

# The Oldest Extant Editions of the Letters of Paul

by David Trobisch

David Trobisch was born in Cameroon (West Africa) as the son of missionaries. The family then moved to Austria. He studied theology at the Universities of Tuebingen and Heidelberg in Germany. He taught at the University of Heidelberg for ten years before accepting teaching positions at South West Missouri State University, Yale Divinity School and Bangor Theological Seminary. For a more detailed curriculum vitae and a list of publications see <http://www.bts.edu/faculty/trobisch.htm>

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**Introduction**

**Before book printing was invented in the 15th century, all books had to be copied by hand. Approximately 800 early copies of the letters of Paul have survived to the current day. No two copies are completely identical.**

**When copies are made by hand, mistakes will inevitably appear in the text. But there are other reasons for the differences in the text of the extant manuscripts.**

**Different Editions**

**At all times books were made to be sold. The text has been revised over the centuries to meet the needs of the people who actually used the books. Different needs prompted different editions. Bilingual editions were produced for Latin-speaking students who were learning Greek; these provided the Latin translation between the lines or on the page facing the Greek text, paragraph by paragraph. Lectionaries were produced to be read aloud by the priest during worship services. Other editions added introductory passages to explain where and why Paul wrote the specified letter. As with modern revisions of the English Bible, old-fashioned expressions were changed to modern ones and style was updated.**

Some of the manuscripts are mere copies of an older copy. But often the scribes would compare more than one older manuscript and note all the differences in the copy they were producing. We do the same today with our critical text editions: if there are differing readings in extant manuscripts, modern editors decide which one they believe is the authentic one and print it as the critical text, putting the variants in the apparatus at the bottom of the page.

### Typical page of the Greek New Testament

τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ<sup>4</sup>, μωρία γὰρ αὐτῷ ἐστίν,  
καὶ οὐ δύναται γινῶναι, ὅτι πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται.  
15 ὁ δὲ πνευματικὸς ἀνακρίνει [τὰ] πάντα<sup>5</sup>, αὐτὸς δὲ  
ὑπ' οὐδενὸς ἀνακρίνεται.  
16 τίς γὰρ ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου,  
ὃς συμβιβάσει αὐτόν;  
ἡμεῖς δὲ νοῦν Χριστοῦ ἔχομεν.

#### Fellow Workmen for God

3 Καὶ γὰρ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἠδυνήθην λαλῆσαι ὑμῖν ὡς  
πνευματικοῖς ἀλλ' ὡς σαρκίνοις, ὡς νηπίοις ἐν Χριστῷ.  
2 γάλα ὑμᾶς ἐπότισα, οὐ βρῶμα, οὐπω γὰρ ἐδύνασθε.<sup>a</sup>  
ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἔτι νῦν δύνασθε,<sup>a</sup> 3 ἔτι γὰρ σαρκικοί ἐστε.  
ὅπου γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις<sup>1</sup>, οὐχὶ σαρκικοί ἐστε

<sup>4</sup> 14 {C} τοῦ θεοῦ p<sup>11vid,46</sup> ⲛ A B C D G P Ψ 33 81 88 104 181 326 436  
614 629 630 1241 1739 1877 1881 1962 1984 1985 2127 2492 2495 *Byz Lect*  
it<sup>ar,d,dem,e,f,g,m,r<sup>1</sup>,x,z</sup> vg syr<sup>h</sup> cop<sup>sa,bo,fay</sup> arm Naassenes and Valentinians<sup>acc.</sup>  
to Hippolytus Clement Origen<sup>gr,lat</sup> Eusebius Ambrosiaster Hilary Ambrose  
Didymus Augustine // ἀγίου eth // omit 2 216\* 255 330 440 451 823 1827 syr<sup>p</sup>  
Valentinians<sup>acc.</sup> to Irenaeus Irenaeus<sup>gr,lat</sup> Clement Tertullian Origen Hilary  
Athanasius Epiphanius Chrysostom Jerome Theodotus-Ancyra

<sup>5</sup> 15 {D} τὰ πάντα p<sup>46</sup> A C D\* arm eth Valentinians Irenaeus<sup>gr<sup>ms</sup></sup>  
Clement Origen // πάντα G Irenaeus<sup>gr</sup> Clement Origen Theodoret // τὰ  
πάντα or πάντα it<sup>ar,d,dem,e,f,g,m,r<sup>1</sup>,x,z</sup> vg syr<sup>p</sup> cop<sup>sa<sup>ms</sup>,bo,fay</sup> Irenaeus<sup>lat</sup>  
Origen<sup>lat</sup> // μὲν πάντα ⲛ<sup>a</sup> B D<sup>b</sup> Ψ 104 181 326 330 436 451 614 629 1241 1877  
1881 1962 1984 1985 2492 2495 *Byz Lect* syr<sup>h</sup> cop<sup>sa<sup>ms</sup></sup> Macarius (Didymus  
Theodoret πάντας) // μὲν τὰ πάντα P 33 81 88 630 1739 2127 cop<sup>sa<sup>ms</sup></sup>  
Chrysostom

<sup>1</sup> 3 {C} ἔρις p<sup>11vid</sup> ⲛ (A ἔρεις) B C P Ψ 81 181\* 630 1739 1877 1881 it<sup>dem.</sup>  
m,r<sup>1</sup>,x,z vg cop<sup>sa,bo,fay</sup> arm eth Clement Origen (Eusebius ἔρεις) Cyril  
Euthalius // εἰς διχοστασίαν 623 Chrysostom // εἰς καὶ διχοστασίαν

Βασιλειανός // ἐπιστολὰς τοῦ Παύλου 328 Chrysostomus // ἐπιστολὰς τοῦ Παύλου  
 p<sup>46</sup> D (G ἔρεις) 33 88 104 181<sup>ms</sup> 326 330 436 451 614 629 1241 (1962 ἀρχοσταςία)

<sup>a</sup> <sup>a</sup> 2 a major, a minor: WH Bov Nes BF<sup>2</sup> RV ASV RSV NEB Zür Luth Jer Seg // a minor,  
 a major: AV // a major, a major: TR

14 μωρία...ἐστιν 1 Cor 1.23      15 ὁ δὲ...πάντα 1 Jn 2.20      16 τίς...συμβιβάσει αὐτόν  
 Is 40.13 (Ro 11.34)  
 3 1 Jn 16.12      2 γάλα...βρῶμα He 5.12-13; 1 Pe 2.2      3 ἐν ὑμῖν...ἔρις 1 Cor 1.10-11;  
 11.18

**The text of the page covers 1 Cor 2:14-3:3. The editors marked three words with superscript numbers 4, 5 and 6; these refer to footnotes. The footnotes describe different readings supported by text witnesses. For example, footnote 4 relates to the passage translated by the NRSV as (1 Cor 2:14): "Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit..". Instead of "God's Spirit" the old Ethiopian translation reads "Holy Spirit", two Greek manuscripts (330, 451) omit "of God" completely. The omission is supported by several Christian and non-Christian writers when they refer to this passage, such as the influential heretic Marcion (2nd century); members of the Gnostic sect of Valentinians (2nd century), according to Irenaeus; one of the first known Christian interpreters of the New Testament, Clement of Alexandria (ca. 200 C.E.); his brilliant student Origen (died ca. 254); Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin; and others.**

**The editors of the The Greek New Testament noted three variants they considered to be important. You will find a picture of the same passage from a bilingual manuscript referred to manuscript "G" in the edition. I counted no less than fourteen minor differences not noted in the edition, nine alternative spellings, three synonyms used, one change of word order and one additional word.**

**This page is reproduced from: The Greek New Testament. Edited by K.Aland, M.Black, C.Martini, B.M.Metzger, A.Wikgren (Stuttgart: Württemberg. Bibelanstalt, 1966).}**

Usually an English translation will not give the reader all the information on the variants of the text. The same was true in ancient times. Only if the scribes were producing a copy for scholarly use would they carefully note variants and give explanatory notes on the margin. But if they were producing a copy for a broad audience, they would try to produce an authentic but understandable text, as free from scribal blunders as possible.

This was the situation of all ancient literature. The letters of Paul were passed on from one generation to another in essentially the same way as, for example, the writings of Aristotle.

## Huge Number of Manuscripts

Compared to any other ancient Greek letter collection, however, the letters of Paul survive in an enormous number of manuscripts. The large number of manuscripts provide a large number of variant readings and the result is that there probably is not a single verse of the letters of Paul that has the same wording in all surviving manuscripts. How should we deal with this discouraging situation?

## Grouping Manuscripts

Fortunately, the complex manuscript evidence is not as enigmatic as it seems at first sight. The trick is to find a way to reduce the enormous number to a small set of manuscripts to be considered. One way is to group manuscripts into families. This may reduce the number dramatically.

Let me give you an example. A paperback economy edition of the King James Version of the Bible looks a lot different than a deluxe study edition of that same King James Version. Yet, as far as the Bible text is concerned, both can be treated as printed copies of the same manuscript.

The majority of the extant manuscripts of the letters of Paul reproduce the Bible text as it was officially edited, revised, and published by the authorities of the Byzantine Church. I will call these editions the *Authorized Byzantine Version*.

## The Authorized Byzantine Version

More than 85 percent of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament were produced in the eleventh century or later. At this time Christianity was no longer connected to the Greek language as closely as it had been in the second century, when the New Testament came into being. From the third century on, the influence of the Roman church was steadily growing and with it the influence of the Latin translation. During and after the eleventh century, the political situation of the Byzantine Empire became more and more precarious. Wars were fought and often lost, against Islamic tribes in the South and against Bulgarians, Slavs and Russians in the North. In 1054 the Byzantine and the Roman Catholic Church separated. May 29, 1453 the city of Byzantium was finally taken by the Turks and the Byzantine Empire came to an abrupt end. For the Greek manuscript tradition of the Bible during these centuries this means that exemplars were produced, sold, bought, and used within a very limited geographical region controlled by the Byzantine Church. Almost all manuscripts, therefore, reproduce the same *Authorized Byzantine Version*.

All manuscripts of the Authorized Byzantine Version can be dealt with as one single manuscript. The differences of text are the result of scribal blunders or the varying purposes for which the editions were produced and usually do not convey any knowledge of manuscripts independent of the Authorized Byzantine Version.

## Fragmentary Manuscripts

Many manuscripts are not complete. Whole pages or parts of pages are missing. The vast majority of copies older than the sixth century actually provide only small portions of text, some of them being tiny scraps of papyrus containing but a few words. This results in the favorable situation that a large number of text witnesses are useful only for very small portions of the text. And because we look at the letters of Paul as a whole in the following, the number of manuscripts to be considered shrinks further.

To be precise, by now we are talking about no more than eight manuscripts. Besides the Authorized Byzantine Version these eight manuscripts form the essential background for the reconstruction of the original text of the letters of Paul. In the next chapter I will introduce these eight manuscripts to you.

## The Manuscripts

## Introduction

There is a good reason to deal with manuscripts of the letters of Paul before you deal with what Paul has to say. Because these manuscripts are all that is left of the letters of Paul. We do not have any letter with Paul's handwriting on it. If, in studying Paul, you want to go as far back in history as possible, the manuscripts of his letters are the oldest objects you can take in your hands and physically touch with your fingers. Any knowledge older than that may be the result of learned reconstruction, but, like all reconstruction, it could be wrong. So it is important to start out at a safe point. The oldest editions of the letters of Paul are a safe starting point for our journey towards Paul.

## Notation of Manuscripts

Old manuscripts usually are referred to by the name of the library where they are kept today or the library where they were reported to be found for the first time. This applies to all old manuscripts, not only to manuscripts of the Bible. For example, a manuscript from the Vatican Library in Rome is referred to as a *Codex Vaticanus*.

The Vatican Library, however, treasures hundreds of New Testament manuscripts, and a reference solely by the name of this library is not precise at all. Therefore scholars began to assign each manuscript a capital letter in addition to the library's name if the manuscript is written in *majuscles*, very similar to our capital letters, or a number, if the manuscript is written in *minuscules*, very similar to our cursive handwriting today. For example, the oldest known manuscript of the Christian Bible is called *Codex Vaticanus (B)*. This system was introduced in the middle of the 18th century by the German scholar *Johann Jakob Wettstein* (1693-1754).

You can easily imagine that this traditional system had trouble to cope with the steadily growing number of *majuscule manuscripts* that were discovered in libraries and described for the first time during the following centuries. After the Latin alphabet was used up, scholars used Greek and Hebrew letters. But even the most sophisticated alphabet will run out of letters trying to classify the more than 270 majuscule manuscripts known today. Finally a third system was adopted: all the manuscripts were numbered. If the manuscript is written in majuscles, the numbers start out with a zero, for example *03*. If it is written in *minuscules* the manuscript is referred to with a simple number, for example *1739*. If the manuscript is written on papyrus, a "p" is put before the number, for example *p46*.

Although this system of classification is very precise, most New Testament scholars find it easier to remember library names than numbers. And the traditional capital letters are still widely used.

Each time I refer to a manuscript I will give you all three designations, the name of the library, the traditional capital letter, and the numbers designed for scholarly use.

## The Oldest Manuscripts of the Christian Bible

Let me now give you a short description of the four oldest extant editions of the Christian Bible, comprising books of the Old Testament and the New Testament as well. After all, the letters of Paul are only one part of the New Testament, and all the New Testament purports to be is the second part of the Christian Bible.

### *Codex Alexandrinus (A 02)*



The first manuscript I want to introduce to you is *Codex Alexandrinus* (A 02). It was written in the fifth century. Kyrillos Lukaris, Patriarch of Alexandria, gave it as a present to King Charles I of England in 1627-28. Today it is kept in the British Museum in London. This manuscript contains all the letters of Paul. Only a few pages are missing.

### *Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus* (C 04)

The *Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus* (C 04) also was produced during the fifth century. Originally it covered the whole Old Testament and the New Testament. In the twelfth century the ink was carefully washed off the parchment and someone copied the works of the Syrian church father Ephraem on many of the pages. The other pages are lost. If you look at the manuscript now, all you see are the writings of Ephraem. Ink, however, contains acid, and acid leaves marks on the parchment. With the help of modern technology, such as ultra-violet lighting, it is possible to make these marks visible and to read the original script. This *palimpsest*, the technical term for a rewritten manuscript, still provides 145 of the original 238 pages of the New Testament. Portions of texts from every book of the New Testament, with the exception of 2 John and 2 Thessalonians, are preserved. No book, however, is complete. The manuscript was brought to France by Catherine de Medici and is now kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

### Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C 04)



*[The page contains two columns of handwritten text in a cursive script, likely from a 17th-century manuscript. The ink is dark brown or black, and the paper shows signs of age and wear. The handwriting is dense and somewhat difficult to decipher due to its style.]*



***If you look at the original page all you see are passages from the writings of the Syrian theologian Ephraem, written in cursive handwriting (minuscules) and arranged in two columns. To read this text you would have to turn the page upside down. For this reproduction the Biblical text (end of the Gospel according to Luke) that was written first and washed off was made visible again with the help of modern technologies. It fills only one column and is written in capital letters (majuscules).***

***{The reproduction is taken from Kurt and Barbara Aland. The Text of the New Testament, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).}***

### ***Codex Sinaiticus (Σ 01)***

***Codex Sinaiticus*** (Σ 01) is the only one of the four manuscripts still containing all the books of the New Testament. It was discovered 1844 in the library of the monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai and brought to Russia in 1869. In 1933 the Russian government sold it to the British Museum, where it is kept today as one of the great treasures of this museum. The manuscript was probably written in the fourth century.

### ***Codex Vaticanus (B 03)***

***Codex Vaticanus*** (B 03) was written in the fourth century. Nobody knows where it was produced, but it is recorded as belonging to the Vatican Library in Rome as far back as 1481. 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon are missing from the end of the manuscript.

Each of these four manuscripts was written independently. That is to say, none of these manuscripts is a copy of any of the others.

### ***Number and Sequence of the Letters of Paul***

While teaching seminars for theological students at the University of Heidelberg in Germany, I had an interesting experience. Very few of my students were able to tell me outright how many letters of Paul are contained in the New Testament. And out of a group of forty not a single student could give me the right order of the letters. This was all the more surprising in light of the fact that a high percentage of these students read the Bible daily and could recite by heart long passages from the letters of Paul, such as 1 Corinthians 13.

The four oldest manuscripts described above present the letters of Paul following the four Gospels, Acts and the general letters. In all of them the number of the letters of Paul is fourteen. Their sequence is uniform: Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians Hebrews 1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus and Philemon.

### The Four Literary Units of the New Testament

These simple observations may teach us two important lessons. First, there is an apparent difference between the four oldest editions of the New Testament and our modern English editions, in which the letters of Paul do not precede the *general letters* (James 1 Peter 2 Peter 1 John 2 John 3 John Jude) but follow them.

Let me go into more detail. Many modern readers of the Bible have lost the feeling for the four *literary units* of the New Testament, and it is one of the goals of this book to get us back into touch with these units. Only very few Greek manuscripts of the letters of Paul - to be precise only 59 out of a number of 779 - contain the whole New Testament. It was difficult to produce large books and very large books became cumbersome and expensive. Most manuscripts, therefore, contain only part of the New Testament. The producers of manuscripts broke the New Testament down into four units. One of these literary units is the collection of the letters of Paul. This means that you will not find an edition of a single letter of Paul in a manuscript.

If you read Paul's letter to the Romans, you will read it among a collection.

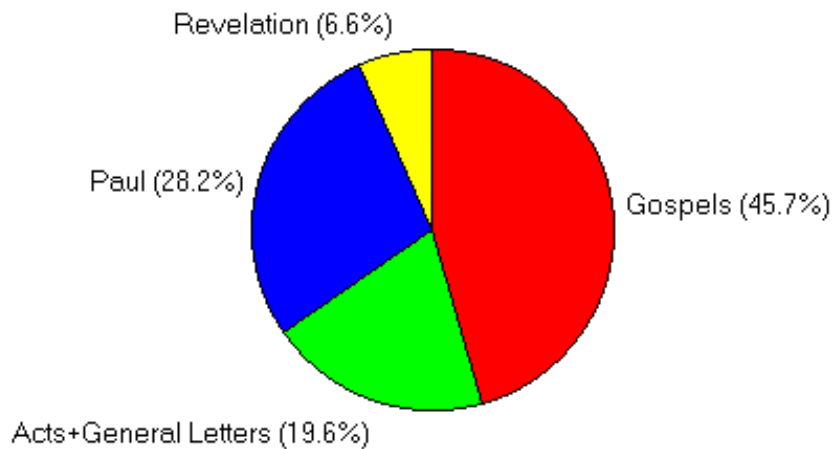
What are those four units clearly demonstrated by the manuscript tradition? To put the *Four Gospels* in one unit and the letters of Paul in another unit is easy, but what about Acts?

Now be ready for a surprise. Acts is always combined with the general letters. There are manuscripts starting out with the letters of Paul followed by Acts and general letters, and there are manuscripts starting out with the Gospels, followed by the letters of Paul, followed by Acts and general letters, and of course there are manuscripts containing Acts and general letters only. But with very rare exceptions to the rule there are no manuscripts combining Gospels and Acts only, or manuscripts of the general letters without Acts. Acts more or less functions as the introduction to the general letters. On second thought, this combination really makes sense, for the main authors of the general letters, James, Peter and John, are the important leaders of the Early Church so vividly described in the first chapters of Acts. In later centuries the editors and revisers of the Authorized Byzantine Version started to move the letters of Paul between Acts and general letters in editions containing the whole New Testament. The reason is not clear, but it has been suggested that this arrangement was more convenient for use in church services. Whatever the reason might have been, it is clear from the older manuscript tradition that Acts and the general letters originally formed a unit.

The *Revelation of John* forms the fourth literary unit.

## The Four Literary Units of the New Testament

	Gospels	Acts and General Letters	Letters of Paul	Revelation
Textlength:	45,66%	19,57%	28,21%	6,56%



### The Letter to the Hebrews

The second lesson the four oldest existing manuscripts of the New Testament teach us is that the *letter to the Hebrews* is treated as a letter of Paul. It has its place right in the middle of the collection, following 2 Thessalonians and preceding 1 Timothy. Even though the exact place of Hebrews varies in later Greek manuscripts, this letter is always copied as one of the letters of Paul; it is not situated as one of the general letters.

The reason why my German students have such a hard time with identifying the right number and sequence of the letters of Paul is that most of them grew up with the translation made by Martin Luther. Martin Luther, like many learned Christians from the second century onward, did not think that Paul was the author of Hebrews. Translating the text, he rearranged the order of the New Testament letters, moving Hebrews, James and Jude to the end, preceding Rev. This does not represent the order of any extant Greek manuscript.

Most English translations and the bulk of Greek manuscripts from the eighth century on present Hebrews at the end of the letters of Paul, following Philemon. This was the normal sequence of the Authorized Byzantine Version. The first printed edition of the Greek New Testament was prepared by *Erasmus of Rotterdam* and published in 1516. He used only late Byzantine manuscripts of the twelfth and thirteenth century to produce the text. From this edition the sequence of the letters was passed on to most of the following printed editions and still is the order of today's leading editions of the *Greek New Testament*, consequently influencing practically all translations of the New Testament. This order, however, does not represent the arrangement of the letters of Paul in the four oldest manuscripts of the Bible.

### Manuscripts Containing Only the Letters of Paul

Not all of the manuscripts containing the letters of Paul present the whole New Testament. Actually fewer than eight percent of all known manuscripts do. In most cases the letters of Paul

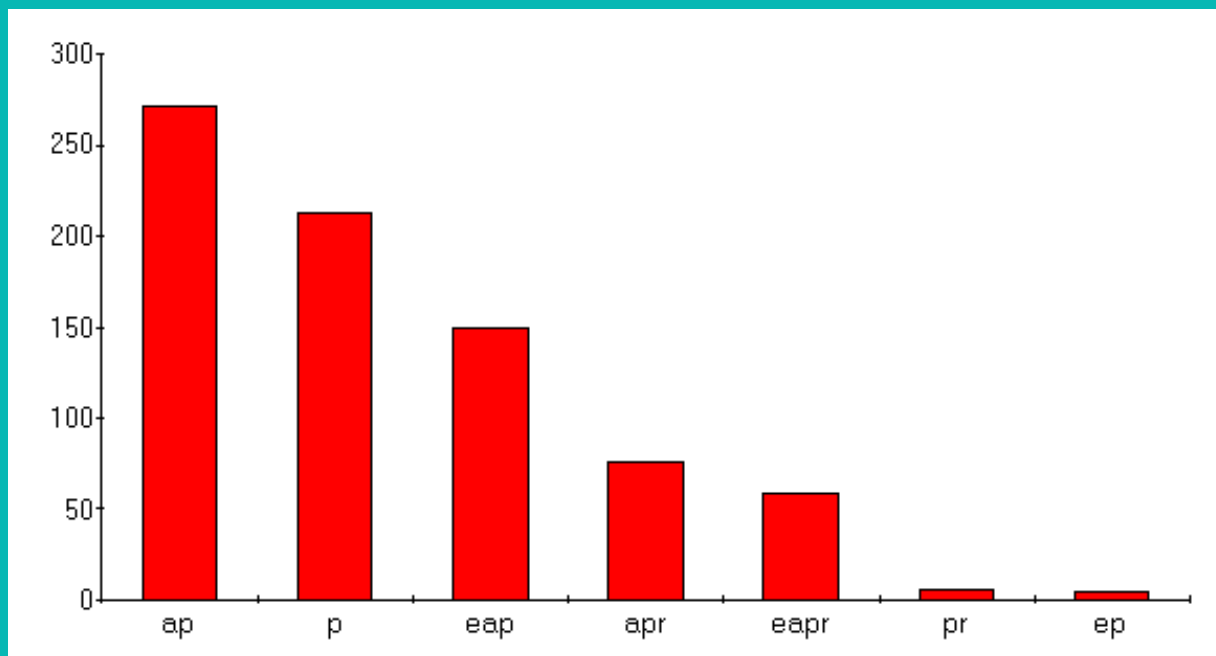
were bound together with Acts and the general letters. And very often they were written in a separate copy containing no other New Testament writings. The following table gives you the exact data.

### Number and Contents of Greek Manuscripts of the *Letters of Paul*.

{ *Kurt and Barbara Aland. The Text of the New Testament, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) 91*}

ap	271	34.79%
p	213	27.34%
eap	149	19.13%
apr	76	9.76%
eapr	59	7.57%
pr	6	0.77%
ep	5	0.64%
TOTAL	779	

***e = Gospels a = Acts + general letters p = letters of Paul r = Revelation***



Besides the four manuscripts mentioned, there are four others of equal importance for the reconstruction of the original form of the letters of Paul. All four manuscripts contain no other New Testament writings than the letters of Paul. Three of them are related to each other; the fourth one is a papyrus book, the oldest known edition of the letters of Paul.

## Codex Boernerianus (G 012)

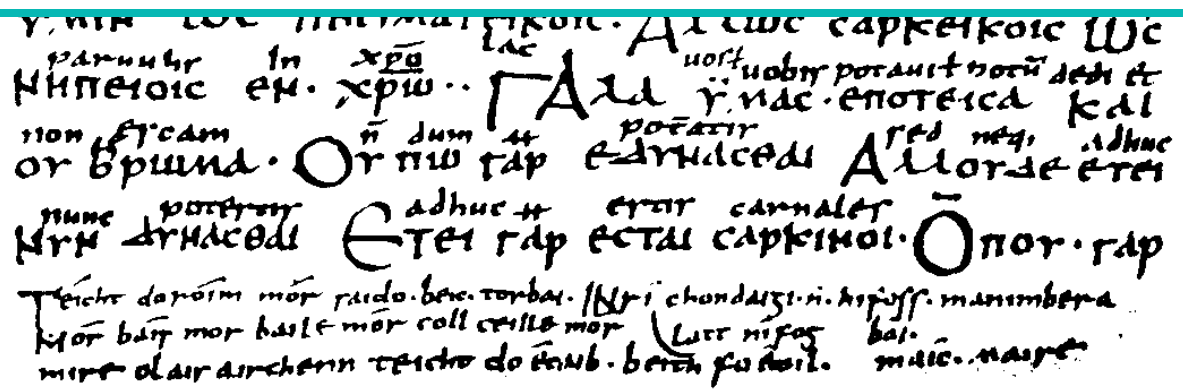
**Codex Boernerianus (G 012)** is a bilingual edition and very probably was produced in the monastery of St. Gallen, Switzerland, during the second half of the ninth century. The Latin translation of the Greek text was written between the lines by an Irish monk. It is kept today at the Sächsische Landesbibliothek in Dresden, Germany.

## Codex Boernerianus (G 012).

ΚΟΡΙΝΘΙΟΥΣ · Α

> Ο ΘΣ ΤΟΙΣ ΑΓΑΠΗΣΙΝ ΑΥΤΟΥ <sup>dilectibus</sup> <sup>re</sup> <sup>nobis</sup> <sup>ante</sup> <sup>revelante</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>  
 ΤΟΥ ΠΗΣ. ΑΥΤΟΥ <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>suum</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>enim</sup> <sup>omnia</sup> <sup>scrutatur</sup> <sup>et</sup> <sup>abundanter</sup>  
 ΤΟΥ ΘΥ. <sup>quid enim scire hominū</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>  
 ΠΝΑ ΤΟ ΕΝΑΥΤΩ. <sup>qui in ipso</sup> <sup>sic</sup> <sup>et</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>nemo</sup>  
 ΕΓΝΩ ΕΙΜΗ ΤΟ ΠΝΑ ΤΟΥ ΘΥ. <sup>corripuit nisi</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>  
 ΚΟΣΜΟΥ ΤΟΥΤΟΥ ΕΛΑΒΟΝΕΝ <sup>mundi huius accepimus</sup> <sup>red</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>qui ex</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>  
 ἵΝΑ ἸΔΩΜΕΝ ΤΑ ὙΠΟ ΤΟΥ ΘΥ ΧΑΡΙΘΕΝΤΑ. <sup>ut sciamus quae</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>donata sūt</sup> <sup>nobis</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>  
 ΛΟΓΟΝ ΕΝ. ΟΥΚ ΕΝ ΔΙΔΑΚΤΟΙΣ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΕΙΝΗΣ. <sup>quoniam non in doctrina humane sapientie</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>  
 ΓΟΥΣ. <sup>sed in doctrina</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>  
 ΚΑ. <sup>comparantur</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>  
 ΤΑΙ. <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>  
 ΟΥ ΔΗΝΑΤΑΙ ΓΝΩΝΑΙ. <sup>non potest</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>  
 Ο ΔΕ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΕΙΚΟΣ. <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>  
 ὙΠΟ ὙΔΕΝΟΣ ΑΝΑΚΡΙΝΕΤΑΙ. <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>  
 ΚΥ. ΟΣ. <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>  
 ΕΧΟΜΕΝ <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>  
 ΚΑ ΓΙΩ ΔΕΛΦΟΙ ΟΥΚ ΗΔΥΝΗΘΗΝ ΛΑΛΗΣΑΙ <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>  
 ΑΝ <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup> <sup>ἵνα</sup>





The text (1 Cor 2:14-3:3) matches exactly the passage given from the printed edition of The Greek New Testament [a few pages ago](#). Capital letters structure the text and divide it into passages of comparable length, so-called *stichoi*. Many manuscripts still note the number of *stichoi* at the end of each book, because the length was important to scribes, booksellers and bookbuyers alike to calculate the price. The marks placed in the left margin indicate a quotation from the Old Testament and a Latin note identifies it as taken from the book of Isaiah. The Latin text follows the Greek word by word and is usually taken from the Vulgate, the most popular translation, but occasionally two alternative Latin renderings for the same Greek word are given. Because the scribe evidently had no other Greek manuscript available beside the one he copied, it could very well be that this bilingual manuscript was to be used for teaching Greek to Latin-speaking monks. At the bottom of the page the scribe, evidently an Irishman, added several lines of Irish, starting with the words "To come to Rome, to come to me, much of trouble, little of profit..." documenting the medieval rivalry between the Irish monks who were to be the first missionaries to central Europe and the authorities of the Catholic Church in Rome.

***The reproduction is taken from Bruce M. Metzger, Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Palaeography. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1981), 5 (plate 28).}***

## Augiensis (F 010)

***ugiensis*** (F 010) very probably was written in the monastery of Reichenau, situated on the island of Reichenau in Lake Constance, Germany. Like Codex Boernerianus, it is a bilingual manuscript, but gives the Latin translation on the opposite page, corresponding line by line. It is now kept in Trinity College in Cambridge, England.

In both manuscripts, five passages are missing in the Greek text. The scribes left some room there to fill in the text later, but never closed the blank space. Apparently some pages were missing in the manuscript they copied and no other Greek edition was available to them. Numerous differences between these two manuscripts can easily be explained by assuming that the exemplar they copied had notes added to the text, and that these notes were sometimes interpreted in a different way by the two scribes. Therefore, neither one is a copy of the other manuscript. They were produced independently, but from the same exemplar.

What makes Codex Boernerianus and Codex Augiensis so important? In both, the letter to the Hebrews is missing completely. The remaining thirteen letters are given in the usual order: Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians 1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus Philemon.

### *Codex Claromontanus (D 06)*

*Codex Claromontanus* (D 06), from the fifth or sixth century is somehow related to these two manuscripts. This too is a bilingual manuscript giving the Latin translation on the opposite page. Because of numerous distinct text-variants, which this manuscript shares uniquely with Codex Augiensis and Codex Boernerianus, their close relationship is evident.

The sequence of the letters is: Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Colossians Philippians 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians 1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus Philemon. No satisfactory explanation has yet been given for the unusual order of Colossians and Philippians. Originally three pages were left blank after Philemon, but later a Latin list of Canonical books was copied there, the so-called *Catalogus Claromontanus*. Following this list the manuscript contains Hebrews. The evidence therefore suggests that Hebrews was not part of the manuscript that was copied to produce the Codex Claromontanus, but that Hebrews was added later.

### *Papyrus 46*

The oldest manuscript of the letters of Paul usually is referred to as *papyrus 46*, abbreviated *p46*. Judging from the handwriting used in this manuscript, it is dated around the year 200 and was produced in Egypt. The University of Michigan in Ann Arbor acquired parts of this manuscript, but most pages belong to the Chester Beatty collection in Dublin, Ireland.

This manuscript is not only the oldest extant edition of the letters of Paul but it is at the same time one of the oldest manuscripts in book form known to exist. Up until the fourth century CE literature was copied almost exclusively on scrolls. There is some mystery about the origin of the *codex*, the Latin term for book in contrast to the scroll. Somehow the public use of the codex is closely connected to the formation of the New Testament. The Christians were apparently the first ones to depart from the scroll and to use the bookform as a medium.

This codex of the letters of Paul was made out of one single *quire*. That is to say, 52 papyrus leaves were put on top of each other and then folded in the middle; thus forming 104 leaves holding 208 pages of text.

If a codex is made out of one quire, the scribe must carefully calculate how much text the book will have to hold before he starts to write. Once he is past the middle page there is no way to correct a mistake, for any sheet of papyrus added at the end of the codex will give an empty first page.

You can imagine how difficult the calculation was. Consider, for example, the problem of the inner leaves. When you fold a heap of paper in the middle, the inner leaves will stick out and you will want to cut them so the book looks nicer. This is what was done to p46 before the scribe started writing. Now if you do that you should be aware that the inner pages are smaller than the outer ones and hold less text.

For some reason, the scribe of p46 made a mistake when he calculated the amount of paper he

needed. After he had filled more than half of the book, he realized there would not be enough room for all the text he planned to copy. He started to write more characters in each line and gradually increased the 26 lines per page in the first half of the codex to 28, then to 30 and in the end to 32 lines per page.

Although the manuscript is in fairly good condition, the outer pages did not survive. The text starts with Rom 5:17, then runs through Hebrews 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Ephesians Galatians Philippians Colossians and ends in 1 Thess 5:28. Because many pages still provide their original page numbers it is easy to see that the seven missing outer leaves holding 14 pages of text at the beginning left room for 14 corresponding pages at the end. There is no way to get the rest of 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon on 14 pages of the size used by p46. A fair estimate lies somewhere close to 23 more pages necessary to hold all of the expected text. What the scribe decided to do, we do not know.

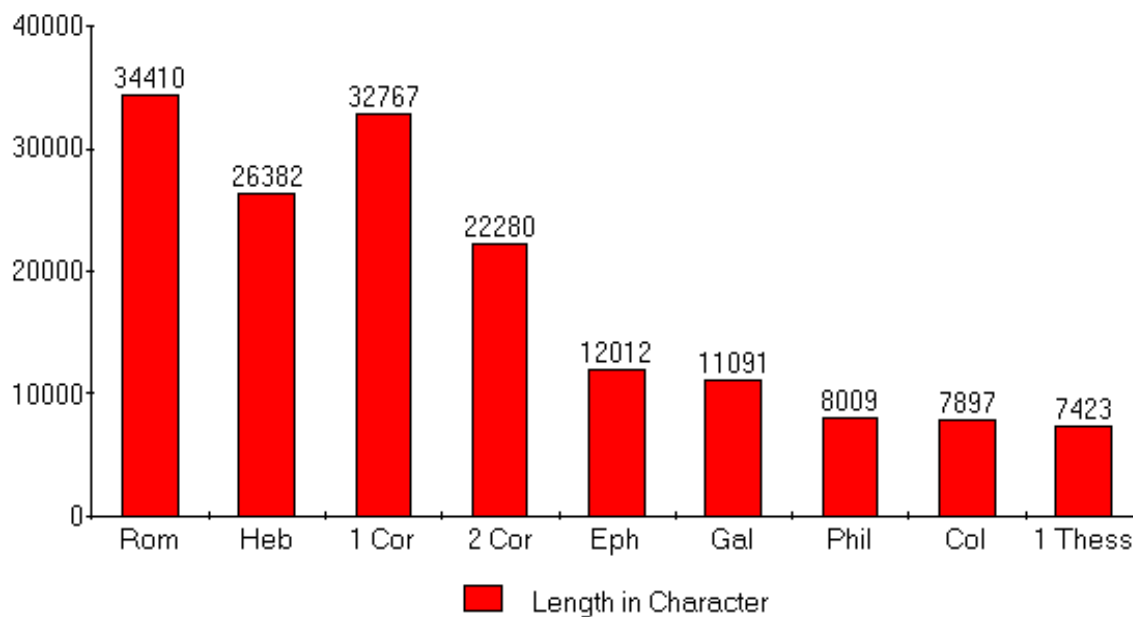
It is not necessary to assume that some of the missing letters were unknown to the scribe, although it could of course be possible. But the scribe evidently had difficulties with the length of the text. Two fragments of papyri codices contemporary to p46 have been found in the sands of Egypt, one of them, *p32*, preserving text from Titus, the other, *p87*, with text from Philemon, thus proving that these letters were known at the time and in the region, where p46 was produced.

What caused the unusual sequence of letters? Why is Hebrews put between Romans and 1 Corinthians and why does Ephesians precede Galatians?

I think the solution is very simple. It was crucial to a scribe properly to calculate the length of the text before he started to write a codex consisting of a single quire. Facing this situation it probably is a good idea to arrange the different parts according to the length of the text before you start to copy the text. For if you start out with the longest letters and end with the shorter ones, the chances are good you can finish the codex with the end of a letter even if your calculation was wrong. In this case all the scribe would need to do is produce an extra volume out of some additional leaves holding the missing letters. But if you start out with the short letters and end with the long ones the chances are much higher that you are right in the middle of a letter when you hit the last page. And who would want to use a book that ends in the middle of the text?

So let us have a look at the length of the letters. Which is the longest, which the shortest?

P46: Letters of Paul arranged according to their length



**Ephesians is longer than Galatians. Hebrews is shorter than 1 Corinthians but longer than 2 Corinthians. Nobody would want to separate the two letters to the Corinthians. An easy solution is to let Hebrews stand before 1 Corinthians. And that is exactly the sequence of letters in p46. So the producers of p46 arranged the letters of Paul strictly according to their length: Romans Hebrews 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Ephesians Galatians Philippians Colossians 1 Thessalonians.**

## The Archetype

### Introduction

**I was born in Africa. My parents were missionaries. My grandparents were missionaries. So it seemed very natural to me to view Paul as a kind of David Livingstone of antiquity.**

**I grew up with a picture of Paul traveling through Asia and Europe, founding congregations, counseling and teaching the men and women who had given their life to Jesus. If he could not visit them, he sent letters. When Paul died, his letters were kept as treasures. Each church that had received one of his letters saved it, had it read during worship services, and exchanged copies of the letter with other congregations close by. Later the congregations tried to complete their collection.**

**But this view does not match the uniformity of manuscript evidence.**

**I will have to explain this more closely. Today, before a book is published, the author presents a manuscript to the publisher. The publisher very often will suggest changes and will have the manuscript edited by professional editors. After author and publisher agreed on the final version, one single manuscript only is forwarded to the printer. This manuscript becomes the ancestor of the whole edition or, in other words, this manuscript is the *archetype* of the text tradition.**

**The view I grew up with does not suggest that there was any archetype of the letters of Paul. There were several collections and different editors combined these collections at different places until all known letters were included.**

**Now there is a way to find out whether a text tradition goes back to a single archetype or not. All you have to look for are editorial changes made while editing the final version of the manuscript,**

changes not made by the author. For example if Paul did not collect and publish his letters himself, someone else must have added the *titles* of the letters and someone else must have arranged them. It is this final editorial touch that defines the archetype. The next step is to concentrate on elements of this final editing that are unusual and very probably would not be made by two independent editors. If all copies of the text show these peculiar editorial changes, they all derive from the same archetype.

## Principle of Arrangement

What would an editor do, if he or she had to order the correspondence of another person? Chances are, an editor would try to arrange letters in a chronological order. That is what most editors nowadays do when they prepare letters for publication. And that is what editors tried in the days of Paul as well. But what do you do if the letters have no date?

## Chronological Order?

The letters of Paul are not dated. New Testament scholars have tried down through the years, but a generally accepted chronological order of the fourteen letters has not yet been established.

For example: You can find arguments that *First Thessalonians* was written during Paul's first missionary journey to Macedonia, thus making it the oldest recorded letter of Paul. Others place it during his last trip, making 1 Thessalonians one of his last letters, and their arguments are plausible. In his *letter to the Philippians* (Phil 1:13) Paul clearly states that he is in prison when he writes. But scholars could not agree up to this day whether he was in prison in Ephesus, Cesarea, Rome, or even some other place, and they consequently dated this letter very differently. The letters of Paul do not give enough information.

Nevertheless, two letters, 1 Corinthians and Romans give us almost certainly clues to establish their relative chronological order.

### 1 Cor 16:1-4 (NIV)

Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.

### Rom 15:25-26 (NIV)

Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

In 1 Corinthians Paul has not yet decided whether he will travel to Jerusalem or not. When Paul writes to the Romans his mind is made up. He plans to make the trip. By speaking of *Achaia* in Rom 15:26 Paul makes a clear reference to the addressees of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, because Corinth (1 Cor 1:2) is the capital city of the province called Achaia, and 2Cor is explicitly addressed to "*all the saints throughout Achaia*" (2 Cor 1:1) as well.



Putting the information of these two passages together gives us the impression that Paul has just visited or is still visiting Corinth when he writes to the Romans. His fundraising campaign in Achaia seems completed, and he is determined to bring the gift to Jerusalem himself. This suggests that Romans was written after 1 Corinthians.

Let us have a look at the manuscripts. Romans precedes 1 Corinthians in all manuscripts. Obviously the letters are not presented in the chronological order.

### *Independent arrangements?*

If the view I grew up with was right, that Christian congregations started out with some letters and gradually tried to complete their collection of Paul's letters independently from each other, then each editor of the collection would face the problem of arranging the letters. And how likely is it that each one came up with exactly the same arrangement as is given in the New Testament?

### *Uniform Sequences*

The reason I think this would be very improbable is that the principle behind the arrangement of the letters of Paul in the canonical edition is highly unusual. Let us have a look at the manuscripts again. The sequence of the letters is very much alike in the manuscripts I described above. The following table gives an overview.

#### The Sequence of The Letters of Paul In The Manuscripts (1)

- |  |
|--|
| 1. Rom 1 Cor 2 Cor Gal Eph Phil Col 1 Thess 2 Thess Heb 1 Tim 2 Tim Titus Phlm |
| 2. Rom 1 Cor 2 Cor Gal Eph Phil Col 1 Thess 2 Thess 1 Tim 2 Tim Titus Phlm     |
| 3. Rom 1 Cor 2 Cor Gal Eph Phil Col 1 Thess 2 Thess 1 Tim 2 Tim Titus Phlm Heb |
| 4. Rom 1 Cor 2 Cor Gal Eph Col Phil 1 Thess 2 Thess 1 Tim 2 Tim Titus Phlm Heb |
| 5. Rom Heb 1 Cor 2 Cor Eph Gal Col Phil 1Thess                                 |

**1 = Sinaiticus (Σ 01), Alexandrinus (A 02), Vaticanus (B 03), Ephraemi Rescriptus (C 04)**

**2 = Boernerianus (G 012), Augiensis (F 010)**

**3 = Authorized Byzantine Version**

**4 = Claromontanus 5 = p46**

In the first three sequences only the place of Hebrews differs. This can easily be explained by assuming that a collection without Hebrews existed and Hebrews was added to this collection independently at two different places.

This process of adding Hebrews to a collection of thirteen letters is documented, as we have seen, by the Codex Claromontanus, where Hebrews is added later, following three pages originally left blank. This codex has the sequence Philippians Colossians reversed. I consider this a minor variant.

In p46 the letters are arranged strictly according to the length of text as I demonstrated above.

### *Other Manuscripts*

But what about the other manuscripts? Do they all have the same sequence for the letters of Paul?

I dedicated two years of my doctoral studies to finding an answer to this question. I checked all reports of unusual sequences that I could find, including existing manuscripts, reconstructed ancestors of extant manuscripts, old commentaries, citations by ancient Christian writers, the oldest translations, the lists of canonical writings issued by the Old Church and the very first references to the letters of Paul in Christian literature. As far as I know, this is the most comprehensive survey of this question ever made. {David Trobisch, *Die Entstehung der Paulusbriefsammlung: Studien zu den Anfängen christlicher Publizistik* (NTOA 10; Freiburg/Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1989).}

I could only find three more sequences.

One of them has the same order as Codex Claromontanus, reversing the order of Colossians and Philippians. The manuscript, usually referred to as *minuscule 5*, is now kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. It was written in the fourteenth century and contains the letters in the following order: Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Colossians Philippians 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians Hebrews 1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus Philemon. On the top margin of the page where Ephesians ends and the text of Colossians begins, a comment was added that seems to me to be written by the same hand as the manuscript, saying that the expected Philippians is to be found after Colossians. Thus the scribe was well aware of the unusual order and still he did not change it. So the scribe probably reproduced the order of an older exemplar he copied.

### The Sequence of The Letters of Paul In The Manuscripts (2)

6.Rom 1 Cor 2 Cor Gal Eph Col Phil 1 Thess 2 Thess Heb 1 Tim 2 Tim Titus Phlm
7.Rom 1 Cor 2 Cor Gal Heb Eph Phil Col 1 Thess 2 Thess ...
8.Rom 1 Cor 2 Cor Gal Eph Phil Col 1 Thess 2 Thess Heb 1 Tim 2 Tim Titus Phlm Heb

### **6. Min. 5 7. Chapters in Vaticanus (B 03) & Min. 794**

The other sequence is preserved in the described Codex Vaticanus (B 03), where the text of the letters of Paul is divided into numbered chapters. These numbers do not fit the sequence of the letters as it is now presented in the manuscript. The numbers start with Romans and run consecutively through 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians and Galatians. At the end of Galatians the number of the next expected chapter is 59 but Ephesians starts out with chapter 70 and goes on correctly through 2 Thessalonians. Hebrews following 2 Thessalonians then starts out with chapter 59. This makes it obvious that in the manuscript where the division into chapters was made Hebrews was to be found between Galatians and Ephesians.

The third sequence is even less significant. The manuscript referred to as *minuscule 794* provides the letters of Paul in the usual order with Hebrews between 2 Thessalonians and 1 Timothy. A second scribe added Hebrews after Philemon so this manuscript today contains Hebrews twice. This probably happened by mistake.

### Interpretation

I think the reverse order of Philippians Colossians in minuscule 5 and Codex Claromontanus is to be considered as a minor variant.

In all the other arrangements (except p46) only the place of Hebrews differs. And this, too, can easily be explained by the assumption that Hebrews was added later to a collection of thirteen letters of Paul. This *thirteen-letter collection* is still extant in Codex Boernerianus (G 012) and Codex Augiensis (F 010).

Two further observations confirm that Hebrews was added later: The uniform number of thirteen letters in the manuscripts and the titles of the letters.

### **Uniform Number of Letters**

There is no manuscript evidence to prove that the letters of Paul ever existed in an edition containing only some of the thirteen letters. The last pages of a codex are very often lacking. The outer pages of every book are easily exposed to mutilation once the cover gets lost. To conclude from the missing end of p46 or Codex Vaticanus (B 03) that some letters following 2 Thessalonians were not known to the scribes who produced these manuscripts seems unwise.

To hold on to the view of an independent grouping of the letters of Paul at different Christian congregations, it is necessary to assume that the collectors not only ordered the letters the same way but that each one of them had access to exactly the same number of thirteen letters, no less and no more.

### **Uniform Titles**

The other observation regards the titles of the letters. I think you will agree that Paul did not formulate the titles we read in the New Testament when he first wrote the letters. If you write a letter you do not need a title. But if you collect several letters and present them to a broader audience you have to come up with some kind of name for the letters. The function of these titles is to show where one letter ends and the next one starts, and to make it easier to refer to them.

All the manuscripts have the same titles for the letters. They name the addressee of the letter; a literal translation from the Greek is "*To Romans, To Corinthians Number One, To Corinthians Number Two, To Galatians, To Ephesians,*" and so forth.

This is especially noteworthy concerning the *letter to the Ephesians*. The three oldest manuscripts, p46, Codex Vaticanus (B 03), and Codex Sinaiticus (ⲁ 01) do not have any address in Eph 1:1, the only place where the Ephesian church is mentioned in this letter. But these manuscripts do provide the title "*To the Ephesians*". You do not have to be an expert to realize that scribes could easily take the address from the title and fill it in the text where they would expect it. This actually happened in Codex Vaticanus (B 03) and Codex Sinaiticus (ⲁ 01), the later correction is still evident in these two manuscripts. But you might find it hard to think of a reasonable explanation why a scribe should have deleted the address from the text and leave it in the title. So it is pretty clear that the oldest text of Ephesians did not have an address in the text. How then could anyone figure out the title? No two independent editors could come up with the same name.

Eph 1:1 in Codex Sinaiticus:

ΠΑΥΛΟΣ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ  
 ΙΥΧΥΔΙΑΘΕΛΗΜΑ  
 ΤΟΣΘΥΤΟΙΣ ΑΓΙΟΙΣ ΠΑΤΕΡΑΙΣ  
 ΤΟΙΣ ΟΥΣΤΗΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΕΥΟΥΝ  
 ΧΩΙΥΧΑΡΙΣΥ  
 ΜΙΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΙΡΗΝΗ

*A critical mark is put between the lines (~). This mark is repeated in the margin indicating that the Greek words EN ΕΦ ΕCΩ (in Ephesus) should be added here. The Ephesian address obviously was not part of the original text of the codex but was added by a corrector.*

*{The page of Codex Sinaiticus (8 01) is in a condition that makes it difficult to produce a good photograph. To demonstrate the evidence the photo of the page containing Gal 5:20 - Eph 1:9 given in H.J.Vogels (Codicum Novi Testamenti Specimina. Bonn: Haustein, 1929, 4) was scanned and then retouched with the help of a computer.}*

## Summary

Let me sum up the two points I wanted to make so far. First, the complete manuscript evidence can be interpreted to testify to an edition of thirteen letters of Paul with the order Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians 1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus Philemon. Second, it is very unlikely that two editors would arrange the letters of Paul in this way independently of each other.

These two assumptions lead me to conclude that the canonical edition of the fourteen letters of Paul as it is presented in the New Testament today goes back to one single copy of thirteen letters of Paul, and that only the letter to the Hebrews was added at a later stage of the text-tradition.

## The Canonical Edition

Let us have a closer look at the canonical edition of the fourteen letters of Paul. The titles of the letters reveal two more interesting insights. They suggest an overall title of the edition, and they indicate the *principle of arrangement* of the edition.

## Overall Title of the Edition

If a letter collection had letters written by more than one author you would probably refer to the single letter by the author's name. But if all the letters of the collection are written by the same person, as the letters of Paul purport to be, there is no need to repeat the author's name in each title. Using the address to distinguish them from each other seems a good idea.

On the other hand, if you have a letter collection in which the letters are named by their address, like the letters of Paul, you can safely conclude that they all were written by the same author. The

author's name, however, becomes automatically the title of the whole collection.

Therefore the titles *To Romans*, *To Corinthians* and so on clearly suggest that the complete title is *Paul's letter to Romans*, or *Paul's First letter to Corinthians*, and that the overall title of the collection runs: *Letters of Paul*.

The oldest manuscripts, however, do not provide this overall title. Nevertheless, this letter collection is called *The fourteen letters of Paul* in many lists of the Canonical writings and in most manuscripts of the Authorized Byzantine Version.

So the name of the book is letters of Paul, and the chapters received their titles from the names of the addressees of these letters.

### Principle of Arrangement

The second insight the titles reveal is that the letters were arranged according to their addressees. Obviously, the letters with the same address are put together: the two letters to the Corinthians, the two letters to the Thessalonians, and the two letters to Timothy.

Furthermore the nine letters that are addressed to congregations are grouped together, forming the first and longest part of the book ranging from Romans to 2 Thessalonians.

This part is followed by the four letters which are, at least according to their titles, addressed to individuals: the two letters to Timothy, the letter to Titus, and the letter to Philemon.

### Letter to Philemon

It is worth noting that the *letter to Philemon* actually is addressed "*to Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home*" (Phlm 1-2). As far as this address is concerned, it would be possible to arrange Philemon among the *letters to congregations*. On the other hand, Paul writes to only one individual in the following text, so it makes perfect sense to give the letter the name of the first person mentioned and to put it together with 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus. There again a tight connection between title and sequence of letters is established.

### Letter to the Hebrews

Before I close this chapter, let us have a look at the letter to the Hebrews again. The codices Sinaiticus (ⲛ 01), Alexandrinus (A 02), Vaticanus (B 03) and Ephraemi Rescriptus (C 04) place Hebrews after 2 Thessalonians. Because the letter is not addressed to an individual but to a group, '*the Hebrews*', it was added as the last one of Paul's letters to congregations. The Authorized Byzantine Version places it at the end of the collection, following Philemon. The codices Boernerianus and Augiensis do not have Hebrews at all. The different places in which Hebrews was inserted in the letters of Paul clearly indicate that at some time the collection consisted only of thirteen letters. Hebrews was lacking.

The title of Hebrews has the same wording in all extant manuscripts. This is especially noteworthy because the text itself does not suggest this title with a single word. It is very unlikely that any two editors independently from each other would think of this name.



On the other hand, the title gives only the address; it does not give the name of the author of the letter. This implies that the reader knows the author. But how should he know? And still, the reader of the canonical edition of the letters of Paul had good reason to assume that he was reading a letter of Paul. Why?

To answer this question it is instructive to have a look at the general letters. A letter of Paul can easily be distinguished from any other New Testament letter.

Let us pause for a moment. This is a very important observation. If you look at the New Testament as a whole, the titles of the letters are designed to group them into two collection: The letters of Paul are named according to their addressees; the titles of the general letters give the name of their authors, James, Peter, John, and Jude.

As I have shown above, to name a letter by its addressee makes sense if the letter is part of a collection of letters written by one author. Therefore the reader of the canonical edition will readily assume that he is reading a letter of Paul when he encounters the title "*To the Hebrews*". And actually the only place Hebrews is found in the extant manuscripts is among the letters of Paul.

The uniformity of the title clearly demonstrates that all manuscripts of Hebrews go back to a single exemplar. In this exemplar Hebrews was already part of a collection of the letters of Paul.

### Summary

It is time for a rest and a good opportunity for a résumé of our journey so far. We covered 1800 years back into history looking at the oldest, handwritten editions of the letters of Paul. The oldest manuscripts we investigated dates from the end of the second century.

Let me sum up the major insights. Of the 779 manuscripts of the letters of Paul known today, not all are of the same importance. After grouping manuscripts and excluding witnesses with only small portions of text, only eight manuscripts and the Authorized Byzantine Version form the essential base for the reconstruction of the original text.

Looking at these editions we learned that the manuscripts split the New Testament into four parts: the Gospels, the letters of Paul, Acts and general letters, and Revelation. Furthermore, the uniform titles, sequence, and number of letters in the manuscripts indicate that the *canonical edition* of the letters of Paul derives from one single archetype. Although the letter to the Hebrews was added to the collection later it always is part of the letters of Paul.

From the simple observation that the letters are named by their addressees, we learned that the overall title of the canonical edition is "*Letters of Paul*". The letters were arranged according to their addressees. The letters to congregations form one group (Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians Hebrews); the letters to individuals form the second group (1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus Philemon) of the collection. Letters with identical addressees are placed adjacent to each other (1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians; 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians; 1 Timothy 2 Timothy).

Now that we have a picture of the text tradition of the letters of Paul, it is time to investigate peculiarities of the text itself. There are puzzling observations to make, we will encounter riddles that have not yet been solved, and we will discuss competing theories of interpretation that try to shed some light on the mysteries of the text. But, after all, we will not be able to solve all the

**difficulties. It is the privilege of any ancient text to keep some of its secrets to itself, and it is a matter of honor to respect that. Nevertheless, I am confident that you will enjoy this part of our journey. So let us have a look at some of the characteristic features of the letters of Paul.**

**{The previous text is a slightly edited version of the first chapter of *Paul's Letter Collection: Tracing the Origins* (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1994) by David Trobisch.}**

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