

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expository-times\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

## What were the Churches of Galatia?

BY SIR WILLIAM M. RAMSAY, LL.D., D.D., D.C.L., EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF HUMANITY  
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN.

### II.

I. THE ALTERNATIVE.—The general question has in the lapse of years narrowed itself down to this: Were the churches of Galatia, to which Paul wrote and which he mentioned as an example and model to the Corinthians (1 Co 16<sup>1</sup>), the four churches in South Galatia which were converted and organized on his first journey (Ac 13 and 14), or certain other churches in the territory of the three Gaulish tribes who dwelt around Ancyra, Pessinus, and Tavium? If the latter view is correct, then either the formation of those churches is not mentioned in the Acts, or it is briefly alluded to in Ac 16<sup>6a</sup>, 'he traversed the Phrygian and Galatic region,' though the formation of churches is there not described. The discussions from many sides of this general question show indisputably that there is no other alternative.

Zahn argues that these words do not imply, but actually exclude the supposition, that the formation and organization of new churches took place on this part of the journey. It is difficult to find fault with his reasoning. In order to estimate fairly the meaning of 16<sup>6a</sup> take a parallel case. The same Greek expression occurs in 14<sup>24</sup>, διήλθον τὴν Πισιδίαν. I have always been accustomed to infer that any preaching in this final stage of the first journey was quite ineffective: there was no 'open door.' So far as I am aware, every scholar and commentator agrees. The contrast between the full description of the four new churches and the brief allusion to the progress through Pisidia does away with all doubt. If a theory were proposed that Paul at this time founded a group of churches in Pisidia, and continued afterwards to take a warm interest in them, and addressed to them the so-called letter to the Ephesians (whose destination remains an enigma), the suggestion would be regarded as ridiculous; and at the very least it would be obvious that the author of the Acts either esteemed the Pisidian churches as of no account or was ignorant of their existence; and therefore the same applies to churches whose foundation has been supposed to fall under 16<sup>6</sup>.

Yet, while διελθεῖν never implies the foundation of churches, it seems regularly to imply preaching and teaching in the country whose name is added to the accusative; and the context sometimes specifies what took place. So, for example, in 15<sup>3</sup> the progress through Phœnice and Samaria was a matter of some consequence, and its nature is described; but the foundation of new churches is excluded. Paul visited and taught the disciples who were already there; but he did not form new churches. Similarly in 18<sup>23</sup>.

The fact is that the foundation of a new church was a matter which needed time, teaching and training of officials, proper organization, etc. We are not justified by anything recorded in Acts in believing that the formation of a church was the result of a whirlwind mission and nothing else. The evangelization of Antioch was truly a whirlwind mission: Paul came, spoke, and had the city at his feet. I failed in earlier books to appreciate this fully; but the evidence of Galatians and Acts is coincident and conclusive (*The Cities of St. Paul*, p. 310 ff.). The effect produced on the city was attained in a few days and two Sabbaths. That, however, did not make the church. Zahn seems to distinguish rightly the conversion of disciples from the formation of a church. The church at Antioch was the result of a much longer residence, during which the new disciples were taught and disciplined; and even then the sudden attack which was made on Paul and Barnabas expelled them before they had properly organized the disciples, and they had to return later (14<sup>22f.</sup>) and complete the constitution of the church (as described there, v.<sup>22</sup> 'disciples,' v.<sup>23</sup> 'church').

We find, therefore, that in Ac 16<sup>6a</sup> Luke can hardly have attached any importance to churches formed in this way and at this time; for he does not employ the term 'traversed' (διελθεῖν with accusative of the region) to describe the foundation of new churches, such as those which Paul speaks about and to which he wrote. It is, of course, quite possible, by the supposition that the

author of the Acts wrote inaccurately, carelessly, or ignorantly, to make his language in 16<sup>6</sup> compatible with a prolonged and successful missionary tour, but this can be done only at the sacrifice of the author's claim to be regarded as a good and trustworthy narrator, whose language can be pressed to the full limit of its natural force and meaning.

But this negative argument is not likely to convince any one whose mind is swayed in the North-Galatian direction by other reasons. I propose to collect and examine the geographical and topographical evidence that can be gathered from Luke and Paul, and to show that this is decisive. Historical evidence has been emphasized enough elsewhere by others, and I shall not devote any attention to it at present.

II. THE REGION PISIDIA.—It is clear from the comparison of Ac 14<sup>24</sup> with 13<sup>14</sup> that Antioch the Pisidian—such is the best text: 'Antioch of Pisidia' is a corruption perhaps later than 295 A.D.,<sup>1</sup> about which time Antioch was made the capital of a newly instituted province Pisidia—was not a city of Pisidia. After leaving Antioch on his way home to Syria, Paul traversed Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. Luke therefore regarded Antioch as outside of a region which he calls Pisidia. His view agrees exactly with that of Strabo, who in 19 A.D. describes Antioch as a city 'towards Pisidia,' but not in Pisidia; compare his words quoted above about Phrygian Ancyra 'towards Lydia.' In fact, Strabo treats it as a city of Phrygia. It is clear that both Luke and Strabo regarded it as near, though outside of, the Pisidian frontier. The epithet 'Pisidian' was derived from this situation, and from the fact that the city was a garrison to defend the plain from the incursions of the mountaineers (Strabo, p. 576). Both these authorities knew a region Pisidia, and outside of this region a city Antioch 'towards Pisidia' or 'the Pisidian.'

Some epithet was needed in common use to distinguish this from the numerous other cities of the same name; but, if so, why not call it Phrygian Antioch? That epithet was unsuitable, because there was another Antioch on the south-west frontier of Phrygia, reckoned by some as Phrygian,

<sup>1</sup> This is a mere *obiter dictum*, and has no bearing on the Galatian question. There is still much investigation to do regarding Pisidia, before an opinion can be safely stated about date.

but by Strabo probably as in Caria. The expression 'Phrygian Antioch,' therefore, would be obscure, because it might readily be understood as Antioch on the Mæander, close to the entrance from the west into the land of Phrygia.<sup>2</sup>

The testimony of the best authorities, Luke and Strabo, that Antioch the Pisidian was not in Pisidia but only a guard against Pisidia, is clear. Local evidence, however, may reasonably be desiderated. In an unpublished inscription found at Antioch in 1911, Sagalassos is styled 'First of Pisidia.' That title occurs on its coins about 260 A.D., and corresponds to its importance at that period,<sup>3</sup> provided that Antioch be reckoned as outside of Pisidia. If, however, Antioch was in Pisidia, then beyond all doubt or question, Antioch, not Sagalassos, was 'First of Pisidia.' There were, of course, many cases in which several cities claimed the title of 'First' in their province or region (see examples in section vii.). But in such cases the rivalry was real and strong. Nicomedia would not have admitted to a public place within its walls an inscription in which Nicæa claimed to be 'first of Bithynia.' But here Antioch admits the claim of Sagalassos to be 'first of Pisidia,' and therefore was not a claimant of that honour.

Moreover, an important double inscription on two sides of one large basis at Antioch has long been known, but the correct text was first published in the present writer's *First Christian Century*, p. 160. The inscription on one side calls Antioch a metropolis, and implies that it was metropolis of a *Regio*. In the inscription on the other side, the Region joins in honouring the same person; and the name of the region is given as Mygdonia, a poetic term for Phrygia.

Marquardt rightly speaks of Antioch as a city of that Phrygian district which was included in the province Galatia (*Stadtverwaltung*, i. p. 359); but G. Hirschfeld, in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclop.*, wrongly describes it as a city of Pisidia.<sup>4</sup>

III. THE TWO REGIONS.—From the text of Luke it is evident, as we shall now show, that on

<sup>2</sup> *Cities and Bish. of Phrygia*, chap. i. 'The Gate of Phrygia.'

<sup>3</sup> According to Strabo, p. 569, Selge was the greatest Pisidian city about the time of Christ; and it had a rich old coinage; but it sank to secondary rank.

<sup>4</sup> Ptolemy (in one of his references) and Pliny speak of Antioch as in Pisidia. They are inadequate authorities. After 74 A.D. there was a tendency to make the diminished regions Phrygia and Pisidia into one.

this first journey Paul confined his personal work to four cities in two distinct regions, though he produced great effect also throughout the whole of the first or western region. He did not similarly affect the second region (the eastern) outside its two cities. The reason for this narrower range of influence will become apparent through the statement of the facts in the two cases. In the first region, besides the capital Antioch, there were several other cities (of which Paul visited one, viz. Iconium). In the second or Lycaonian region there were two cities, neither of which was a capital. Paul visited both cities; but in the villages which composed the remainder of the region there was no population suited to comprehend his message: even in Lystra the rude Lycaonian plebs seems to have been beyond his influence. It was in the more educated cities that he found a large audience suited to hear him.

During the second journey Paul's visit to the eastern region is described in some detail (16<sup>1-5</sup>), while his visit to the western or Antiochian or, as Strabo says, Phrygian region is passed over in a word (16<sup>6</sup>).

On the third journey Paul visited both regions, and influenced all the disciples individually (18<sup>23</sup>); in this case the two regions are mentioned with sharp brevity, and both with the same emphasis; and the fact that there are two, and only two, regions, is now made perfectly clear. On the other two journeys it is only by careful reading that the division into two regions is observed, though it becomes quite clear as soon as the regions are pointed out.

Thus Luke (13<sup>14</sup>-14<sup>24a</sup>) describes a large district containing three regions (*χώρας*): of these regions Pisidia was twice traversed (Ac 13<sup>14</sup> 14<sup>24</sup>), but in it no churches were founded; in each of the other two regions two churches were constituted. This is a matter of geography, and the facts will be reviewed and made definite in the following sections.

---

CORRECTION. On p. 21 I have said that Harnack held the North-Galatian view. So I had

fancied. What ground there was for this thought I do not remember. It seems, however, from the note in the second edition of his *Mission und Ausbreitung*, ii. p. 387, that he has not committed himself to a definite opinion, though he inclines rather to the South-Galatian view: this footnote is different from and much longer than the footnote in the first edition.<sup>1</sup> The plan on which the following series of articles were written was, after showing the true meaning of Luke's narrative in detail, to work from the principle laid down in sharp and explicit terms by Harnack (see p. 21 and section xii.) regarding Paul's use of the Roman provincial divisions. This principle, fundamental in the South-Galatian view, was treated in my argument as accepted by the greatest of modern Church historians, even though he did not apply it to the Galatian question.

Since, however, the principle is stated by one who appears to be rather inclined to the South-Galatian view (though not at all committed to it), it loses its value for my present purpose, though its positive strength remains the same in the eyes of the world. I cannot, however, now rewrite the argument; but I will emphasize more than I have done a remarkable fact. Three early Christians speak about Iconium after having personally visited it: the first is Paul through the mouth of Luke; the second is Hierax the martyr in 163, a slave from Iconium; the third is Firmilian, bishop of Cæsarea, who was present at a Council held in Iconium: witnesses respectively of the first, the second, and the third centuries. All of them speak of Iconium as being in Phrygia. This term Luke defines more fully as the Phrygian region of (the province) Galatia: the others knew that the same was true in their time, and we now know that positively this was so from 25 B.C. to about 295 A.D. The full meaning of this testimony will appear in the sequel of the argument.

<sup>1</sup> I no longer possess the first edition in German, which was the copy that I first read; hence, when I mention the first edition, it will be understood that I quote from Dr. Moffatt's excellent translation. In this the footnote simply says that the author will express no opinion on the Galatian question.