JETS 25/3 (September 1982) 295-306

PAULINE LETTER STRUCTURE IN PHILIPPIANS

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In 1939 Paul Schubert made the statement that the formal study of Pauline letters had not yet outgrown the experimental stage.[1] Some ground-breaking work had been done,[2] yet it has taken Pauline studies more than forty years to be on the verge of understanding the form and function of the Pauline letter.[3] Adolf Deissmann made initial observations that the Pauline letters should be related to Greek epistolography: "The classic value of the letters of Paul lies in their being actual letters, that is to say, in their being artless and unpremeditated; in this respect they resemble those of Cicero."[4] He saw the letters of Paul as having form without literary exactness and setting forth not systematic theology but personal reflections on the Christian faith occasioned by a situation. With the extension of form criticism to the Pauline material, the observations of Deissmann on letter structure have been challenged. This form-critical study of the influence of the milieu and tradition on Pauline letter structure has increased scholarly understanding of the nature, growth and function of Pauline composition.

The benefits of this new flurry of scholarly activity give us insights into Pauline letter structure for particular letters and facilitate the interpretation of any

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[1]P. Schubert, "Form and Function of the Pauline Letters," *JR* 19 (1939) 365-377.

[2]A. Deissmann, *Bible Studies* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901); P. Wendland, "Die urchristlichen Literaturformel" (HNT 1; Tübingen: Mohr, 1912) 339-345; F. X. J. Exler, *The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter: A Study in Greek Epistolography* (dissertation; Catholic University of America, 1923); O. Roller, *Das Formular den Paulinischen Briefe* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933); L. D. Champion, *Benedictions and Doxologies in the Epistles of Paul* (Oxford: Kemp Hall, 1934); C. W. Keyes, "The Greek Letter of Introduction," *AJP* 56 (1935) 28-44; P. Schubert, *Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgiving* (Berlin: Topelmann, 1939).

[3]J. A. Eschlemann, "La rédaction des Epîtres pauliniennes," *RB* 63 (1946) 185-196; D. G. Bradley, "The Topos as a Form in the Pauline Paraenesis," *JBL* 81 (1962) 348-356; T. Y. Mullins, "Petition as a Literary Form," *NovT* 5 (1962) 46-54; R. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutics, and the Word of God* (New York: Harper, 1966); "The Apostolic Parousia: Form and Significance," *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967) 249-268; T. Y. Mullins, "Greeting as a New Testament Form," *JBL* 58 (1968) 418-426; B. Rigaux, "Form-Criticism and the Letters," *The Letters of St. Paul* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1968) 115-146; R. Jewett, "The Form and Function of the Homiletic Benediction," *ATR* 51 (1969) 18-34; F. O. Francis, "Form and Function of the Opening and Closing Paragraphs of James and I John," *ZNW* 61 (1970) 110-126; J. L . White, *The Body of the Greek Letter* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1972); C. Kim, *Form and Structure of the Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation* (SBLDS; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1972); W. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973); H. Boers, "The Form-Critical Study of Paul's Letters: I Thessalonians as a Case Study," *NTS* 22 (1976) 140-158.

[4]Deissmann, *Bible Studies* 57-58.

structural section in terms of the whole letter. William Doty and Robert Funk extend these by stating that structural information will aid the reconstruction of letters rearranged in transmission (Corinthian and Philippian as composite correspondence) and will enable the differentiation between authentic and inauthentic Pauline letters.[5]

There must be caution, however, in this extension of form criticism to the Pauline epistles. Will a knowledge of Pauline letter structure really give us a better interpretation of the "real Paul"? The Paul of these letters is problem oriented, bringing apostolic presence and power to a situational context. "The real, the historical, Paul does not live on the pages of his letters but behind them," says Schubert.[6] Yet a sociological understanding will aid in the interpretation of Pauline communication. The form of the Pauline letters contains elements of contemporary letter writing, but much of it is original to the pastoral work of the apostle and is a substitute for his actual oral presence.[7] It must also be remembered that an amanuensis often if not always played a role in the letter writing (Rom 16:22; 1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; 2 Thess 3:17; Phlm 19). "Dans l'étude littéraire des Epitres pauliniennes, il est permis de réserver une place assez large a l'hypothèse d'une intervention possible de rédacteurs au service de l'Apôtre."[8] The style and form could well be affected by this intervention whether it is exact dictation or co-authorship. Structural peculiarities could then be attributed to the greater freedom and variety of secretaries. More serious, however, is the danger of constructing an abstract "Pauline letter structure," rather than a flexible working model, and employing this abstraction to rule structural variation as evidence of inauthenticity. Doty even comments: "Since the letters were composed of what Paul wanted to say orally, there was no restricting formula for writing letters any more than there was any one standard preaching formula, and the Pauline letters display a natural and unstudied diversity."[9] Yet it is this defined structure that is used to comment on authenticity.[10]

[5]Doty, *Letters* 29; Funk, *Language* 254. N. Perrin, *The New Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974) 105-107 is typical of many scholars studying Philippians. He finds three letters (4:10-20; 1:1-3:1; 3:2-4:9) in the composite letter. Cf. W. Schmithals, *Paul and The Gnostics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972) 65-122; B. D. Rahtjen, "The Three Letters of Paul to the Philippians," *NTS* 6 (1959-60) 167-173; H. Koster, "The Purpose of the Polemic of a Pauline Fragment," *NTS* 8 (1961-62) 317-332. The claim that Romans 16 is distinct from Romans 1-15 and is possibly addressed to the Ephesians, though disputed recently by H. Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), has support not only with the Asian-related names in Romans 16 but also textually with the various locations of the benediction (16:25-27) in the manuscript tradition at 14:23; 15:33; cf. J. Fitzmyer, "Letter to the Romans," *JBC* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 2. 292; A. Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East* (London: Harper, 1909) 235-237; T. W. Manson, "St. Paul's Letter to the Romans—and Others," *BJRL* 31 (1948) 224 ff.; E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 422-428.

[6]Schubert, "Form and Function" 365-377.

[7]W. G. Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1966) 176-177; J. Fitzmyer, "New Testament Epistles," *JBC* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 2. 223-226.

[8]Eschlemann, "La rédaction" 196.

[9]Doty, *Letters* 44-45.

[10]Funk, *Language* 272; Doty, *Letters* 29; H. Boers, "Form-Critical Study of Paul's Letters," *NTS* 22 (1976) 151-153.

In this paper I intend to relate the study of Pauline letter structure to the letter to the Philippians. The current definition of letter structure may be outlined as follows:

Hellenistic Letter Structure	*Pauline Letter Structure*
Opening (sender, addressee, greeting, prayer for good health)	Opening (sender, addressee, greeting)
	Thanksgiving (prayer for spiritual welfare, remembrance of addressee, eschatological climax)
Body (with introductory formulae)	Body (with introductory formulae, eschatological appeal, travelogue)
	Paraenesis
Closing (greetings, final wishes, occasionally dating)	Closing (final greetings, benediction)

I. Opening Section

The opening section in Greek letter structure usually had the name of the sender in the nominative case and the addressees in the dative. The opening formula in Philippians (1:1-2) follows this pattern: *Paulos kai Timotheos . . . tois hagiois.* Both groupings are further qualified: Paul and Timothy as *douloi Christou,* and the saints as to their place of residence (with certain ones specified as "deacons" and "bishops"). Often Greek and Jewish letters specified the family relationship (e.g., "Andron to his brother Milon" [P. Eleph. 13]) as well as the vocational definition (e.g., "To Bagoas, the governor of Judah, your servants Yedoniah and his colleagues, the priests" [Elephantine papyrus]). The Pauline introduction is extended beyond the brief secular norm by the longer qualifying phrases.

Often in the Pauline structure a correspondence between the introduction and the contents of the body can be detected.[11] In Philippians this correspondence involves the vocational terminology of Paul and Timothy (*douloi Christou*) and the themes of "servant" and "imprisonment" in the letter proper—e.g., "my imprisonment (*desmous*) is for Christ" (1:13); the merging of "servant" and "suffering" (1:17); Christ "taking the form of a servant (*morphēn doulou labōn*) humbled himself" (2:7); "served with me in the gospel" (*syn emoi edouleusen eis to euangelion,* 2:22); cf. 2:17, 25; 3:7-8, 17; 4:3. The meaning of being a servant of Christ and the related experience of suffering are definite themes throughout the letter.

Another aspect of the salutation is the greeting. The secular letter ("Apollinarius to Taesis, his mother and lady, many greetings [*polla chairein*]. Before all I pray your health. I myself am well") reflects the close connection of the greeting and the health wish in the hellenistic world (*chairein kai errōsthai,* "greeting and

[11]W. Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968) 25.

good health").[12] In Philippians the phrasing is *charis hymin kai eirēnē*. It would appear that the Pauline structure here has been influenced by the Jewish letter where *šālôm* is used in the greeting and involves a wish for prosperity. The Pauline greeting and "health wish" are combined. In the Aramaic "petition to Bagoas" in papyri from Elephantine this is expressed: "May the God of Heaven seek the welfare of our lord at all times, and give you favor before King Darius . . . [and] grant you long life" (cf. Dan 4:1-3; 6:25b-27; Ezra 4:7-22).

II. THANKSGIVING SECTION

The thanksgiving period was a form in the Greek letter where rescue from danger is the motive behind the expression of thanksgiving—e.g., "I thank the lord Serapis that when I was in danger at sea he straightway saved me" (BGY 423; cf. 2 Macc 2:11). Yet the Pauline thanksgiving period seems to be a development influenced greatly by Jewish custom and expanded by pastoral concern for his readers. The Pauline thanksgiving is issued not because of rescue but because of the readers' faithfulness in Christ and the remembrance of their example (cf. 1 Thess 1:2-10). Schubert in *The Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgiving* sets forth the two basic kinds of formulae for the introduction of this period: (1) *eucharistoumen tō Theō / poioumenoi, mnēmoneuontes* (participles) / clause subordinate to participles (*eidotes*), cf. 1 Thess 1:2-5; (2) *eucharistō tō Theō / hoti* clause / subordinate *hōste* clause, cf. 1 Cor 1:4-8. Schubert mentioned little about the conclusion of the period except that it included an eschatological climax (e.g., 1 Cor 1:17).[13] The linking of prayer for the recipients (1 Thess 1:2-3), the content of the prayer changing from letter to letter, and the congratulations expressed because of the virtues possessed by the addressees (1 Thess 1:4-8) are included by Rigaux as part of the thanksgiving structure.[14] Funk explains the changing content in the prayers as the way Paul telegraphs the contents of the letter.[15] This of course means that the thanksgiving period reflects the situation of the recipients.

The Jewish custom that influenced the thanksgiving period may well have come through the eucharist of the early Church. James M. Robinson has suggested that there is a liturgical background in the usage of the *eucharistō* and *eulogētos* phraseology.[16] The Christian *eucharistia* is the natural heir of the older Jewish *eucharistia* (cf. Matt 11:25: "I praise thee, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise"). The Jewish form had the "thanks" expression and the reason. The early-Church form involved the "thanks" expression, the reason, and sometimes a doxology. The "breaking of bread" in the Di-

[12]Cited here from J. White, "The Structural Analysis of Philemon" (SBLASP; 1971), 1. 1-47.

[13]J. T. Sanders, "Transitions from Opening Epistolary Thanksgiving to the Letters of the Pauline Corpus," *JBL* 81 (1962) 357-362. He also refers to the closing phrases of *pistos ho Theos* (1 Cor 1:9) and *outos ho Theos* (1 Thess 3:11).

[14]Rigaux, "Form-Criticism" 115-146.

[15]Funk, *Language* 257.

[16]J. M. Robinson, "Primitive Christian Hodayoth" (SBL annual meeting, New York, December 1960); cf. idem, "Die Hodajot-Formel in Gebet und Hymnus des Frühchristentums," *Apophoreta Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen* (ed. W. Eltester; Berlin: Topelmann, 1964) 194-235.

dache has the *eucharistia* before and after the meal followed by prayer.[17] This complex of ideas could have influenced the thanksgiving period structure.

The thanksgiving period in Phil 1:3-11 has the first opening form designated by Schubert: *eucharistō tō Theō . . . pantote / poioumenos* with *pepoithōs* subordinate to the former participle. Prayer is made by the apostle as a consequence of the recipient's fellowship or partnership in the gospel, which involves "imprisonment," "defense" and "confirmation" of the gospel (1:7). This prayer functions here and often elsewhere (2 Thess 1:11; Col 1:9-14; cf. Rom 1:10-12) to exhort implicitly a course of moral behavior. Thanksgiving is issued (1:3-5), the reason for thanks (God's faithfulness) is expressed (1:5-7), and a doxology form is in evidence in 1:11, which signals the end of the thanksgiving period. The doxology form (1:11) is a more exact indication in Philippians of the conclusion than the eschatological climax (1:10) mentioned by Schubert.

The thanksgiving period functions to introduce the situation of the recipients and to give a summary of what is to come. This is particularly true with Phil 1:3-11. The topics announced in the thanksgiving period appear in the body of the letter. The first theme is suffering (*desmois*) and its eschatological significance (1:7). In 1:12-30 Paul's imprisonment (*desmos*) and distress advance the spread of the gospel, which may have eschatological tones (cf. Rom 11:25-26). The congregation's steadfastness in the midst of suffering (1:29) and their participation in the same conflict as the apostle's gives evidence of the reality of the near *parousia*. Paul mentions the eschatological objective of sharing Jesus' sufferings in 3:10. The gift received by the apostle is given by the Philippian church as evidence of their partnership (4:15) and sharing his tribulation (4:14). An aspect of the thought of "sharing suffering" involves indirectly the agent of the suffering (1:7; 1:15; 1:28 *tōn antikeimenōn*; 3:2-3; 3:18-19). Notice the parallel exhortation throughout the letter to "stand firm in the Lord" and to have "one-mindedness" (2:2, 5; 3:15, 19; 4:2, 10) particularly related to "opponents" in 1:27-2:5 and 3:2-4:1. The theme of joy is a second announced topic of the thanksgiving section in 1:4 (*charis*) which is found in the letter proper (cf. 1:18, 25; 2:17-18, 28; 3:1; 4:1, 10). The third theme of 1:3-11 involves the proper spiritual attitude of love and the fruits of righteousness (1:9-11). This framework of correct spiritual qualities is mentioned in 1:27, in the Christ hymn (2:2, 3, 5) and in the opponents section of 3:2-21 (cf. 3:15, 19). Those engaged in strife in the congregation are urged to have "the same mind" in the Lord (4:2). This same spiritual attitude is reflected in the gift brought to the apostle (4:10).[18] Thus each section of the body proper of the letter would seem to be a unity that is reflected in the themes of the thanksgiving period. This is an important observation because of its bearing on the integrity of the letter.

III. The Body

The body of the letter contains the real concern of the writer and includes formal formulae to express the opening, the transition, and the continuance of the

[17]J. P. Audet, "Eucharistia in the First Century," *Studia Evangelica* I (Berlin: Topelmann, 1959) 643-662.

[18]R. Jewett, "The Epistolary Thanksgiving and the Integrity of Philippians," *NovT* 12 (1970) 40-53.

thought. The body has a closely argued interrelationship of theological and practical statements. Along with the particular formulae for opening and extending the thought there are definite sections termed the eschatological climax and the travelogue. It is because of these essential features that Funk identifies the body of the Philippian letter as 1:12-2:30.[19] He discovers two independent letters in Phil 3:1-4:1 and 4:10-20. The latter he feels introduces a new subject of an informal thank-you note in an abbreviated form. The letter to the Philippians becomes a collection of Pauline correspondence to Philippi. According to Funk, since the travelogue (2:19-30)[20] closes the body proper and the paraenesis and closing sections are missing, the remaining section of 3:1-4:23 must be separate material. This poses the question of whether an artificial Pauline letter structure should be established as normative and should rule on the integrity of a letter when thematic elements of the "table of contents" (thanksgiving section) are found throughout the entire letter. The role of the thanksgiving section is important and reveals a Paul occupied with situational problems, resulting in a composition of various subject matter. Paul appears to be a man speaking rather than writing, a man whose thoughts come quicker than his words. It would seem erroneous to make the letter form limit the possibilities of the real Paul. Bahr has explained the variation by suggesting that the hand of a secretary composed 1:1-2:30 while the hand of Paul added the subscription of 3:1-4:23. The subscription in secular letters was a summary section that contained personal material and often had *parakalō* as an introductory expression.[21] Be that as it may, the evidence reflects that the "thanksgiving period" contains themes that are developed throughout the units of the letter. This would seem to say that the letter is a unity. But there are recognizable abrupt changes of thought, particularly in 3:2; 3:18. Nevertheless the weight of the evidence would seem to point to the unity of the letter.[22]

Six body-opening formulae have been set forth by White, though these also occur as transitional or connective formulae elsewhere in the body proper. The body-opening contains the announcement of the request, and the body-closing gives the reasons for writing and discusses the future relationship of the writer to the readers (apostolic visit).[23]

The announcement of the request in the body-opening section (Phil 1:12-18) is accomplished with the use of a disclosure formula (1:12),[24] as is often the case in

[19]Funk, *Language* 250-274.

[20]Doty, *Letters* 43, limits the travelogue to 2:19-24.

[21]G. J. Bahr, "The Subscriptions in the Pauline Letters," *JBL* 87 (1968) 27-41.

[22]Cf. Kummel, *Introduction* 235-237; Jewett, "Epistolary" 40-53. These sources refer to critics who find Philippians a composite and those who find it a unity.

[23]White, "Structural Analysis" 33-34; idem, "Introductory Formulae in the Body of the Pauline Letter," *JBL* 90 (1971) 91-97. This includes (1) the disclosure formula ("I make known," Gal 1:11; Rom 1:13; 1 Thess 2:1; 2 Cor 1:8); (2) the request formula ("I make appeal," Phlm 8 ff.; 1 Cor 1:10); (3) the joy formula ("I rejoice," Phlm 7; Phil 4:10); (4) expression of astonishment ("I am amazed," Gal 1:6); (5) formula of compliance ("as I commanded" in previous instruction, Gal 1:9); (6) formula of hearing or learning ("I hear" or "I learn," Gal 1:13-14).

[24]*Ginōskein de hymas boulomai, adelphoi, hoti.* The disclosure formula has the indicative verbal form of *boulomai* with the infinitive, the vocative, and the subject of disclosure in the *hoti* clause.

the Greek secular letter. Paul desires his readers to know that, contrary to what would naturally be thought, his imprisonment has helped to advance the gospel. His chains have been seen in their connection with Christ and the gospel by the whole praetorium or governor's headquarters. Indeed the brethren have become more bold to proclaim the gospel, and the envious Judaizers proclaim Christ also (though mixed with legal demands so as to wound the apostle).[25] It is this information about the vindication of his imprisonment and encouragement that is extended in the body-middle section of Phil 1:19-2:18. The disclosure formula is found in 1:19 (*oida gar hoti*)[26] functioning not only to connect but to extend the introductory thought of 1:12-18. The apostle in 1:19 wishes his readers to know that this time of stress during which Christ is proclaimed will end with his deliverance (cf. 1:28) through prayer and divine aid. This "salvation" will point out Paul as the object of divine favor and thus vindicate his cause. Involved in this "salvation" is not only release (1:25) but also the development of the spiritual life of the apostle (1:20-24). In 1:25 a confidence formula (*kai touto pepoithōs oida hoti*)[27] discloses the meaning and explanation of statement of 1:19. The apostle is convinced that he will soon visit the congregation. Here an element of the "apostolic *parousia*" is announced before the body-closing section.

An exhortation sub-section begins in Phil 1:27 using the formula of a verb of hearing (*akouō . . . hoti stēkete*).[28] This practical section continues from 1:27 to 2:11. The apostle relates his just-concluded discussion to the congregation and urges them to have a worthy spiritual attitude and to stand firm in one spirit (1:27, cf. 2:2). They are to live their "city life" (*politeuesthe*, 1:27; cf. 3:20) so as to be worthy of the gospel of Christ, which in the midst of opposition (1:28) will give evidence that the believers too are the object of divine favor (1:28). Thus their way of life and preaching will be vindicated. The hymnic portion of Phil 2:6-11 is used by the apostle to explain his desire that his readers have the "same mind" (2:2). He urges them to show humility to each other as did Christ. If Ernst Lohmeyer is correct in saying that Paul makes use of an early hymn on the humiliation and exaltation or vindication of Christ,[29] then the apostle adapts the theological statement to a circumstantial paraenetic end, the need of humility on the part of the readers as the quality that leads to vindication.

[25]Cf. G. R. Beasley-Murray, "Philippians," *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1962) 986. R. P. Martin, *New Century Bible Commentary: Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 30, 34, 73-74, 124-126, finds the opponents of 1:15-18; 3:2-4:2 to be Jewish Christians who have a hellenistic spirit as "divine men" and reject lowliness as an acceptable model for the Christian life.

[26]The disclosure formula using *oida* often has a reference to the readers (1 Thess 2:1, 2, 5, 11; 2 Cor. 5:1). Here there is an absence of the infinitive and the vocative with the *hoti* clause (disclosure) present. The apostle uses *chairō . . . charēsomai* (1:18) as a transitional element.

[27]This confidence formula, similar to the disclosure formula, has the perfect form of *peithō*, the verb form *oida* and the object of confidence (*hoti* clause). However, the normal "confidence formula" reflects apostolic confidence that the readers will obey his instructions (Phlm 21). This formula (1:25) actually functions as a disclosure formula.

[28]This formula with verbs of hearing similar to the function of the disclosure formula has the verb of hearing, minus either an adverb or verb mentioning "pain" often used in the secular letter. This usage (1:27) is similar to that of 1 Cor 5:1; 11:18; Gal 1:13; etc.

[29]Cf. Martin, *Philippians* 90-102, for a survey of opinion on the nature of the hymn in 2:5-11.

In the opening and middle sections of the letter a tightly developed argument involving both the theological and practical has emerged. This pattern might be loosely identified as (1) the advance of the gospel and vindication (1:12-18), (2) the quality of life and deliverance so as to glorify Christ (1:19-26), (3) the omen of standing firm and vindication (1:27-30), and (4) the combination of (1) and (2) in 2:1-11 where having the same mind is related to the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. These thoughts are brought to a conclusion and an appeal is made in 2:12-13. These verses urge the recipients to respond appropriately to the apostolic information. The "motivation for writing" (anticipating appropriate response, cf. Rom 15:14-15) of the secular Greek letter functions in this way.[30] This device in the Greek letter occurs in the body-closing, but here (2:12-13; cf. 4:1) it is found in the body-middle before the eschatological climax of 2:14-18. The confidence formula, in which the writer expresses confidence in the fulfilling of the claims made in the motivation-for-writing formula, would normally occur next. Yet it actually occurs in the thanksgiving section (Phil 1:6). This precise formula (*egō / pepoithōs . . . hoti*) noticed here and elsewhere (Phlm 21; Gal 5:10; Rom 15:14-15) has no parallel in Greek secular letters.[31] The apostolic confidence rests in the eschatological power of the "in Christ" relationship (Gal 5:10) and involves the readers' past obedience to apostolic command (Phil 2:12). What the apostle communicates has been conditioned by this same "in Christ" relationship from a revelatory standpoint. The true believer "in Christ" will naturally obey this "in Christ" injunction (cf. 3:15). This seems to be a more exact explanation than White's statement that the Pauline confidence is vested in the eschatological power of the gospel. Indeed Phil 1:6 is more representative of this stylistic form (reader's obedience) than Rom 15:14-15. Completing the good work (Phil 1:6) involves the instruction to work out their salvation (2:12-13), and paradoxically God is working in them to accomplish his will. To suggest the reason for the formular expression in the thanksgiving period rather than in the body-closing section, assuming there is a stylistic reason, involves a description of the milieu of the confidence formula as it appears in the Pauline letter. Two statements can be made. First, it is normal to expect this formula to follow the Pauline statement of items to be obeyed (e.g., Phlm 21; Gal 5:10). Second, it normally occurs in a section where personal remembrance and exhortation is in the context. But this early placement of the confidence formula (Phil 1:6) is not so strange when it is realized that the thanksgiving period contains a digest of the whole letter. Themes are introduced here that are developed in the body of the letter. Furthermore, the thanksgiving section abounds with the personal element. Partnership, the theme of the body of the letter, is the opening item of the thanksgiving section. Then follows the "confidence formulae" (1:6) with the succeeding verses (1:6-7) implying in summary fashion the appropriate continuing response to the Pauline request about which confidence is expressed. The prayer of the apostle follows, and the section concludes with an eschatological climax and a doxology. It is indeed a

[30]Cf. White, "Structural Analysis" 39-40, who shows that the closing of the body sections of Philemon, Galatians and Roman has (1) motivation for writing ("I Paul write that . . ."), (2) confidence formula, and (3) anticipated visit.

[31]White, "Structural Analysis" 40. Cf. 1:25 where personal confidence is expressed toward the apostle rather than toward his readers.

miniature letter itself. Therefore the appearance of the confidence formulae in the thanksgiving section does not seem so unique.

The eschatological climax (Phil 2:14-18) provides the closing to the body-middle section of the letter. The practical exhortation is compelled on the basis of an eschatological reality: that the apostle's ministerial labors in Philippi might not be considered as vain on the day of judgment. The moral appeal is no longer, as in the body-middle, compelled just by the current need of standing firm, which reflects the believers as objects of divine favor vindicating their message. It is noteworthy that the eschatological climax contains apocalyptic terms minus an apocalyptic framework (Dan 12:3; 1 Thess 5:5; Acts 2:40; Col 1:12-13; cf. Deut 32:5; Ps 78:8; 1 Cor 10:10). This statement of climax combines the situational, the traditional and the general in exhortation.[32] The eschatological climax is a combination of tradition from apocalyptic, Jewish and hellenistic backgrounds but related to the local problems at Philippi.

The body-closing section appears in Phil 2:19-30 and contains the apostolic *parousia* or travelogue.[33] This section presents the basis for a future relationship—namely, the arrival of representatives of Paul (Timothy and Epaphroditus, cf. Phil 1:25-26). The sending of these assistants occurs because of the imprisonment of Paul (1:12-14). Timothy is to bring back a report on the church at Philippi to benefit the apostle, and Epaphroditus is to go as well to benefit the congregation. Apostolic power rests in the presence of Paul as the bearer of spiritual benefits to assemblies of believers (1:25-26). Here, in a measure, these benefits are brought by his co-workers (2:20, 28).

This survey of the body section has detected a noticeable trend: that of irregularity in the formulae and function of the body proper as well as elements appearing "out of place" in the thanksgiving section. Although the range would appear to be more extended, Doty does comment that Paul is least bound by epistolary structures in the sermonic body section.[34]

IV. EXHORTATION

Between the body-closing section and the closing elements (greetings, doxology, benediction) in the Pauline letter structure a segment of paraenesis can usually be observed. For instance, Dibelius finds 1 Thess 4:1-12; 5:1-22 to exhibit a paraenetic style[35] characterized by general moral exhortations being stated without a view to the specific circumstances or problems of the local congregation, a reference to which we shall return. Paraenesis can refer as well to specific forms, namely the tables of household duties (Eph 5:22 ff.; Col 3:18 ff.), catalogues of virtues and vices (Rom 1:29-31; Gal 5:19-21), duties of vocations (1 Tim 2:9; 3:2-6; Titus 1:7-8; 2:2-5), and the topos, a stereotyped floating moralism in

[32]Cf. the general moral language (in 2:15): *amemptos* ("blameless"), 1 Thess 3:13; 2:10; 5:23 (phrasing similar to Phil 2:16); *akeraios* ("innocent"), Rom 16:19; *amōmos* ("without blemish"), Eph 1:4; 5:27; Col 1:22; 2 Pet 3:14; cf. 1 Cor 1:8 ("guiltless").

[33]Funk, "Apostolic Parousia" 249-268.

[34]Doty, *Letters* 35-36.

[35]M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Scribner's, n.d.) 238-239.

miniature (often using the preposition *peri*—e.g., 1 Thess 4:9-5:1), identified by David Bradley.[36] The finding of such paraenetic forms in the remaining parts of Philippians is indeed a problem for most. Funk states that Phil 3:1-4:1 is "certainly not the . . . paraenetical section."[37] It seems a difficulty even to localize paraenesis in one section of the letter structure when the letter as a whole has the tightly related theological and practical emphases, the latter most often as a consequence of the former. It seems as if the trend of the past was to define paraenesis as the floating general moral advice that could fit any situation rather than being situational moral exhortation. However, one becomes more convinced (against Bradley) that the apostle selectively incorporates traditional Jewish and hellenistic moral ideas into his writings to accomplish his purpose situationally. There is language that is general (2:15), but the emphasis of the Pauline concern is the extension of his apostolic power to meet the needs of the particular situation. In viewing the "paraenesis" of Philippians (3:1-4:8) there are similarities with the paraenetic section identified by Dibelius in 1 Thessalonians. Both have the exhortation made to remind them of prior instructions (1 Thess 4:1-2; cf. Phil 3:1, an aspect of the disclosure form—*auta graphein hymin*). Certain themes are found in both ("rejoice always," "pray constantly," "give thanks," "will of God," "hold fast what is good," "may the God of peace sanctify you"). Furthermore, Bornkamm has set forth the thesis—which seems correct—that the practice in Christian letter-writing was to warn about heresy and false teachers near the end of the letter. This would of course be circumstantial moral advice (e.g., Rom 16:17-20; Gal 6:11 ff.; 1 Cor 16:22; 2 Thess 3:11-12; Phil 3:2-3, 18-19).To those opposing the Judaizers (3:17-21) the apostle urges imitation of himself (3:17). This phraseology occurs often in hortatory sections in other letters (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; 1 Thess 1:6; 2 Thess 3:7, 9). Likewise, formular aspects are similar in Phil 4:2-3; 1 Thess 4:1, 10 (verbs of entreaty with infinitive constructions occur in both passages as "request formulae").[38] Often used in the exhortation section are hortatory subjunctives. These are found in 3:15 (*phronōmen*) and 1 Thess 5:6. One passage in the larger section (4:8) has been termed paraenetic and part of the catalogue-of-virtues form.[39] Paul Furnish says of this passage that it is one of the most hellenistic passages in the Pauline corpus, especially with the once-occurring *prosphilēs* and *euphēmos* along with common vocabulary from Greek ethical material (*aretē, epainos*).[40] But this general moral language is related to Pauline teaching (4:9). The stress of the exhortation section (3:1-4:8) includes warning about the Judaizers, stimulating pursuit of the heavenly calling in Christ, the urging of believers to imitate Christ, appealing for agreement in the Lord, and urging the believers to fill their minds with what is good and practice what they

[36]D. Bradley, "The Topos as a Form in the Pauline Paraenesis," *JBL* 72 (1953) 238-246; Rigaux, *Letters* 115-146.

[37]Funk, *Language* 272.

[38]J. White, "Introductory Formulae in the Body of the Pauline Letter," *JBL* 90 (1971) 91-97. Cf. *parakaiō . . . phronein* (4:2); *erōtō . . . sollambanou* (4:3).

[39]S. Wibbing, *Die Tugend- und Lasterkataloge im NT* (Berlin: Topelmann, 1959) 78.

[40]P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (New York: Abingdon, 1968) 46.

have learned. Other elements are present as well, such as the "peristatic catalogue," a list of experiences faced by the apostle (3:4-6; cf. Rom 8:35; 2 Cor 11:21 ff.).[41] For these reasons it seems that the material in 3:1-4:8 can be termed "exhortation."

The joy expression found in Phil 4:10 (*echarēn . . . megalōs hoti*), which occurs in the secular letter tradition in the letter-opening period, has led to the suggestion that 4:10 is the opening of an independent letter.[42] But the joy expression occurs elsewhere in Pauline letters where it could not possibly be the opening of the letter. In Rom 16:19 it occurs in a warning against false teachers that is normally placed at the end of the letter in Christian practice. The joy expression in 1 Thess 3:9 appears in the travelogue section. It also occurs in 2 Cor 7:9, 13, which certainly is not the opening section regardless of how many components are identified with the book. The only place that the joy formula occurs in the opening of the letter is in 3 John 3 and Phlm 7. In fact the appearance of it in Phil 4:10 functions as an indirect appeal for continued future contact, the same function as the body-closing section, which may be the reason for the formula's particular location. Indeed the church is reminded in 4:15 (disclosure formula: *oidate . . . philippēsioi, hoti*) of their past relationship with the apostle.

V. Closing

The closing elements of the Pauline letter include greetings, doxology and benediction (Phil 4:21-23). The type of formula is threefold, depending on the number of the person of the verb (first, second or third). The second person of greeting is found in 4:21a (*aspasasthe*) and the third person in 4:21b-22 (*aspazontai*). A description of the persons doing the greeting is also included ("brethren," 4:21; "those of Caesar's household," 4:22).[43]

The closing doxology is found in 4:20. Two basic types have been distinguished: the Jewish, "Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 1:25; 9:6; etc.), and the common, "To him be glory forever, Amen" (Rom 16:27; Gal 1:27).[44] Philippians 4:20 belongs to the second type. The closing benediction, so White reports, is a "Christian innovation without formal parallel in the common letter tradition."[45] It functions as a final farewell. Jewett's thesis suggests that the form and function of these units point to their use in homiletical contexts as summaries.[46] The structure Jewett analyzed in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Romans exhibits a certain uniformity ("And may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you," 1 Thess 3:11)—namely, with the subjects

[41]This hints that Philippians may have been written at a time close to the composition of 1 and 2 Corinthians from an Ephesian imprisonment (cf. 2 Cor 11:16 ff. with 3:2 ff.; 2 Cor 11:23; 1 Cor 15:30-32; 2 Cor 1:8 ff.). See Martin, *Philippians* 36-57, for a survey of opinion.

[42]Funk, *Language* 272; White, "Introductory Formulae" 91-97.

[43]Mullins, "Greeting" 418-426.

[44]Rigaux, *Letters* 115-146.

[45]White, "Structural Analysis" 33.

[46]Jewett, "Form and Function" 18-37.

God, Jesus, descriptions, optative verb, and an object of the verb with a flexibility in the content. Some similarity to this structure can be seen in Phil 4:7 (cf. 4:9). The summarized contents of 4:7, 9 point directly to their own paragraph of thought (4:7 with 4:4-7 and 4:9 with 4:8-9) but could refer to earlier elements—namely, proper spiritual attitudes (having the same mind, 1:7; 2:2; 3:15, 19; 4:2, 10; imitation, 2:5; 3:17). The usage of the benediction in 4:23 would seem to be part of a liturgical piece (cf. 1 Cor 16:23), which does not summarize homiletical thought.[47]

CONCLUSION

This extension of form-critical principles to the Pauline corpus has been beneficial to demonstrate that the Pauline letter is not an abstract theological treatise but a circumstantial pastoral response to local church needs. The Pauline letter is not so much a systematic, rationalistic theological expression as the unsystematic use of theological concepts that are applied as circumstantial expressions meaningful within a church community facing problems. This observation about diversity within the content of the Pauline letter is important when facing the task of interpretation.

From this present study one notion emerges: There is almost as much irregularity as regularity in "the Pauline letter form." Yet it seems proper to say that the apostle Paul uses the basic form of the secular Greek letter to accomplish his purpose related to the demands of the Christian mission activity and yet is not limited to that form. Indeed the Pauline adaptation of the secular form, demanded by his pastoral vocation, reflects unique Christian content. Deissmann's statement that these actual letters of Paul are "artless and unpremeditated" must be modified against the contrary evidence of the research reflected in this study.[48]

We have demonstrated the problem of constructing an abstract "Pauline letter structure" and utilizing this abstraction to judge structural variation as evidence of inauthenticity. When there is a natural diversity in the form of the Pauline letter structure, a flexible working model should be proposed. While the abstract Pauline letter structure of Funk and Doty could rule the Philippian correspondence as composite with 3:1-4:1 as not paraenetic but an independent letter and 4:10-20 as a separate thank-you note,[49] yet the thanksgiving section (1:3-11), as Marxsen suggests, becoming a table of contents for the total letter, reflects the unity of Philippians. In this regard Deissmann may not have been far from the truth. "The criticism of the letters of Paul must always leave room for the probability that their alleged contradictions and impossibilities, from which reasons against their authority and integrity have been deduced, are really evidences to the contrary, being but the natural concomitants of letter writing."[50]

[47]J. A. T. Robinson, "Liturgical Sequence in I Cor. 10:20-24," *JTS* 41 (1953) 38-41.

[48]Deissmann, *Bible Studies* 58.

[49]Funk, *Language* 254, contends that "only a close analysis of form, together with style and sequence analysis, promises to bring further progress" in separating between Paul and his imitators.

[50]Deissmann, *Bible Studies* 57.