InTRODUCTION.] THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS. [cu. v.   
   
 MSS. It seems to have been done with reference to the catholic sub-~   
 ject of the Epistle, very possibly by churches among whom it was read,   
 and with a view to generalize the reference of its contents.   
 19. It is necessary now to deal with two hypotheses respecting the   
 readers to whom our Epistle was addressed ; both obviously falling to the   
 ground if the words in Ephesus are genuine, but requiring also separate   
 treatment. The first of these is, that it was to the Zaodiceans. This   
 idea has not even tradition to stand on, All the consensus of the ancient   
 Church is against it. It has nothing to rest on but conjecture, arising   
 out of the mention of an Epistle from Laodicea, in Col. iv. 16, which   
 seems to have induced the ancient heretic Marcion to alter the title, as   
 Tertullian -says- he did. No single MS. fills in the gap produced by   
 omitting in Ephesus with the words “in Laodicea.” Again, if this had   
 been really so, is it conceivable that the Laodicean church would without   
 protest and without any remaining sign of their right to the Epistle,   
 have allowed that right to be usurped by the Ephesians and universally   
 acknowledged by the church as theirs? Other minor difficulties of the   
 hypothesis have been pointed out. This failing, another way has been   
 struck out, possessing much more plausibility, and gaining many more   
 adherents®, It has been supposed that the Epistle was encyclical,   
 addressed to more churches than Ephesus only. But I cannot help   
 regarding this hypothesis as even less worthy of our acceptance than the   
 other. It has against it, 1) and chiefly, its total discrepancy with the   
 spirit of the Epistle, which, to whomsoever sent, is clearly addressed to   
 one set of persons throughout, coexisting in one place, and as one body,   
 and under the same circumstances: 2) the improbability that the Apostle,   
 who in two of his Epistles (2 Cor., Gal.) has so plainly specified their   
 encyclical character, should have here omitted all such specification:   
 3) the even greater improbability that he should have, as on this hypo-   
 thesis must be assumed, written a cireular Epistle to a district of which   
 Ephesus was the commercial capital, addressed to various churches within   
 that district, yet from its very contents (as by the opponents’ hypo-   
 thesis) not admitting of application to the church of that metropolis, in   
 which he had spent so long a time, and to which he was so affectionately   
 bound: 4) the inconsistency of this hypothesis with the address of the   
 Epistle, and the universal consensus of the ancient church, who, however   
 they read that address, had no doubt of its being properly entitled. Nor   
 is this objection removed by the form of the hypothesis suggested by   
 Conybeare and Howson, that copies were sent, differently superseribed,   
 which superseriptions, perplexing the copyists, were left out, and then, as   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
 5 The hypothesis was started by Usher, in his Annals, on the year 64; and is upheld   
 by very many of the principal commentators, with various sub-hypotheses as to the   
 central church to which it was sent and the means by which it was to be circulated.   
 44