

ST. PAUL IN ROME  
4. THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS<sup>1</sup>

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I

FIFTY years ago—on 11 October 1916, to be precise—the first incumbent of the Rylands Chair in Manchester University delivered a lecture in this Library to which he gave the title “The Quintessence of Paulinism”.<sup>2</sup> It was a characteristically judicious presentation of those features which Professor Peake considered (and rightly so) to constitute the pith of Paul’s teaching.

But there is a first-century document to which this same title, “The Quintessence of Paulinism”, might well be given. It is the document which we know by its traditional title, “The Epistle to the Ephesians”. My present purpose is to show that this document in large measure sums up the leading themes of the Pauline epistles, and at the same time the central motive of Paul’s ministry as apostle to the Gentiles.

II

I do not propose to enter into the question of the authorship of Ephesians, as I have no fresh contribution to make to it. The arguments for direct Pauline authorship have been most ably presented by E. Percy,<sup>3</sup> those against by C. L. Mitton.<sup>4</sup> I will not say, like a colleague of mine in another English University, that when I read Dr. Percy I feel that the epistle is non-Pauline,

<sup>1</sup> A lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on Wednesday, the 9th of November 1966.

<sup>2</sup> BULLETIN, iv (1917-18), 285 ff., reprinted in J. T. Wilkinson (ed.), *Arthur Samuel Peake* (London, 1958), pp. 116 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Die Probleme der Kolosser- und Epheserbriefe* (Lund, 1946).

<sup>4</sup> *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Oxford, 1951).

while when I read Dr. Mitton I feel that it is Pauline after all. It is the contents of the epistle, not the authorship, that I propose to look at, and in this regard it will suffice to say, with G. B. Caird, that Ephesians, "if it is not by Paul, is a masterly summary of Paul's theology by a disciple who was capable of thinking Paul's thoughts after him".<sup>1</sup>

Ephesians is not an easy document for New Testament students to come to terms with. Markus Barth calls it "a stranger at the door"<sup>2</sup> of the Pauline corpus. E. J. Goodspeed speaks of it as "the Waterloo of commentators"<sup>3</sup>—an ambiguous expression. Waterloo may be a defeat to a Frenchman, a victory to a Briton, but what does it mean on the lips of an American? The context suggests that to most commentators Ephesians means what Waterloo meant to Napoleon, not to Wellington. More promisingly, Goodspeed describes the epistle as "a great rhapsody of the Christian salvation".<sup>4</sup> It reads, he says, "like a commentary on the Pauline letters"<sup>5</sup>—which is true, but a trifle odd in a work which, a few lines previously, has referred to it as "a mosaic of Pauline materials".<sup>6</sup> A mosaic made up of fragments of a man's writings is not best calculated to provide a commentary on them.

In a recent book mention is made of an unnamed writer who, "anxious to preserve Ephesians for Paul", says that "Ephesians may look like a compilation of Pauline phrases, but if looked at as a whole it has a unity". "So", say the authors of the book, "has a pile of stones, no matter what kind or by whom brought

<sup>1</sup> *The Apostolic Age* (London, 1955), p. 133. Cf. S. H. Hooke; "Ephesians, . . . if not by Paul, certainly belongs to the Pauline exposition of the glory" (*Alpha and Omega* (Welwyn, 1961), p. 256). P. N. Harrison adds that the author of Ephesians "knew how to put into words, and so make explicit, thoughts which are implicit in Paul's other letters, but nowhere else so explicit as here" (*Paulines and Pastorals* (London, 1964), p. 35). See further the two opening papers, "The Case for the Pauline Authorship" by J. N. Sanders (pp. 9 ff.) and "The Case against the Pauline Authorship" by D. E. Nineham (pp. 21 ff.) in F. L. Cross (ed.), *Studies in Ephesians* (London, 1956); also H. J. Cadbury, "The Dilemma of Ephesians", *New Testament Studies*, v (1958-9), 91 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *The Broken Wall* (London, 1960), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *The Meaning of Ephesians* (Chicago, 1933), p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> *The Meaning of Ephesians*, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *The Meaning of Ephesians*, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> *The Meaning of Ephesians*, p. 8.

together—if looked at as a unity."<sup>1</sup> The analogy is inexact: the structural unity of Ephesians is not like that of a pile of stones but much more like that of its own "building fitly framed together".<sup>2</sup> Such a careful literary structure, indeed, is no proof of Pauline authorship; one could well imagine its being used as an argument *against* Pauline authorship. But an elaborately constructed work like this, with its own inner unity, a work which Samuel Taylor Coleridge could characterize as "the divinest composition of man",<sup>3</sup> cannot properly be compared to a cairn, or even to a mosaic painstakingly pieced together with fragments from other Pauline epistles.

### III

"In form", says Goodspeed, "it is an encyclical."<sup>4</sup> This is a widely held view, and some support is given to it by the textual phenomena of the salutation with which it commences, which throw doubt on the originality of the words "at Ephesus".<sup>5</sup> Perhaps we may call it a general letter to Gentile Christians, more particularly in the province of Asia—Gentile Christians who (like the readers of 1 Peter) needed to be shown what was involved in their recent commitment to the way of Christ. The personal notes at the end of Ephesians link it with Colossians,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Q. Morton and J. McLeman, *Paul: The Man and the Myth* (London, 1966), pp. 27 f.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. ii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Table Talk*, 25 May, 1830; see H. N. Coleridge (ed.), *Specimens of the Table Talk of the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London, 1835), p. 88. "The Epistle to the Ephesians", Coleridge said on this occasion, "is evidently a catholic epistle, addressed to the whole of what might be called St. Paul's diocese. . . . It embraces every doctrine of Christianity;—first, those doctrines peculiar to Christianity, and then those precepts common to it with natural religion."

<sup>4</sup> *The Meaning of Ephesians*, p. 3. Goodspeed's own view, in which he is followed by the "Chicago school" and by P. N. Harrison, was that Ephesians was composed by the first editor of the Pauline corpus to serve as an introduction to it.

<sup>5</sup> ἐν Ἐφέσῳ om. P<sup>46</sup> κ \* B \* 424<sup>c</sup> 1739 Orig. etc. See T. W. Manson in *BULLETIN*, xxxi (1947-8), 228 f.; *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (Manchester, 1962), pp. 229 f.

<sup>6</sup> The reference to Tychicus in Eph. vi. 21 f. is almost a verbatim reproduction of Col. iv. 7 f.

and provide a formal justification for including a study of Ephesians in a series on "St. Paul in Rome".

Even apart from these personal references, Ephesians has other close links with Colossians, material as well as verbal. If in Colossians the cosmic role of Christ has been unfolded,<sup>1</sup> Ephesians considers the implications of this for the Church as the body of Christ—what is the Church's relation to Christ's cosmic role, to the principalities and powers, to God's eternal purpose? This change of perspective from Christ to the Church goes far to explain the different nuances with which such keywords as "fulness" (πλήρωμα) and "mystery" (μυστήριον) are used in Ephesians as compared with Colossians.

Ephesians has manifest affinities also with 1 Corinthians; in particular, it universalizes the teaching about the Church which in the earlier epistle is applied to the life of one local congregation.

Nor should its relation to certain parts of Romans be overlooked. If Paul in Romans emphasizes that "there is no difference" between Jew and Gentile (Rom. iii. 22; x. 12), either "in Adam" or "in Christ", Ephesians emphasizes that all the spiritual blessings which are available to men "in the heavenly realm in Christ Jesus" are accessible on an equal footing to Jews and Gentiles alike (Eph. i. 3; ii. 6, etc.). If Paul in Romans magnifies his office as apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. xi. 13)<sup>2</sup> and tells how he has discharged this ministry, winning obedience from the Gentiles "from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum" (Rom. xv. 15-21), Ephesians presents him as "a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles" (Eph. iii. 1) and sees an astounding token of divine grace in the fact that Paul, of all people,<sup>3</sup> has been chosen "to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. iii. 8).

<sup>1</sup> See "St. Paul in Rome. 3. The Epistle to the Colossians", BULLETIN, xlviii (1965-6), 268 ff.

<sup>2</sup> He magnifies his office because it will be the indirect means of the conversion of his fellow-countrymen; apostle to the Gentiles though he is, he has closely at heart the spiritual welfare of his Jewish kith and kin. On the relation between Ephesians and Rom. ix-xi cf. H. Chadwick, "Die Absicht des Epheserbriefes", ZNTW, li (1960), 145 ff., especially p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the similar sentiment in 1 Cor. xv. 9 f.

In the light of such affinities between Ephesians and other outstanding letters in the Pauline corpus, it is not so easy to accept the view, expounded principally by Heinrich Schlier, that Ephesians is indebted for its dominant themes to Gnostic sources and only in two or three instances to the common stock of primitive Christianity.<sup>1</sup> This thesis calls for serious study and evaluation, but I find it much less cogent than the interpretation of Ephesians as an exposition of dominant themes of Paul's ministry.

#### IV

Among dominant Pauline themes justification by faith is the one that comes most readily to many minds. Luther's discovery of justification by faith in the writings of Paul, and his use of it as a touchstone to determine, if not the genuineness, at least the value of everything handed down as sacred scripture, has, I think, made it difficult for many of his followers to see much else in Paul,<sup>2</sup> and has inclined them to dismiss as non-Pauline, or at best as deutero-Pauline, any document in the Pauline corpus in which justification by faith does not play the central part that it does in Galatians and Romans. How does Ephesians fare in this regard? Certainly justification by faith is not a central theme in Ephesians, but it underlies the argument of the epistle, so much so that it is assumed rather than expressed, apart from Ephesians ii. 8 f.: "by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast." This is precisely the point of

<sup>1</sup> H. Schlier, *Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief* (Tübingen, 1930). From the common stock of Christian language about Christ's saving work, he points out, come statements about Christ's giving himself up for his people (Eph. v. 2, 25) and about God's raising him from the dead and putting all things beneath his feet (Eph. i. 20, 22). For the rest, Schlier derives from the world of Gnostic thought the concepts of the redeemer's ascent to heaven, the heavenly wall, the heavenly man, the church as the body of Christ, the body of Christ as a heavenly building, and the heavenly bridal union. See the summary of his thesis by K. L. Schmidt in Kittel's *T.W.N.T.* iii (Stuttgart, 1938), 512 ff. (Eng. trans., 509 ff.); abridged in *The Church* (Bible Key Words, London, 1950), pp. 15 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Although in the eyes of others it is a "subsidiary crater" (*Nebenkrater*) in Pauline theology; cf. A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (Eng. tr., London, 1931), p. 225.

Romans iii. 27 ("Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On the principle of works? No, but on the principle of faith") or of 1 Corinthians i. 30 f. (God "is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord'").

## V

Less prominence is given to the parousia, the manifestation of Christ in glory. This theme is plain enough in Colossians (cf. Col. iii. 4, "When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory"), but in Ephesians it is present only by implication. When, for example, the purpose of the Church's hallowing and cleansing is said to be its presentation to Christ "in splendour, without spot or wrinkle" (Eph. v. 26 f.), this presentation is most naturally contemplated as coinciding with the parousia, as it certainly does elsewhere in the Pauline corpus. The parousia is also "the day of redemption" against which, according to Ephesians iv. 30, the people of Christ are sealed with the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

## VI

This brings us to a major Pauline doctrine which is undoubtedly dominant in Ephesians—the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Central as it is to Paul's teaching, this doctrine is practically absent from Colossians,<sup>2</sup> and in view of the affinity between Colossians and Ephesians it is all the more striking to note its dominance in Ephesians.

In the New Testament in general the presence of the Holy Spirit is a sign that the last days have come, in accordance with the words of Joel ii. 28 quoted by Peter in Jerusalem on the first Christian Pentecost: "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh . . ." (Acts

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Eph. i. 14.

<sup>2</sup> The Spirit is mentioned incidentally in Col. i. 8 ("your love in the Spirit").

ii. 16 ff.). The presence of the Spirit, moreover, is the witness that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the one who (in John the Baptist's words) would baptize with the Holy Spirit; in other words, the new era which Jesus' passion and triumph inaugurated is the age of the Spirit to which the prophets pointed forward. This emphasis on the Spirit's vindicating witness to Jesus as Messiah and Lord pervades the New Testament; it is found in Acts,<sup>1</sup> in the Johannine Gospel<sup>2</sup> and Epistles,<sup>3</sup> and in 1 Peter.<sup>4</sup> It is found also in Paul, in whose eyes the age of the Spirit has superseded the age of the Torah<sup>5</sup>—hence his anathema in Galatians i. 8 f. against those who endeavour to reimpose the Jewish law on converts to Christianity, for to him the implication of such an attempt is that the age of the Torah is still running, therefore the age of the Spirit has not yet dawned, therefore Jesus was not the anointed Lord whose function was to inaugurate the age of the Spirit.<sup>6</sup>

But in addition to the general early Christian teaching on the Spirit, which Paul had received, he makes at least two distinctive contributions: (i) the Holy Spirit is the present earnest of coming resurrection and glory<sup>7</sup> and (ii) it is in the Holy Spirit that the people of Christ have been baptized into one corporate entity.<sup>8</sup> Both of these contributions, expounded in Paul's "capital" epistles (those to the Romans, Corinthians and Galatians), are emphasized in Ephesians.

(i) The Holy Spirit is called in Ephesians "the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13). This does not mean, as the R.S.V. renders it, that he is "the promised Holy Spirit" (true though that is, as witness Acts i. 4 f., ii. 33); the context rather indicates that to those whom he indwells the Holy Spirit is himself the promise of resurrection life and all the heritage of glory associated with it. The *locus classicus* for this view of the Spirit is Romans viii. 9 ff. There "the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead" will "quicken" the mortal bodies of those who

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 33, v. 32.

<sup>2</sup> John xv. 26, xvi. 8-10, 14 f.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John v. 7 f.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter i. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. vii. 6, viii. 2, 4; 2 Cor. iii. 3 ff.; Gal. iii. 2 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. L. Baeck, "The Faith of Paul", *Journal of Jewish Studies*, iii (1952), 93 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. viii. 10 ff., especially verse 23; 2 Cor. i. 22, v. 5.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 13.

believe in Jesus. He is "the Spirit of adoption" in the sense that he enables believers to realize their privileges and responsibilities as sons of God against the day when they will be publicly revealed as such. This "revelation of the sons of God" (for which, as Paul says, all creation eagerly waits in order to share "the liberty of the glory of the children of God") is called our "adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies". And of this consummation believers here and now possess the "first fruits" (*ἀπαρχή*) in the form of the Spirit. To the same effect Paul in 2 Corinthians v. 5, where he speaks of believers' coming investiture with their "heavenly dwelling", says: "He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee (*ἀρραβών*)."

This insistence that the Spirit is for believers their "first fruits" or "guarantee" appears in Ephesians i. 13, where they are reminded—Gentiles as well as Jews—that on believing in Christ they were "sealed" with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is "the guarantee (*ἀρραβών*) of our inheritance, pending God's redemption of his own possession". (This collocation of "seal" and "guarantee" in reference to the Spirit has already occurred in 2 Corinthians i. 22: "God has sealed us and set the guarantee of the Spirit in our hearts.") Again, in Ephesians iv. 30 the warning is given: "do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption"—here, as in Ephesians i. 14, the "redemption" is identical with "the redemption of our bodies" mentioned in Romans viii. 23.

When this sealing is regarded as taking place has been debated with some animation<sup>1</sup>; to me it seems clear that it coincides with the occasion indicated in 1 Corinthians xii. 13: "in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were watered with one Spirit".

(ii) This quotation of 1 Corinthians xii. 13 brings us to Paul's other distinctive contribution to the doctrine of the Spirit, for it is summed up there. This baptism in the Spirit—Christ himself being the baptizer, in fulfilment of John the Baptist's prophecy<sup>2</sup>—is not simply an individual experience; it is the divine

<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* (London, 1951).

<sup>2</sup> Mark i. 8; John i. 33; Acts i. 5, xi. 16 and (by implication) xix. 1-6.

act by which believers in Christ are incorporated into his body. Elsewhere Paul speaks of being "baptized into Christ" (Gal. iii. 27; Rom. vi. 3) or "putting on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27; Rom. xiii. 14) with the plain implication that incorporation into Christ is involved, but it is in 1 Corinthians xii. 13, quoted at the end of the foregoing paragraph, that the Spirit's part in this experience finds expression. And the i's of 1 Corinthians xii. 13 are dotted and its t's crossed in Ephesians iv. 3, where the readers are enjoined to be sure to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". This "unity of the Spirit" is the unity of the body of Christ into which the people of Christ are brought by his Spirit for, in the words which immediately follow, "there is one body and one Spirit" (Eph. iv. 4).<sup>1</sup>

In Ephesians ii. 19 ff. the Church is portrayed rather as a building than as a body (although, just as architectural language is used of the body in Eph. iv. 12-16, so biological language is used of the building in Eph. ii. 21); but here too it is "in the Spirit" that the building takes shape, as the individual components are bonded together by Christ the "corner-stone". Here too it is in that same "one Spirit" that Jewish and Gentile believers together have common access to the Father (cf. Rom. v. 2), or (by a change of figure) constitute a holy dwelling-place or temple for God (an idea anticipated in 1 Cor. iii. 16 f.).

## VII

These concepts of the body of Christ and the temple of God are interwoven with the concept of the New Man. In a mingling of the architectural and biological figures, we read in Ephesians iv. 13 ff. of the full-grown man (*ἀνὴρ τέλειος*), "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ", which is the climax of the Church's development as the body of Christ is built up, growing

<sup>1</sup> The "unity (*ἐνότης*) of the Spirit" which the readers are charged to keep is not, of course, the fact that there is one Spirit (which cannot be affected by anything they do or fail to do); it is a consequence of that fact. Eph. iv. 4-6 to some extent echoes 1 Cor. xii. 4-6; both passages include the co-ordinated "Spirit . . . Lord . . . God". The repeated "one" in Eph. iv. 4-6 anticipates the later eastern creeds; cf. R. R. Williams, "Logic versus Experience in the Order of Credal Formulae", *NTS*, i (1954-55), 42 ff.

up to match him who is its head. Christ as the Second Man, the Last Adam, the head and embodiment of the new creation, meets us in Romans v. 12-19 and 1 Corinthians xv. 20-28, 42-50. When believers' putting on Christ is mentioned in Romans xiii. 14 and Galatians iii. 27, this (as we have seen) is not so much a question of personal *imitatio Christi* as of incorporation into Christ. So, when Colossians and Ephesians speak of putting on the new man, "who is being renewed in knowledge after the image of his creator" (Col. iii. 10), "created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. iv. 24)<sup>1</sup> the new man is Christ himself—not Christ in isolation from his people, but Christ *in* his people, the same Christ as Paul has in mind when he tells his Galatian converts that he endures birth-pangs over them "until Christ be formed" in them (Gal. iv. 19).

When we bear these earlier Pauline references in mind, there is no need to look to extraneous sources for the concept of the "new" or "perfect" man. Neither need we be surprised that the Church in Ephesians is the Church Universal rather than the local congregation.

Ephesians, as has been said above, universalizes the church doctrine of 1 Corinthians, but the universal principle which finds clear expression in Ephesians is already latent in 1 Corinthians, which is addressed not only to "the church of God that is in Corinth" but also to "all those who in every place<sup>2</sup> call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. i. 1). The oneness of the Church is bound up with the fact that there is one Spirit, one

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the "new man" of Eph. ii. 15, who comprises former Jew and former Gentile in one. There, as in Eph. iv. 24, the "new man" is the *καινός άνθρωπος*, whereas in Col. iii. 10 he is the *νέος άνθρωπος*. But no difference in meaning can be pressed here between *καινός* and *νέος*, for in Eph. iv. 23 putting on the *καινός άνθρωπος* is equivalent to *ἀνανεοῦσθαι* ("being renewed") in the spirit of their mind, while in Col. iii. 10 the verb *ἀνακαινώνω* is used for the renewal of the *νέος άνθρωπος*. With the new man we must compare the "inner man" (*ὁ ἔσω άνθρωπος*) of Rom. vii. 22 and 2 Cor. iv. 16, who appears also in Eph. iii. 16. It is in the *παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος* of Rom. vi. 6 and the *ἔσω ἄνθρωπος* of Rom. vii. 22 that we find the source of the "new man" concept rather than in the Gnostic "redeemer" myth (cf. J. Horst in Kittel, *T.W.N.T.* iv (1942), 570 [Eng. trans. 565], n. 79, s.v. *μέλος*).

<sup>2</sup> On the significance of "place" in 1 Cor. i. 1 cf. T. W. Manson, *BULLETIN*, xxvi (1941-2), 119 f.; *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, pp. 208 f.

Lord and one God; it follows that there is one people of Christ, indwelt by the one Spirit, confessing the one Lord and through him worshipping the one God, and comprising indifferently those who were formerly separated as Jews on the one hand and Gentiles on the other.

There are plainly to be recognized in the New Testament elements of what our German colleagues call *Frühkatholizismus*—early Catholicism. Chief among these elements is the conception of the Church throughout the world as a unity, which characterizes Ephesians. But it has been too generally accepted as axiomatic that early Catholicism has no place in authentic Paulinism, so that any document in which it appears, even if it bears Paul's name, cannot be a genuine epistle of Paul.<sup>1</sup>

Like so many other theological axioms, this one calls for scrutiny, and under scrutiny it loses something of its plausibility. We might *a priori* have expected Paul to think of Christians throughout his mission field as forming a unity. "Israel after the flesh" did not exist only in local synagogues; it was an ecumenical reality. The synagogue in any place was the local manifestation of the whole "congregation of Israel". The same situation governed the new Israel.

What we should have expected *a priori* is confirmed by the evidence in the "capital" epistles that Paul had a deep concern for Christian unity—not only the unity of his own Gentile mission

<sup>1</sup> Thus E. Käsemann says that "in the New Testament it is Ephesians that most clearly marks the transition from the Pauline tradition to the perspective of the early Catholic era"; he compares the epistle in this respect with Acts ("Ephesians and Acts", *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn (Nashville, 1966), pp. 288 ff.). On this point H. Küng takes issue with Käsemann and others in *The Structures of the Church* (Eng. trans., London, 1965), pp. 142 ff., charging them with establishing a reduced New Testament canon within the received canon by relegating to an inferior status anything that savours of "early Catholic decadence". S. Neill points out that in German Protestant theology the term *Frühkatholizismus* is used "always as a term of reproach" (*The Interpretation of the New Testament* (London, 1964), p. 160). It is noteworthy that when H. Schlier, author of *Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief*, became convinced that early Catholicism and other features commonly labelled "accretions" were part and parcel of apostolic Christianity, he not only became a member of the Roman Catholic Church but found it possible to regard Ephesians as an authentic epistle of Paul (cf. his commentary, *Der Brief an die Epheser*<sup>5</sup> (Düsseldorf, 1965), pp. 22 ff.).

but the unity which embraced his Gentile mission on the one hand with the Jerusalem church and the Jewish mission on the other.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, all Christians according to Paul were baptized "into Christ", not merely into a local fellowship. All who were baptized into Christ (and had thus "put on" Christ) inevitably formed part of one spiritual entity. In baptism they had been united with Christ in his death, to rise with him in the likeness of his resurrection and so "walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 3-5). They had, in other words, become members of the body of Christ, baptized into it "in one Spirit". The Christians in Corinth are reminded that they are Christ's body, and individually members thereof (1 Cor. xii. 27); similarly those in Rome are told that "we" (that is, not the Roman Christians alone but the Roman Christians in fellowship with Paul and others), "though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Rom. xii. 5).<sup>2</sup> To Paul's way of thinking Christ could no more be divided between the several congregations than he could be divided between the factions within the congregation at Corinth. The explicit appearance of the Church Universal in Colossians and more particularly Ephesians is a corollary of Paul's understanding of the phrase "in Christ" and all that goes with it.

Language such as Paul uses to the Corinthian and Roman Christians about membership in the body of Christ could not be locally restricted, even if the occasions that called forth the "capital" epistles directed its application to the requirements of local fellowship. All believers—in Corinth and Rome, in Jerusalem and Ephesus, and everywhere else—had together died with Christ and been raised with him; as participators in his risen life they could not but constitute one Christian fellowship.

### VIII

This experience of passing in Christ from death to life may also be expressed in terms of passing from darkness to light, and

<sup>1</sup> An evident token of this is his collection for the Jerusalem "saints" (cf. Gal. ii. 10; 2 Cor. ix. 11-14; Rom. xv. 25-27).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the similar use of μέλη ("members") in Eph. iv. 16, 25, v. 30.

it is so expressed in Ephesians v. 7-14. "Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord", the readers are told, in language which has affinities elsewhere in the Pauline corpus,<sup>1</sup> as also in the Johannine writings<sup>2</sup> and in the Qumran literature.<sup>3</sup> The point is driven home by the quotation of the tristich:

Awake, O thou that sleepest,  
And from the dead arouse thee,  
And Christ shall dawn upon thee.

Although this is introduced by the phrase διὸ λέγει, as though it were holy writ, it is no precise Old Testament quotation, and has often been regarded as part of an early Christian baptismal hymn. The rhythm, it has been said, is similar to that of initiation formulae used in various mystery cults,<sup>4</sup> but the content is entirely Christian.<sup>5</sup> In the context of Ephesians v. 14, where the light reveals all things as they truly are, these words constitute a call to the sinner to abandon his old course and embrace a new way of life; they express the experience which, according to Paul, is sacramentally realized in baptism: "we were buried with him through baptism into death, in order that, as Christ was raised from the dead through the Father's glory,<sup>6</sup> so we too should walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 4).

### IX

Emphasizing the equal incorporation within the Christian community of Jews and Gentiles—two groups which had previously been estranged from each other—Ephesians says that Christ "has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition"—the breaking down of this wall being otherwise described as his removal of the hostility between the two groups,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 Thess. v. 5; Col. i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. John iii. 19 ff., xii. 35 ff.; 1 John i. 7, ii. 8 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See BULLETIN, xlix (1966-67), 81 f.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the Attis initiation formula quoted in Firmicus Maternus, *Err. prof. rel.* 18. 1.

<sup>5</sup> On this see K. G. Kuhn, "Der Epheserbrief im Lichte der Qumrantexte", *NTS* vii (1960-61), 334 ff., especially pp. 339 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Here the relation between δόξα and φῶς should be borne in mind.

his annulling of "the law consisting of commandments, ordinances and all" (Eph. ii. 14 f.).

It is a commonplace with British commentators on Ephesians to suggest that this "middle wall of partition" may have been suggested by the barrier which separated the inner courts of the Jerusalem temple from the Court of the Gentiles, a barrier which Gentiles were forbidden to penetrate on pain of death.<sup>1</sup> German commentators, on the other hand, are more inclined to think of the barrier which, in some Gnostic texts, separates the world beneath from the upper world of light.<sup>2</sup>

Without examining the question whether this concept in its Gnostic form was current as early as the first century A.D.,<sup>3</sup> we may ask which of the two barriers provides the more apt analogy to the thought of Ephesians ii. 14. The barrier in the temple was a vertical one; the "iron curtain" of the Gnostic texts was horizontal. The division in view in Ephesians ii. 14 is not a division between the upper and lower world; it is a division between two groups of people resident in this world, and is therefore more aptly represented by a vertical barrier than by a horizontal one—the more so as the two groups which were kept apart by this "middle wall of partition" are exactly the same two groups as were kept apart by the barrier in the Jerusalem temple.

It may indeed be asked, as it is by M. Dibelius,<sup>4</sup> if the readers of Ephesians ii. 14 would have understood such an allusion. Perhaps not; but would they have understood a Gnostic allusion any better? There is in any case no emphasis on a material barrier. But whatever the readers may or may not have understood, the writer may well have had at the back of his mind that

<sup>1</sup> E.g. J. A. Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (London, 1904), pp. 59 f. (On the barrier see Josephus, *B.J.* v. 194.)

<sup>2</sup> E.g. H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, pp. 126 ff., following his treatment of "Die himmlische Mauer" in *Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief*, pp. 18 ff.

<sup>3</sup> This question is especially provoked when attempts are made to reconstruct the concept of the heavenly wall (or other Gnostic concepts) on the basis of Mandaeen texts which are several centuries later than the New Testament age.

<sup>4</sup> In Lietzmann's *Handbuch zum NT*, iii (Tübingen, 1911-13), 105; cf. H. Schlier, *Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief*, p. 18. E. J. Goodspeed sees the temple barrier here, but considers that its figurative use in this context was suggested by its actual destruction in A.D. 70 (*The Meaning of Ephesians*, p. 37).

temple barrier which played an important part in the chain of events through which Paul became (to quote Eph. iii. 1) "the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles". For, according to Acts xxi. 27 ff., Paul's arrest came about because he was charged with aiding and abetting illegal entry by a Gentile through the temple barrier. The charge could not be sustained when it came to court, as no witnesses were forthcoming, but Paul was not released; he remained in custody, first in Caesarea and then in Rome. That literal "middle wall of partition", the outward and visible sign of the ancient cleavage between Jew and Gentile, could have come very readily to mind in this situation.

This is further suggested by the emphasis laid a few lines later on the common access to the Father which Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ now enjoy "in one Spirit".<sup>1</sup> The barrier which formerly kept Gentiles at a distance from the God of Israel has been abrogated, and even Jewish believers have now more unimpeded access to God in this "holy sanctuary" of living men and women than was available to them in the earthly temple where, in accordance with their status, they had to maintain a respectful distance. For the barrier which excluded Gentiles from the inner courts was not the only barrier there. There was a further succession of barriers in the inner precincts, barring various groups of Israelites from nearer access. Beyond the Court of the Women Jewish women might not proceed; beyond the Court of Israel Jewish laymen might not proceed. Into the Court of the Priests and the outer compartment of the holy house itself priests and Levites might enter in the performance of their prescribed duties, but the heavy veil which curtailed off the inner compartment barred all access to the throne-room of God's invisible presence except to the high priest when he entered it annually on the Day of Atonement with sacrificial blood. His direct access then was an occasion for soul-affliction; in the spiritual sanctuary of Ephesians ii. 21 the direct access to God which all believers enjoy is an occasion for gladness and praise. This direct access is a major theme of the Epistle to the Ephesians and the Epistle to the Hebrews alike; but whereas the barrier which Hebrews uses as an illustration is the veil which

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 18, 21.



hung before the holy of holies, that which is more probably envisaged in Ephesians is the one which forced Gentiles to keep their distance.

## X

Something more in the nature of the horizontal barrier may, however, be discerned in another passage in Ephesians. In Ephesians iv. 8-10 there is a remarkable commentary in what we have now learned to call *peshet* style on the words of Psalm lxxviii. 18. "When he ascended on high", the quotation runs (turning the second person of the original into the third), "he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men."

The context of Psalm lxxviii seems to portray a triumphal procession ascending the sacred hill of Zion: the conquering hero is followed by a train of captives and his route is lined by his exultant fellow-citizens. The temple singers acclaim him as victor, and tell how he has "received gifts among men"—a reference, probably, to the tribute paid him by the vanquished. Or the leader of the triumphal procession may be no human conqueror but Yahweh himself, his invisible presence betokened by the Ark of the Covenant, safe home from leading Israel into battle and now being carried up to its shrine at the head of the procession. In this case the tribute of subject nations is paid direct to the God of Israel.

Whichever of these interpretations of the Psalm be preferred, it is not in terms of its historical setting that verse 18 is expounded in Ephesians iv. 8-10. Even if the historical setting had been taken into account, an acclamation of the God of Israel or of his Anointed King would have been equally appropriate for the present application of the words to the one who was "born of the seed of David according to the flesh but appointed Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. i. 3 f.). What is most striking is that, instead of the Massoretic and Septuagint reading, "received gifts among men", a reading is here chosen which agrees with the Aramaic Targum and the Syriac version: "gave gifts to men". In the Targum this is interpreted of Moses ascending

Mount Sinai to receive the tables of the law and deliver them as God's gift to men. But in Ephesians it is interpreted of Christ's ascent on high and his bestowal thence upon his church of the ministers or ministries necessary for its growth to maturity.

It is in the exposition of Psalm lxxviii. 18 that a horizontal barrier is possibly implied. This is the barrier between "the lower parts of the earth" (τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς) and the upper world, "far above all the heavens" (ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν), which Christ broke when he ascended. But if it is implied, no particular stress is laid on it. On the verb "ascended" in the Psalm the comment is made:

What does this mean if not that he first of all *descended* into the lower parts of the earth? He who *descended* is the same who *ascended* far above all the heavens, in order to fill the universe.

In this exposition the crucial question is whether by "the lower parts of the earth" the earth itself is indicated (as being "lower" in relation to the world above), or the underworld (as being "lower" in relation to the earth). It is not possible to reach complete certainty. Comparison with Romans x. 6 f., where (in a *peshet* exegesis of Deut. xxx. 12-14) ascending into heaven is contrasted with descending into the abyss, suggests the latter interpretation; comparison with John iii. 13 (and the Gospel of John has special affinities with the Epistle to the Ephesians) suggests the former, for in John iii. 13 the Son of Man's ascent into heaven is paralleled by his coming down from heaven (that is, to earth). Traditionally the passage has been interpreted of the *descensus ad inferos* and the harrowing of hell, and the "leading captivity captive" has been understood in this sense; but in Ephesians the "leading captivity captive" appears simply in the quotation from the psalm, playing no part in the following exegesis. If there is any implied significance in the quotation of the words, they might refer to the despoiling of principalities and powers described in Colossians ii. 15. But this was effected on the cross, not in Hades. On the whole, I am disposed to take τῆς γῆς in τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς as genitive of definition—that is, to regard earth itself as being the "lower" realm into which Christ is here said to have descended. But the point of the reference to his successive descent and ascent, which is not

affected by our resolution one way or another of this *crux interpretum*, is that by this twofold movement Christ fills the universe, upper and lower realms alike, with his presence.<sup>1</sup>

## XI

One of the most interesting points of affinity between Ephesians and the Qumran texts lies in the idea of the "mysteries" of God. These "mysteries" are not *arcana*; they have been revealed, but even when they are revealed they remain mysteries until they are interpreted in terms of their fulfilment. The pattern of *rāz* ("mystery") and *peshet* ("interpretation") in the Aramaic sections of Daniel, where the former requires the latter to complete and explain it, reappears in the Qumran texts (pre-eminently in commentaries) and in the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> Paul, for example, speaks of himself and his fellow-apostles as "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1)—servants of God called to proclaim that what had been "promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures" (Rom. i. 2)<sup>3</sup> was now accomplished, and was made plain by the fact of that accomplishment, being embodied in Christ and the gospel.

But Paul speaks not only of the mysteries in the plural, but also (comprehensively) of "the mystery" in the singular, for all the revelation of God has been consummated in Christ. So in Colossians ii. 2 f. he speaks of his desire that his readers and the other churches in the Lycus valley may attain "the knowledge of God's mystery—that is, of Christ himself—in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden" (but no longer hidden from those who have attained this knowledge). This mystery is unfolded in the gospel; so the doxology at the end of Romans mentions "my gospel and the proclamation concerning

<sup>1</sup> How evenly balanced is the evidence for either view may be illustrated by a series of entries in Kittel's *Theologisches Wörterbuch*. In Vol. i (1933), 520 (Eng. trans., 522 f.), *s.v.* ἀναβαίνω, J. Schneider argued for the "lower realm" being earth itself; in Vol. iv (1942), p. 602 (Eng. trans., 597 f.), *s.v.* μέρος, he acknowledges a change of mind, having been persuaded thereto by F. Büchsel's entry on *κατώτερος* in Vol. iii (1938), pp. 641 f. (Eng. trans., 640 f.).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (London, 1960), pp. 7 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Rom. iii. 21.

Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was shrouded in silence in eternal ages but has now been made manifest, and through prophetic writings, according to the commandment of the eternal God, made known to all the nations for the obedience of faith" (Rom. xvi. 25 f.).

As one called to make known among the Gentiles "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. iii. 8) Paul might well appreciate the honour of being entrusted with the stewardship of such a "mystery", nor is it surprising that at times he concentrates on some aspect of the gospel specially related to his own ministry and speaks of it as a mystery. In Colossians i. 26 f., for example, he calls the subject-matter of his ministry "the mystery which has been kept hidden from ages and generations but has now been made manifest to the people of God, to whom God has been well pleased to make known what is the glorious wealth of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you [even in you Gentiles], the hope of glory". That Gentiles would come to worship the God of Israel was a theme of Old Testament expectation; in Romans xv. 9-12 Paul reproduces a catena of passages from the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms to this effect. But that Gentiles should have the Messiah of Israel, now the exalted Lord, dwelling in their hearts by faith as the living hope of coming glory—this was something completely un contemplated before: it was bound up with Paul's own Gentile apostolate and was the subject of a new revelation. Similarly in Ephesians iii. 9 the substance of this mystery now for the first time divulged is said to be "that the Gentiles should be joint heirs, fellow-members of the one body, sharers of the promise conveyed in Christ Jesus through the gospel". Not the Gentiles without the Jews, or even in preference to the Jews, but the Gentiles on the same basis as the Jews—Gentiles and Jews alike being reconciled to God "in one body through the cross" (Eph. ii. 16).<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, the full unveiling of the mystery of God, in the Qumran texts and in the New Testament, illuminates his

<sup>1</sup> Goodspeed (*The Meaning of Ephesians*, p. 12) suggests strangely that when Ephesians was written the Jewish-Gentile question was no longer actual, but that "under this old form the writer puts forth his appeal for unity among the Greek churches in the face of the rising sects". This is reading into the text what is not there in preference to reading out of it what is there.

ultimate purpose. In Ephesians iii. 9-11 the unfolding of the mystery hidden in God from ages past brings to light the purpose for which he has created the church, his "fellowship of reconciliation"—it is that through the church his many-coloured wisdom might be made known to all created forces, to "principalities and powers in the heavenly realm", "according to the eternal purpose which he conceived in Christ Jesus our Lord". And this eternal purpose, thus subserved by the church and due to be realized in the "fulness of the times", is concisely stated in Ephesians i. 9 f.: it is to bring all things together under the headship of Christ.

## XII

In 1 Corinthians ii. 6 ff. Paul tells the Corinthian Christians that, for all their self-styled wisdom, he has to feed them with milk and not with solid food, because they are not yet spiritually mature. This immaturity was due not to deficiency in *gnōsis* (of which they had plenty of a kind), but to deficiency in *agapē*. "Nevertheless", he goes on, "to those who are mature we do impart wisdom... God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom ordained before the world for our glory... as it is written:

What eye never saw, what ear never heard,  
What never entered the heart of man,  
What God prepared for those who love him—

these are the things which God has revealed to use by the Spirit."

If we ask where in the Pauline corpus this divine "wisdom in a mystery" is imparted, we should direct our attention to the Epistle to the Ephesians.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, pp. 21 f.