



Theses and Dissertations

2013-07-03

Acts 17: Paul Before the Areopagus

Michael R. Preece

Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), and the [Other Religion Commons](#)

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Preece, Michael R., "Acts 17: Paul Before the Areopagus" (2013). *Theses and Dissertations*. 3688.
<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/3688>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Acts 17: Paul Before the Areopagus

Michael R. Preece

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Thomas A. Wayment, Chair
Gaye Strathearn
Ray Huntington

Religious Education

Brigham Young University

June 2013

Copyright © 2013 Michael R. Preece

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Acts 17: Paul Before the Areopagus

Michael R. Preece
Religious Education, BYU
Master of Arts

Luke's record of Paul in Athens is among the most interesting and widely studied topics in the life of the Apostle Paul. Luke recorded that Paul taught in the Athenian marketplace, where he was asked to present his doctrines before the Areopagus. Many have commented on the controversial aspects of Paul's speech before the council as recounted by Luke. Much of this scholarly commentary has been centered on the speech itself and the historical authenticity of the account. The purpose of this thesis is to reexamine the context and the setting of the speech as recorded by Luke in the biblical text.

By reexamining the context of the speech, this thesis will help clarify Paul's purpose in engaging in philosophical dialogue with his audience while omitting the profound Christocentric doctrines as found in the Pauline Epistles. This thesis argues that an understanding of the setting and the audience played a pivotal role in the content of the Areopagus speech. Paul's audience was very different than the one he was writing to in his Epistles; therefore, the speech matches the setting and the audience.

This thesis demonstrates the significance of the audience by examining Paul's education before his conversion to Christianity, whether Paul was taken before the Areopagus on trial, what the functions of the Areopagus were over its history, where Paul was taken to explain his doctrine, and what role the audience played in how and what Paul taught on that occasion.

Keywords: Paul, Luke, Acts, audience, Areopagus, Mars Hill, *Stoa Basileios*, Stoics, Epicureans

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for all those who helped me complete this thesis. First, I want to express my love and appreciation for my parents who have always encouraged me to strive for excellence in education and in life. They have expressed their love and support throughout this endeavor, but most importantly they have given me an example of what Christ-like discipleship looks like.

I also want to thank the members of my committee for their many hours of service in helping me, and this thesis, reach their potential. I want to thank Dr. Strathearn for her example of a disciple and scholar. Her testimony and careful critique have been a strength to me and my writing. I want to thank Dr. Huntington for his compassion, support, and encouragement for me to succeed. And a special thanks to Professor Wayment for the many hours spent answering my questions and for helping me to remove the “preacher” that is too often found in my writing.

Lastly, I want to thank my wonderful family. I want to thank Miles for his curiosity and his love to learn which has inspired me to have a more youthful desire to never tire of learning something new. I want to thank Benny for his ability to make me smile after a long day of study or work. But most importantly, I want to thank my amazing wife. She has spent hours listening to my ramblings and discoveries through this process. Her encouragement has moved me to finish this thesis. Not only does she listen, but she has a love for the topic because she loves the author. I love you, sweetheart.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Figures.....	vi
List of Tables	vi
Chapter One Paul: A Product of His Time	1
Paul in Athens.....	2
Paul's Education	5
Purpose of Thesis and Desired Outcome.....	11
Chapter Two Historiographic Essay	14
Early Scholarship.....	15
The Dibelius Effect.....	18
After Dibelius	20
The Last Thirty Years	25
Conclusion	30
Chapter Three Paul on Trial?.....	31
Epilabomenoi	31
Scholarly Disagreement.....	34
The Areopagus: A Trial Scene?.....	35
Polite Invitation.....	35
A Serious Yet Informal Inquiry	37
Formal Inquiry	39
Paul on Trial.....	41
The Most Likely Scenario.....	43
Conclusion	45
Chapter Four The Council of Areopagus: Location Theories	47
Before the Council, Not the Mars Hill.....	48
Historical Significance of the Council of Areopagus	51
Functions of the Areopagus	53
The Archon Basileus.....	55

Location of the Address	56
Mars Hill	57
The Stoa Basileios.....	59
An Argument for the <i>Stoa</i> as the Location of the Speech	61
Conclusion	67
Chapter Five Hellenization of Christianity?	69
Speeches in Acts	72
Lukan Influence in Acts 17.....	73
Acts 17: The Hellenization of Christianity?	76
Points of Contact: Paul’s Use of Rhetoric before the Council of Areopagus.....	82
The Response of the Audience	87
Was Paul’s Speech a Success?.....	89
Conclusion	90
Significance of Thesis.....	90
Appendix The LDS Perspective: Areopagus Speech	93
Bibliography	109

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul. Map 13 in the Holy Bible, King James Version (KJV), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.....	3
Figure 2. The Athenians Agora in AD 150. John M. Camp, <i>The Athenian Agora: Excavations in the heart of Classical Athens</i> (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 17-18. Paul would have walked through the Athenian Agora by the Panathenaic Way, which diagonally dissects the Agora and where he would have passed by many shrines and altars to the Athenian Gods.	5
Figure 3. Plan of Agora in the second century AD. Image from John M. Camp, <i>The Athenian Agora</i> (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 182.	47
Figure 4. Reconstruction of the <i>Royal Stoa</i> , as it would have appeared in ca. 300 BC. John M. Camp, <i>The Athenian Agora: A Short Guide to the Excavations</i> (American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2003), 41.....	59
Figure 5. The remains of the <i>Royal Stoa</i> . Image from John M. Camp, <i>The Athenian Agora</i> (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 54.	62
Figure 6. Herm, S 33 used as support for arm of larger figure. Craig A. Mauzy, <i>Agora Excavations 1931–2006: A Pictorial History</i> , (The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2006), 18.	65
Figure 7. Plan of northwest corner of Agora, principle entrance into the public square. John M. Camp, <i>The Athenian Agora: A Short Guide to the Excavations</i> , (American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2003), 41.....	66
Figure 8. A reconstruction of the northwest corner of the Agora in ca. 420 BC, with Royal Stoa at left and the Painted Stoa at upper right, looking northwest. John M. Camp, <i>The Athenian Agora: A Short Guide to the Excavations</i> , (American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2003), 40.	81
Figure A-1. Mars Hill viewed from the Acropolis, where most Latter-day Saint scholars believe the speech took place.	95

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. <i>Epilabomenoi</i> in Luke-Acts.....	32
--	----

CHAPTER ONE PAUL: A PRODUCT OF HIS TIME

The life and works of the apostle Paul have been extensively studied, perhaps because his writings are among the most prolific in the New Testament. Paul's unique upbringing allowed him to be "all things to all men" (1 Corinthians 9:22). "Paul was a product of his time, and his religious view was deeply conditioned by his unique environment."¹ When Paul taught the Jews, "[he] became as a Jew, that [he] might gain the Jews" (1 Corinthians 9:20). Paul taught the Gentiles as a Gentile so to "gain them that are without law" (1 Corinthians 9:21). And "to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak" (1 Corinthians 9:22). He did this "for the gospel's sake" (1 Corinthians 9:23). "From this wide and diversified training we may understand better Paul's suitability to develop the primitive Judaic Church into the Church of the Roman World."²

The Roman world provided Paul with the proper environment to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. According to Luke Timothy Johnson, there existed three ideals and realities of Greco-Roman Hellenism that allowed Paul to have success while on his missionary travels: the first was the *polis*, the second was the unification of one language (Greek), and the third was religious syncretism, an amalgam of the different religious ideals, ethics, and doctrines within the

¹ Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* 2nd ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), vi.

² W. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller*, 5th ed. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979), 34.

Roman Empire.³ These three ideals shaped who, where, and in what language Paul taught during his extensive missionary travels throughout the Mediterranean world.

Roman context allowed Paul to travel “some thirteen thousand miles in Roman territory with less danger of bloodshed than one could meet in the same lands today.”⁴ He was permitted to do this in large part because of the *pax Romana*. The former Lord Chief Justice of England, Lord Hewart, described the influence of the *pax Romana* on Paul’s missionary journeys in these words, “It is not often stated, yet perhaps it is the fact, that the... general picture of the *pax Romana* and all that it meant—good roads and posting, good police, freedom from brigandage and piracy, freedom of movement, toleration and justice is to be found in the experiences written in Greek, of a Jew who happened to be a Roman citizen.”⁵ The influence of the *pax Romana* on the life of the apostle Paul cannot be overstated. Paul was able to freely travel throughout the Roman Empire and teach his new-found faith in Christ Jesus.⁶

Paul in Athens

Paul traveled to different *poleis* in the Roman Empire where he encountered an amalgam of different religious beliefs and practices. The account of Paul’s second missionary journey contains one of the most interesting moments in the Apostle’s life, his trip to the

³ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament* (Philadelphia Fortress Press, 1986). For more information on the Roman context, see Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

⁴ Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, revised ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2007), 15.

⁵ Henry J. Cadbury, *The Book of Acts in History* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1955), 58.

⁶ Wayne A. Meeks stated, while quoting Martin Hengel, “‘The guiding thread for every history of earliest Christianity is the irresistible expansion of the Christian faith in the Mediterranean region during the first 120 years.’ That expansion was closely associated with personal mobility, both physical and social. The former is simpler and its importance more obvious.” Meeks, 16.



Figure 1. Missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul. Map 13 in the Holy Bible, King James Version (KJV), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

epicenter of ancient philosophy—Athens. Paul arrived in Athens after having escaped Jewish agitators in Thessalonica and Berea. He remained in Athens for an undisclosed amount of time as he waited for his companions. Many questions remain concerning the purpose of Paul’s visit to Athens. Was it simply the most convenient stop in his escape from the persecution of the Thessalonian Jews? Or was he seeking a brief respite from his missionary travels and trials? Answers to these questions remain unsolved, but whatever the purpose for the visit, Luke deemed the events of Paul’s Athenian mission worth telling.

Luke recounted that while in Athens, Paul encountered pervasive idolatry. He recorded that Paul’s “spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry”

(Acts 17:16). Paul's heart was stirred by the history of this great city and its worship of idols.⁷ Paul noted the idols of the city at the beginning of his speech, "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions" (Acts 17:23).⁸

While in Athens, Paul began to preach concerning Christ and the Resurrection. As usual, he found his way to the Jewish synagogue and disputed with the Jews and the "godfearers" (Acts 17:17). However, Luke's account of Paul in the Jewish synagogue is not the emphasis of the text. The emphasis in this chapter was to show Paul's encounter with Hellenistic philosophy in its Mecca. According to Luke, Paul went daily to the market and there conversed with the Athenians about religion. "Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and the Stoicks, encountered him...because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection" (Acts 17:18). "Both of these rival schools traced their origins to late fourth century B.C.E. Athens."⁹

⁷ R.E. Wycherley described the abundance of idols as a "veritable forest of idols." R. E. Wycherley, "St. Paul at Athens," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 19, no. 2 (October 1968): 619.

⁸ Oscar Broneer gave an interesting description of what Athens would have been like had Paul gone sightseeing in that great city, detailing the different buildings and shrines that would have existed during the time of Paul's visit. Through this article, Broneer is able to paint a vivid picture of Athens in the time of Paul and show why perhaps Paul's "spirit was stirred" and "thus be able to begin his speech with references to facts well known to his hearers." Oscar Broneer, "Athens, City of Idol Worship," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 21, no. 1 (February 1958): 3.

⁹ N. Clayton Croy, "Hellenistic Philosophies and the Preaching of the Resurrection (Acts 17:18, 32)," *Novum Testamentum* 39, no. 1 (January 1997): 23.

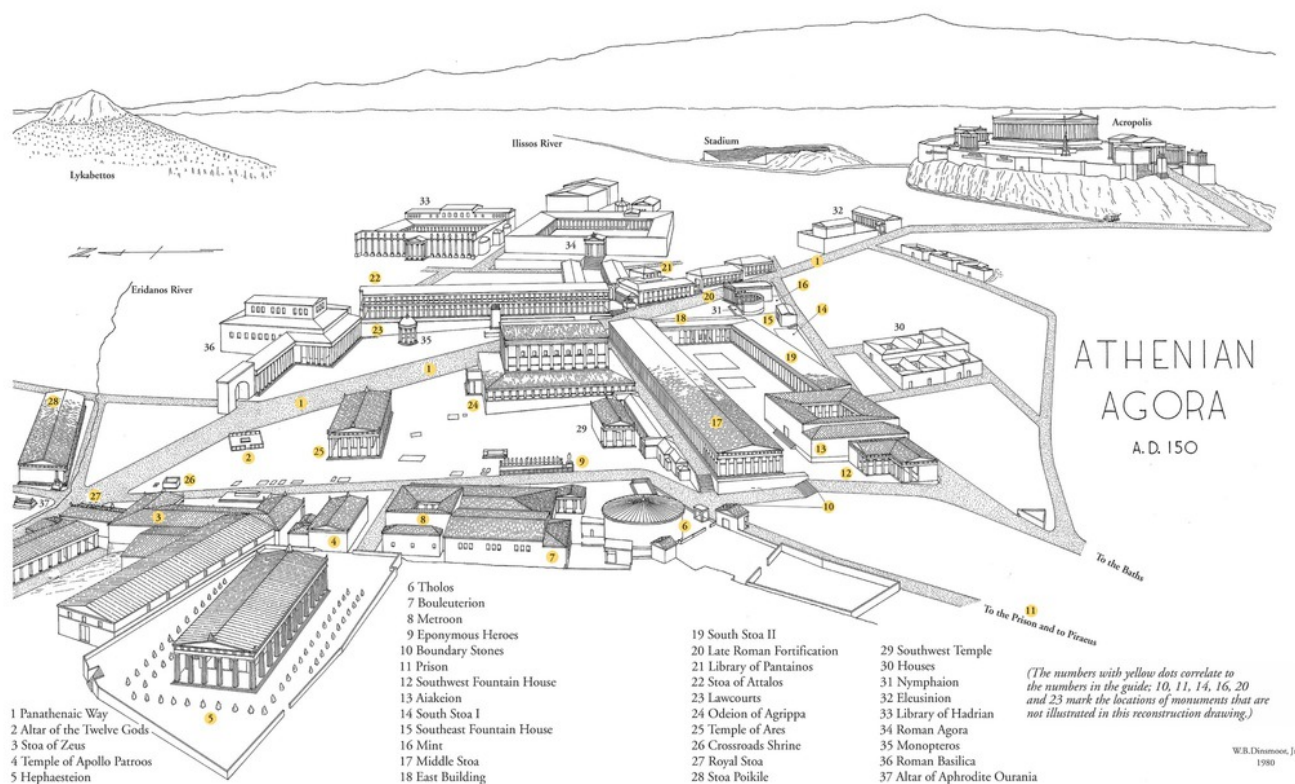


Figure 2. The Athenians Agora in AD 150. John M. Camp, *The Athenian Agora: Excavations in the heart of Classical Athens* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 17-18. Paul would have walked through the Athenian Agora by the Panathenaic Way, which diagonally dissects the Agora and where he would have passed by many shrines and altars to the Athenian Gods.

Intrigued by his words, the philosophers took Paul before the Areopagus. Paul began his classic speech by saying, “Ye men of Athens... I passed by, and beheld your devotions; I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you” (Acts 17:22–23). This Christian proselyte, in the midst of great paganism, taught boldly the superiority of his God.

Paul’s Education

Is it possible for one who described himself as a “Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee” (Philippians 3:5) to be conversant enough with Greek philosophy as to reason with the Athenians about the true nature of God while utilizing their concepts of deity?

Paul's education would have played a vital role for him to be "all things to all men" (1 Corinthians 9:23). It is certain that Paul was highly educated when it came to the law of Moses, but did Paul have an education which would allow him to find points of contact with the audience of Acts 17?

There is very little in the biblical text to illuminate the education of Paul. Paul himself only mentioned his Judaic background. He described himself as "more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of [his] fathers" (Galatians 1:14) than even the general Jewish population. It is through Paul's biographer, Luke, that we learn that he was a "Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia" (Acts 22:3). Luke further recorded that Paul, at some point during his life, moved to Jerusalem where he was brought to "the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers" (Acts 22:33). Being raised a Jew and trained by Gamaliel allowed Paul to dispute "in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons" (Acts 17:17). It is also evident in the writings of Paul himself that he was "highly, highly, highly expert in Jewish scripture and in arguments based on" the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint.¹⁰ It is also clear that Paul had access to Greek education, as evidenced by the manner in which he wrote and argued; however, he did not directly reference his Greek education in his Epistles.¹¹

Abraham Malherbe rightly noted that what emerges from a study of the Pauline Epistles is that Paul "is one who was thoroughly familiar with the traditions used by his philosophic

¹⁰ E. P. Sanders, "Paul between Judaism and Hellenism" in *St. Paul among the Philosophers* ed. Martin Alcoff and John D. Caputo (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 82. See also Andrew W. Pitts, "Hellenistic Schools in Jerusalem and Paul's Rhetorical Education," in *Paul's World* ed. Stanley E. Porter (Leiden, NLD: Brill, 2008).

¹¹ See Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 33. The significance of Paul's education and Paul's referencing Hellenistic ideas will be discussed in chapter five.

contemporaries...he knew these traditions first-hand.”¹² How did Paul receive an education outside of Judaic training, specifically a Greek education? Luke noted that Paul was raised in the city of Tarsus; this is where Paul likely received his Greek education.¹³

Ancient Tarsus was the capital of Cilicia and was a well-respected city in the Roman Empire, because of both trade and education. “Although firmly rooted in the soil of the east, Tarsus had a Hellenic respect for education, and [because of its trade affluence] the means to pay for it.”¹⁴ In both the Jewish and Hellenized world, children began their education at the age of six.¹⁵ The Hellenistic education model was divided into three categories: primary, secondary, and tertiary schools. In the primary school, a student would learn the rudiments of Greek, both speaking and writing. The secondary schools taught a child to study classic Greek literature and speeches, beginning about the age of eleven. A tertiary education, reserved for the privileged few, consisted of speech writing and rhetoric.¹⁶

E. P. Sanders concluded that “what we *know* about the content of [Paul’s] education is that he could write everyday Greek accurately and that he has studied the Bible with great care and precision.”¹⁷ It is evident, therefore, that Paul received a primary education in the basics of Greek, both literacy and verbal skills. It seems that in order for Paul to have given the Areopagus speech he would have needed access to at least a secondary education. It is in this level of

¹² Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 8.

¹³ There are those who believe that Paul may have received some of his Greek education while in Jerusalem and not in Tarsus. See Pitts, “Hellenistic Schools in Jerusalem” p. 20–22 for a list of scholars who both support and oppose this concept.

¹⁴ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 34.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁶ See Murphy-O'Connor, 46 and Pitts, “Hellenistic Schools,” p. 20 for more information on the structure of a Hellenistic education.

¹⁷ Sanders, 82.

education Paul would have become conversant in the classic speeches and ideologies of the Hellenized world. In this speech he was able to find points of contact with his highly educated audience. According to Luke's account of the speech Paul is even able to quote Aratus and perhaps even Euripides.¹⁸ The speech shows not only a cursory knowledge of the contemporary philosophies but also an ability to teach in the basic patterns of Greek rhetoric, a skill that Paul had to have learned in at least the secondary level and perhaps even the tertiary level.¹⁹ It is true that there is evidence in the Epistles that Paul was aware of Greek idioms and ideologies, what E.P. Sanders described as "Greekisms," yet Sanders argued that these "Greekisms" are not conclusive evidence that Paul received more education than the primary level.²⁰ With the evidence available, it is impossible to conclude definitively on the subject.

The most important detail concerning Paul's education for this thesis is that Paul was born in Tarsus. Being raised in Tarsus would have given him access to all levels of education in the Hellenistic world before moving to Jerusalem to continue his studies in the law of Moses. Paul's socioeconomic status would have had to be great enough to allow him access to this type of education, yet the text does not provide any clues other than Paul's free-born Roman citizenship (Acts 22:28). This status is of vital importance when speaking of Paul's education. Unfortunately, these details of Paul's background are not part of the scope of this thesis. This

¹⁸Much more is discussed on these quotations and the points of contact with Hellenistic philosophy in chapter five. Luke recorded Paul quoting from these philosophers, yet Paul himself quoted the philosopher a Cretan philosopher, probably Epimenides, in his Pastoral Epistle to Titus (Titus 1:12). It is therefore not unlikely that Paul may have quoted these philosophers in a speech and not just while writing personal correspondence.

¹⁹ For more information, see Engberg-Pedersen. Engberg-Pedersen was able to conclusively argue that Paul was aware of the Stoic's mode of argument which he called "the model" (Engberg-Pedersen, 34).

²⁰ Sanders, 76. Sanders lists 2 Corinthians 4:18, Philippians 4:11–12, and 1 Corinthians 15:33 as examples of Paul being shaped, theologically, by the world in which he lived. These citations of "Greekisms" does not end the argument on whether Paul received a secondary education but only shows that he was certainly aware of and influenced by the world of Greek culture.

thesis is concerned with whether Paul, under the correct circumstances, had access to the levels of education that would have enabled him to speak so eloquently before the Areopagus.

Strabo described Tarsus from the early first century in these words:

The People of Tarsus have devoted themselves so eagerly, not only to philosophy, but also the whole round of education in general, that they have surpassed Athens, Alexandria, or any other place that can be named where there have been schools and lectures of philosophers. But it is so different from the other cities that there the men who are fond of learning are all natives, and foreigners are not inclined to sojourn there; neither do these natives stay there, but they complete their education abroad; and when they have completed it, they are pleased to live abroad, and but few go back home....Further, the city of Tarsus has all kinds of schools of rhetoric; and in general it not only has a flourishing population but also is the most powerful, thus keeping up the reputation of the mother-city.²¹

Within this contemporary account of the education milieu of Tarsus is found some very important details as pertaining to the Apostle Paul. For example, those who partook of the education offered in Tarsus were locals. Strabo seemed to be surprised by this local dominance in education. What is even more significant is that people of Tarsus did not stay in Tarsus after receiving education. Many would move to another city to acquire further education and would rarely return home. Thus, the story of Paul as told by Luke fits into the pattern of the highly educated of Tarsus. It is possible that Paul received most of his education within Tarsus, perhaps even some rhetorical training, and then sought further education elsewhere. Where would this Jewish-born boy from Tarsus go? Not to Athens or Alexandria, but to Jerusalem, where he could receive more training in the law and be tutored in the Hillel school at the “feet of Gamaliel” (Acts 22:3). Paul, a Diaspora Jew, after having received an adequate Hellenistic education while in Tarsus, would desire further education at Jerusalem, never to permanently return to home.²²

²¹ Strabo, *Geography*. 14.5.13.

²²Jerome Murphy-O'Connor argued that Paul received his rhetorical education while living in Tarsus, “Since the study of rhetoric did not normally last beyond four years, the above line of argument would suggest that Paul left for Jerusalem about the age of 20” (Murphy-O'Connor, 51). For more information on the chronology of the

Strabo further explained that the educational environment allowed the Tarsian the ability to “instantly speak offhand and unceasingly on any given subject.”²³ Perhaps the best example of Paul offhandedly understanding the usage of Greco-Roman philosophy is the Areopagus speech, where he was able to quote their philosophers in defense of his doctrine. Not only did Paul quote Greek philosophy, but he used specific ideologies of the Epicureans and Stoics against one another to show the supremacy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.²⁴ C. K. Barrett summarized Paul’s ability to use these philosophies against one another: “Paul enlists the aid of the philosophers, using in the first place the rational criticism of the Epicureans to attack the folly and especially the idolatry of popular religion, and then the theism of the Stoics to establish (against the Epicureans) the immediate and intimate nearness of God, and man’s obligation to follow the path of duty and of (true) religion, rather than that of pleasure. But all these propaedeutics come in the end under judgment: men must repent, for God has appointed a day in which he means to judge the world in righteousness, by a Man whom he has appointed, and raised from the dead” (Acts 17:31).²⁵

Strabo’s statements support the conclusion that Paul may have received much of his Hellenistic education while living in Tarsus before he left to further his education in the law at Jerusalem. Though this evidence is circumstantial, it does show that Paul could have received more than just a primary education in the Hellenized world. Because he was of Tarsus, it is likely that Paul received a secondary or even a tertiary education during his formative years. This

life of the Apostle Paul, see Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology*, trans., Doug Stott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998).

²³ Strabo, *Geography*. 14.5.14.

²⁴ A more detailed analysis of these ideas is in chapter five.

²⁵ C. K. Barrett, “Paul’s Speech on the Areopagus,” in *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World: Essays in Honour of Harry Sawyerr*, ed. Mark E. Glasswell and Edward W. Fashole-Luke (London: SPCK, 1974), 75.

educational background of Greek philosophy and Judaic law allowed him to be “all things to all men.”²⁶

Purpose of Thesis and Desired Outcome

Acts 17, or the Areopagus speech, has been disputed over the past century by scholars who have primarily focused on the theology and historicity of the text and whether it can be attributed to Paul or Luke. F. F. Bruce summarized the problem when he said that, “probably no ten verses in the Acts of the Apostles [Acts 17:22–31] have formed the text for such an abundance of commentary as has gathered round Paul’s Areopagitica.”²⁷ In the past century, scholars such as Martin Dibelius,²⁸ Albert Schweitzer, Eduard Norden,²⁹ and Henry J. Cadbury, studied the Pauline authorship of the account. While this discussion is important, an understanding of the setting of the sermon adds depth and meaning to how Luke recorded the account of Paul in Athens. This thesis will not focus on the debate surrounding authorship but will concentrate on the location of the sermon itself and how an understanding of Paul’s audience changes how Luke’s record of Pauline theology should be interpreted. The Areopagus was not the Hellenization of Christianity, but a wise use of cross-cultural dialogue in a setting

²⁶ Alan F. Segal’s biography of Paul discussed the importance of not forgetting Paul’s Jewish past. In fact, according to Segal, Paul viewed early Christianity as an outgrowth of Jewish law and tradition. Segal explained, “To read Paul properly...one must recognize that Paul was a Pharisaic Jew who converted to a new apocalyptic, Jewish sect and then lived in a Hellenistic, gentile Christian community as a Jew among gentiles.” Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 6–7. For Segal, it is impossible to separate the Jewish Paul from the Christian Paul, which is especially important to understanding Paul’s theology as found in his Epistles.

²⁷ F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 353.

²⁸ Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht 1956).

²⁹ Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1956).

that was potentially more dangerous than just a public sermon on Mars Hill. Examining the questions that surround the context of the Areopagus speech is the purpose of this thesis.³⁰

This thesis will examine the context and audience of the speech in order to show how Paul in Athens, like elsewhere, sought to teach the gospel of Christ to everyone, from the uneducated poor to Gentile magistrates. Paul's upbringing and education allowed him to teach culturally diverse audiences throughout his missionary journeys. One clear example of Paul's ability to adapt and mold the message to his audience is the speech before the Areopagus.

This thesis will investigate five topics to properly contextualize the setting and the audience of the Areopagus: (1) the history of the scholarship of Acts 17, (2) Acts 17 as a trial, (3) location theory: on Mars hill, (4) location theory: before the council of Areopagus, and (5) the theology of the speech as evidence that Paul was speaking to the council of Areopagus and not the general populace of Athens.

The author's hypothesis is that Paul was physically taken before the council of Areopagus, the supreme court of Athens, which held an informal inquiry in the *Royal Stoa* or *Stoa Basileios*, "one of the earliest and most important public buildings in Athens. It served as the headquarters of the archon basileus (king archon), second in command of the Athenian government and the official responsible for religious matters and the laws."³¹ It was probably here that the council required Paul to explain his doctrine of Christ and the Resurrection. By having Paul teaching the council of Areopagus in the *Royal Stoa* as the setting of Acts 17, it becomes clear to the careful reader of Acts that Paul's speech was not the Hellenization of

³⁰ One controversial aspect of the speech that may be clarified through this discussion is why the sermon in Athens would be so different from the Christocentric theology of his other writings? Paul's stated purpose was to preach redemption through Christ (see 1 Corinthians 2:2). So why are there only veiled references to Christ in the Areopagus address? Chapter five will discuss how the audience and setting of the speech provides the reason why Paul did not teach to this audience like the audiences in his Epistles.

³¹ John M. Camp, *The Athenian Agora: A Short Guide to the Excavations* (American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2003), 41.

Christianity. Rather, Paul found agreement with Greek philosophy and rhetoric, which he utilized to preach his faith in Christ.

CHAPTER TWO HISTORIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

The Areopagus speech has been discussed for more than a century by scholars. As already noted, scholars like Eduard Norden, Martin Dibelius, Albert Schweitzer, and Henry J. Cadbury, and others have disputed over several elements of the speech. Patrick Gray succinctly summarized how the arguments have moved over the years: “Paul’s address before the Areopagus in Acts 17 counts as one of the most celebrated passages in the NT. It has been read variously as an expression of,” (1) natural theology mixed with Stoic ideologies, (2) a Christian sermon pointed at Gentiles using Old Testament theology, (3) a “gauge of Luke’s reliability as a historian,” (4) a model for Paul’s and the first century church’s missionary approach among the Gentiles, (5) as “evidence for or against its Pauline authorship vis-à-vis the epistles,” and (6) a reshaping of the books of Luke and Acts as historical narrative.¹ Most scholars center their arguments on the Areopagus around these six possible readings and interpretations, using any number of them to reach their conclusions.

This chapter will investigate how scholars have shaped the debate surrounding the setting of the Areopagus over time. This chapter will emphasize the arguments that are of particular importance to this thesis while still briefly discussing the broader arguments that have shaped the scholarship for Acts 17. Many of the pertinent arguments that are germane to other chapters of this thesis will be mentioned in this historiographic essay; however, conclusions will be primarily reserved for the chapters where those topics will be discussed in greater depth.

¹ Patrick Gray, “Implied Audiences in Areopagus Narrative,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 55, no. 2 (2004): 205–206.

Early Scholarship

In many ways, the beginning of critical Pauline scholarship began with the Tübingen school of theology and F. C. Baur.² Early in the mid-nineteenth century, scholars began to doubt the historical authenticity of the Acts 17 speech. Baur called the speech “unhistorical”³ because the author of Acts desired to contrast as “prominently as possible” the differences between “Christianity and polytheistic heathenism.”⁴ For Baur, this was accomplished by fabricate the setting for the sermon by giving specific details of the Athenian culture, like mentioning that the audience included Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in order to contrast Christianity with popular pagan religious belief. Baur argued that the setting of the speech described in the text moves one to conclude that Paul was on trial before the Areopagus, yet there is no direct evidence in the following text for a trial setting.⁵ This contradiction led Baur to assume that the Areopagus speech was a fabrication.⁶ The weakness of this argument is the assumption that a lack of trial language equates to a fabricated scene. What if the Lukan account did not place Paul on trial, but the account was a defense in a meeting less formal? This thesis

² Another Tübingen scholar who agreed with Baur was C. V. Weizsäcker. Weizsäcker concluded, “The narrative given by the Acts (xvII. 16-34) can claim no historical value. The objective element in it [details surrounding the setting] shows no trace of actual events. Paul’s speech merely reveals the author’s conception of his manner of preaching to the heathen.” Carl Von Weizsäcker, *The Apostolic Age of the Christian Church*, trans., James Millar, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1907), 1:303.

³ F. C. Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 184.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁵ Likewise, Otto Pflieger concluded that the author of Acts desired to show a trial before the Areopagus but “of regular legal process,” therefore, “the whole situation has obviously been freely invented in order to give the speech...a dignified setting.” Otto Pflieger, *Primitive Christianity: Its Writings and Teachings in Their Historical Connections*, trans., W. Montgomery, 4 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1909), 2:249.

⁶ Though much of the early scholarship of the Areopagus in Germany held the attitude of skepticism, there were some conservative voices in defense of Lukan and Pauline authorship of the sermon. Bertil Gärtner discussed these opposing views by listing scholars such as C.F Nösgen, A. V. Harnack, and F. Bethge. Bertil Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* trans., Carolyn Hannay King (Copenhagen: Uppsala, 1955), 37-41.

will argue that there is a lack of formal trial language in the text, but that does not mean that the details of the setting of the speech are not contradictory.⁷

W. M. Ramsay argued against some of the Tübingen school's conclusions in his work *St Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, first published in 1897. In contrast to Baur, he argued that Luke's details of the setting for the speech actually give historical credibility to Paul's visit to Athens. Ramsay noted that Paul was taken before the council of Areopagus, not on the Hill of Ares, to explain his new doctrines.⁸ The hill would have been inadequate for the council because of its "small size and its exposed position."⁹ Ramsay did agree with Baur's argument for the improbability that Paul was on trial before the council of Areopagus because the account lacks any language of a formal trial. Ramsay doubted that the Areopagus account was a trial scene. He also correctly emphasized that the philosophers physically accosted Paul, and therefore their intent to hear Paul was not just an invitation to expound on his doctrine of the Resurrection. Ramsay's interpretation opened the door for the possibility that Paul, though not on trial, had to defend himself before the Areopagus and that the Acts 17 account was something more serious than a simple inquiry.

Five years after Ramsay's arguments for the historical authenticity of Luke's account F. W. Farrar penned a significant work on *The Life and Work of St. Paul*.¹⁰ Farrar, like Ramsay, argued for the historical details in the Lukan account of Paul in Athens but disagreed with

⁷ See chapter three for this discussion.

⁸ The Lukan text is ambiguous to whether Paul was taken to Mars Hill or before the Athenian Council of Areopagus. This linguistic ambiguity has led many scholars to disagree about the location of Paul's speech in Athens. These arguments will be discussed in detail throughout this thesis.

⁹ Ramsay, 241.

¹⁰ Other important early monographs include: A. T. Robertson, *Epochs in the Life of Paul* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1913), Benjamin Willard Robinson, *The Life of Paul*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1928), and C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* 9th ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960).

Ramsay's conclusion that Paul was taken before the council. Farrar argued that Paul was taken to Mars Hill. He concluded that the Agora would have been too crowded to be a suitable place to hear Paul's message. Farrar's interpretation allowed for a more romantic reading of the text— Paul was taken to the Hill of Ares, in the shadow of the Acropolis, the temple of polytheism, and yet Paul stood “under the blue dome of heaven, a vaster and diviner temple than any which man could rear.”¹¹

The early scholarship on Acts 17 also noted the influence of Hellenistic doctrines within the Areopagus speech. Two journal articles center on the debate of Paul's embrace of natural revelation and Stoic and Hellenistic philosophy and whether Luke can be trusted as a historian. Rudolf Knopf argued that the Areopagus address “cannot be used as a source for the preaching of Paul.”¹² He was among the first to argue that the speech was an outgrowth of Hellenistic ideals, particularly Stoicism, and that Luke was seeking to give an example of how to weld Hellenistic ideals with Christianity.¹³ Frederick Clifton Grant in “St. Paul and Stoicism” examined the influence of Stoicism in the life and teachings of Paul and argued that the account was historically accurate. His focus was that Paul failed to convert the Athenians because he aimed too closely “toward a common center” with the Stoics.¹⁴ Overall, Grant concluded that Paul must have been influenced by Hellenistic philosophy but was “certainly not a Stoic.”¹⁵ Grant also argued that Paul did not have success in Athens because he strayed too far from the

¹¹ F. W. Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, 2 vols. (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company 1902), 1:541.

¹² Rudolf Knopf, “Paul and Hellenism,” *The American Journal of Theology* 18, no. 4 (October 1914): 505.

¹³ Chapter five of this thesis will discuss why Paul used Hellenistic concepts in his speech. Paul was not just welding Christian doctrine with Hellenism, but used these concepts to gain audience and find points of contact with the philosophers to encourage them to repent (Acts 17:30).

¹⁴ Frederick Clifton Grant, “St. Paul and Stoicism,” *The Biblical World* 45, no. 5 (May 1915): 281.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 276.

gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁶ Yet his interpretation ignored that Luke did mention Paul's success while teaching in Athens. At the conclusion of the account, Luke noted that "certain men... believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and the woman named Damaris, and others with them" (Acts 17:34). Grant did not consider in his arguments that Paul's use of Hellenistic philosophy in his speech may have been an attempt to find points of contact with his audience to invite them to repent.

The Dibelius Effect

Much of the early nineteenth century scholarship on Acts 17 was shaped by the Tübingen school, whether or not a scholar agreed with their interpretation that Luke's account of the Areopagus was fabrication. In the twentieth century, the next great contributor to the scholarship of Acts 17 was Martin Dibelius in his monograph, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*. In many ways, Dibelius's work agreed with and built upon the conclusion of the Tübingen school. His focus, however, was on a literary approach to understanding Acts. His major question was "what can be discovered about the tradition underlying the book [Acts] by a criticism of its style?"¹⁷ Dibelius's extensive research and his pragmatic belief in style criticism led him to conclude that, like Tübingen School before him, the Mars Hill account was not an actual historical event. For Dibelius, the book of Acts should be read and analyzed as literature, not as history. He argued that in Acts 17, "Luke strayed too far from the Paul who was the theologian of the paradoxes of grace and faith...[The speech] is meant not an historical, but a symbolic encounter. The Areopagus speech became a symbol of Christian theology in the environment of Greek

¹⁶ Ibid., 281.

¹⁷ Dibelius, 1.

culture.”¹⁸ Dibelius concluded that Acts does not give a true historical account. Luke, instead, gave an itinerant account of events, and then completed the text with anecdote, legend, and theology. Therefore, “it is difficult to ascertain how much historical fact underlies each isolated individual case.”¹⁹

Dibelius’s work influenced the scholarly debate for decades. Eduard Schweizer summarized the influence of Dibelius: “Ever since Martin Dibelius’ essay about this subject, it has been more and more widely recognized that the speeches [in Acts, including chapter 17] are basically compositions by the author of Acts.”²⁰ Since Dibelius and his followers cared little for the historical authenticity of the Lukan account, they paid little attention to the location of the sermon. In fact, Ernst Haenchen viewed the speech as Luke trying to reproduce the “‘ideal scene’, which baffles every attempt to translate it into reality.”²¹ Hans Conzelmann ignored what Henry Cadbury called proper “Greek colouring”²² in the Areopagus account by stating, “Inasmuch as Luke draws upon the form of secular historiography, we must interpret the Areopagus Speech first of all as a literary speech of Luke, not a real sermon by Paul.... Luke makes Paul say what he considers appropriate to the situation.... In my own opinion, the speech is the free creation of the author, for it does not show the specific thoughts and ideas of Paul.”²³

¹⁸ Ibid., 77.

¹⁹ Ibid., 13.

²⁰ Eduard Schweizer, “Concerning Speeches in Acts,” in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 208.

²¹ Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* trans., Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn, 14th ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), 528.

²² Cadbury, 44.

²³ Hans Conzelmann, “The Address of Paul on the Areopagus,” in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 218. Conzelmann further explained that since the historical authenticity of Luke’s account of Paul in Athens is invalid, then, “The value of the description rests not in the historical worth of its details as sources of information about Paul’s conduct, but in the fact that it documents for

Dibelius, Conzelmann, and Haenchen all doubt the historical relevance of the scene. Dibelius concluded, “the decision [of the location of the sermon] must be reached neither by topographical nor by historical, but by literary considerations. We have first to establish what Luke wishes to convey.”²⁴ According to all three of these scholars, Paul was not taken before the court of the Areopagus because “the literary style of Luke rules that out: wherever he reports a trial he is absolutely unambiguous.”²⁵ These scholars argued that Paul was taken for a “change of locality,” not before the council but to Mars Hill to give a public sermon.²⁶ Haenchen argued that Luke’s literary portrayal of this event “rather recalls an orator in Hyde Park” giving a public sermon, not a defense, before the Areopagus.²⁷

After Dibelius

Twentieth century scholars since Martin Dibelius have continued to discuss the historical authenticity of Acts. Although many have agreed with Dibelius’ conclusions, his position was not universally accepted. Some have continued to argue for the historical authenticity of Luke’s accounts and his portrayal of Paul in Athens and provide commentary on the location of the

us how a Christian around A.D. 100 reacts to the *pagan* milieu and meets it from the position of his faith” (Conzelmann, 218).

²⁴ Dibelius, 69.

²⁵ Conzelmann, 219.

²⁶ Dibelius, 69.

²⁷ Haenchen, 519. Albert Schweitzer, like Dibelius, doubted the historicity of the Areopagus address. His doubts arise from Acts 17:28, which says, “For in him [God] we live, and move, and have our being.” He believes that the Areopagus address is inconsistent with the theology in the Pauline epistles. “In Paul there is no God-mysticism; only a Christ-mysticism by means of which man comes into relation to God.” Schweitzer, 3. If the Areopagus address is historically accurate, then Paul contradicts himself. Therefore, the Areopagus address “is to be ascribed solely to the writer of the Acts.” Ibid., 6. Schweitzer’s conclusions are similar to Eduard Norden’s *Agnostos Theos*, originally published in 1913. Norden concluded that the sermon was almost in its entirety a Stoic document. See Norden, 31-56.

sermon as recorded by Luke.²⁸ In 1955, Henry J. Cadbury's work, *The Book of Acts in History*, focused on Luke's ability to properly "colour" the historical environment of first century AD. He discussed the Areopagus as relevant to a proper "Greek colouring"²⁹ found in Acts. As to the location of the sermon, Cadbury concluded that a Christian pilgrim, sitting on the Hill of Ares, with "Testament in hand... must be informed that the Areopagus spoken of was no longer the actual hill of Mars but the court."³⁰ Cadbury concluded that, "the court which formerly met there and which still bore the name of its earliest place of assembly."³¹ Chapter four will argue for Cadbury's conclusion that Paul did not give his speech on the hill, but gave the speech before the council of Areopagus in the *Royal Stoa*.

In the same year as Cadbury's monograph, Bertil Gärtner published a very important work that focused the attention away from the Stoic undertones of the Areopagus and placed the speech within the milieu Old Testament theology and Jewish historical writing.³² Gärtner was bothered by those who saw a homage to Greek philosophy in the Areopagus speech. "Luke follows the Jewish tradition in the attitude he takes to his narrative.... This is not to say that Luke was ignorant of [the] Greek tradition.... But he seems nonetheless to be more in line with the

²⁸ It is worth noting that Dibelius propelled the argument about the historical authenticity of the speeches found in Acts. Some scholars agreed with Dibelius, chiefly Hans Conzelmann and Ernst Haenchen. Others have refuted some of Dibelius's arguments including: F. F. Bruce, "The Speeches in Acts—Thirty Years After," in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L.L. Morris on His 60th Birthday* ed. Robert Banks (Carlisle The Paternoster Press, 1974), 53-68; Barrett, 69-77. C. J. Hemer, "The Speeches of Acts II: The Areopagus Address," *Tyndale Bulletin* 40, no. 2 (1989): 239-259; Stanley E. Porter, "Thucydides 1.22.1 and Speeches in Acts: Is There a Thucydidean View?," *Novum Testamentum* 32, no. 2 (April 1990): 121-142; Mark D. Given, "Not Either/or but Both/and in Paul's Areopagus Speech," *Biblical Interpretation* 3, no. 3 (1995): 356-372 and Patrick Gray, "Athenian Curiosity," *Novum Testamentum* 47, no. 2 (April 2005): 109-116.

²⁹ Cadbury, 44.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 51. Cadbury does leave the possibility that Luke may have been referencing the hill not the court due to "historical reminiscence and current reputation than to the author's actual contact with events." *Ibid.*, 52.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

³² Gärtner, 26, 29. Gärtner also gives a great summary of the early scholarship surrounding the historical authenticity of the Areopagus account. *Ibid.*, 37-44.

Jewish tradition, a fact that has unfortunately been quite disregarded.” Like Farrar and Cadbury, Gärtner also interpreted Acts 17:19–22 to mean that Paul’s speech was given to the Areopagus council rather than given on Mars Hill. He based his conclusions on the Greek text which indicates that Paul was taken “in the midst” of the Areopagus which meant ““amidst some members of the court’ in preference to ‘in the midst of the hill.’”³³ For Gärtner, Paul was seized by members of the council of Areopagus but not for a formal trial. “There is therefore reason for supposing that the Areopagus speech and its narrative framework are part of an informal interrogation by the education commission of the Areopagus court.”³⁴

In the last half of the twentieth century, the most outspoken scholar in defense of the historical authenticity of the speeches in Acts was F. F. Bruce. Bruce concluded, like Cadbury and Gärtner, that the Areopagus “retained the name even when it transferred its meeting place [from Mars Hill] to the Royal Portico;” therefore, “Before this...court, then, Paul was brought, not to be put on trial in any forensic sense, but to give an account of his ‘philosophy.’”³⁵ Bruce also agreed with Ramsay’s conclusion that Paul was likely taken before the Areopagus because he was seen by the Athenians as a public lecturer.³⁶

N. B. Stonehouse’s contribution *Paul before the Areopagus* was able to explicate the differing opinions on the Areopagus address, but Stonehouse’s weakness came from his resistance to conclude with his own opinion. One example is found in his lack of conclusion for

³³ Ibid., 55.

³⁴ Ibid., 64. See also Marilyn McCord Adams, “Philosophy and the Bible: The Areopagus Speech,” *Faith and Philosophy* 9, no. 2 (April 1992): 137.

³⁵ Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 352. For other works in which Bruce defends the speeches of Acts see F. F. Bruce, “The Speeches in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Tyndale New Testament Lecture* (London: Tyndale Press, 1944) and Bruce, “The Speeches in Acts—Thirty Years After,” 53–68. F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1980), 311–313.

³⁶ Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 352. Ramsay, 246. For more information on this argument, see chapter four.

the location of the speech. He concluded that Paul is “probably in the *Stoa Basileios*” and not the hill, but the hill cannot be “finally discarded as being beyond the realm of possibility.”³⁷

Stonehouse argued, like Gärtner and Bruce, that there is no evidence for Paul on formal trial due to the lack of specific trial language in the text.³⁸

Paul on Trial?

Over the next fifteen years, the academic discussion centered on the location of the speech and if Paul was on trial before the Areopagus.³⁹ This is due in large part because of the work of Timothy D. Barnes and significant archaeological discoveries within the Athenian Agora. Barnes wrote in response to Gärtner, Stonehouse, Cadbury, and Bruce and disagreed with them concerning both the nature of the meeting and the site where the Areopagus met. He argued that the “examination of the powers and functions of the Areopagus... fails to reveal any implausibility in the view that Paul was put on trial accused of introducing a new religion.”⁴⁰ He argued that there is insufficient evidence to place the defense before the Areopagus as merely an informal hearing, “though the form of words is politer than [elsewhere in Acts], why should [vs. 19–20] not be construed as an accusation.”⁴¹ He further attacked Gärtner’s belief that Paul was brought before a subcommittee of the Areopagus. According to Barnes, if Luke had desired to portray only a subcommittee of the Areopagus, he would have specified this distinction in the text instead of only mentioned the Areopagus council as a whole. Barnes further disagreed that

³⁷ N. B. Stonehouse, *Paul before the Areopagus: And Other New Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), 8.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Chapter three will go into greater depth on the discussion of whether Paul was taken to the Areopagus to stand trial. It is the author’s opinion that Paul was not taken to Mars Hill nor was he placed on trial. Chapter three and four will discuss the reasons for this opinion.

⁴⁰ Timothy D. Barnes, “An Apostle on Trial,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 20, no. 2 (October 1969): 414.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 415.

Paul was taken before the council in the *Stoa* and not to Mars Hill. He argued for the hill as the location of the speech because of the lack of evidence that the council stopped meeting on the hill during the first century AD in favor of the *Stoa*, which became a viable alternative as its site was identified and excavated.⁴²

In 1969 and 1970, archaeologists finally excavated the ruins of the *Stoa Basileios*, which had been described for thousands of years in the ancient texts. Homer A. Thompson and R. E. Wycherley released the results of their excavations in Athens in 1972. In their book, Thompson and Wycherley described the physical dimensions of the *Stoa* and gave its history as it relates to the council of Areopagus. They noted that the council met at times on the hill and in the *Stoa*, yet these scholars concluded Paul's famous speech to be on the hill, perhaps because of the *Stoa*'s insufficient size to house a large hearing.⁴³ They mentioned that "only the preliminary formalities took place in the *Stoa Basileios*. W. G. Morrice agreed with Thompson, Wycherley, and Barnes that Paul was not tried before the council of Areopagus but taken to a public speaking place, a kind of ancient "soap-box" an "open air" meeting before a "mixed audience."⁴⁴ This is because the invitation, according to Morrice, from the crowd was a "friendly, but somewhat contemptuous inquiry into the credentials of [the] new travelling sophist."⁴⁵

C. J. Hemer commented on the location for the Areopagus by giving a response to T. D. Barnes's article while noting the recent archaeological evidence. He credited Barnes for reopening an intelligent conversation on the topic but faulted Barnes for making conclusions

⁴² "The obvious meaning of the words in Acts should be accepted: Paul was taken before the Areopagus, i.e. before the council sitting on the hill." *Ibid.*, 410.

⁴³ Homer A. Thompson and R. E. Wycherley, *The Athenian Agora: The Agora of Athens*, vol. 14 (Princeton: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens 1972), 168.

⁴⁴ W. G. Morrice, "Where Did Paul Speak in Athens—on Mars' Hill or before the Court of the Areopagus? (Acts 17)," *The Expository Times* 83, (1971-72): 378.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

without sufficient evidence. Hemer made two significant arguments in his article to refute Barnes's claim for a trial scene on Mars Hill as the setting for Acts 17. Hemer's first argument was that the ancient literature demonstrates that the council of Areopagus met both on Mars Hill (traditionally for homicide cases) and within the city center at the *Stoa Basileios*. Hemer's second conclusion was that the entire event took place in the *Stoa* because of its "close unity of place and time" with the discussion Paul was having in the Agora.⁴⁶ He cogently noted, "We gain the impression that he was abruptly hauled before the court of the archon Basileus as one suspected of disturbing the peace by religious innovation...the swift narrative tells against the assumption of delay or remand in prison while court assembled on the hill. It is easier to think it was in session nearby."⁴⁷ I. Howard Marshall agreed with Hemer that it was more likely that Paul was taken to "an unofficial gathering...no doubt in public session and not necessarily taking the form of a legal trial."⁴⁸ Marshall unfortunately does not give his own opinion about the location of the sermon, stating it could have been either the hill or the *Stoa*.⁴⁹

The Last Thirty Years

Research on the Areopagus over the last thirty years has been primarily based on refocusing attention on the context surrounding Acts 17 rather than rehash the arguments on the location of the speech set forth by Barnes and Hemer. By focusing on the context, these scholars have sought for a more critical understanding of the address itself.

⁴⁶ C. J. Hemer, "Paul at Athens: A Topographical Note," *New Testament Studies* 20, no. 3 (April 1974): 346.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 349–350.

⁴⁸ I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 285.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 284.

Robert C. Tannehill's involvement in the discussion sought to focus on the book of Acts as narrative history. His section on Acts 17 primarily discussed the doctrines taught by Paul before the Areopagus. Tannehill took issue with Dibelius's conclusions that the speech is a fabrication because the doctrine in Acts 17 does not match the general themes as taught by Paul throughout his missionary career, especially the Pauline Epistles. Tannehill disputed this claim by showing that there are parallels to other Pauline doctrines throughout the Epistles. He concluded that the speech is not based in Hellenism, rather Paul is aware of his location and audience. Tannehill demonstrated that the speech was given before the council of Areopagus because Paul was seeking to find common theological ground in which to present the doctrine of Christ. "The speech fits better if Paul is addressing not only the philosophers but also an official body that has responsibility for the city, including its religious facilities and rites."⁵⁰ He continued, if the council was the audience and *Stoa* was the setting, "Paul's comments on the popular religion of Athens are not wide of the mark....Paul is telling them that religion in Athens does not live up to the insights of [their own] philosophers and poets."⁵¹ Therefore, Paul sought to find a starting point on which they would agree and use the words of their own philosophers to demonstrate the truth of his own theological argument.⁵²

The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, published in 1990, argued that Paul was taken to the hill rather than the council but does not give an explanation for that conclusion. The commentary's most important contribution to the discussion is that Paul was definitely not on trial based on the authors' understanding of the Greek; "The ptc. *epilabomenoi* means 'taking

⁵⁰ Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation: The Acts of the Apostles*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 2:216.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁵² Chapter five will expound on how Paul saw Greek philosophy and rhetoric as an opportunity to show the superiority of his doctrine of God.

him along' [Acts 9:27]...., not "seizing him" (Acts 16:19). No verdict or sentence follows the sermon; its setting is a learned disputation rather than judicial defense."⁵³

N. Clayton Croy wrote an article that examined the potentially divergent responses to Paul's preaching in Athens about the resurrection of Christ. He meticulously examined both the Epicureans and the Stoic philosophies in contrast to Paul's doctrine of resurrection.⁵⁴ As to the location of the sermon he concluded, "certain linguistic factors... favor interpreting [the Areopagus] as the Council rather than the hill...the Royal Stoa seems to be a more likely setting for the speech than Mars Hill."⁵⁵

The *Anchor Bible* commentary on Acts, written by Joseph A. Fitzmyer, added much to this discussion. Fitzmyer's was able to contextualize the sermon within Greek history. Fitzmyer concluded that the speech was probably given at the *Stoa* and not the hill. He discussed the linguistic nuance that has led to many different interpretations on the location of the speech in these words: "It is impossible to say in which sense Luke would be using the prep. *epi* [unto] the name [Acts 17:19]. If it means 'on,' that Paul was led to the hill, as Dibelius thought, it would be the ideal place for his speech....It could, however, mean that Paul was led 'to' the council of Areopagus."⁵⁶ This linguistically nuanced passage led Fitzmyer to conclude that the council "is the more likely meaning."⁵⁷

⁵³ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Raymond E. Brown, and Roland E. Murphy, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1990), 755.

⁵⁴ For other treatises on the theology of the Areopagus, see Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Contextualising Paul in Athens: The Proclamation of the Gospel before Pagan Audiences in the Graeco-Roman World," *Religion & Theology* (December 2005): 172–190 and C. Kavin Rowe, "The Grammar of Life: The Areopagus Speech and Pagan Tradition," *New Testament Studies* 57, (2010): 31–50.

⁵⁵ Croy, "Hellenistic Philosophies," 25. Croy noted the linguistic ambiguity of Areopagus, meaning either the council or the hill, but ruled in favor of the council because "In the midst of the Council [Acts 17:22] is more sensible Greek and correlates better with the similar expression in vs. 33." Ibid.

⁵⁶ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary; the Anchor Bible* vol. 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 605–606.

Another carefully written work was C. K. Barrett's commentary on Acts published in 1998. Though Barrett did not give his opinion on the location of the sermon, his verse by verse commentary covered a myriad of the broader arguments that surround the Areopagus. Barrett disagreed with Barnes's conclusion that Paul was brought before a trial and concluded that Paul was politely invited to share his thoughts on religion before the Areopagus: "May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?" So "they brought him before the Areopagus council (wherever it met)."⁵⁸

Dean Flemming and Patrick Gray are examples of how the recent research on the Areopagus transfers the attention on the context and audience in the text. Flemming's desire was to combat the argument that Paul's sermon is steeped too much in Hellenistic philosophy to be an actual sermon as given by Paul.⁵⁹ Flemming demonstrated that Paul used the philosophies of the day to connect with his audience, but Paul would not compromise on certain doctrines that pertain to the Resurrection of Christ. The reason for Flemming's emphasis on context was to show modern Christians a "model of cultural sensitivity and creativity when presenting biblical truth to non-Christians....At the same time, Paul refuses to syncretize his message or to

⁵⁷ Ibid., 606.

⁵⁸ C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 832. This thesis will go into greater depth about the linguistic ambiguity that exists in this verse. Many of the different opinions about whether Paul was taken to trial are based on how the Greek is understood in this verse. This ambiguity and the different interpretations will be discussed in chapter three.

⁵⁹ One of the most recent avenues of research that surrounds the Areopagus is how to use Paul as a missionary example to teach an agnostic world. For example: Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Paul and the Athenian Intellectuals," *Ensign*, (February 1976): 55; D. Mark Davis, "Between Text & Sermon: Acts 17:16-34," *Interpretation* 57, no. 1 (January 2003): 64-66; and Joseph Pathrapankal, "From Areopagus to Corinth (Acts 17:22-31; 1 Cor 2:1-5) a Study on the Transition from Power of Knowledge to the Power of Spirit," *Mission Studies* 23, no. 1 (2006): 61-78.

compromise its theological integrity. He engages Athenian culture with the aim of its transformation.”⁶⁰

Gray’s article, “Implied Audiences in the Areopagus Narrative,” discussed not the audience to whom Paul is talking in the sermon, but for whom Luke is writing.⁶¹ Gray showed how Luke’s account of Paul’s life has a narrative flow and themes and that Acts 17 fits into the narrative. Though Gray did not discuss the location of the speech, his ability to reframe the argument with Luke’s implied audience helps to clarify the Hellenistic elements of the speech and the desired outcome of Luke’s recording of it. Gray argued that Luke’s written audience was largely Gentiles who have laid aside their previous belief systems, similar to the Epicureans and Stoics, and have embraced the gospel of Christ. Thus, his readers can relate to the conversions of Dionysius and Damaris. Luke’s audience, Gentiles turned Christians, are “hearing their own story retold through the medium of the Areopagus narrative.”⁶²

The most significant, recent work on the Areopagus was done by C. Kavin Rowe. Rowe’s stated purpose was to portray Paul’s Areopagus speech not as a “paean of the Greek intellectual or spiritual achievement. It is instead the presentation of an alternative pattern of life.” Rowe argued that Luke’s intent was to “craft a careful speech that employs vocabulary common to Christian and pagan tradition alike (indeed, enough to save Paul’s life) but whose meaning is fundamentally evangelistic (enough to cause the full range of mockery, continued interest, and conversion).”⁶³ It is here where Rowe agreed with Barnes in that Paul is definitely

⁶⁰ Dean Flemming, “Contextualizing the Gospel in Athens: Paul’s Areopagus Address as a Paradigm for Missionary Communication,” *Missiology* 30, no. 1 (January 2002): 207.

⁶¹ Gray, “Implied Audiences in Areopagus Narrative,” 205–218.

⁶² *Ibid.* 215.

⁶³ Rowe, “The Grammar of Life,” 50.

on trial for his life. Rowe was able to demonstrate his thesis by approaching the Lukan account as a narrative. Acts 17 is part of the entire message of Acts, the triumph of the gospel of Jesus Christ even against Athenian paganism.⁶⁴

Conclusion

What has been discussed in this historiographic essay is not intended to be exhaustive; rather, it was to note which scholars and arguments are germane to this thesis. This chapter has shown that there are volumes of works done on the significance of the Areopagus. C. K. Barrett summarized the abundance of commentary on this chapter when he wrote, “Few parts of the New Testament have been so fully and so frequently discussed as Luke’s account of Paul’s visit to Athens...and on few has so great a wealth of scholarship been expended.”⁶⁵ Scholars have disagreed with each other about the authenticity of the Lukan account, about whether Luke can be trusted as a historian and a writer of religious literature, and about possible sites where the speech was given. Recently, scholars like Flemming, Gray, and Rowe have tried to use the context and audience of the speech to understand why Paul used Hellenistic concepts to teach Christianity. This thesis builds on these scholars’ attempts to emphasize the audience for the Areopagus speech, demonstrating that Paul was keenly aware of his audience and spoke to them in a manner that would have been clear to them.

This chapter has also shown that scholars have argued for and against Acts 17 as a trial scene in the life of Paul. Chapter three will discuss the linguistic ambiguities that have led scholars to conclude differently and argue for the most likely conclusion.

⁶⁴ C. K. Barrett made a similar conclusion by looking at Acts as a narrative whole. “On the one hand, [Luke] wished to indicate that Athens, the citadel where pagan religion and philosophy were entrenched, offered to Paul serious opposition and a real threat. On the other hand, Paul not only escaped the threat, but won converts....Paul encountered a stiff obstacle, provoked dissension, escaped attack, and made at least some converts. As elsewhere, the Lord’s hand was with him.” Barrett, “Paul’s Speech on the Areopagus,” 70–71.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

CHAPTER THREE PAUL ON TRIAL?

One of the most ambiguous sentences is in Acts 17:19, “And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus.”¹ Many scholars have debated the nature of this statement. Was Paul kindly invited to present his message to the general populace of Athens who desired to “hear this...new thing”? Or was Paul taken against his will to present his message of Christ and the Resurrection? Or was he arrested and forced to defend himself while on trial?

Contextualizing the setting of the speech will help answer some of the more difficult questions posed in the scholarship of Acts 17. If Paul was speaking to the general populace of Athens, which included Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, what Paul was teaching seems to differ with the doctrines he taught in the Epistles. If Paul was on trial, he may have been trying to get a judicial court of Athens to understand that the “strange gods” he professed, were not a direct attack on the piety of the Athenians. The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the circumstances surrounding Paul’s invitation to expound on this “new doctrine” (Acts 17:19) and to evaluate the evidence within the text for the different theories. This chapter discusses which of these theories is the most tenable while looking at Acts 17 as part of the narrative of Acts and not as an isolated event.

Epilabomenoi

Much of the ambiguity for the setting of the speech may be due to the linguistically vague language in Acts 17:19. The Greek renders the statement, *epilabomenoi te autou epi ton*

¹ This sentence will also play a vital role in discussing the different location theories extant for where Paul was taken. These topics will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four.

areionpagon (Acts 17:19). This chapter will focus on the word *epilabomenoi*, which was translated by the KJV scholars as “they took him.” *Epilabomenoi* is much more nuanced than the simple “to take,” as translated by the KJV scholars. Strong’s Concordance translates the word as “to lay hold on, to take, or to seize.” The word is found throughout the Bible, but what is of particular importance is how the word is used by Luke in his record. Table 1 shows the ten different occasions the word is used by Luke and compares how the KJV and New International

Table 1. *Epilabomenoi* in Luke-Acts

KJV Translation	NIV Translation	Context
“And Jesus, perceiving the thought..., <i>took</i> a child, and set him by him” (Luke 9:47)	“Jesus, knowing their thoughts, <i>took</i> a little child and had him stand beside him” (Luke 9:47)	Jesus instructing his disciples on who is the greatest among them.
“And <i>he took</i> him, and healed him, and let him go” (Luke 14:4)	“So <i>taking hold</i> of the man, he healed him and sent him away” (Luke 14:4)	Jesus healing the man with dropsy on the Sabbath.
“And as they led him away, <i>they laid hold upon</i> Simon” (Luke 23:26)	“As they led him away, they <i>seized</i> Simon” (Luke 23:26)	Simon Cyrenian bears the cross for Jesus.
“But Barnabas <i>took</i> him, and brought him to the apostles” (Acts 9:27)	“But Barnabas <i>took</i> him and brought him to the apostles” (Acts 9:27)	Barnabas taking Paul to meet with apostles after his conversion.
“And when her masters saw..., <i>they caught</i> Paul and Silas” (Acts 16:19)	“When the owners of the slave girl realized..., they <i>seized</i> Paul and Silas” (Acts 16:19)	Paul and Silas taken before the rulers in Philippi.
“And <i>they took</i> him, and brought him unto Areopagus”(Acts 17:19)	“Then they <i>took</i> him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus” (Acts 17:19)	Paul in Athens taken before the Areopagus.
“Then all the <i>Greeks took</i> Sosthenes,..., and beat him” (Acts 18:17)	“Then they all <i>turned on</i> Sosthenes the synagogue ruler and beat him” (Acts 18:17)	Paul in Corinth.
“the people ran together: and <i>they took</i> Paul, and drew him out of the temple” (Acts 21:30)	“the people came running from all directions. <i>Seizing</i> Paul, they dragged him from the temple” (Acts 21:30)	Paul in Jerusalem—persecuted, arrested, and bound.
“Then the chief captain came near, and <i>took</i> him, and commanded him to be bound” (Acts 21:33)	“The commander came up and <i>arrested</i> him and ordered him to be bound” (Acts 21:33)	Paul in Jerusalem—persecuted, arrested, and bound.
“Then the <i>chief captain took</i> him by the hand, and went with him” (Acts 23:19)	“The commander <i>took</i> the young man by the hand, drew him aside” (Acts 23:19)	Forty Jews plot to put Paul to death.

Version (NIV) scholars translated the word within the text and the context in which the word was used in order to give a comparative analysis to Acts 17:19.

As noted in Table 1, the contexts of all of the occurrences of *epilabomenoi* in Luke-Acts, beside one, show the word as taking hold of someone physically. One example is the account of Paul in Philippi. After Paul and Silas healed the young “damsel possessed with a spirit of divination...her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, *they caught Paul [epilabomenoi]* and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers” (Acts 16:16, 19). The NIV translates this passages as “When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, *they seized Paul [epilabomenoi]* and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities” (Acts 16: 19 NIV).² The meaning of the word here and other places in the narrative of Luke-Acts in their contexts show that the word *epilabomenoi* almost always denotes a seizure of someone by physical force.³

The one difference is found in Acts 9. After the conversion of Paul on the road to Damascus, Paul desired to join with the Apostles of Christ in Jerusalem. Because of Paul’s past reputation, he was hesitant to meet with them on his own. Barnabas played the role of mediator and “took him [*epilabomenoi*], and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord” (Acts 9:27). It is obvious by the context that Barnabas did not physically apprehend Paul and drag him to meeting the Apostles. For this event, *epilabomenoi* describes the friendly attachment of Barnabas to Paul that allowed him to appear before the Apostles. With

² Other Biblical translations show this connotation for the word in the Greek. For example, the NRSV and the NKJV both translate *epilabomenoi* in Acts 16:19 as “seized.”

³ One slight difference is the Luke 9 account of Jesus and the little child. Luke recorded that the apostles were reasoning in their hearts which among them was the greatest. Jesus perceived their thoughts and took [*epilabomenoi*] hold of a child and set the child in their midst (Acts 9:46–47). The word *epilabomenoi* in this context is different than Paul being physically taken against his will before the Areopagus, but the text shows that Jesus did physically take hold of the child and placed the child in the midst of Apostles. The meaning of *epilabomenoi* in the Luke 9 account still holds relevance in that it meant to lay hands on someone.

this instance and Acts 17 excluded, the eight other times the word is used in Luke-Acts shows the physical, tactile nature of the word *epilabomenoi*.

Scholarly Disagreement

Even with this evidence, there has yet to be a scholarly agreement concerning Luke's use of the word in Acts 17:19. T. D. Barnes argued that Acts 17 should be read like the other occurrences; "As at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth, Paul is seized by force....The meaning in Greek is undeniable: in Luke and Acts [*epilabomenoi*] always signifies 'to take hold of', and in this context that is hard to interpret as a friendly action."⁴ Bertil Gärtner also believed that Paul was seized upon by demonstrating that the Latin "Vulgate evidently accepts the idea of a 'laying hold of', for ...[the Greek] is translated by *apprehendere (et apprehensum eum ad Areopagum duxerunt)*."⁵ Therefore, Paul was apprehended and taken against his will before the Areopagus.⁶ In contrast, Raymond E. Brown concluded, "The ptc. *epilabomenoi* means 'taking him along' [Acts 9:27]..., not "seizing him" [Acts 16:19]."⁷ C. K. Barrett also disagreed with the conclusions of Barnes that Paul was taken by force to explain his doctrines. *Epilabomenoi* could also mean "a well-intentioned attachment (Acts 9:27; 23:19)."⁸ N. Clayton Croy went as far as to say that though "the sermon was provocative. The crowd is not content with a little verbal

⁴Barnes, "An Apostle," 414.

⁵Gärtner, 55.

⁶W. M. Ramsay also agreed with the conclusions of Gärtner and Barnes, stating, "The philosophers took hold of Paul. When a man, especially an educated man, goes so far as to lay his hands on another, it is obvious his feelings have been moved." Ramsay continued that the Greek shows a "hostile action" taken against Paul and the philosophers "certainly did not act as his friends and sponsors in taking him before the Council." Ramsay, 245–246.

⁷ Raymond E. Brown, 755.

⁸ Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 831.

repartee; [so] they take hold of Paul.”⁹ The word *epilabomenoi*, to Croy, “probably involves no hostility here, though it certainly may in other contexts.”¹⁰

Was Paul taken by force like in Philippi or was Paul taken like he was by Barnabas to meet with the Apostles? Much of the disagreement of whether Paul was on trial stems from how scholars have read the account of Acts 17. If a scholar concludes that Paul was taken before the council to defend himself and his doctrine, then they argue, like Barnes, that Paul was physically forced to defend. However, if a scholar concludes that Paul was cordially invited to present his ideas, then they will argue, like Barrett, that Paul was merely brought alongside the philosophers to explain his strange doctrines before the Areopagus.

The Areopagus: A Trial Scene?

Scholars have argued four different interpretations of Paul being taken before the Areopagus: (1) Paul was kindly invited to present his theology before the Areopagus, (2) Paul was taken before the Areopagus for a serious yet informal inquiry, (3) Paul was brought to the Areopagus for a formal inquiry, and (4) Paul was on trial before the Areopagus. These four views develop from how the scholars interpret the rest of account of Paul in Athens. This thesis will demonstrate that of these four theories, the most logical conclusion is Paul was taken before the Areopagus for a serious yet informal inquiry in defense of his doctrines.

Polite Invitation

There are two reasons for interpreting that Paul was not on trial but was politely invited to give an explanation of his theology. The first argument resides in the philosophers asking Paul, “May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?” (Acts 17:19). C. K.

⁹ Croy, “Hellenistic Philosophies,” 24.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Barrett argued that this invitation is “more like the English ‘May we...?’ than ‘Can we...?’, ‘Are we able...?’; that is, it looks more like a polite request than a demand for an explanation, such as a court might have made.”¹¹ N. Clayton Croy argued further that the motivation of the Athenians was “‘to know’ or ‘understand’...the ‘new teaching,’ ‘the surprising things’ which Paul is proclaiming.”¹² Therefore, there was no legal action taken; rather the scene stems from the “Athenians proverbial curiosity, not their litigiousness.”¹³ They simply desired to know what it was that Paul was teaching in the marketplace concerning Christ and the Resurrection.

The second reason supporting that Paul is not on trial is the lack of trial language in the text. “No verdict or sentence follows the sermon; its setting is a learned disputation rather than a judicial defense.”¹⁴ Other scholars have argued that the text shows that Paul was taken to some kind of “ancient ‘soap box’” or an “open air meeting” with a “mixed audience.”¹⁵ The invitation from the crowd was a “friendly, but somewhat contemptuous inquiry into the credentials of [the] new travelling sophist.”¹⁶ Those who doubt that Luke meant anything but a polite invitation cite as evidence the question that led Paul before the Areopagus, the lack of trial language, and presence of a mixed audience.¹⁷

¹¹ Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 832. Joseph A. Fitzmyer similarly translated the question as, “May we know this new teaching is that is being proposed by you? It is ‘new’ in the sense of ‘strange’ to Athenian ears... the interest of the Athenians is polite, but it is not without serious concern; so they are depicted as skeptical.” Fitzmyer, 606.

¹² Croy, “Hellenistic Philosophies,” 24.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Raymond E. Brown, 755.

¹⁵ Morrice, “Where did Paul speak,” 378.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Morrice also argued that Paul’s audience is mixed as evidenced by Luke’s description of those who converted following the message: “among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them” (Acts 17:18). This diverse group of people is therefore evidence that Paul was not on trial but rather “had been preaching in the open air to a mixed audience.” Morrice, “Where did Paul speak,” 378.

There is, however, one glaring weakness to the argument of a polite invitation. These scholars have yet to explain why the Greek shows that Paul was likely taken by force to present his doctrines. The exegesis of these scholars is excellent, but they overlook that (except in one occasion) Luke uses *epilabomenoi* to mean to physically lay hold upon someone else. The one exception, Paul being brought before the Apostles by Barnabas, is not analogous to Paul being taken to explain the doctrine of Christ and his Resurrection before the supreme judicial council in Athens. The text shows it is possible that Paul was politely invited to present his doctrines before the Areopagus but the implication of physical force negates the likelihood that the request of the philosophers was totally benign.

A Serious Yet Informal Inquiry

The theory that Paul was taken before a serious yet informal inquiry is the strongest of the four theories because it analyzes all the textual evidence without ignoring that Paul was physically accosted and taken before the Areopagus. Those who argue this idea mediate between those who argue that Paul was politely invited to present his doctrine and those who argue that Paul was placed on trial, which had “potential for death.”¹⁸ These scholars also note that there is no direct trial language in the text.¹⁹ Yet, they refuse to ignore Luke’s introduction to the narrative, Paul being seized upon to declare his doctrine before the Areopagus. C. J. Hemer’s statement is an excellent example of how these scholars balance between the two theories: “We gain the impression that he was abruptly hauled before the court... as one suspected of disturbing

¹⁸ Rowe, “The Grammar of Life,” 39.

¹⁹ Stonehouse described the language as giving, “not intimation of arrest and of distinctly judicial examination.” Stonehouse, 8. Bruce further explained the, “Paul was brought, not to be tried in any forensic sense, but to give an account of his philosophy.” Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 352. Ramsay explained that it could not have been trial because, “nothing of judicial type, no accuser, no accusation, and no defensive character in Paul’s speech.” Yet, it was not friendly for the “philosophers [to take] hold of Paul.” Ramsay, 243, 245.

the peace by religious innovation,” but the “swift narrative tells against the assumption or delay or remand in prison while the court assembled.”²⁰

In this theory, there are two reasons for the seizure of Paul. Bertil Gärtner provides the first tenable idea that Paul was taken before a committee of the Areopagus that had charge over education of the youth in Athens. This committee desired to see if any of the doctrine of Paul could be considered dangerous to the piety of Athens. The commission “wanted to know about the new doctrine preached by Paul.”²¹ Gärtner also argued that the narrative as told by Luke fits into the “underlying purpose of Acts as a whole.”²² Throughout Acts, “Christian leaders come into conflict with the people and the law-givers, but that these conflicts have always the same outcome: the Christians are found blameless and their doctrines innocuous.”²³ Paul, according to Gärtner, was taken to present his doctrine before a committee in charge of the education of the youth and found not guilty. The overlying weakness of this theory is that it is impossible to prove. The text mentions the Areopagus but makes no mention of a separate subcommittee. As described in chapter four, there is evidence that the Areopagus held jurisdiction over education, but there is no way to prove that there were subcommittees of the Areopagus or that Paul was taken before one of them.

The second reason for the Areopagus to inquire after Paul was that this governing body had control over “lecturing in the marketplace.”²⁴ The account of Paul in Athens has him

²⁰ Hemer, “Paul at Athens: A Topographical Note,” 349–350.

²¹ Gärtner, 58.

²² *Ibid.*, 59.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Stonehouse, 9. See also W. M. Ramsay and F. F. Bruce who also argued for this theory as the impetus for the Areopagus to inquire after Paul. Ramsay, 246 and Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 352.

teaching and preaching daily in the market. According to this theory, the Areopagus heard of this preaching and desired to see if what he taught was “unobjectionable.”²⁵

Scholars who argue that Paul was taken physically as part of an informal inquiry come to this conclusion because (1) judicial language is lacking in the text,²⁶ (2) Paul’s foreign doctrines may have been viewed as dangerous and therefore brought before an educational committee²⁷ or the Areopagus to verify that his lectures were innocuous,²⁸ and (3) Paul may have been disturbing the peace via religious debate.²⁹ This theory uses all the textual details as given by Luke. It does not ignore that Paul was taken by force before the Areopagus, yet also shows that the philosopher’s inquiry was not a formal accusation during a trial.

Formal Inquiry

A third possible theory is that Paul was taken before a serious and formal inquiry of the Areopagus. This argument varies only slightly from those who argue that Paul was taken before an informal hearing. Luke explicitly states that Paul was confronted in the marketplace because he “seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18). Many scholars have concluded that the Athenians saw Jesus and the Resurrection as two separate gods,³⁰ but Bruce W. Winter has taken that statement as the entire motivation behind Paul being taken to the Areopagus. Winter argued that Paul was not on trial but taken to a formal inquiry by the Areopagus because the people believed he was heralding

²⁵ Stonehouse, 9.

²⁶ See Ramsay, 243.

²⁷ Gärtner, 58.

²⁸ See Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 352.

²⁹ Robert W. Wallace, *The Areopagos Council, to 307 B.C.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 204.

³⁰ Fitzmyer, 605. Croy, “Hellenistic Philosophies,” 23, and Haenchen, 518.

new gods in Athens. According to Winter, new gods could be heralded and accepted by popular support and approved by the Areopagus. He further argued that “may we know what this new doctrine?” could be rendered in the Greek as, “we have the power?”³¹ This intriguing interpretation lends some interesting context into the passage, though it is impossible to prove.³² Winter concluded, “Good grounds exist, then, for arguing that...Paul was not being asked to provide an explanation. Instead the Council was informing him initially ‘we possess the legal right to judge what this new teaching is that is being spoken by you.’”³³ So, Paul was brought to the Areopagus because the people saw Paul as a herald of new gods. Because this was the perception of the people and not Paul, the people are disappointed that Paul’s true message was that of repentance.

Winter’s provocative argument is an interesting interpretation of Acts 17. The main weakness in Winter’s argument is that he does not have sufficient evidence to prove his theory. He based the entire theory on a book by R. Garland, *Introducing New Gods*. Winter even conceded that Garland’s book does not cover the history of introducing new gods in Athens during the lifetime of Paul. Winter tried to make an analogy hundreds of years after the evidence present in Garland’s book.³⁴ Winter may have been correct, but further evidence must come forward before any real conclusion can be made.

³¹ Bruce W. Winter, “On Introducing Gods to Athens: An Alternative Reading of Acts 17:18–20,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 47, no. 1 (May 1996): 81.

³² T. D. Barnes similarly showed that the heralding of new gods could be the purpose for Paul’s arrest and trial before the Areopagus. However, Barnes does not conclude as definitively as did Winter. See Barnes, “An Apostle on Trial,” 418.

³³ Winter, “On Introducing Gods,” 82.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

Paul on Trial

The fourth theory is that Paul was on trial before the Areopagus. T. D. Barnes is the most outspoken proponent of Paul being arrested and taken before the Areopagus to be placed on trial for introducing new gods to Athens. Barnes disputed the idea that there was no accusation or verdict in the text by saying, “That argument, however, appears to presuppose an anachronistic notion of what constitutes a criminal trial.”³⁵ Barnes disagreed with the idea that Paul was politely asked to present his doctrine because Paul was taken by force (*epilabomenoi*). “For, if Paul went before the Areopagus ‘by special invitation,’ what need was there of physical constraint?”³⁶

There are two major weaknesses in Barnes’s conclusions. The first, as previously noted, is a lack of trial language in the account; the second is that Luke in his narratives made it abundantly clear when someone was taken on trial. One example, Acts 16, is the account of Paul in Philippi. Paul healed the young damsel and was subsequently taken (*epilabomenoi*) into the marketplace before the rulers saying, “These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans” (Acts 16:20–21). Unlike in the chapter that follows this account, it is obvious that the people have made an official accusation before the magistrates. But even more than that, Paul and Silas are beaten and placed in prison; “the jailor [being charged] to keep them safely” (Acts 16:23). In Acts 16, there is little doubt in the narrative that Paul and Silas are tried, beaten, and imprisoned.³⁷

³⁵ Barnes, “An Apostle on Trial,” 413. Barnes furthered this argument by stating that “the almost uniform practice of the Roman world was an informal process, with hardly any rules to circumscribe either procedure or penalties or nature of the charge.” Ibid., 414.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Richard J. Cassidy wrote an important book where he discussed the different types of Roman imprisonment and in what circumstances Paul encountered the Roman judicial system. The three types of Roman

Acts 18 is another example of obvious arrest and trial language in the narrative. Paul was in Corinth, where a group of Jews made insurrection against Paul and brought him “to the judgment seat, Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law” (Acts 18:12–13). Again, Luke’s narrative is abundantly clear that this is a trial before a judicial court of law accompanied by a specific accusation against Paul. True, there are similarities in the narrative in Acts 17 to both Paul’s experiences in Philippi and in Corinth. For example, Paul, while teaching in a public space, incited strong emotion and was then taken forcibly before magistrates and judicial courts. However, the Acts 17 account is not as conclusive as the other two. The philosophers have grounds to seize Paul but Luke does not portray a specific accusation that Paul was breaking the law like we see in Philippi and Corinth. Barnes saw the difference in the narrative but still concluded, “Although the form of words is politer than at Corinth, why should it not be construed as an accusation.”³⁸ Here Barnes conceded that his theory has a large weakness.

C. Kavin Rowe has come to the defense of Barnes’s conclusion for a trial in Acts 17. Rowe derived his conclusions from *epilabomenoi* just as Barnes did, but he also concluded that the philosopher’s polite question may not have been so innocuous. He, like Bruce W. Winter, saw the “May we know” question as “we have the legal right to know” what it is you are teaching.³⁹ Rowe believed the Greek word *dunamai*⁴⁰ should read “we have the legal right to

imprisonment are: *carcer*, *custodia militaris*, and *custodia libera*, ranging from the harshest to the mildest. Cassidy does not mention Acts 17 as an example of Roman imprisonment in the life of Paul but does discuss both Acts 16 and Acts 18. Richard J. Cassidy, *Paul in Chains: Roman Imprisonment and the Letters of St. Paul* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), 37–42. Though there is much to say concerning the Roman judicial system in a study of Luke-Acts, this thesis is examining what Luke’s intent was in portraying the Areopagus account. The scope of this thesis does not include a more detailed examination of the Roman judicial system.

³⁸ Barnes, “An Apostle on Trial,” 419.

³⁹ Rowe, “The Grammar of Life,” 37.

know, as in Acts 25:11 or P. Oxy 899,” not the politer “May we know.”⁴¹ If this is how Luke meant that question, then a more clear accusation was brought against Paul before the Areopagus.

The Most Likely Scenario

As described in this chapter, each theory has its strengths in describing the circumstances in which Paul was brought before the Areopagus to defend or to present his doctrine of Christ and the Resurrection. Each theory also has weakness, primarily because when Luke recorded the account he left the text with considerable ambiguity. It may be that there is no way to prove or disprove any given theory. What scholars are left to do is give their best hypothesis and support it with the evidence present. This chapter will now show which of these four hypotheses has the greatest strengths and the least glaring weaknesses.

The most logical conclusion is that Paul was taken before a serious yet informal inquiry before the Areopagus. The theory acknowledges that Paul was likely taken by force, against his will. It also acknowledges that the question posed by the philosophers was unlikely to be completely hostile and yet not totally benign. It is likely that Paul was asked to give an account of his doctrine before a council who did have legal authority. Most importantly, this theory builds upon the strong foundation that Acts 17 must be viewed as part of the complete narrative for the book of Acts and not separate from it.

⁴⁰ Strong’s concordance defines *dunamai* as to be able, to have power, leaving this interpretation of Rowe and Winter as a possibility, though not a good one. The evidence that Rowe cited in his argument (Acts 25:11 or P. Oxy 899) is insufficient to conclude that *dunamai* should read “we have a legal right to know” in Acts 17:19.

⁴¹ Rowe, “The Grammar of Life,” 37. Rowe furthered his argument by paralleling Luke’s account of Paul’s arrest with the trial and death of Socrates. “Luke’s culturally and philologically precise narration creates the analogical space in which the trial of Socrates informs that of Paul. Readers of Acts are thereby enabled to see in the seizure of Paul the potential for death. Like Socrates, Paul appears before the governing Athenians council under the suspicion of introducing strange, new deities...and like Socrates, Paul may well meet his end.” Ibid., 39.

As mentioned earlier, there exist narrative similarities and differences in Acts 17 and other events in Acts. One obvious difference is to contrast the arrest and trial language in the chapters that surround Acts 17, namely Paul's arrest and trials in Philippi and Corinth. Luke is abundantly clear that Paul was arrested in these accounts, but he does not make it clear in the Areopagus account. This may be because Paul was not arrested and placed on a formal trial, rather Paul was quickly accosted and asked to explain his doctrine before an informal inquiry of the Areopagus. C. J. Hemer concluded that the swift narrative places Paul before the Areopagus and "tells against the assumption of delay or remand in prison...it is easier to think [that the Areopagus] was in session nearby."⁴²

The narrative framework of Luke shows how an informal inquiry best fits into the "underlying purpose in the Acts as a whole."⁴³ The purpose of Luke's account of his heroes, Peter and Paul, is that they are "almost uniformly successful [at] being delivered from their enemies—Peter from the Council and from Herod, Paul from the Jews and from imprisonment at Philippi, and so on."⁴⁴ Paul, throughout his life, was taken before courts and tribunals, accused of disturbing the peace or preaching against Roman law. But in each setting, the charges placed against Paul are found lacking, and in each case Paul is found "not guilty."⁴⁵ This is particularly true in the account before the Areopagus. Paul proclaimed his doctrines, and some took offense to what he has said and even interrupted him. However, he was able to "depart from among them" without further molestation or accusation (Acts 17:33).

⁴² Hemer, "Paul at Athens: A Topographical Note," 350.

⁴³ Gärtner, 59.

⁴⁴ Barrett, "Paul's Speech on the Areopagus," 70. Of course one exception to this theme in Acts is the martyrdom of Stephen. Time and again Luke's heroes are ultimately delivered from their enemies.

⁴⁵ Gärtner, 63.

Furthermore, Luke desired to show throughout his book that no power on earth could stop the progress of the gospel of Christ. That the gospel will spread from “Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto all the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Throughout the narrative accounts of Paul’s missionary travels, the gospel of Christ spreads to all the earth, both to Jew and to Gentile and to citizens, slaves, and proconsuls. Acts 17 is no exception to this theme of Acts. Luke “wished to indicate that Athens, the citadel where pagan religion and philosophy were entrenched, offered to Paul serious opposition.”⁴⁶ This serious opposition came in the form of being taken by force (*epilabomenoi*) for a serious, but informal inquiry before the Areopagus where he was found not guilty of any serious crime. Thus, the gospel of Christ can go into the heart of paganism and come out triumphant because “Paul not only escaped the threat, but won converts.”⁴⁷ Throughout Acts, Paul was the embodiment of the power of the gospel being preached to the world, he was able to enter difficult situations and come out victorious.

Conclusion

Over time there have been different opinions as to the circumstances surrounding the Areopagus. Was Paul invited to share his theology with the people of Athens or the Areopagus? Was Paul taken forcibly to be placed on trial? Or was Paul taken before the Areopagus who inquired about the doctrines he had presented in the marketplace? Evidence in the text shows that the most probable of these theories is that Paul was taken before an informal convening of the council of Areopagus. Paul was not just invited politely to expound on his doctrines of Jesus and the Resurrection because it cannot be interpreted as polite for the philosophers to physically accost Paul. Paul was not on trial because there is no formal trial language in the text like

⁴⁶ Barrett, “Paul’s Speech on the Areopagus,” 70.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

elsewhere in the narrative, for example in Philippi and Corinth. Therefore, the evidence points to an informal convening of the Areopagus because this theory employs all the relevant details in Acts 17. Paul was physically forced to stand before the Areopagus and yet it was not a formal trial. Furthermore, the account should be viewed as part of the narrative whole of Luke-Acts, meaning Luke's desire throughout his works was to show the triumph of the gospel before Jew and Gentile, peasant and king, within marketplaces and great halls. Acts 17 placed Paul as standing up against a serious yet informal convening of the council of Areopagus and winning converts to Christ. Barrett eloquently summarizes Luke's intent for sharing Paul's visit to Athens and his subsequent inquiry before the Areopagus in these words; "It looks then as if Luke's final view of the outcome of the visit to Athens was that Paul encountered a stiff obstacle, provoked dissension, escaped attack, and made at least some converts. As elsewhere [in Acts], the Lord's hand was with him."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Ibid., 71.

CHAPTER FOUR THE COUNCIL OF AREOPAGUS: LOCATION THEORIES

If Paul was taken against his will before an informal inquiry, where was Paul taken to defend his doctrine concerning Christ and the resurrection? Was Paul taken from the marketplace to a more secluded venue on Mars Hill, away from the business of the Agora to preach to the general populace of Athens? Or was Paul taken before the famous council of the Areopagus?

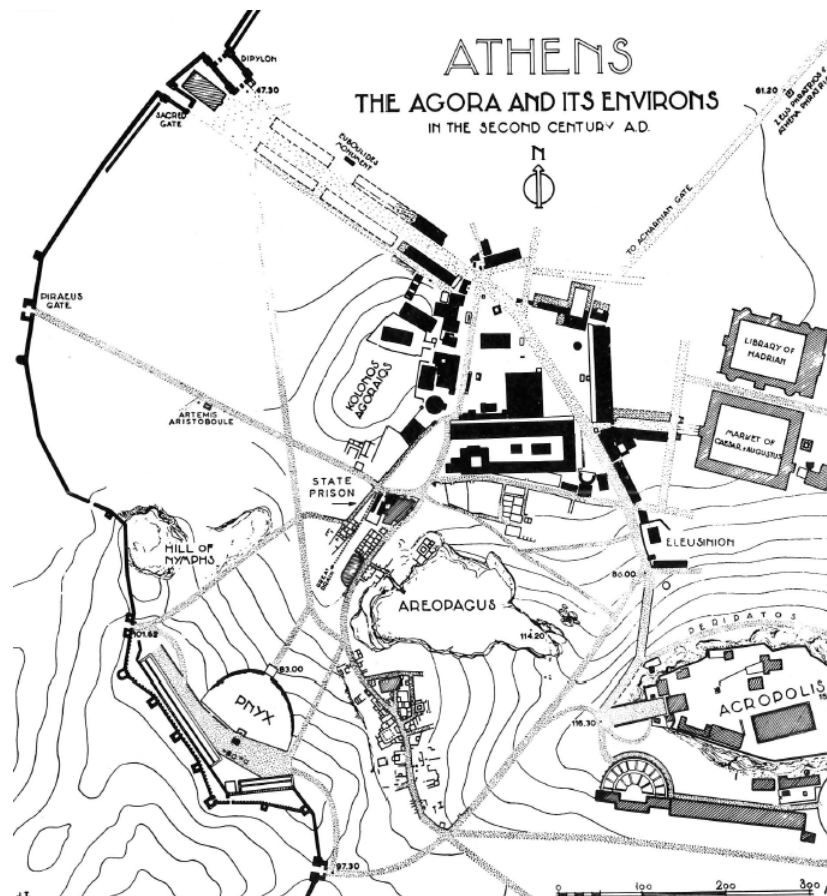


Figure 3. Plan of Agora in the second century AD. Image from John M. Camp, *The Athenian Agora* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 182.

If Paul was taken before the council, was he taken to the cultic-traditional meeting place of the council on Mars Hill, or was he taken to the *Stoa Basileios* within the Athenian Agora for an expedient gathering of that council? This chapter discusses the different theories and evidences that surround this debate and logically, though not definitively, conclude that Paul was taken to defend himself before an informal and expeditious gathering of the council in the *Stoa Basileios*.

The question of location, like others that drive the discussion surrounding Acts 17, is difficult to conclude with any certainty due to the linguistic ambiguity in Luke's account. There exists a myriad of interpretations in the reading of the text. The statement in question is in verse 19, "And they took him and brought him unto Areopagus." The Greek is rendered, "*epilabomenoi de autou epi ton areion pagon*." The problem is that the phrase *areion pagon* could refer to either the rocky outcrop just west of the Acropolis or the famed council that derived its name from the hill. The issue is complicated in the KJV because the same Greek phrase is translated two different ways. In verse 19, *areion pagon* is translated as "Areopagus" but in verse 22, the genitive form is translated as "Mars Hill."¹ This KJV discrepancy between the two verses then frames the question of this chapter: what did Luke mean in referencing the Areopagus? Did he mean that Paul was taken up to Mars Hill or that he was taken before the council of Areopagus?

Before the Council, Not the Mars Hill

There is evidence in the text that suggests that Paul was taken before the council of Areopagus and not just invited to give a sermon to the general populace of Athens on Mars Hill.

¹ Other English translations do not have this discrepancy. They are uniform in their translations of *areion pagon* in both of these verses. For example, the New International Version, New Revised Standard Version, English Standard Version, and the New Jerusalem Bible all translated it as "Areopagus" in both verses.

For example, within the text of Acts 17 Luke narrated that Paul “stood in the midst of the Areopagus” (*statheis de Paulos en mesō tou Areiou pagou*) and later that Paul left “from the midst” of the Areopagus (*outōs o Paulos exēlthen ek mesou autōn*). Stonehouse noted, “The prepositional phrase ‘in the midst of’ may be used with reference to places as well as persons....But it is exceedingly doubtful that a person or group of persons would be described as being in the midst of a hill.”² One example in the New Testament where the prepositional phrase “in the midst of” (*en mesō*) is used to describe a place rather than a group of people is in Mark 6:47. Mark described the Apostles of Christ as being “in the midst of the sea” while Jesus watched their toiling and rowing from the shore. However, there are many examples within Luke’s own writings to suggest that Luke meant that Paul was in the midst of a group of people rather than a place (see Luke 2:46, Luke 22:57, Luke 24:36, Acts 1:15, Acts 2:22, Acts 4:7, Acts 17:22, and Acts 27:21).³

Other exegetical evidence continues to substantiate that Paul was taken before the council of Areopagus rather than merely asked to give a public discourse. Luke mentioned that there were some in the audience that believed Paul’s doctrines from the speech. He mentioned only two people by name, one being “Dionysius the Areopagite” (Acts 17:34). Luke may have mentioned Dionysius to give credence to Paul’s ability to proselytize to someone of great importance in the community. More importantly, Luke mentioned Dionysius because it showed that Paul was speaking to the council of Areopagus, of which Dionysius was a member.⁴

² Stonehouse, 9.

³ It is of value to note that more modern translations of Acts 17 make it clear that Paul stood in the midst of a group of people rather than in the midst of a hill. See the NIV and NRSV translations for Acts 17:22, 33.

⁴ For further discussion on Dionysius the Areopagite as evidence that Paul spoke to this esteemed body, see David W. J. Gill, “Achaia,” in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1994), 448 and Marshall, 285. Luke likely mentioned Damaris and Dionysius to

Critics of this theory argue that if Luke meant the council, he would have explicitly stated that fact.⁵ In response to this critique, F. F. Bruce noted that the reason why Luke does not make a specific mention to the council of Areopagus is because “the term ‘the council of Areopagus’...was shortened in common parlance to ‘the Areopagus’ [which] is attested” by ancient texts from Cicero, Seneca, and Valerius Maximus.⁶

As discussed in chapter 3, Paul was most likely taken against his will before a serious yet informal meeting of the council of Areopagus. In the text, Paul seemed to be “a setter forth of strange gods” and was subsequently taken to defend this “new doctrine.” Paul would have been taken to the council of Areopagus, the council that held power over the religious piety of the city of Athens. Thus, Luke intended to portray Paul defending himself before the governing body of Athens that held jurisdiction over religious matters.⁷ It is also possible that the council of Areopagus had power over public lectures within Athens.⁸ Thus, Paul may match the historical description of those who had to defend themselves before the Areopagus; he may have been seen by the Athenians as public lecturer preaching in the marketplace about “strange gods.” Based on

show that Paul was able to find success in Athens among a diverse group of people, both men and women, and “others with them” who were in the audience as Paul gave his speech.

⁵ See Haenchen, 518–19 and Conzelmann, 220.

⁶ Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 352. These ancient texts describe the council of Areopagus while omitting the word “council.” Cicero, in mentioning the Areopagus said, “Affairs in Rome stand thus: The Senate is quite an Areopagus.” Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*. i. 14.5. Seneca similarly said, “In the city in which there was the Areopagus, a most god-fearing court...” Seneca, *De Tranquillitate Animi*. 5.1. Valerius Maximus noted, “The most ancient and venerable council of the same city, the Areopagus.” Valerius Maximus. II. 6.4.

⁷ Tannehill, 217.

⁸ If this theory is true, despite a small amount of evidence, it helps to clarify one reason why Paul would have been brought before the Areopagus. Ramsay explained, “Now, certain power were vested in the Council of Areopagus to appoint or invite lecturers at Athens, and to exercise some general control over the lecturers in the interest of public order and morality. There is an almost complete lack of evidence what were the advantages and the legal rights of a lecturer thus appointed, and to what extent or in what way a strange teacher could find freedom to lecture in Athens. There existed something in the way of privileges vested in the recognized lecturers; for the fact that Cicero induced the Areopagus to pass a decree inviting Cratippus... to become a lecturer in Athens, implies that some advantages was thereby secured to him.” Ramsay, 247. See also Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 352 and Gärtner, 58.

the evidence in the text, Paul was taken before the council of Areopagus and not just to Mars Hill in order to present his doctrines of Jesus and the Resurrection to the general populace of Athens.⁹ Though the KJV is ambiguous about whether Paul was teaching the public of Athens or the council, the NIV scholars did not leave ambiguity in their translation. Act 17:22 reads in the NIV, “Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus” and later, verse 33 reads, “Paul left the Council.”

Historical Significance of the Council of Areopagus

What was the role and function of the Areopagus throughout Greek history? It is imperative to understand the council’s basic functions in order to explain why Paul was taken before this group to defend his doctrines.

The council of Areopagus received its name from the Hill of Ares, or Mars Hill, and met on the same hill throughout much of Greek history. Pausanias described the significance of the hill to the ancient Greeks, “There is also the Hill of Ares, so named because Ares was the first to be tried here; my narration has already told that he killed Halirrhothius, and what were his grounds for this act. Afterwards, they say, Orestes was tried for killing his mother, and there is an altar to Athena Areia, which he dedicated on being acquitted. The unhewn stones on which stand the defendants and the prosecutors, they call the stone of Outrage and the stone of

⁹ Though most scholars agree with this conclusion, there are those who doubt the validity of Luke’s account of Paul being taken before the council of Areopagus. Ernst Haenchen was one who argued against this theory. He believed that Paul’s sermon was a fabrication of Luke and that Luke wanted Paul to be giving a public lecture, something like an ancient “Hyde Park.” Haenchen, 519. Haenchen believed that scholars like Gärtner and Ramsay had made too much of the role of the council in public lecture for Paul’s sermon. Haenchen believed that the council only got involved when what was being presented had a larger philosophical impact on the city of Athens, and it was necessary to set up a new philosophical school. According to Haenchen, “Paul had begun no lecture activity which could be compared even remotely with a philosophical school.” Haenchen’s logic is valid; however, he missed the role of the Areopagus in the public worship of Athens. Paul may not have posed a significant philosophical threat to the Epicureans or Stoics, but Paul did pose a serious enough threat on the religious climate of Athens for the council of Areopagus to get involved.

Ruthlessness.”¹⁰ Pausanias here described the ancient mythological significance of the hill as a place of trial, particularly when dealing with murder. Lucian described the Areopagus as a place of trial in his satire, *The Double Indictment*. He noted “all who have entered suit are to come to the Areopagus...at the place of Justice.”¹¹ Lucian further quipped that the Athenians drag “each other up the hill, straight for the Areopagus...every day.”¹² Thus, Mars Hill and the council from which it received its name became part of the Athenian law courts founded upon its ancient mythological history.

The Areopagus became the supreme legal authority for the Greeks, though it did go through periods of greater and lesser significance.¹³ Aristides described the significance of the council of Areopagus, “if someone would ask which of the courts among the Greeks was the most revered and holy, all would say the Areopagus. I believe that everyone would admit with reference to the Areopagus that no fairer image of democracy can be conceived nor on which preserves the meaning of its name.”¹⁴ Cicero said, “that when one says, ‘the Athenian state is ruled by council,’ the words ‘of the Areopagus’ are omitted.”¹⁵ And finally, Pausanias wrote of the Areopagus that the “Athenians have other law courts as well, which are not so famous.”¹⁶

¹⁰ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*. i.28.5.

¹¹ Lucian, *The Double Indictment*. 4.4.

¹² Lucian, 4.12.

¹³ See Wallace and Bruno Keil, *Beitraege Zur Geschichte Des Areopags* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1920).

¹⁴ Aristides, *Panathenaic Oration*. i. 367.

¹⁵ Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*. II. 74.

¹⁶ Pausanias, i. 28.8.

Functions of the Areopagus

What were the functions of the council? Hubert M. Martin described the Areopagus as having “far-reaching and undefined religious, judicial, censorial, and political power.”¹⁷ T. D. Barnes said that even during the life of Paul “the Areopagus seems to be the effective government of Roman Athens and its chief court. As such, like the imperial Senate in Rome, it could interfere in any aspect of corporate life—education, philosophical lectures, public morality, foreign cults.”¹⁸

Ancient texts also describe the varied role for the council of Areopagus. Tacitus showed the council held jurisdiction over those who were accused of committing forgery.¹⁹ Plutarch recorded that the council of Areopagus may have had some jurisdiction over foreign lectures and perhaps even the education of the youth by describing Cicero’s appeal for Cratippus to “remain at Athens and discourse with the young men, and thus be an ornament to the city.”²⁰ This statement from Plutarch has received a myriad of interpretations. Bertil Gärtner concluded from this passage that the Areopagus supervised education, and therefore Paul was brought before the same education committee of the Areopagus that questioned Cratippus earlier in history.²¹ Though Plutarch’s statement shows that Cicero went before the council to ask if Cratippus could remain in Athens to teach, it does not make any specific distinction for a subcommittee in charge of education or public lecture. Another explanation linked to Plutarch’s statement is that “the

¹⁷ Hubert M. Martin, “Areopagus,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 370.

¹⁸ Barnes, “An Apostle on Trial,” 413.

¹⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*. II.55.

²⁰ Plutarch, *Cicero*. 24.5.

²¹ Gärtner, 54.

Council of Areopagus invited Paul to demonstrate his competence as an orator”.²² If the Areopagus held jurisdiction over public lecture, it could be the cause for Paul being asked to defend himself. These interpretations are based on circumstantial evidence. It is not possible to conclude that the Areopagus had direct supervision over education or public lecturing.

Both Pausanias and Aristotle confirm that the council of Areopagus continued in its most sacred role, steeped in the mythology, of trying murder cases.²³ C. J. Hemer concluded, “the various testimonies...leave no reasonable doubt that when the court assembled in its traditional role as a homicide tribunal it met on the [Mars] hill” bound by its “cultic traditions.”²⁴

Among the most significant roles of the Areopagus, and that which is of greatest importance to this thesis, was that the council held specific jurisdiction over religious matters in Athens. Demosthenes described the account of the trial of Theogenes, “the council of Areopagus, which in other matters also is high worth to the city in what pertains to piety...the council of the Areopagus was deeply incensed and was disposed to fine Theogenes for having married a wife of such a character and having permitted her to administer on the city’s behalf the rites that none may name.”²⁵ In this account, the council of Areopagus held legal rights over the religious “piety” of the city of Athens and had power to fine Theogenes for marrying a wife who did not meet the required piety of the sacred city. Martin commented that this council, “hallowed by its

²² Schnabel, “Contextualising Paul,” 175.

²³ Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.*. 57. 3-4. Pausanias, i. 28.5

²⁴ Hemer, “Paul at Athens: A Topographical Note,” 344, 346. Hubert M. Martin also stated that the council “was never deprived of...the jurisdiction in specific types of homicide cases. In the mythological version of its origins presented in Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*, Athena herself founds the Council as a homicide court for the initial purpose of trying Orestes for the murder of his mother Clytemnestra...[therefore] the Council convened on its hill to judge homicide cases.” Martin, 371.

²⁵ Demosthenes, *Orations vi. Against Neaera* 80–81.

antique origin [was] rooted in religious tradition as to be virtually sacrosanct.”²⁶ The council held “legal competence” in religion and “took upon itself the preservation of traditional piety and investigating religious offenders.”²⁷ Apparently Stilpon and Theodoros were summoned before the council with the accusation of *asebeia*, meaning impiety or ungodliness, for saying “that Athena was not a god. The Areopagus ordered him [Stilpon] to leave the city.”²⁸

Understanding the traditional roles of the council of Areopagus clarifies why the Athenians would have taken Paul before this council. It is obvious that Paul had not committed murder, so the Areopagus could not have convened under the pretenses of a murder trial. It is possible, however, that the Areopagus could have found an interest in Paul’s public lecturing or even his educating of the youth of Athens. It is most likely, and most relevant, that Paul would have been taken before the council in order to investigate his preaching of “strange Gods”—an obvious religious matter. It would have been historically appropriate to bring this foreign proselyte before the council that had power over religious piety of Athens.

The Archon Basileus

It is important to note that the Archon Basileus was closely connected with the council of Areopagus, particularly when it met for religious matters.²⁹ The Archon was second in command of the Athenian government with special jurisdiction in protecting the *asebeia* of Athens. Aristotle described the Archon Basileus as “first responsible for the Mysteries....One might say that he administers all the traditional sacrifices. Public lawsuits fall to him on charges

²⁶ Martin, 371.

²⁷ Wallace, 204.

²⁸ Diogenes Laertius. II.101, 177.

²⁹ Wycherley, *The Athenian Agora: The Agora of Athens*, 87.

of impiety, and when a man is involved in a dispute with someone over priesthood. He holds the adjudications for clans and for priests in all their disputes on religions matters.”³⁰

The religious jurisdiction of the Archon, along with his connection with the council of Areopagus, allows for the possibility that it was before him and the council of Areopagus that Paul was asked to defend his doctrine. It is likely that Paul was accosted by the people in the marketplace and taken before the Archon Basileus, assisted by the council of Areopagus, to further investigate Paul as one who was heralding new gods to the city of Athens.³¹ The “Areopagus was always and typically a religious court, and it is a plausible inference that it might naturally meet on occasion under the chairmanship of the Basileus, the religious head of state, at his abode.”³²

Location of the Address

If Paul was taken before the council of Areopagus to defend what he had been teaching in the marketplace, where in Athens was he taken? Was he taken up to Mars Hill to give a public sermon before the Athenian people? Or was he taken to the hill in order to defend himself before the council? Or perhaps was Paul taken before the council to a more expedient location within Athens to quickly explain his doctrine? Many scholars have investigated these questions with varied conclusions. As stated earlier, most scholars do not believe that Paul was taken to the hill to give a public sermon. Instead, evidence shows that Paul was taken before the council of Areopagus. However, what is less clear is where the council met for this occasion, the hill or the *Stoa Basileios*. The fact that different scholars have given evidence for both the hill and the *Stoa*, highlights that the Greek text is not conclusive, allowing these questions to remain open. What

³⁰ Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 57.

³¹ For more information on this topic, see Winter, “On Introducing Gods,” 73.

³² Hemer, “Paul at Athens: A Topographical Note,” 345.

this thesis will discuss the evidence for both sides and conclude which of these theories seems most plausible. Though it is possible that Paul was taken to Mars Hill, the most compelling evidence places Paul before the Areopagus in the *Stoa Basileios*.

Mars Hill

Throughout history, the council of Areopagus met on the hill of the same name. After carefully researching the history of the Areopagus, Wallace concluded that the “council did in fact regularly meet somewhere on the Areios Pagos” even on into the first century AD.³³ The ancient texts frequently describe a meeting of the Areopagus as the defendants going up to the Areopagus or coming down from the Areopagus after trial. This language points to an ascension to higher ground. Likewise, in the Acts 17 narrative, Luke’s Greek also shows a change of topography. “And they took him, and brought him *unto* the Areopagus (*epi ton areionpagon*)” (Acts 17:19).

Epi is usually understood as “upon” in Greek. In this case, it is *epi* plus the accusative, which indicates that someone is taking Paul to a place that is up or *upon* something, rather than *to* something. The language then “favors the view” that Paul was taken up to Mars Hill to defend himself before the council of Areopagus.³⁴ According to T. D. Barnes, “If the Council of Areopagus still normally met on the hill of that name, there is no need to introduce an artificial distinction....The obvious meaning of the words in Acts should be accepted: Paul was taken before the Areopagus, i.e. before the council sitting on the hill.”³⁵ Though Barnes and others affirm that the language points to Mars Hill as the location of the address, the language “does not

³³ Wallace, 215. See also Barnes, “An Apostle on Trial,” 409 and Rowe, “The Grammar of Life,” 37.

³⁴ Broneer, “Athens,” 27.

³⁵Barnes, “An Aposlte on Trial,” 410.

exclude” other interpretations.³⁶ “It is impossible to say in which sense Luke would be using the [preposition] *epi* with the name.”³⁷ If it means “on,” it is highly likely that Luke meant Paul was taken before the council on the hill. Other scholars have argued that Luke meant “to” the Areopagus.³⁸ Clayton Croy argued that Luke used *epi* “with the accusative to denote the person(s) before whom someone is brought.”³⁹ Croy cited various occasions within Luke-Acts to support this idea.⁴⁰ Though T. D. Barnes may be right that the language does point toward Paul being taken “up” to the council while it met on the hill, there is enough evidence to cast some doubt on that being the only possible interpretation.

One limitation for Paul being taken before the council on the hill is that traditionally the council met on the hill in the cases of murder, as it was bound to do by its mythological origins.⁴¹ Paul was obviously not taken before the council to stand trial for murder. Yet, it is also evident that trials were held on the hill for reasons other than for murder. Demosthenes recorded that Theogenes was taken up to Mars Hill to be “examined there on the matter of his wife’s identity,” not for murder.⁴² The fact that Paul may not have been taken to the hill cannot be overlooked.

³⁶ Broneer, “Athens,” 27.

³⁷ Martin, 605.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 606.

³⁹ Croy, “Hellenistic Philosophies,” 25.

⁴⁰ Croy listed Luke 12:58; Luke 21:12; Luke 23:1; Acts 9:21; Acts 16:19; Acts 17:6; Acts 25:12 as examples of how Luke used *epi* to denote being taken before a group of people not necessarily up to a different location.

⁴¹ Wallace, 218.

⁴² Demosthenes, *Orations vi, Against Neaera*. 80-81, *ibid.*

The Stoa Basileios

This thesis will argue that the *Stoa Basileios* was the setting of Acts 17 based on four compelling evidences. Before examining these four arguments, it is important to understand the *Stoa*'s physical characteristics and role in Athenian society, particularly how it relates to the council of Areopagus.

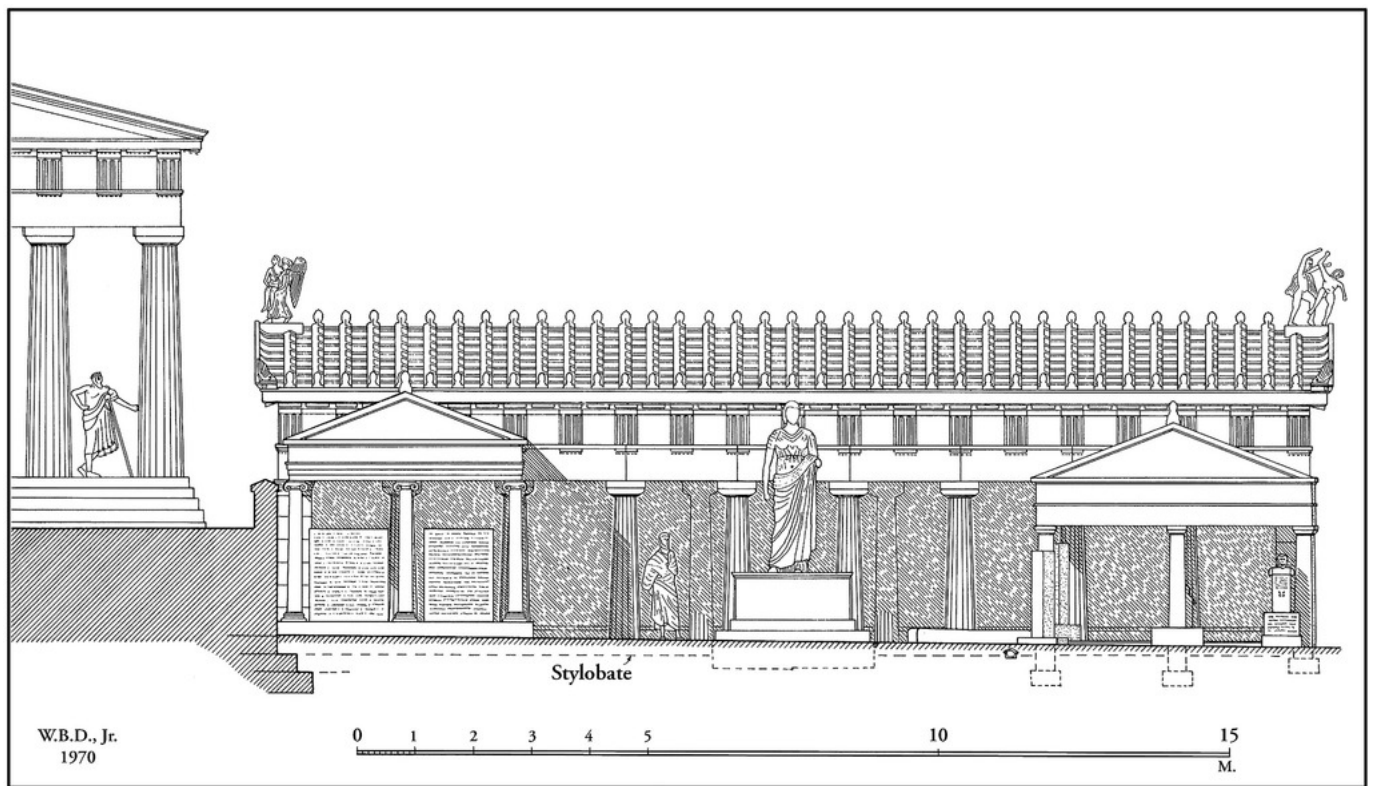


Figure 4. Reconstruction of the *Royal Stoa*, as it would have appeared in ca. 300 BC. John M. Camp, *The Athenian Agora: A Short Guide to the Excavations* (American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2003), 41.

Almost all of the ancient textual evidence points to the council of Areopagus meeting exclusively on Mars Hill,⁴³ however, there is one ancient account that explicitly places the

⁴³ This is T. D. Barnes's argument. Barnes admits that there is evidence that the council met in the *Stoa Basileios* but mentioned that there is only a single passage by Demosthenes, *Orations* III. i.23 in support of this idea. Barnes then cited multiple examples of how generally the council met on the hill.

council within the Athenian Agora. In Demosthenes oration *Against Aristogeiton* is this important statement, “The Council of Areopagus, when it sits roped off in the King’s Portico, enjoys complete freedom from disturbance, and all men hold aloof.”⁴⁴ From this statement by Demosthenes, it is seen that the council of Areopagus did not always meet on Mars Hill; on occasion they met in the “King’s Portico,” also known as the *Royal Stoa* or the *Stoa Basileios*. The King mentioned here is referring to the Archon Basileus, who held jurisdiction over the religious piety of the city of Athens and before whom it is likely that Paul was brought. It is therefore possible that Paul was not taken to Mars Hill but could have been taken into the *Stoa Basileios* to defend his doctrine to both the council and the Archon.

The *Stoa* was described by Pausanias as he entered into Athens by the Panathenaic Way. It was the “First on the right [that] is called the Royal Portico.”⁴⁵ Located on the northwest corner of the Athenian Agora, this ancient *Stoa*, which was used in Athenian government up until AD 267, was relatively small in comparison to other official buildings within the Agora.⁴⁶

The tiny structure measures 17.75 m. in length and 7.18 m. in width. In plan it exhibits the simplest form of stoa with a colonnade of 8 Doric columns along its façade, and its rear ends enclosed with walls of fine ashlar masonry. On the interior a row of four Doric columns was arranged along the axis of the building. There is clear evidence that a bench lined the walls on three sides. Doric capitals were recovered from the exterior and interior orders, and their style and profiles suggest a date for the original construction of the stoa about the middle of the sixth century B.C.⁴⁷

John Camp described the inside of the *Stoa*: “Other furnishings accommodated the king archon....These included several sets of thrones which originally stood inside or in the front of

⁴⁴ Demosthenes, *Orations III, Against Aristogeiton* i. 23. Demosthenes’s authorship of this oration is in doubt, but the content of the information is still pertinent to this discussion.

⁴⁵ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*. i.3.1.

⁴⁶ P. M. Fraser, “Archaeology in Greece,” *Archaeological Reports*, no. 16 (1969-70): 4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

the stoa.... Just how many people may have had to be provided for is not clear, but by the 4th century B.C. as large a body as the council of Areopagus is known to have met in the building.”⁴⁸ Scholars estimate that more than 200 people could have met within the *Stoa* as well as any number that could have listened to the proceedings from the outside, blocked off the roped barricade.⁴⁹ If Paul was defending himself before the council while in the *Stoa Basileios*, he may have been speaking to hundreds of people.⁵⁰

An Argument for the *Stoa* as the Location of the Speech

There are four points that suggest that Paul may have been taken to the *Stoa Basileus*. The first is the similarities of the Lukan account to Socrates’ trial and conviction before the Areopagus. Plato recorded, “What a strange thing has happened Socrates, that you have left your accustomed haunts

⁴⁸ Camp, 104.

⁴⁹ Wycherley, *The Athenian Agora: The Agora of Athens*, 87. A weakness for the theory that Paul was in the *Stoa* is its small dimensions. Could Paul have given an address that began “Ye men of Athens” in such small venue? Yet, 200 people is a large group within the confines of the *Stoa* as well as the possibility that Paul was also addressing those who had gathered to witness the proceedings while being blocked off by the rope while in session.

⁵⁰ There are some who conclude that Mars Hill would have been an unsuitable location based on size just like the *Stoa Basileios*. See Ramsay, 244. I. Howard Marshall disputed Ramsay’s claim that the hill was too small to hold this gathering, that it is a “false” assumption. Marshall, 285. Ernst Haenchen concluded, “Scholars either find it an arraignment before the authorities or hold that Paul was brought out of the tumult of the marketplace to the quiet hill of Mars. Both interpretations are doubtful: there was room for only a few men on the rugged, rocky summit and not for such a large audience as Luke presupposes for this speech, and if the ‘Council of Areopagus’ assembled in the *Stoa Basileios*, the public were kept out of earshot.” Yet Haenchen argued that Luke intended on taking Paul away from the marketplace to the hill. According to Haenchen, Luke only did this as a literary device to give credibility to his account. Haenchen, 518–519. Hans Conzelmann disputed the size of the hill theory based on the fact that Luke did not know the size of the hill, but rather relayed details to add to the authenticity of this account of the proceedings of Paul in Athens. Conzelmann, 220.



Figure 5. The remains of the *Royal Stoa*. Image from John M. Camp, *The Athenian Agora* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 54.

in the Lyceum and are now haunting the portico where the king archon sits?”⁵¹ It was in the *Royal Stoa* that Socrates was tried before the Archon Basileus on charges of corruption of the youth of Athens and introducing of strange Gods to Athens.⁵² The second charge against Socrates is very similar to a possible charge from the Lukan narrative against Paul: “He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods” (Acts 17:18). Luke may have purposefully inserted these

⁵¹ Plato, *Euthyphro*. 2a.

⁵² Plato, *Euthyphro*. 1c, 2B. Plato recorded that Socrates said that the charge laid against was that he was “a maker of gods; and because I make new gods and do not believe in the old ones, he indicted me.” *Euthyphro*. 2B.

details in order to add credence to his account by connecting his hero Paul with Socrates. But could it not also be true that Paul was brought before the Areopagus because the Athenians saw that Paul, like Socrates, was a challenge to the piety of Athens? This could be evidence for what Cadbury called the proper “Greek colouring” of the Lukan account of Paul in Athens.⁵³

The second piece of evidence builds on the first. Socrates was accused of attacking the religious piety of Athens and was brought before the religious head of state, the Archon Basileus, who sat in the “portico” to hear the case against Socrates.⁵⁴ Paul was brought before the same council and under similar charges as Socrates. Socrates was found guilty and paid for it with his life. Paul, on the other hand, was able to escape this fate. The similarities between these two men, their charges, and their hearings gives credence to the possibility that Paul was also brought to the *Stoa* and asked to defend himself before the Archon Basileus and the council of Areopagus. It is evident that the council met in the *Stoa* from time to time and met there at least once when the piety of Athens had been challenged by Socrates. “The Areopagus was always and typically a religious court, and it is a plausible inference that it might meet on occasion under the chairmanship of the Basileus, the religious head of state, at his abode.”⁵⁵ Therefore, it is possible that when the council of Areopagus was meeting with regard to religious matters, it met in the *Stoa* rather than on the hill, such as in the case of Socrates and perhaps Paul.

The third significant argument for the *Stoa* comes from Thompson and Wycherley. “It seems likely that in most if not all cases that had to be resolved by a trial only the preliminary formalities took place in the *Stoa Basileios*.”⁵⁶ Though these two scholars eventually conclude

⁵³ Cadbury, 44.

⁵⁴ Plato, *Euthyphro*. 2a.

⁵⁵ Hemer, “Paul at Athens: A Topographical Note,” 345.

⁵⁶ Wycherley, *The Athenian Agora: The Agora of Athens*, 87.

that Paul was likely taken before the council of Areopagus on Mars Hill, they presented an interesting possibility as to why Paul may have been brought to the *Stoa* on this occasion.⁵⁷ If Thompson and Wycherley are correct, Paul may have been brought before the council for a preliminary hearing, not an official trial. In this serious yet informal hearing, he was acquitted and did not need to stand trial before a more official gathering of the Areopagus. Therefore, the *Stoa* may have been the “convenient venue for more routine matters in the business centre of the city” for the Areopagus to meet.⁵⁸ “The locale of the hill had an ancient solemnity of religious association which would not be lightly abandoned, whereas routine business could be conducted more conveniently in the Agora,”⁵⁹ which in this instance was possibly an informal gathering of the Areopagus to investigate whether Paul was a threat to the piety of Athens.

The fourth and the most compelling evidence for Paul being brought to the *Stoa* is the narrative unity in the text of time and space within the Athenian Agora. For example, Luke gave the detail that Paul was “stirred...when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry” (Acts 17:16). The KJV translators used “given to idolatry,” but the Greek is better rendered as “full of idols.” R. E. Wycherley notes that the “full of idols” could also be translated as “a forest of idols.”⁶⁰ The significance of the translation is found in the topographical layout of ancient Athens. As Paul entered Athens, he would have been confronted with many Hermes statues that paid reverence to the “God of roads, gateways, and the marketplace.”⁶¹ As Paul continued and entered the Agora, he would have found an unusual amount of the Hermes statues at the northwest corner of the

⁵⁷ Ibid., 168.

⁵⁸ Hemer, “Paul at Athens: A Topographical Note,” 346.

⁵⁹ Hemer, “The Speeches of Acts II: The Areopagus Address,” 239–240.

⁶⁰ Wycherley, “St. Paul at Athens,” 619.

⁶¹ Ibid., 620.

Agora “between the Poikile (Painted Stoa) and the Basileios; in fact the figure so dominated the scene that the place was called simply “the Herms.”



Figure 6. Herm, S 33 used as support for arm of larger figure. Craig A. Mauzy, *Agora Excavations 1931–2006: A Pictorial History*, (The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2006), 18.

This was the main approach to the Agora, by which Paul would probably enter as he came up from Peiraeus....[The] Herms more than anything else would make him feel that at Athens idols were like trees in wood.”⁶² Thus, Paul was disturbed by a city “full of idols” or a city that was “a forest of idols.” Not only was this area of the Agora rich with Herms, but here, adjacent to the *Stoa Basileios*, was the *Stoa Poikila* or the Painted Stoa.

⁶² Ibid.

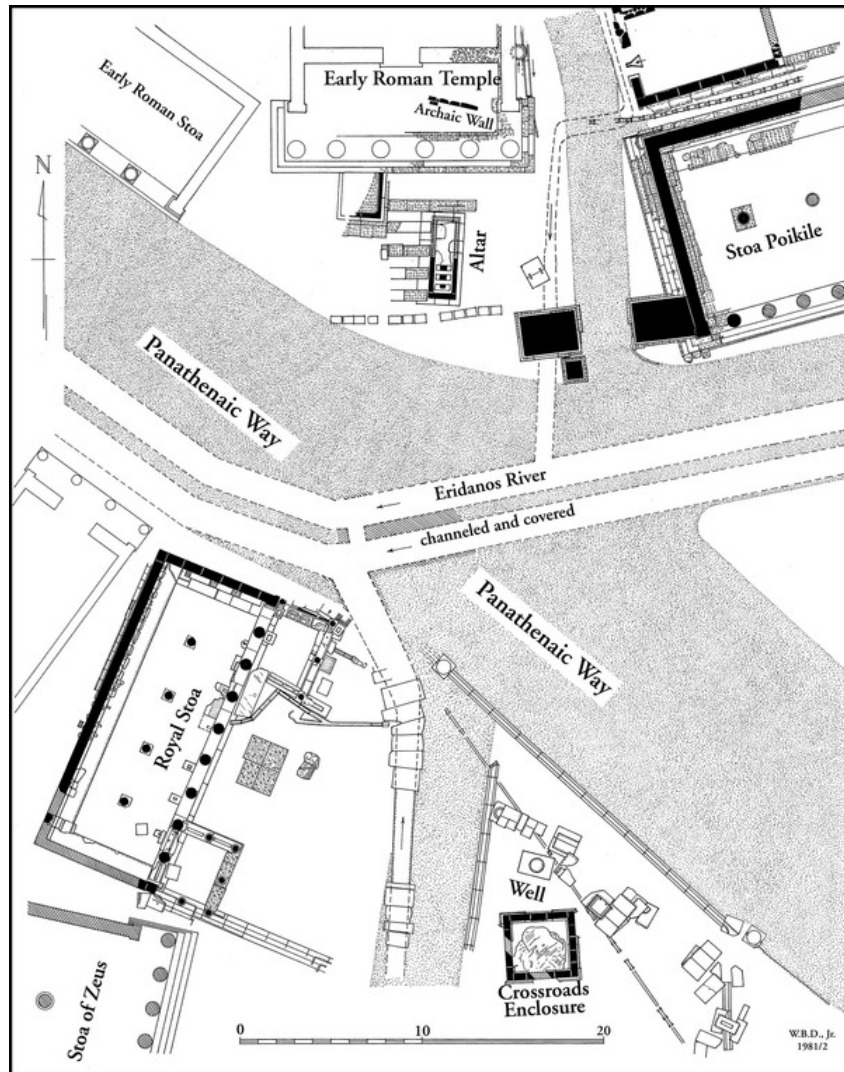


Figure 7. Plan of northwest corner of Agora, principle entrance into the public square. John M. Camp, *The Athenian Agora: A Short Guide to the Excavations*, (American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2003), 41.

The Painted Stoa was a popular resort where the philosophers of Athens would gather to discuss and to dispute their ideas. It was so popular that the philosophical school of Stoics received their name from this building. Luke, after mentioning the significant “forest of idols,” immediately mentions that Paul daily disputed in the marketplace,⁶³ where “certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him” (Acts 17:16–18). Here in the northwest corner

⁶³ Hemer, “The Speeches of Acts II: The Areopagus Address,” 240.

of the Agora existed all the relevant details that surround Luke's narrative for Paul confronting both the pervasive idolatry and philosophers who were debating daily their philosophical ideas. "We [therefore] gain the impression that [Paul] was abruptly hauled before the court of the archon Basileus as one suspected of disturbing the peace by religious innovation."⁶⁴

Conclusion

It is with this reading that the *Stoa* becomes a real possibility. Luke's narrative quickly moves from the Agora to a scene of defense for the unflinching proselyte. In the northwest corner of the Agora, Paul would have confronted the pervasive idolatry, the philosophers, and the council of Areopagus. It seems that the council gathered for an informal, perhaps preliminary, hearing to better understand the religious teachings from this herald of foreign deity. It is possible that Paul taught before a group of about 200 individuals and commanded them "to repent" (Acts 17:30). Though the council of Areopagus obviously had two meeting places within Athens, "the swift narrative tells against assumption of delay or remand in prison while the court assembled on the hill. It is easier to think it was in session nearby."⁶⁵

There is good evidence that Paul was abruptly taken by the philosophers as they met in the northwest corner of the Agora to an adjacent building, the *Stoa Basileios*. It is in this building where the Archon Basileus and the council of Areopagus met to hold an expedient hearing to investigate Paul's doctrine of Jesus and the Resurrection. It is before this audience and within this context that we can profitably read Paul's famous speech before the Areopagus.

Though it is impossible to conclude precisely where the council of Areopagus met in the first century AD, what is most important is to whom Paul was addressing this new theology.

⁶⁴ Hemer, "Paul at Athens: A Topographical Note," 349.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 350.

Much has been said about the controversial Hellenistic philosophies found in Acts 17. However, approaching the speech with an understanding of Paul’s audience clarifies the message given before this supreme governing body of Athens and demonstrates that Paul was willing to mold his message to his audience. Knowing that the “narrator [chose to match] the speech to fit the audience” will help the reader of Acts understand that this speech is not the totality of Pauline doctrine, but a masterpiece of rhetoric—a call to repentance to these highly educated rulers of the Athenian high court.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Tannehill, 216.

CHAPTER FIVE HELLENIZATION OF CHRISTIANITY?

This thesis has discussed the audience and the setting of Acts 17. The context of the account is not only paramount in comprehending the complex speech but also provides evidence that Paul's audience was the Areopagus. Paul's manner of engaging his audience in Acts 17 is evidence that Paul was speaking to a specific audience with a specific objective. Luke portrayed Paul's willingness to engage cross-culturally with different audiences, even the educated pagan council of Areopagus.

It is likely that the council of Areopagus convened, under the direction of the Archon Basileus, to investigate the strange doctrines of Paul and to examine if he was proclaiming foreign deities. Luke's attention to detail for the setting of the speech is essential in understanding the complex doctrines recorded in Acts 17. Ignoring the context leads to a narrow understanding of the purpose, thrust, theology, and the outcomes of this controversial speech.

The council of Areopagus had convened under the direction of the Archon. Luke also made his readers aware that among the crowd were two common philosophical schools of thought that were popular in Athens during the time of Paul, namely the Epicureans and Stoics. Luke may have mentioned these two groups of philosophers to add credence to his account, but more likely, Luke desired his readers to understand that these men were part of the audience for Acts 17.

What about the council of Areopagus pushed Paul to use the education he gained while growing up in Tarsus? These were well-educated men versed in philosophical concepts and theology who, unlike other audiences whom Paul addressed, did not have a basic understanding

of the Judeo-Christian concepts of God. Also, a misstep in speaking to this group could result in serious trouble. Socrates is a prime example of the consequences of not being able to properly defend oneself before the Areopagus. The setting for the speech is more than just a casual discussion, but a serious matter with potentially serious consequences. Paul must be at his rhetorical best, the education and the political influence of his audience. It is with this understanding of the setting of the sermon that the more controversial aspects of the speech must be understood. Paul had to create a “masterpiece of cross-cultural communication.”¹

In order for orators to have success, they must be aware of the ideologies and philosophical background of the audience. This is especially true in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul, by his own admission, changed the way he taught depending on his audience. “And unto the Jews I became a Jew, that I might gain the Jews....To them that are without law...that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:20–22). Paul admitted that when he taught the Jews he became as a Jew, teaching to their understanding in order to bring them to Christ. When he taught those who were without law, meaning the Gentiles, he would speak to them according to their understanding, likewise to bring them to Christ. He was indeed, as noted in chapter one, “a product of his time, and his religious view was deeply conditioned by his unique environment.”²

Marshall correctly expressed the importance for missionaries to reach their audience in these words; “It has always been good missionary policy to express the gospel in terms that

¹ Hemer, “The Speeches of Acts II: The Areopagus Address,” 258.

² Schweitzer, vi.

would be intelligible to the hearers without thereby altering the essence of the message.”³ Paul’s Areopagus speech is an example of this principle. Tannehill made this connection when he wrote: “The Areopagus speech may provide a helpful model of the delicate task of speaking outside the religious community through critical engagement with the larger world. A mission that does not engage the presuppositions and dominant concerns of those being approached leaves presuppositions and concerns untouched, with the result that the message, even if accepted, does not transform its hearers....Dialogue with outsiders may be risky, but the refusal of dialogue on cultural concerns results in either the isolation of the religious community or the compartmentalization of religion so that it does not affect society at large.”⁴

Luke’s record in Acts 17 shows that Paul was keenly aware that he was not teaching Jews in a synagogue or Christian converts through an Epistle. These men had at the very least an equivalent Greek education to Paul. Paul could not teach this audience in the same manner as he had taught in the synagogue. The Areopagus had the ability to cast judgment upon Paul if he did not show that the accusations against him were misguided. Luke’s account also shows that Paul desired apologetics and found an opportunity to fulfill his commission as an Apostle. This chapter discusses to what extent the reader can trust the speeches in Acts as historically authentic, investigate the Lukan influence on the speech, and more fully examine the rhetoric and theology found in Acts 17 as Paul engages intellectually and spiritually with the council of Areopagus.

³ Marshall, 283.

⁴ Tannehill, 215.

Speeches in Acts

One of the major difficulties in understanding the doctrines in Acts 17 is that Paul does not give his own account of what transpired within Athens. Throughout the book of Acts, Luke recorded multiple speeches as given by his heroes, the Disciples of Jesus Christ—Peter, Stephen, and Paul. What is important to ascertain is how did Luke gather the information in order to record these speeches? There are four possible explanations: (1) Luke was present to hear and then record what these men said, (2) Luke fabricated these speeches in order to match his own purposes, (3) Luke relied on the accounts of others, perhaps even the reminiscent account of the speech giver, and (4) Luke stayed close to the message of the historical speech while interjecting his own words to match a broader Lukan theology.

Acts 17 does not fall under the category of Luke's "we" passages, and therefore it is likely that Luke was not in Athens with Paul and did not hear the sermon first-hand. This has led many scholars to conclude that Acts 17 is either a reminiscent account of the speech⁵ or a fabrication by Luke. Some scholars like Martin Dibelius, Hans Conzelmann,⁶ and Ernst Haenchen⁷ argued that Luke fabricated the speech in order to make the "speech as an example of a typical sermon to Gentiles" or a "symbolic encounter" with paganism.⁸

Other scholars have argued that Luke followed the example of the ancient historian Thucydides, who recorded ancient speeches. Thucydides commented on his history, "As to the

⁵ Dodd, 17.

⁶ Conzelmann goes as far as to say, "Inasmuch as Luke draws upon the form of secular historiography, we must interpret the Areopagus Speech first of all as a literary speech of Luke, not a real sermon by Paul...Luke makes Paul say what he considers appropriate to the situation....In my own opinion, the speech is the free creation of the author, for it does not show the specific thoughts and ideas of Paul." Conzelmann, 218.

⁷ Haenchen viewed the speech as Luke trying to reproduce the "'ideal scene', which baffles every attempt to translate it into reality." Haenchen, 528.

⁸ Dibelius, 73, 77.

speeches that were made by different men, either when they were about to begin the war or when they were already engaged therein, it has been difficult to recall with strict accuracy the words actually spoken, both for me as regards that which I myself heard, and for those who from various other sources have brought reports. Therefore the speeches are given in language in which, as it seemed to me, the several speakers would express, on the subjects under consideration, the sentiments most benefiting the occasion, though at the same time I have adhered as closely as possible to the general sense of what was actually said.”⁹ According to Bruce, the “Thucydidean analogy” for the speeches of Acts could be valid. “We should expect Luke to ‘give a general purport of what was actually said’ and not to ascribe to the speaker sentiments or utterances out of keeping with his true beliefs and teachings.”¹⁰ C. H. Dodd further stated that Luke, “apparently used to some extent the liberty which all ancient historians claimed (after the example of Thucydides), of composing speeches which are put into the mouths of the personages of the story.”¹¹ Therefore, it is unlikely that Luke recorded verbatim what Paul had taught before the Areopagus, instead recording as closely as possible the major themes and utterances “based upon the reminiscence of what the apostle actually said.”¹²

Lukan Influence in Acts 17

It is, therefore, naïve to equate Paul’s words in Athens as strictly Pauline. Though this author believes that Luke did follow the example of ancient historical speech recording, it is very

⁹ Thucydides, i. 22. 1.

¹⁰ Bruce, “The Speeches in Acts-Thirty Years After,” 55.

¹¹ Dodd, 17.

¹² Ibid., 19. See also Porter, “Thucydides,” 121–142. Colin J. Hemer argued, in response to scholars like Dibelius, that the Areopagus is consistent with an “authentic rather than [a] contrived” account of what happened with Paul in Athens. “The detailed illustration of the setting of the speech raises questions about the application of evidence. This series of connections cannot *prove* anything about the speech. But ‘proof’ is not really the issue at stake. It is the kind of correlation which could hardly be present accidentally in an in the Lukan redaction.” Hemer, “The Speeches of Acts II: The Areopagus Address,” 242, 258.

likely that Luke's own editorial hand is evident in the text.¹³ Luke's words remained close to the historical event while being influenced by his theology and themes in Acts as a whole. The Areopagus account fits into the major theological motifs for the book of Acts. That is not to say that Luke's portrayal of the event is a fabrication, but that Luke's motive for recording the account influenced the doctrines that were emphasized in the account. It is important then to investigate how the Areopagus fits into the thematic and theological motifs of Acts.¹⁴

One of the major themes of the book of Acts was Luke's emphasis that the gospel of Jesus Christ was not exclusively for the Jews. Throughout his record, Luke showed the success of the Gentile mission.¹⁵ He records Paul's success in the heart of paganism, desiring to show how the gospel of Jesus Christ was for everyone, even pagan intellectuals. Another overarching theme of Acts that is found in the Areopagus discourse was that "Luke was most anxious to impress upon his readers that the Roman authorities treated the Christian missionaries with benevolence and acknowledged them to be politically harmless."¹⁶ Paul's speech before the Areopagus was effective enough for him to leave that serious but informal inquiry without further molestation.

Not only does the Areopagus speech match some overarching themes for the book of Acts, but it also connects with "Lukan theology." According to Haenchen, "Luke is no systematic theologian. He does not develop any unified doctrine....Nevertheless he has a theology of his own; he sets out from definite theological premises....But he does not proceed by

¹³ Fitzmyer adequately summarized Luke's influence on Acts, "Luke has imposed his own style and language on all the sources that he used; in the end, Acts is a thoroughly Lukan composition." Fitzmyer, 85.

¹⁴ See Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 824–26 and Fitzmyer, 601–02, for more information on the history of the debate for Lukan or Pauline authorship.

¹⁵ Fitzmyer, 59. Luke, a Gentile, would have found this theme particularly important as he recorded the gospel of Christ being spread throughout the Roman world.

¹⁶ Haenchen, 106.

the systematic discussion of dogmatic themes: these are rather, directly or indirectly, suggested to the reader in his historical presentation by means of vivid scenes.”¹⁷ One of these scenes was Paul’s presentation before the Areopagus. Among the most important theological purpose of the book of Acts was to show the supremacy of God the Father¹⁸—that he is Creator,¹⁹ that he organized a plan of salvation enabled by the coming of Christ,²⁰ that he raised Christ from the dead,²¹ and that he appointed Jesus to be the judge.²² All of these doctrines are emphasized in Paul’s Areopagus speech, fitting the speech into the broad themes of Acts and echoing the theology present throughout Luke’s record. This is not to say that Luke’s account of Paul in Athens is only a symbolic presentation of his theological motifs for Acts but that simply equating Lukan theology with Pauline theology is naive. Luke’s close association with Paul throughout his missionary travels allowed Luke to have ample opportunity to question the Apostle about his experiences in Athens and to later record a reminiscent account that closely matched Paul’s speech before the Areopagus. However, Luke’s portrayal of the speech was certainly shaped by his own narrative themes and theology.

This thesis discusses the record’s obvious Hellenistic themes based on the argument that Luke’s portrayal remained close to the historical event. Contextualizing the setting and audience clarifies the purpose for the Hellenistic doctrines found in the account.

¹⁷ Ibid., 91.

¹⁸ Ibid. See also John T. Squires, “Acts,” in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 1214 and Robert W. Wall, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, 12 vols., ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 10:18.

¹⁹ See Acts 4:24; 7:49–50; 14:15; 17:24.

²⁰ See Acts 1:7; 2:33; 10:38; 17:31. The lack of Christocentrism in Acts 17 may be due to Luke’s desire to emphasize the supremacy of the Father and how the Son was the enabler of the plan of salvation.

²¹ See Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 13:37; 17:31; 26:8.

²² See Acts 10:42; 17:31.

Acts 17: The Hellenization of Christianity?

For over a century, scholars have recognized and discussed the Hellenistic philosophies in Acts 17. These Hellenistic concepts have led some to disbelieve the account as authentic because these concepts of God are far from the profundity of the Christocentric doctrines as found in the Pauline Epistles.²³ Within the speech itself, Paul quoted a Greek poet and alluded to many concrete Hellenistic philosophical doctrines.²⁴ Could this be the same man who stated that his mission was to preach “Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2)? Could Paul give a Hellenized sermon on the nature of God? It is this supposed discrepancy that led Martin Dibelius to conclude that “the Areopagus speech is absolutely foreign to Paul’s own theology, that it is, in fact, foreign to the entire New Testament.”²⁵ Yet this criticism did not take into account that the sermon itself is evidence that Paul’s audience was very different from that of his Epistles, regardless if it is Luke’s version of the speech or a firsthand account from Paul. Luke desired, at the very least, that the speech fit the audience. As discussed in chapters three and four, Paul was likely taken before a serious yet informal gathering of the Areopagus, not writing an epistle to Jews-turned-Christians or Gentile converts.

²³ Joseph Fitzmyer noted that the source of the speech is more complicated than ascribing the text as Hellenistic philosophy. “Some expressions do resemble Hellenistic philosophical teachings,...but other elements in the speech echo not only Jewish belief, but OT phraseology. In effect, Luke makes Paul sound like a Jewish preacher addressing a pagan audience about the true God.” Fitzmyer, 602. Schnabel argued, “Paul selects from Old Testament and Jewish theological and apologetic traditions such motifs that could be immediately understood by the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, including terminological allusions and quotations.” Schnabel, “Contextualising Paul,” 177.

²⁴ These conclusions are drawn from a “Lukan version” of the speech, but the author has chosen, as most scholars have, to maintain Paul as the voice of the speech though it could very well be Luke’s voice that plays the dominate role in the speech. It is possible, as noted in chapter one, that Paul’s Greek education in Tarsus could have allowed him to give this speech as recorded by Luke; therefore, the possibility that Paul gave a speech that closely matches Acts 17 should not be completely disregarded. This thesis argues for Luke’s credibility as the historian and biographer of Paul in the speech before the Areopagus but also acknowledges a Lukan influence in the record.

²⁵ Dibelius, 71. He further stated, “Luke strayed too far from the Paul who was the theologian of the paradoxes of grace and faith...[the speech] is meant not an historical, but a symbolic encounter. The Areopagus speech became a symbol of Christian theology in the environment of Greek culture.” Ibid., 77.

There are, without a doubt, elements of Hellenistic philosophy in the text of Acts 17. For example, Paul himself said, “as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God” (Acts 17:29). Paul is quoting the third century BC Stoic poet Aratus, “For we are also his offspring.”²⁶ Other statements in the text are not direct quotes but certainly match philosophical concepts of the Greeks. For example, Paul stated that God “dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24). This statement is similar to a quote made by the founder of Stoicism, Zeno, as recorded by Plutarch, “it is a doctrine of Zeno’s not to build temples of the gods”.²⁷ Another example is that Paul said concerning God, “Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed anything” (Acts 17:24). Greek philosopher Euripides wrote, “A god, if he is truly a god, needs nothing.”²⁸ Paul’s statement “he be not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:27) is very similar to Seneca, who taught, “God is near you, he is with you, he is within you.”²⁹ Paul’s statement, “in him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28), “evokes a wide...range of familiar philosophical thinking to have scholars scurrying from Plato to Posidonius to Epimenides to Epictetus in the effort to ferret out Luke’s ‘source.’”³⁰ It is obvious that Paul, as recorded by Luke, was versed in these different philosophical tenants enough to cite them for the purpose of teaching the Areopagus. Yet the question remains, why would Paul evoke the philosophers of Greece to make a Judeo-Christian theological argument? The reasons have been widely debated over the past

²⁶ Aratus, *Phaenomena*. 5.

²⁷ Plutarch, *Moralia*. 1034B.

²⁸ Euripides, *Heracles*. 1344–45.

²⁹ Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*. 41.1.

³⁰ Rowe, “The Grammar of Life,” 42.

century. Some scholars have made conclusions without maintaining the proper context of Paul speaking before the Areopagus.

Dibelius argued that Luke was seeking to show how a Christian missionary could take the gospel to an educated Gentile audience. Bruce agreed to a certain extent: “We may agree with Dibelius in looking at the speaker before the Areopagus as ‘the forerunner of the apologists.’”³¹ But Bruce did not see the speech in its entirety as an apology. Paul may have filled the role as an apologist, but what the reader of Acts 17 should not assume is “that such an apology to the Gentiles involves a compromise of biblical principles.”³² Remembering Paul’s audience is once again helpful here. Paul was not only speaking to an educated Greek audience but to a political body who had power to incarcerate or even kill Paul. In many ways, with the Areopagus as the audience, this speech is a rhetorical genius, because not only did Paul find enough common ground with his accusers as to not elicit further inquiry or reprimand, he also was able to win converts from among their numbers.

Another critique of the speech is that it “strayed too far from the Paul who was the theologian of the paradoxes of grace and faith.”³³ C. K. Barrett adequately refuted this claim that the Areopagus “may lack the profundity of Pauline theology, but it hardly [was] a betrayal of it.”³⁴ The speech before the Areopagus cannot be viewed as Paul’s, or even Luke’s, total presentation of God’s plan.³⁵ The text itself bears this out. Luke recorded that when Paul approached the most difficult doctrine for his audience to understand, the Resurrection, “some

³¹ Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 363.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Dibelius, 77.

³⁴ Barrett, “Paul’s Speech on the Areopagus,” 70.

³⁵ Tannehill, 213.

[of his audience] mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again on this matter. So Paul departed from among them” (Acts 17:32). At this point, Luke mentioned the volatile reaction of some of the audience that day; some openly mocked his claim that Jesus was raised from the dead. It is impossible to know what Paul would have continued to say had he not been interrupted by his audience. After being interrupted, Paul was able to leave the presence of the Areopagus without further molestation and without continuing his presentation of the plan of God.

Why then did Paul wait to introduce these pagans to Christ until near the end of the speech? Again Martin Dibelius was bothered by this lack of Christocentrism in the text of Acts 17 by noting that then “only Christian” reference in the speech is found at the end, after Paul taught from pagan philosophies.³⁶ The weakness of this argument is that Dibelius assumed that Paul taught Gentiles the same way he taught Jews, that Paul’s missionary approach was monolithic. What and how Paul taught in Acts 17 is evidence that this speech was before a different audience than in his Epistles.³⁷

Again, Luke’s record shows Paul was keenly aware of his surroundings and his audience. Had Paul expounded a high Christology with this pagan audience, like he did in his Epistle to the Romans, the message would not have been understood or received.³⁸ Tannehill correctly observed, “the sophisticated Athenians have no understanding of Christ or, for that

³⁶ Dibelius, 56.

³⁷ It is impossible for a reader to know what Paul would have taught had he not been interrupted as he began to teach about Jesus and his Resurrection. Perhaps if Paul had been allowed to continue, the text would show a move toward a more Pauline Christocentric speech. Dibelius also ignored that Paul had already been teaching about Jesus and the Resurrection before he had been hauled before the Areopagus (Acts 17:18–19).

³⁸ Luke’s theological emphasis on the Father may have interrupted the Christ-centered thrust of the Pauline speech; therefore, Luke’s version may have obscured the Christ-centered nature of Paul’s original speech before the Areopagus. This is impossible to prove, but the careful reader must consider the Lukan influence on the speeches of Acts.

matter, the Scriptures upon which to build. Consequently, to lead them on a journey through Hebrew history about Jesus as the promised Jewish Messiah... would no doubt have made little sense to *this* crowd.”³⁹ Though the profundity of Pauline doctrine is lacking in Acts 17 as compared to the Epistles, the Pauline Epistles were not written to the supreme governing body of Athens.⁴⁰ Rather, the Pauline Epistles were written to recent converts to Christianity who already had a foundation laid for the importance of Jesus as the Messiah and the Christian imperative of being justified through faith in Christ Jesus; points which would not have been understood by the Areopagus and the pagan philosophers present in Athens.⁴¹ Joseph Fitzmyer observed that Acts 17 may have been an example of Paul’s program when teaching pagans and admonishing them to move away from idol worship, “some expressions [in Acts 17] do resemble Hellenistic philosophical teachings....If Paul himself could write to the Thessalonians, ‘You turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God’ (1 Thess 1:9), he could well have preached as Luke depicts him here in Acts.”⁴²

In the Areopagus account, Luke demonstrated Paul’s skillful rhetoric, which he may have learned while growing up in Tarsus. Paul used the philosophical understanding of God to build a

³⁹ Tannehill, 202.

⁴⁰ I. Howard Marshall made a fantastic statement on why it is difficult to directly compare the doctrines of Acts 17 to the Pauline Epistles: “It has always been good missionary policy to express the gospel in terms that would be intelligible to the hearers without thereby altering the essence of the message. It has often be claimed the Paul’s view of ‘natural theology’, as seen in Romans 1, is different from the view presented here, an that the approach expressed in this speech is un-Pauline. Such a view is undoubtedly too extreme. The difficulty is that we do not have any full statements from Paul himself (as opposed to what Luke tells us) regarding the content of his missionary preaching; what we have in his Letters is teaching for his covert. Consequently, it is impossible to be sure that Paul could not have expressed himself in the way described here.” Marshall, 282–283.

⁴¹ Acts 17 is not the only encounter Luke recorded of Paul before pagans. Acts 14:15–18 is an account with a similar audience as in Athens with a similar theological tone as Acts 17. In Paul’s letter to the Romans he similarly critiqued paganism as “vain...imagination” and that they “changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.... Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator” (see Romans 1:18–26).

⁴² Fitzmyer, 602.

foundation of commonality to capture the attention of his audience, find points of contact with his listeners, and eventually invite them to change their lives by recognizing that the God they had ignorantly worshiped in the past now desired them to repent. Paul does show he is a “masterful public speaker in his ability to arrest attention by linking his message with features of his listeners’ own experience.”⁴³ When he wrote to Jewish Christians “[Paul] quotes the Old Testament; in addressing the Areopagus he quotes Greek poets, but Paul would not have been the effective missionary he was if he had not known the value of finding and exploiting a point of contact with his hearers, whether in a Jewish synagogue or in a Greek marketplace.”⁴⁴ Therefore Acts 17 is purposefully different than other chapters in the New Testament text.

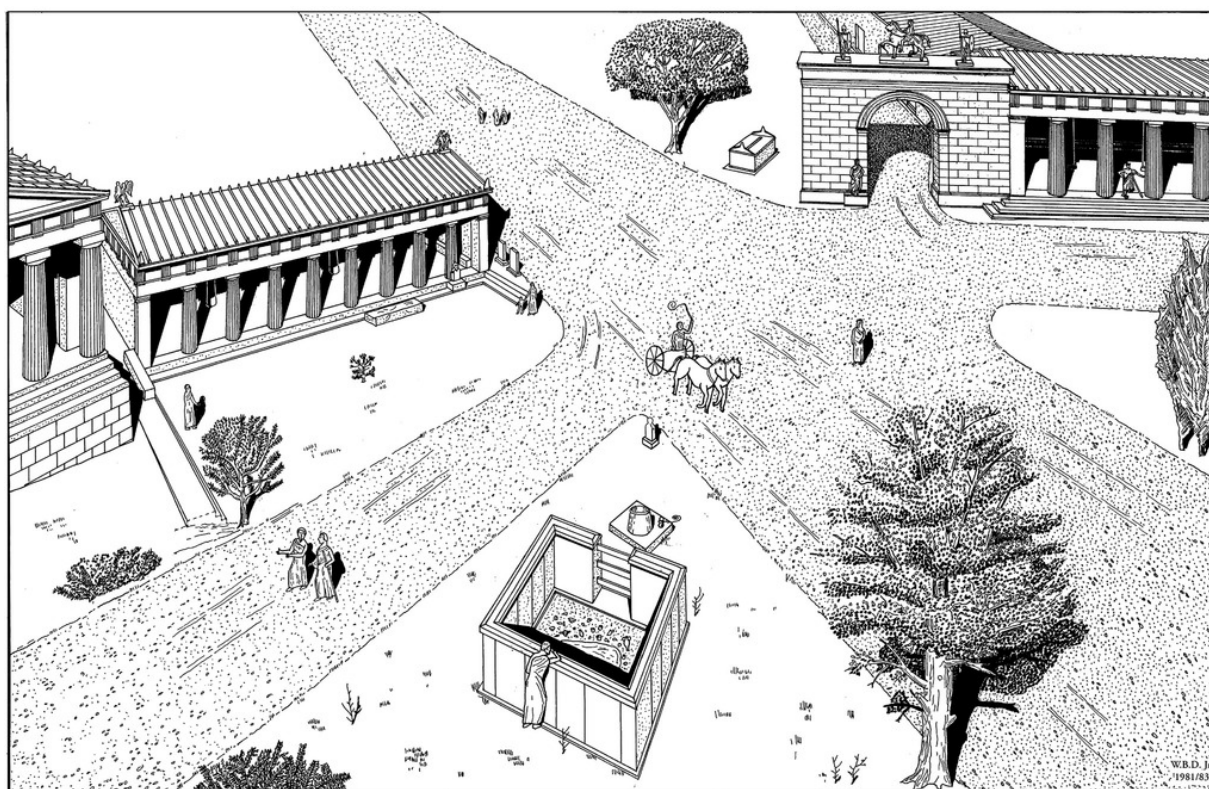


Figure 8. A reconstruction of the northwest corner of the Agora in ca. 420 BC, with Royal Stoa at left and the Painted Stoa at upper right, looking northwest. John M. Camp, *The Athenian Agora: A Short Guide to the Excavations*, (American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2003), 40.

⁴³ Stonehouse, 4.

⁴⁴ Bruce, *New Testament History*, 313.

Points of Contact: Paul's Use of Rhetoric before the Council of Areopagus

Luke's account shows that Paul was aware of rhetorical skills and was able to use this rhetoric to create points of contact with his listeners and eventually move toward an invitation to accept the "true God" and repentance.⁴⁵ Typical Greek rhetorical structure follows four basic steps that Paul used in this masterful speech before the Areopagus. A skilled rhetorician would first deliver his *exordium*. An *exordium* is the introduction of a speech, "designed to gain a hearing from his listeners."⁴⁶

Paul's *exordium* begins with his statement, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious" (Acts 17:22). There has been much discussion on whether Paul was criticizing the Athenians or complementing them in his *exordium*. However, if Paul desired to use the Greek rhetorical skill *captatio benevolentiae*, a currying of favor, it seems likely that Paul desired to give this educated audience a complement in hopes that he would capture their attention and be able to continue. The KJV translators should have or could have used a different word to translate "superstitious." The Greek word, translated as superstitious, is *deisidaimonesterouv*. The word can mean superstition, but it could also be translated as "very religious" or even "very pious."⁴⁷ Paul may not have been criticizing from the outset of the speech but rather seeking favor from his listeners, the council of Areopagus.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ See chapter one for theories on where Paul may have received the education necessary to use rhetoric and Greek philosophy to find points of contact with the council of Areopagus.

⁴⁶ Flemming, "Contextualizing the Gospel," 201.

⁴⁷ The NIV scholars translated the phrase with this meaning, "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious" (Acts 17:22). See also the footnote notation in the LDS Bible.

⁴⁸ Though it seems that Paul was using *captatio benevolentiae* in his *exordium* in order to arrest the attention of his important audience, it is also been proposed that Paul's statement was meant to be slightly ambiguous; meaning, he may have clothed his criticism of the popular religion of the day with a backhanded compliment. See Fitzmyer, 606. Marshall, 285. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 834.

Paul continued with the structure of Greek rhetoric by introducing his *propositio*, which is a “proposition stating the desired goal of the discourse.”⁴⁹ Paul’s *propositio* is in verse 23, “For as I passed by, and behold your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” Paul used something he had observed during his stay in Athens—that these people were so “religious” that they created an altar to not offend an unknown god. Paul, “as a Jewish Christian, [realized] that pagan Greeks do not worship the ‘true’ God...[so Paul] tries to show that the God whom he proclaims is in reality not stranger to the Athenians, if they would only rightly reflect. His starting point is Athenian piety, and he tries to raise them from such personal experience to sound theology.”⁵⁰ Therefore Paul’s proposition for his listeners was that the Athenians have already worshiped, although ignorantly, the God he is proclaiming. In other words, he desired to make their unknown god known to them.

A key concept in Paul’s *propositio* is that the Athenians were ignorant. Paul’s theme of ignorance continued throughout the speech and must have struck a chord with this audience; Paul was speaking in Athens to a well-educated assembly. This group of men prided themselves on their knowledge, even their knowledge and conceptions of God. So Paul’s statement that these men are ignorant must have, at the very least, grabbed their attention. The Athenians were well known for their desire to “hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). Paul delicately stated that their knowledge of God remained incomplete. C. J. Hemer noted that “these philosophers who prided

⁴⁹ Flemming, “Contextualizing the Gospel,” 201.

⁵⁰ Fitzmyer, 607.

themselves on their superior wisdom [to them] God was unknown, and it falls to Paul to build on their glimmerings of truth and correct their ignorance.”⁵¹

Paul has captured the audience’s attention and has given his objective; Paul must now prove his point. Again Paul uses rhetoric and gives his *probatio*, “proof, which argues the case.”⁵² It is in the *probatio* that the reader finds Paul’s willingness to quote from and present Hellenistic concepts with the Areopagus. It is evident in this section of the speech that Paul tried to find points of contact of his doctrine with the religious beliefs of his audience. It is during the *probatio* that many scholars refute that this speech could have ever been given by Paul when compared to the doctrines of the Pauline Epistles. However, those who have argued that Paul sought to merely teach Hellenistic doctrines in the speech have missed that Paul’s intention was to gain favor and engage these men in a manner that would drive them toward change. Paul’s willingness to reference and quote Hellenistic ideals was to create “points of contact with the hearers, and illustrate the argument in terms familiar to them, but in no way commit the speaker to acquiescence.”⁵³ Paul’s speech was not merely a “paean of Greek intellectual or spiritual achievement,” but rather a presentation of the doctrines of the “true” God to pagans who could not adequately worship Christ, or even understand who he was, if they did not understand their relationship with divinity first. Paul’s Areopagus speech does lack the high-Christological arguments found in his Epistles and does delve more into Old Testament theology to find agreement with Hellenism. However, that does not mean that Luke’s record of the speech is lacking historical authenticity. Paul was not speaking to a Jewish or a Christian audience; he was

⁵¹ Hemer, “The Speeches of Acts II: The Areopagus Address,” 244.

⁵² Flemming, “Contextualizing the Gospel,” 201.

⁵³ Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 363.

speaking to a highly educated audience who needed to move away from paganism. Paul had to bridge that gap so his audience could first accept the “true” God and then accept his Christ.⁵⁴

Luke mentioned that two philosophical schools were present at Paul’s Areopagus speech, the Epicureans and the Stoics. Paul used points of agreement with these two philosophical schools to convince his audience that his theology was not a threat but an opportunity for these philosophical schools to understand the “true” God. Paul did this by using terms and concepts with which the Areopagites were already familiar.

Paul found points of contact with the Stoics on many levels.⁵⁵ The Stoics believed in the unity of humankind (Acts 17:26), God-appointed seasons and boundaries for men and women (Acts 17:26), and their natural kinship with divinity (Acts 17:28).⁵⁶ The Epicureans would have agreed with Paul’s speech because the Epicureans despised idolatry and superstitions (Acts 17:22, 24–25).⁵⁷ Epicureans also believed that God was not directly involved in the lives of his worshipers and that “God needs nothing from men and cannot be served by them.”⁵⁸ This sentiment is paralleled in Paul’s statement, “Neither is [God] worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing” (Acts 17:25).⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Schnabel, “Contextualising Paul,” 185.

⁵⁵ The purpose of this thesis is not to give a comprehensive theological comparison of the Paul’s theology found in Acts 17 as compared to the theology of the Epicureans and Stoics but to rather show, briefly, that Paul was aware of these concepts and used them as points of contact with his hearers as a rhetorical skill before *this* audience.

⁵⁶ Barrett, “Paul’s Speech on the Areopagus,” 72.

⁵⁷ C. K. Barrett noted that Epicurus himself, “though he conformed to public rituals, . . . vehemently resisted superstition.” *Ibid.*, 74.

⁵⁸ Hemer, “The Speeches of Acts II: The Areopagus Address,” 244.

⁵⁹ C. K. Barrett likewise noted that Paul found in Epicurus an “ally . . . Nothing man could do by religious maneuvering could affect the gods; the thought that the gods could need anything was particularly shocking—the gods were perfectly blessed and happy beings.” Barrett, “Paul’s Speech on the Areopagus,” 74.

Paul not only used these points of contact with Epicureans and the Stoics but pitted their views of deity against one another. Paul used Stoic ideals to refute the Epicurean claim that God was not involved with humankind and needs nothing from men or women. Paul and Stoics believed God was in fact the creator of heaven, not a result of fortune like the Epicureans believed (Acts 17:24). God, to the Stoics, gave life to all humans and that they should seek after God because he is close to his creation. Therefore, men and women must seek to live their lives in accordance to God's will (Acts 17:24–30). Paul also used the Epicurean principles to rebuke the Stoic's superstition and their belief in temples and idol worship (Acts 17:24–25). Paul, therefore, “enlists the aid of the philosophers, using in the first place the rational criticism of the Epicureans to attack the folly and especially the idolatry of popular religion, and then the theism of the Stoics to establish (against the Epicureans) the immediate and intimate nearness of God, and man's obligation to follow the path of duty and of (true) religion, rather than that of pleasure [the true form of happiness according the Epicureans].”⁶⁰ Though there is agreement with these philosophies in the speech, it does not mean that Paul advocated an acceptance of these philosophers' way of life. Instead, he demanded these Athenians overcome their ignorance and repent (Acts 17:30).⁶¹

After Paul had given his evidence that the men of Athens ignorantly worshiped the “true” God, he introduced his *peroratio*. The *peroratio* is the exhortation at the end of a speech “which attempts to persuade the audience to take the right course of action.”⁶² Paul's exhortation is for men and women everywhere to repent because a day of judgment is coming and God has appointed a judge in the man Jesus. Here Paul introduced Christ as the judge of humankind. It is

⁶⁰ Ibid., 75.

⁶¹ See Rowe, “The Grammar of Life,” 45.

⁶² Flemming, “Contextualizing the Gospel,” 201.

because of the late and ambiguous reference to Christ that Martin Dibelius concluded that Paul's sermon was not really a Christian sermon.⁶³ With Paul's motif of ignorance stated in the *propositio*, it is obvious that Paul's speech was not merely apology but an invitation for the Areopagus to change their way of life—to repent. From the beginning of the speech, Paul mentioned that the Athenians, though well intentioned, were ignorant of the “true” God that they should be worshipping. At the end of the speech, Paul stated that God had “winked at,” or had overlooked, their ignorance, but it was now time for these men to repent and worship God through the resurrected Christ (Acts 17:30–31).

Through Paul's use of rhetorical structure—*exordium*, *propositio*, *probatio*, and *peroration*—he was able to speak articulately to the Areopagus. But Paul's Areopagus speech was not, as was mentioned earlier, merely a “paean... to Greek intellectual or spiritual achievement. It [was] instead the presentation of an alternative pattern of life” through a belief in the true God and an invitation to repent through Jesus Christ.⁶⁴ Luke recorded that Paul skillfully answered the accusations that brought him before the council of Areopagus and was able to depart from their midst without further molestation (Acts 17:18–19, 33).⁶⁵

The Response of the Audience

Paul was taken before the Areopagus because he was teaching in the marketplace about Jesus and the Resurrection. Those who heard in the Agora believed that Paul was a herald of new gods to Athens. By the end of his speech, however, it was clear to Paul's audience that he was not heralding new gods, but rather he was exhorting the people of Athens to believe in the

⁶³ Dibelius, 56.

⁶⁴ Rowe, “The Grammar of Life,” 35.

⁶⁵ This instance is a clear example of Luke showing that his Christian heroes were taken before the magistrates of Roman government and found to be an insignificant threat.

Resurrection of Jesus and to repent and change their lives. Luke recorded that when the people “heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again on this matter” (Acts 17:32). The Lukan text shows that Paul was interrupted as he was getting to the climax of his speech. Why would the audience have found what Paul was teaching to be so diametrically opposed to their beliefs that they would have openly mocked a speaker giving the crux of his argument? The answer again comes with understanding Paul’s audience.

To the Epicureans, Stoics, and Greek philosophy in general, the concept of a resurrection after death was completely unbelievable. To the Greeks, who believed in Orphism, the body was the “tomb of the soul” and that death was the release of the soul from its prison.⁶⁶ This concept had been taught since Plato and found further meaning in the writings of Aristotle.⁶⁷ To the Epicureans in particular, the concept of resurrection was particularly repugnant. For Epicureans the “soul and body are so interdependent that they are dissolved together at the point of death. Death is complete extinction.”⁶⁸ It is possible, therefore, that those who interrupted Paul before he could finish the sermon were the Epicureans who openly mocked resurrection.

The Stoics may have been the group which inquired of Paul to hear from him again, for the Stoics, though they didn’t believe in resurrection, did not view death as complete extinction. Cicero stated, “The Stoics...they say that souls will survive a long time [after death], not for ever.”⁶⁹ Because Paul was interrupted by the Athenians as he taught, it is difficult to know if the Apostle would have continued toward a more Christological argument before the Areopagus. What is obvious is that Paul intended to preach about Christ and his Resurrection, even in

⁶⁶ Croy, “Hellenistic Philosophies,” 29.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 31.

⁶⁹ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, 1.31.77.

Athens. Luke recorded that it was preaching the Resurrection that brought Paul before the Areopagus, and it was with the message of the Resurrection that the speech concluded.

Was Paul's Speech a Success?

Joseph Pathrapankal summarized the view of many that Paul did not have success in Athens because Paul “attempted to preach the gospel in Athens with the eloquence and wisdom of the Greeks and then changed his approach in Corinth to give centrality to the power of the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2).⁷⁰ However, this view is too narrow and inaccurate.⁷¹ In the narrative unity of Acts, Luke did not want Paul's sermon before the Areopagus to be an exception, rather Luke desired to show the “victorious progress of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome” (Acts 1:8), and Athens was no different.⁷² In fact, in the text itself, Luke mentioned that “certain men clave unto [Paul], and believed” (Acts 17:34). It does not mention these men by name, but Luke wanted to show that some were touched by Paul's teachings, whether in the marketplace or in the council of Areopagus itself, including converts of prominence such as “Dionysius the Areopagite” (Acts 17:34). Women too were converted to Christianity through Paul's preaching in Athens. There is no surviving record of Paul establishing a church in Athens, but clearly Luke wanted his readers to see that “Athens, the citadel where pagan religion and philosophy were entrenched, offered to Paul a serious opposition and a real threat...[but] Paul not only escaped the threat but won converts.”⁷³

⁷⁰ Pathrapankal: 61. See also Ramsay, 252 and Dibelius, 73.

⁷¹ Stonehouse, 33.

⁷² Barrett, “Paul's Speech on the Areopagus,” 69.

⁷³ Ibid., 70.

Conclusion

Paul's Areopagus speech has received much attention by scholars because of its complicated theology. However, it becomes less complex when the context and the audience for Paul's speech are considered.⁷⁴ The speech itself is evidence that Luke portrayed Paul as speaking to the Areopagus and not giving a public sermon to the populace of Athens nor giving a missionary sermon to Jews in the synagogue. Rather, Paul was speaking to a very specific audience who had religious jurisdiction over the city of Athens, an audience which necessitated Paul's rhetorical best. Paul cited Hellenistic philosophy to gain the attention of his audience, demonstrate that his theology was not foreign to their own beliefs, and move toward an invitation to repent. This context helps the reader understand why Paul addressed the Areopagus with points of contact with Hellenistic philosophies. His purpose was to drive his audience toward a proper conception of the true God. The Father had in times past winked at their ignorance but now was demanding that these educated pagan philosophers change their lives. God had ushered in a new era, marked by the Resurrection of and the pending judgment by Jesus Christ.

Significance of Thesis

New Testament scholars have debated for decades about the speech before the Areopagus. The debate has centered on the authenticity of the account and whether Paul actually gave this address. If a fabrication, Luke's intent was to preach Hellenism with the semblance of Christianity. If not a fabrication, how does one understand Paul's audience, tone, and intent of this speech? This thesis has refocused the attention of the speech on the context, as recorded by

⁷⁴ Of course this conclusion is only possible if Luke's record was a close portrayal of the actual speech of Paul as given before the Areopagus. It is impossible to prove that the speech can be labeled as Pauline. This speech was most certainly influenced by Luke, but Luke's close association with Paul gave him ample opportunity to have been able to record the theologies of the speech, while at the same time emphasizing certain Lukan themes that would allow the Areopagus to be intertwined with Luke's overarching objectives for the book of Acts as narrative history.

Luke. This thesis has argued that an understanding of Paul's audience is vital for understanding Acts 17 and its complex theology. First, Paul was taken against his will to present his doctrine of Christ and the resurrection; this was more than just a simple inquiry into what this travelling preacher had to say about these doctrines. Paul was taken before the council of Areopagus and not to Mars Hill, giving Paul an audience of educated men who warranted Paul's best preaching and rhetoric. Those who listened to Paul in the Agora physically took Paul before the supreme governing body of Athens to decide if Paul's teachings were an attack on the piety of Athens.

The Hellenistic doctrines found in the account are in need of further study. This chapter has sought to investigate the purpose behind why Paul would use these points of contact with his audience. It is the author's opinion that the main reason behind this agreement with pagan philosophy was the seriousness of the inquiry of the Areopagus. There must be more research done that critically analyzes the theology found in Acts 17 in its proper context.

More research is also needed on the Lukan influence in the account. Luke likely recorded Acts 17 from reminiscent accounts of the speech. The Areopagus cannot be viewed as completely Pauline; Luke's personal agenda for the narrative of Acts found its way into the text. However, this does not mean that the entire speech should be considered a fabrication of Luke. Paul certainly could have received an education that allowed him to give a speech with Greek philosophy and rhetorical themes. Luke, like Thucydides, may have recorded as closely as possible what the Apostle said on that occasion, but it is naive to equate the speech as a verbatim record of what Paul said as he stood among the council of Areopagus.

This thesis has posed questions for further examination, in order to better understand the Areopagus. In providing answers to the important questions of the context, setting, and audience

in Acts 17, it is hoped a broader discussion on the complex theology found in the Areopagus speech may take place.

APPENDIX

THE LDS PERSPECTIVE: AREOPAGUS SPEECH

“Few parts of the New Testament have been so fully and so frequently discussed as Luke’s account of Paul’s visit to Athens...and on few has so great a wealth of scholarship been expended.”¹ As a Latter-day Saint, the author was curious to investigate commentary on the Areopagus from a Latter-day Saint perspective. Unfortunately, Latter-day Saint scholars have only lightly discussed this chapter in Acts that has created such a firestorm in other scholarly circles. This Latter-day Saint commentary is very limited, even on the most significant questions posed by New Testament scholars over the past century. Perhaps the one hundred years of scholarly debate has little to do with these scholar’s overarching purposes for writing their works about the Apostle Paul. Whatever the reason, Latter-day Saint scholars have mentioned Acts 17 with only cursory acknowledgement. This appendix has three purposes: first, to investigate what has been said by Latter-day Saint scholars about Acts 17 (the setting, audience, tone and success of the speech); secondly, to consider if the Joseph Smith Translation for Acts 17 clarifies the biblical account; and thirdly, to examine what modern prophets have said about the doctrinal content in Paul’s famous speech before the Areopagus.

LDS Scholarship

Latter-day Saint commentators have only briefly discussed where Paul gave his sermon and to whom he was addressing. As noted in this thesis, the word Areopagus in Acts 17 is ambiguous. It could mean Mars Hill or the highest court in Athens. Most Latter-day Saint

¹ Barrett, “Paul’s Speech on the Areopagus,” 69.

commentators view Paul’s audience as the “highest court in Athens,”² the “Court of Areopagus [that] met to pass judgment on criminals and to decide questions of religion.”³ So these commentators agree that Paul addressed the council of the Areopagus.⁴ As to the location of the speech in Athens, most of these Latter-day Saints agree with the KJV translators in Acts 17:22 that Paul was taken to “a rocky hill in Athens, known as Mars Hill.”⁵ However, Richard Lloyd Anderson disagreed with that conclusion. Anderson, who has written the most carefully studied work on Act 17 by a Latter-day Saint, concluded that the evidence points to the *Royal Stoa* as the location for the sermon. Anderson contended that the location of the speech was the *Stoa* for three reasons. The first reason is that Luke intended to parallel what happened to Paul in Corinth and in Philippi to Paul’s experience in Athens. Throughout Acts, Luke recorded that Paul constantly stirred up controversy with his preaching and was often taken to defend himself before Gentile magistrates. Secondly, by citing Demosthenes, Anderson noted that there is evidence that the council held meetings in the *Stoa* and not just on Mars Hill. Thirdly, Paul was

² D. Kelly and Andrew C. Skinner Ogden, *Acts through Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 85.

³ Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary: Acts—Philippians* vol. 2 (Salt Lake City Bookcraft, 1970), 157.

⁴ For others who agree that Paul was taken before the high court see the following: Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 55; Richard N. Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment, *Making Sense of the New Testament: Timely Insights and Timeless Messages* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 298; and Richard N. Holzapfel, Eric D. Huntsman, and Thomas A. Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament: An Illustrated Reference for Latter-Day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 172. One dissenting view comes from Ed J. Pinegar and Richard Allen who contend that Paul was speaking to the “local philosophers” and ignores the probability that Paul was addressing the high court. Richard J. Allen and Ed J. Pinegar, *Teachings and Commentaries on the New Testament* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2006), 336.

⁵ David J. Ridges, *The New Testament Made Easier: Part 2 Acts through Revelation*, Gospel Studies Series, vol. 3 (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2003), 49. See also Thomas A. Wayment, *From Persecutor to Apostle: A Biography of Paul* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 134; Holzapfel and Wayment, *Making Sense of the New Testament: Timely Insights and Timeless Messages*, 298; and McConkie, 157.

“in the midst” of a crowd and not the hill; “thus it might be the site of Paul’s speech rather than the hill where tourists see the bronze commemorative plaque.”⁶



Figure A-1. Mars Hill viewed from the Acropolis, where most Latter-day Saint scholars believe the speech took place.

Latter-day Saint commentators have largely ignored the nuanced *epilabomenoi* in Acts 17:19. Bruce R. McConkie noted that Luke may have placed Paul as appearing “before the court,” but it could also be that “he was speaking to an informal gathering.”⁷ Two commentaries

⁶ Anderson, “Paul and the Athenian Intellectuals,” 53. One other Latter-day Saint work agrees with Anderson that the sermon was given “in the Royal Portico at the northwest corner of the Agora.” Holzapfel, Huntsman, and Wayment, 171.

⁷ McConkie, 157.

agree with other New Testament scholars that Paul must have been cordially “invited to speak”⁸ and that he was “not arraigned or accused”⁹ as to be on trial. The language of the text shows that the Athenians physically took Paul to defend himself before the Areopagus, not just politely expound on the doctrine of Christ.

For these commentators, Paul’s tone in the Areopagus speech was certainly “empathetic” with the views of the Athenians.¹⁰ Paul began his speech with this famous phrase, “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious” (Acts 17:22). “Superstitious” may be an inadequate translation for the Greek word *deisidaimonesterous*. This poor translation is made clear in the Latter-day Saint addition to the KJV. Acts 17:22, footnote *a*, shows the better translation as “most religious” instead of “too superstitious.” “Paul’s [opening] remark is not insulting but praise. In essence, he was saying, ‘I notice you’re pretty religious around here. In fact, while I was touring the city, I noticed an altar with the inscription TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Well, let me tell you about him.’”¹¹ Though, Paul’s tone was congratulatory, he was not entirely in agreement with the false concepts as taught by these pagans about the nature of God. Paul used his previous Greek education, which “provided him with a common ground to approach the people of Areopagus, [yet] he spoke as an apostle, . . . as one sent to teach . . . salvation to others.”¹² Therefore, Paul could show the Athenians the error in their worship of an unknown God. Paul stated that God had viewed their ignorance, and even “winked at” it, “but now [he] commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). Ridges commented on this passage,

⁸ Richard P. Anderson, “Rhetoric Versus Revelation: A Consideration of Acts 17, Verses 16 to 34,” in *The New Testament and the Latter-Day Saints* (Orem, UT: Randall Book Company, 1987), 29.

⁹ Ogden, 85.

¹⁰ Anderson, “Paul and the Athenian Intellectuals,” 53.

¹¹ Ogden, 85.

¹² Anderson, “Rhetoric Versus Revelation: A Consideration of Acts 17, Verses 16 to 34,” 36.

“God has been patient up to now with such foolish notions about who he is...but now you know the truth about him and who you are, and it is time to repent and begin worshiping the true God.”¹³ Thus Paul’s tone began with praise and congratulations, which allowed him to build on points of contact to move to a call for repentance.

What then was Paul’s intent in this speech according the Latter-day Saint commentators? Was it purely apologetic, or was Paul using his previous education to teach these pagans about Christ? To the Latter-day Saint commentator, it is the latter.¹⁴ Certainly there are apologetic tones in Paul’s speech; however, Paul’s intent was to use his gift of rhetoric to approach such an educated audience.¹⁵ Thus, Paul’s purpose was to be skilled enough to give him audience and then teach these pagans that even the great minds of their philosophers fell “short of the mark of really knowing the Creator. Paul simply says that philosophy can grope after God but will not find him.”¹⁶

For Anderson, Paul before the Areopagus is an example of how to teach people today who do not deny the existence of God but function “as though he did not exist.”¹⁷ Anderson defined these people as modern agnostics. “Paul had named the god of the altar as ‘*agnostos theos*’” with the hope that he could bring these intellectuals to recognize the reality of God, and for the Athenians to note God’s desire for man to walk in accordance with his laws.¹⁸ Therefore,

¹³ Ridges, 50.

¹⁴ Paul, being in Athens, “adopted the Socratic method of public discussion and reasoned with his listeners.” Ogden, 85.

¹⁵ Anderson, “Rhetoric Versus Revelation: A Consideration of Acts 17, Verses 16 to 34,” 29.

¹⁶ Anderson, “Paul and the Athenian Intellectuals,” 54.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

“those with valid knowledge of God and his plan can generally say to the modern intellectual,” like Paul did in Acts 17, “I declare to you the Creator whom you admit you do not know.”¹⁹

Some New Testament scholars have concluded that Paul’s speech was a failure, so Paul left the rhetoric of Athens for a simpler and purer doctrine in Corinth.²⁰ Anderson disagreed with this conclusion. For him the “opposite was the case...Paul diagnosed the shortcomings of intellectualism and challenged the Athenians to leave speculation for scripture.”²¹ The “climax of his message was the call to repentance and the Resurrection of Christ. If Paul spoke to the Athenian intellectuals in their own terms, he did so not to flatter them but to expose the weaknesses of their thinking.”²² Pinegar saw an application to Latter-day Saints today; like Paul, Latter-day Saints must “stand up for truth and deliver our witness in the strength of the Lord. Not all will respond, but the honest at heart will be moved by the Spirit [like Dionysius and Damaris] to come forward and join the flock.”²³

While Latter-day Saints scholarship has focused little on the Areopagus, the work that has been done has laid the groundwork for future discussion on the intent, tone, and success of the sermon as recorded by Luke in Acts 17. More discussion is needed on the audience and setting of the sermon as well as an analysis on the controversial aspects of the sermon. This thesis has tried to focus on these important details in the Lukan account.

¹⁹Ibid., 55. For more information on how Latter-day Saint scholars see Paul as an example of how to proclaim Christ amid intellectualism, see Gary Layne Hatch, “Paul among the Rhetoricians: A Model for Proclaiming Christ,” in *The Apostle Paul: His Life and His Testimony the 23d Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994).

²⁰ Pathrapankal: 61. See also Ramsay, 252 and Dibelius, 73.

²¹ Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 56.

²² Anderson, “Paul and the Athenian Intellectuals,” 54. Likewise, Holzapfel and Wayment conclude, “Rather than attempt to find commonality with the Athenian plurality of gods, Paul testified to the singularity of God as well as God's role as Creator in light of Stoic and Epicurean intellectual antimaterialism.” Holzapfel and Wayment, *Making Sense of the New Testament: Timely Insights and Timeless Messages*, 298.

²³ Allen and Pinegar, 337.

While looking at the New Testament scholarship, a variety of interpretations for the authenticity, tone, and the success of the Areopagus discourse arise. Latter-day Saints, however, do not rely solely on the interpretation of scholars to understand Acts 17, but they also use the opinions of modern prophets. One of these modern prophets, Elder D. Todd Christofferson, stated that Latter-day Saints should “value scholarship that enhances understanding,” but for the Latter-day Saint the emphasis should not be solely based on the “reasoning [of]...theologians or on biblical hermeneutics and exegesis.”²⁴ This does not mean that modern day prophets discount the value of a serious study of the Bible.²⁵ The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST), also known as the *Inspired Version*, is often used by leaders and members alike to clarify difficult passages of scripture found in the KJV of the Bible. How does the JST help Latter-day Saints better understand the Areopagus address?

Acts 17: The Joseph Smith Translation

Scholars have concluded that there are five different types of changes that Joseph Smith made in the JST. The five changes include (1) a “restoration of original text,” (2) a “restoration of what was once said or done but which was never in the Bible,” (3) “editing to make the Bible more understandable for modern readers,” (4) “editing to bring biblical wording into harmony with truth found in other revelations or elsewhere in the Bible,” and (5) “changes to provide

²⁴ D. Todd Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Christ,” *Ensign* (May 2012): 86.

²⁵ As Russell M. Nelson expressed, “Scriptures of the Restoration do not compete with the Bible; they complement the Bible...with these scriptural witnesses, doctrines of the Bible are not only reaffirmed but clarified.” Russell M. Nelson, “Scriptural Witnesses,” *Conference Report* (October 2007): 44–45. Elder Mark E. Petersen explained that members of the church “understand the Bible better than any other people. It is not because we are smarter than they are. But we understand the Bible better than the rest of the world because of the new light we have received from heaven in modern times.” Elder Petersen continued explaining that the different interpretations of scholars may be helpful for Latter-day Saints, but “no matter how bright...they do not have the light of revelation to guide them. They do not even believe in modern revelation. Therefore, we do not and cannot regard them as authorities in interpreting the doctrines of the Bible.” Mark E. Petersen, “Avoiding Sectarianism,” in *Address to CES Religious Educators* (Brigham Young University, June 22, 1962), 2–3.

modern readers with teachings that were not written by original authors.”²⁶ In Acts 17, the JST adds additional insight for three verses; all of these verses are within the context of the Aeropagus. It is important to note that it is difficult to “know with certainty the nature or origin of any particular change.”²⁷ The author, however, will give his opinion concerning the nature of the changes as rendered by Joseph Smith for Acts 17.

The KJV of Acts 17:19 reads, “And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus.” The JST added only one word, but this word could play a potentially significant role in the historical detail of the account. The JST reads, “And they took him and brought him unto *the* Areopagus.”²⁸ If this change is a restoration of the original text, then this addition may help clarify the location of the speech. Scholars have argued for decades whether the Athenians took Paul to Mars Hill or before the council of Aeropagus. It could be that Joseph’s addition “unto *the* Areopagus” refers to the council and not the hill, furthering this thesis’s argument for the council. Yet this is not conclusive; this change could be a simple edit to make the Bible more readable.

Verse 27 contains the next insight added to the text of Acts 17. This change does not have any bearing on the historical facts that surround the event, rather it simplifies and clarifies the message of Paul. It is an edit to make the Bible more understandable to modern readers. The KJV reads, “That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us;” the change in the Joseph Smith Translation clarifies

²⁶ Joseph Smith, *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts*, ed. Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews (Provo: Religious Studies Center, 2004), 8–10.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 473.

the simple message of Paul to the Athenians. “*If they are willing to find him, [they will] for he is not far from every one of us.*”²⁹

The final insight is found in verse 31. It is only a two-word change, but it helps clarify Paul’s ambiguous testimony of Jesus Christ as found in the KJV. Many scholars are bothered by the lack of direct references to Christ in the speech. This lack of direct testimony has led some to conclude that this speech was barely Christian because Paul alluded to the Savior only in veiled phrases. Within verse 31, Paul taught that God will “judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.” Paul’s reference to Christ as “that man” has troubled Christian scholars. Karl Olav Sandnes said, “The way Jesus is introduced in this speech is unprecedented. He has not been mentioned during the speech. Nothing in the speech has prepared the audience for the appearance of ‘a man’ who is part of God’s plan. A Christian reader will certainly be somewhat surprised that Jesus is introduced simply as ‘a man.’”³⁰ Robert Dunham argued that “to those who have been reading Luke’s story from the beginning of Acts, this sermon initially looks odd indeed. Unlike the early sermons...the Aeropagus speech makes no reference to the history of Israel and quotes not a solitary word of scripture. Even the one reference to Jesus here is indirect, and nothing is said of Jesus’ death by crucifixion.”³¹ For Paul, Jesus of Nazareth was no ordinary man, he was God. Why would Paul use such a veiled reference to Christ?

The JST helps the reader understand that Paul continued to testify of Jesus before the Areopagus like he had in the Agora. Paul did not exclude Jesus from the speech nor did he make Christ appear to be a mere mortal to his Athenians audience. The JST for verse 31 reads that God

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Karl Olav Sandnes, “Paul and Socrates: The Aim of Paul’s Areopagus Speech,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* no. 50 (June 1993): 17-18.

³¹ Robert E. Dunham, “Between Text & Sermon: Acts 17:16–34,” *Interpretation* 60, no. 2 (April 2006): 202.

“will judge the world in righteousness *by him* [not “that man”] whom he hath ordained: and he hath given assurance of this unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”³² This change is another example of how Joseph Smith desired to make the text more understandable for his followers.³³

The JST changes for Acts 17 are largely editorial to enable the modern reader to more clearly understand the doctrines as taught in the account. It is possible that the change in verse 19 clarifies that Paul was taken before the council of Areopagus; however, this change is not monumental. Other modern biblical translations for Acts 17 have clarified that Paul was likely taken to a “meeting of the Areopagus” (NIV Acts 17:22).

Eisegetical Commentary

This appendix will now discuss what the Latter-day Saint modern prophets have said about the Areopagus, specifically how they interpret the doctrines of Acts 17. It is important to note that prophetic commentary is not an exegetical clarification of the text. Rather, the commentary that surrounds the Areopagus is largely eisegetical.³⁴ Modern prophets have found doctrines in Acts 17 that relate to the broader theological concepts they are trying to teach in their homilies. It is therefore up to the Latter-day Saint scholars and commentators to exegetically study the text. Much of what has been said about Acts 17 from a Latter-day Saint perspective is eisegetical commentary by the church leadership given in their discourses. Though eisegesis cannot clarify the text of Acts 17, there is value in understanding how the modern prophets have used the account in teaching the doctrines of the gospel of Christ. There are three

³²Smith, 473.

³³ It is also possible, though less likely, that Joseph Smith desired to bring this passage of scripture into harmony with other passages of scripture that clearly teach that Jesus Christ is the appointed judge of the world.

³⁴ Eisegesis is an interpretation of a text while using the interpreter’s own personal bias or agenda. As opposed to exegesis which is the critical analysis of the text itself.

main areas where Latter-day Saint prophets have focused their attention in Acts 17: humanity's relation to deity, humanity is the offspring of God, and the reality of the resurrection.

Our Relation to Deity: Acts 17:26–29

President Harold B. Lee taught that the “personal relationship to our Heavenly Father and to our Lord and master, Jesus Christ...is nowhere more aptly expounded than in the apostle Paul’s sermon on Mars hill.”³⁵ If the Areopagus would “seek the Lord” they would “find him” (Acts 17:27). The Athenians did not need to build large temples in the name of deity, but they needed to live a pious life and seek after the one true God. By doing so, their unknown God could be made known.³⁶

Not only could these Athenians personally know their God but they could understand that in him “[they] live, and move and have [their] being” (Acts 17:28). This “strange God” sought to help them in every facet of life and understand their divine nature and relationship with their Deity. Harold B. Lee asked and then answered this question;

Who are you? You are all the sons and daughters of God. Your spirits were created and lived as organized intelligences before the world was. You have been blessed to have a physical body because of your obedience to certain commandments in that premortal state....Hear now the significant words of that powerful sermon to “The Unknown God” preached by the apostle Paul, to those who were ignorantly worshipping images of stone and brass and wood, and I quote: ‘God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us’” (Acts 17:24, 26–27).³⁷

³⁵ Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), 9–10.

³⁶ Elder Spencer W. Kimball taught: “Paul’s testimony on Mars hill in Athens was a significant one. The Greeks accepted any and all gods that were proposed. They had inscribed one altar ‘To the Unknown God’ (Acts 17:23) and Paul used this text to tell them that with all their gods of wood and stone they did not know the real ‘God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;’ ...‘seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;’...and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation...he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:24–26, 31). Spencer W. Kimball, *Conference Report* (April 1969): 29.

³⁷ Harold B. Lee, “Understanding Who We Are Brings Self-Respect,” *Ensign* (January 1974): 2.

By Paul teaching humanity's true relationship to God, he also taught their relationship with one another. God "hath made of blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the fact of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26). Elder Alexander B. Morrison taught that when a man or a woman truly understands their true relationship to God they "will see all men everywhere as...brothers and all women as...sisters, with all that implies in terms of sibling responsibility."³⁸ In Acts 17, Paul taught the Athenians of their true relationship with the Deity and all of humanity.

We Are the Offspring of God: Acts 17:28–29

One of the most important doctrinal statements found in Acts 17 is one often misrepresented. As Paul taught the Athenians about the ability for all to have a personal relationship with God, he used a statement from one of their own poets, "For we are also his offspring" (Acts 17:28). Paul attempted to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, particularly the divine heritage of humanity, using the language of the people. As the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi stated, "For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding; for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding" (2 Nephi 31:3). Therefore, the Lord, through Paul, taught this important doctrine so that his audience could understand their divine parentage.

³⁸ Alexander B. Morrison, "Come and See," *Ensign*, (November 2000): 12–13. President Gordon B. Hinckley further expounded on this doctrine by saying; "We have reached out across the world, wherever we are permitted to go. We have taught the gospel as revealed in this dispensation of the fulness of times. We are now going into areas whose names were seldom heard back in 1947. Our missionary work has expanded in a miraculous manner. I think I have been in most of the places where the Church is organized. I have found wonderful people everywhere. They are Latter-day Saints in the truest sense of the word. They are seeking to live the commandments. As I have met with them and talked with them, I have learned the real meaning of the words of Paul: 'And [God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;' 'That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:' 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being;...For we are also his offspring' (Acts 17:26–28). We have become a great cosmopolitan society, a vast family of brothers and sisters in the Lord." Gordon B. Hinckley, *Conference Report* (October 2000): 86–87.

To a Latter-day Saint child, this doctrine has been taught since birth. The hymn “I Am a Child of God” reiterates this doctrine. Elder Boyd K. Packer, speaking of this hymn has said,

Those lyrics teach a basic doctrine of the Church. We *are* the children of God. That doctrine is not hidden away in an obscure verse. It is taught over and over again in scripture. These clear examples are from the Bible: “All of you are children of the most High.” (Ps. 82:6.) And: “We are the offspring of God.” (Acts 17:29.) Doctrinal truths are interrelated. There is an old saying that if you pick up one end of a stick, you pick up the other end as well. If you concede that we are His children, you must allow that God is our Father.³⁹

Joseph Smith taught early that “the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard; He views them as His offspring.”⁴⁰ More recently, Elder Merrill J. Bateman testified about the universality of this divine parentage, “whether African, Asian, European, or any other nationality. As the Apostle Paul declared to the Athenians, all of us ‘are the offspring of God.’”⁴¹ Many other prophets have testified to this eternal truth, that God is the Father and mankind his offspring.

The Reality of a Resurrection: Acts 17:31

While Paul taught, “certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18). Some of those who heard Paul preach of these “strange gods” wanted to know more, so “they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, wherefore thou speakest, is?” (Acts 17:19) During Paul’s speech on the resurrection of Christ “some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter” (Acts 17:31).

³⁹ Boyd K. Packer, “The Pattern of Our Parentage,” *Ensign* (November 1984): 66.

⁴⁰ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1978), 4:595.

⁴¹ Merrill J. Bateman, “A Pattern for All,” *Ensign* (November 2005): 74.

Paul’s preaching of the resurrection to Epicureans and Stoics may have led to both a rejection of an interest in learning more of the doctrine.⁴²

Regardless of the reaction of Paul’s audience, it is evident that one of the major objectives of Paul for the Areopagus address was to testify of the living, resurrected Christ. Modern prophets have echoed Paul’s testimony throughout the history of the church. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon testified that Christ “lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God” (D&C 76:22–23). Joseph Smith further witnessed that “Christ himself has assuredly risen from the dead; and if he has risen from the dead, he will, by his power, bring all men to stand before Him: for if He has risen from the dead the bands of the temporal death are broken.”⁴³ More recently the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have stated in a public declaration that Jesus Christ “rose from the grave to ‘become the firstfruits of them that slept’ (1 Corinthians 15:20)... We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God.”⁴⁴ Paul anciently, and modern prophets currently, reaffirm the reality of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

By using ancient scripture and modern prophetic commentary in tandem, Latter-day Saints believe they have a correct understanding of the attributes and characteristics of God. “The inscription was, ‘To the unknown God.’ This is not our [the Latter-day Saints’] inscription; ours is, ‘To the *known* God.’”⁴⁵ Therefore, one purpose of Acts 17 is to aid the humble seeker of God to “begin to know how to approach Him, and how to ask so as to receive an answer. When we understand the character of God, and know how to come to Him, He begins to unfold the

⁴² For more information about the Epicureans and the Stoics belief in the afterlife, see chapter five.

⁴³ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1978), 2:19.

⁴⁴ “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign* (April 2000).

⁴⁵ Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854-86), 13:220.

heavens to us, and to tell us all about it. When we are ready to come to Him, He is ready to come to us.”⁴⁶

Conclusion

Latter-day Saint commentators and modern prophets have exegetically and eisegetically interpreted the details that surround the speech and the doctrine of the Godhead as taught in Acts 17. This prophetic commentary on the speech is largely eisegetical, meaning the modern prophets have found in the Areopagus important concepts concerning the nature of God. This commentary is of great value in order to comprehend the doctrine of the Godhead and make personal application of the scriptures. But there is no harm in critically examining the text through good exegesis, or investigating Luke’s broader purpose for the account.⁴⁷

Among the most significant contributions of this thesis is that it provides a series of questions to which Latter-day Saint scholarship can respond. There needs to be an increase of discussion on this difficult New Testament chapter for a Latter-day Saint audience. Posing these questions certainly should not lead to the conclusion that Latter-day Saints must disbelieve the account as authentic or question the validity of the biblical text. If Luke’s version of the account is only loosely based on fact or (if the most extreme theory is true) if Luke’s account is a fabrication, what damage has been done to the doctrines taught in the account? Does that demonstrate these truths as irrelevant to the gospel of Christ as a whole? Though the account

⁴⁶ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1978), 6:308.

⁴⁷ This appendix has interpreted Paul’s intent, according to a Latter-day Saint perspective, was to teach the Athenians a knowable God, that thereby they too could “exercise faith in [the true] God unto life and salvation.” Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 38. A Latter-day Saint perspective of the intent of the Areopagus has great relevancy for a Christian living in an increasingly agnostic world, especially as Paul sought to invite the Athenians, in the midst of a plethora of polytheism, to have faith in the true God. Marion G. Romney taught that “the present world situation is not unlike that which prevailed in Athens, as portrayed in Paul’s great sermon preached on Mars’ hill.” Elder Romney taught that, like Athens of old, the “want [for] a knowledge of the true and living God, this world is today dying. And please do not be deceived. Such knowledge is not widespread....But when they attempt to define the God to whom they would have us return, they reveal a woeful lack of knowledge concerning the living and true God. Frequently they actually deny him.” Marion G. Romney, *Conference Report* (October 1964): 50.

contains quotes from Greek Hellenism, these concepts are still compatible with the doctrine of the Godhead taught elsewhere in Latter-day Saint scripture.

Acts 17 is a testimony of the triumph of the gospel in the heart of paganism. Even if Luke's record is not historically accurate, the doctrines emphasized in that account merit a separate analysis for truth. Latter-day Saint scholars should not be afraid to ask difficult questions when interpreting the book of Acts, particularly Acts 17. By critically analyzing the text, Latter-day Saints would gain a more complete understanding that the account of Paul in Athens is more nuanced and complex than a simple report that Paul was invited to Mars Hill to give a public discourse on the nature of God and man's relationship to him.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ McConkie, 160.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ancient Sources

- Aratus. *Aratus*. Translated by G. R. Mair. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969.
- Aristides. *Aristides: in Four Volumes*. Vol. 1. Translated by C. A. Behr. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973.
- Cicero. *Cicero: in Twenty-Eight Volumes*. Vol. 18. Translated by H. Rackham. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971.
- . *Cicero: in Twenty-Eight Volumes*. Vol. 19. Translated by H. Rackham. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933.
- . *Cicero: Letters to Atticus*. Vol. 1. Translated by D. R. Shackleton Bailey. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Demosthenes. *Demosthenes III*. Translated by J. H. Vince. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935.
- . *Demosthenes IV Private Orations*. Translated by A. T. Murray. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939.
- Diogenes Laertius. *Diogenes Laertius: Lives of Eminent Philosophers in Two Volumes*. Vol. 2. Translated by R. D. Hicks. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970.
- Euripides. *Euripides: Suppliant Woman, Electra, Heracles*. Translated by David Kovacs. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Lucian. *Lucian: in Eight Volumes*. Vol. 3. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921.
- Pausanias. *Pausanias: Description of Greece*. Vol. 1. Translated by W. H. S. Jones. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918.
- Plato. *Plato: In Twelve Volumes*. Vol. 1. Translated by Harold North Fowler. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971.
- Plutarch. *Plutarch's Lives*. Translated by Bernadotte Perrin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919.
- . *Plutarch's Moralia: in Seventeen Volumes*. Vol. 13. Translated by Harold Cherniss. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976.

- Seneca. *Seneca: Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales in Three Volumes*. Vol. 1. Translated by Richard M. Gummere. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967.
- . *Seneca: Moral Essays in Three Volumes*. Vol. 2. Translated by John W. Basore. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965.
- Strabo. *The Geography of Strabo: in Eight Volumes*. Vol. 6. Translated by Horace Leonard Jones. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970.
- Tacitus. *Tacitus: The Annals*. Vol. 3. Translated by John Jackson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933.
- Thucydides. *Thucydides: In Four Volumes*. Vol. 1. Translated by Charles Forster Smith. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969.
- Valerius Maximus. *Valerius Maximus: Memorable Doings and Sayings*. Translated by D. R. Shackleton Bailey. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Secondary Sources

- Adams, Marilyn McCord. "Philosophy and the Bible: The Areopagus Speech." *Faith and Philosophy* 9, no. 2 (April 1992): 135–49.
- Anderson, Richard Lloyd. *Understanding Paul*. Revised ed. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2007.
- . "Paul and the Athenian Intellectuals." *Ensign* (February 1976): 53–55.
- Anderson, Richard P. "Rhetoric Versus Revelation: A Consideration of Acts 17, Verses 16 to 34." In *The New Testament and the Latter-Day Saints*. Orem, UT: Randall Book Company, 1987: 23–39.
- Barnes, Timothy D. "An Apostle of Trial," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 20, no. 2 (October 1969): 407–419.
- Barrett, C.K. "The New Testament Background: Selected Documents," edited by Mark E. Glasswell and Edward W. Fashole-Luke. New York: Harper & Row, 1961.
- . "Paul's Speech on the Areopagus." In *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World: Essays in Honour of Harry Sawyerr*. Edited by Mark E. Glasswell and Edward W. Fashole-Luke, London: SPCK, 1974.
- . *The Acts of the Apostles: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998.
- Bateman, Merrill J. "A Pattern for All." *Ensign* (November 2005).

- Baur, F. C. *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003.
- Boegehold, Alan L. *The Athenian Agora: The Lawcourts at Athens Sites, Buildings, Equipment, Procedure, and Testimonia* Vol. 28. Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1995.
- Broneer, Oscar. "Athens, City of Idol Worship." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 21, no. 1 (February 1958): 1–28.
- Brown, Raymond E., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1990.
- Bruce, F. F. "The Speeches in the Acts of the Apostles." In *Tyndale New Testament Lecture*. London: Tyndale Press, 1944: 5–27.
- . *Commentary on the Book of Acts*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955.
- . "The Speeches in Acts—Thirty Years After." In *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L.L. Morris on His 60th Birthday*. Edited by Robert Banks, 53–68. Carlisle The Paternoster Press, 1974.
- . *New Testament History*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1980.
- Cadbury, Henry J. *The Book of Acts in History*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1955.
- Camp, John M. *The Athenian Agora*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1986.
- . *The Athenian Agora: A Short Guide to the Excavations*. The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2003.
- Cassidy, Richard J. *Paul in Chains: Roman Imprisonment and the Letters of St. Paul*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001.
- Christofferson, D. Todd. "The Doctrine of Christ" *Ensign*, (May 2012).
- Conzelmann, Hans. "The Address of Paul on the Areopagus." In *Studies in Luke-Acts*, edited by Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn, 217–30. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966.
- Croy, N. Clayton. "Hellenistic Philosophies and the Preaching of the Resurrection (Acts 17:18, 32)." *Novum Testamentum* 39, no. 1 (January 1997): 21–39.
- Davis, D. Mark. "Between Text & Sermon: Acts 17:16–34." *Interpretation* 57, no. 1 (January 2003): 64–66.

- Dibelius, Martin. *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*. Gottingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1956.
- Dodd, C. H. *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* 9th ed. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960.
- Dunham, Robert E. "Between Text & Sermon: Acts 17:16-34." *Interpretation* 60, no. 2 (April 2006): 202–04.
- Engberg-Pedersen, Troels. *Paul and the Stoics*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.
- Farrar, F. W. *The Life and Work of St. Paul*. Vol. 1. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1902.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary; the Anchor Bible* Vol. 31. New York: Doubleday, 1998.
- Flemming, Dean. "Contextualizing the Gospel in Athens: Paul's Areopagus Address as a Paradigm for Missionary Communication" *Missiology* 30, no. 1 (January 2002): 199–213.
- Fraser, P. M. "Archaeology in Greece." *Archaeological Reports*, no. 16 (1969-70): 3–31.
- Gärtner, Bertil. *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation*. Translated by Carolyn Hannay King. Copenhagen: Uppsala, 1955.
- Gill, David W. J. "Achaia." In *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, edited by David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, 433–454. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.
- Given, Mark D. "Not Either/or but Both/and in Paul's Areopagus Speech." *Biblical Interpretation* 3, no. 3 (1995): 356–72.
- Grant, Frederick Clifton. "St. Paul and Stoicism" *The Biblical World* 45, no. 5 (May 1915): 268–81.
- Gray, Patrick. "Implied Audiences in Areopagus Narrative." *Tyndale Bulletin* 55, no. 2 (2004): 205–18.
- . "Athenian Curiosity" *Novum Testamentum* 47, no. 2 (April 2005): 109–16.
- Haenchen, Ernst. *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*. Translated by Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn. 14th ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971.
- Hatch, Gary Layne. "Paul among the Rhetoricians: A Model for Proclaiming Christ." In *The Apostle Paul: His Life and His Testimony the 23d Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, 65–79. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994.

- Hemer, C. J. "The Speeches of Acts II: The Areopagus Address." *Tyndale Bulletin* 40, no. 2 (1989): 239–59.
- . "Paul at Athens: A Topographical Note." *New Testament Studies* 20, no. 3 (April 1974): 341–50.
- Hinckley, Gordon B. in *Conference Report* (October 2000): 86-87.
- Holland, Jeffrey R. "May Words...Never Cease." *Ensign* (May 2008).
- Holzappel, Richard Neitzel and Thomas A. Wayment. *Making Sense of the New Testament: Timely Insights and Timeless Messages*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010.
- . Eric D. Huntsman, and Thomas A. Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament: An Illustrated Reference for Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Writings of the New Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.
- Keck, Leander E. and J. Louis Martyn, ed. *Studies in Luke-Acts*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966.
- Keil, Bruno. *Beitraege zur Geschichte des Areopags*. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1920.
- Kimball, Spencer W. in *Conference Report* (April 1969): 29.
- Knopf, Rudolf. "Paul and Hellenism." *The American Journal of Theology* 18, no. 4 (October 1914): 497–520.
- Lee, Harold B. *Stand Ye in Holy Places*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974.
- . "Understanding Who We Are Brings Self-Respect." *Ensign* (January 1974).
- Malherbe, Abraham J. *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.
- Martin, Hubert M. "Areopagus." In *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Noel Freedman, 370–72. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Mauzy, Craig A. *Agora Excavations 1931–2006: A Pictorial History*. The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2006.

- McConkie, Bruce R. *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary: Acts—Philippians* Vol. 2. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970.
- McKay, David O. in *Conference Report* (April 1944): 119–125.
- Meeks, Wayne A. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Morrice, W. G. “Where Did Paul Speak in Athens-on Mars' Hill or before the Court of the Areopagus? (Acts 17).” *The Expository Times* 83, (1971-72): 377–78.
- Morrison, Alexander B. “Come and See.” *Ensign* (November 2000).
- Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome. *Paul: A Critical Life*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
- Nelson, Russell M. in *Conference Report*, (October 2007): 43–47.
- Norden, Eduard. *Agnostos Theos*. Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1956.
- Ogden, D. Kelly and Andrew C. Skinner. *Acts through Revelation*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998.
- Packer, Boyd K. “The Pattern of Our Parentage.” *Ensign* (November 1984).
- Pathrapankal, Joseph. “From Areopagus to Corinth (Acts 17:22–31; 1 Cor 2:1–5) a Study on the Transition from Power of Knowledge to the Power of Spirit.” *Mission Studies* 23, no. 1 (2006): 61–78.
- Petersen, Mark E. “Avoiding Sectarianism “ In *Address to CES Religious Educators*, 2–3. Brigham Young University June 22, 1962.
- Pfleiderer, Otto. *Primitive Christianity: Its Writings and Teachings in Their Historical Connections*. Translated by W. Montgomery. Vol. 2. London: Williams and Norgate, 1909.
- Pinegar, Richard J. Allen and Ed J. *Teachings and Commentaries on the New Testament*. American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2006.
- Pitts, Andrew W. “Hellenistic Schools in Jerusalem and Paul's Rhetorical Education.” In *Paul's World* edited by Stanley E. Porter, 19–50. Leiden, NLD: Brill, 2008.
- Porter, Stanley E. “Thucydides 1.22.1 and Speeches in Acts: Is There a Thucydidean View?” *Novum Testamentum* 32, no. 2 (April 1990): 121–42.
- Ramsay, W. M. *St. Paul the Traveller*. 5th ed. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979.

- Ridges, David J. *The New Testament Made Easier: Part 2 Acts through Revelation*. Vol. 3 Gospel Studies Series. Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2003.
- Riesner, Rainer. *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology*. Translated by Doug Stott. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Robertson, A. T. *Epochs in the Life of Paul*. New York: Charles Scribner, 1913.
- Robinson, Benjamin Willard. *The Life of Paul*. 2nd ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1928.
- Romney, Marion G. in *Conference Report* (October 1964).
- Rowe, C. Kavin. "The Grammar of Life: The Areopagus Speech and Pagan Tradition." *New Testament Studies* 57, (2010): 31–50.
- Sanders, E. P. "Paul between Judaism and Hellenism." In *St. Paul among the Philosophers* edited by Martin Alcoff and John D. Caputo, 74–90. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Sandnes, Karl Olav. "Paul and Socrates: The Aim of Paul's Areopagus Speech." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* no. 50 (June 1993): 13–26.
- Schnabel, Eckhard J. "Contextualising Paul in Athens: The Proclamation of the Gospel before Pagan Audiences in the Graeco-Roman World." *Religion & Theology* (December 2005): 172–90.
- Schweitzer, Albert. *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* 2nd ed. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956.
- Schweizer, Eduard. "Concerning Speeches in Acts." In *Studies in Luke-Acts*, edited by Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn, 208–16. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966.
- Segal, Alan F. *Paul the Convert*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Smith, Joseph. *History of the Church*. Vol. 2. 7 vols. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978.
- . *History of the Church*. Vol. 4. 7 vols. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978.
- . *History of the Church*. Vol. 6. 7 vols. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978.
- . *Lectures on Faith*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985.
- . *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts*, Edited by Kent P. Jackson, Scott H. Faulring, and Robert J. Matthews. Provo: Religious Studies Center, 2004.

- Squires, John T. "Acts." In *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*. Edited by James D. G. Dunn. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Stendahl, Krister. *Paul among Jews and Gentiles: And Other Essays*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976.
- Stonehouse, N. B. *Paul before the Areopagus: And Other New Testament Studies*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957.
- Tannehill, Robert C. *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*. Vol. 2nd: The Acts of the Apostles. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990.
- "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles." *Ensign* (April 2000).
- Wall, Robert W. "The Acts of the Apostles." In *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Vol. 10. 12 vols. Edited by Leander E. Keck. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002.
- Wallace, Robert W. *The Areopagos Council, to 307 B.C.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.
- Wayment, Thomas A. *From Persecutor to Apostle: A Biography of Paul*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006.
- Weizsäcker, Carl Von. *The Apostolic Age of the Christian Church*. Translated by James Millar. Vol. 1. 3rd ed. London: Williams and Norgate, 1907.
- Wilken, Robert L. *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.
- Winter, Bruce W. "On Introducing Gods to Athens: An Alternative Reading of Acts 17:18–20." *Tyndale Bulletin* 47, no. 1 (May 1996): 71–90.
- Wycherley, R. E. and Homer A. Thompson. *The Athenian Agora: The Agora of Athens*. Vol. 14. Princeton: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1972.
- Wycherley, R. E. "Two Notes on Athenian Topography." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 75, (1955): 117–21.
- . "St. Paul at Athens." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 19, no. 2 (October 1968): 619–21.
- Young, Brigham. *Journal of Discourses*. Vol.13. London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–86.