New Testament Cities

in Western Asia Minor

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Edwin M. Yamauchi

Foreword by
W. Ward Gasque

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To

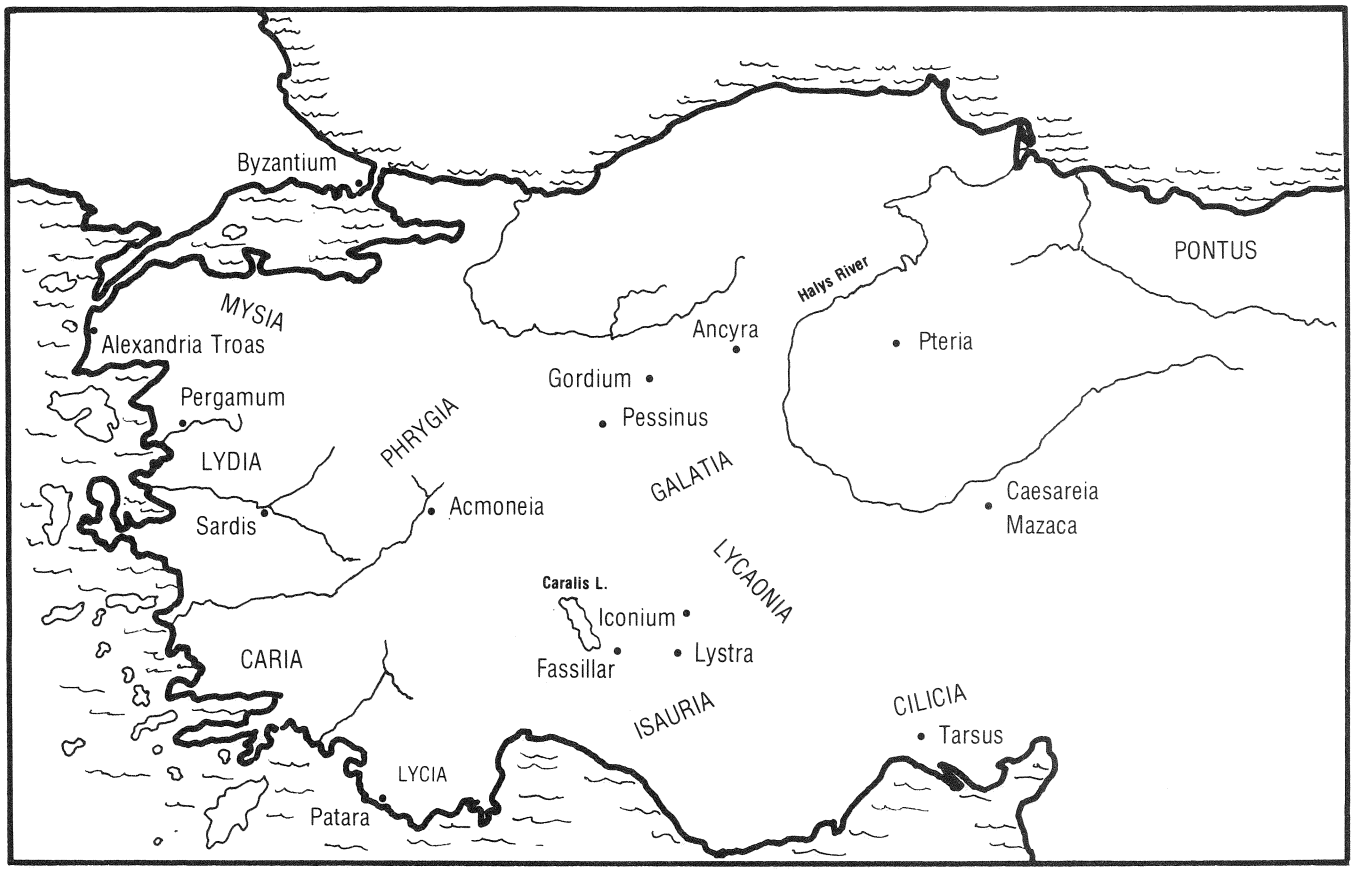
W. Harold Mare and Donald W. Burdick

Colleagues in the Near East Archaeological Society

CONTENTS

Foreword by W. Ward Gasque 9
Preface 11
Introduction 15
Chapter 1. Assos 21
Chapter 2. Pergamum 31
Chapter 3. Thyateira 51
Chapter 4. Smyrna 55
Chapter 5. Sardis 63
Chapter 6. Philadelphia 77
Chapter 7. Ephesus 79
Chapter 8. Miletus 115
Chapter 9. Didyma 129
Chapter 10. Laodicea 135
Chapter 11. Hierapolis 147
Chapter 12. Colossae 155
Chapter 13. Rivalry Among Cities 163
Appendix. The Roman Emperors 166
Selected Bibliography 167
Indexes 171

Figure 1 ASIA MINOR



After Barbara Levick, *Roman Colonies in Southeast Asia Minor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967)

FOREWORD

Interpretation of the New Testament often suffers because of a lack of a good foundation of historical knowledge. Many twentieth-century Bible expositors are oblivious to the positive contribution of a century-and-a-half of scholarly endeavor in the field of history and approach the New Testament writings as though they had been written within the past few decades. Other Bible students, more academically oriented, are at least indirectly aware of the great work that has been done in the study of antiquity; but, rather than devoting their energies to the study of the New Testament documents themselves in the context of the history and literature of the Graeco-Roman world, they tend to focus on what other scholars are saying *about* the New Testament. In the former case, the result is unhistorical and idiosyncratic exegesis; in the latter, unsubstantial and often even absurd speculations. In either case, the Scripture is dishonored.

The work of Professor Yamauchi has always been a healthy corrective to these unhistorical approaches. Whether dealing with the literary and historical problems of the Book of Daniel (the subject of his earliest book) or the much-debated subject of the origins of Gnosticism (the subject of an important recent study), his views have always been rooted firmly in the hard data of historical research. In the present work he turns his attention to the archaeological background of the early Christian communities of western Asia Minor, and, in so doing, provides the student of the New Testament with a much needed aid.

This is a book which has cried out for a writer for many years, for no one since Sir William M. Ramsay at the turn of the century has brought together in such a fashion all of the material which has resulted from archaeological research into the life and times of the cities connected with the mission of Saint Paul and the Book of Revelation. True, there have been numerous essays and articles dedicated to the subject in recent years—the important work

of Colin J. Hemer is of special note—but there has been no comprehensive study. Although he has not attempted to be exhaustive, Yamauchi has written a fairly complete account of the research related to these New Testament cities, and thus he has done a great service for the scholarly community.

I have often mentioned the need for a book such as this one, and have even thought of trying to do it myself. But it is definitely for the best that the need has been met by one who is much more deeply involved in the study of the ancient world than I or others have been.

I am sure that *The Archaeology of New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor* will prove to be as interesting and as helpful to others as it has proved to be to me. Every student of the letters of Paul, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Revelation will find much of value, as will any brave travelers to Turkey who seek to retrace the footsteps of Saint Paul. This is a book to which I will surely be referring in my own studies in the future. It is with a great deal of pleasure, therefore, that I commend this work to all who love the Scriptures and who desire to be faithful interpreters of them to others.

W. Ward Gasque
President
New College Berkeley

PREFACE

Stimulated by a visit to western Turkey in 1974, I have sought to investigate the status of the archaeological information which we now have about key cities of western Asia Minor during the early Roman Empire. In this book I discuss the history and the monuments of certain key cities in a general north-to-south direction (see figure 2 for a map of western Asia Minor): (1) Assos, (2) Pergamum, (3) Thyateira, (4) Smyrna, (5) Sardis, (6) Philadelphia, (7) Ephesus, (8) Miletus, (9) Didyma, (10) Laodicea, (11) Hierapolis, and (12) Colossae.

These cities include the "Seven Cities" addressed in Revelation 2 and 3 (nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10), and also cities to which Paul sent letters (nos. 7, 10, 12). All except Didyma are mentioned in the New Testament. As commentators and other writers, most notably C. J. Hemer, have discussed the specific implications of the New Testament references to these cities, I have sought to present a broader historical perspective.

I have visited all of the cities with the exception of Thyateira and Philadelphia. With the exception of the photos of Colossae, which were taken by W. Harold Mare, all the photos were made from slides which I took in 1974. I am greatly indebted to Jerry Coltharp of the Audio-Visual Service of Miami University for his considerable efforts in preparing the maps and figures.

The publishers are to be commended for their interest in sponsoring this series in archaeology, and in reprinting the still valuable works of Sir William M. Ramsay.

I am especially indebted to W. Harold Mare, president of the Near East Archaeological Society, and to Donald W. Burdick, editor of the *Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin,* for permission to use materials from my article, "Recent Archaeological Work in the New Testament Cities of Western Anatolia," which appeared in numbers 13 and 14 of the *Bulletin.* With gratitude for their encouragement and fellowship in the gospel, I dedicate this book to them.

Finally, I would like to thank my son Brian, who used his computer skills to help me compile the indexes.

ABBREVIATIONS

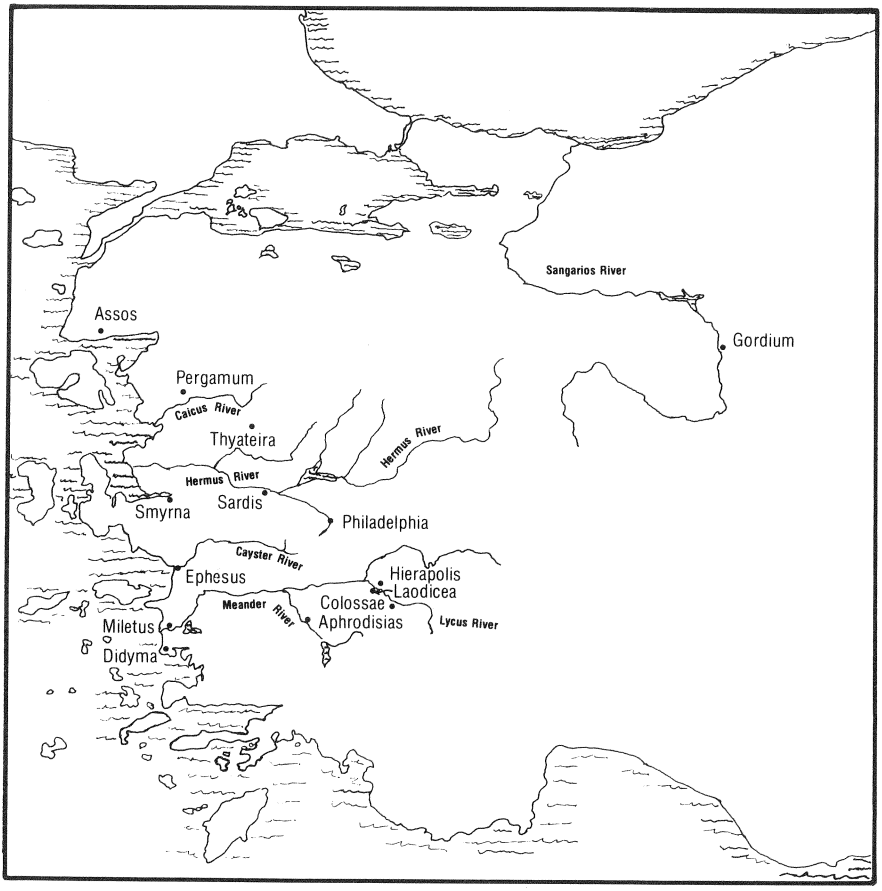
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
Arch	*Archaeology*
AS	*Anatolian Studies*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
Beiblatt	*Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts in Wien, Beiblatt*
BH	*Buried History*
Hauptblatt	*Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts in Wien, Hauptblatt*
IDBS	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume*
IM	*Istanbuler Mitteilungen Deutsches Archäologisches Institut*
NEASB	*Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin*
TB	*Tyndale Bulletin*

FIGURES

1. Asia Minor 8
2. Western Asia Minor 14
3. The Upper Acropolis of Pergamum 30
4. Ruins of Sardis 64
5. Synagogue at Sardis 73
6. Plan of Ephesus 80
7. Temple and Altar at Ephesus 105
8. The Mouth of the Meander 116
9. Plan of Miletus 124
10. Environs of Denizli 136
11. Plan of Laodicea 138

Figure 2

WESTERN ASIA MINOR



INTRODUCTION

Asia

The modern country of Turkey is named after the nomadic Turks from Central Asia (Turkestan), whom the Arabs first employed as palace guards under the Abbassid ruler Al-Mutasim (833–42).[1] The Turks defeated the Byzantine emperor at the decisive battle of Manzikert near Lake Van in 1071, and gradually overran the entire Middle East, capturing Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1453.

The peninsula was called Anatolia (Turkish, *Anadolu*) by the Turks. We do not know when the name *Asia Minor* was first used but it was not prior to Orosius (5th century A.D.).[2] The word *Asia* may go back to the Hittite name *Assuwa.*[3] In the New Testament the word *Asia* usually refers to the Roman province which occupied the western part of Anatolia, and included the former territories of Caria, Ionia, and Lydia. In Acts 16:6 Paul was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia. Later, when he preached in Ephesus, all that dwelt in Asia heard the gospel (Acts 19:10). The word *Asia* is also used in the broader sense of Asia Minor, as in Acts 27:2.

Historical Survey

Western Anatolia, which was on the fringes of the Hittite Empire, was subject to raids by the Mycenaean Greeks in the 13th century B.C., most notably in the famed siege

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1. On the general subject of Turkey, see J. C. Dewdney, *Turkey* (New York: F. Praeger, 1971).

2. John A. Cramer, *A Geographical and Historical Description of Asia Minor* (Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1971 reprint of the 1832 edition), p. 3.

3. D. L. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), p. 104: "We have securely placed the kingdom of *Assuwa* in a region which was known to the Greeks as *Asia:* Asia is a name earliest associated with the district of the River Caÿster and, not far north of it, the territory of Sardis. The greatest and strictest of Hittitologists admits that Hittite *Assuwa* and Greek *Asia* may well be the same word."

of Troy immortalized by Homer's *Iliad.*[4] Archaeology has confirmed the Greek tradition of the settlement of Ionia in western Asia Minor by Greek refugees fleeing from the Dorians in the 12th–11th centuries B.C.[5]

As the Aegean world emerged from the Dark Age, the Ionian cities led the way. Extensive evidence for the archaic period (8th–6th centuries B.C.) has been recovered at Smyrna.[6] During much of this time western Asia Minor was dominated by the powerful and fabulously wealthy kings of Sardis in Lydia.

The Persians under Cyrus captured Sardis and much of Ionia in 547/546 B.C. After failing in an abortive revolt in 499 to 494 B.C., the Ionians were liberated from the Persians by Alexander the Great.[7]

After Alexander's death various successors, including Lysimachus of Thrace and Seleucid rulers, fought each other for control of Asia Minor. The entire area in western Asia Minor enjoyed prosperity under the Attalid rulers of Pergamum. The last of the Pergamene kings, who was without an heir, bequeathed his kingdom to the Romans in 133 B.C. They reorganized his territories as the province of Asia.[8]

In 88 B.C. the rapacity of Roman businessmen and tax-collectors provoked the rebellion of Mithradates, the king of Pontus in northern Anatolia.[9] Mithradates ordered the killing of eighty thousand Italians resident in Asia. He is

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4. E. Yamauchi, "Homer, History and Archaeology," *NEASB* 3 (1973): 21–42.

5. J. M. Cook, *The Greeks in Ionia and the East* (New York: F. Praeger, 1963).

6. J. M. Cook, "Old Smyrna, 1948–51," *Annual of the British School at Athens* 53–54 (1958–59): 1–34.

7. Chester G. Starr, "Greeks and Persians in the Fourth Century B.C.," *Iranica Antiqua* 11 (1975): 39–99.

8. A. N. Sherwin-White, "Roman Involvement in Anatolia, 167–88 B.C.," *Journal of Roman Studies* 67 (1977): 62–75.

9. A. Duggan, *He Died Old: Mithradates Eupator, King of Pontus* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958). M. J. Mellink, "Archaeology in Asia Minor," *AJA* 81 (1977): 308, reports: "A remarkable new epigraphic discovery was made in the church of St. John (at Ephesus) . . . . The block has a 153-

even said to have ordered molten gold poured down the throat of one Roman. The Romans sent Sulla (88–85 B.C.) and then Lucullus and Pompey (74–63 B.C.) to subdue this dangerous foe.

In the period of the Roman Empire the key cities of Asia vied with each other to demonstrate their support for the emperors, beginning with Augustus.[10] On the occasion of his birthday in 9 B.C., the *Koinon* (Provincial Assembly) of Asia issued a flattering proclamation hailing the emperor as the "divine Caesar" and as Savior *(Sōtēr)*.[11] Much of what the excavators have recovered comes either from what the emperors donated, or from structures dedicated to the emperors.[12] G. M. A. Hanfmann observes:

> For these splendid cities of the Roman province of Asia, for Ephesus, Sardis, Miletus, and Pergamon, there began with the emperor Augustus an era of reconstruction and prosperity which continued to gain momentum through the first and second centuries A.D. until invasions of the Goths, Sassanian Persians, and Palmyrenes, after the middle of the third century broke the golden age of Roman peace.[13]

So thoroughgoing was the rebuilding of the Asian cities

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line inscription dated July 8, A.D. 62, apparently containing an Asiatic tax and customs regulation."

10. For a general treatment of the relations between Augustus and the East, see G. W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

11. F. C. Grant, ed., *Ancient Roman Religion* (New York: Liberal Arts, 1957), pp. 173–74; Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (London: Duckworth, 1977), p. 386.

12. Most Greek and Latin inscriptions relating to the emperors of the 1st century may be found in: *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius,* ed. V. Ehrenberg and A. H. M. Jones, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976); *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero,* ed. E. M. Smallwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); *Select Documents of the Principates of the Flavian Emperors,* ed. M. McCrum and A. G. Woodhead, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966); *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian,* ed. E. M. Smallwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

13. G. M. A. Hanfmann, *From Croesus to Constantine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), p. 42.

under the emperors that Henri Metzger comments: "Generally speaking, western and southern Anatolia were so thoroughly romanised that there is no local feeling to be detected under the buildings of the main Roman period."[14]

Ramsay's Contributions

The greatest figure in the archaeology of Roman Asia Minor was Sir William Mitchell Ramsay (d. 1939). When he first set foot in Turkey in 1880, Ramsay was committed to the then dominant views of the Tübingen School.[15] But the results of his own researches in Asia Minor convinced him of the essential trustworthiness of the New Testament.[16] Ramsay effectively challenged the radical Tübingen School's dismissal of the Acts of the Apostles as a late and unreliable composition.[17]

In the years since Ramsay's death many of the major positions which he advocated have been accepted and reinforced by subsequent discoveries. It was Ramsay who argued for the southern or political designation of Galatia as opposed to the northern or ethnic explanation of the term as maintained by J. B. Lightfoot.[18] The lasting value

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14. Henri Metzger, *Anatolia II* (London: Cresset, 1969), p. 191.

15. W. M. Ramsay, "Explorations of Asia Minor as Bearing on the Historical Trustworthiness of the New Testament," *The Victoria Institute's Transactions* (1907): 204–05.

16. W. M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1915); Colin J. Hemer, "Luke the Historian," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 60 (1977): 36–37; idem, "The Later Ramsay, A Supplementary Bibliography," *TB* 22 (1971): 119–24.

17. E. M. Yamauchi, *The Stones and the Scriptures* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1972), pp. 92–96; W. W. Gasque, *Sir William M. Ramsay* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966); idem, "The Historical Value of the Book of Acts," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 28 (1972): 177–96; idem, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975).

18. D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction: The Pauline Epistles,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1963), pp. 72–79.