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READING THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS AS A LETTER

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I. Introduction

Paul's letter to the Philippians can become so familiar that we forget that it was originally a letter. It is easy at those times to wish that it were not full of historical particularities and personal affairs. We sometimes want something that is more like a systematic theology textbook and less like reading a church's personal mail. However, God in his wisdom gave us twenty-one letters in our New Testament, and the Spirit chose to use particular communications between historical people to be the inspired revelation about Christ and life in him. We need to know how to read letters as Scripture.

This paper will seek to show how an understanding of ancient letter writing can contribute to an understanding of Paul's letter to the Philippians.¹ Section two will examine the notion of genre, and section three will inquire into the practice of letter writing in the ancient world. Section four will examine the sub-genre of Philippians within the broad categorization of ancient letter. Section five will look at the characteristics of the ancient letter, and section six will apply this information to the book of Philippians. The conclusion will suggest a few ways that this understanding of Philippians as an ancient letter impacts our interpretation of it. The paper will attempt to demonstrate that understanding that Philippians is an ancient letter will assist the

¹ It is by no means to be taken for granted that the integrity of Philippians has been completely accepted in the academic guild. The question of the integrity of the letter has been debated vigorously over the past hundred years. It seems to me that the evidence convincingly supports the conclusion that Philippians is one letter, rather than a series of letters that has been redacted into a whole. However, in light of the purpose of this paper, I will simply presuppose the integrity of the book.

exegesis of the letter both by making the reader aware of the literary conventions that govern the letter and by highlighting the interpersonal dimension of the letter.

II. The Ancient Letter as Genre

To deal with Philippians as an ancient letter is to speak of its genre. According to Thomas R. Schreiner, “Perhaps the most important issue in interpretation is the issue of genre.”² So what is genre? A genre is simply a type of literature.³ A more technical definition is given by D.E. Aune: “A literary genre may be defined as a group of texts that exhibit a coherent and recurring configuration of literary features involving form (including structure and style), content, and function.”⁴

One might wonder why it is important to understand the genre of Philippians. It would be easy to reason that if the important thing is what Paul’s words and sentences mean, then understanding the letter is simply a matter of syntactical and lexical analysis. But genre affects the structure and the way that the author carries out his theme in such a way that it serves as one of the foundations from which the study of the book proceeds. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson say the following:

Some have compared interpreting types of literature such as narrative, epistle, or apocalyptic to playing various games such as baseball, basketball, or soccer. In each case, if you want to play the game, you must first acquaint yourself with the rules. Conversely, if you don’t know the rules of a given game, you will most likely be lost and unable to follow a game, much less participate in it. It is similar with interpreting the various genres of Scripture: in order to pick up the fine nuances conveyed by the biblical text, we must learn the ‘rules’ that guide the

² Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 23.

³ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 149.

⁴ David Edward Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 13.

interpretation of that particular biblical genre.⁵

In light of these comments, it appears that if we want to “play the same game” that Paul is playing and thus understand what he meant when he wrote Philippians, we need to identify the genre of the book and understand how it affects the author’s intended meaning.

Now, on a basic level this is not difficult. As Reed says, “The genre of Philippians is undisputedly that of an ancient letter.”⁶ What is more challenging is understanding the nuances of the genre in terms of sub-genres and conventions. In light of this, we will have to inquire into the concept of letter-writing in the ancient world.

III. Letter Writing in the Ancient World

J.L. White, in his book *Light from Ancient Letters*, highlights the importance of understanding the epistolary genre when he says that “one needs an overview of Greek letter writing to properly assess the special character, if any, of Christian letters.”⁷ In other words it is important to understand the Greek letter in general in order to see how the NT letters are similar or different from other letters at the time. Ignorance regarding the character and conventions of ancient letters can contribute to misreading features of the NT letters.⁸

Thankfully, we have a wealth of manuscripts today to compare the NT letters with. White says that “the earliest Greek letter preserved in its original form is from the fourth century BCE.”⁹ Much of our knowledge of ancient letters comes from the large number of papyri

⁵ Andreas J. Köstenberger, and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 237–238.

⁶ Jeffrey T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity* (JSNTSup 136, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 154.

⁷ John L. White, *Light from Ancient Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 3.

⁸ In addition to the information cited here, see also M. Luther Stirewalt Jr., *Studies in Ancient Greek Epistolography* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993); William G. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973).

⁹ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 189. White is dealing primarily with the non-literary “personal,” or “documentary” letter (see below in the discussion of sub-genre).

(several thousand) that have been discovered in Egypt, which were preserved by the dry climate.¹⁰ These present a large body of works for studying the Greek letter writing at the time that the New Testament was written. The majority of them are from about 300 BC to 300 AD, stretching from the Ptolamaic period to the Roman and Byzantine periods.¹¹

White says the following: “The fundamental and practical need that created the impetus to letter writing was the need to converse with someone from whom the writer is separated. It was the desire to turn, as Koskenniemi phrases it, *apousia* into *parousia*.¹² The two major aspects of this were the desire to maintain personal contact and the need to impart information.”¹³ Thus the fundamental purpose of ancient letters was to bridge the spatial distance that separated people who were variously related to one another. The thoughtful reader will be able to imagine what life was like without modern technology, and see that letter writing was an important way of maintaining relationships and giving and receiving information in the ancient world, whether between family, friends, business partners, or political leaders.

Letter writing was important enough in that time that some people received formal instruction in the writing of letters.¹⁴ There are even some handbooks that appear to give instruction on how to write letters, including a typology of kinds of letters. Two such handbooks that are extant are the handbooks of Pseudo Demetrius and Pseudo Libanius.¹⁵ Though these

¹⁰ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 189. White’s book helpfully lists over one hundred of these letters with translation and analysis, as well as a helpful analysis of the phenomenon of ancient letter writing.

¹¹ *Ibid.*; Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 162.

¹² Notice the theme of “presence” and “absence” even in Philippians: “Ὡστε, ἀγαπητοί μου, καθὼς πάντοτε ὑπηκούσατε, μὴ ὡς ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ μου μόνον ἀλλὰ νῦν πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἐν τῇ ἀπουσίᾳ μου, μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε.” (Phil 2:12).

¹³ John Lee White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter: A Study of the Letter-body in the Non-literary Papyri and in Paul the Apostle* ([Missoula]: Society of Biblical Literature for the Seminar on Paul, 1972), 62–63.

¹⁴ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 189–190; Stanley Kent Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 32–35.

¹⁵ Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 52.

demonstrate a systematic approach to ancient letter writing, scholars seem to think that there was a gap between the theory and the actual writing of letters.¹⁶

Despite that gap, letter-writing was something that was taken seriously. Purportedly, “Artemon, the editor of Aristotle’s letters, likened letter writing to one-half of a spoken conversation and, correspondingly, that he advocated writing a letter in the same manner as a conversation,” with the exception that one was to be more careful in the writing of letters because of the potential for misunderstanding.¹⁷

The earliest Greek letters were probably military or diplomatic letters, but “The necessities of ordinary life, aided by the relatively inexpensive and available writing materials of papyrus in the Hellenistic period, increased the writing of letters between private citizens who were separated spatially.”¹⁸ These were occasioned by either some pressing issue or the desire to strengthen or maintain relationships between family or friends.¹⁹ With reference to the function of letters, White says that “in general, there are three broad purposes served by letters: to convey information, to make requests or give commands, and to enhance or maintain personal contact with the recipient (‘to stay in touch’).”²⁰

IV. The Question of Philippians’ Sub-genre

While the fact that Philippians is an ancient letter (epistle) seems fairly obvious, it is much more debated as to whether there is a more precise sub-genre that could be applied to the letter. Carson and Moo trace the attempts to classify NT letters according to sub-genres to Adolf Deissmann,

¹⁶ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 190.

¹⁷ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 190–191. White traces this information from a work in the first to second century BCE called *On Style*, which was attributed to Demetrius, although (as with the handbook attributed to Demetrius) it is unlikely that Demetrius wrote it.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 197.

who made a “distinction between ‘epistles’ (carefully crafted, public pieces of literature) and ‘letters’ (unstudied, private communications).”²¹ However, they note that Deissmann’s view has basically been abandoned in light of the fact that there was likely more of a spectrum of, rather than a sharp division between, literary and non-literary letters, with the NT letters probably finding themselves somewhere in between.²²

Various Ways of Classifying Ancient Letters

In terms of classifications that are used today, Aune comments, “Aside from Deissmann’s distinction . . . few typologies of Greco-Roman or early Christian letters have been proposed and none widely accepted.”²³ In fact there are various classifications that appear to be overlapping. However, it can be helpful to note some of the ways that ancient letters have been classified, both by ancient writers themselves, as well as by modern scholars.

Aune mentions that one way that letter have been classified is by content. He notes that Cicero appears to discuss various kinds of letters according to their content.²⁴ He also mentions the work of A. N. Sherwin-White, who examined some of the ancient classifications and “synthesizing up to 13 ancient types, suggests eight types: (1) public affairs (including history, anecdotes, gossip); (2) character sketches; (3) patronage; (4) admonitions; (5) domestic affairs; (6) literary matters (e.g., composition, criticism); (7) scenic; and (8) social courtesy.”²⁵

A second way that the ancient letters have been classified is by function.²⁶ This is the

²¹ D.A. Carson and Douglas J Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 333.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 161.

²⁴ He says that “Cicero, for example, distinguished between news letters, domestic letters, letters of recommendation, letters of consolation, and letters promising assistance (*To Friends* 2.4.1; 4.13.1; 5.5.1).” (Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 161.)

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 162.

approach of the above mentioned ancient handbooks by Pseudo Demetrius and Pseudo Libanius.²⁷ The elements listed by these handbook are not so much “formal features” or “subjects of discussion” that characterize different kinds of letters, but rather “a typical social relationship in the culture and a customary action or activity which takes place within that social context.”²⁸ As an example, Stowers lists some of the “essential elements” of some of the letters as Pseudo Demetrius describes them:

The Friendly Type (*philikos*)²⁹

1. Two people separated
2. One person attempting to converse with the other
3. A relationship of friendship between the two
4. The writer attempting to maintain that relationship with the recipient

The Commending Type (*systatikos*)

1. Two people separated
2. One person attempting to converse with the other
3. An established positive social relationship between the two (e.g., friendship, family, patron-client)
4. The writer interceding on behalf of a third party in order to initiate a positive social relationship between the recipient and the third party

This means that the classification of the letters in the handbooks is apparently by social situation and not by literary features. It seems to be the case that the handbooks give us not so much a list of different ways that ancient letters could be formed but in a sense a list of different social situations in which a letter would be an appropriate social interaction between two people.

In terms of their classifications, Demetrius lists 21 kinds of letters, and “provides a brief description and sample letter for each type.”³⁰ Libanius lists 41 kinds.³¹ However, these authors

²⁷ See Appendix B for a comparative list of Pseudo Demetrius’ and Pseudo Libanius’ categories.

²⁸ Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 54. “This manner of classification is different from the division of literature by a combination of formal, structural, and stylistic criteria such as in the genres of epic, lyric, satire, elegy” (*Ibid.*).

²⁹ These are reproduced from Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 54

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

³¹ *Ibid.*

appear to have written to instruct on “ideal types for letters,” while recognizing that there would be mixtures of the characteristics of each kind according to the needs of the situation of the writer.³²

More recently, Stowers has distilled their categories down to six:

“(1) letters of friendship; (2) family letters; (3) letters of praise and blame (functions of epideictic rhetoric); (4) hortatory letters (with seven subtypes: paraenetic letters, protreptic letters, letters of advice, admonition, rebuke, reproach, and consolation); (5) letters of recommendation (or mediation); and (6) accusing, apologetic, and accounting letters (functions of juridical rhetoric), found in letters of petition.”³³

Furthermore, he has also identified some of the features of the various types of letters.³⁴ For example, friendship letters “placed a stress on reciprocity.”³⁵ He says that “Reminders concerning the foundation of friendship in past experiences are an important commonplace in friendly letters.”³⁶ Both of these themes find at least some parallel in Philippians, for example when Paul talks about their “fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now” (1:5, cf. 4:15), and when he talks about the “matter of giving and receiving” (4:15).³⁷

A second kind of letter that Stowers discusses is the family letter. He says that although it was “never recognized as a type by the ancient theorists,” there were enough occurrences of this kind of letter to consider it a distinct type.³⁸ This is not surprising in light of the importance of the

³² Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 53.

³³ Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 162. His summary of Stowers’ work here is helpful.

³⁴ See Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*. The majority of his work is taken up with discussing the various kinds of letters. I simply summarize his work on these two kinds of letters because Philippians is often classified under these headings (see, for example, Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* [NICNT Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 1–24; Loveday Alexander, “Hellenistic Letter-forms and the Structure of Philippians” *JSNT* 37 [1989], 90).

³⁵ Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 59.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Scripture translations are the authors own.

³⁸ Fee says that “the so-called ‘family letter,’ which abounds among the papyri, was not recognized as a distinct type by the ancient theorists. But that is because, as the illustration by Pseudo-Demetrius makes clear, the content of the so-called family letter belonged to the category of ‘friendly letter’” (Fee, *Philippians*, 2, n. 8).

household in the ancient world, and predictably there were many letters written to maintain the family relationships.³⁹ He thus indicates that the family letter is more of a modern category that is revealed through the analysis of the letters. He says that “Characteristically, the writer of a family letter has been forced to leave home because of economic necessity, the service of government, or the illness of a relative. The traveler then writes back reporting about the situation and expressing his affection for the family and anxiety over separation.”⁴⁰ This too finds some parallel in Philippians.

Aune, noting the limitations of these classifications, adds three more categories: “documentary,” or “private letters,” “official letters,” and “literary letters.”⁴¹ The documentary, or personal letters are exemplified by the letters that were recovered from Egypt.⁴² J.L. White, who has provided some helpful analyses of these letters, located four basic types: 1. “letters of introduction and recommendation” identify a person who is recommended to the recipients.⁴³ This is usually done by introducing the person, indicating their relationship to the sender of the letter, and making a request on their behalf.⁴⁴ 2. “Letters of petition” were written from someone of lower status to someone of higher status to make a request of the recipient.⁴⁵ 3. “Family letters” were taken up almost exclusively with interest in the other person and their affairs.⁴⁶ They contained news of the well-being of the sender and requests for news as to the well-being

³⁹ Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 71. Families in the ancient world were extended beyond husband and wife and unmarried children. The household would begin with the male head of the house. “Next were his wife and children. The patriarch’s married sons with wives and children were also part of the household. . . . Under immediate blood relatives came slaves, hired servants, live-in guests, and associated freedmen and freedwomen” (Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 31).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁴¹ Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 162–169.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 162.

⁴³ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 193–194. His very helpful work is found in *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter* and *Light from Ancient Letters*.

⁴⁴ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 194.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 194–195.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 196–197.

of the recipient.⁴⁷ 4. “Memoranda.” These contain either reminders of past or future official or business matters, or other instructions or petitions.⁴⁸

Official letters were structured very much like the personal letters.⁴⁹ They were “written from a government head or representative to others in an official capacity.”⁵⁰ Aune defines literary letters as “those which were preserved and transmitted through literary channels and were valued either as epistolary models, as examples of literary artistry, or as vignettes into earlier lives and manners.”⁵¹ They often existed on a spectrum between actual letters that had no literary intentionality behind them to literary creations that merely make use of the letter form.⁵²

Classifying the Sub-genre of Philippians

Where does Philippians fall in terms of sub-genre? There have been a number of proposals. Fee says that “Philippians reflects all the characteristics of a ‘letter of friendship,’ combined with those of a ‘letter of moral exhortation.’”⁵³ Black sees it as a combination of epistle and rhetoric,

⁴⁷ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 196–197.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁴⁹ Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 164.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 165–166. “They exhibit wide variety, including (1) real letters written by an educated person with no thought of publication (e.g., many of the *epistulae commendaticidae* or letters of recommendation by Cicero, Pliny, and Fronto); (2) real letters written with a broader public in view (Cicero, Pliny, Libanius); (3) ideal letters using a ‘high’ style and written with publication in view (Horace, Ovid, Seneca, Statius); (4) fictional letters using epistolary conventions to frame human interest stories or interesting anecdotes (Alciphron, Aelian, Philostratus); (5) fictional letters composed for insertion in historical and fictional narratives and/or those written as rhetorical exercises as if by some famous person (Achilles Tatius, Chariton); (6) letter-essays (*syggrammata*; Pseudo-Demetrius, *On Style* 4.228), in which essays or treatises on various subjects are prefaced by an epistolary precept (Plutarch, Fronto).” Aune goes on to list specific kinds of literary letters: letters of recommendation, letter-essays, philosophical letters, novelistic letters, imaginative letters for entertainment, and letters embedded in other works (*New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 166–170). He also adds that many of these are simply examples of “framing” other genres of literature within the conventions of the letter (Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 170).

⁵³ Fee, *Philippians*, 2. “In light of the foregoing, Philippians is rightly called ‘a hortatory letter of friendship.’ The marks of the ‘letter of friendship’ are everywhere. It is clearly intended to make up for their mutual absence, functioning as Paul’s way of being present while absent . . . Thus he informs them about ‘his affairs,’ speaks into ‘their affairs,’ and offers information about the movements of intermediaries. Evidence of mutual affection abound; and the reciprocity of friendship is especially evident at the beginning and the end, and thus is probably to be seen in other parts as well.” (Fee, *Philippians*, 12).

“a hybrid letter in which the epistolary body contains a deliberative heart.”⁵⁴ Alexander sees the clearest parallels with the family letter.⁵⁵ Reed seems to conclude that Paul made use of the conventions of the personal letter without being bound to them, and that the predominant characteristics of the letter are its personal and hortatory nature.⁵⁶ White suggests that they resemble “philosophical letters of instruction” except with regard to the “egalitarian aspect to Paul’s sense of presence with his churches.”⁵⁷

It seems best to say that Paul’s letter doesn’t seem to fit neatly into any one of these sub-genres, but has commonalities with different sub-genres at different points. Notably, Philippians seems to share some characteristics with the letter of friendship, family letters, literary letters and letters of moral exhortation.

What would explain this? For one thing, there seems to be an indication that the various sub-genres envisioned by the handbooks of the time were not hard and fast. A study by Heikki Koskenniemi cited by White seems to corroborate this. It indicates that what the handbooks actually “illustrate are a selection of styles appropriate to different circumstances and the tone in which letters may be written. Many of these motifs occur in papyrus letters, to be sure, but the ordinary writer would not have thought of them as specific categories and certainly not as letter types.”⁵⁸ So even the letter writers of the day may not have consciously thought “now I will write a friendly letter.” Rather, they would simply use the conventions appropriate to the circumstances.

Secondly, part of the explanation may be found in the distinct purpose of Christian letters.

⁵⁴ David Alan Black, “The Discourse Structure of Philippians: A Study in Textlinguistics.” *Novum Testamentum* 37 (1995), 49.

⁵⁵ Alexander, “Hellenistic Letter-forms,” 90.

⁵⁶ Reed, *Discourse Analysis*, 174, 178–179.

⁵⁷ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 219.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 190.

White says that for Christian letters, while the desire to maintain relationships was clearly present as it was with the family or friendly letter, the unusually long Christian letter in relation to other Greek letters signals the fact that a distinct function for Christian letters is instruction.⁵⁹ In fact, since Paul used the letters to substitute for his presence, they may have been intended for use in the corporate gatherings of the church.⁶⁰ “Namely, it was in his capacity as God’s representative that Paul addressed his congregations.”⁶¹ It is in comparison with the ordinary Greek letter that these characteristics stand out.

So perhaps some of the search for a sub-genre for Philippians is “putting the cart before the horse.” The reason for the similarities and differences between the epistolary sub-genres and Philippians may be found in the similarities and differences between the social situations of the Christian community and the social situations that made the various types of letters appropriate in the ancient world. Despite the fact that there were recognized distinctions between the various sub-genres of ancient letters, it seems to be the case that there were not as much distinct literary features as distinct functions, content, and social situations that distinguished letters. This would mean that the question may not be so much “what letter-form was Paul using?” but “how is Paul’s relationship with the Philippians similar to or different from other structures and institutions?”

Three facts about Paul’s relationship with the churches may help answer that question. 1. Paul was an apostle, which gave him the responsibility to care for the churches. This necessitated teaching and exhortation, thus producing a likeness to letters of exhortation and moral instruction. 2. The fellowship/partnership (*κοινωνία*) he had with the churches in the gospel made

⁵⁹ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 19.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

his letters resemble letters between friends who had a view to mutual benefit. 3. Because the Christian church viewed itself as a spiritual family, there are aspects of this relationships that are bound to resemble family letters. In other words, to the degree that the Apostle Paul's relationship with the Philippians and other churches resembled any one of these three social situations, there is bound to be found some common characteristics.

In light of the above, possibly the best way forward is to note some of the basic characteristics of the ancient epistle, and look for any ways that Philippians shares these characteristics. As far as sub-genres go, we should have an open mind about how different kinds of ancient letters might shed light on Philippians, but we should be cautious about trying to match Philippians to specifically with one of them because of the temptation to try to make it fit into a preconceived mold.

Stirewalt, seems to confirm this when, after comparing Paul's letters to personal letters and official letters, says that

It must be said that neither in form, nor function, nor style can Paul's letters be contained in one category. A person of authority writing communal letters on subjects dealing with faithful adherence to the gospel, polity, ethics, and so on is not writing in a category limited to the maintenance of friendship, the sending of information or a request, and the exchange of greetings.⁶²

Neither does the official letter accurately describe Paul's writings. "The Pauline letters arose in a *unique epistolary setting* and may be said to constitute an addition to the epistolary corpus."⁶³

⁶² Stirewalt, *Paul, the Letter Writer*, 26.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, emphasis mine. In light of the fact that 21 of the books in the NT are letters, it would be interesting to see what sub-genres each of them fall under. However, most of the discussion on the literary subgenres of the NT epistles focus on how to categorize various parts of the books. For example, Schreiner discusses "Diatribes," "Parenesis," and "Hymns and Confessional Statements" within the Pauline Epistles (*Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 36–41). Aune discusses "Liturgical Forms," and "Paraenetic Forms" such as "Vice and Virtue Lists," and "Codes of Household Ethics" (*New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 194–197). Some of the letters seem to be more easily categorized as a whole, such as 1 Thessalonians, which is classified as a "Paraenetic Letter" by Aune (*New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 206) as well as Stowers (*Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 96). However, most of the letters in the NT seems to resist such categorization. Aune's comments here are helpful: "Early Christian letters tend to resist rigid classification, either in terms of the three main types of oratory or in terms of the

V. Characteristics of the Ancient Letter Genre

In light of the above analysis of the sub-genre of Philippians, this sections will look at the general characteristics of the letter genre, especially as represented by the personal letter. White comments on the usefulness of this exercise:

Now, what kinds of things may be learned by studying documentary letters? In addition to the more obvious recognition that Greek letters usually have a tripartite structure of opening, body and closing, we learn that set epistolary phrases are employed within each of these three epistolary parts. The particular form of an individual phrase, or a certain combination of epistolary conventions, frequently signals the basic intention or occasion of the letter.⁶⁴

This section will seek to examine the parts of the Greek personal letter with the intention of understanding the so-called “epistolary hardware” and how it functions.⁶⁵

Letter Opening and Closing

The Greek letter consists of an opening, a body, and a closing.⁶⁶ The opening consisted of the formula “A- to B- *χαίρειν*” or “To B-from A-,” where A represents the sender and B represents

may categories listed by the epistolary theorists. Most early Christian letters are multifunctional and have a ‘mixed’ character, combining elements from two or more epistolary types.” (*New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 203). One gets the same impression when reading Stowers’ description of the various types of letters and how they are represented in the NT: “Although there are no letters of friendship in the New Testament, some letters employ commonplaces and language from the friendly letter tradition” (Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 60). “Although no pure letters of praise exist in the New Testament, Paul makes a significant use of praise in certain parts of his letters” (*Ibid.*, 80). “Exhortation plays a major role in all of the letters of Paul and the Pauline school except Philemon. This is also the case for Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 1 and 2 John” (*Ibid.*, 96). “Second Corinthians is even more complex. It seems to mix exhortation, advice, rebuke, invective, and apology. . . . Exhortation and advice are also skillfully mixed in Galatians” (*Ibid.*, 109). These comments highlight the fact that the question of epistolary sub-genre has been brought to the fore in Philippians in a way that seems unique among the NT letters (For example, compare Fee’s extended discussion on “Philippians as a Letter” which is prominently placed in the first 24 pages of his Philippians commentary [Fee, *Philippians*, 1–24.] with the discussion in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, which amounts to a mere paragraph commenting on the form of Paul’s salutation [Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 27.]).

⁶⁴ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 19.

⁶⁵ This helpful phrase comes from H. Van Dyke Parunak, “Dimensions of Discourse Structure: A Multidimensional Analysis of the Components and Transitions of Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians,” *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis*, Edited by David Alan Black, Katharine Barnwell and Stephen Levinsohn (Nashville: B&H, 1992), 217.

⁶⁶ White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 7.

the receiver.⁶⁷ The sender is in the nominative case and the recipient is in the dative case. The second formula was often used when a petition was being sent from someone of inferior status to someone of superior status, with the sender placing the receiver's name first out of deference.⁶⁸

Alexander notes that "Family letters are particularly likely to expand the bare greeting-formula by the addition of a 'familial modifier' (mother, father, brother, sister) and by increasing the fervency of the greeting (πολλὰ χαίρειν, πλεῖστα χαίρειν)."⁶⁹ This basic structure was flexible.

Aune comments that "The basic pattern of Greek epistolary prescripts was subject to various forms of amplification and elaboration. . . This capacity for amplification allowed the Christian letter to develop its own distinctive features."⁷⁰

The closing consisted of a farewell such as "ἔρρωσο (ἔρρωσθε), or its modifications; εὐτύχει later changed to διευτύχει."⁷¹ Regarding which of these is used in a particular context, White says that "The former characterizes familiar letters; the latter, petitions and formal complaints."⁷² In light of this, note that Acts 15:23–29 and 23:26–30 are standard ancient letters, demonstrating these characteristics fairly consistently.⁷³

These basic introductions and conclusions were also expanded in some cases to include a

⁶⁷ White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 7.

⁶⁸ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 195. He mentions that letters 20, 37, 50 and 86 in his book are examples of letters of petition (p. 194). These are found on pp. 46, 69, 86, and 86, respectively, and each exemplify this characteristic.

⁶⁹ Alexander, "Hellenistic Letter-forms," 91.

⁷⁰ Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 163.

⁷¹ White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 7. "ἔρρωσο is the perfect passive imperative of ῥώννυμι ("to strengthen") which means "goodbye" or "farewell" (BDAG, 908). See Acts 15:29, 23:30 (v.l.). Εὐτυχέω means "to be well off, successful, prosperous" (Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott. *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon: Founded Upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001], 334). Διευτυχέω is an intensive form meaning "to continue prosperous" (Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 201).

⁷² White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 7, n. 3.

⁷³ In Acts 23:26–30, the closing "ερρωσο/σθε" is found in a textual variants.

wish for health with the greeting (“χαίρειν καὶ ἐρρῶσθαι”) and wish or prayer for health with the closing (τοῦ σώματος ἐπιμελόμενος, ἴν’ υἰαίνης. Ἐρρωσο.).⁷⁴ There was also what is called the “*proskynema formula*,” which was “a prayer (often of thanksgiving. . .)” that was included near the opening with the wish for health.⁷⁵

There might also be included in the opening “the exclamation of joy at receipt of a letter, expressed by means of the convention, ‘I rejoiced greatly (λίαν/μεγάλην ἐχάρην) at receipt of your letter.’”⁷⁶ Sometimes there would be included in the closing a request for information or a request for or promise to visit.⁷⁷ This is warmly affectionate in most family letters, but can be have a threatening quality in some business letters if the sender perceives some irresponsibility in the receiver.⁷⁸ Both the expression of joy and the request for a visit or letter can also be used to transition to the body-opening (see below). One final expansion to the closing that White indicates was frequent after the time of Augustus was the sending of greetings to or from third parties. The normal word used in these cases was some form of ἀσπάζομαι.

One indication of the significance of these conventions is the fact that the amount of material included in the opening and closing could indicate how close of a relationship the

⁷⁴ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 200. The wish for health attached to the greeting was a characteristic of the letters dated from the second century BCE, while the wish or prayer for health attached to the closing became characteristic of letters by the first century CE (*ibid.*). The greeting and wish for health above are from letter 53, p. 89 (his translation: “greeting and good health”). The closing and wish for health are from letter 39, p.73 (there is a note that υἰαίνης should be read ὑγιαίνης; his translation of the closing is “taking care of yourself to stay well. Good-bye.”).

⁷⁵ Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 163.

⁷⁶ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 201. White seems to tie the “joy expression” to the body-opening (White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 39). This is often cited as evidence for a new letter at Phil 4:10. However it is not necessarily the case that the expression of joy is tied to the letter or body-opening (*ibid.*).

⁷⁷ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 202.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

sender and recipient had. White says that “if the opening and the closing are full, the letter is a family letter or a letter between friends in which the ongoing maintenance of friendship is an important consideration. By contrast, if the opening and closing are minimal, the letter is probably a business letter, a legal transaction in epistolary form, or a piece of administrative correspondence.”⁷⁹

Letter Body

The body of the letter is where the actual content of the letter is found.⁸⁰ White says that “the body is the ‘message’ part of the letter,” so that it is here the information that the sender wanted to communicate to the receiver will be found.⁸¹ In terms of body structure, “The body, like the letter in general, may be divided into three discrete sections: body-opening; body-closing; and section between opening and closing (‘body-middle’).”⁸²

Body-opening

The body-opening functions as the foundation for the letter by beginning with the point of commonality between the sender and the recipient.⁸³ White says the following:

⁷⁹ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 19.

⁸⁰ White summarizes the function of the body and its parts: “The general function of the body is the imparting of information to someone at a distance and the role that the respective body parts play in the execution of this function may be stated as follows. The body-opening posits the basis of mutuality (i.e., whether disclosing new information; recalling previous communication of which both parties are cognizant; or reassuring the addressee about the present status of a business matter; the body-opening introduces the most pressing matter of mutual concern). The body-middle—once the basis of common concern has been introduced—carries the message forward; either by developing its relevant details, introducing new and equally important matters of mutual concern, or by introducing new but less important matters. The role of the body-closing may be grasped on the basis of its two principle functions: (1) the means whereby the principle motivation for writing is finalized (either by accentuating or reiterating what was previously stated); (2) the means of establishing the basis of future communication.” (White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 64).

⁸¹ In family letters, the body is completely taken up with the relationship between the sender and receiver of the letter so that there is no real other message contained (White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 197; White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 63).

⁸² White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 9.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 33.

“The body-opening is the point at which the principal occasion for the letter is usually indicated. In addition, the body-opening must proceed, like spoken conversation, from a basis common to both parties. This is provided either by allusion to subject matter shared by both parties or by the addressor’s disclosure of new information. The body-opening lays the foundation, in either case, from which the superstructure may grow.⁸⁴

White mentions four devices that are used to introduce the body-opening. The first is the “disclosure formula.”⁸⁵ The disclosure formula is “a formulaic phrase conveying either the addressor’s desire or command that the addressee ‘know’ something.”⁸⁶ The second is some form of a request.⁸⁷ These are often a request to receive a letter or a visit. “Reproach for failure to write is a common means of opening the body.”⁸⁸ The writer may also open the letter by asking the receiver to visit or to “send someone (something) to the addressor . . .”⁸⁹ The third device used to transition to the body-opening is the “expression of joy.”⁹⁰ White says that expressions of joy can be used for other purposes, but normally expressions of joy “relate to the reception of [a previous] letter and open the body.”⁹¹ Finally, the body may be introduced by a reference to previous communication.⁹²

Body-middle

The body-middle is much harder to discuss than the body-opening or body-closing.⁹³ While admitting that it is much less predictable, White gives this basic description of its function: “The body-middle—once the basis of common concern has been introduced—carries the message

⁸⁴ White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 33.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 11–15, 66.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 34–38.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 39–40.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 40–42.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 51, 10 n. 6.

forward; either by developing its relevant details, introducing new and equally important matters of mutual concern, or by introducing new but less important matters.”⁹⁴ In a way, White wants to say that the body-middle is just the part between the body-opening and the body-closing.⁹⁵ However, it is helpful to affirm at least what he says above, which is that the body-middle “moves the message forward.”⁹⁶

He furthermore mentions a number of devices used to mark transitions within the letter body-middle. He says that significant transitions can be indicated by: “reassurances,” “the stereotyped use of δηλώω,” the “writing formula” (“I wrote that . . .”), “receipt-transfer statements” (especially in business letters), and “use of the vocative.”⁹⁷ Devices that can be used in more or less significant transitions are: “the perfect indicative . . . and participle,” “forms of the disclosure formula,” “verbs of saying,” the tandem conjunction δε καί,” and “περί with the genitive case.”⁹⁸

Body-closing

White says that the body-closing functions in two ways: first, “as a means of finalizing the principal motivation for writing (by accentuating or reiterating what was stated earlier in the body),” and second, “as a means of forming a bridge to further communication.”⁹⁹ In other words, it wraps up the discussion by reaffirming the main point of the letter and provides a point of contact for the next communication.

White also mentions four devices used to introduce the body-closing: statements that

⁹⁴ White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 64.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10 n. 6.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

express the reason why the sender wrote (disclosure formulas),¹⁰⁰ statements that encourage the recipient to “be responsive” to the request made in the letter,¹⁰¹ statements telling the recipient to write if they need anything (usually included as a courtesy in letters making request of something as an offer to ‘pay back’ the recipient),¹⁰² and statements indicating a coming visit from the sender (which can be viewed as good, bad or neutral by the recipient).¹⁰³ However, it is not necessary that all letters have one of these devices to indicate the body-closing.¹⁰⁴

Two Examples

In light of the above discussion, it may be helpful to show the reader what this looks like in actual letters. Letters 104A and 104B are two “family letters” sent from a young man who had recently become a Roman soldier to his mother.¹⁰⁵

Letter 104A exhibits the standard letter opening (A- to B- *χαίρειν*) in lines 1 and 2. There is then the *προσκύνημα* formula in lines 3–5a. The body-opening consists of lines 5b–9a, where Apollinarios establishes his own situation and expresses interest in his mother’s situation. The body-middle seems to be lines 9b–11a, where he expresses the most pertinent aspect of his situation (*οὐπω . . . ἀνέβην ἰς Πώμην καὶ διετάγην*).¹⁰⁶ The body-closing consists of 11b–16a,

¹⁰⁰ White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 45–46

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 48

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 49–51.

¹⁰⁴ “Many letters do not conclude the body in any identifiable manner. Nonetheless, a sufficient number of identifiable conventions gravitate toward the end of the body that we may attribute a discrete purpose to them. In general, these conventions appear in the part of the letter where the purpose of the communication is completed.” (White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 205).

¹⁰⁵ Refer to Appendix A for the text of these letters.

¹⁰⁶ As mentioned above, the family letter is concerned primarily with the exchange of news and interest in the affairs of one another. As such it is hard to pinpoint a real body-middle since the function of the family letter is in many ways the same as the body-opening and body-closing—namely to establish personal contact (see White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 197; White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 63). As such, the body-middle, as I have interpreted it here, is much smaller than the body-opening and body-closing.

where he discusses future communication. The letter closing extends from 16b-21, where he sends greetings (16b-19), gives a closing prayer for health (20), and concludes with a note about the date of his arrival at the present location (21). There is also some additional matter (lines 22–25) in the form of a postscript written with a different handwriting and an address for the sake of delivery.

The passage can thus be outlined as follows:

1–5a: Letter Opening

1–2: Address and greeting

3–5a: Prayer

5b–16a: Letter Body

5b–9a: Body Opening

9b–11a: Body-middle

11b–16a: Body Closing

16b–21: Letter Closing

16b–19: Greetings

20: Farewell prayer for health

21: Note about the date of sender’s arrival

22–25: Additional Matter

22–23: Postscript

24–25: Outside Address

Letter 104B can be similarly outlined. The letter opening is again the standard formula of address and greeting in lines 1–2a (A- to B- *χαιρέιν*) and *προσκύνημα* formula in 2b-4. Lines 4b-9a represent the body-opening, which begins with the disclosure formula and vocative (*γεινώσκεις σε θέλω, μήτηρ, ὅτι . . .*) and establishes his situation. As with letter 104A, the body-middle is very short (lines 9b-11a), and simply expresses his desire that his mother take care of herself and not worry about him because he “has come to a good place” (*ἐγὼ γὰρ εἰς καλὸν τόπον ἦλθον*). Lines 11b-14a represent the body-closing, in which he requests future communication

and states his intention to likewise send another letter as the situation permits.¹⁰⁷ The letter closing consists of lines 14b-21 which contain the greetings (14b-20) and prayer for health (21).

Lines 22–23 contain the address for delivery. This letter can be outlined as follows:

1–4a: Letter Opening

1–2a: Address and greeting

2b-4a: Wish for health and prayer

4b-14a: Letter Body

4b-9a: Body opening

9b-11a: Body-middle

11b-14a: Body closing

14b-21: Letter Closing

14b-20: greetings

21: Farewell prayer for health

22–23: Outside Address

These two family letters are helpful to get a sense of how the ancient letter “works.” It now remains to bring all of this information to bear on Paul’s letter to the Philippians to see what fruit this study can provide.

VI. Philippians as an Ancient Letter

A quick overview of the preceding material will show that in terms of structure, the non-literary letters have the potential to help us to understand how Philippians “works.” The following will discuss the ways in which Philippians reflects the basic characteristics of the Greek letter and how understanding the Greek letter helps us to understand the structure of Philippians. By way of introduction it is important to note one important difference between Philippians and other personal letters, namely, the length.¹⁰⁸ Philippians, while sharing a number of genre

¹⁰⁷Note the phrase used for the polite request: *καλῶς δὲ ποιήσ<εις> γράψασ{σ}ά μοι ἐπιστολὴν*. White says that “the most common means of making requests is to employ some form of the polite convention *καλῶς ἂν οὔν ποιήσαις*, which means ‘therefore you would do well to . . .,’ or simply phrased, ‘Please. . . .’” (White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 204; cf. also White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 18; see below on Phil 4:14).

¹⁰⁸ “. . . while nearly all the papyrus letters are relatively brief, many early Christian letters are quite

characteristics, is in comparison much longer and more rich. In this sense it shares more in common with the literary letter than it does the personal letter.

The Opening (1:1–11)

The opening of Philippians displays several of the characteristics of the ancient letter. For one thing, the stereotypical opening, “A to B, greeting” is represented by Παῦλος καὶ Τιμόθεος . . .

παᾶσιν τοῖς ἀγίοις . . . τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ

εἰρήνη . . . (Phil 1:1–2). Notice that the normal greeting χαίρειν has been “Christianized” to

χάρις.¹⁰⁹ In addition, Paul has added the typical Hebrew greeting *shalom* (in Greek, εἰρήνη).¹¹⁰

Another significant aspect is the fact that all of the elements of the opening have been expanded from what is usually a simple mention of sender, recipient and greeting. While it was not unusual for writers of family letters to expand this by adding “familial modifiers,” here Paul’s expansion, in addition to any relational reasons, is likely didactic, helping the readers to understand who he is, who they are, and the source of the grace and peace that they enjoy.¹¹¹

The letter opening also seems to include the thanksgiving (1:3–8) and prayer (1:9–11).¹¹²

This seems to parallel the προσκύνημα formula of the personal letter which seems to have

frequently been part of the letter opening.¹¹³ It is widely acknowledged that Paul’s opening prayer

lengthy” (Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 160).

¹⁰⁹ Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 456.

¹¹⁰ Fee, *Philippians*, 70.

¹¹¹ On “familial modifiers,” see Alexander, “Hellenistic Letter-forms,” 91, and the discussion above.

¹¹² Schreiner says that “The last element of the opening is the prayer.” (*Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 28). This is to be distinguished from Black, who sees 1:3–11 as the body-opening (Black, “The Discourse Structure of Philippians,” 24). While Black rightly points out the parallels between 1:3–11 and the body-closing, 4:10–20, it seems to be the case that from a genre-critical perspective, 1:3–11 fits better with the letter openings of personal letters and 1:12–30 fits better as the body-opening.

¹¹³ Alexander, “Hellenistic Letter-forms,” 91, 94 for the parallel between Phil 1:3–11 and the προσκύνημα

and thanksgiving “is a formal device serving to announce and introduce the topics of the letter,” and that seems to be the case here as well.¹¹⁴

As with the greeting, the thanksgiving and prayer have been expanded. In addition to the thematic and didactic function, they also highlight the warmth of relationship between Paul and the church, as evidenced by the way he refers to the joy he has in prayer for them because of their fellowship (1:3–4) and the way he has them “in his heart” and “longs for” them (1:7–8). White’s comments about the relative size of openings and closings with reference to whether the letter is a personal letter or an official letter are helpful here.¹¹⁵ The substantial amount of material in the opening reveals the fact that Paul is using this letter at least in part to express and maintain his relationship with this congregation.

Body (1:12–4:20)

The body of Philippians has many noteworthy features, and will be discussed in terms of body-opening, body-middle and body-closing.

Body-opening (1:12–30)

The body-opening seems to be evident from the noticeable transition in 1:12 which is marked by the conjunction δὲ, the disclosure formula (γινώσκειν δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι) and the use of the vocative (ἀδελφοί).¹¹⁶ The interpersonal/pragmatics dimension of the letter is evident in the

formula; See White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter* (pp. 8, 32) for the προσκύνημα formula as a part of the letter opening.

¹¹⁴ Robert Jewett, “Epistolary Thanksgiving and the Integrity of Philippians” *Novum Testamentum* 12 no. 1 (Ja 1970), 53.

¹¹⁵ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 19.

¹¹⁶ Bloomquist begins the body-opening at 1:12, but limits it to 1:12–14 (L. Gregory Bloomquist, *The Function of Suffering in Philippians*, JSNTSup 78 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], 107).

discussion of the circumstances of the two parties. Paul wants them to know τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ in 1:12, and says that he hopes to hear good things when he hears τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν in 1:27.¹¹⁷ The circumstances of Paul and the Philippians are introduced here in the body-opening because they serve as the occasion for the letter.

Furthermore, throughout the letter of Paul informs them of his circumstances (codified syntactically by indicatives) and admonishes them regarding theirs (by imperatives). It is interesting that an analysis of the syntax of the letter shows that there are a number of disclosure formulas that are syntactically prominent in the sections where Paul is informing them of his circumstances, and a number of imperatives that are syntactically prominent in the sections where Paul is addressing their circumstances.¹¹⁸

Furthermore, one of the benefits of analyzing the book of Philippians as an ancient letter is that it helps to highlight the interpersonal elements. When we read the Scriptures, whether privately or in the church, it is easy to try to read out the interpersonal elements in order to emphasize the universal theological propositions because what is universal is more readily applicable. However, when Paul wrote to the Philippians, he used the universal theological propositions as support for his interpersonal exhortations, and this is reflected in the fact that the

¹¹⁷ Regarding the phrase “τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ,” “This expression was a common one in the contemporary world and was used to describe the situation of a person.” (Peter T. O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 89). See also Fee’s outline of Philippians where “Paul’s ‘affairs’” and “the Philippians’ ‘affairs’” help him to outline the book (Fee, *Philippians*, 54–55). He outlines it as follows: I. Introductory matters (1:1–11), II. Paul’s “affairs” – Reflections on imprisonment (1:12–26), III. The Philippians’ “affairs” – Exhortation to steadfastness and unity (1:27–2:18), IV. What’s next – Regarding Paul’s and their “affairs” (2:19–30), V. Their “affairs” – Again (3:1–4:3), VI. Concluding matters (4:4–23). For parallels with ancient personal letters, see White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 32–33. See also Alexander, “Hellenistic Letter-forms,” 95.

¹¹⁸ See Appendix C for a syntactical diagram of the book. Note especially 1:12, 19, 27; 2:2, 5, 13, 14, etc. When speaking of syntactic prominence, I have in mind the natural prominence that comes from a verbal construction that comes at the head of a dependency chain.

universal theological statements are often syntactically subordinate to the interpersonal.¹¹⁹

In addition to the circumstances that are the occasion for the letter, Paul also introduces in the body-opening a basis of mutual interest and common ground in the “progress of the gospel” (1:12, 18, 25, 27). Paul also gives the main point of his letter here, the exhortation to live as worthy citizens of the gospel (μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε).¹²⁰ Note that with this imperative, Paul moves away from the “friendship” letter which is based on equality. Here Philippians begins to sound more like the “philosophical letters of instruction” that White mentioned above.¹²¹

There are a few other elements of the letter genre that are apparent in the body-opening. First, There is the use of the disclosure formula (“I know that . . .”) that forms an *inclusio* at 1:19 and 1:25.¹²² Second, the theme of “absence/presence” that is a major part of a personal letter is found at 1:26 (τῆς ἐμῆς παρουσίας πάλιν πρὸς ὑμᾶς) and 1:27 (εἴτε ἐλθὼν καὶ ἰδὼν ὑμᾶς εἴτε ἀπὼν ἀκούω). This is a theme that repeats itself throughout Philippians (cf. 2:12).

Body-middle (2:1–4:9)

The body-middle of Philippians, in accordance with the basic function of the body-middle of an ancient letter, carries forward the message of the body-opening (1:12–30). If the central message

¹¹⁹ This is especially exemplified by the treatment of the so-called “Christ-hymn” of 2:5–11. A number of people have gone to this passage to make appeals for particular models of Christology; however, it is syntactically subordinate to the call to humble unity (2:1–5) and is supportive of that theme.

¹²⁰ “. . . the body-opening introduces the most pressing matter of mutual concern. . .” (White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 64).

¹²¹ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 219.

¹²² Bloomquist, *The Function of Suffering in Philippians*, 108; George H. Guthrie, “Cohesion Shifts and Stitches in Philippians.” *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, Edited by Stanley E. Porter and D.A. Carson. JSNTSup 113 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], 42. For “disclosure formulas,” see White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 11–15.

of the body-opening is “live as good citizens of the gospel,” then the body-middle, and most directly 2:1–18, tells them how to do that.

The new section opens with the conjunction οὖν, which indicates both a sense of “development” in the discourse as well as “continuity.”¹²³ Interestingly, the most syntactically prominent clause in 2:1–11 is πληρώσατέ μου τὴν χαρὰν. It is functioning as an orienter for the content clause ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε.¹²⁴ The main point of this section seems to be to “have the same mind,” but what is semantically prominent is the command “fill my joy . . .” This is heavily weighted toward relational/pragmatic dimension even though it is syntactically more prominent.¹²⁵

At 2:12 there is another transitional formula (ὥστε + the affectionate vocative). This seems to be a minor transition because it introduces a section that is exhortative and focused on the Philippians circumstances, which gives it cohesion with 2:1–11. Paul again highlights his absence (καθὼς πάντοτε ὑπηκούσατε, μὴ ὡς ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ μου μόνον ἀλλὰ νῦν πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἐν τῇ ἀπουσίᾳ μου). This is followed by two exhortations joined by asyndeton. This section could be summarized as follows: “be diligent to work out your common salvation before the world so that the gospel advances.”

There is another transition at 2:19 (introduced by δέ) that seems more significant because Paul moves from exhortation to disclosure of plans (2:19–30). He speaks here again of his desire

¹²³ Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010), 43.

¹²⁴ An orienter is a proposition that “introduces a unit” (John Beekman, John Callow, and Michael F. Kopeseck. *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication*, 5th revision [Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981], 93).

¹²⁵ Cf. the Syntactical diagram in Appendix C.

to know their circumstances (τὰ περι ὑμῶν in 2:19), highlighting again his absence and concern for them. These two paragraphs (speaking of Timothy in 2:19–24 and Epaphroditus in 2:25–30) have some resemblance to the letters of recommendation (see especially 2:22, 25, 29 where they are commended for their lives), although no request is made on their behalf except to receive and honor them (2:29).¹²⁶

There is another transition at 3:1 which is marked by τὸ λοιπόν and a change from Paul's plans to exhortation. Noteworthy at this point is a "hesitation formula" that is discussed at some length by Reed in *Discourse Analysis*.¹²⁷ The hesitation formula was a device used in ancient writing where disclosure formulas were intensified "by adding either (i) a form of the verb ὀκνέω ('to scruple, hesitate, delay') which is often negated or, more rarely, (ii) the adverb ἀόκνως ('unhesitatingly, without hesitation') so as to indicate no hesitation on the part of the author concerning some matter."¹²⁸

In Phil 3:1, Paul says that τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ ὀκνηρόν, ὑμῖν δὲ ἀσφαλές.¹²⁹ Reed concludes that Paul has modifying or adapting the hesitation formula "to indicate that 'writing the same things' was not done in a 'hesitating' manner . . ." ¹³⁰ In other words, Paul is reaffirming his friendship to them by communicating that he was not hesitating to fulfill the obligations of his relationship with them.¹³¹ There are two sets of admonitions in 3:1–2 conjoined by asyndeton (3:1 and 3:2). If Reed's analysis is right, then this would indicate that both the

¹²⁶ On "letters of introduction and recommendation," see White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 193–194.

¹²⁷ Reed, *Discourse Analysis*, 228–238, 246–265.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 231.

¹²⁹ See also Appendix A where letter 104A uses the phrase μὴ ὀκνῆσαι γράφειν and letter 104B uses the phrase οὐ μὴ ὀκνήσω σοι γράφειν.

¹³⁰ Reed, *Discourse Analysis*, 250.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 250–253.

exhortation to rejoice and the exhortation to watch out for false teachers are both rooted in his friendship to them.

As was mentioned above, much of the material that is oriented toward the Philippians' situation is expressed in imperatives that are supported by theological reasoning. That is no less the case here. 3:3–16, Paul's spiritual autobiography, is syntactically subordinate to the exhortations of 3:2.

There seems to be a minor transition at 3:17, where Paul uses the vocative and returns to the use of the imperatives. This section (3:17–21) belongs to the greater section of 3:1–21. It is tied to the previous material in that Paul describes himself in 3:4–16 so that he might be an example for them, and then in 3:17 he tells them to follow him.

There is another transition at 4:1 marked by the *ὥστε* + the vocative (which is heavily weighted with adjectives). He seems to be saying that “the above is how you should stand firm, as I commanded in 1:27.”¹³² It seems like there is another transition at 4:2 by means of asyndeton and change from general exhortations to specific and blunt exhortations of individuals. It is significant to note that in this whole letter in which he frequently speaks to the readers with great affection and rejoicing, this is the only place in which he calls on them by name.

There is a transition back into general exhortations in 4:4, possibly marked by the use of *χαίρω*.¹³³ 4:8 seems to mark the last transition within the body-middle by means of *τὸ λοιπόν* + the vocative. This seems to mark the closing exhortation of the body-middle.

¹³² I take the *οὕτως* as anaphoric rather than cataphoric because it seems to lack an anchor point in 4:2 (as it has in for example, 3:17 where you find *οὕτω . . . καθὼς*). However it is a difficult decision that I am not incredibly confident about.

¹³³ Guthrie mentions that “the ‘rejoice’ motif” occurs at several transitions in Philippians (“Cohesion Shifts and Stitches in Philippians,” 45–46).

Body-closing (4:10–20)

Though Paul transitions with the use of the conjunction *δέ*, there do not seem to be any of the formulaic devices that are often used to indicate a transition to the body-closing. This is not problematic since the letters didn't always contain formulaic devices to indicate transitions to the body-closing. Nevertheless there are indications that 4:10–20 function as the close of the body.

First, moves from exhortation to commendation. Since much of the letter has consisted of exhortations, this change may be one indication that he is bringing the body to a close. One good reason for this may be the fact that Paul wants to end the letter on a positive note and emphasize the relationship that he has with the Philippians as the point of contact for the next communication, rather than the exhortations he has just given.

Second, at least one body-closing commonplace that appears in this section is the mention of “doing well” (4:14). White notes that

the most common means of making requests is to employ some form of the polite convention *καλῶς ἂν οὖν ποιήσαις*, which means ‘therefore you would do well to . . .,’ or simply phrased, ‘Please. . . .’ This phrase occurs hundreds of times, usually with a conjunction meaning ‘therefore,’ and almost always as a transitional statement in the body, following some introductory explanation of the request which it expresses.¹³⁴

It seems likely that Paul's use of *καλῶς ἐποιήσατε* is a modification or adaptation of this convention, though he is making a commendation rather than a request.

There are two other conventions in this section worth mentioning in passing. The first is the disclosure formula in 4:15 (*οἴδατε δὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς, Φιλιππηῖσι*). The second is the reference to

¹³⁴ White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 204; cf. also White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter*, 18.

λόγον δόσεως καὶ λήμψεως. This latter point is said by Fee to be a “commercial idiom.”¹³⁵ It brings the letter back to resembling a friendship letter with the emphasis on mutuality.

Letter Closing (4:21–23)

Philippians closes with a fairly standard series of greetings to and from other believers (4:21–22). the letter as a whole is closed with a benediction (4:23), which may function in place of the “closing wish for health.”¹³⁶

In light of the preceding analysis, the following outline of the book can be suggested:¹³⁷

1:1–11: Letter Opening

1:1–2: Address and greeting-formula

1:3–11: Thanksgiving and prayer

1:12–4:20: Letter Body

1:12–30: Body-opening

1:12–26: Paul’s situation

1:27–30: Paul addresses their situation (thesis: live as good citizens of the gospel)

2:1–4:9: Body-middle

2:1–18: Be diligent to live in humble unity in imitation of Christ

2:19–30: The affairs of Paul’s coworkers (implied: emulate exemplary men)

3:1–4:1: Rejoice in the Lord, beware of false teachers, and follow the example of those who follow Paul (implied: reject pride and don’t become an enemy of Christ)

4:2–9: Live as good citizens by being unified in the Lord

4:10–20: Body-closing:

Commendation of the Philippians for participating in the gospel ministry with Paul (implied: reaffirmation of their relationship)

4:21–23: Letter Closing: Greetings and benediction

4:21–22: Greetings

4:23: Benediction

This outline demonstrates how the genre of ancient letter influences the structure of the

¹³⁵ Fee, *Philippians*, 443, n. 20.

¹³⁶ Alexander, “Hellenistic Letter-forms,” 94.

¹³⁷ While this paper has focused on the genre-critical study of the book, this outline is also influenced by Discourse Analysis approaches such as those by Black and Guthrie (see Black, “The Discourse Structure of Philippians,” and Guthrie, “Cohesion Shifts and Stitches in Philippians”).

book. Paul opens his letter in a way that modifies the standard forms (1:1–11), and then establishes in the body opening both his situation and his concern for the Philippians' situation (1:12–30). It is here that Paul introduces the thesis to “live as good citizens of the gospel,” the theme that he carries forward in several sections of the body-middle (2:1–4:9). In the body closing he commends the Philippians for their participation in the ministry of the gospel, which functions as a reaffirmation of their relationship so that there is a positive note that forms the basis for the next communication. Finally, Paul closes the letter with somewhat standard greetings, but with a benediction in place of the typical prayer or wish for health.

VIII. Conclusion: The Contribution of Genre to the Interpretation of Philippians

What is the significance of the genre of the ancient letter for the interpretation of the book of Philippians? First, we need to be aware of the fact that Philippians is an ancient letter, and the genre affects how the message was shaped, both in terms of how the whole of the discourse flows, as well as how the individual parts of it function. Understanding this can help the interpreter identify how Paul has departed from the conventions of his day and why. It can also help the reader to understand the use of formulaic phrases so that they are not over-interpreted or under-interpreted. This will include interpreting them in light of how the phrases “work” (pragmatics) and not just what they literally say.

Second, understanding the genre of Philippians as an ancient letter can keep us from reading out a significant aspect of the meaning, namely the interpersonal. Understanding that in Scripture, God has given us letters from the Apostles to particular churches can keep us from trying to reduce the letters to merely universal theological principles. It also helps us remember that in terms of the text's meaning, often the universal theological principles are given as support

for the interpersonal and exhortative meaning, which is frequently more prominent. In light of these two uses for a genre-critical reading of Philippians, we can read Philippians as a letter from God to us, through a letter from Paul to the church at Philippi.

Appendix A: Two Ancient Letters

Reproduced from White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 161–164.

Apollinarios' letters to his mother, ca. second century.

Letter 104A

Ἀπολινᾶρις Ταησίῳ τῇ μητρὶ
πολλὰ χαίρειν
πρὸ παντὸς ἔρρωσὸ μοι ὑγιαίνουσα
τὸ προσκύνημά σου ποιῶν παρὰ πᾶ-
5 σι τοῖς θεοῖς. καὶ ἀπὸ Κυρήνης εὐρῶν
τὸν πρὸς σὲ ἐρχόμενον ἀνάγκην ἔσχον σοι
δηλῶσαι περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας μου· καὶ σύ μοι
ταχύτερον δήλωσον περὶ τῆς ἀπροσκοπίας
σου καὶ τῆς τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου. καὶ νῦν ἀπὸ
10 Πόρτου σοι δηλῶ, οὐπω γὰρ ἀνέβην ἰς Ῥώμην
καὶ διετάγην. ἐπὶ διαταγῶ καὶ γινώ ἰς ποίαν
ἴμι εὐθέως σοι δηλῶ, καὶ σύ δὲ μὴ ὤκνι γρά-
φιν περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας σου καὶ τῆς τῶν ἀδελ-
φῶν μου. ἐὰν δὲ μὴ εὔρησ τὸν ἐρχόμενον
15 πρὸς ἐμὲ γράψον Σωκράτη καὶ αὐτὸς μοι
διαπέμπεται. ἀσπάζομαι πολλὰ τὰ ἀδέλφια
καὶ Ἀπολινᾶριν καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ καὶ Καλαλᾶ(ν)
καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ καὶ πάντες τοὺς σε φιλοῦντες.
ἀσπάζεται σε Ἀσκληπιάδης.
20 Ἔρρωσὸ μοι ὑγιαίνουσα.
ἰς Πόρτον παρεγενάμην Παχῶν κε.
γείνωσκε ὅτι ἰς Μεισηνοὺς διετάγην, ὕστερον γὰρ ἐπέ-
γνων.
ἀπόδος ἰς Καρανίδα Ταησίῳ ἀπὸ Ἀπολιναρίου
25 υἱοῦ.

Apollinarios to his mother, Taesion,
many greetings. Before anything else I
wish that you are well, making
obeisance on your behalf to all the
gods. And when I found someone
who was journeying to you from
Cyrene, I thought it a necessity to
inform you about my welfare; you
must inform me at once, in turn,
about your safety and that of my
brothers. And now I am writing to
you from Portus, for I have not yet
gone up to Rome and been assigned.
When I am assigned and know where
I will be, I will tell you immediately;
and, for your part, do not hesitate to
write about your welfare and that of
my brothers. If you do not find
someone coming to me, write to
Socrates and he will transmit it to me.
I greet (salute) my brothers much,
and Apollinarios and his children, and
Kalalas and his children, and
all your friends. Asklepiades salutes
you. I pray that you are well. I arrived
in Portus on Pachon 25.

[Postscript in second hand]: Know that I have been assigned to Misenum, for I found out later (i.e., after the letter was written)

[Outside address]: Deliver to Karanis, to Taesion, from her son Apollinarios.

Letter 104B

Ἀπολινᾶρις Ταήσι τῇ μητρὶ καὶ κυρίᾳ
πολλὰ χαίρειν. πρὸ μὲν πάντων εὐχομαί σε
ὑγειαίνειν, καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς ὑγειαίνω καὶ τὸ προσκύνη-
μά σου ποιῶ παρὰ τοῖς ἐνθάδε θεοῖς. γεινώσκεις σε
5 θέλω, μήτηρ, ὅτι ἐρρωμένος ἐγενόμην εἰς Ῥώμην
Παχῶν μηνὶ κε καὶ ἐκληρώθην εἰς Μισηνοῦς.
οὐπω δὲ τὴν κε(ν)τυρίαν μου ἔγνω· οὐ γὰρ ἀπε-
ληλύθειν εἰς Μισηνοῦς ὅτε σοὶ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ταύτην
ἔγραφον. ἐρωτῶ σε, οὖν, μήτηρ, σεαυτῇ πρόσσεχε,
10 μηδὲν δίσταζε περὶ ἐμοῦ· ἐγὼ γὰρ εἰς καλὸν τό-
πον ἦλθον. καλῶς δὲ ποιήσ<εις> γράψασ[σ]ά μοι ἐπιστο-
λὴν πε[ρ]ὶ τῆς σωτηρίας σου καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου καὶ
τῶν σῶν πάντων. καὶ ἄν τις εἴ τινα ἐὰν εὕρω γράφω
σοι· οὐ μὴ ὀκνήσω σοὶ γράφειν. ἀσπάζομαι τοὺς ἀ-
15 δελφούς μου πολλὰ καὶ Ἀπολινᾶριν καὶ τὰ τέ-
κνα αὐτοῦ καὶ Καραλαῖν καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ.
ἀσπάζ[ο]μαι Πτολεμαῖν καὶ Πτολεμαεῖδα καὶ τὰ
τέκν[α] αὐτῆς καὶ Ἡρακλοῦν καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς.
ἀσπάζομαι τοὺς φιλοῦντάς σε πάντας κατ' ὄνο-
20 μα.

ἐρρωσθαι σε εὐχομαί.

ἀπόδ(ος) εἰς Καρανίδα Ταήσι ἀπὸ Ἀπολιναρίου υἱοῦ
Μισηνάτου.

Apollinarios to his mother and lady,
Taesis, many greetings. Before all else
I pray that you are well; I myself am
well and make obeisance on your
behalf to the gods here. I want you to
know, mother, that I arrived in Rome
safely on the twenty-fifth of the
month Pachon and was assigned to
Misenum. But I do not know my
century yet, for I had not gone to
Misenum when I wrote this
letter to you. I request you,
therefore, mother, attend to yourself;
do not worry about me, for I came to
a fine place. Please write me a letter
about your welfare and that of my
brothers and of all your people. And
for my part, if I ever find someone (to
carry the letter), I will write to you; I
certainly will not hesitate to write to
Karalás and his children. I greet
Ptolemy, and Ptolemais and
her children. I greet all your friends,

each by name. I pray that you are well.

[Outside address]: Deliver to Karansis, to Taesis, from her son, Apollinarios, of Misenum.

Appendix B: Epistolary Typologies according to Pseudo Demetrius and Pseudo Libanius

The following are categories that are parallel between Pseudo Demetrius and Pseudo Libanius:¹³⁸

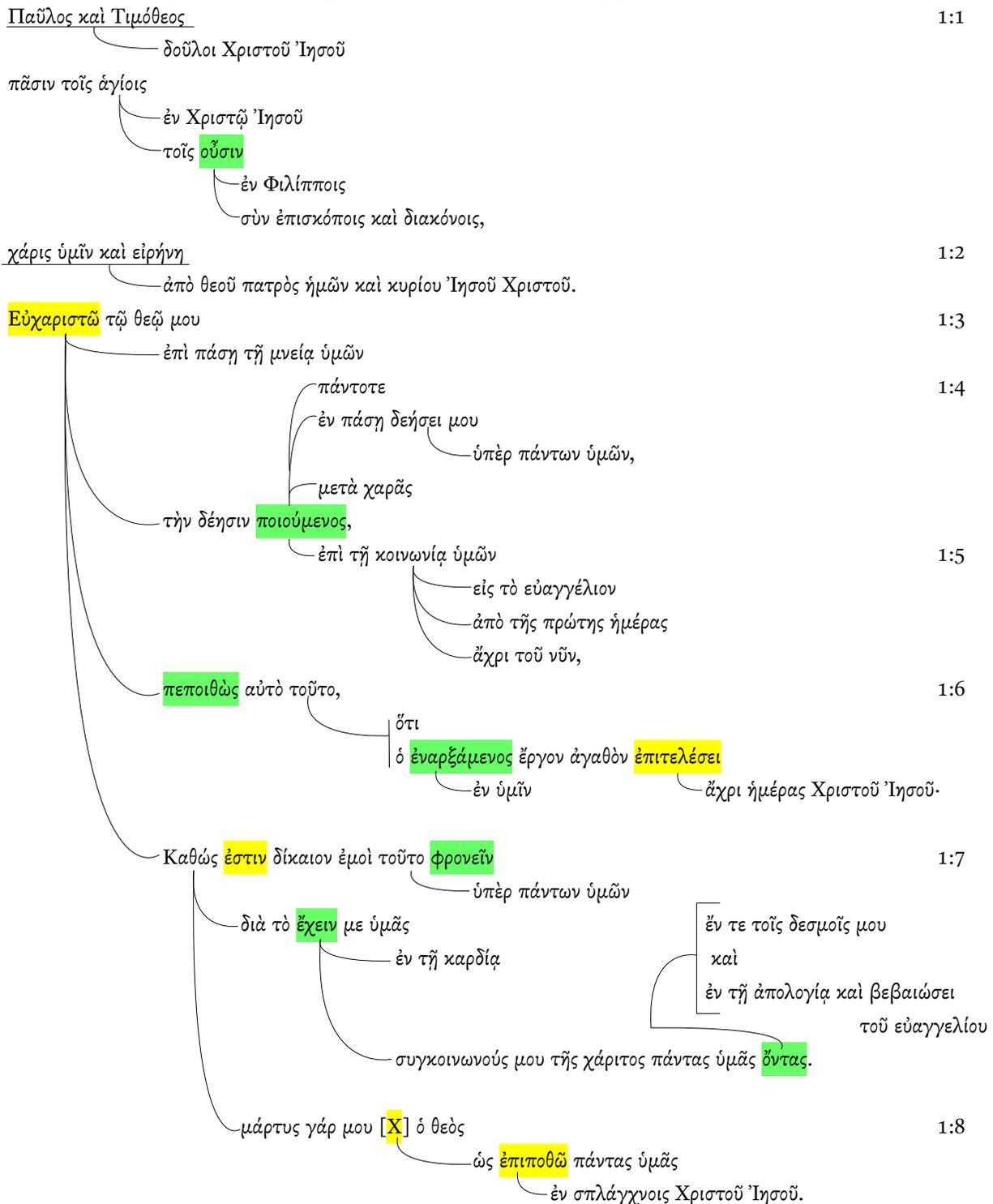
<u>Pseudo Demetrius</u>	<u>Pseudo Libanius</u>
the friendly (φιλικός)	friendly [φιλική]
commendatory (συστατικός)	commending [συστατική]
blaming (μεμπτικός)	blaming [μεμπτική]
reproachful (όνειδιστικός)	reproaching [όνειδιστική]
consoling (παραμυθητικός)	consoling [παραμυθητική]
ensorious (έπιτιμητικός)	ensorious [έπιτιμητική]
admonishing (νουθετητικός)	–
threatening (άπειλητικός)	threatening [άπειλητική]
vituperative (ψεκτικός)	–
praising (έπαινετικός)	praising [έπαινετική]
advisory (συμβουλευτικός)	–
supplicatory (άξιωματικός)	–
inquiring (έρωτηματικός)	inquiring [έρωτηματική]
responding (άποφαντικός)	declaratory [άποφαντική]
allegorical (άλληγορικός)	–
accounting (άιτιολογικός)	–
accusing (κατηγορικός)	–
apologetic (άπολογητικός)	–
congratulatory (συγχαρητικός)	congratulatory [συγχαρητική]
ironic (είρωνικός)	ironic [είρωνική]
thankful (άπευχαριστικός).	thankful [εύχαριστική]

The following are the remaining 28 letters in Pseudo Libanius' list that have no direct parallel in Pseudo Demetrius' list:

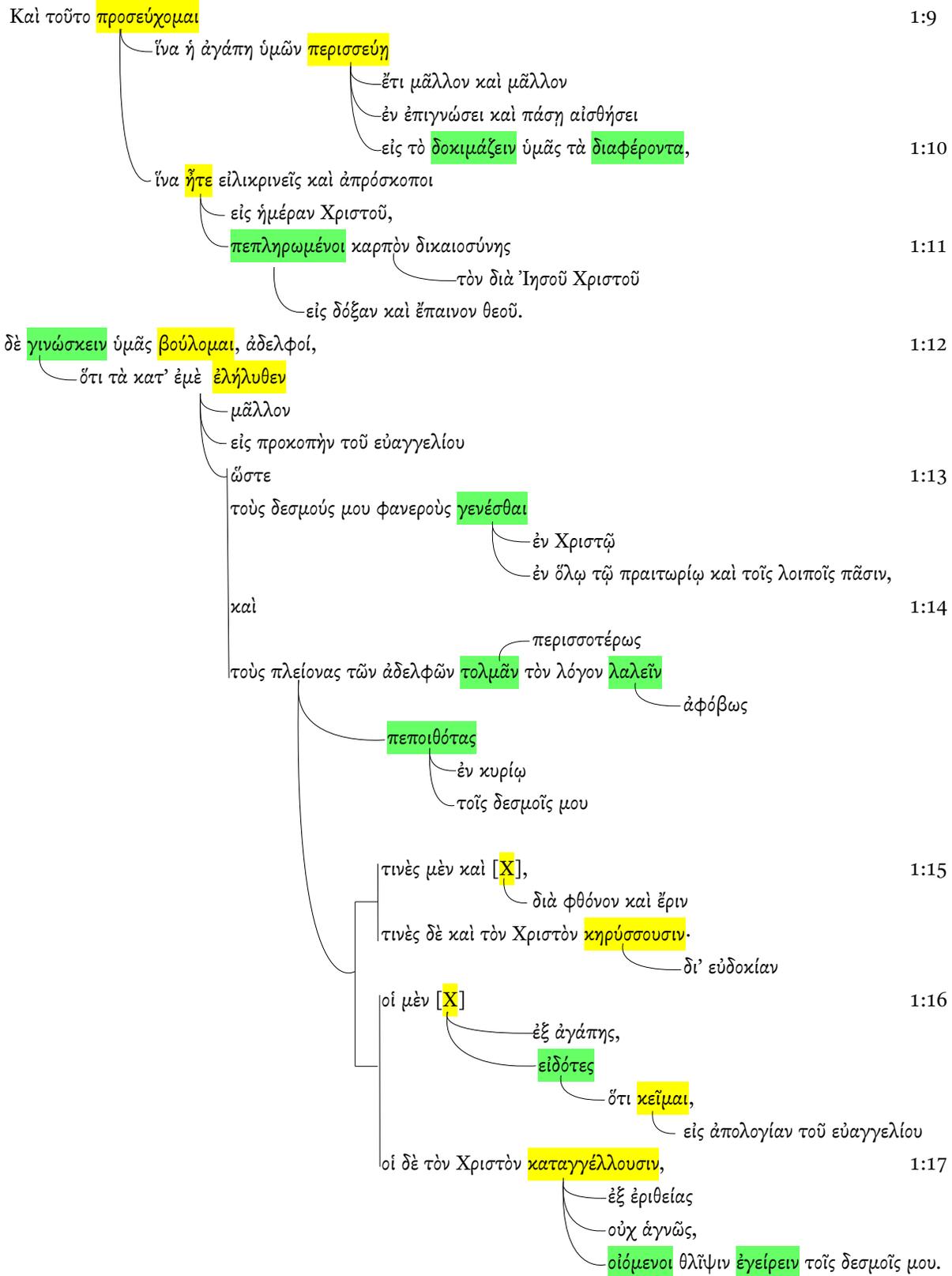
¹³⁸ Pseudo Demetrius' list is from White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 203. Pseudo Libanius' list is from Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 66–67. The latter is a translation of the Greek text by Malherbe (from p. 67). I have inserted the Greek terms translated by Malherbe in brackets from p. 66. I have also rearranged the order of Pseudo Libanius' list in order to place his terms next to the corresponding terms in Pseudo Demetrius' list.

paraenetic [παραινετική], requesting [παρακλητική], praying [εὐκτική], denying [ἀπαρνητική], commanding [παραγγεληματική], repenting [μεταμελητική], sympathetic [συμπαθητική], conciliatory [θεραπευτική], contemptuous [παραλογιστική], counter-accusing [ἀντεγκληματική], replying [ἀντεπισταλτική], provoking [παροξυντική], insulting [ὕβριστική], reporting [ἀπαγγελιτική], angry [σχετλιαστική], diplomatic [πρεσβευτική], didactic [διδασκαλική], reproving [ἐλεγκτική], maligning [διαβλητική], encouraging [παραθαρρυντική], consulting [ἀναθετική], mocking [σκωπτική], submissive [μετριαστική], enigmatic [αἰνιγματική], suggestive [ὕπομνηστική], grieving [λυπητική], erotic [ἔρωτική], mixed [μικτή].

Appendix C: Syntactical Diagram of the Book of Philippians¹³⁹



¹³⁹Notes on the diagram: the words were kept in the same order as found in the text unless there was need to change order for clarity (i.e. conjunctions often moved). Finite verbs are highlighted yellow. Participles and infinitives are highlighted green. Imperatives are in bold. [X] = implied verbal. Punctuation was often removed.



Τί γάρ;
πλήν

1:18

ὅτι
Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται,
καὶ
χαίρω.
ἐν τούτῳ
παντὶ τρόπῳ,
εἴτε προφάσει
εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ,

Ἀλλὰ καὶ χαρήσομαι,
οἶδα γάρ

1:19

ὅτι
τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται
εἰς σωτηρίαν
διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν δεήσεως καὶ ἐπιχορηγίας τοῦ πνεύματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
κατὰ τὴν ἀποκαταδοκίαν καὶ ἐλπίδα μου,

1:20

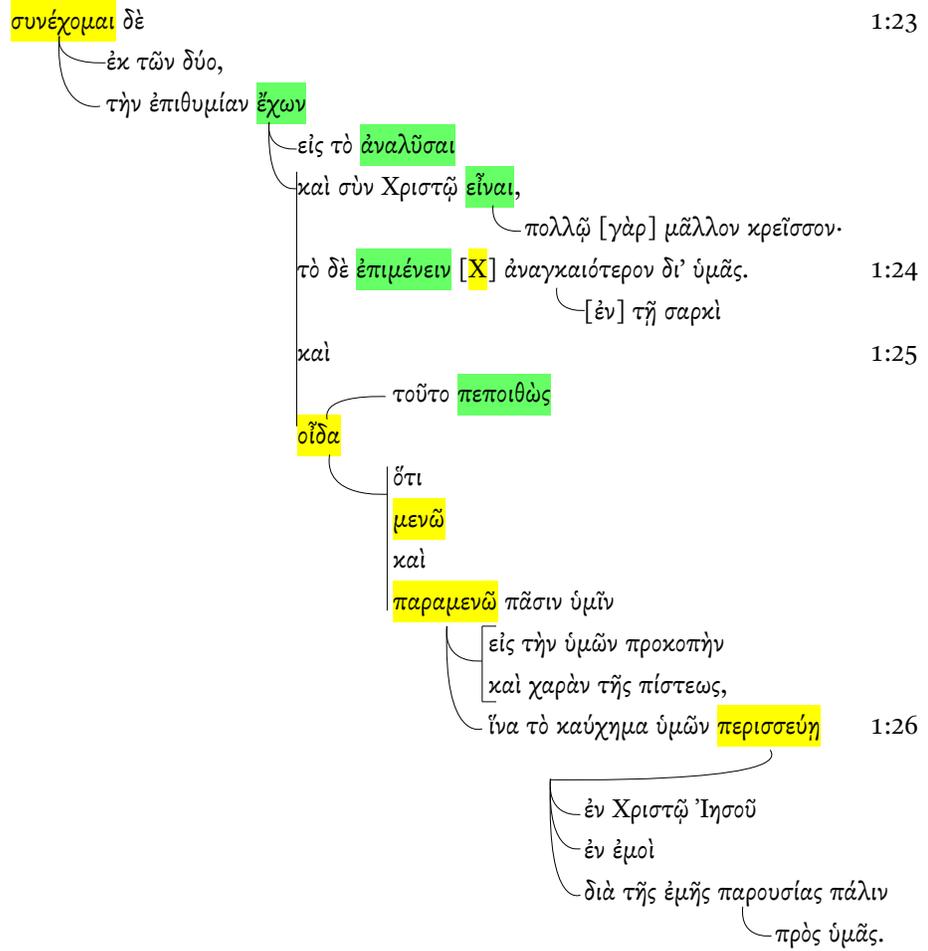
ὅτι
ἐν οὐδενὶ
αἰσχυνθήσομαι
ἀλλ'
ἐν πάσῃ παρρησίᾳ
ὡς πάντοτε καὶ νῦν
μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστὸς
ἐν τῷ σώματί μου,
εἴτε διὰ ζωῆς
εἴτε διὰ θανάτου.

Ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν [X] Χριστὸς
καὶ
τὸ ἀποθανεῖν [X] κέρδος.

1:21

εἰ δὲ τὸ ζῆν ἐν σαρκί,
τοῦτό μοι [X] καρπὸς ἔργου,
καὶ
οὐ γνωρίζω.
τί αἰρήσομαι

1:22



πολιτεύεσθε,

ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ

ἵνα

εἴτε ἔλθῶν
καὶ ἰδῶν ὑμᾶς

εἴτε ἀπῶν
ἀκούω τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν,

ὅτι

στήχετε

ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι,
μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθλοῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου
καὶ μὴ πτυρόμενοι

1:28

ἐν μηδενὶ

ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντικειμένων,

ἣτις ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἔνδειξις ἀπωλείας,
ὑμῶν δὲ σωτηρίας,
καὶ τοῦτο ἀπὸ θεοῦ.

ὅτι ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ,

1:29

οὐ μόνον τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύειν

ἀλλὰ καὶ

τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν,

τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγῶνα ἔχοντες 1:30

οἷον εἶδετε

ἐν ἐμοί

καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε

ἐν ἐμοί.

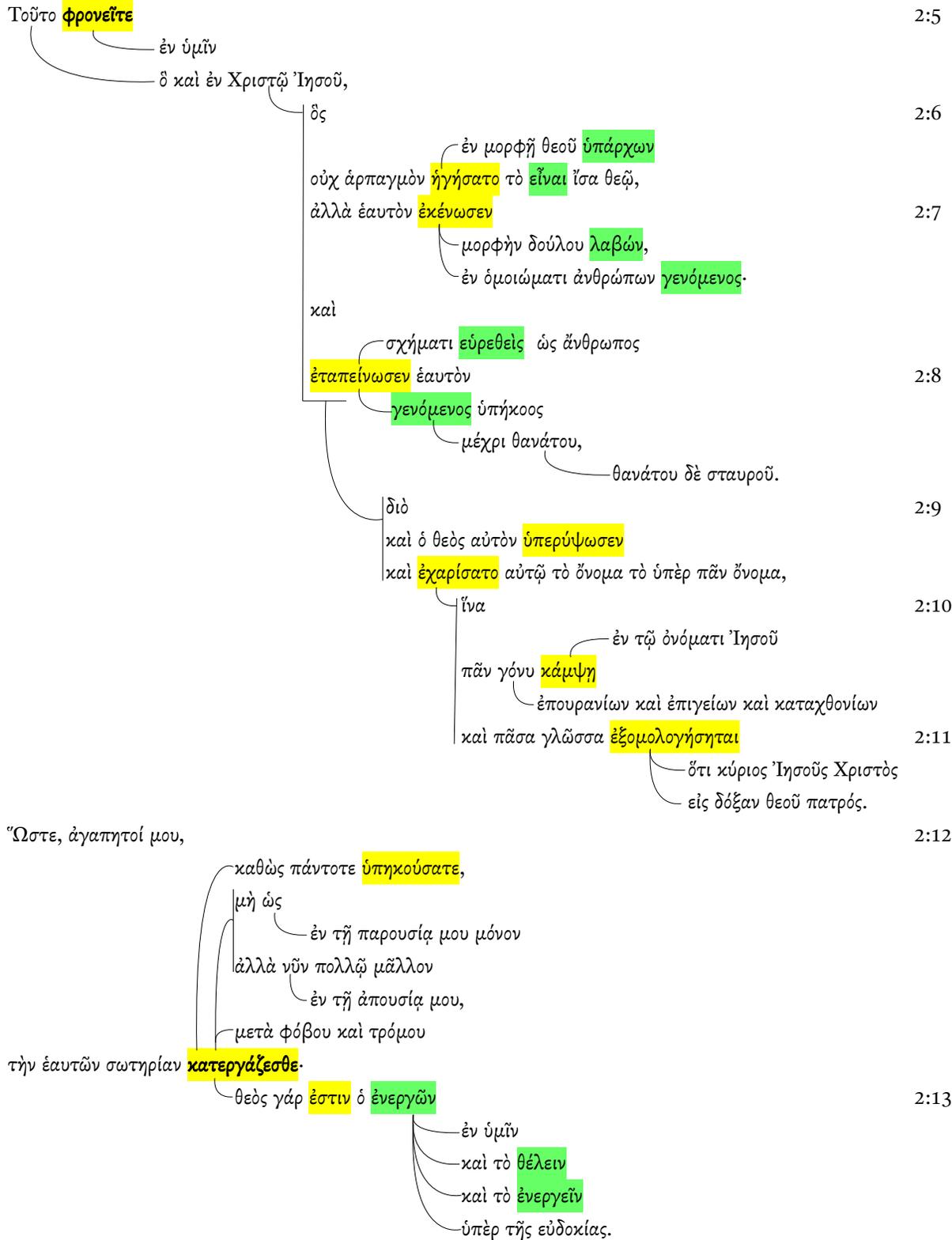
οὖν 2:1

Εἴ τις παράκλησις ἐν Χριστῷ,
 εἴ τι παραμύθιον ἀγάπης,
 εἴ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος,
 εἴ τις σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί,
 πληρώσατέ μου τὴν χαρὰν 2:2

ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε,
 τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες,
 σύμφυχοι,
 τὸ ἐν φρονούντες,
 2:3

[X] μὴδὲν κατ' ἐριθείαν
 μὴδὲ [X] κατὰ κενοδοξίαν
 ἀλλὰ
 τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ
 ἀλλήλους ἡγούμενοι ὑπερέχοντες ἑαυτῶν,
 2:4

μὴ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἕκαστος σκοποῦντες
 ἀλλὰ [καὶ]
 [X] τὰ ἐτέρων ἕκαστοι.



Πάντα **ποιεῖτε** 2:14

χωρίς γογγυσμῶν
καὶ διαλογισμῶν,

ἵνα **γένησθε** 2:15

ἄμεμπτοι καὶ ἀκέραιοι
τέκνα θεοῦ ἄμωμα

μέσον γενεᾶς σκολιᾶς καὶ διεστραμμένης,

ἐν οἷς **φαίνεσθε**

ὡς φωστῆρες

ἐν κόσμῳ,

λόγον ζωῆς **ἐπέχοντες**, 2:16

εἰς καύχημα ἔμοι

εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ,

ὅτι

οὐκ εἰς κενὸν **ἔδραμον**

οὐδὲ εἰς κενὸν **ἐκοπίασα**.

2:17

Ἄλλὰ

εἰ καὶ **σπένδομαι**

ἐπὶ τῇ θυσίᾳ καὶ λειτουργίᾳ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν,

χαίρω

καὶ **συγχαίρω** πᾶσιν ὑμῖν.

δὲ

τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ὑμεῖς **χαίρετε**

καὶ **συγχαίρετέ** μοι.

2:18

δὲ

Ἐλπίζω

ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ

Τιμόθεον ταχέως **πέμψαι** ὑμῖν,

ἵνα καὶ εὐψυχῶ **γνοῦς** τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν.

οὐδένα γὰρ **ἔχω** ἰσόψυχον,

2:20

ὅστις γνησίως τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν **μεριμνήσει**.

οἱ πάντες γὰρ τὰ ἑαυτῶν **ζητοῦσιν**,

2:21

οὐ **[X]** τὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

δὲ

τὴν δοκιμὴν αὐτοῦ **γινώσκετε**,

2:22

ὅτι

ὡς πατρὶ τέκνον

σὺν ἔμοι

ἔδούλευσεν

εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον.

οὖν 2:23
τοῦτον μὲν ἐλπίζω πέμψαι
— ὡς ἂν ἀφίδω τὰ περι ἐμέ
— ἐξαυτῆς.

δὲ 2:24
πέποιθα ἐν κυρίῳ
— ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς ταχέως ἐλεύσομαι

δὲ 2:25
Ἄναγκαῖον ἠγγεῖάμην πέμψαι Ἐπαφρόδιτον
— πρὸς ὑμᾶς | τὸν ἀδελφὸν καὶ συνεργὸν καὶ συστρατιώτην μου,
— ὑμῶν δὲ ἀπόστολον καὶ λειτουργὸν τῆς χρείας μου,

2:26
ἐπειδὴ
ἐπιποθῶν ἦν πάντας ὑμᾶς
καὶ ἀδημονῶν,
— διότι ἠκούσατε
— ὅτι ἠσθένησεν.

2:27
καὶ γὰρ ἠσθένησεν παραπλήσιον θανάτῳ·
ἀλλὰ ὁ θεὸς ἠλέησεν αὐτόν

— οὐκ [X] αὐτὸν δὲ μόνον
— ἀλλὰ καὶ [X] ἐμέ,
— ἵνα μὴ λύπην ἐπὶ λύπην σχῶ.

οὖν 2:28
ἔπεμψα αὐτόν,
— σπουδαιότερως
— ἵνα
— ἰδόντες αὐτὸν πάλιν
— χαρῆτε
— καὶ γὰρ ἀλυπότερος ᾶ.

οὖν 2:29
προσδέχεσθε αὐτόν
— ἐν κυρίῳ
— μετὰ πάσης χαρᾶς

καὶ 2:30
τοὺς τοιούτους ἐντίμους ἔχετε,
— ὅτι
— μέχρι θανάτου ἠγγισεν
— διὰ τὸ ἔργον Χριστοῦ
— παραβολευσάμενος τῇ ψυχῇ,
— ἵνα ἀναπληρώσῃ τὸ ὑμῶν ὑστέρημα τῆς πρὸς με λειτουργίας.

Τὸ λοιπόν, ἀδελφοί μου,

3:1

χαίρετε

ἐν κυρίῳ.

τὰ αὐτὰ **γράφειν** ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν [X] οὐκ ὀκνηρόν,
ὑμῖν δὲ [X] ἀσφαλές.

Βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας,

3:2

βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας,

βλέπετε τὴν κατατομὴν.

ἡμεῖς γὰρ **ἔσμεν** ἡ περιτομή,

3:3

οἱ
πνεύματι θεοῦ **λατρεύοντες**
καὶ **καυχώμενοι** ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ
καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ **πεποιθότες**,

καίπερ ἐγὼ **ἔχων** πεποιθήσιν καὶ ἐν σαρκί.

3:4

Εἴ τις **δοκεῖ** ἄλλος **πεποιθέναι**
ἐγὼ [X] μᾶλλον·

ἐν σαρκί,

περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος,

3:5

ἐκ γένους Ἰσραὴλ,
φυλῆς Βενιαμίν,
Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων,
κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος,
κατὰ ζῆλος **διώκων** τὴν ἐκκλησίαν
κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ **γενόμενος** ἄμεμπτος.

3:6

[Ἀλλὰ]

ἅτινα **ἦν** μοι κέρδη,
ταῦτα **ἤγημαι** διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν.

3:7

ἀλλὰ μενοῦνγε καὶ 3:8

ἡγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι

διὰ τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου,

δι' ὃν

τὰ πάντα ἐζημιώθην,

καὶ ἡγοῦμαι σκύβαλα ,

ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω

καὶ εὐρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ,

3:9

μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου

ἀλλὰ [X] τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ,

τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει,

τοῦ γινῶναι

3:10

αὐτὸν

καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ

καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ,

συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ,

εἴ πως καταστήσω 3:11

εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν.

Οὐχ [X] 3:12

ὅτι

ἤδη ἔλαβον

ἢ

ἤδη τετελείωμαι,

δὲ

διώκω

εἰ καὶ καταλάβω,

ἐφ' ᾧ καὶ κατελήμφθην

ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ].

ἀδελφοί, 3:13

ἐγὼ ἑμαυτὸν οὐ λογίζομαι κατελιγμένον.

ἐν δέ [X],

τὰ μὲν ὀπίσω ἐπιλανθανόμενος

τοῖς δὲ ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεκτεινόμενος,

κατὰ σκοπὸν

3:14

διώκω

εἰς τὸ βραβεῖον τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

οὖν
"Όσοι τέλειοι, τοῦτο φρονῶμεν· 3:15
καὶ

εἴ τι ἐτέρως φρονεῖτε,
καὶ τοῦτο ὁ θεὸς ὑμῖν ἀποκαλύψει·

πλὴν 3:16
εἰς ὃ ἐφθάσαμεν,
τῷ αὐτῷ στοιχεῖν.

Συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε, ἀδελφοί, 3:17
καὶ

σκοπεῖτε τοὺς οὕτω περιπατοῦντας
καθὼς ἔχετε τύπον ἡμᾶς.

πολλοὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦσιν 3:18

οὓς
πολλάκις ἔλεγον ὑμῖν,
νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίων λέγω,
τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ,

ὧν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια, 3:19

ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία καὶ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ αὐτῶν,

οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες.

ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, 3:20

ἐξ οὗ καὶ σωτήρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν,

ὃς μετασχηματίζει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμμορφον 3:21

τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ

κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτὸν καὶ ὑποτάξαι αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα.

"Ωστε, 4:1

ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοὶ καὶ ἐπιπόθητοι,

χαρὰ καὶ στέφανός μου,

οὕτως στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ,

ἀγαπητοί.

Εὐδοκίαν **παρακαλῶ** 4:2
καὶ
Συντύχην **παρακαλῶ**
— τὸ αὐτὸ **φρονεῖν**
— ἐν κυρίῳ.

ναὶ ἐρωτῶ καὶ σέ, γνήσιε σύζυγε, 4:3
— **συλλαμβάνου** αὐταῖς,
— αἵτινες **συνήθλησάν** μοι
— ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ
— μετὰ καὶ Κλήμεντος
— καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν συνεργῶν μου,
— ὧν τὰ ὀνόματα [X]
— ἐν βίβλῳ ζωῆς.

Χαίρετε 4:4
— ἐν κυρίῳ
— πάντοτε.

πάλιν ἐρῶ,
— **χαίρετε.**

τὸ ἐπιεικὲς ὑμῶν **γνωσθήτω** πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις. 4:5
ὁ κύριος [X] ἐγγύς.

μηδὲν **μεριμνᾶτε,** 4:6
ἀλλ'
— ἐν παντὶ
— τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ δεήσει
— μετὰ εὐχαριστίας
τὰ αἰτήματα ὑμῶν **γνωρίζεσθω**
— πρὸς τὸν θεόν.

καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ **φρουρήσει** τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν καὶ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν 4:7
— ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.
— ἡ **ὑπερέχουσα** πάντα νοῦν

Τὸ λοιπόν, ἀδελφοί,

4:8

ὅσα ἐστὶν ἀληθῆ,
ὅσα [X] σεμνά,
ὅσα [X] δίκαια,
ὅσα [X] ἀγνά,
ὅσα [X] προσφιλῆ,
ὅσα [X] εὐφημα,
εἴ [X] τις ἀρετὴ
καὶ
εἴ [X] τις ἔπαινος ,
ταῦτα **λογίζεσθε**.

ἃ
καὶ ἐμάθετε
καὶ παρελάβετε
καὶ ἠκούσατε
καὶ εἶδετε
ἐν ἐμοί,

4:9

ταῦτα **πράσσετε**.
καὶ
ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης **ἔσται**
μεθ' ὑμῶν.

δὲ

Ἐχάρην
ἐν κυρίῳ
μεγάλως
ὅτι
ἤδη ποτὲ **ἀνεθάλετε** τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ **φρονεῖν**
ἐφ' ᾧ
καὶ **ἐφρονεῖτε**
δέ
ἠκαιρεῖσθε

4:10

οὐχ
ὅτι
καθ' ὑστέρησιν
λέγω,
γὰρ
ἐγὼ **ἔμαθον**
ἐν οἷς **εἰμι** αὐτάρκης **εἶναι**.

4:11

οἶδα και ταπεινοῦσθαι,

4:12

οἶδα και περισσεύειν.

έν παντί
και
έν πᾶσιν
μεμύημαι,
και χορτάζεσθαι
και πεινᾶν
και περισσεύειν
και ὑστερεῖσθαι.

πάντα ἰσχύω

4:13

έν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με.

πλὴν

καλῶς ἐποιήσατε

4:14

συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει.

δὲ

4:15

οἶδατε και ὑμεῖς, Φιλιππησίοι,

ὅτι
οὐδεμία μοι ἐκκλησία ἔκοινωνήσεν
έν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου,
ὅτε ἐξῆλθον
ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας,
εἰς λόγον δόσεως και λήψεως
εἰ μὴ ὑμεῖς μόνοι,
ὅτι
και έν Θεσσαλονίκη
και ἅπαξ
και δις
εἰς τὴν χρείαν
μοι ἐπέμψατε.

4:16

οὐχ [X] 4:17

ὅτι
ἐπιζητῶ τὸ δόμα,
ἀλλὰ
ἐπιζητῶ τὸν καρπὸν
τὸν πλεονάζοντα
εἰς λόγον ὑμῶν.

δὲ 4:18

ἀπέχω πάντα
καὶ
περισεύω.

πεπλήρωμαι
δεξάμενος
παρὰ Ἐπαφροδίτου τὰ παρ' ὑμῶν,
ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας,
θυσίαν δεκτὴν,
εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ.

δὲ 4:19

ὁ θεός μου πληρώσει πᾶσαν χρείαν ὑμῶν
κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος αὐτοῦ
ἐν δόξῃ
ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

δὲ 4:20

τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ ἡμῶν [X] ἡ δόξα
εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν.

Ἀσπάσασθε πάντα ἅγιον 4:21

ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ ἀδελφοί.

ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς πάντες οἱ ἅγιοι, 4:22

δὲ
μάλιστα [X] οἱ ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας.

Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [X] 4:23

μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν.

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