HOW THE NEW TESTAMENT CAME TO BE

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THE OCCASIONAL NATURE, COMPOSITION, AND STRUCTURE OF PAUL'S LETTERS

Eric D. Huntsman

Even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

—2 Peter 3:15–16

The heart of much Catholic and especially Reformation theology, the Pauline epistles frequently prove to be unfamiliar and difficult territory for many Latter-day Saints.[1] Some of Paul's teaching, taken in isolation and out of context, can seem confusing or even to be in contradiction with gospel principles explicated elsewhere in the scriptures generally or even in the rest of the Pauline corpus itself.[2] This is partly because the letters of Paul, by and large, are not treatises of systematic theology, a fact that undercuts the efforts of some to establish extensive

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theological positions based largely upon the Apostle's writings alone.[3] Instead, the letters were written to congregations or individuals in response to specific circumstances or problems and therefore emphasize or apply specific aspects of gospel principles in response to the original situation.

Paul was a prolific and lengthy writer. Whereas the average ancient letter was 87 words long, the literary letters of the Roman authors Cicero and Seneca averaged 295 and 995 words respectively. The average letter of Paul, however, was 2,495 words long![4] Often covering a variety of subjects and addressing each with complex argumentation, his letters can be difficult to follow, especially in translation. However, by considering the original context of the letters and Paul's original reasons for writing them, the types of writing that these letters represent, and how he actually composed and formatted them, the modern student of the Pauline epistles can better interpret the letters and understand both their original and current applications, thereby avoiding "wresting" them improperly.

OCCASIONAL NATURE

Although an occasion, or reason for writing, can be identified for all of the letters of the Pauline corpus, the occasional nature is particularly apparent in some of the earliest of the Apostle's letters, each of which is a response to specific situations in the early branches of the Church.[5] While the principles that these letters teach are abiding and applicable in our age, understanding the original occasion of each letter is especially important for understanding and interpreting it,[6] as can be seen particularly in some of the early letters of Paul such as those written to the Saints in Thessalonica, Galatia, Corinth, and Rome.

Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy had come to Thessalonica early in the Second Missionary Journey, about AD 50, and had spent only a few weeks in the city, where they had established a largely Gentile congregation. Dated to AD 50 or 51, Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians are generally considered to be the earliest of his preserved writings, and the formal occasion for Paul's writing is his concern for the further instruction of these new Saints.[7] Lacking Paul's later focus on righteousness by faith rather than by the works of the law, much of these

letters consist of ethical exhortations as Paul endeavors to teach these new Christians how to live as Saints (see 1 Thessalonians 4:1–12; 5:12–22; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15).

Nevertheless, considerable portions of both letters to the Thessalonians are devoted to treating the specific topic of the Parousia, or glorious return of Jesus Christ (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12), which included the promise that those who were Jesus' at His coming would live with Him forever.[8] While this part of Paul's teaching is best preserved in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18, this same passage also makes clear that it caused some confusion among the Thessalonians that Paul's letter sought to resolve: because the Thessalonians, and possibly Paul himself, expected the Lord to return soon, they were concerned when the Parousia did not happen immediately and, furthermore, when members of the congregation began to die before Jesus' return. Accordingly, Paul explained in his first letter that "the dead in Christ shall rise first" to be followed by those who were alive at His coming who would be "caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). This preoccupation with Jesus' return, however, seems to have been at the heart of Paul's second letter, where he needed to moderate the enthusiasm of the Thessalonians, noting some of the significant signs that would precede the Parousia (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12) and encouraging the Saints with admonitions to work that seem to have been occasioned by the "disorderly walk" (*ataktos peripatountos*) or idle behavior of Saints whose indolence seems to have been the result of an unrealistic expectation of an imminent Second Coming (see 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15).

The letter to the Galatians, conventionally dated AD 54–55 but perhaps composed as early as AD 48 if it were written before the Council of Jerusalem in AD 49, was written in response to a very specific and real problem in the churches spread throughout the southern or northern parts of the Roman province of Galatia. These congregations also consisted largely of Gentile converts, but in Paul's absence a subsequent group of missionaries had disturbed the new converts by teaching them "a different gospel" (see Galatians 1:6–10). Paul's succeeding arguments, especially in Galatians 5:2–12, have suggested that

these false teachers had convinced some of the Galatians of the necessity of adopting certain aspects of the Mosaic law—notably circumcision—leading many modern scholars to refer to them as "Judaizers."[9] This context and Paul's efforts to counter this false teaching are necessary to understand properly one of his central points in the letter: "Knowing that a man is *not* justified *by the works of the law,* but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and *not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified*" (2:16; emphasis added). On the other hand, Paul may have had a second group of opponents, because his letter later seeks to counter the efforts of those who think that the grace of Christ had made all obedience and law unnecessary. In reaction to the false teaching of these "libertines," a second emphasis is found in a strong ethical section of the letter, where Paul enjoins the Galatians to reject the works of the flesh in favor of the fruits of the Spirit (see 5:16–26).

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, one of a series of letters of which only two are preserved, was written as a result of problems within one of the largest congregations that he had established. A mixed congregation of converted Jews and Gentiles in the cosmopolitan Roman capital of the province of Achaia (Greece), this branch had been established during Paul's second missionary journey, AD 50–52, when he had stayed there for eighteen months (see Acts 18:7–11). The beneficiaries of thorough gospel instruction, upon Paul's departure the Corinthian Saints developed internal divisions arising from factionalism, pride over special knowledge and gifts, and moral misbehavior arising from doctrinal speculation.[10] Accordingly, Paul devoted considerable portions of his letter to dealing with problems in Corinth such as factions (see 1 Corinthians 1:10–4:21); moral misbehavior, including problems of sex and property (see 5:1–6:20); problems regarding marriage and celibacy (see 7:1–40); Christian freedom and its abuse (see 8:1–11:1); correct and incorrect Christian worship, including the veiling of women (see 11:2–16); abuses of the Lord's Supper (see 11:17–34); misunderstanding and misusing spiritual gifts (see 12:1–14:40); and doctrinal correction regarding the nature of the Resurrection and its application to Christians (see 15:1–58).

Paul's important letter to the Romans is significant both because Paul wrote it to a congregation with which he was not yet familiar and also because of the particular history of the congregation there. He seems to have written it from Corinth in the winter of AD 57–58, when Paul began making plans to visit Rome on his way to Spain and the west after first delivering a collection of money to the poor Saints in Jerusalem (see Romans 15:14–33). Since he knew individual Saints from Rome but had not yet been there himself, the letter was partially intended as a letter of introduction in which he hoped to familiarize the Roman congregation with "his" gospel, perhaps recognizing that his views had been incorrectly represented to the Roman Saints by others (see Romans 3:8).[11] Furthermore, Paul wrote this letter with over a decade of preaching and writing behind him, including the letters to the Thessalonians, Galatians, Corinthians, and perhaps to the Philippians and to Philemon. As a result, in this letter Paul provides a masterful survey of many of the issues he treated in earlier letters to other congregations, producing in the process what is perhaps his most systematic treatment of the issue of justification by faith (see Romans 1:16–8:39).[12]

The background of the Roman church itself influenced both how Paul approached the issue of justification and why he also introduced another topic, God's promises to Israel. Christianity had been brought to Rome by others, presumably Jewish Christians, perhaps as early as the AD 40s or even earlier since Jews from Rome had been among those in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost (see Acts 2:10). The introduction of Christianity in the capital had apparently led to conflict within the large Jewish community in the city, leading the emperor Claudius to expel all Jews from the city in AD 49.[13] Consequently, in Romans, Paul addresses many of the same issues as he did in Galatians, but here the situation is reversed. In Galatians, Paul addressed a congregation that he had founded but which had subsequently been infiltrated by Judaizers bringing with them old practices of the Mosaic law. In Romans he was addressing a church founded by others and one in which Jewish Christians had been significant but were no longer dominant. As a result, he is less strident and more diplomatic about some of the same principles.

After the death of Claudius in AD 54, Jews and Jewish Christians were allowed to return to Rome, but in the meantime the Church had continued to grow among Gentiles, perhaps resulting in some tension between them and the returning Jewish Christians. The failure of the majority of ethnic Israel to accept Christ and the confusion about what role Jewish Christians should play in the Church led to questions such as whether the Gentiles had superceded the Jews or whether the promises of Israel had passed to the Church, subjects that Paul addresses in his treatise on God's promises to Israel (see Romans 9:1–11:36). Largely misunderstood by sectarian Christianity, Paul's arguments here regarding such issues as God's election of Israel (see 9:1–29), Israel's unbelief (see 9:30–10:5), the availability of salvation to all (see 10:6–21), the fact that Israel's rejection is not final (see 11:1–10), Paul's allegory of the ingrafted branches and the salvation of the Gentiles (see 11:11–24), and the promise that all righteous Israel will be saved *as a group* (see 11:25–32) have a particular importance in the context of the restored gospel.[14]

THE GENRES OF PAUL'S LETTERS

When a specific occasion influenced Paul to write regarding certain topics, he employed the basic letter form common in the Mediterranean world at that time. However, as noted above, Paul's letters were unusually long, and he adapted the standard letter format to meet each occasion. Although the differences in the types of writing found in the gospels, the book of Acts, the book of Revelation, and the various "epistles" or letters in the New Testament are fairly obvious, distinctions in genre also exist among the various letters themselves. Part of this is a result of the fact that New Testament letters vary according to intended audience and how widely the authors expected them to be circulated beyond their original audiences. Paul's letter to Philemon and his family, for instance, reads very much like a personal letter about a particular subject of concern to the sender and recipient—namely how Philemon should treat his slave, Onesimus, who is also Paul's convert. Accordingly, Philemon is termed a "real letter," as opposed to a literary or philosophical exercise intended for wider publication. Paul's other early letters—such as 1–2 Thessalonians, Galatians,

Philippians,[15] 1–2 Corinthians, and Romans—were written to individuals or congregations, but, like Greek philosophical letters, they were considerably longer than an average ancient letter and were meant to teach and exhort. Nevertheless, these are still considered "real letters" because they were written to specific individuals or communities and addressed practical and theological issues relevant to their recipients.

In Ephesians and Colossians, however, there are indications that Paul expected the letters to be circulated among a broader audience. (See Colossians 4:16. Some early manuscripts of Ephesians 1:1 lack "at Ephesus," opening the possibility that the letter was meant for more than just the branch at Ephesus.)[16] This concept of an encyclical, or circular letter, is further developed in 1 Peter and in the other "general epistles." Some scholars, in fact, have tried to reserve the term "epistle" for letters of this type, comparing them to the literary letters of classical authors such as Cicero and Pliny, who, even when they were writing "real letters" to specific individuals, expected their letters to be more widely published and so often wrote with a broader audience in mind.[17] While being familiar with the circumstances that faced Christianity in the first century is still important for understanding the general epistles, as a whole these letters tend to address more than one congregation or were even directed to the entire Church, much like a First Presidency message or letter is today. Ephesians and Colossians, midway between real and circular letters, follow the same general structure of most of Paul's other letters, whereas the general epistles of other authors, although they open and close as letters, are generally shorter and have a less complex structure than a Pauline letter.[18]

The remainder of Paul's letters either fall into different generic categories or combine different types of writing. First Timothy and Titus, commonly called "pastoral epistles," are in effect priesthood handbooks or collections of instructions for the practical organization and regulation of branches of the Church. In them Timothy and Titus are given instructions for the selection and appointment of Church officials, warnings against false teachings, and practical advice on community behavior and belief. While 2 Timothy also addresses some of these issues, it also takes the form of a "testament" or final expression of belief before Paul met his death. Hebrews, which has been closely

associated with Paul in both ancient tradition and Restoration teaching despite being significantly different in style and theme from the secure Pauline letters, has been identified as a work that "begins like a treatise, proceeds like a sermon, and closes like an epistle."[19] Nevertheless, it is not simply a theological treatise but rather has an apologetic purpose, defending the superiority of Christ and preventing the readers from lapsing back to the Mosaic system. Furthermore, it is more of a homily, which is an explication closely connected to scriptural text, rather than a sermon, which is generally more topical. Only at Hebrews 13:1–25 does it read like a letter or epistle.

THE MECHANICS OF WRITING AN ANCIENT LETTER

While the occasion helped determine *what* Paul wrote and to some extent the *form* the letter took, the realities of ancient letter writing affected *how* he wrote. Contrary to modern notions of letter writing, Paul did not sit alone at a desk quietly composing his epistles. Instead, the composition process was a more lengthy procedure that involved others at every step.[20] Paul probably stayed with other Christians in his travels and would have enjoyed little privacy.[21] But more significantly, his letters frequently included in their opening formula references to coauthors, who are different from others, such as scribes, who, if mentioned by name, are usually noted in the conclusion.

Examples of coauthors include Silvanus and Timothy in 1–2 Thessalonians; Timothy in 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon; Sosthenes in 1 Corinthians; and "all the brethren" with Paul in Galatians. These individuals can be viewed as collaborators in the composition process and may have contributed substantively to much of the initial material that the scribe, under Paul's direction, later wove into the final draft.[22] The involvement of Silvanus and Timothy in the Thessalonian correspondence makes particular sense because they had been involved with Paul in the initial evangelizing of Thessalonica, and Timothy was often Paul's messenger to the congregation there, as he was in the case of other letters where he is listed as coauthor. The nature of their participation in the formulation of the material used in the letter is best described by Richards, who notes that Paul worked as leader of a

missionary team, the members of which would have discussed and prayed with him about problems facing the congregations to which they were writing.[23] The case of Sosthenes—who may well be the same individual mentioned in Acts 18:17 as the former ruler of the synagogue, as well as an opponent of Paul, in Corinth—is intriguing. Familiar with both Jewish customs and scripture on the one hand and Greek philosophy and lifestyle in Corinth on the other, he may have been particularly sensitive to the problems facing the congregation there.[24]

The involvement of a secretary or scribe in the actual writing of an ancient letter is more important than modern readers might suspect. Professional writers were used for virtually every letter written in antiquity. For those who were themselves illiterate and needed someone to write for them, a scribe usually took down notes regarding the subjects that concerned the sender and then employed a standard format and used conventional expressions to write the letter. For those who were themselves able to read and perhaps write, scribes were still often used to take down literal dictation—although the skill involved often made this prohibitively expensive—or to take notes from which they wrote a first draft, which the "author" then reviewed, altered, and approved. Two New Testament scribes are identified by name: Tertius in Romans 16:22 and Silvanus in 1 Peter 5:12. In both cases, they seem to have been fellow Christians who were competent in letter writing. In the case of Paul's scribe Tertius, he may have been a professional secretary who was able to take dictation in ancient shorthand and had volunteered his services since Romans has many oratorical features that seem to reflect spoken composition.[25]

Most of Paul's letters, however, were probably not the result of such transcription, which would have taken hours of continuous dictation: by some estimates 1 Thessalonians and Philippians could have been dictated in about two and a half hours, but 1 Corinthians would have required over ten hours, and Romans itself over eleven if an expensive professional not using shorthand were transcribing it.[26] While scribes are not named in any Pauline epistle other than Romans, they can be presumed in the other letters, where their involvement in the actual composition of the letter and the degree to which they were involved in wording of the final draft could vary greatly. Nevertheless, their involvement in the composition process may, in fact, help to explain the differences of style and diction between the different letters of Paul.[27]

Because parchment and especially finer quality papyrus were expensive, scribes may have first taken notes and even written initial drafts on tablets of wood or ivory coated with wax. The scribe then composed, or in the case of a dictated letter, revised the letter and set it down in a neat, professional hand on a good paper, usually papyrus (for a detailed discussion of the involvement of scribes in the writing of an ancient letter, see Lincoln Blumell's chapter in this volume). Letters often went through several drafts before the author reviewed it and then either applied his seal or "signed it" with a postscript at the end. While a postscript could in fact be additional information added after the close of a letter, as is often the case today, in antiquity an "author" more generally used a postscript to guarantee that the contents written by a scribe reflected his thinking. In such a postscript, the author might summarize the contents and then sign his name or affirm the contents in some other fashion.[28] Such postscripts that are actual parts of the preserved text differ from the postbiblical subscriptions that copyists began to add in the fourth century to note assumed facts about a letter but which are often wrong.[29]

Noted examples of postcripts in the Pauline corpus include 1 Corinthians 16:21–24, Galatians 6:11–18, Colossians 4:18, 2 Thessalonians 3:17–18, and Philemon 1:19, where Paul uses his own name and mentions that he is writing this "with mine own hand." Other possible, but unsigned, postscripts include 1 Thessalonians 5:27–28 and Romans 16:21–23.[30] Therefore, regardless of the role of a coauthor or scribe in the composition of a letter, the final product was reviewed and accepted by Paul, who thereby attributed to it apostolic authority. Second Thessalonians 3:17, "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write," is a clear example of an authoritative postscript, and it is particularly interesting since the authenticating postscript seems also to have been a device used to prevent forgery by a letter purporting to be from Paul. Apparently this had occurred, because 2 Thessalonians 2:2 suggests that the eschatological fervor that Paul was trying to counter in that letter had been inflamed by such a forgery: "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled,

neither by spirit, nor by word, *nor by letter as from us,* as that the day of Christ is at hand."[31]

After the postscript was added, the letter was either folded or rolled and then sealed. The entire process of composition, dictation, writing, revision, review, and approval was not only time-consuming but also expensive. The cost of the finished letter included both the cost of the papyrus and secretarial labor and could be quite high. According to some calculations, Romans (979 manuscript lines) would have cost $2,275 in 2004 U.S. dollars, and even short Philemon (44 lines) would have cost $101![32] The letter was then dispatched, sometimes being carried by a friend or associate traveling to the recipient's destination but sometimes just sent with some traveler who was found going to the intended destination. The imperial post carried only official government correspondence, so it was not available to Paul and other New Testament letter writers.

THE STRUCTURE AND FORMAT OF PAUL'S LETTERS

In antiquity, even personal letters were read aloud.[33] Letters to groups, such as Paul's letters to various congregations, were often read to a majority of the recipients (the probable meaning of Colossians 4:16), so most individuals never actually read the letters themselves. As a result, care was given to the way the letter was written, both in its language and its structure, so that it could best be understood, remembered, and repeated to others. Most ancient letters followed a standardized format, one that can often be discerned in other letters of the New Testament, but the length of Paul's letters and the fact they would generally be heard rather then read required additional organization. Briefly analyzing this format and the rhetorical structure of Paul's letters allows a reader to see how Paul used, and in many instances changed, the conventional letter format in order to emphasize certain points.

Ancient letters began with an *opening formula,* identifying the sender (which we saw above could include coauthors) and the recipient (which could be a local congregation, specific members of a branch, or an individual).[34] For example, "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:1). While ancient Greek letters consistently included the salutation *chaire*—"be well" or "rejoice"—in the opening formula, here Paul seems to have changed the conventional greeting by substituting *charis,* or "grace," a typically Pauline usage that immediately called to mind the saving work of Jesus Christ. Then, rather than refer to his earthly family or household as a typical letter writer would have done (e.g., "Paul, son of X, of Tarsus . . ."), he identified himself with a new, spiritual household and identified his position to emphasize his authority (e.g., "Paul, a servant or apostle of Jesus Christ" as in 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1–2 Timothy, and Titus).[35]

The introductory formula of an ancient letter was routinely followed by either a prayer for health or a *thanksgiving* to the gods. This section of the letter is often considerably extended in Christian letters, particularly the letters of Paul, where it includes expressions of gratitude to the one true God, doxologies or expressions of praise, and even extended prayers.[36] A short example from what is perhaps Paul's earliest extant letter illustrates the thanksgiving section of one of his letters: "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God" (1 Thessalonians 1:2–4). These thanksgivings were so standard in Pauline letters that their absence is obvious, as in the letter to the Galatians, where Paul's anger is apparent.[37]

The *body* of a longer letter was frequently structured according to the principles of Classical rhetoric, varying the style depending upon the purpose of the letter, while a shorter letter could be written quite simply. The body of a longer letter of Paul also often contained some of the elements found in the literary letter of a Classical philosopher, such as containing a section of instruction or teaching followed by a section of exhortation. Hence the body of a letter is often divided then into distinct parts, sometimes referred to as "Pauline Indicative" for the section of instructions and "Pauline Imperative" for the section containing admonitions,[38] as can be seen in the body of 1 Thessalonians, in which Paul begins with an indicative section reviewing his relationship

to the Thessalonians (2:1–3:13) and follows with an imperative section of exhortations and instructions (4:1–5:22), which includes not only a subdivision of ethical admonitions (4:1–12) but also a further subsection that gives the Saints directions on how they should live given their expectation of the Parousia (4:13–5:11).

This frequent two-fold division into indicative and imperative sections is important because many commentators focus on Paul's doctrinal teaching without sufficiently noting that almost every letter also discussed how the reality of the message of Christ should affect how Saints should *live* as Christians. For instance, the weighty doctrinal section of Romans (1:16–11:36) is followed by a shorter but still significant imperative or hortatory section (12:1–15:13) that includes important discussions of Christian ethics (12:1–13:14) and relations between the strong and the weak (14:1–15:13). Even when indicative and imperative sections alternate or are otherwise spread throughout the body of a letter, the modern reader must always keep in mind that Paul's letters not only teach *doctrine* but also call to *action* and insist that Christians must live according to the highest ethical and moral standards, that their "whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).[39]

While formal divisions into indicative and imperative sections may have helped a listening audience follow one of Paul's letters, what was even more significant to an ancient audience was his use of rhetorical styles. Dubbed "the art of persuasion," Classical rhetoric involved both the pleasing use of language—which was meant to help it be both understood and remembered—and appropriate use of argumentation. The three modes of argumentation were forensic or judicial, often meant to defend a position; deliberative or hortatory, intended to persuade an audience to make practical decisions; and demonstrative or "epideictic," which sought to inspire, praise, affirm common beliefs, and gain support. According to these divisions, Galatians, meant to defend both Paul's teaching of the gospel and his own authority, is an example of judicial oratory; 1 Corinthians, intended to correct behavior, is an example of deliberative writing; and Romans, which sought to introduce Paul, affirm his doctrine, and gain the support of the Saints in Rome, serves as an example of demonstrative rhetoric.[40] The rhetorical intent of a letter could, in fact, dictate the way Paul organized the

body of the letter. For instance, the indicative section of Galatians (1:6–5:1) takes the form of a courtroom speech in which the introduction of Paul's argument that there is no other gospel (see 1:6–10) is followed by a formal *apologia* or "defense" (see 1:11–21) and a series of six proofs demonstrating that one is indeed saved by the faith of Jesus Christ and not by the works of the law (see 3:1–5:1).[41]

The simple *concluding formula* of a Greek or Roman letter is considerably developed in New Testament letters. In place of a simple expression of affection and the occasional wish for strength and health for the recipient, the letters of Paul, for instance, frequently include a final blessing, greetings to various individuals in the community receiving the letter, sometimes the instructions "to greet with a holy kiss," and a final peace wish.[42] Most letters then concluded with a postscript like those discussed above, written and often signed by Paul.

PAUL'S LETTERS, THEN AND NOW

The frequent personal greetings often appended to the end of Paul's letters—such as the list of twenty-six individuals and five groups in Romans 16:3–16—remind us that these were actual letters written to real people in the first century AD. One must try to understand the circumstances in which these individuals and groups found themselves in order to understand what and how Paul was trying to teach them. Nevertheless, Paul's final doxology, or expression of praise, at the end of his letter to the Romans reminds us that his fervent testimony is as vital and true today as it was then: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen" (Romans 16:25–27).

NOTES

1. See the representative excerpts of Augustine's AD 427 treatise *On Grace and Free Will,* and Martin Luther's 1531 "Lectures on Galatians," in *The Writings of St. Paul,* ed. Wayne A. Meeks (New York: Norton, 1972), 220–50.

2. See Richard L. Anderson, *Understanding Paul* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 177–83.

3. Morna D. Hooker, *A Preface to Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 8–9, 16–18.

4 E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter-Writing: Secretaries, Composition, and Collection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 163–64.

5. Hooker, *Preface to Paul,* 9.

6. Hooker, *Preface to Paul,* 9–11.

7. In this note and subsequent notes, I have given a representative chronological sampling of scholarship from both LDS and non-LDS commentators who consider the occasion of each of the letters briefly discussed here. For 1–2 Thessalonians, see Sidney B. Sperry, *Paul's Life and Letters* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), 94–98; Anderson, *Understanding Paul,* 72–90; Jo Ann H. Seely, "Hope for the 'Children of Light' as the Darkness Descends (1, 2 Thessalonians)," in *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 6: Acts to Revelation,* ed. Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 146–50; Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians,* New International Greek Testament Commentary (hereafter NIGTC) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 53–63, 164–90; E. P. Sanders, *Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 26–33; Raymond E. Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 459–62.

8. Sanders, *Paul,* 21–22.

9. Sperry, *Paul's Life and Letters,* 158–71; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians,* NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 19–32; Anderson, *Understanding Paul,* 152–58; George A. Horton Jr., "Concern, Correction, and Counsel for Converts (Galatians)," in Millet, *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 6,* 83–88; Sanders, *Paul,* 44–64; Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 468–77.

10. Sperry, *Paul's Life and Letters,* 118–37; Anderson, *Understanding Paul,* 95–129; David R. Seely, "'Is Christ Divided?' Unity of the Saints through Charity (1, 2 Corinthians)," in Millet, *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 6,* 57–66; Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 511–35; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 29–40.

11. Sperry, *Paul's Life and Letters,* 179–200; Anderson, *Understanding Paul,* 172–95; Robert L. Millet, "The Just Shall Live by Faith (Romans)," in Millet, *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 6,* 46; Sanders, *Paul,* 65–76; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 25–36; Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 559–75.

12. Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 563, notes that "Romans was in a way a summary of Paul's thought, phrased with an air of finality as he pulled together his ideas before going to Jerusalem where he would have to defend them."

13. See Suetonius, *Claudius,* 25.3, which attributes the expulsion order to riots over one *Chrestus,* the Latin form of a common Greek slave name meaning "useful" or "serviceable" (*Chrestos*), which apparently he had confused with the name *Christos.* Priscilla and Aquila, whom Paul met in Corinth, were Jewish Christian refugees from Rome (see Acts 18:1–3; Romans 16:3–4). Paul himself had relatives who later returned to the city (Andronicus and Junia; see Romans 16:7).

14. Early in the postapostolic period and in the centuries since, many Christians have seen the necessity of accepting Jesus Christ and the failure of Israel to do so as a sign that the Christian Church, as New Israel, had superseded, or taken the place, of ethnic Israel. This view of supersession, sometimes called "replacement theology," saw the Mosaic law and the old covenant of God with His people as being replaced by the new covenant ushered in by Jesus' sacrificial death. In addition to early patristic authors such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Origen, later reformers such as Martin Luther and John Wesley subscribed to some degree of supersessionism. In contrast, for an LDS understanding of Romans 9–11, see Millet, "The Just Shall Live by Faith," 53–54.

15. Although Philippians, as one of the "imprisonment epistles," has been traditionally associated with Paul's (first) Roman imprisonment, c. AD 61–63, this is based largely upon the text's later subscription (see below) as well as to references to "the palace" (Greek *praitorion,* Philippians 1:13) and Saints "of Caesar's household" (Greek *hoi ek tēs kaisaros oikias,* 4:22), both of which terms were not, in fact, limited to Rome itself. Consequently, alternative suggestions include a postulated Ephesian imprisonment, c. AD 54–55, or Paul's detention in Caesarea, c. AD 58–60, both of which would allow for an earlier letter to the Philippians, proposals that are attractive because of Philippians' similarity in style, content, and situation to Galatians and 1 Corinthians (see Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 493–96, and Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians,* NIGTC [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991], 19–26). See Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 507–9, for similar arguments that have been made about the dating of Philemon.

16. Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 600–1, 626–27, 631–33.

17. First proposed by Adolph Deissmann, *Bible Studies* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1901), 3–59, the strict distinction between an actual *letter* and a literary *epistle* has largely been abandoned by New Testament scholarship. Nevertheless, "real letters" and "apparent letters" continue as basic categories, especially if the latter are considered to include circular letters, treatises, homilies, and other kinds of writing that only contain superficial epistolary features (see Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995], 42–45).

18. 1–2 Peter, 2–3 John, and Jude do not divide the body of the letter into the two usual sections of instruction and admonition. Paul's letters often do. James, although it begins as a letter, continues as a homily based on scriptural references and the teachings of Jesus, employing the diatribe style. Shaped in letter format in its opening and focusing on practical religion, it is somewhat in the tradition of Old Testament wisdom literature. First John does not read like a letter at all but is probably best seen as a theological treatise or a doctrinal homily rather than a letter, although it was sent to a "general" audience and is usually termed an epistle.

19. H. E. Dana, *Jewish Christianity: An Expository Survey of Acts I to XII, James, I and II Peter, Jude and Hebrews* (New Orleans: Bible Institute Memorial, 1937), 201.

20. See Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing,* 19–31.

21. Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing,* 36–44.

22. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer,* 16–19; Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing,* 33–36.

23 Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing,* 32–33.

24. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer,* 20–24, reviews carefully both 1 Corinthians and considerable commentary on said letter to try to discern what contributions Sosthenes indeed made to the letter. He suggests that the more theologically involved passages, such as 1:18–31 and 2:6–16, may possibly represent Sosthenes' presumably exegetical and philosophical bent, whereas Paul insisted on pragmatic counsel. How the involvement of Sosthenes and his concerns for Corinthian customs might have affected some of the more controversial sections of 1 Corinthians (e.g., the role of women) is unrecoverable.

25. Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing,* 92.

26. Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing,* 92.

27. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer,* 8–16, 34–35; Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing,* 59–93.

28. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer,* 110–13; Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 419; Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing,* 171–75.

29. For instance, the subscription to 1 Thessalonians reads: "The first epistle unto the Thessalonians was written from Athens." First Thessalonians 3:1–6, taken together with Acts 18:1–5, make it clear that Paul wrote the letter from Corinth, after he had left Athens and when Timothy had come to Corinth with news about the Church in Thessalonica (see Anderson, *Understanding Paul,* 72).

30. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer,* 112–13, and Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing,* 174–75, differ in their assessments of 2 Corinthians—Murphy-O'Connor seeing 2 Corinthians 1–9 and 10–13 as two different letters (and all of 2 Corinthians 9 as the postscript of the first letter), whereas Richards sees 10–13 as an after-the-fact postscript or addition to the original letter.

31. Sperry, *Paul's Life and Letters,* 102, 104–5, notes, "A careful reading of [2 Thessalonians 2:2] . . . gives the impression that some person might have forged a letter purporting to come from Paul, which gave faulty information to the Thessalonians and caused them to be shaken in mind and considerably troubled. . . . These reports from Macedonia together with accounts of continued persecution, convinced the great missionary that he ought to write the Thessalonian Saints another letter. . . . In this one and some others he writes a greeting toward the end in his own distinctive handwriting, to give a warm personal touch and also to prevent forgery."

32. Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing,* 169.

33. Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing,* 202.

34. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer,* 45–55; Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 413–15.

35. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer,* 45–53; Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing,* 128–29.

36. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer,* 55–59; Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing,* 129–30.

37. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer,* 60–61.

38. See Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 416n16.

39. Sanders, *Paul,* 22.

40. The classical point of discussion begins with Aristotle, *Ars rhetorica,* 1.3 (§1358b) and includes Quintillian, *Institutio oratorio,* 3.4.12–15. See Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 411–12, for a brief review and this particular application to Paul's letters, as well as the more detailed discussion of Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer,* 65–95.

41. Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 412.

42. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer,* 98–110; Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 418–19.