

**CORINTH** (PLACE) [Gk *Korinthos* Κορινθος]. CORINTHIAN. A city on the Peloponnesian coast of Greece (35° 56'N; 22° 56'W) where Paul met Aquila and Priscilla and where he spent eighteen months preaching and teaching (Acts 18:1–18). He later wrote at least two letters to the congregation at Corinth (1 Cor and 2 Cor; but cf. 1 Cor 5:9, 11).

### A. Geographic Setting

The 4-km<sup>2</sup> site occupies two broad natural terraces that step up from the coastal plain to the height of Acrocorinth (575 m). This is limited on the E and W by two of the gullies that drain Acrocorinth. The 10-km wall follows the optimum defense line along the edges and is anchored by [Vol. 1, p. 1,136] Acrocorinth. The built-up area never expanded as far as the walls; in times of danger the extra space could shelter the people and flocks of the agricultural area that fed Corinth. Long walls 2.5 km long and 1.2 km apart linked the city to the port of Lechaem. See Fig. COR.01. Its artificial double harbor covered 460,000 m<sup>2</sup> and was bordered by 7 km of quays; only a tiny portion of the harbor area has been excavated (Roux 1958: 103). Corinth's second port, CENCHREAE, lay some 9 km to the E on the Saronic Gulf. The artificial harbor enclosed only 30,000 m<sup>2</sup>. A large building dominated the N breakwater, and four blocks of warehouses were aligned along the inner part of the S mole (Scranton, Shaw, and Ibrahim 1978: 14, 41).

Control of these two harbors, and its position virtually astride the 6-km-wide isthmus linking the Peloponnese to mainland Greece, made Corinth the great crossroads of the ancient world (Strabo 8.6.20). Set on the edge of a plain whose richness was proverbial, with a tradition of high productivity, and so situated as to be able to levy a percentage on both E–W and N–S trade, the coffers of Corinth were always full. From the time of Homer (*Il.* 2.570) the adjective associated with Corinth was always “wealthy” (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 37.36). Today the name Korinthos belongs to a small city on the Peloponnesian coast of the Gulf of Corinth 2.4 km W of the Corinth Canal. Its origins go back only to 1858 when the old city was destroyed by an earthquake. The “light of all Greece” (Cicero, *Leg. Man.* 5) is now represented by the poor village of Archaia (or Palaia) Korinthos, located 5.6 km SW of the modern city.

### B. History of Excavations

The first excavations at Corinth were conducted by the German Archaeological Institute (Dörpfeld 1886). In 1896 the American School of Classical Studies at Athens assumed responsibility for the site and has conducted excavations there ever since. Preliminary studies appear in *American Journal of Archaeology* and *Hesperia*, and final reports in the series of volumes entitled *Corinth* (1930–). Remains of all periods from the Early Neolithic have been brought to light. Elsewhere in the Corinthia, major excavations have been carried out at Isthmia (1952–60 and again from 1967 to 1978), and at Cenchreae (1963–68). Final reports on Isthmia have been published by Gebhard (1973) and by Broneer (1971; 1973), and on Cenchreae by Scranton, Shaw, and Ibrahim (1978).

### C. History of Corinth

The history of Corinth is long and complex, but the fundamental distinction is between the Greek city, which came to an end in 146 B.C., and the Roman colony founded by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C.

The origins of the city in the 5th millennium and its subsequent development to the 4th century B.C. have

been documented by J. B. Salmon (1984). For long centuries Corinth enjoyed unusual social and political stability, partly because of excellent management by the ruling class, who anticipated rather than opposed change, and partly because of an exceptionally diversified and productive economy. In addition to the celebrated Corinthian bronze (Murphy-O'Connor 1983b), the city was renowned for its ceramics, textiles, shipbuilding, and architecture. In order to develop E–W trade a canal joining the Corinthian and Saronic gulfs was mooted as early as the 6th century B.C. (Diog. Laert. 1.99). When the project came to nothing, Periander (ca. 625–585 B.C.) built a paved road (the *diolkos*) across the isthmus, which permitted light ships to be hauled from one sea to the other on a platform running in grooves cut in the pavement. Excavations have revealed a dock and 460 m of the road on the W side of the isthmus. The width varies from 3.4 to 6 m, and the grooves are 1.5 m apart (Wiseman 1978: 45–46). Repaired many times, it remained in use at least until the 9th century A.D., and would also have served for the movement of goods. These facilities permitted merchants to avoid the voyage around Cape Maleae, which was so dangerous as to be proverbial: “When you double Maleae forget your home!” (Strabo 8.6.20).

Such success inevitably provoked the envy of those less fortunate in their location and less industrious in their habits, and so in the 5th–4th centuries B.C., Athenian writers made Corinth the symbol of commercialized love. Aristophanes coined the verb *korinthiazesthai*, “to fornicate” (*Fr.* 354). Philetærus and Poliochus wrote plays entitled *Korinthiastēs*, “The Whoremonger” (Athenaeus 313c, 559a). Plato used *korinthia korē*, “a Corinthian girl,” to [Vol. 1, p. 1,137] mean a prostitute (*Rest.* 404d). These neologisms, however, left no permanent mark on the language, because in reality Corinth was neither better nor worse than its contemporaries. It was not dedicated to the goddess of love, Aphrodite (Saffrey 1985), and Strabo’s story of 1000 sacred prostitutes (8.6.20) has been shown to be pure fabrication (Conzelmann 1967).

The events leading to the destruction of Corinth in 146 B.C. have been summarized by Wiseman (1979: 450–62). Even though Rome had granted freedom to the cities of Greece after the Second Macedonian War (200–196 B.C.) and permitted them to unite in various leagues, it came to see the latter as a threat. In defiance of a Roman attempt to break up the Achaian League, of which Corinth was a prominent member, the league asserted its independence by going to war to discipline Sparta in 146 B.C. When Metellus reached the isthmus from the N after defeating three Achaian armies, he was joined by the fleet of the consul Lucius Mummius, who assumed command. Corinth, the bastion of Achaia, had only a ragtag army of 14,000 infantry and 600 cavalry recruited from untrained slaves and citizens to face a Roman force of 23,000 infantry and 3500 cavalry plus auxiliaries. The result of the battle on the plain was a foregone conclusion.

The looting of the city is recorded by an eyewitness, Polybius (preserved only in Strabo 8.6.23), but the inference from excavations that the city was neither totally destroyed nor completely depopulated (Wiseman 1979: 494–95) is confirmed by Cicero, who visited Corinth between 79 and 77 B.C. (*Tusc.* 3.53; cf. Feger 1952). Corinth was too natural a market center ever to be abandoned completely, and those citizens who escaped the net cast by Mummius would surely have returned (Dio Cass. 21).

The establishment of the Roman colony is attributed to Julius Caesar by a number of classical authors (all the Greek and Latin references to the colony are conveniently assembled in Murphy-O'Connor 1983a: 1–128), but only Appian gives a precise date, namely 102 years after the sack of Carthage (*Hist.* 8.136), i.e., 44 B.C. Inscriptions show that the new name of the city was Colonia Laus Julia Corinthiensis (Kent 1966: 60, 70). Since the region had been peaceful for over a century and no danger threatened, Caesar’s concerns can hardly have been military or political. The economic potential of Corinth was well known in Rome (Cicero, *Leg. Agr.* 1.5; 2.51, 87; cf. E. Salmon

1969: 135), and that this was his motive appears to be demonstrated by the fact that the construction of a canal across the isthmus was part of the project (Suetonius, *Iul.* 44).

Strabo's assertion that the new settlers were for the most part freed slaves (8.136) harmonizes with Appian's view that they were *aporoi* (*Hist.* 8.136), provided that this adjective is understood to apply to those who felt themselves locked into a certain socioeconomic level through lack of opportunity. Thus they were not Romans but had been brought originally from Greece, Syria, Judea, and Egypt (Gordon 1924: 94–95). In a new colony they had everything to gain. Distance would have made their ties to former masters meaningless, and their children would be free. As a group they had the technical, financial, and administrative skills to make the project work. Their enterprise and industry are attested by the fact that, though they had to begin by robbing graves, they quickly found a lucrative market in Rome for the bronze vessels and terra-cotta reliefs that they discovered (Strabo 8.6.23). The great demand for the former prompted some of the wilier colonists to recommence the production of bronze (Stillwell, Scranton, and Freeman 1941: 273), and other traditional industries were soon reestablished.

Once the colony was securely based, it attracted entrepreneurs from Greece and the major trading countries of the E Mediterranean. Such infusions of new capital in a prime commercial situation inevitably generated more wealth, and within 50 years of its foundation many citizens of Corinth were men of very considerable means. The clearest evidence of this is an inscription commemorating L. Castricius Regulus, who assumed the presidency of the first restored Isthmian Games sometime between 7 B.C. and A.D. 3. He refurbished the facilities, which had not been used for a century, and offered a banquet to all the inhabitants of the colony (Kent 1966: 70). Commercial development demanded banking facilities, and by the mid-1st century A.D. Corinth was an important financial center (Plutarch, *Mor.* 831A).

Urban expansion is also a significant indicator of the city's increasing prosperity (Wiseman 1979: 509–30). The early colonists displaced the center of the old city to the S of the archaic temple, where a racetrack had preserved a large open space. It became the forum (Robinson 1965: 23). A number of ancient elements, e.g., the South Stoa, the Well of Glauce, the Peirene Fountain, were incorporated, but new structures quickly appeared. Ten monumental edifices were erected before the end of the reign of Augustus (31 B.C.–A.D. 14). A further six are ascribed to the long reign of his successor, Tiberius (A.D. 14–37). Thus, the city center at the time of Paul can be reconstructed with a very high degree of accuracy (Murphy-O'Connor 1984). See Fig. COR.02. The ruined walls were still visible but served only as a quarry of cut stone. In an era of great political stability their repair was seen as a completely unprofitable investment.

The Corinth that Paul knew was severely damaged by an earthquake in A.D. 77 (West 1931: 18–19). In gratitude for imperial aid in rebuilding, the city was renamed Colonia Julia Flavia Augusta Corinthiensis (Kent 1966: 42), but the original name returned in the early 2d century A.D. (Edwards 1933: 28–29). The tax-free status accorded the city by Hadrian (Wiseman 1979: 507) stimulated a building boom in the mid-2d century A.D. This was the city depicted (about A.D. 174) by Pausanias in his *Description of Greece* (2.1.1–5.5).

The most attractive residential and recreational area in Corinth was the suburb of Craneum on the lower slopes of Acrocorinth (Plutarch, *Mor.* 601B). According to legend, it was there that Diogenes the Cynic (ca. 400–325 B.C.) lived in his barrel (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.5) and asked Alexander the Great to move a little to one side because he was blocking the rays of the sun (Plutarch, *Vit. Alex.* 14). In terms of recreational facilities, its only competitor was the Asclepieion and Lerna complex just inside the N wall (Roebuck 1951; Lang 1977). The latter offered a fine swimming pool, while the dining rooms of the latter could have been the setting for 1 Cor 8:10 (Murphy-O'Connor

1983a: 161–67).

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When Achaia was set up as a senatorial province in 27 B.C., Corinth presumably was the capital, but this is not confirmed by any direct evidence (Wiseman 1979: 501). In A.D. 15 Tiberius attached Achaia and Macedonia to the imperial province of Moesia (Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.76, 80), but Achaia was restored to the Senate by Claudius in A.D. 44 (Suetonius, *Claud.* 25). Thus, Rome was represented by a proconsul, who served for one year from June 1 to May 30 (Dio Cass. 57.14.5). The most celebrated proconsul is Lucius Iunius Gallio (June 51–May 52), not because of his personal character or achievements but because he is mentioned in Acts 18:12 and so provides the key date in Pauline chronology (Murphy-O'Connor 1983a: 141–52). Since he did not complete his term of office (Seneca, *Ep.* 104.1), Paul must have met him in Corinth in the summer of A.D. 51.

The municipal government was a miniature of that of republican Rome (Kent 1966: 23). Citizen voters, divided into twelve tribes (Wiseman 1979: 497), elected four annual magistrates, who on retirement became eligible for membership of the city council. These offices were open to freedmen (Duff 1928: 66). The senior magistrates were *duoviri iure dicundo*, and to date the names of 58 are known (Kent 1966: 24–26, but the dates there given are subject to revision; Wiseman 1979: 498, n. 224). In addition to juridical duties, they were the chief executive officers of the city. Those elected every fifth year were known as *duoviri quinquennales* and had the additional responsibilities [Vol. 1, p. 1,139] of taking the census and naming new members of the city council.

The *duoviri* were assisted by two *aediles* (11 are listed in Kent 1966: 27). They functioned as city business managers and so presumably were responsible for commercial and financial litigation. An inscription in the paving of the square E of the theater, dated to the mid-1st century A.D., mentions an *aedile* named Erastus. The rarity of the name generally and its absence elsewhere at Corinth (Kent 1966: 99) strengthens the identification of this individual with the Erastus mentioned by Paul as the *oikonomos* of Corinth (Rom 16:23). *Oikonomos*, “steward,” however, is not a standard rendering of *aedile*, and Erastus may have occupied a lower office when Paul wrote (Theissen 1982: 79–83). If so, his conversion to Christianity did not block Erastus’ advancement. In times of food shortages a *curator annonae* was appointed to ensure supplies at his own expense (Wiseman 1979: 499).

The greatest honor that Corinth could bestow was the presidency of the Isthmian Games, which were celebrated every two years in the spring at the sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia. Responsibility for this, the second greatest of the panhellenic festivals, had passed to Sicyon in 146 B.C., but the new colony must have pressed the traditional right of Corinth from the beginning, since great economic benefits flowed from the presence of huge crowds (Strabo 8.6.20). It would have succeeded in this claim, however, only when some of the settlers had become sufficiently wealthy to accept the financially onerous office of *agonothetes*. Paul could have attended the games of A.D. 51 (Kent 1966: 31); it can hardly be coincidental that his first use of athletic imagery appears in a letter to Corinth (1 Cor 9:24–27). The fact that winners at Isthmia were crowned with withered celery (Broneer 1962a) may have stimulated Paul to think of salvation as an imperishable crown (Broneer 1962b).

In addition to furnishing information on the officials and benefactors of the city, inscriptions also document a shift in the official language. Those published by Kent reveal that, of the 104 inscriptions dated prior to the reign of Hadrian (A.D. 117–38), 101 are in Latin and only 3 in Greek, while thereafter there are 39 in Greek and 17 in Latin. There may have been exclusive use of Latin in the early days of the colony, but Greek was the language of

trade and commerce, and as the population expanded it would have become the most commonly spoken tongue. Its promotion to an official position, however, was delayed until the 2d century A.D.

The religious and ethnic diversity of the population of Corinth is graphically attested by excavated remains. The imperial cult is attested by a temple just off the forum (Stillwell, Scranton, and Freeman 1941: 168–79), but also by additions to the Isthmian Games. A series of competitions known as the Caesarea and run on a quadrennial basis was added under Augustus, and the imperial contests appear under Tiberius (Kent 1966: 28). Numerous shrines dedicated to Apollo, Athena, Aphrodite, Asclepius, Demeter and Kore, Palaimon, and Sisypus witness to the continuity of Greek cults (detailed references in *2 Corinthians* AB 32A, 15–18). Egyptian influence is documented by the worship of Isis and Sarapis (Smith 1977). The physical evidence for a Jewish community is late (possibly 4th–5th century A.D.) and meager, only a marble impost inscribed with three menorahs separated by lulab and etrog (Scranton 1957: 26, 116) and a cornice stone reused as a lintel and bearing the lettering [*syna*]gōgē *hebr*[aiōn] (West 1931: 78–79).

The complete absence of Jewish remains from the early Christian centuries is rather surprising, since Philo's specification of Corinth (and Argos), in counterdistinction to geographical regions in the rest of his description of the Diaspora, would seem to imply a particularly large and vital Jewish community at Corinth (*Leg.* 281). Jews may have fled to Sicyon in 146 B.C. (1 Macc 15:23). If so, they would have returned to join their coreligionists among the settlers of the new colony (*2 Corinthians* AB 32A, 20). Whether Corinth benefited by the expulsion of Jews from Rome by Tiberius in A.D. 19 (Smallwood 1981: 201–10) must remain an open question, and Luke's hint (Acts 18:2) that Jews came to Corinth as a result of the so-called Edict of Claudius in A.D. 41 should be treated with extreme skepticism (Murphy-O'Connor 1983a: 130–40). The community would have increased significantly after A.D. 67 when, according to Josephus, Vespasian sent 6000 Jewish prisoners to work on the canal begun by Nero (*JW* 3.540). Most of them would have become freedmen eventually, because work on the canal did not last long, even though a tremendous amount of work was accomplished (Wiseman 1978: 48–50). Other Jews came from Palestine during and after the revolt of A.D. 132–35 (Justin, *Dial.* 1). On the basis of what is known about conditions elsewhere in the Diaspora, the Jewish community at Corinth would have been recognized as a *politeuma*, a corporation of aliens with permanent right of domicile and empowered to manage its internal affairs through its own officials (Smallwood 1981: 225). Jews, therefore, enjoyed a civic existence but were not citizens in the full sense, though individuals might achieve this status.

Modern writers adopt a view of the moral character of the colony that derives more from Athenian slanders of the 4th century B.C. (see above) and from Athenian envy of the 2d century A.D. (Alciph. 15 and 24 [3.51, 60]) than from convincing contemporary data. If we exclude the evidence for gladiatorial shows (Apuleius, *Met.* 10.18), which Dio Chrysostom mentions only to indicate that the situation at Athens was worse (*Or.* 31.121), and the mildly erotic tale of a young man in the toils of a vampire (Philostratus, *V.A.* 4.25), all that remains is Apuleius' salacious tale of a woman copulating with a donkey (*Met.* 10.19–23), an act that others considered suitable for the theater (10.34–35). The fact that this episode is set in Corinth (it does not appear in the original Greek novel) owes less to reality than to Apuleius' sojourn in Athens, where he earned the title of the "Platonic philosopher" (Millar 1981). It speaks more of what he learned there than of actual conditions at Corinth. The proverb "Not for everyone is the voyage to Corinth" is used by Strabo in a sexual sense (8.6.20) but, as Horace makes clear (*Epist.* 1.17.36), the original meaning referred not to the danger of losing one's virginity but to the danger of losing one's shirt in the intense cutthroat competition of a boom town.

In choosing as one of his main missionary centers a city in which only the tough were reputed to survive, Paul demonstrated a confidence oddly at variance with his [Vol. 1, p. 1,140] protestations of weakness. Corinth, however, offered advantages that outweighed its dangers. In addition to excellent communications, the extraordinary number of visitors (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 37.8; Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 46.24) created the possibility of converts who would carry the gospel back to their homelands. In contrast to the closed complacency of Athens (Geagan 1979: 378–89), Corinth was open and questioning, eager for new ideas but neither docile nor passive, as Paul’s relationship with the Christian community there amply documents.

**COR.01.** City plan of Corinth. (*Redrawn from Murphy-O’Connor 1983a: 20, fig. 4.*)

**COR.02.** Plan of Corinth—central area, ca. 50 C.E. 1, theater; 2, N market; 3, archaic temple, 6th century B.C.E.; 4, Fountain of Glauke, 6th century B.C.E.; 5, temple C (unidentified); 6, NW stoa; 7, N basilica; 8, Lechaemum Road; 9, bath (of Eurycles?); 10, Peribolos of Apollo; 11, Fountain of Peirene; 12, Propylaea; 13, Tripod; 14, statue of Athena; 15, altar (unidentified); 16, temple D (*Tychē*); 17, Babbis monument; 18, Fountain of Poseidon (Neptune); 19, temple of the imperial cult; 20, temple G (Pantheon?); 21, temple F (Aphrodite); 22, unidentified building (temple or civic structure); 23, “Cellar Building” (public restaurant or tavern); 24, W shops; 25, central shops; 26, *bēma*; 27, S stoa; 28, room XX (Sarapis shrine); 29, *Bouleutērion*; 30, “Fountain House”; 31, S basilica; 32, room C (*Agonotheteion*); 33, room B; 34, room A; 35, SE building (Tabularium and library?); 36, Julian Basilica. (*Redrawn from Furnish, II Corinthians AB, 11, fig. 2.*)

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