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E. Randolph Richards

The Secretary in the Letters of Paul



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in the Letters of Paul

by

E. Randolph Richards



J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) Tübingen

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To
Stacia, Joshua and Jacob

Preface

It is surprising that a topic as potentially significant as secretarial mediation in the Pauline letters has gone largely undeveloped. This work will hopefully move Pauline studies a step closer toward an understanding of how Paul used his secretary.

Although many have contributed throughout the process, a few deserve special mention. Thanks are due first of all to my loving wife, Stacia. I am also appreciative particularly to three professors at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary: Earle Ellis, a true gentleman-scholar, who encouraged me to pursue the publication of my dissertation; Bruce Corley, who had first introduced me to a subject that I had dreaded for years: Pauline studies; and James Brooks, who most importantly taught me to love the study of the Greek New Testament.

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All classical works are cited by the now standard abbreviations listed in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Commonly cited periodicals, reference works, serials, Pseudepigraphal and early Patristic works, the Dead Sea Scrolls (and related texts), orders and tractates in the Mishnah (and related texts), and the Nag Hammadi tractates were always abbreviated using the list provided in *JBL* 99 (1980): 83–97. Collections of papyri were abbreviated following the list provided by Chan-Hie Kim, “Index of Greek Papyrus Letters,” *Semeia* 22 (1981): 107–12. The bibliography contains the full form of all abbreviated material.

All quotations from classical works depend on the editions and translations of the Loeb Classical Library unless stated otherwise. The text of the Greek New Testament is that of *Novum Testamentum Graece*, ed. E. Nestle and K. Aland, 26th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979). All translations from scripture are my own unless stated other-

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Bandung, Indonesia, Christmas 1989

E. Randolph Richards

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Introduction

The primitive Christian church used two basic literary tools: the gospel and the letter. The gospel may be indigenous to the Christian community, but letters were immensely popular in the first century Greco-Roman world. The nature of letter writing in the first century has received much modern attention.¹

1. *Statement of the Problem*

Despite the interest in letter writing in general, the role of the amanuensis² or secretary has received scant attention. Although many works note the possible influence of a secretary, particularly in the letters of Paul, there has been no inclusive study of the various roles of a secretary and the possible effects of secretarial mediation on a letter.

¹ E.g., two important series, Guides to Biblical Scholarship and Library of Early Christianity, selected works on letter writing for inclusion; hence, Wm. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973); and Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986). A few other important works are: Heikki Koskeniemi, *Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n. Chr.* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedakatemia, 1956); Francis X. J. Exler, *The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter: a Study in Greek Epistolography* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1922); Otto Roller, *Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933); Paul Schubert, *The Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgiving* (Berlin: Alfred Topelmann, 1939); and Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, trans. L. R. M. Strachan (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910). Two articles together cover the discipline well: C. Dziatzko, "Der Brief", in *PW*, 3: 836–38; and J. Sykutris, "Epistolographie", in *PWSup*, 5: 185–220.

² 'Amanuensis' is probably the most popular term in modern studies to denote the ancient secretary. In antiquity, however, it was perhaps the *least* common term (see below, p. 11). Therefore throughout this work, the modern English equivalent, 'secretary,' is used.

2. Methodology

To classify the possible roles of a secretary, an inductive examination is made of the primary material, Greek and Latin private letters, for traces of a secretary. The resulting descriptions of secretarial roles are placed on a spectrum composed of four basic categories, ranging from more author-controlled to more secretary-controlled roles. With the aid of letters in which the author is more explicit about his use of a secretary, criteria are developed for detecting the presence of a secretary in letters where it is less evident. The results are applied to the letters of Paul. In many ways still a *prolegomenon* to the role of the secretary in Paul, this work attempts to set the general parameters and to suggest the probable secretarial role in the individual letters of Paul. Yet, in *prolegomena* style, it engages little in any detailed analyses of the individual letters nor in the ramifications for other issues of Pauline study.

a) Terminology

An analysis should begin with a definition of an ancient secretary, and the best way to begin this definition is to describe three peripheral tasks often performed by a secretary that are not germane to his role and therefore will not be considered elsewhere: copying, carrying the letter, and reading (orally) for the recipient.

aa) Three Related Roles

Copyist

A copyist is not treated as a secretary. This is actually an artificial distinction.³ As a professional writer, secretaries were often hired to copy existing material. For example, Cicero informs Atticus that his latest work is almost finished: "tantum librariorum menda toluntur".⁴ He calls these copyists *librarii*, a term he also uses for his personal secretary. Yet for the purpose of this research, only those scribes who are functioning as letter writing secretaries are considered.⁵

³ The same word is used for a secretary and a copyist in Hebrew (סֹפֵר), Greek (γρᾶμματεὺς) and Latin (*librarius*).

⁴ Cicero *Epistulae ad Atticum* 13.23 (July 10, 45 B.C.); "There is [left] only the correction of the copyists' mistakes." Also Cic. *Epistulae ad Quintum Fratrem* 3.6.6.

⁵ It was because of this equivocation that the term 'scribe' is rejected in favor of 'secretary'. The former can connote less than intended, as in a mere copyist, or more than in-

This is not to say that the fact that a scribe often had the dual roles of a secretary and a copyist is not significant. Rather the production and use of copies impacts letter writing. From remarks by ancient authors, primarily in the letters of Cicero,⁶ it appears that copies of letters were used for four reasons: (1) a copy was made to be retained by the author; (2) a copy was made to share with another; (3) multiple copies were sent via different carriers to help insure the arrival of the message; and (4) a copy was made in order to use all or part in another letter.

(1) There are numerous references that indicate the author retained a copy for himself, usually prepared by the secretary. Cicero tells Fadius Gallus:

You are sorry the letter^d has been torn up; well don't fret yourself; I have it^e safe at home; you may come and fetch it whenever you like.

[^d Probably the preceding letter, in which Tigellius was severely criticized.]

[^e No doubt a copy of it.]⁷

In a letter to his brother, Cicero relates a mishap with a letter to Caesar. The packet of letters had become wet so that Cicero's letter to Caesar was destroyed. Yet there was no real loss, for he tells, "itaque postea misi ad Caesarem eodem illo exemplo litteras".⁸ Cicero agrees to send Dolabella a copy of a small speech. He thought little of it; yet evidently he still had a copy of it with him in his residence in Pompeii.⁹ He chides a young lawyer-friend for making multiple copies of a letter in his own hand, seeming to imply that he considered this secretarial work.¹⁰ He remarks casually in a note that he was writing a copy of the letter into his 'notebook' while at the meal-table.¹¹ Evidently he or more likely his

tended, as in an expert in the Jewish law. The New Testament use of γραμματεὺς is always in the sense of an expert in religious law with one exception (Acts 19:35) where it refers to a government official. See J. Jeremias, "γραμματεὺς", *TDNT*.

⁶ The practice, however, was not exclusively Cicero's. Many of the references are from letters to Cicero. Nevertheless the limitation of evidence to the collection of his letters was unfortunate but largely unavoidable. The papyrus letters are too abbreviated and stereotyped to speak much of incidental matters. Pliny's letters, for example, are also rather artificial. Yet Cicero wrote many letters and often spoke of such ordinary matters of everyday life.

⁷ Cic. *Epistulae ad Familiares* 7.25.1 (LCL 2: 101).

⁸ Cic. *QFr.* 2.12.4; "So later on I sent Caesar an exact duplicate of my letter."

⁹ Cic. *Fam.* 9.12.2.

¹⁰ Cic. *Fam.* 7.18.2.

¹¹ Cic. *Fam.* 9.26.1. This was a quick note that he dashed off (*exaravi*) in the midst of a meal; yet still a copy was retained for his notebook (*in codicillis*).

secretary kept copies of his letters in notebooks.¹² He advises his brother Quintus to destroy any letters he wrote that were unbecoming of a man in his position. This must refer to copies that Quintus had retained because later in the same letter, Cicero repeats his advice and also tells him to request that the recipients also destroy their letters (the dispatched copies).¹³

(2) A copy of a letter was often appended to another letter to someone else, with whom the author wished to share the original letter. Frequently the copy was of another letter by the same author but to a different recipient.¹⁴ For example, Pollio writes to Cicero, "I am sending you for your perusal a letter that I have written to Balbus".¹⁵ Cicero ends a letter to Atticus with "I have sent you a copy of the letter I wrote to Pompey".¹⁶ Elsewhere he notes, "Your letter and the enclosed copy of one of my brother Quintus' letters show me. . . ." ¹⁷ Although the reasons are different, an interesting parallel to Col. 4:16 may be seen in a request of Cicero: "Be sure you send me a line as often as you can, and take care that you get from Luceius the letter I sent him".¹⁸ Evidently copies were shared among friends. Brutus advises Cicero "I have read the short extract from the note which you sent to Octavius: Atticus sent it to me".¹⁹ One may infer that Cicero *usually* shared with Atticus the letters that he received from others, because Curius specifically asks Cicero not to let Atticus read that particular letter.²⁰ Finally Cicero mentions in a

¹² Cic. *Att.* 13.6.3. This passage indicates that Tiro, Cicero's trusted secretary, kept copies of the letters, which he published after Cicero's death; so also R. Y. Tyrrell and L. C. Purser, *The Correspondence of M. Tullius Cicero*, 7 vols., 3d rev. ed. (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1901–33), 5: 18 n. 3; 5: 379 n. 5. See also *Att.* 16.5 where συναγωγή is used for the corpus of letters.

¹³ Cic. *QFr.* 1.2.8, 9. He also mentions that he had also seen one, probably a circulated copy.

¹⁴ Moreover, presumably the second letter (the one that contained the copy) was not written *before* he sent the original letter. Thus the author must have retained a copy of the first letter that served as the exemplar for the copy appended to the second.

¹⁵ Cic. *Fam.* 10.32.5. Obviously this 'letter' that he is including must have been a copy.

¹⁶ Cic. *Att.* 3.9.

¹⁷ Cic. *Att.* 1.17; see also *Fam.* 3.3.2; 10.12.2; 10.33.2; and *Ad Brutum* 1.16.1.

¹⁸ Cic. *Att.* 4.6.

¹⁹ Cic. *Br.* 1.16.1. Ever since James Tunstall (Cambridge, 1741), this letter's authenticity has been questioned mainly because its pettiness was deemed unworthy of Brutus. However Tyrrell and Purser, *Cicero*, accept it as does M. Cary in the Loeb edition (see the discussion by Cary, LCL 4: 619). Other examples are found in Cic. *Fam.* 3.3.2; 10.12.2; and *Br.* 1.6.3.

²⁰ Cic. *Fam.* 7.29.2, and vice versa: "I was the man — I don't think I am boasting unduly in saying to you privately, especially in a letter which I would rather you didn't read to anyone" (Cic. *Att.* 1.16).

letter to Caecina that he would be speaking personally with Furfanius soon and therefore Caecina would not need a letter of recommendation. Nonetheless he has sent Caecina with one that was *sealed* to deliver to Furfanius. Yet because Cicero wants Caecina also to know the content of the letter of recommendation, he appends a copy of it to the letter he sent Caecina.²¹

(3) Multiple copies of important letters were often made and dispatched by different carriers (with different routes) to help ensure the safe delivery. Whether this has relevance to more ordinary personal letters is questionable.²²

(4) This last reason for making copies is related to the first. By retaining copies of his own letters, an author was able to reuse all or part of a letter in a different letter to another. Cicero observes “The letter contained the same passage about your sister that you wrote to me”. Apparently Atticus had used the same passage in letters to Cicero and to another man, who happened to share his version of the letter with Cicero. In two letters to different men, Cicero begins each with a clever and witty reference to Caesar’s assassination and Anthony’s survival.²³ The young Quintus (Cicero’s nephew) had sent both Cicero and Atticus a long letter. Apparently he was pleased with the letter (or perhaps was trying to kill two birds with one stone) and had sent them both the same letter, although the one to Atticus was evidently abbreviated.²⁴ It seems to have been quite acceptable to use the same material, theme, or argument in more than one letter, if the recipients were different.²⁵

²¹ Cic. *Fam.* 6.8. He no doubt wished the family to know what a kind letter he had sent.

²² A few references will suffice: Cic. *Fam.* 9.16.1; 10.5.1; 11.11.1; 12.12.1; and 12.30.7. It is unlikely Paul took such precautions over the delivery of one of his letters, particularly if he retained a copy.

²³ Cic. *Fam.* 10.28.1; “How I should like you to have invited me to that most gorgeous banquet on the Ides of March! We should have left no leavings [Anthony]” and *Fam.* 12.4.1; “I should like you to have invited me to your banquet on the Ides of March; there would have been no leavings.”

²⁴ Cic. *Att.* 13.29; “I am sending you young Quintus’ letter . . . I have sent you half the letter. The other half about his adventures I think you have in duplicate.”

²⁵ A good piece of prose was worth sharing with others. Is there a parallel in the Colossians and Ephesians problem? Reusing material, however, was not always appropriate. Cf. *Att.* 16.6 where Cicero sheepishly confesses to Atticus that he had carelessly used the same preface in two different works, admitting that he kept a notebook of prefaces from which he selected. The works were too similar to allow this. Is it possible that others such as Paul kept notebooks of material, such as *testimonia* or doxologies? The possible relevance of the *μεμβράναι* (parchment notebooks) of 2 Tim. 4:13 is discussed below, pp. 164–68.

Copies of letters were a desirable thing in the ancient world.²⁶ Cicero frequently read some of his letters to his dinner guests, both the ones he wrote and the ones he received. If a guest particularly enjoyed a letter, he would request a copy.²⁷ Cicero is dumbfounded as to how one of his works became so widely copied, despite his efforts to keep it secret.²⁸ It appears that at least in certain circles people actively sought copies of pieces that they liked. This has immediate relevance to Paul. Those asserting an early collection of Paul's letters often maintain that the churches shared copies of their letters.²⁹ This would not have been unusual. There is an alternative explanation, however, and it may be the most significant aspect of the secretary also serving as a copyist. The secretary retained copies. Tyrrell and Purser observe:

For there seems considerable evidence that the senders of letters, or, at all events, Cicero and Tiro, were accustomed to keep copies of letters, even, perhaps, letters which might seem to us to be of no great importance; and this is probably one of the reasons why we have such a rich collection of the correspondence of Cicero.³⁰

The collection of Paul's letters may have begun much earlier, with Paul himself. If he employed a secretary to write the letter, then a copy was likely retained.³¹ Perhaps the letters were collected not by gathering

²⁶ They were also used by historians as primary sources; see e.g., Plutarch *Alexander* 47.3; 54.2; 57.4; 60.1.

²⁷ Cic. *Att.* 8.9.

²⁸ Cic. *Att.* 13.21a.

²⁹ See Harry Gamble, *New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, New Testament Series (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 36–43. Also see idem, "The Redaction of the Pauline Letters and the Formation of the Pauline Corpus", *JBL* 94 (1975): 403–18.

³⁰ Tyrrell and Purser, *Cicero*, 1: 59. Note also that when Alexander sets fire to Eumenes' (his secretary's) tent, he regrets that the letter-copies are destroyed. Consequently he orders all his correspondents to send copies back to replace the lost ones; Plut. *Eumenes* 2.2–3. Evidently he anticipated that all of his recipients retained their letters as well. Of course these were probably more official correspondences.

³¹ That Paul retained copies of his letters seemed a matter of course to Hermann von Soden, *Griechisches Neues Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913), vii. So also T. Henshaw, *New Testament Literature* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1963); and L. Hartman, "On Reading Others' Letters", *HTR* 79 (1986): 139. Cf. O. Roller, *Formular*, 260.

The theory may be applied to the severe letter of 2 Corinthians. It was quite possibly written without secretarial assistance. (Cf. the harsh letter Cicero wrote and then tried to intercept and destroy; *Att.* 8.5.) If it was written in anger and without a secretary, then it is less likely that a copy was retained. Is this the reason it is now lost?

them from the churches but by using the copies Paul had kept.³² All the aspects of a secretary serving also as a copyist may merit future attention but is not central to the initial investigation of the role of the secretary in Paul. Hence a copyist is not included in the definition of a secretary.

Letter Carrier

Although a secretary could be asked also to deliver the letter, this request was independent and therefore also will not be considered part of the secretarial task.³³ Nevertheless this is not to downplay the importance of the letter carrier (*tabellarius*³⁴). He was often a personal link between the author and the recipients in addition to the written link. Commonly the oral remarks from the carrier were preferred. When Cicero was trying to discover what was happening in Rome during his temporary exile, he notes that he often trusted "the remarks of those who travelled by this route [from Rome] . . ." more than the news in the letters.³⁵ Occasionally a letter and a personal report could conflict. Cicero explains:

Decius the copyist [*librarius*] paid me a visit and entreated me to make every effort to prevent the appointment for the present of anybody to succeed you; now although he impressed me as being an honest fellow and on friendly terms with you, still, having a clear recollection of the purport of your previous letter to me, I did not feel quite convinced . . . [After checking with other sources, I was persuaded, but] what gave me the most trouble was to compel . . . all the others to whom you had written to believe me rather than the letter.³⁶

³² If only Luke was with Paul when he died (2 Tim. 4:11), then it is quite likely that he inherited the copies. This idea is discussed more fully below, p. 165 n. 169.

³³ The two tasks are not mutually exclusive; however, they are also not mutually dependent. If a letter refers to the carrier, this is no indication of the secretary's identity: the carrier may or may not have been the secretary. Probably a public (hired) secretary was rarely used for this. Furthermore it seems unwise to 'waste' a secretary's time in this way, but see John White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, Foundation and Facets Series (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 216.

³⁴ For the use of this term, see Cic. *Fam.* 2.7.3; 2.29.1; 9.15.1; 14.1.6; 14.18.2; *Att.* 1.18; Plut. *Cicero* 15.2–3. See also the discussion in O. Roller, *Formular*, 68 and 474 n. 314. For a brief discussion of the postal system, see J. White, "The Greek Documentary Letter Tradition, Third Century B.C.E. to Third Century C.E.," *Semeia* 22 (1981): 89–106, and more recently, idem, *Light*, 214–15.

³⁵ Cic. *Fam.* 5.4.1. A living person communicates with more than words, is easier to catch in a lie, and can be questioned further. Also see 2.29.1. Cf. his exclamation "If only I could talk with you instead of writing!" (*Att.* 11.4).

³⁶ Cic. *Fam.* 5.6.1. It is interesting to see Cicero's struggle: the man appears reliable and friendly (*n.b.*), but the letter is unambiguous.

Evidently an oral supplement could call an undisputed letter into question, but it was difficult to overturn a letter's message, because the letter was assumed also to be the author's wishes.³⁷

The carrier became a vital link in the writing process; therefore he had to be trustworthy.³⁸ At the end of private letters, if the carrier was not a mere employee, it was not unknown to note that the carrier was trustworthy and deserving of any assistance the recipient could offer.³⁹ Yet why did carriers need to be so reliable? There was the obvious problem of the letter not arriving. An interesting example is provided by comparing two of Cicero's letters to Atticus. In the first one, he notes that he is planning to give the letter to the first available person as compared to waiting for a trusted one.⁴⁰ The following letter to Atticus begins with a lament over the news that his previous letter had not arrived.⁴¹ If Cicero had difficulty with a carrier not bothering to deliver a letter, how much more would a less prominent man?

The failure of the carrier to deliver the letter was not the only cause of a lost letter. Evidently carriers could actually lose a letter in transit. Cicero explains to Atticus:

[I heard] that some slaves had come from Rome. I called them and inquired if they had any letters. "No", they said . . . Frightened to death by my voice and look, they confessed they had been given one, but it had been lost on the way. As you may suppose, I was wild with annoyance.⁴²

Notably, Cicero is not amazed that they could lose a letter, but only annoyed that they had.⁴³

³⁷ Cicero tells Cassius (*Fam.* 15.14.2–3) that he wishes "that I might congratulate you in person . . . since that has not come to pass, we will avail ourselves of the boon of letters, and so secure almost the same objects in our separation as if we were together." See also Cic. *QFr.* 1.1.45. This aspect of a letter is discussed further below, p. 130 n.

³⁸ Cic. *Att.* 1.7.1; "And if I do [write letters] less frequently than you expect, the reason will be that my letters are not of such a nature that I can entrust them in a casual way to anybody. Whenever I can get hold of trustworthy men in whose hands I can properly put them, I shall . . ." See also Cic. *Fam.* 1.9.23 and the complaints of the lazy carrier in 8.12.4.

³⁹ Often either to introduce the carrier or to assure the recipient that he could trust any additional information the carrier gave. See, e.g., the letters of Ignatius discussed below, pp. 70–71.

⁴⁰ Cic. *Att.* 2.12.

⁴¹ Cic. *Att.* 2.13. Incidentally, it is quite noteworthy that this earlier letter (2.12) is in the collection. This illustrates that the collection was compiled from Cicero's copies and not by gathering them from all the recipients. Cf. the relevance to the formation of the Pauline corpus suggested below, p. 165 n. and p. 188 n.

⁴² Cic. *Att.* 2.8.

⁴³ One carrier carelessly allowed some of his letters to become soaked with water, effectively losing the letter, since the ink washed off. See Cic. *QFr.* 2.12.4.

Sometimes the loss of a letter was not the carrier's fault. During the breakdown of the Republic during the Spring of 43 B.C., Pollio complains to Cicero that brigands were stopping the letter carriers.⁴⁴ Lepidus was known to detain, read, or even destroy letters.⁴⁵ Yet he was not alone in this vice. Cicero on occasion intercepted letters.⁴⁶

Cicero states a second reason for a trustworthy carrier:

but I have been rather slow about sending one, for lack of a safe messenger. There are very few who can carry a letter of weight without lightening it by a perusal.⁴⁷

A third reason for needing a trustworthy carrier was because he often carried additional information. A letter may describe a situation briefly, frequently with the author's assessment, but the carrier is expected to elaborate for the recipient all the details.⁴⁸

The oral message that the carrier had may also have been confidential and perhaps even have been the real message. Brutus plainly reveals this in a request to Cicero.

Please write me a reply to this letter at once, and send one of your own men with it, if there is anything somewhat confidential which you think it necessary for me to know.⁴⁹

Since the role of the carrier is not to be discussed further, a concluding observation may be made. The availability of a messenger often prompted the writing of a letter. A papyrus letter states, "As an opportunity was afforded me by someone going up to you I could not miss this chance of addressing you".⁵⁰ Alan Samuel argues that the absence of

⁴⁴ Cic. *Fam.* 10.31.1. During a period of political intrigue, Cicero is afraid of his letters being intercepted; therefore he used pseudonyms and only the most trusted carriers; Cic. *Att.* 2.19.

⁴⁵ Cic. *Fam.* 10.31.4.

⁴⁶ He confesses to this once (Cic. *Att.* 11.9) because he wished Atticus to go ahead and deliver them. Although these situations require opponents and conflicts, they may still be relevant to Paul. Apparently Paul's opponents were not above forgery (2 Thes. 2:2).

⁴⁷ Cic. *Att.* 1.13.

⁴⁸ This is the clear implication of Cicero's complaint (*Fam.* 4.2.1): "I received your letter . . . and on reading it I gathered that Philotimus did not act . . . [on] the instructions he had from you (as you write) . . . [when] he failed to come to me himself, and merely forwarded me your letter; and I concluded that it was shorter because you had imagined that he would deliver it in person." See also Cic. *Fam.* 3.5; 10.7; 1.8.1; 3.1.1. In *Fam.* 7.18.4, the carrier tells Cicero that the author wishes the letter destroyed after he reads it. See also John White, *Light*, 216 (and *PCol.* 3.6 [p. 34]).

⁴⁹ Cic. *Fam.* 11.20.4. Cicero also does this (*Fam.* 11.26.5).

⁵⁰ POxy. 123 (third to fourth Christian century).

a state postal system for ordinary private correspondences affected a letter's contents.⁵¹ Many letters appear to have been written more from the opportunity provided by an available carrier than from an actual need.⁵² The financial status of men like Cicero allowed the extravagance of dispatching slave carriers when needed.⁵³ This luxury was certainly not available to most, including Paul. However someone like Paul was not left entirely to the whims of chance. If he is responding to a church's letter, then the one who delivered the letter could return it.⁵⁴ A letter could also be seen as vital to his mission and hence worthy of a special dispatch.

Reader

On occasion a secretary was also used as a reader (*lector*). According to servile custom, these roles were separated, but even the wealthiest of the upper classes found it too convenient to blend the roles.⁵⁵ Apparently a recipient often preferred to have the letter read to him.⁵⁶ Little privacy was lost since even private reading was aloud, and it afforded some relief for the eyes.⁵⁷ Since this role is also independent, it is not considered further.

bb) Definition and Ancient Terms

To say what an ancient secretary was *not* is only a partial definition. For the purposes here, he was a person employed to write out correspon-

⁵¹ In an unpublished paper on Hellenistic epistolography, "The Mechanics of Letter Writing", read at the SBL Annual Meeting (1973). See the brief discussion in J. White, "The Ancient Epistolography Group in Retrospect", *Semeia* 22 (1981): 2.

⁵² See the discussion in John White, *Light*, 215 (and *PMich.* 8.490 [p. 162]).

⁵³ The wealthy Epicurean Papirus Pactus kept at least two slaves solely for carrying letters; see *Cic. Fam.* 9.15.1.

⁵⁴ If a letter was not occasioned by the church (perhaps Romans?), then the availability of a messenger may have been more of an influence.

⁵⁵ So argues A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny: a Historical and Social Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1966; reprint with corr., Oxford, Oxford University, 1985), 225 n. 15 and 515–16.

⁵⁶ See esp. Pliny *Epistulae* 8.1, who laments at length the temporary loss of his reader. Cicero kept a reader, although perhaps only for Greek texts, judging from the reader's Latinized Greek title (*anagnostes*).

⁵⁷ A statement like "I read your letter" in no way implies that a reader was not used. E.g., Plutarch relates that Alexander "read" the inscription on Cyrus' tomb. Yet certainly he did not: "After reading (*ἀναγνούς*) the inscription upon this tomb, he ordered it to be repeated below in *Greek letters*" (Plut. *Alex.* 69.2) [italics are mine].

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