

I Kneel Before the Father and Pray for You (Ephesians 3:14): Date and Significance of Ephesians, Part 1 *Rüdiger Fuchs*

SUMMARY

This three-part article argues that Paul's thinking shows much development throughout his ministry and that Ephesians can be seen as a representative example of his mature theology. The first part discusses the dates of writing of the letters of Paul, especially of Ephesians. The

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letters are divided over an early, middle and late period, the latter crowned by Ephesians. Part 2 will ground the dating proposal for Ephesians more fully upon the Pauline chronology and the letter's character as a legacy; the third and final part will discuss some arguments against the authenticity of Ephesians.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser dreiteilige Artikel vertritt die Auffassung, dass sich die Ansichten von Paulus während seines Dienstes beträchtlich weiterentwickelt haben und dass der Epheserbrief als ein repräsentatives Beispiel für seine gereifte Theologie angesehen werden kann. Der erste Teil behandelt die Abfassungsdaten der paulinischen Briefe, insbesondere des Epheserbriefes. Die Briefe gehen von

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einer frühen Abfassungszeit über eine mittlere bis hin zu einer späten Periode, die durch den Epheserbrief ihre Krönung erfährt. Der zweite Teil wird sich mit seinem Datierungsvorschlag für den Epheserbrief noch umfassender auf die paulinische Chronologie und das Charakteristikum des Briefes als ein Vermächtnis gründen. Der dritte und letzte Teil wird sich mit Argumenten gegen die Authentizität des Epheserbriefes befassen.

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RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article qui comportera trois parties, l'auteur soutient que la pensée de l'apôtre Paul a connu un développement important au cours de son ministère et que l'épître aux Éphésiens peut être considérée comme un exemple représentatif de sa maturité théologique. La première partie traite des dates de rédaction des épîtres pauliniennes et en particulier de la date d'Éphésiens.

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Les lettres sont réparties en trois groupes : celles de la première période, de la période médiane, puis de la dernière période, la lettre aux Éphésiens venant couronner la troisième. La deuxième partie apportera des éléments supplémentaires pour étayer plus pleinement la date proposée pour Éphésiens ainsi que son caractère de testament de l'apôtre. La troisième partie considérera certains des arguments avancés contre l'authenticité de cette lettre.

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Repeated attempts have been made to date all thirteen letters of the *corpus Paulinum* to within the lifetime of Paul.¹ The following article² seeks to develop a proposal by Peter Stuhlmacher concerning the letter to the Ephesians. He writes that the letter ... assumes that the apostle is imprisoned (see Eph 4:1; 6:20). In my opinion, this can be traced back to a Pauline circular, which was given to co-workers of Paul, like Tychicus (see

Eph 6:21), and which was supposed to be read in the congregational gatherings throughout the entire area of Asia Minor. The copy is preserved for us from the congregational archive of Ephesus... After the apostle's death the circular was fundamentally revised (see Eph 2:20; 3:5) and reconfigured as a kind of 'theological legacy of the school of Paul'.³

Klaus Berger argues that Ephesians was written

before AD 63-64 and considers it not unlikely that Tychicus (Eph 6:21) could have written the letter on behalf of the apostle.⁴ We can also think of the theological teacher Epaphras as Paul's 'ghost-writer'. As one familiar with the Lycos Valley he would have had significant influence on Colossians (Col 1:7; 4:12). In that letter Paul could work best through the teacher of the Colossians, Epaphras, while holding to his principle: 'To those outside the law, I became as one outside the law ... so that I might win those outside the law' (1 Cor 9:21). Colossians and Ephesians are closely related stylistically and it is possible that their style is in fact the style of Epaphras.

What we learn about Epaphras in the New Testament can be read like a summary of Ephesians. Can we perhaps gain a sense of how much this theologian and teacher might have influenced Paul in the writing of Ephesians? We read in Colossians 1:6-8 that the gospel

... has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit [cf. Eph 5:9] and growing in the whole world,⁵ so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves [Eph 5:9] from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God.⁶ This you learned from Epaphras, our *beloved* fellow-servant. He is a faithful minister of *the* Christ (the article is present in the Greek and is used often in Col and Eph!) on our behalf, and he has made known to us your *love* in the Spirit.⁷

Then in Colossians 4:12-13: 'Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of *Christ* Jesus, greets you. He is *always wrestling in his prayers on your behalf* ...' (Of all Pauline letters, Ephesians starts with the longest prayers on behalf of the addressees, in chapter 1, 3:14-21 and 6:18-20.) The apostle continues,

... so that you may stand mature and fully assured in everything that God wills. For I testify for him that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis.⁸

And Philemon 23 reads: 'Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you.'

Epaphras was a Jewish-Christian teacher (see below) to whom Paul ascribes nearly equal rank, calling him a 'servant of Christ Jesus' (cf. Col 4:12 with Rom 1:1 and Phil 1:1). Paul would surely have been pleased to have received information and advice from such a teacher, in order to write 'as a non-Jew to non-Jews' (see 1 Cor 9:20-22). An old, chained and very ill Paul would in fact have had every reason to choose precisely this teacher of

the Christians in Asia Minor as his 'ghost-writer' for Colossians and Ephesians.

Perhaps Ephesians was a letter intended for circulation beyond Asia Minor, even though at first it may have been intended particularly for that region.⁹ It contains further developments of thoughts from other letters of Paul. Compare for example 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 with Ephesians 5-6; Ephesians 2:20 with Galatians 6:9; regarding circumcision and the teaching on grace Ephesians 2 with Galatians and Romans; or the 'body of Christ' metaphor in Ephesians with 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. Was the congregation of Ephesus also supposed to bring copies of the letter to Macedonia, Achaia and the Galatian region in the vicinity of Colossae?

Whatever the case, in this examination I will first outline the chronology of the letters of Paul, including Ephesians, which I consider the most likely.¹⁰ Thereafter I will base my dating proposal for Ephesians more fully on the Pauline chronology and its character as a legacy. In the third and last part I will discuss the arguments that for many speak against the authenticity of Ephesians.

1. Ephesians in the Pauline Chronology

1.1 Was Paul silent after Romans?

Through Christ, Paul was a 'transformed zealot' for the love of God. Involved with his whole heart and ready to accept nearly every risk in missionary (2 Cor 11; Rom 15:19-29), catechetical (1 Cor 4:17) and literary work, he was a very active apostle. It is unthinkable that Paul, so eagerly engaged for God and congregation in the years prior to his imprisonments in Caesarea and Rome, would have become silent after his imprisonment. He had a strong sense of responsibility for all his congregations (1 Thess 1-3; 2 Cor 11:28) and indeed for all gentile Christians (Rom 1, 15-16). He therefore wanted especially to have his letters (1-2 Thessalonians; 1-2 Corinthians; Philippians, Philemon, 1-2 Timothy) and circulars (Galatians, Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Titus) read by all congregations (1 Thess 5:27; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Col 4:16). This Paul would never have given up his congregations, or himself, to the opponents he had fought so hard (Gal, Rom 16:17-20, Phil 1:15-18, 3:2-19). Would the Paul we experience in 1 Corinthians 4:1-21, 2 Corinthians 11-12 and elsewhere have failed to use the two years of relatively mild custody in Caesarea (Acts 24:23) and

then again the two years' custody in Rome (Acts 28:30-31)? A silent Paul, after Romans, would be more of a 'puzzle', as Gert Theissen argues.¹¹ For Paul, silence would have meant being unfaithful to God (Gal 1:1, 11-16; 1 Cor 4:1; 9:16-17). After Romans (ca. AD 56-57), Paul probably lived another six years. Dating Philippians and Philemon late would obviate this problem of a silent Paul, as Theissen thinks. But to write only two letters in six years from Caesarea or Rome to two specific congregations would really have been few for a man like Paul.

Theissen further asks:

Or, during these final years when his imprisonment separated him from his congregations, was his ministry amplified by others in the congregations? For example, did during that time one of his pupils write Colossians and did he add his own signature at the end as authorization (Col 4:18)?¹² Or was he working on an edition of his letters with the help of his co-workers?¹³ Or ... was he acting ... amplified again through envoys? It is most difficult to imagine an inactive Paul.¹⁴

I conclude that after writing Romans, even a Paul forced to the inactivity of 'house arrest' would not have been 'silenced'. He would have used all possibilities mentioned by Theissen in order to continue to care as 'father' and 'mother' for his 'children' (1 Thess 1-2; 1 Cor 4:14-17; 2 Cor 11:28-29).

It is probable that we can know when Paul at least assumed that he would be able to care for his congregations one last time by means of a circular letter. To me, Ephesians is the testament of the 'Apostle to the Gentiles' for his communities. He begins with praise from the perspective of the 'we' group of Jewish Christians. Probably this 'we' group contains mainly the Jewish apostles who are the most important group in this letter (Eph 2:20; 3:5; 4:11). And Epaphras perhaps speaks also through the 'we'. He was probably a Jewish-Christian because Paul calls him in an Old Testament and Jewish manner a 'servant' and minister of 'the Christ (Messiah)' and a 'fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus' (Col 1:7; 4:12; Phlm 23). In Ephesians 1:3-13 Paul uses more Jewish-Christian language ('he chose us', 'he predestined us', 'we have redemption through his blood') but subsequently Paul changes the perspective to that of the 'you' group of the addressees (1:14) and adds a prayer of thanks and intercession. This is a prayer specifically from the Jewish Christian Paul,

who writes as a member of the group of Jewish Christians who all prayed together in Ephesians 1:3-13. (Note the shift from Paul writing as part of the anonymous 'we' group in 1:3-13 to the personal comment in 1:15, 'I have heard'.) Here he writes on behalf of the Gentile Christians (and Christians in general) who have come later to be the new people of faith: baptised Jews and non-Jews in the one Church under Christ or as the body of Christ.

From Ephesians 1:14-15 on, the Gentile Christians are the primary addressees in the letter. Ephesians was probably written shortly before Paul's departure as prisoner from Caesarea to Rome, following his appeal to the emperor (Acts 25:9-12). He writes or dictates the letter in case he does not survive the journey or dies after arrival in Rome. Ephesians is his bequest. He writes knowing that many or most of the apostles have died, from the perspective of one of the last apostles, one who will never again minister personally in the congregations that he founded. He writes looking at the Church of Christ at the end of the apostolic period, 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone' (Eph 2:20). In other words, Paul writes as a typical writer of antiquity. He does not write from his own perspective, but rather from the perspective of his current and future readers, who, following him and the apostolic era, will live as Christians regardless of which rulers and powers they are living under (Eph 1:21). In a way, he is already writing in the name of the entire collegium of apostles, those already dead as well as those who will soon die. He writes for the preservation of the unity of the Church under Christ (Eph 2:20; 3:5, 14; 4:11; cf. an early form in 1 Cor 15:1-11, 28).

Already in Paul's time the Church had become a majority gentile movement (see the disappointed-sounding words of Rom 9-11; 16:21b; Col 4:11b). Luke reports this as well from Acts 13 on. Moreover, according to Luke, in Caesarea a number of intensive conversations with educated, high-ranking Romans (and Jewish) authorities took place which likely influenced the thinking and language of Paul (Acts 22-26), much as the despair felt by him and Timothy following the afflictions they had suffered in Asia had changed his perspective (2 Cor 1:8-11). Certainly the theology and ethic of the earlier letters is more thoughtfully developed in Philippians, Colossians and Ephesians (cf. Phil 2:5-18; 3:20-21 with Col 1:15-29; Eph 1-3) and even in Philemon (cf. this

letter with earlier statements in Gal 3:26-28 and 1 Cor 7:21-24 and with Col 3:22 - 4:1 and Eph 6:5-9 in the time of Philemon). I presume that the origins of Colossians and Ephesians were in Caesarea (see below). It is possible that these last letters to communities were written more in the style of the secretaries and ‘ghost-writers’ Paul chose,¹⁵ and beyond that, were re-worked by pupils posthumously and published again.¹⁶

There is at least one further indication that Paul’s thinking continued to develop during the long, enforced pause in Caesarea and Rome: all five of the prison letters clearly demonstrate an increase of Christology along with a simultaneous decrease of theology. For Paul, God is the head of Christ, as for example in 1 Corinthians 11:3b, and God the Father remains prior vis à vis Christ. But, among other things, we can recognise an increase in the use of the ‘in Christ’ formula in the prison letters. The formula appears in the letters of Paul in the following levels of frequency (I count each appearance of the formula as one word):

Frequency of ‘in Christ’ in letters to congregations

	‘In Christ’	Percentage
Romans	21	0.3
1 Corinthians	23	0.3
2 Corinthians	13	0.3
Galatians	8	0.4
1 Thessalonians	6	0.4
2 Thessalonians	2	0.2
Philippians	21	1.3
Philemon	5	1.5
Colossians	18	1.1
Ephesians	34	1.4

Frequency of ‘in Christ’ in letters to co-workers

	‘In Christ’	Percentage
1 Timothy	2	0.1
Titus	0	0
2 Timothy	7	0.6

Note that 2 Timothy was written from a prison.¹⁷

The way Paul’s letters were written is that he determined the contents and then dictated them, perhaps in consultation with his secretaries. They could obviously introduce a better, more hymnic (e.g. Eph 1-3) or simply different writing style. Compare Romans, written by Tertius (16:22), which in style is far removed from 1 Corinthians, written by Paul and Sosthenes (1:1).¹⁸ It is also likely that Paul’s secretaries – like Epaphras, see above – advanced and inspired Paul’s thinking

through their own theology and teaching experience. The expectation of the imminent return of Christ could have turned more and more into anticipatory joy over the almost-present Christ. Following the death of many companions on the journey, a more present-time eschatology may increasingly have replaced the apocalyptic thinking of 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians (cf. already Rom 13:11 and 6:1-11).¹⁹ In Colossians and Ephesians, a thesis of opponents (that Christians were already resurrected in baptism) almost becomes Pauline opinion – but not quite (e.g. Eph 1:21; Col 3:1-4; cf. also ‘hope’ in Eph 1:18, 2:12, 4:4; Col 1:5, 23, 27).

Colossians, Ephesians and even Philippians presumably adopted (and continued to develop) a more *spatial* expectation of the future from Galatians, a formulation more understandable for Hellenist readers; see ‘the *present* Jerusalem ... the Jerusalem *above*’ (Gal 4:25-26) and also ‘to *set us free* from the *present* evil age’ (Gal 1:4). Galatians knows nothing of imminent apocalyptic expectation. Hence, Colossians and Ephesians preserved a more ‘Galatian’ futurist eschatology. Ephesians is more concerned with the earthly battle with heretics generally, at present and in the future, which explains the absence of eschatology in this letter, as in Galatians, in which Paul is presently engaged in battle with opponents. On the other hand, Colossians wants to win back a local readership influenced by a specific and enthusiastic heresy to look toward God’s future. Note how Colossians, for the sake of its readers, progresses from the standpoint of the opponents in Colossians 2:12 to that of Paul in Colossians 3:1-4. The eschatology of 1 and 2 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians 4 and 15 is not abandoned but rather rewritten and updated. Paul realised, at the latest after 2 Corinthians 1:8-11, that he could die before Christ’s *parousia* and that the Church would be there after him.

The development of thought in the letters to the co-workers is similar: 2 Timothy is the only letter in the *corpus Paulinum* that never mentions ‘hope’, even though the author sees death before his eyes. He does, however, in 4:6-8 and elsewhere, express the expectation that Christ, as he always has, will now, finally, in the next months or one or two years, ‘save me for his heavenly kingdom’ (4:18). (Is this meant spatially?) We can compare 2 Timothy 4:16-18 with earlier, similar thinking in 2 Corinthians 1:8-11. In 1 Timothy and Titus, on the other hand, ‘hope’ of God’s eschatological

future and eternal life is very much a central theme already years earlier (1 Tim 1:1; 4:10; 5:5; 6:17; Tit 1:2; 2:13; 3:7).

Following this sketch of a probable development of Pauline thinking from ca AD 48 until the early 60s, I will now attempt to date Paul's letters.

1.2 Dating the letters of Paul

Generally, I have for a long time pursued²⁰ the following dates of Paul's letters, especially after reading some works of Peter Walker.²¹

Galatians was written after the second visit by the apostles Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 14:4, 14; note that Luke sees both men as apostles), following a prophetic revelation they received (Acts 11:27-30, 12:25, parallel to Gal 2:1-10), but, according to Galatians 1-2, before Paul's third visit to Jerusalem (Acts 15). We can date this circular letter (Gal 1:1-2) to the south Galatian communities (Acts 13-14) quite precisely to the period before the apostolic council of AD 48-49 (Acts 15:1-2). At this time Paul does not yet know Timothy and Silas; besides, he cannot yet report a matter of relevance to the Galatians that he certainly would not have kept quiet: that he and Barnabas had reconciled, following the argument described in Galatians 2:11-14. In Galatians 3-6 he argues like a Spirit enthusiast, hence the controversy with the enthusiasts of Corinth must still lie before him. That the behaviour of Christians must show consideration for outsiders is a main theme in Pauline letters from first problems with misconduct by Christians (1 Thess 3:12 - 4:12; 5:11-15; 1 Cor 10:31 - 14:14; also the continuation of 1 Cor 5-6; 9:20-22 in 2 Cor 6:3, where Paul speaks as a model for the Corinthians; also Rom 12:14 - 14:18; Phil 2:16; 4:1-9). But in Galatians 5-6 this issue is almost entirely missing (only 6:9-10). Dispute among Christians is not discussed as having a negative effect on the public.

Thus, Galatians was written before 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians in the time of the very first troubles in Pauline communities. Passages like 1 Thessalonians 3:12 - 4:12 are probably Paul's later reactions to problems he had not realised and did not have to solve before. Besides, according to Galatians 2:11, Paul still believes that his opponents who preach circumcision and who provoked the first disputes in Pauline communities (Acts 15:1-3) are authorised by James. After the clarification by James described in Acts 15:24, he can no longer maintain this (cf. Rom and Phil 3).

Luke does not report 'that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy' (Gal 2:13). But he reports from a considerable distance in time and probably with the knowledge of a later reconciliation between Paul, Barnabas and Mark (1 Cor 9:6; Phlm 24; Col 4:10 no longer with negative undertones); the harmonising result is a solid front of all the apostles. According to Luke in Acts 15, all apostles had historically, once and for always, stood together against the preachers of circumcision. In Galatians 1 and after Galatians 3, Barnabas is not mentioned at all as a congregation founder. The last we read about him actually sounds very negative (Gal 2:11-18). It is likely that Barnabas and Paul, according to Acts 15:2, were actually forced by the congregation in Antioch to travel to Jerusalem. Maybe that journey was a very quiet one as they walked along together.

1-2 Thessalonians were written ca. AD 50-51. Second Thessalonians, however, assumes (in contrast to 1 Thess 3:10), the transfer of a complete early Christian-Pauline paradosis, as in 1 Corinthians 11:1-2. Second Thessalonians was composed, according to 2:15 and 3:6, after 1 Thessalonians in time and intended for better instructions. It was probably especially but not exclusively meant for future teachers of the congregation. Therefore the subject of the brief passage in 1 Thessalonians 5:11-15 becomes a primary theme in 2 Thessalonians 3. The surprising twist at the end (2 Thess 3:15) seems to fit in time with 1 Corinthians 5:9-11.

1 Corinthians and **1 Timothy** were, in my opinion, written in AD 53-54; later in the same year, **Titus** followed.²² **2 Corinthians** came into being 55-56, Romans 56-57. In **Romans** Paul summarised his theology and ethics for the first time for people he had never visited. To some extent, they knew his gospel only through negative rumours (Rom 3:8; 6:1-3; 16:17-20).

In Romans, while Paul reflects on his mission activities in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, more than anything else Paul wants to prepare his planned visit to Rome, which will include teaching there (15:14-33; 16:23). That involves disproving (in this letter) the negative rumours about him and his gospel spread by his opponents (2:17-24; 3:8; 6:1-3 and beyond). Paul is in agreement with the Roman Christians in doctrine (6:17; 16:17) and on this common basis he sharply attacks his opponents again at the end of the letter (16:17-20). Some disputes and conflicts, well known from previous

letters, emerge again in Romans in a way which suggests that Paul would attempt to rectify them.

Parts of Romans 12-14 can be read as an 'improved edition' of 1 Corinthians 8-14. Paul's harsh polemic against 'the Jews' in 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16, which his opponents might have quoted against him, can be corrected in Romans 9-11 as easily misunderstood. In Romans 2-11, 13:8-10 and 15:4 (esp. in chapter 7) he also 'corrects' unfavourable comments about the Law of Moses in Galatians 3-4. Soteriology is missing in Galatians but heavily present in Romans; likewise the expectation of the *parousia* of Christ and the final judgment now appear in Romans 1:18-32; 13:11-14; 14:7-23; 16:17-19, and the gospel is encompassed within it.²³

According to Acts 19, opponents of the Christian community at Ephesus reproached the Christians, claiming that, because of them, 'the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be scorned, and she will be deprived of her majesty that brought all Asia and the world to worship (σέβεται / *sebetai*) her' (Acts 19:27). So the Christians were accused of 'godlessness' (*asebeia*). It seems to me that a further feature of Romans fits into the context of the taking up of past conflicts. With the exception of 2 Thessalonians (2:4 only) and Romans, only three letters utilise words from the *seb-* group; they are the letters to Timothy and Titus which were most likely written under the influence of ongoing conflicts around Artemis of Ephesus.²⁴ The repeatedly 'un-Pauline' use of such words in the theological part of Romans (c. 1-11) with a polemical stab at the people who want to live *asebes* (Rom 1:18) instead of 'worshipping' God (cf. σεβάζομαι in 1:25) could also be a corrected restaging (Rom 1:18, 25; 4:5; 5:6; 11:26) of the accusations of opponents from Ephesus, Asia Minor (and Crete).

According to Luke, Jewish opponents of Paul, from Ephesus in particular, wanted to harm him by disseminating rumours that he was a sinner and a blasphemer. They were ultimately successful because it was most likely opponents from Ephesus in Asia Minor who saw to it that Paul wound up in a Roman prison, which likely led to his death (Acts 19:9-10, 33-34; 21:27-29). Following the life-threatening clashes in the province of Asia (Acts 19:23-40; 2 Cor 1:8-11), Paul may already have suspected that rumours would reach Rome from there. Thus in Romans he shows himself as a loyal citizen of the Roman state, in a manner similar to 1 Timothy 2:1-8 and especially Titus 3:1-8: standing clearly for peace (Rom 13:1-7; cf. the

frequency of the word 'peace' in Rom 1:7; 2:10; 3:17; 5:1; 8:6; 14:17, 19; 15:13, 33; 16:20 and esp. 12:18). Romans 13:1-7 sounds like a reflection of past struggles in and around Ephesus. Paul here assures that he is not a destroyer of peace – which could be the impression that reaches Rome through rumours from Ephesus – but a promoter of the *pax romana*.²⁵

I date **Philippians** ca. AD 57, following the arrest described in Acts 21:27-36 and at the beginning of a quiet phase in Caesarea (Acts 24:23). Paul wrote the letter when a youthful Christianity had barely got over its first scare: Paul had been arrested by the emperor Nero's tribune and was in prison, and not just for a few days. Before this, there had never been such a serious imprisonment! But now, finally, after a long time of uncertainty (Acts 19:23-40 through 24:28), the Philippians had revived their concern for Paul (Phil 4:10-13). Imprisonment develops quickly into a mission opportunity. It is not, as all feared, the beginning of the end of the Pauline mission (Phil 1:15-18). As the situation is becoming manageable, Paul now even reckons with an early release and further ministry in the east (Phlm 22; Phil 1:12-29). He does not abandon the travel plans he shared in Romans 15. His view ranges from Caesarea towards the west. He wants to travel by way of Colossae and Philippi, among other places. It is only after the appeal to the emperor (Acts 25:9-12) and later after reaching Rome that the plans are undone. Paul was able to reach Rome all right, but as a prisoner and unable to make any visits on the way.

Even the language of Philippians could speak for my dating proposal. This letter is on the one hand linguistically close to the letters to the Colossians and Ephesians, but on the other hand it is similar to earlier Pauline letters in many respects.²⁶

Philemon is written ca. AD 57-58, during the period of calm in Caesarea but before the appeal to the emperor. Paul is hoping for his release and a visit in Colossae (Phlm 22). Right after the appeal to the emperor, Paul might well have sent Timothy and Mark, Tychicus and Titus, among others, as envoys with letters to and assignments for the eastern areas. He knew now that he himself would no longer visit the congregations in the east. His 'team', named in Acts 20:4, Philemon 23-25, 2 Timothy 4:9-22, Colossians 4:7-17 and Ephesians 6:21, now becomes an apostolic delegation, sent by Paul to the congregations to be dispersed among them.

1.3 The later letters

Following his arrival in Rome, Paul first writes **2 Timothy**, ca. AD 60. I have elsewhere argued for this date in almost the same way as Walker,²⁷ who however presents further, good arguments for it.²⁸ According to Walker, **Colossians** and **Ephesians** were perhaps written after 2 Timothy.²⁹ These two letters were deliberately to complement each other wherever possible. For example, Ephesians – written not for the Lycos valley but rather generally for the non-Jewish believers (2:11-13 etc.) – emphasizes soteriology much more than does Colossians. Paul takes into his teaching on *grace* the σωζω κτλ-language (originally of opponents, see Acts 15:11), which is missing in Colossians but important for Paul after Galatians. It is important for him, also in his directives regarding conduct when under demonic and satanic attack. This happens more specifically in Ephesians 2:5, 8 within the context of 2:1-9, as well as in Ephesians 5:23 and 6:17 within the context of 5:21 - 6:20. There is nothing about grace in the final segment of Ephesians but shortly thereafter comes the all-concluding blessing of grace (6:24). In the directives of Ephesians 6:1-20 earlier thoughts from Galatians (1:6-9; 6:14-18) and 1 Corinthians (16:22-24) are taken up, which include an excommunication of (satani-cally inspired?) heretics.

Rescue language (σωζω κτλ) is probably missing in Colossians because Paul assumes that the Colossians will also be reading a copy of Ephesians (Col 4:18 – typical of Paul: 1 Thess 5:27). The themes of Ephesians (rescue, peace and others) hardly need to be treated in Colossians. Colossians, on the other hand, augments Ephesians,³⁰ and also generalises several things from Philemon; see for example ‘erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, *nailing it to the cross*’ (2:14). This alludes metaphorically to the letter to Philemon as a promissory note (Phlm 19). As Paul, similar to Christ, asks Philemon to ‘nail’ to him, the representative of Christ, the promissory note of Onesimus, so Christ assumes the promissory note of all debtors and pays it.

The title *Kurios*, which is rare in Colossians (as in Galatians), shows up exactly, and *only*, in Colossians 3:13 - 4:1. The concentration of the term ‘Lord’ in this one segment of Colossians establishes a direct link with Philemon, in which it is a primary theme that a slave and his owner, his ‘lord’, are both Christians under the same heavenly Lord, just as in Colossians all slaves and

all their ‘lords’ are under the Lord. Thus, Christ as Lord (*Kurios*) over slaves and their owners is a primary theme in both letters, which points to a similar date and address. That is to say, as the two letters are read to all Christians in the congregational assembly, it is not only the host of the Colossians, Philemon (Phlm 1-2), who is put under the one ‘Lord’; rather, both letters put him and all other ‘lords’ (slave owners) and all slaves in the Lycos valley in subordination to Jesus and within a ‘brotherhood’. Finally, the thanksgivings of Philemon 5, Ephesians 1:15 and Colossians 1:4 are almost similar in wording, which indicates that the three letters were written close to each other in time; moreover, Colossians 4:18 fits well with Philemon 19: both letters are expressly signed and attested by the apostle.

In Ephesians, *agape* is more important than in Colossians and any other letter of Paul;³¹ it is a primary concern of the letter.³² In order to strengthen and protect the congregations in Asia Minor (Col 2:6-15, Eph 2:2-6, 20), Colossians and Ephesians probably want to introduce Pauline theology and ethic, better informed about actual heresies, into the intense disputes in that area (see 1 Tim, 2 Tim 1:15, 4:14-15, Rev 2-3). Paul had actually developed his theology further on the basis of information, especially from Epaphras and, of course, also from other ‘reporters’ (Col 4:7-15; cf. Onesiphorus in 2 Tim 1:15-18).

According to Walker, in Colossians, Mark and Timothy are not being summoned to join Luke (as in 2 Tim 4:9-11) because they are already present with Paul (Col 4:10-11).³³ Neither of the letters calls for further missionary work, but they do seek to strengthen the already baptised Christians in the mature communities. They present a mature Pauline theology and ecclesiology, a considerable time after the writing of Romans. Colossians, then, would mirror the situation that in the meantime Onesimus had been sent again from Philemon to Rome, as was at first only diplomatically hinted at by Paul in Philemon.

However, in my view these events can also have happened earlier in Caesarea, if Philemon was already written and sent in the first year in Caesarea, but Colossians only toward the end of the second year. In any case, H. Binder shows that Colossians could reflect a time later than Philemon. Mark, Timothy and others are soon underway in the east again, wherever possible.³⁴ (Timothy is missing yet again in Eph 1:1.)

But if we use Walker’s dating of Colossians

and Ephesians after 2 Timothy, there is a serious problem: in Colossians, Demas would be reunited with Paul instead of, as 2 Timothy 4:10 clearly witnesses, an apostate. Therefore I think that at least Colossians, if not also Ephesians, was more likely written before 2 Timothy, at the end of the detention in Caesarea. The advantage of this dating is that the turning away of (almost) 'all' in Asia, announced in 2 Timothy 1:15, would not yet have happened at the time of Colossians and Ephesians. The turning away would then likely have been triggered by the fact that, in the eyes of his congregations, Paul would once and for all have been 'abducted' from the eastern regions. Paul's concerned premonition that his communities could despair was not unjustified (see Eph 3:1-13: 'This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles ... I pray therefore that you may not lose heart over my sufferings for you ...'). Certainly Paul's 'abduction' gave his opponents the opportunity triumphantly to spread the news of the collapse of a failed Pauline mission and of unanswered prayers of Paul and his communities (cf. Phlm 22, Phil 1:19-26). In addition, it was certainly known in Asia Minor that Paul was destined for death. Nero's first good years of rule after AD 54-55 were past and sometime after AD 60 he mutated into a crazed hater of Christians. He did not become that overnight but rather some time before the burning of Rome in AD 64 and his subsequent persecution of the Christians. According to Walker, Nero's shift in thinking happened primarily and especially through the interrogations of the *leaders* of the Christians, Peter and Paul; their proclamation before him or his representatives clarified for him what Christians are. After AD 60-61 no Christian could expect a fair trial from Nero. Under the heading 'peace and order', it became ever easier to distinguish between Christians and Jews in Rome. And following the Jewish revolt, the Jews were hated even more in Rome. A release of the Jewish Christian Paul during the years of Nero's animosity toward Christians and Jews would have been improbable.

For these reasons, I date the prison letters somewhat differently than Peter Walker: **Philippians** and **Philemon** originated at the time of Acts 24:23. Around that time Timothy could have departed to Philippi (Phil 2:19-23). Then follows the appeal of Paul to Nero, which makes an end to any hope of visits to the congregations in the east. While still in Caesarea, shortly before the departure to Rome, Paul writes **Colossians**

and **Ephesians**. It is also possible that at this time Romans was expanded with a new ending (Rom 16:25-27) which takes up the theme of Romans 1:1-16, using the language of Hellenistic non-Jews; Romans was then newly released especially for gentile Christians. Timothy, back from Philippi, is sent to Asia, where he is to organise a young community, among other things (compare the directive 2 Timothy 2:2 with Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5). Paul's journey to Rome follows and in Rome the first preliminary hearing takes place. Or was it still in Caesarea, as reported in Acts 26? In that case 2 Timothy 4:16 reflects the previous hearing before Agrippa and Festus.³⁵

After this Paul sees more clearly and he immediately writes **2 Timothy** at the start of the two-year time period (Acts 28:30-31), still prior to the first winter, for which he needs his cloak (2 Tim 4:13a). He writes yet before the second hearing, so decisive for his appeal, for which he needs the books and parchments 'that I left with Carpus at Troas' (2 Tim 4:13b). Written years after the march from Troas to Assos without Timothy (Acts 20:13), before which Paul no doubt left his belongings for safekeeping with Carpus, this verse is a note of identification for the not-informed Timothy. It does not provide information about any travels recently completed before his arrival in Rome. Timothy is reminded of the time described in Acts 20:1-13, for he had to leave Paul already in Caesarea in order to travel to Philippi and later into Asia. All the information relayed to Timothy by Tychicus and other team members shows us that Timothy had departed ahead of these co-workers. Paul has to explain to Timothy why he is in Rome with only Luke (2 Tim 4:9-12). During the anxious time after his arrest, Paul could not risk fetching his cloak and books so he preferred leaving them in Troas (Acts 20:6). Only after the situation is calmer does he, via Timothy, bring them to Rome.

In any case, Timothy knows nothing about what happened following his tearful departure in Caesarea (2 Tim 1:4). Timothy, as co-author of Philemon and Colossians, could not yet know of Demas' desertion (see Phlm 24; Col 4:14, but then 2 Tim 4:10). This happened quite possibly because, from Demas' perspective, the situation of the appeal to the emperor worsened frighteningly at the first hearing in Rome. The bad news brought from Asia by Onesiphorus may have disheartened him as well (2 Tim 1:15-17). In any case, Demas' desertion put Paul in an extremely difficult

theological predicament. To Jews and Christians of that time, according to Deuteronomy 19:15, every matter must be confirmed 'by two or three witnesses' (2 Cor 13:1-2, 1 Tim 5:19). But now only Luke was with Paul. The desertion of Demas is clearly the primary reason (note the *gar* in 2 Tim 4:10!) for Paul to summon Timothy and Mark to Rome: as the second and third witnesses. He has sent off all other potential witnesses on important assignments or lost them through illness (2 Tim 4:9-12).

1.4 Concluding remarks

The journey of **Tychicus** to Ephesus, mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:12, can be the one mentioned in Colossians 4:7 and Ephesians 6:21, which therefore took place before 2 Timothy. This agrees with dating Colossians and Ephesians before 2 Timothy. It must have followed the sending of Tychicus after Timothy's departure from Caesarea and shortly after Colossians 1:1 and 4:12, so that Timothy has to be informed about it (2 Tim 4:12). Perhaps the letter to the Colossians, written in consultation with Epaphras (Col 1:7, 4:14) and together with Timothy (Col 1:1), remained with Paul for a short time yet. Tychicus may previously have been underway somewhere else (see e.g. Tit 3:12) and was available only belatedly, for whatever reason, as a messenger after Timothy's departure.

Timothy's journey, which Paul announces in Philippians 2:19-23, would then have been delayed considerably; alternatively, Timothy made two or more journeys during the entire time span of Acts 21:27 - 28:10: either he travelled early on from Caesarea to Philippi, then later again to Asia Minor (2 Tim 2:2) or the hoped-for journey of Timothy mentioned in Philippians 2:19-23 did not happen at all, or they were later combined. Timothy then travelled to Asia Minor as well as to Philippi, but then again to Rome (2 Tim 4:9-13). We do not know.

Mark may also have undertaken several journeys in that period of up to six years from Philemon 24 to Colossians 4:10 and 2 Timothy 4:9-11. **Luke** remained as physician and secretary with an unwell Paul (cf. 2 Cor 12:7-10; Phlm 9). Besides 2 Timothy,³⁶ he composed – in conversation with Mark – his Gospel and Acts (as an apology for the case?).

In the next issue of *EJT* I will base my dating proposal for the letter to the Ephesians more fully upon the Pauline chronology and the letter's char-

acter as a legacy.

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Endnotes

- 1 With regard to the letters of Paul and Luke-Acts, see e.g. J.A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976); D.A. Carson, D.J. Moo and L. Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Leicester: Apollos and IVP, 1992) 215-390; Thomas Weissenborn, *Apostel, Lehrer und Propheten: Eine Einführung in das Neue Testament* (Marburg: Francke Verlag, 2012) 59-143, 167-196 and 208-390; Peter Walker, *Unterwegs auf den Spuren des Paulus: das illustrierte Sachbuch zu seinen Reisen* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2008); the same, specifically regarding the Pastoral Epistles: 'Revisiting the Pastoral Epistles, Part I' in *European Journal of Theology* 21.1 (2012) 4-16; and the same, 'Revisiting the Pastoral Epistles, Part II' in *European Journal of Theology* 21.2 (2012) 120-132. See also Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments, Band 2: von der Paulusschule bis zur Johannesoffenbarung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2012³) 2-3; regarding Paul and Luke, see Klaus Berger, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2011) 210-211, 415-416 and 495-830. Regarding Luke-Acts, see A. Mittelstaedt, *Lukas als Historiker: zur Datierung des lukanischen Doppelwerkes* (TANZ 43; Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2006).
- 2 My thanks to Merlin Schlichting, who translated my German text and gave some helpful advice, to David L. Mealand (University of Edinburgh) who allowed me to use an unpublished study, and to the editor for his redactional work. Most Scripture quotations are from the NRSV. Quotations from German authors are translated. Around the time this study was being written our grandchildren *Abigail* and *Hazel Elizabeth* were born. We dedicate this essay to them and all the children and grandchildren of both of our families whose names are mentioned in the present and the future, with the blessing of Christ (Eph. 1:21-22; 3:14-21).
- 3 Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie*, 2-3.
- 4 Berger, *Commentary*, 688-698, 717.
- 5 Note this worldwide perspective from the lack of an address in Eph 1:1 and from Eph 1:21 forward.
- 6 See *grace* as a main theme of Ephesians in 1:2, 6-7, 2:5, 7-8, 3:2, 7-8, 4:7, 29, 6:24.
- 7 See *love* as the main theme of Ephesians in 1:4, 15, 2:4, 3:17, 19, 6:23-24 and other places; cf. Part 3 of this study (forthcoming).
- 8 A key theme in Ephesians.
- 9 Cf. Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*,

- revised ed. (Leicester and Downers Grove: Apollos and IVP, 1990) 528-535 and following Guthrie (and J.N. Sanders), G. Hörster, *Einleitung und Bibelkunde zum Neuen Testament* (Handbibliothek zur Wuppertaler Studienbibel; Wuppertal und Zürich: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1993) 124-126; cf. the discussion in Carson, Moo and Morris, *Introduction*, 309-312.
- 10 In a future publication I hope to give more detailed reasons for my dating of the letters of Paul.
- 11 Gert Theissen, *Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments als literaturgeschichtliches Problem* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2007) 124.
- 12 K.-W. Niebuhr (ed.), *Grundinformationen Neues Testament: eine bibelkundlich-theologische Einführung* (UTB 2108; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; 4. rev. ed. 2011) 265-266; Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie*, 2; E. Schweizer, *Der Brief an die Kolosser* second edition (EKK XII; Düsseldorf, Zürich, Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980); U. Wilckens, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments, Teilband 3* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2005) 254-266; Berger, *Commentary*, 736.
- 13 2 Tim 4:13b could also mean that Paul had, among other things, a collection of his letters in his possession. In that case he could have proceeded well against the forgeries and forged letters his opponents were using in his name (see 2 Thess 2:1-3; 3:17).
- 14 Theissen, *Entstehung*, 124.
- 15 The best work on that theme I know is E.R. Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (WUNT II/42; Tübingen: Mohr, 1991).
- 16 We probably see Paul's own style or influence most clearly in Ephesians in ch. 4-6. On the other hand, Eph 1-3 are quite unlike Paul's undisputed letters (D.L. Mealand, unpublished results, personal email 3 April 2003). In ancient times, one and the same author could deliberately 'operate in the same text with multiple styles', see F. Jung, *Soter: Studien zur Rezeption eines hellenistischen Ehrentitels im Neuen Testament* (NTA neue Folge 39; Münster: Verlag Aschendorff, 2002) 310-311, with reference to R. Brucker, *Christushymnen oder epideiktische Passagen?* (FRLANT 176; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997) 174ff.
- 17 R. Fuchs, *Unerwartete Unterschiede: müssen wir unsere Ansichten über 'die' Pastoralbriefe revidieren?* (BWM 12; Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 2003) 117-125; for word numbers see A. Kenny, *A Stylometric Study of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) 15.
- 18 Kenny, *Stylometric Study*, 99-100; K. Jaros, *Das Neue Testament und seine Autoren: eine Einführung* (UTB 3087; Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2008) e.g. 263.
- 19 H.-J. Eckstein, 'Auferstehung und gegenwärtiges Leben nach Röm 6,1-11: präsentische Eschatologie bei Paulus' in *Theologische Beiträge* 1 (1997) 8-33.
- 20 Fuchs, *Unterschiede*.
- 21 Walker, *Unterwegs* and *Revisiting* Parts I and II.
- 22 On the dating of 1 Timothy and Titus see R. Fuchs, 'Eine vierte Missionsreise des Paulus im Osten? zur Datierung des ersten Timotheusbriefs und des Titusbriefs' in *Jahrbuch für evangelikale Theologie* 25 (2011) 33-58.
- 23 For further examples see K. Haacker, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (ThHK 6; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1999) 78.
- 24 See Fuchs, 'Vierte Missionsreise' and also 'Ein Gott, der Vater, ein Herr, Jesus Christus: Verwendung und Vermeidung der Gottesbezeichnung „Vater“ in den Gemeinde- und Pastoralbriefen des Paulus' in *Jahrbuch für evangelikale Theologie* 26 (2012) 63-91.
- 25 K. Haacker, 'Der Römerbrief als Friedensmemorandum' in *Novum Testamentum* 36 (1990) 25-41.
- 26 Results from an unpublished study by D. L. Mealand, personal email 3 April 2003.
- 27 Fuchs, *Unterschiede*, 18-30.
- 28 Walker, 'Revisiting', Part 2.
- 29 Walker, *Unterwegs* and 'Revisiting' Part 2.
- 30 I believe that the letter to Laodicea mentioned in Col 4:16 was a copy of Ephesians.
- 31 It is only in Philemon that the agap- word group is relatively more frequent.
- 32 Heinz-Werner Neudorfer, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an Timotheus* (HTA; Gießen and Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 2004) 23-24; Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002) 104-106.
- 33 Walker, 'Revisiting' Part 2, 123-124.
- 34 Hermann Binder, *Der Brief des Paulus an Philemon* (THK XI/2; Berlin: Evangelisches Verlagshaus, 1990) 25.
- 35 In favour of the official *prima actio* are e.g. J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles: I & II Timothy, Titus* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1963) 217-218 and Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 635ff. In favour of record keeping only, not as part of the process: Walker, 'Revisiting' Part 2, 124.
- 36 On Luke as author of 2 Timothy and also of 1 Timothy and Titus, see e.g. Rainer Riesner, 'Once more: Luke-Acts and the Pastoral Epistles' in Sang-Won Son (ed.), *History and Exegesis*, Festschrift for E. Earle Ellis (New York, London: T & T Clark, 2006).