

## The Repertoire of Charitable Gifts in Christian Late Antiquity

Daniel F. Caner  
University of Connecticut

Discussions of Christian almsgiving rarely distinguish alms from other religious gifts.

Elsewhere I have demonstrated that one such gift, called a "blessing," became prominent in this period because it provided a conceptual and practical basis for church and monastic economies. Inspired by 2 Cor 9:5-12, such blessings, though passed through human beings, were believed to come from God; hence one of their properties was that they were not supposed to be given out of self-interest or personal gain. This distinguished them from most secular gifts of the period.

It also differentiated them from "alms." While almsgiving was sometimes promoted as an act that emulated God's mercy, Christians more often were encouraged to give alms as a profitable loan, or means of obtaining salvation. Thus alms differed from blessings in their being given for the sake of self-interest and personal gain. Moreover, unlike a blessing, alms seems to have reflected a degree of self-sacrifice.

Blessings were also distinguished from "offerings" (*prosphorai*). Originally a generic term, *prosphora* came to designate a long-term, often immovable gift that funded services to God in memory of their donor.

I will also attempt to show how such gifts related to the concept of a grace.

**Greed is the Root of All Evil:  
The Church Fathers' Interpretation of Col 3,5 and 1 Tim 6,10**  
(Johan Leemans, Erfurt/Leuven)

In their discourse on poverty and richness, the Early Christian authors developed and applied with the concept of greed (pleonexia; filarguria; avaritia; cupiditas): the excessive attachment to money and earthly goods. To that end they drew on non-Christian paideia as well as on the Scriptures. Since the former aspect is well-explored in the article *Habsucht* in the *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* I will focus on the Early Christian authors' use of the New Testament in the development of their ideas on greed. I will limit myself to two (Pseudo) Pauline passages in which greed/love of money is described as the root or apex of evil: Col 3,5 and 1 Tim 6,10 Both passages are often brought into connection with one another, which makes it sensible to take them together.

It is likely that this research generates much more material than can be presented in the time allotted to me: in that case I will illustrate the variety of use of the said passages c.q. a progressing development, rather than bringing out multiple testimonies to the same idea. The research for this paper serves the long-term goal of writing a reception history of Colossians for the *Novum Testamentum Patristicum*.

Johan Leemans  
Professor of early Church History and Patrology  
Faculty of Theology  
University of Erfurt  
johan.leemans@uni-erfurt.de



"Pamela Bright"  
<brightp@alcor.concordia.ca>

22/09/2007 12:49 AM

To: <t.buchanan@patrick.acu.edu.au>  
cc:  
Subject: FW: Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church V

Dear Tom,

I am resending the abstract to you which was sent on September 7, 2007.

This is the title and abstract that I had submitted in June, but had forwarded it to Lawrence Cross. Charles would be available as session chair if this would be helpful.

Thank you for your assistance and we look forward to seeing you in Melbourne.

Please confirm that you have received the abstract.

Pamela

Title

The "Works of Mercy" enjoined on Rich and Poor: Augustine and the Essentials of Christian Discipleship - Dr. Pamela Bright, Concordia University, Montreal.

ABSTRACT

While Augustine deals with practical issues concerning poverty and riches in sermons and letters, the broader principles of social justice are to be found in his analysis of misericordia as the fundamental element Christian discipleship. This concept is elaborate in two of Augustine's early episcopal works: The Doctrina Christiana (Book II) and Confessions (Book XIII).

Here misericordia expressing itself in the exercise of the "works of mercy", is enjoined not only on the rich in relationship to those in need, but as an essential and enduring aspect of the greatest commandment - love of God and neighbor.

-----Original Message-----

From: Pamela Bright [mailto:brightp@alcor.concordia.ca]  
Sent: August 16, 2007 11:35 AM  
To: 'Kannengiesser.c@wanadoo.fr'  
Subject: FW: Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church V

For Dr. Bright

-----Original Message-----

From: thomas buchanan [mailto:t.buchanan@patrick.acu.edu.au]  
Sent: August 15, 2007 11:29 PM  
To: brightp@alcor.concordia.ca  
Subject: Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church V

Dear Professor Bright,

Pauline Allen informed me this morning that you have sent a conference registration and abstract to Melbourne for the forthcoming Prayer and Spirituality conference. Unfortunately it has not arrived here!



"..."  
<kalokagathos@livedoor.com>  
02/10/2007 11:08 AM

To: t.buchanan@patrick.acu.edu.au  
cc: early.christian@mcauley.acu.edu.au  
Subject: [SPAM] Fwd: Abstract for Poverty in monastic communities as Evagrius saw it.

Dear Prof. Buchanan

I re-send you my abstract for "Prayer and Spirituality in the early church V".  
(original message have been send on 28th Sept.)  
please let me know if you get this e-mail.

best regards  
Jun SUZUKI (Tokyo Univ.)  
[kalokagathos@livedoor.com](mailto:kalokagathos@livedoor.com)

+81-80-5005-4104

message -----

From: ... <[kalokagathos@livedoor.com](mailto:kalokagathos@livedoor.com)>

Date: 2007/09/28 18:59

Subject: Abstract for Poverty in monastic communities as Evagrius saw it.

To: [early.christian@mcauley.acu.edu.au](mailto:early.christian@mcauley.acu.edu.au)

Cc: [p.allen@mcauley.acu.edu.au](mailto:p.allen@mcauley.acu.edu.au)

Dear Professors

I hope everything is going well at your institute.  
I would like to submit the abstract of my paper for "Prayer and Spirituality in the early church V".  
please e-mail me back after you receive this message.

best regards  
Jun SUZUKI (PhD Candidate Tokyo Univ.)

+++ABSTRACT+++

Poverty in monastic communities as Evagrius saw it.  
Jun SUZUKI

Though voluntary poverty was the one of the most significant characteristics of early monasticism, renunciation of personal possessions and communal share of property were not institutionalized practices. Instead, a majority of hermits sustained themselves with their own income and savings. As a consequence, there was an economic gap between rich and poor monks. Through analysis of Evagrius' works such as *Antirrehticus*, *De Malginibus Cogitationibus* and *Practicus*, I will reconstruct his reflections and discourses on poverty taking into account the socio-economic situation of monastic colonies in 4<sup>th</sup> C Egypt.