TEXT AND LANGUAGE IN THE PAULINE CORPUS:

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE USE OF CONJUNCTIONS IN GALATIANS*

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ABSTRACT

On the basis of a computer-assisted collation of selected manuscripts for Galatians and Philippians, Paul’s use of conjunctions can be studied from a new angle. The article begins with a survey of intersentence connectors in Galatians and proceeds to examine passages where textual variation exists. Special emphasis is given to the interchange between δὲ and γάρ.

1 INTRODUCTION

During the last decade or two, advances in linguistics have focused more and more on the level of discourse, including the problems associated with intersentence relationships. Of course, for me even to mention such a fact to NT scholars in South Africa — to say nothing of pretending to make a contribution to the field — gives fresh meaning to the expression, ‘carrying coals to Newcastle’. Nevertheless, I am so bold as to attempt a preliminary linguistic analysis of the way in which Paul uses conjunctions to link clauses with one another.

To be sure, good exegetes have always sought to pay close attention to Paul’s use of conjunctions, and there is much that can still be learned by studying exegetical commentaries from the past. Indeed, I have always felt that the greatest potential of linguistic science for biblical interpretation lies not in generating revolutionary theories or coming up with brand new interpretations that no one previously imagined but rather in refining what our best interpreters have done, in correcting their inconsistencies, in formalising and systematising the data so that our conclusions can be based on reliable, clearly sifted evidence as well as on the intuitive powers of our finest scholars.

As an interpreter comes across a conjunction in the Pauline literature, certain dangers lurk in the background. One of them is the tendency to make ad hoc determinations. I use the term ad hoc because it has something of a negative flavor, though it must be acknowledged that there is a positive element in this procedure. Ultimately, every decision regarding the force of a particular conjunction should be ad hoc in the sense that it must be contextually grounded, and I would much sooner go along with the

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judgment of exegetes who genuinely pay attention to the context (even if their procedure strikes me as unhelpfully atomistic) than with that of linguists who can display reams of sophisticated data but little sense of how to apply the data to actual texts.

In spite of that qualification, the ad hoc procedure is ultimately unsatisfying, for it almost inevitably leads to apparent inconsistencies that it cannot explain. Let me be more concrete. Most interpreters of Paul approach his letters with the assumption that he was a fairly careful and logical thinker, at least on the level of sentence-by-sentence argumentation. (Some scholars, true, deny that the apostle succeeds in articulating a systematic, coherent theology — an observation that leads us to a broader conceptual level in which we are not directly interested at the moment. Even these writers, however, will normally pay close attention to the force of the conjunctions and regard such a procedure as important.) Accordingly, every good exegete will make an effort to identify, for example, the way in which the conjunction γάρ is linked to the preceding text. Assuming the conjunction’s causal force, we would ask, what is it that the γάρ-clause provides a reason for?

The problem is, of course, that we cannot always find a clear-cut answer, and so interpreters (if they address the question at all in the problem passages) will sometimes suggest or imply that the γάρ in such cases has a weakened, more general sense, thus approaching the transitional or copulative sense of δέ. This assessment may be accurate, but on what grounds is it made? At this point appeals to the context become somewhat vague, and we are left to wondering whether the insistence that Paul was ‘careful’ or precise in the other passages can be sustained. What we need is explicit evidence of usage patterns, since such patterns may provide the framework within which better-informed exegetical decisions should be made.

In addition to the inadequacy of atomistic approaches, there is a second danger that faces us if we attempt to evaluate the evidence as a whole. Conjunctions are among those word types most susceptible to scribal change. The attempt to determine the stylistic patterns of Paul must be based either (1) on textually uncontested occurrences or (2) on passages where, in spite of textual variation, we can be virtually certain of the original reading. In either case — but especially if we apply the first, and more rigorous, option — we have to deal with the problem that the apparatuses of our standard editions are not exhaustive. Certainly, the Nestle-Aland edition is quite selective (as is appropriate to the character of the edition) in its documentation of conjunctions and other particles. Tischendorf, on the other hand, is virtually exhaustive, but he had no access to the papyri and some other important early documents.

In the past few years I have spent some time collating ten of our most important witnesses for Galatians and Philippians against the latest edition of N-A (i.e., 26th ed = UBSGNT, 3d ed). The advent of the personal computer, while it has not diminished the exacting labor involved in gathering the data — indeed, in some respects it increases that labor, since there are more clerical stages during which errors can be introduced — greatly facilitates the process of sorting and reporting the variants. I identified each variant according to the type of word it is and according to the type of change involved. This material, though fragmentary, makes
it possible for us to assess Paul's language and style against some important pieces of evidence that simply were not available before.

2 AN APPROACH TO CONJUNCTIONS IN GALATIANS

The place to begin is by summarising the use of intersentence connectors in Galatians. The following statistics are fairly rough: they are intended to give merely a general profile of the data rather than the kind of specific information on which one would want to build an argument. Using the N-A text as our point of departure, we find (as one would have anticipated) that the most common conjunction is δέ — almost 60x. The second most frequent particle, γάρ, occurs some 35x, while διό and καί (when used to link independent clauses) occur with almost equal frequency, about 15x. Several other conjunctions (δει, ἀν, ἀπο, ἀρα) occur 4-7x, while ἦ only once (1:10b; but cf 2:2; 3:15). It must be noted, however, that about a dozen clauses are in effect joined by means of a relative pronoun. Very significant is a fact that I had not anticipated: about 48 instances of asyndeton. Whether such a proportion is unusual or not I cannot tell, but the incidence of 'zero-conjunction' is certainly a factor that must be taken into account.

The next stage in our analysis should be to determine whether any syntagmatic patterns emerge out of the data. For example, fully 8 of the occurrences of διό (1:17b; 2:7; 3:12b; 4:2, 14,17; 5:13c; 6:13b; possibly also 3:22?) answer to an explicit negative in the previous clause (cf German sondern). This is a rather important consideration: it casts a somewhat different light on the observation that this conjunction occurs about as frequently as καί; moreover, it can help us in differentiating this conjunction from the other adversative, δέ.

If we focus on δέ, we notice several patterns, such as δέ δέ, which occurs 4x (1:15; 2:11, 12b; 4:4). The word δέ is also found once with διό (2:14; and independently of a conjunction in 4:3). We may wish to deduce from these facts that, in these syntactical contexts, δέ functions somewhat as the 'unmarked' member of a pair, that is, as the more common and expected conjunction. There would probably be some truth to that conclusion. Moreover, we may suspect that, while this conjunction serves primarily as a transitional particle (therefore to be translated with such a phrase as 'Now when...'), διό is the more clearly adversative term and so it serves to call attention to the particular importance of the event narrated in 2:14.

When we look carefully at the semantics of each context, however, these inferences do not appear to be fully accurate. For example, δέ has an explicitly adversative function in 2:12b; since the clause it introduces (Peter 'separated himself') stands in clear opposition to 2:12a (Peter 'was eating with the Gentiles'). Similarly, the presence of δέ in 4:4 reflects an explicit opposition between the notion of immaturity and slavery in verse 3 and that of maturity and sonship in verses 4-7. Interestingly, the clause introduced by διό in 2:14 does not stand in explicit opposition to the previous clause. One could, to be sure, posit an implicit opposition: while Peter did such and such, I did such and such. On the other hand, one is tempted to interpret the conjunction as inferential: because Peter was doing such and such, therefore I did such and such. Of course, no grammarian, to the best of my knowledge, calls διό an inferen-
tial particle, and I am not really suggesting that we should. No doubt, the broader context of the whole passage, in which Paul must distinguish himself clearly from the original apostles, could have influenced Paul's choice; if so, it would be proper to see an adversative function here. There is much to be said, however, for the view that ἀλλά in this context, like δέ, is simply transitional — only more emphatic.

Another common pattern, of course, is δέ. If we include the various forms of the article, the number of occurrences is about 15. Contrast that figure with only 3 for ἀλλά (2:8; 5:14; 5:17a; with ἀλλά, 3:12b and 4:23; with οὐ, 3:5 and 21). The very frequency of this construction suggests that it conveys little information (using this term in the technical sense it has in communication theory); in other words, it would be misguided to suggest that Paul's choice of δέ in any one of these instances has particular significance. On the other hand, breaks in the pattern should grab our attention. Indeed, it appears from the three relevant contexts that the use of ἀλλά in this construction reflects a clearly causal sense. As a general and tentative guideline, therefore, we may say that Paul's use of δέ is one instance where the vague, transitional force of the conjunction is unlikely.

I suspect that we could draw a similar conclusion in cases where one of these conjunctions follows a preposition or such modifiers as μόνον, νῦν, μᾶλλον, μᾶλκυ, since in such constructions there seems to be a decided preference for δέ (2:4,6; 3:23; 1:23; 4:9a,9b; 6:10b). Contrast in particular πρὸ τοῦ δέ in 3:23 with πρὸ τοῦ ἀλλά in 2:12 (the only occurrence of preposition + ἀλλά). It is more difficult to explain the choice when the conjunction follows εἰ, since δέ occurs 5x (2:17; 3:29; 4:7b; 5:15,18) but so does ἀλλά (2:18, 21; 3:18, 21b; 6:3)! Two of the occurrences of εἰ ἀλλά are clearly causal insofar as they introduce the explanation for Paul's μὴ γένοιτο (2:18; 3:21b). The other three, however, could just as easily be explained as adversative. One might even consider substituting ἀλλά τούτου εἰ (cf 2:7) for the εἰ ἀλλά in 2:21 and 3:18 as support for this interpretation.

On the other hand, we could argue that there is a studied ellipsis in both instances: 2:21 — 'I will not set aside the grace of God; [that is indeed what Peter was doing, though unwittingly, by his inconsistency,] because to suggest that righteousness comes through the law is to nullify the death of Christ'; 3:18 — 'I am not contradicting the OT message, as the Judaisers claim — in fact, they are the ones who annul the promise,] because to argue that the inheritance comes from obedience to the law is to say that the inheritance is not a part of a gracious promise'. A comparable ellipsis has been persuasively suggested by Lightfoot as the explanation for the unusual ἀλλά in 1:10 and 5:13, namely, '[I have resorted to such strong language] because...'.

These examples are probably sufficient to indicate the lines along which further research, I believe, needs to be conducted. Without suggesting that a study of collocation is the remedy for all of our semantic ills, I have long suspected (though it would take a great deal of research to prove) that closer attention to syntagmatic relations can make a critical difference in our analysis of language and style.
3 EVALUATING TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

We move then to a consideration of text-critical data in Galatians and Philippians, based on my collation of \(\text{P}^{46} \equiv \text{N A B C D} \equiv \text{T} 33 1739\) and the Majority Text (ed. Hodges & Farstad).

3.1 General comments

Even a cursory look at the material would show that, whatever value there is in formulating general text-critical canons, we must pay attention to the profile of individual manuscripts. It is immediately evident, for example, that \(\text{P}^{46} \text{D} \text{and} \text{T}\) are simply untrustworthy when it comes to variants that involve conjunctions. In particular, these scribes will drop conjunctions at the slightest provocation. For that matter, it should be noted that with the exception of \(C\) (which incidentally is fragmentary) all the manuscripts, including even the Majority Text, omit conjunctions more frequently than they add them — an important qualification to the principle that the shorter reading is better (but then Griesbach was already very clear about this matter).\(^6\)

It is also worth noticing that some manuscripts, especially \(\text{T}\), have a larger than average number of equivalent changes.

A look at the variants that involve the addition of a conjunction does not reveal any clear patterns, but it is otherwise with equivalent (i.e., one-to-one) changes, since one can detect a tendency for \(\gamma\omega\rho\) to be replaced with \(\delta\varepsilon\). Leaving aside the very complicated textual problem in Galatians 4:25a, this change occurs at Galatians 1:11; 4:25c; 5:17b; 6:5; and Philippians 1:19. In the first three of those references, the change is attested by a variety of witnesses, including \(\text{T}\) and the Majority Text. As for 6:5, the change is attested only by \(\text{T}\) and 33 (Tischendorf lists two other minuscules); at Philp 1:19, by \(\text{P}^{46} \text{B} 1739\) (plus a few other minuscules). In contrast, \(\delta\varepsilon\) has been changed to \(\gamma\omega\rho\) only at 3:20 and 4:18, both of which are singular readings of \(\text{ms} 33\). This pattern is not altogether unexpected, given the greater frequency of \(\delta\varepsilon\) and thus its lesser potential to convey information; that is, since its introduction into the text would tend to ‘flatten out’ the passage, scribes would more likely ‘default’ to \(\delta\varepsilon\) than to \(\gamma\omega\rho\), the latter having a greater potential to alter the context. (Of course, if the clause in question is very clearly causal, then a scribe would be susceptible to changing \(\delta\varepsilon\) to \(\gamma\omega\rho\), since in this case the latter conjunction would seem more appropriate to the context.)

On the basis of this information, it would seem reasonable to conclude that in cases where the witnesses are divided, preference should be given to \(\gamma\omega\rho\), since this conjunction is more likely to give rise to \(\delta\varepsilon\) than vice versa. Of course, someone may object that choosing N-A as the collation base skews the data. In response, we may note the following points. (1) Any collating base, other than the autograph itself, will distort the data to some extent. (2) The N-A text is the best that specialists have been able to achieve — that is, it comes the closest to representing any kind of consensus — and thus it can serve as a point of departure. (3) Regardless of which of the standard collation bases one uses, some of the patterns will be the same (e.g., the unique readings of \(\text{ms} 33\)). (4) Once we have done this type of collation, we can ask whether the N-A text satisfactorily explains departures from that text throughout the manuscript.
tradition. In other words, the set of variations from N-A can provide a basis for detecting inconsistencies in N-A that need correction.

3.2 Specific cases

Let us look more closely at the δέ-γάρ interchange. It is a good idea, when examining those passages where there is textual variation, to begin by identifying the ones about which we can be virtually certain. This exercise may help us to determine what scribes were more likely to do. In our case we find four such passages: γάρ for δέ at 4:25c and 6:5, and the reverse at 3:20 and 4:18. The decision is so clear in these verses that N-A does not even bother informing us about the variations. The first two of these variations are compatible with our tentative suggestion that δέ, being less precise, is more likely to be introduced. The other two references appear to contradict this principle, but we could reasonably argue that the changes there reflect a peculiarity of manuscript 33. We are left with three passages (Gl 1:11; 5:17b; Philp 1:19) that deserve special attention, since we cannot reach a quick decision about them by merely looking at the apparatus.

(1) Galatians 1:11. The first one is rather interesting for several reasons. (a) The first hand of N wrote δέ; the first corrector, who belonged to the original scriptorium, changed it to γάρ; the second corrector, who was also one of the original copyists, corrected it back to δέ. We are left to speculating that the second corrector may have confirmed the δέ by checking the master-copy, but that is not at all certain. In any case, the witness of N is at best ambiguous. (b) The other witnesses supporting γάρ are hardly definitive. To judge by my collations, manuscript 33 is generally speaking mediocre in its handling of conjunctions; besides, we have noted its unique replacing of δέ with γάρ at two other points. As for B, its value is diminished in the Pauline corpus (according to the Westcott-Hort analysis) when it is joined by D F G (plus the Latin tradition) against the Alexandrian witnesses. (c) Whereas the external evidence is therefore shaky, internal considerations strongly support the N-A text. Unquestionably, γάρ is the more difficult reading, since it is not at all obvious that verse 11 is giving the reason for anything that has preceded it. Moreover, the text could have been easily assimilated to the familiar passage in 1 Corinthians 15:1, γνωρίζω δέ ύμιν, δδελφοί, το εὐαγγέλιον δ εὐηγελισμήν ύμιν... (the conjunction is uncontested in the whole ms tradition; cf also 2 Cor 8:1). Finally, the double occurrence of γάρ in the Majority Text of verse 10 might understandably have led scribes, consciously or not, to opt for δέ in verse 11.

(2) Galatians 5:17. Curiously, the external evidence at 5:17b is almost identical, since there we also have the group B D* (with F G and Latin) 33 supporting the γάρ of N-A. In this case, the original hand of N also wrote γάρ, which was left alone by the first corrector; as in 1:11, however, the second corrector objected and changed it to δέ (this piece of evidence could plausibly be used to cast suspicion on the second corrector). The primary difference is the support of Π for γάρ; although the word cannot be read clearly, it certainly is not δέ. In short, the external evidence in favor of γάρ here is a little stronger – which is a good thing, be-
cause internal considerations are less significant (perhaps scribes wanted to avoid the repetition of this conjunction, but one would not want to place too much weight on that possibility).

(3) *Philippians 1:19.* The evidence for δέ in this last passage is restricted to P46 B and a few minuscules, including 1739. Clearly, the editors did not regard this testimony as very strong (they did not even list the contrary evidence). One could argue for the originality of δέ on the grounds that it is the more difficult reading — after all, verse 19 seems clearly to provide a reason for the last clause of v 18 and so to cry out for a γάπ. However, the paragraph division in N-A (which I consider correct [Silva 1988:75]) is not universally accepted. Indeed, it would be plausible to say that the real reason for Paul’s rejoicing has already been given in verse 18: Christ is being proclaimed. According to this approach, the last clause of verse 18 simply completes the thought, with verse 19 beginning a new paragraph. Our verse division probably reflects such an understanding, which, if shared by early scribes, would have easily led to the introduction of δέ.

4 CONCLUSIONS

A *caveat* is in order at this point. My evidence, being limited to *Philippians* and *Galatians*, is rather fragmentary and may not be representative of the Pauline corpus as a whole. A look at the N-A apparatus for Romans revealed half a dozen variants of this type (excluding 15:29), and in every case the reading of the text is δέ. Three of those instances involve the construction εί δέ, namely, 3:7; 6:8; 11:16; the other occurrences are 2:2; 4:15b; 11:13. While I am not at all ready to say that this evidence from Romans contradicts the substance of my comments, it does raise some questions that must be answered before presuming to draw definitive conclusions, particularly in view of Zuntz’s claim that scribes more frequently changed δέ to γάπ. Some tentative comments may be offered.

Part of the answer is that N-A is much too selective to provide reliable evidence. Indeed, I decided to go quickly through Tischendorf’s apparatus, and the results were markedly different. Tischendorf lists two other changes from δέ to γάπ in Romans, but he also lists no fewer than 10 alterations from γάπ to δέ: 1:17 (A); 2:14 (G); 5:6 (L); 1:14 (A D L); 8:18 (A P), 22 (A); 10:3 (A); 11:25 (ms 37 = 69); 14:15 (L*reg* and pl); 15:8 (L and pl). In addition, he reads δέ in his text at 2:2; if this is correct, then the incidence of γάπ to δέ is 11x, over against 7x for δέ to γάπ. In spite of my admiration for Zuntz, I must say that his claims on this matter cannot be trusted.

At any rate, my purpose in this paper has been not to formulate a new theory regarding Paul’s use of conjunctions, and certainly not to propose a radically new exegesis of specific passages in *Galatians*, but merely to suggest certain lines of investigation that seem to me quite important if we hope to analyse the language and text of the Pauline corpus in a responsible fashion. In the end, I suspect, the result will be to downplay the significance of Paul’s grammatical choices. Grammar more often than not has a ‘negative’ function: it helps us to eliminate bad interpretations rather than formulate good ones. In my opinion, commentators and other NT scholars tend to overinterpret the linguistic data whenever there
is even the slightest plausibility for doing so. Moreover, a recognition of the forces that led scribes to alter the text — usually at a subconscious level, I am sure — will indirectly lead us to appreciate that the apostle normally used language the way the rest of us do! Grammatical details, including the use of conjunctions, provide only a secondary kind of evidence for identifying the central semantic content of an author's concepts. That fact does not render the study of grammar unimportant, but it does help us to put it in the proper perspective.

ENDNOTES
1 Burton (1921:31) argues 'that all the uses of γάρ are to be explained from its causal force,' but few commentators, I suspect, would want to defend such a strong statement. Part of the difficulty arises from differences among scholars regarding how far to stretch the label causal: Burton, for example, views explicative and justificatory uses as subcategories under causal (1921:89), while Robertson (1934:1190) distinguishes more sharply the causal from the explanatory.
2 This material will be summarised in a forthcoming article on scribal tendencies. I must point out, however, that my initial purposes were strictly text-critical rather than grammatical in character, and so I made no effort to anticipate the specific questions that a grammarian might ask. Thus, for example, κατί in my database is always identified as a conjunction, even though very frequently the word has an adverbial function.
3 It would be useful to compare these statistics with those given by Blomqvist (1969:134ff).
4 Nevertheless, how much semantic content would have been lost — or gained — if Paul had in fact used ὅπερ οὖν?
5 Cf LSJ sv 1.3.b. Perhaps it could be argued that even after μη γένετο the clause responds to an ellipsis, such as, 'I write so emphatically because...'
6 As I have argued elsewhere (Silva 1985), current attacks on the principle that the shorter reading is preferable are misguided, unless what is in view is the sloppy application of the principle.
7 Cf in this connection Nida (1981:105), Zuntz (1953:203-204) seems to present a contrary point of view: 'An original δέ is, in the tradition of the classical writers, very often corrupted to γάρ. The opposite change likewise occurs, but it is far less frequent. The same holds good for the New Testament. The prevalence of the former corruption is, in both fields, indicative of a conscious tendency to replace the nondescript connexion by a more definite one.' With regard to classical writers, Zuntz documents his statement by reference to Denniston (1978:169n) and to an article by Zuntz himself. I have not been able to see his article, but Denniston's work does not precisely support the point: 'δέ is sometimes corrupted to γάρ: the converse also occasionally happens.' With regard to the NT, cf my comments below on Romans.
8 My views on this variant would be disputed by some scholars. Mußner (1974:65n110) argues that δέ fits the context better because of the contrast between the accusation that he seeks to please men and his affirmation that his gospel is not according to man. I find the argument unpersuasive on two counts: (a) the supposed contrast does not seem to me...
all that clear; (b) we cannot assume that δὲ is a strong adversative. Aside from these objections, however, Mußner seems unaware that such an argument, if sound, would cut both ways, since a scribe would be more likely to adjust the text in conformity with the context than vice versa. At any rate, Mußner does not offer an explanation for the origin of the variant. Lightfoot (1898:80), who also but tentatively prefers δὲ, does address the problem and argues that γὰρ 'would seem the obvious connecting particle to transcribers' — but he does not tell us why. Zuntz is more emphatic: 'The superficial appropriateness of γὰρ is here so striking that it could hardly have been dislodged if it had been in the text from the first. It owes its existence, here again [as in 1 Cor 7:40], to a mistaken effort at clarifying the apostle's thought' (1953:204). Zuntz's view here, as we noted earlier, arises out of his conviction that scribes tend to give propositions a closer and more definite connection. Even Zuntz, however, does not specify what the connection would be. Presumably, what he has in mind is the idea that a scribe would see the not-according-to-man clause as the demonstration that Paul is not a man-pleaser. The ambiguity of this argument, however, becomes obvious when we remember that this is the same contrast that leads Mußner to choose δὲ as being more appropriate to the context! In point of fact, however, the presence of γνωρίζω spoils such a connection as Zuntz imagines. If γὰρ were strictly causal here, the emphasis of the explanation would fall on Paul's making known the gospel rather than on the character of the gospel. In other words, if a scribe viewed vll as providing the reason or explanation for v10, he probably would have perceived the connection as awkward; it would be much more natural for vll to begin with τὸ γὰρ εὐαγγέλιον τὸ εὐαγγελισθέν...

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