

Acts in Ephesus (and Environs) c. 115

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The purpose of this essay is to examine, refine, tighten, revise, expand, and update my views about the date and provenance of the book of Acts. Otherwise stated, this is a commentary upon two pages written over a decade ago.¹ Provenance and date need not be linked. I suppose that I have been inclined to associate Acts with Ephesus for forty years, but, when I first mentioned it in 1989, Ephesus was equipped with a “perhaps.”² For three decades I dated Acts c. 100. When, in connection with the Acts Seminar, I began to investigate the date, it transpired that this should be advanced by more than a decade, at least. The most surprising discovery was that neither date nor provenance had received much attention. The work of the Acts Seminar has generated some good discussion and exposed the intellectual poverty of “refutations” that consist of claims that an argument has few adherents or that it is “unconvincing.”³

Provenance fares even worse. Three major commentaries published since the advent of the modern era—the epiphany of my commentary on Acts—serve as examples. Daniel Marguerat’s contribution to the CNT series will be about 1000 pages long. On the question of provenance he offers a paragraph of twelve lines, seven of which discuss the audience. The eastern part of the Mediterranean basin takes the prize. Five lines are consigned to the paragraph on date, placed c. 85, as “the canon of Pauline epistles was created between 95 and 100.”⁴ Darrell Bock’s 848-page commentary expends two of them on the date (25–27) and seven lines on location, governed by the memorable sentence: “We really do not know where Acts was written.”⁵ Craig Keener requires much of two pages, notes the Aegean focus, finds Ephesus plausible, but also identifies problems: “Luke devotes so much space to Ephesus because it constitutes the climax of Paul’s precaptivity ministry; the length of time Paul spent in Ephesus and the

1. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 204–5.

2. Pervo, *Luke’s Story of Paul*, 13.

3. The massive work in progress of Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*. Vol. 1: Introduction and 1:1–2:47, devotes eighteen pages (383–401) to date. Pages 396–400 take up my argument in *Dating Acts*. This is more of a rejection based upon limited support from other scholars than a refutation of the arguments, but Keener did not ignore them.

4. Marguerat, *Les Actes des Apôtres (1–12)*, 20.

5. Bock, *Acts*, 27.

achievements are sufficient cause for this attention."⁶ These persons are fine scholars. One can only explain the general tendency to give these questions minimal attention because they are deemed either unimportant or insoluble. Solution may be difficult, but only those who have spent a great deal of time and effort may claim that a problem is intractable. At present it may be said that the argument for dating Acts c. 115 has been opposed, but not refuted. This does not mean that it has been established.

For more than a few scholars, inattention to date and locale is justified by their presumed lack of importance. For purely literary studies this may be somewhat true; for historical studies these questions are nearly paramount.⁷ Believing that the questions are important, I address them in tandem, with the object of locating Acts within early Christian history. This is not to imply that the cases stand or fall together. They were formulated separately and remain separable.

With regard to date, the most secure *external* evidence is an explicit declaration by or within a datable author or text that such and such a document exists. In the case of Acts that evidence is provided by Irenaeus of Lyon, c. 180, who cites Acts as an authoritative book. The earliest recognized possible indirect allusion is found in Polycarp of Smyrna, c. 130–35. This attestation, which I accept, preferring to err on the side of caution, would indicate that Polycarp was familiar with at least part of Acts, but it says nothing about the status or authority of the book.⁸ In the decade since I worked on *Dating Acts*, the possibility that the Pastor (author of 1–2 Timothy, Titus) knew Acts has gained strength. This would drop indirect allusion down to c. 120–25, again with no hint about status. You don't have to admire that from which you steal, particularly when no acknowledgement of borrowing sullies the page.

For *internal* attestation the criterion is that a work cannot be earlier than the latest datum of its integral text. "Integral" excludes subsequent additions or interpolations, such as John 21. So, for example, if you read the statement, "I googled that term yesterday," you would ascertain that the text had not been written before 2002.⁹ Another internal criterion is the use of datable sources. Since ancient authors tended not to identify their sources, such as, "The *New York Times*, 14 November 1943," this can be difficult. Three important principles utilized are: 1) an explicit, methodologically sophisticated intertextual method, 2) economy, which privileges proposals that require fewer hypothetical sources,

6. Keener, *Acts*, 429–30.

7. Critics are by and large loath to abandon any interest in where and when works of literature were written.

8. The observation looks trite, but assumptions, such as "*Hermas* apparently cites Ephesians proving that it was written by Paul and part of the canon of Scripture ..." are not infrequent implicit accompaniments to discovery of an allusion.

9. This was verified by searching under "Google as a verb" via the Google search engine on 9 August 2013.

and 3) simplicity, where solutions that solve more problems than they create are preferable.

Although NT scholars are prepared to engage in creative reflection in pursuit of allusions to scripture in Paul,¹⁰ the rules for allusions to Paul are more rigid. The field has moved on from the analogy of engaging in source criticism with a gospel synopsis, however. The major reason for the hypothesis that Luke was not familiar with the letters of Paul is that he would have used them as would modern historians and got Paul's theology better. The data indicate Lucan familiarity with so many letters, including the Deuteropauline Ephesians, that one may reasonably postulate that he utilized a collection. Efforts to refer all of these possible allusions to hypothetical liturgical traditions or the common vocabulary of early Christianity run up against criterion (2), and can be tested with the help of the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae database, which often shows no other uses of this phrase or that expression. The third criterion, simplicity is potent here, for explaining how Luke did not know of Paul's letters or, if he did, why he did not refer to them, requires an argument of baroque convolutions.

The question of Flavius Josephus generates similar concerns. One must decide either that Luke had access to another Jewish historian who nonetheless shared the biases and views of Josephus or deem it highly probable that Luke had access to at least some of his writings. The question does not involve certain cribbed phrases but a range of shared incidents, views, interests, and techniques. Again, Luke does not use Josephus as we would. One of the difficulties of this hypothesis is that it removes from the board one author often utilized in comparisons with Luke, since, if Josephus served as one source and a model, he can no longer constitute a parallel.¹¹

My detailed study devoted about 150 pages to Luke's use of Paul and Josephus, proposing certainty in the former case and near certainty in the latter.¹² For the purpose of dating, these investigations established the earliest date at c. 100.¹³ The subsequent chapters attempted to show the affinities of Luke and Acts to the Apostolic Fathers, arguing that it belonged to roughly the second

10. E.g., Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*.

11. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*.

12. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 51–199. For an update, as it were, see Pervo, "Acts in the Suburbs of the Apologists," 29–46.

13. *Ant.* 20.267 indicates that the work was concluded in 93–94. Book 20 contains some material that Luke evidently used (Pervo, *Dating*, 197). It is therefore possible that Luke could have had access to the material in the Aegean region by 95. The probability that Luke utilized a collection of Pauline letters rather than individual texts is quite high. (Had he used individual copies, he would almost certainly have had to do so in Ephesus.) That collection was not formed before c. 100. Reasons for this include that it was not known in Rome at the time of *1 Clement* (c. 100). The editor of the collection shared some views with Ephesians, but had sufficient distance from it to include both Colossians and Ephesians. The latter sought to replace Colossians. The year 100 seems to be the earliest logical time for the editing of the collection.

decade of the century. These data were generally social in nature, and it is to them that I shall presently turn, after a look at provenance.

Previously it was noted that commentators rarely give the question of provenance an entire paragraph. One must now also consider the questions of narrator and viewpoint. Although Dante's *Inferno* is set in Hell and reveals a great deal of local knowledge, critics do not presume that it was written there. An extensive discussion is not called for in the present case. It is quite likely that the geographical perspective of the third-person narrator of Acts is that of the author, from the perspective of Ephesus and/or adjacent regions. In 1933 Henry Cadbury observed that "the upper regions" of Acts 19:1 was the "hinterland from perspective of Ephesus."¹⁴ At the close of an interesting comparison of the geographic perspectives of Philo and Luke, Peder Borgen states: "The horizon of Luke-Acts may be defined as the geographical perspective of the world as seen from the standpoint of pagans, Jews, and Christians in Ephesus."¹⁵ Vern Robbins concludes: "[T]he social location of thought appears to lie among a cosmopolitan population mixture somewhere between the western coast of Asia Minor and Syria."¹⁶ The catalogue of peoples in Acts 2:9-11 reflects the perspective of Hellenistic Antioch.¹⁷ Verses 10c-11, however, "... visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs ..." is redactional. Joseph Fitzmyer observes that "Cretans and Arabs" represents the West and the East.¹⁸ This is the perspective of Roman Asia. It would not be suitable for Antioch or for Corinth.

The Aegean region is without doubt the center of interest. The "we" narrator emerges in this region. In contrast to Cyprus and locations in southern and central Asia Minor, specifics appear for Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, and, above all, Ephesus. Quantitatively, seventy verses, some 7% of the text, take place in or are related to the Asian metropolis (18:19-19:40 [less 18:22-23, 28]; 20:16-38).¹⁹ This could be met by Keener's previously noted objection that Ephesus receives the attention it does because it was Paul's longest and most important missionary base. That does not account for the particular data. Granting that everyone knew about Ephesian Artemis and excluding what could be derived from the epistles, one observes the "Hall of Tyrannus" (19:9), a civic assembly that meets in a theater (19:29, not unique), the divine origin

14. Cadbury and Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, 4.236.

15. Borgen, *Philo, John and Paul*, 273-85, citing 282. Borgen says that Ephesus played a role for Luke similar to Alexandria for Philo. See also Löning, "Paulinismus in der Apostelgeschichte," 202-34, esp. 205-9.

16. Robbins, "The Social Location of the Implied Author of Luke-Acts," 305-32, citing 318.

17. Pervo, *Acts*, 66-68.

18. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 243.

19. Lambrecht, "Paul's Farewell-Address at Miletus, Acts 20, 17-38," 307-37, esp. 330: says "There can be no doubt that, in Luke's view, Ephesus dominates the whole third missionary journey of Paul."

of Artemis' image, the title "Neōcoros," the "Executive Secretary" (both 19:35), and an organization of silversmiths (19:25). By comparison with other sites, Acts displays intimate knowledge about Ephesus and, more importantly, the interest in utilizing it effectively in the construction of the plot.

It is from Ephesus that Acts looks toward the future, to post-Pauline conflicts. Ephesus is the navel of the Deuteropauline universe. For this reason it is otiose to argue for Ephesus as the physical location of the author. Ephesus is the center of the Pauline past, the focus of subsequent conflicts, and the hope of a Pauline future. Acts is engaged in the battle for Paul's heritage in Asia. To that subject I shall now turn.

Excursus: Ephesus²⁰

Ephesus was an old (c. 900) Ionian foundation in central southwestern Asia Minor on the Cayster river.²¹ The old Ionian city fell to Croesus c. 555.²² Within a decade Cyrus had taken Ephesus, which sat out the Ionian revolt against Persia (499–494). Subsequent to the Persian wars, Ephesus was part of the Delian League, an Athenian concoction, from which it defected c. 412 to join Sparta. The peace of 386 restored Persian hegemony.

Lysimachus controlled the region after Alexander and built a wall around Ephesus.²³ In 197 Antiochus III captured the region and made Ephesus a second capital. By 190 Eumenes had taken Ephesus, and it remained under the Attalids until its absorption (via inheritance) by Rome in 133, which made it the provincial capital. Ephesus thrived under Roman rule and attained a population of c. 200,000, probably the third largest city of the empire. Although commerce and industry remained important (although the harbor suffered from silting), Ephesian prosperity owed more to its governmental than to its commercial standing.

Information about the Jewish community at Ephesus is relatively scanty. Paul Trebilco reviews it in detail, teasing out whatever cautious generalizations can be made. Jews probably lived in Ephesus from the early third century onward. The last fifty years preceding the common era witnessed conflict with civic officials over various rights and privileges, in which the Jews were supported by Rome. (Josephus had no interest in minimizing either the numbers of Jews or their success in maintaining their way of life. His claims require acute scrutiny.) The number of synagogues is uncertain, and it is not clear whether there was a central Jewish organization (as in Alexandria) or not (as at Rome).

20. For bibliography, see Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 132–33; Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* and Pervo, *Acts*, 462 n. 2. Trebilco reviews the locality and its history, 11–52. He is comprehensive, cautious, and thorough. Günther, *Die Frühgeschichte des Christentums in Ephesus* is more critical and less comprehensive. Thiessen, *Christen in Ephesus* has valuable insights on the circumstances of the PE. For a survey of development of civic architecture during this period, see Scherrer, "The City of Ephesos," 2–25.

21. For the foundation, see Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 8.361 (Murphy-O'Connor, 47–48).

22. Herodotus 1.26 (Murphy-O'Connor, 67).

23. C. 287 (Strabo 14.1.21 [Murphy-O'Connor, 17]).

The cult of Artemis (originally a pre-Greek Cybele) was world famous, as was her shrine. Acts correctly portrays her economic and civic importance. Crossing Artemis was unwise. The imperial cult was also prominent.

Christian History in Ephesus

This section, the core of the essay, does not attempt a narrative account of the Jesus movement at Ephesus during its first eight decades. The goal is to illuminate the movement through examination of texts and leaders, with the object of exploring a place for Acts in the Deuteropauline milieu. Material prior to 100, the earliest possible date of Acts, is merely outlined.

1. 52–55. Paul's mission to Asia. One must ask whether Luke seeks to make Paul appear to be the founder of the movement in Ephesus or to protect him from responsibility for what happened.

2. Mission of Apollos (?), "Followers of John the Baptizer" (Acts 18:24–19:7). These difficult episodes may seek to show the presence of rival movements.²⁴

3. Colossians, c. 70–75. "Left-wing" Paulinism detaching itself from Judaism and engaging in speculative, cosmic theology.²⁵

4. Ephesians, c. 90–95. Conservative, comprehensive Paulinism that stresses the Israelite background.²⁶

5. Revelation, c. 100–110.²⁷ Although Revelation is quite non-, even anti-Pauline, links with the Pauline orbit are apparent. The milieu is that of Paul's Asian mission. Not only does the author use the Pauline form of letters to churches, he frames the entire work with Pauline formulae: 1:4–5 (Ἰωάννης ταῖς ἐπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ· χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη), and 22:21 (Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ μετὰ πάντων).²⁸ John, like Paul, does not ground authority in association with the historical Jesus or in his precepts but in revelation from the heavenly Christ. By the middle of the second century those who viewed the

24. See Pervo, *Acts*, 458–70.

25. For a survey of Colossians in its Deuteropauline context, see Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 64–71.

26. Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 71–77.

27. Since Irenaeus (*A.H.* 5.30.3) dates Revelation toward the end of the reign of Domitian, he is generally followed, given the propensity to date writings as close to apostolic times as possible, which would locate it during the reign of Nero. Because Domitian was viewed as a persecuting emperor, he was a natural choice for a work viewed as late. In short, Revelation may belong to the early second century, during the reign of Trajan. For a canvas of opinions, see Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 294.

28. The letters of Revelation 2–3 do not conform to ecclesiastical correspondence. One is tempted to speculate about the universal significance of the number seven. One edition of the Pauline corpus contained seven letters to seven churches. Of both John and Paul it was said that in writing to one, they wrote to all. On Paul see Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem* 5.17; this becomes a commonplace. The aphorism is applied to both in Muratori, ll. 47–48 (Paul), ll. 57–59 (John). See also Victorinus of Pettau, *Comm. In Apoc.* 1.7 (ad Rev 1:20), who makes the claim for both. One can speculate that one collection of seven inspired the other. Less speculative is the appearance of two collections of seven in the environs of Ephesus.

heavenly Christ as the sole basis of revelation were moving along paths that would be declared “heretical.”

Paul and John were not viewing the same heavenly revelation cable channel, as their theologies, orientation, politics, and ethics strongly differ. An example of the last is John’s abhorrence of consuming food associated with idolatry (Rev 2:14, 20). This term refers, in the most scrupulous sense, to anything purchased from a butcher, least scrupulously to participation in cultic meals. On this matter, if almost no other,²⁹ Acts agrees with Revelation, but this activity quickly became an identification badge between the faithful proto-orthodox and the lax proto-heretical (probably because consumption of sacrifices to the emperor was used as a test).³⁰

The letters to the churches indicate tensions over authority. That to Ephesus commends the community for testing alleged “apostles” and rejecting them.³¹ “Apostle” here evidently means “itinerant teacher” (*Did.* 11.3–6). The passage breathes the atmosphere of the Johannine epistles.³² Verse 6 introduces the Nicolaitans, who are also mentioned in the Pergamene letter (2:15). This represents a real group, possibly named for a leader.³³ The text of 2:14–15 apparently identifies the “teaching of Balaam” with this group. The charges approaching specificity are eating idolatrous food and engaging in fornication (*πορνείω*). The “Apostolic Decree” (Acts 15:29) touches upon both. “Fornication” can refer to a wide range of matters related to sexual purity (including marriage within prohibited degrees of consanguinity and sexual relations in improper circumstances) or, metaphorically, to idolatry. A third possibility is that it embraces both. In the majority of instances the metaphorical meaning is certain for Revelation (e.g. 17:2), and probably applies here.³⁴ Those in Thyatira (2:20–24) associated with Jezebel are subject to the same charges. The attempts of later heresiologists to characterize their theology/ies lack historical value.³⁵ The

29. Revelation also expresses conflict with and antagonism toward the synagogue: 2:9; 3:9.

30. Pervo, *Acts*, 377–78 nn. 103–4. For such offerings used as a test, see Pliny, *Ep.* 10, 96.5. (Although the term “meat offered to idols” has become standard in English [from a time when “meat” had a wide range of meaning], the Greek word refers only to sacrificial offerings.)

31. Ignatius will say much the same. See below.

32. See below. (The nature of the testing is not described.)

33. For bibliography on the Nicolaitans and a succinct discussion, see Aune, *Revelation*, 148–49. Trebilco has a lengthy and thoughtful discussion, *Ephesus*, 307–35.

34. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 311–12.

35. Irenaeus, *A.H.* 1.26.3 refers only to Rev 2:6. He interprets the passage to mean that they made no distinction between fornication and consuming idol meat. He thus characterizes them as lax: “Nicolaitae autem magistrum quidem habent Nicolaum, unum ex VII qui primi ad diaconium ab apostolis ordinate sunt. Qui indiscrete vivunt. Plenissime autem per Iohannis Apocalypsin manifestantur qui sint, nullam differentiam esse docents in moechando, et idolythyum edere. Quapropter dixit et de his sermo: ‘Sed hoc habes quod odisti opera Nicolaiturum, quae et ego odi’” (Rev 2:6). His association of them with Cerinthus (below) is probably erroneous.

group may have appealed to Paul as an authority (below). In any case they were viewed as morally and therefore theologically loose.

From the embedded letters it appears that the communities at Pergamum (2:14–16) and Thyatira (2:20) contained/tolerated the Nicolaitans, but that those at Ephesus rejected them. The two leaders identified by nicknames (Balaam, Jezebel) may have been itinerants. Jezebel could have been an itinerant prophet given hospitality. An alternative is that one or both of these persons could have headed a house church within their respective communities.³⁶

Both these persons are associated with the same charges. Reference to a *didachē* (διδασχῆ, 2:15) could suggest particular doctrines.³⁷ Of “Balaam it is said: ἀλλ’ ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὀλίγα ὅτι ἔχεις ἐκεῖ κρατοῦντας τὴν διδασχὴν Βαλαάμ, ὃς ἐδίδασκεν τῷ Βαλακ βαλεῖν σκάνδαλον ἐνώπιον τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυστα καὶ πορνεῦσαι (2:14). The biblical material in Numbers 22–25, 31 was interpreted in later times to present Balaam as the patron demon, so to speak, of syncretistic religion.³⁸ By using this nickname John was not attempting to flatter his colleague. The Jezebel of 1–2 Kings was no friend of the prophets. In addition to her enmity toward legitimate prophets, her introduction of foreign gods probably inspired this not particularly complimentary sobriquet.³⁹

Although John despises Jezebel’s views, he does not denounce her as a woman. The Pastor would have needed to say no more (1 Tim 2:9–15). Luke does not object to women prophets; he merely does not allow them to prophesy. In Luke 1:26–56 Mary, in particular, and Elizabeth play prophetic roles. Once they have delivered their children, this activity ceases. Luke 2:21–38 introduces two prophets, Simeon and Anna (although only the latter is identified as such). At the scene’s close the score reads: Simeon: two prophecies, Anna: zero. When Paul arrives at Philip’s with his entourage, it transpires that the evangelist has or has acquired four prophesying daughters. Given the rather foreboding atmosphere, readers eagerly await to discover what they have to say. In vain, for the narrator imports the previously utilized Agabus from Jerusalem to deliver the requisite dire forecast (Acts 21:8–14). Women prophets played a major role in the New Prophecy, with roots reaching back to Ammia of Philadelphia, recognized by all Christians as a link in the succession of prophets (Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.17.4). Pauline practice is continued in the *Acts of Paul*, where women prophesy (e.g. 13.5).

36. Cf. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 309.

37. See, however, the *Didache*, which focuses upon “moral” and “practical” issues, title notwithstanding.

38. Philo, *Vit Mos* 1.53–55; 263–304; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.126–30; Ps.-Philo, *LAB* 18.13. Cf. Jude 11–12; Pet 2:15–16. See the discussion by Aune, *Revelation*, 187–88; Vermes, “The Story of Balaam,” 7.

39. For those keeping score, Jezebel was related to the historical character known to us (via Virgil) as Dido.

Revelation 2:24 claims that Jezebel taught “the deep things of Satan” (τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανα). “Deep things” evidently refers to the more profound subjects in contrast to elementary teaching.⁴⁰ This would, if taken literally, endow believers with the power to vanquish diabolic forces. It is more likely that this language is polemic against claims that this advanced teaching involved “the deep things of God.”⁴¹ If this Theology 201 applies, as seems likely, to the question of dietary scruples and engagement in civic life, the supporters of “liberal conduct” based their actions upon knowledge, almost certainly the awareness that the gods and demons do not exist. This introduces noteworthy parallels between the Nicolaitans and “the strong” who were inspired by Paul.⁴² See 1 Cor 8:1–9:23 and 10:23–11:1, in which the consumption of food associated with other gods is authorized by “freedom” and “knowledge.” Paul, Jezebel might well have noted, wrote of “the depths of God” (τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ; 1 Cor 2:10).⁴³

Although the Nicolaitans in Asia were probably socially similar to the “strong” discussed by Paul in 1 Corinthians and Romans—persons whose occupations, status, and aspirations inclined them toward accommodation with civic culture and life and whose livelihoods may well have been imperiled had they followed the path of rigorous separation⁴⁴—it is not likely that they represent a continuity of or a coincidental parallel to those strong. To me it seems more likely that they were Paulinists, probably heirs of the Pauline tradition, and certainly readers of 1 Corinthians (the most widely circulated of Paul’s letters), if not other texts. A potential interest in speculative theology (“depths of God”) would find Colossians congenial, for example. The Nicolaitans appear to have represented a continuation of “left-wing” Paulinism that would later manifest itself in some gnostic groups, and, not least, in the work of Marcion. If John has provided few details, they add up to rather more than Luke and the Pastor combined, and they are conducive to assignment within a Pauline milieu. One may therefore posit the existence of “liberal” Paulinists in Western Asia during the first decade of the second century, even if, as John the Seer asserts, they had been suppressed in Ephesus itself.

6. 120–130, the Pastoral Epistles (=PE) (1–2 Timothy, Titus). My proposal is that Acts fits into Ephesus between Ephesians and the PE, closer in time to the PE, (probably less than a decade) as indicated by institutional structure and rival movements, but within Deuteropauline trajectories.⁴⁵ All but the most

40. Cf. 1 Cor 3:2; Heb 5:12.

41. On the term, see Heinrich Schlier, *βάθος*, *TDNT* 1.517–18; Aune, *Revelation*, 207–8.

42. Paul’s intellectual sympathies lie with the “strong,” but he criticizes them for failing to understand the importance of love, of not needing to attempt to dominate with one’s superior knowledge. The importance of this observation is that the strong were not Paul’s opponents.

43. Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 118–26.

44. See the argument of Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 319–22.

45. For a survey, see Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 63–81.

conservative scholars view this collection as Deuteropauline, and its association with Ephesus is scarcely disputable.⁴⁶ Areas of agreement between Luke/Acts and the PE are sufficiently broad to have generated the proposal that Luke composed those epistles.⁴⁷ This hypothesis neglects some substantial differences between the two.⁴⁸ This essay attends to two areas: statements about false teachers and church offices.

Luke never portrays Paul engaged in struggles with rival members of the Jesus movement. The closest episode to an exception is associated with Ephesus: that strange tale of the followers of John the Baptizer in Ephesus (Acts 19:1–7). Ernst Haenchen took a stab: “Paulus überwindet die Sekte.”⁴⁹ This desperate conjecture may well have been based upon the recognition that trouble is in the forecast for Ephesus. That forecast emerges at the close of Paul’s address to the presbyters of Ephesus (20:29–30). Specifics are lacking. The preview indicates that some opponents, “the wolves,” will invade from outside (v. 29), while others (v. 30) will come from within. First Timothy’s Ephesian opponents are generally characterized as insiders; in Crete Titus must deal with external threats (e.g. Titus 1:10–16). Luke uses the (enduring) metaphor of the church leader as shepherd.⁵⁰ The PE do not use this imagery, for their ecclesial model is the household rather than the flock, and the method is educative rather than “pastoral” in the literal sense, which assumes that sheep are uneducable.⁵¹ The primary domestic concern is for good health. Behind this notion of proper hygiene (albeit at some distance) is the Pauline understanding of the church as a body.⁵²

Both Luke and the PE transform the old eschatological threat of the appearance of wayward teachers in the terrible last days⁵³ into predictions that the bad guys will erupt once *Paul* is off the scene (rather than all of the apostles, for example⁵⁴). The Pastor has no apparent difficulty balancing this dogma-driven

46. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 205–9. For detailed references, see Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 309–10 nn. 162–70.

47. On this, see Pervo, “Romancing an Oft-neglected Stone,” 25–47.

48. A theological difference is that, whereas Luke stresses the continuity between Israel and the church, for the Pastor the Jewish roots lie in the remote past and salvation history is ignored. Advocates of the Israelite heritage are numbered among the opponents. A practical difference is that, whereas the Pastor makes marriage essentially a requirement, Luke opposes it. Advocates of celibacy can be found in the ranks of the Pastor’s opponents. One difference in personnel is that the PE include a letter to Titus, who is for Luke an “unperson.”

49. Haenchen, *Die Apostleschichte*, 492.

50. On this image, often coupled with that of wolves, see Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 204–8.

51. This does not intend to suggest that the Pastor is neither direct nor directive.

52. The verb “be healthy” occurs at 1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 1:13; 2:12; and the adjective in Titus 2:8. Note also the metaphor of “gangrene” (which has a wider reference than in our usage) in 2 Tim 2:17. On the use of medical imagery in the PE, see Malherbe, “Medical Imagery in the Pastoral Epistles,” 121–36.

53. Examples include Mark 13 (and parallels; Jude 14–19; *Didache* 16).

54. Eusebius’ famous scheme requires the departure of the entire apostolic generation before the church can lose its virginity: *H.E.* 3.32.7–8.

scheme with his more general perspective that these teachings are disrupting the community in the present. Neither author seeks to stress the imminence of the end through this eschatological vocabulary (see Table 1).

Table 1: Trials of the Last Days

Acts 20:29–30

ἐγὼ οἶδα ὅτι εἰσελεύσονται μετὰ τὴν ἄφιξίν μου λύκοι βαρεῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς μὴ φειδόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου,³⁰ καὶ ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν ἀναστήσονται ἄνδρες λαλοῦντες διεστραμμένα τοῦ ἀποσπᾶν τοὺς μαθητὰς ὀπίσω αὐτῶν.

1 Tim 4:1

Τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ῥητῶς λέγει ὅτι ἐν ὑστέροις καιροῖς ἀποστήσονται τινες τῆς πίστεως προσέχοντες πνεύμασιν πλάνοις καὶ διδασκαλίαις δαιμονίων,
2 Tim 3:1

Τοῦτο δὲ γίνωσκε, ὅτι ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις ἐνστήσονται καιροὶ χαλεποί·
2 Tim 4:3–4

Ἔσται γὰρ καιρὸς ὅτε τῆς ὑγιαίνουσης διδασκαλίας οὐκ ἀνέξονται ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἑαυτοῖς ἐπισωρεύσουσιν διδασκάλους κνηθόμενοι τὴν ἀκοὴν⁴ καὶ ἀπὸ μὲν τῆς ἀληθείας τὴν ἀκοὴν ἀποστρέψουσιν, ἐπὶ δὲ τοὺς μύθους ἐκτραπήσονται.

Luke does not provide any details about the forthcoming falsity. The Pastor does, and some of them are possibly applicable. Any who contradicted the messages proclaimed in Luke and/or Acts would qualify, to be sure, but that is too general to be of use. Acts 20:20 could be construed as a claim that Paul did not engage in private teaching. Ancients did not believe that those who did not publish perished. Oral instruction to one's intimates, such as John 13–17, was considered superior to the vulgar productions issued in writing. Secret teaching could both a) claim superiority and b) not be controlled. Later writers, closely associated with the tendencies that would constitute orthodoxy, rejected the possibility of valid secret teaching attributed to Jesus or Paul (and other early leaders). The less orthodox had access to entire libraries of Jesus' and others' secret teachings. Acts 20:27 asserts that Paul proclaimed "the entire plan of God." If this means that he did not tailor his message for various groups, it amounts to self-defense.⁵⁵ Similar reservations apply to verses 33–34. Greed was one of the most common claims made against opponents. The historical Paul was suspected of misappropriating funds raised for the collection.⁵⁶

55. "Plan" need not mean anything more than the same general demands for repentance and belief in Jesus laid upon both Jews and gentiles.

56. See Pervo, *Acts*, 527–28.

The Pastor is much less reserved.⁵⁷ Is this contrast due to the difference in genre or temperament, or is it a result of time? The question is important. I doubt that these two authors would describe the situation in Ephesus in very similar terms were they not talking about similar phenomena. This similarity is noted by some authors who incline to date Acts a good generation earlier than I do (see the close of this sub-section).

Ancients were not unduly innocent of the art of vituperation. Much of what the Pastor said about his opponents was boiler plate polemic and of limited value. One well-developed means for discrediting a movement was to allege that it targeted women, ill-prepared and thus easily seducible and consequently off limits. Yet the picture of women as missionaries for these opponents in 2 Tim 3:6 and 1 Tim 5:13 is not standard polemic, and, in the light of the virile misogyny of 1 Timothy, it is reasonable to suspect that those whom the Pastor opposes have an emancipationist program. On the question of gender-based roles, Luke is ambivalent (above) and a witness to the decline in female leadership (in what would become the dominant circles [in Ephesus]).

Both 1 Tim 1:3–7 and Titus 1:10 focus upon the Jewish dimension of the rival doctrine. The latter speaks of actual Jews, although this may relate to the requirements of pseudonymity. To characterize a method as “Jewish” is, in this milieu, to denounce it. First Timothy’s references to “myths/stories” and “genealogies” readily generate a hypothesis that these opponents engage in speculative exegesis of Genesis. Speculation on the creation story stands behind the presumably pre-Pauline Gal 3:28 and becomes a foundational principle in much of what is called Gnosticism. The Pastor’s solution is to avoid such activity as speculation (conversation, dialogue, and thought).

Knowledge is a central concept. The opponents claim to know God (Titus 1:16). Contrasted with the famous “falsely named knowledge” of 1 Tim 6:20 are four uses of the expression “ἐπίγνωσις ἀληθείας” (“firm knowledge of truth”; 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25; 3:7; Titus 1:1). The parallel structure of 2 Tim 2:19 and 1 Tim 6:20–21 link “gnosis” to the claim that believers enjoy the benefits of resurrection. (On this point the Pastor maintains the Pauline position, against Colossians and Ephesians, both of which speak of resurrection in the present,⁵⁸ 2 Tim 2:11: πιστός ὁ λόγος· εἰ γὰρ συναπεθάνομεν, καὶ συζήσομεν; cf. Rom 6:5.) What is one to make of the unusual term “antitheses” in 1 Tim 6:20? The proposal that it may have been inspired by Marcion has arisen from time to time.⁵⁹

57. For a survey of the Pastor’s opponents and research on the subject, see Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 209–36.

58. Col 2:12; Eph 2:6.

59. Cf. Tyson, *Marcion*, 30.

Table 2: Gnosis and Present Resurrection

2 Tim 2:19

οἵτινες περὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἠστόχησαν,
λέγοντες [τὴν] ἀνάστασιν ἤδη
γεγονέναι, καὶ ἀνατρέπουσιν τὴν
τινῶν πίστιν.

1 Tim 6:20–21

ὦ Τιμόθεε, τὴν παραθήκην φύλαξον
ἐκτρεπόμενος τὰς βεβήλους
κενοφωνίας καὶ ἀντιθέσεις τῆς
ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως, ²¹ ἣν τινες
ἐπαγγελλόμενοι περὶ τὴν πίστιν
ἠστόχησαν.

In the practical realm, the opponents oppose marriage and prohibit certain foods (1 Tim 4:3). The latter is probably ascetic rather than motivated by *kashrut*, judging from the well-known 1 Tim 5:23: Μηκέτι ὑδροπότει, ἀλλὰ οἴνω ὀλίγω χρῶ διὰ τὸν στόμαχον. On diet the Pastor is scarcely less liberal than Paul and tenders not a hint of concession to the weak: 1 Tim 4:3–5; Titus 1:15. These passages lend no support to a prohibition against eating food contaminated by idolatry.⁶⁰ By comparison, Luke would stand closer to the opponents on marriage and differs somewhat with the Pastor on matters of diet.⁶¹ Nothing explicit emerges about docetism, an issue that will concern the figures and writings to be encountered subsequently in this paper.

The radical social notions of celibacy and women's freedom, as well as the ascetic diet, are shared by the *Acts of Paul*, making its Thecla chapters an ideal foil to the Pastor and a g-dsend to NT teachers since Dennis MacDonald showed the way some thirty years ago.⁶² That work does not share the theology of the Pastor's opponents, however; the claim that the resurrection has already taken place is uttered by malicious rascals consumed by envy.

From what can be inferred, it appears that, if the Pastor's opponents represent a more or less single movement, its basis is Pauline, that is, the PE are ranged against rival interpreters of Paul. The exception to this is the influence of Jewish thought, which appears to resemble what some of Paul's rivals taught (cf. Galatians and 2 Corinthians). Colossians and, in particular, Ephesians show an entrée of Jewish speculative theology into a Pauline milieu (at Ephesus in fact). Luke participated in this appropriation of Jewish thought to erect his model of salvation history. The speculative component was of no interest or value to him. The Pastor admitted neither into the household of faith, but Luke and the Pastor have a great deal in common. In the course of wrapping up his study of Luke's anti-heretical orientation, Charles Talbert notes eight points of

60. Note, however, Pervo, *Dating*, 247–49, who points out that the Pastor moralizes.

61. On marriage, contrast Luke 29:34–36 to Mark 10:25. See also Pervo, *Profit with Delight*, 181 n. 79.

62. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle*.

comparison, concluding: "These obvious similarities between the picture of Paul that we get from Luke-Acts and the Pastorals seem to relate naturally to the problem of the apostolic defense against heresy."⁶³ Paul Trebilco concludes his examination of the polemic of the Pastorals with this observation: "We can ... make a connection between Acts 20:30 and the opponents in the Pastorals."⁶⁴ With reference to offices, the linkage between Luke and the Pastor is quite apparent in the realm of church offices and the relevant ceremonies of authorization (for the latter, see the end of this subsection).⁶⁵

Excursus: Office, Officer, Order

Power is the capacity to achieve an object. *Authority* is power recognized by a formal or informal body and may be incorporated in writing. For example, a thief brandishing a handgun has the *power* to command obedience; police *officers* are *authorized* to bear handguns in the course of their duties. Office provides a formal link between a person and authority.

Church offices have long entailed certain formal characteristics:⁶⁶

1. Permanency (unlike Greek priesthoods, e.g., which were often annual).
2. Recognition by the church, often in an established title.
3. Distinct status, eventually marked by seating position, later by dress, etc.⁶⁷
4. Ceremony of commission (as contrasted with divine calls). In ecclesiastical terms, ordination is the formal endorsement of a vocation (see Table 3).
5. Legalization. This may involve placing the officer's name on an official roster or some other means of legal endorsement.⁶⁸
6. Letters of commendation may be required, for example, in the case of relocation. (To this category one might add giving or refusing hospitality.)
7. Remuneration of some sort is a common feature.

In not infrequent competition with the foregoing, and vastly stimulating the growth of formal structures, were those who sought to acquire authority through their gifts: healing, intellectual, prophetic, and the like. Many of these persons were itinerant; they constitute a substantial number of the opponents of many of the authors and texts examined in this essay.

63. Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics*, 114.

64. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 235.

65. For this section I have borrowed freely from an unpublished paper, "Luke and the Bishops," delivered at the SBL Book of Acts, San Francisco, 21 November 2011. (*Caveat lector!* This paper received no serious criticism and even less commendation.)

66. On these characteristics, see Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 109–10. (Holmberg was indebted to Ulrich Brockhaus, *Charisma und Amt. Die paulinische Charismenlehre auf dem Hintergrund der frühchristlichen Gemeindefunktion*, 2d ed., 1975.)

67. The distinction between "clergy" and "laity" does not emerge until the third century, however.

68. Those who witness for the first time the ordination of a bishop of the Episcopal Church, e.g., may be surprised at the number of legal features required to attest the validity of the election and consent of other dioceses.

“Order” is used in two senses: one to characterize the various offices, whence “ordained” and “Holy Orders,” another for bodies, such as the “Order of Widows.”⁶⁹

The respect to terminology, the offices that receive attention here are ἐπίσκοπος/οι, πρεσβύτερος/οι, and διάκονος/οι.⁷⁰ For convenience they are semi-translated “bishop,” “presbyter,” and “deacon.” “Overseer,” “elder,” and “servant” are possible alternates. “Bishop” occurs in various secular contexts for officers with supervisory or oversight responsibility. “Deacon” is a common Greek term for “one who serves,” but it can be used for those who play prominent religious roles.⁷¹ “Presbyter” refers to one who possesses seniority. The “elders” of a group often form a conciliar or legislative body. “Senior” status can be transmitted. In Roman history one refers to “Senatorial families,” families whose sons would enter the Senate. Although it is often claimed that “presbyters” were a synagogue office adopted by Christians, the evidence for this is perilously thin. Two other uses of the word do not refer to a continuing office: “the presbyter” as an evident honorific nickname, and as a group of important tradents, “the elders.”⁷²

The eventual system of bishop, presbyter, and deacon is strongly recommended by Ignatius. In the churches he addressed, the authority of a single bishop was apparently accepted. The images Ignatius employs to illustrate the roles of each order reveal that presbyters have been imposed upon a deacon-bishop structure.⁷³ He likens the bishop to God or God’s grace (*Magn.* 6.1; 2.1) or commandment (*Trall.* 13.2), to the father (*Magn.* 3.1; *Trall.* 3.1; *Smyrn.* 8.1), to the lord (*Eph.* 6.1), or to Jesus Christ (*Trall.* 2.1). The πρεσβυτέριον (“presbytery, council”) is compared to the apostles (*Magn.* 6.1; *Trall.* 2.2; 3.1; *Phld.* 5.1; *Smyrn.* 8.1), and the law of Jesus Christ (*Magn.* 6.1; *Trall.* 3.1), and a divine commandment (*Smyrn.* 8.1). Deacons are routinely compared to Christ. The odd group is the presbyters, always characterized as a body, compared to a body, the apostles, and to the function of judgment and rule.

The pattern of bishop/deacon is associated with the *Didache*, which lacks the word presbyter. This may reflect church organization in the region of Antioch before Ignatius.⁷⁴ It is also Pauline (Phil 1:1). Luke is aware of this model. The parable in Luke 17:7–10 (Τίς δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν δοῦλον ἔχων ἀροτριῶντα ἢ ποιμαίνοντα, ὃς εἰσελθόντι ἐκ τοῦ ἀγροῦ ἐρεῖ αὐτῷ· εὐθέως παρελθὼν

69. The source of this ambiguity is Roman legal language, which used *ordo* to refer to a social body, like a “class,” and for one’s social standing.

70. Officers not considered include “teachers” “prophets,” and “evangelists.”

71. Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 27–32.

72. See Brown, *Epistles*, 647–51, who regards the group as “disciples” of the disciples of Jesus.

73. See Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 217 and 427 nn. 89–90.

74. See Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 200. Both words are in the plural, as in Phil 1:1. That the community is to choose their officers does not conflict with Ignatius.

ἀνάπεσε, ⁸ ἀλλ' οὐχὶ ἐρεῖ αὐτῶ· ἐτοίμασον τί δειπνήσω καὶ περιζωσάμενος **διακόνει** μοι ἕως φάγω καὶ πῖω, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα φάγεσαι καὶ πίεσαι σύ; ⁹ μὴ ἔχει χάριν τῷ δούλῳ ὅτι ἐποίησεν τὰ διαταχθέντα; ¹⁰ οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς, ὅταν ποιήσητε πάντα τὰ διαταχθέντα ὑμῖν, λέγετε ὅτι δούλοι ἀχρεῖοί ἐσμεν, ὁ ὠφειλομεν ποιῆσαι πεποιήκαμεν) is not a congeries of rustic images. The first verbs are images for missionary (agricultural) and pastoral labor, while the third refers to the ministry of service. Since mission and pastoral care are equated here, this is a two-fold model, as is that proposed in Acts 6:1–4. In general, Luke prefers to characterize ministry in functional terms, with such words as ἀποστολή and ἐπισκοπή, as well as διακονία, all used in the important narrative of Acts 1:14–26. This continues Pauline usage.⁷⁵ Neither Luke nor others, however, have a term like *πρεσβυτέρια* (“seniority”). When describing the Pauline churches in Acts, however, Luke identifies one order: the presbyters (11:30; 14:23; [15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4]; 20:17; [21:18]⁷⁶). Similarly *1 Clement*, which speaks of “bishop and deacons,”⁷⁷ refers only to presbyters when describing the governance of the church at Corinth. Luke is not the only writer who seems to use “bishop” and “presbyter” almost interchangeably (Acts 20:28).

The PE present a particularly difficult case. Attempts to sort out and refine the distinctions between uses of the two words “bishop” and “presbyter” have been diligent and ingenious.⁷⁸ Fortunately for at least one scholar, this essay does not require solving the problem so much as identifying the issues and usages. The PE can employ both “bishop” and “presbyter” of church leaders. Luke equates presbyters with bishops and may well dislike the latter title. In the literature of this period “presbyter” appears only in the plural; “bishop” may be singular.⁷⁹ Where Luke and the PE agree is that a leading responsibility of pastors is the suppression of suspect teaching. Luke, the Pastor, and Ignatius identify false teaching in Ephesus: Acts 20; 1 Tim 1:3–11; 4:1–4; 6:2b–10; Ignatius, *Ephesians* 7–9, 16–17. Strong leadership will be required to defeat heresy. The PE appear to prefer a single leader of the community, a role played by Timothy and Titus.

Similarity between Luke and the Pastor is, as stated, quite apparent in their depiction of “ordinations.”

75. ἀποστολή: Act 1:25; Rom 1:5; 1 Cor 9:2; Gal 2:8. διακονία appears in Luke 10:40, eight times in Acts, including 1:17, 25, twenty-one times in Pauline and Deuteropauline letters (including Hebrews), and once in Rev 2:19 (a letter). ἐπισκοπή is Deuteropauline: Acts 1:20; 1 Tim 3:1; *1 Clem.* 44.1, 4; 50.3; Ignatius, *Polycarp* 8.3.

76. The bracketed references apply to Jerusalem, the elders of which community are probably not equivalent to those of, e.g., Ephesus.

77. “Bishop,” sing., 59.3; “bishops” and “deacons,” pl., 42.5.

78. See the survey and proposals of Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 448–60.

79. In the PE “bishop” is only singular (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7).

Table 3: Authorizing Acts (and Pastorals)⁸⁰

Acts 13:1–3

Ἦσαν δὲ ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ κατὰ τὴν οὖσαν ἐκκλησίαν **προφήται** καὶ διδάσκαλοι... Λειτουργούντων δὲ αὐτῶν τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ νηστευόντων εἶπεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον· ἀφορίσατε δὴ μοι τὸν Βαρναβᾶν καὶ Σαῦλον εἰς τὸ ἔργον ὃ προσκέκλημαι αὐτούς. **ἅ τότε νηστεύσαντες καὶ προσευξάμενοι καὶ ἐπιθέντες τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῖς ἀπέλυσαν.**

Acts 6:6

οὐς ἔστησαν ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀποστόλων, καὶ **προσευξάμενοι ἐπέθηκαν αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας.**

Acts 14:23

χειροτονήσαντες δὲ αὐτοῖς **κατ' ἐκκλησίαν πρεσβυτέρους, προσευξάμενοι μετὰ νηστειῶν** παρέθεντο αὐτοὺς τῷ κυρίῳ εἰς ὃν πεπιστεύκεισαν.

1 Tim 4:14

¹⁴ μὴ ἀμέλει τοῦ ἐν σοὶ χαρίσματος, ὃ ἐδόθη σοι **διὰ προφητείας μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν** τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου.

1 Tim 1:18

Ταύτην τὴν παραγγελίαν παρατίθεμαι σοι, τέκνον Τιμόθεε, κατὰ τὰς προαγούσας ἐπὶ σὲ **προφητείας, ἵνα στρατεύῃ ἐν αὐταῖς τὴν καλὴν στρατείαν**

2 Tim 1:6

Δι' ἣν αἰτίαν ἀναμνήσκω σε ἀναζωπυρεῖν τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐν σοὶ **διὰ τῆς ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν** μου.

1 Tim 5:22

χεῖρας ταχέως μηδενὶ ἐπιτίθει μηδὲ κοινώνει ἁμαρτίας ἄλλοτρίαις· σεαυτὸν ἄγνόν τήρει.

Tit 1:5

Τούτου χάριν ἀπέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτῃ, ἵνα τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώσῃ καὶ καταστήσῃ **κατὰ πόλιν πρεσβυτέρους,** ὡς ἐγὼ σοὶ διεταξάμην,

In conclusion, both Luke and the PE note the presence of what they view as questionable teaching in Ephesus. Both view Paul's teaching as the proper antidote. Both regard leaders as responsible for attacking false teachers and teaching and see this as a major task of those leaders. Finally, both reflect an era when "bishop" and "presbyter" were acceptable titles for the chief officer(s), and they reflect a common understanding of the rites Christians of a few generations later would call "ordination."⁸¹

7. Cerinthus, c. 120–130 (?). Cerinthus was a Jewish-Christian of dualistic bent. Irenaeus presents Cerinthus, the Ebionites, and the Nicolaitans in that order (*A.H.* 1.26). Because of the citations in Hippolytus (*Ref.* 7.33–34; 10.21–22), the Greek text of Irenaeus, *A.H.* 1.26.1 can be reconstructed with some assurance. He states:

80. This is from Table 6.3 "Ordinations" in Pervo, *Dating Acts*. See pp. 214–16 for comments.

81. Acts 14:23 uses *χειροτονέω*, which will become the standard verb for "ordain."

A certain Cerinthus taught in Asia that the world was not made by the first God, but by some Power which was separated and distant from the Authority (αὐθεντία) that is above all things. He proposes Jesus, not as having been born of a Virgin—for this seemed impossible to him—but as having been born the son of Joseph and Mary like all other humans, and that he excelled over every person in justice, prudence, and wisdom (δικαιοσύνη, σωφροσύνη, σύνεσις). After his baptism Christ descended on him in the shape of a dove from the Authority that is above all things. Then he preached the unknown Father and worked wonders. But at the end Christ again flew off from Jesus. Jesus indeed suffered and rose again from the dead, but Christ remained impassible, since he was spiritual.⁸²

This is characteristic of a number of theologies associated with Marcion and/or Gnosis. Features include the assignment of creation to an inferior (but not specifically wicked) power, an adoptionist and strongly docetic christology, and the ἄγνωστος θεός (the true God was unknown prior to Christ and cannot be discovered through the use of reason or the investigation of nature). Although Christ left Jesus at the cross, the latter did, according to Cerinthus, rise from the dead.

Eusebius (*H.E.* 3.28.2–4) states that Cerinthus was a chiliast, attributing his information to the anti-Montanist Roman presbyter Gaius of the late second century, as well as the more recent Dionysius of Alexandria. Irenaeus may have neglected to develop this feature (if he were aware of it) because he did not find it abhorrent, as did Eusebius. Charles Hill argues that Cerinthus *was* a chiliast and that, like Marcion, he envisioned parallel fulfillments for Jews and true believers, the former of a decidedly material sort.⁸³ Those who look for “Gnostic” influences upon Marcion ought not neglect Cerinthus.

Irenaeus’ first account speaks of the pre-baptism Jesus as surpassing “... every person in justice, prudence, and wisdom.” This catalogue of three of the cardinal virtues evokes Luke 2:52 (cf. also 1:80; 2:40), suggesting that Cerinthus may have known the third gospel with the first two chapters (an alternative, that he was the source of 2:52, is less likely). Cerinthus is normally linked with John the Evangelist and John the Seer (note Irenaeus, *A.H.* 3.11.1).

Hanc fidem annuntians Johannes Domini discipulus, volens per Evangelii annuntiationem auferre eum, qui a Cerintho inseminatus erat hominibus errorem, et multo prius ab his qui dicuntur Nicolaitae, qui sunt vulsio eius quae falso cognominatur scientiae, ut confunderet eos, et suaderet quoniam unus Deus et Omnia fecit per Verbum suum ...⁸⁴

82. Irenaeus, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies*, 1.90, *alt.*

83. Hill, “Cerinthus, Gnostic or Chiliast?” 135–72.

84. “John the Lord’s disciple, proclaimed that faith. By preaching the Gospel he wished to remove the error that was disseminated among the people by Cerinthus, and long before by those who are called Nicolaitans, who are an offshoot of the falsely called ‘knowledge.’” Irenaeus, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies*, 3.52.

This is the famous claim that John composed the Fourth Gospel in order to refute Cerinthus, whose views were like those of the “much earlier” Nicolaitans. Since Irenaeus himself locates the Nicolaitans in the 90s, Cerinthus would seem to be not much earlier than c. 125. In addition he invokes the PE by alluding to 1 Tim 6:20.

Irenaeus relates two adjacent anecdotes associated with Polycarp (*A.H.* 3.3.4):

There are those who heard him [Polycarp] say that when John the disciple of the Lord was at Ephesus and went to take a bath, on seeing Cerinthus there, he rushed out of the bathhouse without having bathed. “Let us flee,” he explained, “lest even the bathhouse collapse because Cerinthus the enemy of the truth is in there.”

Polycarp himself, when Marcion met him on one occasion and said, “Recognize us!” gave this reply” “I do recognize you as the first-born of Satan.”⁸⁵

Irenaeus gives limited endorsement to the former apophthegm while treating the latter as authentic. He views both, in his subsequent comment, as examples of the Pastor’s admonition to avoid speaking with heretics. John, Marcion, and Polycarp in Asia are more or less contemporaneous. How we should have liked to be there! The most important observation about Cerinthus is that he attests the presence of a dualistic system in Asia at the time of Polycarp. Although he may have used Luke, the Ephesus of his era—as described by later orthodox writers—witnessed the rise of the figure of John.

8. The Johannine Circles and Tradition. By the final quarter of the second century Paul’s name had (despite his letters, Acts, the Pastorals, Polycarp, and Ignatius) been effectively erased from the foundation stone of the Ephesian church, to be replaced by that of the apostle John. Helmut Koester invokes an impressive list of witnesses from the middle third of the century who did not associate John with Ephesus, if anywhere: Ignatius, Polycarp (both of whom mention Paul), Justin, and Papias.⁸⁶ Both Polycarp and, according to Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.39.17, Papias cited 1 John. Papias knew two persons named John, one a member of the twelve, the other “the Presbyter” (*H.E.* 3.39.4), a term that was evidently used for “disciples” of the disciples of Jesus.

Koester concludes that Irenaeus was responsible for attributing the Fourth Gospel and Revelation to the apostle John (*A.H.* 2.22.5; 3.3.4; 5.30.3).⁸⁷ Irenaeus’ claim (according to Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.24.16) that Polycarp had associated with the apostle John is certainly fictitious. In the late second century, Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus could write to Bishop Victor at Rome (whose own see did

85. Irenaeus, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies*, 3.34.

86. Koester, “Early Christian Literature,” 135–37. Papias’ list of apostles in Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.39.3–4 suggests that he knew John. He may have elected not to discuss it or his observations may not have been acceptable to Eusebius.

87. Koester, “Early Christian Literature,” 138.

not lack apostolic real estate of high value) about the beloved disciple John, whose tomb was at Ephesus (Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.31.3). The *Acts of John*, written in the late second century, utilizes the association of the apostle John to support its argument.⁸⁸

Richard Bauckham argues that Polycrates believed that John the Presbyter wrote the Fourth Gospel.⁸⁹ An evidently fatal flaw in this elegant hypothesis is that, while Bauckham explains the identification of Philip the Evangelist with the apostle of the same name as an example of typical practice, he denies it in the case of John. This seems highly improbable. The tenor of the letter is to present the largest and brightest galaxy of witnesses that Polycrates can muster in support of the Quartodeciman calendar. Identification of the Fourth Gospel as a Johannine composition is lacking before the closing decades of the second century in Western Asia, although it was known to the New Prophecy, for example, which used the term “Paraclete,” and to Irenaeus, who, by bestowing apostolic credentials upon it and reading the text through the lens provided by 1 John, secured it, to his everlasting credit, for orthodoxy. The claim that the gospel was written to refute Cerinthus testifies to its appeal to theologians of a more speculative bent. (The figure of the apostle John, son of Zebedee, as the evangelist enters the picture later than the period under consideration here.)

The earliest attestation of the Fourth Gospel in Asia may be Luke in its canonical shape. Luke 24, as it exists, exhibits a number of parallels with John 20, most notably the disputed v. 12. If the close of Luke was re-edited for one reason or another, that editor evidently made use of John 20.⁹⁰

9. Papias of Hierapolis. Hierapolis lies at the fringe of the region under consideration. Although the Lycos valley was part of the orbit of Paul’s Ephesian mission, the surviving fragments of Papias, who was not well handled by his later readers, show no sign of Pauline influence. Links with the apocalyptic revival in Asia, of which 2 Thessalonians may be the earliest known witness and the New Prophecy the mature heir, are apparent. If Papias had anything to say about the gospels of Luke and John, it has not survived. In *H.E.* 3.36.1–2 Eusebius states:

At this time (Trajan) there flourished in Asia Polycarp, the companion of the Apostles, who had been appointed to the bishopric of the church in Smyrna by the eyewitnesses and ministers of the Lord. Distinguished men at the same time were Papias, who was himself bishop of the diocese of Hierapolis, and Ignatius, still a name of note to most, the second after Peter to succeed to the bishopric of Antioch.⁹¹

88. Cf. Pervo, “Johannine Trajectories in the *Acts of John*,” 47–68.

89. Bauckman, “Papias and Polycrates on the Origin of the Fourth Gospel,” 24–69.

90. On these parallels, see Brown, *The Gospel according to John. XIII–XXI*, 1000–1001; Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts*, 44–47, 100–9; as well as the just launched BeDuhn, *The First New Testament*.

91. Eusebius, *H.E.*, 1.281.

Most of this information is demonstrably erroneous. If one accepts the least tendentious element, that Papias was the contemporary of Polycarp and Ignatius, he is to be dated c. 130.⁹² One can explain most of Eusebius' fantasies and anachronisms by reference to his wishes, but a good reason for him to place Papias twenty years' late is not readily detectable.

10. Polycarp of Smyrna, c. 130–135 (proposals range from 120–135).⁹³ Polycarp is a fascinating figure. His life reached back into the foothills of the apostolic era and forward into the heyday of the apologists. With that most interesting span comes a compact but rich dossier: a letter from Ignatius, correspondence to Philippi, and a famous, moving martyrdom. Polycarp shows that the PE are at home in the realm of the Apostolic Fathers, for his correspondence has so many similarities with them that Hans von Campenhausen proposed that Polycarp wrote the PE.⁹⁴ This is unlikely, since Polycarp displays no trace of the Pastor's epiphany christology. Polycarp is therefore probably the first witness to the PE, as he may be the first witness to Acts, since they share a mellifluous, albeit obscure, phrase to describe the resurrection:⁹⁵

Table 4: Acts and Polycarp

Acts 2:24

ὅν ὁ θεὸς ἀνέστησεν λύσας τὰς ᾠδῖνας τοῦ ἄδου

Polycarp *Phil* 1.2

ὃν ἤγειρεν ὁ θεὸς λύσας τὰς ᾠδῖνας τοῦ ἄδου

[Jesus] whom God raised, having loosed the pangs of Hades [death]

The foregoing comparisons of Acts and the PE indicate that, if Polycarp shows that the PE rest comfortably in the world of the Apostolic Fathers, then something uncomfortably similar must be said about Acts.

Polycarp warns the Philippianians about the dangers of docetism (as Ignatius did for the Smyrnaeans: *Smyrnaeans* 2–3; cf. *Trallians* 10). The language of *Phil.* 7.1 uses words evidently drawn from 1 John 4:2–3 (cf. 3:8). Polycarp is thus the first witness to Johannine literature in western Asia. Despite Irenaeus' effort to link Polycarp to John, he names (and reveres) but one apostle: Paul (9.2; 11.2). His letter says nothing specific about Marcion.⁹⁶ This does not mean that Polycarp was unaware of the threat. Another anecdote has him confront Sinope's most famous Paulinist (see above).

92. On the early date (c. 110) for Papias, see MacDonald, *Two Shiptwrecked Gospels*.

93. Recent surveys include Holmes, "Polycarp of Smyrna, *Epistle to the Philippians*," 108–25; Dehandschutter, "The Epistle of Polycarp," 117–33. Cf. also Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 139–43.

94. Campenhausen, "Polykarp von Smyrna und die Pastoralbriefe," 197–252.

95. See the discussion in Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 17–20 (against N.-A.²⁸ I prefer to read "Hades" rather than "death" in Acts; see Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 81–82).

96. Polycarp, *Phil.* 7 does not appear to be directed at Marcion. See Schoedel, *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*, 23–26; Paulsen, *Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Polykarperbrief*, 120–21. The expression "firstborn of Satan" (7.1) may have been the source of the anecdote in Irenaeus, *A.H.* 3.3.4, #7, above.

11. Ignatius of Antioch.⁹⁷ Recent scholarship tends to move Ignatius' martyrdom forward from the Trajanic date proposed, without substantive support, by Eusebius (*H.E.* 3.22; 3.34–36) to the second quarter of the century, perhaps 130–135.⁹⁸ At the time of his letters, the churches of Asia with which he communicates have accepted, with varying degrees of consensus and enthusiasm, the idea that each will have a single leader, the bishop. These epistles, written in difficult circumstances in the course of his journey to martyrdom at Rome, are like a star shell, providing a brief but brilliant glimpse of the communities addressed.

The focus of the following paragraphs is what light Ignatius' letter to the Ephesians sheds upon the situation in Ephesus at his time.⁹⁹ Ignatius intended to write to the entire Christian community at Ephesus.¹⁰⁰ As his guards did not stop there, his information about the community comes from a visit by Bishop Onesimus and four others (1.3; 2.1). Presuming that Onesimus was human, he probably did not include his most ardent opponents, any docetists, or a hard-shell presbyterian in the group. *Ephesians* is Ignatius' longest letter, suitably florid for the metropolis of the province, from the bishop of a community in another capital (Antioch).

The "wolves" (actually feral dogs; 7.1) are out there, but Ignatius says that they have not gained a foothold. In 9.1 he intimates that the representatives of evil teaching are itinerant. Since one of Ignatius' tactics is to say "good for you for not doing such and such" in the sense of "don't even *think* about doing such and such,"¹⁰¹ one can't be absolutely certain, but he is much less concerned about Onesimus' protégés being seduced by false teaching¹⁰² than

97. Two recent surveys of Ignatius are Foster, "Ignatius of Antioch," 81–107, and Hermut Löhr, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch," in Pratscher, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, 91–115. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 628–711, displays his customary thoroughness and sense.

98. See Barnes, "The Date of Ignatius," 119–30, who, among other data, argues for two anti-Valentinian references in the letters, Paul Foster (see note 97 above) 84–89, who bases his doubts about Eusebius' dating on the grounds of church development, and Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 134–35, who criticizes Eusebius' inferences.

99. The commentary of Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 37–100, is an invaluable guide to the understanding of Ignatius' *Epistle to the Ephesians*.

100. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 643. Schoedel (*Ignatius*, 37) shows that the inscription to the letter contains many possible allusions to Ephesians, concluding: "It is tempting to think that (in spite of no references to Paul's Ephesians in *Eph.* 12.2, where it may have been expected) Ignatius felt it appropriate to address the Ephesians with language from an apostolic writing regarded as directed to them." If one yielded to this temptation, it would constitute the earliest known evidence for "Ephesians" in the address of that letter, which was known to Marcion as "Laodiceans." Some important witnesses (P⁴⁶ a* B* 424^c 1739) and others known from patristic citations omit "At Ephesus."

101. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 634–35.

102. In 6.2 Ignatius states: ἐν ὑμῖν οὐδεμία αἵρεσις κατοικεῖ. To render this "No heresy dwells among you" is a bit anachronistic. "Faction" is preferable, both because for Ignatius (as for good conservative Romans) faction is the major problem, and because "heresy" cannot exist until there is a defined "orthodoxy." See Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 58.

by those who absent themselves from the community assembly (e.g. 4.1; 13.1; 20.2, positively; 5.2, negatively). As often, Ignatius pleads frequently, fervently, and eloquently for unity, that is, assembly under the direction and leadership of Onesimus. Nothing specific about the nature and contents of the opposed teaching emerges.¹⁰³ Elsewhere the good bishop attacks Judaizers and docetists, probably two different groups.¹⁰⁴ Nowhere does Ignatius address teachings that are particularly characteristic of Marcion.

The text of 6.1 raises another issue: the “silence” of Onesimus. This is presumably a euphemism for a lack of verbal facility, quite possibly aptitude, in debate with representatives of dubious doctrines. Those who don’t “hang out with the bishop” may find him rather dull. Ignatius makes a virtue of this necessity.¹⁰⁵ Onesimus was presumably chosen for other gifts than eloquence, a choice that may have disappointed some at the time of his election and later. (Onesimus was probably not the first church leader to learn that one cannot please all of the faithful all the time.)

Ignatius, who views himself as did Polycarp and the Pastor as a leader in the mold and tradition of Paul, identifies his readers as, with him, “fellow initiates of Paul,” who mentions the Ephesians “in every letter” (12.2).¹⁰⁶ He assumes that all the hearers of his letter will approve of this comparison and not hiss at the mention of Paul’s name. Unless Onesimus and his delegation were the most deceiving of rascals or equipped with the pre-spectacles equivalent of lenses tinted in the most lavish shade of fuchsia—both are possible—things at Ephesus were looking up for Ignatius, perhaps a decade later than the Pastor. This is no tableau of warring, fissiparous factions—which is not to mistake it for the Garden of Eden.

Conclusion

Within four clearly crucial decades the most apparent change at Ephesus has been structure, stimulated by the clearest continuity: doctrinal dispute. The Seer John attacks persons. The authority used to straighten them up is the heavenly Christ. Both John and Ignatius praise the Ephesians for fending off false teachers; for Ignatius it is unity under the bishop that brings this about. Teaching opposed has ranged from liberal Paulinism (Revelation) to a Paulinism influenced by speculative exegesis (PE) to docetism (Polycarp, Ignatius). The course of the “anti-heretical” trajectory is toward strong, single leadership. Even Luke, no admirer of the emerging Ignatian bishop, charges leaders with this responsibility.

103. Note, however, the paradoxical creedal assertions in 7.2, which would be anathema to a good docetist.

104. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 689–90.

105. Note 15, which extols the merits of silence. See Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 56–57.

106. “Every letter” is a bit of flattery. The phrase intimates the existence of a collection. Cf. 2 Thess 2:17.

Attitudes toward Judaism range from viewing Jews as antagonists (Luke/Acts, Revelation) to appropriation of salvation history and sacred texts (Luke/Acts), to opposing “Judaizing” movements (PE, Ignatius), to gentile Christianity with no particular fondness for the Israelite past (PE).

Plausible reconstructions and patristic statements notwithstanding, the Johannine tradition has not penetrated the Ephesus of Ignatius. Polycarp finds 1 John useful against docetists, but he does not identify the citation. Paul is the only apostle named. If Johannine circles were prominent at Ephesus—and it is reasonable to credit the opponents of 1 John with putting docetism onto the Asian map—they were all, docetists (expectedly) and incarnationalists (inappropriately), essentially invisible. Cerinthus is no more than a vague candidate for the role of an opponent to the Pastor. In short, two boxes of data exist, that of the texts, which reveal mainly Pauline influences, and another composed of patristic references, which include John and Co., Cerinthus, and Marcion.

Trajectories are barely traceable: from Galatians to Colossians through those opposed by John the Seer to radical Paulinists culminating in Marcion, another from Romans to Ephesians to Luke and Acts ... to Irenaeus, in one direction, from Ephesians to Valentinus in another. These will include gaps and a faint web of interconnections.

If one grants, for the sake of argument, that the foregoing has demonstrated that Luke fits into the Ephesian milieu roughly at the threshold of the PE and at least a decade before Ignatius, it remains possible for those who date Ignatius 105–115 and the PE 80–100, to say, “We agree. Luke *does* belong in proximity to the PE and in the period leading up to Ignatius (although our arguments for the date of Acts do not use data of this nature).” What is this poor old scholar to do? Has he devoted all of this time and effort only to support a date scarcely later than 95?

The telescope approach is not without its difficulties. Those who promote it¹⁰⁷ must posit a period of very rapid development between the composition of the gospels and the catholic epistles, all of which would have had to be in print, so to speak, by c. 80, followed, after the explosion, by a generation in which nothing happened. Rome would wait for nearly four decades to get a proper episcopal system in place. Marcion and Valentinus would spring up in a parched and somnolent garden. Granted that development does not take place at a uniform pace, what this chronological scheme requires places Asia well out of synch with other Christians. The developmental argument will lack appeal for some scholars, who may choose not to regard it as “hard” evidence, but it does possess weight. The single, most incontrovertible obstacle to this scheme is the bishop of Smyrna. Polycarp did interact with Ignatius and he holds a place close to the PE, but no one nowadays would try to place him c. 105–110,

107. Trebilco does commend most of these early dates, but he does not erect a theory of church history upon them.

for he was martyred c. 156–157, possibly two decades later than that—a fifty-year stretch between seeing Ignatius on his way and writing to Philippi before martyrdom is too much to ask of anyone, even a saintly old pastor. He is the lynchpin. The dates proposed above have greater probability, and, in sum, Acts is at home in Ephesus during the second decade of the second century.

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