

Wealth and Worship in Ancient Ephesus

Gary G. Hoag, Ph.D.

Ancient Historians describe Ephesus as the financial capital of the ancient world in the first century CE. Social and religious life linked to the worship of the goddess Artemis and daily activities in her temple, the Artemisium. This included banking, tourism, festivals, and trade bringing money to the city. From literary, epigraphic, and numismatic sources, we find rich citizens playing key roles at the center of community life and reaping many benefits as a result.

Others have previously explored wealth and worship in ancient Ephesus.¹ This fresh look includes input from a text not widely known, *Ephesiaca* by Xenophon of Ephesus, recently dated to mid-first century CE to see how it might add to our knowledge.² The findings from this examination of wealth and worship follow in four sections: (1) the role of the Artemisium, (2) worship activities, (3) priestly and community roles, and (4) implications for biblical reading and interpretation.

(1) The Role of the Artemisium

This section features the role of the Artemisium linked to finance, as the location that curated treasures of the Greco-Roman world, and something more according to Xenophon of Ephesus.

Ancient historians depict the Artemisium as the international depository for wealth in the first century CE. Dio Chrysostom testifies that it contained the wealth of “persons from all parts of the world” (*Oration* 31.54). Aelius Aristides refers to the Temple of Artemis as the “general bank of Asia” (*Orations* 23.24). Jerome Murphy-O'Connor adds: “It was thought that the power of the goddess protected money deposited there.”³ People viewed riches as secure in her precincts.⁴

Philip Harland notes inscriptions of associations for various goods and services, and among them we find an association of bankers who facilitated financial matters (*IvE* 454).⁵ Money held on deposit generated income through low-risk loans such as mortgages. Artemis had the reputation of protecting the capital linked to the ancient perception of the meaning of her name. Plato suggests that the name of Artemis came from ἄρτημις, meaning, “strong-limbed” (*Cratylus* 406B).⁶ Numismatic evidence supports that assertion, as coins present Artemis with arms outstretched.⁷ Strabo reports a different etymological explanation: Artemis makes people ἄρτεμις, meaning, “secure and healthy” (*Geography* 14.1.6).⁸ These sources help us understand why people in the ancient world trusted the goddess to watch over their wealth.

¹ Gary G. Hoag, *Wealth in Ancient Ephesus and the First Letter to Timothy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 233-47.

² James N. O'Sullivan, *Xenophon of Ephesus: His Compositional Technique and the Birth of the Novel* (UaLG 44; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 9, has argued convincingly for a mid-first century CE date for *Ephesiaca*, when Luke places Paul in Ephesus in Acts of the Apostles.

³ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Ephesus: Texts and Archaeology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 52. Coins portray Artemis as holding the temple in her hand; see: Sheedy, “The Coinage of Ephesus.” See also: G. Kenneth Jenkins, *Ancient Greek Coins* (The World of Numismatics; New York: Putnam, 1972).

⁴ On Scipio's attempts to rob the Artemisium, which were thwarted by Caesar, see: Julius Caesar, *Civil Wars* 3.33; 3.105.

⁵ Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 38-44.

⁶ Richard Oster, “The Ephesian Artemis as an Opponent of Early Christianity,” *JAC* 19 (1976): 24-44.

⁷ Larry Joseph Kreitzer, *Striking New Images: Roman Imperial Coinage and the New Testament World* (JSNTS 134; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 104.

⁸ Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Ephesus*, 14. See LSJ for the root ἄρταμος, meaning “butcher.” This definition can be justified by the widely known ancient story that the god Actaeon, having seen Artemis naked, was turned into a stag by her and subsequently

We must also envision the Artemisium as a place people visited to see notable gifts from prominent people in the ancient world. Her precincts housed treasures such as the “Psaltery” of Alexander of Cythera (Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists* 183c) and two famous paintings by Apelles: *Alexander the Great Holding a Thunderbolt* and *Heracles with Face Averted* (Pliny, *Natural History* 35.36.79–97). Croesus, the rich and generous king of Lydia donated “oxen of gold and the greater part of the pillars” to the Artemisium (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.92). Pausanias depicts this collection of gifts as a historical and cultural museum (*Guide to Greece* 10.38.6).

Antipater of Sidon called Artemis the “Queen of the Ionians” and named her temple one of the “Seven Wonders of the World,” considering it to be second only to Mt. Olympus.

I have set my eyes on the wall of lofty Babylon, on which is a road for chariots, and the statue of Zeus by the Alpheus, and the hanging gardens, and the Colossus of the Sun, and the huge labor of the high pyramids, and the vast tomb of Mausolus, but when I saw the house of Artemis that mounted to the cloud, those other marvels lost their brilliancy, and I said, “Lo, apart from Olympus, the Sun never looked on aught so grand!” (*Greek Anthology* 9.58)

Strabo reports that visitors across the Mediterranean world came to see this sight and to shop at “the largest emporium in Asia this side of the Taurus” (*Geography* 14.1.24). Scholars describe Ephesus as an embedded economy where work, wealth, and worship were interconnected.⁹ The massive home of the goddess provided banking and financial services, facilitated trade and tourism, and housed ancient treasures for anyone to see. In addition, temple visitors also may have learned the story of *Ephesiaca*. Xenophon of Ephesus internally attests that Anthia and Habrocomes inscribed the story on the walls of the Artemisium exalting the goddess as savior.¹⁰

“The whole city had already heard the news of their salvation. As soon as they disembarked they went just as they were to the temple of Artemis, offered many prayers and made sacrifice, then set up dedications, among them dedicating to the goddess the inscription commemorating all that they had experienced and done.” (5.15.2)

Why would a wealthy couple etch the story on the temple walls? Reinhold Merkelbach contends that *Ephesiaca* is a hieros logos, “a sacred writing.”¹¹ R. E. Witt concurs and adds this thought: “Xenophon is not just a storyteller. He has a didactic and indeed a religious aim. His tale is that of the salvation of human lives through faith in divine powers that do intervene.”¹² In their thinking, *Ephesiaca* represents more than a novella, as classical scholars have labeled it. Xenophon of Ephesus urges hearers of his “sacred utterance or sacred story” to put their trust in Artemis by showing that, regardless of the challenges in life, the goddess delivers those who trust in her.¹³

ripped to pieces by her hounds. For further reading on that reputation of Artemis, see: Pausanias, *Guide to Greece* 9.2.3.

⁹ On the embedded economy, see Richard L. Rohrbaugh, “The Preindustrial City,” and Douglas E. Oakman, “The Ancient Economy,” in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation* (ed. Richard L. Rohrbaugh; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 107–25, 126–43.

¹⁰ Coins depict her as a huntress and often include the term, ΣΩΤΕΙΡΑ, meaning “savior.” Welch, *Forum Ancient Coins: Diana the Huntress, Bringer of Light*. Cf. John Yonge Akerman, *Numismatic Illustrations of the Narrative Portions of the New Testament* (Argonaut Library of Antiquities; Chicago: Argonaut, 1966). See *Ephesiaca* 5.13.4.

¹¹ Reinhold Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Berlin: Beck, 1962), 94.

¹² R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World* (Isis in the Graeco-Roman World; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 243.

¹³ For this definition of hieros logos and further discussion on sacred texts, see: Sarah Iles Johnson, ed., *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 634.

Ephesiaca may well have been etched as a grand display of writing paid for by wealthy Ephesians or even by Xenophon of Ephesus himself to urge all who read or heard the story to serve Artemis supremely and respect the gods of the ancient world. If *Ephesiaca* embodies a *hieros logos* rather than merely a novella or a sampling of erotica, then its purpose would have been to solidify cultural rules and religious beliefs. Guy Rogers alerts us to another such large inscription, *IvE* 27, paid for by wealthy citizen for the purpose of preserving the religious reputation of the city.¹⁴

This brief exploration illustrates the Artemisium as an economic center that linked wealth and worship, a cultural and historical attraction for visitors, and a place where the rich celebrated the renown of the goddess through inscriptions aimed to teach others to serve her. A closer look at the worship practices will add to our knowledge more about what went on there.

(2) Worship Activities

This section highlights various worship activities that took place in the temple precincts. This includes the annual procession to celebrate the birth of the goddess, a record of sacrifices and oracles, accounts of the sale of idols, and more from Xenophon of Ephesus.

We learn about the annual procession to celebrate the birth of the goddess from an inscription dated to 104 CE. A wealthy patron, Gaius Vibius Salutaris, had it written to preserve cultic rules and practices that had gone on for centuries. *IvE* 27 honors the “piety” (εὐσέβεια) of Salutaris nine times for establishing annual lotteries, distributions, and a procession of statues in honor of Artemis.¹⁵ The council and the people celebrated his gift to the temple treasuries to underwrite the annual event at which citizens and visitors made sacrifices to the goddess.

During the reign of Nero, C. Stertinius Orpex, a rich Ephesian gave a gift from his foundation for lotteries and distributions for community activities (*IvE* 4123). On another occasion, Orpex and his daughter gave statues of Asklepios, Hygeia, and Hyponos for the gymnasium for the benefit of the people (*IvE* 2113).¹⁶ In each case, the givers received honor. Strabo recounts a related example.

When the Phocaeans were setting sail from their homeland an oracle was delivered to them, it is said, to use for their voyage as a guide received from the Ephesian Artemis. Accordingly, some of them put in at Ephesus and inquired in what way they might procure from the goddess what had been enjoined upon them. Now the goddess in a dream, it is said, had stood beside Aristarcha, one of the women held in very high honor, and commanded her to sail away with the Phocaeans taking with her a certain reproduction [of Artemis] which was among the sacred images. This done, and the colony finally settled, they not only established the temple, but also did Aristarcha the exceptional honor of appointing her priestess. Further, in the colonial cities [of Marseilles] the people everywhere do this goddess honors of the first rank. (Geography 4.1.4–5)

¹⁴ See *IvE* 27 for an example of a similar grand display which aimed to reinforce the prominence of Artemis. Cf. For the Greek text and English translation, see: Guy M. Rogers, *The Sacred Identity of Ephesus: Foundation Myths of a Roman City* (London: Routledge, 1991)

¹⁵ *IvE* 27.14–19, 84–90, 114–19, 366–69, 384–89, 414–18, 427–30, 431–42. Cf. εὐσέβεια in 1 Timothy 2:2;10; 3:16; 6:3, 5, 6; 2 Timothy 3:5.

¹⁶ Cf. Maria Aurenhammer, “Sculptures of Gods and Heroes from Ephesos,” in *Ephesos, Metropolis of Asia: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Its Archaeology, Religion and Culture* (ed. Helmut Koester; HTS 41; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 266.

While we have limited evidence that visitors received oracles at the Artemisium, this example shows one way the goddess may have recruited the wealthy to extend her first-rank fame throughout the ancient world. Additionally, this oracle would have pleased the silversmiths, as their livelihood was associated with making idols or reproductions of the goddess.¹⁷

Xenophon of Ephesus adds much to our knowledge of cultic worship at the Artemisium. Consider a few examples including an account of the annual procession, sacrifices, and daily recitation. This first excerpt comes from the annual procession celebrating the birth of the goddess, Artemis.

The local festival of Artemis was in progress, with its procession from the city to the temple nearly a mile away. All the local girls had to march in procession, richly dressed (κοσμημέναις), as well as all the young men of Habrocomes' age—he was around sixteen, already a member of the Ephebes, and took first place in the procession. There was a great crowd of Ephesians and visitors alike to see the festival, for it was the custom at this festival to find husbands for the girls and wives for the young men. So the procession filed past—first the sacred objects, the torches, the baskets, and the incense; then horses, dogs, hunting equipment . . . some for war, some for peace. And each of the girls was dressed (ἐκεκόσμητο) as if to receive a lover. Anthia led the line of girls; she was the daughter of Megamedes and Euippe, both of Ephesus. Anthia's beauty was an object of wonder, far surpassing the other girls. She was fourteen; her beauty was burgeoning, still more enhanced by the adornment (κόσμος) of her dress. Her hair was golden—a little of it plaited (πεπλεγμένη), but most hanging loose and blowing in the wind. Her eyes were quick; she had the bright glance of a young girl, and yet the austere look of a virgin. She wore a purple tunic down to the knee, fastened with a girdle and falling loose over her arms, with a fawnskin over it, a quiver attached, and arrows for weapons; she carried javelins and was followed by dogs. Often as they saw her in the sacred enclosure the Ephesians would worship her as Artemis. (1.2.2–7)

In the festival, customs called for the wearing of specific attire to honor the goddess and advance her renown in Ephesus.¹⁸ Anthia leads the way in the procession because of her outstanding beauty and as the daughter of prominent parents who could trace their Ionian roots and genealogy back the origin of the city. Georges Dalmeyda proclaims, “Anthia représente, en effet, Artémis,” which translates as “Anthia represents, in effect, Artemis!”¹⁹

The characters in the story made many sacrifices to the goddess.²⁰ The above excerpt comes from the start of the story during the procession on the Via Sacra, the sacred way from the city to the temple. Xenophon of Ephesus describes this ritual honoring the goddess as a community affair: “And so when the procession was over, the whole crowd went into the temple for the sacrifice, and the files broke up; men and women and girls and boys came together” (1.3.1). We have already mentioned the sacrifice they made to the goddess at the end of the story.

¹⁷ Strabo affirms the existence of temples of the Ephesian Artemis in other cities on the eastern coast of Spain in *Geography* such as: Hemeroscopeium, 3.4.6; Rhodus and Emporium, 3.4.8; and on an island in the delta of the river Rhone, 4.1.8. Cf. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Ephesus*, 6. Cf. Acts 19:23–41.

¹⁸ The Greek words in *Ephesiaca* that depict the required dress and hairstyle for all the girls participating in the procession matches the prohibited dress and hairstyle in 1 Timothy 2:9–15. As such, the biblical text appears to call women to avoid participation in these cultic practices and instead use their wealth to do good deeds to show their piety toward God. Cf. Hoag, *Wealth in Ancient Ephesus*, 61–99.

¹⁹ G. Dalmeyda, *Xénophon d'Éphèse: Les Éphésiaques ou le roman d'Habrocomès et d'Anthia* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1926), 5.

²⁰ See *Ephesiaca* 1.3.1, 1.5.8, 1.8.1, 1.10.5, 1.11.2, 1.12.2, 5.10.5–6, 5.11.2, 5.11.6, 5.15.2.

The crowds also joined those who processed during the festival. Xenophon of Ephesus states that everyone participated in the sacrifice to Artemis (1.3.1). Many also made sacrifices to the goddess to celebrate the marriage of Anthia and Habrocomes.

“And so the time for their marriage arrived; there were all-night celebrations and a feast of sacrifices to [Artemis]. And so, when these had been performed, night came (everything seemed too slow for Habrocomes and Anthia); they brought the girl to the bridal chamber with torches, sang the bridal hymn, shouted their good wishes, brought the couple in, and put them on the couch.” (1.8.1)

Ephesiaca includes another scene featuring daily worship. We see Anthia and Habrocomes lifting up prayers to the goddess in the Artemisium (1.5.1–5). For Anthia, dedicated as a priestess to the goddess at birth (3.12.1), this likely included competing for specific service roles in the temple such as reciting the Artemis myth among other responsibilities explored in the next section.

(3) Priestly and Community Roles

This third part features roles that Ephesians played. Wealth and worship come clearly into view when looking at officials, priests and priestesses, the *curetes*, and the *ephebes*.²¹ Interestingly, the main characters in *Ephesiaca* serve as illustrations of wealthy citizens filling these roles.

The cult of Artemis expected the support of civic leaders. Vitruvius records that a magistrate got fined for failing to perform an annual sacrifice in the place where a shepherd found the marble that was used in the Artemisium (*On Architecture* 10.2.11–15). Like the example of Aristarcha, rich citizens were urged to purchase idols. Maria Aurenhammer notes that the residents of the slope houses – homes where some of the wealthy of Ephesus appear to have resided – did not have to go to the temple to see the goddess; they had statues of her at home.²² They believed that the goddess watched over them and secured their lives, their wealth, and their future.

Rich families, such as that of Ulpia Eudoia Mudiene received honors in *IvE* 989 for funding the priesthood of Artemis. In *IvE* 681, the council and the assembly paid tribute to Claudia Ammion, the high priestess, and P. Gavius Capito, the high priest of Asia, for their faithful service and support of Artemis.²³ Inscriptions reveal that the foremost female priestess distributed money from temple funds on the birthday celebration of Artemis, for wreathing the temple, and for performing public sacrifice; she could even reorganize the temple cult.²⁴ On occasion, this leading priestess used personal resources to pay cultic expenses,²⁵ and in the case of Helvidia Paula, funded the construction and dedication of a building (*IvE* 492).²⁶

²¹ Guy Maclean Rogers, *The Mysteries of Artemis of Ephesos* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 122–44.

²² Maria Aurenhammer, “Sculptures of Gods and Heroes from Ephesos,” 276, figures. 2–3.

²³ Cf. E. A. Judge and James R. Harrison, “Ethical Terms in St. Paul and the Inscriptions of Ephesus,” in *The First Christians in the Roman World: Augustan and New Testament Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 377.

²⁴ *IvE* 27, 987, 3059. Cf. Jan N. Bremmer, “Priestly Personnel of the Ephesian Artemision: Anatolian, Persian, Greek and Roman Aspects,” in *Practitioners of the Divine: Greek Priests and Religious Officials from Homer to Heliodorus* (ed. Beate Dignas and Kai Trampedach; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 42.

²⁵ Philip A. Harland, “Honours and Worship: Emperors, Imperial Cults and Associations at Ephesus (First to Third Centuries CE),” *SR* 25 (1996): 319–34.

²⁶ On the use of personal funds for cultic activities, see: *IvE* 989, 1139, 3072. On Helvidia Paula, ca. 89/90 CE, see *IvE* 492. Cf. Rogers, *Sacred Identity of Ephesus*, 54–55, 75 n. 74.

Jan Bremmer notes that this would have been a position “of great honour and by far the most common office taken on by upper-class women.”²⁷ Guy Rogers adds that the female chief priestess who held symposia and performed mystic sacrifices came from noble birth. In support, he cites first and second century CE examples of leading women.²⁸ Others from among the Ephesian elite performed similar duties alongside this leading lady serving as priestesses.²⁹

The edict of Paullus Fabius Persicus, the Roman proconsul of Asia, addresses the “unjust desire” (ἄδικο ἐπιθυμίαν) for shameful gain and corrupt “management” (προϊσταμένων) in the priesthood in 44 CE (IvE 18b.8–18).³⁰ The priestesses and priests of Artemis had used the house of the goddess as a front for personal gain. Jan Bremmer notes that they “had started to create priesthoods in order to enable the elite to enrich itself through the perquisites assigned to these priesthoods,” and by about 104 CE, “priests were still so prestigious that they belonged to the class of the ‘gold-bearing’ citizens.”³¹ Greed appears to have motivated the abuse of these roles.

Wealthy Ephesians also gave money and served as *curetes* (κουρήτες) to Artemis and received honor for their “piety” (εὐσέβεια). While our knowledge of the *curetes* may be limited, we do know they served to protect the sacred reputation of Ephesus. If Artemis gave the city its distinction, they endeavored to keep it that way, and they benefited for their efforts.³²

Die Inschriften von Ephesos 4.1001–80b, lists *Kureteninschriften und verwandte Texte*, that is, the catalog of *curetes* inscriptions with related texts dated between the reign of Emperors Tiberius (14–37 CE) and Alexander Severus (222–235 CE).³³ A closer look at the *curetes* inscriptions of the first century CE (IvE 1001–20) reveals five offices or roles with family ties and specific recurring rhetoric.³⁴ The *curetes* lists contain nothing regarding qualifications per se. What was the nature of these five offices (ιεροφάντης, ιεροσκοπος, ἐπὶ θυμιάτρου, ιεροκῆρυξ, and σπονδαύλης)? What duties were associated with them? And what was the significance of the recurring terms?

Prior to the time of Augustus, we find the *curetes* to have performed a variety of political and cultic responsibilities; however, Christine Thomas believes “that the transfer of the *curetes* from the Artemision to the Prytaneion during Augustan times corresponded with a reduction of their responsibilities from the political and cultic to the cultic alone.”³⁵ Cultic duties may have represented a broad range of duties from the liturgical to the administrative, from the privilege

²⁷ Bremmer, “Priestly Personnel,” 42.

²⁸ Rogers, *Sacred Identity of Ephesus*, 54; 75 n. 73. Cf. IvE 411, 617, 637, 661, 690, 892, 894, 897, 980, 983, 984, 1068, 3072.

²⁹ Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11–15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1992), 77–113, suggest that the high priestess and/or other leading women in the Artemis cult may also have had teaching responsibilities and that such women may have been promoting heresy regarding the origin of man among other myths. While many have refuted their view that women had a monopoly on religious leadership roles in Ephesus, the ancient evidence they put forth adds to our knowledge in this area.

³⁰ These terms appear in contrast to faithful stewardship and management in 1 Timothy 3:1–13. Cf. 1 Timothy 6:3–10 seems to portray such workers promoting a contrary doctrine and greedy for gain.

³¹ Bremmer, “Priestly Personnel,” 48. Cf. IvE 27.456.

³² Rogers, *The Sacred Identity of Ephesus*, 145–46. Cf. Rogers, *The Mysteries of Artemis of Ephesus*, 122–44.

³³ IvE 1001 is dated by Knibbe: “Zeit des Tiberius.” IvE 1080 is dated by Knibbe: “etwa unter Alexander Severus.”

³⁴ Hoag, *Wealth in Ancient Ephesus*, 112, table 1. Table 1 is adapted from *Chronologische Ordnung der Kuretentexte nach dem Kultpersonal in IvE 4.56*. This table names the people who held each of the five offices and the dates that they held these roles in Ephesus in the first century CE.

³⁵ Christine M. Thomas, “At Home in the City of Artemis: Religion in Ephesus in the Literary Imagination of the Roman Period,” in *Ephesus Metropolis of Asia: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Its Archaeology, Religion, and Culture* (ed. Helmut Koester; HTS 41; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 111. Cf. D. Knibbe, *Der Staatsmarkt: Die Inschriften des Prytaneions. Die Kureteninschriften und sonstige religiöse Texte*. (FiE 9.1.1; Vienna: Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut, 1981), 74–79, 96–100.

of offering sacrifices to Artemis to the upkeep of the temple precincts, statues, and sacred objects, and to the execution of lotteries and distributions for banquets and festivals held in her honor. Though the evidence is fragmentary, when names are mentioned in *curetes* lists, their family ties are often cited. We can gather that leading families held priestly roles in perpetuity.

Zeal for the goddess also emerges in the recurring rhetoric in the *curetes* lists. The “piety of the *curetes*” (κουρητες εὐσεβεῖς) in performing the duties of five offices is celebrated in 17 out of 20 first century CE *curetes* inscriptions.³⁶ As in *IvE* 1015, these terms occur at the beginning of each inscription honoring the priestly people and highlighting their faithful service to Artemis.

Finally, we come to the *ephebes*. Consider this a training program for community leadership, which included teaching youth the rules of reciprocity and granting favors or liturgies linked to community distributions. A. R. Hands explains the rules of reciprocity in effect here: “Gifts, benefits or favors in question are to be conferred upon somebody who can make a return, so that a return, even though it may no longer decently be asked for, is confidently expected.”³⁷ Though space does not permit further exploration, envision this as training for young wealthy citizens to engage in the benefactor model and to fulfill the duties of patron-client relations.

In *Ephesiaca*, Habrocomes leads the procession of *ephebes* (1.2.2) and meets up later in the story with Aegialeus, who is also an *ephebe* (5.1.2). There are striking similarities between the stories of the two characters, Habrocomes and Aegialeus. Both had love relationships influenced by the gods, both came from prominent wealthy families, and both had enrolled in the *ephebes*.

Meanwhile, Anthia, dedicated as a priestess from birth (3.12.1), appears as a female supplicant assertively promoting the Artemis myth and proudly receiving worship as the goddess who is mysteriously linked to Isis. She recites prayers, serves piously, and fiercely competes to attain distinction linked to her adornment and behavior. R. E. Witt suggests that Anthia served as “the leading priestess” of Ephesus and adds that Artemis and Isis have one identity in this sacred writing with interchangeable roles in the thinking of Xenophon of Ephesus. The two goddesses are depicted in this way in *Ephesiaca* because they were seen as unified in the ancient world.³⁸

(4) Implications for Biblical Reading and Interpretation

To conclude this study, we consider possible implications for biblical reading and interpretation. I offer three points for further discussion and exploration.

First, we notice the intertextuality of terms like “piety” (εὐσέβεια), “riches” (πλοῦτος), and “economy” (οἰκονομία). They appear in ancient Ephesus, the financial capital of the ancient world, and in *Ephesiaca* linked to pious wealthy people who treated the goddess as central to the embedded economy and all of life.³⁹ In biblical texts, it seems their use comes into view not as incidental but as intentional for reading and interpreting Ephesians and 1 and 2 Timothy.

³⁶ *IvE* 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004, 1005, 1006, 1008, 1009, 1010, 1012, 1013, 1014, 1015, 1016, 1017, 1018, 1020.

³⁷ A. R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), 30–31, 118–20; cf. Jouette M. Bassler, *God and Mammon: Asking for Money in the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 17.

³⁸ R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World*, 243. The Ephesian Artemis, the Egyptian Isis, and Roman Diana appear as a unified persona.

³⁹ Gary G. Hoag, “The Economy of Ephesus in contrast to the Economy of God in 1 Timothy and Ephesians” SBL, Amsterdam 2024.

Texts in Ephesians and 1 and 2 Timothy point readers to piety toward God rather than Artemis and to a different kind of riches.⁴⁰ The economy of God appears as the opposite of the economy of this world (1 Timothy 1:3-4). We see Christ at the center of all things (Ephesians 1:7-10). And the Church emerges as the channel for making this economy known to the world (Ephesians 3:8-12).

Second, we find that a text which interpreters have used to limit the role women in Christian ministry, 1 Timothy 2:9-15, has a fresh reading considering *Ephesiaca*. The text calls women to break from the cultural rule of dressing sumptuously, plaiting the hair to imitate the goddess, and promoting her myth, and urges them instead to do good deeds to show their piety toward God.

From birth, all the women of Ephesus, such as Anthia, would have been trained to imitate the goddess and promote the myth which said that the woman (Artemis) was the author of all life and that sin came into the world through man.⁴¹ The text calls women to shift loyalty from Artemis to Christ and not fear that the goddess of childbearing will take their life at childbirth.⁴²

Third and lastly, the opponents of the author of 1 Timothy appear as greedy prominent citizens who want to remain rich and ensconced in worship roles which provide personal benefit.⁴³ As a result of this study, their identity as Paul's opponents may have come into view as advocates of ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν, "a different doctrine" (1:3). The two opponents mentioned in 1 Timothy are Hymenaeus and Alexander who are guilty of βλασφημεῖν, "blaspheming" (1:20).⁴⁴

In 2 Timothy we see two names, Hymenaeus (2:17) and Alexander (4:14), repeated. Also in 2 Timothy, three additional names appear: Phygelus (1:15), Hermogenes (1:15), and Philetus (2:17). If these five opponents had ties to Artemis, the gods, and the city, and represent wealthy people facilitating worship, then we would expect to find them in the Ephesian inscriptions.

Interestingly, we find all five names in *Die Inschriften von Ephesos*! While we cannot conclusively connect the names in the inscriptions to the people in 1 or 2 Timothy with the evidence available to us, all five names appear in prominent roles.⁴⁵ The opponents of the apostle Paul may well have served as leading proponents of Artemis who wanted to remain rich and benefit from their piety to the goddess. Further study of biblical texts alongside ancient evidence and *Ephesiaca* by Xenophon of Ephesus may reveal more clues. I will leave those for future papers to explore.

⁴⁰ See "piety" in 1 Timothy 2:2, 10; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 5:4; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Timothy 3:5. See "riches" in Eph 1:7; 2:7; 3:8; 1 Timothy 6:10, 17, 18, 19.

⁴¹ Elizabeth A. McCabe, *An Examination of the Isis Cult with Preliminary Exploration into New Testament Studies* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), 99–100.

⁴² Artemis gained the distinction as the goddess of childbearing for assisting her mother, Leto, in delivering her twin brother, Apollo. For the testimony that all women put their trust in Artemis, see: Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists* 15.694D. For the implications tied to disobeying purity laws, see: Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 8.6.11–14.

⁴³ Reggie M. Kidd, *Wealth and Beneficence in the Pastoral Epistles: A "Bourgeois" Form of Early Christianity?* (SBLDS 122; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 95–96. Kidd adds: "An instructive parallel is Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1120b.16, where he expresses sympathy for liberal people who have difficulty staying rich (πλουτεῖν)."

⁴⁴ Note: IvE 261.5–9 mentions an Ἀλέξανδρος who served under Claudius (ca. 41–54 CE) as γραμματεὺς τοῦ δήμου; IvE 3865 mentions Ὑμέναιος καὶ . . . on a bath wall (undated). Neither person can be tied to 1 Timothy 1:20 with certainty, though their names appear in IvE. It is also unclear whether the Alexander in 1 Timothy is the same as the Alexander who is mentioned in Acts 19:33.

⁴⁵ For Hymenaeus, see: IvE 3865; Alexander: IvE 9, 17, 41, 47, 257, 261, 597, 613, 614, 688, 719, 898(1), 904a, 905a, 979a, 1001, 1004, 1012, 1015, 1018, 1020, 1021, 1033, 1055b, 1101, 1123, 1153, 1234, 1320, 1419, 1578a, 1590b, 1600, 1602, 1625a, 1633, 1686b, 1687, 1977a, 1987, 2018, 2205b, 2206a/b, 2302, 2306a, 2569, 2900, 2948d, 3022, 3031, 3412, 3414, 3415, 3428, 3429, 3448a, 3801, 3824, 4285; Phygelus: IvE 909a; Hermogenes: IvE 236, 572, 853, 903, 904b, 905a, 906, 960, 1454, 1600, 3291c, 3272, 3273, 3281, 3115, 3315, 4103; and Philetus: IvE 2440, 2531. It is noteworthy that Hermogenes and Alexander appear in the *Ephebenliste* 904a/b, 905a, 906 from the mid-first century CE, and Phygelus appears on the *Namenliste* from the *Fundplatz*.

Gary G. Hoag, Ph.D. (New Testament), Trinity College Bristol, UK (2014), lives in Littleton, Colorado, is a member of ETS, IBR, and SBL, serves as Founder of Global Trust Partners (gtp.org), and as affiliate faculty at Kairos University (USA). He has also taught courses at Asian Theological Seminary (Philippines), Christian Institute for Management (India), Denver Seminary (USA), Northern Seminary (USA), Torch Trinity Graduate University (South Korea), and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (USA). He has written or contributed to 17 books including, *Wealth in Ancient Ephesus and the First Letter to Timothy* (2015).