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## The Contribution of Archaeology to the Interpretation of the New Testament

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# The Contribution of Archaeology to the Interpretation of the New Testament

By RAYMOND F. SURBURG

(Continued)

## V

ARCHAEOLOGY is, furthermore, of great value because it relates exegesis to historical facts. Christianity is a historical religion, based upon events and experiences which transpired in history.<sup>130</sup> Allegorical and symbolical interpretations often ignore the historical background of the Christian religion and lead to aberrations in religious thought. While the New Testament as a supernatural revelation harbors many elements transcending historical verification, it does nevertheless contain much material which can be determined by historical study.<sup>131</sup> Thus Dana asserts: "There is no feature of the process of interpretation more important than the reconstruction of the historical situation out of which a given book or passage arose."<sup>132</sup> As a part of the historical background with which the New Testament interpreter should be acquainted, Fiebig lists: (1) the Graeco-Latin environment of The New Testament, with the contemporary language and literature; (2) the Judaism of New Testament times; (3) Oriental life in the New Testament period; and (4) early Christian literature.<sup>133</sup> In furnishing the New Testament expositor with a picture of the daily life of the people, the environment in which they moved, the cultural influences that affected them, and the historical forces contributing to the shaping of their lives, archaeology becomes the handmaid of history.<sup>134</sup> New Testament archaeology has supplied,

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<sup>130</sup> Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 129; Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950), pp. 113, 114.

<sup>131</sup> Fr. Torm, *Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1930), p. 170 ff.

<sup>132</sup> H. E. Dana, *Searching the Scriptures* (New Orleans: Bible Institute Memorial Press, 1936), p. 205.

<sup>133</sup> F. Fiebig, *Die Aufgaben der neutestamentlichen Forschung in der Gegenwart*, pp. 5, 6, as quoted by Dana, p. 209.

<sup>134</sup> Nelson Glueck, *The Other Side of the Jordan* (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1940), p. 32.



and undoubtedly will continue to supply, New Testament students with materials for the construction of the historical background.

A knowledge of history involves an understanding of chronology and geography. The succession of events, the division of ages into eras, the establishment of dates, the scope of genealogical tables are important and call for much patient study. It has already been indicated in this essay how the chronological difficulties presented by Luke 2:1-5, and 3:1 have been satisfactorily solved by archaeology.

An important event in the life of St. Paul has been established by the Gallio inscription mentioned above. The time of the Apostle's stay in Corinth has now been determined<sup>135</sup> and provides New Testament interpreters with a date from which they can operate both backwards and forwards. The inscription, found at Delphi, begins as follows: "Tiberius Claudius Germanicus, Pontifex Maximus, of tribunican authority for the twelfth time, emperor the twenty-sixth time, father of the country, consul for the fifth time." While much of the inscription is incomplete, it does contain a reference to the fact that a Lucius Junius Gallio was the proconsul of Achaia, as Luke reported Acts 18:2. Since the reference to the 12th tribunican year and the 26th imperatorship of Claudius dates this communication between January and August of the year 52, Gallio must have arrived in Corinth not later than the year A.D. 51. Deissmann argued that the impression given in Acts is that Gallio had arrived shortly before the time when the Jews brought Paul into his court. As Paul had been in Corinth for a considerable time (a year and six months), it is believed that Paul's arrival in Corinth was in the beginning of the year A.D. 50.<sup>136</sup>

Another contribution to the vexing problem of New Testament chronology comes from Cyprus, where Paul and Barnabas visited Paphos and met Sergius Paulus. In an inscription from Cyprus coming from the first century, probably from A.D. 53, a certain Apollonius is dated in the proconsulship of Paulus. It appears from still another inscription, now found in the *Corpus Inscriptionum*

<sup>135</sup> Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past* (Princeton: The Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 282.

<sup>136</sup> Adolf Deissmann, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1926), p. 272.



*Graecarum* (Number 2,632), dated in the 12th year of Claudius, that L. Annius Bassus was proconsul in A.D. 52. If the Julius Cordus referred to by Bassus was the immediate predecessor of Paulus, then the latter's proconsulship may be dated before A. D. 51.<sup>137</sup>

History, whether it be secular or religious, cannot be understood without a knowledge of geography. Bright declared that for a proper understanding of the Bible a knowledge of its geography is essential.<sup>138</sup> History, geography, and religion are inseparably united.<sup>139</sup> Adams made the following assertion about the importance of geography for Biblical interpretation: "The most notable contribution in the wide field of recent scientific investigation has been to emphasize Biblical *Orientation* as one of the imperatives of Biblical study. That is a solid conclusion. It means simply that the Bible will never be known in the most appreciative way until it is approached in the light of its *geography*, its *languages*, its *history*, and its *archaeology*."<sup>140</sup> The writings of the New Testament, especially the account of the earthly life of Christ and the story of the spread of the Christian Church in the Apostolic age, cannot be understood without a knowledge of geography.<sup>141</sup> How far Biblical history has been determined by geographical factors is a moot question.<sup>142</sup> Writers like Louis Wallis have gone so far as to use the concept of geographical conditioning of religious experience as the sole explanation for the phenomena of that faith which began in the Old Testament and reached its fulfillment and climax in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>143</sup> The

<sup>137</sup> Armstrong, "Chron. of N. T.," p. 648. Cf. N. 123 above.

<sup>138</sup> John Bright, "Biblical Geographies and Atlases," *Interpretation*, II (July 1948), 324.

<sup>139</sup> George Ernest Wright, and Floyd Vivian Filson, *The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1945), p. 5.

<sup>140</sup> J. McKee Adams, *Biblical Backgrounds* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 5.

<sup>141</sup> Charles Foster Kent, *Biblical Geography and History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), p. v.

<sup>142</sup> Chester C. McCown, "The Geographical Conditioning of Religious Experience in Palestine," *The Study of the Bible Today and Tomorrow*, pp. 232, 233.

<sup>143</sup> Louis Wallis, *Sociological Study of the Bible* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1912); *God and the Social Process* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935); *The Bible Is Human* (New York: The Columbia Press, 1942).



Scriptural teaching of miracles and of God's direct intervention in the affairs of His people is relegated to the same category as the magical beliefs of primitive peoples. With this naturalistic interpretation the Christian New Testament scholar of course cannot agree.

Archaeology has contributed greatly to the furtherance of the Biblical geography. Advances in geographical knowledge furnished by archaeology have helped to shed further light on the records of the New Testament. Sites and cities unknown have been recovered and their exact place determined. Before certain discoveries were made by Pere Vincent, it was customary to criticize severely St. John for bad topography.<sup>144</sup> John 19:13 portrays Jesus as brought before Pilate in a place called *Lithostroton* (the Stone Pavement, par excellence), or in Hebrew (i. e., Aramaic) *Gabbatha*, which means "ridge," "elevated terrain." St. John's Gospel does not place the *Lithostroton*, as has often been said, at the Praetorium. Vincent has determined the place and the extent of this magnificent early Roman pavement, over which later the Ecce Homo Arch was built.<sup>145</sup> He further proved that this pavement was the court of the Tower Antonia and that it stood on a rocky elevation rising high over the surrounding terrain. The Aramaic word *Gabbatha* accurately described this ridge and elevated terrain. When the Tower Antonia had fallen in ruins, the Ecce Homo Arch was built over the pavement. The events of St. John 19 must therefore go back to a period antedating the year A. D. 70. They must be dated at a time before the *Lithostroton* was buried under the ruins of Jerusalem. Thus the Greek and Aramaic names of St. John have received striking archaeological confirmation. Albright is convinced further that St. John's statement that Aenon was near Salim is correct.<sup>146</sup> This was the place where John the Baptist was active because much water was there. On the basis of Sellin's excavations, Albright believes this Salim must be the one southeast of modern Nablus, near Ainun. The waters of the Wadi Far'ah would there supply sufficient water for purposes of baptizing.

<sup>144</sup> William Foxwell Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940), p. 299.

<sup>145</sup> Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, pp. 245, 246. Cf. N. 120 above.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.



What light has archaeology shed on the cities and localities associated with Christ's earthly ministry? The modern tourist has no difficulty in finding the sites where Jesus lived and taught. However, few scenes of the life of Christ can be determined with certainty.<sup>147</sup> Only the general framework of Christ's life is known: the place of His birth, childhood, and death; the fact that Capernaum was the center of the Galilean ministry and that the major portion of His ministry was exercised north and west of the Sea of Galilee.

Some of the outstanding and important events in Christ's life occurred in and about Jerusalem. Because of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by Titus and the rebellion of Bar Kochba in A.D. 135 "an almost impenetrable curtain, archaeologically speaking," has descended on the city.<sup>148</sup> There are two gaps in the history of Christian Jerusalem — a gap of fifty years after A.D. 70 and another one of two centuries after A.D. 135. The Graeco-Roman remains enable scholars to conjecture with some kind of certainty the type of architecture in vogue in Christ's day in Jerusalem. They indicate the existence in Judea and Jerusalem of the prevalence of Hellenistic culture, as is evident from its numerous remains, a fact which would not have been known from a reading of the Gospels or from the study of such a Jewish writer as Josephus.<sup>149</sup> Of Pontius Pilate's days an unquestionably authentic relic has survived in the form of the remains of an aqueduct, which is supposed to have been built by this procurator from Solomon's Pool to the Temple area.<sup>150</sup>

None of the sites assigned by tradition to the Upper Room, the place of Calvary, the Garden of the Resurrection can definitely be identified. "It does not follow, however," says Adams, "that we are justified in accepting as authentic any of the supposed sites represented now by local shrines in the city of Jerusalem, even though they have the support of old traditions and continuous veneration."<sup>151</sup>

<sup>147</sup> Wright and Filson, p. 86.

<sup>148</sup> Caiger, *Archaeology and the New Testament*, p. 35.

<sup>149</sup> Caiger, "Archaeology's Contribution to New Testament Knowledge," *The Story of the Bible*, p. 1474.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1475.

<sup>151</sup> Adams, *Biblical Backgrounds*, p. 382.



To the archaeologist, Jerusalem is an Old Curiosity Shop, full of dubious antiques. Of the Temple in which Christ and His disciples worshiped, there remains only the famous wailing wall of the Jews. It is difficult to determine whether the architectural style of the Herodian Temple was Greek, Babylonian, or mixed Egyptian and Phoenecian. All modern reconstructions, therefore, must be more or less conjectural.<sup>152</sup>

McCown, a former director of the American Schools of Oriental Research, has called attention to the neglect by Christian archaeology of those cities which were the cradle of the Christian movement. Up till now little has been done to provide Biblical students with the Jewish-Hellenistic background of the most fundamental and appealing books of the Bible—the Gospels. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century Palestinian archaeology has so neglected Galilee that even the actual sites of Capernaum, Bethsaida, Cana, and other Galilean cities have been in doubt.<sup>153</sup>

Capernaum, on the shores of Lake Gennesaret, has now been identified with the modern Tell Hum.<sup>154</sup> In the synagogue of this city Christ often preached (Luke 7:5). Archaeologists have uncovered a Roman cemetery here with which Jesus undoubtedly was acquainted. Most notable among the present-day ruins of Tell Hum is the synagogue, a structure unrivaled for preservation and beauty. A few archaeologists are of the opinion that this synagogue belongs to the period before A. D. 70, but the majority of experts date it about A. D. 200,<sup>155</sup> for the earlier synagogues were destroyed in the war of A. D. 66 and in the revolt of Bar Kochba in A. D. 135. Even if the synagogue is not the one in which Christ worshiped, it is nevertheless valuable as a possible reconstruction of the earlier synagogue. It also gives an idea of the construction and the appearance of a synagogue in the times of Jesus and His Apostles.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>152</sup> Caiger, *Archaeology and the New Testament*, p. 73.

<sup>153</sup> McCown, *The Ladder of Progress in Palestine* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1943), pp. 254, 255.

<sup>154</sup> Caiger, "Archaeology's Contribution to New Testament Knowledge," *The Story of the Bible*, p. 1476.

<sup>155</sup> Advocates of an early date: B. Meistermann, *Capernaum et Bethsaide* (Paris, 1921), p. 289; G. Orfali, *Capernaum et ses Ruines* (Paris, 1922), pp. 74—86; in contrast to these cf. H. G. May, "Synagogues in Palestine," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, VII (February 1944), 3.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.



In regard to the cities and places associated with St. Paul's journeys the expositor is more fortunate in respect to the evidence that archaeology has furnished. Sir William Ramsay has done more than any other scholar to elucidate and illuminate the geography of St. Paul's travels. The efforts of Ramsay and others have helped to identify most of the cities mentioned in Acts in connection with St. Paul's spread of the Gospel. It is possible to follow him with considerable accuracy on his three journeys. It was the finding of an inscription by Sterrett in 1885 that enabled scholars to determine the exact location of Lystra on the map of Asia Minor. This identification has been made possible in turn by the previous discovery of Pisidian Antioch by Arundell.<sup>157</sup>

Antioch in Syria, where St. Paul was commissioned as a foreign missionary, has preserved only a few traces of its ancient buildings, besides some colossal ruins of Roman aqueducts and walls. Antioch in Pisidia, where the Apostle declared he would turn to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46), has furnished a great number of inscriptions, some of which are very important in the study of the New Testament. A group of milestones uncovered in 1905 show that although Antioch geographically is a Phrygian city, it belonged politically to the Roman province of Galatia.<sup>158</sup> The evidence would thus seem to support the "South Galatian" theory, according to which St. Paul addressed Galatians in the cities of the southern part of the Roman province Galatia.

Iconium, the modern Konia, visited at least four times by the Apostle of the Gentiles, was probably one of the cities to which the Epistle to the Galatians was sent. Though only a few relics of this city survive, it is important in the history of New Testament criticism, for it was a discovery at this site which led Ramsay to change his mind about Luke as a historian. Acts 14:6 depicts Paul and Barnabas leaving Iconium in Phrygia and entering the country of Lycaonia. But Iconium, the German critics maintained, was itself in Lycaonia during the first century A. D., and so St. Luke did not know what he was writing when he portrayed it as a city of Phrygia. Ramsay, however, made the interesting discovery that

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<sup>157</sup> Caiger, *Archaeology and the New Testament*, pp. 111, 112.

<sup>158</sup> Caiger, "Archaeology's Contribution to the Knowledge of the New Testament," *The Story of the Bible*, p. 1477.



while Iconium both before and after St. Paul's time was assigned to Lycaonia, yet in St. Paul's day it belonged to Phrygia.<sup>159</sup> St. Luke had therefore accurately described the geographical facts. Two important inscriptions uncovered in 1910 revealed further how the inhabitants of Iconium were using the Phrygian language in their public records as late as A. D. 150, thereby furnishing a substantiation of Ramsay's inscriptional evidence.<sup>160</sup>

At Lystra, where St. Paul preached on his first missionary journey, he and Barnabas healed a lame man. This miracle caused the people of the city to regard Barnabas as Jupiter and Paul as Mercury. Jupiter and Mercury were the equivalents of the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes. In 1909 an inscription was found at Lystra on a monument erected to the "priests of Zeus." Another inscriptional find from the same vicinity relates how two men "having made in accordance with a vow at their own expense [a statue of] Hermes Most Great, along with a sundial dedicated to Zeus the sun-god."<sup>161</sup>

Archaeology has excavated most of first-century Athens within the last thirty years; the theater of Dionysus, where Paul may have watched the Greek games he so often refers to in his epistles; the well-preserved Theseum; the temple of Aesculapius; the temple of the Olympian Zeus, built by Antiochus Epiphanes; the Parthenon and many other architectural monuments. Of especial interest to New Testament interpreters is a stone altar with the inscription "Sacred to a God or Goddess," found not at Athens but at Pergamum and Rome. St. Paul was evidently basing his text on a practice not uncommon in the ancient world. Visualizing him in the intellectual center of his time, Cobern writes: "In the midst of these glories of architecture and art, only just revealed to us, and with the splendid literature of ancient Greece in our memories, it stirs our hearts to see Paul lifting up his hands, which were pricked and roughened with his daily toil, before these representatives of the best learning of the earth; and we rejoice in his con-

<sup>159</sup> Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, pp. 39—46.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>161</sup> W. M. Calder, "Lystra," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, III, 1944.



fidence that the new Gospel of purity could succeed even in such surroundings."<sup>162</sup>

Ancient Corinth, about three miles from the modern city, was made the base for eighteen months of missionary activity. Since 1896 the Americans have conducted excavations at ancient Corinth and have unearthed a number of edifices which undoubtedly Saint Paul must have seen. Today the Christian exegete may see the following first-century structures: the Roman theater; the celebrated fountains of Pirene and Glauce; the market place; and the great temple of Aphrodite, notorious for the immoralities associated with it.<sup>163</sup> In view of the splendid ruins, a tribute to the wealth, opulence, and grandeur that must have characterized Corinthian life in that day, one must admire the courage of Paul in bidding defiance to this heathen environment and building a church in spite of it. Two finds from Corinth or connected with it are of particular interest. One is the fragment of a lintel on a door with the Greek inscription "Synagog of the Hebrews." It dates from the Imperial period, and Deissmann believes it to be from the very synagogue in which St. Paul preached.<sup>164</sup> It is poorly executed and testifies to the low social position of the people who worshiped there. The other is the famous "Gallio inscription" described above.

The Apostle spent the major part of his time during the course of his third missionary journey at Ephesus. At this site the archaeologist's spade has yielded satisfying evidence. In 1869 the famous Temple of Diana, twenty feet below the present level, was discovered by J. T. Wood. The temple proved to measure 160 by 340 feet, with some columns as much as twenty feet in diameter.<sup>165</sup> Excavations have also enabled scholars to reconstruct in detail the ritual connected with the worship of Diana, which reached its heyday at the time of the Apostle, and as a result New Testament students can comprehend the opposition that St. Paul faced in his missionary activity in Ephesus. In 1904 D. G. Hogarth found what

<sup>162</sup> Camden M. Cobern, *The New Archaeological Discoveries and the New Testament* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1924), pp. 491, 492.

<sup>163</sup> William A. McDonald, "Archaeology and St. Paul's Journeys in Greek Lands," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, V (September 1942), 40—48.

<sup>164</sup> Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*, p. 13.

<sup>165</sup> F. N. Pryce, "The Temple of Diana at Ephesus," *Wonders of the Past* (New York: Wise and Co., 1937), II, 911—915.



is believed to have been the basis of the altar upon which the famous image of Diana had rested. Vast quantities of votive offerings were found in the stone altar, including figurines made of ivory, bronze, and terra cotta. Many of the effigies of Diana which were found represented Diana as a beautiful woman, with many breasts and a sort of halo round her head.<sup>166</sup> The great theater of St. Paul's day was unearthed, together with buildings that may have served for educational purposes, one of which may have been the school of Tyrannus, where St. Paul taught (Acts 19:9).

Some of the many inscriptions that have come from Ephesus, are useful for a better understanding of the New Testament. The ministrants of the Ephesian temple were called "elders" and "presbyters," just as in the Apostolic Church. The temple officers were elected by an assembly known as the *ecclesia*, or the church. The terms "chief of Asia," "town clerk," and "worshiper," mentioned in Acts 19, are all found in the Ephesian inscriptions.<sup>167</sup> In his account of the Pauline Ephesian stay St. Luke mentions a bonfire of magical books occasioned by the conversion of many of the city to Christianity. Today the New Testament interpreter may see in the British Museum magical books just like those burnt nearly nineteen centuries ago. Papyri emanating from such sites as Arsinoe, Magdala, Hermopolis, and Oxyrhynchus contain hundreds of magical books, of which the "Great Magical Papyrus," now in Paris, is most famous.<sup>168</sup>

In Thessalonica (modern Salonika) a great deal of material has been furnished by the archaeologist's spade. This material helps to recall living conditions as they existed in the first centuries after Christ.<sup>169</sup> An inscription from this city has confirmed the statement of Acts that governors of Thessalonica were known as "politarchs."

Philippi, the first European city visited by St. Paul, has been excavated. Some ten to fifteen feet below the present level the

<sup>166</sup> Cobern, p. 463.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., pp. 466—468.

<sup>168</sup> Caiger, "Archaeology's Contribution to New Testament Knowledge," *The Story of the Bible*, p. 1487.

<sup>169</sup> Harold Rideout Willoughby, "Archaeology and Christian Beginnings," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, II (September 1939), 32.



ancient pavement was uncovered, containing stones upon which the Apostle walked. The market place and other buildings surrounding the pavement were also laid bare by the French excavators. Stones from the old Via Egnatia have also been found. Inscriptions and coins corroborate St. Luke's statement that Philippi was a colony. The word *μερίς*, employed by him in describing Philippi as "the chief city of that part of Macedonia" (Acts 16:12) has been confirmed, as well as the term "magistrates" (*στρατηγοί*) for the governors of Philippi (Acts 16:20).<sup>170</sup>

Almost the whole ancient city of Rome has been excavated, but only few inscriptions or relics dating to the days of Paul have been found.<sup>171</sup>

The limits of this paper prohibit the discussion of other discoveries illustrating the geography of Paul's missionary journeys. The past issues of the *American Journal of Archaeology* are replete with information illuminating the background of his visit to Asia Minor, Greece, Achaia, Macedonia, and Rome. The pages of *The Biblical Archaeologist* likewise contain a series of articles relating archaeological discoveries to his journeys.<sup>172</sup>

Archaeology has also furnished material on persons and historical happenings recorded in the New Testament. Has any evidence been produced concerning the question of the historicity of Jesus? What did He look like? Have actual relics of Jesus and of His disciples been found? Some have asserted that external historical proof exists for Jesus and His disciples. Thus Rimmer declares:

One such proof will illustrate my point. Years ago I saw the famed chalice from Antioch, a work of the most exquisite craftsmanship in silver overlaid on a crude vessel of apparent antiquity.

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<sup>170</sup> Moulton and Milligan, pp. 398, 562.

<sup>171</sup> Willoughby, "Current Contributions from Archaeology to Early Christian History," in McNeill, Spinka, and Willoughby, editors, *Environmental Factors in Christian History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939), pp. 110—113.

<sup>172</sup> Willoughby, "Archaeology and Christian Beginnings," (cf. N. 169 above), II, 25—36; McDonald (see N. 163 supra), III (May 1940), 18—24; Part II, IV (February 1941), 1—10; Part III, V (September 1942), 38 to 48; Merrill M. Parvis, "Archaeology and St. Paul's Journeys in Greek Lands," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, VIII (September 1945), 62—73; Floyd V. Filson, "Ephesus and the New Testament," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, VIII (September 1945), 73—80; Sherman E. Johnson, "Laodicea and Its Neighbors," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, XIII (February 1950), 1—18.



The date assigned to the chalice in its recovered form was 54 A. D., and many capable scholars argued that it was the original Grail. . . . This is merely to say that an archaeological discovery, dating back to within a score of years of the death of our Lord, both attests the fact that He did live among men and brings us an authentic picture of His physical appearance.<sup>173</sup>

The Great Chalice of Antioch, reported to have been discovered in Syria in 1910, was purchased by the Kouchakji Brothers of New York. It consists of an inner plain glass cup held in an outer open-work gilded shell and set on a solid silver base. On the open-work holder are to be found twelve seated human figures, decorated with vines, birds, and animals. The human figures are divided into two groups, each having Christ as its central figure.<sup>174</sup>

Since 1916 this art object has received more attention from archaeologists and art critics than any other object discovered in recent years. The date of origin, the provenance, the authenticity, and other matters related to the chalice have been given much space in art and archaeological journals. Dr. Gustav Eisen was engaged by the owners of the chalice to study it and publish his conclusions. In 1923 two large folio volumes appeared, one containing a descriptive text together with artistic, archaeological, and critical discussions; the other volume had photographs of the chalice, together with photographs of other art objects with which Eisen had compared the chalice.<sup>175</sup>

Eisen dated the chalice in the first Christian century. The figures on the chalice were identified by him as follows: The two central figures, located on each side of the cup, are Christ. In one group the figure of Christ is that of a twelve-year-old boy; in the other it is that of the risen Christ. In each group, according to Eisen, the figures are seated on chairs and face Jesus. All have scrolls in their hands. In one group, says Eisen, the four Evangelists are represented together with James, the brother of John. In the second group he saw Peter, Paul, James, Jude, and Andrew.<sup>176</sup> These

<sup>173</sup> Harry Rimmer, *Crying Stones* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), pp. 50, 51.

<sup>174</sup> Floyd V. Filson, "Who Are the Figurines on the Chalice of Antioch?" *The Biblical Archaeologist*, V (February 1942), 2.

<sup>175</sup> G. A. Eisen, *The Great Chalice of Antioch* (New York: The Kouchakji Brothers, 1923), I, II.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. the illustration in Filson's article (N. 174 above) pp. 1—13.



identifications are by no means certain. According to Filson, there are at least six different interpretations which experts in the fields of Christian art and archaeology have given these figures.<sup>177</sup> Although the authenticity of the chalice was attacked by Joseph Wilpert, Morey, and a few others, the consensus of scholarly opinion is to the effect that it is genuine.<sup>178</sup> Eisen's first-century date, however, has been challenged by a host of scholars. George A. Barton dissented from Eisen's view of A. D. 50—70 as the time of origin and would place it between A. D. 120—140.<sup>179</sup> The English archaeologist Woolley contended the chalice was made at least three hundred years after Christ's death.<sup>180</sup> The followers of Strzygoski, who favor the theory that the East, and Syria in particular, was the home of early Christian art, saw the value of dating the Antiochean chalice in the first century in their battle with the school of Christian art advocating Rome as its fountainhead. And so one finds Brehier, Diehl, Kaufmann, and Strzygoski defending the early first-century date for the cup.<sup>181</sup>

The most devastating critique of Eisen's first-century date was made by such scholars as Gillaume de Jerphanion, C. Morey, Stuhl-futh, and W. Volbach.<sup>182</sup> Filson, on the basis of New Testament arguments, has showed the impossibility of the date assigned by Eisen to the figures.<sup>183</sup> Arnason, who made a thorough study of the entire literature pertaining to the chalice, gave the following as his conclusions: (1) The first-century school has not thus far furnished archaeological proof for its theory; (2) The relationship of the chalice to the city of Antioch is questionable; (3) The cup is authentic; (4) Archaeological evidence seems to point to a date in the fourth or the fifth century; (5) The fact that the chalice was found in Syria does not eliminate the possibility of an Egyptian

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., pp. 6—8.

<sup>178</sup> H. Harvard Arnason, "The History of the Chalice of Antioch," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, IV (December 1941), 60—81.

<sup>179</sup> George A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible* (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1937), p. 568.

<sup>180</sup> C. Leonard Woolley, *Digging Up the Past* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), p. 10.

<sup>181</sup> Arnason, pp. 56—58.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., pp. 55, 56, 61—64.

<sup>183</sup> Filson, pp. 6—8.



provenance, since many interesting Egyptian parallels have been noted.<sup>184</sup>

Although New Testament scholarship does not possess any relics of Christ and those close to Him, yet the cities, lakes, rivers, mountains, and areas of Palestine associated with His life are still there, and an acquaintance with them will illuminate the setting of the New Testament. Regarding this Caiger wrote: "By bringing His teaching into relation with its environment, we shall understand it better: allusions in the Gospel narrative, hitherto obscure, will now be explained; in many ways a new sense of reality will be given to the 'old, old, story' by making contact with the tangible evidence for it which after all these twenty centuries still survives."<sup>185</sup>

The ideal situation for every Bible interpreter would be to travel to Palestine and the Near East and spend a number of months walking in the footsteps of Jesus in the Holy Land and tracing Paul's missionary journeys in Asia Minor and Europe. That, however, will be the privilege of relatively few. But everyone can read the accounts of those who have visited these places and study pictures, photographs, and maps of Biblical countries.<sup>186</sup> When Gustav Dalman was asked whether this or that place was historical in the Holy Land, he replied: "Here everything is historical."<sup>187</sup> To this day it is possible to identify many places of the Gospel narratives and to find remains of the world in which Christ walked.<sup>188</sup>

<sup>184</sup> H. Harvard Arason, "The History of the Chalice of Antioch," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, V (February 1942), 15, 16. Bruce Metzger, "Antioch on the Orontes," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, XI (December 1948), 87, wrote: "It seems likely, however, that this is an early, though by no means first-century, piece of Christian art."

<sup>185</sup> Caiger, *Archaeology and the New Testament*, p. 33.

<sup>186</sup> The following are some of the books which offer help in this direction: William Arndt, *From the Nile to the Waters of Damascus* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1949). Gustav Dalman, *Sacred Sites and Ways* (London: The Macmillan Co., 1935). Karl Groeber, *Palestine and Syria: The Country, the People, and the Landscape* (New York: Via-Lens Publications, 1926). Ernst W. Mastermann, *Studies in Galilee* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1909). H. V. Morton, *In the Steps of the Master* (London: Rich & Cowan Ltd., 1934). Idem, *In the Steps of St. Paul* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1936). Idem, *Through Lands of the Bible* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1938). George Ernest Wright and Floyd Vivian Filson, N. 139 above.

<sup>187</sup> Gustav Dalman (N. 186 supra), p. 13.

<sup>188</sup> Finegan, p. 321.



The background of Jesus' life, as portrayed in the Gospels, has been shown to be in agreement with the finds of archaeology.<sup>189</sup>

As a result of the excavations and researches of Professor Sukenik of the Hebrew University at Jerusalem, the number of Aramaic and Greek inscriptions on ossuaries (i. e., bone caskets) has been doubled. The latter are of great value for an understanding of the nomenclature and of the social and family organization of Christ's time. Hundreds of Jewish names from the time of Christ and the Apostles are written on them, such as Jeshua (Jesus) son of Joseph, Simon, Judas, Annanias, Sapphira, Solomene, and Apphia.<sup>190</sup> A very tantalizing discovery was made at Tell Hum, where an inscription was found reading: "Alphaeus, son of Zebedee, son of John." On a column in a synagog at Capernaum there were found three names that appear in the list of Jesus' disciples and their families. (Mark 3:17f.) Gratifying as is this find, it does not mean that these names refer to the same individuals which are mentioned in the Gospel records.<sup>191</sup>

Two inscriptions originating in Palestine are of especial interest to students of the Gospels and Acts. One of these stood at the entrance to the Temple precinct and undoubtedly was standing at the time of Christ and His Apostles, having been erected by Herod the Great. It was found by Clermont-Ganneau and reads: "No Gentile may enter inside the enclosing screen around the Temple. Whoever is caught [entering] is alone responsible for the death [penalty] which follows."<sup>192</sup> This inscription helps the interpreter of Acts understand the force of the accusation which Paul's enemies made against him (Acts 21:28). The other inscription, discovered by R. Weill in 1913—14 on the southern end of Ophel, is the oldest synagog inscription known and at the same time has the distinction of being the oldest architectural fragment of a synagog prior to A. D. 70. Albright believes it to have been a part of the "synagog of the freedmen" (Acts 6:8), a synagog founded probably in Christ's time.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Burrows, *What Mean These Stones?* P. 283.

<sup>190</sup> Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands," p. 39.

<sup>191</sup> Chester C. McCown, *The Ladder of Progress in Palestine*, p. 271.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. figure 64 in Wright and Filson, p. 87.

<sup>193</sup> Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands" (N. 125 above), p. 39.



Archaeological light has been shed on a historical statement in Acts 8, the chapter reporting the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip the Evangelist. The eunuch is said to have been in the employ of Queen Candace of Ethiopia. McIver in his excavations, 1908—1909, found a cemetery containing the remains of the civilizations of the Christian Nubians. From the excavated material it is evident that the Nubians called their queen Candace, fed her on milk, and regarded obesity as a virtue of royalty.<sup>194</sup>

Historical persons referred to by Paul in his writings have been found on archaeological documents. The name of Aretas, mentioned by the Apostle as the governor of Damascus (2 Cor. 11:32), has been found on several inscriptions dating from A.D. 31 to 37.<sup>195</sup> On their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas paid a visit to Cyprus. At Paphos (Acts 13:5, 6) they came into contact with Sergius Paulus, to whom repeated reference has been made above. Ramsay in 1912 found a stone at Antioch with this inscription: "To Lucius Sergius Paullus, the younger, one of the four commissioners in charge of Roman streets." Another inscription mentions a woman named Sergia Paulla. In Ramsay's opinion these persons were the son and daughter of Sergius Paullus, proconsul of Cyprus.<sup>196</sup>

A few discoveries of interest to the student of New Testament interpretation have been made regarding the epistles of St. Paul. About a century ago a market gardener, digging near the entrance of the Appian Way, unearthed slabs of stone which served as a roof for a large vault bearing the inscription "Vault for Caesar's household." The interments were made from sometime during the life of Christ up till A.D. 66.<sup>197</sup> In the Epistle to the Philippians St. Paul sends greetings from the saints of Caesar's household. In the vault near the Appian Way, archaeologists found a number of names familiar to the reader of the Epistle to the Romans. Among them are: Tryphosa, Tryphena, Urbanus, Hermas, Stachys, Phil-

<sup>194</sup> Barton, p. 30.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. inscription 209 in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, Pars II, Tomus I, Fasc. ii, as quoted by Barton, p. 563.

<sup>196</sup> Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, p. 151. See N. 114.

<sup>197</sup> Short (N. 122 above), p. 163.



ologus, Julia, and Patrobas.<sup>198</sup> Since the discovery of these interments, other burial places, called *columbaria*, have been uncovered. They were given this name because of their resemblance to pigeon coes. In the columbaria further urns of members of the imperial "family" were found and among them names such as those recorded in Romans 16, where St. Paul sends greetings from Corinth to Christians in Rome. Among the names were Amplias, Urbane, and Apelles. While these urns are of late origin, they are not late enough to exclude them from St. Paul's acquaintances. The theory advanced by certain scholars that Romans 16 was not a part of this epistle, because St. Paul had not visited Rome before writing it and consequently could not have had friends there, cannot advance the claim that the people named in Romans 16 were not known in Rome. As Bishop Moule has pointed out, it is possible that members of the imperial household were moved about in large detachments. Individuals of Caesar's household residing at Philippi and converted by Paul's preaching or that of his friends could therefore later have been removed to Rome. Years later, when the Apostle wrote to the Philippians from Rome, his friends took advantage of the opportunity to send greetings (Phil. 4:22). One of the men present when Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans from Corinth was Erastus, chamberlain of the city. In 1929 Dr. Shear found an inscription reading: "Erastus, procurator, aedile, laid this pavement out of his own private funds."<sup>199</sup> Of course, it does not follow of necessity that these persons are the same as those mentioned in Rom. 16:23, but Short declares: "The association of uncommon names makes it highly probable, and the discoveries do at least show, that persons of these names were alive at Rome, and in Caesar's household, while Paul was on his travels. That being so, it is unreasonable to suggest that Romans 16 cannot possibly have been addressed to Christians in Rome."<sup>200</sup>

Seward, Nebr.

(To be concluded)

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<sup>198</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London: The Macmillan Co., 1878), pp. 171—173.

<sup>199</sup> Joseph F. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* (Wheaton: Van Kampen Press, 1950), p. 322.

<sup>200</sup> Short, p. 164.