

Introduction

Challenging a Prevailing Paradigm

There is, indeed, no transaction which offers stronger temptation to fallacy and sophistication than epistolary intercourse.

Dr. Johnson, “The Life of Pope”¹

The Pauline New Testament (NT) letters, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon have long been considered actual letters, genuine correspondence, authored by Paul (or his secretary), and dispatched to communities of and in the mid-first century CE.² This book challenges that long-held authentic-perspective on Pauline letters. It details when and how the authentic-letter perspective

¹ Cited in Patricia A. Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions: The Letter in Greek Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 193.

² Scholarship of various types confirms the authentic letter perspective. See, for example, popular New Testament Introductory textbooks, such as Stephen L. Harris, *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*, 9th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2020); Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Also, many studies on Paul and his letters, including Leander E. Keck, *Paul and His Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988); Morna D. Hooker, *Paul: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003); Calvin J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul*, 6th ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015); E.P. Sanders, *Paul: The Apostle's Life, Letters, and Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015); Arthur J. Dewey et al., *The Authentic Letters of Paul: A New Reading of Paul's Rhetoric and Meaning* (Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2010). Also, reference articles, such as C.F. Evans, “The New Testament in the Making,” in *The Cambridge History of the Bible, vol. 1: From the Beginnings to Jerome*, ed. P.R. Ackroyd and C.F. Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 232–84, esp. p. 241–42; Jouette M. Bassler, “Paul and His Letters,” in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament*, ed. David E. Aune (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 373–97.

came to be dominant and the various ways in which scholarship has kept the perspective alive. As I indicate in the pages that follow, without sufficient evidence and through flawed methodologies, authentic-letter scholarship falsely assumes and advances the historicity of Paul and his mid-first-century communities. Indeed, the determination of authenticity of the seven Pauline letters – a product of nineteenth-century scholarship – employs criteria that do not meet modern standards of historical-critical analysis. By adopting various issues and methods of argumentation, and through engagement with various disciplines – including studies in the history of interpretation, patristics, classics, epistolography, ancient pedagogy, and rhetoric – this book argues that these seven letters are instead pseudonymous,³ literary, and fictional, letters-in-form-only. Their likely origin is Marcion's mid-second-century speculative/philosophical school in Rome, the site and timeframe of our earliest evidence of a collection of ten Pauline epistles (c. 144 CE). Deploying the letter genre, trained authors of this school crafted teachings in the name of the Apostle Paul for peer elite audiences.

This study contributes to an important conceptual shift in our understanding of early Christianity. In the authentic-letter perspective, the mid-first century marks a moment of historical significance in which the Apostle Paul and Pauline Christ communities – those located in the regions specified by the letters – practice emerging-Christian principles and adopt its doctrines. This activity is likewise understood as a continuation of the thought and practices of Jesus in the decades after his death. By contrast, recognizing the letters as scribal products not only permits a reassessment of their compositional date but also a conceptual shift from lived reality to that of a crafted and speculative realm. The change in status to letters-in-form-only likewise influences the understanding of other and later letters of the tradition, outside of the scriptural canon, said to have been patterned after Pauline letters.

³ I am using the word “pseudonymous” to mean “fictitious ascription,” that is, the inscribed author is someone other than the actual author, and not in the nefarious sense of forged authorship. Indeed, I argue that the composition of letters in the name of the Apostle Paul was both intentional and deployed for its potential positive rhetorical effects, as an essential part of the theological teaching goals of the letters. For an insightful article on the understanding of ancient pseudepigraphy, see Hindy Najman and Irene Peirano, “Pseudepigraphy as an Interpretative Construct,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Fifty Years of the Pseudepigrapha Section at the SBL*, eds. Matthias Henze and Liv Ingeborg Lied (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2019), 331–56. I thank Patricia Rosenmeyer for pointing me to this article.

The understanding that Pauline letters are authored by a historical Paul, are genuine correspondence, and are historically reliable is relatively recent. Early “Christian”⁴ writers who witness to Pauline letters valued and considered them not for their historicity but instead for their theological and ethical teachings and as evidence in support of their theological positions. Indeed, the insistence on the letters’ historical reliability is not in evidence in the early debates regarding Paul and Pauline thought. The authentic-letter perspective – as I detail in Chapter 1 – is attributable in large part to two dominant interpretive forces. The first, as influenced by philosophers such as H. Grotius (1583–1645), B. Spinoza (1632–77), and J. Locke (1632–1704), is the turn to the historical-critical method in which biblical scholars began to value biblical texts for their ability to provide evidence of early Christian history. Thus, deploying four Pauline letters (Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans) – the so-called *Hauptbriefe* – as historical documents, the highly influential nineteenth-century NT scholar F.C. Baur⁵ argued that earliest Christianity emerged in the mid-first century from under an outmoded Judaism. The authentic-letter perspective has only grown in the post-Baur period,⁶ even as subsequent scholarship has for the most part jettisoned Baur’s anti-Judaic bias. The second interpretive force can be attributed to the early-twentieth-century NT scholar Adolf Deissmann (*Licht vom Osten*, 1908), who

⁴ I agree with scholarship that finds the terms “Christian” and “Christianity” anachronistic for the early centuries of the common era. This scholarship argues that fuller traditions of Christianity and Judaism emerge closer to the fourth or fifth century, through varied and complex processes, and with various types and instances of fruitful interaction, see especially Annette Yoshiko Reed and Adam H. Becker, “Introduction: Traditional Models and New Directions,” in *The Ways that Never Parted*, ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 1–33; Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity (Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion)* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). I assess that what we see with Pauline letters and other writings of the period is Christianity in the making.

⁵ See especially F.C. Baur, *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi: Sein Leben und Wirken, seine Briefe und seine Lehre*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Leipzig: Fues’s Verlag, 1866–67).

⁶ Influential twentieth-century scholars, such as Werner Kümmel (1923, 1965) and Günther Bornkamm (1971) affirmed this perspective. See Werner Georg Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1923); English translation (ET): *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. Howard Clark Kee (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975). Günther Bornkamm, *Bibel – Das Neue Testament: Eine Einführung in seine Schriften im Rahmen der Geschichte des Urchristentums* (Stuttgart: Kreuz, 1971). ET: *The New Testament: A Guide to Its Writings*, trans. Reginald H. Fuller and Ilse Fuller (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1973).

argued that by virtue of their style and form Pauline letters were “real” (i.e., genuine correspondence) as opposed to artistic or literary. Scholarship on ancient epistolography and ancient letter types and forms after Deissmann – and even as it challenges the bases of Deissmann’s theses – continue to advance the view of Pauline letters as genuine correspondence. As I indicate in Chapters 1 and 2, both the lack of historical evidence and methodological flaws in the determinations of authenticity significantly undermine the view that the letters are authentic and genuine correspondence. Indeed, nothing fundamentally indicates that these seven letters are mid-first-century genuine correspondence authored by a historical Paul.

PSEUDONYMOUS LETTERS AND LETTER COLLECTIONS

As mock pseudonymous letters of the mid-second century, Pauline letters can be viewed alongside a well-known, popular, and contemporaneous literary genre. As Owen Hodkinson remarks, pseudonymous⁷ letters attributed to a known figure were by far “the most frequent type of Greek letter from all periods.”⁸ By contrast, Pauline letters are posited to be genuine correspondence by assessing them as unique among ancient letters. Epistolographers of the Second Sophistic⁹ provide the earliest

⁷ Pseudonymous letters appear as early as the fourth century BCE. See Michael Trapp, ed. *Greek and Latin Letters: An Anthology with Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 27. For a compendium of ancient Greek letters, see Rudolf Hercher and Jean François Boissonade, *Epistolographi Graeci* (Paris: A.F. Didot, 1873).

⁸ See Owen Hodkinson, “Epistolography,” in *The Oxford Handbook of The Second Sophistic*, ed. Daniel S. Richter and William A. Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 514.

⁹ More recently, scholars have found the term “Second Sophistic” to be less helpful as an explanatory term. The term stems from Philostratus’ *Lives of the Sophists* and envisions the circle of sophists too narrowly. See Kendra Eshleman, “Defining the Circle of Sophists: Philostratus and the Construction of Second Sophistic Author(s),” *Classical Philology* 103, no. 4 (2008): 395–413. Eshleman, Secord, and Laura Nasrallah include “Christian” intellectuals such as Justin, Marcion, and Tatian within this category. See, for instance, Laura Nasrallah, “Mapping the World: Justin, Tatian, Lucian, and the Second Sophistic,” *Harvard Theological Review* 98, no. 3 (2005): 283–314. That the term excludes scholars and falsely circumscribes a particular period, see Jared J. Secord, “Elites and Outsiders: The Greek-Speaking Scholars of Rome, 100 BCE–200 CE” (University of Michigan, 2012), 15–74. That the sophistic movement continues beyond the second century, see Lieve Van Hoof, “Greek Rhetoric and the Later Roman Empire: The Bubble of the ‘Third Sophistic’,” *Antiquité Tardive* 18 (2010): 211–24. I am indebted to David DeVore for pointing me to this scholarship on the Second Sophistic.

freestanding epistolary collections.¹⁰ Attributed to known public figures (real or imaginary) for the purpose of authenticating them, these collections inscribe as letter-senders philosophers (Socrates, Heraclitus, Plato, and the Cynics), wise men (Anacharsis, Apollonius of Tyana, Democritus, and Hippocrates), orators (Demosthenes and Isocrates), literary figures (Euripides, and Xenophon), and politicians or tyrants (Themistocles, Phalaris, Artaxerxes, and Periander).¹¹ The collections rely on prior knowledge of the character in whose name the letters are written, and are often the product of more than one writer.¹² Epistolographers supplemented what was known of the figure, all the while remaining within the realm of the credible.¹³ The letters likewise often function as an apology for the featured figure. This aspect very likely pertains to the genre's use as a substitute for ancient autobiography.¹⁴ Thought to provide firsthand access to the writer's soul, letters could seemingly give readers information of a private nature of the featured figure, the inscribed sender.¹⁵ Hodkinson also notes a moralizing and philosophical advice-giving tendency in these collections,¹⁶ with some collections attempting "to convert their readers to a certain belief."¹⁷ The letter contents are variable and can include consolation, invective, and didactic passages.

Ancient pseudonymous collections share various characteristics that indicate and also signal their pseudonymity. As mentioned, epistolographers of pseudonymous letters adopted a known character (factual or fictional) as their inscribed letter-sender, the purported author. Yet a

¹⁰ See Hodkinson, "Epistolography," 518; Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, 194. At this time, too, the rhetorical syllabus began to contain exercises in the creative composition of letters to and from well-known men. See Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, 197.

¹¹ See Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, 203. There are letter collections attributed to Aeschines, Anacharsis, Apollonius of Tyana, Aristotle, Artaxerxes, Brutus, Chion of Heraclea, Crates, Demosthenes, Dio, Diogenes, Euripides, Heraclitus, Hippocrates, Isocrates, Periander, Phalaris, Plato, Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans, Socrates and the Socratics, Solon, Thales, Themistocles, and Xenophon. See Trapp, *Greek and Latin Letters*, 27.

¹² See Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, 198–99.

¹³ Rosenmeyer notes, their goal was to "work the bare bones of a biography into a compelling life story" (ibid., 198–99).

¹⁴ See Owen Hodkinson and Patricia A. Rosenmeyer, "Introduction," in *Epistolary Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature*, ed. Owen Hodkinson, Patricia A. Rosenmeyer, and Evelien Bracke (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 16.

¹⁵ Ibid., 16. With letters, the "pseudonymous author can thereby 'reveal' to the external reader things which canonical writings by the historical author do not" (ibid., 7).

¹⁶ Hodkinson, "Epistolography," 518.

¹⁷ Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, 203.

common characteristic of these letter collections is the distinct and recognizable *differences* in character traits, philosophy, and values between the inscribed letter-sender and what is known of the featured figure from other written sources. Other shared collection characteristics include explicit hints of their fictionality and the lack of a chronological coherence. Representative extracts of ancient pseudonymous collections, including the *Platonic Epistles*,¹⁸ the *Letters of Apollonius of Tyana*,¹⁹ and the *Correspondence of Paul and Seneca*²⁰ illustrate these three common characteristics.

Inconsistencies in character traits, philosophy, and values between what is otherwise known of the featured figure and “his”²¹ discussions within the letters are evident in these sample collections. Thus, the views of Plato from his collected works and those of “Plato” of the *Platonic*

¹⁸ For the *Platonic Epistles*, see Plato, *Platonis Opera*. 5 vols. Oxonii: E Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1900–7 (2nd ed. 1905–13). Vol 5: Minos; Leges; Epinomis; Epistulae; Definitiones; De iusto; De virtute; Demodocus; Sisyphus; Eryxias; Axiochus. See also Plato, “Epistles,” in *Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles*, trans. Robert G. Bury, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 385–627.

¹⁹ The earliest edition of the *Letters of Apollonius of Tyana* is by Bartholomaeus Justinopolitanus (1498). Other editions include Aldine’s *Epistolae diversorum philosophorum, oratorum, rhetorum sex et viginti* (Venice 1499), edited by Marcus Musurus; H. Stephanus, *Epistolia, dialogi breves, oratiunculae, poematia ex variis utriusque linguae scriptoribus* (Paris 1577); E. Lubinus, *Epistolae Apollonii Tyanei, Anacharsidis, Euripidis, Theanus, aliorumque ad eosdem* (Heidelberg 1601); and *Epistolae graecanicae mutuae* (Geneva 1606); C.L. Kayser’s *Corpus Philostrateum, Flavii Philostrati quae supersunt* (Zürich 1844, 1853). Conybeare’s Loeb edition and Penella’s edition follow on Kayser’s.

A reference to the *Letters of Apollonius of Tyana* is in *Vita Apollonii* 8.2 (early third century CE), in which Philostratus remarks that a collection of the letters of Apollonius was presented to Hadrian. Philostratus alludes to several letters of the collection and fully cites fourteen of them. It is likely that Porphyry (c. 234–305 CE) was familiar with a collection of the letters. Stobaeus (c. fifth century) included twenty-two letters of this collection in an anthology. The collection grew over time, and especially during the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries, to approximately 100 letters. On this, see Robert J. Penella, *The Letters of Apollonius of Tyana: A Critical Text with Prolegomena, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 1–3, 28.

²⁰ The *Correspondence of Paul and Seneca* is found in modern critical editions, such as Claude W. Barlow, ed. *Epistolae Senecae ad Paulum et Pauli ad Senecam <quae vocantur>* (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1938). See also Laura Bocciaolini Palagi, *Epistolario apocrifo di Seneca e san Paolo* (Firenze: Nardini, 1985); Monica Natali, *Epistolario tra Seneca e san Paolo* (Milano: Rusconi Libri, 1995); Alfons Fürst, *Der apokryphe Briefwechsel zwischen Seneca und Paulus : zusammen mit dem Brief des Mordechai an Alexander und dem Brief des Annaeus Seneca über Hochmut und Götterbilder* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

²¹ The pseudonymous letter collections in view here posit males as the letter-sender.

*Epistles*²² are distinct from one another.²³ For example, each of the thirteen extant *Platonic Epistles* addresses or concerns tyrants,²⁴ and “Plato” attempts to win them to his philosophy²⁵ and to foster a mutually beneficial relationship with them.²⁶ He is thus on friendly terms with Dionysius II, the tyrant of Syracuse (τυράννῳ Συρακουσῶν), while the latter is said to appreciate “Plato’s” philosophy (*Ep.* 13).²⁷ “Plato” remarks,

Once when you were giving a banquet to the young Locrians you got up and came over to me (you were reclining some distance away from me) and greeted me with a phrase that was both affectionate and neatly turned, as it seemed to me and to the man reclining beside me (and a fair youth he was), who said: “No doubt, Dionysius, you have benefited much in wisdom from Plato.” And you said, “And in much else besides, for from the moment I sent for him, by the very fact that I had sent for him, I benefited.” So let us preserve this feeling so that our benefits to one another always increase.²⁸

By contrast, in his *Republic*, Plato considers tyrants to be miserable and slavish (*R.* 577a3–5).²⁹ While Plato values that which is unchanging and eternal, tyrants represent mere appearance and superficiality (*R.* 577b1).

In the *Epistles*, “Plato” commits his teachings to writing, while in the Platonic corpus, he considers writing to be inferior to face-to-face conversation (*Phaedrus* 275d4–9, 276e4–277a4).³⁰ Wohl comments, “Platonic philosophy, as a practice based on presence, is necessarily oral; all the

²² Scholarship on the *Platonic Epistles* has probed the letters for what they could possibly reveal about Plato and his Academy. For a short bibliography of sources on the question of authenticity of the *Platonic Epistles*, see A.D. Morrison, “Narrative and Epistolarity in the ‘Platonic’ Epistles,” in *Epistolary Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature*, ed. Hodkinson, Rosenmeyer, and Bracke, 107, n. 1. The Loeb editor of the *Platonic Epistles*, Robert Bury, assesses that a few of the epistles are likely genuine, from the hand of Plato. See Plato, “Epistles,” 391. By contrast, Rosenmeyer argues that all the epistles are by a single hand, but not that of Plato. See Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, 202. Morrison finds that the collection took shape in the first century CE. See Morrison, “Narrative and Epistolarity in the ‘Platonic’ Epistles,” 112.

²³ See Victoria Wohl, “Plato Avant la Lettre: Authenticity in Plato’s Epistles,” *Ramus* 27 (1998): 60.

²⁴ That all the letters concern tyrants, see especially Wohl, “Plato Avant la Lettre,” 66.

In four letters, “Plato” addresses Dionysius II of Syracuse (c. 397–343 BCE), and in six others, various statemen and rulers. For a table listing the various letters and their addressees, see Morrison, “Narrative and Epistolarity in the ‘Platonic’ Epistles,” 110.

²⁵ See Wohl, “Plato Avant la Lettre,” 61.

²⁶ See Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, 202.

²⁷ That this letter is certainly spurious, see Bury in Plato, “Epistles,” 610–13.

²⁸ As cited in Morrison, “Narrative and Epistolarity in the ‘Platonic’ Epistles,” 127.

²⁹ See Wohl, “Plato Avant la Lettre,” 61.

³⁰ See Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, 202; Morrison, “Narrative and Epistolarity in the ‘Platonic’ Epistles,” 130; Wohl, “Plato Avant la Lettre,” 60, 76.

seemingly incidental scene-setting of the Platonic dialogues – the walks, the chance meetings, the quiet gardens, the *symposia* – is in fact vital: one must be with the master and hear his words. Writing is associated with the lack, even loss, of presence.”³¹

There are evident character-trait distinctions and differences of philosophy between Apollonius of Tyana of *Vita Apollonii* (*Life of Apollonius of Tyana*)³² and “Apollonius” of the *Epistolae Apollonii Tyanei* (*Letters of Apollonius of Tyana*).³³ In the former, Philostratus depicts Apollonius as a semidivine character. Supernatural figures and events attend his birth. Apollonius adopts an ascetic lifestyle, never cutting his hair and often going barefoot. He rejects marriage, wine, and the consumption of meat. Known as a healer, he travels extensively preaching asceticism and the importance of giving to the poor. At his death, Apollonius resurrects bodily and later appears to others.³⁴ Philostratus narrates his experience in the temple of Asclepius as follows:

After then having purged his interior, he took to walking without shoes by way of adornment and clad himself in linen raiment, declining to wear any animal product; and he let his hair grow long and lived in the Temple. And the people around about the Temple were struck with admiration for him, and the god Asclepius one day said to the priest that he was delighted to have Apollonius as witness of his cures of the sick; and such was his reputation that the Cilicians themselves and the people all around flocked to Aegae to see him. Hence the

³¹ Wohl, “Plato Avant la Lettre,” 76.

³² This is the life of the sage of the first century CE written by Philostratus and completed after the death of Julia Domna in 217 CE. See Penella, *The Letters of Apollonius of Tyana*, 2.

³³ According to Rosenmeyer, this collection of one hundred letters is fully pseudonymous, see Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, 203–6. Other scholars, however, allow that some letters are genuine. See, for example, Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis*, trans. Daniel P. Bailey (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 112; Penella, *The Letters of Apollonius of Tyana*, 24–25; Hodkinson, “Epistolography,” 513.

³⁴ For this summary, see Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, trans. F.C. Conybeare, 2 vols., LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912–50). 1. ix–xi. See also Hugh Chisholm, ed. “Apollonius of Tyana.” *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 188.

Already in late antiquity, Apollonius was compared to Jesus. See Penella, *The Letters of Apollonius of Tyana*, 29. For modern scholars who make a similar comparison, see F.C. Baur, “Apollonius von Tyana und Christus oder das Verhältniss des Pythagoreismus zur Christentum,” *Drei Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der alten Philosophie und ihres Verhältnisses zum Christentum*, ed. E. Zeller (Leipzig: Neudr. d. Ausg., 1876), 1–227; J.L. Bernard, *Apollonius de Tyana et Jésus* (Paris: R. Laffont, 1977); Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?: The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 208.

Cilician proverb: “Wither runnest thou? Is it to see the stripling?” Such was the saying that arose about him, and it gained the distinction of becoming a proverb.³⁵ (*Vita Apol.* 1.8)

A far different Apollonius emerges, however, from the *Letters*. In contrast to *Life*, “Apollonius” is a Pythagorean philosopher – not a wandering ascetic – who gives moral advice and who can be critical and even condemnatory of others. Sample letters follow, some consist of only short aphorisms.

To Euphrates Apollonius writes,

Men of light and leading use fewest words; for if babblers felt as much annoyance as they inflict, they would not be so-long winded.³⁶ (*Ep.* 8ο)

To the People of Sardis Apollonius writes,

It is quite right that an old-fashioned philosopher like myself should be anxious to visit a city so old and considerable as your own; and I would willingly have visited it, without waiting for an invitation, which so many other cities have sent me, if I had any hopes of reconciling your city with morality (ἡθελ), or with nature or with law or with God. And I would have done in any case so much as in me lies; only faction (στάσις), as someone has remarked, is crueller than war.³⁷ (*Ep.* 76)

To the Censors (δικαιωταῖς)³⁸ of Rome Apollonius writes,

Some of you have taken trouble to provide harbours and public buildings and enclosures and promenades; but neither you yourselves nor your laws evince any solicitude for the children in your cities, or for the young, or for women. Were it not so it would be a fine thing to be one of your subjects.³⁹ (*Ep.* 54)

The public speaker Apollonius of *Life* rejects public speaking in the *Letters* (10, 54). Unlike in *Life*, “Apollonius” of the *Letters* disparages religious sacrifice (*Ep.* 27). In distinction from the Apollonius of *Life*, “Apollonius” of the *Letters* refuses to bathe (*Eps.* 8.1, 43). *Letter* 24 appears to contradict information regarding Apollonius’ attendance at the Olympic Games as described in *Life*. In concert with the *Platonic*

³⁵ Translation is by F.C. Conybeare in Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 1.2.1.

³⁶ Translation is by F.C. Conybeare in Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 2.475. For a brief commentary, see Penella, *The Letters of Apollonius of Tyana*, 134.

³⁷ Translation is by F.C. Conybeare in Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 2.473, 75. For a brief commentary, see Penella, *The Letters of Apollonius of Tyana*, 130.

³⁸ Penella suggests that this could mean “Procurators” or other Roman officials. See Penella, *The Letters of Apollonius of Tyana*, 117.

³⁹ Translation is by F.C. Conybeare in Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 2.449.

Epistles, in *Life*, Apollonius is an opponent of a tyrant (Domitian), while in *Letters* 20 and 21, “he” writes to him with philosophical guidance.⁴⁰

The likely fourth-century⁴¹ fourteen-letter collection – eight from “Seneca” and six from “Paul” – *Correspondence of Paul and Seneca*⁴² presents as a friendly exchange between “Paul” and “Seneca.” Like these other pseudonymous letter collections, there are glaring differences between the letters’ depictions of the two correspondents and what is otherwise known of them from other extant sources.⁴³ The

⁴⁰ See Penella, *The Letters of Apollonius of Tyana*, 27–28. Despite these disparities in character type and perspectives, Penella allows that the two characters are not necessarily discordant (*ibid.*, 28).

⁴¹ Jerome (c. 392/3 CE) cites the *Correspondence* (*De viris illustribus*, 12), providing their *terminus ante quem*. While Lactantius (c. 324 CE) praised Seneca, he never mentioned the correspondence between Paul and Seneca (*Div. Inst.* 6.24.14). On this see Barlow, *Epistolae Senecae ad Paulum et Pauli ad Senecam*, 4–5; Harry M. Hine, “Seneca and Paul: The First Two Thousand Years,” in *Paul and Seneca in Dialogue*, ed. Joseph R. Dodson and David E. Briones (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 26, 28; Kenneth M. Abbott, “Seneca and St. Paul,” in *Festschr. für Wolfgang Fleischhauer anlässl. seines 65. Geburtstags u. d. 40. Jahres seines Wirkens als Professor d. dt. Philologie an d. Ohio State University*, ed. Wolfgang Fleischhauer and Donald C. Riechel (Cologne: Böhlau, 1978), 124.

⁴² There are over 300 extant manuscripts of the *Correspondence*. Barlow relies on twenty-five of them for his 1938 edition. On this, see Barlow, *Epistolae Senecae ad Paulum et Pauli ad Senecam*, 8–69.

That the *Correspondence* is not genuine, see Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Macmillan, 1828–1889), 271; Barlow, *Epistolae Senecae ad Paulum et Pauli ad Senecam*, 1; Abbott, “Seneca and St. Paul,” 119; J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 547; Willem Chistiaan van Manen, “Paul,” in *Encyclopedia Biblica*, ed. Thomas Kelly Cheyne and John Sutherland Black (Toronto: Morang, 1899–1903), 3637; Richard I. Pervo, *The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 111–16. Hine remarks, “The predominant scholarly view today, despite voices to the contrary, is that the letters are pseudepigraphic.” See Hine, “Seneca and Paul: The First Two Thousand Years,” 26. According to Hine, there is no evidence of a friendship between Paul and Seneca, as is posited by the *Correspondence* (*ibid.*, 27). Twentieth-century editors of editions of the *Correspondence* who refute the letters’ authenticity include Claude Barlow, Laura Boccioni Palagi, Monica Natali, and Alfons Fürst. By contrast, some recent scholars such as Ilaria Ramelli and Marta Sordi have argued in favor of their authenticity (*ibid.*, 41–42).

According to Hine, Seneca’s reputation had ebbed after his death; it was the Latin Church Fathers who brought him back to popularity. Tertullian claimed that Seneca was *saepe noster* (often one of us). See Hine, “Seneca and Paul: The First Two Thousand Years,” 26–32.

⁴³ Chiara Torre cautions against the assumption that the Church Fathers drew on details of Seneca’s collected works. See Chiara Torre, “Seneca and the Christian Tradition,” in *The*

Correspondence falsely indicates that the ancient philosopher and the Apostle Paul knew each other⁴⁴ and were friends.⁴⁵

In his extant works, Seneca writes of the importance of being true to oneself and of living in accordance with the self (*secundum naturam suam vivere*, *Ep.* 41.9; cf. *Ep.* 32).⁴⁶ He is critical of outward appearance and artificiality. What counts are not possessions, signs of wealth, or prestige, but rather what lies within (*Eps.* 23, 27). Yet in the *Correspondence*, “Seneca” espouses a different view of the good. In *Letter* 7,⁴⁷ “Seneca” writes that what makes “Paul” remarkable is not that he listens to his own voice but that he is guided by the holy spirit within (*Spiritus enim sanctus in te*).

A common thread running through the *Correspondence* (*Eps.* 3, 7, 9, and 13) is “Seneca’s” interest in “Paul’s” writing style. “Seneca” comments that “Paul” is to embellish or adorn (*decoranda*) his words, giving them a refined (*cultus*) outward appearance (*Ep.* 13). By deploying correct Latin style (*Latinitas*), “his” great gift will be made worthy (*Ep.* 13).⁴⁸ By contrast, in his *Moral Epistles*, Seneca counsels his pupil Lucilius *not* to be too particular regarding his writing style, remarking that what he writes is far more important than the written form (*Ep.* 115.1). In the *Correspondence*, “Seneca” brings three of “Paul’s” letters (Galatians, Corinthians, and Achaeans) to Nero (*Ep.* 7), yet sources such as Acts and the collected Pauline letters do not mention this event, nor is there extant evidence of a Pauline letter to the Achaeans. Kenneth Abbott makes a likely suggestion that the *Correspondence* reflects the product of a rhetorical school in which students were asked, “If Seneca and St. Paul had met, what would they have said to each other?”⁴⁹

Cambridge Companion to Seneca, ed. Shadi Bartsch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 267.

⁴⁴ “Seneca” of the *Correspondence* indicates knowledge of Pauline letters (*Eps.* 7, 9).

⁴⁵ See Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 113.

⁴⁶ Of this letter, Gummere comments that in “no pagan author, save perhaps Vergil, is the beauty of holiness so sincerely presented from a Roman standpoint.” See Seneca, *Epistles*, trans. Richard M. Gummere, 3 vols., LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 1.xiv.

⁴⁷ I am following Barlow’s order of the letters.

⁴⁸ On this, see Abbott, “Seneca and St. Paul,” 129.

⁴⁹ See Abbott, “Seneca and St. Paul,” 131. Pervo comments that the number of letters (thirteen/fourteen) within the *Correspondence* is significant and likely corresponds to fourth-century collections of the Pauline letters that also contain thirteen/fourteen letters. See Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 113.

Another common trait of pseudonymous letters is what Rosenmeyer refers to as “the anxiety of fiction.”⁵⁰ This is the epistolographer’s (i.e., the actual letter author’s) attempt to satisfy the letter genre’s requirement of verisimilitude.⁵¹ The anxiety of fiction manifests in references to letters, to the writing or reading of letters (even the current letter), or to the act of sending letters back and forth between correspondents.⁵²

Each of these pseudonymous letter collections provides abundant evidence of the anxiety of fiction. Among the thirteen extant *Platonic Epistles*, eight contain references to letter-related activities. Some letters contain more than one such reference (*Eps.* 3, 13). Addressed to Dionysius, *Letter* 13 begins with the comment that the greeting formula is a sign of the letter’s genuineness; refers to Dionysius writing to “Plato”; has “Plato” discussing the quality of his letters; mentions that ambassadors requested that “Plato” write to Dionysius; and includes a request that Dionysius preserve the present letter. References to letter-writing and envoys likewise occur with regularity in the *Letters of Apollonius of Tyana* (*Eps.* 12, 45, 49, 53, 55, 59, and 63). And half of the fourteen letters of the *Correspondence of Paul and Seneca* (*Eps.* 2, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 13) regard a reference to letter-related activity.

Lastly, pseudonymous collections are typified by their lack of chronological coherence.⁵³ The burden thus falls to external readers to fill in gaps and create some sort of chronological and even logical order.⁵⁴ Rosenmeyer notes, “The genre delights in playing with all possibilities: twisting time, . . . , leaving the reader with gaps she can fill in only with her own imagination.”⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, 204. ⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Rosenmeyer notes that in the collected letters attributed to the Athenian politician and general Themistocles (524–460 BCE), one sees references to the letter-messenger, the place of writing the letter, the postal system, and instructions on how to receive the letter (*Eps.* 3, 8, and 16). See Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, 204–5.

⁵³ Ibid., 230; Hodkinson and Rosenmeyer, “Introduction,” 16; Morrison, “Narrative and Epistolarity in the ‘Platonic’ Epistles,” 108–9.

⁵⁴ Morrison, for instance, works to find a quasi-narrative in the arrangement of the *Platonic Epistles*. See Morrison, “Narrative and Epistolarity in the ‘Platonic’ Epistles,” 107–32.

⁵⁵ Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, 229. Yet citing the work of Mary Beard, Morrison remarks that editors of pseudonymous letter collections nevertheless strove to make a meaningful impression on external readers through the arrangement of the letters in a collection. See Morrison, “Narrative and Epistolarity in the ‘Platonic’ Epistles,” 112.

While the philosopher-tyrant motif provides thematic coherence, the *Platonic Epistles* exhibit no obvious chronological or logical order.⁵⁶ Similarly, the *Epistolae Apollonii* are without this feature.⁵⁷ “Apollonius” addresses a multiplicity of persons and unrelated topics. *Letter 1* is addressed to the Stoic philosopher Euphrates. Critical of Euphrates, “Apollonius” pens eighteen letters to him, yet they are strewn throughout the collection (*Eps.* 1–8, 14–18, 50–52, 60, 79). “Apollonius” writes to his brothers and his friends (*Eps.* 35, 44, 45, 55, 72, 73); to Roman emperors (*Eps.* 20, 21); to groups of intellectuals (*Eps.* 34, 42, 57); to cities in Greece and Asia (the Milesians [*Eps.* 33, 68]; Trallians [*Ep.* 69], Ionians [*Ep.* 71]); to particular groups within cities, such as the “senior magistrates of Caesarea and Seleucia” (*Eps.* 11–13) or the “Priests at Delphi” (*Ep.* 27). The letters of the collection cohere by their common addressor and his propensity to give advice.

The last five letters of the *Correspondence of Paul and Seneca* contain date stamps, giving the impression or hope of chronologically coherence. However, the dated letters as ordered within the collection do not provide a coherent sequence of events. In modern equivalence, the dates by letter order are June 27, 58 (*Ep.* 10), March 28, 64 (*Ep.* 11), March 23, 59 (*Ep.* 12), July 6, 58 (*Ep.* 13), and August 1, 58 (*Ep.* 14). A coherent chronology based on these internal dates necessitates a letter sequence of 10, 13, 14, 12, 11.⁵⁸ Moreover, *Letter 11* interrupts the question raised in *Letter 10* and is answered only in *Letter 12*.⁵⁹

PAULINE LETTERS AS A PSEUDONYMOUS COLLECTION

In assessing the Pauline letter collection as pseudonymous, one must consider not just seven letters but instead all letters attributed to Paul

⁵⁶ According to Morrison, the internal “dramatic dates” do not follow a chronological sequence that aligns with the letters as sequentially arranged in the collection. For instance, *Letter 1* refers to events in 361, while *Letter 2* to events in 360. Events indicated in *Letter 4* take place in the period between 357 and 354. See the table in Morrison, “Narrative and Epistolarity in the ‘Platonic’ Epistles,” 109.

⁵⁷ According to Penella, “No chronological principle of arrangement is discernible in the collection as we have it.” See Penella, *The Letters of Apollonius of Tyana*, 18. See also Philostratus, *Apollonius of Tyana: Letters of Apollonius, Ancient Testimonia, Eusebius’s Reply to Hierocles*, trans. Christopher P. Jones, vol. 3, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 2.

⁵⁸ Abbott comments that the dates appear to be “useless decorations.” See Abbott, “Seneca and St. Paul,” 131.

⁵⁹ See Abbott, “Seneca and St. Paul,” 130; Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 112.

within the various collections. Important early collections range from nine to fourteen letters.⁶⁰ Modern scholarship likewise recognizes that the thirteen letters of the group are not by the same hand. The earliest known – but nonextant edition of the collected letters – is Marcion's (c. 144 CE),⁶¹ which consisted of ten letters in the following order, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Laodiceans=Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon.⁶² The earliest extant manuscript is Papyrus 46 (c. 200 CE). It comprises Romans, Hebrews, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians. Leaves lacking at its end likely contained 2 Thessalonians and Philemon.⁶³

⁶⁰ Pervo provides a table of some of the early known collections of Pauline letters, including their number and order. These include Muratori (late-second century or likely later), Claromontanus (sixth century), Gelasianum (sixth century), Ambrosiaster (fourth century), Victorinus of Petau (c. 304), Augustine (354–430), and Syriac (fourth century). See Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 29. Modern NT editions list thirteen letters (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon). While listed in some early letter collections, Hebrews was disputed as early as Origen (c. 184–253 CE). Yet see Thomas who nuances Origen's opinion of the authenticity of Hebrews in Matthew J. Thomas, "Origen on Paul's Authorship of Hebrews," *New Testament Studies* 65 (2019): 598–609.

⁶¹ Tertullian and Epiphanius provide evidence of Marcion's collection. For extended analysis of the order and contents of Marcion's collection of Pauline letters, the *Apostolikon*, see Jason D. BeDuhn, *The First New Testament: Marcion's Scriptural Canon* (Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2013), 203–319. See also Jack Finegan, "The Original Form of the Pauline Collection," *Harvard Theological Review* 49, no. 2 (1956): 88–89.

For the date of 144 CE, see Markus Vinzent, *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels* (Leuven and Paris: Peeters, 2014), 138. BeDuhn comments that 144 is the date Marcion likely came to Rome. See BeDuhn, *The First New Testament*, 13.

Gamble, however, argues that Marcion was indebted to a still earlier collection (no longer extant), the "letters to the seven churches." This collection contained the letters to the Corinthians, Romans, Ephesians, Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians, and Colossians. Philemon, if included, was associated with the church in Colossae. See Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 59–62.

⁶² Tertullian and Epiphanius disagree slightly regarding the order of the ten Pauline letters in Marcion's collection. Tertullian gives the order as Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Laodiceans/Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. While Epiphanius presents the letters in the order of Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Laodiceans/Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians. See Vinzent, *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels*, 117; BeDuhn, *The First New Testament*, 260.

⁶³ See Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 291, n. 29. Disputed is whether the manuscript also contained the Pastorals. That it did, see Jeremy Duff, "P46 and the Pastorals: A Misleading Consensus," *New Testament Studies* 44 (1998): 578–90.

The Pauline collection shares all the signature characteristics of these other pseudonymous letter collections. In the case of the Apostle Paul as the inscribed letter-sender, this character – as I outline in greater detail in Chapter 2 – is made known in the book of Acts, a work that serves in part as the character’s biography. As with these other pseudonymous letter collections, there are significant character differences between the Paul of Acts and the Apostle Paul of the Pauline letters.⁶⁴ Like Apollonius, in Acts, Paul is a wandering preacher and miracle worker (Acts 13:9–12), but not a letter writer. In the letters, “Paul” self-identifies as an apostle, while that characterization is nearly entirely absent from Acts.⁶⁵ The Paul of Acts upholds various Hebrew customs (circumcision, Acts 16:3; rite of purification, Acts 20:24; reading the law and prophets in the synagogue, Acts 13:15), whereas these activities are either absent or qualified in the collected letters. In Acts, Paul preaches to Jews (Ἰουδαῖοι)⁶⁶ (Acts 13:5, 14:43; 14:1; 17:1–3, 10, 17; 18:5; 19:8), while the “Paul” of the letters explicitly addresses gentiles (ἐθνῆ) (Rom 1:13; 15:18; Gal 1:16; 2:2, 8–9; 1 Thess 2:16). The “Paul” of the letters argues against Jewish law adoption and practice (i.e., circumcision) for the gentile communities he addresses (Galatians, 1 Corinthians), whereas in Acts, he is more accepting of that law and circumcision (Acts 13:46, 51; 14:6; 16:3, 7–8; 18:5–6; 19:9).

The anxiety of fiction is likewise in evidence in Pauline letters. While I address this topic in greater detail in Chapter 3, the trait is nowhere

⁶⁴ This is well known in Pauline scholarship. Pervo outlines some of the main differences in Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 150. See also Todd Penner, “Paul and Acts.” *Bible Odyssey*, May 5, 2020. www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/paul-and-acts.

⁶⁵ There is only one reference to Paul and Barnabas as apostles in Acts (14:4). At this reference, some witnesses (D-text, sy^{hmg} [Syriac Harklean marginal readings]) do not designate “apostles” (ἀποστόλοις), but instead the phrase “κολλωμενοι δια τον λογον του θεου” (those joined through the word of God).

⁶⁶ The English translation of the Greek proper noun Ἰουδαῖος is debated in recent scholarship. Scholars have assessed that it is best to translate the Greek noun as “Judaean” rather than as “Jew,” arguing that the former refers to an ancient ethnicity rather than a religion and thus best reflects the social situation of the early centuries of the common era. See, for example, Steve Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007): 457–512. Arguing against that view, Cynthia Baker reasons convincingly that the term “Jew” can equally signify an ethnicity and has the added advantage of being able to refer to “kinship, laws, ancestry, traditions, customs, and conceptions of God.” See Cynthia M. Baker, “A ‘Jew’ by Any Other Name?,” *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 2 (2011): 177.

more apparent than in Gal 6:11 (cf. 1 Cor 16:21; 2 Thess 3:17; Col 4:18), in which “Paul” discusses his own writing skill. References to letters likewise dot the collection (1 Cor 5:9–11; 2 Cor 7:8, 10:9–11; Col 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27; 2 Thess 2:2, 15, 3:14). Ancient lists of Pauline letters are variously arranged and exhibit no obvious chronological order. No letters are internally dated.⁶⁷ Marcion’s letter order differs from later extant manuscript evidence, and again, exhibits no obvious chronological sequence, although scholars have suggested that he (Marcion) intentionally placed Galatians in first position, but for theological, not chronological, reasons.⁶⁸ A modern chronology, derived circularly⁶⁹ from references internal to the letters, yields the order 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Philemon, Philippians, and Romans.⁷⁰ Yet none of the reconstructed lists or manuscript evidence follows this modern-created chronological sequence, and ancient manuscripts contain, as mentioned, not seven but nine to fourteen letters.⁷¹ Addressees and topics vary throughout the collection. The letters cohere around the “Apostle Paul” as the inscribed sender and his teachings of Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Jesus Christ, Jesus the Anointed One). Like Seneca’s *Moral Epistles*, the letters have served a didactic function for secondary readers throughout the ages. In Chapter 3, I outline various rhetorical benefits of adopting the letter genre for teachings delivered by an authoritative figure.

⁶⁷ On this, see especially David Trobisch, *Paul’s Letter Collection: Tracing the Origins* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 18–19.

⁶⁸ According to Adolf von Harnack, the Galatians-first order was Marcion’s attempt to influence the collection in an anti-Torah direction. In disputing this view, BeDuhn provides evidence of other Galatians-first collections found in non-Marcionite circles. A Galatians-first collection appears in the Mount Sinai monastery of Saint Catherine (*Catalogus Sinaiticus*), and in a fourth-century commentary on Pauline letters by Ephrem Syrus. See BeDuhn, *The First New Testament*, 207. Pervo, however, allows that these other and later Galatians-first editions may have been influenced by the Marcion edition. See Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 30.

⁶⁹ Jouette Bassler notes that the methodology for determining the chronology of the letters is circular: “[I]t assumes what the sequence is supposed to reveal.” See Bassler, “Paul and His Letters,” 384–85.

⁷⁰ For a modern edition of Pauline letters based on this proposed chronology, see Dewey et al., *Authentic Letters of Paul*.

⁷¹ Pauline letter collections tend to follow an order based on decreasing length. On this, see Finegan, “The Original Form of the Pauline Collection,” 103; Trobisch, *Paul’s Letter Collection*, 20–21. Trobisch provides tables that list the order of individual letters by decreasing length, an order that appears in many manuscripts, including primary ones, such as Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Vaticanus. See Trobisch, *Paul’s Letter Collection*, 53.

CHALLENGES TO PAULINE AUTHENTICITY

Beginning in the eighteenth century, various NT scholars engaged the question of the Pauline letters' authenticity. The English clergyman Edward Evanson (1731–1805) was among the first to doubt the authenticity of various Pauline letters. Evanson established various criteria for determining a letter's authenticity, including ancient church acceptance; consistency with the book of Acts (considered by him to be historically reliable); logical coherence, including a lack of historical anachronisms; consistency of expression with other letters; and an indication of divine authority.⁷² In large part because their content could not be reconciled with Acts, Evanson dismissed Hebrews, Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Titus, and Philemon as not being authentically Pauline.⁷³ Those letters meeting his criteria and thus deemed authentic were 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Galatians, and 1 and 2 Timothy.⁷⁴

Taking as their point of departure Baur's mid-nineteenth-century findings that only the *Hauptbriefe* (Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans) were authentically Pauline and historically reliable,⁷⁵ scholars of the late-nineteenth-century Dutch Radical School⁷⁶ waged a vigorous and united attack against the authenticity of the letters. Scholars Bruno Bauer, Abraham Dirk Loman,⁷⁷ Rudolf Steck, and Willem Christiaan (W.C.) van Manen advanced the view that all the Pauline letters were pseudonymous, written by a variety of authors, and products of the second rather than first century CE. The Dutch Radicals marshaled both

⁷² See Edward Evanson, *The Dissonance of the Four Generally Received Evangelists, and the Evidence of Their Respective Authenticity Examined*, 2nd ed. (Gloucester: D. Walker, 1805), 306–36.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 306–26. ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 336.

⁷⁵ See van Manen, "Paul," 3622–24. For Baur's *Hauptbriefe* as a point of departure for subsequent studies of Pauline authenticity, see also Benjamin L. White, *Remembering Paul: Ancient and Modern Contests over the Image of the Apostle* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 28.

⁷⁶ There are several summaries of the assessments of the Dutch Radical School. See Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Schocken, 1964), 117–50; J.C. O'Neill, *The Recovery of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1972); Hermann Detering, "The Dutch Radical Approach to the Pauline Epistles," *The Journal of Higher Criticism* 3, no. 2 (1996): 163–75. A much lengthier, yet less well-organized discussion is found in Richard John Knowling, *The Witness of the Epistles* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), 133–215.

⁷⁷ A.D. Loman was the first to use the name "Dutch Radical."

internal and external evidence in support of their views. Prominent among the internal factors weighing against authenticity was the relatively advanced level of theological reflection evident within the letters. According to them, developed theology was suggestive of a period several generations removed from the mid-first century, the timeframe indicated in references internal to the letters. A lack of evidence of references to Pauline letters in written sources dated prior to the second century constituted a central argument against authenticity on external grounds.

While criticized for being “careless and contradictory,”⁷⁸ and for exhibiting a hostility toward Christianity,⁷⁹ Bruno Bauer (1809–82) was nonetheless foundational⁸⁰ for Dutch Radical thought. In contrast to F.C. Baur, who assumed that historical reliability resided either in Acts or in the *Hauptbriefe*, Bruno Bauer assessed that both Acts and the Pauline letters were “free reflection,”⁸¹ that is, ahistorical.⁸² In Bauer’s view, Pauline letters were products of multiple hands and reflect a “Christian self-confidence” of the second century.⁸³ Christianity did not originate in Palestine but was instead the result of the influences of the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Philo, and the Roman philosopher Seneca.⁸⁴ All the letters exhibit Gnostic influence, as seen in particular in the writings of Valentinus,⁸⁵ and are thus best dated to the reign of Marcus Aurelius

⁷⁸ See Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters*, 123.

⁷⁹ See Rudolf Steck, *Der Galaterbrief nach seiner Echtheit untersucht nebst kritischen bemerkungen zu den Paulinischen Hauptbriefen* (Berlin: George Reimer, 1888), 6. Steck remarks that as a result of his work on the gospels, Bauer lost his permission to give theological lectures (ibid., 7).

⁸⁰ J.C. O’Neill calls Bauer’s *Kritik der paulinischen Briefe* (2nd ed. [Berlin: Gustav Hempel, 1852]) “brilliant.” See O’Neill, *The Recovery of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians*, 3. For Bauer’s influence on those who criticize him for being eccentric, see Knowing, *The Witness of the Epistles*, 133, n. 1.

Detering argues that while Bruno Bauer was the “great stimulator of Dutch Radical Criticism,” he was guilty of rather serious methodological errors. In Detering’s view, van Manen’s work was more careful and more textually sound. See Detering, “Dutch Radical Approach,” 174.

⁸¹ See O’Neill, *The Recovery of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians*, 3.

⁸² See Bruno Bauer, *Christ and the Caesars*, trans. Frank E. Schacht (Charleston, SC: Charleston House Publishing, 1998), 340. See also Bauer, *Kritik der paulinischen Briefe*.

⁸³ See Detering, “Dutch Radical Approach,” 168.

⁸⁴ See Martin Kegel, *Bruno Bauer und seine Theorien über die Entstehung des Christentums* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1908), 64.

⁸⁵ As for parallels with Valentinian thought, Bauer cites among other things, the debasement motif in Phil 2:6–8, the fullness motif of Col 1:19–20, the “many-formed” character of wisdom in Eph 3:10, and the contrast between divine wisdom hidden in mystery and the

(161–80 CE). In contrast to other Radicals who followed on his work (see later in this section), Bauer denied the historicity of Paul. In that he adopted the view that the Pauline letters and Acts came about through a process of gradual accretion, and indicate a complex compositional relationship, his arguments are more sophisticated than those typically found in current Pauline scholarship, which tends to treat all seven “authentic” letters in their finished canonical form, and as fully composed prior to the book of Acts.

Bauer based his denial of the authenticity of the *Hauptbriefe* on his skepticism of the historical likelihood of key events as narrated in these letters. According to him, several consequential passages could be shown to have been influenced by other sources (such as Acts), derivative of the Gospels, or otherwise artificial in nature. In an argument later adopted by Rudolf Steck (see later in this section), Bauer – like current Pauline scholars – observed inconsistencies between the characterization of Paul in Acts and of the letters. He rightly noted that unlike the Paul of Acts, the Paul of Galatians did not similarly accommodate Jews, approve of circumcision, or celebrate Jewish festivals. The Paul of Galatians was a radical figure who listened not to men but God.⁸⁶ Observations such as these contributed to Bauer’s doubt in the historicity of Paul. Elsewhere, Bauer assessed Paul’s introduction of a central tenet on resurrection unconvincing as narrated. “Paul” begins the passage with “I make known to you” (Γνωρίζω δὲ ὑμῖν; 1 Cor 15:1). Due to the event’s significance, it would have been something the community had already heard from him, and therefore would have been more convincing had Paul reminded the Corinthians of what he had previously preached to them.⁸⁷

Using a series of internal references in Acts and various Pauline letters, Bauer developed a complex theory of their compositional history.⁸⁸ According to him, the first section of Romans (up through chapter 8) is the oldest compositional unit among this literature; the author of 1 Corinthians relied upon this section of Romans, and Acts is dependent upon 1 Corinthians. By contrast, the compositional relationship is

wisdom of the rulers of the world (1 Cor 2:6–8; cf. Rom 8:38). See Bauer, *Christ and the Caesars*, 342–44.

⁸⁶ See Knowling, *The Witness of the Epistles*, 59.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 202. In seeming agreement with Bauer, the NRSV translates the Greek γνωρίζω as “I remind.” That translation is contradicted in Liddell and Scott who supply the denotations, “to make known, point out, explain.” See *LS* 355.

⁸⁸ See Bruno Bauer, *Kritik der paulinischen Briefe*.

reversed when it comes to 2 Corinthians; this epistle appears to know Acts. Second Corinthians already has in hand the view that Paul performed miracles. Adding to the complexity of his theory, Bauer reasoned that it is likely, but not certain, that the author of 2 Corinthians knew of an earlier version of Acts. Neither Romans nor 1 and 2 Corinthians knew of Acts in its final form.⁸⁹

The letter to the Galatians represents a pivotal point in Bauer's compositional history. According to him, Galatians is a response to Acts in its final form. By comparison with Galatians, Acts is far more comprehensive and coherent, indicating to Bauer an earlier and foundational composition. Among the issues Bauer cites are the deformed or misshapen (*missgestaltet*) treatment of the noncircumcision of Titus (Gal 2:3), as compared with its likely model, the well-described event of the circumcision of Timothy found in Acts (16:1–3); and the more substantive narration of the Jerusalem Council in Acts (15:1–29), as compared to the spotty treatment of this same event in Galatians (2:1–10). Thus, according to Bauer, Galatians is derivative of and presupposes Acts.⁹⁰

As with Galatians, 1 Thessalonians and Philippians also presuppose Acts in their completed form. Moreover, according to Bauer, Galatians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philippians also know Luke's Gospel,⁹¹ while the original Gospel of Luke (*Urlukas*) knew 1 Corinthians.⁹² While Bauer's various literary dependencies could be debated, the general compositional process he posits – in which various authors had access to each other's writings – is compelling and echoes modern scholarship which situates early Christian literature in a school-like setting and among peer elite authors (see Chapter 4).⁹³

Although finding Bruno Bauer uncongenial,⁹⁴ other Dutch Radicals nonetheless follow closely on his overall assessment of the letters. In a series of articles titled “*Quaestiones Paulinae*” (1882–86), the Lutheran NT scholar Abraham Loman (1823–97) argued, like Bauer, against

⁸⁹ Ibid., 120–1. ⁹⁰ Ibid., 121–24. ⁹¹ Ibid., 125. ⁹² Ibid., 127.

⁹³ See especially Robyn Faith Walsh, *The Origins of Early Christian Literature: Contextualizing the New Testament within Greco-Roman Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

⁹⁴ Steck remarks, “Bruno Bauer ist ein Herr, mit dem man nicht gern zu thun hat.” (Bruno Bauer is a gentleman with whom one does not like to be involved.) See Steck, *Der Galaterbrief*, 6.

Pauline authenticity based on a lack of evidence of the letters in written sources of the first- or early-second-centuries.⁹⁵ According to Loman, the lack of external evidence was an indication that all thirteen epistles (without Hebrews in view) were composed later, in second century.⁹⁶ Loman likewise notes that Marcion (c. 85–160 CE) is the first witness to these epistles. In a view often repeated among the Dutch Radicals, Loman assessed that all the epistles evince a well-developed theology, an indication of a maturation period. If the Paul of the epistles were an actual person, and active only at a short two- to three-decade remove from Jesus, the rise of the first-century church could only be attributed to a miracle.⁹⁷ According to Loman, the fictitious character Paul of the epistles belongs in the circles of anti-Jewish elements of the second century.

Unlike Bauer who posited a complex compositional relationship among the letters, with some epistles predating and others postdating Acts, Loman asserted that all the Pauline epistles postdate Acts.⁹⁸ Yet like Bauer, Loman located all Pauline letters, the book of Acts, and the Gospel of Luke within the same general period and social milieu.⁹⁹ Loman, however, did not deny a historical Paul. According to him, the historical Paul was simply distinct from the character Paul of the letters.

In contrast to Loman, who argued his case against Pauline authenticity largely on external grounds, Rudolf Steck (1842–1924) launched an in-depth refutation of the epistles based on internal evidence.¹⁰⁰ Steck set out to disprove the authenticity of the *Hauptbriefe* and to establish these letters' relative compositional order in relationship to Acts. In contrast to F.C. Baur, Steck posited that Galatians was derivative of Romans and composed last among the group of the four chief epistles. Following on Bruno Bauer, he assessed a compositional order of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians, justifying this sequence by what he interpreted as an evident progressive harshness of tone against Jewish teachings.¹⁰¹ According to Steck, Galatians represented the full independence (*volle Unabhängigkeit*) of "Paul" from Judaism.¹⁰² Expressing one of the

⁹⁵ See Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters*, 125.

⁹⁶ See Detering, "Dutch Radical Approach," 170.

⁹⁷ See Knowling, *The Witness of the Epistles*, 146. ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 147. ⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁰⁰ See Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters*, 125; Knowling, *The Witness of the Epistles*, 155.

¹⁰¹ See Knowling, *The Witness of the Epistles*, 175.

¹⁰² See Steck, *Der Galaterbrief*, 162.

central premises of Dutch Radical thought, Steck likewise claimed that evidence of higher theology, as seen especially in the *Hauptbriefe*, warranted their second-century date.¹⁰³ In Steck's estimation, all Pauline letters date to c. 120–40 CE.¹⁰⁴

According to Steck, Pauline letters evince literary dependency on the Gospels, the latter of which he dated to after the fall of Jerusalem.¹⁰⁵ Similarities in expressions and themes between the *Hauptbriefe* and Gospel texts – especially regarding accounts of the Lord's Supper and Resurrection – indicated Gospel influence on the letters. According to Steck, Rom 12:14 (εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς διώκοντάς ὑμᾶς, εὐλογεῖτε καὶ μὴ καταρᾶσθε, [bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse]) is dependent on Matt 5:44 and Luke 6:38;¹⁰⁶ the listed commandments (Rom 13:8–10) derive from Mark 10:19; the figure of the cornerstone as a reference to Christ (Rom 9:33) stems from Matt 21:42, Mark 12:10, and Luke 20:17;¹⁰⁷ the injunction in 1 Cor 9:14 regarding the need of adequate support for those who preach the gospel is dependent on Matt 10:10 and Luke 10:7;¹⁰⁸ and the resurrection and appearance narrative in 1 Cor 15:1–11 is influenced by Luke 24:26–40.¹⁰⁹

In contrast to Bruno Bauer, who argued against the authenticity of both Acts and the Pauline letters, Steck determined against F.C. Baur that Acts was at times more reliable than the *Hauptbriefe*.¹¹⁰ Steck's credence in the historical reliability of Acts appears to be tied to his belief in the historical Paul.¹¹¹ According to him, even with its irenic tendency (*irenische Tendenz*) the depiction of Paul in Acts is to be believed over his characterization in Galatians.¹¹² Finally – and following on Bauer – Steck claimed that both Philo and Seneca influenced the characterization of “Paul” in the letters.¹¹³

The Leiden University Professor of Early Christian and New Testament Literature, W.C. van Manen (1842–1905),¹¹⁴ followed closely

¹⁰³ Ibid., 284–87. ¹⁰⁴ See Knowling, *The Witness of the Epistles*, 155.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 189. ¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 189–90. ¹⁰⁷ See Steck, *Der Galaterbrief*, 164–66.

¹⁰⁸ See Knowling, *The Witness of the Epistles*, 191.

¹⁰⁹ See Steck, *Der Galaterbrief*, 180–91.

¹¹⁰ See Knowling, *The Witness of the Epistles*, 156. ¹¹¹ Ibid., 210.

¹¹² See Steck, *Der Galaterbrief*, 80. According to Steck, whereas the Paul in Gal 2:1–7 is an ideal figure, the Paul in Acts is a mediating figure and hence more realistic. See Knowling, *The Witness of the Epistles*, 159.

¹¹³ See Knowling, *The Witness of the Epistles*, 213–15.

¹¹⁴ A summary of his views on Paul and the epistles is found in van Manen, “Paul,” 3621–38.

on the assessments of Rudolph Steck.¹¹⁵ In his voluminous study of Acts, Romans, and 1 and 2 Corinthians, *Paulus* (Leiden: Brill, 1890–96), van Manen subjected Pauline letters to close literary analysis and found “seams and flaws.” His analysis drew him to the conclusions that the letters were “patchworks,” composed over a period a time,¹¹⁶ and that all were pseudepigrapha.¹¹⁷ In line with these other Dutch Radicals, van Manen likewise noted that Pauline letters evince a higher theological reasoning, one that could only have arisen at a considerable remove from the purported death of Christ (c. 30 CE).¹¹⁸ Like Steck, van Manen did not dispute the historicity of Paul; his characterization of Paul derives from the book of Acts.¹¹⁹ Again, in agreement with Steck, van Manen likewise assessed literary dependency of the written Gospels on the letters. According to him, the phrase “my gospel” (εὐαγγέλιόν μου, Rom 2:16; 16:25) does not refer to a proclamation but is instead a reference to a written Gospel.¹²⁰ According to van Manen, the letters and what is known as “Paulinism” are not only of the second century but also known first among the “heretics,” Basilides, Valentinus, and Heracleon.¹²¹ Their

¹¹⁵ For the compatibility of thought between the two, see especially Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters*, 125–33.

¹¹⁶ See Detering, “Dutch Radical Approach,” 174.

¹¹⁷ See Donald Guthrie, “The Development of the Idea of Canonical Pseudepigrapha in New Testament Criticism,” *Vox Evangelica* 1 (1962): 46, n. 26. Van der Toorn defines pseudepigraphical texts as those composed by scribes who “attribute their work to a (fictive) author from remote times in order to present their work as legacy from the venerable past.” See Karel Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 34.

¹¹⁸ Van Manen calls this higher reasoning a Christian “gnosis.” He observes gnosis, or wisdom theology, in passages such as 1 Cor 1:17–31; 26:16. See van Manen, “Paul,” 3629.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3631. According to van Manen, Paul was a contemporary of Peter, likely a Jew, and a native of Tarsus. He took one great journey, from Troas to Philippi, back to Troas, Assos, Mitylene, Samos, Miletus, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre, Ptolemais, Caesarea, Jerusalem, back to Caesarea, Sidon, Myra, Fair Havens, Melita, Syracuse, Rhegium, Puteoli, and Rome, as narrated in Acts (16: 10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16). Like the other disciples, he remained a Jew and attended the synagogue. He was a Jew who taught “things concerning Jesus” (*ibid.*, 3632).

In addition, according to van Manen, reliable details of Paul’s life derived from a nonextant work. Both the letters and the book of Acts made use of this source for their portrait of Paul (*ibid.*, 3631–34).

¹²⁰ See Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters*, 125–30.

¹²¹ See van Manen, “Paul,” 3634. According to van Manen, the figure of Paul was a creation of Marcionism. See Detering, “Dutch Radical Approach,” 172.

first attestation is Marcion's *Apostolikon*. The letters likely arose in a school attributed to Paul.¹²²

In distinction from the earlier Dutch Radicals, van Manen made additional observations – especially regarding the letter form – that warrant mention. According to him, not only are none of the thirteen canonical Pauline epistles authored by Paul,¹²³ but the distinction between the “principal epistles” and the minor epistles (deutero-Pauline and Pastorals) is arbitrarily determined. While of various hands, all thirteen letters evince a similar style, language, and religious and ethical perspective, and hence were likely from the same school. None of these are actual letters intended for their named recipients. They are instead “from the first, books; treatises for instruction, and especially for edification, written in the form of letters in a tone of authority as from the pen of Paul.”¹²⁴ The chief epistles (i.e., Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans) are in effect small treatises on various subjects, such as divisions in the church (1 Cor 1:10–3:23), the authority of the apostles (1 Corinthians 4), unchastity (1 Corinthians 5–6), eating food offered to idols (1 Cor 8–11:1), spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12–14), etc. These are not the topics of common letters.¹²⁵

With the 1957 death of van Manen's student G.A. Van den Bergh van Eysinga, Dutch Radical thought formally came to an end.¹²⁶ However, scholars such as Louis G. Rylands, J.C. O'Neill, and Hermann Detering reprised aspects of it. Rylands (1862–1942)¹²⁷ doubted the authenticity of the *Hauptbriefe*.¹²⁸ O'Neill questioned how Paul in Galatians (1:13) could have assessed the faith of Israel as “Judaism.”¹²⁹ And observing

¹²² See van Manen, “Paul,” 3634. ¹²³ Ibid., 3625. ¹²⁴ Ibid., 3626.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 3627. ¹²⁶ See Detering, “Dutch Radical Approach,” 173.

¹²⁷ See L. Gordon Rylands, *A Critical Analysis of the Four Chief Pauline Epistles: Romans, First and Second Corinthians, and Galatians* (London: Watt & Co., 1929).

¹²⁸ As for the *Hauptbriefe*, Rylands argued that Romans chronologically preceded 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians. Paul may have written the earliest stratum of the first two of these chief epistles, but he likely did not write the earliest versions of the second two. The earliest stratum was “Gnostic,” as was Pauline Christianity. Galatians, the last written, likely dates to 100 CE. A table that lists the four chief epistles along with their presumed compositional date is found in Rylands, *Four Chief Pauline Epistles*, 416.

Regarding the historicity of Galatians, he remarks, “There can, of course, be no question of treating this Epistle as an historical document in the ordinary sense of the word, or in the sense in which it has hitherto been almost universally believed to be one. It is not the work of a man who was recording events which had occurred to himself. It was written with a purpose to which facts were subservient, as were all the documents of which the New Testament is composed.” Rylands, *Four Chief Pauline Epistles*, 316–17.

¹²⁹ See O'Neill, *The Recovery of Paul's Letter to the Galatians*, 9.

what he considered to be “obscurities, contradictions, improbable remarks and *non sequiturs*,” advanced the thesis that while originally of Paul, the present Galatians is filled with later glosses and interpolations.¹³⁰ The Berlin Pastor and NT scholar Hermann Detering (1953–2018)¹³¹ embraced the Dutch Radical perspective more fully and directly than did O’Neill.¹³² In his 1996 article, “The Dutch Radical Approach to the Pauline Epistles,” Detering allows that the earliest evidence of Pauline epistles was likely among “heretical” Christians.¹³³ Like most Dutch Radicals, he notes that themes within Pauline letters suggest a second-century social context. According to him, Israel’s repudiation (Romans 9–11)¹³⁴ and the reworking of the remnant theme (Rom 9:27; 11:5) could only have occurred after 135 CE. Similarly, discussions of faith, law, and circumcision within Pauline letters are better suited to a second rather than first-century social setting. Like Bruno Bauer, Detering posited that Galatians was a response to Acts’ subordination of Paul and is likely the product of a Marcionite author.¹³⁵ According to him, the starting point for the inquiry into dating “should be the *altercation about the question of the figure and importance of the apostle*, which manifested itself in the second century among Catholic, Jewish-Christian, Marcionite and Gnostic Christianity.”¹³⁶

DUTCH RADICAL THOUGHT 3.0

In that I assess all Pauline letters as inauthentic and imaginatively composed in a second-century school setting, my thesis accepts basic premises of the Dutch Radical School.¹³⁷ Indeed, many modern studies are

¹³⁰ Ibid., 8.

¹³¹ See H. Detering, *Paulusbrieve ohne Paulus? Die Paulusbrieve in der holländischen Radikalkritik* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992); H. Detering, *Der gefälschte Paulus, Urchristentum im Zwielicht* (1995).

¹³² See Detering, “Dutch Radical Approach,” 163–93.

¹³³ Detering cites scholars such as E. Käsemann, W. Schneemelcher, C.K. Barrett, E. Weiss, E. Pagels, and Walter Bauer, who confirm this observation. See Detering, “Dutch Radical Approach,” 178–79, n. 40.

¹³⁴ This was an observation also made earlier by Evanson, see Evanson, *Dissonance of the Four Generally Received Evangelists*, 311.

¹³⁵ See Detering, “Dutch Radical Approach,” 183. According to Detering, the question that must be asked is “*cui buno*”? (Who stands to gain?). For Detering, the answer is the Marcionite community in which the letters originate (ibid., 184).

¹³⁶ Ibid., 181. Emphasis original.

¹³⁷ I adopted and adapted the term “3.0” from its digital use, where it signifies a stage in Web development.

surprisingly confirmatory of aspects of the Dutch Radical perspective on the Pauline letters. Recent scholarship in literary analysis,¹³⁸ historiography,¹³⁹ ancient rhetoric,¹⁴⁰ and epistolography, undermine assumptions of the historical reliability of ancient compositions, including the letter genre. Of the latter, Rosenmeyer remarks that the “letter is a construction, not a reflection, of reality.”¹⁴¹ Rhetorical studies¹⁴² of Pauline letters likewise problematize our ability to take the Paul of the letters at face value. Aptly, Penner and Lopez remark, “There is no place outside of rhetoric in Paul’s letters. Every word links with other words, forming series of statements that play a role in making arguments that Paul, presumably, finds important to share with his recipients.”¹⁴³

¹³⁸ All writing has a conventional aspect to it. See Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1986), 19.

¹³⁹ As NT scholar Melanie Johnson-Debaufre notes, “Whatever we say we know about the past is always a narration of a text of the past and not the past itself.” Melanie Johnson-Debaufre, “Historical Approaches: Which Past? Whose Past?,” in *Studying Paul’s Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods*, ed. Joseph A. Marchal (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 17.

¹⁴⁰ In this scholarship, Paul as author is recognized as adopting rhetorical strategies and fully engaged in the art of persuasion. See Johnson-Debaufre, “Historical Approaches,” 15.

¹⁴¹ See Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, 5.

¹⁴² The bibliography on Paul and rhetoric is enormous. Some of the more influential studies include Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1979); George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990); Joseph A. Marchal, ed. *After the Corinthian Women Prophets: Reimagining Rhetoric and Power* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2021); Troy W. Martin, ed. *Genealogies of New Testament Rhetorical Criticism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014); Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993); Mikeal C. Parsons and Michael Wade Martin, *Ancient Rhetoric and the New Testament: The Influence of Elementary Greek Composition* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018); Todd Penner and Davina C. Lopez, “Rhetorical Approaches: Introducing the Art of Persuasion in Paul and Pauline Studies,” in *Studying Paul’s Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods*, ed. Joseph A. Marchal (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 33–52; Stanley E. Porter and Bryan R. Dyer, eds., *Paul and Ancient Rhetoric: Theory and Practice in the Hellenistic Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Lauri Thurén, ed. *Rhetoric and Scripture: Collected Essays of Thomas H. Olbricht* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2021); Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction Through Paul’s Rhetoric* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990); Wilhelm H. Wuellner, “Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (1987): 448–63.

¹⁴³ See Penner, “Rhetorical Approaches,” 37.

Modern studies of ancient pedagogy describe the lengthy and arduous process of mastering the art of composition – a process I detail in the Appendix – and note that the art was available primarily only to a relatively small group of wealthy elites.¹⁴⁴ These studies along with others trouble a traditional view of Paul as a low-status person who reliably attests to a transformative religious experience. By contrast, the scholarship suggests that it is likely that the letters were the product of trained and skilled authors.¹⁴⁵ More recently, studies on ancient epistolography have unearthed various rhetorical benefits of adopting the letter genre for philosophical and theological teachings. These studies likewise note the popularity and dominance of pseudonymous fictional letters in the Second Sophistic, and thereby increase the likelihood of the adoption of the letter genre by early “Christian” authors for their novel theological teachings.

While certainly a contentious and debated issue, the dating of NT writings plays an important role in my thesis. Not only Acts,¹⁴⁶ but also

¹⁴⁴ See Henri Irénée Marrou, *Histoire de l'Éducation dans l'Antiquité* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1948); Stanley F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001); William A. Johnson, “Constructing Elite Reading Communities in the High Empire,” in *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome*, ed. William A. Johnson and Holt N. Parker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); William A. Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire: A Study of Elite Communities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); William A. Johnson, “Learning to Read and Write,” in *A Companion to Ancient Education*, ed. W. Martin Bloomer (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

¹⁴⁵ Indeed, to address this issue, scholars have argued that “Paul” did receive an education, including some training in the rhetorical arts. See Paul M. Robertson, *Paul's Letters and Contemporary Greco-Roman Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 48–49. In support of this view are M. Dibelius, C. Poster, J.T. Reed, M. L. Stirewalt, and S.K. Stowers (*Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 49, n. 134). See also Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 146–89.

¹⁴⁶ Richard Pervo did extensive work on the dating of Acts. As he notes, already in the nineteenth century, F.C. Baur had dated Acts to the mid-second century. Pervo assessed the composition of Acts (likely too conservatively) between 110 and 120 CE. See Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2006), 343, passim. Pervo likewise assessed 150 CE as its *terminus ad quem* (ibid., 26). For a similar assessment to that of Pervo, see Joseph B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 50. Yet see also John T. Townsend, “The Date of Luke-Acts,” in *Luke-Acts, New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar*, ed. Charles H. Talbert (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 58; Christopher N. Mount, *Pauline Christianity: Luke-Acts and the*

the canonical Gospels are more recently considered not first- but second-century writings.¹⁴⁷ If we consider – as did the Dutch Radicals – that the Pauline letters were produced alongside of and in a complex and dynamic relationship with the Gospels and Acts, the forward shift in the dating of the latter lends further support to a second-century provenance of the letters.

In the chapters that follow I adopt a multifaceted approach to argue for the unlikelihood and infeasibility of the authenticity of Pauline letters. While I challenge the authenticity of the seven Pauline letters – those thought by consensus to have been authored by Paul (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon) – my arguments against those letters’ authenticity similarly affect the entire Pauline corpus of letters. Indeed, and as I have mentioned, our earliest evidence of Pauline letters is as a collection of ten and include 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, and Laodiceans=Ephesians. In the first part of this book (Chapters 1 and 2), I provide a brief history of interpretation, discussing when and by what processes scholars came to regard Pauline letters as authentic of Paul and as genuine correspondence; and, from evidence internal and external to the letters, challenge specific and consequential modern assumptions of the seven letters’ historicity. In the second part (Chapters 3 and 4), I offer a fresh interpretation of the letters based on the assumption that they are literary – letters-in-form-only – and pseudonymous, intended from the start for secondary readers to promote theological teachings. Through a comparative textual analysis, the last chapter indicates that the letters reflect a second-century social context and derivation in a school patterned on a philosophical model.

To summarize, Chapter 1 provides a brief history of the interpretation of the status of Pauline letters. I indicate the difference between the earliest witnesses and interpreters of Pauline letters and those beginning in the Enlightenment. Early “Christian” authors considered Pauline letters as

legacy of Paul (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 168; Dennis E. Smith and Joseph B. Tyson, eds., *Acts and Christian Beginnings: The Acts Seminar Report* (Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2013), 2; Shelly Matthews, *Perfect Martyr: The Stoning of Stephen and the Construction of Christian Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5–6; Jason D. BeDuhn, “The Contested Authority of Paul in the Second Century,” *Forum* 8, no. 2 (2019): 118.

¹⁴⁷ For a mid-second century dating of the Gospels, see Vinzent, *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels*; Heidi Wendt, “Marcion the Shipmaster: Unlikely Religious Expert of the Roman World,” *Studia Patristica* 94 (2018): 67–68; Hermann Detering, “The Synoptic Apocalypse (Mark 13 Par): A Document from the Time of Bar Kokhba,” *Journal of Higher Criticism* 7 (2000): 161–210.

authoritative and scripture-like sources. They relied on the letters for evidence in support of their theological/philosophical perspectives. Only in the Enlightenment did the letters begin to be deemed of value and significance when considered in the light of history. In this period, scholars significantly engaged questions of authorship, provenance, literary style, and social context. They likewise mined the letters for evidence of early Christianity. The methods these scholars adopted were variously flawed, rendering historical reconstructions that are unreliable. The chapter likewise asserts that the question of Pauline letters as genuine correspondence can be attributed in modern scholarship to Adolf Deissmann. While rejecting Deissmann's underlying rationale as inadequately theorized, NT scholars nonetheless carried forward his overall assessment of the letters as genuine correspondence.

In Chapter 2, I discuss and challenge central assumptions that either explicitly or implicitly undergird the letters' authenticity and historical reliability and their status as genuine correspondence. These assumptions include the reliability of a historical Paul and Pauline communities, and Paul's activities confidently dated to the mid-first century CE. I indicate the ways in which the scholarship in support of these assumptions relies on inadequately theorized methods and lacks necessary external corroborating evidence. I likewise examine and reassess the scholarship on the earliest witnesses of Pauline letters that without sufficient warrant posits and then relies upon a collection of Pauline letters in c. 100 CE. Scholarship that imagines Pauline letters as genuine correspondence must likewise account for the gathering of those letters from a wide geographic area into a collection, our first (and only) evidentiary presentation of the letters.

In dialog with modern studies of ancient epistolography and rhetoric, Chapter 3 compares authorial strategies for the promotion of teachings in the seven Pauline letters and Seneca's *Moral Epistles*. Long recognized as mock letters, the *Moral Epistles* were Seneca's primary means of teaching Stoic moral philosophy. In adopting the letter genre, Seneca likewise placed himself within a tradition adopted by his philosophical predecessors, notably the Cynic philosopher Epicurus. I contend that "Christian" authors exploited this established medium for the promotion of a similar type of teachings. The chapter details the various benefits of adopting the letter genre for philosophical/theological teachings. Among them are the esteem and authority the teacher receives by virtue of being the inscribed letter-sender; a ready-made audience handily designated by the genre's requirement of addressees; and a platform amenable to the persuasive

arts, made possible by the medium's reputation for being casual, friendly, and trusting.

Through a comparative textual study of treatments of Jewish law and the rite of circumcision, Chapter 4 indicates that Pauline letters best cohere in a mid-second century, post-Bar Kokhba (the final Jewish revolt against Rome in 132–135 CE) milieu. A comparable diminishment in the value of the Jewish law and circumcision found within a series of writings dated to circa mid-second century parallels discussions of those same subjects within Pauline letters as it also reflects a sociopolitical situation redolent of the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba revolt. Through engagement with patristic scholarship and early “Christian” writings, I conclude that Marcion's second-century school in Rome is the likely place of origin of the first group of ten Pauline letters. Marcion's collection of Pauline epistles (the *Apostolikon*) is our earliest witness of Pauline letters. His school was conducive to the creation, production, publication, and dissemination of texts and letters. Marcion is likewise thought to have had access to archival materials and a strong and nearly exclusive interest in the Apostle Paul.