

## *Appendices in the New Testament*

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### **Introduction**

Older biblical scholars of the previous generation took it for granted that many of the writings of the NT were composite documents, that is to say, documents which are composed of the fragments of two or more other writings. In fact, some theories of composition were so elaborate that scholars thought that some NT writings contained parts of as many as nine different letters.

That the compositional history of the NT writings could be so complex runs against what we know about the history of their canonization. Recently, the trend in NT scholarship has been to argue, in many cases, for the compositional integrity of the documents in question. In this article we will consider five of the NT writings which have most often been considered to be composed of several fragments. Of special interest are those writings which scholars claim have had material appended to the end of the document: Mark, Romans, Philippians, 2 Corinthians, and John.

### **Mark**

The majority of textual critics agree that Mark 16:9-20 is not part of the original Gospel of Mark. Some of the oldest and best manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark are either missing those verses or have clearly marked them in the text to indicate that they are of a very different character from what precedes them.<sup>1</sup> When one reads those verses, it becomes clear that they were mostly compiled from the other canonical gospels, probably by a later scribe of the second or third centuries AD. There are stories of appearances to Mary Magdalene (*cf.* Jn. 20), to two walking 'in the country' (*cf.* Lk. 24), and to the disciples at table (*cf.* Jn. 21 and Lk. 24); a commissioning (*cf.* Mt. 28; Lk. 24), and an ascension story (*cf.* Lk. 24). There are also extra-canonical references to casting out demons, speaking in tongues, handling serpents and drinking poison as demonstrations of faith (Mk. 16:17).

Why were these verses added? The answer may be found when one reads Mark 16:8, 'And the women said nothing to anyone for they were afraid.' Is it possible that the evangelist could have ended the gospel with this rather enigmatic expression? For a long time, scholars thought not. And the popular view was that the ending of Mark was lost; perhaps the last page of the manuscript was torn off and destroyed, or perhaps the evangelist died before finishing the composition. More recently, however, scholars have argued that Mark ended the gospel intentionally at 16:8. The fact that other manuscripts have been discovered which also end with

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<sup>1</sup> Actually there are four endings current in the manuscript tradition. See the discussion by Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1975), pp. 122-128.

the preposition 'for (*gar*) adds weight to this conclusion.<sup>2</sup> The rhetorical effect of ending the Gospel of Mark at 16:8 is to leave the gospel open-ended, so that the readers themselves must write the conclusion to the gospel as they finally decide what to do about Jesus.

In the case of the Gospel of Mark, then, we may indeed have a clear instance where material was appended to the end of the gospel because 16:8 was considered to be an unsatisfying ending, particularly in light of the endings of the other canonical gospels.

## **Romans**

Paul's letter to the Romans was considered by older scholars to betray the marks of a composite letter. The doxology found in most translations at the end of chapter 16 (vv. 25-27) is found in some manuscripts at the end of chapter 14; and in the oldest witness to the Pauline letters, P46, the doxology is found at the end of chapter 15. While none of the manuscripts of Romans lacks chapters 15 or 16, the 'floating' doxology found at the end of chapters 14, 15 and 16 has led to the conclusion that, at some point, Paul's letter to the Romans circulated in a fourteen-chapter, fifteen-chapter, and sixteen-chapter form. The question, then, is: which of these forms is the most original?

For a long time, scholars thought chapter 16 in particular could not be part of the original letter to the Romans. The argument was reasoned as follows. Paul had never been to Rome at the time of the writing of this epistle. Therefore, it would have been impossible for him to have known the large number of Christians listed in the greeting in chapter 16. Scholars concluded that chapter 16 was once part of another letter by Paul, probably addressed originally to the Ephesians. It was probably added to the end of Romans by later scribes in the process of collecting Paul's letters.<sup>3</sup> One then had to account for the fourteen-chapter ending which, so it was argued, was the product of Marcionites who were motivated by an anti-Jewish bias and excised the favourable references to Judaism found in chapter 15.

Recent work, however, has convinced most scholars that Romans 1-16 belong together as part of the original letter sent by Paul to the Romans.<sup>4</sup> According to this view, a fourteen-chapter and fifteen-chapter form of Romans emerged at the time when Paul's letters were being circulated among churches to whom they were not originally addressed. The fourteen- and fifteen- chapter forms were abbreviated, then, for liturgical purposes. Rarely in the early church would there have been occasion to read from chapters 15 and 16.

The argument that Paul could not have known the large number of Christians listed in chapter 16 is countered by arguing that Paul is employing a particular rhetorical device to establish his contacts in the church. The rhetorical effect has Paul saying, 'You may not know who I am, but I

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<sup>2</sup> See Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), p. 151, for references to works which end in *gar*.

<sup>3</sup> See T.W. Manson, 'St. Paul's Letter to the Romans—and Others', *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, ed. Matthew Black (Manchester, 1962).

<sup>4</sup> See especially the work of Harry Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977). In my opinion, Gamble's arguments are conclusive, and his work shifts the burden of proof upon those who would argue against the compositional unity of Romans.

know who you are.' So he drops names to establish contacts in Rome before his arrival there. Christians travelled rather extensively, and it would not have been impossible for Paul to have known, either personally or by reputation, all of those listed in Romans 16. The cumulative effect of these arguments (and others) is the conclusion that Paul wrote chapters 1-16, our canonical Romans, to the church at Rome.

## **Philippians**

Many have thought that Paul's letter to the Philippians is comprised of two or three letters. Though there is no manuscript evidence to support such a division, as in the cases of 2 Corinthians and Romans, scholars point to the sharp break in 3:1 where Paul uses the expression, 'Finally, brethren'. Many scholars believe that Paul intended to end the letter here and that the closing of this first letter to the Philippians was lost. Those words ('finally, brethren'), coupled with the sharp change of tone in 3:2, have led some to conclude that a second letter has been added to the first. Recent grammatical studies, however, have demonstrated that the 'finally' of 3:1 may be simply a transitional particle used to introduce a fresh point in the argument and that 3:2 stands in continuity with what precedes and follows it in Paul's argument.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, the themes of Philippians cut across chapters 2 and 3, arguing against its disunity. Against the selfishness of some in Philippi, perhaps led by Syntyche and Euodia (see 4:2), Paul offers several examples of selfless service. He begins with the Christ-hymn in which Christ is depicted as the selfless servant who puts the needs of others before himself (2:5-11, esp. 2:5). Paul then points to the example of his co-worker, Timothy, as one who 'will have the interest of the congregation at heart and not like those others who put their own selfish thoughts first' (2:22). Later in chapter 2, Paul refers to the example of Epaphroditus (2:29), a member of the Philippian church, as yet another example of those in the service of the gospel who put others and the cause of the gospel before themselves. Finally, in chapter 3, Paul holds himself up as a fourth example of those who adopt a selfless stance in their ministry. The argument of chapter 3 then fits very nicely with the arguments made by Paul in chapters 1 and 2 and contributes to the arguments for the unity of the letter.

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Chapter 4, often referred to as the 'thankless thanksgiving', has sometimes also been viewed as yet another fragment appended to the Philippran letter. Again, there is little reason to assign chapter 4 to another letter. Rather, that Paul has waited until now to thank the Philippian congregation for their gift may be a rhetorical device on the part of Paul to allow him to deal with the problems in the Philippian congregation first. It also accounts for his own embarrassment at having received a gift from them. After all, the typical practice of Paul was not to receive any gifts from the congregations that he served (see *e.g.* 1 Cor. 9:15-18; 2 Cor. 2:14-

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<sup>5</sup> These arguments for the unity of Philippians and others may be found in David Garland's article, 'The Composition and Unity of Philippians: Some Neglected Literary Factors', *Novum Testamentum* 27 (1985), pp. 141-173.

17). Thus, the manuscript evidence, the grammatical evidence, the rhetorical arguments, and the theological themes of the Philippian letter all contribute to confirm its integrity.<sup>6</sup>

## 2 Corinthians

Without doubt, 2 Corinthians has been the NT writing most frequently identified as a 'composite document'. A few scholars have suggested that as many as nine letters have been stitched together to make our canonical 2 Corinthians. Even less radical reconstructions posit as many as six letters: (a) 1:1-2:13, 7:5-16, 13:1-14; (b) 2:14-6:13, 7:2-4; (c) 6:14-7:1; (d) chapter 8; (e) chapter 9; (f) chapters 10-13.<sup>7</sup> These divisions are based on what scholars have identified as sharp breaks in Paul's thought or argument—passages so disjointed that some think Paul could not have digressed that much in a single letter. Such judgments are, of course, somewhat subjective, as evidenced by the fact that scholars cannot agree when the argument has digressed to the point that a fragmentary letter must be posited!

While no universal agreement among scholars exists on this very complex issue of the compositional history of 2 Corinthians, there does seem to be a majority opinion emerging among the more recent commentaries on 2 Corinthians on two points. First, it is more plausible to accept digressions in Paul's thought in 2 Corinthians than to accept modern reconstructions of five or six epistolary fragments woven together into one document. Multiple-letter reconstructions of six to nine letters seem almost physically impossible without the aid of a word processor to 'cut and paste'! They certainly demand more sophistication in ancient book-making than we have hard evidence for. So a number of recent commentaries argue that the compositional history of 2 Corinthians must be much less complicated than many have assumed.

Second, despite the more cautious views on the compositional history of 2 Corinthians, there does seem to be a consensus among recent commentators that 2 Corinthians 10-13 represents a separate letter which was appended to the end of chapters 1-9.<sup>8</sup> Several pieces of evidence point in this direction: (1) There is a sharp change in tone between chapters 1-9 and 10-13. In the first nine chapters, Paul presumes that the conflicts alluded to in previous letters have been resolved, and he commends the Corinthians for their recent behaviour and attitude (see *e.g.* 7:5-16). The overall tone is irenic and conciliatory. But in chapters 10-13, Paul launches into an invective against 'false apostles' (see *e.g.* 11:13, 22-23; 12:11-13). The overall tone in these chapters is defensive and polemical; Paul has slipped into his fighting mode! (2) The visit by Titus mentioned in 8:16-23 is evidently not the same as the one mentioned in 12:17-18. In the first, Titus is accompanied by two brethren, while in the second he has only one companion.

The last three chapters seem to presume a change in the situation which Paul is addressing. Some have suggested the Corinthian situation changed during the course of writing the letter and caused Paul to shift his tone in the midst of his composition—the so-called 'sleepless night'

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<sup>6</sup> See *ibid.* for the arguments cited in the preceding paragraphs. Garland's work has done for the unity of Philippians, in a less exhaustive way, what Gamble's work has done for the unity of Romans.

<sup>7</sup> See David Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), p. 208.

<sup>8</sup> See, *e.g.*, Victor Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB Vol. 32A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984); Ralph Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC Vol. 40 (Waco: Word, 1984); Charles Talbert, *Reading Corinthians* (New York: Crossroad, 1987).

theory. It seems unlikely, however, that Paul would have allowed the first two-thirds of the letter, with its laudatory tone, to stand unrevised. And it is historically possible, but not probable, that such a situational change could have occurred during the actual composition of the letter.

More likely is the suggestion that chapters 10-13 were originally part of another letter and were appended to 2 Corinthians 1-9 during the process of the collection and formation of the Pauline corpus at the end of the first century. Even this view, however, does not finally settle the issue. Some scholars argue that chapters 10-13 come from the so-called 'angry letter' to which Paul alludes several times in chapters 1-9 (see 2:3-4; 2:9; 7:8, 12).<sup>9</sup> Others are persuaded that the topics taken up in 10-13 do not sufficiently match the issues which Paul says he addressed in the 'angry letter'. Hence, these scholars argue that the 'angry letter' is indeed lost, and that chapters 10-13 were written after chapters 1-9 at a time when relations between the Corinthian community and Paul had taken another turn for the worse.<sup>10</sup> This reconstruction would make 2 Corinthians 10-13 the fifth piece of correspondence sent by Paul to the Corinthians.<sup>11</sup> It was probably added to the end of 2 Corinthians 1-9, not necessarily because it was written after 1-9, but more likely because of the tendency of the editors of the Pauline collection to arrange the letters from the longest to the shortest (see *e.g.* Romans, 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, which are arranged in descending order according to length).

This reconstruction is historically plausible: it does not demand a complicated process of editorial activity—chapters 10-13 were simply added to chapters 1-9; it accounts for the sharp break in tone and differences of detail between 1-9 and 10-13; and it recognizes the Pauline tendency to address financial matters at or near the end of his letters (here in 2 Cor. 8-9; *cf.* 1 Cor. 16; Phil. 4). It is not impossible that such invectives as those found in chapters 10-13 could have been included by Paul at the end of the letter as a rhetorical device, but no-one has yet made that case convincingly.<sup>12</sup> Until such evidence is forthcoming, the most convincing solution appears to be the one proposed above.

## John

Only a very few students of the Fourth Gospel in modern times have argued that chapter 21 belonged to the original composition of John. The decisive evidence for most commentators is that the overall effect of chapter 20 is to give appropriate closure to the gospel story. This judgment is bolstered by the conclusion of chapter 20 which contains a closing beatitude (20:29) and a summary of the authors purpose (20:30-31). To narrate another appearance story after blessing 'those who have not seen and yet believe' (20:29) is an unusual transition to say the least. And it is also somewhat surprising that chapter 21 follows on the heels of these words: 'Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book...' (20:30)! That the book at one time concluded with chapter 20 seems clear. Still, chapter

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<sup>9</sup> So Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, pp. xix-xx.

<sup>10</sup> So Furnish, *II Corinthians*, and Martin, *2 Corinthians*.

<sup>11</sup> In this reconstruction, letter A is lost (see 1 Cor. 5:9); letter B is our 1 Cor.; letter C is the now lost 'angry letter' (see 2 Cor. 2:4; 7:8); letter D is 2 Cor. 1-9; and letter E is 2 Cor. 10-13.

<sup>12</sup> See though the commentary by Frederick W. Danker, *II Corinthians*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1989), in which he suggests the possibility of a unified narrative based on ancient rhetorical conventions.

21 does pick up some of the narrative threads of chapters 1-20 and is better labelled an epilogue than an appendix of unrelated matters or a supplement of information acquired later.<sup>13</sup>

But when was chapter 21 written, by whom, and why? The question of 'when' is probably the easiest to answer. The fact that the earliest manuscripts include chapter 21 has been taken by scholars, not as evidence against the view that chapter 21 was added later, but that the addition was made very early in the compositional process. In fact, it is generally agreed that chapter 21 was probably added before the Fourth Gospel was 'published', that is, circulated beyond the audience for whom it was originally intended.

Who wrote the chapter is a much more difficult question. Some argue that it is the product of the fourth evangelist himself who was prompted to append the material because of some change in the life of his community. Others argue that a later redactor of the Johannine community was responsible for the material. Recently, many scholars have simply admitted they do not know.<sup>14</sup> At least we can say that it was the product of an individual closely related to the interpretive community for whom the Fourth Gospel was written. Why the material was composed and appended is, of course, an equally notorious question. For those who do not identify the fourth evangelist with the beloved disciple, the 'most compelling ground could have been the death of the Beloved Disciple after the writing of chapters 1-20, and the consequent dismay that it caused among the Johannine churches....'<sup>15</sup> At any rate, chapter 21 of John does bear the marks of being material appended to a gospel which originally concluded at 20:30-31.

## Conclusion

Of the five NT writings sometimes believed to contain appended material, I have argued, on the basis of grammatical, literary, and theological grounds, that two—Romans and Philippians—are, in fact, literary unities. But how can we speak of the remaining three as the inspired Word of God if they contain fragments of other documents? I close by making several remarks in response to this question.

Mark 16:9-20 came from a period well after the time of the composition of Mark's gospel. In fact, the evidence suggests that the material was written after the process of canonization began,

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certainly after the collection of the four-fold gospel. For that reason, many scholars are unwilling to accept Mark 16:9-20 as authoritative Scripture, since presumably it is from the hand of a second- or third-century scribe and not from the period of composition. Even the most

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<sup>13</sup> These arguments are made by Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, AB 29A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 1078-1079.

<sup>14</sup> George Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC Vol. 36 (Waco: Word, 1987), pp. 395-396.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 396.

conservative scholars consider it unwise to base church doctrine on such spurious passages which are not supported elsewhere in Scripture.<sup>16</sup>

The other two writings, 2 Corinthians and John, are distinct from Mark in this respect. In both instances, the appended material evidently comes from the period of composition. Both are vehicles of the authentic, apostolic theology which took its impulse from the teachings of Jesus, is reflected in the NT writings, and was later formalized in the early church as the 'rule of faith'. In the case of 2 Corinthians, the material comes from the pen of Paul; and, in the case of the Fourth Gospel, chapter 21, if not from the hand of the evangelist, comes from someone within the original interpretive community. No reason exists in either case not to accept the canonical status of the material as sacred Scripture.

Furthermore, recent trends in confessional biblical scholarship suggest that interpreters, while acknowledging the complex compositional histories of such writings as 2 Corinthians and John, attempt to understand these writings in their final, canonical form.<sup>17</sup> The final, canonical shape of Scripture is the form which the believing community has accepted as inspired and authoritative. And unless it can be shown, as is most likely the case with Mark 16, that the material comes from a time period well after the emergence of the NT documents as sacred writings, then one indispensable task of the theologian of the church is to interpret those sacred writings in their canonical form as the Word of God for the community of faith.

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<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., the note on Mk. 16:9-20 in W.A. Criswell (ed.), *The Criswell Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1979), p. 1184. On the basis of the textual evidence, the writer concludes: '...the precise ending of Mark remains unknown', and further that '...no doctrine ought to be built on the basis of these verses alone'.

<sup>17</sup> See especially the work of Brevard Childs in this area.