RESEARCH ARTICLE

European Journal of Theology and Philosophy
www.ej-theology.org

Apostle Paul in Ephesus: Christianity's Clash with the Cult of Artemis

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ABSTRACT

This essay contextualizes the apostle Paul's pivotal missionary residence in Ephesus, giving particular attention to the intriguing confrontation between Paul's associates and devotees of the cult of Ephesian Artemis. The essay begins by examining aspects of the city of Ephesus and its residents that presented Paul both with unique challenges and unique evangelical opportunities. Specific attention is given to the shift in Paul's locus of evangelism, from the Ephesian synagogue to residential house churches. This is followed by an exploration of the Ephesians' distinctive adoration of Artemis. Finally, the dramatic clash between Christians and pagans in the Ephesian amphitheatre is scrutinized, with emphasis placed on the people involved and implications for the first century expansion of the Christian Church.

Keywords: Artemis, Christianity, Ephesus, House Church, Paul.

Published Online: January 25, 2023

ISSN: 2736-5514

DOI: 10.24018/ejtheology.2023.3.1.86

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I. Introduction

The apostle Paul was a crucial figure in the growth and development of the first century Christian Church. Like the other apostles, Paul was a Jew, however, unlike the other apostles, he was also a Roman citizen. Paul saw his special purpose to be sharing the *gospel* (or "good news") of Jesus Christ with both Jews and *Gentiles* (non-Jews) throughout the Roman Empire, and he set out to accomplish this goal by going on at least three missionary journeys (c. A.D. 46-48; 49-52; and 53-57). A Gentile Christian and fellow evangelist named Luke wrote the biblical book of Acts, which provides a historical narrative of Paul's journeys. But Luke also seems to be guided by two other primary intentions: 1) to document Christian *apologetics* (argumentative discourses defending Christianity in the face of Jewish and Gentile, or pagan, objections); and 2) to illustrate the triumph of Christianity over the forces of bitter persecution. This triumph was evidenced, in part, by Paul and his associates' success in planting local churches across the Roman Empire, including in major urban centres such as Rome, Athens, and Ephesus (Acts 17:32-34; 19; 20:17-21; 28:17-31 NIV).

This essay focuses on Paul's efforts during his two-year, three-month stay in Ephesus from the early months of A.D. 53 through the spring of 55, or perhaps slightly later (Acts 19:8-10; see Koester, 1995: 119) (Figs. 1, 2). Paul's stay in Ephesus, which occurred during his third missionary journey, is described in the nineteenth chapter of Acts. As Luke does through most of the book of Acts, in Acts 19 he blends historiography with theology, specifically "Pauline theology" (Shauf, 2005), which reflects not only the apostle's "integrated set of beliefs," but also Paul's commitment to put his beliefs into action, and his conception of his evangelical mission as "an activity, [or] an ongoing process" (Shauf, 2005: 45, quoting Hay, 1993, p. 136).

Most historians date the book of Acts to A.D. 63 or later, but Paul mentions Ephesus for the first time nearly a decade earlier (c. A.D. 55) in his *epistle* (or "letter") known as 1 Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:5-9, 19-20). Paul first visited the Greek city of Corinth during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-18). Paul wrote the epistle of 1 Corinthians a few years later, when he was concluding his lengthy stay in Ephesus at the end of his third mission. Paul told the Corinthians his aim was to continue onward into Macedonia and through northern Greece, before returning to Corinth, the geographical end point of his third mission. From Corinth, Paul made a circuitous return trip to Jerusalem that Luke explains in a relatively cursory manner (Acts 20-21). In many respects, the unusually lengthy and detailed story Luke tells in Acts 19 is "the climax of the Pauline mission" (Shauf, 2005, p. 87), and the final detailed report Luke provides of Paul's missionary activity. When the apostle eventually arrived in Jerusalem, after his third mission, he was arrested and then transported to Rome for trial before Caesar. Paul's ultimate fate is debated; although there is no record of it in the Bible, some early church historians maintain he was released and went on a fourth evangelical and church-planting journey that may have taken him to modern Spain (Chapman, 1908; *see* Muratorian Canon).

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Fig. 1. Paul's Third Missionary Journey.

Fig. 2. Location of ancient Ephesus.

Paul arrived in Ephesus most likely during the first few months of A.D. 53, after spending some time in the province of Galatia preaching the gospel and collecting donations for the church in Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1-4). The Christians in Jerusalem were suffering from the combined effects of a famine and persecution during the reign of the Roman emperor Claudius (10 B.C.-A.D. 54) (Acts 8:1; 11:28). From Galatia, Paul took what Luke called "the road through the interior" (Acts 19:1), the upper Phrygian route that ran from the churches established in Galatia (Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe) to the southwest and to Ephesus. Paul had been to Ephesus previously, but only briefly, during his second evangelical journey. On that occasion, Paul sailed from Corinth across the Aegean Sea to reach Ephesus (see Parvis, 1945). He then went into a synagogue and "reasoned with the Jews." When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined, but as he left Paul promised, "I will come back if it is God's will" (Acts 18:19-21). According to Luke's account, it *was* God's will for Paul to return to Ephesus and that the key city would play a major part in the growth of Christianity.

II. A Key City with a Key Role

Ephesus was "the gate by which the West [meaning Europe] visited the East," and the vantage point from which the East looked over the Aegean Sea toward the West (Ramsay, 1901: 167). Ancient Ephesus was home to approximately a quarter-million residents, making it the third largest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria. It was also the capital of the important Roman province of western Asia Minor (or Anatolia). The province was a thriving centre of commerce and trade. Ephesus possessed a bustling Aegean harbor at the mouth of the Kaystros River (Greek: Κάϋστρος), connecting Ephesus to the rest of the world, and major inland roads, connecting Ephesus to Asia Minor's interior provinces and the Near East. The Greek historian Strabo (c. 64 B.C.-A.D. 24) placed Ephesus as the most important urban centre within the Roman Empire, after the capital (Strabo, 1918). The province was also "one of the most

important geographical centres of the early Christian movement. (…) As much as half of the New Testament writings may be located to western Asia Minor" (Tellbe, 2009, p. 2). The church in Ephesus was the most significant in Asia Minor and was an ideal base from which Christian evangelists could publicize the gospel message for dissemination across Asia Minor, and to other Roman provinces and beyond. Arguably, Ephesus was "the most influential church in the world at the end of the first century A.D.", surpassing in influence even the church in Jerusalem (Beasley-Murray, 1974, p. 73).

Ephesus is mentioned frequently in the Bible; including in the book of Acts and in the epistles that Paul wrote to the Corinthians, the Ephesians, and to his associate Timothy (Ephesians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:18; 4:12). Each of these writings reflect so-called "Pauline theology" (Moo, 2021). But there is another vein of first century apostolic theology associated with Ephesus: "Johannine theology," the teachings of the apostle John contained in the Gospel of John, his epistles (1, 2, and 3 John), and the book of Revelation (Köstenberger, 2009). An ancient tradition held that soon after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, his mother Mary and the apostle John left Palestine for Ephesus, where they gathered a great number of followers in the Aegean region and Asia Minor before they died and were buried in Ephesus (Gümüs, 1998, p. 14). Though this tradition is not specifically supported within the biblical texts, it was endorsed by the early Christian apologist Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165) and by the Greek bishop Irenaeus (c. A.D. 130-202) (Justin Martyr; Irenaeus). That Irenaeus had been a student of Polycarp (A.D. 69-155), who in turn had been a student of the apostle John, adds credence to the story. In addition, the Roman Catholic Augustinian mystic, Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824) claimed to have had visions in 1818 revealing the precise location of Mary's house just outside Ephesus where she lived her final years (Emmerich, 2008, pp. 450-451). Missionaries later asserted they had followed Emmerich's descriptions and had located the remains of Mary's house (Fusaro, 2009).

Documentary evidence, particularly the *patristic* writings of the *Church Fathers*, suggests the apostle John wrote his Gospel and epistles from Ephesus c. A.D. 85 (Tellbe, 2009, p. 31-33). Additionally, the traditional view holds the apostle John wrote the book of Revelation (c. A.D. 95) after he fell victim to the oppression perpetrated against Christians during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian (A.D. 51-96), and after he was exiled to the Roman penal colony of Patmos (Revelation 1:9), an island of the Aegean just 100 km from Ephesus. In Revelation, the ascended Jesus in heaven conveyed, through John, a message to the church in Ephesus, praising the Ephesians for their perseverance, but admonishing the Ephesians for their lack of passion (Revelation 2:1-7). Although a consensus of biblical scholars agrees on the existence of a "Johannine tradition" [or 'community,' 'school,' or 'circle'] in the city of Ephesus (Tellbe, 2009, p. 35), John's theological influence was felt much later than Paul's time in the city; therefore, it will not be addressed in the remainder of this essay. It is enough to point out that, at the time of Paul's residence in Ephesus, there was neither a specific 'church' in the city nor a single line of continuity running from the founding of Apollos (see Acts 18:24-26) to the later "triumph of Johannine Christianity" (Tellbe, 2009, pp. 40-41). Rather, several diverse groups of Christians (or *Christian movements*) coexisted in Ephesus.

It was Paul's practice to establish himself in a strategic centre and plant a church that would then serve as a point from which missionaries could spread the gospel message to surrounding areas. This was his *modus operandi* in Antioch in Pisidia, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth (Acts 13:14; 17:1, 17; 18:4), and in Ephesus. Paul made Ephesus his base of operations for more than two years, longer than any of his other missionary destinations; next was probably Corinth, where he labored around eighteen months (Murphy-O'Connor, 2008, p. 210). While Paul was busy in Ephesus, he apparently sent his associates to evangelize in other nearby communities. The book of Revelation contains messages to seven churches in Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (Revelation 2-3). The fellowship in Ephesus clearly had a Pauline foundation and it seems logical to attribute the founding of the other churches to the missionary initiative of Paul's "fellow servants" in Ephesus (see Colossians 1:1-9). Each of the Asian churches were within a 192 km radius of Ephesus and were linked by excellent roads. The furthest away, Laodicea and Pergamum, could be reached on foot in just a few days (Murphy-O'Connor, 2008: 212). In addition, during his time in Ephesus, Paul sent epistles to distant groups of Christians, including the disciples in Corinth and elsewhere (Michaelis, 1928). Ephesus presented an ideal location from which to widely disseminate the gospel, because the city "experienced over its history the changing tides of political power and influence, and absorbed into its midst people of various cultures, languages, and religions" (Brinks, 2009, p. 783). New Christian converts in Ephesus could circulate the new faith through the known world.

Peter and the other apostles used a similar strategy when they first preached the gospel to a diverse, international audience assembled in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost c. A.D. 30/33 (Acts 2).

The wellbeing of the Christian community in Ephesus was so significant to Paul's distinct calling, he may have even made a special effort to revisit the city one last time near the end of his life, on an odyssey alluded to but not wholly explained in the scriptures. The book of Acts establishes Paul went on at least three missionary journeys, but many scholars contend he went on a fourth, which is not described in the Bible, sometime between A.D. 62 and the date of his martyrdom approximately five years later. This

contention is largely based upon; 1) a suggestion made by the Greek historian Eusebius (c. A.D. 260-339) that Paul was released from his Roman imprisonment (see Acts 28:16-31); 2) Paul's stated intention to go to Spain (Romans 15:24, 28); and 3) early claims Paul successfully took the gospel to Spain (see Clement of Rome's *Epistle to the Corinthians*; Muratorian Canon). Paul's final epistles were written between A.D. 64 and 67 to his associate Timothy, who was ministering in Ephesus, and to Titus, Paul's trusted companion. These indicate Paul may have been released from his imprisonment discussed in Acts 28, travelled extensively (even to Spain), and then returned to Ephesus one last time c. A.D. 66, not long before his death (see 1 Timothy 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:17; 4:6, 20; Titus 1:5; 3:12). Given the time and energy Paul expended building up the Ephesian church, such a final visit would not have come as a surprise.

III. Beyond the Synagogue: New Meeting Places for a New Faith

According to the Romano-Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (c. A.D. 37-100) and Jewish philosopher and historian Philo Judaeus of Alexandria (c. 20 B.C.-A.D. 50), "great multitudes of Jews" inhabited the cities of Asia Minor; and as many as 25,000 Jews lived in Ephesus during the first century (cited in Tellbe 2009, p. 75). During his missionary journeys, when Paul first arrived in an urban centre, he initially took the gospel message to the Jewish population, and if they rejected his teachings, he then turned to the Gentile population (see Acts 13:44-47; 18:5-6). When Paul first visited Ephesus, toward the end of his second missionary journey, he received at least some positive feedback teaching in the synagogue. Luke writes the local Jewish leaders who heard his message asked Paul "to spend more time with them," but the apostle declined because he was committed to visiting other regions (Acts 18:20). When Paul returned to Ephesus three or four years later on his third journey, he again sought out the Jewish community, but on this occasion, he encountered animosity and after being rebuffed took his gospel message to a broader, more diverse audience. Luke writes, "Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So, Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:8-10).

Despite the resistance he faced, Paul probably did not completely break off his connection with Ephesus' Jewish community; in all likelihood, he stayed in contact but in a less formal capacity. His decision to refrain from teaching daily in the synagogue in favor of holding "discussions" in the hall of Tyrannus should not be interpreted as a formal separation of Christianity from Judaism, as some have argued (Mussner, 1984, pp. 114-115). It must be noted Paul was not forced to leave the synagogue but left one particular synagogue on his own accord and he may have continued his association with other synagogues in Ephesus. However, some scholars have claimed that "Ephesus is the first place," in Acts at least, where we see the emergence of "the universal church composed of Jews and Gentiles on equal footing" (Witherington, 1998, p. 573; Shauf, 2005, p. 111).

Although ancient Ephesus has been extensively excavated, archaeologists have not yet located remains of a synagogue in which Paul may have preached. There is ample evidence though, both in biblical and other texts, that they existed. According to Flavius Josephus, around 90 B.C. the Roman governor of Asia, Gaius Julius Caesar (c. 140 B.C.-85) officially exempted the Jews living in Ephesus from compulsory military service in the Roman legions (because religious customs would not allow them to bear arms, or travel on sabbath days, or eat the military diet), and he granted Jews the freedom to assemble together for sacred and religious purposes, presumably in synagogues (Antiquities of the Jews: 14.215). Similarly, according to Philo, around A.D. 50 Caesar Claudius decreed Jews across the empire, including in Ephesus, were permitted to assemble together in compliance with their ancient customs, again, presumably including to worship in synagogues (Embassy to Gaius: 315).

Archaeologists have not definitively identified the lecture hall of Tyrannus either, though it was likely located in or around the city's gymnasium or *agora* (a public assembly area and marketplace) (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4). In each Greek city of any considerable size, philosophers, orators, and poets gave recitations and lessons in lecture halls, usually located within gymnasia. Tyrannus (Τύραννος), whose name translates as "tyrant," "prince," or "ruler," may have been a leading philosopher, orator, or rhetorician; or he may have been a Jewish rabbi, who allowed Paul to expound his controversial message in his private residence (or even his private synagogue), free from the conflict and dangers of the public synagogues (Meyer, 1869, p. 368). Some early Greek New Testament manuscripts specify that Tyrannus allowed Paul to teach in his lecture hall "from the fifth hour to the tenth," meaning from 11:00 am - 4:00 pm. This would have been the hottest part of the day when many Ephesians took a break from their labours and had free time.

Fig. 3. Ruins of the Ephesian Gymnasium

Fig.4. Ruins of the Ephesian Agora.

The Roman poets Martial (c. A.D. 38-102) and Juvenal (c. A.D. 50-120) proposed Tyrannus gave his own lectures during the cooler morning hours and rented the hall to Paul during the hotter hours at a discounted rate when it would have otherwise been vacant (Tenney, 1976, p. 832). If so, this would have allowed Paul the luxury of plying his own trade as a tentmaker during regular business hours (see Acts 18:3-4; 20:34; 1 Corinthians 4:12).

Even though Paul and other disciples had daily discussions about Christianity in the lecture hall of Tyrannus, actual worship services were held in *house churches*, a trend that only grew in later decades. By the end of the first century A.D. there were 200,000 or more full-time residents in Ephesus, and at least five hundred Christians; some say as many as 2,000 (Günther, 1995, pp. 26-27; Tellbe, 2009, p. 47). Christians were scattered across the city, apparently worshipping "in dozens or scores of house church units" (Robinson, 1988, p. 107). With several small coexisting communities of believers, gathering in dozens of independent house churches at the same time, it is possible many Christians living in Ephesus may not have been fully aware of one another (Tellbe, 2009, p. 27; Robinson, 1988, p. 107).

Aquila, a Jewish Christian who had fled from Roman persecution, and his wife Priscilla pioneered the formation of house churches in Ephesus. They first befriended the apostle Paul during his second missionary journey when he ministered in the Greek city of Corinth in c. A.D. 51 (Acts 18). Like Paul, Aquila and Priscilla were tentmakers and they invited the apostle into their home in Corinth. Paul worked and lived with Aquila and Priscilla "for some time" as he built up the fellowship (Acts 18:3-4, 18). The three then sailed together to Ephesus and again Aquila and Pricilla set up a house church (1 Corinthians 16:19). After Paul left to continue his second mission, an eloquent evangelist named Apollos came to Ephesus. Although Apollos was a passionate student of the scriptures and powerful orator, he had only learned about the baptism of John the Baptist and did not realize the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection or the relevance of Gentiles' inclusion in the faith. Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos into their home and taught him the complete gospel (Acts 18:24-26). Aquila and Priscilla were models of Christian hospitality and they demonstrated how effectively the faith could be disseminated outside synagogues or official church buildings.

When Paul returned to Ephesus on his third missionary journey, he wrote the epistle known as 1 Corinthians to the Christians of Corinth. At the end of the letter, as Paul sent his final salutations, he wrote, "The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does *the church that meets at their house* [emphasis added]" (1 Corinthians 16:19-20). The Greek word translated as "church" (ἐκκλησίᾳ transliteration *ekklēsia*) means a gathering or an assembly, in the Christian sense in a religious meeting. The phrase translated as "at their house" can mean either 1) the quarters Priscilla and Aquila occupied; or 2) the whole household or extended family that lived in one residence and formed a Christian community (Alikin, 2010, p. 50). Elsewhere in his epistle to Corinth, Paul discusses what should happen when "the whole church [meeting in Corinth] comes together" (1 Corinthians 14:23), indicating that in any given locale there might be both smaller churches meeting in homes and a larger church comprising the entire local community of Christians.

Priscilla and Aquila were one example of (seemingly relatively) well-to-do Christians who lived in an abode sufficiently ample to accommodate a small fellowship (Alikin, 2010, p. 50); other biblical examples were Gaius, Philemon, and Mary the mother of John (Acts 12:12; Romans 16:23; Philemon 2). The house church arrangement was in accord with imagery Paul used in his first letter to Timothy, where he calls the church "God's household" (1 Timothy 3:15). Christian services in house churches were most likely overseen by the host, such as Philemon in Colossae (Philemon 2) or Aquila (and Paul), in Corinth, Ephesus, and in Rome (Acts 18:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:4). In this respect, early gatherings of Christians conformed to the pattern of Greco-Roman banquets in which the host normally also served as the chairperson (Alikin, 2010, p. 69). Indeed, the form and content of early Christian gatherings in Ephesus may have followed the bipartite format of both Jewish and pagan Greco-Roman banquets. Congregants first dined and then took part in a *symposium*, which in the case of pagan gatherings might include a ceremonial feast and libations followed by various rites and prayers (Alikin, 2010, pp. 17, 19, 21-22;

Klauck, 2000, p. 44). In the case of Christian gatherings, the bipartite service may have begun with a commemoration of the Lord's Supper (or Eucharist), followed by biblical study, evangelism, and communal prayer. The phenomena of the house church appeared nearly simultaneously in multiple locations across the Roman world during the first century, when Christians, as a new social and religious group, were "seeking to establish themselves in both the physical and social landscape" of urban areas (Billings, 2011, p. 543; see Acts 2:46; 5:42; 12:12; 16:14-15; 1 Corinthians 1:11; Romans 16:3-5; Philippians 4:22). Historians have put forward the *insula* (a type of Roman multi-story apartment block) as a suitable structural locale for the first house churches, both on physical and social grounds. Insulae were a common type of mass residential architecture in Ephesus and were typically spacious enough to accommodate moderate-sized gatherings. During the two years Paul spent in Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla's abode almost certainly functioned as the physical base of the apostle's Ephesian mission (1 Corinthians 16:19); even as he lectured in Tyrannus' hall and taught from "house to house" (Acts 20:20). Priscilla and Aquila's house church may well have been within an Ephesian insula.

IV. The Cult of Ephesian Artemis

Regardless of whether Paul preached his gospel message in an insular or a lecture hall, Ephesus presented unique impediments to successfully attracting Christian converts. "Ephesus was a centre of [various religions for] centuries, and perhaps millennia, before it became a political capital" (Ramsay, 1901, p. 174). In the first century Ephesians actively participated in the Asian provincial imperial cult of the Roman emperor, formulated during the Principate of Caesar Augustus (63 B.C.-A.D. 14) (Ando, 2000), and Asia Minor's provincial cults and centres devoted to emperor worship served as models to other provinces across the Roman Empire (Mitchell, 1993, p. 100). Furthermore, the people of Ephesus, like others in the Greco-Roman world, paid homage to numerous gods and goddesses and maintained varieties of cults, particularly those of Demeter and Dionysus (Strelan, 1996, pp. 94-125). The goddess Artemis though was the city's primary protector. Various Artemis cults, "embraced by Greeks and non-Greeks alike, had spread throughout much of the known world by the first century" and there is evidence of them in Greece, Italy, France, Spain, Phoenicia, and Palestine (Brinks, 2009, p. 780). However, in the ancient world the city of Ephesus, its fervent cult of Artemis, and the city's celebrated Temple of Artemis were inseparable. The Greek traveller and geographer, Pausanias (c. A.D. 110-180) wrote, "All [Greek] cities worship Artemis of Ephesus, and individuals hold her in honour above all gods. The reason, in my view, is the renown of the Amazons [the female warriors who according to legend founded Ephesus and dedicated her cult statute], also the extreme antiquity of [her] sanctuary. Three other points as well have contributed to her renown: the size of the temple, surpassing all buildings among men; the eminence of the city of the Ephesians; and the renown of the goddess who dwells there" (Jones, 1918, p. 4.31.8).

Ephesians took comfort in believing Artemis protected their city and helped feed its residents, through her control over nature. To show appreciation, Ephesians devoted theatrical performances to the goddess' exploits and held annual festivals in her honour. They also venerated Artemis by parading her likeness through the streets along the official processional way that ran from one of Ephesus' major gateways to the other, leading onward to the Temple of Artemis. These processions continued beyond the end of the first century A.D., and are described in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch (c. 108-140) (Murphy-O'Connor, 2008, p. 76).

The famed Temple of Artemis, home to the goddess' cult statue, sat on a flat plain about 2 kilometres from the centre of ancient Ephesus. The temple's best-known phase was constructed during the Classical period, beginning c. 323 B.C. This immense structure was included among the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and measured approximately 140 metres long, 70 metres wide, and with a roof supported by 127 20-metre-high columns. Within the temple sat Artemis's cult image, which may have been carved by the sixth century B.C. Greek sculptor Endoeus (Jones, 1918, pp. 10.38.6). Ephesian industry was inextricably tied to the sanctuary and the cult of Artemis. Cultic rituals provided livelihoods to priests and prostitutes, though cultic prostitution probably ceased by the first century (Baugh, 1999).

The cult also supported a commercial class of artisans, including a guild of metalsmiths who produced small "shrines" (ναοὺς transliteration *naiskoi*) and statuettes of Artemis, which they sold to residents of Ephesus, pilgrims, and tourists, who carried their figurines home as prized souvenirs (Williams, 1994; Fleischer, 1973). Ephesus emerged as a major centre of metallurgy and the production of metallic jewellery and figurines by the second half of the seventh century B.C., and art historians specializing in ancient Greek cultic practices have confirmed that worshippers placed large amounts of gold and other metallic jewellery on the cult statue at the sanctuary of Artemis as offerings (Williams, 1994, pp. 12, 85). In addition, gold and silver coins, bearing images of the Temple of Artemis, were minted in Ephesus for centuries, before, during, and after the first century A.D. (Brinks, 2009, pp. 784-785). Throughout the Greek world, Artemis was revered as the twin sister of Apollo, the daughter of the king of the gods Zeus, and the guardian of the

wilderness (Ferguson, 1970; Kampen, 2003). Ephesians though, considered their city as Artemis' birthplace and therefore *Ephesian Artemis*, their great mother goddess and protectress, had a special relevance and sculptors and artisans represented her with special attributes. In the book of Acts, an Ephesian official asks, "Doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven?" (Acts 19:35). One researcher thought the phrase "fell from heaven" implied the cult statue of Artemis had been partially carved from aerolite (the stony or metallic remains of a fallen meteoroid) (Fouard, 1908, p. 291, n. 1). Whatever the case, the famous sculpture "which fell from heaven" and was once housed in Artemis' sanctuary, has been lost and only ancient writings and surviving derivative works help us imagine the appearance of the original cultic image.

The earliest cult sculpture of Ephesian Artemis, which may have been later copied by Endoeus, was an archaic, pre-Hellenic wooden form decorated with jewels. The statue would have had more in common with representations of Near-Eastern and Egyptian mother goddesses, such as Cybele, Astarte, Ishtar, and Mut, than Classical deities (Brinks, 2009, p. 778; Fleischer, 1973). Anatolians were greatly influenced by Egypt. Indeed, the influence of the Greco-Egyptian kings, or Ptolemies (c. 305-30 B.C.), "in the eastern waters of the Aegean Sea, affected Ephesus to such an extent that she became one of the stations for the Egyptian fleet, and a recruiting centre for mercenary soldiers in the Egyptian service" (Parvis, 1945, p. 66). Egyptian idolatry and the form of Egyptian idols impacted Ephesian religious practices and the style of the Ephesian Artemis.

Surviving depictions of Ephesian Artemis are eclectic mixtures of a regional Asian (or Anatolian) style, and broader Egyptian and Hellenistic (or Greek) aesthetics (Fig. 5 and Fig. 6). Her body's streamlined form resembles a sarcophagus or coffin, reflecting Egyptian or even Cycladic influences. Typically, Artemis was flanked by two animals, often stags. Because she was believed to play special roles both in animal fertility and human child-bearing, Artemis was often portrayed holding a basket in her outstretched arms, from which oval-shaped swellings cascaded down her body. These forms were once thought to represent multiple mammary glands, or a "polymastic nature." The Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar also "wore necklaces adorned with egg-shaped beads" that may have inspired "the egg-shaped breasts of Ephesian Artemis" (Brinks, 2009, pp. 779-780). However, many historians now believe the swellings actually denote sacrificial bull scrota (LiDonnici, 1992; Seiterle, 1979), which also symbolized procreation.

Fig. 5. Ephesian Artemis, c. A.D. 100-300. Mainz Zentralmuseum.

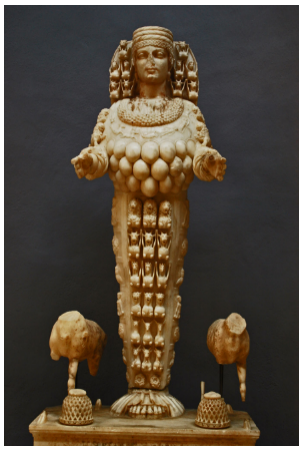

Fig. 6. Statue of Artemis, c. A.D. 100. Ephesus Museum, Selcuk, Turkey.

As an aside, it should be noted that some modern historians envision Artemis as a symbol of the Greek "spirit of conservation [and primarily as] a formidable protectress of animals and plants" (Hughes, 1990: 191). Representations of a special "lady of the beasts" occur long before the first century, in the early art of the Neolithic period in Anatolia. A goddess figure enthroned between two lionesses dating to c. 6000 B.C. was found at the proto-city settlement of Çatalhöyük, and not far away, craftsmen of Minoan Crete made similar ceramic statues of a goddess holding a snake in each hand and with a cat perched on her head (c. 1500 B.C.). These prototypical mother goddesses displayed "attributes of fecundity and reproductive sexuality [that] persisted into the classical Greek period" and "the many-breasted [depictions of] Artemis of the Ephesians" (Hughes, 1990, p. 192). The main cultic version of Ephesian Artemis, as copied by Greco-Roman sculptors, was also covered with small animals carved in high relief emphasizing her fecundity and role as the mother of living creatures.

Although Artemis was worshipped across the Greek cultural world, "the goddess was not transformed into a [purely] Greek deity [in Ephesus or elsewhere. Rather,] she remained an Anatolian deity both in character and in the rituals by which she was worshipped" (Parvis, 1945, p. 64).

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V. Paul Refutes Paganism and Battles (Figurative?) Beasts

The apostle Paul was a well-educated Roman citizen and he was acquainted with Greek philosophy and worldviews (Dunn, 2003, pp. 19-23). When he evangelized in centres of Greek learning he appealed to the understanding of the local populous. For example, in Athens, a city that was "full of idols" (Acts 17:16), he engaged a group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers on the *Areopagus* (the "hill of Ares"), where Athenian custodians of learning discussed the Greek pantheon, foreign gods, and new religions. Paul pointed out to the philosophers that there was an altar in Athens with the inscription "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD," and he reasoned this might refer to the God of Christianity. Paul explained though, "we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone – an image made by man's design" (see Acts 17:16-34). Then, perhaps looking at Athens' magnificent sanctuaries, Paul emphatically declared, "The God who made the world and everything in it (…) does not live in temples built by hands." The apostle even quoted the Greek pagan poets Epimenides (c. 600 B.C.) and Cleanthes (c. 331-233 B.C.) to explain man's relation to the God of Christianity: "in him we live and move and have our being (…) We are his offspring" (Acts 17:24, 28).

In Ephesus, as in Athens, Paul encountered a culture of *polytheists*, "acting within the theological and ritual parameters of civic religion" (Rogers, 2012, p. 15). Paul was perhaps the first, though not the last, to appropriate "public knowledge" about the practices, activities, and beliefs of Greek pagan cults to speak about and differentiate the beliefs of Christian adherents and the characteristics of the Christian deity. For instance, Paul borrowed the terminology of the pagan cults, including the cult of Artemis, and he "repeatedly asserted the reality of the rising of the dead (*anastasis nekron*)" and the mysterious [or *musterion*] apocalyptic coming of the Lord (Rogers, 2012, p. 15). Another early Christian writer, Ignatius of Antioch used a similar strategy. One noted historian has written that Paul and Ignatius successfully co-opted "the memes of polytheism [and successfully] pulled apart the ritual and theological components of the mystery cults [to evangelize about the] quite different memeplex of Christianity" (Rogers, 2012, pp. 287-288).

Although, like the Athenians, the Ephesians were polytheistic, unlike in Athens, in Ephesus Paul was obligated to teach against the residents' special devotion to a specific pagan deity, Artemis. In the letter Paul wrote to the church in Corinth from Ephesus, when he was preparing to end his residency there, he asked rhetorically, "If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained?" (1 Corinthians 15:32). The phrase "I fought wild beasts" has usually been interpreted in one of three ways: 1) as a reference to a fight against actual animals in the Ephesian amphitheatre; 2) as a general metaphor for confrontations with religious adversaries; or 3) "in the context of popular philosophy (…) to describe the struggle of the wise man against his desires and emotions" (Koester, 1995, p. 120; Malherbe, 1968, pp. 71-80; for analysis of the relevant Greek terminology see Malherbe, 1968; Frayer-Griggs, 2013).

There is a fourth possibility. Paul's characterization of his efforts in Ephesus as a fight against wild animals may specifically refer to his theological attack on Artemis' legitimacy and on her recognized association with fauna (Hooker, 2013, pp. 37-46). In the Bible, God's enemies are often referred to metaphorically as wild animals (see Isaiah 56:9; Philippians 3:2). In 1 Corinthians Paul seems to envision himself as a spiritual gladiator in combat with evil beasts in an arena, and the end of Acts 19 gives a sense of that type of fierce, even violent, atmosphere. However, according to Luke, Gaius and Aristarchus were the men forced to face an angry, even blood-thirsty, pagan mob in the Ephesian amphitheatre, not Paul. This indicates that in 1 Corinthians the apostle may have been making a more exact statement about the cult of Artemis. Artemis (and her Roman counterpart Diana) were thought to exercise control over all wild animals, on the land, the air, and in the sea (Burkert, 1985, p. 149). In his epic poem *The Iliad*, Homer calls Artemis the "Mistress of the Beasts," "Lady of the Wilds," and "Mistress of the Bow" (Iliad Book 21). Artemis had a well-known reputation for fierceness, and aggressiveness, the characteristics of many wild creatures, which was reflected in literature, art, and the popular imagination. Artemis commanded the wild beasts, but her strength excelled over theirs. This may explain why Paul would have imagined his spiritual confrontation specifically with the cult of Artemis and her followers as similar to a literal fight with animals (Hooker, 2013, p. 44).

VI. The Literal Conflict

Paul may have envisioned himself as akin to the early Christians in Rome who were subject to *damnatio ad bestias* (Latin for "condemnation to beasts"), a form of capital punishment in which the condemned person was killed by animals. The emperor Nero (A.D. 37-68) persecuted Christians in this way (Tacitus, Annals: XV.44). Nero's notorious paranoia concerning Christians may have been based upon their tendency to worship in private or at night (*collegium illicitum* or *coetus nocturni*), which he may have interpreted as evidence of sedition or conspiring to riot. Another issue was the refusal of Christians to participate in either the cult of the emperor or in state-sanctioned pagan cults and their rituals. The latter transgression, offending

cultic practices, brought Paul and his Christian associates into harm's way in Ephesus, and set up a high-stakes confrontation between Christianity and paganism, and between the God of Christianity and Ephesian Artemis. Luke writes the confrontation began after Paul had already been in Ephesus for close to two years: "About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: 'You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty'" (Acts 19:23-27).

Biblical historians generally agree that this disturbance occurred during the late winter or early spring of A.D. 55. Some surmise that Paul remained in Ephesus for a second year so he could be present for the annual festive holidays (ἐκεχειρία transliteration *ekecheiria*) that were held in Artemis' honour for several continuous weeks during March and April and for the celebration of Artemis' birthday held in May, known as *Thargelion*. Throngs flocked to Ephesus for these annual rites as much for pleasure as for religion, and for weeks, day and night, "Ephesus rang with revelry and drinking songs" (Fouard, 1908, p. 286). During the festivities, hunters and breeders came to Artemis' temple to offer sacrifices of their finest game and cattle, and the temple's guardians poured libations freely and sang hymns of worship as devotees placed a crown on the cultic statue (Hughes, 1990, p. 194). These celebrations were "significant not only for religious and social reasons but also for economic ones, as hordes of people streamed to Ephesus to participate" (Brinks, 2009: 784). The Temple of Artemis was "probably the most important economic factor in the city" (Brinks, 2009: 781-782; Shauf, 2005: 244), and craftsmen, such as the silversmith Demetrius, capitalized on the annual influx.

The prominent English archaeologist John T. Wood (1821-1890), who excavated the ruins of the Temple of Artemis and recovered numerous shattered sculptures which he sent back to the British Museum in London, supposed, "St. Paul, during his three years' sojourn at Ephesus, doubtless often gazed upon [the Temple of Artemis] with admiration, at the same time that he deplored its consecration to the worship of a heathen goddess" (Wood, 1877, p. 272). Paul may have realized during his first year in Ephesus, when he saw the multitudes taking part in the festivals devoted to Artemis, that the celebrations presented ideal opportunities to publicise his message to Asia Minor's wider provincial community and to international visitors.

Demetrius, the rabble-rousing silversmith described in Acts 19:23-27, made his living from crafting silver shrines for the cult of Artemis. These are believed to have been small, portable shrines featuring a cupped enclosure with a small figurine resembling the cultic statue of Artemis enclosed. According to Luke, the success of Demetrius' trade was threatened by the success of Paul's evangelization. The quotation Luke attributes to Demetrius when he called together his fellow craftsmen insinuates dual motives. He said, "You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. And [Paul's effective proselytizing and his censure of idolatry has created a] danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself (…) will be robbed of her divine majesty" (Acts 19:25-27).

A cynic might understandably believe Demetrius was more concerned about his source of income than he was about defending the dignity of Artemis. It must be noted though, at least as an aside, there is one bit of archaeological evidence that could suggest Demetrius had purer motives. Anglican Bishop, Edward Lee Hick (1843-1919) took part in deciphering the Ephesian inscriptions on objects John Wood sent back to the British Museum. Among the inscriptions, Canon Hicks believed he found the name of Demetrius on a marble slab discovered in the immediate vicinity of the Temple of Artemis. The marble slab designated a man named Demetrius as a guardian of the temple or temple-warden (*neopoios*). He may have been more than a mere maker of saleable shrines (Biblical notes, 1890). If Demetrius had priest-like functions in the temple, it might indicate his attack on Paul's message had a more sincere religious purpose, rather than a purely financial one.

Paul's general mission and the emphatic lessons he delivered daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus presented the people of the city with a blunt choice. They could continue their devotion to Ephesian Artemis, who was "worshipped throughout the province of Asia and the world" (Acts 19:27), or they could turn to the way of the Christian God. By the time Demetrius called on his fellow craftsmen to take action, Paul had already been preaching in Ephesus for two years, "so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:10). Given how dependent the Ephesian economy was on the cult of Artemis, Christianity's progressing growth in the city presented a real threat to the goddess, and an equivalent "threat to the city [and the] businesses related to the goddess and her temple" (Brinks, 2009, p. 787).

As the relevance of Demetrius' incendiary words began to register in the minds of his fellow craftsmen

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and other people of the city, a *mob mentality* took over. "[The people grew] furious and began shouting: 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!' Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and all of them rushed into the theatre together. (…) The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there" (Acts 19:28-29, 32).

Along with its massive Temple of Artemis, Ephesus was well-known for its enormous amphitheatre (the largest in the world), which was cut into terraces along the side of Mount Koressos and had a capacity of tens of thousands of spectators (Fig. 7). The theatre was begun during the reign of Lysimachus (c. 360-281 B.C.), a Thessalian officer and successor of Alexander the Great who became King of Asia Minor, but it was greatly expanded during the Roman period. Ephesians filled the theatre for entertainment (including gladiatorial and animal combat) and to hear political, philosophical, and religious discussions. Adjacent to the theatre were gymnasia, baths, a library, and lecture facilities, likely including the hall of Tyrannus where Paul taught for two years.

Fig. 7. The theater in Ephesus.

Luke does not record how many people poured into the theatre, but a threat to Artemis would have been perceived as a threat to the city as a whole, and the numbers could well have been in the thousands. In essence, the assembled multitude stood for all Ephesians, or the "community of citizens" and all their rights (πολιτεία transliteration *politeia*). The "citizen body" was no abstraction in antiquity. "It became a reality by assembling on frequent occasions in the great theatres and hippodromes … an enduring feature of Roman urban life." Seated row upon row, "the theatre crowd *was* the city and it made its wishes known to the governors "by means of orchestrated acclamations" (Brown, 1992, pp. 84-85).

VII. Gaius, Aristarchus, and Alexander

Luke's account implies that the citizens who assembled in the theatre demanded that Paul appear and defend himself; they may have even sent a band of representatives to Paul's dwelling to force him to appear. However, the situation had become too dangerous and the apostle's disciples and "even some of the officials of the province [who were] friends of Paul" persuaded him "not to venture into the theatre" (Acts 19:30-31). The people then seized Paul's associates, Gaius and Aristarchus, and brought them to the floor of the theatre to justify their actions (Acts 19:29). Gaius and Aristarchus were Paul's traveling companions during his third missionary journey. It is uncertain whether they were Jewish or Gentile converts to Christianity. They were both from Macedonia, a small kingdom located in northern Greece. Aristarchus came from Macedonia's capital city of Thessalonica (Acts 27:2). The Bible says less about Gaius than Aristarchus. After the uproar in Ephesus, Aristarchus accompanied Paul on a three-month journey through Macedonia, and a few years later he went with Paul on his initial journey to Rome.

Aristarchus was even imprisoned with Paul in Rome (Acts 20:4; 27:1-2; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:23-24), and an early church tradition holds both Gaius and Aristarchus were martyred during the reign of Nero. It is uncertain whether Gaius and Aristarchus were able to address the people assembled in the theatre, or whether the people assembled really even wanted to hear what they had to say, as the scene descended into disorder and chaos. First, the protestors directed their anger at Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's surrogates and the embodiment of Christianity, which many considered a dangerous Jewish sect. Then, the protestors turned their wrath against the Jews generally (Fouard, 1908, p. 289). Jewish leaders in the theatre "pushed [a man named] Alexander to the front (…) [and] he motioned for silence in order to make a defence before the people. But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!'" (Acts 19:33-34). One can only speculate what Alexander might have said.

Maybe he wished to disassociate the Jewish community from the Christian troublemakers and explain all Jews should not be held responsible for the behaviour of a few, or maybe he wished to voice additional complaints about Paul and his companions. Whatever the case, the rioters refused to listen.

Biblical scholars have deliberated on the identity and precise position of Alexander, and why he was chosen to speak on behalf of the Jews of Ephesus. Paul may have provided some answers in his epistles. When Paul was facing imminent martyrdom, probably in Rome (c. A.D. 66-67), he wrote a letter to his disciple Timothy, who was ministering in Ephesus. Paul encouraged Timothy to persevere with his ministry and to continue preaching, even though the church was facing severe persecution during the reign of Nero. At the end of his letter Paul writes, "Alexander the *metalworker* [emphasis added] did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message" (2 Timothy 4:14-15). In another letter to Timothy, Paul again referenced a man named Alexander. Paul urged Timothy to hold onto "faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and *Alexander* [emphasis added], whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme" (1 Timothy 1:19-20).

The word translated as "metalworker" (χαλκεύς transliteration *chalkeus*) in 2 Timothy 4:14, suggests a link between Alexander and the silversmith Demetrius who incited the furore in the theatre of Ephesus. Perhaps the Jewish leaders selected Alexander to speak on their behalf because he was Jewish, a metalworker by trade, and had a positive relationship with Demetrius and other silversmiths. Furthermore, among the residents of Ephesus, Alexander may have had an ambiguous connection to Paul (and Paul's teachings) and Alexander could therefore contend that not all Jews presented a challenge to the cult of Artemis. Regardless of Alexander's social standing though, the people assembled in the theatre refused to listen to his arguments, perhaps realizing that neither Christians nor Jews worshipped Artemis.

After considering Acts 19 and Paul's epistles to Timothy, one writer has postulated that Alexander was an influential Jewish metalworker in Ephesus who initially had been open to the gospel message. This would have made him a natural liaison between Demetrius and the silversmiths and Paul and the Christians, and would have made Alexander an obvious choice to address the rioters in the theatre. The writer further postulates, however, that sometime later Alexander then rejected the gospel and began to oppose the church in Ephesus. That would explain why Paul would then have warned Timothy, who was pastoring in Ephesus, to be leery of Alexander and the damage he had done to the cause of Christ (Houdmann, 2022).

VIII. The Gravity of Rioting

A large and disorderly crowd had taken over the theatre and carried on protesting intensely for hours. Fuelled by collective religious indignation and perceived threats to a major source of revenue, it must have seemed like the mob might turn to violent acts of retribution or destruction of property. Before any of this happened though, a government official stepped forward and called for calm. The "city clerk" succeeded in quieting the people, then he said: "'Fellow Ephesians, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the *guardian of the temple* [νεωκόρος transliteration *neōkoros*] of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to calm down and not do anything rash. You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of what happened today. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it.' After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly" (Acts 19:35-41).

The term "city clerk" is a translation of the Greek γραμματεύς (transliteration *grammateus*). Although the roles of such a magistrate varied from province to province, in Ephesus the city clerk was one of the most important functionaries (Koester, 1995, p. 130); he presided at public meetings, directed municipal affairs, and reported directly to the Roman proconsul. The protestors in the theatre had good reason to heed the city clerk's warnings (Fouard, 1908, p. 290), and he was correct about the proper venue for the protestors to voice their concerns. Ephesus was a capital of one of Rome's senatorial provinces and was governed by civilian governors known as proconsuls (ἀνθύπατος transliteration *anthypatos*). Proconsuls could exercise jurisdiction over all civilian and criminal complaints. The proconsul of Asia from A.D. 55-56 was Marius Cordus. There is no record of Paul appearing before Marius Cordus, but previously (in c. A.D. 53) the apostle had preached the word of God to the proconsul of the island of Cyprus, "an intelligent man" named Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:6-7).

The city clerk was also prudent to warn the protestors that they were at risk "of being charged with rioting." To some, "riot[ing]" (from στάσις transliteration *stasis*) may seem like a minor offense, but in antiquity, it was directly related to the seemingly more serious offense of "insurrection," an uprising against

an established authority or government. In Greek and Roman societies rioting was considered a major breach of civic peace and under Roman law it was punishable by beatings, imprisonment, and even capital punishment (Rapske, 1994: 118; see Mark 15:7). The protest initiated by Demetrius at first involved acceptable "orchestrated acclimations" by a "community of citizens." But then it devolved into something more unpredictable and dangerous (Brown, 1992, pp. 84-85); uncontrolled protests or riots, fuelled by intense emotions, can turn violent, particularly when participants do not fully understand the issues at stake or, to borrow Luke's words, do not "even know why they [are] there" (Acts 19:32). There are many examples in the Bible of great harm resulting from an uncontrolled mob mentality (Matthew 27:20; Mark 15:11-14; Acts 17:5; 2 Corinthians 6:5) and the scriptures consistently condemn rioting as a form of unacceptable lawlessness.

IX. Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, in the book of Acts Luke seems to be guided by twin objectives: 1) documenting apostolic discourses that defend the Christian faith against flawed doctrine or competing belief systems; and 2) documenting narratives that illustrate the triumph of Christianity in the face of persecution. Luke devoted the first half of Acts 19, which is not covered in detail in this essay, primarily to the first objective; but Luke devoted his "riot in Ephesus" section to the second objective. Luke presents a stark contrast between the Ephesians who worshipped Artemis, on the one hand, and the Christians who worshipped the Christian God, on the other hand. The religious motivations of Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen seem to have been undermined, to some degree at least, by financial self-interest. And even though the other Ephesians assembled in the theatre apparently sincerely venerated Artemis, they eventually lost sufficient self-control and degenerated into an unruly mob. Some "did not even know why they were there." On the contrary, the Christians are characterized as unjustly victimized, and the city clerk summarily proclaims that Gaius and Aristarchus had neither desecrated the temple "nor blasphemed our goddess [Artemis]." After finally subduing the demonstrators with his voice of reason, the city clerk finally "dismisses the assembly" (Acts 19:41). The pagan throng returns to their shops and homes unrewarded, maybe even embarrassed, and the Christians emerge from the arena victorious to continue evangelizing. Luke's clear implication is that Artemis, who was esteemed above all gods and goddesses in Ephesus, was in the process of being eclipsed entirely by the God proclaimed by Paul and the other Christians (Brinks, 2009, p. 793; Shauf, 2005, p. 263; Trombley, 1995, p. 145).

One author described the riot in Ephesus as the "death cry" of the cult of Artemis, "the thousand-year-old goddess of Anatolia" (Gümüs, 1998, p. 15), and it is true that in following decades Artemis' temple, statues, and other physical traces of her cult fell into disuse and ruin.

By A.D. 112, the Roman magistrate and historian Pliny the Younger (c. A.D. 61-113) reported to the emperor Trajan (A.D. 53-117) that the Christian faith posed a serious threat to pagan rituals, and that because of the rise of Christianity cultic temples had been "almost deserted" (Firth, 1900, p. 10.96).

Fig. 8. Ruins of Temple of Artemis at Ephesus.

The adoration of Ephesian Artemis actually suffered a slow death though, lingering on into the third century. Late in the reign of the Roman emperor Gallienus (c. 218-268), an enormous marauding Gothic fleet attacked and laid waste to Ephesus. Warriors set the Temple of Artemis on fire and the famed ancient sanctuary was finally destroyed (Fig. 8). The temple was never rebuilt and the old cultic practices were never revived. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that Paul's missionary residence in Ephesus, including the pivotal clash in the amphitheatre, was a key turning point in the ultimate downfall of Artemis.

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