The Apocryphal Epistle to the Laodiceans

An Epistolary and Rhetorical Analysis

Philip L. Tite

The Apocryphal Epistle to the Laodiceans

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

To my sister Kim
For always believing in me

And

In loving memory of my brother-in-law Larry
You are missed

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ABD   *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AJT   *American Journal of Theology*
ANF   *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325.* Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1867–97 (American edition, 1885–1906). Reprint: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956–68.
ANRW   *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
BCNH   Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi
BDAG   *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd edition, edited by W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BR   *Biblical Research*
BWANT   Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
CBQ   *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
ECL   Early Christianity and its Literature Series
Exp.T   *Expository Times*
GRBS   *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*
HTR   *Harvard Theological Review*
ICC   International Critical Commentary
ITQ   *Irish Theological Quarterly*
JAAR   *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JBL   *Journal of Biblical Literature*
JECS   *Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JETS   *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JSNT   *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTS   Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSPL   *Journal of the Study of Paul and His Letters*
JTI   *Journal of Theological Interpretation*
JTS   *Journal of Theological Studies*
LCL   Loeb Classical Library
LNTS   Library of New Testament Studies
MTSR   *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*
Neot.   *Neotestamentica*
NHMS   Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
NovT   *Novum Testamentum*

NTS	Novum Testamentum Supplement Series
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
PAST	Pauline Studies
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SNTSMS	SNTS Monograph Series
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, 10 volumes. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromily. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-76
Theol.Bl.	*Theologische Blätter*
TJ	*Trinity Journal*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

PREFACE

I first encountered the apocryphal epistle to the Laodiceans when I was an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto. Back then my eyes were wide with wonder every time I read another ancient writing or encountered a new method of analysis. Source criticism, redaction criticism, literary theories, gender studies, historical-critical methods—they were all new tools for me to play with in an all new sandbox. Between 1988 and 1993, while completing my first degree at Olivet Nazarene University, I fell in love with the world of the early Christians, with the range of ancient texts that I never knew existed until I began my studies, and with the contentious (and thus satisfying) scholarly arguments raging over the interpretation of these texts. Well over 20 years (and three graduate degrees) later, I still find myself obsessed with the early Christian material and the broader Greco-Roman world.

Laodiceans captured my attention early on. Here was a little letter written in Paul's name that had barely been touched by New Testament scholars and church historians. Everyone said it was a poorly constructed forgery based on the authentic letters in the New Testament. At best, Laodiceans should only occupy a footnote in the history of early Christianity. But there was something about this letter that prompted me to keep returning to it, to reevaluate this consensus regarding the letter. With the bit of training I then had in biblical interpretation, I threw myself into applying an epistolary analysis to the letter. I was delighted to discover some level of order and thought in the text, despite what I had read in scholarship. This was back in 1990 or 1991, and I still recall working on the literary breakdown of Laodiceans in the middle of the night while working a night shift on campus. In the perpetual moves that students inevitably make from domicile to domicile, as if learning went hand-in-hand with a semi-nomadic existence, the beaten up old piece of paper upon which I had scratched my notes eventually disappeared. But the ideas never left me. I think it was in part due to a conversation I had with Peter Richardson, while taking classes under him at Toronto in 1992 that kept this interest alive. With great excitement I shared my basic ideas and interpretation of Laodiceans with him. Professor Richardson, with all the grace that typifies him as a scholar and a teacher, and with a bit of a mischievous glint in his eye, simply responded, "You do have the strangest

ideas." From that point on, I was hooked and knew that someday I would return to Laodiceans.

As those familiar with my previous research will recognize, I have a passion for the neglected things in history. Thus, my continued interest in 1 Peter and my primary focus on the non-canonical materials from these early centuries. Laodiceans certainly fits into my *modus operandi* as a researcher, given its very marginal status in the field. It also fits into my work on ancient epistolary practices. Formally, this book originally started when I received my contributor copy of *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, edited by Stanley Porter and Sean Adams. While reading through the wonderful essays in that volume, I started to think about Laodiceans once again (now a long forgotten research idea from almost two decades ago). I decided to write an article on Laodiceans for possible inclusion in Brill's Pauline Studies series, a project that Stanley Porter encouraged me to pursue. As I wrote the essay it continued to grow and I realized after a few months of work that this was turning into a small monograph. Again, Professor Porter was enthusiastic about the book project. As a result, an abbreviated discussion of my research on Laodiceans is to appear in the *Paul and Pseudepigraphy* volume, while the more extensive analysis is presented here in this book.[1]

I wish to express my most sincere appreciation to Professor Porter for accepting this work for the TENTS series, as well as for his invaluable suggestions to improve the manuscript. This book would never have come together without his guidance. I'm also thankful to Mattie Kuiper and the other staff at Brill for seeing this project to completion. The research for this book was conducted while holding an appointment as a visiting scholar in the Comparative Religion program at the University of Washington. The kindness of UW in offering me this appointment enabled me to have access to the resources necessary for my research. In particular I must mention Michael Williams, who not only warmly welcomed me to the UW community, but also was generous enough to read through the entire manuscript in draft form. Professor Williams's challenging, yet gentle, questions prompted me to build on points raised in the book that I would have left undeveloped or would have simply glossed over on my way to finishing the project. If my work makes a useful contribution to the

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[1] Philip L. Tite, "Dusting Off a Pseudo-Historical Letter: Re-Thinking the Epistolary Aspects of the Apocryphal Epistle to the Laodiceans," in *Paul and Pseudepigraphy*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Gregory P. Fewster (PAST, 8; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, forthcoming).

field, it will largely be due to the prodding by these two very kind scholars while I was polishing up the manuscript. I also wish to thank Sean Adams for his invitation to write an essay on the Pauline prescript for the *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* volume, an invitation that directed my attention back to epistolary analysis and subsequently opened the door for my work on Laodiceans.

Material from this book was presented at the regional meetings of the Pacific Northwest AAR/SBL/ASOR held in Spokane (2011) and Portland (2012). I wish to thank those attending these sessions for their feedback on my work, especially Anne Moore at the University of Calgary. Of course, I am thankful to Peter Richardson for the challenge he threw down for me all those years ago. Professor Richardson has always modeled for me, in a singular fashion, what a truly great scholar should be by his example of kindness, courtesy, and integrity. Finally, as always, I want to express my thanks to my wife, Colleen, for all her love and support while I wrote this book. The "Great Recession" has been hard on us, and the past few years have been a time of rebuilding, periods of depression, and continual reappraisals of our academic careers. I don't think I would have made it through those years without her by my side. And, of course, Colleen had to endure, yet again, my insane obsession with a research project; all of my endless talk about epistolary theory, rhetorical mechanisms, interpretative ideas, as well as my intense moments of inspiration at 2am, my long tedious days of sitting in one place for eight hours or more just typing, reading, or note taking (and then she'd gently encourage me to shower and eat something). As with my previous books, she has been an amazing sounding board for my ideas.

Finally, let me offer a brief word about the dedication. This book is dedicated to my oldest sister, Kim, and her husband, Larry. Since those undergraduate days, Kim has always believed in my academic potential and future. She has never wavered in her confidence in my ability to carve out a niche within the academy. Of all of the people I know, she has been one of my closest friends, indeed one of my best friends, and I feel honored to have her for a sister. I also want to dedicate this book in loving memory of Larry. In 2007, just before Colleen and I moved from the UK to Oregon, we heard the horrible news that Larry had suddenly passed away. This was a shock to all of us. We still miss Larry's exuberant presence, his intellectual honesty, his obstinate arguments (especially over chicken quotas and Canadian politics), and, most importantly, his love of life. It is with great love and admiration that I dedicate this book to Kim and Larry.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The impact that the apostle Paul had on the early Christian imagination cannot be overstated. Not only did he establish a vibrant network of communities in the mid-first century, engage in, if not elicit, debates central to defining the Christian identity vis-à-vis the Gentile mission, and write what would become foundational texts for the nascent canon, but by the second century the diverse individuals and communities competing for normative status would invoke him as a key authority figure. Indeed, by the second century, Paul, alongside Peter, is portrayed as one of the great pillars of the church (*2 Clem.* 5:2–3; cf. Ignatius, *Ep. Rom.* 4:3). It is no wonder that his legacy was perpetuated by the preservation, collection, and wide distribution of a Pauline corpus along with narrative retellings of his life—both in Acts and the various traditions that formed the *Acts of Paul*.[1] It is during this period of admiration, appropriation, social and doctrinal debate, and simple creative excitement that several pseudonymous letters were written in Paul's name, some of which eventually found a place within the New Testament canon and some which were relegated to the dusty shelves of even dustier church historians.

Of the three known apocryphal Pauline letters, it is the Epistle to the Laodiceans that has been the most underappreciated.[2] Whereas

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[1] A recent and valuable collection of essays exploring Paul's continued impact within the second century is offered by Michael F. Bird and Joseph R. Dodson, editors, *Paul in the Second Century* (LNTS, 412; London/New York: Continuum, 2011). See also Victor Paul Furnish, "On Putting Paul in His Place," *JBL* 113 (1994): 3–17, where both the ancient and modern fascination with Paul is explored, Calvin J. Roetzel, "Paul in the Second Century," in *The Cambridge Companion to Paul*, edited by James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 227–241, Judith M. Lieu, " 'As much my apostle as Christ is mine': The dispute over Paul between Tertullian and Marcion," *Early Christianity* 1 (2010): 41–59, and Lieu, "The Battle for Paul in the Second Century," *ITQ* 75.1 (2010): 3–14. An important study on the second-century appropriation of Paul in the construction of "Christianity" (especially when set in juxtaposition to the New Testament gospels and Acts, vis-à-vis the emergence of a refined "Christian" Pauline canon), is William Arnal, "The Collection and Synthesis of 'Tradition' and the Second-Century Invention of Christianity," *MTSR* 23 (2011): 193–215.

[2] A fourth apocryphal Pauline letter may have been produced in the second century, namely a letter to the Macedonians (Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 9), but it is unclear if such a letter ever existed or if Clement is simply referring to Philippians (the

3 Corinthians fairs a bit better,[3] and Alexandrians, despite a noble attempt by Theodor Zahn,[4] is unfortunately lost, Laodiceans is almost universally ignored except as a side comment on Col. 4:16, where a "lost letter" to or from the Laodiceans is mentioned.[5] Attempts to locate this "lost letter" have resulted in various hypotheses, both in antiquity and in modern scholarship, including attempts to identify other canonical texts as Laodiceans. Since Marcion's identification of Ephesians as the lost letter,[6] this has become the most common suggestion, though other candidates include Hebrews and Philemon.[7] More recently Marie-Émile Boismard has tried to reconstruct the lost letter from canonical Colossians, claiming that the two original letters were merged into a composite text.[8] Despite such

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latter seems most likely). Regardless, even if there was a distinct letter to the Macedonians, this pseudonymous letter is no longer extant and we know nothing further about it.

[3] See, for example, the excellent study by Benjamin L. White, "Reclaiming Paul? Reconfiguration as Reclamation in 3 Corinthians," *JECS* 17.4 (2009): 497–523, and Bart D. Ehrman, *Forged: Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 88–90 (strangely Ehrman does not address Laodiceans in his discussion of the non-canonical Pauline texts).

[4] Theodor Zahn, *Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons*, volume 2 (Leipzig, 1890), 586–592. E. C. Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence* (London: S.P.C.K., 1948), 61, while contending that Alexandrians is irretrievable, suggest that "we are left to suppose that it [Alexandrians] was similar to the Laodicean [letter], i.e., a patchwork of selections from genuine epistles of Paul." This assumption is based on the Muratorian Canon fragment and equating the reference to Laodiceans in the fragment to the apocryphal epistle to the Laodiceans.

[5] Scholars have debated whether τὴν ἐκ Λαοδικείας (Col. 4:16) should be read as a letter of Paul's to the Laodicean Christians that is being forwarded to the Colossians from Laodicea, a letter from the church at Laodicea to the Colossians, or a letter from another Christian leader to the Laodiceans that Paul recommends for the Colossians to read. Most scholars read Col. 4:16 as referring to another letter written by Paul to the Laodiceans.

[6] Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion* 5.17.1. See also B. W. Bacon, "St. Paul to the Laodiceans," *Expositor* 17 (1919): 19–35; Willi Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1968), 191; and the general discussion in August Sartori, *Ueber den Laodicenserbrief: Eine exegetisch-kritische Abhandlung* (Lübeck: Verlag von A. Dittmer, 1853).

[7] In identifying Hebrews as the lost letter, see Leon Hermann, "LÉpitre aux Laodicéens (Laodicéens et l'apologie aux Hebreux)," *Cahiers du Cercle Ernest Renan* 58.2 (1968): 1–16. The classic attempt to identify the letter with Philemon is John Knox, *Philemon Among the Letters of Paul: A New View of Its Place and Importance*, revised edition (New York: Abingdon, 1959), 38–47; Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament: An Essay in the Early History of the Canon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), 40–41; cf. E. J. Goodspeed, *New Solutions of New Testament Problems* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 18; Goodspeed, *The Meaning of Ephesians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), 7. See also Richard Batey, "The Destination of Ephesians," *JBL* 82.1 (1963): 101, who argued that Ephesians was a circular letter to churches in Asia Minor, thereby explaining why Marcion identified it with Laodiceans (cf. John Rutherford, "St. Paul's Epistle to the Laodiceans," *ExpT* 19.7 (1908): 311–314).

[8] Marie-Émile Boismard, *La Letter de Saint Paul aux Laodicéens: Retrouvée et commentée* (Cahiers de la Revue Biblique, 42; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1999). This position is repeated

attempts to find this lost letter, attempts usually driven by the assumption that an authentic Pauline letter would have been preserved by the Pauline churches, most scholars remain unconvinced by their colleagues' "discoveries", resulting in the unfortunate, but most likely, conclusion that the letter referred to in Colossians is simply lost, if in fact it ever existed.[9]

A final resolution for identifying the "lost" letter of Col. 4:16 is the extant apocryphal letter to the Laodiceans,[10] which has survived in several Latin manuscripts, the earliest and most important being in Codex Fuldensis (dated to 546 C.E.),[11] and various medieval translations. According to J. B. Lightfoot, the Latin letter is a translation of a Greek version now lost.[12] Although his retroversion is not the first attempt to get at the underlying

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in Boismard's "Paul's Letter to the Laodiceans," in *The Pauline Canon*, edited by Stanley E. Porter (PAST 1; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 45–57.

[9] Charles P. Anderson, "Who Wrote 'The Epistle to the Laodiceans'?" *JBL* 85.4 (1966): 436–440, has suggested that it is more likely that the letter referred to in Col. 4:16 was not written by Paul, but rather by Epaphras, thereby explaining how the letter could be lost. Cf. Anderson, "Epistle to the Laodiceans," *ABD* 4.231–233. Anderson assumes that it is unlikely that a Pauline letter would have been lost, claiming that such a letter would either have been lost prior to the formation of a Pauline letter collection or simply wasn't written by Paul. Another imaginative solution to the "lost letter" problem is offered by Lucetta Mowry, "The Early Circulation of Paul's Letters," *JBL* 63 (1944): 84 n. 27: "In this connection it is possible to understand why we have Colossians and not Laodiceans. Laodiceans, having been read at Laodicea, went on to Colossae, an out of the way place, and was lost from view. Colossians, having been read at Colossae, went on to Laodicea, a city on an important highway where its presence came to the attention of transients. It was copied and began that circulation which eventually brought it to Ephesus and to the attention of the Asian collector." Overlooked by most scholars is that if Colossians is a pseudonymous work, then the reference to a letter to the Laodiceans could simply be a pseudonymous device to lend authenticity to Colossians (see my discussion in chapter 8).

[10] Karl Pink, "Die Pseudo-Paulinischen Briefe II: (2) Der Laodizenerbrief," *Biblica* 6 (1925): 179–193, especially 182: "Das älteste Zeugnis für das Bestehen eines laodbr. gibt uns der hl. Paulus selbst in der oben angeführten Stelle Kol. 4, 16. Er spricht von einer ἐπιστολὴ ἐκ Λαοδικίας." Cf. Kilian Rudrauff (and Johannes Henricus Leuslerus), *Exercitatio academica de Epistola Laodicensium ex Coloss. IV.16: nec non epimetris subnexis de habitus theologiae qualitate* (Doctoral thesis, evaluation; Giessen: Ex Typograph. Academ. Ordinar. B. Kargerii, 1680).

[11] *Codex Fuldensis. Novum Testamentum Latine Interprete Hieronymo, ex manuscript Victoris Capuani*, edited by Ernst Ranke (Marburg and Leipzig: Sumptibus N. G. Elwerti Bibliopolae Academici, 1868).

[12] J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, revised edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978 [1879]), 274–300, with Greek text on pages 293–294. The Greek is reprinted in Adolf von Harnack, "Der apokryphe Brief des Apostels Paulus an die Laodicener, eine Marcionitische Fälschung aus der 2. Hälfte des 2. Jahrhunderts," *Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Jahrgang 1923. Philosophisch-historische Klasse* (Berlin: Verlage der Akademie der Wissenschaften/Walter de Gruyter, 1923), 238.

Greek,[13] and the specific details of the Greek text are questionable (as with any such "reverse" translation), Lightfoot has convinced most scholars that the text originally was Greek and that it was likely written either in the late second or early third century. A notable exception to Lightfoot's hypothesis is Karl Pink, who contends that Laodiceans, as a Latin production, should be dated further into the third century.[14] Similarly, Harnack contends that Laodiceans was issued in both Latin and Greek editions.[15] A complicated history underlies the letter's transmission, with the ancient testimonies ambiguous as to whether or not our letter is under consideration,[16] but Laodiceans enjoyed a level of acceptance as an authentic letter of Paul in the Western Church—though long rejected in the Eastern Church during the medieval period (since the Second Council of Nicea, 787 C.E.)—until, that is, it was finally omitted from the New Testament canon by the Reformers and the Council of Trent.[17]

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[13] An earlier Greek translation appears in Elias Hutter, *Polyglott New Testament* (Nuremberg, 1599), which is reproduced in Rudolph Anger, *Ueber den Laodiceans. Eine biblisch-kritische Untersuchung* (Leipzig: Verlag von Gebhardt & Reisland, 1843), 172.

[14] Pink, "Die Pseudo-Paulinischen Briefe II," 190–192.

[15] Cf. Harnack, "Der apokryphe Brief des Apostels Paulus"; Harnack, *Apocrypha*, IV. *Die apokrphen Briefe des Paulus an die Laodicener und Korinther* (Kleine Texte für theologische Vorlesungen und Übungen, 12; Bonn: A. Marcus und E. Weber's Verlag, 1905), 2–3; though see the critique of this view in Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence*, 62.

[16] Pink, "Die Pseudo-Paulinischen Briefe II," passim, effectively calls into question the earliest external witnesses to Laodiceans, concluding that, "Alle bisher angeführten Zeugnisse kommen also für unser Apokryphon nicht in Betracht" (187).

[17] Overviews of the transmission history, manuscript traditions, or Patristic testimonies for Laodiceans tend to dominate scholarly treatment of the letter. Helpful surveys are offered by Anger, *Laodiceans*, 141–155; Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 282–284; Zahn, *Kanon*, 2.566–585; Otto Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Litteratur*, Bd. 1: *Vom Ausgange des apostolischen Zeitalters bis zum Ende des zweiten Jahrhunderts* (Freiburg: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1902), 459–462; Leon Vouaux, *Les Actes de Paul et ses letters apocryphes: Introduction, texts, traduction et commentaire* (Les Apocryphes du Nouveau Testament; Paris: Librairie Letouzet et Ané, 1913), 315–326; Harnack, "Der apokryphe Brief des Apostels Paulus," 235–236; Harnack, *Apocrypha*, 2–3; Luigi Firpo, *Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento* (Classici delle Religioni; Editrice Torinese, 1971), 1720–1723; and Mario Erbetta, "La Lettera ai Laodiceni (160–190?)," in *Gli Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento*, Volume 3: *Lettere e Apocalissi* (Casa Editrice Marietti, 1981), 63–67. See also E. J. Goodspeed, "A Toledo Manuscript of Laodiceans," *JBL* 23.1 (1904): 76–78; Goodspeed, "The Madrid MS. of Laodiceans," *AJT* 8 (1904): 536–538; Thomas W. Mackay, "Content and Style in two Pseudo-Pauline Epistles (3 Corinthians and the Epistle to the Laodiceans)," in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-Day Saints*, edited by C. Wilfred Griggs (Religious Studies Monograph Series, 13; Salt Lake: Brigham Young University, 1986), 215–240; Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origins, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 239–240; and Thomas N. Hall, "Aelfric and the Epistle to the Laodiceans," in *Apocryphal Texts and Traditions in Anglo-Saxon England*, edited by Kathryn Powell and Donald Scragg (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 65–84. Although the apocryphal letter to the Laodiceans has almost universally fell out of favor since the 16th century, it has still been admired and read

Modern scholarship has almost unanimously dismissed Laodiceans as a clumsy forgery, claiming that it is merely comprised of lifted phrases from the authentic Pauline letters, and is mostly harmless due to its theological blandness. Adolf Jülicher once referred to Laodiceans as "short, unimportant and colourless."[18] A similar opinion was voiced earlier by John Eadie, who described the letter as a "brief and tasteless forgery" and later by M. R. James who judged it "wholly uninteresting."[19] Further examples could be listed at length, where the letter is called a mere rhaposody, a cento, a catana, a patchwork, or a pastiche that has been thoughtlessly thrown together from the more beautiful and sophisticated letters of Paul, primarily Philippians and Galatians.[20] It is perhaps Wilhelm Schneemelcher, in

as authentic by a few, including holding a place among the Quakers, venerated in the work of Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples, and the 1595 edition by Stefan Praetorius. See Irena Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)* (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, 94; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003), 276–286; Backus, "New Testament Apocryphal Writings: Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples and His Epigones," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51 (1998): 1169–1198.

[18] Adolf Jülicher, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, translated by Janet Penrose Ward (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1904), 544.

[19] John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, 2nd edition (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1861), xxiv; M. R. James, *New Testament Apocrypha* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924; reprinted: Berkeley: Apocryphile Press, 2004), 478.

[20] This view is found in nearly all scholarly treatments of Laodiceans. This position is adopted, for example, in Lightfoot, *Colossians*; John David Michaelis, *Introduction to the New Testament*, volume 4, 4th edition, translated by Herbert Marsh (London: F. C. & J. Rivington, 1822), 127; Archibald Alexander, *The Canon of the Old and New Testaments Ascertained; or, The Bible Complete without the Apocrypha and Unwritten Traditions* (New York: Princeton Press, 1826), 405–406; Handley Carr Glyn Moule, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893), 44–47; Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence*, 61–62; Leander E. Keck, *Paul and His Letters*, 2nd edition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988 [1979]), 17; Charles H. Cosgrove, "Laodiceans, Epistle to the," in the *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by Watson E. Mills (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990), 500; Duane F. Watson, "Laodiceans, Letter to the," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 790; Donald A. Hagner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 44; Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A Literary History*, 2 volumes, translated by Matthew J. O'Connell (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 2005 [1995]), vol. 1, 29; Howard Clark Kee, *The Beginnings of Christianity: An Introduction to the New Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 358; R. McL. Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon* (ICC; London/New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 15, 59, 65, 309; Wayne A. Meeks and John T. Fitzgerald, *The Writings of Paul: Annotated Texts, Reception and Criticism*, 2nd edition (A Norton Classical Edition; New York/London: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2007), 141–148, especially 142; Raymond F. Collins, *Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 2010 [1987]), 31; Collins, *Letters That Paul Did Not Write: The Epistle to the Hebrews and The Pauline Pseudepigrapha* (Good News Studies, 28; Wimington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1988), 150; Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 182–183; and David B. Capes, Rodney Reeves and E. Randolph Richards, *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World,*

what is arguably the most accessible collection of early Christian apocry-
phal texts to date, who has both voiced and shaped the modern disdain
that scholars continue to heap upon this little Latin letter:

> For the Ep. to the Laodiceans does not purpose to be a rhetorical perfor-
> mance, and the author had obviously no literary ambitions. Too much hon-
> our is done the author of this paltry and carelessly compiled concoction
> when we judge him by the yardstick of ancient literary practices.[21]

This dismissal approach has resulted in three assumptions about the let-
ter. First, that it is the product of a simple "cut and paste" job, a sloppy
example of plagiarism that we wouldn't even expect from our worst
undergraduate students. Second, the lifted phrases are randomly arranged
with no logical sense (theological or otherwise) or purpose beyond simply
filling in the gap of Col. 4:16. Indeed, this letter's lack of coherence has
led scholars to read it as a harmless or idle work. As far back as 1849, this
reading was voiced by William Paley who referred to Laodiceans as "noth-
ing more than a collection of sentences from the genuine epistles; and
was perhaps, at first, rather the exercise of some idle pen, [rather] than
any serious attempt to impose a forgery on the public."[22] And thirdly, the
letter is unworthy of scholarly attention.

Beyond this dismissal approach to Laodiceans, there have been a few
attempts to give the letter serious consideration. The first and most sig-
nificant attempt is to link the letter to the Marcionite church, building on
the vague reference in the Muratorian Canon, line 16, which briefly men-
tions a letter to the Laodiceans (along with another to the Alexandrians)
that was written to further Marcion's teachings.[23] Adolf von Harnack, and

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Letters and Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 291–292. Mackay, "Con-
tent and Style," 226, recognizes the irony of Laodiceans' use of Paul's letters: "Whereas
3 Corinthians was suspect because it contained too many non-Pauline words and con-
structions, Laodiceans is at the other extreme. Here *everything* is a quote from Paul; the
epistle is more Pauline than Paul."

[21] Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*. Volume 2: *Writings Relating to
the Apostles; Apocalypses and Related Subjects*, revised edition, translated by R. McL. Wilson
(Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press/Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd, 1992), 44.

[22] William Paley, *A View of the Evidences of Christianity, in Three Parts; and the Horae
Paulinae* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1849).

[23] The standard reading of *Pauli nomine fictae ad haeresem Marcionis* in the Muratorian
Canon is "on behalf of" or "in support of the heresy of Marcion" (line 16) (Erbetta, "La Let-
tera ai Laodiceni," 64, offers the translation, "conforme all'eresia di Marcione"). However,
the Latin can also be translated more benignly as "in regard to the heresy of Marcion."
This second reading supports, for example, Bart Ehrman's Marcionite reading of the let-
ter (see below), where he argues that the letter was written to counter the Marcionite
heresy rather than support it. The fragment is far too vague for us to accept either reading

later Gilles Quispel, argued at length that Laodiceans exhibits Marcionite redactional tendencies.[24] The Marcionite hypothesis has found almost no supporters,[25] largely due to both internal and external problems: (1) the lack of anything specifically Marcionite in the letter (indeed, one would have to assume a Marcionite influence a priori in order to find anything Marcionite in the letter);[26] (2) that the Muratorian Canon claims that the letter advances Marcion's teachings, while our letter does not; and (3) Tertullian's claim that Marcion already had a letter to the Laodiceans in his canon, which was Ephesians, negates the likelihood of a second Marcionite letter to the Laodiceans. A twist on the Marcionite hypothesis has recently been advanced by Bart Ehrman, though this idea is not original with him (as it was already suggested by Karl Pink, Luigi Firpo, and

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with certainty, though even with the benign reading there is nothing in *ad haeresem Marcionis* that necessitates reading Laodiceans as countering Marcion; "regarding" fits either a supporting Marcionite or an anti-Marcionite perspective. Given the polemical *fel enim cum melle misceri non congruity* that follows, I am more inclined to accept the standard reading.

[24] Harnack, *Apocrypha*; Harnack, *Marcion, das Evangelium vom fremden Gott*, 2nd edition (Leipzig, 1924, especially Appendix 3; ET: *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God*, translated by John E. Steely and Lyle D. Bierma [Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1990], though lacking the appendices); Gilles Quispel, "De Brief aan de Laodicensen een Marcion-itische vervalsing," *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 5 (1950/51): 43–46 (ET: "The Epistle to the Laodiceans: A Marcionite Forgery," in *Gnostica, Judaica, Catholica. Collected Essays of Gilles Quispel*, edited by Johannes van Oort [NHMS, 55; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008], 689–693). The additional note by Quispel to the English translation of his article indicates that he continued to hold his reading of Laodiceans to the end of his life, though with an added view that Laodiceans may have contended with the Pastoral epistles or, at least, contended with the views on the church expressed in the Pastorals (693).

[25] An earlier disassociation of Laodiceans from Marcion is argued by Alfred Barry, "Ephesians," in *Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians* (New Testament Commentary; edited by Charles John Elliott; London/Paris/New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1879), 123–126, especially 126. Since Harnack's hypothesis was published, a few voices of support have emerged. For instance, a mid-twentieth century exception to the general rejection of the Marcionite hypothesis can be found in Dmitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 39, 47, who argues that the Paulicians made use of the apocryphal epistle to the Laodiceans (citing Migne regarding a marginal annotation in the *Historia Manichaeorium*). For Obolensky, who follows Harnack's association of Laodiceans with Marcion's movement, this use of Laodiceans in the Paulician canon closely matches the Marcionite canon. An earlier identification of Laodiceans with Marcion is made by Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *Canon Muratorianus: The Earliest Catalogue of the Books of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1867), 47.

[26] Donald N. Penny, "The Pseudo-Pauline Letters of the First Two Centuries," (Ph.D. dissertation; Emory University, 1979), 328, correctly observes: "However, only if one were already convinced of the Marcionite origin of Laod., could such slight details assume such a significance. There really is nothing in Laod. which could not also be heartily endorsed by Catholic Christians. If Laod. is a Marcionite invention, its author certainly missed a great opportunity to score polemical points."

Donald Penny), specifically that Laodiceans, being so inoffensive and dull, was produced to counter the Marcionite forgery mentioned in the Muratorian Canon.[27] Another variant of the Marcionite hypothesis was posited by E. C. Blackman, who suggested that "the forger used Marcionite texts, but was himself orthodox, and made his compilation at a time when the Marcionite danger was past."[28] While intriguing, these diverse perspectives of the Marcionite hypothesis remain unconvincing. There just isn't enough internal or external evidence to support such a hypothesis.

Beyond the Marcionite hypothesis, there have been a few other attempts to take Laodiceans seriously (all of which reject Harnack's reading). In one of the few scholarly articles written specifically on Laodiceans, Régis Burnet offers the first analysis of the letter (since Harnack and Quispel) that uses the letter as a valuable lens for discerning the social dynamics of second-century Christianity.[29] For Burnet, the letter was produced as an attempt to discursively identify the Laodicean church of the second century with the authority of Paul from the first century, largely in competition with other communities, notably at Colossae, which were also vying for social prestige vis-à-vis the famous apostle. Although Burnet's article is a major contribution for rehabilitating this letter in early Christian studies, pushing its value beyond simply supplying the "lost" letter of Col. 4:16, this study, like Harnack's treatment, continues to place the focus not on the internal rhetorical texture of the letter but on its contribution to an external concern. Indeed, Burnet claims that the letter's content is not really as important as its existence as an object of veneration of Paul.[30]

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[27] Bart Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make it into the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 165, and repeated in Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), xiii, 213–215; Pink, "Die Pseudo-Paulinischen Briefe II," 192; Firpo, *Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento*, 1722, makes the same observation: "È probabile che l'autore intendesse o sostituire la lettera marcionita (della quale però non sappiamo nulla di preciso) con una ortodossa; o riempire il vuoto che ogni lettore delle lettere paoline poteva sentire leggendo il testo di Col., 4, 16; la seconda ipotesi è assai più probabile della prima." See also Penny, "The Pseudo-Pauline Letters," 330, who argues that "a Catholic churchman" may have been aware of a Marcionite epistle to the Laodiceans not found in the New Testament and, in embarrassment that a letter Paul himself refers to in Col. 4:16 was not in the canon, decided to forge a letter to counter the Marcionite canon. Penny, correctly, recognizes that this suggestion is "only a conjecture."

[28] Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence*, 62.

[29] Régis Burnet, "Pourquoi avoir écrit l'insipide épître aux Laodicéens?" *NTS* 48 (2002): 132–141.

[30] Burnet, "Laodicéens," 141: "En un mot, la lettre vaut plus comme *objet*—un objet à exhiber au milieu d'une communauté, un objet auquel est attaché l'autorité de l'écrit—que comme *message*. Laodicéens représente en quelque sorte le point extrême de la pratique

Thus, the scholarly value of Laodiceans has less to do with Laodiceans per se, than due to its derivative value for some other analytical project. Consequently, there is still much work to be done on this apocryphal letter.

In his doctoral thesis, accepted in 2009 at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Gregory S. MaGee dedicates an entire chapter to the utilization of Paul in 3 Corinthians, Laodiceans, and the letters of Ignatius.[31] His discussion of Laodiceans offers a much closer survey of the letter's content than we find in Burnet. MaGee analyses the entire letter verse by verse, noting the author's heavy dependence and reworking of the Pauline material, specifically Philippians and Galatians, in order to ascertain how the pseudonymous author re-presents Paul in a second-century context. Yet despite this close attention to the letter's contents, MaGee's conclusions are disappointing, as he merely rearticulates the dismissal approach, perceiving no organizational structure or rhetorical complexity in the letter. Laodiceans' portrayal of Paul is particularly unimpressive for MaGee:

> The characterization of Paul in the *Epistle to the Laodiceans* reflects direct dependence on Galatians 1 and Philippians 1, without evidence of a fresh expression according to the author's context or according to the creative mind of the original apostle. The resulting portrayal of Paul overstates his apostolic calling and status for such a calm letter and restricts the significance of his suffering to his own experience with Christ … That this letter fails to sound the voice of Paul credibly even though it confines itself almost exclusively to the language of Paul suggests that the task of mimicking another writer in a letter is very challenging indeed.[32]

Beyond slipping into the dismissal camp, MaGee's study, even more than Burnet's, simply utilizes Laodiceans to address an external concern. For MaGee that concern is to argue for the authenticity of Colossians and Ephesians. The apocryphal letters serve as a yardstick by which to establish criteria for identifying pseudonymous letters—a position that is similar to William Moorehead and Donald Penny's use of Laodiceans for the Pastorals and Raymond Collins's treatment of Ephesians.[33] Thus, for

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épistolaire initiée par Paul, qui assignait à la lettre la mission d'être le relais de papyrus de la présence apostolique."

[31] Gregory S. MaGee, "Exalted Apostle: The Portrayal of Paul in Colossians and Ephesians" (Ph.D. dissertation; Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2009), especially pp. 120–131, which address Laodiceans.

[32] MaGee, "Exalted Apostle," 130–131.

[33] Note the view adopted by Penny, "The Pseudo-Pauline Letters," who contends that Laodiceans is unique among the pseudepigrapha, in that Laodiceans does not directly engage debates over Paul nor does it create a fictional context within which to authenticate itself, thus rendering the letter largely harmless. Both Penny and MaGee, therefore, fall

MaGee, like Moorehead, Penny, and Collins, Laodiceans only has deriva-
tive value.

A similar approach is taken to Laodiceans by James Kelhoffer in
his study of the longer ending of Mark. Kelhoffer, who largely follows
Schneemelcher's reading, uses Laodiceans along with 5 Ezra as an anal-
ogy for the composition of the Markan longer ending.[34] Kelhoffer notes
two major differences between Laodiceans and the Markan longer end-
ing: (1) Laodiceans is a new composition building on the Pauline material,
whereas the longer ending is an addition to the Markan material; and
(2) whereas the longer ending infuses new theological perspectives onto
the Gospel of Mark, Laodiceans adds "nothing of crucial significance to
the picture of Pauline theology."[35] Kelhoffer's interest, of course, does not
lie with Laodiceans but with Mark. Consequently, like MaGee, Penny, Col-
lins, and Moorehead, what is central for Kelhoffer's research interests in
Laodiceans is only for its derivative value for another scholarly endeavor.

Similarly, in an important debate between Philip Sellew and Paul Hol-
loway over the integrity of Philippians, Laodiceans is invoked.[36] Sellew
argues that this Latin letter only demonstrates knowledge of Phil. 1:1–3:1,
4:4–9, and 4:21–23 (the so-called Letter B hypothesis) and thus Laodiceans
serves as an external witness in support of partition theories for Philippi-
ans. Holloway attempts to counter this position, arguing for the integrity
of canonical Philippians. Regardless of where one falls on this partition

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into the dismissal camp. A much earlier use of Laodiceans to support authenticity of the
Pastoral epistles is found in William G. Moorehead, *Outline Studies in the New Testament:
Philippians to Hebrews* (London/Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1905), 136–137
(see also Moorehead's dismissal of Laodiceans on pp. 47–48). Note also the discussion of
Ephesians, specifically the letter's *adscriptio*, in comparison to Laodiceans in Collins, *Let-
ters That Paul Did Not Write*, 150–151.

[34]   James A. Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and their
Message in the Longer Ending of Mark* (WUNT II.112; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck],
2000), 150–151.

[35]   Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 151.

[36]   Philip Sellew, "*Laodiceans* and the Philippians Fragments Hypothesis," *HTR* 87 (1994):
17–28. See also the counter by Paul A. Holloway, "The Apocryphal *Epistle to the Laodiceans*
and the Partitioning of Philippians," *HTR* 91 (1998): 321–325; Holloway, *Consolation in Phi-
lippians: Philosophical Sources and Rhetorical Strategy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 2001), 9–11. Holloway's defense of the unity of Philippians against the partitionist
case vis-à-vis Laodiceans is persuasively refuted by Sellew, "*Laodiceans* and Philippians
Revisited: A Response to Paul Holloway," *HTR* 91 (1998): 327–329, a response that should
have been dealt with in Holloway's book. Like other treatments of Laodiceans that move
beyond mere dismissal, the debate between Sellew and Holloway is less interested in Laod-
iceans than the impact that the letter may have on other, more central issues for these
scholars—in this case the debate over the unity or composite nature of Philippians.

vs. integrity debate (to which I will return later in this book), it is worth noting that the Sellew-Holloway debate once again demonstrates the derivative value approach in scholarly treatments of Laodiceans. While fruitful research can certainly emerge from a derivative value approach, an approach far superior to the dismissal approach, the limitation of scholarly interest to just a derivative value indicates a similar oversight of the intrinsic or inner textural value of the letter that is grounded in the dominant "patchwork" compositional model. Such myopic treatments certainly need correction.

A further attempt to take Laodiceans seriously, which strives to move beyond such myopic tendencies, is the brief analysis by Richard Pervo in his recent study of the Pauline tradition.[37] Pervo is the only modern scholar to my knowledge to openly reject the "hodge-podge" or "patchwork" view of the letter and instead to insightfully recognize that the author both had a motive beyond filling "the gap" for Col. 4:16 and that the author's letter demonstrates a clear epistolary structure.[38] To the former, Pervo builds on Philip Sellew's arguments that Laodiceans demonstrates knowledge of only part of Philippians (the so-called Letter B), observing that the author either wrote at a relatively early date or was an intelligent abbreviator with the goal of producing a "friendly, paraenetic letter": "Moreover, that same editor wished to portray Paul primarily as a proponent of the gospel of joy and love. For this he has been portrayed at worst as worthless, better as 'harmless,' at best as a proponent of Marcion."[39] Indeed, according to Pervo's reading, the author of Laodiceans seems to be a rigid Paulinist, offering a moderate but engaging guide to Paul's teaching and the Christian life. To the latter, the epistle's structure, Pervo suggests the following breakdown: Epistolary greeting (1–2); Thanksgiving (3–5); Paul's situation (6–8), Exhortations (9–16), and epistolary conclusion (17/18–20).[40] Pervo's work is refreshing and arguably the most seminal treatment of the letter since Harnack. He is to be commended for breaking with both the

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[37] Richard I. Pervo, *The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 105–109.

[38] Lewis R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1986), in his two page treatment of Laodiceans (42–43) comes closest when he challenges Schneemelcher's dismissal approach. Donelson does not offer a detailed analysis of the letter, however, he does make a helpful suggestion about the themes of the letter. Specifically, for Donelson, Laodiceans counters heterodoxy using two major admonitions: "beware of heretics and devote yourself to the ethical life" (43).

[39] Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 107.

[40] Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 108.

dismissal and derivative value approaches to Laodiceans. Unfortunately, his analysis is extremely brief, located within a broader introductory book on Paul, and therefore he only touches on some of the key themes and literary qualities of the letter.

In what follows, I will attempt to offer a detailed analysis of Laodiceans, arguing against the grain of scholarship that would prefer to heap disdain upon this little gem from the second or third century. In contrast to the regnant reading of Laodiceans, I contend that this letter has an internal logic, through which the author constructs a rhetorical situation that, although certainly fictive, is well developed through the incremental progression of the letter. In this sense, Laodiceans is no different than other, contemporary pseudepigraphic letters. Like other Pauline letters, perhaps especially pseudonymous letters, Laodiceans constructs what D. L. Stamps labels the entextualized situation of a text, as a qualification for discerning a given rhetorical situation: "The entextualized situation is not the historical situation which generates the text and/or which the text responds to or addresses; rather, at this level, it is that situation embedded in the text and created by the text, which contributes to the rhetorical effect of the text."[41] In elucidating the rhetorical situation of Laodiceans, we explore less the historical situation into which the discourse has been infused (to evoke Lloyd F. Blitzer's famous definitional treatment of the rhetorical situation),[42] than we do the fictional narrative through which the author navigates his or her presentation the past in an effort to shape the present. Even if that historical situation eludes analysis, the rhetorical inner texture of the letter (the espoused social memory of the text) can certainly be ascertained.

The dependency of Laodiceans on Paul's letters is fully accepted in my study, though that dependence is not a simplistic "copy and paste" job. Rather, I contend that this letter demonstrates an authorial hand within the author's utilization of his or her sources. Such an intertextual relationship, furthermore, should not obscure our appreciation of the

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[41] D. L. Stamps, "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation: The Entextualization of the Situation in New Testament Epistles," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (JSNTS, 90; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 193–210, see 199. Troy W. Martin applies Stamps approach to the Pastorals in an attempt to situate the rhetorical situation of these disputed epistles within the context of second-century intrachurch debates over Marcion. See Martin, "Entextualized and Implied Rhetorical Situations: The Case of 1 Timothy and Titus," *BR* 45 (2000): 5–24.

[42] Lloyd F. Blitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1–14.

sophistication of this seemingly simple letter. Rather than by means of original composition, it is within Ps.-Paul's method of weaving together his sources that we find his creativity as a pseudonymous author.[43]

Although biblical scholars have made varied attempts to apply rhetorical arrangement to critical analyses of the Pauline letters (as well as other New Testament and early Christian texts),[44] the *function* of arrangement has tended to take secondary place to that of imposing a set *literary* outline onto the compositional organization of a letter's discussion. For those applying rhetorical arrangement to the Pauline corpus, the argument has been that Paul's letters are really speeches that are only framed by epistolary opening and closing formulas. Two difficulties arise in my mind with regard to such attempts to discern such an organization of a Pauline letter. First, as Stanley Porter, Carl Joachim Classen, and others have argued,[45] the epistolary nature of the text is ignored, while, simultaneously, the content of the letter is forced into a framework that is largely alien to the epistolary medium of communication. Thus, the fact that these are letters that we are studying tends to be obscured if not divorced from analysis. In my mind, a rhetorical analysis needs to play a secondary, or, more aptly, a complimentary role to the epistolary analysis of such texts. Second, the rhetorical qualities of ancient discourse (however framed or delivered) are obscured by the fixed structural agenda that such studies tend to create. It is as if identifying compositional units is the end product of such work,

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[43] For the sake of clarity, I will refer to the author of Laodiceans as Ps.-Paul rather than Paul. We have no idea who the real author of this letter was, but we do know that he or she articulated the implied author as Paul and would have been read, even if as a fictional voice, as Paul.

[44] A helpful overview of the debate in Pauline studies over applying rhetorical arrangement to Paul's letters is offered by Troy W. Martin, "Invention and Arrangement in Recent Pauline Rhetorical Studies: A Survey of the Practices and the Problems," in *Paul and Rhetoric*, edited by Peter Lampe and J. Paul Sampley (New York/London: Continuum, 2010), 48–118.

[45] See, e.g., Carl Joachim Classen, "St. Paul's Epistles and Ancient Greek and Roman Rhetoric," in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation*, edited by Mark D. Nanos (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 98–104; Classen, "Paulus und die antike Rhetorik," *ZNW* 82 (1991): 15–27; Stanley E. Porter, "Paul as Epistolographer and Rhetorician?" in *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps (JSNTS, 180; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 222–248; Porter, "The Theoretical Justification for Application of Rhetorical Categories to Pauline Epistolary Literature," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (JSNTS, 90; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 100–122; and Porter, "Exegesis of the Pauline Letters, Including the Deutero-Pauline Letters," in *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*, edited by Thomas E. Renz and Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), 503–553, especially 539–550.

rather than as a step toward discerning the broader, and more impor-
tant aspect of rhetoric: i.e., rhetorical discourse attempts to persuade an
audience, reader, or recipient to accept the author/rhetor's position or to
dissuade acceptance of an opposing position. Discursive interaction, not
simple literary analysis, should be the focus of any rhetorical analysis.

Although the rhetorical handbooks are concerned with ancient
speeches, rather than letters, this does not mean that rhetorical arrange-
ment is useless for early Christian epistolary analysis. These letters,
including the internal letter bodies, are not ancient speeches. They are
letters—written to maintain an ongoing discursive engagement between
writer and recipient(s) by means of an asynchronic mode of communica-
tion. Thus, we should not be looking for specific parts of speech, such
as the *exordium, narratio, propositio, probatio*, and *peroratio*. Rather than
identifying specific organizational components, and thus forcing episto-
lary content into formal speech structures, we can look at the discursive
function of arrangement, a function that nicely applies to diverse com-
municative contexts. Quintilian, for instance, distinguishes arrangement
as that which is expedient for persuasion:

> *Division*, as I already stated, means the division of a group of things into its
> component parts, *partition* is the separation of an individual whole into its
> elements, *order* the correct disposition of things in such a way that what
> follows coheres with what precedes, while *arrangement* is the distribution of
> things and parts to the places which it is expedient that they should occupy.
> But we must remember that *arrangement* is generally dependent on expedi-
> ency, and that the same question will not always be discussed first by both
> parties. (Quintilian, *Orator* 7.1.1–2; translation Butler LCL)

He goes on to discuss several examples of differing arrangements based on
both types of contexts and an opponent's arranged argument. Quintilian is
certainly concerned about oral speeches, but his observations are helpful
for other discursive modes of communication; i.e., that arrangement (or
form) is dependent upon the discursive advantage that such form lends to
the persuasive presentation of content (*function*).

With a similar concern over the relationship of form to function, Steven
Lynn's highly accessible discussion of rhetoric highlights that arrangement
fits into broader mediums than the ancient fixation on speeches: "Arrange-
ment, in its narrow sense, is concerned with identifying the parts of a text
and organizing those parts into a whole. Classical rhetoric focused on oral
speeches, but arrangement has evolved to deal with written texts and,
more recently, the visual design of texts, as well as the interplay of visual

and aural design in electronic media."[46] With this broader—and for Lynn, more inclusive of the modern, multi-media—application of arrangement in mind, Lynn goes on to discern the interdependency between function (as tied into genre) and form (arrangement). Such co-dependent sides of a discourse work in tandem with the reception, or the idealized or hoped for context of reception, of the discourse in order to be both intelligible and persuasive. Lynn builds on Kenneth Burke's definition of form to articulate this intersection of form, function, and anticipated reception: "Form is an arousing and fulfillment of desire. A work has form in so far as one part of it leads a reader to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence."[47] Elsewhere in *Counter-Statement*, Burke further states: "Form, having to do with the creation and gratification of needs, is 'correct' in so far as it gratifies the needs which it creates. The appeal of the form in this sense is obvious: form *is* the appeal."[48] Thus, the focus should be on the potential influence on the posterior reception of the discourse, rather than the anterior mechanisms for constructing the discourse, while those anterior mechanisms only are adopted and, subsequently adapted, by a writer or speaker to serve that posterior rhetorical agenda.

The impact of the above discussion on a study of rhetorical arrangement in the Pauline letters, and in particular the apocryphal epistle to the Laodiceans, is obvious. Rather than looking for the presence of organizational components for simply establishing the outline of a particular text, it is necessary to look at the internal progression of a text as those sequencing elements unpack a discursive presentation to the reader or hearer that furthers the author's persuasive agenda. This is where invention and arrangement work in tandem.[49] Such a rhetorical analysis—or, perhaps more correctly, such a reorientation of a rhetorical analysis—can be applied to the epistolary context without forcing the content of a letter into alien compositional frameworks.

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[46] Steven Lynn *Rhetoric and Composition: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 105.
[47] Kenneth Burke, *Counter-Statement* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968 [1931]), 124; cited in Lynn, *Rhetoric and Composition*, 111.
[48] Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 138.
[49] Lynn, *Rhetoric and Composition*, 106: "Not only is it an open question which comes first—form or content, arrangement or invention—we should also note that one both constrains and enables the other: if language shapes reality, as Ernst Cassirer says, the reality can be articulated only in the shapes that language allows."

A brief *caveat*, however, is needed. Although I've stressed an inductive study of the rhetorical arrangement of a text, specifically with an eye on potential persuasive force that such arrangement adds to that discourse (what Quintilian calls expedience or utility), this does not mean that culturally specific modes of arrangement are unimportant for such critical analysis. As Lynn aptly notes, the effectiveness of a type of communication—be that a speech, letter, visual presentation, detective novel, job application, etc.—is dependent upon the "audience's awareness of function,"[50] i.e., upon an awareness of forms (and, I would argue, intertextual content) that are available within a given cultural context. Consequently, it is helpful to recognize epistolary conventions that were present in late antiquity, specifically those present in the Pauline epistolary tradition. These are the conventions that a second- or third-century audience would have likely recognized in Laodiceans. Of course, we need to move beyond those conventions, which are anterior to the writing of Laodiceans, toward an inductive exegesis of how those very conventions are adapted to serve the rhetorical situation embedded within the inner texture of the letter.

My method of analysis will be to analyze incrementally the letter using ancient epistolary conventions, especially as refined within the Pauline tradition, as the implied author's mode of arrangement.[51] A great deal of work has been done in the past century on ancient letter structures, and bringing this scholarship to bear on this Pauline letter promises to finally remove the blinders from scholarship and thereby enable us to appreciate the rhetorical strategies employed within this pseudonymous letter. To anticipate my conclusions (after all, introductions should be written after conclusions), I claim that Laodiceans follows the five-fold pattern of

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[50] Lynn, *Rhetoric and Composition*, 107.

[51] A brief comment on the Latin text and translation used in this study (and printed as Appendix 1). I have largely followed the Latin text as presented by Burnet, following Lightfoot, though I have corrected the text in comparison to the published edition of Codex Fuldensis. Note also the publication of the Latin text in B. F. Wescott, *A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament*, 5th edition (Cambridge/London: Macmillan and Co., 1881), 580–584 (Appendix E), drawing upon Lightfoot's edition, though Wescott offers no analysis of the letter. There are several English translations available, including most importantly those by James, J. K. Elliott, Schneemelcher, Meeks & Fitzgerald, and Pervo. Burnet also offers an excellent French translation, while a German translation is available from Harnack. Other modern translations include Vouaux (French), Erbetta (Italian), and Firpo (Italian). What is used in my study is my own translation, which largely agrees with Schneemelcher (the most widely accessible translation today), though my translation deviates at key interpretative points. New Testament quotations typically follow the NRSV.

a Pauline letter (prescript, thanksgiving, letter body [including opening, middle, closing], paraenesis, and letter closing), with all elements discursively situating the implied readers, implied author, and false teachers so as to drive home the hortative injunction for the recipients to "hold fast" to the "true gospel" that was received and accepted beforehand—indeed, I believe that Laodiceans, like 1 Thessalonians, is best read as a paraenetic letter (with other sections of the letter implicitly establishing the basis for the explicit exhortation in the paraenesis). This organization is not simply lifted from Philippians, as Penny suggests, but is integral to the internal logic of the letter, a logic that is unique to Laodiceans. It is largely due to a failure in recognizing the epistolary arrangement of Laodiceans, along with failing to recognize the discursively qualities of such epistolary arrangement, that past scholarship has largely missed the rhetorical argumentation of this letter, thus simply dismissing the letter for the most part as unworthy of scholarly interest. My approach—and many of my findings—is very similar to Pervo's brief treatment of Laodiceans. Indeed, besides my work, Pervo is the only scholar to take the epistolary structure of Laodiceans seriously, though Vouaux and Penny also suggested an epistolary structure (and are perhaps the inspiration for Pervo's work).[52]

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[52] Penny, "The Pseudo-Pauline Letters," 324, offers the following epistolary breakdown: greeting (2; with verse 1 being lifted from Galatians); thanksgiving (3); Paul and his suffering (5–8), four groups of general admonitions (9, 10–12, 13, 14–16); salutation and benediction (18–19). According to Penny this structure is completely dependent upon Philippians and carries no significance for understanding the letter beyond indicating a "lifting" or intertextual relationship to the authentic Pauline letters: "It is not, however, a matter of providing a Pauline frame for the author's own message. Rather, the framework *is* the letter, as though an end in itself." Vouaux also offers a brief epistolary breakdown, which may have influenced both Penny and Pervo: "Après les inevitable salutations du début (1–2), saint Paul exprime son bonheur de la persévérance de la communauté et la met en garde contra les fausses doctrines (3–5); il rappelled sa proprè captivité, ses travaux et ses souffrances pour le Christ (6–8). Les Laodicéens eux-mêmes doivent rester unis, maîntenir la doctrine, craindre Dieu, qui agit en eux, se réjouir dans le Christ, se montrer franes devant Dieu, pratiquer la vertu, et garder en leur coeur ce qu'ils ont appris (9–16). Suivent la conclusion ordinaire avec ses saluations, et la recommendation de faire lire la lettre par les Colossiens" (Vouaux, *Actes de Paul*, 322). Despite recognizing a rough epistolary structure, Vouaux unfortunately does not extend the analysis in any fruitful direction, but rather asserts that there is only a vague connection between the ideas in these verses (p. 322). More recently, Matthias Günther has asserted that Laodiceans simply follows Philippians in the order that material appeared while inserting Gal. 1:1 at the beginning of the letter. Günther does not engage any epistolary qualities of the letter. See Günther, "Laodiceans, Letter to the," in *Religion Past & Present: Encylopedia of Theology and Religion*, Vol. 7: *Joh-Mah*, edited by Hans Dieter Betz, Don S. Browning, Bernd Janowski and Eberhard Jüngel (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2009), 326. Vouaux, Penny and Pervo are the only scholars that I am aware of to come close to an epistolary analysis of Laodiceans, though Pervo's analysis is far superior to his predecessors.

It should be noted at the outset that both of us have worked indepen-
dently of each other, and in my case I only came across Pervo's book when
the bulk of my analysis was concluded. The fact that two scholars have
respectively arrived at such similar conclusions certainly reinforces the
plausibility of our readings and, perhaps, bodes well for future research
on Laodiceans.

EPISTOLARY ANALYSIS I: THE PRESCRIPT

Throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods, there was a fairly uni-
formed set of formulas for letter openings. Ancient prescripts typically
followed the stylized greeting, "From A (= sender) to B (= recipient),
Greetings."[1] In these letters, the prescript presents the sender (*superscrip-
tio*) in the nomative case, the recipient (*adscriptio*) in the dative, with the
infinitive χαίρειν as the usual greeting element in the *salutatio*. This "A
to B Greeting" formula is used, for example, in P.Tebt. 1.33: "Hermias to
Horus, greetings"; P.Oxy. 73.4963: "Heraclas to his brother Diogenes, greet-
ings"; Tab. Vindol. 2.234: "Flavius Cerialis to his September, greetings"; and
O. Florida 3 (inv. 2): "Claudius Archibios to Aristoboulos, his colleague
greeting."[2] While this formula is most commonly found in ancient letters,
there are several variations that emerge. We find, for example, the ele-
ments organized slightly differently, such as "To B" (e.g., P.Ryl. 4.603 "To
Herakleides and Typhron at the Oxyrhynchite nome"; Tab. Vindol. 2.225:
"To his Crispinus"),[3] "To B, Greetings, A" (e.g., P.Mich. 1.29 "To Zenon,

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[1] For a thorough analysis of ancient letter prescripts within the Pauline collection,
including their discursive function, see Philip L. Tite, "How to Begin, and Why? Diverse
Functions of the Pauline Prescript within a Greco-Roman Context," in *Paul and the Ancient
Letter Form*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams (PAST, 6; Leiden: Brill Academic
Publishers, 2010), 57–99. I will be drawing upon my previous work on the Pauline prescript
here. See also Tite, "The Compositional Function of the Petrine Prescript: A Look at 1 Pet
1:1–3," *JETS* 39 (1996): 47–56; Tite, *Compositional Transitions in 1 Peter: An Analysis of the
Letter-Opening* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1997); Sean A. Adams,
"Paul's Letter Opening and Greek Epistolography: A Matter of Relationship," in *Paul and
the Ancient Letter Form*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams (PAST, 6; Leiden:
Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 33–55; and Francis Xavier J. Exler, *A Study in Greek Epis-
tolography: The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of
America, 1923), 23. See also the discussion of the ancient letter in John L. White, "New Tes-
tament Epistolary Literature in the Framework of Ancient Epistolography," *ANRW* 2.25.2
(1984): 1730–1756, especially 1733–1738 on opening and closing formulas; and White, *The
Form and Function of the Greek Letter* (SBLDS, 2; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1972).

[2] Among the Aramaic letters of the fifth century B.C.E., the same formula is used, but
with the greeting component either dropped or moved into (or transitioning into) the let-
ter body. For instance, Bodleian Pell. Aram. X reads: "From Artahaya to Nakhthor. I send
you greetings and best wishes for your good health" (cp. Bodleian Pell. Aram. I: "From
Arshama to Nakhthor").

[3] Note the "To B Greeting" formula in P.Tebt. 1.26: "To Horus greetings." In this instance,
the letter has been appended to another letter that simply copies this one as a "forwarded"

greetings, from Senchons") and "To B from A Greeting" (e.g., P.Kellis 1.68: "To my lord son Elias, Psais greetings"). Such variation can be explained, in part, due to the purpose of the letter. Letters of petition tend to give first position to the recipient rather than the writer, thereby stressing the prominence of the recipient within a hierarchal relationship to the writer (e.g., P.Oxy. 73.4958). The imperatival form "χαῖρε B" also is found in such petition letters.[4] Not only does the Greek letter follow such formulas, but this form is also found in Latin, Aramaic and Hebrew letters of this same period.[5]

Within New Testament studies, the prescript tends to be treated as a simple formulaic device that has little or no bearing upon a letter's "real" message. Consequently, both the letter opening (including the thanksgiving period along with the prescript) and the letter closing are the most identifiable epistolary elements while, ironically, the most underappreciated parts of an early Christian letter. An analysis of the Hellenistic papyri letters alone demonstrates that the prescript is a vital part of the rhetorical discourse of a letter and therefore should not be glossed over on the way to the letter body.[6] The discursive function here is largely indicated through expansions to the formulaic elements of the prescript. P.Mich. 9.466 offers just such an example: "Julius Apollinarios to his dearest father, Julius Sabinus, very many greetings." Here we find two key expansions: first, the affectionate familial qualification τῶι γλυκυτάτῳ πατρί, and, second, the enhancement of χαίρειν with πλεῖστα. These expansions stress the positive relations between Julius Apollinarios and Julius Sabinus while retaining the hierarchal family relation of father and son. Another helpful example is P.Tebt. 2.410. Here we find a slight shift from the external address ("To Akousilaos, toparch of Tebtunis") to the prescript ("Hermias to his dearest Akousilaos many greetings"). The prescript reworks the

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letter. Thus, the "A to B Greeting", maintained in the prescript of the new letter, has been dropped from the copied letter, reducing the copied prescript to the "To B Greeting" formula. Likely the original prescript of the copied letter was in the "A to B Greeting" form.

[4] For a valuable study of letters of petition, including these formulaic variations, see Chan-Hie Kim, *Form and Structure of the Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation* (SBLDS, 4; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1972), in particular 224 on the use of the imperatival form of χαίρειν.

[5] See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Some Notes on Aramaic Epistolography," *JBL* 93 (1974): 201–225; Dennis Pardee (in collaboration with J. David Whitehead and Paul E. Dion), "An Overview of Ancient Hebrew Epistolography," *JBL* 97 (1978): 321–326; Dennis Pardee, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters* (Philadelphia: Scholars Press, 1982); and Yigael Yadin, *Bar Kokhba* (New York: Random House, 1971).

[6] See Tite, "How to Begin," where this point is argued at some length.

elements of the external address, adding the letter writer's name within the A to B Greeting formula, thereby shifting from the official prominence of the address to the friendly, positive relations between the writer and recipient in the prescript (cf. P.Ryl. 4.603).

Within the Pauline letters, the epistolary formulas are adapted to suit the author's Christian context as well as to fit the occasion of the letter. In every letter written by or written in the name of Paul that we have, the prescript follows the standard "A to B Greeting" formula.[7] The formula itself is not surprising, but some of the changes that Paul makes, especially to the *salutatio*, indicate Paul's peculiar socio-religious context. Specifically, Paul makes three major modifications in the prescript. First, he typically includes co-workers in many of his letters (1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon, and in the disputed letters 2 Thessalonians, Colossians). Among the disputed or pseudonymous letters, co-workers are only mentioned in two letters out of eight letters (not appearing in Ephesians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 3 Corinthians, and Laodiceans),[8] and thus the absence of co-workers could be seen as a typical device in such letters. Among the undisputed letters, however, only in Romans are co-workers absent (though see Rom. 16). Galatians is distinct, in that specific co-workers are absent, yet we find a reference to "all the brothers who are with me" in the *superscriptio*. Second, Paul consistently replaces χαίρειν with χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη

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[7] This is also true of Philemon, which I read as a letter of petition rather than recommendation. See Tite, "How to Begin," 71–72, 79–81.

[8] I omit from consideration the apocryphal correspondence between Paul and Seneca, which is very late, and tends to lack normal epistolary formulas. Even if the prescript is original within this correspondence, the unadorned "A to B Greeting" form is only used to demarcate the individual letters. I have also omitted from consideration the apocryphal letter to the Alexandrians, which is mentioned, along with Laodiceans, in the Muratorian Canon likely as a Marcionite text. Even if Zahn is correct in recovering a version of this letter from a much later liturgical work (the 7th century *Sacramentarium et lectionarium Bobbiense*) (*Kanon*, 2.586–592, with the text given on pages 587–589), the text is not a true letter but is more like the Pseudo-Titus Epistle, in that both are theological tracts that have been mislabeled as letters (cf. Richard Bauckham, "Pseudo-Apostolic Letters," *JBL* 107 [1988]: 469–494, especially 474). In Alexandrians, the only epistolary quality is the opening address, "brethren" (*fraters*) (thus giving a "To B" form to the prescript, though even this address may not be original). However, this "letter" lacks a greeting, health wish, prayer statement, statement of remembrance, thanksgiving period, or final greetings etc. Thus, it is likely not the opening of a letter but rather of a speech or sermon. For discussions of Alexandrians, see especially Mario Erbetta, "La Lettera Agli Alessandrini," in *Gli Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento*, Volume 3: *Lettere e Apocalissi* (Casa Editrice Marietti, 1981), 70–71 (with translation); and especially Vouaux, *Les Actes de Paul*, 327–332 (including a reprinting of the text). Firpo, *Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento*, 1723, and Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Litteratur*, 462, only briefly discuss this text.

(this is true of all Pauline letters, authentic or not, with 3 Corinthians being the only exception), normally with the expansion to the *salutatio* ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κύριου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.[9]

Third, like other ancient letter writers, Paul expands on the prescript formula in order to discursively position both himself and his recipients. Among the undisputed letters, three functions of these expansions have been observed: (1) the expansions are designed to enhance the existing positive relations between Paul and his recipients (1 Thessalonians, Philippians, Philemon); (2) the expansions are designed to reinforce Paul's authority within the context of reconciliation and advice (1 and 2 Corinthians); and (3) the expansions are designed to claim apostolic authority either within a heightened context of conflict (Galatians) or as a form of self-recommendation or introduction (Romans).[10] Thus, the prescript, especially within the Pauline letter tradition, functions not only to establish the personal encounter (with the prescript opening this encounter as the "greeting") between a writer and recipient who are separated, but

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[9] In the undisputed letters, this expansion is only absent from 1 Thessalonians, while Galatians extends the expansion further to meet the rhetorical agenda of that letter. Among the disputed letters more variety appears, where Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Laodiceans, and some manuscripts of Titus follow Paul's *salutatio*, though with some minor textual variants (e.g., Colossians in some mss. lacks καὶ κύριου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ and 2 Thessalonians varies as to the inclusion and placement of ἡμῶν). Greater distance from Paul's epistolary style is found in 1 and 2 Timothy and some manuscripts of Titus, where χάρις ἔλεος εἰρήνη replaces χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη. The greatest departure from Paul's *salutatio* is 3 Corinthians where the pseudonymous author simply offers the standard epistolary form *salutem* (with a variant of *salutum in Domino*—the *in Domino* would be a minor expansion that expresses a Christianization of the *salutatio* in 3 Corinthians). The prescript of 3 Corinthians, however, is the shortest Pauline prescript and thus the distance from Paul's normal style is to be expected. Given the degree of conformity among the undisputed letters in the Pauline *salutatio*, the major departures found in the Pastoral epistles and 3 Corinthians are clear indications of a pseudonymous hand at work. Indeed, based on this element alone, the degree of likelihood of authenticity basically fits Bauckham's ("Pseudo-Apostolic Letters," 487–492) conclusions with regard to the disputed letters: good case for authenticity (Eph., Col., 2 Thess., Laod.); most likely not authentic (Titus); almost certainly not authentic (1 and 2 Tim.); without question not authentic (3 Cor.). Given the manuscript tradition, I see Titus as closer to 1 and 2 Timothy than those letters that have a good argument for authenticity. Laodiceans, however, only fits into the first category due to the pseudonymous author (most likely) directly quoting from the authentic letters. (Bauckham explicitly falls into the dismissal camp on Laodiceans, when he states on page 485: "*Laodiceans* . . . is a remarkably incompetent attempt to fill the gap. It is nothing but a patchwork of Pauline sentences and phrases from other letters, mainly Philippians. The result is a series of highly generalized exhortations which address no particular situation and reveal no intention by the author to communicate any clear message." The lack of any clear message leads Bauckham to reject Harnack's reading of the letter.)

[10] Tite, "How to Begin, and Why?"

also functions, as Troy Martin correctly observes, to establish the assumed relationship of the writer and recipient within that encounter.[11] It is this very epistolary encounter that affords a letter writer the opportunity to use the prescript to discursively position the conversation partners within a relationship that enhances the rhetorical situation of the letter. In many cases, the prescript will give hints of key themes to emerge as the letter unfolds. Consequently, an epistolary analysis necessitates an explication of the rhetorical moves in the prescript, specifically moves that serve to establish the relationship and tone of the letter. In setting this tone, the prescript will be the first building block, though sometimes a very obtuse one, within the letter's attempt at persuasive communication.

In turning to the prescript in Laodiceans, the opening greeting serves just such a communicative function. Like other Pauline letters, Laodiceans follows the "A to B, Greeting" formula (Laod. 1–2). The prescript functions to establish Paul's authority in relation to the Laodicean Christians. As is widely recognized, the *superscriptio* (*Paulus apostolus non ab hominibus neque per hominem, sed per Jesum Christum*, v. 1) is likely drawn from Gal. 1:1–2, though with significant differences in the expansions. In identifying the letter sender, Laodiceans limits the identification to Paul, dropping the unspecified reference to co-workers (καὶ οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ πάντες ἀδελφοὶ). Such a shift effectively places stress on Paul's credentials. The expansions in the *superscriptio* enhance this very emphasis by claiming both an apostolic title for Paul and the divine source of this apostleship. In the undisputed letters, Paul consistently identifies himself as an apostle within a context where he needs to establish his authority (1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans), whereas the disputed letters likely identify Paul as an apostle in order to claim authority for the pseudonymous letter. While Laodiceans certainly uses ἀπόστολος as a pseudepigraphic device, the title is also designed to discursively establish the legitimacy of Ps.-Paul's voice over that of other Christian teachers. The second expansion in the *superscriptio* effectively underscores the conflict prompting the letter's composition. By qualifying the nature of Ps.-Paul's apostolic office within an antithesis that builds on a dual negative (*non ab hominibus neque per hominem*) with a contrasting positive (*sed per Jesum Christum*), the prescript defends Ps.-Paul's apostleship within a confrontational social setting. Thus, in establishing this "apostolic letter," the prescript overtly establishes the implied

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[11] Troy W. Martin, *Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter* (SBLDS, 131; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 42–43, drawing upon Exler, *Form*, 62.

author's credentials as being divinely grounded rather than derived from human origin or human authority. Implicitly, this discursive act counters the possible claim of false teachers to an authoritative voice; their authority is derived from humans not from Christ[12] and therefore the Laodicean Christians can trust Ps.-Paul's voice over his opponents.[13]

The *adscriptio* is not unlike Gal. 1:2 (ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Γαλατίας), though there is no reason to suppose that this is the direct source for Laodiceans (*fratribus qui sunt Laodiciae*). Indeed, the two prescripts are strikingly distinct, despite the fact that both are extremely short with no epistolary expansions to the *adscriptio*.[14] Specifically, the differences lie in the use of the genitive in Galatians in contrast to the verbal identification in Laodiceans (*qui sunt*), the broad geographic reference in Galatians in contrast to a specific location in Laodiceans, and the description of the recipients as *fratibus* in Laodiceans, whereas in Galatians the recipients

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[12] An odd shift from Gal. 1:1 in the Laodicean prescript is the delimitation of Paul's authority to Jesus Christ (*sed per Jesum Christum*) rather than from "Jesus Christ and God the father who raised him from the dead" (ἀλλὰ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν). Although this delimitation led Harnack and Quispel to identify Laodiceans as fitting a Marcionite Christology, the evidence has not been convincing. Indeed, there is neither a dualist aspect in the Christology of Laodiceans (if we can reasonably speak of a Christology in this letter) nor a modalist theology evident in the letter (furthermore, it is questionable whether Marcion actually held a modalist theology; cf. Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* [WUNT, 250; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010], 64–65). Only by imposing Marcionite theology onto Laodiceans could the letter demonstrate, in a circular fashion, such a theology.

[13] I am not, however, suggesting that we can reconstruct the claims of the false teachers in Laodicea. Such a move would be a clear instance of mirror reading, an interpretative method that has been correctly called into question in Pauline studies (see George Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography: Toward a New Understanding* [SBLDS, 73; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985], 96–105; Jerry L. Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990]; Sumney, "Those Who 'Pass Judgment': The Identity of the Opponents in Colossians," *Biblica* 74 [1993]: 366–388; and John M. G. Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case," *JSNT* 31 [1987]: 73–93). Rather, I am focusing on the discursive texture of this letter, where rhetorical moves are made to position "players" within the context of the rhetorical situation embodied within the letter. Indeed, given the pseudonymity of Laodiceans, any attempt of mirror reading would be even more methodologically flawed than when applied to an undisputed letter.

[14] Of the undisputed letters, the only other letters to not include expansions on the *adscriptio* are 2 Corinthians and Philippians, though in both cases the address is far more elaborate than what we find in Galatians and Laodiceans. While short addresses are found in Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Thessalonians, each of these letters have expansions. Among the disputed letters, the *adscriptio* tends to be very short, but each has some form of expansion that qualifies the recipient(s). The one exception is 3 Corinthians, where we have only "to the brethren in Corinth", which is the closest of all the Pauline letters to the *adscriptio* in Laodiceans.

are simply ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. This final distinction is especially noteworthy, in that Laodiceans establishes a positive relationship between the sender and recipients through the use of fictive kinship language.

In Galatians, the familial language is limited to Paul's co-workers in the *superscriptio*, thereby highlighting Paul's indignation with the Galatian Christians and his consolidation with the universal Christian church ("all the brethren with me"). This confrontational tone is completely lacking in Laodiceans. Rather, Ps.-Paul identifies with the recipients through the affectionate family language. By using familial language, Ps.-Paul follows a common early Christian, and in particular Pauline, device for constructing group solidarity. Reider Aasgaard has traced the use of such family metaphors within Paul's letters along these lines, concluding that,

> The general importance of siblingship as a crucial element in the shaping of Christian self-understanding, both among Christians and vis-à-vis the outside world. By calling his co-Christians siblings, he aimed at providing them with the strong sense of identity and belonging which was generally considered to characterize the relationships of natural siblings ... as in the social family, ideas of honour proved to be central in Paul's perception of Christian siblingship. Christians were obliged to treat one another honourably internally. They were also to attend to their common honour vis-à-vis outsiders ... Similarly, Paul emphasized notions of harmony among Christian siblings: they were to display the unity expected of members of a family and of siblings.[15]

Thus, for Paul to evoke family language as he does in Galatians is to rebuke the Galatian Christians for failing to live up to the ideals of sibling relations, in particular their inner-Christian relations vis-à-vis their relations with outsiders. By breaking with Paul's teaching, they have brought shame rather than honor upon themselves. In contrast, by applying the sibling language to the co-workers, Paul stresses the unity, honor, and social identity that he shares with the rest of the Christian churches;[16]

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[15] Reider Aasgaard, *'My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!': Christian Siblingship in Paul* (Early Christianity in Content; London/New York: Continuum, 2004), 306–307. See also the excellent discussion in Philip A. Harland, "Familial Dimensions of Group Identity: 'Brothers' (ΑΔΕΛΦΟΙ) in Associations of the Greek East," *JBL* 124 (2005): 491–513.

[16] As Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1983), 109, correctly observes, the various mechanisms of the Pauline mission, including co-workers or associates, served to nurture such a sense of solidarity by establishing and maintaining a social network between Paul and the various churches: "It is evident, too, that Paul and the other leaders of the mission worked actively to inculcate the notion of a universal brotherhood of the believers in Messiah

thus, discursively situating false teachers as outsiders and warning the Galatians of the danger of falling into such outsider status.

If Ps.-Paul is drawing upon the Galatian prescript, then such a shift in tone is all the more evident as the author deliberately displaces the familial language from the *superscriptio* to the *adscriptio*, thereby shifting the use of familial language from creating solidarity between the letter writer and co-workers in opposition to the recipients (in Galatians) to establishing solidarity, or mutual identification, between the letter writer and the recipients. Thus, the Laodicean prescript reinforces the positive relations between Ps.-Paul and the Laodicean Christians. They have a shared social identity through which they fulfill their proper social obligations to each other, namely they treat each other honorably, display unity, and have solidarity in the face of outsiders. Consequently, the rhetorical function of familial language in Laodiceans stands in sharp contrast with the rhetoric in Galatians.

Despite the lack of expansions in Laodiceans' *adscriptio*, this positive relationship suggests that something different is occurring in this letter from what is occurring in Galatians. Whereas the lack of expansions in Galatians for the *adscriptio* effectively negates the authority of the recipients while offering a formal and abrupt tone to the prescript, thus giving the letter writer a privileged position in contrast to the recipients, the lack of expansions in Laodiceans does assumes positive relations between the letter writer and the recipients, thereby suggesting that the conflict (at least discursively) lies not with the recipients but with other (Christian) teachers that Ps.-Paul views as false teachers. The misbalance between *superscriptio* and *adscriptio* in Laodiceans, therefore, adds emphasis to Paul's apostolic authority, and thus the authority of the actual letter writer, while shifting the discursive positioning of the recipients to the thanksgiving period, which, unlike Galatians' condemnation (Gal. 1:6), is a positive positioning of the recipients (Laod. 3, see below). The silence in the *adscriptio* may have added something new to the sentence, and thus the overall function of the prescript. If the recipients (ideal or real readers) were familiar with the standard Pauline letter formulas, they

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Jesus. The letters themselves, the messengers who brought them, and the repeated visits to the local assemblies by Paul and his associates all emphasized this interrelatedness." See also Robert W. Funk, "The Apostolic *Parousia*: Form and Significance," in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, edited by W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R. R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 249–269, and Margaret M. Mitchell, "New Testament Envoys in the Context of Greco-Roman Diplomatic and Epistolary Conventions: The Example of Timothy and Titus," *JBL* 111 (1992): 641–662.

may have noted the lack of expansions in the *adscriptio*. Given the positive relations infused in the letter by both the *salutatio* and the familial language, such silence may have prompted the recipients to engage the thanksgiving period with a curiosity as to how the author discursively views the recipients. In other words, by not expanding on the description of the recipients, the author may have been prompting the recipients to look toward the thanksgiving period for further information.

Such positional moves on the part of Ps.-Paul are reinforced by the *salutatio* (Laod. 2). Like all seven of the undisputed Pauline letters, Laodiceans follows the standard Pauline modification of the common letter formula χαίρειν or *salutem* (i.e., *gratia vobis et pax* = χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη), along with the typical Pauline expansion *a Deo patre et domino Jesu Christo* (= ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κύριου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). The expansion distinguishes Laodiceans from both Galatians and the disputed or pseudonymous letters (especially the Pastoral epistles and 3 Corinthians). In Galatians, Paul extends the *salutatio* by adding what many scholars have seen as a liturgical addition ending with a forceful ἀμήν; an expansion that is an emphatic device serving to reinforce Paul's position. This liturgical element is lacking, or consciously dropped, in Laodiceans, further suggesting that the rhetorical situation in our letter is not one of strained relations between the writer and recipients. Rather, the *salutatio* in Laodiceans functions much like it does in other Pauline letters, i.e., to offer a Christianized greeting element, as a blessing, that reinforces the mutual ideological connection of the writer and recipients. This shared theological foundation, furthermore, nicely picks up on and thereby cements the divine source of Paul's apostolic office while simultaneously identifying the recipients with Paul's apostolic work. It is this shared foundation upon which the thanksgiving period is subsequently offered.

What emerges from this discussion of the Laodicean prescript, is a tightly integrated and unique letter opening that discursively establishes the apostolic authority of the fictive letter writer (and, we may assume, of the actual letter writer), who speaks on behalf of, rather than in opposition to, the recipients.[17] The recipients are discursively presented in a

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[17] Contra MaGee, "Exalted Apostle," 124–126, who merely asserts that Laodiceans lifts the prescript from Galatians. MaGee fails to recognize any redactional activity on the part of Ps.-Paul (beyond a brief refutation of Harnack's Marcionite reading). MaGee sees no reason for the pseudepigraphic author to assert Paul's authority, as is done in Galatians for a particular reason, and simply reads Laodiceans as "misappropriate[ing] Paul's self-description" (126).

positive light, standing in a familial relationship to Ps.-Paul. Implicitly, threats to the community from other, "false" teachers are external to the positive relationship between Ps.-Paul and the Laodicean Christians. It is this discursive basis upon which the recipients are to continue reading the letter and from which they are to take encouragement.

EPISTOLARY ANALYSIS II: THE THANKSGIVING PERIOD

Ancient letter openings typical closed with a formulaic, though variable, well wish to the recipient. These healthgiving clauses served as transitional devices between the prescript and the letter body and typically were not very long. Exler writes:

> In the first part we take up the "initial" phrases which occur at the beginning of the letter proper, and follow immediately upon the opening formula. They are subdivided into three sections: the ἐρρῶσθαι wish, the ὑγιαίνειν wish without and with the proscynesis, and the ἀσπάσασθαι wish.[1]

A recently published example of such a health wish is found in P.Oxy. 73.4960 (2nd century C.E.), where, following the fragmented prescript, we read: πρὸ μὲν παντος εὐχόμεθα ὑμας ὑγιαίνειν (following the editors' textual reconstruction). In an earlier letter, dated to 99 B.C.E., we find an example of the health wish being incorporated into the prescript proper: "Poseidonios to the priests in Teptunis greeting and good health. I myself am well" (…χαίρειν καὶ ἐρρῶσθαι, ὑγίαινον δὲ καὶ αὐτός; P.Tebt. 1.59). Such formulas were designed to assure the recipient of the writer's concern for the recipient's wellbeing as well as to reassure the recipient of the continued presence of the writer despite the physical separation between them. In some cases, the healthgiving clause is designed to reassure the recipient of the writer's wellbeing (e.g., Tab. Vindol. 2.311: "I want you to know that I am in good health, as I hope that you are in turn, you neglectful man, who have not sent me even one letter"; cf. P.Mich. 8.475.4–8). Such healthgiving clauses are more typical of private letters than official or business letters. In some cases, the well wish is shifted to or repeated in the epistolary closing (e.g., O. Florida 14 [inv. 6]).[2] A strong philophronetic quality underlies this asynchronic communicative device.

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[1] Exler, *Form*, 101, cf. 103–113; see also the discussion in Martin, *Metaphor*, 47.

[2] This ostracon, furthermore, is insightful as the health wishes in both the letter opening and the closing relate directly to the theme of the letter, i.e., the expectant birth of Tinarsieges's child.

Peter Arzt-Grabner has identified three standard types of such clauses within ancient letters.[3] While these types are not exclusive of each other, they each carry a distinctive nuance in emphasizing the relational connection of writer and recipient. The first type that Arzt-Grabner identifies is a report of a prayer on behalf of the recipient by the writer.[4] He notes that the fixed formula πρὸ μὲν πάντων εὔχομαί σε ὑγιαίνειν (with variants), emerged from the first century C.E. onwards.[5] By mentioning his or her prayers, the letter writer intersects a desire for the recipient's wellbeing with the fulfillment of the writer's prayers. In Terentianus' letter to his father he uses this very formula when he writes, τρὸ μὲν πάντων εὔχομαί σε ὑγιαίνειν (P.Mich. 8.479). In this particular letter, the prayer report effectively sets up a contrast between Terentianus and his father, which becomes apparent when we move into the letter body: "I am surprised that after you sailed up-country you did not write to me about your health, but until today I have been worried because you were indisposed (ill) when you left me." Thus, the prayer report establishes a continual concern on the writer's part since he last saw his father, which could have, and, from the writer's perspective, should have, been alleviated by the father keeping Terentianus updated. The body of the letter builds on this discursive self-positioning of the writer by chastising the father for not living up to social expectations, and then exhorting the father to write a new update on his condition. The letter ends with a parallel prayer report ("I pray that you are well"), which reinforces the discursive act of the healthgiving clause.

Another example from the same writer is P.Mich. 8.481, where Terentianus writes to his sister, Tasoucharion, "Before all else I pray that you are well together with your whole family." This second century letter illustrates a discursive act on the part of Terentianus within an asynchronic communicative setting; i.e., even though absent, the condition of his sister and her family remains one of his chief concerns and, furthermore, this concern is strong enough to prompt prayers to the gods for such a positive condition. While certainly formulaic, the prayer report helps to reinforce the positive relations existing between the Terentianus and Tasoucharion

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[3] Peter Arzt-Grabner, "Paul's Letter Thanksgiving," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams (PAST, 6; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 129–158. See also Arzt-Grabner, "The 'Epistolary Introductory Thanksgiving' in the Papyri and in Paul," *NovT* 36 (1994): 29–49; cf. Jeffrey T. Reed, "Are Paul's Thanksgivings 'Epistolary'?" *JSNT* 61 (1996): 87–99.

[4] Arzt-Grabner, "Paul's Letter Thanksgiving," 132–137.

[5] Arzt-Grabner, "Paul's Letter Thanksgiving," 132.

(regardless of how positive or strained their actual relationship may have been; the letter's healthgiving clause is a discursive rather than descriptive device).

A second type of healthgiving clause identified by Arzt-Grabner is an affirmation of remembrance.[6] It should be recalled that the letter served to maintain communication or "personal presence" (i.e., the relationship between correspondents) while separated. As an asynchronic mode of communication, the letter serves to reinforce, by standing in place of the physical/synchronic relationship, the continued connection between correspondents. Thus, affirmations of remembrance are not surprising and indeed such affirmations contribute to the philophronetic function of a letter. Like the prayer report, however, the affirmation of remembrance commonly carried a religious connotation. The phrase μνείαν ποιέομαι is not an unexpected one in such affirmations, and, as Arzt-Grabner has persuasively demonstrated, such a phrase evokes the gods. An example is found in SB 20.14729.2–4 (ὑμῶν τὴν ἀρίστην μνείαν ποιούμενοι παρὰ τῶν ἐνταῦθα θεῶν διατελοῦμεν) as well as BGU 2.632.5–6 (μνίαν σου ποιούμενος παρὰ τοῖς ἐνθάδε θεοῖς). A religious or cultic demonstration of the philophronetic relationship is important in these and other examples (e.g., BGU 10.2006.1–3 and P.Oxy. 14.1664.4–6). In some cases the religious element is unstated or perhaps exists only as a subtext (e.g., P.Hamb. 1.37.3–6: "as often as I find an opportunity, I write you. For it is necessary to remember your nobleness and your character as that of a true philosopher").

A central function is to reaffirm the positive relations between recipient and writer, a function wonderfully illustrated by CPR 6.19 (second century): "For just as you remember us on every occasion by letter, so also I make your obeisance here before the lords Dioscuri and before the lord Serapis and I pray for you…" (the letter continues with a series of well wishes). This letter is couched within the social networks of patronage and is designed to praise the patron, Serapion, as a means of reinforcing that network for the benefit of the letter writer. As Arzt-Grabner nicely puts it, "This letter writer really knew how to make something personal and exceptional out of plain formulas and common conventions."[7] The letter writer also reminds Serapion of his obligations to his client; social obligations, it is indicated, that have been upheld. What those obligations are (underlying "you remember us on every occasion by letter") is not

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[6] Arzt-Grabner, "Paul's Letter Thanksgiving," 137–139.
[7] Arzt-Grabner, "Paul's Letter Thanksgiving," 141.

the point. Rather, this letter both expresses appreciation for that "remembrance" and stresses the reciprocity of those relations between patron and client. The religious dimension here underscores the importance and authenticity of the writer's "remembrance" and "obeisance" for the benefit of Serapion.

A third type of healthgiving clause is the thanksgiving clause, which has been of most interest for Pauline scholarship.[8] Like the other two types of healthgiving clauses, the expression of thanks is not limited to the letter opening, but frequently appears elsewhere in a letter (e.g., the prayer report at the end of Tab. Vindol. 2.316; cf. P.Lond. 1.42 where the thanksgiving [ἐπί μὲν τῶι ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὐθέως τοῖς θεοῖς εὐχαρίστουν] is in the middle of the letter, but naturally builds from the letter opening where we find a prayer report). However, as part of the opening sections of a letter, an expression of thanks serves to discursively reinforce the positive relations between writer and recipient as the letter transitions into the body proper.[9] Unlike the prayer report and the affirmation of remembrance, thanksgivings typically are responses to information that has been received. The writer expresses thanks, usually using χάρις, εὐχαριστέω, or *gratias*, for receiving a report (by letter, orally, or both) regarding the recipient, whereas affirmations of remembrance and prayer reports convey to the recipient a continued relational connection during a period of physical separation (and therefore are not contingent on a report per se). For instance, in a letter from the early second century, Eutychides writes to his father, Serapion, in response to a report of good health: πρὸ τῶν ὅλων ἀσπάζομαί σε καὶ εὐχαριστῶ σοι ὅτι ἐδήλωσάς μοι στὴν ὑγείαν σου (P.Amh. 2.133.2–4). Although the letter quickly moves on to agricultural matters of business, the opening thanksgiving clause explicitly indicates that Eutychides had been kept informed about Serapion's health. The positive reaction (along with such direct reference to a report) functions to reinforce the positive relations and continued communication between the two

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    [8] Arzt-Grabner, "Paul's Letter Thanksgiving," 143–149.
    [9] Like White, "Epistolary Literature," 1740, I see the thanksgiving period as part of the letter opening rather than the letter body. In the papyri letters the brevity and placement of such clauses situate them very closely to the prescript and in certain cases even as part of the greeting section of the prescript. In early Christian letters, however, these periods are extended to form a new section within the letter opening. However, I do not believe that situating the thanksgiving period within the letter opening negates the communicative function of the period (i.e., rendering it merely formulaic). Like the prescript, the thanksgiving serves an important role in the argumentation of a letter. Cf. Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 21.

people. This relational function is reinforced by the request for continued updates on Serapion's health on lines 17–18 (παρακαλῶ σε γράψαι μοι περὶ τῆς ὑγιείας σου) and again lines 20–22 (ἔρρωσο καὶ παρακληθεὶς συνεχῶς ἡμεῖν γραφε περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας σου), which close the letter. A major concern of this letter is to maintain regular communication so that the writer will be kept updated on the condition of the recipient. Similarly, in the second century B.C.E. letters UPZ 1.64.3–4 and UPZ 1.59.6–10 we find thanks given as a direct reaction to a report regarding the recipient.

While most healthgiving clauses are fairly short extensions of the prescript, there are instances where longer periods are given. These periods are helpful parallels for early Christian epistolary practices. Just such an extended thanksgiving period is found in P.Mert. 1.12 (58 C.E.). Here we find an extended thanksgiving period following the health wish that closes the prescript (lines 1–13, with the thanksgiving running from lines 3–13). Like some scholarly readings of 1 Thessalonians, P.Mert. 1.12's thanksgiving period comprises nearly half of the letter and places great stress on the friendship between the two correspondents (evidently both were physicians). Other extended thanksgiving periods are found in PSI 12.1261.3–13 from the third century and P.Bad. 4.48 from the second century B.C.E. PSI 12.1261 merges a prayer report with thanks expressed for recent information on the recipient's health. Dionysia's letter (P.Bad. 4.48) has a much shorter healthgiving clause (this is not an instance of giving thanks, but it does illustrate an extended period that is not unlike what we see in the Pauline letters). In P.Bad. 4.48's healthgiving clause the sentence extends beyond the prescript (merging health wish, prayer report and affirmation of remembrance) immediately after a declaration of Dionysia's own wellbeing. Furthermore, it transitions into the letter body, illustrating the thematic connection between the letter opening and letter body.

Occasionally a letter's thanks is offered not in response to the wellbeing of the recipient, but to offer that kind of information to the recipient regarding the letter writer. BGU 2.632 exemplifies this sort of communication, beginning with a general health wish for the recipient's household ("Before all else I pray that you are well and that you may prosper in continual health, together with my sister and her daughter and my brother") and then moving on to a specific incident that prompts the thanksgiving ("I give thanks to the lord Serapis because, when I was endangered at sea, he rescued me immediately").

Beyond conveying information on the wellbeing of the letter writer (to which the recipient may have written back with an expression of thanks), BGU 2.632 also exemplifies the strong religious quality of the thanksgiving

period. Prayer and remembrance before the gods is taken on behalf of the recipient, but giving thanks is a proper response to the fulfillment of such a desire for wellbeing. Although there are instances where thanks are given directly to the recipient (e.g., P.Bad. 2.34), it seems more common for an ancient letter writer to express thanks to the gods (e.g., PSI 12.1261: "very many thanks therefore to the gods"; P.Cair.Zen. 1.59032, where χάρις is used: "we have many thanks to all the gods"; and SB 24.16338, where χάρις is used: "and acknowledge my gratitude before my lord Serapis").

As Jerome Neyrey has recently argued, the semantic context for εὐχαριστεῖν is that of praise, honor, and glory within mortal-divine reciprocal relations.[10] Specifically, unlike χάρις terminology, where the appropriate response to the divine is offering something pleasing back to the gods or God (thereby perpetuating a cycle of mutual reciprocity), εὐχαριστεῖν, specifically within the intellectual milieu of Philo, Seneca, and Lucian, offers praise to God, as God is perceived as not needing anything from humankind. Neyrey's study of "thanksgiving" language is insightful, furthermore, in that it suggests a slight nuance with εὐχαριστεῖν language. Specifically, to offer thanks carries a more private than public connotation. It is this specific nuance that is lost, however, when Neyrey directly studies the New Testament writings. He overstates the synonymous connection of the terminology (ἐπαινεῖν, δοξάζειν, ἐξομολογεῖσθαι, εὐλογεῖν, τιμᾶν, ὑμνεῖν, and εὐχαριστεῖν). I fully agree that these terms stand within a synonymous relationship, thereby situating them within language of human-divine relations (i.e., worship or praise language), but there are shades of meaning underlying the different terms. For instance, τιμᾶν carries the sense of estimating the value of someone or something, ὑμνεῖν of singing praises within a cultic setting, and εὐλογεῖν to give praise.[11] All three belong to the semantic context of praise/glory language within public expressions, but they do so with distinct shades of meaning. The private/public quality of the praise given with εὐχαριστεῖν strikes me as insightful for appreciating the nuance of the thanksgiving period in ancient letters. In the case of the Pauline letters, to offers thanks to God is to delimit the public glory or praise expressed to the triadic constellation of relationship between Paul, the Christian community addressed, and God. Furthermore, as noted in the papyri letters and correctly noted by Arzt-Grabner, thanksgivings are

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[10] Jerome H. Neyrey, "Lost in Translation: Did It Matter If Christians 'Thanked' God or 'Gave God Glory'?" *CBQ* 71 (2009): 1–23.

[11] Neyrey, "Lost in Translation," 9, outlines these various shades of meaning using BDAG and TDNT.

positive reactions to newly imparted knowledge of wellbeing. To recognize that such thanks typically were given to the gods is to situate both χάρις and εὐχαριστέω within the epistolary semantic context of prayer reports and affirmations of remembrance.

Early Christian letters tap into this religious nuance when constructing such periods for the letter opening. In 1 Peter, for example, the blessing period—a nominal sentence running from 1:3–12—is directed toward giving praise to God for the soteriological and eschatological benefits of the recipients. This period takes the cultic aspect of healthgiving clauses to the point of worship language being employed, even though 1 Pet. 1:3–12 is mostly concerned with the letter's recipients. In Paul's letters, we find thanksgiving periods that direct that thanks to the divine source of benefaction (e.g., 1 Thess. 1:2: Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε περὶ πάντων ὑμῶν). Thus, like others in the ancient world, Paul's thanksgiving periods are saturated with religious language that locates the epistolary situation within a triadic constellation of writer-recipient-deity.

Within the Pauline epistolary tradition, these thanksgiving periods are the most common form of the healthgiving clause. Of the undisputed letters, only 2 Corinthians and Galatians lack a thanksgiving period.[12] In both cases, the strained relationship between Paul and the recipients explains the lack of a thanksgiving (i.e., Paul had little to nothing for which to express thanks).[13] With Galatians, the thanksgiving gives way to a polemical critique or chastisement of the Christians of Galatia for abandoning their true faith. The lack of a thanksgiving strongly reinforces Paul's taking offense at the Galatians; in effect, the Galatians have broken the triadic constellation of writer(apostle)-recipients(Galatians)-God that is a necessary prerequisite for giving thanks. In the case of 2 Cor. 1:3, we are likely seeing the use of a blessing period in place of the standard Pauline thanksgiving (cf. 1 Pet. 1:3; Eph. 1:3) as an outcome to Paul's "painful" letter and visit (2:1–4) (note, however, the thanksgiving at 2 Cor. 1:11, which is aligned with a mention of the recipients' prayers regarding God's assistance; ἵνα ἐκ

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[12] Of the disputed and apocryphal letters, nearly every letter has a thanksgiving period, though the Pastoral epistles open the thanksgiving section with χάρις rather than εὐχαριστέω. The only letters to not have a thanksgiving period are Ephesians, which, like 2 Corinthians, has a blessing period (beginning at 1:3; εὐλογητός), and 3 Corinthians, which moves directly into the letter body from the prescript.

[13] Arzt-Grabner, "Paul's Letter Thanksgiving," 131; contra E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 132. Cf. James A. Kelhoffer, "Suppressing Anger in Early Christianity: Examples from the Pauline Tradition," *GRBS* 47 (2007): 307–325.

πολλῶν προσώπων τὸ εἰς ἡμᾶς χάρισμα διὰ πολλῶν εὐχαριστηθῇ ὑμῶν). The Pauline thanksgiving periods parallel those extended healthgiving clauses that are occasionally found in the papyri letters, rather than shorter additions to the prescript (in no extant Pauline letter do we find a healthgiving clause in the prescript per se). In extending the healthgiving clause, Paul followed a highly structured format.

Raymond F. Collins effectively demonstrates that the Pauline thanksgivings are structured along the same lines as what is found in 2 Macc. 1:10–12.[14] In extending his thanksgivings, Paul tended to follow particular patterns (as helpfully delineated by Collins):[15] (1) an expression of thanksgiving ("I/we give thanks"); (2) an indication of the recipient of the thanksgiving ("to God/Jesus Christ"); (3) a temporal adverb or qualification (e.g., "constantly give thanks");[16] (4) the motivation for the thanksgiving (i.e., the recipients as either receiving divine benefaction or fulfilling proper duties, for which Paul expresses thanks to God); and (5) a specification of the thanksgiving by means of an explanatory clause (such as indicated by, e.g., ὅτι or ἐπί along with participial clauses in the case of 1 Thessalonians).[17] While all of these structural elements are not present in every letter, with the exception of 1 Thessalonians, at least four of them appear with surpris-

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[14] Raymond F. Collins, "A Significant Decade: The Trajectory of the Hellenistic Epistolary Thanksgiving," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams (PAST, 6; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 159–184, see especially 165–170, 182. The letter-opening in 2 Macc. 1:10–12 reads (NRSV): "The people of Jerusalem and of Judea and the senate and Judas, to Aristobulus, who is of the family of the anointed priests, teacher of King Ptolemy, and to the Jews in Egypt, greetings and good health. Having been saved by God out of grave danger we thank him greatly for taking our side against the king, for he drove out those who fought against the holy city."

[15] The following list is almost identical to the one supplied by L. Ann Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation* (JSNTS, 55; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 86–109: (1) Principle verb and its personal object; (2) Manner of thanksgiving; (3) Cause for the thanksgiving; (4) Explanation for the thanksgiving (typically causal clauses for this elaboration); and (5) Prayer report. Jeffrey A. D. Weima, however, has observed that similar components can be found in the papyri letters; see Weima, "Paul's Persuasive Prose: An Epistolary Analysis of the Letter to Philemon," in *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter*, edited by D. Francois Tolmie (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 29–60, see especially 42. He gives the following list: (1) the main verb; (2) an adverb of magnitude; (3) a causal clause supplying the reason (i.e., a ὅτι clause offering elaboration).

[16] Henry G. Meecham, *Light from Ancient Letters: Private Correspondence in the Non-Literary Papyri of Oxyrhynchus of the First Four Centuries, and its Bearing on the New Testament Language and Thought* (London/New York: George Allen & Unwin Ltd/Macmillan Company, 1923), 121, notes that the prayer report "is often qualified by some adverbial expression such as διὰ πάντος, 'continually.' The use of this conventional phrase shows clearly Paul's knowledge of Greek epistolary style."

[17] Collins, "A Significant Decade," 170–179.

ing consistency. Identifying such elements in Laodiceans will be helpful in tracing the syntactical contours of the thanksgiving in our apocryphal letter along with the argumentative logic of that thanksgiving period.

Consequently, the thanksgiving period in early Christian letters, especially those within the Pauline tradition, carry several functions: (1) they tend to develop from but also beyond the prescript, extending the health-giving clause into an independent unit within the letter; (2) giving thanks is the primary interest within Pauline letters, though other elements, such as the prayer report, could be present as supportive elements (as we also find in several of the papyri letters); (3) the thanksgiving period, as Schubert correctly notes, not only opens the letter but also suggests the letter's purpose and themes to be unpacked in the letter body;[18] and (4) the thanksgiving serves the rhetorical purpose of reinforcing the positive relationship of the letter writer and recipients (thus, like an exordium in an ancient speech, the thanksgiving renders the recipients well disposed to receive the letter's overall message).

In turning to Laodiceans, we find a similar rhetorical utilization of the thanksgiving period. The thanksgiving period is immediately marked in v. 3 by Ps.-Paul's expression of thanks (*gratias*). This expression of thanks dominates the sense of the entire sentence, where the thanksgiving is unpacked through standard Pauline structural elements.[19] All other elements in the thanksgiving period are elaborations on *gratias*

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[18] Paul Schubert, *The Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgiving* (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1939), 180. Schubert's position has been confirmed in subsequent scholarship, the most important being Peter T. O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgiving in the Letters of Paul* (NTS, 49; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1977). So also Karl Olav Sandnes, *Paul—One of the Prophets? A Contribution to the Apostle's Self-Understanding* (WUNT II.43; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 91: "The significant and primary function of the Pauline thanksgiving is not to form an ornamental introduction; they are, rather, a functionally essential constitutive element of the Pauline epistle. Their purpose is to indicate the occasion for the contents of the epistles which they introduce."

[19] The thanksgiving period comprises only Laod. 3, which stands on its own as a tightly knitted unit following the elements of the Pauline thanksgiving, as articulated by Collins and Arzt-Grabner. The eschatological promise brings the period to an appropriate conclusion (see William G. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973], 27, 33; O'Brien, *Thanksgivings*, 28). Pervo, however, extends the thanksgiving to include verses 4 and 5 (Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 108). However, there are two difficulties with Pervo's reading. First, he mistakenly reads Laod. 4 and 5 as comprising a closing prayer. Rather than a prayer, these verses constitute the opening of the letter body by focusing on the occasion of the letter (see below). Second, the opening of verse 4 is marked by a shift toward the threat facing the community by *neque destituant vos quorundam vaniloquia insinuantium* (marking the body opening), while *et nunc* at verse 5 compositionally marks the body middle. Consequently, the thanksgiving period is best read as being comprised of only verse 3, coming to an eschatological climax or finale. Penny, "Ps-Pauline Letters,"

and, therefore, these elements must be read as building upon or elucidat-
ing the semantic field of thanksgiving. Following Collins's delineation of
these elements, we find in Laodiceans three of the five elements explic-
itly present (with the remaining two elements implicitly present): (1) an
expression of thanksgiving (*gratias*); (2) an indication of the recipient of
that thanks (*ago Christo*); and (3) a temporal qualification. The temporal
qualification is the contrast drawn between the recipients' present status
as remaining steadfast in relation to the recipient of thanksgiving (i.e., the
deity) (*quod permanents estis in eo, et perseverantes in operibus ejus*) and
a future condition of eschatological judgment (*promissum expectantes in
diem judicii*). This elaborate temporal qualification, which, furthermore,
serves as an explanatory clause for the thanksgiving, is both the reason for
thanksgiving (i.e., the motivation element) and an indication of the occa-
sion for the letter. Ps.-Paul writes because he has received information
regarding the Laodicean Christians, specifically that they have not been
swayed by "false" teachers. They have remained firm in the teaching to
which the author adheres and which he professes as a divinely appointed
apostle. With this eschatological promise, the author exhorts the recipi-
ents to continue to remain in their current state of both static "firmness"
and active "persevering in his works."

It is with this very purpose in writing that the thanksgiving period
functions to discursively establish positive relations between Ps.-Paul and
the Laodicean Christians. Unlike Paul's letter to the Galatians, where the
recipients are rebuked for not holding fast to Paul's teaching, here in Laod-
iceans we find the recipients praised for not being swayed by false teach-
ing. The temporal quality in the letter underscores the writer's confidence
in the recipients' status. Rather than admonishing them, Ps.-Paul praises
them and encourages them to continue holding fast and doing what is
correct. This praise builds on the prescript, where we saw that the author
utilized familial language in order to establish a positive and mutual rela-
tionship between writer and recipients. Furthermore, the implication that
Ps.-Paul has received news of the condition of the recipients likely evokes
the philophronetic quality that underscored the remembrance motif in
other ancient letters. Indeed, to compare Laodiceans with Arzt-Grabner's
treatment of the Pauline thanksgiving, we find a thanksgiving element, a
prayer report (*per omnem orationem meam*), and this remembrance motif

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324, also limits the thanksgiving period to verse 3, but does not offer an analysis of the
thanksgiving beyond simply noting a dependency on Phil. 1:3–4, 6, 10.

(implied by both the prayer report and the present tense condition of the recipients). The primary element, as in other Pauline thanksgivings, is the thanks motif, to which all other elements (prayer report, remembrance, motivation for thanks, and eschatological promise) offer clarification and support. Again, as Neyrey correctly highlighted, such thanksgiving is tied into worship language as an appropriate response to the deity. Ps.-Paul's prayers are a direct response of such thanks to the deity for the wellbeing of the recipients.

Although most scholars have identified this thanksgiving period as lifted from the thanksgiving period in Philippians (1:3–11), it should be noted that there is not a direct correlation between these two letters, though there are common elements.[20] In both we have an expression of thanks, a prayer report, an eschatological qualification, and a positive motivation (i.e., the writer's confidence in the steadfastness of the recipients as they participate in the work of Jesus Christ). If there is a direct reliance on Philippians by Ps.-Paul, then Laodiceans condenses Philippians, by means of summation, rather than directly translating the Philippian thanksgiving. However, as Karl Pink observes, with far greater precision than most treatments of Laodiceans, the parallels between Laodiceans and other Pauline letters are far more comprehensive than just Philippians and Galatians.[21] With regard to the thanksgiving period, there are also strong parallels with Rom. 1:9–10 (specifically the prayer report), Phlm. 4–7 (again a prayer report with a strong emphasis on Philemon's love and faithfulness in partnership with Paul's ministry), and, among the disputed letters, Col. 1:1–5 (which includes a prayer report in response to a report of steadfastness, followed by an eschatological promise).[22] Laodiceans stands closest to Philemon and Colossians, rather than Philippians, but the parallels are not close enough to suggest a direct literary dependency beyond broad similarities. A direct relationship is only possible if Laodiceans drew upon an earlier version of Philippians (e.g., Sellew's Letter B, running from 1:3 to 3:1, 4:4–9, and 4:21–23),[23] which would make Laodiceans a witness to an

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[20] Sellew, "Laodiceans," 23, however, observes that "the thanksgiving period in Phil 1:3–11 is not used, although Phil 1:12 is possibly drawn upon at *Laod.* 5."

[21] Pink, "Die pseudo-paulinischen Briefe II," 188–189.

[22] Both Colossians and Romans mention Jesus Christ as a qualification for God, who is the recipient of thanks, whereas Philippians and Philemon only mention God. Laodiceans only mentions Jesus Christ. Laodiceans, therefore, stands closer to 1 Tim. 1:12 where we read, Χάριν ἔχω τῷ ἐνδυναμώσαντί με Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν. Given this parallel with 1 Timothy, there is no reason to infer a Marcionite Christology in Laod. 3.

[23] Sellew, "Laodiceans," passim.

earlier, more authentic letter opening for Philippians that was expanded when canonical Philippians was constructed. However, such a reading, while possible, does not consider the other Pauline letters, nor does it account for the epistolary conventions that Laodiceans is following. Indeed, given the wider set of Pauline parallels, along with similarities to other ancient letters where thanks and prayer reports are offered, Laodiceans is better read as offering a distinct thanksgiving period that fits the general Pauline pattern. Within the context of Laodiceans, this thanksgiving serves the overall purpose of the letter opening, which is, without doubt, to discursively reinforce the positive relations between Ps.-Paul and the recipients.

We noted that in the prescript Ps.-Paul does not offer expansions in the *adscriptio*, though he does evoke familial language in describing the recipients. The positive relations touched upon in the *adscriptio* are more fully developed here in the thanksgiving period. By shifting the expansions describing the recipients from the prescript to the thanksgiving, Ps.-Paul evokes a similar positional move taken in Romans, where, after the lengthy *superscriptio* describing Paul's gospel via a creedal source, we find the shockingly short πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις (Rom. 1:7). As I have argued elsewhere, the brevity of the *adscriptio* in Romans is carefully designed to identify the voice of the recipients with that of Paul, specifically by means of the creedal summary of the gospel in verses 3 and 4 as well as the repetition of key terminology that further establishes the common ground between the Roman Christians and Paul.[24] With Laodiceans, a similar positional move is made through the familial language and the use of the thanksgiving period. Such a positional move stands in sharp contrast to the discursive moves in Galatians.

Whereas the recipients of Galatians are rebuked for breaking the triadic relationship of writer-recipients-deity, the thanksgiving period in Laodiceans offers praise and worship due to the recipients continuing status within the Pauline triadic relationship. It is on this basis that Ps.-Paul can identify with them as "brethren" in the prescript. Consequently, those who have broken with the harmony of the triadic relationship are not the recipients but rather the "false" teachers that the author refutes, warns the community about, and who are excluded from the actual conversation. The eschatological finale in the thanksgiving is not designed as a warning, but rather as a promise; a promise that should motivate the recipients to

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[24] Tite, "How to Begin, and Why?" 96–97.

continue to live as they do. Given these positive elements in verse 3, the thanksgiving certainly carries a paraenetic quality that is picked up later in the letter. Indeed, the thanksgiving period effectively fits the functional aspects established by Schubert for thanksgivings: Laod. 3 concludes (and develops) from the prescript, suggests the purpose of the letter, and establishes key themes that are more fully developed in the letter body.[25] Furthermore, the thanksgiving period affirms the positive relations between Ps.-Paul and the recipients, thereby rendering the Laodicean Christians open to the author's argument while simultaneously negating the voice of the "false" teachers.

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[25] Schubert, *Form and Function*, passim.

EPISTOLARY ANALYSIS III: THE LETTER BODY

Identifying and elucidating the letter body through the tools of epistolary analysis has been the most irritating arena for Pauline scholarship.[1] Whereas the elements of the letter opening (prescript and, to a lesser degree, thanksgiving) and letter closing (final greetings and farewell) tend to follow easily identified formulaic patterns, the body of the letter has demonstrated far greater variability.[2] For some scholars, the body is where the "real" message of the letter lies, and thus the occasion and theologically distinctive quality of a given letter is what emerges rather than the formulaic means of framing that message. Stanley Stowers summarizes the situation well:

> According to some scholars, the salutation and thanksgiving are followed by two other sections in the Pauline letter, the body and the paraenetic section—a text that strings together moral exhortations. Problems with these two divisions of the Pauline letter illustrate the limitations of the prevailing approach to earliest Christian letters...Modern epistolary research has found very little to say about the body of the letter. This major lacuna has occurred because scholars studying "epistolary" style have limited their analysis to elements thought to be unique to letters. Defined that way, what is "epistolary" about letters shows up only at the beginnings and conclusions.[3]

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[1] An invaluable discussion on the problems in epistolary analysis of the letter body is found in Martin, "Investigating the Pauline Letter Body: Issues, Methods, and Approaches," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams (PAST, 6; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 185–212. My own approach to the ancient letter body is very much indebted to Martin's discussion in both his essay as well as his earlier work, Martin, *Metaphor*, 69–75.

[2] This view is articulated, for example, by Doty, *Letters*, 34–35. Doty sees the letter body as the place where Paul demonstrates his creativity. Thus, Doty views the body as enabling a writer to break out from formulaic epistolary constraints and thereby express a unique voice from other letter writers.

[3] Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Library of Early Christianity; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 22. So also Loveday Alexander, "Hellenistic Letter-Forms and the Structure of Philippians," *JSNT* 12 (1989): 87–101; cf. Duane F. Watson, "The Integration of Epistolary and Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians," in *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and D. L. Stamps (JSNTS, 180; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 399.

Among the papyri letters, furthermore, the brevity of most letters stands in stark contrast with the Pauline letters (even Philemon is far more developed than many of the documentary letters that we possess).[4] Consequently, the temptation is to abandon epistolary analysis for other methods in discerning the structure and argumentation of the Pauline letter body.

A notable attempt at applying epistolary analysis to the letter body was John White's tripartite division. Just as the letter as a whole has an opening, middle, and closing, so also, White contends, does the letter body: a body opening and body closing with a middle section.[5] Of these discrete sections, specific transitional devices can be identified. Specifically, expressions of joy, requests, and indications of previous communication are all commonly found in body openings along with disclosure formulas.[6] Such markers are found in, for example, P.Oxy. 73.4960 (γεινώσκειν ὑμᾶς θέλομε[ν]), P.Ryl. 4.593 (περί), BGU 4.1206 (κεκόμισμαι ἅ ἐγεγράφις; so also BGU 4.1207), P.Oxy. 4.744 (γίνῶσκε), and P.Oxy. 12.1481 (γεινώσκειν σ[ε] θέλω). The function of the body opening is described as follows:

> 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 addresser's disclosure of new information. The body-opening lays the foundation, in either case, from which the superstructure may grow.[7]

Similarly, the body closing will draw upon transitional devices to call attention to material already presented in the body middle.[8] In Theonas's letter to his mother, Tetheus (P.Oxy. 12.1481, dated to the early second century), the letter body closes with the exhortation for her not to trouble

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A similar position is taken by Klaus Berger, "Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament," *ANRW* 25.2 (1984): 1338.

[4] White, "Epistolary Literature," 1739, comments that, "[w]ith the possible exception of Philemon, Paul's letters are much longer than the common familial letter. This characteristic is of a piece with a difference in style; Paul's letters being considerably more literary." The vast majority of the papyri letters, however, are far shorter and written with far less care than Philemon, which, along with Laodiceans, is the shortest letter in the Pauline epistolary collection.

[5] White, *Form and Function*, 1.

[6] Cf. Henry A. Streen, "Les Clichés épistolaires dans des Lettres sur Papyrus Grecques," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 1 (1938): 119–176.

[7] White, *Form and Function*, 33; cf. White, "Epistolary Literature," 1743–1744.

[8] White, *Form and Function*, 42–49, esp. 46.

herself in sending anything to him (μὴ ὀχλοῦ δὲ πέμπειν τι ἡμῖν). This body closing builds on the occasion of the letter, which is to counter a false report to Tetheus that Theonas was seriously ill. The closing leads into a final report that Theonas had received gifts from Herakleides along with Tetheus's letter. Although the letter breaks off at this point, a concluding thanksgiving section seems to function as the letter closing. P.Oxy. 12.1481 effectively illustrates the function of both body openings and body closings.[9]

Thus, just as the body opening will disclose the purpose of the letter, establishing a foundation for the body middle, the body closing brings the discussion to a summation while simultaneously building a bridge for further communication.[10] Such a conclusion typically functions to call the recipient to take responsibility for what has been disclosed in the letter, thereby offering the recipient motivation to respond positively to the writer's appeal, request, etc. The letter body, consequently, can be discerned through an epistolary method, albeit with a limitation to the body opening and body closing.

The body middle, however, continues to resist epistolary formulas and thus other methods are still needed to analyze the body middle. White summarizes the problem: "Internal features of the Pauline body-middle itself also complicate the analysis and frustrate the possibility of utilizing the comparative method."[11] There have been several attempts at an analysis of the letter body, including the imposition of rhetorical arrangements onto the letter form. Such rhetorical analyses have tapped into judicial, deliberative and epideictic rhetoric, especially in debates over Galatians.[12]

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[9] Similarly, P.Oxy. 73.4960 (also dated to the second century) uses a motivation for writing formula to bring the letter to a close (διὸ γράφομεν ὑμεῖν). This letter is particularly noteworthy, due to the body closing's call for an appropriate response of celebration from the recipient(s) to the news that the letter writer has passed along regarding the court case against Petseis.

[10] White, *Form and Function*, 42.

[11] White, *Form and Function*, 53–54; cited by Martin, "Investigating the Pauline Letter Body," 193, who uses this observation to explicate the central methodological problem in studying the Pauline letter body.

[12] The classic debate in New Testament studies on the application of rhetorical theory to Galatians is between Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches of Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), arguing for a judicial rhetoric perspective, and George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), arguing for deliberative rhetoric. Arguments on epideictic aspects in Galatians are set forth by, for example, James D. Hester, "Placing the Blame: The Presence of Epideictic in Galatians 1 and 2," in *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy*, edited

Unfortunately, these rhetorical approaches tend to move away from an epistolary appreciation of these letters, shifting the model from literary and non-literary letters to that of the ancient speech as the analogous typology. Another approach has been to identify structural markers of major and minor transitions. Stanley Porter has produced a composite list of ten such markers, building on the work of White, Schneider and Stender, Funk, Mullins, and Roller. These markers include: thanksgiving, disclosure, petition, joy, astonishment, reiteration, learning, affirmation, blessing/doxology, greetings, and travelogue.[13] In an excellent study of the letter body of 1 Peter, Troy Martin, largely following White's lead, draws upon metaphorical themes as they emerge within the text to form topical clusters at diverse levels. A key strength in Martin's work is the recognition that the internal composition of the letter middle, specifically the body middle, must be discerned on a case-by-case basis.[14] Thus, an inductive approach to the body can compliment and thereby complete the epistolary analysis, rather than stand in opposition to the epistolary analysis.[15] It is with this very approach—i.e., to identify possible internal

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by Duane F. Watson (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 281–307. Other scholars have challenged this particular application of rhetorical theory to the Pauline letters. See, especially, Porter, "Theoretical Justification" and Porter, "Exegesis of the Pauline Letters".

[13] Stanley E. Porter, "A Functional Letter Perspective: Toward a Grammar of Epistolary Form," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams (PAST, 6; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 16–17. He draws upon Exler, *Form*, 16–18; John L. White, "Introduction to the Formulae in the Body of the Pauline Letter," *JBL* 40 (1971): 91–97; Franz Schnider and Werner Stenger, *Studien zum Neutestamentlichen Briefformular* (NTTS, 11; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1987), 168–181; Funk, "The Apostolic *Parousia*"; Terence Y. Mullins, "Formulas in New Testament Epistles," *JBL* 91 (1972): 380–390; and Otto Roller, *Das Formular der Paulinischen Briefe: Ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom antiken Briefe* (BWANT, 4.6; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933).

[14] Martin, *Metaphor*, 79, states: "This analysis of epistolary formulas is effective for analyzing all parts of this document [1 Peter] except the body-middle. Since analysis of the letter formulas is only able to delineate the extent of the body-middle, new analytical methods must be applied to this segment of the document in order to explain its internal composition."

[15] This approach is not dissimilar to the discourse analysis taken by Cynthia Long Westfall in her analyses of both Hebrews and, most importantly, 2 Timothy's letter body. See Cynthia Long Westfall, "A Moral Dilemma? The Epistolary Body in 2 Timothy," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams (PAST, 6; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 213–252; Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship Between Form and Meaning* (LNTS, 127; Sheffield: T & T Clark, 2005). For Westfall, it is necessary to trace the internal patterns of communication at the textual, ideational, and interpersonal levels. It is through these functional patterns that the situational parameters of communication are established through a theory of registry. While my work on Laodiceans does not delve into the depths that Westfall would

structuring mechanisms within the body middle as a complement to the epistolary analysis—that I approach the letter body of Laodiceans.

Both the body opening and body closing can be discerned in Laodiceans by identifying transitional devices that fulfill the epistolary function of such compositional units. The body opening is marked by the disclosure formula *neque destituant vos* that opens the independent clause of verse 4. With this opening, Ps.-Paul discloses his motivation for writing; i.e., a wish that the recipients not be deceived. The independent clause articulates the object of deception that threatens the recipients: *quorundam vaniloquia insinuantium*. The subjunctive quality of this sentence, however, does not indicate that Ps.-Paul is constructing a prayer to close the thanksgiving period (contra Pervo), but rather we are seeing a clearly articulated motivation for writing. Specifically, Ps.-Paul recognizes the present reality that the recipients are currently steadfast in their good standing and thus he writes to exhort them to remind them of that status and to exhort them to remain firm in their faith. A distinction in verbal constructions explicates this contrast between the recipients' current status and the possible threat facing them. In referring to the false teachers (third person plural), the author uses two subjunctives (*destituant . . . evertant*) that are closely correlated; that is, those who attempt "to deceived" are motivated by a desire, to follow Pervo's translation, "that they may draw you aside" from the true gospel. By using the subjunctive, the author stresses that the Laodiceans have not been "drawn away", but that they are threatened by those who would seek to undermine Ps.-Paul's "true gospel". In contrast, the recipients are described, in the thanksgiving period, with the present active indicative, which is then reinforced with two supporting participles, as being steadfast and persevering in works (*quod permanents estis in eo, et perseverantes in operibus ejus*). Beyond the active indicative and active subjunctive distinction between the recipients and the false teachers, Ps.-Paul further describes God's work (for the author's co-workers and the recipients) with the future active indicative *faciet* (Laod. 5, 9).

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go (though I certainly welcome such a study from a sophisticated linguistics approach), it does cohere with her methodological approach in that I am concerned to identify the internal communicative patterns of the letter body as they bring to fulfillment Ps.-Paul's epistolary effort by focusing upon the internal or inductive structural components of the letter.

Verse 9 constitutes the body closing, which effectively parallels, and thereby completes, the body opening. The body closing is marked by the transitional *et id ipsum*. While the conjunctive *et* begins a new compositional unit in the text (thus carrying a consecutive function), the demonstrative pronoun *id* both indicates the subordinate clause that completes the body closing (*ut eandem dilectionem habeatis et sitis unianimes*) and brings the preceding discussion of the letter body to a cumulative finale. Given the paratactic use of *et* following the body opening in the letter body, this final transitional marker effectively indicates the body closing. Functionally, verse 9 is an appropriate body closing for this letter. First, it summarizes the purpose for writing so as to parallel verse 4. Whereas the body opening establishes the present or potential threat that prompts the writing of the letter, the body closing antithetically stresses the ideal condition that the recipients are exhorted to hold to: a shared love and being of one mind. Just as Ps.-Paul's apostolic claim (v. 1) and gospel (v. 4) are divinely grounded, so also is the unity of the Laodicean church based on divine mercy (*misericordiam suam*). Thus, the body opening and the body closing antithetically set forth the motivation for writing (i.e., to not allow false teaching to divide the community, for as the author argues there is only one true gospel), with the body middle explicating this motivation.

The body middle is delimited to verses 5 to 8 by the body opening and closing. Beyond this delimitation, the compositional structure of the body middle cannot be determined by epistolary formulas. An inductive analysis of the letter, however, does reveal possible internal structuring mechanisms for the body middle. Specifically the repetitious use of *et* to begin a new subsection or thought results in three major subsections of the body middle: *et nunc . . .* ("and now"; v. 5); *et nunc . . .* ("and now"; v. 6); and, finally, *et hoc . . .* ("and this"; v. 7). These compositional markers result in three possible, though not exclusive, literary structures through which we can read the letter body.

The first literary structure is a two-fold thematic focus on the condition of the letter writer and the condition of the recipients. In verses 4 and 5, Ps.-Paul explicates the community situation. He sets in antithesis those who challenge his gospel with the veracity of that gospel (*quorundam vaniloquia insinuantium* in contrast with *veritate evangelii quod a me praedicatur*). In verse 5, the "proclamation" of the "true gospel" is extended to the work of those who are co-workers in the Pauline mission. Although verse 5 is likely corrupted, rendering the reading of this verse unclear, the general sense seems to be that those who come from Ps.-Paul (*ut qui sunt ex*

me) are engaged in legitimate Christian work, as they are the extension of the apostle's divinely authorized work.[16] Indeed, the author's co-workers, like the apostle, further the "truth of the gospel" (*veritatis evangelii*; v. 5a, cf. v. 4—which effectively aligns co-workers with Ps.-Paul) through their good works (*deservientes et facientes benignitatem operumque*; v. 5b, cf. v. 3 where a similar description of the recipients emerges with *et perseverantes in operibus ejus*—which effectively aligns co-workers with the recipients). A possible eschatological or soteriological quality authenticates their work (*salutis vitae aeternae*; v. 5c), a quality that likely evokes the eschatological finale of the thanksgiving period (*promissum expectantes in diem judicii*; v. 3). Discursively, Ps.-Paul aligns himself, his co-workers, and the recipients in opposition to those who offer an alternative gospel teaching, which the author (and thus the recipients) views as vain talk that, as Pervo translates, "perverts the truth" (v. 4). This discursive alignment, furthermore, is reinforced by direct divine activity among both the co-workers and the recipients (*Et nunc faciet Deus, ut qui sunt ex me*; v. 5a//*Et id ipsum in vobis faciet misericordiam suam*; v. 9a). Thus, the co-workers and recipients are connected to Ps.-Paul due to the divine source of their ministry (*apostolus . . . sed per Jesum Christum*; v. 1), unlike those who are "false" teachers. Thus, the community situation is described as one of an external threat of false Christian teaching to the true gospel proclaimed by Ps.-Paul and his co-workers, a true gospel that is adhered to by the recipients.[17]

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[16] Contra MaGee, "Exalted Apostle," 126, who fails to read Laod. 4 in light of verse 5 and thus dismisses the theme of proclamation, claiming that such a theme holds no purpose: "In *Ep. Lao.* 4, the addition of the words 'which is preached by me' serves no obvious purpose. Following on the heels of a warning against succumbing to false teaching, one might have expected instead 'which was preached to you' as a means of redirecting the readers to their original acceptance of the truth." By reading, against MaGee, *ut qui sunt ex me* in verse 5 as an extension of the theme in verse 4, *veritate evangelii quod a me praedicatur* makes a great deal of sense. Not only is the call to remembrance that MaGee seems to insist on implicitly underlying these verses, but, more importantly, the rhetorical purpose is explicitly focused on the moral authority of the gospel that Ps.-Paul proclaims. With verse 5, this gospel or proclamation is presented as continuing within the labor of those co-workers "sent from me". Furthermore, as I've articulated above, Ps-Paul's "true gospel" is antithetically set in opposition to the "vain talk" of other teachers. Thus, the focus in these opening verses is to stress not the actual message received by the Laodicean Christians at some period in the church's past, but rather on those who claim the authority to be teachers for the Laodiceans. By stressing the "me" (*me praedicatur* and *ut qui sunt ex me*) (i.e., Ps.-Paul) in verses 4 and 5, this letter opening establishes Ps.-Paul as the focal point for correct teaching; thus, establishing a demarcation of those who are aligned with the apostle (co-workers and the Laodiceans/recipients) and those who are not aligned with him (false teachers).

[17] My reading takes verse 5 as referring to those "sent from" Ps.-Paul as those who are his co-workers. This verse (*ut qui sunt ex me*), however, can also be read as referring to

At verse 6, Ps.-Paul shifts the focus from the community situation to his own suffering in Christ. Several scholars have read verses 6 to 8 as a general allusion to Paul's imprisonment, rendering Laodiceans simply a clumsy attempt at producing another prison epistle.[18] While imprisonment is not an uncommon motif among Pauline pseudepigraphic letters,[19] Laod. 6–8 uses Paul's suffering as more than just a pseudepigraphic device.[20] Given the rhetorical situation already articulated in the letter, it is necessary to read these verses as integral to the occasion of the text. Specifically, Ps-Paul's suffering serves as a moral *exemplar* for the recipients to follow.

Ps.-Paul draws upon his own suffering in order to both reinforce the mutual identification between writer, recipients, and co-workers

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those who have been converted by Paul (i.e., those "coming from" him). The former reading is fairly standard in scholarship, and is what I follow, but the latter reading is viable. Even if we were to follow the latter reading, the focus remains on the community situation. Cf. Meeks and Fitzgerald, *Writings of St. Paul*, 148, who suggest that Laod. 5 redacts Phil. 1:12 ("what has happened to me") in light of Gal. 2:12 ("people who 'come from James' "). If Laod. 5 is playing off of Gal. 2:12, then the "co-workers" reading of *ut qui sunt ex me* is reinforced.

[18] For example, Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 108; MaGee, "Exalted Apostle," 127–128; Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians*, 11; Penny, "Pseudo-Pauline," 325–327. Meeks and Fitzgerald, *Writings of St. Paul*, 142, observe that, "this letter is pastoral, with the imprisoned Paul chiefly offering words of exhortation and warning."

[19] As Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument*, 43, observes, "Paul's joy and perseverance in the face of suffering becomes the single biographical detail which recurs in the pseudo-Pauline corpus, as the Pastorals themselves illustrate."

[20] Note Burnet's comment ("Laodicéens," 137–138): "Paul est visiblement en prison, comme let prouve la mention des liens (*vincula*, v. 6) qui est le *topos* des épîtres pseudépigraphiques." Among the disputed or apocryphal Pauline letters we find references to Paul's imprisonment in every case, except for 2 Thessalonians. The disputed prison epistles overtly identify Paul writing from prison (Eph. 6:20, Col. 4:3, cf. 3 Cor. 3.1, 34–35). By situating the fictive letter within a prison context, an author is able to historically situate the letter within a plausible setting. The Pastoral epistles, however, extends this motif in order to serve the pseudepigraphic function of connecting the actual readers with the historic period within which the text is fictively set. Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament. Volume 2: History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 303, distinguishes the prison motif in the Pastoral epistles from other "letters from prison" (to which he correctly assigns 3 Corinthians). Specifically, the Pastorals utilize "the prison situation to present the 'Testament of Paul' . . . The testament permits a recapitulation of the past, interpreted and summarized from the perspective of the present, and it thus becomes a signpost for the future." A similar function is suggested for Ephesians by David G. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon: An Investigation into the Relationship of Authorship and Authority in Jewish and Earliest Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 153. Laodiceans does not follow the strategy of the Pastorals, but the letter does draw upon the imprisonment motif for other, paraenetic purposes. The fact that all but one disputed or apocryphal letter includes an imprisonment theme strongly suggest that this was a typical device for Pauline pseudepigraphy, though certainly a motif not limited to pseudepigraphy (e.g., Philippians, Philemon, cf. 1 Thessalonians).

(specifically with a divine connection that evokes the triadic relationship of the thanksgiving) and to encourage the recipients by setting himself forth as an apostolic figure that they should imitate.[21] Thus, Ps.-Paul and the Laodicean Christians share in the sufferings of a true Christian, suffering that is externalized from the insider group (for Ps.-Paul, the governing authorities [thus an external, Christian/non-Christian conflict]; for the Laodiceans, those who are false teachers [thus an intra-Christian conflict]). Ps.-Paul is the ideal model for the Laodicean Christians, for, as he claims in verse 7, he embodies the very soteriological and eschatological benefit that the recipients are exhorted to continue striving towards (v. 3) and which the co-workers (v. 4) serve as Ps.-Paul's means of extending such benefit to the recipients.[22] With *et hoc mihi et ad salute perpetuam* (v. 7), the apostle's suffering becomes a means for attaining that benefit. The recipients, furthermore, are discursively presented as essential collaborators with the Holy Spirit for ensuring Ps.-Paul's eternal salvation (*quod ipsum factum orationibus vestries et administrante spiritu sancto*). This

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[21] On the importance of imitation in the Pauline tradition, especially 1 Thessalonians, see Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*; Lyons, "Modeling the Holiness Ethos: A Study Based on First Thessalonians," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30.1 (1995): 187–211. See also Abraham J. Malherbe, "Exhortation in First Thessalonians," *NovT* 25 (1983): 238–256, especially 240–241, who recognizes that Paul's call for imitation in 1 Thess 2:1–8 is established by an antithetical construction. An important study of this theme within the Pauline tradition is offered by Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1991). See also David Stanley, "Imitation in Paul's Letters: Its Significance for His Relationship to Jesus and His Own Christian Foundations," in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honour of Francis Wright Beare*, edited by Peter Richardson and John C. Hurd (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984), 127–141; Stanley, " 'Become Imitators of Me': Apostolic Tradition in Paul," in *A Companion to Paul: Readings in Pauline Theology*, edited by Michael J. Taylor (New York: Alba House, 1975), 197–211. Emulation as a rhetorical device also is prominent in the Cynic tradition (e.g., Ps.-Crates, *Epistle* 19, which builds on positive and negative *exempla*). See Donald R. Dudley, *A History of Cynicism: From Diogenes to the 6th Century AD*, 2nd edition (edited by Miriam Griffin; London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 2003 [1937]), 182–183, 198–201 (especially in regard to Heracles as a legendary figure to be emulated).

[22] MaGee, "Exalted Apostle," 128, claims that Laodiceans weakens the "rich theology of suffering for the sake of the church" that is found in Philippians, resulting in a simple elevation of Paul's suffering in Laodiceans as a form of self-promotion: "The picture of Paul rejoicing in publicly suffering for Christ…as a badge of honor. Thus in *Ep. Lao.* 6 the original evangelistic context has been bypassed in favor of an elevation of the nobility of Paul's suffering." By privileging canonical Philippians as an interpretative key, as well as ignoring the integrated texture of Laodiceans on its own merits, MaGee has missed the hortatory function of Pauline suffering in Laodiceans ("Exalted Apostle," 128–130) and has thus misunderstood the function of suffering as a theme within this letter. As my discussion demonstrates, Ps.-Paul's suffering serves a central function as moral *exemplar* for the letter body.

function of the recipients' prayers in Ps.-Paul's attaining eternal life (v. 7), situates the recipients within a context of not only mutual suffering with the apostle but mutual benefit to each other. Thus, a strong social cohesion underlies Ps.-Paul's relationship with the recipients, building on the interdependency of their prayers for each other (i.e., v. 7 nicely parallel's *per omnem orationem meam* in v. 3).[23] By intersecting Ps.-Paul's suffering (perhaps even with an allusion to his possible martyrdom, vv. 7b and 8)[24] with that of the Laodicean church, the author encourages the recipients to not abandon their faith when threatened or challenged. Their mutual suffering, furthermore, is due to both being on the correct path (e.g., the author refers to his suffering being "in Christ"; cf. the "true gospel" back at verses 4 and 5). Just as Ps.-Paul will attain eternal life and joy, so also will the recipients if they continue to remain steadfast, whereas those causing their suffering stand outside the true faith and thus will not share in the divine blessings to follow. With the transition into the body closing (*et id ipsum*), Ps.-Paul directly applies his own moral example to the situation facing the recipients. Thus, the body middle effectively addresses the motivation for writing articulated in the body opening and closing by both unpacking the community situation and using Ps.-Paul as the key moral *exemplar* to encourage the recipients within that situation.

This reading of the letter body can be more clearly articulated by a second literary structure. The transitional markers structuring the letter body result in five subunits that can be arranged chiastically as follows:

A1—*Neque destituant vos* ... (v. 4)— Potential threat to the church (Body Opening)
    B1—*Et nunc* ... (v. 5)—Implication of divine activity (co-workers) (Body Middle)

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[23] These two mentions of prayers (vv. 3, 7) not only underscore the mutual suffering and benefit that each offers, but, by inverting the role of the one who offers prayers and the subject of those prayers, the author establishes a type of spiritual reciprocity. The end goal for each set of prayers is eternal life (for Ps.-Paul, possibly within the context of martyrdom; for the Laodicean Christians, on the day of judgment). Such reciprocal benefit by means of prayers discursively reinforce the philophronetic tone of the letter while, simultaneously, isolating other Christian teachers as outside this well established (and efficient) system of reciprocity.

[24] If Laod. 7–8 alludes to Paul's martyrdom, then Laodiceans becomes another source for early Christian martyrdom traditions, particularly traditions related to the death of Paul. Specifically, Laodiceans illustrates the importance of moral *exempla* for martyrdom discourse.

> C—*Et nunc* . . . (v. 6)—Ps.-Paul's suffering as moral *exemplar* (Body Middle)
>
> B2—*Et hoc* . . . (vv. 7–8)—Implication of divine activity (Ps.-Paul) (Body Middle)
>
> A2—*Et id ipsum* . . . (v. 9)—Need for unity in the church (Body Closing)

The chiasm does not follow clearly identifiable grammatical parallels (i.e., using key linking terms for marking the parallel units, as the parallels are more loosely articulated than would be ideal for identifying a chiasm), yet it does articulate a clear thematic parallel between these units. Such thematic parallels lend support in identifying this second literary structure as a possible reading.[25] This chiasm places stress upon Ps.-Paul's suffering as evidence of the truth of the gospel by placing his suffering at the central unit (C), while A1/A2 establish the motivation for writing within an antithesis of potential threat (A1) and the need for unity within the Laodicean church in the face of such a threat (A2). This framing mechanism in verses 4 and 9 juxtaposes the ideal condition that the recipients are exhorted to adhere to with the danger of schism due to any challenges to what the author considers the true gospel. By remaining true to Ps.-Paul's version of Christian teaching, the recipients will realize the divine benefits of eternal

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[25] John Paul Heil, *Philippians: Let Us Rejoice in Being Conformed to Christ* (ECL, 3; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 10, offers a set of nine criteria that are ideal for plausibly identifying a chiasm. Heil's concern is largely to avoid a merely subjective imposition of a chiastic structure onto a text. His criteria are: "(1) There must be a problem in perceiving the structure of the text in question, which more conventional outlines fail to resolve. (2) There must be clear examples of parallelism between the two 'halves' of the hypothesized chiasm, to which commentators call attention even when they propose quite different outlines for the text overall. (3) Linguistic (or grammatical) parallelism as well as conceptual (or structural) parallelism should characterize most if not all of the corresponding pairs of subdivisions. (4) The linguistic parallelism should involve central or dominant imagery or terminology important to the rhetorical strategy of the text. (5) Both linguistic and conceptual parallelism should involve words and ideas not regularly found elsewhere within the proposed chiasm. (6) Multiple sets of correspondences between passages opposite each other in the chiasm as well as multiple members of the chiasm itself are desirable. (7) The outline should divide the text at natural breaks which would be agreed upon even by those proposing very different structures to account for the whole. (9) Ruptures in the outline should be avoided if at all possible." A chiastic reading of Laod. 4–9 fits most of the above criteria, but falters on Heil's emphasis on linguistic parallels, with the conceptual or thematic serving as the strongest indicator of a chiasm in this letter. Below I offer a third literary structure as an alternative to this proposed chiasm. This third literary structure also builds on a set of parallels, but does not face the pitfalls of the chiasm. All of these possible literary structures are offered for readers to contend with, without a particular preference being promoted by myself.

life (articulated in B1 and B2), thus enabling "his mercy to work in you" (v. 9a). Whether eternal life is understood in this letter as a type of realized eschatology, future eschatology, or some mixture of the two is unclear.[26] Pervo, recognizing the importance of eschatology in this letter, argues that Laodiceans "sanitizes" Paul by presenting him as neither antinomian nor as a teacher of a fully realized eschatology.[27] Likely, Laodiceans advocates a realized eschatology within a future eschatological framework.[28] What is clear is that the recipients are being exhorted to follow the example of both Ps-Paul and his co-workers in order to share in that life (i.e., divine mercy). With the central element, the letter body exemplifies apostolic suffering for the community to emulate or at least iden-

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[26] For a more thorough discussion of Pauline eschatology as applied to Laodiceans, see chapter 7. A future eschatology likely underlies the eschatological promise that closes the thanksgiving period. Here in the letter body, however, the life given could be a present reality that continues on into eternity (*vita aeternae*; v. 5b) or after death (*sive per vitam sive per mortem. Est enim mihi vere vita in Christo et mori gaudium*; vv. 7b–8) (note especially Ps.-Paul's present condition of having "life in Christ" and potential future of "joy" in death; this suggests to me that there is a continuance of a present realization of life). It is also unclear if *ut*, opening the subordinate clause at verse 9b, marks a condition on which "his mercy" will be able to "work in you" (i.e., if the recipients do share the same love and are likeminded, then his mercy will be at work among them) or if it marks a result of the independent clause (i.e., the purpose or outcome of his mercy working among them is that the recipients will be of the same love and be like-minded). Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 294, and Anger, *Laodiceans*, 172 (reproducing Hutter's Greek translation), take this particle for ἵνα as the underlying Greek. A ἵνα-clause would suggest that the recipients will be brought into a state of unity (same love and like-mindedness) as a result of God's mercy, rather than as a precondition for receiving that mercy. My initial preference is for the former reading given the hortatory nature of this letter, though both are viable readings, and grammatically the latter reading may carry greater weight. Regardless, the eschatological nuance in verse 9 seems to be a present realization of divine benefit within the community, though the latter reading would more firmly fit a realized eschatology as the author assumes that the church will continue to be unified in their faith in the present crisis.

[27] Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 108. MaGee, "Exalted Apostle," 129, reads Ps.-Paul's "salvation" (*ad salute perpetuam*) in verse 7 as eschatological rather than as freedom from prison. MaGee, however, does not expand on this insight, except to note a possible Marcionite reading from Harnack (though I see no reason to read this verse as reflecting Marcionite theology, and I doubt MaGee would either). MaGee's lack of explication is largely due to the dismissive approach underlying the discussion, especially with a privileged exegetical place given to Philippians (as if Laodiceans, to have any value or rhetorical meaning, must follow the discussion of canonical Philippians): "But by ignoring some material from Phil 1:20 ... the author [of Laodiceans] once again reflects a shallow understanding of Paul's central motivation in the original passage ... the author merely echoes Phil 1:21."

[28] So also Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 108: "Other Deutero-Pauline features include a ... strong emphasis upon eschatology, with a tendency toward individualized eschatology and the final judgment (vv. 3, 5, 7, 10)."

tify with. This central unit, furthermore, reinforces the authority of the letter writer.

The same thematic points could be discerned in the letter body by a third possible literary structure. Indeed, key terms in Laod. 4–9, as an alternative to the chiastic reading, could render the parallels as following an a-a-b-b-c structure, with verse 9 (c) pulling the subsection to a close: (a) *veritate evangelii* (v. 4), (a) *veritatis evangelii* (v. 5), (b) *in Christo* (v. 6), (b) *in Christo* (vv. 7–8), (c) *et id ipsum in vobis faciet misericordiam suam, ut eandem dilectionem habeatis et sitis unianimes.* This a-a-b-b-c structure progressively reinforces the foundation of the "true gospel", Ps.-Paul's exemplary suffering "in Christ", with the climax of divine benefit ("mercy") for the Laodicean community—if they remain in (or for the sake of attaining to) a state of unity. Indeed, the stress on divine activity for the benefit of the community is underscored by *faciet misericordiam suam*, which nicely parallels the a-a section (*faciet Deus...et facientens benignitatem*) (where the stress falls on promoting the true gospel, with the Pauline co-workers' activity being dependent upon divine activity for success) and the b-b section (*factum orationibus*) (where Ps.-Paul's benefit in suffering is due to the Laodicean community's prayers in cooperation with the work of the Holy Spirit). Note the progression with this verbal parallel: the section begins with divine activity, moves to the activity of Ps.-Paul's associates (i.e., human activity), then to the activity of the Laodiceans (as Ps.-Paul's extended associates) (i.e., human activity), and finally to a return at verse 9 with divine activity. Like the proposed chiasm above, this a-a-b-b-c structure, especially with this divine-human-human-divine progression, places interpretative stress upon the central unit of Ps.-Paul's exemplary suffering (v. 6).

From the preceding discussion, it is clear that the letter body of Laodiceans can be clearly discerned by epistolary means, such as established by, especially, White and Martin. The body has clearly delineated opening, middle, and closing sections. The letter, furthermore, is not lacking in purpose nor is it a chaotic assemblage of random Pauline phrases. Rather, the body of this letter is carefully structured with a cohesive argument that unpacks the motivation for writing by using Ps.-Paul as a moral example of suffering; a moral example that should guide the recipients in their response to the dangers facing them from false teachers. In setting forth his case, the letter writer marshals an eschatological promise of eternal life, while alluding to elements in the letter opening. During this entire process, the writer builds upon the positive relations between writer and

recipients from the letter opening. The exhortation thus far has been largely indirect, i.e., there have been no specific imperatival statements to explicitly enjoin the recipients. Rather, the letter body has implicitly exhorted the recipients by means of moral *exempla*, discursive positioning, and eschatological promises.

EPISTOLARY ANALYSIS IV: THE PARAENESIS

Following the body of the letter, Laodiceans, like several other Pauline letters,[1] includes an extended paraenetic subsection. The paraenesis in Laodiceans is marked by the compositional transition *ergo, delectissimi*, which opens verse 10, with the paraenesis extending to the end of verse 16, where, at verse 17 or 18, the letter closing begins. In this section we find a shift in the verbs from the indicative or subjunctive to the imperative. Indeed, there is an intense clustering of imperatives that dominate these verses and, thereby, clearly delineates the paraenesis section.

Paraenesis has been defined as moral discourse intended to persuade or dissuade a course of action or direction in life.[2] Such a broad definition encompasses several key aspects of moral exhortation in antiquity, specifically that such discourse is not only moral discourse, but is also framed within a context of exhortation. It is this communicative setting that sets paraenetic discourse off from simply moral or ethical discussions, such as one finds exemplified in ancient moral philosophy or purely didactic texts (e.g., *Tripartite Tractate* or Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*).[3] This definition,

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[1] Although the specific demarcation of the paraenesis in Paul's letters is heavily debated, Andrew Pitts offers a helpful breakdown of the hortative section within the context of other epistolary units of both the undisputed and disputed letters. See Andrew W. Pitts, "Philosophical and Epistolary Contexts for Pauline Paraenesis," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams (PAST, 6; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 301. Pitts suggest the following paraenetic sections: Rom. 12:1–15:33; 2 Cor. 10:1–13:10; 1 Thess. 4:1–5:22; 2 Thess. 2:13–3:15; Col. 3:5–4:6; Eph. 4:1–6:19; Phil. 3:1–4:20.

[2] See Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse: Determining the Social Function of Moral Exhortation in Valentinian Christianity* (NHMS, 67; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2009), 57–133, for a full discussion of the definitional debates over paraenesis. This broad definition is what I followed in this earlier study (see especially 132–133). My basic definition is also exemplified in Ps.-Libanius's definition of paraenesis: "The paraenetic style is that in which we exhort someone by urging him to pursue something or to avoid something. Paraenesis is divided into two parts, encouragement and dissuasion" (*Epistolary Styles*; cited from Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 94).

[3] Pitts, "Philosophical and Epistolary Contexts," offers a carefully nuanced distinction between moral discourse within philosophical circles and what is found in both the papyri letters and in examples from the rhetorical handbooks. However, Pitts tends to overemphasize the differences between literary letters, letter essays, and epistolary letters in order to re-situate Paul's letters within the epistolary tradition rather than within Greco-Roman philosophical traditions (largely as a counter to Malherbe and Engberg-Pedersen). Yet,

furthermore, places stress on the behavioral response expected by those being exhorted. Within the Pauline corpus such moral directives tend to be clustered within closing sections of the letters, thereby adding a call of response to the contents of the entire letter.

Among the papyri letters, there are few extant letters that specifically include a hortatory section at the end of a letter. Partly this absence is due to the brevity of these letters, partly due to the content (especially when dealing with business matters), and partly due to Paul's innovative utilization of the ancient letter form.[4] However, several examples can be found where a closing directive is given to the recipient. For example, in P.Tebt. 2.411 Paulinus writes to his son Heron informing him of inquiries made about Heron by the epistrategus. Paulinus closes the letter with a brief double exhortation, the first directing Heron to not fail to come and the second to reassure him that he should not be worried: μή οὖν ἄλλως ποιήσῃς, μηδὲν μέντοι θορυβηθῇς, παραγενόμενος γὰρ εἴσῃ ὅ τι ποτέ ἐστιν (lines 10–14). Similarly, in P.Princ. 3.160 the body of the letter indicates that the letter writer has written to Pnepheros "in order to ask for a contract", and then closes with the directive, "therefore, please get it and hold it for me until I arrive." In both cases the particle οὖν marks the transition to the directive, thus linking the exhortation to the content of the letter in order to prompt the recipient to respond as expected. The same use of a closing directive is found in P.Oxy. 2.291, where Tyrannos, the recipient, is exhorted to "make ready the account on grain and money" (again, note the compositional marker, μὴ οὖν ["therefore do not neglect

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there is far more overlap here than Pitts seems to allow. Furthermore, it is important to recognize the hortative quality underlying all paraenetic texts, regardless of whether we are discussing Ps.-Isocrates, Pliny, Seneca, Paul, or the Cynic epistles. On the centrality of the imperative as the defining element of paraenesis, see Hildegard Canick, *Senecas Epistulae Morales* (Spudasmata, 18; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), passim, Martin, *Metaphor*, 85–107, Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, 138–147. The classic example of the imperatival force of such discourse is Ps.-Isocrates, *To Demonicus*, where the imperatives dominate the letter from 13 onward. Another example is Ps.-Crates, *Epistle* 15, where the letter is framed by φεύγετε μὴ μόνον and διώκετε μὴ μόνον (which nicely articulates the two-fold persuasion/dissuasion aspect of this hortative quality; see Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, 180–181). Within early Christian texts, the imperative shapes the moral discourse of, for example, *Didache* 3.1–3, Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians* 4.1–3, 9.1–2, *1 Apocalypse of James* 40,9–41, and *Gospel of Truth* 32,33–33,32 (again highlighting a two-fold "do" and "don't do" exhortation).

[4] Paul's innovation with regard to the paraenetic section should also be kept in mind when analyzing other early Christian letters. The vast majority of these letters lack a paraenetic section, even though several letters are infused with moral exhortation (e.g., 1 Peter and James).

this matter, but . . ."]). In all these examples, the directive develops from the letter body, appropriately calling on the recipient to now respond to the motivation for writing. While it is difficult to determine if such closing directives are best read as constituting the body closing or as part of the letter closing (or some transitional connection between the letter body and letter closing),[5] it does seem that it was not uncommon for a letter to close with a hortative statement calling on the recipient to respond to or act on the letter.

Even with such short letters, however, there are indications that a distinct hortatory section of the letter could emerge. P.Amh. 2.133, for instance, has a clear epistolary structure: opening with a prescript and then a thanksgiving clause (in response to a positive report about Eutychides's father's health), a letter body regarding farm matters, and a farewell with a request for continued reports on the recipient's health. However, just before the letter body concludes, Eutychides has inserted another request for health, this time as an exhortation: παρακαλῶ σε γράψαι μοι περὶ τῆς ὑγιείας σου (lines 17–18). This exhortation has nothing to do with the business matters being discussed (and which pick up once more with, "The grain does not advance (in price) beyond seven drachmas"), does not stand in the letter closing, and is somewhat redundant given the later request καὶ παρακληθεὶς συνεχῶς ἡμεῖν γράφε περὶ τῆ(ς) σωτηρίας σου (lines 20–22). Yet, the exhortation in lines 17 to 18 does pick up and place emphasis upon one of the key motivations for writing (i.e., a response to a report on his father's health and a desire for continued reports). Although much later examples (from the fourth century), both P.Kellis 70 and 78 close the letter body by exhorting the recipients to "not be neglectful" in regard to fulfilling the business addressed in each letter (70: Ὅρα μὴ ἀμελήσῃς; 78: Ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀμελήσῃς).

Clearer examples of an extended section of moral exhortation can be found within ancient epistolary practices.[6] For instance, in P.Tebt. 2.314 we find a hortative section following the closing greetings (rather than as part of the letter body, as would be expected). The exhortation, which comprises approximately a third of the letter, strictly addresses business

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[5] P.Tebt. 2.414 is an odd example, where there are two closing greetings that are both followed by exhortations. There are also commands preceding the closing greetings. Overall, the commands and greetings comprise approximately ¾ of the letter.

[6] I am excluding from consideration the few letters that are completely hortative. For example, the two letters comprising P.Tebt. 2.416 are completely dominated by the imperative and could, furthermore, be read as touching on moral or obligatory matters.

matters rather than ethical or moral concerns. A better example is found in Isidora's letter to her brother Asklepiades, dated to 28 B.C.E.:

> **Prescript**: Isidora to her brother Asklepiades greeting and may you always be well.
> **Letter Body**: I enclose under the same seal to you the letter to Paniskos. Therefore, whenever you meet him, send his reply in hast on account of the fact that the boat is broken.
> **Exhortation**: Moreover, continue to act steadfastly, until whatever time he arrives, and take care of yourself to stay well, which is most important.
> **Letter Closing**: Good-bye. Year 3, Phaophi 5.
> **Postscript**: Send the child's mattress (?).[7]

In this letter the letter body is comprised of two components, specifically a motivation for writing (the sending of Isidora's letter to Paniskos) and directions to Asklepiades to quickly send a reply back to her when Paniskos arrives (transitionally linked by οὖν). A hortative section follows this first imperative, a section that is best read as distinct from, though also building upon, the main purpose of the letter: "Moreover, continue to act steadfastly, until whatever time he arrives, and take care of yourself to stay well, which is most important." In this section, Isidora shifts the focus from Paniskos and the enclosed letter to Asklepiades and his wellbeing, exhorting him to take care of himself. This moral exhortation expands on a typical healthgiving clause that can be found in letter closings, thereby framing the health wish into an exhortation.

Another excellent example of a paraenetic subsection in a letter is found in P.Oxy. 42.3069:

> **Prescript**: Aquila to Sarapion, greetings.
> **Letter Body**: I was overjoyed to receive your letter. Our friend Callinicus was testifying to the utmost about the way of life you follow even under such conditions—especially in your not abandoning your austerities. Yes, we may deserve to congratulate ourselves, not because we do these things, but because we are not diverted from them by ourselves.
> **Moral Exhortation**: Be of good courage! Carry through what remains like a man! Do not let wealth distract you, nor beauty, nor anything else of the same kind: for there is no good in them, if virtue does not join her presence, no, they are vanishing and worthless.

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[7] Translation from White, *Light from Ancient Letters* (Foundations and Facets: New Testament; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 103. The compositional divisions have been added by me.

> **Letter Closing**: Under divine protection I expect you in Antinoöpolis. Send Soteris the puppy, since she now spends her time alone in the country. Good health!
> **Back**: To Sarapion the philosopher from his friend Aquila.[8]

Building from the motivation for writing (i.e., a positive report about Sarapion), this letter is strongly paraenetic throughout and could be defined as a paraenetic letter, especially given the personal moral example that Aquila takes on for Sarapion's benefit (lines 11–13).[9] However, there is a clustering of imperatival commands that set off a distinct compositional unit. These exhortations tap into classic virtues (courage and a focus on permanent rather than temporal benefits, along with a direct mention of virtue as underlying anything worthy of one's attention), thereby clearly establishing the moral quality of the exhortation. Furthermore, this paraenetic section relates the moral directives to the body of the letter with obvious clarity. Indeed, the moral exhortation effectively completes the motivation for writing by calling on the recipient to continue living in such a way that ensures that further positive reports will be forthcoming. The relationship of the body of the letter to the paraenesis is not unlike what we find with 1 Thessalonians, where the extended thanksgiving period prepares the reader for the moral exhortations.[10] Consequently, P.Oxy. 42.3069 is an excellent parallel for the Pauline epistolary tradition.

From this brief survey of ancient epistolary practices, it becomes clear that Paul's development of a paraenetic subsection is not wholly without precedent. However, these examples are not as clear as one may wish, and, furthermore, are few and far between.[11] Furthermore, most do not engage moral issues specifically, but address business matters. Finally, the hortative sections are ambiguous as to whether they should be considered

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[8] I'm following the translation in Pitts, "Philosophical and Epistolary Contexts," 285, where he also offers an insightful discussion of the paraenetic qualities of this letter. Compositional divisions are my addition.

[9] See Pitts, "Philosophical and Epistolary Contexts," 296, where he offers a parallel with 1 Thess. 2:3–4.

[10] I am following Malherbe's reading of 1 Thessalonians, which I continue to find extremely insightful and persuasive. See Malherbe, "Exhortation"; Malherbe, " 'Gentle as a Nurse': The Cynic Background to 1 Thessalonians 2," *NovT* 12 (1970): 203–217.

[11] So also Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 96, in his discussion of the paraenetic letter: "I have not yet found any good examples among the papyri, although there are simpler exhortations in the papyri that suggest development toward more complex hortatory letters." What we find in the papyri letters, instead, are sections that offer explicit directions for the recipient to respond appropriately to the purpose of the letter. It is this very "direct application or exhortation" quality that we find extended in the Pauline letter tradition and which is clearly present in Laodiceans.

as part of the letter closing (i.e., final greetings, well wishes, etc.), as the body closing (i.e., bringing the body to a close by calling for a response on the part of the recipient), or as a distinct epistolary unit. Consequently, we need to recognize the innovator in Paul when it comes to epistolary paraenesis. Yet, from the examples explored above a key function of epistolary paraenesis emerges—in most cases, the exhortations are designed to bring the letter's main purpose to a close by demanding a response by the recipient, a response that will fulfill the letter writer's purpose in sending a letter. Thus, in reading the paraenetic sections of Paul's letters, we should consider his exhortations as (1) completing the letter's purpose by directly applying it to the recipients, and (2) demanding an appropriate response from the recipients in order to fulfill that purpose. For Paul these hortative sections address the embodiment of a distinct Christian lifestyle, rather than the everyday matters more commonly found in the papyri letters.

The study of early Christian paraenesis has come a long way since Martin Dibelius argued that paraenesis is simply traditional ethical maxims randomly strung together, a position that most scholars have long rejected.[12] Indeed, the most important work to emerge on paraenetic discourse comes from the Lund and Oslo sessions of 2000 and 2001 and subsequently published in 2004.[13] The Lund-Oslo group's work was preceded by an equally important collection of essays put together by Leo Perdue in 1990, a collection that more clearly articulated social aspects of paraenetic discourse (in particular, issues of liminality or potential social crisis).[14] An

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[12] Martin Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Auflage. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1971 [1919]); Dibelius, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 2nd edition (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1931); Dibelius, "Der himmlische Kultus nach dem Hebräerbrief," *Theol.Bl.* 21 (1942): 1–12; and Dibelius, *James: A Commentary on the Epistle to James*, translated by Michael Allen Williams (Hermenia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976). Dibelius's understanding of paraenetic material dominated most of the 20th century, perhaps most clearly articulated in David Bradley, "The Topos as a Form in the Pauline Paraenesis," *JBL* 73 (1953): 238–246. Malherbe's work in the 1970s and 1980s on early Christian paraenesis exemplifies the break from Dibelius that has now pervaded scholarship.

[13] Troels Engberg-Pedersen and James M. Starr, eds., *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004). See my discussion of this collection in Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, 88–107, 116–124.

[14] *Semeia* 50 (1990) (entitled, *Paraenesis: Act and Form*), edited by Leo Perdue. Again, see my discussion in Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, 67–88. Note, in particular, Perdue's essays, "The Social Character of Paraenesis and Paraenetic Literature" (pp. 5–38) and "The Death of the Sage and Moral Exhortation: From Ancient Near Eastern Instructions to Graeco-Roman Paraenesis" (pp. 81–109). See also Perdue, "Paraenesis and the Epistle of James," *ZNW* 72 (1981): 241–256; Perdue, "Liminality as a Social Setting for Wisdom Instruction," *ZAW* 93 (1981): 114–126. The *Semeia* group's work on paraenesis, most clearly Perdue's social

important social function of paraenesis, picked up by Troy Martin's study of 1 Peter and my own work on the *Interpretation of Knowledge* (NHC XI,1), is the liminality that can emerge when there is a threat or danger of possible apostasy within a Christian community.[15] A break need not have occurred, such as we find in Galatians, to prompt a paraenetic address. Rather, it is the possibility of rupture in social cohesion that could motivate a teacher to write to his or her community in order to keep them on track. Such persuasion/dissuasion could follow either static ("hold to") or dynamic ("go do") commands, especially given the importance of antithesis within paraenesis.[16] This nuance of Perdue's liminal social model nicely fits the contours of the Lund-Oslo definition.

The Lund-Oslo group set forth the following definition of paraenesis: "a concise, benevolent injunction that reminds of moral practices to be pursued or avoided, expresses or implies a shared worldview, and does not anticipate disagreement."[17] From this general definition, James Starr delineates fives key aspects of such moral exhortation: (1) "Paraenesis is *benevolent* . . . [it builds on an] element of mutual friendship" and thus works with the assumption that the communicative setting is one of amicable relations, rather than between opponents; (2) "Paraenesis typically concerns *moral practices* to be pursued or avoided" and thus is interested in behavioral responses or moral paths taken; (3) "Paraenesis *reminds* someone . . . [it] 'concentrates on memory' " rather than on imparting new information or teaching. Paraenesis recalls what is known for reinforcing the continuance of moral behavior;[18] (4) "Paraenesis assumes a *shared*

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models of traditional and subversive paraenesis, served as the theoretical framework for Martin's analysis of paraenesis in 1 Peter (Martin, *Metaphor*, passim).

[15] Martin, *Metaphor*; cf. Martin, "Apostasy to Paganism: The Rhetorical Stasis of the Galatians Controversy," *JBL* 114 (1995): 437–461; Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*; Tite, "An Exploration of Valentinian Paraenesis: Rethinking Gnostic Ethics in the *Interpretation of Knowledge* (NHC XI,1)," *HTR* 97 (2004): 275–304.

[16] On static and dynamic commands, see Harold Attridge, "Paraenesis in a Homily (λόγος παρακλήσεως): The Possible Location of, and Socialization in, the 'Epistle to the Hebrews'," *Semeia* 50 (1990): 211–226.

[17] Starr and Engberg-Pedersen, "Introduction," in *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context*, edited by Troels Engberg-Pedersen and James M. Starr (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004), 4.

[18] With the Lund-Oslo definition of moral exhortation, paraenesis is distinguished from protrepsis (i.e., paraenesis does not seek to convert but to confirm; cf. Paul Hartlich, *De exhortationum a Graecis Romanisque scriptarum historia et indole* [Leipziger Studien zur Classichen philology, 11.2; Leipzig, 1889]; Theodore L. Burgess, *Epideictic Literature* [Studies in Classical Philology, 3; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1902]). See Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, 124. For a different approach to protreptic discourse, see Diana M. Swancutt, "Paraenesis in Light of Protrepsis: Troubling the Typical Dichotomy," in *Early Christian*

Table 1: Parallel Paraenetic Elements

Section A1		Section A2		Type of Element
Verse	Text	Verse	Text	
10a	*ut audistis praesentia mei*	16a	*Et quae audistis et acceptistis*	Reminding
10b	*ita retinete*	14b; 16b	*et estote firmi in sensu Christi*; *in corde retinete*	Static Commands
10b	*et facite in timore Dei*	12	*Et facite … facitis* = 15. *Facite*	Dynamic Commands
10c	*Et erit vobis vita in aeternum*	16c	*et erit vobis pax*	Motivation

worldview or set of convictions that inform and motivate the advice given";
and (5) "Finally, paraenesis *does not anticipate disagreement* . . . The advice
offered concerns simply the best way to achieve the common goals, and
both parties have already agreed on these."[19]

The above understanding of paraenesis fits the rhetorical elements in
Laod. 10–14, thereby indicating that this section of the letter is a sustained
moral exhortation that contributes to the overall purpose of the letter.
These verses are arranged in a simple A-B-A structure (see Appendix 1),
with the two outer units (vv. 10–11 and 14–16) vividly paralleling each other
in the presentation of the imperatives (Table 1).

This parallel structure effectively relates key hortative elements of
reminding, static/dynamic commands, and motivational clauses between
the two units.

In verses 10a and 16a, Ps.-Paul evokes a reminding motif, thus fitting
Starr's third aspect of paraenesis. Ps.-Paul concentrates on memory rather
than imparting new information to the Laodiceans. Two qualifications,
however, emerge in this presentation. First, the source of what they are
being reminded of is that which they "heard in my presence" (*praesentia*

Paraenesis in Context, edited by Troels Engberg-Pedersen and James M. Starr (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004), 113–153; Swancutt, "Pax Christi: Romans as Protrepsis to Live as Kings," Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 2001.

[19] Starr, "Was Paraenesis for Beginners?" in *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context*, edited by Troels Engberg-Pedersen and James M. Starr (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004), 79–80.

mei), which, in turn, evokes the *veritate evangelii, quod a me praedicatur* in the body opening and, by extension, the *veritatis evangelii* in verse 5. Thus, what the Laodiceans are being reminded of is the very gospel that Ps.-Paul and his co-workers have proclaimed and which is under attack by false teachers. Secondly, this call to remembrance recalls for the recipients that they have both heard and accepted this previous teaching. Discursively, these qualifications underscore the amicable relations shared by the author and recipients (in contrast to the confrontational relations with other teachers).

Both static and dynamic commands are present in the paraenesis in order to direct moral behavior (Starr's second aspect by using Attridge's qualification). By drawing the recipients attention to recall what they had received and accepted beforehand, Ps.-Paul exhorts the Laodiceans to "hold fast" to that teaching in verses 10b, 14b, and 16b with the imperatives *retinete* and *estote firmi*. The first static command is complemented with a dynamic command (*et facite*; v. 10b). These imperatives refer to the call to remembrance, thus enjoining the recipients to actively hold to and do what Ps.-Paul had previously taught them (i.e., the "true gospel"). Both "hold fast" and "do" are qualified by *in timore Dei*, thus echoing once again the divine source that they are to adhere to (e.g., *sed per Jesum Christum* in the prescript; *quod permanents estis in eo, et perseverantes in operibus ejusi* in the thanksgiving). The dynamic command in particular nicely relates back to the activity of the divine in the letter body on behalf of both Ps.-Paul (or his co-workers) (v. 5: *Et nunc faciet Deus*) and the recipients (v. 9: *Et id ipsum in vobis faciet misericordiam suam*), thereby linking the indicative to the imperative in this letter. The second *retinete* (v. 16b) repeats this point of holding fast to what Ps.-Paul had taught them. Finally, the imperative *estote firmi in sensu Christi* (v. 14b) nicely calls the recipients to "hold fast" with the qualification of "in the mind of Christ." This qualification gently builds on, though without directly paralleling, the call to unity in the body closing (*ut eandem dilectionem habeatis et sitis unianimes*). For Ps.-Paul, social cohesion needs to be maintained within the Laodicean church, with the foundation of that unity being the "true gospel" that he had previously brought to them. Indeed, it is only by means of "holding fast" to that teaching that their petitions can be fulfilled (v. 14a). These petitions likely relate back to their prayers in verse 7 (again evoking the verb *factum* as the indicative counterpart for the dynamic imperatives *facite* and *estote firmi* in the paraenesis). The dynamic imperative *facite* in verse 15 shifts the focus from the past to the future by means of the polysyndetic virtue list. The five virtues that the recipients are exhorted "to do"

embody the Christian lifestyle that Ps.-Paul's gospel alone can enable. As every virtue list should have a vice counterpart, verse 15 indirectly warns the recipients that to follow any other teaching would lead them to vice rather than virtue. With the virtue list, Ps.-Paul exhorts the Laodiceans to continue living a life exemplary of the gospel that he preaches. Thus, by means of static and dynamic commands, the author interlinks the recipients' past, present, and future adherence to his teaching.

Finally, the moral exhortation is supported by two paralleled motivational clauses (vv. 10c and 16c). Motivational clauses are important persuasive devices in moral exhortation, functioning to substantiate ethical propositions.[20] In order to support the exhortation to hold fast and do what the Laodiceans have already accepted, Ps.-Paul uses a clear eschatological promise in verse 10c (*et erit vobis vita in aeternum*), which serves as the interpretative framework of the motivation clause at verse 16c (*et erit vobis pax*) (note, for example, the parallel clausal structure). Earlier in the letter, the author evoked a soteriological perspective that seems to interweave realized and future eschatological promises. A clear future eschatological statement concludes the thanksgiving period, while we have two paralleled references to eternal life or salvation in the body of the letter (B1 and B2 in the chiastic arrangement). By using another eschatological reference as a motivating element in the paraenesis, Ps.-Paul again draws the reader's attention back to implications attached to not being deceived by false teachers, both for the Laodiceans (v. 3) and for the success of the Pauline mission (vv. 5, 7).[21] It is striking that these motivational statements

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[20] Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, 191; Lorenz Nieder, *Die Motive der religiös-sittlichen Paränese in den Paulinischen Gemeindebriefen* (Münchener Theologische Studien, 12; Munich: Karl Zink, 1956), 104–145; Ferdinand Hahn, "Die christologische Begründung urchristlicher Paränese," *ZNW* 72 (1981): 88–99, see especially 99; John G. Gammie, "Paraenetic Literature: Toward the Morphology of a Secondary Genre," *Semeia* 50 (1990): 59, 60–61; Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation, A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Library of Early Christianity; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); Martin, *Metaphor*, 93–98; Walter T. Wilson, *Love Without Pretense: Romans 12.9–21 and Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom Literature* (WUNT, 46; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1991); Heironymus Cruz, *Christological Motives and Motivated Actions in Pauline Paraenesis* (European University Studies, 23; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1990), and Lauri Thurén, *Argument and Theology in 1 Peter: The Origins of Christian Paraenesis* (JSNTS, 114; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); Thurén, "Motivation as the Core of Paraenesis—Remarks on Peter and Paul as Persuaders," in *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context*, edited by Troels Engberg-Pedersen and James M. Starr (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004), 353–371. Cf. Seneca, *Epistle* 94.

[21] With regard to Pauline paraenesis in 1 Corinthians, David W. Kuck, *Judgment and Community Conflict: Paul's Use of Apocalyptic Judgment Language in 1 Corinthians 3:5–4:5* (NTS, 66; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1992), 229, cf. 234–235, observes: "...in Jewish texts [prior to 100 C.E.] that refer to a belief in future judgment it [paraenesis] functions

in the paraenetic section reinforce that affirmation of the thanksgiving; i.e., the recipients are already holding fast and doing what they should be doing. Thus, there is no rebuke underlying this letter. Rather, the motivation clauses tap into the call to remembrance with the end goal of encouraging the Laodiceans to continue along the path that they are on. Furthermore, by evoking an eschatological framework, Ps.-Paul discursively establishes and thus assumes the shared worldview that the apostle and the recipients hold to.[22]

By positing a shared worldview, building up the amicable relations between author and recipients throughout the letter, and exhorting by means of a call to remembrance, the letter writer establishes a discursive communicative setting wherein there should be no disagreement expected. The recipients should accept Ps.-Paul's moral exhortation as commonsense, as something that they already adhere to and practice.

This "sandwich" like structure places interpretative emphasis upon the central unit (v. 13). Whereas the outer units parallel each other in order to enjoin the recipients to appropriately respond to the letter, the central unit clearly establishes the persuasion/dissuasion point of the entire letter. In this central unit we find two imperatives: *gaudete* and *praecavete*. These are antithetically juxtaposed, set within a general summation of the hortative purpose of the letter (*et quod est reliquum*), while once again stressing the positive relations between letter writer and recipient by means of the vocative *delectissimi*.[23] This two-fold exhortation functions to position

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[22] for the most part to define one group against another in the face of conflict, crisis, or threat which affects the whole group." Similarly, in regard the paraenetic function of eschatology in 1 Thessalonians, see Charles A. Wanamaker, "Apocalyptic Discourse, Paraenesis and Identity Maintenance in 1 Thessalonians," *Neot.* 36.1–2 (2002): 131–145.

[22] Rhetorically, this is an important qualification (which I raised in Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, 297). By narratively, or discursively, setting forth a shared worldview, paraenesis does not simply *hold* to a shared worldview, but even more importantly *presents its worldview as an assumed* shared worldview in order to generate mutual identity for the sake of mobilizing or facilitating the appropriate response as desired by the letter writer. Thus, by assuming a shared worldview, our author utilizes these two motivational clauses to tacitly persuade the recipients.

[23] A similar reading is taken by Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument*, 43, who argues that Laodiceans, "contains two major admonitions: beware of heretics and devote yourself to the ethical life. In support of these two expressed hopes the letter enlists the authority of Paul's unique reputation." Donelson does not offer any detailed analysis of how Laodiceans articulates this two-fold exhortation, but merely connects this exhortation to a conflict between heterodoxy and orthodoxy, specifically that "[h]eterodoxy is undermining the tranquility and morality of the church." While I agree with Donelson in recognizing a two-fold exhortation, I am not convinced that Laodiceans contends with heterodoxy or that the letter is best understood within the model of orthodoxy and heresy.

the recipients in a positive light, while, simultaneously, derogatorily positioning the other teachers as illegitimate. The positive exhortation "to rejoice in Christ" plays on the author's continued treatment of the divine throughout this letter. In this letter, God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit serve as the source of authentic teaching (v. 1), the liturgical object of worship and thus the source of "peace" (v. 2), the recipient of prayers (vv. 3, 7, 14), the basis for eschatological fulfillment, life, or salvation (vv. 3, 4, 7, 8, 10), the basis of joy in suffering (v. 5), and the active agent for social cohesion within the community (vv. 9, 11). Discursively, Ps.-Paul has already aligned himself and the recipients with the divine, while disassociating the false teachers. The author's exhortation "to rejoice" continues such discursive alignments, as Ps.-Paul exemplifies this very action of rejoicing in suffering (6; *Et nunc palam sunt vincula mea, quae patior in Christo, quibus laetor et gaudeo*; cf. verse 8). Thus, to remain firm in their moral path is, as the positive exhortation in verse 13 declares, "to rejoice in Christ." This is the persuasive side of the letter's hortative purpose.

The dissuasive side of this exhortation is embodied in the imperative *praecavete*. What the recipients are to beware are those who are "out for sordid gain" (*sordidos in lucro*). Just as the recipients are exhorted to continue to follow Ps.-Paul's teaching, so also are they exhorted to be on their guard regarding other teachers that counter the gospel that Ps.-Paul and his co-workers proclaim. This two-fold exhortation effectively articulates and demands a response to the letter's motivation for writing, as set forth in the body opening. While the exact details of what it is about these false teachers that is offensive to the author are left unstated (i.e., there is no clearly articulated theology that is being countered by the letter), the conflict is certainly present and explicated in this accusation of "those who are out for sordid gain".

Debate has ensured over this warning between Sellew and Holloway, specifically over the verse's relationship to Philippians. In countering Sellew's argument that Laodiceans demonstrates knowledge of only Philippians Letter B (Phil. 1:1–3:1, 4:4–9, and 4:21–23), Holloway argues that *gaudete in Christo et praecavete sordidos in lucro* (Laod. 13) merges Phil. 3:1 and 2. Holloway follows Lightfoot's retroversion of Laodiceans, contending that *praecavete* translates βλέπετε, while rejecting Harnack's suggestion of παραιτεῖσθε τοὺς αἰσχροκερδεῖς, while *gaudete in Christo* translates χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ.[24] The object of the static imperative *praecavete*, i.e., *sordidos in*

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   24   Holloway, "Laodiceans," 323.

lucro, is taken as relating to the Judaizers of Phil. 3:2, a reading that is only possible by invoking Titus 1:10–11. In his response, Sellew decisively counters Holloway's argument. Not only does Holloway's reading require that Ps.-Paul had access to canonical Philippians as is (thus overlooking that Phil. 3:1–2 is a possible editorial seam and, therefore, if Philippians is a composite document then the warning in 3:2 could have been, in some form, in Letter B), but Holloway also ignores other possibilities to Lightfoot's βλέπετε (e.g., both Harnack's παραιτεῖσθε and Sellew's φυλλάσσεσθε are both viable and even make more sense than βλέπετε given the "bewaring" quality of *praecavete*), with Lightfoot's retroversion being dependent, as Sellew correctly counters, on an a priori intertextual link to canonical Philippians. Finally, Holloway assumes a tendentious literary connection between Laodiceans and Philippians. Both imperatives in Laod. 13 do not neatly follow what is found in Philippians. Firstly, the object of *gaudete* is not *in domino* (for ἐν κυρίω) but *in Christo*. There is no obvious reason for this redactional shift from "Lord" to "Christ" (as if a major theological shift is being made), especially given the prescript's *et domino Jesu Christo*. Thus, the question must be raised as to why, if Ps.-Paul were following Phil. 3:1, he would modify his source. Secondly, and more importantly, the object of *praecavete* does not follow any of the three options set forth in Phil. 3:2. It is only by means of forcing a double allusion from Philippians and Titus that Holloway is able to relate Laodiceans to Phil. 3:2. This hypothesis is problematic for at least two reasons: (1) it requires a far more complicated solution than is needed, and (2) it ignores the fact that there is nothing in Laodiceans that even remotely suggests Judaizers as the author's theological opponents (indeed, the content of the false teaching being refuted is completely ignored in Laodiceans). Thirdly, the antithetical structure of Laod. 13 does not emerge directly and naturally from Phil. 3:1–2 (indeed, it would seem more likely for the redactional changes to have moved in the opposition direction, with canonical Philippians elaborating on what we find in Laodiceans to fit that new context, which, once again, suggests that Laodiceans has access to an earlier version of Philippians). In order for Laod. 13 to be directly drawing upon Phil. 3:1–2, Ps.-Paul would have had to make several significant changes or translation decisions to his source material. Specifically, in Philippians the antithesis so obvious in Laodiceans is interrupted by τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ ὀκνηρόν, ὑμῖν ἀσφαλές (Phil. 3:1). I can think of no reason why Ps.-Paul would cut this comment, especially as the philophrenetic quality of the statement would work wonderfully in Laodiceans, in particular given the paraenetic "reminder" function that such a statement would have served in the new

context. Unlike Philippians, Laodiceans establishes a sharp antithetical exhortation of persuasion and dissuasion to drive home the paraenesis.[25] Once we remove the objects for the two imperatives, call into question the need to read βλέπετε as underlying the Latin, and recognize the structural differences between Philippians and Laodiceans, there remains no reason to accept Holloway's contention.

What is overlooked not only by Holloway, but by other scholars addressing Laod. 13 (including Sellew), is that there is no reason to assume literary dependency for understanding *praecavete sordidos in lucro*, as this imperative taps into a common polemical device for undermining one's philosophical opponents.[26] Both within Christian circles (especially within the second century) and the broader Greco-Roman philosophical tradition, it was common practice to refute competitors by casting them into the villainous role of "false" teachers or philosophers who are motivated by selfish desires. Such opponents are discursively presented as failing to adhere to the intrinsic value of their philosophical teachings or doctrines. Often these motives are tied into wealth, sexual appetite, and establishing a reputation (either within a patronage system or for constructing a personal legacy among the masses). Thus, Laodiceans is likely tapping into the widespread trope of the charlatan.

Perhaps the best examples of such false teachers are found in the second-century satires of Lucian. In his delightful work *Piscator*, Lucian has Frankness draw the attention of Philosophy and the various great philosophers (who are temporarily brought back from the dead) to the false philosophers who merely use the title of "philosopher" as a pretext for per-

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[25] Similar problems arise when we consider Holloway's correlation of Laod. 15–16 with Phil. 4:8–9 and Laod. 9 with Phil. 2:1–2 ("Laodiceans," 322). The literary dependency is not exact or even close. Rather, they are more like loose parallels that would, if truly indicating literary dependency, require an explanation on redactional decisions being made (especially as there is nothing here that would be cut due to specific personal connections between Paul and the Philippian community nor anything that is theologically out of place in Laodiceans). The assumption that loose parallels between Laodiceans and the Pauline letters, especially Philippians, indicates a direct literary dependency (a "lifting" approach by the author of Laodiceans) has derailed detailed analysis of Laodiceans and its sources.

[26] Furthermore, there is no basis on which to accept Quispel's identification of the opposing teachers: "Laodiceans may allude to the endeavour of the Catholics in Rome to emasculate St Paul and to encapsulate him in a Canon by adding the unauthentic Pastoral Letters of Timothy and Titus . . . Are these words [Laod. 4] an echo of the gigantic struggle between the followers of Paul in Rome and the followers of Peter, which was to lead to the birth of the Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church?" (Quispel, "Epistle to the Laodiceans," 693). Descriptions of the false teachers are so vague in Laodiceans that such a specific identification is mere fanciful wish.

sonal gain. We begin with the mistaken belief that Frankness (i.e., "frank speech" or *parrhesia* which embodies Lucian's voice) has slandered Philosophy herself, yet it is Philosophy that corrects Plato's accusation early on: "Careful! Perhaps his abuse was not directed against Philosophy, but against imposters who do much that is vile in our name" including setting "doctrines for sale at two obols apiece" (15).[27] The rest of the text uncovers these false philosophers, calling them into judgment. In the process, we learn more about what motives define these charlatans. The primary motivations, which ironically stand in contradictions with the very doctrines being promoted, include an obsession with financial gain ("they teach these very doctrines for pay, and worship the rich, and are agog after money") while trying to establish themselves within elite social relations that they have no just claim to ("and elbow one another at the portals of the rich and take part in great banquets, where they pay vulgar compliments" and act disorderly) (34). Greed drives these charlatans to not only demand gifts from others, but, in turn, refuse to give anything to others in need (35). Later in the text, when all the philosophers are summoned from the town by Philosophy, very few philosophers show up until, at Frankness's suggestion, they are promised various gifts. Philosophy's response sums up Lucian's disdain: "The Acropolis is full in a trice as the noisily settle in place, and everywhere are begging-bags and flattery, beards and shamelessness, staves and gluttony, syllogisms and avarice," to which Frankness adds, "These cheats are more convincing than the genuine philosophers" (42).[28] Later, when fishing for the false philosophers that flee, figs and gold are used as bait. Lucian highlights that charlatans are those who are out for sordid gain, in this case primarily wealth and social prestige (i.e., honorable places at elite banquets, thus abusing the patronage system).

Lucian's polemical barbs are not limited to a generalized criticism of the degradation of "true" philosophy within the various schools, but are extended to specific cult leaders who were his contemporaries. In *Alexander the False Prophet*, Alexander the priest of Glycon is attacked as turning a quick profit from trumped up divinations (23). Indeed, Alexander is characterized as being motivated by wealth, specifically in pursuing the

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[27] Translations from Lucian's works are taken from the LCL.
[28] Note especially Lucian's use of antithesis to undermine these false philosophers. This polemical device demonstrates that these would-be philosophers only have the external visage of a philosopher, but lack the correct moral character—i.e., the internal motivations do not correspond, but rather abuse, the external appearance.

rich (16), as well as desiring a reputation (e.g., in his relations to Rutil-
ianus) and, perhaps most vividly set forth by the narrative, his sexual
appetites (including young boys and married women; the wives coming
with the praise of their husbands no less!) (41–42). Noteworthy is the use
of "the kiss" for both the boys and the women. Lucian claims that Alex-
ander would "not . . . greet anyone over eighteen years with his lips, or to
embrace and kiss him; he kissed only the young, extending his hand to the
others to be kissed by them. They were called 'those within the kiss'" (καὶ
ἐκαλοῦντο οἱ ἐντὸς τοῦ φιλήματος) (41). Similarly, those women that Alex-
ander desired to have sexual relations with would be "deem[ed] . . . worthy
of a kiss" (42). A ritualized kiss is incorporated into the prophet's interac-
tions with his followers, using the kiss to demarcate degrees of access or
acceptance by Alexander. Lucian, of course, casts this ritual act into an
immoral light. Under the pen of Lucian, Alexander becomes the quintes-
sential representative of the charlatan trope, though he is not the only one
to fall under Lucian's polemical gaze.

Perhaps more closely related to early Christian circles is Lucian's *The
Passing of Peregrinus*. Here we find Proteus Peregrinus—a once Christian,
once Cynic philosopher or teacher—that is castigated as a charlatan prey-
ing upon the ignorant masses. Evidently, Peregrinus gained a prestigious
position within Christian circles. When he was imprisoned, these Chris-
tians seem to have viewed him as a martyr figure, rather than, as Lucian
saw him, as a scoundrel. Peregrinus's motivation is the "reputation . . . and
notoriety-seeking that he was enamoured of," which was nicely given him
by these simple folk along with a great deal of money: "much money came
to him from them by reason of his imprisonment, and he procured not a
little revenue from it." While Peregrinus is not characterized as seeking
sexual pleasures, he does fit the other two elements of the charlatan trope
that we find addressed by ancient writers, both those outside and within
early Christian circles: a desire for a lasting reputation (so significant in an
honor/shame culture) and material wealth. Whether Lucian's descriptions
of such teachers were accurate or polemical distortion is beside the point.
His barbs effectively illustrate the trope of the charlatan.[29]

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[29] Lucian is not the only ancient writer to address charlatanism. See also Dio Chrysos-
tom, *Discourse* 32.10 (where a humorous analogy is made between those "in the guise of
philosophers" who are out for "their own profit and reputation, and not to improve you"
with physicians who merely entertain rather than practice medicine). Dio Chrysostom also
sets up a contrast between charlatans and true philosophers, contending that the latter do
not seek after wealth (*Discourse* 77/78.34–38, especially 37–38).

The charlatan played an important role in early Christian circles, especially during the second century. Lucian's discussion of Peregrinus is a telling piece of evidence, though not the only one. In *Didache* 11 and 12 we find directions for a Christian community to test wandering prophets or teachers. These directions are intended to ensure that charlatans, such as Peregrinus (at least as presented by Lucian), do not take advantage of the community. Key qualities of an acceptable prophet or apostle include: (1) "who comes and teaches you everything mentioned above. But if a teacher should himself turn away and teach something different, undermining these things, do not listen to him" (11.1–2), they should not remain longer than two days at most ("if he stays three days, he is a false prophet [ψευδοπροφήτης])" (11.5), they should not take anything more than enough food to get him or her to her or his next lodging (11.6), they must live what he or she teaches (11.10), and if he or she decides to settle in the community then the prophet/apostle must earn their own living (12.3–5).[30] A key statement here is, "If he asks for money, he is a false prophet" (11.6). A similar concern is raised in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, who characterizes the false prophet as someone who receives wages or uses his or her position in order to gain a privileged position (*Man.* 11.12: "Moreover, he receives wages for his prophecy—without them, he does not prophecy. But can the divine spirit receive wages for its prophecies? The prophet of God cannot do this, but the spirit of these other prophets is earthly"). *Didache* and the *Shepherd* both demonstrate a social concern over charlatans within the Christian community; enough of a concern, it seems, that church leaders felt the need to warn and advise Christians regarding such individuals. This advice may reflect a power struggle between itinerant and sedentary authorities in the early second century,[31] or centralizing

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[30] Translations of the Apostolic Fathers are taken from Ehrman's edition in the LCL.

[31] The *Wanderradikalismus* hypothesis, as put forth by Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, translated by James Moffatt (New York: Harper & Row, 1961 [1908]), and especially Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, translated by John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978 [1956]), has met with serious criticism from, for example, Jonathan A. Draper, "Weber, Theissen, and 'Wandering Charismatics' in the *Didache*," *JECS* 6.4 (1998): 541–576; Richard A. Horsley, *Sociology of the Jesus Movement*, 2nd edition (New York: Continuum, 1994 [1989]); Horsley, "Jesus, Itinerant Cynic or Israelite Prophet?" in *Images of Jesus Today*, edited by J. H. Charlesworth (Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1994), 68–97; Wolfgang Stegemann, "Wanderradikalismus im Urchristentum? Historische und theologische Auseinandersetzung mit einer interessanten These," in *Der Gott der kleinen Leute: Sozialgeschichtliche Bibelauslegungen II: Neues Testament*, edited by W. Schottroff and W. Stegemann (München: Kaiser, 1979), 94–120; Luise Schottroff, "Itinerant Prophetesses: A Feminist Analysis of the Sayings Source Q," in *The Gospel Behind the Gospels: Current Studies on Q*, edited by Ronald A. Piper

and decentralizing social forces.[32] Evidently charlatanism was as much a problem for various early Christian leaders as it was for Lucian. The second-century pseudonymous author of Titus, for instance, attacks those of the "circumcision party" by using this same trope ("by teaching for sordid gain what is not right to teach"; Titus 1:11–12), while the author of 1 Peter, likely writing near the end of the first century/beginning of the second century, warns church leaders to not carry out their duties "for sordid gain but eagerly" (5:1–2). Even earlier in the first century, a teacher needed to be on his or her guard against accusations of being a charlatan. Paul, for instance, reminds the Thessalonian Christians that he did not come among them with impure motives (1 Thess. 2:1–6) and exclaims to the Corinthian Christians: "For we are not peddlers of God's word like so many: but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence" (1 Cor. 2:17).

This trope persists within Christian polemic to at least the end of the second century, perhaps most clearly present in Irenaeus' treatment of Marcus the Magician (*Against Heresies* 1.13.3). Marcus is perhaps the best parallel to Lucian's treatment of Alexander and Peregrinus. Irenaeus describes him as, "devot[ing] himself especially to women, and those such as are well-bred, and elegantly attired, and of great wealth." When Marcus tricks these women to believe that they have received a prophetic gift, such a woman "makes the effort to reward him, not only by the gift of her possessions (in which he has collected a very large fortune), but also by yield[ing] up to him her person, desiring in every way to be united to him." Thus, Marcus fits the expected portrait of the charlatan, who is motivated by sexual pleasures and a desire for wealth (*et remunerare eum gestit, non solum secundum substantiae suae dationem, unde et diuitiarum copiam magnam collegit, sed et secundum corporis copulationem et secundum omnia unire ei cupit, uti cum eo descendat in unum*).[33] (Marcus, as presented by Irenaeus, does not seem to fit Alexander's third characteristic, i.e., a desire for a reputation.)

Given this widespread motif of the charlatan seeking personal benefit rather than adhering to the truth of whatever she or he proclaims, the

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(NTS, 75; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1995), 347–360; and William E. Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001). See the discussion in Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, 270–276.

[32] Einar Thomassen, "Orthodoxy and Heresy in Second-Century Rome," *HTR* 97.3 (2004): 241–256.

[33] Latin text is from the SC edition, while the translation is from the ANF edition.

imperative warning in Laodiceans, *praecavete sordidos in lucro* (Laod. 13) is less likely a direct quote from a Pauline letter, much less an awkward conflation of Phil. 3:1–2 and Titus 1:10–11, than it is another example of this broader motif. Rather than an instance of literary dependency, Ps.-Paul exhorts the recipients to be on their guard against what would have been a recognized social problem that was especially present in the second century when the letter was possibly written. Rhetorically, the author discursively situates the false teachers among such charlatans as Peregrinus, Alexander, Marcus, and those nameless prophets and apostles that *Didache* and the *Shepherd of Hermas* raise warnings against. Like *Didache* and the *Shepherd of Hermas* in particular, Laodiceans asserts that Ps.-Paul's teachings are those already received while the opposing teachers are breaking with that established "true gospel" (compare with *Didache* 11.1–2). Laodiceans, furthermore, antithetically presents Ps.-Paul as an authentic conveyor of the "true gospel" due to a divine appointment and the opposing teachers as inauthentic due to their immoral, earthly motivations (compare with *Man.* 11.12).

By calling into question the motives of other teachers, Ps.-Paul has effectively alienated them from the Laodicean community while taking on the opposite and positive status that Paul articulated in 1 Thess. 2:1–6 and 2 Cor. 2:17, thereby once again rhetorically reinforcing the "truth" of the "gospel" that the author proclaims (Laod. 4). Furthermore, by evoking the image of the charlatan, Ps.-Paul has given the recipients a further motivation for continuing along the moral path that they have been on; in particular, there is a more implicit rhetorical move underlying verse 13. Specifically, the author has positioned the recipients, who are not currently being deluded by charlatans, as being wise rather than ignorant. In Lucian especially it is the ignorant masses, or the simpletons who are Christians, who mainly are deceived by charlatans such as Peregrinus. By indicating that the Laodiceans are not being deceived, but need to be on their guard, Ps.-Paul has praised the recipients while simultaneously hinting that to embrace these other teachers would disprove that praise (i.e., by accepting "false" teaching, they would indicate that they are ignorant rather than cultured).[34] The tacit nature of this argument certainly would

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[34] Young Chul Wang, "Pauline Letter Paraenesis," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams (PAST, 6; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 262–263, identifies one aspect of Pauline paraenesis as "an exhortation of interpersonal relationship" (i.e., a concern for maintaining the healthy social condition of a given community, especially when that community is faced with a threat of divisiveness,

have added persuasive force to the letter while further suggesting that
(due to their superiority over those who are deluded by such people) there
would be no anticipated disagreement (Starr's fifth aspect of paraenesis).

This two-fold exhortation—of persuasion and dissuasion—at the cen-
ter of the paraenesis encapsulates the entire point of the letter: to enjoin
the Laodicean Christians to continue to hold fast to what they had already
received from Ps.-Paul and to guard against those who would deter them
from that course, for such teachers neither teach the true gospel nor do
they have pure motives. The entire letter has discursively developed this
theme through the entire letter structure and has now reached a cumula-
tive climax here in the paraenesis section.[35] Indeed, we could justly read
Laodiceans along the same lines that Malherbe reads 1 Thessalonians; i.e.,
as a paraenetic letter with the earlier parts of the letter establishing the
basis for the explicit moral exhortation that concludes the letter.

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such as with Philippians). Such interpersonal relational concern is certainly at the heart of
the paraenesis in Laodiceans. Indeed, for Ps.-Paul, the goal of the exhortation is to simul-
taneously reinforce the interpersonal relationship that he has with the recipients while
undermining similar interpersonal relations that could emerge between the Laodicean
Christians and other teachers.

[35] Contra MaGee's "Exalted Apostle," 125, who claims that there are only "vague and
relatively mild statements about opponents of the gospel in v. 4 . . . and v. 13 . . . there is
little evidence that 'Paul' is mounting an energetic advance of his teachings in the face of
sustained opposition or teetering loyalties. Therefore, there is no need for 'Paul' to assert
his authority in a forceful way as was the case in Gal 1:1." MaGee overlooks the importance
of the charlatan theme due to several methodological mistakes: (1) he conflates Galatians
with Laodiceans, as if Laodiceans only makes sense if it follows the rhetorical situation of
Galatians; (2) he does not recognize that Laodiceans' reference to false teachers or oppo-
sition needs to be read in the context of the broader hortatory rhetoric of the letter; and
(3) MaGee comes to such mistaken conclusions largely due to the presupposition underly-
ing the "dismissal" approach to Laodiceans (i.e., that the letter is simply a random collec-
tion of Pauline phrases that are not worth studying). My analysis has demonstrated that
Laodiceans is far more refined in its rhetorical treatment of false teachers.

EPISTOLARY ANALYSIS V: THE LETTER CLOSING

In discussing the letter closing, Jeffrey Weima whimsically refers to this section as "the 'Rodney Dangerfield' section of Paul's letters: it doesn't get any respect."[1] Like the prescript, the closing is commonly glossed over as mere formulaic convention, contributing nothing to our understanding of these letters. Heikki Koskenniemi recognizes that the letter closing functions to conclude the epistolary encounter that is set forth in the prescript.[2] While the closing certainly serves this function, it has the potential to do far more than simply serve as a typical device for leave taking. Paul's letters certainly do more, and we are deeply in Weima's debt for this insight.[3]

The letter closing can be interpreted analogously to the thanksgiving period, that is "as the thanksgiving foreshadows and points ahead to the major concerns to be addressed in the body of the letter, so the closing serves to highlight and encapsulate the main points previously taken up in the body . . . [which], in turn, provides interpretative clues for a richer understanding of [the Pauline] letters."[4] By modifying the epistolary formulas that were used to conclude a letter, an ancient author could signal significant themes that assist in concluding the epistolary encounter so as to effectively underscore the purpose of the letter, by establishing a closing tone that should prompt the desired response from the recipient.

Ancient letters typically ended with a series of closing greetings and a farewell statement.[5] Troy Martin aptly observes that, "[t]his word of fare-

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[1] Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "Sincerely, Paul: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams (PAST, 6; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 307.

[2] See, for example, Heikki Koskenniemi, *Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n. Chr.* (Soumalaisen Tiedeakatemian Toimituksia; Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, 102.2; Helskinki: Akateeminen Kirjakauppa, 1956), 155. See also the discussion of Pauline letter closings in White, "Epistolary Literature," 1744–1751.

[3] This insight is developed in both Weima's recent essay, "Sincerely, Paul," and in his book length treatment, *Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings* (JSNTS, 101; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994).

[4] Weima, "Sincerely, Paul," 309.

[5] Exler, *Form*, 69–71, drew a distinction between three types of letters in regard to the farewell formula utilized. Familiar letters tended to end with ἔρρωσο or its modification;

well functions as the 'good-bye' of the speech encounter."[6] Both the greet-
ings and farewell served a philophronetic concern, thereby ending a letter
with stress on friendship, continued communication, and shared well
wishes.[7] Christianized versions of such closings abound in early Christian
letters, in particular the Pauline corpus.[8]

Weima sets forth five structural components that typify the Pauline let-
ters. While not all of these components will be found in every letter, they
are surprising consistent and four are relevant to Laodiceans: the peace
benediction; the hortatory section; the greetings; the autograph; and the
grace benediction.[9] The peace benediction usually opens with an intro-
ductory element, such as δέ or καί, includes a reference to the source of
peace ("from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"), a wish state-
ment (explicit or implied) for peace to be supplied, and a reference to
the recipient of the peace wish (i.e., the letter recipient; frequently with
μετά and ὑμῶν). The hortative section is a final request or directive, typi-
cally adding stress to previous elements from the letter body or carrying
a philophronetic function (e.g., 1 Thess. 5:25: "Brothers, pray for us"; Phlm.
20: "Yes, brother, may I have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my
heart in Christ"). The greetings can be supplied in three forms. Firstly, the
first-person type, when the letter writer sends greetings to the recipients
("I greet"). This type only appears in Rom. 16:22 (and is given by Tertius,
not Paul). Secondly, the second-person type of greeting "enlists the help of
his readers in passing on greetings to specific individuals in their church
community."[10] Although those being greeting would likely be included
among the letter's recipients, Weima suggests that Paul often uses this
indirect method of passing along personal greetings with rhetorical pur-
pose: "the answer seems to be that the involvement of the congregation as
a whole in passing on his greetings to others expressed a stronger sense of
public commendation for those individuals being specifically greeted by
the apostle."[11] Thus, the second-person type of greeting functioned to build
solidarity within the community, specifically in connection with particu-

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business letters tended to end with εὐτύχει; and official letters tended to lack such a
formula.

   [6] Martin, *Metaphor*, 77.
   [7] Martin, *Metaphor*, 76–77.
   [8] See White, "Epistolary Literature," 1740.
   [9] Weima, "Sincerely, Paul," passim. In *Neglected Endings*, Weima studies several other
common conventions, in addition to these five, that are found in ancient letters: the illit-
eracy formula, the dating formula, and the postscript. The three additional conventions
are not relevant for the Pauline letters.
   [10] Weima, "Sincerely, Paul," 328.
   [11] Weima, "Sincerely, Paul," 328.

lar key figures. Thirdly, Paul uses the third-person type of greeting, where he passes on greetings to the recipients from others who are with Paul. All three types are constructed around three components: the greeting verb, the person passing along greetings, and the recipients of the greetings. Paul occasionally includes a statement of autograph (e.g., 1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Phlm. 19; among the disputed letters, Col. 4:18 and 2 Thess. 3:17); that is, an indication that Paul writes in his own hand, rather than using a secretary such as Tertius, at least in closing the letter. Weima suggests that such a statement in the letter could be an oral device for public reading of the letter (as a shift in handwriting would not be evident in such as setting, such as it would in the personal papyri letters). Finally, the grace benediction corresponds to the common healthgiving clause that we find as the farewell element in ancient letters.[12] This Christianized formula is present in every Pauline letter and offers a socially specific focus of well wish, highlighting the common worldview that the author and recipients share, due to the very source of that benefit (God and Jesus Christ) and the supra-mundane quality of the wish ("grace"). Such grace and peace wishes nicely parallel the Christianized healthgiving clause in the prescript, thereby creating an epistolary *inclusio* between the opening and the closing of the letter.[13]

Laodiceans concludes with a fitting Pauline letter closing for the rhetorical situation of the letter. Of the five structural components, three are explicitly present in the epistolary closing (greetings, grace benediction, and hortatory section), one is closely related to the letter closing (peace benediction), and one is absent (autograph). As the autograph is rare in Paul's letters, both undisputed and disputed, its absence in Laodiceans is not surprising.

The grace benediction appears in verse 19 (*gratia domini Jesu cum spiritu vestro*). Like other Pauline grace benedictions, Ps.-Paul assumes a shared worldview by means of this grace wish. Unlike other Pauline grace wishes, the assumption underlying Laodiceans is that the recipients already have this grace due to their steadfastness. This assumption is suggested by the shift of the peace benediction to the closing of the paraenesis, where in verse 16 we read: *Et quae audistis et acceptistis, in corde retinete, et erit vobis pax*. The "grace and peace" *inclusio* so common in the Pauline letter

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[12] White, "Epistolary Literature," 1740.
[13] So also Weima, "Sincerely, Paul," 341, who reads a chiastic structure in this parallel (I'm less convinced that a clear chiasm would have been picked up by an ancient audience). William L Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition in 1 Peter* (WUNT, 2.30; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1989), 27, also recognizes such an *inclusio* in 1 Peter.

is effected in Laodiceans with parallels of *in corde = cum spiritu vestro* and *pax = gratia*. The delimitation of the grace benediction to only Jesus Christ could be explained by means of such a parallel, specifically with *cum spiritu vestro* aligning the recipients with *sensu Christi* at verse 14 (thus, they are to be "likeminded" not only with each other, but also with and by means of the "mind of Christ"; Laod. 14, in turn, parallels Laod. 11, *est enim Deus qui operatur in vos*, thus evoking the full source of the Pauline grace and peace wish). In the paraenesis, the motivational clause qualifies the eschatological "peace" as conditional on the recipients continued adherence to what they had "heard and accepted". Thus, so also is the "grace" of the closing conditioned on such adherence. Given the remembrance aspect of the paraenesis, Ps.-Paul's wish has already been fulfilled and it is his hope that grace and peace will continue in the community's life. Consequently, the grace and peace benedictions are designed to integrate the letter closing with earlier content in the letter.

The greetings in Laodiceans are a bit more complicated due to a variant in the manuscript tradition. Verse 17 does not appear in some manuscripts, most significantly Codex Fuldensis, which begins the letter closing at verse 18. A third-person type of greeting is found in verse 18 (*salutant vos sancti*), whereas a second-person type of greeting is found in verse 17 (*salutate omnes fraters in osculo sancto*). Both greetings include a greeting verb, the giver of greetings (the saints with Ps.-Paul or the Laodiceans), and the recipients of the greeting (the letter's recipients or "all the brethren" within the Laodicean community). Each greeting contributes to the philophronetic relationship between Ps.-Paul and the Laodicean Christians, specifically as such interpersonal relations are encompassed in a broader, Christian community.

The third-person greeting reminds the Laodiceans that Ps.-Paul is not alone in sending this letter, but rather stands in continuity with "the saints"; indeed, by passing along such greetings, Ps.-Paul indirectly uses the other Christians with him as a testimony to the veracity of his "true gospel" and thus of his moral exhortation to the Laodiceans. Such rhetorical backing is not argumentative, but presented as a supporting subtext. The second-person type of greeting, however, functions, as Weima puts it, to express "a stronger sense of public commendation" for those greeted. However, Laodiceans does not specify a particular individual or fraction within the Laodicean church, a specification that could have served as a pseudepigraphic device. Instead, the greetings are passed on from Ps.-Paul to the entire Laodicean community via the entire Laodicean community. Thus, from a discursive perspective Ps.-Paul underscores the unity and positive relations that the community already enjoys. This positive social

condition is both the fulfillment of verse 9 (*ut eandem dilectionem habeatis et sitis unianimes*) and the basis for Ps.-Paul's thanksgiving in verse 3. The addition of the *osculum pacis* ("kiss of peace") certainly adds to this theme of social unity. Weima notes that the distinct Christian modification of this mode of greeting (adding "holy") distinguishes Christian practice from the common practice in the east:

> What is new, however, is that Paul explicitly refers to this kiss greeting as a "holy" kiss. Paul could be referring to the importance of maintaining proper and holy motives while practicing a kiss greeting. But though this concern is surely part of Paul's thought in the exhortation . . . the kiss express not merely friendship and love, but more specifically reconciliation and peace . . . As a concrete expression of the oneness that exists between followers of Jesus, the exchange of the holy kiss naturally became an introductory step leading up to the celebration of the Eucharist—a further outward act that also powerfully symbolized the unity of believers as the body of Christ.[14]

Thus the addition of *osculo sancto*, along with the familial language (*omnes fratres*), furthers the discursive purpose of the public commendation. A second purpose is served by verse 17, which is highlighted by the Pauline moral distinction of the "holy" kiss, specifically that the Laodiceans (like Ps.-Paul and other Christians) greet each other with good motives rather than the motives of those who are "out for sordid gain" (Laod. 13). Although a direct intertextual connection to Lucian's polemic against Alexander would be asking far more of Laodiceans than it can plausibly deliver, it is helpful to recall how, according to Lucian, the greeting kiss is abused and ritualized by Alexander in his inappropriate relations with young boys ("those within the kiss"; *Alex.* 41) and women (*Alex.* 42). The kiss becomes a focal point of social propriety, including the inverse danger of impropriety, and thus it becomes an appropriate descriptor for distinguishing the charlatan and the true philosopher or teacher. In Laodiceans, the holy kiss is extended to the entire community but not to the false teachers. They are excluded from proper fellowship, as they are outside the truth and thus the unity of the church. Thus, the intra-Christian threat

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[14] Weima, "Sincerely, Paul," 331. Cf. Stephen Benko, "The Kiss," in *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 79–102, especially 98, who holds a similar interpretation: "[the kiss] could be simply an expression of friendship and good will, but among Christians it assumed a deeper meaning; it symbolized the unity, the belonging together of Christians, in the church of Jesus Christ" (also cited by Weima). Benko also notes the problems, and advantages, associated with the early Christian kiss: "Although the holy kiss gave rise to false rumors among non-Christians as well as temptations among the faithful, the church did not abandon it. The idea of the mystical union with God was so supremely important in this rite that it overrode all other considerations. The holy kiss maintained the unity of the church" (86).

facing the Laodicean Christians is discursively transformed into an externalized threat of false Christians against the true Christians who stand in harmony with Ps-Paul.

The philophronetic quality of the epistolary "good-bye" is central to Laodiceans' letter closing. This quality is further reinforced by the hortatory section that brings the letter closing to its finale: *Et facite legi* [*Colosensibus et*] *Colosensium vobis* (20). Nearly every scholar who has commented on Laodiceans points to this final verse as the key pseudepigraphic clue to the motivation for the production of Laodiceans; that is, it serves as a reference to Col. 4:16, lifting the verse from Colossians and simply inverting the two churches. Although I fully agree that Laod. 20 is drawn from, and points to, Col. 4:16, I suggest that this verse serves a more significant function within the internal argumentation of the letter. As Weima observes in some of Paul's letters, "the closing commands are directly related to concerns addressed previously in the body."[15] An excellent example, offered by Weima, of such a connection between closing commands and the body of the letter is Philemon, where the command to the recipient underscores the purpose of the letter, i.e., Paul's appeal for Onesimus (Phlm. 20). Similarly, Laodiceans is concerned with exhorting the recipients to remain firm in their beliefs and not to be divided by false teachers. The entire letter closing has been constructed to reinforce the positive relations and mutual identity of letter writer and recipients. By closing with such a reference to the Colossian church, Ps.-Paul once again reminds the Laodicean Christians of their broader Christian community (i.e., the "universal brotherhood" of the Pauline mission, to follow Meeks sociological discussion),[16] as well as the solidarity that Ps.-Paul shares with them and that more universal church.

From this brief analysis of the letter closing in Laodiceans, Weima's conclusions regarding the Pauline letter closings are confirmed in relation to at least one apocryphal Pauline letter. The author of Laodiceans uses standard Pauline epistolary conventions to conclude his letter, a conclusion that hints at earlier themes in the letter while discursively stressing the interpersonal relations that the recipients share with the letter writer, with each other, and with the broader Christian tradition or "universal" church. Thus, Laod. 17/18–20 is an appropriate and effective closing for furthering the rhetorical purpose of this letter.

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[15] Weima, "Sincerely, Paul," 322.
[16] Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 108–110.

A THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS OF LAODICEANS

A near consensus has emerged in scholarship in which the apocryphal epistle to the Laodiceans is viewed with disdain as nothing more than a clumsy forgery, a colorless work with nothing to contribute to our understanding of early Christianity, let alone the Pauline tradition. Even beyond the letter's lack of any potential contribution to the broader early Christian world, Laodiceans has been dismissed as devoid of any internal theological message. However, the preceding chapters in this book have demonstrated that Laodiceans does indeed have a coherent internal logic. My focus has been on the rhetorical coherence of the letter, following an epistolary analysis, but there are also theological themes that can be explored in this letter; themes that contribute to the rhetorical persuasion of Laodiceans. Although the eschatological, ecclesiological, Christological, and soteriological motifs are certainly not extensively developed in the letter, they are certainly present. Consequently, Laodiceans does have a theology, one that fits well with broader Pauline traditions and one which emerges from the rhetorical situation of the letter.

Pauline Eschatology

One of the dominant themes in Laodiceans is the letter's eschatological concern. Other theological motifs tend to feed into Ps.-Paul's eschatological discussion, working in concert to articulate a persuasive shared worldview for the implied recipients (and thus the real recipients) to which the Laodicean Christians are expected to positively respond. This eschatological worldview is very Pauline in its basic contours. Within Pauline scholarship there has long been a debate over the realized and future eschatology, or even apocalyptic outlook that Paul held.[1] For Schweitzer, an emphasis upon the imminent approach of the parousia, situated within a temporary

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[1] Although the scholarship on Paul's eschatology is far too extensive to address here, a helpful overview of scholarly trends in Pauline studies is offered in Don N. Howell, "Pauline Eschatological Dualism and Its Resulting Tensions," *TJ* 14 (1993): 3–24. Much of what follows is indebted to Howell's discussion. For a broader survey of early Christian views

period of overlap of the present age and the age to come, was perceived as the key to Paul theology. Paul is seen as following the eschatological worldview set forth by the historical Jesus. Social structures and attendant ethics were seen as only interm solutions.[2] Only in the second century (according the *konsequente Eschatologie* hypothesis) was Paul's theology Hellenized from its Hebraic cultural mileau and rendered less apocalyptic and more mystical in outlook.[3] The challenge of the delayed parousia may also have taken a different direction after Paul's death, specifically with the shift from an imminent expectation in 1 Thessalonians to a future apocalyptic expectation in 2 Thessalonians (assuming non-Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians).[4] Both directions—i.e., an extended future eschatology (history's denouement articulated within a broader temporal framework), or a realized eschatology/mysticism (or even a shift from eschatology to protology)[5]—attempt to resolve the problem of a delayed parousia and, to return to Albert Schweitzer and Johannes Weiss,[6] perhaps a demographic shift from a predominantely Jewish movement (especially a diaspora Jewish context for the Pauline mission) to a predominantely Greco-Roman constituency. Such a shift from a Hebraic to Hellenistic mindset, however, overly simplifies and thus caricatures the cultural forces at play within the Mediterranean world,[7] though a theological shift within certain streams of

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on eschatology, see Art Marmorstein, "Eschatological Inconsistency in the Ante-Nicene Fathers?" *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39.1 (2001): 125–132.

[2] Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, 2nd edition, translated by W. Montgomery (London: Black, 1964): "from his first letter to his last Paul's thought is always uniformly dominated by the expectation of the immediate return of Jesus" (364). See also James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

[3] See also R. H. Charles, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, in Judaism and in Christianity* (London: Black, 1899).

[4] Helpful discussions of the eschatological contours of the Thessalonian correspondence, especially within broader Pauline tendencies, are offered in David Luckensmeyer, *The Eschatology of 1 Thessalonians* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009); Paul Foster, "The Eschatology in the Thessalonians Correspondence: An Exercise in Pastoral Pedagogy and Constructive Theology," *JSPL* 1.1 (2011): 57–82; and Pieter G. R. de Villiers, "The Future Existence of the Believers According to 2 Thessalonians," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 67.1 (2011): Art#912, 9 pages (DOI: 10.4102/hts.v67i1.912).

[5] See the discussion in Paul J. Achtemeier, "An Apocalyptic Shift in Early Christian Tradition: Reflections on Some Canonical Evidence," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 231–248.

[6] Schweitzer, *Mysticism*; Johannes Weiss, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892).

[7] This clear division between Jewish and Hellenistic thought has been effectively challenged in scholarship. See especially Martin Hengel, *Hellenism and Judaism*, 2 volumes (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974).

the Pauline tradition during the second century in reaction to the delayed parousia may make sense.

On the other end of the spectrum in Pauline studies is the overemphasis upon a realized eschatology. Both C. H. Dodd and Rudolf Bultmann, for example, correctly noted that Paul's eschatological language includes a present actualization of eschatological and soteriological hopes.[8] For Dodd the mutual tension between Paul's future and present language indicates a shift in the apostle's thinking toward a less thoroughly futuristic eschatological outlook, whereas for Bultmann this tension is resolved in the application of existential hermeneutics to the biblical texts, thereby rendering a question of temporal focus into an anthropocentric and transformative decision that collapses the past and future into a philosophical "now".

More recent scholarship has attempted to avoid taking such polarizing positions on Pauline eschatology, preferring to discern a present-future or "already/but not yet" tension in Paul's thinking. The respective work of Lucien Cerfaux, Oscar Cullman, W. G. Kümmel, George Eldon Ladd, and Johan Christiaan Beker all stressed an intersection or overlap between the Christ event and the consummation of that event within a future age.[9] It is within this "intermediate" period that Paul views the transition from the dying "present age" to the future, full eschatological realization within which the community exists. Howell suggests that Paul's thought is best situated within a Jewish apocalyptic tradition of two ages, i.e., the present age (under evil domination) and the age to come (to be brought about by divine intervention). Such a reading largely follows the well-known

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[8] C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (New York: Harper, 1936); Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 volumes, translated by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951 and 1955); cf. Richard H. Hiers, "Pivotal Reactions to the Eschatological Interpretations: Rudolf Bultmann and C. H. Dodd," in *The Kingdom of God in 20th-Century Interpretation*, edited by W. Willis (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 15–33; and Clayton Sullivan, *Rethinking Realized Eschatology* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988). A similar emphasis on realized eschatology is found in Robin Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); cf. Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman," *JAAR* 40 (1972): 283–303, where social implications of this "eschatological community" are addressed in far greater detail.

[9] Lucien Cerfaux, "Paul's Eschatological Message to the Nations," in *A Companion to Paul: Readings in Pauline Theology*, edited by Michael J. Taylor (New York: Alba House, 1975), 101–117; Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Conception of Time and History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1951); W. G. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfilment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus* (Studies in Biblical Theology, 23; London: SCM Press, 1957); George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, revised edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); and Johan Christiaan Beker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

work of Geerhardus Vos, which posited such a two age reading of Paul's thought.[10] Thus, according to this two age reading, Paul's network of communities exists within the ongoing inauguration of the fulfillment of salvation history, and it is within that liminal period of redemption and conflict that ethical demands are to be followed. Ethics, therefore, become the basis for maintaining one's insider, redemptive status in anticipation of the grand finale of the forthcoming eschatological realization.[11] The Holy Spirit, according to Ladd, is an important component in this process; i.e., functioning as both a future promise and a present down payment of that promise (1 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; the same idea is present in the disputed letters, e.g., Eph. 1:13–14).[12]

Howell suggests that this two age perspective pervades the entirety of the Pauline corpus, for which he includes the disputed letters as authentic:

> We live in the present evil age (Gal 1:4) yet are also translated into the king-dom of God's Son (Col 1:13). We dwell in the intermingling of the ages where the conflict rages between flesh and Spirit (Rom 8:1–17; Gal 5:16–26). We are positionally (indicative) already resident with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph 1:3; Col 3:1–3) but groan in our not yet (imperative) state of humilia-tion in anticipation of the coming redemptive liberation (Rom 8:23–25). The dawning of the new world order is set in motion by the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ, creating a dynamic, heightened tension between the present and the future.[13]

The above summation of Paul's "already/but not yet" tension is only per-suasive when we accept the disputed letters as authentic. The examples

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[10] Gerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952). See also Andrew Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet* (SNTSMS, 43; Cambridge: Cambridge Univer-sity Press, 1981).

[11] So also Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 375, with regard to 1 Thess. 5:24. See Schreiner's broader discussion of this two age eschatology on pp. 96–116. Udo Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament*, translated by M. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 343–344, refers to Paul's eschatology carrying a fundamentally "participatory character," which is facilitated by God's activity, and thus this eschatology demands from Christians that they live their lives accordingly, i.e., the "manner in which they live their lives is [to be] oriented to their new being ἐν Χριστῷ (cf. Gal. 3:26–28)."

[12] Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 408–409.

[13] Howell, "Eschatological Dualism," 10–11. The same "already/but not yet" perspective is read in 2 Thessalonians by de Villiers, "Future Existence," 6: "In 2 Thessalonians 1:10 (B) the attention shifts to the faithful and their salvation, which consists as is implied by verse 9, of their sharing the divine presence. The future is thus the completion of what God had begun through Christ. The divine initiative finds its final consummation in the bringing in of the faithful into the presence of God." Foster, "Eschatology," 70–72, reads 2 Thess. 1:6–10 as primarily driven by pastoral concerns, rather than apocalyptic retribution.

supplied by Howell suggests that the the future eschatological elements are exclusively located within the undisputed letters (Gal. 1:4; Rom. 8:1–17; Gal. 5:16–26; Rom. 8:23–25) while the present realization is found in what other scholars consider disputed letters (Col. 1:13; 3:1–3; Eph. 1:3). Based on this summary, one could equally argue for the plausibility of Schweitzer's historical reconstruction. Howell's juxtaposition of passages, however, is slightly misleading and unnecessary undermines his otherwise correct observation.

A tension between the "already/but not yet" view of history can be found in both disputed and undisputed letters. In 1 Cor. 1:18–31, and again at 3:18, Paul inverts the value of foolishness, challenging the Corinthian Christians to reconceptualize their place within the social structures of the present world in light of their newly established relationship with God through the work of the crucified Christ (1:23). Not only are the recipients presented as currently standing in a particular relationship with God, but the antithetical presentation of the two present passive particles articulates an indeterminate condition by the juxtaposition of "perishing" and "saving" (ἀπολλυμένοις and σῳζομένοις). Paul's treatment of foolishness certainly supports a future realization of apocalyptic hopes, such as we also see in 1 Cor. 15:20–28, especially at 15:22 where the future tense clearly indicates a future resurrection of the dead. However, along with this futurity in Paul's thinking is a present realization. At 15:58, for instance, Paul's discourse on the resurrection is brought into the present ontological condition of the community through the exhortation for the Corinthian Christians to remain firm and unmoveable. They are also described as laboring ἐν κυρίῳ (and this work is not in vain, Paul declares). Similarly, back in chapter one Paul throws out a rhetorical question, indicating that God has already rendered the wisdom of the world foolishness (οὐχὶ ἐμώρανεν ὁ θεὸς τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου). Furthermore, the condition of being saved (1:18) is not a future promise, but rather a current process or condition. This tension of present-future realization makes sense when we view Paul's eschatology through the lens of an imminent future that has been preceded, and thus set in motion by the Christ event (cf. 1 Cor. 7:29 where Paul's social ethics are linked to a worldview of a rapidly approaching end of the present age).

Similarly in Gal. 4:1–9 Paul engages in a comparison of inheritance with the redemptive work of God for the Galatian Christians. Within an apocalyptic scenario of cosmic warfare between the divine and oppressive powers (ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ἤμεθα δεδουλωμένοι; 4:3), Paul stresses that the Galatians have already received God's divine benefit as adopted

children (ὅτι δέ ἐστε υἱοί; 4:6a), having received the Spirit in their hearts (not as a promise, but as a completed act), rather than being enslaved (which is their former condition; cf. ἀλλὰ τότε at 4:8, which stands in antithesis with the ontological condition marked by ὥστε at 4:7 and at νῦν δὲ 4:9). Thus, Paul's exhortation to the Galatians also presents an "already/but not yet" eschatological perspective. They are "already" recipients of God's redemptive work, they already have the Spirit in their "hearts", but there is also a danger of losing those divine benefits given the "but not yet" consummation of the present world, and thus the Galatians are still heirs awaiting the full inheritance. Paul's admonition is founded upon the claim that the Galatians could still lose that inheritance.

Romans and 1 Thessalonians offer further examples of this "already/but not yet" Pauline outlook. In praising the recipients in Rom. 16:17–20, encouraging them to be wise about the good and simple in regards to evil (note the use of εἶναι), Paul uses an eschatological promise to reinforce their continuance in that positive, praiseworthy condition (16:20). This eschatological comment clearly indicates an imminent future victory over Satan (συντρίψει, which is temporally intensified by ἐν τάχει). The same concept arises in 1 Thess. 5:1–5, where a sudden future coming of the Lord clearly demonstrates an imminent future realization (5:1–3), but is immediately followed by an ontological description of the Thessalonian Christians as being "children of light" and not in "darkness" (note the antithesis established by οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν and γὰρ … ἐστε; 5:4–5), a condition launched with a constrast drawn between the Thessalonian Christians and those who will not escape God's coming judgment (5:4a). The same idea appears in the disputed Pauline letters, such as we see in Ephesians. In Eph. 2:6–7, the author refers to the "ages to come" and "the heavenly place", suggesting a future, spatial distinction from the recipients' present context. However, the author of Ephesians continually refers to the recipients as no longer members of "the dead" but rather already "saved through faith" for the sake of doing "good works" (2:4–10). The recipients have been set apart from the nations or Gentiles, i.e., the recipients' former Gentile status when they were "without Christ" (2:11–12).

Consequently, the Pauline tension between a present realization of eschatological benefits and a future consummation of those benefits seems to be a key eschatological perspective in early Christian communities (and can be found in the eschatological presentations outside the Pauline traditions, e.g., in 1 Peter). It is not surprising, then, to find this "already/but not yet" eschatology in Laodiceans.

Futurity arises at the very outset of the letter. Within the thanksgiving period, the eschatological promise in verse 3b (*promissum expectantes in diem judicii*) points toward a future, yet to be realized day of judgment. Given the thanks offered to Christ by the author, this future judgment day is a positive thing for the recipients, though, given the threat of false teachers (explicitly in Laod. 4 and 13), the day of judgment is certainly a negative thing for those who are not "insiders" as discursively situated by the letter writer. Ps.-Paul conditions this eschatological promise with his reaction to the current status of the recipients: *quod permanentes estis in eo, et perserverantes in operibus ejus*; v. 3a). Thus, this eschatological reward depends upon the continued status of the community, specifically the recipients' steadfast adherence to Christ as well as their active participation in "his works". The Laodicean Christians' active role in the soteriological process underlies Ps.-Paul's own soteriological status, for they share with the Holy Spirit the task of bringing about eternal salvation (Laod. 7).

Similarly, verses 10 and 16 parallel each other with *et erit vobis* (each having different, but parallel objects, i.e., *vita in aeternum* and *pax*). The tense of *erit* indicates that Ps.-Paul has a future condition in mind, specifically that the realization of "eternal life"//"peace" is conditioned on remaining steadfast (i.e., continuing to follow the precepts underlying the moral exhortation). It is unclear if the author has an apocalyptic futurity in mind in these verses. The tense can be read simply as an indication of the conditional nature of the divine benefit for the community, with the appropriate interpretation being "if you wish to have (or continue to have) these benefits, then hold fast to what I am exhorting you." The present active indicative *operatur* in verse 11 suggests that the recipients are in a current, ongoing process of receiving divine benefaction. Given the parallel imperative *estote firmi* in verse 14, it seems likely that the divine benefits are part of the ongoing process that the recipients and God work in concert to bring about or to ensure. Thus, this divine activity could be read through the lens of present realization (i.e., the conditional rather than apocalyptic reading), but at the same time could also be read toward a future promise of those benefits. If the latter is adopted, then we are likely looking at an eschatological tension between the present-future, such as observed above in Pauline eschatological thought; i.e., the recipients are in a current state of receiving soteriological benefits in which they and the divine work to ensure the fulfillment of those benefits in the (imminent?) age to come.

An ontological basis underlies the letter's articulation of the present realization of these eschatological benefits. Specifically, they are described (and thus exhorted to continue) as being "in the mind of Christ" (14b), having "peace" (16) and "eternal life" (5, 10b) or "eternal salvation" (7a). Although it is possible to read *et erit vobis* as indicating futurity, and certainly there is a future quality in verses 14 and 16, the paraenetic qualities of "holding fast" in the paraenesis qualifies this futurity with a present qualification. Ps.-Paul describes the Laodiceans as already *in sensu Christi* (14b). Their ontological condition is not something that they are to strive toward, but rather something that they are to nurture and preserve. The author exemplifies this very reality through his apostolic suffering (7b–8). They already have eschatological benefits, and thus the author's concern is the preservation of that condition rather than the future acquisition of such a salvific condition. Such a reading affects our exegesis of verse 9b's subordinant clause. As I indicated in chapter 4, the particle *ut*, which marks the clause, could be read either as articulating a precondition (i.e., the Laodiceans need to "have the same love and be likeminded" in order for God's divine mercy to be at work in them) or as a result of that divine activity (i.e., God's divine mercy, which continues to be at work among the Laodiceans, has brought about this status of social unity). The former reading clearly underlies the Greek retroversion translations of Lightfoot, Anger, and Hutter, who take *ut* as a translation for a ἵνα-clause. The latter reading, however, suggests that the recipients are already sharing "the same love" and are "likeminded", which would nicely fit with the hortatory purpose of the letter. Given the paraenetic nature of Laodiceans, I prefer to read this clause within a realized eschatological framework: i.e., as the recipients have already received divine benefaction (with a socially unifying result), they need to maintain that unity in order to ensure the continued realization of those benefits.

Thus, the epistle's eschatological nature follows the Pauline "already/but not yet" tendency.[14] Like Paul's undisputed letters, this apocryphal letter applies this tendency to communal concerns. Our author uses eschatology as a hortatory device, reminding the recipients of their current status

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[14] Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 108, correctly observes that the eschatology in Laodiceans resists an exclusive realized eschatology: "*Laodiceans* nonetheless immediately fends off (v. 3) two ideas associated with the radical Paul: that he was an antinomian, and that he taught a fully present eschatology (which was often associated with the concept of a present, 'spiritual' resurrection)." I agree with Pervo's point here and would add that instead of either a fully realized or fully future eschatology, this letter follows the "already/but not yet" eschatological tension. In its eschatology, therefore, Laodiceans is extremely Pauline.

or benefits, situating that description within a sharp warning that they could lose those benefits if they allow false teachers to influence them. The implied author gives no indication that the community has fallen into such false teaching, but rather he shows a concern that they might fall away if they are not careful. The eschatological "already/but not yet" certainly stresses the long term, cosmic implications that are linked to the recipients' reaction to such a threat. What emerges, therefore, is a pseudonymous letter that is extremely Pauline in its eschatological thinking.

Pauline Ecclesiology

This letter does not have a well developed concept of the church. We look in vain for a discussion of bishops, deacons, gendered division of labor, or other structural elements. The author also does not demonstrate an interest in liturgical aspects of worship, or other central concerns facing Paul's network of communities (such as Paul's struggle with Jewish-Gentile relations, dietary restrictions, or social affiliations with the broader society).[15] Nor do we find any indications of organizational structures, such as seeing the community as a type of voluntary association, philosophical school, series of household assemblies/churches, etc. The temptation is to gloss over ecclesiological concerns in Laodiceans, declaring that the pseudonymous author was drawn toward other matters. Such decisions in interpretating Laodiceans certainly makes sense when we look at other pseudo-Pauline or para-Pauline products of the second century, such as the Pastorals and the book of Acts, both of which demonstrate strong interests in correct ecclesiastical structures vis-à-vis the Pauline mission.

Yet such a glossing over of ecclesiastical concern in Laodiceans would be a mistake. Our author is certainly concerned about social relations and, furthermore, articulates a clear view of a universal network of communities that constitute "authentic" Christianity. Although the evocation of Paul in ecclesiastical debates in the second century engages such detailed, and perhaps practical, concerns as we find in the Pastorals or, to the counter,

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[15] See the helpful discussion in Luke Timothy Johnson, "Paul's Ecclesiology," in *The Cambridge Companion to St. Paul*, edited by James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 199–211. Johnson takes a very different position on the Pastorals than I do, seeing far more continuity in community formation and conceptualizations than I see in the disputed and undisputed letters. However, I agree with Johnson on Paul's ecclesiastical focus: "the central concern in Paul's letters is the stability and integrity of his churches" (200).

in the *Acts of Paul*, in Laodiceans the theological concept of "the church" is evoked in concert with the paraenetic agenda of the letter. Throughout the letter, Ps.-Paul sets forth a demarcation of those who are false teachers and those who stand within a positive relationship with the author. The overt recipients of the letter are those who hold social coherence with the letter writer, rather than those who oppose Ps.-Paul's teaching or authority. Such discursive rhetoric is unlike what we find in Galatians or the Corinthian correspondence (where either diverse factions are addressed or those accused of abandoning Paul's teachings are addressed), but is similar to the positional moves found in 1 Thessalonians and especially Philippians where the recipients are challenged to define themselves as either insiders or outsiders (depending on their self-alignment with Paul's discourse).

Throughout Laodiceans, Ps.-Paul discursively positions the community in a positive light. For instance, they are referred to with fictive kinship language in the prescript (2b), with the nature of that language fully articulated in the thanksgiving period as those who are standing firm in their faith (3; so also in the letter closing at verse 17, if original). In the paraenesis they are addressed as "the beloved" (*delectissimi*) (10 and 13). And the community's unity is a central point in the letter body (9b) as they play a key role in the soteriological process (7). The third person description of those who oppose Ps.-Paul's teaching (e.g., vv. 4, 13) effectively sets them in contrast with the positive presentation of the recipients. I find it insightful that the author of this letter discursively demarcates these "false" teachers from those who comprise the authentic network of Pauline communities. The recipients (who are undoubtedly "insiders") share in the work of, and are thus integral to a broader missionary network of the authentic church. In Laod. 5, the author refers to those *qui sunt ex me*, which likely refers to the apostle's co-workers that we are so familiar with in both the undisputed and disputed Pauline letters. These co-workers are integral to the maintenance of a network of churches, all centered on the person of the apostle Paul. This verse could either indicate that the Laodicean church was founded by Ps.-Paul (i.e., that "those from me" are members of the Laodicean community) or co-workers who are part of the broader network of Pauline communities, such as we find reflected in Paul's letters or in the narrative presentation of the Pauline mission in Acts. The very closing of the letter (20), where we find a reference to the Colossian church, augments this idea that the Laodicean community is part of a larger church network. Apostleship in this letter adds to the validity of this universal Christian community's support of Ps.-Paul. Unlike the author's opponents,

Ps.-Paul's apostleship is divinely assigned (1) and has been proven worthy through suffering and (for the real audience rather than the fictive recipients) possibly martyrdom (6–8). Rhetorically, the impression is that the universal Christian community stands in unity with Ps.-Paul, due to his divinely ordained ministry, rather than with those who oppose the author's teaching within the Laodicean community. Thus, the ecclesiology of Laodiceans is to situate those who adhere to the moral exhortation of the letter as those who stand in unity with the broader Christian tradition. Thus, the "opponents" or "false teachers" are those who are aberrations, not standing in harmony with the Pauline author. Indeed, the author's understanding of apostleship, as divinely mandated, nicely supports this very rhetorical argument (see Laod. 1, which is then further authenticated by the theme of apostolic suffering in verses 6–7).

An eschatological quality underlies the ecclesiology in Laodiceans. In verse 5c, for example, the labor of the co-workers is tied into the "wellbeing of eternal life". If "eternal life" has a realized eschatological sense, then the entire Pauline mission is interlaced with the purpose of "furthering the true gospel" within the present world. The Laodiceans are challenged to maintain their positive eschatological status by ensuring that they are aligned with the universal "brotherhood" with which the author stands in unity. Thus, Laodiceans articulates what Robin Scroggs has called the "eschatological community" (though, according to my reading, within an "already/but not yet" eschatology).[16] In opposition to such a universal network, however, are the false teachers. I have argued in this book that Laod. 13b evokes the trope of the charlatan, a motif that may have situated the apocryphal epistle to the Laodiceans within early second-century concerns over charismatic, itinerant leadership models. If my reading is correct, then it is possible to see this letter articulating such a concern over false teachers or charlatans. The moral exhortations caution the recipients to be wary of those who could exploit their faith. The faith (and the faithfulness) of the community is certainly not in question, nor is their integration to a larger, more universal Christian community. Rather, Ps.-Paul demonstrates a fear that the Laodiceans may be led astray by those who will use them for personal gain. Whether these "false" teachers are part of a particular strand of Christianity that could be labeled "heretical" (i.e., Marcionite, Valentinian, Sethian, Ebionite, etc.) is not stated. What is stated, however, is that if the community does not "hold fast" to what the

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[16] Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day*, 39–56.

author assumes they are already adhering to, then the community risks losing the eschatological benefits that they enjoy and for which they strive for within a future consummation of history. Consequently, the paraenesis of this letter effectively interweaves ecclesiology and eschatology along with claims of apostolic authority.

Pauline Christology, Pneumatology, and Trinitarian Theology

Although Harnack claimed that there was a Marcionite Christology in Laodiceans, due to the redactional modification in Laod. 1 ("through Christ Jesus", without a reference to God), there is no reason to assume a Marcionite dualistic theology in this letter. Furthermore, the shift in verse 13 from "in the Lord" to "in Christ" (if Laodiceans draws from Philippians at this point, an intertextual link that I have not been convinced of) need not indicate a shift from a theocentric to a christocentric theology (to again evoke J. C. Beker's hypothesis on the development of the Pauline tradition after Paul's death), especially given the presence of both the Father and Jesus Christ in the prescript (*a Deo patre et domino Jesu Christo*; v. 2). Such a non-Marcionite reading is reinforced when we consider 1 Tim. 1:12, where "Jesus Christ our Lord" stands without the qualification of mentioning God.

Rather than a Marcionite theology or Christology, the apocryphal epistle to the Laodiceans articulates a more Trinitarian theology.[17] We find, for instance, a direct reference to the Holy Spirit in verse 7, numerous references to Jesus or Christ (vv. 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 13, 14, 19), and several references to God (vv. 2, 5, 10, 11, 14) (given the qualification in verse 2 [*Deo patre*], our author likely equates God with the Father elsewhere in the letter). Each member of the Trinity serves a different, though complementary function in this letter.

Christ is presented as the source of authentic teaching (1), an authorization that is solely offered to Ps.-Paul and extended from Ps.-Paul to others (i.e., the co-workers and the recipients) who labor in the same divine work as the apostle. Christ is also an object of worship, and thus the source of "peace" and "grace" (2, 16, 19) and the recipient of prayers (of thanksgiving

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[17] Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 109, also recognizes Trinitarian theology in Laodiceans, or at least that the preference for Christ in Laodiceans is influenced by a developing Trinitarian theology. He makes this observation in opposition to the Marcionite reading of Laodiceans.

in verse 3; cf. the prayers of the recipients on Ps.-Paul's behalf in verse 7). An ontological identification with Christ is also presented in the letter, specifically when Ps.-Paul refers to Christ as the source of "life" (8) and the Laodicean Christians are exhorted to be "in the mind of Christ" (14b).

This ontological condition, which nicely evokes a realized eschatology for encouragement, is closely interwoven with themes of suffering and even death. Ps.-Paul's suffers *in Christo* (6b). His bonds (6a) likely refer to some form of imprisonment, a not uncommon theme in a pseudonymous Pauline letter. As an *exemplar* of suffering, the letter writer presents such suffering as a form of witness (his bonds are made "manifest") (6a), a venue for attaining (future eschatological) "eternal life" (7), and thus his suffering is a reason for great joy (6b). In verse 8, Ps.-Paul sets forth what looks like an antithesis of life and death, as if a type of crossroads had been reached, at which he must make a decision. However, this verse does not necessarily present a contrast (as if translating the sentence: "my life is in Christ *but* to die is joy") but rather a continuation of the same point, where the conjunction *et* completes and thus heightens the thought set forth at the beginning of the sentence. Thus, the sentence could be rendered: "For my life is in Christ and so death is a joy (to me)". Unlike Phil. 1:21–24, where Paul is conflicted over staying in this world (for the benefit of the Philippian Christians) or dying (to be with Christ), Laodiceans offers a valuation of suffering by equating it with life. Perhaps the author of Laodiceans has Paul's martyrdom in mind.[18] Given the soteriological result of Ps.-Paul's bonds being manifest ("in Christ"), i.e., "eternal life" (7), this reading of the conjunction in verse 8 as completion rather than antithesis is reinforced. As an *exemplar* of suffering—indeed, of joyful suffering—Ps-Paul identifies with the Laodicean Christians, though his suffering is linked to an external danger (the governing authorities or sporadic mob action against him) while the suffering of the Laodiceans is due to an internal threat (false teachers). Just as Ps.-Paul's suffering is

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[18] If Ps-Paul has redacted Philippians in Laod. 8, then the original angst expressed in Philippians has been transformed into a praise of suffering, in which an earthly death ensures eternal life. Such a view of death/life was certainly at home in second- and third-century martyrdom accounts (e.g., *Mart. Polycarp* 14; *Mart. Apollonius* 28, 46; *Mart. Pionius* 6), though the same concept of death being a venue for life arises in Rom. 6:4 (and thus the motif in our letter could go back to Paul's own time). However, if Laodiceans witnesses to a more primitive Philippians Letter B (see my discussion in chapter 8), then perhaps the compiler/redactor(s) of the Philippian correspondence has modified Laodiceans' distinctive theme of suffering in order to attribute agency, along with emotional turmoil, to Paul, especially in order to establish a heightened personal relationship between Paul and the Philippian Christians.

beneficial due to being on behalf of Christ, so also with the sufferings of the Laodicean church. Christologically, therefore, Christ serves as the only legitimate basis for expedient suffering.

Although Ps.-Paul places emphasis upon his Christology, God the Father and the Holy Spirit also play significant roles in his theology and thus the letter's moral exhortation. The author of Laodiceans does not articulate, nor does he counter, a subordinationist or modalistic Trinitarian theology. While the three members of the Trinity seem to have individual personhood in the letter, debates over easing the tension between distinct personhood and shared essence (e.g., Tertullian's *tres personae, una substantia; Adversus Praxean* 13), so important during these formative centuries, does not play a role in this letter.[19] Rather, the pneumatology of this letter only arises in verse 7 (*et administrante spiritum sanctum*). The efficaciousness of the community's prayers on behalf of Ps.-Paul, who faces suffering, for attaining "eternal life" is central in this verse. The Holy Spirit functions in collaboration with the Laodiceans as soteriological venues for the apostle. The "administrative" function of the Holy Spirit is not dissimilar to Origen's view of the Spirit as the means by which Christians are endowed with those virtues so necessary in attaining salvation or final oneness with the Father (*De Princ.* 2.8.3; Origen's *Comm. ad Rom.* 8.5), though Laodiceans does not articulate a Platonic framework for its pneumatology. Discursively, the Holy Spirit in Laodiceans aligns the recipients with divine activity, an activity that is situated within the Pauline mission. The transition into verse 9 extends these soteriological benefits (either as future or realized eschatology) to the Laodicean Christians. The prayer context in Laod. 7 evokes Ps.-Paul's prayers to Christ in verse 3. Whereas Christ is the recipient of Ps.-Paul's thanksgiving, reinforced by an eschatological promise, the prayers in the letter body are made in conjunction with the work of the Holy Spirit (rather than addressed to the Holy Spirit). Pneumatology in Laodiceans, therefore, articulates the active role of the Holy Spirit within the Christian community, rendering the ministry of the

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[19] For a brief, but helpful, overview of early Christian pneumatology, see Johannes van Oort, "The Holy Spirit and the Early Church: Doctrine & Confession," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 63.3 (2011): Art. #1120, 8 pages (http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts .v67i3.1120). Van Oort, however, does not engage all strands of early Christian thinking, especially those deemed "heretical" by later theologians, such as the Valentinians. On Valentinian pneumatology (as it intersected Origen's Trinitarian formulations), see Tite, "The Holy Spirit's Role in Origen's Trinitarian System: A Comparison with Valentinian Pneumatology," *Theoforum* 32 (2001): 131–164.

community effective or life-giving (cf. 2 Cor. 3:4–9).[20] Such a function also appears in Acts, where the Spirit is a central character for spurring on new developments in the community's mission (i.e., in the witnessing to Jesus Christ), and is actively engaged in the life of the community especially in times of hardship.[21] If Acts is a second-century composition,[22] then perhaps we are seeing similar pneumatological developments in both Acts and Laodiceans (though certainly far more developed in Acts), where the Spirit functions as the force that intiates progression in the church's mission while supplying empowerment and renewal for that mission.

God, identified as the Father in Laod. 2, is presented in verses 2, 5, 10, 11, and 14. At no point do we find a dualistic distinction between a good god and a just god, nor between a higher perfect deity and a lower, creator figure. Indeed, this letter lacks any creation theology (this is also true of Laodiceans' Christology and pneumatology). Rather the author demonstrates a pastoral concern rather than any interest in cosmological and protological speculations. Thus, this Pauline letter carries no discernable or distinctive Marcionite theological views. Rather, God is presented alongside Christ as the source of grace and peace (2), thereby suggesting a mutual cooperative work between God and Christ (see Laod. 16 and 19). Furthermore, a collaborative function between members of the Trinity is discernable in Ps.-Paul's discussion of prayer. I have already noted the connection between Ps.-Paul's prayers of thanks offered to Christ (3) and the Laodicean Christians' prayers for the apostle's eschatological benefit in concert with the Holy Spirit (7), however prayer emerges once again in verse 14: *Omnes sint petitiones vestrae palam apud deum*. In this verse, prayers are offered to God, just as Ps.-Paul's prayers were offered to Christ in the thanksgiving period. Whereas the thanksgiving period confirms a good report on the condition of the community, the Laodiceans' prayers are petitions offered to God for future or ongoing benefit (it is unclear if these petitions are being made on behalf of Ps.-Paul, the Laodicean community, the broader Pauline mission, or all of the above). With *palam* the author draws a clear parallel back to verse 6, where Ps.-Paul's "bonds are

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[20] For a detailed study of pneumatological concepts in antiquity as an interpretative lens for Paul's theology (in particular moving toward a relational model for Pauline pneumatology), see Volker Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul* (WUNT, 283; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

[21] See Ju Hur, *A Dynamic Reading of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

[22] See especially Richard Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2006).

manifest [*palam*]". As suggested above, these bonds serve as a type of witness or even public proclamation. If we apply a similar reading to verse 14, then the Laodiceans are being exhorted to openly or publicly petition God, i.e., their prayers are a witness before the divine and, by implication, to others such as the false teachers, each other, and other Christian communities (perhaps also to non-Christians, though Ps.-Paul's focus tends to be on internal Christian relations rather than external social relations). This parallel between verses 6 and 14 is reinforced by the desired or anticipated outcome of these prayers: eternal salvation, life (7) and eternal life (10). In the former case (verse 7), it is Ps.-Paul who is the recipient of eschatological benefits, whereas in the latter (verse 10) the Laodiceans are the recipients of those same benefits. Given this parallel between the letter body and the paraenesis, it is noteworthy that all three members of the Trinity play a role: it is Christ who is the reason for Ps.-Paul's suffering, the Holy Spirit who works in the life of the community to ensure eschatological benefits, and the Father who is recipient of petitions for continued or future benefits. This active role of God dominates the letter's theology, as central to the success of the Pauline mission both locally (in Laodicea) and globally (the broader network of communities). It is God who makes possible the "furtherance of the truth of the gospel" vis-à-vis the co-workers (5a), which again ties into the notion of eternal life (5b). It is God *qui operatur in vos* (11), whose labor is dependent on the Laodiceans not only "holding fast and doing" what Ps.-Paul had already taught them (and which they are currently holding to and doing), but to do so *in timore Dei* (10b). Again, it is God's relational connection to the community that determines access to eternal life (*et erit vobis vita in aeternum*; 10b). This relational qualification may also underlie the theme of mercy in verse 9, though it is difficult to determine with certainty if the possessive identifies "mercy" with Christ (going back to verse 8), the Holy Spirit (verse 7), or God (pointing ahead to verse 11 in particular). My preference is for God as the referent given the active role played by God in verse 11.

Consequently, we find an active characterization of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit in this letter. While the letter does not have a fully articulated Trinitarian theology, and would be difficult to securely situate within the detailed theological debates of the second to fourth centuries on the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit, the epistle to the Laodiceans certainly conceptualized a triune deity, albeit without evidence of heavy Platonic influence (e.g., the Father is not immoveable and unknowable, such as we find in Valentinian Christianity, but rather he is an active agent as one who labors on behalf of the

Christian community). As with the ecclesiology of this letter, the author's demonstrated understanding of the nature of God functions within an eschatological "already/but not yet" view of salvation history. Eschatology, ecclesiology, and theology all work in tandem to support the moral exhortation of the letter, primarily as discursive alignments of the divine, the author, the community, and other teachers. In this sense, theology in the letter is subordinate to hortatory and communal concerns.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

> The dawn of the Reformation epoch had effectively scared away this
> ghost of a Pauline epistle, which (we may confidently hope) has been
> laid for ever and will not again be suffered to haunt the mind of the
> Church.—J. B. Lightfoot[1]

With these words, J. B. Lightfoot articulated what would become the consensus in scholarship on the apocryphal epistle to the Laodiceans. This letter has consistently been viewed with disdain, unworthy of scholarly attention. The letter remains nothing more than a footnote in commentaries on Col. 4:16. A few notable exceptions have emerged in scholarship, most importantly Harnack's attempt to connect this epistle to the Marcionite church, yet such attempts have not found much of a following. Furthermore, more recent attempts to seriously study Laodiceans, such as the work by MaGee and especially Burnet, have, like Harnack, limited the value of the letter to an external interest—the Marcionite church (Harnack and Quispel), ongoing debates on the authenticity of Colossians and Ephesians (MaGee), or the utilization of Paul in the second century for establishing social prestige (Burnet). Only in Pervo's very brief overview of Laodiceans do we find a modern scholar that seriously contends with the internal message of this letter. The scholarly consensus, however, remains firmly entrenched (e.g., Meeks and Fitzgerald).

In this book, I have attempted to challenge nearly two centuries of scholarship on Laodiceans, contending that this little letter is indeed worth scholarly attention, that it should not, contra Lightfoot, be laid to rest by scholars. By means of an epistolary analysis of this letter, the rhetorical argument in Laodiceans has been clearly articulated. This letter constructs a fictive rhetorical situation, articulating a paraenetic message of affirmation and encouragement for a second- or third-century Christian audience through the lens of a first-century epistolary encounter between Paul and the Laodicean Christians. From this study, several conclusions can be drawn from which further discussion can emerge.

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[1] Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 300.

Most importantly, this letter is not a random collection of Pauline say-
ings drawn from the more beautifully crafted letters in the New Testa-
ment. I certainly agree that Ps-Paul has drawn upon Paul's letters, but
this author has also redacted and organized his or her material in order
to create a new letter with a distinct message within a fresh rhetorical
or entextualized situation. In some cases, such as with the thanksgiving
period, the author does not seem to follow a specific source but rather
is inspired by the standard Pauline form. Our author demonstrates a
close familiarity with the Pauline tradition, a tradition that both supplies
raw material and inspiration for the framing of that material (though a
framework seemingly limited to the epistolary tradition—i.e., Paul, in this
letter, is certainly a letter writer at the head of social network of com-
munities; he is not situated in relation to a four gospel tradition, as we
see with Irenaeus, nor within narrative or apocalyptic traditions associ-
ated with the memory of Paul in the second century).[2] What we have
is less a sloppy plagiarist than an editor who takes on the role of author
within the very arrangement of the traditions at his or her disposal. This
arrangement enables the various elements in the letter to weave into each
other, building on previous information in the letter as new material is
introduced.[3] Key elements, such as the true gospel, false teachers, and
the positive relations between writer and recipients, fold back onto each
other, evoking previous points so as to drive home the persuasive force of
the letter as a whole. Parallel structures throughout the letter add points
of interpretative stress and focus, while simultaneously interlocking the
various elements in the letter. This process is perhaps most evident in
the letter body, especially the body middle, and the paraenesis section.
Yet, these very processes can be discerned in the letter opening and letter
closing. Such careful construction in what is, on the surface at least, a very
simple letter demonstrates a careful hand at work.

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[2] See the discussion in Arnal, "Second Century Invention," passim.

[3] Although I have not offered a specialized linguistic analysis (largely due to the inevi-
table tedious and redundant presentation such a discussion would add to this book), I am
convinced that this very process of building on previous information while weaving mate-
rial together in Laodiceans follows the basic principles of the Functional Letter Perspective
(FLP), as set forth by Stanley Porter ("Functional Letter Perspective"), who builds on the
work of the Prague Linguistics Circle's Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP). Beyond the
work cited by Porter, on the FSP approach see also Leonard Lipka, "Functional Sentence
Perspective, Intonation, and the Speaker," in *Grundbegriffe und Hauptströmungen der Lin-
guistik*, edited by Christoph Gutknecht (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1977),
133–141. Lipka gives special attention to verbal emphasis along with transitional elements
linking *theme* and *rheme* structures.

Furthermore, Laodiceans is so infused with hortative devices that it should be read as a paraenetic letter. The letter nicely fits the definitional contours of the Lund-Oslo group, even beyond the paraenetic subsection of verses 10 to 16. As a result, the letter's arrangement of hortatory material is analogous to the rhetorical articulation of moral exhortation in 1 Thessalonians; i.e., the preceding elements in the letter (prescript, thanksgiving, body) move the reader towards the paraenetic climax of the author's direct moral exhortation. Indeed, Laodiceans helps to confirm the findings of the Lund-Oslo group. Consequently, in future scholarship it will be necessary to study this letter alongside other examples of early Christian paraenesis. Too often has the study of early Christian paraenesis been limited to canonical sources, resulting in a distorted historical perspective due to a failure to appreciate the full reservoir of sources available to the historian. The apocryphal epistle to the Laodiceans, like other early Christian texts outside the canon, should now be included in any study of moral exhortation in early Christianity.

Pseudo-Historical Letters and the Problem of Pseudonymity

The presuppositions underlying scholarly approaches to pseudepigraphy also need to be revisited and corrected. Pseudonymity is certainly an important arena for Pauline studies, with serious exegetical implications arising from scholarly decisions on questions of authentiticity. As Stanley Porter aptly puts the matter:

> Authorship is important for determining whether the situation being addressed is one in the 50s or the 180s, whether one is reading a letter confronting problems at the beginning of the Christian movement or one responding to developed problems of Church order, whether the theology reflects an author formulating and developing profound concepts for the first time or merely repeating what have become accepted dogmas, etc.[4]

Implications of occasion and purpose of a letter are central to the issue of authenticity, and thus the issue of pseudonymity has a direct impact on exegetical analysis. Given the implications of such an issue for historical reconstructions, scholars have given a great deal of attention to this matter, yet with a myopic focus on the canonical writings at the expense of the non-canonical.

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[4] Porter, "Exegesis of the Pauline Letters," 536.

Laodiceans has been largely ignored in scholarship, in part, due to both its non-canonical and pseudepigraphic status. Unlike other letters written in Paul's name, several of which likely date to the second century (i.e., the Pastorals), there is no drive in scholarship to struggle with the apocryphal letters in light of their lack of authenticity. A canonical bias undergirds our field in this regard. When it comes to the canon, to use David Meade's terminology, pseudonymity is a "problem" demanding and therefore fostering "attempts at resolving the problem" or "to 'justify' the presence of pseudonymity within the canon."[5] The problem, of course, is that as part of the biblical canon these texts must be trustworthy; thus, to posit that a letter (such as 1 Timothy or Ephesians) falsely attributes itself to Paul is to indicate that this letter, and thus the biblical canon, contains blatant lies. J. I. Packer states the theological implications of such a view of pseudonymity: "We may lay down as a general principle that, when biblical books specify their own authorship, the affirmation of their canonicity involves a denial of their pseudonymity. Pseudonymity and canonicity are mutually exclusive."[6] The same point is made by the Wesleyan theologian, J. Kenneth Grider, who, in arguing for a biblical foundation for theological work, asserts that if the Bible indicates authorship then that authorship must be correct or the biblical texts are untrustworthy.[7] Thus, pseudonymity is only a problem when it comes to the integrity, or the honesty, of the canon, for, to quote J. S. Candlish, such "a fraud . . . is incompatible with the character of a message from God."[8] Indeed, Candlish goes on to claim that the "conclusion therefore would seem to be that books in which a false authorship is claimed, merely in order to gain the more acceptance for their contents, cannot be divinely inspired, or any part of the canon of Scripture."[9] Thus, it is the canon as a divinely inspired, authoritative voice that drives the need to "resolve" the "problem" of pseudonymity for some scholars.[10]

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[5] Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon*, 4.

[6] J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 184; cited in Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon*, 3. Packer applies this principle to debates over the Pastorals, indicating that pseudonymity here would constitute fraudulent imitation (183).

[7] J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1994), especially 30–32, 37–62 (chapter 3: "Perspectives on Doing Theology: Biblical Realism"), and 63–100 (chapter 4: "Theology's Written Authority").

[8] J. S. Candlish, "On the Moral Character of Pseudonymous Books," *The Expositor* 4 (1891): 91–107, 262–279, especially 92.

[9] Candlish, "Moral Character," 278.

[10] See the helpful overview of the various approaches to pseudonymity in Bruce M. Metzger, "Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha," *JBL* 91 (1972): 3–24. Porter,

Resolutions typically fall into three general approaches: (1) a psycho-
logical analysis of the ancient pseudo-author, sometimes linking the
Christian author's worldview to a "Hebrew psychology" of collective men-
tality (thus eliminating the concept of an author);[11] (2) a reconstruction
of social conventions so that pseudonymous works are not analogous to
modern forgeries (e.g., the Pauline school hypothesis) (thus the difficulty
only arises with an anachronistic reading of ancient conventions through
a modern lens);[12] and (3) an attempt at countering the charge of pseud-
onymity in favor of authenticity, thereby distancing the canonical texts
from the problems of pseudonymity.[13] Such attempts tend to work with
the assumption that there is a problem to be addressed—specifically, that
pseudonymity needs to be accounted for or explained away so that the
texts remain acceptable for modern interpreters. No such concern under-
lies the treatment of non-canonical texts. No one is threatened (today at
least) by a letter falsely written in Paul's name to the Corinthians, Alex-
andrians, or Laodiceans—those texts are already excluded from canon
and therefore offer no danger to the veracity of the canon. As a result,
monographs, articles, and doctoral theses are not being written to argue

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"Exegesis of the Pauline Letters," 537–538, also discusses the issue of "deception" as a schol-
arly preoccupation in the treatment of Pauline authorship.

   [11] See, e.g., Kurt Aland, "The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity in Christian
Literature of the First Two Centuries," *JTS* 12 (1961): 39–49; D. S. Russell, *The Method
and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964); and Arnold
Meyer, "Religiöse Pseudepigraphie als ethisch-psychologisches Problem," *ZNW* 35 (1936):
262–279; cf. Horst R. Balz, "Anonymität und Pseudepigraphie im Urchristentum," *ZTK* 66
(1969): 403–436, and Morton Smith, "Pseudepigraphy in the Israelite Literary Tradition,"
in *Pseudepigrapha I: Pseudopythagorica—Letters de Platon—Littérature pseudépigraphique
juive*, edited by K. von Kritz (Entrentiens sur l'antiquité classique, 17; Geneva: Vandoeuvres,
1971), 194–198. See also the valuable critique of scholarly approaches to pseudonymity in
Régis Burnet, "La pseudépigrahie comme procédé littéraire autonome: L'exemple des Pas-
torals," *Apocrypha* 11 (2000): 77–91.

   [12] See, e.g., Hans Conzelmann, "Paulus und die Weisheit," *NTS* 12 (1965/66): 231–244;
Conzelmann, "Die Schule des Paulus," in *Theologia Crucis—Signum Crucis: Festschrift für
Erich Dinkler*, edited by Carl Andresen and Günter Klein (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979),
85–96; James D. G. Dunn, "Pauline Legacy and School," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testa-
ment and Its Developments*, edited by Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove:
InterVarsity Press, 1997), 887–893; cf. MaGee, "Exalted Apostle," 21–37.

   [13] See, e.g., Donald Guthrie, "The Development of the Idea of Canonical Pseudonymity
in New Testament Criticism," *Vox Evangelica: Biblical and Historical Essays by Members
of the Faculty of the London Bible College*, edited by Ralph P. Martin (London: Epworth
Press, 1962), 43–59, and Frederick Torm, "Die Psychologie der Pseudonymität im Hinblick
auf die Literatur des Urchristentums," in *Pseudepigraphie in der heidnischen und jüdisch-
christlichen Antike*, edited by Norbert Brox (Darmstadt: Wissenschafliche Buchgesellschaft,
1977), 111–140.

the authorship of these pseudonymous texts or to struggle with the impli-
cations of a pseudonymous status. They don't matter.

Yet it is this very canonical bias that obscures the historian's perspec-
tive, forcing attention toward one set of texts while overlooking another,
likely contemporary, set of sources, unless, of course, that latter set of
sources offers some insight into the first set.[14] Such a demarcation of
canonical and non-canonical sources is a persistent fallacy of historiogra-
phy in biblical scholarship. Not only does the preoccupation with decep-
tive motivation impose a bioptic treatment of sources that marginalizes
the non-canonical sources, this preoccupation also tends to obscure the
editorial processes at work in the second century of these letters from the
first century. As Paul's letters were collected, redacted, and dissiminated
within an early second-century social network(s) wherein communities
were defining themselves as inheritors and authentic interpreters of these
first-century writings, these letters (or fragments of letters) were rendered
into newly constructed texts. In this sense, even the authentic letters of
Paul are not really the product of Paul's hand, at least in their emerg-
ing second-century re-presentation.[15] This process of utilization through
re-presentation/re-formulation of Paul's letters is typically overlooked,
especially as partition theories increasingly are challenged in New Testa-
ment scholarship. Rather, these letters tend to be treated as holistic prod-
ucts of the first century, minus a few interpolations that, perhaps with
increasing scholarly confidence, are to be explained away. Overlooked,
however, are those processes by which second-century Christians were
constructing contending images of Paul for socially authorizing their
diverse formations of Christian identity. Consequently, the canonical bias

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[14] This is certainly the position advocated in 1826 by Archibald Alexander, *The Canon
of the Old and New Testaments Ascertained*, who is only concerned with the New Testa-
ment canon and thereby dismisses Laodiceans as having no impact on the message of the
canon: "But there is also an EPISTLE TO THE LAODICEANS, now extant, against which
nothing can be said, except that almost everything contained in it, is taken out of Paul's
other Epistles, so that if it should be received, we add nothing in reality to the Canon; and
if it should be rejected, we lose nothing. The reader may find a translation of this Epistle,
inserted in the notes at the end of the volume" (297–298; see also Alexender's English
translation on pages 405–406).

[15] Here I am building on the seminal essay by Arnal, "Second Century Invention." See
page 208 for Arnal's discussion of the composite construction of Paul's letters from the
letter fragments of the first century by a Pauline school (or schools) in the early second
century (briefly mentioning Sellew's treatment of Laodiceans as an indication of such edi-
torial activity). See also Andreas Lindemann, "Die Sammlung der Paulusbriefe im 1. und
2. Jahrhundert," in *The Biblical Canons*, edited by Jean-Marie Auwers and H. J. de Jonge
(Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 321–351.

in the study of early Christian pseudoynmity results in a naïve treatment of the New Testament sources along with a near exclusion of analysis of those letters attributed to Paul that circulated outside of, or only for a time within the emerging canon lists. As the circulating sets of documents from the first and second centuries that were to eventually comprise the New Testament were discursive mechanisms for articulating a unified social tradition for Christianity within the second century, the historian risks slipping into merely rearticulating and thus authenticating that very discursive act rather than analyzing such identity formation within a wider spectrum of such processes for the sake of better understanding and theorizing this formative period.

Such a bias suggests that the task of the historian has collapsed into a modern confessional agenda.[16] It is important to note, however, that such a bias is not only found in clearly apologetic academic works, but also arises in scholarship that is firmly grounded within historical research, such as we find with Sellew, Holloway, Penny, MaGee, and numerous other scholars who have studied Laodiceans and other early Christian letters. My concern is not to dismiss scholarship that has a focus on those texts found within the New Testament canon, as if such a focus alone is the problem. The New Testament texts certainly are important works to study. My point is that the way we treat our sources needs to extend beyond canonical analysis, to include non-canonical works on par with those in the canon when it comes to assessing and utilizing our historical sources.

An appreciation of "canon"—as an historical category—remains useful, however. During the second century canonical developments were clearly at play, both with Marcion and among other Christian thinkers and groups. As Richard Thompson has correctly indicated, early Christians would have read these texts not only individually (such as during the original occasion of the text) but also collectively as part of organized sets of texts (e.g., the transmission of the four gospels and the letters of Paul during the early to mid-second century, especially with Irenaeus, who re-presents Paul as an "orthodox" letter writer in juxtaposition to a four-fold gospel tradition

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[16] Moving in a different, though equally apologetic direction, is M. James Sawyer, "Evangelicals and the Canon of the New Testament," *Grace Theological Journal* 11.1 (1991): 29–52 (see especially Sawyer's treatment of Laodiceans on pp. 44–45, where the letter is used to demonstrate that the New Testament canon was not fixed even in the Western Church by the fourth century), who argues that historical criticism should have no bearing on the evangelical defense of the canon.

of the sayings and doings of Jesus).[17] Such arrangements of texts could have affected the way communities used, read, and interpreted such texts (especially if we look at the performance or ritual use of texts subsequent to their original occasion). A similar appreciation of "sets of texts" has emerged in the study of other ancient, including early Christian, literature, such as, for example, with the Nag Hammadi codices.[18] Canon, therefore, remains important, but as one of the social processes at play; processes that should be explored historically as an object of study, not used as the interpretative lens for our understanding of these formative centuries. By keeping our focus on the historical agenda, rather than the normative, we (as historians) are enabled to identify, as Willi Braun puts it, programmatic "tinkering with the past" within "moments of emergence" such as we find occurring in the second-century treatment of Paul (and, of course, other first-century figures).[19]

In the study of Laodiceans, this canonical bias has contributed to a lack of appreciation for this letter, resulting in either debate over a Marcionite connection or a summary of manuscript traditions and ancient testimonies with little or no further analysis. Even when analysis is offered, such as by Sellew, Holloway, Penny and MaGee, a canonical concern dominates the study. However, like other pseudonymous letters, Laodiceans demonstrates a clearly articulated rhetorical situation, an internal logic that is neither dependent on the letter being authentically Pauline nor grounded within an intertextual relationship to the canonical letters (though intertextuality remains an important part of the analysis, as it should with any

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[17] Richard P. Thompson, "Scripture, Christian Canon, and Community: Rethinking Theological Interpretation Canonically," *JTI* 4.2 (2010): 253–272. On Irenaeus' treatment of the Paul and the four gospels, see Arnal, "Second Century Invention," 204–205.

[18] See, for example, Michael Kaler, "The Prayer of the Apostle Paul in the Context of Nag Hammadi Codex I," *JECS* 16 (2008): 319–339; Louis Painchaud and Michael Kaler, "From the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul* to the *Three Steles of Seth*: Codices I, XI and VII from Nag Hammadi Viewed as a Collection," *VC* 61 (2007): 445–469; Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 235–262; Williams, "Interpreting the Nag Hammadi Collection(s) in the History of 'Gnosticism(s)'," in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi et le problème de leur classification. Actes du colloque tenu à Québec du 15 au 19 septembre 1993*, edited by Louis Painchaud and Anne Pasquier (BCNH, section "Études" 3; Quebec/Leuven-Paris: Les Presses de l'Université Laval/Éditions Peeters, 1995), 3–50.

[19] Willi Braun, "Schooled Intelligence, Social Interests, and the Sayings Gospel Q," paper presented at the Westar Seminar on Christian Origins, Santa Rosa, CA, October 2007 (cited in Arnal, "Second Century Invention," 201). See also Braun, "Amnesia in the Production of (Christian) History," *CSSR Bulletin* 28.1 (1999): 3–8, and Braun, "The Past as Simulacrum in the Canonical Narratives of Christian Origins," *Religion and Theology* 8.3–4 (2001): 213–228.

early Christian text). Just as scholars can fruitfully study the disputed Pauline letters while accepting their pseudonymous nature, so also, I submit, may the non-canonical letters be studied.[20]

A more fruitful model for future research is offered by Patricia Rosenmeyer's discussion of pseudonymous or pseudo-historical letters from, especially, the Second Sophistic.[21] Such letters were popular creative venues for retelling historical events and personalities with far more flare and personal impact than other genres permitted, in part due to the personal perspective of a letter and in part due to the less restrictive conventions attached to letter writing. Rosenmeyer observes that,

> The principal impulse behind the work of a pseudonymous letter writer may have been the desire to illuminate a figure from the glorious past through a more intimate character portrait than a standard biography would allow. The letter writer presents an "apology" for the hero's life, or challenges a later generation to admire his accomplishments, viewing historical events through the lens of one man's personal correspondence.[22]

She also notes that such fictive letters would typically pick up where the historical record left off, thereby adding a voyeuristic reading experience for the real audience. Rosenmeyer's study is not burdened by a canonical bias and these letters are not "a problem" that demands resolution. Rather, her study is focused on a broad philosophical and historical literary tradition within the imperial period.

Perhaps the early Christian pseudepigraphic letters could be studied within such a literary tradition. In order to break from the biases of our field, perhaps such letters should be identified as pseudo-historical letters. Laodiceans, for example, certainly "picks up" where the known history of Paul drops off, that is, if we accept the authenticity of Colossians. But Laodiceans, like 3 Corinthians, the Pastoral epistles, and other apocryphal letters, does not stop at filling a gap in the historical record, but goes on

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[20] Contra Meeks and Fitzgerald, *Writings of Paul*, 141: "The Deutero-Pauline letters of the New Testament are deeply anchored in the thought of Paul and represent attempts to adapt the apostle's message to new generations of believers. The pseudo-Pauline works included in this section are quite different and have no such firm mooring. Written for a variety of purposes, these works are clear forgeries." The distinction between "deutero-" and "pseudo-" Pauline works enables this erroneous conclusion, as I have demonstrated in this study. Indeed, it is this very distinction that enables "clear forgeries" to be applied to the "pseudo-" but not the "deutero-" Pauline works.

[21] Patricia A. Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Greek Literary Letters: Selections in Translation* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 97–129.

[22] Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Greek Literary Letters*, 98.

to create a fresh literary work in the very re-presentation of Paul as an historical figure for second-century Christians. Within less than a century from his ministry and death, Paul had become a culture hero for these communities. As a culture hero, his memory would have been continued, shaped or re-shaped, or simply offered for the reading pleasure of readers by such pseudo-historical letters. For a letter writer, as Rosenmeyer articulates, "[t]he pseudo-historical letters satisfied their authors' urge to write biography, autobiography, and fiction all at once."[23] Equally, the pseudo-historical Pauline letters could have satisfied a reader's desire for biography, autobiography, and fiction about one of their most esteemed founding figures. While blatant forgeries, with the goal of deceiving readers, were certainly produced in antiquity—and the slippery slope between the fictional and the authentic may have been difficult to draw at times, especially if the pseudonymous author had done his or her job well—we don't need to frame our analysis along such lines, either defending the production of such works as harmless emulations of a significant figure or rejecting them as outright forgeries intended to be passed off as authentic works. Rather than viewing pseudonymity as a "problem", we could instead look at pseudo-historical letters as literary expressions worth studying in their own right as literary works, as products of broader social identity formation, and as socially constructed "memory" within those discursive moments of emergence.

A contrary position is taken by Lewis Donelson, who, following the three-fold typology of Wolfgang Speyer, contends that early Christian works fall exclusively under the *gefälschte religiöse Pseudepigraphie* type (i.e., as works produced with the goal of deception) rather than *fiktive religiöse Pseudepigraphie* (exercises in literary expression, such as we see explored by Rosenmeyer) or *die echte religiöse Pseudepigraphie* type (which, according to both Donelson and Speyer, has nothing to do with early Christian texts, contra, for example, Kurt Aland's analysis of pseudepigraphy).[24] In support of this claim, Donelson recognizes that when an ancient work was identified as inauthentic, it was immediately

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[23] Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Greek Literary Letters*, 103. Similarly, Rosenmeyer comments, "The curious reader hopes to find in letters a 'mirror of the soul' to use a phrase from one ancient epistolary theorist ('Demetrius' *On Style* 227). One could call our readings of such letters 'voyeuristic,' as we seek to glimpse into the private thoughts of a public figure, not really caring whether what we discover is noble or base, as long as we find something new" (98).

[24] Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument*, 15–18; Wolfgang Speyer, "Religiöse Pseudepigraphie und literarische Fälschung," in *Pseudepigraphie in der heidnischen und*

rejected by the church fathers. Although Donelson is certainly correct in noting the rejection of pseudepigraphic works by the church fathers, what is overlooked is that such false vs. authentic assessments arise late in the second century, when the formation of the canon along with attribution of anonymous works (such as the New Testament gospels) became an issue.[25] Kurt Aland's hypothesis, for example, of an early second-century concern over inspiration rather than attribution, is not negated by Donelson's observation.[26] Consequently, we can appreciate the literary origins of pseudepigraphic works even if we accept a later rejection of those works on other, canonical grounds. Furthermore, there is no reason to assume that all Christians in the second and third century responded to pseudonymous works as their church leaders did, though unfortunately we lack evidence to elucidate such differences. However, given the number of pseudonymous works produced both before and after the Muratorian Canon was supposedly composed, we should be cautious in assuming that all Christians were offended by the practice of pseudonymity. Given the tendencies within the Second Sophistic, it is likely that similar literary expressions were at work in the production of second-century Christian pseudonymity.

In the case of Laodiceans, we have a pseudo-historical letter that exemplifies a second-century Christian fascination and adoration of Paul as culture hero, a fascination that directly builds on the Pauline tradition to create a fresh and unique picture of the famous apostle. Whether the rhetorical situation is constructed to address a specific historical occasion

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jüdisch-christlichen Antike, edited by Norbert Brox (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), 195–263.

[25] The same argument arises in the discussion of the church's rejection of pseudonymous works offered by Terry L. Wilder, *Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and Deception: An Inquiry into Intention and Reception* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004), especially 134: "Thus, it becomes difficult to maintain, as many do, that the early church was more concerned about the content of writings than their authorship . . . It is difficult to claim, from the evidence in this case, that a sturdy tradition of pseudonymity existed amongst early Christians. The church accepted none of the letters in this section [explored in Wilder's book], except for the extant *Laodiceans* by the medieval West, but, as was mentioned, this acceptance seems to have occurred because the writing was thought to be a genuine letter of Paul." Wilder is absolutely correct about the church rejecting pseudonymous writings based on both content and authorship, but Wilder mistakenly assumes that the church's reaction to pseudonymity was uniform across time, groups, and social stratifications within Christian communities. In discussing second-century Christian rejection of pseudonymous works in particular, Wilder is overly dependent on the Muratorian Canon. Again, this dependency assumes that what was happening at the end of the second century was the same as what was occurring at the beginning of that century.

[26] Aland, "Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity," passim.

is not clear, anymore than as to whether the unknown author was trying to pass off the letter as authentic or not[27]—we just don't have enough external or internal evidence to identify any such occasion or situation with certainty. Yet such a context is not necessary for analyzing this letter's internal texture. And it is by approaching such pseudo-historical letters from a literary perspective—perhaps even situating them within a broader second-century literary tradition exemplified by the Second Sophistic—that scholarly work on such letters can more fruitfully proceed than by continuing to burden our historical work with all the problems inherent with a canonical bias.[28] Pseudonymity is not a problem to be solved, but a delightful puzzle to be worked through.

Paul as "Culture Hero" in the Second Century

The figure of Paul carries ideological nuance in the hands of second-century writers. But where do we fit the apocryphal epistle to the Laodiceans into that historical context? Some could argue, and indeed have argued, that the letter should be dismissed given the lack of detail offered. After all, what do we really gain from an analysis of this pseudepigraphic letter? Other letters attributed to Paul, especially from the second century, offer far more complex appropriations of Paul. The apocryphal 3 Corinthians (both the letter sent to Paul and the response from Paul) demonstrates that Paul was portrayed by some early Christians as a key authority figure that was used to contend against those other Christians perceived as heretics. The Pastoral epistles, which are clearly pseudepigraphical constructions from the mid-second century, not only contend against "heresy" (if indeed they were written in response to the traditions underlying the

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[27] Wilder, *Pseudonymity*, 135, comments: "Though scholars do not know specifically whether the extant *Laodiceans* was written to deceive, one should again note that many readers (in the West) were misled into thinking that Paul had written the letter."

[28] My comments in this section are not meant to imply that scholarly debates over authorship of the Pauline letters are inappropriate or misguided. Whether one follows a seven letter Pauline corpus (as I do) or a larger corpus, including 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, and Ephesians, or even a broader corpus of authentic letters, by including 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, the same principle of studying these letters through historical rather than canonical methods or presuppositions still stands. I have no problem with an historically grounded argument for the authenticity of, for example, 1 Timothy (and in the case of 2 Thessalonians and Colossians, I am inclined toward authenticity more than toward the other disputed letters). However, when a text is determined to be pseudonymous, that should open the text to new and different analytical possibilities, such as my proposal of looking at such texts as pseudo-historical letters with entextualized situations.

Acts of Paul),[29] but also use Paul as an authoritative figure for shaping and reinforcing emerging ecclesiastical structures within the second century. Other traditions portray Paul as a source of divine revelation (*Apocalypse of Paul* and perhaps the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul*), an ideal martyr (letters of Ignatius, *1 Clement*, and the *Acts of Paul*), a corrector of misguided teachings (2 Thessalonians, if not authentic; Ephesians and Colossians), a supporter of a particular set of teachings (the apocryphal letter to the Alexandrians, at least based on the reference in the Muratorian Canon), a founding figure of a Gentile mission that was not an aberration of the original apostolic mission (Acts), a source of doctrinal or ethical misinterpretations (Revelation), and a philosophical figure worthy of an educated demographic (*Correspondence of Paul and Seneca*, albeit this is later than the second century). So what do we gain from Laodiceans that we don't from other texts?

A supposedly benign characterization of Paul by this letter has led Pervo to suggest a common rather than elite Christian fascination with the famous apostle. He observes:

> This letter could readily be memorized to serve as a companion in the Christian life. Probably issued in the first half of the third century, *Laodiceans* testifies to the existence of a mildly sanitized Paul, who remained nonetheless a living and vigorous herald of the gospel. It is an example of pseudepigraphical restraint. . . . for this is a portrait of Paul that wishes to be ordinary and is therefore evidence of normal—as opposed to elite—Christian activity.[30]

For certain the letter offers a fairly undeveloped "Paul" for the reader, at least from the perspective of church order, theological speculation, personal histories, etc., but does the letter offer nothing more than a "sanitized Paul" born out of a deep admiration for the historic figure? Undoubtedly such admiration would nicely locate Laodiceans within the literary tradition of the pseudo-historical epistolary tradition traced by Rosenmeyer, and it is tempting to end the discussion with such a conclusion. Yet I suggest that we move past Pervo's otherwise insightful and correct evaluation. Laodiceans demonstrates a carefully developed rhetorical presentation, arranging material to the furtherance of its paraenetic purpose. This alone hints at something more going on in the letter's characterization of Paul.

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[29] As argued by Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983).

[30] Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 109.

William Arnal has recently argued that Paul was a formative figure in the social identity construction of the second century.[31] Arnal goes as far as claiming that "Christianity" was socially constructed in the second century, in part through the appropriation, juxtaposition, and revision of first-century documents, along with the production of new texts that, again, interacted with earlier materials to effect a fresh presentation of, for example, Paul for the needs of second-century Christian communities. Arnal goes as far as claiming that the very label "Christianity" is an anachronism if applied to the first century. Although I likely see a stronger historical link than Arnal does between those diverse movements of the first century (that emerged in response to the Jesus movement) with those more developed, yet still highly diverse networks that came into being in the second century, I fully agree with him that second-century Christians were fashioning historical memories (and thus social cohesion, or the perception of a lineage of social coherence with the past) by using earlier works and historic individuals. Not only do we find the Pauline corpus being constructed (collected, edited, compressed into composite documents, and circulated as a corpus) near the beginning of the second century, but we also find early Christians producing narrative depictions of Paul, depictions that contended with the characterizations found in the letters or other narrative depictions (e.g., Acts and the various traditions collected into the *Acts of Paul*). Paul is presented (or re-presented) as a missionary founder of a diverse network of churches, a wandering preacher who is self-supporting, a visionary commissioned as an apostle, a church leader standing in harmony with the other apostles (or, as in Acts, being supported by the apostles even though Paul himself is not technically an apostle), a traditionalist fighting against non-hierarchal social tendencies, and as a letter writer (though an "orthodox" letter writer and theologian). Although the Paul of the undisputed letters has little if any interest in the narrative of Jesus' life, by the end of the second century we find Irenaeus adhering to a four-fold gospel tradition and a Pauline letter collection as definitive for the understanding of the canon (and thus of understanding Paul). This process of correlating Paul with the New Testament gospels arises elsewhere, even beyond Marcion's proposed canon list, such as in 3 Corinthians (especially verses 12–13) and, I would argue, the *Interpretation of Knowledge* (where once again we find a four-fold gospel canon opening the tractate and a lengthy engagement with the Pauline letters, mainly

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[31] Arnal, "Second Century Invention."

the Corinthian correspondence as well as Colossians and Ephesians, in the closing pages of the tractate where the social conflict underlying this Valentinian text is forcefully addressed). Thus, Paul as exemplary figure was important in the second century, regardless of the theological tendencies, geographic locality, or sociological status of those admiring Paul.

In looking at the character of Paul in Laodiceans, we find several key traits assigned to him: he is a letter writer working with a network of communities that he seems to be the leader of (at least due to the presence of co-workers who "come from him" and the mention of the letter to the Colossians); he is an apostle (a title which is undefined, except as a divinely ordained leadership role, thus authenticating Ps.-Paul's leadership over that network of churches, including the community in Laodicea); he is a martyr, both through his suffering and perhaps also his death;[32] his relationship with the Laodiceans is one of reciprocity with eternal implications for both of them; and he is the ultimate moral example for the Laodicean Christians to admire, emulate, and thereby receive encouragement from while facing their own (internal) struggles. It is perhaps this exemplary role that Ps.-Paul holds that is most significant. An affective relationship certainly exists between the letter writer and the recipients, which, of course, fits the paraenetic nature of the letter.

This affectionate relationship situates "Paul" as a culture hero for these second-century Christians. Culture heroes, at least as studied in various folklore traditions (not only indigenous North America and African origin myths, but also in Greco-Roman myths such as we find with Prometheus, Hermes, and Aeneas), function to (1) explain certain social roles within a group (e.g., agricultural skills, ethical norms, etc.) that are necessary for survival or the establishment of "civilization", and (2) to explain the origins of the community, often, though not always, interwoven with creation myths.[33] The culture hero tends to be a legendary or historical figure that

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[32] If Paul is presented as a martyr in Laodiceans, then such an allusion would have been directed to the real audience of the letter rather than the fictional community at Laodicea (as Ps.-Paul is obviously alive while writing the letter). Still, such allusions articulate a portrayal, or narrative characterization, of the famed apostle that would have resonated with the second-century readers of Laodiceans.

[33] See, for example, the comparative analysis between Greco-Roman and Chinese culture heroes in Dore J. Levy, "The Trojan and the Hegemon; or, the Culture Hero as Slave of Duty," *Comparative Literature Studies* 22.1 (1985): 136–146. Also see Volney P. Gay, "Winnicott's Contribution to Religious Studies: The Resurrection of the Culture Hero," *JAAR* 51.3 (1983): 371–395. Most recently, see the comprehensive study by John Jerome Collins, "Worthless Mysteries: Forbidden Knowledge, Culture Heroes, and the Enochic Motif of Angelic Instruction" (Ph.D. dissertation; University of Virginia, 2011).

emerged with prominence alongside the emergence of the community. The hero is almost always larger than life, occasionally a trickster figure (especially when "civilized" skills are linked to vice rather than virtue),[34] and he or she is perceived as a central figure not only for understanding the legendary past of the community but also as a guide for the present community in attaining social cohesion, communal survival, or ethical revitalization. Culture heroes are praiseworthy, sometimes deified, or are object of awe. Often they are multivalent through cultural reassessments and applications of the hero figure.[35] They are essential devices in the construction of social identity and historical memory.

When we move beyond identifying culture heroes within the emergence of an entire racial/ethnic group or civilization, culture heroes can be located within diverse social movements where founding figures function for communal identity formation. Among the Cynics of the second century, for example, founding figures such as Crates, Diogenes as well as mythical or legendary figures like Odysseus (as a negative *exemplar*) and Hercules (a positive *exemplar*), function as embodiments of the "essence" of the movement, i.e., they continue to instruct those who strive to follow the difficult path to wisdom.[36] Exemplary figures are potent paraenetic

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[34] Gay, "Winnicott's Contribution," 373–379. An important aspect of the culture hero as trickster figure is the figure's role in challenging while maintaining boundaries. Thus, the figure's liminal qualities underscore the transitional narrative role she or he plays within the community's constructed memory. Of course, not all trickster figures are culture heroes, nor are all culture heroes trickster figures. In the second-century construction of "Paul" as culture hero for early Christian communities, he is sometimes portrayed as a transitional or liminal figure, such as between Jewish and Gentile community (Paul as founder of the Gentile mission), or between this worldly and other worldly communications/teachings (the apocalyptic Paul as visionary). Like other culture heroes with trickster qualities, the constructed Paul evokes controversy and disruption by challenging such social or cosmological boundaries. In Laodiceans, this trickster or transitional quality does not seem to be attached to the figure of Paul. To the contrary, the emphasis on divine authority, inner Christian concerns, and a universal network of communities, all suggest that this "Paul" is a stabilizing figure rather than a disruptive figure.

[35] See, for example, Eliot Wirshbo, "The Mekone Scene in the Theogony: Prometheus as Prankster," *GRBS* 23.2 (1982): 101–110.

[36] In Ps.-Crates, *Epistle* 19, we find an antithesis of negative and positive *exempla*, drawn from Homeric legends, for exhorting the reader within the Cynic lifestyle: "Do not call Odysseus, who was the most effiminate [sic] of all his companions and who put pleasure above all else, the father of Cynicisim because he once put on the garb of the Cynic . . . Rather, call Diogenes the father of Cynicism. He put on the cloak not just once but throughout his life, he was superior to both toil and pleasure . . . he was brave not only at the point of death but was also courageous in his practice of virtue" (translation from Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles: A Study Edition* [SBLSBS, 12; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977]). On Heracles/Hercules as moral *exemplar* within Cynicism, see Dudley, *History of Cynicism*, 198–201, especially 182–183.

devices in ancient texts, and we find the same in the early Christian material. Returning to Arnal's seminal analysis, central founding figures of the first century, as antecedents of the second-century Christian churches, were drawn upon as authoritative heroes. Jesus, Peter, Paul, James, and various other first-century figures were drawn upon, and then supplemented by other figures such as Thecla (in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*). In the case of Jesus, the culture hero is mythologized as a semi- or fully divine figure, whereas Paul, while not mythologized, certainly was elevated as the founder and shaper of what second-century Christians identified as a network of churches from which they themselves emerged. In effect, Paul supplies these Christians with historical memory; fictional perhaps in whole or part, but certainly a profound and "true" history for their own social alignment vis-à-vis the broader cultural and historical world within which they negotiated their existence. However, these heroes are not only presented as founding figures in second-century redescriptions (e.g., Peter and Paul in Acts; Jesus in various gospels), but they also offered orientations for social identity within these communities. These orientations have ethical, ecclesiastical, doctrinal, and ritual implications for how the community should function in order to remain true to the community's origins (these implications are perhaps most clearly present in the Pastorals). These functions are quintessentially those of a culture hero.

Laodiceans redescribes this first-century period of "origins" by disclosing "Paul" as the center of the recipients' attention, demarcating insiders from outsiders by aligning people within or standing beyond the affective connection that the apostle has nurtured with the "authentic" churches. Such authenticity is not exhibited by discerning correct doctrines, ritual processes, ecclesiastical authorities, or even scriptural exegesis. Rather, authenticity arises from a relationship with Ps-Paul, whose authority comes from Christ, is proved by his suffering, and most importantly is continually expressed by his passionate concern for the community. By focusing on the character of Ps.-Paul, our author effectively follows (not intentionally, perhaps) the advice that Aristotle set forth in his *Rhetoric*:

> The orator persuades by moral character when his speech is delivered in such a manner as to render him worthy of confidence; for we feel confident in a greater degree and more readily in persons of worth in regard to everything in general, but where there is no certainty and there is room for doubt, our confidence is absolute. But this confidence must be due to the speech itself, not to any preconceived idea of the speaker's character; for it is not the case, as some writers of rhetorical treatises lay down in their "Art," that the worth of the orator in no way contributes to his powers of persuasion;

> on the contrary, moral character, so to say, constitutes the most effective
> means of proof. (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.2.4–5 LCL)

What Aristotle observes for speeches is even truer in paraenetic discourse, and especially for our reading of Laodiceans. Using a "Paul" as his or her pseudonym, our author evokes the moral value attached to Paul among second-century Christians. By tapping into such a valuation of a culture hero for Christians, the author reveals his or her creative ingenuity.

From a more social scientific perspective, the author's ingenuity can be explicated further by looking at recent theories in social psychology, specifically the theory of attachment theory, which has gained much attention in recent decades. I do not wish to fall into anachronistic readings of ancient texts by imposing 20th and 21st century cultural processes upon them; however, the use of analytical tools (with a sensitivity to the historical, cultural, and discursive context under one's analysis) can be useful for elucidating processes of social interaction rather than as a means of imposing internal psychological states onto such texts. While the latter is certainly anachronistic, the former can function as explanatory or interpretative tools.

Attachment theory, as developed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, offers an explanatory model for tracing social relations along lines of significant figures of security and safety.[37] Originally this theoretical approach was applied to parent-child relationships, but has since been extended to adult relationships, workplace relations, and, beyond dyadic relations, to group relations.[38] More recently, Lee Kirkpatrick has applied attachment

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[37] John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss. Volume 3: Loss* (New York: Basic Books, 1980); Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss. Volume 2: Separation, Anxiety, and Anger* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss. Volume 1: Attachment* (New York: Basic Books, 1969); Mary Ainsworth, "Attachments Across the Life Span," *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* 61 (1985): 792–812; Ainsworth, "Object Relations, Dependency, and Attachment: A Theoretical Review of the Infant-Mother Relationship," *Child Development* 40 (1969): 969–1025. For a helpful overview of the development of attachment theory, see Jerry Gold, "Attachment Theory and Psychotherapy Integration: An Introduction and Review of the Literature," *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration* 21 (2011): 221–231, and Inge Bretherton, "The Origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth," *Developmental Psychology* 5 (1992): 759–775.

[38] Rayna D. Markin and Cheri Marmarosh, "Application of Adult Attachment Theory to Group Member Transference and the Group Therapy Process," *Psychotherapy Theory, Research, Practice, Training* 47 (2010): 111–121; David A. Richards and Aaron C. H. Schat, "Attachment at (Not to) Work: Applying Attachment Theory to Explain Individual Behavior in Organizations," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 96 (2010): 169–182; Robert S. Weiss, "Attachment in Adult Life," in *The Place of Attachment in Human Behavior*, edited by

theory to religious conceptions of deity (i.e., religious experiences).[39] The basic idea is that a relationship where an attachment figure is perceived as consistently near, attentive, and approving the greater the sense of security. Such security enables a person, such as the child, to explore their environment with confidence, thus enabling developmental progression through the lifespan. There are three responses to such parental type figures: (1) full security, love, and confidence (when the attachment figure supplies the needed relational bonds); (2) anxiety, where the child will attempt to reaffirm or reestablish contact with the attachment figure (thus leading to an overemphasis on intimacy needs); or (3) avoidance, where the child defensively withdrawals from close contact. Regardless of whether these interactions take place between an adult and child, two or more adults, or a human and a god figure, the key point is that the encounter is "to function as a *safe haven* from potential danger."[40] When this "safe haven" is not realized, dysfunctional developments arise. Such a social model can be applied to early Christian materials.[41]

Within second-century reconceptualizations of Paul, it is perhaps in Laodiceans more than any other text that this culture hero serves as a focal point for ensuring a stable social identity. Throughout the letter, Ps.-Paul calls on the recipients to look at this figure as a stabilizing force: his apostolic authority, his previous role as teacher (perhaps community founder), his suffering as the primary example for the community to emulate within their own situation, his mutual prayers with the community, and his leadership of a divinely established network of communities of which the Laodiceans are members. The focus is never on specific teachings, sacred texts (either of the Hebrew Bible or the nascent New Testament canon), but rather is unequivocally the figure of Paul himself. This

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C. M. Parkes and J. S. Hinde (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 171–184; and Weiss, *Loneliness: The Experience of Emotional and Social Isolation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973).

[39] Lee A. Kirkpatrick, *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion* (New York: Guilford Press, 2005); Kirkpatrick, "Attachment Theory and Religious Experience," in *Handbook of Religious Experience*, edited by Ralph W. Hood, Jr. (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1995), 446–475. See also Innocent F. Okozi, "Attachment to God: Its Impact on the Psychological Wellbeing of Persons with Religious Vocation." Ph.D. dissertation, Seton Hall University, 2010; and Duane F. Reinert and Carla E. Edwards, "Attachment Theory, Childhood Mistreatment, and Religiosity," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 1 (2009): 25–34.

[40] Kirkpatrick, "Attachment Theory and Religious Experience," 449.

[41] See, for example, Tite, "Theoretical Challenges in Studying Religious Experience in Gnosticism: A Prolegomena for Social Analysis," *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* (forthcoming).

is a clue to the rhetoric of this apocryphal letter. The author of Laodiceans establishes the entire paraenetic discourse with his presentation of the moral character of the famed apostle. To put this emphasis within the context of attachment theory, Ps.-Paul becomes that "safe haven" or focal point of security or stability for the Laodicean community within a dangerous context. The rhetorical situation (at the fictive, internal texture of the letter) is one in which the community faces a destabilizing threat of false teachers or charlatans. Ps.-Paul reaffirms his relational connection with the Laodicean community, approving their adherence to the "true gospel" that they had received in the past, while modeling the ideal suffering Christian. Such relational affirmations should reinforce the sense of security and confidence that the Laodicean community needs in order to continue along their eschatological journey (within the "already/but not yet" world view of the letter). All this fits in well with paraenetic address, especially as defined by the Lund-Oslo conferences and qualified with Perdue's stress on liminal social conditions.

Thus, the Paul of Laodiceans is not only a "mildly sanitized Paul" who is, nonetheless, "a living and vigorous herald of the gospel" (Pervo is certainly correct, of course), but is also a figure that people can—and should—relate to, a figure of such moral character that they should look toward him as a source of encouragement, consolation, and inspiration. From a pseudepigraphic perspective, the "real" recipients are offered, from their second-century comfy couch, a peek in on their hero's passionate relationship with Christians of the first century. They gain a glimpse into the trustworthiness of this historic figure even for Christians of their own day. What exigencies may have prompted the original composition (or redactional production) of this letter is unknown, but whatever it was, even if merely for historical curiosity or mutual identification with their supposed first-century religious antecedents (again the insightful study of Laodiceans by Burnet comes to mind),[42] the figure of Paul would have offered a viable character for a moral exhortation in the second century, grounded that is upon the persuasive role of Ps.-Paul's narrative characterization.

Reassessing the Relationship of Laodiceans to Other Pauline Letters

Closely connected with the relationship of canonical and non-canonical pseudonymous texts, we can reassess the relationship of Laodiceans to

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[42] Burnet, "Laodicéens," passim.

the broader Pauline tradition. Specifically, it has long been observed—albeit largely uncritically—that Laodiceans draws upon Paul's letters, specifically Galatians, Philippians, and Colossians. Sellew has convinced me that if Laodiceans demonstrates knowledge of Philippians, then the author of Laodiceans knew an abbreviated form of Philippians that conforms to the so-called Letter B (Phil. 1:1–3:1, 4:4–9, and 4:21–23) that predates canonical Philippians. If this hypothesis is correct, then it is possible that Laodiceans comprises, albeit in redacted and translated form, this earlier letter of Paul. Although it is far beyond the confines of my study to explore this possibility fully, I would suggest that Laodiceans could be analyzed by source critical methods to reconstruct an approximation of the underlying authentic Pauline letter, a letter that would be more authentic than the version that appears in the New Testament canon. While I am not denying the late and pseudonymous nature of Laodiceans *as Laodiceans*, I am suggesting that this apocryphal letter may be the end product of a transmitted and redacted earlier letter of Paul to the Philippian Christians. Thus, Laodiceans—*as redacted Philippians Letter B*—may be the one non-canonical authentic letter of Paul that we have access to, albeit indirectly. Future scholarship on both Laodiceans and Philippians will need to test this hypothesis further, though with an openness to move past the canonical limits of our discipline (i.e., to not dismiss a priori Laodiceans as incorporating an authentic letter of Paul due to the non-canonical status of that letter along with the impact that such a line of analysis may have on the authenticity of canonical Philippians).

Colossians offers another important relationship to Laodiceans. It is obvious that Laod. 20 draws upon Col. 4:16, using this textual relationship as a pseudonymous device. Previous scholarship, however, has limited the occasion of Laodiceans to simply "filling the gap" left by Col. 4:16's καὶ τὴν ἐκ Λαοδικείας. What tends to be overlooked, however, is that the authenticity of Colossians is also in serious doubt.[43] If Colossians is an authentic letter of Paul, then the typical reading of Laod. 20 vis-à-vis Col. 4:16 makes

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[43] A notable exception is Meeks and Fitzgerald, *Writings of St. Paul*, 142, who note that the "lost letter" to the Laodiceans may have been "only a literary device to link Colossians to the Pauline ambit." They do not, however, link this insight to the apocryphal letter to the Laodiceans ("In any case, the document printed below is certainly not the one referred to in Colossians 4:16"). Another exception is Vincent A. Pizzuto, *A Cosmic Leap of Faith: An Authorial, Structural, and Theological Investigation of the Cosmic Christology in Col 1:15–20* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology, 41; Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 83–85, where we find the implications of authenticity or pseudonymity of Colossians explored vis-à-vis Laodiceans (both the "lost letter" and the apocryphal letter).

sense. Yet, if we admit the possible pseudonymous nature of Colossians, then a far more interesting relationship emerges. Two possible scenarios arise. First, Laodiceans becomes evidence of the success of Colossians as a pseudonymous experiment: i.e., the pseudonymous author of Colossians successfully passed off a Pauline forgery as an authentic letter of Paul, at least by the time Laodiceans was written. Thus, the author of Laodiceans found and accepted Colossians as authentic; indeed, authentic enough to assume that Colossians would lend credibility to Laodiceans. Ironically, the very device used to lend credibility to Colossians (a reference to a broader correspondence with the Christians at Laodicea) becomes the clue to the pseudonymous nature of Laodiceans. A second scenario is that Laodiceans and Colossians were written in support of each other, a type of "double barreled" pseudonymous trick. Rather than simply referring to another letter, and thus lending historical veracity to the letter, an anonymous late first- or early second-century writer wrote two letters in Paul's name that referenced each other. In this second scenario, the author was only partially successful: Colossians being accepted while Laodiceans was, eventually, rejected. This second scenario nicely answers R. C. H. Lenski's rhetorical question, a question posed in support of the authenticity of Colossians: "Why did the forger select Colosse [sic] and not Laodicea? Why did he stop after he had forged 4:16 and fail to forge also the epistle to the Laodiceans? These and other questions will always remain unanswered."[44] A possible answer, however, can be offered, specifically that Colossians and the extant Laodiceans were written in support of each other.

   Both scenarios are admittedly speculative, but both are also possible and worth greater attention in future scholarship on Laodiceans. Given the intertextual connection to Philippians, the production of Laodiceans likely was the final layer or edit of our extant letter (or the underlying Greek letter, if Lightfoot, Anger, and Hutter are correct), appropriating and assimilating Letter B as the foundation for the pseudonymous production of Laodiceans-Colossians. This experiment in pseudonymity likely would have occurred early, both due to the connection to Colossians and the lack of further external indications of Letter B (with the corresponding ascendency of canonical Philippians). My guess is that this likely would

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[44] R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Thessalonians* (Commentary on the New Testament Series; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008 [1946]), 14.

have occurred in the first half of the second century.[45] Again, this suggestion is beyond the scope of my study to fully unpack, but it is suggestive of a more complicated set of textual relations than has normally been perceived in scholarship.

Situating Laodiceans within the Social Currents of the Second Century

Finally, and in closing, Laodiceans can be situated within the currents and issues facing the various Christian groups of the second century, without forcing our letter into the Marcionite camp, or reading the letter as a reaction to the competing Marcionite church. I have suggested that Laod. 13 (specifically, *praecavete sordidos in lucro*) evokes the image of the charlatan, a concern that was especially present in Christian circles in the first half of the second century, though also present in the mid-first century (Paul in 1 Thessalonians) and running to at least the end of the second century (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*). Laodiceans addresses this very social concern, albeit within a fictional occasion situated within the first century rather than the second century when the letter was composed. Regardless of how one wishes to sociologically explain the charlatan within second-century Christianity—i.e., either following Theissen's theory of a shift from charismatic leadership models to a sedentary leadership structure near the beginning of the second century (perhaps evoking Aland's analysis of pseudonymity) or Thomassen's theory of a shift from decentralizing to centralizing social forces throughout the second century (though this theory is limited to Rome, Thomassen's analysis is very insightful and carries potential value in other geographic locations within second-century Christianity)—the apocryphal epistle to the Laodiceans can now stand beside *Didache*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and Lucian's *Passing of Peregrinus* as one more reaction to the wandering charismatic figure. At the very least, Laodiceans evokes the same polemical device. Throughout this century, as Arnal has taught us, early Christians engaged in a series of constructive processes with Paul as one focal point for crystalizing social identities. As an ongoing development, these constructive processes were certainly contentious, diverse, and amorphous in formulation and dissemination. Yet their primary function seems to have been the articulation of, and subsequent socialization within, a particular conceptualization of "Christianity"

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[45] On the dating of Laodiceans, see Appendix 2.

or, to be more precise, "normative" Christianity from the perspective of those producing, sharing, and accepting or rejecting these Pauline texts. The same is true even if a work carried a purely literary or entertainment purpose; for what is story if not the plunging of a reader into a fictional universe infused with values and worldviews through which the reader may then reenvision their own existential and ontological status?

Judith Lieu refers to the second-century "Paul" as an elusive and unstable figure born from the imaginative recapturing of an idealized past. Such imaginative processes certainly were not homogeneous, nor were their products. As Lieu aptly states, "[i]n recapturing the remembered Paul we revisit the struggles of an infant church to find an identity in a strange world."[46] It is within that strange world that we need to read Laodiceans. This pseudonymous letter is not a worthless pastiche that has been thoughtlessly thrown together from the more beautiful and sophisticated letters of Paul. Rather, it is one more instance of an attempt to recapture and remember Paul within a second-century context.

Other early Christian letters have faced similar neglect in scholarship, of course. An obvious, and well recognized, example of such neglect is 1 Peter. In 1976 John H. Elliott bemoaned the then current state of scholarship on 1 Peter, calling for a "rehabilitation" of this "exegetical step-child."[47] Over thirty years later, Petrine scholarship has responded to Elliott's challenge, producing more articles, books, and theses than ever before on this once neglected letter. It is my hope that scholars will respond in like manner to Laodiceans and, indeed, to other non-canonical texts that have been ignored or quickly dismissed in the study of early Christianity. Laodiceans is a simple, yet fascinating letter that emerged from the creative excitement and admiration of Paul in the second century. My hope is that my small contribution to the study of this letter will inspire further work on this letter and its place within the dynamic and fluid world of the early Christians. It is time for the dust to be blown off of Laodiceans.

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[46] Lieu, "Battle for Paul," 14.
[47] John. H. Elliott, "The Rehabilitation of an Exegetical Step-Child: 1 Peter in Recent Research," *JBL* 95 (1976): 243–254.

TEXT, TRANSLATION, AND EPISTOLARY ARRANGEMENT
OF LAODICEANS

Prescript

1. Paulus apostolus non ab hominibus neque per hominem, sed per Jesum Christum, fratribus qui sunt Laodiciae: 2. gratia vobis et pax a Deo patre et domino Jesu Christo.

1. Paul, an apostle not from mortals nor through mortals, but through Jesus Christ, to the brethren who are in Laodicea. 2. Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving Period

3. Gratias ago Christo per omnem orationem meam, quod permanentes estis in eo, et perseverantes in operibus ejus, promissum expectantes in diem judicii.

3. I thank Christ in all my prayers, since you are steadfast in him and persevering in his labors, in expectation of the promise for judgment day.

Letter Body

Literary Structure 1
(*Writer and Recipient Situations*)

A. *Community Situation: Challenges to Paul's Gospel*

[Body Opening] 4. Neque destituant vos quorundam vaniloquia insinuantium, ut vos evertant a veritate evangelii, quod a me praedicatur.

4. And may you not be deceived by their vain insinuations, so as to deter you from the true gospel that is proclaimed by me.

[Body Middle] 5. Et nunc faciet Deus, ut qui sunt ex me [venerint ad vos] ad profectum veritatis evangelii deservientes et facientes benignitatem operumque salutis vitae aeternae.

5. And now God will grant that those who are [coming] from me [to you] for the furtherance of the truth of the gospel (…) serving and doing good works for the well-being of eternal life.

B. *Paul's Situation: Paul's Suffering in Christ*

6. Et nunc palam sunt vincula mea, quae patior in Christo, quibus laetor et gaudeo.

6. And now my bonds are manifest, which I suffer in Christ, on account of which I am glad and rejoice.

7. Et hoc mihi est ad salute perpetuam, quod ipsum factum orationibus vestries et administrante spiritum sanctum, sive per vitam sive per mortem. 8. Est enim mihi vere vita in Christo et mori gaudium.

7. And this ministers to me for eternal salvation, which itself is brought about by your prayers and is administered by the Holy Spirit, either in life or in death. 8. For my life is in Christ and so to die is joy (to me).

[Body Closing] 9. Et id [or *in*] ipsum in vobis faciet misericordiam suam, ut eandem dilectionem habeatis et sitis unianimes.

9. And this itself [or "in this"] will his mercy work in you, so that you will have the same love and be likeminded.

Literary Structure 2
(*Chiastic Arrangement*)

A1 – [Body Opening] 4. Neque destituant vos quorundam vaniloquia insinuantium, ut vos evertant a veritate evangelii, quod a me praedicatur.

   B1 – Body Middle] 5. Et nunc faciet Deus, ut qui sunt ex me [venerint ad vos] ad profectum veritatis evangelii deservientes et facientes benignitatem operumque salutis vitae aeternae.

      C – 6. Et nunc palam sunt vincula mea, quae patior in Christo, quibus laetor et gaudeo.

   B2 – 7. Et hoc mihi est ad salute perpetuam, quod ipsum factum orationibus vestries et administrante spiritum sanctum, sive per vitam sive per mortem. 8. Est enim mihi vere vita in Christo et mori gaudium.

A2 – [BODY CLOSING] 9. Et id [or *in*] ipsum in vobis faciet misericordiam suam, ut eandem dilectionem habeatis et sitis unianimes.

Literary Structure 3
(A-A-B-B-C Parallel Arrangement)

A – [BODY OPENING] 4. Neque destituant vos quorundam vaniloquia insinuantium, ut vos evertant a **veritate evangelii**, quod a me praedicatur.
A – [BODY MIDDLE] 5. Et nunc *faciet Deus*, ut qui sunt ex me [venerint ad vos] ad profectum **veritatis evangelii** deservientes et *facientes benignitatem* operumque salutis vitae aeternae.

B – 6. Et nunc palam sunt vincula mea, quae patior **in Christo**, quibus laetor et gaudeo.

B – 7. Et hoc mihi est ad salute perpetuam, quod ipsum *factum orationibus* vestries et administrante spiritum sanctum, sive per vitam sive per mortem. 8. Est enim mihi vere vita **in Christo** et mori gaudium.

C – [BODY CLOSING] 9. Et id [or *in*] ipsum in vobis *faciet misericordiam suam*, ut eandem dilectionem habeatis et sitis unianimes.

A = Divine Activity (*faciet Deus*) // A = Human Activity (*facientes benignitatem*) // B = Human Activity (*factum orationibus*) // C = Divine Activity (*faciet misericordiam suam*)

PARAENESIS

A – 10. Ergo, delectissimi, ut audistis praesentia mei, **ita retinete** et **facite** in timore Dei, *et erit vobis vita in aeternum*; 11. Est enim Deus qui operatur in vos, 12. Et **facite** sine retractu quaecumque **facitis**.

10. Therefore, beloved, as you heard in my presence, **so hold fast** and **do** in the fear of God, *and you will have eternal life*; 11. For it is God who labors on behalf of you. 12. And **do** without hesitation what you are **doing**.

B – 13. Et quod est 'reliquum', delectissimi, GAUDETE in Christo et PRAECAVETE sordidos in lucro.

13. And as for the rest, beloved, REJOICE in Christ and BE WARY of those who are out for sordid gain.

A – 14. Omnes sint petitiones vestrae palam apud deum, **et estote firmi** in sensu Christi. 15. Et quae integra et vera et pudica et justa et amabilia, <u>**facite**</u>. 16. <u>Et quae audistis et acceptistis</u>, in corde **retinete**, *<u>et erit vobis pax</u>*.

14. May all your petitions be manifest before God, **and you be firm** in the mind of Christ. 15. And whatever is pure and true and prudent and just and lovely, <u>**do**</u>. 16. <u>And what you have heard and received</u>, **hold fast** in your heart, *<u>and peace will be with you</u>*.

Letter Closing

[17. Salutate omnes fraters in osculo sancto.] 18. Salutant vos sancti. 19. Gratia domini Jesu cum spiritu vestro; 20. Et facite legi [Colosensibus et] Colosensium vobis.

[17. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.] 18. The saints greet you. 19. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with your spirit. 20. And see that this letter is read to the Colossians and that of the Colossians among you.

DATING THE APOCRYPHAL EPISTLE TO THE LAODICEANS

All attempts at dating the apocryphal epistle to the Laodiceans are wrought with methodological difficulties. Specifically, such dating is founded upon several historical presuppositions that lack methodological controls. In this appendix, I will touch on several such assumptions while trying to tease out a possible dating for this letter.

The assumption of when a Pauline corpus would have been in circulation must have a bearing upon the dating of Laodiceans. If the apocryphal letter depends upon a Pauline corpus comprised of at least Colossians, Philippians (either Letter B or canonical Philippians), and Galatians, then we need to know when such a corpus could have been in circulation for our author to utilize. Such dating of a Pauline corpus would certainly assist us in fixing the earliest possible date for Laodiceans. However, while we know that Paul's letters were certainly in circulation by the early second century, we have no way of knowing the exact composition of such a corpus, nor how early such a corpus would have been in circulation. Furthermore, such source dependency for Laodiceans necessitates discerning when certain other Pauline letters would have been produced, in particular Colossians (if a pseudepigraphic letter) and perhaps the Pastoral epistles (especially if we accept Quispel's hypothesis that Laodiceans responds to the Pastoral epistles or at least the vision of the church exemplified by the Pastorals).[1] Again, the dating of such texts is not certain

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[1] Quispel, "The Epistle to the Laodiceans," 692–693. This "additional note" does not appear in the original 1950/51 version of the article. More recently, and without the burden of the Marcionite hypothesis, Frances M. Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 140, has suggested that the Pastoral epistles could be seen as an attempt at a "Testament of Paul" not dissimilar to Laodiceans: "I would argue that in very general terms the three [1 and 2 Timothy, Titus] together form a work which might be described as The Testament of Paul, and in general outline together they have a similar shape to the apocryphal letter to the Laodiceans, which may be seen as a less successful example of a similar work." Although Young does not clarify how Laodiceans could be read as a Testament of Paul (structurally or theologically), there is a clear appreciation in these brief comments for studying Laodiceans alongside the Pastorals as second-century Christian pseudonymous works. Young also benefits from not forcing a direct relationship between the Pastorals and Laodiceans.

(especially with Colossians), though the Pastorals seem to come from the mid-second century (yet an intertextual relationship between Laodiceans and the Pastorals, in my opinion, is not certain, contra Quispel). Consequently, the circulation of the Pauline corpus cannot help us set the *terminus post quem* for Laodiceans.

The reference in the Muratorian Canon to a Pauline letter to the Laodiceans would require a *terminus ante quem* of ca. 190/200 C.E. Furthermore, any Marcionite connection such as advocated by Harnack and Quispel, or modified by Pink, Firpo, Penny, and Ehrman, tends to rely on this dating as a rough beginning point, if indeed the apocryphal letter is to be equated with or set over against the one referred to in the Muratorian Canon. If a Marcionite work, however, the apocryphal letter to the Laodiceans need not be limited to ca. 200 C.E., as it could be dated after the Muratorian Canon (if produced to counter a Marcionite Laodiceans) or long before 200 C.E. (if the same as that one mentioned in the Muratorian Canon).[2] Indeed, if our letter is of Marcionite provenance, then the *terminus post quem* would lie with Marcion's active work, perhaps in Rome ca. 144/145 C.E.—or even earlier, especially if the letter was produced in the east (i.e., anytime after Marcion's birth ca. 85 C.E., to follow Harnack's suggestion, with a few decades for Marcion to reach adulthood [thus, we could say ca. 100 C.E.], up to his activity in Rome at mid-century).[3] Thus, Laodiceans could be dated at any point within the second and third centuries, though such arguments do demonstrate that the letter could exist as early as 100 C.E. Unfortunately, any variant of the Marcionite hypothesis is highly unlikely. Consequently, if we reject both any connection to Marcion and any correlation between our letter and the Muratorian Canon, then such dating methods cease to be viable.

Another issue weighing in on the dating of Laodiceans is the original language of composition. If Hutter and Lightfoot are correct in discerning an earlier Greek version from which our extant Latin letter is derived, then the dating of the letter is more likely situated to either the second century or, at the very latest, the first quarter of the third century. In part, this early dating is dependent on the wider circulation of Laodiceans in the Western Church, which could suggest that the letter was only translated into Latin in the west after Latin become more common in Western

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[2] This treatment of the Muratorian Canon for dating Laodiceans is found, for example, in Moreschini and Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, vol. 1, 29.

[3] On the dating of Marcion's life, see Moll, *Arch-Heretic*, especially 25–31.

Christianity mid-third century. If the letter was produced by the Western Church and subsequently circulated to the Eastern Church (where it did not find a widely positive reception), then it must have been produced when Greek was common in the Western Church—thus, the second century dating. This hypothesis is supported by the lack of Greek manuscripts of this letter and the Eastern Church's early rejection of the letter.

Although the Greek qualities underlying Laodiceans, along with the poor Latin, certainly seem to support Lightfoot, and like most scholars I am inclined to agree with Lightfoot, the production of a Latin version of our letter need not be dependent on the existence of a Greek version of Laodiceans. Lightfoot works with the assumption that Latin Laodiceans must be translating Greek Laodiceans, which, in turn, draws upon the Greek Pauline letters. The flow of influence in Lightfoot's reconstruction can be set forth as follows:

GK (Phil., Gal., Col., etc.) → Gk (Laod.) → L (Laod.)

However, to explain the Greek idioms in Laodiceans does not require such an intermediate Greek edition between Latin Laodiceans and its Pauline sources. It is possible that the author/translator of Latin Laodiceans directly translates from the Greek Pauline letters rather than through an intermediary Greek Laodiceans; perhaps, to explain the poor Latin, by an incompetent translator/author or, alternatively, by a translator/author overly influenced by the Pauline source material. The underlying Greek could simply be reflective of the sources used rather than the existence of the letter in an earlier Greek version. The lack of any manuscript evidence or external testimonies for a Greek version of Laodiceans supports this hypothesis, as does the fact that this hypothesis is less convoluted than Lightfoot's reading. Thus, the flow of influence alternatively could be set forth as follows:

GK (Phil., Gal., Col., etc.) → L (Laod.)

Either scenario is possible, though neither is certain. If we follow the latter scenario then Laodiceans could be dated even earlier than in the former scenario (as there is no need for an intermediate stage). Yet a later date is also possible, as we do not need to reckon with any shift from the use of Greek to the dominance of Latin in the Western Church. However, neither scenario enables us to establish an earlier or later date with any clear precision.

External witnesses for Laodiceans are perhaps the most problematic type of evidence in trying to date this letter. Once the Muratorian Canon

is excluded from the equation, the earliest unambiguous reference to our letter is in the fourth century (specifically, Jerome). Furthermore, our earliest and best manuscript for Laodiceans is Codex Fuldensis (dated to 546 C.E.) with no other textual evidence for either the Latin or Greek text before the sixth century. Other external references to Laodiceans are either ambiguous as to whether our letter is in reference or clearly refer to another text (e.g., Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion* 5.17.1, which indicates that Marcion identified Ephesians with Laodiceans). Thus, the external testimonies can only set the *terminus ante quem* for apocryphal Laodiceans to the fourth century and the manuscript tradition to the sixth century. The *terminus post quem* remains undetermined.

We also must contend with Sellew's argument that Laodiceans drew upon an earlier version of Philippians, specifically Letter B. If Sellew is correct, which I think very likely, then Laodiceans must have been produced when Letter B was still in circulation and/or before canonical Philippians was produced. Furthermore, if Colossians is viewed as authentic, then the date is not limited by the pseudepigraphic production of Colossians. This point returns us to the indeterminate and thus speculative discussion of a Pauline corpus that the author of Laodiceans may have had access to. However, a tentative suggestion on dating could be made at least for establishing the *terminus post quem*. Outside of Colossians, there are no disputed Pauline letters that Laodiceans clearly draws upon. Thus, if Colossians is authentic, then there is nothing to stop us from pushing the date back to the 60s or 70s C.E. (assuming that Pauline pseudonymity would occur only after Paul's death).[4] Thus, the letter could be dated anywhere

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[4] This assumption is commonly found in Pauline studies. Pseudonymity, however, was not limited to when a person died, but could occur within that person's lifetime. For example, in *Adv. Marcion* 1.1, Tertullian refers to an earlier version of his treatise that had been corrupted and circulated in his name. Similarly, according to Eusebius, Dionysius of Corinth also complained that his letters had been corrupted (i.e., things changed, added, and omitted) and, Dionysius suggests, the other, sacred Christian texts had also been mutilated (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.23.12). If we accept the two cases of Tertullian and Dionysius as instances of pseudonymity, then we certainly have evidence of such practices while a person, from whom the pseudonym is derived, is still alive. These two cases, furthermore, nicely parallel the style of pseudonymity found in Laodiceans; i.e., Laodiceans draws from and modifies Paul's (mostly undisputed) letters, most notably Philippians (likely Letter B), Galatians, and Colossians. My point here is that Pauline pseudonymity, while likely a practice conducted after Paul's death, could have occurred while he was alive. However, given the typical elements suggesting a later date for the disputed letters (especially in the case of the Pastorals) as well as Paul's silence on any such letters falsely written in his name, it is perhaps more likely that Pauline pseudonymity would have occurred after Paul's death.

from the third quarter of the first century to the end of the third century/ beginning of the fourth century. The earlier the date, of course, the more speculative, and perhaps overly optimistic, the dating—especially given the lack of external references to Laodiceans (which we would expect if the letter was a first-century production) and the eventual exclusion of the letter from the accepted Pauline letters (which would be more difficult if Laodiceans had been produced close to or within Paul's lifetime). Yet an early date would be more likely if we accept Sellew's Letter B hypothesis. An early date, along with an eastern provenance, would also better account for Lightfoot's hypothesis of an earlier Greek version.

Consequently, I would tentatively suggest that we could date Laodiceans to the first half of the second century. Such a date would also nicely fit the social issues identified in connection to Laod. 13. Specifically, the early Christian concern over discerning the credibility of traveling teachers, i.e., whether they were authentic teachers/envoys or charlatans. While this concern is not limited to the early second century (it seems to have been an issue during Paul's own ministry and was deemed an effective polemical trope by Irenaeus), such a correlation would enable us to situate Laodiceans within the context of the debate engaged by *Didache* and the *Shepherd of Hermas*, as well as the communal dynamics touched on by Lucian with regard to Peregrinus. An early second century date would also explain the production of such a letter as Laodiceans, which is, as many scholars have asserted, an inoffensive letter written in Paul's name. If the social processes identified by Aland and Thomassen are accepted as viable models, then Laodiceans likely was written during a period when pseudonymity would not have yet become an issue, especially in relation to questions of canon. Indeed, this dating would enable us to situate the letter within the broader literary climate of the Second Sophistic as articulated by Rosenmeyer. Even though such a date is reasonable, it remains possible that the letter was produced in the second half of the first century or sometime during the third century. The latter is especially viable if we reject Lightfoot's hypothesis of a Greek version of the letter. Consequently, an early to mid-second century dating strikes me as likely, but uncertain.

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ANCIENT TEXTS INDEX

Early Christian Sources

Other Ancient Sources

MODERN AUTHOR INDEX

SUBJECT INDEX