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September 22, 2016  
Seminar on the New Testament Canon  
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**Preface**

Motivated by the desire to present Paul as he was, so that we can imitate him (p. 9). If we don’t think about the letter writing process of Paul’s day, “we are at risk of reading our culture, customs, values and ideas back onto Paul” (p. 9).

**Introduction**

The value of ancient letters

- Richards sets the stage by reminding the reader that it is hard to appreciate the value of a letter in our culture when we can text, email or call someone anywhere in the world (p. 13).
- My reflection: this helps me understand how much weightier letter writing was in that day.
- The ancients wrote letters as a substitute for their presence (p. 14).

**Sources**

- Literary letters were copied and preserved by monks, while private letters have been uncovered as well.
- Cicero is an important source of information because he wrote frequently and commented on mundane matters (p. 15).
- “In this book I will not argue that the letters of Cicero, Seneca and their peers are analogous to Paul’s. Rather I will show that the basic mechanics of letter writing were a part of the culture, for we find evidence for various customs across the literary spectrum, in Cicero (and his friends) as well as in the papyri.” (p. 15).

**Paul**

- Richards argues that while many people think that Paul wrote letters only when he could not be present or send someone else, there were actually occasions when letter writing was preferred (cf. Corinthians). (p. 16).

This book
The mechanics of letter writing is a gap in scholarship that this book seeks to fill (p. 17).

“This work will try to peek over Paul’s shoulder, looking at how he likely wrote his letters, with the hope of seeing more accurately how our New Testament letters came into being. A more careful consideration of Paul as a letter writer should affect how we view the authorship of Paul’s letters (coauthors and pseudonymity), how we recreate the original text (text criticism, interpolations), and perhaps even how we interpret some passages in his letters. We will see the extraordinary amount of work that went into his letters. We also will see more clearly how letters were sent and how we likely came to have a collection of Paul’s letters.” (p. 18).

1. A Modern, Western Paul

The first chapter is an attempt by Richards to expose the ways that we read our own culture back onto Paul. The idea of Paul sitting at a desk with “pen in hand” is not what would have likely occurred (p. 19).

*The following are some false assumptions, according to Richards:*

The letter writer’s study (p. 23)

1. Paul wrote in private
2. Only intimate friends were present
3. The process took “only a day or two of uninterrupted privacy.”

The letter writer’s helpers (p. 23–24)

Coauthors

1. Coauthors were mentioned for a reason other than attributing authorship
2. Paul was the sole author

Secretaries

1. Paul used a secretary because he was unable to write himself
2. Every word of the text originated with Paul
3. Paul dictated the letters
4. The secretary took dictation
5. Hiring a secretary was the most expensive part of letter writing
6. Timothy was literate

The writing process (p. 24–26)

The inclusion of traditional material: they were weaved in as Paul dictated the letter. These include:

1. OT quotations
2. Traditional Christian material (e.g. the Christ Hymn of Philippians 2)
3. Other material such as virtue/vice lists
Editing

1. The first draft was the only draft
2. The letter was written on the papyrus it which was then sent out. This assumes that the secretary could take dictation while writing well enough that the letter could be read publicly

Copying

1. Copies were made quickly and easily
2. Paul did not keep a copy for himself

Dispatching the letter: dispatch was always immediate

Problems with these assumptions (pp. 26–31):

- Misconceptions about the letter writer’s study (pp. 26–27)
  1. Paul likely did not share our idea of “privacy” and was likely with his “group” when writing
  2. There were likely no modern conveniences such as lights or desks

- Misconceptions about the letter writer’s “helpers” (pp. 27–30)
  1. Paul should be assumed to be working as a part of a team rather than as an individual, even in writing letters. Paul was not a western individualist, so he was not as concerned with having “his own” ideas
  2. Not every team member could have served as a secretary. Those who were not illiterate, cannot be assumed to have been able to write. Secretaries also contributed other skills related to the materials of writing that Paul’s team members may not have had (mixing ink, gluing papyrus, lining the papyrus, etc.)
  3. The secretary may have contributed to the content of the letter, though Paul was responsible for the final letter. Richards says that there are two poles: Paul dictated every word, vs the secretary “hijacking” the letter by taking control of the content. It may have been in the middle.

- Misconceptions about the writing process (p. 30–31)
  1. The letters were likely not dictated but composed
  2. There existed stenographers who could take Greek shorthand dictation in the 1st century, but it is not guaranteed that Paul had access to this.
  3. “unlikely Paul dictated his letters verbatim, then we must allow for a process that includes editing; that is, Paul had notes and rough drafts” (p. 31).

Richards’ Conclusions (p. 31):

1. “Several misconceptions are common about Paul, such as assuming that (a) he wrote in privacy with only a secretary at hand who recorded his dictation; (b) he dictated to the secretary all quoted material, either reciting it from memory or reading it aloud; and (c) when he finished dictating, the letter was sealed and sent.”
2. “Paul’s writings show clear evidence of careful composition. They were not dashed off one evening in the flurry of mission activity. For example, Witherington and Betz both allow Paul to have worked through at least one draft of Galatians before sending it.

3. “Since Paul named coauthors in some of his letters, our understanding of author must be expanded beyond meaning ‘Paul alone.’ ”

2. Paul as a First-Century Letter Writer

Paul as the leader of a missionary team

- “Paul did not work alone” (p. 32).
- Paul had disciples and associates, but he was the leader of a team which had an ever changing cast (p. 33).
- “Associates are never named as cosenders in Paul’s letters; only understudies are. We are arguing that Paul’s letters were a team project, but not a team of near-equals. Paul was the leader and the dominant voice; the others were his disciples” (p. 33).
- Other ancient writers would not lower themselves to write with those lower than them, but this is one of several ways that Paul departs from the norm because of Christian convictions about his role as a slave of Christ (p. 33).

Paul and his coauthors

- The practice of naming “cosenders” in a letter in the ancient world is rare except when a letter is form a group or a husband and wife (p. 33–34).
- Paul uses “we” in the thanksgiving of letters that he writes with Timothy as the coauthor (p. 35). Likewise, letters that are written with Timothy as coauthor also give greetings from Paul’s other associates who are not listed as coauthors (p. 34). Finally, in Romans Timothy sends greetings but is not listed as a coauthor (p. 35).
- This seems to indicate that the matter of coauthorship should be taken seriously as indicating that in certain letters, members of Paul’s team participated in the authoring of the letters.

The Letter Writer’s Office: where might Paul have written Romans, for example?

- The workshop (pp. 36–37): The workshop would have been noisy and the back room would have been badly lit. This would not have been an ideal place.
- The home: It is likely that some of Paul’s letters were written in the living room of some of his patrons (pp. 37–43). The bedrooms were more private, but poorly lit. The living rooms would have had room for Paul’s team members to be seated with him.
- While traveling: It is possible that some of Paul’s writings were written while traveling. “Writing aboard ship or during a brief stay on a journey are not as unlikely as sometimes implied” (p. 43).
Outside: Paul may have composed outside during the day (p. 44). “It is . . . common to imagine Paul writing in the evenings, ‘after a full day’s toil’; yet for an ancient, evenings were the worst time to write because of the particularly poor lighting. Furthermore, Paul’s letters were not his leisure activity after work, but were part of his work, perhaps his primary work” (p. 44).

Conclusions: pp. 45–46

“We have seen that ancient letter writers wrote in places we might not have considered. Paul and his team most likely wrote in the living room of the home in which he was staying, but he may have done some writing at the synagogue (when he was welcome there), aboard ship and even outdoors in afternoon rest breaks. They were constantly preparing notes and polishing drafts of material. Preaching and debating in the synagogues and marketplaces provided Paul and his team constant opportunity and motivation to rework material. Many of his basic arguments took shape in the crucible of this mission work. Sometimes a messenger arrived with problems and questions from another church, and these specific questions and issues caused new insights as he and his team sought to provide answers.

Friends stopped by and heard the material, making comments and suggestions. Sometimes their comments and suggestions precipitated changes. Small discourses on topics and other snippets of material were written in the notebooks for future use. There were other opportunities to try the material. . . . Paul no doubt used evening meals as opportunities to teach those present, probably using materials from his notes. The resulting discussion would prompt revision and clarification of what had been written.”

Furthermore:
- Thessalonians, Corinthians, and Romans may have been written from a host’s apartment
- The prison epistles may have been written from a rented apartment in Rome
- 1 Timothy and Titus may have been written in haste on the road
- 2 Timothy may have been written while Paul was in a slimy prison with his secretary outside. “Paul’s final letter, 2 Timothy was written in miserable conditions, but most likely with a good secretary I suspect a good secretary in a poor situation was better than a poor secretary in a good situation” (p. 44).

3. The Tools of a Letter Writer

Writing Materials (pp. 47–52):

- Pen and Ink:
  - Red ink and black ink were available. The black ink was cheap and easy to make, but washed off if it got wet. Pens were made from reed cut to a point like a fountain pen.
Tablets:
- Wooden notebooks could be written directly upon as well as filled with wax which was written upon for temporary notes.

Parchment:
- These were made of animal skin that was treated. The “hairside” was not as smooth, but absorbed the ink better. The “fleshside” was smoother and preferred for writing upon. The fleshside was the “recto” or proper side for writing, while the hairside was the “verso” side. They were sewn together to make a scroll.
- Theoretically parchment would be more expensive than papyrus, but Richards says we don’t know that for sure since Egypt had a monopoly on the market and it may have been expensive outside of Egypt.

Papyrus
- Made from papyrus plants, they were more susceptible to water damage. The strips of papyrus ran horizontally on the recto, vertically on the verso.

Rolls
- Parchment or papyrus was normally sold as a roll, the standard of which, at Paul’s time, was about 12 feet.
- Richards estimates that a standard roll, or chartes, would cost about $500 in modern equivalent. For labor, he estimates that a copy of a letter could have cost $250, and the cost of copying Isaiah could have been $1,200.

Desks (pp. 53–55)
- “Art, archaeological finds and literary references all indicate that ancient scribes wrote without desks” (p. 53).
- For a brief note, a scribe would stand and write, holding the writing surface in the left hand.
- For something longer, the scribe would sit, stretch his tunic between his knees and place the writing surface on his knees.

Notes and Notebooks (pp. 55–57)
- “Tablets were used for keeping notes” (p. 56). They were made of wood or ivory and often arranged in small “notebooks” in which notes were kept temporarily. They could be reused.
- He suggests that “Probably early Christian preachers, including Paul, kept notebooks with relevant Old Testament passages for use in their preaching and teaching” (p. 56).
- Tablets “were also commonly used for preparing a rough draft of a letter” (p. 56).
- There were also parchment notebooks called membranae (p. 57).
- Notebooks were used for unpublished materials and notes, while scrolls were for published materials (p. 57). Cf. 2 Tim 4:13.
4. Secretaries in the First-Century World

How common were Secretaries? (pp. 60–64)

- Official and business letters: use of secretaries was “widespread in both governmental and business life (p. 60).
- Private letters: “It is clear that the use of a secretary was prevalent among both the upper and lower classes, although perhaps for different reasons. Of course, both classes made widespread—almost exclusive—use of a secretary in the composition of business and official letters. Yet, both class members still used a secretary in the writing of private letters, although at times they would send private letters in their own hand as well” (p. 63).

How did Secretaries Work? (pp. 64–79).

- There was a spectrum regarding the role of the secretary:
  - Secretary as transcriber
    - Slow dictation: “syllable by syllable” (p. 66). Julius Caesar was aid to dictate several letters at once because of the rate of slow dictation. This required “slower than normal speech” (p. 67).
    - Rapid dictation: to record at the pace of normal speech would require a form of shorthand. Richards argues that there was such a system of Greek shorthand because it existed in Latin a century before Paul, and there is evidence that it was borrowed from the Greeks. However, it cannot be stated with certainty that because some could write shorthand, that Paul necessarily had access to a secretary who could do so (p. 74).
  - Secretary as contributor
    - “. . . the author determined the basic content of the letter but the secretary offered much of the phraseology” (p. 74).
    - The secretaries played an editorial role for those they served. They were familiar with the literary conventions of the day and may have filled these in for the writer.
  - Secretary as composer
    - “Because of the highly standardized nature of most ancient letters, letter writers had the option of asking the secretary to compose the letter, without detailing its contents. . . . For example, an author could request that a letter be written to a local official assuring him of compliance with all the latest ordinances. The secretary would then compose a suitable letter. In this role the secretary was actually the author of the letter, although the stated author assumed full responsibility for it” (p. 77).
- Note that the three divisions presented are somewhat arbitrary. It was a spectrum.

5. Paul’s Use of a Secretary
“Certainly Paul used a secretary. Six of his letters explicitly mention it, either by stating when he wrote the postscript in his own hand (1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; 2 Thess 3:17; Philem 19) or by having a word of greeting from the secretary (Rom 16:22). There are other indicators in Paul’s other letters. However, using a secretary was standard procedure in antiquity and does not require explicit evidence in each letter. The question is not whether Paul used a secretary but how Paul used a secretary.” (p. 81).

Describing Paul’s Secretary (pp. 81–89)

- **Responsibility**
  - “The author assumed full responsibility for the purpose, content, style and even the form of every letter, whether actually from his pen or not” (p. 81).
  - Richards remarks that “I have found no ancient examples of poor wording being blamed on a secretary (or fine wording attributed to one). Apparently it was assumed that the author was responsible for every phrase and nuance contained in his letter no matter how much the secretary actually formulated” (p. 82).

- **Training**
  - “The majority of people, those with only an elementary level of education, had perhaps a little exposure to letter writing, enough probably to handle the rudimentary forms. . . . [on the other hand, we] may safely assume secretaries were trained through apprenticeship with some additional guidance from training manuals” (pp. 86–87).

- **Practical considerations**
  - “. . . dictating to one’s secretary while strolling about, reclining at meal or sitting by the roadside was hardly worthy of praise but rather routine” (p. 89).

Identifying Paul’s Secretary (pp. 89–91)

- **Team member, private slave, or contracted secretary?**
  - Because letter writing was a specialized skill, “it is unwise to presume that Timothy or some other member of the team could take dictation and prepare a proper letter” (p. 89).
  - “Paul most likely found his secretaries in the same place as almost everyone else, in the market. Like other craftsmen, secretaries could be contracted in the marketplace. . . . When a person wished to send a letter, he or she sought a secretary in the market. This was more likely the procedure for short letters and business contracts. In the case of longer letters, a secretary likely went to the author. We need not imagine Paul standing in front of a counter at a secretary’s shop dictating Romans. Likely he hired a secretary to come to him to prepare the letter.” (p. 90).

- **Training**: Two issues raised by Richards:
  - “First, we should not assume the typical secretary was capable of fine nuances of rhetoric. . . . When such elements are present in Paul’s letters, we should first assume they came from Paul or a team member and not immediately credit the
secretary. Since a fairly consistent, medium-level rhetorical sophistication is found in all of Paul’s letters, it is more reasonable to conclude that Paul was the common thread rather than his various secretaries or occasional coauthors” (pp. 90–91).

- Second, while secretaries often corrected grammar, this did not necessarily include fine points of grammar” (p. 91).

**Place of work**

- It is likely that Paul was constantly in the writing process, “composing, editing and polishing material as he traveled and ministered” (p. 91). However, writing a major letter probably took an extended stay to complete.

**Conclusion:**

- Paul likely did not dictate his letters
- We should not assume Paul had a secretary that could take shorthand (though Richards says that Tertius may have been able to because of oral features in Romans)
- It is unlikely that Paul’s secretary was the composer of the letter
- “Most likely Paul’s secretary fell in that middle area between the extremes of transcriber composer. Paul (and his team) dictated the letter, compromising between a painfully slow, syllable-by-syllable rate of speech and the rapid rate of normal speech. The secretary, unable to take shorthand, also compromised. Unable to maintain the complete precision of verbatim transcription, the secretary took notes as complete and detailed as he could. He then prepared a rough draft, probably on washable papyrus sheets or stacks of wax tablets. Paul and his team heard the letter read and made corrections and additions, . . . The process of editing and revising continued until Paul and his team were completely satisfied, since they, and especially Paul, had ultimate responsibility for every word of the letter.” (p. 93).

**6. Identifying Inserted Material**

**Preformed Material** (pp. 95–99):

- Any preexisting material not composed as part of the letter. It falls on a spectrum from material clearly introduced by introduction formula or phrases to material that may have been integrated into the authors thought and therefore no longer “foreign”

- **Criteria for detection**
  - Related to content
    - Indicated by introductory formula
    - Sometimes introduced by “who” (relative pronoun)
    - “multiple attestations” not caused by literary dependence
    - Passages with multiple peculiar idioms
The inclusion of “extraneous details” that suggest “leftover meaning” not related to the author’s immediate point
- Theological passages summarizing the gospel or commenting on the cosmic reign or preexistence of Christ
  - Related to form
    - Interruption of syntax of flow of thought
    - Rhythmic and other literary elements indicating poetic material
    - Certain syntactical features (cf. p. 99).
  - None of the criteria are determinative on their own. You must build an argument from the presence of multiple criteria

Interpolations (pp. 99–108)
- Defined: “a phrase, sentence or even a paragraph that has been inserted by someone else into Paul’s letter” (p. 99). Richards says that two conclusions are commonly accepted by Scholars:
  - Later interpolations revealed by MS evidence are to be removed as non-genuine
  - “Theories arguing for extensive interpolations in Paul’s letters—for which there is no manuscript evidence—are ungrounded” (p. 100). The MS evidence is of utmost importance.
- Since interpolations share the features of preformed material, the difference is that they are identified as “non-Pauline” and “post-Pauline” (p. 101).
- Three kinds of non-Pauline material
  - Preformed material (not a true interpolation)
    - Contributions from team members during composition: “Paul had coauthors, a secretary, and usually colleagues, all of whom felt varying degrees of freedom to contribute to the letter’s formation and content” (p. 103).
    - Post-dispatch interpolations likely identifiable by textual criticism
- Pre- vs post-dispatch interpolations
  - Pre-dispatch: Paul was not ultimately concerned with expressing his “individual” viewpoint, and so would have allowed his coauthors to express distinct or tangential ideas.
  - If the passage was interjected during the drafting process, it would be weaved in seamlessly, but if it was during the editing process it would stick out more.
  - Post-dispatch: MS evidence is the only way to distinguish between pre- and post-dispatch interpolation.
  - However, it is important to distinguish because pre-dispatch interpolation is authorized and part of the Pauline letter, while post-dispatch is unauthorized and can be ignored

7. Weaving Together a Letter
Weaving Inserted Material into a Letter (pp. 109–118)

- Weaving in Preformed Material
  - Short memorized portions that would be weaved in while drafting (OT quotes, Jesus traditions, sayings, or hymn fragments)
  - Longer pieces that had been written down and would be handed to the secretary to insert during the drafting process (Phil 2 Christ hymn)
  - This explains why the preformed material interrupts the flow of thought

- Weaving in Interpolations
  - Richards uses 1 Cor 14:33b–35 as an example taking a cue form Fee’s commentary. He suggests that there is a tension between Paul and Sosthenes on this point.
  - “. . . Is it coincidence that scholars find interpolations more often in 1 Corinthians than in Paul’s other letters? Non-Pauline elements seem more common in 1 Corinthians, in the eyes of some scholars. Perhaps this is because Sosthenes was the coauthor least integrated into the Pauline band, least influenced by Paul’s theology, and thus least likely to sound Pauline. Unlike Timothy, Sosthenes was not trained under the tutelage of Paul. Sosthenes was also a man of status. He was a ruler of the synagogue. He was less likely to be cowed by Paul, more likely to freely interject. As a ruler of the synagogue, it is not surprising to hear appeals to Torah, midrash, and other indicators of Jewish exegetical training, although perhaps from a different slant than Paul” (p. 114).
  - Richards argues that 1 Corinthians 10:1–22 is an interpolation that was woven in during the drafting process (p. 115). Paul was gentler on idolatry, but Sosthenes took a harder stand. Paul moderated it, but permitted it because it was not contradictory to what he had said.
  - Richards argues that 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 was added by Timothy later in the process.

The “Author” and Inserted Material

- “There can be authorized non-Pauline insertions” (p. 118–119).
- Paul as “we”: “. . . Paul was the major, predominant, often overwhelming voice on the team. His imprimatur was not only unmistakable but often overbearing. The arguments went where he intended them to go; the conclusions were what Paul intended to reach. Nevertheless, the smaller, quieter voices of others can still be heard in his letters, not only in the discussions before the letters were written, not just in the discussions as the letters were being written, but sometimes in the letter itself” (p. 120).
- The Mistaken quest for the “pure Paul”: Richards says it is because of our western presuppositions that we think it is better if only Paul wrote the letters. “. . . the 1 Corinthians we consider inspired is not the 1 Corinthians written by Paul alone but Paul and Sosthenes (1:1), through a secretary (16:21)” (p. 120).
8. Classifying Paul’s Letters

Public vs Private: Classifying Greco-Roman Letters (pp. 122–127)

- Public vs private letters
- Deissmann: “Letter” vs “Epistle”
- There was no solid line between public and private in Greco-Roman society (p. 126).
- Conclusion: Paul took the papyrus letter and used it for his purposes, so that it was neither a crude, stereotyped message, nor a literary masterpiece designed for its own sake (p. 127).

Paul’s Letter as a Greco-Roman Letter (pp. 127–139)

- Structure
  - Body opening, body closing, body middle
  - Paul’s letters are a modified form of the basic Greco-Roman letter
- Content
  - Paul uses stereotyped formulae
  - He modifies the traditional thanksgiving formula, giving thanks for the congregation, blending prayer and intercession, and giving previews of the letter’s contents (pp. 131–132).
  - Paul also used literary features, such as chiasm, analogy, metaphor, paradox, etc., as well as rhetorical features such as paranesis and diatribe (though the latter is disputed and may just have come from imitating other speakers rather than training)
  - Conclusion: Paul was thoughtful in his letter writing, but all the literary and rhetorical functions were for proclaiming the truth, not as ends in and of themselves.

9. Analyzing Paul’s Writing Style

The Writing Style of Paul (pp. 141–148)

- The question of “inauthentic” letters is problematic because there is a question about how we know a genuine Pauline letter. Attempts have been made to determine Pauline letters by theology and style and diction.
- Richards proposes that the presence of coauthors and the use of secretaries adequately explains any proposed differences in the Pauline letter collection (p. 145).
• “Paul, as the dominant (often domineering) author, was the common thread that provided the similarity, while the various coauthors and secretaries provided enough input to prevent a clear style from emerging” (p. 145).
• “The conclusion we must reach is that style analyses are not effective in determining the authenticity of a Pauline letter. Our modern, Western, individualistic perception of a solitary writer cannot be cast back upon Paul. His letters are too filled with Old Testament material, quotes, coauthors and secretarial influences to root out a ‘pure Paul’ litmus test for other letters.” (p. 145).
• Ancient letters were considered inauthentic, not on the basis of style, but on the basis of “tone” (p. 146–147).

Stylistic Differences because Paul Used a Secretary (pp. 148–155)

• Length: no effect
• Rhetorical content: no effect
• Flow: breaks in the flow of thought may be due to composing over a period of time with changing circumstances (p. 149)
• Addition of details: the secretary may have effected this. Perhaps Tertius was a Roman and knew the names of those in the Roman church, and this is why Romans has a long list of Greetings though Paul had not been there.
• Corrections: no evidence that Paul’s letters contain spontaneous corrections.
• Style: the use of a secretary has been shown to influence Cicero’s style, and so it is probable that differences of Pauline style can be explained in part as a result of the use of a secretary.

10. Preparing a Letter for Dispatch

Making a Copy (pp. 156–161)

• “Modern classical scholarship generally agrees that ancient letter writers kept copies of their letters. . . . From incidental remarks in ancient letters it becomes clear that letter writers made copies of letters for three reasons: (1) multiple copies were made and sent via different carriers to help insure the safe arrival of the message, (2) a copy of a letter was made to be shared with another, (3) a copy was made to be retained by the author” (p. 156–157).
  o Multiple copies: not likely that Paul did this. For one thing, it was expensive, and for another, he evidently sent one copy to multiple destinations.
  o Sharing copies: it was not uncommon to have copies of a letter in the ancient world. This may in part explain the copying of the Pauline letters.
  o The author’s copy: ‘Because retaining copies of a dispatched letter was routine practice, letter writers usually did not mentioned it. We typically read about it only when a letter was lost or damaged and a replacement was sent. Nevertheless,
since letters were often lost, there are still numerous references to this practice” (p. 158). This is true for the aristocracy. Richards argues that it was likely true even among the less wealthy when the letter was important (p. 159).

Preparing the Dispatched Copy (pp. 161–165)

- “Preparing the copy of the letter for dispatch was the culmination of the secretary’s work” (p. 161).
- Preparing a copy for public reading:
  - Good handwriting was a skill of its own. Literacy did not necessarily entail the ability to write well. In addition, one might have good handwriting and not good grammar.
  - “Since most writers had poor handwriting, aside from quick notes dashed to family, ancients (if they could afford it) paid to have the dispatched letter written in a pleasing script. There is no reason to assume Paul was the exception to the rule. Since the skills to prepare a letter pleasing in appearance were usually limited to those trained in the craft, we should assume Paul paid to have a dispatched copy prepared in pleasing script and on good quality papyrus” (p. 163).
- Writing out long letters:
  - “. . . Paul’s letters were inordinately long” (p. 163).
  - “Philemon . . . was a typical length, perhaps even a bit long” (p. 164).
  - Secretaries could write about 85 lines per hour. Richards estimates that in light of limitations of energy and light, as well as the preparation of supplies and other interruptions, probably a secretary could write for 5 hours a day (p. 164).
  - “I feel confident in expressing a minimum number of drafts: the initial draft was prepared from notes, surely there was at least one revision, the polished draft was prepared for dispatch on quality papyrus and a copy written in Paul’s notebook, which would result in a minimum of four drafts. Thus Paul’s letter to the Romans needed twelve days just for the secretary to prepare his drafts. This does not include any time for composition or note-taking sessions” (p. 164).

Estimating Paul’s Cost to Write a Letter (pp. 165–169)

- Richards gives an “educated guess” for the sake of helping the reader understand the cost.
- Paul would have been charged for papyri and labor. Labor would include all of the drafts that the secretary made.
- “To err again on the side of caution. I have said that for most of his letters Paul paid for a minimum of the initial draft and one revision, both done on tablets or washable notebooks, then paid for a copy to be dispatched (with nice script on good papyrus) and a copy to be retained” (p. 168).
- At this rate, Romans would have cost about $2,300, and Philemon about $100.
11. Dispatching the Letter

Signing the Letter (pp. 171–175)

- Three methods:
  - Use of a seal
  - Summary of letter’s contents in the author’s own writing
  - Closing greeting in the author’s own writing

- Two kinds of postscripts:
  - Summary: written in the author’s handwriting, or a third person if the author was illiterate. This was necessary to authenticate the letter.
  - Additional material: either sensitive information or “postscripted” material that came too late to be integrated into the last draft. Richards proposes that in “Pauline postscripts . . . there is a tendency for the language to be more abrupt and stern than that found in the body of the letter. It is quite possible that ‘pure Paul’ tended to be more blunt and that his coauthors (and secretaries) tended to moderate his tone” (p. 175).

Folding and Sealing the Letter (pp. 176–177)

- Letters of one sheet were folded and tied and clay was put on the knot. The recipient was written on the outside.
- For longer letters, they were glued together into a roll and scrolled up and tied

Carrying the Letter (pp. 177–185)

- Types of letter carriers
  - Imperial carriers: there was an imperial postal system, but no one was allowed to use it except government officials
  - Happenstance letter carriers: family, friends, acquaintances, or strangers were tasked with carrying letters. While “unreliable,” the system was common and accepted (pp. 178–179). “The availability of a carrier often prompted someone to write” (p. 180).
  - Private letter carriers: often slaves carried letters. They were more reliable than an “accidental” letter carrier, who might lose, damage, or read a letter. “Private letter carriers often expected to carry a response back” (p. 182). Paul’s junior team members may have functioned as private letter carriers.

- Other tasks of the letter carrier:
  - Bringing supplies
  - Bringing information: the carrier could give additional information and explain the contents of the letter (p. 183). “The sender did not usually state that the carrier had additional news; it was expected. The fact that the carrier had news was specifically noted only when the matter was urgent or secretive” (p. 183).
Reading the letter: as all reading was out loud, the carrier likely “performed” the letter, and since they knew the sender, were most likely to communicate the sender’s intent in the reading of the letter.

12. Paul’s Letter Carriers

Identifying Paul’s Carriers (pp. 188–189)

- Unnamed carriers: Richards supposes that when the carriers are unnamed, they are happenstance carriers. “For example, he did not say anything about who carried Galatians and 1 and 2 Thessalonians, his early letters. Since the letter carrier was not named or described in any way, it is most likely Paul used a happenstance carrier who was traveling that way and who may well have been a convert. It is impossible to ascertain” (p. 188).
- Named carriers: Paul often sent a team member such as Tychicus.
- A formula for identifying the carrier: this was used in 1 Peter 5:12, but Paul never used a standardized formula.

The Logistics of Carrying Paul’s Letters (pp. 189–200)

- Travel: travel by land was restricted to the summer months (June to September). There was the issue of terrain, as well as the issue of social propriety: Christian hospitality would demand that travelers would stay to visit friends and local church leaders.
- Dangers: pirates, weather, thieves, etc. People traveled together because there was safety in numbers.
- Distances and travel time: Ancient travelers could travel around 20 miles per day, but we cannot be sure how long it took for Paul’s letters to be delivered because the various circumstances were unpredictable. It is possible that some letters took as little as a week or two.
- Letter carriers occasionally took the letter to more than one destination (e.g. Galatians)

13. Paul’s Use of His Letter Carriers

Additional tasks of a letter carrier (pp. 201–204)

- Paul seems to indicate that he received gifts from churches by the hand of messengers, and that Timothy would bring some supplies (2 Timothy)
- Tychicus was sent with additional information. Those who brought the letter from the Corinthians to Paul (“those of Chloe’s household”) gave him some information about the quarrels and other problems that the church probably had not asked them to communicate (1 Cor 1–6).
The letter writer might have been expected to “perform” the letter so as to get across the tone of Paul’s letters. “An informed carrier provided additional information and perhaps also could comment and expound upon the letter. It was advantageous to both Paul and his recipients to have an informed carrier read the letter so as to provide the proper inflections and nuances” (p. 202).

The letter carrier often functioned as Paul’s “delegates.” When there was a strained relationship, they functioned as an “intermediary.” Sometimes Paul preferred a letter or a delegation. “Paul’s answers to the theological questions of the Corinthians (seen in 1 Cor 7ff.) were answered in a letter rather than by a visit. It was not because Paul was too busy to visit; as argued throughout this book, the writing of the letter actually might have taken more time than a visit, or at least not significantly less time” (p. 203). Paul actually might have had other reasons for not coming personally.

The Availability of a Carrier (pp. 204–207)

- An available carrier provided an opportunity to write, and an opportunity to send a response.
- Precipitating a letter:
  - Paul’s letters were generally prompted by the situation, not the opportunity to write. However, Romans is unlike the other letters in that it is more “oral” in style.
  - “A scenario suggests itself. Paul’s attention and focus was upon the collection and delivery of the offering for the church in Jerusalem. As seen from his letters, the offering dominated his attention. Nevertheless, the availability in Corinth of a professional secretary, who knew the situation in the Roman church, was too great an opportunity for Paul to miss. Although he had no direct affiliation with the church in Rome, he saw an opportunity to mend the division in the church. Paul felt qualified to address this issue. He also saw an opportunity for the church to assist him in his larger goal of preaching in Spain. The opportunity provided by Tertius was too good to miss and may well have precipitated the letter to the Romans” (pp. 206–207).
- Generating a response:
  - This may explain Philippians

Paul’s Developing Use of Letter Carriers (pp. 207–209)

- Richards supposes that Paul changed the way he used his letter carriers after the Corinthians misunderstood his letter (1 Cor 5:9–10).
- “I am suggesting that Paul, from experience, learned to use his letter carriers more wisely. Progressing from unnamed and uninformed carriers early in his ministry to named, endorsed and informed carriers in his later ministry. Paul’s later carriers were team members who could explain his meaning to avoid problems like that seen in his “previous letter” to Corinth” (p. 208).
14. Collecting Paul’s Letters

Formation of the Pauline Corpus (pp. 201–214):

- Old collection theories
  - Snowball theories: a gradual process where letters were exchanged and smaller collections made before the final Pauline corpus was finally compiled.
  - Big bang theories: Goodspeed argued that Onesimus took the initiative to collect the Pauline corpus. These theories posit “an occasion, an agent, and a motive” (p. 211, quoting Harry Y. Gamble).

- New “codex and collection” theories
  - Skeat and Gamble argued that the publication of Christian documents in codex form (Skeat says it was gospels, while Gamble says it was the Pauline letters) was what led to the early Christian adoption of the codex.
  - The fact that all evidence we have suggests the almost exclusive use of codex suggests that there was some specifically determinative factor. Skeat says only the codex could hold the fourfold gospel; Gamble says only the codex could hold all of Paul’s letters.
  - Richards says that it was an unintentional choice that led to the use of the codex, rather than an intentional one.

Retaining Personal Copies (pp. 214–215):

- Most discussions of the Pauline corpus suggest that it was collected from the dispatched copies. However, it could have been from the author’s own copies.
- What evidence is there to suggest Paul kept copies? There is no direct evidence, but possibly some indirect evidence:
  - Could some of the letters have been developed from each other? What about Romans 4 from Galatians 3? What about Ephesians and Colossians? 1 and 2 Thessalonians? Conclusion: no decisive evidence.
  - “It is not surprising, then, that Paul made no explicit references to keeping copies of his letters (however, the skimpy evidence available always supports the practice of writer keeping copies). There is no reason to posit Paul as the exception to the custom. I argue it is safe to assume that Paul retained copies if most if not all of his letters, as is beginning to be seen among Pauline scholars” (p. 215).

Copies and the Codex (pp. 216–217):

- Small parchment codices were considered notebooks. They were used for taking notes and for keeping copies of letters.
- Paul used codex notebooks as evident by 2 Tim 4:13.
“...also the books and parchment notebooks.”

NLT: “...also the books and especially my papers.”

Collections from the Retained Copies (pp. 217–218):

- Two examples: Cicero, and Ignatius
  - Cicero: There is a letter that was sent by Cicero and lost; however, the lost letter can be read in the collection of his letters. “Since the dispatched copy was lost, this published copy had to have come from Cicero’s retained copy. In actuality, it is a well-accepted fact that the collections of Cicero’s letters arose from his retained copies” (p. 217).
  - Ignatius: The church at Philippi wanted some of Ignatius’s letters, so they wrote to Polycarp rather than go to each church to collect them. “...at the very least it can be demonstrated that the Philippian church did not seek copies of the dispatched letters from each church. Rather, they looked for a personal set of copies, in this case Polycarp’s, who probably got them from Ignatius. Although the evidence is less than desirable, all available evidence argues ancient publishers used an author’s personal set of copies” (p. 218).

The Collection of Paul’s Letters (pp. 218–223):

- “Paul probably retained copies of his letters. It was customary practice to do so. ... Paul probably retained his copies in a small codex notebook. Again, it was customary practice to do so. ... Since it was the most practical option, it was the most common method. Obviously, I am talking plausibilities. Yet all theories dealing with the collection of the Pauline Corpus, by virtue of the evidence, speak in terms of probabilities. The question is always which reconstruction best fits the historical situation” (p. 218).
- Richards suggested that Paul did not intend to publish his writings, but that he kept his letters and when he died one of his disciples published them.
- Furthermore, he says that the Christian use of the codex, the “lost” letters to the Corinthians (1 Cor 5:9; 2 Cor 2:3–4), and the early note of the Pauline collection in 2 Peter 3:16 and 1 Clement all are explained by positing a Pauline codex that comes from his own collection.
  - The pattern of Christian use of the codex might have been patterned after Paul’s personal collection. If this is true, this set the pattern for Christian use of the codex, and thus it is simply an accident of history.
  - The lost letters might not have been “lost” but simply never included in the collection.
  - 2 Pet 3:16 might be referring to Paul’s personal collection, which Peter has seen and read in Rome. Furthermore, 1 Clement (also in Rome!) refers to 1 Corinthians
as what was written by Paul at the first, which seems to refer to a canonical “first” rather than a historical “first.”

15. Inspiration and First-Century Letter writing

Letter Writing and Inspiration (pp. 224–229)

- The study to this point raises questions that relate to the inspiration of the NT letters.
- It is the documents that are inspired, not Paul himself.
- “A divinely prepared person(s), responding to a divinely prepared situation, produced an inspired letter. . . . The entire letter-writing process can be considered ‘inspired.’ Inspiration does not require that a single writer produce a single draft of a letter. A team, led by Paul, using a secretary, making multiple drafts can all be part of the divinely supervised process which resulted in an inspired letter” (pp. 228–229).

Conclusion

Evaluation

- Richards might be wrong about many of his reconstructions. However, his goal is not to prove all of them, but to give a reasonable case for what our default assumptions about Paul’s letters should be. This is a strong case. It is not true that in every case it must have happened as he says, but rather he gives a strong case for the presumption that Paul’s letter writing is more like the way he describes it than it was the way that we tend to imagine it.
- His argument for the Pauline letter collection:
  - Did some people keep their letters? Absolutely
  - Did all people always keep their letters? No
  - We are left with a probability argument.
- The link that I am curious about is how likely it is that Paul followed this practice.
  - He appears to argue that the case is strong enough that the burden of proof lies on those who would posit another theory.
  - As he says in the beginning: “In this book I will not argue that the letters of Cicero, Seneca and their peers are analogous to Paul’s. Rather I will show that the basic mechanics of letter writing were a part of the culture, for we find evidence
for various customs across the literary spectrum, in Cicero (and his friends) as well as in the papyri.” (p. 15).
  o “However, it is a fair to ask how the practices of an ultra-wealthy Roman aristocrat such as Cicero have any points of comparison to Paul” (p. 15). He successfully argues that this was one normal practice, but has he demonstrated that this was the only practice?
  o I conclude that he presents a case of strong possibility. The degree of possibility that can be assumed would take more research into this area.

- A topic that is not addressed is Paul’s own education
- Some of the reconstructions are not particularly compelling. The letter-writing dimension has become, for Richards, the element that explains all of the data of the Pauline letters. For example:
  o The fact that Paul’s letters become more complex as time goes on is attributed to his letter writing because he used his letter carriers differently as time went on and he was more confident that he would be able to send someone who could explain more complex letters (pp. 208–209)
  o He says that no one may have been interested in Paul’s letters except Paul at the time of his death (pp. 219ff). It was only after the publication of Acts that interest in Paul’s writings revived. This seems to posit a later date for the gospel codex than evidence warrants if Acts was circulating before the Pauline letter collection.
- Sometimes his non-committal attitude toward the particularities leaves the reader asking for commitment. For example, he frequently will support a plausibility claim with “some scholars even believe x” (cf. p. 222) but then never himself commits to whether this is in fact likely. Since his argument is based on plausibility, this is understandable, however, it seems overused.
- His book gives some interesting thoughts for interpretation. For example, what do we think about there being tension between Paul and Sosthenes on the issue of eating meat sacrificed to idols? How much of this can actually change our view of the meaning of the text?
- Some typos, but minimal (p. 208, 215)