



What of the unique emphasis of apostolic foundations and leadership we find in Ephesians? This issue addresses the question of Pauline adjustment of ecclesiology from earlier models of leadership structures to that of the Pastoral Epistles and beyond.



The Roman Connection of Ephesians

The letter to the Ephesians presents us with a number of difficulties. How could Paul write such an impersonal letter to a church where he served for over 3 years, with only 5 intervening years since his most recent visit? Why does Paul employ cosmic language to speak of a universal church, while earlier he spoke of local churches with their own leadership? Why does Paul speak of his being honored by God as apostle to the Gentiles, instead of his suffering for the churches of Christ? Can we even conceive of Paul as author, or of Ephesus as the destination of the letter? Many of these difficulties can be resolved if we read Ephesians through the lens of Paul's imprisonment in Rome. Several observations point to this Roman background.

Paul's Roman situation

Paul uses the vocabulary of imperial ideology: the gospel of peace, victory over rulers and authorities, unity of people groups and in organization, orderly Roman homes, and the firm stand of the Roman soldier. Paul also uses imperial ideology elsewhere, such as in his letter to the Thessalonians, but its extended use in Ephesians would harmonize well with Paul's imprisonment in Rome, the traditional location for the letter, where Roman propaganda would be more prominent than elsewhere.

While in Rome, Paul faced a stage of church development he had not encountered earlier: the house churches in the city had started at multiple sites.

They did not and could not meet in one location. In an earlier paper, I argued that Paul wrote *Romans* in part because he intended to provide apostolic approval for the teaching tradition and leadership structures of these churches. Considering later traditions, it is likely that as Paul stayed in Rome, he conceived of a level of church organization and leadership that was able to connect multiple house churches into one overall network.

The Ephesian Addressees

This focus on apostolic foundations and leadership seems to be reflected in Ephesians, which shares many themes with Colossians but not the discussion on leadership. Why? Paul mentions a few key people in the church at Colossae (Epaphras, Nympha, Archippus and likely Philemon), probably reflecting just a few house churches with a relatively simple organization. Ephesians, on the other hand, appears to be a circular letter addressed to a more complex situation of a regional network of churches. Paul's concern to explain himself to those who had only heard about him (3:2) supports the suggestion that the Ephesian church had expanded significantly beyond what it was during Paul's ministry. This situation suggests that while there was little need in Colossae to address leadership issues, a regional network would certainly raise questions about seniority, authority, and supervision in the absence of its founding leadership.

Thus, Ephesians discusses leadership intently. It offers Paul's view on the apostolic foundations of the church (2:20), not just chronologically but also as recipients of God's revelation (3:5). It also offers a perspective on current leadership in Paul's expansion of the leadership group to include evangelists, shepherds, and other teachers. Although Paul had mentioned other gifts like governing and serving in earlier letters, he focuses on these gifts in particular as providing for the unity of the church (4:11-12). Paul here provides theological legitimating for both apostolic foundations as well as for current leadership functions.

Paul's Leadership Lessons

It may well be that the leadership lessons Paul learned in Rome he now communicates to Ephesus. His theological foundations for leadership in Ephesus reflect his practice in Rome. Much like Paul used Greco-Roman household structures as the basis for church leadership initially, he now interprets Roman leadership hierarchies to fit Christian identity. In doing so, he raised the status of certain gifts within the community to take special responsibility to provide for unity in a situation that had outgrown the simple household structures of the church. This is the most obvious option in a society where from beggar to emperor, all were connected through a hierarchy of reciprocal patronage relationships.

Conclusion

This reconstruction suggests that Ephesians is impersonal because Paul anticipates a church situation with many new faces at all levels and far more complex than what he left behind only 5 years earlier. It suggests that part of the reason for more cosmic and universal language is found in the increasing need for supra-local organization to maintain the unity among the churches (another reason might be found in the magic practiced in Ephesus). It suggests that Paul emphasized his unique privilege as apostle to the Gentiles, in order to position himself as the one to pass on the succession of leadership to new generations. And finally, this reconstruction situates all this within the time frame of Paul's ministry as we know it from his letters and from Acts.

This perspective turns Ephesians into a key legitimizing document for increasing levels of leadership in Pauline churches. As such, it may be recognized as the missing link between the early leadership structures in the so-called uncontested Pauline letter, and later leadership structures in Acts, the Pastoral Epistles, and the Apostolic Fathers.

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Reviews & Annotations

Heine, Ronald E., *Reading the Old Testament with the Ancient Church: Exploring the Formation of Early Christian Thought*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007. 204 pp. ISBN 978-0-8010-2777-2

This is a lucid, comprehensive, yet succinct treatment of the early patristic use of the Old Testament. The author's motivation for writing this volume in the *Evangelical Resourcement* series (Williams, D. H., ed.) lies 'in examining the central role that the Old Testament played in the formation of Christian thinking and life in the early centuries of the church' (11-12). It is an attempt to remedy the present situation in the Evangelical communion which suffers from a sort of neglect for the Old Testament, as evidenced by infrequent teaching. While neither Luther nor Calvin had considered both testaments as less than vital for Christian doctrine, the Evangelical tradition has unwittingly fallen prey especially to the post-Enlightenment attitude of disconnection, if not one of disdain, for the Old Testament, which is none other than the earliest church's gospel of Jesus Christ.

Heine begins with a survey of a handful of influential theologians/philosophers and their views of the Old Testament since the Reformation time to the twentieth century. Those concerned with the viewpoints of the patristic writers can safely pass over the first chapter, which is but a terse account of the role of the Old Testament and the formation of the concept of Christian Scripture in the first and the early second century. It is the second chapter that introduces us to the question of how the early church began to justify her use of the Old Testament against the Jews on the one hand and the Gnostics and the Marcionites on the other. The Mosaic law, therefore, clearly becomes one of the prominent issues facing the early church in the second century to answer the question of continuity or discontinuity with the God of the Old Testament. The law is the first of the tree categories ('the prophets, and the psalms' being the other two) in which

all things concerning Christ must be fulfilled according to Luke 24:44, and it appears that Heine has conveniently used these three to outline his book: Except for chapter 3, which is inserted as a hermeneutical parenthesis, chapter 4 and 5 resume with the patristic writings on the witness of the prophets and the psalms respectively concerning Christ.

In the third chapter, Heine underscores not only the importance of establishing continuity with the Old Testament, but also the criteria by which it must be done. The performing act of the reader of any ancient texts including the Old Testament may be captured by the word 'reimagining,' and this must be both 'responsible and relevant' (76). For Heine the writer of the Fourth Gospel already performs this 'symbolic reading' of the wilderness event (e.g., the eating of *manna* in the wilderness in John 6) in line with what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:11. Origen and Gregory of Nyssa are then selected and celebrated as prototypical patristic writers who model this performance for the church.

The fourth and longest chapter details the 'proof from prophecy' which the fathers used to support the veracity of Christianity in six major areas: the deity and preexistence of Christ; the incarnation; the healing ministry of Christ; the suffering and death of Christ; the resurrection and glorification of Christ; and the calling of the Gentiles. This is perhaps the strongest chapter especially since the author draws on a wealth of concise yet helpful information both from the patristic as well as from the rabbinic sources about the debates on a number of Messianic passages, and further documents balanced and fair viewpoints from typically solid secondary sources in the footnotes.

The fifth chapter stresses how the early Christians were 'soaked with the Psalms' as a way of life, not merely in worship services, at monasteries, during private devotions several times a day, but also while traveling. Two points of strength are particularly noteworthy in this chapter. First, Heine presents us with more detailed analyses of differing patristic exegetical method than presented in the previous chapters. Second, besides Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, whom he seems to favor, he enlists a more balanced selection of the fathers to include the Antiochian and the Latin.

The final chapter makes the case for rediscovering the spiritual relevance of 'living the text' in our day. Taking his cue from Henri de Lubac's statement 'Everything in Scripture is "spiritual",' Heine calls his readers to 'live in the story of the text' so that 'the biblical story functions somewhat like a paradigm into which one fits the circumstances of one's life' (177). He prescribes two stages: (1) 'deep familiarity with the text, and then (2) 'molding life by the text.' The first prescription is clear enough; however, the second one perhaps leads into a circuitous and elusive discussion than Heine intends. In simpler language, he finally elucidates it as what had been taught by Origen and Gregory of Nyssa—simply practicing the virtues everyday in imitation of Christ.

Overall, this book offers a good introduction for students interested in further study of patristic interpretation of the Old Testament. The bibliography at the end of the book, however, is too limited; and the matters are not helped by the absence of a scriptural index. One major observation from the perspective of balance is in order. Heine's treatment seems to infer the Eastern fathers as being more important than the Western fathers. More particularly, Origen and Gregory of Nyssa receive the most empathetic treatment of all. It is certainly true that the Evangelical tradition would be helped by a more 'symbolic reading' of the Old Testament. It is also true that recent scholarship has given attention to the less rigid boundaries between the traditional categories of Alexandrian and Antiochian exegesis. Nonetheless, had Heine also discussed how non-Origenistic interpreters sought to establish continuity with the New Testament, employing a variety of interpretive tools for multilayered exegesis different from the allegorical method, it would have been a more balanced treatment that accords the title of this book. Chapter 5 is a clear exception to this pattern, since the Latin fathers were allotted a bit more space as interpreters of the Psalms. But again, since both Jerome's and Augustine's exposition of the Psalms had been heavily influenced by Origen, Heine clearly shows most enthusiasm for Origen and Gregory of Nyssa.

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