

## EPHESUS AS A ROMAN, CHRISTIAN, AND JEWISH METROPOLIS IN THE FIRST AND SECOND CENTURIES C.E.

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At the dawn of the fifth century C.E. (ca. 406), in the city of Mopsuestia in Cilicia, bishop Theodore wrote his Commentary on the Fourth Gospel. Theodore had a reputation for being a precise interpreter of the text of the Bible, avoiding allegorical glosses. The Interpreter or *Mephasqana*, as he was later called by the Syrian Church, became the first to apply literary criticism in order to solve textual problems.<sup>1</sup> This approach allowed him a "free and critical investigation into questions of authorship and date and... [a] highly scientific, philological and historical approach."<sup>2</sup>

In his introduction to his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, the Interpreter presents the historical setting within which this gospel came into being, and tries to explain to his audience the purpose behind it. He writes:

Thus, the blessed John settled in Ephesus, visiting the whole of Asia and providing great benefit to those there through his own words.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Quasten, *Patrology* 3rd ed. (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1960-1986), 3:402.

<sup>2</sup> Quasten, *Patrology*, 3:402.

In the meantime, the publication of the [work of the] rest of the evangelists took place — of Matthew, Mark and Luke, writing their own gospels — and were spread instantly to the whole world, and were studied by all the believers with great eagerness, as was natural.

But the believers around Asia, having judged the blessed John to be more trustworthy than the rest in the testimony of the gospel, because he had been with the Lord from the very beginning, even before Matthew, and had enjoyed more grace (because of the [Lord's] love) brought him the books wanting to learn from him what opinion he had in regards to them. And he indeed praised the writers as having written the truth, but he said that nearly all the short instructional items were omitted by them, and some of the miracles that are most necessary to be told....

There upon a plea came from the brethren to write immediately the things he judged to be most important for instruction, which he saw omitted by the rest; so he did.<sup>3</sup>

From the casual tone of the text, and the briefness of description, it appears as though Theodore is simply reiterating a tradition common to his listeners. Taking into account the author's great interest in historical accuracy — as becomes clearly evident throughout the rest of his commentary — this paper will try to examine whether the bishop's statements originate from within an independent Antiochene tradition, or whether they are part of a well known and widely accepted tradition that transcended the borders of Syria and could possibly trace its origin back to Asia Minor. In doing so, I will try to isolate each statement and examine it over the background of other literary sources of the first and second centuries.

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<sup>3</sup> R. Devréese, "Les Fragments grecs du commentaire sur le quatrième évangile," Appendix in *Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste*, Vol. 141, *Studi e Testi* (Vatican, 1948), 305.10-306.8: *Οὕτω δὴ καὶ ὁ μακάριος Ἰωάννης οἰκεῖ τὴν Ἔφεσον, ἅπασαν ἐφοδεύων τὴν Ἀσίαν καὶ πολλὴν τοῖς ἐκεῖ διὰ τῶν οἰκείων λόγων τὴν ὀφέλειαν παρεχόμενος*

*Γίνεται τοίνυν ἐν τούτοις ἡ τῶν λοιπῶν εὐαγγελιστῶν ἐκδόσις. Ματθαίου τε καὶ Μάρκου ἔτι μὴν καὶ Λουκᾶ τὰ οἰκεία γεγραφῶτων εὐαγγέλια, διεδόθη τε κατὰ πάσης ἐν ἄκαρπῃ τῆς οἰκουμένης καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν πιστῶν ἐσπουδάζετο πάντων μετὰ πολλῆς, ὡς εἰκός τῆς διαθέσεως.*

*Ἄλλ' οἱ περὶ τὴν Ἀσίαν πιστοὶ ἀξιοπιστότερον τῶν λοιπῶν εἰς τὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου μαρτυρίαν Ἰωάννην κρίναντες εἶναι τὸν μακάριον, ὡς καὶ ἄνωθεν αὐτῷ συνόντα τῷ Κυρίῳ καὶ πρὸ Ματθαίου, καὶ πλείονος διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην τῆς χάριτος ἀπολαύσαντα, προσήνεγκαν μὲν αὐτῷ τὰς βίβλους, μαθεῖν ἤντινα περὶ αὐτῶν ἔχει τὴν δόξαν παρ' αὐτοῦ βουλόμενοι. Ὁ δὲ ἐπήνεσε μὲν τῆς ἀληθείας τοὺς γεγραφότας, ἔφησε δὲ βραχέα μὲν αὐτοῖς παραλελειφθαι, — καὶ τῶν μάλιστα ἀναγκαίων λεχθῆναι θαυμάτων, — τὰ διδασκαλικά δὲ ἅπαντα μικροῦ...᾽ Ἐπὶ τούτοις παράκλησις τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐγένετο, ταῦτα ἅ μάλιστα ἀναγκαῖα μὲν κρίνει πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, παραλελειμμένα δὲ ὄρα τοῖς λοιποῖς γράψαι μετὰ σπουδῆς· ὁ δὲ καὶ πεποίηκεν. (Translation is mine.)*

## Ephesus as the Roman Metropolis of Asia

"And in this way also the blessed John settles in Ephesus, visiting the whole Asia and providing great benefit to those there through his own words." In the light of much recent debate on the origins of the Fourth Gospel, the identity of the author still remains unknown.<sup>4</sup> However, the purpose of this paper is not to settle that debate — or even attempt to do so — but, beginning with the tradition present in the writings of the bishop of Mopsuestia, to examine the possibility and assess the probability of supporting his statements from the milieu of Ephesus in the first and second centuries C.E.

In doing so, let us begin our search by focusing on the city of Ephesus, and by paying particular attention to Theodore's claim that the city was the primary center of (ecclesiastical) activity for the whole of Asia.

Ephesus has been described as a city "notorious for its repeated changes of site."<sup>5</sup> A city with a history that goes back to the Mycenaean period, Ephesus had been relocated four times. Following a first relocation at the end of Croesus' rule (ca. 550 B.C.) from its Ionic position to the region close to the Artemision,<sup>6</sup> Lycimachus, in 281 B.C., moved the city once again. This time Ephesus was relocated on higher ground in the valley between the Koressus and Pion hills.<sup>7</sup> The Hellenistic fortification of the new city extended for more than five miles and also provided the city with a new harbor.<sup>8</sup> In later Byzantine times, the city was again relocated, but this time the population was divided into those who remained within the walls of the Hellenistic city and those who chose to descend to Mount Ayasoluk.<sup>9</sup> The end of the ancient

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<sup>4</sup> For an excellent discussion on the subject of authorship see R. E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), and M. Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (London: SCM Press, 1989; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> C. J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, JSNTS, vol 11 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986), 37.

<sup>6</sup> R. E. Oster, Jr., s.v. "Ephesus." in D.N. Freedman ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 542.

<sup>7</sup> Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, 14.1.21. Trans. by H. L. Jones. 8 vols. Vol. 5-6, *The Loeb Classical Library* (London; New York: William Heinemann; G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928).

<sup>8</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, 14.1.21.

<sup>9</sup> Oster, *Ephesus*, 542; also, P. Scherrer, "The City of Ephesus: From the Roman Period to Late Antiquity," in *Ephesus: Metropolis of Asia*, edited by Helmut Koester (Valley Forge: Trinity

city came in 614, when the Sassanian Persians attacked and captured the city.<sup>10</sup> Destroyed, the ancient *polis* never regained its prior glory, although it continued to exist as an inland and somewhat impoverished town throughout the Byzantine period up to 1304 C.E., when it passed into Turkish hands. During the Ottomanic rule, Ephesus found new prosperity and became a busy center of commerce once again; yet the glory and status of the ancient city was forever gone.<sup>11</sup>

Ephesus owed its prosperity primarily to its location. Strabo informs us that the Hellenistic city "has both an arsenal and a harbour... and the city, because of its advantageous situation in other respects, grows daily, and is the largest emporium in Asia this side of the Taurus."<sup>12</sup> The "other respects" to which Strabo refers, are the fact that Ephesus was also a key hub for land transportation. In addition to the various local routes which connected in Ephesus, the Hellenistic city was a terminal point of two great highways which "led from Ephesus to the east. Firstly, the *koine hodos*,... which went from Ephesus up the Meander valley... onward to the river Euphrates and beyond."<sup>13</sup> Secondly, the primary highway linking Asia with the province of Galatia also had its starting point in Ephesus.<sup>14</sup>

It is not hard, then, to understand why Ephesus served as the capital for the province of Asia during the *Pax Romana*. In addition, the city of Ephesus served as the center for both the *aerarium* and the *fiscus* of the province. Furthermore, a college of *tabellarii* which was based in the city,<sup>15</sup> provided the Roman administration with a rapid

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Press International, 1995), 3.

<sup>10</sup> C. Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity: A Late Antique, Byzantine and Turkish City* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), vii.

<sup>11</sup> Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity*, viii.

<sup>12</sup> Strabo, *Geography* 14.1.24: "ἔχει δ' ἡ πόλις καὶ νεώρια καὶ λιμένα· ... ἡ δὲ πόλις τῇ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα εὐκαιρία τῶν τόπων ἀύξεται καθ' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν, ἐμπόριον οὐσα μέγιστον τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν τὴν ἐντὸς τοῦ Ταύρου.

<sup>13</sup> P. Trebilco, "Asia," in David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, eds., *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994) 308; also, see Magie, D. *Roman Rule in Asia Minor, to the End of the Third Century After Christ* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), I:40; and Strabo, *Geography*. 14.2.29.

<sup>14</sup> Trebilco, "Asia", 308; Magie, *Roman Rule*, I:157.

<sup>15</sup> S. Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), I:129; Magie, *Roman Rule*, I:129.

and centralized means of communication with the whole of Asia.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the city of Ephesus prospered tremendously. The population of the city during the Roman period has been estimated between 200,000-250,000 people;<sup>17</sup> a fact that allowed Ephesus to boast the title of "τῆς πρώτης καὶ μεγίστης καὶ ἐνδοξοτάτης μητροπόλεως τῆς Ἀσίας" ("the foremost and greatest and most glorious metropolis of Asia")<sup>18</sup> over her rival cities of Pergamum and Smyrna.

The main organs of local government were the Senate, or *Βουλή*, and with the *Δῆμος*, the council of the People.<sup>19</sup> From inscriptional evidence we know that during the first and second centuries, the Senate was comprised of 450 senators entrusted with the administration of the finances, public works, and public services of the city.<sup>20</sup> However, these two, the Senate and the Council, were not the only two organs with influence in ancient Ephesus. There was also the *Ἐκκλησία*, the meeting of the people at the 25,000 seat Theater of Ephesus. In this popular assembly, the people made their wishes known by shouting in unison. In the book of Acts, 19:24-41, during Paul's visit to the city the assembled crowd expressed its opinion by a prolonged cry: "φωνὴ ἐγένετο μία ἐκ πάντων ὡς ἐπὶ ὥρας δύο" (19:34). Even during the third Ecumenical Council which convened in Ephesus in 431, the Nestorian faction used the Theater to announce their deposition of Cyril of Alexandria and the bishop of Ephesus, Memnon.<sup>21</sup>

As in all Hellenistic and Roman cities, therefore, in Ephesus too, popular acclamation was a regular and accepted means of government.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Magie, *Roman Rule*, I:165.

<sup>17</sup> Trebilco, "Asia", 307; Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I:243-44.

<sup>18</sup> *I. Ephesos III*, 740, as reported in R. A. Kearsley, "The Asiarchs." in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, 375; also, Oster, "Ephesus", 543.

<sup>19</sup> Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity*, 13.

<sup>20</sup> Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity*, 13; F. F. Abbott, and A. C. Johnson. *Municipal Administration in the Roman Empire* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 387-89, presents the *Epistula Aquili Proculi, Proconsulis Asiae, ad Ephesios*, the letter of the proconsul of Asia in 104 C.E., ratifying the endowment founded by Vibius Salutaris "for the benefit of his fellow-citizens at Ephesus." Salutaris provided for the amount of 450 denarii to "be distributed annually to the senators at the rate of a denarius apiece," thus informing us of the number of senators during the late first, early second century C.E.

<sup>21</sup> Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity*, 15.

<sup>22</sup> Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity*, 15-16.

It is here, then, that I would like to draw our attention to another of Theodore's very specific claims on the origin of the gospel of John: "There upon a plea came from the brethren to write immediately the things he judged to be most important for instruction, which he saw omitted by the rest; so he did." The popular demand for a "new and improved" gospel, would not have been a novelty of the Johannine community but an acclamation firmly grounded in the tradition of Ephesus.

But this tradition is not unique with Theodore or the Antiochenes. About 110 years earlier, the bishop of Caesarea, in Palestine, penned a very similar account of the occasion of the creation of the Fourth Gospel. He wrote: "They say accordingly that for this reason the apostle John was asked, the period passed over in silence by the former evangelists and the things done during it by the Savior (that is to say, the events before the imprisonment of the Baptist) to relate in his own gospel."<sup>23</sup> Although the description of the Mopsuestian is more vivid and detailed, Eusebius' account also revolves around the same concept of popular demand that may have driven the author of the gospel to engage in a work which he might not have otherwise done.

But there is also a point of deviation between the two accounts which may warrant further investigation and which may — ultimately — provide some insight into the approaches taken by the two bishops. Theodore's work is a theological commentary. As such, the Interpreter places the ultimate control of what is to be included in the retelling of the story of Jesus, the "new" gospel, on the shoulders of its author. He argues that the reason why John chose to start his story before the imprisonment of John the Baptist is because he was concerned with presenting, and preserving, the divinity of Christ: "*Ὅθεν εὐθὺ μὲν καὶ ἐξ' ἀρχῆς περὶ τῆς θεότητος ἐφιλοσόφησε δογματῶν, ταύτην ἀναγκαίαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου κρίνων ἔσεσθαι τὴν ἀρχήν.*"<sup>24</sup> The historian, on the other hand, places the burden of the context of the

<sup>23</sup> Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*. Trans. Kirshopp Lake, *The Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1926), 3.24.11: *παρακληθέντα δὴ οὖν τούτων ἕνεκά φασι τὸν ἀπόστολον Ἰωάννην τὸν ὑπὸ τῶν προτέρων εὐαγγελιστῶν παρασιωπηθέντα χρόνον καὶ τὰ κατὰ τοῦτον πεπραγμένα τῷ σωτῆρι (ταῦτα δ' ἦν τὰ πρὸ τῆς τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ καθείρξεως) τῷ κατ' αὐτὸν εὐαγγελίῳ παραδοῦναι.*

<sup>24</sup> Devrèsse, "Les Fragments" 306.8-10: "For which reason immediately and from the beginning he presented philosophically the doctrines concerning the divinity, judging this to be the necessary beginning of the gospel."

gospel on the desire of those "who asked" to know what happened between Jesus' baptism and John's imprisonment.

### Christianity in Ephesus

In the last section we saw Roman Ephesus as a very important center of communication, commerce and administration for the province of Asia and beyond. A city whose influence extended far beyond the boundaries of the *polis*. It would be very reasonable, therefore, to propose that during the formative years of Christianity, Ephesus would also have served as a center of ecclesiastical activity and missions. In Acts 19-20, Luke informs us that Paul spend about three years in the city, "so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10, NASB). In addition, the comments of the silversmith Demetrius "And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people," in Acts 19:26 are relevant. Both these verses indicate not only the centrality of the city of Ephesus within the whole of Asia, but also the extent to which events occurring within the Metropolis influenced the rest of the province.

I believe that this comment of Luke about Paul's ministry in Ephesus could readily apply to the situation which existed less than fifty years later, at the end of the first century, namely, that Ephesus was a missionary center for the whole of Asia. Trebilco notes that

due to the strategic location of Ephesus, the fact that it was the provincial capital from the time of Augustus, an assize centre, and...the home of Artemis of Ephesus and her famous temple.... Paul's message would quickly be spread through the province, through the agency of people who had come to Ephesus for any of a number of reasons, had become Christian, and then returned to their homes, but also because people in the province would be used to hearing news from Ephesus.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to Paul's own ministry, there is ample evidence for missionary activity through associates of his, such as Tychicus and Epaphras, who evangelized the region of Colossae and the whole of the Lycus valley.<sup>26</sup> The scheme, therefore, proposed by Theodore, namely, the ecclesiastical administration and ministry of the rest of Asia by the church(es) of Ephesus, seems to be more than likely.

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<sup>25</sup> Trebilco, "Asia", 310-11.

<sup>26</sup> Trebilco, "Asia"; Oster, "Ephesus", 548; Hemer, *Seven Churches*, 39.

Foss argues for a very close relationship between the Roman administrative style of the provinces and that of the Early Church. Taking into account the tendency of the Early Church to adopt and modify already existing structures and elements of the society within which it evolved, I find this argument quite possible. I believe that this argument could find support in the example of the church buildings, where the flexibility of the Early Church "allowed the Christian communities to adopt and renovate a variety of preexisting structures and forms,"<sup>27</sup> and eventually to develop into the "Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture [which] finds its origins of forms in the Roman civic buildings."<sup>28</sup> Thus, it seems quite possible that the Church could also adopt, renovate and modify already existing administrative models that had proven themselves successful throughout the Empire.

However, during this period, the first and second centuries C.E., the church(es) of Ephesus seem to have followed more the example of the *tabellarii*, rather than that of the proconsulate. With this I mean that there seems to be more a *network of influence*, finding its synoptic point in Ephesus, rather than a *centralized system* of ecclesiastical administration. Ignatius, writing in the mid-second C.E., refers to Ephesus as a "*παροδος*," a "passage-way,"<sup>29</sup> indicating its importance as a hub for Christian communications, ministry and life, rather than a localized administrative center with fixed hierarchical structure and control over the province of Asia.

I would argue, therefore, that the presence of a Christian community — as described in Acts and the Pauline letters — in the first century Ephesus, cannot be disputed.<sup>30</sup> What warrants further discussion, though, in the context of this paper, is the constitution of

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<sup>27</sup> G. Kalantzis, "A Comparison of the Architectural Elements of the Fifth and Sixth Century Byzantine Churches in the Negev and Constantinople" (M. T. S. diss., Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, 1994), 2.

<sup>28</sup> Kalantzis, "A Comparison of the Architectural Elements," 2, and L. M. White, *Domus Ecclesiae - Domus Dei: Adaptation and Development in the Setting for Early Christian Assembly* (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1982), 4.

<sup>29</sup> Ignatius to the Ephesians, XII.2. in trans. Kirshopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2 vols, *The Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912; London: William Heinemann, 1912), 186.

<sup>30</sup> See Hemer, *Seven Churches*, 35-56; Kearsley, *Asiarchs*, 364-76; Oster, *Ephesus*, 548-49; Foss, *Antiquity*, 30-45; Meinardus, O. F. A. *St. Paul in Ephesus and the Cities of Galatia and Cyprus* (Athens: Lecabettus Press, 1973).



this community and the extent to which it had penetrated the surrounding Hellenistic and/or Jewish culture. To this end, I would like to focus on two specific points, which may shed some light on the matter.

Note the importance of one of the surviving Ephesian inscriptions from ca. 138-139 C.E.: "the town council proposed a distribution of a denarius to each citizen present at the sacrifices in honor of the emperor on his birthday, if his name was on the roll of invited guests."<sup>31</sup> This inscription by itself may have been of little use in our discussion. However, in combination with Horsley's keen observation concerning an earlier inscription found within the city it may help us understand a little better the Christian community in Ephesus.

The earlier inscription was found in the area of the harbor. It is a dedicatory *stèle* dating from the first half of Nero's rule (ca. 54-59 C.E.). On the *stèle* are the names of those of the association of fishermen and fishmongers who contributed to the erection of a toll-house at the harbor "specifically for the collection of dues relating to the fishing industry."<sup>32</sup> Horsley focuses our attention on four things which may be of importance in our discussion. Firstly, he notes the large number of Roman citizens "at a time when citizenship, especially in the East, was fairly rare."<sup>33</sup> Secondly, is the fact that 25-28 of the names found in this inscription are names that occur in the New Testament, 18 of which are associated with Paul. Lastly, almost half of the latter ones are identifiable as Roman citizens, "a considerable number of whom possess Latin *cognomina*. Further, those involved in this association of fish traders reflect the whole range in formal rank, from citizen to slave."<sup>34</sup>

Among the names included in the *stèle*, Horsley alludes to "at least three of the donors [who] can be shown to have been men of considerable substance, holding magistracies themselves or members of well-known Ephesian families."<sup>35</sup> Based on this, he goes on to propose that the

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<sup>31</sup> Abbott, *Municipal Administration, inscr. 99: ἐπιτελεῖν ... διανομὴν τοῖς ἰσχυροῦσι πολίταις ἐκ τῶν καλουμένων εἰς τὰς ἑορτὰς ἰσχυρίας ἐκάστωι δηναρίον διδόναι.*

<sup>32</sup> G. H. R. Horsley "The Inscriptions of Ephesus and the New Testament." *Novum Testamentum* 34, no. 2 (1992): 129.

<sup>33</sup> Horsley, "The Inscriptions," 132.

<sup>34</sup> Horsley, "The Inscriptions," 132.

<sup>35</sup> Horsley "The Inscriptions," 130. Although Horsley does not identify these donors by name, he refers the reader to S. M. Baugh's unpublished dissertation *Paul and Ephesus. The*

understanding of the status of associations such as this ought to be reevaluated; including a serious reappraisal of the status and financial means of Jesus' own disciples — such as Andrew and Peter, James and John — who, although fishermen, were also able to leave their families and/or profession for a period of at least three years, without having to worry about their survival.<sup>36</sup>

Horsley moves on, then to suggest hesitantly that the Ephesian Pauline congregations, which showed a high rate of Latin names, may have been largely composed of Roman citizens — including those of higher status, who would be able to host large gatherings in their homes — with the protections, civil rights and freedom of movement that their citizenship provided. Thus they would be more free both to work as missionaries throughout Asia and protect their local Christian congregations from pagan hostility.<sup>37</sup>

But in combination with the first inscription mentioned, one could also argue that Roman citizenship was not — ultimately — only beneficial but also detrimental for the new Church. The proposition of the city council does not provide an alternative for those of the "invited" citizens who did not wish to offer a sacrifice on behalf of the emperor. Those who did, were rewarded with one denarius; the fate of those who did not is open to speculation.

It would seem that a church which would have *focused* on Roman citizenship, so as to attain freedom of movement and protection, as Horsley argues, would have also exposed itself to a higher degree of probable conflict with the civil authorities followed by retaliation and even persecution, in the highly possible event of non-compliance with the "invitation" of the city council. I propose, therefore, that although the Pauline churches did not shy away from including Roman citizens in their midst (even *Asiarchs*, Acts 19:31<sup>38</sup>) a deliberate and calculated evangelization of citizens seems to be both foreign to the Pauline

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*Apostle among His Contemporaries* (University of California, Irvine, 1990) 189-90.

<sup>36</sup> Horsley, "The Inscriptions," 130.

<sup>37</sup> Horsley, "The Inscriptions," 132-33.

<sup>38</sup> See Kearsley, *Asiarchs*, 363-376 and her article in "Some Asiarchs in Ephesos." in *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1979*, ed. G. H. R. Horsley (Macquarie University: The Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, 1987), 46-55, for an excellent discussion on the identification and function of the *Asiarchs*.

approach — where the Jewish element of the synagogues is approached first — and a risk which I do not see supported by literary or other evidence. Thus, Horsley's suggestion, although worthy of further investigation, does not seem — to this reader — as being probable.<sup>39</sup>

### The Jewish Community in Ephesus

The Early Christian community, however, is not the only one that left little physical evidence of its presence. The same seems to be true of the contemporary Jewish community. Although the Book of Acts informs us that both Apollos and Paul engaged in dialogue with the Jews of the city "ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ," no physical trace of a synagogue has been unearthed to date.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, only a few artifacts can be identified with confidence as Jewish. Of a total of five lamps identifiable as Jewish — bearing menorahs and other similar symbols — only two date from the second and third centuries C.E., while the rest date to late antiquity.<sup>41</sup> In addition, a piece of pottery on which "is painted a menorah, ethrog, lulab, and shofar"<sup>42</sup> has been found, along with the most

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<sup>39</sup> Another element which warrants further discussion is the fact that — as of yet — very few Christian artifacts have been uncovered that pre-date Constantine. Of those, the most significant are a second century sarcophagus at the so called "Tomb of St. John" and fragmentary 'crypto-Christian' inscriptions of the second and third centuries C.E. (Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity*, 36). The sarcophagus, which contained coins of Antoninus Pius and Geta, was found on top of the hill of Ayasoluk, where the Roman necropolis used to be. The site continued with its funerary function well into the fourth century. Tradition claimed that the apostle John was buried there, and his tomb was venerated as early as the first part of the third C.E. century (Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity*, 87 nt. 85). The small martyrion was replaced by a cruciform church over eighty meters long by 390-420 (Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity*, 88). The remains seen today are those of the Justinianic church which was built by demolishing the older one and replacing it with one which was 130 m. long — including the atrium — and 65 m. wide. More importantly, Foss points out that down to late antiquity, scenes from pagan mythology were more popular as decorations of pottery than Biblical stories. Foss argues that scenes depicting Zeus and Aphrodite, Leda and the swan, Hercules and the lion, and many other such pagan motifs may be indicative of the very slow penetration of Christianity in the culture and consciousness of the city of Artemis (Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity*, 11).

However, I would like to propose here that this lack of first and second century physical evidence of Christianity in Ephesus may be — at least in part — due not to the slow penetration of Christianity in the area but to its association in the consciousness of the people with Judaism, seen as nothing more as one of its sects.

<sup>40</sup> Horsley, "The Inscriptions," 121; Oster, "Ephesus", 549; Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity*, 45.

<sup>41</sup> Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity*, 45 nt. 48; Horsley, "The Inscriptions," 125 nt. 90.

<sup>42</sup> Horsley, "The Inscriptions," 125.

prominent Jewish symbol in the city, a menorah carved on one of the steps leading into the Library of Celsus.<sup>43</sup>

The lack of physical evidence is matched by the scarcity of epigraphical evidence. Of the 3750 inscriptions which have been published from the city of Ephesus, less than a dozen, or so, can be identified as Jewish.<sup>44</sup> The two primary sources for the presence and the extent of the Jewish community in Ephesus come from the Lukan accounts in Acts and the works of Josephus. In the works of the Jewish historian the name of Ephesus appears almost 20 times. Consequently, Josephus is by far our richest source of information about the *politeuma* and *politeia* of the Jews.

The Jewish presence in Ephesus — and the rest of Ionia — is thought to have been established at the end of the third century B.C.E., "as important military colonists serving the Seleucid monarch by protecting his holdings."<sup>45</sup>

Epigraphical evidence attests to the presence of synagogue(s), as reported by Luke. One of the inscriptions has an "expression of good wishes for *archisynagogoi* and elders: τῶν ἀρχιϰαὶ ἡγετῶν καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων) | πολλὰ | τὰ {τὰ} ἔτη.<sup>46</sup> Although this inscription does not provide much information as to the extent of the Jewish community in Ephesus, it provides independent evidence supporting the claims of both Luke and Josephus.

There are two more inscriptions that should be mentioned here. In the first (dating to the end of the second century C.E.), οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι assume responsibility for the burial of a priest (*ἱαρέος*).<sup>47</sup> Horsley

<sup>43</sup> Horsley, "The Inscriptions."

<sup>44</sup> Horsley, "The Inscriptions," 121 and *Jews at Ephesus*, 231.

<sup>45</sup> T. Rajak, "Jewish Rights in the Greek Cities Under Roman Rule: A New Approach," in *Studies in Judaism and its Greco-Roman Context*, edited by W. S. Green (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985) 19. This point is also made by W. M. Ramsay, *The Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia: Being an Essay of the Local History of Phrygia from the Earliest Times to the Turkish Conquest* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885-1887) II:668. Concerning the Jews of neighboring Phrygia, Ramsay writes: "Probably the Jewish community in Apameia is as old as the foundation of the city (280-261 B.C.). The Seleucid kings used the Jews as an element of the colonies which they founded to strengthen their hold on Phrygia and other countries."

<sup>46</sup> Horsley, *New Documents 1979*, 113, 215, no. 23.

<sup>47</sup> Horsley, *New Documents 1979*, 116. Note the misspelling in *ἱαρέος*, where the letters

would argue that this inscription is a part of the "funerary monuments for Jews, and the community takes responsibility for the upkeep of the graves of its own."<sup>48</sup> It seems, then, that this inscription supports the presence of an organized community that identifies itself as a separate element of the society within which it lives. A community that has the right and responsibility to retain its own identity.

The second inscription is also funerary. It is a family epitaph dating from the Imperial period, set up by the [ἐν Ἐφέσῳ] Ἰουδαῖοι.<sup>49</sup> Though this inscription further establishes the presence of Jews in Ephesus, what is of more importance is that on this epitaph, the father is identified as ἀρχίατρος.<sup>50</sup> In Roman Ephesus the *archiatros*, or the *iatros*, for that matter, was a public servant.<sup>51</sup> That, however, does not mean that he was providing state-sponsored free medical care. Following the edict of Antoninus Pius to the *koinon* of Asia, in the mid-second century C.E., the number of doctors each city could employ was limited to three for small towns, seven for large *poleis*, and ten for *metropoleis*.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the position of *archiatros* was often that of the personal physician of the ruler(s). His position was honorary, bestowed by the city and carried with it tax-exemption.<sup>53</sup>

This inscription, then, provides some evidence for the relationship between the Jews and Gentiles of Ephesus. At least some of the members of the Jewish community were fully integrated within Graeco-Roman society and the ethos of the Hellenic *polis*. Furthermore, they were regarded with high esteem by their fellow-citizens, so as to be voted into this privileged category by the city council.<sup>54</sup> Hemer emphasizes that the Jewish community of Ephesus possessed "citizenship since Seleucid times."<sup>55</sup>

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-ε and -αι have been juxtaposed: ἰατρείος instead of ἱεραῖος.

<sup>48</sup> Horsley, *The Inscriptions*, 124.

<sup>49</sup> Horsley, *New Document 1979*, 116.

<sup>50</sup> Horsley, *New Documents 1979*, 116 and "The Inscriptions", 124.

<sup>51</sup> Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity*, 21; Horsley, *New Documents 1977*, 2.

<sup>52</sup> Horsley, *New Documents 1977*, 2.

<sup>53</sup> Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity*, 21; Horsley, *New Documents 1977*, 2.

<sup>54</sup> Horsley, *New Documents 1977*, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Hemer, *Seven Churches*, 35-36.

Josephus informs us that Seleucus Nicator gave the Jewish settlers of the Asiatic cities, *πολιτεία*.<sup>56</sup> Both Hemer and Ramsay interpret Josephus' statement to mean "full rights of citizenship, equal to those of Macedonians and Greeks."<sup>57</sup> Rajak, on the other hand, challenges this view of *politeia* and focuses on the continuation of Josephus' description. She points out that, when Josephus refers to the granting of *politeia* by Seleucus to the Jews, the emphasis is on their "equality in honor" (*ἰσοτίμου*).<sup>58</sup> She notes that "the Jews were mainly interested not in being citizens of the *polis* but in "isopolity," by which they meant an equal standing for their own *politeuma*, alongside the Greek city."<sup>59</sup>

This attitude of the Jews, she argues, was based on their religion which demanded a more or less separate existence. Josephus records two edicts which may support this hypothesis. The first is the edict of Julius Caesar by which the Jews were exempted from his general ban on *collegia*.<sup>60</sup> Rajak argues that this decree clearly shows the connection as it established a precedent which allowed only the Jews to form *thiasoi* (religious fraternities) or to *collect money* or to have common meals.<sup>61</sup>

Her argument is further supported by two more points Josephus makes concerning the Jews of Asia and Cyrenaean Libya. He writes that the Jews were "mistreated by the cities" (*ἐκᾶκουν αἱ πόλεις*), although they had been granted *ἰσονομίαν*, "equality under the law." His argument is not based on citizenship, but *isonomia*.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, 12.119; "πολιτείας αὐτοῦς ἠξίωσε καὶ τοῖς ἐνοικισθεῖσιν ἰσοτίμους ἀπέφηνε Μακεδόσιν καὶ Ἑλλήσιν, ὡς τὴν πολιτείαν αὐτὴν ἔτι καὶ νῦν διαμένει".

<sup>57</sup> Ramsay, *Cities*, 668.

<sup>58</sup> Rajak, *Jewish Rights*, 27.

<sup>59</sup> Rajak, *Jewish Rights*, 34 nt. 21.

<sup>60</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14.214-16; "καὶ χρήματα εἰς σύνδειπνα καὶ τὰ ἱερὰ εἰσφέρει ... ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὸς ἄλλους θιάσους καλύων, τούτοις [τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις] μόνοις ἐπιτρέπω κατὰ τὰ πάτρια ἔθνη καὶ νόμιμα συνάγεσθαι τε καὶ ἐστίασθαι."

<sup>61</sup> Rajak, *Jewish Ephesos*, 23.

<sup>62</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, 16.160. The special status of the — Ephesian — Jews is also attested by Knibbe, D. and W. Alzinger. "Ephesos vom Beginn der römischen Herrschaft in Kleinasien bis zum Ende der Principatszeit." In Vol. II.7.2, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, 761.

This treatment prompted Hyrcanus, their high-priest, to send envoys to Augustus to remind him of Caesar's edict. The ensuing edict of Augustus, sent to Norbanus Flaccus, proconsul of Asia, insists that the Jews may follow their own customs, by continuing to pay the temple tax.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, ca. 44-43 B.C., the consul P. Dolabella, wrote to the proconsul of Asia, in Ephesus, that the Jews who were Roman citizens could not fight or appear in court on Sabbath and needed special food; he also declared that following his predecessors, he was allowing them to follow their customs and to be exempted from military service.<sup>64</sup> This practice of exempting specific groups of people from practices which were followed elsewhere in the empire, was not isolated to the Jews. In an inscription provided by Abbott and Johnson, *Edictum Proconsulis Asiae de Festis Diebus Ephesiorum*, dating to 160 C.E., the proconsul of Asia had offended the citizens of Ephesus by transacting public business on the sacred days of Diana. Thus, the governor provided for the whole of the month Artemision to be held as sacred to the goddess and no court to be held during that time.<sup>65</sup>

But in a Greek *polis*, argues Rajak, it was one thing for the whole citizenry to participate — or be excused from participating — in public life, and quite another for one group of people to enjoy a more or less separate existence:

For pagan city-dwellers what was disturbing was the practice of Jewish ritual in their midst.... We know from literary evidence that the strangeness of the invisible Jewish God and the supposed barbarousness of the rites and 'superstitions' believed to be associated with Him was deeply disturbing to many Greeks and Romans. It is a prominent feature of recorded riots that they involve attacks made specifically on Jews engaged in religious activities, on synagogues, on ritual objects...and on Sabbath gatherings.<sup>66</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that the hostility expressed by the silversmith Demetrius towards the Christians — who were seen as a Jewish sect — was fueled not only by greed but by religious indignation and the danger of saying that "gods made with hands are no gods at all"

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<sup>63</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, 16.162-70.

<sup>64</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14.34, 167-68, 223-27.

<sup>65</sup> Abbott, *Municipal Administration*, *inscr.* 105. See Appendix B. The second part of the decree where the governor orders for the whole month of Artemision to be sacred is omitted by the authors.

<sup>66</sup> Rajak, *Jewish Rights*, 29-30.

(Acts 19:26). Furthermore, this discussion may shed a somewhat different light on Luke's comment in Acts 19:34, on the events that took place in the Theater. Luke notes that, when Alexander tried to speak to the assembled crowd, "realizing that he was a Jew, a single outcry arose from all of them shouting for two hours, 'Great is Artemis of Ephesus.'" Yet, two verses above that we are told that "the majority did not know for what cause they had come together" (19:32). The fact that the identification by the assembled crowd of Alexander as a Jew, brought an immediate and ecstatic (?) expression of religious loyalty and identity with Artemis as the supreme deity of the city, may indeed be indicative of where the lines of division and intolerance lay in ancient Ephesus.

It seems, then, that one of the reasons for the lack of physical evidence that would indicate either a Christian or a Jewish presence in the first and second century C.E. Ephesus may be traced to this tension between the Hellenic majority of the city and what was seen as an outside cult (Judaism) and its sect(s) (Christianity). A cult that has a right of religious self-expression only because the Roman authorities produced a series of imperial edicts to that effect.<sup>67</sup>

However, the presence of both communities in the city at the end of the first century is certain. In the case of Christianity, the Metropolitan status of Ephesus provided an elevated status for its church(es) and leaders, making Ephesus the missionary and ecclesiastical center of Asia.<sup>68</sup>

The above examination of the status and composition of the city of Ephesus in the first two centuries C.E. makes Theodore's first claim that the city was a center of Christian activity for the whole of Asia both possible and probable. Further, given the character and function of popular acclamation, the second claim of the Mopsuestian, namely that popular demand drove John to write his gospel, is also quite plausible. Lastly, given the similarities with Eusebius' account of the same events, I would argue that Theodore reiterates a well established tradition that can trace its roots to the first and second century C.E. Asia Minor.

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<sup>67</sup> Another reason may very well be the lack of excavations in what would be the Jewish quarters of the city. It is, then, quite possible that when that area of Ephesus is unearthed, our understanding of the relationships between Jews, Christians and Hellenes, may change. But I believe that the picture painted here could be seen as representing the evidence we have today.

<sup>68</sup> cf. 108-109.



## ABSTRACT

Since the dawn of Christianity, Ephesus has been associated with the Johanne tradition and has been claimed as the place of origin of the Fourth Gospel. This study tries to evaluate this ancient tradition by examining the status of Ephesus as a Roman, Jewish and Christian Metropolis in the first and second centuries C.E. In the process it becomes evident that the influence of Ephesus as an administrative, cultural and religious center of Asia was such that the traditional claim can be seen as more than a mere possibility.

## 撮 要

由初期教會開始，以弗所城被認為是秉承使徒約翰的傳統，及被宣稱是約翰寫成約翰福音的地方。本文旨在透過檢視以弗所在主後第一及第二世紀，能否作為一個羅馬、猶太及基督教文化的大都會，從而探討傳統宣稱的可靠性。作者在論證過程中，闡釋以弗所乃當代的行政、文化及宗教中心，因此，傳統宣稱應該不只是純粹的推測。