

One God, One Lord

Christianity in a World of Religious Pluralism

Second Edition

Edited by

Andrew D. Clarke
and Bruce W. Winter



"The Lord is our God, the Lord is one, He alone."

This unpublished inscription is from a synagogue in Neapolis. The text, written in Samaritan Hebrew, is based on Deuteronomy 6:4 and Exodus 22:20. *Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum E. 1-1870; reproduced by permission of the Syndics.*



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and various Phoenician female deities, Tanit, Anath and Baalath are easily confused with Astarte. The Romans sometimes equated her with Venus Caelstis, 'Heavenly Venus'. Astarte might be connected to fertility, and therefore associated with Cybele; to love and prosperity, and Venus/Aphrodite, or Tyche; or to war, and associated with the Arab warrior goddess Allat or the Greek Athena. She appears as the consort of Adonis, the beautiful young hunter god, thus strengthening her associations with Cybele. She may be accompanied by sphinxes, owls, erotes, and may wear a polos or a helmet. At Sidon in Phoenicia Astarte's cultus-image is depicted as a disk or a baetyl with a lunar crescent, in a shrine with wheels.

Another deity was Sin whose cult centre was at Carthae in Mesopotamia (modern Harran in Turkey). A lunar deity, the cult of Sin already existed by 2000 BC, when the temple is mentioned in a tablet from Mari. Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, especially favoured Sin of Harran. Coins of Carthae represent Sin as a lunar crescent, but the deity is not known to have been represented in human form during the Roman period. Birds were frequently associated with cults in the Levant, particularly pigeons. Pigeons were also associated with the cult of Atergatis at Hierapolis in Syria, and Aphrodite at Paphos in Cyprus. Coins of cities such as Damascus, Neapolis in Samaria, and Rhessaena in Mesopotamia show birds emerging from temples or shrines.

In conclusion, these local cults of the Roman empire, especially in what is now Anatolian Turkey, show the religious background for the gospel. The early church was addressing people who worshipped rocks, believed plants could be deities, had sacred animals, accepted ritual castration and prostitution. In addition there were the cults that we normally associate with the Roman empire: Jupiter and the other Capitoline deities, as well as the cult of the Emperor himself.³⁴

³⁴This chapter is based on an exhibition at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge (July-October, 1991) and I am grateful to my former colleague in the Department of Coins and Medals, Dr Kevin Butcher, for his help and co-operation.

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"Summing Up All Things"

Religious Pluralism and Universalism in Ephesians

Thorsten Moritz

The term biblical universalism is used to refer either to the extending of salvation beyond the confines of Israel (Mal. 1:11,14), or to the eventual reconciliation of all mankind to God. Colossians 1:19-22 with its key notion of 'to reconcile' (*ἀποκαταλλάσσω*), has been used to support the latter view.¹ Support has also been drawn from Romans 2:14-16 where it has been concluded that at least some pagans may worship God without even being aware either of the gospel or indeed of their need of it.² Normally texts other than those drawn from Ephesians are used to support a view of biblical universalism. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the issue of religious

¹This second kind of universalism was condemned at the Council of Constantinople in 553. It revived during the time of the Reformation (extreme Reformers) but was condemned again in the Augsburg Confession. Modern universalism can be traced back largely to Schleiermacher and has today one major advocate in J. Hick (see chapter twelve in this volume.)

²Other texts have included Rom. 5:18f; 11:32; 1 Cor. 15:22-8; Phil. 2:10f and 1 Tim. 2:4.

pluralism in relation to this epistle.

It is widely accepted both that the epistle to the Ephesians was written to Western Asia Minor, and that the Ephesian Artemis cult was the all-pervading and all-dominating power in this entire area. This enables us to paint a reasonably accurate picture of the religio-cultural circumstances of the addressees, regardless of the precise destination of the letter. In seeking to understand how all things are to be 'summed-up' in Christ it is important not only to reconstruct the religious background of Ephesians, but also to show how Paul responded to the challenge of contextualising the gospel of Christ in a situation of religious pluralism. By comparing Ephesians with Colossians, it will be demonstrated that in the case of the former Paul had to fight on two fronts. It is this recognition that will make it possible to determine more precisely the nature of his concept of 'summing-up everything' under or through Christ.

It is proposed to discuss (I) the narrowness of the outlook of religious pluralism in Western Asia Minor, (II) Jews, Gentiles and pagans in Western Asia Minor, (III) the Ephesian letter as an encounter with religious pluralism, (IV) the scope and need of salvation, (V) ethics and the argument from unity, and (VI) the tactics of the struggle against the spirits of evil.

1. The 'Narrow' Religious Pluralism³ of Western Asia Minor

Religious Pluralism in the ancient world did not necessarily bring with it tolerance. A clear example to the contrary is the Artemis cult dominating 1st century Western Asia Minor. It could at the same time incorporate numerous religious phenomena drawn from a wide variety of smaller cults and esoteric circles, and yet demand strict loyalty not just from devotees, but from virtually everyone within its wider sphere of influence. The variety of sources which can be employed fruitfully in shedding light on the religious environment of Paul's addressees, demonstrates the point.⁴ The religious phe-

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nomena include asceticism, immoral indulgences, esotericism, spiritism, astrology, divination, sacred calendars and magic.

The sphere of influence of Artemis on her subjects extended to matters of culture, politics, economy, education, most areas of local government and even family life. There was not much in Western Asia Minor or indeed in Asia Minor that did not revolve to some extent around the Ephesian Artemision.⁵ It is precisely this all-pervasive character of the corporate cult that enabled it to exert a relentless grip on individuals. What are the components of this cult?

First, there was the goddess Artemis herself. For her followers she was at once saviour, cosmic Queen, goddess and even Lord. As such she mediated between individuals and their fate. Wearing the zodiac around her neck she was seen to be superior to astrological powers, even to the extent of being capable of raising the dead.⁶ She was in direct contact with the demons of the underworld and had the keys to unlock the doors of Hades.

Second, while a good deal of Hellenistic magic in Asia was not directly related to the Artemis cult, it is nevertheless true that the cult displayed numerous links with Magic. One such link may well consist of the apotropaic significance of her false breasts.⁷

In the magical papyri it is not always easy to distinguish between Artemis and other goddesses.⁸ In any case, she may well be a hybrid of other influences such as the Cybele cult and she also incorporates some features of the Artemis known to Greek mythology. Accordingly, the magical amulets used display widely diverging influences.

Third, mysteries and sacred prostitution featured largely in the worship of Artemis, thus for instance when her birth is celebrated annually. This did not, however, keep the cult from conveying a picture of segregation from the profane,

³R. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven 1974) 22.

⁴Pseudo-Prochorus, *Acts of John*—see R. Kuksa, 'Literary Witnesses of the Artemis Temple', *FtE* 1.253 (cited from C. Arnold, *op. cit.*, 181).

⁵E. Lichteneker, 'Die Kultbilder der Artemis von Ephesos' (Tübingen 1952) 124f.

⁶T. Hopfer, 'Hekate-Selene-Artemis und Verwandte in den griechischen Zauberpapyri und auf den Fluchtafeln', in *Pischli* (Münster 1939) 144.

³Religious Pluralism refers here to the variety and diversity of religious phenomena accommodated within the dominant cult, not to a variety of cults. There existed no doubt a variety of cults in 1st century Western Asia Minor. However, this paper is concerned only with the major cult, i.e. that of Artemis. For this see C. Arnold, *Ephesians: Powers and Magic* (Cambridge 1989) 14-40.

especially in regard to the priests. It also included elements of mystery religion. As Artemis was perceived to have power even over astral powers, mystery rites were seen to be effective tools in persuading Artemis to manipulate the evil powers and demons. It is against this backdrop that reports such as Acts 19 about Ephesus become intelligible.⁹

Fourth, and this is important, there was a major Jewish presence in the area as early as the 3rd century BC (Jos. *Ant.*, 12.3.2). By the time of the 1st century AD this is reflected in the prevalence of Jewish magic which Betz considers to have been famous at the time.¹⁰ It was characterised by a strong regard for Hebrew phrases, names, angels and demons and was often seen almost as a kind of superior if not elitist magic.¹¹ This may have to do with the fact that Jewish magic often did not quite as readily embrace pagan elements as vice versa.

A fifth cultic area, better described as political rather than religious, is that of the ruler cult which flourished at around the turn of the century especially in the region of Smyrna and Pergamum.¹² The imperial cult offered not much by way of protection and problem solving. It was rather a matter of enhancing the city's status. As a political vehicle it often involved psychological manipulation ranging from displays of enthusiastic affection to generating naked fear among the citizens. It was a case of political utilitarianism. Spiritually it had little if anything to offer,¹³ and it needed to be supplemented by some kind of truly religious cult of the kind outlined earlier, a cult which offered protection from evil, if not resurrection from the dead, and therefore salvation.¹⁴

⁹ Arnold, *op. cit.*, 30f. Documents illustrating the astrological background include *Jubilees*, 1 & 2 Enoch, *Ascension of Isaiah*, *Testament of Solomon*.

¹⁰ Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* 1 (Chicago 1986) xiv.

¹¹ Documents under this category include among others the *Prayer of Jacob* and *Sepher Ha-Razim* (the 'Book of Mysteries').

¹² Arnold, *op. cit.*, 37f.

¹³ It is hardly surprising that by the 2nd century the Roman state religion had ceased to dominate the minds of people and gave way to an even larger variety of religious phenomena. See J. Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (New Haven 1968) 128ff.

¹⁴ Some philosophes obviously deny a future life (e.g. Epicureanism). Nevertheless they proclaimed themselves saviours from death and its terrors (J. Carcopino, *op. cit.*, 128).

Sixth, a visionary-mystical framework.¹⁵ From 2 Corinthians 12 we know that Paul had to deal with such claims in Corinth. Jewish Christians had visions and ravishing experiences including trips to the third heaven. Paul did not like this and advanced his suffering instead. Also, in Colossians 2:18 he warns against those who 'enter into' (ἐμβάτεω) 'visionary things, (ὁράω). The Johannine literature, which is usually associated with Asia Minor, has similar leitmotifs ('no one has seen or ascended to God'). Interestingly, in both types of literature such a rebuttal of visionary claims can be found next to strong antitheses between grace and the old economy/circumcision (Jn. 1:17f, 3:13f, 6:46-59;—cf. 1 Tim. 6:16, Tit. 1:10, 2 Cor. 12:1ff, Col. 2:11,14,18). It is therefore hardly surprising to find similar echoes in Ephesians which was addressed precisely into this syncretistic geographical area. Much of the vocabulary peculiar to Ephesians (μυστήριον, ἐπουρανίος, κοσμοκράτωρ, and δýνος—power terminology) can in fact be taken as evidence for Paul's interest in this very field of religious syncretism. To take just one example, Paul's emphasis on the ἀποκάλυψις of the μυστήριον of God's will for the nations which was formerly hidden (ἀποκρύπτω) has now been brought to light (φωτίζω) in the apostle, as is shown by his particular σῶντες (3:2-11). At this point, Ephesians goes beyond the well-known polemic against circumcision and all the revelatory vocabulary it entails in Galatians 1:12-16 and 1 Corinthians 2. Colossians and Ephesians provide us with his most direct encounter with religious syncretism, and it is for this reason that we must study above all these letters in our effort to disclose Paul's strategy.

In conclusion, the addressees of Ephesians are converts from a pagan cult, which was at the same time highly syncretistic in terms of the religious elements combined, yet rather intolerant when it came to diverging from it or even ignoring it. Participation was not an optional extra but an everyday requirement. On all levels of social existence failure to support

¹⁵ While the above areas have been discussed by Arnold in his *Ephesians: Power and Magic*, he makes no reference to the matters of visionaries and mystics. Note the forthcoming article on the topic by M. Goulder who kindly gave access to an early version to which some of the following suggestions refer.

the cultic system would entail repression. The basic motivation for compliance with the cult was no doubt the individual's existential fear of the evil powers who needed to be manipulated by the goddess. Compliance with the demands posed by the cult was clearly a matter of social survival and hope for the future. Salvation was conceived of as pertaining to the present liberation from terror and oppression by evil powers. No wonder, then, that Paul focuses in Ephesians on the realized aspects of true salvation (2:1-10).

II. Jews, Gentiles and Pagans

Since Käsemann's assertion in his RCG article on Ephesians,¹⁶ it has become commonplace to maintain that whereas Colossians was written at a time of Jewish-Gentile conflict, Ephesians addresses a predominantly Gentile situation in which the Gentile believers are in danger of arrogantly neglecting their Jewish roots.¹⁷ It seems to me that this turns the evidence on its head. It has for long been puzzling to notice that exponents of this view found little to say about the strong criticism of Judaism (Eph. 2) and the sometimes rather polemical (i.e. Torah critical) use of the Old Testament.¹⁸ It is Ephesians and not Colossians which employs the Old Testament Scriptures frequently and in a way which presupposes a considerable degree of Scriptural knowledge on the part of the recipients. There is virtually no explicit Old Testament material in Colossians.¹⁹ It is Ephesus or indeed most cities in Asia Minor, but not Colossae, concerning which we have manifold and conclusive evidence of a strong Jewish presence.²⁰ It is Ephesians not Colossians, which spells out that what has been abrogated by the cross of Christ is not only a general debt of sin, but also the Jewish Torah (2:15). It is also Ephesians and not Colossians which is at pains to demonstrate that ethnically

Paul's theology is entirely compatible with the old economy (4:25ff., 5:14, 18, 31-6:4). In Ephesus Paul has to stress this when he addresses the Gentiles in particular (2:11; 3:1)—in Colossae this is not necessary. This suffices to show that if any of these two epistle addresses a Jewish-Gentile situation, it surely must be Ephesians.

Colossians addresses a congregation of previous pagans who are in constant danger of re-importing elements from their syncretistic past into the worship of the people of God and elevating those to the point of legalism. The Jewish elements mentioned (sabbath, new moon, food laws, 2:16, 21) are typically Jewish identity markers. That is, it did not take a Jewish presence in the Colossian church to import such general Jewish elements. They are what we would expect to find in a highly syncretistic 1st century Western Asia Minor environment. While some scholars²¹ detect in Colossians (1:15-20 in particular) a polemic against the Jewish Torah, this should more happily be applied to Ephesians.

Whereas Colossians addresses a Gentile church in danger of succumbing to religious syncretism and to actively importing cultic elements of the pluralistic environment, Ephesians presupposes a very similar context, but with the added dimension of a live Jewish-Gentile conflict. This would explain the priority in writing of Colossians over Ephesians. Paul takes over the basic thrust of Colossians, and expands it primarily by addressing very specifically the ethnic-religious conflict in or around the city of Ephesus or which ever city in Asia Minor was addressed, for that matter.²²

This would agree with the above discussion regarding Jewish magic and astrology. Given the assumption voiced above that Paul attacks also what can be described as a visionary-mystical framework, one wonders whether we

¹⁶E. Käsemann, 'Epheserbrief' in RCG II, 517-20.

¹⁷K. Fischer, *Tendenz und Absicht des Epheserbriefes* (Göttingen 1973).

¹⁸For this see my PhD thesis forthcoming entitled 'The Use of Scripture in Ephesians' (King's College, London 1991).

¹⁹Col. 1:15 refers to the beginning of creation, not to the Jewish Exodus motif. Other possible OT reminiscences are far too general to be traceable and have hardly been intended as deliberate allusions (1:9, cf. Ps. 119:73; 2:3, cf. Is. 45:3).

²⁰E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ III.1*, M. Black, ed. (Edinburgh 1986) 22f.

²¹M. Hooker, 'Were there False Teachers in Colossae?', in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament*, Lindars and Smalley, edd. (Cambridge 1973) 315-22.

²²Incidentally, assuming that Ephesians is identical with the letter to the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16), my distinction between Jewish-Gentile addressees (Eph.) and Gentile addressees (Col.) could still be maintained (Jewish presence in Laodicea—cf. Schürer, III.1, 27). In fact, that would even better explain why Ephesians is based to such a large extent on Colossians as the two locations are so close to each other.

should not see the Torah-polemic in Ephesians 2:13-18 (προσάγωγι—cf. Col. 2:18 ἐμβάτευω) and 4:8-10 with the ascending and traversing the heavens motif against this mystical background in the latter citation.²³ There is clearly both diversity and specificity in the historical backcloth against which Ephesians must be read. It is somewhat ironic that Paul should have to remind Christians whose background consisted of pagan cults of the inter-ethnic scope of Christian faith which 'transcended' racial or national distinctions.

III. Ephesians as an Encounter with Religious Pluralism

There are good grounds for reading Ephesians as a document pregnant with allusions to the religio-cultural background of its recipients. Ephesians is not as obviously polemical as is for instance Galatians. This has to do precisely with the fact that the views rebutted in Ephesians are not nearly as clear-cut as those attacked in Galatians. Nevertheless Paul, when attacking other views, does so more often by taking them up and glossing them, than by contradicting them outright. For example, it is not that Paul simply rejects wisdom, rather he claims to speak 'better wisdom, that is God's wisdom' (1 Cor. 2:6f). When others base their authority on letters of recommendation, Paul bases his on an even better one, i.e. his ministry as evident from his churches (2 Cor. 3:1ff). When others point to their glorious enlightenment by the Law, he claims enlightenment by the glory of Christ who is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4). We can therefore recover at least to some extent what his 'opponents' argued. Nevertheless we should not so much think in terms of specific opponents, but more generally in terms of the overall religious climate outlined above. This thought world forms the backdrop of much of the glossing in Ephesians.

1. Ephesians 1

Ephesians 1:3-14—one of the longest Greek sentences known—piles up synonymous expressions, σὺν-compounds, trailing relative clauses and chains of genitives, and is reminiscent of a

Hebrew *berakha*.²⁴ This device has the purpose of presenting a doxological manifesto, for in Ephesians 1 Paul was concerned with emphasizing the unique role of Christ. There are no less than thirteen references to Christ in this opening sentence. The entire passage is framed, furthermore, by references to the Father (v. 3) and to the Holy Spirit (vv. 12f). But the centre stage is taken by Christ. The unparalleled extent to which this is the case suggests that the religious climate into which the epistle was addressed allocated to Christ a somewhat subordinate place.

The variety of religious phenomena and authorities accommodated within a single and yet all-dominating cult in Western Asia Minor. It should therefore not be surprising if some of the Christian converts in the area gradually yielded to the enormous pressure exercised by the cult, and treated Christ as not much more than a spiritual mechanism with which to manipulate the powers of the heavenly realms. It was these powers which exercised a substantial grip on the majority of people. No doubt Arnold was right when he suggested that Ephesians offers a Christian perspective on the evil powers which dominated all areas of life. It was part of this Christian perspective to affirm uncompromisingly that Christ stands high above them, rather than just being one among many gods who make up the local pantheon.

The pivotal statement within this opening eulogy is 1:10: 'When the times have reached their fulfilment, God will bring to a head everything in heaven and on earth under Christ'. The term *Anakephalaiosis* ranges in meaning between recapitulation, summing up or drawing together, uniting, crowning or even ruling.²⁵ The notion of 'summing up' or 'concluding' appears the most appropriate not only in the light of the only other occurrence in the New Testament (where it must have that meaning, Rom 13:9), but also in view of its usage for speech or letter conclusions throughout ancient Greek rhetoric down to Roman times (cf., Ps. 71:20 Theodotion). It has

²⁴P. O'Brien, 'Ephesians 1: An Unusual Introduction to a New Testament Letter', *NTS* 25 (1978-79) 504-10.

²⁵See M. Kitchen, *Theology and Purpose in the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Manchester University Ph.D.) which focuses on this term.

²³A notion that could be termed *Torah mysticism* or *Moses mysticism* is found in Philo. See my PhD thesis, *op.cit.*, for details.

clear connotations of 'coming to an end'. The term κεφάλαιον is in most instances best translated as 'main point', and again this supports the translation 'summing up'. Paul's implicit point (which he only makes explicit in ch. 3:1ff) is that the inclusion of the Gentiles among God's people (1:9, cf., 3:1ff) is truly eschatological, but that this must not bring with it a syncretistic tendency to compromise the unique status of Christ as their saviour (2:13f).

It is important to note that Paul stresses not only the person of Christ, but more specifically the need to be found in Christ, (ἐν Χριστῷ) because of the number of occurrences of this phrase in Ephesians. There it is quite literally a matter of being incorporated into Christ.²⁶ However, *anakephalosis* is more than the participation of believers in the body of Christ. It includes to some extent 'all that is in heaven and on earth' (v. 10), for the phrase ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις features more in Ephesians (1:3,20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12, cf., οὐρανῶς 1:10; 4:10) than in all of the other Pauline epistles. It occurs here in opposition to ἐν τῇ γῇ and is to be taken to mean 'locally'. But why this emphasis and why this seemingly un-Pauline language?

It is illuminating to compare some of the phraseology in Ephesians with 1 Enoch as well as with Merkabah texts.²⁷ 1 Enoch speaks of God's throne of glory which is praised throughout all generations; his name is glorious throughout the world; he created everything and has authority over everything (9:4f). A vision of God sitting on the throne in all his glory is also reported in 14:20f. In 27:3,5 Enoch brings forth 'the praise of his glory'. It is exactly this kind of language that we find Paul using in Ephesians 1:6,12,14. The decisive difference is that there he glosses it in a way which turns the attention away from the heavenly throne to 'the grace which God has given us in the Beloved One'. This explains the strange phrase 'we who had hoped before in Christ' (v. 12). The term ὑποσπάρξω occurs only here in the New Testament and stresses the salvation-historical priority of the Jews. But this

is done only to show that already God's old people had to place their hope in the Messiah. Verses 13f. extend the truth of the gospel to all believers. Everyone's praise of God's glory depends on the response to Christ. The riches of God's glory (1:18) are the riches of his grace (v. 7). They are only found in the Son, not in heavenly visions nor in other spiritualistic efforts. To be the praise of God's glory can mean nothing else than being found to be in Christ. The heavenly journey had already been accomplished by Christ himself (1:20f; 4:9f). There was no need for repetition. He had already been raised from the dead and seated ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις (1:20) and we in him (2:6).

When the so-called *Lesser Hekhaloth* encourage 'to ascend on high, to descend below... and to contemplate the splendour, to dwell with the crown, to praise the glory',²⁸ Ephesians counters that the glory of the inheritance is found in the believers already (v. 18), in as far as they have been sealed with the Spirit who is the earnest of our inheritance to the praise of his glory (v. 12). It is by means of the Spirit that Christ is said to indwell their hearts (3:16f.). It is by means of the Spirit indwelling the believer that he is able to grasp the width, length, height and depth of God's fulness (3:18; cf., 1:19,4;6,13-16), not by measuring the godhead, as we find it in the Jewish Christian sect of Elchasai at the beginning of the 2nd century.²⁹ It is by being in Christ that we have access to God (2:18; 3:12), not by traversing seven heavens,³⁰ each of which has a gate-keeping angel whose name needs to be known by the visionary in order to be allowed to pass through. Above these angels there would be further powers and principalities. According to Hek. Rab. 17f the relevant names were inscribed on a seal, which was then to be shown in order to gain access. No, says Paul, our seal is the Spirit and that is quite enough in order to gain the inheritance (1:13f). The believers have access

²⁶C. Contina J. Allan, 'The "in Christ" Formula in Ephesians', *NTS* 5 (1958/59) 54-62 who maintains that the formula is used in Ephesians instrumentally (as opposed to Paul).

²⁷Here I am following a suggestion in a paper to be published by M. Goulder, *op. cit.*

²⁸G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York 1960) 78. As Goulder points out (*op. cit.*), the vision of Ezekiel which is of so much interest in the Merkabah literature, was already contemplated within a visionary framework at Qumran (4Q 403 1.2,1-16—see C. Newsom, 'Merkabah Exegesis in the Qumran Sabbath Shitot', *JJS* 38, 11-30).

²⁹M. Goulder pointed me in this connection to P. Luttkhuisen, *The Revelation of Elchasai* (Tübingen 1985).

³⁰See already the Asc. Is. 6-9. Cf. P. Alexander's introduction '3 Enoch' in Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* 1, 233.

(προορῶν) to God himself through Christ (2:18) already.

The visionaries had certain techniques to get out of their trance when things went wrong (such as when a particular seal was missing). Paul anticipates no such problems. He sees believers themselves as being sealed. And the seal of the Spirit cannot simply be lost by accident. There is no need to remember important names and invocations—all these names and the authorities behind them have been made subject to Christ for all time (1:21). In fact, Paul makes this part of the very basis for Christ's headship in the church (v.22). For the church *anakephalatos* means being the body of Christ—for all other powers it means being subject to Christ. In principle this dualism is already accomplished through Christ's resurrection and exaltation—but *de facto* the church must still stand her ground now as well as in expected future struggles with the evil powers (6:14-17). It is precisely through this struggle against evil in which the Spirit-indwelt church plays a vital although totally defensive part (6:14ff), that the fullness in all respects (1:23) will be achieved. Chapter 1:23 can thus be seen as a reiteration of what Paul had previously called *anakephalatos*. There is certainly no notion here of ultimate reconciliation or *apokatastasis* as in the Alexandrian tradition, although, to be fair, in order to assess conclusively the validity of that particular notion one would have to study primarily Colossians 1:19-22 as well as Acts 3:21.³¹

When Paul speaks here of the πλήρωμα of God, he again takes up a term well-known from the visionary-mystical thought world. Fullness was a term for the spheres of principalities which needed to be traversed on the way up to God's throne.³² But again Paul argues that the achievement of fullness is God's responsibility. True spiritual illumination means to focus on the working of the mighty power of God's strength (1:19), not to undertake visionary excursions into the

heavenly presence of God. God's glory is to be beheld in the temple (v. 18)—and that is no different than what we know from Isaiah 6, except, of course that the new temple of God consists of his church (1:18; 2:20-2). In contrast to the high flying endeavours of the apocalyptic visionaries in Asia Minor, this temple is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets with Christ being the corner stone.³³

2. Ephesians 2

Having elaborated rather generally on how Ephesians 1 can be understood as alluding to the religious background of the congregation addressed, we can now better appreciate the abrupt change in topic at the start of chapter 2. Paul suddenly turns to the recipients and reminds them of their pre-conversion state of transgressions and dominion by the powers of the air. Stylistically, the rupture could hardly have been more severe. I would argue, however, that for the recipients the reference to their being gripped by the powers and principalities (i.e. behind the Artemis cult) came not as much of a surprise as it might seem. They would have recognized the drift of the eulogy in chapter 1 and its implicit attack on the unwarranted and indeed unnecessary and dangerous spiritual endeavours which they were so used to from their own past and from their present environment. Whereas chapter 1 concluded by celebrating the subjection of the evil powers, chapter 2 suddenly indicates that these powers had exercised a direct and destructive influence on the converts. In view of the extensive parenthesis throughout the second part of the letter, does Paul believed this still to be the case to some extent? But before turning to ethical issues, Paul addresses an ethnic problem.

As argued earlier, it is doubtful if the congregation addressed consisted solely of Gentiles. When Paul carefully singles out Gentile Christians in 2:11 and 3:1 he does that probably for the very reason that there were also Jewish Christians around. A comparison with Colossians shows that

³¹Note that, as so often, Colossians phrases rather generally and vaguely what Ephesians then applies specifically to the Jewish-Gentile issue (cf. Eph. 2:13-17). The same applies to Col. 1:23 (cf. v.6) which argues that the truth of the gospel is being preached in the whole world—in Ephesus it needs to be preached specifically to the Gentiles in order to show them that they are now on an equal footing with the Jews (3:6-8).

³²C. Schollem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York 1971) 48.

³³I have dealt in my doctoral thesis (*op. cit.*, Appendix A) with the more modern view put forward by Jeremias, that Eph. 2:20 refers to the coping stone of the building (ῥῶνις TWNT 1, 792-3). For reasons mentioned in my thesis I prefer the traditional view. For the debate see R. McKelvey, 'Christ the Corner Stone', *NTS* 8 (1961-2) 352-9.

Ephesians 2:11-22 places particular stress on the Jewish-Gentile issue. In fact he uses thoroughly Jewish language in places which compares with rather more vague statements in Colossian parallels.³⁴ If Colossians was first (in my view the correct consensus opinion), Paul had reason to add in Ephesians the Jewish dimension. The question arises how this ethnic dimension relates to the religious background outlined above.

Arnold had already noted the presence and influence of Jewish magic in Western Asia Minor at the time. To this might be added what could be called Torah or Merhaba Mysticism. There is little doubt that such a visionary mysticism goes back to the start of Christianity. Given the essentially Jewish nature of such frameworks, it would tie in well the ethnic diversity of Western Asia Minor (which is reflected in Eph. 2) with the religious background outlined earlier.

The clearest Jewish feature of such mysticism was the demand for punctilious Torah observance,³⁵ combined with various forms of asceticism in preparation for the heavenly ascent.³⁶ Colossians refers to such asceticism (2:16,21-3), but not to the significance of the Torah. In Ephesians the opposite is the case. The explanation is again that Colossians dealt with general syncretistic tendencies, whereas Ephesians had to deal with a more particularly *Jewish-Gentile* problem. Paul glosses the phrases which are in popular use in the thought world outlined above—when he comes to the significance of the Torah, he moves to attack. Not only has the Torah been abrogated through the cross of Christ (2:15), works as such are neither relevant for salvation, nor our own doing (2:8-10). The result of the awkward but deliberate use of Psalm 68:19 (a Jewish Pentecostal Psalm, used to commemorate the Torah)³⁷ is equally that the giving of the Torah has far been surpassed by

the self-giving of Christ and the giving of the Spirit (cf. 4:7,5:2). It is Christ who illuminates the eyes of the heart (1:18), not the Torah. It was only relevant until 'he came and announced peace' through the cross (2:17). This differs markedly from what we know about Yehiyah, the prince of the Torah, who appears frequently in the Merhaba literature and whose responsibilities ranged from helping Moses to remember its text to letting potential visionaries into the deeper secrets of its mysticism.³⁸

IV. The Scope and Need for Salvation

We now return to the question of universalism.³⁹ How does Paul deal with the religious pluralism he faced in Asia Minor and what are the implications for the problem of universalism?

1. The Nature of Man

Stylistically it comes as a shock when Paul drops suddenly from the height of a carefully constructed eulogy, followed by a theologically rich prayer report in chapter 1, to the depths of his readers' wickedness and transgressions inspired by the evil princes and sons of disobedience of this world (ch. 2). To make matters apparently worse, he goes on (v. 3) to engage in a classic anacoluthon. Rather than picking up the pieces, he goes on (v. 5) to anticipate briefly what he will set out in verses 8-10, thereby fragmenting the flow of the argument even further.⁴⁰ Such anacolutha are helpful to us as they reveal vividly Paul's major concerns at this point. Thus we notice the change from the second person to the inclusive first person (vv. 3-7). He reminds the recipients of their negative past and hastens to add that the same verdict applies to 'us', i.e. the Jews,⁴¹ as indeed to

³⁴Hek. Rab 30.2.

³⁵The most striking example is the reference to the Jewish Torah in Eph. 2:15 (cf. Ep. Arist. 139.142); compare the rather vague *written code with its regulations* in Col. 2:14. See also the *far and near* language from Isaiah in vv.13,17 and the polemical reference to the so-called *circumcision* (v.11) and the covenants (v.12), none of which features in Colossians.

³⁶F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids 1984) 23-6.

³⁷G. Caird, 'The descent of Christ in Ephesians 4:7-11' in SE II, 535-45. Also J. Kirby, *Ephesians, Baptism and Pentecost* (London 1986) 97-100 and A. Lincoln, 'The use of the OT in Ephesians', 20.

³⁹For discussions which show that Ephesians 1 contains the main ideas of the entire epistle see C. Maurer, 'Der Hymnus von Epheser 1 als Schlüssel zum ganzen Briefe', Ev. Theol. 11 (1951/2) 151-72 and P. O'Brien, *op. cit.* The one theme of the body, which does not feature in the eulogy, is introduced in the thanksgiving report which follows immediately.

⁴⁰For the second major anacoluthon in the epistle see chapter 3:1ff.

⁴¹For the contrast between the two cf. 1:12 (Jews; hope) with 2:12 (Gentiles; previously no hope). When Paul points out repeatedly that Gentiles were without hope (see also chapter 4:17-19) this goes against the grain of many prevalent philosophies which claimed precisely to be in the position of offering hope.

everyone (v. 3c). This generalization leaves no doubt as to the apostle's conviction that all men are in desperate need of being raised from the dead by Χριστῷ (2:5). The general applicability of this point is particularly evident against the backdrop of the religious pluralism outlined above.⁴²

2. The Restoration of Man

Confirmation is found in 2:11-22 which, while acknowledging a salvation-historical advantage of the Jews (v. 12) goes on not to argue that the Gentiles are being incorporated into the Jewish people, but that both ethnic groups are merged into a new entity via the cross (2:15). Rather than suggesting the incorporation of the one into the other, Paul argues that through the cross a new man had been created. The vocabulary used suggests that he was thinking in terms of a new creation which supersedes the first creation of Adam and Eve. Under the old economy the distinction was between God's chosen (ethnic) people and the rest. Now that distinction has gone, together with the Law. This raises the question of whether there are any distinctions left at all.

F.C. Baur argued in regard to Romans that Paul was not concerned so much with the salvation of the individual but with the question of how it could be that the Gentiles are now part of the people of God. Therefore, for Baur, Paul's immediate concern was to lay down the Christian principle of universalism as opposed to Jewish particularism.⁴³ Regardless of whether that is a fair judgment about Romans,⁴⁴ it does not do justice to Ephesians. The point about Jewish particularism is well taken—yet it is not a matter of substituting particularism with universalism, but of substituting one kind of particularism (Christological) for another (ethnic). Notice that access to the Father is only via the one Spirit (v. 18) with whom only those

⁴²It is sometimes argued that the notion of the believers already being seated in heaven stands in tension with 1 Cor. 4:8. This ignores that for Paul salvation is always 'a past fact, a present experience and a future hope' (G. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison* (London, 1987) 21). Within Ephesians this can be demonstrated by pointing to the 'powers' who are already subjected (1:20), who need to be resisted in the present (6:12) and who will go on challenging the believers until the evil day to come (6:12).

⁴³F. Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries* 1 (Edinburgh 1875) 47-55.

⁴⁴F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles* (Cambridge CUP 1986) 17.

who respond positively to the gospel (1:13) are being sealed. Without this seal there is no inheritance (1:14). It is not that Gentiles are not to be incorporated at all—they are—but that they are incorporated into the new man (2:15), the body of Christ, through the gospel (3:6). The emphasis on responding to the true gospel as a basic pre-condition of claiming the promised heritage (i.e. salvation) pervades therefore much of the theological part of the letter (i.e. chs. 1-3). It is based on Paul's conviction that God is vastly superior to every power or name both in heaven and on earth (1:21; 3:15).

Second, it is based on the fact that *anakephalaiosis* only allows for two alternatives: subjection under Christ or incorporation into the body of Christ. The direct link between man's transgressions and the evil powers (who are in principle already subject and who will be finally defeated) implies beyond doubt, that man as an individual must respond positively to the gospel of the cross, in order to avoid certain subjection together with the principalities and powers which dominated his life. In this way Ephesians combines a strong belief in divine grace (2:5-10) with the need for human response.

Third, the necessity of responding to the gospel in order to inherit what has been promised is based on strictly salvation-historical considerations. This is most evident in Paul's recognition of the pre-Christian covenantal succession (2:12), and when he implies that Christ's arrival had been foreseen in the Scriptures,⁴⁵ and when he argues confidently that the Torah had been abolished and replaced by a Christocentric framework. This has been handed on by Apostles and Prophets, as opposed to the typical Jewish phrase Law and the Prophets (2:20-2; 3:5; 4:11). Each of these passages demonstrates how Christ and the Spirit belong together. Although this soteriological package is applicable universally in the ethnic sense, Christ and the Spirit need to be received on an individual basis in order to inherit the promised salvation. Therefore, when Paul speaks literally of Gentile atheism having been without hope before the cross (2:12), and when he adds that the cross brought about change in this situation (v. 13), we must not press this ethnic observation into the

⁴⁵Notice the use of Isaianic phrases in vv. 13f., 17. See my doctoral thesis.

service of an individualistic universalism. Such a notion is clearly rebutted in 1:13f and in 4:30 which warn against grieving the Holy Spirit with whom each believer is sealed unto the day of redemption. That Paul presupposes his recipients are indeed individuals who have responded positively to the challenge of the gospel, is clear (4:7). If there was any doubt at all in the minds of the recipients about this point, he clearly dispels it by affirming in the parenthetical part of the letter, that there are ethical requirements which can only be met by putting on the new man created by God (4:24). Furthermore, persistent, unethical behaviour is evidence of failure to have put on this new man and thus of inheriting the kingdom of God (5:5).

The significance of responding to the gospel permeates the first and theological half of Ephesians; in the second half Paul discusses ethics and a brief examination of the basis of his argument follows.

V. Ethics and the Argument from Unity

Ephesians 4:1 picks up the first half of chapter 2 in order to apply practically what it means to 'walk worthily' (*τετραταρῶν ἀξίως*).⁴⁶ In fact, however, he again diverges (*cf.*, 2:3 and 3:1ff) in verse 4 and does not return to practical parenesis until verse 17 where he picks up the verb *τετραταρῶν* again. The concept which captures his attention is oneness of the Spirit (v. 3). What follows (vv. 4-16) is best described as an exposition of ecclesiological unity (vv. 4-6) and diversity (vv. 7-11). Our present interest lies with the former.

In this section there is clearly an evangelical response to pluralism. There is just one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God. When saying that Paul allowed himself to be sidetracked, there is nevertheless a link between this confessional part⁴⁷ and the preceding

introduction to the parenthetical material; that is, the emphasis on the Christian calling (4:1 and 4:4). Commentators have often ignored that the concept of the church having been 'called to one hope when you were called' (4:4) annuls the previous distinction between those who 'have first set their hope on the Christ' (i.e. the Jews, 1:12) and those who had previously been 'without hope' (i.e. the Gentiles—2:12). Therefore, part of the reason for the confessional digression (vv. 4-6) was no doubt the author's desire to stress again the need for unity between the Jewish and Gentile Christians among the recipients. Paul is at pains to work out the ecclesiological implications of his own argument in chapter 2. It is not until verse 17 that he returns to his parenesis.

We know from other places in the New Testament (1 Cor. 8:6; 1 Tim. 2:5 and Jas. 2:19) that attacks on idolatry often went along with an emphasis on the unity of God. New Testament apologetics hardly distinguish neatly between rebutting religious pluralism and attacking idolatry. In any case, Ephesians appears to do both. This quest for and emphasis on unity had of course no claim to originality. Much of Greek philosophy was precisely about detecting the unifying principle behind the plurality of the sensible world. A major difference between the latter and Ephesians consists of the insistence in Ephesians that the history of salvation is just that, i.e. historical.⁴⁸ It leads to a final process which 1:10 calls *anakephalaiosis*, the consummation of time. For some this means participation in Christ and for others subjection under Christ.

But here the emphasis falls not on what is to be aspired, but on that which forms the basis of the church—the non-negotiables of ecclesiology. Notice that unity is to be maintained rather than having to be established. The accent

⁴⁶For the typical *τετραταρῶν* as an introduction of ethical material see Eph. 4:1,17; 5:1,8,15.

⁴⁷It is open to question whether Paul here takes up traditional confessional material. R. Schnackenburg appears to have changed his mind between 'Christus, Geist und Gemeinde' in Lindars and Smalley, *op. cit.*, 282 and his commentary *Der Brief an die Epheser* (Neukirchen-Vluyn 1982) 167, where he affirms the question. I tend to answer in the negative especially as Paul does not mention the name of Jesus as we would expect from Acts 2:38 and 10:48; *cf.* 1

Cor. 1:13 and 8:6. More important is the OT background, that is the so-called *Shema* (esp. Dt. 6:4): 'The Lord our God is one' which is here adapted to the Christian faith (similar Caird, *ibid.*, 72). For the influence of this text on the Eastern creeds see R. Williams, 'Logic versus Experience in the Order of Credal Formulae', *NTS* 1 (1954-55) 42-4.

⁴⁸*Contra* A. Lindemann, *Die Aufhebung der Zeit* (Gütersloh 1975) who argues throughout his book for a transformation of temporal categories into spatial categories in this epistle. But see 1:4,10,12,14,21; 2:1,7,11-13,17,21; 3:5,9.

falls on the unity which the one Spirit gives—not on a kind of spiritual union which might be hoped to be achieved by meditation, or visionary out-of-body experiences, or by sharing in cultic rituals of the kind reported in the mystery religion literature. Thus the one baptism (v. 5) is not a plea against anabaptism but against cultic baptisms as we know them from the Ephesian mystery cults.⁴⁹ Similarly there is just the one Spirit who indwells the body of Christ⁵⁰—and there is no need for cultically manipulating the world powers (κοσμοκράτορες) who are thought by the pagans to control the stars and planets as well as the lives and destiny of humankind. Yielding to the principalities and powers is by definition incompatible with participation in the body of Christ, as this would amount to nothing less than a change in loyalties at the expense of God's sufficiency. Again, the text is about 'the Christian's allegiance given once and for all to the one Lord',⁵¹ and not about an ideal to be accomplished by development. Incidentally this explains best why Paul omitted the Lord's supper, yet included baptism, something which has long puzzled commentators.

There has been some discussion about whether the author here reiterates early Christian confessional material.⁵² In a general sense that is of course true. On the other hand it hardly took a set formula to string together a number of nouns connected through καὶ and a few numerals. This was a simple, yet powerful way of making the point that just as God created oneness between Jews and Gentiles through the cross (2:11–22), so he is himself one. This is not dissimilar from what the *Schemata* affirmed many centuries earlier in opposition to polytheism and what Paul himself made explicit (1 Cor. 8:5f.).

⁴⁹See W. Moore, 'One Baptism', NTS 10 (1963/64) 504–16, esp. 514f.

⁵⁰Contra E. Haupt, *Die Gefangenschaftsbriefe* (Göttingen 1902) ad. loc., who ethicises the role of the Spirit and speaks of a 'Gottesgeist gewirkten subjektiven Habitus' (quoted from Gnlika, *Der Epheserbrief* (Freiburg 1982) 201).

⁵¹Caird, *ibid.*, 3.

⁵²Cf. 1 Cor. 8:6 and 12:4–6. See for instance A. Lindemann, *Der Epheserbrief*, (Zürich 1985) 72.

The phrase 'one God' εἷς θεός (4:6) occurs also in contemporary philosophical literature,⁵³ usually with a pantheistic thrust.⁵⁴ A similar statement is found in Malachi 2:10a,⁵⁵ which was spoken into a situation where the uniting covenant bond of Israel was being violated. Just as the prophet spoke to the situation of Israel, so Paul speaks to the situation of the church, consisting of former Jews and former Gentiles, both of whom are now part of the same one new man and should therefore act accordingly.

VI. Tactics of the Struggle against the Spirits of Evil (6:12)⁵⁶

Essentially the tactics of the struggle mentioned in chapter 6:10–17 are defensive. The weaponry consists not of virtues, but of spiritual gifts. This coheres well with the Old Testament background of the armour mentioned. To have been girded with the belt of the truth (i.e. of the gospel, 1:14; 4:15, 20–24)⁵⁷ means to entrust oneself into the hands of the one who is the source of the gospel.⁵⁸ It also denotes humility (John 13:4ff). The breastplate of righteousness is best understood as the forensic verdict passed on account of Christ's death on those who repent.⁵⁹ The following phrase (6:15) is to be translated as the firmness of the gospel of peace and not as the readiness to make known the gospel of peace.⁶⁰ Peace is not an offer extended to

⁵³Gnlika, *op. cit.*, 203 n.5.

⁵⁴Compare the similar pantheistic text of Diogenes of Apollonia (5th century BC): 'To me this appears to be divine: That which reaches everything and pervades everything and which is in everything—and there is nothing which it does not form part of' (tr. from the German quotation given by Lindemann, *op. cit.*, 72). See M. Dibelius, *An die Kolosser, Epheser, an Philemon* (Tübingen 1933) 14ff. for further texts.

⁵⁵This reference to creation is also paralleled frequently in Philo when he uses the same phrase as Ephesians, πατὴρ πάντων, which is a NT hapax legomenon. For the Philo parallels see Gnlika, *op. cit.*, 204 n.2. Cf. also Eph. 3:9, 15.

⁵⁶One aspect needs to be highlighted which is often ignored by commentators. For a full-scale treatment of this passage see my doctoral thesis (*op. cit.*).

⁵⁷For truth as a divine bestowment see Isaiah 11:5 (i.e. the very text underlying part of the imagery of Eph. 6:14–17). Truth is also the 'power of God unto salvation for those who have faith' Rom. 1:16.

⁵⁸For the imagery of Jn 21:18.

⁵⁹Again see Is. 59:17, 20—cf. Eph. 6:14 for the OT precedent.

⁶⁰Contra Arnold, *op. cit.*, 111. For this see A. Buscariet, 'The "Preparation" of the Gospel of Peace', ExT 9 (1897/8) 38–40. This emphasis is present in Rom. 10, but not here.

the opposing powers but an attitude which is a prerequisite for successful resistance.⁶¹ As for the helmet of salvation there is little doubt that Paul is thinking in terms of gift rather than virtue.⁶² The helmet becomes a token for divine protection. The sword of the Spirit as applied to the word (i.e. God's word of truth, *cf.*, 1:13) goes back to Isaiah 11:4 ('breath') and has a further Old Testament parallel in Hosea 6:6 as well as having parallels in Revelation 1:16 and 19:15. It may also have been influenced by Jesus' promise that 'the Spirit would put words into their (i.e. the disciples') mouths in moments of crisis to confound their adversaries'.⁶³

This leaves the shield of faith. We know that Paul can keep *fides obiectiva* (*quae creditur*) and *fides subiectiva* (*qua creditur*) as well as the faithfulness of Christ (which is realized in the life of the believer through the Spirit) together (e.g. Rom. 3:22; Gal. 2:16, 20, 3:22; Phil. 3:9).⁶⁴ There is no need, then, to interpret Ephesians 6:16 as an either-or statement.

It should also be noted that the list omits the offensive equipment mentioned in the Old Testament. Thus there is no tunic of vengeance nor the cloak of fury, nor the stern wrath for a sword (Wis. 5:20). But if there still be doubt about the purely defensive character of the struggle, it is dispelled by the noun *πρόη* which denotes frequently wrestling matches⁶⁵ rather than offensive war. Further support comes from the verb *σφύρα* which is used 3 times in this context and is also combined with *πρόη* in 1 Corinthians 16:13 and 2 Corinthians 12:4.

⁶¹This difference to Is. 52:7 results from the fact that in Isaiah the struggle is perceived as being over. The messenger brings good news about *what had happened*. Caird, *Letters*, 93 notes the paradox of going into battle with a declaration of peace. But there is no paradox if the above interpretation is accepted.

⁶²The implicit message is that effective salvation from the oppressive terror of the evil powers comes from him who upheld righteousness already centuries earlier in the history of Israel (Is. 59:17, *cf.*, Eph. 6:17).

⁶³Caird, *Letters*, 93.

⁶⁴See M. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ* (Cambridge 1990) 165-86.

⁶⁵For instance Gn. 32:25f. LXX; also Philo's description of asceticism as a *πρόη* (*Leg. All.* III, 190). See E. Levine, 'The Wrestling-Bel-Legacy in the New Testament', *NTS* 28, 1982, 560-4, J. Balsdon, *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* (London 1969) 308-11. For my suggestion that the *πρόη* and parody imagery makes more sense if related to arena fighting rather than to the typical Roman soldier, see my thesis (ch. 8).

Paul's recipe for confronting the evil spiritual powers ruling this world is defensive. It relies solely but very deliberately on God's superiority over the powers, whom he has subjected in principle already (1:21), but whom he will subject *de facto* at their final onslaught (6:12). As far as the church's confrontation with the powers is concerned, all that is needed is the defensive armour provided in full by God to those who are sealed with his Spirit. There is no need for believers to take the struggle to the enemy. It is rather a matter of holding out until the end. In principle, the powers are defeated.

The discussion to this point helps us appreciate Paul's fight on two fronts; *viz.*, the attack on tendencies to yield to foreign spiritual powers; and, the refutation by clear implication of any attempt to gain special spiritual insights by means of visionary endeavours and, and also, the rebuttal of Judaizing notions (which are likely to have gone hand in hand with the former). None of these keeps Paul from announcing the creation of a new man whose scope is trans-ethnic and in that sense universal. Soteriologically, however, there is not a hint of universalism. The best description of Ephesian soteriology is (as in the case of Rom. and Gal.) that of a christological particularism which is seen to replace the old ethnic particularism. Paul takes pains to show that this stands in continuity with the oneness of God (Eph. 4). There is one Spirit, one Lord, one Father. The only diversity Paul detects is functional, i.e. a matter of who exercises which particular gift. On a confessional level Paul leaves no alternatives to the narrow doctrinal confines set out in 4:3-6. The basic and explicit non-negotiables include the seal of the one Spirit, the need for incorporation into Christ's body as professed through baptism and the acknowledgment of the one Father.

An additional emphasis particularly prevalent in Ephesians which follows from the exclusiveness of the one church, is the demand for complete renunciation of cultic links with other spiritual forces. Such reasoning, which is based on the conviction that certain spiritual unions are incompatible, strongly resembles the logic which makes Paul argue that sexual intercourse with prostitutes is abominable because it constitutes a union which is incompatible with participating in the body of Christ, (1 Cor. 6:13-20). Here we then have a

principle which had validity for Paul in both areas, that of physical prostitution as well as that of spiritual and confessional aberration. Peace on the horizontal level and salvation as peace on the vertical level (Eph. 2:11-22) are inseparably linked to the confession of the one God who manifests himself as Father, Lord/Son and Spirit (4:3-6).⁶⁶ As Paul makes clear, there is just one hope—and it is not a variant of the many types of hope offered by the cults. Its realization is brought about in just the one body of believers with Christ as its head. This requirement of incorporation into this one body explains why Paul says there can just be one meaningful kind of baptism, namely that in the name of Christ. It also explains why that body had to be cleansed and to remain 'without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish—but holy and blameless' (5:27). Paul leaves no doubt: this extends to and even follows directly from truly apostolic teaching (4:12f) and uncompromising preaching of the one and only gospel (1:13; 4:15,20f).

6

In Public and in Private

Early Christians and Religious Pluralism

Bruce W. Winter

The early Christian church interacted with religious pluralism in two spheres—in public and in private. In public evangelistic preaching it was encountered in Lystra and Athens and actually discussed with the listeners (Acts 14 and 17). There was also the actual participation by some Christians in the public cultic activities in Corinth (1 Cor. 8:10).¹ Paul discussed appropriate Christian interactions in both public and private activities. These were to govern the church's conduct as it lived in the midst of a world which endorsed religious pluralism (1 Cor. 8-10). He concluded with this injunction (1 Cor 10:32-11:1):

Give no offence to Jew or Greek or to the church of God, just as I try to please all men in everything, I do not seek my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me as I am of Christ.

⁶⁶The term *trinity* would be anachronistic (4th century), but it is generally acknowledged that Eph. 4:3-6 is built around the triad *Spirit, Lord and Father*.

¹For background evidence see my 'Theological and Ethical Responses to Religious Pluralism—1 Corinthians 8-10', *TynB.* 41.2 (Nov. 1990) 209-26.