

## Ephesians

### I. AUTHENTICITY<sup>1</sup>

#### *a. The traditional view*

Since this epistle had been regarded as a genuine epistle of Paul until nineteenth-century criticism attacked it, it will be advisable first of all to enumerate the positive grounds upon which this traditional view was based.

(i) *Its self-claims.* In the opening address, which is identical with those of 2 Corinthians and Colossians, the writer not only claims to be Paul, but claims also the authority of apostleship by the will of God. This is as characteristic of Paul as is the greeting with its combination of grace and peace (1:2). But this is not all, for the name recurs in the body of the epistle (3:1) in the same manner as in 2 Corinthians 10:1, Galatians 5:2, Colossians 1:23 2:18 and Philemon 9 (*cf.* also 1 Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18; 2 Thes. 3:17; Phm. 19, where it occurs at the close of the letters).

The whole epistle and particularly the section from 3:1 ff. abounds with statements in the first person and it is instructive to note the picture that the author gives of himself. He has personally heard of the readers' faith and of their love towards other Christians (1:15); he expresses his personal thanks to God for them (1:16); describes himself as a 'prisoner of Christ Jesus' (3:1; 4:1); points out that he is writing about a mystery personally revealed to him (3:3 ff.); appeals to his own divine appointment to the ministry (3:7); exhorts the readers not to lose heart over his present sufferings (3:13); assumes an attitude of humble intercession for them (3:14 ff.); affirms the readers' present need of a new way of living and of thinking against a background of Gentile ignorance and licentiousness (4:17 ff.); gives his own interpretation of the 'mystery' (5:32); appeals for prayer on his own behalf as a chained ambassador that he might have boldness to speak (6:19–20); and concludes with a personal salutation (6:21–22). From these persistent witnesses to the author-reader relationship the personality of Paul may be sufficiently discerned. Indeed it seems in agreement with what is seen of him from his other epistles. A different interpretation of this evidence will be considered later, but it is difficult not to see in it a personal knowledge on the author's part of the present circumstances of the readers.

(ii) *Its external attestation.* This epistle appears to have been in wide circulation by the middle of the second century among both orthodox Christians and heretics. It was included in the earliest formal canon, that of Marcion (*c.* A.D. 140), though under the name of 'Laodiceans'. Its Pauline origin was therefore at this time undisputed, since Marcion acknowledged only the apostle Paul as his authority. In the Muratorian Canon (*c.* A.D. 180) it was included under the epistles of Paul. It forms part of the Pauline epistles in the earliest evidence for the Latin and Syriac versions. It was used by the Ophites, Valentinians and Basilideans. There are reminiscences of its language in the writings of Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Hermas and possibly the Didache. The explanation of these reminiscences cannot be a similar milieu of thought, for these sub-

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<sup>1</sup>Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Series taken from jacket., 4th rev. ed., The master reference collection Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996, c1990), 496.

apostolic writers reflect a more developed state of church life and thought. Most scholars are therefore agreed that Ephesians must have preceded the epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians (A.D. 95).

(iii) *Its Pauline structure.* Leaving aside stylistic considerations which will be dealt with later (pp. 500 ff., pp. 509 ff.) it may here be pointed out that there are distinct affinities with Paul's other epistles in the literary type to which they all belong. We find the characteristically Pauline sequence of opening greeting, thanksgiving, doctrinal exposition, ethical exhortations, concluding salutations and benediction. While this generally conforms to the contemporary literary epistolary pattern, it is treated in a distinctively Pauline manner compared with the non-Pauline New Testament epistles (and incidentally with the spurious 3 Corinthians). In particular, the basing of moral appeal on theological argument can not only be paralleled in Paul's other epistles but was in fact an integral part of the apostle's approach to practical problems.

(iv) *Its language and literary affinities.* There are many words common to the epistle and to the other Pauline epistles which do not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The vocabulary is, in fact, nearer to that of the earlier Pauline epistles than its sister epistle, Colossians. There are the characteristic paradoxical antitheses (*cf.* 6:15, 20), free citations from the Old Testament (4:8–11; *cf.* Rom. 10:6–8) and adaption of Old Testament language (1:22; 2:13, 17; 4:25; 5:2; 6:1–3; *cf.* 1 Cor. 3:9).

The literary connection with the other Pauline epistles and the other New Testament epistles will be discussed later, but the striking similarities between Ephesians and Colossians call for some comment here as the close connection between the epistles has undoubtedly played some part in the traditional approach. If Colossians is a genuine epistle of Paul, and few modern scholars doubt that it is (see pp. 572 ff.), its close connection with Ephesians and the patristic assumption that both epistles were genuine raise a strong presumption in favour of Ephesians. In fact the attestation is stronger for Ephesians than for Colossians.

(v) *Its theological affinities.* While there are some new emphases in the epistle (as for instance in the doctrine of the church), the background of Pauline theology is unmistakable. There is the characteristic conception of God as not only glorious (1:17) and powerful (1:19 ff.) but also merciful (2:4 ff.), the same consciousness of mystic wonder that the believer is 'in Christ' (1:3, 10–11, *al.*), the same appreciation of the reconciliatory value of the cross (2:13 ff), the same grasp of the ministry of the Holy Spirit (2:18; 3:5; 4:1 ff., 30; 5:18) and the same humble awareness of the predestinating counsel of God (1:5 ff.). In fact this epistle has often not inappropriately been called the crown of Paulinism.

(vi) *Its historical data.* Because of the almost entire absence of any historical clues in this epistle it may seem an unlikely quest to educe historical data in support of the tradition, but this line of approach rests rather on negative than positive evidence. The silence regarding the fall of Jerusalem is rather remarkable in view of the argument about the destruction of the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile (2:14 ff.), while the absence of reference to the persecution of the readers may indicate a date during the early period of the church's history, i.e. the apostolic period. Moreover, the absence of developed ecclesiastical organization fits an early date better than a later. Historical considerations as far as they can be ascertained, give the impression of an early setting in agreement with a genuine epistle of Paul.

(vii) *Conclusion.* This brief introductory survey of the traditional position has enabled us to see the strong external background and primary internal impressions of authenticity given by the epistle itself. It is against this background that the objections raised by certain schools of criticism must be stated and examined. The arguments against will first be given in order to present as completely as possible the cumulative grounds for dispensing with this epistle as a genuine work of Paul. The burden of proof must in any case lie with the challengers since the epistle not only claims to be Pauline but has also been regarded as such by the Christian church. As Mitton, who himself denies Pauline authorship, admits, 'Pauline authorship can rightly be assumed until it is disproved'. This means that those maintaining Pauline authorship will need only to bring adequate counter-arguments against the arguments of the challengers. This is naturally a defensive approach, but it cannot in the nature of the case be otherwise.

*b. The case against Pauline authorship* These objections may be conveniently grouped under four main heads, linguistic and stylistic, literary, historical and doctrinal, and they will be considered in that order.

(i) Linguistic and stylistic arguments. First it may be noted that there are a number of words which do not occur elsewhere in the New Testament and others which are New Testament words but are absent from the other generally accepted Pauline epistles. Some of these are said to be significant. For instance, whereas Paul refers to the devil by various titles in his other letters he does not use διάβολος as he does in Ephesians (it is used in the pastoral epistles, but since their authenticity is also widely disputed they are excluded in the present argument). The phrase 'in the heavenlies', which occurs many times in Ephesians, does not occur elsewhere in Paul. The prepositions *κατά* and *ἐκ* occur with unusual frequency for Paul, while there is an unparalleled number of genetical formations.

Goodspeed thinks that the novel element in the vocabulary shows a close relationship with works like Luke-Acts, 1 Clement, 1 Peter and Hebrews, which he considers were all written towards the close of the first century. On this basis he regards the linguistic data as pointing to a time later than the apostle Paul.

The style is certainly different from the other nine undisputed Pauline epistles and this has seemed to some to weigh against Pauline authorship. Goodspeed calls it 'reverberating and liturgical, not at all the direct, rapid Pauline give-and-take'. Mitton remarks that 'we are uncomfortably aware in Ephesians of a somewhat artificial eloquence, which Paul elsewhere seemed deliberately to avoid (*cf.* 1 Cor. 1:17; 2:4, 13)', There are also many redundant expressions, such as τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θελήματος (1:11) and τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος (1:19), which have appeared to some scholars as evidence of non-Pauline practice. Many who have admitted these difficulties over the style have not, however, considered the difficulties sufficiently weighty to overthrow authenticity.

It has further been maintained by Goodspeed that the review of blessings in the opening part of the epistle is not Pauline because his usual method was to take up a theme and dwell upon it, whereas in Ephesians the themes 'fairly tumble over one another'. He thinks this would be natural if the epistle was the work of a Paulinist who wrote to introduce the collected works of Paul.

(ii) Literary arguments. The most important consideration is the relationship between Ephesians and Colossians. It is maintained that over a quarter of the words in Ephesians are borrowed from Colossians, while more than a third of the words in Colossians

reappear in Ephesians. There is no parallel to this in any other of Paul's epistles, and the phenomenon demands an explanation. The view that both epistles were written by the same author on different occasions is rejected in favour of the theory that the author of Ephesians was so familiar with Colossians that his mind moved in accordance with the development of argument in that epistle and at times brought together passages which were separated in the earlier epistle. Yet because the exact similarities with Colossians are not as great as would be expected under this hypothesis, it has been considered doubtful that the author knew Colossians off by heart. There is, in fact, only one passage of any length which can be verbally paralleled in the two epistles, and that concerns Tychicus. Nevertheless the alleged use of Colossians by the author was considered by Dibelius to be decisive against Pauline authorship.

It is not the mere use of Colossians, however, which generally weighs heaviest against Pauline authorship in the minds of its opponents. It is rather the frequency of parallel words and terminology used in a completely different sense. Some scholars, for example, cannot imagine a man like Paul refusing original terms to express new ideas and borrowing instead phrases from Colossians to express something quite different. The problem is whether it is psychologically possible for a man with such fluency as Paul to repeat words and phrases, but with a different meaning. Opponents of Pauline authorship answer in the negative. To illustrate this latter point, one or two examples may be cited. The description of Christ as Head of the church in Ephesians 4:15–16 is claimed to be borrowed from Colossians 2:19, but there it is applied to the cosmic powers. Whereas the word 'mystery' in Colossians is applied to Christ, in Ephesians it is used of the unifying of Jew and Gentile. In Colossians the word οἰκονομία (stewardship) is used to describe an entrusted task (1:25), but in Ephesians it refers to the planned economy of God (3:2). This sort of thing is said to be characteristic of Ephesians.

Mitton draws attention to many occasions in Ephesians where two passages from Colossians have been conflated into one passage (*e.g.* Col. 1:14, 20 and Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:9, 4 and Eph. 1:15–16; Col. 2:13, 3:6 and Eph. 2:1–5). He claims that some similarity of wording in the Colossians passages serves as a link to combine them in Ephesians. This evidence is alleged to show not only that the author was not the author of Colossians but that he was citing the latter from memory.

So far we have mentioned only the literary relation between Ephesians and Colossians, but some scholars place equal emphasis upon its literary dependence on the other eight 'genuine' letters of Paul. Goodspeed, for instance, maintains that the author of Ephesians knew well all the other letters, but his familiarity with them was not that of Paul but of an admiring disciple. Largely on the basis of this supposition Goodspeed argues that Ephesians must have been written after the collection of the other letters. The manner in which the author has incorporated material from these other letters seems to Mitton to differ considerably from that of Paul, so much so that the phenomena of Ephesians are thought to betray the hand of an imitator. An attempt is made to prove this by comparing Ephesians with Philippians, which has far fewer parallels with the other Paulines. Mitton claims that Philippians is a fair standard to which to appeal because it belongs to the same period as Ephesians purports to belong to and can be claimed as typical of Paul's writings. When these epistles are compared, not only does Ephesians show a much greater proportion of Pauline parallels but also a greater tendency to draw from some of the more striking passages in the other epistles, which is reckoned by

Mitton to be a test by which an imitator may be distinguished from Paul. The basis of this test is the assumption that only an imitator would be inclined to reproduce certain passages which had made a deeper impression on his mind than others. Another test proposed by the same scholar is the use of 'striking and memorable' phrases from the other Pauline epistles, which he considers to be an indication of an imitator. This second test also shows a difference between Ephesians and Philippians, which therefore suggests, if the test is valid, that the former must be non-Pauline.

The literary parallels between Ephesians and other New Testament books also present a problem and are particularly important because of their use in the attempt to fix a date for the epistle. There are many parallels between the epistle and 1 Peter although it is difficult to determine the direction of literary dependence, if such dependence seems probable. Those who assume that Ephesians has borrowed from 1 Peter do not place themselves in so vulnerable a position as those who make the reverse assumption.

Among the latter is Mitton, who makes the significant admission that if 1 Peter belonged to Peter's lifetime, it would be almost conclusive that Ephesians belonged to Paul's own time, and must therefore have been written by him. But he does not accept the Petrine authorship of 1 Peter and can therefore adhere to a date for both far later than the lifetime of Paul. There are similarly more parallels between Ephesians and the Acts than is the case for any other Pauline epistle, and this has produced various explanations. If the author of Acts used Ephesians it would be difficult if not impossible to deny the Pauline authorship of the latter. But the opponents of Pauline authorship invariably deny that the author of Acts was acquainted with Ephesians, in which case the only options are either to hold that Ephesians was written under the influence of Acts or else that both were written within the same decade and were the products of the same spiritual atmosphere. In neither case would Pauline authorship be possible. Goodspeed conjectures that the author of Ephesians thinks of Paul in the condition in which the Acts left him, i.e. 'a prisoner for the Greek mission'.

One of the reasons why some scholars think that Ephesians could not have been published until after Luke-Acts is the absence of any trace of Ephesians in Matthew and Mark. Goodspeed suggests that the appearance of Luke-Acts supplied the impetus for the collection of the Pauline letters. On the other hand there are similarities between Ephesians and John which are claimed to support the theory that the epistle belongs to the period separating the synoptic gospels from John.

Another important literary problem is the form of the letter. It differs from the other Paulines in the absence of any concrete situation to which Paul is addressing himself. Moffatt regarded it as a homily rather than a letter, while many scholars have strongly criticized the encyclical explanation of its peculiar form.

The references to Paul in the letter are said to be forced. For instance, the words 'I am less than the least of all God's people' (3:8) sound in Mitton's opinion 'calmly deliberate, even self-conscious and a little theatrical'. In 3:2 Paul writes rather awkwardly, 'Surely you have heard' of God's stewardship granted to me. Again in 3:4 Paul appears to be commending his own insight into the mystery of Christ in such a way as to constitute a difficulty in the minds of some. He is said to be too complacent and to 'protest too much' for the genuine Paul. Because of this it is supposed that the writer's admiration for Paul constitutes a real difficulty for the defenders of Pauline authorship. It is maintained that Paul did not overstress his own activity in such sweeping terms as we find here.

(iii) *Historical arguments.* There is such strong external attestation for the early recognition of Ephesians as Pauline that the objectors to authenticity are hard put to it to explain it away. The usual line of attack against this damaging external evidence is to maintain that pseudepigraphy was very common at that time, even among Christians. In support of this, appeal is made to those parts of the New Testament which some scholars regard as pseudepigraphical, e.g. 2 Peter, Jude, James, Revelation, 1 Peter and the pastoral epistles. If pseudepigraphy was as common a Christian practice as this, so the argument proceeds, the Christian church would have had no hesitancy in accepting an epistle like Ephesians, even if they had known it to be non-Pauline. Early attestation to its circulation and use may if necessary be set aside if it clashes with a hypothesis which offers a reasonable explanation of the internal data. Thus if internal evidence is assumed to be against Pauline authorship it is considered to take precedence over external attestation.

One of the strongest historical factors alleged to weigh heavily against Pauline authorship is the state of the Jewish-Gentile controversy. It seems already settled, whereas in Paul's other epistles the conflict still appears to be active. The basic assumption of scholars maintaining this position is that the controversy could not have been settled in Paul's lifetime.

Goodspeed further maintains that the breaking down of the barrier separating Jew and Gentile, although figurative, is more natural after A.D. 70 when the destruction of the temple had effectively eliminated the barrier. Closely akin to this view is the contention that the church has now become Greek with no room for Jewish Christianity. Ephesians 2:2, 11 is said to prove that all the readers were once heathen, while 2:3 suggests that the author identifies himself in this respect with the readers and must therefore have been a Gentile and could not have been Paul.

Another line of argument against authenticity is the claim that Ephesians shows parallels with Gnostic literature which would put it beyond the time of Paul. This opinion was first expressed by F. C. Baur in the nineteenth century, but is not without its modern supporters, such as Kasemann and Conzelmann. The latter writers have based their opinions on the assumption that the head/body imagery in Colossians and Ephesians points to the Gnostic Redeemed Redeemer myth. But this view may be discounted on the grounds that it was Mani who first forged the many similar myths into one myth, and the evidence is therefore much too late to have any bearing on the origin of either epistle.

(iv) *Doctrinal arguments.* Arguments based on doctrinal differences are notoriously vulnerable as most challengers of Pauline authorship admit. But the plea is made that the evidence, though weak taken point by point, is nevertheless much weightier when considered cumulatively. The main points may be grouped as follows.

1. Differences have been noted in Paul's teaching on the doctrine of the church. In this epistle the church is universal and not local as it often is in Paul's other epistles. Paul admittedly uses the word in both senses, but Goodspeed stresses the fact that the local is more frequent in the Pauline epistles than the universal. He further maintains that the writer is more of an ecclesiastic. 'He finds in the church a great spiritual fellowship, built upon the apostles and the prophets'. As in the book of Revelation the church is the Bride of Christ. But it is further pointed out that in Ephesians this image is combined with others like building, planting and growing, which Paul uses separately.

Those who deny Pauline authorship place much stress on the unusual authority which appears to be vested in the apostles and prophets. Ephesians 2:20 is a particular

stumbling-block, for the apostles and prophets are said to be the foundation of the church, a statement which seems at variance with 1 Corinthians 3:11, where Christ is described as the only foundation.

The reference in Eph. 3:5 to the 'holy apostles and prophets' is said to belong to a later date than Paul when the apostles were becoming increasingly venerated. Objection is made to the use of the word 'holy' because it suggests a greater deference to the apostles than could have existed in Paul's time, In fact, Goodspeed claims that it belongs to the latter part of the first century and bases his contention on similar phraseology in Luke 1:70, Revelation 18:20, 21:14, and a similar attitude in Matthew, all of which books he dates late.

2. Further differences are claimed to appear in Paul's Christology in this epistle. Certain acts which are attributed to God in the other epistles are attributed to Christ in this. Two instances are specially singled out: firstly Ephesians 2:16, where reconciliation is described as the work of Christ, as compared with Colossians 1:20; 2:13-14; and secondly Ephesians 4:11, where Christ is said to appoint officials in the church, as compared with 1 Corinthians 12:28.

It is claimed that nowhere else in the Pauline epistles does Paul speak of Christ's descent into Hades and this is considered a difficult concept to fit into his theology (Eph. 4:9). It is on the other hand supposed to be akin to the doctrine of ascension in Luke's gospel.

Another criticism is based on the use of the formula 'In Christ'. Although occurring in this epistle frequently it is claimed to lack the deeper meanings of Paul's usage. Whereas Paul used it for a personal identification with Christ and for the idea of corporate personality, Ephesians uses it predominantly in an instrumental sense.

The small attention given to the death of Christ has also raised doubts about the authenticity of the epistle. The writer is alleged to be more concerned about the exaltation of Christ than his death. In the main section on the redemptive activity of God (Eph. 1:15-2:10) the death is not mentioned although the resurrection twice comes into view. Moreover, the primary aim of the work of Christ is said to be the unification of Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:13-18).

3. Finally, differences are claimed in Paul's social teaching here. As contrasted with Paul's attitude towards marriage in 1 Corinthians 7 the writer of Ephesians is alleged to have a much more exalted view. To him the institution is worthy enough to illustrate the relationship between Christ and his church. The weight of this objection will nevertheless appeal differently to different scholars, for many consider that Paul's earlier attitude to marriage was conditioned by his belief in the imminence of the parousia.

It has been suggested that a different approach towards children is discernible when Ephesians is compared with Colossians. In the former epistle believers are to bring up their children 'in the training and instruction of the Lord' (Eph. 6:4), while in Colossians 3:21 they are urged not to embitter them and nothing more is said about training them. Goodspeed interprets this to mean that Ephesians urges a more long-term policy of religious education.

Another alleged difference is the way in which the writer refers to circumcision. In Ephesians he is said to have treated it with contempt, whereas in Paul's other epistles it receives greater reverence, although the apostle is clear enough that it should not be enforced upon Gentiles.

*c. The case for Pauline authorship*

The main arguments against authenticity have been stated as a whole without challenging any separate points in order to give the evidence the most favourable opportunity to make a cumulative impression. But the evidence must now be examined point by point to test its validity. Defenders of Pauline authorship have sometimes been accused of resorting to a method of 'divide and conquer', as if any analytical criticism of the cumulative evidence is quite unfair. But any hypothesis built on no more than an overall effect which fears the scrutiny of analytical treatment does not deserve to survive.

Any statement of the case of Pauline authorship must commence with the external evidence. Mitton concedes that this is the 'strongest bulwark in the defence of Pauline authorship', while Nineham goes further and frankly admits that 'as far as external evidence goes Ephesians is unassailable'.

In view of the unfavourable character of external attestation for any theory that denies Pauline authorship, the advocates of authenticity may reasonably demand that internal arguments brought against the tradition should be of such a conclusive character as to provide no other option than the rejection of the tradition. Furthermore, if the tradition is rejected some adequate explanation must be given for the unanimity of the inaccurate tradition. Our next inquiry must therefore be to discover whether these opposing arguments are in fact conclusive.

(i) *Linguistic and stylistic arguments.* To deduce non-Pauline authorship from the fact that Ephesians contains a large number of non-Pauline words is an argument which must be used with very great reserve. It is not unusual for Paul to use new words when dealing with new subject-matter, and this objection could carry weight only if it could be shown that Paul could not have used the new words in question. But this cannot be substantiated.

The claim that different words are used in Ephesians to express ideas which occur in other Pauline epistles presents a weightier problem, but even here it cannot be said to suggest non-Pauline authorship unless it is conclusive that Paul would not have used the changed expressions. There is, for instance, no reason why Paul should not have used the phrase 'in the heavenlies', nor why he could not have introduced different grammatical constructions.

The comparison of the vocabulary with so-called later first-century books will be an obstacle only to those who are confident of the late dating of these books. Only I Clement can be dated with any certainty at the close of the century, and since it is generally admitted that Clement knew and used Ephesians this line of attack may safely be discounted.

The style may be different from Paul's usual manner of writing, more reflective, moving in a more carefully considered way, lacking the somewhat turbulent approach of Galatians or the Corinthian epistles and less logically argued than the Epistle to the Romans; but does this justify the conclusion that Paul could not have written it? It is of course open to anyone to express the opinion that Paul could not have written Ephesians on stylistic grounds, but the evidence does not demand this view. It may, in fact, be regarded as evidence of Paul's versatility. In any case it should be noted that the stylistic peculiarities occur mostly in the first part of the epistle where statements of doctrine are presented in reflective mood and where controversy is absent. This absence of controversy must have had an effect upon Paul's mind and it is most natural to suppose

that his style would reflect his own reactions. Clogg is surely right in maintaining that the style found in Ephesians fits Paul in contemplative mood.

A more important question is whether an imitator would have consciously produced a work with such a style as this, so close to Paul and yet different, so breathing the same atmosphere and yet expressing it in another way. Is Goodspeed justified in maintaining that Ephesians is not Pauline because the author does not stay to dwell upon the various themes he mentions? Surely an author is at liberty to choose which method he will adopt without running the risk of being denied his own writing if he is thoughtless enough to choose a method he has not previously used! But even if it be conceded that this change of method may be an indication of, or an indirect support for, non-Pauline authorship, it is by no means self-evident that the review of blessings in chapter 1 is natural if the author was a Paulinist writing to introduce Paul's collected works. It is improbable psychology to suggest that an imitator making a conscious effort to recall the great Pauline themes would have made them 'tumble over one another' in the manner found here. The natural result would have been a more stilted summary. If, then, Ephesians is the work of an imitator, the author must have been an extraordinary literary artist.

(ii) *Literary arguments.* The close relation between Ephesians and Colossians appears to be capable of opposing explanations. Advocates of non-Pauline authorship find it difficult to conceive that one mind could have produced two works possessing so remarkable a degree of similarity in theme and phraseology and yet differing in so many other respects, whereas advocates of Pauline authorship are equally emphatic that two minds could not have produced two such works with so much subtle interdependence blended with independence. This close relationship is, in fact, exactly what might be reasonably expected if Paul had produced the two epistles within a short period of time and had applied in a general way in the second (i.e. Ephesians) the great themes of the first, divorced from their specific situation. Mitton agrees that an imitator producing Ephesians would have kept closer to Colossians if he had had his model before his eyes, and he is therefore driven to suppose that the imitator knew it so well that he could easily recall its themes and phraseology. This means that the two epistles in his judgment are not similar enough for both to be attributed to Paul, nor are they similar enough for one to be the work of an imitator copying Paul. Yet what critical criterion can pronounce with any confidence that they are sufficiently dissimilar for one of them to be the work of an imitator writing generally from memory? If this hypothesis were valid we should hardly expect to find the only passage with any extended verbal parallels with Colossians to be the concluding reference to Tychicus. It is difficult to see why any Paulinist should have committed this passage to memory with so great a degree of verbal accuracy and have seen any purpose in reproducing it in a letter purporting to introduce the Pauline corpus of letters as Goodspeed suggests. The proposal of Mitton that it may have been introduced in honour of Tychicus who may still have been alive seems utterly pointless since the same words already existed in Colossians. This shows the extent of the difficulty for the non-Pauline theory. Indeed it may fairly be claimed that this passage is a great stumbling-block to the opponents of authenticity. The best explanation of the repetition is to suppose that Paul directed his amanuensis to use the same words in referring to Tychicus as in the Colossian letter.

Advocates of the imitator-hypothesis are, in fact, using an argument which can be used against them, for it may reasonably be supposed that a conscious imitator would

have endeavoured to keep as close as possible to his model. But the spiritual and intellectual power of Ephesians, together with its freedom from a slavish reproduction of Colossians, is extremely improbable in an imitator, even if the memory hypothesis be allowed. But this hypothesis looks like an attempt to stave off a difficult problem. It is even more difficult to explain why a Paulinist writing towards the end of the first century should have picked on Colossians to form the basis of his summary of Pauline teaching. The theory that Colossians was for a long time the only Pauline epistle known to the author might at first sight appear a reasonable explanation of the phenomenon, but the force of it depends entirely on the further theory of the late collection of Paul's letters, for which the evidence is too scanty to enable us to reach anything but the most tentative conclusions. Clement of Rome certainly knew of more than one of Paul's epistles and it seems most probable that they were more generally known than this theory allows. To make the hypothesis sound at all probable it is necessary to suppose that the Paulinist was cut off in some obscure Christian centre while his mind was becoming saturated with Colossians. But this is rather a desperate alternative to the traditional view.

We must next consider the objection based on the use of words said to have been borrowed from Colossians and then used in a quite different sense. No one would dispute that a writer may on occasion use words in different senses, but the difficulty seems to arise from the necessity to suppose a very short interval between the two epistles. This is a difficulty only if two conditions are first fulfilled. The differences in usage must be shown to be incompatible in one mind at one period of time, and they must further be inconceivable in the works of the writer to whom they are attributed. But the examples cited by the opponents of authenticity fulfil neither of these conditions. The alleged difference between Ephesians 4:15–16 and Colossians 2:19 in their description of Christ's Headship cannot seriously be maintained in view of the fact that both epistles specifically identify 'the body' as the church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23). That the further thought of Christ as Head of the universe, if this can be maintained, is not explicit in Ephesians is no basis for denying its Pauline authorship, for it is not incompatible with the more restricted application, as Colossians shows. There would seem to be more validity in the objection based on the word 'mystery', but it cannot be said that Paul would never have described the unification of mankind as 'the mystery of his will' (Eph. 1:9), nor is it particularly apparent that he could not at the same time have used the same word to describe the indwelling Christ (Col. 1:27). Indeed, when Paul uses the word in the Roman doxology (Rom. 16:25–26) he is marvelling that the mystery is 'made known ... [to] all nations', a thought closely akin to that in Ephesians. Again the different uses of *ὁικονομία* are not inconceivable in one mind. These variations of meaning will naturally assume a greater significance for those already persuaded of non-Pauline authorship than for supporters of authenticity. A fair conclusion would be that the evidence does not demand the rejection of Pauline authorship.

The examples of conflation already quoted, in which two passages in Colossians are found combined in one passage in Ephesians, are not as impressive as Mitton claims, for this kind of thing would be perfectly natural for Paul writing Ephesians shortly after Colossians with the thoughts and phraseology of the latter much in his mind. It can hardly be expected that Paul himself would have linked together certain phrases in exactly the same way in both epistles. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to imagine why an imitator should have resorted to conflation. Mitton's own explanation that the imitator is

quoting from memory certain phrases but does not recall their exact relationship in Colossians is really making a virtue out of necessity. There is no other more probable solution that the advocate of non-Pauline authorship can bring if he denies that the imitator was writing with Colossians before him. But it would be interesting to know why he does not consult Colossians as this must have been included in the Pauline corpus, which *ex hypothesi* he is proposing to introduce. But no satisfactory explanation of this strange behaviour has yet been given. It is clearly more reasonable to suppose that Paul did not consult his own epistle than that an admirer of his, who had possessed a copy of Paul's Colossian epistle and who set out to produce a resume of his master's doctrine, would have discarded the immeasurable advantage of consulting it.

It is the claim that Ephesians shows dependence on all the other Pauline epistles (excluding the pastorals) that has provided the basis for the hypothesis that it was intended to introduce the collection of these epistles. In fact, if it can be shown that Ephesians does not depend in a literary way on the other epistles the introduction theory would fall to pieces. Both Goodspeed and Mitton have set out clearly by means of parallel columns the passages from the other Pauline epistles which show similarity with Ephesians. The number of parallels looks very impressive, but the evidence is of course capable of more than one explanation. The existence of parallels is not in itself sufficient to establish dependence. And this leads to the real crux of the problem. According to Mitton's analysis there are three types of parallels.

1. Isolated parallels are those where the verbal similarity extends to no more than a word or two. Goodspeed includes a great quantity of these but Mitton rightly rejects the majority of them. He includes some in his statistical calculations, but his main emphasis is on the two other classes of parallels.

2. Sustained parallels are passages from other Pauline epistles from which a number of phrases are reproduced in one or more contexts in Ephesians. For instance, many phrases in Romans 1:21–24 can be paralleled in Ephesians 4:17–19. Mitton cites more than twenty examples of this kind of thing.

3. Conflated parallels are those in which two passages from different parts of Paul's other epistles have been combined in Ephesians. It is impossible in a small compass to examine adequately the evidence on which these two latter classifications of parallels are based. It is sufficient to state that the parallels show a rather uneven degree of similarity, yet on the whole they do demonstrate the closeness of the language of Ephesians with the other Pauline epistles. What needs more careful examination is the validity of Mitton's claims that in both of these latter categories the evidence favours more the work of an imitator than of Paul.

The most natural conclusion from the abundance of parallel passages is that the same mind is reflected in Ephesians as in the other Pauline epistles. In fact it has for long been assumed as a critical presupposition that the absence rather than the presence of such parallels is an indication of non-Pauline authorship in the investigation of certain other epistles, notably the pastorals. But Mitton claims to have discovered evidence which disproves this kind of presupposition. Taking Philippians as a representative Pauline epistle, he claims that in this epistle there is considerably less evidence of either sustained parallels or conflated parallels with the other Pauline epistles. Assuming that in the case of Philippians this conclusion is correct, does this justify the further deduction that Ephesians cannot on this score be attributed to Paul? The assumption here is that what

Paul does in Philippians he must do in all other writings. But the basis of this assumption is not obvious. To use Philippians alone in the comparison involves an over-simplification of a very complicated process. The difference in occasion, specific in Philippians, very general in Ephesians, must have had some bearing on the writer's mental processes. Indeed the only thing which these epistles have in common is that both were written when Paul was a prisoner. Philippians as a sample epistle is much too small to be convincing. It consists of about one-sixteenth of the eight epistles which Mitton accepts. Surely a wider basis is required before his suppositions can be assumed to be correct. Whether the subject to be studied is literary parallelism or linguistic dissimilarities as a basis for settling disputed points of authorship, the sample chosen must be clearly recognized as both representative and quantitatively adequate. But the choice of Philippians does not fulfill either of these conditions.

It would be convenient here to comment on Mitton's two tests for discriminating between a writer and his imitator. An imitator, he thinks, would tend to concentrate coincidences with other Pauline epistles in groups associated with passages which had particularly impressed his mind, whereas Paul would scatter them evenly. Unfortunately, no adequate evidence is given to substantiate the validity of this test apart from the appeal to Philippians mentioned above. But the test is not self-evident, for any writer might equally well concentrate his allusions to his earlier writings into certain groups if he happened to be writing on a similar subject and his former thoughts on the same subject automatically sprang to mind. Deep impressions made on the subconscious mind may easily be reproduced with sufficient stimulus, and there seems no reason for confining this to imitators and denying it to original authors.

The second test maintains that an imitator would reproduce 'striking and memorable phrases' whereas an authentic writer would not. But this again wears the appearance of an over-simplification. The impact of words on human minds is always complex and it cannot be assumed that all readers must necessarily react in the same way. If a reader sets out to reproduce Paul, the degree of reproduction of striking phrases will vary according to his familiarity with the genuine epistles, his own particular interests, his purpose in imitating Paul, and most important of all the retentiveness or otherwise of his own mind. The same variety of factors would, of course, apply to a writer's reproduction of ideas from his own earlier writings. But no test can take into account all these different factors. It is by no means apparent that different imitators setting to work on Paul's epistles would all tend to reproduce striking and memorable phrases, nor is it evident that Paul would never do so himself.

The question of the relation between Ephesians and the non-Pauline books of the New Testament is of special importance in Goodspeed's theory since it bolsters his claim for a late date for the collection of Paul's letters. But the evidence from literary allusions or their absence is generally unreliable since there are rarely any concrete grounds for determining the all-important question of priority. In dealing with Ephesians and 1 Peter this consideration is crucial. If 1 Peter has borrowed from Ephesians (as Mitton agrees) the date of Ephesians is affected by the date of 1 Peter, which is in turn affected by its authorship. It will inevitably follow, therefore, that those disputing Pauline authorship of Ephesians have little option but to reject Petrine authorship of 1 Peter. But this is not an undisputed opinion since many scholars find strong arguments in support of Petrine

authorship. There is no doubt that if the early date for Ephesians is established its Pauline authorship cannot be disputed.

The non-reflection of the Pauline epistles in the synoptic gospels is no evidence of a late date for Ephesians unless there is some good reason why the evangelists should have cited them. But such a reason is inconceivable. It was the life and teaching of Jesus, not Paul, that they were describing. The parallels with Acts are even more inconclusive and at most could be used only as corroborative evidence of an hypothesis already proved on other grounds. Such suggested parallels are therefore entirely neutral and depend on a preconceived approach (either for or against authenticity) to give them any positive value. There tends to be too great a subjective element in the assessing of these literary priorities.

It remains to consider the problem of literary form. Ephesians certainly differs from the other Pauline epistles in the absence of a specific situation and Moffatt may be near the truth in classing it as a homily rather than a letter, but this does not in itself support non-Pauline authorship unless it could be shown that Paul could not have written a letter in such a form. But this latter condition cannot be fulfilled, and although the circular letter theory has been strongly criticized (see below) it does at least provide as probable a situation for the production of the epistle as any other theory, if not considerably more so. In that case the occasion determined the form.

The personal references in Ephesians 3 and the lack of the usual Pauline salutations may readily be regarded as non-Pauline once non-apostolicity has been accepted. But until nineteenth-century criticism spotted them, no-one regarded these references as forced, as if the writer was protesting too much his own identity. It is purely a matter of opinion whether it is theatrical for Paul to call himself 'less than the least of all God's people'. When due allowance is made for the overwhelming sense of God's grace, of which Paul was particularly conscious, nothing seems more natural than this self-depreciation. It is not otherwise with Eph. 3:2 and Eph. 3:4 where self-commendation is alleged to be un-Pauline, for the apostle is certainly not evaluating himself, but the immense effectiveness of the grace of God entrusted to him. What 'insight' (Eph. 3:4) he has is no ground for boasting, for he expressly traces its origin to divine 'revelation' (Eph. 3:3) in complete harmony with his other epistles. It is difficult to see how an imitator whose 'admiration and regard for Paul are so emphasized in Ephesians' could in the same passage have made Paul call himself 'less than the least of all God's people', which is surely the last thing an ardent admirer of the great apostle would have done. If it is a little theatrical for Paul to have used these words, it is inconceivably overdramatic for a zealous Paulinist.

(iii) *Historical arguments.* The overwhelming testimony of tradition in favour of Pauline authorship has already been considered and its embarrassment to advocates of non-Pauline authorship noted. But the supposed internal problems merit some comment. The history of the Jewish-Gentile controversy is not easy to trace with any certainty and no deductions can fairly be made from its presence or absence from any Pauline writing. The state of the controversy must have varied from church to church. Yet the position in Ephesians shows a remarkable affinity with that dealt with in Romans, especially Romans 11:17–24. In both Paul sets out the unification of Jew and Gentile through Christ.

Goodspeed's argument from the destruction of the temple is open to dispute. In fact, the evidence can more reasonably be made to do service for Pauline authorship. For instance, C. A. A. Scott asks the following three cogent questions on this matter: (1) Is it likely that any one would address Gentiles in these terms (i.e. using the figure of the 'barrier') after A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was in ruins? (2) Is it likely that before A.D. 70 anyone but Paul with his keen perceptions of Israel's privileges would have done this? (3) Is it likely that even Paul would have done so if he were describing an ideal and not a realized unification of Jew and Gentile? He concludes that if these questions are answered negatively, as he maintains they must be, doubts regarding Pauline authorship must be otherwise explained. It may further be argued that if the author were writing after the fall of the temple it would have given him an admirable symbolic illustration to press home his point, and the omission to use it militates against the view that Ephesians was later than A.D. 70. It must however be admitted that no later New Testament writers show any interest in the historic event. To the primitive church the elimination of the spiritual barrier was of far greater importance than the destruction of the material edifice. To sum up, it cannot be claimed that anything in the treatment of this theme in Ephesians is un-Pauline.

The appeal to Eph. 2:3 as evidence that the author was a Gentile and therefore not Paul depends on a false assumption. It may be true that an orthodox Jew would never have admitted that he was among the 'objects of wrath', 'gratifying the cravings' of his sinful nature, but a Christian Jew, who had become an apostle to Gentiles and whose aim was to be all things to all men, would surely not have hesitated to identify himself in this way with his Gentile readers. It would have been bordering on the pedantic if he had not been prepared to do so. Moreover, since in the same chapter (verse 11) Paul addresses himself to 'you ... Gentiles' (ὁμῆις τὰ ἔθνη) it is clear that in verse 3 he is speaking universally and it is doubtful whether he would regard the statement about 'cravings', 'desires' and 'objects of wrath' as inapplicable to Jews, however strongly the Jews themselves may have repudiated the idea. For Paul both Jew and Gentile were in a condition of desperate need of God's mercy (verse 4).

(iv) *Doctrinal arguments.* The special plea for cumulative consideration of this evidence rather than analytical approach amounts to an admission of its weakness. The fact is that the advocate of non-Pauline authorship is bound to search in all quarters for every scrap of evidence which might lend support to his theory, and when he becomes conscious of the insubstantial character of the evidences he has gathered he finds it necessary to plead that these must not be treated as isolated scraps but as fragments of a united whole. Such an approach will seem more impressive to those already disposed to dispute Pauline authorship than those convinced on other grounds of its authenticity. Mitton, in conceding that the separate units may be satisfactorily answered but that the cumulative effect is considerable in supporting non-Pauline authorship, is virtually pleading that the weakness of his evidence should be ignored but his conclusions accepted. A chain is as strong as its weakest link and it is impossible to assess the strength of the chain as a whole until its separate links have been tested, always provided they are regarded separately as links in a whole. The main objections will be considered from this point of view.

The treatment of the doctrine of the church is more developed than in Paul's other writings, but Goodspeed's contention that the writer of Ephesians is more 'of an

ecclesiastic than Paul' must be strongly contested. An ecclesiastic would have laboured his comments on the Christian ministry far more than this writer has done. There is a wide gap between Ephesians and Clement's letter to the Corinthians on this subject, yet according to Goodspeed's theory both belong to the same period of church development. When compared with Clement's views of the ministry, Ephesians is essentially Pauline. The problem is the writer's attitude towards the apostles and prophets, but the difficulty may be due to faulty exegesis rather than to the intrinsic meaning of the text. Ephesians 2:20 could mean that the foundation of the church is the same as the foundation of the apostles, i.e. Christ, and there would then be no disagreement with 1 Corinthians 3:11. The alternative and most generally accepted interpretation, that the apostles were themselves the foundation, may present a different point of view from 1 Corinthians 3:11, but it would not be out of harmony with the authority which Paul so frequently claims for apostles, himself included. He clearly considered his own position and that of the other apostles as different in status from the communities in general, and he expected their authority to be unquestionably recognized. That Paul considered himself among the authorized bearers of the Christian revelation is evident from such passages as Galatians 1:8, 11; 1 Corinthians 4:17.

Greater difficulty is generally found in the description of the apostles and prophets as 'holy' (ἅγιοι) in Ephesians 3:5, as if this indicates a time when greater reverence was accorded to them than would have been likely in the apostolic age. But, as T. K. Abbott pointed out the objectors are really boggling over a modern connotation of the word 'holy' and not over its essential New Testament use to denote those set apart for a special sacred purpose. If Paul could use the word as a synonym for believers it can hardly be considered incongruous when applied to the apostles. In Colossians 1:26 it is the 'holy ones' (οἱ ἅγιοι) who are the recipients of the mystery once hidden but now revealed, whereas in Ephesians 3:5 the recipients are more closely defined as apostles and prophets, but since the same descriptive term is used it cannot be considered more inappropriate in the one case than in the other. Opponents of Pauline authorship may be justified in claiming that the description 'holy' seems stranger on the lips of Paul than on the lips of one of his admirers, but there are difficulties in the latter view because of the conjunction of apostles with prophets, a combination which fits better the primitive Christian period than that at the close of the century.

There is no conclusive support for the view that ecclesiology rather than Christology dominates this epistle. Pauline theology cannot be summed up by too narrow a definition. It would be as great a mistake to limit Paul's thought to the doctrine of justification, and on the strength of this to deny authenticity to any epistle (such as this) which does not expound it in the same way as it is dealt with in Romans or Galatians.

The Christology of Ephesians may similarly be shown to be in harmony with Pauline doctrine, although certain differences in expression may be found. Mere differences in doctrine cannot be regarded as evidence of dissimilarity of authorship unless real want of harmony is proved. In his other letters Paul was not consistent in attributing certain acts to God and others to Christ (*cf.* 1Cor. 8:6), and to expect such consistency in Ephesians would be unreasonable. The distinction assumed in the objection is too subtle to carry weight. The problem raised over the descent of Christ into Hades is no more substantial, in spite of the absence of any specific teaching to this effect in Paul's other letters. Goodspeed's argument that this doctrine is virtually excluded by Romans 10:6–7 cannot

seriously be maintained, for in this passage Paul is asserting the inability of human effort to bring Christ up from the abyss, but the statement says nothing about the reality or otherwise of Christ's descent, and is certainly not inconsistent with Ephesians 4:9. The objection based on the absence of the characteristic Pauline use of the formula 'In Christ' cannot be sustained, for many of the occurrences in Ephesians can be paralleled in other Pauline epistles. For instance, Eph. 2:13 seems a clear case of a deep Pauline meaning.

Of greater significance is the objection based on the writer's approach to the work of Christ. But it would be inaccurate to maintain that the presentation of the work of Christ differed in any essential manner from Paul's teaching elsewhere. He relates it here more specifically to the unification of Jew and Gentile, but there is nothing in Paul's other letters to suggest that he would not have agreed with this. Nor can it be said that in Ephesians this unification is presented as the primary aim of the work of Christ. If this feature is reckoned to be a difficulty for Pauline authorship it would be a far greater one for a Paulinist. Indeed, it would be quite inexplicable for such a man who was setting out to give a summary of Paul's teaching to include as a sample of that teaching on redemption one of the subsidiary results of the death of Christ. It may not be a prominent emphasis in Paul to relate the purpose of the cross to the universal appeal of the gospel, but it would have been inexcusable in a Paulinist to omit the great themes so apparent elsewhere in Paul's letters.

Little importance can be attached to the social teaching of the epistle as compared with Paul's other letters, for no more than a quite natural variation of emphasis due to the writer's different reaction to changed circumstances is discernible. Paul's use of the marriage metaphor for illuminating the relationship between Christ and his church is not excluded by his own personal approach to matrimony. Even a confirmed bachelor need not be entirely insensible to the appropriateness of such a figure of speech. It is also difficult to take very seriously Goodspeed's idea that Colossians differs from Ephesians in its approach to the behaviour of children. It is unconvincing to maintain that Paul would not have urged fathers to bring up children 'in the training and instruction of the Lord', and scarcely less so to claim that this represents 'a long-term policy of religious education'. When Paul was dwelling upon the theme of Christian responsibilities in the home, it was not unnatural for him to exhort fathers to take care over the training of their children.

At the same time, some recognition must be given to the fact that in Ephesians the dealings of God have a more social context than in some of Paul's other epistles. While there may be less emphasis on the individual aspects of salvation and more on the social aspects in this epistle, there is no essential contradiction between them, and this issue cannot contribute to a resolution of the problem of authorship.

There are so many weak links in the doctrinal attack on the Pauline authorship of Ephesians that no amount of cumulative consideration can redeem it. The only possible conclusion to which a detailed examination can lead us is that there is nothing incompatible with the doctrinal teaching of the apostle.

#### *d. Conclusion to the discussion of Pauline authorship*

When all the objections are carefully considered it will be seen that the weight of evidence is inadequate to overthrow the overwhelming external attestation to Pauline authorship, and the epistle's own claims. The fact that the writer plainly calls himself Paul has not been greatly stressed in the preceding discussion in order not to prejudice

judgment. But in spite of the fact that pseudonymity is regarded by many modern scholars to have been an established practice among the early Christians, the advocates of the traditional view are entitled to emphasize the self-testimony of the epistle as support for their position until some satisfactory explanation is found which accounts for the universal acceptance of the epistle at its face value. To maintain that the Paulinist out of his sheer love for Paul and through his own self-effacement composed the letter, attributed it to Paul and found an astonishing and immediate readiness on the part of the church to recognize it as such is considerably less credible than the simple alternative of regarding it as Paul's own work..

Another view which has been proposed is that Paul commissioned an amanuensis to produce Ephesians on the basis of Colossians. But this is no more convincing for the following reasons: (a) he would hardly have had access to all the Pauline epistles with which Ephesians has contacts; (b) his work would not have reflected the same kind of literary relationship with Colossians—it would surely have been closer in phraseology; (c) he would hardly have enlarged upon the ethical sections as the author of Ephesians has done; (d) this hypothesis does not explain the author's references to himself in the epistle; (e) it is difficult to find an adequate motive for the apostle to adopt so unusual a procedure..