

I Kneel Before the Father and Pray for You (Ephesians 3:14)

Date and Significance of Ephesians, Part 3

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SUMMARY

This three-part article argues that during the course of his ministry, Paul's thinking shows much development, and that Ephesians should be seen as a representative example of his mature theology. The first part (which appeared in *EJT* 23.1) discussed the dates of the letters of Paul and

part 2 (*EJT* 23.2) expanded the dating proposal for Ephesians with reference to the Epistle's character. Part 3 now discusses arguments against the authenticity of the Letter to the Ephesians, partly in dialogue with Michael Theobald. Paul's eschatology, cosmology and ecclesiology as well as his view of marriage come under review.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser dreiteilige Artikel vertritt das Argument, dass sich das Denken von Paulus während seines Dienstes beträchtlich weiter entwickelt hat und dass der Epheserbrief als ein repräsentatives Beispiel seiner gereiften Theologie anzusehen ist. Der erste Teil (erschieden in *EJT* 23.1) erörterte die Datierung der Paulusbriefe,

und Teil 2 (*EJT* 23.2) führte die Datierungsvorschläge für den Epheserbrief fort mit Verweis auf den Charakter der Epistel. Teil 3 setzt sich nun mit den Argumenten gegen die Authentizität des Epheserbriefes auseinander, und dies teils im Dialog mit Michael Theobald. Dabei werden Eschatologie, Kosmologie und Ekklesiologie von Paulus ebenso wie seine Sicht der Ehe untersucht.

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RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article en trois parties, l'auteur soutient que la pensée de Paul a connu un développement important au cours de son ministère, et que l'épître aux Éphésiens doit être considérée comme un exemple représentatif de sa théologie la plus mûrie. La première partie (*JET* 23:1) traitait de la date des lettres pauliniennes et la seconde (*JET*

23:2) élaborait la justification de la date proposée pour Éphésiens en se fondant sur le caractère de cette épître. Dans cette troisième partie, l'auteur examine des arguments qui ont été opposés à la thèse de l'authenticité de cette épître, notamment ceux de Michael Theobald. Il prend en considération l'eschatologie, la cosmologie et l'ecclésiologie de l'apôtre, ainsi que sa conception du mariage.

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3.1 Introduction

Intensive teaching took place in all the Pauline churches. A clearly defined doctrinal tradition was passed on as *paradosis*. This same *paradosis* Paul taught in word and deed as a model for his pupils.¹ According to the opinion of his time (e.g. Lk 10:16), Paul could also teach through his co-workers or even 'in' them (1 Cor 4:16–17, 16:10–11; cf 1 Thess 3:1–10, Phil 3:17 – 4:9, Col 1:7,

4:12), thus being 'present in spirit' (1 Cor 5:3). New experiences, questions from the communities, religious conversations with non-Christians, debates with opponents and the writing of letters all led to developments in Paul's teaching. How far could Paul go in changing his views?

Michael Theobald, a representative of the exegetical mainstream, reads Ephesians as a pseudonymous attempt to 'update' the Pauline theology.²

According to Theobald, Ephesians was a continuation particularly of Colossians. Compared to Colossians, the author of Ephesians brings more Pauline terminology and thoughts into his circular letter. This view comes close to that of scholars who argue for the authenticity of Ephesians. They believe that Ephesians is a further development of Pauline theology, written by Paul himself.³ Proponents of pseudonymity believe, however, that the real Paul was less flexible. Theobald, for example, thinks that Paul could not have taught a *cosmic* Christology such as we find in Ephesians (1:10, 21-22, 3:9-10) or a *realised* eschatology (Eph 1:3, 9-10, 2:4-10) as a result of diminishing expectations of Christ's return. Paul could never say that Christians were already raised from the death (Eph. 2:6; cf. Rom 6). Unlike in the authentic Paul, in Ephesians *ekklesia* is not a group of local churches but the Church as a whole (1:22, 3:10, 21, 5:23-25, 27, 29, 32). The distinct theology of community leadership (4:7-16) reflects a time after Paul, according to Theobald. The real Paul thought little of marriage, but according to Ephesians 5:21-33 the marital union of man and woman portrays the mystery of Christ and the Church; it is a portrayal of the saving love of God for all people. This, Theobald concludes, is an understanding of marriage that goes against the Pauline view of things.⁴

But the evidence can also be read differently. Pauline letters are occasional writings, not a 'doctrine of Paul'; this is also true for Ephesians. 1 Corinthians picks up and interprets only a few of the controversial aspects of Paul's catechesis (see 1 Cor 3:1-11, 11:23, 15:1-11) and 1 Thessalonians 3:12 – 5:23 only supplements lessons already taught orally. Almost literal parallels between 1 Thessalonians 5 and Ephesians 5-6 (e.g. 1 Thess 5:4-10 / Eph 5:6-14 or 1 Thess 5:8 / Eph 6:10-17) show that an identical Pauline *paradosis* was complemented and interpreted for different causes in both letters and thus possibly further developed in Ephesians some years – not decades – later, in different ways, for different addressees.

3.2 Eschatology

Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 15:1-28, Romans 1:18, 5-8, 13:11, 14:11-12, 16:20, Phil 2:5-11 and 3:20-21 we find only small and occasional elements of an eschatology. Only in Philippians does Paul use the short formula 'day of Christ (Jesus)' to allude to his – in Philippi – well known apoca-

lyptic teachings (Phil 1:6, 10, 2:16, cf. 4:9). But in 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians he has to teach beginners, 'infants in Christ' (1 Thess 3:10; 1 Cor 3:1), and thus he includes more details of his eschatology (1 Thess 4-5; 1 Cor 15). These passages show us an early form of his eschatology: God the Father enthroned Jesus Christ as his 'Son' (a title for the king of the Jews in the Old Testament) and as Lord of all creation. Through him, God will in the future also redeem the creation from all demonic powers, all God's enemies, and the 'last enemy', death. Then he will completely reunite all with himself through Christ.

Would not Paul himself have been able to formulate a more developed form of this part of his eschatology in a later conflict with 'philosophies' (Col 2:6-8) and in a circular for Christians whom he did not know, some of whom would live after his death (Eph 1:10, 21, 4:12-16)? Also, in the not so (as Theobald and others believe) 'realised' eschatology of Ephesians, future expectations (e.g. the word 'hope' in Eph 1:18, 2:12, 4:4) do not disappear to the degree they do in Galatians or in Philemon (see the non-eschatological 'hope' of Gal 5:5 and Phlm 22).

Ephesians generally wants to help believers achieve victory in disputes with present and future opponents and the demonic powers behind them. It is a kind of compendium or 'handbook'. On the other hand, Galatians and Philemon address very particular situations in disputes with particular opponents (Gal) or addressees (Phlm).⁵ It is easy to imagine that Paul, at the end of his life and following the death of many companions and apostles, can develop the (comforting) belief that Christians are completely secure in God's hands and thus in some ways already 'raised', even before death. Who would want to abandon such divine, fatherly protection? In Romans 6 Paul also represents a realised eschatology.⁶ In a critique of the German exegetical mainstream, Klaus Haacker writes that even Paul argues for the view 'in Christ' = 'new creation'. Haacker criticises those for whom the alleged abandonment of the eschatological reservation is the most serious theological argument against the authenticity of Colossians and Ephesians. Too much weight has been given to Romans 6:1-11, which states that the believer died with Christ (v. 8) and is buried with him (v. 4), while speaking of his resurrection in the future tense (v. 5 and 8).

This overlooks or downplays that in Romans 6 'dead to sin' faces a 'but alive to God in Christ Jesus' at present (Rom 6:11). ... This is further clarified by the words ἐκ νεκρῶν ζῶντα in v. 13 as participation in the resurrection reality.⁷

3.3 Christ and cosmos

Unlike what is often thought, we find a cosmic Christology not only in the late letters but also in the early letters of Paul. Not surprisingly, however, Ephesians formulates a more developed Christology after Paul's four years of house arrest and multiple conversations with political rulers (Acts 24:23 – 26:32, 28:28-31). Yet in the earlier letters we already find the following, albeit hardly developed thoughts: Through the human Adam sin came into the universe, and death with it (Rom 5:12; also 1 Cor 15). Since then the entire creation suffers from perishability (2 Cor. 7:10b) but it is redeemed by God through Christ together with the children of God (Rom 8; also 11:12-32). For Paul the truth is that,

'no idol in the world really exists' and 'there is no God but one'. Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth – as in fact there are many gods and many lords – yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. (1 Cor 8:4b-6)

God is and remains the head of Christ, and the body of Christ is the community, which he rules as the Head through Christ (already 1 Cor 11:3). At the end of time Christ will unite all with God again, after God has put all his enemies, including death, under Christ's feet (1 Cor 15:20-28; Rom 16:20). Then Jesus will establish the Kingdom of God as Christ, as Saviour and as Lord (Phil 2:6-11, 3:20-21, 4:5). Yet Christians already experience a kind of present eschatology:

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old *has passed away*; see, everything *has become new*! All this is from God, who *reconciled himself* through Christ ... in Christ God *was reconciling* the world to himself ... (2 Cor 5:17-19, emphasis added).

3.4 Marriage

In discussions with dissenters Paul often pursued the strategy he outlines in 1 Corinthians 9:20-22

and 10:32-33.⁸ He tries to gain, or to regain, dissenters for his vision, first by understanding their feelings and becoming almost like one of them. Then he starts to argue, apparently in a manner similar to his addressees. But he proceeds to question the arguments that he has formulated himself one by one, sometimes even using the language and slogans of opponents, and he finally concludes: I understand your desire, but under scrutiny your point of view (e.g. 'all things are lawful', 1 Cor 6:12, 10:23) shows itself as erroneous. I invite you (e.g. the 'strong') to adopt my point of view (e.g. love for the 'weak'). Such love is a higher goal for Christians (1 Cor 8:1 – 10:23, 10:33, 1 Cor 6:1-11, 12-17).

In the same way we can read the theology of marriage in Ephesians 5:21-33 as a continuation of 1 Thessalonians 3:10 – 4:12 and of the instructions regarding women and men in 1 Corinthians 5-14. In 1 Thessalonians Paul alludes to lessons already taught and also to lessons not yet taught. From the beginning of chapter 4, he chooses a commanding tone that occurs nowhere else in this letter, which tells us that what he teaches here is very important to him. This teaching includes, first and foremost, that baptised men should 'abstain from fornication' and 'should win *their own wife* (literally 'vessel')⁹ in sanctification and honour, not with lustful passion, like the gentiles who do not know God' (4:3-5). In Ephesians 5 Paul presupposes this lesson for beginners and develops his teaching accordingly. His understanding of marriage follows the Scriptures of Israel as interpreted by Jesus. Only on this basis is his conception of marriage (Rom 7:1-3, 1 Cor 6:16) understandable. Paul therefore insists on monogamy for men and women in all communities.

It is interesting to see how Paul tries to enforce and defend monogamy as he confronts dissenters and opponents who practise or permit adultery of the worst kind (1 Cor 5:1-5) or who live in 'polygamy' with prostitutes (1 Cor 6:9-16).¹⁰ In both these cases he is very direct, prohibiting such conduct with reference to the Scriptures and to Jesus. He threatens church discipline and the judgement of God (1 Cor 5:9-13, 6:9-20, cf. Eph 5). But otherwise in 1 Corinthians 7 he argues in a 'diplomatic' way and *invites* his readers to change their opinion. With regard to those who want to dissolve marriages with non-believers or seek divorces for other reasons, he emphasizes, first, that he himself lives a celibate life, almost living up to 'their' ideal! Because of the transitory nature of this world and

because of their partners, married Christians suffer a conflict of loyalties: loyalty to God and loyalty to their partner. Thus, Paul argues, celibacy is the best choice; that is, Paul himself would advise all Christians to remain unmarried.

But subsequently he puts a question mark behind 'his' opinion, which is closely related to that of his opponents: What is the situation of those who, like you, want to live morally proper lives but have a strong sex drive? What about the commands in Scripture and from the Lord that they 'should not commit adultery'? What will become of the children of men and women already married to a non-Christian spouse, etc.? Paul concludes: Because sexual desires and the desires of the widowed are often strong, and because monogamy and 'you shall not commit adultery' are valid commands of the Lord, living in obedience to these rules should be normal practice in Corinth! And he argues further: 'the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband... your children are holy...' and so on. As required by Scripture and by the teachings of Jesus, marriage should be sought as a shelter against sin and is to be respected. Later, Paul will add more arguments in passing; for example, that the other apostles must also live in monogamy (1 Cor 9:5) and that they are witnesses to the resurrection of Christ. These are all in harmony with his futuristic eschatology (1 Cor 15:1-11 plus 1 Cor 6:2a) but not with the thinking of those who deny the resurrection (1 Cor 15:12 plus 4:8).

So when we read 1 Corinthians 5-14, 1 Thessalonians 4 and Romans 7:1-3, we can only conclude that Paul, in harmony with God and Christ and all apostolic colleagues, argues for monogamy as the norm for all Christians, no matter how long it will be until the parousia. Colossians 3:22-25 and Ephesians 5:21-33 are thus not inconsistent with 'Paul', as far as we know him from a few occasional letters. And, as one should expect from a teacher of his calibre, Paul's thinking continued to develop between AD 50 and 60. Then, in his final circular letter (Eph 5:21-33) he developed an actual theology of marriage. We know from 2 Corinthians how he developed the successful reasoning he had begun in 1 Corinthians. Already in 1 Thessalonians 3:12 - 4:12; 5:1-15; 1 Corinthians 9:19 - 14:40 and Colossians 3:22 - 4:6, Paul led the Christian communities to his view that they were to live in a non-Christian world — prior to the parousia of

Christ — as those who have contact with and are observed by non-Christians. In other words, they were always under scrutiny (1 Cor 14:23-25). Admittedly, 'in the Lord' Christians are free to live in a new manner (1 Cor 11:11-12; 14:35a; cf. 9:19), but surrounded by non-Christian Jews (whose views are 'cited' in 1 Cor 11:3-10 and 14:34) and non-Jews (whose views are 'cited' in 1 Cor 11:13-15 and 14:35b), Christians should 'give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God ... so that they may be saved', as the 'headline' for 1 Corinthians 11-14 puts it in 1 Corinthians 10:31-33. And so Christians had to live their marriages and worship as a community of women and men who are both blameless and welcoming.¹¹ The conjugal union of man and woman, according to 1 Corinthians, should show the world the 'mystery' of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 2:1, 7, 4:1, 15:51), depicted in the Church as his body. Note the frequent use of the word *ēkklesia* from 1 Corinthians 10:32 onward and note especially 12:27-28 in the context of 1 Corinthians 11-14. The behaviour of Christian spouses and the public worship of the community must be evidence of the presence of the love of God among them (1 Cor 9:20 - 10:33). A central goal of the argument of 1 Corinthians 5-14 is that a non-Christian, when visiting their meetings, should 'worship God, declaring, God is really among you'. The Corinthians are the temple of the Holy Spirit and they represent the *universal* Church in public. This idea Paul later develops in Colossians 3:22 - 4:6 and Ephesians 4-5, complementing his earlier words in 1 Corinthians,

Do all things for God's *doxa* [that is, God's glory/honour, reputation or reflection in the world]. Be blameless ... both for Jews and for Greeks and for the whole Church of God! Christ is the head of every man, the head of the woman is the man, the head of Christ is God ... the man is ... God's image and (public) luminous reflection (*doxa*), the woman is (before non-Christians) the shining reflection of the man (*doxa*)...

In the time of the New Testament, the behaviour of the woman was the means by which non-Christians evaluated the husband and his (new) religion. In their eyes, the husband was the ruler over his house and his wife. If this were not so, they would have despised the Christian faith in the way Paul 'quotes' them in 1 Timothy 3:4-5. I hear similar concerns in 1 Corinthians 5-14, Colossians 3:22 -

4:6 and also in Ephesians 5:1-21, where we read *inter alia*:

Be imitators of God, as beloved children ... For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light ... Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord! For the husband is head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the saviour.

Paul continues in Ephesians 5:24:

Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in every thing, to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendour itself glorified (*endoxon*) [in parts my own translation] ... In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

So the theme of love from 1 Corinthians 13 reappears here in Ephesians. Paul adds that a man who cares for his wife in this way follows the model of Christ's care for his body, the Church. And that 'we are members of his body' is still Paul's view in 1 Corinthians 10-12. His general opinion already in 1 Corinthians 6:16 (cf. Gen 2:24, Mt 19:5) was: 'a man will leave father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' Ideas from 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 and 6:16-20 are developed in Ephesians 5:21-33 but 1 Corinthians 3-6 already contain the thought: the temple which is built on the one foundation, Jesus Christ, is the Church, and she is represented in the world particularly in the proper behaviour of the husband towards the wife.

In short, Ephesians 4-5 is thoughtful and mature, but not contradictory to 1 Corinthians 5-14. It is a Pauline updating of his earlier thoughts in a direction also found in Philippians 1:27 - 2:16 and 3:17 - 4:9. The community, and the Christian women and men who are its members (Phil 4:1-5), should 'shine' publicly (2:16) through their behaviour and words, even in a time of conflict (4:2-3). They should reflect God's love in Christ in the non-Christian environment (Phil 2:5-16; 4:5, 8).

In 1 Corinthians and Ephesians, Pauline exhortation is based on the Old Testament and the Jesus tradition that he had already taught the

Corinthians, who, to his surprise, acted as if they were uneducated in it. Thus, in 1 Corinthians Paul must cite the Old Testament and words of Jesus literally, while in Philippians he can teach without citing those basics; compare Philippians 2:9-11 (to known and well taught addressees) with Romans 14:11 (to unknown Jewish-Christian addressees - hence with an Old Testament quotation). His 'favourite community' in Philippi knows everything Paul taught (Phil 4:9), so in Philippians Paul only alludes occasionally to the traditions. Likewise in Ephesians he assumes that *all* communities reading this letter already know his teaching, and he also knows that earlier letters of his are available to them.

The further development of Paul's theology of marriage in Ephesians can be a result of debates with Christians in Corinth who had conflated Galatians 3:28 and Matthew 22:30, enthusiastically acting like 'angels', as 'risen' in the here and now, and justifying their behaviour with Jesus' words 'for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven'. In their view, they were already ruling the world, acting as though they were already at the throne of God (cf. 1 Cor 4 and 15).¹² Because they tried to live in that way, oblivious of both the non-Christians and the Christians of the universal Church, they damaged the reputation of their faith. Paul must therefore reinterpret the unexplained short 'formula' of Galatians 3:28 ('There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, *nor is there male and female*'). He does this for the first time in the debates with those 'risen angels' in Corinth in AD 53-54 (1 Cor 7:17-24, 11:11-12, 12:12). Those who had propounded the free work of the Holy Spirit, like Paul himself and the Galatians (Gal 3:1-4), now require submission to Scripture, to the Jesus tradition and to community leadership. Years later Paul argues - superseding his Spirit-only based teachings in Galatians 3-6 - that Christian men and women should embody God's love in the world through their interaction with other people. The key words 'light' and 'salt' (Col 1:12, 4:6, Eph 5:8-9) can be allusions to a tradition as expressed in Matthew 5:13-16.

We close this section with a look to 2 Corinthians. In this occasional letter Paul writes 'to the church of God in Corinth with all the saints throughout Achaia' (2 Cor 1:1), which church he wants to build: 'I have promised you in marriage to one husband ... the Messiah' (2 Cor 11:2). This sentence tells us three things: first, Paul had a high

opinion of marriage and monogamy to use such imagery. Second, he derives this view from the Old Testament where the unity of husband and wife in monogamy is an image of God visible to the world (Gen 1:26) and God wants to be the 'husband' of his people (Hosea). Third, the same Paul could develop this imagery in the way Ephesians 5-6 does.

3.5 Ecclesiology

The ecclesiology of Ephesians is an evolution of the ecclesiology of 1 Thessalonians 5:11-15; 1 Corinthians 4:1-21, 12:28, 16:10-18, Philippians 1:1, 3:17 and other places. At the time of writing of Ephesians the Church was no longer a small group. Galatians is the only letter of Paul in which the geographical areas of mission are not clearly identified Roman provinces. This suggests that at the time of the writing of Galatians (AD 47-48), Paul did not have a strategy of evangelising Roman provinces, as he had later in the 50s (1 Thess 1, 1 Cor 16, 2 Cor 8-9, Rom 15-16). In the time of Ephesians, after Paul had carried out his mission work in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, he could in a circular letter recognise the Church as a larger whole. At the end of his life Paul now looked to all Christians as the body of Christ 'from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum' (Rom 15:19). This development resulted from his view that Christians are the body of Christ and that Christ cannot be divided (1 Cor 1:13). His view is probably based on the words Christ spoke to him near Damascus, in which he identified himself with all Christians, i.e. – in Paul's view – with 'the church of God'. Later, Paul would understand the words 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *me*?' (Acts 9:4) to mean the whole Church, not Christ alone. After Galatians and 1-2 Thessalonians, in 1 Corinthians Paul begins to see Christians as the one indivisible body of Christ in the world (1 Cor 12:27-28), as the one 'church of God' (e.g. 1 Cor 10:33, 15:9). It is only logical that Paul formulates this understanding explicitly and more deeply in a circular letter to all Christians in the eastern Roman Empire; in other words, to the 'church of God' in the Roman world.

That Paul formulates a more pronounced theology of leadership in Ephesians (2:20, 4:1-16; contrast 1 Thess 5:11-15, 1 Cor 12:28, 4:16-17, 16:10-18, Rom 12:6-8, Phil 1:1, 3:17) was also to be expected. In Ephesians he is writing at the end of the era of the apostles and in view of the death

of the apostles and prophets of the first generation. Communities need to be protected and taught for the future, after Paul's death (Eph 1:21). After the 'holy apostles and prophets' (Eph 3:5) have died, responsible community leaders must be chosen to take their places. Luke and Clement testify shortly afterwards that the apostles and not least Paul (and Barnabas) made sure that not just anyone, but that *their* and their delegates' chosen leaders were present in the communities. We are then in AD 65-90, i.e. the time of the Christians of the *second* and third generation (Acts 14:23, 20:17-35, 1 Clem 42:4-5, cf. Gal 6:6, 1 Thess 5:12-13, 1 Cor 16:15-18, Phil 1:1),

3.6 Theobald again

So we see that Ephesians and Colossians sometimes go beyond earlier Pauline letters. Yet Ephesians also cites or interprets parts of the Pauline *paradosis* which was known to all churches (1 Cor 4:17; Rom 6:17; 16:17; Phil 4:9) in the time after Romans 15:19-24.¹³ So we simply do not know in how far Ephesians creates new thoughts or is repeating (in a more developed way) the Pauline traditions for addressees who are unknown to Paul. The quotation from the tradition on the Lord's Supper and the resurrection *paradosis* in 1 Corinthians 11:23-27 and 15:1-12 appear only in 1 Corinthians, but they were certainly known in all Pauline churches, just like the Old Testament and Jesus traditions regarding marriage and divorce to which Paul alludes in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, 1 Corinthians 5-7 and Romans 7:1-3. We always need to remember that most of Paul's letters were occasional writings.

All of this should make us cautious regarding Theobald's views, for example concerning allegedly 'unpauline' statements or theological developments in Ephesians. If his argumentation were correct, we could say that the more detailed, longer 1 Corinthians 'continues' and 'develops' Galatians considerably. In the time of 1 Corinthians it was necessary for *salvation* to preserve tradition literally and the community had to submit itself to its leaders (1 Cor 4:16-17, 11:23, 15:1-11, 16:10-18). In Galatians we see a 'non-catholic', Spirit-only led church (e.g. in Gal 6:6-10), but later, in 1 Corinthians, the worldwide church (1 Cor 10:32, 12:28, 15:9) is on its way to 'Catholicism'. And later again, in Philippians, we see that the role of the Holy Spirit is reduced almost beyond recognition and that the church is no longer the body

of Christ but governed by ‘bishops and deacons’ (Phil 1:1) who are images of the one apostle Paul and his very ‘bourgeois’ tradition (3:17, 4:8-9).

But if we watch, for example, the ‘rise’ of *love* in Paul’s theology and ethics from its first modest appearance in Galatians 5 to its full development in later writings, we see that significant developments in Paul’s teaching took place over the years: love soon governs the triad faith – hope – love (1 Thess 1:3, 1 Cor 13, Col 1:4-5),¹⁴ which in Romans is evident throughout the letter.¹⁵ *Love* finally appears, more frequently than in other letters of Paul, as a major theme in Ephesians and Philemon.¹⁶ Thus, in the years AD 50-60 Paul became more and more a preacher of love. Ephesians 5 includes more love in the theology of marriage than 1 Corinthians and situates it expressly and directly between wives and husbands, while 1 Corinthians 13 has *agape* as the theological climax of 1 Corinthians 11-14.

There is one main difference between 1 Corinthians and Ephesians. The latter does not give instructions for behaviour in public worship or in marriages between Christians and non-Christians. Verses like 1 Corinthians 9:20-22, 10:32-33, 14:23-40 and Colossians 4:5-6 have no counterparts in Ephesians, a letter written mainly for internal instruction. It was written only for Christians in disputes with opponents and under satanic attack. This was not the case in Corinth for Satan was clearly outside of the community (1 Cor 5:1-5; in Paul’s view this perhaps changed later, see 2 Cor 6:11-17, 11:3). So we see that Ephesians must solve different problems than 1 Corinthians and therefore has to take up, interpret and develop other parts of Paul’s theology of marriage than 1 Corinthians.

3.7 Conclusion: the flexible Paul

Scholarship should pay more attention to the flexibility of Paul, who always tried to become a Jew to the Jews and a non-Jew to the non-Jews. He wanted and needed to formulate his theology afresh for each new student, for dissenters and opponents, for high-ranking personalities and for ordinary people, for beginners and for masters in Paul’s teachings.

A further illustration of this thesis is that in the prison letters, above all in Philippians and 2 Timothy, many new words appear that he had not used in writing before. The proportion for *hapax legomena* in Ephesians (1.45% of 2422 words),

which is sometimes rated as an index of its inauthenticity,¹⁷ lies well below that in other letters to communities, e.g. Philippians (2.21% of 1629 words). Further letters to communities before the imprisonment have *hapaxes* up to the maximum of 2 Corinthians at 1.45%.

The style of writing in, among others, Ephesians, can be traced back to secretaries such as Timothy, Epaphras, Tychicus or Luke. Paul was interested in the contents of his writings, in his theology and ethics, but not in an authentic writing style, although the ‘packaging’ of the contents was not unimportant (1 Cor 9:20-22, 10:32-33 and 14:19). They had to be suitable for their readers in vocabulary and in style. Paul would have relied on his co-authors or secretaries for the final formulation of his letters because they were closer to the various addressees than he was himself (cf. the Roman Tertius in Rom 16:22 and the Corinthian Sosthenes in 1 Cor 1:1). Epaphras may well have put the finishing stylistic touches on Colossians¹⁸ and perhaps also Ephesians; he may also have included his own teaching examples and his knowledge of the problems in Asia Minor.

Paul was flexible, he had a big heart and a mind which was able – after years of debates with non-Christians and in conversation with Christians and teachers of Christians like Epaphras and Timothy – to write a circular letter such as the letter ‘to the Ephesians’ for all Gentile Christians, to complement and develop what he had written in earlier letters. In this letter he both used his own language of earlier letters (Eph 4-6) and changed to a hymnic style for his last prayer (Eph 1-3). Of course, he did not simply repeat earlier views or carry on with what he had thought years before. He was, after all, a realist who could learn – from the ‘afflictions’ he mentioned in 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 on to the parousia of Christ – to take into account his own death. Thus he was able to teach with the Church as it would be after his death in mind, starting perhaps in Philippians.

Undoubtedly, the author who wrote a letter such as Ephesians was an important teacher of the first century Church. Ephesians is one of the most important documents in the New Testament. Could its author have written only this one letter (plus maybe Colossians) and afterwards disappear without a trace? It is much easier to suppose that Christ’s one and only apostle of the gentiles, Paul, was the very teacher of the first century Church who wrote Ephesians. Thus I conclude with the words of Klaus Berger, Thomas Weissenborn and

Klaus Haacker. Berger writes:

The assessment of Paul's versatility should not be limited a priori. Although this might make it easier to systematise, especially for the later theologian, it might also lead to a considerable underestimation of Paul's ability to change. Since it is all a matter of judgement, when in doubt, one should vote in favour of the accused ... In my opinion there was no unified Pauline theology ... There is no way around it, in Pauline theology we perceive different approaches and clusters.¹⁹

And I agree with Weißenborn:

According to the now widespread prejudice of F.C. Baur, primitive Christianity in the entire Mediterranean basin 'developed' in a relatively uniform manner, from the unordered Jesus movement to an 'early Catholic' church, with its foundations of Scripture, office and tradition. From a simple witness to Jesus, a complex Christology developed. The Jewish Christian church of Palestine was replaced by the Hellenist Gentile church, including pagan conceptions of the gods. Separate house churches, with itinerant prophets travelling among them, grew into a hierarchical church with a superstructure that bound them together. A feverish and this-world critical expectation of Christ's imminent return was disappointed and the church turned more toward the world. Marriage, profession, etc. became important. It is into this scheme that modern exegetes arrange their sources, not according to historical, but rather to theological criteria. It is then not considered quite so important and can easily be overlooked, if one speaks of the theology or eschatology of 'Paul', even though the individual, uncontested letters fail to offer us a uniform Paul.²⁰

Last but not least Haacker rightly demands:

There are – as far as I know – no reliable, empirically based parameters for content uniformity and temporal stability of the theology of Paul! Arguments along this line presuppose a concept of theology that is applicable at most to dogmatists ... [I] feel that the scholarly representations of the theology of Paul have a tendency to *hyper-* or *gnesiopaulinism* [italics his]. They over-emphasize certain key points, raising them as benchmarks against which the historical, documented Paul of the historical sources is to be measured ... It would be better if theological

arguments were excluded from the debate on the authenticity of the surviving letters of Paul, or they should at least be downgraded significantly.²¹

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Endnotes

- 1 E. Weise, *Paulus, Apostel Jesu Christi, Lehrer der Gemeinden* (Inaugural Dissertation, Eberhard-Karls-Universität zu Tübingen 1997, unpublished).
- 2 Michael Theobald, 'Der Epheserbrief' in M. Ebner & S. Schreiber (eds), *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008) 410-418; also e.g. Udo Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (UTB 1830; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2007) 343-357; Ingo Broer, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*: Studienausgabe Bd. 1 + 2 (Würzburg: Echter Verlag 2006) 2.515-518; Niebuhr, *Grundinformationen*, 250-253.
- 3 Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 496-528; Carson, Moo and Morris, *Introduction*, 305-316; Hoehner, *Ephesians*.
- 4 Theobald, 'Epheserbrief', 410-418.
- 5 In Ephesians, eschatological 'hope' is only vaguely mentioned for well-taught Christians who know everything about this topic (1:18, 2:2, 4:4) because such 'hope' is no main theme; but in Galatians and in Philemon eschatological 'hope' is not mentioned at all.
- 6 Eckstein, 'Auferstehung und gegenwärtiges Leben', 8-23, esp. 22-23 incl. fn 69-70; 19 incl. fn 53.
- 7 See Klaus Haacker, 'Rezeptionsgeschichte und Literarkritik: Anfragen an die communis opinio zum Corpus Paulinum', *Theologische Zeitschrift* 65 (2009) 224-225.
- 8 See Henri Chadwick, 'All Things to all Men', *New Testament Studies* 55 (1954) 261-275; Klaus Haacker, 'Urchristliche Mission und kulturelle Identität: Beobachtungen zur Strategie und Homiletik des Apostels Paulus', *Theologische Beiträge* 2 (1988) 61-72; K. Köhler, 'Allen bin ich alles geworden, um auf jeden Fall einige zu retten' (1 Kor 9,22b): Das Ende des Paulus und der Anfang der Kirche' in R. Hoppe & K. Köhler (eds), *Das Paulusbild der Apostelgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2009) 193-234.
- 9 I prefer the alternate translation of the phrase 'to control your own body', as noted in the NRSV comments on 1 Thess 4:4.
- 10 This problem contributed to (polemical?) formulations like: an elder, bishop or genuine widow 'must be someone who must be above reproach, *married only once*' (cf. Tit 1:5-6, 1 Tim 3:2; 5:9).

- 11 Cf. already 1 Cor 9:20-23 moving toward 1 Cor 10:31 – 14:14, specifically 1 Cor 10:32 – 11:2 as the header of 1 Cor 11-14; see also the theme of the letter, starting in 5:1, 7:14-16.
- 12 See Towner, 'Gnosis', 95-125.
- 13 Paul knows very well what his readers had learned and what they did not yet know (Rom 1:8-17, 6:17, 16:17, 1 Cor 4:17, 11:1-2, 1 Thess 3:10; 1 Thess 4, 2 Thess 3:6, Phil 4:9; cf. Acts 20:20).
- 14 E.g. P. Wick, *Paulus* (UTB [basics] 2858; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2006) 124-158.
- 15 Romans 1-4: faith; Romans 5-8: love and hope; Romans 8: our love for God and love of God in Christ for the Christians; finally Romans 12-15: love among Christians and to all.
- 16 See the noun and verb in Eph 1:4, 6, 15, 2:4, 3:17, 19, 4:2, 15, 16, 5:2, 25, 28, 33, 6:23, 24 and Phlm 5, 7, 9 in only 335 words of this letter. See also the identical words in the prayers Eph 1:15 and Col 1:4 'faith and love', nearly identical to Phlm 5 'love and faith.' See also 2 Tim 1:7, Col 1:4, 8, 13, 2:2, 3:14.
- 17 For example Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 344.
- 18 Johannes Lähnemann, *Der Kolosserbrief: Komposition, Situation und Argumentation* (StNT 3; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus 1971) 181-182 note 82.
- 19 Berger, *Kommentar*, 792.
- 20 Weißenborn, *Apostel*, 302-303.
- 21 Haacker, *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, 226.

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