

“In My Own Hand”: Grapho-Literacy and the Apostle Paul

I. “In My Own Hand”

That the apostle Paul was a literate individual is well-established and beyond doubt⁽¹⁾. However, in the ancient world as today, “literacy” was not a homogeneous entity but rather existed in shades and gradations. The present essay is thus concerned not with Paul’s literacy per se, but rather the degree of literacy Paul held in Greek, and, more importantly, how he employed and displayed his literate status in a rhetorical fashion. Recent research in the school papyri of Greco-Roman Egypt has yielded new insights into the process by which individuals learned to read and write in the Greco-Roman world, insights that shed new light on five passages where Paul (or someone writing in his name)⁽²⁾ highlights the fact that he has written in the epistle with his own hand. I will suggest that these passages enhance Paul’s arguments in the epistles, and social position in the congregations, by underscoring not only his literacy, but his grapho-literacy; and not only his grapho-literacy, but his ability to avoid using it.

1. *The Texts*

In five passages within his epistles, Paul draws attention to the fact that he has signed the epistle himself and written a short greeting or oath. These texts are 1 Cor 16,21, Gal 6,11, Col 4,18, 2 Thess 3,17, and Phil 19, and are briefly presented here in canonical order⁽³⁾.

⁽¹⁾ *Inter alia*, see B. WITHERINGTON III, *The Paul Quest. The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove, IL 1998) 89-129.

⁽²⁾ The Pauline authenticity of the texts does not affect the following argument. Even as deutero-Pauline epistles, Colossians and 2 Thessalonians would remain as evidence. That these epistles include the exact same formula in 1 Cor 16,21 demonstrates that their authors recognized the importance of asserting that Paul signed the epistle himself and replicated that claim. “Paul” will thus be used in this article in order to indicate the author of the epistle, even if that was not the apostle Paul.

⁽³⁾ G.J. BAHR, “The Subscriptions in the Pauline Letters”, *JBL* 87 (1968) 27-41, suggests other passages that Paul may have written. E.R. RICHARDS, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (WUNT 2.42; Tübingen 1991) 189, claims, “Both [2 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians] probably have autographed postscripts” (see

Paul closes the first epistle to the church at Corinth with what Richards refers to as “a typical formula”⁽⁴⁾ in 1 Cor 16,21: “The greeting (is) in my hand, Paul’s” (ὁ ἀσπασμὸς τῆ ἐμῆ χειρὶ Παύλου)⁽⁵⁾.

Gal 6,11 similarly calls attention to Paul’s authorship of the epistolary greeting, and peculiarly to either the size or form of his letters. Here Paul says, “See with what big letters I write to you in my own hand” (ἴδετε πηλίκοις ὑμῖν γράμμασιν ἔγραψα τῆ ἐμῆ χειρὶ). Paul’s “big letters” have caused no small amount of debate, which will be discussed shortly.

Prior to asking his readership to remember his afflictions, Col 4,18 contains the exact same phrase as 1 Cor 16,21: “The greeting (is) in my hand, Paul’s” (ὁ ἀσπασμὸς τῆ ἐμῆ χειρὶ Παύλου).

Second Thessalonians 3,17 repeats this phrase verbatim as well: “The greeting (is) in my hand, Paul’s” (ὁ ἀσπασμὸς τῆ ἐμῆ χειρὶ Παύλου). Significantly, however, 2 Thess 3,17 follows this stock phrase with an explicit statement on its purpose in the text as a method of authenticating not only this epistle but presumably all of them. Paul says, “This is a sign in each epistle; thus I write” (ὅ ἐστιν σημεῖον ἐν πάσῃ ἐπιστολῇ οὕτως γράφω).

Finally, the short letter to Philemon states that it is from both Paul and Timothy (Phlm 1). In Phlm 19, however, Paul writes his oath (or “promissory note”)⁽⁶⁾ in his own handwriting. The passage reads: “I,

also 189, n. 281) and, on 190, n. 285, notes that the implication of 2 Thess 3,17 is “that all of his letters contained an autographed postscript whether explicitly mentioned or not” (cf. p. 174). The latter point is made also by A. DEISSMANN, *Light from the Ancient East. The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (London 1927) 166, n. 7 (continued on 167). M.L. Stirewalt, Jr. (*Paul, the Letter Writer* [Grand Rapids, MI 2003] 51, n. 57) claims, “The lack of notation of autograph and a clear subscription in Philippians tend to show Paul’s hand throughout the letter ...”. I am less confident that a case for the entirety of Philippians coming from the hand of Paul can be made from the evidence it lacks.

⁽⁴⁾ RICHARDS, *Secretary*, 173.

⁽⁵⁾ NRSV (“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand”) is slightly misleading in that no verb appears in the Greek. For interpretive options with Παύλου, see M.J. HARRIS, *Colossians and Philemon* (Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI 1991) 215. I take it as a genitive of apposition, as does J. MURPHY-O’CONNOR, *Paul the Letter Writer. His World, His Options, His Skills* (GNS 41; Collegeville, PA 1995) 104.

⁽⁶⁾ E. LOHSE, *Colossians and Philemon. A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA 1971) 204.

Paul, write in my hand: I will repay” (ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ ἐγὼ ἀποτίσω).

Before proceeding, some preliminary observations on these five passages are in order. First, Paul’s use of his own handwriting implicitly highlights his use of an amanuensis for the rest of the writing task⁽⁷⁾. Though perhaps at first glance insignificant, this detail concerning Paul may reveal information about his Greek education and social status⁽⁸⁾.

Second, these passages demonstrate that Paul’s Greek education was (in the very least) sufficient enough that he could write formulaic greetings and short phrases in his text. Scholars have debated, however, whether Paul’s writing activity is limited to these passages specifically and I here mention two examples. First, there is disagreement over the precise content of the ἔγραψα of Gal 6,11. Bahr and Deissmann posit that Paul began writing at Gal 5,2 rather than 6,11⁽⁹⁾ while Guthrie and Turner suggest that the verb may refer to the full epistle⁽¹⁰⁾. Numerous scholars are against the idea that Gal 6,11 refers to the entire epistle⁽¹¹⁾, however, and Richards argues persuasively that one should not consider Paul’s handwriting to begin prior to his stating that he is now writing in his own hand⁽¹²⁾. A second example of disagreement over the boundaries of Paul’s writing is

⁽⁷⁾ H.Y. GAMBLE, *Books and Readers in the Early Church. A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven 1995) 95-96; MURPHY-O’CONNOR, *Paul*, 7; RICHARDS, *Secretary*, 172; STIREWALT, *Paul*, 9. P.J. ACHEMEIER, “*Omne verbum sonat: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity*”, *JBL* 109.1 (1990) 12, describes dictation as “the normal mode of composition of any writing”.

⁽⁸⁾ The present study thus focuses upon Paul’s Greek education and leaves questions of Paul’s Hebrew and/or Aramaic linguistic abilities for another occasion. See, however, the short summary in C.J. ROETZEL, *Paul. The Man and the Myth* (Columbia 1998) 11-12.

⁽⁹⁾ BAHR, “Subscriptions”, 35; DEISSMANN, *Light*, 166, n. 7 (continued on 167).

⁽¹⁰⁾ D. GUTHRIE, *Galatians* (Century Bible Commentary new series; London 1969) 158; N. TURNER, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh 1965) 93.

⁽¹¹⁾ *Inter alia*, H.D. BETZ, *Galatians. A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA 1979) 314, 314, n. 22; E. DE WITT BURTON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh 1921) 347-349; J.B. LIGHTFOOT, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (London 1869) 217; A. OEPKE, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* (THKNT 9; Berlin 1957) 157-158.

⁽¹²⁾ RICHARDS, *Secretary*, 172-179.

Philemon. Some scholars see Paul as interrupting the work of the scribe in order to write himself in Phlm 19⁽¹³⁾. Lemaire, however, thinks that Paul penned the entirety of the epistle⁽¹⁴⁾. Occupying a middle ground, Harris notes that the autograph's location outside the end of the epistle is not necessarily evidence that Paul wrote its entirety, but also observes that one cannot rule out this possibility based on the brevity of the letter⁽¹⁵⁾. More recently, Arzt-Grabner has claimed the idiom in Phlm 19 (stating that one writes in one's own hand) does not decidedly clarify whether Paul used a secretary for the rest of the epistle one way or another⁽¹⁶⁾. He cites similar occurrences of the idiom in documentary papyri where no obvious change of scribal hand appears, and thus considers it more probable that Paul wrote all of Philemon than that he took over from the amanuensis at this point⁽¹⁷⁾. One can therefore certainly not rule out the possibility that Paul penned all of Philemon. Nevertheless, one can also not rule out the possibility that, along with passages such as Gal 6,11 and 2 Thess 3,17, Phlm 19 assumes that a reader could inspect the autograph and notice a particular style of handwriting that was different from the rest of the epistle and identifiable with Paul's. The important point for the present study is that Paul has grabbed the reed and written at least Phlm 19 himself. I will thus proceed from this fact and focus my study on it and the other four explicit statements of writing without speculating on what else in the epistle he may/could have also written.

As a third preliminary observation, and possibly in tension with the idea that he wrote all of Philemon, Paul draws attention to the "big letters" he writes in Gal 6,11. What does Paul's "big letters" signify? Explicitly rejecting the idea that the size of the letters reflects the importance of the words, Deismann considers Gal 6,11 to be the "clumsy, awkward writing" of an "artisan missionary" who is "no

⁽¹³⁾ J.D.G. DUNN, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI 1996) 339 (also p. 289 in reference to Col 4,18); RICHARDS, *Secretary*, 178-179; R.McL. WILSON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon* (ICC; London 2005) 358.

⁽¹⁴⁾ A. LEMAIRE, "Writing and Writing Materials", *ABD* VI, 1006.

⁽¹⁵⁾ HARRIS, *Colossians and Philemon*, 273-274. Lohse (*Colossians and Philemon*, 204, n. 71) too, remains agnostic on the issue.

⁽¹⁶⁾ P. ARZT-GRABNER, *Philemon* (Papyrologische Kommentare zum Neuen Testament 1; Göttingen 2003) 243.

⁽¹⁷⁾ ARZT-GRABNER, *Philemon*, 240-243 (entire discussion); 242 (probable that Paul wrote Philemon).

rigorous pedagogue”⁽¹⁸⁾: “Between [the amanuensis’] fluent hand and that of Paul there was a pronounced difference The *large letters* naturally suggest that the explanation rather lies in the formal and external matter of calligraphy”⁽¹⁹⁾. Again he claims, “The handwriting of the amanuensis of Gal. i. 1 – vi. 10 . . . was probably cursive, and the autograph signature of St. Paul the stiff, heavy uncials of a manual labourer”⁽²⁰⁾. There are, however, numerous dissenters to this view⁽²¹⁾. Betz claims *πηλίκα γρόμματα* should be interpreted neutrally as “large letters” rather than implying “clumsy” and that the large letters serve to “underscore the importance of what he has to say in these last words”⁽²²⁾. Similarly, Lightfoot claims the size of the letters “answers to the force of the apostle’s convictions”:

The language almost bursts with the surcharge of feeling. The very forms of the letters too bear witness to his intense earnestness. He writes in large bold characters to arrest the eye and rivet the mind”⁽²³⁾.

After considering a number of possibilities, including Paul’s poor eyesight, a hand defect due to an actual crucifixion⁽²⁴⁾, and Paul’s familiarity with Hebrew letters rather than Greek and thus reflecting that Paul was “a Hebrew of the Hebrews”, George concludes: “All of these are intriguing possibilities, but none of them can be set forth with certainty”⁽²⁵⁾. In the very least, the weight of scholarly opinion is aligned against Deissmann’s notion of a sloppily-writing Paul, as

⁽¹⁸⁾ A. DEISSMANN, *Paul. A Study in Social and Religious History* (London 1926) 49; DEISSMANN, *Light*, 166, n. 7, 246; A. DEISSMANN, *Bible Studies. Contributions Chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions to the History of the Language, the Literature, and the Religion of Hellenistic Judaism and Primitive Christianity* (Edinburgh 1909) 348, respectively.

⁽¹⁹⁾ DEISSMANN, *Bible Studies*, 348.

⁽²⁰⁾ DEISSMANN, *Light*, 174.

⁽²¹⁾ In addition to those discussed below in the main text, see F.F. BRUCE, *The Epistle to the Galatians. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids 1982) 268; W.K.L. CLARKE, “St. Paul’s ‘Large Letters’”, *ExpT* 24 (1912-1913) 285; J.S. CLEMENS, “St. Paul’s Handwriting”, *ExpT* 24 (1912-1913) 380; RICHARDS, *Secretary*, 181.

⁽²²⁾ BETZ, *Galatians*, 314.

⁽²³⁾ LIGHTFOOT, *Galatians*, 218, 65, respectively. So also BURTON, *Galatians*, 348. J.D.G. DUNN, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; London 1993) 335, claims Paul perhaps wrote “large enough for the reader to hold up so that the various congregations could read his words for themselves”, which was also the suggestion of BRUCE, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 268.

⁽²⁴⁾ This is the suggestion of TURNER, *Grammatical Insights*, 94.

⁽²⁵⁾ T. GEORGE, *Galatians* (NAC 30; Nashville 1994) 432.

Matera observes, “There is general agreement among commentators that the reference to Paul’s large letters does not refer to their misshapen appearance, as Chrysostom thought, but simply to their size”⁽²⁶⁾. Perhaps one should conclude that Paul’s “big letters” serve as emphasis without specifying the precise nature of the emphasis. One should not disregard entirely, however, that the paucity of extant Greek writing that actually comes from the hand of Paul could suggest that his was an unpracticed hand, whether his “big letters” are a result of that fact or not. Importantly, the following argument is not dependent on one interpretation of Paul’s “big letters” in Gal 6,11 over another, and will offer another explanation for why little of Paul’s own handwriting remains. The present study now turns from the significance of Paul’s “big letters” to the significance of Paul writing in the first place.

2. *Previous Assessments of Paul Writing in His Epistles*

Scholars have accounted for the appearance of Paul’s own handwriting in a number of ways (which are not mutually exclusive). Some remark that Paul is adding a personal touch to the greeting of the epistle⁽²⁷⁾. Others see Paul as conforming to the epistolary norm of signing one’s name at the end of the epistle⁽²⁸⁾. Commenting on the addition of autographs to Greco-Roman friendship letters, Stowers combines these options:

This practice was like adding a signature to a typed letter. The apostle Paul does the same at the close of some letters in order to provide a personal touch⁽²⁹⁾.

Normally with reference to 2 Thess 3,17, some scholars suggest that Paul indeed signed his epistles as part of an epistolary norm, but

⁽²⁶⁾ F.J. MATERA, *Galatians* (Sacra Pagina 9; Collegeville, PA 1992) 229.

⁽²⁷⁾ M.M. THOMPSON, *Colossians and Philemon* (Two Horizons; Grand Rapids, MI 2005) 109.

⁽²⁸⁾ R.F. COLLINS, “‘I Command That This Letter Be Read’: Writing as a Manner of Speaking”, in *The Thessalonians Debate. Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis* (eds. K.P. DONFRIED – J. BEUTLER) (Grand Rapids, MI 2000) 329; R.Y.K. FUNG, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI 1988) 301; GEORGE, *Galatians*, 430; LOHSE, *Colossians and Philemon*, 177. Cf. also A. ROBERTSON – A. PLUMMER, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (ICC; Edinburgh 1911) 400, who mentions this epistolary practice but also thinks the signature would have authenticated the epistle since “the apostle’s handwriting would be known at Corinth”.

⁽²⁹⁾ S.K. STOWERS, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (LEC 5; Philadelphia, PA 1986) 61.

specify that the autograph was a method of authentication⁽³⁰⁾. For example, Richards claims, “It [2 Thess 3,17] probably was added to protect the Thessalonians from forgeries (2 Thes. 2:2)”⁽³¹⁾. This was not an uncommon practice, as later Cyprian will also ask his readers to inspect handwriting as a method of authentication⁽³²⁾. Earlier, Cicero had instructed Atticus to write letters for him in his name⁽³³⁾, and to lie to explain the absence of his authenticating mark:

If they notice the absence of my seal (*signum*) or handwriting (*manum*), please say that I have avoided using them owing to the sentries⁽³⁴⁾.

Attaching handwriting is, then, a common method for an author to authenticate his epistle, and its absence must sometimes be explained.

Alternatively (though sometimes also in conjunction with the idea that Paul’s autographs serve an authenticating function), some scholars stress that Paul’s own handwriting underscores the importance of what he has written, as noted in the above discussion of Gal 6,11. The precise importance being communicated is conceptualized in various ways. Regarding Gal 6,15, Sanders makes a general statement: “This is important to Paul. He wrote it in his own hand ...”⁽³⁵⁾. Wilson claims that the fact that Paul writes Phlm 19 shows that it was “a serious and binding commitment”⁽³⁶⁾. Dunn notes that Col 4,18 “must count in favour of the view that Paul himself actually held the stylus for these final words”, and that this “reinforces the effect of the letter” by presenting a personal touch⁽³⁷⁾. Dunn also suggests that in Phlm 19 Paul “is pulling out all the stops and putting the full weight of his

⁽³⁰⁾ BETZ, *Galatians*, 314; BURTON, *Galatians*, 347-348; RICHARDS, *Secretary*, 175; STIREWALT, *Paul*, 54; WITHERINGTON, *Paul Quest*, 109. DUNN, *Epistles*, 289, correctly observes that this verse “adds an important twist to the issue of the pseudonymity of 2 Thessalonians”. For a recent discussion, see K.P. DONFRIED, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI 2002) 54-56, who notes that this verse causes problems for defenders and opponents of Pauline authenticity alike.

⁽³¹⁾ RICHARDS, *Secretary*, 174.

⁽³²⁾ Cyprian, *Epistle 9*.

⁽³³⁾ *Inter alia*, Cicero, *Att.* 11.2, 3, 5, 7.

⁽³⁴⁾ Cicero, *Att.* 11.2 (WINSTEDT, LCL).

⁽³⁵⁾ E.P. SANDERS, *Paul. A Very Short Introduction* (Very Short Introduction 42; Oxford 1991) 70.

⁽³⁶⁾ WILSON, *Critical*, 359.

⁽³⁷⁾ DUNN, *Epistles*, 289.

personal standing behind his words”⁽³⁸⁾. The question that remains, however, is: How did Paul holding the reed reinforce his point? That is, can one be more specific about how personal handwriting would place Paul’s “full weight” behind his points and, more broadly, his epistles?

The above suggestions are all plausible explanations for why Paul wrote in his epistles with his own hand. This article does not intend to contradict any one of them, but rather will move these observations one step further by adding an important nuance. I here suggest that these passages in the Pauline corpus functioned rhetorically in a much more significant manner than simply highlighting an “importance” or merely conforming to an epistolary norm, be it a signature or a method of authentication or both. Paul’s inclusion of his own handwriting in some of his epistles underscored not just what Paul said but who Paul was and why he was in a position to say it — they demonstrate that Paul was capable of writing, what I here refer to as “grapho-literacy”.

II. Grapho-Literacy in the Ancient World

In the world of the apostle Paul, illiteracy was the rule of the day. Thus, to acknowledge Paul as literate at all is to place him among the elite stratus of first-century Jewish (and Greco-Roman) culture. Further, even amongst those who could read, not everyone could write. Both of these realities have recently been proven demonstrably by the studies of Raffaella Cribiore on the Greco-Roman school papyri of ancient Egypt⁽³⁹⁾. To these issues I now turn.

1. *General Low Literacy*

William Harris’ *Ancient Literacy* famously asserted a generalized 10% literacy rate for the ancient world⁽⁴⁰⁾. More recent works on

⁽³⁸⁾ DUNN, *Epistles*, 339.

⁽³⁹⁾ Though one must leave open the possibility that education differed in small manners from one geographical location to another, and thus not assume that the Greco-Roman Egyptian evidence is entirely illustrative of Roman Judea or elsewhere, the uniform nature of education throughout the Empire is now widely recognized. See W.V. HARRIS, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA 1989) 281; M.L.W. LAISTNER, *Christianity and Pagan Culture in the Later Roman Empire* (Ithaca, GA 1951) 25; T. MORGAN, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge Classical Studies; Cambridge 1998) 44-45, 66-67.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ HARRIS, *Ancient Literacy*, 22.

Roman Judea and early Christianity have affirmed Harris’ estimate for these respective communities and, in the former case, suggested that 10% may be generous⁽⁴¹⁾. Importantly, however, “literacy” is not a well-defined category but rather a spectrum (or spectrums), and thus it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of “literate competency(ies)”. One reason for this is that an individual could hold different literate competencies in different languages, much like individuals do today⁽⁴²⁾. Another reason is the presence of individuals that can be described as “semi-literates”⁽⁴³⁾. These are individuals who are literate enough to participate in the local economy or carry on their trade⁽⁴⁴⁾, but could not, for example, read a page of the *Iliad* if asked or write a personal letter. In a primarily agrarian society, it was simply (financially) impractical for parents to send a child through the various levels of pedagogy that would eventually allow him (or, more rarely, her) to cite Homer or compose writing. Not only would this lose a worker for the family, the child’s life likely would never present an opportunity for him (or her) to use that skill⁽⁴⁵⁾. A third reason to speak of “literate competencies” rather than strictly “literacy” or “illiteracy” is that the two aspects of a literate education — reading and writing — were neither equally taught nor learned.

2. Reading Versus Writing in the School Papyri

Like moderns who consider reading and writing a unity, historians of ancient education have often failed to distinguish between reading

⁽⁴¹⁾ Jewish context: C. HEZSER, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (TSAJ 81; Tübingen 2001) 496. Christian context: GAMBLE, *Books and Readers*, 5.

⁽⁴²⁾ Consider especially the comments of GAMBLE, *Books and Readers*, 3: “A Christian in first-century Palestine might have been thoroughly literate in Aramaic, largely literate in Hebrew, semiliterate in Greek, and illiterate in Latin, while a Christian in Rome in the second century might have been literate in Latin and semiliterate in Greek but ignorant of Aramaic and Hebrew”.

⁽⁴³⁾ On “semi-literates”, see HARRIS, *Ancient Literacy*, 5; H.C. YOUTIE, “Βραδέως γράφων: Between Literacy and Illiteracy”, *GRBS* 12.2 (1971) 239-261; repr. in *Scriptiunculae II* (Amsterdam 1973).

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Thus, “semi-literacy” is also known as “craftsman’s literacy” (HARRIS, *Ancient Literacy*, 7-8 and throughout) or “tradesman’s literacy” (J.P. MEIER, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus* [New York 1991] I, 262).

⁽⁴⁵⁾ M. BAR-ILAN, “Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C.E.”, *Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society* (eds. S. FISHBANE – S. SCHOENFELD – A. GOLDSCHLAEGER) (New York 1992) II, 55; H.Y. GAMBLE, “Literacy and Book Culture”, *DNTB*, 645; HARRIS, *Ancient Literacy*, 30.

and writing, specifically in conceptions of pedagogical method. For example, Marrou claims, “Writing was taught in the same way as reading”⁽⁴⁶⁾. Not all scholars agree, however, on the essential unity of reading and writing acquisition, and alongside some older studies, more recent ones have begun to stress that one cannot equate proficiency in one with proficiency in the other⁽⁴⁷⁾. Harris observes, “In some cultures non-writing readers, those possessed of one skill but not the other, have made up a broad spectrum”⁽⁴⁸⁾. Cribiore’s work on the school papyri of Greco-Roman Egypt has perhaps dealt the “death blow” to the view that reading and writing were similarly taught and learned⁽⁴⁹⁾. Though her studies deserve more detailed attention than the present essay can offer, I would here like to invoke her conclusions

⁽⁴⁶⁾ H.I. MARROU, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (London 1956) 155.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ See A. EDERSHEIM, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*. Updated Edition (Peabody, MA 1994), 111-112, 122; R.L. FOX, “Literacy and Power in Early Christianity”, *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (eds. A.K. BOWMAN – G. WOOLF) (Cambridge 1994) 128-129; M.D. GOODMAN, “Texts, Scribes, and Power in Roman Judea”, in *Literacy and Power*, 99-100; HEZSER, *Jewish Literacy*, 474-495; M.C.A. MACDONALD, “Literacy in an Oral Environment”, *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society*. Papers in Honour of Alan R. Millard (eds. P. BIENKOWSKI – C. MEE – E. SLATER) (JSOTSup 426; London 2005) 52-56, 65; A. MILLARD, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus* (Biblical Seminar 69; London 2001) 154. Morgan (*Literate Education*, 92-93) moves from this observation to argue that, since reading was taught before writing, the educational environment was inherently hierarchical, since a student would always “be able to understand more than he could articulate for himself” (93).

⁽⁴⁸⁾ HARRIS, *Ancient Literacy*, 5. In the same paragraph, Harris offers this caveat: “We shall certainly have to be on guard for the possibility that the difference between reading and writing levels was actually very great among the Greeks and Romans. There is, however, no especial reason to think that those who could truly read and truly *not* write were numerous” (emphasis original). However, he alludes to the difference between the two again when he claims that the fact that there was much reading material in the ancient world “must not lead us to the assumption that the majority of city-dwellers were able to read for themselves . . . *still less to the assumption that they could write*” (14; emphasis added; for similar statements see 176, 275, 276, 302). MEIER (*A Marginal Jew* I, 255) reads Harris along these lines, and a number of other scholars implicitly reference the difference between reading and writing in the ancient world with similar statements. For example, GAMBLE, “Literacy and Book Culture”, 645; LEMAIRE, “Writing”, 6.1005; T. THATCHER, *Why John Wrote a Gospel*. Jesus – Memory – History (Louisville, KY 2006) xv.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ R. CRIBIORE, *Gymnastics of the Mind*. Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt (Princeton 2001). This text is a revision of her earlier *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (ASP 36; Atlanta, GA 1996).

regarding two issues that illuminate the previous Pauline passages: (1) the stage of literate education at which individuals learned to write their names; and (2) the importance of demonstrating that ability.

Most children in the ancient world received no education beyond what their parents taught them at home, and here one must keep in mind the 10% general literacy rate as an indication of how many parents were literate enough to teach their children. Educational opportunities outside the home were dependent upon population, proximity to an urban environment, availability of teachers, and (perhaps above all) the financial resources of the family. Those few who were able to attend a formal school setting, however, have left important clues indicating how they learned to read and write. Scholars have had some idea of this process through ancient educational theorists who offer detail on the pedagogical process. For example, Dionysius of Halicarnassus (first century CE) provides an example, and it is here worth including the long quotation since he references the entire pedagogical spectrum, from initial instruction to professional writing:

When we are taught to read, first we learn by heart the names of the letters, then their shapes and their values, then, in the same way, the syllables and their effects, and finally words and their properties And when we have acquired knowledge of these things, we begin to write and read (γράφειν τε καὶ ἀναγινώσκειν), syllable by syllable and slowly at first. It is only when a considerable lapse of time has implanted firmly in our minds the forms of the words that we execute them with the utmost ease, and we read through any book that is given to us unfalteringly and with incredible confidence and speed. It must be assumed that something of this kind happens with accomplished professional writers when they come to deal with literary composition and the harmonious arrangement of clauses⁽⁵⁰⁾.

According to this theory, termed the “syllabic method”, literate education followed a clear pattern in which syllable recognition formed the initial stages⁽⁵¹⁾. It is significant here that Dionysius mentions compositional writing only in the context of professional writers.

According to Cribiore, however, the school papyri demonstrate a slightly different pedagogical agenda, which she terms the “copying method”. She says,

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Literary Composition* (USHER, LCL). This reference is from 2.229 of the Loeb edition. See also Manilius, *Astronomica* 2.755-61.

⁽⁵¹⁾ CRIBIORE, *Gymnastics*, 169.

The school exercises show that at the same time that students were learning to juggle the letters of the alphabet, they had to apply their new expertise by learning to write their personal names.

Thus, signature literacy — i.e., the ability to write one’s name — was actually a nascent stage of grapho-literacy, but one with important implications for the majority of students who would not proceed further, to which I will shortly turn⁽⁵²⁾. Under the “copying method” of literate education, after this stage students had to copy texts manually that they were incapable of reading, as evidenced by their inability to correct mistakes⁽⁵³⁾. Outside of the school papyri, Quintilian⁽⁵⁴⁾ and Seneca⁽⁵⁵⁾ attest the copying method with remarks that allude to the fact that writing instruction occurred after introduction to letters but prior to the building of syllables and/or reading comprehension. Writing in these instances, then, amounts to letter recognition and formation, without the ability to understand those letters as constituent parts of larger language units of syllables, words, or sentences⁽⁵⁶⁾. That these students were forced to copy texts letter by letter earned the name of “slow writers” (βραδέως γράφων/γράφουσα) for those who never advanced beyond this limited literacy, which can be described as “probably on the verge of illiteracy”⁽⁵⁷⁾. The early Christian author of

⁽⁵²⁾ CRIBIORE, *Gymnastics*, 167. On p. 168, Cribiore includes a photograph of an ostrakon where a schoolboy has written his name and then practiced the first four letters of the alphabet. Cribiore’s study provides evidence for the speculation of BAR-ILAN, “Illiteracy”, 56, n. 4, regarding signature literacy as an early stage in education.

⁽⁵³⁾ CRIBIORE, *Gymnastics*, 169. See also her *Writing*, 151: “These students were not able to read”.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.1.27: “As soon as the child has begun to know the shapes of the various letters, it will be no bad thing to have them cut as accurately as possible upon a board, so that the pen may be guided along the grooves” (BUTLER, LCL).

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Seneca, *Ep.* 94.15: “Their fingers are held and guided by others so that they may follow the outlines of the letters” (GUMMERE, LCL).

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Eleven years prior to Cribiore’s initial study of the school papyri, J.L. Crenshaw (“Education in Ancient Israel”, *JBL* 104 [1985] 607) noted that “numerous errors in the [Egyptian] school copies survived, which suggests that learning did not always accompany copying, inasmuch as students seem often not to have understood the text”.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ CRIBIORE, *Writing*, 6. Harris (*Ancient Literacy*, 276) inappropriately refers to “slow writers” as an “intermediate group”. This group more plausibly reflects those individuals whose education did not progress to the intermediate stage. Harris may here be generally referring to these individuals as “intermediate” in the sense of semi-literate. For further discussion of “slow writers”, see CRIBIORE,

Shepherd of Hermas was a “slow writer”. Though the command of *Vis.* 2.4.3 presumes he can read, Hermas must copy letter by letter since he cannot identify the syllables (τὰς συλλαβὰς), even if writing books⁽⁵⁸⁾.

Papyrologists have criticized Cribiore’s methodological basis for identifying the “syllabic” and “copying” methods as two separate instructional techniques⁽⁵⁹⁾. In her later work, Cribiore acknowledges the possibility that teachers could have practiced both simultaneously while advancing students with varying competencies through the different stages of literate education⁽⁶⁰⁾. However, Cribiore has demonstrated conclusively that, in the ancient world, ability in one literate skill does not automatically imply ability in the other and that compositional writing dwelled at the high end of the pedagogical spectrum, where few students ever progressed. That is, the ancient context was certainly familiar with individuals such as the town clerk Petaus (discussed immediately below), who could write a short formula but was not literate enough to know when he had made a mistake in his copying.

Of the minority of children who were educated, most did not progress far through the pedagogical system, and thus were

Writing, 116-117, 150-152; *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 163-164, 176-177; HARRIS, *Ancient Literacy*, 254, 254, n. 419, 276-277, 318; T.J. KRAUS, “‘Slow Writers’ — ΒΡΑΔΕΩΣ ΓΡΑΦΟΝΤΕΣ: What, How Much, and How Did They Write?”, (ID.) *Ad Fontes*. Original Manuscripts and Their Significance for Studying Early Christianity – Selected Essays (Leiden 2007) 131-147; YOUTIE, “Βραδέως γράφων”, 239-261.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ Herm. *Vis.* 2.4.3 (read); 2.1.4 (letter by letter); 2.1.4 and 2.4.3 (writing “little” books). One may compare here with Cicero’s scribes (*librarii*) Spintharo and Tiro, discussed in *Att.* 13.25. Spintharo has attained a slightly higher gradation of writing ability than Hermas, since he can follow dictation syllable by syllable. Even more advanced, however, is Tiro, who can follow whole sentences. For discussion of Hermas and Christian copyists, see K. HAINES-EITZEN, *Guardians of Letters*. Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature (New York 2000) 36-37.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ See especially K. VÖSSING, “Schreiben lernen, ohne lesen zu können? Zur Methode des antiken Elementarunterrichts,” *ZPE* 123 (1998) 121-125. Other reviews of Cribiore’s work are H. MAEHLER, review of *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* by Raffaella Cribiore, *Gnomon* 75 (2003) 229-235; K. VÖSSING, review of *Gymnastics of the Mind* by Raffaella Cribiore, *Gnomon* 75 (2003) 613-616.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ CRIBIORE, *Gymnastics*, 176-177. For her discussion of various ancient educational theorists and their descriptions of learning to write, see CRIBIORE, *Writing*, 139-152.

characterized by a limited writing capacity. That limited capacity, however, had significant repercussions. From that point on in an individual's life he or she would at least be ranked among those who could sign his or her own name on documents, and thus participate, even if marginally, in literate culture.

When teachers stressed penmanship among students, assigning them writing practice at a very early stage, they intended to take best advantage of the time at their disposal to make them part of the class of those who “did know letters”. Thus basic copying skills and the ability to produce a signature were probably considered more desirable in the first place than the ability to read properly, especially when balanced against the time and effort needed to produce such result⁽⁶¹⁾.

The importance for being able to demonstrate membership in the class of those who “know letters” cannot be overemphasized for those ancients in positions of even marginal power. One may here cite the famous Petaus, a town clerk (κωμογραμματεύς) who could “pass himself off as literate” by reproducing letters mechanically even though he could not read anything beyond his own name⁽⁶²⁾. That this was the case is revealed by a papyrus he used to practice his formula Πεταῦς κωμογρα(μματεύς) ἐπιδέδωκα (“I, Petaus, town clerk, have submitted”)⁽⁶³⁾. Once he made a mistake while practicing (omission of the initial *epsilon* of the verb at line 5), the mistake repeats itself⁽⁶⁴⁾. That is, Petaus cannot read enough to know he was repeating the mistake; he was simply copying the previous line. Petaus’ own writing abilities are all the more interesting because, when called upon to give an opinion on another town clerk who had been charged with illiteracy, he claimed boldly that of course the clerk was literate, for he had

⁽⁶¹⁾ CRIBIORE, *Writing*, 152. See also HARRIS, *Ancient Literacy*, 251-252. Cf. MURPHY-O’CONNOR, *Paul*, 8: “In the Greco-Roman world all who went to school learned to write, and were trained by being obliged to take down dictation”. This is (in the least) a gross overstatement.

⁽⁶²⁾ CRIBIORE, *Writing*, 151; *Gymnastics*, 172.

⁽⁶³⁾ *P.Petaus* 121 (P. Köln inv. 328). The papyrus appears on R. BAGNALL, *Reading Papyri, Writing Ancient History* (Approaching the Ancient World; London 1995) xiii (discussed on 24). An excellent discussion is that of YOUTIE, “Βραδέως γράφων”, 239-241.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ T.J. Kraus (“[I]lliteracy in Non-Literary Papyri from Graeco-Roman Egypt: Further Aspects to the Educational Ideal in Ancient Literary Sources”, [ID.] *Ad Fontes*, 119-120) gives a fuller description of the numerous mistakes in *P.Petaus* 121.

signed the papers passing through his office⁽⁶⁵⁾. Youtie notes the irony of Petaus’ defence of the other town clerk:

“He was in effect offering a defence not only of Ischyron, against whom the accusation had been directed, but also of himself and his own procedure”⁽⁶⁶⁾.

Though Petaus is not literate enough to correct a simple mistake, he certainly considers himself literate.

Against such a literary landscape, where few could write but those who could found it to be a significant accomplishment, it is now appropriate to consider the Pauline passages that call attention to Paul’s ability to write τῆ ἐμῆ χειρὶ. For the sake of clarity, I note here that an individual such as Petaus is important for understanding Paul’s demonstrations of grapho-literacy not because Paul’s literate competency was comparable with Petaus’ — Paul clearly had progressed pedagogically further — but rather because Petaus’ example displays the social significance of using what literate skills one had.

III. A Grapho-Literate Paul

Cribiore discusses the phenomenon of attaching an epistolary greeting in one’s own hand as evidence that one of the education process’ primary goals was simply to enable students to participate in literate culture⁽⁶⁷⁾. She states:

There can be no doubt that inhabitants of Graeco-Roman Egypt preferred to sign documents and letters in their clumsy, belaboured characters than be considered among illiterates. It was better to possess and exhibit the skill in limited and imperfect degree, however difficult and unpleasant to the eye their efforts were⁽⁶⁸⁾.

This observation may pertain to interpretations of Paul’s “big letters” in Gal 6,11. While the material evidence of unskilled writers

⁽⁶⁵⁾ For more on Petaus, see HAINES-EITZEN, *Guardians of Letters*, 27-28; KRAUS, “(Il)literacy”, 119-121; KRAUS, “Slow Writers”, 131-133; MACDONALD, “Literacy”, 53; E.G. TURNER, *Greek Papyri. An Introduction* (Oxford 1968) 83; H.C. YOUTIE, “ΑΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΟΣ: An Aspect of Greek Society in Egypt”, in *Scriptiunculae II*, 621-622; repr. from *HSCP* 75 (1971); YOUTIE, “Βραδέως γράφων”, 239-244.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ YOUTIE, “Βραδέως γράφων”, 239-240.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ CRIBIORE, *Writing*, 4-5, 7, 10.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ CRIBIORE, *Writing*, 10.

and “slow writers” does not prove that Paul’s letters were likewise unskilled, it does call into question the current robust rejection of Deissmann’s suggestion about Paul’s “big letters”. For the present study, however, the critical point is that, whether or not Paul’s writing is less than calligraphic, it is his.

In this sense, Cribiore’s observation equally illuminates the other four Pauline passages as well, as it draws attention to the importance, in the ancient world, of demonstrating the literate ability one possessed. If an individual could do nothing more than sign his name, he could locate himself within that minority of the society that was educated, even if he was clearly not as educated as others. That is, it was better to be on the bottom rung of the literacy ladder (and prove it) than it was not to be on the literacy ladder at all (and prove that). When Paul mentions that he writes with his own hand, therefore, he was not only pointing out how important a particular point or section of the epistle was to him. Though he may have been doing that amongst other things (and likely was), he was simultaneously making a point about himself — proving to the church he is addressing that he is an educated member of society. This was an important point to make, and especially when issues of textual interpretation were at stake and “the bulk of the membership [of Paul’s churches] was nonelite [i.e., illiterate], as 1 Cor 1,26 indicates”⁽⁶⁹⁾. Drawing attention to his educated status, however, was perhaps not the only rhetorical function of proving his grapho-literacy.

Literacy intertwined with status in a multifaceted manner in the ancient world. One aspect of this complex relationship concerns displays of grapho-literacy such as Paul’s. For persons of prestige, one mark of status was the ability to demonstrate literacy but simultaneously avoid its use⁽⁷⁰⁾. “One might almost say that there was a direct correlation between the social standing that guaranteed literacy and the means to avoid writing”⁽⁷¹⁾. (A rough modern analogy to this phenomenon would be the manner in which the über-rich may employ chauffeurs — they could drive themselves, but their ability to pay

⁽⁶⁹⁾ J.S. KLOPPENBORG VERBIN, *Excavating Q*. The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel (Edinburgh 2000) 167.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ Likewise with reading. See ACHTEMEIER, “*Omne verbum sonat*”, 16, who cites Pliny, *Epistulae* 3.5.15. In this passage, Pliny the Younger describes his uncle Pliny the Elder as having a servant ready to read to him (or take dictation) even while bathing.

⁽⁷¹⁾ BAGNALL, *Reading Papyri*, 25.

someone else to do that task is a sign of their status and/or wealth.) The first-century BCE author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* disparages the copying of full texts:

The laborious is not necessarily the excellent. There are many things requiring labour which you would not necessarily boast of having done — unless, to be sure, you thought it a glorious feat to have transcribed by your own hand whole dramas or speeches! ⁽⁷²⁾.

Thus, one finds that many of the grapho-literate individuals in the ancient world employed slaves or freedmen who had been trained as copyists ⁽⁷³⁾. The use of copyists, via one’s own means or patronage ⁽⁷⁴⁾, displayed that one had the ability to avoid the menial task of writing. This does not mean that rhetoricians, procurators, rabbis, or Pharisees did not compose their own letters and writings from time to time ⁽⁷⁵⁾. They most certainly did, as demonstrations of this literacy were critical to their authority, as it was critical even for Petaus — only a town clerk — to demonstrate his limited abilities. Significant in this respect is that the author of the *Rhetorica* does not disparage compositional writing or epistolary writing, but the rote copying of entire works. Quintilian (first century CE) shows how different gradations of writing were regarded as status symbols:

The art of writing well and quickly [i.e., shorthand] is not unimportant for our purpose, though it is generally disregarded by persons of quality. Writing is of the utmost importance in the study which we have under consideration and by its means alone can true and deeply rooted proficiency be obtained. But a sluggish pen delays our thoughts, while an unformed and illiterate hand cannot be deciphered, a circumstance which necessitates another wearisome task, namely the dictation of what we have written to a copyist. We shall therefore at all times and in all places, and above all when we are writing private letters to our friends, find a gratification in the thought that we have not neglected even this accomplishment ⁽⁷⁶⁾.

⁽⁷²⁾ *Rhet. Her.* 4.4.6 (CAPLAN, LCL).

⁽⁷³⁾ Many, perhaps most, early Christian copyists were slaves or freedmen. See HAINES-EITZEN, *Guardians of Letters*, 21-40.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ According to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.23, Ambrose was a patron of Origen, providing short-hand writers, copyists, and calligraphers for him. Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 61, also notes this fact.

⁽⁷⁵⁾ BAGNALL, *Reading Papyri*, 25. See also the ca. 400 CE carving of a Roman vicar in the act of writing his name, even though scribes attend him on either side, in J. NATANSON, *Early Christian Ivories* (London 1953), figure 8.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.1.28-29 (BUTLER, LCL).

According to Quintilian, writing is disparaged by some, but the ability to write epistles is prized and an important intellectual exercise. This reflects the point made earlier, that it is important that a person of status be able to write, but have a copyist at hand when it becomes irksome⁽⁷⁷⁾.

That grapho-literacy is simultaneously indicative of and antithetical to status in the thoughts of the author of the *Rhetorica* and Quintilian sheds further light on the passages where Paul highlights his own handwriting. Implicitly, these verses witness not just to Paul's grapho-literate competency, but also to the fact that he is important enough to be able to avoid its use if he desires. These verses thus say — again, implicitly — to Paul's audience (most of whom would not be able to write)⁽⁷⁸⁾: “Look, I can write, but I can avoid doing so. Most of you can do neither, so listen to me”.

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* *

Paul clearly found it beneficial to use an amanuensis when composing epistles in Greek⁽⁷⁹⁾. This in itself does not set Paul apart from other Jewish leaders, as even Josephus found that he needed help when composing in Greek⁽⁸⁰⁾. Hezser's comments on Josephus are

⁽⁷⁷⁾ HAINES-EITZEN, *Guardians of Letters*, 39, says, “It goes without saying that writers such as Jerome, Rufinus, and Augustine had plenty of uses for copyists”. See also R. BAUCKHAM, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*. The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony (Grand Rapids, MI 2006) 359-361; HEZSER, *Jewish Literacy*, 474-476; R.S. KRAEMER, “Women's Authorship of Jewish and Christian Literature in the Greco-Roman Period”, “*Women Like This*”. *New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. A.-J. LEVINE) (Atlanta, GA 1991) 227; MACDONALD, “Literacy”, 65 (referring to medieval England). Note that *4 Ezra* (=2 Esd) 14.50 refers to Ezra as “scribe of the knowledge of the Most High” (NRSV) even though 14.42 makes clear that Ezra himself did not actually write, but rather copyists took dictation.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ This is not to claim that Paul's audience was completely illiterate. For one thing, Paul clearly presumed that at least one person (or his carrier) would be able to read. For another, as emphasized at the beginning of this article, literacy existed in gradations. It is safe to assume, however, that if Paul's churches were similar to the rest of the culture, the vast majority of his audience would have been incapable of writing and found Paul's ability to write to be significant.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ For a thorough study of the amanuensis in Paul, see RICHARDS, *Secretary*; and his *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing*. *Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downers Grove 2004).

⁽⁸⁰⁾ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.9, 51. See also Josephus, *Ant.* 20.12.1, where Josephus refers to his Greek education.

apropos here in light of the previous discussion of Paul’s Greek abilities:

Josephus should probably be seen as an example of those upper-class Jews who had achieved a relatively high level of Greek education, being able to read and discuss Greek literature, although not able to write a faultless and stylistically sophisticated Greek without outside help⁽⁸¹⁾.

The primary focus of this study has not been Paul’s dependence upon an amanuensis, however, but rather has concerned his motives for breaking into the work of the amanuensis in order to demonstrate his own writing abilities. When Paul signs his own name and writes the formulaic statement “the greeting is in my hand” or an oath (“I will repay”), he demonstrates both his identity as an educated individual who “knows letters” (and Greek ones at that) and that he is a person of true prestige — able to write, but able to avoid it as well and have an amanuensis write the bulk of the epistle.

In terms of material evidence for his writing ability in Greek, the apostle has left us an admittedly meagre corpus of “actual” Pauline writing (as opposed to “Pauline” writing produced by the hand of an amanuensis). However, while keeping in mind that lack of demonstration was not necessarily indicative of lack of ability (though at times it was), one may hazard a comment on Paul’s training in Greek based on the evidence we have. If Paul’s use of an amanuensis is due to the fact that he can write nothing more than short greetings and his name, this would suggest that his education in Greek was, in the least, adequate but not protracted. Since he penned greetings (i.e., not only formulae) and therefore was capable of at least a limited degree of compositional writing, Paul was more proficient than a “slow-writer” in Greek and certainly more advanced than Petaus, who had to copy line by line and was thus incapable of even a small degree of compositional writing. If Paul wrote all of Philemon, this would set him even further apart from a slow-writer. Nonetheless, there is likely truth in the estimation of Deissmann that “Paul preferred to dictate his letters; writing [at least in Greek] was not particularly easy for him”⁽⁸²⁾. Composing a greeting, or even Philemon, was not the same as composing the entirety of Romans or the Corinthian Correspondence, and Paul sought the help of a professional for lengthier tasks in the *lingua franca*, much the same as Josephus.

⁽⁸¹⁾ HEZSER, *Jewish Literacy*, 91.

⁽⁸²⁾ DEISSMANN, *Paul*, 49. See also his *Light*, 166, n. 7, 174, 246.

To what extent this competency level is reflective of his training under Gamaliel (Acts 22,3) or his Diasporan hometown of Tarsus, or both, however, is not entirely clear⁽⁸³⁾. Combined with an everyday immersion in a Greek-speaking culture, one need posit little beyond the initial stages of literate education in order to account for the level of grapho-literate competency in Greek that Paul displays in the aforementioned passages of explicit writing. However, while Paul may not appear to have travelled far enough down the Greek pedagogical path to be able to compose lengthy and intricate texts, what grapho-literacy in Greek he had would have placed him in the top echelon of Jewish society (in terms of literacy). More importantly, this is something he wanted his audience to know.

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SUMMARY

Recent research in the school papyri of Egypt, especially Oxyrhynchus, has illuminated our understanding of the pedagogical process in the Greco-Roman world. Particularly interesting in this respect is the acquisition and social function of grapho-literacy (i.e., the ability to compose writing). Since few were literate, and of those few, fewer could read than could write, understanding how one gained grapho-literacy, who gained grapho-literacy, and how that literacy was employed in day to day life shines new light on passages such as 1 Cor 16,21, Gal 6,11, Col 4,18, 2 Thess 3,17, and Phlm 19. In these passages, Paul draws attention to the fact that he has personally written in the text. This paper will argue that these passages are not merely interesting asides, but rather significantly heighten the rhetorical force of the text. They draw attention not only to Paul's grapho-literacy, but also to his ability to avoid using it.

⁽⁸³⁾ G.F. Moore (*Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era. The Age of the Tannaim* [Cambridge 1927-1930] I, 322) claims "Hellenistic Jews" (by which he means those outside Palestine and Babylonia) were taught the scriptures in Greek. Likewise, M. HENGEL, *The Pre-Christian Paul* (London 1991), posits that Paul would have received a Greek-speaking Jewish elementary education consisting of the LXX (38; and thus Greek was his mother tongue), but that he returned to Jerusalem as an adolescent, where he honed his oratorical skills in Greek-speaking synagogues (58). However, MacDonald ("Literacy", 72, n. 72, 73) notes the lack of evidence for Jewish Greek education in the Diaspora. Hezser (*Jewish Literacy*, 90) observes that Josephus "is the only Jew who explicitly describes the way he learned Greek and received an education". See Josephus, *Ant.* 20.12.1.