



Type: Book Chapter

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Author(s): Thomas W. Mackay

Source: *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints*

Editor(s): C. Wilfred Griggs

Published: Provo, UT; Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University,
1986

Page(s): 215-240

Abstract: No abstract available.



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Content and Style in Two Pseudo-Pauline Epistles (3 Corinthians and the Epistle to the Laodiceans)

Thomas W. Mackay

To help you understand more fully how one treats apocryphal texts, I propose to invite you, as it were, into a laboratory with me where we can experiment with the text. In 1 Corinthians 5:9 we read, “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators”—yet this is in *First* Corinthians. And in Colossians 4:16 there is reference to an epistle to (or from) the Laodiceans. Since the New Testament makes it abundantly clear that Paul composed more than the fourteen epistles usually ascribed to him (or his immediate associates), the opportunity was provided for several others to be written under his name. We will examine two such letters, 3 Corinthians and Laodiceans.

3 CORINTHIANS

The early Christian text known as 3 Corinthians is an exchange, or rather a purported exchange, of correspondence

Thomas W. Mackay is a Professor of Greek and Latin at Brigham Young University.

between the Saints at Corinth and the Apostle Paul. Although an Armenian version was discovered and publicized in the nineteenth century, it was not until the last decade of that century that a Latin text was found. A total of five Latin manuscripts have surfaced from that discovery to the present time, and finally, in 1959, an early Greek text of the correspondence was published: P. Bodmer X ("P" indicates "Papyrus"). In our discussion of the text, we will refer both to the Latin and to the Greek versions because the Latin manuscripts may derive from other Greek texts. At any rate, they do contain passages not in P. Bodmer X.

As long as only the Armenian version was known, the letter could be readily dismissed by scholars as an oriental forgery, but when the Latin and Greek versions came to light, a more serious consideration of the contents was demanded. It is agreed that 3 Corinthians was part of the *Acta Pauli*, a late second-century composition which exists in a mutilated Coptic papyrus at Heidelberg. Tertullian, a very educated and articulate lawyer in Roman North Africa who became a Christian in the late second century, wrote scathingly of the author of the *Acta Pauli*:

If those who read the writings that falseiy bear the name of Paul adduce the example of Thecla to maintain the right of women to teach and to baptize, let them know that the presbyter in Asia who produced this document, as if he could of himself add anything to the prestige of Paul, was removed from his office after he had been convicted and had confessed that he did it out of love for Paul. (Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 17.)

Certainly we would, upon reading the text of the *Acta Pauli*, immediately assent to a late, unhistorical origin. It does demonstrate that people always seek to buttress their faith with appropriate reading materials. Whereas the Greek papyrus and four of the Latin manuscripts give only the text of the letter of the Corinthian Saints and Paul's response, the Latin manuscript at Zurich also includes some transitional sentences which tie the correspondence directly to the *Acta Pauli*. That this Latin version (and there were at least three differing versions known in the Latin Middle Ages) should be derived from the *Acta Pauli* does not mean the letter was originally composed for it.

We cannot, moreover, so quickly reject the possibility that 3 Corinthians was an early Christian document, because, as we examine the actual contents of the letter, we are struck by the doctrinal heresies it seeks to refute. They are, in fact, characteristic of the end of the first century and the beginning of the second. By careful scrutiny of the language and themes, we will be able to discern that (1) the epistle was definitely *not* written by Paul; (2) the vocabulary points to a familiarity with a collection of scriptures that included synoptic Gospels, Pauline and general epistles, and possibly John; (3) the literal, physical resurrection of the body is staunchly defended; (4) other doctrines, such as the creation of mankind by angels rather than by Deity, point to a growing “gnostic” doctrine; and (5) the insistence on Christ as the son of Mary is directly expressed to counter a Docetic view of the Savior, one such as that propounded by the heretic Saturninus.

The first matter, and one on which we will but briefly touch, is the date of the manuscripts containing the correspondence. We do not, of course, have anything like an autograph copy. Literary texts from antiquity are usually several centuries removed from their authors, but the science of textual criticism can help us reconstruct the text quite reliably from later manuscripts. The Greek papyrus at the Bodmer Library in Geneva is from a rather small codex which contained also the epistles of Peter and Jude, Psalms 33 and 34, the Eleventh Ode of Solomon, a liturgical hymn, and the Apocalypse or Protevangelium of James, together with the Easter Homilies of Bishop Melito of Sardis, an important second-century leader and writer. The codex had been strengthened in each of the gatherings of papyrus sheets by the addition of a narrow strip of parchment for reinforcement, the same as we find on the large papyrus sheets, recently acquired by BYU, from the Taura codex of Didymos the Blind’s commentary on the Psalms. The Didymos codex was copied in the mid-sixth century in a small, rapidly flowing documentary cursive. By contrast, the Bodmer codex was transcribed in the third or fourth century in “*maiuscola biblica*” or bold, rounding capitals. There is clear evidence in the Greek that the text had already been copied several times to the detriment of accurate transmission.

Let us examine some passages of this correspondence. (The references are to the pages and line numbers of the Bodmer papyrus. Latin manuscripts of 3 Corinthians, listed as manuscripts 10 through 14 in the appendix to this article, will be cited as L (= Laon), P (= Paris), M (= Milan), Z (= Zurich), and B (= Berlin). In the notes that follow, A/G stands for Arndt and Gingrich's *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, and Lampe refers to his *Patristic Greek Lexicon*.)

New Testament Quotations or References

- 50.7–8 τὴν τινῶν πίστιν ἀνατρέπουσιν. This is a quotation, with an inversion, of 2 Tim. 2:18; cf. Titus 1:11; peruertunt M, euertunt Z, subuerterunt B, subuertunt L (= Vulgate 2 Tim. 2:18).
- 50.19 ἀνόμου. This echoes 2 Thes. 2:8; cf. Acts 2:23. For ἐκ χειρὸς ἀνόμου, the Latin manuscripts give: de manu iniqui M B, de manibus iniquis Z, de manibus inimici L.
- 51.10–11 At 2 Pet. 1:5 we have σπουδὴν πᾶσαν with the imperative as in 3 Cor. Once more, the Latin manuscripts attest the Greek text but in different traditions of translation:
- πᾶσαν εἰσήγησαι σπουδὴν
petimus frater omni necessitate cura uenire ad nos
M
fratres fac ut uenias hic Z
frater praetermitte omnia ut uenias ad nos B
frater omne studium adhibe ueniendi ad nos L
- 51.13–14 The words τούτων ἡ ἄνοια ἔκδηλος γένηται are a paraphrase of 2 Tim. 3:9 ἡ γὰρ ἄνοια αὐτῶν ἔκδηλος ἔσται πᾶσιν (cf. Job 1:19 and Didymos the Blind *ad loc.*). The Latin manuscripts have a close translation, but they again reflect three, if not four, separate sources:
- et eorum dementia inanis inueniatur M
et horum seductio nota fiat omnibus Z

- et horum seductio noticiam omnibus fiat B
et illorum dementia manifestetur L
- 51.17 δέσμιος is very Pauline (e.g., Philemon 1:9; Eph. 3:1). In Latin, M L translate this by “uinctus” as in the Vulgate.
- 52.4 This sense of the verb προτρέχω is not found in Paul. Rather, it is only in John 20:4.
- 52.4 δόγματα in the N.T. is used of God, the gospel, or Caesar, never the evil one (τὰ τοῦ πονηροῦ δόγματα).
- 52.16 Both John and Paul use the verb ἐλευθερώω.
- 53.1 The word σαρκικός is Pauline (Rom. 15:27; 1 Cor. 3:3; 9:11) and also Gnostic.
- 53.1 Paul uses τύπος (Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 10:5).
- 53.1 The verb ἀπόλλυμι occurs in the Gospels and in Paul (Rom. 14:15).
- 54.9 Only in Acts do we find a N.T. use of ἀναδείκνυμι.
- 54.12 πρόνοια is used by Paul (Rom. 13:14; cf. Acts 24:2), Philo, Papias, etc.
- 54.15 The perfect passive participle of καταράομαι occurs at Mt. 25:41 and 1 Clement 30:8, and twice Philo links it to ὄφις.
- 55.3 This meaning of ἀπιστέω is only in the Gospels and Acts, not in Paul.
- 55.7 This passage is strongly reminiscent of 1 Cor. 15:35–37.
- 55.18 “Hades” is in the synoptic Gospels and Acts but not in Paul.
- 56.2 The word ὀλιγόπιστος is found only in the synoptics —when Jesus spoke to the disciples.
- 56.11 In the N.T., the adjective ὑγιής is found only in the synoptics and Acts.
- 56.13–15 These lines echo Phil. 3:8 and Gal. 6:17.
- 56.21 Although the verb παραβαίνω is not Pauline, it is found elsewhere in the N.T.

Proper Names

- 50.2 Εὐβολος is associated with Paul (1 Cor. 1:15); cubolus Z, eubolus MLB.
- 50.3 Στεφανᾶς is associated with Paul (2 Tim. 4:21); stephanus ZMLB.
- 50.3 Θεόφιλος is associated with Luke (Lk. 1:1; Acts 1:1); theophilus ZBML.
- 50.3 Δάφνος is not in the N.T.; is associated with Ignatius in Smyrna (Ignatius *ad Smyrnaeans* 13:2); dapnus Z, daphus L, daphnus B, daphinus M.
- 50.4 Κλεόβιος is not in the N.T., nor is it recorded in A/G; cleobius ZBML.
- 50.6 Σίμων may be μάγος, the archheretic from Acts 8 where he is associated with Peter; simon ML, symon ZB.
- 50.6–7 Ξένων is not in the N.T.; zenon MZL, zenus B.
- 50.18 Θεονόη is not in the N.T.; theoni B, atheone L, theonae Z, (?) M.

Early Christian Vocabulary (not in the N.T.)

- 50.8 The adjective φθοριμαῖος is not in A/G, though the noun does occur. The adjective is found in Epiphanius and Eusebius (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 4, 28); corruptis ZBL, adulteris M.
- 50.19 The verb from which ἀντίγραψον comes is not cited in A/G or Lampe, although various related nouns are used (as in the *Martyrium Polycarpi*). For ἡ ἀντίγραψον ἡμῶν, the Latin manuscripts read: petimus quod rescribas nobis M, aut rescribe nobis B, aut scribe nobis ita et nos credentes in domino L, om Z. The variant of L has text not in P. Bod. X.
- 51.4 In the N.T., ἀνάστασις either stands alone or is qualified by ἐκ νεκρῶν as elsewhere in 3 Cor. (P. Bod. X 56.16).

- 51.5–6 The noun *πλάσις* is not found in the N.T., though it does appear at Barnabas 6:9. Other related words do occur in 3 Cor.: 54.22 *πλάσμα* as Rom. 9:20, and 53.3 *πλάσσω* as 1 Tim. 2:13. The Latin manuscripts use different words; see below under “Doctrinal Heresies.”
- 51.7 The phrase *εἰς σάρκα ἦλθεν* is close to the Johanneine *ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα* (1 John 4:2, cf. 2 John 7 *ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί*), and it actually occurs at Barnabas 5:10 *ἦλθεν ἐν σαρκί*.
- 51.12 The adjective *ἀσκανδάλιστος* is not noted in A/G, and Lampe’s earliest citation is Clement of Alexandria’s *Stromata*. Two traditions underlie the Latin manuscripts: *ut non in offensam M*, *ut sine scandalo ZBL*.
- 51.15 While *ἔρρωσο* is common in Ignatius, other early Christian writers, and contemporary papyrus documents, it is not in the N.T. epistles. For *ἔρρωσο ἐν κυρίῳ* we find *uale in domino ZB*, *uale in domino semper L*, *om. M*.
- 52.2 The noun *ἀστοχῆμα* is not in A/G, but the verb is Pauline: 1 Tim. 1:5; 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:18. The noun, as used here in 3 Cor., is cited by Epiphanius *Panarion* 50.1 and is also in the *Martyrium Pionii*. Compare *in multis cum essem taediis M*, *in multis quae michi non ut oportet eueniunt L*.
- 52.6 The verb *παραχαράσσω*, which is not in the N.T., is used in *Pastor Hermae* Sim. 1:11.
- 54.2 According to A/G, *καταπέμπω* is not in the N.T., but it is found in Clement and other Christian writers.
- 54.3 The adjective “Galilean” is used of Mary in the *Protevangelium Iacobi* (P. Bod. V [the first work of this codex]) but not in the N.T.
- 54.4 The prefixed form of the verb *ἐμπολιτεύομαι* is not found in the N.T., but Paul, 1 Clement, and Diogenetus do use the uncompounded verb.

- 55.7 Although *συμφθείρω* is not in A/G, it is found here in a passage which has strong echoes of 1 Cor. 15:35–37.
- 55.11 The word *πολλοστός* is not in A/G, but Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* 5, 2, 3 has it in connection with *κόκκος σίτου*.
- 55.14 The use of Jonah as a type of the Resurrection is an artistic motif second in popularity only to Daniel and the lions' den in early Christian art. There are parallels in the synoptics and at 1 Clement 7:7.
- 56.1 The word *βλέφαρον* (usually in the plural) occurs at Papias fr. 3 but not in the N.T.
- 57.1 The verb *προοδοιπορέω* is not in the N.T., though it is at 1 Clement 44:5.

Doctrinal Heresies

- 51.2–3 οὐ δεῖν, φησίν, προφήταις χρῆσθαι. The question is whether *προφήται* refers to revelation or to the Old Testament. Note that the Latin manuscripts have a plural verb and that M uses an old Latin word, *uatibus*:
- non debere inquit uatibus credi M
 non debere inquit prophetis credi B
 non debent inquit prophetis credi Z
 negant prophetis oportere uti L
- This probably points to three different translations or phases of the text in Latin.
- 51.3–4 οὐδ' εἶναι Θεὸν παντοκράτορα (cf. 1 Cor. 6:18). This problem of the omnipotence of God points to incipient Gnosticism. For this passage the Latin manuscripts read:
- neque esse deum omnipotentem MB
 neque esse dominum omnipotentem Z
 nec communium rerum esse deum potentem L
- Here, L clearly presents a different translation, perhaps even a different Greek text, than that used by MBZ. The difference between *dominum* and

deum is probably due to abbreviation and is not doctrinally significant.

- 51.4–5 οὐδὲ ἀνάστασιν εἶναι σαρκός. As we have noted above, the “resurrection of the flesh” is a common Christian expression but is not in the N.T. Again, the literal resurrection was a doctrine which was compromised by Gnosticism and by the common religious and philosophical views of the second century. Once more, the Latin manuscripts follow the Greek text, and all refer to a resurrection of the flesh. But L merely uses a transliteration of the Greek for “resurrection” and may therefore be closer to a Greek original. At the very least, it demonstrates two separate Latin translations.

neque esse resurrectionem carnis M

neque ressurectionem carnis Z

neque esse carnis resurrectionem B

nec anastasim futuram carnis L

- 51.5–6 οὐδ’ εἶναι τὴν πλάσιν τὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων τοῦ Θεοῦ. The assertion, to judge by the final heresy noted below, is that it is angels or intermediaries, not God, who effected the Creation. This is part of the Gnostic approach. Later, the *ex nihilo* creation theory came to be accepted as doctrinal. For this charge of heresy, the text of the four Latin manuscripts differs enough to indicate at least three, if not four, different translations of 3 Corinthians.

sed nec esse figm(entum) hominem dei M

neque figuram hominis esse dei Z

nec esse finctionem hominis ex deo B

nec hominem a deo factum L

- 51.7–8 οὐδ’ ὅτι εἰς σάρκα ἦλθεν ὁ κύριος οὐδ’ ὅτι ἐκ μαρίας ἐγεννήθη. Another heretical question was whether the Lord had come in the flesh, precisely the issue noted at John 4:2–3 and 2 John 7. In the late first century and the early second, the “Docetic” teachings challenged this early Christian doctrine. The passage in 3 Cor. attributes the Docetic

view to the heretic by noting that they denied Jesus had been born of Mary. Again, there seem clearly to be three separate traditions in the four Latin manuscripts; for the literal coming in the flesh they read:

sed neque in carnem uenisse christum M
 nec quia in carnem uenit dominus noster ihesus
 christus Z
 nec quia in carne uenit dominus noster ihesus
 christus B
 nec in carne christum descendisse L

As to Jesus' being born of Mary, the text again varies enough to point to three separate traditions:

sed neque ex maria natum M
 nec quia ex uirginem maria natus est Z
 nec quia ex uirgine maria natus est B
 nec de maria natum L

51.8–9 οὐδ' εἶναι τὸν κόσμον Θεοῦ ἀλλὰ ἀγγέλων. The last heresy noted is an extension of the fourth (i.e., that creation of man was not by God), and states that "the world is not of God but of angels." This is susceptible of two meanings: that angels, not God, acted as the creator(s) of the world, or that it belongs to them as a possession for which they are the overseers. The Latin manuscripts give three versions, and two have an Old Latin word for "angels":

sed nec esse saeculum dei sed nuntiorum M
 neque esse mundum dei sed angelorum ZB
 nec dei esse orbem sed nuntiorum L

These heresies closely correspond to the teachings of Saturninus recorded in Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* 1, 24, 1–2. Saturninus' mature years were in the reign of the emperor Trajan, that is, the end of the first and the beginning of the second century.

Inherent in the divergent readings of 3 Corinthians in Latin is the sort of variation which is produced by different translations of a document. There were at least three translations. Note that

even the source documents may have exhibited distinct differences, and that for Z, the epistle was apparently derived from a text of the *Acta Pauli*. There are a number of instances where one or more of the Latin manuscripts preserve text which is not found in P. Bod. X. (e.g., after 50.19 ἡμῶν; following 53.5 υἱοθεσίας; before 54.3 ἵνα; before 54.8 ἵνα; after 54.19 ἀποφεύγετε; after 55.13 παραβολήν; after 56.20 λήμμεται; after 57.5 εἰρήνη). Both M and L use words reminiscent of the Old Latin—that is, they come from a time or form of Christianity in which Jerome's Vulgate translation of the Bible, completed near the end of the fourth century, was not yet preeminent. From our examination of other apocryphal documents, we realize that some of the peripheral groups retained texts which were rejected by the largest Christian church, but which had been widely accepted in the early Christian centuries. Hence, texts in Ethiopic, Coptic, Armenian, and Old Irish, as well as Syriac, Nubian, Old Church Slavonic, Anglo-Saxon, and even Latin or Greek (from outlying areas such as France, Switzerland, Spain, and the British Isles), cannot be rejected merely because they are not in mainstream Christianity, for often such peripheral Christian groups preserved genuine early Christian traditions and texts. Such is the case with 3 Corinthians.

Thus there are several scriptural quotations or allusions in 3 Corinthians presupposing, as we have already intimated, familiarity with a collected New Testament corpus. This is the sort of thing we discover in the Apostolic Fathers, writing in the first half of the second century. Likewise, the names we encountered include some found in the New Testament, another in the Apostolic Fathers, and yet others which occur nowhere else in those writings. So, too, the vocabulary of 3 Corinthians has some affinities to Paul's vocabulary, though the grammatical constructions differ from normal Pauline selection and usage. Finally, the doctrinal problems noted in the Corinthian correspondence are more akin to the epistles of John, Peter, and Jude, as well as to writings of the second century. Therefore, 3 Corinthians offers to us an early Christian document treating important theological issues which illuminate trends in the early Christian church, but it is not from Paul.

LAODICEANS

Let us now turn to the *Epistola ad Laodicenses* attributed to Paul. Whereas 3 Corinthians was suspect because it contained too many non-Pauline words and constructions, Laodiceans is at the other extreme. Here *everything* is a quote from Paul: the epistle is more Pauline than Paul. In this epistle the textual problem is also very different from 3 Corinthians, for there is no Greek text, and the Latin manuscripts are very numerous.

The only evidences we have of Laodiceans in Greek are (1) the fact that it was condemned by the Greek church at the second Council of Nicea in 787 and (2) the clumsiness of some Latin expressions which seems to indicate a too literal translation from Greek by someone acquainted with the Old Latin version of the Bible. There is one other possible shred of evidence. A series of Greek and Latin manuscripts were prepared at Saint Gall, Switzerland, in the ninth century: Codex Sangallensis, now manuscript 70 at Saint Gall; Codex Boernerianus, now at Dresden; and, from the tenth century, the Codex Augiensis, formerly at Reichenau (Augia maior) and now at Bern. The first two are interlinear with the Latin above the Greek. The Codex Augiensis has two parallel columns with the Latin in the exterior column of each page. Although the Greek text of the Augiensis closely resembles that of the Boernerianus, the Boernerianus has an Old Latin version whereas the Augiensis uses Jerome's Vulgate. They both contain the Pauline epistles. When the Greek text fails near the end of Philemon, the scribe of the Augiensis completes the epistle in Latin and then, on the verso of the page, commences the epistle to the Hebrews using both columns for the Latin. By contrast, the scribe of the ninth-century Boernerianus starts the next epistle by writing:

ad laudicenses incipit epistola
 προς λαουδακησας αρχεται επιστολη

The Latin was written first and shows that the Old Latin text which was his model included Laodiceans. (This is precisely what we would expect, given the known affiliation or interrelationship of biblical manuscripts in Italy, Spain, England, and Irish monastic foundations on the Continent, of which Saint Gall was

one of the most famous.) That there is an incipit for the Greek in the Codex Boernerianus but no Greek text following seems to indicate that the scribe could not find a Greek manuscript and so stopped. Also, the Greek incipit is clearly a transliteration back into Greek from a poorly spelled Latin phrase. Hence, the Laodicean epistle was expected by the ninth-century scribe; it was a normal part of the Pauline corpus in Latin, though the position between Philemon and Hebrew is not at all common. (But Laodiceans is found there in London, British Library Harley 3131 [see appendix to this article, ms. 29].)

The Latin text of Laodiceans is found in the manuscripts of the Bibles or the Pauline epistles listed at the end of this article. By far the most ancient and accurate copy of the text is in the Fuldensis, an early copy of the Latin New Testament (transcribed by A.D. 546/547). Moreover, the Fuldensis is uncontaminated by the famous interpolation in 1 John 5:7–8, which was propounded by the Spanish heretic Priscillian and which later came to be part of the Vulgate tradition; the ninth-century manuscript, written in Spain but now at the Italian monastery La Cava, is the earliest Latin Bible to contain it. In Greek, the passage appears in only four late Byzantine or Renaissance manuscripts. Nevertheless, it also became part of the “received text” used to make the King James translation:

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.

And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one (1 John 5:7–8.)

However, the text should read:

Because those who bear witness (or testify) are three,

The spirit and the water and the blood, and the three are for one purpose.

The combined evidence of manuscripts and citations by early Christian writers stands indisputably against the authenticity of the longer version of the passage. (This is, however, a good example of the influence of the later form of the Latin Vulgate on the establishment of the “textus receptus.”)

Similarly, our ancient evidence goes strongly against the authenticity of Laodiceans. Jerome writes in his *de uiris*

illustribus 5, “Legunt quidam et ad Laodicenses sed ab omnibus exploditur.” This passage is also frequently included in Jerome’s preface to the Pauline epistles in Latin Bibles. As we noted earlier, the problem is caused by Paul’s expression in Colossians 4:16:

καὶ ὅταν ἀναγνωσθῆ παρ’ ὑμῶν ἡ ἐπιστολή, ποιήσατε ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ Λαοδικέων ἐκκλησίᾳ ἀναγνωσθῆ, καὶ τὴν ἐκ Λαοδικείας ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀναγνῶτε.

And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

We normally think this means that Paul had recently written another letter to the Laodiceans, and that he wants to effect an exchange for mutual benefit. Yet it has also been taken as a reference to a letter from the Laodiceans (so John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret, Photius, *et al.*). But the context seems to point to the two as contemporary and companion epistles. Which epistle can it be? Various people have suggested 1 Timothy, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, or Galatians, but none of them was composed at the same time as Colossians. More likely, other scholars, ancient and modern, have suggested Hebrews (the evidence is primarily the incipit in the Codex Boernerianus), Philemon (but he was at Colossae, and the epistle mentioned in Colossians 4:16 appears to have been directed to a church), Ephesians (a strong possibility), or a non-canonical epistle now lost. My own preference is Ephesians.

Let us examine a few verses to see the sort of textual problem that confronts us in every text, biblical and apocryphal, of our ancient scriptures.

Sample Select Apparatus for Epistola ad Laodicenses

(The numbers refer to the manuscripts listed in the appendix to this article.)

Laod.:3 Gratias ago Christo per omnem orationem meam quod permanentes estis in eo et perseuerantes in operibus eius promissum expectantes in diem iudicii.

christo] christo iesu 16, deo meo 6 7 8 9 10 15 17 20 21 24 25 26
 33 35 38 40 45 47 48, deo meo et christo iesu 5 30 46
 meam] *om.* 20, meam pro uobis 16
 estis permanentes ~ 3 11 12 13 30 46 49
 in operibus eius] *om.* 6 7 8 9 10 15 16 17 20 21 38 40, in operi-
 bus 22, in operibus bonis 18² 27 28 29 31 34 35 36 37
 promissum expectantes] promissum 28, promissum sperantes
 5, sperantes promissum 3 11 12 13 30 46 49
 diem] die 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 23 24 25 26 28 29
 30 31 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 45 46 47 49
 iudicii] iudicationis 5 11 12 13 30 46 49

Laod.:4 Neque destituant uos quorundam uaniloquia insinuan-
 tium, ut uos euertant a ueritate euangelii quod a me praedicatur.

neque] neque enim 5 13 30
 destituant] destituunt 27, destituat 18¹ (*ex* destituant 18 [?]),
 destituit 4 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 16 17 19 20 21 30 (*cor.* 30¹) 33 38
 40, destitui 13 15, decipiant 39
 uos] *om.* 28, prauitate 11, 12, uos sermo 18²
 quorundam] corundam 4 13
 uaniloquia] uaniloquentia 4 6 7 8 9 10 15¹ 17 19 21 33 38 40 49,
 uaniloquium 16, eloquia 23, uaniloquentiam 11 12 15,
 uaniloquentium 13
 insinuantium] insanientium 27 31
 ut] se ut 13 49, sed ut 3 4 11 12, seductorum sed peto ne 5, sed
 peto ne 46
 uos] nos 23, *om.* 20
 euertant 1 3 11 12 22, euertent 4 16, *om.* 20, auertant 5 6 7 8 9
 10 15 18 19 21 24 25 26 27 28 29 30¹ 31² 33 34 35 36 37 38 39
 40 45 46 47 48 49 50, auertat 13 23 31, auertant 30, auer-
 terent 17

Laod.:8 Est enim mihi uere uita in Christo et mori gaudium.

mihi] *om.* 10 (*cor.* 10²) 21, mihi *post* uita ~ 48

uere uita] uera uita 4 15 17 19, uiuere 3 12 13 49, uiuere uita 8
9 10 11 18 20 21 27 28 29 31 32² (*ex uere uita* 32) 33 34 (*cor.*
34¹) 35 36 37 38 40 48 50, uita uiuere 16, uita 46

in christo] mors 45

mori] more 15

gaudium] gaudium uel lucrum 27 29 31 34 36 37, lucrum 28 35
50, lucrum gaudium 22 (*cor.* 22²), lucrum et gaudium 3

Laod.:10 Ergo dilectissimi ut audistis praesentia mei ita retinete
et facite in timore dei et erit uobis uita in aeternum.

ergo] ego 29

ut] et 22, quod 11 12

audistis] cepistis 5

praesentia mei] praesentiam ei 4 8 13 38 40, praesentiam eius
18 praesentiam et 15 21, praesentiam mei 5 16 22 30 32 36
46 48, praesentia dei 3, praesentia 10 (*cor.* 10²) 21 33,
praesentia domini 27, praesentiam domini 28 31 34 35 37
50, praesentiam dei 29, in praesentia mei 9² (*ex praesentia*
mei 9) 39

ita] *om.* 5 8 9 15 20 21 38 40, et 10 *cor.* 10² ita et

in] ei in 33

in timore . . . et facit (Laod.:12)] *om.* 10 21

timore] honore 17, timorem 3

dei] domini 31 35 50

et erit uobis uita in aeternum *om.* 50

uita] pax et uita 5 30, uita et pax 37 46

in aeternum] in aeterno 3, aeterna 23 24 25 26 45 47 49¹ (*ex in*
aeterna 49)

Laod.:13 Et quod est, dilectissimi, gaudete in Christo, et prae-
cauete sordidos in lucro.

et] *om.* 10

quod est] quod 39, quod bonum est 9² (*ex quod est* 9), quod-
cumque optimum est 3, quod est optimum 50

christo] domino 10 15 20 21 33 37 (*cor.* 37¹) 38 40

sordidos] sordidos omnes 27 28 29 31 34 37, omnes sordidos
35 36, sordidos homines 3, sordidas 26, a sordibus 19,
sordibus 4 17 48 10² (*ex* sordidos 10), sordidorum 46

in lucro] in lucrum 5 13 30 46, illusores 39

Laod.:15 Et quae integra et uera et pudica et iusta et amabilia
facite.

quae] *om.* 11 12 15 (*cor.* 11²?), quae sunt 46

integra et] integra sunt et 16 23 24 25 26 45 47, integere et 33,
integre et 10 (*cor.* 10²) 33', intigra et 3

uera] uera sunt 5 8 9 10 15 20 21 38 40 48

pudica] pudica et casta 16 27 29 31 34 35 36 37, pudica et
sancta 28

et iusta et pudica ~ 30 46

iusta] iusta et casta 3 49

amabilia] amabilia et sancta 5 30 46, amabilia sunt 27 28 29 31
34 35 36 37 50

Laod.:17 *om.* 1 4 8 9 10 13 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 31
33 38 39 40 45 47 48, Laod.:17 *post* Laod.:18 ~ 35

Laod.:18 *om.* 4 17 19 40

Laod.:20 Et facite legi Colosensium uobis.

sic 1 4 8 9 10 15 17 18 (*emend.* 18²) 19 21 22 39 40

et facite legi colosensum uobis amen 33

" " " colosensibus epistolam et colosenses uobis amen
11 12

" " " colosensibus et colosensium uobis 3 49

et tradite legi culossensibus et colosensis uobis 13

et facite legi epistolam colosensium uobis 20 24

" " " " colosensium uobis 45

" " " " colosencium uobis 47

" " " " cholosensium uobis 25 26

" " " " colonocensium uobis 23

et facite legi colosensium epistolam uobis 32

" " " hanc epistolam colosensibus et colosensium uobis
18²

" " hanc epistolam legi colossenbius et colossensium uobis 50
 " " uobis legi collosensium epistolam 39
 " " colocensium epistolam legi et uobis 48
 facite legi colosensium epistolam uobis et hanc colosensibus legatur 16
 et hanc facite legi colosensibus et colosensium uobis 27 29 31 36 37
 " " " " colosensibus et colossensium uobis 34
 " " " " collosensibus et collosensium uobis 28 35
 et facite legi colosensibus (colocensibus 46) hanc epistolam et colosensium uos legite. deus autem et pater domini nostri iesu christi custodiat uos immaculatos in christo iesu cui est honor et gloria in saecula saecula saeculorum. amen 5 30 46

These examples will suffice to demonstrate both textual problems and the generally poor quality of the letter. It certainly is not characteristic of Paul to write a letter without any specific doctrinal or moral question at the base. Laodiceans was not written by Paul.

That such a short letter as Laodiceans, which has a mosaic of familiar quotations from Pauline epistles for its text, should suffer such a range of errors in the process of copying may seem strange to us. Yet this is the observation which could be made of almost any text which has had a large number of copies made over a period of twelve to fourteen centuries. Hence, the editor must be prepared to make judgment between readings, using the best critical skills and possessing a familiarity with the vocabulary and style of the author. Certain types of errors became almost predictable and point to a grouping of relationships which may be called "families," or which may indicate almost a "genealogical" table or "stemma" of the affiliations. Very quickly is the lesson learned that *quality, not quantity*, must be our concern: mere numbers of surviving manuscripts cannot outweigh good readings by a few reliable (and often early) manuscripts. Every reasonable effort must be made to collate the text from the sources, but each manuscript must be evaluated and weighted in accordance with the reliability of the textual exemplar and its tradition, the general dependability of the scriptorium at the time

the manuscript was produced, the care of checking and correcting, and the probability of the variants. Confusion of letters or abbreviations will differ according to whether the exemplar was in rustic capitals, Insular minuscule, Carolingian, Beneventan, or Gothic script; and if the copyist is accustomed to working in a script different from that of his exemplar, the chances of error are multiplied—but predictable.

CONCLUSIONS

What, then, are we to conclude? There are several observations to make:

1. First of all, our study of any document will be the more accurate and precise to the extent that we can establish and understand the text in the form most closely approximating its earliest written appearance. Hence, it becomes imperative to study out and to compare the manuscripts, paying particular attention to their interrelations and interdependency, for sound textual criticism does not yield to mere numbers. Instead, careful evaluation of variants will indicate affiliation and point to progressive degeneration of certain passages. This is a sound basis for establishing relative merit and, where possible, stemmatic relations. We may also discover that elaborations, expansions, or abbreviations of the text can occur at any time and produce a large “progeny,” although the manuscripts are merely agreeing in an error.

2. We must *understand the text* as it was intended by the author. As we examine his sources, quotations, references, and use of words, we gain a deeper appreciation for the meaning and purpose of the work. In particular, minute control of words and their nuances can point to important conclusions. Such was our experience as we considered 3 Corinthians and Laodiceans.

3. While translations or versions are one step removed (or more, depending on how accurate and faithful the translation is to the text, whatever form it may have had), they are nonetheless meritorious in providing checks on early forms of the text. They also allow us to perceive the basis on which other people may have drawn their observations.

4. We must analyze the content in the context of when it was written and not from preconceived notions. The same words and phrases take on different and varied meanings in different centuries and settings.

Thus far we have been perhaps somewhat detached in emotional or spiritual commitment from the discussion. After all, these are apocryphal texts and not accepted scripture (at least, not today). Very well, we shall now apply these same principles to our biblical texts. Since the New Testament was composed entirely in Greek and since the writers knew and cited the Old Testament in its Greek (i.e., Septuagint) form, to what extent should we accept the Old Testament Apocrypha (which, as Dr. C. Wilfred Griggs has noted, were simply scriptural and not apocryphal until the fifth century), including the longer version of Daniel? Furthermore, inasmuch as Jude actually quotes from 1 Enoch and the Assumption of Moses, should we not receive these as acceptable books? If the Gospel of Thomas, in its pristine, Greek form, was read and quoted in the early Christian church, ought we not read it to glean more sayings of Jesus?

We must also seek an understanding of the words of our biblical texts, as opposed to relying on an uncritical impression of meaning based on a translation (need we add, of a somewhat faulty text by well-meaning men who were both deeply influenced by Jerome's Vulgate [and the earlier translations from it] and, at the same time, limited in their control of the Greek). By controlling minute details and nuances of words, one can formulate more precisely an English translation. Here the attention is drawn first to comprehend what the author intended and only afterwards to apply that meaning to our day and age. An example, a very fine example, of how this provides a sound basis is seen in the recent book *Understanding Paul* by Richard L. Anderson. His approach combines linguistic, historical, and theological matters with mature reflection and spiritual insight. In his own analogous way, Joseph Smith was not content to rely on unprompted revelation. Instead, he constantly framed new, more precise questions to take to the Lord. If you ask a better question, you get a better answer. Several of our most notable

sections in the Doctrine and Covenants have been given in response to specific questions about passages of scripture (D&C 76, 7, 13, 91, etc.). Joseph Smith insisted on the study of languages for himself and his close associates and took delight in reading the word of the Lord in the original languages.

Let us take a few words as illustrative of the thoughts one can gain from studying scriptures in their original languages. In English, we make a clear distinction between “justice” and “righteousness.” In fact, we do so to such an extent that we may be unaware that Greek and most European languages simply use one word for both ideas. Also, we may be concerned about the difference between “faith” (πίστις) and “believe” (πιστεύω), but in the New Testament the two words are merely the noun and the verb forms of the same root, as though the verb were “faith-ize” (*sic*) or “exercise faith.”

When, as recorded in John 3, Nicodemus approached Jesus at night to pose a few questions, Jesus responded by stating that a man “must be born again” (John 3:3), or at least that is how the King James Version puts it. The word used in the instance is ἄνωθεν, which refers to “down from above,” “from the top,” and does not mean “again.” The translators have followed too closely Jerome and the typical, understandable notion of construing Jesus’ meaning based on Nicodemus’ comic, almost flippant response, which Jesus immediately refutes. To state that a man must be born from on high or from heaven emphasizes the difference between the law of Moses and the Gospel (= χάρις in John and Paul), for a person cannot, by outward ordinances, assure himself of a celestial reward. God, not man, determines the spiritual condition of each individual and must ratify any ordinance. In that same chapter of John, Jesus explains the spiritual birth by stating that “the wind bloweth where it listeth” (John 3:8, τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου θέλει πνεῖ). We could also translate it, “the breath (of God) breathes where it desires” or “the spirit breathes the spirit of life wherever he wishes.”

Another example of words with deeper, more specific meanings is in Matthew 16. When Peter is quoted as saying, “Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16), he is

using the word ζῶντος, “living,” which to early Christians seems to have meant “resurrected.” For example, the Gospel of Thomas records the words of the “living” Jesus which he spoke to Thomas during the forty-day ministry.

Jesus’ famous reply to Peter (Matthew 16:17–19) includes the phrase πύλαι ᾠδου, “the gates of hell.” To us in English, the translation “hell” obscures the very clear meaning of the Greek. There are three distinctly different terms in Greek which are all translated by our single term *hell*: (1) *Hades* (ᾠδης), the world where spirits go after mortality; (2) *gehenna* (γεέννη), named from the valley of Hinnon which was the public garbage dump southwest of Jerusalem where fires were incessantly burning rubbish; and (3) *skotos* (σκοτός), *zophos* (ζόφος), or *tartaros* (τάρταρος), meaning the outer darkness where, according to Jude, Satan and his followers are to be consigned. Doctrinally these cover a vast range, and are accordingly so translated in most modern-language versions of the Bible which the LDS church uses, apart from English. In Matthew 16:18, the word is *Hades*; the efficacy of the power granted to the Apostles was to extend into the spirit world. (Incidentally, “gates” could be appropriately rendered “defense fortifications at Hades’ most vulnerable position,” or even “headquarters”—Hades’ Pentagon and CIA offices.)

Skipping over the enigmatic language of Paul (is Colossians written against an incipient Gnostic heresy?), let us take one final example from Jude. Speaking of the angelic hosts who followed Satan, Jude (v. 6) states that they threw away their own rightful *arche* (ἀρχή). That word has been translated “first estate” as though in contrast to a second estate, yet the word means rule, beginning, firstness, or, in modern terms, “leadership.”

Whether or not a work is canonical scripture, it must be examined carefully and the words and expressions must be weighed against contemporary and similar documents. Although the process of establishing a text and analyzing the contents is long and arduous, the rewards, while rarely spectacular, have great merit.

Appendix: Latin Manuscripts of the Pseudo-Pauline Epistola ad Laodicenses (and 3 Corinthians)

1. Fulda
A.D. 546/547 for Victor, Bishop of Capua, Italy
2. La Cava
s.vi/vii
3. Dublin Trinity College "The Book of Armagh"
A.D. 807
4. Milan Biblioteca Ambrosiana B 48 sup.
s.ix Bobbio, Italy
5. London Lambeth Palace 4
s.xii Canterbury
6. London British Library Add. 10546
Moutier Grandval
7. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 1
s.ix First Bible of Charles the Bald
8. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 3
s.ix
9. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 250
s.ix Saint Denis
10. Laon Bibliothèque Municipale 45
s.xiii Saint Vincent de Laon contains 3 Corinthians
11. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 5288
s.x Southern Switzerland (Chur?) contains 3 Corinthians
12. Milan Biblioteca Ambrosiana E 53 inf.
s.x Biasca contains 3 Corinthians
13. Zurich Zentralbibliothek Car. C 14
s.ix/x Einsiedeln contains 3 Corinthians
14. Berlin Stadtsbibliothek Ham. 84
s.xiii contains 3 Corinthians
15. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 10
s.xii/xiii Southern France
16. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 336
s.xii Fratrum Minorum, Cagliari, Sardinia
17. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 166
18. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 104
s.xi, (but ad Laod. added in s.xii) Nemur

19. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 11
20. Zurich Zentralbibliothek Car. C 149
s.xii
21. Zurich Zentralbibliothek Car. C 177
s.xiii
22. St. Gall Stiftsbibliothek 69
s.xii
23. London Lambeth Palace 90
24. London Lambeth Palace 348
25. London Lambeth Palace 1152
26. London British Library Royal I A xix
27. London British Library Harley 2834
Anger Cathedral
28. London British Library Royal I A xvii
29. London British Library Harley 3131
30. London British Library Royal I E viii
31. London British Library Sloane 539
32. Oxford Bodleian Library Laud. lat. 8
33. Oxford Bodleian Library Canon. Bibl. 25
34. Oxford Bodleian Library Canon. Bibl. 11
35. Oxford Bodleian Library Canon. Bibl. 7
36. Oxford Bodleian Library Canon. Bibl. 16
37. Oxford Bodleian Library Canon. Bibl. 82
38. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 35
39. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 312
40. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 82
41. Darmstadt (from the Cathedral library at Cologne)
42. Bern 334
43. Toledo Cathedral library
s.viii
44. Vienna 287
A.D. 1079 written by Marianus Scotus
45. Dublin Trinity College 37
s.viii^{ex} Wirzburg (with Irish glosses)
46. Dublin Trinity College 42
47. Dublin Trinity College 44
s.xiii England

48. London British Library Royal I A vii
s.xiii
49. London British Library Add. 11852
A.D. 872–83 St. Gall
50. London British Library Harley 828
A.D. 1610 England
51. Dublin Trinity College 57 “The Book of Durrow”
s.vii² Northumbria
52. Munich Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 6229
s.viii² Freising
53. Leon, S. Isidoro
A.D. 960 Spain
54. Berlin (DDR) Staatsbibliothek ms. Ham. 627
55. Berlin (DDR) Staatsbibliothek ms. Phillips 1650
s.x Metz
56. Berlin (West = FGR/BRD) Theol. fol. 8
s.xiv
57. Berlin (DDR) Staatsbibliothek ms. 222
58. Berlin (DDR) Staatsbibliothek ms. 241
59. Berlin (DDR) Staatsbibliothek ms. 276
60. Oxford Bodleian Library Laud. lat. 13
61. Cambridge Trinity College B.5.16
62. Cambridge Trinity College B.5.1
63. Cambridge University Library Mm.3.2 fol. 349^r – v
s.xiii
64. Cambridge University Library Mm.3.2 fol. 357^r
s.xiii
65. Cambridge University Library Dd.5.52
s.xiv
66. Cambridge University Library Ee.1.16
s.xiii/xiv
67. Cambridge University Library St. Peters 0.4.6
s.xiii
68. Cambridge University Library Sidney D.5.11
s.xiii
69. Cambridge University Library Emman 2.1.6
s.xiv
70. Berlin (DDR) Staatsbibliothek ms. 277

71. Assisi 261
72. London Lambeth Palace 544
73. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 6

(Note: Anselm of Laon included Laodiceans in his *Com. in Ep. Pauli* [PL 181, col. 1335-59], and so copies of the epistle may also be found in manuscripts of that work.)