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PHILIPPI

In its introduction to Philippians, *The NIV Study Bible* has the following entry under the heading 'Recipients'.

> The city of Philippi was named after King Philip II of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great. It was a prosperous Roman colony, which meant that the citizens of Philippi were also citizens of the city of Rome itself. They prided themselves on being Romans (see Ac. 16.21), dressed like Romans and often spoke Latin. No doubt this was the background for Paul's reference to the believer's heavenly citizenship (3.20–21). Many of the Philippians were retired military men who had been given land in the vicinity and who in turn served as a military presence in this frontier city. That Philippi was a Roman colony may explain why there were not enough Jews there to permit the establishment of a synagogue and why Paul does not quote the OT in the Philippian letter.[1]

This description draws on a long history of scholarship on Philippians.[2] It uses a number of the major conclusions that can be drawn from the archaeological investigation of Philippi and from reading the key classical texts relevant to Philippi. The description provides a general impression of the Philippian Christians which will inform the reader's hearing of the text – an obvious example being the passage which it cites, Philippians 3.20–1. However, the impression given is false. It represents a radical misunderstanding

[1] *The NIV Study Bible* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987 UK edn), p. 1767.

[2] E.g., J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Macmillan, 1885 edn), p. 52; Gerhard Friedrich, 'Der Brief an die Philipper', *Die kleineren Briefe des Apostels Paulus*, H. W. Beyer et al. (NTD (9th edn) VIII; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), p. 106; G. F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (Waco: Word, 1983), pp. xxxiii–iv. After their first occurrence, commentaries on Philippians will be cited by name of author alone.

of the nature of a Roman colony like Philippi and of the kind of church likely to be found in such a setting.

To try to gain a reasonable impression of the nature of the Philippian church we need to build a model of the likely social make-up of that church. To do that, we need first to build a model of the social make-up of the town. To do that, we need first to model the development of the Roman colony of Philippi from its founding in 42 BC to the period, in the middle of the first century AD, when Philippians was written.

We will have to deal with estimating some figures. This seems strange when our aim is only 'to gain a reasonable impression'. However, it is unavoidable. The paragraph quoted above could be taken as being, in a literal sense, correct in stating that 'Many of the Philippians were retired military men'. I would estimate the number as being of the order of one hundred (see below). This is 'many' – but it is less that 1 per cent of the population. Without some consideration of numbers it is all too easy – and scholars have often done it – to slip from knowing that one has evidence of the existence of a particular type of person in a city to thinking that that type constituted a substantial proportion of the population. This tendency is greatly exacerbated in a case such as Philippi where the main thing that most scholars know about the city is that it was a Roman veteran colony.

Estimated figures may be subject to a wide range of uncertainty and yet still be useful. The factors in the estimate for veteran soldiers could vary a great deal yet still lead to the same conclusion about the veterans' numerical insignificance. Similarly, my estimate for the proportion of slaves in the population is 15–30 per cent. The upper figure is twice the lower one but the estimate is still useful for envisaging life in Philippi. If you lived in Philippi you would meet slaves every day. On the other hand they would not constitute a majority of the population. We can also then use our estimate for slaves as one component in a calculation of whether most Philippians were probably Roman citizens or not. The result of that calculation can then help in deciding whether Paul's news about heavenly citizenship was addressed primarily to those who already had an earthly citizenship or to those for most of whom citizenship of Philippi was an unattainable goal. In fact, even if we cannot decide on the answer to that question, the process of reflecting on the likely social composition of Philippi, and then of the church, will already have opened our eyes to the

vital fact that there are two such groups, citizens and non-citizens, to be considered.

1. Looking at Philippi

To understand an ancient city such as Philippi we need to draw evidence both from the city itself and from further afield. Most of the features which are seen at Philippi are common to many Graeco-Roman cities. Evidence on the nature of such a feature (for example, the role of slaves) can, with caution, be drawn from many locations even though they are dispersed geographically and, to an extent, temporally. Some of Philippi's features are more specifically characteristic of Roman colonies. In fact, we need to be more specific than this because *colonia* covers a range of types of city including, from the first century AD onwards, a rapidly expanding group of cities which gained the title solely as an honour. Philippi has features characteristic of citizen colonies of the larger type which were set up during the late Republic and early Empire.[3] In some features, Philippi exceeds most other cities or colonies. The persistence of its Romanness is the best example. Finally, some features are special to it alone. These include its ethnic mix and its location, which has peculiarities in terms of agriculture, history and transport.

a. Archaeological investigation and reports

Philippi has undergone substantial archaeological investigation. Most of the recent attention has been on the Christian centre of the city, particularly under the auspices of the University of Thessaloniki. The early imperial period, with interest centred on the Antonine Forum area, has been the responsibility of the École Française at Athens. The main excavation here was carried out between the two World Wars and is summarised in Paul Collart's *Philippes, Ville de Macédoine: depuis ses origines jusqu'à la fin de l'époque romaine* (1937). Collart's work remains fundamental for any study of Philippi and all subsequent scholars on Philippi are in debt to him. His work has directed me to many of the primary sources which I have been able to consider in this study. Buildings

[3] See E. T. Salmon's tracing of types of colony founded at various times in his *Roman Colonization under the Republic* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1969).

of a later date among or near the early Roman ones are reported in Paul Lemerle's *Philippes et la Macédoine Orientale à l'époque chrétienne et byzantine* (1945), which also considers Paul's time in and contacts with Philippi. These two books gather data which was largely reported in more detail in various issues of the *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*, which continues to publish articles and reports on studies of the forum and elsewhere by M. Sève, P. Weber and other scholars, who are mainly engaged in analytical work. Three important recent articles are on a revised plan of the forum (1982),[4] on a reconstruction of the way in which the north side of the forum was dominated by monumental buildings uphill from it (1986)[5] and on the discovery of a large monument from the Livia cult (1988).[6] Much of this recent work is gathered together in Sève's study on the development of the forum at Philippi, *Recherches sur les Places Publiques dans le monde Grec du Premier au Septième Siècle de Notre Ère: L'exemple de Philippes* (1989, 1990).

At the time of Collart and Lemerle's books, formal publication of the inscriptions from Philippi was announced as fairly imminent. In fact, the first volume, covering the unique mass of reliefs carved into the hill at the base of which Philippi was built, did not appear until 1975[7] and the remaining volumes are still awaited. Peter Pilhofer has provided substantial interim help with this in his *Habilitationsschrift* for which he gathered all the inscriptions available. His first published volume, *Philippi I: Die erste christliche Gemeinde Europas* (1995), gives his historical and exegetical results. The second volume will be a catalogue of the inscriptions from Philippi. Two other scholars who have done substantial work on Philippi are D. Lazarides, in particular in his 1973 book, Φίλιπποι-Ρωμαική ἀποικία, and Fanoula Papazoglou, especially her 1988 *Les Villes de Macédoine à l'époque Romaine*. More recently, Chaido Koukouli-Chrysantaki has gathered material on the colony in his paper for a 1993 symposium on Paul and Philippi.[8] Among the

[4] M. Sève, 'Philippes', *BCH* 106 (1982), pp. 651–3.
[5] M. Sève and P. Weber, 'Le côté Nord du forum de Philippes', *BCH* 110 (1986), pp. 531–81.
[6] M. Sève and P. Weber, 'Un monument honorifique au forum de Philippes', *BCH* 112 (1988), pp. 467–79.
[7] Paul Collart and Pierre Ducrey, *Philippes I: Les Reliefs Rupestres* (BCH Supp. II; Paris, 1975).
[8] Chaido Koukouli-Chrysantaki, 'Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis', in C. Bakirtzis and H. Koester, eds., *Philippi at the Time of Paul and after His Death* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998).

various Biblically oriented guides to Philippi, the most substantial is Winfried Elliger's *Paulus in Griechenland: Philippi, Thessaloniki, Athen, Korinth* (1978, 1987). Lilian Portefaix's book, *Sisters Rejoice: Paul's Letter to the Philippians & Luke-Acts as Received by First-century Philippian Women* (1988) also discusses Philippi in some detail, especially the rock reliefs, in which she follows the work of Valerie Abrahamsen.[9] Lukas Bormann, in *Philippi: Stadt und Christengemeinde zur Zeit des Paulus* (1995), discusses Philippi with particular reference the town's 'self-understanding'.

Two recent books which are not on Philippi help to put into perspective the evidence from there and the issues involved in employing it. Susan Alcock's book, *Graecia Capta: The Landscapes of Roman Greece* (1993), considers the experience of Greeks in Achaia under the early Empire. It particularly brings together and assesses the implications of the results of the technique of 'pedestrian surface survey' (a very controlled survey of a district looking for fragments of pottery, etc., of various dates in order to spot settlements and other sites which may not have left standing remains of buildings). These have been applied in the 1980s for the first time to a number of areas of Achaia and enable a rough picture to be drawn of changes in the pattern of occupation of the countryside (and also of large urban areas). Another book which helps give an idea of the issues involved in using archaeological evidence is Philippe Leveau's monumental study *Caesarea de Maurétanie: Une Ville Romaine et ses Campagnes* (1984). The main part of this study is a field survey of a wide area around Caesarea, looking at evidence of buildings, etc., that are still visible. A picture is built up of how various types of settlement were distributed in the city's hinterland. The study also considers issues concerning the use of evidence from epitaphs.

b. Overview of the geography and history of Philippi

The city lies 13 km north-west of Kavala, the ancient port of Neapolis. As it has always been, the site is bisected by the main road from there to Drama.[10] The road, which otherwise crosses a

[9] V. Abrahamsen, *The Rock Reliefs and the Cult of Diana at Philippi* (Diss. Harvard Univ.; Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1986).

[10] Any bus to Drama therefore visits the site, which is called Αρχαία Φίλιπποι – *not* simply Φίλιπποι, which is a modern village some kilometres to the east and on a different bus route!

Figure 1 View SW from acropolis of Philippi. The town lies in the lower half of the picture, occupying the space between the hill and marshland (now drained). The hills of the Pangaion are to the right in the distance.

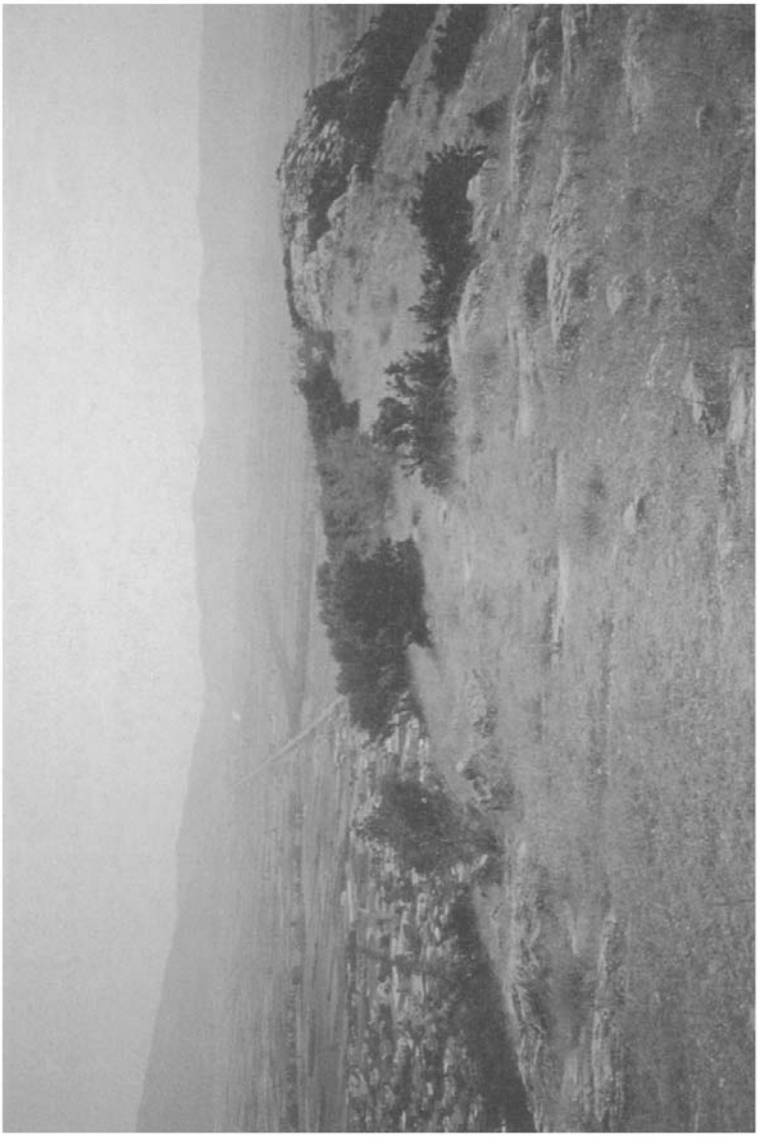

Figure 2 View SE from acropolis. The line of the Via Egnatia can be seen running towards Neapolis, which lies behind the Symbolon, the low range of hills in the background.

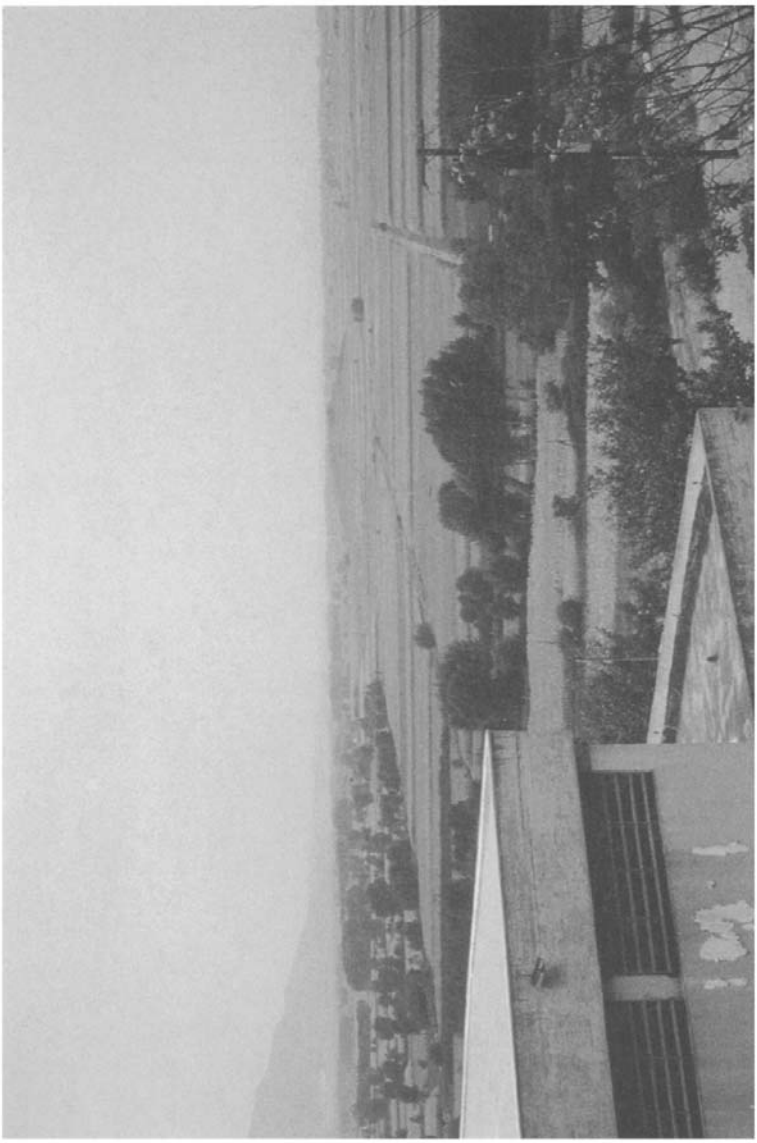

Figure 3 View W from acropolis, showing the battlefield of Philippi and the wide expanse of agricultural land. The marsh and the Pangaion are to the left.

Figure 4 The Antonine forum at Philippi. Beyond lies the gymnasium and the market (largely covered by remains of a church).

fertile plain, must go through the city because the western end of a range of steep hills falls almost into the eastern end of what was until this century a great marsh. The city walls form roughly a rectangle 1 km x 700m (with the longer sides running NNW–SSE). At the northern corner is the citadel of the acropolis. The southern corner meets the marsh. Building is most feasible in roughly the area south of a line joining the north-west to the south-east corner.[11] Elsewhere, building seems not to have taken place, on account of the steepness of the hill, except in limited areas such as around the theatre. The Via Egnatia follows the base of the hill. The hills provide both abundant springs (the settlement was originally called *Krenides*, 'springs') and mineral deposits, particularly gold (exhausted by Roman times). Beyond the marsh lie the hills of the Pangaion, another, richer gold- and silver-mining area.

The extent of the colony's territory is at various points attested by inscriptions and has been estimated at 1900 sq. km (730 sq. miles).[12] This seems to put it at the upper end of the normal range: Barbara Levick cites Pisidian Antioch as 1400 sq. km and at the lower end.[13] The territory includes the Pangaion, the extensive plain surrounding it, and, beyond the low range of the Symbolon, the valuable port of Neapolis. The eastern edge forms a border with Thrace.

The various social groups in the area of the colony arrived in a fairly clear order. Before 360 BC, the inhabitants were various tribes, mainly Pieri and Edoni.[14] I will call them Thracians, as Collart does. Papazoglou reasonably objects that they ought really to be distinguished from Thracians:[15] those who migrated came from the west, ejected from west of Thessalonika and from Mygdonia,[16] rather than from Thrace in the east. However, I will persist with calling them Thracian because their religious affinities are with the Thracians, their names sound Thracian and, like the

[11] Of the walled area of 67.8 Ha about 45 Ha appear easy to build upon. Cf. Peter Pilhofer, *Philippi I: Die erste christliche Gemeinde Europas* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), p. 74.

[12] See below, pp. 45f.

[13] 540 sq. miles: Barbara Levick, *Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 45.

[14] Fanoula Papazoglou, *Les Villes de Macédoine à l'époque Romaine* (BCH Supp. XVI; Paris: École Française d'Athènes, 1988), pp. 385f.; Paul Collart, *Philippes, Ville de Macédoine: depuis ses origines jusqu'à la fin de l'époque romaine* (École Française d'Athènes: Travaux et Mémoires, Fascicule V; Paris, 1937), p. 55.

[15] Papazoglou, *Villes*, p. 342 n. 2.

[16] Collart, *Philippes*, p. 56; Papazoglou, *Villes*, pp. 385f.