Paul's missionary duty towards Gentiles in Rome: A note on the punctuation and syntax of Romans-I,13-15

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Although scholars have long been aware of syntactical difficulties in Rom 1.13–15, few have approached the problem by challenging the established punctuation. Readings of the text by some earlier interpreters, e.g. Origen of Alexandria, indicate that there may be good reasons to do so. In this article it is argued that current readings of Rom 1.13–15 are based on inaccurate punctuation and syntax. A different punctuation of the passage is suggested, upon which a more plausible reading is based. This reading may, in turn, have some significance for the interpretation of Romans as a whole.

It is sometimes asserted that Rom 1.13–15 includes statements about Paul’s ‘universal’ obligation towards ‘all humanity’. So Friedrich Hauck states: ‘Paul, once a persecutor of the Gospel, is after his visitation and calling by Christ committed to be a messenger to all mankind, Rom. 1:14: “Ελλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάροις... ὀφειλετὴς εἰμί.”’ Hauck’s words are to some extent descriptive of...
the conventional aim of focus when dealing with this passage in Paul’s letter to
the Romans. Questions such as who these people were to whom Paul was obli-
gated,² and what potential indications the passage may include of Paul’s person
and apostleship,³ have been and continue to be of main interest among inter-
preters of the text.

Another closely related assertion is that there is a discrepancy between Paul’s
words in Rom 1.15 and 15.20, i.e. between his stated ‘eagerness’ to proclaim the
good news in Rome and his canon of not proclaiming the gospel ‘where Christ
has been named’. Since most scholars assume that it is Paul’s belief that
‘Christ has [already] been named’ in Rome,⁴ attempts to adjust the text in 1.15 to
Paul’s canon in 15.20 are not infrequent. Peter Stuhlmacher, for instance, argues
that ‘[v]erse 15 . . . explains Paul’s original plan, not what he means to do at the
time of writing . . .'. This verse in no way indicates that Paul is still intending to
come as a missionary to preach his gospel in Rome.⁵ In order to support such a
reading, Ernst Käsemann adds the verb ἐγένετο to v. 15.⁶

Of a slightly different kind is the tendency among scholars to treat Rom 1.13–15
as a structural unity. Indeed, almost universally, v. 15 is considered to be struc-
turally separated from v. 16. This kind of reading, I presume, is based on modern
text editions of Romans, which surprisingly make such a distinction in spite of
clear connective marks in the text.

In the following study I will show that the above claims about the content and
structure of Rom 1.13–15 are among those that may have to be reconsidered if jus-
tice is to be done to the text’s grammar. The purpose of this paper is, on the one

² See, e.g., Starnitzke, ‘ “Griechen und Barbaren” ’ as well as most standard commentaries on
Romans.
³ Especially noteworthy in this regard are S. Pedersen’s ‘Theologische Überlegungen zur
Isagogik des Römerbriefes’, ZNW 76 (1985) 47–67, in which he argues that 1.14 is the ‘Schlüssel
zum Römerbrief’ in that it contains ‘das fundamentale Wort über das Apostolat des Paulus’
(47), and P. S. Minear’s ‘Gratitude and Mission in the Epistle to the Romans’, Basileia: Walter
Missionsverlag GMBH, 1959) 42–8. Minear reads 1.14 (within the context of 1.8–17) as an
example of passages ‘in which the apostle indicates a strong connection between his sense
of obligation and gratitude, on the one hand, and his motivation as an apostle on the other’
(42), strangely concluding that ‘if men are converted from life on one side of the line to the
other, the change will be most authentically indicated by the emergence of a radically new
indebtedness/thankfulness. For we, too, are debtors “both to Greeks and barbarians, both
to the wise and the foolish” ’ (48).
⁴ See, e.g., the discussion in K. P. Donfried, ed., The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded
Edition (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991). See also Fitzmyer’s (unsuccessful) attempt to minimize
the discrepancy between 1.15 and 15.20, after claiming that ‘it is clear that [Paul] did not found
the Roman church and that some other Christians must have done so’ (Romans, 715).
⁶ E. Käsemann, An die Römer (HNT 8a; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1973) 14, 18.
hand, to argue that prevailing readings of Rom 1.13–15 are based on inaccurate punctuation and syntax, and, on the other, to suggest a more plausible reading of the passage.

Current punctuation and syntax of Rom 1.13–15

13 οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι πολλάκις προεθέμην ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἐκωλύθην ἄχρι τοῦ δεύτερου, ἵνα τινὰ καρπὸν σχῶ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν καθὼς καὶ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἐθνεῖσθιν. 14 Ἐλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάροις, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἀνοιχτοῖς ὀφειλέτης εἰμί, 15 οὖν τὸ κατ’ ἐμὲ πρόθυμον καὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς ἐν Ρώμῃ εὐαγγελίσασθαι.7

According to current readings and critical text editions the proper punctuation8 of Rom 1.13–15 may be detected by following the verse division of the text.9 Thus, a period mark is put after τοῖς λοιποῖς ἐθνεῖσθιν (‘the rest of the gentiles’) at the end of v. 13. Accordingly, v. 14 begins a new sentence with the dative phrase Ἐλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάροις, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἀνοιχτοῖς understood as an object to the predicate ὀφειλέτης εἰμί (‘I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish’ [NRSV]).10 In v. 15, then, another sentence begins, the reading of which, however, has been marked with some uncertainty:11 (a) In line with a number of scholars, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, for example, holds that the entire phrase τὸ κατ’ ἐμὲ πρόθυμον functions as the subject and εὐαγγελίσασθαι as the predicate. Thus his translation goes: ‘Hence my eagerness to preach the

7 Rom 1.13–15 according to Nestle-Aland, 27th edn.
8 Punctuation of ancient manuscripts is, of course, a later invention, the purpose of which is to provide helps for readers who are not used to read texts in scriptio continua. Hence, unless originally found in the text, the proper punctuation of an ancient writing always involves interpretation of some kind. As B. M. Metzger observes: ‘Marks of punctuation occur only sporadically or not at all in the most ancient manuscripts. . . . Although the exegete can learn something concerning the history of the interpretation of a passage by considering the punctuation of a passage in the manuscripts, neither the editor nor the translator need, of course, feel bound to adopt the punctuation preferred by scribes’ (Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Palaeography [New York: Oxford University, 1981] 31–2). So also F. C. Burkitt, ‘The Punctuation of New Testament Manuscripts’, JTS 29 (1927–8) 397: ‘In a certain sense the punctuation of an ancient Greek work is no part of the original tradition; a properly written Greek paragraph goes in theory from the beginning to the end without punctuation, the beginnings and the due subordination of the several sentences being sufficiently indicated by the appropriate particles.’
10 Unless otherwise noted, translations from the Greek and Latin are mine.
11 See esp. C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (2 vols; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975–9) 1.85. See also BDF § 224 (1).
gospel . . .’; 12 (b) Whereas C. F. D. Moule also considers Ευαγγελισασθαι to be the predicate, he believes that ‘more probably τὸ κατ᾽ ἐμὲ is a self-contained adverbial phrase, as far as I am concerned’. He argues further that πρόθυμον is a ‘slip, or a case of attraction, for [the adjective] πρόθυμος’ (approximately ‘Hence, as far as I am concerned, I am eager to preach the gospel . . .’); 13 (c) William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, on the other hand, argue that, instead of Εὐαγγελισασθαι, πρόθυμον should be read as the predicate and τὸ κατ᾽ ἐμὲ as the subject. In spite of this difference, however, their translation stands surprisingly close to the foregoing: ‘Hence, so far as the decision rests with me, I am bent on delivering the message of salvation . . .’ 14

These different readings of v. 15 may be seen as potential marks of syntactical incompleteness or ambiguity. That the differences are minor ones does not reflect the problem at hand. Rather, what they exhibit are examples of unsuccessful attempts to reconcile an ambiguous syntax. Essentially, this ambiguity seems to be generated by reading v. 14 as an independent sentence, i.e. putting a period mark after ἔθνεσίν. As a consequence, the dative phrase Ἐλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάροις, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἄνοιχτοις can only be taken as an object to ὀφείλειν ἐμί. 15 That, in turn, leaves the following text in v. 15 ‘pleasantly ambiguous’, 16 i.e. in an uncertain syntactical position, regarding the identification of both the subject and the main verb. 17 To be sure, it is quite possible to read v. 14 as an independent sentence, but when the reading is continued it becomes evident that something has been overlooked or left out. That is what the different suggestions of reading v. 15 indicate.

12 Fitzmyer, Romans, 251–2. J. D. G. Dunn offers identical translation in his Romans (2 vols; WBC 38; Dallas: Word, 1988) 1.27. See also the translations of the NRSV, NEB, and Moffatt.
13 C. F. D. Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1959) 38. Moule himself does not offer a complete translation of v. 15 (only of the phrase τὸ κατ᾽ ἐμὲ). Cf. the close translations of the RSV, NAB, and TEV, where the phrase τὸ κατ᾽ ἐμὲ seems to be taken as a neuter periphrasis for the personal pronoun ἐμῖ. 15
14 W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902) 19, 21–2. Unfortunately, the authors explain neither the function of the infinitive εὐαγγελισασθαι in this reading nor which part of Paul’s text they are translating as ‘bent on’. Cf. also the similar translations of the KJV and ASV.
Alternative punctuation and syntax of Rom 1.13–15

Despite apparent awareness of syntactical difficulties involved in prevailing readings, few scholars have challenged the established punctuation in order to search for alternative solutions to the problem. Indeed, I have only been able to find one single publication in which this has been seriously attempted.

In the 1967–8 issue of the *Expository Times*, Harry Parkin published a short note in which he suggested an alternative reading of Rom 1.13–15 based on different punctuation of the passage. Unfortunately, Parkin’s note has been largely unnoticed. Therefore, it is appropriate to offer a summary of his argument and suggestion of reading. First, according to Parkin, the phrase Ἐλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάρωις, σοφοίς τε καὶ ἄνοιητοῖς is to be taken in apposition to the preceding τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν, ‘providing a natural division of the non-Jewish peoples’. This kind of expression is normal for Paul, as shown in 1.16 where Ἰουδαίοι τε ... καὶ Ἐλληνι stands in apposition to παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι. Second, ὄφειλέτης εἰμί is employed with the infinitive εὐαγγελίσασθαι. This accords with Paul’s use elsewhere of the word ὄφειλέτης (4x in Paul): in Rom 8.12 and Gal 5.3 he uses ὄφειλέται ἐσμέν/ἐστίν with the infinitives ζην/ποιήσοι respectively. In Rom 15.27 – which stands closest to the prevailing reading of 1.14 in that it has no infinitive – Paul does not use ὄφειλέτης with the dative case (which is classical) but with the genitive. Further, a survey of the cognate verb ὄφειλῷ shows that in 12 out of 13 instances in the letters of Paul it is used with the infinitive. Third, as for οὐτωσ τὸ κατ’ ἐμὲ πρόθυμον Parkin notes: ‘No new light is brought to bear upon this awkward construction except to relieve it of the full burden of the sentence. It becomes a parenthesis.’ Parkin summarizes his conclusions by providing the following translation of the passage:

I want you to know, brethren, that I have often intended to visit you, but have been hindered more than once, in order to have some fruit among you also, even as I have among the remainder of the Gentiles, both cultured and primitive, both wise and simple. I am under an obligation, that is why I am eager, to preach the Gospel also to you in Rome.

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19 Parkin, ‘Romans i. 13–15’.
20 Somewhat surprisingly it gets no mention in Fitzmyer’s *Romans*, in spite of its extensive bibliography. It is not mentioned either in, e.g., Käsemann, *An die Römer*; Cranfield, *Romans*; H. Schlier, *Der Römerbrief* (HTKN 6; Freiburg: Herder, 1977); Dunn, *Romans*; P. Stuhlmacher, *Der Brief an die Römer übersetzt und erklärt* (NTD 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989).
21 Elsewhere in the NT only in Matt 6.12; 18.24; Luke 13.4.
22 According to Parkin, the fact that Paul uses an articular inf. in Rom 8.12 does not undermine the parallel use.
23 Rom 13.8; 15.1, 27; 1 Cor 5.10; 7.36; 9.10; 11.7, 10; 2 Cor 12.11, 14; 2 Thess 1.3; 2.13. Phlm 18 is the only exception (with acc.). Cf. Eph 5.28 (with inf.).
Important as it is, Parkin’s note is unfortunately too short to provide any adequate presentation of the problem under discussion. A glance at the history of interpretation, however, reveals that Parkin, in fact, is not the only reader of Romans who has noticed the close syntactical relationship between τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν and Ἑλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάροις, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἄνοιχτοις, on the one hand, and ὀφειλέτης εἰμί and εὐαγγελίσασθαι, on the other. Such alternative readings of Rom 1.13–15 did exist among earlier interpreters, of which no traces are left in modern text editions.

In his Annotationes (1535) Erasmus of Rotterdam tells us that sunt qui malint infinitum εὐαγγελίσασθαι referre ad nomen utorale ὀφειλέτης (‘some would rather take the infinitive εὐαγγελίσασθαι as referring to the noun ὀφειλέτης’), paraphrasing the passage in 1.13–15 thus: Sicut alijs gentibus iam praedicaui, quum omnibus debeam... (see further n. 44 below). Then he states: ‘Paulus ist also verpflichtet, allen Heiden das Evangelium zu predigen. Grammatisch ist deswegen der οὗτος-Satz bis einschließlich έν Ἡρώμη parenthetisch, inhaltlich jedoch von zentraler Bedeutung’ (123–4; cf. also on p. 125: ‘Paulus betont οὗτος έν Ἡρώμη’. This is a rather peculiar statement: how is it possible for the clause to be both ‘grammatically parenthetical’ and ‘of a central meaning’ as regards ‘content’? If Paul wanted to highlight the significance of a specific textual content he surely would have grammaticalized it accordingly!

24 Cf. also Zahn, An die Römer, 66–7, albeit on other grounds. Zahn claims: ‘Alle diese Schwierigkeiten [in 1.13–14] schwinden, wenn man den mit καθός beginnenden Satz in V. 14 sich fortsetzen läßt und übersetzt: “gemäß dem, daß ich auch unter den übrigen έθνη sowohl Hellenen als Barbaren, Gebildeten wie Ungebildeten ein Schuldner bin” ’ (66). That is, he reads καθός... ὀφειλέτης εἰμί as a distinct (subordinate) clause. However, since Zahn fails to provide any examples of the use of ὀφειλέτης (εἰμί) with the preposition εν, his reading must be considered doubtful at best.

25 Kettunen, Abfassungszweck, 123–6, has also noticed some relationship between the latter. However, he appears to have missed the point of Paul’s grammar. Kettunen argues that vv. 14–15 should be read thus: Ἑλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάροις, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἄνοιχτοις ὀφειλέτης εἰμί, οὗτος τὸ κατ’ εμὲ πρόθυμον καὶ ήμῖν τοῖς ἐν Ρώμῃ, εὐαγγελίσασθαι, i.e. with a comma before εὐαγγελίσασθαι (see further n. 44 below). Then he states: ‘Paulus ist also verpflichtet, allen Heiden das Evangelium zu predigen. Grammatisch ist deswegen der οὗτος-Satz bis einschließlich έν Ρώμῃ parenthetisch, inhaltlich jedoch von zentraler Bedeutung’ (123–4; cf. also on p. 125: ‘Paulus betont ήμῖν τοῖς ἐν Ρώμῃ’). This is a rather peculiar statement: how is it possible for the clause to be both ‘grammatically parenthetical’ and ‘of a central meaning’ as regards ‘content’? If Paul wanted to highlight the significance of a specific textual content he surely would have grammaticalized it accordingly!


27 See Reeve and Screech, Erasmus’ Annotations, 344–5. The words left out, indicated by ellipsis points, are sic quantum ad animi mei promptitudinem attinet (presumably for οὗτος τὸ κατ’ εμὲ πρόθυμον).
a double function, referring to the preceding dative phrase as well as the infinitive εὐαγγελίσασθαι. This is made clear by the repetition of the verb debeo in the paraphrase (omnibus debeam . . . debeo . . . prædicare).

This ambiguity of the syntactical function of ὁφειλέτης εἰμί was not unknown still earlier in the history of interpretation. While many, or most, church fathers seem to have read the passage as is commonly done today, John Chrysostom’s (347–407) commentary on Romans gives clear evidence of the ambiguity. In his discussion of the passage ad loc. he reads 1.14–15 with the familiar period mark between ὁφειλέτης εἰμί and οὗτος. However, in his preface to the commentary he notes: Διὸ καὶ ἐν ἀρχῇ ἔλεγεν [Παύλος]: Ὅφειλέτης εἰμί, τὸ κατ’ ἐμὲ πρόθυμον, καὶ ὑμᾶς τοῖς ἐν Ρώμῃ εὐαγγελίσασθαι (’Therefore [Paul] says in the beginning [of the letter]: I am obligated . . . to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in Rome’), taking the infinitive as a complement to ὁφειλέτης εἰμί.

Most enlightening is the treatment of the text by the prominent exegete Origen of Alexandria (185–c. 254). His studies of the passage – virtually the earliest we have – are mainly preserved in the Latin translation of his commentary on Romans by Rufinus of Aquileia (c. 345–410), and in several Greek fragments of the commentary. These texts reveal that Origen was fully aware of the syntactical problem at

28 This is actually difficult to estimate, since those church fathers who mention the passage often do so in passing only. Nevertheless, Theodoret of Cyrrhus (393–466) (see PG 82.56) may serve as an example of the reading which appears to be the most common. He reads Rom 1.14–15 as follows: ἔλλησι τε καὶ βαρβάρους, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἀνοίγοις ὁφειλέτης εἰμί. Οὕτω τὸ κατ’ ἐμὲ πρόθυμον καὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς ἐν Ρώμῃ εὐαγγελίσασθαι. On the former sentence he comments (in Paul’s voice): Τῶν ἐθνῶν ἀπάντων ἔχειριστονήθη [i.e. Παύλος] διδάσκαλος. Οὐ δὴ χάριν πάσιν ὤφειλο τῆς διδασκαλίας τῷ χρέως, καὶ οὐχ ἔλλησι μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ βαρβάροις (’I [i.e. Paul] was appointed teacher of all the nations. Therefore, I owe my obligation of teaching to all, not only to Greeks but also to barbarians’).

29 See PG 60.394, 407.
31 Dated c. 406. The text used here is the Latin–German edition of T. Heither, Origenes: Commentarii in epistulam ad Romanos (Fontes Christiani; Freiburg: Herder, 1990), which follows the Latin text of PG 14. Rufinus’s ‘translation’ is in fact more of a paraphrase (consequentiæ) of the commentary, as pointed out by Rufinus himself in his preface to the work. However, that does not seem to affect the following study of Origen’s text, since, despite concerns for syntactical details, I am dealing with Origen’s general understanding of the passage in Rom 1.13–15. The major differences between Rufinus’s text and the extant Greek fragments of the passage (see next note) may be explained by Rufinus’s main concern, viz. to offer a sketch of Origen’s commentary (originally in 15 vols). While the fragments include more detailed discussion of specific issues, such as Paul’s syntax and rhetoric, nothing in them runs counter to the observations made below.

hand. In his preface to the commentary Origen complains that Paul’s letter to the Romans is the most difficult to understand of all his letters. Origen himself sees two main reasons for this, of which the one is that *elocutionibus interdum confusis et minus explicitis utitur* (‘[Paul] sometimes uses expressions that are obscure and not completely without difficulties’). The text under discussion seems to be one of those Origen has in mind. He is much concerned about the proper syntax of Paul’s text and wonders therefore why Paul would place καὶ ἐκκλήθην ἀρχὴ τοῦ δεύρο in v. 13 in so syntactically awkward a position. Origen’s answer to the question is that Paul is using the rhetorical technique of ὑπερβατόν, i.e. a transposition of words or clauses. His conclusion is that the text (vv. 13–14a) should be read as follows:

> Nolo autem vos ignorare fratres, quia saepe proposui venire ad vos, ut aliquem fructum habeam et in vobis sicut et in ceteris gentibus Graecis ac barbaris sapientibus et insipientibus, et prohibitus sum usque adhuc ('But I do not want you to be ignorant of, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you, in order that I may have some fruit among you as I have among the rest of the gentiles, Greeks as well as barbarians, wise as well as ignorant, but have been hindered until now').

But, Origen proceeds, it is also evident that the utterance is ‘defective’; there is something lacking in the text:

> Defectio vero elocutionis hoc modo adimplebitur. In eo ubi dicit: ‘et in ceteris gentibus Graecis ac barbaris sapientibus et insipientibus,’ videtur deesse:

33. So Heither, *Origenes*, 62 n. 4.
35. Whereas the Greek fragments include somewhat detailed (but short) discussion of the reason why Origen would make use of this technique, Rufinus is more interested in providing the result of it, i.e. how Origen reads the text. On ὑπερβατόν see R. D. Anderson, Jr, *Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms: Connected to Methods of Argumentation, Figures and Tropes from Anaximenes to Quintilian* (CBET 24; Leuven: Peeters, 2000) 121–2. Anderson notes that among ancient rhetorical theorists ὑπερβατόν was ‘normally considered poor use of language, leading only to ambiguity’ (122).
36. Cf. Origen’s reading in frg. 4 in Ramsbotham, ‘Commentary’, 214: πολλάκις προεθέμεν ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ύμᾶς ἵνα τινά καρπόν σχέδιο καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν καθός καὶ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς θείεσιν, Ἔλησε τε καὶ βαρβάρους, σοφοῖς τε καὶ άνωτέρους, καὶ ἐκκλήθην ἅχρι τοῦ δεύρο. Ramsbotham’s edition is based on the text of cod. Vat. Gr. 762 from the 10th century. Staab (frg. 10 in ‘Neue Fragmenten’, 79), on the other hand, prefers to follow cod. Vindob. Gr. 166 from the 14th century and adds ὁφειλέτης εἰμί between ἀνωτέρους and καὶ ἐκκλήθην ἅχρι τοῦ δεύρο. Apparently, this choice goes against standard criteria in textual criticism: not only is cod. Vindob. about 400 years later than cod. Vat. (external evidence), but also potentially influenced by the text of Romans (internal evidence, e.g. cod. Vat. has the lectio brevior as well as the lectio difficultior).
'quibus,' ut ea, quae subsequuntur, sic legantur: 'quibus debitor sum' ('The utterance’s defect must be complemented as follows: Where Paul says “among the rest of the gentiles, Greeks as well as barbarians, wise as well as ignorant” [the relative “to which” is clearly missing, so that one may continue and read: “to which I am indebted”].

This gives the following paraphrase (consequentia) of vv. 13–15:

Sicut fructum habeo in ceteris gentibus Graecis ac barbaris sapientibus et insipientibus, quibus debitor sum, ita quod in me est, promptus sum etiam vobis, qui Romae estis, evangelizare ('Just as I have [gathered some] fruit among the rest of the gentiles, Greeks as well as barbarians, wise as well as ignorant, to which I am indebted, so, as far as I am concerned, I am ready to proclaim the good news to you also who are in Rome').

Thus, Origen sought to solve the text’s syntactical problem by reading ὅφειλέτης εἰμί relatively. To be able to do this he had to form a relative clause by adding the pronoun quibus to Paul’s text.37 This strongly suggests that it never occurred to Origen to read the dative phrase Ἐλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάροις, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἄνωτοις apart from the preceding τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν. Instead, he read the former as an apposition to the latter, with Ἐλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάροις, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἄνωτοις clearly understood as a natural description for τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν in the letter. In other words, rather than making a clear syntactical distinction between ἔθνεσιν and the following dative phrase, he made great effort to fit ὅφειλέτης εἰμί into the syntax, eventually settling upon an emendation of the text. On the reason why he did not think of εὐαγγελισθαι as a complement to ὅφειλέτης εἰμί one can only speculate: perhaps it was a matter of reluctance on his behalf to give up the notion of the text speaking of Paul as an obligator to all people38 – a popular notion indeed among interpreters of the passage, as previously noted. But, again, this remains pure speculation. Most importantly, by reading the dative phrase in v. 14 as an apposition, Origen presented the initial step towards the proper punctuation and syntax of the passage.

Suggested punctuation and syntax of Rom 1.13–15

I would concur with Origen et al. that the phrase Ἐλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάροις, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἄνωτοις stands in an appositional relationship with the preceding dative phrase τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν. A comma should therefore be put after the word ἔθνεσιν and a period mark after ἄνωτοις (οὐτως τὸ κατ’ ἐμὲ πρόθυμον see further below). In addition, I would also agree with Origen in

37 The equivalent pronoun in Greek would be οἷς.
38 See his subsequent discussion of the passage (Heither, Origenes, 128–31).
reading and ἐκαλύθην ἄχρι τοῦ δεύρο as an ὑπερβατόν (marked by hyphenation). Hence, Rom 1.13–15 should be read as follows:

Οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι πολλάκις προεθέμην ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, — καὶ ἐκαλύθην ἄχρι τοῦ δεύρο, — ἵνα τινὰ καρπὸν σχῶ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν καθὼς καὶ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἐθνοισί, Ἐλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάροις, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἀνόητοις.

Ὁσείτης εἰμὶ οὕτως τὸ κατ’ ἐμὲ πρόθυμον καὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς ἐν Ῥώμῃ εὐαγγελίσασθαι.

This reading will be supported and explained by the following four points:

First, there is no need to extend further the arguments presented above of the dative phrase in v. 14 being an apposition. With respect to the text’s syntax, this reading seems to be the most natural one. Nevertheless, the following additional examples with parallel usage of the conjunctive τε καὶ are in order: Rom 2.9 (πᾶσαν ψυχὴν ἀνθρώπου τοῦ καταργαζομένου τὸ κακὸν, Ἰουδαίον τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἔλληνος); 2.10 (παντὶ τῷ ἐργαζομένῳ τῷ ἄγαθον, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἔλλην); 1 Cor 1.24 (οὕτως δὲ τοῖς κλητοῖς, Ἰουδαίοις τε καὶ Ἐλλησίν).

Second, Harry Parkin has argued convincingly for the probability of Paul using ὀφειλέτης εἰμὶ with the infinitive. To be sure, this cannot be stated beyond doubt because of the relatively few occurrences of the word ὀφειλέτης in Paul’s letters (one of which includes some syntactical uncertainty). However, there is

39 Or, strictly speaking, what the ancient rhetorical theorists would label ὑπερβατόν. This could perhaps be marked by placing the clause at the end of the former sentence, thus: ὦ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι πολλάκις προεθέμην ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἵνα τινὰ καρπὸν σχῶ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν καθὼς καὶ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἐθνοῖσιν, Ἐλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάροις, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἀνόητοις, καὶ ἐκαλύθην ἄχρι τοῦ δεύρο. That, however, would involve some alteration of Paul’s text.

40 It provides, for example, a reasonable solution to the mystery of the ‘odd asyndeton’ in v. 14 (Zahn, An die Römer, 65 [‘ein befremdliches Asyndeton’]). Note also that nowhere does Paul seem to initiate a sentence with words or phrases joined by the conjunctive τε καὶ (see Rom 1.12, 16, 20 [app. nom.]; 2.9, 10; 3.9; 10.12; 1 Cor 1.24, 30 [probably app. nom.]; 2 Cor 12.12; Phil 1.7), except in Rom 1.27 where the joined elements stand in the nominative case as subjects (but notice the widely supported variant δὲ instead of τε).

41 It may be mentioned that there are virtually no examples of an independent use of the inf. εὐαγγελίσασθαι in Paul’s letters. In fact, instances of independent infinitives are very rare in the Pauline letters, mostly confined to imperatival usage (e.g. Rom 12.15; Phil 3.16). See S. E. Porter, Idioms of the Greek New Testament (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994) 201–2.

42 As for comparative material, it should be noted that the word ὀφειλέτης does not occur, e.g., in the LXX or the writings of Philo. Cf., however, Sophocles Aj. 589–90: οὐ κάτοικον ἐγὼ θεοῖς ὡς οὐδεὶς ὀφείλει εἰμί ὀφειλέτης ἐτι (‘Do you not know that I owe the gods no service any more?’ [trans. H. Lloyd-Jones, LCL]) — an excellent example from classical Greek literature of ὀφειλέτης εἰμὶ with the infinitive.

43 Viz. regarding the function of the articular inf. in Rom 8.12. On the difference between articular and anaarthrous inf. Porter observes: ‘Most scholars are agreed that the difference between the two structures does not warrant a major distinction in meaning’ (Idioms, 194).
hardly any doubt about Paul’s usage of the cognate verb ὠφείλω:44 he nearly always uses it with the infinitive45 (see above) and virtually never with a dative object.46 These facts become even more important when it is noticed that the semantic difference between the form ὠφειλέτης εἰμί and ὠφείλω is mostly a matter of emphasis.47 Hence, there is ample evidence for concluding that it is not only possible, but also more probable, that the infinitive εὐγενελίσασθαι is a complement to the predicate ὠφειλέτης εἰμί.48

Third, as for the more problematic οὐτὸς τὸ κατ’ ἐμὲ πρόθυμον, I would make the following comments and suggestions. It seems no longer to be a reasonable option to follow Moule et al. in reading πρόθυμον as the adjective πρόθυμος (‘eager’, ‘willing’, ‘ready’), with τὸ κατ’ ἐμὲ understood as an adverbial phrase (‘as

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Porter reads the inf. in Rom 8.12 as epexegetic or appositional: ‘we are debtors not to the flesh, i.e. to living according to the flesh’ (198). Differently, e.g., N. Turner, A Grammar of New Testament Greek 3. Syntax (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963) 141, who takes it as consecutive or final (‘so that . . .’). Observe that the dative τῆς σάρκις need not be an object to ὠφειλέται ἐσμέν. It may, for instance, be read as a dat. of advantage (‘in favour of the flesh’).

44 Again (see n. 25 above), Kettunen fails to do justice to Paul’s grammar. He states (Abfassungszweck, 123): ‘Bei Paulus bleibt dieser Ausdruck [i.e. ὠφειλέτης εἰμί] nie ohne Objekt. Wenn es sich um ein Genetivobjekt handelt, ist die Bedeutung “schuldig sein”, [Röm] 15,27 . . . geht es aber hier um ein Dativobjekt – und das gilt auch für das Verb ὠφελείν – kommt dazu noch ein Verb, um zu zeigen, worin die Verpflichtung besteht, 8,12; 2 Kor 12,14; vgl. [Röm] 15,1; 1 Kor 5,10; Gal 5,3. Der Sinn ist dann “verpflichtet sein, etwas zu tun”’. Although Kettunen is right in his judgement of ὠφειλέτης/ὁφείλω being in a close relationship with the inf., he seems to have misunderstood the grammar of the passages to which he refers: in 2 Cor 12.14 the dat. is a direct object to the inf., but not to the verb ὠφελέω; in Rom 15.1 and Gal 5.3 there is no dat. object, only acc. object to the inf.; in 1 Cor 5.10 there is no direct object at all, only prepositional phrase with the inf. (on Rom 8.12 see the previous note). In fact, Kettunen fails to provide any example of the verb ὠφελέω with a dative object.

45 When he does not, namely in Phlm 18, he uses it with the acc. and not the dat. case: εἰ δὲ τι ἡδικησέν σε ἡ ὠφείλει, τούτο ἐμοὶ ἐλλάγα.

46 The only possible exception may be Rom 13.8 (μηδένι μηδὲν ὠφείλειτε εἰ μὴ τὸ ἀλλήλους ἀγαπάτε, but it is probably more accurate to read μηδείς as a dative of respect, i.e. lit. ‘with respect to nothing (= anything)” (contra, e.g., RSV and NRSV: ‘Owe no one anything’, in which μηδενί = ‘no one’).

47 See LSJ, s.v. ὠφειλέτης and s.v. ὠφεῖλο. H. Lietzmann, Einführung in die Textgeschichte der Paulusbriefe an die Römer (HNT 8; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1971 [first publ. 1906]) 29, comments: ὠφειλέτης εἰμί heißt bei [Paulus] einfach “ich bin schuldig, ich muß” . . . (also nicht “ich bin Schuldner”).’ Note that in the LXX ὠφεῖλο with the inf. occurs exclusively in later (Hellenistic) Jewish writings, i.e. near contemporary with Paul’s, viz. Wis 12.15; 4 Macc 11.15; 16.19. Hauck, ὠφείλω, 560, observes: ‘In view of the copious number of examples in general Gk. literature it is surprising how rare ὠφείλειν is in the LXX. In the OT proper it occurs only 5 times [Deut 15.2; Job 6.20; Prov 14.9; Isa 24.2; Ezèk 18.7], with a further 10 instances in the Apocrypha [1 Macc 10.43; 13.15, 39; 3 Macc 7.10; 4 Macc 11.3, 15; 16.19; Tob 6.13; Wis 12.15, 20].’

48 On the complement use of the inf., see Porter, Idioms, 196–8.
far as I am concerned'). Perhaps it would be so if τὸ κατ' ἐμέ were to be read as a neuter periphrasis for ἐγὼ and the whole phrase as a subordinate (explanatory) clause (cf. Parkin’s translation above). But, although this latter reading is possible, it still presupposes that the adjective πρόθυμος is to be preferred as the intended word in the text. However, I would argue that this reading probably grew out of a necessity to fill the assumed empty slot of a main verb within the sentence, thus supplied by the adjective πρόθυμος with an absent εἰμὶ (or an absent ἐγένετο). Since the verb is present in the preceding ὑπειλέγεται εἰμὶ, it is unnecessary to adapt the text in this way. Instead, a search for a reading of the text as it stands is required. Therefore, I suggest that the phrase τὸ κατ' ἐμὲ πρόθυμον may be taken adverbially as an accusative of respect (comprising what is variously labelled adverbial accusative and accusative of manner).

49 Moule, Idiom Book, 58 (see also above). Cf. BDF § 224 (i), who appear to support this reading (cf. § 283 [3]), as well as, e.g., the Latin versions of Origen (Rufinus), Ambrosiaster (c. 366–84), d (5th or 6th cent.), and several Vg MSS (quod in me est τὸ κατ' ἐμὲ (ἐστίν)), promptus sum (πρόθυμος εἰμὶ)). For arguments against the possibility of this reading, see Lietzmann, Einführung, 29. The problem with reading τὸ κατ' ἐμὲ as a phrase can be exemplified by reference to J. B. Lightfoot’s Notes on Epistles of St Paul: From Unpublished Commentaries (London: Macmillan, 1904 [first publ. 1895]) 249. Lightfoot understands τὸ κατ' ἐμὲ to be a phrase similar to the plural τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ in Phil 1.12. As a result, he claims: Τὸ πρόθυμον cannot be taken as a substantive, and rendered, “there is readiness on my part.” The absence of the article and of the substantive verb is fatal to this interpretation. Cf. Sanday and Headlam, Romans, 21 (‘τὸ κατ' ἐμὲ will = “I, so far as it rests with me,” i.e. “under God”,’ equivalent to the Vg tradition quod in me promptum est). Note that the adjective πρόθυμος does not occur (elsewhere) in Paul’s letters.

50 Compared to its presence, the absence of the first person singular εἰμὶ is actually quite rare in Paul’s letters (cf. Rom 7.24; 2 Cor 10.1; 11.6, 22, 23 [without εἰμὶ] and Rom 1.14; 7.14; 11.1, 13; 1 Cor 1.12; 3.4; 9.1, 2; 12.15, 16; 13.2; 15.9, 10; 2 Cor 12.10; Phil 4.11 [with εἰμὶ]). See Turner, Syntax, 302, who notes that ‘[a]lmost universally in NT, εἰμὶ is inserted’ (297).

51 So Käsemann, An die Römer, 18; Lietzmann, Einführung, 29; Michel, An die Römer, 85 n. 29; Kettunen, Abfassungszweck, 124–5.

52 Of course, one does not have to assume that an absent verb is thought of as a necessary element in the clause; as some readings imply (cf. Fitzmyer’s reading above), v. 15 may simply be a nominal clause with τὸ πρόθυμον as the subject and ἐπιθυμοῦσασθαι as the predicate. However, since I have not been able to find any example in Paul’s letters of a nominal clause that has an identical syntactical structure, I consider this possibility to be unlikely. On nominal clauses in the NT, see Porter, Idioms, 85.

53 After all, why did Paul not write πρόθυμος εἰμὶ or προθυμοῦμαι with the inf. if this was what he meant to say?

phrase κατ’ ἐμὲ may then be read as a circumlocution for the possessive genitive (= τὸ πρόθυμον μου).55 Further, as widely attested in ancient Greek literature,56 the word πρόθυμον should probably be regarded as equivalent to the feminine πρόθυμία (‘willingness’ or ‘goodwill’).57 Thus understood, the phrase could be rendered ‘with respect to my goodwill’, or, more precisely, ‘with (my) goodwill’.58

The adverb οὐτως is a bit more difficult to deal with, not least because of its functional flexibility.59 With regard to Paul’s non-correlative use of it elsewhere, οὐτως in Rom 1.15 could probably either be taken in an absolute inferential sense (‘thus’, ‘so’, ‘then’),60 or as a denotation of degree (‘so [very] . . .’),61 modifying the accusative phrase τὸ κατ’ ἐμὲ πρόθυμον with respect to what has previously been stated. The latter occurs in Gal 1.6 with an adverb (οὐτως ταχέως [‘so quickly’]). Read as ‘so’ or ‘in this manner’, οὐτως could therefore be taken as wholly embedded in the adverbial τὸ πρόθυμον62 (which, as we recall, denotes Paul’s manner of proclaiming his good news). On the other hand, the former use of οὐτως is far more common in Paul’s letters and, therefore, perhaps, preferable. Its function

55 This use of the preposition κατά is frequently found in Hellenistic Greek, mostly confined to pronouns in NT literature (e.g. Acts 17.28; 18.15; Eph 1.15; cf. Acts 26.3). See L. Radermacher, Neutestamentliche Grammatik: Das Griechisch Der Neuen Testaments im Zusammenhang mit der Volkssprache (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1925) 139; BDF § 224 (1); Turner, Syntax, 268; BAGD, s.v. κατά II.7.b and s.v. πρόθυμος; Lietzmann, Einführung, 29; Robertson, Grammar, 608.
56 E.g. Euripides Med. 178 (τὸ γ’ ἐμὸν πρόθυμον [= Ἡ ἐμὴ προθυμία] ); Iph. taur. 1023; Thucydides 3.82.8; Plato Leg. 9.859b; Josephus A.J. 4.42, 213; 3 Macc 5.26.
57 So LSJ, s.v. πρόθυμος I.4. Suggestions of translations of πρόθυμια include: (1) ‘readiness’, ‘willingness’, ‘eagerness’, and (2) ‘goodwill’, ‘ready kindness’. So also BAGD, s.v. προθυμια, who suggest ‘willingness’, ‘readiness’, ‘goodwill’. Cf. προθυμια in 2 Cor 8.11, 12, 19; 9.2 – the only occurrences of this word in the letters of Paul (besides the neuter προθυμον in Rom 1.15).
58 So also C. Spicq, προθυμια κτλ., Notes de lexicographie néo-testamentaire (3 vols; OBO 22; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978–82) 2.748 n. 3: ‘Lorsque saint Paul déclare aux Romains qu’il ira leur porter l’évangile τὸ πρόθυμον (Rom. I, 15), on peut traduire “de bon cœur” au sens de bonne volonté, bien disposé.’
59 See LSJ, s.v. οὐτως; BAGD, s.v. οὐτως.
60 This usage occurs in several forms: (a) comp. use with an adv. κτι (Rom 6.11; 1 Cor 2.11; 9.14; 14.9, 12; 15.42, 45; Gal 4.3; 1 Thess 4.14); (b) with connecting particles (Rom 11.5, 26; 15.20; 1 Cor 7.7, 17, 36; 8.12; 11.28; 14.25; 15.11c; Gal 6.2; 1 Thess 4.17); (c) without connecting particles (1 Cor 9.24; 15.11b; Phil 4.1; and so in dep. clauses: 1 Cor 7.26, 40; 9.15); (d) within participial phrases (1 Cor 5.3; Phil 3.17). In addition, it is found in scriptural citations (Rom 4.18; 9.20 [οὐτως added by Paul]; 1 Cor 14.21 [add.]).
61 This usage occurs before adjectives and adverbs. See esp. Gal 1.6 (with adv.); 3.3 (with adj.). Cf. also the potential example in 1 Cor 6.5 (with σοφος).
62 Note that John Chrysostom’s reference to Rom 1.14b–15 in his preface (see further above) does not include the adv. οὐτως. Since this absence of οὐτως does not seem to bother him, it is possible that he considered οὐτως to be embedded in τὸ κατ’ ἐμὲ πρόθυμον.
would then be to contribute to the text’s natural flow by reducing the need for a connecting particle in the sentence.63

Fourth, the asyndeton in ὁφειλέτης εἶμι etc. introduces a new phase in the discourse. This accords well with Paul’s language elsewhere: in addition to the frequent use of asyndeton within smaller units (e.g. Rom 12.9–13.1, 8, 10), Paul occasionally uses it to indicate macro-structural developments in his letters64 (as evident in Rom 9.1).65 In light of this, Rom 1.13–15 could be translated as follows:

But I do not want you to be ignorant of, brothers, that I have frequently intended to come to you – but was hindered until now – in order that I may reap some harvest among you as I have among the rest of the gentiles, Greeks as well as barbarians,66 wise as well as ignorant.67

I am bound, then, to announce the gospel68 with goodwill to you also who are in Rome.


64 So also Turner, Syntax, 341. On p. 340 he comments: ‘Except occasionally for effect, this [i.e. the use of asyndeton] is contrary to the genius of Greek, but Paul and Hebrews are full of it.’ See also idem, A Grammar of New Testament Greek 4. Style (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1976) 85.

65 Cf., e.g., 1 Cor 5.1; 6.12; 2 Cor 6.11; Gal 4.12, 21; 6.11; Phil 3.17. Note also that, with Romans as the only exception, the transition from opening to body in Paul’s letters always has asyndeton (1 Cor 1.4; 2 Cor 1.3; Gal 1.6; Phil 1.3; 1 Thess 1.2; Philm 4. Cf. 2 Thess 1.3; Col 1.3; Eph 1.3).

66 Paul probably uses the phrase Ἐλληνιν τε καὶ βαρβάροις simply to denote all non-Jews (τὰ ἔθνη, cf. 1.5), as was common among contemporary Jews, such as Philo and Josephus. See esp. H. Windisch, ‘βαρβάρος’, TDNT 1.549–53; idem, ‘Ἐλλην κτλ.’, in TDNT 2.512–16. So also already in Lightfoot, Notes, 249 (‘A comprehensive description of the Gentile World’). The phrase, however, cannot but also include some cultural and/or linguistic distinctions (cf. 1 Cor 14.11 for the latter). Obviously, the Roman audience would consider themselves as belonging to the former category, and Paul’s subsequent discussion shows that he does too (see 1.16; 2.9; 3.9; 10.12).

67 If by Ἐλληνιν τε καὶ βαρβάροις Paul means all non-Jews (see the previous note) it may be assumed that he uses the phrase σοφοίς τε καὶ ἰόνιτοις to denote a different grouping of the gentile people (so also Cranfield, Romans, 83–4), most likely according to educational level. On the other hand, if the cultural/linguistic distinction is primarily in his mind σοφοίς may be identical with Ἐλληνιν and ἰόνιτοις with βαρβάροις. In that case, Paul probably intends to flatter his audience as Ἐλλήνες.

68 On this meaning of εὐφημείσασθαι, i.e. primarily referring to the content of Paul’s εὐφημίαν, see Rom 10.14–18; 15.18–21; 1 Cor 1.17–18; 15.1–8; Gal 1.6–9, 11–23 (esp. v. 16). Cf. also the interesting occurrence in 1 Thess 3.6.
Conclusions: the reading of Rom 1.13–15

While I do not claim to have provided the solution to the difficult phrase (οὐ τῶς) τὸ κατ’ ἐμὲ πρόθυμον, I do consider my suggestions of punctuation and syntax of Rom 1.13–15 to be less problematic in whole than the current one(s). Hence, there is good reason to conclude that the reading suggested above is a plausible one. But how does this affect the interpretation of the text? In what way does my reading differ from previous readings, which, again, have been based on different punctuation?

To begin with, my reading suggests that in Rom 1.13–15 Paul does not declare that he is under an obligation towards all humanity. It also suggests that Paul does not state that he is under an obligation towards ‘Greeks as well as barbarians, wise as well as ignorant’. In fact, according to my reading, Paul does not say anything about his willingness to proclaim the gospel in Rome being a result of an obligation towards certain people. Furthermore, my reading suggests that Paul does not state that it is no longer, or never was, his intention to proclaim the good news in Rome. Thus, there is no sign of discrepancy between Rom 1.15 and 15.20. Finally, the above reading strongly suggests that Rom 1.13–15 should not be read as a structural unity.

What, then, does the text imply according to my suggestion? In general, the reading implies that Rom 1.13–15 comprises the end of one phase in the discourse and the beginning of another.69 Οὐ εἰλήπτης ἐμὶ ... εὐαγγελίσασθαι constitutes therefore a transition70 from the first part of the letter’s ‘body’71 to the second.

After the opening (vv. 1–7) Paul begins the main part of his letter by praising the audiences’ faithfulness (v. 8) and expressing his concern for them as well as his yearning to make a visit (vv. 9–12). This is introduced by πρὸ τοῦ μέν, followed by

69 Observe the subordinate (explanatory) function of the clauses immediately following (vv. 16 [γάρ ×2], 17 [γάρ], and 18 [γάρ]). So R. D. Anderson, Jr, Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul (CBET 18; Kampen: Pharos, 1996) 183, remarks (his emphasis): ‘Formally the proposition for the letter as a whole might be considered to be v.15. It is this statement (that it is Paul’s desire to preach the Gospel to the Roman Christians) that forms the basis for Paul’s following remarks (indicated by the ensuing series of causal conjunctions [γάρ]), and also seems to be reflected upon again at the end of the “sermon” (15.5ff.).’ On the widespread tendency to cut off vv. 16–17 from the surrounding discourse, on the assumption that it constitutes ‘the theme’ of Romans, N. Elliott comments somewhat ironically: ‘Numerous commentators follow text editions (e.g., Nestle-Aland) in isolating 1.16–17 as the letter’s “theme,” almost as if the superscription περὶ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου or περὶ τῆς δικαιοσύνης θεοῦ stood in the text at this point’ (The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul’s Dialogue with Judaism [JSNTSup 45; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990] 84 n. 2).

70 The transitional force may be softened a bit by the inferential οὐ τῶς.

71 I.e. the main part of the letter, viz. everything between the epistolary opening (1.1–7) and closing (16.1–23 [or 27]).
two explanatory sentences with γάρ (vv. 9 and 11), which indicates that the main sentence is found in v. 8. Πρῶτον μὲν is then answered by δὲ in v. 13. After his attempt to convince the audience of his willingness to visit them, Paul apologizes for not having been able to do so. The reason Paul gives for his serious delay is that he has been occupied with ‘reaping the harvest’ among other gentiles (cf. 15.19–22). By giving a further description of these people as ‘Greeks as well as barbarians, wise as well as ignorant’, he intensifies his previous missionary work, thus providing additional support for his delay. This first part of the letter’s body may therefore be seen as Paul’s captatio benevolentiae, i.e. his effort to capture the audience’s goodwill before turning to the main subject.

At the beginning of the next phase in the discourse (in 1.14b–15) Paul presents his main concern with the letter. He refers to his ‘goodwill’ towards the audience, so distinctly marked out in his previous words, and states that it is his duty to announce the good news also to them, as well as to other gentiles. Since Paul has completed his work in the eastern part of his missionary province (cf. 15.19b, 23),

72 Note that v. 12 contains a subordinate purpose clause with additional explanation (indicated by τοῦτο δὲ ἐστίν) of the preceding purpose clause (εἰς τὸ στηρίζῆναι ὑμᾶς).
73 Πρῶτον μὲν is frequently answered only by δὲ, see LSJ, s.v. πρῶτος B.3.3.a. Cf. the observations made by Theodore of Mopsuestia (350–428), in Staab, Pauluskommentare, 115: Ζητεῖται δὲ πῶς ἀνταπέδωκεν Πρῶτον μὲν ἐνυπαρξίᾳ τῷ θεῷ τούτου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ περὶ πάντων ὑμῶν; οὐ γὰρ εἶπεν δὲ ἐνυπαρξίᾳ τὸν ἑαυτὸν δὲ. Ἡγούμεναι τοίνυν ἢ ἀνταπόδοσις γέγονεν εἰς τὸ ὅτι θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἄγνοεν, ἀδέλφοι, καὶ τὰ ἔξης (‘The question is in what way [Paul] gives an answer to “First, I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ for all of you,” for he does not say “Second, …” Well, I hold that here the answer has become “But I do not want you to be ignorant of, brothers” and so on’).
74 Cf. the frequent mention of visiting in 15.22 (τοῦ ἑλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς), 23 (ἐπιστοθαν δὲ ἐχειν τοῦ ἑλθειν πρὸς ὑμᾶς [cf. ἐπιστοθα ἡξεὶν ὑμᾶς in 1.11]), 24 (διαπερευμένος θεόσσονθαι ὑμᾶς), 28 (απελεύσομαι δὲ ὑμῶν), 29 (ἐρχόμενος πρὸς ὑμᾶς . . . ἐλεύνομαι), 32 (ἐλθὼν πρὸς ὑμᾶς). By this recurrent theme Paul probably wants to assure the audience of his intention to visit them, in spite of the fact that not even now, when he has finished his work ‘from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum’ (15.19 [NRSV]), will he turn to the city of Rome.
75 See 15.23 (ἀπὸ πολλῶν ἐπόν).
76 So Origen comments (see frg. 9 in Staab, ‘Neue Fragmente’, 79): ἀπολογεῖται ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἐφέλκεται τὴν τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἐκκλησίας ἀγάπην πρὸς ἑαυτὸν (lit. ’[Paul] speaks in defence of himself and draws [thereby] the love of the Roman church towards himself’). Theodore of Mopsuestia notes Paul’s convention of praising his audience in the introductory part (τὸ προοίμιον) of his letters, and speaks of the passage in Rom 1.8 and following as a ‘praise of the Romans’ (Ῥωμαίων ἐπαίνον), intended to secure the audience’s goodwill (ὅστε τὰς ἐνθύμιας προθυμοτέρους αὐτῶν πρὸς τὴν τῶν γραμμόμενων παρασκευάζειν ἀνάγνωσθαι); see Staab, Pauluskommentare, 113–14. Cf. the comments of Gennadius of Constantinople (d. 471) (ἐπαίνεσάς αὐτῶν); see ibid., 353. So also Ambrosiaster and Pelagius (c. 354–420); see Schelkle, Paulus, 31.
77 On Paul’s missionary province, see esp. Gal 2.7–9. Cf. 1.16; 2.2; Rom 1.5–6; 15.15–16, 18.
it is now the Romans’ turn to hear of his good news. In other words, it is Paul’s missionary duty to present his message to gentiles in Rome. Presumably, then, that is what he subsequently carries out in this extensive letter.

78 In 15.14–33 it becomes clear that Paul is not on his way to Rome in the nearest future; he is on his way to Jerusalem (see esp. v. 25). Accordingly, he cannot deliver his message in person. In light of what he states in 1.14b–15, then, it follows that his letter, or some portion(s) of it, constitutes the announcement of his good news.