CHAPTER 46

PETER'S CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN ASIA MINOR

1 Pet 1:1

Mark Wilson

KEY POINTS

- Peter himself perhaps did evangelistic work in the provinces addressed in his first letter.
- These provinces were connected by major sea and land routes still in use today.
- Cities with royal, religious, and tribal connections were founded along these routes.
- Jewish communities are documented in Cappadocia, Pontus, and Bithynia.
- Letters between Pliny the Younger and Trajan indicate that Christianity had spread throughout Bithynia and Pontus by the early second century AD.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF PETER'S FIRST LETTER

The book of Acts presents Peter as its major figure in chapters 1–12 while Paul predominates in chapters 13–28.[1] Peter's travels in Acts are confined to Samaria (8:14), Lydda (9:32), Joppa (9:43), and Caesarea (10:24). Paul mentions a confrontation between them in Antioch (Gal 2:11). Paul's naming of Peter in 1 Corinthians (1:12; 9:5) suggests that he had visited Corinth.[2] Another geographical marker is "Babylon" where Peter wrote his first letter (1 Pet 5:13). Babylon is plausibly interpreted as a cipher for Rome (see Rev 17:5 among others), so 1 Peter was written from the impe-

1. In Acts 15 both men play an important role at the Jerusalem Council.

2. C. K. Barrett, "Cephas and Corinth," in *Essays on Paul* (London: SPCK, 1982), 28–39, is a strong proponent of a Petrine visit there.

rial capital.[3] The letter is addressed to Christian communities in north-central Asia Minor—Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Pet 1:1). Although these locations seem ill-defined, a closer examination of their socio-political dimensions permits the development of a geographical profile. The likelihood is that Peter himself planted some of the churches in these provinces as he traveled westward.[4] This tradition is preserved in Eusebius' *Church History* (3.1.2). Pilgrims from three of the provinces—Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia—and one region—Phrygia—were among the diaspora Jews in Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9–10). Some were perhaps among the respondents to Peter's message and became early Jesus followers in the region (Acts 2:41; 4:4). From Syrian Antioch the distance to Amisus on the Black Sea was shorter (631 mi. [1015 km]) than to Ephesus on the Aegean Sea (667 mi. [1073 km]).[5] A network of roads had developed in north-central Asia Minor to facilitate intra- and inter-provincial trade and travel. Vespasian reorganized these provinces dramatically beginning in AD 70 so the provincial boundaries before his reorganization are assumed.[6]

3. Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on 1 Peter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 63–64, 354.

4. Carsten P. Thiede posits such a mission but in the early 40s under Claudius (Thiede, *Simon Peter: From Galilee to Rome* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988], 155). However, such an early date is generally rejected. Stephen Mitchell identifies the evangelist bringing the gospel to these provinces as "the author of 1 Peter" (Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992], 2:871).

5. These distances were calculated using http://orbis.stanford.edu/.

6. Christian Marek, *In the Land of a Thousand Gods: A History of Asia Minor in the Ancient World*, trans. Steven Rendall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 338–42. For the provincial organization in the 60s, see page 327 map 16; for the Vespasianic reorganization, see page 340 map 18.

The messenger carrying the letter, probably Silvanus (Silas; 1 Pet 5:12),[7] arrived in Asia Minor either by ship or road. Depending on the season, the latter was more dependable. His route followed the Via Appia from Rome to Brundisium.[8] From its port, ferries made a short crossing of the Adriatic Sea to Dyrrachium. There travelers embarked on the Via Egnatia to transit Illyricum, Macedonia, and Thrace (see map on page XXX). The distance to Byzantium (later Constantinople) was 1057 miles (1700 km) and took nearly two months.[9] At the harbor Chrysokeras (Golden Horn; modern Haliç) on the Bosphorus (Ox-ford), Silvanus secured passage on a coasting vessel to transport him along the south coast of the Black Sea to Pontus.

The order of the provinces in 1 Peter 1:1 has been judged unhelpful for reconstructing Silvanus' route. Because Cappadocia has no border with Asia, it has been argued that the description is inherently flawed.[10] However, Peter's audience knew the region's geography and that Galatia must be recrossed from Cappadocia to reach Asia. Peter, perhaps to avoid repetition, chose not to repeat Galatia in his list. This order suggested to F. J. A. Hort a delivery route; Colin Hemer later made minor modifications to Hort's suggestion.[11] For example, Hort proposed an entry point at Sinope while Hemer proposed Amisus.[12] The weakness of their reconstructions is the inclusion of the Pauline cities of Iconium and Pisidian Antioch and the Johannine city of Sardis. Peter's provinces are instead oriented toward the Black Sea and center "on northern and eastern churches not reached by the journeys of Paul."[13] While building on these previous proposals, this article presents a more refined view of the route, particularly after Cappadocia.[14]

Pontus and its cities

Pontus is the Greek word for "sea" (Πόντος, *pontos*). The southern coast of the Black Sea (*Pontus Euxinus*, "Hospitable Sea")

7. E. Randolph Richards, "Silvanus Was Not Peter's Secretary: Theological Bias in Interpreting διὰ Σιλουανοῦ … ἔγραψα," *JETS* 43 (2000): 427–32.

8. In AD 9 when Augustus exiled the poet Ovid from Rome to Tomis, he traveled by sea from Brundisium to the Black Sea (*Tristia* 1).

9. In the fourth century AD Constantine constructed the Milion to mark the starting point of the *Via Egnatia*. It copied the Golden Milestone (*Milliarium Aureum*) that Augustus had erected in the Roman forum. Today a stone from the monument stands opposite the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul.

10. For example, Torrey Seland, *Strangers in the Light: Philonic Perspectives on Christian Identity in 1 Peter* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 36.

11. F. J. A. Hort, *First Epistle of St. Peter I,1–II,17* (London: Macmillan, 1898), 167–84; Colin J. Hemer, "The Address of 1 Peter," *Expository Times* 89.8 (1978): 239–43.

12. Hort, *First Epistle of St. Peter*, 176; Hemer, "Address of 1 Peter," 241.

13. J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 10.

14. Observations here are drawn from my article, Mark Wilson, "Cities of God in Northern Asia Minor: Using Stark's Social Theories to Reconstruct Peter's Communities," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 32 (2011): passim, as well as from my book, Wilson, *Biblical Turkey: A Guide to the Jewish and Christian Sites of Asia Minor* (Istanbul: Ege, 2010), passim. For other suggested itineraries see Karen H. Jobes, "'Foreigners and Exiles': Was 1 Peter Written to Roman Colonists?" in *Bedrängnis und Identität: Studien zu Situation, Kommunikation und Theologie des 1. Petrusbriefes*, ed. David S. du Toit (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 36–37.

was divided into three regions—Bithynia, Paphlagonia, and Pontus. The Parthenius River (modern Bartın) separated Bithynia from Paphlagonia, while the Halys River (modern Kızılırmak) separated inland Paphlagonia from Pontus. The Iris (modern Yeşilırmak) similarly emptied into the Black Sea east of Amisus. The forested Paryadres Mountains (modern Küre Dağları), with peaks over 6500 feet (1900 m), separated the narrow coastal plain from the inland plateau, so travel in Pontus was largely done by sea. While a track connected the coastal cities, it was slow and rugged. The roads that ran inland from the coastal cities connected with an east-west Pontic road that, in part, followed the valley of the Amnias River (modern Gökırmak).[15]

A Hellenized Persian named Mithridates I founded the kingdom of Pontus in 302 BC. After three wars the Romans finally defeated Mithridates VI Eupator in 66 BC. In 63 BC Pompey united Pontus with Bithynia to form the new double province *Bithynia et Pontus*. The province had thirteen cities including Amastris, Sinope, Amisus, Amasia, and Zela. Mark Antony reorganized Pontus in 39 BC and established the kingdom of Pontus Polemoniacus in eastern Pontus. Augustus made Bithynia along with most of Pontus a senatorial province in 29 BC. Philo attests to an extensive settlement of Jews throughout Pontus (*Embassy to Gaius* 36).

Portait of Mithridates I on Tetradrachm

Although the Bithynian city of Heraclea Pontica (modern Karadeniz Ereğli) had the first major harbor east of the Bosphorus, Amastris (modern Amasra) was better situated with its double harbor. It was originally named Sesamos (Homer, *Iliad* 2.853). However, around 300 BC Queen Amastris founded a new city for her capital by merging four cities at Sesamos. In 70 BC during the Mithridatic wars Amastris was captured by the Romans. It became a metropolis of the Pontic assembly and served briefly as capital of the twin province. Pliny the Younger described Amastris as "an elegant and beautiful city" (*Letters* 10.99 [LCL]). A well-preserved road monument stands two and a half miles (4 km) south of Amasra today. Its Greek-Latin inscription identifies Gaius Julius Aquilla as the governor who built the road under the emperor Claudius.[16] Ramsay suggested Amastris as the messenger's entry point because it was Pontus' "chief center at first."[17] Because the road's terminus was Bithynian Hadrianopolis (modern

15. Pompey founded or completed cities after 63 BC along this road; see Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:32; 268–69, map 3. Karen H. Jobes believes it is these inland cities also colonized by Claudius that were among the Christian communities addressed by Peter (Jobes, *1 Peter* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005], 29–32).

16. The monument in Turkish is called Kuşkayası ("Bird rock"); see Takeko Harada and Fatih Cimok, *Roads of Ancient Anatolia* (Istanbul: Turizm, 2008), 2:196–97, figs. 282–84.

17. William M. Ramsay, "Pontus," in *A Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1898), 4:17.

Eskipazar) where it joined an east-west road, this hypothesis is unlikely. An inscription recording a benefaction from Aurelios Protektetos for a synagogue (προσευχή, *proseuchē*) in Amastris dates from the third century AD.[18]

Sinope (modern Sinop) was situated on a peninsula whose promontory Lepte/Syrias is Asia Minor's northernmost point and the narrowest distance to the Cimmerian Bosphorus (modern Crimea). Located astride a narrow isthmus, its two deep-water harbors were the best on the Black Sea. Strabo calls Sinope the greatest city of Pontus with its fine walls and public buildings (*Geography* 12.3.11). In 630 BC it became Miletus' first colony (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 6.1.15). Sinope retained its status as an independent free city until 183 BC when Pharnaces I moved his capital here from Amasia. In 67 BC the Roman general Lucullus made Sinope a free city again; in 46 BC Julius Caesar established a Roman colony here. In 14 BC Herod the Great sailed to Sinope to join Marcus Agrippa, Augustus' deputy (Josephus, *Ant.* 16.21–23). They returned by land, passing through Paphlagonia, Cappadocia, and Great Phrygia before arrival in Ephesus.[19] A milestone dating to Vespasian's reign identifies Sinope as the *caput viae* (roadhead) of this road running inland to Paphlagonia.[20] Such overland travel, albeit by the Roman elite, suggests that Silvanus' journey was practicable. The city remained the Roman base for its Black Sea fleet until the third century AD. The Jewish believer

Kuşkayası Monument South of Amasra

Aquila, companion of Paul and husband of Priscilla, was a native of Pontus (Acts 18:2), probably from Sinope or Amisus.

Amisus (modern Samsun) was also founded by Milesian colonists in the mid-sixth century BC. It was the terminus of

18. Margaret H. Williams, *The Jews among the Greeks and Romans: A Diasporan Sourcebook* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 122 V.45; Walter Ameling, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis: Band II, Kleinasien* (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 314–17 no. 149.

19. Peter Richardson and Amy Marie Fischer using Josephus' provincial and geographical markers, reconstruct a plausible itinerary similar to this reconstruction (Richardson and Fischer, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* [London: Routledge, 2017], 174).

20. David H. French, *Milestones: Pontus et Bithynia (with Northern* Galatia) in fascicle 3.4 of *Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor* (Ankara: British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 2013), 58 no. 19. The earliest milestones date from Vespasian's reign; for maps of the provincial road system see pages 19–20.

Tombs of the Pontic Kings at Amasya

the primary passable road to the Black Sea coast from Cappadocia.[21] Although J. Arthur Munro called it the "alimentary canal" of the Pontic kingdom, his metaphor applies equally to the road's significance for central Asia Minor since it continues southward to the Cilician Gates and Tarsus.[22] Its democratic constitution, suppressed under the Persians, was restored by Alexander the Great in 334 BC. Under the Mithridatic kingdom, the city was enlarged and adorned. After the suicide of Mithridates VI in 63 BC, his son Pharnaces sent his body to Amisus where Pompey finally realized victory over his enemy. He later sent the corpse to Sinope to appease the divine jealousy (Plutarch, *Life of Pompey* 42.2–3). In 47 BC Julius Caesar confirmed the city's free status. Around 36 BC Mark Antony placed Amisus under the control of a local tyrant, but in 31 BC Augustus again made Amisus a free city. In the early first century AD Amisus was the limit of Roman rule with Armenia Minor to the east. Sampsames, usually identified with Amisus, was one of the cities addressed by the Roman consul Lucius on behalf of the Jews (1 Macc 15:23).

Galatia and its cities

Galatia was the region and province south of Pontus. Situated around the headwaters of the Sangarius River (modern Sakarya) and the middle tributary of the Halys River, it comprised a largely level basin in central Asia Minor. The name derives from the many Gauls who migrated from Europe in 278–277 BC to serve as mercenaries for Nicomedes I, king of Bithynia. In

21. D. R. Wilson, "The Historical Geography of Bithynia, Paphlagonia and Pontus in the Greek and Roman Periods: A New Survey with Particular Reference to Surface Remains Still Visible" (B.Litt. thesis, Oxford, 1960), 369–78.

22. J. Arthur Munro, "Roads in Pontus, Royal and Roman," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 21 (1901): 53–55.

232 BC the three Galatian tribes received fixed boundaries. The Tolistobogii were centered at Pessinus, the Tectosages at Ancyra, and the Trocmi at Tavium. In 63 BC the Tolistobogiian king Deiotarus killed his fellow rulers and became sole monarch. Individual leaders followed until Amyntas bequeathed his kingdom to Rome in 25 BC. Galatia then became a Roman province with Ancyra as its capital. The new province included not only the Galatian settlements but also Pisidia, eastern Phrygia, Lycaonia, Isaurian, and Pamphylia. In 6 BC Paphlagonia and in 3/2 BC inland Pontus were also added to Galatia.

Amasia (Amasya) is situated in the deep valley of the Iris River (Yeşilırmak) and "had a strategic position in the road system leading to the NE frontier."[23] The main north-south route also passed through the city. A milestone from Nerva's reign seemingly indicates Amasia as the *caput viae*.[24] Mithridates I established Amasia as his first capital in 301 BC. In 183 BC Pharnaces I transferred the capital to Sinope, but Amasia remained important since it hosted the shrine of the chief Pontic deity Zeus Stratios. After the Romans captured the city in 70 BC, Pompey granted Amasia city status in the newly created province of Bithynia-Pontus. In 3/2 BC Augustus attached it to Galatia, and Amasia became the capital of the region Pontus Galaticus. The geographer Strabo was born a Roman citizen of Pontic aristocracy in Amasia (approximately 64 BC–AD 23).

Zela (modern Zile) had an important temple of the Persian goddess Anaitis on its acropolis and so was part of a large temple territory ruled by priests. Outside Zela in 67 BC Mithridates VI decisively defeated Gaius Valerius Triarius and killed seven thousand of his men. In 64 BC Pompey defeated the king and established Zela as one of the eleven urban centers of Pontus. A civic organization now replaced Comanian priestly rule, and the lands of the goddess became the new civic territory. Pharnaces II usurped his father's former Pontic kingdom during the Roman civil wars but was defeated by Julius Caesar at Zela in 47 BC. This inspired Caesar's famous words to the Roman Senate: *Veni, vidi, vici* ("I came, I saw, I conquered"). Under Antony in 36 BC the city reverted to its prior temple status and was ruled by Pontic client kings. In 3/2 BC the Romans annexed Zela, which then regained its city status. The city lay on the north-south trunk road.

Cappadocia and its cities

Cappadocia was both a region and province in central Anatolia bounded on the east by the Euphrates River (modern Fırat) and on the south by the Taurus Mountains (modern Toros Dağları). Its name is believed Persian: "land of the beautiful horses." This vast treeless plateau was sparsely populated, and the Halys River flows through its northern part. Mount Argaeus (Erciyes Dağı) looms over the region, and tufa formed by volcanic activity is responsible for its "fairy chimney" moonscape. In 301 BC Cappadocia became an autonomous state with its capital established at Mazaca. Its residents were mainly agrarian shep-

23. Stephen Mitchell, "Amaseia," in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth, 4th ed. (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1993), 69.

24. David H. French, *Milestones: Cappadocia*, fascicle 3.3 of *Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor* (Ankara: British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 2012), 46–47 no. 19.

Mount Argaeus Towers over the City of Kayseri

herds and horse breeders. Hellenization was of little influence except among its rulers, so Cappadocian remained the main language. Strabo records that only two cities existed—Caesarea Mazaca and Tyana (*Geography* 12.2.7). In AD 17 Tiberius established Cappadocia as a Roman province with Caesarea (modern Kayseri) as its capital. Vespasian formed a new superprovince in AD 70 that combined Cappadocia with Galatia and Armenia Minor. Cappadocia was the home of Jewish pilgrims who were in Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9).

Caesarea Mazaca was situated on a low spur rising on the northern side of sacred Argaeus (12,851 ft. [3917 m]). The mountain is frequently depicted on Caesarea's coins. Mazaca served as a capital for Tubal and the Persians in the sixth to fourth centuries BC. Alexander passed through Cappadocia, but his general Perdiccas later secured it for the Greeks. After the death of Seleucus, an independent Cappadocian kingdom was established in 301 BC. The city was renamed Eusebeia in honor of Ariarathes V Eusebes Philopator (reigned 163–120 BC), who sought to promote Greek culture in this backwater. After sacking the city in 77 BC, Tigranes I the Great deported the residents to populate his capital Tigranocerta. The Roman general Lucullus freed them eight years later, and Pompey the Great helped with the city's reconstruction. Archelaus (36 BC–AD 17), a client king of Augustus, again made Mazaca his capital, and in 12–9 BC he changed its name to Caesarea in honor of his patron. In AD 17 Tiberius made Caesarea the capital of the new Roman province. Because of its strategic location, Caesarea served as an important transportation hub with five roads, including the main north-south trunk, converging on the city. A twice-inscribed milestone from the reigns of Titus and Nerva indicates Caesarea as the *caput viae* of the road eastward to Melitene on the Euphrates.[25]

25. French, *Milestones: Cappadocia*, 102–3 no. 66; see also 20 map 5.1. A milestone (p. 31 A7) dating around AD 100 comes from the Caesarea to Tyana route.

Galatia and its cities

The recrossing of Galatia is assumed in Peter's itinerary so coming from Caesarea Mazaca, Tavium (modern Büyüknefes) was the major city in northeast Galatia. Four major roads converged here. Tavium is the probable *caput viae* for a group of milestones dating from Nerva's reign.[26] Around 232 BC the Trocmi, the easternmost Galatian tribe, made Tavium their primary settlement. Augustus founded a colony around 22–21 BC called Sebasteni Trocmi Taviani. A Late Antique cemetery near Tavium contains both Christian and Jewish gravestones including one with a menorah in memory of Sara.[27]

Ancyra (modern Ankara) was the second metropolis of Phrygia after Gordium, and both the Persians and the Seleucids sought to control it. It was situated at the junction of seven key trade routes in northern Asia Minor. Anycra is the *caput viae* for a group of milestones found around the city that date from the reigns of Titus, Domitian, and Trajan.[28] Around 265 BC the Galatian tribe, Tectosages, made Ancyra its capital after receiving the site from the Pontic kingdom. In the early first century BC Mithradates VI Eupator took control the city until Pompey defeated him in 65 BC. After the Romans annexed Galatia in 25 BC, Augustus made Ancyra the capital of the new province also named Galatia. He founded a colony there around 22–21 BC called Sebasteni Tectosages Ancyrani.

Pessinus (modern Ballıhisar) was an important city in west central Galatia situated beneath holy Mount Dindymus. It held the shrine of the Phrygian mother goddess Cybele until the Romans moved the sacred black stone to Rome in 204 BC (Livy, *History* 29.10.4–29.11.9). In the third century BC the Tolistobogii, the westernmost Galatian tribe, made Pessinus their capital. After the Romans annexed Galatia in 25 BC, Augustus founded a colony at Pessinus around 22–21 BC naming it Sebasteni Tolistobogii Pessinuntii. Pessinus' influence and territory were reduced after Augustus founded the colony of Germa in 17 BC to the northwest. An undated inscription found on the east slope of Dindymus clearly uses the Jewish names Esther and Jacob.[29]

Asia and its cities

The Attalid dynasty ruled western Asia Minor from Pergamum from 283 to 133 BC when Attalus III bequeathed his kingdom to Rome. In 129 BC the Romans established the province of Asia whose boundaries changed considerably over time. By the first century AD it had thirteen juridical districts encompassing ancient regions from the Aegean Sea on the west to the Mediterranean on the southwest and the Propontis (modern Sea of Marmara) on

26. David H. French, *Milestones: Galatia*, fascicle 3.2 of *Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor* (Ankara: British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 2012), 68–69 no. 45(A); 70–71 no. 47; 71–72 no. 49(A); 78–79 no. 51(C); 84–85 no. 54(B); 86 no. 56; 89–91 nos. 59(B)–60. For maps of the road system in Galatia, see pages 15–16.

27. See Stephen Mitchell, *The Inscriptions of North Galatia: The Ankara District*, vol. 2 of *Regional and Epigraphic Catalogues of Asia Minor* (Oxford: BAR, 1982), 512.

28. French, *Milestones: Galatia*, 27–29 nos. 07–08; 57 no. 35; 59–60 nos. 38(A–B). The first two stones lay between Ancyra and Pessinus. French interestingly notes, "The Flavian date for the paving of the road—*viam stravit*—is some one hundred years later than the creation of the province itself" (11).

29. Mitchell, *Inscriptions of North Galatia*, 133.

Roman Theater at Nicaea

the northwest. Synnada was the assize center for the Phyrgian region of northeastern Asia. Around 35 BC Octavian guaranteed its large Jewish population the right to send the temple tax to Jerusalem. In AD 30 Jews from Asia were in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2:9), and some belonged to the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Acts 6:9).

Dorylaeum was situated at Şarhöyük (Şar mound) north of modern Eskişehir in the fertile plain of the Tembris River (modern Porsuk). Located in Phrygia Epictetus (Cicero, *For Flaccus* 17.39–41) and linked administratively to Synnada, Dorylaeum's civic territory bordered that of Bithynian Nicea.[30] Its strategic location commanded the junction of five roads, particularly from Galatia to the east and northwest into Bithynia. Controlling Dorylaeum "ensured easy passage for armies or more peaceful traffic."[31] Paul probably reached Dorylaeum on his second journey, arriving from Cotiaeum to the southwest. Here he was forbidden by the Spirit of Jesus to proceed into Bithynia (Acts 16:7).[32] If the Pauline cities in Asia west of Cappadocia are skipped and Galatia's three northern cities are visited, Silvanus would have naturally

30. A. H. M. Jones, *Cities of the Eastern Roman Empire*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 65, 160.

31. Clive Foss, "Dorylaion: Bulwark of the Byzantine Frontier," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 41 (1996): 39.

32. Glen L. Thompson and Mark Wilson, "The Route of Paul's Second Journey in Asia Minor: In the Steps of Robert Jewett and Beyond," *TynBul* 67 (2016): 230–32; for a map see 231 fig. 4. They had previously been forbidden to preach in Asia (Acts 16:6).

Roman Walls and Istanbul Gate at Nicaea

visited Dorylaeum in his circular itinerary. A funerary inscription, undated and found in Judea, mentions a rabbi named Samuel who was a synagogue leader (ἀρχισυνάγωγος, *archisynagogos*) from Phrygian Dorylaeum (*CIJ* 1414).[33]

Bithynia and its cities

Bithynia was a region and later province in northwest Asia Minor that bordered the Propontis, the Bosphorus, and the Euxine (Black) Sea. The Sangarius River provided a fertile delta, while much of its remaining landscape was mountainous and forested. The Bithynian tribe had migrated from Thrace, and in 298 BC King Zipoetes founded a local dynasty. During the reigns of Nicomedes I and II and Prusias I many cities were founded and Greek culture promoted. The last Bithynian king Nicomedes III bequeathed his kingdom to the Romans in 74 BC. However, Roman rule was not instituted until Mithridates was defeated in 72 BC. Pompey the Great in 63 BC united coastal Pontus with Bithynia to form a single senatorial province. However, each region always retained its distinct identity, hence the official double name—*Bithynia et Pontus*. Bithynia was a rich and highly civilized province. Nicomedia was its political center; Nicea its commercial one. Two important roads crossed Bithynia: one ran eastward from Nicomedia to the inner Pontic region; the second ran southeast from Nicea to Asian Dorylaeum and Galatian Pessinus and Ancyra. The latter became the main land route for European pilgrims to Jerusalem, hence was later called the Pilgrim's Road. Philo mentions the presence of Jews in Bithynia (*Embassy to Gaius* 36).

33. Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Epigraphical Rabbis," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 72 (1981): 14–15. Ameling, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*, 389–92 no. 184, prefers the restoration of Docimeum, a Phrygian city noted for its marble quarries but more isolated geographically.

Nicea (modern İznik) was situated on the eastern shore of Lake Ascania (İznik Gölü), which helped to connect to its port Cius (modern Gemlik) on the Propontis. Five roads from all directions converged here. Nicea is probably the *caput viae* of a milestone found near Gemlik that dates to Vespasian's reign.[34] The road from Nicea to Dorylaeum was of particular importance "leading as it does to the whole of southern, southeastern and indeed eastern Asia Minor."[35] Antigonus founded the Hellenistic city of Antigonia in 316 BC. After the battle of Ipsus in 301 BC, Lysimachus captured the city; he refounded and named it after his first wife Nicea. Bithynian kings controlled Nicea after Lysimachus' death in 281 BC until the arrival of the Romans in the first century BC. Nicea and Nicomedia vied for the honor of being Bithynia's principal city. In 29 BC Augustus authorized a sanctuary of Dea Roma and Divus Julius to be built in Nicea for Roman citizens (Cassius Dio 51.20.6). A Jewish inscription with menorah dates from Late Antiquity. Its Greek text of Psalm 135:25 LXX (Ps 136:25) is the longest citation of a scripture from the diaspora.[36]

Nicomedia (modern İzmit) lay at the northeastern corner of the narrow Gulf of Astacus (modern İzmit Körfezi), the eastern arm of the Propontis. Lysimachus razed the city of Astacus ("lobster") on the southern shore around 281 BC, and its residents became the first citizens of the new city founded by Nicomedes around 264 BC. With its excellent natural harbor, Nicomedia was Bithynia's major maritime port. Traffic from the Bosphorus into Asia Minor passed through the city. In 74 BC the Bithynian king bequeathed his kingdom to the Romans, who made Nicomedia their provincial capital. As the seat of the provincial assembly (κοινόν, *koinon*), it was Bithynia's most populous city. An imperial cult temple to Rome and Augustus for Greeks was built here in 29 BC (Cassius Dio 51.20.7). Dio Chrysostum's thirty-eighth oration addressed the strife between Nicomedia and Nicea generated by their fierce competition. Several Jewish inscriptions come from Nicomedia including the funerary one of Ulpia Capitylla that mentions a synagogue.[37]

Chalcedon (modern Kadıköy) was situated on the east side of the Bosphorus as Bithynia's westernmost city. This Greek colony was founded around 676 BC. The site was situated between two harbors, the modern bays of Kalamış and Kadıköy. However, Chalcedon had two disadvantages: the Bosphorus currents carried the fish toward the western shore and these same currents made it difficult to land at Chalcedon. Byzantium thus came to overshadow her sister city. Nevertheless, all traffic from the east passed through Chalcedon's port where ferries conveyed them to Byzantium. During the Roman period Chalcedon was a free city. A funerary stele of Jacob son of Leontios with a

34. French, Milestones: Pontus et Bithynia, 70–71 no. 26.

35. Wilson, "Historical Geography of Bithynia, Paphlagonia and Pontus," 338.

36. Steven Fine and Leonard V. Rutgers, "New Light on Judaism in Asia Minor," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3 (1996): 7.

37. Williams, *Jews among the Greeks and Romans*, 30 I.108; compare 34 II.4; 130 V.73; see also Ameling, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*, 324–32 nos. 154–58.

Looking Westward across the Bosphorus to Modern Istanbul (Byzantium)

menorah was found at the nearby port of Chrysopolis (modern Üsküdar).[38]

Byzantium (modern Istanbul) was located on the west side of the Bosphorus. Between 668–657 BC Greeks from Megara and Argos founded the city on seven hills across from Chalcedon. In 340/339 BC its defenders resisted the siege of Philip II of Macedonia, reputedly through the intervention of the goddess Hecate. During the reigns of Augustus, Tiberius, and Nero, Byzantium functioned as a free city. Although situated in Thrace, Byzantium was attached to the province of Bithynia and Pontus (Pliny the Younger *Epistles* 43, 44). Here Silvanus would have completed his rota, perhaps visiting a Christian community there before returning to Rome to bring Peter news of the congregations in northern Asia Minor.

CONCLUSION

Silvanus' suggested itinerary shows parallels with Paul's journeys in Acts. It follows major roads in north central Asia Minor that connected royal, religious, and tribal centers, which later became provincial and regional capitals during the Roman period. Though less populated with Jewish communities than southern and western Asia Minor, Jews were found in the major cities. Peter's first connection with these diasporan communities might date to the day of Pentecost.

Evidence for an early establishment of churches, particularly in Bithynia and Pontus, is found in two second-century sources. Pliny the Younger served as imperial commissioner to Pontus-Bithynia from AD 111–113 and wrote a letter to the Emperor Trajan (*Letters* 10.96). He described the spread of Christianity in this double province. Pliny's testimony is significant because it is the first secular source to describe the practices of early Christian congregations. The demographics of this new movement consisted of many individuals of every age, class, and gender who lived not only in towns but also in villages and rural districts. Some were even Roman citizens. He likens the spread of this "wretched cult" to an infection that must be checked. The socio-religious impact of the movement had caused temples to be deserted, sacred rituals to be neglected, and the meat of

38. Ameling, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*, 317 no. 150.

sacrificial animals to go unbought. To stem this spiritual plague, he tortured two deaconesses who were slaves and allowed others to escape persecution by having them offer wine and incense to the emperor's statue. Pliny believed that many people could be reformed if given an opportunity to repent. Yet many did not repent, for Lucian, writing a few decades later, said that Pontus was "filled with Epicureans and atheists and Christians" (*Alexander* 25). Pliny's comments show how the Christian movement had expanded both geographically and demographically less than half a century after 1 Peter was written.

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