

Bastian Van Elderen, "Some Archaeological Observations on Paul's First Missionary Journey," W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.150-161.

CHAPTER IX

Some Archaeological Observations on Paul's First Missionary Journey

Bastian Van Elderen

[p.151]

In the area of New Testament Studies, Professor F. F. Bruce's major contribution has been in his commentaries on the Book of Acts and his special studies in first-century Christianity. To his brilliant and expansive scholarship not only we of the present generation but those of generations to come will be debtors. It is a great pleasure to participate in the publication of this volume in honour of one who is a stellar example of Christian scholarship, genuine devotion, and loyal stewardship.

In the preface to the first edition of his commentary on the Greek text of the Acts of the Apostles (published in 1951), Prof. Bruce acknowledges with appreciation the contributions of Sir W. M. Ramsay when he writes: "I am particularly indebted to the works of W. M. Ramsay.¹ He reaffirms this in the preface to the second edition in these words: "My debt to the writings of Sir William Ramsay is evident throughout the book, and I am repeatedly amazed by modern writers who deal with areas of New Testament scholarship to which Ramsay made contributions of peculiar value, with hardly so much as a hint that such a person ever lived."² As one interested in New Testament and Early Christian Archaeology (and especially in Asia Minor where Ramsay worked so extensively), I share Bruce's appreciation of Ramsay's contribution and his dismay that it has had so little impact in New Testament studies. Ramsay's pioneer work must be continued and intensified³ and this essay will attempt to present some new light in one area of Ramsay's and Bruce's interests.

I

Sergius Paulus of Acts 13:7

Luke reports (Acts 13:7-12) that on the first missionary journey, when Barnabas and Saul (Paul) reached Paphos on the island of Cyprus, they

[p.152]

¹ *The Acts of the Apostles* (London, 1951), p. vii.

² *The Acts of the Apostles* (London, 1952), p. viii. I experienced a similar amazement upon discovering that C. K. Barrett's *Luke the Historian in Recent Study* (London, 1961) contains no reference to or citation from Ramsay's works. Bruce's appreciation of Ramsay is also expressed in the Foreword of W. Ward Gasque's *Sir William Ramsay: Archaeologist and New Testament Scholar* (Grand Rapids, 1966), pp. 7-9.

³ This need was also voiced in my article "New Perspectives in Biblical Research," *Calvin Theological Journal* 1 (1966), pp. 180 f.

Bastian Van Elderen, "Some Archaeological Observations on Paul's First Missionary Journey," W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.150-161.

had a conference with the proconsul Sergius Paulus. Observing Paul's encounter with Elymas, the proconsul "believed... for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord" (Acts 13:12). The nature of his faith has been a subject for debate.

Attempts to identify Sergius Paulus in non-Biblical sources have centred around two inscriptions. These and a third inscription, also relevant to this discussion, are described and discussed below.

The full name of a Roman citizen consisted of three names: *praenomen*, *nomen*, *cognomen*. Luke has only given us the *nomen* and *cognomen* of the proconsul under discussion. The names Sergius Paul(us) were not uncommon in the Roman world.⁴ A further complication in this identification is that the list of proconsuls of first-century Cyprus is very defective — in fact, almost non-existent. Consequently, the little relevant epigraphic evidence is often cited and frequently over-extended for the sake of some parallelism or identification. Such an identification could throw some light on the strange episode recorded in Acts 13. In addition, a firm date for such a proconsul would provide a much-needed item in the chronology of the Apostle Paul. The Gallio Inscription provides a date in the second missionary journey, but for events immediately before and after the early fifties there are no fixed dates upon which to structure a chronology. Unfortunately, the present discussion is not able to provide such data.⁵ Scholars usually place the first missionary journey of Paul between A.D. 46 and 49.

The numbering and publication data of the inscriptions in this discussion are:

Inscription 1 — *Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes* III.930. Corrected reading in T. B. Mitford, *Annual of British School at Athens* 42 (1947), pp. 201-06.

Inscription 2 — *GIL* VI.3 1545.

Inscription 3 — *Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes* III.935. Corrected reading in John L. Myers, *Handbook of the Cesnola Collection of Antiquities from Cyprus* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1914), p. 319 (no. 1903) and p. 548 (no. 1903).

Inscription 1

This Greek inscription, found at Soli on the north coast of Cyprus, gives a date-line ἐπὶ Παύλου [ἀνθ]πάτου. The date-line also contains an era date, although the numeral is difficult to read. Mitford reads the numeral

[p.153]

as 10 and, since his study of Cypriot inscriptions indicates that dating in the first century was by regnal year, he calculates that regnal year 10 = A.D. 50 (if reign of Claudius).⁶ However, the date-line appears to be a later addition to the inscription (irregular lineation, variant script,

⁴ The Greek spelling of the name is Παῦλος and the Latin spelling is Paullus.

⁵ Haenchen's observation regrettably is still valid: "Die Hoffnung, sein [Sergius Paulus] Amtsjahr in einer Inschrift zu finden, blieb unerfüllt" (*Die Apostelgeschichte* [Göttingen, 1965], 57).

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 205.

Bastian Van Elderen, "Some Archaeological Observations on Paul's First Missionary Journey," W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.150-161.

and possible later terminology), and Mitford therefore concludes: "...on epigraphic grounds this inscription, while it cannot be earlier, is in all probability considerably."⁷

Earlier discussions of this inscription sought to identify the proconsul with Sergius Paulus in Acts 13. D. G. Hogarth, although having difficulty with the year numeral, made this identification.⁸ However, since Kirsopp Lake's discussion⁹ of this inscription, few commentators are inclined to make this identification.¹⁰ Furthermore, Mitford with his reading and interpretation of the date-line has closed the discussion of this inscription and Sergius Paulus of Acts 13. Even granting the earliest possible date suggested by Mitford (A.D. 50) places the consulship too late in the chronology of Paul since on the basis of the Gallio inscription he was in Corinth (Acts 18) during the second missionary journey in A.D. 51.

Inscription 2

This Latin inscription lists a Lucius Sergius Paullus as one of the curators of the Tiber (*curatores riparum et alvei tiberis*) under Claudius. No date is given in the inscription, but it is surmised that this person went to Cyprus following this position in Italy.¹¹ Hence, numerous commentators identify this Lucius Sergius Paullus with the Sergius Paulus of Acts 13:7.

Ramsay has carried this identification and discussion a step farther. At the turn of the century he suggested that the Paulus of the inscription from Soli (our Inscription 1) "probably is the same governor" that is mentioned in Acts 13¹². In a later discussion about Sergius Paulus of Acts 13, he does not cite this evidence,¹³ but builds an ingenious and intriguing theory on a few other inscriptions. One of these, discovered by Ramsay and J. G. C. Anderson near Pisidian Antioch in 1912, mentions a "L(ucius) Sergius Paullus the younger, son of L(ucius)."¹⁴ Ramsay confidently

[p.154]

identifies the elder Lucius Sergius Paullus as the proconsul of Acts 13. The Lucius Sergius Paullus who was consul in A.D. 152 and 168 Ramsay identifies as the great-grandson of the proconsul of Cyprus.¹⁵ Ramsay's discovery in 1913 of the full name Sergia Paula on an inscription in Antioch allowed him to make further identifications and deductions.¹⁶ This woman, identified on the stone as the daughter of Lucius and the wife of Gaius Caristianus

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Devia Cypria* (1889), p. 114, No. 36.

⁹ *BC V*, pp. 455-59.

¹⁰ Nevertheless, the identification persists in some writings; e.g., Merrill F. Unger affirmed as recently as 1960 that this inscription "without any reasonable doubt refers to the Sergius Paulus whom Paul introduced to Christianity" (*Bibliotheca Sacra* 117 [1960], p. 233).

¹¹ Lake (*op. cit.*, p. 458): "The date would fit admirably if he went to Cyprus soon after being one of the curators of the Tiber." Similarly, Bruce (*op. cit.*, p.256): "If he went to Cyprus after this curatorship, the date would fit with his appearance in Ac."

¹² *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (London, 1903), p. 74.

¹³ In a chapter entitled "Sergius Paullus and his Relation to Christian Faith," in *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (London, 1920), pp. 150-72.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

Bastian Van Elderen, "Some Archaeological Observations on Paul's First Missionary Journey," W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.150-161.

Fronto, Ramsay considers to be the daughter of the elder Lucius, the proconsul of Cyprus. He further calculates that the younger Lucius was governor of Galatia about A.D. 72-4 and the marriage of his sister and Caristianus took place about the same time.¹⁷ It was their son who erected the inscription. His use of Greek and his subsequent disappearance from the records of Antioch (a kind of *argumentum e silentio*) led Ramsay to conclude that he was a Christian, influenced by his mother, Sergia Paulla, who in turn was influenced by her father, the proconsul of Cyprus.¹⁸

Admittedly, Ramsay has built an interesting theory from the scattered data at his disposal. However, some of his assumptions simply demand too much imagination to be convincing.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the crucial issue is the identification of Lucius Sergius Paullus with Sergius Paulus of Acts 13. It must be observed and emphasized that there is presently no evidence linking Lucius Sergius Paullus with Cyprus. This is a serious weakness in Ramsay's theory and in the proposal to identify L. Sergius Paullus of our Inscription 2 with the proconsul of Cyprus. That the curator of the Tiber mentioned in Inscription 2 later went to Cyprus is assumed, not directly attested. The absence of the *praenomen* in Acts 13:7 makes the name too indefinite to identify it simply with someone who has the same *nomen* and *cognomen*.

A further difficulty with Inscription 2 is its possible date. It is placed in the reign of Claudius (*ex auctoritate Ti. Claudi Caesaris Aug. Germanici*) — A.D. 41 to 54. Mommsen suggests that possibly the year of this inscription was A.D. 47/48.²⁰ At best, this is an inference but certainly presents a difficulty with the Pauline chronology. If Mommsen is correct and Lucius Sergius Paullus was the proconsul of Cyprus, the *terminus a quo* for this proconsulship is A.D. 48²¹ — a rather late date for most Pauline chronologies.²² One can hardly avoid reckoning A.D. 48 as the *terminus ad quem* for

[p.155]

the first missionary journey. On the other hand, Groag has concluded that the date must be before A.D. 47, the supposed date of Claudius' censorship, which title would be included if the inscription were cut after the censorship.²³ However, Arthur Gordon has shown that this cannot be a criterion for dating the inscription since the absence of the title does not necessarily mean he was not censor at the time and furthermore the exact date of his censorship is not known.²⁴ In the light of so many unknown factors regarding this inscription and this period of Paul's ministry, no definite conclusions can be drawn about this chronology.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-64. This argument is repeated and conclusion accepted by Stephen L. Caiger (*Archaeology and the New Testament* [London, 1939], pp. 142-44) and Egbert C. Hudson ("The Principal Family at Pisidian Antioch", *JNES* 15 [1956], pp. 104-06). Bruce (*op. cit.*, p. 256) cites the argument without evaluation or judgment.

¹⁹ Lake's evaluation seems correct when he describes Ramsay's theory as "marvelously ingenious, but not very convincing combinations" (*op. cit.*, p. 458).

²⁰ *ZNTW* 2 (1901), p. 83, footnote 3.

²¹ Suggested by A. Wikenhauser, *Die Apostelgeschichte und ihr Geschichtswert* (Münster, 1921), p. 339.

²² For example, Bruce (*op. cit.*, p. 55) dates the first missionary journey c. 47-48.

²³ *PW*, II A, col. 1717, no. 34.

²⁴ *Album of Dated Latin Inscriptions*, Vol.1: *Text* (Berkeley, 1958), p. 97.

Bastian Van Elderen, "Some Archaeological Observations on Paul's First Missionary Journey," W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.150-161.

In conclusion, Inscription 2 cannot be confidently cited as a solution to the identification of Sergius Paulus. Perhaps even Bruce's cautious judgment says too much: "He may be the Lucius Sergius Paullus referred to in *GIL* vi 31545 [our Inscription 2]."²⁵ Furthermore, the evidence of our Inscription 3 introduces another possible identification which in many respects is more convincing than either of the above attempts.

Inscription 3

This Greek inscription, found at Kytheria on Cyprus and now housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, contains a decree regulating sacrifices and offerings. The date-line at the end of the inscription is not complete, but the following reconstruction by Myers is very attractive:²⁶

9 Κλαυδίου Καίσαρος Σεβαστοῦ καὶ
10 ἐπὶ Κ]οίντου Σεργ-
11 [ίου Παύλου ἀνθυπάτου]

Palaeographically, the inscription belongs to the first century — e.g., the four-bar sigma and early omega. The preserved portions of line 9 indicate that the emperor is from the Julio-Claudian line. Hence, the restoration [Κλαυδίου] is very plausible.²⁷ Likewise, the reading [Κ]οίντου Σεργ[ίου] in lines 10 and 11 is virtually certain. Mitford considers Myers' restoration in line 11 of Παύλου ἀνθυπάτου "at least plausible."²⁸

However, Myers does not want to identify Quintus Sergius (Paullus) with the Sergius Paulus of Acts 13.²⁹ Mitford is somewhat more inclined to the identification,³⁰ and Emilio Gabba virtually makes the identification.³¹

[p.156]

What is the status with regard to the identification of Sergius Paulus in non-Biblical sources? In summary, it must be noted that Inscription 1 cannot be associated with him. Inscription 2 can hardly be used to identify Sergius Paulus, and surely Ramsay's conjectured family of Sergii Paulli and their Christianity must be rejected. It may be that in Inscription 3 there is a probable identification. This most attractive possibility of the three discussed above is here presented with a measure of reservation. Conclusive proof is not available at this time. Perhaps continued epigraphical studies and the current excavations at New Paphos by a Polish archaeological team eventually will solve this problem and throw some light on the chronology of the first missionary journey.

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 256.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 548.

²⁷ The other possibility might be Tiberius, but this may be too early and perhaps require more titles.

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 206, footnote 21.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 319. Elsewhere, he states that an inscription "exists of that Sergius Paulus who was proconsul in A.D. 46 when the island was visited by St. Paul" (*ibid.*, p. xli). He does not further specify — apparently he is alluding to either Inscription 1 or 2 above.

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 206.

³¹ *Iscrizioni Greche e Latine per lo Studio della Bibba* (Torino, 1958), pp. 71-73.

Bastian Van Elderen, "Some Archaeological Observations on Paul's First Missionary Journey," W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.150-161.

II

The New Site for Derbe

In Luke's account of Paul's first missionary journey it is reported that Paul and Barnabas went from Iconium to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia (Acts 14:6). Only a brief account of Paul's activities in Derbe is recorded — "...and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra..." (Acts 14:20, 21). Paul re-visited Derbe on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:1). It is possible that he also visited Derbe at the beginning of his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23). A disciple and companion of Paul from Derbe is mentioned in Acts 20:4.³²

1. Location suggested by Ramsay

Until about the end of the nineteenth century, no convincing site for ancient Derbe had been advanced. Prof. J. R. Sitlington Sterrett was the first to suggest locating Derbe in the neighbourhood of the large mound of Gudelisin.³³ Shortly after that, Ramsay advanced the theory that the mound of Gudelisin is the site of Derbe.³⁴ On and near this mound he found "plain traces of an ancient city of moderate extent."³⁵ Later he wrote: "Gudelisin is the only site in this district where a city of the style of Derbe, the stronghold of the 'robber Antipater', could be situated."³⁶ It should be noted that this location is not based on any epigraphical or extensive archaeological evidence. In fact, surface exploration and a very limited

[p.157]

excavation for a day yielded no convincing evidence.³⁷ Hence, in 1912 Ramsay could write that "the site of Derbe is not established on such certain evidence as that of Lystra"³⁸ — the evidence for Lystra being the inscription found on the mound near Hatunsaray.

This location for Derbe has been the more or less accepted one since Ramsay's suggestion.³⁹ Gudelisin is located about sixty miles south of Konya in the Taurus foothills. It is the location given in practically all the maps describing Paul's missionary journeys. However, subsequent to Ramsay, no further evidence has been advanced to confirm this location. On the other hand,

³² Manuscript D has Δουβ[έ]ριος instead of Δερβόλιος.

³³ *Wolfe Expedition to Asia Minor*, p. 22. Actually Sterrett suggested that the twin cities of Bosala and Zosta (Losta) in ancient times were one city — namely, Derbe.

³⁴ *The Cities of St. Paul* (New York, 1907), pp. 393-97. Ramsay identified what Sterrett called Derbe as ancient Possala, and located Derbe about four miles west at Gudelisin.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 395.

³⁶ *The Church in the Roman Empire Before A.D. 170* (New York, 1952), p. 55.

³⁷ *The Cities of St. Paul*, pp. 395 f.

³⁸ *The Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 54.

³⁹ E. Kraeling reflects the hesitation of most writers in the following statement: "Derbe has not been located with absolute certainty to this day; but it is believed that it lay about three miles northwest of the present Zosta, where there is a large mound of an ancient city, the Surface remains of which are late Roman" (*Rand McNally Bible Atlas* [New York, 1956}, p. 434).

Bastian Van Elderen, "Some Archaeological Observations on Paul's First Missionary Journey," W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.150-161.

in recent years a new site has been suggested for the location of Derbe. The evidence for this new site will be reviewed and evaluated below.

2. New Site suggested by M. Ballance

In 1956 M. Ballance discovered an inscribed white limestone block which mentions the people of Derbe.⁴⁰ This block was found at Kerti Hüyük, lying on the gently sloping skirt of the mound. The size of the stone is 105 cm. high, 69 cm. wide, and 68 cm. thick. Balance thinks that it probably formed the shaft of a large statue-base. Because of its size and weight (about a ton), he believes that it could hardly have been moved very far, if at all, prior to its discovery. The inscription is a dedication by the council and people of Derbe and can be dated in A.D. 157. Lines 9 and 10 read:

ν, Κλαυδιο]δερβήτων ἡ βουλή κ-
αί ὁ δ[ῆμος ἐπὶ Κορνηλιο-

The stone has been moved to Konya and is housed in the new museum for Classical Antiquities at Konya. Presently it stands next to the Lystra inscription in the courtyard of this attractive museum.

Kerti Hüyük is a sizeable, although not prominent, mound located about fifteen miles north-northeast of Karaman (ancient Laranda). Karaman is about sixty-five miles southeast of Konya (ancient Iconium). Between 1962 and 1968 I visited this area seven times to conduct epigraphic surveys and surface explorations of mounds in the vicinity of Kerti Hüyük and the Thousand and One Churches (to be described below). Surface sherds on Kerti Hüyük indicate extensive occupation during the Roman and Hellenistic period with possibly some earlier

[p.158]

evidence.⁴¹ Byzantine evidence, although scanty on Kerti Hüyük, can be definitely identified on nearby mounds. The building ruins scattered about the area around Kerti Hüyük and the provenance of tombstones; described below indicate that the city of Derbe may have been extensive, rather than concentrated, in Byzantine times.

3. Further Evidence for the New Site

In June 1962 I was shown an inscription in a small house in Suduraya, a village near Kerti Hüyük.⁴² Later that summer the inscription was moved to a storeroom in Karaman where it was still located in 1968. The marble slab fragment is the upper right-hand corner of a

⁴⁰ *Anatolian Studies* 7 (1957), pp. 147-51.

⁴¹ The surface of the mound is rather irregular and ravined; hence, surface evidence at best must be considered tentative. Further conclusions must await careful stratigraphic excavation.

⁴² I was informed about the inscription by Mr. Onder, then the Director of Museums in Konya, who gave me the publication rights of this inscription. In December 1963 I reported on this inscription in a paper, entitled "Further Confirmation of the New Site for Derbe," presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature held in New York. M. Balance presents a short report on this inscription in *Anatolian Studies* 14 (1964), pages 139-40. He reports that he saw the inscription in 1958.

Bastian Van Elderen, "Some Archaeological Observations on Paul's First Missionary Journey," W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.150-161.

tombstone. The measurements of the fragment are: top: 65 cm; bottom: 56 cm; left side: 70 cm; right side: 50 cm; thickness: c. 9 cm. There is a narrow recessed border on the top and right side of the stone. The major part of the stone is covered with an inscription of six lines within five concentric circles. In the upper right-hand corner is a small circle in which are inscribed two lines of four and three letters, respectively.

The text in the larger circle mentions "the most God-loving Michael, bishop of Derbe" ὁ θεοφιλέστατος Μιχαὴλ ἐπίσκοπος Δερβίς. The date-line is found in both circles: June 8, Indiction 14. This does not allow for precise dating, since the 14th year of indiction would occur every 5 years (in the fifth century: 401, 416, 431, 446, 461, 476, 491). Palaeographically,⁴³ a late fourth to fifth century date is possible.

In 1962 the natives of Sudaraya maintained that the inscription had been found on Kerti Hüyük. Ballance reports that the stone was found at Devri Şehri, about two and a half miles south-southeast of Kerti Hüyük.⁴⁴ Hence, he now proposes this site as the location of Derbe. In view of the inconclusive nature of surface sharding (hardly exclusive and at best inclusive) and the indefiniteness regarding the provenance of the Michael inscription, Kerti Hüyük cannot be so quickly eliminated as the site of ancient Derbe.

Additional evidence of early Christianity has been found in the immediate vicinity of Kerti Hüyük. In 1965 a blue marble slab was found in one of the villages. It is a fragment of a beautifully inscribed tombstone of a

[p.159]

presbyteros (elder) of a Christian church.⁴⁵ Some Christian inscriptions in the storeroom at Karaman are reported to have come from the area around Kerti Hüyük.

In conclusion, the epigraphic evidence clearly indicates that previous attempts to locate Derbe have been erroneous. The territory of Derbe must be located about thirty miles east of the area suggested by Ramsay. It must be located in the vicinity of Kerti Hüyük, and in all probability on Kerti Hüyük itself. This new location places Derbe more in the centre of Lycaonia, but has little bearing on the problem of the boundary between Phrygia and Lycaonia raised by some first-century writers and Acts 14:6.

4. Significance of the New Site

In the light of this new evidence it is now possible to speak with confidence regarding the general location of Derbe.⁴⁶ It also indicates that Acts 14:20 must be translated: "On the next

⁴³ The square *sigma* and *epsilon*, the *upsilon* as a Roman V, the broken cross-bar *alpha* and small looped *rho* and *beta* occur in dated fourth-century inscriptions and are well-attested in the early fifth century (cf. *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* 7, pp. xxxvi-xliii).

⁴⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 139. Also accepted by Bruce, *New Testament History* (1969) p. 259.

⁴⁵ This and other inscriptions will be published in a forthcoming collection of epigraphic evidence of early Christianity in this area.

⁴⁶ More specific data must await a systematic excavation of the mound or soundings in various locations in the vicinity.

Bastian Van Elderen, "Some Archaeological Observations on Paul's First Missionary Journey," W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.150-161.

day he set out with Barnabas towards (or for) Derbe." The Greek text of the passage does not necessarily imply that they made the trip in one day.⁴⁷

In Acts 14:6 Luke writes that Paul fled to the cities of Lycaonia — Lystra and Derbe — and the surrounding country. Ramsay has interpreted this passage and other evidence to indicate that Derbe and Lystra were in the Roman province of Galatia. One of Ramsay's presuppositions regarding this is that Paul restricted his work to the limit of the Roman territory. George Ogg has shown the weakness of this presupposition since Paul obviously passed through and ministered in non-Roman territory at the beginning of both the second and the third missionary journeys.⁴⁸ On the other hand, this new location for Derbe agrees better with the data in Strabo. Strabo describes the territory of Lycaonia and Cappadocia as separated from Cilicia Tracheia on the south by the Taurus Mountain (p. 568). The boundary between Lycaonia and Cappadocia lies between Garsaura and Coropassus, located northeast of this new site for Derbe. Strabo indicates that Derbe lies especially close to Cappadocia and that it with Laranda was under Antipater Derbetes, but later was held by Amyntas. The above data would surely suggest that Derbe was as far east as Laranda, if not farther east.

In his description of the administrative divisions of Cappadocia just prior to A.D. 17 and the death of King Archelaus, Strabo (p. 535) describes an eleventh prefecture formed by the Romans as including the country round Castabala and Cybistra in Cilicia and extending westward to Derbe.

[p.160]

Derbe and Laranda do not seem to be included in this division. However, Ptolemy (V. 6:6) places them with Olbasa and Mousbanda in the prefecture of Antiochus. The date to which Ptolemy refers is in dispute. Numismatic evidence indicates that Laranda belonged to Antiochus IV of Commagene from A.D. 41 on.⁴⁹ That this may also be true of Derbe is suggested by its new location slightly east of Laranda. Hence, the question of the location of the eastern border of the province of Galatia and Derbe's inclusion in that province is raised anew. George Ogg has shown that Ramsay's argumentation (whereby he places Derbe in the province of Galatia) no longer is valid⁵⁰ and hence concludes that "no compelling reasons have thus far been given for the inclusion of Derbe in the Province of Galatia in St. Paul's time, and consequently that at present it is an open question whether it was then inside or outside it."⁵¹ A related question is whether Derbe is one of the Galatian churches who are the recipients of the Epistle to the Galatians, according to the South Galatian theory.⁵² In view of the fluctuating political conditions in this part of Asia Minor during the first century and the present incomplete data, no conclusive judgment is possible at this time.

⁴⁷ Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past* (Princeton, 1959), p. 343, footnote 352.

⁴⁸ *NTS* 9 (1963), p. 368.

⁴⁹ Ogg, *loc. cit.*, p. 369.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 367-70.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 367. According to the provincial boundaries set by Ramsay in the map included in the back cover of *The Church in the Roman Empire*, the new location for Derbe places it outside the Provincia Galatia and in the Regnum Antiochi.

⁵² A position maintained by Bruce in his commentary (*op. cit.*, p. 38) and assumed in a recent lecture (*BJRL* 51 [1969], p. 292).

Bastian Van Elderen, "Some Archaeological Observations on Paul's First Missionary Journey," W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.150-161.

This new inscription provides evidence regarding the Christian church at Derbe. We have here a reference to a bishop of Derbe from possibly the late fourth or fifth century. The name of another bishop of Derbe is also known — Dapimus, who was present at the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381. This provides another interesting piece of evidence regarding Christianity in central Asia Minor in this period.

Furthermore, this new location for Derbe places it in close proximity to, and possible relation with, the area designated as "The Thousand and One Churches". This area lies in the vicinity of Kara Dağ (Black Mountain). Modern villages in this area are Madenşehir and Deyle. In his investigations of this area with Gertrude Bell, Ramsay identified the ruins of almost fifty churches.⁵³ Recent investigations have located additional ruins — although some of those described by Ramsay are hard to locate because local natives have been removing some of the dressed stones for modern building purposes. Most of the ruins are dated between the sixth and eleventh centuries. Our location of Derbe about nine or ten miles from this concentration of churches suggests the possibility of relationship. Possibly the Christianity represented by the ruins of "The Thousand and One Churches" has its origins in the church established by Paul at Derbe in the first century. In any case, in spite of relatively meagre references in the

[p.161]

literary sources to this area of ancient Christendom, much has been learned about it through archaeological surveys and studies in recent decades.⁵⁴

III

In spite of Ramsay's pioneer work in the early part of this century, nearly all the studies on the Acts of the Apostles have doubted or ignored its historical reliability. Ward Gasque in a recent paper has carefully documented and rightly lamented this sceptical tradition.⁵⁵ As archaeological and historical studies uncover more and more about the eastern Mediterranean world, the historical reliability of New Testament authors becomes more and more impressive — and Luke in Acts is no exception. On the other hand, mere affirmation of this characteristic of Lucan writings will not be the answer to current scholarship nor do justice to the message of Luke. Luke obviously is not merely writing history. He has a purpose, an apologetic interest, an argument, an objective — a theology.

The primary concern of this essay with some historical problems in the Acts of the Apostles is not intended to overlook the theological dimension necessary for a balanced study of this book. To understand Luke (and any New Testament author) requires an integration of historical and theological studies. In recent decades we have come to know Luke as a

⁵³ Ramsay and Gertrude L. Bell, *The Thousand and One Churches* (London, 1909).

⁵⁴ The British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara under the direction of Dr Michael Gough has been excavating the ruins of at least three impressive fifth-century churches about twenty-five miles south of Karaman. Although their relationship with Derbe is questionable, these churches nevertheless give evidence in sculpture and architecture of a creative and imaginative Christianity in this area. Preliminary reports of these excavations can be found in *Anatolian Studies* 12 (1962), pp. 173-84; 13 (1963), pp. 105-15; 14 (1964), pp. 185-90; 17 (1967), pp. 37-47; 18 (1968), pp. 159-67.

⁵⁵ *EQ* 54 (1969), pp. 68-88. Blaiklock's essay in this present volume establishes the setting of Acts squarely in the first-century Graeco-Roman world.

Bastian Van Elderen, "Some Archaeological Observations on Paul's First Missionary Journey," W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.150-161.

theologian it is now time to recognize and appreciate him as a theologian-historian. Bruce himself has fittingly expressed this thought in these words: "I see no incompatibility between theology and history: in fact I am tempted, in face of a strong contemporary trend, to say that — within the Jewish and Christian tradition, at least — a man cannot be a good theologian unless he is a good historian."⁵⁶

© 1970 The Paternoster Press. Reproduced by kind permission of the publisher.

Converted to PDF by Robert I Bradshaw in May 2005.

<http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/>

⁵⁶ *BJRL* 51 (1969), p. 294.