

MATTERS THAT AFFECT STYLE

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Higher critics do not allow a wide enough range of style variance in New Testament authors. The items below have implication for greater variety in style.

1. Subject matter (topic) Complex problems tend to cause complex presentations. Certain subjects call for special vocabulary. What we are trying to combat determines terminology: “faith and works” (Judaism), “fullness” (Gnosticism), priesthood (new subject). For the sake of meeting the minds of the ones we want to address, we use the vocabulary of the other in reference to our own subject so there can be a correlation of parts of thought systems, or functional equivalents. Becoming/being a Christian we might call a natural “high” because of the modern drug scene. Vocabulary generated by such circumstances will be peculiar to the circumstance (cp. “*circumcision of the heart*,” “*fullness of the godhead*,” “*armor of salvation*”).
2. Amanuensis (help) Change in amanuensis from one letter to another may affect the wording of the letter: oral vs. written, different writers, ways amanuenses are used.
3. Pressure (time) The press of the immediate circumstances and the demands of the problem foster hurried composition, which tends away from more reflective presentation and toward more conversational style. If Paul in prison found out someone was going somewhere, for instance, he might have written a letter more hurriedly than normal to take advantage of this way to send his communication. The more time people have to think through their presentation, the more tightly they may organize it and the more precisely they may word it.
4. Readership (audience) (culture) We do not write the same way to a country church as to one in modern suburbia. The cultural expectancy of an area may contribute to the stiltedness of expression.
5. Stage of Life Over time, people tend to adjust their vocabulary and way of speaking. Expectancy about ways of speaking may vary with the age of the speaker.
6. Recent experiences (environment) Sometimes what we have been doing or the people we have been around cause us to pick up on expressions, vocabulary, speaking styles that are fresh and new to us. (That is the reason they impress us.) Illustration comes in the fact that no two letters are closer than Colossians and Ephesians, written at the same time. The mood shift in 2 Corinthians may result from such a thing as well.
7. Speech habits Authors can “get on” an expression or manner of speaking, so the

term, phrase, or grammatical phenomenon may appear several times in this letter or sermon, but nowhere else (cp. “*in the heavenlies*” in Ephesians, to a lesser extent “*God forbid*” in Romans, and “*I am*” in John).

Style considerations in New Testament studies affect the authorship of Ephesians (vs. the other “nine letters” of Paul), the Pastoral letters, *Hebrews, *2 Peter (vs. 1 Peter), *Revelation (vs. the other Johannine writings), synoptic studies, Acts **1-12** vs. **13-28**; the genuineness of Mark **16:9-20**; as well as the unity of 2 Corinthians, Philippians, and Matthew (the Great Commission, **28:18-20**). (*The ancient church acknowledged stylistic questions here.) Maybe the stylistic differences did not bother the ancients as much because Greek was their mother tongue and they had a better feel for how a native speaker might vary,