I. INTRODUCTION

Although it has always occupied a place in biblical studies, interest in the canon has been invigorated in recent years by the writings of Brevard Childs\(^1\) (Yale) and James A. Sanders (Claremont)\(^2\). While their attention has been fixed upon the canonical \textit{product} as the context for interpretation (Childs) and as a record of the canonical \textit{process(es)} at work (Sanders), little has been said about the \textit{place} where both product and process were enabled to flourish\(^3\). This should not be surprising because to mention place these days carries with it great risk. Rarely does one confidently cite Jamnia as the locale and occasion for the closing of the Old Testament Canon. Nor does one speak dogmatically anymore about an Alexandrian canon among the Jews in Egypt\(^4\).


\(^2\) Sanders set forth his basic position in \textit{Torah and Canon} (Philadelphia, 1972). It was developed further in the introduction to \textit{God Has a Story Too} (Philadelphia, 1980). His most recent, comprehensive statement appears in \textit{Canon and Community} (Philadelphia, 1984). The numerous articles which he has written (including essays in \textit{Festschriften}) are to be published together by Fortress Press. Viewing the Childs-Sanders debate with his characteristically keen eye is James Barr, most recently in \textit{Holy Scripture. Canon, Authority, Criticism} (Philadelphia, 1983).


Such local or regional specification not only lacks substantiation, it also runs contrary to the realization that the church universal was the mother of canon. Documents enjoying only local or regional favour could not qualify for inclusion.

However, if we cannot speak of the birth of canon in a certain place and time, might there be clues to its conception in a particular environment? After all, on a more limited scale, scholars have attempted to pin-point the Sitz im Leben of various writings (Mark: Rome, Galilee, etc.). So, might it be legitimate to ascertain a Sitz im Leben des Kanons, a social and religious context in which the diversity-within-unity of the New Testament was not only tolerated but caused to thrive? To use a limited analogy, we may cite the stock market, a phenomenon which transcends place. Yet, in a very real sense the Exchange in New York City (on Wall Street!) provides an economic, financial, and social centre for the national and international enterprise. Of course, other cities now might do just as well; but it was the peculiar character of New York in the critical, early years which made it the hub of capital investment.

As the title indicates, I shall argue that Ephesus was such a place. Admittedly, the idea is not a new one. James Moffatt broached it in protesting the prevailing view that the canon emerged in Rome: “Was not the Apostolic canon of Scripture first formed, in its informal stages, in Asia Minor”\(^5\)? And a half century before I completed my own independent investigation about Ephesus, E.J. Goodspeed had come to similar conclusions: “... for one momentous generation, Ephesus was the literary focus of early Christianity, and by its compilations ... influenced Christianity more than Jerusalem, Antioch or Rome”\(^6\). But his

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\(^{5}\) James Moffatt, reviewing the German original of Bauer (n. 12) in Ext. T., xlv (1933/34), pp. 475-76.

findings were presented in the popular, undocumented form of an address to seminarians. Moreover, much of his case rested upon speculation unsupported by data; and it expanded the boundary of the quest beyond the limits of the New Testament canon. My method will be to examine the connections between Ephesus and the documents of the New Testament according to three kinds of data: (1) explicit references to the city in the New Testament itself, (2) statements in church tradition linking the two (a connection which must be taken seriously even if not true), and (3) inferences made by the more subtle detective-like investigation of critical scholarship. Throughout the enterprise, these categories and their relative merits will be in constant view. In the end, I shall argue that what has been posited for the church universal, both in its theological and canonical developments, occurred first in prototypical form at Ephesus.

II. PRIDE OF PLACE

Numerical Occurrence and Distribution

The mechanical exercise of counting concordance entries reveals the astonishing results that Ephesus is referred to in the New Testament more than any other city except Jerusalem. It is the most-mentioned of the Greek churches. Furthermore, the sixteen instances occur in six documents (if Ephesians be included): Acts 7; I Cor. 15:32, 16:8; Eph. 1:1; I Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:18, 4:12; Rev. 1:11, 2:1. At least three or as many as five authors (if 1 and 2 Tim. and Eph. are not Pauline) contributed to this corpus.

Perhaps this is the place to note that, according to Acts, Paul spent the longest period of ministry at Ephesus. Although imprisoned for two years in Caesarea (24:27) and under "house arrest" in Rome for a similar length of time (28:16, 30) being engaged in extensive dialogue with Jews and others (vss. 17, 23, 18:19, 21, 24; 19:1, 17, 26; 20:16, 17.


My thesis does not dispute Hans von Campenhausen's view that the heretic Marcion and his catholic counterpart Irenaeus are the two most formative figures in the development of the New Testament Canon in the second century. See The Formation of the Christian Bible (Philadelphia, 1972), p. 203. Rather, I am suggesting that, already in Ephesus, proto-canonical tradition had been accumulating that provided the reservoir from which the later church, in response to Marcion and others, drew.
30-31), Paul laboured unhindered for three years at Ephesus (20:31), two of them in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (19:9). Furthermore, it is about that ministry that Luke allots more space and detail than any other (half of Ch. 19, two-thirds of Ch. 20). This is twice the amount of attention given to the Roman stay in Ch. 28, even though this is Paul's and the gospel's ultimate destination. And the only extended farewell which Paul gave to any of his churches was to the elders of Ephesus (20:17-38)8.

Next in frequency is Caesarea Maritima, all fifteen occurrences in Acts9. Syrian Antioch follows as a close third (fourteen times in two documents by different authors)10. Surprisingly, Rome figures only eight times, being mentioned in three writings from the hand of two authors (if either Paul or Luke wrote 2 Tim., three if they did not)11. While one cannot formulate conclusions on such quantitative data alone, the sheer preponderance of references to Ephesus justifies further inquiry.

III. LODESTONE FOR “APOSTOLIC” PERSONS

New Testament Data

That Ephesus drew so many prominent leaders of the early church is noteworthy, too. There is, of course, Paul in much of the literature cited above. Accompanying him (at least some of the time) was Luke, who puts in an appearance at the departure from the city with the resumption of the “we” section (21:1). The intimacy of the language suggests that Luke had endeared himself there, too, as a result of a longer stay labouring alongside Paul. For an unknown reason, Apollos of Alexandria was attracted there (Acts 18:24-26). In this connection, we must not overlook the substantial impact of John the Baptist whose doctrine had influenced Apollos (in Alexandria?) and about twelve “disciples” (18:25, 19:1-7). And, as all of these in one way or another have to do with Paul, his protégés Timothy (1 Tim. 1:1-2; 2 Tim. 1:1-2, 18) and Mark (2 Tim. 4:11) ought not to be overlooked. But besides this heavily Pauline presence, the New Testament includes

8 Goodsir made the same point in New Chapters, p. 27.
as its only “apocalypse” the work of a “John”. However he is to be identified, the author displays an authority over and an intimacy with seven churches of Asia, Ephesus heading the list (Rev. 1:4, 9, 11).

Church Tradition

Furthermore, both the New Testament and church tradition agree on a Pauline and Johannine presence there. Whether we appeal to the disapproved (but not heretical) apocryphal material of the second century or to the major spokespersons of that period, the answer is the same. Irenaeus, in his efforts to refute gnostic heretics, cites the unbroken chain of episcopal tradition in Rome and all the churches of Asia. Of these, only Ephesus comes up for mentioning: “... founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan [which commenced in 98 C.E.], is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles.” Irenaeus, in his efforts to refute gnostic heretics, cites the unbroken chain of episcopal tradition in Rome and all the churches of Asia. Of these, only Ephesus comes up for mentioning: “... founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan [which commenced in 98 C.E.], is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles.”

Justin (d. 165), a resident of Ephesus for a time, speaks of John as “... a certain man with us, ... one of the apostles of Christ” who wrote the Apocalypse. Near the end of this century, Polycrates, bishop of the church there, mentions that “John, who leaned on the Lord’s breast, ... sleeps at Ephesus.”

12 Whereas there will be a separate attempt to deal with the issue of Pauline and “Johannine” literature written to and from (or in) Ephesus, we are here concerned with persons of stature and antiquity whom Ephesus attracted. For differing assessments about the stability and longevity of their influence there, see Walter Bauer, Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity (Philadelphia, 1971), pp. 77-94.


14 Although later authorities will be referred to subsequently, in the main they give the impression of repeating the testimony of these worthies rather than of providing witness to independent tradition(s).


And so it was throughout the successive generations: "the universal testimony of antiquity assigns John's later life to Ephesus". Even those who in the third and fourth centuries reckoned, that, on literary and theological grounds, the author of the Apocalypse was not John the son of Zebedee, did claim it was by another worthy of the same name, John the Elder, a co-resident of Ephesus. Although put rather melodramatically, the editors of The Beginnings of Christianity capture the spirit of the tradition well: Ephesus "... seems to ... have been obsessed by the name of John — John the Baptist, John the son of Zebedee, and John the Elder".

Critical Scholarship

Few nowadays would deny the probability that either or both of the latter lived in Asia Minor and in Ephesus in particular. There is no reason (anymore) for denying the consistent witness of the church to this effect.

IV. LITERARY LODESTONE AND CENTRIFUGE

When we examine how much of the New Testament was actually or allegedly written to and from Ephesus, the results are noteworthy indeed.


19 Dionysius of Alexandria on the Apocalypse of John, Eusebius, C.H., VII 25: the author was holy and inspired, but not the Apostle (7), the Elder who wrote 2 and 3 John is not the same as the author of the Gospel or Revelation (11), this John was otherwise unknown (12), he probably lived in Asia, one of two monuments in Ephesus bearing his name (16). See pp. 309-10 of the edition cited in n. 17.


21 The distinction probably stems from comments by Papias who either claimed to have spoken with both persons or who referred to the same one twice only somewhat differently. See Finegan, Archaeology, p. 41 and I.T. Beckwith's thorough treatment, "The Two Johns of the Asian Church" in The Apocalypse of John (New York, 1919; Grand Rapids, 1967), pp. 362-93. The rumour of two tombs at Ephesus might also stem from such a different interpretation. And Eusebius admits the possibility that the two tombs might commemorate a single individual (C.H., III 39.6).


23 Beckwith and Finegan (n. 21, above) present the arguments on which the current consensus is based.
The data of the canon alone indicate that more literature was addressed to Ephesus than to any other church: 1 Tim. (1:3), 2 Tim. (1:18) and the Apocalypse (Rev. 1:11, 2:1). Furthermore, Paul wrote 1 Cor. from here (16:8).

Church Tradition

The witness of the early church adds more. Although no texts earlier than the fourth century contain Ἐφέσῳ at “Ephesians” 1:1, patristic testimony makes the debate over the destination of this document more complex than it might seem. Manuscripts from c. 200 (p.46) and the fourth century (κ and B) exclude the phrase; and one can cite Origen a century earlier not knowing manuscripts which include it. Nevertheless there is the odd fact that he does mention Ephesians at the head of a list of Pauline epistles. Furthermore, his predecessor at Alexandria, Clement, and Tertullian in North Africa explicitly adduce the letter in question as to the Ephesians. Likewise, at least as early as p.46, Irenaeus precedes the quotation of Eph. 2:13 with “as the Apostle says to the Ephesians...” One could add the testimony of the Muratorian Fragment were this not now under suspicion by some to be a later (and eastern) document instead of an early and Roman one. So, in addition to the textual evidence, we must

24 For this interpretation see B.F. Westcott, Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians (New York, 1906), pp. xxiii and 19.
26 See Westcott, pp. xxxii for the text of Paedag I 18 and the Stromata IV 65.
27 Against Marcion, IV 5, V 11 and 17. See vol. 7, p. 186 in the edition cited in n. 15, above and Westcott, pp. xxiii and xxxii for the texts of the latter two passages.
28 A.H., V 14.3 (p. 542 of the edition cited in n. 15, above and Westcott, xxxii for the text). Markus Barth points out that the Syriac and Latin versions of the second century have the address. Might their exemplars in Greek have contained it, too? See Ephesians (the Anchor Bible, vol. 34; Garden City, New York, 1974), i. 67. He also observes that all of the earliest manuscripts (and thereby p.46) contain the title ΠΡΟΣ ΕΦΕΣΙΟΥΣ, even though the address is missing (ibid.).
29 See n. 25 above for a summary of Sundberg’s position on pp. 362-364 of the article cited there. His full argument was presented in “Canon Muratori: A Fourth Century List”, H.T.R., 66 (1973), pp. 1-41. Recently, F.F. Bruce has
include the patristic tradition which is at least as old and more widespread. Finally, Irenaeus' claim that the Fourth Gospel was written in Ephesus by John the son of Zebedee went unchallenged\textsuperscript{30} (though his authorship of it is not the main point here).

Critical Scholarship

The twofold patristic and textual testimonies about "Ephesians" led B.F. Westcott, who favoured a version of the circulation theory to explain the absence of the address in the most ancient manuscripts, to conclude:

Since it is highly probable that the epistle would be communicated to the great mother church first, and then sent to the lesser churches around, there is sufficient justification for the title ΠΡΟΣ ΕΦΕΣΙΟΥΣ and for the retention of ἐν Ἐφέσῳ in peculiar type in the text itself…. Ephesus must have had a better right than any other single city to account itself the recipient of the epistle\textsuperscript{31}.

Although a few scholars have linked the Fourth Gospel (and implicitly its author) with Egyptian Alexandria\textsuperscript{32} or Syrian Antioch\textsuperscript{33}, F.F. Bruce finds their cases unconvincing. His judgment corresponds to the conclusions which we drew above:

Neither in Syria nor anywhere else … do we find the weight of tradition and external testimony that links the Johannine literature and its author or authors with Ephesus. In the absence of any tradition or substantial evidence to the contrary, the Ephesian link holds the field\textsuperscript{34}.

\textsuperscript{30} Irenaeus, \textit{A. H. III} 1.1.

\textsuperscript{31} Westcott, p. 20. Markus Barth, p. 50 cites scholars who, though disputing Pauline authorship, nevertheless locate the place of writing in Asia Minor, sometimes in Ephesus itself.


\textsuperscript{34} Bruce, op. cit., lx. 360. So far as the letters are concerned, R.E. Brown suggests "… a large metropolitan center (Ephesus) with many house churches of Johannine Christians to which 1 John was primarily addressed". 2 and 3 John
Less consensual are opinions regarding the origination and destination of Luke-Acts. Yet, evidence from four quarters points in the direction of Ephesus: the form of tradition in Luke and John; the Jesus-Baptist rivalry; the theology of the two volumes and parallels in vocabulary and theology between Luke-Acts, Ephesians and the Pastorals. Early in this century, the editors of The Beginnings Of Christianity, while themselves supporting a Roman association for the Doppelwerk, nevertheless recognized that Ephesus could not be ignored:

... the form of synoptic tradition which is behind the Fourth Gospel is precisely that of Luke, and if so, the case for Ephesus as the original home of Acts would have to be reconsidered.\(^\text{35}\)

Although they did not pursue the matter further, more recent and detailed studies fortify this observation and thereby strengthen the Ephesian connection.\(^\text{36}\) Even more conspicuous are the agreements between John and Acts.\(^\text{37}\) Together, they suggest that the entire Lukan enterprise owes its character to the milieu of Ephesus, which, as we saw earlier, receives so much time and space in volume two.

Moreover, among the similarities between Luke-Acts and John are those which reverently subordinate John the Baptist to Jesus. Luke alone of the gospels records the birth of John, but in such a way as to give Jesus the pre-eminence. Only Luke among the synoptists relates that John was suspected of being the Messiah (3:15). In Acts, he is made to deny that he is the Christ (13:25). Furthermore, neither Luke nor John associates the Baptist with

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\(^{37}\) Ibid., pp. 44-61. These include the Baptist’s announcement of the Coming One; the concept of witness; and the “sign” language of miracles, which are important for producing faith. In these instances and others, Acts stands closer to John than to the Markan and Matthean traditions. In many cases, Acts stands closer to John than to Luke itself: e.g. the Baptist’s denial of messiahship, the Holy Spirit as a witness to Jesus, the frequent use of “Christ”, a Moses/Christ parallelistism and an interest in mission to Samaria. Cribbs cites examples of extensive verbal agreements.
Elijah, reports his baptism as bringing forgiveness, or allows him to baptize Jesus\textsuperscript{38}. Similarly, the Fourth Evangelist reports John’s insisting that his own importance must subside while Jesus’ increases (3:30)\textsuperscript{39}. Finally, we might note that the Baptist witnessed his own disciples transfer their allegiance to Jesus (1:35-37. Cf. 3:25-29).

In view of these data, how intriguing it is that the single document mentioning that there were “about twelve” Christian disciples who knew John’s baptism alone is Acts (19:1-6), and that the only place where they were reportedly encountered was Ephesus. The Baptist’s influence there had been profound even though geographically, culturally and intellectually the Jordan desert and Asia Minor were worlds apart. And Luke takes pains to make clear that what these brothers lacked in understanding and experience was supplied by the agency of Paul. Even the mighty Apollos needed to have the way of God explained more adequately at Ephesus since he, too, had known only the baptism of John (18:24-26). Where else but in Ephesus itself would the Lukan and Johannine contrasts have been meaningful?

Furthermore, an Ephesian provenance for Luke-Acts may be argued for by comparing it with literature already linked there by internal evidence or by tradition and which together show a concern both for the continuity of salvation history and for the unity among those who have been included in it. Thus, the saints of the opening chapters of the third gospel sing about God’s great redemptive acts in Israel’s history of which Jesus’ story in Luke’s διήγησις is an extension (1:46-55, 67-79; 2:29-32). And the seer of Revelation relates the vision wherein the victors over the Beast sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb (15:2-4)\textsuperscript{40}. Furthermore, the scope of the Christian mission in Acts corresponds to that of Jesus’ itinerary in John: Jerusalem and Judaea, Samaria and the

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 47.

\textsuperscript{39} To these observations (which could be multiplied) should be added that in Matthew, Jesus identifies the origin of the Kingdom’s forceful advance in the days of John (11:12). But in Luke’s account he marks only the beginning of its proclamation (16:16).

\textsuperscript{40} The wealth of direct and allusive references in Revelation to Old Testament texts and images hardly needs documentation. And even where there seems to be polemic against contemporary Jews (3:9), there is no attempt to sever connections with Judaism but to claim that Christians (both Jewish and Gentile) are the legitimate heirs of God’s ancient people.
world. Likewise, the ranks of those who believe are similarly described. Luke and John alone report that Samaritans (Acts 8:12, John 4:39-42) and Jews believed on Jesus (Acts 14:1, 20:21; John 8:30-31, 11:45, 12:11). And, if Luke provides the story of the ultimate unity which was forged between the Jewish mission under Peter and the Gentile mission under Paul, then Ephesians provides the profound theological underpinnings of it (2:11-22).

Goodspeed saw the association long ago:

... if Luke-Acts had just awakened Christians to the world-wide character of their fellowship, what more natural than for Ephesians to set up the doctrine of one universal spiritual church ...?

Finally, if lexical and theological parallels between Luke and the Pastorals on the one hand and between Luke and Ephesians on the other are sufficient to suggest that Luke was their author, as C.F.D. Moule and R.P. Martin have argued, then the personal and literary connections with Ephesus are increased.

Before assessing the significance of these findings, let us review the evidence from various quarters so far: the New Testament specifically assigns 1 & 2 Tim. and Revelation (1 Cor. was written from Ephesus). Patristic tradition adds John’s Gospel and Ephesians. Scholarly consensus supports the former (along with the letters) and at least concurs on the congenial association of the latter. A case can be argued for Luke-Acts, although there is nothing like a consensus in this regard. But others are prepared to go much farther than this rather conservative estimate: Helmut Koester maintains that most of Paul’s letters were written from

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41 Divisions among the Jews regarding Jesus are reported in Acts 14:4 and John 11:46. And both mention that members of the officialdom showed various degrees of support: Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple, secures Jesus’ body (John 19:38) and Nicodemus, a Pharisee and the ruler of the Jews (3:1, 10), brought spices for the burial (19:39). According to Acts 15:5, Pharisees were among the believers at the Jerusalem Council.

42 Goodspeed, New Chapters, p. 29. Ephesians and Acts concur on the importance of the Spirit as the great leveler of distinctions between Jew and Gentile (Acts 2:17, 11:16-17, 15:8-9; Eph. 2:18).


Ephesus\textsuperscript{45} (where he was imprisoned)\textsuperscript{46}. This includes three letters to Philippi, four to Corinth, Galatians and Philemon\textsuperscript{47}. Furthermore, Paul wrote Romans 16:1-23 to Ephesus along with a copy of chs. 1-15\textsuperscript{48}. In Koester's view, Ephesus was as much a literary centrifuge as it was a lodestone. That few today would concur with his contentions is beside the point: that Ephesus more than any other city should be regarded as the alternative to the more usual designations is itself an important datum that cannot be overlooked.

V. DIVERSITY

Thus far, we have done little more than catalogue the persons and literature which one way or another found their way into or out of Ephesus. The next stage is to categorize this data more subtly in


\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 309. John Ferguson has examined a number of lexical and thematic commonalities between Philippians and the Fourth Gospel and has come to the same conclusions. See "Philippians, John and the Traditions of Ephesus", \textit{Ex.T.}, lxxiii. 3 (1971), pp. 85-87. Another feature that might be added is the incarnational christology which appears most explicitly here (2:5-11) and in John 1:1-14 and 1 Tim. 3:16, both of which by tradition and internal evidence, respectively, were associated with Ephesus. If, as many believe, the "Hymn to Christ" is a fragment which Paul incorporated into the letter, might he have borrowed it from the Ephesian Christians?

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., pp. 138-39. The hypothesis of an Ephesian destination is still tenacious enough to require serious attention in Harry Gamble, Jr.'s \textit{The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans} (Studies and Documents 42, ed. I.A. Sparks; Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977), pp. 37-41.
order to assess more fully both the nature of the canonical literature and the place of its origination and destination. First, we shall examine that great diversity among persons, genres and points of view which manifests itself.

Persons
There is Saul of Jerusalem and Paul of Tarsus, himself cosmopolitan figure par excellence, who moved freely both in the heartland of Judaism and in the great cities of the larger Hellenistic world. Also from Asia Minor was his associate, Timothy of Lystra, whose dual Greek and Jewish heritage (Acts 16:1-3) spanned both worlds. Like Paul, Apollos was a hellenistic Jew, but from Alexandria in Egypt. And we must be prepared for at least three named John: the son of Zebedee from Galilee, the Elder of the Epistles (whom Papias and certain other church fathers distinguished) and the seer of Patmos. Here, too, both Asian and Palestinian tributaries merge. Not to be forgotten is John the Baptist of the wilderness of Judea by proxy. Although Luke's origins are not known precisely (some have thought Syrian Antioch), he bears the distinction of being the example of a Gentile conversant with the traditions of Judaism and Jewish Christianity. Of course, the presence and influence of these persons was not on a par, nor was its intensity constant. Paul's impact waxed and waned (2 Tim. 1:15-16, the point being true however one assigns authorship). But how intriguing that Ephesus, at one time or another during the composition and collection of the N.T. writings, should have attracted these persons from such a variety of backgrounds and locale in the east Mediterranean basin.

Genres
Furthermore, the multiplicity of genres represented by the literature coming from these persons is noteworthy. Among the epistles are three types: that addressed to an individual, a leader of the congregation (1, 2 Tim.; 3 John), two "circulars" (Eph., Rev. and perhaps 1 John) and, if one will, two addressed to specific congregations (2 John, possibly Eph.). The same types would be reflected if the so-called prison epistles were to be included. The only example of an apocalypse found in the N.T. was sent to seven churches in Asia, the first of which, Ephesus, is the only one to be otherwise represented literarily in it. Finally, the third kind of genre found at Ephesus is evangelic. The firmest representative is,
of course, John’s gospel. And this would be sufficient to make the point. However, there are some grounds for believing that besides the “spiritual” gospel, Luke, a representative of the synoptics, who rendered that tradition so differently, found a home there, too 49. However, in accepting Luke, one would have to include Acts, yet a fourth literary type. Even apart from the Third Evangelist’s two volumes, we have here virtually all of the ingredients of the Christian canon, and a large quantity of it at that.

Points of View

Much of what follows may be found in greater detail and comprehensiveness in J. D. G. Dunn’s *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*. My contention is that what he and others see as constituting unity and diversity throughout the church of the New Testament era in a kind of abstract sense is reflected in the range of documents associated with Ephesus. And these suggest that most of the issues which emerge were encountered there at one time or another, and sometimes concurrently. Limited space permits highlighting only a few of the subjects, at least in broad strokes.

So far as eschatology is concerned, the apocalyptic variety is most magisterially represented by Revelation. And Paul, writing from Ephesus to Corinth, could share at least in its expectation of an imminent end and the Lord’s return (1 Cor. 7:29-31, 16:22). At the opposite end of the scale lies the Fourth Gospel with its highly realized or inaugurated eschatology. While references to the consummation (e.g. 5:28-29) and a future return (14:1-3) occur, they are neither prominent nor intense. To hear Jesus’ word and believe on God enables one already to pass from death to life (5:24) 50. 1 John appears as a kind of *via media* 51. Paul, of course,

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49 For a concise comparison and contrast, see J. D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, 1977), pp. 75-76.

50 Ibid., p. 349.

51 Bruce, “St. John at Ephesus”, p. 356, quotes C. K. Barrett, who captures the spirit of the diversity which belonged within the Johannine “school” itself: “... the evangelist, the author of the epistles and the final editor of Revelation were all pupils of the original apocalyptist. They developed his work along similar lines, but it was the evangelist who saw most clearly how eschatological Christian theology could be re-expressed in the language of Hellenistic thought, and indeed saw this so clearly as to be far ahead of his time” (*The Gospel According to St. John* (London, 1955), p. 52).
believed that Jesus' resurrection and the gift of the Spirit were the first-fruits of the end-time harvest (1 Cor. 15:20, 23)\(^{52}\), and in this he was joined by others. Awareness of an interim of varying length and theological significance appears, too. In the Pastorals, belief in the day of the Lord and Jesus' appearance remains strong, but its imminence has diminished somewhat (1 Tim. 6:15, 2 Tim. 2:2). And Dunn can say of Ephesians that "... the expectation of an imminent End is wholly lacking and the parousia is not even mentioned"\(^{53}\). Instead, it is as if the church as Christ's Bride grows to maturity (4:12-15) until she at last can be presented to him (5:27)\(^{54}\). If it is legitimate to include Luke-Acts, then here occurs the most thoroughgoing theological valuation of the interim. The Evangelist's re-interpreting of Mark 13 involves separating the destruction of Jerusalem from the parousia (21:24) and making the proclamation of an imminent end a falsehood (21:8). In writing a history of the church, Luke "... was in effect interposing a whole new epoch between the resurrection/ascension of Jesus and the parousia"\(^{55}\). Of course, the church's first historian did not invent the interim; rather, he "regularized" or "formalized" it\(^{56}\).

In addition to single issues, one may observe how diversity affects several interdependent perspectives such as images of the church and their corresponding implications for structure and ministry. Consequently, when the world-wide Christian community (including the local congregation) is conceived of as the united body of Christ (Eph. 1:23, 4:4), then growth and maturity occur in community and as a community (4:12-16); and its internal ethics presuppose not only the initial work of Christ (4:32, 5:2) but also the mutual interdependence of believers (4:25-32, 5:21-33). No wonder, then, that such church "officers" as are listed (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, 4:11), function as those who equip the people of God as a whole for ministry as well as edifying that leads to collective maturity (vss. 12-13). This in the end is the best safeguard against infantile oscillation between novel doctrines peddled by charlatans (vs. 14).

\(^{52}\) Dunn, p. 18.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., p. 346.

\(^{54}\) In Rev. 21:2 the Bride imagery is slightly different and opposite in its movement: descent from heaven.


\(^{56}\) Moule, Birth, p. 226
And Dunn observes "... strong parallels between the image of church order in Eph. 4 and the body metaphor in Rom. 12 and 1 Cor. 12". But he cannot decide whether the author is "... enlarging his vision of the local church as a charismatic community to cosmic dimensions ..." or whether he is "... beginning to think of ministry in terms of offices valid throughout the universal Church" (in loc.). No mention of bishops or elders occurs. Various charismata, distributed by the sovereign Spirit (12:7-11) and ranked by God (vss. 28-31), allow each believer to have some ministry, that of the apostle's being unique.

Perhaps the most egalitarian of the various traditions is the Johannine, broadly conceived. John of Patmos regards himself simply as God's servant (1:1, 22:9). Although a member of a prophetic brotherhood (22:9), his status or role does not appear to be official as such. And he writes his letters simply to the ἀγγελος of each church (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14), a category so elusive that no consensus about its meaning exists. In a time of persecution, one might have expected to find some admonition to rally round the authority and discipline of church leaders. Instead, the Seer calls Christians a nation in which they serve as priests (1:6, 5:10, 20:6). The ethic is one of loyalty and patient endurance which, when maintained even to death, brings victory over Satan (e.g., 1:9; 2:2, 10; 12:11) as well as participation in the new age.

Neither in the Fourth Gospel nor in 1 John are the disciples ever called "apostles" or "the twelve". There is no officialdom whatever. The closest suggestion of such authority appears in 3 John, where "the Elder" resists Diotrephes' thirst for ecclesiastical prominence and power. An individualism matches this "democracy". Each branch is rooted directly into Christ, the Vine (15:4-7). Although community exists (17:20-23), based upon keeping Christ's command to love one another as he loved (15:9-14), there is no strong sense of belonging together in a mutual, corporate manner.

At the opposite extreme, of course, are the Pastorals, 1 & 2 Tim. Here, the intimate connection between the image of the church and the character of its organization is most clear. As God's

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57 Dunn, p. 351.
58 Ibid., p. 110.
59 For most of the observations on the Gospel and 2, 3 John, I am following Dunn, pp. 118-19, 358-59.
“household” (1 Tim. 3:16), it needs managers who can attend the needs of various members. Well-established, hierarchical offices of elders, over-seers and deacons appear (1 Tim. 3:1), with Timothy himself assuming something of the role of monarchical bishop. Because it is the “pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:16), leaders are to preserve and transmit an established, orthodox body of teachings (1 Tim. 6 and 2 Tim. 2, throughout). This in turn determines the nature of one’s response: to learn and obey them.

Finally, if Luke’s witness be included, then his portrait of the early Jerusalem community will conclude this topic. Upon repentance and baptism, respondents to the apostolic preaching are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:37-39). Devotion to the apostles’ teaching, the breaking of bread and prayer (vs. 42) yields commonality of heart, mind, and possessions (vss. 44-46, 4:32-35) which the apostles distribute according to need. There are few ethical characteristics apart from these. None of this becomes typical in Luke’s portrait of the early church. Leadership initially was not executive so far as the Twelve were concerned. In the main, they represented eschatological Israel (Matt. 19:28/Luke 22:29-30; Acts 1:6, 20-26; 6:2). Peter, James and John emerge next as leading figures (1:13; 3:4; 12:1-2), followed by James, the Lord’s brother (15:13-15; 21:18). Perhaps to him belongs the credit of adopting the pattern of synagogue government for the church at Jerusalem wherein he was aided by a body of elders (11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 16:4; 21:18). Antioch seems to have been led by prophets and teachers (13:1-3). Although Luke suggests that Paul reproduced the Jerusalem pattern elsewhere (14:23, 20:17), Paul himself nowhere mentions “elders” prior to the Pastorals.

Such diversity extends to christology, too. There is the cosmic Christ of Ephesians under whom all that exists (wherever it may be) is to be summed up (1:9, 10). Alongside this ascending movement appears the descensus of the incarnational thrust of John (1:1-14) and the “manifest christology” of 1 Tim. 3:16.

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60 Ibid., pp. 115, 352.
61 Ibid., pp. 69, 361.
62 I have relied on Dunn, pp. 108-109 for the material on leadership. Curiously, he says little about the nature of the Christian Community as a separate category here or elsewhere.
Added to this verticular perspective is the more horizontal-linear one of Revelation where the slaughtered Lamb is none other than "the Alpha and Omega, the First and Last, the Beginning and the End" (22:13. Cf. 1:5, 8 where similar appellations refer to God). And complementing this soaring christology is the First-Last Adam treatment of 1 Cor. 15:45-49. Finally, and firmly within the "historical" arena, is the christology of Luke-Acts where Jesus is the promised, designated and returning Messiah and Lord (Luke 1:31-33, 2:25-32; Acts 2:22-36, 3:18-26).

The same degree of variety emerges in descriptions of the redemptive event itself. In Revelation, the sacrificial death of the lamb, while it implies release or cleansing from sins (1:5), is the event by which Satan, ejected from heaven, loses his role as "accuser of the brethren" who extend this victory by the witness they bear even to death (12:11). In Ephesians, Christ's death effects unity between God and an estranged humanity (2:1-4) by virtue of their sharing Jesus' history (vss. 5-10). And this forms the basis of unity among alienated Jews and Gentiles who jointly have access to God because Jesus' death gives life to a new humanity (vss. 11-(14-17)-22). Although similar emphases may be found in the Johannine literature, especially in the Fourth Gospel, the primary thrust is upon the entire life of Jesus as a revelatory event. The Son conveys his filial knowledge of the Father to those whom he has called into an analogous relationship. This is eternal life (17:3). While 1 & 2 Tim. do not contain a fully-developed soteriology, one can find traces and snippets of the foregoing throughout the letters (1 Tim. 1:15, 16; 2:3-5; 2 Tim. 1:9-10, 2:11-13). So far as 1 Cor. is concerned, the death and resurrection of Jesus are construed as the means of forgiveness (15:3, 17). If Luke-Acts were to be included we would have to note the oft-mentioned "primitive soteriology" which characterizes even volume two: that the resurrection is God's "yes" to the "no" of wicked men who crucified him (e.g. 2:23-24). Forgiveness of sins is the result (e.g. 2:38, 10:43, 13:38) which enables one to receive the promised Holy Spirit (2:38, 10:44, 15:8) through whom comes purity of heart by faith (15:9).

Although one could continue along several other lines, our survey will conclude with diverse understandings and experiences of the Spirit. Perhaps the fullest range of outlooks, and in some ways the most diverse, occurs in the Johannine literature. While it may be possible to regard the Spirit, at least by implication, as the
agent of regeneration (3:5, 6, 8; 6:63) and of true worship (4:23, 24), his main function, according to the Fourth Evangelist, is in relation to Christ. He will remind the disciples of what Jesus said and will lead them into further truth of christological origin (14:26, 16:12-14). Furthermore, John assures his readers that the coming of the other Paraclete (14:15-26) will enable Christians of subsequent generations to experience the same nearness to their Lord as the first because “... the Spirit is the presence of Jesus” 63. In Revelation, while there is talk of the seven spirits of God (1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6), the identity of Jesus and the Spirit is clear in the letters to the seven churches, each of which opens with a message from the exalted Christ and closes with an exhortation from the Spirit that all the churches heed his word. It is as if the Spirit makes universal the particular word of Christ. This revelatory aspect fits well with that of inspiring prophetic utterance (1:10, 4:2, 17:3, 21:10). Near the end of the Apocalypse, the angel tells the prostrate Seer “... the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (19:10).

Such a close connection between christology and pneumatology underlines Luke-Acts as well, though of course in its own peculiar way. The same eschatological Spirit who led and empowered the earthly Jesus now fills, guides, and empowers the church to bear witness to him throughout the world (Acts 1:8). Though originally restricted to the ancient people of God and their Messiah, he has been made available to all, regardless of race, sex or age (2:16-21).

This outward, universal, and evangelistic thrust is almost entirely lacking in I Cor., where the focus is upon the local congregation and its internal life. The Spirit who justified and sanctified them (6:11) makes his abode in each Christian’s body (3:16, 17). Yet, the Spirit primarily serves the corporate body as the agent of its unity (12:13) through the plurality of his gracious gifts (12:4-11).

In Ephesians, the Spirit’s activity lies in an opposite “direction”. While it is true that Christians are to be continously filled with the Spirit (5:18), his role consists in preserving (1:3, 4:30), unifying (4:3), and making access to God possible (2:18, 22).

Finally, the church’s structure and organization have become so formalized in the Pastorals that the Spirit’s role has all but been confined to “... the preserver of the past tradition rather than as

63 Ibid., p. 198.
the one who leads into new truth (1 Tim. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:12-14...)."\(^{64}\)

I have risked belabouring the point that a rich variety of outlooks (not all necessarily antithetical) appears in the literature associated with Ephesus. It now remains to illustrate, more briefly and selectively, that these same documents nevertheless plead most eloquently for the church’s unity and for the maintenance of standards which keep the diversity from being open-ended.

VI. UNITY

The most systematic and thoroughgoing of these is, of course, Ephesians itself. Without repeating the points made earlier regarding christology and soteriology, we might extend the emphasis upon unity to define the character of the worthy life (4:1) founded upon certain convictions about God, doctrine and liturgy (vss. 2-6). Such diversity as exists stems from the victorious Christ whose gifts are meant to promote a unified body, the parts of which minister collectively and grow towards maturity (vss. 7-16). And the long section on ethics which follows is replete with the emphasis that Christians behave towards one another in certain ways because they belong to one another (vss. 25-32). This general point is extended to the specific relationships between spouses (5:22-23), parents and children (6:1-4) and slaves and masters (vss. 5-9). Within such a context, one can interpret spiritual warfare as being directed against hostile cosmic forces (vss. 10-17) who mean to resist God’s unifying plan for the universe which Paul and the church are to declare to them (3:8-11).

And unity is a prominent concern of the Fourth Gospel. Perfect unity among the original disciples and those who believe through them is one of Jesus’ main petitions (17:11, 22). It not only reflects the unity characteristic of the Father and Son but becomes the chief testimony to the world of the Son’s mission and the Father’s love (vs. 23). Furthermore, other sheep, not of this fold, are to be united in one flock (10:16). Despite the litmus tests for orthodoxy which 1 John requires (see below), there is a strong appeal towards mutuality, the koinonia among believers and with God in Christ (1:3-8). Even the struggle over authority in 2 and 3 John presupposes the desire for catholicity. And the author of Revela-

\(^{64}\) Ibid., p. 361.
tion, intolerant of heretics as he is (Chs. 2, 3), nevertheless means to preserve the integrity of the churches which he addresses. Thus, even lukewarm Laodicea must be recovered if at all possible. But there is a more comprehensive horizon against which the Seer writes. His work embraces all of God’s redemptive acts throughout salvation history. The victorious martyrs sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb (15:2-3). Consequently, Christians are the legitimate heirs of Judaism (esp. 3:7-13).

In the same vein, Professor Moule’s summation of an Ephesian theme could well apply both to the Apocalypse and Luke (though the point is differently made): “... the Christian Church is indeed continuous with Judaism and, at the same time, is not limited by the limitations of Judaism: ...”65. And Luke is at pains to underscore in a literary and theological mode the continuity between the accomplishments of the earthly Jesus and the risen Lord (Acts 1:1-2). Although too uncritically dismissed as idealized and romantic, the resolution of conflict between hellenistic Jewish Christians and Aramaic-speaking ones (6:1-7), and between advocates and detractors of Paul’s Gentile mission (ch. 15), testifies to a profound theology rather than historical revisionism.

Finally, the one document clearly written from Ephesus testifies to Paul’s over-riding concern for rampant dissension in Corinth. Virtually every segment of the letter shows him coping with division among those who rally around certain prominent leaders (1:10-13, 3:1-9, 21-23), sue each other (6:1-8), and think to divorce body and spirit (6:12-20. Cf. 15:35-50). Even the church’s worship is disrupted at the Lord’s supper (11:17-34) and in the exercise of spiritual gifts (Chs. 12-14).

VII. AUTHENTICITY

The Ephesian intolerance of heresy which John of Patmos commends (2:1-3, 6) eventually became both more subtle and loving, if our thesis holds. It is as if the church had eventually accepted the Son of Man’s admonition to recover the works of first love (vss. 4-5) which involve not only passion for the beloved but tolerance of his/her differences. Of course, the answer was not syncretism. Deviations were permitted, but they had to be “standard deviations”. Consequently, it is necessary to glance at

65 Moule, Birth, p. 67.
the effort in these documents to define the nature of both the breadth of outlook and practice which could be tolerated and the limits which would have to be imposed on them. And, although such a concern can certainly be found elsewhere, it comes to prominence among the documents flowing to and out of Ephesus. In Ephesians, the unified edifice of God’s household rests upon apostolic and prophetic foundations with Christ himself as the chief cornerstone (2:19-22). And yet, in a real sense, the letter itself is the literary constitution of all that the church universal holds. That Ephesians seems to have been circulated so widely during at least part of its life bears witness to such an estimate. So far as the Fourth Gospel is concerned, it is Jesus alone, as witnessed to by the author, who is the authentic standard. How one relates in interpersonal union to him as the Father’s only son (and as such his best agent and interpreter) determines his or her ultimate destiny. In I John, the test of orthodoxy and orthopraxy is both confessional (2:22-23, 4:2-3) and behavioural (5:1-3). And the point of the Apocalypse is to help one to discriminate the authentic from the counterfeit. By presupposing the insider’s awareness of the meaning of standard images and clues, the seer can remind them that God’s people have always had to exercise judgment — made more critical and difficult under pressure. (Ephesus, we recall, is given honourable mention in its ability to identify and resist pseudo-apostles, 2:2).

Similar in some respects are the letters to Timothy in that the author takes pains to highlight the signs of the times which bring fraudulent alternatives to true religion (1 Tim. 4:1-5). As an antidote, the Pastor prescribes proper use of the Law (1:8-10), and sound doctrine (vss. 10, 6:3) entrusted to qualified leaders (3:1-13. See 2 Tim. 1:13, 2:11-13, 3:1-4:5)

To the high-minded schismatics at Corinth, Paul appeals to the stigmatized kerygma of Christ crucified (1:18-25). Likewise, he cites the liturgical and kerygmatic traditions which had set the standards both for “etiquette” at the Lord’s Table (11:23-26) and a proper understanding of the resurrection (15:3-11). Here as elsewhere the arguments are amplified by common biblical tradition and mutual experience which, though capable of varying interpretations, constitute a datum nevertheless.

Finally, Luke-Acts addresses the issue variously. The Apostolate, though not an executive body, nevertheless possesses sufficient authority to provide standard teaching (2:42), be the instruments of divine judgment (5:1-11), authenticate the Samaritan mission (8:14-17) and render a verdict regarding the Gentile mission (15:6-11, 13-21). Although there is no evidence even in Acts that the letter of minimal requirements sent from James was observed by the Gentiles, nevertheless the move seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to them (vs. 28). Again, these formalities are undergirded by the Spirit who regulates the itinerary of the early church.

VIII. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

One can sympathize with Raymond Brown who, in concluding that the evidence for the place of composition of the Fourth Gospel points to Ephesus, says that in the end the question lacks importance. There are, indeed, larger issues for commentators to wrestle with and settle. But what shall we make of the fact that Ephesus repeatedly emerges as the explicit or most likely provenance and origin of so much of the New Testament, with its various authors, genres and points of view? Does the matter suddenly assume a greater significance? Is it legitimate, on the basis of the foregoing, to speak of a *Sitz im Leben des Kanons* and of assigning it to Ephesus, at least as the scene of the canon’s prototype?

Does the internal evidence of the New Testament, supported and complemented by church tradition and scholarly inference, match what is otherwise well-known about this metropolis? At the time of Augustus, it was the chief city of Asia (Dio II. 20.6). Intellectually, economically, politically and religiously, the city became the crossroads between East and West. Antioch was only an apparent rival, being “... at arm’s length from the center of the Greek world. It was on the periphery. Ephesus was at the center.” No wonder then that a profound tolerance contributed to what C. F. D. Moule has called “... the seething diversity of Ephesus ... where the mystic and the biblicist Jew, the dualist

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68 Cited by Finegan, *Archaeology*, p. 158.
70 Moule, *Birth*, p. 204.
philosopher and the ebionite might have jostled one another; ...". What other locale could have provided a more suitable setting for the multiplicity and diversity of persons, literary types, and points of view which the church there attracted and dispersed? Where else could such disparate elements nevertheless be viewed as having a fundamental unity? Ultimately, the complex interplay between Christianity at Ephesus and the city's character will have to be left to those who are qualified to theorize about "the sociology of canon". In the meantime, it might be possible to develop further the implications of our study. Perhaps the most useful approach will be to make several assertions which have some foundation in the data above and others which will have to be substantiated, modified or rejected by subsequent research.

The phenomena which I have examined seem to provide a profile of Ephesian Christianity comprehending perhaps as much as a century — roughly the second half of the first century and the first part of the second. The boundaries have been set so as to include, on the one hand, the possibility that Revelation could have been written in the late 60s and that John comes from the 50s, if there is even a chance that J.A.T. Robinson is correct. On the other hand, Irenaeus at the end of the second century commends both Ephesus and Rome as bulwarks of the faith, although he gives the edge to the latter. Within these limits, our profile cannot provide anything like a developmental sequence of events and movements. But any effort to do so must treat certain data with special care and subtlety. For example, in dating 1 and 2 Timothy one needs to consider the possibility that the "sociology" of Ephesus influenced the greater level of institutionalization in the church there. Furthermore, the Qumran texts show that a high

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71 Ibid., p. 136.
72 Although I am neither a sociologist nor the son of one, the issue may be worth raising now that the discipline is making its impact on New Testament studies.
74 Ibid., pp. 307-11, but note the entire chapter. The matter of dating gets extensive treatment in Bp. Robinson's magnum opus, The Priority of John (London, 1984), pp. 36-122, which, alas, he did not survive to see.
75 See n. 15, above.
degree of structure need not be inimical to an early date or to eschatological fervour. And, if the Fourth Gospel and Revelation are to be dated late, then they seem to ignore, if not protest, such structures. Finally, the same provenance could tolerate both apocalyptic and highly-realized eschatological outlooks.

Perhaps the imagery of a watercourse might help to visualize the situation: a stream fed and diverted by its tributaries at different moments, each ebbing and flowing at diverse rates according to various tidal influences. Another way of viewing circumstances there might be to speak of a collective Ephesian spirit or mindset, an environment which could accommodate diverse persons and points of view, receive and dispatch their works and then collect and preserve them. The resultant literary precipitates contained examples of most if not all of the genres which the canon eventually included. Of course, many of the same issues were at stake in other churches, too; and comparable literature emerged. But the essential point is that they seem to have been debated with more vigour and comprehensiveness at Ephesus, and the literary deposit was apparently more extensive and deeper there.

Furthermore, this prototypical canon might well have given the final canon its classical function. Dunn has summarized the role of the New Testament canon along four lines: it (1) contains (though somewhat obscurely) the orthodox centre, (2) legitimates diversity, (3) marks the boundaries of acceptable diversity, and (4) validates the development of belief and practice (again, within the limits of (3))

Yet, all of these elements emerged earlier in the Ephesian prototype. Finally, Christianity at Ephesus shows signs of having been, for a century or so, the microcosm for Christianity as a whole. The church universal recapitulated, by and large and in its various parts, the struggles, losses, and gains which had occurred so paradigmatically among the saints and faithful brethren ἐν Ἐφεσω, that lodestone and centrifuge of apostolic persons and the literature which they had produced or influenced.

76 Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, pp. 374-82.