

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE MEANING
OF 2 CORINTHIANS 8:9

by
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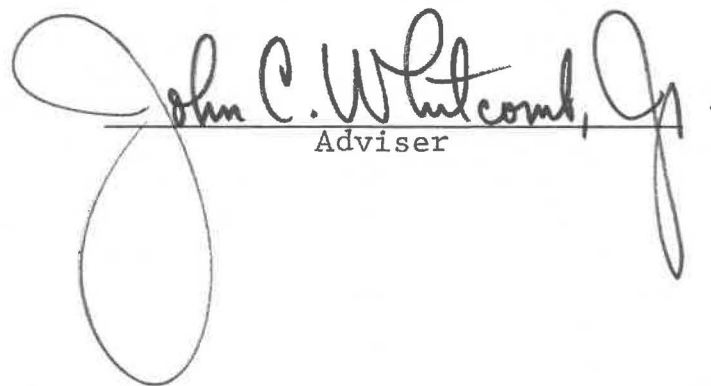
Title: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE MEANING OF
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The purpose of this thesis is to carefully investigate the exact meaning of 2 Corinthians 8:9 from a grammatical and contextual setting and to make a careful examination of the various translations of the early Church Fathers. Other biblical passages, such as Philippians 2:6-11 and Galatians 4:4-5, are also used to shed light on the meaning of the verse.

Second Corinthians 8:9 is understood to teach that in stating our Lord Jesus Christ "was rich," the riches here means He possessed the glory, dignity and privileges of God, He is God. "For by Him all things were created, both in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created by Him and for Him" (Col 1:16). He owns everything in this universe, His riches are immeasurable; but then because of His unmeasurable love for us and the whole world "He became poor." This means that He voluntarily laid aside His glory and heavenly riches, assumed a human nature, submitted to the natural laws which He had created and willingly endured the sufferings even to the most painful and shameful death on the cross. Therefore "He became poor" does not necessarily refer to economic concern but primarily to His attitude and position (cf. Phil 2). Our Lord became poor in order that through His poverty we might become rich. This means that the Corinthians as well as anyone who believes in Christ and trusts in Him, will have spiritual blessings: salvation, sin's forgiveness, eternal life and glorying, sharing the richness with Christ in His kingdom.

Generally speaking, 2 Corinthians 8:9 is one of the most beautiful and important verses of the doctrine of redemption.

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
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Master of Divinity

A large, stylized handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "John C. Whitcomb, Jr.". The signature is written in dark ink and features a large loop at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail that extends downwards and to the right. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

Adviser

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
The Need for This Study	1
The Procedure of this Study	2
Chapter	
I. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS	4
The Context of the Book of 2 Corinthians	4
The Context of 2 Corinthians 8:9	7
II. THE MEANING OF 2 CORINTHIANS 8:9	10
The Text	10
Terminology	10
γὰρ	11
γινώσκετε	11
τὴν	12
χαρὶν	12
τοῦ	14
κυρίου	14
ἡμῶν	15
Ἰησοῦ	16
Χριστοῦ	16
ὅτι	17
δι'	17
ὑμᾶς	18
ἐπτώχευσεν	18
ᾧν	21
πλούσιος	21
ἵνα	22
ὕμεις	23
τῇ	23
ἐκείνου	23
πτωχεῖα	24
πλουτήσητε	24
The Relationship of Other Passages	26
Various Interpretations	29
Church Fathers	29
St. Augustine	29
St. Ambrose	31
St. Gregory of Nyssa	32
St. Chrysostom	34
Martin Luther	35
John Calvin	36

Summary	37
Writers of Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries	37
CONCLUSION	40
BIBLIOGRAPHY	42

INTRODUCTION

The Need for this Study

Second Corinthians 8:9, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (NASV), is one of the most important verses related to the doctrine of redemption. From this verse there are many questions that have been raised, such as: How was Christ rich? Why did Christ become poor? Of what did Christ's poverty consist? In what way did the Corinthians become rich? From century to century, the answers to these questions have been offered by Christian scholars. However, the answers are different from each other. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the views of all the Christian writers from the available books with the purpose of discovering how Christian writers through the ages understood the text and how they interpreted it. From this investigation, along with the knowledge of Greek language studied as well as the exegetical tools available, this writer prays and hopes that his suggested answer will be the valid explanation of the meaning of 2 Corinthians 8:9.

The Procedure of this Study

The procedure of this study is as follows: In chapter one, the context of the book of 2 Corinthians will be analyzed carefully. This discussion will include the introduction of the church of Corinth, how this church began, and the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the church is also briefly discussed; also, the date and place of writing, the authorship, occasion for writing and purpose of 2 Corinthians will be mentioned. Finally, the more immediate context of 2 Corinthians 8:9 will be discussed in detail.

The context of a verse is very important, for if any interpreter takes a verse out of context he can change the meaning of the verse easily. Relating to this, Mickelson has rightly observed: "Neglect of context is a common cause of erroneous interpretation and irrelevant application.

. . . The first responsibility of every interpreter is to note carefully what precedes and what follows any verse or any passage he is interpreting."¹ In chapter two, attention will be focused on the meaning of 2 Corinthians 8:9. From this study, hopefully, will result an acceptable explanation of the verse. In order to understand the meaning of the verse properly, this writer would divide his discussion into four sections: (1) Terminology (every Greek word in the

¹A. Berkeley Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 99-102.

verse will be treated individually and the key words of the verse such as "favor," "rich" and "poor" will be examined and exegeted. (2) The relationship of other passages (parallel and similar passages--Phil 2:6-11; Gal 4:4-5--will be discussed and exegeted). (3) Various interpretations (under this section, the writings of several church fathers and most of the commentaries of modern authors will be examined to see how they understood and interpreted the verse). (4) After careful study of all these different interpretations, this writer will conclude with the meaning of the verse as the result of his investigation and exegesis.

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

The Context of the Book of 2 Corinthians

In order to understand fully the situation of the church of Corinth, it is necessary to examine the geography of the city and the culture of the Corinthians in the time the church was begun. In relation to the geography, Dr. Gromacki states:

Corinth was located on a narrow strip of land, called an Isthmus, connecting the peloponnesus with Northern Greece. . . . In that day Corinth was the crossroads for travel and commerce, both North and South for the Greek peninsula and East and West between Rome and the Near East; It had two seaports, Cenchrea on the Aegean Sea to the East and Lechaeum on the edge of the Gulf of Corinth to the West.¹

In relation to its culture and the morality, Dr. Lenski observes:

Corinth was a wicked city even as larger cities in the empire went at this period. The very term "Corinthian" meant a profligate, and the verb "to Corinthianize" meant to have intercourse with prostitutes. The temple of Venus in the old city boasted that a thousand female slaves were kept there who were free to strangers. . . . Money was freely spent for sinful pleasures.²

¹R. G. Gromacki, Stand Firm in the Faith (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 10.

²R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), p. 12.

Having briefly mentioned the geographical, cultural and moral situation of the people of Corinth, now let us move into the Scripture and find out how the church of God was started in this sinful city. By the record of Luke in Acts 18:4-8, we know that the church of Corinth was started by a group of Jews from the Jewish synagogue whom Paul had converted to the Christian faith on his second missionary journey. After awhile, because of controversies and persecution by their fellow Jews, this group left the synagogue and gathered together for worship in the home of Titius Justus who was a God fearing Gentile (Acts 18:7). At this beloved Gentile's home they met weekly to worship God, sharing their testimonies. Their love for each other grew and it did not take long for the church to increase. Most of the new converts happened to be Gentile; therefore, even though the church was founded by Jewish Christians, Gentiles ultimately predominated, so that it was regarded as one of the Gentile Christian churches (1 Cor 12:1).

Unfortunately, most of the members of the Corinthian church came from the lower class and many of them also had the problem of an immoral background (1 Cor 1:26; 6:9-11). These moral problems still remained among them even though they were already Christians. Therefore the Corinthian church was known among the early Christians as one of the most troubled churches because in this church there were many problems such as: factionalism, immorality, drinking,

lawsuits against each other, marriage problems, liberty and license, and misunderstanding Christian doctrines. Due to the situation of the Corinthian church, Paul became so unhappy that he wrote two letters to them known as 1 and 2 Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians chapters 1-7, he expresses his joy because of the Corinthian church's response to his ministry; in chapters 8-9, he reminds the Corinthians to fulfill their commitment related to fund-raising projects which were to be used to help the poor Christians in Jerusalem. Finally, in the last three chapters, 10-13, Paul emphasizes his ministry and defends his apostolic authority.

In relation to the book of 2 Corinthians, Dr. Lenski rightly observes: "In Second Corinthians Paul bares his heart and his life as he does in none of his other letters. . . . He lets all the love of his heart speak."¹ As we already mentioned, the church of Corinth was known as the problem church; however, this church also can be called the exciting church. It demonstrated the power of God working in the hearts and minds of people to transform lives. God is able! Many of its members, after the conviction of the Holy Spirit, realized their sinful nature and their sinful actions. They repented and were saved. From the historical records and the context of the epistle, we know that the Apostle Paul is the author and that he wrote this epistle in

¹Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians, p. 804.

the year A.D. 57 in Macedonia and then followed it up with his final recorded visit to the church.¹

The Context of 2 Corinthians 8:9

In this particular epistle, the Apostle asked the Corinthians to contribute their gifts to help their poor Christian brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. This fund-raising project had been started by the Apostle in the previous year, during his third missionary journey (1 Cor 16:1-4). So this letter just encouraged the Corinthians to complete the project which they had willingly promised to start (2 Cor 8:10). The church of Corinth was not the only church involved in this fund-raising project, but other Gentile churches were involved as well. And all other churches which were involved in the project seemed to respond very well (Rom 15:25-27).

Here, the Apostle Paul uses several beautiful and meaningful descriptions to encourage the Corinthian church to complete the fund-raising project. The first such description is found in the immediate context of the verse (8:1-15). In this particular passage, Paul describes the situation of the church of Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea) and goes on to praise them for their love to the Lord and to their poverty-stricken Christian brethren in Judea. The

¹P. E. Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), p. xxxv.

Apostle Paul writes: "Now I want to tell you what God in his grace has done for the churches in Macedonia. Though they have been going through much trouble and hard times, they have mixed their wonderful joy with their deep poverty, and the result has been an overflow of giving to others. They gave not only what they could afford, but far more; and I can testify that they did it because they wanted to, and not because of nagging on my part. They begged us to take the money so they could share in the joy of helping the Christians in Jerusalem" (2 Cor 8:1-5, The Living Bible).

According to the Apostle Paul, the members of Macedonian churches were not rich. As Lightfoot correctly comments: "They were baptized with the baptism of suffering, and this suffering was the result both of poverty and of persecution."¹ It is very impressive that even during times of testing and affliction, the Macedonian Christians still trusted in God and continued in their generosity, happy always in the Lord. And when the Apostle asked for their donation to their brethren who were more poverty-stricken than they, the Macedonians were more than ready to help. They not only responded with their financial support but they also supported both the Apostle and their poor Christian brethren with their faithful prayers.

¹J. B. Lightfoot, Biblical Essays (London: The MacMillan and Co., 1893), p. 247.

The actions of the Macedonian Christians, according to the Apostle Paul, were not natural human responses but "the grace of God," meaning that God had been working in the hearts of Macedonian Christians. This was a very good way to encourage the Corinthian Christians.

However, the Apostle did not stop here. He went on to use another illustration: the Lord Jesus Himself. This illustration is beautiful, and it was not only good to use to encourage the Corinthians to give to the poor but it also can be used to demonstrate the love of God through Jesus Christ, implying the doctrine of redemption. Here the Apostle says, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). In other words, the Apostle meant that Jesus Christ, who created everything in this universe, is God; His richness is immeasurable, but because of His love for us He voluntarily laid aside His glory and willingly came into this world; He took to Himself a human nature and became as a servant (Phil 2:6) in order to die on the cross so that through Him we might have eternal life and be glorified with Him. The material things which the Corinthians shared with the poverty-stricken Christian brethren in Jerusalem was nothing to compare with the love of Christ for them. In the remainder of chapter 8:10-9:15, the Apostle explained the policies of giving and the blessing to those who give.

CHAPTER II

THE MEANING OF 2 CORINTHIANS 8:9

The Text

*" γινώσκετε γὰρ τὴν χάριν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ,
ὅτι δι' ὑμᾶς ἐπτώχευεν πλούσιος ὢν, ἵνα ὑμεῖς τῇ
ἐκείνου πτωχείᾳ πλουτήσητε "*

This text is given by Tischendorf,¹ Nestle,² Tasker,³ Westcott and Hort.⁴

Terminology

In order to have a proper understanding of 2 Corinthians 8:9 it is necessary to understand the words in their context. Ramm is correct in stating that "words are the units of thought, and bricks of conceptual construction. Any study of scripture, therefore, must commence with a study of words."⁵ Because of the importance of word studies

¹Tischendorf, Novum Testamentum Graece, Tischendorf Constantinus (Lipsiae: J. C. Hinrichs, 1894).

²Nestle, Novum Testamentum Graece (Germany: Wurttembergische Bibelanstalt Stuttgart, 1971).

³Tasker, The Greek New Testament (Britain: Oxford University Press, 1964).

⁴Westcott and Hort, The New Testament in the Original Greek, ed. Westcott and Hort (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1881).

⁵Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W. A. Wilde Co., 1956), p. 129.

to understand the meaning of the verse, in this section every Greek word will be exegeted.

γὰρ

This is a subordinating conjunction; in this context it might be correctly interpreted "for." According to Robertson: "In the New Testament 'γὰρ' never begins a sentence. This word as well as other words: ἄν , γέ , δε , μέν , μέντοι , οὖν , τε usually stands in the second place and varies in position according to the point to be made in relation to other words."¹ Therefore, the word γὰρ in this sentence is used to explain, to introduce or to remind of the ideas which already are known by the readers.

γινώσκετε

This is present active indicative, second person plural, translated as "you know," "have come to know." The present tense indicates that the action is linear; it has the idea of progress or of continuation.² The indicative mood is the mood of certainty. It denotes a simple assertion or interrogation.³ In this context Paul used the verb

¹A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 424.

²H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (Toronto: The MacMillan Co., 1955), p. 181.

³Ibid., p. 168.

γινώσκετε to emphasize the facts which the Corinthians had realized and were fully acquainted with that is the "grace" and the "love" of God through the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Τὴν

This is the definite article, accusative feminine singular. According to Dana and Mantey, "the article was originally derived from the demonstrative pronoun ὁ, ἡ, τὸ and is clearly akin to the relative pronoun ὅς, ἣ, ὅ. It always retained some of the demonstrative force. . . . The function of the article is to point out an object or to draw attention to it."¹ In this case τὴν is used to point out a definite and specific object of thought, and that object is χάριν (grace) of Jesus Christ. Because it refers back to what is already familiar so in this sense the τὴν is anaphoric.²

Χάρις

This is a feminine noun, accusative singular. In the Septuagint the Greek word χάρις is equivalent to the Hebrew חַן, meaning "favor, inclination"; it also rarely

¹Dana and Mantey, Manual Grammar, pp. 136, 137.

²John A. Sproule, "Intermediate Greek Notes." Unpublished class syllabus (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1979), p. 87.

means "attractiveness, beauty, charm."¹ In the Hebrew its root meaning "to stoop," "to be inclined," is used to denote the attitude of a person in its direction to another in a specific gracious action.² For instance, the gracious action of Esau to Jacob (Gen 32:5); the Egyptians to Joseph (Gen 47:25); Boaz to Ruth (Ruth 2:2); the king to Esther (Est 8:5), etc. In non-biblical Greek *χάρις* has the meaning of "graciousness, attractiveness, favor, grace, gracious care or help, goodwill, gift, benefaction."³ Basically, the New Testament writers employed the non-biblical ideas of *χάρις* in their writing and then this word became an important word in the New Testament theology. However, this word has different meanings depending on the context in which the word is being used. For instance, in the New Testament the Apostle Paul used this word to express his appreciation, "*χάρις τῷ Θεῷ*" (Rom 6:17); to salute, "*χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εὐχήν*" (Rom 1:7; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1). But mostly, Paul uses this word to describe the salvation event, presenting

¹Colin Brown, Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), p. 116.

²Walther Zimmerli, "*χάρις*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. IX. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 377.

³W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 877.

the grace of God to the sinners (Rom 5:10). In this particular verse (2 Cor 8:9), Paul uses *Χαρις* to describe the generosity and loving kindness of Jesus Christ. Here the *Χαρις* of our Lord Jesus Christ is clearly explained in the following clause, "Ὅτι δι' ὑμᾶς ἐπτώχευθεν πλούσιος ὢν."

τοῦ

Definite article, genitive masculine singular. For the usage and the function of article, please see previous discussion, p. 12.

κυρίου

This is a masculine noun, genitive, singular. Generally speaking, the Greek word *κύριος* means "owner" (Mark 12:9, Luke 19:33; Matt 15:27) or "employer" (Luke 16:3, 5). This word is also used to describe the role of the husband related to his wife (1 Pet 3:6; cf. Gen 18:12). According to Dr. Brown, *κύριος* is also used as a form of address; its emphasis is on the power of a superior over an inferior. It is used for simply politeness (Matt 18:21); to address angels (Acts 10:4).¹ Basically, this word has the adjectival form *κύριος* meaning "having power," "having legal power," "lawful," "valid," "authorized," "competent," "empowered,"

¹Colin Brown, Dictionary of New Testament Theology, p. 513.

"important," "decisive," "principal."¹ In the Old Testament the word *Kypios* is "equivalent to the Hebrew word קִיָּא or קִיָּא "² and might be used as an expository equivalent for the divine name יְיָ (Ps 32:2; Isa 10:22; 53:1, etc.).

In this particular phrase, as well as other passages in the New Testament, whenever Paul used the Greek word *Kypios* to refer to Jesus, he not only used it as a polite form of address, but he used it because he recognized the Lord's authority. He confessed Him as the Savior, the ruler, the master, the owner of the whole universe (Col 1:16; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Rom 14:9).

$\eta\mu\acute{\omega}\nu$

This is a genitive pronoun, first person plural. It is used here to modify a noun, *Kypios*, and it indicates one who owns or possesses the noun it modifies. The use is that of a possessive genitive.³ Here Paul uses the first person plural pronoun $\eta\mu\acute{\omega}\nu$ to identify and to emphasize that he and the Corinthians have the same "Lord," "our Lord," and not "my Lord" or "your Lord."

¹Werner Foerster, "*Kypios*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 3. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 1041.

²Ibid., p. 1058.

³J. A. Sproule, "Intermediate Greek Notes," p. 66.

Ἰησοῦ

Ἰησοῦς is the Greek form of the Old Testament Jewish name יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, arrived at by transcribing the Hebrew and adding an ending sigma to the nominative to facilitate declension.¹ This noun, when it is used in the New Testament, refers to the personal name of our Lord. However, His name was not accidentally given but it was determined by heavenly instruction. In Matthew 1:21, it states, "You shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins" (NASB). The important thing of the name Ἰησοῦς is that in its Hebrew original יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, we should not ignore the verb שׁוּעַ. This verb means "to be liberated, saved from external evils, be saved in battle, deliver, save from moral troubles."² When this word is used as a noun, שׁוּעַ, it has the sense of "deliverance, rescue, salvation, also safety, welfare."³ Therefore, the name Ἰησοῦς means Savior. Indeed, our Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. He saved us out of the slavery of sin.

χρίστου

This is a genitive noun, masculine singular. Its verbal adjective χρίστος means "spreadable," "smeared on,"

¹Colin Brown, Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 2, p. 330.

²Francis Brown; S. R. Driver; and C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 447.

³Ibid.

"anointed."¹ When it is used as a noun, τοῦ χριστοῦ means "ointment."² This Greek word, χριστός, is equivalent to the Hebrew word מָשִׁיחַ or מְשִׁיחַ which is used to denote "someone who has been ceremonially anointed for an office," such as "royal anointing," "anointing of office bearers (the high-priest, the priests, prophetic office bearers)."³ Therefore, the name Ἰησοῦς Χριστός in the New Testament is used to indicate that "Christ is the Savior of the world." He is the one anointed by God to be our Prophet, High Priest, and King (Heb 9:11; 1 Tim 6:15).

ὅτι

This conjunction is very common in the New Testament; it is usually used as a causal particle, meaning "because" or "for." This conjunction is also used to introduce an objective clause after a verb.⁴ In this particular verse, ὅτι is used epexegetically and translated "that."

δι'

This is the preposition of intermediate agency. Δι' is a shortened form of the word δια. Its root meaning is

¹Walter Grundmann, "Χριστός," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 3. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 495.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 493.

⁴Dana and Mantey, Greek Manual Grammar, p. 252.

"two" from δύο, when used with the genitive case it is commonly translated "through," and if used with the accusative case it is commonly translated "because of," "for the sake of."¹ Here it is used with "ὑμᾶς" (accusative), therefore it is correctly translated "for the sake of."

ὑμᾶς

This is an accusative pronoun, second personal plural. Here the Apostle Paul uses this pronoun to refer to the Corinthian believers. He meant that "because of you" Christ became poor. It is implied in the resultant meanings.

ἐπιτωχεύειν

This verb came from the Greek word πιτωχεύω meaning "to be destitute," "to lead the life of a beggar."² πιτωχεία means the condition of begging, the life of a beggar.³ These Greek words are equivalent to the following Hebrew words: רָצַח -- "Primarily the word expresses a relation rather than a state of social distress";⁴ שָׁחַח -- "This word is used of physical weakness, social status, 'lowly,' 'poor,' 'wretched,' and 'insignificant';"⁵ and רָצַח -- from the stem of "to will," "to be willing." It originally denotes the

¹Ibid., p. 101.

²Friedrich Hauck, "πιτωχος," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 6. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 886.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 888.

⁵Ibid.

one who seeks alms, "the beggar."¹ In New Testament literature, the Greek word *πτωχευω* and *πτωχεια* are no longer referring to "the life of a beggar," but instead refer to the person who is (extremely) poor.² In this particular verse, Paul uses the verb *ἐπτάχευθεν* to indicate the poverty state of Christ. It is in third person singular, aorist active indicative, coming from *πτωχευω*. The aorist tense is used to denote "the fact of the action or event without regard to duration."³ The indicative mood here is indicating that Jesus Christ became poor as an actual and real event.⁴ The aorist tense as used in this context must be understood as aorist ingressive, meaning that its stress is "on the beginning of an action or entrance into a state, and the idea can be brought out by 'began to do' or 'started doing.'"⁵ In relation to this, Dr. Turner has given us some very good examples. He states, "The aorist of the verb 'to be a king' (a state or condition) must be 'to become a king' (point of entrance); of 'to trust' it must be 'to put one's trust in.'"⁶

¹Ibid.

²W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 735.

³Dana and Mantey, Greek Manual Grammar, p. 193.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Sproule, "Intermediate Greek Notes," p. 30.

⁶Nigel Turner, Grammatical Insights into the New Testament (Britain: Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1965), p. 150.

Therefore, according to Turner, the aorist as used in 2 Corinthians 8:9 must be understood as Christ "became poor" but not "Christ was poor."¹

Now let us examine and find out what Paul meant by "Christ's poverty" in this context. In 2 Corinthians 8:2, Paul uses *πτωχεια* to refer to the real material poverty of the Macedonian believers. Then in verse 9 of the same chapter, he again uses *πτωχεια* to refer to Christ's poverty. Therefore it could be logical for one to identify both words as synonymous in meaning and conclude that Paul uses *πτωχεια* in verse 9 to refer to the poverty of Christ in the sense of material poverty. However, this writer rejects the idea of the two words being synonymous in meaning, because the full statement of 2 Corinthians 8:9 is clearly indicating that Paul speaks of the riches of Christ in terms of the things He possessed in His pre-existent state--immeasurable and incomparable riches. Therefore His poverty on this earth, which contrasts to His pre-existent riches, must be referring to something more directly opposed to His original state rather than merely material poverty. Therefore the "poverty" Paul means here must be referring to His incarnate state. "He became poor" in the sense that He laid aside His incomparable riches which He had with His Father in His

¹Ibid.; also see R. C. H. Lenski, "The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians," p. 1138.

pre-existence, and became a man.¹ Primarily it refers to His attitude and position, not His economic status (cf. Phil 2).

ὥν

This is a present active participle. "The present participle expresses time contemporaneous with the action of the main verb."² It is used to refer to antecedent or subsequent state. In this context it is used to refer to subsequent state because the following clause is indicating Christ's state of poverty, therefore ὥν is correctly translated as "while" (He was rich).

πλούσιος

This Greek word originally meant "to fill," "full."³ In the word group it has the basic sense of "fullness of goods." Sometimes πλούτος on the one side means material wealth, but on the other side it can be used to refer to anything that brings the benefit to a happy life,⁴ for instance, "wealth of wisdom," "wealth of grace," etc. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul usually uses this word

¹Homer A. Kent, Jr., A Heart Opened Wide (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1982), p. 127.

²J. A. Sproule, "Intermediate Greek Notes," p. 50.

³Freidrich Hauck, " πλούτος ," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 6. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 319.

⁴Ibid.

in the non-material sense, as in Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you"; 1 Corinthians 1:5: "that in everything you were enriched in Him"; Romans 2:4: "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness"; Romans 9:23: "The riches of His glory"; Ephesians 2:4: "But God, being rich in mercy"; Ephesians 1:7: "according to the riches of His grace." With the context of 2 Corinthians 8:9 and in the light of these texts, we might safely conclude that "the riches" of Christ here refer to His pre-existent state.

iva

iva is used frequently to denote the purpose and it is also frequently used in a non-final sense in object clauses.¹ Sometimes it may possibly be used to express result.² However, in some cases it is impossible to distinguish between the purpose and the resulting usage. Arndt and Gingrich rightly observe: "In many cases purpose and result cannot be clearly differentiated, and hence *iva* is used for the result which follows according to the purpose of the subject or of God. As in Jewish and pagan thought, purpose and result are identical in declarations of divine

¹Dana and Mantey, Manual Greek Grammar, p. 248.

²A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament, p. 999.

will."¹ In this particular text, this writer thinks that *ἵνα* is used as result or possibly purpose, because it tells the result of the poverty of Christ "to bring spiritual blessing to the Corinthians."

ὑμεῖς

This is the accusative pronoun, second personal plural and translated "you." Here, it is used to refer to the Corinthian believers.

τῇ

This is the definite article.² In this context this article refers to the poverty, "*πτωχεῖα*," of Jesus Christ. It denotes the "poverty" which had been previously mentioned.

ἐκείνου

ἐκείνου is a genitive demonstrative pronoun. It is heavily used in the New Testament and frequently called the "far" demonstrative; usually, it is used to refer to something more remote in thought or position.³ In this context *ἐκείνου* refers to *Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*.

¹Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 151.

²For the usage and the function of article please see previous discussion on page 12.

³Sproule, "Intermediate Greek Notes," p. 83.

πτωχεία

This is a noun, used in the dative case, and as a dative, it suggests the poverty of Christ as some kind of means by which the Corinthians were enriched. Therefore, here we can call this dative a dative of means.¹ πτωχεία has the original root meaning "the condition of begging," "the life of a beggar."² In New Testament literature this word is used to refer to the person who is extremely poor.³ For instance: In Galatians 2:10 and Romans 15:26, Paul uses the word πτωχος to denote the poverty situation of the believers in Jerusalem. In Luke 18:22, Jesus told the young ruler to sell his possessions and give to the poor. This Greek word sometimes can be used in a religious sense, such as "poor in spirit" (Matt 5:3), "we are poor, but enriching many" (2 Cor 6:10). In this particular verse, the word πτωχεία is not used merely to refer to the material poverty of Christ, but primarily it is used to indicate His incarnation state. He became poor by entering into a state of humiliation.

πλουτήσητε

The aorist active subjunctive form of the root πλουτέω, second person plural. In this instance, the

¹Ibid., p. 72.

²Supra, p. 18.

³Supra, p. 18.

plural person of the verb is referring back to the plural relative pronoun *υμεις* in the previous relative clause. The aorist tense denotes the action simply as occurring, without reference to its progress. It is the indefinite tense.¹ In relation to the aorist tense, Dr. Turner states:

The aorist stem essentially expresses the point of time of an action, or the action itself without reference to time at all. Nevertheless, the simple principle has to be qualified: verbs which by their meaning express a state or condition are employed in the aorist tense to indicate the action which is the point of entrance into that state.²

The subjunctive mood is the mood of mild contingency and assumes unreality. In this context, this subjunctive mood is used as a potential subjunctive in subordinate clauses and commonly implies future reference.³ Here, the *πλουτησῃτε* is correctly translated "you might become rich," but the question might be raised, "In what way did the Corinthians become rich?" To this writer, the riches in this context are primarily referring to spiritual blessing: salvation, sin's forgiveness, eternal life and glorying with Christ in His kingdom.

¹Dana and Mantey, Manual Greek Grammar, p. 193.

²Nigel Turner, Grammatical Insights into the New Testament, p. 150.

³Dana and Mantey, Manual Greek Grammar, p. 172.

The Relationship of Other Passages

The closest parallel to 2 Corinthians 8:9 is found in Philippians 2:6-11.

6. Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.
7. But emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
8. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
9. Therefore, also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.
10. That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth.
11. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Verse 6 presents the glorious state of Christ in His pre-existence. In His divine state, He possessed everything God possessed. He existed in the form of God. The word "form" is translated from the Greek word *μορφή* meaning "character" referring to "the inner, essential, and abiding nature of a person or thing."¹ The participle *ὑπαρχων* (being), its context denotes prior existence of Christ. Therefore, the phrase "in the form of God" means that all that God is, Jesus Christ was. He is equal with God in all of the essential attributes: holy, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, glorious and sovereign. He Himself is God, as John wrote: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

¹William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary; Exposition of Philippians (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962), p. 104.

And Jesus also said that He and His Father are one (John 10:30). Therefore verse 6 is regarded as synonymous to the "riches" of Christ in 2 Corinthians 8:9 because this verse describes the state of the pre-existent Christ.

The next two verses, 7 and 8, describe the earthly life of Christ. That Christ "emptied Himself" means the same as "became poor" in 2 Corinthians 8:9. The word "emptied" here is indicating His voluntary act. He voluntarily set aside His manner of pre-existence to become man. As man, He yielded His will to the Father. However, this does not mean that to become man He is no longer "existent in the form of God" or "to lose His divine nature." Dr. Lenski rightly states, "He could not do without His deity in his state of humiliation. . . . Even in the midst of his death he had to be the mighty God, in order by his death to conquer death."¹ After "He emptied Himself" then He took upon Him the form of a servant. The noun "servant" comes from the Greek word *δουλος* meaning "slave." The word "servant" is more proper to use for Christ. Here the contrast is clearly seen "in the form of God." He is deserving to be served. There was no limitation for Him but "the form of a servant." He served, suffered, was weary, hungry, thirsty. He had all the weaknesses of a human (except sin). But as

¹R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 782.

a servant, He totally submitted to His Father and He died for our sins, saving us out of slavery to sin. He was the servant of whom the prophet Isaiah wrote, "My Servant will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities" (Isa 53:12). And to Him God said, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen one in whom my soul delights" (Isa 42:1). The phrase "in the likeness of man" indicates that He is a man, a real human being, though not sinning.

Verse 8 describes the redemptive action of Christ. As a servant, He totally submitted to God and willingly entered into a state of humiliation, accepting the life of a suffering human and finally accepting the suffering of death in order to provide a way of salvation to mankind (cf. John 3:16; Isa 53:4-12).

Verses 9-11 describe the exaltation of Christ. The verb "exalted" means to lift above or to lift beyond. This verb is used only of Christ and only here in the New Testament.¹ Indeed, Christ has been glorified and one day the whole world will confess that "He is God, He is Lord, and He is our Savior."

Generally speaking, in comparing Philippians 2:6-11 and 2 Corinthians 8:9, we could see that the phrase "Christ was rich" refers to His pre-existent state with the Father,

¹Robert G. Gromacki, Stand United in Joy, An Exposition of Philippians (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 100.

sharing all the glory, power and honor with Him. He "became poor" or "He emptied Himself" refers to His entry into humanity; yes, the incarnation made Christ poor (in position, not economics), and made Him a servant, becoming like a weak man. His "poverty" started at His birth and ended with His death on the cross. The riches that came to the Corinthians as well as to the whole world are the riches of spiritual blessing: justification, redemption, and adoption as sons. As believers we are no longer slaves of sin but sons of God. This idea is found in Galatians 4:4-5: "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." And if sons, then we will be heirs, and we will be glorified with Christ.

Various Interpretations

Church Fathers

In order to understand how 2 Corinthians 8:9 has been translated and understood in the past, let us briefly examine the writing of several Church Fathers.

St. Augustine (354-430)

St. Augustine was born at Tagaste in North Africa, of a pagan father and a Christian mother. He was one of the

doctors of the Church.¹ His explanation of 2 Corinthians 8:9 is mostly found in his sermons which he preached to the common people. For instance, in encouraging the people to be faithful, he quoted 2 Corinthians 8:9 as a support verse and used Christ as an illustration.² One of Augustine's best comments on 2 Corinthians 8:9 is found in his sermon 194. Here, Augustine identifies Christ's poverty to His incarnation. He states: "When He assumed our mortality and overcame death, He manifested Himself in poverty, but He promised riches though they might be deferred; He did not lose them as if they were taken from Him."³ And then Augustine goes on to identify Christ's riches with His divinity and creative power.

Truly, when Christ was rich, He became poor on account of us. Do you seek for gold? He made it. Do you seek for silver? He made it. Do you seek for a household? He made it. Do you seek for flocks? He made them. Do you seek for possessions? He made them. Why do you seek only what He made? Seek Him who made all these things. Consider how He loved you: "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made." . . . Consider riches; what are riches than He by whom all things were made? Yet, although He was rich, He took mortal flesh in a virgin's womb. He was born as an infant; He was wrapped in swaddling clothes; He was laid in a manger; He patiently waited for the normal

¹F. L. Cross, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 108.

²St. Augustine, "Of Holy Virginitv," Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. III (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952-55), p. 426.

³St. Augustine, "Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons." Trans. by Sister Mary Sarah Muldowney, The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation. Vol. 38 (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1959), p. 39.

periods of life; He, by whom all seasons were made, patiently endured the seasons. He was nursed; He cried; He appeared as an infant. He lay there, yet He was reigning; He was in the manger, yet He sustained the world; He was nursed by His mother and adored by the Gentiles; He was nursed by His mother and adored by angels; He was nursed by His mother, and announced by a gleaming star. Such riches and such poverty! Riches, that you might be created; poverty, that you might be redeemed. Therefore, the fact that He as a poor man was granted hospitality as a poor man was the result of the condescension of the recipient, not of the wretchedness of the needy.¹

In this passage Augustine has a number of interesting and helpful observations. In this sermon, besides identifying Christ's riches with His creative power, He also regarded the incarnation and birth of Christ as His poverty, but even in His poverty state He still retains His divinity and power. Generally speaking, Augustine understood that Christ's riches are His divinity, power, glory and holiness; and Christ's poverty is His whole life on earth, from the day He was born as an infant laid in a manger at Bethlehem to the day He was buried in a tomb of another man. Man's enrichment are all the spiritual blessings that lead to eternal life, and will be glorified with Christ.

St. Ambrose (339-397)

Saint Ambrose's explanation of 2 Corinthians 8:9 is quite similar to Augustine. To Ambrose, the riches of Christ are identified with the glory He had with the Father

¹Ibid., p. 249.

in His pre-existent state and Christ's poverty is identified with His incarnate state. Ambrose says:

Who is rich but the Lord Jesus, who always abounds and never fails? He came into this world a poor man and abounds in all things; He has filled all men. How mighty He is in riches, for He has made all men rich by His poverty! But He was poor for our sakes, and rich with the Father. He was poor to deliver us from want, as the Apostle teaches when he says "Being rich, he became poor for your sakes, that by his poverty you might become rich." His poverty enriches, the fringe of His garment heals, His hunger satisfies, His death gives life, His burial gives resurrection. Therefore, He is rich treasure, for His bread is rich.¹

This passage is indicating that St. Ambrose is fully understanding of Paul's implication. Here Ambrose understands that the poverty of Christ as including His incarnation, and all the suffering He endured in His life on earth, including death and burial. Christ's riches to Ambrose are His eternal divine status, and these divine riches always remain in Him even during His incarnation state. And Ambrose understood the riches to men to include "healing of wounds," "eternal life" and "resurrection."

St. Gregory of Nyssa (394)

In his sermon on the beatitudes, St. Gregory understood the phrase "poor in spirit" as synonymous to humility. So he uses the humility of Christ as an example to encourage

¹St. Ambrose, "Seven Exegetical Works," The Fathers of the Church, A New Translation, Vol. 65 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, Inc., 1972), p. 263.

his audiences to imitate. With that purpose in mind, St.

Gregory states:

What greater poverty is there for God than the form of a servant? What more humble for the king of creation than to share in our poor nature? The Ruler of Rulers, the Lord of Lords puts on voluntarily the garb of servitude. The Judge of all things becomes a subject of governors; the Lord of creation dwells in a cave; He who holds the universe in His hands finds no place in the inn, but is cast aside into the manger of irrational beasts. The perfectly pure accepts the filth of human nature, and after going through all our poverty passes on to the experience of death. Look at the standard by which to measure voluntary poverty! Life tastes death; the judge is brought to judgment; the Lord of the Life of all creatures is sentenced by the judge; the king of all heavenly powers does not push aside the hands of the executioners. Take this, he says, as an example by which to measure your humility.¹

In the same sermon, Gregory goes on to describe another type of poverty and uses Christ as an illustration. This poverty is to Gregory the poverty of the one who is willing to give up material wealth in order to gain the riches of the soul. Gregory believes that whoever could do so will receive the reward from Christ who became poor for our sakes. Therefore he writes:

The man who gives to the poor will take his share in Him who became poor for our sake. The Lord became poor, so be not afraid of poverty. But he who became poor for us reigns over all creation. Therefore, if you become poor because He became poor, you will also reign because He is reigning.²

¹St. Gregory of Nyssa, The Beatitudes. Translated and annotated by Hilda C. Gray (New York: Newman Press, 1954), p. 91.

²Ibid., p. 96.

From this sermon we could see Gregory understand the impoverishment of Christ as including His incarnation, His life, and His death. To him any man who was willing to give up wealth, and imitate the poverty of Christ by humility will be reigning with Him in His universal kingship. The primary goal of this sermon is to encourage His hearers to become poor in spirit. Therefore He does not emphasize how man's spiritual riches are the result of Christ's poverty, but he did imply it.

St. Chrysostom (347-407)

In his explanation of 2 Corinthians 8:9, Chrysostom states:

He emptied Himself of His glory that ye, not through His riches but through His poverty, might be rich. If thou believest not that poverty is productive of riches, have in mind thy Lord and thou wilt doubt no longer. For had He not become poor, thou wouldest not have become rich. For this is the marvel, that poverty hath made riches rich. And by riches here he meaneth the knowledge of godliness, the cleansing away of sins, justification, sanctification, the countless good things which He bestowed upon us and purposeth to bestow. And all these things accrued to us through His poverty. What poverty? Through His taking flesh on Him and becoming man and suffering what He suffered.¹

This passage indicates that Chrysostom understood the poverty of Christ to consist of His voluntary emptying of His divine glory (which He had shared with the Father in His

¹St. Chrysostom, Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, edited by Philip Schaff. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. XII (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), p. 360.

pre-existent state), taking on a human flesh and becoming a man, and then enduring suffering, death and burial. Generally speaking, to Chrysostom, the incarnation and redemption of Christ constitute His poverty. And in explaining the phrase, "through His poverty you might be rich," Chrysostom arranges those riches in chronological order as: first, the knowledge of godliness; second, the cleansing away of sins; third, justification; and finally, sanctification.

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Martin Luther, founder of the German Reformation, in relating to 2 Corinthians 8:9, gives no specific comment. However, he does imply it in his writing related to the doctrine of Christ. To Luther, the life of Christ on earth is his poverty, therefore he describes Christ's poverty literally: "He was a pauper, and no one in Wittenberg owned less than He. The Lord must have gone about in a gray coat, and had not even a morsel of bread to feed Himself, for He was a poor man."¹ But to Luther,

Christ's poverty was not the assumed poverty of Franciscans: After teaching the five thousand, for instance, He and His disciples at least had five loaves and two hundred pence, and the moneybox which Judas managed may well have had thirty gulden in reserve. Christ's real poverty was poverty of Spirit.²

¹J. D. K. Siggins, Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 36.

²Ibid.

Basically, to Luther, the poverty of Christ is His human nature on earth. As human, He shares our poverty, weakness, wretchedness, misery. "In our flesh, the Son of God Himself was weak and weary, He was afraid, and He fled from danger."¹

John Calvin (1509-1564)

John Calvin was a French reformer and theologian. In his commentary on the 2 Corinthian Epistles, Calvin briefly explains the "riches" of Christ in 2 Corinthians 8:9 as:

Christ was rich, because he was God, under whose power and authority all things are; and farther, even in our human nature, which he put on. As the Apostle bears witness (Heb. 1:2; 2:8), he was the heir of all things, inasmuch as he was placed by his father over all creatures, and all things were placed under his feet. He nevertheless became poor, because he refrained from possessing, and thus he gave up his right for a time. . . . Hence he has consecrated poverty in his own person, that believers may no longer regard it with horror. By his poverty he has enriched us all for this purpose--that we may not feel it hard to take from our abundance what we may lay out upon our brethren.²

Here Calvin places Christ's riches to His divinity (God) and lordship over all creation. And to Calvin, Christ "became poor" because He voluntarily took to Himself a human nature. Concerning the phrase "by his poverty he has enriched us," Calvin does not explain how Christ enriched us. However, he

¹Ibid., p. 38.

²John Calvin, Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, Vol. 1. Translated from the original Latin and collated with the author's French version by the Rev. John Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 290.

does understand that by the poverty of Christ, he and the whole human race are able to obtain salvation.

Summary

Most of the fathers identify Christ's riches with His divinity and His glory. To them Christ's divinity always remained, even in His incarnate state. Here they understood the phrase *πλουσιος ὢν* as implying the divinity of Christ. To them Christ was God and always God even when He became man. The basic notion of Christ's impoverishment according to the fathers is His incarnate state. This means that He voluntarily took on Himself a weak human nature, a human nature in its unglorified condition, though without sin. And as a man He is able to enrich men through His sufferings and death. The riches of men as the result of Christ's poverty according to the fathers are eternal life and spiritual riches. Most of the fathers also use the life of Christ as an example to encourage Christians in almsgiving and in daily life. Some of them even use Christ's poverty as an example of monastic poverty.

Writers of Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Most of the writers of this period identify the riches of Christ with the glory He possessed as God in His pre-existent state, and they identify the poverty of Christ with His whole life on earth. To them, Christ became poor

by surrendering His divine glory and entering into the state of humiliation. The riches that are given to men as the result of Christ's poverty are riches of spiritual blessing: eternal life and glory with Christ in His kingdom. The writers who hold this view are: Hughes,¹ Barrett,² Lenski,³ Hodge,⁴ Barnes,⁵ McFadyen,⁶ Tasker,⁷ Cerfaux,⁸ Weiss,⁹

¹Philip E. Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), p. 299.

²C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973), pp. 222-23.

³R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), pp. 1136-39.

⁴Charles Hodge, An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950), pp. 200-01.

⁵Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament: II Corinthians and Galatians (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), pp. 181-83.

⁶John E. McFadyen, The Epistles to the Corinthians (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911), p. 356.

⁷R. V. G. Tasker, The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), pp. 115-16.

⁸Lucien Cerfaux, Christ in the Theology of St. Paul (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), pp. 165, 371.

⁹Berhard Weiss, A Commentary on the New Testament. Vol. 4. Translated by George Schodde and Epiphanius Wilson (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1906), p. 330.

Fallon,¹ and Erdman.²

¹Francis Fallon, II Corinthians (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1973), p. 71.

²Charles R. Erdman, The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1929), p. 80.

CONCLUSION

After having carefully examined the context of 2 Corinthians 8:9, the grammatical structure, the interpretations of Church Fathers and the modern commentators, this writer believes that Second Corinthians 8:9 can be understood as follows: you know that God so loved the world, as it is demonstrated in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ who was sent by God as a gift for the salvation of the world. Although the Lord Jesus Christ possessed the glory, dignity and privileges of God, He is God, He is the one who created the whole universe and owns everything in it, His riches are immeasurable, but because He so loved you and the whole world, that He voluntarily (or He freely) incarnated into this world laying aside His glory and heavenly riches and took on a frail human condition like any other human. Submitting to natural laws (which He had created): He was tired, hungry, painful and He willingly endured sufferings even to the most painful and shameful death on the cross. Therefore, "He became poor" refers to His attitude and position, not to economics (cf. Phil 2). It indicates His human existence, incarnation. But why did He "become poor"? Because He loves us, so by His action we who believe in Him, and trust in Him, will become rich

in spiritual life, will receive the graces of justification and salvation, and will be with Him eternally and receive the glory and richness of Him. Therefore 2 Corinthians 8:9 might be regarded as one of the most beautiful and important verses of the doctrine of redemption.

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