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The Ministry to Jerusalem (Rom 15.31): Paul's Hopes and Fears

Paul is evidently keenly interested in establishing not only a theological but also a very concrete link/relationship between the ἐκκλησίαι of the nations he had founded and Jerusalem. The key means via which he pursues this aim is through the «collection».¹ Numerous explanations which cannot be discussed here in detail, have been proposed for this passionately pursued Pauline endeavour.² Most of them see in it a combination of poverty relief in the vein of almsgiving and a means of establishing solidarity between the ἐκκλησίαι of the nations and the Christ-followers in Jerusalem; an assertion of Paul's commitment to the agreement between him, Barnabas³ and the Jerusalem pillars has also been considered as a motivation for the collection. A critical point of discussion has been whether the collection was a voluntary contribution to Jerusalem or whether it was seen by Paul as an obligation in the vein of gift-exchange or even as a tax in analogy to the half-shekel Jews contributed to the Temple.⁴ Although I think all of these aspects may well have been part of the Pauline endeavour they do not satisfactorily explain the central importance this project appears to have not just for Paul's theologizing but for his entire activity. It is of foremost concern in the Corinthian correspondence; it must have been part of Paul's activity in Thessaloniki and other parts of Greece as he mentions the Macedonians and Achaïans as exemplary «collectors» in Rom 15.26. The fact that he also mentions the «remembering of the poor» in Gal

¹ For a discussion of the terminology see the paper «Die Kollekte für Jerusalem» presented by E.W. and W. Stegemann at the SNTS Annual Meeting in Leuven, 2012.

² Cf e.g. Dunn who emphasises the significance of Jerusalem for Paul; he highlights how the collection offers a visible link between Paul's theology, missionary work, and pastoral concern; J.D.G. Dunn: *The Theology of Paul, the Apostle*, Grand Rapids, MI, 1998, 706-11.

³ On the corporate dimension of the Pauline mission, including the Jerusalem agreement see K. Ehrensperger: *Paul and the Dynamics of Power: Communication and Interaction in the Early Christ-Movement*, London, New York 2007/09, 35-53.

⁴ For a discussion of these aspects see Stegemann, Stegemann: *Die Kollekte* (n. 1). For the analogy to the Temple tax see e.g. M. Hengel: *Jakobus der Herrenbruder – der erste Papst?*, in: E.Grässer et al. (eds.): *Glaube und Eschatologie. FS für W.G. Kümmel*, Tübingen 1985, 71-104.

2.10 and the explicit reference to the Galatians in 1 Cor 16.1- 4 as examples the Corinthians should follow with regards to regularly setting money aside, indicates that they also were part of this project. All of this, the frequent and at times passionate mentioning of this Jerusalem centred project, the arrangement of travel plans to suit its delivery (Rom 15.25), together with activities Paul must have pursued which do not surface in explicit references in the letters indicate that this was a core implication of the gospel in Paul's view.

If almsgiving were the key dimension, why is Jerusalem so important? To remember the poor seems to be an aspect of the gospel which is not confined to the poor in Jerusalem as Bruce Longenecker has recently argued.⁵ Although Longenecker does not deny that there might have been poverty among the Christ-followers in Jerusalem, they were certainly not the only poor among the Christ-followers. Care for the poor rather seems to have been a specific hallmark of the Movement also among the Christ-followers from the nations. Longenecker has demonstrated that poverty relief was not a general virtue in the world of Rome and Greece. Although occasionally friends would have considered it noble to help out if one of them was in financial trouble, this was a practice only between members of the elite, and not a general attitude towards the vast numbers of people who lived at or below subsistence level.⁶ To take care of the poor and those in need, however, was part of Jewish tradition, thus for Jewish Christ-followers it would have been superfluous to remind them to «remember the poor». This admonition, in Longenecker's view, was clearly directed at the Christ-followers from the nations, as people who were not familiar with such a notion at a general level due to their cultural context. If Longenecker is correct then Paul's focus on Jerusalem cannot be taken as the fulfilment of the agreement with the Jerusalem pillars. Poverty relief was expected to be an inherent aspect of the ethos of the Christ-movement, thus also of the ἐκκλησίαι of the nations. This could have included support for Christ-followers in Jerusalem, but they were not the specific focus of the collection. And why should these Christ-followers be more in need of support than e.g. Christ-followers in Judea? If the purpose was to strengthen the bond of solidarity between Jewish and non-Jewish Christ-followers it seems slightly strange

⁵ B.W. Longenecker: *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty and the Greco-Roman World*, Grand Rapids, MI 2010.

⁶ Ibid. 69-72.

that those from Judea would not be specifically included, as in other passages such as Gal 1.22. In addition, Longenecker has raised the question, if this «ministry to Jerusalem» was actually merely the completion of the task set for Paul by the Jerusalem «pillars», why would Paul be worried about them accepting this collection now, since this was exactly what they had asked Paul to do?⁷

These issues and questions direct our attention to aspects of the collection which specifically have to do with Jerusalem as the place and space which occupies centre stage in Paul's social and symbolic world.⁸ The link and relationship Paul is so keen to establish seems to have more to do with this centrality of Jerusalem rather than the extent of poverty in that part of the Roman world.

A further indication for a meaning of the collection beyond poverty relief can be found in 2 Cor 9.12 where Paul emphasizes that «the transmission of this service (ἡ διακονία τῆς λειτουργίας)» not only supplies the needs of the saints but also is overflowing through «many thanksgivings to God» as also E.W. Stegemann and W. Stegemann have noted. In their differentiated discussion of the voluntary and obligatory dimension of the collection, they conclude that both aspects are found in Paul, and might actually be intertwined in his perception. They conclude that the collection is an expression of gratitude and ecumenical community between Christ-followers from the east and those in Jerusalem.⁹ This is certainly so, but 2 Cor 9.12 could indicate that the gratitude which «overflows to God» not only benefits the needs of the poor but also is expressed in a concrete way through offerings in the Temple. Maybe the narrative depiction in Acts hints at something which deserves further consideration. Paul is envisaged here as providing the rationale for his visit to Jerusalem as follows: «Now after some years I came to bring alms to my nation and to offer sacrifices» (Acts 24.17). The cultic activity of offering sacrifices¹⁰ for a Jew could only be performed in the Temple in Jerusalem. In this contribution I will explore whether this is an additional important dimension in Paul's pursuit of the collection in that he may be trying to establish some kind of link for Christ-

⁷ Ibid. 186-88.

⁸ As is indicated e.g. in Rom 15.19.

⁹ Stegemann, Stegemann: *Die Kollekte* (n. 1), 17.

¹⁰ I will use «cultic activity», «cult practice» and «cultic dimension» to indicate specifically the offering of sacrifices at a sanctuary. For detailed analysis and discussion see K. Ehrensperger: *Paul at the Crossroads of Cultures – Theologizing in the Space-Between*, London/New York 2013, 183-89.

followers from the nations not only with Jewish Christ-followers but also with the cult centre of the God of Israel, the Temple in Jerusalem. It is here in particular, although of course not exclusively, that God is praised. With the emphasis in Rom 15.9-12 on Jews and the nations jointly praising God, it is not inconceivable that this might also have been envisaged by Paul as taking place at the centre of Jewish worshipping. That the collection might be something like a parallel to the half-shekel Diaspora Jews contributed to the Temple, has been argued by Holl and others.¹¹ This should not be ruled out, and in as much as the half-shekel was not merely significant in financial but also in cultic terms¹² a similar notion may apply to such a dimension of the collection.

The Cultic Dimension of the Collection

In 1 Cor 16.1-4 in particular Paul uses terminology for the collection which is rooted in the cultic realm. The use of *λογεῖα* links this with cult related activities such as contributions to a temple or deity. Deissmann has noted that these could be small contributions which were expected from adherents of particular cults such as the Isis cult. The fact that such a contribution could be acknowledged on an ostrakon indicates that this was a common and widespread activity.¹³ E.W. Stegemann and W. Stegemann note that such financial contributions should be not seen merely in their «religious» character but also as social and public contributions. They are owed to the deity or the temple, and their social and public aspects are thus linked to the dimension of cult. These realms are not separated. This most likely also applies to Paul's and his communities' perception of «religious», social, and public life. The fact that Paul uses this term in 1 Cor 16.1-4 thus should not only be seen as just another term to refer to the collection, with an inherent notion of obligations associated with it. It should possibly also be heard in its association with the cultic dimension. In Jewish tradition cult practice was only performed in one place, at the Temple in Jerusalem. The centrality of Jerusalem is not only but significantly associated

¹¹ K. Holl: Der Kirchenbegriff des Paulus in seinem Verhältnis zu dem der Urgemeinde, in: id.: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte, vol. II, Der Osten, Darmstadt 1964, 44-67.

¹² See e.g. A. Hogeterp: Paul and God's Temple: A Historical Interpretation of Cultic Imagery in the Corinthian Correspondence (Biblical tools and studies 2), Leuven 2006, 30.

¹³ See references in Stegemann, Stegemann: Die Kollekte (n. 1), 3.

with the Temple cult. Thus if the collection had a cultic dimension the rather exclusive focus on Jerusalem rather than on Jewish Christ-followers in Jerusalem and Judea alike, would be more understandable.

It is noteworthy that the focus in Rom 15.25-31 on Jerusalem is found in a context of dense cultic terminology in the immediately preceding verses, and of worshipping language in chapters 12 and 15 in particular. This concentration of cultic language and on Jerusalem in the midst of it in this part of Romans resonates well with the cultic terminology for the collection in 1 Cor 16.1-4. In both passages the dimension of social and theological solidarity is not isolated from the cultic dimension inherent to all these aspects.

Paul's frequent use of cultic language and metaphors certainly has to do with the embeddedness of Paul himself in this common aspect of Jewish life. For Paul the Christ-event did not amount to a replacement of cult practice in Jerusalem or to its spiritualization. Vahrenhorst in his important study *Kultische Sprache in den Paulusbriefen* has convincingly argued that in order for such language to be meaningful for the audience it has to have positive value for Paul. Positive appreciation of cult practice of course was not confined to Jewish tradition but was the all-permeating dimension of life in the Roman world.¹⁴ Cult practice and language was familiar to both, Jews and non-Jews, although with different overtones. For non-Jews cult practice was a matter of everyday life in that the numerous deities associated with all aspects of life had to be attended to in the appropriate way. For Jews, although their commitment to the covenant with their God permeated all aspects of life as well, cult practice was concentrated in the Temple in Jerusalem and thus particularly for Diaspora Jews not an everyday practice. This did not render this cult performed hundreds of miles from where they lived less important,¹⁵ but this importance was mediated through the texts which dealt with cult performance in the Temple, possibly memories of rare visits to Jerusalem, and the contribution of the half-shekel by men from the age of 20, rather than through their active participation in the Temple cult. At synagogue gatherings such collective mediation of cult

¹⁴ M. Vahrenhorst: *Kultische Sprache in den Paulusbriefen* (WUNT 230), Tübingen 2008.

¹⁵ Cf. St. Fraade: *The Temple as a Marker of Jewish Identity Before and After 70 CE: The Role of the Holy Vessels in Rabbinic Memory and Imagination*, in: L. Levine and D. Schwartz (eds.): *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 130), Tübingen 2009, 237-64.

tradition, the sharing of memories, and the collection of the half-shekel, the link with Jerusalem was maintained and strengthened. This means that for Jews there was an established practice of relating to the cult centre in Jerusalem wherever they lived. In the perspective of their polytheistic neighbours the non-existence of a regular daily cult practice contributed to the perception of Jews as atheists¹⁶ or at least as lacking in piety and occasionally as undermining the stability of the order of civic society.¹⁷

Paul's Creation of a Problem

In as much as Paul must have considered aspects of the life of people from the nations as compatible with life in Christ,¹⁸ there was one dimension which was non-negotiable when someone from the nations joined the Christ-movement. To worship the God of Israel together with his people, Christ-followers from the nations had to abstain from being involved in the cult practices of other deities. Significant parts of 1 Corinthians deal with issues concerning «idolatry», with Paul arguing in detail and with respect to specific examples what did and did not constitute such cultic involvement. Although the boundaries between «idolatry» and just honouring lesser spirits or men required careful negotiation and were not always clear,¹⁹ honouring deities through cult participation was considered a confusion by the nations in that «they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator (Rom 1.25), and thus had to be avoided. This absolute restriction seems to have caused some problems or at least some confusion among Christ-followers from the nations. Being used to a cumulative practice of cults with several deities being worshipped alongside each other, this request on Paul's part would have appeared unusual to them, and most likely alien and strange. It has been argued that since there existed some kind of cult criticism on the part of Ro-

¹⁶ See e.g. J. Lightstone: Roman Diaspora Judaism, in: J. Rüpke (ed.): *A Companion to Roman Religion*, Oxford 2007, 345-77 (368).

¹⁷ The Roman authorities accepted the daily sacrifice on behalf of Caesar and the empire in the Temple in Jerusalem as an adequate expression of the submission of the Jews to their authority and their contribution to the stability of the empire. But this may not have been the perception of everybody in the empire.

¹⁸ See Ehrensperger: *Paul at the Crossroads of Cultures* (n. 10), esp. chapter 7.

¹⁹ For a more detailed discussion see Ehrensperger: *Paul at the Crossroads of Cultures* (n. 10), 190-94.

man and Greek philosophers, the notion of exclusively worshipping only one God may have been welcomed by some from the educated elite, rendering the Christ-movement particularly attractive to them. But this would have been a rather rare exception in that most Christ-followers would not have come from this section of the society of the empire. So we assume that for most of the Christ-followers from the nations to abstain from any cultic involvement with any of the familiar deities would have been strange and problematic. This would have been so even for those Christ-followers who prior to joining the Christ-movement had some familiarity and association with Judaism as God-fearers.²⁰ For them the requirement of exclusive loyalty to the God of Israel would have been applicable to Jews but not to them, as they most likely adhered to Jewish tradition to a certain extent, but did so alongside continued loyalty to other deities. Thus God-fearers continued to participate in everyday cult practice, and it seems that this was accepted, or at least not challenged by the Jewish communities with which they associated.

Since God-fearers already considered themselves associated with the God of Israel to some extent, Paul's requirement for them to abstain completely from the association and cult practice with any other deity, would have been new and possibly surprising. It could have instigated negative reactions not only on the part of their polytheistic neighbours as undermining the peace and stability of civic society in a *polis* or *colonia*, but also on the part of unconvinced Jews. Martin Goodman considered this to be a possible reason for negative reactions of fellow Jews against Paul. The foundation of communities of Christ-followers from the nations who were associated to some extent with Jewish communities, who were requested to abstain from any polytheistic cult practice, could be seen by Jews as threatening their volatile arrangements with their host cities which were based on mutual non-interference.²¹ As long as «the altars continued to smoke and the benevolence of the gods (was) assured» local authorities would most likely consider Jewish non-participation as strange or ridiculous but not threatening. But where interference with this nor-

²⁰ Cf. M. Goodman: The Persecution of Paul by Diaspora Jews, in: idem: Judaism in the Roman World: Collected Essays (Ancient Judaism and early Christianity 66), Leiden 2007, 145-152 (150).

²¹ Ibid. 150-52.

mal routine was suspected, things could turn unpleasant for Jews.²² To encourage non-Jews to give up their traditional cult practice most likely would have been seen by civic authorities as interference. For Christ-followers from the nations the requirement would above all have created a significant vacancy in their social and symbolic world. Not to participate in cultic practices in the house, at the street corner or at the frequent festivals in a *polis* or *colonia* separated these Christ-followers from the nations from their «normal» ways and means of finding meaning in life, and protection and reassurance in risks and dangers. Of course Paul reassured them that all of this was now encompassed and granted in Christ, when he affirms e.g. that «neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord» (Rom 8.38-39). But how was this expressed? For Jews this assertion was rooted in their tradition that is, in their narrative of belonging, the Scriptures, expressed through rituals on the Sabbath, during Synagogue gatherings in the Diaspora, and the Temple cult in Jerusalem, as well as a cycle of annual festivals. For Christ-followers from the nations, these traditions are considered to be also their traditions to some extent now, although in their identity as «Greeks and barbarians», that is, without them becoming Jews. The Scriptures, Paul assures them, were written also for their instruction. The implications of this for Christ-followers from the nations are far from evident. They are not to become Jews, thus in order to get an understanding of how Jewish tradition applies to them they can only partially follow a Jewish way of life. Some aspects of their lives as «Greeks and barbarians» must be compatible with life in Christ in order for Paul's emphasis on the distinction between «Jews and Greeks» to make any sense.²³ But the decisive dimension of cult practice had to be re-oriented in Christ and directed to the God of Israel. With this cult practice only being performed in the Temple in Jerusalem, this re-orientation implied significant changes in everyday practice for Christ-followers from the nations. Traditions are not merely a matter of the minds of people, they are

²² Ibid. 151.

²³ On this see W.S. Campbell: Gentile Identity and Transformation in Christ According to Paul, in: *The Making of Christianity: Conflicts, Contacts, and Constructions: Essays in Honor of Bengt Holmberg*, ed. by S. Byrskog and M. Zetterholm, Winona Lake, IN 2012, 22-55.

inhabited in corporeal form, they are part of our *habitus*. Thus old inhabited traditions do not merely disappear because new traditions are being formed. For these Christ-followers from the nations life without cult practice, that is, a collective corporeal expression of their association with, and loyalty to the God of Israel in Christ was inconceivable. This vacant space Paul created by his request to abstain from any cult practice with other deities was a problem on a scale which, in my view, has not been sufficiently taken into account in Pauline scholarship.

Paul seems to have been at least partially aware of the problem this requirement created and seems to have attempted to provide guidance for his ἐκκλησίαι from the nations with regard to particular problems. In 1 Cor 8.14-21 Paul compares the table of *demons* and the table of the Lord, creating a parallel between these. He seems to imply that the table of the Lord moves into the vacant space created by his request to stay away from the tables of *demons*.²⁴ Although the table of the Lord then is presented as a substitute for the tables these Christ-followers from the nations had to leave, the vacancy is only partially filled. Nowhere does Paul associate the table of the Lord with sacrificial or other cult language. Thus, the important function of sacrifices remains vacant. The parallel between the table of *demons* and the table of the Lord in this passage does not consist in the sacrificial dimension, Paul does not set up a parallel between altars as the places of the actual offerings, but between tables which establish and celebrate community. The table of the Lord thus does not replace the altars for the Christ-followers of the nations, but the tables of community. The vacancy of the altars remained a problem for them. Whether Paul was aware of this is an open question. But could it be that his focus on Jerusalem as the recipient of the collection has something to do with this vacant altar space? In the next section we will need to consider the role of the Temple for Diaspora Jews as a possible model for an association of Christ-followers from the nations.

Diaspora Judaism and the Temple in Jerusalem

The Temple in Jerusalem was the only place where offerings to the God of Israel could be presented in Paul's time. As we have already noted, the centra-

²⁴ For a more detailed argument see my *Paul at the Crossroads of Cultures* (n. 10), 189-209.

lity of the cult practice there was not diminished by geographical distance for Diaspora Jews. Philo refers to the importance of the practice of sacrifices, and describes them as an expression of human aspiration to relate to the Divine, to seek blessings and compensate for failures of virtue. He emphasizes that sacrifices are a medium of prayer and thanksgiving for the sole purpose of rendering honour to God for his own sake exclusively, and to obtain blessing from him (*Spec. Leg* 1.195). Moreover he asserts that the one thing that unites all Jews, whatever they call their fatherland, «they hold the Holy City where stands the sacred Temple of the most high God to be their mother city» (*Flacc.* 46). There can be no doubt that the Temple was central for Judaism «whether as a divisive or unifying symbol of God's continual covenantal relation to Israel ... whether as a contested reality or romanticized ideal, or as a complex intersection of the two, the Jerusalem Temple stood at the centre of Jewish national, ethnic, and religious self-understanding».²⁵ There are no indications that this role changed for Jews who joined the Christ-movement. The narrative of Acts, which depicts the earliest Christ-followers as gathering in the Temple courts, is theologically accurate irrespective of its historical accuracy. Thus pre-70 CE the problem of a vacant altar space did not emerge for Jewish Christ-followers. The situation most likely changed after 70 CE not only for Christ-followers but Judaism generally with diverse solutions to the problem being proposed. The impact of the loss of the Temple on Judaism and the early Christ-movement cannot be pursued within the limits of this article, I only wish to draw attention to the difference in context and the historical, social and theological implications which the continued existence and practice of the Temple cult has when dealing with pre-70 Pauline literature as distinct from texts which emerged after 70 CE.²⁶

In addition to the desirability of festival pilgrimages, contributions to the Temple by Diaspora Jews were considered the main means via which an ongoing link with this important institution and the cult practice there could be

²⁵ Fraade: *The Temple as a Marker* (n. 15), 240, also M. Goodman: *The Temple in First Century Judaism*, in: *Judaism in the Roman World. Collected Essays*, Leiden 2007, 47-58 (47).

²⁶ For a discussion of the significance of 70 CE in Jewish perspective see the collection of essays: D. Schwartz and Z. Weiss (eds.): *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish history?*, in: *Jews and Judaism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple (Ancient Judaism and early Christianity 78)*, Leiden 2012.

maintained. Although the precise function of the half-shekel may not be clearly identifiable, it is evident that it also contributed to sacrificing activities.²⁷ It is important to note that the financial contributions were not a substitute for actual offerings but were contributing to these by donors who could not be present at the Temple themselves. There is a debate whether and to what extent non-Jews could or did contribute financially to the cult practice in Jerusalem, and whether this implied that they participated to some extent in the Temple cult themselves. Daniel Schwartz rules out the latter possibility,²⁸ but financial contributions by non-Jews seem to have been acceptable if Josephus' note implies that the daily offering for the wellbeing of the Caesar, his family and the empire was paid for by imperial funds (*Bell.*2.409). However, the note is unclear and contradicted by *Ap.*2.77 where Josephus claims that these offerings were actually funded by the Jews.²⁹ The passage in *Bellum* nevertheless indicates that financial contributions to the Temple by non-Jews had been accepted at times and were then rejected in the build up to the War.

It is thus evident that financial contributions to the Temple, by Jews and partly by non-Jews were part of the normal «business» of Temple related activities. The half-shekel seems to have been a contribution expected of Diaspora Jews and as such it seems to have been considered obligatory. The money was mainly collected and possibly also kept at synagogues, a practice explicitly approved by the Roman authorities as Josephus reports (*Ant.*16.164). Such an approval of financial funds kept at, or collected for the purpose of, a sanctuary, by Rome was not exceptional. All activities in provinces related to sanctuaries were tightly controlled by Rome. Not only the appointments of priests or cult officials generally required Roman approval, but also any financial transaction related to a Temple or shrine was subject to Roman control. Thus no collection or transfer of money directed at a sanctuary was allowed without Roman consent. This applied to all sanctuaries of subjugated peoples, as they were

²⁷ Cf. M.B. Zeev: From Toleration to Destruction: Roman Policy and the Jewish Temple, in: *The Temple in Jerusalem: From Moses to the Messiah. Essays in Honor of Professor Louis H. Feldman*, ed. St. Fine (The Brill reference library of Judaism 29), Leiden 2011, 57-68 (64-65).

²⁸ D. Schwartz: Sacrifices of Gentiles in the Temple of Jerusalem, in: id.: *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (WUNT 60), Tübingen 1992, 102-116.

²⁹ Which is the more likely scenario as it coheres with the widespread practice in the provinces to present offerings to the Caesars as a sign of submission and loyalty to Rome.

considered to be centres of potential resistance to Roman rule. Thus in Asia minor local high priests were expected to serve the interests of Rome; if they did not do so, they were punished. This eventually resulted in them turning into magistrates of the empire. When Augustus took control over Egypt he confiscated most sacred land and thus made priests dependent on financial support from Roman authorities. Gaulish Druids were persecuted as they were considered subversive and Suetonius reports that Claudius «completely abolished the barbarous and inhuman religion of the druids in Gaul, which under Augustus had merely been forbidden to Roman citizens» (Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25). The Temple in Jerusalem was no exemption to such Roman perceptions and practice. Josephus' emphasis in *Antiquities* on Roman decrees of approval of Jewish synagogue gatherings and activities like communal meals, festivals, Sabbath prayers, and the collection and storing of funds reflect Roman claims to actual legal oversight of any cult related or ritual activities (16.164). The collection and transmission of the half-shekel for the Temple was certainly subject to Roman oversight, whether the money was used to directly fund offerings at the Temple, or also served as alms for the poor did not make any difference in the eyes of Roman authorities.

The Collection: The Temple and the Vacant Altar Space

Paul clearly models the collection of money in the ἐκκλησίαι on the practice of the regular collection of money at Diaspora synagogues. As an aside this provides us with a hint that he expected these ἐκκλησίαι to meet on a weekly basis again in analogy to synagogue gatherings. Such a regular collection of money directed to Jerusalem appears as normal practice in Jewish perspective, and as such it can be assumed that this financial contribution would in some way or another be directed towards the Temple. We do not know of any other collection by Jewish communities, although almsgiving was established Jewish practice at the time. Paul sets his collection up in a vein which resembles the function of the half-shekel. The language he uses in some instances clearly refers to cult related money transfer (1 Cor 16.1-4) as we have seen above. On the other hand the passages which emphasize the voluntary character resonate more with the practice of almsgiving although the duty related character is not entirely absent there either.

The designation of the collection as λογεῖα tunes in with the density of cult language Paul uses in Rom 15.16 and 25-31. It is remarkable in my view that

precisely here Paul actually combines cult related language for the collection with a clear focus on Jerusalem as the recipient of this mediating activity. I think it is quite probable that Paul here does not merely use cultic language in a metaphorical sense but tries to communicate to the Romans, as he did to the Corinthians, that their solidarity with the community in Jerusalem includes a link to the cult centre there as well. Such a link includes a number of aspects of which poverty relief could be one, but most likely is not the only one. The expression of ecumenical solidarity could well be another aspect. In addition to these I think that there is a link between the cult language in relation to the transmission of the collection in Rom 15.16 and 25-31 and the emphasis on the purpose of the coming of Christ as confirming the promises to the patriarchs and in order that the gentiles might glorify God for his mercy and that they may rejoice with his people in Rom 15.9-12. Although one could imagine that such joint praising and glorifying could happen during synagogue gatherings, the centre of the worshipping activity directed at the God of Israel was the Temple in Jerusalem. If the purpose of the coming of Christ was to mediate common worshipping activity of Jews and the nations, the Temple cult certainly was included in Paul's perception as a, if not the, sacred space where such praising and glorifying should take place. The collection could have been an indirect means to achieve just this. Since for non-Jews direct participation in the Temple cult was not possible, they would need mediation in order to be included in some sense in the worshipping community.

It is evident that the community of the saints in Jerusalem continued to participate in the Temple cult (as is assumed in Acts). This required some financial means. Could the contribution from the Christ-followers from the nations be intended not as general poverty relief but as a contribution to a joint participation in the cult practice at the Temple? The financial contribution by those from the nations would then establish a link for these Christ-followers with the cult practice of the God of Israel, via their Jewish brothers and sisters in Christ. This is a hypothetical scenario. It is not impossible that Paul envisaged the Christ-followers in Jerusalem to act in such a mediating role. It would establish a concrete expression of the participation of people from the nations in the cult practice at the Temple in Jerusalem and thus fulfil the hopes of the Scriptural passages in Rom 15.9-12. Moreover, it would fill for Christ-followers from the nations the vacant space of cult practice which had emerged through the requirement to abstain from any act of worshipping other deities.

Such a scenario would provide an explanation for Paul's anxieties and fears associated with the delivery of the collection. If the collection were merely an act of charity, or the fulfilment of the agreement with the Jerusalem pillars to remember the poor, why then would Paul be so worried about the delivery of this money? Longenecker has argued convincingly that if the collection were merely the delivery of the funds as agreed with the pillars, why would Paul envisage that they might reject it? But if Paul expected them to act as mediators for a participation of the Christ-followers from the nations in the Temple cult, as an expression of the joint worshipping practice of 'Israel and the nations' mentioned in Rom 15.9-12, Paul could not be certain of the cooperation of the saints in Jerusalem, as there was no agreement concerning this between him and the pillars. The fear from the ἀπειθούντες has been explained as having to do with nationalistic stances in the build up of the war which might lead to the rejection of any donation from non-Jews. But this explanation again leaves questions open. If the collection was charitable poverty relief for the tiny Christ-following community in Jerusalem – why would this be of any concern to outsiders? Such possible troubles caused by ἀπειθούντες would only make sense if the money was directed in some sense to the Temple, as this is, as we know from Josephus, where questions concerning non-Jewish contributions eventually emerged. Thus Paul's fear from those who are not part of the Christ-movement again directs at least part of the purpose of the collection towards the Temple cult.

Such a rejection by both, brothers and sisters in Christ, and Jews in Jerusalem generally may not only be linked to notions of resistance in the build up of the war, but also with the fact that as a collection from non-Jews this was a financial transfer to a sanctuary which was not approved by Rome, and as such was illegal in the eyes of Rome. Jews, whether Christ-followers or not may have had good reasons to dissociate themselves from being seen as being involved in such 'illegal' financial activities and thus would reject the money out of concern for the stance in the eyes of Rome.

Despite such potential obstacles, Paul has put significant energy into this project and associates high hopes with it. In as much as ethical concern for the material needs of brothers and sisters in Christ is an inherent aspect of life in Christ, there are significant indications in Rom 15.9-31 that the collection encompasses more than poverty relief. The collection was more than a charitable act of almsgiving, more than the fulfilment of the agreement between Paul,

Barnabas and the Jerusalem pillars. The focus on Jerusalem, the cultic language used in relation to the collection particularly in Romans 15, the problem of the vacancy of cult practice Paul had created for the Christ-followers from the nations, and Paul's fears, all point to a function of the collection which has to do with the Temple in Jerusalem. Moreover, Paul hopes to achieve something he considers to be core to the proclamation of the gospel, a «completion and sealing of the fruit» (Rom 15.28), which will lead to «the fullness of the blessings of Christ» (Rom 15.29). Nothing less than the actual worshipping of the God of Israel by «Israel and the nations» at the centre of the Jewish social and symbolic world is what Paul might hope for.

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Abstract

The collection for Jerusalem plays a very important role in Paul's activities among his communities. The fact that he considers it important to inform the Christ-followers in Rome of his intention to actually deliver it in person to Jerusalem possibly indicates that he sees this not only as a means of poverty relief or to establish ecumenical solidarity between his gentile converts and the Jewish «Urgemeinde», but that there are also other issues at stake here. Without wishing to deny that all these aspects are part of the endeavour I propose to consider another dimension as playing a role that renders this project of decisive importance for Paul. Since his gentile converts had to refrain from any cult related activities to their former deities, an inconceivable vacancy was created in their everyday lives. For him and his fellow Jews this place was filled by the centre stage which Jerusalem and the Temple occupied. The possibility that Paul tried to establish a link for his gentile converts not only with the «Urgemeinde» but through this also with Jerusalem and the Temple as such should not be ruled out.

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