

Paul's Collection for Jerusalem

by Matthew C. Harrison

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Preface

One of the constant callings and simultaneous challenges for the church is to embody Christ's presence in concrete acts of charity and mercy. As the faithful hear the living voice of Jesus through His apostles and prophets, and as they experience His presence at the font and on the altar, they are to live out this gracious reality of God's mercy and compassion in Christ. Matthew C. Harrison's study of Paul's collection for Jerusalem displays how Paul's theology was embodied in this apostolic effort. The examination of scriptural texts is scholarly and thorough. At the same time the author goes beyond exegetical research that remains abstract. Rather, Harrison persuasively recommends that Paul's practice is the appropriate paradigm for churchly care and compassion for the neighbor in the 21st century. Here is a refreshing, scriptural antidote to a sterile and abstract orthodoxy on the one hand, and liberalism's empty effort to do good on the other hand. Here Christ and His gifts permeate the actions as well as the thought of the church. Readers will benefit from this insightful exposition of a frequently neglected aspect of Paul's apostolic mission.

May the church hear afresh Paul's invitation: "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." 1 Corinthians 11:1

Dean O. Wenthe
September 2007

Introduction

In 2007 I was able to find a little time to work on the topic of St. Paul's great collection for Jerusalem. There is so very much packed into this issue in the New Testament, and as I hope the reader will see, so much of the vital heartbeat of St. Paul's theology resonates for him in this issue, which one scholar has called Paul's "obsession." The issues of grace, fellowship, mercy, mission, and others all coincide at the point of the collection. Even more, tracing the history of the collection through the New Testament documents gives enlightenment on the whole socio-cultural reality faced by the New Testament church.

You will see that for St. Paul, demonstrating mercy as a corporate churchly act was serious business, which took up much of his Christian life. It was deeply intertwined with his view of the Gospel and of the church's mission. Finally, it was delivering the gifts to Jerusalem, which led to his imprisonment and ultimate martyrdom.

This paper was written for a Ph.D. course at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., for Dr. Jeff Oschwald, a delightful, humble expert on the New Testament who added much and forced the answering of numerous questions. This study is but a beginning. It is about the "nuts and bolts" and dates of the collection, and its place in the New Testament.

As a "church bureaucrat" who finds himself ill at ease with life strictly governed by policy, budgets, bylaws, and generally accepted accounting principles (all a necessity in this fallen world), drinking deep of the New Testament on this issue was a breath of fresh air. But it was also delightful to find that Paul's dealing with the collection was "big business," for the earliest church, and 2 Corinthians (as Betz demonstrates handily in his commentary) shows that Paul was operating in this matter with the clear language and principles of the legal and business world of his day. There is a practical, "left hand kingdom" side to working together as a fellowship of faith, as church.

Knowing something of the great collection is vital for anyone who actually desires to get something real done in the church on behalf of Christ. From fund development to personnel, to government regulations and internal power struggles, St. Paul dealt with it all. And by God's grace, he found a way to assist the needy in all of it. That's comforting and encouraging. Where the mercy of Christ in the Gospel provides the heartbeat, there is a way to get it done. "Let's Go" (Mark 1:38).

Matthew C. Harrison
St. Louis, Mo., 2008

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Introduction

The church can learn a great deal from study of St. Paul's great collection for Jerusalem. While the famous "stewardship" texts of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 are regularly recited in efforts to raise funds for operations or special projects in the church's life and mission, or in stewardship education materials, they are more rarely referenced in specific relation to the context that elicited them from the apostle. The fundamental context and reason for the chief apostolic teaching on the sharing of one's possessions, and those of the church as a corporate entity (particularly money), is the alleviation of pressing need among fellow Christians. Overlooking the nature of the great collection also brings a neglect of the several very significant and even central Pauline themes in the New Testament. Numerous significant points of St. Paul's theology converge at the collection. 2 Corinthians 8-9 alone brims with references to *grace* (charis), *koinonia* (participation/fellowship), *diakonia* (service, ministry), *spoudeis* (free, eager desire), *eulogia* (blessing), *ergon agathon* (good works), *eucharistia* (thanksgiving), *leitourgia* (public service), *genemata tes dikaiosunes* (harvest of righteousness), and others. These are the most powerful and freighted theological terms of the New Testament. Paul uses them all (and others) about or related to the collection for the poor. "Most important of all, the collection sums up to a unique degree the way in which Paul's theology, missionary work, and pastoral concern held together as a single whole."¹

At first glance, the apparent dearth of references to the collection in the book of Acts presents somewhat of a conundrum. How important was the collection to St. Paul? How significant was it for his compatriots and, in general, for the churches he helped to found? Why might Luke limit references to the collection in Acts? The answer to these questions will bear directly upon our assessment of the role of the church today in caring for the poor and needy in its midst. Since Acts is the great book of mission in the early church, only one or two clearly direct references in the book to the great collection would seem to relegate this aspect of the church's life to the periphery. Yet the evidence paints a different picture.

In Acts 24:17-18 there occurs the only overt and specific reference in the book of Acts to St. Paul's great collection for the poor in Jerusalem. Jews caught up in the Zealot movement accosted Paul at the Temple in A.D. 58. The "so-called Zealots, [were] those Jewish nationalists who, during the period in question, fought desperately against Greek influence and Roman sovereignty."² The Jewish establishment accused Paul of false doctrine. Charges were proffered to Governor Felix. Paul stated in his defense: "¹⁷Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. ¹⁸While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult" (Acts 24:17-18). This incident soon began Paul's Caesarian house arrest of A.D. 59-60, during which time he likely wrote Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and 2 Timothy. The chain of events begun with the

¹ James Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, Eerdmans 1998, p. 707.

² Bo Reicke, *Re-examining Paul's Letters: The History of the Pauline Correspondence*. Harrisburg Pa: Trinity Press International, 2001, p. 10.

delivery of the “alms” “after some years” (Acts 24:17) of work, soon took Paul to Rome, and, finally, to martyrdom. The delivery of the alms was a decisive event for the beginning of the end of the apostle’s earthly life. It was the culmination of an effort of considerable duration and complexity. The collection was intricately intertwined with Paul’s mission and theology. Of all the ways Paul might have defended or defined his vocation in front of Ceasar’s representative, he chose to reference the collection. All this is veiled by this significant but undetailed and lone remark in Acts, which is part of Paul’s speech to Felix.

How significant was the great collection for Paul? To answer this question we must look at the time (when?), people (who?), places (where?), and rationale (what for?) involved in the greatest New Testament work of Christian charity. To this end I shall provide a brief commentary on 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. In preparing what follows I have made extensive use of three resources (1.) Bo Reicke, *Re-examining Paul's Letters: The History of the Pauline Correspondence* (1992); (2.) *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the apostle Paul*, by Hans Dieter Betz (1985); and (3.) Keith F. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy* (1966). Reicke provides a thoroughgoing, yet concise and readable explanation of all issues relative to the dating of the Pauline corpus. Reicke takes a refreshingly positive view of the veracity, authenticity, and integrity of the Pauline corpus, yet with deep scholarly fidelity. Reicke also paints an invaluable picture of the struggle of first century Judaism against its Roman and Greek world, and how the Christian movement fits into the mix. While both Betz and Nickle regularly question the historical accuracy of Acts and question the integrity of 2 Corinthians, both provide an overwhelming wealth of sources, resources, information, and studied expertise on all matters relating to the collection and the Pauline texts. This paper could not have been written without these three resources.

I have not engaged critical arguments regarding the integrity of the text or the historicity of the New Testament as these issues are raised by study of the collection. The purpose of this paper is simply to present in a summary, but reasonably complete fashion, the issue of Paul’s great collection and what it meant for the first century. It is my conviction that the collection’s significance lies not merely in the first century, but that these texts and their meaning and history have much to say to the church today regarding the church’s corporate diakonic life.

The Collection Texts³

Acts 11 (Events took place A.D. 46)

¹⁹Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the Word to no one except Jews. ²⁰But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. ²²The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, ²⁴for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. ²⁵So Barnabas went to

3 All texts quoted from the English Standard Version unless noted otherwise.

Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

²⁷Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). ²⁹So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. ³⁰And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

Galatians 2 (Events took place A.D. 49)

2:1 Then after 14 years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. ²I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the Gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. ³But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. ⁴Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in — who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery — ⁵to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the Gospel might be preserved for you. ⁶And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) — those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. ⁷On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the Gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the Gospel to the circumcised ⁸(for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), ⁹and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

1 Corinthians 16 (A.D. 56 Spring)

16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ²On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. ³And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

⁵I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, ⁶and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go. ⁷For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. ⁸But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

¹⁰When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. ¹¹So let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers.

2 Corinthians 8 & 9 (A.D. 57 Summer)

8: ¹We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ²for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, ⁴begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints — ⁵and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. ⁶Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. ⁷But as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you — see that you excel in this act of grace also.

⁸I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. ⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich. ¹⁰And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. ¹¹So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. ¹²For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. ¹³I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness ¹⁴your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. ¹⁵As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.”

¹⁶But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. ¹⁷For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord. ¹⁸With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the Gospel. ¹⁹And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord Himself and to show our good will. ²⁰We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, ²¹for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man. ²²And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. ²³As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. ²⁴So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.

9: ¹Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, ²for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them. ³But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove vain in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be. ⁴Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated — to say nothing of you — for being so confident. ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

⁶The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under

compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ⁹As it is written,

“He has distributed freely, He has given to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever.”

¹⁰He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be enriched in every way for all your generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹²For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. ¹³By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the Gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ¹⁴while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

Romans 15 (A.D. 58)

²²This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. ²³But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, ²⁴I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. ²⁵At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. ²⁶For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. ²⁸When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. ²⁹I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

³⁰I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ³¹that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³²so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. ³³May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Acts 20 (Events took place A.D. 58)

20:1 After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. ²When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. ³There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. ⁴Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus from Berea, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. ⁵These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, ⁶but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

Acts 24 (Events took place A.D. 58-60)

¹⁰And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied:

“Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. ¹¹You can verify that it is not more than 12 days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, ¹²and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city. ¹³Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. ¹⁴But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, ¹⁵having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. ¹⁶So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. ¹⁷Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. ¹⁸While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia — ¹⁹they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. ²⁰Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, ²¹other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them: ‘It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.’”

²²But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, put them off, saying, “When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case.” ²³Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs.

²⁴After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, “Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you.” ²⁶At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him. ²⁷When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

When?⁴

Paul, the Jewish Zealot, was converted to Christianity in A.D. 36 (Acts 7:58; 8:3; 9:4). The high priest was able to have Stephen stoned without permission of the Roman authorities (John 18:31) because the position of imperial procurator in Palestine was vacant. The Roman governor of Syria appointed Jonathan high priest and allowed him independent rule in Palestine (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18:90, 95) during the interregnum of A.D. 36. “Jonathan was able to sanction the stoning of Stephen in Jerusalem and permit Paul to persecute Christians as far as Damascus (Acts 9:2).”⁵ Thus the Martyrdom of Stephen and conversion of Paul occurred in A.D. 36. After being baptized in Damascus

4 I am completely dependent upon Reicke for all New Testament dating and historical evidence for the same, unless otherwise noted. Dating the New Testament events and books is a labyrinth of complexity. Reicke’s work is coherent, compelling, scholarly, and respects the integrity of the New Testament. There are, of course, several other dating possibilities which take seriously the text’s own claims to integrity (e.g. F.F. Bruce). See L.C.A. Alexander “Chronology of Paul” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois (1993), pp. 115 ff.

5 Reicke, op. cit., p. 35.

(Acts 9:18), Paul remained in the Syrian desert outside Damascus, which was occupied by Nabateans (which he therefore called “Arabia”) until returning to the city (Acts 9:22; Gal. 1:17). Jews sought his demise and he escaped to Jerusalem (Acts 9:23; 2 Cor. 11:32-33). In Galatians 1:18, Paul indicates that he went to Jerusalem three years after he was converted. As Reicke points out, since it was the custom to include both the (partial) initial and concluding years in the whole, Paul actually went to Jerusalem after two years, and visited Peter “for fifteen days” (Gal. 1:18) in A.D. 38.⁶ Paul then fled under threat to Tarsus (Acts 9:30) via Ceasarea.

Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to Antioch to deal with the influx of gentiles as a result of the preaching of those who scattered in the wake of Stephen’s martyrdom (Acts 11:19ff).⁷ Most spoke “the Word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus.” (11:19-20). “A great number believed.” (11:21) Barnabas retrieved Paul from Tarsus and brought him to Antioch where they taught for “a whole year” (Acts 11:26).

A famine occurred in Palestine about A.D. 46.⁸ The “prophets who came down from Jerusalem” (Acts 11:27) included one Agabus who foretold the coming famine, which Luke writes occurred during the reign of Emperor Claudius (41-54).⁹ “So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.” (11:29-30). This occurred then, in A.D. 46. Jerusalem was particularly susceptible to such famine. Its soil is generally poor-quality clay. It possessed really only one natural water source (the spring of Shiloach). While the city had access to several ports, the roads were poor. The temple generated a tremendous volume of trade. Foreign trade consisted mainly of food, clothing, precious metals, and luxury goods. Chief imports were wheat, oil, and livestock.¹⁰ Jerusalem enjoyed a generally higher standard of living but the cost of living was also higher than the rest of the country.¹¹ In times of famine and drought prices skyrocketed. There were only two grains (barley and wheat) grown in the region and the wheat crop was particularly prone to fluctuation.

Any severe disturbance to its production and/or transport could cause the price to soar to as much as sixteen times its usual tariff, the daily per head allowance of a liter of wheat

6 This corresponds to the reign of Nabatean King Aretas IV (9 B.C.-A.D. 38) whom Paul mentioned with respect to his escape from Damascus (2 Cor 11:32).

7 Was Paul of specific interest to Barnabas and the Jerusalem church because of his former unblemished status as a Jewish zealot? Perhaps in choosing Paul they hoped to satisfy the zealotic elements within the church.

8 Reicke notes Josephus, *Antiquities* 3:320-21, 20:51-53, 111. “Suetonius does indicate that the reign of Claudius was marked by recurring food shortages. It is doubtless to this that the author of acts was referring. Josephus records it as being present in Palestine during the offices of Cuspius Fadus and of Tiberius Alexander (44-48).” Keith F. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul’s Strategy*, London: SCM Press, 1966, p. 29. Nickle notes a study by Jeremias which demonstrated that A.D. 47-48 was a Sabbath year in which fields lay fallow, thus increasing the negative impact of draught and famine. Nickle p. 31.

9 Nickle, *op. cit.* p. 29. Cornu and Shulam note that the entire decade of the 40s were beset with famine and shortage. Due to the wide vocabulary in the literature “it is difficult to determine the actual situations which gave rise to the grain shortages and their cause or extent.” (p. 628) “The effects of famine were still being felt at the end of the 40’s if Ishmael b. Phiadbi assumed office as high priest in 49 – perhaps exacerbated by the sabbatical year of 48/49, whose own effects would have lasted at least until the harvest of 50. Thus although the famine may not have been consistently or equally difficult throughout the decade, Agabus’ prophetic prediction of ‘a great famine all over the world’ is not necessarily an exaggeration and seems most likely to have been already felt by 44.” Hilary Le Cornu with Joseph Shulam, *A Commentary on The Jewish Roots of Acts*, Jerusalem: Academion 2003, p. 629.

10 *Idem* p. 630-631.

11 *Idem* p. 632.

costing more than a day's wage. Only a few exceptional urban centers in the ancient world depended upon foreign imports for foodstuffs; other inhabited units and areas subsisted on local agriculture. In time of need, aid from the Diaspora could serve as a vital source of sustenance. The sabbatical year also seriously affected supplies not only from local sources but also from abroad. Up until 70 C.E., halakhic regulations prohibited the import of vegetables, fruit, olives, figs, and raisins in the seventh year (shmittah) – although rice may already have begun to be brought in.¹²

The significance of this “proto-collection” for the later great collection of St. Paul cannot be overestimated. The preaching of the Gospel to the gentiles in Antioch is the first explicit reference to actual mission activity among non-Jews in Acts. The sending of Barnabas indicated concern on the part of the Jerusalem church. Barnabas was greatly moved and impressed, however, by these new Christians (Acts 11:23). Paul and Barnabas saw in the gathering of a collection for the suffering church in Jerusalem (and perhaps for Christians more broadly in Palestine) a golden opportunity for practical expression of not only good will, but unity in the Gospel. The significant elements of the later great collection are present in Acts 11:29.

1. The collection is a communal act (not simply the act of interested individuals): “So the disciples determined.”
2. The collection is taken up among individuals without coercion or legalistic prescriptions: “everyone according to his ability.”
3. The collection is called a “diakonion” or service.
4. The collection is for the “brothers in Judea.”
5. The collection is a corporate churchly act with respect to both its delivery and reception: “And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.”

Thereafter (A.D. 47) the church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to Cyprus (Acts 13:1-3; 4, 13ff.) and through Pisidian Antioch into Asia Minor (Acts 13:1-14:28; Cyprus, Pamphylia, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Syrian Antioch). Thus Paul's first missionary journey occurred in the years 47-48.¹³ The Gentile problem, which needed Barnabas' attention earlier, was only growing as a result of this missionary work. After disagreements with emissaries from Jerusalem back in Antioch (Acts 15:2), the church in Antioch resolved to send Paul and Barnabas “to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about his question.” (Acts 15:2). “I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.” (More on the significant role of Titus in the collection below.) Reicke notes: “Paul himself said that he came to Jerusalem for this reason ‘after fourteen years’ (Gal. 2:1). Adjusting this expression to mean ‘after thirteen years,’ [i.e. partial years are counted as whole years] with the starting point of Paul's conversion as A.D. 36, the apostolic council took place in the year 49.”¹⁴ This assumes, as most scholars agree, the account of Acts 15 (the apostolic council) and that related by Paul in Galatians 2:1-14 are one and the same event.¹⁵

After the letter was brought by Paul and Barnabas from Jerusalem back to Antioch, “Paul and

12 Idem p. 633.

13 Reicke, op. cit. p. 36.

14 Reicke, op. cit. p. 36.

15 Reicke, op. cit. p. 17.

Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord, with many others also.” (Acts 15:35) Though the next verse would indicate the stay was short: “And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the Word of the Lord, and see how they are.’ (v. 36) A disagreement ensued over John Mark and the two split. “Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. And he went through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches.” (40-41) This second missionary journey of Paul (Acts 15:36-18:22) thus commenced toward the end of 49 or beginning of A.D. 50. Reicke suggests that Paul is active in Asia minor in A.D. 50 to 51, and spent the end of 51 and beginning of A.D. 52 in Macedonia (16:11). “In any case, Paul is explicitly said to have worked afterward in Corinth for eighteen months (Acts 18:11), and to have been confronted there by the Roman proconsul Gallio (18:12). An inscription placed by Gallio at Delphi states that he was the proconsul of Greece during the year A.D. 52, making it possible to date the activity of Paul in Corinth to the latter part of 52, the whole year 53, and the first months of the year 54. Thus his return from Corinth to Antioch (18:18-22) may have occurred in the spring and summer of 54.”¹⁶

It is at first somewhat surprising that there is no mention of any collection on the second journey or a delivery of funds to Jerusalem at its end. Acts 18:22 states with tantalizing brevity, “When he had landed in Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch.” There is no mention of any delegation with Paul as he ends his second journey (unlike that indicated in Paul’s third journey – Acts 20:1ff.). But that there was no significant collection on the second journey makes some sense. This was Paul’s first visit to numerous communities (Macedonia) and he was surely reticent to push hard for funds, which is completely in keeping with the apostle’s known demeanor (Acts 20:34-35). Acts 16:4 does record that “as they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.” Certainly, Paul was laying the groundwork also for honoring Galatians 2:10, “only remember the poor.” This concern would in fact become Paul’s “obsession.”¹⁷ It is most likely, however, that the food crisis of the late 40s in Palestine had temporarily subsided.

The third missionary journey (Acts 18:23 – 21:15) began soon after Paul’s return to Antioch, presumably in A.D. 54. “After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.” (Acts 18:23) It was the third journey that Paul used extensively for the Jerusalem collection. Beginning the journey in 54, he preached in Ephesus in 55-56 (19:8-10). Paul’s preaching was so successful he was cutting into the business of the idol manufacturers there and a riot ensued. Paul then immediately “departed for Macedonia” (20:1), and then proceeded to Greece (Corinth) for “three months” (20:3) during the winter of 57-58 AD. “From there he returned to Macedonia, leaving Philippi for Asia Minor and Palestine shortly before Easter (Acts 20:6), so that he must have reached Jerusalem in the summer of A.D. 58.”¹⁸

References to the collection in the Pauline corpus coincide with the overall dating of the let-

16 Reicke p 36.

17 “Little did the Jerusalem leaders know that their suggestion [Galatians 2:10] would become Paul’s obsession for nearly two decades.” S. McKnight, “Collection for the Saints” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press (1993), p. 143.

18 Reicke, p. 36-37.

ters of Paul. The letters that mention the collection are Galatians (2:10); 1 Corinthians (16:1-4); 2 Corinthians (8-9); Romans (15:25). These letters are most convincingly dated within the period of the third mission journey. Reicke's dating is as follows:

Early Palestinian Jewish – Jewish Christian Tension

1. 2 Thessalonians (A.D. 52, summer)
2. 1 Thessalonians (A.D. 52/53)

Rising Zealotism [Period of the Great Collection]

3. Galatians (A.D. 55) Written from Ephesus.
4. 1 Corinthians (A.D. 56, spring) Written from Ephesus.
5. 1 Timothy (A.D. 56, summer/fall) Written in Macedonia.
6. 2 Corinthians (A.D. 57, summer) Written in Macedonia.
7. Romans (A.D. 58, early) During Paul's three month stay in Corinth.
8. Titus (A.D. 58) Sent to Titus in Crete as Paul sailed to Jerusalem.

Paul's Captivity

9. Philemon (A.D. 59)
10. Colossians (A.D. 59)
11. Ephesians (A.D. 59)
12. 2 Timothy (A.D. 60)
13. Philippians (A.D. 61/62)¹⁹

Significant Texts and Dates from Acts for the Third Missionary Journey

- "And he stayed a year and six months [in Corinth on the Second Journey] teaching the Word of God" (Acts 18:11). [A.D. 51-52]
- "But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul" (Acts 18:12). [A.D. 51-52] [*An inscription placed by Gallio at Delphi states that he was the proconsul of Greece during the year A.D. 52, making it possible to date the activity of Paul in Corinth to the latter part of 52, the whole year 53, and the first months of the year 54. Thus his return from Corinth to Antioch (18:18-22) may have occurred in the spring and summer of 54.*]²⁰]
- "When he had landed in Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia" (Acts 18:22-23). [A.D. 54]
- "While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus" (19:1). [A.D. 55]
- "He entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly" (19:8).
- "Some became stubborn . . . he withdrew . . . reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus"

19 Reicke, p. 141.

20 Reicke, p. 36.

- (19:9).
- “This continued for two years so that all the residents of Asia heard the Word” (19:10). [A.D. 55-56] Paul writes Galatians. “*The judaizing movement behind [Peter’s] “about face” is conveniently explained by the sudden intensification of zealotism and the rise of sicarian terror after the enthronement of Nero in A.D. 54 (Josephus Antiquities 20:158-67a).*”²¹ Paul writes 1 Corinthians: “But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost.” (1 Corinthians 16:8). Directions for the collection in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4.
 - “After the uproar [of the silversmith Demetrius in Ephesus] Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. There he spent three months” (20:1-2). [winter A.D. 57-58] Paul writes Romans (Collection – Romans 15:25-28). “*In Romans, the apostle explicitly states that he was going to leave for Jerusalem with the money collected in Macedonia and Greece (15:15-16), so that the epistle was most likely composed toward the end of Paul’s three months in Corinth.*”²²
 - [Paul travels to Illyricum some time before arriving in Corinth] “from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:19). [late A.D. 57]
 - “he decided to return through Macedonia” (20:3).
 - “We sailed away from Philippi after the days of the Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Traos, where we stayed for seven days.” [Easter A.D. 58]
 - “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread . . .” (Acts 20:7). [First Sunday after Easter, A.D. 58]
 - “we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged intending himself to go by land. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene” (20:13-14).
 - “And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and the next day after that we went to Miletus. For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost” (20:15-16). *Paul writes Titus while sailing to Jerusalem, A.D. 58.*
 - From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him . . .” (20:17).
 - “And when we departed from them [*Ephesian elders*] and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. And having found a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria and landed in Tyre, for there the ship

21 Reicke, p. 47.

22 Reicke, p. 63.

- was to unload its cargo. And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey . . . Then we went on board the ship . . . when we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day. On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him” (21:1-8). It is quite significant that Paul stays with “one of the seven” in charge of diakonia for the needy.
- “After these days we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. And some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us, bringing us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge” (21:15-16).
 - “When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry [diakonias]” (21:17-19). [Around Pentecost A.D. 58]
 - “Then the tribune came up and arrested him . . .” (Acts 21:33).
 - “When they had come to Caesaria and delivered the letter to the governor [Felix] they presented Paul also before him” (Acts 23:33). “Now after several years I came to bring alms [elenmosunas] to my nation and to present offerings” [prosporas] (Acts 24:17).
 - “Then he [Felix] gave orders that he [Paul] should be kept in custody . . .” (Acts 24:22). [A.D. 58-60]
 - “When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison” Acts (24:27). [*“Felix had been installed by Claudius in A.D. 52; but after A.D. 54 Felix found little support from the new emperor, Nero, though he was allowed to retain his post until A.D. 60. This latter date is corroborated by Josephus (Antiquities 20:179, 182) . . . Well-known political developments also speak in favor of the year 60 as concluding the procuratorship of Felix. In A.D. 59, Nero killed his mother and was able to “expunge” certain officials whom she and her powerful friend Pallas, Felix’s brother, had protected. Hence it becomes clear that it was Felix’s less than certain position under Nero that prevented him from delivering any decision in the Jewish-zealot accusations against Paul while the apostle lingered on in prison from fall of A.D. 58 to the spring of 60. This pivotal period of erupting tensions among Romans, Jewish zealots, and Jewish and Gentile Christians matches the circumstances of Paul’s captivity in Caesarea as well as the decisive responses reflected in the letters of Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and 2 Timothy. A short time after Felix had been replaced in Caesarea by Festus – an effective politician who had much better relations with Nero – Paul risked an appeal to the emperor Nero (Acts 25:1,11) and was promptly sent to Rome (27:1). This so-called fourth journey of the apostle began in the fall (27:9).”*²³

23 Reicke, p. 38.

- "I appeal to Caesar.' Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, 'To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go'" (Act 25:11-12).

Jewish Cultural Context at the Time of the Collection

The cultural context of the period of the collection was one of rising conflict between Palestinian Zealots and the Roman government. This also meant rising tensions between Jews and Gentiles, and Jewish and Gentile Christians. At the end of Claudius' reign he had expelled the Jews from Rome. "As the Jews were indulging in constant riots at the instigation of Chrestus, he banished them from Rome." (Dio Cassius, History 60.6) The tumult that caused expulsion was likely the internal Jewish debate about Christ.²⁴ As a result, Aquila and Priscilla had been expelled and found refuge in Corinth where they met Paul on his third journey. Claudius (41-54) had generally left the Jews alone and so did Nero (54-68) at least in his early years as ruler.²⁵ The ruling establishment viewed the Jewish/Jewish Christian matter as an internal affair over fine points of religious custom and preferred not be involved, unless tumult and riot resulted.

Palestinian Jews generally detested Roman sovereignty but the political intrigue involved with such occupation is as complex as that of modern Palestine. Radicals (zealots) were deeply interested in the reassertion of strict Jewish observance. "Zealots make no distinction between what we should call politics and religion."²⁶ They were Jewish nationalists. They hoped to oust Roman rule by way of guerilla tactics, striking especially those Jews who were favorably disposed to the governing establishment.²⁷ Roman rule brought Roman and Greek influences into Palestine, which the zealots detested. Of course, there was a strong overlapping of zealot and Pharisaic movements. Thus St. Paul had been both a zealot and Pharisee. "A Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the law blameless." (Philippians 3:3) Nero was particularly fond of Hellenism (Greek custom and influence) and brought such Hellenism to bear in Palestine – including the attempt to put his own statue in the temple – which "sparked new waves of zealotism, fanning unprecedented terror and murder."²⁸ The period of zealotism is decisively capped with the destruction of Jerusalem in 66 and the first Jewish war 66-70. The period from the death of Christ to the destruction of the temple is marked by intense Jewish animosity and persecution of Christians. The book of Galatians, along with numerous references in the Book of Acts, indicates that during the years of the collection (54-58), there was also significant pro-Jewish/nationalist sentiment within the Christian community. By maintaining Jewish identity in Palestine, Christians avoided to some extent zealot persecution. When Paul visited James in Jerusalem the latter made a comment, which indicates the nature of the challenge faced particularly with the Galatians. "You see brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews who have believed. They are all zealous for the law, and

24 F.F. Bruce, Commentary on the Book of Acts, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954, p. 368.

25 "The legal question for the period we are interested in was settled by the famous letter of Claudius of A.D. 41, a papyrus copy of which was discovered in the first decade of this century. Claudius reconfirmed the Jew's rights to continue their ancestral customs without molestation, but he categorically denied them the right to be considered citizens." Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, p. 38.

26 F.F. Bruce, *Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, Eerdmans, 1977, p. 28.

27 *The Works of Josephus Complete and Unabridged*, William Whiston, Peabody Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publisher, 1987, p. 535. Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 20:160, 164.

28 Reicke, p. 37.

they have been told about you that you teach all these Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs.” (Acts 21:21f.). Soon after this account Paul is arrested in the temple. Were these zealous Jewish Christians, at least in part, the cause Paul's arrest? Perhaps so. This was the context to which Paul brought his collection, and which ended in his arrest. The problem of Jewish Christian, Gentile Christian relationships within one church was acute.

Who?

We shall limit the “who?” to those mentioned in 2 Corinthians and the list of traveling companions in Acts 20:1ff.

1. “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus” (1:1).
2. “and Timothy our brother” (1:1).
3. “To the Church of God that is at Corinth” (1:1).
4. “With all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia” (1:1).
5. “the churches of Macedonia” (8:1).
6. “Accordingly, we urged Titus” (8:6).
7. The poor in Jerusalem “supplying the needs of the saints” (9:12).

Paul

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus” (1:1). “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city” (Acts 21:39). Paul is a man caught by the Gospel between two worlds. He has impeccable Jewish and Zealot credentials (Philippians 3), and yet he is the apostle to the Gentiles. From Zealot persecutor of Christians to zealous advocate of Gentile Christianity, Paul is the ideal apostle for the transition from Jewish Christianity to Christianity beyond an ethnic enclave. He knows the former, has a thoroughgoing Jewish pedigree, yet has the vision and force of personality and conviction to take the Gospel where it must go according to Christ's own mandate, “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). He was a man made for the moment, raised in cosmopolitan Tarsus, familiar with the literature of non-Jewish antiquity.

“This man is a Roman Citizen” (Acts 22:26). Paul was born a citizen and that means his father was a Roman citizen. Given the laws for citizenship it is likely that either Paul's father or a grandfather performed some outstanding act of service for the state and received citizenship as a reward. A tent maker might have been extremely useful to a proconsul executing war.²⁹ Paul knew Roman law and took advantage of it for his purposes (Acts 22:26ff). When Paul describes himself as a “Hebrew of Hebrews” it is to be taken in a narrower sense than merely “an ethnic Jew.” “Hebrews . . . attended synagogues where the service was conducted in Hebrew and used Aramaic as their normal mode of speech, while the Hellenists spoke Greek and attended synagogues where the scriptures were read and the prayers recited in that language.”³⁰ Paul was raised an Orthodox Jew in Tarsus, and early sent to Jerusalem by his parents such that he could state of Jerusalem that he “was bought up in this city,

²⁹ Bruce, *op. cit.* p. 37.

³⁰ Bruce, p. 42.

educated at the feet of Gamaliel.” (Acts 22:3f.). By his own account Paul was a “Pharisee, a son of Pharisees.” (Acts 26:5). Gamaliel was the leading Pharisee of his day. The Pharisees had risen as a party within Judaism particularly during the struggles in the second century B.C. against the Ptolemaies and Seleucids. They “were despised as antiquated spoil-sports by those of the younger generation, even within the priestly families, who ardently welcomed new fashion.”³¹

Timothy

Timothy is the co-author of 2 Corinthians (1:1). Timothy had worked extensively with Paul in Ephesus, and Paul directed Timothy to remain there as pastor while he traveled to Macedonia (1 Timothy 1:3). This was in A.D. 56-57. “In the spring of 56 Timothy, accompanied by Erastus and a few others, had traveled to Corinth by way of Macedonia with the first Corinthian letter (Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10a).”³² That letter gives specific directives regarding the collection, and indications of Paul’s intent regarding the collection. Paul introduces the matter as one that is known already to the Corinthians, “Now concerning the collection for the saints” (16:1). He indicates that he has given the same directive to Galatia “as I directed the church of Galatia, so you also are to do” (v. 2). Paul advises that each is to give a gift on Sunday, which is to be stored up, so there will be no collection when he comes (v.2). The Corinthians will “accredit by letter” those who will carry the gift to Jerusalem (v.3). Verse 4 ends with a bit of feigned humility, “If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.” Paul’s letter, sent by Timothy’s hand gives the directive, “When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord.” (v.10). What precisely is that work? Among other things – straightening out the many conflicts in Corinth – was assisting in organizing the collection. Paul urged that Timothy be sent back to Ephesus soon (1 Cor. 16:11b). Timothy took over the ministry in Ephesus while Paul proceeded to Macedonia, working hard there for the sake of the collection. Reicke suggests quite convincingly that 1 Timothy is a letter directed to Timothy and the entire Ephesian Christian community (commending Timothy, speaking of his ordination, commission, leadership for the sake of the community).³³ One year later, Timothy joined Paul in Macedonia as the co-author of 2 Corinthians (1:1). Reicke notes, “Because the ‘we’ form is used throughout this letter – much more frequently in fact than in any other of the Paulines (108 times in 2 Corinthians, 59 times in Romans, and 54 times in 1 Corinthians) the personal notices are tied more intimately than usual to both senders, to Paul, and at the same time to Timothy.”³⁴ The many references in 2 Corinthians to suffering by the apostle and Timothy (we) are references to the intense persecution experienced especially by Timothy at the hands of the Jew Alexander in Ephesus,³⁵ before he joined Paul in Macedonia (Acts 19:33; 1 Tim. 1:20; Acts 19:33; 2 Tim. 4:14; Acts 19:23-27; 1 Tim. 1:7; 4:3). The problems in Ephesus caused Paul not to visit on his trip to Jerusalem, but only to meet the elders in Miletus (Acts 20). Timothy worked extensively with Paul on all aspects

31 Bruce, p. 45.

32 Reicke p. 108.

33 Reicke p. 108.

34 Reicke p. 109.

35 Virtually every Mediterranean city had a significant Jewish population in the first century. The Diaspora which resulted from the sixth century B.C. Babylonian conquest of Palestine resulted in an estimated 5 or 6 million Diaspora Jews by the first century. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, New Haven: Yale University Press 1983, p. 34.

of the collection and spent time both in Corinth and in Macedonia, as well as Ephesus. It is unclear whether or not he accompanied Paul to Jerusalem with the collection.

Timothy was a very appropriate selection for Paul. He was thoroughly conversant with Judaism via his mother and grandmother. Eunice and Lois had been pious Jews (2 Tim. 1:5). He had a tremendous reputation in his hometown, Lystra. Timothy's father was a Greek. Paul had Timothy circumcised because (unlike the Gentile Titus) Timothy in traveling with Paul would have been expected to be and act as a Jew. According to Acts 16, "Paul and Timothy" traveled through the cities of Asia publishing the decision of the apostolic council, which included the directive recorded in Galatians to "remember the poor." Since Galatians was written on the third journey, that letter itself provides the very evidence that the collection was part of Paul's message (Galatians 2:10) in Asia. Timothy was an ideal choice in Paul's quest for the collection to bridge the gulf between Gentile and Jewish Christianity. He was extremely loyal and knew the apostle's mind (1 Corinthians 4:17). 1 Timothy was written by Paul to Timothy and the church in Ephesus from Macedonia (site of Paul's most successful work for the collection). 2 Corinthians (with its most extensive discussion of the collection) is written by Paul with Timothy from Macedonia. Romans mentions the collection and that Timothy (16:21) is present with Paul when it is written. Timothy accompanied Paul with the collection to Jerusalem (Acts 20:5).

The Church of God that is in Corinth

It is rather astounding that Paul is so adamant about the collection in addressing the Corinthians. That the congregation held the potential for significant contributions cannot be the final cause of his intensity. The fact that he did so demonstrates, I believe, how fundamentally theological and significant the collection is for him. It is not simply an adiaphorous matter that can as easily be ignored. I would not be prone to cajole a very troubled congregation about a collection. But it is precisely the genius of the apostle to emphasize the theological nature of the collection, catechizing the Corinthians to look outside themselves and their immediate problems, while aiming for nearly the same effect with the recipients of the collection.

The Corinthian congregation had been founded by Paul on his second journey (Acts 18) after a trip to Athens. Corinth was the capital city of Achaia, and the city was placed advantageously at the intersection of trade routes of land and sea. The land route connected the Peloponnese and Attica, the two harbors (Lechaenum and Cenchreae) facilitated traffic between the Aegean and Adriatic seas. It boasted a large temple to Aphrodite. "To Corinthianize" was synonymous with profligate behavior. Corinth was "an international metropolis, famous for commerce, industry, luxury, and immorality."³⁶ At the instigation of Caesar after 44 B.C., Corinth grew as a colony of Italian citizens, but saw a steady influx of Greeks, and Orientals (including Jews) who worked as entrepreneurs in the city (thus Paul worked for Aquila in the city – Acts 18:2).³⁷ Meeks suggests from Paul's advice that the collection is to be assembled little by little, week by week (1 Corinthians 16:1-4), that "this bespeaks the economy of small people, not destitute, but not commanding capital either. This, too, would fit the picture of

³⁶ Bo Reicke, *The New Testament Era, The World of the Bible from 500 B.C. to 100 A.D.*, translated by David Green, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1968, p. 233.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

fairly well-off artisans and tradespeople as the typical Christians.”³⁸

The problems in the congregation were numerous. Paul responded at length in 1 Corinthians to a letter sent from the congregation. There were several extent fissures (1:12ff). Religiously, “a volatile mixture” obtained.³⁹ Theologians of glory boasted of strength, wisdom, and miracles. There were problems of sexual immorality, lawsuits between Christians (an indication of means)⁴⁰, marriage, food offered to idols, attacks on the apostle himself, misuse of the Lord’s Supper, the role of women in worship, order in worship, prophecy and interpretation, and the resurrection of Christ and of the dead in general. Despite the long list of problems dealt with in the letter, Paul praised the Corinthians for their tremendous gifts of knowledge and speech (1 Cor. 1:4ff). At the end of the long letter, he turns to the collection with a characteristic, “Now concerning” (*Peri de*), indicating that the Corinthians themselves had raised the issue in their letter to the apostle.⁴¹ The directions are matter-of-fact and brief. There seems to be no controversy among the Corinthians over the matter, or at least that they had raised in their (now lost) letter to Paul.

1. Now concerning the collection [*logeias*] for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do.
2. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting [*logeiai*] when I come.
3. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.
4. If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

The Churches of Macedonia

Paul indicates that the Macedonian Christians gave to the collection despite their “abysmal poverty” (2 Cor. 8:2). The Macedonian parishes were particularly those of Berea, Thessalonica, and Philippi. Achaia had belonged to Macedonia from 147 to 27 B.C. Caesar Augustus elevated Achaia to its own province because of the rising importance of Corinth. In A.D. 15-44 it was joined again to Macedonia. “Then Claudius divided them up again in A.D. 44, establishing two senatorial provinces. This was the situation at the time of Paul.”⁴² Achaia outshone Macedonia both with respect to its capital (Corinth) and its intellectual center (Athens).⁴³ The churches had been founded on Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 16:6ff; 2 Cor. 2:12-13). Paul finds an opportunity for his rhetorical skill in using opposites to describe the situation faced by the Macedonians, who nevertheless gave generously. “For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have

38 Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, p. 65.

39 *Idem*.

40 Meeks, *op. cit.* p. 66. Though what level of “means” is unclear. “... as the papyri show, it was a litigious age, when even small traders or village farmers could and did appear before magistrates to complain about the encroachments of their neighbors.” Meeks p. 66.

41 “The short passage in 1 Corinthians (16:1-4) indicates that the collection project had already been introduced to the Corinthians, and that in their letter to Paul they had made inquiries about it.” See the documentary evidence in Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul’s Strategy*, London: SCM Press 1966, p. 15.

42 Betz, *2 Corinthians*, p. 50.

43 Reicke, *The New Testament Era*, p. 232.

overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.” (2 Cor. 8:1-2) “The ancient sources indicate that poverty was a way of life in Macedonia generally.”⁴⁴

Macedonia had been a Roman province since 146 B.C. The population was mostly Greek, largely rural, more or less Hellenized, and organized along tribal lines. M. I. Rostovtzeff has summed up the conditions this way: ‘The . . . province of Macedonia . . . was never a land of intensive urbanization, apart from its eastern coast. The strength of the Macedonian kingdom was based on the Macedonian peasantry, on the villages. During the Macedonian wars, the country suffered heavy losses. Under the rule of the Roman Republic, it experienced many disastrous invasions of barbarians. Then it became, with Thessaly, the main battle-field of the Roman generals during the civil wars. It was no wonder that this fertile land was less densely populated than it had been under its kings.’ To make up for the loss of population, Augustus decided to establish Roman colonies in the province, thus introducing a Roman element. Roman veterans and civilians settle in the major cities (Dyrrhachium, Philippi, Dium, Pella, Cessandrea, Byblis), while other urban centers were given the status of Roman municipia (Berea, Thessalonica, Stobi). It is easy to understand why Paul called the Macedonians’ economic situation one of ‘rock-bottom poverty’ (8:2) because such was, proverbially, the condition of the country.⁴⁵

“With all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia” (2 Cor. 1:1)

While the Corinthians were a constant problem, the Christians of Achaia had an unblemished relationship with Paul, and seem not to have been affected by the problems of their province’s most famous congregation. In fact, the Achaians had an excellent reputation in general in the ancient world. While Corinth was wealthy and cosmopolitan (Julius Caesar had import 80,000 Roman settlers, who were mostly freedmen from various ethnic backgrounds), Achaia was largely, tribal, Greek and traditional. Achaia was rural and poor, quiet and largely politically unaffected. Greek Achaia preserved its traditional culture while Corinth ran after all things new. “Thus the province and its capital were in many respects worlds apart. Their feelings about each other were at best ambiguous.”⁴⁶ “So far as we can tell, the Corinthian crisis was limited to Corinth, while the other Achaean churches maintained an untroubled and loyal relationship to the apostle. For this reason Paul turned to them when he needed assistance in bringing the collection for Jerusalem to a conclusion.”⁴⁷ While Paul cajoled the Corinthians to get ready for his visit with respect to the collection, he informed them that in Macedonia he had praised the Corinthian’s fellow Achaians who had been ready with the collection already for a year (9:2). If not for the confusion in Corinth, all Achaia would have been ready for the final phase of the collection. “The enthusiasm of the Achaians provoked the Macedonians (9:2) who in turn, had become the model for the Corinthians.”⁴⁸

44 2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul, by Hans Dieter Betz, Edited by George W. MacRae, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1985, p. 43.

45 Betz, p. 50.

46 Betz, p. 53.

47 Betz, p. 52.

48 Betz, p. 92-93.

Titus

Titus was integrally involved in the entire matter of the collection, from its inception to its practical conclusion. In fact, he was very much personally invested in the matter. When Paul went to Jerusalem for the "Apostolic Council" in A.D. 49, Titus accompanied him. "I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me" (Gal. 2:1). It was a provocative act by Paul, since Titus was a Gentile, but provocative for the sake of the Gospel. Paul wished to make his point about justification by grace (Galatians 3), and the observance of Mosaic law, and he made it orally and physically in the person of Titus. "But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek." (Gal. 2:3). Pressure to have Titus circumcised was being brought to bear by "false brothers secretly brought it – who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery – to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the Gospel might be preserved for you" (Gal. 2:5-5).

Who were these "false brothers"? They were certainly individuals affected by the zealot movement. Nickle finds in Galatians 2:4 ("slipped in") indication that they did not bring their concern to have Titus circumcised directly to Paul, but tried to work James and Peter ("the pillars").

The motive of the 'false brethren' for affiliating with the Jerusalem church was the same as their motive for demanding the circumcision of Titus. They had become part of the Christian community for the purpose of enlisting the support of this new and vigorous "Jewish sect" for the emerging nationalistic movement dedicated to the goal of restoring the political independence and prestige of the Jewish nation.

They learned that Titus, who professed to belong to this sect, was an uncircumcised Gentile. In keeping with their intent of enrolling the Christians as supporters of a rigid Jewish nationalism they demanded the circumcision of Titus in order that he might be regarded as a member of the Jewish nation.⁴⁹

Nickle also goes so far as to assert that these "false brothers" were Jewish infiltrators of the Christian community, and not believers.⁵⁰ That would accord with Paul's intense rejection of them as "false brothers" (Gal. 2:4). Indeed, Acts 15:1 states, "But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Yet Acts 15:5 clearly calls those who held this position "believers": "But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, 'It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses.'" The apostles and elders gathered and there was "much debate." (Acts 15:7) Some few had gone out, without commission and direction "from us" (Acts 15:24) and advocated the pro-circumcision position in Antioch, although the apostles and elders "gave them no instructions" to do so (Acts 15:24). Nickle may well be correct about the specific "false brothers" who were the most intense opponents of Paul. They may have been Jewish spies and true zealots attempting to co-opt the movement. Nevertheless, the Christians community was large. Many priests and Pharisees had joined the group. Zealotism was in the air. It was over the issue of justification by grace (Acts 15:11) and circumcision, and in the very person of Titus, that James and the other

49 Keith Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy*, London: SCM 1966, p. 48.

50 Nickle, p. 48.

Jerusalem leaders decided for grace against the interest of the zealots (Acts 15:19).

Titus was directly involved with Paul's implementation of the apostolic request of Paul recorded in Galatians, "only remember the poor" (Gal. 2:10). Not appearing in Acts, Titus nevertheless shows up decisively in 2 Corinthians. That means from the events mentioned in Galatians/Acts 15 (written A.D. 55) which occurred in A.D. 49, we have no record of Titus with Paul until 2 Corinthians (summer A.D. 57). The fact that Paul expends almost no ink explaining who Titus is to the Galatians ("though he was a Greek") very likely indicates their familiarity with him (*argumentum a silentio*). The name "Titus" appears eight times in 2 Corinthians, twice in Galatians, once in 2 Timothy, and once in Titus. We learn that Paul expected to find Titus in Troas where he received the vision inviting him to Macedonia (Acts 16). Yet the apostle complained to the Corinthians, "even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia." (2 Cor. 2:12-13). By A.D. 57 Titus is a very trusted and dear compatriot of the apostle. If 1 Corinthians is the "sorrowful letter" (2 Corinthians 2:1-4) it appears Titus⁵¹ accompanied Timothy in delivering that letter to Corinth. In any case, Paul had sent Titus to Corinth in A.D. 57, and Titus then returned to Paul in Macedonia, greatly comforting the apostle with positive news from Corinth. Ephesus had been extremely difficult, and though Paul often complimented the Christians in Macedonia, nevertheless, his initial time there was not easy.

For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn – fightings without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it – though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. (2 Corinthians 7:5-9).

After reassuring Paul of the love of the Corinthians, Titus was sent back to Corinth to complete the collection. "We urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace" (2 Corinthians 8:6). Soon thereafter, Paul proceeded from Macedonia to Corinth, where he wrote Romans during his three-month stay early in A.D. 58. Though Paul informed the Romans of the collection (Romans 15:25-28), he did not list Titus among the several compatriots noted in the greeting at the end of the letter (Timothy, Lucius, Jason, Sosipater, Tertius, Gaius, Erastus, Quartus – Romans 16:21). Why? Titus was in Crete, sent there by Paul to put in order that church's leadership. "This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you . . ." (Titus 1:5). The letter to Titus is directed to the churches of Crete, making clear Paul's apostolic commission to Titus to appoint leaders, teach sound doctrine and urge good works. The letter finishes those written during the period of the great collection of the third missionary journey.

Sailing along the coast of Asia Minor brought Paul to places where a letter could be sent to Crete by a ship on a normal route. A suitable explanation for the provenance of the letter

51 Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, Inter-Varsity Press 1970, p. 435.

to Titus is that Paul sent the letter to his friend in Crete while he passed the west coast of Asia on his way to Jerusalem; that is, in the spring or early summer of A.D. 58.⁵²

Thus Titus is not with Paul when he greets the Ephesian elders (Acts 20), nor does he make the trip to Jerusalem with the apostle. The letter to Titus is short because Paul is aboard ship, or hastily writing to deliver the letter to a boat ready to set sail from an Asian port to Crete. We would expect Paul's last letter of the period of the collection also to make reference to the matter of the collection itself, and we are not disappointed. At the end of the letter, Paul urged Titus to meet him later in Nicopolis (in Epirus south of Dalmatia and Illyricum) as Paul intended to winter there after taking the collection to Jerusalem – an intention he was unable to fulfill, though Titus did make his way there.⁵³ The final two verses allude to the collection, which was the “urgent need” in the mind of the apostle. Given the long list of companions on the journey to Jerusalem, the apostle simply says, “All . . . send greetings . . .”

And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful. All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Titus 3:14-15

Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus, Trophimus

From the Book of Acts and the Pauline epistles, we have quite a clear picture of which churches participated in the collection: Galatia (1 Corinthians 16:1); Macedonia (2 Corinthians 8-9); Achaia (Romans 15:26). Sopater (Berea), and Aristarchus and Secundus (Thessalonica) are all from Macedonia. Gaius (Derbe) and Timothy (Lystra) are from Galatia. Tychicus and Trophimus (Ephesus) are from Asia.⁵⁴ The author of Acts joined Paul at Philippi, where the author's famous “we” occurs for the first time in the book. “But we sailed away from Philippi after the days of the Unleavened Bread . . .” (Acts 20:6). Thus Luke himself was probably a delegate from Philippi or the region.⁵⁵ These delegates were the result of Paul's specific directives that each contributing community appoint delegates to take the funds to Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:3; 2 Corinthians 8:19-20). Philippi was a strong participant on the collection.⁵⁶

Many have surmised – with good cause – that the list of the delegates presented by Luke is only partial. Does he list only seven as a representative indication of the full delegation, or perhaps a parallel to the seven deacons chosen for the Jerusalem church in Acts 6?⁵⁷ Luke is careful to note, for instance, that “we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him” (Act 21:8). This first Palestinian contact with Philip was likely both highly practical (Philip was charged with care for the poor; Acts 6:5) and symbolic. Those listed are said to have “went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas.” Did an equal or larger number remain behind? Did the seven go on ahead because the small church in Philippi could not

52 Reicke p. 68.

53 2 Tim. 4:10ff. “Titus's activity in Dalmatia presupposes a stop I that city.” Reicke p. 112.

54 See Nickle, p. 68f.

55 “Auch Philippi fehlte unter diesen Gemeinden nicht, weil von Philippi her Lukas wieder mit ‘wir’ erzählt. Er blieb von nun an bei Paulus bis zu seinem Tod, 2 Tim. 4:11” Adolf Schlatter, Die Apostelgeschichte, Calwer Verlag Stuttgart, 1948, p. 244-45.

56 “They were also early and strong participants in the collection ... (2 Cor. 8:1-6; 9:2-4; Rom. 15:26).” Meeks, p. 41.

57 O. Dibelius referenced by Nickle, p. 68, n. 83.

accommodate them easily?⁵⁸ Georgi suggests that since Paul was able to participate in deciding the course of the ship (Acts 20:13-14; 20:16) “the delegation was quite large and, thus, represented a high percentage of the passengers.”⁵⁹ Representatives from Achaia and Corinth are not mentioned, despite the fact that Paul had informed the Romans (Romans 15:26) that they were significant contributors.⁶⁰ “One can surmise that additional representatives were picked up along the trip. Perhaps delegates were included also from Troas (Acts 20:5, 6bff.), Philippi (Acts 20:6), Tyre (Acts 21:4), Ptolemais (Acts 21:7) – certainly Caesarea, possibly Cyprus” (Acts 21:16).⁶¹

Betz notes that a number of the names are Latin, “which implies that their bearers were Roman.”⁶² He also notes that the names overlap somewhat with the list in Romans 16:21-23, and perhaps the Romans list is another list of delegates to Jerusalem. Particularly the Macedonian churches were likely to have Roman settlers among them. “Perhaps these men were chosen because they had served previously in the military or in civilian administration and had experience in international travel and the transport of money. Unfortunately, the obscure sources allow us to do nothing more than raise the possibility.”⁶³ Such a delegation including Jews would easily be confused by officials for a delegation taking the Diaspora temple tax to Jerusalem and afforded Paul's efforts apparent legal protection (see below).

Paul's specific words to the Ephesian elders also would indicate perhaps that both delegates and contributions were picked up there at Miletus (Acts 20:17). Thus Paul would have desired to avoid Ephesus (site of so much previous controversy over his preaching) in order to avoid at all costs the danger of zealous locals (Jewish or Pagan) accosting him and more importantly, the collection itself! Acts 20:34-35 is surely a reference to the collection and an indication just why the church leaders came to meet him!

“I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Paul had felt compelled to frequently strike the theme that he sought no personal gain from his mission churches precisely because he was collecting funds.⁶⁴

Schlatter is certainly correct in suggesting that no matter how many finally accompanied Paul, the apostle was eager to impress upon the church in Jerusalem the significance of the Gentile mission and along with its rich financial contribution, its significant numeric strength. The more delegates, the better.⁶⁵

58 So suggests Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: A History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992, p. 123.

59 Georgi op. cit. p. 123.

60 Nickle, p. 69.

61 Nickle, p. 69.

62 Betz p. 51.

63 Betz p. 51-52.

64 Nickle p. 69.

65 Schlatter op. cit. p. 245.

The Poor in Jerusalem (The Delivery of the Collection)

I have already briefly outlined the general circumstances in Palestine, cultural and political, obtained in the period of the collection. In describing the circumstances of the Antiochene “proto-collection,” I have also described the general circumstances of famine and its effects upon Jerusalem. McKnight suggests several reasons the Jerusalem church was in a state of particular need:

1. The presence of more and more widows needing care (Acts 6:1-7).
2. Pilgrims to Jerusalem who burdened the community.
3. Problems from the early community's experimentation with communal life (Acts 4:32-5:11).
4. The economic hardships caused by famine (Acts 11:27-30).
5. Personal stresses due to economic persecution (James 1:9; 2:6-7; 5:1-6).⁶⁶

It remains to describe something of the circumstances which obtained in the reception of the collection. That so very little is mentioned in Acts of the reception is something of a conundrum, given the extraordinary significance of the collection for Paul and the church.⁶⁷ Indeed, Luke, as a delegate from Philippi, and thereafter lifelong companion of Paul, could hardly have been more involved and interested in the topic. Yet the only specific reference to the collection is made by Paul to Governor Felix, “Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings” (Acts 24:17). While with one of the seven, Philip the evangelist, in Caesarea, a prophet “Agabus came down from Jerusalem” (the same Agabus who prophesied the famine under Claudius in Acts 11?). Paul would be bound and “delivered into the hands of the Gentiles.” (Act 21:11) Upon hearing this, Luke, the delegates, and the locals “urged him not to go up to Jerusalem” (Acts 21:12). Nevertheless, Paul – determined in light of the years of work, the large delegation and very significant amount of money – would not be deterred. The reference Luke gives to the reception by James and the others is certainly veiled.

When we came to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry (*dia tes diakonias*). And when they heard it, they glorified God (Acts 21:17-19).

The word translated “ministry” by the ESV is *diakonia*, a technical term that Paul used repeatedly for the collection (Romans 15:25; 1 Corinthians 16:15; 2 Corinthians 8:4,19; 9:1,12,13). Immediately, the brothers referenced the delicate political situation and that many believers “are all zealous for the law, and they have been told that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses” (Acts 21:20-21). Paul agreed to a compromise at the suggestion of James et al. He would go with those with him who were Jewish, to the temple and undergo the rights of purification.

⁶⁶ McKnight “Collection for the Saints” in Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, p. 144.

⁶⁷ Dr. Jeff Oschwald of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (for whom this paper was written for a graduate course), that Luke's apparent disinterest in the collection is no more confounding that his lack of detail regarding numerous other issues in the life of the early church. If Luke's purpose in writing Acts is to trace the course of the Gospel to Rome (Acts 1:8), then the collection is of less striking significance for Luke. Yet still, for Paul the collection is in fact evidence of the Gospel's very spread “to the ends of the earth.” “Luke's silence, no doubt, is not explained by recourse to Luke's designs; he obviously did not think descriptions of it were necessary for his purposes. M. Hengel wryly notes that ‘Luke does not always say everything that he knows, and when he does, he can mention facts which are important – to us – only in passing’ (Hengel, 119).” S. McKnight “Collection for the Saints” in Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, Downers Grove Illinois: Intervarsity Press (1993) p. 144.

Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for each one of them (Acts 21:26).

It is a great irony that precisely his willingness to show deference to the Mosaic law lands him in prison. The wretched Ephesians do him in after all. "When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, 'Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. For they had seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple' (Acts 21:27-29). The Ephesian Jews knew Paul well, and they recognized the Gentile Ephesian delegate Trophimus with Paul. When he warned the Ephesian elders that he was headed for Jerusalem for "imprisonment and affliction" and that "after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you" (Acts 20:22&29) he well knew what he was saying. Paul was seized but soon granted a chance on the steps of the temple to address the zealous crowd. He spoke in Hebrew, he referenced his unblemished Hebrew and zealot credentials, but his mention that the Lord had said to him, "Go, for I will send you to the Gentiles" sent the anti-Hellenist crowd into a rage. His fate was sealed. The collection, the very attempt to overcome the anti-Hellenist animosity of the Jewish Christians had subjected him to the very epicenter of that animus. "In spite of Paul's high hopes the delivery of the collection project only served to aggravate an already tense and explosive situation."⁶⁸

Why is there no fuller account of the collection's delivery, reception, and effects in the final chapters of Acts? This remains somewhat a mystery, though as we have indicated, Luke is not as silent as might be indicated by an initial glance at Acts. Perhaps Paul consciously carried out the collection in the Mediterranean world under the guise of existing laws, which protected the Jewish temple tax and its transmission to Jerusalem. An extensive system was in place for collecting funds for the temple from the Diaspora.

Because the Jews in the Diaspora were so numerous, the amount of contributions flowing annually to the Temple was significantly rich . . . After the Temple tax contributions had been collected in the local communities, the custom followed in the Diaspora was to send the funds to central receiving points from which the large aggregate sums were forwarded to Jerusalem. They were accompanied for protection from banditry by a large retinue consisting of paid mercenary guards, pilgrims, and deputies from the communities, which had contributed; of which the last named were charged with representing the local Jewish fellowship in person at the sacrifices in Jerusalem.⁶⁹

Of numerous possible reasons for the lack of reference to the collection in Acts most are unsatisfactory, particularly if we accept Acts own claim to Lukan authorship and accuracy (which we do). It is most likely that by the time Acts was written, the separation between Christianity and Judaism was all but complete, and Luke did not desire to write anything which would unduly bring Roman scrutiny and intrusion to the Christian community. Rome's antagonism for Judaism reach its

68 Nickle p. 147.

69 Nickle p. 83. See "Analogies to Paul's Collection in Contemporary Judaism" in Nickle.

destructive height and fever pitch in A.D. 70 with the destruction of the temple. "The collection delivered by Paul to Jerusalem would therefore have been regarded by the Roman authorities as an illegal operation. To have described it in detail would have provided valid legal grounds for increased official suspicion of the Christian faith."⁷⁰

What? The Account of the Collection in 2 Corinthians 8&9 Commentary

We now turn to a specific treatment, verse by verse of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. This section of Paul's letter has long been the subject of historical critical inquiry. Bultmann, of course, among many others, sees no way that chapters 8 and 9 could possibly have been part of the original letter.⁷¹ I have no desire or intent to attempt to unravel the complex issues involved in the assertions that 2 Corinthians is a series of independent letters, genuine or not, cobbled together by some redactor well after the fact, from numerous sources. We simply assert with Reicke, "Attempts to divide 2 Corinthians into different writings destroy the logical coherence, which is evident in spite of the passionate prose."⁷²

While he is numbered among those who chop up the letter, Betz provides a magisterial explanation of these two chapters based upon ancient rhetoric. While perhaps overdone, his rhetorical division of the chapters is nevertheless illuminating, even though we see no real reason to tear these two chapters from the whole as two separated letters by Paul later conflated with other material into 2 Corinthians. Betz also demonstrates that these two chapters are written in highly administrative and even legal style, which coincides to the subject at hand. Where I have made use of Betz or other authors, they are duly noted. Otherwise, the ideas are my own.

8:1-5 Exordium – Paul seeks to gain the attention of the reader, and “put the cards on the table.”⁷³

8:1 *We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia.* Paul is writing from Macedonia. The Corinthian propensity is to disparage Macedonia as a rural “backwater.” So Paul gets their attention quickly by noting the example of Macedonia. “Grace” (*charis*) is given by divine action, quite over against works or human activity. Reception of the message of divine favor in Christ has caused something of note among the Macedonians. The Corinthians are well aware of the significance of “grace” in Paul's preaching. It is the strongest and most characteristic term on Paul's theology. Upon it hangs all divine blessing (Gal. 2:21). “Charis in fact dominates all in Second Corinthians 8 and 9.”⁷⁴ It occurs 10 times in these two chapters.

²*for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.* The Macedonians are noteworthy because in a severe trial (*polle*

70 Nickle p. 150.

71 Rudolf Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House 1976, p. 18. For the history of interpretation see Betz, pp. 3-35.

72 Reicke p. 61.

73 Betz p. 41.

74 Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1998, p. 710.

dokime thlipsios) and abysmal poverty, their joy in Christ has abounded and resulted rich giving for the collection. Paul mentions his own physical affliction while in Macedonia (2 Cor. 7:5 – fighting without and fear within), and he must have participated in these difficulties with the Christians there. For Paul, afflictions and trials are always toward positive ends (Romans 8). “Testing” is a significant thread through these chapters (8:2; 8:8; 8:22; 9:13), and always provides opportunity for increase of faith and love. He frequently notes the paradox of joy/affliction. “In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.” (2 Cor. 7:4) Generosity (*aplotes*) is for Paul the rich result of faith in Christ and the opposite of greed (*pleonexia*). The generosity flowed as a result of grace. “Grace, we might say, had only been truly experienced, when it produced a gracious people.”⁷⁵

³For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, God's grace results in giving beyond one's ability (*dunamin*). Here Paul introduces a theme that is vital for him in the matter of the collection and all Christian ethics: “of their own free will” (*authairetos*). The Gospel suffers no compulsion or coercion (Rom. 6:7, 22).

⁴begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints “with much exertion” (*polles paraklesios*) they plead for the favor (*charis/grace/gift*) even (*kai*) the participation (*koinonia*) in this service/ministry (*diakonia*). The Macedonians regard the collection as a gift, a privilege. Dunn calls this use of *charis* “transitional.” “Charis here seems to signify the (sense of) engracement which prompted the Macedonians to contribute to the collection beyond their means (8:2-23).”⁷⁶ *Koinonia* means a partaking of something in common. So Paul can call the Lord's Supper a “participation (*koinonia*) of the blood of Christ” (1 Cor. 10:16). In Acts 4 the saints have all things in common (*koina*). The very word Paul uses for the Lord's Supper also becomes for him a technical term for the collection. By so sharing in the burdens of the needy saints in Jerusalem one demonstrates the membership in the body of Christ.

⁵and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. “Christ gives himself to us in this Sacrament and we give ourselves to our neighbor with might and main” (Luther). Generosity is born of one's relationship to Christ. And service to Christ is rendered by service to the neighbor as a result (Matthew 25:40). To refuse assistance to the neighbor is to refuse Christ.

8:6 The Narratio (Statement of Facts)

⁶Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. As noted above, Titus had been with Paul since Antioch and the visit to Jerusalem in A.D. 49 for the apostolic council. Paul “urged” (*parakalein*) “exhorted” Titus. The positive action of the Macedonians encouraged Titus to attempt to bring about such positive results among the Corinthians. Titus is to bring the matter to conclusion, fulfill (*epiteleo*). Betz notes that while “exhort/urge” (*parakalein*) occurs often in Paul's writing, it is used here in a technical way referring to “appointment of legal or political representatives.”⁷⁷ The flesh would see taking up a collection as an exaction, yet it is forever for Paul an “act of grace.” The original simply has “this grace.”

75 Dunn, op. cit. p. 707.

76 Dunn, op. cit. p. 707-08.

77 P. 54.

8:7-8 The *Propositio* (Proposition-Points of Agreement/Disagreement)

⁷*But as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you — see that you excel in this act of grace also.* “The purpose of the proposition is to set forth the points of agreement and disagreement.”⁷⁸ They are flattered by Paul’s praise and no doubt agree with it (1:18ff). Paul introduces a very significant term “earnestness” (*spoudeis*). This term signifies for Paul the zealous desire and ability to act freely. “A virtue one would expect of a good administrator . . . and thus in 2 Cor. 8, where the term plays an important role in reference to the Corinthians and to the envoys.”⁷⁹ Paul encourages them by reminding them of his own love for them and encourages them to abound in charitable action as a result of their faith, speech, and knowledge. All these are denied without action.

⁸*I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.* Conviction, not coercion, is the goal of the apostle. He will not command (like he would not command celibacy – *epitagen* – 1 Cor. 7:6). The zeal of the Macedonians is the occasion for the Corinthians to prove their own fidelity and conviction (faith, zeal, love). Those “accredited (proved) by letter” (1 Cor. 16:4) would represent the Corinthians bearing the collection. Here their act of charity would “accredit” the genuineness (*gnesion*) of their love.

8:9-15 The *Probatio* (Proofs) – The deliberative argument.

The First Proof

⁹*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.* Paul’s first argument is Christological. The “grace” of Christ is in His act of self sacrifice for the benefit of us. It is forever amazing that though this text is Paul’s chief Christological argument for charity, the text is rarely used in that fashion today. The great “happy exchange” (Luther), Paul uses the rich/poor metaphor for obvious reasons in motivating the Corinthians to charitable giving. “Have this mind in you . . . though in the form of God, he emptied himself, taking on the form of a servant . . .” (Phil. 2). Paul had already introduced the language of “exchange” in 1:18ff. “The cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us . . . the power of God.”

The Second Proof

¹⁰*And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it.* Paul refers to a matter of common sense (*judgement/gnomen*), “a stock argument in deliberative oratory.”⁸⁰ “You started this thing, it makes sense to finish doesn’t it?” “You are the one who wanted to do it a year ago . . . Wouldn’t it be a good thing now for you to finish it?” Paul appeals to basic human common sense. Within that year much had taken place, including Paul’s strong rebuke of the Corinthians for a number of delicate problems. Paul is saying, “Let’s overlook all that and get it done.”

78 Betz p. 56.

79 Betz p. 58.

80 Betz p. 63.

¹¹*So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.* The Corinthians began the collection out of sincere desire. The desire grew cold because of the numerous problems in the congregation. Paul's great pastoral sense is that they will benefit in every way by focusing on external needs rather than only on those internal to the congregation. The apostles urges the completion of the task on a reasonable basis, that is, out of what they have (*ek tou exein*).

¹²*For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.* "Readiness" (*prothumia*) indicates eagerness. Thus the Bereans eagerly investigated the Scriptures (*meta pases prothumias*; Acts 17:11). Paul is concerned with honest and sincere motives not with the amount of money.

The Third Proof

¹³*I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness* "The final proof is that of equity, another stock argument in deliberative oratory."⁸¹ Paul did not have "ease" or "rest" (*anesis*) for his spirit when he could not find Titus in Troas (2 Cor. 2:13). "Thlipsis" (here rendered "burdened") indicates affliction, here material/financial need. "Fairness" (*isotetos*) is often rendered incorrectly as "equality." Paul urges: "Masters treat your slaves justly and fairly (*isotata*), knowing that you also have a master in heaven" (Col. 4:1). The virtue indicates reasonable care for all.

¹⁴*your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.* "Need" (*hysterema*) means a lack of any sort ("fall short of the glory of God" Rom. 3:23; "not lacking any spiritual gift" 1 Cor. 1:7). "Fairness" is a good rendering again of "isotes" rather than equality. Paul here indicates that while the Corinthians supply the physical needs of those in Jerusalem, the latter have supplied their spiritual needs. "For salvation is of the Jews" (Rom. 11:11ff.).

¹⁵*As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."* Exodus 16:18. Paul evidently cites from memory the word order in the Septuagint being slightly different. The apostle probably conflates the Hebrew original with the Greek, being familiar with both. "They gather, some more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had not lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could" (Ex. 16:17-18). When the Old Testament people of God gathered the manna that fell, they did not all gather equal amounts (due to age, ability, etc.) yet all ate. So in the church all are cared for by sharing of the provisions God supplies. It is significant that Paul applies this text speaking of all the Old Testament people who were in one locale to the church strewn from Palestine to Greece! It is also significant that Paul applies a text speaking of the special and specific prerogative of the Jews ("our fathers ate manna") to the entire "mixed" church of Jew and Gentile believer (Oschwald).

The Legal Section: Commendation and Authorization of the Envoys 9:16-23

81 Betz p. 67.

The Commendation of Titus

¹⁶*But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you.* Betz notes that here Paul switches from arguments to official business.⁸² “Earnest care” (*spoudeis*) is repeatedly used in these chapters for eager active desire. It is God’s gift resulting from belief in the Gospel. Titus shares the apostle’s concerns and ministry in every way (see above). Betz notes the use of *spoude* in secular literature of administration. It is “the most important qualification of the administrator.”⁸³

¹⁷*For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord.* Titus accepted Paul’s appeal (*paraklesis*; “exhortation”). Betz has a very intriguing excursus on the commissioning of Titus and the brothers as a formal “mandatum” or officium/office. The word *paraklesis* is common to such contracts in Greek society of the day. Titus was given a legal mandate to carry out tasks on behalf of Paul. “Under Roman law, the acceptance of a mandate was regarded as an officium, that is to say, a public obligation of a citizen in good standing, to be discharged without financial compensation.”⁸⁴ Such a mandate described the agent’s personality, qualifications, and standing in the community, and specific assignment. The importance of the matter and the large sum of money involved required just a mandate according to Betz, from Paul to Titus and the Brothers. Paul dealt with his compatriots in the same manner as the Corinthians regarding requests. Nothing out of compulsion but rather of conviction. So Titus willingly was most eager to come to the Corinthians to take care of the matter of the collection. Being with Paul from the days at Antioch and the visit to Jerusalem, the matter was of personal significance to him. So he to comes “of his own accord” (*authairetos*) being very zealous (*spoudaioteros*).

The Commendation of the Two Brothers

¹⁸*With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the Gospel.* We simply have no idea who this brother was. There is no textual evidence that the name was removed (because he allegedly later fell out of the good graces of Paul or the church). Some have suggested Luke was one of them (Plummer).⁸⁵ In any case this man had a stellar reputation.

¹⁹*And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will.* “Appointed” (*xeirotoneo*) means “extending the hand.” Thus the brother was elected by the churches for the task of working with Paul in carrying out the collection. Paul sent Titus to Crete to appoint (*katastasei*) elders (Titus 1). In Acts 14

Paul and Barnabas “appointed (*xeirotoneo*) elders for them in every church” (Acts 14:23). Yet these appointments all probably occurred as did the choosing of the seven in Acts 6. The community put forward (elected; *exelaxanto*) the seven names and the apostles appointed (*katastesomen*) them (6:4-5). So also Paul indicated that those “accredited by letter” by the Corinthians would accompany him to Jerusalem with the collection (1 Corinthians 16:3). There is no pitting of apostle against people or vice versa.

82 Betz p. 70.

83 Betz p. 70.

84 Betz p. 71.

85 Betz p. 73.

²⁰*We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us.* Thus Paul would not want the delegates for the collection to merely be his own choice! “Administered” renders the verbal form of “diakonia” which had become a technical term for matters of the collection for Paul. The apostle wanted in every way to avoid suspicion. “Religious charlatans . . . filled the Roman world. Such men had a reputation for raising funds for what were purported to be good causes, and then lining their own pockets.”⁸⁶ In calling the gift “generous” (*hadrotēs*), Paul indicates that the gift was to be very substantial.⁸⁷

²¹*for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.* Paul loosely quotes Proverbs 3:4, “So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.” He makes a similar statement in Romans 12:17, “Give thought to what is honorable in the sight of all.” Thus one is to aim not only for honorable motives (known to God) but the appearance of honor over against men. The brothers would insure that honor. Given the deep challenges Paul faced particularly in Asia (Ephesus), it is quite understandable that he is so adamant on both the reality and appearance of honor with respect to the collection.

²²*And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you.* Another man is added who is more “earnest” than ever; that is, both eager and capable (*spoudaion*). Who is he? We have no idea. He’s called “our” brother by Paul and this may indicate a closer association with the apostle. Perhaps he was in fact appointed by Paul. The Acts 20 list indicated that each church probably had two delegates to Jerusalem. Why does Paul name a third? He already had appointed Titus. Betz surmises that perhaps the “brother” chosen by the Corinthians necessitated a third be insisted upon by Paul! Thus the delegation from Corinth would include: (1.) Titus (Paul’s man); (2.) the brother chosen by Corinth; and (3.) another man chosen by Paul and also appointed by the churches.⁸⁸

The Authorization of the Delegates

²³*As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.* This is the legal language of appointment. “In texts which have legal representation as their subject, the prepositional phrase *hyper tinōs* designates the act of authorized representation (instead of, in representation of, on behalf of). Thus by means of this expression in 8:23a, Paul made an official statement on behalf of Titus, authorizing him to be his legal and administrative representative.”⁸⁹ Paul calls Titus his “partner” (*koinonos*) and “fellow worker” (*synergos*), indicating the nature of Titus’ authority, which was nearly that of the apostle by virtue of his association. The word “messengers” translates “apostles” (*apostoloi*), taken here in the sense of those sent with a commission by the churches themselves as official representatives. Thus Paul was an “apostle of Christ” or Christ’s ambassador, carrying the full authority of Christ Himself.

The Peroratio (Peroration-Summary and final statement of purpose)

²⁴*So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.* What’s the

86 Betz p. 76.

87 Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, p. 65.

88 Betz p. 78.

89 Betz p. 79.

point of all that preceded? It's time to bring the collection to fruition and, in doing so, not make Paul out to be a liar.

The Exordium (Introduction)

⁹*1*Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, “Now concerning the collection (*diakonias*).” Paul turns from the technical language of properly and legally appointed delegates, back to the matter at hand. “It is superfluous” because he knows they know why he is writing and much of what he will say.

²*for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them.* Apparently Titus, when he came to Paul reporting the sad state of affairs in Corinth with respect to the collection, told the apostle things with Achaia in general were much better. So Paul had boasted of the work of the Achaians to the Macedonians. That spurred on the Macedonians. Paul, in turn, used the results among the Macedonians to cajole the Corinthians!⁹⁰

The Narratio (Statement of facts)

³*But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove vain in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be.* The brothers (capable administrators) would assist the Corinthians so Paul's boasting would not prove an embarrassment to him or the Corinthians. “Vain” (kenow/ render/ void/ empty). “I would rather die than have my ground for boasting emptied (*kenow*)” (1 Cor. 9:15).

⁴*Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident.* Would the Macedonian delegates already accompany Paul? Apparently so. Paul desires to bring them along to assist with the Corinthian collection. He'll have three months to pull it together before taking the full delegation to Jerusalem (Acts 20:1-2). “Some Macedonians” might have included Sopater of Berea, or Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica (Acts 20:4).

⁵*So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you.* Paul had to finish the work in Macedonia and thought it best to send the brothers rather than cut his time short in the north to come south and tend to the Corinthian challenge.

The Propositio (Proposition- what now needs to be done)

and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised. The advance team hit the ground in Corinth no doubt carrying 2 Corinthians itself, and . . .

so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction. Paul now turns from past to future.⁹¹ . . . Paul wants a “blessing” (*eulogia*) not something forced out of them (*pleonexia*). “Eulogia” is a blessing wrought by grace, willingly bestowed. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed (*eulogesas*) us in Christ with every spiritual blessing (*eulogia pneumatike*)” (Eph. 1:3). “What

90 Betz p. 93.

91 Betz p. 95.

do you have that you have not received?" (1 Cor. 4:7). "Exaction" translates "greed" (*pleonexia*). "Take care and be on your guard against all covetousness (*pleonexia*), for one's life does not consist in the abundance of one's possessions" (Lk. 12:15). "Pleonexia" is frequent in Paul's catalogues of the sins of unbelief (Rom. 1:29; Eph. 4:19; 5:3; Col. 3:5). Here Paul's concern is that he not be accused of greed for urging the completion of the collection, in the sense of "For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed – God is witness." (1 Thess. 2:5).

The Probatio (Proofs) 9:6-14 (The proofs justify the author's concerns)⁹²

The Thesis

⁶*The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.* This proverb echoes the thought of Proverbs 11:24, though with no similarity in wording. "One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want." Paul uses the word "spare" of the supreme gift: "He who did not spare (*pheidomai*) His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32) The simple but profound truth is that if the farmer skimps on seed, the harvest will be poor. Paul had used the agricultural metaphor in 1 Corinthians 15 for the resurrection. "It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory." (1 Cor. 15:43), and then he proceeded directly to discuss the collection (1 Cor. 16:1ff.). The Lord Himself did not spare His own son, and the harvest was phenomenal. The text is exceedingly memorable and more so in the original, "sparingly, sparingly" . . . "upon blessings, upon blessings." If one sows "upon blessings" ("eulogiais" in light of blessings received from God) one shall harvest "upon blessings." That is to say, the blessings will be heaped up. The divine economy of life is counterintuitive. The following verses explicate the "gift of blessing."

The First Proof – the giver

⁷*Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.* Literally, "each as he has decided ahead of time in his heart." So giving is always a matter of the heart, but Paul wants the matter to be deliberative and rational, in light of blessings received. Not "reluctantly" (*ek lupes*). "Grief (*lupe*) according to God produces repentance" (2 Cor. 7:19). The opposite is grief according to greed. The decision to give is to be a deliberative resolution, which considers one's blessings and avoids "reluctance." The Gospel broaches no "compulsion" (*anagkes*). "I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will" (Philemon 14). "Gifts can be the result of internal distress (*lupe*) or external pressure (*anagke*), but gifts given under such circumstances cannot be regarded as gifts of blessing. Only gifts which result from a cheerful disposition (*hilaros*) can be properly called by that name."⁹³ Proverbs 8 (Septuagint) states, "God blesses (*eulogei*) a man who is a cheerful giver."

The Second Proof

⁸*And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.* God is the actor. He makes a "cheerful giver." How? "He gives

92 Betz p. 100.

93 Betz p. 105.

overflowing grace (*charis*) so that in all things, all times with all sufficiency (*panti*, *pan tote*, *pasan*) you may abound in every (*pan*) good work.” The grace of God causes the recognition that in all things we are blessed. Grace produces abundance – not in a ‘name it and claim it’ sort of theology of glory, but rather a sober and joyous recognition that God’s provision suffices for need, and abounds for others’ needs. Grace piles up blessings – “all grace”, “all sufficiency”, “all things”, “all times”, “every good work.” There is no cause to be stingy.

⁹As it is written,

“He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever.” Paul imports teaching from a Psalm meaningful for his work of the collection (Ps. 112).

Praise the Lord!
Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
Who greatly delights in His commandments!
His offspring will be might in the land;
the generation of the upright will be blessed.
Wealth and riches are in his house,
and his righteousness endures forever.
Light dawns in the darkness for the upright;
He is gracious, merciful and righteous.
It is well with the man who deals generously and lends;
who conducts his affairs with justice...
He has distributed freely;
he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever;
his horn is exalted in honor.
The wicked man sees it and is angry;
he gnashes his teeth and melts away;
the desire of the wicked will perish!

¹⁰He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. God provides the seed for sowing and bread for eating. The Corinthian’s charity is promised a divine blessing to multiply their harvest in the future. Give and you shall be blessed with all the more. “The harvest of your righteousness” is the harvest produced by the righteousness of Christ.

¹¹You will be enriched in every way for all your generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. Another promise of sweeping divine blessing “every way” (*en panti*) you will be made rich “for all generosity” (*pasan aploteta*). The promise is that the Corinthians will be made wealthy in every possible way, materially and spiritually. “Wealth is good and acceptable if it leads to generosity.”⁹⁴ Through Paul’s delivery of the gift there will result “thanksgiving” (*eucharistia*) on the part of the poor in Jerusalem, to God. Paul encourages giving by telling the Corinthians that their giving will result in divine transactions.

The Fourth Proof

¹²*For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.* “The diakonia of this leitourgia.” Diakonia is Paul’s technical term for the collection, “Charitable service.” A leitourgia is “a public service performed by private citizens at their own expense.”⁹⁵ The need addressed among the saints is worthy in and of itself, but the gift will also be a great aid to their faith and result in abundant thanksgiving. Thus the giving has a physical and a spiritual purpose.

The Fifth Proof

¹³*By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the Gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others,* “By their confirmation (*dokimes*) of the diakonia” that is, knowing exactly from whom it comes and why it was given, they will glorify God. Why has it come? It is a submission produced by the Corinthians confession (*homologias*) of the Gospel. The very gift is itself a confession of the Gospel. “Contribution” is *koinonias*, a “sharing” or “fellowship.” So “fellowship” in the church is not merely doctrinal assent. It is mutual participation in Christ’s gifts of Word and Sacrament, but also sharing in the goods and material challenges of life.⁹⁶

¹⁴*while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.* An added benefit of the gift is that the poor in Jerusalem will pray for the Corinthians and “drink deep” for you. So Paul can say to his coworkers “I long – drink deep – to see you. A great blessing considering the deep animus on the part of zealous Christians over against Gentiles!

The Peroratio (Peroration)

¹⁵*Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!* Here Paul “completes the circle of grace – from God as grace, to human and through humans as gracious action, and back to God as thanks.”⁹⁷

So What?

The Collection was Paul’s crowning achievement in life. It is fairly amazing that this greatest theologian and Christian in history so decisively and determinedly turned his attention to a matter of human need. And he led the entire Gentile mission to take up the matter of human need as a corporate, churchly act. He saw in this need the deepest theological significance. The most tangible demonstration of unity and love in the church – aside from the Word and Sacraments, which con-

⁹⁵ Betz p. 117.

⁹⁶ For Paul knew precisely that the refusal of the gifts of the other congregations by the church in Jerusalem would indicate the breaking of the unity of the church. The sacrifice, whose collection he organized everywhere, had for Paul a very eminent theological significance. That’s why he spoke of it so often. It is decisive that this collection was designated as “fellowship” . . . thus it appears to me that the ecumenical collection of the apostle not only replaced the Jewish temple tax, rather at the same time lengthened and continued the fellowship of goods worked by the Holy Ghost in Jerusalem [i.e. Acts 3-6]. Oscar Cullmann, “*Oekumenische Kollekte und Gueteregemeinschaft im Urchristentum* (1965), in *Oscar Cullman Vortraege und Aufsaeetze 1925-1962*, JCB Mohr Tuebingen 1966, p. 602. My translation.

⁹⁷ James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1998, p. 707.

stitute such love – is the sharing of one's possessions with the needy in the body of Christ. "Fellowship" is for Paul participation in Christ, and by extension, mutual participation in one another. The church is a fellowship (*koinonia*). The collection is so much a demonstration, a tangible evidence of the fellowship that Paul dares to call it a *koinonia*. What do we learn from the collection?

1. Grace (divine favor) produces grace (gracious living).
2. Church fellowship includes concern for physical needs.
3. Paul and his ordained apostolic band were concerned with both physical and spiritual need, and worked extensively to both ends.
4. Diakonia may well be a powerful tool for enhancing and maintaining church unity. It produces prayer and thanksgiving to God for the giver.
5. Giving is a demonstration of confession of the Gospel.
6. The church is to demonstrate the utmost care in all matters financial.
7. The church does well to follow Paul's careful methods of accountability, administration, and transparency, with direct local representation.
8. Appointment to offices of responsibility ought to be shared by local communities affected.
9. Meeting human need is the most basic reason for Christian stewardship.
10. Giving is in no way to be done out of compulsion or with a bad conscience.
11. Giving is best done after careful deliberation and consideration of blessings.
12. God is pleased with each gift (small or large) relative to the faith, intent, and means of the giver.
13. Spiritual care and counsel for the giver was worthy of the deepest apostolic concern. It also ought to concern our clergy. Giving is a deeply theological and pastoral concern.⁹⁸
14. As did Paul, it is very appropriate to reference the promises of Holy Scripture with respect to generosity in encouraging giving.
15. Giving to the needy carries the New Testament promise of abundant blessing (not withstanding the theology of the cross, of course).
16. Based on the model of St. Paul, the church would do well to have competent, theologically capable men/women administering funding issues.
17. Mission congregations must not be spared the privilege of learning to give to need outside their immediate community, no matter how modest the gift.

98 "The resulting picture is not one of a Paul striding confidently forward, riding roughshod over feelings and views of others. It is a picture rather of one with a basic conviction regarding the collection's importance, but conscious of the need to carry people with him, uncertain as to various aspects of it, and nervous about the final outcome. This final unbarring of his heart (Romans 15:30-32) reveals to us not just Paul the theologian and pastor, but Paul the man." Dunn p. 710.