"EYEWITNESSES," "INFORMED CONTEMPORARIES," AND "UNKNOWING INQUIRERS": JOSEPHUS' CRITERIA FOR AUTHENTIC HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE MEANING OF ΠΑΡΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΕΩ

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A commonly accepted meaning for the compound verb παρακολουθεω is "to investigate," "conduct research," "inquire into," "follow up" a matter or events that have already occurred. In the NT the most notable rendering of this specific sense is Luke 1:3 and Luke's "claim" to have carefully "investigated" (παρακολουθηκότα) "all" that he has drawn up into his two-volume narrative.1 This understanding of the perfect participle of course fits well with the majority of Luke-Acts scholars who regard Luke's enterprise as essentially some form of historiography, however similar or different it may appear from contemporary Hellenistic histories. Luke claims to have done his "homework," and whatever final grade one assigns his project, Luke at least—according to this interpretation—has done the investigative work tantamount to the research


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of an historian. It is also not uncommon to back up this construal of Luke 1:3 by appealing to Josephus’ Against Apion (Ag. Ap.) 1.53 as does, for example, a lexicon like Bauer, or a commentary such as J. Fitzmyer’s. What is particularly telling about this Josephus reference is that a Jewish Hellenistic historian is expatiating the criteria for acceptable history writing and in the process comparing his own composing of the Jewish war with Rome to that of other contemporaries (cf. the “many” others in Luke 1:1). Notwithstanding this “received rendering,” we shall show that παρακολοοθέω in Ag. Ap. 1.53 does not mean “to go back over” anything whether through personal inquiry of living persons or research of “facts” and, hence, cannot be used to support the sense of “to investigate.” In fact, nowhere among the 8 occurrences of παρακολοοθέω in Josephus can this sense be seriously maintained, and to that extent—whether in reference to Luke or to any other occurrence of the word in ancient Greek literature—Josephus cannot be invoked to support such a connotation.

Fitzmyer provides a succinct but comprehensive list of the alleged “senses” of παρακολοοθέω in ancient Greek literature:

1. “follow” (physically), “accompany” (at one’s side);
2. “follow with the mind” (as a speech, a teaching, a rule);
3. “follow, result from” (logically; intransitive use);
4. “follow closely, keep in touch with” (as some event or movement);
5. “follow up, trace, investigate, inform oneself about” (past events).

We have seen that he subsumes Ag. Ap. 1.53 to no. 5. But by “investigating” each instance in Josephus, we shall discover that Josephus uses παρακολοοθέω only in senses 1, 2, and (possibly) 4.

**Jewish War (J. W.)**

In both occurrences in his own history of the Jewish conflagration with Rome Josephus uses παρακολοοθέω in sense 1, a literal or physical “following” or “accompanying.”

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4. Fitzmyer believes he is listing actual demonstrable meanings in Greek literature. Since I am taking issue with his and others’ findings, “alleged” is my term.