

Colossians 2:6-15 as a Thesis: A Rhetorical-Critical Study

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I. Introduction

Scholarly attention to Colossians in the recent past has included attention to the nature of the Colossian heresy,¹ the hymn to Christ in Col. 1:15-20,² and the literary style of Colossians generally.³ Although rhetorical studies of Colossians have appeared, comprehensive rhetorical studies which consider the letter's invention, arrangement, and style have been few in number.⁴ The current article is an attempt to address the paucity of rhetorical analyses of the letter by examining the rhetorical elements in and considering the rhetorical function of the Col 2:6-15, which I maintain represents a complete rhetorical argument known as a thesis.⁵

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¹ For recent treatments on the Colossian heresy, see Clinton E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996); and Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, trans. Astrid B. Beck, Anchor Bible 34B (New York: Doubleday, 1994). Each work recognizes the possible presence of both Jewish and pagan elements in the heresy.

² For discussions of the hymn, see, e. g., Ben Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 266-72; N. T. Wright, "Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1.15-20," *New Testament Studies* 36 (1990): 444-68.

³ Cf. W. Bujard, *Stilanalytische Untersuchungen zum Kolosserbrief als Beitrag zur Methodik von Sprachvergleichen*, SUNT 11 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973); Alfred Edwin Drake, "The Riddle of Colossians: *Quaerendo Invenietis*," *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995): 123-44 [focuses mainly on visually chiasmic structure in the letter].

⁴ Rhetorical analyses of Colossians include Jean-Noël Aletti, *Saint Paul Epître aux Colossiens: Introduction, Traduction et Commentaire*, Etudes bibliques 20 [new series] (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1993); John W. Neesley, "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Epistle to the Colossians" (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1994); Petr Pokorný, *Colossians*, trans. S. S. Schatzmann (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991) [not a complete rhetorical analysis; somewhat attentive to rhetorical structure]; Charles Puskas, *The Letters of Paul: An Introduction* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993), 124-26 [not a full rhetorical analysis]; J. G. van der Watt, "Colossians 1.3-12 Considered as an Exordium," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 57 (December 1986): 32-42; Michael Wolter, *Der Brief an die Kolosser. Der Brief an Philemon*, Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament 12 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus/Gerd Mohn; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1993).

⁵ Throughout the article I presuppose Pauline authorship but recognize the debate regarding authorship that continues to swirl about the letter to the Colossians. For a recent statement on Pauline authorship, see Robert W. Wall, *Colossians & Philemon* The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 15-20 ("in all probability Paul wrote Colossians with Timothy's help," 15). Whether Paul or a Deutero-Paulinist is the actual writer makes little difference on a rhetorical-critical study of the letter.

II. Rhetorical Criticism of 2:6-15: The Unit as a Thesis⁶

Col. 2:6-15 is a distinct rhetorical unit (one that has a discernible beginning, middle, and end). Οὖν marks a transition to a new division of thought that begins in v.6 and, since the particle appears again in v.16, ends in v.15

This unit takes the form of a thesis, a popular and teachable rhetorical pattern developed during the second century BCE. Its pattern is as follows:⁷

1. Introduction
2. Proposition
3. Reason (rationale)
4. Opposite (contrary)
5. Analogy
6. Example
7. Citation (authority)
8. Conclusion

Col. 2:6-15 conforms very closely to this arrangement.

The thesis expresses the proposition of the letter. The basis of the proposition (and the thesis which constitutes it) is the prior acceptance of Christ Jesus the Lord by the Colossians. παραλαμβάνω refers to the reception of tradition. Jesus himself is the "tradition that the Colossians have received, a tradition that 'should prove a sufficient safeguard against following the tradition of men' (v.8)."⁸ Christ himself "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation," in whom "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell."⁹ The introductory adverbial ὡς clause is euphonic, marked by the stylistic device of homoeoptoton.¹⁰

⁶For the steps of rhetorical criticism of NT texts, see C. Clifton Black II, "Keeping up with Recent Studies XVI: Rhetorical Criticism and Biblical Interpretation," *The Expository Times* 100 (April 1989): 254-55; Barth L. Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, SBL Dissertation Series 160 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 5-9; George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 33-38; Duane Frederick Watson, *Invention, Arrangement, and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter*, SBL Dissertation Series 104 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 8-28.

⁷See Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, New Testament Series, ed. Dan O. Via, Jr. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 42-47; in *Her.* 4.43.56-44.57 (cf. 4.42.54) the pattern appears with some variation.

⁸F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 93.

⁹Col. 1:15, 19, NRSV (from which all scriptural quotations are taken unless otherwise noted). Although ὁ Χριστός is not mentioned until Col. 1:24, the context is clear that the Christ is the Son to whom the hymn of 1:15-20 is dedicated. The Son, exalted as the pre-eminent One, is he who suffered on the cross (1:20) and is the Christ whose afflictions are mentioned in 1:24. It is in Christ "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:3) and "in him all the fullness of deity dwells bodily" (2:9=1:19). The latter characteristic makes clear that the hymnic Son of Col. 1:15-20 is Christ, the Lord of creation.

¹⁰A figure of speech in which two or more words appear in the same period, in the same case, with similar endings (*Her.* 4.20.28; cf. Quint. *Inst. Or.* 9.3.78, who does not require identity in appearance of case

Hence the *propositio* of the entire letter to the Colossians is couched in a well-defined discursive pattern:

1. [Introduction]
2. Proposition (*partitio*: positive, vv. 6-7; negative, v. 8) 2:6-8
3. Reason (rationale) 2:9
4. [Opposite (contrary)]
5. Analogy 2:10
6. Example 2:11-12
7. Citation (authority) 2:13-15
8. [Conclusion]

The introduction is unnecessary since Paul has already furnished an exordium in Col. 1:3-12.¹¹

III. *Partitio*, 2:6-8

1. *Positive*, 2:6-7. The proposition, the main point of the orator in an argument, may be singly or multiply presented. When propositions are combined, they form a *partitio*.¹² In Col. 2:6b-7, the proposition consists of the present imperative περιπαεῖτε and four circumstantial participles¹³ that attend it (ἐρριζωμένοι, ἐποικοδομούμενοι,

endings). See Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 301-02, for discussion of the NT designation 'Christ Jesus, the Lord' and its variations. They point out that this particular form is rare—only here and in Eph. 3:11.

¹¹See van der Watt, "Colossians 1.3-12." Cf. Aletti, *Colossiens*, 49-127 (esp. 49-53), who asserts that the exordium extends from 1:3-23.

¹²Quint. *Inst. Or.* 4.4.1-5.1; *Her.* 2.18.28. Wolter, *Kolosser*, 116, identifies Col. 2:6-8 as a *partitio* whose purpose is to introduce points discussed thereafter and, consistently with deliberative speech, to persuade (walk in Christ, 2:6-7) and dissuade (separate from the false teachers, 2:8). Wolter's (*Kolosser*, 7-8, 115-16, et passim) analysis of the rhetorical structure is helpful: prescript (1:1-2), *proem* (1:3-23, including an encomium of Christ [1:15-20]), a self-representation of the author to the readers (1:24-2:5), *partitio* (2:6-8), *argumentatio* (2:9-23, the two divisions of which are the *probatio* [2:9-15] and the *refutatio* [2:16-23]), *peroratio* (3:1-4), *exhortatio* (3:5-4:6), conclusion (4:7-18). Wolter's outline, however, fails to recognize the contours of a thesis within 2:6-15. The flow of the argument is disturbed by the identification of 2:9 as the beginning of the proof; the verse is really connected logically and grammatically to vv. 6-8 (see my discussion below). I contend that Col. 2:6-15 is Paul's thesis and 2:16-3:17 a threefold *probatio*, each section of which begins with the particle οὖν).

¹³Murray J. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 89 ("adv. ptes. of attendant circumstance"); pace Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 303, who describe the four participles as imperatival in character. A fine line exists between imperatival and circumstantial participles. My view that these participles are circumstantial is based on the fact that the first three are passive, denoting activities outside the realm of human possibility, but divinely effected (cf. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 303; Harris, *Colossians*, 89). The fourth participle, περισσεύοντες is active, but is probably to be taken in the same sense as the preceding participles. The possibility of ἐπιρριζωμένοι (pf.) being indicative ("once for all"), and ἐποικοδομούμενοι and βεβαλούμενοι (pres.) being imperatival ("from hour to hour") is suggested by J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Revised Text with Introductions, Notes, and Dissertations*, 8th ed. (London and New York: MacMillan, 1886), 174. See also the discussion in Otto Merk, "Erwägungen zu Kol 2,6f," in *Vom Urchristentum zu Jesus: für Joachim Gnilka*, ed. Hubert Frankemölle and Karl Kertelge (Freiburg: Herder, 1989), 412-14, where the possibility of either similar or dissimilar (indicative/imperative) senses for ἐρριζωμένοι and ἐποικοδομούμενοι is explored.

βεβαιοῦμενοι, and περισσεύοντε). Once again, homoeoptoton gives auditory stress to the injunction with the repetition of final -μενοι. The presence of so many circumstantial participles constitutes a rhetorical figure known as accumulation, in which several somewhat synonymous or related terms are placed together in order to give emphasis to the author's point.¹⁴ Paul utilizes a metaphor¹⁵ in his imperatival expression and in each of the participles as well.

"Walk in him" is a metaphor for the Christian life of godly behavior. In the OT and extra-biblical Jewish literature, walking there appears also as a metaphor for one's conduct. The concept, found elsewhere in Paul (e.g., Rom. 14:15; 2 Cor. 4:2; Gal. 5:16),¹⁶ is an early Christian *topos*, a topic commonly used in Christian discourse as a description of the Christian life.¹⁷ The attendant participles are themselves distinct metaphors, but are stylistically attractive since they are not mixed, but simply successive.¹⁸

The first participle, ἐρριζωμένοι, is a botanical metaphor that, in the perfect tense, suggests "a settled state."¹⁹ Paul's readers have become rooted in Christ, a fact that should bring comfort and assurance to them. This participle is linked with an architectural metaphor, ἐποικοδομούμενοι, perhaps a linkage that was itself another early Christian *topos*.²⁰ The prepositional phrase ἐν αὐτῷ ought to be construed as modifying both previous participles (REB: "be rooted in him, be built in him") with a locative sense—Christ Jesus is the element in which rootedness and building have taken/take place.

The Colossians are also "strengthened in the faith" (NIV), or "established in the faith" (NRSV). βεβαιοῦμενοι may either refer to being made strong and confirmed, or legally guaranteed (a sense that is present in the usage of the word in the papyri and the LXX).²¹ Given the fact that a legal metaphor is prominent in Col. 2:14,²² it would not be

¹⁴Lat. *frequentatio*. Her. 4.40.52-41.53.

¹⁵Lat. *translatio*. Her. 4.34.45: a trope that occurs when a word that applies to one thing is transferred to another since the similarity appears to justify such a transference.

¹⁶See Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary 44 (Waco: Word, 1982), 22, 106.

¹⁷*Topoi* are the "places" where rhetors commonly find material for the development of their arguments.

On topics generally see Arist. *Topica*; Cic., *Top.*; Kennedy, *NT Interpretation*, 20-21; Watson, *Invention*, 19-20.

¹⁸For the proper unmixed use of metaphors see Quint. *Inst. Or.* 8.6.49-51; Josef Martin, *Antike Rhetorik: Technik und Methode*. Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 2.3 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1974), 263.

¹⁹O'Brien, *Colossians*, 107.

²⁰In Eph. 3:17 the botanical and architectural images are linked, only there τεθεμελιωμένοι appears rather than ἐποικοδομούμενοι. In the latter instance (Col. 2:7), the pres. tense contrasts with the pf. ἐρριζωμένοι, a temporal shift which suggests that, in Christ, the rootedness is the presupposition for the present building up (Joachim Gnlika, *Der Kolosserbrief*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum neuen Testament 10/1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1980), 117.

²¹See discussions in Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 305; Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [hereafter BAGD] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 138; O'Brien, *Colossians*; Heinrich Schlier, "βέβαιος, βεβαιώω, βεβαίωσις" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [hereafter TDNT], ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:602-03,

surprising to see one here in v.7 with βεβαιώω. The present passive participle might then be translated (with its modifying dative of reference), "becoming more and more guaranteed with respect to the faith" (i.e., the body of Christian belief).²³ The final participial construction, περισσεύοντες ἐν εὐχαριστία ("overflowing with thankfulness," NIV) conveys the idea of the believers being so full of thanksgiving that it spills over and more than enough remains.²⁴ In Col. 2:7, the participle is asyndetic,²⁵ thus stylistically variant in comparison with the other syndetic participles in the verse. The prepositional phrase ἐν εὐχαριστία is likely instrumental (as in NAS and NIV).

2. *Negative, v. 8.* With the new paragraph that begins at v. 8,²⁶ Paul warns his readers about a phenomenon that constitutes, rhetorically, an opposite that has been assimilated into the *partitio*. The warning is made imminent and urgent by (1) the use of the future indicative (ἔσται), rather than the subjunctive,²⁷ and (2) a threefold repetition of κατά ("according to"). The iteration of the preposition is an instance of transplacement, the frequent reintroduction of the same word in a tasteful, elegant way.²⁸ The focus of this section is on ἡ φιλοσοφία καὶ κενὴ ἀπάτη a construction that may refer to two distinct injurious influences ("philosophy and empty deceit," NRSV) or to one influence, φιλοσοφία, that is described by an additional nominal construction in hendiadys ("a hollow and deceptive philosophy," NIV).²⁹ The metaphor of the carrying off as booty is introduced with ὁ συλαγωγῶν --the inference being that if the Colossian believers are not "rooted and built up in him and established in the faith," they are liable to being carried off by a spiritual opponent, like a prisoner such as those pictured on Assyrian monuments with a rope around their necks.³⁰ Several terms are assembled to describe the means through which the captivity might occur. Although somewhat synonymous, the first two prepositional phrases beginning with κατά³¹ designate

none of whom opts for this sense for βεβαιώω in Col. 2:7, although Schlier thinks it is present in Mk. 16:20; 1 Cor. 1:6, 8; 2 Cor. 1:21(?); Phil. 1:7; Heb. 2:2ff; 6:16.

²² See discussion on Col. 2:14 below.

²³ Harris, *Colossians*, 90, suggests that the translation "becoming" (more and more) established" with the dative of reference as a possible option for ἵνα ἰσχυροῦσθε in an objective sense. One could argue, on the basis of symmetry, for ἐν πίστει (rather than the preferred UBS⁴ reading of τῇ πίστει). The witnesses to the anarthrous reading are less persuasive (see UBS⁴ apparatus).

²⁴For inferior variant readings here, see UBS⁴ apparatus and Harris, *Colossians*, 91. Forms of περισσεύω describe the overabundance of food at the miraculous feedings in the Gospels; what was "left over" (Mt. 14:20; 15:37; Mk. 8:8; Lk. 9:17; Jn. 6:12-13).

²⁵Asyndeton is a stylistic device in which a conjunction is lacking (*Her.* 4.30.41). Harris, *Colossians*, 91, believes that περισσεύοντες is related not just to βεβαιούμενοι τῇ πίστει but to περιπατεῖτε as the fourth circumstantial ptc.

²⁶Cf. NIV, NRSV, TEV.

²⁷Harris, *Colossians*, 91.

²⁸*Traductio*, *Her.* 4.14.20.

²⁹On hendiadys see Ernest W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible Explained and Illustrated* (London: Eyre Spottiswoode, 1898), 657; Harris, *Colossians*, 92, maintains that the one prep. and one art. point to one influence; the καί is expegetic.

³⁰N. Hillyer, "ἰσχυροῦσθε," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* [hereafter *NIDNTT*], ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 3:379.

³¹The third prep. phrase begins with οὐ, and not κατά (οὐ κατά Χριστόν).

characteristics of φιλοσοφία and are thus adjectival and not adverbial. They state positively what the φιλοσοφία constitutes.

The phrase κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων ("which depends on human tradition," NIV) is linked asyndetically in parataxis with κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. Hence the latter refers to basic principles, perhaps of Jewish dietary laws and their demands, rather than to spiritual or demonic forces under whose influence the Colossians have come.³² The third κατα-phrase, κατὰ Χριστόν, is negated by οὐ and, as a mild antithesis,³³ is an "opposite of the opposite" and returns the hearer to the thought of the proposition: true philosophy,³⁴ i.e., a way of thinking that is not deceptive but in accordance with reality, is according to Christ (κατὰ Χριστόν). Such a philosophy is consistent, even tantamount, to walking in Christ (v. 6).

IV. Reason (2:9)

The particle ὅτι, as is often the case, introduces an enthymeme, a syllogistic expression without one of its premises.³⁵ An enthymeme functions as a proof in rhetorical discourse and is ideally suited for inclusion as a reason in a thesis. The syllogism that underlies the *partitio* and its reason is as follows:

A Walk in the one in whom the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily

B In him dwells the whole fullness of deity bodily

C Walk in him, for in him dwells the whole fullness of deity bodily

One could argue that the ὅτι clause, a causal clause, is subordinate to the construction governed by βλέπετε in v. 8: "See to it that no one takes you captive . . . for in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (vv. 8a, 9 NIV).³⁶ However,

³²Even if τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου has a personal reference in Gal. 4:3, 9 (and that is contested by Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 373-78), the expression does not necessarily have the same connotation in Col. The association of the στοιχεῖα with Jewish dietary prescriptions is clear in Col. 2:20-21, a fact emphasized with duplication of phraseology from the Gospel tradition: ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων □ Mk. 7:7; Mt. 15:9 par. The association of στοιχεῖα with Jewish dietary laws is overlooked by some recent commentators who equate στοιχεῖα in Col. 2:8, 20 with other entities: Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 373-78 (=created things); O'Brien, *Colossians*, 129-32 (=spirit powers controlling the elements); N. T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 101-02 (=local presiding deities).

³³A strong antithesis would include the conjunctive adversative ἀλλά. For the figure of antithesis see *Her.* 4.45.58.

³⁴φιλοσοφία, a neutral term, is pejorative here only because of its literary and grammatical contexts. It is associated/in hendiadys with □□□□. ἀπάτη, linked with ἡ παράδοσις τῶν ἀνθρώπων and τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (v. 8). This particular system of belief and practice, in that it includes false speculation, pride, and sensuality (2:18-23), is not according to Christ (οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν). See the discussion in Lightfoot, *Colossians and Philemon*, 176-77.

³⁵For discussion of enthymemes, see Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 16. The particle γάρ may also indicate an enthymeme.

³⁶Both Harris (*Colossians and Philemon*, 98) and O'Brien (*Colossians, Philemon*, 110-11) suggest that the causal ὅτι refers back to the philosophy of v. 8, explaining why it is false and not according to Christ. O'Brien avers that it is not attached to βλέπετε and is thus not a reason for the warning. James D. G.

since the entire passage Col. 2:6-15 follows the pattern of a rhetorical thesis, one must consider rhetorical as well as grammatical relationships within a text. In my opinion, the persuasive nature of the passage suggests that rhetorical concerns should guide the interpreter in her/his determination of grammatical relationships. Hence, it is preferable to understand the clause as subordinate to ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε κτλ.³⁷ The clause functions suitably as a reason for the *partitio*.³⁸

The verb "dwells" (κατοικεῖ) is a metaphor that suggests the residence of the Shekinah in the tabernacle of the OT. The fullness of deity has its "permanent" or "fixed abode"³⁹ in bodily form.

V. Analogy (2:10)

For the reason stated above (i. e., in Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily), the Colossians are themselves in a state of completion ("and you have come to fullness") since they are ἐν αὐτῷ.⁴⁰ Their state of completion is analogous both to the condition of walking in Christ in v. 6 and Christ's own possession of deity as the tabernacle thereof. The appearance of πεπληρωμένοι is an antanaklasis,⁴¹ a change occurring within a word to create a pun. Here the change is between πλήρωμα and πεπληρωμένοι, both from the πληρο- word group. The Colossians have been brought to fullness because they are in Christ, the one in whom dwells all fullness.

A relative clause (ὃς ἐστὶν ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσία) introduces the metaphor⁴² of head in reference to Christ: "who is the head of every ruler and authority" (2:10b). The phrase echoes the Christ-hymn of 1:15-20, where Christ is similarly described (καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας 1:18a), only here every ruler and authority over whom Christ exercises absolute sovereignty are not his body, whereas the church is in 1:18a. Hence the head-metaphor has shifted from a denotation of an organic unity between head and body parts (the former sustaining the

Dunn (*The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996], 151) states that the force of κατὰ Χριστόν is explained (ὅτι) by the sequence of 'in him' clauses that build into an exposition of the cross. NLT and NRSV begin a new paragraph at v. 8; the ὅτι clause could then be construed as either subordinate to βλέπετε or as modifying κατὰ Χριστόν.

³⁷NEB, NIV, and REB begin a new paragraph at v. 9, thus obscuring any grammatical connection to what has preceded.

³⁸The ὅτι clause ("since in him all the fullness of Deity dwells bodily") could be the basis of v. 10a ('you also have been brought to completion in him'). NT examples of the causal ὅτι clause preceding the primary clause do exist: Ὅτι ἐώρακός με πεπίστευκας (Jn. 20:29), reading the construction as a statement, rather than a question, with Lutherbibel, NIV, NJB, NLT, REB; reading a question are UBS⁴, NRSV, NTHD⁴, NAS, Bible en français courant [Société biblique canadienne]. Jn. 1:50 has a similar construction: Ὅτι εἶπόν σοι ὅτι εἶδόν σε ὑποκάτω τῆ σκῆης πιστεύεις (question: UBS⁴, NRSV, NAS, REB; statement: NIV, NJB). The alignment to the pattern of a thesis that is achieved if one understands the clause to point backward rather than forward argues strongly, however, for the likelihood of a backward reference—all the way to ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε in v. 6.

³⁹Lightfoot, *Colossians and Philemon*, 157 (on 1:19); 179 (on 2:9).

⁴⁰The pf. ptc. πεπληρωμένοι suggests the completion of an act with ongoing significance.

⁴¹Quint. *Inst. Or.* 9.3.68-77. Also *paronomasia* (Lat. *adnominatio*), *Her.* 4.21.29.

⁴²Lat. *translatio*: A figure of speech by which a word applying to one thing is transferred to another because the similarity seems to justify it (*Her.* 4.34.45).

latter) to one that portrays Christ as authoritative ruler over cosmic powers whom he has conquered (cf. 2:15).⁴³ A double *exornatio*⁴⁴ gives the relative clause distinct euphony.

The Colossian Christians' state as a result of being ἐν αὐτῷ (i. e., Christ, the antecedent of v. 8c) is analogous to that of Christ himself. Just as he is the dwelling of the divine πλήρωμα, so the church is filled with that same fullness by virtue of her union with Christ. "If the fullness of deity resided in him [Christ], his fullness was imparted to them."⁴⁵ In a thesis, an analogy "pointed to a common phenomenon regarded as an instance of a universal principle."⁴⁶ In Col. 2:10, a parallelism presents a second situation (B) analogous to the first (A):

- A All the fullness (πλήρωμα) of the deity dwells in Christ (=God fills Christ)
- B The Colossians have come to fullness in Christ (=Christ fills the Colossians)

The second condition is not completely parallel to the first, though it is analogous. The believers are fulfilled ("in him you too find your own fulfillment," NJB) in the sense that they have found a completely secure and intimate relationship with God. The fullness of that relationship, although complete, is not exactly that of Christ, in whom the fullness of deity dwells and who alone is head over every ruler and authority. The prepositional phrase, ἐν αὐτῷ (v. 10), in the second instance is a locative of sphere, whereas the first (v. 9) represents a locative of place. The first, in reference to the actual somatic existence (earthly, now heavenly) of Christ, is literal and the second figurative. The presence of the prepositional phrase ἐν αὐτῷ in each condition is, rhetorically, an instance of reduplication⁴⁷ that shows that an analogy is indeed in effect. The analogy also represents an epicheireme, a manner of reasoning based on statements that are merely credible, and not formally logical or coherent.⁴⁸

- A You are complete in whomever embodies the fullness of deity.
- B In Christ dwells all the fullness of deity bodily.
- C You are complete in him.

In Col. 2:10, the epicheireme contains only premises B and C with A suppressed. The relative clause ὃς ἐστὶν ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας stands appositionally to Christ, referred to pronominally in vv. 9-10. The clause picks up 1:18a, καὶ αὐτός

⁴³The shift in metaphor is noted by BAGD, 430, and O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 49-50, 114.

⁴⁴Gk. *homoeoptoton*, a figure of speech which features two or more words in the same case, within one period, with similar terminations (*Her.* 4.20.28; *Quint. Inst. Or.* 9.3.78). Here, (1) ἡ κεφαλῆς (2) πάσης ἀρχῆς ἐξουσίας

⁴⁵Bruce, *Colossians*, 101.

⁴⁶Mack, *Rhetoric and the NT*, 46.

⁴⁷Lat. *conduplicatio*. *Her.* 4.28.38. See at n. 56 below.

⁴⁸Quint. *Inst. Or.* 5.14.5-23.

ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας. In 1:18 the head-body terminology signifies a metaphor by which the church is an organic unity subsumed under a head, Christ. By that head the body receives nutrition, unifying power, and growth (2:19).⁴⁹ The metaphor is not the same at 2:10, where head is not mentioned in relation to the church. Paul, neither here nor anywhere else, describes the universe or the cosmic powers as Christ's body.⁵⁰ κεφαλὴ should be thought of in Col. 2:10 as a metaphor for source or beginning.⁵¹ Christ is foremost among spiritual or supernatural beings, including ἀρχαί and ἐξουσία since he himself is the agent through which they and the cosmos were created (1:16).

VI. Example (2:11-12)

The normal pattern for a thesis features an opposite before both analogy and example. In the present thesis, however, the opposite follows them. The example of Paul in this thesis is twofold: both circumcision (v. 11) and baptism (v. 12) signify the necessity of the *partitio*—walking in Christ and not being taken captive.

Circumcision in 2:11 metaphorical: the removal is not that of the foreskin, but a "putting off of the body of the flesh" (τῇ ἀπεκδύσει τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός. Striking instances of homoeoptoton⁵² give emphasis to the examples in the Pauline thesis: the repetition of endings occurs in ω (2x), η (3x plus -ει), -ος (2x), and -ου (3x). The varied and immediate usage of words in the περιτεμ- word group is an instance of reduplication,⁵³ a figure utilized for the purpose of amplification whereby one or more words are repeated. Three instances of the word group appear in v. 11: περιετμήθητε (aor. pass. ind.), περιτομῇ (2x; instr. sg). Circumcision is a metaphor for the new life of completeness in Christ (v. 10), and is symbolic in biblical language of the covenant of God with Abraham, now fulfilled in Christ (see Romans).

The phrase ἐν τῇ ἀπεκδύσει τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός itself contains two figures. ἀπεκδύσις is actually a double metaphor: the removal of the foreskin is denoted by it as well as the removal of clothing.⁵⁴ The latter significance is apt in view of the baptismal language of v. 12, since those baptized may have, from a very early time, stripped off clothing (perhaps in exchange for baptismal garments) before baptism. τὸ σῶμα τῇ σαρκός is hendiadys, and should be translated "fleshly (i.e. sinful) body."⁵⁵ "Body" serves as a metonymy:⁵⁶ the σῶμα, as the instrument of their execution, represents sinful deeds.⁵⁷

⁴⁹Bruce, *Colossians*, 123.

⁵⁰O'Brien, *Colossians*, 114.

⁵¹C. C. Kroeger, "Head," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* [hereafter *DPL*], ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 375-76.

⁵²See n. 14 above.

⁵³*Her.* 4.28.38.

⁵⁴BAGD, 83.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶Metonymy / *denominatio* "draws from an object closely akin or associated an expression suggesting the object meant, but not called by its own name" (*Her.* 4.32.43).

⁵⁷σῶμα could represent the personality of 'identity' of the hearers in their pre-Christian days. Thus 'body' is not so much the material substance of existence, but that existence as lived corporally outside of Christ.

The phrase ἐν τῇ περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ is an apposition to ἐν τῇ ἀπεκδύσει τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός. The recipient(s) of the circumcision could be the Colossians, in which case Χριστοῦ signifies a possessive genitive ("with a Christian circumcision" [Weymouth]),⁵⁸ or a subjective genitive (=a circumcision of the heart⁵⁹ that is effected by Christ). Christ himself, however, could be the recipient of the circumcision, in which case Χριστοῦ would be an objective genitive (=the circumcision that Christ received). Thus the περιτομή would not be that which he received on the eighth day (Lk. 2:21), but his death, a stripping off of his physical body.⁶⁰ The construction is probably best understood, however, as a reference to the spiritual circumcision of the hearers; it is both a stripping away of their sinful body and a Christian circumcision (cf. Col. 3:9).⁶¹ The example of circumcision, used metaphorically, is effective in that it introduces the language of the OT covenant. This sort of language would undoubtedly appeal to the Colossian congregation and foster positive pathos: they stand in the place of Abraham and his heirs who inherit the covenant promises.

The significance of baptism constitutes the next example of Paul's thesis. An example is always mimetic; it establishes the thesis by the portrayal of the action of a significant predecessor whose deed explains a notion or presents a model to follow. In v. 12, the idea is that the reasonable and logical course of action would be to carry out the *partitio* (live in him/see to it that no one takes you captive) since the Christian experience is that of complete union and identification with Christ. The repetition of the συν-prefix (συνταφέντες, συνηγέρθητε) forms a pleasing and emphatic alliteration.⁶² ΣΥΝΤΑΦΕΝΤΕΣ Αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ βαπτισμῷ is a synecdoche;⁶³ burial is the conclusion of the event of dying, whereas baptism, itself presumably by immersion, is a metaphor for burial that "represented mimetically the commitment to enter the tomb with Jesus after

See J. A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology*, Studies in Biblical Theology 5 (London: SCM Press, 1952), 30-31 (on Col. 2:11).

⁵⁸Harris, *Colossians*, 102-03.

⁵⁹A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 4, *The Epistles of Paul* (Nashville: Broadman, 1931), 492.

⁶⁰G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 152-53, who intimates that the circumcision is primarily Christ's death (obj. gen. sense; circumcision is "a gruesome figure for death," 152), but because the Colossian believers experience a stripping off of the body of flesh in him, a possessive or subjective genitive sense could be construed in the verse also. Beasley-Murray does not discuss the possible genitival senses explicitly.). See also Roy Yates, *The Epistle to the Colossians*, Epworth Commentaries (London: Epworth Press, 1993), 42.

⁶¹The congregation at Colossae, although likely mixed Jewish and Gentile (cf. Col. 3:11) but predominantly Gentile (1:21, 27), is presumed by Paul to be familiar with the OT, esp. its rituals and ceremonies (2:13-16). Thus, although Gentiles would not have necessarily undergone circumcision, the import of the practice would not be lost on them.

⁶²Also called homoeopropheron: "the repetition of the same letter or syllable at the beginning of two or more words in close succession" (Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 171). The repetition of the συν-prefix indicates that, with the ptc. συνταφέντες a completely new metaphor is introduced. The punctuation in UBS⁴ and NIV is confusing at this point; the minor stop suggests that the ptc. modifies περιετμήθητε (v. 11). Such a syntactical subordination creates a seriously mixed metaphor, however. NLT; REB; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 102, correctly place a full stop after v. 11, thus signifying the commencement of a new image.

⁶³Lat. *intellectio*. A figure of speech by which the whole is known from a small part or a part is known from the whole (*Her.* 4.33.44-45).

he has been taken down from the cross."⁶⁴ ἐν ᾧ forms a synonymy⁶⁵ with the construction ἐν αὐτῷ in vv. 6, 7, 9, 10, and with ἐν ᾧ in v. 11. In vv. 11a and 12b, the relative pronoun ᾧ (loc. masc. sg.) replaces the personal pronoun αὐτῷ (loc. masc. sg.) to avoid excessive transplacement⁶⁶. The emphasis in the passage is union with Christ, so theological as well as rhetorical considerations suggest that the antecedent to w-| in v. 12b is Christ rather than baptism.⁶⁷

The joint *topoi*⁶⁸ dying/being buried with Christ and being raised with him are common in Paul's writings. Death/burial and rising with Christ signify, respectively, redemption through Jesus' death on the cross and the resurrection life in which the believer shares. Rhetorically, the death/resurrection correspondence between believers and Christ is a topic of comparison in which what is valid in the greater should be valid in the lesser.⁶⁹

The joint rising with Christ has taken place because of the Colossians' faith in the power of God (v. 12b). The notion of faith in his power, rather than in God himself, is a metonymy—a figure whereby something closely associated with something stands in place of it. In this case power = God, who is described in an appositional epithet as he "who raised him from the dead" (lit., "of the one who raised him from the dead"). To so describe God, as the one who raised Jesus, is to use *antonomasia*, an epithet used in place of a proper name.⁷⁰ In order to stress the fact of resurrection through God' power, Paul creates a stunning triple word play between συνηγέρθητε, ἐνεργείας, and ἐγείραντος. Paul's modifications concern the shifts between η/ἐγε(ι)ρ- and ἐνερ-. The blending of the sounds demonstrates that rising and the power to effect that rising are inextricably linked; only by God's power could a resurrection of the Colossians occur, and it has in their union with Christ.

VII. Citation (Authority) (2:13-15)

A transition (v. 13a-b)⁷¹ to the authoritatively cited traditional material (v. 13c) provides an antithesis to the state of being raised with Christ. Death (adjectivally participial νεκροῦς ὄντας) is portrayed as both location in trespasses and in an uncircumcised state. The basis of being made alive is the antecedent forgiveness of sins

⁶⁴Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, 159.

⁶⁵ Lat. *interpretatio*, *Her.* 4.28.38. This is a figure whereby one word replaces another of the same meaning.

⁶⁶ Lat. *tradio*, *Her.* 4.14.20-21: The frequent reintroduction of the same word in a tasteful, elegant way.

⁶⁷ So also Walter Grundmann, "σύν-μετά with the Genitive, κτλ," *TDNT*, 7:792. For discussion on the antecedent of ᾧ, see Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, 104 (he prefers βαπτισμῷ as the antecedent for the rel. pron. ᾧ).

⁶⁸ τόποι / *loci* (commonplaces, topics) are the subjects from which rhetors consistently draw in order to develop arguments. See n. 20 above.

⁶⁹ Cic. *Top.* 4.23 (cf. 18.68-71).

⁷⁰ Lat. *pronominitio*. *Her.* 4.31.42.

⁷¹ *Her.* 4.26.35. A *transitio* is a brief recall of that which has been said and a brief presentation of what is to follow. Col. 2:13a-b constitute such a figure.

by God.⁷² Paul generates negative pathos among the audience against the life outside Christ (the non-circumcised, non-baptized life) and positive pathos⁷³ toward the life in Christ, a life that is *with* the risen Lord (συνεζωποίησεν ὑμᾶς σὺν αὐτῷ).

The presence of six participial constructions in Col. 2:13-15 (οὔτας, χαρισάμενος, ἐξαλείψας, προσηλώσας ἀπεκδυσάμενος, θριαμβεύσας) likely signifies the presence of creedal/hymnic material⁷⁴ that serves as an authoritative citation which substantiates the *partitio* when it calls for the hearers to walk in Christ. As authoritative statement, creedal or hymnic material functions like an oracle, "a communication from a deity on some particular matter."⁷⁵ According to Quintilian,⁷⁶ oracles, in terms of rhetorical function, present themselves as either supernatural evidence that is inherent in the case itself, or supernatural argument that is brought forth from another source. Hymns function like oracles in that they have a revelatory dimension; they are inspired by the Spirit in and for the worshipping community (Eph. 5:18-19; cf. Col. 3:16).⁷⁷ The Spirit, as an external agent, represents a supernatural argument; the inspired hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs inhere in the Christian life itself as elements of charismatic community experience. Thus they are supernatural evidence. Hymnic material that is introduced as an authoritative citation lends power to Paul's argument in the thesis of Col. 2:6-15. The

⁷² So RSV "having forgiven us all our trespasses." Cf. Robertson, *The Epistles of Paul*, 494, who affirms that divine forgiveness is logically antecedent to the vivifying work of God, though grammatically simultaneous. See Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 107.

⁷³ Pathos refers to the emotional response among the audience that is elicited by the orator's craft. For discussion of pathos, negative and positive, see Watson, *Invention*, 15-16 (with refs. to the handbooks).

⁷⁴ Ethelbert Stauffer, *New Testament Theology*, trans. John Marsh (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 338-39, on NT creedal formulae. Hymnic materials in the NT are essentially expanded creedal formulae. According to R. P. Martin ("Hymns, Hymn Fragments, Songs, Spiritual Songs," *DPL*, 422), "the hymns are essentially soteriological in their purpose, and set forth the person of Christ in relation to his world as reconciler and world ruler." Proposed reconstructions of the hymnic or creedal source for Col. 2:13-15 are reviewed in Gnlika, *Der Kolosserbrief*, 119-21, although he cautions that an attempt to isolate an original text behind Col. is bound to fail. One can at least maintain that the author uses traditional concepts and expressions in ways commensurate to his singular purpose. George E. Cannon, *The Use of Traditional Materials in Colossians* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), 39-49, understands vv. 14-15, which declare Christ's victory over sin and the powers, as having originated from a previously existing hymn and undergone redaction; v. 13 is not a part of that hymn since it celebrates the participation of Christians in the death and resurrection of Christ.

⁷⁵ Christopher T. Begg, "Oracle," in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 565. For further brief, but helpful, discussion see T. Witton Davies, "Divination," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* [hereafter *ISBE*], ed. James Orr [CD-ROM] (Big Fork, MT: Computer Bible Research Software, 1998); Burton Scott Easton, "Oracle," *ISBE*; Joseph Eddy Fontenrose, "Oracles," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. M. Cary and others (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), 624.

⁷⁶ *Inst. Or.* 5.11.42-44.

⁷⁷ καὶ μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἴνω, ἐν ᾧ ἐστὶν ἀσωτία, ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι,

λαλοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς ἐν ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς ᾄδοντες καὶ ψάλλοντες τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ κυρίῳ (Eph. 5:18-19). The *ptc.* λαλοῦντες modifies πληροῦσθε as a circumstantial or modal *ptc.*; ὕμνοις is *inst.* Hence, by singing to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, the filling of the Spirit is (in part) evinced or effected. In Col. 3:16, the word of Christ dwelling within the community of believers effects teaching and admonition by means of psalms, hymns (ὕμνοις), and spiritual songs. The various terms used for these expressions of worship in Eph. and Col. may not be absolutely distinct, although 'hymns' may refer to (musical) works already composed and known to the congregations in which they are expressed. See Bruce, *Colossians*, 158-59, 380-81, for discussion.

cumulative effect of the participial hymnic constructions is to emphasize to the audience that they have, as persons formerly dead but now alive, been forgiven through the work of Christ on the cross where the hostile powers have been conquered. The Spirit-inspired hymns of Christian worship carry the Spirit's own authority. Hence, the Colossian believers ought to walk in him. Although the participles could together be considered (elements of) a Christian *topos* of forgiveness,⁷⁸ I shall examine the legal- and military-metaphorical aspects of the constructions.

1. *Legal metaphor.* The legal metaphor is twofold: it is "a picture of debt, drawn from the ancient business world" and a picture of the posting of a public decree: the *titulus* with the *causa poenae* of the criminal was affixed to the cross.⁷⁹ "Erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands" modifies συνεζωποίησεν. The thought is either that God made us alive by erasing the record (instrumental), the making alive and erasing the record being actions concomitant to the forgiveness, or that God erased the record as a new action subsequent to the forgiveness. The former possibility is preferable.⁸⁰ τὸ χειρόγραφον has been variously interpreted, but among the many options the legal metaphor in Paul's language is generally recognized.⁸¹ In my opinion, the reference is to an accusatory record of violations of the Mosaic law (τοῖς δόγμασιν). The statement of indebtedness that testified against us was erased. God nailed it to the cross, the debt was satisfied by the cross, to which our accusation was affixed; Christ's death sufficed as a payment for our sins.⁸²

2. *Military metaphor.* The core of this metaphor is the verbal construction, θριαμβεύσας αὐτούς "triumphing over them" [viz., the rulers and authorities]. The picture is of a Roman emperor leading prisoners in a triumphal procession. ἐν αὐτῷ [= ἐν σταυρῷ, with locative] indicates the paradoxical location where the victory procession takes place: in Jesus' way to the cross.⁸³ Hence the cross is a synecdoche⁸⁴ that represents the entire passion of Christ. Col. 2:15 is vivid imagery—it is an instance

⁷⁸ In Col. 1:14, forgiveness is redemption: ἐν ᾧ [Χριστῷ] ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἀφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν.

⁷⁹ Colin Brown and Egon Brandenburger, "□□□□□□" *NIDNTT*, 1:402.

⁸⁰ Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, 107; Robertson, *The Epistles of Paul*, 494.

⁸¹ The review of interpretive suggestions in Bruce, *Colossians*, 109 n. 91, includes: (1) our written agreement to observe the law; (2) an IOU given to the devil by Adam at the time of the fall of humanity; (3) Christ's body which was nailed to the cross. Adolf Deissmann (*Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978], 333-34) suggests that Paul's cryptic reference to a bond nailed to the cross should perhaps be thought of in terms of "the cross on the bond," i. e., a cancellation of a statement of debt with the Greek cross-letter Chi (X)

⁸² Bruce, *Colossians*, 109-10; J. Schneider, "σταυρός, κτλ," *TDNT*, 7:577. God is probably to be understood as the subject of the finite verb ἦρκεν, and the action of the participle προσηλώσας regarded as antecedent or simultaneous to that of the finite verb: God removed the record in the action of nailing it to the cross (cf. TEV; Goodspeed; JB; NJB; Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, 166).

⁸³ Gerhard Delling, "θριαμβεύω", *TDNT*, 3:160; cf. Gnlika, *Kolosserbrieff*, 142-43, and Wolter, *Kolosses*, 137, both of whom maintain that, in the imperial era, a triumphal procession is for the conquering field commander. Delling views the procession as one for the emperor (=God). His view is affirmed by Lamar Williamson, Jr., "Led in Triumph: Paul's Use of Thriambeuo," *Interpretation* 22 (July 1968): 317-332.

⁸⁴ *Her.* 4.3.44-45.

of *demonstratio*, an ocular demonstration by which the rhetor describes an event so vividly that the hearers can practically see it.⁸⁵ God ought to be regarded as the subject of the verb ἐδειγμάτισεν; the warfare imagery in the context indicates that the middle voice of ἀπεκδυσάμενος is active in meaning,⁸⁶ so that one ought to adopt the NRSV "He disarmed the rulers and authorities."⁸⁷

Who are "the rulers and authorities" over whom the triumph has occurred? The ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι have already appeared in the hymn of Col. 1:15-20 along with the θρόνοι and κυριότητες, and are probably the unseen things created in or by (ἐν αὐτῷ) the beloved Son. Despite recent attempts to demythologize these powers and present them as institutions with their inherent power that tends to oppression and idolatry,⁸⁸ Paul almost certainly understood the powers as actual personal, supernatural entities.⁸⁹ They have been overcome in the cross.

VIII. Conclusion

Paul does not append a formal conclusion to his thesis; he continues his argument, that has now been introduced with the thesis-proposition, in the *probatio* of 2:16-3:17.⁹⁰

The *peroratio* of the entire letter (3:18-4:17) is adequate as a conclusion for the entire rhetorical discourse of Colossians.

In the perspective of Greco-Roman rhetoric, Paul's proposition in the Colossian letter evinces itself to be a highly crafted example of a rhetorical thesis. That the apostle devoted such attention to this central element of his letter attests to the seriousness of its injunction. The proposition, as manifold, is a *propositio*, and argues for the Colossian believers to continue walking in Christ Jesus the Lord, just as they have received, not only tradition about him, but the Lord himself. The circumstantial participles attending the imperative verb "walk" in v. 6 are colorful metaphorical pictures of what the Christian life in Christ should look like: the believers, individually and corporately, should be rooted firmly in Christ like a tree in its ground. They should also be like a building whose steadfastness lies in its trusty foundation. In the case of the Colossian

⁸⁵ Gk. ἐνέργεια. Her. 4.55.68-69; Quint. *Inst. Or.* 8.3.61-71 (*repraesentatio*), 9.2.40-44 (*sub oculos subiectio*); Cic. *De Or.* 3.53.202 (*sub aspectum paene subiectio*). The public aspect of the procession is noted by Gnllka, *Kolosserbrieff*, 142 ("Die Universalität des mythologischen Dramas korrespondiert die universale Befreiung, die Gott gewirkt hat").

⁸⁶ Wolter, *Kolossier*, 137. Cf. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, 110-11, for translation options.

⁸⁷ NAS more clearly captures the action of the aorist ptc. as antecedent to ἐδειγμάτισεν: "when He had disarmed the rulers and authorities," a denotation called for by Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, 110.

⁸⁸ See Walter Wink, "Biblical Theology and Social Ethics," in *Biblical Theology: Problems and Perspectives*, ed. Steven J. Kraftchick, Charles D. Myers, Jr., and Ben C. Ollenburger (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 260-75; idem, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, vol. 1, *The Powers* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 104-05, 140.

⁸⁹ A helpful statement to this effect is P. T. O'Brien, "Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church," in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: The Problem of Contextualization*, ed. D. A. Carson (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 110-50.

⁹⁰ Neesley, "Rhetorical Analysis," 215, regards 2:6-3:4 as the *probatio*; an extended *reprehensio* is constituted by 2:16-23, followed by a final *confirmatio*, 3:1-4. In the section that he entitles "Final Exhortations" (within a quasi-*peroratio*), Col. 3:5-4:6 is situated.

Christians, that foundation is Christ. Furthermore, the prominence of legal language elsewhere in the Pauline thesis (cf. 2:14-15) suggests that *βεβαιούμενοι* also a legal expression that denotes a condition of becoming progressively certain of a legal guarantee, i. e., of their fullness in Christ (cf. 2:10). Finally, the metaphor of overflowing points to the Colossians' abundance of thanksgiving.

The *partitio* not only includes such positive modifications of the imperative, but a negative one as well. The hearers are to beware of deceptive and empty teachings that do not promote Christ, but human traditions. Without the care that Paul enjoins in the negative part of the *partitio*, a rhetorical opposite that has been subsumed under the *partitio*, the audience is in danger of being carried off as booty.

As a persuasive reason for the proposition, Paul reminds the audience that, in Christ, all the fullness of deity dwells bodily (v. 9). In this section of his argument, Paul employs syllogistic reasoning (presented in a shortened form known as an enthymeme) that argues for walking only after one in whom the deity dwells bodily. Since the deity so dwells in Christ, the conclusion reached by the syllogism is that the believers in Colossae ought to walk in Christ. Rhetorical concerns lead us to link the *ὅτι*-clause with the positively stated element of the proposition, not the negative one only. Thus, we should construe Paul's point to be that one should walk in Christ, simultaneously avoiding empty philosophy, because in him dwells all the divine fullness. This gives a fuller scope to the enthymeme than those interpretations that see it as a reason for caution in the face of deceptive and vain teaching.

Next in the Pauline thesis are analogy and example. An analogous situation exists between the Colossian believers and Christ: in him, the fullness of God dwells bodily; in them, they are complete. An *antanaklasis* involving *πλήρωμα* and *πληρώω* make clear that, although the believers' status is not identical to Christ's insofar as God's fullness is concerned, still they have been 'fulfilled' (i.e., brought to completion) through their union with the one in whom all the fullness of deity dwells. The example that Paul utilizes is twofold. The believers have been circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, thereby having been brought within the sphere of the covenant of God with his people. Furthermore, their baptism represents their own identification with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. The union of the believers so represented is given powerful rhetorical expression through the various sun- compounds that Paul employs (vv. 12-13). The citation-section of the thesis utilizes legal and military metaphors from traditional material whose authority resides in its nature of confession for the early church. Because the death of Christ served to erase the record of indebtedness that humanity had incurred, and he triumphed over the powers by his death, the hearers of the letter are persuaded to continue to walk in the one who has sacrificed so much for them.