

## Mapping, Mission and Mimesis: Paul's redefinition of imperial articulations of travel

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*DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION*

*Abstract:* Paul's claims to travel in Romans 15 function as status claims within the larger domain of Roman imperial consciousness of spatiality and its manipulation. Travel was vital to the Empire not only on a practical level, but perhaps most significantly on a rhetorical level, used to validate and emphasize Roman sovereignty. Paul uses and redefines imperial travel-related rhetoric in order to achieve a "remapping" of the Empire, offering an alternate polity with an alternate sovereign within the same geographical boundaries.

*Words are his sails. The way they are set turns them into concepts.*<sup>1</sup>

*Introduction: The interpretive problem of Romans 15:19-20*

In writing his letter to the Christian community at Rome, Paul hopes to gain their support for his planned mission to Spain. In order to garner this support, Paul needs to prove to the Roman Christians the validity of his apostolic authority and credentials. He accomplishes this task chiefly in the epilogue of the letter; as Käsemann writes, "[f]or various reasons he needed Rome's help in his work, and he thus thought it good even without some pressing occasion to acquaint this unknown congregation with his preaching and work before giving his concern a clear contour. To that extent the whole epistle prepares the way for this "epilogue."<sup>2</sup> Paul's presentation of his mission in Romans 15 is particularly significant, therefore, not simply for the information it provides regarding Paul's personal background, but also regarding Paul's understanding of his role as apostle and of his message.<sup>3</sup>

In Romans 15:18-20, Paul maps the spread of the gospel onto the map of the Mediterranean, claiming imperial territory for the gospel: "... from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the good news of Christ. Thus I make it my ambition to proclaim the good news, not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on someone else's foundation...." Scholars do not agree on the type of "map" Paul's statements represent. For example, Geysler holds that it is useless to try to find an historical or geographical sense for Romans 15:19 as the verse "est donc rien que l'attestation que donne St Paul de l'authenticité de son apostolat."<sup>4</sup> In fact, he states, "la confusion totale nous attend au moment où nous décidons de donner un sens historique et géographique à ce passage."<sup>5</sup> Paul is simply making a basic statement of accountability. Others recognize the geographical nature of the verses but have difficulty placing them in context. For example, Käsemann describes the geographical and travel-related terms in the passage - "The eastern part of the empire is defined by Jerusalem on the one hand as the salvation-historical center of the world and the starting point

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Benjamin, "Das Passagen-Werk," in *Paris, Capitale Du XIXe Siècle, le Livre Des Passages*, trans. J. Lacoste (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1989), 491.

<sup>2</sup>Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 390.

<sup>3</sup>See John Knox, "Romans 15:14-33 and Paul's Conception of His Apostolic Mission," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83, no. 1 (March 1964): 1.

<sup>4</sup>Albert S. Geysler, "Un essai d'explication de Rom. XV.19," *New Testament Studies* 6 (January 1960): 158.

<sup>5</sup>Geysler, "Un essai d'explication" 157.

of the gospel, and by the end of the Via Aegnatia on the other hand” - but goes on to rule out a geographical meaning for the passage: “the statement is an enormous exaggeration when measured by geographical reality... it is understandable only on the basic premise that the apostle views his work as preparatory for the imminent parousia.”<sup>6</sup> Käsemann is here focusing on Paul’s use of the verb πληρώω, which is generally translated in the sense of “fulfilled” or “fully preached.” Similarly Fitzmeyer, also recognizing that the verses represent a geographical point of view, states, “[r]hetorically, he exaggerates, because one may wonder what he means by “fully preached.” This term, however, gives us an inkling of the way he conceived of his apostolate during the preceding twelve years or so; he was called a pioneer preacher of the gospel...”<sup>7</sup> The geographical references are simply rhetorical exaggerations.

Paul seems, however, to place these statements in a realistic framework of travel as he emphasizes how his previous travels have hindered desired travel: “This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you” (15:22). He hopes to see the Roman Christian community on his way to Spain, “and to be sped on my journey there by you” (v.24). Stuhlmacher, attentive to these travel details, begins to recognize the importance of these plans when he affirms, “this fulfillment of his commission to go out with the gospel, which Paul very briefly outlines here geographically, represents an enormous achievement. And it appears all the greater the more one takes into consideration ancient travel conditions and living circumstances.”<sup>8</sup> This is an important statement, but Stuhlmacher does not take it any further.

In a similar fashion, other scholars have focused on the geographical references in the verses in the context of the use of specific place names themselves, giving descriptions of the location of the lesser-known Illyricum and analyzing when, chronologically, Paul could have visited Illyricum in the context of his missionary journeys. For example, Dodd comments on the passage, “He has taken the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire as his sphere of work, exclusive of those places where other Christian missionaries have been first in the field, and his work in this sphere is now finished, since he has preached from Jerusalem right round to Illyricum.”<sup>9</sup> Dodd then goes on to explain where Illyricum was located and when Paul might have visited the area. Like Dodd, Barrett and Bruce also describe the route Paul might have

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<sup>6</sup>Käsemann, *Romans*, 395.

<sup>7</sup>Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible Vol. 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 713 The verb has been interpreted differently; see, for example, Knox: “[Paul] 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.” Knox, “Romans 15:14–33,” 3. Paul has “completed” his task of preaching the gospel in areas the good news has not yet reached, not “everywhere” but “in a sufficient number of important centers to make the subsequent missionizing of their regional hinterlands by local colleagues feasible.” Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 914. Jervis disagrees with this interpretation of the verb, stating that it does not indicate *where* the gospel has been preached, but *how*: “Paul’s statement about the fulfilling of the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum is another statement about the manner in which the gospel has been preached in these places. Paul says that the gospel has been fully preached, in the power of signs and wonders, in an arc around the northeastern Mediterranean. This information serves to qualify further the manner in which he writes this letter. For Paul here is stressing his apostolic credentials.” L. Ann Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans: A Comprehensive Letter Structure Investigation*, JSNT Suppl. Series 55 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press (Sheffield Academic Press), 1991), 123–24.

<sup>8</sup>Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 238.

<sup>9</sup>C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1932), 227.

taken to get to Illyricum and when a visit there might have fit into his itinerary, without discussing the role of these travel claims in the passage.<sup>10</sup>

These claims to travel in Romans 15:19-20 and Paul's remarks in 15:24, 28 on his plans to travel to Spain therefore remain difficult to navigate in terms of their geographical significance. Paul's geographical references are either pushed aside as incidental background information or mere rhetorical flourish, or are approached from a more descriptive standpoint, in terms of the locations of the places mentioned and where Paul's visits to them might fit into his missionary work. Paul's geographical presentation of his mission may be taken more seriously, however, when viewed as a type of rhetorical geography; "la confusion totale" does not have to swamp our small interpretive vessels. The question is not when or even whether Paul could have visited Illyricum, but why he makes this claim - the rhetorical place of travel references in Paul's location of the gospel. In Romans 15, Paul uses travel and geography rhetorically in order to make a status claim, to prove his authenticity as an apostle and the validity of his mission, claiming the map of the Mediterranean as Christ's own. His travel terminology draws on Roman imperial vocabulary of travel as Paul constructs a discourse of global universality for the gospel in the context of empire. In articulating his mission as encompassing the circle of the known world, Paul adopts and assigns new value to imperial articulations of travel and geography, mapping his mission world onto the Roman world. This claiming of imperial territory through travel vocabulary, Paul's mimicking of imperial language of travel and geography, can be interpreted as an example of mimesis as Paul imitates an imperial construction in order to make it his (or rather Christ's) own.

### *Mimesis*

In Romans 15:19-20, Paul lays claim to an imperial vocabulary of travel and geography, mapping the territory of the gospel onto the borders of the Roman empire. Paul's claiming of imperial space through the rhetoric of travel and geography may be helpfully articulated through the application of the concept of mimesis, specifically as defined by Michael Taussig in his work *Mimesis and Alterity* (New York 1993).<sup>11</sup> Taussig describes the mimetic faculty as "the nature that culture uses to create second nature, the faculty to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become Other. The wonder of mimesis lies in the granting of the copy the character and power of the original, to the point whereby the representation may even assume that character and that power."<sup>12</sup> The key point about mimesis for Taussig, the "magic of mimesis," is the ability of the representation to not simply affect but to take power from what it represents.<sup>13</sup> Taussig gives the example of an Emberá shaman (from the eastern region of

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<sup>10</sup>See C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1957), 276; F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), 261.

<sup>11</sup>Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>13</sup>This concept of the "magic of mimesis" is built upon Frazer's description of "sympathetic magic" in *The Golden Bough*. Frazer identifies two classes of magic, similarity (imitation) and contact (contagion): "If we analyze the principles of thought on which magic is based, they will probably be found to resolve themselves into two; first, that like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause; and second, that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed. The former principle may be called the Law of Similarity, the latter the law of Contact or Contagion. From the first of these principles, namely the Law of Similarity, the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by imitating it." James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough Part One: The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, 3rd ed.

Panama) who, on a journey with some companions to find a buried chest of money, had a vision of a gringo boat, but couldn't catch up to it in his canoe. He determined that it was an evil spirit boat, but instead of performing a defensive ritual, the shaman "boldly decided to take the initiative and acquire the gringo spirit-crew for himself, to capture them so as to add to his stable of spirit-powers."<sup>14</sup> The shaman does this by making a copy of the boat and its crew which he keeps inside the village. Through making a copy of the spirit-crew (though an imperfect copy, as some of the crew members lack heads or feet), the shaman is able to harness their power for his own ends.

Mimesis does not apply simply to the making of material artifacts, however. It relates also to the creation of mental images, and to speech. Taussig describes a chant of the Cuna people, also from Panama, which consists of a long series of quotations: the chanter quotes his teacher, the teacher was quoting a mythical hero, the hero was quoting someone from a Chocó village, who was himself quoting a chief in the spirit world.<sup>15</sup> A new chant is created out of old speech, the speech of others being copied in order to say something new. This mimetic component of speech may be compared to Bakhtin's discussion of "reaccentuation" in discourse. All speech arrives in the mouth previously spoken: "All words have the "taste" of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, and age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions."<sup>16</sup> Language is never neutral or impersonal, but bears the marks of other people's contexts and intentions. Because words bear these marks of previous speakers, they must be reaccented in order to become part of one's own worldview: "The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention."<sup>17</sup> To use a word, the speaker responds to previous conversations, but adds his or her own intentions to the discourse as well. The "copy" of the word thus belongs to the "original," but is not identical to it.

While involving the copying or imitation of an Other, mimesis (whether verbal or physical) is not a passive process, a losing or yielding of the self into the Other, as articulated in the work of Horkheimer and Adorno.<sup>18</sup> Taussig describes the process rather as an "active yielding," using an example from his fieldwork with the Ingano people along the Putumayo river in southwest Colombia. The Ingano ritual of healing involves the taking of a hallucinatory medicine called yagé, used to bring forth mental pictures referred to as *pintas* ("paintings"). These "paintings" or images have curative functions as they can communicate to the healer the nature of the illness and the way in which it might be cured. Taussig relates the experience of one Ingano man who approached a healer for help with severe headaches. Upon taking yagé, the man saw a "painting" first of angels, then of jungle birds, then of Ingano people dressed as

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(London: Macmillan, 1911), 52. Taussig notes the strange connection of copy to original in this process, as motion is from copy to original, thought to fact, rather than the other way around; for example, it is first piercing the effigy of an enemy, the copy of the enemy, that the enemy then experiences a similar pain. See Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 48.

<sup>14</sup>Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 15.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 109.

<sup>16</sup> Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981): 293.

<sup>17</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*: 293.

<sup>18</sup>Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 227.

healers, and finally of a battalion of the colonizing army dressed in gold, fully armed and dancing. The man feels an intense desire to enter into the image, to join with the army in their dance. This image and the man's response, his desire to enter into it, grants the healer access to the power required to resolve the man's headaches.<sup>19</sup> Taussig describes this desire to enter into the image as an active process, an "active yielding," as it is through the entering into the image of the state army that the power of that army is not only captured, but is in a sense intensified: "[t]he image is more powerful than what it is an image of."<sup>20</sup> The colonized Ingano man gains the power of the colonizer through his "painting" of the golden army, his mimicking of the state apparatus.<sup>21</sup> Image-making therefore is shown to be a high-stakes process, as the forming of an image involves drawing out the power, the very nature, of the thing being represented.<sup>22</sup>

It is critical to note the active nature of mimesis as it is through the process of active yielding that difference is asserted, or a "space between." As Walter Benjamin states, "Words are his sails. They way they are set turns them into concepts."<sup>23</sup> The words, or images created through words, are the sails. These images may be set differently, to catch the wind, to come about, to luff... Taussig writes, "the sails as images (read mimesis) develop into concepts according to how they are set. Here is the space for human agency and shrewdness, the setting of the sail within the buffeting of history. This is the decisive factor, setting the sail's edge tensed so the image billows into the driving concept..."<sup>24</sup> Mimesis is not simply about becoming the Other. Through mimesis comes the possibility of negotiating difference, of creating a distance from the imitated.<sup>25</sup> The copy is not an exact copy; in a similar way to the use of the photocopier, where the copy made never looks exactly the same as the original (a smudge on the screen, an uneven distribution of toner, an enlargement or reduction of the original), the mimed copy, the representation, demands and creates a certain degree of difference from the represented.

Mimesis is necessarily linked in relationship to alterity, sameness linked to difference. The copy draws power over that which it portrays, but does not become identical to it:

Pulling you this way and that, mimesis plays this trick of dancing between the very same and the very different. An impossible but necessary, indeed an everyday affair, mimesis registers both sameness and difference, of being like, and of being Other. Creating stability from this instability is no small task, yet all identity formation is engaged in this habitually bracing activity...<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 59–61.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>21</sup>The colonial context is essential for Taussig in his study of mimesis. At the conclusion of his description of the Ingano *pintas*, he asserts: "I also want to insist... that we take stock here of the magical usage by the colonized of the mystique of the colonizing State apparatus - just as we, upon reflection, have to acknowledge the importance to such usage of the magic that in fact exists within the art of modern, secular, statecraft itself." Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 62–63. The process is not one-way, however; the circular nature of mimesis must be recognized in this context. As the Ingano man gains healing power from his "painting" of the golden army, Taussig relates a story of a peasant colonist who visits a healer and gains knowledge of his condition through a vision of an Ingano man as the devil. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 65.

<sup>22</sup>Taussig describes this process of image-making as "giving birth to the real": the magic of mimesis brings the "spirit" of the thing into the physical world, to bring the power being called upon into being. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 101–05.

<sup>23</sup>Benjamin, "Das Passagen-Werk," 491.

<sup>24</sup>Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 71.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, xix.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 129.

In a colonial context, for example, the carving of figurines in the form of European types by the Cuna shaman grants him the power of or certain power over the represented types, yet the shaman remains within his own cosmological territory; he asserts his identity as Cuna shaman through his mimetic activity. This negotiation of difference may be linked to Homi Bhabha's idea of interstitial agency. Through harnessing some of the power of the colonizer through mimesis or mimetic discourse, some space is created for agency on the part of the colonized. The relationship of colonizer-colonized may remain unequal, but the colonized, through their mimicking of certain dominant cultural patterns or discourse, gain a certain power from this discourse which enables an assertion of identity, which creates some space "in between."<sup>27</sup>

The process of mimesis therefore involves the imitation of an Other in order to harness the power of that Other, articulating both sameness in the act of copying, but also creating space for a difference in identity, as the representation is never exactly equivalent to what it represents. This concept creates some interesting space in the interpretation of Paul's travel statements in Romans 15, allowing Paul's geographical presentation to be taken more seriously in its significance to Romans as a whole. Paul draws upon the mimetic capability of speech in Romans 15, imitating the imperial vocabulary of travel and geography in order to articulate an alternative. He copies the Roman map of the Mediterranean in order to claim it for the gospel.

#### *Imperial Vocabulary of Travel & Geography*

When placed in the context of Roman imperial articulations of travel and geography, it becomes clear that Paul, in his geographical statements in Romans 15:19-10, is mimicking Roman discourse of travel in order to create an alternate space or polity including Greek and Jew, male and female, slave and free, some of the major categories of the Roman world, within the same geographical boundaries. He mimics cultural discourse in order to redefine it, claiming imperial territory for the true universal ruler, Christ. A survey of imperial language relating to travel, or the self-conscious representation of travel and geography which formed a significant part of the imperial cultural program, will help to illuminate Paul's mimetic language in Romans 15.

The imperial vocabulary of travel and geography is difficult to separate from the language of conquest. Travel, exploration and conquest are, of course, intimately associated, or even, to a certain degree, interchangeable. Coulston writes on Trajan's Column, the pictorial representation of the Roman campaign against the Dacians, "In many respects the reliefs on Trajan's column are all about travel: travel of emperor and army to win victories, explore new regions, meet new peoples and to collect the royal gold which went to pay for the massive building complex within which the monument stood... All was couched in the language of Roman 'historical' art for the urban audience."<sup>28</sup> The Roman armies are depicted on the column carrying tents, pulling carts or manning boats, armed with all sorts of equipment and provisions, along Roman roads and over Roman bridges in great detail. They change the landscape as they advance: "new roads are cleared through forests with much felling of trees and dumping of metalling. Sometimes the exact functions of the soldiers' tasks are obscure, but industry is

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<sup>27</sup>Bhabha writes of interstitial agency in the context of hybridity in colonial discourse, as simple distinctions between resistance to colonization and assimilation cannot be maintained in discussions of identity. Rather, hybrid agencies "deploy the partial culture from which they emerge to construct visions of community, and versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the minority positions they occupy; the outside of the inside; the part in the whole." Homi K. Bhabha, "Culture's In Between," *Artforum* 32, no. 1 (1993): 170.

<sup>28</sup>Jon Coulston, "Transport and Travel on the Column of Trajan," in *Travel & Geography in the Roman Empire*, ed. Colin Adams and Ray Laurence (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 126-27.

always evident, in contrast with barbarian inattention and indiscipline.”<sup>29</sup> The armies win over local gods, crossing the Danube “sous le regard protecteur du dieu du fleuve,”<sup>30</sup> the river god giving divine consent (scenes III-IV on the column). Victory over the river is represented in the building of a bridge; in the rare case where the Romans have to actually ford a watercourse (scene XXVI), “citizen troops cross in orderly fashion and carefully preserve their military equipment from immersion. In contrast, the one time the barbarians are shown crossing a river (XXXI) chaos and panic ensues, horses are lost and some men even appear to be drowning.”<sup>31</sup> Roman superiority is demonstrated through their mastery of travel.

As depicted on Trajan’s column, the Roman armies advance across the Danube with the assent and protection of the river god, who looks on with approval from the rushing waters. Rivers were often personified in a form of allegorical geography used to celebrate or denigrate the achievements of emperors. Pliny writes on Trajan, “You were scarcely more than a boy when your successes in Parthia helped to win fame for your father, when you already deserved the name of *Germanicus*, when the mere sound of your approach struck terror into the proud hearts of savage Parthians, when Rhine and Euphrates were united in their admiration for you...”<sup>32</sup> Domitian is another matter: “Rivers also witnessed this shameful travesty; the Danube and Rhine were delighted for their waters to play their part in our disgrace, and it was no less a blot on the empire for this to be seen by Roman eagles, Roman standards, and the Roman river-bank, than by the other side, the bank of the enemy - the enemy whose habit it was to navigate or swim across these same rivers, whether blocked with ice-floes or flooding the plains when ice is melted and passage is free.”<sup>33</sup> The rivers are not passive onlookers here, but are happy to play their part in Domitian’s disgrace. Domitian’s representation of himself in the *Equus Domitianus* is quite different, as his horse’s “brazen hoof chafes the hair of captive Rhine.”<sup>34</sup> It is amusing to note that Domitian, “en expédition et en marche, il alla très rarement à cheval, mais habituellement en litière.”<sup>35</sup>

Conquest extended beyond the gods even to land and weather conditions. Barbarians are contrasted with Romans not only in terms of their sophistication at arms or lifestyle, but in terms of the very land they inhabit. Seneca writes, “consider all the races to whom Roman peace does not extend - the Germans, for example, and whatever nomadic races harass us along the Danube. Eternal winter and a gloomy sky smother them; barren ground ill sustains them; they fend off rain with thatch and leaves; they wander marshes hardened by ice; and they capture wild animals for food.”<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Florus, a historian from early in the second century, writes that the Sarmatians “have nothing except snow, frost and trees. Their barbarism is such that they don’t even understand peace.”<sup>37</sup> The benefits of the *pax Romana* extend far indeed.

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<sup>29</sup>Jon Coulston, “Transport and Travel,” 123.

<sup>30</sup>Raymond Chevallier, *Voyages et déplacements dans l’Empire Romain* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1988), 257.

<sup>31</sup>Coulston, “Transport and Travel,” 123.

<sup>32</sup>*Panegyricus* 14.1. Translations of Pliny the Younger from Pliny the Younger, *Letters and Panegyricus*, 2 vols., trans. Betty Radice, Loeb Classical Library (London; Cambridge, Mass.: Wm. Heinemann; Harvard University Press, 1975).

<sup>33</sup>Pliny, *Panegyricus* 82.4-5.

<sup>34</sup>Statius, *Silvae* I.1.50-51. From Statius, *Silvae*, ed. and trans. D.R. Shackleton Bailey, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>35</sup>Chevallier, *Voyages et déplacements*, 186. Commenting on Suetonius 12.

<sup>36</sup>Seneca, *Dial.* 1.4.14.

<sup>37</sup>Florus 2.29. See Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 325–26; also Ovid, *Pont.* 2.1.21-24.

After conquest, the conquered did not remain isolated in their dark, wild forests. The sending of embassies to Rome acted as a significant mode in which Roman imperial culture could be promulgated among the provincial elite. Price writes, “Diplomacy, a major element of politics in the Roman period, is often seen as essentially practical, or ‘efficient,’ a given, empirical reality requiring no further explanation. But diplomacy is surely not a simple fact, but a contingent social construct. The endless embassies from cities to emperors need to be seen as one way of creating and defining a relationship between subject and ruler.”<sup>38</sup> Diplomatic travel to Rome was a method of encountering empire, encounters which were then communicated throughout the provinces upon returning home.<sup>39</sup>

Provincial diplomats travelled along newly-constructed roads and over expertly-built bridges, themselves symbols of Roman power,<sup>40</sup> to Rome, the centre of empire, the *caput orbis terrarum*.<sup>41</sup> Once arrived at Rome, Tacitus relates that there was actually a “tour” for barbarian embassies; foreign embassies were shown certain sites in the hope of impressing upon them the scope and power of Rome. Tacitus describes the visit of representatives of the Germanic tribe of the Frisians to Rome in the first century in *Annals* 13.54. The Frisians had taken over some clearings reserved for the use of the Roman army to the point where they were already “tilling the soil as if they had been born on it.” Threatened with Roman arms if they did not receive permission to use the land from the emperor himself, two Frisian leaders travelled to Rome to present their petition. While waiting for Nero, who was too busy to deal with them,

...they visited the usual places shown to barbarians, and among them the theatre of Pompey, where they were to contemplate the size of the population. There, to kill time (they had not sufficient knowledge to be amused by the play), they were putting questions as to the crowd seated in the auditorium - the distinctions between the orders - which were the knights? - where was the Senate? - when they noticed a few men in foreign dress on the senatorial seats. They inquired who they were, and, on hearing that this was a compliment paid to the envoys of nations distinguished for their courage and for friendship to Rome, exclaimed that no people in the world ranked before Germans in arms or loyalty, went down, and took their seats among the Fathers. The action was taken in good part by the onlookers, as a trait of primitive impetuosity and generous rivalry...<sup>42</sup>

In showing the honours granted to more obedient provincials, it was hoped that the rebellious Frisians would also fall into line.

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<sup>38</sup>S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 242. For more on embassies, see Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World (31 BC - AD 337)* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 375–463; David Noy, *Foreigners at Rome: Citizens and Strangers* (London: Duckworth with the Classical Press of Wales, 2000), 100–05.

<sup>39</sup>See Richard Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture: Unity, Diversity and Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 69.

<sup>40</sup>See Laurence: “The roads as infrastructure altered the nature of geography to create a form of unity and were part of a recognisable landscape that emphasised a cultural unity across the empire in contrast to those regions beyond it.” Ray Laurence, “Afterword: Travel and Empire,” in *Travel & Geography in the Roman Empire*, ed. Colin Adams and Ray Laurence (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 172.

<sup>41</sup>Livy 1.16.7; 21.30.10; 34.58.8; 42.39.3.

<sup>42</sup>Translation from *Tacitus*, Loeb Classical Library, trans. John Jackson (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, William Heinemann Ltd., 1914). It must be noted that though Nero, after this incident, granted the two leaders Roman citizenship and ordered them to leave the district, even after this experience of Rome, they refused... and were slaughtered.

The travel of foreign embassies to Rome was thus used as a way of demonstrating to other foreigners the scope of the empire. Martial remarks, “What race is so remote, what so barbarous, Caesar, from which there is no spectator in your city?”<sup>43</sup> He goes on to list Thracians, Sarmatians, Sygambrians, Arabs and Ethiopians as among these spectators. As Edwards and Woolf comment, “Marked out by their exotic clothing and hair arrangements, their incomprehensible speech, these people embodied the vastness and diversity of Roman territory, their presence in the heart of the city underlining Rome’s power to draw people to itself over distances almost unimaginable, from cultures thrillingly alien.”<sup>44</sup> The spectacles themselves would have had a similar impact, involving gladiators, entertainers and animals from distant lands. Dio writes that hippopotami and rhinoceri were brought in for the consecration of the shrine to Julius, as well as Dacians and Suebi who “fought in crowds with one another” (Dio 51.22). Neither animals nor foreigners had yet been seen in Rome, so Dio goes on to explain a bit about their backgrounds.

Everywhere in Rome, in almost every detail of urban life, visitors would have had the power of the empire impressed upon them. Augustus’ self-representation in the *Res Gestae* with its focus on travel and conquered space (“A copy below of the deeds of the divine Augustus, by which he subjected the whole wide earth to the rule of the Roman people...”, followed by a list of fifty-five place names “collected in a taxonomy of dominion”<sup>45</sup>) greeting visitors to the huge Mausoleum and the *Ara Pacis* and copied in urban centres throughout the provinces, made a more obvious statement about the power of Rome, as did as the monumental buildings constructed from the marbles of distant lands and statues of captured barbarians.<sup>46</sup> Even the food, though, would have made an impression. Aristides writes, “Here is brought from every land and sea all the crops of the seasons and the produce of each land, river, lake as well as of the arts of the Greeks and barbarians, so that if someone should wish to view all these things, he must either see them by travelling over the whole world or be in this city.”<sup>47</sup> It is no wonder that Rome the city became equated with the whole world, as “[e]verywhere in the city elements of the conquered world had been appropriated and recontextualized; the city had absorbed the world.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>*De spectaculis* 3.

<sup>44</sup>Catherine Edwards and Greg Woolf, “Cosmopolis: Rome as World City,” in *Rome the Cosmopolis*, eds. Catherine Edwards and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.

<sup>45</sup>Jaś Elsner, “Inventing Imperium: Texts and the Propaganda of Monuments in Augustan Rome,” in *Art and Text in Roman Culture*, ed. Jaś Elsner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 39. See also Claude Nicolet, *Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 15–27.

<sup>46</sup>As Nicolet writes, the interest here is not in “the spatial or territorial reality of the Roman empire at its foundation, but the awareness of it possessed by the main players: the Romans and their adversaries, the ruling classes and the subjects.” Nicolet, *Space, Geography, and Politics*, 3. These images of captured peoples were not only present in Rome, but in the captured provinces themselves, such as on the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias or at the temple of Augustus in the city of Lugdunum in Gaul, as described by Strabo in *Geography* 4.3.2.

<sup>47</sup>*To Rome* 10. See also Josephus, *War* 7.5.7; Seneca, *Ad. Helv.* 10.3. Commenting on this text from Seneca, Gowers states, “Like the spoils heaped up in a Roman triumphal procession lists of food, verbal “heaps” which challenged the reader’s or listener’s bodily capacity graphically reproduced the amassing of goods in Rome, whether on the tables of the rich or in the city’s cookshops, where the wealth of conquered nations was translated into ingestible matter.” Emily Gowers, *The Loaded Table: Representations of Food in Roman Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 18–19.

<sup>48</sup>Edwards and Woolf, “Cosmopolis,” 2. See Ovid, *Fasti* 2.684: “The world and the city of Rome occupy the same space” (*Romanae spatium est urbis et orbis idem*). Strabo describes Rome as actually making the rest of the world superfluous: having seen all the great monuments in Rome, “you would easily become oblivious to everything else outside. Such is Rome.” *Geography* 5.3.8.

Embassies did not travel only to Rome, however. The Emperor was, as Millar states, “a sort of moving capital of the empire in himself,”<sup>49</sup> and embassies from all parts of the empire approached the emperor on his journeys, to present their petitions. Dio writes that when an earthquake struck Antioch while Trajan was visiting in 114/15 CE, the whole empire suffered: “Since Trajan was passing the winter there and many soldiers and many civilians had flocked thither from all sides in connexion with law-suits, embassies, business or sightseeing, there was no nation of people that went unscathed; and thus in Antioch the whole world under Roman sway suffered disaster.”<sup>50</sup> If not from natural disaster, cities often “suffered” from imperial visits because of the burdens they required, from the requisitioning of proper transport to the organization of sacrifices and contests; imperial visits were such significant occasions that, as Millar notes, “it is not surprising to find that cities sometimes either dated from the moment of the imperial ‘presence’ or held some form of festival on the anniversary of it.”<sup>51</sup> The mark of a good emperor was framed in terms of imperial travel; Pliny contrasts Trajan, a “good” emperor with Domitian, evident from the difference in their travel style - Trajan put no burden on his subjects while travelling, while Domitian caused a great deal of destruction.<sup>52</sup>

The need to travel therefore seems to be a fundamental part of experiencing empire.<sup>53</sup> Aristides declares of Rome,

It is you again who have best proved the general assertion that Earth is mother of all and common fatherland. Now indeed it is possible for Hellene or non-Hellene, with or without his property, to travel wherever he will, easily, just as if passing from fatherland to fatherland. Neither Cilician Gates nor narrow sandy approaches to Egypt through Arab country, nor inaccessible mountains, nor immense stretches of river, nor inhospitable tribes of barbarians cause terror, but for security it suffices to be a Roman citizen, or rather to be one of those united under your hegemony. Homer said ‘Earth common to all,’ and you have made it come true. You have measured and recorded the land of the entire civilised world; you have spanned the rivers with all kinds of bridges and hewn highways through the mountains and filled the barren stretches with posting stations; you have accustomed all areas to a settled and orderly way of life.<sup>54</sup>

The Roman empire has facilitated travel across the entirety of the inhabited world, the *oikoumenē*, all the way to the “limits of the inhabited world” of the Pillars of Hercules.<sup>55</sup> Roman

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<sup>49</sup>Millar, *Emperor*, 39 See also Bernard Stolte, “Jurisdiction and the Representation of Power, or the Emperor on Circuit,” in *The Representation and Perception of Roman Imperial Power: Proceedings of the Third Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Roman Empire, c. 200 B.C. - A.D. 476)*, Netherlands Institute in Rome, March 20–23, 2002, ed. Lukas de Blois et. al. (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 2003), 216–68.

<sup>50</sup>Dio LXVIII 24.1-2. For similar statements, see Millar, *Emperor*, 38–39.

<sup>51</sup>Millar, *Emperor*, 36 See *IGII*<sup>2</sup> 3190; *IG V.2*, 50, 52; *IG IV.2* 384. On the burdens placed on provincials, see *P.Beatty.Panop.* 1.167ff.; 381-3; also E.D. Hunt, “Travel, Tourism and Piety in the Roman Empire: A Context for the Beginnings of Christian Pilgrimage,” *Echoes Du Monde Classique* 28, no. 3 (1984): 392.

<sup>52</sup>*Panegyricus* 20.

<sup>53</sup>Laurence, “Afterword,” 169.

<sup>54</sup>Aelius Aristides, *To Rome (Oration 26)* 100-101. Translations of Aristides from J.H. Oliver, *The Ruling Power: A Study of the Roman Empire in the Second Century After Christ Through the Roman Oration of Aelius Aristides* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1959).

<sup>55</sup>See Strabo, *Geography* 3.5.5. The lyric poet Pindar also discusses the Pillars of Hercules as the ends of the earth in *Olymp.* 3.42-45 and *Isthm.* 4.9-14. Romm writes that the Pillars of Hercules “became a vivid symbol of the gateway or barrier between inner and outer worlds. For the most part they stood in the Greek imagination as a forbidding *non plus ultra*, a warning to mariners not to proceed any further.” In James S. Romm, *The Edges of the*

power occupies “the circuit of the whole world: thus it has propagated its empire beyond the paths of the sun, and the bounds of the ocean itself...”<sup>56</sup> The empire thus took on cosmic proportions, represented through the popular imperial image, especially on coins, of the globe (see Dio 43.14.6: “[The Senate] decreed... that [Julius Caesar’s] statue in bronze should be mounted upon a likeness of the inhabited world, with an inscription to the effect that he was a demigod”).<sup>57</sup>

This cosmic empire extended to the limits of the world. While there was territory beyond these boundaries, it is presented as not worth the effort of travel; Strabo declares, “Scholars in our day cannot speak of anything beyond Ierne, which lies just north of Britain. It is home to complete savages who lead a miserable existence because of the cold. I therefore believe that the northern boundary of the world (τὸ τῆς οἰκουμένης πέρας) should be placed there.”<sup>58</sup> The Roman, inhabited world is thus the whole world (Philo, *Leg.* 10); what is beyond the limits of the world is cold and miserable, and not worth conquering.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, those explorers who undertook the circumnavigation of the world did not turn back because of any hindrance, but simply because they were lonely (Strabo, *Geography* 1.1.8).

Roman imperial articulations of travel and geography are quite diverse, but they all bear towards the same point of the compass: Roman power is expressed through Roman mastery of travel and space. This discussion serves to ground our examination of Romans 15:19-20 as it enables us to interpret Paul’s language in the context of the imperial vocabulary of travel and conquest, a vocabulary promulgated throughout the empire through both written word and visual imagery. As Maier asserts, the trajectories of early Christianity “took shape in a world of images designed to convince the inhabitants of the Roman Empire that they were governed by an order willed by the gods, with a divinely established ruler, indeed *divi filius* or υἱὸς θεοῦ, at its head.”<sup>60</sup> Paul mimics this language in order to articulate an alternate universality, one which also transcends the physical and ethnic boundaries of empire.

*A Reading of Romans 15:19-20 through the Concept of Mimesis*

Romans 15:19-20 suggests that travel and geography are central to Paul’s understanding of his mission as apostle and of the message of the gospel. Through his imitation of imperial travel vocabulary, Paul creates a “copy” which leaves space for the articulation of an alternate empire, that of Christ. Paul has travelled the empire by land and by sea, but here his sails are

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*Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University press, 1992), 17.

<sup>56</sup>Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 6.

<sup>57</sup>Nicolet writes on the globe symbol, “... the globe is less the sign of the concrete domination of space easily located on the surface of the earth than of a sovereignty the more recognizable for being general and “cosmic,” even more than geographic. No empire, no universal monarch could in antiquity reasonably wish to dominate the entire terrestrial sphere. Three-quarters of it remained literally unattainable in ancient cosmogony, out of the reach of all human enterprise. A universal domination could not claim more than the one known *oikoumene*. Nevertheless, they could claim to fit in the order of the cosmic destiny - either they were under the protection of or they held a covenant with the gods, or they were in some way divine. They became therefore an element, or the guarantee, of world order. This is then the visual symbol of the “elevation” of the globe.” Nicolet, *Space, Geography, and Politics*, 35–36.

<sup>58</sup>*Geography* 2.5.8.

<sup>59</sup>See Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, 328–29.

<sup>60</sup>Harry O. Maier, “Barbarians, Scythians and Imperial Iconography in the Epistle of the Colossians,” in *Picturing the New Testament: Studies in Ancient Visual Images*, ed. Annette Weissenrieder, Friederike Wendt, and Petra von Gemünden, *Wissenschaftliche untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 193 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 386.

verbal ones, the imperial geographical vocabulary. He sets them in his own direction, formulating through them his concept of the work of the gospel.

Paul does not stand alone in his mimetic appropriation of Roman imperial travel discourse. His rhetorical use of geography may be fruitfully compared to third century sophistic rhetoric. Writers such as Lucian (*Philopseudes* 33-38; *Bis accusatus* 27), Dio Chrysostom (*Oration* 36, especially 39-61), Aelius Aristides (*Oration* 26.15-57) and Philostratus (*Life of Apollonius* 7.11, 14) all use travel imagery in order to bolster their credibility; their authority is demonstrated by their accounts of travel to distant places. This use of travel is particularly striking in Philostratus' biography of Apollonius of Tyana, whose travels across and beyond the known world, from India to western Spain, prove his status as an exemplary holy man; the theme of travel is used in this text to establish Apollonius' credentials "in a world of sophists, wise men and teachers, part of whose identity was defined by travel."<sup>61</sup>

According to Elsner, Philostratus uses travel in two different ways in his portrait of Apollonius: in the context of pilgrimage, and in what Elsner calls a "rather broader, geographic discourse" consisting of ethnographic reports from the boundaries of the known world.<sup>62</sup> As pilgrim, Apollonius travels to major holy sites not only to view the divine marvels, but to actually give instruction on their upkeep and ritual (3.58; 4.19-21, 24, 40-41; 5.25-26; 6.5, 11): "He comes, in other words, not as a supplicant but as a master, not as a client but as an expert."<sup>63</sup> As a result, Apollonius becomes an object of pilgrimage himself: "But when the rumor of his arrival was confirmed, they all flocked to see him from the whole of Greece, and never did any such crowd flock to any Olympic festival as then, all full of enthusiasm and expectation" (8.15).<sup>64</sup> In witnessing Apollonius' journeys and listening to his instruction, the reader also becomes a pilgrim, the theme of pilgrimage being used "to construct not only those whom Apollonius confronts within the text, but also the author and the readers as potential disciples of the holy man who the text presents as becoming a god."<sup>65</sup> This surrogate form of pilgrimage is thus a mimetic act, as in reading the text on pilgrimage, one in a way repeats the ritual.

Philostratus uses tales of Apollonius' more general travels in order to demonstrate his credentials; when asked, upon entering Babylon, what authority he had to travel there, Apollonius replies in a statement fit for an emperor, "All the earth is mine, and I have a right to go all over and through it" (1.21). His travel takes on an imperial character as he journeys not simply to landmarks associated with the campaigns of Alexander, but beyond these landmarks; in 2.8 for example, he visits the shrine of Dionysus at Mount Nysa, a shrine to which Alexander failed to go, "although he was eager to do so" 2.9. As Elsner asserts, Apollonius' trip into the east "develops an instant parallelism of Apollonius with Heracles, Dionysus and Alexander, in which the sage finally outdoes the conqueror in penetrating the east"<sup>66</sup> (see also 2.10, 12, 20, 33;

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<sup>61</sup>John (Jaś) Elsner, "Hagiographic Geography: Travel and Allegory in the Life of Apollonius of Tyana," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 117 (1997): 24.

<sup>62</sup>Elsner, "Hagiographic Geography" 25.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>64</sup>Translations of Philostratus from Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana, the Epistles of Apollonius and the Treatise of Eusebius*, trans. F.C. Conybeare (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960).

<sup>65</sup>John (Jaś) Elsner, "Hagiographic Geography," 28.

<sup>66</sup>John (Jaś) Elsner, "Hagiographic Geography," 30. Alexander was himself described as the best general because, aside from his judgment (compared to Nestor) and valour (like that of Odysseus), he was a world-traveller: he "saw the cities of many peoples and learnt their ways," AR iii.26 (127.7 recensio a). See W.J. Aerts, "Alexander the Great and Ancient Travel Stories," in *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction: Studies on Fiction, Literary Tradition, Scholarly Discovery and Observation in Travel Writing*, ed. Zweder von Martels, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 55 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 33.

3.12, 16 53). Apollonius' spiritual quest is articulated in the language of imperial conquest, his extensive travels acting as a testament to his experience and knowledge, and even to his divinity; as the gods do not dwell all the time in temples but travel throughout the world, so Apollonius travels from temple to temple with permission of the gods, in god-like fashion (4.40).<sup>67</sup>

The story of Apollonius moves from the periphery to the centre, ending in Rome. He confronts the emperor Domitian in Rome and is victorious in his trial before him. After Domitian's downfall, Nerva sends Apollonius a letter asking him to return to Rome, as Nerva would have a better chance of retaining power over the empire if Apollonius would assist him. Apollonius, however, ignores this summons (8.27). As Elsner writes, "[t]he spiritual victory in Rome, at the centre of the empire, is the sage's claim to sacred conquest of the empire as a whole."<sup>68</sup> When viewed in this context, it is extremely significant that Paul is addressing this letter also to the centre, to Rome, as victory over the centre, gaining the support of the Roman Christian community for his continued mission, would validate Paul's claim to the Christian conquest of the empire as a whole. As Apollonius lays claim to not simply the empire, but to territories beyond even Alexander's reach, Paul lays claim to the map of the Mediterranean.

Paul is not claiming this territory for himself, however; he is not travelling as a holy man, but on behalf of another, as more of an ambassador. Paul presents his apostolic (ambassadorial) credentials very carefully and diplomatically, structuring his position rhetorically so that he is able "to affirm values held by the audience, thereby nurturing community with its readers so as to increase and encourage cooperation" with his proposed mission to Spain.<sup>69</sup> This affirmation is a mimetic activity, as Paul confirms existing values while giving them a new emphasis. He therefore presents himself as an ambassador, "expressing the power of his sovereign only by submitting himself to it," structuring his communication to the Roman congregation as a type of "ambassadorial letter" whose purpose "is to advocate in behalf of the "power of God" a cooperative mission to evangelize Spain so that the theological argumentation reiterates the gospel to be therein proclaimed..."<sup>70</sup> As travel in the empire is a product not of individual success, but due to the success of the emperor, Paul's accomplishments are not his own, but belong to his sovereign: "...because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God..." (Romans 15:15b-16); "by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit..." (15:19). The Romans needed the assent of the river god in order to cross the Danube; so Paul's successful travel signals divine consent. In 15:19, Paul presents the realization of his mandate as ambassador in terms which emphasize his status through his accomplishment on behalf of his sovereign: "...I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."<sup>71</sup>

Perhaps most important in understanding the function of Paul's travel claim in Romans 15:19 is the expression καὶ κύκλω □ μέχρι, "also as far round as," "in an arc or curve" or "even in

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<sup>67</sup>John (Jaś) Elsner, "Hagiographic Geography," 32.

<sup>68</sup>John (Jaś) Elsner, "Hagiographic Geography," 34. See also in this context Elsner's work on (Pseudo) Lucian's *De dea Syria*: Jaś Elsner, "Describing Self in the Language of Other: Pseudo (?) Lucian at the Temple of Hierapolis," in *Being Greek Under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire*, ed. Simon Goldhill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 123–53.

<sup>69</sup>Jervis, *Purpose of Romans*, 20.

<sup>70</sup>Jewett, *Romans*, 45, 44.

<sup>71</sup>See Jewett on Paul's use of the perfect infinitive πεπληρωκέναί, which he states is used "in a bureaucratic sense of executing a mission." Jewett, *Romans*, 914. Jewett is here drawing on evidence from P.Oxy. 10.252, recto 8-10, a text in which a Roman prefect writes to an official in Oxyrhynchus to reiterate an order.

a circle as far as.”<sup>72</sup> The dative κύκλω is used adverbially to describe a circle or curve, not, as Stuhlmacher suggests, as Jerusalem and its “surrounding region.”<sup>73</sup> Jewett makes sense of the phrase in the context of world maps from the Roman period, which “placed the circle of the Mediterranean at the center of the four quarters of the world.”<sup>74</sup> This idea fits in well with Roman articulations of imperial space described above, and with the spatial sense of μέγρι, a preposition implying something far-reaching or ultimate.<sup>75</sup>

Paul’s mission has extended in a sweep across imperial space; he has “fully preached” the gospel from Jerusalem all the way around in an arc to Illyricum, to both “Greeks and barbarians” (1:14), a phrase which can be viewed as “representative of a geographical space defining the closest boundaries of Greco-Roman civilization generally.”<sup>76</sup> His desire to travel to Spain thus takes on a new significance, not simply indicative of his travel plans but demonstrating the spread of the gospel to the end of Rome’s imperial reach, to the end of the known world: Spain, the end of the “circle.” Commentators on 15:24, 28 tend to discuss Paul’s reasons for going to Spain in very general terms: there were Jewish communities there (despite a lack of concrete evidence for these communities in the Julio-Claudian period) that Paul could use as a base of operations.<sup>77</sup> These statements seem to miss the point, however; Paul did not want to go to Spain to make contact with Jewish communities there, but to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth, to the place where Homer mythically placed Hades, overflowing with rich resources with which to nurture the empire (“anyone who has seen these regions would declare that they are everlasting storehouses of nature, or a never-failing treasury of an empire”<sup>78</sup>). The geographical presentation of Paul’s mission thus has imperial implications, Paul mimicking a discourse of global universality in an imperial narrative with which, as shown above, his audience would have been familiar.

In mimicking the imperial vocabulary of travel, Paul thus creates a new cultural space for the gospel, presenting a geographically-imagined, universal triumph of Christ who, as imperial ruler, brings salvation not through military conquest but through the power of God:

In the establishing of faith communities as far as the ends of the known world, God will be restoring arenas where righteousness is accomplished, thus creating salvation. In place of the salvation of the *pax Romana*, based on military power and imperial administration, there is the salvation of small groups who believe in the gospel of Christ

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<sup>72</sup>Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 713.

<sup>73</sup>Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 236.

<sup>74</sup>Jewett, *Romans*, 912.

<sup>75</sup>Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 515.

<sup>76</sup>Maier, “Barbarians, Scythians,” 391–92.

<sup>77</sup>See S. Safrai and M. Stern, *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974–76), 169–70; also Käsemann, *Romans*, 398.

<sup>78</sup>Strabo, *Geography* 3.2.9; see also 3.1.7; 3.2.4–8, 12–14. It is also interesting to note in this context that Spain was also portrayed as setting a precedent for other provinces in terms of the imperial cult (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.78), which Dewey calls the “most symbolic indicator of Roman dominance.” Arthur J. Dewey, “ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΣΠΑΝΙΑΝ: The Future and Paul,” in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays Honoring Dieter Georgi*, eds. Lukas Bormann, Kelly del Tredici, and Angela Standhartinger, Suppl. to NovT 74 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 329.

crucified. Paul's goal in this letter is to encourage their cooperation with each other to extend this new form of salvation to the end of the world.<sup>79</sup>

Paul uses the imperial discourse of travel and geography to create an alternate polity, harnessing the power of this discourse for a new end. This is not, therefore an act of utopian displacement, a shifting of the centrality of Rome "to the geographical and ideological margins";<sup>80</sup> Paul is dependent on imperial constructions in his creation of alternate space.<sup>81</sup> It is through imitation that Paul achieves difference; it is through constructions of imperial territory that Paul maps the territory of the gospel.

#### *Conclusion*

As demonstrated above, Paul's claims to travel in Romans 15 function as status claims within the larger domain of Roman imperial consciousness of spatiality and its manipulation. Paul uses the imperial vocabulary of travel mimetically in order to create space for an alternate articulation of empire; like the Ingano man who harnesses the power of the colonizing army in his "painting" of the dancing golden battalion, Paul copies imperial discourse relating to travel in geography in order to persuade his audience of the power of his message. Travel lay at the heart of the empire, necessary not only on a practical level for trade and the transport of goods or armies in conquest, but also on a rhetorical level, used to validate and emphasize Roman sovereignty. Paul uses the power of this rhetoric in his discourse to the Romans, maintaining a degree of distance from and redefining it in order to achieve a "remapping" of the empire, claiming Roman territory for the gospel, setting the sails of Roman imperial geography to steer his own course.

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<sup>79</sup>Jewett, *Romans*, 146–47.

<sup>80</sup>Dewey, "ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΣΠΑΝΙΑΝ," 322.

<sup>81</sup>See Marshall: "In Romans as a whole and in his literary production more widely, Paul is concretely working and reworking the 'rules of recognition' that found authority in the Roman world and yet at the same time, and genuinely, adhering to a perspective that was foundational for Roman imperial authority." John W. Marshall, "Hybridity and Reading Romans 13," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31, no. 2 (2008): 172–73.

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