

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

is any evidence that He spoke of these things, such as the parables in Matthew provide, it is quite gratuitous to rule it out *a priori* on the ground that it refers to a future which His hearers could not realise. It is quite conceivable, no doubt, that when the parables were preached in any particular situation they might be modified, in such ways as we have seen, so as to bring out their special point at and for the moment ; but that is a totally different thing from saying that the evangelists made them out of their own heads. Men who called Jesus Lord, who tell us that parable was a conspicuous feature of His teaching, and who never put a parable into any lips but His, could not have acted so irresponsibly. In spite of the minor deflections and variations which have been illustrated, there is no part of the gospel tradition in which we can be surer of our contact with the mind of Jesus than the tradition of the parables.

JAMES DENNEY.

*THE EPISTLE TO THE "EPHESIANS" NOT A
SECONDARY PRODUCTION.*

THE resemblances between the Epistle to the "Ephesians" and that to the Colossians caused no trouble to students before the revolutionary period of the nineteenth century : they were merely a welcome excuse for commentators on the Epistles to abbreviate their comments on one or the other. The all-questioning attitude of the past generation or two did not, however, rest content with this, and a favourite explanation of the resemblances and differences was the view that "Ephesians" is the production of a second-century writer, who used the Epistle to the Colossians as a basis for his compilation. This view is still expressed in the recently published *Introduction to the Literature of the*

New Testament, by Dr. James Moffatt.¹ Dr. Moffatt's words are, however, cautious :—"The weight of the arguments (such as they are) inclines upon the whole to favour the authenticity of Colossians and the sub-Pauline origin of Ephesians (so e.g. . . . here follow the names of nine German scholars), and the basis for this hypothesis—at best it is only a working hypothesis—lies in a comparative analysis of the two writings." . . . "Ephesians may be fairly regarded as a set of variations played by a master hand upon one or two themes suggested by Colossians."²

While not maintaining that such a situation is inconceivable, I venture to agree with those who think it improbable. After all, the simplest hypothesis is likely to be the right one, and I cannot see that it is possible to upset this hypothesis. I will state the general situation, as I conceive it, briefly in my own words, not supposing that I can claim entire agreement even among those who, like myself, accept the genuineness of the epistle. Paul, as a prisoner in Rome, wrote the three epistles, "Ephesians," Colossians and Philemon, at the same period, probably in the same week. All hang together, and no scholar now, I think, doubts the genuineness of Philemon. He wished to send a circular letter to the churches of the great province of Asia, perhaps excluding Ephesus, with which alone of all these churches he had been in close contact, and he wrote "Ephesians." This letter is identical with that referred to in Colossians, chapter iv. verse 16, as a letter which is to come to the Colossians from Laodicea (*τὴν ἐκ Λαοδικείας*). The wording here is important, and significant. The letter is not said to be addressed to Laodicea specifically or exclusively, and one might almost say that this verse in itself proves that Paul really did send a circular letter to the churches

¹ International Theological Library (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1911).

² *Op. cit.*, p. 375.

of the province. The solicitations of Epaphras (Epaphroditus), himself a Colossian (chap. iv, verse 12), described as "struggling for the sake of the Colossians in his prayers," supplies a ready reason why Paul should have written a special letter to Colossae alone of these churches, dealing with the special difficulties of that church. Of course there would be much in common in the contents of the two letters, as Colossae was no better known personally to Paul than the others. The three letters were all taken in the same ship by Tychicus and Onesimus, the two travelling together, probably as master and slave, in accordance with the regular ancient custom.

Such is practically the view of Hort, whose masterly introduction to Ephesians is unsurpassed.¹ It is also, as I understand, the view of Mr. Rutherford, in his *St. Paul's Epistles to Colossae and Laodicea; The Epistle to the Colossians viewed in relation to the Epistle to the Ephesians*,² which, however, I have not seen. What will carry still greater weight with many, who do not know how fearless of consequences Hort was in his critical investigations, is that Harnack has recently expressed a similar view in a paper entitled *Die Adresse des Epheserbriefts des Paulus* in the *Transactions* of the Imperial Prussian Academy of Sciences for 1910.³ This is a great consolation to those who have maintained the genuineness and non-secondary character of "Ephesians." What I want to do here is to show from a critical study of one passage that "Ephesians" cannot have been compiled from Colossians.

The passage to which I refer is in the Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter i., verse 15. In the Revised Version this verse reads: "For this cause I also, having heard of

¹ *Prolegomena to St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and the Ephesians* (London, Macmillan, 1895).

² T. & T. Clark, 1908.

³ Berlin, G. Reimer, price 6d.

the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among (*margin* 'in') you, and which *ye shew* toward all the saints, cease not, etc.," but in the margin we find the note that after the word "and" "Many ancient authorities insert *the love*." The difference between these two renderings represents a serious difference in the texts offered by the ancient authorities. The Revised Version is an attempt to translate *Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ γὰρ, ἀκούσας τὴν καθ' ὑμᾶς πίστιν ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὴν εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους, οὐ παύομαι κ.τ.λ.* This reading is supported by the following authorities, according to Dean Robinson's note¹:—N*ABP 17, Origen (once), Cyril of Alexandria (once), Augustine (once): in other words, by four uncials, three of them of superlative quality, by one other uncial, and by "the queen of the cursives," as well as by two Alexandrian Fathers and one Western (African) Father in one of two citations he makes. Since Dean Robinson published this note in 1903, the publication of better editions has strengthened the evidence: we must now add the Bohairic Version, as edited by Horner (Clarendon Press, 1905), a citation of Jerome, and the other passage of Augustine; the last case is very instructive to the student of textual criticism. Augustine, *Epistle* cccvii. § 28, in the current editions reads: *Propter hoc et ego audita fide vestra in domino Iesu et dilectione in omnes sanctos non cesso*, etc. The recently published edition of Goldbacher in the *Vienna Corpus*,² however, based as it is on five manuscripts ranging in date from the close of the ninth to the thirteenth century, shows that the manuscripts are unanimous in omitting *dilectione*. Clearly *dilectione* is, then, an insertion of the older editors, who did not know

¹ *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (London, Macmillan, 1903 and 1904), p. 295.

² *S. Aureli Augustini Hipponiensis Episcopi Epistulae*, recensuit et commentario critico instruxit Al. Goldbacher, Pars iv. (Vindobonae et Lipsiae, 1911) (— *Corpus Script. Eccl. Lat.*, vol. lvii.).

any other form of text, and thought that their MSS. were in error. Augustine was, therefore, quite consistent with himself and used a form of text from which *dilectione* was absent. To sum up all the evidence for the shorter reading, the oldest and purest Eastern and the oldest Western authorities, to which we have access,¹ support the absence of *dilectione* (*ἀγάπην*). This is, then, likely to be the primitive reading.

The rival reading appears in two forms. The earlier of the two shows merely an *ἀγάπην* after the *τῆν*: this is found in D and G, the two uncials which are our best Greek authorities for the Western Text. Some Atticising purist inserted another *τῆν* after the *ἀγάπην* and thus gave us the reading most widely present in manuscripts. There is yet a third variety of this rival reading where the *ἀγάπην* comes after the *ἀγίους* and not till then: this form is found in some half a dozen cursives, etc., known to Tischendorf. These phenomena suggest that the *ἀγάπην* is an early "Western" insertion. This rival reading in some form or other is at the basis of the Latin, Syriac and Gothic versions: it is possible that the old Syriac, however, if we had it, would witness to a text without *ἀγάπην*.

"Good and well," you may say, "you have demonstrated that the form of the verse without *ἀγάπην* is the more primitive, and the better attested, but the trouble about it is that it will not translate." Some, like the Revisers, have risked taking the *εἰς* with *πίστω*, but such a construction is artificial and unparalleled. The proper solution of the difficulty is that *εἰς* here, as so often in New Testament times, has encroached on the province of *ἐν*, and means "among."² I fancied that this interpretation was original

¹ Unfortunately Cyprian does not cite this verse, but there can be little doubt that the word was absent from his copy of the Apostle. Augustine's copy here preserves an ancient trait.

² Moulton, *Grammar of N.T. Greek*, vol. i. p. 62 f., p. 234 f.

when I proposed it in the *Expository Times* for October, 1907, but I was agreeably surprised to find later that it was exactly the way in which the Bohairic translator took it. I shall, therefore, be acquitted of suggesting the fantastic. Paul simply meant: "the faith which is among you and (the faith which is) among all the Christians." The faith is not their special possession, but it is the same faith as the Christians of other provinces show.¹ Elsewhere in the Epistle he refers to Christians outside the province of Asia, for example in chapter ii. 19, and careful readers of Paul will readily recall parallel instances in other Epistles.

If, then, this be the original text and the correct interpretation of Ephesians i. 15, it is quite clear that "Ephesians" cannot be derived from Colossians. For in the parallel passage there (chap. i. verse 4) the words *τὴν ἀγάπην* are genuine. No one could possibly have produced the original text of Ephesians i. 15 out of Colossians i. 4: the Colossian form would have been transferred bodily. There can be no doubt that the insertion of *ἀγάπην* [*τὴν*] in certain textual authorities in Ephesians i. 15 is a borrowing from Colossians i. 4. Some ancient reader (perhaps Marcion), like many moderns, misunderstood the *εἰς* in Ephesians i. 15, and made sense by borrowing from the parallel passage Colossians i. 4. I maintain, therefore, that the restoration of the correct text and interpretation of Ephesians i. 15 is a demonstration that "Ephesians" cannot be a sub-Pauline compilation based on Colossians.

ALEX. SOUTER.

¹ It is, perhaps, characteristic of Dr. Moffatt that in his parallel columns illustrating the common matter of Ephesians and Colossians he makes no mention of the various readings in Ephesians i. 15; but they have an importance here comparable to that which they have in parallel passages in the Synoptic Gospels.