

As I was writing up my post yesterday on the evidence that speaks against Paul having written Colossians, it occurred to me (as I indicated at the time) that it might be instructive to show the difference between how I might present that case to a lay audience and how I might present it to fellow scholars. The following is how I cover the same material in [Forgery and Counterforgery](#) . (All of this is related to the larger thread I have going on just now on whether the Third Gospel was written by Luke the Gentile physician, traveling companion of Paul; see yesterday's post on the connection. In my next post I'll return to that thread and point out other problems with the "logic" that says Luke wrote the Gospel. This current post will not be to everyone's taste. If not, just sample it - or spit it out!)

As with every instance of forgery, the case of Colossians is cumulative, involving multiple factors. None has proved more decisive over the past thirty years than the question of writing style. The case was made most effectively in 1973 by Walter Bujard, in a study both exhaustive and exhausting, widely thought to be unanswerable.

Bujard compares the writing style of Colossians to the other Pauline letters, focusing especially on those of comparable length (Galatians, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians), and looking at an inordinately wide range of stylistic features: the use of conjunctions (of all kinds); infinitives; participles, relative clauses; repetitions of words and word groups; use of antithetical statements; parallel constructions; the use of preposition ἐν; the piling up of genitives; and on and on. In case after case, Colossians stands apart from Paul's letters.

Here I can mention a slim selection of his findings. How often does a book of Paul's use adversative conjunctions? Galatians 84 times; Philippians 52; 1 Thessalonians 29; but Colossians only 9. Causal conjunctions? Galatians 45 times; Philippians 20; 1 Thessalonians 31; but Colossians only 9. Consecutive conjunctions? Galatians 16 times; Philippians 10; 1 Thessalonians 12; but Colossians only 6. How often does the letter use a conjunction to introduce a statement (ὅτι, ὡς, πῶς etc.) Galatians 20 times; Philippians 19; 1 Thessalonians 11; but Colossians only 3.

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