

Every now and then I think it's useful on the blog to shift gears away from explaining at a more popular level what scholars have come to think to showing how scholars make their arguments to one \*another\*. I don't want to do this a lot, but it seems that it can be helpful at times, just so blog readers can get a bit of a sense.

Right now I'm in the middle of a thread on whether the author of Luke was really "Luke the gentile physician," one of Paul's traveling companions. The only reason for thinking such a person even existed (a gentile doctor named Luke) is that he is mentioned by Paul in Colossians. In my previous post I explained why the majority of critical scholars don't think Paul actually wrote Colossians (so that the historical Paul does \*not\* mention this person). The post was written for a general audience, and a number of people raised questions about it. So here is how I provide the evidence for fellow scholars in my book Forgery and Counterforgery, just so you can see.

It's not HUGELY complicated. We're not talking astrophysics here. But as you'll see, it does get ratcheted up a notch. The second half is less technical. This kind of thing may not be to your taste; but in any case, it is!

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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.

If you want to keep reading, and you're not yet a blog member, why not join? Won't cost much; you get five posts a week; almost all of them are written to communicate knowledge scholars have acquired in terms non-scholars can make sense of — about topics that many of us find really important. And the entire membership fee goes to help those in need.

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