

THE FIGURE OF PAUL IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES*

The Areopagos Speech

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As the second part of a single work the Acts of the Apostles provides the reader with a clear picture of the witnessing to the saving name of Jesus Christ by the first Christian Communities. At this stage the Church was doing its utmost to propagate this name beginning from Jerusalem to Judaea, Samaria and to all the ends of the world, wherever her members were dispersed. Paul was one of the most important of these members, and he too did his utmost to make the name of Christ be proclaimed to all. The speech before the Areopagos in Athens (Acts 17,22-31), apart from the few verses in 14,15-17 delivered at Lystra, is the only discourse made to a Gentile audience in Acts. However, it presents us with an important depiction of this Apostle to the Gentiles. It is the aim of this study to bring out the figure of Paul as it emerges from this speech, as of one who obeyed the command of Jesus to the apostles to be His witnesses to the ends of the world. Paul did not completely act on his own initiative, but submitted his whole proclamation to the first responsible for that very proclamation — the Church.

Luke's aim in Gospel/Acts

Luke presents Jesus Christ as Son of God, Lord, Messiah and light to all nations. Certain aspects of Jesus' message were intended to be fulfilled only after his departure from this earthly life, after his programmed death and resurrection,¹ as the Scriptures had foretold. His disciples would be commissioned to propagate his message so that He would be acknowledged by all nations. For such a purpose he would send the Holy Spirit, after being exalted at the right hand of the Father² from where He would return to clothe his disciples with power. The time of witnessing was as important for Luke as Christ's terrestrial life. Hence the need for a second volume to his work — Acts.

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1. Cf. Luke 9,22; 17,25; 24,25-27; Matt 16,21; 17,12; Mark 8,31; 9,12.
2. Acts 2,33; 5,31; 7,55-56.

Just before ascending to the right hand of the father, Jesus tells his eleven and those who were with them that as it was written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, so also repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24,44-49). Acts 1,8 presents Jesus foretelling to the apostles that "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth". Acts serves as the story of the fulfillment by the apostles of that prophecy/command. Athens, therefore, as the gateway to wisdom, and Rome (at the end of Acts), as the gateway to power and to reaching the rest of the world are two extremely important stages in the completion of that last command of the Master.³

The General Context of the Speech

The second missionary journey of Paul

After the definition of the religious statute of the converted Gentiles within the Church by the Council of Jerusalem,⁴ the Christian mission turns towards the great cities of the eastern Mediterranean basin. As leaders of the Church, the Apostles and Elders of the Council commission Paul, Silas and Barnabas to communicate the decisions taken in a letter to the Church in Antioch. Some days after the letter is handed over, Paul takes the initiative and invites Barnabas to go with him for his second missionary journey, with the specific aim of visiting the brethren in every city in which they had already proclaimed the Word of the Lord and to see how they were faring (Acts 15,36). This journey supposedly began around 49 A.D., was completed towards the end of winter of c. 50 A.D.⁵ Departing from Antioch, they passed through Troas in Asia Minor, and stopped

3. Although Acts 1,8 does suggest an outline for the whole work, the narrative itself does not follow this programme faithfully. Depending on how "Judaea and Samaria" of v.8 is understood, whether strictly linked together to the preceding *pasē tē* to denote the whole of Palestine or understood as two proper place-names like Jerusalem, the book may be seen to be programmed in three or four parts. But in the book itself Luke distinguishes four stages, of which the two middle ones are more strictly linked together, as in v.8. It follows that a basic division in three parts of the exposition does not correspond to v.8. Cf. G. SCHNEIDER, *Gli Atti degli Apostoli* (Commentario Teologico del Nuovo Testamento; Brescia 1986), I, 278-281.
4. According to Acts 15,29, this statute demanded that Gentiles converted to Christianity should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what is strangled, and from unchastity. Cf. R.P. BOOTH, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity* (JSNTS 13; Sheffield 1986) 117-187 for the concept and the history of purity in eating.
5. Cf. R.J. DILLON, "Acts of the Apostles", in R.E. BROWN/J.A. FITZMYER/R.E. MURPHY [eds] *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (New Jersey 1990) 44:93-94; J.A.

at Philippi, Thessalonica and Boerea in Macedonia and then Athens and Corinth in Greece.

Athens

We should immediately note that Athens features rather late within the literary reality of Acts, which means that the narrator is presuming that this city did not actually make part of the already evangelized world. Athens, however, is very important for the author of Acts. It appears in the narrative as the gateway to wisdom.⁶ Here Paul comes into direct contact with pagan culture and religiosity, spiritual syncretism and idolatric fanaticism of the masses, typical of great cities. Athens, at that time a quiet little city of some 5,000 citizens, lived on its glorious past, sculptured in its monuments and temples. It still exerted an extremely great attraction upon those who aspired to acquire science and culture. It served as a centre of study, where one could get philosophical instruction in line with the ancient tradition. Its religious sensibility was proverbial, witnessed by its innumerable religious symbols and monuments: temples, statues and votive altars. This environment, representative of hellenistic civilization, offered the scenario where the missionary and Jewish Paul roamed. Far from being a tourist curiously viewing objects of art, Paul was a missionary with the sensibility of the religious man. Early Christians did not consider these monuments as objects of art at all.⁷

Luke knew that Athens had a long and dominant association with philosophy, and philosophy was that search of the mind to attain happiness in finding the meaning of all things in relation to man. Luke wanted to show whether this philosophical method was valid or not as a way to recognize God. Athens could serve the author to drive home the point that it is God who comes to man and not man to God, as he searches for the Divine through his intellectual considerations. Athens still had a feeling for the unknown and a curiosity to hear something new (cf. Acts 17,21). But it was probably this intellectualism which resisted the simple message of Christian salvation offered to all by God through Christian missionaries. The subject of the clash of these two worlds, namely that

FITZMYER, "A life of Paul", *NJBC*, 79:38-39; C.M. MARTINI, *Atti degli Apostoli* (Nuovissima Versione della Bibbia; Milan 1986) 226; G. OGG, *The Chronology of the Life of Paul* (London 1968) 112-126; R. JEWETT, *A Chronology of Paul's Life* (Philadelphia 1979); T.H. CAMPBELL, "Paul's 'Missionary Journeys' as Reflected in his Letters", *JBL* 74 (1955) 80-87.

6. Cf. M. DIBELLIUS, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (London 1956) 76.

7. Cf. MARTINI, *Atti*, 244-245; R. FABRIS, *Atti degli Apostoli* (Commenti biblici; Rome 1984) 486.518; E. HAENCHEN, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Oxford 1971) 517; A. WIKENHAUSER, *Atti degli Apostoli* (Il Nuovo Testamento Commentato 5; Brescia 1979) 255.

of the successors of the Athenian philosophers and that of the preacher of the gospel, was especially attractive to the writer of our narrative. This narrative takes as especially significant Paul's short stay in Athens; and confers a symbolical meaning to the scene on/before the Aeropagos.⁸

Agnōstos theos

The narrative slowly builds up to Paul's speech. Paul is brought before the council to explain his position. *Theōrountos kateidōlon ousan tēn polin*, in v.16, and *boulometha gnōnai*, in v.20, serve to prepare the way for the speech concerning the *agnōstos theos*. The Athenian philosophers confess that they could not understand Paul's teachings, but would like to do so. With v.22 Paul begins his speech. As from its commencement the attention is remarkably centred upon the religious devotion of the Athenians. Following oratorical rhetoric, at the outset Paul seeks to render his hearers benevolent, beginning his speech with a *captatio benevolentiae*. In vv.16-17 Paul's spirit is aroused by the idolatry he found flourishing in the city. Against this state of affairs he argues and gives vent to his indignation. Without narrating or even referring to his anger and recalling his wandering about in the city in which he had been aroused to indignation at the prevalence of idolatry (v.16), he singles out for special attention one altar among the many "objects of worship" upon which was inscribed *agnōstō theō*. The presence of such an altar offers an excellent exordium to Paul's address. Literary references to altars dedicated to "unknown gods"⁹ may have inspired Luke's recasting in the singular, which furnishes an ideal fulcrum for the parrying of the accusation about "strange gods" by the philosophers before he was taken to the Areopagos (v.18). The apostle calls the attention of the citizens of Athens to the presence of the true God in their midst, the God whose special protection they had experienced and publicly acknowledged with the altar, but whose identity was still unknown to them.¹⁰ We might note the difference of perspective between Paul's and the Athenians' viewing

8. Cf. DIBELLIUS, *Studies*, 79-80.

9. PAUSANIAS, *Description of Greece*, 1 (Attica).1,4 (tr. by W.H.S. JONES) (London-Cambridge-Massachusetts 1954): "...Here there is also a temple of Athena Sciras, and one of Zeno some distance away, and altars of the gods named Unknown." The Greek text reads: *bōmoi de Theōn te onomazomenōn Agnōstōn*; PHILOSTRATUS, *Life of Apollonius*, 6.3.5. (tr. by F.C. CONYBEARE) (London-Cambridge-Massachusetts 1950) has: "For it is a much greater proof of wisdom and sobriety to speak well of all the gods, especially at Athens, where altars are set up in honour even of unknown gods." The last phrase in the Greek text being: "*hou agnōstōn daimonōn bōmoi hidryntai*."

10. Cf. P.P. PARENTE, "St. Paul's address before the Areopagus", *CBQ* 11 (1949) 144-147; N.B. STONEHOUSE, "The Areopagus Address", *Paul before the Areopagus and other N.T. studies* (London 1957), 10-15; HAENCHEN, *Acts*, 518-519.

the altar in question. Paul viewed it as the Athenians' way of honouring whom they worship as unknown, the one, true God. On the other hand, the altar served the Athenians' wish to honour each and every existent god, to ensure that no one of them is left out of their cult. Did such an altar exist in Athens?

Some authors hold that the dedication of an altar in the singular could never have existed in Athens, the possibility being averse to Greek mentality.¹¹ Others say that archaeology has not yet uncovered an altar with such an inscribed dedication.¹² Others have proved the contrary. In fact, altars to unknown gods have been found in Athens itself. Although they are no exception to the rule, most dedications being in the plural, dedications to unknown gods in the singular have also been unearthed.¹³

The reason for this unusual use of such a dedication by Paul to begin his speech has also been widely discussed. Some say that Paul is using the sophisticated trick of slightly misinterpreting the evidence in his own favour. Others hold that only the singular version of the inscription could be used by the speaker, for he regarded the inscription as evidence of the Athenians' latent awareness of the true God.¹⁴ Whether that kind of altar existed or not remains an object of debate; but the speaker makes good use of their presumed existence (with a dedication in the singular) in the exordium of his speech. We would opt for the opinion that in such an inscription Paul wisely recognized that there was in the heart of Athens a witness to the deep unsatisfied yearning of humanity for a clearer and closer knowledge of the unseen power which men worshiped dimly and imperfectly. The worship of an unknown god, coming to expression within the framework of polytheism, remains an idolatrous act of worship of one god among many. But the singular expression of idolatry exhibited by the altar which especially attracted Paul's attention, intimating as it did its own defectiveness, provided a starting point for Paul's proclamation of the living God who was still unknown to them, but whom they worshiped (v.23). Paul wanted to proclaim

11. Cf. E. NORDEN, *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede* (Leipzig-Berlin 1929). His thesis was contradicted by P.W. van der HORST and proved to be wrong on the grounds that there is enough evidence to make it not only possible but also highly probable that in Athens and elsewhere there were altars to unknown gods. It is also probable that there were than one such altar and they might have had different backgrounds for their erection. Cf. "The unknown gods (Acts 17:23)", *Knowledge of God in the Greco-Roman World* (eds R. van der BROEK/T. BAARDA/J. MANSFELD) (EPRO 112; Leiden 1988) 19-42.
12. Cf. MARTINI, *Atti*, 247; BARNES, 418.
13. Cf. J.J. KILGALLEN, *A Brief Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York-Mahwah 1988) 139; van der HORST, *Knowledge*, 19-42.
14. Cf. DIBELLIUS, *Studies*, 41.

the One, True God and so made use of the dedication in the singular. The speech does not begin with the presupposition that the Athenians were already worshipping this true personal God unknowingly. V.23b indicates that their ignorance did not consist in not knowing only the name of the one God, but also in their misunderstanding the nature of the divine in general. Paul's claim was that he was able to explain to his hearers that it was this Unknown God who would inform them about the creator of heavens and earth. It is this true living God, unknown to them up to that moment, that Paul wants to proclaim now to his hearers.

The audience

Among the ordinary crowds of the Athenian Agora there were the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who undoubtedly are much involved in the preliminary discussions with him whom they now are so eager to hear (v.18). Luke singles these two out even before Paul's speech itself begins. After his anger was provoked at seeing the city full of idols (v.16), he argues with the Jews and the devout persons, and with all those who happen to be in the market-place at the moment (v.17). The Stoics and the Epicureans are then introduced.

The *Stoics*, who claimed the Cypriot Zeno (c.340-265 B.C.) as their founder, were so called because they used to hold their meetings in the *stoa poikilē*, in the agora,¹⁵ where they habitually taught in Athens. In a pantheistic perspective of the world pervaded by a universal divine dynamism, they propounded an elevated ethical ideal and a high sense of duty. To live in conformity with a universal law that controls all things and events was their motto. Their key philosophical ideas were the unity of humanity and the natural kinship of humans with God.

The *Epicurean* school, founded by Epicurus (340-270 B.C.), member of Athenian settlers on Samos, based its ethical theory on the atomic physics of Democritus and presented pleasure as being the chief end in life; the pleasure most worth enjoying was for the Epicureans a life of tranquility (*ataraksia*), free from pain, disturbing passions, and superstitious fears (including, in particular, the fear of death). The Epicureans did not deny the existence of gods, but emancipated themselves from a false image of the divinity by maintaining that they (the gods) took no interest in the life of men. They shared a fervent opposition to common people's groveling superstition and a conviction that the gods are unaffected by human maneuvering.

15. The famous ruins of the agora lie just NW of the Acropolis. It was the city's governmental and commercial hub and the meeting place par excellence for all matters of community life.

Luke, even before giving us what Paul said in the speech, completes the picture of the Areopagos Speech by these particular details about Paul's audience, giving the scene a precise local colour.¹⁶ The narrator is fully aware which schools of thought had most influence at this time. So he mentions these two, typical representatives of the spiritual-humanistic currents of the Greek environment contemporary to Paul. Whatever their different understanding might be as to how man is to relate to all things in order to find and secure his happiness, both Epicureans and Stoics agreed on the ephemerality of the traditional gods of Greece and Rome. For them these gods had no value at all, since they never guarantee to man what he so eagerly longs for. They knew so well that man must recognize the forces that surround and dominate him and the world. Being unable to overcome these forces man seeks to adjust himself to them. In the discussions he has with the Jews and the devout men in the synagogue and the agora (v.17), prior to the speech before the Areopagos, Paul touches upon these subjects and now he addresses himself to this way of thinking.¹⁷ Thus, Paul starts with a very accidental fact, and underlines a very deeply rooted reality in the Athenians' (and Gentile) religious convictions. Hearing Paul speaking in the agora these philosophy experts spring to the occasion to know something new about the eternal question of God. "What the speech now attacks, with arguments from the philosophy of the Greek enlightenment, is the heathen popular belief and not the religion of the philosophers. If the speech is nonetheless directed to these philosophers, it is because Greek culture has to be exhibited in its highest representatives".¹⁸

Paul is called a "charlatan" (*Bruce*), "babblor" (*Kilgallen, Haenchen, RSV*), "parrot" (*JB*) by some who heard him speaking (v.18). The Greek word reported by Luke is *spermologos*, seed-picker, one who makes his living by picking up scraps, a rag picker, or in this context, used non-literally, gossip, chatterer, one who picks up and retails scraps of knowledge, an idle babblor.¹⁹ But through his speech Paul picks up and reduces to nothing the different trends of thought which the philosophers had about the point in question by showing the futility of mental exercise to the full realization of this quest.

16. Cf. W. NEIL, *The Acts of the Apostles* (The New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids 1973) 189.
17. Cf. KILGALLEN, *Brief Commentary*, 138.
18. HAENCHEN, *Acts*, 528.
19. Cf. W. BAUER, /W. ARNDT /W. GINGRICH, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago-London² 1979) 762.

The motif of the Athenians' ignorance with respect to God is the point of departure for Paul's speech. Biblical wisdom tradition had already stigmatized idolatric aberrations as ignorance (Wis 13,1; 14,22; Jer 10). The Old Testament denied that God can ever be contained in statues or houses made by human hands. Nor can this Unknown God depend on humans for food or drink through offerings. Paul reiterates this point, with which his audience of philosophers would agree (v.25), because it is He who gives life (*zōē*) and breath (*pnoē*) and all else to mankind, the one in whom all live and move and have their very being (vv.24,28). Paul presumes his hearers would agree with this line of argumentation; he even quotes their writings.²⁰ In this way Paul joins YHWH with the idea of the Greeks that there exists another Unknown God who is beyond all the gods of their ancestors. Paul was coming to the crux of his speech. This god who controls man's life, epochs, boundaries (v.26), wanted to be searched for and found, if possible. However, men, though acknowledging his laws, have scorned them by not acknowledging his due sovereignty and so were expected to repent in this time of history (v.30). These men of knowledge approved of this too.²¹ Christian proclamation put an end to this religious ignorance taking place between the age of ignorance and the moment of the full manifestation of God's salvific activity. From here comes the need for *metanoia* that delivers man from his ignorance and helps him adhere to the true God who offers his salvation through his Only begotten Son Jesus.²² Paul wisely makes no mention of Jesus except indirectly and towards the end of his speech.

It was this ending of the speech that brought about a tremendous reaction. God will judge the world through his Son raised from the dead. The Greeks could never accept the fact that man can enjoy complete happiness by coming back to life, to the same circumstances from which he has departed with death. This would constitute for them a contradiction in itself, something they could in no way stomach. And as unacceptable did they hold it in the narrative. Pagan wisdom refutes the Christian message, not because the latter lacks the foundations for credibility, but because self-sufficiency and superficiality closes it in a refractory world to the free gift of salvation by God.²³

20. Paul quotes ARATUS (d. 240 B.C.), the Stoic poet and philosopher in his poem *Phaenomena*, 5: "gar kai genos eimen" G. MURRAY/C. BAILEY/E.A. BARBER/T.F. HIGHAM/C.M. BOWRA (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Greek Verse* (Oxford 1954). This point is also hinted at by CLEANTHES in his *Hymn to Zeus*, 4 (cf. *Ibid.*). Cleanthes expresses the invocation to Zeus as: "ek sou gar genometha".

21. Cf. KILGALLEN, *Brief Commentary*, 139.

22. Cf. FABRIS, *Atti*, 533.

23. Cf. FABRIS, *Atti*, 534.

This speech is a fine example of aperture and audacity on the part of the speaker as well as of the author who reports it. Luke does not portray a pitiful departure, but rather lets the reader feel that Paul has emerged from a difficult situation. It was not he who has failed to grasp Paul's intention in this speech, but the audience.²⁴ Indirectly, Luke has been given the motive why Paul could know, and preach, "nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2,2.3-5), as the only way to meet God. This does not mean that the method Paul used with the Athenians was not the correct one; rather the narrator is implying that the knowledge of God can never be separated from belief in the Only begotten Son, crucified but raised from the dead, as propounded in the Christian message.²⁵

The literary aspect of the Speech

According to a study of the speech genre in Acts, M. DIBELLIUS concluded that the ancient historian was not aware of any obligation to reproduce only, or even preferably, the text of a speech which was actually made.²⁶ He concludes that the speech before the Areopagos was essentially constructed by Luke. It consists of a Hellenistic speech about recognizing God and doing so philosophically; the arguments employed are nearer to those of second-century apologists than to those of Paul's epistles. Luke has put in Paul's mouth a speech to the Athenian intelligentsia. It offers a synthesis of philosophical argumentation combined with the corresponding motives taken from Biblical tradition and Jewish propaganda aimed at vilifying arguments for pagan polytheism and idolatry. The philosophical elements of the speech can easily be isolated by a process of literary criticism; one can allot different parts of the speech to the different sources employed by the author. The speech would thus lose its homogeneity and unity. On the other hand, B. GÄRTNER defends the unity of the speech,²⁷ attributing to Luke, though, some formal revisions. A third opinion holds the speech to be a completely Lucan composition with hints to speeches and treatises in pagan sources.²⁸ The first two views which are diametrically

24. Cf. HAENCHEN, *Acts*, 526.

25. Cf. W.R. RAMSAY, *St. Paul the Traveller and Roman citizen* (London ¹⁴1920) 252; cf. also the critique of this point in STONEHOUSE, *Paul before the Areopagos*, 31-40 and F.F. BRUCE, *The Book of the Acts* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids 1988) 344.

26. Cf. DIBELLIUS, *Studies*, 139.

27. Cf. B. GÄRTNER, *The Areopagos Speech and Natural Revelation* (ASNU 21; Uppsala 1955) 45.

28. E.g., PAUSANIAS, PHILOSTRATUS.

opposed are representative of the majority of opinions about this speech.²⁹ Considering the aim of speeches in documents such as Acts, we may say with DIBELLIUS that the author had specific aims for incorporating speeches in his narrative. Such aims could be intended to give a deeper insight into the total situation the narrator is describing, or to focus on the true significance of the historical moment concerned; the narrator might wish to enframe the character of the speaker into a close-up. Very often only close reading of the literary unit as a whole will reveal the real motive for the speech. The criticism of idolatry rests on a true conception of God in so far as this can be attained by His self-revelation to men. Thus, the purpose of the missionary preaching as exemplified in the Areopagos Speech was not to reinstate the natural knowledge of God by enlightening the misapprehensions of man's mind, but to show the uselessness and the vanity in the Gentiles' natural conception of God. According to the Christian missionaries ignorance is the prevailing condition in this manner of conceiving the Divinity; but this offered the reason for the universal act of salvation through Christ, *ta nun paraggellei* (v.30).³⁰

This gives us a hint for solving the problem of the genuinity of the speech before the Areopagos. Luke had a very specific aim for this speech; he wanted to demonstrate through Paul the uselessness of philosophy alone in order to recognize God. He makes use of a speech which the historical Paul had most probably delivered and, by giving it a more ordinate form, conveyed his message. Here we have a case where Luke incorporates another speech in Acts by one of his main protagonists to show his readers what the Christian faith was.

The structure and the division of the episode determine the speech itself as central (vv.22-31), for which the narrator dedicates the preceding six verses (v.16-21) as its scenario. Paul's speech provokes the conclusion of the Areopagos experience as narrated by Luke (vv.32-34).

It is because Athens is the centre of hellenistic piety and Greek wisdom that this city bears so great an importance to the message that the speech portrays. The cultivated style of the Areopagos speech and of the one delivered at Lystra³¹

29. In favour of DIBELLIUS we find P. GARDNER, "The speeches of St. Paul in Acts", *Cambridge Biblical Essays* (Cambridge 1909), NORDEN, *Agnostos Theos*. In favour of GÄRTNER, B.W. BACON, *The Story of St. Paul* (London 1905); E. MEYER, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentum* (Stuttgart-Berlin, 1931), III; H. CONZELMANN, "The Address of Paul on the Areopagus" (1958), *Studies in Luke-Acts* (Nashville-New York 1966); HAENCHEN, *Acts*.

30. Cf. GÄRTNER, *Areopagus Speech*, 169.

31. Cf. *en tais parōchēmēnais geneais eiasen panta ta ethnē poreuesthai tais hodois autōn* (Acts 14,16-17).

enables the solemn proclamation about God, and the evidence of God's existence that is found in the order of nature, especially in the seasons of the year, to stand out more forcefully. Comparing the Areopagos Speech to the Lystra Discourse would shed further light on the former (Acts 14). In contrast to 17,4, 14,15-17 does not contain the word *kosmos*; the speech follows the Old Testament style completely (e.g. Ex 20,11). The gods are described as *hoi mataioi* as in the Old Testament. In Acts 14,16 there is a reference to the motif of ignorance, as in 17,30, but none to the revelation of salvation as having put an end to ignorance. The context determined this modification. In the speech at Lystra, as in conformity with the OT thought, God is said to have filled men's hearts with food and gladness. But in the Stoic proof of God these ideas are arranged thus: God revealed himself by a purposeful ordering of human life; men were therefore able to recognize him.³²

The way Luke employs speeches as well as the comparison between these two discourses (Areopagos/Lystra), both having Gentiles as their addressees, bring us nearer to Luke's aim for the Areopagos Speech and the figure of Paul that emerges from it.

One last word about the Speech's ending. Since there is no mention of a major interruption, this apparently sudden ending serves to emphasize what is most important in the speech; an essential role is here played by the opposition of the listeners.³³ The composition of the speech makes it abundantly clear that it forms a unity, which reaches an intended ending. Whatever is felt as missing was not expressed in this speech.³⁴ The speaker is interrupted precisely at his argument's target: raising him from the dead (v.31); this is the point where propaedeutic theodicy reaches out to Christian kerygma, the point where the kerygma, with the Resurrection as its core, predictably repels many of its educated prospects.³⁵

In 1 Thess 1,9-10 Paul summarizes the preaching to the Gentiles, and we can see a certain similarity between this summary, Romans³⁶ and Acts 17,22-31: *epestrepstate pros ton theon apo ton eidolon, douleuein theo zonti kai alethinō*, and *anamenein ton huion autou ek ton ouranon, hon egeiren ek [ton] nekrōn*,

32. Cf. DIBELLIUS, *Studies*, 71-72; KILGALLEN, *Brief Commentary*, 112-113; HAENCHEN, *Acts*, 429-434; BRUCE, *Acts*, 276-277.

33. See the same effect in Acts 10,44; 22,22; 26,24.

34. Cf. DIBELLIUS, *Studies*, 57.

35. Cf. DIBELLIUS, *Studies*, 56-57.

36. See, e.g., 1,1-6; 2,1-4-11.16.22; 3,6.27-31; 5,1-11; 6,1-11.

Iēsoun ton rhuomnon hēmas ek tēs orgēs tēs erchomenēs. The pattern of the proclamation is very similar: conversion from idolatry and serving the true God, resurrection faith, judgment/rule of the world by the Risen One: a pattern shared also by 1 Cor 4-7. "The christological conclusion is no ill-fitting appendix, but the climax of an established, two-pronged kerygma to pagans in which the summons to monotheism, nourished by Hellenistic-Jewish apologetics, formed the necessary premise of the proclamation of Christ."³⁷

The Figure of Paul in the Speech

The purpose of missionary preaching is not to reinstate natural knowledge of God by enlightening men's minds, but to show the uselessness and vanity in the pagan conception of God and his worship. This is much in line with traditional missionary preaching based on the OT tradition. To be complete this preaching has to be followed by a proclamation of salvation in Christ. This is what Paul is determined to do in his speech.

In this discourse Paul appears as the missionary who is compelled to proclaim repentance in Him who will save, in the *Kyrios* (Lord of everything) who dominates in order to judge and to save, as he comes again sitting at the right hand of the Father. Acts 17,23.30 contain key phrases to this depiction of the missionary figure of Paul. he feels the compulsion to preach his Lord, even while idling in Athens and waiting for the others. Together with this speech we may take into account other pronouncements by Paul about his mandate to preach: Acts 10,42 – "He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead"; 1 Cor 9,16-17 – "For if I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel. For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission"; Eph 3,8-13 – The eternal plan of God that the Gospel of Christ is to be preached to the gentiles; Rom 1,1-6 – He is set apart to preach to all nations, both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish (cfr also Rom 1,14); Rom 1,15 – "So I am eager to preach the Gospel also to you who are in Rome".

The persuasion and consciousness in Paul of being chosen by Christ and sent by the Church³⁸ places upon him the responsibility not to preach anything

37. DILLON, *NJBC*, 44:94.

38. See, for example, Acts 9,22.29. The Ananias episode in Acts 9,10-19 and parallels convey this message. In a special way Acts 22,12-21 inculcates the idea of the sending of Paul through Ananias in the name of Christ and the Church. Even the context of Paul's defense before the Jews in Jerusalem is of utmost importance as to this point.

against or even outside what this Church teaches. The conformity in the contents of this preaching is creatively propagated by Paul according to the concrete situation in which he finds himself. The climax in this preaching is reached as Paul touches the theme of the day of the saving judgment when God will judge the world in righteousness. Here it is announced on the authority of this Apostle of Christ, to declare to the Jews and Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance (Acts 14,15-17; 26,20). Paul was commanded to go to the Gentiles (Acts 13,46-49) to preach the Message. However, it was not Paul himself who formulated the contents of his kerygma. Here he followed tradition, proclaiming those truths according to the pattern defined by the Church. Thus, the narrator sees Paul as the missionary who preaches the kerygma determined by the Church who sends him in the name of Christ who had chosen him. Indirectly, we can also see the pattern the Church followed in her proclaiming Christ and his Message to Gentile and pagan communities. Luke's aim for his Gospel and Acts is thus vindicated.

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