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Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (Mar., 1964), pp. 1-11

Published by: [The Society of Biblical Literature](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3264902>

Accessed: 06/04/2012 12:28

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ROMANS 15 14-33 AND PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF HIS APOSTOLIC MISSION*

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AT SOME time in the sixth decade of the first century — whether early or late in it is sometimes disputed but for our present purposes does not matter — the Apostle Paul, at the end of an extended stay in Corinth, sent to the church at Rome, some hundreds of miles still farther to the west, the longest of his surviving letters. The importance of this letter lies chiefly in the statement it contains of Paul's message or "gospel," but it is also significant for the light it throws on his own personal situation at the time and, more especially, on his way of understanding it. One gathers that he regards the first long chapter of his work as an apostle as about to end and another as about to begin. He has completed the preaching of the gospel as far as the Adriatic and hopes now to make Rome, where Christianity obviously had already been established, a kind of base for missionary activity even farther west — indeed, as far as Spain, the western limit of the Mediterranean world. First, however (he lets us know), he must put a "seal," so to speak, on his work thus far by taking to Jerusalem the offering of money which the largely gentile churches of Asia Minor and Greece have, for the last several years, been engaged in getting ready. The money has now been raised and Paul, accompanied by a committee of local or provincial church representatives, is about to embark for Palestine. When this token of the gratitude and loyalty of the churches he has established has been placed in the hands of the leaders of the Jerusalem church, Paul will feel that his apostolic work in the whole region from Jerusalem to Illyricum will have been completed; not only will the evangelization of that area have been accomplished (in the sense that the gospel will have been preached and churches established in all of its provinces), but the unity and solidarity of these churches, both Jewish and gentile, will have been, he hopes, confirmed and stabilized. He will then be free to do what for a long time he has been wanting to do — namely, to initiate a new phase of his work in the virgin, or largely

* The Presidential Address delivered at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature on January 1, 1964, at Union Theological Seminary, New York City.

virgin, territory west of Italy. And even now, as he waits in Corinth, his mind is largely preoccupied with this future undertaking.

All this rather clearly appears in vss. 14–33 of the 15th chapter of the letter to the Romans (with a little help from scattered remarks elsewhere in the letter and in Corinthians and Galatians); and up to this point in the recovering of Paul's situation and intention when he wrote this letter we can proceed with considerable assurance. But one can hardly go so far as this in that direction without wanting very much to go further and indeed without feeling some confidence that one can. A letter of such length, written at so crucial a moment, we are bound to surmise, must actually reflect Paul's situation far more fully and subtly than we are likely at first glance to discern. Where so much is clearly said, much more must be implied. Where the lines themselves are so full, there must be much to be read between them. Thus students of Paul's letters have always thought; and (I say) it is inevitable that they should. It is, then, an old theme I am proposing for our reflection in this half-hour. I venture to do so because the theme itself is so important and so fascinating; not because I feel I have anything very important or fascinating to say about it. At the most I shall hope to stimulate your own reflections; at the least, not too seriously to interrupt them.

We can hardly avoid beginning with a very obvious and familiar point — namely, that Paul reveals himself here, as so often elsewhere, as being primarily concerned with the gospel and that he interprets his calling as an apostle to be primarily a call to proclaim it. He has told the Corinthians that God did not send him, even to baptize, but only to preach. In the present passage this way of understanding his particular mission appears, not only in the repeated references to the preaching he has done and intends to do, but also in the statement that between Jerusalem and Illyricum “there is no more room for [him] to work.” He has “finished” his own task in that vast area; and this could have been said only if his task was the particular one of preaching, to which he is so constantly referring here and elsewhere.

A second point is almost equally obvious. Paul understood his calling to preach as a calling to preach *to the nations*. The ambiguity of the word ἔθνη on the lips of a first-century Jew has given rise to a great deal of controversy. When Paul calls himself an apostle εἰς τὰ ἔθνη or speaks of his ἀποστολὴν εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, does this last word mean “the gentiles” or “the nations”? When in Gal 2 7–10 Paul tells of what looks like a division of responsibility between Peter and himself — Peter being entrusted with the gospel to the Jews and Paul with that εἰς τὰ ἔθνη — are we to see a division between Jews and non-Jews everywhere or a division between Palestine, or some part of it, on the one hand, and the extra-Palestinian world,

the largely non-Jewish "nations" of the Roman empire, on the other? Each of these understandings has been defended, and one of them is almost if not quite as difficult as the other. How could either arrangement have actually been carried out? How could Paul have refrained from preaching to Jews in his mission field; and is it at all likely that Peter and his associates, even if they were content to think of their mission as limited to Jews, would have accepted also a geographical restriction? Besides, Paul actually refers to his work among Jews, and certainly strongly suggests that Peter had been at work in largely gentile areas.

Precisely what is meant by these sentences in Galatians 2 we shall probably never know; but so far as the word *ἔθνη* is concerned, there is plenty of evidence that Paul used it in both senses. The question, I suppose, is one of emphasis or of logical priority. Did Paul think of himself as sent primarily to the nations (and therefore largely to the non-Jews who comprised them) or did he interpret his mission primarily as to non-Jews (and therefore to the nations where they were chiefly found)? I do not venture to say, and am not even sure that the question itself is a proper one. I do believe, however, along with Cullmann, Munck, Bornkamm, and many others, that the geographical consideration was an important one for Paul — that he regarded himself as having a mission *to the nations* as such and that this conception of his rôle or task, not only meant something as regards its objectives and range, but also had a bearing on his methods of work. He could say that he had completed the preaching of the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum only because this statement would have meant for him that the message had been proclaimed and the church planted in each of the nations north and west across Asia Minor and the Greek peninsula — "proclaimed" widely enough and "planted" firmly enough to assure that the name of Christ would soon be heard throughout its borders. And in view of the way Paul speaks so consistently in provincial terms, one may wonder if by "nations" he would not have meant simply the Roman provinces in that area. He was appointed to preach Christ to the nations; and his work was by no means finished. Hence he is looking now with eager interest and deliberate purpose to Rome and Spain and presumably to the Gaul (or what Strabo calls the "Celtica") which lay between.

We come now to a question which cannot be quite so easily answered: Just what significance did the preaching to all the nations have for Paul and how did he think of his own relation to it? Whatever opinion we may have of Johannes Munck's book, *Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte*,¹

¹ Copenhagen, 1954; Eng. tr., *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London, 1959). I also call attention to two extended reviews of the book: W. D. Davies in *New Tes-*

it has the great merit of forcing us to look afresh at this question. There can be no doubt that the belief was current, at any rate in parts of the early church, that the End would not come — that Christ would not return — till the gospel had been preached to all the nations.² Given Paul's passionate commitment to the gentile mission, we should certainly not be surprised to learn that he shared this view; and at the moment when we are chiefly watching him — that is, when he wrote Romans — we can scarcely doubt that he did. How otherwise could we understand his argument in ch. 11 that God had sent a "hardening" on Israel till the "fullness of the gentiles" should come in, at which time "all Israel" would be "saved"? However we understand *πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν*, is not the necessary prior proclaiming of the gospel to all the nations clearly implied? And as Munck points out, much of ch. 10, with its emphasis upon the importance, indeed the indispensability, of the preaching, reflects the same view.

One cannot help wondering, however, whether Paul always thought in this way. He had such frequent occasion to refer to the *eschaton* and the Lord's return that it must seem strange, on the assumption that he consistently entertained this view of the preaching and that it was as important to him as Cullmann and Munck aver — I say, it must seem strange, on this assumption, that he nowhere else clearly expresses it. Cullmann, to be sure, and Munck, following him, find a reference to it in II Thess 2 6-7,³ understanding Paul to mean there that it is the fact of the gospel's not having been yet preached to all the nations which is holding back, "restraining," the appearance of the Antichrist and the beginning of the final act of history. But this can scarcely be claimed as a *clear* reference. And if the lack of clarity is explained by the fact that we are dealing here with a small apocalypse and should expect the language to be somewhat enigmatic, one may still wonder that so relevant an idea, having such constant bearing on Paul's daily work, is not unambiguously expressed in other contexts. Still, in view of what is plainly implied in Rom 11 25 ff. it cannot be denied that Paul held it, and one must therefore be open to the possibility that the II Thessalonians passage, too, may in some way reflect it.

When Cullmann and Munck go on, however, to affirm that Paul thought of Christ's return as dependent on *his* — that is, on Paul's

tament Studies, 2 (1955), pp. 60-72, and Morton Smith in *HTR*, 50 (1957), pp. 107-31.

² See Mark 13 10 (cf. Matt 24 14); Munck points to other passages which, with varying degrees of plausibility, can be claimed as reflecting the same idea (*op. cit.*, pp. 31-32; Eng. tr., pp. 39-40).

³ Oscar Cullmann, "Le caractère eschatologique de devoir missionnaire et de la conscience apostolique de S. Paul," *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses*, 16 (1936), pp. 210-45.

own — preaching to all the nations, I think we must more seriously demur. It must be said, not only that there is not enough evidence to justify our attributing to Paul an image of himself which would border on what Morton Smith⁴ in his review of Munck calls “egomania,” but also that cogent evidence can be cited against it. Here we must walk carefully, for no one can doubt that Paul had a peculiar sense of vocation and a sense of peculiar vocation — that he thought of himself and his work as having an extraordinary importance of some kind in the working out of God’s purpose in Christ. Over and over again in reading his letters, one is impressed, and sometimes repelled, by signs of what may appear to be an almost morbid sense of his own importance. Schonfield in his *The Jew of Tarsus*⁵ goes further than anyone else I have read in laying stress on this element in Paul’s self-portraiture. He holds that we are confronted here with something psychologically quite extraordinary, which, when looked at in conjunction with the equally extraordinary zeal of Paul’s earlier persecuting activity, is susceptible of no ordinary explanation. Schonfield makes the rather startling proposal that Paul had thought of *himself* as destined for the Messiah’s rôle. It was on this account that he resisted so fiercely the claims for Jesus: they would have seemed to him a kind of personal affront. And he was able to accept these claims at length only because he came to see his own rôle as that of being “Christ” to the gentiles: God had set him apart from his mother’s womb in order to “reveal his Son in [him]” to the non-Jewish world. Here was a task worthy even of one who had dared believe he was himself the predestined Christ! It is not likely that we shall find ourselves persuaded by so bold a proposal, although it is worth noting that it comes very near to being fully anticipated by Windisch in his *Paulus und Christus*.⁶ The suggestion does point, however, to something remarkable in Paul’s consciousness of his apostleship, something for which Cullmann and Munck are also seeking to account.⁷

I believe, however, that we must reject their proposal also. It is true that Paul will not let it be said that he is not an apostle — every whit as much an apostle as any other — and, moreover, that he clearly ascribed to his apostleship a special, perhaps even a unique, character. If, as I believe, he regarded himself as being the only person, outside the number of Jesus’ own disciples, who had been called to the apostolate

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 130.

⁵ H. J. Schonfield, *The Jew of Tarsus: An Unorthodox Portrait of Paul*.

⁶ H. Windisch, *Paulus und Christus*.

⁷ It should be noted, however, that some of the passages often cited in support of the view that Paul ascribed a unique importance to his apostleship lose a measure of their force when it is observed that he uses the same terms in speaking of other Christians; for example, he can say, . . . ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός (Gal 2 20), but he can also write, . . . Χριστός ἐν ὑμῖν (Col 1 27).

in the highest sense of that term, then he was, as he would have thought of it, the only apostle (in that sense) who had been sent *primarily* or *expressly* to the gentiles or the nations. It may also be suggested that Paul may well have believed that on him particularly God had laid the responsibility of *defending* the preaching to the gentiles, of establishing and protecting the *right* of the gentiles to the gospel. Perhaps he is referring to the agony he had suffered in his struggle, almost if not quite alone, to secure and maintain this right of the gentiles when in Col 1 24 he goes so far as to speak of his completing in his own flesh "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church." One can say all of this by way of explaining the apparent extravagance of Paul's language in more than one reference to himself. But there is really no evidence that he regarded himself as the only evangelist (or even as the only *apostle*) to non-Jews. Certainly he never says so; on the contrary, he quite obviously knows that the gospel had been, and was being, preached among them by other evangelists, and there is no suggestion that he does not fully respect the validity of their preaching and the authenticity of the churches they have been the means of establishing. This fact unmistakably appears in the letter to the Romans, written with deferential regard to a church which, it is quite clear, he had not founded or even visited.

But at least two other considerations can be cited to the same effect. One is the length of Paul's stay in the area he describes as "from Jerusalem . . . to Illyricum," that is, in Syria, Cilicia, Asia Minor generally, Macedonia, and Achaia. We know that it could not have been a shorter period than some fifteen years.⁸ There must be some uncertainty as to how this time was *distributed* among the various "nations" or provinces; but Paul's own words forbid our reducing its total length — that is, if we are to assume that the moment of his seeing the Lord at or near Damascus was also the moment when he received his apostolic calling, as at several points he strongly suggests it was, and also if we are to suppose that he entered at once, or almost at once, upon fulfilling it. One may, of course, argue that although in retrospect it seemed to Paul that his calling from the beginning was a calling to apostleship among the nations, actually he did not realize that this was its special character till several years after the calling itself was received. Even so, however, we are forced to recognize that when he writes Romans Paul has been engaged for many years — must we not say at least ten? — in work among the largely gentile churches with whose affairs the surviving letters are chiefly concerned. Much of his time and energy, as he tells us, during this period were taken up with what he calls "the care of all the churches" — that is, with the nurturing and regulating of Christian

⁸ This we know from Gal 1 18–2 1 and II Cor 12 2.

communities which he or his associates had already established. It is clear that this pastoral and administrative work irked him and that he wanted to be free of it. One can readily sense his relief when he writes Rom 15: at last he can take up again the work he was really called to do! The question I am raising is whether he would have been able to remain so long in what was really only a small part of the Graeco-Roman world if he had believed that the eschatological event, God's final judging and saving act, was waiting till he should make an initial proclamation of the gospel in every nation.

But another and much more decisive argument against his having entertained such a conception of his own personal place in the *Heilsgeschichte* (to use the current term) comes into view in the letter to the Philippians. Whether we think of this letter as written in Ephesus or in Caesarea or in Rome (or somewhere else), it undoubtedly reflects a time when Paul's understanding of his apostleship had fully matured and much or all of the work referred to in Rom 15 14 ff. had been done. He is in prison and manifestly in great and imminent danger, but he talks in what would appear to be a rather relaxed fashion about the prospects. He does not know whether he will survive the approaching crisis or not; but he is ready for either eventuality. Indeed, he does not know which to prefer; in some ways, he would rather depart and be with Christ, but he knows that his staying may be important to the church at Philippi and presumably to other churches. Therefore, he rather hopes to be set free again and, on the whole, believes that in God's providence he will be. All of this is quite intelligible and fits with much that we know of Paul. But what has happened to the conviction which, according to Cullmann and Munck, has dominated his whole career, that God has called him to preach to all the nations? Surely, if he had held it, he would have known in advance what would be — must be — the outcome of every imprisonment or other obstructing incident till his high task should have been accomplished! It is argued that Paul was ready to accept death at Rome because he was able to think of his witnessing before Caesar as being in itself a preaching to all the nations and therefore a fulfilling of his calling. But is not such a rationalization on Paul's part less likely than that we are dealing here with a rationalization on the part of the modern interpreter? Besides, would we not, on Munck's assumption, expect in Philippians some reference by Paul to this radically new way of interpreting his calling and some sign of the agony he must have suffered in achieving it? If the idea that God was relying on him, Paul, to preach the gospel to all the nations was so important and well known an element in his teaching that in II Thess 2 6-7 he can refer to himself as "the restrainer" with confidence that his readers will understand his meaning, is it not strange that he should now be talking as though he had never entertained such an idea at all? I simply cannot

imagine a person of the mentality which Munck attributes to Paul speaking about the imminent possibility of his death in the manner of Paul's remarks in Phil 1 19-26.

We are left to conclude, therefore, that although Paul may have thought — and certainly did when Rom 11 11 ff. was written — that the preaching of the gospel to all the nations was a precondition of the *eschaton*; although he was convinced that God had called him to that work and may even have believed that he was the only witness of Jesus' resurrection (and therefore the only "apostle" in the highest sense of that term) who had been directed explicitly and particularly to the gentiles; and although he may have regarded himself as having been set apart as a supreme *defender* of the propriety of the gentile mission — although all of this may be true, he did not think of himself as the only preacher to the nations or find for himself a place in God's plan quite so exalted as Cullmann and Munck assert.

With this conclusion in mind, let us return to Rom 15 14 ff. and especially to vs. 19: ὥστε με ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλήμ καὶ κύκλῳ μέχρι τοῦ Ἰλλυρικοῦ πεπληρωκέναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ. I do not need to say here that this statement of Paul's has been a crux for a long time. And, may I add, I am not for a moment supposing that after this paper it will cease to be! Nevertheless, I want to make a suggestion or two about it. The most puzzling phrase has been ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλήμ . . . μέχρι τοῦ Ἰλλυρικοῦ. How can Paul set these limits to the preaching he has done? There is no need to present here the reasons for some surprise at the mention of Illyricum and for real perplexity in the reference to Jerusalem.⁹ Familiar also are the various ways of explaining how Paul might have thought of his ministry up to that point as having had these particular termini.¹⁰ On this matter I shall not comment

⁹ If it be presumed that Paul either personally or through one of his associates had actually carried the gospel into Illyricum, the silence of Acts and (except here) of Paul himself about any activity of his in this area can be accounted for in any number of plausible ways. But his way of setting the eastern limit raises a real problem. How can he say that he has "completed" the preaching of the gospel "from Jerusalem . . .," when in Galatians he tells us quite emphatically that he did not do any preaching in Jerusalem at all, and when moreover he clearly implies the same thing in the context of this very verse in Romans? For he tells us here that he has been careful not to preach where another has done so first; and surely nothing is more certain than that the gospel had been preached, not only in and around Jerusalem, but also as far as Damascus and probably Antioch before Paul's Christian career began.

¹⁰ Many scholars have tried to meet the difficulties attaching in some degree to both place names by taking them in an exclusive sense: Paul's preaching had begun just beyond what might be regarded as the neighborhood of Jerusalem and had extended to the borders of Illyricum. But this is admittedly not the natural way to understand Paul's statement. A. S. Geysler in *New Testament Studies* (6 [1960], pp.

further than to say that I believe the clue to the solution of the problem lies in the presence of the word *πεπληρωκέναι*, which in its own way has also been an occasion of perplexity among commentators, or at any rate of wide ranging conjecture and surmise. Paul says, "I have *completed the gospel* from Jerusalem to Illyricum." This expression occurs nowhere else in the epistles, although it is striking that in Col 1 25 Paul uses a similar phrase, *εἰς ὑμᾶς πληρῶσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ*, and uses it in a not dissimilar connection, as he speaks of the office (*οἰκονομία*) given him "toward you [the Colossians] to fulfill the word of God," or, as it might also be translated, "to fulfill to you the word of God." The fact that the gentiles or the nations are mentioned later in the passage confirms the impression of a possible similarity in sense between this "fulfilling" of the "word" to the Colossians and the "fulfilling" of the "gospel" in Rom 15 19.

But we are concerned especially with the latter phrase. What does it mean? We may rule out the idea that Paul is claiming here to have "done something" to the gospel (or, in the other case, to the "word") itself — that is, to have made adequate a "gospel" which was inadequate, to have perfected a "word" which was imperfect. Surely the full gospel had been given by God himself; the apostle's task was to *proclaim* it, not to complete it. One may somewhat more plausibly suppose that the "fullness" applies to Paul's way of *preaching* the gospel: he has preached it fully, that is, in all its height and depth, in its totality. But especially in view of the context of this phrase in Rom 15, it is not strange that almost all interpreters have understood Paul to be using it in a geographical connection: he has completed his task of preaching the gospel in a certain area. But when he then describes that area in the way he does, his use of the word *πληρῶ* may seem at first to accentuate the difficulties which that description involves.

Actually, however, *πληρῶ* here, while it might mean either that Paul had done all the preaching in the area from Jerusalem to Illyricum or that he himself had preached in every part of it, does not need to be taken in either sense, and, I am persuaded, should not be. *Πληρῶ*

156-59) seeks to solve the problem with the suggestion that Paul is not giving either an historical or a geographical account of his work when he makes this statement, but is simply accrediting himself as an apostle equal in every way to the Twelve. "From Jerusalem to Illyricum" is really a symbolic term, a formula indicating the field or scope of any true apostle's work, "to Illyricum" being only the equivalent of "to the ends of the earth" in Acts 1 8. But in view of the fact that in the whole context of this remark Paul is plainly speaking about his immediate travel plans, making unmistakable references to Rome, Jerusalem, and Spain as actual places he expects to visit, this way of understanding the perplexing phrase is, like the one just mentioned, certainly not the most natural and, it would appear, should be adopted only as a last resort.

can mean, to complete what is incomplete; to fill out what has been partly done. So I understand Bauer to take it at this point. Paul is saying here simply that the gospel has now been preached in every nation or province of Greece and Asia Minor and, of course, in Syria and Palestine. He does not mean that he has done all the preaching or even that he has preached in all the places — indeed he says in the very next sentence that he has not. But where others had not proclaimed the gospel, he has made it a point to do so; and now he has, in this sense, “completed” the preaching in that whole northeastern segment of the Mediterranean world he has described. Looked at in this way, the very word *πληρώω* involves an acknowledgment on Paul’s part of the preaching work of others. We should assume that as he now moves farther west, he will continue to understand his own task as that of filling out, or thus “completing,” the preaching to the nations. And indeed he makes this quite clear. He hopes he may be of some help to the Christians at Rome as he passes through, and they to him; but his real objective is territory beyond Italy which the gospel has not yet reached. He is coming to Rome, but only on his way to Spain.¹¹

And after Spain? Even apart from the evidence that Paul ascribed the greatest importance to the preaching to all the nations and thought of himself as called to take an important part in the completing of this task — even apart from these considerations, it would seem highly improbable either that he would have regarded Spain as a kind of natural or inevitable terminus of his career as an apostle or that he would have given no thought to where he would next go. He must have had plans, however tentative. Certainly he nowhere tells us what they were. But does he provide even a hint of them? May I conclude this discussion by suggesting the bare possibility that by using the word *κύκλος* in our passage he does so? I have spoken of other problems which make Rom 15 19 a *crux interpretum*; καὶ κύκλω is also a problem. This appears, not only in the variety of the ways in which the phrase has been understood by modern translators and commentators, but also in the ancient doubt as to whether it belonged after *Ἱερουσαλήμ* or after *Ἰλλυρικοῦ*. It is not necessary to speak here of the several ways in which the word *κύκλω* has been understood in this passage or to indicate the difficulties which have been found severally in them. The problem has its center in the fact that *κύκλος* apparently usually meant a complete circle, however inexact or approximate, not an arc

¹¹ That when he wrote Romans Paul had in mind other churches which he had not established but which he might visit in the course of his further missionary activity and that he actually sent this letter (substantially, but without 15 14 ff.) to some of these churches is argued in “A Note on the Text of Romans,” in *NTSt*, 2 (1956), pp. 191–93.

or perhaps a generally curving *direction*, which is the meaning usually found here.¹²

May I suggest the possibility — and I hope I may be understood as doing no more than this — that it occurred to Paul to describe the territory already evangelised in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece in circular terms — to speak of it as lying within a circle — because he is thinking of the whole evangelistic enterprise to which he is committed as lying within the circle of the nations around the Mediterranean Sea? The gospel preaching in that segment of this circle whose limits are roughly indicated by “from Jerusalem to Illyricum” has been completed; the rest of the circle has yet to be filled in. It is at least possible that this rather casual κύκλω reflects Paul’s hope and expectation of making a complete circuit of the nations, both north and south of the Sea, planting the gospel where it had not been planted by another. If this should be true, his over-all conception of his apostolic mission would not have been of a series of missionary journeys between Jerusalem and various points in Asia Minor and Greece, but rather of one great journey beginning and ending at Jerusalem, but encompassing the whole Mediterranean world in its scope.

¹² This appears to be true even when the dative is used in the adverbial sense of “around about.” Even then the idea of a circle or ring is still present. In the present passage, for example, if the term is taken in this way, Jerusalem is being thought of as the center of a rough circle — “Jerusalem and the surrounding country.” Because one would expect to find the article before κύκλω if the word had been intended in this sense and because there appears to be no reason why Paul should thus have emphasized the work in the Jerusalem area, most commentators and translators take κύκλω as a reference to an arc or curve — “from Jerusalem as far around as Illyricum.” But against taking it so is the fact, which a glance at Liddell and Scott will confirm, that κύκλος normally meant a circle of some kind. A search through six books of Strabo did not yield a single clear instance of its use of a curve or an arc, although it was found almost forty times in the other sense. At one point (1, 1, 21) Strabo distinguishes between κύκλος (as circle) and περιφέρεια (as curve). The latter term, however, can be shown to have sometimes meant a circle; and it would be rash to say that κύκλος could never mean a curve or that κύκλω might not sometimes indicate a curving direction. Indeed, Sanday and Headlam direct us to a passage in the *Anabasis* (vii,1) where it definitely seems to do so. It does seem clear, however, that κύκλος usually and normally meant a completed circle. Because of this fact it has been proposed that κύκλω here is an allusion to a round trip between Jerusalem and Illyricum or perhaps to several round trips: Paul has gone back and forth between the two limits. The variant Western reading which places καὶ κύκλω after Ἰλλυρικοῦ instead of after Ἱερουσαλήμ rather suggests this understanding. Arthur S. Way (*The Letters of Paul*) in his paraphrase tries to meet the difficulty in another, but basically related, way: “Starting from Jerusalem and making a complete circuit of all the countries as far as Illyricum . . .” But either of the more usual ways of understanding the phrase here would seem to be preferable to this.