

MICHAEL IMMENDÖRFER

Ephesians and Artemis

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

436

Mohr Siebeck

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament · 2. Reihe

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436



Michael Immendörfer

Ephesians and Artemis

The Cult of the Great Goddess of Ephesus
as the Epistle's Context

Mohr Siebeck

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e-ISBN 978-3-16-155443-8

ISBN 978-3-16-155264-9

ISSN 0340-9570 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe)

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

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The book was printed by Laupp & Göbel in Gomaringen on non-aging paper and bound by Buchbinderei Nädle in Nehren.

Printed in Germany.

Preface

This book is a slightly revised version of my dissertation, which I completed at the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David, Lampeter in 2016. It examines the relationship between the New Testament letter to the Ephesians and the ancient city of Ephesus, which had the great Artemis as its goddess. The study seeks to make a contribution to the discussion surrounding the extent to which conclusions can be drawn concerning the local-historical explanation of New Testament epistles by viewing the latter through the lens of cultic practices of the Greco-Roman world. Thus, the contents of Ephesians shall be compared with the abundance of available archaeological and epigraphical sources of the Asia Minor metropolis. This endeavour reveals that the letter contains numerous explicit references to the cult of Artemis, without naming the goddess. This nexus suggests that the author was very familiar with the historical background of ancient Ephesus and contextualised his letter accordingly for the intended readers, those living in this particular cultic environment. Drawing on the sources concerning ancient Ephesus, especially inscriptions, provides a plausible local-historical explanation of Ephesians, an epistle that has been an enigma to New Testament scholarship for decades in this regard.

It is a great privilege to have my work published by the Mohr Siebeck Verlag in the highly regarded series “Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament II”. First, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Jörg Frey and Prof. Dr. Hans-Josef Klauck, editors of the series, for recommending my work for publication. Furthermore, I would like to emphasise the fruitful collaboration with Dr. Henning Ziebritzki, Klaus Hermannstädter and Jana Trispel who supported me professionally and kindly in the process of publication.

I am indebted to my supervisors, Prof. Dr. Kathy Ehrensperger and Dr. Jügen Kuberski, who provided invaluable assistance to me in successfully writing my dissertation. They showed admirable staying power in accompanying this project over a period of many years, and persistently challenged me with their sharp-witted questions, impetuses, corrections and meticulous comments. Their permanent, warm encouragement was an enormous help.

I am very grateful to the members of the examining board, the internal examiner Dr. Catrin Williams and the external examiner Dr. Michael Thompson, for their insightful comments and suggestions. In particular, their advice to accentuate and articulate the methodological approach more comprehensively

led to a thorough revision of my work, which resulted in a distinctly enhanced clarity and conclusiveness of the argumentation.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to the people who supported my dissertation in terms of language. Here, Dr. Jörg Strate and Dr. Sarah Harding deserve special mention. I have greatly benefited from the countless hours they devoted to lending me a helping hand in getting along with the English language, which is not my mother tongue. I received generous support from Dr. Rudolf Fichtner and Nikolaus Frey when it came to questions concerning intricate and tricky parts of the Greek texts.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Andreas Franz, director of the Theologisch-Missionswissenschaftliche Akademie (TheMA) in Barleben, and study provider of ACROSS, where I initiated my doctoral studies before adoption by the University of Wales.

I want to thank the staff of the Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen, the Landeskirchliche Zentralbibliothek Stuttgart and the Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart for their reliability and commitment. Their tireless work behind the scenes has been indispensable.

Having been in contact with many friends, students and colleagues over the years was extremely important to me. To mention all of them by name would go beyond the scope of this preface, but in place of them I thank my long-standing friends, Tobias Krämer and Christian Breuers. The many profound conversations about theological matters I was privileged to have with them not only honed my personal theological thinking and work, but also influenced the development of my dissertation.

I am particularly humbled, however, by the patience, goodwill and support with which my wife, Angelika, and our four children have stood by my side throughout this endeavour. Thank you for allowing me to be “in Ephesus” (a periphrasis for my study desk) for such a long time. Words cannot begin to describe what you mean to me.

Stuttgart, February 2017

Michael Immendorfer

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Abbreviations

<i>AA</i>	<i>Archäologischer Anzeiger</i>
<i>AB</i>	Anchor Bible
<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>ACW</i>	Ancient Christian Writers
<i>AGJU</i>	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
<i>AGSU</i>	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und des Urchristentums
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AnBib</i>	Analecta Biblica
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>AnSt</i>	<i>Anatolian Studies</i>
<i>ANTC</i>	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
<i>APF</i>	<i>Archiv für Papyrusforschung</i>
<i>ARGU</i>	Arbeiten zur Religion und Geschichte des Urchristentums
<i>ATANT</i>	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>ATDan</i>	Acta Theologica Danica
<i>ATLABS</i>	American Theological Library Association Bibliography Series
<i>ATR</i>	<i>Australasian Theological Review</i>
<i>AW</i>	<i>Antike Welt</i>
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BBB</i>	Bonner biblische Beiträge
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<i>BECNT</i>	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>BHT</i>	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
<i>BiH</i>	Biblische Handbibliothek
<i>BiInS</i>	Biblical Interpretation Series
<i>BiRev</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
<i>BNTC</i>	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BToSt</i>	Biblical Tools and Studies
<i>BU</i>	Biblische Untersuchungen
<i>BurH</i>	<i>Buried History</i>
<i>BWANT</i>	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>BWM</i>	Bibelwissenschaftliche Monographien
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>BZAW</i>	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>BZNW</i>	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CB</i>	Coniectanea Biblica
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>

CCHS	Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture
CIG	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i>
CJT	<i>Canadian Journal of Theology</i>
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
ECCo	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
EHS.T	Europäische Hochschulschriften Theologie
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ELThG	<i>Evangelisches Lexikon für Theologie und Gemeinde</i>
EpAn	<i>Epigraphica Anatolica</i>
EpC	Epworth Commentaries
EPRO	Études Préliminaires aux Religions Orientales dans l'Empire Romain
EtB	Études Bibliques
EvQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
EvT	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
EWNT	<i>Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i>
Exp.	<i>Expositor</i>
ExpTim	<i>Expository Times</i>
EzNT	Erläuterungen zum Neuen Testament
FC	Fontes Christiani
FGH	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i>
FGNK	Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altchristlichen Literatur
FiE	<i>Forschungen in Ephesos</i>
FiE	Forschungen in Ephesos
FKDG	Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FVS	<i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i>
GGA	<i>Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen</i>
GNT	Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
IBS	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary (on the Holy Scriptures)
IEph	Die Inschriften von Ephesos
IGSK	Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien
IJFM	<i>International Journal of Frontier Missions</i>
IstMitt	<i>Istanbuler Mitteilungen</i>
JAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JET	<i>Jahrbuch für evangelikale Theologie</i>
JÖAI	<i>Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes in Wien</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series

<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>Kairós</i>	<i>Kairós. Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft und Theologie</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
KIG	Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
<i>LIMC</i>	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologicae Classicae</i>
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
<i>LTK</i>	<i>Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche</i>
<i>LTP</i>	<i>Laval Théologique et Philosophique</i>
<i>LTQ</i>	<i>Lexington Theological Quarterly</i>
LXX	Septuagint
MBPF	Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und antiken Rechtsgeschichte
<i>MDAI</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts</i>
<i>Miss.</i>	<i>Missiology. American Society for Missiology</i>
NBST	Neukirchener Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NNM	Numismatic Notes and Monographs
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTM	New Testament Monographs
NTR	New Testament Readings
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>OCD</i>	<i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i>
ÖAI	Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut in Wien
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar
<i>OJRS</i>	<i>Ohio Journal of Religious Studies</i>
OrChrAn	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OTM	Oxford Theological Monographs
PaSt	Pauline Studies
PG	Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca
<i>PGM</i>	<i>Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri</i>
PL	Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina
PNTC	Pelican New Testament Commentaries
<i>PSB</i>	<i>Princeton Seminary Bulletin</i>
<i>PW</i>	<i>Pauly-Wissowas Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
QD	Quaestiones Disputatae
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i>
<i>RAr</i>	<i>Revue Archeologique</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RBL</i>	<i>Review of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>RGG</i>	<i>Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i>
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World

RKAM	Religion und Kultur der alten Mittelmeerwelt in Parallelforschungen
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
RR	<i>Review of Religion</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SE	<i>Studia Evangelica</i>
SEG	Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum
SIG	<i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i>
SNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SoSchrÖAI	Sonderschriften des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes in Wien
SP	Sacra Pagina
SPCIC	<i>Studiorum Paulinorum Congressus Internationalis Catholicus</i>
SR	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
ST	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
StBL	Studies in Biblical Literature
SUC	Schriften des Urchristentums
TAM	<i>Tituli Asiae Minoris</i>
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter
TAPA	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
TBei	<i>Theologische Beiträge</i>
TBLNT	<i>Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament</i>
TEH	Theologische Existenz heute
ThDi	Theologie und Dienst
THKNT	<i>Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament</i>
TLG	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Graecae</i>
TLL	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i>
TLNT	<i>Theological Lexicon of the New Testament</i>
TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TPQ	<i>Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift</i>
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i>
TRu	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
TThSt	Trierer Theologische Studien
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
TWNT	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i>
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
USQR	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VIEG	Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte

WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft (und die Kunde der älteren Kirche)</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
ZWT	<i>Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie</i>

Note:

The reference works are quoted consistently in their short version in the footnotes, whilst their extended version is listed in the bibliography. Exceptions are the *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament (EWNT)* and the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament (TWNT)*, where the individual articles appear in their extended version in the footnotes, but not in the bibliography.

Scripture quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version (RSV).

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Preliminary Remarks

I could not have guessed that the afternoon of May 2007 would change my life so profoundly and mark the inception of this dissertation. Feeling rather elated because, a few days previous, my favourite football club had finally become German champion again after a long barren spell, I sat at my desk and read the article *The Ephesian Artemis as an Opponent of Early Christianity* by Oster.¹ When I reached his comments on the seven honorific titles which the Ephesians used in antiquity to designate their city goddess, I paused. I was somewhat mesmerised as I considered these names and intuitively started to compare these titles with the text of Ephesians, to which I had dedicated my research interest for years. At that time I was not familiar with terms, such as ‘intertextuality’, and the names of researchers such as Hays, Porter and Stanley. To my surprise, I found that all seven honorific titles were also present in Ephesians, where they were applied to Christ. Initially I thought that this interesting observation might be a coincidence or stem, in part, from the use of fairly general and widespread honorific titles, like *κυρία*. Delving deeper into the subject, which now had my full attention, I studied all the New Testament epistles with regard to these titles. The result was surprising: many of these titles occur in individual epistles, but Ephesians is the only letter that contains all of them. What, indeed, was the import of this discovery?

It was certainly the beginning of a long journey of theological research and wrestling (of course, also on site at Ephesus), which has now lasted almost a decade. In the process, I have made many new observations about possible analogies in Ephesians with the cultic context in Ephesus, which could be partly verified and, occasionally, falsified. On my journey I discovered that, for a considerable time, theological researchers had also endeavoured to compare New Testament texts – for example, the letters to the Romans, Galatians, Corinthians and Thessalonians – with the cultic settings of the Greco-Roman surroundings.

¹ Oster 1976: 24–44.

This intertextual comparison clearly requires an adequate methodology and criteria for its application. When I re-read the following sentence, in a publication by Brodie, MacDonald and Porter a few days ago, I was transported back to the beginning of this research: “In other cases, the first awareness may come as more of a surprise, or an intuition, or simply as a suspicion.”² My initial observation in reference to honorific titles, “a lucky strike in mining”,³ has grown into an extensive project. I trust that it will inspire theological researchers afresh to consider a possible background understanding of Ephesians, which has not up to now been so much of a focal point.

1.2. Scope and Aims

The ancient city of Ephesus is fascinating, but the New Testament letter to the Ephesians is frustrating. Probably no New Testament scholar would admit this openly. However, when Goodspeed calls Ephesians the “Waterloo of commentators”,⁴ this conclusion is not so far-fetched. This label may be rooted in the various peculiarities of Ephesians,⁵ which are difficult to classify and have led to numerous and quite fierce discussion. From the outset, Eph 1:1 poses the contentious question of textual criticism, whether, that is, ἐν Ἐφέσῳ was part of the original letter, which in turn raises the question whether the letter was addressed to Ephesus at all. Therefore, the letter has often been marginalised in New Testament research.⁶ Moreover, the letter has also engendered admiration,⁷ and boasts a highly important reception history similar to that of Romans.⁸

² Brodie and MacDonald and Porter 2006b: 291.

³ Brodie and MacDonald and Porter 2006b: 291.

⁴ Goodspeed 1933: 15.

⁵ For example, Ephesians contains a remarkably high number of *hapax legomena*, unusual stylistic elements and a somewhat idiosyncratic theology, which make the letter appear non-Pauline. A number of ‘favourite words’, such as πλοῦτος or μυστήριον, occur more frequently in Ephesians than in other New Testament epistles. Dahl (2000: 343–344) notes that almost every paragraph can be based on hymnal, liturgical or catechetical traditions. The quotation in 5:14 is very difficult to locate. Paul speaks of the enthronement of Christians with Christ only in 2:6 (cf. Thielmann 2010: 137). In addition, the similarity between Ephesians and Colossians continues to be topical in research.

⁶ Heckel (2000: 176) remarks that some researchers treat Ephesians like a second-class or even third-class letter.

⁷ For Barth (1974: 3), Ephesians “is among the greatest letters under the name of the apostle Paul”. Kreitzer (2007: vii) notes that Ephesians is “regarded by many to be the most fascinating letter within the Pauline corpus”. For Arnold (2010: 21), it is “truly an amazing and wonderful letter. ... This letter summarizes what it means to be a Christian better than any other book of the Bible.”

⁸ For historical examples, see Hoehner 2007: 1–2.

In most New Testament analyses of Ephesians, the possibility of the people of Ephesus being recipients plays no, or hardly any, role. Using the plentiful historical sources regarding ancient Ephesus, this dissertation aims to demonstrate the opposite. It will investigate whether the epistle contains similarities to the local situation in Ephesus, especially with regard to the cult of the city goddess Artemis. This would not only indicate that the recipients of the letter lived in this metropolis in Asia Minor, but also that its author had a concrete context in mind when he wrote the epistle.

Consequently, this dissertation deals with Ephesians *and* the ancient city of Ephesus. For a long time only one or the other subject area has been considered. It is only recently that monographs and commentaries which try to combine both subject areas have been published.⁹ Research on the development of the early Christian church in Ephesus often does not consult Ephesians as a possible relevant source, and commentaries or introductions to the New Testament which deal with Ephesians seldom establish a link to the church in Ephesus or the ancient city.¹⁰ The reasons for this are manifold, and can be traced back primarily to the assessment of introductory questions on Ephesians. They include the frequently discussed authorship and recipients of the letter, which directly influence the approach in theological research, and the questions of the date and occasion of Ephesians. The objective of this dissertation is to show that Ephesians was not written in a vacuum, but that there are good reasons indicating that the author had a concrete situation in mind, i.e., recipients living in the surroundings of ancient Ephesus.¹¹ The question of authorship is not a precondition to following this line of argument, as the relationship between Ephesians and Ephesus is cogent without this being established, as will be demonstrated later. Although this conclusion can also be reached without knowing the identity of the author, like many other researchers, I consider Paul to be the writer of Ephesians.¹²

Hence, it needs to be ascertained whether Ephesians contains possible similarities to the local Ephesian context. The contents of Ephesians are to be compared with the various available sources dealing with ancient Ephesus. For some decades, researchers have become increasingly interested in examining

⁹ For monographs, see Arnold 1989; Schwindt 2002. For commentaries, see Hoehner 2007; Arnold 2010; Thielman 2010.

¹⁰ This gives the impression that they are two completely separate areas: the historical context of Ephesus, which encompasses the city and church development, and the letter to the Ephesians.

¹¹ For scholars who reject this view, the question mentioned does not arise. Therefore, the answers to the introductory questions are of immediate relevance.

¹² Due to the focus on the location of the possible recipients of the epistle, the introductory questions in chapter 2 will only discuss the question of the recipients. Nonetheless, at the end of this dissertation I will also consider whether the results arrived at actually suggest Pauline authorship (see chapter 6).

New Testament texts with regard to older sources, which can be of very different nature. Primarily, New Testament texts are related to the Jewish Scriptures and writings, but, equally, comparisons with non-Jewish literature or archaeological sources – as is the case in this dissertation – are very relevant. The defining moment for this research method was Hays' publication, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* in 1989, which introduced the term 'intertextuality'. In his work, he examines the contents of Romans in relation to possible allusions to Jewish Scriptures. Since then researchers in general, but especially Pauline researchers, have shown an increased interest in such intertextual analyses. The various reactions to Hays' study, i.e., the strong support as well as the far more seldom, but definitely critical, reservations,¹³ demonstrate in particular that the question of an adequate methodology for linking texts is a crucial issue for individual research projects and, indeed, the entire subject matter alike.¹⁴ The common aspect of this research is the attempt, particularly in the Pauline letters, to establish references to the Jewish Scriptures. Beyond that, there are newer tendencies to examine the Pauline corpus in relation to possible Roman imperial or pagan cultic allusions. The methods used vary, and this highlights the necessity of discussing an appropriate methodological approach. Hence, this introduction will detail the methodology chosen for this dissertation later on. For now, the focus will be on the individual building blocks that, when put together, will form the approach to be adopted.

1.2.1. An Integrated View of Three Topic Areas

For this dissertation, three topic areas are of relevance: Ephesians, historical sources regarding the city of Ephesus (which illuminate life in this metropolis in Asia Minor during the first century CE) and sources on the development of the early church in Ephesus. As mentioned above, researchers tend to look at these areas in isolation from one another. In contrast to this practice, this dissertation will provide an integrated view of these topic areas.

1.2.1.1. The Letter to the Ephesians

Ephesians is one of the most disputed fields in New Testament scholarship. The unresolved introductory questions are one of the main reasons for this. Controversy surrounds both its recipients (whether, that is, they were Ephesians) and its putative Pauline authorship. The majority of researchers doubt a concrete historical reference to Ephesus in Ephesians. The letter is interpreted

¹³ The initial reactions to Hays' work are summarised in Evans and Sanders 1993. For a later critique, see also Porter 1997: 82–85; 2006: 102–106; Stanley 2008: 126–131.

¹⁴ See, for example, Porter's critique (2006: 103–104) of Wagner's (2002) application of Hays' criteria.

as a general letter, which was written in a vacuum, and, therefore, any specific background cannot play any role in its exegesis.¹⁵ With regard to their approach, attempts by Arnold and Schwindt to give the letter a life-setting are remarkable and have triggered a certain amount of interest among researchers, but have not been accepted widely.¹⁶ For example, the latest commentary on Ephesians in the German-speaking world features hardly any reference to Ephesus.¹⁷ Today's researchers appear to have given up any hope of ever being able to determine the precise historical background of Ephesians. Kreitzer recently attempted to locate the letter in Hierapolis.¹⁸ Whilst this endeavour has to be welcomed, it will be argued that due to the analogies between Ephesians and Ephesus, which this study will bring to light, it is more likely that the Ephesians were the recipients of the letter.

For the methodological approach of this dissertation, the relationship between Ephesians and Colossians is very important. Located in the province of Asia, the cities of Ephesus and Colossae are close to each other, not only geographically (the distance is just about 170 kilometres); they also have similar world-views.¹⁹ For this reason alone, one needs to look at the contents of Ephesians not in isolation but in conjunction with Colossians. This necessity is reinforced by the similarity of the two epistles. However, this dissertation does not agree with a literary dependence of Ephesians on Colossians, which some researchers do.²⁰ Instead of this, the similarities in language and style in both letters²¹ point to a close relationship.²² Researchers cannot agree on similar contents for both epistles.²³ As the priority of Colossians over

¹⁵ Muddiman (2001: 12) claims that Ephesians “has no setting”. For O’Brien (1999: 49), Ephesians is “the most general and least situational”. Specific knowledge of Ephesus would contribute little to the interpretation of the epistle. See also Best (2001: 3, 6), who notes the lack of detailed information of the readers’ situation, which is why the choice of a specific recipient region would not make any particular difference. A number of commentaries, such as Hübner (1997), Gnllka (2002) and Sellin (2008), do not deal with a concrete background of the epistle’s recipients.

¹⁶ Arnold 1989; Schwindt 2002.

¹⁷ Sellin 2008.

¹⁸ Kreitzer 2007.

¹⁹ For a comprehensive discussion of the syncretistic environments of Colossae, which were dominated by religious pluralism and mystery cults, see Arnold 1995.

²⁰ Mitton (1951: 256), Pokorný and Heckel (2007: 630), Schnelle (2007: 356) and Sellin (2009: 178), for example, take this stance.

²¹ Mitton (1951: 57) claims that 26.5 per cent of the words in Ephesians are borrowed from Colossians, and 34 per cent vice versa. This is rejected by Best (2001: 21), who argues that authors using other documents normally borrow its ideas and not its words.

²² For example, Percy 1946: 1.

²³ While, *inter alia* Schnelle (2007: 356–357) is of this opinion, others point to significant differences, for example, Lincoln (1990: lxxvii) and Best (2001: 20–25). For Muddiman (2001: 11), the divergence of contents is a compelling reason against Ephesians being a pseudepigraphon that is based on Colossians.

Ephesians cannot be proven unequivocally, a literary dependence of Ephesians on Colossians cannot be concluded.²⁴ In the course of this study it will be clarified whether the relevant passages or themes of Ephesians exhibit similarities to or differences from Colossians, and to what extent they can be explained by the difference in recipients. If Ephesians can be associated with the Ephesian context, the question of the dependence of Ephesians on Colossians will appear in a different light.

A part of the extensive archaeological material has been used in the last two decades to describe the development of the early Christian church in Ephesus. As Ephesians usually does not play any role in these analyses, a comprehensive comparison of the letter with this data is yet to be carried out. This dissertation aims to contribute to closing this gap.

1.2.1.2. Ancient Ephesus

The extensive exploration of ancient Ephesus has created an ideal opportunity for New Testament scholars. Apart from numerous literary traditions of ancient authors,²⁵ the excavation work by the Austrian Archaeological Institute in Vienna (Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut, ÖAI), which started in 1895 and was interrupted only by the two World Wars, has brought to light an immeasurable quantity of archaeologically valuable and useful material. The host of Inscriptions of Ephesus (IEph) are of special importance for this dissertation. The extensive excavations in the past century have turned the metropolis in Asia Minor into a focal point for historians, archaeologists, art historians, numismatists, epigraphists and religious historians.²⁶

The ambivalence of theological researchers is surprising in view of this situation. Despite hardly any other city being investigated as thoroughly for the history of theology of the first century CE as Ephesus, only few New Testament scholars have shown an interest in the results of other disciplines

²⁴ Schnelle (2007: 356) and Sellin (2009: 178), for example, adopt the position that Colossians has priority over Ephesians. Van Roon (1974: 414–437), however, observes more indications for the priority of Ephesians over Colossians. This is supported by Best (1997b: 72–96; 2001: 23), for whom it is impossible to show which epistle depends on the other, yet he opts for the priority of Ephesians. He sees no compelling arguments that either epistle depends on the other, apart from Eph 6:21–22 and Col 4:7–8. These two passages represent by far the largest word-for-word comparison between these two epistles. For Best (2001: 23–23), one author “could easily have used the same words in the two letters”, therefore, he accepts the possibility that both letters could have been written “at almost the same time”. Schmid (1928: 454–455) argues that there is no one-sided literary dependence between both letters and that they must, therefore, originate from the same author.

²⁵ For an overview or discussion, see Kukula 1906: 237–277; Murphy-O’Connor 2008: 1–180.

²⁶ Cf. Karwiese 1995b: 9.

and integrate them into their research. Bearing in mind this lack of interest and also ignorance, Oster's remarks are not surprising: "There is no clearer example of the neglect of potentially relevant historical and archaeological sources than at Ephesus. ... One is puzzled by the neglect of ancient Ephesus in current New Testament scholarship."²⁷ At the beginning of the twentieth century, Deißmann was the first New Testament researcher to recognise the importance of the archaeological exploration of Ephesus.²⁸ The symposia of 1994 and 1995 show how enriching cooperation in New Testament exegesis, early church history and ancient history can be.²⁹ However, contact between researchers of ancient history and exegetes remain sparse.³⁰ This dissertation aims to fill this gap by using many of the ancient sources and comparing them with the contents of Ephesians.

The fascination with ancient Ephesus can be traced back to a number of factors. The Temple of Artemis is mentioned repeatedly in historical traditions as the reason for the glory of the city.³¹ Due to the many large building projects conducted during the Roman period, Ephesus was able to establish itself as an important and, indeed, magnificent metropolis over many decades.³² Today's visitors can imagine its historical splendour with the help of the extensive excavations and reconstruction projects of the past decades.³³ Ephesus was often history's focus during its long and changeable development. Wars shaped its development just as much as ongoing intellectual movements. All of this made Ephesus "one of the most extraordinary cities of antiquity".³⁴ Religion was an integral part of the lives of the people of antiquity. As in many parts of the Roman Empire, traditional Greek and Roman gods were worshipped in Ephesus, but in addition Egyptian religions, the cult

²⁷ Oster 1987a: xix.

²⁸ Cf. Deißmann 1923; Murphy-O'Connor 2008: xiv.

²⁹ In 1994, Austrian archaeologists met New Testament scholars at Harvard Divinity School. The articles that resulted are published in Koester 1995. On the occasion of the centenary of the Austrian excavation in 1995, a one-week interdisciplinary symposium took place in Vienna, see Friesinger and Krininger 1999.

³⁰ One should note that a good number of archaeological researchers have been interested in the findings of New Testament scholarship. It is unfortunate that in the 1990s, when publications of the Austrian Archaeological Institute peaked, one-sided investigations were consulted such as Günther's (1998; see 2.1.1. for more information). For example, in his work on Acts, the epigraphist Knibbe (1998: 124, 133) adopts mainly Günther's position that Pauline Christianity failed in Ephesus.

³¹ As one of the seven wonders of the world in antiquity, due to its size and marble splendour, the Artemision became the destination of many pilgrims.

³² Ephesus later became the capital of the province of Asia and continually competed for supremacy with the other important cities in western Asia Minor.

³³ Horsley (1992a: 106) considers the easily accessible and impressively reconstructed archaeological park to be the main reason for today's fascination with ancient Ephesus.

³⁴ Murphy-O'Connor 2008: xiii.

of the Roman emperor and early Christianity were equally practised. However, one deity had a unique pre-eminence: Artemis, the great goddess of the Ephesians.

The excavations by the Austrian Archaeological Institute, which were often performed under difficult external conditions, have contributed invaluable to the exploration of ancient Ephesus. Ephesus is currently the most important ruin site in Turkey.³⁵ The research work and results have been released in numerous articles and books.³⁶ These are mainly published in German, while English archaeological publications are rare.³⁷

Methodologically, it would be particularly interesting to apply the same approach to Colossians and the city of Colossae as shall be applied to Ephesians and Ephesus, i.e., to compare the text of the epistle with the ancient sources. Regrettably, both cities could not be greater opposites from an archaeological perspective. Archaeologists have researched Ephesus intensively and systematically for more than 100 years. Numerous buildings have been uncovered and reconstructed in part; whole streets have been researched and can be walked on today; thousands of inscriptions have been excavated and catalogued – of particular value for this study – and there are many other achievements, as will be revealed in the review of the exploration history of ancient Ephesus in chapter 3. The opposite is true for Colossae: it is the only ancient site linked to the New Testament that has not been excavated yet.³⁸ A large hill indicates the presence of an ancient city buried beneath. Some few archaeological finds, such as inscriptions or columns and surface surveys, which suggest an *acropolis* and a *necropolis*, unfortunately do not allow a systematic comparison that would be required for the scope and objective of this dissertation.

³⁵ Cf. Bammer 1988: 10. It includes splendid buildings, reconstructed building parts, and religious and civic buildings. Extensive excavations after World War II made entire streets or districts visible. The glory of living in imperial times can be imagined in exposed private dwelling complexes. Magnificent fountains, numerous statues, mosaics and frescoes make up the cityscape. Valuable art treasures and many ancient coins have been brought to light. Many of the finds from Ephesus can be seen in museums in Selçuk, Izmir, Istanbul, Vienna and London.

³⁶ For more details, see chapter 3.

³⁷ This has contributed to an increased interest in Ephesus over recent years and decades. An abundance of archaeological data is available for theologians. Therefore, Oster (1987a: xix) demands the following: “New Testament scholarship must learn to walk among the vast number of archaeological facts in front of it.”

³⁸ Several attempts have been made to begin excavations at Colossae, but so far the Turkish government has not granted permission. At present, researchers from the Flinders University in Adelaide/Australia are working with Turkish colleagues from the Pamukkale University to start a joint project. This approach is to be applauded, but it remains to be seen whether it is feasible. For more information, see www.flinders.edu.au.

1.2.1.3. The Church in Ephesus

Ancient Ephesus was an important (missionary) centre for early Christianity. The city of Ephesus is the third most frequently recorded place in the New Testament,³⁹ named in six New Testament books (Acts; 1 Corinthians; Ephesians; 1–2 Timothy; Revelation). A number of New Testament letters are addressed to Ephesus and at least one letter (1 Corinthians) was written there. Ephesus plays an important role in Acts, Revelation and also in the Pauline corpus, although many of the introductory issues are controversial, especially here. Paul resided for three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:31), the longest period spent during his ministry at any given place. The gospel was proclaimed in many parts of the province of Asia during that time (Acts 19:10). After the fall of Jerusalem, Ephesus was possibly the main centre of the Christian church for a period.⁴⁰ The church in Ephesus is named first among the seven churches in Revelation, which stresses its supremacy. Several leading personalities in early Christianity have a link to Ephesus; for example, one of the seven letters of Ignatius is addressed to it.⁴¹ A number of sources – Paul himself, Luke in Acts, John in Revelation and Ignatius – testify to the important role of Ephesus in early Christianity.⁴² All these aspects suggest that Ephesus in the Roman period *should* be of special interest to New Testament researchers, which was not the case until the end of the 1980s.

1.2.2. Objective

The main objective of this dissertation is to show that Ephesians is not a general, non-specific letter, but evinces a distinct, local Ephesian character. To demonstrate this, parts of the extensive inscriptional, numismatic, archaeological and literary material from Ephesus, often neglected in New Testament interpretation, are compared with the contents of Ephesians and utilised for New Testament research. In this search for extratextual references based on a concrete context in Ephesus, cultic and cultural aspects of ancient Ephesus together with linguistic and rhetorical patterns in Ephesians play an important role. It will be argued that Ephesians contains a number of significant possible analogies to the city goddess of Artemis and her cult, without naming her. These consist, for example, of indirect allusions and echoes that might be evoked by the adoption of important cultic words or similar cultic contents. These similarities are more frequent and clearer than Arnold, Schwindt,

³⁹ Shauf 2005: 135.

⁴⁰ Cf. Hemer 1989b: 39. Frend (1984: 38, 127) concludes that the province of Asia was “the main centre of Christianity for a century and a half after the Pauline mission ... with Ephesus as its radial point”.

⁴¹ The statement ὃς ἐν πάσῃ ἐπιστολῇ μνημονεύει in IgnEph 12:2 (in relation to Paul and the Ephesians) suggests that Ephesus played an important role at that time.

⁴² Becker 1989: 167.

Hoehner and Thielman suggest. As such, a concrete and extensive comparison of historical Artemis traditions from Ephesus with Ephesians has not yet been made, and, therefore, this analysis fills a lacuna in New Testament research. The fact that Ephesians might contain a specific life-setting, i.e., the religious background of the Artemis worship, would, therefore, offer a new way of reading the epistle as a whole.

1.3. Methodology

The methodological approach of this dissertation, which is interdisciplinary (especially the interplay of New Testament interpretation and archaeology/epigraphy) and intertextual, arises from its objective. In view of the length of Paul's residence in Ephesus, Horsley deems it likely that "there should surface features distinctive of local Ephesian usage which turn up in the Pauline letters".⁴³ In relation to the extraction of local historical material from the New Testament epistles, researchers have focused primarily on the letters to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians and Thessalonians.⁴⁴ Apart from some exceptions, Ephesians has been widely ignored. Therefore, the approach of this research is both comparative and linguistic in nature. Its primary objective is to identify analogies in an intertextual sense by systematically comparing the text of Ephesians with ancient Ephesian sources. This has not been done previously. As the references to the cult of Artemis in question are predominantly of a linguistic nature, New Testament methodologies of intertextuality are relevant for this dissertation. Selected verses and passages from all six chapters of the epistle will be investigated. In his letters, Paul always had to adapt the message of the gospel to new contexts and issues. The local cultures and cults involved considerably influenced the manner of his proclamation.⁴⁵ This vital aspect will be examined in detail with regard to Ephesians.

A direct mention of Artemis in the text of Ephesians would be a significant indicator. On the other hand, Ehrensperger points out that Rome as an "entity is stunningly absent" in the letters of the apostle Paul, at least with regard to explicit references.⁴⁶ One, therefore, has to ask whether the ever-present Roman supremacy played any role in shaping Paul's theological thought – or, alternatively, whether Paul chose the rhetorical strategy of mentioning Rome not explicitly, but implicitly. Ehrensperger encapsulates this point: "Thus

⁴³ Horsley 1992a: 160.

⁴⁴ Regarding 1–2 Corinthians, one should note that Paul lists a number of details of his ministry in Ephesus and in the province of Asia, which will be investigated later on.

⁴⁵ For a more recent study of the linguistic translation process in Paul's apostolic ministry, see Ehrensperger 2013b.

⁴⁶ Ehrensperger 2013b: 107.

although not explicitly mentioned, Rome is considered to be present providing the fore- or background context of the communication and interaction of the people we encounter in the Pauline letters.”⁴⁷

The same is true for the background of ancient Ephesus. The goddess Artemis had a dominant position in the city and region, as will be explained in greater detail in the course of this dissertation. One has to ask, however, whether the rhetorical approach alluded to above was also used for Ephesians. Despite the name of Artemis not being explicitly mentioned, this does not preclude its cult being implicitly part of the letter’s train of thought in the form of allusions. Not only Jews, but Gentiles too – for whom the cult was an integral part of life – would easily understand a language that is shaped strongly by a cult, as is the case in Ephesians. Therefore, looking at possible cultic nuances in the rhetoric of the author of Ephesians will play an important role in this study.

To achieve this objective, it is necessary (1) to ascertain how, within the course of this methodological discussion, these possible allusions are to be understood, and (2) to develop criteria for their recognition and assessment. The more numerous and clearer such possible similarities are, the more likely it is to view Ephesians as a sustained interaction with the cult of Artemis in Ephesus. One also has to investigate whether putative allusions to Artemis were clear enough to be recognised by readers of the epistle, and whether the author knew the cult sufficiently to channel his Christian message through cultic language.

1.3.1. Text Comparison

In New Testament research the term ‘intertextuality’, which was introduced by Hays in 1989 and coined by the semiotician Kristeva in 1967, has become a catchphrase in the past decades. For Kristeva, any “text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations, any text is the absorption and transformation of another”.⁴⁸ The term ‘text’ covers not only written texts, but also cultural phenomena in general as long as they constitute elements of a structure.⁴⁹ The concept of intertextuality is based on the recognition “that all discourse depends upon, builds upon, modifies, and/or reacts to prior discourse and the prior use of words, concepts, and ideas”.⁵⁰ As Kristeva focuses on the text and its relationships, she diverts the attention away from the author and readers.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Ehrensperger 2013b: 107.

⁴⁸ Kristeva 1980: 66.

⁴⁹ Kristeva 1980: 66.

⁵⁰ Ciampa 2008: 41.

⁵¹ Due to this approach, the question of the original authorial intention or the question whether readers were able to recognise possible analogies also fades into the background.