

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BOOK OF ACTS

JOHN MCRA Y

Wheaton College Graduate School, Wheaton, IL 60187

The winds of biblical scholarship have blown toward the Book of Acts from a largely theological direction for the past quarter of a century,¹ providing a corrective to the pervasive concern with questions of historicity fostered by the work of W. Ramsay almost a century ago.² However, the winds are changing again, and interest is once more being kindled in questions relating to the trustworthiness of Acts. These changing winds are blowing from such unlikely places as the University of Tubingen itself, whose extremely critical views were held by Ramsay prior to his sojourn in Asia Minor. For example, M. Hengel, a NT scholar at Tubingen, "makes a bold departure from radical NT scholarship in supporting the historical integrity of the Acts of the Apostles. . . and demonstrates that Luke's account is historically reliable. . . ."³ Mitigating cases against the hyperskepticism of scholars like J. Knox,⁴ and G. Leudemann,⁵ are now being made in various quarters bolstered by new discoveries in archaeological and inscriptional material.⁶

¹ C. Talbert, ed., *Perspectives on Luke-Acts* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978); I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970); L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn, *Studies in Luke-Acts* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966).

² W. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908); idem, *The Cities of St. Paul* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907); idem, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (2d ed.; London/New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1915).

³ From the jacket of Hengel's *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

⁴ J. Knox, *Chapters in a Life of Paul* (New York: Abingdon, 1950). (Rev. ed.; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987).

⁵ G. Leudemann, *Paulus der Heidenapostell: Studien zur Chronologie* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1980). English trans. by F. S. Jones, *Paul-Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

⁶ See works below by Finegan, McRay, and Hener.

In this article only a modicum of current archaeological research will be presented because an article of this length requires a high degree of selectivity in order to include even the highlights of archaeology's ongoing contribution to the study of Acts. Older works on Acts, such as those by Ramsay, Foakes-Jackson, and Lake,⁷ are now able to be supplemented, and in places corrected, by contemporary research on archaeology and classical history in the works of J. Finegan,⁸ C. Hemer,⁹ the author,¹⁰ and others.

For convenience we may group significant discoveries relating to Acts into the following categories: 1) chronology, 2) inscriptions and coins, and 3) excavated sites.

Chronology

The unbridled skepticism of Knox and Leudemann concerning the trustworthiness of Acts for constructing a reliable, if not detailed, chronology of its events has been effectively neutralized by the careful work of less radical scholars. Fragments¹¹ of an inscription reproducing a letter sent from Claudius, either to the people of Delphi or to the successor of Gallio, have been found at Delphi mentioning Gallio (Λουκιος [ου] υιος Γαλλιων ο φ [ιλος] μου κα [ι ανθου] πατος [της] Αχαιας] εγραψεν. . .).¹² C. Herner and J. Finegan demonstrate that most recent studies¹³ on the Gallio inscription require the placing of that proconsul's accession to office in Achaia in A.D. 51/52 (Acts 18:12). Paul, having come to Corinth 18 months earlier than his appearance before Gallio (18:11), could have arrived in the late fall of 49,¹⁴ or

⁷ F. J. Foakes-Jackson and K. Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity* (5 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1920-33; 5 vols.; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966).

⁸ J. Finegan, *The Archaeology of the New Testament: The Mediterranean World of the Early Christian Apostles* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1981).

⁹ The scholarly world has been recently blessed by the posthumous publication of the exhaustive work of Professor Herner, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (WUNT; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1989). His work deals with questions of the history, language, geography, and structure of Acts.

¹⁰ J. McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991).

¹¹ Four were known to A. Deissmann (see n. 12), but a total of nine are now accepted by Herner (*The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, 252, n. 18). See his analysis based on these additional fragments in "Observations on Pauline Chronology," in D. A. Hagner and M. J. Harris, eds., *Pauline Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 6-9.

¹² A. Deissmann, *St. Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912) appendix I.

¹³ See Herner, *Book of Acts*, 252, n. 18.

¹⁴ Finegan, *The Archaeology of the New Testament*, 13.

taking a less restrictive view of the 18-month period, in the late fall of 50.¹⁵

This date coincides well with Suetonius' record of an expulsion of the Jews from Rome under Claudius in A.D. 49,¹⁶ which occurred just before Paul arrived in Corinth (Acts 18:2).¹⁷ Dio Cassius' comment that Claudius "did not drive them out [i.e., because there were so many] . . . but ordered them not to hold meetings"¹⁸ probably refers to the beginning of his reign when he showed tolerance to the Jews.¹⁹

The very recent discovery of a cemetery in Jericho, seven miles long with more than 120 tombs, provides support for this analysis.²⁰ One of the tombs contained an inscribed sarcophagus which belonged to "Theodotus, freedman of Queen Agrippina. . . ." He was freed by the queen, the second wife of Claudius, between A.D. 50 and 54. This manumission of a Jewish slave²¹ (Theodotus is Greek for Nathanael), points to a favorable relation between the house of Claudius and the Jews early in his reign. Later in his reign, another wife of Claudius, Queen Protonice, converted to Christianity, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and returned to Rome with a report that the Jews had wrongfully withheld from Christians the possession of Golgotha, the cross, and the tomb of Christ. A little known passage in the Doctrine of Addai then reads: "And when Caesar heard it, he commanded all the Jews to leave the country of Italy."²² This is probably the expulsion referred to above by Suetonius.

¹⁵ Herner, *The Book of Acts*, 169,252-53; "Pauline Chronology," 6.

¹⁶ Herner, *The Book of Acts*, 169.

¹⁷ Orosius (*Seven Books of History Against the Romans* 7.6,15-16) dated it to the ninth year of Claudius's reign, which Finegan places at A.D. 49 (*Handbook of Biblical Chronology* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964] 319. Suetonius *Twelve* 25; idem, *The Teaching of Addai* 7b-11a. See G. Howard, trans., *The Teaching of Addai* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981) 33.

¹⁸ Dio Cassius, *History of Rome* 60.6.6.

¹⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 19.280-91. G. Howard, "The Beginnings of Christianity in Rome: A Note on Suetonius, Life of Claudius XXV A," *Restoration Quarterly* 24 (1981) 175-77.

²⁰ R. Hachlili and A. Killebrew, "The Saga of the Goliath Family-As Revealed in Their Newly Discovered 2,000 Year Old Tomb," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 9/1 (1983) 52-53.

²¹ Another Theodotus, who was a priest and synagogue president, whose name was found on a pre- A.D. 70 inscription belonging to a synagogue in Jerusalem, is called "son of Vettenu" and thus may have been a slave who had been freed by the prominent Roman family of the Vettenu, taking their name as was the custom. A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (New York: George H. Doran, 1922) 439-41; Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*, 306. Albright felt that this synagogue of Theodotus may be connected with the "synagogue of freedmen" in Acts 6:9. W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, (Baltimore: Penguin, 1960) 172. I

²² Howard, *Doctrine of Addai*, 33.

Inscriptions and Coins

One of our most important sources for the study of the ancient world continues to be the ongoing decipherment of already discovered inscriptions and the continual discovery of new ones. For example, some 7,500 inscriptions have been found in the Greek Agora of Athens alone.²³ They testify to the huge number of inscribed altars, monuments, and buildings that existed in this part of Athens' huge market area. Excavations by the American School of Classical Studies in 1970 and 1981-82 unearthed about 25 hermai (statues) in the northwest part of this western agora alone.

This area had "assumed something of the aspect of a museum" in the time of Acts,²⁴ and Petronius, a Roman satirist in the court of Nero, could say that it was easier to meet a god than a man in Athens.²⁵ Paul was thus impressed that he found among these "objects of your worship" an altar even "to the unknown god" (αγνωστω θεω), Acts 17:13). Although this altar no longer exists, an altar "to the unknown god," was purportedly located by Pope Innocent III in A.D. 1208 in Athens.²⁶ Pausanias, who visited Athens between A.D. 143 and 159, saw such altars. Describing his trip from the harbor to Athens he wrote, "The Temple of Athene Skiras is also here, and one of Zeus further off, and altars of the 'Unknown gods'. . . ." ²⁷ Similarly, at Olympia, he described the altar of Olympian Zeus and wrote that "near it is an altar of the Unknown gods. . . ." ²⁸ Apollonius of Tyana, who was born at the time of the birth of Christ and died in A.D. 98, spoke of Athens as the place "where altars are set up in honor even of unknown gods (αγνωστων δαιμονων βωμοι)." ²⁹

Diogenes Laertes wrote of altars being erected "To the god whom it may concern (τω προσηκοντι θεω)." ³⁰ Oecumenius records an altar

²³ J. Camp, *The Athenian Agora* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1986) 17.

²⁴ T. L. Shear, Jr., "Athens: From City State to Provincial Town," *Hesperia* 50 (1981) 362.

²⁵ Petronius, *Satiricon* 17.

²⁶ Published in PL 215, cols. 1559-61. "*Palladis in sedem humiliavit gloriosissimae genitricia veri Dei nunc assecuta notitiam quae dudum ignoto extruxerat Deo aram.*" The fuller text of the testimonium is easily accessible in J. Travlos and A. Frantz, "The Church of St. Dionysios the Areopagite and the Palace of the Archbishop of Athens in the 16th Century," *Hesperia* 34 (1965) 194. I am grateful for this reference from J. Binder, which she excerpted for me from materials in her forthcoming book on *The Topography of Athens: A Sourcebook*.

²⁷ *Description of Greece* 1.2.4. (trans. by P. Levi; Penguin Classics) 1.12.

²⁸ *Description of Greece* 5.14.8. Levi, 2.239.

²⁹ *Recorded by his biographer, Flavius Philostratus (A.D. c. 170-c. 245). Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 6.3. (trans. by F. C. Coyne, Loeb Classical Library) 2.13.

³⁰ Diogenes Laertes, 1.110.

dedicated to “the gods of Asia, Europe, and Libya, to the Unknown and Strange God.”³¹ When W. Dörpfeld cleared the sacred precinct of Demeter at Pergamum in 1909, he found an altar with a partially defective text, which is restored by H. Hepding and A. Deissmann to read: **ΘΕΟΙΣ ΑΓΝ[ΩΣΤΟΙΣ] ΚΑΠΙΤΩ[Ν] ΔΑΔΟΥΧΟ[Σ]** “To unknown gods, Capito, torchbearer.”³²

The tendency to view emperors as divine at the time of Acts is shown in an inscription found in 1980 in Thessalonica. A temple of **ΘΕΟΣ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ** (divine Caesar) had been in Thessalonica since the time of Augustus,³³ and in this newly discovered inscription, the **ΘΕΟΙ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΙ** (august gods) are venerated as *cruvvaol* (fellow sanctuaries) of Serapis and Isis.³⁴

The other section of the agora lay 250 feet to the east, partially endowed by Julius Caesar and completed by Augustus in the last decade of the 1st century B.C.³⁵ The identification and date of this area are confirmed by two inscriptions, one on the architrave of the gate of Athena, which allowed entrance from the Greek agora,³⁶ and the other on the base of a statue of Lucius Caesar, Augustus' grandson.³⁷ It is now customarily referred to as “the market of Caesar and Augustus.” It would have been more likely in this area, rather than the more often visited one to the west, that Paul would have found his audiences.

Excavators of Amphipolis, a city on Paul's journey down the Egnatian Way in Macedonia, have uncovered a gymnasium which was still standing when Paul passed through the area.³⁸ A lengthy inscription (139 lines) of 21 B.C. contains an ephebic law (i.e., a law for youth), which provides detailed instruction about athletic activities and equipment in the gymnasium,³⁹ as well as references to the city's road system, factories, a theatre, and an agora.⁴⁰ This confirms the impression of Amphipolis as a major city. It was, in fact, the capital city of the first district of Macedonia.

³¹ Comments on Acts 17:23, in Minge, *Patrologia Graecae*, 118.238.

³² See Hepding's report in *Athenische Mitteilungen* 35 (1910), 454-57. And see Deissmann's discussion in *St. Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911) appendix 2, 261-62.

³³ *Inscriptiones Graecae: Inscriptiones Attica*, 1935. 10.2.31. (Vols. 2 and 3 of this larger series are now called IG II²). Hereafter referred to as IG II².

³⁴ F. Papazoglou, "Macedonia Under the Romans," *Macedonia: 4000 Years of Greek History and Civilization* (ed. M. B. Sakellariou; Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1983) 207, n. III.

³⁵ W. B. Dinsmoor, "The Temple of Ares at Athens," *Hesperia* 9 (1940) 50, n. 14. J. H. Oliver, *Hesperia* 11 (1942) 82.

³⁶ IG 1123175.

³⁷ IG 1123251.

³⁸ *Archaeological Reports* 30 (1983-84) 49.

³⁹ *Archaeological Reports* 31 (1984-85) 48.

⁴⁰ *Archaeological Reports* 32 (1985-86) 68.

At Beroea, also visited by Paul along the Egnatian Way, another important gymnasium inscription has been found, "The Gymnasiarchal Law of Beroea," which was published in 1951,⁴¹ and has been recently restudied.⁴² The age groups categorized in the gymnasium are: 1) Παιδες, up to age 15; 2) εφεβοι, ages 15-17; and 3) Νεοι or Νεανισκοι, ages 18-22. This may provide some indication of the age of Timothy, who is referred to as a νεοτης ("youth") in 1 Tim 4:12.

Archaeology continues to make a contribution to a problem that has centered around Thessalonica for many years. Critics of the NT asserted that Luke was mistaken in his use of the term πολιταρχαι (politarchs) for the officials before whom Paul was taken in this city.⁴³ The British Museum houses along-known, fragmentary inscription containing this term which was found in Thessalonica. The inscription begins, "In the time of the Politarchs. . . ." Finegan writes that the importance of the inscription is that "it is otherwise unknown in extant Greek literature."⁴⁴

However, in 1000 C. Schuler published a list of 32 inscriptions which contain this term,⁴⁵ and 19 of them come from Thessalonica! Three of these date to the 1st century A.D. (#8, 9, and 10). One of the 32 is from Beroea and also dates to the 1st century A.D. The word politarch appears on line 110 of this impressive stele in the city's museum.⁴⁶

Three more may be added to that list as follows: 1) I have seen one in the Thessalonica Museum which was apparently discovered in Mygdonian Apollonia, and published by K. Sismanides.⁴⁷ 2) J. H. Oliver discusses an inscription that appeared on the base of a statue erected in Beroea for the emperor Claudius, which refers to a board of five politarchs in that city, all of whom are named on the inscription.⁴⁸ It

⁴¹ Makaronas, *Μακεδονικα* (1951); *χρονικα Αρχαιολογικα* 629-30, n. 71.

⁴² J. M. R. Cormack, *Ancient Macedonia* 2.139-49; J. and L. Robert, *Bulletin Epigraphique* 9 (1978) 430-31.

⁴³ Acts 17:6.

⁴⁴ Finegan, *Archaeology of the New Testament*, 108.

⁴⁵ C. Schuler, "The Macedonian Politarchs," *Classical Philology* 55 (January/October, 1960) 00-100.

⁴⁶ It has been the subject of recent study by J. M. R. Cormack; "The Gymnasiarchal Law of Beroea," *Ancient Macedonia II: Papers Read at the Second International Symposium Held in Thessaloniki*, 19-24, August, 1973 (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1977) 139-49. See also a response by J. Robert and L. Robert in *Bulletin Epigraphique* 9 (1978) 431-32.

⁴⁷ Sismanides, however, has not accepted Apollonia as its source. *Αρχαιολογικη Εφημερις*; (1983) 75-84. See also *Archaeological Reports* 32 (1985-86) 58.

⁴⁸ J. Oliver, "The Dedication to Claudius at Beroea," *Zeitschrift fur Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 30 (1978) 150. A reply was made by J. Touratzoglou in *ZPE* 34 (1979) 272-73.

was published originally in modern Greek by J. Touratzoglou.⁴⁹ 3) In January, 1975, a reused marble plaque was discovered at Amphipolis in Basilica A, containing the word "politarchs" in line 7. C. Koukouli-Chrysanthaki of the Kavalla Museum dates the inscription to the 2nd century B.C.⁵⁰ It is interesting that scholarly discussion has now shifted from whether politarchs existed at all to the question of when the institution originated!⁵¹ It is now incontrovertible that politarchs existed in Macedonia both before and during the time of the Apostle Paul. The reference in Acts 16:12 to Philippi as "the leading city of the district of Macedonia" is enigmatic in the Greek manuscripts. The translation is equally enigmatic.⁵² Coins minted in Amphipolis from 168 to 146 B.C. carried the inscription **ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΩΝ ΠΡΩΤΗΣ** (first of Macedonia).⁵³ Philippi was also a part of the first (πρωτη) of four districts of Macedonia but was not its capital city. According to Pliny, that honor belonged to Amphipolis,⁵⁴ a city which Paul would visit later.⁵⁵ The conjectural text of Nestle-Aland's 26th ed., making "first" (πρωτης) a genitive and thus reading "a city of (the) first district of Macedonia," is probably to be preferred at present.

Paul undoubtedly travelled to Philippi on the Egnatian Way, which according to Strabo,⁵⁶ ran from Apollonia on the west coast of Macedonia (on the same latitude as Thessalonica) to Kypsela (modern Maritza) on the east coast. The milestones marked it as a distance of 535 Roman miles (493 English miles). One of these milestones was recently discovered in the vicinity of Thessalonica,⁵⁷ and is now housed in the

⁴⁹ Ch. Koukouli-Chrysanthaki, **Πρακτικά Β: Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου Αρχαίας Μακεδονίας** (Thessaloniki, 1977) 486-93.

⁵⁰ Ch. Koukouli-Chrysanthaki, "Politarchs in a New Inscription from Amphipolis," *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honor of Charles F. Edson* (ed. H. J. Dell; Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1981) 238-39.

⁵¹ For a survey of that question see M. Hatzopoulos, "Les politarques de Philippopolis: Un element meconnu pour la datation d'une magistrature macedonienne," a communication read at the Third International Congress of Thracology in Vienna (June, 1980). For bibliography previous to 1973 see F. Geschnitzer, *RE Suppl.* 13 (1973) 483-500. Also see B. Helly, "Politarques, Poliarches, et Politophylarques," *Ancient Macedonia* 2 (Thessaloniki, 1977) 531-32.

⁵² RSV, 2d ed., 1971. This is generally the way the verse is translated.

⁵³ See Lazarides' article on "Amphipolis" in *Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites* (ed. R. Stillwell; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976) 52.

⁵⁴ *Natural History* 4.38. See also Papazoglou, 198; and Lazarides in *Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites*, 52.

⁵⁵ Acts 17:1.

⁵⁶ *Geography* 7.7.4.

⁵⁷ C. Romiopoulou, "Un Nouveau Milliaire de la Via Engatia," *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique* 98 (1974) 813-16.

museum in that city. It is one of the most interesting I have seen,⁵⁸ is written in both Latin and Greek, and gives the distance as 260 Roman miles (Thessalonica is midway between the two points mentioned by Strabo).

Inscriptions found at Ephesus and elsewhere in Asia Minor have now illuminated the use of terms in Acts such as God-fearers⁵⁹ (φοβο-
μενοι σεβομενοι),⁶⁰ town clerk (γραμματευς),⁶¹ and Asiarchs (Ασιαρχαι).⁶² In 1974, M. Rossner identified 74 Asiarchs or high priests of Asia in Ephesus from inscriptions. The recent monumental publication of the repertorium of inscriptions from Ephesus,⁶³ containing no less than 3,500 previously known and new inscriptions, has brought the number

⁵⁸ The Latin distance is given as CC followed by an arrow pointing down, followed by X. Romiopoulou comments on the arrow as follows: "L'emploi de la lettre [down arrow] pour designer le chiffre 50 (le X de l'alphabet {chalcidique}), mais surtout la forme des lettres du texte grec, autorisent a dater l'inscription de la seconde moitie du II^e siecle avo J.-C." *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique* 98 (1974) 814. The distance in Greek is clear-ΣΞ = 260.

⁵⁹ Acts 10:22; 13:16,26,43; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7.

⁶⁰ See the material on the recent excavation of the Aphrodisias stele by C. Gempf in Herner, *Book of Acts*, appendix 2, "The God-Fearers," 444-48. In general see: L. Feldman, "The Omnipresence of the God-Fearers," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 12/5 (1986) 58-63; T. Finn, "The God Fearers Reconsidered" *CBQ* 47 (1985) 81; R. MacLennan and T. Kraabel, "The God-Fearers: A Literary and Theological Invention," *BAR* 12 (1986) 45-54; M. Mellink, "An Article on Inscription in the Synagogue at Aphrodisias Containing the Word θεσσαβεις," *AJA* 81 (1977) 281-321; R. Tannenbaum, "Jews and God-Fearers in the Holy City of Aphrodite," *BAR* 12/5 (1986) 55-57. M. Wilcox, "The 'God Fearers' in Acts-A Reconsideration," *JSNT* 13 (1981) 109; note also an editorial report in *BAR* 12/2 (1987) 52-53.

⁶¹ Acts 19:35. On the importance of this office see A. H. M. Jones, *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967) 238-40; and D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor to the End of the Third Century after Christ* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950) 1.60, and esp. 2.848, n. 32. Several inscriptions found in Ephesus refer to this office. One of them identifies Laberius Amoenus as ο γραμμ[ατευς του δ]ημου, "the clerk (or secretary) of the people." E. L. Hicks, *The Collection of Ancient Greek Inscriptions in the British Museum*, 3.2 (Oxford, 1980) 482 (+ addendum on 294). The inscription, which dates to the mid-2nd century A.D., is conveniently available in G. H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* (4 vols.; Macquarie, Australia: The Ancient History Documentary Research Center, 1981-87) 4.74.

⁶² These high officials were among Paul's friends in Ephesus, Acts 19:31 (ουτες αυτω φιλοι). Asiarchs were the "foremost men of the province of Asia, chosen from the wealthiest and the most aristocratic inhabitants of the province. See the discussion in my book, *Archaeology and the New Testament* in the chapter on "Cities in Western Asia Minor." See also L. Taylor, "The Asiarchs," in *The Beginnings of Christianity* (ed. F. J. Foakes-Jackson and K. Lake; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966) 4.256.

⁶³ This is *Inschriften grieschischer Stüdte aus Kleinasien XI-XVII. Die Inschriften von Ephesos 1- VIII*. (Ed. H. Wankel; Bonn, 1979-84). Newly discovered inscriptions are being published in *Oesterreichische Jahreshfte*. See *Archaeological Studies* 35 (1985) 191.

of Asiarchs in Ephesus to 106, including both men and women.⁶⁴ Asiarch inscriptions have been found in more than 40 cities throughout Asia. Numerous inscriptions mentioning Asiarchs have been found in Ephesus, some of them dating to within 50 years of the events described in Acts.⁶⁵ The fact that such men were friends of Paul may suggest that the wealthy and educated people of Ephesus were not as opposed to Paul as the superstitious crowd in the theatre, and that Paul's ministry was not as exclusively oriented to the poor and uneducated as is sometimes assumed, and probably also suggests that the policy of the Roman Empire at this time was not hostile to Christianity.⁶⁶

Sometime in the late 1st century, probably in the reign of Domitian, Pergamum, Smyrna, and Ephesus, which were seats of emperor worship, became officially designated "temple wardens" (*νεωκοροι*),⁶⁷ a term used by the clerk of the city of Ephesus in Acts 19:35. Whereas in Acts the term may only have "referred to the Ephesians as worshippers of Artemis,"⁶⁸ it became in the 2nd century a title conferred by Rome on cities in which there was "a temple founded for the worship of the emperors."⁶⁹ It appears in its full form *νεωκορος των Σεβαστων* ("temple warden of the Augusti") in numerous inscriptions from this century and later. For example, an inscription found in Ephesus dating to about 162-64 reads:

[εδ]οξεν της πρωτης και με[γιστης μητρ]οπολεως της Ασιας και δις νεσκ[ορου των Σεβα]στον και φιλοσεβαστου Εφε[σινω πολεως τη βο]υλη και τω δημω . . .

"It was decreed by the council and people of the patriotic city of the Ephesians, first and greatest metropolis of Asia, temple-warden of the Augusti two times. . . ."⁷⁰

Some cities, e.g., Pergamum, Smyrna, and Ephesus,⁷¹ built two such temples and were designated as "twice temple wardens"; a few of the more important ones even became "thrice temple wardens."⁷²

⁶⁴ The most recent publication of a list of the Asiarchs is by M. Rosser, *Studii Clasice*: Bucuresti, *Soc. de Studii clasice din RSR* 16 (1974) 101-42.

⁶⁵ See the texts and extensive comments in Horsley, *New Documents*, 4.46-55, where the careers of four Asiarchs are traced on 49-50.

⁶⁶ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (NICNT; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 376-77.

⁶⁷ Magie, *Roman Rule* 1.637; 2.1433, 1451.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.1433.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.1432.

⁷⁰ Horsley, 4.74. See also the inscriptions in J. T. Wood, *Discoveries at Ephesus* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1877), "Inscriptions from the City and Suburbs," #12, and #15.

⁷¹ Magie, *Roman Rule*, 1.594, 615, and 619 respectively.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1.637.

The care of the temples, the handling of the sacred funds, and the recording of public documents (often on the walls of the temples) were entrusted to a board of men known as **νεοποιαι** (temple wardens) a term used seemingly synonymously with **νεωκορος** in the inscriptions.⁷³ The former term appears frequently in inscriptions from Ephesus, both in the form **νεοποις** and **νεωποιος**.⁷⁴ It has been conjectured that Demetrius the silversmith in Acts 19:24 may have been one of these officials. One inscription⁷⁵ mentions a Demetrius who is a **νεοποιος**, but Ramsay rejected the identification of this man with the one mentioned in Acts.⁷⁶

In an inscription from the time of Claudius or later,⁷⁷ a man named M. Antonius Hermeias is called a "silversmith," and "temple warden" (**αργυροκοπου νεοποιου**).⁷⁸ A number of inscriptions in the newly published *Inscripfen van Ephesas* series contain references to silversmiths that are much closer in time to the Book of Acts than the papyrus citations recorded in Greek lexicons.⁷⁹ The Hermeias inscription, mentioned above, also mentions a "guild of silversmiths" (**συνεδριον των αργυροκοπων**) in Ephesus, which was commissioned to care for a gravesite. It has been reported that Miltner found the shops of the silversmiths in his excavations in the agora, though I have not seen them.⁸⁰

In the theatre of Ephesus, a crowd gathered to protest the missionary work of Paul, prompted largely by the detrimental economic impact his teaching was having on the livelihood of the silversmiths mentioned above.⁸¹ They were making silver images of Artemis (the Roman Diana), some of whose beautifully sculpted statues were found in the town hall, as previously noted. A Greek and Latin inscription,

⁷³ See the inscriptions in Wood. *Discoveries at Ephesus*, "Inscriptions from the Temple of Diana," #1 and #2. See also the extended discussion and references in Magie, *Roman Rule*, 2.847-48; and inscription #28 with discussion in Horsley. *New Documents*, 4.127.

⁷⁴ *Inscripfen von Ephesos*, 8.1, see index. As **νεωποιης**, Horsley, *New Documents*, 4, Inscriptions #1, 28; and **νεωποιος**, Wood, *Discoveries at Ephesus*, "Inscriptions from the Temple of Diana," #1 (cf. n. 5) and #2. Also, **νεωποιης**; IG II², 1678b.

⁷⁵ *Inscripfen von Ephesos* 5.1578.

⁷⁶ W. M. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire before A.D. 170* (7th ed.; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1903) 112-45.

⁷⁷ *Inscripfen von Ephesos*, 6, 2212.

⁷⁸ Horsley, *New Documents*, 4.7, #1.

⁷⁹ E.g., Moulton and Milligan's *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* and Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*. For other examples see Horsley, *New Documents*, 4.7.

⁸⁰ P. MacKendrick. *The Greek Stones Speak* (New York: St. Martin, 1962) 422.

⁸¹ Acts 19:23-41.

found in the theatre,⁸² tells how a Roman official provided a silver image of Artemis and other statues which would be displayed in the theatre when civic meetings were held there, as was customary.⁸³ Incidentally, an inscription at Ephesus touches on another trade in Ephesus, mentioned by Paul who wrote to Timothy about an "Alexander the coppersmith," who opposed him while he taught in that city.⁸⁴ Timothy was probably in Ephesus when he received the letter.⁸⁵ The inscription refers to the "(work place) of Diogenes the copper-smith" (Διογενου[ς] χαρκωματαδος).⁸⁶

Sites in Asia Minor and Greece

Due to limitations of space I will only mention briefly some matters of interest about several sites and refer the reader for a discussion of each to my forthcoming book (see n. 10 above). At Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14) extensive surveys and probes have clarified the existing structures and produced maps and diagrams of the entire area (1983 and 1984).⁸⁷ The full circuit of the city walls, 15 to 18 feet thick, has been traced. Domestic as well as religious and civic structures have been found.

No excavations have been done at Iconium, Lystra, or Derbe, although two inscriptions have generated debate over the location of Derbe. M. Ballance, who found the inscription near the town of Devri Sehri, places Derbe there.⁸⁸ Derbe is mentioned at the beginning of line nine as follows: ν, [Κλαυδιο]δερβητων η βουλη και ο [δ]ημος ἐι Κορνηλιο- (*italics mine*). The other inscription, which also mentions Derbe, was found by B. Van Eldern in a village nearby (Suduraya) where he locates the city.⁸⁹ It reads: ο θεοφιλεστατος Μιχαιλ ἐπισκοπος Δερβις.⁹⁰

⁸² *Inschriften von Ephesos*, 1.27.

⁸³ *Anatolian Studies* 15 (1965) 58-59.

⁸⁴ 2 Tim 4:14.

⁸⁵ Cf. I Tim 1:3.

⁸⁶ *Inschriften von Ephesos* 2.554. The form χαρκ- is equivalent to χαλκ- (see Horsely, *New Documents* 4.10). In Acts he is called more briefly χαλκευς.

⁸⁷ See the two reports by S. Mitchell in *Anatolian Studies* 33 (1983) 7-9; 34 (1984) 8-10.

⁸⁸ *Anatolian Studies* 7 (1957) 147-51. The stone is now in the new Museum for Classical Antiquities at Konya.

⁸⁹ He reported on it at the 1963 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in New York, in a paper entitled "Further Confirmation of the New Site for Derbe." Idem, "Some Archaeological Observations on Paul's First Missionary Journey," 158, n. 2.

⁹⁰ Both inscriptions are published in Van Eldem's article, "Some Archaeological Observations," 157-58.

Ephesus, a city of about 200,000 people, was called "a most illustrious city" (λαμπροτατος Εφεσιων πολεως) in an inscription found in the city,⁹¹ and Strabo called it "the greatest emporium in Asia, I mean Asia in the special sense of that term [ie., Asia Minor]."⁹² The extensive ruins of Ephesus are well known, including the upper forum, the lower forum, the theatre mentioned in Acts 19:29, the town hall, the odeion, the beautiful paved streets, temple remains, and other civic structures.

The extent to which the imperial cult was established in Ephesus is strikingly revealed in life-size marble busts of Tiberius and his wife Livia found *in situ* in *insula* VII of the excavations of private houses in Ephesus (the Hanghauser excavations). The imperial family seems to have been worshipped even "in a private context as guarantors of peace and prosperity."⁹³ Excavations in this sector of Ephesus have uncovered extensive remains of two huge *insulae* (ie., city blocks), constructed in the 1st century A.D., on the northern slopes of Mount Koressos (Bulbudag). They were built on a three-terraced hillside and had water piped into apartments on every level, unlike those of Rome and Ostia. In the eastern section, shops similar to those built in Pompeii and Herculaneum were built into the first-floor level, selling among other things, warm beverages. The owners lived in apartments behind the shops. Upper levels consisted mostly of middle class apartments and a large two-storied mansion. The western half of the area consisted of five large luxury apartments. Thus, we have an example in Ephesus of the rich, the poor, and the middle class, living in close proximity in these *insulae*.⁹⁴

A lecture hall, or auditorium,⁹⁵ mentioned in a 1st-century-A.D. inscription,⁹⁶ has been tentatively identified by the Turkish archaeologist E. Akurgal in the area adjacent to the east side of the Celsus library. It may be the lecture hall (or school, σχολη) of Tyrannus where Paul "reasoned daily."⁹⁷ Hemer thought the two Greek words αυδειτωριον and σχολη were virtually synonymous.⁹⁸ The "auditorium"

⁹¹ See Horsley, *New Documents*, 4.74, for text and bibliography.

⁹² *Geography* 12.8.15; 14.1.24. See his description of Ephesus in 14.1.20-24.

⁹³ *Archaeological Reports* 31 (1984-85) 83.

⁹⁴ For a fuller description of these *insulae*, see McKay, *ibid.*, 212-17. See also the chapter in my book on "Institutions."

⁹⁵ αυδειτωριον from the Latin *auditorium*.

⁹⁶ E. Akurgal, *Ancient Civilizations and Ruins of Turkey* (Istanbul: Public Affairs Department of Mobil Oil Co., 1970) 161. The inscription is in J. Keil, *Ephesos: Einfuhrer durch die Ruinenstatte und ihre Geschichte* (Vienna: Osterreichisches Archaologisches Institut, 1964) 109.

⁹⁷ Acts 19:9.

⁹⁸ C. J. Herner, "Audeitorion," *Tyndale Bulletin* 24 (1973) 128.

is referred to in recent publication,⁹⁹ although little, if any, of the actual structure has yet been found. What have been found are portions of a Hellenistic circular platform which was destroyed when the auditorium was constructed.¹⁰⁰

Excavations continue at Corinth. Previous work has uncovered a well-known inscription containing the name Erastus, which the excavation report identified with the Erastus referred to in Romans 16:23 (Acts 19:22; 2 Tim 4:20).¹⁰¹ Although his praenomen and nomen are missing, the text reads: ERASTVS -PRO -AEDILIT[at]E S -P-STRA VIT. In full it would read: *Erastus pro aedilitate sua pecunia stragit*, “[. . .] Erastus in return for his aedileship laid [the pavement] at his own expense.”¹⁰²

Previous excavations have also uncovered the tribunal (bema or rostrum) where Paul stood before Gallio (Acts 18:12). The structure was discovered in 1935,¹⁰³ and identified by O. Broneer, the excavator, in 1937.¹⁰⁴ It is described in detail and carefully analyzed in the later excavation reports:¹⁰⁵ Seven parts of an inscription found in areas around the bema establish its identity. Kent's reconstruction of the text is as follows: A[]SA[]ROST[RA-] IN[CRU]STA -MAR[MORAQU]E -O[MNIA -S -P] -F -C -[EX] TEST[AMENTO], “He revetted the *Bema* and paid personally the expense of making all its marble.”¹⁰⁶ According to Wiseman, the bema inscription may be dated to the reign of either Augustus or Claudius.¹⁰⁷ Kent places the bema's construction between A.D. 25 and 50 on the basis of the letter forms of the inscription.

In the 1985 excavations east of the theatre, C. Williams found buildings close to the theatre with two or more stories, whose upper floors were residential apartments but whose lower floors had ovens in them and windows for street selling, similar to the arrangement in

⁹⁹ *Anatolian Studies* 36 (1986) 193.

¹⁰⁰ Akurgal, *Ancient Civilizations*, 161.

¹⁰¹ J. Kent, *Corinth: The Inscriptions 1926-1950* (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies in Athens, 1966), 8.3.99, #232 and plate 21.

¹⁰² See the recent discussion of Erastus as both aedile and *oikonomos* at Corinth by D. Gill, “Erastus the Aedile,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 40 (1989) 293-302. C. Hemer notes that the cognomen Erastus was not uncommon among prominent people in Ephesus. C. J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (ed. C. -H. Gempf; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1989) 235.

¹⁰³ Morgan, *AJA* 40 (1936) 471-74.

¹⁰⁴ Broneer, “Studies in the Topography of Corinth at the Time of St. Paul,” *Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίς* (1937) 125-28.

¹⁰⁵ Scranton, *Corinth*, 1.3.91-92.

¹⁰⁶ Kent, *Corinth*, 8.3, #322, 8.3.128-29.

¹⁰⁷ See Wiseman, “Corinth and Rome I,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.7.1, 516, n. 308.

Ephesus. Large quantities of animal bones were found here. He thinks these functioned as combination taverns/butcher shops.¹⁰⁸

A final note might be added about the author's work at Caesarea Maritima on the coast of Israel since 1972 as a part of the joint expedition to Caesarea Maritima, headed by Professor R. J. Bull of Drew University. Considerable space is given in Acts to events transpiring in this city (chaps. 10-11, 21-26), and our excavations there have uncovered parts of the ancient city's northern walls and gate, as well as warehouses constructed in the time of Herod the Great and later renovated. The street system can be recreated rather well, and the harbor is being explored by underwater teams headed by the University of Haifa. The theatre was excavated by an Italian expedition years ago. Two inscriptions containing the Greek text of Rom 13:3 in the form of medallions were found in our excavations of a Byzantine building and date to the time of some of our earliest manuscripts of the Greek NT. In addition to the pertinent chapter in the author's forthcoming book, information about the excavations can be found in various publications by the expedition.¹⁰⁹ The best available book on the site is the beautifully done volume for the Smithsonian Institute exhibit.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ C. Williams, "Corinth, 1985: East of the Theater," *Hesperia* 55 (1986) 146.

¹⁰⁹ The official publication is being done by Edwin Mellen Press in 14 vols, under the general title of *The Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima: Excavation Reports* and is being ed. by R. J. Bull (director), E. Krentz, and O. Storvick (field supervisors). See also R. J. Bull, "Caesarea Maritima: The Search for Herod's City," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 8 (1982) 24-40; R. Bull, "Caesarea," IDB: Supplement 120; R. Bull, *The Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima: Preliminary Reports in Microfiche* (Madison, NJ: Drew University Institute for Archaeological Research, 1982); *The Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Caesarea Maritima: The Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima-Excavation Reports* (ed. R. Bull). R. Bull, "Caesarea Maritima"; A. Frova, *Scavi di Caesarea Maritima*.

¹¹⁰ K. G. Holum, R. L. Hohlfelder, R. J. Bull, and A. Raban, *King Herod's Dream: Caesarea on the Sea*, (New York: Norton, 1988).

This material is cited with gracious permission from:

The Criswell College;
4010 Gaston Ave.
Dallas, TX 75246
www.criswell.edu

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: thildebrandt@gordon.edu