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### Making “An Unknown God” Known: A Narratne-Critical Reading of Paul’s Areopagus Speech (Acts 17:16-34) In Light of the “Ignorance-Knowledge” Theme of Luke-Acts

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To my wife Miran who has joyfully journeyed with me on an unknown path of faith.



“ . . . I even found an altar with this inscription: ‘To an unknown god.’ Therefore what you worship without knowing it, this I proclaim to you.”

Acts 17:23b

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Since the research for this dissertation was done while serving as a parish minister at Zion Lutheran Church, Belleville, Illinois, I would like to thank the Korean parishioners for their sacrifice as well as the pastoral staff for their ongoing encouragement. Wearing the two hats of pastor and scholar has challenged me to read and think and write for the life of the church.

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Most of all I offer my thanks to God for his marvelous revelation through raising up writers like "Luke." What was spelled out at the pen of Luke about God's salvation of all peoples through Jesus Christ has brought me a realization of, first, my own ignorance of the magnitude of his enduring love and, then, the delight of knowing how God leads the ignorant to saving knowledge. God is indeed patient and the infinite source of wisdom.

## ABBREVIATIONS

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| AB            | Anchor Bible  |
| <i>ABD</i>    | D. N. Freedman (ed.), <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>  |
| ANTC          | Abingdon New Testament Commentaries   |
| BAGD          | W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich (2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.: and F. W. Danker),<br><i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i> |
| BDF           | F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament</i>   |
| BECNT         | Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament  |
| <i>CBQ</i>    | <i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>  |
| <i>ExpTim</i> | <i>Expository Times</i>   |
| <i>ICC</i>    | International Critical Commentary   |
| <i>Int</i>    | <i>Interpretation</i>   |
| <i>JBL</i>    | <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>   |
| <i>JSNT</i>   | <i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>   |
| JSNTSup       | JSNT Supplement Series  |
| KJV           | King James Version  |
| LXX           | Septuagint  |
| MT            | Masoretic Text  |
| NASB          | New American Standard Bible   |
| NEB           | New English Bible   |
| NIBC          | New International Biblical Commentary   |
| NICNT         | New International Commentary on the New Testament   |
| NIV           | New International Version   |

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <i>NovT</i> | <i>Novum Testamentum</i>  |
| NRSV        | New Revised Standard Version  |
| <i>NTS</i>  | <i>New Testament Studies</i>  |
| RSV         | Revised Standard Version  |
| SacPag      | Sacra Pagina  |
| SBL         | Society of Biblical Literature  |
| SBLDS       | SBL Dissertation Series   |
| SBLMS       | SBL Monograph Series  |
| <i>SBLP</i> | <i>SBL Seminar Papers</i>   |
| SNTSMS      | Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series                                    |
| SNTSU       | Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt   |
| <i>TDNT</i> | G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> |
| <i>TLNT</i> | C. Spicq, <i>Theological Lexicon of the New Testament</i>                             |
| WUNT        | Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament                                  |

## ABSTRACT

Kim, Hyo-Jong. "Making 'An Unknown God' Known: A Narrative-Critical Reading of Paul's Areopagus Speech (Acts 17:16–34) in Light of the 'Ignorance-Knowledge' Theme of Luke-Acts." Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2015. 324 pp.

This dissertation argues that a reading of Paul's speech in Athens (Acts 17:16–34) through narrative-critical analysis helps the reader see how Lukan narration of Paul's "new teaching" to make "an unknown god" known to the pagan philosophers marks a pivotal point for Lukan presentation of the "ignorance-knowledge" theme in Luke-Acts. This study examines how the speech, in its unique narrative setting and with its subtle rhetorical critique of pagan "ignorance," partakes of Luke's overall concern to show that Jews, proselytes, and outright pagans all stand in the same condition before the God of Israel, that is, in need of the divine revelation to change their ignorant state.



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### I. Preliminary Comments

Paul's speech in Athens (Acts 17:22–31), which is the only recorded “full-length” sermon delivered to a Gentile audience, is fascinating because it records the first encounter between Christianity and Hellenism in the sense that Athens marks the birthplace of many Hellenistic philosophies and democracy, and Athens was still one of the three university cities of the Roman empire at the time of Paul's visit.<sup>1</sup> In view of the universal scope of Luke's vision of God's salvation in Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 3:6; 24:47; Acts 1:8; 2:17; 26:17–18) within the arguments and structure of Luke-Acts, Luke's choice to include only one sermon to the non-godfearing Gentiles is more impressive. Therefore it is rightly suggested that the Areopagus speech has become “(*vielleicht*) *meist erörterte Rede der Weltliteratur*.”<sup>2</sup>

As Paul's speech changed from the usual, Jewish context at the synagogue<sup>3</sup> to the unfamiliar, predominantly Gentile pagan context, Paul's Areopagus speech can be read as an

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<sup>1</sup> For an important discussion on this point, see Dean Zweck, “The Exordium of the Areopagus Speech, Acts 17:22–23,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 94–103.

<sup>2</sup> “(perhaps) the most discussed speech in the world literature” (Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, V/2 [Zürich: Benzinger, 1986], 130).

<sup>3</sup> Thus far, Paul's preaching activities have been in the Jewish context (cf. Acts 13: 16–41) with one minor exception if we are to include Paul's brief speech to the pagan crowd at Lystra, recorded in Acts 14:15–17. What sets the Athenian episode apart from others is the fact that Paul's preaching to the Athenian audience does not follow the narrative “pattern” Luke develops. Paul, upon arriving at a new city or town, customarily goes to synagogue first to preach to the Jews and godfearing Gentiles until some jealous Jews stir up trouble, which forces Paul to turn to the Gentiles outside synagogue or other cities (cf. 13:43–52; 14:1–6; 17:1–14, 2; 18:5–6; 19:8–9).

example of a paradigm shift<sup>4</sup> moving away from his usual “midrashic method”<sup>5</sup> whose example can be seen in his speech to the Pisidia Antiochean Jews (13:16–41), which, in turn, parallels Peter’s sermons in form, content, and context (cf. 2:14–40; 3:12–26; 4:8–12).<sup>6</sup> Luke records in his second volume<sup>7</sup> a speech that R. Pervo rightly describes as “apposite, witty, erudite, and well-

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Hengel, introducing the discussion between the Jewish apologetics and the Gentile philosophers, says of Paul in Athens, “We must also assume this to be the case with Paul, on the basis of Acts 17:18 and the speech on the Areopagus which follows (17:22–32). For Luke this has *paradigmatic significance*. Paul could also speak in this style when he wanted to” (Martin Hengel and Anna M. Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1997], 169–70; emphasis added).

<sup>5</sup> Originally a commonly employed method in the liturgical setting of the synagogue, this particular method refers to “actualizing a discourse on Scripture by explaining it in the light of an event or other scriptural texts” (Marianne Fournier, *The Episode at Lystra: A Rhetorical and Semiotic Analysis of Acts 14:7–20a* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 183. For a fuller discussion on this method, see Addison G. Wright, *The Literary Genre Midrash* (Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba, 1967).

<sup>6</sup> Speaking of the shorter and very similar speech in setting and content delivered at Lystra (Acts 14), M. Fournier says: “With the pagans, Paul can no longer use the well-known midrashic method to expose Scripture and its fulfillment in the Jesus-event. He has to appeal to the audience’s unique experience and background that is quite different from that of the Jews” (Marianne Fournier, *The Episode at Lystra: A Rhetorical and Semiotic Analysis of Acts 14:7–20a* [New York: Peter Lang, 1997], 185).

<sup>7</sup> Throughout the dissertation, I will use “Luke,” “narrator,” “implied author,” and “narrator/implied author” interchangeably unless specified otherwise in basic agreement with Merenlahti and Hakola. They argue that the narrator and the author should not be confused in reading *fictional* narratives in which the narrator is a rhetorical device the author invented for the purpose of telling the story. At the same time, it is generally argued and accepted that, in *non-fictional*, “*factual*” narratives, the narrator can be identified with the author. (Cf. Petri Merenlahti and Raimo Hakola, “Reconceiving Narrative Criticism,” in *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* [JSNTS 184; eds. David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999], 13–48.) Merenlahti and Hakola form their argument relying on the following works of narratologists: Gérard Genette, “Fictional Narrative, Factual Narrative,” *Poetics Today* 11 (1990): 755–74; *idem*, *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 213; and Dorrit Cohn, “Signposts of Fictionality: A Narratological Perspective,” *Poetics Today* 11 (1990): 775–804.

A similar point is raised by Osvaldo Padilla: “The concept of the implied author (‘a selecting, structuring, and presiding intelligence, discerned indirectly in the text, like God in his/her creation’) is useful when examining transparently fictional works; however, it is doubtful that in a narrative of historiographic orientation (such as Acts) the real author wanted to be completely distinguished from the *persona* of the implied author” (Osvaldo Padilla, *The Speeches of Outsiders in Acts* [SNTS 144; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008], 11). For his understanding of the implied author, Padilla relies on Stephen Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 3–4.

Also see Kari Syreeni’s scholarly discussion on this issue appearing in the same book. He refers to the following works: Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1988), 94–103; and R.W. Funk, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 29. “To Funk,” says Syreeni, “the real author, the implied author, and the teller within the narrative itself are the three ‘facets’ or ‘masks’ of the narrator.” See his “Peter as Character and Symbol,” in *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (JSNTS 184; eds. David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 106–52.

crafted.”<sup>8</sup> That this passage has drawn enormous attention from scholars<sup>9</sup> resulting in the production of an immense amount of literature reflects that (1) the Areopagus speech is “in many regards one of the most important in all of Acts,”<sup>10</sup> and (2) more importantly, this text is complicated and thus controversial.

Questions of the extent of the literary context arise when the speech is read narratively. Our writer Luke purports to write an orderly account, that is, διήγησις “of events that have been fulfilled among us” (Luke 1:1, 3).<sup>11</sup> Whether we take the book of Acts as a part of Luke’s originally one unified work or a sequel to the Gospel, Luke’s two prologues (Luke 1:1–4 and Acts 1:1–2) provide us sufficient ground to read the Areopagus speech in light of Lukan motifs expressed in Luke-Acts.<sup>12</sup> In view of this, a more focused set of questions surfaces: How does Luke view and use Paul’s speech at Athens for his overall scheme? How does this speech,

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 425.

<sup>9</sup> According to a survey done up to 1962 by A. J. and Mary Mattill in *A Classified Bibliography of Literature on the Acts of the Apostles* (NT Tools and Studies; ed. Bruce Metzger; Leiden: Brill, 1966), there are one hundred and fifty possible entries. See pp. 430–39 for full list. For a more recent bibliographical work, see Günter Wagner ed., *Luke and Acts, An Exegetical Bibliography of the NT Series* (vol. 2; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1985). This work lists a similar number of works. The listing is found in pp. 495–502. And Watson Mills performed a follow-up work to the Mattill’s work by listing all periodical literature on the Acts between 1962–1984. He lists sixty-three articles and essays written on Paul’s Areopagus speech (Watson E. Mills, *A Bibliography of the Periodical Literature on the Acts of the Apostles 1962–1984* (Leiden: Brill, 1986).

<sup>10</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 511.

<sup>11</sup> For a scholarly treatment on this much debated Lukan prologue (Luke 1:1–4), see François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50* (Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 16–25.

<sup>12</sup> Unlike Loveday Alexander, who concludes that Luke’s preface(s) bears most similarities with ancient scientific treatises, and the Gospel’s preface in 1:1–4 is of a “detachable” sort from the content and style of Luke’s Gospel (see Loveday Alexander, *The Preface to Luke’s Gospel* [SNTSMS 78; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005]), scholars like Ben Witherington III (*Acts*, 11–15), Howard Marshall (*The Acts of the Apostles* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 17–23), David Aune (*The NT in Its Literary Environment* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987], 121), Robert Tannehill (*The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990], 2:6–9), and Charles K. Barrett (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994], 2:64–65) strongly suggest that Luke and Acts are to be read together as written by the same author based on their understanding of Luke 1:1–4. They are convinced that Luke 1:1–4 holds an important interpretive key to reading Luke-Acts.

through its highlighted themes and narrative features, contribute to Luke’s διήγησις? What are some narrative and rhetorical devices Luke employs to achieve his end in presenting Paul’s Areopagus speech?

It is the thesis of this project, therefore, that a narrative-critical reading of Paul’s speech in Athens and its setting and consequence (Acts 17:16–34) helps the reader see how Luke presents Paul’s “new teaching” to make “an unknown god” known to the pagan philosophers as a unique and positive development of his larger “ignorance-knowledge” theme, which is connected to Luke’s overarching goal of presenting God’s universal salvation through Jesus Christ.

## II. Survey of Earlier Research on Acts 17

### 2.a. Introduction

We begin by summarizing and describing the contours of earlier significant research of Acts 17:16–34. By initially navigating through various scholarly works, we will discover how different methods and questions necessarily yield different conclusions as R. Tannehill insightfully observes saying, “How we study Acts is important for what we will discover.”<sup>13</sup> At the same time, surveying the past scholarship will lead to the realization that (i) “much of the commentary tradition on Acts 17:16–34 too quickly glosses over the inclusion of Paul’s sermon in a larger narrative context, focusing instead on the *religionsgeschichtliche* background of the speech or its compatibility with Pauline thought as expressed in the epistles,”<sup>14</sup> and (ii) perhaps, a narrative reading, which seeks to understand Acts 17 in the context of Luke-Acts and his literary and theological motifs, promises a new and fruitful reading.

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<sup>13</sup> R. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity* 2:4.

<sup>14</sup> Patrick Gray, “Implied Audiences in the Areopagus Narrative,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 55.2 (2004): 205–18.

Already more than a half century ago, N. B. Stonehouse pointed out that many had undertaken to propose the best possible reading of Paul's Areopagus speech.<sup>15</sup> Of those, Eduard Norden stands out as a pioneering twentieth century scholar to offer what seems to be an independent, scholarly, and comprehensive treatment on this text in his *Agnostos Theos* (1913). Norden refocused on the discourses in Acts and, in particular, Paul's speech at Athens. In the latter, he saw the stamp of orientalized Hellenism as well as influence of the Jewish propaganda.<sup>16</sup> Of crucial importance for his discussion were the striking similarities he identified between Paul on the Areopagus and Apollonius of Tyana who wandered preaching in Athens. Based primarily on the two preachers' attack on false gods, discussion on the true worship, and reference to the Athenian altars to unknown gods, "Norden concluded thence that the Areopagus speech was from a strange hand, modeled on an Apollonius biography written in good Attic, and had been inserted in the Acts during the second century A.D. The speech is a missionary sermon of the traditional type, but verges on Stoic motifs."<sup>17</sup> Norden's treatment on Acts 17 gave rise to heated discussion.<sup>18</sup> A few decades later, Martin Dibelius, who was heavily influenced by

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<sup>15</sup> Thus Stonehouse: "The passage is so replete with exceptional and arresting features that the commentators and the historians of early Christianity have been stimulated to treat it at considerable length. . . . Much as one may learn from what others have written, my impression is that the last word has by no means been spoken, and that the Areopagus address will continue to challenge the Biblical interpreter to press forward to his goal, both because of the variety and intricacy of problems for the understanding of early Christianity." (N. B. Stonehouse, *Paul before the Areopagus and Other NT Studies* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957], 1)

<sup>16</sup> Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formgeschichte religiöser Rede* (4th ed.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956), 10; cited from Bertil Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* (trans. Carolyn Hannay King; Upsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1955), 38.

<sup>17</sup> Apollonius of Tyana is presumed to have lived between A.D. 15 and A.D. 100. But it was Philostratus who wrote his speeches in the third century; cited from Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 38–39.

<sup>18</sup> According to Gärtner, it was A. v. Harnack who most severely and successfully challenged Norden's thesis that the Areopagus speech should be dismissed from Acts as a later addition based on similarities between the Athenian speech by Paul and that of Apollonius. Even though Norden's possible connection between Acts 17 and Apollonius was abandoned soon after, his idea that the speech should be attributed to Luke continued to make its way among the subsequent scholarship (Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 40–41).

Norden,<sup>19</sup> offered what turned out to be the major watershed not only in the study of Acts 17 but also in the study of Acts in his seminal essay titled “Paul on the Areopagus” (1939), an application of his critical methodology, which he coined as “*Stilkritisches zur Apostelgeschichte*” (1923). Therefore, M. Dibelius would be a rightful place to start our survey.

## **2.b. Varying Approaches That Focus on Historical Questions/Referentiality**

### **2.b.1. Martin Dibelius (1883-1947): ‘Style Criticism,’ a Movement from *Historia* to *Theologia***

In his departing from “form-criticism” to adopt “style criticism,” Dibelius relentlessly asked the question of the location of Acts 17 in Luke’s composition of Acts. However, this parting does not mean his total abandoning the general position of the Tübingen School influenced by F. C. Baur who regarded the speeches in Acts as stereotyped because they had been composed and arranged by Luke to conform with his purpose and literary agenda.<sup>20</sup> For Baur, the similarity of the different speeches in Acts was the signal for the author’s *inability* to give them the ring of authenticity. Dibelius, in fact, built on this assumption, which attributed the speeches to Luke, and his work left a decisive impact on many scholars including Conzelmann,<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Gasque points out that Norden’s influence on Dibelius was great in terms of the former’s suggestion that “the speeches are intended for the reader rather than the original audiences.” See Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 204. Another critical area of Norden’s influence on Dibelius was his emphasis on the Greek conceptual background of the speech rather than the OT. Both Norden and Dibelius saw the speech’s teaching about the knowledge of God and man’s natural kinship to God in a stark contrast with the OT teachings about the same subjects (Gasque, *History*, 210).

<sup>20</sup> Through his philosophical-historical configuration, F.C. Baur (1792–1860) attempted to construct Christian origins hinted at Acts and Pauline Letters. His key concept is that there were two specific, competing Christian segments in early church: a Petrine and a Paulinist group. (Cf. Todd Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origin* [NY: T & T Clark, 2004], 8–14.)

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (ET; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 138–48. As it will emerge in our discussion on Dibelius, the following words of Conzelmann in his “The Address of Paul on the Areopagus” demonstrate how foundational is Dibelius’ work to his followers: “To develop his point, Luke uses the common literary means of ancient historiography, the inserted speech. . . . Luke makes Paul say what he considers appropriate to the situation. . . . In my opinion, the speech is the free creation of the author, for it does not show the specific thoughts and ideas of Paul. . . . Since both the setting and the speech are

Schneider,<sup>22</sup> Haenchen,<sup>23</sup> and Vielhauer.<sup>24</sup> It was Haenchen who said Dibelius' argument offers a *conclusive* proof that Paul's Areopagus speech was Luke's literary creation.<sup>25</sup>

What seems to be of critical importance is to note what Dibelius defined as an important task for a student of Acts. In his "The Speeches in Acts and Ancient Historiography," which is considered to be his most important and influential essay with regard to the speeches in Acts, Dibelius spells out his intention to take up "the task of discovering what place the speeches in the Acts of the Apostles take among the quite varied types of speeches recorded by historians, and, thus, at the same time, of determining the meaning to be attributed to the speeches in the work as a whole."<sup>26</sup> There are at least three things to be noted in regard to how he achieves his end.

First, Dibelius places Luke along with other ancient writers for whom speech was regarded as "the natural complement of the deed"<sup>27</sup> serving as a means to obtain their goal. Since the historian of antiquity did not feel bound by respect for the text or the original source, what becomes important is what the writer intended to impart to the reader. Dibelius lists four aims of speeches: (1) to give an insight into the situation as a whole; (2) to illumine the meaning of the historical moment involved; (3) to impart insight into the character of the speaker; and (4) to provide an insight into general ideas introduced to explain the situation. "At any rate," concludes Dibelius, "whether the speech is an artistic device or not, the historian of antiquity felt differently

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the author's work, the details related are of no value for the reconstruction of the individual historical events" (218).

<sup>22</sup> Gerhard Schneider, "Urchristliche Gettesverkündigung in hellenistischer Umwelt," *BZ* 13 (1969): 62–64.

<sup>23</sup> See commentary *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971).

<sup>24</sup> P. Vielhauer, "On the 'Paulinism' of Acts," in *Studies in Luke-Acts* (eds. L.E. Keck and J.L. Martyn; London: SPCK, 1968), 33–50.

<sup>25</sup> Haenchen, *Acts*, 590 referring to Dibelius' *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (ed. Heinrich Greeven; trans. Mary Ling; London: SCM Press, 1956), 155–58; cited in C. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Wiona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 426, n. 33; emphasis mine.

<sup>26</sup> Dibelius, *Studies*, 145.

<sup>27</sup> Here Dibelius recognizes his indebtedness to and cites from Otto Regenbogen, "Thukydides als politischer

from ourselves about the relationship of speeches to historical reality.”<sup>28</sup> Dibelius places the Acts of the Apostles into this historiographical tradition, which “teaches us that even the interpreter of historical speeches of such a kind must first ask what is the function of the speeches in the whole work.”<sup>29</sup>

Second, Dibelius investigates what he calls four “unlikely” speeches placed at significant junctures of the story development in Acts.<sup>30</sup> Luke placed them, as was the practice of his contemporary ancient writers, not for the sake of the *characters within*, but for the *readers of the narrative*. However, it was Luke’s sermonizing tendency, that is, his kerygmatic aim to proclaim with repetition and emphasis of certain themes,<sup>31</sup> which marks the point of departure from other ancient historians.<sup>32</sup> In other words, Luke followed the method of the ancient writers but differed in content. This takes us to the third point about Dibelius.

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Denker,” *Das humanistische Gymnasium* 44 (1933), 3; cf. Dibelius, *Studies*, 139, n. 2 for full detail.

<sup>28</sup> Dibelius, *Studies*, 139–40.

<sup>29</sup> Dibelius, *Studies*, 144–45.

<sup>30</sup> Dibelius, *Studies*, 163.

<sup>31</sup> Osvaldo Padilla’s following words further illuminate Dibelius’ point about Lukan tendency: “However, when Luke began to employ certain techniques—repetition, exclusive *oratio recta*, radical ruptures between speech and their supposed situational origin—or failed to employ others such as authorial intrusion to give judgments or the juxtaposition of speeches with conflicting viewpoints, at that point Luke had ceased to be a historian and had become a preacher. In other words, *when Luke put aside practices that were meant to ensure objectivity and impartiality and introduced practices that were channels for ideational propositions, he was no longer a historian*. When Luke sermonized he was conveying *religious* convictions about his own views on a movement of God; this is not history writing but rather preaching” (Osvaldo Padilla, *The Speeches of Outsiders in Acts* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008], 30; italics in original).

<sup>32</sup> Dibelius, *Studies*, 174–78; emphasis added. Of Luke’s theological motif of placing unlikely speeches still in line with the tradition of ancient historiography in method, Dibelius says: “There is here one parallel: at vital points in the history of the community Luke has inserted speeches which do not necessarily fit the occasion but which have an obvious function in the book as a whole: they help to make intelligible the rejection of Christianity by the Jews (Stephen), and to defend the rightness of the mission to the Gentiles (Paul’s speech before the people); they show how God himself ordained the conversion of the Gentiles (Cornelius); how the Christian sermon takes up Greek ideas (Areopagus speech); they indicate both the past and the future destiny of the community (Miletus). All these speeches, which appear at significant points and bear the impress of the author’s mind, he has inserted into his narrative, or into the narrative provided by his source” (Dibelius, *Studies*, 176).



Third, Dibelius coins his own methodology as “style criticism.” Unlike the writing of his gospel (which has known sources such as Mark and Q),<sup>33</sup> Luke as the author of Acts did not have any predecessor to follow. Dibelius says, “If . . . we read in Acts the scenes of the Apostolic Council or of the trial (Acts 24–26), we become easily convinced that here Luke has not only fitted together, joined and framed fragments of tradition, as in a mosaic, but that in Acts there is a greater depth of original composition.” Accordingly, Luke’s much higher degree of creativity was employed in writing Acts.<sup>34</sup> “Here, then, the author can fashion the material he has collected as far as it permits; he can select, abbreviate or elaborate; he determines the sequence of events; he creates connecting-links and independent passages in between.”<sup>35</sup> In short, Dibelius elevated Luke from Baur’s *unable* writer trying to collect and fit pieces together to a *competent* writer with polished style and theological drive.

As Osvaldo Padilla observed, it was through this methodological shift that Dibelius brought about a profound effect on the future of Lukan studies. The “style criticism” of Dibelius “served as a precursor to redaction criticism with its emphasis on the active roles that the evangelists took in the editing of their respective works. Conzelmann and Haenchen, in particular, developed Dibelius’ insights, creating a place for Luke the theologian.”<sup>36</sup>

For the significant place Dibelius’ study on the current subject occupies, we now turn to his treatment of Paul’s Areopagus speech. Of the four “unlikely” speeches Luke composed and put in the mouth of Peter and Paul at four significant junctures, the Areopagus speech “denotes, and

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<sup>33</sup> Luke acknowledges this in his prolegomena (Luke 1:1) with a possible exaggeration in saying πολλοί. (many) have undertaken the task of writing an account.

<sup>34</sup> Dibelius, *Studies*, 2.

<sup>35</sup> Dibelius, *Studies*, 148.

<sup>36</sup> Padilla, *Speeches*, 32.

is intended to denote, a climax of the book.”<sup>37</sup> To undertake the task of reading this important speech strategically placed by Luke and avoid the mistakes other readers made before him, Dibelius applies “a reverse method.” He sees that, on the one hand, there are those who approached the speech with historical thesis in mind.<sup>38</sup> That the speech is Paul’s actual sermon. On the other hand, there are some others like Norden in *Agnostos* and A. Loisy<sup>39</sup> who explain off contradictory contents and passages that are in disharmony with other parts of Acts as results of Lukan editorship in inserting. Therefore, he proposes a new approach by looking first at the meaning of the speech stated in vv. 24–29 and then moving to identify the importance of the speech in Acts.<sup>40</sup>

This reading leads him to conclude that the speaker on the Areopagus was a forerunner of apologetics, whose doctrine of God was deduced from contemplation of the world, and, therefore, the speech is “*eine hellenistische Rede von der wahren Gottesterkenntnis*.”<sup>41</sup> He finds his support from the alleged difference between Acts 17 and Romans 1 [–3] saying:

The inconsistency between the epistle to the Romans and Areopagus speech is clear. Both refer to the knowledge of God in view of creation or the order(ing) of the world; but according to the speech this knowledge leads to anticipatory “understanding” and veneration of God, while as according to the Epistle it indeed leads to the knowledge of God, but also to misjudging his sovereign authority, to a denial of the genuine worship of God, and to the involvement in the false worship of images. . . . Paul could never have written in this way [in Romans]. That human being is profoundly estranged from God penetrated his thought (Rom 1–3).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Dibelius, *Studies*, 26.

<sup>38</sup> He lists the following in 26, n. 1: Ernst Cuttrius (“Paulus in Athen,” 1893); Adolf Harnack (“Ist die Rede des Paulus in Athen ein ursprüngl. Bestandteil der Apg.?” [1913]); Alfred Wikenhauser (*Die Apostelgeschichte und ihr Geschichtswert* [1921]); and Eduard Meyer (*Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums*, III [1923]).

<sup>39</sup> See Alfred Loisy, *Les Actes des Apôtres* (Paris: Nourry, 1920), 660–84.

<sup>40</sup> Dibelius, *Studies*, 26–27.

<sup>41</sup> “an Hellenistic speech of the true knowledge of God”; cited from Dibelius, “Paulus auf dem Areopag, Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften” (Heidelberg, 1939): 54.

<sup>42</sup> “Der Widerspruch zwischen Römerbrief und Areopagrede ist deutlich. Beide erwähnen zwar die Erkenntnis

After all, Luke was interested not in representing what and how Paul had preached, but in providing how a Christian living among the largely pagan Hellenistic society might preach to the new culture.<sup>43</sup> In Dibelius' own words: "The probability is that the speeches were written by the author, with the primary intention of guiding his readers, rather than extending their knowledge of history. *The speeches answer the question: how is one to speak? and not the question: how did that man speak at that time?*"<sup>44</sup> Thus was made the transition from history to theology in the studies of the second volume of Luke.

The primary questions that guided Dibelius' works were the following: (1) How does Luke's work compare or contrast with other contemporary writings of history? (2) How does Acts 17's content compare with genuine Pauline Epistles and the OT? His primary focus on the first question dictated his second question to the point that he concluded the Areopagus speech is "a *sui generis* [of its own kind] speech on natural theology."<sup>45</sup> Beyond doubt these are important questions that continue to give rise to discussions, investigations and debates, but Dibelius' "reverse" reading in his article, "Paul on the Areopagus," has little place for the narrative aspects of Acts 17. He only briefly, for example, mentions the narrative setting at the very end of his

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*Gottes aus Schöpfung oder Ordnung der Welt; aber nach der Rede führt diese Erkenntnis zum ahnenden "Begreifen" und Verehren Gottes, nach dem Brief führt sie war zur Kenntnis Gottes, aber zugleich zur Verkennung seiner Herrschaft, zur Verweigerung des echten Gottesdienstes und zur Verstrickung in falschen Bilderdienst. . . . Paulus hätte so niemals geschrieben. Er ist zu tief durchdrungen von der Überzeugung, dass der Mensch God entfremdet ist (Röm. 1-3) (Dibelius, "Paulus," 57). For Dibelius, therefore, Acts 17:28 ('People are God's family') is unthinkable for the Paul of Romans.*

<sup>43</sup> Dibelius, *Studies*, 76–77. Here, it is important to note that Dibelius is suggesting that Luke presents Paul's speech as both an example of the typical sermon of the latter day and an ideal sermon to be followed. In doing so, Dibelius maintains Luke as a historian and theologian with emphasis on the latter.

<sup>44</sup> Dibelius, *Studies*, 70; emphasis added.

<sup>45</sup> David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (WUNT 2/130; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 193.

discussion<sup>46</sup> making the narrative setting subservient to the content of the speech and its purpose in the Lukan scheme.<sup>47</sup> His divorce between the historical and narrative context and meaning of the speech leaves room for a severe future criticism,<sup>48</sup> and his emphasis on Luke as a redactor writing for his readership of a much later time reminds us of the redactic-critical concept of the text as a “window” into the redactor’s community. With that said, we turn to Bertil Gärtner, a Scandinavian scholar, whose work based on a different approach challenged Dibelius’ reading of Paul’s speech.

## **2.b.2. Bertil Gärtner**

### *2.b.2.a. Luke as a defending/apologetic writer after Jewish apologetic conventions*

If Dibelius’ methodological movement from his predecessors’ form-critical method to redaction-criticism meant a discovery of a new Luke as an able theologian rather than an unable historian, Gärtner’s work in response to Dibelius bears its significance in that he placed greater

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<sup>46</sup> His reading negligent of the narrative setting is evident in his translating only vv. 22–31 (cf. 37–38). Of the narrative introduction, Dibelius says: “Therefore Luke conjures up in a few sentences the whole individuality of Athens as it was at that time, in order to give the right background to the apostle’s sermon; for this reason he brings the apostle to an illustrious place, sanctified by a great tradition, and for this reason he lets Paul speak more of the Gentile way of recognizing God than of the Christian way. . . . So he let Paul preach, preach in one of the most distinguished places in Greece, in the way that he thought the Greeks ought to be preached to at that time . . .” (76–77)

<sup>47</sup> Contra Dibelius, Beverly Gaventa’s words rightly address this issue: “Lukan theology is intricately and irreversibly bound up with the story he tells and cannot be separated from it. An attempt to do justice to the theology of Acts must struggle to reclaim the character of Acts as a narrative” (Beverly Gaventa, “Toward a Theology of Acts: Reading and Rereading,” *Interpretation* 42 [1988]: 150).

For critical views offered on Dibelius’ understanding of Thucydides’ celebrated passage about writing speeches and of Luke as a historian, see Gasque, *History*, 225–26 and 233, respectively.

<sup>48</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Conceptualizing Paul in Athens: The Proclamation of the Gospel before Pagan Audiences in the Graeco-Roman World,” *Religion & Theology* 12/2 (2005): 177. Schnabel draws the same conclusion about a similar assessment to the Areopagus speech by S.E. Porter who said that the “balance” of the speech is “completely wrong” based on the lack of a Christological reference (ibid., 186, n. 14; cf. S.E. Porter, *The Paul of Acts: Essays in the Literary Criticism, Rhetoric and Theology* [WUNT 115; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999], 124). For Schnabel, both assessments, which isolated the interpretation of the speech from its historical context, are wrong.

emphasis on proving that the content of the speech was compatible with both the OT and the theology of the Pauline Epistles. Contra Dibelius, Bertil Gärtner proposes to consider that there were two types of history writing which influenced Luke as a writer: the Old Testament type and the Greek type. He compares Luke with Josephus and 1 and 2 Maccabees to conclude that although Luke's writings bear outward similarities with the works of his Hellenistic contemporaries, it is essentially the Jewish historiography tradition that Luke reflects in his attitude to his narrative.<sup>49</sup> Contending that the speeches in the Acts of the Apostles have been dismissed as unhistorical on the basis of form-critical criteria, Gärtner suggests that the "contents and theology" of the speeches must be analyzed.<sup>50</sup> On the question whether Luke was adapting or assimilating,<sup>51</sup> Gärtner takes the former to be the case and concludes that the Areopagus speech exemplifies an early Christian missionary's sermon to the Gentiles,<sup>52</sup> in the sense that Paul adapted "his words to the commonplaces of philosophy when preaching to an educated Gentile audience." In short, the speech is a Christian adaptation of Jewish-Diaspora preaching colored by the Hellenistic-Greek sphere of culture.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Gärtner's survey reveals that there is the distance that divides Josephus from 1 and 2 Maccabees. Of the two, the former is far removed from the perspectives of Jewish historiography in wholly adhering to the Greek tradition of historical writing, while as the latter's view of history clearly parallels to that of Acts. However, on the importance of Josephus for Lukan study, Gärtner points out that Josephus "received both a Jewish upbringing and a Greek education, and is a typical representative of this period's historical writing" (Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 26, 29).

<sup>50</sup> Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 12–36.

<sup>51</sup> Gärtner observes that both elements took place in Judaism long before the advent of Christianity. In its process of interacting with its surrounding Mediterranean world, Judaism first took up the form of adaptation in attempts to establish important points of contacts and present some things that were "acceptable to the enlightened critics of the time. . . . But, as is particularly noticeable in certain Diaspora circles, this interchange of ideas, and accommodation of the Jewish to the Hellenistic, could not fail to affect the Jewish conceptions of God and man. Adaptation merged into assimilation—a process facilitated by the fact that the Jews were obligated to transpose their Hebrew ideas into that of the Greeks" (ibid., 66–67).

<sup>52</sup> Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 72.

<sup>53</sup> Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 66.

Gärtner briefly surveys four highly influential scholars on Acts 17: E. Norden, Adolf von Harnack, Dibelius and W. Schmidt.<sup>54</sup> Unlike Dibelius, Gärtner begins his discussion of the speech by analyzing the narrative framework<sup>55</sup> to conclude that certain linguistic turns both in the framework and in the scene itself support the idea that Paul was on trial or interrogated by the education committee of the Areopagus court, and thus this speech well serves Luke's "apologetic" intention of writing the Book of Acts.<sup>56</sup> Gärtner identifies two issues with which Luke was concerned: "How [the historical] Paul fared when the leading Athenian tribunal investigated his doctrine, and how he preached this same doctrine to the Gentiles."<sup>57</sup> The importance of Paul's speech for Luke's overall purpose, i.e., defending the church's activities and Paul "against the accusations and tumult of the Jews," can be demonstrated as following:

An apologist addressing himself to Roman authorities acted shrewdly in mentioning Athens and the attitude to unknown religious doctrines, which was current there. The fact that its supreme court, the famous Areopagus, could be shown to have had nothing to bring against Paul and his teaching therefore provided Luke with a trump card.<sup>58</sup>

#### 2.b.2.b. "Natural Revelation"

Whereas Dibelius' overt stress on Luke in light of the ancient Greek historiography

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 37–44.

<sup>55</sup> Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 45–65.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 64–65. Suggesting that Acts might have been written before Paul's death or during Paul's trial, Gärtner likens Paul's sermon in Lukan scheme to Josephus' "Against Apion," in which Josephus defends the Jewish attitude toward other religions (64–65). According to Gärtner, that Luke's apologetic is directed to both Jews and Gentiles has been neglected. Observing that, even though the Jews always brought accusations, both groups involved in assailing Paul, Gärtner proposes two important facts conclusive to Luke that he aimed to demonstrate in writing Acts: "(1) The multitude seeks to take the law into its own hands, the initiative coming from both Jews and Gentiles. Rioting, persecution and uproar are their weapons, and they find Paul guilty. But the populace is not always moved by the purest motives. (2) The Roman authorities disapprove of rioting, as it may upset the law and order of the State. But the law-givers see through the accusations of the populace, and find no evidence anywhere for convicting Paul" (Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 60; cf. Acts 19:40).

<sup>57</sup> Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 64.

<sup>58</sup> Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 65.

influenced his reading of the content of the Areopagus speech evident in his “philosophical interpretation” by arguing for a strong association with Stoic thoughts,<sup>59</sup> Gärtner argues that the content of Paul’s discourse at Athens is compatible with the NT and the OT, and thus not with the Stoic theory of “*theologia naturalis*.”<sup>60</sup> To prove his point through a thoroughgoing analysis, he devotes significant space.<sup>61</sup> Above all, Gärtner points out that, even though both Romans 1–2 and Acts 17 contain the idea of a natural revelation and even some of the terms employed in both texts bear Greek philosophical nuances, this concept does not support any theory of *theologia naturalis*.<sup>62</sup>

Gärtner identifies three elements important to the OT when it comes to how Israelite’s “Covenant knowledge” of Yahweh is manifested: nature as God’s creation, history, and mankind’s dependence on God. These three factors, according to his analysis, are all represented in the Areopagus speech.<sup>63</sup> With regard to the critical difference between the Old Testament concept of the knowledge of God and any Stoic counterpart, Gärtner offers the following summary as a way of reading Paul’s speech at Athens:

In the Old Testament, knowledge of God, worship and ethics are fused, and become *one* expression of the God-fearing man’s acknowledgement of the One God. . . . There is a direct relation between Yahweh and man in the Old Testament, indicated by God’s revelation in the creation, history, the law, the election, etc. But there is no such personal relation in Stoic philosophy, where instead it is *voũç* that makes any union with the Deity possible at all. God is invisible, but man’s *voũç* recognizes his own being in God-Cosmos, and thence is born knowledge. We see, then, that the

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<sup>59</sup> Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 73.

<sup>60</sup> He prefers “the natural revelation” to “natural theology” based on his conviction that the latter “brings in the view, associated to some extent with the Stoic theory of affinity with God, that man’s reason is akin to God. In my opinion, the NT does not voice this view of man” (Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 73).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 73–169.

<sup>62</sup> Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 82.

<sup>63</sup> Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 86.

Stoic system is a closed one, so that God, the world and man form an undivided unit—an important point to remember when analyzing the Areopagus speech.<sup>64</sup>

The discourse in Athens is the first step in preaching to the Gentiles by criticizing the false knowledge of God and its resultant worship of idols while as Paul's letter to the Roman Christians contains the second step or expansion in Gärtner's argument. The former was to prepare the groundwork for developing the *Kerygma* and the latter "to use the natural revelation both to attack the idolaters and to render all men sinners in the face of God."<sup>65</sup> Against reading the Areopagus speech as a total Stoic theology, Gärtner suggests the following four main subjects for consideration: "the arguments for God's existence, man's kinship with God, his duty as a created being to know God, and who God *is*, by means of his reason."<sup>66</sup>

#### *2.b.2.c. Conclusion:*

Gärtner strongly argues that Acts 17 along with Romans 1 contains the fundamental difference from the Stoic philosophy as illustrated by the following point:

To the Stoics, the insight into the intimate connection between God, Cosmos and the human soul was an important premise in the argument for God's existence. . . . In the Areopagus speech, God's revelations in creation and history, and man's absolute dependence on Him, are used to support the doctrine of the Sole God against all idols, which are every one corruptible.<sup>67</sup>

It is Gärtner's conclusion that Luke makes Paul carefully accommodate his speech for the occasion and yet without any additional doctrinal assimilation. Therefore, the adaptation seen in borrowing contemporary Greek idioms may be purely formal as we remember how those

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<sup>64</sup> Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 116.

<sup>65</sup> Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 145.

<sup>66</sup> Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 145; see 146–67 for his full discussion.

<sup>67</sup> Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 167. Gärtner further points out that "this argumentation against the idols is typically OT-Jewish" (*ibid.*, 167, n. 3).



philosophical concepts function within Acts 17. Rather, the Areopagus speech's basic tenet, which is found also in Romans 1, displays a similarity with Jewish Diaspora preaching. For example, in the Wisdom of Solomon, one of the best examples of that Diaspora Jewish pattern, one can find Pauline ideas expressed both in Paul's Letters as well as the main ideas expressed in Acts 17 such as the function of nature and an attack on idolatry. That is the ground by which Gärtner asserts the Areopagus speech is a Pauline adaptation to the Jewish Diaspora propaganda rather than assimilation of any Greek ideas.<sup>68</sup>

Given that Gärtner's current work was in response to Dibelius' work and his major influence over the subject, Gärtner's larger questions seem to be similar to those of Dibelius even though their answers emerge on opposite sides: Where historically does Paul's speech best fit? How does Luke use Paul's Areopagus sermon for his overall purpose of defending Christianity and Paul? How does the content of the sermon compare with the OT, Pauline Letters, and the philosophical themes of the Stoics? While as Dibelius concluded that the Areopagus speech took the form of assimilation written by Luke, Gärtner argued for that of adaptation by Paul, thus he aptly demonstrated "the untenable nature of Dibelius' interpretation of Paul's speech."<sup>69</sup> Therefore, Gärtner's conclusion that Acts 17 is congruent with the OT tradition<sup>70</sup> expressed in Jewish Diaspora propaganda and with what are known as Pauline Epistles, especially Romans 1, seems to be Gärtner's major contribution toward a new reading or rereading of Acts 17.

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<sup>68</sup> Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 250–52.

<sup>69</sup> Gasque, *History*, 213.

<sup>70</sup> Originally a Ph.D. dissertation, David Pao's *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* offers a similar approach and conclusion. Based on the widely accepted view that the "prophecy-fulfillment" theme is one of the keys to unlocking Luke-Acts, Pao argues that Luke employs an important "new exodus" theme—which, in turn, takes its root from the Book of Exodus—found in Second Isaiah (*ibid*, 4–5). Seen within this narrative structure, we can find in Acts 17 "the most explicit expression of the anti-idol polemic in Acts" (*ibid*, 193).

### 2.b.3. Pieter W. van der Horst

Another scholar whose primary interest lies in questions of historical referentiality but from a different angle is Pieter van der Horst. Based on archaeological and epigraphic evidences, van der Horst attempted to show historical reliability or veracity of Acts 17. One of the principal questions that guided him seems to be: “Is Paul’s sermon at Athens historically verifiable?” Or, more specifically, “Is Paul’s reference to the altar inscription ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD’ (17:23) historically grounded?”

After surveying the history of the interpretation of Acts prior to the advent of archaeological studies, W. Gasque rightly complains about the bias of biblical scholars limiting their attention to literary texts and, thus, studying independently of the material remains of ancient cultures as important background.<sup>71</sup> Edwin Yamauchi partially attributes this phenomenon to the Tübingen School whose basic framework is expressed in general dismissal of the Acts of Apostles as a late and unreliable composition,<sup>72</sup> and Dibelius drifted away further. Yet, a wealth of information has been surfacing as a result of excavations and other related efforts. We now take a closer look into the works of Pieter W. van der Horst who combined his archaeological findings with ancient literary sources regarding our text.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Gasque, *History*, 358.

<sup>72</sup> Edwin Yamauchi, *New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor: Light from Archaeology on Cities of Paul and the Seven Churches of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 18–19. Also see his *The Stones and the Scriptures* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1972), 92–96; and “The Historical Value of the Book of Acts,” *TZ* 28 (1972): 177–96 for further discussion in defense of the historical trustworthiness of Acts.

<sup>73</sup> The choice of van der Horst is made in full awareness of the positive contribution made by the works of C. J. Hemer in a similar line. In his several essays, Hemer also establishes the historical reliability of Luke’s narratives based on archaeological supports. In his essay titled “Luke the Historian,” Hemer “gives the outline of a case for seeing Luke not only as the user of reliable traditions but also as himself a careful historian who stands alongside the best of ancient historians.” (Quoted from I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* [3d ed.; Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1988], 226; See C. J. Hemer, “Luke the Historian,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 60 [1977-78]: 28-51; *idem*, “Paul at Athens. A Topographical Note,” *NTS* 20 [1973–1974]: 341–50.)

In his “A New Altar of a God-fearer?” he describes an inscription published by two French epigraphists in 1988 from a small altar from the first or second century CE in Belkis, a town in Pamphylia. Here is how the inscription runs:

θεῷ ἀψευδ[εῖ καὶ]  
ἀχειροποίητος  
ἐὸ χήν

*“For the truthful god who is not made with hands (in fulfillment of) a vow.”<sup>74</sup>*

He argues that the proper meaning of one of its crucial words “ἀχειροποίητος” can be traced to Jewish polemics against idolatry because, although ἀχειροποίητος does not appear in the LXX, its antithesis χειροποίητος appears frequently enough to establish this literary connection.<sup>75</sup> The LXX uses χειροποίητος fifteen times (eight in Isaiah in the context of polemics against idolatry). The NT contains three occurrences: Mark 14:58 (temple); Col 2:11 (circumcision); and 2 Cor 5:1 (heavenly building). Van der Horst’s conviction is strengthened by the fact that the pagan Greek literature and epigraphy do not use it.<sup>76</sup>

Van der Horst argues against the possibility that a Jew could have erected the altar-inscription, noting that there are “no known instances of Jewish altars functioning outside a Jewish temple connection”<sup>77</sup> Rather, concludes van der Horst, “It seems much more credible to look for the origin of this later inscription in the circles of the so-called God-fearers, that specific group of pagans who felt strongly attracted to Judaism and often had close ties to the synagogue.”<sup>78</sup> The God-fearers, otherwise called ‘sympathizers,’ who were numerous and

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<sup>74</sup> Pieter W. van der Horst, “A New Altar of a God-fearer?” in *Hellenism – Judaism – Christianity: Essays on their Interaction* (Kampen, Netherland: Kok Pharos, 1994), 65. Translation and italics are by van der Horst.

<sup>75</sup> Van der Horst, “A New Altar,” 65–67.

<sup>76</sup> Van der Horst, “A New Altar,” 66–67.

<sup>77</sup> Van der Horst, “A New Altar,” 68.

<sup>78</sup> Van der Horst, “A New Altar,” 68.

influential in Asia Minor were pagan sympathizers who could freely decide how much of Jewishness in belief or way of life they would adopt. It is not hard, then, to imagine a God-fearer who, on the one hand, wanted to express his faith in the one true God who is “not made with hands” by erecting an altar because he, on the other hand, did not feel he was constrained by centralization of the sacrificial cult in Jerusalem alone.<sup>79</sup>

Van der Horst’s article sheds new insight into reading Acts 17:23 when he suggests that the inscription (“TO AN UNKNOWN GOD”) that Paul is purported to have seen in Athens could have been one of the many erected by the God-fearers. In fact, says van der Horst, the expression “the unknown god” was sometimes used of the God of Jews by both Jews and pagans as early as the first century CE simply because the deity had no name.<sup>80</sup> Even though the connection between Acts 17:23–4 and the new inscription from Belkis, a town in modern day Turkey, is not decisive, it does reinforce the possibility that God-fearers expressed their religion by erecting altars with that inscription and, thus, what Paul refers to in Acts 17 could be real,<sup>81</sup> and this account thus regarded as more historically accurate.

In another article titled, “The Altar of the ‘Unknown God’ in Athens (Acts 17:23) and the Cults of ‘Unknown Gods’ in the Graeco-Roman World,”<sup>82</sup> written in 1994, van der Horst examines the issue in more detail manner, which can be summarized in four points:

(1) The *hapax legomenon* word ‘βωμός’ in Acts 17:23 is to be contrasted with the frequently employed word θυσιαστήριον. Horst attributes the latter’s twenty-three occurrences in the NT to

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<sup>79</sup> Van der Horst, “A New Altar,” 68–69.

<sup>80</sup> Van der Horst, “A New Altar,” 69.

<sup>81</sup> Van der Horst, “A New Altar,” 70.

<sup>82</sup> Of this article, Witherington says, “This essay is by far the most helpful one written on our subject [of altars to unknown gods] in the last fifty or so years and eclipses the older ones by Deissmann, *Paul*, pp. 287–91, and by Lake, ‘The Unknown God’” (Witherington, *Acts*, 521, n. 211).

the influence of the LXX, saying that the translators of the LXX made a sharp distinction between θυσιαστήριον and βωμός depending on whether the altar was an Israelite one or not. What is interesting is the fact that Philo and Josephus, Jewish contemporaries of the NT authors, did not follow the LXX but freely used βωμός to designate the altar in the Jerusalem temple.<sup>83</sup> (2) Luke, in making Paul use an altar-inscription as a starting point, was using a well-known literary device of his time.<sup>84</sup> (3) On the issue of whether or not Luke deliberately changed an existing altar-inscription in the plural into the singular form to fit his purpose, van der Horst challenges the general acceptance of the modern commentators<sup>85</sup> and Jerome, who said Luke did make such a change. Based on his previous archaeological and literary argument and separate article titled “A New Altar of a God-fearer?” van der Horst asserts, “It is an untenable position that such inscriptions could not occur.”<sup>86</sup> (4) Denying the possibility of any connection in Luke’s mind between the true God and “an unknown god,” Horst is convinced that the Lukan Paul’s use of the altar-inscription provided him an occasion to emphasize the ignorance of the Athenians regarding the true God of the universe. And this theme is reinforced in v. 30 where Paul says that God has overlooked the times of their ignorance.<sup>87</sup> In all of this, van der Horst’s discussion hinges on the historical accuracy of the altar inscription mentioned in Acts 17:23.

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<sup>83</sup> Pieter van der Horst, “The Altar of the ‘Unknown God’ in Athens (Acts 17:23) and the Cults of ‘Unknown Gods’ in the Graeco-Roman World” in *Hellenism – Judaism – Christianity: Essays on Their Interaction* (Kampen, Netherland: Kok Pharos, 1994): 196–97.

<sup>84</sup> Of this commonly employed literary device of using an altar inscription in the speech or discussion in Luke’s time, van der Horst provides two examples: Ps-Heraclitus’ 4<sup>th</sup> *Epistle* and the 36<sup>th</sup> *Epistle* of Diogenes (ibid., 197).

<sup>85</sup> C. K. Barrett, *Acts*, 2:836–39 supports van der Horst even though he cautions against giving too heavy a theological treatment to Paul’s sentence. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 140–41 relying on Jerome and Pausanius to say Luke did, says Luke’s real interest lies on “unknown—I proclaim” not “in theories about the origins of this ignorance nor about the development of idol worship.” Pervo, *Acts* (433) and Haenchen, *Acts* (521, esp. n. 2) follow basically the same line as Conzelmann.

<sup>86</sup> Van der Horst, “A New Altar,” 198–99.

<sup>87</sup> “Until the coming of the revelation of God’s true nature in Christianity mankind lived in ignorance of him. . . . After Christ’s coming, Luke implies, there is no longer room for altars dedicated to an unknown god because God has now made himself known” (Van der Horst, “A New Altar,” 199–200).

Yet in another article, van der Horst investigates the text in light of Luke's literary structure.<sup>88</sup> Although the first half is somewhat repeated in the second part, van der Horst, arguing that the term ἄγνωστος θεός is ambiguous, lists seven possible ways to understand it.<sup>89</sup> Then he moves on to isolate three for consideration in the way of illuminating Acts 17:23, and the first two are pertinent to our discussion:

First, the term may be a fitting one for the Jewish god from the standpoint of the Greeks because neither any name nor any image was permitted. And yet, this “unknown god” was worshipped by masses of the diaspora Jews scattered over the Hellenistic-Roman world as well as many so-called “God-fearing” Gentiles.<sup>90</sup> Relying on some recent discoveries and discussion, van der Horst suggests that a small and private altar could have been erected either by a diaspora Jew or a Gentile worshiper. In that case, the inscription would be in the singular. Writings by Johannes Lydus<sup>91</sup> and Josephus<sup>92</sup> are also cited to support the idea that there existed the practice among the Jews to speak of their own god as an “unknown one.”

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<sup>88</sup> Pieter van der Horst, “The Unknown God (Acts 17:23),” in *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World* (eds. R. van den Broek et al.; New York: Brill, 1988), 19–42.

<sup>89</sup> For our discussion, his list is worth mentioning: “(1) It may mean a god who is quite well-known to one people but not or not yet known to another, i.e., a foreign deity whose name and function are in principle knowable by asking the people who do know it. (2) It may mean a deity whose name nobody knows either because it has been forgotten (altar-inscriptions may have become unreadable) or because there is no way of knowing which god—maybe even which of the known gods—is the author of either a calamity or of good fortune. (3) Further it may mean: a god unknown to those who did not receive a special initiation or revelation; (4) or unknown or unknowable—ἄγνωστος can have both meanings—to humanity because of the limitations of human knowledge; (5) or in essence unknowable but partially knowable by inference from his work; (6) or unknowable in his positive character but definable by negations; (7) or unknowable but accessible in a *unio mystica*, which is not properly speaking knowledge, being suprarational” (Van der Horst, “The Unknown God,” 35). The last three, notes van der Horst, correspond to the *via analogiae*, the *via negationis*, and the *via mystica* of the later Platonic tradition (cf. 35, n. 67).

<sup>90</sup> Van der Horst, “The Unknown God,” 35–36.

<sup>91</sup> According to van der Horst, Johannes Lydus was “a late antiquarian author who wrote in the middle of the sixth century CE.” Here van der Horst refers to Lydus’ *De mensibus* IV 53, which, in turn, refers to Lucan’s *Pharsalia* II 592–3 (cf. Van der Horst, “The Unknown God,” 36–38).

<sup>92</sup> Josephus in *Contra Apionem* II 167 speaks of the God of Moses: “In his power he is known to us, but in his essence he is unknown” (Van der Horst, “The Unknown God,” 37–38).

Second, the term ἄγνωστος θεός may be read as an expression of doubt concerning the correct name, and even fear, lest one offend any deity by wrongful designation in occasions of war, earthquake, pestilence, etc.<sup>93</sup> He also points to the fact that the first centuries philosophers discussed much about the concept of an unknown deity, which could have led someone to erect an altar to this deity.<sup>94</sup>

Arguing that these aforementioned two positions allow for the possibility that there existed an altar inscription in the singular form, i.e., ἄγνωστῷ θεῷ, van der Horst draws the following important conclusion:

It is not only possible but even highly probable that in Athens (and elsewhere) there were altars to unknown gods. It is also probable that there were more than one of such altars and they may have had different backgrounds. (The one Paul saw need not have been the one(s) seen by Pausanias). It is not improbable that there were altars with descriptions in the singular, though it is likely that they were an exception to the rule, most dedications being in the plural. And, finally, Norden's thesis that the motif of an 'unknown god' is utterly un-Greek and must have been imported from the oriental world, has found no support whatsoever in the present investigation.<sup>95</sup>

In closing, working with archaeological, epigraphic and literary evidences with questions about the historically verifiable nature of Acts 17, van der Horst's three often overlapping articles and the insights therein led him to a positive conclusion to his questions. His conclusion, especially that Paul's reference to the Athenian altar inscription is historically reliable, serves as example *par excellence* to demonstrate how studies done with a similar perspective can illuminate other disciplines as long as we avoid the two extremes of simply ignoring or blindly accepting them.<sup>96</sup> On top of the challenge presented to Dibelius by Gärtner, van der Horst further

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<sup>93</sup> Van der Horst, "The Unknown God," 38–40.

<sup>94</sup> Van der Horst, "The Unknown God," 42, n. 98.

<sup>95</sup> Van der Horst, "The Unknown God," 42.

<sup>96</sup> Edwin Yamauchi, *New Testament*, 19. For a helpful general introduction to the ancient city of Athens, see Jack Finegan, *The Archaeology of the NT: The Mediterranean World of the Early Christian Apostles* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1981), 124–42. Also for a positive discussion in terms of where Paul might have spoken in

demonstrates the unsustainable nature of Dibelius' position that the Areopagus speech was entirely Luke's literary composition.<sup>97</sup> It should be noted once again, however, that despite the differing conclusions to which van der Horst comes, he is asking similar questions of the text, i.e., questions of historical referentiality.

## **2.c. A Sociological Reading<sup>98</sup> through "Audience Studies": Stoics and Epicureans**

We now turn to a group of scholars who raised historical interest yet from another angle. The last quarter of the twentieth century witnessed a birth to yet another fresh field of study, that is, the social world of the early church pioneered by Wayne A. Meeks of Yale, whose editorship over *The Library of Early Christianity* filled a very important gap in the NT student's library. Scholars like David Balch, E. A. Judge, Engberg-Pedersen and Abraham Malherbe<sup>99</sup> also have made significant contributions to this area of study. We will examine three articles dealing with two representative groups of philosophers in Athens: Stoics and Epicureans.

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Athens, see C. J. Hemer's short article "Paul at Athens: A Topographical Note," *NTS* 20 (1974): 341–50. Hemer produced a series of articles based on archaeological-geographical-epigraphic-literary evidences afterwards. For the list, see Joel Green and M. McKeever, *Luke-Acts and NT Historiography* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 104–5. Hemer's more mature summary is found in his *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (WUNT 49; ed. C.H. Gempf; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989).

<sup>97</sup> This was confidently advocated by his followers like Conzelmann, Haenchen, and Vielhauer, who, in turn, said Dibelius provides the "conclusive" proof; see our above discussion on Dibelius.

<sup>98</sup> As a study with its focus on the sociology of early Christianity, this is a very broad term and defies any facile description, let alone definition. NT students are familiar with two representative disciplines: social-historical studies (pioneered by A. J. Malherbe and R. Grant) and social-scientific studies (by G. Theissen and W. Meeks). Bruce Malina and John Pilch have collaborated to produce what they call 'a social-scientific' commentary on the book of Acts. Their work seeks to avoid the common problems of anachronism, which, they contend, has produced "a landscape littered with a layer of intellectual debris that makes the understanding of first-century Jesus groups rather daunting. Much of this debris is due to the sloppy work of modern historians who have allowed anachronism to reign in their explanation of these documents." It is interesting to note that they see the problem of anachronism, not the historical-social gap that lies between the first-century Christians and us, as the main roadblock to an informed reading of the text. (Cf. Bruce Malina and John Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Acts* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008], 1.)

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Wayne A. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1986); David Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1986); E. A. Judge, *Rank and Status in the World of the Caesars and St. Paul* (New Zealand: University of Canterbury, 1982); Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (2000); and Abraham Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989).



2.b.4.a. David L. Balch, “The Areopagus Speech: An Appeal to the Stoic Historian Posidonius against Later Stoics and the Epicureans”

Balch begins with the question: “Why does Luke mention only Epicureans and Stoics in 17:18?” Building upon C.K. Barrett’s suggestion that Luke is preparing the readers for the allusions in the speech,<sup>100</sup> Balch’s overarching concern is to see Paul’s Areopagus speech in light of the Stoicism in its earlier and pure form represented by Posidonius and thus identifying “points of contact between this speech and Posidonian thought.”<sup>101</sup> Posidonius was a Greek empirical scientist who traveled even to Spain about A.D. 100 to investigate the ocean tides and was “the only important philosopher of antiquity known to us who also wrote a political history of his own time.”<sup>102</sup> Based on his investigation into two recent editions of Posidonius’ work and sayings, Balch argues that there are four parallel themes between Posidonius’ works and the Areopagus speech: divine providence in nature, divine providence in history, opposition to image or idol worship in temples, and “sources for the knowledge of God.”<sup>103</sup>

Balch’s thesis that Posidonian texts clarify influence of a Stoic model on the Areopagus speech is further supported by a close investigation into Dio Chrysostom’s *Oration* 12, which is dependent on Posidonius and “presents a Stoic model that was important in producing this

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<sup>100</sup> David L. Balch, “The Areopagus Speech: An Appeal to the Stoic Historian Posidonius against Later Stoics and the Epicureans,” in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians* (eds. David Balch and Everett Ferguson; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 52, 79. Balch refers to Barrett, “Paul’s Speech on the Areopagus,” in *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World* (eds. M. E. Glasswell and E. W. Fashole-Luke; London: SPCK, 1974), 73.

<sup>101</sup> Balch credits Abraham J. Malherbe for suggesting that a study about the Stoic Posidonius would prove fruitful for students studying the Areopagus speech (ibid., 52–53).

<sup>102</sup> Balch, “The Areopagus Speech,” 52–53.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Balch, “The Areopagus Speech,” 54–72. Balch states that the last theme is traced in Dio Chrysostom, *Olympic Oration* 12, a Stoic speech influenced by Posidonius’ presentation of the topic (Balch, “The Areopagus Speech,” 53).

speech, as were the prototypes in the Hebrew Bible.”<sup>104</sup> For example, opposition to forming the divine image found in Acts 17:25 and 29 finds closely parallel ideas in Dio Chrysostom’s *Oration* 12. Whereas somewhat distorted Stoics of later period (including an historical Athenian Stoic audience of the mid-first century C.E.) rejected this true philosophical thought, concludes Balch: “Luke-Acts guards the legitimate philosophical tradition against the Athenians who delight in novelties.”<sup>105</sup> Balch agrees with Wolfgang Nauck that the Areopagus speech “belongs to a category with precedents in Hellenistic-Jewish mission literature.”<sup>106</sup> But he parts with Nauck, claiming the latter is too negative about the possibility of Hellenistic-Stoic models’ influence over the Areopagus speech. For Balch “The form [of the Areopagus speech] is, then, neither strictly Jewish nor exclusively Stoic; it is rather a Jewish form in the process of being Hellenized”<sup>107</sup> and thus he disagrees on Gärtner’s Jewish and Dibelius’ Stoic origin of the speech.

In short, based on the rediscovery of Posidonius, who represents the early, pure Stoicism, Balch’s article suggests that Lukan Paul’s speech confronts the deformed form of Stoicism of the first century Athens and, therefore, Balch seems to stress a possibly positive connection between the Posidonius’ Stoicism and Luke-Acts through the teaching of Luke’s presentation of Paul. Luke, according to Balch, has the purpose of showing that the Christian mission has positive affinities with true or classic Stoicism.

#### *2.b.4.b. Jerome Neyrey, “Acts 17, Epicureans, and Theodicy: A Study in Stereotypes”*

If one of the guiding questions for Balch is how Paul’s sermon compares with the Stoicism

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<sup>104</sup> Balch, “The Areopagus Speech,” 73.

<sup>105</sup> Balch, “The Areopagus Speech,” 79.

<sup>106</sup> Balch, “The Areopagus Speech,” 72; References are made to Wolfgang Nauck, “Die Tradition und Komposition der Areopagrede,” *ZTK* 53 (1956): 11–52. Balch regards Nauck’s article as one of the best treatments of Paul’s speech at Athens.

of the first century Athens, Neyrey's important question has to do with the way Luke characterizes and stereotypes the Epicureans in view of their negative attitude toward Paul's topic of theodicy.<sup>108</sup> His larger concern is to show how the Lukan characterization of the Epicureans prepares his readers to face similar negative reaction or opposition of the world.<sup>109</sup>

According to Neyrey, the doctrine of theodicy as divine providence is the main focus in Acts 17. He analyzes Luke's presentation of that doctrine of theodicy in three elements: (a) a divine judge, (b) survival of death/resurrection, and (c) eschatological retribution. The same idea repeats in the Book of Acts like a formula.<sup>110</sup> Neyrey further claims such thinking was found in traditional teachings of the Stoics but was roundly opposed by the Epicureans.<sup>111</sup> Relying on Luke's alleged employment of stereotype in terms of characterization, which was very common in the literary world of Luke, Neyrey proposes that Luke makes the stereotypical presentation of the Stoics and the Epicureans as following: "Epicureans = Sadducees = Cain vs. Stoics = Pharisees = Abel."<sup>112</sup> Here is his conclusion:

From this analysis, we conclude that Luke has cast the characters and the issues in such a way as to argue that Christian theology belongs to the common, acceptable doctrine of God held by good and reasonable people, whether Hellenistic Stoics or Jewish Pharisees. . . . Luke, then, presents certain aspects of Christian thought (that is, theodicy) in terms acceptable to Greek and Jew alike; he would argue that this

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<sup>107</sup> Balch, "The Areopagus Speech," 73.

<sup>108</sup> Jerome Neyrey, "Acts 17, Epicureans, and Theodicy: A Study in Stereotypes," in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians* (eds. David Balch and E. Ferguson; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 128–29. Theodicy is "[an] argument that God's providential relationship to the world entails a just judgment of mortals, especially a judgment that takes after death, where rewards and punishments are allotted" (ibid., 119).

<sup>109</sup> Neyrey's article is built on his conviction that Luke intends his readers to see the Epicureans as those who mocked Paul as a "babbling" (17:18) and, at the end of Paul's speech, said, "we will hear you again about this" (v. 32), whereas the Stoics "joined him and believed" (v. 34) (Neyrey, "Acts 17," 128).

<sup>110</sup> Neyrey, "Acts 17," 121, 126; cf. Acts 24:10–21 and 23:6–10.

<sup>111</sup> Neyrey, "Acts 17," 124–26.

<sup>112</sup> Neyrey, "Acts 17," 131–33. Neyrey relies on targumic exposition on Gen 4 for Cain and Abel's inclination for theodicy (cf. 131–32). For the contrasting positions assumed by Sadducees and Pharisees, he reads Acts 23:6–10 where Paul likens himself to the after-life believing Pharisees in his defense (cf. ibid., 128–29).

doctrine is orthodox, common, and traditional. . . . [And that the Christian] doctrine is quite in conformity with what all intelligent, good people think.<sup>113</sup>

For what end does Luke present this? By proving wrong the groups who mock (the Epicureans) and dismiss (the Sadducees) Paul and Christians, Luke intends his readers to be sure that the opposing groups' mockery and dismissal confirm the rightness of the opposed. "Comparably," concludes Neyrey, "to find common ground and perhaps endorsement from groups generally considered the guardians of the basic tradition (Stoics and Pharisees) could only transfer that approbation to the new groups of Christians as well."<sup>114</sup>

Contra Kavin Rowe,<sup>115</sup> Neyrey thinks that the charge made against Paul and his fellow Christians as "trouble makers" who "turn the world upside down" in Acts 17:6 must be false.<sup>116</sup> Neyrey's treatment of the important topic of Theodicy, or divine providence, a concept Luke uses to describe God's activities in Acts,<sup>117</sup> offers some fresh insights for the question, "What theological content would Luke's first century audience have heard in this speech Luke has in Acts 17?"<sup>118</sup> Even though Epicureans are referenced by name only here in the entire NT, Neyrey draws our attention to their significance for his argument. His article better equips us to imagine how Luke's original audience might have heard this speech and what Luke was inferring and, therefore, fills our gap as a reader lest we fall prey to anachronism. However, his stress on finding affinity between the Christian teaching about theodicy and the Stoics' seems to lead to a

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<sup>113</sup> Neyrey, "Acts 17," 133–34.

<sup>114</sup> Neyrey, "Acts 17," 134.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in Graeco-Roman Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Rowe's entire book, whose portion we will discuss later, presupposes the verity of this charge in the sense that Christian message demands a radically new way of thinking.

<sup>116</sup> Neyrey, "Acts 17," 133.

<sup>117</sup> His broad discussion on this topic in the Book of Acts is in want.

<sup>118</sup> Such questions of background are also pertinent to a narrative-critical reading, as we shall see below.

biased reading of Acts 17 in failing to see the uniqueness of Paul's presentation of the Christian God in Acts 17.<sup>119</sup>

*2.b.4.c. Scott Bartchy, "Agnōstos Theos: Luke's Message to the "Nations" about Israel's God"*

Bartchy begins his article with a short introduction to Jerome Neyrey's work. He rightly sees that Jerome Neyrey "seeks to show a "fullness of fit" between the Lukan God and a composite description of god-as-provident in Hellenistic thinking" and shows that Luke successfully argued that the "unknown god" mentioned in 17:23 was quite well known after all.<sup>120</sup> In agreement with and building on Neyrey's position, Bartchy's article attempts to answer the question: "If Luke's providential theology sounded familiar to many of his Gentile readers, what was it about his God that they did not yet understand and believe, that Luke sought to communicate to them in the hope of convincing them and changing their behavior?"<sup>121</sup> In other words, Bartchy asks what urged Luke to write Luke-Acts for his implied reader and the particular place of Acts 17 in Luke's narrative purpose.

In answering, Bartchy first rejects the view that Luke's primary concern in the argument had to do with monotheism of Israel in opposition to polytheism of the Gentiles. Writing for the post-Paul generation marked by the rapidly dwindling number of those who grew up knowing Israel's God, Luke rather wanted to communicate the truth that conversion to the "Christian" movement meant to make the commitment to a transformed understanding of "community-

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<sup>119</sup> Like Dibelius, Neyrey says that "What sets Paul's presentation of the Christian God apart from well-known Greek understanding of god is the very issue of Christian Theodicy, the role of Jesus as Judge who will judge all peoples after death to render reward and punishment (17:30–31)" (Neyrey, "Acts 17," 120).

<sup>120</sup> S. Scott Bartchy, "Agnōstos Theos: Luke's Message to the 'Nations' about Israel's God" (SBLSPS 34; Atlanta: Scholars, 1995), 304. (Cf. Jerome Neyrey, "Acts 17": 118–34.)

<sup>121</sup> Bartchy, "Agnōstos Theos," 305.

forming and community-sustaining power.” The focus of conversion lay not in abandoning a polytheistic belief system for embracing the monotheistic faith, but in knowing the true character of God of Israel and the resulting actions through a different lifestyle of practicing justice and mercy, especially toward the socially and economically poor. Bartchy proposes six related theses and elaborates upon them to prove how Luke composed the two-volume work to highlight ‘interpersonal righteousness’ required by Israel’s God, who had been an “unknown god” to this new generation.<sup>122</sup>

Noticing that David Moessner and others find the strong influence of the Deuteronomic Historian on Luke–Acts,<sup>123</sup> Bartchy points out the basic tenet of a Deuteronomic theology is expressed in God’s will by giving the Decalogue saying:

God’s deliverance of an enslaved people became linked essentially with a new notion of community “within which the pyramid of social stratification consigning certain classes to lives of ease and others to relentless suffering and deprivation was to be banned forever.” Fundamental to the Deuteronomist’s conception of God is this God’s profound desire that the people of Israel function as agents of God’s impartiality and love by practicing justice and mercy.<sup>124</sup>

Thus, for Bartchy, understanding the socio-political milieu of Greco-Roman world is critical. Without denying the importance of religious concerns for their life, Bartchy points out that, when it came to matters of individual equality or the practice of *koinonia*, their religious influence did not intersect the social and economic lines. The concepts of equality and fellowship were alien to them because they were familiar with their deities in struggle and strife, and it is not strange that the concept of church had no equivalent in pagan religion. Very little in the previous experience

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<sup>122</sup> Bartchy, “*Agnōstos Theos*,” 305–7.

<sup>123</sup> It is argued among those scholars that Luke patterned the central section of his Gospel (9:51–18:14) after the contents and order of Deut 1–26 LXX (cf. Bartchy, “*Agnōstos Theos*,” 307, nos. 9 and 10).

<sup>124</sup> Bartchy, “*Agnōstos Theos*,” 307. Bartchy cites from Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 23. Deut 10:17–19 and 15:7–8, 10–11 are key passages for the argument.

of the new converts into Christian faith had prepared them for Paul and Luke's vision, "a vision rooted in the First Testament and filtered through traditions of radical inclusiveness with Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>125</sup>

The challenge and difficulty of "getting the message" among the new Gentile Christians provided the major motivation to Luke to compose his two-volume work. In agreement with David Moessner's apt suggestion that Luke's emphasis is predominantly theocentric in the sense that Luke was interested in presenting "what sort of action God is effecting through this person [of Jesus] for the salvation of Israel (and the nations.),"<sup>126</sup> Bartchy identifies three areas in which one can trace how Luke achieved his goal.<sup>127</sup> In conclusion, Bartchy, borrowed Luke's phrase "*Agnōstos Theos*" from Acts 17:23 and explored Luke's socio-political interest in interpersonal righteousness based on Neyrey's argument that Luke successfully argued the "unknown god" was, after all, quite well known especially among the Stoics.

Before we move to some examples of narrative reading of Acts 17, it is noteworthy that Balch, Neyrey, and Bartchy make a significant move away from historical referentiality toward more of a holistic reading the text in terms of Luke-Acts. They are more concerned with a narrative reading of the Areopagus speech in its larger narrative context. However, what seem to be in want in their treatments are close attentions to the speech itself and Luke's narrative notes.

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<sup>125</sup> Bartchy, "*Agnōstos Theos*," 310–14.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

<sup>127</sup> They are: (1) Luke's redactional and compositional touch can be traced by detecting how Luke changed Markan material for his own interest. (2) So is true with material unique to Luke's Gospel such as the story of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19–31) and the parable of the "Great Feast" (14:15–24). Bartchy argues that Luke's point was rooted in his Israelite conception of God who challenges the rich to form God's radically inclusive community even though that meant a willingness to be rejected by their peers. (3) Lastly, Luke employed the familiar language of Hellenistic friendship and went far beyond in order to expand the range of inclusiveness especially in the narratives of Acts whose people were empowered and enabled by God's Spirit (Bartchy, "*Agnōstos Theos*," 315–16).

## 2.c. Narrative Readings

### 2.c.1. A Transition to Literary-Narrative Readings

We noted how Dibelius' comparative study of Luke with his contemporary history writers led to stress Luke's role as the able theologian in not only redacting his sources but also composing many of the speeches in Acts including the Areopagus speech led to divorce between theology and history, and theology and the narrative elements as Gaventa hinted. His own conclusion about Luke dominated his reading of Acts 17. It was Padilla, however, who suggested that one can discern Dibelius' positive contribution to the narrative reading of Acts saying: "To be sure . . . narrative criticism did not develop out of redaction criticism; however, insofar as Dibelius highlighted Luke's ability as a story-teller, he *indirectly* encouraged New Testament critics to take up the methods of narrative criticism so as to exploit the narrational potentialities of Luke's two volumes."<sup>128</sup>

Our preceding investigation into various scholars on Acts 17 shows, in a way, a subtle movement toward literary/narrative reading of our text. Much of Dibelius' gap between theology and history was filled by Gärtner and van der Horst. Balch, Neyrey, and Bartchy strove to read the text in light of Paul's oratee as well as the social milieu of the first-century Greco-Roman world. We have looked at six scholars' varying views, and they fall somewhere between adaptation and assimilation.<sup>129</sup> Again, Bartchy and Neyrey, in particular, seem to work more literarily and narratively insofar as they keep an eye to the concepts available to Luke's implied reader. Therefore, even though it was not the primary goal, a subtle scholarly trajectory leading up to narrative reading of Acts 17 emerged.

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<sup>128</sup> Padilla, *Speeches*, 32–33; italics added.

<sup>129</sup> Dibelius, Balch, and Neyrey are close to the view that Luke('s Paul) assimilated, whereas Gärtner strongly



With that said, we now note an important shift in method. We will summarize the work of two scholars (Kavin Rowe and Joshua Jipp) whose reading represents a significant shift to the text itself in the sense that it permits more autonomy to the text as a way to get to author's meaning for the implied reader. First, however, the wide-ranging work of Mark Given, whom we treat before Rowe and Jipp, works like a bridge in the sense that, while regarding the reading offered by Dibelius and Gärtner as a failure, he gives special attention to the narrative-rhetorical elements of the speech as well as the historical and the social place for both Luke as a writer and Paul as an orator.

### **2.c.2. Mark D. Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric*<sup>130</sup>**

Given's broader, introductory question has to do with the apostle Paul. In particular, Given inquires "where in 'the Greco-Roman humanistic tradition' [Paul's] rhetorical strategies tend to locate him."<sup>131</sup> In asking the question, he holds up two common perspectives<sup>132</sup> on this issue as problematic: (i) Paul's rhetoric bears far more similarities with the philosophic than the sophistic tradition of rhetoric; and (ii) Paul uses recognized rhetorical devices for the purpose of making his discourses as unambiguous and truthful as possible.

Challenging a position taken by H. D. Betz, who argued for a clear-cut binary distinction between philosophic and sophistic rhetoric,<sup>133</sup> Given contends that Plato's Socrates shows the

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took the view that adaptation is shown in Acts 17, and van der Horst and Bartchy somewhere in-between.

<sup>130</sup> Mark D. Given's *Paul's True Rhetoric: Ambiguity, Cunning, and Deception in Greece and Rome* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 2001) was originally his doctoral dissertation presented to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>131</sup> Given, *Rhetoric*, 2.

<sup>132</sup> Given considers that most NT rhetorical criticism would accept these two perspectives at the wake of Hans D. Betz' studies. See Hans D. Betz, *Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition: Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu seiner "Apologie" 2 Korinther 10–13* (BHT 45; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1972) (cf. Given, *Rhetoric*, 2, n. 4).

<sup>133</sup> Given, *Rhetoric*, 11–12.

impossibility of maintaining any such distinction<sup>134</sup> and the same can be said of the very person who initially proposed that distinction, Socrates himself. Socrates, driven by his conviction to enlighten the deceived of his day, felt free to be ambiguous, cunning, and deceptive in his rhetoric. This point is of paradigmatic importance for Given who is convinced that Luke faithfully presents Paul as a new “Socrates”<sup>135</sup> standing on the streets of Athens, driven by his own passion. Given’s description of the historical Paul<sup>136</sup> as a new “Socrates” is telling:

Paul’s sincere conviction that he knew the Truth and had a divine mandate to promote it in an apocalyptic world filled with deception is an important key for explaining the perennial and entirely justified suspicion that his rhetorical strategies are not always irreproachable when judged by philosophical rhetorical ideals.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Given, *Rhetoric*, 15. Given strengthens his position by citing from traditional classicist George Kennedy: “Some modern readers sympathize with philosophy in its dispute with rhetoric. In the former discipline they see devotion to truth, intellectual honesty, depth of perception, consistency, and sincerity; in the later [*sic*], verbal dexterity, empty pomposity, triviality, moral ambivalence, and a desire to achieve self-interest by any means. *The picture is not quite so clear cut.*” (George. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* [rinceton: Princeton University Press, 1994] 9; italics in original.)

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Dennis R. Macdonald, “Classical Greek Poetry and the Acts of the Apostles: Imitations of Euripides’ *Bacchae*,” in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament*, vol 1 (eds. Stanley Porter and Andrew Pitts; Boston: Brill, 2013), 463–96, esp. 488–90. Arguing for ‘mimetic connections between Acts and classical Greek literature,’ Macdonald suggests the following passages as Luke’s employing the Socrates motif: Acts 16:1–8; 19:21–20:1; 22:22–23:11; 24:1–27; 25:1–26:3; 28:12–31.

<sup>136</sup> At this point, it is important to note that Given’s discussion throughout the book keeps switching between the “historical Paul” and “Lukan Paul,” and Paul and Luke, but without confusion as his following statements reveal: “. . . [I]n both the narrative framework and the speech, Paul is standing in the midst, betwixt and between, or as Barthes would say, ‘in that space where no language has a hold over any other, where languages circulate (keeping the circular sense of the term).’

“And so is Luke. One only need inquire about the genre of Acts to realize this. Is Acts an attempt to imitate and extend ‘biblical’ history, a specimen of Hellenistic historiography, an institutional history, or the first Christian novel? Surely it was all of these and more, and that is why Pervo is on the right track when he calls it a historical novel. . . . the quintessential expression of the *eclectic* tendencies of the Hellenistic age.” (Given, *Rhetoric*, 42–43; italics added. Cf. Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text,” in *Image-Music-Text* [New York: Hill & Wang, 1978], 164.)

<sup>137</sup> Given, *Rhetoric*, 4; emphasis original. On top of his challenge to the accepted, positive views on Paul, Given also challenges canonization, which, functioning as a strategy of “prophylactic containment,” is responsible for production of extreme, mutually exclusive, ‘either/or,’ approaches to points of view exemplified by Dibelius and Gärtner on the study of Acts 17. Given proposes to divest any protective canonical or ecclesiastical veil of ‘Saint’ Paul for objective assessment because Given is convinced that the accusation raised by Paul’s enemies holds some truth. Given takes seriously the position that Paul was “accused by enemies both inside and outside his own congregations of speaking and acting in a veiled, opportunistic, and not completely trustworthy manner.” (Cf. Given, *Rhetoric*, 3; see 42 for Given’s further discussion about the “totalizing exclusivity” of Dibelius and Gärtner’s reading of Acts 17 as their main defect).

Given employs the term “eclecticism” to describe Luke’s genius in writing and his intentional use of ambiguity in Acts 17 and Given himself employs “eclecticism” throughout. Even though he denies the possibility for narrowing down Luke’s genre to exclusively one, he is of the opinion that what influenced Luke the most was Greek Tragedy with a theatrical component. By highlighting ambiguity in Lukan Paul’s speech at Athens, which is tragedy’s most characteristic feature, Given wants to drive home the point that Luke was influenced by Greek Tragedy throughout his writing.<sup>138</sup> Thus, Luke makes Paul “stand in the middle where and when Luke’s intertextual worlds collide and coalesce — Socrates and the Septuagint, Theodorus and Theophilus, Theios and Theos.”<sup>139</sup>

According to Given, there are two levels of understanding to bear in mind when reading Acts 17: “That of the oratees who are inquisitive and philosophically inclined pagans, and that of the narratee, Theophilus, who, like the implied reader, is now, on the basis of his reading of Acts up to this point, as insider.”<sup>140</sup> This distinction is insightful and is one of the distinct contributions of a narrative-critical approach for reading any speech text. The beauty of making such a distinction is to see that, for example, while the Athenian oratees might naively take an ambivalent word like δεισιδαιμονέστερος (superstitious or very religious) as a compliment, the

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<sup>138</sup> Given, *Rhetoric*, 43–44. Cf. *ibid.*, 40 for similarity and parallelism between Theos, Theodorus, and Paul’s Areopagus speech. Even though a historian like Dibelius denied the possibility of interconnection for the lack of sufficient evidence, Given sees the strong possibility of connection between Luke and Euripides’ *Bacchae* both verbally, thematically and structurally. Given cites from Tomas Hägg: “Whoever wrote the first Greek novel did not create it out of nothing. Like his successors within the new genre, he was strongly influenced by what he had read and heard: by epic, historiography, and tales of travel, by drama and erotic poetry, by the rhetoric of his time.” (Given, *Rhetoric*, 43; cf. Tomas Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983], 109.)

<sup>139</sup> Given, *Rhetoric*, 46.

<sup>140</sup> Given, *Rhetoric*, 68–69; for an example of a scholarly work not making this distinction, see Andrew M. Mbuvi, “Missionary Acts, Things Fall Apart: Modeling Mission in Acts 17:15–34 And a Concern for Dialogue in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*,” *Ex Auditu* 23 (2007): 140–56.

narratee can detect the irony and thus discern what “Paul” really meant by it. What is left with the reader is the task both of deciding how the oratees would take this ambiguity and how the narrator would expect his narratee to understand it. Contra the Athenians’ inability to recognize Paul as a new Socrates, the narratee has the advantage of sharing with the narrator’s acumen. He is thus made aware of the orator’s ability to address his audience with tongue in cheek, and he is on the lookout for even more ambiguities.<sup>141</sup>

Another example Given discusses in terms of the Lukan Paul’s intentional ambiguity is his reference to the altar dedication “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD” in v. 23. Given says, “Ἄγνοέω has both a positive and negative connotation. It can mean a straightforward, non-culpable epistemic failure resulting in a lack of knowledge, or a culpable moral failure of acting ignorantly in regard to what is right, to act amiss.”<sup>142</sup> Which one did Paul mean? According to Given, not either/or but both/and. Paul through this word keeps his oratees in confusion not knowing whether they are being excused or accused of ignorance.<sup>143</sup>

Given’s thick and often provocative<sup>144</sup> argument in *Paul’s Rhetoric* stimulates a new level of scholarly conversation and debate. His stress on Paul’s intentional use of ambiguity and irony “like Socrates” and the role left to Luke’s implied reader are new and fresh for our discussion. Therefore, Given’s work serves as a transition from approaches that are driven primarily (though

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<sup>141</sup> Given, *Rhetoric*, 68–70.

<sup>142</sup> Given, *Rhetoric*, 71. Given refers to Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed. with rev. supp.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 11–12.

<sup>143</sup> Given, *Rhetoric*, 72.

<sup>144</sup> Given, for example, attributes Paul’s characteristics of being ambiguous, cunning, and deceptive to the character of God he serves. In other words, Paul’s rhetorical dimensions are theologically oriented because “Paul’s apocalyptic God is truly unsearchable and inscrutable (Rom 11:33); a mysterious, ambiguous, and finally *sophistic* God, who cares enough to be cunning and is devoted enough to be deceptive. Of that God, Paul is the True Apostle” (Given, *Rhetoric*, 181).

not exclusively) by questions of historical accuracy and referentiality, to readings that attend more to Acts 17 as a part of a coherent narrative.

### **2.c.3. Two Narrative Readings by C. Kavin Rowe and Joshua W. Jipp**

C. Kavin Rowe in his *World Upside Down* challenges a dominant position of Acts' exegetes since C. A. Heumann's article of 1720, namely, that the Acts of the Apostles was written to argue "for the political possibility of a harmonious existence between Rome and the early Christian movement."<sup>145</sup> Rowe's bold departure from that dominant reading reflects the Barthian insight that God, as the measure of all things, is generative not derivative.<sup>146</sup> Therefore, argues Rowe, belief in a doctrine of God or theology always and by inner necessity involves a total way of life. The collision between (emerging) Christianity and paganism as frequently recorded in Acts is a concomitant phenomenon as Luke narrates how the early Christians held on to full divine understandings.<sup>147</sup> Luke wrote his two-volume narrative neither simply to defend the potentially innocuous nature of the Christian faith nor only to demur against false accusation. Rather, Luke's account asserts that converting to the God of the Christians meant "an extraction or removal from constitutive aspects of pagan culture" enabled through the salvation of God that comes through Jesus Christ as a revelation to the Gentiles. Having said that, Rowe proposes four especially illuminating instances of collision resulted from the reconfiguration of divine identity: the accounts of the Christian mission in Lystra (Acts 14:8–19), Philippi (Acts 16:16–24), Athens

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<sup>145</sup> K. Rowe, *World*, 3. Even though Rowe wrote a separate article, "The Grammar of Life: The Areopagus Speech and Pagan Tradition," *NTS* 57 (2010): 31–50, I chose to work contained in this book simply because, in the latter, one can see his treatment within the larger narrative context of [Luke-] Acts, a similar attempt to mine. Suffice it to say that, in the former, Rowe opposes the long, traditional reading of this speech as a 'translation' of Christian theological convictions into a pagan philosophical framework and proposes to read it as a fundamentally Christian grammar (cf. Rowe, "Grammar of Life," 49). We have briefly noted Heumann's position functions as Gärtner's basic premise of his work in terms Luke's apologetic motive of writing the Book of Acts, that is, defending Paul.

<sup>146</sup> Contra Feuerbach and Freud; cf. Rowe, *World*, 17.

<sup>147</sup> Rowe, *World*, 17.

(17:16–34), and Ephesus (19:18–40).<sup>148</sup> We will focus on here on Rowe’s reading of Acts 17:16–34.

Rowe regards Dibelius’ earlier view that Paul’s speech at Athens is more Stoic than Christian as the result of ignoring “the basic interpretive moves through which Luke places pagan traditions within a different hermeneutical context and thereby transforms their meaning,”<sup>149</sup> Rowe emphasizes especially the following narrative markers that Luke carefully placed to set the stage (17:16–21): κατείδωλος (cause of Paul’s distress [παρωξύνετο] prior to the speech), σπερμολόγος (the Athenian philosophers’ derogatory designation of Paul) and ἐπιλαμβάνομαι (a word to be taken as “to seize” to recount the infamous trial of Socrates).<sup>150</sup>

In terms of his analysis of the actual content of the speech, Rowe emphasizes five interconnected features. (1) Acts 17:22, as widely taken by modern scholars, serves as an excellent example of *captatio benevolentiae* (winning of goodwill/favor of the audience) which Paul under threat, utilizes to win the goodwill of the audience, even though Luke’s ambiguous intention to use of δεισιδαιμονέστερος (either “very religious” or “superstitious”) should be regarded as ambiguous. (2) The Lukan Paul tactfully makes a literary detour to deflect the charge of bringing in a new deity; he does so by employing an Athenian altar inscription. (3) Then, Paul immediately moves to the implications of understanding God as the Lord and maker of all things, thus precluding any effort to fashion the divine in merely human terms, an idolatrous common practice which some learned Greek philosophers like Socrates and Seneca also strove in vain to purify. (4) Luke’s further development of Paul’s critique of Athenian idolatry is done by co-opting Graeco-Roman religio-philosophical knowledge into the biblical story. And (5) a dramatic

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<sup>148</sup> Rowe, *World*, 18.

<sup>149</sup> Rowe, *World*, 27.

<sup>150</sup> Rowe, *World*, 27–33.

turn from critique of pagan idolatry to God in repentance is offered in 17:30 with an emphatic *vũv* (now).<sup>151</sup>

According to Rowe, what is a key to proper understanding of this seemingly “Stoic” Areopagus speech is not to miss Luke’s change of interpretive context into that which “stretches from Gen 1 through the resurrection of Jesus to the last day (ἡμέρα, v. 31).” Instead of translating the gospel into pagan philosophical terms, Luke narrates how Paul’s speech points out the need to abandon the interpretive framework of Graeco-Roman philosophy for a new framework by becoming a Christian. This is a politically charged speech as it issues a call for a turn from the pagan religious habitus as ignorant idolatry to the δικαιοσύνη (righteousness) of the God of Israel (v. 31).<sup>152</sup>

Joshua Jipp offers yet another example of narrative analysis on Acts 17.<sup>153</sup> Abandoning the often “radically incongruous,” either/or readings between a placid, accommodating, and pantheistic sermon on natural theology (Dibelius and his followers), and a scathing and severely critical demonization of Gentile religion (Gärtner), Jipp proposes that Luke has a twofold agenda of critique and promotion in presenting Paul’s sermon: “(1) to narrate the complete incongruity between the Christian movement and gentile religion . . . and (2) to exalt the Christian movement as comprising the best features of Greco-Roman philosophical sensibilities and therefore as a superior philosophy.”<sup>154</sup> Jipp calls the speech simultaneously *conventional* in its dealing with usual topics resonating with Graeco-Roman thought, and *radical* in the sense that it boldly co-

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<sup>151</sup> Rowe, *World*, 33–39.

<sup>152</sup> Rowe, *World*, 39–41.

<sup>153</sup> Joshua W. Jipp, “Paul’s Areopagus Speech of Acts 17:16–34 as Both Critique *and* Propaganda,” *JBL* 131 (2012): 567–88.

<sup>154</sup> Jipp, “Areopagus Speech,” 567–68.

opts the best aspects of Hellenistic philosophy, and claims the Christian movement alone to be their proper locus and the resurrected Jesus Christ to be the Lord of heaven and earth.<sup>155</sup>

In view of the narrative setting for the speech (17:16–21), Jipp adopts a similar position taken by Rowe in *World Upside Down*, arguing that Luke has presented that Paul is on trial as “Socrates redivivus (reborn).” Simply stated, the Paul who was provoked in Athens by “a luxuriant forest of idols” (v. 16) was arrested for introducing new gods (vv. 17–20), and Jipp discerns “a mock trial scene between Christianity and Hellenistic philosophy” based on four cues.<sup>156</sup> Equally important to note is Luke’s referencing of a well-known stereotype, namely, the Athenians’ fabled curiosity.<sup>157</sup> Dibelius’ failure to take this literary context (17:16–21), says Jipp, was the cause for his mistaken reading.<sup>158</sup> For him Luke uses this speech to criticize pagan religiosity based on a Septuagintal context and to legitimate the early Christian movement as a superior and more consistent form of philosophical knowledge of the divine.<sup>159</sup> The centrality of the resurrection of Jesus in the speech is found in that “Luke has bracketed the speech (17:18, 32) and ended the challenge that the risen Jesus presents to pagan religion.”<sup>160</sup>

## **2.d. Conclusion:**

Among the many number of scholars who attempted to read and analyze Acts 17 from various angles or perspectives, we have singled out only a select number of scholars to see how one’s choice of a particular reading methodology leads to different conclusions. Between

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<sup>155</sup> Jipp, “Areopagus Speech,” 568–69; italics added.

<sup>156</sup> They are: intellectual contempt as the initial reaction to Paul’s preaching (v. 18), similar, serious accusation against Paul and Socrates (v. 18b), arresting and bringing before the Areopagus (v. 19a), and the role of the Areopagus as the Athenian tribunal (cf. Jipp, “Areopagus Speech,” 570–74).

<sup>157</sup> Jipp, “Areopagus Speech,” 574–75.

<sup>158</sup> Jipp, “Areopagus Speech,” 575.

<sup>159</sup> Jipp, “Areopagus Speech,” 581.

<sup>160</sup> Jipp, “Areopagus Speech,” 587.



Dibelius' both historical<sup>161</sup> and theological<sup>162</sup> emphases based on a redaction-critical assessment and Gärtner's historical, theological,<sup>163</sup> and narrative reading, and more recent works focusing on literary features by Given, Rowe, and Jipp, we have found a wide range of readings.<sup>164</sup> Each of them whom we investigated has something to contribute toward a greater appreciation of the complexities within our chosen pericope. Paula Fredriksen said, "Once method determines our perspective on our sources, *how* we see is really what we get."<sup>165</sup> Therefore, Tannehill rightly suggests that methodological pluralism should be encouraged, as "each method will have blind spots that can only be overcome through another approach."<sup>166</sup>

Our previous discussion on scholars made it evident that Paul's Areopagus speech has been one of the most studied texts in the NT. Earlier discussion often centered on historical concerns of the speech, summarized in the question: "Was the Paul who spoke at Athens the Paul of the

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<sup>161</sup> Dibelius tried to do away from his predecessors' interest in Luke as a historian. However, for his overall approach historical referentiality was important.

<sup>162</sup> Dibelius' theological emphasis is evident in his stress on Luke as an able theologian who can skillfully pen his Christian ideology in Acts. A similar point can be said of Conzelmann, one of his followers, in his *Theology of St. Luke*, 209–18.

<sup>163</sup> This is because he stressed the concept of "natural revelation."

<sup>164</sup> Patrick Gray offers following helpful summary of his survey: "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 natural theology rooted in Stoic thought (M. Dibelius, "Paul on the Areopagus") as a Christian sermon aimed at Gentiles yet steeped in biblical language and thought Patterns (Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech*), as a gauge of Luke's reliability as a historian (Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* and N. B. Stonehouse, *Paul Before the Areopagus*), as a source for reconstructing Paul's missionary *modus operandi* (Stephen G. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973), and as evidence for or against its Pauline authorship vis-à-vis the Epistles (Philipp Vielhauer, "On the 'Paulinism' of Acts")—and this sampling is by no means exhaustive." (Patrick Gray, "Implied Audiences in the Areopagus Narrative," 205–6.)

<sup>165</sup> Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 7. This is quoted in Todd Penner's "Contextualizing Acts," in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse* (eds. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele [Boston: E. J. Brill, 2004]), 1. Penner says that "The early Christian book of Acts serves as an interesting test case for this conclusion, as the various methods used and results obtained from well over a century of study illustrate the widespread diversity of interpretive strategies for reading Lukan narrative" (cf. *ibid.*, 1).

<sup>166</sup> Robert Tannehill, *Narrative*, 2:4.

Letters?”<sup>167</sup> More recent scholarship has shifted from a primary emphasis on historical questions to literary aspects of Acts 17 as part of a larger narrative. Two factors emerged thus far as a result of our survey. Though divided, one nearly unanimous conviction of the scholars we surveyed is its strategically important location within the Book of Acts and larger context, that is, Luke-Acts. Second, as of yet there has not emerged a full narrative-critical analysis that seeks to show how Acts 17 contributes to Luke’s larger themes and, as chapter two will argue, especially to the somewhat neglected theme of knowledge-ignorance. We now turn to a brief discussion about how that reading would be done, a methodological procedure.

### **III. An Overview of Narrative Criticism As the Major Methodological Procedure**

In order to analyze Acts 17 in light of Luke’s overarching goals a narrative critical approach will be applied. As Mark Given points out, the historical-critical method was destined to fail in specifically appreciating the text’s narrative subtlety and sophistication because its investigations of narrational and rhetorical elements only played a subservient role, preoccupied with its zealous pursuit of the historical referent as to whether the Paul who speaks here is the Paul of the letters.<sup>168</sup> As valid as this question might be, it can overshadow the equally valid question of how “Paul” and his speech function in the coherent narrative that is Luke-Acts.

The historical-critical scholars were also not concerned to assume the positions of the implied reader.<sup>169</sup> By contrast, a narrative-critical interpretation of the Areopagus speech will require us to take up a position that carefully distinguishes between the oratees of the speech in

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<sup>167</sup> Mark Given, “Not Either/Or But Both/And in Paul’s Areopagus Speech,” *Biblical Interpretation* 3 (1995): 356.

<sup>168</sup> M. Given, “Not Either,” 356–57.

<sup>169</sup> Thus they do not take into consideration the fact that, by the time the reader reaches Paul’s speech, “the reader already knows that the author of Acts is fascinated by the polysemic nature of words and the way a word or expression can mean one thing to the speaker and quite another to the audience (e. g. Jesus and *Anastasia* as recently

the story—a group of inquisitive and philosophically inclined pagans who are uninformed outsiders in relation to Christianity—and the narratee—Theophilus—who is the implied reader, an informed insider on the basis of his initial reading of Luke/Acts to this point in the narrative.<sup>170</sup> Having noted a transition to more narrative-sensitive readings, especially in the work of Rowe and Jipp, a brief, introductory discussion on narrative approach is in order.

C.H. Talbert and Norman Petersen pioneered narrative inquiries into Luke-Acts in the 1970s.<sup>171</sup> While the former took interest in structural patterns such as parallelism, chiasmic arrangement, and other literary devices, the latter was more focused on poetic function and on how linear elements and repetitive cycles form the narrative plot.<sup>172</sup> In the 1980s, Tannehill and other scholars, extensively borrowing skills and insights from non-biblical literary criticism, investigated “the narrative as an interactive whole in terms of plotlines, gaps, redundancies, characterization, irony, narrative points of view, and more—terminology drawn from the literary criticism known as ‘narratology.’”<sup>173</sup> For Lukan scholarship, in particular, the publication of Tannehill’s much celebrated, two-volume work *Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* marks a scholarly move toward a more encompassing methodology termed as “narrative criticism.” In Tannehill’s words: “I am convinced that accents will be differently placed and questions differently posed if Luke-Acts is approached as a unified narrative with the help of narrative criticism.”<sup>174</sup>

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as 17:18).” (Cf. Given, “Not Either,” 370.)

<sup>170</sup> Given, “Not Either,” 357, 363.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. C.H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (SBLMS, 20; Missoula: Scholars, 1974); and Norman Petersen, *Literary Criticism for NT Critics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

<sup>172</sup> Patrick Spencer, *Rhetorical Texture and Narrative Trajectories of the Lukan Galilean Ministry Speeches: Hermeneutical Appropriation by Authorial Readers of Luke-Acts* (LNTS 341; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 9.

<sup>173</sup> Spencer, *Rhetorical Texture*, 9–10. Also see Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (trans. Christine van Boheemen; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

<sup>174</sup> Tannehill, *Unity* 1:1.

Narrative criticism is a discipline under “literary criticism,” which is to be separated from the older *Literarkritik* whose proper English name would be “source criticism.” The latter is a discipline that “operates by asking how the text came to be in the first place and whether it is made up from a diversity of underlying sources.”<sup>175</sup> What the English-speaking world now knows as “literary criticism” emphasizes “aesthetic appreciation of texts. . . . It works with the text as it now lies before us and self-consciously rejects as irrelevant (or even historically inaccurate) hypotheses of earlier stages underlying the present text.”<sup>176</sup> According to Barton, the method of *Literarkritik* approach is “excavative,” meaning it is a kind of literary archaeology because of its “tendency to look at earlier strata in the text rather than at the text that has come down to us.” Another way of distinguishing between *Literarkritik* and literary criticism would be in terms of *diachronic* and *synchronic*. “A diachronic (through time) reading of a text is one concerned with how the text came to be, whereas a synchronic (contemporaneous) reading looks at the text just as it meets us in the present.”<sup>177</sup> Mark Powell makes a similar distinction and yet is more cautious about their relationship:

Literary criticism is more likely to describe the meaning of a text in terms of what it communicates between its author and reader, and historical criticism is more likely to describe its meaning in terms of its origin and process of development. Still these insights will not necessarily be contradictory and so potential exists for the two models to be used in ways that are distinctive but complementary.<sup>178</sup>

Emphasizing the importance of the questions exegetes ask as they tend to determine the answers, Elizabeth Malbon points out that the dominant question for the NT readers for almost

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<sup>175</sup> John Barton, “Reflections on Literary Criticism,” in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Peterson* (Society of Biblical Literature: Atlanta, 2009), 523.

<sup>176</sup> Barton, “Reflections,” 525.

<sup>177</sup> Barton, “Reflections,” 525.

<sup>178</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 10.

twenty centuries has been “What does the text mean?” a theological question. A new question raised by most NT scholars since the nineteenth century has been “What *did* the text mean?”<sup>179</sup> Yet a newer question by many NT scholars in the United States roughly during the last quarter of the twentieth century and on has been a literary question: “*How* does the text [as it stands] mean?”<sup>180</sup> A paradigm shift in biblical studies was made from external or referential meaning to internal meaning asking new questions such as “How do various literary patterns enable the text to communicate meaning to its hearers and readers? How do the interrelated characters, settings, and actions of the plot contribute to a narrative’s meaning for the reader?”<sup>181</sup>

Therefore, according to Powell, narrative criticism tends to view the text, which is one of the three components in literary criticism, as an entire communication that embodies all three components (sender, message, and receiver which are referred as “implied author-narrative-implied reader”) considering the issues of the real author and the real reader “as lying outside the parameters of the text itself.”<sup>182</sup> As such, narrative criticism is a more text-centered, descriptive

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<sup>179</sup> Elizabeth Malbon, “Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?” in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (eds. Janice Anderson and Stephen Moore; 2d ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 29; italics in original. She argues that as a pursuit for referential meaning “What *did* the text mean?” has been one common driving question asked by three related disciplines: source: “What did the text mean in its original context?”; form: “For its author?”; and redaction criticism: “To its first hearers or readers?” (Ibid., 29–30.)

<sup>180</sup> Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 29; italics in original. The following brief presentation of Malbon on Seymour Chatman further illuminates this question: “The distinction between story and discourse that was highlighted by literary critic Seymour Chatman has proved useful to narrative critics. Story is the *what* of a narrative; discourse is the *how*. Story indicates the content of the narrative, including events, characters, and settings, and their interaction as the plot. Discourse indicates the rhetoric of the narrative, how the story is told. The four canonical Gospels, for example, share a similar (although not identical) story of Jesus, but the discourse of each Gospel is distinctive. The story is where the characters interact; the discourse is where the implied author and implied reader interact. Story and discourse are not really separable. What we have, in Chatman’s words, is the story-as-discoursed. It is this about which narrative critics ask, How does the text mean?” (ibid., 32)

<sup>181</sup> Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 30. Malbon says that thinking of the old and familiar in a new way is a challenge this paradigm shift demands to take up. When the challenge is met and new questions are addressed, a new reading emerges. She shares the following as an example of what this new approach yields to the study of Mark: “The writer of Mark is no longer a cut-and-paste editor but an author with control over the story he narrates. The Jesus of Mark is no longer a shadowy historical personage but a lively character. Galilee and Jerusalem are no longer simply geographical references but settings for dramatic action. The account of Jesus’ passion (suffering and death) is no longer the source of theological doctrine but the culmination of a dramatic and engaging plot” (30).

<sup>182</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 19–20.

approach rather than rhetorical critic's "a purely reader-centered (pragmatic) type of criticism."<sup>183</sup> Sharing its common interest with rhetorical criticism "in discerning the effect that a work has on its reader and in explicating why it has this effect," narrative criticism "however, employs a concept of the reader that makes it a more text-centered approach" by interpreting the text from an idealized implied reader's perspective.<sup>184</sup>

Elizabeth Malbon lists five essential narrative elements or aspects of narratives: implied author and implied reader, characters, settings, plot, and rhetoric.<sup>185</sup> We shall offer a brief discussion of each in turn.

### **3.a. Implied Author and Implied Reader:**

According to Malbon, the conventional framework for approaching texts ("author-text-reader") based on the communication model ("sender-message-receiver") proved to be inadequate for narrative analysis because author and reader cannot be viewed "as isolated entities but as poles of a continuum of communication."<sup>186</sup> The theoretical and conceptual development of the "implied author" and "implied reader" arises from the awareness of this inadequacy. "An implied author, a creation of the real author that is implied in his or her text, presents a narrative to an implied reader, a parallel creation of the real author that is embedded in the text, and a narrator tells a story to a narratee."<sup>187</sup> In other words, the "implied author" is a literary version of the "real author," "which the reader comes to know through the process of reading the story of

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid. The phrase "rhetorical criticism" is Powell's. There is no agreed-upon terminology for denoting these various reading strategies that are included under the broad umbrella of modern "literary criticisms."

<sup>184</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 15.

<sup>185</sup> Joel Green proposes different set of narrative elements: sequence, staging, time, characterization, perspective, insider information, and intertextuality (Joel B. Green, "Narrative Criticism," in *Method for Luke* [ed. Joel B. Green; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 95–98).

<sup>186</sup> Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 32.

<sup>187</sup> Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 32–33.

the narrative... [while as] the ‘narrator,’ in turn, is the voice, or invisible speaker, the reader hears as he or she moves through the story, the one who tells the reader the story.” Since we have a “reliable narrator” in four Gospels, however, the Gospel readers are not to be too concerned with making a distinction between the implied author and the narrator.<sup>188</sup>

John Darr raises an important warning concerning the issue of the implied reader. He suggests that, if historical critics’ overconfidence lay in identifying the purpose and “community” or *Sitz im Leben* of Luke-Acts based on their “rather naïve and ultimately inconclusive attempts to identify Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1),” the potential danger for literary critics lies on oversimplifying the task of identifying readers. Pointing out the common tendency even among those who claim to be audience-oriented interpreters, Darr emphatically states: “*The reader cannot be found by looking only to the critic, the text or the extratext, for readers are in fact the products of a complex interaction among all three factors.*”<sup>189</sup> Darr’s warning against any simplistic understanding of a reader (the implied reader) is telling as the implied reader, as is the case for the implied author, is not a flesh-and-blood person but a heuristic construct. In Kingsbury’s words:

The implied reader is an imaginary person who is to be envisaged . . . as responding to the text at every point with whatever emotion, understanding, or knowledge the text really ideally calls for. Or to put it differently, the implied reader is that imaginary person in whom the intention of the text is to be thought of as always

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<sup>188</sup> Jack Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 31. According to Kingsbury, even though the distinction between the implied author and narrator is important for literary theorists as “a narrator can prove himself or herself to be ‘unreliable’ . . . when the narrator does not espouse the same system of ideas, values, or beliefs that sustains and informs the story,” in case of the four canonical Gospels the narrators are in full accord with the implied authors and thus they are reliable narrators. The same can be said of the Book of Acts.

<sup>189</sup> John Darr, *Character Building: The Reader And The Rhetoric of Characterization In Luke-Acts* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 23–25; italics in original. Recognizing the inescapable subjectivity inserted into reading experience, Darr argues that “[t]o some degree, *the* reader is always *my* reader, a projection of my own experience of reading the text.” He lists subjective factors such as gender, class, social setting, education, age, vocation, and ideological orientation (25; emphasis in original). He further refers in his note to the work of Fowler (1983:46–49) for more insightful comments on inevitable subjectivity (cf. Darr, *Character Building*, 177, n. 13).

reaching its fulfillment. . . . [I]mplied reader is the one who is silently and invisibly present throughout.<sup>190</sup>

What becomes important when we consider the complex issue of the implied reader and the implied author in actual reading process is discerning a proper “evaluative point of view,” a way of conceiving reality, or a particular way of judging or looking at things. Kingsbury suggests that, in the Gospels “God’s evaluative point of view . . . has been established by the implied author as normative.”<sup>191</sup> Throughout Acts, the implied author’s one persistent evaluative point of view would be one’s “ability to *discern* and *embrace* God’s salvation as it is revealed in Jesus or proclaimed by the other protagonists in the narrative.”<sup>192</sup>

Mark Powell offers some concrete suggestions for describing the implied reader in his “Expected and Unexpected Readings of Matthew: What the Reader Knows.” He identifies four types of desired knowledge the implied reader is supposed to have. These insights can help real human readers avoid any “unexpected readings”:<sup>193</sup> (i) “universal knowledge”; (ii) “knowledge revealed in the narrative”; (iii) “the knowledge related to the spatial/temporal/social setting of the narrative”; and (iv) “the knowledge of other literature that is cited (by reference or allusion)

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<sup>190</sup> Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 38. Matthew Skinner’s following definition of the “implied reader” (=the reader) drawing from John Darr’s discussion renders helpful insight: “The readers referred to in the discussions that follow are not actual people, not flesh-and-blood readers of any particular historical and cultural circumstances. *The reader* is a cipher for the collection of knowledge and expectations-conscious and unconscious-brought to bear on Luke-Acts with an interest in the text’s functions and significance as a narrative. This is consistent with John A. Darr’s description of a reader as a “heuristic construct” created by the biblical critic: “a *hybrid* reader, part ancient, part modern, part reader, part critic.” (Matthew L. Skinner, *Locating Paul: Places of Custody as Narrative Settings in Acts 21–28* [Academica Biblica 13; Atlanta: SBL, 2003], 16; cf. John Darr, *On Character Building*, 25–26.)

<sup>191</sup> Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 34.

<sup>192</sup> Patrick Gray, “The Areopagus Narrative,” 211; italics added.

<sup>193</sup> An “unexpected reading,” preferred over to “misreading” for its pejorative labeling, “is one that would not be adopted by a narrative’s implied reader. Unexpected readings are not necessarily undesirable or wrong.” (Mark Powell, “Expected and Unexpected Readings of Matthew: What the Reader Knows,” *The Asbury Theological Journal*, vol. 48 no.2 [1993]: 48, n. 7.)



within the narrative.”<sup>194</sup> Therefore, if real readers desire to have the kind of reading expected of its implied reader, they would sometimes have to set aside their own knowledge. In brief, too much and too little knowledge as well as real reader’s hermeneutical bias can hinder obtaining the proper reading and result in an “unexpected reading.”<sup>195</sup>

Powell’s following observation that contrasts the implied readers of Matthew and Luke presents an example of “expected reading” and “unexpected reading”:

In Luke’s story, as we have seen, the implied reader is actually moved to feel sympathy for the religious leaders instead of the intense antipathy created in Matthew’s narrative. . . . Luke tells his story differently because he has a different point to make. In Luke’s narrative, the religious leaders contribute to the overall effect of the narrative by demonstrating a tragic response to the protagonist Jesus, who nevertheless refuses to give up hope for them. . . . If Luke sometimes makes the leaders look bad, it is not to highlight the greatness of Christ’s victory in defeating them, but the greatness of his mercy in forgiving them. Accordingly, the impact of Luke’s story on the implied reader is every bit as profound as Matthew’s, but it is a different impact. The lasting images in this story are of Jesus weeping over his enemies’ failure to accept the peace he brings (19:41–44) and, finally, of Jesus nailed to the cross, praying, still, for their forgiveness.<sup>196</sup>

### **3.b. Characters:**

Characters form an obvious narrative element as a story is about actions carried out by someone—the characters.<sup>197</sup> A conventional way of discussing characters in literary studies would be in terms of character traits. Referring to persistent personal qualities, traits are usually revealed in the process of showing, even though the narrator sometimes may occasionally

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<sup>194</sup> Powell, “Expected and Unexpected Readings,” 31–32.

<sup>195</sup> Powell, “Expected and Unexpected Readings,” 43.

<sup>196</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 67. The warning against using the historical and cultural knowledge of the first century for the purpose of reconstructing historical event rather than simply understanding the text is expressed by Powell in *Narrative Criticism*, 74, and for that Powell refers to D. Rhoads’ early article “Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark,” *JAAR* 50 (1982): 413.

<sup>197</sup> Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 34.

employ explicit adjectives such as “righteous” and thus uses the technique of telling to reveal traits.<sup>198</sup> Based on their traits, there can be (1) *round* characters with a variety of potentially conflicting traits (Jesus and his disciples in Luke’s Gospel), (2) *flat* characters with consistent and predictable traits (the religious leaders in Mark),<sup>199</sup> and (3) *stock* characters with a single trait who perform a perfunctory role in the story.<sup>200</sup> Another way to speak of characters is in terms of *static* (Jesus) or *dynamic* (the disciples especially in Luke-Acts).<sup>201</sup>

“The implied reader of the story-as-discoursed is frequently invited to admire, judge, or identify with the characters”<sup>202</sup> of different traits carefully portrayed in the narrative by the implied author. Powell speaks of the largely three different kinds of imagination or participation in reading the story for an implied reader: empathy, sympathy, and antipathy. *Empathy* is more intense identification, which involves an experience of reading into or “feeling into” the text. *Sympathy*, a less intense identification, consists of a “feeling-alongside-of” even though the reader may not share his/her evaluative point of view with a character. *Antipathy* is a feeling of alienation from or disdain for particular characters.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 54. Malbon says, “Most of the characterization in the Gospels is by ‘showing’” (ibid., 35).

<sup>199</sup> Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 35.

<sup>200</sup> The first two are suggested by Edward Forster in *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1927), 103–18. The third is suggested by Meyer Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (4th ed.; New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1981), 185.

<sup>201</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 55.

<sup>202</sup> Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 34.

<sup>203</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 56–57. As a case study of the religious leaders in the synoptic Gospels, Powell makes the following observation: “In Luke’s story, the leaders are not blind, but “foolish” (11:40). They possess the key knowledge but will not use it (11:52). Whereas in Matthew John rejects the religious leaders as ineligible for baptism (3:7), in Luke it is the leaders who reject “God’s purpose for themselves” by not accepting John’s baptism (7:30). The theme of “the rebuffed invitation” runs throughout Luke’s story in a manner illustrative of the religious leader’s point of view. Although the leaders may claim to look forward to celebrating God’s rule (14:15), in reality they have declined invitations to do so (14:16–24). Like the older brother in the prodigal son parable, they “refuse to go in” because the celebration is not given in their honor (15:25–29). Because the leaders have so foolishly rejected the things of God, they may be characterized as people who “do not know what they are doing” (23:34). Yet this lack of true knowledge is not presented as a judgment of God upon them; rather, it is constructed as a possible

When it comes to applying the theory of “characters” to reading actual narrative texts, it should be done with caution mindful that many characters are dynamic, changeable and “open constructs.” The difficulty in the art of applying narrative critical insights to actual reading is coupled in our case with Luke’s well-known ambivalence throughout the book of Acts, especially with regard to the relationship of the Christian mission to Jews.<sup>204</sup> The term “ambivalence” should not be necessarily taken as negative, however. Rather, it is a fitting and complimentary concept for Luke as “a master of short story”<sup>205</sup> and “the great storyteller of the NT.”<sup>206</sup> Luke’s ambivalent portrayals of difficult characters require an extra measure of attentiveness in analyzing and reading his text.

As mentioned briefly above, one of the storm centers for Lukan scholarship, for example, has been whether Luke writes as an insider or outsider of Judaism. It is pointed out that “[t]he question of Luke’s relationship to Judaism is one of the most hotly contested issues in modern Lukan studies. Viewpoints range widely . . .”<sup>207</sup> Despite the general recognition that Luke

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excuse, on the basis of which they should be forgiven” (ibid., 61).

Even though Powell is correct to point out that Luke’s characterizing expression “they do not know what they are doing” applies to the leaders, it isn’t only for them but also other people groups as well, a point I will explore and elaborate in the next chapter. Also, in so far as Luke does not have any of his protagonists addressing the leaders with a speech with ignorance as a possible excuse (see, however, Acts 3:17; 13:27), it might be said Luke’s view changed due to their persistent obduracy and resistance. See my next chapter for this conclusion.

<sup>204</sup> Joseph Tyson, “The Problem of Jewish Rejection in Acts” in *Luke–Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives* (ed. Joseph Tyson, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 127. Also see Michael Goulder, *Luke: A New Paradigm* (2 vols. JSNTSup, 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 1: 93–99; quoted in Lehtipuu, “Characterization,” 83.

<sup>205</sup> J. Drury, “Luke,” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (eds. R. Alter and F. Kermode; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 427.

<sup>206</sup> M. Goulder, *Luke*, 1:94. Again, Tannehill emphasizes Luke’s creativity as a storyteller by pointing to Lukan use of “quest stories.” Of the nine quest stories in the synoptic Gospels, seven are in Luke and four of them are uniquely Lukan. Through them, Luke drives the reader’s attention to Jesus who determines the legitimacy of what was requested by granting or refusing. That way, the narrative tends to persuade the reader to accept the definition of the issues rendered by Jesus whose authority and insight, in turn, becomes reinforced. (Tannehill, *Unity*, 1: 111–12).

<sup>207</sup> Joel Green and Michael McKeever, *Luke-Acts and NT Historiography* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 61.

perhaps has a more positive attitude toward Judaism and Jewish leaders than Matthew, strong arguments from both sides<sup>208</sup> show the complexity of the issue reflecting Luke's ambivalence as a writer. Lloyd Gaston even concludes, "In any case the paradox remains that Luke-Acts is one of the most pro-Jewish and one of the most anti-Jewish writings in the NT."<sup>209</sup>

The question of where Luke stands in relation to the Judaism, often regarded as an important historical question about the evangelist's context still bears direct ramifications for how we understand Luke's characterization of Gentiles. As an example, Jacob Jervell spells out what seems to be a summary of his position on Lukan presentation of the Gentiles. He leans toward the position that Luke wrote as a Jew.<sup>210</sup> He argues that Luke's church in Acts does not welcome Gentiles of any kind regularly found in Jewish Scriptures: the idolaters and people without knowledge of the Torah and its precepts, the enemies of God who are also considered to be enemies of the people of Israel.<sup>211</sup> The only Gentiles who are welcomed to Luke's church are godfearers whose prototype is Cornelius. They are already in the synagogue and under the Law of Moses. In fact, "the church is very much like the synagogue" where one could find both Jews

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<sup>208</sup> For a definite leaning toward Lukan Jewish flavor, see, for example, Jacob Jervell, *Luke and People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1972). For a strikingly contrasting position on the issue, see Stephen Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973). Also for scholarly introduction to the broader topic of Luke's presentation of the Gentile mission, see W. Gasque, *A History of Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles* (BGBE 17; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1975), 107–200.

<sup>209</sup> Lloyd Gaston, "Anti-Judaism and the Passion Narrative in Luke and Acts," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity* (ed. Peter Richardson; Waterloo, Eng.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 1:153. For further research on Lukan ambivalence, see the following: Stephen Wilson, "The Jews and the Death of Jesus," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity* (ed. Peter Richardson; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 1:155–64, and *idem*, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 219–38; and Maddox, *Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982). Suggested in Tyson, "The Problem," 159, n. 8.

<sup>210</sup> Jacob Jervell, "The Church of Jews and Godfearers," in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives* (ed. Joseph Tyson; Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1988), 12. For his expanded views on related topics and the classic statement of position that the Gentile inclusion in Luke-Acts originates from the acceptance of the gospel by Jews, not from Jewish rejection, see his *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972).

<sup>211</sup> Jervell, "The Church of Jews and Godfearers," 11.

and godfearers.<sup>212</sup> Based on this particular view of how Gentiles are characterized in the narrative, Jervell contends Paul's sermons at Lystra (14:14–17) and Athens (17:16–31) cannot be considered as missionary sermons. Instead, the former is “more an apologetic dissociation with paganism” and the latter “more like a discourse or lecture on true and false religion.” Jervell claims to feel Luke's *abhorrence* for Gentiles in reading both episodes because “paganism is nothing but sinful, false religiosity only to be condemned.”<sup>213</sup> However, Stephen Wilson stands on the opposite side of the pole in saying:

Luke's liberal and magnanimous assessment of the Gentiles' pre-Christian religiosity can be connected with his pragmatic justification of the Gentile mission. . . . While the Gentiles have been misguided and ignorant in their idolatry, this is no different from the comparable blindness and disobedience of the Jews.<sup>214</sup>

With regard to natural revelation the Gentiles already had, Wilson says, “Luke's assessment is positive and Paul's is negative: for Luke, the Gentile's religiosity is the first stage on the way to salvation; for Paul, it is basis for their condemnation by God”.<sup>215</sup>

As evident in two contrasting and persuasive arguments raised by Jervell and Wilson, the issue of Luke's characterization of the Gentiles is complex and controversial. This is attributed largely to Luke's own ambivalence, which seems to be an important narrative and rhetorical device Luke employs. This ambivalence of Luke, combined with his frequent reticence or

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<sup>212</sup> Jervell, “The Church of Jews and Godfearers,” 14.

<sup>213</sup> Jervell, “The Church of Jews and Godfearers,” 18; emphasis added.

<sup>214</sup> Stephen Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 217. That Luke viewed the Hellenistic pre-Christian religiosity in a positive light finds a strong resemblance to Dibelius' assessment. In fact, both Dibelius and Wilson are of the opinion that there is a significant time-gap between Paul's missionary journeys and Luke's composing Luke-Acts. In his *Luke and the Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Wilson offers a more focused view on this topic.

<sup>215</sup> Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 218. Christoph Stenschke has written a resourceful monograph on a related issue. As its title *Luke's Portrait of Gentiles Prior to Their Coming to Faith* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999) suggests, Stenschke attempts to fill the scholarly void of addressing issues of why the Gentiles needed to be evangelized and what their previous spiritual condition was.

sparseness in giving any formal portrayal of characters, invites the readers to be attentive the author's making of characters.<sup>216</sup>

In light of the various positions among Lukan scholars on how Luke characterizes the Gentiles, and since the Areopagus speech functions as one of the central stages for the discussion, the issue of Luke's characterization is ever crucial for our reading Acts 17. The reading promises to be rich and rewarding if done attentively by paying close attentions to how the narrator/implicit author both explicitly and implicitly guides the implied reader.

### 3.c. Settings:

If characters concern the "who" of the story-as-discoursed, settings concern the "where" and "when."<sup>217</sup> Malbon argues that the change from historical questions to literary questions impacted the way readers view the spatial and temporal settings. She takes an example of the geographical and chronological references to Jesus' ministry appearing in Mark. Whereas as an external interpretation of them yields to "a clear picture of neither Jesus' time and place in history nor Mark's,"<sup>218</sup> the kind of interpretation that attends to the internal signification of these spatial and temporal references leads to a fruitful result of identifying in them "the background for the dramatic action of Mark's Gospel. . . . Places and times are rich in connotational, or associative, values and these values contribute to the meaning of the narrative for the implied reader." Reading Mark 3:13 (Jesus "went up the mountain,") for example, historical critics

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<sup>216</sup> Petri Merenlahti, "Characters in the Making: Individuality and Ideology in the Gospels," in *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (JSNTS 184; eds. David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 52–53.

<sup>217</sup> Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 36–37.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid. Speaking of the result of external reading by the original requesters for the historical Jesus and the redactional critics, Malbon points out that Jesus' prediction of the Jerusalem Temple in Mark 13 with the cryptic parenthetical phrase "(let the reader understand)" (13:14) "has been cited as evidence that Mark was written prior to 70 C.E. (the date of the Temple's actual destruction by the Romans) and as evidence that it was written after 70 C.E.!" (Emphasis in original.)

attempted to identify a mountain in Galilee, while as for the implied author and reader “the mountain” invokes the biblical image of a place where God comes to meet leaders of the people of God.<sup>219</sup>

As such, “[s]ettings serve a variety of functions. They may be symbolic. They may help to reveal characters, determine conflict, or provide structure for the story.”<sup>220</sup> According to Chatman, “A normal and perhaps principal function of setting is to contribute to the mood of the narrative.”<sup>221</sup> As in a painting a person poses against the background, “the setting ‘sets the character off’ in the usual figurative sense of the expression; it is the place and collection of objects ‘against which’ his actions and passions appropriately emerge.”<sup>222</sup>

That settings function as background in the story does not imply they remain as sterile and lifeless, however. As characters have the capacity to transcend their role in the story, settings are not limited to their functional role they serve. Some settings such as the Garden of Eden or the Land of Oz “become so clearly entrenched in the mind of the reader that they, like memorable characters, take on a life of their own.”<sup>223</sup> This observation can have direct implication for reading Acts 17, since it can be argued that its spatial (the Areopagus court) and social settings (the city of Athens for its historical, cultural, and sociological importance for the Greco-Roman philosophies and religions) immediately create certain image for the implied reader.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 37.

<sup>220</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 70.

<sup>221</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 141.

<sup>222</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 138–39.

<sup>223</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 70.

<sup>224</sup> There is a danger lurking, warns Powell: “As Rhoads indicates, however, using knowledge of the history and culture of the first century as an aid in understanding a particular Gospel’s story world is quite a different matter from using story elements to reconstruct historical events” (Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 74). Powell’s “Expected and Unexpected Readings of Matthew” offers some significant insights to avoid common pitfalls.

### 3.d. Plot/Event:<sup>225</sup>

Defined by Aristotle as the “arrangement of incidents” plot (*mythos*) functions “to emphasize or de-emphasize certain story-events, to interpret some and to leave others to inference, to show or to tell, to comment or to remain silent, to focus on this or that aspect of an event or character.”<sup>226</sup> Chatman asks later, “But what is an event, in the narrative sense? Events are either *actions (acts)* or *happenings*. Both are changes of state. An action is a change of state brought about by an agent or one that affects a patient. If the action is plot-significant, the agent or patient is called a character.”<sup>227</sup>

Two crucial components to understand and identify plot in a narrative seem to be theme/purpose and conflict. The implied author has a theme in composing and presenting a narrative. Usually the theme is developed through conflict and its resolution. Malbon suggests that conflict is the key to the Markan narrative plot.<sup>228</sup> Of Luke-Acts, Tannehill says, “[It] has a unified plot because there is a unifying purpose of God behind the events, which are narrated, and the mission of Jesus and his witnesses represents that purpose being carried out through human action.”<sup>229</sup> According to Steven Sheeley, conflict and prophecy-fulfillment constitute two

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<sup>225</sup> Event and plot are related but not identical. Malbon uses “plot” (“Narrative Criticism,” 38) and Powell uses “event” (*Narrative Criticism*, 35) while as Chatman both saying, “The events of a story are traditionally said to constitute an array called ‘plot’. . . . The events in a story are turned into a plot by its discourse, the modus of presentation” (Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 43).

<sup>226</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 43. He cites from O. B. Hardison, Jr.: “The author can arrange the incidents in a story in a great many ways. He can treat some in detail and barely mention or even omit others, as Sophocles omits everything that happened to Oedipus before the plague in Thebes. He can observe chronological sequence, he can distort it, he can use messengers or flashbacks, and so forth. Each arrangement produces a different plot, and a great many plots can be made from the same story. (43; cf. O. B. Hardison, Jr., “A Commentary on Aristotle’s Poetics,” in *Aristotle’s Poetics* [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968], 123)

<sup>227</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 44; italics in original.

<sup>228</sup> Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 39.

<sup>229</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:2; cited in Steven M. Sheeley, *Narrative Asides in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 139.



major thematic plot devices commonly employed in Luke's Gospel and Acts.<sup>230</sup> The increasing distance between the unbelieving Jews and God's kingdom caused by the conflict between the disciples and non-disciples is impacted and maintained by the narrator's asides.<sup>231</sup> Our narrative-critical reading of Acts 17 will attempt to show how Acts 17:16–34 functions in the plot of Luke-Acts in a wider sense, as well as how the specifics of Paul's speech make their own unique contributions for a fresh reading.

#### IV. Sequence of Chapters

Chapter Two will analyze the Lukan presentation of the key theme of "knowledge-ignorance." Luke in his two-volume narrative develops this theme, showing how ignorance among both Jews and Gentiles is the major roadblock hindering perception and reception of God's salvific will and revelation (cf. Luke 8:10; 9:45; 18:34; Acts 7:51; 13:27; 17: 23–29; 28:26–27). The knowledge-ignorance theme in the Lukan narrative is closely related to Luke's larger presentation of God's universal salvation in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the second chapter mainly focuses on identifying Luke's important narrative theme of knowledge-ignorance in view of God's will/plan for salvation, and tracing its development among different main character groups in Luke-Acts: the Jewish people, the minor characters, the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus' disciples, and finally Gentiles.

Chapter Three will, first, attend to some larger text-critical issues. A brief discussion about the text of Acts will take us to the three main text families of Acts and the challenge presented by the Western family, D in particular. Second, after a translation of the text, and drawing up a

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<sup>230</sup> Sheeley, *Narrative Asides*, 144.

<sup>231</sup> Cf. Sheeley, *Narrative Asides*, 145–46. For two opposing opinions about the narrator's position on the Jews in Acts: J. T. Sanders *The Jews in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) vs. D. L. Tiede, "'Glory to the People Israel': Luke-Acts and the Jews," in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives* (ed. J. B. Tyson; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988).

structure for the narrative unit, we will offer a careful narrative commentary on the text. Utilizing narrative critical insights at this step will assist us in discerning Lukan Paul's emphasis on the theme of knowledge-ignorance as the key concept and Luke's narrative usage of the theme and speech for greater purpose and context.

Building on conclusions and insights drawn from the preceding chapters, the final, fourth chapter of the dissertation will consider the contribution that Paul's Athenian sermon brings to Luke's overall concern of presenting God's universal salvation in Jesus by asking the following questions: (i) How does the speech relate to the broader theme of knowledge-ignorance, especially in relation to the characterization of Gentiles in Luke-Acts? (ii) Does Luke narrate the event as a success or failure? That is, do the content and rhetorical strategy portray the speech as faithful to the narrative's overall theme and value? (iii) In light of the uniqueness of this speech in its context, can Paul's speech be regarded as a Lukan paradigm for proclamation to those who have no knowledge of the God of Israel and the story of his dealing with them?

An appendix is in order to assist us to better appreciate the oratees of Paul's speech. Among many different philosophical groups of scholars prevalent in Athens during the first century C.E., Luke mentions two: Stoics and Epicureans (17:18). They are the two named philosophical schools with whom Paul engaged in dispute. Some members of these two groups led Paul to Areopagus demanding to explain what he had proclaimed. As many scholars have noted, Paul's speech bears much resemblance with Greek philosophy as a result of Paul incorporating in some sense their teachings into his preaching. Insofar as it is critical for reaching the goal of narrative criticism "to know everything that the text assumes the reader knows and to 'forget' everything that the text does not assume the reader knows,"<sup>232</sup> hearing Paul's sermon as

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<sup>232</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 20.

the implied reader does presupposes some knowledge of first century Athens, and, in particular, about Stoics and Epicureans. As Mark Powell said, “If the story is important to us, we try to increase our knowledge in order to appreciate it more fully. We look up words in the dictionary, do some research on the period of history in which the story takes place, or do whatever else is necessary to gain the knowledge we are expected to have.”<sup>233</sup> The appendix study aims for a two-fold purpose: To appropriate the concept of knowledge-ignorance in the religio-philosophical system of Stoicism and Epicureanism, and, thus, to gain an enriched understanding of Acts 17 by attempting to hear Paul’s message from the first century Athenian perspective.

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<sup>233</sup> Powell, “Expected and Unexpected Readings,” 31.

## CHAPTER TWO

### “IGNORANCE-KNOWLEDGE” THEME AS LUKAN CHARACTERIZATION

In the preceding introductory chapter, our survey of several scholars who, in monographs, commentaries, and articles, offered notable analysis on Acts 17 revealed that one’s reading of Areopagus speech hinges on one’s choice of reading methodology. Narrative criticism, a relatively new approach in biblical studies, began to make its way into reading Paul’s Athenian sermon. However, a largely underdeveloped area seems to be a study about the place and significance of the speech in Luke’s overall narrative scheme of presenting an orderly narrative of what had been fulfilled so that the reader “may know for certain the things” he was taught (Luke 1:4). Thus, this chapter is an attempt to answer several narrative-critical questions including: Is there any unifying theme in Luke-Acts? If there is, how do or do not central ideas of the Areopagus speech relate to it? How does Luke use the “ignorance-knowledge” theme, which arguably serves as the basic frame for the Areopagus sermon (vv. 23, 30), for his overall narrative scheme, and, in particular, characterization and plot development? What does Lukan scholarship have to say about this theme?

#### I. Quest for a Unifying Theme in Luke-Acts

Luke-Acts presents many difficult and potentially controversial topics. This is understandable not only for the mere fact that this two-volume work is the largest corpus by a single author in the NT,<sup>1</sup> but also for its well-known ambivalence on subjects such as the Lukan

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<sup>1</sup> According to Joel Green, Lukan writings make up some 28 percent of the total volume of the NT whereas

attitude toward the Judaism.<sup>2</sup> Contra Mikeal Parsons and Richard Pervo,<sup>3</sup> there is at least one overarching theme that draws a fairly general consensus among Lukan scholars, however; God's plan for universal salvation<sup>4</sup> through Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup> Luke records Simeon's prophecy in Luke 2:31–32 and cites Isaiah 40:3–5 in Luke 3:6 (And all mankind will see God's salvation). Jesus

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Paul's 13 letters 24 percent (Joel Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke* [New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 2, n. 5).

<sup>2</sup> In the Third Gospel John the Baptist utters harsh words (“You brood of vipers!”) to the crowds (3:7) while in Matthew John's words are directed only to the Pharisees and Sadducees (3:7). But Luke's seemingly more relaxed attitude toward the two groups is radically reversed by his later comment in the form of narrative aside in 7:29–30: “And all the people who heard this, including the tax collectors, acknowledged the justice of God, because they had been baptized with John's baptism. But by refusing to be baptized by him, the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves (τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ἠθέτησαν εἰς ἑαυτοὺς).” However, scholars who argue for Luke's friendlier attitude toward the Pharisees tend to draw their supporting evidence from Acts (e.g., Gamaliel in 5:34–40; Paul identifying himself as a Pharisee in 23:6; See Robert. Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987]: 84–106, for an overall review as well as his more positive position on the Pharisees in Luke-Acts).

<sup>3</sup> It is their basic argument and conviction that Lukan scholars, including Tannehill, who propose the narrative unity between Luke and Acts, have not produced “or even attempted to produce a comprehensive Lukan theology” (Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 85).

<sup>4</sup> Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, 94–102, discusses the concept of salvation and points out that “salvation” used in Luke-Acts, as in other NT documents, has a wide range of meaning including healings. Salvation is used “in a rather general sense to denote the sum of the blessings which God bestows upon men in rescuing them from human distress and from divine judgment itself” (95). However, our discussion hitherto mainly focuses on the spiritual aspect of salvation even though not exclusive to other aspects.

<sup>5</sup> I am aware that this phrase itself may seem to be a somewhat ambitious attempt to embrace several central theological concepts in addition to above mentioned topic: salvation: God and his salvific plan with universal scope, and Christology. One of the better and more comprehensive treatments on the subject of God's plan is found in John Squires' *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts* (1993). He begins his monograph by noting that Luke's preface, though not as explicit as in the works of Diodorus, Diosysius and Josephus, does have some significant terms pointing to Luke's interest in divine providence, which is backed by the ensuing narrative development (cf. “περὶ τῶν πεπληροφορημένων ἐν ἡμῖν πραγμάτων” in Luke 1:1) (Squires, *Plan of God*, 10–27). With that, he analyzes “the prologue to the Gospel” (Luke 1:5–2:52) and “Paul's apology to Agrippa and Festus” (Acts 26:1–29) to demonstrate the significance of ‘plan of God’ in Luke-Acts as the central theme (ibid., 27–36). He proposes that when the related strands are combined together one can see “a comprehensive picture of divine activity in which God's actions stretch from creation to the final judgment and exhibit a consistent intention to guide history in a very specific direction” (ibid., 35–36). This topic of “the purpose of God” is often discussed in relation to or within the context of salvation. For more discussion on “plan of God,” see the following works: Tannehill, *Unity* 1:xiii–xiv (“[Luke's] single controlling purpose”); F. Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-five Years of Research (1950–2005)* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2006): 1–85 for an excellent review on scholarship and his own conclusion; J. Fitzmyer, *Luke 1:179–192* for its treatment in relation to salvation history; H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1988): 103–15 for Jesus' ministry in the salvific plan of God; Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), etc. In regard to Christology, C. Keener says, “The theme of Jesus as God's saving agent is too pervasive and central to warrant detailed treatment in one place” (Craig Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Introduction and 1:1–2:47* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012], 500; cf. 500, n. 31 for an extended bibliography).

himself announced this theme in his inauguration sermon (Luke 4:18–21; cf. Isa 61:1–2) and in a post-resurrection discourse (Luke 24:46–47). Luke leads us to see that God’s salvation has universal scope in these passages.<sup>6</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, to find Luke beginning his second volume by summarizing the first volume saying, “In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up . . .” (1:1–2) The reader of Acts is directed to see or remember how God’s salvific plan was unfolded through Jesus’ teaching and ministry, and death and resurrection all the way up to his ascension. In his second volume Luke continues to work out this central motif of “universal salvation” as God’s plan through the witnesses of the Spirit-empowered teaching/preaching ministry of Jesus, just as Jesus predicted in Acts 1:8 (cf. Luke 24:48). Peter first appears in the foreground as a strong witness to God’s plan of salvation wrought in Jesus (cf. 2:14–40<sup>7</sup>; 3:12–26; 4:9–12 [“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”] [v. 12]). In the rest of Acts Luke repeatedly shows the forward movement of the gospel through which God achieves his plan for salvation. In the concluding chapter Luke tells us that Paul welcomed “all” who came to him and continued to “preach the kingdom of God and teach about the Lord Jesus Christ openly and unhindered” (28:30–31). In this way the Lukan Paul confirms his professed commitment to proclaiming “the plan of God” shared in his last sermon preached to the Ephesian elders before his Jerusalem arrest: “Therefore I declare to you today that I am innocent of the

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<sup>6</sup> A possible exception might be Luke 4:18–21. Isaiah 61, however, does address to God’s universal vision for the restored Israel (cf. Isa 61:9–11).

<sup>7</sup> Acts 2:23 also bears repeating for our discussion: “this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God (τῆ ὀρισμένη βουλῇ καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ/), you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law.”

blood of you all. For I did not hold back from announcing to you the whole purpose of God (παᾶσαν τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θεοῦ)” (20:26–27).

Therefore, the centrality of God’s plan for universal salvation in Jesus is evident throughout Luke-Acts.<sup>8</sup> In the words of Keener: “Most scholars recognize that the Gentile mission (i.e., more accurately, a ‘universal’ mission) is one of the central themes (if not *the* central theme) in the book of Acts.”<sup>9</sup> Joel Green rightly identifies Luke’s unrelenting emphasis on the purpose of God in Luke-Acts. This purpose forms the narrative unity, and the Lukan emphasis functions as an invitation in the sense that “people *within* the narrative may embrace or reject the divine plan.”<sup>10</sup>

## II. Acts 17:16–34 within Luke’s Unifying Narrative Scheme

We suggested that presenting God’s plan for the universal salvation carried out and fulfilled in Jesus Christ is Luke’s overall narrative scheme. Then, how does Acts 17:16–34 fit in Luke’s narrative goal? How does Luke use what is emphasized in Acts 17 to build up his theme and achieve his narrative goal?

Tannehill identifies three major representative speeches delivered by Paul as a free man in Acts: 13:13–52 (Antioch), 17:22–31 (Athens), and 20:18–35 (Ephesus).<sup>11</sup> With regard to the

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<sup>8</sup> According to Luke 7:30, receiving John’s baptism was to embrace God’s plan for man. Acts 2:23 and 20:27 show Peter and Paul respectively upholding “the plan of God (τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θεοῦ).”

<sup>9</sup> C. Keener, *Acts*, 505; emphasis in original. Also see n. 58 for an extended bibliography beginning with Cadbury. At the end of his note Keener concludes, “Even if the theme is central in all of Scripture (N.T. Wright, *Mission in Acts*, 514–21; in *Paul*, 522–30), its prominence in Acts is particularly noteworthy.”

<sup>10</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 48–49; emphasis in original. See his entire chapter (22–49) and 74–75 for further discussions and development of this theme.

<sup>11</sup> Contra, Parsons and Pervo, in *Rethinking the Unity*, attribute Tannehill’s (and others’) position on the representative nature of these speeches to redaction critical presuppositions, which give priority to the speeches over narratives because the former are, by and large, considered to be authentic compositions of the author and thus reveal the author’s own ideas (84–85).

address made to the Ephesian elders, Tannehill suggests it marks the “climax of his mission as a free man,”<sup>12</sup> the speech, delivered to the elders from Ephesus en route to his fateful visit to Jerusalem, recalls and clarifies “key aspects of Paul’s past ministry,” and alerts the reader to key future developments.<sup>13</sup> Regarding the speech in Antioch (13:13–52), Tannehill says that it represents or typifies Paul’s speeches at other synagogues. This sets a pattern to be repeated in Paul’s subsequent ministry among the Jews.<sup>14</sup>

Regarding Paul’s speech at Athens (17:22–31), Tannehill, contra Stenschke, but with Witherington, argues that it represents Paul’s mission that reaches beyond Athens.<sup>15</sup> By the narrative order we are invited to also see “Paul’s work in Corinth and Ephesus in light of the programmatic speech in Athens.”<sup>16</sup> Rejecting the negative assessment of the speech as a

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Tannehill, *Unity*, 2:230–40 for his full discussion. See esp. 240 for the importance of Paul’s visit to Jerusalem “as the symbolic center for Judaism” in his resort to maintain the tie with Judaism.

<sup>13</sup> Tannehill, *Unity*, 2:252.

<sup>14</sup> Commenting on Paul’s “custom” to go to the synagogue to present the word (17:2; cf. 17:10b), Tannehill sees this as the narrator’s intentional insertion to remind the reader of the primacy of Jewish mission in the midst of his presentation about the impact of the mission on gentile society in Acts 16–19 (Tannehill, *Unity*, 2:206). Retrospectively, Tannehill sees the theme in this sermon repeated in Peter’s first two sermons (2:14–36; 3:12–26), which reveal to us the Lukan literary praxis of emphasizing the important theme (Tannehill, *Unity*, 2:174).

<sup>15</sup> Tannehill’s following words shed insight on the pragmatic importance of the speech: “The Areopagus speech may provide a helpful *model* of the delicate task of speaking outside the [Jewish] religious community through critical engagement with the larger world” (Tannehill, *Unity*, 2:215; emphasis added). Witherington, in his commentary *Acts*, expresses the following similar view: “Luke has presented us here with the fullest example of Paul’s missionary preaching to a certain kind of Gentile audience . . .” (Witherington, *Acts*, 511) Again Witherington, “It is hard to doubt that Luke sees this speech in Acts 17 as something of a model for how to approach educated pagan Greeks, and means it to reflect positively on his hero Paul, especially since he records only three major speech summaries from Paul’s travels, and this is the only major one specifically directed at Gentiles” (Witherington, *Acts*, 533). In addition, Witherington sees an extremely significant point in that two pivotal elements of Acts emerge in the speech, i.e., Luke’s purpose of presenting universal salvation (theology) and his historical interest in arranging the material geographically and ethnographically (history) (ibid., 511–12).

Finally, I cite Stenschke’s dissenting argument on the Areopagus speech: “The following verses specifically report Paul’s encounter with some Athenian philosophers and their responses, not Paul’s representative ministry and message to the Gentile world at large. Because this limited focus has often been overlooked, the following speech was given too much significance” (Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 205).

<sup>16</sup> Tannehill, *Unity*, 2:213.



temporary experiment, Tannehill proposes, “The speech is important not only as further indication of interest in the mission’s encounter with Greco-Roman culture but also as an attempt to deal with issues that emerge from *core values affirmed in the narrative as a whole*.”<sup>17</sup> Contra Dibelius and others who take Paul’s speech at Athens as a foreign body to the NT, Tannehill suggests that the universal scope of God’s saving work in the risen Jesus Christ is highlighted in Acts 17 through reliable indicators of the Lukan narrator’s values.<sup>18</sup> Tannehill’s following words convincingly place the Areopagus speech within Acts with its full narrative significance attached:

The narrator of Acts has been presenting the plan of God through the whole series of speeches [up] to Acts 17. Because, as Paul Schubert said, “the Areopagus speech is not only a hellenized but also a universal version of Luke’s βουλή-theology,” it is probable “that Luke regarded the Areopagus speech as the final climactic part of his exposition of the whole plan of God.” This speech presents the relation of God to humanity as a whole and founds God’s call not on the history of a special group but on the creaturely humanness that is shared by all. . . . The tension between the Athens speech and Paul’s statement about God’s promise to Israel cannot be easily resolved, for one begins from what all share as God’s creatures and the other from God’s special history with a chosen people. Both perspectives are important in Acts.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 2:210; italics added. Tannehill comments that what Demetrius of Ephesus said in opposition to Paul (19:25–27) is justified in light of what Paul said in Athens. The following words of Tannehill bear repeating: “We must assume that during the two years at Ephesus Paul shared some of the negative views of popular religion expressed in the Athens speech, for Demetrius knows Paul’s claim that gods made with hands are not gods (19:26). Paul stated this in different terms in 17:29, and the reference to ‘hands’ recalls a related point: the gulf between God and temples or cult, the work of ‘human hands’ (17:24–25)” (Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:243).

<sup>18</sup> Tannehill lists five themes found in the Areopagus speech that are common to the rest of Acts: God as Creator of the world (v. 24); rejection of man-made images (v. 24b); common genealogy (v. 26); the need to repent over ignorance (v. 30); and Jesus as the God-appointed judge (v. 31). He concludes, “Thus, a good share of the Athens speech repeats themes already presented in Luke-Acts” (Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:211–12). Later on, Tannehill focuses on this universal scope of salvation commenting on Paul’s detailed description of the voyage to Rome. He notes the narrator’s special attention given to the cooperative relationship between Paul and Julius the centurion for the realization of God’s purpose or salvation, and this creates, concludes Tannehill, important positive expectation for the future mission among Gentiles (Acts 27:1–28:16; cf. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:330–43).

<sup>19</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:213–14; cf. Paul Schubert, “Areopagus Speech,” 260–61.

Considering that Paul's Areopagus sermon is the only recorded, full-scale speech delivered to a "purely" Gentile audience,<sup>20</sup> and that Luke repeats when necessary,<sup>21</sup> Tannehill's assertion of its representative nature seems convincing. He also points to several topics found in the Athenian speech that well connect the speech to the rest of Luke-Acts body (cf. my note 15). We also have sufficient reason to agree with Tannehill in citing P. Schubert on the claim of the speech's pivotal importance in terms of Luke's βουλή-theology.<sup>22</sup> Paul draws attention to common ancestral lineage (v. 26) attributed to the Creator (v. 24), which connects to Luke's genealogy that goes all the way back to Adam (3:23–38; cf. Matt 1:1–16 [Abraham–Jesus]).

As the Lukan theme of universal salvation (Luke 3:6) is juxtaposed with the theme of repentance (3:7–14), the Lukan Paul in Acts 17 immediately after announcing God's universal sovereignty and the divine origin of humanity (vv. 24–29) introduced God's universal call to repentance (v. 30). Paul drives home the point that Athenian ignorance is what keeps them away from their Creator God. Despite their proud philosophical and cultural heritage, their eagerness

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<sup>20</sup> However, Jervell, arguing for Luke's pro-Jewish tendency, offers an extreme view against Acts 17. According to Jervell, the only Gentiles who are welcomed to Luke's church are God-fearers whose prototype is Cornelius. Therefore, no "pure" or "genuine" Gentile without prior tie with Judaism can be found in Luke's church. Luke's Gentile Christians are already in the synagogue and in the Law of Moses. In fact, "the church is very much like the synagogue" where one could find the Jews and Godfearers (cf. J. Jervell, "The Church of Jews and Godfearers" in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives* [ed. Joseph Tyson; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988]: 11–20, 14). Jervell even contends that Paul's sermons at Lystra (14:14–17) and Athens (17:16–31) cannot be considered as missionary sermons. Instead, the former is "more an apologetic dissociation with paganism" and the latter "more like a discourse or lecture on true and false religion." Jervell claims to feel Luke's *abhorrence* in both episodes because "paganism is nothing but sinful, false religiosity only to be condemned" (Jervell, "The Church of Jews," 18; emphasis added).

<sup>21</sup> In view of his style of avoiding mechanical repetition (cf. Bovon, *Luke* 3, 307), Lukan repetition of Cornelius' conversion using many same vocabularies (Acts 10 and 11) and allusion to it in Acts 15:7–8 are impressive. Also, Paul's conversion story is recorded three times (Acts 9, 22, and 26) and in these Lukan style shows better.

<sup>22</sup> Pointing to the fact that of the thirteen total occurrences of βουλή in the NT, 10 are found in Luke-Acts, Jervell captures an important aspect of Luke's βουλή-theology: "The word points not only to the will of God, but even to the fact that God himself carries out his will, and fixes the times for its execution (Acts 1:7; 13:37; 17:26; Luke 21:24, cf. 1:10)" (cf. J. Jervell, "The future of the past: Luke's vision of salvation history and its bearing on his writing of history" in *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* [ed. Ben Witherington; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996]: 104–126).

to learn (cf. “May we know. . .?” [vv. 19–20]),<sup>23</sup> their more-than-usual curiosity (v. 21), their religious fervor and sensitivity expressed in the inscription “TO AN UN-KNOWN GOD” (vv. 16 and 23), and their own poets’ religious insights (v. 28), they remain in ignorance by worshipping numerous man-made gods, hoarding anything new, and being alienated from the true God. All this malaise, argues the Lukan Paul, springs from their ignorance of God as their Creator and Preserver. Thus Tannehill rightly observes that Paul’s call to repent of the past “ignorance” is one of many unifying motifs (cf. Acts 3:17–19; 13:27), even as this theme of ignorance forms an important frame and judgment for the whole speech as Paul strives to make the “unknown God” known as the Creator of all.<sup>24</sup>

This call to repent of ignorance in relation to God and his will is not unique to Luke’s second volume. In fact it harkens back to a prominent text in the Gospel, namely, Jesus’ prayer offered on the cross for his executioners and, most likely, for all those people heaping insults on him, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing (οὐ γὰρ οἴδασιν τί ποιοῦσιν)” (23:34). Considering that Luke is the only Gospel writer recording this prayer and his stated goal of writing is to bring certainty (1:4), it would not be too much to say that, at least within the Lukan scheme of God’s plan for the universal salvation, “ignorance” poses a, if not *the*, major problem. Making these words of prayer as one of the key passages for Lukan schema, however, requires a discussion about the textual issue of Luke 23:34 as it “poses one of the major textual

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<sup>23</sup> For a contrasting view, see K. Rowe, *Word Upside Down*, 31. He takes this as a demand or statement of intention (“we have the right to know . . .”) in view of Acts 25:11 or P. Oxy 899 (line 31; second/third centuries).

<sup>24</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:212, 215, and 219.

problems of the Gospel of Luke.”<sup>25</sup> Or simply put, “Was [Jesus’ prayer] part of the original text of Luke, or was it added later?”<sup>26</sup>

Suffice it to say that we have equally strong and weighty external evidences for both the shorter and the longer readings of the text.<sup>27</sup> In a separate treatment of this textual issue, Raymond Brown proposes the following four possibilities for the origin of Jesus’ prayer in Luke 23:34a: (i) This prayer was actually spoken by Jesus but only Luke preserved it. Some later scribes who found it unacceptable omitted it. (ii) This real prayer of Jesus, though not preserved by Luke, was circulated as an independent tradition until a copyist in the second century, seeing it fitting with Lukan sentiments, inserted it.<sup>28</sup> (iii) It was not authentic but formulated by Luke or “in the immediate pre-Lukan tradition” to harmonize with what Jesus must have done in thought/silence. Some later, disagreeing copyists rejected it. And (iv) it was not original but inserted by a copyist who thought it fitting for Luke’s passion narrative as well as the post-Gospel Christian thought.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Bovon, *Luke 3*, 306.

<sup>26</sup> Bovon, *Luke 3*, 306.

<sup>27</sup> On the one hand, we have “early and weighty” (David M. Crump, *Jesus the intercessor: Prayer and Christology in Luke-Acts* [Tübingen: Mohr Seibeck, 1992], 79) or “most impressive” (Metzger, *A Textual Commentary* [1971], 180) manuscript evidence in favor of its omission: P<sup>75</sup>  $\aleph^a$  vid B D\*  $\Theta$  a,d syr<sup>r</sup> sa, bo<sup>mss</sup> 38 0124 435 579 1241 Cyril. These mss cover diverse geographical areas. On the other hand, however, the mss evidence in defense of its authenticity is also “early and diverse:  $\aleph^{*c}$  A C D<sup>b</sup> L f<sup>1</sup> f<sup>13</sup> 28 33 565 700 (with numerous other miniscules) aur,b,c,e,f,ff<sup>2</sup>, l, r<sup>1</sup> vg syr<sup>(c),p,(h,h mg), pal</sup> bo<sup>mss</sup> Marcion, Tatian, Hegesippus, Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius and many other Fathers” (Crump, *Jesus the intercessor*, 80). Of course, some of the above listed mss bear more weight than others. According to Bovon, *Luke 3*, 307, we have Sinaiticus ( $\aleph^*$ ), Tatian, Irenaeus, and Hegesippus speaking for its originality whereas the counter evidence presented by P<sup>75</sup> D\* B is weighty. See Crump, *Jesus the intercessor*, 80–83, for an extended discussion on the external evidences in favor of authenticity of the prayer.

<sup>28</sup> This position is argued by Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 180.

<sup>29</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:975. According to Marshall, who himself defends its authenticity based on the internal evidence, “the external evidence suggests that [the prayer] was a traditional word of Jesus which was inserted into this context after Luke wrote the narrative” (Marshall, *Luke*, 417).

R. Tannehill suggests two guiding questions for providing arguments for and against the different readings, which are supported by equally strong mss evidences: “(1) Which reading best fits the tendencies of the document? (2) Is it easier to explain the long reading as a secondary insertion or the short reading as a secondary omission by copyists?”<sup>30</sup> With both scholars’ suggestions in mind, we first turn to the argument in favor of its omission.

D. Crump summarizes five positions that argue favorably for the shorter reading based on internal evidence. First, if it were original, the omission of this prayer, which is clearly comforting to the Jesus’ image the early Christians had, is difficult to explain. Second, the prayer interrupts the connection between 23:33 and 34b as the subject in these is “they,” namely, the crucifiers. Third, this prayer asking for the forgiveness of the Jews contradicts with the condemning tone in vv. 28–31. Fourth, this prayer is an interpolation influenced by Isa 53:12, Luke 6:28 (Jesus’ teaching), Acts 7:60 (Stephen’s prayer), or Hegesippus’ account of the martyrdom of James. Fifth, asking forgiveness for an offense in ignorance could have originated from Greek and Latin sources,<sup>31</sup> or Acts passages (3:17; 13:27; 17:30).<sup>32</sup> In addition to the five arguments mentioned above, Jason Whitlark and M. Parsons suggest the possibility that Christians of later date (in the second half of the second century) inserted this prayer in their attempt to make it the seventh word of Christ on the cross.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Robert Tannehill, *Luke* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 340.

<sup>31</sup> Crump refers to the following: John Creed, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (4th ed.; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1953), 286; David Daube, “‘For they know not what they do:’ Luke 23:34,” *Studia Patristica IV in Texte und Untersuchungen* 79 (1961), 58ff.

<sup>32</sup> Crump, *Jesus*, 79–80. The last point is suggested by Fitzmyer as a possible explanation (Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1503).

<sup>33</sup> Jason Whitlark and M. Parsons, “The ‘Seven’ Last Words: A Numerical Motivation for the Insertion of Luke 23:34a,” *NTS* 52 (2006): 188–204. This view is introduced and evaluated in Bovon, *Luke* 3, 307.

The saying's authenticity is argued by several commentators on Luke's Gospel<sup>34</sup> as well as Crump and Brown on the basis of internal evidence.<sup>35</sup> First, the omission of this prayer can be easily explained in terms of the widespread anti-Judaic mood as evidenced clearly, for example, in the tendentiousness of Codex Bezae (D) in reference to the ignorance motif.<sup>36</sup> Second, another possible explanation for its later omission is in view of the disasters befell on Jerusalem at the hand of Romans (AD 66–70, 115–118, and 132–135). The repeated Roman seizure and destruction of the city seem to include that God did not answer Jesus' prayer and thus the prayer was omitted.<sup>37</sup> Third, the prayer is in line with Luke's portrayal of Jesus' teaching (Luke 6:27–28, 35) and practice (5:20, 24, 32; 7:34, 47–50; 11:4; 15:1–32; 17:3–4).<sup>38</sup> Fourth, Jesus' prayer provides an important presupposition for the ignorance motif in Acts (3:17; 13:27; 17:30), which, in turn, serves as an important basis for the church's proclamation and mission work.<sup>39</sup> Fifth, Jesus addressing God as *πατήρ* in his prayer fits well with other occasions (2:49; 10:21; 11:2; 22:42; 23:46).<sup>40</sup> The most significant of them is probably 23:46 ("Father, into your hands I

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<sup>34</sup> L.T. Johnson, Bovon, John Carroll, D. Garland, Marshall, Fitzmyer, and Tannehill.

<sup>35</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 466, suggests additional arguments in favor of its authenticity: Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1989), 128–29; Joel Green, *The Death of Jesus: Tradition and Interpretation in the Passion Narrative* (WUNT 2/33; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 91–92; R. Alan Culpepper, "The Gospel of Luke," in *New Interpreter's Bible* (vol. 9; ed. Leander Keck; Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 455. Also, for a cautionary and yet positive position, Crump (84, n. 34) and Brown (2:980) rely on A. Harnack, "Probleme im Texte der Leidensgeschichte Jesu," *SPAW* 11 (1901): 251–66.

<sup>36</sup> D adds *πονηρον* to Acts 3:17 to stress Jewish guilt. For more discussion, see Epp, *Theological Tendency*, 41–64; Crump, *Jesus*, 83; Marshall, *Luke*, 417; Carroll, *Luke*, 466; Brown, *Death*, 2:979–80. An extended treatment on this topic in D follows below in chapter 3.

<sup>37</sup> D. Garland, *Luke*, 922; cf. also Brown (*Death*, 979), Crump (*Jesus*, 83).

<sup>38</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 466; cf. Bovon, *Luke* 3, 307.

<sup>39</sup> Tannehill, *Luke*, 341; cf. Crump (*Jesus*, 4); Bovon (*Luke* 3, 307); Carroll (*Luke*, 466); L.T. Johnson (*Luke*, 376).

<sup>40</sup> Crump (*Jesus*, 84); cf. Bovon (*Luke* 3, 307).

commit my spirit!”). Speaking of 23:43 and 23:46, Tannehill says: “The one shows Jesus’ attitude toward his opponents; the other his attitude toward God. [They] bracket the death scene.”<sup>41</sup> Sixth, Stephen’s prayer (Acts 7:60) most likely is modeled on Jesus’ earlier prayer. If a later scribe had inserted Jesus’ prayer imitating after Stephen’s prayer, however, there would have been more verbal similarity. Luke, however, “avoids mechanical repetition”<sup>42</sup> and it would be natural to assume the authenticity of Jesus’ prayer.

In conclusion, we noted that it is not possible to determine whether or not Jesus’ prayer in the Lukan passion narrative is original on the basis of external evidence. When we evaluate both sides of the argument based on internal evidence, however, it seems easier to explain why this was omitted in so many manuscripts (e.g., the widespread anti-Judaic sentiment caused largely by the severed relationship between Jews and Christians and difficulty of Jewish mission) than to conclude that this was inserted by a later copyist. In other words, the argument from internal evidence in favor of its authenticity fits well with Jesus’ character and teaching as well as Lukan themes in Luke-Acts (e.g., “ignorance-knowledge” and God’s universal salvific plan).<sup>43</sup> “Jesus’ prayer . . . is a revelation of his regal authority and of his prophetic insight in the presence of Israel’s tragic ignorance. These are all central concerns for Luke.”<sup>44</sup> Therefore, it is the current

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<sup>41</sup> Tannehill, *Luke*, 340.

<sup>42</sup> Bovon (*Luke 3*, 307) and Crump (*Jesus*, 84). Tannehill, *Luke*, 341, further suggests that Stephen’s referencing to Jesus being at the right hand of God (7:55–56) takes the reader to Luke 22:69. See Charles Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 212–18 for further discussion on the relationship between the two prayers.

<sup>43</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 923, points out Jesus’ commissioning his disciples to preach “repentance for the forgiveness of sins in his name to all the nations” (24:47) is in line with his prayer (23:34) because “the sin is universal — the disciples also belong to the category of the “lawless” (22:37) — and the prayer for God to forgive those who act from ignorance applies universally.”

<sup>44</sup> Marshall, *Luke*, 417; For similar conclusions, see T.L. Johnson, *Luke*, 376 (“ . . . it confirms the image of Jesus as *sophos* who demonstrates virtue until the end of his life”); Carroll, *Luke*, 466 (“Jesus faces martyrdom with integrity, staying on message and living it out to his dying breath [cf. 23:43, 6]”); Bovon, *Luke 3*, 307 (“The

writer's conclusion that the Lukan Jesus' prayer on the cross is original. With that said, we now turn to our major discussion about how Luke uses the theme of "ignorance-knowledge"<sup>45</sup> in his entire narrative as a brush to paint his characters.

### III. "Ignorance-Knowledge" Theme in Luke-Acts

#### 3.a. Introduction

We suggested that Luke's recording the Jesus' prayer from the cross could be a significant support and even evidence for a prominent "ignorance-knowledge" theme for Luke's overall narrative.<sup>46</sup> As our investigation will argue, Luke treats quite extensively the problem of human ignorance as a major roadblock for appropriating God's salvation and other sub-themes such as becoming the people of God, perceiving God's plan for them, and entering into God's kingdom. In the Lukan account, again, there seems no better place than the cross to portray the forceful dynamic of human ignorance in regard to the subject of salvation. The cross is where the full gravity of human ignorance is *developed, displayed* and even *dealt with* in a succinct and surprising manner made known in Jesus' prayer.

In anticipation of the ensuing presentation, this short prayer reveals three simple and yet significant points about ignorance. First, the heinous action to crucify God's Son was plotted and done *in* ignorance. Those who were responsible for his crucifixion did not see the gravity of their

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presence of this prayer confirms the saintliness that the author applies to Christ during his agony").

<sup>45</sup> It is necessary to include "knowledge" because, as our further investigation will reveal, the two antithetical themes are often interrelated and, often, they appear in the same narrative units or sayings, and ignorance is overcome only by true knowledge bestowed from above. Therefore, in the ensuing discussion, the "ignorance" theme presupposes the "knowledge" theme without being specified.

<sup>46</sup> Joseph Tyson argues that Luke's treatment of Jesus death is not confined to Lukan passion narrative. "The earlier parts of the gospel build toward it and anticipates it, and the book of Acts recalls it and reflects on its implications. Thus, all sections of Luke-Acts contribute to the forging of a particular understanding of the forces that brought about Jesus' death" (Tyson, *The Death of Jesus* [Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1986], x). It is my conviction that the theme of "ignorance-knowledge," which is closely related to Jesus' passion/death, works in much same way throughout Luke-Acts in pointing to the ignorance Jesus prayed for.



action. Second, the crucifixion was done due to the sin *of* ignorance. In other words, Luke presents ignorance not only as the state of the people who crucified him but also as the critical source or the basic cause for the sins leading up to crucifying the Messiah.<sup>47</sup> This is to be argued and confirmed in our ensuing analysis. Third, ignorance, therefore, turns to the *new* era on the cross or its proclamation. Despite the grave nature of crucifying God’s Messiah, forgiveness is asked by the crucified one in recognition that the crime is done from ignorance. But, as will be shown below, Luke begins to distinguish his people groups and individuals according to their reaction to this prayer (cf. Luke 23:34b–49), and adds an invitation to repent with words of judgment after addressing the issue of ignorance (cf. Acts 3:19–20; 13:38–41; 17:30–31). Luke perceives and presents the unrepentant and persistent ignorance seriously. As our following discussion will argue, Luke’s presentation of the ignorance-knowledge theme centers around the above mentioned three points as basic tenets of his portrait of both Jews and Gentiles: *ignorance as the state of people, un-repentant ignorance as the leading source for further malice, and the inexcusable nature of ignorance after its exposure through proclamation.*

### **3.b. How to Go about Our Research Regarding “Ignorance-Knowledge”**

If we were to agree with Tannehill on his proposal that Luke intends the Areopagus speech to be the representative of other mission speeches for Gentile audience who had no prior contact with the Jewish Scripture or teaching, we would do that on his point that human ignorance hampers their search for and worship of the true God, and, as it is hinted previously, that in Luke’s portrait of human beings the problem of ignorance bears critical weight. Instead of

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<sup>47</sup> For example, over the second occasion of expressing his grief over Jerusalem (cf. 13:34–35 and 19:41–44), Jesus’ emotion is so intense that he weeps over the city as he is approaching her (v. 41). Jesus twice mentions about the Jerusalemites’ ignorance: “If you had only known (ἔγνων) on this day, even you, the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes” (v. 42). And “They will demolish you . . . because you did not recognize (ἔγνων) the time of your visitation from God” (v. 44). In recording this, Luke seems to be convinced of the

the “verse-by-verse” approach to examine the way Luke presents how ignorance is entrenched in human life in regard to God and his agents (Jesus and the apostles), I opt to treat the issue with a narrative approach. It will be argued that Luke sees ignorance as the major malaise to be identified and remedied, but he does not regard it as a cut-and-dried concept lacking fluidity. Human ignorance is expressed or emerges in many different shapes and stages throughout Luke-Acts. In the course of investigation we focus on explicit texts while including some implicit texts supporting the theme or textual allusions. Before we embark on our investigation, we must first take two important preliminary steps: surveying the Lukan scholarship on the topic and establishing the linguistic parameters.

### **3.c. Lukan Scholarship on “Ignorance-knowledge” Theme**

Our first entry point into prior scholarly discussion of “ignorance/knowledge” is provided by the question of whether Luke-Acts exhibits an anti-Judaic theme. We may begin with J. Tyson’s *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars: Critical Approaches to Luke-Acts*, which is especially valuable as it discusses the critical issue of Lukan presentation of Jews as understood by Lukan scholars and traces the scholarly trajectory.<sup>48</sup> Based on the insight that scholarship of a particular time is profoundly influenced by that particular culture, Tyson begins his work with his own observation that the Holocaust of 1933–45 marks a major watershed event for New Testament scholarship as well as the study of Lukan writings.<sup>49</sup> The prewar scholars, who generally drew

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magnitude of this problem of ignorance as the epicenter for the imminent storm over Jerusalem.

<sup>48</sup> Joseph B. Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars: Critical Approaches to Luke-Acts* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999). In addition, he has other works addressing the issue: *Images of Judaism in Luke-Acts* (1992); “Jews and Judaism in Luke-Acts: Reading as a God-fearer,” *NTS* 41 (1995): 19–38; and his edited work *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988).

<sup>49</sup> Tyson, *Luke*, ix. Tyson says the Holocaust was “perhaps the most striking illustration of the relationship between historical events and critical scholarship” (Tyson, *Luke*, 1). He also refers to an excellent study by Karl Hoheisel (1978) who pinpoints the year 1947 instead. According to Hoheisel, that year marks a significant turning

“an exceedingly dark picture of the first-century Judaism,” rarely questioned the historical accuracy of the anti-Jewish motifs in the NT documents nor were they alarmed by the possibility of their misleading or harmful nature. The postwar generation of NT scholarship, on the contrary, is divided and Luke-Acts has been the storm center for the debate, as “Luke-Acts seems to be the most perplexing in terms of the ambivalent attitudes toward Judaism.”<sup>50</sup> Even though Luke’s view of Judaism may seem irrelevant or as a distant topic to the theme of ignorance, their interconnection will surface in our discussion. We begin with Conzelmann and Haenchen who took up the “anti-Judaic”<sup>51</sup> view.

### 3.c.1. Die Mitte der Zeit (Conzelmann, 1954)<sup>52</sup>

Conzelmann considers that the issue of ignorance was important for Luke who, as a redactor-writer, was working with different traditions and kerygmatic sayings of the primitive church. Therefore, understanding Conzelmann’s position on ignorance-knowledge requires reading these texts on his terms. First of all, Conzelmann argues for the theory that the Gospel has “the tendency to put all the blame on to the Jews” insofar as Jesus’ passion is concerned.<sup>53</sup> Although

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point on two counts: the reassessment of the issue in light of the Holocaust and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The latter, in particular, made NT scholarship aware of the existence of the dynamically various groups of Jews (Tyson, *Luke*, 2).

<sup>50</sup> Tyson, *Luke*, 1–2.

<sup>51</sup> Eldon Epp offers a cautionary note on distinguishing between “anti-Judaic” and “anti-Jewish.” The latter, on the one hand, can more easily be taken to mean “against the Jew as person.” By “anti-Judaic,” on the other hand, he refers to the “religious complex out of which Christianity arose and contemporary with the earliest period of the new faith. ‘Judaic,’ then, both involves the concept of Israel as the distinctive and exclusive people of God and also, at times, refers to the official religious system, including the regulations, customs, and institutions of both ‘Palestinian’ and ‘Diaspora’ Judaism. . . . When the Jews as persons are singled out, they appear as the representatives and instruments and often as the leaders of this system.” Cf. his *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 23–24.

<sup>52</sup> My references are to the English version *The Theology of St. Luke* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960).

<sup>53</sup> Conzelmann, *Theology*, 90. An important piece of evidence would be Pilate’s involvement in Jesus’ execution. While in Mark 14:15 Pilate’s interest to please his Jewish subjects makes his involvement active, Luke

Acts 13:28 holds Pilate responsible for Jesus' execution even though it was by the request of the Jews, in Luke 23:25 (“[Pilate] handed Jesus over to their will”) Luke inserts his own interpretation of Acts 13:28 without saying Pilate carried out the execution.<sup>54</sup>

Second, based on the first point, Conzelmann claims that the guilty ones are the Jews. He finds a discrepancy in Acts 2:23 (διὰ χειρὸς ἀνόμων) where the wicked or lawless originally referred to the Gentiles. Who are the “ἄνομοι” Luke had in mind? Based on the usage of “ἄνομος” in Luke 22:37 (“For I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me, ‘And he was counted with the transgressors.’ For what is written about me is being fulfilled”) and Acts 7:53 (“You received the law by decrees given by angels, but you did not obey it”), Conzelmann concludes that the Lukan understanding of “ἄνομος” is different from the Jewish referencing to the Gentiles or non-Jews. Luke employs it in a moral sense to mean “criminal.”<sup>55</sup>

Third, what becomes important is Luke's mission motif. Conzelmann's following words bear repeating:

It is significant that the theme of guilt can be combined with the theme of relative excuse, when connected with ignorance. The two themes are different in origin. The one arises from a consideration of redemptive history, and aims to show that the Passion is a divine decree. It is then given a secondary moral application, and is used for the purpose of the polemic against Judaism. The other theme arises from the need for a connecting-link in the missionary approach. . . . In v. 17 [of Acts 3] there is a definite pardon of the Jews, which is even extended to their rulers. . . . This change of

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23:25–26 shows Pilate playing a passive part. Conzelmann goes further: “In place of mockery by the Romans there is repeated mockery by the Jews. Once again we see the contrast between the sources and Luke's adaptation; in the sources the soldiers are Romans and although the soldiers are still there in Luke, it is not certain where they belong. Every positive indication that they belong to Rome is removed. . . .” (Conzelmann, *Theology*, 88).

<sup>54</sup> Conzelmann, *Theology*, 91. Thus, Conzelmann makes Acts 13:28 part of the Lukan original source and Luke 23:25 as Luke's redactional touch. His redactional conviction is evident in the following words: “In so far as there is any suggestion that the Romans take part, it is a survival from the sources and is not part of the plan of Luke's account, but, rather contradicts it.”

<sup>55</sup> Conzelmann, *Theology*, 90–92. The same can be said of Luke 24:7 and 13:27 (cf. Matt 7:23). They are Luke's interpretation of what it means to be ἄνομος.

attitude in view of mission is also seen in the typical language of v. 19, following upon the statement in the previous verse.<sup>56</sup>

Originally, Conzelmann asserts the theme of ignorance is applicable *only* to the ignorant Gentiles because the Jewish guilt in relation to God's redemptive history prohibits an application of the theme to the Jews. "[B]ut a way of doing it is found. Conversion is possible for the individual Jew, and it is the fact of ignorance that makes this possible."<sup>57</sup>

Conzelmann's redactional approach to various texts related to the theme of ignorance led him to an "anti-Judaic" conclusion that this theme was used to establish mission contact or missionary link mainly with the Gentiles. The guilty Jews receive pardon individually just as a bonus. For this reason Conzelmann has a narrow understanding of who were the beneficiaries of Jesus' prayer in Luke 23:34: only the executioners who were mere tools.<sup>58</sup> Another point Conzelmann raises in regard to our theme is that Jesus' resurrection is the turning point. Since it is the resurrection in which the truth is inescapably disclosed, after this people can no longer hide behind the excuse of ignorance.<sup>59</sup> E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (1971) shares a more or less similar view to that expressed by Conzelmann.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Conzelmann, *Theology*, 92.

<sup>57</sup> Conzelmann, *Theology*, 92–93; italics added. Also, see 17, note 2 and 162 for further discussion on this. Elsewhere, Conzelmann argues that the Jews had opportunity to make good their claim to be "Israel," but their failure in the end led them to be "the Jews" (Conzelmann, *Theology*, 145).

<sup>58</sup> Conzelmann, *Theology*, 89.

<sup>59</sup> Conzelmann, *Theology*, 162. Resurrection "proved [him] to be the Messiah in such a way that the fact can no longer be evaded. It is now that the unbelief becomes inexcusable; this underlies the appeal to the Jews (Acts 3:17–18) and that to the heathen (Acts 17:30), and is in keeping with the interpretation of the event of the Resurrection in Acts 17" (Conzelmann, *Theology*, 90). Conzelmann further says that after the resurrection any Jew cannot "put forward as an excuse his non-Christian understanding of Scripture" (Conzelmann, *Theology*, 162).

<sup>60</sup> One apparent difference, though, for our interest is their reading of Acts 13:27. While as Haenchen takes it as continuation of the theme expressed in Acts 3:17 that sin committed in ignorance is pardonable (Haenchen, *Acts*, 207), Conzelmann views that 13:27 expresses a different thought. Luke, allegedly following the Old Testament tradition, describes ignorance as guilt (Conzelmann, *Theology*, 90).

In conclusion, while holding onto the “anti-Judaic” view of Luke, the “Conzelmann-Haenchen consensus” made a contribution for our subject of the ἄγνοια in proposing Luke’s missionary motif; Lukan speakers utilized the theme for retaining contact with their hearers.

### 3.c.2. The Jews in Luke-Acts (Jack T. Sanders, 1987)

Jack Sanders in *The Jews in Luke-Acts* takes Conzelmann’s view even further in a strongly argued manner. He sees in Acts 3:17 and 13:27 what he calls “Luke’s epochal scheme” at work. The main focus of Peter’s address “to all people” in Jerusalem in the second person is the invitation to repent of past actions in ignorance, and to turn around. Paul’s Antiochene speech, addressed in the third person, on the other hand, is different in saying that the Jerusalemites and their rulers were ignorant of Jesus “*although they ‘read the voices of the Prophets every Sabbath’* (v. 27).”<sup>61</sup> The logical conclusion is that, even though opportunity was offered to the Jerusalem Jews in Acts 3, after the beginning of the Gentile mission their ignorance provided no more chance for conversion, but rather a judgment and condemnation which provides incentive for the Antiochene Jews’ conversion. Sanders concludes:

I believe that it would be correct to say that, in Luke’s opinion, after Paul’s sermon in Acts 13, the Antiochene Jews also have no excuse. In a word, the proclamation of the gospel both offers the opportunity for repentance and removes the excuse of ignorance. Thus, if we continue to ignore the story line and concentrate on what Paul says, we see that he is very shortly pronouncing God’s rejection also upon the Antiochene Jews in the first of the three announcements of the turning to the Gentiles

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Haenchen notes an apparent tension between Acts 2:22 (Jesus’ miracles bore sufficient divine mark and “you Israelites” could not have been ignorant!) and 3:17 (Peter pronounces their act of killing Jesus was in ignorance), and he explains by attributing it to the various traditions Luke had and used unaware of contradictions. Basically, the ἄγνοια in 3:17 counts as an exculpation. Haenchen, with Conzelmann, sees the missionary motif in the Lukan presentation of the ἄγνοια. Of the ἄγνοια in Acts 17:30, Haenchen expresses a similar view of the Lukan missionary motif, which is behind the whole speech. Contra Paul’s indictment in Rom 1, the Lukan God does not punish the Gentiles according to their deserts but rather overlooks their wrong. However this divine overlooking has an end, which is evident in Acts 17:31 (Haenchen, *Acts*, 525–26).

<sup>61</sup> Sanders, *The Jews*, 52; italics by Sanders.

(13:46). . . . No matter; when Jews in Paul's Diaspora mission reject the gospel they fall under the same condemnation that is pronounced against those in Jerusalem. (13:27)<sup>62</sup>

Therefore, by the end of Acts the Jews are written off because, says Sanders, Paul's condemnation of the Roman Jews with a scriptural quotation "for their intransigent and endemic ignorance applies probably to all Jews."<sup>63</sup> Sanders further argues that this "anti-Judaic" view is commonly expressed by Luke's major speakers, namely, Jesus, Peter, Stephen, and Paul.<sup>64</sup>

That one's view of the ignorance theme plays a key role for "anti-Judaic" reading, and the two are interrelated is evident in the following summary:

[The Jews] always have been willfully ignorant of the purposes and plans of God expressed in their familiar scriptures, that they always have rejected and will reject God's offer of salvation, that they executed Jesus and persecute and hinder those who try to advance the gospel . . . bringing God's wrath down upon them, and quite deservedly so . . . "*Luke has written the Jews off.*" No divided Israel here.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Sanders, *The Jews*, 52–53, 201, 260, 286

<sup>63</sup> Sanders, *The Jews*, 53. For a similar position by Sanders in a condensed format, see his "The Salvation of the Jews in Luke-Acts" in *Luke-Acts, New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar* (ed. C. Talbert; New York: The Crossroad, 1984): 104–28. In this essay, he builds up his argument in opposition to Jervell's position in *People* and to Eric Franklin, *Christ the Lord*. Tyson, in *Luke*, points out that one of Sanders' unique contributions to consider is his insight drawn from distinguishing between narratives and speeches. In the former, there are both repentant and obdurate Jews mixed, while in the latter all Jews are condemned. Denying the possibility that the differences are due to different sources Luke used, an argument used by Boismard, Sanders argues that both genres come from one mind and thus "apparent disharmonious juxtaposition of" two contrasting images about Jews is purposeful and deliberate, and Luke brings the two elements together in successful resolution. As somewhat favorable narratives earlier than the speeches become negative toward the end of Acts, they join the speeches in rendering negative judgment about Jews. (cf. Sanders, *The Jews*, 47–65; Tyson, *Luke*, 114–17). However, Tyson challenges Sanders' analysis in distinguishing narratives and speeches saying, "Under his interpretation we are called upon to believe that the author quite consciously used different literary genres to express different theological views, while carefully manipulating the narrative so that it progressively represents what the speeches have been claiming all along." Without totally denying Sanders' claims as a possible explanation, Tyson thinks that would lay severe demand on the intended reader (Tyson, *Luke*, 120).

<sup>64</sup> Sanders, *The Jews*, 63.

<sup>65</sup> Sanders, *The Jews*, 63–64. The words in my added italics are attributed to Haenchen. The last sentence is offered mindful of Jervell's position taken in "The Divided People," in *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972): 41–74.

### 3.c.3. Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts (Mikeal Parsons and Richard Pervo, 1993)

The main concern of the collaborated work by Parsons and Pervo is, as the title suggests, to challenge the scholarly consensus on the unity between Luke's Gospel and Acts. However, this monograph deserves our attention in that it includes some discussion on our topic and raises a strong dissenting voice. In the fourth chapter ("The Theological Unity of Luke and Acts"), they attempt an understanding of Lukan anthropology, which, despite its more subtle and less intentional nature within the frame of Lukan theology, shows "an important and pervasive element of Lukan thought and literary expression that stresses general cultural views rather than particular concerns emerging from the Israelite religious tradition."<sup>66</sup> Even though Luke's Gospel is largely excluded in Parsons and Pervo's discussion of Lukan anthropology, what they present is of some importance due to their very different perspective.

Speaking of the Lystra episode (14:8–18), they apply insight and conclusions drawn from studies of ancient popular narratives. What the Lystrans did after witnessing the miracle wrought through Paul to a lame man is perfectly understandable considering that the ancient writers readily compare their heroes to divinities.<sup>67</sup> "If the healing stands at the tip of God's gracious creation, the healers represent *the zenith of human achievement*."<sup>68</sup>

Next Parsons and Pervo discuss the Areopagus speech (17:22–31) under the heading of "the unity of the human race." Relying heavily on Lukan genealogy (Luke 3:23–38; in particular, v. 38 ["...the son of Adam, the son of God"]) in light of the preceding verse ["You are my Son,

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<sup>66</sup> Mikeal Parsons and Richard Pervo, *Rethinking*, 89–90.

<sup>67</sup> Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 90–92. They refer to the first book of *Callirhoe* in which Callirhoe was taken to be a goddess as Aphrodite was thought to manifest herself in the fields.

<sup>68</sup> Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 93–94; emphasis added. Contra, see Acts 3:12; 10:26 (καὶ ἐγὼ αὐτὸς ἄνθρωπός εἰμι); 12:23; Rev 19:10.



the Beloved; with you I am well pleased”] [3:22]), Parsons and Pervo consider Luke to be more in line with Graeco-Roman popular philosophy<sup>69</sup> than the tradition established in the Hebrew Scriptures. This correlates with Luke’s attempt to claim the universality of the Christian proclamation based on humanity’s divine progeny.<sup>70</sup> When Luke 3:38 is read in connection with 3:22, therefore, Adam is elevated because “Lukas presumably refers to Adam not as a fallen sinner but as the glorified, immortal being fashioned by God and placed as the head of creation.”<sup>71</sup> Since all human beings, Jews and Gentiles, are children of Adam who is, in turn, the Son of God, the unity is an accessible gift of the one Creator.<sup>72</sup> This leads them to make the following statement in regard to theme of ignorance among the Athenians: “The audience may be ignorant, but their ignorance is far from invincible. No blindness has utterly corrupted pagan hearts, as Paul presently demonstrates. He comes to the claim that all people descend from one person fashioned by God (v. 26).”<sup>73</sup> According to Parsons and Pervo, Luke’s anthropology that “humans are of divine origin” shapes his Christology, characterized as “theology of glory,” which is distinctive from other evangelists as well as Paul.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> They list several Greek philosophers and their works for their claim: Pindar, Prodicus, Cleanthes, Epictetus, Dio of Prusa, Plutarch, Cicero, Aratus, and the *Sentences of Sextus* (98–99). Later, they make the following summary statement applicable to Acts 14:6–18: “Behind the preceding sketch what is probably the most common (and fluid) of Greco-Roman anthropological perspectives, in which humanity lies upon a spectrum ranging from the θηριώδες (beastly) to the θεϊον (divine), with a potential for ethical improvement” (Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 107).

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 101, notes 70 and 71.

<sup>71</sup> They see strong support for their argument for human immortality in Acts 17:28 (In him we live...) and Luke 20:35–38, with its oft-noted parallels to *4 Macc.* 7:19; 13:17 and 16:24–25 (cf. Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 101 and n. 72).

<sup>72</sup> This Lukan notion, argue Parsons and Pervo, is radically different from Pauline thought, in which ‘the eschatological miracle of new creation through baptism’ forms the basis for the unity of the human race (Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 97–98).

<sup>73</sup> Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 98.

<sup>74</sup> Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 102–12.

In conclusion, though their main goal lies in challenging the assumed unity of “Luke-Acts,” Parsons and Pervo’s anthropological analysis paints clearly an optimistic view of man.

**3.c.4. Luke’s Portrait of Gentiles Prior to Their Coming to Faith** (Christoph Stenschke, 1999)

Our preceding survey of several authors shows that (with the exception of Parsons and Pervo) the ignorance theme received attention either in passing or only as far as it relates to the broader discussion of the Lukan view of the Jews.<sup>75</sup> This changes in C.W. Stenschke’s book, *Luke’s Portrait of Gentiles Prior to Their Coming to Faith*, originally a Ph. D. dissertation presented to the University of Aberdeen in 1997. In so far as Stenschke’s discussion renders valuable insights to consider for our topic, we will pay close attention.

The author is, first of all, convinced that Lukan scholarship largely “failed to note why what had been so clearly foretold was necessary or to consider the state of the Gentiles implied” by Lukan assertions about the universal lordship of Jesus and the Gentile inclusion.<sup>76</sup> His study is an attempt to answer the question “Why was [the Gentile] mission part of God’s ancient plan, and what state of the Gentiles does it seek to address?”<sup>77</sup> Stenschke embarks his project with conviction that his studied material “forms the backdrop for understanding salvation and often explains the particular shape of the Christian proclamation (*e.g.* the description of the setting of

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<sup>75</sup> This observation is confirmed in Bovon’s *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-Five Years of Research (1950–2005)* (2d ed.; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006). Of the vast number of scholars he treats, no one, including Bovon himself, has treated the ignorance theme as a separate topic.

<sup>76</sup> Christoph W. Stenschke, *Luke’s Portrait of Gentiles Prior to Their Coming to Faith* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 4–5.

<sup>77</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 5.

the Areopagus speech and its content) and shows indirectly from what and why people actually needed to be saved.”<sup>78</sup>

Stenschke’s first phase of analysis (Chapter 2) led him to see that though Luke does not develop stereotyped portrait of Gentiles, they share some common traits which enable the reader to detect a fairly coherent portrayal of their state as in the following:<sup>79</sup> (i) *Ignorance of God*: The Gentiles’ underlying assumptions, lifestyle, and behavior point to their ignorance of God and lack of revelation. Their condition is hopeless apart from the initiative of God and his servants. (ii) *Spiritual incapacity*: Possibly as a consequence of (i), the spiritually incapacitated Gentiles are idolatrous in engaging magical practices (Acts 8:9–11) and they fail to distinguish between human and divine (Acts 8:9–11; 12:20–23; 19:35). The Gentiles rebel against God (Acts 4:25–26; Luke 21:24–28), and when confronted with special revelation they respond based on their own notions and customs. Luke’s portrait of the Gentiles places them in need of God’s direct intervention for salvation, rather than mere correction which is advocated by J.-W. Taeger.<sup>80</sup> (iii) *Moral-ethical sin(s)*: Their fornication and greed are connected to their spiritual state despite some exceptions (Acts 28:2). (iv) *Under divine claim and condemnation*: Their failures in

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<sup>78</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 52–53.

<sup>79</sup> The following four points are found in Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 97–101; italics in original.

<sup>80</sup> Throughout his book, Stenschke keeps emphasizing Luke’s conviction that Gentiles need more than correction. The correction theory is originally proposed by Jens-W. Taeger in his *Der Mensch und sein Heil: Studien zum Bild des Menschen und zur Sicht der Bekehrung bei Lukas*, StNT 14 (Gütersloh: G. Mohn, 1982). According to Stenschke, Taeger is the only scholar to date to undertake the challenge of writing on Luke’s anthropology in monograph form. Arguing for the unique, unified portrait of man by Luke, Taeger proposes that “Der Mensch ist kein salvandus, sondern ein corrigendus” (Taeger, *Mensch*, 225; cf. Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 36–37). Stenschke’s following statement defines what is a proper place for correction within the Lukan scheme: “Correction is undoubtedly a Lukan concept with regard to the Gentiles. The various misconceptions of Gentiles need to be exposed, corrected and replaced. The speeches directly addressing Gentiles prior to faith contain such correction, e.g., the Athenians were called to change their thinking (μετα-νοεῖν, Acts 17:30). Once Christian, Gentiles continue to receive further correction, instruction and exhortation” (Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 386).

spiritual ignorance place them under temporary and eschatological divine judgment (Luke 10:12–14; 11:30, 32; Acts 7:7), and thus they need to repent and be saved.

Based on those characteristics of the Gentiles that he surveys in his third chapter (“The Gentile Encounter with Salvation”), the following three strands are identified.<sup>81</sup> First, *the accounts of Gentile encounters with Jesus or with the Gentile mission*: Due to their state of enmity with God, spiritual blindness and darkness, and bondage to demon and disease, the divine saving intervention had to be brought to them.<sup>82</sup> Second, *the Gentile appropriation of salvation*: The Gentile response to their encounter with salvation was often negatively expressed in the form of rejection of both salvation and the divine agents (Jesus and the missionaries). Third, *the Gentiles’ state prior to faith*: Their rejection (cf. # 2) and spiritual and moral-ethical failure held them responsible and under the divine judgment. Stenschke concludes: “Gentiles need God’s salvation as the only way forward. . . . [C]orrection<sup>83</sup> does not and cannot replace salvation, rather it accompanies and follows salvation and, due to the condition of Gentiles, has to follow salvation to a greater extent than Taeger allows for.”<sup>84</sup>

His fourth chapter treats Gentile Christians, concluding that the emergent portrait coincides with and supplements Luke’s direct evidence, which he had analyzed in the previous chapters. “[They] are *not* holy, righteous, believing, following God’s course and his appointed leader to

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<sup>81</sup> Stenschke claims that the adoption of this particular approach “does more justice to an author who in other areas demonstrates considerable skill and coherence” (Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 317).

<sup>82</sup> Stenschke rightly points out that response to the saving message was better among the Gentiles with previous association with Judaism while as among the “pure” Gentiles “severe misunderstandings occurred and/or response was limited.” Stenschke considers that God had already been working through the Jewish association (Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 317).

<sup>83</sup> It is interesting to note that Stenschke understands that what was offered to the Athenian and Lystra audiences was “correction of pagan notions” about divine being (318). He later argues, “‘Genuine’ Gentile reasoning about deity is mentioned only to be exposed as mistaken and to be corrected: οὐκ ὀφείλομεν νομίζειν (Acts 17:29)” (Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 383).

life. They are on their own ways, at odds with God's purposes and not members of God's people. Other Gentiles lack the Spirit and everything associated with him and his ministry."<sup>85</sup> Luke's portrait of them implies that "the pagan life, so natural and deeply entrenched, is not a *preparatio evangelica* but determined by notions and values that need to be eradicated."<sup>86</sup>

Stenschke then summarizes his findings under seven points, concluding that his study led to a darker portrait of the Gentiles than suggested by some previous studies. (i) Ignorance: The Gentile state is characterized by darkness, blindness, and idolatry, and this ignorance is liable for judgment. (ii) Rejection of God's purpose and revelation in history: The Gentiles prior to faith are not only ignorant but also actively hostile to the purpose and revelation of God and his chosen agents. (iii) Idolatry: Ignorance further leads them to worship a plurality of deities and to get caught up in magic and sorcery. When these practices are challenged, Gentiles fiercely defend them. (iv) Materialism: Alienated from the true God, Gentiles are preoccupied with material things, which in turn leads them to resist the Christian mission. (v) Moral-ethical sins: With caution Stenschke argues for a correlation between the moral failures of Gentiles and their spiritual state as Luke's reference to the former is more indirect. (vi) Under the power of Satan: Gentiles live in the world, which is under Satan's dominion and at his disposal (Luke 4:5-6; Acts 26:18). All previously mentioned symptoms are related to this state. (vii) Under judgment: Only repentance and God's salvation provide a way out of their grave failures, which place them under eschatological judgment.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 317–18.

<sup>85</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 375; emphasis in original.

<sup>86</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 375.

<sup>87</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 379–82.

Contra Conzelmann<sup>88</sup> and Wilson<sup>89</sup> and in agreement with Marshall,<sup>90</sup> Stenschke concludes, “Unable to alter their condition, they need God’s saving intervention to change their plight. . . . [And] they cannot alter their state themselves but need God’s salvation,”<sup>91</sup> which establishes a strong necessity for the Gentile mission because only the Gentile mission alone “*can* address, alter and ameliorate” their state.<sup>92</sup> In closing, the author points to the lack of and need for “*neues Gesamtbild der lukanischen Theologie*”<sup>93</sup> being mindful of the missing piece, that is, the Lukan portrait of the Jews.<sup>94</sup>

### 3.c.5. A Summary and Conclusion

We began our scholarly survey of Luke’s theme of knowledge-ignorance with Tyson’s work on the Lukan understanding of Judaism, hoping to find the Lukan scholars’ treatment of our topic in their discussion of the larger topic: Jews. As Joel B. Green and M. McKeever

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<sup>88</sup> See Stenschke, 28–33 for his presentation and criticism of Conzelmann’s position in his *Die Mitte der Zeit*. Stenschke concludes that Conzelmann tends to weaken the concept of original sin by discussing sin as concrete, individual acts, as supported in Luke’s use of it in the plural. Thus, Conzelmann’s hamartiology is ethical-moral.

<sup>89</sup> Stenschke’s treatment on S. G. Wilson’s position in *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Acts* is found in pp. 34–36. Wilson draws up an extremely positive portrait of Gentiles saying, “[T]he Gentiles are, in their own way, as devout and as likeable as the Jews” (Wilson, *Gentiles*, 245; cited in Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 34).

<sup>90</sup> Stenschke cites Marshall’s following conclusion: “It is fair to conclude from this that Luke regards all people, both Jews and Gentiles, as in need of salvation that comes only through Jesus. Piety, such as that shown by Cornelius the Roman centurion (Acts 10:2), is an indication of readiness to accept the message, and is pleasing to God (Acts 10:31), but is no substitute for actually responding to the gospel, which brings salvation (Acts 11:14, 18)” (Cf. Marshall, *The Acts of Apostles* [New Testament Guide, 1992], 60; cited in Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 383–84).

<sup>91</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 383–85.

<sup>92</sup> Therefore, in opposition to some scholars’ labeling Luke as having an allegedly anti-Jewish stance, Stenschke rightly points out that his study and its conclusion would imply Luke’s *anti-Gentile stance*. “Luke equally or to an even greater extent condemns non-Christian Gentiles” (Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 392; emphasis in original).

<sup>93</sup> That is, a new big picture of Lukan theology.

<sup>94</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 392. Stenschke cites from W. Wiefel, “Review of Taeger, *Mensch*,” *Die Theologische Literaturzeitung* 114 (1989): 272–73.

correctly identify, this question of Luke's relationship to Judaism is one of the most contested issues in modern Lukan scholarship, and salvation for and inclusion of Gentiles is another. However, our survey reveals that Luke's use of ignorance theme as an important tool for his characterization has not received focused attention within scholarly discussion of "Lukan anthropology." At most, this topic has dealt with a few key passages (Luke 23:34; Acts 3:17; 13:27) and then only in passing. In the majority of modern Lukan scholarship, proving or disproving Luke's anti-Judaism has been the storm center of discussion.<sup>95</sup> A major narrative analysis of how "ignorance/knowledge" relates to the Lukan understanding of both Jews and Gentiles is absent to date. Our survey noted Stenschke's work renders much valuable insight for understanding Luke's portrait of the Gentiles, albeit his main focus lay on surveying only the Gentiles prior to coming to faith. It stands alone in identifying and working out the theme of "ignorance-knowledge" as one of the important characteristics of the Gentiles in Luke-Acts. With that said, we proceed to another preliminary step before we take up the task of investigating the ignorance-knowledge theme in Luke-Acts.

### **3.d. Establishing Linguistic Parameters for the Topic of Ignorance-Knowledge**

A brief discussion to establish the linguistic parameter of our study is in order. Since our goal is to locate the theme of ignorance-knowledge within the entire narrative of Luke-Acts, there are many Greek words as well as concepts explicitly and implicitly expressed without using particular terms like "ignorant(ce)" or "knowledge." Luke employs a variety of words and images to portray the state of ignorance or knowledge. Furthermore, there are hints and allusions as well. Therefore, even though one can subdivide Greek words into two categories (directly related and implicit or allusive), we put them together for brevity, recognizing that the division

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<sup>95</sup> Cf. Tyson's *Luke* for a general survey.

between explicit and implicit words in some cases is artificial. All of the definitions of each word provided below are from J.P. Louw and E.A. Nida's *Greek-English Lexicon*.<sup>96</sup> First of all, here is the list of vocabulary appearing in the texts we treat: γινώσκω (ἐπιγ-) and its noun forms (γνώσις [ἐπίγ-]); οἶδα; συνίημι (-ίω) and its noun form (σύνεσις); αἰσθάνομαι; θεωρέω; βλέπω; ὁράω; ὀφθαλμός; φῶς; διανοίγω; ὁδηγέω; ἀγνοέω; ἄγνωστος; σκοτία; τυφλός; μωρός; and κρύπτω.

### 3.d.1. Greek Words Related to Knowledge/Understanding:

γινώσκω<sup>97</sup> and its noun form (γνώσις): to know, to possess information about, to learn, to be familiar with, to understand, and to acknowledge

ἐπιγινώσκω and its noun form (ἐπιγνώσις): to possess more or less definite information about, possibly with a degree of thoroughness or competence

οἶδα: to have knowledge as to how to perform a particular activity or to accomplish some goal, to understand, to remember

συνίημι (-ίω) and its noun form (σύνεσις): to (be able to) understand (comprehend) and evaluate, to be intelligent, to employ one's capacity for understanding and thus arrive at insight

αἰσθάνομαι: to have the capacity to perceive (understand) clearly and hence to understand the real nature of something

θεωρέω: to come to understand as the result of perception, to recognize

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<sup>96</sup> J.P. Louw and E.A. Nida eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Society, 1988).

<sup>97</sup> The concordance survey shows Luke prefers ἐπιγινώσκω to γινώσκω. While the former appears 20 times in Luke-Acts out of its 42 total occurrences in the NT (=47%), the latter's occurrences in Luke-Acts amounts to 20% (44 out 218). The latter is heavily used in Johannine literature (87 times=40%) (cf. Moulton and Geden eds., *A Concordance to the Greek Testament* [5th ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978], 170–72 and 365–66). Luke uses ἐπιγινώσκω for special emphasis: e.g., Luke 1:4; 24:31; Acts 24:8, 11. However, Louw and Nida caution: "It is possible that ἐπιγινώσκω differs somewhat in meaning from γινώσκω in focusing attention on what is understood or indicating that the process of understanding is somewhat more emphatic, but such a distinction cannot be determined from existing contexts" (Louw and Nida eds., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 382).



κατανοέω: to come to a clear and definite understanding of something, to understand completely, to perceive clearly

καταλαμβάνω: to process information, understand, grasp, learn about something through process of inquiry

μανθάνω: to come to understand as the result of a process of learning

βλέπω: to see, to be able to see; with θεωρέω, to come to understand as the result of perception

ὁράω: to see; with θεωρέω and βλέπω, to come to understand as the result of perception; to acquire information, with focus upon the event of perception

διανοίγω and ἀνοίγω:<sup>98</sup> to explain (open up, make evident) something which has been previously hidden or obscure

ὁδηγέω: to lead or guide someone in acquiring information, to lead someone to know, to guide someone in learning

ἐπίσταμαι: to possess information about, with the implication of an understanding of the significance of such information, to have or gain insight with focus on the process

σωφρονέω: to be sane, to have understanding about practical matters and thus be able to act sensibly

σοφίζω: to cause a person to have wisdom and understanding, to make (cause to be) wise

ὀφθαλμός: the capacity to see (seeing, sight), capacity to understand as the result of perception

φῶς: light in contrast with darkness, in public, people of God

ψηφίζω: to come to understand the meaning of something by figuring it out, to interpret

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<sup>98</sup> J. Louw and E. Nida say it is possible that διανοίγω with δια- can have a more emphatic meaning (Louw

### 3.d.2. Greek words related to ignorance

ἀγνοέω and cognate words (ἀγνοωσία, ἄγνοια, and ἄγνωστος): to not have information about (to be ignorant about), to refuse to think about or pay attention to, to not understand with the implication of a lack of capacity or ability (to fail) to understand

ἄνοια:<sup>99</sup> the state of being devoid of understanding or absence of understanding

κρύπτω: to keep safe, to cause something to be invisible with the intent of its being not found or for the purpose of safekeeping and protection, to cause something not to be known (to hide, to keep secret, to conceal)

σκοτία: a condition resulting from the partial or complete absence of light, the realm of sin and evil

μωρός: pertaining to being extremely unwise and foolish, pertaining to thoughts devoid of understanding and therefore foolish

τυφλός: pertaining to not being able to understand (to be blind), pertaining to being unable to see

In addition, it has to be borne in mind that much of the material in the Gospel and Acts is often allusive rather than definitively or explicitly employing the expressive terms listed above.

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and Nida eds., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 704).

<sup>99</sup> Ἄνοια is used only twice (Luke 6:11 [“furor”]) and 2 Tim 3:9 (“foolishness/folly”). See 2 Tim 3:8 for the ground for being “folly” related to opposition to the truth, and Jannes and Jambres’ opposition to Moses. Ἄνοια used in 2 Tim 3:9 can offer an insight for reading Luke 6:11 where we are told that the Pharisees and the lawyers, in opposition to Jesus’ ministry on the Sabbath and his overpowering teaching, began to discuss what they might do to Jesus. Joseph Fitzmyer comments on this verse: “Lit. ‘they were filled with madness.’ The Greek noun *a-noia* actually describes a state of unthinking or thoughtlessness and often means more than mere ‘folly.’ Plato (*Timaeus* 86B) distinguished two kinds of *anoia* and folly: *mania* (‘madness, fury’) and *amathia* (‘ignorance’). The former meaning suits the Lukan context better; it expresses the hardness of the hearts of Jesus’ critics” (Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* [The Anchor Bible 28; New York: Doubleday, 1964], 611).

That invites the reader to an even broader search for the topic within the whole narrative context. Therefore, setting up the linguistic parameters is for the sake of keeping the scope workable.

### 3.e. Ignorance in Luke-Acts

According to M. Abrams, there are two categories for the indicators of character: showing and telling.<sup>100</sup> Of the two, Luke “tends more toward showing than telling.”<sup>101</sup> Luke’s prominent use of “showing” has to do with Luke’s main thesis, that is, to present God’s universal salvation plan worked out through Jesus. Luke’s two-volume work shows how God’s plan is worked out through human blindness. Luke’s showing, in turn, necessitates his frequent use of irony,<sup>102</sup> and Kurz even argues that Luke’s main goal is “to convince his audience of this basic irony of history.”<sup>103</sup> The discussion below will argue that the main ingredients for irony in Luke-Acts are God’s salvific plan/purpose and people’s ignorance of or blindness to it.

Instead of dividing the characters into three convenient categories originally suggested by Harvey,<sup>104</sup> we may organize our discussion about Lukan motif of “ignorance-knowledge” around

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<sup>100</sup> Meyer H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1981), 20; cited in Darr, *On Character Building*, 44. Darr describes, “The various narrative settings . . . show characters by providing the backgrounds against which figures take on idiosyncratic shape. Other ways the text shows character are by revealing a figure’s (1) choices, (2) behavior, and (3) thoughts (internal monologue or direct speech). . . . [U]nder ‘telling’ we place only direct narrative descriptions and evaluations of characters. Although seldom recognized as rhetorical, these descriptions play a crucial role in positioning readers vis-à-vis *dramatis personae*” (Abrams, *A Glossary*, 44; italics in original).

<sup>101</sup> Darr, *On Character Building*, 45.

<sup>102</sup> Irony as one of Luke’s main literary tools will be discussed prior to reading Acts 17:16–34. Here is Culpepper’s description of the gospel irony: “The ‘silent’ communication between the author and reader assumes its most intriguing form in the ironies of the gospel. The implied author smiles, winks, and raises eyebrows as the story is told. The reader who sees as well as hears understands that the narrator means more than he says and that the characters do not understand what is happening or what they are saying” (Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 165–66).

<sup>103</sup> Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 137.

<sup>104</sup> Darr, relying on W.J. Harvey, *Character and the Novel* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965), 56–58, says, “Roughly speaking, the characters of Luke-Acts may be divided into three groups: background or tertiary figures, like the crowds (*ochloi*) or the people (*laoi*); intermediate or secondary personae, such as the Pharisees and tax collectors; and protagonists, or primary characters.” Darr, however, cautions against any rigid application of this

the following character-groups: the Jewish people, minor characters, the Jewish leaders, disciples, and the Gentiles. This grouping is conducive for identifying of what things each group is characteristically ignorant, and our narrative reading of Acts 17:16–34 will be built on and compared with its findings.

### 3.e.1. Ignorance among the Jewish People

This section of our survey includes the Jewish people such as Jesus' hometown Jews, the Jews in Jericho, the Jerusalem Jews, the Antiochean Jews in Pisidia, etc. Before we begin our discussion, we need to note two points in terms of grouping. One, even though Luke most often makes a conscious effort to distinguish between the people and their religious leaders (cf. Luke 23:13, 35; Acts 3:11 (the people) with 4:1–3 [religious leaders]),<sup>105</sup> there are times when Luke uses the inclusive πάντες (cf. Luke 4:28; 19:7) as the subject. In these cases, we cannot exclude the possibility that the leaders were present. But, insofar as Luke does not suggest the character behavior portrayed in the episode is influenced by the religious leaders, we treat the characters under the rubric of “the Jewish people.” Two, Luke's copious use of “crowd” (ὄχλος, Luke 6:19; 7:24) and the more complex “people”<sup>106</sup> (λαός, Luke 23:13; 6:17) is to be noted.<sup>107</sup> Even though

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taxonomy of characters being mindful of the fluid nature of the categories (Darr, *Character*, 45).

<sup>105</sup> In Acts 4:4 Luke goes back to the people saying, “But many of those who had listened to the message believed . . .”

<sup>106</sup> For more discussion on this, see the following: J. Kodell, “Luke's Use of *Laos*, ‘People,’ Especially in the Jerusalem Narrative (Luke 19, 28–24, 53),” *CBQ* 31 (1969): 327–43; Nils A. Dahl, “A People for His Name, (Acts 15:14),” *New Testament Studies* 4 (1958): 319–27. What is insightful is Dahl's specific focus on Acts 15:14 and 18:10 where Luke uses *Laos* in connection with Gentiles. These two verses constitute the two exceptions where Luke does not use the word to refer to Jews. A brief discussion appears in J. Tyson, *The Death of Jesus*, 29–32. Also helpful is J. Jervell's Jewish understanding of λαός in his “Gottest Treue zum untreuen Volk,” in *Der Treue Gottes Trauen: Beiträge zum Werk des Lukas: für Gerhard Schneider* (Freiburg, Basle and Vienna, 1991), 15–17. As in his *Luke and the People of God*, Jervell permits Gentiles a limited space by saying their inclusion as God's people through believing Jews occurs as a part of eschatology.

<sup>107</sup> According to Kingsbury, “‘crowd’ is a more vague and general word and simply denotes a large number

Luke, at times, uses them interchangeably,<sup>108</sup> we should watch out for places where that is not the case.

### *The Jewish People in Luke's Gospel*

Luke narrates Jesus' encounter with his hometown Jews in Luke 4, which seems to function as a pattern for how other Jews interact with Jesus in Luke and Jesus' apostles in Acts. That is to say, they gather around God's word and miracle works that accompany them, and yet, due to their lack of comprehending God's universal salvation plan, they turn away.

The people<sup>109</sup> who gathered at Jesus' hometown synagogue, upon hearing Jesus' gracious words, "were favorably impressed with his statement of his mission" (cf. 4:22).<sup>110</sup> But this initial positive impression became short-lived when they turned into a mob with murderous intent "that they could throw him down the cliff" (cf. Luke 4:28–29). What happened in-between? What was the cause for their quick turning?

To provide an insight into this episode, Tannehill pays attention to the parallelism between John the Baptist's harsh message in Luke 3:7–9 and Jesus' complaint in 4:23 on two counts. First, the missions of both John and Jesus are introduced with long quotations from Isaiah (cf. Luke 3:4–5 from Isa 40:3–5 and 4:18–19 from Isa 61:1–2). Second and more importantly, both have people's initially positive response.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, "John does not confuse superficial religion

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of persons" whereas " 'people' possesses a religious coloration and refers to the Jewish masses or to Israel as God's chosen nation" (Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 29).

<sup>108</sup> See, for examples, Luke 6:17 with 6:19; 7:24 with 7:29; 9:12 with 9:13; 18:36 with 18:43; 23:4 with 23:13. This list is suggested in Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 149, n. 130.

<sup>109</sup> Πάντες is repeatedly used (cf. vv. 15, 22, and 28).

<sup>110</sup> Tannehill, *Unity*, 1:69.

<sup>111</sup> Even though there is no explicit mentioning of this response to John, Tannehill argues that crowds' flocking in to be baptized speaks for it (Tannehill, *Unity*, 1:69–70).

with real repentance, and Jesus does not confuse wondering admiration with openness to his mission.”<sup>112</sup> People’s later rejection of Jesus reveals their self-preserving, “jealous possessiveness”<sup>113</sup> which would conflict with embracing and working in obedience to God’s universal salvific plan.

However, Tannehill’s otherwise insightful explanation seems to ignore what began the turning of the crowd in this episode. Initially impressed by the gracious words from Jesus’ lips, they asked, “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” (Luke 4:22b). Luke seems to imply a sense of irony here; by asserting that they certainly know Jesus in asking a rhetorical question using οὐχὶ, they reveal their ignorance. The implied meaning is: they certainly know Jesus as Joseph’s son. But, unlike Luke’s reader, they do not know who truly he is, namely, God’s Son (cf. Luke 1:32, 35) and his anointed one (the Messiah) (cf. v. 18).<sup>114</sup> They are blinded by their own knowledge. Thus,

Garland:

The excited question also exposes their limited understanding of Jesus. The reader knows from the infancy narrative that Jesus is not simply Joseph’s son but the Son of God. He is not merely a local boy speaking of the wondrous fulfillment of promises that would be a boon to this destitute community and exalt their estate. Only when it dawns on them that this is not in the plan do they begin to turn on Jesus.<sup>115</sup>

Jesus’ response, of course, drives forward and moves to something deeper by declaring that the Prophet Elijah was sent to none other than a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon, and that Elisha, Elijah’s successor, cured no lepers in Israel but Naaman the Syrian. Considering that the God of Israel is a compassionate God toward the widows (Gen 21:17–19; Ex 22:22; Deut

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<sup>112</sup> Tannehill, *Unity*, 1:70.

<sup>113</sup> Tannehill, *Unity*, 1:70.

<sup>114</sup> Thus Kurz, “Questions too can have an ironic impact. When characters in the story ask questions whose answers the audience knows, the effect is reassuring for the audience. It confirms their sense of superior insight into the inner meaning of the narrated events, which eludes the original observers” (Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 138–39).

10:18), the fact that God had Elijah pass all widows in Israel to get to a Gentile widow is provoking. Understood in their own historical contexts, Jesus' reference to these prophets is pregnant with rich meanings.<sup>116</sup> The ironical meaning suggested in this portion of the episode for both Jesus' audience and the implied reader seems to be that there exists "the inevitable conflict between God's purpose and the human desire to make special claims to God's salvation or place limits on its scope."<sup>117</sup> For that reason, the universal scope of salvation, suggested by Lukan inclusion of Jesus' reference to the Old Testament episodes, creates immediate tension as the Jews at Nazareth, who were ignorant of whose son Jesus really is, and of God's universal salvific plan, took offense and reacted with great rage at what Jesus said.

Located as it is in the narrative, this episode<sup>118</sup> sets the tone and serves as the narrative pattern for the rest of Luke-Acts.<sup>119</sup> Ignorant of this divine saving plan with its universal scope as

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<sup>115</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 202.

<sup>116</sup> Tannehill, for example, points out the fact that "the Elijah narrative is dominated by this prophet's conflict with the king and queen of Israel and by a sense of widespread apostasy among the people (see Elijah's despair in 1 Kgs 19:10, mitigated somewhat by 19:18)" (Tannehill, *Unity*, 171). D. Garland, for another, sees the parallel between Jesus' later healing of the centurion's slave (7:1–10) with Elisha's healing Naaman, and Jesus' raising the son of the widow of Nain (7:11–17) with Elisha's raising the widow's son at Zarephath (Garland, *Luke*, 205).

<sup>117</sup> Tannehill, *Unity*, 1:71.

<sup>118</sup> This episode follows Jesus' inaugural speech citing Isa 61:1–2. Lukan Jesus announces that his ministry is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

<sup>119</sup> Speaking of the programmatic nature of this whole episode (4:16–30) for Luke-Acts, J. Tyson, *The Death of Jesus*, 32 asks, "Is not one to understand that the fulfillment of Isaiah is to be accomplished by Jesus but that the benefits of the fulfillment will be enjoyed by Gentiles rather than by Jews?" Tyson, 45, n. 8, complains about the lack of attention by the Lukan scholarship in detecting the significance of the initial positive reaction of the audience (4:22) (Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], 177–90; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I–IX)* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981]). According to Tyson, Luke develops here a literary pattern: "initial acceptance followed by rejection" (Tyson, *The Death of Jesus*, 33).

well as of Jesus as God's anointed (4:18–19), many Jewish people with their leaders unfortunately will keep stumbling over the message and ministry of Jesus.<sup>120</sup>

Between Luke 4 and 23:13 where the people (λαός) began to join their leaders in demanding Jesus' death before Pilate, the Jewish people do not appear as violent. Often, they are portrayed in at least a sympathetic light. They marvel at Jesus' word or teaching or miraculous power (4:32, 4:36; 5:26; 7:16; 9:43). They delight in Jesus' act of showing mercy (13:17), and they praise God for Jesus' healing the blind (18:43). They are eager to hear Jesus' words (5:15; 8:4; 9:11) so much so that they tried to retain him (4:42). They acknowledge that God's way was right (7:29).<sup>121</sup> Despite this positive dimension, however, there are important episodes that point in a different direction. In several passages, Luke displays the Jewish people's ignorance, both explicitly and implicitly.

Jairus' friends and relatives show their ignorance of Jesus and his power (cf. 8:40–56). Jesus' travel to Jairus' house to heal his daughter is delayed by a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years. In the meantime, the girl dies before Jesus' arrival (cf. 8:49). Entering into the house, Jesus tells all (πάντες) who are wailing and mourning, "Stop your weeping; she is not dead but asleep" (v. 52). How do they respond? Luke narrates, "And they began making fun of

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<sup>120</sup> Different observations about the strategic importance of Jesus' encounter with his hometown Jews are suggested. J. Tyson, *The Death of Jesus*, 39, argues for Luke's persistent literary use of "the pattern of initial acceptance followed by rejection" to shape several individual sections as well as the entire Book of Acts. He claims to detect a parallelism between Luke 4:16–30 and Acts 13:13–52 by saying, "[The latter] may, in fact, serve as a programmatic introduction to Paul's ministry as Luke 4:16–30 served for Jesus' ministry . . ."

Bovon also senses a greater significance of this episode for Luke's Gospel saying, "Perhaps Luke intends to create a typological connection between Nazareth and Jerusalem, between the first and the last attempt at murder 'outside the city' (cf. Heb 13:12–13, as well as Acts 7:58 in the case of Stephen)" (Bovon, *Luke 1*, 156).

<sup>121</sup> See Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 29–30, for a summary discussion how the people in the Third Gospel are chiefly "well-disposed" toward Jesus in a stark contrast with their leaders. Kingsbury argues that "without faith" in Jesus and making no commitment to follow him are the negative traits Luke attributes to the people (31).



(κατεγέλων) him, because they knew (εἰδότες) that she was dead” (v. 53).<sup>122</sup> Because some of them saw with their own eyes how the girl breathed her last or heard her mother’s sorrowful cry over her death, they knew the fact that she was dead. Their surety over her death made them misunderstand Jesus’ words when he said she was sleeping. They even ridiculed Jesus. In Garland’s words, “They know death when they see it, and they know no one who can bring the dead back to life.”<sup>123</sup> Since they were inside the house and Jesus was outside, they assumed to have the superior insider’s knowledge while Jesus did not. However, the reversal took place when Jesus helped her by hand to get up. No one except her parents was astonished (v. 56, ἐξίστημι) at the scene. Unlike Luke’s reader, the friends and relatives who had gathered did not have the insider knowledge about Jesus and what he is capable of (cf. Luke 7:7, 14, 21).

Next, in Jesus’ discourse recorded in 12:54–57, Jesus speaks to the crowd (ὄχλος in plural) referring to their ability to predict the weather by cloud or wind. Since “[k]nowledge of winds was necessary for farmers and indispensable for sailors”<sup>124</sup> in those days, Jesus’ following words are forceful and weighty: “You hypocrites! You know (οἴδατε) how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky, but how can you not know (οἴδατε) how to interpret the present time?” (v. 56). Seen in light of Luke’s other use of ὑποκριταί, in 6:42 and 13:15, Bovon offers the following interpretation:

For [Luke] the hypocrite is less a Tartuffe than a being without self-knowledge who believes that he or she is doing good or knows the truth but remains caught up in evil. Ignorance here involves *guilt*, since it could have been avoided. All that people have to do is open their eyes to their time. . . . What [the Lukan Christ] suggests is being attentive to history as much as to nature. There is “hypocrisy” in the biblical sense of the term, when one reacts correctly to nature while remaining passive in the face of

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<sup>122</sup> In Mark 5:40 and Matt 9:24, however, the whole clause (εἰδότες ὅτι ἀπέθανεν) is missing.

<sup>123</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 369.

<sup>124</sup> Bovon, *Luke* 2, 254.

events. . . . These women and men stifle their potentialities for *seeing* things clearly, as long as they do not open their eyes to contemplate what is going on in their time. The effort required to do so is not the simple act of looking, since history has a certain obviousness about it, but rather the *will* to open one's eyes and drop the mask.<sup>125</sup>

Jesus' telling that people are responsible for their ignorance in 12:54–57 is implicitly suggested in 17:27–30. Initiated by a question about the timing of the coming of God's kingdom the Pharisees asked (17:20), Jesus speaks the following words to his disciples:

People were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage— right up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot, people were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building; but on the day Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be the same on the day the Son of Man is revealed. (vv. 27–30)<sup>126</sup>

What is contrasted explicitly here is people's absorption in normal and economic activities with their total lack of awareness of dire imminent judgment. Whether Jesus' words might stress on God's rescuing the righteous rather than sudden judgment<sup>127</sup> or, with Bovon, the unforeseen character of the parousia as well as the legitimate condemnation of the ungodly,<sup>128</sup> one thing is clearly suggested: the people in the days of Noah and of Lot did not prepare aptly because they were "oblivious to"<sup>129</sup> or ignorant of the coming destruction. And, according to Fitzmyer, the

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<sup>125</sup> Bovon, *Luke* 2, 255; italics added. Speaking of the Jewish people's voluntary nature of ignorance, Garland says, "It may imply that they are deliberately oblivious" (Garland, *Luke*, 531).

<sup>126</sup> In vv. 27 and 28, John Carroll notes a "rhetorically powerful, attention-riveting syntax" and "striking stylistic feature of the discourse" in "the staccato string of verbs without connecting conjunctions (i.e., the stylistic technique of asyndeton) . . . , and with a crescendo effect (four verbs in v. 27, building to six in v. 28, with the first two verbs identical in the two parallel series" (Carroll, *Luke*, 350).

<sup>127</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 699–700.

<sup>128</sup> Bovon, *Luke* 2, 520.

<sup>129</sup> David Tiede, *Luke*, 302.

Lukan Jesus is warning “against the insouciance and indifference of ‘this generation.’”<sup>130</sup> Luke’s implicit portrait of the people is: They are too absorbed in mundane things (cf. Luke 8:14) to discern God’s present realm in their midst through Jesus (cf. 17:21) and God’s future judgment.

The Lukan portrait of the Jewish people can also be found in episodes where an anonymous person(s) acts as subject. Luke sometimes uses an anonymous subject to narrate an episode by using a passive verb without, expressing the agent (e.g., 8:20), or his “favorite” τις (-ες; e.g., 13:23; 11:15; 13:1) with ἕτερος (-οι; e.g., 11:16; 18:10; Acts 23:6).<sup>131</sup> One important episode for Luke’s characterization of the people in this regard is recorded in 11:14–36, out of which emerge two important things for understanding Luke’s entire Gospel: (i) Some of the Jewish people begin to take up strongly negative roles; and (ii), divisions within the crowd have developed.<sup>132</sup>

The two negative reactions to Jesus’ healing a mute by driving out a demon (cf. 11:14) staged Jesus’ teaching. The first group (τινὲς δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν) accused Jesus of driving out the demon by Beelzebub (v. 15). Tannehill points to other related passages (11:29–32 and 12:54–13:9), and he concludes, “These related passages in chapters 10–13 suggest that the fault of Jesus’ accusers in 11:15 lies not only in their false accusation but also in their failure to *recognize* the approach of God’s reign and repent.”<sup>133</sup> Carroll makes a similar point regarding the second group of people who demanded a sign from heaven (v. 16): “The insistence of less hostile

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<sup>130</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke (X–XXIV)*, 1167.

<sup>131</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 110–11, indicates that ἕτερος (-οι) is used 30 times in the Gospel whereas τις (τινὲς) with a noun for 38 times. Thus, with many others, these two form Lukan characteristic words (Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 112).

<sup>132</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:150. In regard to the second point, Tannehill says, “The narrator previously distinguished between the attitudes of the scribes/Pharisees and the crowd or people (7:29–30). Now the opposition to Jesus characteristic of the former is emerging within the crowd” (ibid).

observers that Jesus perform (another) sign also shows incapacity to *discern* God’s activity in this exorcism and thus betrays massive failure of *perception* . . .”<sup>134</sup> Jesus’ logical defense against the first group’s accusation through an analogy of a divided kingdom or house (vv. 17–20) speaks for “the patent absurdity” of his accusers.<sup>135</sup> Seen in this episode and hinted at in the text (17:26–30) we examined above, the people’s ignorance is not portrayed as a “mere lack of understanding or insight.” Rather, Luke presents it to be more voluntary (Luke 17) and hostility-breeding (Luke 11). And thus Luke records, “As the crowds were increasing, Jesus began to say,<sup>136</sup> ‘This generation is a wicked generation; it looks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah’” (11:29).<sup>137</sup>

Luke’s portrait of the division among the Jewish people and the growing hostility toward Jesus as the narrative moves toward Jesus’ passion is supported by and confirmed in Jesus’ grief over Jerusalem. Luke’s Gospel has Jesus grieving over Jerusalem twice: 13:34 and 19:41–42. The ignorance motif appears only in the second. The setting for the second occasion is the triumphal entry facing his passion. Luke 19:41–42 reads: “And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, ‘Would that you, even you, had known (εἰ ἔγνων) on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden (ἐκρύβη) from your eyes.’” Seeing the

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<sup>133</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 149–50; italics added.

<sup>134</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 255; italics added.

<sup>135</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 255.

<sup>136</sup> ἤρξατο λέγειν here may be compared with 3:8 (. . . μὴ ἄρξησθε λέγειν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς· πατέρα ἔχομεν τὸν Ἀβραάμ. λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι δύναται ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν λίθων τούτων ἐγεῖραι τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ. . . .)

<sup>137</sup> Even though the Lukan Jesus has a much larger group of people than a segment of the crowd in 11:16, Fitzmyer argues that 11:16 functions as the real introduction to this episode (*idem*, *Luke X–XXIV*, 935). The implication Jesus is making with reference to Jonah in Nineveh is that “‘this generation’ is doomed apart from repentance” (Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:150, and n. 14). Thus, refusal to repent after the proclamation or exposure of ignorance faces severe consequence (cf. Luke 12:47).

magnitude of the imminent tragic event in handing him over to the Gentiles, Jesus grieves over the city because the Jerusalemites play a major role in this tragedy in ignorance of the fact that Jesus brings the salvation, peace, and God's kingdom in their midst. Participating in that horrendous evil is far from bringing peace to Jerusalem, but rather destruction. But things are hidden for now and they do not know (γινώσκω) about things that would bring peace. Luke, earlier, said God's mercy would cause "the rising sun" to guide "our feet into the path of peace" (Luke 1:79) and he let us see that Simeon, holding and recognizing Jesus, knew the way of peace as evident in his praise in 2:29 ("Now, according to your word, Sovereign Lord, permit your servant to depart in peace"). In an important way Jesus' grief over Jerusalem prepares for the passion narrative in terms of their role in the plot in ignorance of Jesus and God's ironic achievement of salvation through the Jerusalemites' ignorant act.

Even though Jesus was brought to Pilate by the core leadership of Israel, "the council of elders of the people, both the chief priests and teachers of the law" (cf. 22:66), the people also were present. Therefore, when Pilate answered back after a brief conversation with Jesus, it was "to the chief priests and the crowds" (καὶ τοὺς ὄχλους) (23:4). After Jesus was returned by Herod Antipas, Pilate "called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people" (τὸν λαόν) (23:13).<sup>138</sup> Upon hearing Pilate's proposal to punish Jesus and release him, "[T]hey all shouted out together, 'Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!'" (v. 18). The people (λαός) joined in unison to demand Jesus' death. Even though Luke no longer uses any specific word to designate who made up the group, it is clear. They all joined and kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" (vv. 21 and 23). This group of people (λαός) followed Jesus heading to the place called "the Skull" (v. 27). And Jesus offers his prayer saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what

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<sup>138</sup> Garland rightly points to the irony that "the people (τὸν λαόν) whom Jesus is accused of leading astray

they do” (πάτερ, ἄφες αὐτοῖς, οὐ γὰρ οἶδασιν τί ποιῶσιν) (v. 34a). For whom was the prayer offered? Only for the executioners? Luke leaves this unanswered for now, but I shall argue below that the prayer was for all people groups as they share in their ignorance of Jesus’ identity and, thus, the heinous nature of crucifying God’s Son and Messiah.

Luke leaves us with two more references to the people (λαός) immediately following this prayer.<sup>139</sup> While the rulers sneered at him saying “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!” (v. 35),<sup>140</sup> “the people (ὁ λαός) stood by, watching” (θεωρῶν) (v. 35). Is Luke signaling some hope for the Jewish people hinting that, upon hearing Jesus’ prayer or due to something else, they distanced themselves from their sneering rulers?

Apparently, he does so. Though Luke does not refer to “the people” (λαός), he makes room for their appearance once more. Immediately after Jesus’ death, the centurion, who had seen (ὁράω) what had happened, did something truly remarkable: He praised God and emphatically recognized the innocence of Jesus (v. 47).<sup>141</sup> Appearing only after this are the people who stood watching in verse 35. Luke states: “And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts” (καὶ πάντες οἱ συμπαραγενόμενοι ὄχλοι ἐπὶ τὴν θεωρίαν ταύτην, θεωρήσαντες τὰ γενόμενα, τύπτοντες τὰ στήθη ὑπέστρεφον)” (v. 48). David Tiede’s following words capture the narrative significance of Luke’s notation:

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(23:5) appear on the side of the chief priests and rulers” (idem, *Luke*, 907).

<sup>139</sup> Luke’s last reference to the people (λαός) in his Gospel appears in 24:19. See Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 30–31, for a positive evaluation of the people in light of v. 21. He concludes, “In conversing with the risen Jesus before they have conceived who he is, the Emmaus disciples recount that whereas the people looked upon Jesus as a prophet mighty in deed and word, the leaders delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified (24:19–20).”

<sup>140</sup> Luke uses a triplet here by having the rulers, the soldiers, and one crucified criminal on Jesus’ side (vss. 35, 37, and 39, respectively) hurled similar insults at him.

<sup>141</sup> The remarkable nature of the action of this unknown centurion is comparable with another centurion in

The crowds who have gathered to “watch” (v. 35) now have “watched” or “observed” both Jesus’ death and the centurion’s testimony. Luke’s play on the words for “seeing” continues, and the only clue that they have truly “observed” or “seen” something is that they **return beating their breasts**. The text does not say **returned home** (RSV), but simply **returned**, which could be an image of “turned around” or “repenting” (Gk: *hypostrephein*), and their **beating their breasts** at least means remorse. Full repentance of the people of Judea and Jerusalem will be evident at Pentecost, preceded by their being “cut to the heart” (Acts 2:37–38), but these “crowds” at least seem to have a new level of tragic insight.<sup>142</sup>

Their returning in remorse, but not yet repenting in the proper sense, took hearing two pronouncements of Jesus’ innocence (cf. vv. 41 [by a crucified criminal] and 47 [a centurion]) and seeing how Jesus comported himself on the cross. As it will become evident in our further discussion, the Jewish people’s ignorance does not get removed easily. It takes a gradual process led by the divine intervention working through the proclamation of church, which takes us to Luke’s second volume.

### *The Jewish People in the Book of Acts*

The first incident revealing the people’s ignorance appears at the dawn of the Christian church, that is, at Pentecost. At the sight of the gathered disciples speaking in tongues moved and empowered by the Holy Spirit, some Jews were amazed and even perplexed (*διαπορέω*) not knowing<sup>143</sup> what to make of what they were witnessing as they say, “What does this mean?” (2:12). Yet worse, other Jews made fun of the Spirit-filled and salvation-proclaiming disciples mockingly (*διαχλευάζω*; used also in Acts 17:32) saying, “They are filled with new wine” (2:13). At this, Peter with the Eleven got up and he delivered a sermon to answer their question of

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Capernaum (Luke 7:2–10). We will return to these Gentile individuals below.

<sup>142</sup> David L. Tiede, *Luke*, 425; emphasis in original. Tiede compares this remorseful reaction of the crowds to Peter’s “weeping bitterly” (Luke 22:62) as part of his turning again (*ἐπιστρέφω*) as Jesus had predicted (22:32).

<sup>143</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 71, calls it “incomprehension.”

“What does this mean?” and to bring insight into this epoch-making event of Pentecost. He began by saying, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you (τοῦτο ὑμῖν γνωστὸν ἔστω), and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day” (2:14–15). His further words, in particular what is said in v. 36 (“Therefore let all the house of Israel know [γνωσκέτω] beyond a doubt that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ”), would finally make them to be “cut to the heart” (v. 37) as the message so squarely confronted their ignorant involvement in killing Jesus. Their ignorance is exposed. The following points are significant for our discussion.

First, instead of an untimely drunken orgy, what they are witnessing bears eschatological significance (the fulfillment of the prophecy by Joel [vv. 16–17]) as well as soteriological.<sup>144</sup> Second, Peter appeals to what is known to them<sup>145</sup> by now in vv. 22–23 saying, “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know (καθὼς αὐτοὶ οἶδατε)—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God (βουλῇ καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ), you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.” Third, their revered King David already knew (οἶδα) and predicted Jesus’ resurrection (vv. 30–31). Finally, “the entire house of Israel”<sup>146</sup> including this audience are to “be assured” (ἀσφαλῶς οὖν

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<sup>144</sup> God’s promise of outpouring of his Spirit “on all people (ἐπὶ πᾶσαν σάρκα)” in v. 17 and of salvation to everyone (“πᾶς”) who calls on his name (v. 21) reminds the reader of Luke’s own quote from the words of Isaiah in Luke 3:6 (“and all humanity [πᾶσα σὰρξ] will see the salvation of God.”).

<sup>145</sup> Some of them probably had watched and beat their chests as we noted in the preceding discussion of Luke 23.

<sup>146</sup> Of this expression, Beverly Gaventa, *Acts*, 79, says, “By identifying ‘the entire house of Israel’ as those who need to know, Peter further emphasizes the significance of the occasion (see 4:10; 13:24).”



γνωσκέτω)<sup>147</sup> that the same Jesus whom they crucified (cf. Greek emphasis: ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε) God made Lord and Christ (v. 36). In conclusion, what the Jews mistakenly took for drunkenness marks the eschatological divine actions toward achieving universal salvation as foretold by the Prophet Joel, proclaimed by Peter, and now confirmed by the outpouring of the Spirit on “all flesh” (cf. both Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17 have identical ‘ἐπὶ πᾶσαν σάρκα’). The significance of this great, jubilant event can be grasped only through seeing and knowing<sup>148</sup> a series of truths about Jesus: that Jesus’ ministry was attested by mighty works; Jesus’ resurrection was predicted by David; and Jesus the crucified was, by his resurrection from the dead, divinely appointed as Lord and Christ.

More directly addressing the ignorance theme is Peter’s second sermon to the people (λαός) of Jerusalem who gathered around in Solomon’s Colonnade, being astonished by Peter’s healing a crippled man (cf. Acts 3:11). After describing how Jesus was disowned and handed over to be killed, Peter says, “And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers” (Καὶ νῦν, ἀδελφοί, οἶδα ὅτι κατὰ ἄγνοιαν ἐπράξατε ὡσπερ καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες ὑμῶν) (v. 17).<sup>149</sup>

Once again, their involvement in crucifying the divinely sent Messiah is pronounced to be an action committed in ignorance. “Here is the proclamation of a divine amnesty, offering a free

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<sup>147</sup> Gaventa notes the subtle connection between Lukan uses of ἀσφαλῶς in here and Luke 1:4 (Gaventa, *Acts*, 79).

<sup>148</sup> Referring to “. . . what see and hear” in v. 33, Johnson says, “Perception, experience, and meaning are all united in the conviction that Jesus is not dead but alive as powerful Lord” (L.T. Johnson, *Acts*, 55).

<sup>149</sup> See Witherington, *Acts*, 183, n. 75, for his comment on the anti-Judaic tendency in the Western text (D, E it [h, p] cop [G67] originally discussed in E. J. Epp, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 41. Witherington notes two changes made in the Western text which show its tendency: “(1) the adding of μὲν in v. 17 make the contrast between the Jews’ action and God’s purpose stronger and clearer; (2) the adding of πονηρον after ἐπράξατε. As Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 314, says, this leads to the rendering “We know that *you*, on the one hand, did a *wicked thing* in ignorance . . . but on the other hand God . . .” (italics in original).

pardon to all who took part in Jesus' death, if only they acknowledged their error, confess their sin, and turn to God in repentance."<sup>150</sup> Tannehill sees a parallelism between Peter and his audience in their common failure to recognize and accept Jesus as God's servant prior to the resurrection of Christ. Tannehill's "pastoral" reading of Peter's sermon bears repeating:

Thus Peter, in speaking to the people of Jerusalem, is trying to convey the new and revolutionary understanding that removed his own *blind ignorance* when he was instructed by the risen Christ. Furthermore, Peter accuses the Jerusalem Jews of having "denied" Jesus (3:13–14) yet "is himself a reformed denier" (cf. 22:34, 54–62). Peter's record suggests that he knows something of the need and possibility of repentance and can speak to his audience from this experience.<sup>151</sup>

After Peter's sermons to them in Acts 2 and 3, the Jewish people are portrayed as well-disposed toward the Christian message largely thanks to the removal of their ignorance through God's proclaimed message: they repented and accepted the message and even were baptized (2:41); their positive attitude caused jealousy among their leaders (4:1–2, 17); their leaders' fear of the people prevented them from punishing the apostles (4:21); crowds brought their sick and those tormented by evil spirits to be healed (5:16); they were astonished by the converted Paul preaching at Damascus (9:21).

However, with Paul's conversion the derogatory expression οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι begins to emerge to designate the Jews in opposition to Christianity (9:23). In fact, the appearance of this term seems to turn the tide in view of the Jewish people's attitude toward Christ and the church's mission. With a few exceptions where ὁ ὄχλος is used (cf. 21:34; 22:22), Luke begins to use οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι to characterize a distinctively hostile Jewish group in opposition to the Christian movement (cf. 9:23; 12:3; 13:45, 50; 14:2, 19; 18:12; 20:19; 21:27; 23:12). Considering that

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<sup>150</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Acts*, 83.

<sup>151</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:57–58; italics in original. See also D. Hamm, "Acts 3:12–26: Peter's Speech and the Healing of the Man Born Lame," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 11 (1984): 199–217.

Paul's preaching activity in Damascus marks the very beginning of his mission, we now turn to this episode (9:19b–25).

Even though the ignorance motif is implicit, this episode is important for its parallelisms with Jesus' hometown episode. First, Luke 4:18–21 and Acts 9:20 mark the first preaching by Jesus and Paul respectively. Second, Jesus' hometown folks were amazed (θαυμάζω in Luke 4:22) and the Jews in Damascus were bewildered (ἐξίστημι in Acts 9:21).<sup>152</sup> Third, both groups in Luke 4:22 and Acts 9:21 respectively ask a similar question: οὐχὶ . . . ἐστὶν . . . οὗτος . . . ;: (Isn't this . . . ?) and οὐχὶ οὗτός ἐστιν . . . ἔ; (Isn't this . . . ?), which implies their blindness to the true identity of Jesus as God's Son rather than Joseph's and of Paul who will suffer much for Jesus' name (9:16) rather than a persecutor of those who call on Jesus' name (9:2, 21).<sup>153</sup> Fourth, both groups tried to kill their speaker (Luke 4:28–29 and Acts 9:23). And, fifth, Luke's protagonists made a narrow escape and moved to a different location (Luke 4:30–31 and Acts 9:24–26). In closing, in both episodes Luke portrays the Jews as ignorant of Jesus and Paul and the message they preached. In their ignorance and anger, they became violent. Similar things repeat when Paul goes to Jerusalem and speaks "in the name of the Lord" (9:28). The Grecian Jews attempted to kill him (v. 29), which made Paul's new Christian brothers in Jerusalem send him to Tarsus (v. 30) where he stayed until Barnabas brought him to Antioch (11:25–26).

Luke revisits the theme of ignorance of the Jerusalem Jews and their leaders in 13:27 using "dramatic irony, lack of recognition leading to fulfillment of oracles."<sup>154</sup> After a brief summary

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<sup>152</sup> For Luke's other uses of ἐξίστημι, see Luke 2:47; 24:22; Acts 2:7, 12; 8:9, 11.

<sup>153</sup> Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 435, notes the reappearance of "the refrain of the 'name' " (cf. Ananias' report to the Lord in 9:14).

<sup>154</sup> W. Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 91. Kurz argues that this type of irony is familiar from both Hellenistic drama and historiography.

of the story of Israel from the patriarchs to David (13:17–22),<sup>155</sup> through which Paul establishes his connection with his audience by affirming the community relationship,<sup>156</sup> Paul swiftly transitions to Jesus Christ as God’s promise fulfilled to David (v. 23; cf. 2 Sam 7:12). Then Paul takes a step back by referring to the ministry of John the Baptist as Jesus’ forerunner, and he cites John’s words: “What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold, after me one is coming . . .” (v. 25) Paul’s reference to John assumes not only his audience’s familiarity with John but also some weight of John’s ministry.<sup>157</sup> Paul builds up his argument by using him along with David for his climatic message, beginning with a familiar greeting:

Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. For the people who live in Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize him (ἀγνοήσαντες), and they fulfilled the sayings of the prophets that are read every Sabbath by condemning him (13:26–27).<sup>158</sup>

The fulfillment of Scripture is once more mentioned in relation to killing Jesus in v. 29. Therefore, through and through, Paul declares to his audience the tragic ignorance of the Jerusalem Jews (and their rulers) in failing to recognize Jesus despite several obvious historical and scriptural supports. But Paul’s real concern in the speech is yet to come. Speaking about the ignorance of the Jerusalemite Jews and their leaders has an urgent gospel message for his audience, and Paul is explicit as he says, “Let it be known to you therefore (γνωστὸν οὖν ἔστω

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<sup>155</sup> The content and tone of this historical review are similar to those of Stephen’s sermon (Acts 7), albeit not so convicting.

<sup>156</sup> Tannehill, *Unity* 2:166. Also see C. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (trans. J. Wilkinson and P. Weaver; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 14, 24, 65 and 142 for more substantial discussion on the orator’s careful approach to present persuasive speech.

<sup>157</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:168.

<sup>158</sup> The Greek sentence structure of v. 27 makes a few other readings possible including NAS: “For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled *these* by condemning *Him*.” Thus, Bock, “The Jewish leadership had two failures: (1) it did not recognize Jesus and his work, and (2) it failed to understand the prophets read in the synagogue each Sabbath (on such blame, see 2:22–24; 3:17; 4:26–28)” (Bock, *Acts*, 454).

ὁμῖν),<sup>159</sup> brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses” (vv. 38–39).

It is true that other Jews living outside of Jerusalem, including this group, are not blamed for acting in ignorance and killing the Messiah. “However, if the hearer relates v. 27 to vv. 40–41, the former can be understood as an advance warning not to repeat the blind rejection of the Jerusalemites.”<sup>160</sup> In addition, the Lukan Paul’s passing over the part the Romans played in condemning and executing Jesus is noteworthy.<sup>161</sup> What happens the following Sabbath (13:44–45) only confirms Paul’s fear because Paul and Barnabas say, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles” (v. 46). This marks the first of the three fatal pronouncements made by Paul against fellow Jews (cf. 18:6 [in Corinth] and 28:28 [in Rome]). After the initial success of the Jewish mission in Jerusalem “outwardly” (cf. 3:41 [addition of three thousand]; 4:4 [five thousand in total]) and “inwardly” up to Stephen’s martyrdom (Acts 7), the characterization of Jews remains pretty much the same: they are obdurate and violent in their ignorance. In fact, this is what Paul’s last visit to Jerusalem shows in 21:17–24:30, to which we now turn.

A few preliminary comments are in order. For Paul (as for Jesus), Jerusalem with its temple and worship was a much longed for city.<sup>162</sup> There are several points of parallelism

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<sup>159</sup> This phrase appears in 2:14 and 4:10 with intention of emphasis.

<sup>160</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:169.

<sup>161</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 225.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Luke 13:34; 19:41–44 (Jesus’ cry over Jerusalem) and Acts 24:17 (Paul’s gift for the poor in the city even though Fitzmyer correctly notes the absence of any reference to the collection) (cf. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 692).

between Jesus and Paul in regard to Jerusalem. Despite the warnings of the potential danger (Luke 13:31 and Acts 20:22–23; 21:11), both Jesus and Paul resolutely headed toward this city (Luke 9:51 and Acts 20:24) because they understood the city to be crucial for their destiny in God’s plan. Both were warmly received upon arrival at the city (Luke 19:28–40 [the triumphal entry] and Acts 21:17–20a) and yet later they were arrested. Jesus was sentenced to death and Paul had a near death experience (Acts 21:31–36; 22:22–23; 23:12–15).

Act 22:1–21 marks the first of a series of defense (*ἀπολογία* [v.1]) speeches (cf. 24:10–21; 25:8–13; 26:2–23). Despite Paul’s careful application of persuasive techniques suitable for a forensic speech (“Brothers and fathers” [v. 1]; his upbringing, education and devotion to God [v. 3]; the high priest and all the Council as his witnesses to his former life (v. 5); and reference to Ananias of Damascus [v. 12]),<sup>163</sup> Paul’s speech provoked the anger of the Jerusalem Jews even before getting into his main apology or the formal proof for defense.<sup>164</sup> As a defense speech, it may appear to be a failure in view of the very negative reaction of the crowd.<sup>165</sup> Two things are pertinent for our interest in relation to the Lukan scheme.

First, the theme of ignorance is implicitly reinforced as Paul recounts his conversion. The Lord’s answer (“I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting” [v. 8]) brought him “the horrible *realization* that he has been persecuting the risen and exalted Messiah, and in fact doing

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<sup>163</sup> Cf. Jerome Neyrey, “The Forensic Defense Speech and Paul’s Trial Speeches in Acts 22–26: Form and Function” in *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar* (ed. Charles H. Talbert; New York: Crossroad, 1984), 211–13; John C. Lentz, *Luke’s Portrait of Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 106.

<sup>164</sup> On this Tannehill makes the following observation: “The end of the speech sharpens the problem, rather than allowing the tension to be reduced. Such a move is possible because this speech is only the beginning of Paul’s defense. It begins a defense of Paul and his mission that will be cumulative, seeking to convince the suspicious by painting a portrait of Paul that will make him more understandable and acceptable to detractors sympathetic to Judaism” (Tannehill, *Narrative Unity* 2:278). Also see W. R. Long, “The Paulusbild in the Trial of Paul in Acts,” in *SBLSP* (1983) (ed. K. H. Richards; Chico, CA: Scholars, 1983): 87–105 for a similar view.

<sup>165</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 675.

the opposite of what God would want him to do.”<sup>166</sup> For Luke’s readers, the life of the young Paul prior to conversion means that a model Jew with an impressive background and religious zeal can do the worst that a Jew can imagine, that is, persecuting Jesus, the Son of God (Luke 1:32, 35). The young Paul, who was thoroughly trained under Gamaliel, would have continued in violent ignorance had it not been for the dramatic divine intervention.<sup>167</sup> Second, the first point immediately serves as a warning to Paul’s current audience. In a way, Paul’s recounting his past extends a serious and urgent invitation, however indirectly, to his accusers whose current life resembles Paul’s former living in blind ignorance. We noted Tannehill’s citation of D. Hamm, who articulated the view of Peter as “reformed denier” addressing his fellow Jerusalem Jews in 3:13–14. The same can be said of Paul standing before and sharing with the accusing Jews only with greater force.<sup>168</sup> At any rate, the invitation is clear in Paul’s reciting the word of Ananias: “The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will (γινῶναι τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ), to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth” (v. 14). If these words outline Paul’s conversion and his new life, it means, by implication, that his hearers “don’t know his will; they don’t see the Righteous One; and they don’t hear his voice.”

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<sup>166</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 671; emphasis added.

<sup>167</sup> This point can shed some controversial light on the Lukan portrait of Gamaliel (cf. his speech in Acts 5:34–40). A separate treatment of Gamaliel will be given under “Jewish Leaders” section below. Suffice it to say J. Darr draws a negative conclusion based on Acts 22:3 along with several additional elements found in Acts 5:34–40. L.T. Johnson draws a similar conclusion: “In Acts 22:3, Paul claims to have had Gamaliel as his teacher; since Paul was at that time also a persecutor of the Church, one would hesitate to presume that in our author’s eyes Gamaliel is positively inclined toward the Messianists!” (Johnson, *Acts*, 99).

<sup>168</sup> That is because Peter, unlike Paul, never got into his own regretful act of denying Jesus in the speech! Paul’s attitude is well captured in his final speech in Caesarea delivered to the Roman governor Festus and King Agrippa. Luke records his final words before being sent to Rome: “. . . I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am- except for these chains” (Acts 26:29).

Paul's speech in 22:1–21 is the fifth Christian sermon delivered to the Jerusalem Jews<sup>169</sup> not counting Paul's initial preaching activity following his conversion hinted at in 22:17:20. Therefore, "Jerusalem should know that it is about to lose what could have been a second opportunity to hear the good news from Paul. . . . Paul's narration of the radical change that took place in his life is an invitation to his present persecutors to reevaluate Paul and Jesus and thereby be changed themselves."<sup>170</sup> They chose not to despite that "they themselves know" (αὐτοὶ ἐπίστανται) about Paul's past as a zealous persecutor (vv. 19–20). But instead they interrupted Paul because they were provoked by or took offence at Paul reciting Jesus' words, "Go, because I will send you far away to the Gentiles" (v. 21). Here, we note that the Gentile inclusion is not the consequence of the Jewish rejection but the cause of it as was suggested in Jesus' encounter with his hometown Jews (Luke 4).

In summary, when it comes to characterization of the Jewish people, Luke seems to struggle to keep the balance between the negative and positive portraits.<sup>171</sup> For example, the Jewish leaders' desire to get rid of Jesus was thwarted by their fear of the people (Luke 20:19; 19: 48; 22:6; cf. Acts 4:21), who were with Jesus eagerly learning from him daily (19:47–48; 21:37–38) and praising God for what he did (7:16; 13:17; 18:43; 19:37) and said, all of which worked against the leaders (13:17; 18:43; 19:37, 48; 21:38). And yet, when the power of darkness gained its momentum (Luke 22:53), the people were with their leaders (23:13) and

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<sup>169</sup> Peter already preached to the Jewish people three times (2:14–36; 3:12–26; and 4:8–12 [cf. v. 10] and Stephen once (7:2–53 [cf. 6:12–13, 7:58]).

<sup>170</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:279.

<sup>171</sup> L.T. Johnson, *Luke*, 380, commenting on this issue of Lukan characterization of people suggests that Luke "exploits the presence of two other criminals . . . to make that division even more dramatic: one of the criminals joins the leaders and the soldiers in their mockery of him. But the other makes a confession of faith and asks to be remembered in Jesus' kingdom." These individuals will receive a separate treatment under "Minor Characters" below.



raised their voice in unison to persistently demand Jesus' execution (Luke 23:18–25). The Jews living in Jericho displayed their leaders' characteristic when they muttered against Jesus for associating with Zacchaeus (19:7, cf. 15:1–2).<sup>172</sup> Their hatred with murderous intent emerged even before the time of darkness. We noted this among Jesus' hometown Jews (Luke 4:28–29). In addition, the ignorance of the people is sometimes more than just lack of understanding/insight or comprehension. It is hostile or accusing (Luke 11:15) and voluntary (Luke 17:27–28).

We also noted in our treatment of the people appearing in the passion narrative that Luke carefully distinguishes the people from their leaders and other people groups before the cross, i.e., Roman soldiers and Jesus' followers. They stood watching Jesus on the cross (23:35) without hurling insults as did the three parties (the religious leaders, the soldiers, and the crucified criminal) and beat their chests in remorse (v. 48). Many of them after Pentecost accepted Peter's call for repentance (2:38) evidenced in their baptism, and about three thousand of them were added to the number of believers as a result (2:41). Luke's characterization of the people is complex<sup>173</sup> not simply due to the inclusive nature of "people" but more so probably due to Luke's own narrative scheme of presenting them to be in movement<sup>174</sup> as they were yet to respond to

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<sup>172</sup> In view that "in the Third Gospel, 'Gentiles' may be understood as members of a more encompassing category of persons generally understood to be outside the boundaries of divine graciousness" (Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke* [New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 126), people's reaction to Jesus' association with Zacchaeus (Luke 19) as well as sinners and tax collectors (Luke 15) is important. In the discussion below, we will address the fact that the issue of the gentile inclusion will bring about the Jewish opposition in Acts.

<sup>173</sup> J. Kingsbury puts it in a slightly different way: "In brief, then, the people in Luke's gospel story exhibit the conflicting traits of being 'well-disposed' toward Jesus but also 'without faith' in him. . . . In Luke's gospel story, Jesus struggles with the people to win their allegiance" (Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 31).

<sup>174</sup> An example would be Lukan choice of "ὑπέστρεφον" in Luke 23:48. In addition to D. Tiede's comment on Luke 23:47–48 (the people's returning home beating their breasts) above, John Carroll also sees the narrative significance of this term in light of Luke 18:13 (the tax collector's beating his chest). He rightly suggests that the people's returning can be taken in a spiritual sense. He builds his case based on Luke's repeated use of 'beating

Jesus' prayer on the cross<sup>175</sup> and the call of the church to repent accepting that offer of forgiveness.

Luke's overall portrayal of the Jewish people in view of their knowledge-ignorance is not ambiguous, however. They are not neutral, nor merely in need of enlightenment. The Jerusalem Jews are fickle. The Diaspora Jews are largely depicted as violent and murderous.<sup>176</sup> They take offense at the Gentile inclusion despite God's will and plan. Luke's overall negative portrait of the Jewish people is not his personal reflection but is in line with the prophetic tradition, which in turn reflects the divine verdict, spoken to Isaiah (cf. Isa 6:9–10 in Luke 8:10; Acts 28:26–27). In short, the Jews are, despite some positive traits, characterized largely by their violence-breeding blindness and ignorance of Jesus as God's Son carrying out God's universal plan of salvation. Their ignorance can be then lifted and removed only by the divine intervention through the proclamations of his agents.

### 3.e.2. Ignorance among Minor Characters

Unlike other character groups such as the disciples and the Jewish leaders whose ongoing appearance has cumulative characterization effect, minor characters interacting with Jesus usually make up one episode and they usually disappear. R. A. Culpepper in his study in literary

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breast' (18:13 and 23:48). In Carroll's own words: ". . . the Jewish public, momentarily diverted from their attraction to Jesus and his message into an alliance with the powerful elite among them, are now experiencing regret after watching Jesus die. Their returning (ὑπέστρεφον), therefore, while not already the restorative return of repentance (ἐπιστρέφω as, e.g., prophesied for Peter in 22:32), is *spatial representation of movement in that direction*. Peter and his apostle colleagues will appeal for the next step in the mission speeches of Acts." (John Carroll, *Luke*, 471–72; italics added).

<sup>175</sup> From sermons preached to the Jewish crowd by Peter (cf. Acts 3:17) and Paul (cf. 13:27), we can deduce the fact that Jesus' prayer in Luke 23:34 was meant to include the Jerusalemite Jews who joined the rulers in asking for Jesus' crucifixion. Accordingly, those who were watching recognized that they did it in ignorance, which should yet to be rectified through repentance.

<sup>176</sup> Their opposition staged Stephen's martyrdom (6:8–15) and Paul's arrest (21:27–29). In addition, see 9:23; 13:45; 14:19; 18:12.

design of the Fourth Gospel spells out a two-fold function of John's minor characters that shed some light on understanding Luke's minor characters:

[They function] (1) to draw out various aspects of Jesus' character successively by providing a series of diverse individuals with whom Jesus can interact, and (2) to represent alternative responses to Jesus so that the reader can see their attendant misunderstanding and consequences.<sup>177</sup>

Jack Kingsbury gives an overview about this particular group of individuals in the Third Gospel noting, "Besides such major characters as Jesus . . . the world of Luke's Gospel story is also populated with a large cast of minor characters. Some play highly significant roles and assume the characteristics of real persons."<sup>178</sup> On Culpepper's second point, Kingsbury differs. Dividing into three minor character groups (those who appear in the infancy narratives; those who exemplify the "excluded;" and those who appear in the passion narrative), Kingsbury argues that those individual groups stand as models for the Jewish people and the disciples with their virtues of "faith," or "trust" in Jesus' power. Here we engage in a study of several minor characters in view of their 'ignorance/knowledge.'

Included in what is called the "infancy narrative" (Luke 1:5–2:52) are two episodes revealing the ignorance of two important individuals, Zechariah and Mary. Despite their commendable piety, Luke includes some reference to their shortcoming. Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth "were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord," and thus they exemplified Old Testament piety. But when Zechariah encountered Gabriel, the angelic messenger who foretold the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:13–17), his response was anything but an expression of faith: "How shall I know this?" (κατὰ

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<sup>177</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 145.

<sup>178</sup> Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 31–32.

τί γνώσομαι τοῦτο;) (v. 18). Insofar as Zechariah’s “request for a sign”<sup>179</sup> to be certain is taken seriously as *unbelief*, which is evident in the words of Gabriel (v. 20), Zechariah seems, as did the aged Abraham twice (cf. Gen 17:17; 15:8), to lose sight of God’s might for his personal lives in face of his own bareness in advanced age.<sup>180</sup> J. Carroll puts it in this way: “Apparently the change [promised by Gabriel] is too extreme for Zechariah’s powers of imagination. He can only respond with a question, one that betrays not only lack of insight but also, in Gabriel’s reframing, lack of trust . . .”<sup>181</sup>

In the same manner, Luke initially portrays Mary in a positive light in how she responded to Gabriel’s announcement: “. . . let it be to me according to your word” (1:38). Mary is elevated above her husband and others in her response to the Bethlehem shepherds’ report: “. . . all who heard it wondered (ἐθαύμασαν). . . . But Mary (ἡ δὲ Μαριάμ) treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart” (2:18–19).<sup>182</sup> However, an episode about twelve years later reveals her apparent ignorance. Jesus’ family went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. After the Feast, Jesus remained in Jerusalem while the rest of his family and his relatives had traveled a day until noticing his absence. Joseph and Mary’s frantic search found him three days later in the temple courts, “sitting among the teachers” (2:46). The uncomprehending Mary rebuked Jesus saying, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you

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<sup>179</sup> D. Tiede, *Luke*, 44.

<sup>180</sup> Fitzmyer in *Luke*, 1:327 takes this as a simple query of Zechariah who knew “that God in the past had given signs in such contexts (Judg 6:37–40, Gideon’s trial of God with the fleece; 2 Kgs 20:8–11, Hezekiah’s request; Isa 7:11).” On the contrary, W. Hendriksen takes it as an expression of “sinful skepticism” unlike Abraham, Gideon, and Hezekiah, whose “response was that of faith, not of unbelief” (Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel of Luke* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978], 74–76; italics added).

<sup>181</sup> John Carroll, *Luke*, 33.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. 2:51 for Mary’s similar act of treasuring up “all these things” (πάντα τὰ ῥήματα). Hendriksen points to the lack of this quality in people who with Mary heard about the baby from the shepherds. That is, “mulling over” or “prayerful putting together” which would in the course of time “produce the result [God] had determined from

in great distress” (v. 48). But Jesus replied, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know (οὐκ ἤδατε) that I must be in my Father's house?” (v. 49)<sup>183</sup> Jesus’ response and their stressful search and astonishment point to the obvious: they did not comprehend, as Luke adds, “And they did not understand (συνῆκαν) the saying that he spoke to them” (v. 50). Fitzmyer argues: “[A]ll questions about Mary’s awareness of Jesus’ divinity, despite Gabriel’s pronouncement to her (1:32, 35), have to be understood in the light of what Luke writes in 2:50. . . . This is Luke’s way of getting across to his readers the difficulty of understanding who Jesus is or was.”<sup>184</sup> His parents’ ignorance due to difficulty of comprehension is surprising when we consider all the things they had experienced earlier in this narrative: Gabriel’s visit, Elizabeth’s words (1:41–45), the visits by the shepherds (2:16–19), and testimonies of Simeon (2:28–35) and Anna (2:38). However, Luke does not present it in a derogatory manner. Rather, Luke throws a sense of hope for future and gradual understanding when he records about Mary: “But his mother kept all these things in her heart” (2:51b).

John the Baptist is another minor character who plays a highly significant role. His father, Zechariah, was visited by Gabriel (1:11, 19) who foretold Zechariah about John’s birth. Luke narrates his birth allowing lengthy space (1:57–66), which is immediately followed by his father’s thanksgiving song for his son (1:67–79) who would be called “a prophet of the Most

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eternity” in becoming a worshipper of Jesus (Acts 1:14) (Hendriksen, *Luke*, 158).

<sup>183</sup> Note the interesting contrast or tension between Mary’s “your father” (v. 48) and Jesus’ “my Father” (v. 49).

<sup>184</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 439. Later, Fitzmyer further comments on this difficulty of understanding on Mary and Joseph’s part and its significance in the Lukan scheme: “Despite the revelations that have been made to her by others about the nature of the child born to her, she (and Joseph) still fail to comprehend what Jesus himself says to them. His parents did not understand because their coming to understanding was a gradual process, even in the Lukan writings; their lack of comprehension is like that of the disciples in 18:34. . . . For all the revelation that has been made to Mary and Joseph about the child born to her, Luke can still record that they did not understand, for he is aware that the comprehension of who Jesus was/is a *complex* problem. But recall that he has already told us that the child will be a sword of *discernment* even for Mary.” (445; italics added).

High” (v. 76). John’s ministry was well received so much so that some began to wonder if John might be the Christ (3:15). All these positive things about John can be summarized in Jesus’ words: “I tell you, among those born of women no one is greater than John” (7:28a). However, Luke records something puzzling about John in Luke 7. John sent his disciples to Jesus with this question: “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?” (v. 19) The nature of his inquiry is hard to understand as Luke’s reader knows that John’s disciples already reported him “all these things” about Jesus (v. 18), most likely including Jesus’ raising a widow’s son and people’s shouting “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and, “God has visited His people!” (v. 16)<sup>185</sup> According to Carroll, John, who had a sure answer for the people who were waiting expectantly (cf. 3:15–16), now is the one “who is waiting expectantly—or queries whether he should continue to do so.”<sup>186</sup>

Relying on J. Dupont,<sup>187</sup> Fitzmyer categorizes various attempts to explain “John’s doubt” into five positions.<sup>188</sup> Humanly speaking, John’s question as a possible expression of doubt can be understandable considering that he is imprisoned (3:20) and Jesus’ ministry might not have been what he had expected (cf. 3:9, 16–17). However, Tannehill and Garland propose a different interpretation that seems to fit better within the Lukan scheme of things. According to Garland, Luke emphasizes the vital nature of John’s question to his reader by repetition (vv. 19–20) as it

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<sup>185</sup> D. Tiede, *Luke*, 153.

<sup>186</sup> J. Carroll, *Luke*, 170.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Dupont, *NRT* 83 (1961): 806–13.

<sup>188</sup> They are: “(1) John’s question has been interpreted . . . as a fictive doubt” to strengthen and help his disciples’ understanding about Jesus. (2) The question “has been understood his first inkling of the role that Jesus might playing.” (3) Some saw it reflecting the polemics of the strife among the disciples in the church. (4) As the most common view, the question was taken as an expression of “real doubt, hesitation, or surprise that Jesus was not turning out to be the kind of messiah that he expected.” And (5), according to Fitzmyer, John’s question has to do with John’s “failure to see Jesus playing the role of the fiery reformer” even though not doubting Jesus as the Messiah (Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 664–65).

relates to Luke's stated purpose of bringing "certainty" (ἀσφάλεια, 1:4).<sup>189</sup> Both Garland and Tannehill note that, John, who has not made a clear confession of Jesus "as the fulfillment of his prophecy, is now raising that possibility."<sup>190</sup> We also have to consider that Peter's confession of faith appears in 9:20, which is preceded by John's death (9:7). With all these considered, "John's question should be viewed instead as the dawning of recognition."<sup>191</sup> If John's question signifies "the dawn of faith" rather than "the rise of doubt,"<sup>192</sup> his question and this conclusion lead us to Luke's conviction that the true understanding about Jesus, which is pivotal for faith and assurance,<sup>193</sup> is given from above (9:45; 10:21–22). Then, John's question discloses not so much about his ignorance per se though it is there, but rather the importance of answering that question for faith and certainty, and the apocalyptic and given nature of such a blessed understanding.

Next, we find the story about Mary and Martha, which is, according to L.T. Johnson, "clearly expressive of [Luke's] thematic interests," and a reminder of "Luke's deftness and skill" as the story goes deep into human "psychology" and it still comes to us as fresh.<sup>194</sup> What is important for a better appreciation of this story is the Lukan emphasis on "hearing and doing" through repetition and pairing (cf. 6:46–49; 8:21; 11:28).<sup>195</sup> In this particular episode, Luke does

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<sup>189</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 309–10.

<sup>190</sup> Tannehill, *Unity*, 1:80. Garland says, "In Luke, John has not previously acknowledged that Jesus is the one who is to come (contrast John 1:29–37)" (idem, *Luke*, 310).

<sup>191</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 310. A similar position can be found in G.B. Caird, *The Gospel of Saint Luke* (Westminster Pelican Commentaries; New York: Seabury, 1968), 111.

<sup>192</sup> Caird, *Luke*, 111; cited in Garland, *Luke*, 310.

<sup>193</sup> Garland notes that a similar question about Jesus' identity will be raised by different groups of people: "the guests in the home of Simon the Pharisee (7:49), Jesus' disciples (8:25), Herod (9:9), the Sanhedrin (22:67, 70), and Pilate (23:3)" (Garland, *Luke*, 310, n. 2).

<sup>194</sup> Johnson, *Luke*, 175–76.

<sup>195</sup> John Carroll, *Luke*, 247–48.

not contrast between the silent hearer Mary and the busy doer Martha. Rather, Lukan Jesus' reply to Martha's "inappropriate" request to Jesus<sup>196</sup> in frustration with her socially inappropriate sister<sup>197</sup> discloses her two things: first, we sense an irony in that Martha calls Jesus "Lord," but it is Mary "who sits at Jesus' feet and listens to his word, in her position and receptiveness suggesting at least an inchoate awareness of her guest's identity."<sup>198</sup> Second, Jesus' response explicitly reveals Martha lacks "knowledge and insight to help her discern what is best (Phil 1:9–10)."<sup>199</sup> While as her sister chose the best portion (cf. Ps 15:5 LXX),<sup>200</sup> "Martha is in danger of 'missing the point' which of all points must not be missed."<sup>201</sup> For Luke, doing is preceded by hearing/listening, a point Martha missed.

Luke 24 introduces a group of minor characters: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and other women visiting Jesus' tomb. They are, most likely, the ones who had followed Joseph of Arimathea who buried Jesus' body, seen the tomb of Jesus, and went home to prepare for proper burial (23:55). Thus, "they provide the essential 'chain of evidence' for the Christian claims about Jesus [and] embody those who were 'eyewitnesses become ministers of the word' after Jesus' resurrection (see 1:2)."<sup>202</sup> For this reason, we can include them in the

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<sup>196</sup> This is so in the sense that Martha attempts to put Jesus in the position of intervening her family matter.

<sup>197</sup> Garland points out that Mary, by not helping her sister, "is out of her proper place and breaching social conventions" (Garland, *Luke*, 453).

<sup>198</sup> Garland, here at 453, cites from K. Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology*, 149.

<sup>199</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 455.

<sup>200</sup> Garland suggests this rendering without denying the possibility of rendering it in a comparative sense (Garland, *Luke*, 454).

<sup>201</sup> Loveday Alexander, "Sisters in Adversity: Retelling Martha's Story," in *Women in the Biblical Tradition* (Studies in Women and Religion 31; ed. G.J. Brooke; Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1992), 181; cited in Garland, *Luke*, 454.

<sup>202</sup> L.T. Johnson, *Luke*, 383.



disciples group and wait for the next section of our discussion. However, their portrait reveals the characteristics of what Kingsbury calls “foils” in the sense that they stand in contrast with the disciples<sup>203</sup> insofar as following Joseph to the tomb and coming back to do what seemed proper.

Despite Luke’s positive portrayal of them in this episode and the Easter morning story,<sup>204</sup> they still suffer from their lack of understanding evident in the words of the two angels: “Why<sup>205</sup> do you look for the living among the dead?” (24:5). In the words of Tiede, “Luke heightens the sense that even as they do the proper things to tend to a burial, they should have known better. . . . The irony of the question exposes their ignorance . . .”<sup>206</sup> Commenting on the angelic messengers’ words in light of Jesus’ words in 20:38 (“God is the God of the living”) and 9:60 (“Let the dead bury the dead”), Bovon says, “They invite the women to make a cognitive or hermeneutical leap. They should stop looking among the dead and start looking among the living.”<sup>207</sup> In short, the reader is to recognize the fact that the women’s incomprehension is to be overcome by remembering what Jesus had already told them about the necessity of his suffering and death (cf. 9:44; 18:31–33). The proclamation from the angel about Jesus suffices to overturn their ignorance and replace it with knowledge.

There are other minor characters whose portrait reveals ignorance in Luke and Acts. A brief discussion would do. First, the rich ruler (cf. Luke 18:18–23) who came to Jesus with

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<sup>203</sup> J. Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 34.

<sup>204</sup> A redaction reading, for example, of the Easter morning episode leads to Johnson conclude: “Luke eliminates completely any negative nuance concerning the women he might have found in Mark. They are not commanded to tell anyone, yet they report to everything they have experienced. The problem of disbelief is not that of the women but of the men . . .” (Johnson, *Luke*, 391).

<sup>205</sup> Bovon argues that τὶ here should be taken as “why” introducing “a rhetorical question and means: In fact, you are on the wrong way” (Bovon, *Luke 3*, 350).

<sup>206</sup> Tiede, *Luke*, 430.

<sup>207</sup> Bovon, *Luke 3*, 350.

question about eternal life was ignorant of the fact that what was hindering him from entering into the kingdom was his love for or attachment to his wealth. Even though he claimed to have kept “all the commandments” (v. 21), he did not love God wholeheartedly and his lack of love for his needy neighbors was symbolic of this. Second, a similar point is made in a more serious setting. Ananias and Sapphira (cf. Acts 5:1–11), caught between greed and fame,<sup>208</sup> lied to Peter not knowing they were doing it to the Holy Spirit (v. 3) and to God (v. 4). Their spiritual ignorance resulting in lying took a dire toll. Third, an ironic ignorance is recorded in Acts 12. When Peter, after a supernatural deliverance from a Herodian prison the night before his execution, knocked on the door of the house of Mary the mother of Mark where many believers were praying (v. 12; also see v. 5), a servant girl Rhoda answered and recognized his voice. However, others on hearing her overjoyed report said that she was out of her mind (v. 14, *μαίνομαι* is used in noun form by Festus in 26:25 and in v. 26 in verb form by Paul in response). When she insisted, they replied, “It must be his angel” (v. 15). According to Witherington, “We are meant to think that this house church no longer expected their prayers would help lead to Peter’s release; indeed, they seem to have thought he was dead.”<sup>209</sup> Simply put, they were praying (*ἤσαν . . . προσευχόμενοι*) to God not knowing that that very God had already answered their prayers<sup>210</sup> and that Peter rather than his guardian angel was standing outside as the proof! God’s saving work is not grasped or realized by the human mind.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Their action of selling and brining the money is preceded by Barnabas’ good deed recorded in 4:36–37.

<sup>209</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 387. He does not exclude the possibility that the church prayed for Pete’s faithful witness until the end in view of James’ martyrdom.

<sup>210</sup> D. Bock, *Acts*, 428.

<sup>211</sup> Peter goes through a similar experience v. 12 (*συνοράω*).

In closing, as the Christian mission continues to broaden in its geographic and ethnic scope in the rest of Acts, the minor characters pretty much fade after this incident. Our brief survey shows they concentrate in the Third Gospel. Kingsbury, with a brief survey over minor characters in Luke, notes that some of them play highly significant roles. He says persons like Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Simeon, and Anna function as “foils (contrasts) for the religious authorities and the Israelite people whom the reader encounters. . . . As foils for the people, these persons represent the way the former should be but are not.”<sup>212</sup> We also noted the women at Jesus’ tomb are shown as “foils” for the Twelve.

Our selection of minor characters was based on their character relating to our ignorance-knowledge motif. With a few exceptions,<sup>213</sup> Zechariah, Mary the mother of Jesus, John the Baptist, Martha, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and other women who together visited Jesus’ tomb, and the believers at Mary’s house are presented in a positive light; they are pious, hospitable, eagerly waiting for the Messiah, and praying. And yet, they are still in the slow process of understanding God’s salvation being unfolded before their eyes. Their ignorance or inability to comprehend, in conclusion, points to the fact that they all, as do the disciples (Luke 18:34; 23:31, 45), need the divine initiation to understand who Jesus is and how God’s salvific plan is fulfilled in him. Luke’s portrayal of their positive dispositions points out that they are in the right direction toward the fuller understanding and faith in certainty, which will come in time like the seeds sown in good soil (8:15).

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<sup>212</sup> Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 32, 34.

<sup>213</sup> They are: the rich ruler (Luke 18) and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5).

### 3.e.3. Ignorance among Jewish Leaders

As it was hinted in our previous scholarly survey, when scholars discuss Luke's understanding of Judaism and the Jewish-Christian relations, the focus is usually on the Pharisaic group. In this section of our discussion, however, we propose to maintain one all-embracing category, "Jewish leaders," on the basis of two reasons: (i) to be in line with Luke's narrative presentation of them,<sup>214</sup> and (ii) to see them in contrast and comparison with the Jewish people.

One more preliminary point is about the issue of grouping the Pharisees with other Jewish leaders. As hinted in above note, some scholars<sup>215</sup> find in Luke a more positive portrait of the Pharisees by concentrating on the Acts material (e.g., Acts 5:34–40 [Gamaliel's intervention]; 23:6 [Paul's identifying himself as a Pharisee]). Because the first century church's preaching ministry tended to center around the Jerusalem temple and the Diaspora synagogues, the references to Pharisees in Acts are few (5:34; 15:5; 23:6, 7, 8, 9) and they do not act as the leading opponents. The antagonists in Acts are chiefly other groups of leaders: chief priests, the Sanhedrin, Sadducees, and synagogue rulers. This creates uneasiness in grouping the Pharisees

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<sup>214</sup> That Luke distinguishes between the Pharisees and the Sadducees is obvious throughout Luke-Acts. However, that is not the case when it comes to the scribes and the Pharisees. "The νομοδιδάσκαλοι of [Luke] 5:17 becomes scribes in v. 21, νομικοί in 11:45–52 become scribes in v. 53, and scribes affiliated with the Pharisees appear in 5:30. Moreover, Acts 5:34 labels the eminent Pharisee Gamaliel a νομοδιδάσκαλος" (Carroll, *Luke*, 409). Jesus' words of warning about the νομοδιδάσκαλοι (20:46) also apply to the Pharisees (11:43). They are said to love "the most important seats in the synagogues" and are greedy (cf. 16:14 and 20:47).

For a separate treatment on Pharisees and chief priests in view of their conflicting relation to Jesus, see Joseph Tyson, *The Death of Jesus*, 64–72 and 72–78 respectively. However, Tyson does not assign any importance to ignorance-knowledge theme in his discussion of conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. He rightly points out that the main source of conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees was Torah observance and, thus, "Luke's most significant move in the treatment of Jesus' conflict with the Jewish leaders is to *exclude* the Pharisees from playing a role in the scenes that lead up to Jesus death" (Tyson, *The Death of Jesus*, 78; italics added). The latter point can be demonstrated by the fact that Lukan references to the Pharisees appear in Luke 4:14–19:99 (the middle section of Jesus' ministry outside Jerusalem). However, his other conclusion that "Luke seems to show that there is nothing incompatible between Pharisees and Christian believers" seems to be incompatible with Lukan portrait of them, as our discussion below will show (cf. 11:37–44, 53–54; 7:30).

<sup>215</sup> See, for example, Robert Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews* (Chap. 6 "The Pharisees in Luke-Acts") and

with other groups in power. In Luke's Gospel, however, the Pharisees are not distinct from other leadership groups.<sup>216</sup> As will be evident in the discussion below, despite the differences and tensions among the leadership groups,<sup>217</sup> Lukan presentation of the Jewish leaders is consistent: they are blind to God's plan through Jesus and oppose Jesus and the Jesus movement. Therefore, they share common traits including ignorance.

### *Jewish Leaders in Luke's Gospel*

Luke makes, at least, two sweeping statements regarding the Pharisees and lawyers, who appear more frequently in the narratives before Jesus reaches Jerusalem and enters into the temple (cf. 19:45). These statements are important in view of the dynamic of consistency based on our assumption that Luke and Acts are unified work by one writer.<sup>218</sup> The first statement is found in Luke 5:17: ". . . there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting nearby (who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem) . . ." In the rest of the episode of Jesus' healing a paralytic lowered through the roof tiles (5:18–26), Luke informs the reader that these Jewish leaders were totally blind to Jesus' authority to forgive sins to the point that they considered Jesus' speaking words of forgiveness to be speaking "blasphemy" (v. 21).

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Jervell, *Luke and the People of God* ("Paul: The Teacher of Israel" [153–83]).

<sup>216</sup> Cf. J. D. Kingsbury, *Conflict*; and his article, "The Pharisees in Luke-Acts" in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, (ed. F. Van Segbroeck; BETL 100; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992): 1497–512. In both, Kingsbury challenges the view that Luke draws a relatively positive portrait of the Pharisees. Kingsbury, in turn, refers to the following resources for a broader study about various religious leadership groups: Bo Reicke, *New Testament Era*, 141-68; A. J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1988).

<sup>217</sup> See, for example, Luke 20:27–39 and Acts 23:6–10 for the opposing views on resurrection held by Sadducees and Pharisees.

<sup>218</sup> Thus J. Darr says, "The unity of Luke and Acts remains the dominant scholarly view, despite recent questioning (cf. Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993]) (Darr, "Irenic or Ironic? Another Look at Gamaliel before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:33–42)," in *Literary Studies in Luke and Acts: Essays in Honor of Joseph B. Tyson* [eds. Richard Thompson and T. E. Phillips; Macon, Georgia: Mercer

According to J. Darr, this “sweeping claim” should be, instead of being considered as merely “another case of Lukan hyperbole,” taken as the author’s intention to encourage a consistency building statement.<sup>219</sup> Not knowing Jesus as God’s own Son (1:32, 35) and the Messiah (4:17–21), they constantly take offense at what Jesus does and says.

Another, probably stronger, characterization of the Pharisees and lawyers is found in Luke’s own comment in Luke 7:29–30 where Luke explicitly “tells” (rather than “shows”), “When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just (ἐδικαίωσαν τὸν θεὸν), having been baptized with the baptism of John, but the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.” In 5:17–26, Luke “shows” the leaders’ ignorance of Jesus’ identity leads them to take offense at Jesus’ sayings and actions. In 7:29–30, the leaders are portrayed as being ignorant of God’s plan for them. These two function as summary statements of who they are in Luke-Acts. In sum, the Jewish leaders are ignorant of God’s salvation plan through Jesus Christ, and, as the narrative develops, they will pose to be the major force of opposition to Jesus’ movement.

Luke’s important “telling” in 7:29–30 precedes a new episode in which Simon, a Pharisee, invites Jesus for dinner. A woman known for her sinful life learned (ἐπιγινώσκω, v. 37) of Jesus’ presence and entered the house to show an unusual expression of love to Jesus by wetting Jesus’ feet with her tears, wiping them with her hair, kissing, and even pouring perfume on them (v. 47). While she was doing this, the host said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known (ἐγίνωσκεν) who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him-- that she is a sinner” (v. 39). Jesus knew his thoughts as is evident in his long reply (vv. 40–47) in which Jesus

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University Press, 1999, 125, n. 12).

<sup>219</sup> Darr, *Character Building*, 93.

says, “Do you see (βλέπετε) this woman?” Garland says, although this question is easy to answer with “Yes,” “but he does not see her as Jesus sees her. Simon judged ‘rightly’ (ὀρθῶς), but his prejudgment of Jesus and this woman was wrong.”<sup>220</sup>

Luke places Simon’s fellow Pharisees in the same place of ignorance because Luke records them saying to themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” (v. 49) when Jesus offered forgiveness to the woman. Together with his friends, Simon thought his dinner guest, Jesus, lacked the ability to discern, a qualification necessary to be ranked as a prophet. But, ironically, it was Simon who was ignorant of whom Jesus was. While this woman, despised by Simon and his fellow Pharisees, *sees* and *knows* Jesus, they do not. Simon’s ignorance led to his failure to show Jesus basic host manners.<sup>221</sup>

The occasion of dinner at a Pharisee’s home (11:37–54) sets up another stage to reveal the Jewish religious leaders’ flaw to be ignorance as Jesus’ final word in verse 52 makes clear. Before that summary criticism emerges, however, note the following. Jesus’ first indictment of the Pharisees is very severe because they made it their goal to become wise through meticulous

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<sup>220</sup> D. Garland, *Luke*, 328; Consider Lukan theme of blindness/sight, which is immediately related to ignorance/knowledge theme, in 10:21–24; 11:33–36; 8:10; 2:30; 3:6; 7:21; 23:48; Acts 28:26–27; 7:56; 9:7–18.

<sup>221</sup> Another theme supported by ignorance-knowledge theme here is that of reversal. Carroll argues that Luke’s reversal theme is evident from the beginning. He lists the following: A young woman was chosen to give birth to the Messiah (1:26–38, 46–55); shepherds are favored to hear the angelic announcement and glimpse the Savior-child (2:8–20); while as the Messiah was rejected by his home-town people and the ‘righteous’ and well-positioned (4:16–30; 5:27–32; 7:1–10, 36–50), the sick and sinners and outsiders embrace Jesus and the freedom he brings (4:16–30; 5:27–32; 7:1–10, 36–50) (Carroll, *Luke*, 241). According to Carroll, this pattern of reversal finds its climactic expression in Luke 10. He says, “Now in 10:21, babies are singled out as recipients of divine revelation, which is concealed from persons of mature knowledge. . . . The character of God, and thus the character of Jesus as God’s Son, is not public information but knowledge that must be revealed. Jesus does not keep this a secret but reveals it to whomever he wishes. Since the Father chooses to reveal “these things” to babies, Jesus has chosen to make them known to his disciples (v. 23), and the narrative conveys them to Luke’s audience as well” (Carroll, *Luke*, 241).

Thus Tannehill, “Jesus, the person of authority in Luke’s Gospel and the dominant speaker in this scene, puts the Pharisee in a negative light and the woman in a positive light, *reversing* the situation which existed before Jesus intervened. . . . Jesus’ commendation of the woman’s strange behavior turns the initial situation upside down.” (Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:117; italics added. Also see p. 116 for his comment on literary connection between 7:36–50 and 5:20–7:35. Carroll calls it “the theme of inside-out role reversal” [Carroll, *Luke*, 174]).

observance of the law and not indifferent like the fools (cf. Ps 14:1; Prov 6:12).<sup>222</sup> Jesus says, “You fools (ἄφρονες)! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?” (v. 40). Calling the Pharisees “fools,” Jesus poses a rhetorical question that reveals their ignorance. Blinded by their obsessive concern for minute details of observance of law, their inner light was dim (cf. 11:35) or their eyes were bad (v. 34) with the result that they were ignorant of Jesus as someone greater than Solomon (11:31) and Jonah (v. 32). Then comes the last utterance to the lawyers: “Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge (τὴν κλεῖδα τῆς γνώσεως). You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering” (11:52; cf. Acts 4:16–18).<sup>223</sup> Luke’s reader sees among the Pharisees and lawyers the leadership failed to serve.<sup>224</sup>

Luke 14:1–24 contains four incidents related to the Jewish religious leaders in one setting. Jesus was invited to dine in the house of a prominent Pharisee on a Sabbath, and they were closely watching Jesus (παρατηρέω, v. 1) as before (6:7) and later (20:20; cf. Acts 9:24), which characterizes their typical hostility toward Jesus.

In the first incident, Jesus healed a man with dropsy with a series of questions to the Pharisees, which silenced them (vv. 2–6).<sup>225</sup> In the second, Jesus chides the invited guests

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<sup>222</sup> Tiede, *Luke*, 223. L.T. Johnson notes that in the biblical tradition “fools” refer “to those who resist the wisdom that comes from God (see e.g., Prov 1:22 and Ps 13:1 [LXX])” (Johnson, *Luke*, 189).

<sup>223</sup> Helpful is Carroll’s following summary comment about Jesus’ critique of Torah experts: “[T]hese men who know the law of God impose arduous burdens on others without offering any assistance (v. 46), and they possess knowledge—presumably of God’s ways and commands—that they neither exploit for their own benefit (i.e., by putting the knowledge into practice) nor convey to others so that they, too, might derive benefit (v. 52)” (Carroll, *Luke*, 261).

<sup>224</sup> Johnson, *Luke*, 192, lists the following as causes of their failure: an attitude of self-aggrandizement, a deep rapaciousness hidden behind outwardly purity, forgetting the needy in their overt concern for the minutiae of tithing.

<sup>225</sup> In Luke 13:10–17 a similar episode of healing a crippled woman on the Sabbath is recorded. Jesus also silenced the indignant Synagogue ruler with two questions (vv. 15–16). At the end, Jesus’ opponents were humiliated, whereas the people were delighted (v. 13). In both episodes, the reader recalls the reversal theme expressed by Mary (1:51–53). Regarding the silenced enemies of Jesus, Darr, *Character Building*, 106, says: “In all its appearances in Luke, therefore, the symposium is truncated so that Jesus’ fellow-diners are given no voice. The rhetorical effect of modifying the conventional scene in this way is to elevate the status of Jesus and to lower that of



seeking the first places (vv. 7–11), and in the third incident, Jesus’ implied criticism is against his host for inviting in hopes of being invited back (vv. 12–14). In these two, Jesus knows the Pharisees’ “heart problems”: love for public honor and “unhealthy attitudes toward social status and wealth.”<sup>226</sup> The fourth incident is occasioned by a Pharisee’s comment saying, “Blessed is everyone who will feast in the kingdom of God!” (v. 15). The message for the reader in Jesus’ discourse about a great banquet (vv. 16–24) is clear: The Pharisees do not recognize that the great banquet is being offered *now* by Jesus rather than in the future. “The invitation has been given, but has been ignored by those who were expected to take part. Now others—the marginalized, oppressed and poor—are participating.”<sup>227</sup> What is suggested here is repeated in Luke 15:1–32. Insofar as the three parables in 15:3–32 are told in response to the Pharisees and lawyers’ muttering at Jesus associating with the marginal (vv. 1–2),<sup>228</sup> the parables point to the “now-ness” of the joyous banquet that the leaders were failing to recognize.<sup>229</sup> Not only that, but they also refused to join the banquet (cf. 15:28–30) and, thus, they acted contrary to their wish expressed in 14:15. In closing, despite the fact that the Pharisees had multiple opportunities to

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his fellow diners, the Pharisees. Jesus is not simply the revered sage among lesser philosophers; rather, he is an absolute authority. Any and all counter-arguments from Pharisees are not worthy of expression and so are not voiced.”

<sup>226</sup> Darr, *Character Building*, 107.

<sup>227</sup> Darr, *Character Building*, 107.

<sup>228</sup> Their words in muttering (“this man welcomes sinners and eats with [συνεσθίει, cf. Acts 10:41; 11:3] them”) ironically depict Jesus as the dinner host, which is what Jesus describes in the parable of the Great Banquet (14:16–24).

<sup>229</sup> Their ignorance of God’s kingdom through Jesus Christ in their midst is once again exposed in Luke 17:20–21. Addressing the difficulty of interpreting Jesus’ phrase “The kingdom of God does not come with observation . . .” Darr argues: “The saying is not about signs, but about spiritual perception, the ability truly to perceive the sovereign activity of God in the world.” Noting the significance of the word παρατήρησις (“observation”) in v. 20 for eliciting the ironic encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees, Darr suggests the following conclusion: “Jesus, the narrator, and the reader all realize that the Pharisees have been observing Jesus, and he tells them candidly that the kingdom does not come (i.e., they will not perceive or experience it) via such observations. The Pharisees are living proof that one can observe carefully and yet fail to perceive, for they scrutinize but never recognize” (Darr, *Character Building*, 112–13).

dine with Jesus,<sup>230</sup> they were ignorant of Jesus' identity and significance of the occasion, and, therefore, remained as outsiders. Darr's telling comment bears repeating:

At 13:23, when Jesus is asked if only a few will be saved, he replies affirmatively. Few will be permitted to enter the door. The Lord will turn man away, despite their pleas for recognition: "*We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.*" And he will say, "I tell you, I do not know (οἶδα) where you are from; depart from me, all you evil-doers (οἱ ἐργάται τῆς ἀδικίας)" (13:26–27). Social interaction with Jesus does not insure inclusion in the kingdom. Those who do not recognize the Lord in the present—despite having dined with him—will not be recognized by the Lord in the future when they realize their mistake and do with to join the messianic banquet. The irony of Jesus sitting at banquet with persons who ignore the invitation to *the* (eschatological) banquet is powerful indeed.<sup>231</sup>

In Luke 16:14–15, the narrator provides a "highly significant"<sup>232</sup> and polemical<sup>233</sup> depiction of the Pharisees. Jesus told his disciples a parable about a shrewd manager (vv. 1–13) to which the Pharisees gave a mocking response (ἐκμυκτηρίζω, v. 14). The narrator in v. 14 says that this response was due to their greed (φιλάργυροι, lit. "lovers of money"; cf. 20:47), which is in Luke-Acts "a prime cause of spiritual blindness and failure to respond correctly to divine revelation."<sup>234</sup> Knowing their hearts, Jesus made a very pointing comment, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in men's eyes, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly prized among men is utterly detestable in God's sight" (16:15). At this the reader recalls Luke's similar characterization of the self-justifying lawyer in 10:29 and of the Pharisees in 18:9 in contrast to

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<sup>230</sup> See Luke 7:36–50 and 11:37 for other occasions that Pharisees hosted Jesus.

<sup>231</sup> Darr, *Character Building*, 108; italics in original and Greek words added.

<sup>232</sup> Darr, *Character Building*, 111.

<sup>233</sup> Bovon, *Luke 2*, 463.

<sup>234</sup> Darr, *Character Building*, 111, says, "In Luke's story world, the love of money really is the root of all evil." Darr, *Character Building*, 189, n. 20, refers to the following for further study on the subject of possessions in Luke-Acts: Luke Johnson's dissertation (*The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* [Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977]), W. Pilgrim (*Good News to the Poor: Wealth and Poverty in Luke-Acts* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981]), and H. Moxnes (*The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations to Luke's Gospel*

the sinners and tax collectors in 7:29 who justified God.<sup>235</sup> By now, Luke's reader knows Jesus' antagonists seek "public honors at the expense of their standing before God"<sup>236</sup> (cf. 14:7; 20:46–47).<sup>237</sup> Carroll points out the fact that "status-seeking is no more pleasing to God than idolatry, a common correlate of the strong term that Luke employs here (βδέλυγμα, 'abomination'; e.g., Deut 7:24–25; I Ki 11:5; Dan 9:27; 11:31)."<sup>238</sup>

Luke's last reference to the Pharisees in his Gospel appears in 19:39. Some of them protested against the disciples' welcoming in joyous and loud voice Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (19:37–38) and asked Jesus to rebuke them (v. 39). Whereas they disappear from the scene after this,<sup>239</sup> the teachers of the law continue to appear in their opposition to Jesus joined with other leadership groups, i.e., the chief priests and elders in 20:1–8 (questioning Jesus' (source of) authority) and 20:19–26 (looking for a way to arrest Jesus and sending spies to trap him). In both episodes along with the following episode of the Sadducees questioning about resurrection (20:27–40), Jesus silenced all his opponents. In verse 40 the narrator says, "For they did not dare any longer to ask him anything." That is, until the hour of darkness (22:53), which began with

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[Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988]).

<sup>235</sup> Johnson, *Luke*, 250.

<sup>236</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 331.

<sup>237</sup> Jesus said these words to the disciples: "Beware of the experts in the law. They like walking around in long robes, and they love elaborate greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' property, and as a show make long prayers. They will receive a more severe punishment."

<sup>238</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 332. According to Johnson, *Luke*, 250, "The word choice [of βδέλυγμα] by Luke, in short, corresponds to the portrayal of Mammon in 16:13 as an idol competing for human allegiance against God, which portrayal the Pharisees mock." Jesus' warning words about the teachers of the law (20:46–47) cited above supports the serious nature of their condition.

<sup>239</sup> Tiede says, "Luke does not say that the Pharisees were planning to kill Jesus, nor does he later include them with Jesus' adversaries at his trial and death. But they are now 'building the tomb' at least by their setting themselves in a posture of trying to catch him in what he says. The forces of opposition are gathering strength" (Tiede, *Luke*, 226).

Satan entering Judas (22:3) and Judas, in turn, conspiring with the chief priests, the teachers of the law (v. 2), and the officers of the temple guard (v. 4). The actual arrest of Jesus was made by the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders (v. 52). And then, the council of the elders of the people consisting of the chief priests and teachers of the law met together and questioned Jesus (22:66–71). Upon hearing from Jesus’ mouth that he *is* the Son of God (v. 70), they led Jesus off to Pilate and they began to accuse Jesus (23:1–2), and they in concert with people (v. 13) demanded Jesus’ crucifixion until it was granted (v. 24).

Once united with their leaders before Pilate, the Jewish people separated themselves after Jesus’ prayer on the cross (23:34). Unlike their people,<sup>240</sup> the Jewish leaders remained unchanged and unmoved even after they heard Jesus’ prayer. Instead, they continually mocked (ἐκμυκτηρίζω)<sup>241</sup> Jesus saying, “Others, he saved. Let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, the chosen one!” (23:35, translation mine). In mockeries offered by different people groups including the Jewish leaders, Johnson notes clear distinction between “Jesus as the proclaimer of God’s kingdom and his opponents, for they can understand no salvation except that involving the perpetuation of this human existence.”<sup>242</sup> David Tiede comments:

The “rulers” who scoff speak with the ignorance of blind vengeance (see 23:13; 24:20; Acts 3:17; 4:26; 13:27), posed in the language of logic, “**Let him save himself, if he is the Christ!**” Such attacks are also an enactment of scriptural roles . . . (Wis 2:17–22). Their logic also gives them away because they grant that **he saved others**.

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<sup>240</sup> L.T. Johnson, *Luke*, 377, sees Lukan way of highlighted contrasting “by using an emphatic καί [in v. 35] which is almost untranslatable.” Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1504, sees in verse 35 a similar contrast in Luke’s corrected use of Ps 22:8–9 (“All who see me taunt me; they mock me and shake their heads. They say, ‘Commit yourself to the LORD! Let the LORD rescue him! Let the LORD deliver him, for he delights in him!’”) to differentiate between the people and the leaders.

<sup>241</sup> That this verb ἐκμυκτηρίζω, which literally means “to turn up one’s nose at someone” (Garland, *Luke*, 924), is used again of the Pharisees in 16:14 supports my earlier point with Kingsbury that Luke characterizes them with other leaders.

<sup>242</sup> L.T. Johnson, *Luke*, 380. He emphasizes this in view of the contrast between Jesus as the proclaimer of God’s kingdom and all his opponents who uttered their “save yourself” to Jesus.

They also state the minor premises as a real condition, “Since he is the Messiah of God, the elect one.” Much as the devil in 4:1–13 granted the reality of Jesus’ being the Son of God, these accusers are testing that reality, as the devil’s implied a deceptive acknowledgment. But they miss the point that it is because he is the Savior and the Chosen Messiah of God that Jesus cannot save himself and still be faithful to the will and plan of God according to the Scriptures.<sup>243</sup>

Ironically, their words in disdainful scorn and utter contempt proclaimed who Jesus truly was: “God’s chosen Messiah.”<sup>244</sup> The Lukan passion narrative invites the reader to see this irony that “the rulers have summed up Luke’s whole understanding of the identity of Jesus and stated it as reality, but without *understanding* or believing their own words.”<sup>245</sup> Behind their human purpose of getting rid of Jesus lies a stronger, divine purpose being in the process of fulfillment through their actions, which is hidden to their blind eyes. With this we turn to the leaders in Acts.

### *Jewish Leaders in Acts*

The first reference to the Jewish religious leaders in view of ignorance appears in what is called “the disclosure formula” (γνωστὸν ἔστω)<sup>246</sup> in 4:10. The priests and the captain of the temple guard imprisoned Peter and John overnight for preaching about Jesus and his resurrection to the people who had gathered after healing the crippled beggar (4:2–3). The next day, the rulers, elders and teachers of the law with a question challenged them with a question: “By what power or by what name did you do this?” (v. 7; cf. Luke 20:2) Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 8), replied, “. . . *let it be known* to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus

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<sup>243</sup> Tiede, *Luke*, 418; emphasis in original.

<sup>244</sup> See Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:283–84, for a brief discussion about Lukan use of irony. According to Tannehill, irony is employed to “emphasize the continuing tension between divine action and human expectation” to bring the reader to the conclusion that the God of Luke-Acts is the God of irony.

<sup>245</sup> Tiede, *Luke*, 418; italics added.

<sup>246</sup> This expression is used in Beverly Gaventa, *Acts*, 93.

Christ the Nazarene whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, this man stands before you healthy” (v. 10; italics added). Verse 11 (“This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, that has become the cornerstone”) strongly emphasizes the guilt of the leaders. “This proclamation of Jesus and the indictment of the leadership are what Peter wants to make known, as the era of ignorance is no longer present. . . . There is a cost and accountability that come for rejecting God’s chosen one.”<sup>247</sup> Witherington points out the fact that Peter’s announcing the source of this miracle places on the leaders more responsibility for what they know now about Jesus.<sup>248</sup> Their knowledge about Jesus and refusal to believe is highlighted in the Gamaliel episode in Acts 5.

What could have been a major blow after the execution of Jesus is narrated in the chapter. The high priest and his associates, filled with jealousy (members of the Sadducees; cf. 5:17) for “many miraculous signs and wonders” (v. 12) and the increased number of believers added (v. 14), wanted to kill the apostles out of furor over their bold witnessing (vv. 29–33). However, their murderous intent was deterred by a speech made by Gamaliel (vv. 35–40). J. Darr in his study about Gamaliel lists both ancient<sup>249</sup> and modern readers<sup>250</sup> who place him in a positive light. However, Darr argues that, if the account of Gamaliel before the Sanhedrin (v. 34) is “viewed in

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<sup>247</sup> D. Bock, *Acts*, 192.

<sup>248</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 194.

<sup>249</sup> Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsus*, 57 (Gamaliel was depicted as a paragon of open-mindedness and wisdom); *Recognitions of Clement*, 1.65–71 (Gamaliel was a closet believer.) (Darr, “Irenic or Ironic?” 121–22).

<sup>250</sup> Cf. Robert Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews*, 98 (“the genuine Jew on the verge of affirming Christianity”); Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:66–67 (“a person of insight and reason” who “serves as spokesman for the implied author”); Jack Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts*, 111 (Together with other Pharisees in Acts he “could hardly behave better toward Christians if they were the Church’s fairy godmother”); and Darr, “Irenic or Ironic?” 122.

its broader narrative context and subjected to a close reading,” the study “strongly calls into question laudatory evaluations of the Pharisaic leader.”<sup>251</sup> He suggests:

Four cues in Acts 5:33–42 trigger the reader into retrospection that encourages a construal of Gamaliel as problematic rather than heroic, oblivious rather than insightful, ironic rather than irenic. In order of appearances, these cues are: (1) a note that Gamaliel was a member of the Sanhedrin; (2) a description of him as Pharisee and teacher of the law (νομοδιδάσκαλος; 5:34); (3) an observation that he was “held in honor by all the people” (5:34); and (4) Gamaliel’s speech, especially his references to other messianic movements and the plan (βουλή; 5:38–39) of God. These indicators bring to mind prior narrative phenomena steeped in irony, and so predispose the reader to view Acts 5:33–42 ironically as well.<sup>252</sup>

L. T. Johnson, focusing primarily on the irony found in Gamaliel’s speech, argues that a reading that sees it “as entirely benign, and even as evidence for Luke’s positive appreciation of the Pharisees” would be “to miss entirely the signals the author himself has given us.”<sup>253</sup> In view of the signs and wonders done by the apostles affirming Jesus’ resurrection and his power at work, the following is what the reader concludes about Gamaliel:

He is (in the sense Luke uses the term of the Pharisees and teachers of the law), a “hypocrite,” for he wants to appear to be righteous, and he has all the right convictions, but he will not respond to the prophetic call before him. Like the Pharisees and teachers of the Law described in Luke 7:29, he “rejects God’s plan (βουλή).” There is even greater irony in the fact that the council “listens to” Gamaliel. They do not respond in faith; they listen to humans rather than God; they do not obey the voice of the prophet; the result, as we know from Acts 3:23, is that they are being cut out of the people.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Darr, “Irenic or Ironic?” 123.

<sup>252</sup> Darr, “Irenic or Ironic?” 125. Darr later points out that too often “the apologetic or ecumenical wish” or “interfaith dialogue” became the interpretive key (Darr, “Irenic or Ironic?” 139).

<sup>253</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 102.

<sup>254</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 103.

With several other scholars who, based on literary approach, argue against the reading that puts Gamaliel in a positive light,<sup>255</sup> both Darr and Johnson present persuasive case in alignment with the narrator's intention. The reader, thus, recognizes that Gamaliel's expression of "fighters against God" (θεομάχοι in v. 39) ironically describes what his own group is doing (cf. 5:29). "By this irony, the narrator supplies implicit commentary: actions against the apostles are actions against God."<sup>256</sup> There is no better place where Gamaliel's ironic point about fighting against God is demonstrated than the Stephen episode (6:8–7:60), to which we turn.

In Stephen's sermon the theme of ignorance of the Jewish religious leaders plays an important role since this speech was primarily delivered before the Council (Sanhedrin) members including the high priest.<sup>257</sup> Stephen says, "[Moses] supposed that his kinsfolk would understand (συνιέναι) that God through him was rescuing them, but they did not understand (συνῆκαν)" (7:25). The Egypt-dwelling Jews' ignorance of who Moses was led them to reject him (v. 27). Further, their fatal sin of idolatry in forming and worshipping the golden calf resulted in their anxiety and impatience as they said, "Make gods for us who will lead the way for us; as for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know (οἶδα) what has happened to him" (v. 40). Stephen's primary interest lay not in mere historical reflection but in drawing a parallel between two groups of Jews living at different times in history; both groups in ignorance of God's working in their midst rejected God-appointed servants and thus fought against God (vv. 51–53).

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<sup>255</sup> For the list, see Darr, "Irenic or Ironic?" 123, n. 9. See also Gaventa, *Acts*, 110–11, for a more moderate reading.

<sup>256</sup> Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 146.

<sup>257</sup> This is true even though it was not elites who first brought the main charges against him (cf. 6:9).



Stephen's death at the end of Acts 7 constitutes the first major transition in Acts and it, thus, draws an end to "the Jerusalem story."<sup>258</sup> Therefore, there are a few things that we need to attend to as they relate to our topic of Lukan characterization of the leaders. First, with others we sense that Luke deliberately portrays Stephen in a way that evokes the image of Jesus.<sup>259</sup> As the Jerusalem leaders accused, rejected, and finally killed Jesus, they did the same thing to Stephen. Second, Stephen's prayer (Acts 7:60) stands as a strong parallel to Jesus' prayer (Luke 23:34). But it is also significant to note that Stephen does not refer to "ignorance" as the basis for forgiveness in his prayer. Ignorance no longer can be an excuse for them as their sin to accuse and stone Stephen is witting and willing (cf. 6:10–15).<sup>260</sup> Third, building on the second point is that Stephen saw the heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God, which vindicates Stephen and his message. In the corollary, this places the Jerusalem leaders guilty of killing an innocent, and thus ironically fulfills what Gamaliel spoke in 5:39; the Sanhedrin became θεομάχοι in killing a witness to God's Son. The reader recalls also what Peter said in 3:23.

Luke lets us know that Stephen's prayer was heard and answered in at least one man's conversion.<sup>261</sup> The ignorance of Saul, a Pharisee<sup>262</sup> and also student of Gamaliel (22:3), is well

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<sup>258</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 143.

<sup>259</sup> "Son of Man" sitting at the right hand of God (Luke 22:69 and Acts 7:56), their prayer for forgiveness (Luke 23:34 and Acts 7:60), and committing their spirit (Luke 23:46 and Acts 7:59) to name only a few. For further discussion, see Fitzmyer (*Acts*, 390), Johnson (*Acts*, 142–43), and Witherington (*Acts*, 276).

<sup>260</sup> Of Stephen's face being like that of an angel, Bock, *Acts*, 274, says: "It suggests that Stephen has the appearance of one inspired by and in touch with God, reflecting a touch of God's glory (Exod 34:29–35; Luke 9:29). . . . It is one of Luke's ways of saying that Stephen is innocent." They knew it. But they proceeded.

<sup>261</sup> However, that this prayer is answered and resulted in Paul's conversion through the divine intervention does not invalidate the overall picture Luke paints about the Jewish leadership in Luke-Acts.

<sup>262</sup> Luke's portrait interestingly finds an echo in 1 Tim 1:13: "I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly (ἀγνοῶν ἐπιήσασα) in unbelief."

attested in Acts narratives (8:1–3; 9:1–3; 22:4–5; 26:9–12). Paul, in recounting his conversion to the Jews in Jerusalem, recites what Ananias told him: “The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will (γινῶναι τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ/) to see the Righteous One and to hear his own voice” (22:14).<sup>263</sup> This is symbolically expressed in the original description of the conversion in story 9:17–18: “‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came here, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he could see again (ἀναβλέπω).”<sup>264</sup> Therefore, Luke, without using the word for “ignorance” in the initial account, makes it clear that Saul lived in grave ignorance and darkness, and that brought about the violence expressed in Acts 9:4–5: “‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ He asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ The reply came, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.’” Luke has Paul recount this story twice (Acts 22 and 26). Though not in the same wording,<sup>265</sup> the repeated recounts emphasize the fact that Paul, living in darkness apart from the heavenly intervention, was a θεομάχος.

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<sup>263</sup> Despite a slight difference in nuance between θέλημα and βουλή, it is clear that Paul upheld making known (ἀναγγέλλω) the “will of God” as the central goal and ultimate judge for his ministry among Jews. This is reflected in his earlier farewell speech to the Ephesian elders: “I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God” (πᾶσαν τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θεοῦ//) (Acts 20:27).

<sup>264</sup> Cf. Luke 19:42 for the spiritual meaning of ὀφθαλμός.

<sup>265</sup> Note, however, there is essential harmony among the following three: “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (9:5); “I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting” (22:8); “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting” (26:15). See Witherington, *Acts*, 305–7 for a helpful chart to compare the three accounts. His discussion on the difference between the three accounts (*ibid.*, 305–15) is informative. I cite a few of his suggestions relevant for our topic: “Yet it must be kept in mind that all three narratives are now part of a literary account written up for the benefit of Theophilus, and perhaps others, and so their effect is meant to be collective, cumulative, and supplemental to each other” (*ibid.*, 309). He later concludes: “A. Segal has rightly stressed that we must look at what happened to Paul on the Damascus road as a conversion, involving a major transvaluation of values, and not merely a calling, though that is also entailed in Paul’s conversion. One must delicately balance the elements of continuity and discontinuity between the belief systems of Saul the Pharisee and Paul the Christian. As Segal notes, Paul’s conversion did not lead him to repudiate Torah, only to claim that he had badly *misunderstood* its meaning while a Pharisee. This is why he is still able to draw on the stories in the Hebrew Scriptures to present his own and others’ current narratives of faith.” (*ibid.*, 315; Witherington refers to Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert: the apostolate and apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990], 117ff.; italics added).

As the Christian mission moves beyond Jerusalem after the Stephen episode, Luke's reference to the Jewish leaders and their ignorance becomes scanty. Before the narrator again presents the Jerusalem Jews and their leaders as the major force of opposition to the Jesus movement in persecuting Paul (cf. 21:27), the religious leaders are mentioned in revisiting the passion story (13:27)<sup>266</sup> or in passing (e.g., 18:8 [Crispus, the synagogue ruler at Corinth, became a believer]). Much later in the narrative the Jewish leaders appear and show their violent characteristics in wanting to harm and even get rid of Paul (cf. Acts 23:2; 25:3), which, in turn, forced Paul to appeal to Caesar (25:11).

A discussion about the way Luke ends his second volume helps us draw the conclusion of our treatment of the Jewish religious leaders. Lukan scholars like J. Jervell,<sup>267</sup> Robert L. Brawley,<sup>268</sup> Witherington,<sup>269</sup> Barrett,<sup>270</sup> Fitzmyer,<sup>271</sup> and R. Tannehill<sup>272</sup> claim that Acts 28:28 does not mark the end of Jewish mission/hope despite the impression given, while "many take the view that Luke (cf. 13:46; 18:6) considers the mission to the Jewish people as a whole to be at an end"<sup>273</sup> and the Jews were written off.<sup>274</sup> What needs to be included in our discussion at this point

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<sup>266</sup> Acts 3:17 and 13:27 agree in substance and point to that the ignorance of the Jerusalem Jews and their leaders led to the death of Jesus. Paul's word reveals an irony. Johnson, *Acts*, 234, says, "They had listened to the prophets' utterances every week, yet did not 'recognize' the one of whom the prophets had spoken; thus in rejecting him they fulfilled the very texts foretelling his rejection."

<sup>267</sup> Cf. Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts*.

<sup>268</sup> Cf. Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation*.

<sup>269</sup> See Witherington, *Acts*, 805–6.

<sup>270</sup> See Barrett, *Acts* 2:1246.

<sup>271</sup> See Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 790–91.

<sup>272</sup> See Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:355–57.

<sup>273</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2:1246.

<sup>274</sup> Josep Rius-Camps and Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, *The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae* (LNTS 365; New

is the Isaiah passage that Paul cites in the face of the disagreement among the Jews in Rome over his testimony. In other words, many scholars apply this text to the Jews as a people. A case can be made, however, that Luke intends no such general application. Note the following five points.

First, Luke informs us that Paul's Jewish audience in Acts 28 consisted of "the leaders of the Jews" (cf. v. 17, [Paul called] τοὺς ὄντας τῶν Ἰουδαίων πρώτους; also vv. 21, 23). Second, their rejection of the gospel was not unanimous. Some were convinced (v. 24, ἐπείθοντο). Even though this may not mean they became followers or believers,<sup>275</sup> Luke emphasizes the division or contrast between two groups through the μὲν...δέ, construction.<sup>276</sup> Paul's final words were uttered in view of the Jewish leaders who rejected Paul's witness, not with the other group included. Third, in citing the Isaiah passage Paul compares the obstinacy of the Jewish people (λαός in vv. 25–26) of old with some of the Jewish leaders in Rome. The purpose of citing this passage may not lie in pronouncing judgment but rather describing the hardening of the hearts of Jews in the days of Isaiah and make a comparison.<sup>277</sup> Fourth, Luke's final interest in recording Acts 28 may be larger. Barrett offers the following suggestion to consider:

[T]he chief Lukan motif which emerges here is one which runs through his work as a whole. Nothing can or will prevent the spread of the Gospel. Preachers may be

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York: T&T Clark, 2007), 120; Jack Sanders, *The Jews*, 299; Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, 163, 190; Haenchen, *Acts*, 729.

<sup>275</sup> This verb, according to Witherington, *Acts*, 801, elsewhere in Acts (13:43; 14:1–2; 17:4; 19:8–9) is used to point to "heartfelt conviction and conversion." However, he continues, there are two things that hinder us from taking it in the same sense: "(1) the quotation of Isaiah 6 which follows, and (2) the fact that our account here speaks of even the persuaded Jews leaving without any mentioning of repentance or baptism." Witherington draws support from Haenchen, *Acts*, 723, and Marshall, *Acts*, 424.

<sup>276</sup> Witherington in agreement cites Larkin: "What is contrasted is not the mission [to Jews or Gentiles] but the different audiences' responses to the one mission" (Witherington, *Acts*, 806, citing from W. J. Larkin, *Acts* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1995], 391; emphasis added by Witherington).

<sup>277</sup> Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 790. Both Fitzmyer and Witherington note the aorist tense in ". . . this salvation from God has been sent (ἀπεστάλη) to the Gentiles. . ." (v. 28) to refer to God's activity which has been announced among non-Jews (Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 796; Witherington, *Acts*, 806). In other words, God's salvific plan for including the Gentiles is not God's contingent plan.

persecuted, imprisoned, even killed, but the word of God is not bound. . . . Luke has his own kind of *triumphalism*, but it is the proper triumphalism of the word.<sup>278</sup>

In other words, one of Luke's aims in Acts 28 is to show no human effort can thwart the progress and advancement of the word. And finally and fifth, 28:28 should be seen in connection with 13:46 and 18:6. In the words of Witherington:

In neither of the two previous texts was this pronouncement meant to be seen as a final, fateful turning away from sharing the gospel with Jews and a turning to Gentiles only. It rather stated the next step, which would be followed when the Jews by and large rejected the gospel in a particular place.<sup>279</sup>

In view of all aforementioned points, Paul's final words uttered to some of the prominent Jews in Rome cannot be over-interpreted to mean the final rejection of the Jewish nation/race or the total abandonment of the Jewish mission. Rather, Acts 28 contributes to Luke's characterization of the leaders of the Jewish people. Their ignorance in regard to God's ordained servants (John the Baptist, Jesus, Moses, Stephen, apostles) led them to take offense at, reject, act violently against, plot to kill them, and execute their plan. They differ from Jewish people in that they rarely have any positive traits and Luke generally portrays them as a flat character.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2:1246; italics added.

<sup>279</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 805

<sup>280</sup> In support of this claim, I cite conclusions by Darr and Kingsbury.

First, Kingsbury in *Conflict* aptly notes that the authorities display dual attitude toward Jesus, which show that before the passion, they are "for the most part 'perplexed' by Jesus": they are both respectful of Jesus addressing him as "teacher," and antagonistic toward Jesus (25). Kingsbury concludes: "Overall, then, Luke's characterization of the religious authorities in his gospel story tends to be negative and polemical. Chiefly, the authorities are 'self-righteous'" (28).

Second, Darr's investigation is on the Pharisees in Luke-Acts. But since the Pharisaic group comes better than other religious leadership groups in Luke-Acts, Darr's following conclusion can be used to support our conclusion: "The reader of Luke-Acts builds a complex, yet consistent and coherent image of the Pharisees. This group is integral to three of the primary rhetorical strategies of the text: (1) recognition and response; (2) the reversal of status; and (3) the division of characters into insiders and outsiders. And in each of these, the Pharisees are firmly situated at the negative end of the spectrum of *dramatis personae*" (Darr, *On Character Building*, 126).

This further resulted in their abandoning God's plan for them and finally turning the messengers to others, i.e., Jews living in other places as well as Gentiles.

*Conclusion: the Jewish Leaders in Luke-Acts*

We noted earlier that in Acts there is no speech to the leadership group offering forgiveness on the basis of ignorance. This is revealing when we consider that Luke records three occasions of the Pharisees hosting Jesus for a dinner in Luke's Gospel (7:36–50; 11:37–54; 14:1–24), and they were often “around” Jesus.<sup>281</sup> Our previous study argues that this shifting has to do with Lukan characterization of the Jewish religious leaders in light of Luke's overall concern for presenting God's salvific plan in Jesus Christ. Since God's plan of salvation has universal scope (Luke 2:31–32; 3:6), Jesus prays for his enemies on the cross (Luke 23:34) and his command for mission includes all geographic realms (24:47; Acts 1:8). However, since this salvation and its knowledge are offered in Jesus Christ, the Jewish leaders' ignorance of Jesus' identity as well as their antagonistic attitude toward him led them to fail to discern God's plan and offer for them. Their unrepentant ignorance led them to further malice such as planning and executing Jesus' death and persecuting Jesus' followers in Acts. Furthermore, their moral dispositions such as self-righteous, greedy, and self-aggrandizing contribute toward their eventual spiritual demise. Thus Kingsbury, “In the end, the self-righteousness of the authorities and their opposition to Jesus will cost them their place as Israel's leaders and bring punishment upon the nation.” Thus, the reader recalls Jesus' severe warnings: Luke 12:47–48,<sup>282</sup> 13:25–27, and 20:47.<sup>283</sup> In closing,

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<sup>281</sup> The reader recalls Jesus' three parables in Luke 15, which were occasioned by muttering of the Pharisees and lawyers (v. 2). The third parable does not end by condemning the elder son. Instead, the father comes out and pleads with (παρακαλέω) him to come in and join the feast (v. 28) with kind words (vv. 31–32).

<sup>282</sup> The saying bears repeating here: “That servant who knew (ὁ γνοῦς) his master's will but did not get ready or do what his master asked will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know (ὁ δὲ μὴ γνοῦς) his

the Jewish religious leaders are characterized to have rejected God's purpose for themselves (Luke 7:30) and, with their ignorance and darkness untreated, even forfeited their right to be God's people (Acts 3:23).

### **3.e.4. Ignorance among Jesus' Disciples**

#### ***Preliminary Comment***

In comparison with Jewish people and their leaders, the Lukan portrait of the disciples is radically different. To be sure, Luke includes negative material about the disciples such as their inability to comprehend Jesus' passion predictions (9:45 and 18:34), their dispute to be the greatest (9:46; 22:24), their failure to keep watch with Jesus on the Mount of Olives (22:39–46), Peter's denial (22:54–62), and their difficulty of believing Jesus' resurrection (24:9–12). However, as our analysis will argue, their ignorance and incomprehension do not lead to any further malice or destructive end. Jesus points out their blessedness in being given the knowledge of the secret of God's kingdom (8:10) and sight (10:21–24). In other words, Luke presents their blindness and sight to build anticipation for the time when the disciples understand the final revelation of God's salvation plan fulfilled in Jesus' death and resurrection.

#### ***The Disciples' Ignorance-Knowledge during Jesus' Galilean Ministry (4:14–9:50)***

What seems to function as one of the key passages for Lukan understanding the issue of the disciples' "ignorance-knowledge" is Luke 8:10: "[Jesus] said, 'You have been given the opportunity to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so

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master's will and did things worthy of punishment will receive a light beating. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked."

<sup>283</sup> Speaking of the teachers of the law, Jesus says, ". . . they will receive a more severe punishment."

that although they see they may not see, and although they hear they may not understand.”<sup>284</sup> Given as a response to his disciples’ question about the meaning of “the Parable of the Sower” (8:5–8), 8:10 makes the parable “an instrument of the dark purpose of God which is working through human blindness and incomprehension,<sup>285</sup> or “a way of communicating to insiders and of repelling outsiders.”<sup>286</sup> A few things in the sentence emphasize the important nature of its meaning: the emphatic use of pronouns in contrast (ὁμῖν and τοῖς δὲ λοιποῖς), the use of “the theological passive”<sup>286</sup> (cf. δέδοται), and Luke’s use of Isaiah 6:9–10 (cf. Acts 28:26–27).

Garland’s comment sums it up:

The ‘mysteries’ (μυστήρια) do not refer to conundrums that the human intellect can puzzle over and eventually figure out. . . . They are heavenly truths concealed from human understanding until they are made known through divine revelation (see Dan 2:28–30; I Cor 2:6–16; 1QH 1.21). The passive voice ‘it was given’ (δέδοται) implies that God is the agent who gives the secret. Knowing the mysteries has eschatological implications because they have been hidden for ages and are revealed to humans in God’s timing in the last age (Rom 16:25; Eph 3:9; Col 1:26).<sup>287</sup>

However, even though they are the privileged “recipients of a self-disclosing, supernaturally communicated revelation,”<sup>288</sup> the disciples depicted in the remainder of Luke 8 and beyond do not appear as ones having the knowledge of God’s reign.

S. A. Klassen-Wiebe’s study about the disciples in the Third Gospel notes Luke’s implicit reference to the disciples’ ignorance in Luke 8:22–56. According to her, Luke in this pericope shows “where the disciples stand with respect to their allegiance to Jesus and their readiness to

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<sup>284</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:178, n. 12.

<sup>285</sup> L.T. Johnson, *Luke*, 134.

<sup>286</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 186.

<sup>287</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 344.

<sup>288</sup> Bovon, *Luke 1*, 312.



carry out the mission for which Jesus is preparing them.”<sup>289</sup> Her analysis of the disciples appearing in four miracle episodes recounted in Luke 8:22–56 in light of other individuals commended previously by Jesus (e.g., the paralyzed man and his friends in 5:20; the centurion in 7:9; the sinful woman in 7:50) leads her to conclude, “By the end of the narrative segment the reader realizes that the disciples are still *uncomprehending* and still unprepared for their role in Jesus’ mission.”<sup>290</sup> Therefore, though implicitly suggested, Lukan treatment of their ignorance in terms of incomprehension is important for our study, and so we turn to the first episode.<sup>291</sup>

In the story of Jesus’ calming of the storm (8:22–25), Fitzmyer, Carroll, and Klassen-Wiebe note the point that the disciples are in the process of growing in faith.<sup>292</sup> The desperate disciples facing the fierce storm cried out to Jesus, “Master, Master, we are about to die!” (24). Despite their addressing Jesus as “Master” (ἐπιστάτα), whose “etymology suggests one who ‘stands over’ as an authority,”<sup>293</sup> their pessimistic expression “we are perishing” (ἀπολλύμεθα) rather than “save us” or “help us establishes, with other occasions of using ἐπιστάτα by the disciples (5:5; 8:45; 9:33, 49), the ironical fact that Luke employs it “always in contexts where they exhibit a *lack of comprehension* or trust in the power of Jesus.”<sup>294</sup> Considering that to them was already “given the opportunity to know the secrets of the kingdom of God” (8:10), their lack

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<sup>289</sup> Sheila Anne Klassen-Wiebe’s unpublished dissertation “Called to Mission: A Narrative-Critical Study of the Character and Mission of the Disciples in the Gospel of Luke” was presented to Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, in 2001. See 161–62.

<sup>290</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, “Called to Mission,” 162, 164; italics added.

<sup>291</sup> In three other following episodes, the disciples remain in the background.

<sup>292</sup> Cf. Klassen-Wiebe, “Called to Mission” (“. . . readiness to carry out the mission . . .”); Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 730 (“. . . their faith would be roused [perhaps in time] by a realization of the power that Jesus actually possessed”); Carroll, *Luke*, 191 (“Clearly [the disciples’ faith] is still in the process of formation”).

<sup>293</sup> L.T. Johnson, *Luke*, 88, n. 5; Also, see Carroll, *Luke*, 191 for a similar point. Both Johnson here and Klassen-Wiebe (“Called to Mission,” 137) note that this title is used only by the disciples.

of faith or comprehension about Jesus' identity may seem unusual. However, their question, "who then is this?" with their act in the storm is not portrayed as negative.<sup>295</sup> As Klassen-Wiebe points out, their faith is being nurtured through a series of miracle events leading to Luke 9: sending out the twelve (vv. 1–6) and Peter's confession (v. 20). "Because their question is left hanging, it 'leaves an unresolved tension in the narrative and alerts readers to look for developments in the disciples' understanding.'"<sup>296</sup>

Klassen-Wiebe's following summary statement about the disciples during the first part of Jesus' ministry in Galilee bears repeating:

His disciples are with him, witnessing his ministry in word and deed and growing in knowledge of the kingdom of God. . . . They have learned that they must share what has been given them to know about the kingdom of God and allow the word of God to take root in them . . . for the most part they have been passive and slow learners.<sup>297</sup>

Speaking of Peter's confession in 9:20, which finally comes after series of questions raised by different groups of people and individuals (4:22, 36; 5:21; 8:25; 9:9), Tannehill offers the following insight:

A change has taken place in Peter's *understanding* of Jesus. What has caused this change? While the narrative does not answer this question explicitly, there does seem to be emphasis on the involvement of the twelve, and of Peter in particular, in the miracles that are related from 8:26 through 9:17. . . . That narrator suggests, but does not state, that Peter comes to his *new insight* that Jesus is "the Messiah of God" on the basis of witnessing Jesus' mighty acts on these occasions and sharing in Jesus' healing power on his mission. The feeding of the five thousand may be especially important in awakening this *new insight*.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, "Called to Mission," 163–64; italics added.

<sup>295</sup> Many Lukan commentators draw this point in light of Luke's major alteration to the Markan "source" (cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 730; Tiede, *Luke*, 171; L.T. Johnson, *Luke*, 136).

<sup>296</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, "Called to Mission," 165, citing Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:214.

<sup>297</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, "Called to Mission," 174–75.

<sup>298</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:214–15; italics added. We will come to Tannehill's further argument about

Despite Peter's making his faith statement in 9:20, however, we note explicit and implicit references to the ignorance of the disciples a few times in the episodes recorded in the same chapter: vv. 33, 45, 46, and 49. In the first and the last occurrences, the disciples call Jesus "Master." As noted in our discussion on 8:24, the disciples use this title, ironically, in situations where their action fails to show they grasped Jesus' power or purpose as their *ἐπιστάτα*.

The first expression of ignorance, appearing in the episode of the Transfiguration (9:28–36), relates to Peter. In response to what he, with James and John, was seeing on the mountain, Peter said, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three shelters, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah" (v. 33a), to which Luke adds his own comment ("not knowing [μὴ εἰδώς] what he was saying" [v. 33b]). Whether Peter was thinking of the tents in terms of monuments to their glorious mountain experience or in connection with "the Feast of Booths,"<sup>299</sup> it is clear that Peter, "incorrectly appraising the situation," speaks without comprehension.<sup>300</sup>

The second occurrence takes place in 9:44 as the disciples responded to Jesus' second (cf. 9:22) prediction of his passion: "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands." Despite Jesus' emphasis,<sup>301</sup> the disciples "did not understand (ἠγνόουν) this saying; its meaning was concealed (παρακεκαλυμμένον) from them, so that they could not perceive (αἰσθωνται) it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying" (9:45).

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the importance of feeding of the five thousand (9:10–17) for Peter's confession in light of other narrative clues.

<sup>299</sup> Tiede, *Luke*, 189–90. With Tiede, Bovon, *Luke 2*, 378, leans toward the latter.

<sup>300</sup> Suggesting that Peter's misinterpretation has to do with the characteristics of the tent rather than the motif of the tents, Bovon offers the following insight: "[Peter] did not understand that Jesus himself becomes the place of divine presence and glory for the new, eschatological time. Peter experienced Jesus' transfiguration, but did not understand it" (Bovon, *Luke 2*, 378).

<sup>301</sup> According to Klassen-Wiebe, "Called to Mission," 235, Jesus' word literally means, "you [pl.] put into your ears these words."

Even though the meaning of the first clause in v. 45 is clear that they simply failed to comprehend what Jesus said, the passive voice in the second clause makes it difficult to make the same point about the disciples. Is it to be taken as a divine passive meaning their blindness is to be attributed to God's purpose,<sup>302</sup> or as a result of Satanic action,<sup>303</sup> or something else?<sup>304</sup> Whatever the cause, the narrator points to the difficulty of understanding Jesus' prediction at this point.

The third occurrence of the disciples' ignorance takes an implicit form, but it appears so blatant that we have to say the disciples come out rather poorly in arguing who is the greatest (9:46–48). Without even arguing that the conjunction δέ, in v. 46 shows Luke's intention to contrast this with their "unwillingness to discuss Jesus' suffering,"<sup>305</sup> the reader sees that they

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<sup>302</sup> See the following: Marshall, *Luke*, 394; Plummer, *Luke*, 256–57; F.W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 205; and Richard Dillon, "Early Christian Experience in the Gospel Sayings," *The Bible Today* 21 (1983): 83–88. Cited from Klassen-Wiebe, "Called to Mission," 236, n. 109.

<sup>303</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, "Called to Mission," 236, n. 110, cites Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 514. Nolland suggests the possibility of taking this failure of insight as Satanic saying, "This seems to fit better the broad sweep of Luke's narrative in which he treats such ignorance as a general benightedness . . . A role for Satan also does better justice to the degree of personal responsibility that attaches to this blindness."

<sup>304</sup> Tiede offers the following reading: "Now neither the disciples nor the readers of Luke could claim that they had never been warned of human betrayal of this Son of man who revealed the greatness or majesty of God. And why could they (we) **not understand?** Who **concealed it from them** (us)? Is this the work of the devil or God or human self-deception? The passive voice in this case is probably as ambiguous as in Exod 7:13–14, "Pharaoh's heart was hardened." But the context makes clear that Jesus as the Messiah of God's reign is warning his followers that they will find themselves at enmity with God's saving reign. Like the "day of the Lord" in the prophets (see Joel 1:15; Amos 5:18–20; Zeph 1:14–18), the revelation of the reign of God will be a time of judgment (see 10:14; 11:31–32; 19:44) as well as salvation. (Tiede, *Luke*, 193; emphasis in original)

J. Green argues that it is hard to attribute their imperception to divine intent on the basis of Luke 8:10 and the co-text (J. Green, *Luke*, 390; cited in Klassen-Wiebe, "Called to Mission," 236). Bovon's following comment seems to propose a reading well fitting with Luke's overall narrative: "Like Paul (I Cor 1:30; 2:6–9), Luke believes that human beings were not able to recognize the mystery—in spite of their desire for the revelation of Jesus and God—before it was finally realized" (Bovon, *Luke 1*, 392). Garland also points to this progressive nature of their understanding in the course of Jesus' life saying, "Only after resurrection, after all has been accomplished, will their minds be opened to understand the Scriptures that God is ultimately behind the handing over of Jesus according to a divine plan (24:45–47)" (Garland, *Luke*, 404).

<sup>305</sup> L.T. Johnson, *Luke*, 159. He renders it, "instead, they entered into a discussion."

“continue to display an inability to grasp the character of God’s realm, and of their own vocation within it.”<sup>306</sup> Fitzmyer reads this episode in light of the context:

The episode takes on a further nuance in the context in which it is found. Following on the preceding passage, in which the disciples fail to comprehend Jesus’ destiny, it suggests that part of that incomprehension comes from a rivalry among them that obscures their real vision. They do not comprehend because of the kind of “thought” (διαλογισμός) that they entertain. Again, in the following context, their incomprehension and rivalry are lined to an attitude about outsiders, non-disciples, who may chance to invoke the name of their Master.<sup>307</sup>

The fourth expression of the disciples’ ignorance is recorded in 9:49–50, which marks the second occasion of addressing Jesus as “Master.” John’s word, revealing his “attempt to control the charism,” shows how little he understood Jesus’ last point in vv. 46–48<sup>308</sup> and, thus, his failure further points to the difficulty of living out God’s command to “listen to him” (v. 35). Jesus’ reply with an aphorism teaches that Jesus’ band of followers do not have any “exclusive claim on God’s liberating power.”<sup>309</sup> Johnson aptly concludes: “These would-be leaders of the people still have much to learn: they are not in charge but under a charge.”<sup>310</sup>

In conclusion, these two short episodes (9:46–48 and 9: 49–50) constitute the conclusion of the Galilean section of Jesus’ ministry. In this section, Lukan portrait of the disciples is this: “Although they have progressed in their understanding of Jesus to the point that they can profess him to be the Messiah of God, they still do not understand fully what that means.”<sup>311</sup> Or, we can

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<sup>306</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 224.

<sup>307</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 816.

<sup>308</sup> Johnson, *Luke*, 160. Johnson directs our attention to the painful fact that John’s “cohorts had *not* been able to” exercise authority over a spirit (cf. Luke 9:40; idem, *Luke*, 160–61).

<sup>309</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 225.

<sup>310</sup> Johnson, *Luke*, 161.

<sup>311</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, “Called to Mission,” 243.

summarize their state in light of Luke 8:10. Although, unlike “the others”, they are given (“δέδοται”) to know the mysteries of God’s kingdom, “they have not yet appropriated vital aspect of this knowledge.”<sup>312</sup> Their lack of comprehension is shown in their inability to see Jesus’ suffering as necessary, and in having wrong thoughts and attitude. And, thus, in the following sections of the Gospel, Jesus continues to help them come to true understanding of things by (i) teaching them about “a suffering Messiah,” (ii) modeling a life of subverting the worldly norms, and (iii) preparing them to carry out his mission after him.<sup>313</sup>

*The Ignorance-Knowledge of the Disciples on the Journey to Jerusalem (9:51–19:27)*

Like the paradigmatic passage Luke 8:10, Luke includes another passage critical for our discussion of the disciples’ “ignorance-knowledge” in Luke 10:21–24. What is immediately evident in these verses is the theme of reversal.<sup>314</sup> Jesus’ words emphasize the blessed state of the disciples before God by contrasting them with “the wise and learned (ταῦτα. . . σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν)” (v. 21) and even with “many prophets and kings” (v. 24). Next, what sets apart the disciples to be so blessed from others is the divine revelation given to them. This emphasis is shown in verbs like ἀποκρύπτω (v. 21) and ἀποκαλύπτω (vv. 21 and 22), and in the language of perception related to revelation in vv. 23–24.<sup>315</sup> Carroll’s following interpretation of this section in connection with 8:10 offers an insightful summary:

The mystery of disclosure and concealment, then, is familiar. Commenting on the parable of the soils and seeds and echoing Isa 6:9–10, Jesus earlier asserted that some

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<sup>312</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:214.

<sup>313</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:214.

<sup>314</sup> Johnson, *Luke*, 170–71, identifies this reversal theme in the Sermon of the Plain as well as “a declaration of woe” in 10:13–15.

<sup>315</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, “Called to Mission,” 363.

of God's people hear and see but do not really perceive (8:10); yet concealment is not God's last word but penultimate (8:16–18). Jesus' prayer "in the Spirit" and the following lines about knowing, seeing, and hearing (10:21–24), however, go further. They picture a God who graciously reveals to some but withholds from others. They contrast the present blessedness of the disciples, who see (God's work of salvation), to the frustrated desire of their predecessors in Israel—even kings and prophets—who wanted to see and hear (vv. 23–24, perhaps including even the prophet John? [cf. 7:22–23]). This is extraordinary moment of divine revelation to Israel. Because the disciples are receptive to seeing *God's work* in Jesus' acts of healing and liberation (and now in their own activity as well), and because of their commitment to hear and heed *God's word* in Jesus' teaching, they show themselves to be beneficiaries of divine grace (i.e., people whose names have been inscribed in the heavens, in the image of v. 20).<sup>316</sup>

In short, even though the great mission work by the disciples bears even a cosmic ramification as "the success of the disciples over the demonic spirits is a concrete sign of the ultimate defeat of Satan, a plundering of Satan's kingdom,"<sup>317</sup> Jesus' words redirect their attention away from what they did to what was done to them. They are to rejoice over their privileged status: their names are written in heaven (v. 20), the hidden (heavenly) things are revealed to them (v. 21), Jesus chose them to reveal the Father and, thus, they know Him (v. 22), and they alone possess the sought-after, blessed sight and hearing (vv. 23–24).<sup>318</sup> However, as the disciples' inability to comprehend Jesus in several incidents (cf. 8:22–25; 9:32–33, 45, 46, 54–55) after the knowledge of the secret of God's Kingdom had been given (8:10) was noteworthy, their blessed state through the divine revelation pronounced in 10:21–24 will contrast once again

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<sup>316</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 242; italics in original.

<sup>317</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, "Called to Mission," 353.

<sup>318</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, "Called to Mission," 357, shares an interesting insight by seeing this Jesus' discourse announcing the blessedness of the disciples in light of discipleship concept spelled out in Luke 9:23. She says, "Prior to the mission however, the disciples have given no indication that they are ready to 'take up their cross' and to suffer for Jesus' sake. Instead, they have quarreled about greatness and wanted others to suffer for rejecting them (9:52–56)."

with their inability to grasp Jesus' fourth (after 9:22, 44; 17:25) prediction of his suffering, to which we now turn.

Between Jesus' discourse in 10:21–24 and his fourth statement about his death recorded in 18:31–33, references to the disciples are infrequent (10:38; 11:1; 12:41; 17:5, 37; 18:15). The narrator does not record any episode of the disciples' speech that shows them ignorant or uncomprehending. They ask Jesus to help with prayer (11:1), faith (17:5), and questions (12:41; 17:37). Except one occasion of rebuking the parents who brought their babies to be blessed (18:15), the disciples appear "better" or positive. That is, until we get to 18:31–34.

As Jesus and his companions were nearing Jerusalem (cf. 17:11), Jesus took the Twelve aside (*παραλαμβάνω*) to say:

See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon. After they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again. But they understood (*συνῆκαν*) none of these things. This saying was hidden (*κεκρυμμένον*) from them, and they did not grasp (*ἐγίνωσκον*) what was said (18:31–34).<sup>319</sup>

Despite Jesus' plain talk about the coming event as the "divine, Scripture-attested necessity (9:22, 44; 13:31–22; 17:25; 18:31–33),"<sup>320</sup> his closest followers' complete lack of understanding is striking. Their incomprehension is contrasted with the following two episodes in which there is a blind man wanting to see (18:35–42) and another wanting to see Jesus (19:1–10).

However, as was the case in the second prediction, their failure to grasp this time is explained by the fact that Jesus' words or their meaning were hidden. The perfect passive tense

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<sup>319</sup> It is interesting to note that both Matthew (19:16–22) and Mark (10:17–22) omit any reference to the reaction of the disciples. Also absent is the Lukan repetition that the meaning of the saying was hidden (cf. Luke 9:45).

<sup>320</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 368.



(κεκρυμμένον), “likely a theological passive” expression (18:34),<sup>321</sup> suggests concealment is an on-going condition. Lukan repetition (9:45 and 18:34) builds up anticipation for the moment of complete sight and knowledge, which will come in time but only through divine disclosure (cf. 8:16–17). In contrast, what is to be noted here is the fact that their ignorance does not lead them<sup>322</sup> to any negative reactions such as distancing, rejection, or hatred, which are typical of the Jewish people and their leaders. Bovon’s following comment on the incomprehension of the disciples in connection with Luke 24:44 offers a broader perspective for our discussion:

The disciples will understand what they had not been able to understand during Jesus’ lifetime. They will get to that phase when the Risen One, spiritually present, will repeat what he had told them at that time, namely, that “everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (24:44). Luke develops a biblical theology of divine salvation that is foretold, fulfilled, and proclaimed by means of, first, a contrast between a “before” characterized by lack of understanding and an “after” characterized by understanding . . .<sup>323</sup>

*The Disciples’ Ignorance-Knowledge in the Passion and Resurrection Narratives (22:1–24:53)*

Between Jesus’ fourth prediction of his suffering in Luke 18:31–33 and Luke 22, the disciples appear even less than in the previous section.<sup>324</sup> They are passive, remaining in the background (cf. 19:29, 39; 20:45–47). In Luke 22, however, the narrator arranges a series of events up to Jesus’ trial before the council of elders (vv. 66–71). It is in this chapter that the ignorance/blindness of the disciples finds its “most” dramatic expression. We noted in the

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<sup>321</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 368.

<sup>322</sup> That is, with the exception of Judas whose case we will discuss later.

<sup>323</sup> Bovon, *Luke 2*, 578.

<sup>324</sup> In Matt 24:1–2 and Mark 13:1–2, the disciples or one of them, respectively, came up to Jesus to make a comment about the impressive temple building. On the contrary, Luke’s “some” (τινων) in 21:5 is noteworthy.

preceding sections of Luke that the disciples' ignorance or failure to comprehend appear most vividly in responding by complete silence to Jesus' passion predictions. In Luke 22, however, their ignorance or blindness speaks loud in actions.

The first instance is Judas' betrayal of Jesus. Right at the beginning of the major section dealing with the tragic fulfillment of God's plan (22:1–23:56), the narrator introduces, first, “the chief priests and the teachers of the law” (22:2), second, Satan (v. 3), and third, Judas (v. 3) as they form “the unholy alliance” to carry out the tragic death of Jesus.<sup>325</sup> The narrator's designation Judas as “one of the Twelve [apostles]” (vv. 3 and 47) is important not only that the number twelve symbolizes “the leadership of the restored Israel (cf. 22:30, 47, and especially. Acts 1:15–26)”<sup>326</sup> but also that an insider, who knows an opportune time to hand over Jesus safe from the people – Jesus' “protector” (cf. 19:47–48; 22:2, 6), betrays Luke's all-time protagonist Jesus.

Even though Luke states that Satan entered Judas and thus he was not merely inspired but possessed by<sup>327</sup> or under direct control of Satan,<sup>328</sup> Luke makes it plain that Judas was responsible for his behavior because “he discussed” (συνελάλησεν) (v. 4) with the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard; “he consented (ἐξωμολόγησεν) and watched for (ἐζήτει) an opportunity” (v. 6); and “he was leading” (προήρχετο) the crowd to arrest Jesus (v. 47). For that

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<sup>325</sup> Tiede, *Luke*, 376. The people and political leaders (Pilate and Herod) and the soldiers will join them later.

<sup>326</sup> Johnson, *Luke*, 332. For further discussions on the Twelve, see the following: Bovon, *Luke 1*, 208–11; John P. Meier, “The Circle of the Twelve: Did It Exist during Jesus' Public Ministry?” *JBL* 116 (1997): 635–72; Ann Graham Brock, *Mary Magdalene, the First Apostle: The Struggle for Authority* (HTS 51; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Divinity School, 2003), 145–55.

<sup>327</sup> Bovon, *Luke 3*, 135. Contra Conzelmann who speaks of ‘a Satan-free period’ up to this point from 4:13 (cf. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, 28), Bovon observes that Satan has been vigilant throughout Jesus' ministry on basis of Luke 22:28.

<sup>328</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 845.

reason, during the last meal Jesus said, "... woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" (v. 22)<sup>329</sup> and Luke records his tragic end with graphic detail (Acts 1:15–20).

Even though the reader knows about Judas' betrayal (cf. 6:16), his complete failure as "one of the Twelve" in his betraying Jesus implicitly demonstrates his blindness to Jesus and the weightiness of his action (22:22), which will together lead him to the tragic end of his life (Acts 1:18–20). His action in blindness can be seen in light of two of Jesus' previous sayings: 8:11–15 and 10:19.<sup>330</sup> Jesus' explanation of "the Parable of the Sower" in 8:11–15 shows that Judas possessed all three characteristics of the unproductive grounds. First, his betrayal has to do with the activity of the devil (cf. 22:3 and 8:12) and, at the end, his soul is lost (22:22 and 8:12). Second, his betrayal took place "in the time of testing" (8:13 and 22:31, 40, 53 [the hour of darkness]). Third, Judas agreed to betray Jesus for money (22:5 and 8:14). Even though desire for riches may not have been the main motive behind his betrayal or what "choked" the seed in Judas,<sup>331</sup> Luke suggests no other ground than money on which Judas agreed to hand Jesus over to the leaders' hands. In the language of 8:15, Judas heard the word, but failed to retain and produced a crop by persevering. In addition, Judas' action under the Satanic influence (22:3) and in blindness to Jesus and the damnable consequence of it (22:22) can be seen in light of 10:19 ("Look, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions and on the full force of the

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<sup>329</sup> D. Garland cites Plummer, "[T]here is no hint that Judas is now like a demonic, unable to control his own actions. Judas opened the door to Satan. He did not resist him, and Satan did not flee from him" (cf. Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1922], 490; cited in Garland, *Luke*, 845). A similar argument about Judas' culpability is made by other scholars: e.g., Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 128; Bovon, *Luke 3*, 135; Carroll, *Luke*, 426; Klassen-Wiebe, "Called to Mission," 456–57.

<sup>330</sup> This connection is suggested by Klassen-Wiebe, "Called to Mission," 457–58.

<sup>331</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, "Called to Mission," 458, n. 129, disputes Schuyler Brown, *Apostasy and Perseverance* (AnBib 36; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 85, the idea that "the parallel representation of Satan (22:3) and money (v. 5) as the motivating forces behind Judas' treason." Contra, see Garland, *Luke*, 847–48, for an argument in favor of Brown, *Apostasy*, 85. Garland says, "Satan is the heavenly counterpart to money."

enemy, and nothing will hurt you”). In the words of Klassen-Wiebe, “In reflecting this promise, the reader will understand Judas’ betrayal as failure to appropriate this divinely given authority over the Enemy, he has allowed the power of the Enemy to sway him.”<sup>332</sup> In light of Jesus’ promise in 10:19, and the blessed privileges given to the disciples including Judas (8:10; 10:21–24), his failure to see Jesus and his own action is striking.

We find the second episode of characterizing the disciples as ignorant or blind at a critical time in their arguing to be the greatest. Without any insight into the extremely important nature of the Last Supper, Jesus’ “farewell discourse,” and what Jesus was about to face, the disciples broke into their second dispute with the question: “Which of them seemed to be greatest?” (v. 24). This dispute (φιλονεικία) is ironically placed right after “they began to debate” (συζητεῖν) who would do such a treacherous thing as betraying their teacher (v. 23). “This shocking contrast between the point at issue in these two quarrels highlights, with dark humor, the disciples’ failure . . . to grasp what is happening, what Jesus’ destiny is, and what his messianic vocation means for their common life.”<sup>333</sup>

The third instance showing the disciples’ incomprehension of what Jesus is about to face occurs when they misunderstand Jesus’ words (22:36–38). When Jesus said, “But now . . . let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one” (v. 36), he bid his disciples to wield a metaphorical sword<sup>334</sup> to face the hostile world. But the disciples took it literally and reported,

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<sup>332</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, “Called to Mission,” 458.

<sup>333</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 438.

<sup>334</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 443; cf. Luke 2:35 (ρόμφαία) and Luke’s possible replacement of Matthew’s “sword” (μάχαιρα) in Matt 10:34 with “division” (διαμερισμόν) in Luke 12:51.

“Look, Lord, here are two swords” (v. 38). Jesus’ “It is enough” (ικανόν ἐστίν) is to be taken as dismissing their reply as misguided and uncomprehending.<sup>335</sup> Thus L. T. Johnson:

This misunderstanding of Jesus’ statement about swords reveals just how ‘unready’ the disciples are to follow where Jesus must go—in fact they will use the sword violently in the garden (22:50); they do not understand the meaning of the Scriptures despite Jesus’ instruction (cf. 9:45). Jesus exasperated termination of this discussion (“enough,” ικανόν ἐστίν) here is matched by his chagrin when the sword is actually used (ἐᾶτε ἕως τούτου, “enough of that)! Jesus’ speech about being ‘reckoned among the lawless’ and being arrested as a ληστής is ironic; they are not meant to *act* like such people!<sup>336</sup>

J. Kingsbury points out that they display their continued incomprehension a few hours later when they asked the arrested Jesus “whether they should strike with their swords, and one of them, with a swing, severs the right ear of the high priest’s slave (22:49–51).”<sup>337</sup>

The final and climactic example is Peter’s denial (22:54–62), in which he ironically acknowledges his ignorance of Jesus. Characterized by the triple use of οὐκ (vv. 57, 58, 60), Peter’s three denials lead to a “cracking” of Peter the rock (cf. 6:14)<sup>338</sup> as his weeping bitterly shows (v. 62) in contrast with his boast and avowal (v. 33). Peter’s first denial “Woman, I do not know him” (οὐκ οἶδα αὐτόν) (v. 57) “constitutes the predicted denial, representing in reality a lie, but a lie that speaks the truth of the moment.”<sup>339</sup> Peter thought he knew Jesus (cf. 9:20) but, in

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<sup>335</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 443. There seems to be general agreement among Lukan commentators on this reading: Bovon (“Jesus cuts short the discussion,” *Luke* 3,183); Garland (“as if to say, ‘Drop it’ [see the usage of this word group in Deut 3:26 and Ezek 45:9 in the LXX],” 872); D. Tiede (“Enough of this!” *Luke*, 388); and Fitzmyer (“Enough of that!” *Luke X–XXIV*, 1430).

<sup>336</sup> L.T. Johnson, *Luke*, 347; italics in original.

<sup>337</sup> Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 21.

<sup>338</sup> D. Garland, *Luke*, 891. In view of Peter’s confession (“The Messiah of God” in 9:20) Garland makes the following observation: “Peter’s denial may not be driven purely by fear but also because his hopes and expectations for Jesus as the Messiah are being dashed before his eyes (24:21). Tolbert explains it: ‘To die when there is hope for victory is one thing; to die for a lost cause, quite another’” (cf. Malcolm Tolbert, “Luke,” pp. 1–187 in *The Broadman Bible Commentary: Luke-John* [Nashville: Broadman, 1970], 173; cited in Garland, *Luke*, 891).

<sup>339</sup> Bovon, *Luke* 3, 231. Bovon notices an important connection between this οὐκ οἶδα αὐτόν and a crucial,

reality,<sup>340</sup> his denial portrays his ignorance. The same can be said of his two other denials.

Someone spotted him and said, “You are one of them also!” (v. 58) Indeed, Peter was convinced that he had been more than just one of the Twelve. But as his response “Man, I am not” (v. 58) ironically exposes, Peter failed to be truly one of his. Peter’s physical association with Jesus did not mean true companionship with Jesus. Had it not been for Jesus’ turning (στρέφω) toward Peter after the third denial, his later turning (ἐπιστρέφω, 22:32) based on remembering Jesus’ prediction in vv. 31-34 would not have been possible.

In summary, we have observed that the ignorance/blindness of Jesus’ closest followers takes its dramatic form in several episodes with the immanent “hour of darkness” (cf. 22:53). Without insight into or in complete blindness to the critical meaning of the events moving toward fulfilling what the Scripture said (cf. v. 37) about their teacher and Lord, the disciples misunderstood Jesus, focused on their own self-centered agenda, and even denied or betrayed him. The Twelve disappear during Jesus’ trial and crucifixion. And yet Jesus “looks beyond their immediate failures and weaknesses to a time when they will be faithful and strong followers of him and leaders of the other disciples,”<sup>341</sup> and he, thus, transcends all the darkness and their ignorance giving the reader a sense of strong hope about the disciples. This takes us to the final chapter of Luke.

The episode of two disciples on the road to Emmaus (24:13–35)<sup>342</sup> provides us with yet another dramatic example of the uncomprehending disciples. At the same time it is in this post-

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final word of the Master in refusal to open the gate saying, οὐκ οἶδα ὑμᾶς in Luke 13:25.

<sup>340</sup> That is, when true light dawns on him in the midst of his spiritual darkness as the firelight on his face symbolically shows (v. 56).

<sup>341</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, “Called to Mission,” 461. She makes this observation based on Jesus’ “farewell discourse” spoken during the meal (cf. 22:14–38).

<sup>342</sup> Cf. L.T. Johnson, *Luke*, 398, for discussion of Luke’s storytelling ability beautifully demonstrated in this

resurrection episode that Luke provides the reader the key to ignorance: the explanation of the Scripture and opening their eyes by the risen Jesus himself.<sup>343</sup> “Luke thus narrates an artful reversal-and-recognition scene that builds audience suspense as characters come to a transformed perception that permits recognition of identity previously undetected.”<sup>344</sup> Here, we find Jesus rebuking the two disciples saying, “Oh, how foolish (ἀνόητοι) you are! How slow (βραδεῖς) of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!” (v. 25) Considering that Jesus twice predicted his death and resurrection with emphasis (9:44; 18:31–33; cf. two other occasions in 9:22; 17:25) and repeatedly referred to “divine necessity,” this rebuke for foolishness that resulted in blindness and unbelief seems reasonable, and they are surely responsible for their own blindness. Yet we are again told, “But their eyes were kept (ἐκρατοῦντο) from recognizing (τοῦ μὴ ἐπιγνῶναι) him” (v. 16).<sup>345</sup> “A situation of delightful irony”<sup>346</sup> continues to unfold when Jesus, pretending ignorance of what Cleopas refers as “the things that happened in Jerusalem,” asks, “What things?” (vv. 19–20). Klassen-Wiebe notes Luke’s careful setup arguing:

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story.

<sup>343</sup> In our previous discussion about Luke’s minor characters, we already noted a similar motif evident in Luke 24:1–12. Even though the minor reproof and exhortation were given by two angelic messengers, the key to overcome their incomprehension was to remember what Jesus said (24:6, 8).

<sup>344</sup> J. Carroll, *Luke*, 483. Carroll senses a strong literary echo “in Homer’s *Odyssey* in the story of the heroic Odysseus’s return home (16.172–212) and commended as a dramatic technique by Aristotle (*Poet.* 11.20–30).”

<sup>345</sup> Bovon, *Luke 3*, 372, notes Lukan symmetry in vv. 15–16 corresponding to vv. 30–31. What seems to be important to note for reading the whole episode is Luke’s use of κρατέω in imperfect passive form (lit. “they were forced”). The reader is drawn to Luke’s possible suggestion that God’s agency is at work “in the activities of concealment and disclosure” if this verb is read in light of the other two following verbs in passive form: διηνοίχθησαν (v. 31) and ἐγνώσθη (v. 35) (Carroll, *Luke*, 483). In words of Bovon: “The author suggests both the human weakness and the divine strength, which prepares the denouncement in advance” (idem, *Luke 3*, 372).

<sup>346</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, “Called to Mission,” 494. She explains, “Evidently, not only the empty tomb by itself fails to convince, but even meeting Jesus in the flesh does not immediately ensure enlightenment. The reader knows exactly who Jesus is, on the other hand, and this superior knowledge distances the reader from the disciples and aligns him or her with the narrator’s point of view” (ibid., 495). She identifies another element of irony in the two disciples retelling of the events of 24:1–12 ending with “But him they did not see” (v. 24). She says, “The implication is that they cannot believe that he is alive because he was not seen. The irony in the situation is that they themselves are seeing Jesus right now, but they still do not ‘see’ him” (ibid., 496).

[This] affords an opportunity for characters to reveal in detail their perspective on events in order that Jesus can correct their understanding. Their summary of what has taken place . . . clearly exposes their limited human perspective on things as well as their failure to comprehend, with the other disciples, Jesus' teachings about his death and resurrection during his earthly ministry.<sup>347</sup>

With that Luke proceeds to tell that Jesus explained (διερμήνευσεν)<sup>348</sup> to them what the Scriptures say about him beginning with Moses and all the Prophets (v. 27). Later that day, when they watched their "guest-turned-host"<sup>349</sup> giving thanks and breaking the bread, "their eyes were opened (διηνοίχθησαν), and they recognized (ἐπέγνωσαν) him. And he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened (διήνοιγεν) to us the Scriptures?'" (vv. 31–32). Thus, the Emmaus episode functions "to highlight the contrast between human understanding, represented by the disciples, and God's way of working in Jesus" with a sense of irony in that "the disciples do not recognize that they are trying to inform Jesus about Jesus. Irony is strong as they rebuke Jesus for ignorance (v. 18), when they themselves are the ones who do not understand."<sup>350</sup>

In the subsequent story of Jesus' appearing to the Eleven and the two from Emmaus, Lukan presentation of the disciples in view of "ignorance-knowledge" comes to the ultimate and climatic end. Insofar as this episode not only marks the end to the resurrection narrative leaving a

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<sup>347</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, "Called to Mission," 495. Contra, Bovon points out that Jesus' sharp rebuke is in regard to their failure in "reading the Holy Scriptures" (cf. v. 25) rather than in unbelieving Jesus' predictions or being unable to discern the significance of the recent events (Bovon, *Luke 3*, 374).

<sup>348</sup> About this verb, Bovon says, "This verb, which literally means 'he translated,' recognizes that there is a distance between the two realities that must be overcome (hence the prefix δια-, "through"); a translation, transferring, explanation, interpretation is required" (Bovon, *Luke 3*, 374).

<sup>349</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 483.

<sup>350</sup> R. Tannehill, *Unity*, 1:282. See also Klassen-Wiebe, commenting on the disciples' words about Jesus ("a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people"), points out that "this understanding of Jesus is incomplete and ultimately inadequate, for Jesus is more than a prophet" evident in Jesus' own use of "the Christ" (v. 26) not a prophet before he begins to explain (Klassen-Wiebe, "Called to Mission," 495–96).



short ascension narrative but also functions as the conclusion to Gospel's portrait of the disciples' "ignorance-knowledge," we can attempt to draw up a few points, which render key resolutions to the human ignorance in Luke-Acts.

First, understanding comes as a divine gift through revelation. As the angelic messengers appeared or stood by (ἐπέστησαν) the women (24:4), the risen Jesus himself approached (ἐγγίσας) the two on the road to Emmaus (v. 15) and stood (ἔστη) in the midst of the disciples (v. 36). Their response in fear, confusion, incomprehension, and persistent unbelief (cf. vv. 5, 16–17, 37–41) shows that the appearance of angels and Jesus was never expected. The actions of remembering and knowing are not their achievements. They are gifts given to overcome ignorance. This point is already made clear explicitly in 8:10; 10:21–24 and implicitly in our discussion above.

Second, at the core of revelation is the Christocentric interpretation of the Scriptures. In v. 45, Luke states, "Then [Jesus] opened their minds (διήνοιξεν αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν) to understand (συνιέναι) the scriptures." This verse referring to understanding the Scriptures is sandwiched between two similar statements of Jesus. In v. 44, Jesus said, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." And in v. 45, "Thus it stands written that the Christ would suffer and would rise from the dead on the third day." In recording Jesus' words in these verses, Luke suggests both the continuity of the message before and after resurrection,<sup>351</sup> and the legitimacy and necessity of the Christo-centric reading of the Scripture for attaining true knowledge.

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<sup>351</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 492, makes the following observation: "This backward look (or audition) to words spoken 'while I was still with you' underscores again the continuity of identity between the pre-crucifixion Jesus and the risen Lord."

Third, with understanding comes the divine commission for carrying out God's universal salvation plan. In vv. 47–48, Jesus continues, “and repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” With this, Luke establishes a connection between the “ignorance-knowledge” motif and the witness/mission theme, which forms one of the central themes in Acts. In Lukan understanding, being “(eye)witnesses” (Luke 1:2; cf. Acts 1:8, 21; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32) presupposes one's certainty about or firm grasp on the “necessity”<sup>352</sup> of Jesus' suffering and death and resurrection in God's economy of universal salvation.<sup>353</sup> Such an understanding, in turn, has important ramifications for another Lukan theme of suffering in connection with mission (cf. Acts 5:41; 7:59–60; 9:16; 14:22). Of the paradigmatic importance of Luke 24:47–48, therefore, Senior says, “In condensed form, Luke has summed up the entire Gospel and laid out the program for the Acts of the Apostles.”<sup>354</sup>

In conclusion, the most prominent trait of the disciples in Luke's Gospel is their ignorance “of the true nature of the events in which they are caught up.” It is in this inability to comprehend God's divine plan that the disciples are depicted as “spiritually immature.”<sup>355</sup> However, as

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<sup>352</sup> Tannehill offers the following insight in view of the “necessity” of Jesus' suffering and resurrection, about which Luke is not explicit: “The place of Jesus' death in the hidden, divine purpose is expressed by saying that ‘it is necessary’ that Jesus suffer. This necessity derives from the fact that God's purpose must be realized in a blind and recalcitrant world. By not annihilating this world or robbing it of its power of decision and action, God lays upon God's servants the harsh destiny of suffering. For this world will not yield easily to God's purposes. From this situation the pattern of prophetic suffering arises, a pattern to which Jesus and his followers must submit. But God retains the power of irony, for this suffering does not lead to the defeat which humans expect” (idem, *Narrative Unity*, 1:288–89).

<sup>353</sup> In words of Klassen-Wiebe: “Because this scriptural ‘necessity’ is emphasized in each of the three resurrection encounters and even throughout Jesus' ministry, it is evidently extremely important for Luke's understanding of Jesus' identity and mission. And it is important for the disciples to understand if they are indeed to carry out their mission faithfully” (idem, “Called to Mission,” 501).

<sup>354</sup> Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke* (Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 1989), 159; cited in Bovon, *Luke 3*, 395, n. 57.

<sup>355</sup> J. Kingsbury, in his brief summary discussion about the disciples in Luke, emphasizes this trait several

Kingsbury's "immature" suggests, their incomprehension, especially during Jesus' passion does speak the final word. Rather, their incomprehension experiences a blessed reversal or "leap of growth"<sup>356</sup> with Jesus' resurrection or, to be more precise, with experiencing "the power of the resurrection,"<sup>357</sup> which in turn places them to be in Acts Jesus' legitimate successors in carrying out what Jesus had begun in the Gospel. Having said that, we now turn to a brief discussion about the disciples in Acts.

### *The Disciples' Ignorance-Knowledge in the Book of Acts*

As we turn to Acts, Luke narrates four explicit instances where the disciples' ignorance is in view. But as it will emerge below, their ignorance differs from that which appears in Luke in the sense that they no longer suffer incomprehension about major themes. Their veil or blindness was already lifted by the risen Lord in Luke 24, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts further equips them with wisdom so that they would act as Luke's main protagonists.

The first expression of ignorance is found in 1:6–8. Luke tells us that the main subject of the post-resurrection Jesus' teaching was the kingdom of God (v. 3). Upon hearing his command to wait for the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem, the apostles raised a question about the timing of the restoration of kingship to Israel. In view of the focused teaching on this subject, their question was not merely understandable but also proper.<sup>358</sup> However, Jesus gives no answer to this

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times (idem, *Conflict*, 18–21). He says, "Without question, however, the gravest failing of the disciples is that they are 'without understanding' relative to Jesus' passion" (ibid., 19).

<sup>356</sup> This aspect is important to note because the disciples' past failure before Jesus' resurrection does not invalidate their learning and experience. Jesus and the angels' words (v. 6 ["Remember how he told you . . ."], v. 44 ["This is what I told you while I was still with you . . ."]) sufficiently argue for the importance of what happened before the resurrection.

<sup>357</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, "Called to Mission," 503.

<sup>358</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 1:77.

question. Instead, he “roundly states that the matter of the time of God’s action is his own affair, and it is not open to men to share his knowledge. Since this is God’s secret, there is no place for human speculation.”<sup>359</sup> But the apostles were not rebuked or reproached like when they acted in lack of trust in Jesus or blindness to the situation<sup>360</sup> for being curious about and wanting to know what they were not supposed to. Instead, they were led back to the track in v. 7 and given a new vision in v. 8, about which Jesus already hinted in Luke 24:47 (cf. also Luke 3:6).

The second example appears within the long detailed narrative about Cornelius’ conversion (10:1–48). In this narrative Luke shows “how the Church made this most fundamental and dangerous step, which would involve the greatest struggle and demand the most fundamental self-reinterpretation for the nascent messianic movement . . .”<sup>361</sup> As it is already suggested in Jesus’ programmatic statement in 1:8, what is emphasized in this episode is the divine initiative in mission. A strange vision, repeated three times, was given to Peter while praying alone (v. 16). After this, Peter wondered (διηπόρει) about the meaning of that vision.<sup>362</sup> The Lukan usage of διαπορέω (v. 17) in other passages<sup>363</sup> is clear that it means its subject is in complete loss or is greatly perplexed. This was the case for Peter and rightly so because this episode marks the beginning of the Gentile mission (cf. Peter’s words to Cornelius and the gathered crowd in v. 28).

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<sup>359</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 60.

<sup>360</sup> We have several examples of this in Luke’s Gospel: 8:25 (“Where is your faith?”); 9:55 (“But Jesus turned and rebuked them”); 22:26 (“Not so with you; instead the one who is greatest among you must . . .”); 24:25 (“You foolish people— how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”).

<sup>361</sup> L.T. Johnson, *Acts*, 186.

<sup>362</sup> Johnson notes the effect of this struggle on the reader: “The reader is privileged observer, knowing far more than the characters about what God wills and what God is doing. But the reader is also drawn sympathetically into the poignancy of the human confusion and conflict caused by God’s action. The struggle of Peter and his fellow believers to understand what God is doing works subtly on the reader, shaping a sharper sense of the enormity and unprecedented character of the gift” (idem, *Acts*, 187).

<sup>363</sup> See Luke 9:7; 24:4; Acts 2:12; 5:24.

Upon hearing Cornelius' story how he had in obedience to the divine command sent his men to invite Peter, he said, "I now truly understand (καταλαμβάνομαι) that God does not show favoritism in dealing with people" (v. 34). With a great struggle, Peter is coming to realize that "God is no respecter of persons, if one is talking about ethnic or geographical or forensic matters."<sup>364</sup>

We find a similar pattern repeats in 12:11 and 16:10: The divine vision or intervention takes place first and the apostles later come to know (οἶδα in 12:11 [Peter's realization about his supernatural rescue from Herod]) or gather or conclude (συμβιβάζω in 16:10 [Paul's coming to see the Lord's opening door to Europe]) what is meant by them. There are three points that distinguish their ignorance from their pre-Easter ignorance. First, their ignorance in Acts does not have any ethical implication, whereas the disciples before Jesus' resurrection failed ethically.<sup>365</sup> Second, their ignorance in Acts is in view of something not told beforehand. Until the Spirit manifested, they did not have a full grasp. By contrast, the disciples in Luke struggled with and failed in believing what they had been told, i.e., Jesus' suffering and resurrection (cf. 9:44–45; 17:25; 18:31–34; **24:11**). Third, their incomprehension in Luke and Acts received different treatment. In the former, their imperceptiveness and lack of insight into the situations were rebuked (cf. 8:25; 9:55; 22:26; 24:25), whereas in the latter their struggle to comprehend was enlightened by the divine manifestation.

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<sup>364</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 356.

<sup>365</sup> See my discussion in conclusion and summary below.

### *Summary and Conclusion about the Disciples' Ignorance-Knowledge*

Lukan narration of the disciples in Luke-Acts contains both negative and positive elements in view of knowledge-ignorance motif. They struggle with their own inability to comprehend the situation in which they are caught. Unable to see clearly who Jesus is and God's kingdom, they display the following traits: lack of trust in storm (8:24), self-centeredness in wanting to revenge the unwelcoming Samaritans (9:54) or in rebuking the parents for bringing their babies for blessing (18:15), saying things without understanding (9:33), preoccupation with positions (9:46; 22:24), misunderstanding of Jesus' metaphoric words about sword (22:38), denied (22:54–62), and even betrayed (22:1–6, 47–48). Their spiritual immaturity lacking insights and understanding led them to their moral failures. In addition, they remained in utter darkness in view of Jesus' prediction about his suffering and resurrection (9:44–45; 18:31–34), which continued even after Jesus' resurrection (24:11–12, 13–24, 37–41).

Lukan presentation of the disciples contains positive elements. Even though their failures in incomprehension or lack of understanding resulted in Jesus' reproach or correction (8:25; 9:47–48, 55; 22:38; Acts 1:7; 10:15), Luke here and there leaves signs of hope for their eventual coming to understanding as result of God's gift in revelation (8:10, 17; 10:21–24). One of the most powerful and dramatic expressions of hope is found in Jesus' words to Peter after foretelling Peter's denial: "Simon, Simon, pay attention! Satan has demanded to have you all, to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. When you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (22:31–32). Since "Jesus' point of view is the authoritative and fully reliable one and because other predictions he makes are so closed fulfilled

(19:28–34; 22:7–13), the reader can be confident that this will indeed happen as Jesus envisions.”<sup>366</sup>

With the risen Jesus Christ opening their Scriptures, their eyes, and their minds, their greatest struggle with inability to comprehend Jesus’ suffering and resurrection necessary for achieving God’s universal plan for salvation ceases. The Holy Spirit continually leads the apostles in Acts through the Scriptures, visions, a voice, angels, and prophecies so that they do not stay in darkness or blind ignorance but under the divine initiatives. Their blessed new sight and understanding, which are built on their experiencing the power of the resurrection and continually endowed by the Spirit, qualify them to be true witnesses as well as authoritative interpreters and proclaimers of the divine salvific plan played out in history through Christ (e.g., Acts 2:32–36; 9:17–19). Even though Jesus commends them as “the ones who have remained (διαμεμνηκότες)<sup>367</sup> with me in my trials” (22:28) for which Jesus promises “a kingdom” (v. 29), they are ignorant and the removal of their ignorance takes the continuous and gradual divine work in the midst.

### **3.e.5. Ignorance among Gentiles**

We noted that Luke’s characterization of the Jewish “people” and “crowds” is complex; they are a bit more of a round than a flat character. The portrait of “Gentiles” within Luke’s narratives presents much greater complexity for at least two reasons: (i) The geographical and ethnic diversity presented in Luke-Acts is anything but homogenous; and (ii) Luke-Acts contains several important narratives about the God-fearing Gentiles whose portrayal by Luke is very

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<sup>366</sup> Klassen-Wiebe, “Called to Mission,” 524.

<sup>367</sup> Thus, we are reminded of Jesus’ saying, “But as for the seed that landed on good soil, these are the ones who, after hearing the word, cling to it with an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with *steadfast endurance*”

different from that of the “pure” Gentiles as our following discussion will make evident. For the second reason, the Gentiles living in contact with Judaism will be treated separately.

However, as “consistency-building is a natural aspect of the reading process,”<sup>368</sup> our treatment of the Gentiles’ ignorance-knowledge in view of God’s salvation offered in Jesus Christ will enable us to draw a general portrait of the Gentiles in Luke-Acts. This possibility can be seen in the earliest reference to the Gentiles expressed by Simeon, “For my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples: a light, for revelation to the Gentiles (φῶς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν), and for glory to your people Israel” (Luke 2:30–32). By including this all-encompassing statement at this important juncture of his narrative, it might be said that Luke “enforces the audience’s natural proclivity to build a group character synecdochically.”<sup>369</sup> Carroll’s following interpretation of 2:32 offers an insightful overview:

Simeon pictures the salvation prepared by God as light that brings both revelation for Gentiles and glory for Israel. The situation and the needs of the two differ: Israel, as the people of God, receives light that comes from participation in the honor that is due to God, or rather, that points beyond the people’s glory to God’s (cf. Isa 60:1, 19). Gentiles, however, lack what Israel possesses, the Scriptures that disclose God’s purposes and ways (cf. Acts 15:21), and therefore require illumination that reveals the divine will.<sup>370</sup>

The flip side of Simeon’s saying is that, the Gentiles, whose divine salvation is made ready in the person of Jesus Simeon now holds in his arms, are in darkness and ignorance. As our presentation will argue below, Luke presents a persistent, homogenous, and collective portrait of the Gentiles. To put it differently, Luke does not think of Gentiles in neutral or noble terms. Stenschke pointedly comments on the Athenian audience: “The best-educated Gentiles on

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(ὀπομονῆ)” (Luke 8:15; italics added).

<sup>368</sup> John Darr, *On Character Building*, 93.

<sup>369</sup> John Darr, *On Character Building*, 93.



Luke's pages appear as spiritual 'write-offs.'<sup>371</sup> Some Gentile individuals in Luke-Acts are often the best of their kind. But, despite their "promising" status, they fail to understand God's plan and provision, and thus the best they can do is to seek for and/or rely on external help.<sup>372</sup>

### *Hints of Ignorance among the Gentiles in Luke's Gospel*

Luke's reference to Jesus' interaction with and Luke's reference to the Gentiles are limited in the first volume. In fact, Luke records only one occasion of Jesus' contact with the "pure" Gentiles in 8:26–39.<sup>373</sup> However, inasmuch as God's salvation is prepared before all people (κατὰ πρόσωπον πάντων τῶν λαῶν [2:31]), and all humanity (πᾶσα σὰρξ [3:6]) will see this salvation, the Gentile state in view of it has to be spelled out and made clear.

### *Hints of Ignorance among the "Pure" Gentiles*

Luke narrates two attempts of Jesus to go into Gentile territory during his earthly ministry. In both, Jesus and his company were not welcomed. The first is recorded in Luke 8:26–39 (healing of a demon-possessed man and the reaction of the people in the region of the Gerasenes) and the second in 9:52–56 (the rejection of Jesus by a Samaritan town). Insofar as the Gentile

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<sup>370</sup> J. Carroll, *Luke*, 78.

<sup>371</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 224. Stenschke rightly makes this conclusion on the basis of Acts 17 and it is confirmed by his preceding thorough investigation of Luke's view of Gentiles before coming to faith. In brief, Luke shows that Gentiles live in a state that requires more than correction.

<sup>372</sup> A notable exception to this statement is the Roman Centurion (Luke 7:1–10). Spoken by the Jewish elders of Capernaum, he loves the Jewish nation to build the local synagogue and thus deserves Jesus' healing his dying servant. This man's expression of faith even impressed Jesus and is praised by Jesus as surpassing the faith of any Jews (v. 9). He serves, therefore, as the perfect example of Kingsbury's minor characters function as "foils" in the sense that he shows what God's people should have been (cf. J. Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 34; See 33 for Kingsbury's brief comment on him). Insofar as he already has the Jewish connection and, more than likely, he has been exposed to the Scriptures and instructed accordingly, he does not fit out profile.

<sup>373</sup> What could have been the second is recorded in 9:51–56, in which we are told Jesus and his company did not go into a Samaritan village because the town people did not welcome them, as they were en route to Jerusalem.

mission begins after Pentecost for Lukan scheme, these two episodes do not constitute major stories. However, the impression Luke creates through them is clear; the un-reached Gentiles are in general unwelcoming and unready for the gospel because they do not have any grasp on Jesus' true identity and the significance Jesus' ministry brings. In the former episode, in particular, the Gentiles' inability to recognize Jesus and his mission is sharply contrasted with the evil spirit who addresses Jesus as "Son of the Most High God!" It is further to be noted, however, that both the evil spirit and the town people want their distance from Jesus.<sup>374</sup> Commenting on 8:37 and 9:53, Stenschke says:

Both responses of Gentiles *not* in contact with and/or rejecting Judaism followed from and indicate the spiritual failure of those involved: From the miracle *the Gerasenes* failed to draw the right conclusions as to God's working in Jesus (8:39; cf. 7:15) and the beneficent nature of his mission.<sup>375</sup>

In Luke 11:31 Jesus, in his frustration over "a wicked generation" that asks for a miraculous sign, points to "the Queen of the South." She is described as someone who came from the ends of the earth to hear Solomon's wisdom. Her pursuit of wisdom, while positively elevating the wisdom of divine origin bestowed on Solomon, actually assumes the Gentile state of ignorance unaffected by this God-given wisdom, "despite the proverbial 'wisdom of Egypt.'"<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> In their refusal to welcome Jesus, we are reminded of Acts 26:18 ("to open their eyes so that they turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God . . .")

<sup>375</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 112; italics in original.

<sup>376</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 57. Relying on Josephus (cf. *Ant.* 2.10, 2§249), Fitzmyer associates Saba, the LXX rendering of Sheba (I Ki 10:1–29, II Ch 9:1–12), with "the royal city (i.e., capital) of Ethiopia, an adjacent country of Egypt" (cf. idem, *Luke X–XXIV*, 936).

This observation is confirmed in Jesus' later saying: "For it is the nations of the world (τὰ ἔθνη τοῦ κόσμου)<sup>377</sup> that strive after all these things, and your Father knows (οἶδεν) that you need them" (Luke 12:30). According to Tannehill, the meaning of Jesus' teaching is intensified as one remembers that the ravens are considered to be unclean (cf. Lev 11:15; Deut 14:14).<sup>378</sup> Even though Jesus' main purpose of this saying lies in instructing the disciples, Jesus' words still render significant insight into how Luke understands the spiritual state of the Gentiles for three reasons. First, Jesus' discourse emphasizes God's gracious provision to all living beings including plants and birds. Second, therefore, striving after the daily bread in anxiety is a characteristic of the Gentiles, and that implies their lack of recognition of and gratitude to God. Third, the need of revelation for the Gentiles is implied, because, in blind ignorance of "the underlying portrait of God" who even takes care of the unclean ravens,<sup>379</sup> the nations of this world anxiously run after the basic needs of life (Luke 12:22; cf. Acts 14:17; 17:25–28) and "are deceived about what is crucial in life."<sup>380</sup> One more point to note in this discourse is Jesus' considering King Solomon in all his splendor to be less than one of the lilies in the wild (v. 27). But the Queen of the South came to him to *listen*<sup>381</sup> to his wisdom (11:31).<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> L.T. Johnson notes Luke's addition of the unfavorable 'τοῦ κόσμου' to Matthew 6:25 [*sic*] is less natural because it is for Matthew that 'the appropriation of the symbols of Judaism is distinctive (compare Luke 22:25 to Matt 5:47; 6:7, 32, 18:17; 20:25)' (Cf. Johnson, *Luke*, 200).

<sup>378</sup> Tannehill, *Luke*, 208.

<sup>379</sup> Thomas Stegman, S.J., "'The Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding': Epistemology in Luke-Acts" in *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God* (eds. Mary Healy and Robin Parry; Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007): 88–106. Stegman argues, "Jesus teaches here as one who knows the Father's mind (12:30) and what God's pleasure is (12:32)" (99).

<sup>380</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 519.

<sup>381</sup> Contra, Jesus pronounces the blessedness of those who "*hear* the word of God and *obey* it" (11:28; italics added).

<sup>382</sup> "If the glory of Solomon falls below that of the lilies of the field, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus is something immeasurably far above anything in the natural world" (Thomas W. Mason,

The most obvious depiction of the “pure” Gentile ignorance in the Gospel appears in the passion narrative. Luke reports that on the day Jesus was handed over for crucifixion the Gentile Pilate and Herod Antipas, who had formerly been enemies, became friends (Luke 23:12).<sup>383</sup> The narrative makes it plain that Pilate and Herod were certain of Jesus’ innocence<sup>384</sup> and yet Pilate gave in to the pressure of the populace (cf. 23:4, 14–15, 22, and 24).<sup>385</sup> Therefore, their knowledge about the deceptive nature of the accusation<sup>386</sup> and about Jesus’ innocence makes them doubly responsible for their participation in innocent blood shedding and points to their basic ignorance of who Jesus truly was and of God’s plan through him. Thus Stenschke: “Though Luke is ready to excuse or explain the failures of some Gentiles (23:24a; cf. ἄγνοια, Acts 17:30), he shows no trace of excusing Pilate. Pilate acted neither out of fear nor out of ignorance.”<sup>387</sup> Stenschke’s later comment further illumines the case:

Pilate completely failed to appreciate the identity and mission of Jesus despite all that he, as governor, would have known about him. . . . A bleak picture of cognitive and moral-ethical failure, of the unvarnished self-interest and of the anti-Judaism of this Gentile emerges from Luke’s account.<sup>388</sup>

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*The Teaching of Jesus: Studies in Its Form and Content* [2d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967], 164; cited in Garland, *Luke*, 522).

<sup>383</sup> The unique Lukan inclusion of Herod serves his literary and theological purpose as he interprets their cooperation as fulfillment of Ps 2:1-2 cited in Acts 4:26–27 (“the kings of the earth. . . . Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together . . .”).

<sup>384</sup> Cf. Pilate’s triple assertion in 23:4, 14–15, and 22.

<sup>385</sup> Luke comes back to this in Acts 4:25–28, which we will discuss below.

<sup>386</sup> Cf. L.T. Johnson, *Luke*, 368.

<sup>387</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 122.

<sup>388</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 126. See 123–26 for his further analysis of Pilate’s involvement in Jesus’ execution.

Thus Garland: “[Pilate and Herod] will go down in history for executing someone sent by God. Herod executed John; and Pilate, Jesus.”<sup>389</sup>

The tragic result of this ignorance of Jesus among the Gentiles is, once more, displayed by the Roman soldiers’ heaping mockery (23:36–38). Offering wine vinegar,<sup>390</sup> they taunted him saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” (v. 37). Garland explains their act:

That this pitiable figure could be king even of such an inconsequential group of the Jews was laughable. The soldiers also take for granted that no bona fide king would suffer so ingloriously and would not have the means to extricate himself from his predicament.<sup>391</sup>

At the height of tragedy, however, a sense of irony is displayed. Both the mocking words of the Roman soldiers (“If you are the King of Jews” [v. 37]) and “the capital charge inscribed on the wood above Jesus (‘The King of the Jews’)”<sup>392</sup> (cf. v. 38) ironically announce Jesus’ true identity, but the soldiers were oblivious. With two other parties (Jewish rulers and one of the criminals) ridiculing Jesus with similar words, they did not understand that Jesus on the cross was still “in utter control” as the Lord and King in forgiving his executioners, promising paradise to the repentant criminal, entrusting his spirit to his Father, and dying.<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> D. Garland, *Luke*, 907. Garland points out that, by stating Pilate handed Jesus over to their will, Luke does not mean to put the Jewish leaders in charge of crucifying Jesus. This is also evident by the inscription (23:38) and Joseph’s coming to Pilate to ask for his body (23:52) (*ibid.*, 909).

<sup>390</sup> Commentators differ on “sour wine” (ὄξος). While its possible connection with Ps 69:21 is suggested based on Mark 15:36 (Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1505; Carroll, *Luke*, 467; Tiede, *Luke*, 419), the motivation can be seen as an act of compassion (Bovon, *Luke* 3, 309) or ridiculing (L.T. Johnson 377, [“a parody of the kingly table”]) and Carroll (*Luke*, 467) or even cruelty as suggested by Garland: “. . . Marcus Cato was said to have called for it when he was in a raging thirst or when his strength was failing. The Romans did not consider this drink to be intoxicating but more of a woman’s drink. The executioners would have given this to an exhausted Jesus not to dull the pain but to give him more strength so that his suffering would last longer” (*idem*, *Luke*, 924).

<sup>391</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 924.

<sup>392</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 465.

<sup>393</sup> L.T. Johnson, *Luke* 381. Johnson asserts that the way Luke portrays Jesus presents him as “Philosopher, Prophet, [and] Lord of God’s kingdom.”

## Two Exceptional Centurions in Luke

Standing in stark contrast with Pilate and the Roman soldiers executing Jesus' death are the two exemplary Roman centurions. We first treat each of them separately and then consider the Lukan significance of these individuals.

The more surpassing among the two is introduced in Luke 7:1–10. Probably not a God-fearer like Cornelius (Acts 10:2),<sup>394</sup> his love for the Jewish nation and building the Capernaum synagogue earned him the Jewish elders' praise and respect to the point of considering him to be worthy (ἄξιός) to have Jesus come and heal the centurion's beloved servant (v.4). His later humble (cf. οὐ . . . ἰκανός εἰμι in v. 6) expression of trust in Jesus' absolute authority over disease and his nuanced "spiritual perceptiveness"<sup>395</sup> (vv. 6–8) impressed even Jesus who commended him above Israel (v. 9). What is stressed in the whole episode is thus his "great faith" probably that which is articulated in 6:47–48 rather than his ethical dispositions, as Fitzmyer points out:

Its importance is seen not only in the Lukan emphasis ("not even in Israel have I found such faith as this") but in this saying of Jesus as a reaction to the double delegation sent to him and the very words of the centurion put on the lips of the second. . . . For all their willingness (i.e., that of both the elders and the friends) the implied intensity of the faith of the Gentile centurion is enhanced.<sup>396</sup>

Bovon's following interpretation gives insight into the nature of his faith:

Jesus the teller of parables himself perceives the parable here. What he hears comes from the personal experience of the believer and displays a highly insightful

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<sup>394</sup> Paul Walaskay, 'And so we came to Rome': The political Perspective of St. Luke (MSSNTS 49; Cambridge, CUP, 1983), 32.

<sup>395</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 105.

<sup>396</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 650; emphasis added by Fitzmyer. Lukan emphasis on his faith may be further suggested in that no mention is made about the centurion's reaction to Jesus' "healing, his salvation or ensuing discipleship" (Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 106).

understanding Jesus' authority. To believe means to recognize one's responsibility not only psychologically but also in the social realm, to value not only the person of Jesus but also his position, and to distinguish the analogies and the differences between human reality and the divine sphere.<sup>397</sup>

As to how the centurion came to have such a strong faith in Jesus and insight into spiritual matters, the narrator does not provide any hint. However, we can suggest three possibilities: (i) His contact with Judaic faith evidenced in his good works for the local Jews is a positive witness for Judaism; (ii) it is not difficult to imagine that the centurion heard about (cf. 5:15) or even witnessed Jesus' healings which Luke records (cf. 4:38–41; 5:12–13, 17–26; 6:6–10, 18–19); and (iii) in view that Luke records his episode immediately following the Sermon on the Plain (6:17–49), it is implied that the centurion displays some of the Christian characteristics Jesus preached (cf. humble attitude in 6:20; love for others in 6:27, 30, 35; and practicing the word in life in 6:47).

Another exceptional Roman officer is introduced in Luke 23:47. The Roman centurion who, after seeing (ἰδὼν) “despite and through darkness”<sup>398</sup> what took place, glorified God and affirmed Jesus' innocence and, thus, stands in line with the other centurion in Luke 7.<sup>399</sup> Bovon suggests two possible translations and interpretations of δίκαιος: one in the “biblical tradition of the ḥq'd'c. of moral uprightness, of religious authenticity, of belonging to God's people as part of the covenant,” and the other “in the secular framework of Jesus' trial.”<sup>400</sup> Therefore, Jesus as δίκαιος in the former sense would point to the “‘suffering righteous man’ of the Psalms and of Deutero-

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<sup>397</sup> Bovon, *Luke 1*, 262. Bovon grounds his argument on the analogous words of centurion in v. 8, which implies, “No human being can cure a sick person with a word by him- or herself.”

<sup>398</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 471.

<sup>399</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 470. Carroll, later, concludes, “So this centurion takes his place in a line of impressive, God-honoring centurions in Luke's two volumes (see esp. 7:1–10; Acts 10:1–48)” (*ibid.*, 471).

<sup>400</sup> Bovon, *Luke 3*, 327.

Isaiah” whereas that in the latter would relate to Luke’s motif of innocence.<sup>401</sup> Scholarly readings of this adjective are equally divided and supported by equally weighty evidence. Bovon,<sup>402</sup> Carroll,<sup>403</sup> L.T. Johnson,<sup>404</sup> Garland,<sup>405</sup> and Fitzmyer<sup>406</sup> opt for “righteous,” whereas Kurz and Tannehill for “innocent.”<sup>407</sup>

There seem to be two elements that are of particular interest for our analysis. The first element is that the centurion made that firm (ὄντως) confession after he saw (ὁράω) what had happened. Thus Garland:

The centurion’s confession reveals that he *saw* something beyond surface appearances. One can only assume that Jesus’ prayer that his executioners be forgiven and his tranquility and trust in God at the moment of death penetrated the flinty veneer of the centurion’s callousness and evoked his praise and confession. The result is that Jesus’ life begins (2:14) and concludes (23:47) with the most unlikely persons praising God.<sup>408</sup>

In other words, this Roman officer in charge of Jesus’ crucifixion began to see in darkness (v. 44) who Jesus truly was. Or, to be exact, it took Jesus on the cross for him to understand

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<sup>401</sup> Bovon, *Luke 3*, 327–28.

<sup>402</sup> Bovon’s preference over “righteousness” to “innocent” is based on its suitability within the immediate context. He says, “The centurion can hardly praise God for the innocence of the crucified man; he does so because of Jesus’ righteousness. In addition, the theme of righteousness corresponds to Luke’s theological intention as it is expressed precisely in chapters of the passion (e.g., 22:27, 57, 61; 23:28, 31, 34a, 41, 43)” (Bovon, *Luke 3*, 328).

<sup>403</sup> Carroll, *Luke*, 471, says, “The public vindication of the suffering righteous one (as in Ps 22) begins from the moment of his death, in a Gentile soldier’s affirmation of God’s glory . . .”

<sup>404</sup> Johnson, *Luke*, 382, argues that this word has “the deeper religious significance of ‘righteousness’” and he refers to Acts 3:14 (“you denied the holy and righteous one”).

<sup>405</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 929, argues: “Luke may be playing on the duality of meaning in this word. . . . [However] Luke does not present Jesus’ dying as an innocent martyr but interprets his suffering as that of a suffering righteous one. In Acts, the term becomes a messianic title for Jesus, ‘the Righteous One’ (Acts 3:14–15; 7:52; 22:14; see Jer 23:5; 33:15).”

<sup>406</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1515.

<sup>407</sup> Cf. W. Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 65; and Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:197. Both rely on Lukan motif of innocence recognized by Pilate and Herod (23:4, 14–16, 20, 22).



something truthful about Jesus. The second element we should note is Luke's comment that the centurion's confession glorified (δοξάζω) God because "he recognizes the meaning of the innocent death in God's plan."<sup>409</sup> In view of this, reading δίκαιος in the sense of "righteous" seems to be a more natural reading.

In closing, even though ignorance is implied for the Jerusalem centurion prior to his "seeing," both centurions as well as Cornelius in Acts 10, whose story we will discuss below, appear as exceptional Gentiles. Their positive portrayal suggests the positive contribution Judaism can offer in terms of preparing a person to be receptive to God's saving work played out in Jesus Christ. Luke's primary purpose of introducing them, therefore, does not have to do largely with his "ignorance-knowledge" theme. Rather, the centurion in Luke 7 belongs to the minor characters that "tend to be individuals who are also models of 'faith,' or 'trust,' in Jesus' power to forgive, heal, or save," whereas the centurion in Luke 23 functions as foil, or contrast, for the disciples<sup>410</sup> and/or other Jews and Gentiles.

### *Conclusion*

Since the extensive mission among the "purely" Gentiles in Lukan scheme emerges in the narrative of Acts, we only have a limited number of episodes about Gentiles showing their ignorance as characteristic disposition prior to coming to faith.<sup>411</sup> From surveying the Gentiles in Luke's Gospel, however, we can draw the following conclusions. Luke indicates that what the

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<sup>408</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 929; italics added.

<sup>409</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1515.

<sup>410</sup> Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 33-34.

<sup>411</sup> Luke records two attempts by Jesus to enter into Gentile territories (8:22-39 [the Gerasenes region] and 9:52-56 [the Samaritan town]). In both, the Gentiles did not welcome Jesus. Another "pure" Gentiles contact is mentioned in 6:17-18. People from Sidon and Tyre came to hear Jesus and to be healed of their diseases.

Gentiles need in regard to God’s universal plan of salvation in Jesus is “a light for revelation” (Luke 2:32). The two “impressive” centurions in Luke (7:1–10 and 23:47), together with Cornelius (Acts 10), show the prefatory step Judaism can contribute toward discerning God’s salvation plan working out in Jesus. However, insofar as the three centurions all have former contact with the OT faith, their episodes imply that the Gentiles, apart from the revelation through this former contact with Judaism or hearing about Jesus or “seeing” the crucifixion, remain oblivious to God as their gracious Sustainer (12:30), or in lack of wisdom (11:31), or even violent to Jesus as God’s righteous Servant (e.g., Pilate and his mocking soldiers in Luke 23). Thus, it is fitting that Luke narrates Jesus’ prayer for forgiveness on the basis of ignorance in 23:34, immediately after he was crucified with two criminals at the hands of the Roman soldiers (vv. 32–33). This theme of ignorance among the Gentiles as well as its forgiveness is much more explicitly and intensively articulated in Acts.

#### *Ignorance among the Gentiles in Acts*

Luke’s second volume, which records the forward movement of the Christian mission of proclaiming God’s salvation and kingdom in Jesus Christ reaching Rome at the end, contains far more narrative units and sayings that reveal to us how Luke characterizes the Gentiles. Before we take a look at various “Gentile pericopes,” we first note Luke’s further interpretation of the role of Pilate and Herod.

Luke, albeit in implicit manner, comes back to Pilate and Herod in regard to their involvement with the death of Jesus Christ in Acts 2:23 (referred to as “lawless men” [διὰ χειρὸς ἀνόμων]<sup>412</sup>) and 3:13 (despite his decision to release Jesus, Pilate was pressured by the Jewish

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<sup>412</sup> We noted Conzelmann’s redactic, anti-Semitic reading of ἄνομος in this passage to mean Jews based on Luke 22:37 and Acts 7:53. However, see Witherington, *Acts*, 145; F.F. Bruce, *Acts*, 123; esp. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 255 for

populace). It is in Acts 4:25–28<sup>413</sup> that Pilate and Herod’s involvement is portrayed in a new light. In the believers’ prayer asking for boldness in witnessing, Pilate and Herod’s involvement is reinterpreted through applying Psalm 2:1–2.<sup>414</sup> In Acts 4:27, with their names mentioned, their role in executing God’s Messiah is no longer passive or reluctant giving-in to the pressure. They “gathered” (συνήχθησαν) in the city of Jerusalem for the purpose of opposing “your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed.”<sup>415</sup>

Taken in its narrative context, this prayer serves as an important summary of what the Jesus movement will encounter throughout Acts. By including this prayer recorded in Acts 4:25–28, Luke makes an important connection or analogy between the life of the church and that of Jesus. Retrospectively, several parties came together to crucify God’s servant Jesus in ignorance of Jesus and God’s purpose and foreknowledge. Prospectively, both unbelieving Jews and ignorant Gentiles would oppose the messianic movement, sometimes separately and at other times corporately.<sup>416</sup> However, by revisiting the theme that God raised Jesus from the dead and made

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differing interpretations.

<sup>413</sup> Acts 4:25–28: “who said by the Holy Spirit through your servant David our forefather, ‘Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot foolish things? The kings of the earth stood together, and the rulers assembled together, against the Lord and against his Christ.’ For indeed both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled together in this city against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to do as much as your power and your plan had decided beforehand would happen.”

<sup>414</sup> This is verbatim from the LXX, which, in turn, is an exact translation of the Masoretic Text. Witherington, *Acts*, 202, argues that this shows Luke’s own practice of “rendering of his source material” rather than the possibility of “a group of early Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians” citing the LXX.

<sup>415</sup> J. Fitzmyer, with Haenchen and Witherington, recognizes that this prayer resembles King Hezekiah’s desperate prayer offered when threatened by the mocking Assyrian commander, recorded in Isa 37:16–20 and 2 Ki 19:15–19, and suggests the possibility of Lukan adoption (cf. J. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 306; Haenchen, *Acts*, 228; and Witherington, *Acts*, 203).

<sup>416</sup> Thus, speaking about the importance of the Israel’s past, J. Jervell says, “What has happened and what is going to happen in the church comes from history. If you want to know what is happening today and what is going to happen, you have to look to history. The future is there in the past as promises and as patterns in the Scriptures” (Jacob Jervell, “The future of the past: Luke’s vision of salvation history and its bearing on his writing of history” in Ben Witherington, III ed., *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996]: 104–126). Jervell points out that some Greek historians such as Thucydides perceived the repetitious

him sit on his right side (Acts 2:24–36; 3:15, 20–21; 4:10–12), Luke builds anticipation for God’s continuous working out his salvation through the persecuted church. Human opposition in ignorance, however persistent, does not prevail. The divine sovereignty does. Therefore, the petitions of prayer (4:24–30) and God’s granting them (v. 31) are of paradigmatic importance as this “incident marks the beginning of the church’s response to persecution.”<sup>417</sup>

In summary, “while Herod, Pilate, the Jews, and the Gentiles all intended ill, God had other intentions. Those human actors were only doing what God’s hand and plan had destined in advance to transpire.”<sup>418</sup> The reader is, therefore, directed to *the divine reversal ultimately made known through human ignorance whose “actions” were ironically turned around.*

#### *Gentile Ignorance in Stephen’s Speech*

The modern reading of Stephen’s speech, which is the longest of all the speeches recorded in Acts (7:2–53) and which makes an important turning point for the Jesus movement,<sup>419</sup> has been affected by Dibelius who regarded most of this speech as irrelevant, because of the assumption that this speech should be seen as Stephen’s response to the charges made against him for being a “Law and temple critic.”<sup>420</sup> Whatever that discussion might be, however, we focus on some clues as to the Lukan understanding of the state in which Gentiles live in view of their ignorance-knowledge. Stenschke identifies three themes that Luke conveys about Gentiles:

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nature of history “but from another point of view than Luke’s” (cf. 107, n. 9).

<sup>417</sup> B. Gaventa, “To Speak the Word with All Boldness, Acts 4:23–31,” *Faith and Mission* 3 (1986): 76–82; cited in Witherington, *Acts*, 200.

<sup>418</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 202; also see Acts 2:23 for a similar point made by Peter.

<sup>419</sup> Stephen’s speech marks the end of “Jerusalem spring time” as the situation changes dramatically with his martyrdom after his speech. See especially Witherington, *Acts*, 251–52, and Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:80–101 (“Climax of the Conflict in Jerusalem”) for fuller discussion.

<sup>420</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 259; cf. Dibelius, *Studies*, 167–69.

(i) the Egyptians’ complete spiritual failure to understand and/or cooperate with God’s intention to deliver his people (7:6–7, 24, 34–35); (ii) their resultant, “moral-ethical failures in oppressing the Israelites” (7:6–7, 34); and (iii) the Gentile idolatry in worshipping hand-made objects (7:39–43, 48; cf. 17:24; 19: 24–37).<sup>421</sup> Despite Stenschke’s insight in pointing to the Egyptians’ failure even with their wisdom (7:22), he does overlook Luke’s specific cue in 7:17–18: The Israelites grew greatly in number “until another king who had not known (ἤδει) Joseph ruled over Egypt.”<sup>422</sup> Marshall suggests the following interpretive options for reading v. 18:

The meaning is either that [the new Egyptian king] was ignorant of Joseph and his good deeds for Egypt or (perhaps more likely) that he preferred to forget about him in face of the menace which he saw in the growing might of the Israelites. He therefore got the better of them by cruelly forcing them to *expose their infants* (Exodus 1:10–11, 22).<sup>423</sup>

Whatever the case might have been, the reader is reminded of Jesus’ words in Luke 12:30 as well as Simeon’s in 2:32: The Egyptians and their king living apart from “a light for revelation” acted in ignorance and base ingratitude for Joseph whom God had appointed to provide and sustain them in the time of great need.<sup>424</sup> The Egyptians’ moral and spiritual failure

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<sup>421</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 62–64.

<sup>422</sup> Cf. Exod 1:8 (. . . ὃς οὐκ ἤδει τὸν Ἰωσήφ). The discussion on ignorance is missing in commentaries by Haenchen, Fitzmyer, Bruce (1988), and Witherington. F. Bruce, at least, says Pharaoh played as “God’s instrument in weaning the Israelites,” who would, otherwise, have never thought of leaving Egypt due to their attachment to it (cf. Bruce, *Acts* [1988], 138–39).

<sup>423</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 139; italics in original.

<sup>424</sup> Cf. Gen 41:57 (the “world-wide” [πᾶσαι αἱ χῶραι (#r<a”h’-lk’) famine] and Gen 50:20 (God’s saving and sustaining the lives of many people [λαὸς πολὺς (br”(-[:])).

in oppressing the Hebrews<sup>425</sup> and in refusing to obey God's command respectively is rooted in their ignorance of the benevolent God whose life-saving work was revealed through Joseph.<sup>426</sup>

### *Ignorance among Several Gentile Individuals*

After Stephen's speech and his martyrdom, which resulted in scattering the Jerusalem believers throughout Judea and Samaria except for the apostles, Luke introduces several individuals whose encounter with Christian mission bears marks of ignorance of God: Simon the Sorcerer who thought he could buy the divine gift with his money (8:19–20),<sup>427</sup> the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26–39), Cornelius (10:1–48), King Herod (12:1–5, 20–23), the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus (13:7–12),<sup>428</sup> and Lydia in Philippi (16:14–15).<sup>429</sup> Here we proceed to treat two important minor characters, that is, the Ethiopian eunuch and Cornelius.

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<sup>425</sup> Contra "all the wisdom of the Egyptians" Moses acquired (v. 22), Pharaoh's oppressive rule over the Israelites (κατασφίζομαι) shows the misuse of their wisdom.

<sup>426</sup> For anyone familiar with the OT it would not be difficult to recall what Pharaoh said to his officials ("Can we find a man like Joseph, one in whom the Spirit of God is present?" [Gen 41:38]) and to Joseph ("Because God has enabled you to know all this, there is no one as wise and discerning as you are!" [v. 39]).

<sup>427</sup> It is natural that Luke has the Samaritan mission immediately following the Stephen episode. Despite the church's long history of remembering this foolish man Simon in a derogatory sense, Luke points out that he himself and the people in Samaria considered him great. People exclaimed, "This man is the power of God that is called Great" (8:10b). Simon's magic so impressed the Samaritan mind that for long time they followed him (v. 11). Luke says he had been considered to be one of the better Samaritans. Yet he vainly imagined that he could buy the "magical" power Philip and Peter had! In this narrative, Luke displays their total ignorant state as spelled out in Acts 26:17–18: ". . . so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God . . ."

<sup>428</sup> What is said in the previous note can apply to Elymas and Sergius Paulus. The former, as a sorcerer as well as false Jewish prophet, had influence over the latter, the proconsul despite his intelligence (cf. 13:7). Both of them, therefore, were in darkness. Through Paul's ministry the proconsul was freed from this bondage. On this debatable relationship between Elymas and Sergius Paulus, see Barrett, *Acts*, 1:616; and F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, [3d ed; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 297. Contra Barrett (*Acts*, 1:616) and Stenschke (*Gentiles*, 166), Bruce does not see much influence of the sorcerer on the proconsul.

<sup>429</sup> Considering that Philippi is the first city of Europe, Lydia's conversion is significant. The key word in her story seems to be διανοίγω. Though she was formerly a worshipper of God, it took the divine operation in opening her heart so that she could pay attention to (προσέχω) the preached word and be baptized with members of her household. Thus, Stenschke aptly observes, "[T]he natural intellectual faculties of Gentiles were inadequate to

Tannehill draws our attention to and explores the significance of the Ethiopian eunuch noting, “[He] is a very strong representative of foreignness within a Jewish context. He comes from the edge of the known world, of the black race, is a castrated male, and probably a Gentile.”<sup>430</sup> While the rhetorical cues that several scholars identify are helpful to appreciate the text,<sup>431</sup> it is Marshall who leads us to an important insight for our discussion: “But the general principle which [the eunuch] annunciates is significant. The Old Testament cannot be fully understood without interpretation. It needs a key to unlock the doors of its mysterious sayings. Jesus had provided such a key for the disciples (Luke 24:25–27, 44–47).”<sup>432</sup>

“How in the world can I, unless someone guides me?” was the eunuch’s reply to Phillip who said, “Do you understand (γινώσκεις) what you’re reading?” (8:30–31). However much education, position, elegance, and even earnest zeal for learning this noble God-fearing eunuch had, Luke presents him to be ignorant about true meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures and specifically about Jesus to whom those Scriptures testify (cf. Luke 24:44, 46–47). He needed someone like Philip who would explain (ὁδηγέω, v. 31) and preach the good news (εὐαγγελίζω, v. 35) foretold in the OT and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Therefore, Stenschke concludes: “This provision and its necessity indicates the spiritual deficiency even of Gentiles who were already

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understand the message of Christian salvation” (Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 194).

<sup>430</sup> Cf. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:108–112 for his further comments on those several points.

<sup>431</sup> Haenchen, Bruce, and Witherington recognize word-play in Philip’s question “Do you understand what you are reading? (‘γινώσκεις ἢ ἀναγινώσκεις’)” in 8:30, and Witherington emphasizes the eunuch’s elegant Greek in “using the optative with *αν*, a sign of education or at least conscious style” (“πῶς γὰρ ἂν δυναίμην ἔάν μή τις ὁδηγήσει με;”). (Cf. Witherington, *Acts*, 297, n. 75 and n. 73 [“neat panoromasia”]; Bruce, *Acts* (1990), 175, n. 65; and Haenchen, *Acts*, 311.)

<sup>432</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 163. Marshall’s comment reminds us of what Jesus says about experts in the law who take away the key of knowledge so that no one can enter (Luke 11:52).

attracted to Judaism. Even such ‘promising’ Gentiles failed to understand God’s special revelation.”<sup>433</sup>

We noted earlier that Luke records three exemplary Roman centurions in Luke 7:1–10, 23:47, and in Acts 10:1–48. Luke does not identify the two centurions in Luke by name, whereas the third is introduced as Cornelius, who with all his family is devout and God-fearing (10:1–2). The detailed narratives about Cornelius and the Jerusalem reaction to Peter’s role in his conversion (cf. 11:1–18) speak for the importance of this event in Acts in terms of the Gentile mission initiated by the Spirit (10:19, 44).<sup>434</sup> However, we keep our scope by focusing on Luke’s portrait of Cornelius in view of his knowledge-ignorance.

Luke narrates Cornelius’ first encounter with Peter in v. 25b (“Cornelius met him, fell at his feet, and worshiped him”) to which Peter said, “Stand up. I too am a mere mortal” (v. 26). Witherington suggests that Cornelius’ falling at his feet (πεσὼν ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας) upon Peter’s arrival can be either an act of worship thinking Peter “as some sort of divine or angelic figure perhaps even the man in his vision,” or “obseisance, a normal Middle Eastern form of greeting for an important person.” Peter’s reaction in 10:26 (“. . . I too am a mere mortal”), says Witherington, “suggests the former conclusion, as does the same sort of response to such reverence in Rev. 19:10 and 22:9 (cf. Acts 14:14–15).”<sup>435</sup> In light of his own ignorance of divine

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<sup>433</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 148.

<sup>434</sup> Tannehill offers the following suggestion as to what significance this episode holds for Acts: “The Cornelius episode indicates that this omission [of Gentiles living within Judea, Galilee, and Samaria] is not merely the result of the apostles’ desire to work in an orderly fashion but results from an obstacle that makes Peter and others reluctant to begin. In the Cornelius episode we are told how that obstacle was removed. The obstacle is gentile uncleanness, which prevents Jews from associating freely with Gentiles.

“It is a breakthrough not simply because Peter and the Jerusalem church now accept Gentiles for baptism but also because they recognize the right of Jewish Christians to freely associate with Gentiles in the course of their mission.” (idem, *Narrative Unity*, 2:135 & 137).

<sup>435</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 352; see, Bock, *Acts*, 393, for a similar conclusion. Bock refers to Cornu and Shulam,



matters evident in his thrice resisting the heavenly vision (10:9–16), Peter’s describing himself as a mere mortal was only fitting. And yet, Cornelius was ready to treat him more than what he was. Stenschke sees this corrected act of Cornelius in larger context of Acts<sup>436</sup> and concludes:

Luke repeatedly describes Gentiles ready to give to other humans or to receive for themselves divine acclamation. In this exciting moment this failure surfaced in the otherwise impeccable Cornelius. He now reacted in pagan categories to the vision and the man it announced. Though he had already come a long way from paganism, this Gentile response was still with him.<sup>437</sup>

In summary, both the Ethiopian eunuch and Cornelius episodes portray them as positive Gentiles with social status and genuine interest in the OT faith, and devout. However, since they have not yet come to the Christian faith despite their exposure to Judaism and the OT Scriptures, God sends messengers who can lead them fully out of their darkness by bringing the light for revelation, which finally leads them to Christ and salvation through baptism (cf. 8:38; 10:44–48).

#### *Ignorance among the Lystrans (Acts 14)*

Luke’s narrative about Paul and Barnabas’ ministry at Lystra (14:8–20) calls for analysis for at least three reasons. First, this city marks the first Gentile place in the narrative without a synagogue.<sup>438</sup> Second, the reaction of the Gentile citizens to Paul’s healing a lame man and the end of the episode give insight into the Lukan understanding of Gentile religiosity. Third, though

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*The Jewish Roots of Acts*, 1:580–81, for citing Cicero, *De natura deorum* 3.2.5, “where respect for ‘the immortal gods who have come down to us’ is affirmed.”

<sup>436</sup> He gives the following examples for his argument: “Compare Simon’s claims and the recognition he received in Samaria (Acts 8:9f), the acclamation of Herod Agrippa as divine (12:22f), the Lystrans’ acclamation of the missionaries (14:11), possibly also the jailer’s address of the vindicated missionaries as κύριοι (16:30) and the considerations of the Maltese islanders (28:4–6)” (Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 151, n. 235).

<sup>437</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 151–52.

<sup>438</sup> This is not an argument from silence. Rather, it is based on Paul’s usual practices at Iconium (14:1), Thessalonica (17:1–2), Berea (17:10), Athens (17:17), Corinth (18:4), and Ephesus (19:8). Even though there was a Jewish presence in Lystra (cf. 16:1–2), there was no synagogue probably because “it was an insignificant village which had been made into a Roman colony in 6 BC . . .” (Marshall, *Acts*, 236).

it is short and lacks an explicit reference to ignorance-knowledge theme, the missionary sermon (14:15–17)<sup>439</sup> exhibits an important parallel with Paul’s sermon at Athens.

Luke begins the narrative with Paul healing a cripple whose listening to the word created faith in divine healing (v. 9, “faith to be healed” [τοῦ σωθῆναι]). Witnessing that healing, the natives exclaimed in Lycaonian dialect, “The gods have come down to us in human form” (14:11). For Kavin Rowe, the crowd’s acclamation in v. 11 reveals how the “spell of Homer” had nurtured “Graeco-Roman religious sensibilities” to expect the appearance of the gods in human form.<sup>440</sup> The way Luke narrates this event accurately depicts Greek religiosity as G. Mussies suggests, “Generally speaking one may say that in antiquity anyone who did something that was not understood or that was considered miraculous ran himself the risk of being looked upon as a god. But even in situations where no further living beings were present people could get the idea . . .”<sup>441</sup>

Tannehill, finding a similar reaction in Acts 10:25–26, calls this “a tendency to confuse the power that heals with the healer himself.” He also observes a new step for the mission and a new challenge for Paul in Lystra saying:

In this scene the problem of mission among such people appears in sharp focus. Far from suggesting that the further the mission moves from Judaism the more receptive

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<sup>439</sup> Marshall’s comment on the missionaries’ speech bears repeating: “In the time past he had let the Gentiles live in their own ways, the implication being that he did not regard their ignorance of himself as culpable. Nevertheless, it should have been possible for men to realize that he existed, since he has given testimony to himself in the world of nature by providing *good* things for men. . . . The world of nature should thus have led men to recognize the existence, power and goodness of the Creator. But this ‘natural’ revelation of God belonged to the past; as Paul pointed out in 17:30f., it was now supplemented by a new witness of God, the good news . . .” (Marshall, *Acts*, 239; italics in original).

<sup>440</sup> Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 19. Rowe cites from Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 140. See Rowe, 19–21 for several examples, which support his argument that despite the critical voice raised against this Homer’s anthropomorphism of the gods by philosophers “from Xenophanes and Plato to the time of the NT and beyond,” the vast general population remained unaffected and superstitious.

<sup>441</sup> G. Mussies, “Identification and Self-Identification of Gods in Classical and Hellenistic Times,” in *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World* (eds. R. van den Broek, et al.; New York: Brill, 1988): 1–18.

people will be, the narrator sees a special obstacle where people do not believe in the one God who has created all. . . . The crowd's *ignorance* of God is dramatically demonstrated in the scene as they confuse Barnabas and Paul with divine beings and prepare a very inappropriate sacrifice.<sup>442</sup>

Stenschke also finds a parallel idea in 12:22–23 (the people identifying Herod's voice as divine) and 28:6–8 (the natives in Malta regarding Paul as a god), and calls the Lystra episode “a fine example of pagan syncretism,” in which idolatry and pagan conviction are deeply entrenched.<sup>443</sup> Of their reaction in wanting to sacrifice bulls (14:13), Stenschke says:

Polytheism was the spontaneous and natural frame of reference. The exclamation and ensuing activity indicate *fundamental lack of understanding* of the uniqueness and true nature of God and the *cognitive failure* and blasphemy behind their idolatrous dedication.<sup>444</sup>

The Lystrans' “fundamental lack of understanding” is further noted in the ensuing narrative. In vv. 15–17 Paul and Barnabas plead for the Lystrans turn from vain idolatry to true worship of the living God (τούτων τῶν ματαίων<sup>445</sup> ἐπιστρέφειν ἐπὶ θεὸν ζῶντα). They pronounce about their wayward past in following their own ways<sup>446</sup> and the missionaries tell of God's undeniable

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<sup>442</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:178–79; italics added.

<sup>443</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 181.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*, 184; italics added.

<sup>445</sup> Cf. Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 186, for a helpful discussion on μάταιος appearing in the LXX with derogatory nuance. He then concludes: “This designation entails a verdict over the intellectual and spiritual faculties of the worshippers: They venerated with dedication and effort such vanities without *recognizing* their lack of life and power and their worthlessness. . . . Gentiles revered worthless idols while the living God and his nature were not recognized despite his creation. This idolatry and failure indicate the Gentiles' *spiritual state of blindness and darkness*: not only did they fail with their natural faculties or insight to *recognize* and serve the living God – far from remaining ‘neutral,’ they were turned away from him and worshipped vain idols. The existence and nature of the previously unknown living God and the possibility now to turn to him are truly good news and a necessary part of the proclamation. *Knowledge* and worship of him was nonexistent, both had to be announced to these Gentiles” (*ibid.*, 187–88; italics added).

<sup>446</sup> Witherington sees a strong connection between this speech and Acts 17 saying, “If this pronouncement foreshadows Acts 17:24, then v. 16 presages Acts 17:30 (and cf. 3:17)” (Witherington, *Acts*, 426). Luke's use of “way” (ὁδός) in a figurative sense deserves comment. When referring to a positive meaning, Luke always has it in the singular (cf. Lk 1:79; 20:21; Acts 2:28; 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). Here Luke has it in the plural and thus disapproves them.

testimony in nature (v. 17). Luke records no positive responses, however. Instead, the Lystrans were persuaded by Jews from Antioch and Iconium to stone Paul, whom they once considered to be a deity (14:19).<sup>447</sup> Stenschke aptly notes, “*All that the missionaries achieved was preventing them from proceeding with their idolatrous and blasphemous intention*”<sup>448</sup> (cf. μόλις in v. 18).

In conclusion, while this narrative forms the climax of Paul’s persecution rooted at Pisidian Antioch (13:45, 50) and planned by the Jews of Iconium (14:2–5) and, thus, emphasizes the narrator’s theme,<sup>449</sup> it also reveals important aspects of Lukan anthropology specifically with regard to pagans. As Luke will raise the same point in regard to the Athenian audience (17:16–31), the vast majority of Gentiles live in complete ignorance of their benevolent God even though he leaves unmistakable witness to his existence in the world of nature. Their lives are so entrenched in their ignorant state and idolatrous lifestyle that the Christian message to repent from this ignorance spoken by Paul and Barnabas, accompanied by miraculous healing, genuine plea, and reaffirming message, do not lead to conversion of any person.<sup>450</sup> Instead, the pagan crowd is persuaded to turn into a mob against the messengers. The Lystrans’ joining the Jews in opposition to Paul and Barnabas conveys an unmistakable reminder of the prayer of the church recorded in Acts 4:25–28. People are not just slow but incapable of understanding the message,

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<sup>447</sup> Rowe does not see any difficulty in the perception that the Jews successfully persuaded the locals because “in essence the Gentiles are told that the missionaries ‘advocate customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice’ (16:21), or ‘are acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another King, Jesus’ (17:7), or ‘persuade people to worship God contrary to the law’ (18:13), or cause στάσις (24:5), and so forth” (187, n. 55). For a similar view, see Witherington, *Acts*, 427 and Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 191.

<sup>448</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 190; italics in original. In opposition to Taeger, Stenschke concludes, “Taeger’s *aufgeklärte Menschen*, after receiving *Aufklärung* . . ., participated in the attempted murder of the Christian messenger. More than enlightenment and correction through the Christian proclamation is required” (192).

<sup>449</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:180.

<sup>450</sup> This reality prepares the reader for the seemingly “meager” fruition of Paul’s Athenian mission in Acts 17.

and yet quick to turn against its messengers. In this instance, the quick turning of the Lystrans is not surprising considering what the Lukan Paul is up to with his message.<sup>451</sup>

### *Ignorance among the Athenians (Acts 17)*

A general survey of the scholarship on Acts 17:16–34 is presented in the introductory chapter, and, in chapter three we will attempt to analyze the speech in its narrative setting, content, result, and implication for Luke-Acts utilizing narrative-critical tools. Therefore, here we briefly and thematically focus only on the issue of ignorance. We need to note that Luke does not specifically connect the two philosopher groups with the city's idolatry. Our brief treatment of the speech here is simply meant to follow the narrative.

Before we proceed to analyze Paul's speech at Athens, Stenschke's words in regard to Paul's vexed emotion (*παρωζύνετο τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ*/ in v. 16) over the city filled with idols bear repeating as a way of reviewing our previous discussion:

By now readers know Luke's assessment of idolatry. A multitude of idols indicates alienation from God. As a result of idolatry, God handed Israel over in judgment to worship the host of heaven, pagan deities and idols. A plethora of idols bears witness to God's judgment (Acts 7:40–43) rather than to acceptable or preparatory piety. The Lystrans were charged to turn from worthless idols to the living God. A city teeming with idols is one consequence of God allowing nations in the past to go on their own ways. That idols and whatever is associated with their worship are typical Gentile traits, which need to be discarded, is declared by the apostolic decree. Luke does not commend devout idolaters and their spiritual capacities.<sup>452</sup>

### *v. 18: Ignorance in Applying a Wrong Paradigm*

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<sup>451</sup> Rowe, noting a similar emphasis on the importance of conversion in 15:3 and 26:20, makes the following observation in regard to what is at stake in Paul's preaching to the Lystrans, ". . . Luke's call through the mouths of Paul and Barnabas is not simply an admonition to tweak a rite or halt a ceremony. It contains, rather, the summons that simultaneously involves the destruction of an entire mode of being religious. . . . Luke is not interested in philosophical reform or in demythologizing but in ἐπιστροφή, a conversion to a way of life incompatible with traditional pagan cults" (Rowe, *World*, 21–22).

<sup>452</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 204.

Luke begins by identifying two groups of philosophers who engaged in debate with Paul: Epicureans and Stoics.<sup>453</sup> However, in what follows Luke presents them not according to their philosophical conviction or thought, but their reaction to the Christian message by way of treating Paul the καταγγελεύς. The first group (τινες ἔλεγον), arrogant and contemptuous, refused to interact with Paul<sup>454</sup> by dismissing him as “a cheap philosopher.”<sup>455</sup> The second group (οἱ δέ,) seems to be ominous saying, “‘He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods.’ (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection)” (v. 18). While the first group displays a disdainful attitude, the second group, seemingly more serious, shows a complete confusion because, we are told by Luke in his comment, they thought Paul was propagandizing about “a new male/female pair or divinities like Adonis and Venus or Osiris and Isis, and, therefore, Jesus and Anastasis”<sup>456</sup> (cf. τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν in v. 18). The teaching about resurrection, the core of the Christian proclamation, is taken to be about a female deity! Such ignorance is rooted, implies Luke, in placing things within their own religious paradigm.

*vv. 19–21: Ignorance in Pursuit of New Things*

Seen in light of v. 18, it is more likely that the second group of philosophers rather than the dismissive first group took hold of (ἐπιλαμβάνομαι) Paul and led him to the Areopagus saying, “May we know (δυνάμεθα γινῶναι) what this new teaching is that you are proclaiming? For you

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<sup>453</sup> A separate study on these philosophers in relation to our topic will follow.

<sup>454</sup> This judgment is partially based on my taking their question (τί ἂν θέλοι ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος λέγειν;) as rhetorical.

<sup>455</sup> There is diversity of translations for ‘ὁ σπερμολόγος’: “babbling” (NIV, NRS, NET, KJB, and NAS [idle babbling]), “parrot” (NJB), “scavenger” (NAB), “(one who is) rummaging through trash” (Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 206), or “glib fellow” (Dibelius, “Paul in Athens,” in *Studies*, 80).

<sup>456</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 207. Stenschke cites from H.C. Kee (*Good News to the Ends of the Earth: The Theology of Acts* [London: SCM, 1990], 64) who, in turn, references to Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts*, 233: “. . . for in fact they supposed ‘Anastasis’ . . . to be some deity, being accustomed to worship female divinities also.”

are bringing some surprising things to our ears, so we want to know (βουλόμεθα οὖν γινῶναι) what they mean” (vv. 19b–20). Their desire to learn and know, or intellectual curiosity, serves as one of elements<sup>457</sup> for setting the stage for Paul’s speech. However, Luke immediately inserts his comment saying, “Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new” (v. 21). This “aside to the reader offers an evaluative generalization to the effect that all Athenians are prone to fads. They are overly fascinated with the latest thing. Their interest in Paul’s new teaching is merely a further sign of this weakness.”<sup>458</sup> Despite their great interest and zeal devoted to sharing and hearing new things, their ignorant state did not improve. The plethora of idols, which incited anger or distress in Paul (v. 16), was the result of their constant interest in “newer” things. As the subsequent discussion of Paul’s speech will reveal, their problem of ignorance lies not in failing to obtain enough knowledge in what is the latest happening (τι καινότερον in v. 21) but in discerning what has been obvious and familiar all along, which is what Paul’s following argument makes plain. Contra Dibelius’ positive description of Athenian citizens,<sup>459</sup> their intellectual busyness in habitual pursuit of new things, ironically, impeded their true understanding of reality.

vv. 22–23: *Ignorance Acknowledged*

Does their altar inscription “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD” show their religious sensitivity or an insight into the complex supernatural reality? From their perspective it might have been so. As seen in the introductory chapter, several historical reconstructions for the origin of this

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<sup>457</sup> Our discussion in the third chapter about the Socrates motif will show that there is more to it.

<sup>458</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:214.

<sup>459</sup> Dibelius says, “Athens means more than Corinth to the author of Acts. Corinth is the gateway to the world, Athens the gateway to *wisdom*. . . . Athens still harbors something that is Greek; Athens still has a feeling for the unknown and a curiosity to hear something new” (Dibelius, “Paul in Athens,” in *Studies*, 79; italics added).

inscription based on archaeological and epigraphical evidences are possible. But what does the narrator suggest? Luke does not present this in any positive light<sup>460</sup> save for its usefulness in giving Paul an opening to speak. Van der Horst rightly points out:

Paul hardly meant that his audience was unconscious worshippers of the true God. Rather, he is drawing their attention to the true God who was ultimately responsible for the phenomena, which they attributed to an unknown god. The altar inscription enables Paul to emphasize the ignorance of his audience concerning the true identity of God.<sup>461</sup>

Thus their ignorance of the true God is acknowledged through and expressed in their altar inscription “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.”

*vv. 24–27a: Ignorance Leads to Idolatry*

If we argue with K. Rowe and M. Given that Luke presents Paul as a new Socrates engaging in Socratic dialogue in the agora and being accused of introducing new, strange gods to the Athenian public,<sup>462</sup> we can say Paul deflects the charge against him by saying that the God he proclaims is the God who created the universe. “To link the identity of the unknown god with creation is to undermine in the most radical way possible the charge of preaching a new divinity. Bluntly put, it can scarcely get older than this: the God about whom Paul speaks created the

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<sup>460</sup> This can be demonstrated by the Lukan inclusion of *δεισιδαιμονεστέρους*. Paul employs it to share his emotion in observing the city. The term can mean either “very religious” (NRS, NET, NAS, NAB) or “very superstitious” (KJV). NJB renders it as “extremely scrupulous.” Considering this to be *captatio benevolentiae*, “very religious” would be a better rendering. However, that this word is used most likely with “deliberate ambiguity” in consideration of Acts 17:16 is suggested by many modern scholars: Marshall (*Acts*, 285), Stenschke (*Gentiles*, 210–11), Fitzmyer (*Acts*, 606–7), Witherington (*Acts*, 520), K. Rowe (*World*, 34) and, mostly strongly, M. Given (*Ambiguity*, 68–70). Both F.F. Bruce (*Acts* (1988), 335) and Haenchen (*Acts*, 520) lean toward a more positive interpretation based on Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus* (260, “they say that Athens is most pious towards the gods”), Josephus, *AP*. 2.130 (“the most pious of the Greeks”) and Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.17.1. (“the Athenians venerate the gods more than others”).

<sup>461</sup> Cf. Van der Horst, “The Altar of the “Unknown God” in Athens (Acts 17:23) and the Cult of “Unknown Gods” in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods,” *ANRW II*.18.2 (1989), 1426–56; cited in Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 212.

<sup>462</sup> Cf. Rowe, *World*, 34. For M. Given in *Ambiguity* (68–70), this forms a basic tenet of his whole argument. Also see Witherington, *Acts*, 515.



world in which Athens exists.”<sup>463</sup> Rather, the ignorance of the Athenians is to be blamed for their falling into superstitious and idolatrous practice imagining God to be in need of humans for housing and serving “because he himself gives life and breath and everything to everyone” (v. 25b). Therefore, “by nature, not by locale or placement, human beings were made to be in fellowship with God from the beginning of creation”<sup>464</sup> as the Creator and Sustainer. But in ignorance the Athenians, like any Gentiles prior to coming to Christian faith, fell far from realizing God’s plan and desire. “The created cannot create something for the Creator,” is Paul’s antithetical logic in v. 29. But that is exactly what the Athenians ended up doing in ignorance.

*vv. 27b–29: Willful Ignorance*

Without repeating the elaborate natural revelation of Acts 14 (vv. 15 and 17), Paul simply says that God is not too far from man to reach out or find him.<sup>465</sup> This nearness of God among men is attested not only in the OT (e.g., Ps 19:1–5) but also by their Greek poets.<sup>466</sup> Even though Zeus is in mind in both poem lines by Epimenides the Cretan (c. 600 B.C.: “For in thee we live and move and have our being” [the last line of his quatrain])<sup>467</sup> and by Paul’s fellow-Cilician Aratus (born 310 B.C.: “. . . we are truly his offspring”),<sup>468</sup> Paul argues that some recognition of the true nature of God is available for people, including the Athenians. Paul, by working within the

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<sup>463</sup> Rowe, *World*, 34.

<sup>464</sup> Witherington, based on the two parallel purpose clauses in vv. 26–27 (κατοικεῖν . . . ζητεῖν), argues that one should not take v. 27 as explanation for God’s creating diverse nations to occupy the diverse parts of the earth (Witherington, *Acts*, 528; emphasis in original).

<sup>465</sup> Cf. Deut. 30:11–14 for a parallelism.

<sup>466</sup> For more discussion on the source and meanings of the Greek poems, see Witherington, *Acts*, 529–31, and Bruce, *Acts* (1988), 338–40.

<sup>467</sup> Bruce cites the four lines and says, “The quatrain is quoted in a Syriac version by the ninth-century commentator Isho’dad (ed. M.D. Gibson, *Horae Semiticae*, X [Cambridge, 1913], p. 40)” (Bruce, *Acts* [1988], 338–39, and n. 75).

plausibility structure existing in the minds of the hearers, a critical element for persuasive argument,<sup>469</sup> turns the tables and confronts the council members saying, “You are without excuse!” Rowe points out, “The human arts and faculties are prone to ignorance (ἄγνοια) and superstition (δεισιδαιμονία) with the result that God comes to be conceived as like gold, silver, or stone. . . . As Barrett puts it: ‘From nature the Greeks have evolved not natural theology but natural idolatry.’”<sup>470</sup> Despite wayward human propensity, they are without excuse because their idolatrous practice has a volitional element in the sense that their ignorance was worsened by *ignoring* to take into consideration the wisdom or insight offered by their own teachers.

*vv. 30–31: Ignorance in a New Era*

“In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways,” Paul and Barnabas shouted (14:14, κράζω) to the Lystrans in Acts 14:16. Paul here argues basically along the same line but with decisive force to move forward saying, “Therefore, although God has overlooked such times of ignorance (ὑπεριδῶν τοὺς μὲν οὖν χρόνους τῆς ἀγνοίας), he now commands (παραγγέλλει) all people<sup>471</sup> everywhere to repent” (v. 30). The gracious God in mercy passed over their past ignorance of God, though they are not free from blame taken within the framework of vv. 24–29.<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> Bruce, *Acts* (1988), 339.

<sup>469</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2:848, argues: “In [Acts] 18:15 νόμου τοῦ καθ’ ὑμᾶς is a little more than ‘the law you happen to have’; it means the law that you regard as authoritative. Here as a translation ‘Your own poets’ suffices, with the sense, Poets that you ought to be prepared to listen to.”

<sup>470</sup> Rowe, *World*, 38.

<sup>471</sup> This includes both the city’s superstitious commoners and her sophisticated leaders/teachers.

<sup>472</sup> F.F. Bruce finds parallel ideas concerning God forgiving the past ignorance in Acts 14:16 and Rom 3:21. He concludes, “If ignorance of the divine nature was culpable before, it is inexcusable now” (Bruce, *Acts* [1988], 340).

Rowe goes much deeper to pursue the question of what Luke's argument and Paul's call to repent mean in relation to the Athenian and the pagan interpretive structure of reality. His following words serve as conclusion as well as summary:

To know with *Luke* that the God who might be sought is not far is not to affirm the worth of natural theology but to know that God has not been found. To admit on *Luke's* terms that God does not live in shrines built by human hands is not to rebuke philosophically the simple-minded pagan practitioner but is to admit to the problem of gentile ignorance *in toto* and the need for repentance; it is hence to admit to the δικαιοσύνη of the God of the Jews (v. 31) and to locate the decisive event of human history in the resurrection of Jesus. . . . It is, plainly said, to become a Christian. . . . Indeed, the same inscription upon which Paul initially grounded his defense (Ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ /!) provides, by the end of the speech, a critique of the pagan religious habitus as ignorant idolatry.<sup>473</sup>

*Ignorance among the Ephesians (Acts 19)*

Despite Paul's extended two-year period of stay at Ephesus, Luke does not record for us any significant speech.<sup>474</sup> But, as a logical explanation, we noted earlier Tannehill's suggestion that we can assume Paul delivered sermons similar to his speech at Athens based on his criticism of idolatry intimated in the words of Demetrius in 19:26 in opposition: "And you see and hear that this Paul has persuaded and turned away a large crowd, not only in Ephesus but in practically all of the province of Asia, by saying that gods made by hands are not gods at all." Therefore, even though Acts 19 does not offer much explicit material in regard to the ignorance-knowledge theme, the riot in Ephesus includes one significant point to note for our topic as well as our later discussion of Acts 17:16–34 in chapter three.

Tannehill observes that the speech made by Demetrius (19:25–27) "has a role analogous to the accusations made in Philippi (16:20–21), Thessalonica (17:6–7), and Corinth (18:13)." He

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<sup>473</sup> Rowe, *World*, 40–41; italics in original. See Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 220–21, for a similar view expressed.

<sup>474</sup> Such Lukan practice can be observed in Acts 18, which mainly records Paul's year and a half stay at

further notices a pattern in the incidents: an initial accusation leads to mob action, which leads to an angry protest against Paul.<sup>475</sup> Rowe's following insight helps us understand the challenges the pagans faced in face of the Christian mission and why Tannehill's pattern developed:

Once again in similarity to Lystra and Athens, Demetrius' accusation in Ephesus displays narratively Christianity's profound difference from philosophical criticism, namely, that to be "persuaded" by Christian missionaries necessarily involves a turning away from pagan religious practices. The turning away, that is, was not simply an epistemological act—"knowing better," as it were. Rather, the removal from pagan religious practices, so Luke tells, was a public act with economic and political consequence. Luke's intention is . . . to display narratively the profound incompatibility between the way of Christ and the ways of being that commonly defined pagan life.<sup>476</sup>

In what narrates in the riot episode at Ephesus, the reader is to see that embracing the new life in the light of the Christian revelation evidenced in vv. 11–20 means multi-dimensional change: economic loss (vv. 24–25), abandoning their gods as false (v. 26), and the loss of political influence throughout the province of Asia (v. 27). It is not surprising, therefore, to note that the Ephesian Gentiles displayed not only the difficulty of coming to grips with knowledge but active opposition to it by means of propaganda and violent riots. In so doing, these Gentiles, as well as the Philippian Gentiles, join with the Jews in Thessalonica (17:5–7) and Corinth (18:12–13). As the Christian gospel mission makes its forward movement, the tension builds up everywhere.

In closing, Luke shows that ignorance *was* the cause of their idolatrous life in Acts 14 and 17. He shows in Acts 19 that ignorance *now* serves as fuel for violent riots in opposition to the Christian message of repentance and salvation.

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Corinth.

<sup>475</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:241.

<sup>476</sup> Rowe, *World*, 45–46.

### *Ignorance of Felix*

In the passion story Luke showed that the Jerusalem Jews relied on two powerful political figures to crucify Jesus. Luke echoes this in Acts 24–25 where Paul is at Caesarea accused by the top leaders of the Sanhedrin before two different political entities: Felix, a Roman governor who was later replaced by Festus, and King Agrippa, a Jewish king. Though implicitly, Luke reveals the ignorance of the Roman officials.

In Acts 24, we are told, the high priest Ananias and other council members arrived from Jerusalem with a rhetor (ρήτωρ) named Tertullus (v. 1). Paul had to defend himself against a powerful political group with a skilled speaker. It is interesting to note that both Tertullus and Paul use δύναμαι and ἐπιγινώσκω respectively in v. 8 (When you examine him yourself, you will be able to learn from him . . .) and v. 11 (As you can verify for yourself . . .) to express their confidence in and reliance on governor's ability to discern and even investigate for reaching fair judgment. At the end of Paul's defense speech against Tertullus' accusation, we are told of Felix's decision: "Then Felix, who *understood* the facts concerning the Way *more accurately* (ἀκριβέστερον εἰδὼς τὰ περὶ τῆς ὁδοῦ/), adjourned the hearing, saying, 'When Lysias the commanding officer comes down, I will decide your case'" (v. 22).

We are not told whether the narrator wants to say Felix was better informed about the Way in comparison with others, such as Paul's Jewish accusers.<sup>477</sup> Sensing the highly political and contentious nature of the case, Felix postponed the decision until he could gather further evidence from Lysias, the tribune who had sent him Paul with letter (23:26–30). Up to this point

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<sup>477</sup> See Witherington, *Acts*, 713 for a brief discussion on this word and its possible meaning. He leans toward suggesting that, "Felix knew very well that the charges against Paul were basically bogus. He had been in Israel long enough to know that the Nazarenes were not rabble-rousers." F. Bruce takes the knowledge to be about the Christian movement in general (Bruce, *Acts* [1988], 446).

or on the surface level, the governor appears to be a fair-minded, Roman official. However, what Luke says about Felix afterwards points in a different direction. Felix left Paul in prison even when Festus succeeded him in office two years later (v. 27) as he was hoping to receive a bribe from Paul (v. 26).

Luke makes it clear that Felix had the ability to make an informed decision (δυναμένου σου ἐπιγνώσαι<sup>478</sup> in v. 11) and had good knowledge of the Way (v. 22) even though we are not provided with any clues to its source.<sup>479</sup> Felix should have been certain about Paul's innocence based on Lysia's former report (23:29) and on the fact that "it was not done in a corner" (οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἐν γωνίᾳ πεπραγμένον τοῦτο') (26:26b). However, his mind was darkened by his greed for money (v. 26; cf. Luke 8:14 [". . . choked by life's . . . riches . . ."]; 18:1–8) and political popularity (v. 27). Therefore, Gaventa concludes: "Luke has again and again depicted in harsh light those who would use money or other possessions for their own purpose (1:18; 5:1–11; 8:18–24; 16:16–24), and Felix's desire to profit from Paul's imprisonment surely signals Luke's scorn for him."<sup>480</sup>

### *Ignorance among the Malta Natives*

In Acts 28:1–10, the narrator tells yet another episode that shows the pagan misunderstanding of Christian phenomena. Surviving a treacherous shipwreck, Paul and his 275 companions on board (27:37) arrived on the shore of Malta, where they were shown an unusually

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<sup>478</sup> Paul uses ἐπιγνώσκω once more when Felix' successor Festus played the same political game to please the Jews by asking Paul whether he would go to Jerusalem and be tried (cf. 25:10: "I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you very well know"). Thus, for Luke Festus belongs to the same base rank.

<sup>479</sup> Thus we are left to our own imagination. Maybe his (half) Jewish wife Drusilla who belonged to the Herodian family had shared it (cf. Bruce, *Acts* [1988], 447; Marshall, *Acts*, 381). Or, as a Roman governor, he had to study for himself and became more sympathetic with the Christian movement.

<sup>480</sup> B. Gaventa, *Acts*, 330.

warm hospitality (28:2). While trying to warm up their body by the fire, “a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on [Paul’s] hand” (v. 3), to which the natives responded by saying to each other, “No doubt this man is a murderer (πάντως φονεύς ἐστὶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὗτος)! Although he has escaped from the sea, Justice herself has not allowed him to live!” (v. 4).<sup>481</sup> Here, on the one hand, the reader recalls Paul’s own words to the Lord in 22:20 referring to 8:1a that he was a murderer in giving approval to Stephen’s death. On the other hand, however, the reader senses the narrator’s “mockery of barbarian ignorance” because “after humorously picturing them waiting in vain for Paul to swell up and fall dead, he recounts their astonishing reversal of opinion: ‘they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god’ (28:6, RNAB).”<sup>482</sup> Witherington points out that the unharmed Paul reminds the reader of Jesus’ word in Luke 10:18–19 (the power or authority over snakes and scorpions promised to the followers of Jesus) in its fulfillment.<sup>483</sup>

The kind-hearted Malta natives were ignorant of Paul’s identity as God’s chosen vessel<sup>484</sup> to open Jewish and Gentile eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from Satanic power to the living God (26:18), and to be destined to stand before Caesar (27:24; cf. 23:11). Blinded by their own pagan frame of reference, they first considered Paul to be a murderer destined to perish and soon after a god. They were like the Lystrans in Acts 14. Despite Paul’s healing their sick

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<sup>481</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 778, says Ἡ Δίκη in this verse “was the Greek goddess of justice, the virgin daughter of Zeus.”

<sup>482</sup> Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 152–53. Kurz argues that the narrator here and in 14:11–18 (the Lystrans’ reaction to Paul’s healing) uses “caustic satire against barbarian superstition, which sharply contrasts with his usual reverence for Jewish religious sensitivities, practices, and beliefs” (153).

<sup>483</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 779.

<sup>484</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 237. Stenschke emphasizes that “Paul was God’s servant and dependent on him (27:23), not divine himself. His power derived from God. . . . Paul’s action indicates their spiritual blindness and its persistency.”

including the father of the chief (vv. 8–9) and the Malta natives’ kindness in furnishing Paul’s companions with supplies (v. 10), no conversion is recorded,<sup>485</sup> which is also the case for the Lystrans.

*Conclusion: Ignorance-Knowledge among the Gentiles in Luke-Acts*

We can briefly summarize our discussion of the Lukan portrait of the Gentiles in regard to the ignorance-knowledge theme under seven points. (i) *Gentiles’ salvation is predicted early on in Luke’s Gospel* (cf. 2:30–32 [“a light for revelation to the Gentiles,” v. 32]; 3:6 [“and all humanity will see the salvation of God” citing Isa 40:3–5] *and attested throughout Luke-Acts* [Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8; 28:28–31]). (ii) *Apart from revelation, Gentiles in general are ignorant of God’s provision* (Luke 12:30; Acts 7:18–19 [the Egyptians]). (iii) *Prior contact with Judaic faith can be critical, prefatory tool for granting revelation and understanding to Gentiles*. We noted this point in two Roman centurions (Luke 7 and Acts 10). (vi) *The Gentile ignorance of God leads to idolatrous life* (Acts 14 [the Lystrans], 17 [the Athenians], 8:9–24 [the Samaritans exalting Simon the Sorcerer]). (v) *Even “promising” Gentiles are still in need of a means to open/interpret the Scripture to them*. Various Gentile individuals relied on God’s servants to understand God-given wisdom, the Scripture, God’s plan and Jesus’ identity: the Queen of the South (Luke 11:31); the centurion in charge of Jesus’ execution (Luke 23:47); the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:30–31); Cornelius (10:5). Without those God-sent servants, the Hebrew Bible and its teachings about Christ remained locked to these otherwise very prominent Gentiles. (vi) *No massive conversion is to be expected*. The Lystrans and the Athenians heard Paul’s

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<sup>485</sup> Contra, Witherington, *Acts*, 780 and Johnson, *Acts*, 463, see more fruition among the Malta natives. Thus Johnson: “As always in Luke-Acts, the sharing of physical possessions is a symbol of sharing in the good news (Luke 6:32–36; 8:3; 12:32–34; 14:13–14; 18:22; 21:1–4; Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–37).”



persuasive preaching on their own terms, revealing their ignorant state, and they also heard Paul's invitation to return to the true God. Yet they largely refused the invitation and scoffed. (vii) *Unrepentant ignorance leads to further malice.* With the believers' prayer in Acts 4:24–27 in citing Psalm 2 Luke leads us to the universal nature of the Gentiles in relation to God's salvation history: The Gentiles, in particular their rulers, are not only ignorant of God and his provision, but also they gather together in opposition to the Lord and his Christ (v. 26). By implication, they actively and collectively mock and even oppose the message and the messengers, which are evident among the Lystrans (Acts 14), the Athenians (Acts 17), the Ephesians (Acts 19), and the Romans (Pilate and his soldiers [Luke 23], and Festus [Acts 24:24]).

### **3.f. Conclusion: Ignorance as Lukan Characterization of All Men**

Our investigation of the theme of ignorance-knowledge in Luke-Acts has led us to conclude that this theme functions to support Luke-Acts' overall purpose of presenting God's universal salvation in Christ Jesus. In short, all men, including even Jesus' disciples and devout God-fearers, to whom God's salvation is to be brought and proclaimed are ignorant at varying degrees. To survey that particular theme in the Lukan writings, we divided our study between Jews and Gentiles. We then subdivided Jews into Jewish people, minor characters, Jewish leaders and disciples. Such divisions are, we noted, often only heuristic. Here we propose a summary discussion about what each people group is characteristically ignorant of.

#### **3.f.1. Ignorance-Knowledge among the Jewish People**

Luke portrays the Jewish people as both protective of the Jesus movement and ignorant. Their religious leaders' desire and plan to harm Jesus are frustrated by their fear of the people (Luke 13:17; 19:47–48; 20:19, 26; **22:2, 6**; Acts 4:21; 5:26). In other words, as long as the

Jewish populace holds its positive attitude toward Jesus and his appointed messengers, the leaders cannot proceed with their plan to punish or harm Luke's protagonists. Therefore, the Jewish leaders have to either find an opportune time/place away from the public (Luke 22:6; cf. 22:52) or persuade the people with whatever means to make them come over to their side (Luke 23:2<sup>486</sup>; Acts 6:12<sup>487</sup>). Of course, the leaders' task of persuading the Jewish public to join them to oppose Jesus and his apostles is anything but simple<sup>488</sup> and, thus, would demand greater effort than simply carrying out their plan secretly.

What seems to function as an important "hole" of the Jewish people is their ignorance. We noted in our previous survey that, despite their desire to hear Jesus' words (19:47–48; 20:1; 20:45; 21:38) and positive attitude toward Jesus (13:17), they sometimes turn against Jesus (4:28–29 [Jesus' hometown folks]; 8:53 [the mourners at Jairus' house]; 19:7 [the Jews in Jericho]; 23:18 [the Jerusalem Jews in concert with their leaders]). A similar point can be said of the Pisidia Antiochian Jews (Acts 13:42, 44–45). What is noteworthy is the motif of Gentile

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<sup>486</sup> The "assembly" that took Jesus to Pilate (23:1) consists of the chief priests and teachers of the law (22:66). In support of my reading, see Johnson, *Luke*, 364, for his argument for rendering *πλήθος* as "assembly," and thus without the people. (Contra, Bovon in *Luke* 3, 279, interprets Luke's deliberate use of this imprecise word to mean "multitude," which includes the people.) It is important to note that they first try to convince Pilate of Jesus' guilt in terms of 'subverting their nation' (*διαστρέφοντα τὸ ἔθνος ἡμῶν*, v. 2) along with other things, and later they focus only on "stirring up the people" everywhere (*ἀνασειεί τὸν λαόν*, v. 5). Note Pilate's latter rephrasing their accusation (*ἀποστρέφοντα τὸν λαόν*, v. 14), which combines the two together). To verify this accusation Pilate invites the people to the second appearance as "material witnesses" (Carroll, *Luke*, 459). Pilate's insistence on Jesus' innocence (vv. 14–15, 22) was overcome by the crowd's cry demanding for Jesus' death (vv. 18, 23). Luke does not provide us any clue as to how and when the people began to join Jesus' adversaries.

<sup>487</sup> The picture is much clearer here than Jesus' trial. Stephen's martyrdom, which marks the end of 'the Jerusalem Springtime,' began with "the members of the Synagogue of Freedom" (6:9) persuading some men to be the false witnesses against Stephen (v. 11) and stirring up the people and the leaders (*συνεκίνησαν . . . τὸν λαόν*, v. 12). Since no ground is given for this arousing, it is likely that the false accusation in v. 11 was the cause. This is supported by the false testimony in vv. 13–14.

<sup>488</sup> R. Cassidy, for an example, points out the historical fact that the first century chief priests did not have people's respect and trust as "the legitimate descendants of the sacerdotal line" due to their dishonest exploitation of their position (Richard Cassidy, "Luke's Audience, the Chief Priests and the Motive for Jesus' Death," in *Political Issues in Luke-Acts* [eds. Cassidy and P.J. Sharpner; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983], 146–67; cited from Bovon, *Luke* 3, 179, n. 24).

inclusion, which becomes the stumbling block for the Jews in their turning (4:25–28; 19:7;<sup>489</sup> Acts 13:45; cf. 22:21–22). From this we conclude that Luke portrays the Jewish people’s ignorance of God’s *universal* salvific plan through Jesus Christ as a critical cause of stumbling. Considering that this plan means a new definition of “people of God,”<sup>490</sup> such an opposition is, at least, not surprising.

Luke, however, does not leave the reader without hope for the Jewish populace. They are in movement. At hearing Jesus’ prayer on the cross asking forgiveness on the basis of human ignorance (23:34), they part from their leaders by not joining them in continuing to sneer Jesus (23:35) and leaving the scene beating their chests (v. 48). In early chapters of Acts, the people positively respond to the Christian message and offer of forgiveness for their sin of participating in killing Jesus in ignorance (cf. 3:17; 13:27) and many become believers (2:37–41, 47; 6:1).

### **3.f.2. Ignorance-Knowledge among Minor Characters**

Under this rubric, we briefly treated several individuals. In the Gospel, we analyzed the episodes related to Zechariah, Mary the mother of Jesus, John the Baptist, Martha the sister of Mary, the rich ruler, and the three named women (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James) who, with some other women, visited Jesus’ tomb. In Acts, we also analyzed Luke’s portrait of Ananias and Sapphira and the praying believers gathered at the house of Mary the mother of Mark.

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<sup>489</sup> Zacchaeus is a Jew but is excluded by the Jews in general for his occupation. See also Luke 7:39; 15:1 for similar examples.

<sup>490</sup> Suffice it to point to the following works on this important issue: Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God*, Joseph Tyson ed., *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives*, and, Robert Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation*.

Except for the rich ruler and Ananias and his wife Sapphira, those minor characters in Luke-Acts are presented in a positive light possessing good dispositions and virtues. However, they struggle with their inability to understand or comprehend their new reality brought by the divine intervention. Yet, their ignorance or incomprehension does not lead them to reject Jesus or God's plan but these individuals are helped for eventual understanding.

### **3.f.3. Ignorance-Knowledge among Jewish Leaders**

In our treatment of the Jewish leaders, we noted that Luke's unusual "telling" (rather than "showing") about the Pharisees and the lawyers in Luke 7:29–30 leaves an important light for our understanding of them throughout Luke-Acts,<sup>491</sup> which is evident in our reading of the episode Luke arranges immediately after his comment: an episode of Jesus sitting at Simon's house as a dinner guest (7:36–50). As a group, the leaders are characteristically ignorant of Jesus' true identity as the God's Son (1:32, 35; 2:49) and Messiah (3:22; 4:18–19). As result, they constantly take offense at Jesus' words (5:21; 7:49; 16:14; 20:19) and actions (5:30; 6:11; 7:39; 11:38; 13:14; 14:1; 15:2; 19:39), test Jesus (10:25; 20:20–22; 20:27–28), question Jesus' authority (20:2), and even attempt to harm and destroy Jesus (11:53–54; 19:47; 22:2, 4; 22:52; 23:2, 5, 10, 18–23).

Since they do not know Jesus' true identity as God's anointed Messiah bringing God's salvation, their negative reaction to Jesus' words and saving actions are understandable even

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<sup>491</sup> J. Darr, *Character Building*, 93, renders an important insight into how a "sweeping claim" about a particular group (cf. Luke 5:17 ["... while he was teaching, there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting nearby (who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem . . .")]) affects the reader's reading the rest of the narrative: "It has implications for how the Pharisees are to be constructed as the reading progresses. In short, it reinforces the audience's natural proclivity to build a group character synecdochically. By introducing (at the beginning of their storyline) a representative group of Pharisees (from all over Palestine), and by presenting them as responding to Jesus *in concert*, the narrative encourages readers to continue to construe them consistently, homogeneously, collectively. And, reciprocally, what a particular Pharisee is, does, and knows will be attributed to the entire group. . . . Consistency-building is a natural aspect of the reading progress; here, at the

though their ignorance does not excuse them. Therefore, Luke portrays them, especially the Pharisees and the lawyers, as a group that embodies “the pervasive Lukan theme of ‘seeing but not seeing/hearing but not hearing’”<sup>492</sup> (cf. Luke 8:10 and Isa 6:9). J. Green’s following comment aptly reveals what is at stake with the leaders:

The religion of Israel—its institutions, practices, and so on—is to be embraced fully when understood *vis-à-vis* the redemptive purpose of God. But in order to be understood thus, Israel’s religion must cohere with the purpose of God as articulated by God’s own authorized interpretive and redemptive agent, God’s Son, Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>493</sup>

In other words, as long as they stand in opposition to Jesus, who reveals the Father (Luke 10:22) and opens people’s eyes and the Scriptures (24:31–32, 45), true understanding never comes. Luke narrates that Jesus’ prayer did not change them (23:35), and they continued to show the same traits in Acts by posing threats to the Jesus movement (4:1–2, 16–18; 5:17–18, 27–28, 40; 6:12–15; 24:1–9; 25:2–3). For our discussion, two points are critical. (i) They persistently oppose God’s agents including Jesus whose message brings the key to unlock the Scriptures. (ii) For this reason, as we noted before, Luke does not record in Acts any speech delivered to them offering forgiveness on the basis of human ignorance (cf. Acts 3:17; 13:27).

As we wrap up our discussion about the leaders, we need to point to one element that binds the Jewish populace and their leaders together: the Gentile inclusion. Their common failure of understanding God’s universal salvation plan through Jesus leads both groups to complain and

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introduction of the Pharisees, that tendency is encouraged by the narrator.” (Italics in original.)

<sup>492</sup> John Darr, *Character Building*, 87. Darr raises this point in view of the Pharisees saying, “Laden with irony, they continuously observe (*παρρηρέω*) Jesus and other agents of God and yet utterly fail to recognize the significance of either the persons and events they see or the message they hear” (86–87). However, his point is applicable to other groups of the Jewish leaders as evident in our survey. Luke’s second citation of Isa 6:9(–10) in Acts 28:26–27 supports my view.

<sup>493</sup> Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 75.

resent when the Gentiles appear as equal recipients of gospel (Luke 4:28–30; 15:1–2; 19:7; Acts 13:45; 22:21–22).

### **3.f.4. Ignorance-Knowledge among Jesus' Disciples**

Among the character groups in Luke-Acts, the narrator treats Jesus' disciples in a detailed manner. Jesus points out their blessed state of being given the secret of God's kingdom (8:10) and special revelation about the Father through Jesus (10:22). By contrast, however, they are not free from ignorance and incomprehension. Their ignorance of Jesus' identity as God's Messiah (Christ, 9:20) is overcome, chiefly, through watching Jesus' miracles (8:22–25, 51; 9:10–17; and listening to Jesus who corrects them when necessary (8:25; 9:46–48, 50, 55; 10:20–24; 18:15–17). We noted that they remain uncomprehending even after making the faith statement (9:20) in view of the necessity of Jesus' suffering and death (9:44–45; 18:31–34). Tannehill aptly summarizes our discussion:

Jesus' disciples are unable to understand that he must suffer, and this failure is connected with a series of other failings: they compete for status, they have premature expectations of eschatological fulfillment because they do not reckon with Jesus' rejection, and they are unable to face the threat of death. They begin to change only when they are enlightened by the risen Christ, who explains from Scripture how God works in a resistant world. The portrait of the apostles in Luke and Acts presents a sharp contrast, for a crucial change takes place through Easter and Pentecost.<sup>494</sup>

In closing, their greatest struggle with uncomprehending the divine necessity of Jesus' passion as a critical component of achieving God's salvation is overcome with the risen Christ himself explaining and opening their mind and the Scriptures (Luke 24). The outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2) further guarantees their blessed new sight enabling them to be the witnesses as well as proclaimers throughout Acts.

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<sup>494</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:9.

### **3.f.5. Ignorance-Knowledge among the Gentiles**

Though Luke references their inclusion in God's salvation plan early on (2:30; 3:6), he does not treat the Gentiles in his first volume as extensively as in Acts.<sup>495</sup> Among several impressive individual Gentiles in Luke-Acts,<sup>496</sup> we briefly treated those who show characteristics of ignorance-knowledge. They all rely on external help to understand the Scriptures. The Gentile people groups characteristically display their ignorance of the God of Israel, which is most evident in their idolatrous life (Acts 14, 17, 19). Unless their ignorance is dealt with by repentance and coming to the saving knowledge, their leaders are to share common traits with the Jewish leaders in opposing God's anointed Messiah and the messianic movement (Acts 4:24–27), and all Gentiles are liable for God's judgment through Jesus (Acts 17:30–31). In short, they all need the "light for revelation" (Luke 2:32), which shines now in God's salvation through Jesus.

### **3.f.6. Ignorance-Knowledge, Luke's Major Tool for Characterization**

According to J. Green, Luke's central concern is to highlight "the aim of God to bring salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; salvation in all of its fullness; salvation to all peoples."<sup>497</sup> By implication then, Luke is suggesting his reader to embrace God's saving work wholeheartedly, which means "the reorientation of life around" that purpose of God

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<sup>495</sup> We noted that the sinners and tax collectors as the outcasts of the Jewish society in Luke (7:37; 15:1; 19:2) are equivalent to the Gentiles.

<sup>496</sup> The three centurions (Luke 7, 24, and Acts 10) stand out as more positive examples. Others such as the Queen of the South (Luke 11), Pilate (23), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), and Felix (24) are prominent members in their society.

<sup>497</sup> Green, *Theology*, 152. The centrality of this theme was discussed at the beginning of this chapter as the unifying theme of Luke-Acts.

in Jesus Christ.<sup>498</sup> What is a critical element for this embracing without reservation is understanding/knowledge. In other words, a right response to God's work presupposes a proper recognition of it.<sup>499</sup>

Our current chapter of survey on Lukan theme of ignorance-knowledge in Luke-Acts identifies the critical interconnection between God's salvific plan for all peoples and peoples' state prior to coming to their saving faith. This chapter leads us to conclude that Luke uses this theme of ignorance as his main arsenal to present all people groups and individuals in need of salvation. Insofar as they live in darkness and blindness to God's universal salvific plan and fulfillment through his Son Jesus Christ, God's offer of forgiveness for their life in ignorance is proclaimed (Luke 23:34; Acts 3:17; 13:27; 14:16; 17:30), and Jesus and his apostles are sent to open and enlighten the darkened mind helping people to understand and embrace God's central aim for all men in his Son.

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<sup>498</sup> Green, *Theology*, 152.

<sup>499</sup> Darr, *Character Building*, 91, says, "Luke-Acts focuses its reader's attention on issues of recognition and response."



## CHAPTER THREE

### NARRATIVE-CRITICAL READING OF ACTS 17:16–34

#### I. The Text of Acts

##### 1.a. The Text of Acts in a Broad Discussion

A narrative reading of the Areopagus speech necessitates an introductory discussion of the textual-critical issues of Acts for three interrelated reasons. First, most obviously, the speech belongs to the Book of Acts. The task of reconstructing the text of Acts has been one of the most debated topics among scholars of the NT in the last 160 years;<sup>1</sup> much of the debate centers around the question of the “Western” text.<sup>2</sup> C.K. Barrett says, “It is clear that if the Western text did not exist there would be no serious problem in reconstructing the text of Acts.”<sup>3</sup> Second, it is suggested that D (Codex Bezae), the central witness to the Western text type, presents a broadly different view on the topic of ignorance appearing in Luke-Acts.<sup>4</sup> Third, scholars argue that D’s anti-Judaic tendency in Acts can be detected in its variants in the Acts 17 text. D adds, for example, this” (ταυτης) to Acts 17:30 (“ἀγνοίας”), which can be read as a deliberate attempt to distinguish the *general* Gentile ignorance from the *historical* ignorance of certain Jews in

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Witherington, *Acts*, 65. Contra, Peter Head suggests that the problem has existed ever since 1685 when Jean Leclerc suggested that Luke may have produced two editions of Acts. Cf. Peter Head, “Acts and the Problem of Its Texts,” in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting* (eds. Bruce Winter and A. Clarke; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 416.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer attributes this issue to a complicated history of its transmitted Greek text (Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 66). Also see C. K. Barrett, *Acts*, 1:2, for a similar view.

<sup>3</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 1:22.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Eldon Epp, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* (SNTS 3; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), for extensive treatment of this topic.

denying and killing Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 3:17 and 13:27). The goal of this preliminary discussion about the text of Acts is, therefore, to locate the text of the Areopagus speech (Acts 17:16–34) within a broader textual context and discussion initiated by different textual traditions.

As already hinted above, the debate among most scholars took place as an attempt to decide the original text (“what Luke actually wrote”) not among one or another manuscript but between the textual types. Witherington lists the following three major types: “(1) the Alexandrian text represented chiefly by codex  $\aleph$  and B; (2) the Byzantine text represented by the uncials H, L, P, and S; (3) and the so-called Western text chiefly witnessed by Codex Bezae, called D, and the Harclean Syriac.”<sup>5</sup>

The major debate to determine the original text of Acts has been largely focused on two text types: the Western type and the Alexandrian type. That Metzger’s *Textual Commentary* on the UBS<sup>3</sup> edition allows almost one-third of its pages to discuss the Western type of Acts<sup>6</sup> speaks to the complexities the Western text raises for the textual study of Acts.<sup>7</sup> According to the historical survey by P. Head, among various scholars who argued for the priority of the Western text there are largely three positions: “i) the position of Blass that Luke was responsible for both versions of the text of Acts; ii) the view that the Alexandrian text is the result of a later redactor

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<sup>5</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 65. See Barrett, *Acts*, 1:4–7, for a brief description of various codices.

<sup>6</sup> Head, “Problem,” 416. (Cf. B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [London: UBS, 1975]. See, in particular, 259–272, for Metzger’s helpful introductory discussion about the nature of the text-critical issues concerning Acts.)

<sup>7</sup> Barrett’s following words capture the complex nature of the debate due to the Western text: “The Western text, with its many substantial variants, makes [reconstructing] impossible, so that the primary question with which the textual critic, especially in Acts, is faced is, What is the Western text and where did it arise? This question may not have a simple answer, for behind it lies another. Is the Western text the product of a definite recension or redaction of the text, so that, notwithstanding the diversity of the witnesses, it may be attached to a specific time and place, or is it a tendency, shared by many, to expand, to paraphrase, to modify—chiefly by brightening descriptions and heightening interest?” (Barrett, *Acts*, 1:22).

having abbreviated Luke's original ('Western') text; and iii) the position of Strange which incorporates elements of all the other views."<sup>8</sup>

Though not first in time, F. Blass proposed a theory that Luke produced two versions of Acts.<sup>9</sup> The first one, originating in the West, was a sketch written in Rome in an unpolished style with unnecessary details and ill-formed sentences, and this came to be known as the Western text. The second, improved, edition was written after the author Luke had moved east (Antioch, east of Rome) and with accurate notion of some matters and in better style and "the Oriental" or "Old Uncial" was born.<sup>10</sup> Blass's theory did not win any notable adherents up until the 1980s.<sup>11</sup>

Along with others,<sup>12</sup> J. H. Ropes<sup>13</sup> challenges Blass' view, arguing that Blass' two version theory forces the reader to accept the position that the writer reduced "to a lower degree the serious and religious tone which at first he had adopted" (ccxxix) and came to hold a different view of what had happened.<sup>14</sup> Not denying the possibility that the Western text presents a reading superior to that of the Alexandrian text, Ropes concludes:

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<sup>8</sup> P. Head, "Problem," 417.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Friedrich Blass, *Acta apostolorum, sive Lucae ad Theophilum liber alter editio philologica* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895) and its more abbreviated edition, *Acta apostolorum . . . secundum formam quae videtur Romanam* (Leipzig, 1896).

<sup>10</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 1:22–23.

<sup>11</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 1:23. Contra, see Witherington, *Acts*, 67, n. 231, for his strong opposition to the theory that Luke produced two text types.

<sup>12</sup> In his review of Blass' commentaries on Acts, for instance, T. E. Page singles out numerous places where the Western text highlighted or exaggerated emphases of the passage. He also lists the introduction of religious formulae and pious tendency, and the reviser's preference for the usage of fuller and more elaborate theological titles for the names of Jesus. In conclusion, "[The Western text readings] add practically nothing to our real knowledge of the Acts, while they frequently mar and spoil what they seek to improve" (cf. T. E. Page, Review of F. Blass' Commentaries, *Acta Apostolorum* (1895, 1896), *Classical Review* 11 [1897]: 317–20; citation from 320). For a fuller introduction to this review, see, Metzger's *Textual Commentary*, 262–64 and n. 12 in particular.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. James H. Ropes, *The Text of Acts* (vol. 3 of *The Beginnings of Christianity*; Part I, *The Acts of the Apostles* [eds. F.J. Foakes Jackson, and Kirsopp Lake; London: Macmillan, 1926]).

<sup>14</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 1:23.

The “Western” text was made before, and perhaps long before, the year 150, by a Greek-speaking Christian who knew something of Hebrew, in the East, perhaps in Syria or Palestine. . . . The reviser’s aim was to improve the text, not to restore it, and he lived not far from the time when the New Testament canon in its nucleus was first definitely assembled. It is tempting to suggest . . . that the ‘Western’ text was the original ‘canonical’ text (if the anachronism can be pardoned), which was later supplanted by a ‘pre-canonical’ text of superior age and merit.<sup>15</sup>

What is noteworthy is Ropes’ stress on how the “Western” text reviser’s “literary improvement and elaboration in accordance with his own taste” impacted on the general nature of the text:

Especially congenial to his style were heightened emphasis and more abundant use of religious commonplaces. This effort after smoothness, fullness, and emphasis in his expansion has usually resulted in a weaker style, sometimes showing a sort of naïve superabundance in expressly stating what every reader could have understood without the reviser’s diluting supplement.<sup>16</sup>

Even though Blass’ old two-version theory was resuscitated and elaborated in the work of two French scholars, M.E. Boismard and A. Lamouille,<sup>17</sup> a different trend in textual study facing the impasse of the previous efforts to settle the matter emerged in K. Lake and H. J. Cadbury’s commentary volumes (4 and 5) of *Beginnings* when the authors took up the “the method of eclectic criticism.”<sup>18</sup> According to eclectic criticism or rational criticism,<sup>19</sup> no variant should be

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<sup>15</sup> Ropes, *Beginnings* 3: ccxliiv–ccxlv, cited in Barrett, *Acts*, 1:23. Barrett later introduces a paper by Barbara Aland who agreed with Ropes that the Western text was the product of a *Hauptredaktion* by a *Hauptredaktor* and the redactic work probably took place in Syria. But she differs on its date. Contra Ropes’ dating to 150 or before, “she thinks that it cannot be earlier than the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. A terminus ante quem is given by the two papyri P<sup>38</sup> and P<sup>48</sup> (whose text she investigates in detail), which belong to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> centuries” (Barrett, *Acts*, 1: 26).

<sup>16</sup> Ropes, *Beginnings* 3: ccxxxi.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. M.E. Boismard and A. Lamouille, *Le Texte Occidental des Actes des Apôtres* (2 vols.; Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1984). They believed in the possibility of constructing the original Western text, and that this text can be proved as the work of Luke who also wrote the Alexandrian text.

<sup>18</sup> According to Metzger, the name ‘eclecticism’ was given “because in its application the textual critic pays less attention to questions of date and families of manuscripts than to internal or contextual considerations. Consequently the editor of a text follows now one and now another set of witnesses in accord with what is deemed to be the author’s style or the exigencies of transcriptional hazards” (Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament, Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* [3rd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992], 175).

<sup>19</sup> Another descriptive name for eclectic criticism was used by M. J. Lagrange, in his monumental volume, *Critique textuelle; ii, La Critique rationnelle* (Paris, 1935). In this approach, “the critic is concerned primarily with finding plausible reasons based on internal considerations to justify in each case his choice of one reading as original

rejected or adopted by virtue of its association with a particular MS or family of MSS and local texts. Every variant should be considered on its own merits.<sup>20</sup> According to Metzger, there is much to commend the practice of a judicious eclecticism as there is no one MS or one family of MSS preserves the original text in its entirety, and yet it has its inherent weaknesses in terms of relying on statistics regarding an author's usage. Therefore, both the literary usage of an author and external evidence should be carefully weighed and considered together.<sup>21</sup>

In view of all these on-going discussions based on some convincing evidences and other considerations such as the more acute nature of the “universal Western problem” in Acts, Barrett suggests the following conclusion:

Can it be simply that the Western text is not a redaction but a tendency to paraphrase and to enhance, and that in Acts copyists felt a greater freedom especially in the narrative portions (where the variants are more frequent and divergent) than they did in regard to the life and teaching of Jesus and the letters of the apostles?<sup>22</sup>

Barrett's suggestion to view the Western text as a tendency rather than an independent redactic work points to few scholars whose focused study on the tendency of the most important witness to the Western text (D) help us consider another way forward for my topic.

### **1.b. The Text of Acts in Codex Bezae (D)**

Eldon Epp's work in *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts*<sup>23</sup> is a welcome study not only for D's representative nature of the Western text,<sup>24</sup> but also for its

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and the others as secondary” (Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 176).

<sup>20</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 1:24.

<sup>21</sup> Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 178–79.

<sup>22</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 1:28.

<sup>23</sup> Originally a Ph. D. dissertation presented to Harvard University in 1961, the work reappears in a thoroughly revised and considerably altered and augmented form (Eldon Epp, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts*, [SNTS 3; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966]).

<sup>24</sup> Of D, Barrett says, “D is not the only but is the most important representative of the so-called Western

relevance for the current project. Epp's work is built somewhat on Menoud's work<sup>25</sup> and he, as his point of departure, cites Ropes' the following representative statement about dogmatic tendency in the "Western" text: "Of any special point of view, theological or other, on the part of the 'Western' reviser it is difficult to find any trace."<sup>26</sup> Epp aims to fill the scholarly void in regard to the study of the possible theological motivation(s) of D<sup>27</sup> with an investigation under three headings: "the D-text's portrayal of the Jews' attitude toward and treatment of Jesus"; "the relation of the Jews, the Gentiles, and Christianity in D"; and "the interplay between the Jews and the apostles in the D-text."<sup>28</sup> For keeping the focus on the ignorance theme of this project, his treatment of the first heading is to be closely examined and the third only briefly.

Epp compares the B-text and D-text on three passages: Acts 3:17; 13:27; and 17:30. (i) With D-text's reading of *πονηρόν* to the verb (*ἐπράξατε*) in 3:17 and of *μὲν* to correspond with *ὁ δὲ θεός . . .* in v. 18, 3:17–18 can be translated: "And now, men [and] brethren, we know that you according to ignorance on one hand did a wicked thing, as did your leaders. But on the other hand God has . . ."<sup>29</sup> (ii) On Acts 13:27, Epp says that for the B-text ignorance clearly provides a

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text" (Barrett, *Acts*, 1:6).

<sup>25</sup> P. H. Menoud, "The Western Text and the Theology of Acts," *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas Bulletin* 2 (1951): 19–32. Reprinted in *Bulletin of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* nos. 1–3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963). Epp recognizes his indebtedness to Menoud's work, which makes "a forward step" in the direction of studying the Western text for the purpose of tracing its theological tendencies (Epp, *Tendency*, 22).

<sup>26</sup> Epp, *Tendency*, 4 and 166; See Ropes, *Begs*. 3:ccxxxiii, and also H. Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Tübingen, 1963), 2.

<sup>27</sup> Epp, *Tendency*, 21–22. Epp notes that P. H. Menoud in his "The Western Text" addresses to the theological concern in the Western Text. According to Epp, Menoud identifies as chief intention of the Western text "to emphasize the newness of the Christian faith as regards Judaism." Menoud emphasizes two elements: condemning the unbelief of the Jews and insisting on the greatness of the church and the apostles over against them. Epp's complaint and rationale to take up his project is that Menoud devotes too much space to the 'apostolic decree' in Acts 15 leaving little space for the rest of Acts. Epp's project is built on "Menoud's limited but suggestive treatment" taking his anti-Judaism as its focal point (Epp, *Tendency*, 22–23).

<sup>28</sup> Epp, *Tendency*, 41.

<sup>29</sup> There are additional minor changes in the D-text, which are reflected in my translation. Epp says, "The *μὲν*, however, places the act of the Jews over against the action of God in the *δέ*-clause of the next verse (3:18)." Epp also directs our attention to D's Luke 23:41 (" . . . οὗτος [i.e., Jesus] *δέ*. *πονηρόν ἐπραξεν*") whose usage of *πονηρόν*

basis for an excuse in light of its parallelism with 3:17, while as the D-text's "μὴ συνιέντες τὰς γραφάς . . . for B's τοῦτον [i.e., Jesus] ἀγνοήσαντες καὶ τὰς φωνὰς . . . ἐπλήρωσαν" refuses to let the Jews off by taking away "a relative pardon from guilt because of a disregard for or non-recognition of Jesus as Χριστός." Thus according to D-text 13:27 reads: "Because the people who live in Jerusalem and their leaders did not understand the Scriptures of the prophets that are read every Sabbath, they fulfilled by condemning [him]." D-text's reading stresses that the Jews lacked in understanding their own Scriptures, which is "an excuse hardly complimentary or acceptable to the Jews."<sup>30</sup> (iii) Even though D's παριδὼν and B's ὑπεριδὼν in Acts 17:30 can be argued to have the same meaning,<sup>31</sup> D's inclusion of ταύτης makes D intentionally anti-Judaic as the inclusion meant the Athenian times of ignorance in worshipping idols. Therefore, D's motivation to add "this" is to separate "that" ignorance of the Jews in killing Jesus as referenced in Acts 3:17. It is implied that "God overlooks *this* ignorance of the Athenians, but not *that* ignorance of the Jews."<sup>32</sup>

The anti-Judaic tendency of D evidenced by these three passages is further supported by its omission of Jesus' prayer on the cross (Luke 23:34).<sup>33</sup> Finally, the last point Epp notes is D's favorite use of "the Lord Jesus Christ" for "the Lord," "Jesus," and "Jesus Christ." In view of the Jewish position that Jesus was neither Christ nor Lord, D's heavy emphasis on Christology is seen as intentionally anti-Judaic.<sup>34</sup>

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for other texts' ἄτοπον is intentional. In brief, Epp argues that the small textual variants in the D-text "combine to reveal the calculated anti-Judaic sentiment" (Epp, *Tendency*, 43–44).

<sup>30</sup> Epp, *Tendency*, 48.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech*, 230.

<sup>32</sup> Epp, *Tendency*, 48–49; emphasis in original.

<sup>33</sup> Epp, *Tendency*, 45. Epp aptly says this omission is "revealing."

<sup>34</sup> Epp, *Tendency*, 64. Epp offers the following conclusion: "The portrayal of Jewish hostility toward Jesus and of Jewish responsibility for his death in the D-text reveals a clearly anti-Judaic attitude. On the other hand, the strong positive emphasis on Jesus as Lord and Christ turns the sword in the wound (so to speak), for by presenting

Epp shows that D's trend continues in passages dealing with the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Elements that separate the two are emphasized in D and the latter is significantly elevated above the former for having the new faith.<sup>35</sup> Under the heading of "The Jews and the Apostles," Epp notes the D-text's emphasis on an increased hostility of the Jews and, in particular, that of their leaders toward the apostles. He also draws attention to D's enhancing the apostles as leaders of the church in contrast with the opposing Jews.<sup>36</sup>

Epp acknowledges that his work does not help to address "the traditional text-critical questions regarding the 'Western' text," that is, the questions of origin or originality of the Western text.<sup>37</sup> But he claims that his investigation with a more moderate goal of simply understanding the D-text of Acts on its own terms clearly shows D's theological tendency.<sup>38</sup> "In short, the Jews come out rather poorly in the D-text."<sup>39</sup> Epp is aware of earlier works done by scholars pointing to a similar direction.<sup>40</sup>

Of the significant contribution made by his investigation, he says: "What is striking, however, is the discovery that this anti-Judaic bias is as wide-spread and as evident on so large a scale as the foregoing pages have demonstrated, and that such a large number of D-variants can be seen as directly or indirectly supporting this trend in the D-text."<sup>41</sup>

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Jesus in bold and heightened tones the heinousness of the Jews' action against him is even more strongly emphasized" (ibid., 64).

<sup>35</sup> Epp, *Tendency*, 119.

<sup>36</sup> Epp, *Tendency*, 164.

<sup>37</sup> Epp, *Tendency*, 171.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Epp, *Tendency*, 165.

<sup>39</sup> Epp, *Tendency*, 166.

<sup>40</sup> Epp briefly introduces the following: Peter Corssen, *GGA*, CLVIII (1896), 444; Ropes, *Beginnings* (1926); Klijn, *A Survey of the Researches into the Western Text of the Gospels and Acts* (Utrecht, [1949]); and others (Epp, *Tendency*, 166–67).

<sup>41</sup> Epp, *Tendency*, 166. In saying these concluding words, Epp considers that Ropes and others failed to recognize the prevalent nature of the anti-Judaic tendency in the D-text.



Epp's interest of arguing that the D-text presents a strong and consistent theological tendency with an anti-Judaic bias was challenged in a comparative approach by Josep Rius-Camps and Jenny Read-Heimerdinger.<sup>42</sup> For the sake of keeping our scope, it would seem appropriate to briefly discuss their reading of D in the framework of our topic of ignorance-knowledge theme by asking questions like: Does D change the theme? If it does, to what extent? Does it have any bearing upon current project's understanding and presentation of this theme? A few examples are to be investigated.

As noted above, Epp argues that D inserts *πονηρόν* after the verb (“ἐπράξατε”) in 3:17, and thus increases the guilt of the Jewish leaders. This is further strengthened by D's further usage of *πονηρόν* in passages like Acts 5:4 (by Peter of Ananias); 3:26 (“...turning from your iniquities . . .”); and Luke 5:22 (by Jesus of the leaders). In view of Luke's prevalent usage of the LXX in OT citing, it is noteworthy with Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger that the *πονηρόν* used throughout the LXX denotes “wickedness as an absolute concept and also as transgression against the law or the will of the judgment of God.”<sup>43</sup> A question is whether addition of *πονηρόν* to 3:17 changes the general meaning of the passage. We may suggest a continuous “No” when seen in its context. As said by Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, “under Jewish law, the deeds summarized by Peter (3:13–15) would incur the death penalty.”<sup>44</sup> If

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<sup>42</sup> The collaborative work between the two scholars produced four volumes under *The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2004). Speaking of the individual studies focusing on the language of the “Western” text (e.g., style, Semitisms, Lukanisms) by Strange (*The Problem*) and Wilcox (*The Semitisms of Acts*) and on the contents (e.g., theological tendencies) by Epp (*The Theological Tendency*), Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger propose the following critique: “Although their results have naturally been debated, it is significant that they have repeatedly tended to provide evidence for the conclusion that the ‘Western’ text is consistent with both Lukan language and thought such as can be established from the firm text of his writings. For all the interest of these works, the conclusions fail in the end to lead to definite solutions that provide an overall explanation for the variants in both textual traditions” (Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *Message of Acts*, 1:8–9).

<sup>43</sup> Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *Message of Acts*, 1:232.

<sup>44</sup> Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *Message of Acts*, 1:232. Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger

what is said in vv. 13–15 already conveys that strong negative message in clarity, inserting *πονηρόν* can perhaps intensify the meaning but does not change it.<sup>45</sup> A unique insight for both reading Acts 3:17 and understanding the ignorance theme is offered in their following words, “If [evil deeds] were committed in ignorance that is not an excuse for sin but rather it is the cause of it (cf. Lev. 5:17). The sin becomes something more awful when committed in ignorance (‘we have done wrong and did not realize it’), not something lesser.”<sup>46</sup>

Contra Epp, however, Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger argue their reading Acts 3:17 with a more intensified sense of guilt does not make the Bezan text more anti-Judaic. Commenting on Epp’s conclusion about D’s “calculated anti-Judaic sentiment” (cf. Epp, *Tendency*, 42–44), Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger offer a different take: “The contention here is that, on the contrary, Peter in the Bezan text shows a clearer awareness of the situation of the Jews according to a Jewish perspective. His appreciation of the awfulness of their wrongdoing is expressed not from an accusatory standpoint but one of *compassion*.”<sup>47</sup> As a basis for Peter’s compassion, they rightly point to the apostles’ ignorance expressed in their persistent

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conclude: “[Peter] is not seeking to tone down in any way the dreadfulness of the killing of the Messiah by introducing the notion of ignorance. He is identifying with his audience in sharing their awareness that death must be the consequence for them and that is why he offers them a way to be saved from that punishment” (*Message of Acts*, 1:233). However, Peter’s urgent call to repent from the heinous crime in 3:19 is well prepared without D-text’s *πονηρόν*.

<sup>45</sup> Read-Heimerdinger in a monograph comments on D’s change saying it intensifies the Jewish guilt. For her, D’s stress also lies on the emphatic pronoun *ὐμεῖς* followed by *μὲν*. Cf. Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, *The Bezan Text of Acts: A Contribution of Discourse Analysis to Textual Criticism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 235–36 and also her “Unintentional Sins in Peter’s Speech: Acts 3:12–26,” *RCatT* 20 (1995): 269–276.

<sup>46</sup> Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *Message of Acts*, 1:232.

<sup>47</sup> Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *Message of Acts*, 1:233, n. 19; italics added. It is noteworthy that Epp and Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger take 3:19 as important for understanding 3:17. Contra Epp and Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, Epp leans toward Conzelmann’s missionary motif saying, “. . . Luke uses the theme of the guilt of the Jews in polemic against Judaism, while that of ignorance as a ground for excuse arises out of missionary needs (Epp, *Tendency*, 42, in reference to Conzelmann, *Theology of St. Luke*, 92, 162, n. 162).

resistance of the idea that Jesus had to suffer (Luke 9:22, 44–45; 17:25; 18:31–34; 22:15; and 24:32 D).<sup>48</sup> Their emphasis on Peter’s compassion undermines Epp’s position.

It also may be significant to note that Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger and others<sup>49</sup> feel no need to comment on D’s adding ταύτης in 17:30. This alone suggests that Epp’s position that this inclusion is to separate Gentiles’ “this” non-culpable ignorance from Jews’ “that” punishable ignorance referenced in 3:17 is unlikely.<sup>50</sup> Without consensus among scholars on D’s 17:30, Epp’s reading seems to reveal more of his own creativity than the theological motivation of D.

With regard to the omission of Jesus’ prayer on the cross (Luke 23:34), one should note that other early and important MSS from diverse geographical areas<sup>51</sup> also omit the saying. Fitzmyer suggests that the omission improves the flow of the narrative.<sup>52</sup> One might also note that if D’s omission of prayer was an expression of its anti-Judaic motivation, which is suggested by several scholars,<sup>53</sup> one wonders why the editor of D did not omit other references to the

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<sup>48</sup> Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *Message of Acts*, 1:233.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, D. C. Parker, *Codex Bezae: An Early Christian Manuscript and Its Text* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 154. For a different view on D’s use of demonstrative following the noun, see Read-Heimerdinger, *The Bezan Text*, 106–8.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *Message of Acts*, 3:351. Again, Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger remain silent about what Epp identifies as a change for anti-Judaic meaning in 13:27 (cf. vol. 3:74–75).

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, P<sup>75</sup>, א<sup>1</sup>, B, W and Θ<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> Fitzmyer notes that Stephen’s prayer is another example of interrupting the narrative flow (ibid). Contra, L.T. Johnson says, “If the issue of its inclusion were to be decided on thematic grounds, however, there is every reason to consider it authentic: a) it confirms the image of Jesus as *sophos* who demonstrates virtue until the very end of his life; b) it matches Luke’s version of the Lord’s Prayer (11:4); c) it fits within Luke’s narrative schema: in the time of the prophet’s first sending the people reject him because of their ‘ignorance’ (Acts 3:17; 7:25; 13:27); d) it establishes in Jesus’ own practice the legitimization for the proclamation of ‘repentance for the forgiveness of sins’ which describes the apostolic mission (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:28; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18)” (L.T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 376).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Epp, *Tendency*, 41; P. H. Menoud, “Western Text,” 24; Witherington, *Acts*, 183, n. 75; and Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 313–14. Of D’s change in inserting πονηρόν and μὲν in Acts 3:17–18, Metzger says: “[D] adds πονηρόν . . . in order to express the idea that, though the Jews’ part in bringing about Jesus’ death was done in ignorance, it was nevertheless a crime. By inserting μὲν in v. 17 a sharper contrast is afforded between the act of the Jews over against the purpose of God, expressed in v. 18. The heightened emphasis in the D-text is apparent: ‘We know that you, on the one hand, did a wicked thing in ignorance . . . but, on the other hand, God . . . fulfilled [his purpose]’” (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 313–14).

Jewish ignorance (e.g., Acts 3:17 and 13:27) altogether. Our treatment of Luke 23:34 in our chapter 2 led us to argue that, since external evidences for the text's shorter and longer readings are equally weighty, what should be critically considered is the internal evidences. Our following analysis of internal evidences came out to support the longer text, and, therefore, we concluded that Jesus' prayer is likely to be original.

#### Further Evidences Undermining D's "Consistent Anti-Judaism"

There are several D passages that seem to disprove the claim that D displays a consistent anti-Judaic tendency. First, one of Luke's early and strong comments against the Jewish leaders is in Luke 7:30 (their refusal of John's Baptism is equated with rejecting God's will for themselves). In both  $\kappa$  and D, εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ("thwarted the will of God for themselves"), which intensifies their responsibility and makes the text more anti-Judaic, is wanting.<sup>54</sup> Second, the strong parallel of Jesus' prayer on the cross (Luke 23:34) is Stephen's prayer in Acts 7:60 (κύριε, μὴ στήσης αὐτοῖς ταύτην τὴν ἁμαρτίαν). If D's omission of Jesus' prayer was based on its anti-Judaic position, Stephen's prayer could have been another one to omit. But no MSS including D excludes this portion.<sup>55</sup> A third example can be found in Acts 13:45 where we find some jealous Jews opposing Paul in Pisidian Antioch despite Paul's pleading and warning in vv. 40–41. The Western text contains several variants. Of them Barrett says they are "worth noting, because they show the Western editors simply engaged in a measure of free rewriting, with no special

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<sup>54</sup> Fitzmyer suggests the prepositional phrase εἰς ἑαυτοὺς can either modify the verb "thwarted (ἠθέτησαν)" or be taken with "God's design." In either case, the force of its meaning is against the Pharisees and lawyers (Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 676).

<sup>55</sup> J. Read-Heimerdinger raises the point that the pre-noun position of the demonstrative pronoun makes the prayer refer to "this sin of killing him rather than any other." What is then Stephen excluding from his request? She says, "The answers to such theological difficulties are best found within a Jewish framework; the difficulties could be avoided by placing the demonstrative in simple deictic position after the noun, as in the Sinaiticus text" (Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, *The Bezan Text*, 106).

historical or theological case to support.”<sup>56</sup> A fourth example of a passage in D failing to show any anti-Judaic tendency would be Acts 4:25–28, which explains the current situation that the Jerusalem Christians faced. Whereas the religious leaders of Jerusalem alone arose in opposition to the young church, the prayer includes the Gentiles as well. Therefore, it is important to note that D offers no variants either to emphasize the Jewish guilt or to lessen the Gentile involvement in persecuting Jesus and his followers.

### **1.c. Conclusion**

On the basis of our brief discussion, it would be neither appropriate nor desirable at this point to even attempt to draw any general conclusion about Codex Bezae or the other two major types. From what is discussed to this point emerge a few points, however. First, the Western text, which is best represented by D, presents “the wealth of material waiting to be studied. The character of its text, the fact that it is bilingual, and the extent of its later use, all combine to make it an excellent subject for the explorations that follow.”<sup>57</sup> Second, insofar as the current project’s ignorance theme is concerned, the Western text does not introduce any substantial change. On the one hand, when D adds words as seen in Acts 3:17 and 17:30, it either intensifies or clarifies the meaning, but does not drastically change it. On the other hand, Codex Bezae at times speaks through its inaction. Contra Tendency Criticism’s interest raised by Menoud, Fascher, and Epp,<sup>58</sup> the D-text, by not omitting word(s) that can draw a darker portrait of the Jews seen in 7:60, or not adding to lighten the Gentile portrait in relation to the Christian

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<sup>56</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 1:655–56. For a contrasting reading, see Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *Message of Acts*, 3:116–18. They argue the additions of the Western text make the meaning clear but no mention is made in terms of any consistent tendency.

<sup>57</sup> David C. Parker, *Codex Bezae*, 3.

<sup>58</sup> See Strange, *The Problem*, 17–21, for a brief presentation. Contra, see Witherington, “The Anti-Feminist Tendencies of the Western Text in Acts,” *JBL* 103 (1984): 567–82.

movement seen in 4:25–28, makes it difficult to claim any persistent tendency toward ignorance or anti-Judaic themes.<sup>59</sup> Third, despite the many complexities the Western text raises for students of textual criticism, it has its own value in offering some factually, accurate readings close to the original<sup>60</sup> and much material to consider as suggested by Parker and Metzger.<sup>61</sup>

Those points, in turn, leave with us two things we are to remember for our other steps of analysis: translating, constructing a structure, identifying the narrative elements in larger and immediate textual contexts, and commenting on Acts 17:16–34. First, knowing that no autograph of Acts survives, a textual analysis on Acts 17:16–34 is to be done with (i) attentiveness to variant readings and the link between textual and exegetical issues<sup>62</sup> as well as (ii) the awareness of the textual and historical complexities the discipline of textual criticism faces.<sup>63</sup> Second, a

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<sup>59</sup> Ropes, whose work predates Epp, observed, “Of any special point of view, theological or other, on the part of the ‘Western’ reviser, it is difficult to find any trace” (Ropes, *Begs*. 3:ccxxxiii). At the end of his discussion to identify “Lucanism” in the Western text of Acts, Strange likewise concludes: “Our investigation of the language of the Western text has suggested that, while there are words and phrases found in the Western text of Acts and not in Luke’s undisputed writings, the incidence of these is not so high as to preclude common authorship [by Luke]” (Strange, *The Problem*, 105).

<sup>60</sup> Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 272. Witherington argues that, due to the historical fact that the book of Acts began to receive attention fairly late (A.D. 400), two different versions (the Western and the Alexandrian) “arose quietly and were never carefully compared to or corrected by the other before the time of the Byzantine text” (Witherington, *Acts*, 68).

<sup>61</sup> In comparison with the Westcott and Hort edited Alexandrian Acts text with 18,401 words, the A.C. Clark edited Western text is longer with 19,983 words, which is 8.5% longer. That is why, explains Metzger, the Western text is more colorful, picturesque, and circumstantial (Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 260 and 260, n. 3).

<sup>62</sup> After a brief survey of the studies of Acts, Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger offer the following observation as a way to introduce their new approach: “It is a curious thing that in all of this immensely detailed scholarship, the text of Acts is almost universally treated either as settled, or as sufficiently settled not to interfere with an examination of its contents. Even in the latest spate of commentaries on Acts that have appeared in English since 1992, only passing acknowledgment of the existence of variant readings is made in most instances and little new insight into the exegetical significance of alternative readings is provided. . . . [However,] when the problems concerning the text of Acts are tackled head on, they open up paths to be explored by exegetes, historians, theologians, sociologists, linguists *et al.* and every interested reader should be given access to the riches to which they lead” (Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *Message*, 1:12).

Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger find C.K. Barrett’s commentary on Acts as an exception with its “an introduction to the textual witnesses and the main textual theories” (cf. Barrett, *Acts*, 1:2–29).

<sup>63</sup> Ehrman offers the following helpful description of textual criticism: “[It] works to establish the wording of the text as originally produced and to determine where, when, how, and why the text came to be changed over the course of its transmission” (Bart Ehrman, *Studies in the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, NTTS 33 [Boston:

narrative-critical reading, which moves beyond the text-critical issues, can make significant contribution.

## II. Textual Analysis

Translating a text presupposes establishing the textual unit. Unlike modern prose writing practice using typographic devices to establish textual boundaries and units, Luke's narrating Acts as one continuous story about the first century church and its mission makes it often difficult to establish clear-cut narrative boundaries. Therefore, the reader's decision about where the narrative unit begins and ends is "a first interpretive act which, by making out a unit that makes sense, opens the reading and programmes its regulation." Important criteria for delimiting a micro-narrative unit are "the dramatic criteria: change of place, change of time, change of characters, and change of action or plot."<sup>64</sup>

Since the transition from one narrative unit to another occurs through one or more of these changes,<sup>65</sup> it is not difficult to see where the Athenian episode begins and ends. With only one exception, all the consulted works on the Areopagus speech begin with 17:16 and end with 17:34.<sup>66</sup> Considering Paul's speech at Athens as part of Luke's continued story or narrative about Paul's missionary journey, 17:15 as well as 18:1 could be included in our unit as both verses mention Athens and make transition into and out of the Athens episode.<sup>67</sup> However, since

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Brill, 2006], 1). Ehrman later adds that the difficulty of doing textual criticism at deeper level lies in part that "none of our primary witnesses, the Greek manuscripts, is in complete agreement with another" (3).

<sup>64</sup> Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism* (tr. J. Bowden; London: SCM, 1999), 30.

<sup>65</sup> VanThanh Nguyen, S.V.D., *Peter and Cornelius, A Story of Conversion and Mission* (American Society Missiology Monograph Series vol 15; Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2012), 2; cf. J.L. Ska, "Our Fathers Have Told us," in *Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (Subsidia Biblica 13; Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1990), 1, for original discussion.

<sup>66</sup> Cornu and Shulam, *Jewish Roots*, 2:950, begin with v. 15.

<sup>67</sup> The following examples show that Luke employs various words to make narrative transitions, i.e., the change of place: 16:40 (ἐξέρχομαι); 17:15 (ἐξείμι); 18:1 (ἐρχομαι), 18 (ἀποτάσσω); 20:1 (ἐξέρχομαι).

narrative criticism takes the narrative context into consideration and those two verses better belong to the foregoing and subsequent units, we limit our text to 17:16–34 based on narrative indicators: the change of place (Athens, the market place, and the Areopagus), and the change of characters (Paul without Silas and Timothy, and the Athenians).

## 2.a. A Translation

v. 16: While Paul was waiting for them<sup>68</sup> in Athens, his spirit was continually provoked<sup>69</sup> within him as he saw that<sup>70</sup> the city was full of idols.<sup>71</sup>

v. 17: So<sup>72</sup> he began debating<sup>73</sup> in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.<sup>74</sup>

v. 18: And also certain of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began arguing<sup>75</sup> with him, and some (of them)<sup>76</sup> were saying,<sup>77</sup> “What would this babblers say?”<sup>78</sup> yet others<sup>79</sup> (saying), “A proclaimer of strange deities, he seems to be” (because Jesus and the resurrection, he was preaching about).<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> The fact that Silas and Timothy never came to meet Paul in Athens but in Corinth (cf. Acts 18:1, 5) may account for the variant readings (‘αὐτοῦς τοῦ Παύλου’ is replaced with *autou* in  $\aleph^*$  and *autou/ τοῦ Παύλου* in  $D^*$ ).

<sup>69</sup> *παρωξύνετο*: Some commentators suggest this verb may not denote more than strong feeling (cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 376), and others point to Paul’s Jewish sensitivities due to his up-bringing (cf. Cornu with Shulam, *Jewish Roots*, 2:952). See Acts 15:39 for its cognate.

<sup>70</sup> οὖσαν (participle in the accusative case) used with accusative noun probably indicates indirect discourse (cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 645–46).

<sup>71</sup> *κατειδωλον*: Almost all major translations render it ‘full of idols’ (ESV, NAB, NAS, NET, NIV. Cf. “given to idolatry” [KJV] or “so gar abgöttisch” [Luther], or “full of cult-images/idols” [BAGD, 530]). Bruce, *Acts* (1990), 376, points out that, even though this word does not appear in Greek literature, its formation is regular (cf. *κατάδενδρος* [“full of trees”], *κατάμπελος* [“thick with vines”]). Also BDF, §120, (2), lists *κάθαιμος* (“with blood all over”) and *κατάχρυσος* (“overlaid with gold”). Therefore, what this word conveys in the mind of the implied hearer is clear: Athens was covered with cult-images/idols.

<sup>72</sup> Some identify the antithesis to *μὲν οὖν* in v. 19 (D and Westcott-Hort), which makes v. 18’s *τινὲς δέ*. . . *συνέβαλλον αὐτῷ*/| somewhat parenthetical. Contra, Johnson, *Acts*, 312, argues: “Although the connective *μὲν οὖν* is very frequent in Acts as a simply narrative transition that does not really require translation (Acts 1:18; 2:41 . . . 17:12), it is translated here [as ‘therefore’] because it describes an action consequent on Paul’s previous perception.”

<sup>73</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 544, distinguishes between the ingressive imperfect and the ingressive aorist saying that the former “stresses beginning, but implies that the action *continues*,” whereas the latter “stresses the beginning, but does not imply the action continues.” Therefore, the proper translation for the former ought to be “began *doing*,” and the latter “began *to do*” (italics in original). In this text, *διελέγετο* ought to be taken as the ingressive imperfect in view of the *κατὰ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν* present.

<sup>74</sup> Our text’s present tense (*παρατυγχάνοντας*) is to be preferred to  $D$ ’s aorist tense (*παρατυχόντος*) supported by *κατὰ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν*.

<sup>75</sup> *συμβάλλω*: Of its potentially contrasting meanings (“to engage in mutual pondering of a matter,” “to give careful thought to,” “to draw a conclusion by comparing,” or “to be of assistance,” while it also could mean “to come into conflict,” or “to dispute/quarrel”), BAGD suggests a more neutral one (“to converse/confer”) here and



v. 19: Taking him by force,<sup>81</sup> they led him to the Areopagus court<sup>82</sup> saying, “May we know<sup>83</sup> what this new teaching is being spoken by you?”

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Acts 4:15. My translation (arguing, or disputing) is based on the following three considerations: (i) Even though at this early stage of the narrative, a hostile nuance as in D’s Luke 11:53 and Luke 14:31 seems less probable, the subject switched from Paul to the two groups of philosophers who at that time were subsidizing teaching chairs in Athens (Witherington, *Acts*, 514). With other philosopher groups they were in charge of this cultural city and Paul merely a visitor did not have an equal ground. (ii) According to Luke’s subsequent description of the Athenian philosophers reaction, i.e., mocking and misunderstanding (v. 18), and leading to the Areopagus (v. 19), their συνέβαλλον with Paul is probably more than academic conversing or polite mutual pondering. See further discussion about this verb in the commentary section. And (iii) we noted above that the interpretation of μὲν οὖν in v. 17 is to reflect what is said in v. 16. Accordingly, διελέγομαι (to dispute, debate, or reason) in v. 17 is employed by the narrator to nuance a discussion in the philosophical style. In sum, both Paul’s vexation over the Athenian idolatry and the Athenian philosopher’s reaction in dismissing or misunderstanding Paul force the reader to take it as “dispute” or “argue.”

<sup>76</sup> Since the narrator does not provide any hint of a new group entering into the scene, it is more than probable that the narrator intends to maintain his focus on these specific philosopher groups, who, in turn, best represent “an educated city republic” (Klauck, *Magic*, 77).

<sup>77</sup> Probably this imperfect verb is used in iterative sense (“kept on saying”; cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 546–47).

<sup>78</sup> Accompanying with ἄν θέλοι is to be taken as “potential optative,” a usage appearing uniquely in Lukan writings in the NT. According to Wallace, “It is used to indicate a consequence in the future of an unlikely condition. . . . The idea is, *If he could do something, he would do this.*” At another place, Wallace says, “The implicit protasis is, ‘If he could say anything that made sense!’ It is evident that the philosophers do not think such is likely.” Cf. D. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 483–84 and 701, respectively; emphasis in original. Also see BDF, §§ 385, for a similar reading with an explanation within a broader literary context.

<sup>79</sup> οἱ δέ, as in 14:4 and 17:32, is used to indicate some sense of contrast. The first group dismissed the messenger as a spermolo, goj, while this group seriously and dangerously misunderstood the message to be about two foreign deities (cf. note below on evpilamba, nomai for this).

<sup>80</sup> D<sup>gig</sup> omits the whole clause (ὅτι . . . εὐηγγελίζετο) probably out of pious reason of not wishing to class Jesus among the διαμόνια or of abhorring the Athenian confusion of ἀωάσταις into a female deity parallel with Jesus (Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 455). Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 605, relying on Chrysostom (*Hom. In Acta* 38:1; PG 60.267), reads similarly. See D’s 17:31 for its inclusion of “Jesus” reflecting D’s tendency to clarify.

<sup>81</sup> This verb can mean “to lead” as in Acts 9:27 and 23:19, or “to arrest” as in 16:19 and 18:17. My rendering of this ambiguous Lukan word (ἐπιλαμβάνομαι) is in view of v. 18 that Paul was thought of introducing strange deities of which Socrates was “famously” accused. The Socratic allusion is unmistakable: “διελέγετο . . . τῆ ἄγορᾷ κατὰ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν πρὸς τοὺς παρατυγχάνοντας” (v. 17), “ξένων δαιμονίων” (v. 18), “ἡ καινὴ αὐτῆ ἡ . . . διδαχὴ” (v. 19), “ξενίζοντα . . . εἰσφέρεις” (v.20), and “ξένοι,” “καινότερον” (v. 21). All these indicate the author’s intention that the scene be read as a “trial” rather than “a friendly inquiry” (Contra, see Johnson, *Acts*, 314, for the latter reading based on “the tone of the proceedings”).

<sup>82</sup> Areopagus is meant to be the *Council of Areopagus* or the Areopagus court, not “Mars’ hill,” a place for a quiet hearing or for unimportant idle discussion. This is evident from (i) v. 22 that Paul was brought to the court, (ii) Paul went out of their midst (v. 33), and (iii) that Dionysius, one of the named convert, was “the Aropagagite,” a council member (v. 34).

<sup>83</sup> This investigative and demanding tone in question (δυνάμεθα . . . ἔ) is to be taken with the connotation that “we have the power/authority to judge,” because the council was vested with full authority in religious and civil matters. For supporting views, see Bruce W. Winter, “On Introducing Gods to Athens: An Alternative Reading of Acts 17:18–20,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 47, no. 1 (1996), 81–82; T. D. Barnes, “An Apostle On Trial,” *JTS* 20 (1969): 407–19. See the commentary section for further discussion of this.

v. 20: For you are bringing certain strange<sup>84</sup> things to our ears. We want to know therefore what these things mean.”<sup>85</sup>

v. 21: (Now all Athenians and the strangers sojourning<sup>86</sup> would spend<sup>87</sup> [their] time in nothing other than in telling or listening to something newer.)

v. 22: Then Paul standing in the midst of<sup>88</sup> the Areopagus court said, “Men of Athens!<sup>89</sup> I observe<sup>90</sup> (that) you are in all respects very religious.”<sup>91</sup>

v. 23: For while I was going thorough and looking carefully<sup>92</sup> your objects of worship, I even found an altar on which was inscribed,<sup>93</sup> ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’<sup>94</sup> What therefore you worship unknowing, this<sup>95</sup> I proclaim to you.

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<sup>84</sup> ξενίζοντα is taken as a substantive (“things that astonish”). ξενίζω can have a number of meanings: “to show hospitality,” “to cause a strong psychological reaction through introduction of something new or strange,” and “to astonish, surprise” (BAGD, 683–84). Although “astonishing” can be possible with BAGD, our rendering is in view of v. 18. For a possible Lukan motif of “strange” being played out here, see Cornu and Shulam, *Acts*, 2:958–59.

<sup>85</sup> BAGD, 284, sees that the significance of what takes place rather than meaning of the terms is stressed. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 195, n. 71, for the interrogative pronoun’s function as subject of the infinitive verb.

<sup>86</sup> ἐπιδημέω: “to sojourn” in the sense of staying as visitors would be a better rendering (BAGD, 370) than “to visit” or “to be in town,” a reading the D-text proposes by its inclusion of εἰς αὐτοὺς.

<sup>87</sup> This imperfect tense of εὐκαιρέω is used to depict the Athenians’ habitual life-style. Cf. BDF § 67, 1 for a discussion of the temporal augment related to this verb.

<sup>88</sup> ἐν μέσῳ: As evident in 1:15; 2:22; 4:7; 27:21, ἐν μέσῳ does not mean “at the mid-point of an area” (cf. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 140), but rather “in the midst of a group of people.” This is also supported by Paul’s address beginning with “Men of Athens!” in v. 22 (cf. 7:2).

<sup>89</sup> Herbert W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), par. 986, b, suggests, “The addition of ἀνὴρ often implies respect.”

<sup>90</sup> BDF, § 416, 1, strongly suggests rendering this *captatio benevolentiae* with a softening tone of the reproach: “as far as I see, it appears as if.” Contra, see Bennett, *Acts*, 2:834, for a suggestion that the interpretation of the whole verse depends on how one takes δεισιδαιμονεστέρους: “very religious” or “superstitious.” Citing Lucian, *De Gymnasiis* 19, Barrett suggests such a *captatio benevolentiae* might have been forbidden before the Areopagus court. However, we noted with M. Given and K. Rowe in the first chapter that this ambivalent word (δεισιδαιμονεστέρους) is intentionally used by (Paul and) Luke. Therefore, this term, which the Athenian philosophers would very likely have taken as “very religious,” was plainly meant to be understood as “superstitious” (cf. KJV) by Luke’s implied reader. See the forthcoming discussion of this verse in the commentary section.

<sup>91</sup> Again, this comparative adjective is used with an elative and, thus, superlative meaning. The adjective is, then, intensified rather than compared with something (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 300). Based on the fact that there are enough references for a neutral sense of this word in Greek literature, BAGD, says, “[B]ut in the laudatory introduction of Paul’s speech before the Areopagus, Acts 17:22 it must mean **devout, religious**” (216; emphasis in original).

<sup>92</sup> D\* has yet a stronger word (διῆστον) than ἀναθεωρέω, which, in turn, is stronger than θεωρέω, to possibly emphasize Paul’s shocking emotion while looking at their idols (cf. v. 16).

<sup>93</sup> Here, ἐπεγέγραπτο is taken as “intensive pluperfect (resultative pluperfect).” As is the case for ᾠκοδόμητο in Luke 4:29, the use of the pluperfect does not make comment about the present time and no action continued in present (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 584). There is no substantial difference between D-text’s ἦν γεγραμμένον (periphrastic pluperfect) and our text’s ἐπεγέγραπτο (Barrett, *Acts*, 837). Contra, Rius-Camps and Read-

v. 24: The God who created the world and everything in it, since this (very) one is the Lord of heaven and earth,<sup>96</sup> does not reside in shrines made by human hands.<sup>97</sup>

v. 25: Nor is he served by human hands as though he needed something,<sup>98</sup> since<sup>99</sup> he (himself)<sup>100</sup> gives<sup>101</sup> to all life, breath, and all things.

v. 26: He made out of one<sup>102</sup> every nation<sup>103</sup> of humankind so that they might dwell on the entire surface of the earth, having determined<sup>104</sup> (their) appointed seasons<sup>105</sup> and the boundaries of<sup>106</sup> their habitation,

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Heimerdinger argue D's choice is to be preferred as it reflects the permanent nature of the inscription (Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *Message of Acts*, 3:333).

<sup>94</sup> In the word order of adjective–noun without the article, the adjective is being emphasized. For more examples, see 2:4 (“ἐτέραις γλώσσαις”), 4:16 (“γνωστὸν σημεῖον”), 12:21 (“τακτῆ ἡμέρᾳ”), and 19:26 (“ἰκανὸν ὄχλον”). Read-Heimerdinger, *The Bezan Text*, 90 and I. Larsen, “Word Order and Relative Prominence in New Testament Greek,” *NOT* 5 (1991): 30.

<sup>95</sup> The more difficult reading of the neuters (ὁ) . . . τοῦτο) offered by P<sup>74</sup> א\* A\* B D (81) 1175 maybe to be preferred to the probably changed and smoother masculines (ὁν . . . τοῦτον) by א C E Ψ 98 sy Clement (Barrett, 2:838). Noting the neuter form reappearing in v. 29 (τὸ θεῖον), F. F. Bruce suggests: “Paul starts with his hearers’ belief in an impersonal divine essence, pantheistically conceived, and leads them to the living God revealed as creator and judge” (Bruce, *Acts*, 381).

<sup>96</sup> ὑπάρχων here is read as the causal participle (cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 631).

<sup>97</sup> χειροποιήτοις, which is also used in secular Greek (e.g., Herodotus 1.195.1, σκῆπτρον χειροποίητον), should not raise the question of its polemical connection with the Jerusalem Temple as does Acts 7:48–50, and yet unfailingly reminds one of the OT’s frequent denunciation of idolatry (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:840; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 608, suggests 1 Ki 8:27; Isa 57:15).

<sup>98</sup> προσδεόμενός is taken as adverbial participle (cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 625–26).

<sup>99</sup> διδοῦς has a similar causal function as ὑπάρχων in v. 24 (see above note).

<sup>100</sup> αὐτὸς here functions as intensive nominative (cf. BDF, § 277, [3]).

<sup>101</sup> The reading by D (ὅτι οὗτος ὁ δοῦς [because it is he who gave]) shows its explanatory tendency pointing to the divine action in creation (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:841).

<sup>102</sup> Contra the external evidence that supports the shorter text, the Western text adds αἵματος after ἐνός and Ψ adds στόματος. If one of the longer readings was original, the omission of αἵματος can be explained as a palaeographical accident for similar endings (-ος) (cf. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 456). However, the shorter reading maybe preferred in view of the external evidence as well as the Western text’s tendency to explain. In this case, the Western text probably was mindful of Gen 2:7, and thus not “out of one race.”

<sup>103</sup> Of “race” or “nation,” the latter seems to be a better choice in view of Deut 32:8 (cf. Witherington, *Acts*, 528).

<sup>104</sup> ὀρίσας is taken as adverbial participle. The participle is contemporaneous to the main verb ἐποίησέν. (cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 624).

<sup>105</sup> My commentary section will survey the scholarly debate over the meaning of καιρός and ὀροθεσία. The prefix προ- in D-text’s προτεταγμένους may seem to express the notion of “in advance” (cf. Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *Message in Acts*, 3:334), but it is not significantly different from προτεταγμένους (cf. Barrett, *Acts*, 2:842).

<sup>106</sup> This use of the genitive seems to denote purpose. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 100–101, for further

v. 27: (and) so that they might seek God,<sup>107</sup> perhaps even grope after him and find him,<sup>108</sup> though<sup>109</sup> he be<sup>110</sup> not far from each one of us.

v. 28: For in<sup>111</sup> him we live and we move<sup>112</sup> and we are; as even some of your own<sup>113</sup> poets<sup>114</sup> have said, ‘For we are the race of that one.’<sup>115</sup>

v. 29: Being<sup>116</sup>, therefore, the race of God, we ought not suppose the deity to be like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by human art and imagination.<sup>117</sup>

v. 30: Therefore, though the times of<sup>118</sup> ignorance God overlooked,<sup>119</sup> now<sup>120</sup> he commands<sup>121</sup> to people that<sup>122</sup> all, everywhere, to repent,

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discussion.

<sup>107</sup> This purpose infinitive (ζητεῖν) parallels κατοικεῖν in v. 26. This reading reflects Gen 1:27–28 and 2:7 and, therefore, understands that God’s creation of humanity has a two-fold purpose: to dwell and to seek in the sense of having fellowship with God (Witherington, *Acts*, 526–28). We have a number of variant readings: “... search for the Lord” (E 9L) for “...search for God”; the neuter pronoun (“ζ. τ. Θειον”) (Clement); and μάλιστα ζ. τὸ θεῖόν ἐστιν (D<sub>gig</sub>). Of the last, Metzger says that it cannot be made to coincide with the rest of the verse (ibid., 457). Probably, the neuter pronoun is to be in harmony with τὸ θεῖόν in v. 29. See, however, Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *Message of Acts*, 3:334 for D’s priority in reading τὸ θεῖόν.

<sup>108</sup> Two verbs in the optative mood following after εἰ ἄρα γε suggest that Luke does not think the search for God is impossible (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:844) however remote the possibility might be (cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 484).

<sup>109</sup> Even though variant readings of καιτοι (cf. Acts 14:17; BAGD, 496, “although”) or καιτοι γε for our text’s καί γε clarify the concessive force of what follows, καί (γε) with the participle (ὑπάρχοντα) can be used in a concessive sense (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:845; cf. BDF § 439 (2) for “and even”). Contra, BAGD, 496 renders it: “and indeed God is not far.”

<sup>110</sup> ὑπάρχοντα: BAGD renders “*be somewhere*” (1029; italics in original).

<sup>111</sup> Witherington, with Cadbury and Lake, suggests, “It is even possible that ἐν here, especially on the lips of a Jewish Christian, would mean ‘by’” (*Acts*, 529; cf. Cadbury and Lake, *Beginnings*, 4:217).

<sup>112</sup> κινούμεθα in its passive form takes intransitive sense of “to be in motion” (BAGD, 545).

<sup>113</sup> καθ’ ὑμᾶς: possessive pronoun. P<sup>74</sup> and B-text’s ἡμας for text’s ὑμᾶς is due to itacism (Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *Message of Acts*, 3:336), a result of simple confusion (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:848), or an attempt to adjust in case Aratus, a Paul’s fellow Sicilian, was in view (cf. Pervo, *Acts*, 423, n. 1 for a supportive view of ‘our,’ based on Acts 21:39 and 17:29).

<sup>114</sup> It is suggested that the plural is not to be taken literally but rather according to “the normal Greek way of introducing a single quotation from a specific writer” (Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 610; cf. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 145 [“a literary convention”]).

<sup>115</sup> BAGD, 194, translates it, “we, too, are descended from him.”

<sup>116</sup> By its word order preceding the main verb (ὀφείλομεν) and logic supporting what precedes in v. 28, this is to be taken as a causal participle (cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 631). About the possibility that ὑπάρχω bears special nuance to mean “since we now have our existence as the family of God,” Dibelius points out that Luke’s use of this verb in his Gospel five times precludes such an interpretation. “[T]hus we can simply conclude that it is in accordance with his style that he should have written ὑπάρχοντες instead of ὄντες” (Dibelius, *Studies*, 54–55, n. 87).

<sup>117</sup> Two genitive nouns (τέχνης and ἐνθυμήσεως) are taken as subjective (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:849).

v. 31: because he has fixed a day on which he intends to<sup>123</sup> judge the whole world<sup>124</sup> in righteousness by the man<sup>125</sup> whom he appointed, after providing<sup>126</sup> proof<sup>127</sup> to all by raising him from the dead.”

v. 32: And when they heard the resurrection of<sup>128</sup> the dead people, some started jeering,<sup>129</sup> while others<sup>130</sup> said, “We will hear you about this yet again.”

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<sup>118</sup> τῆς ἀγνοίας seems to be “aporetic” or a descriptive genitive in the sense that “the time is characterized/described by ignorance” (cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 79–80).

<sup>119</sup> ὑπεροράω: ‘to indulgently take no notice of, overlook, disregard’ (BAGD, 1034). It was noted earlier that, based on the Western text’s inclusion of “this” to “ignorance” along with many other variant readings, E. Epp argues for ‘anti-Judaic tendencies’ of D. Epp takes it that D attempts to distinguish the Athenian ignorance from D’s other mention of more serious ignorance of the Jews, which led them to kill the innocent Son of God (Acts 3:17 and 13:27). (Cf. Epp, *Tendency*, 41–164, esp. 48–49.)

D’s change of the prefix from ὑπερ- (“to indulgently take no notice of, *overlook, disregard*” accord. to BAGD [1034; italics in original]) to παρ- (“to look at only by the way, *overlook, take no notice of*” according to BAGD [780; italics in original]) is of minor importance.

<sup>120</sup> Even though δέ is missing may be due to ὑπεριδών, not being a finite verb, adversative tone is implied in view of μὲν οὖν and τὰ νῦν (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:850). BAGD, 681, renders τὰ νῦν as “now” in the sense of “as far as the present situation is concerned.”

<sup>121</sup> The Lukan usage of our text’s παραγγέλλω (14 [15] in Luke-Acts out of 30 uses in the entire NT) does not establish a strong external evidence for its priority over the weaker verb παρ- of κ\* B (cf. 26:20).

<sup>122</sup> πάντας, subject of infinitive μετανοεῖν, expresses indirect discourse.

<sup>123</sup> μέλλει: BAGD, 628, suggests to understand this to denote an intended action (‘intend, propose, have in mind’). The omission of ἐν ἧ μέλλει in D; Ir<sup>lat</sup> Speculum “leaves κρίνειν as a quasi-final infinitive no difference in meaning (M. 1:240–41): God has appointed a day for judging” (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:852).

<sup>124</sup> Cf. BAGD, 699, “world, humankind” in the sense of “all inhabitants of the earth.”

<sup>125</sup> “By the man,” not “by a man” because the article is omitted after the preposition (H. Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 199). D and Ir<sup>lat</sup> have ἀνδρὶ Ἰησοῦ for ἐν ἀνδρὶ. Barrett views the omission of ἐν as accidental, while he attributes the inclusion of Ἰησοῦ to clarifying or pious tendency, and, thus, not the original reading (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:852–53). Conzelmann, *Acts*, 146, n. 79, says evn is used in forensic sense, whereas BAGD, 329, designates it as a “marker of agency.”

<sup>126</sup> παρασχών: this adverbial participle is taken to express temporal idea of “when” or “after” (cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 623–25).

<sup>127</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2:853, points out that, even though πίστις used nowhere in the New Testament to mean “proof,” it was regularly used by Aristotle for this meaning.

<sup>128</sup> Even though it can be taken as a genitive of separation (cf. ἐκ νεκρῶν in v. 31), an objective genitive seems to better express what is meant (cf. C. Croy, “Hellenistic Philosophies and the Preaching of the Resurrection [Acts 17:18, 32],” *NT 39* [1997]: 28). Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 199, suggests the possibility of reading it as “when they heard of a resurrection of dead men.”

<sup>129</sup> This verb in the imperfect tense is best taken to denote the ingressive nature of the action (“they *began and continued to jeer*”) contrasted with the other main verb (εἶπαν) in the aorist tense.

<sup>130</sup> Wallace suggests that this “alternative personal pronoun” with μὲν . . . δέ. is quite rare in the NT and “a mild contrast is implied” (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 212–13).

V. 33: So Paul went out from their midst.<sup>131</sup>

v. 34: And certain men, having followed<sup>132</sup> him, believed, among whom were both Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris,<sup>133</sup> and others with them.

## 2.b. The Structure of Acts 17:16–34

The general structure of Acts 17:16–34 is simple and clear: (i) vv. 16–21 (introduction to the speech: *How it came about*), (ii) vv. 22–31 (the body of the speech: *What Paul preached*), and (iii) vv. 32–34 (concluding remark about the reaction to the speech: *How they reacted to it*).<sup>134</sup> As the body of the speech has its own rhetorical structure, some scholars attempt to divide it into several parts: (i) *captatio benevolentiae* (vv. 22–23), (ii) *narratio* (vv. 24–26), (iii) *argumentatio* (vv. 27–28a), (iv) *reprehensio* (v. 29b),<sup>135</sup> and (v) *peroratio* (vv. 30–31)<sup>136</sup>. There are other scholars who outline the speech with its narrative context in mind using non-technical terms.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> This confirms our reading on v. 22 that by ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ Ἀρείου πάγου Luke meant the council not a place. See Luke 4:30 for a similar expression.

<sup>132</sup> They “followed” in the sense of associating with Paul on intimate terms (“being glued together”) (BAGD, 556; cf. Acts 5:13; 9:26; 10:28). The two verbs (κολληθέντες and ἐπίστευσαν) can be taken as contemporaneously to mean: “And certain men followed him *and* believed . . .” Emphasis in original.

<sup>133</sup> The Western text omits the reference to Damaris (καὶ γυνὴ ὀνόματι Δάμαρις) and adds εὐσχημῶν emphasizing the good standing Dionysius held. This omission maybe explained by catholic depreciation of women (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:855). Metzger attributes it either to the anti-feminist tendency of D or to an accidental omission. In regard to its addition of εὐσχημῶν, Metzger argues with Robinson that this word is exclusively used of women in Acts (13:50; 17:12), and, thus, challenges the position that D intended to elevate Dionysius by adding the word (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 459; cf. Sir Wm. M. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire Before A.D. 170* [New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1912], 161–62 for D’s anti-feminine reading).

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Bock, *Acts*, 558; Pervo, *Acts*, 426; the words in italics are mine.

<sup>135</sup> This analysis is originally offered by A. Weiser (*Die Apostelgeschichte Kapitel 13–28* [Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament 5.1; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1985], 457), and adopted by Barrett (*Acts*, 2:825) and Bock (*Acts*, 558).

<sup>136</sup> This last element is suggested by Witherington, *Acts*, 518.

<sup>137</sup> Fitzmyer, for example, follows Dibelius (*Studies*, 27) and Marshall (*Acts*, 282) in identifying a tripartite division of the sermon: (i) vv. 24–25 (the unknown God’s relation to the world as creator and preserver), (ii) 26–27 (God’s proximity as creator of humankind), and (iii) vv. 28–29 (God’s kinship to humanity) (Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 602). A bipartite division of the body of the speech is suggested by Conzelmann: (i) vv. 24–26 (creator and creation) and (ii)

Building on the simple, tripartite division of the sermon proposed by Conzelmann, Donald Miesner attempts an elaborate, chiasmic analysis of the Athens sermon.<sup>138</sup> The chiasmic structure emphasizes two points. First, Paul's introductory line (v. 22) is balanced by a longer corresponding unit, which consists of "chiasm within a chiasm" (vv. 30a–31).<sup>139</sup> Second, the four units of four concepts located in vv. 24–28 form the center of the sermon, and Luke provides correspondences of the individual units at the end (v. 31).<sup>140</sup> These center units, as one package, "all refer in sequence to the three themes of *God, all, and life*."<sup>141</sup> As a result, he concludes later, "this repeated stress on life and motion and totality of being draws a sharp contrast between man's dependence on the living God and the lifelessness of the gods who are described as 'vain things' in the Lystra speech (14:15). By the fourfold repetition of the concepts of God, all and life, . . . the sermon has stressed the interrelatedness of God's life and man's life. In this connection, Smith has aptly perceived the likely play on the word Zeus" whose name appears in 14:12 and is derived from the word ζωή (life).<sup>142</sup> Therefore, the Areopagus speech shows that "it is not Zeus, 'the father of gods and men,' who gave life, but rather the Creator, Preserver God,

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vv. 27–29 (the destiny of humanity) (cf. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 141). Conzelmann also suggests a tripartite division: "(1) God and world (creation and preservation); (2) God and man (proximity); (3) God and the individual (resurrection and judgment)."

<sup>138</sup> Donald R. Miesner, "Chiasm and the Composition and Message of Paul's Missionary Sermons" (unpublished dissertation at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1974). He analyzes the following speeches by Paul: at Antioch (Acts 13); at Lystra (14); at Athens (17); at Miletus (20). He acknowledges that his analysis of the Athens sermon is a revision of Kenneth Bailey's work (cf. Kenneth Bailey, "A Study of Some Lucan Parables in the Light of Oriental Life and Poetic Style" [unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1972], Appendices 12 and 13).

<sup>139</sup> Miesner later argues that the theme of "God and all," which appears four times in the center and three times in the terminating unit, is directly connected to the "life" motif (Miesner, "Chiasm and the Composition," 226).

<sup>140</sup> Miesner, "Chiasm and the Composition," 217–19.

<sup>141</sup> Miesner, "Chiasm and the Composition," 222; italics added.

<sup>142</sup> Miesner, "Chiasm and the Composition," 224; cf. Robert Smith, *Acts* (Concordia Commentary Series; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), 263.

Whom Paul declared . . .”<sup>143</sup> According to Miesner, the repeated use of ὀρίζω also supports this basic tenet of the speech (cf. ὀρίσας, ὀροθεσίας in v. 26, and ὤρισεν in v. 31).<sup>144</sup>

However, Miesner’s structural analysis with an ensuing commentary<sup>145</sup> appears to neglect totally the theme of knowledge-ignorance within the speech,<sup>146</sup> and the narrative introduction (vv. 16–21) and the concluding remark (vv. 32–34). Even though the narrow scope limits his work, the unfortunate lack of attention to the speech’s narrative context impairs the full understanding and appreciation of the sermon as intended by Luke. In his probe of how Luke and Acts were composed, F.S. Spencer warns about attempts to identify chiasmic patterns in Luke-Acts saying, “The method is susceptible to overplay, speculation, and forced parallels. . . . Careful readers of Luke and Acts do well to keep *chiasmus* on their interpretive radars, but not allow it to control the entire screen.”<sup>147</sup>

A criticism can be issued against some scholars who fail to take the narrative notes into account in their structure analysis. Insofar as Luke records a speech and his overall *style* (cf. Luke 1:1–4 and Acts 1:1–2) was influenced by the Hellenistic historiography<sup>148</sup> whereas his

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<sup>143</sup> Miesner, “Chiasm and the Composition,” 225. It is unfortunate that Miesner keeps referring to the Lystra sermon without offering any specific comments on that it is the implied reader not the Athenian orator who can possibly see the thematic contrast between Zeus in 14:12 and Lukan Paul’s Christian God in Acts 17. Much later, Miesner says, “The Areopagus speech is anticipated by the brief Lystra sermon. The Lystra speech is the only sermon in Acts for a strictly non-Jewish heathen group before the time of the Apostolic Council . . . . Apparently, Luke had saved the recounting of the basic missionary message to the gentiles for the spiritual, intellectual, and cultural capital of the Greek world, Athens” (Miesner, “Chiasm and the Composition,” 227).

<sup>144</sup> In agreement with Paul Schubert (cf. “Areopagus Speech,” 260), Miesner thinks that this use of the word “indicates the connection between the God Who providentially determined the allotted periods and boundaries of man’s habitation and the God Who has appointed the Man who will judge the world in righteousness” (Miesner, “Chiasm and the Composition,” 225).

<sup>145</sup> Miesner, “Chiasm and the Composition,” 217–27.

<sup>146</sup> According to his analysis, Ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ in v. 23 and τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν in v. 28, and οὖν in vv. 23 and 29 form the chiasmic structure (D-D<sup>1</sup>)!

<sup>147</sup> F. Scott Spencer, *The Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 49.

<sup>148</sup> See, for example, Witherington, *Acts*, 2–39 (a broad discussion about genre; esp. 32–35) and 39–51 (a discussion about how rhetoric and rhetorical conventions of Luke’s day influenced Luke). Also insightful is W. S. Kurz’ treatment in “Hellenistic Rhetoric in the Christological Proof of Luke-Acts,” *CBQ* 42 (1980): 171–95. “Kurz



*content* by Jewish writings, a formal analysis of the body of this speech employing rhetorical terms is a rightful step. However, since the speech is part of a larger narrative unit placed in the midst of Lukan writings, treating the speech as if it were standing apart from its context would be an “insular” reading and does not do justice to the text intended by the author. Plus, there seems to be difficulty of reaching a basic agreement among scholarship in terms of categorizing the different parts of the speech.<sup>149</sup> With that said, we propose the following outline of the Athenian episode.

#### Outline of Acts 17:16–34

##### A. The Narrative Introduction to the Areopagus Speech (vv. 16–21): The Idolatrous City Staged the Speech.<sup>150</sup>

1. Provoked by the widespread idolatry of Athens, Paul began reasoning with the Jews and the God-fearers at Synagogue and the Athenians in agora (vv. 16–17).
2. After being dismissed and misunderstood, Paul was taken to the Areopagus court by some Stoic and Epicurean philosophers for questioning (vv. 18–20).
3. The narrative aside provides the narrator’s comment about the Athenian obsession with novelty (v. 21).<sup>151</sup>

##### B. Paul’s Speech (vv. 22–31)

1. Paul’s Introductory Remark (vv. 22–23): Commenting on their religiosity, Paul announces his intention to make the ‘Unknown God’ known.<sup>152</sup>

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shows that Luke’s *manner* of arguing follows the form of the enthymeme, arguing from premise to conclusion as Aristotle advised (*Rhetoric* 1.1.11), rather than a Jewish form of argumentation such as proof and prophecy” (cited from Witherington, *Acts*, 40, n. 138; italics by Witherington).

<sup>149</sup> For example, Witherington, *Acts*, 518, noting the absence of a *narratio*, attempts to explain it, while as Weiser (*Apostelgeschichte*, 457), Bock, (*Acts*, 558), and Barrett (*Acts*, 2:825) consider vv. 24–26 as a *narratio*.

<sup>150</sup> In the introductory section (vv. 16–21), Luke sets up the stage for the speech by providing information about how the mission and the sermon at Athens came about as well as his own comments that have no small effect on the reader’s understanding the speech and its result.

<sup>151</sup> As our ensuing brief discussion about three main narrative-critical tools will show, narrative asides have indispensable function for the implied readers.

<sup>152</sup> The inferential statement (ὁ οὖν ἀγνοοῦντες . . .), which belongs to Paul’s introduction, makes the transition between the introduction and the main body of the speech as it announces the overall theme of the speech.

2. Main Body of the Speech (vv. 24–29): the Athenian idolatrous practice in ignorance of God is contrasted with truth that God desires to be known.
  - a. God as Creator and Lord of all neither lives in man-made shrines nor is served by human hands for he is Giver to all and of all (vv. 24–25).
  - b. God created humankind to fill the earth, determining their seasons and boundaries, and seek him perhaps groping after and finding him, though he is not far (vv. 26–27).
  - c. For in him we live, move, and are. As God’s kinship, therefore, we should not think ignorantly about him in terms of lifeless objects (vv. 28–29).
3. Paul’s Conclusion to the Speech (vv. 30–31): God, after overlooking the times of ignorance, universally commands all to repent because he appointed a day of judgment in righteousness through the divinely-appointed man, evidenced by raising him from the dead.<sup>153</sup>

C. The Narrative Conclusion (vv. 32–34): The Response to the Speech Varied—Contemptuous (sneering), Contemplative (wanting to hear again), and Committed (following and believing)<sup>154</sup>

### **III. Narrative-Critical Reading of Acts 17:16–34**

#### **3.a. Narrative-Critical Tools to be Employed**

Our attempt to read Paul’s Areopagus speech narrative critically will benefit from employing several key elements that narrative criticism highlights such as the concept of implied reader, use of irony, the implied author’s characterization, use of narrative asides, plot, narrative patterns, and so on. Since what seems to be rudimentary for our reading methodology has been

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By placing this to be part of the introduction, we can see Lukan Paul’s emphasis on the ignorance-knowledge motif, which, taken with another reference to ignorance in his conclusion (“the times of ignorance” [v. 30]), brackets the main body of his speech.

<sup>153</sup> As our commentary section will argue, this outline shows the ignorance of the Athenians is closely associated with their idolatry. Paul, in his main body of the speech, breaks down into three specific areas of their failures due to their darkened mind in ignorance.

<sup>154</sup> The first group began to mock Paul; the second was more cautious and wanted a further hearing; and the third became committed followers. It may be possible, however, some of the last group came to believe as a result of further hearing and thus belong to the second group as well.

already discussed in the introductory chapter,<sup>155</sup> here, I propose to highlight three prominently employed narrative-critical tools, as they are immediately relevant to reading our text: Luke's use of irony, his use of the narrative asides, and the importance of characterization.

### 3.a.1. Irony

Use of irony as a literary technique has received widespread attention in literary critical studies of the Bible. Irony is related to, but to be distinguished from, symbolism. Both involve detecting multiple meanings. According to Culpepper, "a symbol is 'a connecting link between two different spheres.' . . . The reader's task is to discern the tenor or meaning of the symbol."<sup>156</sup> Irony implies that the true interpretation is actually contrary to the apparent meaning. A classic example of irony is the soldiers' crowning of Jesus with thorns (Mark 15:17). In a nutshell, irony is "always the result of a disparity of understanding"<sup>157</sup> or a "nonconcurrence" of a point of view.<sup>158</sup> A serious interpreter does well by being careful, however, lest perceiving something ironic would not merely reveal more about the creativity of the critic than that of the author.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Also see Nguyen, *Peter and Cornelius*, 11–18, for a brief discussion on basic topics of narrative criticism under two categories (the facets of the sender (the real author, the implied author, and narrator) and the facets of the receiver (the narratee, the implied reader, and the real reader).

<sup>156</sup> Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 182. See pp. 180–98 for his discussion of symbolism.

<sup>157</sup> M. Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 30. Powell is quoting from Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *Nature of Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 240. Here is a more elaborate definition of irony: "Irony, one of the most complex concepts to delineate in literary criticism, may be defined as an interpretive situation in which an explainable discrepancy is perceived by the reader between what is said and/or done by the characters in a dramatic story, and what is the established state of affairs in the contextual world." Cf. Stanley Porter, "The Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16.1–13): Irony Is the Key" in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield* (eds. Clines et al; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 127 (italics in original). Culpepper in *Anatomy*, 166, cautions any attempts to give simple definition of irony citing Muecke, who said, "The principal obstacle in the way of a simple definition of irony is the fact that irony is not a simple phenomenon."

<sup>158</sup> M. Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 30. For the original use of this term, see Boris Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973).

<sup>159</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 31. An example of excessive application of irony may be found in Elton Trueblood's *The Humor of Christ*. In agreement, James Dawsey sees Trueblood holds that, when Jesus uttered Luke

Paul Duke's cautioning words bear repeating: "Scholars and critics who quest after ironies in a text are prone, once they have caught the thrill of the hunt, to become downright intoxicated, not only bagging their limit so to speak, but opening fire on everything in the text that moves."<sup>160</sup>

It is well attested that Luke as the author of the Gospel frequently uses Old Testament materials to ground his ironies.<sup>161</sup> If we consider that God's universal salvific plan through Jesus Christ is the central and embracing theme of Luke-Acts, one of Luke's main arsenals is his use of irony. According to R. Tannehill, Lukan use of irony within his plot is based on Luke's fascination with and insight into the tension between divine action and human blindness. The Jerusalemites in their blind ignorance killed Jesus and yet the tragic death of Jesus became the fulfillment of the divine plan/purpose (cf. Acts 2:23–36; 4:25–28). He continues, "This is a situation of irony. Humans act blindly (note the emphasis on 'ignorance' in Acts 3:17; 13:27), and the outcome is the opposite of what they intend. For behind their purpose is a stronger, hidden purpose which uses human blindness to thwart human plans."<sup>162</sup> Tannehill, therefore, aptly calls the Lukan God as "the God of irony."<sup>163</sup>

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8:10 ("To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand"), the sensitive hearer is supposed to be able to see that the clear intent is the exact opposite of the literal statement. However, Trueblood draws his conclusion in the light of the synoptic issues not in light of Lukan narrative, and he made a hard saying a more difficult reading. Elton Trueblood, *The Humor of Christ* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1964), 91–92; cf. James Dawsey, *Lukan Voice*, 153.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Paul Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 2. This is quoted in Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 31.

<sup>161</sup> Larry Perkins, "The Finger of God": Lukan Irony and Old Testament Allusion as Narrative Strategy (Luke 11.20 and Exodus 8.19 [LXX 8.15])" in *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels Vol 3: The Gospel of Luke* (ed. Thomas R. Hatina; NY: T&T Clark, 2010), 151. For more examples of Luke's creative use of irony, see Robert Tannehill, "Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story," *JBL* 104 (1985): 69–85; and David Moessner, "The Ironic Fulfillment of Israel's Glory," in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People* (ed., Joseph B. Tyson; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988): 35–50.

<sup>162</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:282–83.

<sup>163</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:284.

William Kurz's work takes us to a deeper level of appreciation for Luke's irony. He argues that there are two levels to be noted in view of irony in Luke-Acts. On a higher level, Luke's implied readers share with the implied author/narrator "insight and information lacking to *dramatis personae* on the lower level of the plot line within the account." For this reason, Luke's readers enjoy a vantage point of superior knowledge while some characters ("outsiders") in the narrative suffer the lack of it. Lukan irony forms a bond between the narrator and implied readers as they share knowledge available for the inner circle, and thus "the irony in Luke-Acts is meant to be inclusive for the audience [implied readers] at the expense of characters from the past."<sup>164</sup> This point even takes us to Luke's narrative scheme of convincing the implied reader "of this basic irony of history" (Luke 1:4).<sup>165</sup>

According to Mark Given, the narrator of Acts employs irony as a powerful arsenal or important literary device to tell Paul's Areopagus speech. As we noted his analysis in our first chapter, our text involves high-level use of irony. In other words, irony is a critical interpretive key to unlock Paul's speech at Athens. The inquisitive Athenian philosophers who ridicule Paul as a "third-rate journalist"<sup>166</sup> or "a bird-brain devoid of method"<sup>167</sup> (σπερμολόγος, v. 18) turn out to be the ironic victims of ignorance. The narrator/implied author shows that the erudite

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<sup>164</sup> William Kurz, S.J., *Reading Luke-Acts: Dynamics of Biblical Narrative* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 136–37.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 137. See 137–147 for Kurz's specific examples of how Lukan use of irony works as implicit commentary for the implied readers.

<sup>166</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2:830.

<sup>167</sup> R. Pervo, *Acts*, 427, uses this expression, which he attributes to Spicq. In and of itself, says Spicq, the hapax σπερμολόγος has no pejorative meaning. "Used figuratively, however, the word takes on more diverse meanings: the good-for-nothing who wanders about the market and collects the scraps and debris scattered here and there." Spicq suggests another possible meaning. Referring to M. A. Robinson, the Athenian designation might have been based on Paul's preaching about Jesus' parable of the sower. Cf. Spicq "σπερμολόγος" in *Theological Lexicon of the NT* (vol. 3; Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1994): 268–69.

philosophers' pride and zeal for learning something ever newer are incongruent with their actual state of ironic ignorance.

However, the warning of Paul Duke and Powell noted earlier should be heeded. It is with caution, therefore, that the narrator's use of irony in our text will be discerned and analyzed to underscore and appreciate the subtlety and ambiguity of Paul's speech as well as Luke's overall presentation of the episode.

### 3.a.2. The Narrative Asides

Studies on narrative asides in the NT are relatively scarce. Merrill Tenney has offered a systematic analysis of narrative asides in the study of John's Gospel. He singled out 59 passages, which can be also called "footnotes." Tenney says:

[They are] explanatory material, which is not directly involved in the progress of the narrative. This material is by no means irrelevant to the main thrust of the Gospel, but is parenthetical. If it were omitted, the main theme of thought would remain largely unaltered, although the parenthetical material has a definitive value for understanding the meaning of the Gospel. . . . [They] are more nearly "glosses" or "asides" which the writer introduced to make his story more lucid, or to explain the cause or motive for some act. . . . They offer a valuable insight into the design of the author, and provide some hints concerning the occasion for which the Gospel was written.<sup>168</sup>

Tenney divides these asides into ten categories acknowledging that the divisions are debatable: (1) explanatory translations often assisted by the verb ἐρμηνεύω; (2) the temporal or spatial explanation; (3) the explanation of custom; (4) reflections of the author; (5) introspective recollections of the disciples; (6) explanation of situations or actions related to cause or

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<sup>168</sup> Merrill Tenney, "The Footnotes of John's Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 117 (1960), 350. That the studies on this topic were rare is testified to by the fact that it took almost twenty years for someone to undertake a similar study. (Cf. John O'Rourke, "Asides in the Gospel of John," *Novum Testamentum* 21 [1979]: 210–19.)

consequence; (7) summary of enumerating footnotes; (8) identification of persons; (9) the supernatural knowledge of Jesus; (10) theological asides/comments.<sup>169</sup>

Welcome and systematic study on narrative asides used in Luke-Acts appeared in *Narrative Asides in Luke-Acts*, originally a doctoral dissertation. Its author, Steven M. Sheeley, undertakes a thorough analysis on the topic beginning with asides in ancient narratives, which form the literary milieu/context for Luke-Acts.<sup>170</sup> After surveying some samples of ancient narratives according to three genres, i.e., romance, history, and biography, Sheeley separately treats the “narrators” of Luke’s Gospel and of Acts and concludes that “for the most part the narrators of Luke’s Gospel and Acts are as similar as one might expect. Their greatest similarity is their desire to approach the narrative task with seriousness and purpose.”<sup>171</sup> The difference between the two are seen in that “the narrator of the Gospel uses commentary on the story to guide the reader’s interpretation, while the narrator of Acts does much the same thing through commentary on the characters.” Sheeley, therefore, concludes that the minor differences between the “two” narrators are due to their stylistic choices and subject matter.<sup>172</sup>

According to Sheeley, the narrators’ asides in both narratives chiefly provide essential information. Both narrators repeatedly anticipate the needs of their readers and make attempts to meet them.<sup>173</sup> Thus, the narrative asides in Luke-Acts together have significant functions at three levels: plot, narrator, and audience of Luke-Acts. The narrative asides were utilized for the purpose of developing the plot, for reinforcing and affirming the idea that the narrators are

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<sup>169</sup> Tenney, “The Footnotes,” 351–52. Tenney emphasizes that the last one is most important and yet also most debatable.

<sup>170</sup> Steven Sheeley, *Narrative Asides in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 40.

<sup>171</sup> Sheeley, *Narrative Asides*, 135. Sheeley argues that both Luke 1:1–4 and Acts 1:1–5 reveal “the self-consciousness of the narrator” (Sheeley, *Narrative Asides*, 134).

<sup>172</sup> Sheeley, *Narrative Asides*, 136.

<sup>173</sup> Sheeley, *Narrative Asides*, 135.

reliable and have authority, and for guiding the reading experience by building and maintaining proper relationship between narrator and reader.<sup>174</sup> Since the rhetorical effect desired by the narrator is persuasion,<sup>175</sup> the narrator of Luke and Acts narratives employs narrative asides for the purpose of rhetorical control over the reader's interpretation of the story,<sup>176</sup> and, thus, it is not surprising to note that the narrator provides asides in passages which were critical to the thematic development of major plot devices (conflict and prophecy-fulfillment) in both volumes.<sup>177</sup>

Narrating about Paul's visit to Athens, the narrator provides two asides.<sup>178</sup> We will argue below that both hold important interpretive keys for the reader to understanding the narrative unit as well as how this particular unit plays an important role within Luke's overall narrative scheme.

### 3.a.3. Characterization

Inquiries into characters or characterization, as critically challenging subjects of literary study, have gained a permanent position in NT studies since the mid 1970s.<sup>179</sup> Elizabeth Malbon says:

A story is about someone—the characters. The actions are carried out by someone—the characters. Narrative analysis of characters is intertwined with narrative analysis of plot. The implied reader of the story-as-discoursed is frequently

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<sup>174</sup> Sheeley, *Narrative Asides*, 175–76.

<sup>175</sup> Sheeley, *Narrative Asides*, 174.

<sup>176</sup> Sheeley, *Narrative Asides*, 183.

<sup>177</sup> Sheeley, *Narrative Asides*, 178. Sheeley concludes that his research on narrative asides renders supports for the unity of Luke-Acts.

<sup>178</sup> v. 18b: "(They said this because he was proclaiming the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.)"

v. 21: "(All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there used to spend their time in nothing else than telling or listening to something newer.)"

<sup>179</sup> "Reconceiving Narrative Criticism," in *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (JSNTS 184; eds. David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 13. In this book in which their article appears, the whole topic of characterization is scholarly and critically explored mostly with regard to the Gospel traditions.



invited to admire, judge, or identify with the characters. Characters are brought to life for the implied reader by the implied author through narrating words and actions.<sup>180</sup>

Therefore, according to Powell, characters are the implied author's literary constructs, created to play and fulfill a particular role in the story. The implied author's characterization is done either by "telling" or "showing"; the narrator/implied author either shows characters or tells things about them to the narratee/implied reader. Of the two, the technique of showing is more interesting even though that of telling through words like "heroic," "just," or "wise" is more precise. The showing makes the reader work harder in the sense that he or she must be "collecting data from various sources and evaluating it in order to figure out the implied author's view of the characters." The implied author's hints regarding the reliability or unreliability of a character also are important.<sup>181</sup> Malbon adds that the showing technique, requiring more work from the narratee and implied reader, is likely more engaging.<sup>182</sup>

Seymour Chatman discusses yet another important aspect related to characterization in his much-celebrated publication, *Story and Discourse*. To the question "Are characters open or closed constructs?"<sup>183</sup> Chatman observes:

Some characters in sophisticated narratives remain open constructs, just as some people in the real world stay mysterious no matter how well we know them. . . . [Therefore,] A viable theory of character should preserve openness and treat characters as autonomous beings, not as mere plot functions. It should argue that character is reconstructed by the audience from evidence announced or implicit in an original construction and communicated by the discourse, through whatever medium.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Elizabeth Malbon, "Narrative Criticism" in *Mark and Method* (eds., Janice Anderson and S. Moore; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 34.

<sup>181</sup> Mark Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 31–33. Powell here relies on Seymour Chatman's distinction between "telling" and "showing."

<sup>182</sup> E. Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 35.

<sup>183</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), 116.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 118–9.

The inadequacy of the merely functional,<sup>185</sup> or what Chatman calls “*actantial* theory of characterization,” does not mean that every attempt to distinguish kinds of characters are doomed. He considers helpful, for example, E. M. Forster’s oft-quoted distinction between “round” and “flat” characters. Possessing a single trait, the behavior of the flat character is very predictable, while the behavior of round characters, with multiple traits of sometimes conflicting or contrasting features, is difficult to predict. Round characters can change and surprise the audience; they are “open-ended.” Therefore, round characters function as open constructs, capable of rendering further insight.<sup>186</sup> E. Malbon also comments that Forster’s distinction is “extremely helpful.” However, she warns that the distinction between the two groups is not the same as that between “minor” and “major” characters because, as an example, the Jewish leaders play a major role in Mark’s Gospel narrative and yet are portrayed as flat.

Building on our second chapter of surveying how Luke characterizes different people groups in Luke-Acts in view of their “ignorance-knowledge” about God’s salvific plan in Jesus Christ, our ensuing reading will attend to how the narrator/implicit author of Areopagus speech portrays the Athenian audience in light his salient theme of knowledge-ignorance. Is Luke suggesting Paul as a new Socrates or someone else? What does that have to do with how Luke tells the story and how the reader reads the story?

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<sup>185</sup> Outi Lehtipuu, in “Characterization and Persuasion: The Rich Man and the Poor Man in Luke 16:19–31,” says it was V. Propp who introduced the functional view of characters as being subordinate to the plot in a story. In Propp’s view, *who* does something is not as important as *what* is done. Lehtipuu argues that Propp’s conclusion is based on his analysis of folk tales. At the other end of the spectrum, says Lehtipuu, is a “realistic” view that sees literary characters as one might see real people with a past and a future beyond the text. (Cf. Outi Lehtipuu, “Characterization and Persuasion: The Rich Man and the Poor Man in Luke 16:19–31” in *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (eds., David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni; JSNTS 184; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1999), 75; emphasis in the original. For further discussion on this topic, see S. Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* [London: Methuen, 2nd ed., 1988], 29–42).

<sup>186</sup> Chatman, *Story*, 131–32. See E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (reprint. 1954, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1927), 103–18 for more detailed discussion.

### 3.b. Narrative Context of Areopagus Speech

Insofar as narrative elements in Luke-Acts such as characters and plots are “cumulative” by nature, readers’ “successive” construction or assessment constitutes a key to a narrative reading.<sup>187</sup> There seem to be six important elements that need to be born in mind as one reads the Areopagus speech within the whole book of Acts: where the speech stands in its connection with the Jerusalem Council; how Luke presents Paul the speaker; how Luke views pagan idolatry; how Luke hints at the paucity of fruition among the Gentile mission; how Luke builds up the plot in terms of the mission and the world’s response to it; and how Luke maintains universal scope of the message.

First, Paul’s speech at Athens belongs to the second half of the Book of Acts, which begins with Acts 15. That the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15:1–29 functions as the dividing point of the book is a narratological as well as theological/missiological claim. It was this council that initially set the official terms for the Gentile mission as well as the Gentile church (cf. 15:19–20, 28–29). “This is a watershed event in Luke’s story-world. The previous chapters build to a point of conflict at the geographic center of the narrative—Jerusalem—and the dramatic tension is relieved considerably with the rejoicing of the Gentiles in Antioch upon the reading of the council’s letter (15:30–31).”<sup>188</sup> However, as Gray rightly observes, the readers have to wait for two chapters “before Paul reaches Athens and delivers the first post-council proclamation to a purely Gentile audience.”<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> John Darr, *Character*, 42.

<sup>188</sup> P. Gray, “Areopagus Audience,” 207. Witherington’s comment presents a broader perspective on the importance of this event: “. . . Acts 15 is the most crucial chapter in the whole book. Marshall is right in noting that this chapter is positioned both structurally and theologically at the very heart of the book. It raises all the key questions of what Luke’s relationship to Paul was, what the relationship is between Acts 15 and Galatians 2, and therefore what sort of history Luke is writing” (Witherington, *Acts*, 439; cf. Marshall, *Acts*, 242).

<sup>189</sup> Gray, “Areopagus Audience,” 207. He explains this delay in terms of the Lukan way of leading the readers away from the view that the post-council mission work is exclusively to the uncircumcised.

Second, related to the first point, Paul comes to the forefront of the narrative after the Jerusalem Council. After the council, Peter dramatically recedes from view in Acts, as does the Jerusalem church. That the council officially and whole-heartedly sent Paul along with Judas, Silas, and Barnabas (15:22, 25–26) with the Jerusalem church’s letter of recommendation to the Gentile churches bears significant narrative and theological tone for the subsequent narratives recorded in the remaining chapters of Acts.<sup>190</sup> Among the four sent with the letter, Luke focuses on Paul as the chief character or protagonist for his narratives.<sup>191</sup> In J. Darr’s words: “By proving adept in many different environments . . . Paul becomes one of the most well-rounded characters (if not *the* most well-developed) in the entire narrative. Readers see him in so many cultural contexts that they are able to construe a rather complex image of him.”<sup>192</sup> It is, therefore, not only what Paul says and does at Athens that is significant and authoritative, but also how he feels about things and how people treat him.

Third, Luke has hinted his view that pagan idolatry is one of the major characteristics of the Gentiles. That Simon the sorcerer was influential among all the people in Samaria as “a man with the divine power” (8:9–10) is Luke’s first telltale signal for this. And, as the mission work went beyond Judea and Samaria, we encounter the Lystrans in Acts 14. We noted in our analysis in the second chapter how deeply entrenched they were in their pagan mode of thinking in attempting to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods after they had witnessed Paul’s miracle work in

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<sup>190</sup> In favor of a “cumulative” or “successive” reading, J. Darr rightly criticizes a common failure among some Lukan scholars regarding what he calls “reverse” readings. In understanding of the Lukan presentation of the Pharisees, for example, some scholars begin near the end of Acts (Acts 22–26), moving backward to the Jerusalem council (Acts 15), to the Gamaliel episode (Acts 5), and, finally, to Luke’s Gospel. In that they “purportedly demonstrate that Luke paints an ambiguous—negative, but also somewhat irenic or sympathetic— portrait of the Pharisees. Readers processing the information *in its intended order*, however, will hardly develop a favorable (or even ambiguous) impression of this group . . .” (Darr, *Character*, 43; See his entire Chapter 4 for a fuller discussion about this issue.)

<sup>191</sup> One minor point related to this is the fact that the phrase “Paul and Silas” (cf. 16:25; 17:4, 10) no longer appears beginning with Paul’s Athenian episode even though Silas with Timothy later joined Paul in Corinth (18:5).

healing a crippled man (14:11–13). This pagan idolatry is rooted in their ignorance of God as their Creator and Preserver (cf. Luke 12:30). The Lukan presentation of the pagan idolatry has significant bearing and important cumulative effect on our reading of Paul’s speech at Athens.

Fourth, the mission work among the deeply idolatrous pagans was seemingly unfruitful. Gray aptly comments, “. . . Paul and Silas are imprisoned in Philippi and run out of Thessalonica by a mixed band of thugs for hire (17:5). Just because Jerusalem has decided to accept the Gentiles, it does not necessarily mean that Gentiles will accept the good news from Jerusalem.”<sup>193</sup> Our discussion about the Lystrans (Acts 14) in our second chapter addresses this issue. Despite the missionary efforts among the Lystrans, no mention is made about any conversion. The narrative does not lead the implied reader to expect massive conversion, which Luke records in earlier chapters of Acts (cf. 2:41; 4:4).

Fifth, Luke’s plot also has a “cumulative” construction that the immediately preceding context has exhibited. Prior to narrating the Athenian episode, Luke consciously builds up a successive plot to impact the reading of our current unit. The first full and more obvious episode is recorded in Acts 16:11–40. Paul, Silas, and others arrived at the first city in Macedonia (Philippi) after seeing the vision. It was not long after that a local slave girl possessed by a spirit began to harass Paul for many days (16:16–18a). Eventually Paul had to drive out the spirit, which was speaking about Paul and Silas through her mouth. The angry owners of the girl, who lost their lucrative business, seized (ἐπιλαμβάνομαι in 17:19) Paul and Silas and brought them to their magistrates saying, “These men are *throwing our city into confusion*. They are Jews and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us to accept or practice, since we are Romans” (16:20–21; italics added). Was it a lawful accusation? Yes and no. Paul and Silas did nothing

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<sup>192</sup> Darr, *Character*, 40–41; emphasis in original.

unlawful to disturb or threaten the Roman city on political level. However, what they taught (the gospel message) and, in particular, did (subduing and expelling the evil spirit “in the name of Jesus Christ” [16:18]) posed an obvious danger to their spiritual and ethical order the city had known and enjoyed.

The second episode took place at Thessalonica (17:1–9). Their mission work in this second Roman city proved short-lived when some jealous Jews stirred up some bad characters and formed a mob to oppose Paul and Silas. The riotous crowd cried out accusing Paul and his companions as people who “turned the world (οικουμένη) upside down.”<sup>194</sup> Even though Paul’s missionary team was accused by different people groups (Gentiles [Acts 16] and Jews [Acts 17]), it is not difficult to note how Luke is building up the plot. In the first episode, they were accused of being harmful to the Roman city (16:20, “. . . *throwing our city into confusion*”). And in the second, the Christian mission was accused of being a threat to the whole (Roman) world (οικουμένη) order. What Paul is going to preach and how the message will be received at Athens are anticipated by these episodes. In other words, the reader is prepared to hear a speech with a disturbing nature for the characters because the Christian gospel demands a new order for the entire οικουμένη.<sup>195</sup> This element points to yet another narrative element.

Sixth, Luke’s interest in presenting the salvation of God with universal scope is evident from the beginning of Lukan writings to the end (cf. Luke 2:30–32; 4:25–27; 24:47; Acts 1:8; 26:17–18, 23; 28:28–31). In view of Acts 17:16–34 offering the only full-length sermon (in summary) preached to a purely Gentile audience, it is anticipated that Lukan Paul is going to deliver a speech that focuses on this central theme of God’s universal salvation in a language

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<sup>193</sup> Gray, “Areopagus Narrative,” 207.

<sup>194</sup> This rendering is found in 17:6 KJV. See also K Rowe’s *World Upside Down*.

<sup>195</sup> In Acts 17:10–15 we note that, although the mission in Berea proves more successful, opposition from

proper for the audience. Witherington points out that in Paul's speech at Athens Lukan universalism is "matched" met with his unique way of arranging his material according to geographical regions and ethnic groups.<sup>196</sup>

In summary, Luke's implied reader will read Acts 17 as a part of the continued story being mindful of these elements as its narrative context. The first point (the Areopagus speech in connection with the Jerusalem Council) enables us to see the strategic importance of Paul's Areopagus speech for the second half of the book. The second point about Paul as an emerging protagonist invites us to pay a close attention to all the details of how Luke narrates the story and builds up the plot through and around his protagonist Paul. The third point, the Lukan view of the pagan idolatry, relates to how Luke characterizes the Athenian audience. The fourth point about the paucity of the Gentile mission bears its significance for how we should evaluate the result of Paul's sermon at Athens. The fifth point ("cumulative plot") has to do with the general tone of the speech. The last point about the universal scope of the Christian mission and message builds anticipation in reader's mind for a sermon that upholds Luke's overall concern and theme of God's universal salvation addressed properly in the Gentile context. Having said these, we now turn our attention to the immediate context of the speech narrated by Luke in vv. 16–21.

### **3.c. The Narrative Introduction: Speech in Its Athenian Setting**

The fact that Luke carefully set the stage for the speech has not received its due attention in the studies of Acts 17.<sup>197</sup> However, identifying Luke's narrative markers helps the reader to

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Jews in Thessalonica short-circuits the work, and this opposition is the immediate cause to send Paul to Athens.

<sup>196</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 511–12; cf. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:210–11, for further discussion on this theme in Luke-Acts as crucial theological background for understanding the Areopagus speech.

<sup>197</sup> We have noted earlier that Dibelius totally ignores the material surrounding the actual speech. K. Rowe points out that other scholars, with possible exceptions of B. Gaventa and Scott Spencer, use the material "only where it is deemed immediately relevant" (Rowe, *World*, 27).

determine how the author intends the speech to be read. Therefore, letting the introductory narrative (vv. 16–21) set “the tones for this unique speech of Paul in Athens”<sup>198</sup> is not artificial or alien to author’s intention, but rather its dismissal would be. According to Fitzmyer, “what had been the most renowned city in ancient Greece” lost some of its fame in Luke’s day, he “still regards Athens as the historical, cultural, and philosophical center of the ancient world.”<sup>199</sup>

Speaking of the significance of cultural settings in Luke-Acts for characterization, John Darr says: “These cultural settings raise specific expectations concerning speech and behavior, and so provide reference points for the reader building a character.”<sup>200</sup> Accordingly, we must identify and discuss the narrative introduction (vv. 16–21) Luke makes before the reader in terms of setting the stage for the speech: Athens as the location of Paul’s speech, Paul as the speaker, and the Athenian audience. Even though Luke’s narrative note will be treated alongside other verses, our attention to this introduction enables us see the “bigger” picture.

First, Luke says that, while Paul was waiting for his coworkers in Athens, he took “something of a tour of the city”<sup>201</sup> suggesting that Athens was not on their original itinerary. That was so at least until the sight of Athens being filled with idols (κατείδωλος)<sup>202</sup> “began to” stir up Paul’s emotion (παρωξύνετο τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ in v. 16). We have noted in our previous discussion about Narrative Criticism that some narrative settings such as the Garden of Eden or the Land of Oz have the capacity to transcend their role in the story by taking on a life of

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<sup>198</sup> Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 601.

<sup>199</sup> Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 601.

<sup>200</sup> Darr, *Character*, 40.

<sup>201</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 512.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. E. Schnabel, “Contextualizing Paul,” 172–74; Broneer, “Athens ‘City of Idol Worship,’” *BA* 21 (1958): 2–28; G.T. Montague, “Paul and Athens,” *TBT* 49 (1970): 14–23; and the Princeton publication, *The Athenian Agora*, 1953, onwards for full descriptions of the city with references to shrines, temples, statues, etc.



their own.<sup>203</sup> “Settings furnish valuable clues about how the reader should assess the significance of characters and evaluate their relationships one to another.”<sup>204</sup> The Lukan setting of the Areopagus speech does exactly that. In other words, hearing Luke’s introductory words, no implied reader would vainly imagine that Paul was moved or impressed by the city’s rich cultural and philosophical heritage. This sets the tone for our interpretation of what follows. The insight J. Darr renders about the importance of the sweeping statement in Luke 5:17 for the reader’s understanding the Pharisees in the rest of Luke[-Acts] can be applied to 17:16 in view of the rest of the Athenian episode.<sup>205</sup> “Christianity is depicted in this episode in direct confrontation with pagan idolatry, Greek philosophy, and Athenian intellectual curiosity . . .”<sup>206</sup>

Second, Luke’s characterization of Paul in this unit requires our attention. Paul according to verse 17 no longer could wait passively for the arrival of Silas and Timothy because of what he was seeing in Athens; he takes actions by entering into an ongoing “dispute” or “reasoning” (διαλέγομαι taken as the ingressive imperfect<sup>207</sup>) with Jews and godfearers in the synagogue and with whoever happened to be in the marketplace. That we must take verse 16 serving as “a general introduction or heading for what follows” is suggested by the μὲν οὖν construction in verse 17.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Cf. Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 70.

<sup>204</sup> Darr, *Character*, 39–40.

<sup>205</sup> Darr, *Character*, 93.

<sup>206</sup> Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 601.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 543–44. According to Wallace’s suggestion, διελέγετο taken as the inceptive imperfect should be rendered “he began debating/reasoning” to stress beginning with implication that the action carries on. See my earlier note in “Translation” section.

<sup>208</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 513. P. Gray, in “Implied Audiences,” 209, sees the causal chain connecting the events in verses 16–17 strengthened by the narrative transition μὲν οὖν. Barrett takes this as a sign for the beginning of Paul’s public ministry (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:828). Therefore, contra Conzelmann, what verse 17 describes in terms of Paul’s entering into debate is not an evidence for Lukan interpolation. Conzelmann opines that Paul’s entering into the Athenian synagogue is simply in line with Lukan pattern (“arrival at synagogue→preaching→positive response→Jewish inciting→turning to the Gentiles”). But he later says that, since that pattern does not fit neatly in

Tannehill also sees another narrative emphasis in verse 17. The mission in Europe, which had begun with the vision in 16:9–10, still had Jewish settings in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. In those cities,

Paul’s mission was cut short while its *synagogue phase* was still in progress. In Athens the situation begins to change. Even there Paul speaks in the synagogue . . . but at the same time he is speaking in the marketplace . . . . The rest of the scene, including the mission speech, highlights his encounter with Gentiles who have no relation to the synagogue.<sup>209</sup>

However, it seems that Tannehill’s “synagogue phase” extends to, or Conzelmann’s “pattern” repeats in the episodes at Corinth (cf. 18:4–7) and Ephesus (cf. 19:8–9) even though one can see with Tannehill that there is “the emphasis on extensive [gentile] mission work beyond the synagogue in these locations.”<sup>210</sup>

We suggest a somewhat different significance to verse 17, which can be highlighted by asking: Then what are we to make out of verse 17 in terms of Lukan characterization of Paul the speaker? F.F. Bruce’s following comment sheds some light:

[H]ow subtly and accurately the *ethos* of each city is suggested. Here Paul adapts himself to the Athenian atmosphere. “In Ephesus Paul taught ‘in the school of Tyrannus’; in the city of Socrates he discussed moral questions in the market place. How incongruous it would seem if the methods were transposed!” (Ramsay, *SPT*, p. 238)<sup>211</sup>

In other words, what is suggested in this verse is “reminiscent of the activity of Socrates who argued with anybody who would listen to him . . .”<sup>212</sup> K. Rowe senses a “conscious attempt on Luke’s part to vivify the memory of Socrates’ trial in the minds of his auditors and forge a

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the Athenian episode, verse 17 shows Luke mechanically relying on his scanty resources (Conzelmann, “The Address of Paul on the Areopagus,” 219).

<sup>209</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:212–13; italics added.

<sup>210</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:213.

<sup>211</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Acts* (1990), 376; italics in original.

<sup>212</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 283. For further discussion on “Socrates” motif, see Barrett, *Acts*, 2:824, 828–29; and K.

connection to the Athenian reputation for enforcing the death penalty upon those who brought in new gods.”<sup>213</sup> That Paul, like in other places, was not driven out of synagogue to begin his preaching to the Gentiles, he daily stood in agora to reason with anyone (v. 17), and he was later taken (ἐπιλαμβάνω) by the Athenian council (v. 19) more than likely point to a Lukan interest and intention of portraying Paul as a new “Socrates.” More discussion on this theme will follow in our commentary section.

Third, our reading needs to be in line with the author as to how he characterizes the Athenian audience. Our brief discussion on the first element—the idol-ridden Athens where Paul’s speech was delivered—made it clear that the city was not a conducive environment to evangelize because it was entrenched in idolatry. This point confirms the third point in our previous discussion about “narrative context.” Luke has established the pagan idolatry in relation to pagan ignorance of God.<sup>214</sup> Luke raises a similar point regarding the Athenian philosophers. That some mocked Paul as a “babbling” (v. 18) and others concluded Paul was preaching “foreign deities” because he spoke about Jesus and the resurrection (v. 18) is telling. In words of Rowe:

Of course, by this time in the narrative of Acts, when an auditor hears Paul insulted, it arouses immediate distrust in the judgment of the insulters. Such distrust of the philosophers’ judgment, in turn, accompanies the auditor through Paul’s speech and shapes the perception of the speech in a crucially important way: the mention of σπερμολόγος by characters whose perspective on the matter is to be distrusted cleverly eliminates the possibility of reading Paul’s citation of Aratus and allusion to pagan “poets” as evidence of his superficiality. . . . Subtlety, implies Luke, should hardly be confused with ignorant babbling.<sup>215</sup>

Of the second philosopher group, Witherington rightly suggests that their concluding Paul as a preacher of ξένων δαίμονίων is dangerous in view that “the charge of being herald of foreign or

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Rowe, *World*, 29–32.

<sup>213</sup> K. Rowe, *World*, 32.

<sup>214</sup> See my chapter 2 for further discussion on this topic.

strange divinities is the very one which led to the demise of Socrates (see Plato, *Apol.* 24B–C; cf. Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.1.1).<sup>216</sup> Another possible narrative marker for Lukan characterization of the audience of the speech is suggested in Cornu and Shulam’s commentary. Noting how Luke comments on “all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning” in the city spending their time on something “newer” (τι καινότερον) in his narrative aside (v. 21), they suggest: “In Jewish thought, the new is generally inferior to the old, the latter frequently being considered to possess a greater authority, especially where God’s promises were seen to be fulfilled long after they had been made (see [Acts 3:19–24]).”<sup>217</sup> Louis Feldman, pointing out to the Greek admiration for the long and venerable history of Jews amid rampant anti-Judaic prejudice, described the rhetorical environment of the first century to assume “nothing can be both new and true.”<sup>218</sup>

If we allow Luke’s aforementioned narrative markers to set the tone for our reading of the speech, it becomes evident that any readings attempting to argue that Paul was striving to build a bridge between the biblical God and the Stoic understanding of deity (e.g., readings offered by Dibelius, Balch, and Neyrey)<sup>219</sup> are not compatible with how the author would have his implied reader understand the speech. With that said, we now proceed to offer a commentary based on narrative-critical insights.

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<sup>215</sup> K. Rowe, *World*, 28–29

<sup>216</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 515. See also Pesch, *Die Apostelegeschichte (Apg 13–28)*, 135, for a similar view.

<sup>217</sup> Cornu with Shulam, *Jewish Roots*, 2:958–59. They refer to the following passages: Ps 25:6; 44:1; 74:12; 93:2; 119:52; Prov 8:22; Isa 37:26; 42:9; 43:9; 46:9–10; 48:3; 51:9; 63:11; Lam 5:21; Amos 9:11; Mal 3:4; PA 1:1 (cf. *ibid.*, n. 41).

<sup>218</sup> Louis Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 198; cited in F. Scott Spencer, *The Gospel of Luke and Acts of Apostles* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 60–61.

<sup>219</sup> See my first chapter for their readings.

### 3.d. A Commentary

#### 3.d.1. The Narrative Introduction to the Areopagus Speech (vv. 16–21)

##### 3.d.1.a. Paul’s Reaction to the City Teemed with Idols (vv. 16–17)

We hinted in our previous discussion about Luke’s ‘narrative introduction’ that J. Darr’s insight about Luke’s “sweeping claim” regarding the Pharisaic group in Luke 5:17 can be applied to Acts 17:16. In this entry statement in v. 16 (“While he was waiting for them at Athens. . .”) the reader is reminded of three things, which will bear important weight for our reading of the rest of the unit.

First, as briefly discussed in the previous section Paul did not include Athens in his itinerary. While, therefore, no speculation over the rationale behind this omission can edify our reading, the impression is that Paul did not take the city as “missionally” or “strategically” significant considering the weightiness of the motif of journey for Luke.<sup>220</sup>

Second, Paul was vexed over the idolatrous city. Even though Paul’s acquaintance with Greek philosophy and practices through Stoicism might be inferred from elsewhere in the narrative,<sup>221</sup> he does not seem to have been fully ready for what he was about to witness in

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<sup>220</sup> Despite Lukan interest of the universal scope of God’s salvific plan, Luke does not record any episode about Jesus going into the Gentile territory except one possible exception of Luke 8:26–39. Even there, the people in the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them even before Jesus entered into their town. Again, in Luke 9:56, we are told that, since the Samaritans in a certain town would not welcome Jesus and his company on the basis of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem (9:52–53), Jesus and his group “went to another village.” Despite Jesus’ obvious interest in and positive portrayal of the Samaritans (cf. 10:33–37 [the Parable of the Good Samaritan]; 17:11–19 [the Grateful Samaritan whose leprosy was healed]), Luke’s careful arrangement keeping Jesus within the Jewish territory is noteworthy.

<sup>221</sup> Between Acts 9:30 (Paul was sent to Tarsus by Christian brothers due to the Jewish threat in Jerusalem) and 11:25 (Barnabas went to Tarsus to find Paul to work as a partner in Antioch, which marks the beginning of Paul’s recorded ministry), we do not know how many years lapsed even though Paul mentions fourteen years had passed until he went back to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus (cf. Gal 2:1; Acts 15:2). However, Paul was born in Tarsus (9:11; 22:3) and was staying in this university city of Rome until Barnabas arrived. F.F. Bruce, *Acts* (1984), 208, points out that it was thanks to the Tarsus native Stoic teacher Athenodorus and his successor Nestor that Stoicism from 15 B.C. on became popular in Tarsus eventually making the city one of three university cities along with Athens and Alexandria.

Athens the birth place of Stoicism.<sup>222</sup> Our narrator uses a strong παροξύνω to describe that Paul’s “spirit within him” was vexed<sup>223</sup> to behold that the city was filled with idols.<sup>224</sup> In other words, this παροξύνω is the narrator’s choice word to communicate his point of view, or to borrow Genette, “internal focalization,” in which the implied reader is given the perspective of one of the characters.<sup>225</sup> W. Kurz aptly points out, “In the narrator’s ideological point of view, idolaters do not get high marks for understanding, even when they are philosophers.”<sup>226</sup> Therefore, Luke’s implied reader once again after the Lystra episode (14:14–15) is to feel the heaviness of heart over this lost condition of Gentiles not only at this verse alone but also throughout the speech because, after all, it was the city’s sorry state that led Paul to engage in mission activities of reasoning or debating with people to persuade,<sup>227</sup> which in turn led to the speech. The implied reader, by this point, knows Paul’s status as chosen to bring Jesus’ name before the Gentiles (9:15). In addition, to Paul, who was brought up in the OT tradition and “in the spirit of the

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<sup>222</sup> In addition to its traditional Greek deities, shrines and altars were built to secure political favor. Ever since the Roman general Sulla seized and conquered Athens in 86 B.C., this city came under direct influence of Rome. Some Roman leaders such as Cicero (106–43 B.C.), Mark Anthony (83–30 B.C.), Pompey (106–48 B.C.), and the emperor Hadrian (A.D. 117–138) paid visits and the city honored their visit by erecting statues or even in establishing cult religions (Daniel J. Geagan, “Roman Athens: Some Aspects of Life and Culture I. 86 B.C. — A.D. 267,” in *Aufstieg Und Niedergang Der Römischen Welt II Principat* [eds., Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase; NY: Water de Gruyter, 1979], 393–98).

<sup>223</sup> In Acts 15:39 παροξύνω’s cognate noun παροξυσμός is used to describe what happened between Paul and Barnabas which led them to split and form two missionary teams. Considering other uses of τὸ πνεῦμα to express a person’s inmost being (e.g., Luke 1:47; 8:55; 23:46; Acts 7:59; 18:25; 19:21; 20:22), it is likely, contra Nock, that Luke employs this term to suggest more than Paul’s emotion that stirred him to take an action (cf. Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World I and II* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972], 824). Ensuing discussion on this verse will clarify my position.

<sup>224</sup> See my preceding note on κατείδωλον for its nuanced meaning with emphasis.

<sup>225</sup> According to Genette, there are three major points of view in a given narrative: external focalization, internal focalization, and zero focalization (non-focalized narrative). (Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* [tr. Jane Lewin; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1980], 189–90).

<sup>226</sup> William Kurz, S.J., *Reading Luke-Acts*, 153.

<sup>227</sup> For Luke’s use of the word διαλέγομαι, see Acts 19:8–9; 20:7; 24:12; 18:4. Of the thirteen times of its occurrences in the New Testament, ten appear in Acts. That all those occurrences in Acts appear from Acts 17:2 on means Paul changed his “rule of engagement.” Paul shifted from simple speaking in proclamation and preaching to “lecturing that leads to discussion, especially contentious debate” (Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *The Message*, 3:312).

second commandment of the Decalogue,<sup>228</sup> and was thoroughly trained as a Pharisee (Acts 22:3), such an idolatrous state of the city living in spiritual darkness/ignorance of God was deeply disturbing.

Third, related to the second point is that the word κατείδωλον bears further ramification for Lukan characterization of the Athenians. The statues Paul saw in Athens “would only have confirmed Paul in the early Jewish Christian impression that idolatry and immorality went together, as the reaction to both in the Acts 15 decree suggests.”<sup>229</sup> After discussing James’ speech in Acts 15:13–21 and Pauline passages (1 Thess 4:1–9; 1 Corinthians 5–10 [esp. 10:23–28]), Witherington concludes:

In short, Paul, like James, insists that pagans flee idolatry and immorality and the temple context where such things are thought to be prevalent. Moses after all primarily required, in the Ten Commandments and elsewhere, this sort of fidelity. Finally, I would suggest that Luke himself portrays Paul, in a narrative that follows shortly after this one (Acts 17), as preaching in accord with the essential requirements of the decree.<sup>230</sup>

In sum, the above-mentioned three points, suggested in verse 16, are weighty for reading the rest of the episode, especially the speech. Verse 16 shows that the narrator’s low “estimation” of the philosophers<sup>231</sup> and, at the same time, reminds of the narrator’s engagement “in a major polemic against all forms of magic and against pagan misunderstanding of Christian

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<sup>228</sup> Bruce, *Acts* (1990), 376. Cornu with Shulam go further to suggest how Paul’s religious sensibilities/sensitivities could have been overwhelmed by introducing some zealous Jews appearing in the Talmud who went to extreme measures to observe the second commandment. R. Menachem b. R. Simlai, for example, was called “the son of the holy” because “he would not gaze even at the image on a coin bearing the emblem of some idolatrous cult” (Cornu with Shulam, *Jewish Roots*, 2:952–53).

<sup>229</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 512–13.

<sup>230</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 466. In 466, n. 436, Witherington once more emphasizes the two interconnected themes saying, “James is clear enough in Acts 15:20—he is concerned about things polluted by idols, which after all are found in pagan temples, and the pollution of sexual immorality.”

<sup>231</sup> Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 153.

phenomena.”<sup>232</sup> In v. 17, Luke presents Paul as someone capable for withstanding “the intellectuals of his day” and, possibly, as “a new Socrates,”<sup>233</sup> a theme that is yet to emerge more clearly in the following verses. Suffice it to say that the idolatrous state of Athens provoked Paul and led him to “take up the position of the Cynic philosopher, who would confront folk in the *agora*.”<sup>234</sup>

### 3.d.1.b. The Athenian Reactions to Paul (vv. 18–20)

In v. 18 Luke’s polemical portrait of the Athenians<sup>235</sup> in their spiritual lost-ness/ignorance continues to emerge in his description of how representatives of two prominent philosopher groups of Athens (the Epicureans and the Stoics) responded to Paul, who reasoned with the Athenians in *agora* (v. 17). With τινὲς δὲ καὶ Luke introduces specific groups of people who “began arguing” (συνέβαλλον, taken as ingressive/inceptive imperfect<sup>236</sup>) with Paul. Without specifying which group said what,<sup>237</sup> Luke says some of the philosophers<sup>238</sup> denigrated and

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<sup>232</sup> Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 152. Kurz, here, relies on Garrett, *Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke’s Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 103–109; 113, n. 4. According to W. Kurz, “the narrator engages in a major polemic against all forms of magic and against pagan misunderstanding of Christian phenomena.” An example for the former can be found in Acts 8:18–24 (Simon the magician). Kurz lists the Lystra episode (14:11–18), the Malta episode (28:4–6), the Athens episode (17:18), and the Festus episode (26:24, 26) as examples for the latter category.

<sup>233</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 514. Also Johnson in *Acts*, 312, says, “The term ‘debate’ (διαλέγομαι) as in 17:2 recalls the philosophical style associated with Socrates (Plato, *Apology* 19D), an association that is made more emphatic in the verses to follow.”

<sup>234</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 312.

<sup>235</sup> Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 152; See Kurz’ point in my previous note.

<sup>236</sup> Of this use of imperfect, see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 544–45. “The ingressive imperfect is especially used in narrative literature when a change in activity is noted. It is possibly the most common imperfect in narrative because it introduces a topic shift” (544). Paul was reasoning (διελέγετο) with Jews at synagogue and Athenians at market place (v. 17) and Luke changes the scene in v. 18 by focusing on two specific group of philosophers.

<sup>237</sup> Contra, Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, relying on the Bezan text’s distinction, argue that it was the Epicureans who treated Paul as a “seed gatherer” (σπερμολόγος) and that Stoics took Paul as a herald of foreign deities (idem, *The Message*, 3:343). Our discussion of the two philosophical groups in appendix leads us to agree with Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger to a certain extent. Since the Epicureans are characterized by their main emphases of freedom from fear caused by superstitious beliefs and practices and of possessing the right perception of reality for attaining a state of perfect tranquility gods enjoy, it would be reasonable to think that it was the



dismissed Paul as someone who lacks sophistication (ὁ σπερμολόγος), doubting any worthiness in his message while others took him to be a proclaimer of strange deities.<sup>239</sup>

At this juncture, Luke provides his comments to close off this sub-portion of the unit beginning with ὅτι explaining, or “telling” (rather than “showing”) how the latter group concluded that they did; it was because Paul’s teaching about Jesus and resurrection was understood to be polytheistic. Contra Barrett,<sup>240</sup> therefore, the readers are told that there were some among the audience who associated Ἰησοῦς with a goddess.<sup>241</sup> How gross this idea might sound,<sup>242</sup> the omniscient narrator<sup>243</sup> characterizes some of the Athenian philosophers as totally mistaken. According to Kurz, “Their ‘Anastasis’ blunder is a case in point and allows the Lukan audience to feel superior in knowledge even to Greek philosophers.”<sup>244</sup> That the first group

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Epicureans who dismissed Paul for his “god-talk.” But our narrator does not provide us with this information, which he did previously, if necessary, for group characterization (cf. Luke 23:47–49 and our discussion on different groups in chapter two).

<sup>238</sup> That Luke lists a woman named Damaris next to Dionysius an Areopagite in v. 34 suggests that Paul’s speech was heard by more than just the council members. Therefore, one can understand that Luke has more than two philosopher groups in mind with καὶ τινες ἔλεγον v. 18b. However, the arrogant tone in categorizing Paul as σπερμολόγος probably suggests that Luke did not change the subject back to the general Athenians (cf. BAGD, “τίς,” 1.8). This reading better discerns Luke’s plot element or the Socrates motif as Paul is depicted as misunderstood, mocked, dismissed and even threatened.

<sup>239</sup> Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech*, 49, n. 1, notes Lukan style of contrasting between two different opinions (cf. 17:32; 2:12; 13:45; 28:24).

<sup>240</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2:830–31, denies the possibility that ἀνάστασις was mistaken for a female deity by the Athenian philosophers saying, “The suggestion is superficially attractive but could be maintained only if there were reason to think that Paul in his preaching constantly referred in quasi-personal terms to Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἀνάστασις. This is unlikely. . . . The Athenian comment is cast in a form intended to recall the story of Socrates, and means no more than, *This is a strange new religion, with all this talk about a man called Jesus and a resurrection*” (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:831; italics added).

<sup>241</sup> Cf. Witherington, *Acts*, 515; Bruce, *Acts* (1988), 331, n. 35; and Cornu with Shulam, *Jewish Roots*, 2:957. The latter two suggest the Athenians’ possible mistake in hearing Ἰησοῦς as the Healer goddess (cf. 9:34).

<sup>242</sup> D’s omission was previously noted in our discussion and suggested to be possibly out of a pious reason.

<sup>243</sup> Elizabeth Malbon gives the following description about “the Markan narrator” as reliable. Her insight can be applied to Acts’ narrator: “The narrator may be characterized in various ways, according to the particular nature of the narrative. The narrators of the Gospels are generally described as omniscient (all-knowing), or omnipresent (present everywhere), or unlimited. . . . This narrator knows past, present, and future as well as the inner thoughts and feelings of the characters” (Elizabeth Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 34).

<sup>244</sup> Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 153.

considered the narrator’s protagonist Paul as a babbler or a quasi-philosopher, and the second group as a polytheist is an important signifier for how Paul’s sermon is going to be received by them as well as how the implied reader is to view Paul’s addressees. The narrator’s “telling” about the Athenian misunderstanding of Paul’s preaching about<sup>245</sup> resurrection and Jesus reminds of the Lystrans (and of the Malta natives in 28:1–10<sup>246</sup>) whose complete misunderstanding demonstrates their pagan frame of reference.

There is yet another point Luke is persistent about: the Socrates theme. Lukan description of Paul daily reasoning with passersby in the agora (ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ κατὰ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν πρὸς τοὺς παρατυγχάνοντα) in v. 17 introduces this theme.<sup>247</sup> And that Paul was thought to be a proclaimer of foreign deities in v. 18 again brings the Socratic echo as Socrates was accused on the basis of a similar charge.<sup>248</sup> Of the several scholars who identify the Socratic theme in the episode,<sup>249</sup> Witherington (“[Luke] seems to be presenting Paul as a new Socrates”), Rowe (“a conscious attempt on Luke’s part to vivify the memory of Socrates’ trial in the minds of his auditors”)<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 313, argues that the author’s use of εὐαγγελίζω shows his perspective on Paul’s mission activity at Athens.

<sup>246</sup> We analyzed the Malta episode in chapter two.

<sup>247</sup> Speaking of the Socrates theme, Johnson, *Acts*, 312–13, says, “Here is the point of innovation in Paul’s procedure: for the first time he deliberately takes up the position of the Cynic philosophers, who would confront folk in the *agora* (for the range of meanings of this term, see the note on 16:19). It is a step sufficiently important to have been prepared for by the psychological comment in v. 16. For the ‘open-air’ style of preaching of the Cynic, see Epictetus, *Discourses*, 3, 22, 26–30; Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 32:9.” Socrates was the teacher of Antisthenes who outlined the basic themes of the “Cynicism” and, thus, the founder of Cynic philosophy.

<sup>248</sup> According Xenophon in *Memorabilia*, 1.1.1, “Socrates is guilty of rejecting the gods acknowledged by the state and of bringing other, new deities (καινά δαιμόνια).” See also Plato’s *Apology*, 26C, 29A for Socrates’ own words. Cited in Rowe, *World*, 32 and n. 116.

<sup>249</sup> Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte* 13–28, 135; Pervo, *Acts*, 424–25; Cornu with Shulam, *Jewish Roots*, 2:955; Haenchen, *Acts*, 517; Bruce, *Acts* (1988), 330; Witherington, *Acts*, 514; Rowe, *World*, 29–32; Karl Sandnes, “Paul and Socrates: The Aim of Paul’s Areopagus Speech,” *JSNT* 50 (1993): 13–26; David Reis, “The Areopagus as Echo Chamber: *Mimesis* and Intertextuality in Acts,” *JHC* 9 (2002): 259–77. See Pervo, *Acts*, 424, n. 2, for references to scholarly works related to Socrates parallels in the Book of Acts.

<sup>250</sup> Referring to ξένων δαιμονίων (v. 18), καινή αὐτή ἡ διδαχή, ξενίζοντα, εισφέρεις (vv. 19–20), ξένοι, καινότερον (v. 21), Rowe speaks of “the remarkable similarity of language . . . [that] suggest nothing less than a conscious attempt [of Luke]” (Rowe, *World*, 32).

and Reis<sup>251</sup> are noteworthy as they persistently pursue this theme throughout their reading of Paul's sermon. Based on a reading that notes the Socratic parallel in vv. 17–18, the current writer takes ἐπιλαβόμενοι in v. 19 in the sense that they took Paul by force.<sup>252</sup> Witherington also reads it in a likewise manner based on “the immediate narrative context with its illusion to Socrates . . . and the usage of the verb in the immediately surrounding chapters where Paul is regularly being hauled before officials to answer charges” (cf. Acts 16:19; 18:17).<sup>253</sup> Therefore, the immediate narrative context with allusions to Socrates supported by the history of the Areopagus court<sup>254</sup> provides sufficient ground for taking this word to mean something more than a polite invitation. Contra Johnson,<sup>255</sup> therefore, it means leading Paul to Areopagus court “with the intention of making sure that an official evaluation was made by the council members about what he was saying”<sup>256</sup> or “with the intent of forcing the apprehended person to appear before the political authorities.”<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> According to Pervo, *Acts*, 424, n. 2, “Reis notes not only the standard parallels adducted for the narrative but also features of the speech that can be found in writings associated with Socrates.”

<sup>252</sup> See my previous note on this word.

<sup>253</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 515. For a similar position, see K. Rowe, *World*, 31–32; BAGD, 374 (“sometimes w. violence, w. gen. following”).

<sup>254</sup> Of the Areopagus court during the first century, T. D. Barnes says it kept the supreme authority of the city. “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” (Timothy D. Barnes, “An Apostle on Trial,” *JTS* 22 [1969]: 407–19, at page 413; cited in Barrett, *Acts*, 2:832). Geagan raises a similar point saying, “Although the best attested functions of the council of the Areopagus are judicial, it can be argued that increasingly it began to function in the way as *ordo decurionum* [which refers to municipal council under Roman rule]; this is probably because of parallels in its history and composition to that of the Roman Senate and of municipal and civic *ordines*” (Geagan, “Roman Athens,” 388).

<sup>255</sup> Relying on the tone of the proceedings, Johnson, *Acts*, 314, argues: “These two verses [19–20] show an elaborate politeness, and place an emphasis on the desire to learn (γινώσκεις used twice), rather than on the desire to investigate or cross-examine.”

<sup>256</sup> Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *The Message*, 3:344; cf. Rowe, *World*, 29. Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech*, 54–65, also strongly argues in this line based on external evidence (cf. a similar use by Aristotle and Lysias to mean “amidst some members of the court”) as well as internal evidence (cf. Luke 2:46; 8:7; 10:3; 22:27; 24:36; Acts 1:15; 2:22; 17:33; 27:21). Recognizing that two different interpretations are possible linguistically, he concludes however, “It would be distinctively odd if Luke meant ‘in the midst of Mars’ hill’; for Paul and his listeners must then have ascended the steep, high hill and been on its summit, where they would not have had much room” (56). Witherington (515) argues, “V. 19 must be allowed to have its full force after the Socratic allusion to

The reader observes at least two things about the Athenian philosophers. First, they ironically acknowledge their ignorance. Twice they demand to know (γνῶναι in vv. 19 and 20), which, in turn, functions as Luke’s implicit commentary to the reader about them.<sup>258</sup> Second, the Athenian philosophers want to play the role of arbiters and judges rather than learners from Paul. However, God will judge them and the whole world on the appointed time day, by the resurrected Jesus.

### 3.d.1.c. Luke’s Narrative Aside (v. 21)

Luke’s polemical tone reappears in a form of narrative comment. In his fairly long narrative aside in v. 21, the narrator once again (as in v. 18b) provides or “tells” his point of view about the Athenians using a conceptual irony; they accuse Paul for the introduction of strange deities whereas they spend their time on nothing but novelties. It is, therefore, highly improbable that Luke either provides this narrative comment just to show his acquaintance with Athenian life and characteristics,<sup>259</sup> or it simply reminds of the Athenian proverbial curiosity.<sup>260</sup> The narrator’s “telling” functions to provide valuable insight into the design of the author, and some hints to understand the occasion.<sup>261</sup> Since the narrator’s goal is persuasion, narrative aside further creates the rhetorical control effect on readers.<sup>262</sup> As is the case here in v. 21, when a narrative aside is

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foreign divinities.” Also, see my note on v. 19 in the translation section.

<sup>257</sup> Thus, Jerome translated ἐπιλαμβάνομαι here as *apprehendere* in the Vulgate (see Rowe, *World*, 29). Contra, Barrett says, “The verse suggests nothing more than a desire for information and enlightenment . . .” (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:833).

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 137.

<sup>259</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2:833.

<sup>260</sup> Haenchen, *Acts*, 520. See Chariton of Aphrodisias’ *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 1, 11, 6–7, for a capturing description of the Athenians’ reputation regarding τι καινότερον.

<sup>261</sup> Merrill Tenney, “The Footnotes of John’s Gospel,” 350.

<sup>262</sup> Steven Sheeley, *Narrative Asides*, 183.

placed at a critical point for the thematic or plot development,<sup>263</sup> its function is of even greater importance. Rowe's following argument captures what is conveyed to the reader through employing the narrative aside:

Through his careful use of ξένοι and καινότερον Luke creates a sense of irony in which the attentive reader can recognize Athenian hypocrisy: the council is prepared to threaten Paul with the charge of bringing in καινά / ξένα δαιμόνια, but it is the Athenians themselves who admit ξένοι into their city and together with them spend time telling and hearing something καινότερον. . . . The reputation of Athens is thus turned against the city itself, as Luke makes use of common knowledge to reverse the charges brought against Paul. It is the Athenians who "do not themselves hold to legitimating tradition" but seek after even newer things.<sup>264</sup>

In summary, a narrative-critical reading of the Lukan introduction to the speech as setting the stage in vv. 16–21 "creates a distinct *Vorverständnis* with which the reader then hears Paul's speech."<sup>265</sup> So far in the introductory verses, the narrator has revealed several things: the rampant Athenian idolatry (v. 16) with pregnant κατείδωλον, some philosophers' intellectual arrogance denigrating Paul as a babbler and others' (dangerous) ignorance in considering Paul as a polytheist (v. 18), and the Athenian irony in taking a great interest in "newer" things and yet taking the "Socrates-like" Paul to a politically charged hearing for introducing strange deities. In other words, before Paul begins his address to the Areopagus council, the narrator makes it evident that Paul's audience lived in spiritual darkness with regard to the true God and acted in ignorance as to both Paul's ability and message. That the theme of ignorance will become more evident in the course of the speech is well hinted by the narrator, and the whole introduction lets the readers know that the speech is going to be hard for the Athenian audience to comprehend let alone to accept or respond positively. Yet, delivered by Paul, the protagonist, the speech will

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<sup>263</sup> Steven Sheeley, *Narrative Asides*, 178.

<sup>264</sup> Rowe, *World*, 32–33. Rowe cites from Malherbe, "'Not in a Corner': Early Christian Apologetic in Acts 26:26," in *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 199.

proclaim God’s universal salvation, and offer to these Gentiles the knowledge that can overcome their ignorance.

### 3.d.2. The Speech (vv. 22–31)

#### 3.d.2.a. Paul’s Introductory Words (vv. 22–23)

Paul, standing in the midst of Areopagus court,<sup>266</sup> begins his speech with a form of address common to Acts in saying “ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι” (cf. 1:11 [ἄνδρες Γαλιλαῖοι]),<sup>267</sup> after which he continues his words of *captatio benevolentiae* by making the audience known that their speaker took a great interest in them (cf. θεωρέω in v. 22 as well as v. 16) so as to conclude that they are κατὰ πάντα (in every aspect) δεισιδαιμονεστέρους, a term which is as equally, if not more, ambiguous as ἐπιλαμβάνομαι of v. 19 as it could mean “very religious” or “superstitious.”<sup>268</sup> In view that v. 22 is part of *captatio benevolentiae* through which Paul would desire to gain their favorable attention, and he had to defend himself against the charge that he was introducing strange deities to the city, δεισιδαιμονεστέρους ought to be rendered “very religious.”<sup>269</sup> Within the narrative, that is how the Areopagus council members would likely have heard, although it is possible that some could have sensed the ambiguity of its meaning (see Acts 25:19). What seems

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<sup>265</sup> Rowe, *World*, 33.

<sup>266</sup> See my note on ἐν μέσῳ in translation section. This further supports Socrates motif.

<sup>267</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2:834, noting its common use in 20 other examples in Acts, says, “[B]ut here, with Ἀθηναῖοι, it adds to the reminiscence of Socrates (e.g. Plato, *Apology*, 17a).”

<sup>268</sup> See my note in the translation section for the grammatical note about its superlative meaning.

<sup>269</sup> Pervo, *Acts*, 433; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 140. Also see Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2.11§130; Sophocles, *O.C.* 260; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.17.1; Strabo, *Geog.*, 9.1.16 for similar positive sayings about the Athenian religiosity by ancient writers.

to be obvious is that Paul would not have used it in his opening if this had had only a derogatory meaning.<sup>270</sup>

However, the narrator already has paved a path for the implied reader to take it as “superstitious,” not “very religious” when he described Paul’s vexed emotion over the numerous idols the Athenians worshipped (v. 16), and their preoccupation with “newer” things (v. 21).<sup>271</sup> This important insight for making distinctions is further buttressed by rhetorical analysis. We noted Mark Given’s insight in chapter 1 regarding two levels of reading δεισιδαμονεστέρους: that of the oratees (the Athenian pagan philosophers) and of the naratee(s) (Theophilus or an implied, inside reader whose reading is much in accord with the mind/intent of the narrator).<sup>272</sup> Paul’s Athenian audience more than likely took it as a compliment or, at least, in a non-derogatory sense,<sup>273</sup> whereas Luke’s implied reader was to sense “the irony of the situation (cf. v. 16). For all their religiosity, the Athenians were in reality thoroughly superstitious and lacking in knowledge of the true God.”<sup>274</sup> Being “alert to the subtlety and richness of the multilevel discourse of the speech” is to discern the dramatic irony Lukan Paul exploits in his first line of the speech.<sup>275</sup> With κατὰ πάντα, the meaning of δεισιδαμονεστέρους is reinforced, and this

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<sup>270</sup> Witherington offers more a neutral reading saying, “It is worth pointing out that this opening, which was capable of several interpretations, also probably allowed the speaker to avoid overtly doing what Lucian says one must not do when speaking to the Areopagus—offer complimentary exordia to secure the goodwill of this court (*De gymn.* 19)” (Witherington, *Acts*, 520).

<sup>271</sup> An altar dedicated to an unknown deity and the word ἀγνοοῦντες both found in v. 23 further provide narrative clue for this line of argument.

<sup>272</sup> Mark D. Given, *Paul’s True Rhetoric*, 68–69. Rowe employs different terms for arguing the same point: “the characters of the story” for oratees, and “auditors” for the implied readers (34).

<sup>273</sup> In view of Lucian’s advice not to offer overtly complimentary exordia (Witherington [*Acts*, 520] and Bruce [*Acts* (1990), 380]), we are to be careful for not placing too much emphasis on the complementary nature of this term.

<sup>274</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 285.

<sup>275</sup> Rowe, *World*, 34. Marshall, once again, makes a similar point saying that Paul’s expression “the objects of your worship (τὰ σεβάσματα ὑμῶν)” in v. 23 could be heard positively by the hearers but not to the Jewish readers. To them, it would carry a derogatory nuance of “idols” (Marshall, *Acts*, 285).

reading is in line with the point of view (internal focalization) our narrator spelled out at the very outset (v. 16). In verse 22 read in combination with verse 16, the implied reader unmistakably understands that every aspect of the Athenians is utterly saturated with superstitious idolatry.

In verse 23, Paul continues his introductory remarks (cf. the suggested outline) by providing his explanation beginning with γάρ. He is speaking with the first-hand knowledge about the Athenian religiosity because he carefully observed (ἀναθεωρέω)<sup>276</sup> their worship objects (σεβάσματα)<sup>277</sup> including an altar inscription (“TO AN UNKNOWN GOD”).<sup>278</sup> And Paul immediately announces that his speech is going to be not about a new deity but rather about the deity whom they worship even though not knowing (ἄγνοοῦντες). The difficult reading of the neuters in our text’s ὁ . . . τοῦτο does not need to be changed into masculines,<sup>279</sup> as, contra Barrett,<sup>280</sup> it is possible to see in this that Paul makes a conscious effort to start “with his hearers’ belief in an impersonal divine essence, pantheistically conceived,” and later comes back to the true living God.<sup>281</sup> This use of neuter gender, well in line with the Athenian audience, can bring

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<sup>276</sup> Its cognate verb (θεωρέω) is used in vv. 16 and 22. With ἀνα-, it means “look at again and again= ‘examine, observe carefully’” (BAGD, 63). Cornu and Shulam’s following words help us to fill some cultural gap so that we can imagine the uneasiness of Paul in looking at their worship objects and of Luke’s Jewish reader(s) hearing about Paul’s words would have felt: “Since the ruling halakhah determined that ‘what is treated as a god is forbidden, but what is not treated as a god is permitted . . . (AZ 3:4), Paul’s ‘close examination of the objects of your worship’ (v. 23) was halakhically prohibited” (Cornu with Shulam, *Jewish Roots*, 2:961).

<sup>277</sup> Witherington directs our attention to the earlier Jewish sources (Wisdom of Sol 14:20 and 15:17) in which the term is used in connection with the worship of idols (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.344) concluding, “[T]his term on the lips of a Jewish Christian like Paul would likely be intended to have negative overtones as well” (Witherington, *Acts*, 520).

<sup>278</sup> Suffice it to say with van der Horst in our introductory chapter that such an alter inscription in plural forms existed and it is more than probable that a superstitious Athenian(s) out of fear for offending an unknown and “unworshipped” deity (cf. Pieter W. van der Horst, “The Altar of the ‘Unknown God’ in Athens (Acts 17:23)” (1990), 1449) or a god-fearing Greek in line with the OT monotheistic teaching could have erected one in singular form.

<sup>279</sup> See my comments in the translation section. A different reading is suggested by Ɱ A° E Ψ 9Ɱ sy Clement.

<sup>280</sup> Barrett warns that one should not make too much out of Paul’s sentence suggesting it to be taken as “a preacher’s *ad hoc* way of introducing his theme” (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:838–39).

<sup>281</sup> Bruce, *Acts* (1990), 381; Cornu with Shulam, *Jewish Roots*, 2:962.



about an additional measure of critique about the Athenians on the part of the implied reader as Polhill suggests: “Their worship object was a thing, a ‘what,’ and not a personal God at all.”<sup>282</sup>

Even though translating the term ἀγνοοῦντες requires some care<sup>283</sup> and more neutral meaning “not knowing” or “unknowing(ly)”<sup>284</sup> is to be preferred on the same basis for the suggested reading of δεισιδαιμονεστέρους, it is not hard to see that Luke is verbalizing a theme implied in his preceding narrative introduction,<sup>285</sup> that is, the theme of knowledge-ignorance. Jipp argues:

Luke stresses their ignorance as he refers to it twice in v. 23 and again in v. 30, characterizing the Athenians’ past as τοὺς . . . χρόνους τῆς ἀγνοίας. The altar functions as a means for Paul to introduce his audience’s ignorance and superstition regarding deity, and as a transition into a proclamation of this God’s identity.<sup>286</sup>

For the general flow of the narrative, Paul’s announcement about his intention to make the “Unknown God” known through his proclamation makes a subtle shift in focus. The theme of knowledge-ignorance, which has been only implied, takes the central stage, whereas the more obvious Socratic theme hitherto fades to the background with Paul’s comment in v. 23 implying, “What I am going to proclaim is not new/strange. It is only that you have lived in ignorance of the God whom I am about to tell.” W. Kurz suggests the possibility that Lukan theme of ignorance-knowledge “recalls the motif of non-recognition and recognition (ἀναγνώρισις) in

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<sup>282</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, 372; cited in Witherington, *Acts*, 524.

<sup>283</sup> Witherington advises against translating it “ignorantly” (KJV; Jipp, “Areopagus Speech,” 578) as misleading without providing clear basis (*Acts*, 524). Several translate it as “in ignorance” (Polhill, *Acts*, 372; Barrett, *Acts*, 2:822; Pervo, 423; NAS).

<sup>284</sup> See Rowe, *World*, 34; Johnson, *Acts*, 315; NAB; NET.

<sup>285</sup> We have noted in the discussion of narrative context that the pagan idolatry is closely related to their ignorance. Therefore, Lukan description of Athens in v. 16 brings back this connection to the mind of the implied reader. Though not verbally expressed, Luke’s characterization of the Athenians as living in ignorance intensifies as Luke shows (i) how two philosopher groups either dismissed Paul as a babblers or mistook him for a polytheist (v. 18); and (ii) how they, despite their own obsession with something “newer,” remained in darkness (v. 21).

<sup>286</sup> Jipp, “Areopagus Speech,” 578; Witherington considers this theme as “one of the key threads that binds the whole together” (*idem*, *Acts*, 524).

Greek literature (e.g., Homer's *Odyssey*) and drama (e.g., Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*), as discussed in Aristotle's *Poetics*.<sup>287</sup> If Kurz is correct, Paul's ability to subsume the Greek theme to present a Christian message in their language shines forth, which will continue to do so as Paul's speech further employs several thoughts familiar to the Athenian philosophers, all of which have been taken captive to Christ.

In closing, Luke already pointed to the Athenian hypocrisy in bringing charge against Paul as a proclaimer of new/strange deities and yet living with obsession to newer things in v. 21. Paul's comment in v. 23 now deflects "the charge of newness."<sup>288</sup> Luke's narrative introductory words (vv. 16–21) as well as Paul's introduction to his speech (vv. 22–23) build an anticipation in the minds of both implied reader and the Athenian audience that the main content of the speech aims to turn "ignorance about spirituality and God into knowledge."<sup>289</sup>

### 3.d.2.b. Main Body of the Speech (vv. 24–29)

The general format of the speech's main body is that Paul juxtaposes affirmative statements about the subject (God in the first two points [vv. 24–27] and about man's relationship with God in the third [vv. 28–29]) with his negative points about what the Athenians do in practice (*praxis*) in contrast with what was presented. The main verbs and the sentence structure in Greek text show Paul's stress lies on his criticisms, and the polemical tone is persistently evident. It is also noteworthy that, on the one hand, his affirmative claims about true identity of God and men in relation to God are generally acceptable or known to the Stoic

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<sup>287</sup> W. Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 140. Kurz in *Reading Luke-Acts*, 214, n. 15, lists the following references to Aristotle's *Poetics*: 10–11, 1452a–52b, and 16, 1454b–55a. For further discussion on Greek writings, see Culbertson, *The Poetics of Revelation: Recognition and the Narrative Tradition* (Studies in American Hermeneutics; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1989), 15–20, 33–54.

<sup>288</sup> Rowe, *World*, 34.

<sup>289</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 565.

philosophy, on the other hand, his points of criticism are at least on the surface level, more agreeable to the Epicureans.<sup>290</sup>

*Point One: God as Creator and Preserver of the world neither lives in fashioned shrines nor is served by human hands because he gives to all and of all (vv. 24–25).*

The first point Paul presents in the main body of his speech is the most embracing statement about God: the God, who created all, is thus the Lord of all. Paul, rather than attempting to prove God’s existence, assumes it by proclaiming. According to Paul, God, who created the world and everything in it, which makes this God the Lord of the heaven and earth (positive statement), does not reside in man-made shrines, nor is served by human hands as if he needs anything (vv. 24–25; two critical points against the Athenian praxis), since he himself is the Giver to all life, breath, and everything (v. 25).<sup>291</sup>

In view of the positive statement about God, our previous discussion about the Athenian philosophers argued that the understanding of God as Creator and Preserver is not totally new to Stoic thought (cf. Cicero, *ND* 2.63 and *DL* 7.157 for a strong argument for their monotheistic claim in view of Zeus) even though the pantheistic idea of God was more popular and prevalent. In replacing the standard biblical γῆ with the relatively rare κόσμον v. 24 Paul’s first main point may show further attempt of accommodation to his Greek audience in addition to the use of the neutrals for the deity (ὁ] . . . τοῦτο) in v. 23.

However, it is Paul’s criticism against the Athenian practice anticipated by Lukan introductory words that makes Paul’s speech polemic.<sup>292</sup> Though Dibelius,<sup>293</sup> Conzelmann, and

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<sup>290</sup> This point is evident in view of our forthcoming discussion about these two groups of the Athenian philosophers in appendix.

<sup>291</sup> This positive statement stands in contrast with two negative points as well as reinforces the preceding positive statement.

<sup>292</sup> Contra, Dibelius, *Studies*, 43–44, argues that Paul’s “pronouncements upon God’s passive being, or “the

Witherington<sup>294</sup> rightly point out the fact that these negative views were also common among Stoic teachers, Luke is not “interested in depicting the common ground shared by Paul and the philosophers”<sup>295</sup> because Luke’s implied reader, after hearing the author’s introductory words in v. 16, hears that Paul is speaking against the idolatrous practices of the city teemed with idols (κατείδωλον in v. 16) when it is said that God does not live in human-fashioned shrines nor is served<sup>296</sup> by human hands. Further, Paul’s expression “ὁ θεὸς . . . οὐκ ἐν χειροποιήτοις ναοῖς κατοικεῖ” (The God who . . . does not reside in shrines made by human hands) in v. 24 reminds Luke’s implied reader of Stephen’s “ἀλλ’ οὐχ ὁ ὕψιστος ἐν χειροποιήτοις κατοικεῖ” (However, the Most High does not reside in houses made by men) in 7:48.<sup>297</sup>

Therefore, when Paul’s first main point is read in light of Luke’s introductory words about Paul’s provoked emotion looking around the city,<sup>298</sup> the implied reader sees the Gentiles living in ignorance exactly in the sense that Luke is exposing and criticizing the Athenians’ pagan and superstitious notion and praxis in worship, which, in turn, demonstrates the Athenians’ failure to

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doctrine of divine qualities . . . which is acquired by means of the *via negationis* has no place in the Old Testament. So also there is no emphasis at all in the canonical books of the Old Testament upon God’s freedom from need.”

<sup>293</sup> Dibelius, *Studies*, 44, advocates the idea that God needs nothing from humans is of Greek origin and foreign to the OT with two possible exceptions appearing in the LXX (2 and 3 Maccabees).

<sup>294</sup> Cf. Dibelius, *Studies*, 44; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 141; Witherington, *Acts*, 525–26. Witherington points out that Paul’s argument that God does not need human service finds a strong parallel to Socratic ideas (Witherington, *Acts*, 525).

<sup>295</sup> Pervo, *Acts*, 435. Rowe makes a similar point saying, “Thus in Acts 17:24–25 Luke aligns Paul with the broadly philosophical critique of the inference between gods and their images. At the same time, the narrative furthers the reshaping of the readers’ religious imagination by placing its theological foundation in the transcendence of the Creator God over the world of images” (Rowe, *World*, 36). The polemical nature of the speech is pointed out in Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 213.

<sup>296</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2:840, points out that, since the NT use of θεραπεύω is often to describe the service done to men by men such as healing, “it is ridiculous to suppose that God needs service by human hands.”

<sup>297</sup> Emphasis added. Of χειροποιήτοις, Stenschke says: “[This adjective] is not a neutral term, but in the LXX and early Judaism it appears frequently as a periphrasis for an idol” (Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 212; cf. P.W. van der Horst, “New Altar,” 67). Pervo, *Acts*, 434, takes an extreme view saying, “For Luke, it is not a question of the abuse of temple piety or sacrificial worship, as in some of the biblical tradition (e.g., Isa 1:11); for Luke, all shrines and sacrifices are marks of bad theology.”

<sup>298</sup> The reader may also recall Barnabas and Paul’s words recorded in Acts 14:15–17.

recognize the true God “and their indebtedness to and dependence on him. God’s provisions failed to enlighten them as to his true nature and worship. . . . The true state of affairs was unknown to them, they had to be told.”<sup>299</sup>

*Point Two: God created humanity to fill the earth and to seek him (vv. 26–27).*

Paul, after proclaiming God’s relationship as the Creator and Preserver to the world and critiquing Athenian religiosity, focuses on the human race standing in relationship with the Creator. Against possible Athenian pride “on being *autochthonous*—sprung from the soil of their native Attica,”<sup>300</sup> Paul proclaims that God created the whole humankind out of one and, thus, the humanity is of one origin: by one Creator and from one ancestor. Paul proclaims that God created all nations with a two-fold purpose: to live on the whole earth in accordance with God’s providence and plan, and to seek him in the sense of having fellowship. The exact meaning of *καίρος* and *ὁροθεσία* in verse 26b is much disputed.<sup>301</sup> Based on the biblical allusions in v. 26 to Genesis 10 (the table of nations), Deut 32:8,<sup>302</sup> and Gen 11:9 and the verb *ὀρίζω*,<sup>303</sup> this verse can be taken to mean that God as the Creator of all the universe has given the whole earth to his

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<sup>299</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 214.

<sup>300</sup> Bruce, *Acts* (1988), 337. Also, according to Pervo, *Acts*, 435, representatives of the philosophical tradition protested the popular Athenian division between Greeks and barbarians.

<sup>301</sup> See, for a few examples, M. Pohlenz, “Paulus und die Stoa,” *ZNW* 42 (1949): 69–104; Dibelius, *Studies*, 29–32 and 35–37; Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech*, 147–52; Balch, “The Areopagus Speech,” 52–79. Barrett summarizes the main positions as well as possibilities as following: “1) (a) God has ordained the various areas in which the races live, and the periods in history of their dominance. (b) As 1) (a) but the periods are those not of history but of apocalyptic; that is, they belong to the future. 2) The areas are the different zones of the earth, and the *καιροί*, are the seasons of the year” (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:842–43).

<sup>302</sup> Bruce, *Acts* (1988), 338, cites the LXX reading of Deut 32:8: “When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of men, he fixed the bounds of the peoples according to the number of *the sons of God*.” The MT reads “. . . sons of Israel” (italics added). Speaking of this verse according to the earliest Hebrew text that reads “. . . according to the number of the gods” as an important support for the OT origin of Paul’s idea, Witherington says, “The speech is monotheistic and opposes polytheism” (Witherington, *Acts*, 527).

<sup>303</sup> Luke’s other uses of *ὀρίζω* (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 10:42, 17:31) show that Luke uses this in connection with his important theme of *βουλῆ τοῦ θεοῦ*. According to Paul Schubert in his “The Place of the Areopagus Speech,” 260–61, *βουλῆ τοῦ θεοῦ* functions as the central theme for Lukan theology. We will discuss this insight below.

created human beings as their dwelling place with its divinely “allotted time span and territorial boundaries.”<sup>304</sup>

According to Witherington, the failure of the Athenians is expressed in two ways: (i) The result of “seeking” is uncertain expressed by an optative verb following εἰ ἄρα γέ, whereas the Stoics taught that “God’s existence could readily be inferred and known from examining nature.”<sup>305</sup> (ii) The NT use of ψηλαφάω (Luke 24:39; 1 John 1:1; Heb 12:18), and classical and other biblical texts (Aristophanes, *Ec.* 315; Plato, *Phaedo* 99b; Isa 59:10; Judg 16:26; Deut 28:29; Job 5:13–14; 12:25 [all from the LXX]) point to the “groping of a blind person or the fumbling of a person in the darkness of night.”<sup>306</sup> Rowe aptly notes in Acts 17:26–27 that “Luke further develops Paul’s critique of Athenian idolatry by subsuming Graeco-Roman religio-philosophical knowledge into the biblical story.”<sup>307</sup>

Regarding Paul’s concluding thought (“God is not far from each one of us”) to the second point, Dibelius says: “So much material on this subject has been collected in the discussion of the last twenty-five years that the purely Hellenistic character of this theme is obvious. . . . [B]y virtue of his nature, regardless of human behavior, he is very near to each of us.”<sup>308</sup> As is in the presentation of the first point, however, Lukan Paul’s emphasis in proclaiming God’s relationship to humanity lies in terms of what the Athenians fail; they failed to recognize God’s purpose. Even though Dibelius’ reading of ζητεῖν (v. 27) in Greek philosophical sense of seeking

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<sup>304</sup> Cornu with Shulam, *Jewish Roots*, 2:966.

<sup>305</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 528.

<sup>306</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 528.

<sup>307</sup> Rowe, *World*, 36–37, in agreement with Barrett on repudiating the dichotomy drawn by modern scholars between a biblical (“will”) and philosophical (“mind”) search further argues: “For Luke the point is, rather, that the biblical text illuminates the places where philosophy has something true to say, even as—at least narratively—the latter is fitted into the former” (see, Rowe, *World*, 199–200, n. 156).

<sup>308</sup> Dibelius, *Studies*, 47.

through careful contemplation and examination may have been true to the oratees,<sup>309</sup> the meaning of this second main verb expressing the divine purpose should be taken in the OT sense (cf. Deut 4:29; II Sam 21:1; Hos 5:15) in terms of trusting and worshipful obeying on the basis of Luke's introductory remarks and how Lukan Paul ends the speech, namely, calling the Athenian audience to repent and turn to God.<sup>310</sup> And this makes his speech a Christian proclamation to the unsaved Gentiles living in ignorance.

In sum, the image of the Athenians portrayed in verses 26–27 is not a positive one. Despite the Creator God's purpose for all nations including the Athenians and the reality that God is near to each of human beings,<sup>311</sup> God was unknown to the Athenians. Paul, whom some of them ignorantly and thus ironically mocked as a babbler and a proclaimer of strange deities, now had to proclaim to them the nature and deeds of that true God.

*Point Three: As God's kinship we should not associate the deity with lifeless objects (vv. 28–29).*

Beginning with γάρ, verse 28 is meant to relate to or support the two main ideas Paul asserted previously in vv. 26–27 (“the divine origin of humanity and God's nearness to humans”) or just the second one, which is expressed at the end of v. 27. Regarding the exact Greek origin of the “triad” (ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν) in verse 28,<sup>312</sup> there are differing opinions among scholars from Plato<sup>313</sup> to Epimenides,<sup>314</sup> and to Posidonius.<sup>315</sup> However, that what is suggested

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<sup>309</sup> Dibelius, *Studies*, 32.

<sup>310</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 528; cf. Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech*, 155; Wilson, *Gentiles and the Gentile Mission*, 206.

<sup>311</sup> Indeed, with Stenschke (*Gentiles*, 216), the Athenian failure to seek and grope for and find the true God is highlighted by this reality.

<sup>312</sup> The term is used by Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech*, 195.

<sup>313</sup> H. Hommel, “Platonisches bei Lukas. Zu Acta 17:28a (Leben-Bewegung-Sein,” *ZNW* 48 [1957]: 193–200. He attributes this to saying of Paul to a triadic Platonic formula (199).

<sup>314</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Acts* (1988), 338–39. He cites a poem attributed to Epimenides the Cretan (c. 600 B.C.): “. . . For in thee we live and move and have our being” (339).

here is not “a pantheistic triad and a pantheistic (Stoic) quotation”<sup>316</sup> is clear in view of Paul’s proclaiming a call for their repentance to the Christian God in vv. 30–31 and Luke’s introduction to the speech (vv. 16–21).<sup>317</sup> Rather, by this triad or “tricolon” the Lukan Paul seems to stress “the dependence of all human life on God and its proximity to him”<sup>318</sup> or the totality of the human beings’ dependence on God the Creator. And the point that this idea presented by Paul finds its basic parallels among the teachings by Greek philosophers and, thus, was already familiar to the Athenian audience is made plain by Paul’s reference to the Greek poets.<sup>319</sup> Luke’s ultimate interest in moving Paul “through a series of allusions to and citations of gentile philosophy and poetry” is to establish “the linguistic ‘point of contact’ with gentile thinking.”<sup>320</sup> We need to note that Paul’s citing the Greek poets and philosophers does not make his speech Hellenistic. On the contrary, as what follows immediately makes it plain, citing Greek poets makes the content of the speech more convicting in the sense of revealing their continual

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<sup>315</sup> Balch, “The Areopagus Speech,” 78. K Rowe suggests to “attribute the lack of an exact verbal parallel to Luke’s careful realization of the power of general allusion. By accessing a range of plausible philosophical or theological positions, Luke avoids identifying directly the God of Israel with any particular pagan construal of θεός (e.g., the Stoic one) and thus preserves the space in which to maintain his critique of idolatry” (idem, *World*, 37).

<sup>316</sup> This is suggested by Conzelmann, *Acts*, 144.

<sup>317</sup> Stenschke makes a similar point in the following: “The two quotations ‘In him we live and move and have our being’ and ‘For we too are his offspring’ aptly summarize the preceding argument that human existence originates from and is dependent upon God. *For that reason and to that extent these snippets have their validity.* They do not endorse Gentile thought in general.” Stenschke dismisses any attempt to identify “their exact source and significance in their original context” as irrelevant. “We are concerned with these quotations *as integral parts of Paul’s speech*, in which setting they have to be interpreted” (Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 216 and n. 521; italics in original).

<sup>318</sup> Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 610. According to him, “‘we live’ refers to physical life; ‘we have our being,’ to spiritual-intellectual life; and ‘move,’ to a transfer of both to a cosmic level.” For this assertion, Fitzmyer relies on Hommel, “Platonisches.”

<sup>319</sup> The latter quote (“We are his race”) is from Aratus (cf. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 611; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 145).

<sup>320</sup> Rowe, *World*, 37. For more discussion on the origin and possible implication of these quotes for our text, see Bruce, *Acts* (1988), 338–39. Bruce concludes that these quotes in this context “could be taken as pointing to some recognition of the true nature of God” (Bruce, *Acts* [1988], 339).



ignorance of this God and their failure to act on what they were taught by their own.<sup>321</sup> Stenschke aptly points out the irony presented by Luke:

Paul was previously belittled as an ‘ignorant plagiarist’ (A. Souter, *Lexicon*, 239). Now Paul employs their own recognized words in a context that demonstrates that their recognition was not followed up and accused them of not even practicing what they considered their ‘first-hand knowledge.’ Not even the little they ridiculed Paul for being able to pick up, had made any difference.<sup>322</sup>

In verse 29 Paul draws his own conclusion from the Aratus citation by saying that we as God’s race/family should not image the living God in lifeless objects.<sup>323</sup> Whereas human ignorance among the Lystrans led them to confuse the God-appointed men with deities (Acts 14:11–13), here Paul specifically spells out how the Athenian ignorance led them to an irrational practice of idolatry by conceiving God as like gold, silver, or stone.<sup>324</sup> Therefore, Witherington sees that there is more than just a criticism against the practice of fashioning idols. What is really under attack is:

the underlying assumptions behind such activities, in particular the assumption that the deity is like a thing, an “image formed by the art and imagination of human beings.” . . . Whatever the notion of kinship meant in the original quote, the idea has been taken up and transformed into a support for the notion that human beings are created by God and in God’s image; God is not created in ours.<sup>325</sup>

In conclusion, the last, third main point of Paul’s speech (vv. 28–29) suggests that the Gentile poets recognized some truth about God, that is, human dependence on God and God’s proximity to human beings. However, in view that their insights are limited only to the

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<sup>321</sup> Cornu points to the fact that both Paul and Luke had the ability to cite and compose in the style of the LXX as well as of Greek poetry (Cornu with Shulam, *Jewish Roots*, 2:969).

<sup>322</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 216, n. 520; His citation is from A. Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (3rd ed.; London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1866).

<sup>323</sup> See my previous discussion on the gender issue raised in to. qei/on.

<sup>324</sup> Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 611, says that the same idea is found in 19:26.

<sup>325</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 530. His citation is from Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 99.

obvious,<sup>326</sup> this does not mean the Gentile poets “provide opportunities for insight into the God proclaimed by Jesus and the message about Jesus in a manner comparable to the Israelites’ sacred writings.”<sup>327</sup> Their poets’ limited insight into God’s nature and humans’ divine origin as God’s kinship further convicted the Athenian failure to recognize these realities, and ignorance in forming God in the form of human art and imagination. They are, therefore, without excuse. This does not mean, however, that there can be no opportunity to be saved.

*Paul’s Conclusion: Universal Call to Repentance in View of God’s Judgment through God-appointed Man (vv. 30–31)*

It is only after delivering the final point of the three regarding the Athenian piety and religious practice characterized as failure to attain knowledge of God that Paul verbalizes God’s response to or dealing with the (past) times of ignorance in v. 30. Contra Pervo<sup>328</sup> and Conzelmann<sup>329</sup> but with Barrett, therefore, we note that v. 30 does not introduce Christian material without a transition. Rather, it builds on what was already complained in v. 16 (the Athenians’ idolatrous life) and v. 23 (ἀγνοοῦντες; worship in ignorance) and, more immediately, in v. 29, that is, the Athenian error in “supposing the Divine to be identifiable with material objects. . . . This ignorance, which perverts the εὐσέβεια that accompanies it into δεισιδαιμονία, has been going on for a long time; the story of Athens is a record of χρόνοι τῆς ἀγνοίας.”<sup>330</sup> For

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<sup>326</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 217.

<sup>327</sup> Pervo, *Acts*, 439. For this conclusion, he relies on Alfons Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2:476.

<sup>328</sup> In Paul’s call to repentance, Pervo sees the speech to Gentiles taking up the shape of the speeches to Jews whose examples can be seen in Acts 2:38; 3:19 (Pervo, *Acts*, 440).

<sup>329</sup> Of vv. 30–31, Conzelmann says: “The final, specifically Christian section follows without any obvious conceptual shift” (Conzelmann, *Acts*, 146).

<sup>330</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2:850.

this reason it is right to say, on the one hand, the times of ignorance<sup>331</sup> immediately refers to the Athenian history of idolatry presented hitherto by Paul, which is suggested by μὲν οὖν in v. 30. On the other hand, as is made plain in what follows in our text (“divine command to all everywhere to repent”), Paul’s reference to it points also to the prevalent or universal nature of the human ignorance of the true God and his worship apart from “a light for revelation” (Luke 2:32; cf. Acts 26:18). Paul’s words thus deftly show both what is particular and unique about the situation in Athens, even as their ignorance is delivered to be part of the malady common to all.

What then does it mean that God overlooked (ὕπεριδόν) the times of ignorance? There seem to be various suggestions by scholars. First, it should not tone down the seriousness of the past ignorance as Bruce argues, “The ‘overlooking’ of ignorance . . . does *not* imply that in pre-Christian days God regarded the idolatry of the heathen with indifference or saved them from the consequences of their sins, denounced so vigorously in Rom 1 . . .”<sup>332</sup> Second, one can detect a missional motif in this statement.<sup>333</sup> Third, Conzelmann sees Paul’s reference to “the times of ignorance” from the perspective of *kerygma*. With the central theme of resurrection (cf. v. 18 and v. 31) bracketing “the anthropological section in the middle,” the whole of the world history is divided into two epochs in this Areopagus speech: the time of ignorance and that of proclamation,

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<sup>331</sup> We noted that Epp, *Theological Tendency*, 48–50, takes D’s addition of the demonstrative (this) to “ignorance” as an attempt to distinguish it from the culpable Jewish ignorance in killing Jesus (Acts 3:17). However, “it is slightly more likely that this is a stylistic improvement” (Pervo, *Acts*, 440), or an “innocent heightening” (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 458).

<sup>332</sup> Bruce, *Acts* (1990), 355; italics added. Bruce cites this from A. C. McGiffert, *History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1922), 260, n. 1.

<sup>333</sup> This is strongly suggested by Dibelius (*Studies*, 56) in the following: “For that is indeed the motif of the Christian mission; the book of Acts deals with that mission, and actual instances of this call to repentance occur often from 2:38 onwards. And here, as in 10:42, attention is turned to the future and to the judgment by Jesus, so that in these two verses (17:30–31) past, present and future appear in close connection with one another.”

which provides “the opportunity for μετάνοια”<sup>334</sup> Fourth, God’s overlooking functions as a sign of his patience, and invites the hearers to praise him.<sup>335</sup>

All four points offer some measure of insight toward our understanding. Building on them, we attempt to construct what is meant seen through the narrative-critical perspective. Above all, Luke tells us clearly that God does not approve of this ignorance in several occasions (e.g., 3:17; 7:25; 9:5; 13:27; 14:14–16; 15:29<sup>336</sup>), and on this occasion, neither does the indignant Paul (v. 16). In his narrative introduction (17:16–21) the narrator hints how the Athenian ignorance of God and the plethora of idols are wedded. And, through the three main points of the speech, Luke reveals that the Athenian ignorance of God the Creator and Sustainer is at the heart of their idolatrous life. God’s command to repent, as pronounced by Paul, should be understood in light of the complete failure of the Athenian intellects in recognizing and serving God. Therefore, even though “people could be held responsible for their failure, God renounced judgment and graciously overlooked the past times of ignorance. *Divine intervention would have meant judgment over the failures exposed.*”<sup>337</sup> Or, in the words of Tannehill:

[Paul’s message is] a call for the Greco-Roman world to break decisively with its religious past in response to the one God who now invites all to be part of the renewed world. The culture that Athens represents is called to repent because it makes God dependent on human temples, rites, and images (vv. 24–25, 29), but it is also called to repent because it rightly belongs to God’s family. It is important to note

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<sup>334</sup> Conzelmann, *Acts*, 146.

<sup>335</sup> That God’s forbearance emphasizes the divine patience can be seen in the late Judaism expressed in *Mishna*. According to Cornu with Shulam, the following blessing was to be cited upon seeing a place where idols were worshipped: “Blessed be He who exercises patience” (Tos.Ber. 6:4). The idea behind this practice of blessing God “appears to be that God should be praised wherever idolatry is perceived so that He might be patient with idolaters and not destroy them” (Cornu with Shulam, *Jewish Roots*, 2:962).

<sup>336</sup> Once again, the reader recalls that Paul with other brothers was commissioned by the Jerusalem Council to carry the Council’s letter, which specifically advises to refrain from any food sacrificed to idols. This reflects the general attitude of the first century church toward idolatry in any form.

<sup>337</sup> Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 218; italics added. Barrett makes a similar point saying, “God did not will or approve this ignorant idolatrous worship, but he did not suppress it; he overlooked it . . .” (Barrett, *Acts*, 2:851).

that there is a positive as well as a negative motivation for the call to repentance in the speech.<sup>338</sup>

This divine universal command, with positive and negative connotations simultaneously in its implication, to men that everyone everywhere (τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντα πανταχοῦ) should repent is in view of God's final judgment through Jesus who died and was raised from the dead (cf. ἀναστήσας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν).<sup>339</sup> Despite the real possibility of misunderstanding,<sup>340</sup> Paul proclaims the central teaching of Christianity: Jesus' resurrection. On the one hand, as did Paul's preaching about Jesus and the resurrection before the speech (v. 18), his reference to Jesus as God's appointed agent of judgment proved universally (cf. πίστιν παρασχὼν πᾶσιν in v. 31) by his resurrection in righteousness offers good news to the Athenians. In other words, despite the bleak picture of the Athenians in his speech, Paul's intention lay not merely in pronouncing them to be liable for the divine judgment if they did not repent. Rather, as in Luke 23:34; Acts 3:17; 13:27, God's extreme measure of grace to all is contained in Paul's reference to Jesus.

On the other hand, it implies that such ignorance no longer is going to be excusable or tolerated because God makes himself known in a new way, that is, through his appointed man

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<sup>338</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:218. Equally insightful are K. Rowe's following words about the radical nature of Luke's message in vv. 30–31: "Luke's move in 17:30–31 thus entails a total determination of general cosmology by a radically particularized eschatology. Whether one's interpretive structure was Platonist, Aristotelian, Epicurean, Stoic, or something else (e.g., everyday paganism), to accept Luke's construal of the importance of Jesus' resurrection for the world would mean the destruction of one's theory(ies)—tacit or acknowledged—of the origin and (non-)end of the cosmos. It is therefore hardly surprising that some sneered (χλευάζω) at Paul after hearing of the resurrection (v. 32)." (Rowe, *World*, 39)

<sup>339</sup> In opposition to the claim that 17: 30–31 presents to be "the generic Christian appendage to the real Hellenistic philosophical sermon of 17: 23–29," Jipp argues that such a position can be accepted only when the following three important elements are ignored: "First, Luke often indicates the climactic portion of his speeches through interruptions of the high point of the speech (e.g., 7:53–54; 10:43–44). Second, it ignores the foregrounding of the *inclusio* of "What would this babblers have to say?" (17:18) and "Some mocked" (17:32), which are both in response to the message about Jesus' resurrection. Finally, the claim that Jesus' resurrection is insignificant in the Areopagus speech ignores the role that the resurrection has in the larger narrative. Scholarly attention to the Areopagus speech has too often failed to integrate this speech within the rest of Acts." (Joshua Jipp, "Areopagus Speech," 587)

<sup>340</sup> This possibility becomes reality in v. 32. We are told that some began to scoff at Paul's mentioning of the rising from the dead.

Jesus Christ.<sup>341</sup> What is expressed in 13:46<sup>342</sup> and again in 28:28 is implied here: If anyone listening to the message to turn from ignorance of God who revealed himself and extends his blessed promise in Jesus does not respond positively, he or she forfeits God's promise in Jesus and salvific plan through him and will be held accountable at God's final and just judgment.

To sum up the more full discussion found in the Appendix, the eschatology of both Stoics and Epicureans differed fundamentally from that of the Scriptures. Even though the Stoics taught about the end of the universe through conflagration, they also taught that the cosmos would begin anew and repeat the same course of events. The Epicurean teaching about this subject is further removed from the biblical one. According to their understanding of the universe, atoms form the invisible "building blocks" for everything including gods. They denied creation and taught that the world is eternal because atoms are indestructible and eternal. Being familiar with the third metaphysical proposition of Epicurus alone ("The universe never was nor will be in a condition which differs from its present one"), the Epicureans listening to Paul's proclamation on this point would be in a great disagreement.<sup>343</sup> We need to note that Paul's message about God's universal call to repentance in view of the righteous judgment by Jesus trumped their every argument. "Whereas the Athenians stood in judgment of Paul and placed him on trial for his introduction of the new gods Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἀνάστασις (17:18–19), Paul now declares that this deity is the judge of the entire world."<sup>344</sup> Whether or not they realized, Paul had just turned the

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<sup>341</sup> Paul's claim that God "appointed" (ὃ ὄρισεν) this man Jesus finds parallels throughout Acts (e.g., 10:42 [. . . οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ὄρισμένος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ κριτῆς ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν]; 2:23–24) (Jipp, "Areopagus Speech," 587; emphasis in original).

<sup>342</sup> (Paul and Barnabas said,) "It was necessary to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we are turning to the Gentiles."

<sup>343</sup> Cf. Homer, *Iliad*, 24.551; Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, 647–48 ("When the dust has soaked up the blood of a man, once he has died, there is no resurrection"); Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1360–61; Sophocles, *Electra*, 137–39. The idea is suggested by Barrett, *Acts*, 2:854, and the citation is from Bock, *Acts*, 570.

<sup>344</sup> Jipp, "Areopagus Speech," 587.

tables. This point of Paul about judgment by a divinely appointed “man” was completely incomprehensible to both circles of philosophers considering their radically different ideas about this subject.

### 3.d.3. Narrative Conclusion: Divided Responses (vv. 32–34)

However, Luke tells us what prompted their negative reaction (*χλευάζω* in v. 32) was not Paul’s mention of the divine judgment, but his reference to the resurrection.<sup>345</sup> For our narrator, this holds a significant point in the Areopagus speech as well as throughout the Book of Acts. First, this negative reaction to the proclamation of resurrection in mocking/jeering (*χλευάζω*)<sup>346</sup> is already hinted in v. 18, where we are told some philosophers took Paul to be a polytheist proclaiming Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἀνάστασις. By mentioning one group’s mocking response in verse 32, the narrator points to their persistent ignorance and inability to comprehend the pivotal Christian proclamation about resurrection, which is most incompatible with their Greek belief. Second, the narrator of Acts has already informed his reader that Jesus’ resurrection is the key to the first century church’s proclamation and an invitation to repentance is extended in view of Jesus’ resurrection (2:32, 38; 3:26; 26:23–24; cf. Luke 24:46–47). Based on these two points and contra Stenschke,<sup>347</sup> we can argue that the speech was not disrupted or it ended prematurely. Paul most likely said what he had to say and, with his remark about resurrection, Paul reached the climax of the speech.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> However, this does not mean that Paul’s teaching about God’s judgment in righteousness through Jesus was less offensive or disagreeable than the idea of resurrection.

<sup>346</sup> The reader recalls the spectators’ similar reaction in uncomprehending at Pentecost (cf. *διαχλευάζω* in Acts 2:13).

<sup>347</sup> Stenschke says, “As his speech was interrupted and the previous reactions to his proclamation continued undiminished, Paul left the assembly (cf. Luke 4:29–30)” (Stenschke, *Gentiles*, 223).

<sup>348</sup> For a similar conclusion, see the following: Jipp, “Areopagus Speech,” 587; Haenchen, *Acts*, 212 and 526; Pervo, *Acts*, 635; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 146. Dibelius, *Studies*, 57, argues that this abrupt ending is “a favorite device

As Paul’s teaching about Jesus’ resurrection caused both difficulty of comprehending and even confusion prior to the speech (v. 18), Paul’s mention of God raising Jesus from the dead as authentication of the judge in v. 31 produced two kinds of response, which is evident in Luke’s supplying the μέν . . . δέ with the participle clause (Ἀκούσαντες δὲ ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν) in v. 32. With that, Paul left the council (and unharmed, v. 33), and, in v. 34, Luke names two converts along with some other unnamed converts. Even though the conclusion seems to be fairly simple and straightforward, there are several points of interest that need to be addressed regarding the ending of the narrative before drawing to this chapter to its conclusion.

The first point is that, there has been some debate as to how to understand the second group’s reaction to Paul’s sermon. Even though the natural reading of the μέν . . . δέ construction would be to take it as expressing two contrasting groups,<sup>349</sup> Haenchen suggests that the distinction between the two is subtle: “one with open scoffing (Luke is probably thinking of the Epicureans), the other courteously requesting a deferment of further instruction *ad Kalendas Graecas*.”<sup>350</sup> Witherington follows a similar line when he suggests the possibility of taking the second group’s reaction as dismissive to mean, “Enough for now, perhaps another time.”<sup>351</sup>

Against the interpretation offered by Haenchen and in defense of the natural reading, C. Croy aptly argues the following points. First, acknowledging that the μέν . . . δέ. construction in

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of the author, who leaves what is most important until the end and emphasizes it by means of the contradiction of the listeners (10:44; 22:22; 26:24; perhaps 5:33 and 7:54 are to be similarly understood).”

<sup>349</sup> See BDF, §447 (1) and (2). For the statistical charts, see Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. III, Syntax* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), 332, and A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 1394. Clayton Croy, who suggests these references says of the μέν . . . δέ. usage in the NT, “It is entirely absent from some books, rare in others, but somewhat better represented in Matthew, Acts, the Corinthian letters, and Hebrews” (C. Croy, “Hellenistic Philosophies,” 27, n. 28).

<sup>350</sup> Haenchen, *Acts*, 526. According to Croy, “Since there was no ‘Kalends’ in the Greek calendar, this clever Latin phrase means ‘to postpone indefinitely so as *never* to do the thing mentioned’” (Croy, “Hellenistic Philosophies,” 26, n. 27).

<sup>351</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 532. Similarly, Bruce, *Acts* (1988), 343, says, “Others, more polite if equally skeptical,



itself does not make a clear-cut argument, Croy resorts to Luke's use of this grammatical construction elsewhere (cf. Acts 14:4; 23:7–8; 28:24)<sup>352</sup> to confirm the fact that a clear contrast is meant by Luke here. Second, it is argued that Haenchen's interpretation is against the natural flow of v. 32 on the basis of the obviously derisive meaning of *χλευάζω* (v. 32a)<sup>353</sup> and of the lack of any explicit hint in the context to suggest sarcasm or insincerity on the part of the second group.<sup>354</sup> Third, in view of Luke's indication of genuine interest among some members of the crowd in vv. 19–20, the natural reading is to be preferred.<sup>355</sup> Fourth, even though we do not know whether or not the two named converts Dionysius and Damaris<sup>356</sup> (v. 34) are among the οἱ δέ of 32b, Luke ends the episode with an impression that Paul's speech at Athens met with at least limited success.<sup>357</sup>

The second point about the ending of this speech is that, there are a few scholars who perceive Paul's speech at Athens as a failure based on their reading it especially in connection

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suggested that there might be an opportunity later for a further exposition of his teaching.”

<sup>352</sup> Croy cites following comment made earlier by Haenchen on 17:18 to suggest Haenchen contradicts himself, “[Luke] is fond of contrasting two groups in the audience, one of which show an interest while the other sharply denies the Christian proclamation” (cf. Haenchen, *Acts*, 517; cited in Croy, “Hellenistic Philosophies,” 27).

<sup>353</sup> See my above-mentioned point about *διαχλευάζω* in Acts 2:13.

<sup>354</sup> Croy, “Hellenistic Philosophies,” 27.

<sup>355</sup> Croy, “Hellenistic Philosophies,” 27–28; Croy senses Luke's intention of giving some emphasis in what he conceives to be a Lukan doublet: *δυνάμεθα γνῶναι τίς ἡ καινὴ αὐτῆ ἢ ὑπὸ σοῦ λαλουμένη διδασχῆ;* (v. 19b) and *βουλόμεθα οὖν γνῶναι τίνα θέλει ταῦτα εἶναι* (20b).

<sup>356</sup> Cf. Bruce Winter, “On Introducing Gods to Athens: An Alternative Reading of Acts 17:18–20,” *TynB* 47 n. 1 (1996): 71–90 for the suggestion that Damaris was the wife of Dionysius, and Luke's “and other with them” refers to their household (Witherington, *Acts*, 532, n. 262; cf. Jipp, “Areopagus Speech,” 588, and Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 4:7 for the suggestion that Damaris was the wife of Dionysius).

<sup>357</sup> See the following for a positive reading of v. 32b: Barrett, *Acts*, 2:854 (“... the use of the οἱ μὲν . . . οἱ δε. construction seems decisive”); Bock, *Acts*, 570; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 612; Johnson, *Acts*, 317; Marshall, *Acts*, 291; Pervo, *Acts*, 441; Polhill, *Acts*, 378. K. Rowe offers an interpretation from a different angle. In his *World*, 39, he argues that the second group's response “attests to the deftness of [Paul's] rhetorical strategy.”

with Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. A typical argument is found in Sir William Ramsay's writing<sup>358</sup> and Oscar Broneer's article.<sup>359</sup> Broneer seems to propose his own conjecture saying:

Paul left Athens disappointed, and this feeling is perhaps echoed in his first letter to the Church of Corinth. As he looked back upon his arrival in that city, he probably recalled how he had been moved by his experience in Athens *to try a new approach* in his endeavor to make converts in Corinth.<sup>360</sup>

Based on 1 Cor. 2:1-3, Broneer senses Paul's regret to quote the Greek poet in Acts 17:23 ("for we are indeed his offspring") as "at this kind of argument he had the disadvantage, and when he came to Corinth he was thoroughly humbled" to the point that he resolved not to try to impress his hearers with his learning. So, Broneer concludes that the visit to Athens and Paul's seemingly failed approach became a good lesson for his future work.<sup>361</sup>

In opposition to Sir William Ramsay's reading, Stonehouse offering an extensive argument concludes that, "Luke did not share the pragmatism of our day which judges the truth of the message by the criterion of outward success."<sup>362</sup> D. A. Carson views the conclusions drawn by scholars like Broneer and possibly Ramsay as the result of "fallacies of causation" (mistakes correlation for cause) to make a sequential conclusion between Acts 17 and 1 Cor. 2:2. Carson argues:

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<sup>358</sup> In his booklet, N. B. Stonehouse points that a negative evaluation of the Areopagus speech in connection with Paul's first canonical letter to the Corinthians "has enjoyed considerable vogue in recent decades, perhaps as result of the influence of Sir W. M. Ramsay" whose following summary words demonstrate such a position: "It would appear that Paul was disappointed and perhaps disillusioned by his experience in Athens. He felt that he had gone at least as far as was right in the way of presenting his doctrine in a form suited to the current philosophy; and the result had been little more than naught. When he went on from Athens to Corinth, he no longer spoke in the philosophic style. . . . [Paul] told the Corinthians that, when he came among them, he "determined not to know anything save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2); . . . Apparently the greater concentration of purpose and simplicity of method in his preaching at Corinth is referred to by Luke, when he says, 18:5, that when Silas and Timothy joined him there, they found him wholly possessed by and engrossed in the word." (N. B. Stonehouse, *Paul Before the Areopagus* [London: The Tyndale, 1949], 39–40. He cites from Sir W.M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen*, 252. See Stonehouse, *Paul*, 40, n. 34, for a list of scholars who share Ramsay's point of view.)

<sup>359</sup> Oscar Broneer, "Athens 'City of Idol Worship,'" *The Biblical Archaeologist* XXI (1958, 1): 2–28.

<sup>360</sup> Broneer, "Athens," 27-28; italics added.

<sup>361</sup> Broneer, "Athens," 28.

This exegesis seriously misunderstands the address at the Areopagus and Luke's purpose in telling it; but it also connects pieces of information from two separate documents and without evidence affirms a causal connection: because Paul allegedly failed miserably in Athens, therefore he resolved to return to his earlier practice.<sup>363</sup>

Despite the geographical and temporal correlation between Paul's visit to Athens and Corinth, there exists "not a shred of evidence for causation."<sup>364</sup>

In addition to what Stonehouse and Carson suggest, there seem to be at least three narrative clues to suggest Luke's positive view of about this speech. First, we need to note the fact that Paul left the Areopagus unscathed. This is significant in view of the Socratic theme hinted at the beginning of the speech (vv. 17–20). Rowe puts it in this way:

Paul has given a speech that protects him from the charge of 'newness.' . . . At this point at least, Paul carefully manages to avoid the death penalty without compromising his call to bear witness to the risen Jesus before gentile authorities (cf. Acts 9:15).<sup>365</sup>

Second, insofar as Luke records only this sermon preached to the Gentile group by Paul in full, and this aligns with Luke's practice of recording missionary sermons of 'representative nature' (cf. 13:16–41 [a sermon to a Jewish group at Pisidian Antioch] and 20: 18–35 (a sermon to the Christian group [Ephesian elders])), it is most likely that Luke presents this as something of model.<sup>366</sup> Third, Luke provides us several examples of speeches with similar, meager, or no fruit. Peter's speech after healing a crippled man drew the temple leaders' anger (cf. 4:1–2). Stephen's sermon (Acts 7) resulted in his death with its possible connection with Paul's conversion (cf. 8:1 and 22:20). And, Paul's speeches were often met with only opposition or negative reaction

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<sup>362</sup> Stonehouse's argument is found in his *Paul*, 40–48; the citation is from 42.

<sup>363</sup> D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 133–34.

<sup>364</sup> D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 134.

<sup>365</sup> Rowe, *World*, 39. Even though Rowe's suggestion about the "death penalty" may be overly dramatic, Paul's missionary journeys recorded by Luke suggest such danger always lurking.

<sup>366</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:210; cf. Witherington, *Acts*, 532.

(13:45; 14:19; 22:22; 26:24; 28:25). Furthermore, throughout Luke's Gospel, we are told that many of Jesus' speeches or teachings resulted in oppositions or misunderstandings.<sup>367</sup>

In sum, instead of evaluating Paul's Areopagus speech by its immediate result and reaction, we should take into consideration those narrative clues and any hints revealing the narrator's point of view. Instead of giving any inkling that we should evaluate speeches on the basis of their immediate outcome, Luke portrays Paul, the Lord's "chosen instrument" (Acts 9:15), as tenaciously faithful to his calling<sup>368</sup> to be his "servant" and "witness" (26:16; cf. 22:15) in order "to open their eyes so that they turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a share among those who are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 22:18; cf. Luke 2:32). Luke presents both Paul's life and message in a positive light. These support the reading that Paul's speech is presented not as a tried and "never-to-be-repeated" sermon. Rather, Luke presents it as a positive model sermon preached by Luke's protagonist showing how one should preach to an audience who is largely characterized by ignorance of the God of Israel without any former acquaintance with the biblical teaching.

#### **IV. Summary and Conclusion**

We began this chapter with a discussion about the text of Acts, which, in turn, led us to the specific issues posed largely by D (Codex Bezae, the best representation of the Western text types) for Acts as well as our text (Acts 17:16–34). We noted E. Epp's thesis that D displays persistently anti-Judaic tendency for the Book of Acts. Despite his strong argument supported by

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<sup>367</sup> Our study of each character group in the second chapter supports this viewpoint.

<sup>368</sup> The reader recalls Jesus' words about what it means to be faithful. He, for example, likens men (disciples) with "increased" faith to servants who, after spending all day working in the field, and preparing and attending their master's table, would only say, "We are slaves undeserving of special praise; we have only done what was our duty" (Luke 17:10). Faithfulness, required of the workers, is the measurement to judge the servant-hood. Luke narrates numerous occasions of Paul faithfully enduring hardships and persecutions for the cause of the gospel and mission works among the Gentiles: 14:20, 22; 16:22; 20:24; 22:22 to list only a few.

detailed analysis that the variants proposed in D demonstrate its anti-Judaic tendency in Acts by stressing, in particular, the Jewish ignorance, our investigation concluded that there are enough data in D pointing to a different direction, which makes Epp's claim untenable.

In our attempt to draw a structure for our unit, which followed a translation, we noted the lack of sufficient attention to Luke's narrative notes (vv. 16–21 and vv. 32–34) among some scholars most notably in D. Miesner's chiasmic structure,<sup>369</sup> which, in turn, impairs the full understanding and appreciation of the sermon as intended by the narrator. Though a formal analysis of the body of this speech employing rhetorical terms is a needed step, failure to include Luke's narrative introduction and conclusion leads to an alien reading, in which Luke's overall purpose of including Paul's speech in (Luke-) Acts and his accented themes like knowledge-ignorance are neglected or significantly reduced.

Next, three specific narrative-critical tools were identified and discussed in preparation for narrative reading of our text: irony, narrative asides, and characterization. A general discussion about those tools was followed by two analyses in terms of the speech's context. In the first, we identified six elements that are important to read our text in its larger context remembering that characters and plots are cumulative by nature, and, therefore, readers' successive construction or assessment plays a pivotal role for a narrative reading of our text. The six are: its connection to the Jerusalem Council; Paul as Luke's new protagonist; pagan idolatry; the anticipated scanty fruition of the Gentile mission; the cumulated plot; and the message with universal scope. In the second, the final preliminary matter was our discussion about how Luke characterizes the city of Athens, Paul, and the Athenian audience in his narrative introduction (17:16–21) and conclusion (vv. 32–34). Both analyses are of critical importance for reaching the goal of reading the

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<sup>369</sup> Cf. Miesner, "Chiasm," 217–27.

Areopagus speech as intended by the narrator, who through them influences and guides our reading process.

Only after these preliminary discussions came the commentary, which was offered to break down our text into small thought units instead of individual verses. Our conclusion is that, despite the mockery and threat placed upon him on top of his exasperation over what he saw in the city, the narrative portrays Paul's sermon as subtly crafted and clearly focused culminating in issuing a call to repentance in view of coming judgment. The proof of the judgment consists of the (death and) resurrection of Jesus Christ, by which Jesus is shown to be God's choice. Seen in Luke's criteria, Paul's sermon was commendable in that he translated the Christian gospel into the language of "the narrative audience" whose religious inclination was recognized as somewhat genuine.<sup>370</sup>

However, the connection between the Gentile ignorance and idolatry is clear in Paul's presentation about the natural revelation and the Athenian religious practice. "[Luke] does not say that man formerly possessed a knowledge of God and later lost it, as Stoic theory would have had it. Rather, Luke asserts that such a knowledge was always possible but was never realized."<sup>371</sup> This emphasis on ignorance-knowledge theme and call to repentance from their ignorance to God should be seen in view of other references to ignorance in Acts (3:17; 13:27; 14:16) and Luke (23:34). In so doing, the reader sees Luke's overall position that,

Both Jews and Gentiles find themselves in the same position, in need of repenting and being reconciled to God through Christ. Luke's analysis of history, including the times of ignorance, owes little or nothing to Stoicism. . . . In short, [Luke] does not

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<sup>370</sup> Beverly Gaventa, *Acts*, 254. As we noted, though Luke's implied reader does not read it that way, Paul's use of δεισιδαιμονεστέρους (v. 22) and the altar inscription (Ἄγνώστῳ θεῷ /) can be taken in a positive light about their religiosity.

<sup>371</sup> Conzelmann, "The Address of Paul," 228.

believe that a Jewish or Christian knowledge can simply be added to what pagans already know about God, with salvific results.<sup>372</sup>

In closing, the narrator deftly utilizes his “ignorance-knowledge” theme to portray the cultured and “very religious” Athenians. Despite that they had enlightened teachers like Aratus for sure<sup>373</sup> and Epimenides for likely,<sup>374</sup> Luke characterizes them as ignorant (17:19–23, 30), which, in turn, led them to a plethora of idols (17:16, 25, 29) as well as rejection of Luke’s proponent, Paul (17:18, 32). In our second chapter, we noted that idolatry and negative reaction to God-sent messengers or Luke’s proponents are Luke’s favorite subjects for characterizing people in the state of ignorance.<sup>375</sup> In view of God’s salvation Paul brings, Luke does not present that the “purely Gentile” Athenians are spiritually neutral.

Therefore, salvation for the Athenians and the Gentiles they represent presupposes not simply to have a better, or more enlightened, or “newer” knowledge, but to embrace a radically new worldview and order of life expressed by Paul here and other places (cf. 16:20–21; 17:6; 19:25–27; 24:5). Possession of it for the Athenians, on the one hand, means to acknowledge one’s complete ignorance of their benevolent God, an ignorance evidenced by both the mindset and acts of idolatry assuming that God is somehow dependent on human service, shrines, and images. On the other hand, this new way of thinking further means to embrace a totally new knowledge, pertaining to the Creator and Preserver God’s universal offer of salvation in Jesus

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<sup>372</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 531.

<sup>373</sup> Barrett, *Acts 15–28*, 848.

<sup>374</sup> L.T. Johnson, *Acts*, 316.

<sup>375</sup> For example, our brief analysis of Stephen’s speech in Acts 7 noted how the ignorance of the Israelites in the wilderness led them to rejection of God-sent messenger Moses (7:25–28, 39) as well as idolatry (7:39–43). The narrator of Acts 7 and 17 presents a parallelism at two levels: At implicit level, Luke lets the reader see the parallelism between Moses and Socrates. Both were religious/moral authority among their community. However, by rejecting their leaders in ignorance, they forfeited the wisdom they offered. At explicit level, Luke draws a parallelism between Stephen and Paul. Even though Paul did not face the violent reaction that Stephen suffered from the Jews (7:54, 57–60), the reader sees that the enlightened Greeks were no better than other Gentiles.

Christ who died and was raised. Without embracing it, the Athenian intellects remain as perpetual seekers in vain.<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> The reader recalls the Pharisees who constantly watch (παρρηρέω) Jesus but fail to believe in him (cf. Luke 14:1).



## CHAPTER FOUR

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This dissertation has argued that the theme of “ignorance-knowledge” has a special place within Luke’s core theological subjects or themes: God, God’s salvation plan, and Jesus Christ whose coming<sup>1</sup> marks the fulfillment of that salvation. In other words, since for Luke these larger topics are critical subjects for Christian knowledge, they are to be comprehended and assuredly grasped for Christian certainty as presented in this narrative setting. This theological and pastoral conviction was the major driving force behind or justification for Luke’s own attempt to narrate “an orderly account” (Luke 1:3) of “the things that have been fulfilled among us” (1:1).

Our study led us to the conclusion that all characters and character groups (Jews and Gentiles) in Luke-Acts are generally ignorant at varying degrees about how God’s salvation is brought and fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ. The “pure” Gentiles<sup>2</sup> are portrayed as typically ignorant of God as their Creator and Provider. Thus their life in ignorance is typified by basic

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<sup>1</sup> There are several scholars who argue that, according to Luke’s Gospel, God’s salvation is related to Jesus’ coming. According to Bovon, for example, Luke presents salvation very early on in his Gospel so that the impression is that “the salvation the apostles preach in Acts is more related to the coming than the death of Jesus, the Messiah and Lord (cf. Luke 2:11; 2:30). . . . The Magnificat (Luke 1:47–54) and the Benedictus (Luke 1:68–79) are witnesses to a soteriology that, because it is expressed in OT terms, assures the continuity of God’s project in the history of Israel” (Bovon, *Luke*, 277). R. Tannehill, for another, notes that Luke presents this topic of salvation in the birth narrative with “an elaborate pattern of repetition” forming a forward movement and sense of “joy at the fulfillment of OT prophecies of salvation.” In his birth narrative, Luke elaborates and permeates with the OT hope and the joyful celebration over its fulfillment. (R. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:15–18. He devotes the whole chapter to this topic under the title of “Previews of Salvation” [15–44]. Suffice it to say his scriptural references to the topic of salvation in Luke 1:1–2:40 are too numerous to repeat here.) See, for yet another example, Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, 84, for a similar argument. In opposition to Conzelmann’s three epochs theory, Marshall argues, “Luke’s purpose was not so much to re-frame the Christian message in terms of ‘salvation-history’ as to make the way of salvation plain to his readers.”

<sup>2</sup> “Pure” Gentiles are, unlike some Greeks whose exposure to the Jewish faith based on the OT led to worship the God of Israel or even to convert to Judaism, those whose lives are largely characterized by indifference to or ignorance of the OT. Pilate and several Roman officials in Luke-Acts were largely indifferent, whereas the Lystrans

anxiety (Luke 12:30) and pagan idolatry (Acts 14 [the Lystrans], 17 [the Athenians], 19 [the Ephesians]). What characterizes the ignorance of the Jewish people relates to their own Scripture. Therefore, the early church's mission to the latter group focuses on elucidating the connection and continuity between the promise made in the OT and its fulfillment in the life of Jesus (Acts 2:14–36; 3:12–25; 13:17–47). Even though the Jewish leaders in Acts are characterized by the same ignorance, no message was preached to them<sup>3</sup> because of their refusal to be baptized by John the forerunner of Jesus (Luke 7:30) and silence after Jesus' prayer on the cross (Luke 23:34), and their constant taking offense at Jesus<sup>4</sup> renders them to be unrepentant and unworthy (Luke 9:5; 10:16) as well as unforgivable (Luke 12:10). They are portrayed as the main antagonists of Jesus and his disciples and, thus, the church. Of minor significance, we noted that the Gentile inclusion as people of God works as a stumbling block for the Jews and their leaders (Luke 4:25–29; 19:7; Acts 11:2–3; 13:44–45; 17:4–5; 22:21–22). Lastly, Jesus' disciples and close followers, including the women from Galilee, are ignorant in view of the Messianic fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Luke 9:44–45; 24:25–27, 44–47). It was further noticed that of the four people groups (the Gentiles, the Jewish leaders, the Jewish people, and the disciples), the ignorance of the first three led to further malice evident in their violent hostility to Luke's protagonists (Jesus, his apostles [Acts 4:25–28] and Stephen [Acts 7]) and, in case of the Gentiles, idolatry was added.

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and the Athenians were totally ignorant of the OT.

<sup>3</sup> Our survey showed that this message about ignorance and repentance was preached only to the people, but never to the leaders. This omission seems to be deliberate if we consider that Lukan Paul does not distinguish between leaders and ordinary people in speaking of ignorance to Gentile audience (cf. Acts 14:16; 17:30).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Luke 5:21, 30; 6:2, 7; 7:39, 49; 11:38, 53–54; 14:1; 15:2; 16:14; 19:47; 20:1–2, 19–22; 22:2.

Our survey study of the two Athenian philosophies, even though placed as an appendix, is designed to be another major preliminary step for narrative-critical reading of Paul's Athenian speech. Our analysis of the Epicureans and the Stoics reveals that the overall content of Paul's speech bears more similarity with the Stoic than the Epicurean teaching about God (God as the Creator and Preserver, God's sovereignty, God's proximity to humans) and humanity (human dependency on God). We noted that, since the Epicureans have a minimal view of the divine beings as being far removed from human affairs and deem any form of superstitious religiosity (*deisidaimonia*) as a major hindrance for attaining their highest virtue (*ataraxia*: serenity, detachment, unadulterated happiness), Paul's positive presentation about these subjects was largely dismissed. And yet, with some of the criticisms that Paul directed against the distorted forms of religious practice at Athens, the Epicureans would readily have agreed.

Since Luke's stated overall goal of writing his two-volume work is to bring certainty to what the implied reader has been taught (Luke 1:4, ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων), i.e., God and his universal salvation fulfilled and offered in Jesus Christ,<sup>5</sup> the implied reader is to feel with Lukan Paul over the city of Athens in its idolatrous condition. Contrary to his initial plan to wait for the arrival of his companions, Paul is driven to engage in mission work by reasoning and sharing with the Athenians about Jesus and his resurrection (17:18, 31–32) in the manner best suitable for the occasion. That occasion arises through the rather aggressive Areopagus council (vv. 19–20), whose treatment of Paul brings a reminder of the infamous Socrates trial. However, Paul not only averts the accusation by beginning with one of their altar inscriptions "TO AN UNKNOWN

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<sup>5</sup> Contra, Jacob Jervell, in emphasizing the fact that the history of Israel is the history of salvation (Acts 7:2–53; 13:16–26; Luke 1:46–55, 68–79) but not the history of the nations (Acts 14:16; 17:25–26), says the following: "Salvation is a divine prerogative. Israel had saviors sent to them, like Abraham, Moses and David (Acts 7:7ff., 25, 35; 13:17ff.): the last link in that chain is Jesus, to whom God in the end of times has transferred the divine prerogative of salvation" (J. Jervell, *The Theology of Acts*, 94).

GOD,” but he also subsumes “Graeco-Roman religio-philosophical knowledge”<sup>6</sup> and even transforms the Greek thoughts taught by their own teachers into support for his presentation of the Christian God.<sup>7</sup> In narrating this sermon, therefore, Luke displays his understanding of the universal scope of God’s reign and salvation. As far as Luke is concerned, the cultured and intellectual Athenians mark no exception to his presentation of human beings: They are without true knowledge about God, and thus ignorant and idolatrous. Therefore, they need more than correction of their thinking about the divine. Needless to say, to possess a “correct”—in the sense of “proper” or “true”— thinking or understanding about the divine is a prerequisite for salvation and this corrective element and tone are strong in Paul’s sermon to the Athenians. However, our studies in chapters 2 and 3 and the appendix unanimously point out that the Athenians are in need of something more than correction. They need conversion.<sup>8</sup>

In closing, a narrative-critical approach to Acts 17:16–34 enabled us see how the Lukan portrayal of the Athenians, contra Dibelius,<sup>9</sup> aligns with his overall picture of the Gentiles in Luke and Acts, and, therefore, together with other Gentiles, the Athenians are in need of repentance from their ignorant idolatry and conversion to the Christian faith,<sup>10</sup> which constitute vital steps toward salvation. To convert to the Christian faith takes more than change of thinking. Conversion for Luke implies (i) to repent from the ignorance of Jesus as God’s anointed Savior

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<sup>6</sup> Rowe, *World*, 36.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Witherington, *Acts*, 530.

<sup>8</sup> In our second chapter we noted that this is a position argued by Stenschke in his *Luke’s Portrait of Gentiles* against Taeger’s assertion about correction in his *Der Mensch und sein Heil*.

<sup>9</sup> We noted in chapter 1 that Dibelius considers the Areopagus speech a Lukan composition of “a *Hellenistic* speech about the true knowledge of God” (Dibelius, *Studies*, 57; italics in original) and alien to the rest of the NT concluding, “The speech is as alien to the New Testament (apart from Acts 14.15–17), as it is familiar to Hellenistic, particularly Stoic, philosophy” (Dibelius, *Studies*, 63).

<sup>10</sup> This conclusion also radically disagrees with Dibelius’ proposal that “The speaker on the Areopagus is the precursor of the [the second century] Apologists” who deduced the church’s teaching about God from their contemplation of the world and thus made their “teaching a part of hellenistic culture” (Dibelius, *Studies*, 63).

(Acts 3:15–17; 13:27–30; 17:30–31); (ii) to turn away from worthless idols (Acts 14:15; 17:24–25, 29; 19:26–27) or even to extract or remove “from constitutive aspects of pagan culture”;<sup>11</sup> and (iii) to recognize and willingly embrace the radically new ordering of life (cf. Acts 17:6; 16:21) in view of the resurrection and judgment (Acts 17:31).

Luke grounds these understandings on his own understanding of the character of God<sup>12</sup> whose plan for universal salvation (Luke 3:6)<sup>13</sup> has seen its fulfillment in Jesus (Luke 2:30–32; 24:44), and whose knowledge is bestowed from above as revelation (Luke 10:21–22) through the medium of Jesus (Luke 7:16) and proclamation of the Spirit-led church (Acts 1:8). The certainty of the Christian faith, in a nutshell, relies on an understanding of “the things that have been fulfilled” (Luke 1:1) in view of how God has worked out salvation through Jesus among the Jews and the Gentiles who all together suffer ignorance.

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<sup>11</sup> Rowe, *World*, 18. He says, “Converting to the God of the Christians was not merely an adjustment of this or that aspect of an otherwise unaltered basic cultural pattern . . .”

<sup>12</sup> Relying on Barthian understanding, K. Rowe says, “Theology, that is, is never merely ideation. It is always and inherently a total way of life” (Rowe, *World*, 17).

<sup>13</sup> The emphasis on this universal scope of God’s salvation is indispensable and pivotal as it is in turn based on Luke’s own understanding of God who is the God of Israel (his particularity; Acts 13:17) as well as the God of the universe (his universality; Acts 17:24–29; 14:15–17). According to J. Jervell, at the heart of the conflict between Jews and Christians lies the concept of “the God of Israel.” He concludes, “The very center of Luke’s theology is his notion about God *as* the God of Israel.” His list of the biblical references as well as related titles is helpful (J. Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts*, 18–19; italics in original).

## APPENDIX

### PAUL'S AUDIENCE: THE STOICS AND EPICUREANS

#### I. Introduction

When Luke penned about Paul's visit to and speech at Athens, he was not unaware of the significance of the "notable university city" of the Roman Empire<sup>1</sup> and of the occasion of Paul's visit even though we are not told why the city was not part of Paul's original missionary itinerary.<sup>2</sup> What is clear, however, is that Luke assumes of his implied readers "a basic familiarity with Athens' reputation as a cultural crossroads and as the seat of philosophy in the first-century Mediterranean world."<sup>3</sup>

F.F. Bruce notes that, "It has often been observed how subtly and acutely Luke suggests the local color and atmosphere of each city with which he deals."<sup>4</sup> Among many items that have the narrator's "local" taste of Athens,<sup>5</sup> Luke's referencing to two particular groups of the Athenian

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<sup>1</sup> C. K. Barrett, *Acts*, 2:827. According to Barrett, Rome respected and well treated Athens for her rich history from the very point of the Roman conquest at the hands of Sulla, who besieged the city in the Mithridatic war (2:826–27; cf. Plutarch, *Sulla*, 13 [460]).

<sup>2</sup> C. K. Barrett, *Acts*, 2:826. R. B. Rackham's following words capture well what Athens might have been to any cultured first century Christian reader: "Paul the Jew of Tarsus in the city of Pericles and Demosthenes, of Sophocles and Euripides, of Socrates and Plato—that is a situation to which our pen cannot attempt to do justice. Nor is it less difficult adequately to estimate the place of Athens in the Roman Empire. For at this date Athens was still the intellectual and artistic capital of the world. It was also a religious capital, for it was the stronghold of the Greek mythology, which was generally accepted as the most authentic account of the gods and their history. . . . The philosophy of Athens was even more celebrated than its arts. . . . So Athens was at once the chief birthplace and the natural home of philosophy. . . . Once more, and in the main through the art, Athens had become the religious center of Hellenism" (Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965], 301–2).

<sup>3</sup> P. Gray, "Implied Audiences," 208.

<sup>4</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (1988), 329.

<sup>5</sup> The following few examples can be suggested: That the city was full of idols (v. 16); Paul, like Socrates, reasoned with Athenians in agora (v. 17); the derogatory Athenian slang word "σπερμολόγος" (v. 18; cf. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler*, 242; and C.K. Barrett, *Acts*, 2:830); Paul was brought to the Areopagus court, where Socrates was tried and sentenced (v. 19); Luke commented on the Athenian obsession with novelties (v. 21); and Paul

philosophers (Stoics and Epicureans) draws our attention. As to why Luke mentions only Stoics and Epicureans in 17:18,<sup>6</sup> different suggestions are made. Rackham, for instance, argues that it was for the reasons of vitality and influence of the two groups among the populace saying, “These two were the only philosophers which at this time possessed vitality. They offered men a guide of life and a moral creed, and so they were a living force in the world.”<sup>7</sup> C. K. Barrett, for another, suggests: “In view, however, of this relation between the Areopagus address and Stoicism it is not unreasonable to think that Luke mentioned the Stoics in v. 18 in order to prepare for the allusions, and to suggest that he mentioned the Epicureans for the same reason.”<sup>8</sup>

Whether we take Rackham’s view or Barrett’s, or both to be the possible explanation for why the two specific philosopher groups are named, the implied author’s expectation is our familiarity with the basic tenets of two philosophical schools. This for modern readers poses an inevitable challenge for a number of reasons. Firstly and most obviously, we are separated by time and space. Secondly, our individual and personal way of analyzing and understanding the reality is unique to the Westerners. It is often pointed out that our separation between state and religion is alien to ancient society.<sup>9</sup> Thirdly, Stoicism, in particular, defies any simple

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referenced to one of their altar inscriptions (v. 23).

<sup>6</sup> C.K. Barrett suggests that Luke could have mentioned other groups such as Pythagoreans, Cynics, Peripatetics, Sceptics, and so forth (cf. C.K. Barrett, “Paul’s Speech on the Areopagus,” in *NT Christianity for African and the World: Essays in Honor of Harry Sawyer* [eds. Glasswell, M. E. and E. W. Fasholé-Luke; London: SPCK, 1974], 72).

<sup>7</sup> According to Rackham, Athens was caught between two growing pressures: the religious easterners wanting spiritual food for their souls and the serious westerners seeking something practical to face life difficulties. Turning away from the investigation of truth in itself and metaphysical speculations to the practical application of moral philosophy, the Stoics and the Epicureans offered help and guidance for obtaining a practical and ethical aim of life: the blessed life. Other schools such as the Academics, Peripatetics, and Sceptics were without practical influence because, while maintaining their zeal for theoretical speculation, they were purely “academic” (Rackham, *Acts*, 303).

<sup>8</sup> C.K. Barrett, “Paul’s Speech,” 72–73.

<sup>9</sup> Simon Price, for example, argues that introducing new deities in Athens for either private or public worship was tightly controlled by the Athenian people and, since the council and the assembly regulated the religious life of the state, political and religious change often went hand in hand. After introducing several changes and reforms, which took place in Athens, Price concludes, “The guiding spirit behind the whole series of reforms was that of

comparison or definition as it went through stages of development and adapted to or even subsumed the teachings of various philosophical traditions.

Reading Paul's Areopagus speech as implied readers toward the general purpose of becoming the suggested image and to embrace the ideal the implied author presents seems to require an expansion of the conventional identification of who Luke's implied readers are.<sup>10</sup> In other words, Lukan readership, taking its cue from the Areopagus speech, assumes some familiarity with first century Athens as well as the leading philosophical schools at Athens and their teachers. Without assuming this particular readership, our reading of Paul's speech at Athens would be, to borrow C. Talbert's somewhat unjustified criticism of narrative approach, "insular" caused by "devoid of references to the Mediterranean environment" or the abstraction of the narrative world from its time and space.<sup>11</sup> Luke's assumption on his readers and aforementioned challenges necessitate our survey on the two philosophical traditions as a way to better understand Paul's Athenian audience as well as our text. As an appendix, this survey is meant to supplement our overall discussion as it takes us closer to Luke's implied readership with better knowledge about the first century Stoicism and Epicureanism.

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democratic patriotism, a strong sense of attachment to the gods of the land of Attica" (Simon Price, *Religions of the Ancient Greeks* [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 78, 81).

<sup>10</sup> Building on Fitzmyer's discussion about Luke's readership in his commentary on Luke, W. Kurz, S. J., for example, proposes the following: "This cumulative evidence suggests implied readers who are not primarily from Palestine but from elsewhere in the Roman Empire, and who are either Gentile Christians or Jewish Christians concerned about the continuity between Judaism (with its scriptures) and contemporary Christianity.

"All this cumulative evidence argues persuasively that Luke-Acts handles predominantly Christian concerns, viewpoints, and interests, many of which would probably be of little interest to non-Christian pagans and aggravating for non-Christian Jews. Luke-Acts is intended primarily for Christian readers" (William Kurz, S. J., *Reading Luke-Acts: Dynamics of Biblical Narrative* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993], 13, 14–15).

<sup>11</sup> Charles Talbert, *Reading Luke-Acts in its Mediterranean Milieu* (SNT vol 107; Boston: Brill, 2003), 12–13. Of Tannehill's *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, Talberts says, "[T]here is an almost total lack of references to Mediterranean sources outside the Bible," whereas he is less critical of Joel Green's *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT, 1997). His criticism, therefore, seems to address to the earlier practice of narrative criticism. Even though reading a text against its Mediterranean background is not the primary interest, narrative-critical emphasis on what the implied author expects what the implied reader to know to fill in the blanks or not to know does address Talbert's concern.



Therefore, with caution lest we violate against the complex nature of these ancient traditions in an overly simplified attempt to assess them, do we propose to do three things: (i) to survey Stoicism and Epicureanism in terms of their basic teachings and tenets; (ii) to identify some similarities as well as differences with Christianity; and (iii) to trace the “knowledge-ignorance” theme within Stoicism and the Epicureanism, which, in turn, would give us an imaginary hearing of Paul’s Areopagus speech from the perspective of the two philosophical traditions.<sup>12</sup> All findings and insights drawn from this survey will serve the ultimate goal, that is, to hear what Luke/implied author would have his implied reader hear.

## II. Stoicism

In introduction, Stoicism and Epicureanism, the two powerful and competing Greco-Roman philosophical groups,<sup>13</sup> arose at the same time as their founding teachers lived in proximity in space (Athens) and time (Zeno of Citium [333–263 B.C.E.] and Epicurus [341–270 B.C.E.]). And both schools faded out, largely due to the rise of Christianity, in the third century C.E. with Stoicism having enjoyed much more popularity and influence.<sup>14</sup> As our survey will

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See, for example, Mark Powell, “Expected and Unexpected Readings of Matthew.”

<sup>12</sup> Joel Marcus wrote an article using Paul’s speech as a “window” to the Hellenistic world. He claims that one can draw from Acts 17 five factors at work in the Hellenistic world: “Hellenistic interest in religious questions; the unity of the Hellenistic world itself; Hellenistic tolerance for ancient gods from elsewhere; a pyramid-like arrangement of divine power; and finally, outside Judaism and Christianity, the Hellenistic world’s lack of any developed idea of the afterlife.” (Cf. Joel Marcus, “Paul at the Areopagus: Window on the Hellenistic World,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 18[1988]:143–148, here at p. 143). Despite its inherent danger of using the text as a window, Marcus’ article offers some insight into the Hellenistic worldview.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. “Against Epicurus” and “Against Followers of Epicurus and of the Academy” (*Discourses of Epictetus*, Book 1:23 and Book 2:20 respectively). Ferguson says that Epicurus lived to be the most controversial person in ancient philosophical circle drawing bitter enemies as well as followers (cf. Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. [Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003], 370). According to L. T. Johnson, Epictetus scorned the Epicureans “because their withdrawal from society and political involvement betrays the social character of humans (*Discourse*, 1.23.1–10) and is the consequences of corrupt judgment and behavior (3.7.19–28)” (Luke T. Johnson, *Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009], 69).

<sup>14</sup> Troels Engberg-Pedersen claims that Stoicism was the reigning Greek-Roman philosophy until Platonism gradually took over that position, that is, “up until the time of Plutarch (c. 46-120 CE).” (Cf. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, “Setting the Scene: Stoicism and Platonism in the Transitional Period in Ancient Philosophy” in *Stoicism*

suggest, it is again Stoicism rather than Epicureanism or Platonism that finds most parallel ideas in the New Testament.<sup>15</sup> Contra Wilhelm Bousset and R. Bultmann of the History of Religious School,<sup>16</sup> a possibility is suggested that the authors of the NT, those of non-canonical early Christian writings, and even some early apologists were influenced by Stoicism and they often adopted Stoic views to a degree greater than those of Middle Platonism.<sup>17</sup> With that said, we first turn to Stoicism.

## 2.a. Four Tenets of Stoicism

It would not be redundant to restate at the outset that one can do injustice against the complex nature of Stoicism in an attempt to present it in a brief discussion even though our narrow scope requires our endeavor in brevity. With that awareness, we list four important

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*in Early Christianity* [eds. Tuomas Rasimus et al.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010], 12–13.) Ronald Nash also says, “On the whole, cultured people during the first century A.D. were influenced more by Stoicism than any other philosophical movement” (R. Nash, *The Gospel and the Greeks* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1999], 57). W. W. Tarn said, “The philosophy of the Hellenistic world was the Stoa; all else was secondary” (W. W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilization* [London: E. Arnold & Company: 1930], 290).

<sup>15</sup> Troels Engberg-Pedersen suggests that “in certain respects the worldview of the apostle Paul was basically a Stoic one,” whereas Platonic ideas are found in II Cor 4–5 (cf. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, “Setting the Scene,” 11). Also writers of the following articles appearing in the same work suggest such connection: “Stoicism as a Key to Pauline Ethics in Romans” by Runar M. Thorsteinsson; “Stoic Law in Paul?” by Niko Huttunen; “Jesus the Teacher and Stoic Ethics in the Gospel of Matthew” by Stanley Stowers; “Stoic Physics, the Universal Conflagration, and the Eschatological Destruction of the ‘Ignorant and Unstable’ in 2 Peter” by J. Albert Harill. Another reliable reference to the issue of ‘Stoicism and the New Testament,’ in particular, is Troels Engberg-Pedersen ed., *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

Contra Engberg-Pedersen and above named scholars, Ronald H. Nash investigates into the topic and denies any connection between Platonism and Paul. Referring to the popular argument for Platonic tone in Paul’s saying in II Cor 4:16 (“Therefore we do not despair, but even if our physical body is wearing away, our inner person is being renewed day by day”), Nash says, “Ironically the terminology ‘inner and outer man’ does not even appear in Plato’s writings” and thus reading Paul into Plato as the reverse (Nash, *The Gospel*, 50).

<sup>16</sup> For a brief introduction to this school and its position on the Hellenistic philosophies, see H. Boers, “Religionsgeschichtliche Schule,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (ed. J. H. Hayes; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 2:383–87.

<sup>17</sup> Tuomas Rasimus et al. eds., *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), vii. Troels Engberg-Pedersen opines that it was for the later Christian writers of the third century that Platonism became important assess (cf. his article, 12–13). In the meantime, Middle Platonism lasted until the time of Plotinus (ca. 204/5–270 C.E.).

characteristics of Stoicism as they relate, first, to Christianity and, second, to our topic of knowledge-ignorance.

First, the early Stoics, in particular, were materialists. They believed that all that exists, including divine and human beings, is corporeal, and they were also monists as they viewed “all reality as composed of one ultimate type of being” following Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 535–c.475 BCE) who identified fire as the basic *arhe* (elementary principle) of the universe.<sup>18</sup>

Second, the Stoics were *largely* panentheists or pantheists.<sup>19</sup> Though the later Stoicism tended to embrace personal Deism,<sup>20</sup> Stoicism is known for their belief that a divine rational ordering principle,<sup>21</sup> without any personality, rules and lives in all things and beings, and thus the Stoic God, the universal law or providence, is incapable of knowledge, love, or providential acts in biblical sense. The Stoics explained the relationship between God and the world in terms of soul and body. The world was thought to be the body of God.<sup>22</sup> The Stoic God, or Zeus, is everywhere, and was often described as a “perfectly good and wise gas” or as “intelligent, fiery breath.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> R. Nash, *The Gospel*, 58.

<sup>19</sup> A helpful distinction between the two is offered by Drozdek: “The Stoics thus vacillated (at last) between two concepts of God: God is the entire cosmos, or only its rational part—*logos-pneuma*. If the first meaning is stressed, then one cannot seriously doubt the pantheism of the Stoics. If the second meaning is emphasized—the duality of the active and the passive principles—we have what can be termed panentheism: ‘everything is in God and God penetrates all things.’ . . . Whether understood pantheistically or panentheistically, God is responsible for everything that is, for all events, for the entire history of the world. God not only knows what is happening in the world, but also wills it to happen” (Adam Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers as Theologians: The Divine Arche* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007], 240; italics added).

<sup>20</sup> W. R. Halliday, *The Pagan Background of Early Christianity* (New York: Cooper Square, reprint. 1970 [1st ed. 1925]), 134.

<sup>21</sup> According to E. Ferguson, the Stoics divided matter into two basic kinds: “the grosser and the finer matter called breath or spirit (*pneuma*) that is diffused throughout reality. This special form of matter holds everything together and is given various names: *logos* (reason), breath (*pneuma*), providence (*pronoia*), Zeus, or fire (the element considered most akin to reason)” (cf. Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 356).

<sup>22</sup> Nash, *The Gospel*, 58–59; Witherington, *Acts*, 514.

<sup>23</sup> E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 357.

Even though their popular understanding of the divine beings fits into pan(en)theism or Deism, it is important to bear in mind that *some* Stoic teachers taught that Zeus or God alone of the gods is imperishable making all the gods creations of God. To maintain or not to compromise their monotheism, they taught that the gods of popular religion were simply unacceptable as they are jealous, squabbling, and vindictive. They are just fables of the poets, a subject of superstition, and “idiotic beliefs” (Cicero, *ND* 2.63) or at best different manifestations of the one God, Zeus (DL 7.157).<sup>24</sup>

Third, the Stoics emphasized providence. For this reason, Stoicism is known for determinism, or the concept of fate and destiny (εἰμαρμένη),<sup>25</sup> which bases on the presupposition that every event must have a cause operating within a cosmic, Natural Law that binds the whole cosmos together. Therefore, “[a]s the all-pervading *pneuma* or *logos*, Nature is the intelligent director of everything.” Based on this they drew the concept of providence. Divine providence “presupposes a capacity in God or Nature to bring about good works. The Stoics held that this is the best of all possible worlds; notwithstanding apparent imperfections here and there, Nature so organizes each part that harmony is present in the whole.”<sup>26</sup> For the theological discussion, “it is important that, for Chrysippus, God is fate (Cicero, *ND* 1.39) and ‘nothing takes place or moves in the least differently than according to the *logos* of Zeus, which Chrysippus says is the same as fate’ (Plutarch, *SR* 1056c). In general, the Stoics are said to state that God is fate and fate is God

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 241.

<sup>25</sup> According to Zeno, fate is “the chain-like cause of existing things of the *logos* according to which they are ordered” (DL 7.149). Also, “the moving power of matter in the same way, which does not differ from providence and nature” (Aetius 1.28.4); cited in Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 237.

<sup>26</sup> A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (London: G. Duckworth, 2nd ed, 1986), 164–65. Long notices the psychological and moral implications of this notion are constantly invoked by Marcus Aurelius, and he quotes: “Nothing is harmful to the part which is advantageous to the whole. For the whole contains nothing which is not advantageous to itself. . . . As long as I remember that I am a part of such a whole I shall be well content with all that happens (x 6)” (cf. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 165). L.T. Johnson, *Among the Gentiles*, 69, explains the “best” in the sense that the Stoic universe is the embodiment of reason.

who ‘is present in all existing things’ (Alexander, *De facto* 22).”<sup>27</sup> At a practical and ethical level, therefore, the virtue or goal of the Stoic system is to live in harmony with nature or the rational principle, or in accord with reason (*logos* = cosmic mind), which in turn brings peace of mind or happiness. Epictetus (AD 55–135), who is best known for his teachings on moral aspect of Stoicism,<sup>28</sup> said, “That is the chief reason why we need education, that we may learn so to adjust our preconceptions of rational and irrational to particular conditions as to be in harmony with nature.”<sup>29</sup> Therefore, what is highly valued for Stoic ethics is one’s ability to make practical judgment (*phronēsis*), which distinguishes between the wise and the foolish, or the virtuous or the non-virtuous.<sup>30</sup> The ideal of detachment as an important characteristic of the wise is hinted at Epictetus’ following saying:

Men as you are, wait upon God. When He gives the signal and releases you from this service, then you shall depart to Him; but for the present be content to dwell in this country wherein He appointed you to dwell. . . . Why should [man] gaze with wonder on them that are rich or powerful? . . . For what will they do with us? We will pay no heed to what they have power to do, what we really care for they cannot touch. Who, I ask you, will be master over one who is of this spirit?<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 237.

<sup>28</sup> L. T. Johnson, *Among the Gentiles*, 70, regards Epictetus to be best known for his pursuit of “moral transformation.” Epictetus likened himself to a coach for athletes preparing for the Olympics (students) or a physician for sick people. He said his lecture hall was like a hospital (cf. *Discourses*, 1.18.21–23; 2.14.21; 3.23.30). For the arduous work of moral transformation, Epictetus emphasized “practice and training (*askēsis*)” (cf. *Discourses*, 2.9.13).

<sup>29</sup> Whitney J. Oates ed., *The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers: The Complete Extant Writings of Epicurus, Epictetus, Lucretius, Marcus Aurelius* (New York: Random House, 1940), 227.

<sup>30</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 359.

<sup>31</sup> Cited in Whitney J. Oates ed., *The Stoic*, 239–41. For Epictetus’ important teachings on man in relation to the gods, see the following: *Discourses*, 1.12 (not inferior to the gods); 2.17.29, 3.24.60, 4.3.9 (friends to the gods); 1.22.21 (like the gods); 2.19.27 (fellowship with Zeus); 1.12.27 (equal to the gods); 1.9.1, 1.9.22–26 (kinship between man and the gods); 1.13.4 (offspring of Zeus). The Stoic stress on detachment as the key code for engaging the world is in stark contrast with the ideal of love of Christianity (E.R. Bevan, *Stoics and Sceptics* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1913], 69; cited in Halliday, *The Pagan Background*, 134, n. 2).

Fourth, they explained the world in terms of fire and *logos*. For this worldview they relied on Heraclitus who taught that “the material constituents of the world are ‘turnings’ or modifications of fire” into air, air into water, water to earth, and back again. In the Stoic system, this traditional “quartet” or these elements of Greek philosophy “are thought of as consisting two pairs, one active (fire and air = *pneuma*), and the other passive (earth and water).”<sup>32</sup> Heraclitus claimed that this constant change is balanced by an interchange. He introduced the *logos* concept for this principle of balance, stability, or order. In the Stoic system *logos* (*ratio*=reason) became another word for God because it maintains order<sup>33</sup> or *logos* is believed to govern through spirit as the vehicle.<sup>34</sup> Cicero argued that there is nothing more divine than *logos*.<sup>35</sup> In a nutshell, *logos* or God is the author not only of the cosmic harmony, “infallibility of natural,<sup>36</sup> but also historical, regularities.”<sup>37</sup>

## 2.b. Stoicism and Christianity

Whether we take Christianity’s relationship with Stoicism in terms of a simple assimilation<sup>38</sup> or some serious influence,<sup>39</sup> we find many parallels in the NT. The biblical admonishments, for example, with regard to “the units of society (Eph. 5:21–6:9; Col. 3:18–4:1;

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<sup>32</sup> A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 156. Long suggests that *logos* concept is Stoic’s biggest borrowing from Heraclitus (cf. Long, *ibid.*, 147–49). For a more detailed and in-depth discussion on *pneuma*, see Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 231–35.

<sup>33</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 357–58.

<sup>34</sup> Johnson, *Gentiles*, 69.

<sup>35</sup> Cicero, *ND* 1.37.

<sup>36</sup> Drozdek says, “God is what science says is the source of life, *pneuma*, and whose intelligence, *logos*, is the best embodiment of the laws of logic. God is the best that science can envision—perfect in execution of physical and logical laws—but nothing more” (Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 244).

<sup>37</sup> Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 230.

<sup>38</sup> R. H. Nash says that we can find coincidences of language and imagery between Paul and Stoics like Seneca. However, using the images and language Paul transformed and purified the ideas, and gave a new and higher meaning and significance (R. H. Nash, *The Gospel and the Greeks: Did the New Testament Borrow from Pagan Thought?* [Phillipsburg, N. J.: P&R, 2003], 64–65).

1 Pet. 2:13–3:7; etc) in both form (the reference to stations in society) and content (e.g., ‘it is fitting’) show Stoic influence.” Ferguson also claims that the Stoic natural theology, whose influence we find in Romans 1–2 and Acts 17, was transmitted through Hellenistic Judaism (cf. Wisdom of Solomon, 13–14).<sup>40</sup> In addition, the NT used some terminologies that are well familiar with Stoicism such as Spirit, conscience, *logos*, virtue, self-sufficiency, freedom of speech, reasonable service, etc.<sup>41</sup> The questions of to what extent and through what channels in regard to the Stoic influence are yet to be determined through on-going, future studies and beyond the scope of this study.

What concerns us goes beyond merely suggesting the possible Stoic influence on Christianity.<sup>42</sup> Here, we list a few teachings that set apart Christianity from Stoicism. They will serve as the basis for our concluding discussion as to how the Athenians would have heard Paul’s sermon framed by knowledge-ignorance theme.

First of all, the single most important element that seems to set the two apart is the biblical teaching about the personal God, the Creator of the world. Contra the Stoic pan(en)theistic, immanent god, who is often equated with the world, Christians believe in the God who created the world at the beginning, and, therefore, the universe has its beginning and purpose, and it is moving toward its end.<sup>43</sup> On the contrary, the Stoics taught the world would eventually end by a universal conflagration (*doctrine of conflagration* [ἐκπύρωσις], something of a parallel idea

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<sup>39</sup> Ferguson concludes that one can trace Stoic influence in the New Testament (Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 36).

<sup>40</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 36. See L. T. Johnson’s “Ways of Being Jewish in the Greco-Roman World” in *Gentiles* (111–29) for a suggestion as to how the Greek influence on the NT could have been natural and historical.

<sup>41</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 36.

<sup>42</sup> Troels Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) contains several articles that illuminate this topic: “Enthymemic Argumentation in Paul: The Case of Romans 6” (David Hellholm); “Determinism and Free Will in Paul: The Argument of 1 Corinthians 8 and 9” (Abraham Malherbe); and “Stoicism in Philipppians” (Troels Engberg-Pedersen).

<sup>43</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 36.

which we find in 2 Peter 3:10–12. But they differ in believing that the world would begin anew and repeat the same course of events (*doctrine of eternal regeneration/recurrence*

[παλιγγενεσία]; cf. Matt 19:28 and Titus 3:5).<sup>44</sup>

Second, self-respect or self-liberation was one of the most powerful driving forces for Stoic ethics. This marks a real and fundamental difference with Christianity in view of the motives and understanding how one should behave in relation to other fellow human beings.<sup>45</sup> Epictetus in the *Enchiridion* gives the following instruction typical of Stoic virtue of apathy:

Is the child or wife of another dead? There is no one who would not say, “This is an accident of mortality.” But if anyone’s own child happens to die, it is immediately, ‘Alas! How wretched am I!’ It should always be remembered how we are affected on hearing the same thing concerning others.<sup>46</sup>

According to Epictetus, therefore, virtuous life is achieved by eliminating all passion and emotion from his life. Ferguson comments: “Stoicism said, ‘Feel toward yourself as you feel toward others’; Christianity said, ‘Feel toward others as you would feel toward yourself.’”<sup>47</sup> Behind this Christian ethics lies the self-giving, active, and redemptive love of a merciful God in Christ, while as the unchangeable law of Nature lies behind the Stoic ethics.<sup>48</sup> Due to their self-centered motive, “the Christian Savior, who redeemed many by self-sacrifice—an idea which in essence was repugnant to many pagan philosophers’ view of the Divine nature—was completely unlike the savior gods of the mystery religions.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> R. H. Nash, *The Gospel*, 61–62; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 358.

<sup>45</sup> W.R. Halliday, *The Pagan Background*, 134.

<sup>46</sup> Cited in Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 367.

<sup>47</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 367.

<sup>48</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 367.

<sup>49</sup> Halliday, *Pagan*, 135.



Third, in the Stoic system, reality is perceived through reason or logical thinking as reality in itself is thought to be rational. Therefore, one's difficulties of understanding the universe are logical matters, which can be overcome by working out problems.<sup>50</sup> This is possible through education and training as the human soul is regarded as a portion of the vital, intelligent, warm breath, which permeates the entire universe, or *logos*, which is also part of the human faculty enabling him to think, plan and speak.<sup>51</sup> In the biblical tradition, however, one perceives deeper reality primarily through the Spirit-wrought faith in God's word given as revelation. Understanding or knowledge in biblical sense is a divine gift through revelation received in faith.

Fourth, what constitutes sin is different. In fact, Stoics like Seneca, Paul's contemporary, lacked any real consciousness of sin because they did not have an awareness of a personal and perfectly holy God.<sup>52</sup> J. B. Lightfoot suggests:

With Seneca error or sin is nothing more than the failure in attaining to the ideal of the perfect man, which he sets before him, the running counter to the law of the universe in which he finds himself placed. . . . The Stoic's conception of error or sin is not referred at all to the idea of God.<sup>53</sup>

In view of the above-mentioned resemblances and differences between Stoicism and Christianity, it is safe to conclude at this point that some Stoic ideas were available for the educated during the first century C.E. With his connection with Tarsus,<sup>54</sup> therefore, Paul's quoting a line from Aratus'

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<sup>50</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 358.

<sup>51</sup> A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 171, 108.

<sup>52</sup> R. H. Nash, *The Gospel*, 66.

<sup>53</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, "St. Paul and Seneca," in *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (1953; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1913): 270–333, here 296; cited in Nash, *The Gospel*, 66.

<sup>54</sup> He is of Tarsus (Acts 22:3) and spent a good number of years there after his conversion (cf. 9:30; 11:25). F. Bruce provides a brief introduction to this "University city" whose native Stoic teacher Athenodorus with his successor Nestor made much contribution toward popularization of Stoicism from 15 B.C. on and making it "one of three chief centers of learning in the world, the other two being Athens and Alexandria." (Cf. Bruce, *The Acts of Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* [Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1984 reprint], 208.)

poem is not unusual nor does it necessarily presuppose that Paul was dependent on Stoicism.<sup>55</sup> Paul simply used his learning for establishing the contact point and delivering his Christian sermon to a Greek audience. Our exegetical analysis on Paul's speech in chapter three further discusses on this point. For example, that God does not need human service (v. 25) echoes both the Stoic and the Epicurean idea, while as the ideas about the unity of mankind (v. 26) and God being the source of all life (v. 28) bear strong Stoic imprints. This invites us to attend to a more specific topic: the Stoic understanding of knowledge and its relation to religion.

### 2.c. Knowledge-Ignorance in Stoicism

According to A. A. Long, Zeno inherited the following basic Socratic propositions: "Knowledge and goodness go hand in hand, or the good man is wise and the bad man ignorant; from knowledge right action follows necessarily; and the greatest evil is a bad condition of the soul."<sup>56</sup> From this, Zeno went on to tackle the challenging task of defining the nature of knowledge or the steps leading to it:

Zeno illustrated this stage [of impression] by the simile of an open hand. He then partly closed his hand, and so represented the response of the governing-principle to the impression: the mind assents to it. Having next made a fist he likened this to cognition ('grasping'). And finally, grasping his fist with the other hand he said, 'This is what knowledge is like' (Cic. *Acad.* 11 145).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> According to Everett Ferguson, Aratus (c. 315–240 BCE), a pupil of Zeno in the latter's old age as well as poet to whom Paul refers in Acts 17:28, popularized Stoicism more than any other founders of Stoicism largely thanks to his easy-to-remember, poetic textbook of astronomy, *Phaenomena*. According to Ferguson, "Everyone read Homer and Aratus. When the Romans translated something from Greek into Latin, Aratus was one of the first (Varro, Cicero, and Germanicus translated his work). Aratus gave a Stoic coloring to his poem, and so he was important in the spread of Stoic ideas. When Paul (Acts 17:28) wanted to quote something religious from the Greek poets, the opening lines of Aratus' *Phaenomenen* came to mind. . . . Everyone would know Aratus' poem, and this particular idea was a Stoic commonplace, so this quotation does not of itself necessarily indicate any extensive knowledge of Greek literature." Cf. Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 355–56.

<sup>56</sup> A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 111.

<sup>57</sup> A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 126.

In Stoicism, therefore, perception is a form of judgment through interpreting and classifying the “cognitive impression” as it is through human sense-experience. Built on this, knowledge must be irrefutable in the sense that its possessor can prove what he knows by means of true propositions. Therefore, since the Stoic wise man knows what must happen in the chain of necessary causes and effects, “he never errs, never fails to grasp things with complete security. His knowledge is logically equivalent to ‘truth,’ since it is based upon the causal nexus, which controls cosmic events. . . . [T]he wise man’s judgments are infallible since he knows why each of them must be true.”<sup>58</sup>

It is almost predicted, and thus not surprising that the Stoics not only sharply distinguished between knowledge and belief (“weak assent”) but also placed the former above the latter. A. A. Long suggests that the distinction goes back to Plato who contrasted between seeming and being, and between belief and knowledge.<sup>59</sup> The Stoics taught that knowledge was peculiar to the wise man whose apprehension or “grasping” (*katalêpsis*) is “secure and unshakable by argument,” while belief was peculiar to the foolish who would assent to what is non-apprehensible.<sup>60</sup> Long further comments:

Knowledge in Stoicism must be ‘secure,’ and any cognitive state, which lacks this property cannot be knowledge. The absence of knowledge is belief or ignorance, but beliefs are not monolithic. Some of them are patently false; others are acts of assent to what is true. But these latter lack the grip—one hand clasping another—by which Zeno characterized knowledge.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 130.

<sup>59</sup> A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 78.

<sup>60</sup> A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 90–91.

<sup>61</sup> A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 129.

Once again, possessing knowledge based on thorough logical examination through suspending judgment,<sup>62</sup> aided by the divine spark, to the point of being absolutely secure and irrefutable is highly valued as a mark for being wise and prerequisite for happiness, while as belief is often considered to be “weak assent” where knowledge is impossible.<sup>63</sup> That there existed a great chasm between Christianity and Stoicism in terms of their epistemologies is obvious as often seen in a simplistic expression: “faith vs. reason.”<sup>64</sup>

At a practical and ethical level, possessing knowledge for the Stoics means to conduct one’s life in accordance with *telos*, that is, “to live in agreement with a single and harmonious logos” or “living in harmony with nature.”<sup>65</sup> For Epictetus, anyone who refuses to live “secure and unshaken” life of tranquility by following or imitating God live in self-induced ignorance and vice “complain against” God (1.29.17; 2.12.12; 3.24.5) and “fight against god” (*theomachein*; 3.24.21; 3.24.24; 4.1.101). Ignorance, in other words, is when one fails to accept providence due to the lack of ability to make practical judgment (*phronēsis*). Zeno and

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<sup>62</sup> It bears mentioning that the Stoic knowledge formally refers to “scientific knowledge” (= science), and, when ignorance, equated with opinion, is viewed as vice, it is taken as an assent to the incognitive or incognitive impressions. What about knowledge about the divine existence? The following is suggested by Long and Sedley: “The gods’ existence and providence, cited as examples of cognition established by rational argument (P), are standard cases of items the Stoics referred to preconceptions and common conceptions (cf. 54K). It appears, then, that these function as criteria to validate theories and to adjudicate truth in areas where simple cognitive sense-impressions will not serve.” See other compiled passages contained in A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1 Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 253–59; above citation from 253.

<sup>63</sup> Against this view, Origen charged the Stoics for “spiritual aristocracy” (cf. Origen, *c. Cels.*, vii, 60; cited in Halliday, *Pagan*, 136). Halliday continues: “It is rather that Christianity, as judged by the pagan standards, seemed to ignore more values in its direct appeal to sinners and criminals, and its basic doctrine of spiritual democracy appeared to run counter, as indeed it did, to that intellectual conception of virtue which is cardinal to pagan ethics” (Halliday, *Pagan*, 137).

<sup>64</sup> According to Loveday Alexander, Galen, the second century C.E. physician and Stoic philosopher, used both Judaism and Christianity “as incidental ammunition in the real debate” against his contemporary philosophical schools in their normal irrational state of lacking logical argument in favor of clinging to their own particular dogmas. See Loveday Alexander, “Paul and the Hellenistic Schools: The Evidence of Galen” in Troels Engberg-Pedersen ed., *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995): 60–83, here at 65–66.

<sup>65</sup> Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 242.

Chrysippus' metaphor of a dog tied to a cart<sup>66</sup> explains it in simplicity. The dog may either willingly follow the cart or be dragged anyhow against its will.<sup>67</sup> However difficult and troublesome is the issue of the strict pantheistic determinism, the ethical message is clear: "Be like a wise dog, not an ignorant and unwilling one." Since the Stoics taught and believed in conflagration through which all existing things except God or Zeus<sup>68</sup> will be subject to total destruction in fire and subsequent rebirth, the punishment of one's ignorance is the current life lived like "an unwilling dog," dragged by a cart of fate.<sup>69</sup>

In view of their teachings and beliefs we surveyed, it is obvious that, whereas the Stoics would have agreed with Paul on several points, what Paul said in vv. 30–31 must have been striking to this group of audience; that the God who had overlooked their past ignorance but "now commands all people everywhere to repent" was a strange concept. Completely alien to their ears was the idea that God set the final day for judgment in righteousness through his appointed man whose rising from the dead bears the divine authentication. As in v. 18, Paul's teaching about resurrection again invited dividing responses; some sneered and some others wanted more hearing. Therefore, the mixed response and seemingly meager result should not surprise us. Even though his preaching was not met with violent reaction and Paul "went out"

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<sup>66</sup> Behind this metaphor is the uneasy position of Stoicism on relationship between fate and human freedom.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Hippolytus, *Haer.* 1.21; cited in Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 242–43. Drozdek's following citation from Cleanthes shows a wise, knowledgeable choice of a sage: "Lead me, Zeus and fate, wherever is your will that I go since I will follow unhesitatingly; when I don't want to, having become evil, I will follow, docile, anyway" (cf. Epictetus, *Ench.* 53; in Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 243).

<sup>68</sup> According to Drozdek, in the Stoic system, the gods are God's creations, and, therefore, they are not immortal and will be subject to destruction (cf. Plutarch, *CN* 1077e; Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 241).

<sup>69</sup> We can deduce from this that their soteriology is this worldly. After in-depth studies on Aelius Aristides (a Sophist, 117–80 CE) and Epictetus (a Stoic, ca. 50–120 CE), L. T. Johnson concludes that for both salvation was a matter of health and integrity in the present life. However, for the former, the divine power is external to humans and available through religious meditations, while as, for the latter, the divine *dynamis* is immanent within human activity and, thus, it is manifested in human moral transformation (Johnson, *Gentiles*, 50–77, esp. 77).

from them free of any charge (v. 33), the majority of audience including Stoics remained unmoved refusing to turn from their ignorance.

### III. Epicureanism

#### 3.a. Epicurus (341–270 BCE), a Controversial Figure

In comparison with Stoicism, which went through ongoing stages of development or changes, Epicureanism took up a fairly consistent and stable form, as there was a tendency in preserving the original teachings of Epicurus. Born as an Athenian citizen on the island of Samos (341 BCE), Epicurus went to Athens at the age of eighteen for the military service for two years. Then, he became a student of Nausiphanes of Teos, not far from his home. This encounter influenced him in two critical directions: Epicurus was fascinated by the conduct of Pyrrho (c. 360 BCE–c. 270 BCE), the teacher of Nausiphanes. Epicurus' abstention from public life and disapproval of all public career in pursuit of tranquility of soul (Epicurean doctrine of *ataraxy*) is allegedly originated from the skepticism of Pyrrho.<sup>70</sup> At the same time, his teacher Nausiphanes perpetuated the teachings of Democritus, the atomist. Contrary to his claim to be “self-taught,” Epicurus' physics is believed to show a critical imprint of Democritus' teaching. However, Epicurus parted from his teacher in consequence of a bitter quarrel, and he began to teach his own doctrines, which he referred to as “true philosophy.”<sup>71</sup>

Upon returning to Athens at the age thirty-four in 307/6 B.C.E., he bought himself a house with garden from which the Epicurean school earned its name: “the philosophy of Garden.” Without totally excluding himself from the civic life such as festivals and religious

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<sup>70</sup> Norman W. DeWitt, *Epicurus and His Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), 61.

<sup>71</sup> Norman W. DeWitt, *St. Paul and Epicurus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), 3–5.

rituals, Epicurus founded a community of variety of people including slaves and courtesans,<sup>72</sup> which would be similar to, in modern sense, “a society of friends” living according to common principles.<sup>73</sup> Even though this setting provided Epicurus the ideal environment for teaching and practice in the context of a close-knit life together, his professed hedonism and a life of austere contentment withdrawn from outside world became the source of some unpopular stories circulated about his school. As we will note later, Epicurus’ main drive was to identify and remove mistaken beliefs in his society to pave a path for happiness. Thus, both his lifestyle and teaching earned him the reputation of being “the most controversial figure in ancient philosophy, with bitter enemies as well as devoted followers.”<sup>74</sup> For their ardent pursuit of tranquility or ultimate “pleasure” and practicing the rules as means to obtain it, Epicureanism was known as the “only missionary and militant” philosophy of the Greeks standing to the dominant Platonism.<sup>75</sup>

### 3.b. Epicurean Physics

It was at the hands of the Latin poet Lucretius (94–55 B.C.E.), an ideal convert to Epicurean teaching, that the teachings of Epicurus became better known to the modern world. His philosophical poem “On the Nature of Things” (*De Rerum Natura*) consists of six books expounding the physical theory of Epicurus.<sup>76</sup> Since Epicurean physics furnishes the major

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<sup>72</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 370; Ferguson notes the importance of “friendship” formed within the community saying, “Epicurus apparently made up for the loss of the gods and of civic life by introducing the bond that exists among friends” (Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 377).

<sup>73</sup> A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 15.

<sup>74</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 377. L.T. Johnson points to Plutarch’s serious charge against the Epicureans for their deliberate refraining “from active participation in the life of the *polis*” as denial of gods to ensure the community’s well-being (Luke T. Johnson, *Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 34; cf. Plutarch, *Against Colotes*, 22 (Mor., 1119F) and 27 (Mor., 1123A).

<sup>75</sup> DeWitt, *Epicurus and His Philosophy*, 329.

<sup>76</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 372. For more resource on Lucretius and Epicurus, Ferguson suggests the following: Diskin Clay, *Lucretius and Epicurus* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984); K. Summers,

premises for the nature of soul and the proper conduct of life, it takes precedence over the ethics in the Epicurean scheme of knowledge.<sup>77</sup>

Epicurus depended on the pre-Socratic philosopher Democritus for his understanding of the structure of things in terms of atom. For Epicurus, *atom* (“indivisible”), as outlined in his “Twelve Elementary Principles,” signified the minimum self-existing particle matter, and, as such, it together with space makes up nature.<sup>78</sup> In other words, atoms, which are without color, sound, taste, or smell but with shape, size, weight, and motion, form the invisible “building blocks” out of which the whole universe is made. That there is no creation and the world is eternal because atoms are indestructible<sup>79</sup> comes from the following three metaphysical propositions of Epicurus: (i) Nothing can come from nothing; (ii) Nothing can be destroyed into nothing; (iii) The universe never was nor will be in a condition which differs from its present one.<sup>80</sup>

### 3.c. Epicurean Epistemology

Epicurean theory of knowledge is closely tied to his physics. His pursuit of a tranquil life, hard-headed empiricism and speculative metaphysics make up his philosophy, and the three are united in his concern to set the evidence of immediate sensation and feeling in opposition to the

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“Lucretius and the Epicurean Tradition of Piety,” *Classical Philosophy* 90 (1995): 32–57; David Sedley, *Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>77</sup> DeWitt, *Epicurus and His Philosophy*, 155.

<sup>78</sup> DeWitt lists the first seven with some adaptation to modern terminology: (i) Matter is uncreatable; (ii) Matter is indestructible; (iii) The universe consists of atoms and space; (iv) All existing things are either atoms or compounds of atoms; (v) The atoms are infinite in multitude; (vi) Space is infinite in extent; and (vii) The atoms are always in action. Cf. DeWitt, *St. Paul and Epicurus*, 11–12; see his *Epicurus and His Philosophy*, 156–57 for a complete list.

<sup>79</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 373.

<sup>80</sup> A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 31. Long says, “Lucretius develops (i) and (ii) at length, i 159–264; he deals with (iii) at ii 294–307” (Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, n. 1).



Platonic and the Aristotelian methodology of logical analysis.<sup>81</sup> Ferguson’s following summary of Epicurean epistemology is helpful:

For Epicurus sense perception is the basis of all reason. Sensation is immediate confrontation, hence it is infallible.<sup>82</sup> Sense experiences cannot be refuted by reason, for reason is built on them. . . . If one perceives something often enough, he has a concept (*prolēsis*; lit. ‘anticipation’) of it. . . . The soul forms general concepts from the particular objects seen. For example, the concept “horse” is a composite picture of the horses one has seen. When one thinks of “horse,” the thought is of what one expects to see (*prolēsis*). All mental operations, therefore, are accumulated experiences. . . . The gods too give off images [*eidōla*], so they have appeared to people in visions and dreams and do really exist. If someone has perceived something, there is something there, for nothing comes from what does not exist.<sup>83</sup>

### 3.d. Epicurus and the Gods

“The gods of classical Greek religion were ignoble projections of the human imagination” as they were described as lechers, intriguers, haters, fighters, and avengers. Epicurus “cleaned up” all those human frailties from the gods of the Greek world beyond recognition and “transported them to remote interstellar space, where they become beautiful symbols of calm and repose . . .”<sup>84</sup>

As evident in his understanding of the physical structure of universe in terms of atoms, Epicurus was a materialist. He was convinced that, since universe consists of solid bodies and void (space), nothing else, by inference, could exist. That atoms operate according to law is sufficient to explain all things including gods. “In this, Epicurus transfers the ability to infuse matter with order from a supreme divinity to nature itself. There is no cosmic intelligence needed

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<sup>81</sup> A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 19.

<sup>82</sup> DeWitt cautions against ascribing to Epicurus the belief in the infallibility of sensation (cf. his *Epicurus and His Philosophy*, 133).

<sup>83</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 374–75.

<sup>84</sup> George K. Strodach, *The Philosophy of Epicurus* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1963), 52.

to assure the possibility of order in the universe.”<sup>85</sup> The gods, whose existence is perceived through extrasensory mediums such as visions and human dreams, dwell in the interstellar spaces. His gods are made of invisible, refined material atoms. Understood in this frame of knowledge, the gods do not perform any providential functions. Contra the popular accusation that the Epicureans were outright “atheists” by the ancients,<sup>86</sup> however, his following statement reveals Epicurus had a different view of gods for a reason: “That which is sublimely happy and immortal experiences no trouble itself nor does it inflict trouble on anything else, so that it is not affected by passion or partiality. Such things are found only in what is weak (*Principal Doctrines* [*Kuriai doxai*] i).”<sup>87</sup> As long as gods remain free of worries, they can maintain their divine attributes: blessedness and incorruptibility.<sup>88</sup>

Holding onto this “logical” understanding of gods is of crucial importance for Epicurus, for whom pleasure or happiness<sup>89</sup> is the ultimate goal and consummation of living that Nature teaches about life. Achieving this means gaining the individual freedom and eradication of “all

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<sup>85</sup> Adam Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 216. Drozdek argues that, for Epicurus, the *isonomia* or equal distribution principle was the key to explaining the process of emergence of a world without the gods intervening world affair. According to this principle, “if the destructive elements in the world are countless, the forces of conservation must likewise be countless” (Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 215–16; cited from Cicero, *ND* 1.50; also see Lucretius 2.569–76).

<sup>86</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 373–74. He said that many Epicureans who did not follow their teacher’s advice to participate in religious festivals and rituals added another reason for being labeled as “atheists.” Also, see Plutarch, *Non posse* 1102b–d and Cicero, *ND* 1.23 for further references.

<sup>87</sup> Cited in Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 41. According to DeWitt, Epicurus conceived the divine nature as ‘blessed and incorruptible’ (cf. DeWitt, *St. Paul and Epicurus*, 20).

<sup>88</sup> Cf. *DL* 10.77. Drozdek says, “In this view of the gods, Epicurus aligns himself with Aristotle, whose Unmoved Mover was even unaware of the existence of the world because such an awareness would make the Unmoved Mover less than perfect” (Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 222). For further study in the area of the parallelism between Aristotle and Epicurus, see Philip Merlan, “Aristoteles und Epicurus müßige Götter,” *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung* 21 (1967), 494; Hans Krämer, *Platonismus und hellenistische Philosophie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), 132.

<sup>89</sup> It is an anachronism to attribute an “eat, drink, and be merry” philosophy to Epicurus. This sensual view of hedonism was advocated by the Cyrenaic school founded by Aristippus (cf. Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 370).

external compulsions to which antecedent and contemporary thought had yielded belief.”<sup>90</sup>

Epicurus, allegedly living in the world where the fear of the gods and the punishments of Hell commonly afflicted men,<sup>91</sup> fiercely opposed superstitious fear of gods and dread of religion as major roadblock for obtaining the goal of life as following words of A.J. Festugière suggest:

So fear of the gods, fear of their anger towards the living and of their vengeance on the dead, displayed a great part in Greek religion. . . . [Epicurus] was convinced, at any rate, that *deisidaimonia* prevailed all about him, and as he had reached the haven of safety and, in a sentiment of universal benevolence, wished to lead other into it, he felt it to be his first care to banish this fear which utterly prevents peace of mind (*ataraxia*).<sup>92</sup>

For Epicurus, therefore, mistaken fear based on improper knowledge of gods is viewed as an ultimate source of evil leading to anxiety. Once again, that gods would not concern themselves with the government of the Universe and human affairs partially comes from his human analogy: If a human is to be free from anxiety and attain happiness, he is to learn to let go of any source of passion such as world, politics, and affairs. The wise, therefore, are called to be the friends of the gods and the gods, the friends of the wise.<sup>93</sup> A.J. Festugière summarizes Epicurus’ conclusion:

The same considerations apply to the gods. It is absurd, then, to imagine that the gods constantly concern themselves. . . . That would run counter to the perfect serenity, which is the basis of their happiness. “Furthermore, we must not believe that the movement of the heavenly bodies, their turnings from one place to another . . . and all such phenomenon are brought about under the direction of a being who controls or will always controls them and who at the same time possesses perfect happiness together with immortality; for the turmoil of affairs, anxieties and feelings of anger

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<sup>90</sup> DeWitt, *Epicurus and His Philosophy*, 171.

<sup>91</sup> Epicurus was, for example, mindful of fears expressed in *Characters* 16 by Theophrastus (c. 371–c. 287 B.C.E.), successor of Aristotle; cf. Ferguson, *ibid.*, 237 for an extended discussion on superstitious fear.

<sup>92</sup> A.J. Festugière, *Epicurus and His Gods* (tr. C.W. Chilton; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), 56–57.

<sup>93</sup> Cited from Philodemus, *De Dis* 3, col. 2.17–18 in Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers as Theologians*, 222.

and benevolence do not go with happiness, but all that arises where there is weakness, fear and dependence on others” (*Ep.*, I, 76–77).<sup>94</sup>

Only with this proper understanding of the divine nature of being “supremely perfect,”<sup>95</sup> suggests Epicurus, can humans partake in the gods’ happiness by praising them in prayer, offering them a sacrifice, and rejoicing with gods at the annual festivals.<sup>96</sup> Evident in this is Epicurus’ minimal view of the divine beings, who are “absorbed in contemplating their own unalloyed perfection and unable to receive human worship or listen to human supplications.”<sup>97</sup> As a way to acquire or increase better understanding of divine nature leading to “the greatest feeling of pleasure” (Cicero, *ND* 1.49), worship was encouraged. In conclusion, as the paragons of the good life, the only function the gods had was ethical, that is, exemplifying the highest ideal of Epicureanism or felicity (*ataraxia*: serenity, detachment, unadulterated happiness) to which the sage can arrive, and, thus, *imitatio Dei* was the way to achieve *ataraxia*.<sup>98</sup> “The attitude toward the gods thus fits the tenor of the Epicurean philosophy and ethics: it is a purely self-serving and self-centered enterprise.”<sup>99</sup>

### 3.e. The Inborn Divine Knowledge in Epicureanism

In addition to visions and dreams as extrasensory mediums through which man is aware of the divine existence, Epicurus taught the inborn nature<sup>100</sup> of the divine knowledge.<sup>101</sup> He

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<sup>94</sup> Festugière, *Epicurus and His Gods*, 57–58.

<sup>95</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 373.

<sup>96</sup> Festugière, *Epicurus and His Gods*, 62. It is notable, therefore, that Epicurus did not oppose the rituals *per se*.

<sup>97</sup> Strodach, *The Philosophy of Epicurus*, 52. Later, Strodach compares the gods of Epicurus with Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover as they were viewed as perfect, self-sufficient, impassive, and self-contemplating (cf. *ibid.*, 53).

<sup>98</sup> Strodach, *The Philosophy of Epicurus*, 51.

<sup>99</sup> Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 227.

<sup>100</sup> Cicero said, “For what nation or tribe of men is there but possesses untaught (*sine doctrina*) some preconceptions of the gods? Such notions Epicurus designated by the word *prolepsis*” (Cicero, *ND* 1.43); cited in Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 223.

considered the divine knowledge to be inborn as a result of the nature imprinting the divine conception on the minds of all humankind. “The existence of most perfect divinities can be just a matter of belief in the validity of the *prolepsis* concerning their nature. Only this allows Epicurus to claim that gods exist ‘because there must be some outstanding nature than which there is no better.’”<sup>102</sup> Their understanding of the divine beings, therefore, seems to be subservient to their highest ideal of *ataraxia*, which they pursued single-mindedly.

#### IV. Paul’s Speech to the Stoics and the Epicureans

In view of our previous discussion about the two philosopher groups, one important question remains for us: In what regard did they live in ignorance (cf. 17:30)?

Our general survey of Stoicism and Epicureanism shows that, Paul’s positive statements about God as the Creator of the world (v. 24) and of the humanity (v. 26), and the human dependency on the divine provision (v. 28) are generally agreeable to the Stoics, while as any notion about the divine engagement with humanity for the Epicureans is rejected as a dangerous stumbling block for achieving their highest goal of life. We also noted that in Stoicism there was room for monotheism even though pan(en)theism is the most fitting way to describe their popular teachings and beliefs. Understood in the Stoic monotheistic framework, erecting an altar to an unknown deity(ies) could not have been deemed significant or a despiteful thing. If that were the case, for some Stoics, Paul’s reference to it would not have meant more than making a contact point. Readily agreeable to both groups of philosophers was Paul’s attack or negative comments on the popular practice to confine God to man-made temples (v. 24) or crafted images (v. 29). The idea in v. 27 that God wills men to seek out (ψηλαφάω) him was not alien to the

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<sup>101</sup> According to Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 227, a dream or a vision in Epicurean thought functions as a stimulus to reveal the riches of the inborn concept (*prolepsis*) engraved or stamped on human mind.

<sup>102</sup> Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers*, 223–24; cf. Cicero, *ND* 2.46; Lactantius, *De ira Dei* 9.4.

Stoic understanding of God but it was to the Epicureans. Finally, Paul's subject of resurrection in connection with God's final judgment aroused two different reactions (v. 32). Even though the first mocking group's reaction is disappointing, that the second group wanted a future hearing<sup>103</sup> can be seen as some improvement in view of 17:18 as well as the traditional Athenian view of afterlife.<sup>104</sup> And yet, this still proves the topic of the bodily resurrection from the dead was hard to comprehend if not novel<sup>105</sup> for both groups.

If the positive statements about God and humankind in Paul's sermon up to v. 29 were principally agreeable to the Stoics<sup>106</sup> and some of the negative statements in criticism were more agreeable to the Epicureans,<sup>107</sup> how do we understand Paul's seemingly sudden turn of his tone in v. 30 announcing their need to repent to God who had overlooked their past ignorance? Three possibilities emerge.

First, the reader might be able to assume the presence of a mixed audience and that this mixed group was largely ignorant of the God presented up to this point. In other words, even though it was the Epicurean and the Stoic philosophers who initially engaged in dispute with Paul (v. 18), that does not mean they were the *only* hearers. Paul's speech hitherto could have been delivered to a mixed audience whose philosophical and theological convictions largely

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<sup>103</sup> Whether that meant a sincere desire or a mere polite gesture would be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>104</sup> According to Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, 647-48, Apollo taught the following at the founding of the Areopagus: "When the dust has soaked up a person's blood, once he is dead, there is no resurrection" (cited in Witherington, *Acts*, 532).

<sup>105</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 515, suggests that being true for the whole Greek world.

<sup>106</sup> This is most evident in Paul's citing from two Greek poems in verse 28: "For in him we live and move about and exist" (Epimenides the Cretan [c. 600 B.C.]) and "For we too are his offspring" (Paul's fellow-Cicilian Aratus [b. 310 B.C.]). F.F. Bruce, after introducing the two poems in their entirety, points out that in these poems "Zeus is considered not as the ruler of the traditional pantheon of Greek mythology but as the supreme being of Greek, and especially Stoic, philosophy. . . . Even in their contexts, the words, quoted (especially those of Aratus) could be taken as pointing to some recognition of the true nature of God . . ." (Bruce, *Acts* [1988], 338-39).

<sup>107</sup> Paul's presentation about the "Unknown God" in vv. 22-29 bore so much similarity to the Greek understanding of God Zeus that Dibelius said of the sermon (vv. 22-29) being the most Hellenistic material in the NT and even alien to the NT (Dibelius, *Studies*, 64).

differed from those of the two circles and, therefore, were ignorant of the kind of God presented by Paul (cf. ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι in v. 22). But this reading, of course, would be at odds with the general flow of the narrative and would seem to defeat Luke’s own purpose of naming the two groups (v. 18). They are the ones who wanted to know about Paul’s “new teaching” (v. 19) which is strange to their ears (v. 20), and Luke does not provide different subjects for the verbs (ἐπιλαβόμενοι, ἤγαγον, and λέγοντες) in v. 19. All these lead us to suppose that some from the same groups of people in v. 18 (the Stoics and the Epicureans) made up the main audience on Mars’ Hill.<sup>108</sup> This first explanation for what seems to be a sudden change at verse 30 fails to convince.

The second possible explanation for the sudden shift at 17:30 would emphasize a gap between what the city should have been, based on the philosophers’ knowledge, and what the city actually was. Possessing at least some of “the natural knowledge” presented by Paul in vv. 24–29 should have led the Athenian philosophers to the one true God and his worship but the city Paul saw was far removed from what it could have been. This option has textual support. That the city was a “forest of idols” (v. 16) and *all* its citizens and sojourners were obsessed with “newer things” (v. 21) point to their failure to live up to what their teachers taught. The Stoics, then, were more responsible for not being in the spiritual state they should have been as their understanding of God bore significant resemblances to that of the Pauline God. In this case, Lukan Paul was not negating or invalidating “the natural knowledge,” but rather turning it and using it as a judge, almost in the manner of Romans 1:20, “so that they are without excuse.”

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<sup>108</sup> Luke is careful for not switching the audience or the subject group without providing narrative cues. Such a Luke’s care in his characterization is important to note and can be demonstrated in how Luke maintains a consistent view of the Jewish leaders. Luke does not have any of his main characters pronouncing the inculpable nature of the sin of killing God’s Son to the council members or the Jewish leaders (cf. Acts 3:17 and 13:27) on the conviction that they are cut off from the people of God because of what they did (cf. Acts 3:23). For further evidence of Luke’s consistent keeping of the same audience group, see Acts 24:3–22; 25:23–26:29.

Our survey on “knowledge-ignorance” theme in the second chapter often showed how Luke used knowledge someone possessed against that person. John the Baptist warned the Jews who were coming to be baptized that they should not be at ease knowing that Abraham was their father (Luke 3:8). Jesus said, “Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge (τὴν κλεῖδα τῆς γνώσεως). You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering” (Luke 11:52). Pilate and Herod were convinced of Jesus’ innocence (Luke 23:14–15) but delivered Jesus to evil hands to be crucified. In the Lukan scheme of ignorance-knowledge, people have some knowledge, and yet, devoid of true and deeper insight, they act in ignorance. In likely manner, one can argue that the Athenians’ life in darkness evidenced by the plethora of idols (natural religions) is undeniable proof for their ignorance of true reality or lack of the true knowledge to enact what they knew. Hence Paul called on them and everyone to repent.

In addition, Luke’s reader may be thought of a realizing that a gap between the ideal and what was reality was coupled by complex socio-political environment the first century Athenians lived in. This piece of the historical information may be crucial for twenty-first century readership. Hans-Josef Klauck, in his *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Greco-Roman Religions*, delves into the issue of the imperial cult in a chapter titled, “Divinised Human Beings: The Cult of Rulers and Emperors.”<sup>109</sup> Noting the familiar terms such as savior (σωτήρ) or savior of the world (σωτήρ τοῦ κόσμου) designated to Augustus, Klauck argues that it is beyond doubt that the New Testament itself poses the question of significance of the imperial cult, whose origin goes back to the Hellenistic cult of rulers.<sup>110</sup> According to Klauck, Wisdom

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<sup>109</sup> Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Greco-Roman Religions* (tr. Brian McNeil; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 250-330.

<sup>110</sup> Klauck recognizes that tracing the genesis of the cult of rulers is a difficult task if not, in the words of Martin Nilsson, “the most obscure and most highly disputed problem of Greek religion in the historical period” (*The*



14:17–21<sup>111</sup> bears a significant witness to this practice and presents a typically biblical response to such a practice. Since Athens existed under special Roman protection as a city with rich inheritance ever since Sulla conquered it in 86 B.C.E, it is beyond doubt that the city had to constantly seek imperial favor.<sup>112</sup> Among several points of criticism Klauk’s whole chapter raises, three seem to stand out for our discussion: (i) The beginning of divinizing human rulers was voluntary work of those who wanted to secure the absent ruler’s favor; (ii) There was the contribution of the artisan whose artistic work made the object attractive; And, (iii) making the rulers as objects of veneration became the snare.

In brief, that the Athenians had proud teachers who had left them noble thoughts and insights into the universe and life in general did not stop them from living in ignorance. Entangled in the complex web forged by the socio-political pressure under the Roman rule, the city Paul saw was teemed with idols.

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*Religious Context*, 252). He later comments that “Alexander’s role as founder of the cult of rulers appears modest. Nevertheless, one can call him a precursor of the Hellenistic-Roman cult of rulers and emperors, less because of what he himself did in this direction than because of the myths and legends which quickly formed around his person and served later rulers as a model for the way in which they portrayed themselves” (274).

<sup>111</sup> (17) When people could not honor monarchs in their presence, since they lived at a distance, they imagined their appearance far away, and made a visible image of the king whom they honored, so that by their zeal they might flatter the absent one as though present. (18) Then the ambition of the artisan impelled even those who did not know the king to intensify their worship. (19) For he, perhaps wishing to please his ruler, skillfully forced the likeness to take more beautiful form, (20) and the multitude, attracted by the charm of his work, now regarded as an object of worship the one whom shortly before they had honored as a man. (21) And this became a hidden trap for humankind, because people, in bondage to misfortune or to royal authority, bestowed on objects of stone or wood the name that ought not to be shared (RSV).

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Daniel J. Geagan, “Roman Athens: Some Aspects of Life and Culture I. 86 B.C. — A.D. 267” in *Aufstieg Und Niedergang Der Römischen Welt II Principat*, Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase eds. (NY: Water de Gruyter, 1979): 371–437. Geagan surveys the three and a half centuries of Athens under Rome between 86 B.C. and A.D. 267. According to Geagan, 86 B.C. marks the tragic event for the Athenians as well as beginning of the Roman rule. The victorious Roman general L. Cornelius Sulla over Mithridates, a king of Pontus and ruler of Asia Minor, entered Athens slaughtering and devastating as a form of punishment for accepting a leader for revolution against Rome offered by Mithridates. Since that the city lost autonomy and the prosperity (373–74). Prior to the advent of Sulla, Athens enjoyed autonomy and relative prosperity in religious observances, economy and construction even though during its later years a decline had set in (374). After Sulla, who left Athens in a status more advantageous than any other cities in Greece in consideration of its rich inheritance, “Athens was not able to remain aloof from events at Rome and the city was subject to levies and forced donations and, probably worse, was forced to choose sides” in the midst of Rome’s internal political struggles (375).

Third and finally, a slightly different reading that explains the abrupt call to repentance in 17:30 would regard Paul's reference to their past ignorance as implying that there are severe limits to the natural knowledge of God. Our discussion of two schools demonstrated that they had their own ways to argue for the divine existence and the divine relationship with human beings. However, their life void of worship of the true God shows that their [natural] knowledge of the divine does not go beyond the belief that there exists the divine being(s). As to what God wants to do for and give to men, the natural knowledge does not address.<sup>113</sup> If this was the case, Paul's stress lies on the new, revealed knowledge, which he was about to address. In other words, what Paul had to say in vv. 30–31 was the kind of knowledge, which would complete the natural knowledge, and yet about which the Athenians were most ignorant. This ignorance is pointed out both implicitly and explicitly in vv. 22–29. The Athenian philosophers had natural knowledge and natural theology,<sup>114</sup> but without God's special revelation in Jesus Christ they practiced natural religions<sup>115</sup> tainted by and entrenched in idolatry.

Once again, why does Luke name only two groups of philosophers? C. K. Barrett suggests yet another possibility that "Paul included Epicurean and Stoic material in his speech because he happened to have met Epicurean and Stoic philosophers."<sup>116</sup> Our survey to identify the basic

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<sup>113</sup> Cf. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, American Edition 26:399. In his comments on Galatians 4:8–9, Luther says: "There is a twofold knowledge of God: the general and the particular. All men have the general knowledge of God, namely, that God is, that He has created heaven and earth, that He is just, that He punishes the wicked, etc. But what God thinks of us, what He wants to give and to do to deliver us from sin and death and to save us—which is the particular and the true knowledge of God—this men do not know."

<sup>114</sup> "Natural theology is the attempt to attain an understanding of God and his relationship with the universe by means of rational reflection, without appealing to special revelation such as the self-revelation of God in Christ and in Scripture" (C. Brown, "Natural Theology" in Sinclair B. Ferguson, D. Wright, and J. I. Packer eds., *New Dictionary of Theology* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988], 452).

<sup>115</sup> "[A natural religion is] a religion validated on the basis of human reason and experience apart from miraculous or supernatural revelation; specifically, a religion that is universally discernible by all men through the use of human reason apart from any special revelation" (Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary, 3rd ed., s.v. "Natural Religion").

<sup>116</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2:829.

teachings of the two groups confirms that Lukan Paul's speech tailors some of their doctrines into his sermon. In so doing, Paul's ingenuity seems to be shown at two levels. First, Paul carefully drew out some theological points that Christianity and the two popular Greek philosophies shared in common to build a bridge<sup>117</sup> and avert their accusation that he was introducing strange ideas (v. 20) and/or foreign gods (v. 18).<sup>118</sup> Second, at a deeper level Paul subsumed their teachings and incorporated them into his Christian sermon to reveal their failure to live up to their knowledge, and at the same time to invite them to the biblical knowledge, which would complete their natural knowledge of God and rectify their life lived in ignorance of the God of Jesus Christ. The textual analysis and narrative reading in chapter three further explores and discusses some of these aspects as well as new topics.

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<sup>117</sup> My conviction is that Paul carefully constructed his sermon by avoiding any derogatory use of the second person pronoun in the main body of his speech (vv. 24–29). One exception (“your own poets”) in v. 28 does not have any negative connotation.

<sup>118</sup> Chapter three (“Narrative-Critical Reading of Acts 17:16–34”) will further address the pressing nature of this indictment seen in light of the Socrates motif.

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