CHAPTER FIVE

CREATION AND REDEMPTION ACCORDING TO POST(?)-PAULINE USE OF TRADITION
(Col. 1:15–20; Eph. 1:3–14)

The apostle Paul's conception of the relation between creation and redemption has been described in the last two chapters on the basis of two strata of material, namely Paul's own writing and his approving use of earlier tradition concerning Christ's lordship over creation and redemption.

Widespread disagreement about authorship of Colossians and Ephesians justifies separate treatment of Col. 1:15–20 and especially Eph. 1:3–14, but this separation is not intended to imply that Paul's authorship has been disproved.1 If Paul wrote Colossians, the Christological hymn in that letter would be another instance in the second stratum of Pauline material, but since it has not been proved that he wrote Colossians, the evidence from that letter ought not be placed on the same level as that from Romans, I Corinthians and Philippians. The problem of Ephesian authorship, though partly dependent on a decision about the provenance of Colossians, is more complicated and it is improbable that Paul wrote it.2

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Eph. 1:3-14 probably represents a third stratum in the corpus Paulinum, namely post-Pauline use of tradition, and it is possible that Col. 1:15-20 belongs in the same category. Even if it were concluded that Paul wrote neither Colossians nor Ephesians, the influence of Paul's thought on both letters is clear enough. It is thus presupposed that the two texts in question are embedded in the corpus Paulinum and represent at least indirect, if not direct, evidence of a Pauline use of tradition.

I. COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

The Christological hymn in Colossians speaks to the relation between creation and redemption not merely by use of some cosmological terms but directly and explicitly, like the hymn in Philippians, through its Christology of the Lord. On the one hand, there is the relation between creation and Christ (1:15-17) and, on the other hand, the relation between redemption and Christ (1:18ff.), so that creation and redemption are related through "the beloved son" (1:13), previously designated as "our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:3).1 Judgments about the authorship and structure of the hymn, as well as about its relation to its context and to possible religiousgeschichtliche sources, influence understanding of the hymn's motif

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1 Martin Dibelius, *An die Kolosser, Epheser, an Philemon* (HNT, XII; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1927), p. 6, thinks the Christological excursus 1:15-20 is in two parts: "Es handelt sich also bis mit 1, 17 um die kosmologische, von da an um die soteriologische Bedeutung Christi. ...Es kommt dem Apostel offenbar darauf an, die Parallelität von Schöpfung und Erlösung zu zeigen." Cf. also Ralph P. Martin, "An Early Christian Hymn (Col. 1:15-20)," *EQ*, XXXVI (1964), 196, 200; N. Kehl, *Christushymnus*, pp. 89, 99. Markus Barth, in his review of Kehl's monograph, *CBQ*, 30 (1968), 106-10, maintains that since a hymn is not discourse, one cannot say that the first stanza concerns only creation and the second only salvation. Cf. list of interpretations of the hymn (not in commentaries) compiled by Lohse, *Kolosser*, pp. 77-78 n. 2; and *Forschungsbericht* of Hans Jakob Gabathuler, *Jesus Christus, Haupt der Kirche—Haupt der Welt* (ATANT, 45; Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1965).