

## SOCIAL RECIPROCITY AND GENTILE DEBT TO JEWS IN ROMANS 15:26–27

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At Rom 15:25–27 Paul tells about his travel plans saying,

[B]ut now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased *to do so*, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.<sup>1</sup>

Why did the Gentiles of Macedonia and Achaia owe a material blessing to the messianic Jews in Jerusalem? If first-century Gentile churches owed this return, do Gentile churches in the twenty-first century owe it as well? If so, how? If not, why not? These questions will be investigated in the following pages. They mainly deal with 15:27. First, however, preliminary comments will be offered on the translation and significance of 15:26. Second, arguments will be given to demonstrate that Gentile debt to believing Jews is ongoing.

### I. PRELIMINARY COMMENTS ON ROMANS 15:26

1. *The translation of κοινωνίαν τινὰ ποιήσασθαι.* This phrase is rendered “make a contribution” in most English translations; those not using the word “contribution” give a virtual equivalent. Translating κοινωνία with “contribution” is a practice that goes as far back as the Vulgate and in English to Tyndale and Wycliffe.<sup>2</sup> But the phrase κοινωνίαν ποιήσασθαι should better be translated “establish fellowship.”<sup>3</sup>

The strongest argument against rendering 15:26 with “make a contribution” is that it gives κοινωνία a rare, if not unknown, concrete sense. It is true that Bauer’s lexicon gives “contribution” as a possible gloss for κοινωνία.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible.

<sup>2</sup> Vulgate: probaverunt enim Macedonia et Achaia conlationem aliquam facere in pauperes sanctorum qui sunt in Hierusalem; Tyndale: For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certayne distribucio vpo the poore sayntes which are at Jerusalem; Wycliffe: For Macedonye and Acaie han assaied to make sum yifte to pore men of seyntis, that ben in Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> An earlier defense of this translation appears in G. W. Peterman, “Romans 15.26: ‘Make a Contribution’ or ‘Establish Fellowship?’” *NTS* 40 (1994) 457–63.

<sup>4</sup> W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, revised and edited by F. W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 553 “κοινωνία” paragraph 3.

But from at least as far back as the second edition of Bauer's *Wörterbuch* (1928) and right up to the present, he has also given a possible alternative rendering for Rom 15:26 such as "establish a rather close relation."<sup>5</sup> Until 1994 scholars overlooked this alternative, following Seesemann's thorough study of *κοινωνία*, who claims that the presence of *ποιήσασθαι* requires that *κοινωνία* be taken concretely.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, examples of *κοινωνία* used in a concrete sense have yet to be found. James D. G. Dunn asserts the construction would not be strange to a Greek speaker, citing Liddell-Scott-Jones.<sup>7</sup> LSJ, however, provide no examples of the construction. They assert that *κοινωνία* can have the meaning "contribution," citing three examples: Rom 15:26, Heb 13:16, and a second-century inscription discussed by Rostowzew.<sup>8</sup> This is the same inscription cited in Bauer's lexicon, although Bauer cites it by way of Radermacher's *Neutestamentliche Grammatik*.<sup>9</sup> But the inscription from Pogle that is discussed by Rostowzew does not supply evidence of *κοινωνία* used concretely. It reads as follows:

(The people honored) Poplius Caius Lukianus . . .  
 who presided over games five years with both  
 statues and prizes and was honored . . . ,  
 who gave grain doles in years of citizenship  
 both to councillors, to assembly members and to  
 all citizens, who creates works for the city, who judges  
 local courts in years (of) *κοινωνίας*, who sent grain to the  
 Alexandrian nation, who served as spokesman and  
 ambassador on behalf of the city,  
 and who is of the prominent family in the homeland.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Bauer, *Lexicon* (2000) 553, par. 1. Bauer's second edition (1928) gives ". . . sie haben sich vorgenommen, e. Art engen Verhältnisses herzustellen zu d. Armen."

<sup>6</sup> H. Seesemann, *Der Begriff KOINΩNIA im Neuen Testament* (Gießen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1933) 29. Seesemann is followed by F. Hauck, "κοινός κτλ," *TWNT* 3 (1938) 809 n. 738 and by K. P. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy* (London: SCM, 1966) 124 n. 204; similarly P. T. O'Brien, "Fellowship, Communion, Sharing," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993) 294.

<sup>7</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Romans* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988) 875.

<sup>8</sup> "κοινωνία," H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968) 970, par. III.i.

<sup>9</sup> M. Rostowzew, "Die Domäne von Pogle," *Jahreshefte des österreichischen archäologischen Instituts in Wien* 4 (1900) 37–46. Bauer (*Lexicon*, 553 par. 3) refers the reader to L. Radermacher, *Neutestamentliche Grammatik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2d ed. 1925).

<sup>10</sup> Author's translation. The Greek is as follows:

Πόπλι|ο[ν] Καίλ|[υ]ον[Α]ουκ[ιανόν. . . ]ο|. . . ἀγω-  
 ν|οθητήσαντα ἀγῶνα πεντ[αετηρικόν σύν  
 τε] ἀνδριάσιν καὶ βραβείοις καὶ τεμ[η]θέντα β'  
 δ]εδωκότα διανομάς ἔτεσιν πολ[ιτείας  
 βουλευταῖς τε καὶ ἐκκλησιαταῖς (sic) [καὶ πᾶ-]  
 σι πολείταις, κτίζοντα ἔργα τῇ πόλει, κρεί-  
 νοντα τοπικὰ δικαστήρια ἔτεσιν κοινω-  
 ν[ίας, πέμψαντα ἀννῶναν εἰς τὸ Ἀλεξαν-  
 δρέων ἔθνος, προη[γ]ορησάν]τα καὶ  
 [πρεσβεύσα]ντα ὑπε[ρ] τῆς πό]λεως,  
 [γένου]ς τ[οῦ] προ[τε]υόν[τος] ἐν τῇ πα[τρι]δί

On the lines that contain *κοινωνία*, Rostowzew gives the following comment:

From our inscription it follows that the region of Pogle was an imperial possession. I conclude this from lines 6–8: κρείνοντα τοπικὰ δικαστήρια κοινωνίας, that is, that the one honored served as a local judge, since Pogle yet possessed no πολιτεία, no city-constitution, but rather the *κοινωνία*, the constitution of a κοινόν. It is known that the colonies of the imperial domain organized themselves in this way, in the west as in the east.<sup>11</sup>

We can see both from the inscription itself and from the comments Rostowzew made on it that *κοινωνία* does not have a concrete sense here. It is not being used with the force of “contribution.” Rather, *κοινωνία* refers to Pogle’s political association. “Macedonian cities and ethnic groups conserved a common organisation existing since the Hellenistic period, the Macedonian ‘koinon,’ which was a confederation of the Macedonian communities.”<sup>12</sup> As Rostowzew points out, cities in the west and east organized themselves in this way. Although the *koinon* was primarily focused on the imperial cult, it also organized games, minted coins, and could serve as an intermediary between the cities of Asia and Rome.<sup>13</sup> Κοινωνία here is political, abstract, and relational. Consequently, it is surprising that Rostowzew’s inscription is cited by LSJ and Bauer.

LSJ also cite Heb 13:16, implying that the passage supplies an example of *κοινωνία* being used concretely as contribution. Certainly *κοινωνία* is found in the context of financial sharing. The author says, “And do not neglect doing good (εὐποιία) and sharing (κοινωνία); for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”<sup>14</sup> Here εὐποιία and *κοινωνία* are sacrifices. Εὐποιία should be understood as beneficence.<sup>15</sup> Κοινωνία, however, need not be understood as alms, but as generosity. Thus, although these two nouns can be used to refer to giving a donation, they are not to be simply equated with the material manifestations that they produce. That is, “generosity” is not the lexical equivalent of “cash” or “donation.” Rather, εὐποιία and *κοινωνία* are, as Weiß

<sup>11</sup> Rostowzew, “Pogle” 39. Author’s translation. The German is as follows: “Aus unserer Inschrift ergibt sich nun, dass auch die Umgebung Poglas in kaiserlichem Besitze war. Ich schließ e dies aus Z. 6–8: κρείνοντα τοπικὰ δικαστήρια ἔτεσιν κοινωνίας, das heißt doch, dass der Geehrte als Localrichter fungierte, als Pogle noch keine πολιτεία besaß, keine Verfassung, sondern nur die *κοινωνία*, die Verfassung eines κοινόν. Es ist bekannt, dass die Colonen eines ‘saltus’ sich in dieser Weise organisierten, im Westen wie im Osten.” The author owes a debt of gratitude to Georg D. Freitag for his comments on Rostowzew’s article.

<sup>12</sup> “The Institutions of the Roman Period,” [www.macedonian-heritage.gr/HellenicMacedonia/en/A1.7.5.html](http://www.macedonian-heritage.gr/HellenicMacedonia/en/A1.7.5.html).

<sup>13</sup> R. C. Behrwald, “Koinon,” *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World*, ed. H. Cancik and H. Schneider (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 7.82.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Phil 4:18; Polycarp *Phil* 4.3; *Herm Sim* 5.3.3, 7–8; 2 *Clem* 16.4. On the spiritualization of sacrifice see E. Ferguson, “Spiritual Sacrifice in Early Christianity and Its Environment,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.23.2 (ed. W. Haase; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980) 1151–89.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Lucian, *Abd* 25. Weiß notes that εὐποιία appears only here in early Christian literature, but corresponds to the more common forms ἀγαθοποιία and εὐεργεσία. The construction with the verb (εὐ ποιεῖν), however, appears in Mark 14:7 (cf. Arist., *Eth. Nic.* 1120a13, 1124b10, 1162a6; Plato, *Resp.* 332D; Xen., *Mem.* 2.3.8; M. Ant. 7.73; Hans-Friedrich Weiß, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991] 742).

notes, Christian virtues.<sup>16</sup> In basic agreement with this are the commentaries of Lane, Attridge, and Ellingworth.<sup>17</sup> Further, since εὐποιΐα and κοινωνία share an article,<sup>18</sup> it is probably best to follow an extension of Granville Sharp's rule and to view both as activities, rather than a concrete sense for κοινωνία being linked so closely with the abstract εὐποιΐα.<sup>19</sup> In other words, κοινωνία is a subset of εὐποιΐα.<sup>20</sup> So, then, Heb 13:16 does not provide an example of κοινωνία used concretely.

Further, Bauer cites Lev 5:21 as an example of κοινωνία used as contribution.<sup>21</sup> The meaning of this text, however, is not clear. Κοινωνία translates תְּשׁוּמָה, which is a *hapax legomenon* in the OT.<sup>22</sup> According to John Wevers, this word "is usually thought to refer to a pledge, but this notion is derived from the context alone."<sup>23</sup> Jacob Milgrom provides two possibilities: first, תְּשׁוּמָה could mean "that which is placed in the hand" such as an investment or loan, or, second, it could mean "that which is made or sealed with the hand" such as partnership. As examples of Jewish sources that take it as partnership, Milgrom cites the LXX and Philo.<sup>24</sup> Septuagintal lexica on κοινωνία are divided. Johan Lust says the word could mean "sign of fellowship, gift, or contribution."<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, Takamitsu Muraoka says κοινωνία in Lev 5:21 refers to "joint partnership."<sup>26</sup> Consequently, Lev 5:21 is, at best, an uncertain example and does not supply clear evidence that κοινωνία can have the concrete meaning "contribution."

Scholars commenting on Rom 15:26 frequently cite 2 Cor 8:4 and 9:13 as similar uses of κοινωνία. Though these passages certainly have κοινωνία

<sup>16</sup> Weiß, *Hebräer* 742, rightly calling κοινωνία a *nomen actionis*. Strangely, however, to illustrate the force of κοινωνία Weiß refers the reader to Heb 10:33, where the personal noun κοινωνός appears, and to Heb 13:3, where the κοινωνία word group does not appear (*ibid.* n. 134).

<sup>17</sup> William Lane, *Hebrews 9–13* (Dallas: Word, 1991) 552; Harold Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989) 401; Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 721.

<sup>18</sup> Note, however, that ⲡ<sup>46</sup> inserts an additional article before κοινωνία.

<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Ellingworth, who refers to the expression as "a virtual hendiadys" (*Hebrews* 721).

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 287.

<sup>21</sup> See also Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003) 346. Lev 5:21 reads: ψυχή ἐὰν ἀμάρτη καὶ παρὶδὼν παρὶδῆ τὰς ἐντολάς κυρίου καὶ ψεύσῃται τὰ πρὸς τὸν πλησίον ἐν παρορθῆκῃ ἢ περὶ κοινωνίας ἢ περὶ ἀρπαγῆς ἢ ἠδίκῃσεν τὸν πλησίον. . . . The soul which shall have sinned, and willfully overlooked the commandments of the Lord, and shall have dealt falsely in the affairs of his neighbor in the matter of a deposit, or concerning fellowship, or concerning plunder, or has in anything wronged his neighbor (translation from Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.] 133).

<sup>22</sup> *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, by L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, revised by W. Baumgartner and J. J. Stamm (Leiden: Brill, 1999) iv.1799.

<sup>23</sup> J. W. Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) 65.

<sup>24</sup> Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (New York: Doubleday, 1991) 335. Philo probably comments on the passage when he says, "If," he says, 'a man lies about a partnership (ψεύσῃται περὶ κοινωνίας) or a deposit or a robbery or as to finding the lost property of someone else.'" (LCL translation)

<sup>25</sup> Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (rev. ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003) 346.

<sup>26</sup> T. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint: Chiefly of the Pentateuch and the Twelve Prophets* (Louvain: Peeters, 2002) 322.

used in the context of a discussion about the collection, nonetheless in them *κοινωνία* is not used concretely but retains the abstract meaning “fellowship” or “sharing.”

In 2 Cor 8:4 *κοινωνία* is the direct object of the verb *δεόμενοι* (“ask,” “entreat”). The collection is called *διακονία*, “service.” The Macedonians, on their own, requested *κοινωνίαν*, participation, in service. The implication is that Paul had not solicited their support, but rather they sought to take part on their own (*αὐθαίρετοι*, v. 3b). Certainly the Macedonians did not ask for or request a contribution. So here *κοινωνία* cannot be taken concretely.<sup>27</sup>

In 2 Cor 9:13, though *κοινωνία* can be understood to mean “financial sharing,” it does not have the concrete sense of “gift” or “alms.”<sup>28</sup> A decision on *κοινωνία* is partly determined by the meaning given to *ἀπλότης*. Although some debate whether *ἀπλότης* can have the meaning “generosity,” it must have that meaning here. For in 2 Cor 9:11, it is generosity, not simplicity, that results from enrichment and produces thanksgiving.<sup>29</sup> If we understand *ἀπλότητι τῆς κοινωνίας* to speak of the generosity of the Corinthians’ contribution, then the cause of thanks is made to lie in the amount of the collection, which does not seem to be the apostle’s point. Rather, Paul stresses that their act of sharing is a service that yields thanksgiving to God. Further, the final part of 2 Cor 9:13 is more difficult if *κοινωνία* is taken concretely. Does 2 Cor 9:13 treat the contribution toward Jerusalem and toward all the saints? Or is it the generosity of the fellowship they have with them and with all? The latter understanding is preferable.

The argument given by Seesemann, that the presence of *ποιήσασθαι* requires that *κοινωνία* be taken concretely, is patently false.<sup>30</sup> Although the construction *κοινωνίαν* with *ποιέω* is rare, a search of the *TLG* database yields three examples, and in all of these it must mean something like “establish fellowship.” First, Polybius says that Cleomenes the Spartan, while Ptolemy Euergetes was alive, established a relationship with him (*πρὸς ὃν ἐποίησατο τὴν κοινωνίαν*, 5.35.1).<sup>31</sup> He did this with the constant belief that he would receive help from Ptolemy to recover the throne. Second, in the dialogue of Plato (*Rep* 371b5–6), Socrates asserts that sharing with one another the products of labor is the very reason why, by establishing fellowship, the city is founded (*ὧν δὴ ἔνεκα καὶ κοινωνίαν ποιησάμενοι πόλιν*

<sup>27</sup> Thrall cites Betz approvingly, saying *κοινωνία* is “an administrative and legal term for ‘partnership’” (Margaret Thrall, *II Corinthians* [2 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994, 2000] 525 n. 122).

<sup>28</sup> Contra C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979) 772.

<sup>29</sup> H. D. Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 116; R. P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (Waco, TX: Word, 1986) 292. For a contrary view see Karl Prümm, *Diakonia Pneumatos. Theologie des zweiten Korintherbriefes. Zweiter Teil: Das christliche Werk. Die apostolische Macht* (Rome: Herder, 1962) 40–43.

<sup>30</sup> Contra Nickle, *Collection* 124 n. 204, following Seesemann, *KOINΩΝΙΑ* 28, 67 and Hauck, “*κοινός* κτλ.,” 809.

<sup>31</sup> It is notable that the person(s) with whom fellowship is established is indicated by the preposition *πρὸς*; in Rom 15:26 it is indicated by *εἰς* (*εἰς τοὺς πτωχοὺς*). Text and translation from W. R. Paton, *Polybius: The Histories, Volume III* (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, reprint 2003).

ῥκίωσαμεν).<sup>32</sup> Third, in one of four speeches against Philip II of Macedonia, Demosthenes assails the inability of the independent Greek states to join together in opposition to Philip's tyranny. Demosthenes writes: "And yet while we Greeks see and hear all this, we do not send ambassadors to one another and express our vexation with these things. We are in such a poor state, we are so entrenched in our several cities, that to this very day we can do nothing for our common interests or needs, nor can we band together, nor can we establish a fellowship of aid or friendship (οὐδὲ κοινωνίαν βοήθειας καὶ φιλίας οὐδεμίαν ποιήσασθαι), but we overlook the growing power of this man" (3 *Philippic* 28.1–6).<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, a very similar construction to this one, φιλίαν ποιήσασθαι ("to make friendship"), is slightly more common.<sup>34</sup> Certainly this construction does not force us to take φιλία concretely. In many examples that may be cited φιλία maintains the abstract meaning friendship. Therefore, as a syntactical argument, there is no good reason to insist that the verb ποιέω forces us to understand κοινωνία concretely.

In conclusion, Rom 15:26 is better understood as "to establish fellowship."<sup>35</sup> That is, the material gift passing from Gentile to Jew seeks to create fellowship; there is nothing in the context of Rom 15:26–27 to indicate that the gift is a demonstration of some pre-existing Christian fellowship.<sup>36</sup> If this conclusion is best and if this fellowship is caused by the giving and receiving of a benefit in time and space, then Paul is not here speaking of an objective theological fellowship grounded solely in the atoning and reconciling work of Christ. Such a fellowship would exist between believers before the gift is given. Rather, Paul is speaking of a subjective, social, historical fellowship. More on this point follows below.

**2. Κοινωνία in Philippians.** The conclusions reached regarding κοινωνία in Rom 15:26 are consistent with Paul's usage of the word group in Philippians.<sup>37</sup> There Paul has a relationship for the advance of the gospel (κοινωνία

<sup>32</sup> Text and translation from Paul Shorey, *Plato: Republic, Books 1–5* (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, reprint 1999). See also κοινωνίαν ἐργαζόμενον, Plutarch, *Moralia* 957a.

<sup>33</sup> Text and translation from [http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cache/perscoll\\_Greco-Roman.html#text1](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cache/perscoll_Greco-Roman.html#text1). The author owes this third example to private correspondence with David Downs, who argues that since money is changing hands κοινωνία must be concrete.

<sup>34</sup> See, e.g., Polybius 21.30.4; Plutarch, *Thes* 30.2; *Rom* 23.5; 25.4; *Sol* 5.1–2; Josephus, *Ant.* 5.55; 7.107; 12.414; 13.259; 14.10; *J.W.* 1.38.

<sup>35</sup> Among post-1994 commentators, this rendering of Rom 15:26 has been accepted by A. Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) 141; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001) 230; and Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 365. It is rejected by Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 777.

<sup>36</sup> Contra Cranfield, *Romans* 772 and Schreiner, *Romans* 777. One can also ask how Schreiner and Cranfield know that the gift is an expression of fellowship when, on their reading, κοινωνία does not have the force of "fellowship" but "contribution."

<sup>37</sup> The instances are as follows: κοινωνία (Phil 1:5; 2:1; 3:10), συγκοινωνός (Phil 1:7), κοινωνέω (Phil 4:15), συγκοινωνέω (Phil 4:14).

εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, Phil 1:5) which has been facilitated by the congregation's material gift (τὰ παρ' ὑμῶν, Phil 4:18).<sup>38</sup> Yet in Philippians κοινωνία never becomes concrete—it never becomes the equivalent of “donation” or “cash”—but remains an abstraction (a relationship) even though this relationship involves financial giving.<sup>39</sup>

In Phil 1:5 the Philippians' partnership in the gospel is one of the grounds for which Paul thanks God. Although Phil 1:3–5 probably refer to the Philippians' gift, the reference is made narrowly by means of μνεῖα and only broadly by means of κοινωνία.<sup>40</sup> Although this partnership has been facilitated by Philippian giving, for the following reasons we can see that κοινωνία is not concrete with the force “contribution.”

First, as mentioned earlier, the association of κοινωνία with financial transactions does not mandate a concrete sense for the term. To make this assertion is similar to asserting that, because of frequent associations, καταλλαγή can be a label applied to a sacrificial victim (i.e. the price paid), that φιλία is a name one can give to a gift (i.e. that which gains friendship), or that γάμος can be a label applied to a person (i.e. one who is married). Certainly associations are helpful. Yet it is simply a category mistake to claim that association provides definition. Second, if κοινωνία were concrete, one could have expected the plural (ἐπὶ ταῖς κοινωνίαις), since by the time of writing Phil 1:3–5 the congregation in Philippi had sent Paul something at least three times (Phil 4:16).<sup>41</sup> Third, if κοινωνία were concrete, we would lose the best lexical basis to assert that Paul has with the Philippians a working relationship that advances the gospel.<sup>42</sup> Instead of a reference to such a

<sup>38</sup> The relationship is further facilitated by sharing grace (Phil 1:7) and by the Philippians' prayers (Phil 1:19) and “thought” for him (φρονεῖν, Phil 4:10). See Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 528–29.

<sup>39</sup> It is not asserted, however, that Paul views the κοινωνία of Rom 15:26 and his κοινωνία with the Philippians as simply equivalent. Indeed, the κοινωνία of Rom 15:26 seems to have a particular nuance as Paul indicates with τινά.

<sup>40</sup> So in Phil 1:3 Paul gives thanks because of remembrance—that is, ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ μνεῖα gives the grounds, not the time, for εὐχαριστῶ (correctly O'Brien, *Philippians* 58–61; G. W. Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997] 93–99; John P. Dickson, *Mission Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in the Pauline Communities* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003] 122–29; Paul A. Holloway, “Thanks for the Memories: On the Translation of Phil 1.3,” *NTS* 52 [2006] 419–32; contra G. D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995] 77–79).

<sup>41</sup> That is, at least twice while in Thessalonica (Phil 4:16) and the instance acknowledged in Phil 4:10–20. On Phil 4:16 see Leon Morris (“Καὶ ἅπαξ καὶ δις,” *NovT* 1 [1956] 205–8), who asserts that this expression has the force “at least twice.”

For an example of singular versus plural, we can refer to Josephus, who uses the plural of δῶρ- forms to refer to repeated or distinct gifts used to gain favor (e.g. *Ant.* 1.297, 329; 2.314; 4.118; 5.189; 15.205; *J.W.* 1.362; *Ap.* 2.249), but uses only the singular of κοινωνία (e.g. *Ant.* 11.341; *Ap.* 2.196).

<sup>42</sup> We might still, on other exegetical or theological grounds, assert that Paul has with this congregation a “partnership in the advance of the gospel.” Here it is asserted that, if κοινωνία is indeed concrete, then the word can only be used indirectly to assert the presence of a relationship. That is, one needs to argue: a donation was made, therefore a relationship exists. Speaking pastorally, however, one does not need to search long to find many examples where (professing) Christians have given gifts that had no clear basis in κοινωνία (neither objective not subjective).

relationship, Phil 1:3–5 would have the force, “I give thanks to God . . . because of the donation (you made) for the gospel (ministry).” Corresponding to this, fourth, if *κοινωνία* were concrete, we would need to draw the conclusion that Paul only uses this noun in Phil 1:5 to refer to the Philippians’ cash, not to the relationship they have together.<sup>43</sup>

Likewise, in Phil 4:14–15, as Marshall has made clear, we find an idiom that refers to Paul’s social reciprocity with the Philippians. With *δόσις* καὶ *λήμισις*, *λόγος*, and *(συγ)κοινωνέω* Paul uses the language of Greco-Roman friendship.<sup>44</sup> But as actions of the Philippians, the verbs *κοινωνέω* and *συγκοινωνέω* (although they can be used to refer to giving),<sup>45</sup> cannot be labels for things they sent (*τὰ παρ’ ὑμῶν*, Phil 4:18). Further, the Philippian display of solidarity with Paul, their sharing his affliction (*συγκοινωνήσαντες μου τῆ θλίψει*, Phil 4:14), has not only given tangible support to the apostle. In addition, to some degree it has brought on the Philippians, and on Epaphroditus in particular, the shame of Paul’s imprisonment and affliction.<sup>46</sup> That is, in a sense, *κοινωνέω* can refer to receiving and not just to giving (cf. Rom 15:27).

Thus in Philippians that which is a concrete reference to the Philippians’ gift is *τὰ παρ’ ὑμῶν* (Phil 4:18). Their sharing (*[συγ]κοινωνέω*) is primarily but not exclusively a reference to financial giving (Phil 4:14–15). *Κοινωνία* remains an abstraction—a relationship; it never has the lexical force of “donation” or “cash.”

3. *The poor among the saints: partitive or appositional?* How should one understand the phrase “the poor of the saints” (*τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῶν ἁγίων*, Rom 15:26b)? The authority on this subject remains Leander Keck, who argues forcibly for what is the majority opinion: the expression is partitive.<sup>47</sup> In the final analysis, it is not definitive for the thesis put forward here whether the construction is partitive (the poor are a group within the saints of Jerusalem) or exegetical (the Jerusalem saints are the poor). The issue dealt with here is not primarily the identity of the recipients but the debt of the Gentiles and whether this debt is ongoing. Georgi claims that although in Gal 2:10 the poor are understood to be Jerusalem itself, the eschatological people of God, in Rom 15:26 the poor is only a certain group within the Jerusalem congregation.<sup>48</sup> In basic agreement is Joubert, asserting that

<sup>43</sup> *Κοινωνία* appears in Phil 2:1 (“fellowship of the Spirit”) and 3:10 (“fellowship [in] Christ’s sufferings”), but obviously does not refer to Paul’s unique relationship with the Philippians.

<sup>44</sup> See Peter Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul’s Relations with the Corinthians* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987) 163, Gerald W. Peterman, “‘Thankless Thanks’: The Epistolary-Social Convention in Philippians 4:10–20,” *TynBul* 42 (1991) 261–70, Gordon Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 436, and John Barner, “Paul’s Reception of the Gift from Philippi,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 50 (2006) 225–53.

<sup>45</sup> E.g. Gal 6:6; Philo, *Spec* 2.107; Josephus, *Ant.* 16.28.

<sup>46</sup> Stephen Fowl, “Know Your Context: Giving and Receiving Money in Philippians,” *Int* 56 (2002) 53.

<sup>47</sup> Leander E. Keck, “The Poor among the Saints in the New Testament,” *ZNW* 56 (1965) 100–29.

<sup>48</sup> Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul’s Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965, 1992) 114.



the Jerusalem congregation understood itself as the poor, but this was not Paul's designation for them.<sup>49</sup>

Within this context, however, the phrase “the poor among the saints in Jerusalem” functions simply as “the Jewish Christian group in Judea.”<sup>50</sup> First, in Rom 15:27, although the grammatical antecedent of “their” (which appears twice), and of “them” is the poor, according to the sense, the antecedent must be believing Jerusalem as a whole and not just poor Jerusalem. The gospel has gone out from Jerusalem, not just from its poor. So the Gentiles' obligation is to believing Jerusalem, not just to the poor among them. Second, the obligation in this passage is most naturally grounded in ethnicity, not poverty. Would Gentiles owe an obligation to Jerusalem if it were not poor? Probably the best answer to this question is, “yes,” following the pattern of Paul and the Corinthians: he would have the right to be supported by them because of what he has given and even if he were not poor (1 Cor 9:3–18). Third, the significance of Jerusalem cannot be simply its geographic location or its tendency to experience famine. It is the spiritual mother-church of believers.<sup>51</sup> If its significance is spiritual, it follows that its significance is most naturally taken as universal and eternal.

## II. ONGOING GENTILE OBLIGATION

What follows are five reasons to conclude that Gentile obligation is operative in the twenty-first century. First, in Rom 15:27 Paul uses the same grounds for Gentile obligation that he uses to defend his right to financial support from the Corinthians in 1 Cor 9:11: “If we have sown spiritual seed (τὰ πνευματικά) among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest (τὰ σαρκικά) from you?”<sup>52</sup> Paul has given spiritual things, namely the gospel. In return he is entitled to receive material things. Does Paul, in 1 Cor 9:11, give a principle that has universal and ongoing application? If one would use this principle in the twenty-first century to defend the right to material support of those in full-time ministry, then one should apply the same to the debt of Gentiles. In each new generation Gentiles are trusting a gospel that has its origins among believing Jews. Paul asserts Jewish priority just as Jesus did in John 4:22: “Salvation is from the Jews.”<sup>53</sup> It follows that each new generation of believing Gentiles owes an obligation for spiritual benefits received.

Second, 2 Cor 8:13–14 implies that future blessing can come from Jews to Gentiles. Regarding the collection for Jerusalem, Paul encourages Corinthian

<sup>49</sup> Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor* 89–90; similarly Cranfield, *Romans* 772.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 930.

<sup>51</sup> Paul's statement that the Jerusalem above is our mother (Gal 4:26) is not destructive of our assertion. Surely Paul is not required to use the term “Jerusalem” in a monolithic or one-dimensional way.

<sup>52</sup> 1 Cor 9:11: εἰ . . . τὰ πνευματικά . . . τὰ σαρκικά. Rom 15:27: εἰ . . . τοῖς πνευματικοῖς . . . ἐν τοῖς σαρκικοῖς. It is only in 1 Corinthians 9 and Romans 15 that Paul sets these two in contrast.

<sup>53</sup> Commenting on John 4:22 Keener observes, “Contrary to the usual Gentile Christian reading of the Gospels, the Synoptic Jesus likewise required Gentiles to recognize Israel's priority and pre-eminence (Mark 7:27–29/Matt 15:24–28; Matt 8:7–8/Luke 7:6–7).” Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003) 610.

participation saying, “Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time<sup>54</sup> your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality.” In this context “your plenty” is quite clearly the Corinthians’ material gift. “Their plenty” is not so clear. Does Paul refer to financial blessings or to spiritual blessings coming from Jerusalem? Scholars debate the point.

According to Margaret Thrall, the view that Paul refers to spiritual benefits goes as far back as Chrysostom. If Paul refers to spiritual benefits, then the “idea would be the same as the thought in Rom 15:27.”<sup>55</sup> But, she says, the suggestion is problematic. “Certainly in the past the Corinthians had been spiritually indebted to the Jerusalem church, but by now they were spiritually wealthy, both in their own regard and in that of Paul.”<sup>56</sup> In the end, however, Thrall opts for a material-for-material exchange.

But a material-for-material exchange is unlikely, for the following reasons. (1) In the Greco-Roman reciprocity of the first century, social exchange need not be carried on with both sides proffering the exact same goods or services.<sup>57</sup> (2) The “chronic poverty in Jerusalem and the long-standing prosperity of Corinth” render “it unlikely that there would ever be such an economic reversal.”<sup>58</sup> (3) Paul’s poverty-riches comparisons in 2 Corinthians 8–9 are not exact. For example, Jesus, though rich, becomes literally poor in order to make others rich (2 Cor 8:9). But as an impoverished benefactor, he gives to others spiritual wealth.<sup>59</sup> (4) As 2 Cor 9:12–15 indicates, one anticipated result of the collection is Jerusalem’s thanksgiving to God and their prayers for the givers. Here we see an immediate spiritual return.<sup>60</sup>

Third, the debt of Rom 15:27 is consistent with the salvation-historical priority of the Jews mentioned elsewhere in Romans and with Paul’s desire to clarify the relationship between Jews and Gentiles seen throughout the letter.<sup>61</sup> By way of review one can cite the following:

- Rom 1:16: “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”
- Rom 2:9–10: “There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor

<sup>54</sup> Probably ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ is not eschatological (with Christian Wolff, *Der zweite Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* [Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1989] 173, n. 69; and James Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace in its Graeco-Roman Context* [Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2003] 306; contra R. P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* [Waco, TX: Word, 1986] 267; Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997] 415; and Byung-Mo Kim, *Die paulinische Kollekte* [Tübingen: Francke, 2002] 55).

<sup>55</sup> Thrall, *II Corinthians* 541, citing Chrysostom (PG 61 col 519).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, citing Betz, *2 Cor 8–9* 68.

<sup>57</sup> Contra Kim, *Kollekte* 55. See Peterman, *Paul’s Gift* 83–86 and Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace* 294–322.

<sup>58</sup> Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 592.

<sup>59</sup> See Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace* 250–56.

<sup>60</sup> Wolff, *Der zweite Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* 173–74.

<sup>61</sup> So correctly Peter Müller, “Grundlinien paulinischer Theologie (Röm 15, 14–33),” *KD* 35 (1989) 212–35, esp. 231.

and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”

- Rom 3:1–2a: “What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way!”
- Rom 11:15: “For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?”
- Rom 15:7–8: “For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy.”

On salvation-historical priority, Jerusalem need not exercise authority over the Gentile church, but surely it is significant that Paul says it is from Jerusalem, not from Antioch or Arabia, that he has preached the gospel (Rom 15:19).<sup>62</sup>

Fourth, there is a need in every generation to establish fellowship between the Gentile and the Jewish branches of the church. This point is dependent on the conclusions reached with regard to the translation and meaning of Rom 15:26. If verse 26 is better translated “establish fellowship” and if this fellowship is *caused* by the giving and receiving of a benefit in time and space, then in Rom 15:26 Paul does not speak of an objective, invisible, theological fellowship grounded solely in the atoning work of Christ. In other words, he cannot be speaking of a fellowship that exists between a Gentile Christian and a Jewish Christian even when these two do not know it exists. Rather, he is speaking of a subjective, social, historical fellowship based on a gift that is passing from specific individuals (or groups) to other specific individuals (or groups). In other words, he speaks of the fellowship of Greco-Roman social reciprocity. There is a logical corollary: the fellowship only exists when Jews and Gentiles know about it and the fellowship only lasts as long as the parties to the transaction are alive.

Though it is more explicit in Romans, it is not only there that we find fellowship connected to the collection project. Thrall rightly points out that “it is likely that Paul had purposes, or a purpose, in view in addition to the relief of poverty.”<sup>63</sup> Regarding 2 Cor 9:13 she says, “For the first time Paul reveals what the objective of the collection is in terms of ecclesiastical politics, i.e., his intention of securing some formal recognition of his Gentile churches on the part of Jerusalem.”<sup>64</sup>

Fifth, no salvation-historical event has transpired that requires the conclusion that the obligation operative in AD 57 is no longer operative in AD 2007. This assertion is not exactly an argument from silence. Rather, stated positively, it is this: the burden of proof rests on those who make the positive assertion that the obligation Paul mentions has ceased.

Some may challenge this conclusion, asserting that if Paul held to on-going Gentile obligation, he would have mentioned it in his discussion of

<sup>62</sup> Nicolas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem: A Study in Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992) 196.

<sup>63</sup> Thrall, *II Corinthians* 509.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 592.

the collection in 1 or 2 Corinthians. Instead, he says nothing about Gentile obligation in those letters.<sup>65</sup>

But the following items demonstrate that one need not assume Paul communicated the same motives for the collection in 1–2 Corinthians as he communicated in Romans. (1) There is an obvious difference of relationship. While Paul may feel the need to clarify his apostleship to the Romans, he does not need to defend himself to them to the extent that he does in the strained relationship with the Corinthians. (2) Financial misunderstanding already exists in the Corinthian congregation. In all probability, to mention Corinthian financial obligation would just make matters worse.<sup>66</sup> (3) Jew-Gentile relations, a primary issue in Romans and a reason for the collection in Romans 15, is not a primary issue in 1–2 Corinthians.<sup>67</sup> If the Gentiles among the Roman congregation have a tendency to self-importance and disdain for Jews (e.g. Rom 11:18), Paul's mention of Gentile obligation is a natural rejoinder and a check to such arrogance.<sup>68</sup> (4) It would be reductionistic to assume that Paul must have only one motivation for the collection. (5) Plainly Paul emphasizes different aspects of the collection in 1–2 Corinthians and Romans.

### III. CONCLUSION

Although Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ (Gal 3:28), they do not cease to be appropriately known as Gentile believers or as Jewish believers.<sup>69</sup> Gentiles have received the blessings of a Jewish gospel. As Jesus said, "salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). This reception of blessing creates an obligation: the required thanks.

Not only did Gentiles in the first century incur this obligation. Paul said that when "Gentiles have shared in [the Jews'] spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things." In the twenty-first century Gentiles continue to receive the Jews' spiritual things. If Gentiles owed a material response in AD 57, then there is good reason to believe that this obligation is operative in AD 2007. If the obligation is operative, Gentile congregations should be looking for ways to serve and to support (that is, to create fellowship with) messianic Jewish congregations.

<sup>65</sup> Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace* 309.

<sup>66</sup> In Paul's discussion of his material support, the issue is his right to support (ἐξουσία in 1 Cor 9:3, 6, 12 [twice], 18), never the Corinthians' obligation to provide it (such words as ὀφείλω, ἀναγκή, and δεῖ [and cognates], as applied to the Corinthians, are absent).

<sup>67</sup> Even on the subject of idol food, what is explicit are the idolatry and/or immorality that go along with the Corinthian practice, not the tension that the eating causes between ethnic groups (John Fotopoulos, *Food Offered to Idols in Roman Corinth* [Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2003]).

<sup>68</sup> A degree of disdain for the Jewish heritage of the gospel seems evident, without the need to label it full anti-Semitism (so Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996] 704; Dunn, *Romans* 662; contra Jewett, *Romans* 686).

<sup>69</sup> Paul uses the present tense when he refers to himself as a Jew (Acts 22:3); an Israelite (Rom 11:1); and as a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). Likewise, his audience in Romans is "you Gentiles" (Rom 11:13).