Reconsidering the Letter to the Ephesians in Ancient Context

Edited by
ANNETTE WEISSENRIEDER
and MARK GRUNDEKEN

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Acknowledgments

The Letter to the Ephesians has recently received some attention from classicists, philosophers, and theologians specializing in early Judaism and Greco-Roman context alike. This collection of essays *Reconsidering the Letter to the Ephesians in Ancient Context* will explore the Letter to the Ephesians in terms of Greek philosophy and science, epistolography, and ancient Judaism(s). The collection will fill a unique niche in biblical studies by addressing the following questions: What are the relevant conceptualities and terminologies marking political, juridical, cultural, cultic, or religious distinctions? What then is its relationship to Judaism(s)? In what way is Ephesians dependent on the Pauline Letters and on Colossians?

This volume goes back to an international and interdisciplinary workshop which was held at the Martin Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg. The workshop brought together in lively conversation biblical scholars, experts on Judaism, classicists, philosophers, and historians. The international group of scholars as well as doctoral students investigated the diverse qualities of contexts for Ephesians in antiquity as well as corpuses of knowledge which have been effective in shaping the text of Ephesians. The primary focus was on epistolography, philosophy, and Greco-Roman literature. Social relationships, investigated on the basis of archaeological finds and textual sources, and urban contexts and their significance for the transfer of knowledge formed the substance of discussions within the workshop and the accompanying doctoral seminar. We have been also interested in instances where intertextual "parallels" have been renounced, for example, with regard to ecclesiology or pneumatology.

Many thanks go to Professor Emeritus Karl-Wilhem Niebuhr (University of Jena), Professor Emerita Elna Mouton (University of Stellenbosch), Professor Emeritus Udo Schnelle (Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg), and to our students and doctoral students at Martin Luther University who provided thought-provoking questions and suggestions in conversation on the topic of Ephesians in Contexts with regard to First and New Testament and Greco-Roman contexts, at the conference and afterwards.

The greater part of this volume consists of a selection of papers delivered at the conference. These papers appear here in revised form. In addition, Annette Weissenrieder has invited a number of other experts in the field of Ephesians to explore further issues that arose in the context of the conference.

Several people contributed to the development of this work, and we want to thank them here.

Annette Weissenrieder is especially thankful for the practical help and financial support of the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg which made the conference possible. A special word of thanks goes to André L. Visinoni and Professor Elna Mouton, and to the students of the Ephesians Seminar for invaluable administrative assistance in organizing and running the conference at MLU.

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We sincerely thank the editor of this series, Professor Jörg Frey, for his continued encouragement and inclusion in the series, as well as for the helpful suggestions we received while finalizing the book. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Tobias Stäbler and Markus Kirchner of the publishing house Mohr Siebeck for supervising the publication of the volume with great reliability and kindness.

January 2024

Annette Weissenrieder, Halle (Saale)
Mark Grundeken, Freiburg

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Reconsidering the Letter to the Ephesians in Ancient Context: An Introduction to the Recent Trends in Research

Annette Weissenrieder and Mark Grundeken

This introduction will explore the Letter to the Ephesians against the background of epistolography, urbanity, cosmopolitism and spatiality in Ephesus, Greek philosophy and medicine, ancient Judaism(s) and theologies. The questions discussed in this introduction include: does the address reflect a circular letter? In what way is Ephesians dependent on the Septuagint, the Pauline Letters, and Colossians? What concepts and technical terms mark the letter's philosophical, cultural, cultic, spatial, and religious contexts? What is Ephesians' understanding of Christian existence (Christology, pneumatology, anthropology, ecclesiology)? What is its relationship to Judaism(s)?

1. The Address ἐν Ἐφέσῳ

Of the 615 manuscripts that transmit the Epistle to the Ephesians, the address[1] ἐν Ἐφέσῳ is missing in the *adscriptio* (v. 1b) of five manuscripts (𝔓[46]; the original hand of Codex Sinaiticus ℵ*, the original version of Vaticanus B*, in the 7th century and 6th/7th century respectively, is supplemented by a different hand in a gloss;[2] the same is the case in the 13th century minuscule manuscript 6,[3] and 10th century manuscript 1739[4]).[5] Nevertheless, the heading ΠΡΟΣ

[1] Numerous older commentaries also list D (06) as having this reading; this, however, is based on an error on Tischendorf's part, as Trobisch has convincingly shown (Trobisch, *Paulusbriefsammlung,* 80 n. 61).

[2] Aland and Aland, *Der Text des Neuen Testaments*, 109, 117–118, 141. For the dating of the corrections in the manuscripts, see NA[28], *Einführung*, 15*.

[3] Minuscule 6 is the only witness listed as belonging to category III ("frequently cited witnesses"). All other manuscripts are assigned to category I.

[4] Parker, *Introduction,* 262; cf. Aland and Aland, *Der Text des Neuen Testaments*, 145, who assign minuscule 1739 to category I with respect to the Epistle to the Ephesians; this manuscript can be considered one of the main witnesses, along with 𝔓[46] 𝔓[49] 𝔓[92] 𝔓[99] ℵ A B C D F G I Ψ 048 082 0278 0285 33 and 1881.

[5] Some commentaries also mention 424[c] (thus NA[25]). The manuscript, however, contains no gloss (see: http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/, accessed June 2024). Cf. Flemming, *Textgeschichte*.

ΕΦΕΣΙΟΥΣ is also found in these manuscripts, though it does not belong to the autograph. In 𝔓[46] and the minuscules 6 and 1739, the heading is above the text (*inscriptio*), whereas in ℵ* and B* ΠΡΟΣ ΕΦΕΣΙΟΥΣ is placed at the end of the letter (*subscriptio*), as is customary in these manuscripts.[6] In ℵ* and B* the column title ΠΡΟΣ ΕΦΕΣΙΟΥΣ, appearing on each page, was added later; this may be inferred from the fact that the *inscriptio* and column title are almost faded, while the text is still clearly legible,[7] showing that the additions were made in less durable ink. On text-critical grounds, the addition of an addressee in v. 1b is easier to justify than its omission, especially since one can assume that the *subscriptio* or *inscriptio* provided a separate reference to the Ephesians.

This observation is also made by the church fathers. Thus, Irenaeus writes in *Adversus haereses* 5.2.3[8]: "This is also what the blessed apostle says in a letter to the Ephesians: members of his body we are, of his flesh and of his bones (Eph 5:30)."[9] Although Irenaeus refers to *a* letter to the Ephesians, it remains unclear whether he does this only on the basis of the *subscriptio* and the column title or also because of the *adscriptio* ἐν Ἐφέσῳ. In addition, ἐν Ἐφέσῳ is also found in Clement of Alexandria (*Strom*. 4.8.64) and Ignatius of Antioch (*Eph.* 12.2), who draw a connection between the household codes – and especially the subordination of women to their husbands – and the "Ephesians."[10] Even though Ignatius addresses Ephesians, the letter is mentioned rather in passing; one would expect that ἐν πάσῃ ἐπιστολῇ would specifically apply to the addressees in Ephesus, but this is not the case. Marcion was aware of the letter to the Laodiceans, but he does not mention the letter to the Ephesians.[11] Tertullian argues that Marcion changed the title of Ephesians to *Ad Laodicenos*, which would have been possible only if the letter lacked both a title and an address. This assessment is corroborated by Epiphanius, who notes that Marcion lists the Epistle to the Ephesians in his collection of Pauline Epistles as the Epistle to

[6] According to Trobisch, *Paulusbriefe*, 41–42, it is easier to explain the possibility that scribes "may have taken the address from the title and inserted it into the text at the appropriate place. This can still be seen today in Codex Vaticanus (B 03) and Codex Sinaiticus (ℵ 01): there the address was inserted into the text. In contrast, it is difficult to give a reasonable reason why a scribe should have deleted the address from the text but left the heading unchanged. From this consideration it seems clear that the oldest text form of the Epistle to the Ephesians offered no recipient's name in the text."

[7] Jongkind, *Codex Sinaiticus*, 51–55.

[8] Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer*. 5.8.1; 5.14.3 and 5.24.4.

[9] Brox, *Irenäus*, 35.

[10] Ignatius, *Eph.* 12.2.

[11] Tertullian, *Adv. Marc*. 5.17.1: *Ecclesiae quidem veritate epistolam istam ad Ephesios habemus emissam, non ad Laodicenos; sed Marcion ei titulum aliquando interpolare gestit, quasi et in isto diligentissimus explorator. Nihil autem de titulis interest, cum ad omnes apostolus scripserit, dum ad quosdam.* Cf. Harnack, *Marcion*; Schmid, *Marcion*, esp. 250–259. See in this context also Tertullian, *Adv. Marc*. 5.11.12, who admittedly refers to 2 Corinthians: *Praetereo hic et de alia epistola quam nos ad Ephesios praescriptam habemus, haeretici vero ad Laodicenos.*

the Laodiceans.[12] The variety of transmitted readings, along with the statements of early church fathers, suggest that the address ἐν Ἐφέσῳ in 1:1b should only be posited beginning in the middle or end of the 1st century CE.

This assessment raises new questions concerning the grammatical features of the text: if one assumes that the locative ἐν Ἐφέσῳ was missing in v. 1, then "one would have to assume that the author of Eph had already made a rather massive mistake in the first sentence of his otherwise carefully formulated text,"[13] since the "substantive participle" of εἶναι requires a "further determination" in addition to the "predicate noun."[14] This grammatical difficulty has led to numerous speculations, such as that the lack of a letter to the Ephesians was perceived as a gap early on, which was subsequently filled by an author belonging to the Pauline school;[15] others assume that different place names could be inserted into a gap intentionally left after τοῖς οὖσιν, so that the letter had a "catholic character" but could be addressed to a congregation at the same time. It has been argued that the letter was addressed to two addressees, Hierapolis and Laodicea, an interpretation supported by the double address τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῖς οὖσιν καὶ πιστοῖς linked with καί.[16] However, a city named Hierapolis is nowhere attested, so that the thesis is hardly convincing. Early on, Adolf von Harnack argued that the original address was ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ ("in Laodicea"), as attested in Col 4:16, a reference which was then taken up in a certain way by Marcion. However, the church had fallen into disrepute at the end of the 1st century (cf. Rev 3:14–22), so that the name of the addressee was erased and replaced by the "Ephesians." But even this hypothesis is not quite plausible, for this supposed change of addressee has left no trace in any of the manuscripts. Given the depraved syntax, scholars often suggest a "General Letter Hypothesis" in harmonizing Eph 1:1b with the syntax of Pauline letter addresses.[17] In recent times, this thesis has been advocated especially by those who consider Ephesians to depend on Colossians: accordingly, the address is said to be "modelled"[18] on that of Colossians, and the difficulty only arises in light of the *adscriptio* of Philippians, Romans, and 1–2 Corinthians. But here too (as in numerous other passages that are claimed as parallels for Ephesians), numerous changes may be seen in the text of Ephesians:[19] one is the addition of τοῖς οὖσιν to Col 1:2; another is the fact that ἀδελφοῖς is understood as a noun and connected with τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῖς

[12] Epiphanius, *Pan*. 42.11.8; 42.12.3; 42.13.4. Cf. also Schmid, *Marcion*, 156. For these passages, see Williams, *Panarion*.

[13] Lindemann, "Bemerkungen zu den Adressaten," 235.

[14] Sellin, *Epheser*, 68, with reference to BDR § 413.4.

[15] Lindemann, "Bemerkungen zu den Adressaten," 238–239.

[16] Van Roon, *Authenticity*, 72–85; Dahl, *Ephesians*, 464; see also on "Frühkatholizismus" Smith, *Drudgery Divine*.

[17] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 3–4; Sellin, *Epheser*, 66–70, and more often.

[18] Sellin, *Epheser*, 68.

[19] See e. g. Van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 195–203.

οὖσιν; at the same time the adjective πιστοῖς (faithful, reliable) is used as a noun: "those who believe in Christ Jesus." Accordingly, one need not posit a proximity to Col 1:1b, of whatever variety, in order to understand Eph 1:1b.[20]

When exegetes more recently examine the epistolary form, they often indicate that Ephesians was initiated as a circular letter. The epistolography of circular letters in classical antiquity remains an underexplored topic which is of relevance to the historical interpretation of Ephesians.[21]

J. Albert Harrill elaborates the discussion of the addressees in this volume by arguing that Ephesians is a circular letter distributed in multiple copies.[22] He claims that both the fill-in-the blank Circular Letter Hypothesis and the General Letter Hypothesis that claims to be its improvement are red herrings in research on Ephesians. The focus on a blank formulaic address as *the* defining feature of circular letters has diverted attention away from the actual forms (and functions) of genuine circular letters in the extant source material. To break through this impasse, his essay seeks new evidence and tests out new ways to conceptualize the form and function of ancient epistolary texts. Harrill's methodology focuses more on the social history involved in the diffusion of a common literary culture among discrete reading communities than on the search for textual source-and-derivation. He argues that Ephesians is an instance of, not just a 'parallel' to, official correspondence in royal Hellenistic circulars (ἐντολή). The closest parallel to Ephesians identified by Harrill is the royal circular found in the Old Greek version of Dan 4:39, which begins with a true catchall phrase, "to all the nations in their individual places (πᾶσι τοῖς κατὰ τόπον ἔθνεσι), and to countries and people of all languages which live in all the countries (καὶ χώραις καὶ γλώσσαις πάσαις ταῖς οἰκούσαις) in generation after generation." Harrill's thesis proposes a fundamental reinterpretation of Ephesians, placing the text's epistolary frame at the forefront of our encounter with the letter.

2. Pseudepigraphy and Epistolography

The Letter to the Ephesians is presented as a letter sent from prison by the apostle Paul (Eph 1:1; 3:1; 4:1). Numerous ambiguities regarding the date make it difficult to determine the place of the letter in the chronological sequence. Various arguments are presented in favor of an early date: (1) Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians during his imprisonment in Ephesus, of which Philemon

[20] For parallels in Jewish letters see the examples in Harrill, "Ephesians as a Circular Letter," ch. 2 in the presented volume.

[21] Cf. Roller, *Formular*.

[22] Cf. Albert Harrill's article in the present volume (ch. 2), arguing that "in Ephesus" in Eph 1:1 is a later addition.

22 subsequently informs us.[23] Chronologically, this would have occurred roughly in the mid-50s. (2) The letter could go back to Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, which one usually connects with Acts 28:14–31. This would be in the year 60 CE.[24] (3) Alternatively, the letter could originate in the second imprisonment, which would have occurred after the one mentioned in Acts, when Paul traveled west and ultimately arrived back in Rome (cf. 1 Clem. 5.7). In this case, the relevant period is 64–68. Two different dates are roughly mentioned as candidates for a later dating, namely the period between 70 and 90 CE[25] or alternatively the 2nd century.[26]

There is no scholarly consensus on the authenticity of the letter,[27] yet several features suggest that the text is pseudonymous as it is shown by Thomas J. Bauer and Margaret MacDonald in this volume. The main arguments against Pauline authorship of Ephesians relate to its language, style, and content.

First, there is the use of *hapax legomena* typical of second-century early Christian writings.[28] It has recently been argued that, on the one hand, none of the disputed Pauline Letters uses significantly more *hapaxes* than the genuine Pauline Letters and that, on the other, only 1 Timothy shares a significantly high number of *hapaxes* with second century sources.[29] The statistical method (linear regression analysis) applied is, however, problematic. Besides, even if the number of *hapaxes* is indeed statistically insignificant, the possibility remains that the use of several of these terms may be best explained as stemming from discourses of the late first or early second century. Accordingly, the use of vocabulary typical of late first to early second century suggests that Ephesians is to be dated after Paul's time.[30]

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[23] White, "Imprisonment"; Wright, *Paul*, 266.

[24] Lampe, *Paul,* 47.

[25] Cf. Canavan, "Armor, Peace, and Gladiators," 246.

[26] Cf. the important works Barth, *Ephesians*, 50–51; Van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 2; Maier, *Picturing Paul*, 3.

[27] For an overview of scholarly positions on the authorship of Ephesians put forth between 1519 and 2001, see Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 2–61; Hoehner himself considers the letter authentic. Grindheim, "Deutero-Pauline Mystery," argues that the ecclesiology (including the use of terms like ἐκκλησία, κεφαλή, and μυστήριον) and the view on the apostles in Ephesians (and Colossians) reflect a later stage of development of the genuine Pauline Letters but cannot serve as evidence that the author must have been someone other than Paul. According to Grindheim, these innovations are combined with typical Pauline motifs in order to reapply them in a new context for the purpose of identity formation of the church. More recently, Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 3–25, has argued for Pauline authorship of the letter.

[28] One of these *hapax legomena* is ἑνότης. In Christian literature, the earliest instances of this word are found in Eph 4:3, 13 and in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch dating from the second century CE. For recent discussion on the dating of Ignatius' Letters, see esp. Prostmeier, "Ignatios von Rom."

[29] Van Nes, "*Hapax Legomena*"; idem, "Pastoral Epistles."

[30] There is no reliable historic information about Paul after the year 60.

Second, the style of writing differs from the genuine Pauline Letters.[31] Generally speaking, there is an excess of genitive constructions.[32] Moreover, while the Epistle overall conforms to the form of the Pauline Letters, it deviates from it in important respects. The genuine Pauline Letters are occasional in character: a concrete case or a pressing question prompted their writing (which does not exclude the possibility that Paul took the opportunity to convey his views on fundamental issues). Ephesians, by contrast, reveals no concrete occasion for its composition. Moreover, the sender does not seem to know his addressees (Eph 1:15; 3:2). This is puzzling, because the *adscriptio* (if original) identifies the addressees as Christ-believers "in *Ephesus*," a city where Paul worked as a missionary for several years (if the information in Acts 19:10; 20:31 is indeed reliable). Finally, Ephesians is a literary construct, a conflation of material found in various (deutero-)Pauline Letters (including Colossians). This suggests that the letter was not written by Paul himself but by a later author familiar with Pauline Letters. Since there must have been an interval between the time of composition and dissemination of the source texts and the time of compilation of Ephesians, this in turn suggests a dating of Ephesians in the later decades of the first century (around 80–90 CE).

Finally, there are major theological differences between Ephesians and the genuine Pauline Letters. A good example is Eph 2:5–6, where the author reveals his belief in realized eschatology by stating that God *has* "made alive" (συνεζωοποίησεν), "saved" (cf. ἐστε σεσῳσμένοι), "raised" (συνήγειρεν) the Christ-believers, and also "sat (them) together" (συνεκάθισεν) with Christ.[33] Paul never says this because, for him, it is the resurrection of the dead that is eschatological. Accordingly, he states, for instance, that "we (i. e., baptized believers) *will* live with him (i. e., with Christ)" (συζήσομεν, Rom 6:8) or that "all *will* be made alive" (πάντες ζῳοποιηθήσονται, 1 Cor 15:22) and not, as is the case in Ephesians, that God "*has made* us (i. e., Christ-believers) alive with Christ." Paul's perspective is linear: at present, baptized believers are dead and buried with Christ, but one day, they will share in his resurrection and be raised from the dead (Rom 6:3–8). By contrast, the perspective of Ephesians is spatial: baptized believers are part of the ἐκκλησία, which is presented as a heavenly as well as an earthly entity (cf. esp. Eph 1:3; 2:6 with, e. g., 4:1–6). The abovementioned differences in language, style, and content cannot be plausibly explained in terms of variation within a single author's corpus, by reference to Paul's use of scribes or secretaries, the contextual nature of letters, or other factors. The terminological, stylistic, and content differences comprise a strong argument

[31] See already Erasmus, *Annotationes*, 413: *Certe stilus tantum dissonat a caeteris Pauli epistolis, ut alterius uideri possit* ("Certainly, the style is so different from Paul's other letters, that it may appear to be by someone else").

[32] Sellin, "Genitive."

[33] Similar but not identical: Col 2:12–13; 3:1–2.

against the authenticity of Ephesians. Ephesians is most likely a product of early Christian pseudepigraphy,[34] a widespread ancient phenomenon.[35] By ascribing his text to Paul, the author of Ephesians places his ideas under the authority of the apostle.[36]

3. The Letter to the Ephesians in Context: Ephesus, the Metropolis of Asia

For some years now, the discussion of the cults at Ephesus has been high on the agenda. Scholars who consider an early dating possible often locate the recipients in Ephesus or Laodicea.[37] The underlying context is certainly the emphasis on the power of God or Christ in Eph 1:15–23, 3:14–21, and 6:10–20, which one has attempted to elucidate through local cults, but especially the cult of Artemis, and their magical practices. Scholars have also often posited a religious uncertainty concerning the proper Christian stance on cults or demonic powers.[38]

Most publications refer, directly or indirectly, to the 1995 volume *Ephesos: Metropolis of Asia* edited by Helmut Koester. A revised edition of this publication is available in the form of *Religion in Ephesos Reconsidered*,[39] a volume which focuses on the setting in which early Christianity operated and aims at providing new archaeological insights. In her contribution to the latter volume, Christine Thomas employs coring and geographical surveys to shed light on the Roman development around the harbor and the *emporion*, where she suspects the "invisible Christians" are to be located.[40] A third edited volume, *Ephesos as a Religious Center under the Principate*,[41] published in honor of Richard E. Oster and including a similar set of contributors, takes a more direct look at the Letter to the Ephesians: for example, Paul Trebilco, following a new thesis by John Muddiman, discusses Ephesians as a document addressed to Pauline and Johannine Christians in Ephesus. He is particularly interested in Johannine language and images, including realized eschatology, unity, and the church, which – so his argument – influenced the Epistle to the Ephesians, either through direct

[34] For examples of early Christian pseudepigrapha, see Thomas Bauer's article in the present volume (ch. 3).

[35] Ibid.

[36] Dahl, "Einleitungsfragen," 48–60, denies the literary authenticity of Ephesians but not its diplomatic authenticity; in other word, the letter was composed not by Paul himself but one of his (Jewish Christian) companions (perhaps Jesus Justus or one of the other men mentioned in Col 4:10–11), either during Paul's lifetime (around 60 CE) or after his death (around 80 CE).

[37] Cf. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 80–89; for Laodicea see Van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*.

[38] Schnelle, *Theologie*, 544.

[39] Schowalter, *Religion*, with further references.

[40] Thomas, "Invisible 'Christians.'"

[41] Black, *Ephesos*.

knowledge of John's Gospel and Letters or through oral tradition.[42] In a fourth edited volume, *Ephesos: Die antike Metropole im Spannungsfeld von Religion und Bildung*,[43] Tobias Georges successfully went beyond the universally discussed cults, such as the cult of Artemis,[44] to treat the Second Sophistic in Ephesus (Flavius Damianos),[45] medical contexts,[46] and the religious identity of the Ephesian Jews.[47]

The references to religio-political cults in Ephesus and in the Letter to the Ephesians may be highlighted in terms of three prominent aspects:

The first aspect, which is at the same time connected with the question of political theology, concerns scholarship on the *imperial cults*, which is broadly discussed in the volumes and elsewhere. Nevertheless, no consensus exists in the exegetical research concerning the question of whether Ephesians contains a theological reference to the imperial cult. While cautioning against overstating the imperial cult and attributing ubiquity to it, Simon Price writes that

> (i)mperial temples and sanctuaries were extremely common. More than eighty happen to be attested in over sixty cities in Asia Minor, though it is not possible to give a precise figure even for the surviving evidence because of the problems of identification. The emperor also received statues in special rooms off the main square of half a dozen cities and buildings or other honours in various sanctuaries of the traditional gods.[48]

A particular development can be traced in Ephesus: already under Augustus, a double temple was built, adhering to the Greek style and at the same time attempting a reinstatement of the cult for the "Italian" Ephesians; in 27 BCE a statue of Augustus was erected in the double sanctuary; a few years later, an Augustea was erected in the Artemision. It was only under Domitian that a *Neokoros* was inaugurated in Ephesus, a fact also attested by Acts 19:35 (see also *IvE* 647.5–7). Justin Winzenburg writes that "(t)hese imperial cults in Asia Minor projected cosmogonical (origins of the world), cosmological (ordering of time and space), and eschatological (arrival of the pinnacle of history) claims that supported wider Roman imperial ideology."[49] It has been emphasized that imperial cults were an "inescapable reality for some Christians in Asia Minor,"[50] a statement which holds true especially in Ephesus. Should we conclude that Christians became more threatened due to this development? Recent research has increasingly emphasized that material and ideological disruptions in imperial cults in Asia

[42] Trebilco, "Reading Ephesians."
[43] Georges, *Ephesos*.
[44] Kerschner, "Das Artemision von Ephesos," with further references.
[45] Holder, "Die Zweite Sophistik."
[46] Nutton, "Rufus von Ephesos."
[47] Abate, "Spuren der religiösen Identität."
[48] Price, *Rituals,* 135.
[49] Winzenburg, *Ephesians and Empire,* 121.
[50] Ibid., 126.

Minor often did not so much call imperial ideology into question as undermine a network of local cults and responsibilities. Of course, the question of whether the acceptance of the imperial cult had to be publicly displayed – for instance, by pressure to participate in the cults – is controversial, as at any rate Pliny attests in the case of Trajan.[51]

In the present volume, Harry O. Maier in his article "Ephesians, Spatiality, Urbanity, and Place Entrepreneurship" studies Ephesians under the aspect of urbanity and spatiality. His approach goes beyond traditional methods of historical criticism. Maier shifts the focus from the historico-critical quest for the "reason" of Ephesians to the author's creation of a newly imagined (religious) space by using civic language and metaphor. He explores Ephesians from the perspective of social geography, and especially from its concept of "spatiality," which points at the dynamic relation or interaction between space and social relations. Maier regards Ephesians as an urban text, written in the socio-cultural context of *insulae* in a first-century metropolis in Asia Minor. For the majority of the inhabitants, such urban contexts were anything but ideal living spaces. At the same time, cityscapes were used to promote urban ideals like civic concord (ὁμόνοια or *concordia*). By means of spatial imagination, people can create imagined spaces and imagine themselves as living in these places. Maier applies the concept of "thirdspace" to Ephesians.[52] In Maier's view, the author of Ephesians has no means to shape ("secondspace") the empirical world around him ("firstspace") but creates instead an alternative, imagined space ("thirdspace"), namely the city of God. Employing Soja's "trialectics of spatiality," Maier asks how empirical spaces (here: urban spaces) shape people's perceptions, concepts, and practices. He sees a reciprocal relation between urban space and religion: religion is affected by the perceptions, concepts, and practices of urban space, and urban space is likewise shaped by the perceptions, concepts, and practices of religion.

The second aspect to be considered concerns various exegetical approaches dealing with the *Artemis cult*: in his book *Ephesians and Artemis*,[53] Michael Immendörfer argues that "Ephesians is not a general, non-specific letter, but evinces a distinct, local character" and brings "the text of Ephesians into conversation with the 'texts' of ancient Ephesus and the cult of Artemis."[54] The fourth chapter of the book is dedicated to the "Artemis Ephesia" in particular, with Immendörfer analyzing the Artemision in relation to the cult status of the deity of a "missionary religion" by comparing cult inscriptions (which he calls "sacrificial

[51] For further instances of accusations and persecutions, see ibid., 124.

[52] Cf. Soja, *Thirdspace*.

[53] Immendörfer, *Ephesians and Artemis*.

[54] Ibid., 24. Immendörfer notably does claim that Paul wrote the letter, though this claim is not important to his overall argument.

law") with *hapax legomena* in the Epistle to the Ephesians. He explains these numerous *hapax legomena* by reference to the specific readership in Ephesus, although the question of why this special audience is not also to be posited for the inscriptions remains open. Upon closer inspection of the numerous lexemes, one realizes that these are not so special (like ναός, ἅγιος, κύριος etc.)[55] and can be frequently encountered in other cults; accordingly the question of whether the Artemision is really suitable as a further intertext for the letter must remain open.[56] Rainer Schwindt, in his book *Das Weltbild des Epheserbriefes*, indirectly establishes a connection with archaeological studies by situating the letter within the framework of the city in order to understand the "zeitlich-räumlich erfaßbare Welt."[57] Schwindt identifies some similarities between the Letter to the Ephesians and the cult of Artemis. Thus, in Eph 6:12, reference is made to the powers (τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις), which can be explained in the context of worship of cosmocrators or planets (*IvE* 504), in which Artemis is interpreted as a superior blessing power. The "fiery darts of evil (τὰ βέλη τοῦ πονηροῦ [τὰ] πεπυρωμένα)" in Eph 6:16 may likewise be explained against the background of an Apollo oracle, though Eph 1:20 is merely suggestive in this respect.[58] Schwindt's arguments are impressive and are elaborated in several articles published in the volumes mentioned above.

The third aspect under consideration consists in Norbert Zimmermann's new insights into *domestic religion*,[59] which reveal facets of domestic religion which are not as standardized as the *lararia* in Pompeii. He points to painted and sculpted images, niches in which statuettes of deities, altars and *thymiateria* can be found, as well as to domestic shrines with various deities and the *agathos daimon*. Further studies of these insights are still a desideratum in the literature.

Thus, past research on Ephesus and Ephesians, though in many cases quite advanced, has nevertheless faced certain limitations. According to Troels Engberg-Pedersen's paper in this volume, the worldview of Ephesians can be sufficiently understood from Paul's letters. This means that the puzzling aspects of Ephesians are to be explained, first and foremost, by reference to the genuine Pauline Letters.

[55] See ibid., 333–393 (with further references).

[56] For late antique housing structures of Christian domestic cult, see Fugger, "Early Christian Domestic Cult."

[57] Schwindt, *Weltbild*, 511.

[58] Ibid., 127, 371–372, 377–392 (with further references).

[59] Zimmermann, "Archaeological Evidence."

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