

SILVANUS WAS NOT PETER'S SECRETARY:
THEOLOGICAL BIAS IN INTERPRETING
διὰ Σιλουανοῦ . . . ἔγραψα IN 1 PETER 5:12

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In 1 Pet 5:12 we find the phrase “I am writing through Silvanus” (γράφω¹ διὰ Σιλουανοῦ). This passing remark by Peter has garnered more than its fair share of attention from scholarship. Many a tall building has been constructed upon this exegetical cornerstone. Yet oddly enough, very little research has been done on this phrase, and certainly not enough to warrant the sweeping historical conclusions usually made about this verse.

The basic formula is (a) a first or second person active form of γράφω with (b) διὰ and a person or persons.² With the active voice, the subject of γράφω is obviously the writer, so “through” must indicate that the writing process was somehow done through the intermediation of the person(s) identified in the διὰ-clause.

The question for us today concerns not the writer but rather the intermediary indicated in the διὰ-clause. This question is twofold. The first is an ancient issue: did this formula³ in Greco-Roman antiquity identify the secretary or the letter-carrier or perhaps both? The second question is a modern issue: do some of us allow an evangelical agenda to prejudice our reading of this formula?

It is often judged that this expression identifies Silvanus as the secretary who was used to write down 1 Peter. The NIV seems to want to leave this as an option: “With the help of Silvanus . . . I have written to you,” as does the TEV: “I write you this brief letter with the help of Silas.” Other translations are equally vague, for example, the Jerusalem Bible: “I write these few words to you through Silvanus” or the NEB: “I write you this brief appeal through Silvanus” or the RSV and KJV: “By Silvanus . . . I have written briefly.”

Others believe that this formula identifies the person who carried the letter. This is the clear meaning of the Living Bible: “I am *sending* this note to you through the courtesy of Silvanus” or the Phillip’s rendering: “I am *sending* this short letter by Silvanus.” To make their point clear, both translations change the verb from “I am writing” to “I am sending.”

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¹ It is assumed that ἔγραψα is an epistolary aorist, though this is open to discussion.

² Obviously, any type of formula where γράφω is in the passive voice would be an entirely different matter, such as the common “having been written by the prophets,” since the object of διὰ then directly identifies the writer (in a typical agency syntax for διὰ).

³ I am using the term “formula” rather loosely. This expression does not have to qualify as an established stereotyped epistolary formula for this thesis.

In antiquity, could this formula be used to identify *either* the secretary or the letter carrier? It will be argued here that this formula identified *only* the letter-carrier and was not used to identify the secretary.

I. γράφω διά τινος IN GRECO-ROMAN EPISTOLOGRAPHY

What examples do we have of the formula γράφω διά τινος? It is found in two sets of writing that are quite analogous to 1 Peter: the letters of Ignatius and the Philippian letter of Polycarp. A careful historical analysis is necessary to demonstrate that Ignatius and Polycarp are using the formula to identify *solely* the letter-carrier. We will then look at the handful of examples that extant secular papyri offer us.

1. *The Letters of Ignatius.* According to Eusebius, Ignatius was carried to Rome for martyrdom in the tenth year of Trajan, i.e. AD 108.⁴ On the journey, Ignatius visited several churches in Asia. During a stop in Smyrna, he wrote to Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, and Rome. During a subsequent stop in Troas, he wrote to Philadelphia and Smyrna, and he also sent a letter to Polycarp (the bishop of Smyrna).⁵

In the letter to the Philadelphians, Ignatius comments: “The love of the brethren at Troas salutes you; and I am writing thence to you by the hand of Burrhus, who was sent with me by the Ephesians and Smyrnaeans as a mark of honor.”⁶ Kirsopp Lake, the Loeb translator, renders the phrase γράφω ὑμῖν

⁴ Scholarship is by no means unanimous in supporting Eusebius’s dating, but there is general agreement that Ignatius died during the reign of Trajan (AD 98–117). See e.g. Kirsopp Lake, *Apostolic Fathers*, 2 vols. (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1912) 1:166. Streeter (*The Primitive Church*, Hewett Lectures 1928 [London: Macmillan, 1929] 275–276) argues for AD 115. Lightfoot (*The Apostolic Fathers* [3 vols.; 2d ed.; vol. 1, pt. 2: *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*; London: Macmillan, 1889] 1.2:30) conservatively summarizes: “His martyrdom may with a high degree of probability be placed within a few years of AD 110, before or after.”

⁵ Eus. *H.E.* 3.36.3–10. (All patristic texts and English translations are from the LCL unless otherwise noted.)

Ignatius’s letters are extant in three recensions: the so-called “short” edition containing three letters (Polycarp, Ephesians, Romans) in a very abridged form; the so-called “mean” or “middle” edition containing the three aforementioned letters in longer form plus Magnesians, Trallians, Philadelphians, and Smyrnaeans; and the so-called “long” edition containing still longer forms of the seven preceding letters plus Mary of Cassobola to Ignatius, Ignatius to Mary of Cassobola, Ignatius to the Tarsians, to the Antiochenes, to Hero, and to the Philippians.

The Middle Ages knew the enlarged and interpolated edition of 12 letters. In 1644 Ussher uncovered the middle edition in Latin. The Greek text of this edition was discovered soon afterwards. In 1845 the yet shorter edition of three letters was discovered in a Syriac edition by Cureton. See e.g. James Orr, *The Early Church: Its History and Literature* (2d ed.; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1903) 41.

Seven is the number of letters supported by Eusebius. The genuineness of the seven letter edition was finally established by the monumental work of J. B. Lightfoot (*Ignatius*, 1.2:70–134, 328–430) and Theodor Zahn (*Ignatius von Antiochien* [Gotha: Perthes, 1873]). The more recent thesis of Reinoud Weijenberg (*Les lettres d’Ignace d’Antioche* [Leiden: Brill, 1969]) that the middle recension is an abridgement of the long—and thus authentic—recension is admirably argued but finally unconvincing; see e.g. Wm. R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 5.

⁶ Ign. *Phld.* 11.2; ἀπάξεται ὑμᾶς ἡ ἀγάπη τῶν ἀδελφῶν τῶν Τρωάδι· ὅθεν καὶ γράφω ὑμῖν διὰ Βούρρου πεμφθέντος ἅμα ἔμοι ἀπὸ Ἐφεσίων καὶ Συμρναίων εἰς λόγον τιμῆς.

διὰ βούρρου as “and I am writing thence to you by the hand of Burrhus.” Certainly Burrhus, a deacon, was a significant character in the present ministry of Ignatius, for he is described in glowing terms by Ignatius in his letter to the Ephesians (2:1):

Now concerning my fellow servant,⁷ Burrhus, your deacon by the will of God, who is blessed in all things, I beg that he may stay longer, for your honour and for that of the bishop.

Ignatius closes his letter to the Smyrnaeans in the same fashion as the Philadelphian letter but with an additional remark:

The love of the brethren who are at Troas salutes you, whence I am writing to you by Burrhus, whom you together with the Ephesians your brothers sent with me, and he has in every way refreshed me. Would that all imitated him, for he is a pattern of the ministry of God. In all things grace shall reward him.⁸

Camelot, the translator for the Sources chrétiennes edition, seems to understand the phrase ὅθεν καὶ γράφω ὑμῖν διὰ Βούρρου to be identifying Burrhus as the secretary: “Thus I have written to you through the intermediation of Burrhus.”⁹ Lake is more ambiguous in his translation: “whence also I am writing you by Burrhus” (LCL 1:265). Again, with wording strikingly similar to his letter to the Smyrnaeans, Ignatius includes in his farewell greetings to the Magnesians:

The Ephesians greet you from Smyrna, whence also I am writing to you; they, like yourselves, are here for the glory of God and have in all things given me comfort, together with Polycarp the bishop of the Smyrnaeans.¹⁰

Note the striking parallels between these passages:

Ign. *Phld.* 11:2: ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς ἡ ἀγάπη τῶν ἀδελφῶν τῶν ἐν Τρωάδι, ὅθεν καὶ γράφω ὑμῖν διὰ Βούρρου,

Ign. *Smyrn.* 12:1: Ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς ἡ ἀγάπη τῶν ἀδελφῶν τῶν ἐν Τρωάδι, ὅθεν καὶ γράφω ὑμῖν διὰ Βούρρου,

Ign. *Magn.* 15:1: Ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς Ἐφέσιοι ἀπὸ Σμύρνης, ὅθεν καὶ γράφω ὑμῖν,

Why does Ignatius mention Burrhus to the Smyrnaeans and not to the Magnesians? Was Burrhus not with Ignatius when the letter was written to the Magnesians and thus unable to serve as the letter's secretary, leaving Ignatius to use an anonymous scribe?¹¹ We will show in a moment that Burrhus was

⁷ Note that it *might* be significant that Burrhus is also called a συνδοῦλος, a term, incidentally, that Paul uses to describe Epaphras (Col 1:7) and Tychicus (Col 4:7), both of whom traditionally are considered to be letter-carriers and not secretaries.

⁸ Ign. *Smyrn.* 12:1: Ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς ἡ ἀγάπη τῶν ἀδελφῶν τῶν ἐν Τρωάδι, ὅθεν καὶ γράφω ὑμῖν διὰ Βούρρου, ὃν ἀπεστείλατε μετ' ἐμοῦ ἅμα Ἐφεσίων, τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὑμῶν, ὃς κατὰ πάντα με ἀνέπαυσεν· καὶ ὄφελος πάντες αὐτὸν ἐμμοῦτο, ὄντα ἐχεμπλάριον θεοῦ διακονίας. ἀμείψεται αὐτὸν ἡ χάρις κατὰ πάντα.

⁹ “c'est de la que je vous ecris par l'intermediaire de Burrhus”; P. Th. Camelot, ed., *Ignace d'Antioche* (4th corr. ed.; SC no. 10; Paris: Les editions du Cerf, 1969); *Smyrn.* 12:1 (p. 143).

¹⁰ Ign. *Magn.* 15:1.

¹¹ Secretaries were the established practice; see my work, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (WUNT 2/42; Tübingen: Mohr, 1991). Walter Bauer (*Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Polykarpbrief*, vol. 2, in *Die Apostolischen Väter*, 3 vols. in 1 [HNTSup; Tübingen: Mohr, 1920] 254) correctly assumes that Ignatius used an amanuensis for all his letters.

indeed with Ignatius when both letters were composed. We will argue it was not a change in scribes but carriers. Ignatius used Burrhus to carry the letter to the Smyrnaeans but not the letter to the Magnesians.

Three reasons lead us to conclude that the formula *γράφω διά* refers to the letter-carrier. First, Ignatius's closing farewell in his letter to the Romans: "Now I am writing these things to you from Smyrna by the blessed Ephesians, and Crocus, a name very dear to me, is also with me, and many others."¹² A casual English reading might tie Crocus with the Ephesians, but the text clearly lists Crocus as the subject of its own independent clause. So for our purposes here, the germane clause is: "Now I am writing these things to you from Smyrna by the blessed Ephesians." Here we find again the same formula used in other letters (see fig. 1). Yet it is quite improbable—if not impossible—that an entire group of persons (the Ephesians) served as his secretary. The logistical problems and the fact that as far as I know the practice was unknown, rule against the possibility,¹³ while a group (elsewhere this group is always mentioned collectively by Ignatius) could be cited as the carrier.¹⁴

Second, while it was not customary to commend secretaries¹⁵ nor to assert their trustworthiness, etc., this was commonly done for the letter-carrier. He was often a personal link between the author and the recipients. Oral additions to a letter were highly prized.¹⁶ A trustworthy carrier often carried additional information. The letter may describe the situation briefly, frequently with the author's assessment, but the carrier was expected to elaborate all the details.¹⁷ The church in Ephesus was told by Paul to expect such from Tychicus as the letter-carrier:

Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. I am sending

¹² Ign. *Rom.* 10:1: Γράφω δὲ ὑμῖν ταῦτα ἀπὸ Σμύρνης δι' Ἐφεσίων τῶν ἀξιομακαρίστων. ἔστιν δὲ καὶ ἅμα ἐμοὶ σὺν ἄλλοις πολλοῖς καὶ Κρόκος, τὸ ποθητόν μοι ὄνομα.

¹³ So also argues Schoedel, *Ignatius* 214. It is also unlikely that this refers to co-authors. Co-authors are customarily listed in the letter address. I know of no examples where this formula was used to indicate co-authors. See my work *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* 47–49. Furthermore, Ignatius's letter to the Romans is such a personal, self-effacing letter defending his personal right to die a martyr's death. It scarcely lends itself to co-authors.

¹⁴ See e.g. Cic. *Att.* 2.8.

¹⁵ The rare exception might be Cicero's references about Tiro to Atticus.

¹⁶ While in exile from Rome, Cicero preferred the oral reports of travellers over any letters he received; Cic. *Fam.* 5.4.1.

¹⁷ See e.g. Cicero's complaint (*Fam.* 4.2.1): "I received your letter . . . and on reading it I gathered that Philotimus did not act . . . [on] the instructions he had from you (as you write) . . . [when] he failed to come to me himself, and merely forwarded me your letter; and I concluded that it was shorter because you had imagined that he would deliver it in person." See also Cic. *Fam.* 3.5; 10.7; 1.8.1; 3.1.1. In *Fam.* 7.18.4, the carrier tells Cicero that the author wishes the letter destroyed after he reads it. See also John White, *Light from Ancient Letters* (Foundations and Facets; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 216 and *PCol* 3.6.

In the case of intrigue, the oral message from the carrier might be the real message. Brutus (Cic. *Fam.* 11.20.4) makes this comment: "Please write me a reply to this letter at once, and send one of your own men with it, if there is anything somewhat confidential which you think it necessary for me to know." Confidentiality was a problem. Cicero (Cic. *Att.* 1.13) once complained, "There are very few who can carry a letter of weight without lightening it by a perusal."

him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.¹⁸

Paul would have known that Tychicus would disclose Paul's situation. Paul *explicitly* mentions this (in v. 21) as a further sign that he is not ashamed of his chains (v. 20). He *wanted* Tychicus to describe his situation. Likewise Phoebe is commended in Romans 16.¹⁹

We are all familiar with the basically verbatim endorsements of Tychicus to the Colossians and to the Ephesians:

Eph 6:21 . . . πάντα γνωρίσει ὑμῖν
Τυχικός ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἀδελφὸς καὶ
πιστὸς διάκονος ἐν κυρίῳ,

ὃν ἔπεμψα πρὸς ὑμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ
τοῦτο, ἵνα γνῶτε τὰ περὶ ἡμῶν καὶ
παρακαλέση τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν.

Col 4:7 . . . πάντα γνωρίσει ὑμῖν
Τυχικός ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἀδελφὸς καὶ
πιστὸς διάκονος καὶ σύνδουλος ἐν
κυρίῳ,

8 ὃν ἔπεμψα πρὸς ὑμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ
τοῦτο, ἵνα γνῶτε τὰ περὶ ἡμῶν καὶ
παρακαλέση τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν,

The repetition in the endorsements may be easily explained in light of the exact same phenomenon in the letters of Ignatius. In commending the same carrier in a different letter to a different church, Ignatius's secretary merely repeated the somewhat stereotypical endorsement:

Ign. *Phld.* 11:2: ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς ἡ
ἀγάπη τῶν ἀδελφῶν τῶν ἐν Τρωάδι,
ὅθεν καὶ γράφω ὑμῖν διὰ Βούρρου,

Ign. *Smyrn.* 12:1: Ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς ἡ
ἀγάπη τῶν ἀδελφῶν τῶν ἐν Τρωάδι,
ὅθεν καὶ γράφω ὑμῖν διὰ Βούρρου,

We argue, then, that commendations such as we find in the Ignatian letters are known to be given for a letter-carrier but not for a secretary.²⁰

Third, Burrhus was available to serve as a secretary for all seven letters, but is cited by the γράφω διὰ formula in only two of them.²¹ Furthermore, the two letters that do cite Burrhus (Philadelphia and Smyrna) were sent to churches (along with a letter to Polycarp the bishop of Smyrna) at a later time and from a different location than the other letters. We could argue that Burrhus served as the secretary only in these later two letters because Ignatius in Troas no longer had access to the secretary he used in Smyrna

¹⁸ Eph 6:21–22. Even if this letter were pseudonymous, the argument remains. The forger would have considered this a normal item to note about a letter-carrier.

¹⁹ Her commendation is more extensive, taking the form of a *littera commendatica*, which was customarily carried by the recommended person. John White ("Greek Documentary Letter Tradition, Third Century B.C.E. to Third Century C.E.," *Semeia* 22 [1981] 95–97) offers a convenient summary of the structure, essential elements, and distinctives of this type of letter.

²⁰ So also Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 351–352. Theodor Zahn (*Introduction to the New Testament* [3 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1909] 2:150) interestingly tries to turn this argument on its head, maintaining that the commendation of Silvanus was too great for a mere carrier or a secretary, but rather must be an indication that Silvanus had a larger role than that of a mere scribe, i.e. that of a co-author. In light of Paul's commendations of Tychicus, 1 Pet 5:12 hardly seems excessive.

²¹ *Phld.* 11:2; *Smyrn.* 12:1.

for the earlier letters. This is possible; however, we must explain then why the letter to Polycarp written from Troas at the same time as the letter to the Smyrnaeans does not mention Burrhus. This is not an insurmountable difficulty. Should the other evidence have argued that this formula indicated the secretary, we could fit this evidence in. However, since the other evidence argues that this formula identifies only the letter-carrier, then we find this last piece of evidence much easier to explain as referring to the carrier than the secretary.

Walter Bauer contends that the letters to Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles, all written from Smyrna, were carried back by the very ones who came to visit Ignatius.²² Thus these letters did not require an introduction for the carrier. Burrhus was originally from Ephesus and probably was supported by the church at Ephesus, thus explaining Ignatius's request: "I pray that he may stay longer for the honor of you and your bishop" (Ign. *Eph.* 2:1). While in Smyrna, Ignatius also sent a letter to the Romans carried by the group of Ephesians (Rom 10:1). Presumably they carried both the letter to their home church, Ephesus, and this letter to the Romans, dropping off the letter in Ephesus and then securing transport on to Rome.²³ Burrhus clearly did not accompany the letter to Ephesus, since Ignatius requests in that very letter that Burrhus remain with him longer in Smyrna. Burrhus also did not accompany the letter to Rome, since he is found later with Ignatius in Troas.

While in Troas, Ignatius sent final letters to Philadelphia and Smyrna. These two cities are not "on the way" to Ephesus from Troas. Is it reasonable to assume that he asked Burrhus to carry these? I argue "yes" for two reasons. One, trustworthy carriers were a problem.²⁴ Two, Ignatius tells us in his letter to Polycarp (*Pol.* 8:1) that he had wanted to write once more to all the churches but could not because of a "sudden sailing" from Troas to Neapolis. Because of this haste, he is likely unable to find reliable carriers to those churches. Burrhus was leaving him to return to Ephesus.²⁵ Ignatius imposes upon Burrhus to carry letters first to the other churches. He was to stop in Philadelphia to deliver the letter, which contains a brief introduction of Burrhus as the letter-carrier explaining his relation to Ignatius and to Smyrna and Ephesus.²⁶ Burrhus was then to carry the other two letters to Smyrna. Burrhus is noted in this letter as the letter-carrier to indicate that his return to Smyrna was at Ignatius's request. The letter to the church at Smyrna contains a word of thanks for their contribution to Burrhus's support: "he [Burrhus] has refreshed me in every way. Would

²² Bauer, *Die Briefe* 254. So also Schoedel, *Ignatius* 191.

²³ William Schoedel (*Ignatius* 191) argues that the special mention of Crocus may indicate that he was the one in the group designated to carry the letter to Rome (by sea). Ignatius mentioned it to insure the Ephesian church's expeditious support for Crocus so that that the Roman letter arrived in Rome before Ignatius did.

²⁴ Letters were sometimes lost, intercepted/destroyed or read. Carriers were also commonly expected to supplement the information provided in the letter they carried. See my work *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* 7–10.

²⁵ Presumably at the request of his church in Ephesus, if we may read that into Ignatius's "prayer" that Burrhus be allowed to stay with him a little longer (Ign. *Eph.* 2:1).

²⁶ Ign. *Phld.* 11:2.

that all imitated him . . .”²⁷ The Smyrnaeans had contributed to Burrhus’s support in some way, since Ignatius had mentioned in another letter that Burrhus had been “sent with me by the Ephesians and the Smyrnaeans as a mark of honor.”²⁸ The mention of Burrhus in this letter, then, is quite understandable. Equally understandable is why the private letter to Polycarp needed no commendation of the letter-carrier. Ignatius did not routinely commend his carrier, as is seen in the Magnesian letter.

2. *The Letter of Polycarp.* We had earlier noted that the evidence for the use of the formula *γράφω διά τινος* to identify only the letter-carrier came from two sources analogous to the NT. The letters of Ignatius are one source. The letter of Polycarp to the Philippians is the second. Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, was martyred on February 23, AD 155. According to Irenaeus, Polycarp wrote several letters.²⁹ Only his letter to the Philippians is extant. Apparently, the Philippians desired to make a collection of Ignatius’s letters. They wrote to Polycarp to request his assistance. His reply letter to them served as a “cover letter” for the copies that Polycarp was able to secure and send to them.³⁰

This letter, perhaps not surprisingly, concludes in a very similar manner to Ignatius’s letters. For our purposes here, it is wise to read his entire closing comments.

I have written this to you by Crescens, whom I commended to you when I was present, and now commend again. For he has behaved blamelessly among us, and I believe that he will do the same with you. His sister shall be commended to you when she comes to you. Farewell in the Lord Jesus Christ in grace, with all who are yours. Amen.³¹

The conclusion to his letter is extant only in the Latin recension, but *scripsi per* seems to be the Latin translation of *γράφω διά* in the Greek original. Crescens is clearly the letter-carrier here because Polycarp commends him and then adds that his sister will also receive a commendation when she *comes* to Philippi. Thus this formula (*γράφω διά τινος*) indicates the letter carrier in both the letters of Ignatius and Polycarp.

One argument is often cited as evidence that the formula *γράφω διά τινος* could *not* indicate the carrier but only the secretary. Eusebius quotes an excerpt from Clement’s letter to the Corinthians: “Today we observed the holy day of the Lord, and read out your letter, which we shall continue to read from time to time for our admonition, as we do with that which was formerly sent [written] to us through Clement.”³² It is argued—correctly—that this

²⁷ Ign. *Smyrn.* 12:1.

²⁸ Ign. *Phld.* 11:2. So also Schoedel, *Ignatius* 191.

²⁹ Iren. *Adv. Haer.* 5.33.4.

³⁰ So Lake, LCL, 1:280.

³¹ Pol. *Phil.* 16: Haec vobis scripsi per Crescentem, quem in praesenti commendavi vobis et nunc commendo. Conversatus est enim nobiscum inculpabiliter; credo quia et vobiscum similiter. Sororem autem eius habebitis commendatam, cum venerit ad vos. Incolumae estote in domino Iesu Christo in gratia cum omnibus vestris. Amen.

³² Eus. *H.E.* 4.23.11: . . . ὡς καὶ τὴν προτέραν ἡμῖν διὰ Κλήμεντος γραφεῖσαν. Lake’s choice of “sent” for *γραφεῖσαν* is interesting.

could scarcely be interpreted to mean that Clement was the letter-carrier. I agree, but it is equally nonsensical to argue that this is identifying Clement as the secretary.³³ This phrase should not even be included in the discussion because it does not use *γράφω* in the first person. Since the writer is not the subject of *γράφω*, it is not surprising that the described agent “*διὰ Κλήμεντος*” fits neither the carrier nor the secretary.³⁴

3. *Secular Papyri*. A recent electronic search produced five papyri that use the *γράφω διὰ τινος* formula: BGU I 33, PMich VIII 466, POxy 937, POxy 129, and PFay 123.³⁵ Two of these papyri, BMich VIII 466³⁶ and POxy 129,³⁷ have sufficient variations from the standard *γράφω διὰ τινος* for-

³³ See the conclusion of J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (WBC; Waco: Word, 1988) 306–307.

³⁴ J. A. T. Robinson (*Redating the New Testament* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976] 168) also cites as a parallel, *Mart. Pol.* 20.1, where the church in Smyrna writes to the church in Philomelium: *ἡμεῖς δὲ κατὰ τὸ παρὸν ἐπὶ κεφαλαίῳ μεμηνύκαμεν διὰ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ ἡμῶν Μαρκίου* (“but we have for the present explained them in summary by our brother Marcion” [LCL]). Robinson also concludes that Marcion could not in any way be deemed the amanuensis of the letter. I agree, but would not consider the passage even analogous.

³⁵ Excluding illiteracy formulae which use *γράφω διὰ* with the accusative (“I have written because he does not know letters”); see e.g. PLond 23; POslo 29. I would have preferred more evidence from the secular papyri. Why are examples so scarce? As is the case with secretarial references, ancient letter writers rarely commented on such mundane matters, unless there were situational reasons; see e.g. POxy 937 discussed below; and my recent article, “The Codex and the Early Collection of Paul’s Letters,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 8 (1998) 155 n. 22.

I am indebted to Mr. Eliseo D. Perez, who did this search in preparation for a Th.M. thesis at Dallas Theological Seminary, sharing a rough draft with me. Perez also cited BGU II 385 and PAmh II 131. Yet these two papyri do not even use the *γράφω διὰ τινος* formula. He noted that the *γράφω* formula is missing, arguing these papyri do include a delivery formula (*ἀπόδος διὰ τινος*). Yet why would ancients then have used *γράφω διὰ τινος* if they had a delivery formula they could use—a reasonable assumption (though based perhaps upon the American veneration of “efficiency”), but not one supported by the evidence. How many ancient epistolary formula could survive a redundancy criterion?

³⁶ This papyrus, dated 26 March AD 107, reads:

Julius Apollinarios to his dearest father, Julius Sabinus, very many greetings. Before all else I pray that you are well, which is what I have wished for, because I revere you next to the gods. But this has troubled me, that though I often wrote through Saturninus the signifier, likewise through Julius the son of Longinus (*γράφαντος διὰ Σατουρνίνου τοῦ σημεαφ[όρου], ὄμ[ο]ίως διὰ Ἰου[λ]ιανοῦ τοῦ Λονγείνου*) even yet you have not answered me about your health. Notwithstanding, now that you have been asked, consider it a necessity above all to write to me about your welfare. Several times I asked Longinus, who carries the letter to you (*Λονγείνου[ν]τι[ο]ν κομίζοντά σοι τὸ ἐπιστόλιον*) in order to take something to you and he refused, claiming that he was unable to take anything. . .

Using *γράφω* in a participial form probably alters the construction too much to be used in our discussion here. Nevertheless, the most reasonable interpretation of this text is still that Saturninus, Julius, and now Longinus were all carriers of letters.

³⁷ This papyrus, a marriage revocation dated to the 6th Christian century, is published in two different sources, POxy, vol. 1 and *Select Papyri* (LCL), and reads:

I, John, father of Euphemia, my unemancipated daughter, do send (*διαπέμτομα ἐγ[ω]*) this present deed of separation and dissolution to you, Phoebammon, my most honorable son-in-law, by the hand of the most illustrious advocate Anastasius (*διὰ Ἀνοστασίου τοῦ λαμπρο[τάτου] ἐκδίκου*) of this city of Oxyrhynchus. It is as follows . . . I therefore send you (*διαπεψάμην σοι*) the present deed of dissolution of the engagement between you and her, my daughter Euphemia, by the hand of the most illustrious advocate aforesaid with my own

mula that they cannot be used.³⁸ Of the remaining three papyri, PFay 123 is a clear parallel to 1 Pet 5:12:

Harpocraton to his brother Bellenus Sabinus, greetings. I wrote to you yesterday too by your servant Mardon (καὶ ἐδθέξ σοι ἔγραψα διὰ Μάρδωνος), desiring you to know that owing to having been molested I was unable to come down . . .³⁹

The letter also mentions that one of Harpocraton's servants, a Jew named Teuphilus, also desired to go to Sabinus (probably as the carrier of the letter). Thus Mardon was noted as the carrier of the previous (yesterday's) letter, which he carried as he returned to his master, in the manner typical of the period, in case the letter had been lost in transit.

The second papyrus, POxy 937, dated to the 3rd Christian century, has some variation: a 2nd person imperative of γράφω in a compound form is used, ἀντιγράφω ("to reply in writing"). Nevertheless, the parallelism to 1 Pet 5:12 is compelling:

Demarchus to his sister Taor, very many greetings. I would have you know that you wrote to me about what Agathinus did to me . . . Write me a reply through the man from Antinoöpolis about whom I sent to you (ἀντίγραψόν μοι διὰ τοῦ Ἀντινοέω[ς] περὶ οὗ σοι ἔπεμψα) and write the list there that you received so and so. If the man from Antinoöpolis wants anything provide him with it, and come with him to meet Tasoitas. Send our cloak and the jar of pickled fish and two cotylae of good oil. I pray for your health. You will receive three bags from the man from Antinoöpolis who is the bearer of this letter (τοῦ Ἀντινοέως τοῦ σοι τὰ γράμματα διδόντος).

[Addressed:] Deliver to my sister Taor from Demarchus.

Because the bearer is also to deliver goods, he is deliberately named again, removing any question that ἀντίγραψόν μοι διὰ τοῦ Ἀντινοέω[ς] refers to the bearer of the letter.

The third papyrus, BGU I 33, reads:

Greet your sister and your brother and the little one (female) and all those in the house. And write to me (τράψις δέ μοι) a reply concerning everything through Dioscorus the son of Chairemene(?) or through the son of [] (διὰ υἱοῦ).
Goodbye.

signature (διὰ τοῦ εἰρημένου λαμπρο[τάτου] ἐκδίκου μεθ' ὑπογραφῆς ἐμῆς) and I have taken a copy of this document, written by the hand of the most illustrious advocate aforesaid (ἐν-υπόγραφον χειρὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ λαμπρο[τάτου] ἐκδίκου). Wherefore for the security of the said Euphemia my daughter I send you this deed . . .

It is clear that the first two instances refer to the letter carrier, since they use some form of a πέμπω διὰ τινος formula. The last occurrence does use γράφω but does not use διὰ. Furthermore, since Anastasius is mentioned twice as the carrier and is now the writer, it is probably to avoid confusion that the text adds χειρὶ. In any event, we do not see anything like the γράφω διὰ τινος formula.

³⁸ F. H. Chase ("Peter, First Epistle," *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1898] 3:790) uses BGU II 385 as a proof-text for the formula γράφω διὰ τινος to indicate the letter-carrier. Yet this papyrus does not use γράφω but instead ἀπόδ[ος] (delivered). While I share his conclusions, this papyrus is not appropriate evidence.

³⁹ Grenfell, Hunt, and Hogarth, *Fayum Towns and Their Papyri* (London: Oxford, 1900) 279–280.

The identity of Διοσκόρος is less certain, but still seems (to me) to be referring to the letter carrier because of (a) the sense of the letter, (b) the use of ἀντιφώνησιν⁴⁰ and the fact that (c) one would hardly offer advice about which scribe to use.

4. *Summary.* To summarize the argument that the formula γράφω διά τινος was used solely to identify the letter-carrier and never to identify the secretary, let us note four points.

First, although references identifying a secretary are found in Greco-Roman letters,⁴¹ we have found no examples of the formula γράφω διά τινος being used to identify the secretary. There is an adequate number of examples of this formula. The formula seems always to be identifying the letter-carrier.

Second, the best two examples we have of this formula come from literature that is quite analogous to the NT and clearly demonstrate that the formula γράφω διά τινος⁴² was meant to identify the letter-carrier and not the secretary. The remaining secular papyri support this contention.

Third, the expanded superscription for Romans found in the majority text reads: “. . . προς Πωμαίους εγγραφή απο Κορινθου δια Φοιβης . . .” where Phoebe is clearly the carrier and not the secretary. While we would not argue for the historical reliability of the superscription, it is noteworthy that εγγραφή . . . δια is used to identify the carrier, not the secretary.

Fourth, a variation of this formula is found in the letter/decreed of the Apostolic Council (Acts 15). There we find the text of the letter introduced: “They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, writing through their hand . . .”⁴³ The structure and wording is sufficiently different, so that it might not serve as an example of the γράφω διά τινος formula. Nevertheless, the usual interpretation of this phrase is that Judas and Silas were chosen as bearers of the letter to accompany Paul and Barnabas and are commended to the church in Antioch in the manner we have seen as fairly typical for a letter-carrier.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ ἀντιφώνησιν means “an answer by letter” (here translated “reply”) and could have a strong legal sense, although the context suggests it does not here. LSJ, “ἀντιφωνέω,” 165.

⁴¹ See my work *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* 68–76.

⁴² Or its Latin equivalent *scripsi per*.

⁴³ Acts 15:22b–23: “. . . πέμψαι εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν σὺν τῷ Παύλῳ καὶ Βαρναβᾷ, Ἰούδαν τὸν καλούμενον Βαρσαββᾶν καὶ Σιλᾶν, ἀνδράς ἡγουμένους ἐν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς, [v. 23] γράψαντες διὰ χειρὸς αὐτῶν.

⁴⁴ Judas and Silas are to communicate the council’s findings to the church in Antioch by word of mouth, but also to carry the letter. That this phrase refers to the letter-carriers is the interpretation of, *inter alios*, F. F. Bruce, *Acts* (NIC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) 314; and Richard Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Church,” in *The Book of Acts in its First-Century Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 4:468, n. 158. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (trans. R. McL. Wilson; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971) 451) concludes similarly that Judas and Silas are the bearers of the letter, not the secretaries. Oddly enough, though, Haenchen adds (without argumentation) in the footnote that “1 Peter 5:12 makes him [Silas] the scribe who wrote this epistle.”

Pace, Theodor Zahn (*Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas, Kap. 1–12* [Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 5/1; Leipzig: Diechert, 1922]) contends that this formula in Acts 15:22 definitely does *not*

II. γράφω διὰ τινοῦ IN 1 PET 5:12

As we have demonstrated, this formula γράφω διὰ τινοῦ elsewhere clearly identifies *only* the letter-carrier and cannot be construed as identifying the secretary.⁴⁵ With such compelling evidence, one would assume unanimity among commentators. However, what we find is that commentators are not unanimous in interpreting this phrase.

Such respected—although quite diverse—commentators as Paul Achtemeier in the Hermeneia series, Ramsey Michaels in the Word Biblical Commentary series, and John H. Elliott in his social-scientific commentary⁴⁶ argue briefly (with the same basic line of argumentation I had given in an earlier work⁴⁷) that this formula γράφω διὰ Σιλουανοῦ indicates solely the carrier. This is not just the conclusion of more recent commentators. Alexander Nisbet (1658), John Brown (1850), Robert Leighton (1853), Mason, Plummer, and Sinclair (1957), and John A. T. Robinson (1976) all argued that γράφω διὰ Σιλουανοῦ indicated that Silvanus was the letter-carrier.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, such respected commentators as Cranfield, Haenchen, Metzger, Kistemaker, and Guthrie consider the formula γράφω διὰ Σιλουανοῦ as evidence that Silvanus was Peter's secretary.⁴⁹ This is not an opinion held

refer to the bearers of the letter (without substantiating arguments). [Although there is no ancient evidence, it could be possible that the qualifier χειρὸς was added to prevent this from being understood as the usual carrier-formula. The lack of evidence for or against mitigates against such an argument.] Yet there is no reason to understand the formula in Acts 15:22 as anything other than a reference to the carrier. Unlike 1 Pet 5:12, the NIV translates Acts 15:22 as clearly referring to the carrier: "With them they sent the following letter."

⁴⁵ Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (rev. ed.; trans. H. C. Kee; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975) 424 cogently concludes: "no one has yet proved that γράφω διὰ τινοῦ can mean to authorize someone else to compose a piece of writing."

⁴⁶ Achtemeier, *1 Peter* 348–350; J. R. Michaels, *1 Peter* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word, 1988) 306; J. H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1981) 279. See also the interesting argumentation by Norbert Brox, "Zur pseudepigraphischen Rahmung des ersten Petrusbriefes," *BZ* 19 (1975) 84–90. Brox's view on authorship (Pauline school) is dismissed by Elliott as "no more than a counsel of despair" (Elliott, *Home for the Homeless* 289 n. 12), but Elliott commends Brox's argumentation for the emissarial meaning of 5:12 (294 n. 39).

⁴⁷ I had presented the arguments in this paper in a much more abbreviated and incomplete way in my 1991 work, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul*.

⁴⁸ Nisbet, *An Exposition of 1 and 2 Peter* (repr. ed., Geneva series; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982 [1658]) 210; Brown, *1 Peter* (2 vols.; repr. ed.; Geneva series; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1850) 2:623–626; Leighton, *Commentary on First Peter* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1972 [1853]) 510; A. J. Mason, Alfred Plummer, W. M. Sinclair, *The Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude* (ed. C. J. Elliott; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957) 115; and John A. T. Robinson, *Redating* 168–169.

⁴⁹ See, *inter alios*, Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 404–405; Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (rev. ed.; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1970) 779: "no doubt" Silvanus was the secretary; D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 422: secretary is the "preferable" interpretation; Bruce Metzger, *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content* (2nd enl. ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1983) 256: this verse "explicitly states" Silvanus was the secretary; Simon Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 207; I. H. Marshall, *1 Peter* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991) 173–174; and Joe Blair, *Introducing the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994) 197.

solely by those favoring Petrine authorship: Conzelmann and Lindemann, in their introduction to the NT, state that 1 Peter claims to be written by Silvanus, citing 5:12 as evidence.⁵⁰ Ernst Best argues that while *γράφω* *διὰ* *τινος* is “ambiguous” and could mean either the secretary or the letter-carrier, 1 Pet 5:12 is referring to the *secretary*.⁵¹ Other writers maintain that 1 Pet 5:12 can mean that Silvanus was *either* the secretary *or* the carrier.⁵²

Since the evidence outside 1 Peter argues rather conclusively that this formula indicates solely the letter-carrier, what arguments are marshaled for 1 Pet 5:12 being an *exception* to the rule? Four arguments regularly appear in works on 1 Peter to argue that *γράφω* *διὰ* *Σιλουανοῦ* means that Silvanus was the secretary. These more “pragmatic” arguments usually make specific reference to the context of 1 Pet 5:12. These four arguments may be summarized as follows.

First, it is argued that the reference in 1 Pet 5:12 could *not* mean that Silvanus was the letter-carrier because it is highly doubtful that *one* person would have been expected to carry the letter to all the churches mentioned in the letter’s address. I first noticed this argument in Beare’s commentary.⁵³ Although Beare soundly rejects what he calls the “Silvanus Hypothesis,” he does add that verse 12 could not have been used to indicate the carrier: “it is simply fatuous to think of a single courier conveying such a letter to all parts of the four provinces mentioned in the Address; it would take him months, or even years to accomplish such a task.”⁵⁴ This argument is picked up again by L. Goppelt and Ernst Best.⁵⁵ Achtemeier dismisses this by noting the “kind of traveling that Acts reports of Paul on his missionary journeys.”⁵⁶ Selwyn adds the additional point that the letter address was so ordered to indicate the route which Silvanus was to take.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ They do not, of course, maintain that this is historically accurate; nevertheless, they still interpret verse 12 as identifying Silvanus as a writer not a carrier; Hans Conzelmann and Andreas Lindemann, *Interpreting the New Testament* (8th ed.; trans. S. S. Schatzmann; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988) 273. Note also Bart H. Ehrman (*The New Testament: An Historical Introduction* [Oxford: University Press, 1997] 373), who concludes that 1 Peter is pseudonymous; nevertheless, the formula in 5:12 was to identify Silvanus as the scribe (though possibly the carrier); as does J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (London: Black, 1969) 214–215; and Donald Senior, *1 & 2 Peter* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1980) 93–94; see also Goppelt’s case for Silvanus as the author (*Der erste Petrusbrief* [KEK 12/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978] 347).

⁵¹ E. Best, *1 Peter* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 176–177; as does James L. Price, *Interpreting the New Testament* (NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961) 486–488.

⁵² See e.g. Robert Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) 329–330; or Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 433.

⁵³ F. W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter: the Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (3rd ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1970).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 209.

⁵⁵ Goppelt, *Der erste Petrusbrief* (ET: 1993) 369; Best, *1 Peter* 176–177.

⁵⁶ Achtemeier, *1 Peter* 350.

⁵⁷ So E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (2d ed.; repr. ed.; Thornapple Commentaries; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981 [1947]) 241; so also Peter Davids, *First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 198 n. 2; and Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude* (New International Biblical Commentary; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992) 3. Michaels argues that the letter was carried only to an initial port of entry (307); but see the cogent rebuttal by Achtemeier, *1 Peter* 350 n. 28.

Second, it has been argued that if Silvanus were the bearer only, ἔπεμψα or ἀπέστειλα would have been the more natural word⁵⁸—a reasonable assertion which unfortunately, as we have seen, is not supported by the evidence.

Third, J. N. D. Kelly readily notes that γράφω διὰ τινος can mean to dispatch a letter. He then adds, though, that the use of the adverb “briefly” (δι’ ὀλίγων) makes the idea of “sending” nonsensical: “I am sending briefly?”⁵⁹ The addition of δι’ ὀλίγων renders it impossible to see a carrier-formula here.⁶⁰ Yet this argument is not persuasive. δι’ ὀλίγων (briefly) here is modifying ἔγραψα (I wrote) and not διὰ Σιλουανοῦ (through Silvanus). The expression δι’ ὀλίγων ἔγραψα is merely part of ancient epistolary convention.⁶¹ The carrier idea does not come from the meaning of γράφω. γράφω means “to write” and not “to send.” The carrier idea is idiomatic and comes from the διὰ construction.

Fourth, 1 Pet 5:12–14 is clearly the epistolary postscript.⁶² Hillyer argues that in a postscript it was common to make a reference to the secretary; hence the appearance of Silvanus.⁶³ This argument is likewise not persuasive. While it is true that secretaries were mentioned in postscripts, it was also common—and probably more common—to commend the letter-carrier in just such a way in the postscript. Thus postscripts were used for both secretarial and emissarial remarks. Identifying 1 Pet 5:12–14 as a postscript is of no benefit for interpreting verse 12. So these four arguments, though commonly cited, are not convincing.⁶⁴

Since the Greco-Roman epistolary evidence argues that 1 Pet 5:12 identifies Silvanus as the carrier and since counter-arguments from the context of 1 Peter are unconvincing, what line of reasoning is used to maintain Silvanus as the secretary? Ironically many—if not most—authors who cite 1 Pet 5:12 as evidence of Peter’s secretary do *not* defend their position at all. While this might be expected in less technical commentaries or by more popular writers, C. E. B. Cranfield, Ernst Haenchen, Donald Guthrie, D. A. Carson, Leon Morris, Leonhard Goppelt, I. H. Marshall, or Peter Davids could hardly be so described.

We must note that those who cite 1 Pet 5:12 as indicating Peter’s secretary do so in the context of discussing (and usually defending) Petrine authorship.

See also C. J. Hemer, “The Address of 1 Peter,” *ExpT* 89 (1977–78) 239–243, who traveled to Turkey and concluded that this was a reasonable route.

⁵⁸ So Selwyn, *First Epistle of St. Peter* 241; C. E. B. Cranfield, *I and II Peter and Jude: Introduction and Commentary* (Torch Bible Commentaries; London: SCM, 1960) 121; Goppelt, *Der erste Petrusbrief* 347; and Carson, Moo and Morris, *Introduction* 422 n. 4.

⁵⁹ Kelly, *Commentary* 215.

⁶⁰ Goppelt, *Der erste Petrusbrief* 369; so also Davids, *First Epistle of Peter* 198; I. H. Marshall, *1 Peter* 174.

⁶¹ As is ably demonstrated by Achtemeier, *1 Peter* 352. It was no indication of length nor modesty.

⁶² 1 Pet 5:12–14 has all the looks of an epistolary postscript, including the closing doxology in v. 11, the commendation of the letter-carrier (v. 12a), the summary (v. 12b), closing greetings (v. 13), and a final benediction (v. 14). See my work *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* 81–90, 176–181; also G. J. Bahr, “The Subscriptions in the Pauline Letters,” *JBL* 87 (1968) 27–41.

⁶³ Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter* 151.

⁶⁴ I am certainly not alone. Achtemeier and Michaels both decisively reject these arguments.

Let's take, for instance, the layman's commentary by Curtis Vaughan and Thomas Lea:

The statement [in verse 12] could mean that: (a) Silas was the bearer of the letter to its readers; (b) Silas, as amanuensis, wrote under the general direction of Peter. The second view is preferable. Understanding this view helps to explain the difference in the style of Greek in 1 Peter and that found in 2 Peter.⁶⁵

Why is the second view preferable? Is it the result of analysis? No. The second view is preferable for precisely the reason they state: expediency. It helps to explain the problems with authorship. A layman's commentary might be forgiven (or dismissed) for such argumentation, but consider, for example, Cranfield:

... the actual arguments against the traditional authorship are not nearly as strong as has been made out.

For anyone reading the letter in the original language the most obvious difficulties in the way of accepting the Petrine authorship are the good Greek style and the extensive literary vocabulary. Is it likely, it is asked, that a Galilean fisherman, who at the beginning of the Apostolic mission could be described as "unlearned and ignorant" (Acts 4.13) and for whom Greek was a foreign tongue, would ever have written some of the best Greek in the NT? But this difficulty disappears at once, if we attribute to Silvanus (mentioned in 5:12 as Peter's amanuensis) a rather more responsible share in the composition of the letter than that of a mere scribe writing to dictation.⁶⁶

Interestingly, Cranfield later adds that "Silvanus was the amanuensis and not just the bearer,"⁶⁷ indicating that he also considers Silvanus the bearer of the letter. He is presuming that this formula serves double-duty. This presumption is more the rule than the exception. E. H. Plumptre (1903) and Kenneth Wuest (1942) maintain in their commentaries that 5:12 indicates that Silvanus was the secretary; yet they also add as somewhat of an aside that Silvanus also carried the letter. For example, "This [5:12] would indicate that Silvanus was the amanuensis, the one to whom Peter dictated the letter and by whom it was sent."⁶⁸ Selwyn in his classic commentary makes the same argument: Silvanus served "both as draftsman and as bearer of the Epistle."⁶⁹

What is the current state of evangelical scholarship? Most modern commentators agree that the formula $\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\varphi\omega$ διὰ Σιλουανοῦ indicates the carrier; yet some wish to maintain that it *also* identifies the secretary.⁷⁰ Conservative introductions to the NT are still very prone to interpret this formula as

⁶⁵ Vaughan and Lea, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988) 132.

⁶⁶ Cranfield, *I and II Peter 7-8*. Later under the discussion of 5:12, Cranfield (p. 121) offers as support the second "pragmatic" defense mentioned above.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 121.

⁶⁸ Wuest, *First Peter in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1942) 132. See also Plumptre, *The General Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude* (Cambridge: University Press, 1903) 159; and J. W. C. Wand, *The General Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude* (London: Methuen, 1934) 29-30.

⁶⁹ Selwyn, *First Epistle of St. Peter* 241.

⁷⁰ In addition to those cited above (n. 48) see also Alan Stibbs, *First Epistle General of Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) 175.

identifying Silvanus as the secretary.⁷¹ Why? Because *we really want it to indicate* a secretary.

Why our sudden interest in the secretary? Despite my arguments elsewhere, the role of the *secretary* in the writing of the NT letters is rarely discussed in commentaries, including commentaries on Romans, where the presence of the secretary is undisputed. We don't find ourselves agonizing over the possible influences of Tertius—although perhaps we should. In general, NT exegetes, including conservative ones, have tended to ignore the role of the secretary. *Except in this case*. The role of Silvanus figures prominently in most introductions to 1 Peter. We must ask, why is this so?

Furthermore, virtually all assertions that 1 Pet 5:12 identifies the secretary are done in the context of arguing for Petrine authorship. An *a priori* desire to “rescue” the Petrine authorship of 1 Peter—and thus often to explain how 2 Peter could have been written by the same author⁷²—has led most of these conservative commentators to seek help where it may be found, a move Beare bluntly calls nothing more than “a device of desperation.”⁷³

Let me spill my own hand. I think Peter wrote 1 Peter.⁷⁴ Actually to the dismay of some of my colleagues, I even think he wrote 2 Peter.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, academic integrity should dictate the proper use and limitations of this formula. We should not “seize upon this verse” as a ready way out of the problems of the Greek of 1 Peter.⁷⁶

How then do we find our way out of the problems of the Greek of 1 Peter (or 2 Peter)? The stylistic peculiarities/dissimilarities of 1 Peter and 2 Peter are easily explained by the intermediation of a secretary. I am well aware of two common criticisms of any theory citing a secretary. First, as Eduard Lohse has adroitly pointed out “with secretary-hypotheses one could attempt to prove the authenticity of any letter.”⁷⁷ Yet I would say that such an argument does not invalidate the point. It merely demonstrates that style analysis is a very dubious criterion for determining authorship questions in the NT.

⁷¹ See above, n. 48. E.g. Thomas Lea (*The New Testament: Its Background and Message* [Nashville: Broadman, 1996]) specifically discusses the role of Silas and states that Silas could have been the secretary or the bearer of the letter (p. 540); yet earlier in the more general introduction to 1 Peter, he plainly comments: “Peter tells us in 5:12 that he used Silvanus as his secretary” (p. 535).

⁷² This second motive is by no means always the case. J. W. C. Wand (*General Epistles*, 143–144) argues that Silvanus is the reason for the “good Greek” in 1 Peter, but maintains 2 Peter is pseudonymous: “Even Silvanus . . . could not have made 1 Peter out of this [2 Peter].”

⁷³ Beare, *First Epistle of Peter* 209; see also Stephen L. Harris, *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction* (3rd ed.; Mtn. View, CA: Mayfield, 1999) 329.

⁷⁴ Incidentally, I am not standing alone against the vast sea of German scholarship who for the most part reject Petrine authorship. Hillyer (*1 and 2 Peter*, 20, n. 16) maintains that English commentaries slightly favor Petrine authorship of 1 Peter: “Among commentaries in English, those by Bigg, Clowney, Cranfield, Grudem, Marshall, Michaels (on balance), Selwyn, Stibbs/Walls, and Wand decide in favor of apostolic authorship; against are Beare and Best, while Kelly remains on the fence.” (Nose counting, though, is meager vindication.)

⁷⁵ 2 Peter leaves us with only two options: apostolic authorship or a forgery. I reject the myth of innocent apostolic pseudepigrapha. The so-called “problem” caused by 2 Pet 3:16's reference to a collection of Paul's letters can be answered; see my article, “The Codex and the Early Collection of Paul's Letters” 162 n. 53 and 165–166.

⁷⁶ To use the phrasing of John A. T. Robinson, *Redating* 167.

⁷⁷ Eduard Lohse, “Paränese und Kerygma im 1. Petrusbrief,” *ZNW* 45 (1954) 71.

The second common criticism can be seen in the typical observations of Achtemeier and N. Brox that the more mediation one ascribes to Silvanus, the less the letter may be ascribed to Peter.⁷⁸ Very recently, J. R. Michaels reiterated this objection: "Although this hypothesis has become popular among some scholars as a defense of Petrine authorship, its effect is to make Silvanus and not Peter the real author of the letter, just as Mark and not Peter was identified as author of the gospel of Mark."⁷⁹ In response, I must assert that the author retained responsibility for all that was written.⁸⁰ We should not confuse style with content. Ancients clearly distinguished between authors and secretaries. Paul listed his co-authors in the letter address (e.g. Col 1:1). Secretarial remarks were by stereotyped formula only (e.g. Col 4:18).⁸¹ Also, the variations caused by a secretary were generally limited to certain types.⁸² Furthermore, a comparison of Peter/Silvanus to Peter/Mark is not appropriate for any number of other reasons.

Yet, is arguing for secretarial mediation in 1 Peter not where we started? Yes, but academic integrity prevents me from appealing to 1 Pet 5:12 as support for the use of a secretary in 1 Peter.⁸³ Silvanus certainly *could* have been the secretary. This verse at least demonstrates that Silvanus was there (at least long enough to pick up the letter). The stylistic differences between 1 and 2 Peter are easily explained by the use of a more skilled secretary for 1 Peter. We do not need 1 Pet 5:12 to argue that there was secretarial mediation, such should be assumed for all NT letters.⁸⁴ However, 1 Pet 5:12 does not address the role of the secretary.

While many—perhaps most—commentators now interpret this verse as identifying Silas as the carrier, there are still lingering tendencies among us evangelicals, those defending Petrine authorship of 2 Peter, to "seek water for thirsty souls" here in 1 Pet 5:12.⁸⁵ Yet this is a "broken cistern that can hold no water."

⁷⁸ Achtemeier (*1 Peter* 9) and N. Brox, "Tendenz und Pseudepigraphie im ersten Petrusbrief," *Kairoi* 20 (1978) 111.

⁷⁹ J. R. Michaels, "1 Peter," *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (eds. R. P. Martin and P. H. Davids; Downers Grove: IVP, 1997) 916.

⁸⁰ See my work *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* 53–56.

⁸¹ Except when Tertius sends a personal greeting.

⁸² Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* 111–128.

⁸³ So also the conclusion of Michaels in his commentary, *1 Peter* 307. Is an appeal to Silvanus an automatic solution to 1 Peter's problems anyway? Cranfield (*I and II Peter* 14) notes: "It is true that there is no evidence that Silvanus was capable of writing elegant Greek; but at least there is in his case no particular reason for thinking that he was not." Achtemeier (*1 Peter* 9 n. 84) correctly observes how tenuous such an argument is.

⁸⁴ See my work *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul*; O. Roller, *Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933); or more recently, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul, the Letter-Writer* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1995) 6; Ben Witherington III, *The Paul Quest* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998) 100–102.

⁸⁵ An example of responsible and very capable scholarship that *still* wishes to skirt around the edges may be Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude* (NIBC). He maintains Petrine authorship (pp. 2–3). He also argues that the formula in 5:12 "can mean that Silas was the bearer of the letter, or that he was the writer under Peter's dictation, or that he composed the letter as a ghost-writer, embodying Peter's thoughts," since, in the opinion of Hillyer, γράφο δὲ Σιλουανοῦ "according to the examples in Greek literature, can have several interpretations" (p. 151). I did not find such latitude.