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THEOLOGICAL DIVISION OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY
OF DIVISIONS AS WELL AS IN THE AREOPAGUS

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Harvard University, in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Divinity

SHORT TITLE

THE AREOPAGUS SPEECH OF PAUL

John W. Woodbury, Jr.

1953

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THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND
OF ATHENS AS REFLECTED IN THE AREOPAGUS
SPEECH OF PAUL

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental purpose of this thesis is twofold. In the first place, it intends to gauge as accurately as possible the extent and precise content of Paul's employment of the philosophical and religious thought of Athens in his Areopagus address. Secondly, it intends to determine precisely what his goal was and how his method of approach was determined both by that aim and by the nature of his audience's thought. In other words, this study will attempt to show both which facets of Stoic, Epicurean, and religious thought are reflected in the speech, and how Paul makes use of these contacts in reaching the goal which he intends. Other questions will be involved. It will be necessary to determine what, if any, validity Paul finds in Athenian religious aspirations and in the particular tenets of Stoic and Epicurean philosophy of which he makes use. Akin to this, it will be necessary to determine how his opinion on the question of validity affects his actual use of this material and the character of his approach. And in the light of the degree of error inherent in Athenian religious thought, the question must be taken up as to how it was possible for Paul to accommodate himself to that thought at all. Furthermore, though the study is primarily concerned with the Athenian elements as reflected in the speech, the Old

Testament and apostolic background will also come under consideration, both as to its extent as the foundation of Paul's presentation and as to the particular form which it takes here.

In order to gauge as accurately as possible the full picture of Paul's attachment to Athenian thought, considerable attention is given in the thesis to the Stoic and Epicurean philosophies and to the state of Greek religion at Paul's time. The chapters devoted to Stoicism and Epicureanism concern themselves only with those areas with which Paul makes contact, particularly the areas of cosmology, anthropology, theology, and the attitude toward the traditional religion. The chapter on Greek religion in the first century aims to give a brief overview of the entire picture, with detailed attention being given to those areas which form a particular background to the elements of Paul's speech.

Toward a thorough understanding of the purpose and contents of Paul's address, particular attention is given to the Athenian background as Paul saw it and to the specific occasion and place of the address, according to the information given by Luke in Ac. 17:16-21. Special effort is made in this study to determine the precise character, thinking, and mood of the crowd which heard Paul's speech, together with its varied reaction to Paul's previous preaching, as these factors would have been of considerable

importance in determining the form which the speech would take. The question of the correct meaning of "Areopagus" is also taken up in detail.

The main body of the thesis is a study of the text of the speech itself. This includes, first of all, the adducing of parallels and contrasts to Paul's statements from Greek philosophical and religious thought, especially Stoic and Epicurean. It includes, secondly, an evaluation of the meaning of these quotations in comparison with the meaning of Paul, with Biblical parallels adduced to explicate the latter. It includes also an interpretation of how, for what purpose, and with what limitations Paul is using those pagan ideas to which he alludes. In addition, historical and exegetical questions are treated where necessary. Conclusions on the questions raised by the thesis are given in the final chapter, along with a summary of the results of the studies devoted to background material.

This study does not concern itself with the much discussed question of the authorship of the speech as Luke records it. It is here assumed, on the basis of the judgment of several competent authorities,¹ that the speech

¹Among the scholars who accept the Pauline character of the speech, a scholar of the caliber of Eduard Meyer, Ursprung und Anfaenge des Christentums (Stuttgart and Berlin: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, c.1923), III, 89-108, deserves first mention. He says (pp. 92 f.) that the unique and striking impression given by the historical data in Acts is such that he cannot imagine the account as an invention. F. F. Bruce is thoroughly convinced of the

represents a summary or perhaps more likely a series of select excerpts from the speech actually delivered by Paul in Athens. That Paul's entire speech is not recorded is obvious, but this thesis assumes that the speech as Luke reports it is completely Pauline and contains the basic elements of the message which Paul actually spoke. The historicity of the entire Athenian ministry and the reliability of Luke's description of it is likewise assumed.

Several limitations of the scope of the thesis should be noted. In the studies on Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Greek religion the attempt was by no means made to give a complete account of these fields, but only to touch such elements as had direct relevance as background material to Paul's speech. Thus, for example, the ethical philosophy of Stoicism and Epicureanism, actually their most important area, was not treated. Furthermore, these studies were based primarily on secondary sources, though primary sources were employed wherever specific points of contact in Paul's speech were involved. The study of the speech itself does not attempt to treat all exegetical questions, but only

genuineness of this incident, and mentions among older scholars who held the same view Curtius and Blass, F. F. Bruce, The Speeches in the Acts of the Apostles (London: The Tyndale Press, 1942), p. 16. Gottlob Schrenk, "Urchristliche Missionspredigt im 1. Jahrhundert," Studien zu Paulus (Zuerich: Zwingli-Verlag, c.1954), p. 143, mentions also the names of Harnack and W. Schmid as accepting the Pauline authorship of the speech. N. B. Stonehouse, The Areopagus Address (London: The Tyndale Press, 1949), affirms the same view.

such as have definite bearing upon Paul's aim, method, and employment of Athenian material. Furthermore, the interesting question of the relationship of Christianity to natural theology, which finds important material in this speech, is treated only incidentally as it has direct bearing upon the purpose of this study.

Biblical quotations in English are taken from the Revised Standard Version.² The source from which each original classical text or translation is quoted is given in its footnote.

²Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1952).

CHAPTER II

STOIC COSMOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

The interests of Stoic philosophy in cosmological study were basically practical rather than speculative. It did not address itself to the problems of natural science with a pure disinterested curiosity to know the truth of things for the sake of knowing, but its aim was to make sure of such things as should justify a certain emotional and volitional attitude in men.¹ For the Stoics, the proper goal of philosophy was the learning and exercise of virtue, the attainment of the happiness of a moral life. But the possession of a knowledge of the nature of the universe was considered indispensable for attaining this end, in that virtue consisted basically of bringing one's actions into harmony with the orderly laws of the universe.² Bevan describes this as follows:

The whole of the Stoic Physics was directed to showing that the Power operating in the universe was rational: all its theory of the constitution of the material world and the course of its movement led up to that

¹Edwyn Robert Bevan, Stoics and Sceptics (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913), p. 40. The subordinate place of natural science in Stoicism is well illustrated by the fact that very little in its natural theories is new, and almost everything is taken over from Heraclitus and the old Ionian physics, cf. Ibid., p. 42.

²Eduard Zeller, The Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics, translated from the German by Oswald J. Reichel (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), p. 58.

crowning result.³

The purpose, then, of the Stoics' cosmological investigation was to support their conviction of a unified and coherent cosmic system, so that man's place, lot, and destiny in it could be determined.⁴

Fundamental Positions: Matter, Force, God

The first principle of Stoic cosmology was that only the material had real existence, and even if its exponents could not deny existence in some sense or other to what was incorporeal, they clearly asserted that essential and real being belonged only to what was material, and of what was incorporeal only a modified kind of being could be predicated. As a result, they regarded several things as material which are generally not regarded as such: the soul, virtue, God, properties and forms, the Good, truth.⁵ But the materialism of the Stoics was considerably different from what is usually meant by that term, as Bevan points out:

the materialism of the Stoics was something quite different from what we mean by materialism to-day. For while God was material body, He was also, according to Zeno, absolute Reason. Modern materialism means that the world is governed by mechanical

³Bevan, op. cit., p. 40.

⁴William Leslie Davidson, The Stoic Creed (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1907), p. 84.

⁵Zeller, op. cit., pp. 126-9.

laws without any directing mind or plan; the essential thing for the Stoics was that the world is governed by the providence of a conscious intelligent God.⁶

It was likewise essential to Stoic materialism that matter possessed a dynamic quality. The Stoics taught that the basic material of the cosmos had the characteristics of life, so that the universe could be described as a living being ($\zeta\omega\omicron\nu$).⁷ Their basic principle in this area was that matter contained both the capacity of acting and of being acted upon.⁸ Thus in a sense they posited two types of primary substance, though in their thought these were often joined as one. The following fragment of Cleanthes illustrates this principle (Diog. Laert. vii, 134):

The Stoics hold that there are two first substances of the universe, the active one and the passive one. The passive one is the unqualified substance Stuff (hyle); the active one is the principle of rational order in it (Logos), that is God. This divine principle is eternal, and throughout the whole of Stuff it fashions the particular things, like a craftsman.⁹

Thus the Stoic form of materialism can be well described as hylozoism, the life principle in matter being essentially reason.¹⁰

⁶Edwyn Robert Bevan, Later Greek Religion (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons Limited; New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1927), p. xiii.

⁷Bevan, Stoics and Sceptics, p. 42. Cf. Diog. Laert. vii, 143, $\zeta\omega\omicron\nu \delta\epsilon' \delta' \kappa\omicron\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$; vii, 142.

⁸Zeller, op. cit., p. 139.

⁹Bevan, Later Greek Religion, p. 9.

¹⁰Bevan, Stoics and Sceptics, p. 40.

The next step in the Stoic theory follows naturally, and has already been alluded to, namely that the active principle in matter is called God. The transition from the idea of natural law and moving cause, which shapes and orders all things, to that of Purpose and Providence, a fore-seeing, thinking, quasi-personal Power is an easily made one, and became a principle of Stoic thought.¹¹ But the material idea is never lost. God is described both in terms which stress that he is basically material, and in terms that emphasize that he is the moving force in matter. On the material side he is spoken of as being Primary Fire, Ether, Air, *πνεῦμα*. On the other hand, he is described as the Soul, the Mind, or the Reason of the World; as a united Whole, containing in himself the germs of all things; as the connecting element in all things; as Universal Law, Nature, Destiny, Providence. Often he is described in terms which combine both aspects, such as the fiery Reason of the World, the Mind in Matter, the reasonable Air-Current, the artistically moulding Fire.¹² The conclusion is inescapable that

¹¹Gilbert Murray, Stoic, Christian, and Humanist (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1950), p. 103.

¹²The following fragment of Chrysippus (Von Arnim, II, frag. 1027) illustrates this intermixing of terminology, "The Stoics profess belief in a God endowed with mind (nous), a technic Fire, . . . a gaseous substance (pneuma) pervading the whole of the kosmos, and receiving various appellations according to the varieties of the Stuff which it penetrates. The kosmos is a god; the stars are gods; the Earth is a God; but the Supreme God is the Mind inhabiting the Aether," Bevan, Later Greek Religion, pp. 16 f.; cf. also Cicero, N. D. i, 14, 39.

for the Stoics ultimately all these terms mean the same thing. Fire, Air-Current, and Ether equal the same as Soul, Reason, Nature, and Universal Law, namely, the one primary force penetrating the whole world.¹³

The more the two sides of this conception of God, the material and the ideal, are compared, the clearer it becomes that there is no difference between God and primary matter. Both are one and the same substance, which when regarded as the universal substratum is known as undetermined matter, but when conceived of as acting force is called all-pervading Ether, all-warming Fire, all-penetrating Air, Soul of the World, God. Thus Stoicism is strictly pantheistic; God and the world are essentially the same. Deity itself is Primary Fire, containing in itself in germ both God and matter.¹⁴

Zeller summarizes the idea as follows:

The world is the sum of all real existence, and all real existence is originally contained in deity, which is at once the matter of everything and the creative force which moulds this matter into particular individual substances.¹⁵

Thus the Stoic can say, οὐσίαν δὲ θεοῦ ζήνων μὲν φησι τὸν ὅλον κόσμον καὶ τὸν οὐρανόν (Diog. Laert. vii, 73).¹⁶ And he can say:

¹³Zeller, op. cit., pp. 148-52.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 155 f.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 156 f.

¹⁶Herman Sasse, "κόσμος," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1938), III, 876.

For the world-order is one made out of all things, and God is one pervading all [*θεός εἰς δὲ πᾶντων*], and being is one, and law is one, even the common reason of all beings possessed of mind . . . (Mar. Aur., *Med.* vii, 9).¹⁷

The Stoic pantheism is subject, however, to certain limitations. All pantheism confronts the difficulty of choosing between making all the universe equally God and so emptying the idea of God of all meaning, and on the other hand recognizing distinctions of more or less divine. Stoicism chose the latter alternative.¹⁸ It made some distinction between Primary Force or Fire and those things into which Primary Fire has changed. The former is God in the strictest sense, the latter are only divine in a derivative sense,¹⁹ though the fluid character of Stoic thought often combines the two, as the following quotation shows (Cicero, *N. D.* i, 14, 37):

Cleanthes . . . at one moment says that the world itself is god, at another gives this name to the mind and soul of the universe, and at another decides that the most unquestionable deity is that remote all-surrounding fiery atmosphere called the aether, which encircles and embraces the universe on its outer side at an exceedingly lofty altitude.²⁰

The question arises in connection with Stoic pantheism

¹⁷ Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

¹⁸ Bevan, *Stoics and Sceptics*, p. 42.

¹⁹ Zeller, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

²⁰ Cicero, *De Natura Deorum, Academica*, in *Loeb Classical Library*, Latin text with an English translation by H. Rackham (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1933), pp. 39-41.

whether the Stoics regarded God as personal or impersonal. In the case of the early Stoics, a degree of doubt exists as to their view on this question. If the Stoic physics had ruled the ethics there would have been little doubt that God would have remained impersonal.²¹ But the ethics ruled; furthermore it was almost impossible to think of Reason apart from personality, and so in effect the Stoic often felt towards the encompassing Power as towards a Person, other than himself, a Father whom he could obey and trust and to whom he could render gratitude and praise.²² Particularly in the Stoicism of St. Paul's time and following, God was thought of in increasingly personal terms. Davidson vividly describes this development:

The Universe is constantly personalized, and the Deity is spoken of as Creator, Father, Guardian, and men are viewed as His sons. Thus the goodness, as well as the majesty and might, of the supreme cause is recognized, and this goodness is seen to operate through love. Moreover, sin is set forth as disloyalty to an unseen Master, whose eye is ever upon us, who knows our every thought, and to whom we are in very truth responsible. The God 'with whom we have to do' becomes to the later Stoics a living actuating presence, in many ways resembling the God of Hebrew and of New Testament Scripture. The motto that Seneca gives to Lucilius for a rule of life is this, -- 'So live among men, as if the eye of God were upon you; and so address yourself to God, as if men heard your prayer' (Ep. 10).²³

²¹Davidson, op. cit., p. 214.

²²Bevan, Later Greek Religion, p. xvii.

²³Davidson, op. cit., p. 59.

The Origin, Course, and Governance of the Universe

In Stoicism, the production of the world takes place by virtue of a law inherent in the nature of primary being, for since it involves the conception of a forming and creating force, it must necessarily develop into a universe, as a seed or ovum must develop into a plant or animal.²⁴

The primary substance of the universe posited by the Stoics was Fire--not in its grosser earthly form, but as a sublimated, all-pervasive essence or aether called πῦρ αἰθέρωδες, and called by Cleanthes "fiery breath" (πνεῦμα).

This primordial Fire, which is also the Deity, is eternal and is endowed with inherent productive power, therefore the Stoics called it the "seminal reason" (λόγος σπέρματικός).²⁵ Originally this Divine Fire existed alone.

Then at a particular moment some part of it became condensed and coarsened, lost its essential divinity, and turned into the four elements.²⁶ Following Heraclitus, the Stoics described this process as follows: Primary Fire first went over into vapor, then into moisture; one part of this moisture was precipitated in the form of earth, another remained as water, and a third part evaporated to constitute

²⁴Zeller, op. cit., p. 161.

²⁵Davidson, op. cit., pp. 87 f.

²⁶Bevan, Later Greek Religion, p. xiv.

the atmospheric air, and air again enkindled fire out of itself.²⁷ At this point there existed two types of substance, the depotentiated passive elements, and the remaining fiery aether which had undergone no change, the active Reason, God in His proper being. The active Reason now set to work upon the passive matter and fashioned out of the four elements the world of manifold objects in which we now live.²⁸ God was, therefore, by no means the creator in the Biblical sense, but rather the architect and artificer of the universe, called characteristically *δημιουργός*²⁹ and artifex³⁰ by the Stoics.

The world, according to the Stoic view, was not intended for eternal existence. As the distinction between matter and force had its origin in time, so it was to have its end in time. Passive matter, which separated from Primary Fire to form the world, is being gradually resolved into Primary Fire again. At the end of the present course of things, a general conflagration of the world will restore all things to their original form and pure Deity, Primary Fire, will alone exist. But no sooner will everything have returned to its original unity, than the formation of a new

²⁷Zeller, loc. cit.

²⁸Bevan, Later Greek Religion, loc. cit.

²⁹Cf. Diog. Laert. vii, 134 and 147.

³⁰Cf. for example Sen., Ep. 65, 19.

world will begin, exactly corresponding to the previous world. Hence the Stoic view posited an endless cycle of world origins and conflagrations, passing each time through the same stages.³¹ Bevan points out how this teaching involved Stoicism in a fundamental hopelessness:

The Stoics more than any school insisted that everything which happened was determined by Providence, by Supreme Reason, yet they stultified such a belief by their doctrine of the eternal recurrence. The process in each cosmic period did not show any progress to greater good, but simply ended in a conflagration, and then, after a time, the same, or a very similar, process began over again.³²

It was, no doubt, such reasons as these which led the outstanding later Stoics to reject the eternal recurrence doctrine.³³

On the other hand, the Stoic confidence in the essential goodness of world process and Providence could provide a partial solution to the eternal recurrence problem. It is interesting to note in contrast to Bevan how Gilbert Murray interprets the same eternal recurrence doctrine, and it was perhaps along such lines that the Stoics were able to resolve the paradox. He says:

For the essence of Goodness is to do something, to labour, to achieve some end; and if Goodness is to exist the world process must begin again. God, so to speak, cannot be good unless he is striving and help-

³¹Zeller, op. cit., pp. 163-7.

³²Bevan, Later Greek Religion, p. xxxvi.

³³Zeller, op. cit., p. 168.

ing. Phusis must be moving upward, or else it is not Phusis.³⁴

The most important feature, perhaps, of Stoic cosmology was its emphasis on Providence. The world's origin and the world-course proceeded uniformly according to fixed, rational laws, and not capriciously or at random, for they were under the presidency and guidance of Universal Reason. This ruling Law was variously described in Stoicism--from the impersonal idea of Fate or Destiny (*εἰμαρμένη*) to the highly personal idea of an intelligent Divine Being. When the emphasis was on the unchangeable connection of cause and effect, the absolute necessity regulating all being and becoming, it was expressed by the term Destiny. But this Destiny was really only another name of Primary Being. And Destiny was always regarded as being rational and ordered according to fixed laws and never as mere caprice. When the emphasis was on the good and orderly arrangement of the world and its development it was expressed by the term Providence (*πρόνοια*).³⁵ Under this conception some of the highest expressions of Stoicism developed. The Stoics were convinced that nature's uniformity bespoke both wisdom and goodness, for all was under the governorship of a divine, pre-arranging, benevolent Ruler.³⁶ As Cleanthes expressed

³⁴Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 112 f.

³⁵Zeller, *op. cit.*, pp. 170 f.

³⁶Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

it, in his Hymn to Zeus, "Thee doth all this system that rolls round the earth obey in what path soever thou guidest it, and willingly is it governed by thee."³⁷ The Stoics could not conceive how the world could be as it is unless by the hand of Providence. For them it was just as easy to believe, that by throwing a large quantity of letters of the alphabet at random on the ground there would emerge, legible and clear, the Annals of Ennius, as to suppose that the world, so obviously showing marks of wisdom and design, could have been produced by chance or by the fortuitous concourse of atoms, as the Epicureans believed.³⁸

The Stoics did not confine their concept of Providence to the cosmic process as a whole, but they believed that the individual and the community alike were under the rule and forethought of the Supreme. Thus because Providence was both universal and special the Stoic could with confidence resign himself to its wise and good care regardless of the circumstances of his life.³⁹ Following along these lines Stoicism reached perhaps its highest expression of faith in Providence in the idea that the world had been formed by

³⁷ Ibid., p. 235.

³⁸ Cicero, N. D. ii, 37; cf. also ii, 2, 4, "For when we gaze upward to the sky and contemplate the heavenly bodies, what can be so obvious and so manifest as that there must exist some power possessing transcendent intelligence by whom these things are ruled," Cicero, op. cit., p. 125.

³⁹ Davidson, loc. cit.

God and shaped into its present good state primarily for the sake of man. This was to be seen already in the arrangement of celestial bodies in fixed orbits around the earth (as they believed), with the habitation of man as the center of the universe. Murray describes this as follows:

Though this order in its fullness might remain inscrutable, its main essence at least could be divined from the fact--then accepted as certain--that the orbits of all the celestial bodies had for their centre our earth and its ephemeral master, Man. Whatever else the Purpose might be, it was the purpose of a God who loves Man and has placed him in the centre of the Universe.⁴⁰

This concept is further elaborated to the extent that plants, animals, and all the world were so formed as to support and serve man. Cicero states the Stoic view very pointedly (Fin. 111, 20, 67), "Omnia, quae sint in hoc mundo, quibus utantur homines, hominum causa facta esse et parata."⁴¹ This high point of Stoic thought serves to illustrate most effectively how thorough and how deeply embedded was its faith in a providential hand governing the universe.

Man

It was an obvious implication of Stoic cosmology that all living creatures were of a single divine origin since they had all come ultimately from the same Primary Divine Fire. The Stoics, especially the later ones, developed this

⁴⁰Murray, op. cit., pp. 60 f.

⁴¹Zeller, op. cit., pp. 185 f.

idea to its full extent with respect to the origin and nature of man in particular. In contrast to the crass mechanism of Epicureanism these Stoics affirmed the unity and the divine paternity of all men, a unity based on their universal possession of reason, the true spark of the divine nature. Epictetus expressed this more clearly than any other Stoic, saying for example (Diss. i, 9, 4-6):

And from Him [God] have descended the seeds, not only to my father and my grandfather, but to all things that have been begotten and are nourished on the earth, but chiefly to those that possess reason, for these alone are privileged by nature to hold communion with God, being united with Him in intercourse through reason: why may not a man then call himself a citizen of the world? why not a Son of God?⁴²

Epictetus developed to a high degree the ethical implications of this view and showed that no man has a right to discriminate against another man, for all are brothers having all the same father. For example (Diss. i, 13, 3-5):

Slave . . . will you not bear with your own brother, who has Zeus for his progenitor, and has been begotten as a son from the same seeds and of the same descent from above. . . . Will you not remember what you are, and whom you rule? that they are kinsmen, that they are brethren by nature, that they are the offspring of Zeus?⁴³

On the basis of this belief the Stoics made much of "world-citizenship," by which they meant that the wise man realizes a greater loyalty to man as a whole than can be expressed within the bounds of any one existing state.

⁴²Davidson, op. cit., p. 90.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 165 f.

They felt that nature had not intended the individual man to be an isolated unit, but a citizen of a great world-city.⁴⁴ Already Zeno had conceived of a world-society in which there should be no separate states, but one great city where all should be citizens and members of one another, bound together not by human laws but by love.⁴⁵

As high as these ideals of human society sound, it must be remembered that these things were predicated only of the soul of man; Stoicism differed not at all from Greek thought in general in regarding the body as the inferior part of the person, a hindrance to the free exercise of the soul, or at best the tool which the soul employed to effect its ends.⁴⁶ The material of the body represented those elements which had lost through condensation their essential divinity. The soul, on the other hand, was akin to that all-pervading Primary Fire which animated the passive matter of the world. Zeller summarizes the Stoic idea of the soul as follows:

the human soul is described by the Stoics sometimes as fire, sometimes as breath, at other times, more accurately, as warm breath, diffused throughout the body, and forming a bond of union for the body . . . much as the Soul of the world is diffused throughout it and forms its bond of union.⁴⁷

The particular feature which distinguished man's soul from

⁴⁴Bevan, Stoics and Sceptics, p. 65.

⁴⁵Murray, op. cit., p. 60.

⁴⁶Davidson, op. cit., p. 141.

⁴⁷Zeller, op. cit., pp. 211 f.

the universal power of life in all creatures was the reason, a part of and an emanation from God, which gave man a special relationship to the Divine Being.⁴⁸ The soul, thus constituted, was characterized by rational powers, self-consciousness, and moral perception, and therefore was the authoritative and ruling principle in man, which guided him to right thought and right action.⁴⁹

The contrasting inferior regard for the body in Stoicism was perhaps most explicit in Seneca. Davidson notes:

To Seneca . . . the body is but the clog and prison-house and punishment of the soul; or it is the fetter that deprives the soul of its liberty; or again, it is an inn which the soul in its sojourn occupies but for a brief moment.⁵⁰

The following is but one of many examples from Seneca's own words which illustrate this (Ep. 65, 16):

For this body of ours is a weight upon the soul and its penance [poena]; as the load presses down the soul is crushed and is in bondage unless philosophy has come to its assistance and has bid it take fresh courage by contemplating the universe, and had turned it from earthly things to things divine.⁵¹

The following statement of Marcus Aurelius points up addi-

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 216.

⁴⁹ Davidson, op. cit., p. 142.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 141.

⁵¹ Seneca, Ad Lucillum Epistulae Morales, in Loeb Classical Library, Latin text with an English translation by Richard M. Gummere (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1925), I, 453-5. Additional references to Seneca's views on the matter are given in the discussion of Acts 17:31 f., infra, p. 182.

tional elements of the Stoic opinion of the body (Med. x, 38):

That which pulls the strings . . . is the power concealed within; there is the mandate, the life, --there, one may say, the man. Never confound it with the mere containing shell, and the various appended organs. They may be compared to tools, with this difference, that the connexion is organic. Indeed, apart from the inner cause which dictates action or inaction, the parts are of no more use than the weaver's shuttle, the writer's pen, or the coachman's whip.⁵²

The Stoic ideas on body and soul had, of course, most important effects on their idea of immortality. It is obvious that with such opinions of the body as they held no thought of bodily immortality could be tolerated.⁵³ On the question of the immortality of the soul no general agreement can be found among Stoic writers. This much can be said with certainty, that the individual soul cannot escape the recurrent cycle of the universe, and at the end of the present world's course the soul will be resolved again by the general conflagration into the Primary Divine Fire, and since this substance is indestructible in a sense the human soul is immortal. The Stoics differed as to whether all souls would last until that time as separate souls, which was the view of Cleanthes, or only the souls of the wise, as Chrysippus held.⁵⁴

⁵²Davidson, loc. cit.

⁵³cf. the strong expressions of Seneca, Ep. 102, 15-26.

⁵⁴Zeller, op. cit., pp. 217 f.

In later Stoicism, the idea of a personal, conscious immortality of the soul with God was developed. Seneca gives probably the finest exposition of this idea, as Davidson points out:

the object of the belief is to Seneca, in his highest apocalyptic moments, no vague colorless hereafter, no mere abstraction of the intellect, but a vivid, definite future life of bliss, a state in which we shall revel in ineffable light, and have the mysteries of nature revealed to us, and in which we shall hold intercourse with the gods and the spirits of the blessed.⁵⁵

However, it is probable that such exalted thoughts as these were beyond the hope of the average Stoic, whose faith was in a less personal survival of the soul, which was to be reabsorbed ultimately into the divine Soul of the World.

Marcus Aurelius expresses this type of hope (Med. iv, 14):

You exist but as a part inherent in a greater whole. You will vanish into that which gave you being; or rather, you will be transmuted into the seminal and universal reason.⁵⁶

And considering the Stoics' high regard for the universal, seminal Reason, this could not but be a good end, perfectly compatible with the Stoic maxim of life, that of conforming oneself in all things to Nature.

The Stoics and the Popular Religion

The relation of the Stoics to the traditional poly-

⁵⁵Davidson, op. cit., pp. 97 f. Cf. Ep. 26, 55, 63, 102, 120.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 90.

theism was one which involved them in certain difficulties. They found some values for their purpose in it and seemed to have been somewhat concerned to exhibit their essential orthodoxy. But on the other hand, they found it necessary to level severe criticisms against certain aspects of the popular faith. The solution to this dilemma they found in the extensive use of allegory.

There is no doubt that the Stoics were in no way dependent upon the traditional religion for any of their religious ideas. However, they were led to seek a closer union with the popular faith for at least two reasons. First of all, since Stoicism made much of the universal existence of belief in divine beings as a proof for their theories on God and Providence,⁵⁷ they could not without danger to their own position declare the current opinions respecting the gods erroneous. Secondly, the ethical platform of Stoic philosophy imposed on its adherents the duty of upholding rather than overthrowing the popular creed, since that creed formed a barrier against the violence of human passions. Furthermore, the Stoics may have feared, that were the traditional worship suspended, that respect for God and the divine law on which they depended for the support of

⁵⁷ Cf. Cicero, N. D. ii, 2, 5, "Nothing but the presence in our minds of a firmly grasped concept of deity could account for the stability and permanence of our belief in him, a belief which is only strengthened by the passage of the ages and grows more deeply rooted with each successive generation of mankind," Cicero, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

their own moral tenets would at the same time be exterminated.⁵⁸

On the other hand, Stoicism did not deny that much in the popular beliefs would not harmonize with their principles, and that both the customary forms of worship and the mythical representations of the gods were untenable.⁵⁹ In describing the Stoic view, Cicero (N. D. 11, 75, 45) notes that the uneducated are "unable to conceive of the immortal gods without setting before themselves the forms of men: a shallow mode of thought. . . ."⁶⁰ Seneca calls the popular gods creatures of superstition whom the philosopher invokes only because it is the custom to do so (Augustine, Civ. D. vi, 10).⁶¹ Chrysippus declared that the distinctions of sex among the gods and other features in which they resembled men were pure childish fancies (Philodemus, Phaedrus 2).⁶² With respect to temples and images the Stoics were likewise quite vocal. Already Zeno spoke with contempt of the erection of sacred edifices on the ground that nothing worthy of God could be erected by builders and laborers.⁶³ Seneca held that God would not be worshipped by

⁵⁸Zeller, op. cit., pp. 343 f.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 344.

⁶⁰Cicero, op. cit., p. 167.

⁶¹Zeller, op. cit., p. 346.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Bevan, Stoics and Sceptics, p. 13.

sacrifices and ceremonies, but by purity of life; not in temples of stone, but in the shrine of the heart (Ep. 95, 47).⁶⁴

The Stoics were, nevertheless, not disposed to reject the current beliefs completely. They sought rather to discover real germs of truth in them by means of allegory. Their cosmological theories were well suited to allow for such a method since they held that although the name of God belonged only to the one Primary Being, it could be applied in a limited and derivative sense to all those objects by means of which the divine power is manifested. Thus they distinguished between God, and the gods created and transitory, in other words, between the universal divine Power as a Unity working in the world, and its individual parts and manifestations.⁶⁵ The Stoics proceeded from this foundation to show that what were commonly called gods might represent divine things indeed, but parts of the kosmos rather than personal, anthropomorphic beings. An example of this sort of allegory is given by Cicero, who says of Chrysippus (M. D. 1, 14, 40):

He also argues that the god whom men call Jupiter is the aether, and that Neptune is the air which permeates the sea, and the goddess called Ceres the earth; and he deals in the same way with the whole series of the names of the other gods. He also identifies Jupiter with the mighty Law, everlasting and eternal, which is

⁶⁴Zeller, op. cit., p. 345.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 347 f.

our guide of life and instructress in duty, and which he entitles Necessity or Fate, and the everlasting Truth of future events.⁶⁶

Extensive allegorical constructs like this are frequent in extant Stoic sources, and they illustrate the dilemma of the Stoic attitude toward the popular faith, which Zeller has described as follows, "Unable to break entirely with these traditions, they still would not sacrifice to them their scientific and moral convictions."⁶⁷ Allegory provided their most satisfactory solution, and it enabled them to express the highest aspirations of their theology and at the same time maintain the permanent values they found inherent in the popular piety.

⁶⁶Cicero, op. cit., p. 43.

⁶⁷Zeller, op. cit., p. 370.

¹T. F. Brown, The Arts of the Ancients (London: The Tynah Press, 1953), p. 114.

²Arthur J. Grotz, editor, The Bible and Hellenism (New York: Random House, 1953), p. 114.

CHAPTER III

EPICUREAN COSMOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

Epicurean Cosmology

As in Stoicism, so in Epicureanism, the theories of natural science were intended to meet a practical need. For Epicurus (341-270 B.C.), the chief purpose of life was pleasure (*ἡδονή*), particularly the pleasure of ataraxy, a life free from pain, disturbing passions, and superstitious fears.¹ Epicurus felt that such an undisturbed state of mind could only be achieved if men were free from their fears of divine influence in human affairs, which the traditional religion inculcated. He makes this clear in statement XII of his Principle Doctrines:

A man cannot dispel his fear about the most important matters if he does not know what is the nature of the universe but suspects the truth of some mythical story. So that without natural science it is not possible to attain our pleasures unalloyed.²

In his Letter to Herodotus he describes in detail just what these fears are which disturb the peace of men, and which can only be removed by an appreciation of natural science:

the principle disturbance in the minds of men arises because they think that these celestial bodies are

¹F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles (London: The Tyndale Press, 1951), p. 332.

²Whitney J. Oates, editor, The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers (New York: Random House, c.1940), p. 30.

blessed and immortal, and yet have wills and actions and motives inconsistent with these attributes; and because they are always expecting or imagining some everlasting misery, such as is depicted in legends. . . . But peace of mind is being delivered from all this. . . .³

Because the Epicureans' interest in natural science was basically practical, Zeller is probably right in saying that they were indifferent about giving a complete explanation of natural phenomena, but were content with a view of nature which would do away with the necessity for supernatural intervention and would at the same time offer something of a sufficient solution to the problems raised by science.⁴

Epicurus found the system which fitted his needs in the atomic theory of Democritus, which formed the basis for a thoroughly materialistic and mechanical explanation of the universe. According to this theory, the universe consisted entirely of atoms⁵ and empty space (or void); there was no third substance, such as World Reason or First Cause.⁶ The atoms themselves were uncreated⁷ and indestructible; they

³Ibid., p. 14.

⁴Eduard Zeller, The Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics, translated from the German by Oswald J. Reichel (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), p. 434.

⁵The word atom means "indivisible," with either the noun stoicheion, "element," or physis, "existence" understood, Norman Wentworth DeWitt, Epicurus and his Philosophy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), p. 159.

⁶Zeller, op. cit., pp. 439 f.

⁷Epicurus states this in his Letter to Herodotus as follows, ". . . nothing is created out of that which does

could be neither divided, destroyed, nor changed in any way. They were regarded as solid, containing no empty space within themselves. They had neither color, warmth, smell, nor any other such property, but possessed only the universal properties of all corporeal things: shape, size, and weight. Their number was considered infinite, as the void was of infinite extent. They differed from each other in size, shape, and weight, though none were large enough that they could be seen by men.⁸

It was a cardinal principle of the atomic theory, taught both by Democritus and by Epicurus, that the atoms were always in motion, which, by virtue of their weight, was an eternally downward motion. But while Democritus held that atoms in their downward motion met together, thus giving rise to a rotatory motion, Epicurus held that all atoms fall equally fast since empty space offers no resistance, and falling perpendicularly it is impossible to see how they could meet.⁹

In order to render a meeting of atoms possible, Epicurus postulated the smallest possible swerving aside of individual atoms from their perpendicular line of falling,

not exist: for if it were, everything would be created out of everything with no need of seeds. . . . Furthermore, the universe always was such as it is now, and always will be the same." Oates, op. cit., p. 4.

⁸Zeller, op. cit., pp. 442 f.

⁹Ibid., pp. 444 f.

which took place because of the inherent ability of the atoms and was not produced by any law or external cause.¹⁰ This supposition was necessary to make possible the collision of atoms and the formation of compound bodies. Even more important, it was necessary ultimately to avoid predestination, for if the atoms were assumed incapable of deviating in the slightest degree from a given course, their motions would all have been unalterably predetermined and all events would be part of an infinite chain of causation, which was a prime abhorrence to Epicurus.¹¹ Without the swerving of the atoms Epicurus could not have insisted on the freedom of the human will, which was of the greatest importance in his ethics.¹²

In the Epicurean system the formation of compound bodies results from the swerving of the atoms. Swerving causes collision, and in consequence of meeting the atoms rebound, the lighter ones are forced upward, and rotary motion results. When this takes place the atoms cluster, and by their motion separate themselves from other atoms and ultimately form worlds of themselves.¹³ Zeller gives a useful summary of the Epicurean view of how our world was

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 445 f.

¹¹ DeWitt, op. cit., p. 165.

¹² Zeller, op. cit., p. 446.

¹³ Ibid.

thus formed:

At a certain period of time . . . a cluster of atoms of varying shape and size was formed in this definite portion of space. These atoms meeting, there first arose from the pressure and rebound of the quickly falling particles motions of every variety in every direction. Soon the greater atoms pressing downwards, by dint of weight forced upwards the smaller and lighter atoms, the fiery ones topmost and with the greatest impetus to form the ether, and afterwards those which form the air. The upper pressure ceasing, these masses, under the pressure of particles still joining it from below, spread forth sidwards, and thus the belts of fire and air were formed. Next uprose those atoms out of which the sun and stars are formed into the heights, and at the same time the earth settled down, its inner part being partially exhausted in those places where the sea now is. By the influence of the warmth of the ether, and the sun-heat, the earth-mass was bound together more closely, the sea was pressed out of it, and the surface assumed an uneven character. The world is shut off from other worlds and from empty spaces by those bodies which form its external boundary.¹⁴

For the Epicureans this world-forming process was universal and eternal. As the atoms were eternal and unchangeable, so the process of forming worlds must go on without beginning or end, and there must be an infinite number of worlds. Though these several worlds show the greatest possible variety in size and arrangement, they are alike in this, that they all come into existence, are liable to decay, and like all other individual elements are exposed to a gradual increase and decrease.¹⁵

With regard to the origin and development of life, the Epicureans anticipated in a limited degree the modern

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 447-9.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 446 f.

theories of evolution. They regarded the earth as the mother and creator¹⁶ of all living things. Lucretius, the great poet and exponent of Epicurean philosophy, says (ii, 1155):

For it is not true, as I think, that the generations of mankind were let down from high heaven by some golden chain upon the fields, nor were they sprung from sea or waves beating upon the rocks, but the same earth generated them which feeds them now from herself.¹⁷

In another connection Lucretius describes the method of such generation. After pointing out that the earth first produced plants, and then mortal creatures of all kinds by various processes, he continues (v, 787):

First the race of winged things and different birds issued from their eggs being hatched in the spring-time. . . . Then first, look you, the earth gave forth the generations of mortal creatures. For there was great abundance of heat and moisture in the fields; therefore wherever a suitable place was found, wombs would grow, holding to the earth by roots; and when in due time the age of the infants broke the bladders, fleeing from moisture and seeking the air, nature would direct thither pores of the earth and make it discharge from these open veins a liquid like to milk. . . .¹⁸

Among these living beings which came forth were many deformed and composite creatures, but only those survived

¹⁶Lucretius uses these very words of the earth, e.g., v, 821 ff., "wherefore again and again the earth deserves the name of mother which she has gotten, since of herself she created the human race [quoniam genus ipsa creavit humanum]," Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, in *Loeb Classical Library*, Latin text with an English translation by W. H. D. Rouse (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1924), pp. 398 f. Likewise in ii, 1117, "omnia . . . rerum natura creatrix," *ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 167.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 397-9.

which were fitted by nature to support, propagate, and protect themselves.¹⁹

Man came into being in the same way, and was originally as rude and ignorant as the beasts and lived like them. In course of time he discovered fire, learned to build, developed speech, arts, and other skills.²⁰

Like Stoicism and all Greek philosophy, Epicurus ascribed to man a soul, but it, like every other real being, was thought of as a material body. It consisted of the finest, lightest, and most easily moved atoms, resembling fire and air.²¹ But, in contrast to Plato and the Stoics, the Epicureans did not believe in the immortality of this soul. Zeller summarizes their view as follows:

When, however, the connection between soul and body is fully severed, then the soul can no longer exist. Deprived of the surrounding shelter of the body, its atoms are dispersed in a moment, owing to their lightness; and the body in consequence, being unable to exist without the soul, goes over into corruption. If this view appears to hold out the most gloomy prospect for the future, Epicurus considers that it cannot really be so. With life every feeling of evil ceases, and the time when we shall no longer exist affects us just as little as the time before we existed. . . . his teaching alone can reconcile us to death by removing all fear of the nether world and its terrors.²²

It is evident that in such a construct as has been described, life is nothing more than the result of atomic

¹⁹Zeller, *op. cit.*, p. 451.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 452.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 454.

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 455 f.

collision, and human consciousness, sensation, reflection, intelligence, even the soul itself, are merely the products of elementary material particles, variously combining and reacting.²³ In such a system, there is no room for divine providence of any kind. It seemed absurd to Epicurus that an earth so abounding in uninhabitable wastes of water, mountains, torrid deserts, and regions rigid with cold could have been the creation of a benevolent and all-wise being. He scoffed at the idea that man had been given dominion over the animals; the world had no more been made for the sake of man than for the sake of insects.²⁴ Furthermore, the Epicureans urged the problem of evil against any theory of providence. How could divine providence have created a world in which evil abounds, in which virtue often fares badly and vice is triumphant. How could nature be intended to promote man's well-being when it often imperils his life and labor.²⁵ And it was even regarded as inconsistent with the nature and life of the gods that they should exercise any control over the world, as shall be seen in the next section.

Epicurean Theology

The gods of Epicurus are something unique in the history

²³William Leslie Davidson, The Stoic Creed (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1907), p. 114.

²⁴Norman Wentworth DeWitt, St. Paul and Epicurus (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, c.1954), p. 180.

²⁵Zeller, op. cit., p. 463.

of philosophy and religion. His theory of the gods appears to have grown primarily out of the logical implications of his cosmology. Starting with the premise that the universe is infinite, he felt it logically inconsistent that it should be imperfect throughout its infinite extent, for then it could no longer be called infinite. This necessity of thought impelled him to promulgate a theory of a kind of cosmic justice (called isonomia by Cicero), according to which the imperfection in particular parts of the universe is offset by the perfection of the whole and by the existence of perfect beings.²⁶ Thus he argued that in an infinite universe perfection is bound to exist as well as imperfection, that is, that there must be some surpassing being or beings than which nothing is better. He felt also, that for the balance to be maintained, the number of these beings could not be less than the number of mortals.²⁷ Epicurus found further evidence for the existence of gods in the fact of the general diffusion of belief in gods throughout the world, for he believed that ultimately only that which materially existed and gave off "atom images" could be perceived. Epicurus' theory of the gods likewise served to fulfill his wish to see his ideal of perfect happiness and ataraxy realized in full somewhere in the universe.²⁸

²⁶ DeWitt, Epicurus and his Philosophy, p. 271.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 274.

²⁸ Zeller, op. cit., p. 465.

The gods of Epicurus are animate creatures, resembling human beings, that is, atomic in composition and structure.²⁹ They are not above and outside of the atomic process, but have come into being in the same way as worlds and other living things. Epicurus defined the divine being as 'a living creature,' employing the term zōon, which is applicable to beasts as well as human beings. For him the gods were part of the natural order of living, corporeal things, the scala naturae. Their place was at the top of the scale, but not outside of it.³⁰

According to Zeller, the gods have two essential characteristics, immortality and perfect happiness.³¹ DeWitt, however, points out, that by virtue of their atomic, corporeal composition, they are theoretically not immune to the contingency of dissolution, though for them this eventuality is avertible. Thus they may be styled incorruptible in the sense that they are subject to a contingency that need never occur.

The gods can ensure incorruptibility for themselves by their own vigilance. Just as this vigilance ensures incorruptibility, so the assurance of incorruptibility ensures blissfulness. The happiness of the gods is perfect because the assurance of its perpetuity is perfect.³²

²⁹DeWitt, Epicurus and his Philosophy, p. 249.

³⁰Ibid., p. 259.

³¹Zeller, op. cit., p. 467.

³²DeWitt, Epicurus and his Philosophy, p. 249.

Somewhat paradoxically Epicurus further maintains that the eternal life of the gods is not to be thought of as a cause of happiness, but rather the perpetuity of happiness is a cause of eternal life. "The gods win eternal life by maintaining their own pleasures perpetually."³³ This teaching is important, for because of it the gods dare not destroy their perfect happiness by assuming a providential care for the world's affairs, lest they lose their immortality. This subject will receive further treatment below.

Epicurus deduces further characteristics of the gods by logical process. Assuming that the gods live in perfect happiness, they must possess virtue, since virtue is the prerequisite for happiness. Furthermore, since an irrational creature cannot possess virtue, it follows that the gods possess the human form, though somewhat larger and more beautiful.³⁴ Their bodies must, of course, consist of the finest atoms, consequently they could not have the same dense corporeity which belongs to ours.³⁵

The type of life lived by the gods, according to the Epicurean position, is well portrayed in Cicero's De Natura Deorum (1, 19, 51):

their life is the happiest conceivable, and the one most bountifully furnished with all good things. God

³³Ibid., p. 269.

³⁴Ibid., p. 260.

³⁵Zeller, loc. cit.

is entirely inactive and free from all ties of occupation; he toils not neither does he labour, but he takes delight in his own wisdom and virtue, and knows with absolute certainty that he will always enjoy pleasures at once consummate and everlasting.³⁶

As to the abode of the gods, Epicurus urges that they could not dwell on any of the innumerable worlds, since worlds are subject to disintegration, and all eventually pass away. DeWitt states Epicurus' view as follows:

Since in the individual worlds the forces of destruction always prevail in the end, it follows that the incorruptible gods can have their dwelling place only outside of the individual worlds, that is, in the free spaces between the worlds, the so-called intermundia,³⁷ where the forces of preservation are always superior.³⁸

The prime concern of Epicurean philosophy on the gods is to deny to them any care or concern for the affairs of men and any interference in world events. The first thesis of Epicurus' Principle Doctrines makes this very clear:

The blessed and immortal nature knows no trouble itself nor causes trouble to any other, so that it is never constrained by anger or favour. For all such things exist only in the weak.³⁹

Lucretius (ii, 646) expands the same basic principle as

³⁶ Cicero, De Natura Deorum, in Loeb Classical Library, Latin text with an English translation by H. Rackham (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1933), pp. 51-3.

³⁷ Hippolytus (Usener, 359) states Epicurus' view as follows, "For the god dwells in what he calls the metakosmia. And he lives in pleasure and peace and transcendent joy, knowing no trouble himself and giving none to anyone else," Edwyn Robert Bevan, Later Greek Religion (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons Limited; New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1927), p. 39.

³⁸ DeWitt, Epicurus and his Philosophy, p. 274.

³⁹ Oates, op. cit., p. 35.

follows:

For the nature of gods must ever in itself of necessity enjoy immortality together with supreme repose, far removed and withdrawn from our concerns; since exempt from every pain, exempt from all dangers, strong in its own resources, not wanting ought of us, it is neither gained by favors nor moved by anger.⁴⁰

The gods had to be so completely separate from the world because the onerous tasks and the pressure of responsibility of caring for the world would be completely incompatible with perfect bliss. In Epicurus' own words (Letter to Herodotus):

the motions of the heavenly bodies and the turnings and eclipses and risings and settings, and kindred phenomena to these, must not be thought to be due to any being who controls and ordains or has ordained them and at the same time enjoys perfect bliss together with immortality (the trouble and care and anger and kindness are not consistent with a life of blessedness, but these things come to pass where there is weakness and fear and dependence on neighbors).⁴¹

And since, as has been seen, the gods had to preserve their happiness to ensure their immortality, their separation from the world became a question of life or death for them. This factor, coupled with the Epicurean materialistic view of the universe, points up the necessary thoroughness of their denial of providence of any kind.

It remains to consider the Epicurean attitude toward the popular Greek religion. As was said at the outset, one of the chief aims of Epicurean philosophy was to rid men of the

⁴⁰ Robert Drew Hicks, Stoic and Epicurean (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 290.

⁴¹ Oates, op. cit., p. 13; cf. Diog. Laert. x, 76 and 97.

superstitious fears which were the chief cause of the miseries of humanity. So on this score Epicurus and his followers opposed the popular polytheism and its crude beliefs. They did this, however, not by open rebellion against the state religion, but by teaching their own polytheism as a substitute and refinement of the popular faith. DeWitt states their aim succinctly:

Epicurus preferred to follow tradition where permissible and was not bent upon introducing new gods, which was an indictable offense, but aimed rather to rationalize existing beliefs and recall his countrymen to true piety.⁴²

In spite of his rejection of the traditional religion as such, Epicurus found a good deal of value in taking part in the religious ceremonies and festivals which it sponsored. Philodemus of Gadara (last century B.C.) states his view as follows (Us. 386:11-14):

So much may be said even now, that the Divine stands in no need of any honour; but for us, it belongs to our nature to honour the Divine being, chiefly by pious beliefs, and, in second place, by those particular forms which are traditional in the community of each worshipper.⁴³

In the same context Philodemus quotes Epicurus as explaining the value of such participation in the popular worship (Us. 386:8-10):

In the festivals in particular [every man who is wise], making progress toward understanding of it [the divine nature], through steadily having the name upon his lips,

⁴²DeWitt, Epicurus and his Philosophy, p. 261.

⁴³Bevan, op. cit., p. 44.

with stronger emotion becomes seized with the incorruptibility of the gods.⁴⁴

The value of this for Epicurus lies in the fact that by contemplating and reverencing the gods, men would build up a more correct concept of the happiness of the divine nature and be inspired to imitate it. So, in spite of the faults of such religious observances, Epicurus himself took part in them⁴⁵ and urged the following upon his disciples (Philodemus, *Us.* 387):

Let us at any rate offer sacrifice piously and fairly, wherever it is the proper thing to do so, and perform all other offices which the laws prescribe, but not allow ourselves to be disturbed in our own beliefs regarding those best and most exalted beings.⁴⁶

⁴⁴DeWitt, Epicurus and his Philosophy, p. 281.

⁴⁵Plutarch, Non posse 1095E, reports that Epicurus rose early in the morning to attend these festivals, ibid.

⁴⁶Bevan, op. cit., p. 45.

CHAPTER IV

GREEK RELIGION IN THE FIRST CENTURY

The purpose of this chapter is by no means to present a detailed study of all aspects of this complex and difficult subject, but merely to point up briefly the various religious currents in the Greek world at the time of St. Paul, and to develop at greater length those areas which play a particular role in the Areopagus address.

The Hellenistic Age in General

At its dawn the Hellenistic age found almost a tabula rasa on which to work in the area of religion.¹ Greek religion had experienced successively the rise of the Olympian polytheism, its conquest and domination over the cruder popular beliefs and superstitions, and the collapse of this polytheism's power as a result of philosophical criticism and political crisis. On the higher levels of culture the traditional religion had fallen aside, and philosophy had taken its place as the comforter and guide of humanity.² On the popular level, the change was more

¹Gilbert Murray, Five Stages of Greek Religion (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 159.

²Martin Persson Nilsson, Greek Piety, translated from the Swedish by Herbert Jennings Rose (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1948), p. 87.

gradual; the old ideas survived for a long time and the new ones worked their way forward only little by little.³

Wilsson characterizes the early Hellenistic period as follows:

Although the cult continued along the old lines, although voices were heard crying for a deepening of religion, yet religious feeling never was lower than when the Hellenistic period began. It was replaced by belief in one's own power and trust in Tyche, and, among the educated, by the philosopher's doctrine concerning life. For the common people there remained cult and the lower forms of religion, supplemented by superstition, which usually increases in a time when the old religions are falling. The ground was cleared and a new structure must arise to make a place for religious feeling. . . .⁴

The new structure which began to arise was characterized especially by the growing force of personal religion, a craving in the individual for a more intimate union with the deity than could be found in the traditional city cults. This is seen, for instance, in the expanding popularity of mystery cults of all types.⁵ Murray gives a classic summary of the overall spirit of this religious reconstruction:

It is a rise of asceticism, of mysticism, in a sense, of pessimism; a loss of self-confidence, of hope in this life and of faith in normal human effort; a despair of patient inquiry, a cry for infallible revelation; an indifference to the welfare of the state, a conversion of the soul to God. . . . the aim of the good man is not so much to live justly . . . but by means of a burning faith, by contempt for the world and its

³Ibid., p. 84.

⁴Ibid., p. 91.

⁵Lewis Richard Farnell, Outline-History of Greek Religion (London: Duckworth and Co., 1921), p. 138.

standards, by ecstasy, suffering, and martyrdom, to be granted pardon for his unspeakable unworthiness, his immeasurable sins. There is an intensifying of certain spiritual emotions; an increase of sensitivity, a failure of nerve.⁶

The Hellenistic reconstruction was marked particularly by a thorough permeation of oriental ideas, cults, and deities into the partial vacuum of Greek religion. The movement was in full bloom by the middle of the Hellenistic period (about 200 B.C.),⁷ and was still in full strength in the first century A.D., when a veritable flood of divinities came from the East to the West.⁸ Nilsson gives a useful characterization of the spirit and color of this oriental influence:

Belief and revelation took the place of research and investigation. To this was added credulity, superstition, and belief in sorcery in an increasing degree, made legitimate by the doctrine of occult forces. . . . In time, science became in Greece what it had always been in the East, an adjunct of religion. . . . It moves in the region of mysticism and occultism and its theology is theosophy, which always follows occultism as its theoretical shadow.⁹

Elements of this oriental influence can be detected in almost every area of religious interest during the Hellenistic period.

With this general picture of Hellenistic Greek religion

⁶Murray, op. cit., p. 155.

⁷Nilsson, op. cit., p. 141.

⁸Clifford Herschel Moore, The Religious Thought of the Greeks (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), p. 263.

⁹Nilsson, loc. cit.

as a background, the following sections describe some of the individual currents of religious thought and piety during the period under consideration.

The Worship of Fortune

The worship of Fate or Fortune came as a natural result of the collapse of the traditional religion. If it was not personal gods who made things happen as they did, what was it? Two main alternatives presented themselves to those who were not disposed to accept the idea of a personal divine providence. Either it was mere chance, or a chain of cause and effect which was responsible for everything that happened.¹⁰ Both alternatives developed in terms of the keyword, Tyche. For some Tyche was no more than the course of events,¹¹ but the long-standing and deeply-embedded ideas of the influence of a higher power determining men's rise and fall inclined many toward a somewhat personal idea of Fate, so that Tyche became almost another goddess like the rest, who willed whatever happened.¹² The personal element is clear in the following fragment of Menander:

Whether Tyche is a divine afflatus or an intelligence (nous), it is she who guides all things and turns them about and saves them, whereas human foresight

¹⁰ Murray, op. cit., p. 163.

¹¹ Nilsson, op. cit., p. 86.

¹² Murray, op. cit., p. 164.

is nothingness and idle chatter.¹³

Nilsson points out that she was regarded personal even to the extent that temples and statues were dedicated to her.¹⁴

The characteristic nature of Tyche was that she was fickle, inconsistent, undependable, and operated by mere caprice. Such a conception arose naturally in a society like Hellenistic Greece, where good and bad conduct had little or no relation to poverty and success. Under such conditions, the thought of a loving providence was largely abandoned, and a changeable chance took its place.¹⁵ Pliny characterizes this common conception as follows (Natural History ii, 22):

Throughout the whole world, at every place and hour, by every voice Fortune alone is invoked and her name spoken: she is the one defendant, the one culprit, the one thought in men's minds, the one object of praise, the one cause. She is worshipped with insults, counted as fickle and often as blind, wandering, inconsistent, elusive, changeful, and friend of the unworthy. . . .¹⁶ We are so much at the mercy of chance that Chance herself, by whom God is proved uncertain, takes the place of God.¹⁷

Further evidence on the unpredictable and unmotivated operations of Tyche is found in the following statement of

¹³Nilsson, loc. cit.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Murray, loc. cit.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Pliny, Natural History, in Loeb Classical Library, Latin text with an English translation by H. Rackham (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1938), I, 185.

Polybius, speaking of the fall of Perseus (xxix, 21):

But nevertheless this Fortune, who never compacts with life, who always defeats our reckoning by some novel stroke; she who ever demonstrates her power by foiling our expectations, now also, as it seems to me, makes it clear to all men, by endowing the Macedonians with the whole wealth of Persia, that she has but lent them these blessings until she decides to deal differently with them.¹⁸

It is evident from the quotations that have been given, that both for those who regarded Tyche as personal and for those who did not, her name stood for the absence of any faith in an ordered providence or a purposive life, and witnessed instead to the widespread prevalence of the belief that all that happened exhibited merely blind chance and meaningless caprice.

The Popularity of Astrology

The science of astrology achieved great popularity in Hellenistic times because it offered another answer to the basic religious question: If the old gods do not exist, why do things happen as they do? Astrology in its proper form applied the law of causality strictly and without exceptions. The universe was a kind of gigantic piece of clockwork, whose wheels were geared into each other. If one knew the movement of the wheel, that of the rest could be calculated, and since the motions of the stars could be

¹⁸ Polybius, The Histories, in Loeb Classical Library, Greek text with an English translation by W. R. Paton (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1927), VI, 79.

calculated, the events of an earthly life could be foretold from them. The strict causality which astronomy applied excluded any arbitrary interference; everything that happened was conditioned by a cause and governed by law, and gods had no more power than men to do anything against it.¹⁹ Pliny describes this view of the universe as follows

(Natural History ii, 22):

Another set of people banishes fortune also, and attributes events to its star and to the laws of birth, holding that for all men that ever are to be God's decree has been enacted once for all, while for the rest of time leisure has been vouchsafed to Him.²⁰

However, the scientific side of astrology was beyond the capacity of the ordinary people. They thought of astrologers as interpreters of omens, diviners who were abler than the rest. For them, the planetary powers were gods whom they could perhaps appease like others with sacrifices and prayers or master through magical means.²¹

Between these two extremes there were a wide variety of applications and uses of astrology. A good deal of speculation and magic centered around the divine character of heavenly bodies, especially the sun, the moon, and the seven planets. This idea was found already in seed in Plato and was further developed in Stoicism, in which the

¹⁹Nilsson, op. cit., p. 111.

²⁰Pliny, loc. cit.

²¹Nilsson, loc. cit.

heavenly bodies, like all other parts of the universe, were divine, or under the influence of divine spirits.²² In Chaldean astrology and its offspring on Hellenistic soil mystic signs and magical formulae were employed to influence the planets.²³ In later Hellenistic religion the orbits of influence of the seven planets were regarded as the last chains which bound the soul of man to the physical body and earth, and much of Mithraic, Gnostic, and Hermetic thinking was absorbed in plans of escape from the prison of the seven planets. The aim for the spirit was to get above the moon and planets into the eighth region, the home of the ultimate God, which was the sphere of true being, freedom, and union with the Divine.²⁴

The extent and variety of this astrological interest is important in that it gives a vivid picture of the spirit of the age and witnesses to its preoccupation with the question of the ultimate cause of all events and man's relation to that cause.

The Deification of Rulers and Emperors

One of the great principles attained to by classic Greek thought was that man and god were separate. This was

²²Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 172 f.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 175.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 180.

lost again in the Hellenistic period, when kings and rulers rose to the rank of divine beings.²⁵ A development known as Euhemerism (based on the work of Euhemerus), which came into vogue about the beginning of the Hellenistic age, may have paved the way for the popularity of king and emperor deification. This movement considered the gods of mythology as simply great men who had lived a long time before and had been deified by popular tradition.²⁶ There were additional theories, based on rational grounds, which supported the deification of rulers. Bevan gives a useful description of these:

Many educated people who had lost belief in the old mythology as literally true retained a vague belief in some diffused divine power ($\tau\omicron\delta$ $\delta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\omicron\nu$), and they might recognize a manifestation of such divine power in any strong human personality. Or if they did not believe at all in the supernatural--as was very probably the case with Euhemerus himself--to treat a contemporary man as a theos would be simply to put him in the same class with men of long ago, like Zeus or Dionysus, who on the theory of Euhemerus, had become gods.²⁷

The deification of rulers really began with Alexander the Great, who realized every characteristic of greatness and power. It was continued under the dynasties of his successors, who were all deified and many of whom claimed

²⁵ Ibid., p. 186.

²⁶ Edwyn Robert Bevan, Later Greek Religion (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons Limited; New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1927), pp. xx f.

²⁷ Ibid., p. xxii.

deity for themselves. Their names bear witness to this: Antiochus Epiphanes (the god made manifest); Ptolemaios Euergetes (the Benefactor); Ptolemaios Soter (the Savior).²⁸ The practice reached its height in the deification of the Roman emperors and the growth of emperor cults. The following inscription is an example of such deification:

The Council and People of Ephesus and the City-states of the other Greeks domiciled in Asia and the native communities honour Gaius Julius Caesar, son of Gaius, High-Priest and Emperor and for the second time Consul, sprung from Ares and Aphrodite, God Manifest and Universal Saviour of human society.²⁹

Philosophy on the whole rejected the deification of man and was moving instead toward the world of the soul. The Savior of men was not the one who protected them against physical disaster, but the one who saved their souls and revealed to them the Gnosis Theou, a merging of beings in a complete union.³⁰ But the prevalence of the ruler and emperor cults among the majority of people shows how fluid the idea of deity was, and how far from a genuine monotheism the masses in general were, though this statement must be considered together with the material in the next section.

The Increasing Tendency Toward Monotheism

It must be noted that the conviction of monotheism,

²⁸Murray, op. cit., pp. 187-9.

²⁹Bevan, op. cit., p. 66.

³⁰Murray, op. cit., pp. 195 f.

which had formerly been held only by certain philosophers, made its way farther and farther in the Hellenistic period.³¹ A contributory cause of this was the spread of philosophy to wider circles, even to the general public, owing to the preaching of wandering popular philosophers. And it was not without importance that the old belief in the gods was so weakened that people spoke less often than formerly of particular gods, but used general expressions, as "the god" or "the deity." All this, however, was largely preparatory, and the triumph of monotheism had its origin in several circumstances. Besides philosophy, which conceived of its first principle as the supreme god, there was the new cosmology, which called for a supreme Ruler of the universe, the monarchical government of the State, which encouraged a monarchical regime not only on earth but in heaven, and finally syncretism and kathenotheism, which resolved other gods into the particular deity to whom the worshipper turned.³²

The weakness of pagan monotheism of this type over against Judaism, and then Christianity, was that it never cleared the old polytheism away; the old gods survived as subordinate deities, satraps of the supreme God.³³

³¹The movement toward monotheism in later Stoic thought has already been referred to, supra, p. 12.

³²Nilsson, op. cit., p. 116.

³³Ibid., p. 122.

Popular Piety

Alongside the advances in Greek religion during the Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman periods toward higher expressions of piety, it is necessary to note the persistence and continued development on the popular level of polytheism and devotion to images.

It is of particular importance for the study of Acts 17 to determine as well as possible whether the traditional polytheism was still alive in Athens at the time of St. Paul's visit there. Unfortunately, fully adequate sources for these facts are not available, but certain evidences point toward the persistence of popular polytheism in the period under consideration.

First of all, it should be pointed out, that the popular religion of Athens was never confined to the official deities of the state. The great Olympian deities, of course, did play a large part in the religious activity of the people, particularly through the numerous state-sponsored festivals and sacrificial banquets. However, even at the height of the Olympian influence, personal piety was often, perhaps usually, directed into different channels, as Nilsson points out:

it was rather the minor deities and the heroes than the great gods of the State who were approached with pious reverence, for the former lay nearer to the heart of the people and there was more belief in their intervention

in the life of the individual.³⁴

This being the case, it is likely that the collapse of the Olympian polytheism prior to the Hellenistic age would touch much more slowly these personal, private exercises of piety.

There is evidence, furthermore, that even the Olympian deities, demolished in effect by philosophical and scientific criticism of the period between 500-300 B.C., maintained considerable strength in the first centuries of the Hellenistic period. Farnell offers some helpful facts to support this:

Certainly in the first centuries of the Hellenistic age there were few external signs of decay; we do not yet hear of ruined shrines or the decline of great festivals such as the Delia; Athena, though no longer the goddess of a civic Empire, was still and for ages yet remained the benign Madonna for the Athenian, to whose care the boy-athlete and the marriageable girl were dedicated; we have record from the island of Tenos of the abiding hold that even such a deity as Poseidon still exercised on the affections of his people, as late as the second and first centuries B.C.; and if we had continuous chronicles of each cult-centre we should probably find similar evidence showing that the dominant figures of the old polytheism were still able to fulfill in some degree the religious wants of the individual worshipper. And scholars who have been tempted to ante-date the decay of Hellenic polytheism have ignored, among other evidence, this important historic fact that in the fourth century it was still vital enough to make foreign conquests, to penetrate and take possession of Carthage, for instance, and that in the third century it began to secure for itself a new lease of life within the city and growing empire of Rome; in fact, the last chapter of Greek religion falls within the Roman imperial period.³⁵

³⁴Ibid., p. 68.

³⁵Farnell, op. cit., pp. 137 f.

There were other factors which no doubt tended to prolong the life of the traditional polytheism in the Greek cities. The worship of the city's gods was mixed up with a great deal of local patriotism and with public festivals and holidays. Even centuries after the criticism of the gods began, these motives might still be strong, and taken together could create in a Greek citizen a feeling of attachment to his city's gods which could on occasion rise to passion.³⁶ Another factor which no doubt helped in keeping the traditional religion alive was the view of many of the educated that the old faith was useful to keep the masses in check by the fear of divine retribution. An example of this from the first century B.C. is found in Diodorus of Sicily (xxxiv, 2, 47):

it is at any rate profitable for society that a superstitious dread of the gods should be engrained in the souls of the multitude. For the persons who act justly from their own virtue are rare, and the great generality of men are restrained from evil-doing by two things--judicial penalties and the visitations of God.³⁷

It may also be regarded as further, if not conclusive evidence of the persistence of polytheism into the first century A. D. and beyond, that the Christian apologists attacked it as a still living belief with probably more justification than one would suppose if one went by the philoso-

³⁶Bevan, op. cit., p. xxiv.

³⁷Ibid., p. 78.

phers and men of letters alone.³⁸

It should be added that popular polytheism did not retain throughout the same deities with the same devotion. New deities were introduced from time to time, and received with much popular devotion, such as Asklepios, Cybele and Attis, and Isis. The popularity of these new deities was grounded largely in the fact that they did not confine themselves to any one tribe or city, but as world-powers appealed to mankind and to the individual. On the other hand, certain of the old deities, such as Demeter and Kore, the mother and daughter of Eleusis, retained much of their power until the conquest of Christianity, because they had early broken the bonds of clan and cast and had invited the civilized world to their fellowship.³⁹

From the foregoing material it can be concluded, that though the traditional religion of Greece had suffered much alteration and lost much of its former influence, polytheism in various forms was still a live faith in the first century A.D. and must have been much in evidence to Paul when he visited Athens.

A second factor of the popular piety which is important for an understanding of Acts 17 is the question of the attitude toward and the use of images. A vivid picture of the

³⁸Ibid., p. xxiv.

³⁹Lewis Richard Farnell, The Higher Aspects of Greek Religion (London: Constable and Co., 1926), p. 149.

popular feeling in this matter is given us by several writers who draw attention to the widespread belief in late antiquity in the miracle-working power of numerous images. In the classical period this sort of thing occurred, but the miracles ascribed to such statues were very modest, generally only omens. However late antiquity witnessed a wide growth and expansion of this belief. Nilsson has drawn together a number of references to this:

It is recorded that one of the statues of Neryllinos, proconsul of Asia Minor under the Emperor Vespasian, gave oracles and healed the sick. Lucian has two stories of statues in his work The Liar. . . . One of them represented a Corinthian general, Pelichos. Every night he walked about the house and often bathed. . . . It was customary to lay coins on the pedestal or fasten them to the thigh of the statue with wax as offerings and by way of thanks for being cured of fever. Once when a slave stole some of these coins, he could not find his way out and was caught and soundly thrashed.⁴⁰

Nilsson says that Lucian's stories contained details taken from common practice, for it is known that statues were worshipped, money was offered to them, and garlands and ribbons were hung on them. He adds the following additional illustrations:

Philostratos says that a statue of the hero Protesilaos was worn away from being anointed and having written prayers attached to it [Heroicus iii, 2]. The cult of images in late antiquity is strikingly illustrated by an anecdote concerning the celebrated rhetorician Proairesios; in their enthusiasm many licked his chest as if he were an image filled with divine potency. . . .⁴¹

⁴⁰ Nilsson, op. cit., pp. 167 f.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 168.

The theory behind such devotion to images seems to have been tied up with ideas of conveyable divine potency, which could be called down into images by magical ceremonies and prayers, and of daemons, who could be induced to dwell in images by means of bestowing kindness and devotion upon them.⁴² Some rather extensive theorizing along these lines is found, interestingly enough, in the Hermetic literature. The following excerpts give a good picture of this type of thinking (Asclepius ii, 23B-24A; 37-38A). To the question whether the gods made by men are statues, the reply is:

Yes, Asklepios . . . I mean statues, but statues living and conscious, filled with the breath of life, and doing many mighty works; statues which have foreknowledge, and predict future events by the drawing of lots, and by prophetic inspiration, and by dreams, and in many other ways; statues which inflict diseases and heal them, dispensing sorrow and joy according to men's deserts. . . .

Our ancestors were at first far astray from the truth about the gods; they had no belief in them, and gave no heed to worship and religion. But afterwards they invented the art of making gods out of some material suited to the purpose. And to this invention they added a supernatural force whereby the images might have power to work good or hurt, and combined it with the material substance; that is to say, being unable to make souls, they invoked the souls of daemons and implanted them in the statues by means of certain holy and sacred rites.

Asklepios. And these gods who are called 'terrestrial,' Trismegistus, by what means are they induced to take up their abode among us?

Hermes. They are induced, Asklepios, by means of herbs and stones and scents which have in them something divine. And would you know why frequent sacrifices are

⁴²Ibid., p. 169.

offered to do them pleasure, with hymns and praises and concord of sweet sound that imitate heaven's harmony? These things are done to the end that, gladdened by oft-repeated worship, the heavenly beings who have been enticed into the images may continue through long ages to acquiesce in the companionship of men. Thus it is that man makes gods.⁴³

It is also of considerable importance that the use of images was not confined to the lower classes of society, but was endorsed by many of the educated, though on somewhat different grounds. They felt that reality in its fullness could never be reached by man. He moves from one image to another, but reality escapes him. For that reason he ought to make use of any and every image which offers help in the unending search for truth.⁴⁴ A representative example of such reasoning from the first century A.D. is given by Dion Chrysostom (Oration xii, 59-61):

Pure spirit and thought by itself no sculptor or painter can portray. But the vessel within which the mental process goes on [the human body]--that is not a matter of shadowy conception, that is something we palpably know, and therefore to this we fly in our need. We attribute a human body to God, seeing in it the vessel of thought and reason. Unable to show the unimaginal and the unrepresentable by an example of it, we try to do so by means of the visible and representable. We so use this that it has the virtue of a symbol. And this is better than to make animals the similitude of God, as some of the barbarians are said to do. . . .

There is in all men an urgent craving to come to close

⁴³ Bevan, op. cit., pp. 181 f.

⁴⁴ Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, Translation and Commentary, in The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I, The Acts of the Apostles, edited by F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1933), IV, 218.

quarters with the Divine Beings whom they honor and serve, approaching them and handling them in confident faith, sacrificing to them and crowning them. It is just like little children who have been separated from their father or mother. They have a poignant longing and desire, and often in their dreams will reach out their hands in the emptiness. Just so we men, who quite rightly love the gods because of their goodness towards us and the kinship between us and them, are eager to come, somehow or other, into contact and communion with them--so much so, that many of the barbarians, in their dearth of artistic resources, give the names of gods to mountains or stones or trees.⁴⁵

The foregoing items have been sufficient to show that on all levels of society, devotion to images was still very much alive in the first century A.D.

The Daemonizing of Religion

The Greek word *δαίμων* was, of course, a rather fluid word, and could connote anything from a vague, dark, undefined supernatural power⁴⁶ to a personal divinity, even

⁴⁵Bevan, op. cit., pp. 114 f. Compare also the following statements on the value of images. Maximus of Tyre (ii, 2) says, "It is not that the Divine Being stands in need of any images or statues. It is poor humanity, because of its weakness and the distance dividing it from God, . . . which has contrived these things as symbols. . . . Just in the same way, it seems to me, the old lawgivers invented images for mankind, as it were for a troop of children, symbols of the honor shown to the God, a leading of men by the hand along the way of mental realization," ibid., p. 146. Also the philosopher Plotinus acquiesced in this doctrine (Enneades iv, 3, 11), "When the image of a particular god is fashioned according to the idea of him, it is connected with that god through that idea in the same way as sensible objects in general are connected with intelligibles through the soul. Even though the god does not inhabit the image, yet his potency, which is given out from him to the sensible world, does inhabit the image in a peculiar way," Nilsson, op. cit., p. 168.

one of the gods of the traditional religion. Our concern here is confined to tracing the particular theories of daemons as personal semi-divine beings, which grew into such prominence in late antiquity.

Xenocrates, one of Plato's successors, may be regarded as the one who gave the greatest impetus to advanced daemonology in Greek religion. He developed certain hints in Plato into a doctrine which was to have a fatal influence in later days, in that it joined hands with the lower forms of the popular belief.⁴⁷ He taught that the daemons were intermediate beings between gods and men.⁴⁸ Nilsson gives the following brief description of his views:

The daemons have their abode in the air, under the moon; their nature is a combination of the divine, the spiritual, and the corporeal; they know pleasure and pain, and some of them are good, some bad. To the bad daemons he ascribed the objectionable cult practices.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ It was so used by Homer for divine powers in general apart from the individual gods, Nilsson, op. cit., p. 60.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 89.

⁴⁸ The intermediate place of daemons in Xenocrates is illustrated by the following description by Plutarch of his theory (On the Cessation of Oracles, 10 ff.), "As a figure of the theory stated, Xenocrates, the disciple of Plato, adduced the system of triangles: he compared the gods to equilateral triangles, mortal men to scalene triangles, and daemons to isosceles triangles, since equilateral triangles are equal every way, and scalene triangles unequal every way, whereas isosceles triangles have two sides equal and the third unequal, just as beings of the daemon-kind combine divine powers with the passion of mortals," Bevan, op. cit., p. 123.

⁴⁹ Nilsson, loc. cit.

The doctrine of daemons found much favor also in Stoicism, which admitted the existence of numberless personal beings other than the Supreme God and men--both invisible ones in the air or in the aether, and the visible heavenly bodies, which were animate fiery globes.⁵⁰

The doctrine of daemons attained great popularity in that it served to give a rational explanation to the old mythology. Now all the discreditable stories about Zeus, Apollo, and other gods could be transferred to daemons who, it was suggested, had pretended to be the gods in question. All the ritual practices which seemed unlovely, such as animal sacrifice, could be explained as addressed to daemons of gross appetites, not to gods.⁵¹

In late antiquity the doctrine of daemons, further expanded by the influx of the polydaemonism of the East, gained wide acceptance.⁵² Daemons were regarded as having bodies of subtle material, not lacking human defects and passions.⁵³ The doctrine of daemons was especially con-

⁵⁰Bevan, op. cit., p. xxviii.

⁵¹Ibid., p. xxix. Cf. Plutarch (On the Cessation of Oracles, 10 ff.), who argues that the human sacrifices once practiced could not have been demanded by gods or agreed to by them without reason, but must have been designed to avert the anger and satisfy the appetites of evil daemons; likewise the stories of gods carrying off maidens, and the like, must be understood not of the gods, but of the daemons.

⁵²Farnell, Outline-History of Greek Religion, p. 150.

⁵³Nilsson, op. cit., p. 171.

nected with the ideas of power, for antiquity could hardly conceive of abstract force, and thought of potency as concentrated in objects, especially gods and daemons. Nilsson characterizes the direction in which popular ideas were moving as follows:

The Greek deities had long lost their marvellous powers and lost ground in folk-belief, all except Hekate the witch-goddess and Asklepios the god of healing. But the daimones, whose importance continually increased and who were credited with supernatural interventions in human life on the widest scale, possessed precisely that supernatural potency which was believed in.⁵⁴

Mystery Religions and Transcendentalism

The popularity of the mysteries in late antiquity can probably be attributed to a great extent to the desire of men to seek refuge from the crippling effects of the Hellenistic belief in Fate.⁵⁵ The mystery religions provided such an escape, in that they offered salvation as rescue from the throes of unavoidable destiny.⁵⁶ They took extremely variegated forms, but certain ideas were more or less common to them all, especially the ideas of death and resurrection, regeneration and sonship with God, enlightenment and redemption, deification and immortality. The most important point in this complex was that as the god in

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 115.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 153.

question dies and rises again, so the initiate is to die and rise again.⁵⁷ It must be noted in this connection, that like all other Greek thought, the mysteries offered no resurrection of the flesh, but only immortality of the soul. Immortality in these cults was nothing new; the novelty was that while the older beliefs made the transition from earthly to eternal life take place at death, the mysteries transferred it to the moment of initiation.⁵⁸ The convert at that stage entered upon a reborn state, cleansed from his former pollutions and ready for a new career.⁵⁹

The importance of the mysteries was not that they were great factors in the forming and shaping of the religion of late antiquity, but rather that they were symptomatic of the religious needs and desires of the people of that age,⁶⁰ who were searching for a firmer foundation of life and a closer association with the divine.

In conclusion, it seems significant for an understanding of the very spirit and mind of Greek religion in the first century A.D., to see in what direction it was moving by comparing with it the last stand of paganism under the

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 151 f.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 154 f.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 152.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 161.

emperor Julian. By that time paganism had become a more or less intelligible whole, such as could appeal respectably to the philosopher and also meet the needs of the average man. By allegory and high morality it could appeal to the philosopher as rational and enlightened. On the other hand, it took no single object of worship from the ignorant and humble-minded. It might explain and purge, but it never condemned or ridiculed.⁶¹ The significance of these facts is that paganism never succeeded, with all its refinement, in rejecting and destroying its own inherent idolatry. Thus the condemnation of it by St. Paul in Acts 17 was just as justified in the first century A.D. as it would have been had he made his visit to Athens centuries earlier during the height of the Olympian deities' domination. Greek paganism had not essentially changed.

⁶¹Murray, op. cit., p. 231.

CHAPTER V

THE PICTURE OF ATHENS AND THE BACKGROUND OF PAUL'S SPEECH AS GIVEN BY LUKE IN ACTS 17:16-21

The background material given in these few verses by Luke constitutes the best available information as to the occasion, place, audience, and mood of the situation, all of which no doubt had a profound influence on the character of the address given by Paul. This material will therefore be given special attention before the speech itself comes under consideration.

In order to understand the spirit of first century Athens, a few historical notes will be helpful. Athens attained the foremost place among the Greek city-states early in the fifth century B.C. by reason of the lead she took in resisting the Persian invasions. She was at the height of her power between 478 and 431 B.C., the century of her greatest cultural achievements, and after her defeat by Sparta in the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.) she was not long in regaining much of her former influence. In the fourth century she again took the lead in resistance to Philip's aggression, and after his victory at Chaeronea (338 B.C.) was generously treated by him and allowed to retain much of her ancient freedom, which she enjoyed until the Roman conquest of Greece in 146 B.C. The Romans too, in consideration of her glorious past, left her to carry on

her own institutions as a free and allied city within the Empire (civitas libera et foederata). At Paul's time the city was the seat of a famous university.¹ It is evident from these facts that though Athens of the first century had lost much of its glory and importance, it was still a city with much freedom and culture, and a city conscious of a great heritage.

It appears from the historical data given in Acts 17 prior to Paul's arrival in Athens, that Paul's visit there was not a part of his original plans, but was forced upon him by the exigencies of the situation, namely by the arrival of troublomaking Thessalonian Jews at Bereoa. The word ἐκδεχομένου (v. 16) gives the impression that Paul had no definite plans for a mission campaign in Athens, but was simply awaiting his helpers so they could proceed to Corinth. Stonehouse takes the verse this way and says:

Paul had come to Athens with the purpose of finding a brief respite from the arduous experiences and the perils of his activity in Macedonia rather than to carry forward his apostolic mission. . . . To relieve this situation [in Bereoa] Paul was constrained to go to Athens, and evidently it was regarded as a mere stopping place on his way to Corinth.²

In a single word Luke characterizes the city of Athens as Paul, the messenger of the true God, saw it: κατείδωλον.

¹F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles (London: The Tyndale Press, 1951), p. 331.

²N. B. Stonehouse, The Areopagus Address (London: The Tyndale Press, 1949), pp. 9 f.

The abundance of statues in Athens, and the general evidences of the Athenian religiosity were mentioned by several ancient writers. For example, Strabo, quoting Hegesias, says (ix, 1, 16):

"I am unable to point them all [the shrines in Athens] out one by one; for Attica is the possession of the gods, who seized it as sanctuary for themselves, and of the ancestral heroes."³

Pausanias states his impressions as follows (i, 17, 1):

In the Athenian market-place among the objects not generally known is an altar to Mercy, of all divinities the most useful in the life of mortals and in the vicissitudes of fortune, but honored by the Athenians alone among the Greeks. And they are conspicuous not only for their humanity but also for their devotion to religion.⁴

The brief characterization of Athens by Petronius is a forceful indication of the city's character, even though a satirical remark (Sat. 17), "Indeed the gods walk about so commonly in our streets that it is easier to meet a god than a man."⁵

Paul's reaction to the artistry of Athenian sculpture and to their "devotion to religion" in no way resembled that of Pausanias. Luke describes Paul's feeling with the

³The Geography of Strabo, in Loeb Classical Library, Greek text with an English translation by Horace Leonard Jones (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1933), IV, 263.

⁴Pausanias, Description of Greece, in Loeb Classical Library, Greek text with an English translation by W. H. S. Jones (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1918), I, 81.

⁵Petronius, Satyricon, in Loeb Classical Library, Latin text with an English translation by W. H. D. Rouse (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1939), p. 23.

strong word *παρωξύνετο*, derived from *ὀξύνω*, which has the root idea of making sharp. The word is used frequently in the Septuagint in the sense of becoming very enraged and embittered, and it is used especially thus of God, e.g., Num. 14:11; Dt. 1:34.⁶ It is of great importance to note that this very verb is used several times of God's anger over idolatry, e.g., Is. 65:3, "a people who provoke [*παρωξύνων*] me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and burning incense upon bricks" (cf. also Dt. 9:18; Ps. 106:29; Hos. 8:5). It is the opinion of Stonehouse that Luke uses this expression to show why Paul could not remain silent in Athens but felt compelled to preach the gospel in spite of his original intention to secure a brief period of relief from the tensions of his ministry.⁷ Whether this conjecture is true or not, it is evident from Luke's statement what course Paul's preaching would take, as the speech itself shows in its twice repeated condemnation of idolatry.

After a brief note that Paul, according to his custom, conversed with the Jews and proselytes in the synagogue, Luke pictures Paul engaging in discussions in the Agora. The scene must be pictured as one of bustling amidst beauty, busy commercial enterprise and cultural discussion in an

⁶Heinrich Sesseemann, "*παρωξύνω, παρωξυσμός*," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, and Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1954), V, 855.

⁷Stonehouse, op. cit., p. 11.

area surrounded by portico after portico adorned by famous artists and rich in noble statues.⁸ Athens was full not only of philosophers, but, as can be imagined from a single phrase of Tacitus, quite a mingling, motley crowd must have surrounded Paul, "illa colluvies nationem" (Ann. 11, 55).⁹ On the cultural side, Athens was no longer the Athens of Socrates, but his spirit and method had deeply rooted itself in the Athenian soil and the nature of the Athenian people.¹⁰ No doubt the habit of Socrates described by Plato (Apol. 31A) was still in evidence in the habits of the philosophers of Paul's time, "He was to be seen in the market-place at the hour when it was most crowded."¹¹ Ramsay characterizes the cultural spirit of first century Athens as follows:

In Athens Socrates could never quite die, and his spirit was in Paul's time still among the people, though the learned lecturers of the university felt already the coming spirit of Herodes Atticus more congenial to them. Among the people in the agora, then, Paul reasoned in the Socratic fashion; but when the Professors came upon the scene, they soon demanded of him a display in the style of the rhetorician.¹²

Paul, in his seemingly infinite versatility, took his

⁸R. J. Knowling, "The Acts of the Apostles," in The Expositor's Greek Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), II, 365.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰W. M. Ramsay, St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, c.1896), p. 238.

¹¹Knowling, loc. cit.

¹²Ramsay, op. cit., pp. 238 f.

place in this milieu as one who belonged, engaging in discussions every day with whoever might happen to be there (v. 17). An interesting parallel can be found in the experiences in Athens of Apollonius, a contemporary of Paul, who also reasoned (*διελέξατο*) with the Athenians on religious matters (Philostr., *Vit. Apol. Tyan.* iv, 19).¹³ Luke draws special attention to the fact, that in the course of Paul's activity there several Stoic and Epicurean philosophers discussed and debated¹⁴ with him. Luke's intention, no doubt, is to indicate that Paul came into contact with these two schools in particular, and that his address was geared particularly in their direction. This will become very evident when the speech itself is considered.

Luke gives only a very brief characterization of the content of Paul's preaching during these chance discussions,

τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν εὐηγγελίζετο (v. 18).¹⁵

But in these few words the basic content of all of Paul's

¹³Knowling, *loc. cit.*

¹⁴*συνέβαλλον* need not have a hostile sense as in Lk. 14:31, but simply means that among the chance comers in the Agora there were some who engaged in discussions with him, Knowling, *loc. cit.*

¹⁵Note that the Western text omits these words, and it is just conceivable that they constitute an actual non-Western interpolation, because the clause is in the nature of an explanatory note to clarify the text, and could be thought of as drawn from vv. 30 f. But the support is so meager for the omission, that it is probably best to retain the reading. The D copyist's tendency to edit could account for his omission of the item, since it might have appeared to him to be a likely insertion.

preaching is evident, for it all centered on these two poles, that Jesus was the Christ of God and had fulfilled the ancient prophesies (cf. for example 13:24 ff.; 17:3; 28:23), and that the guarantee and seal of God's act was the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and our coming resurrection (cf. 13:34 ff.; 23:6; I Cor. 15). Luke means to indicate that also in Athens, both in the synagogue and the market-place, Paul preached the same apostolic kerygma. Note that in Acts 4:2 Luke summarizes the general apostolic kerygma with very similar words, *καταγγέλλειν ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ τὴν ἀνάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν.*¹⁶ The particular form which Paul's preaching of these truths took in the non-Jewish background of Athens can best be seen from verses 30 and 31 of his speech, which will be discussed later. Several scholars have concluded from the reaction of the Athenian populace to Paul's preaching, that they misunderstood Paul to the extent that they thought he was preaching two new deities, Jesus and Anastasis, a male and female pair.¹⁷ Chase has suggested another possibility, namely, that if the people connected Ἰησοῦς with ἰάσις (healing), or with Ἰησώ (the Healer), ἀνάστασις might remind them of ἀναστατήρεια, a word quoted by Hesychius as meaning sacri-

¹⁶ Stonehouse, *op. cit.*, pp. 12 f.

¹⁷ Eduard Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfaenge des Christentums* (Stuttgart and Berlin: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, c. 1923), III, 92.

fices offered on recovery from sickness.¹⁸ The difficulty with accepting any of these theories is the simple observation that Paul did not merely mention these words, but no doubt went to considerable length to make clear what he meant by them. Thus such a complete misunderstanding as these scholars assume seems quite unlikely, though it might have been the case with some who caught only snatches of Paul's preaching or heard of it second or third hand.

The varied reactions of the people to Paul's preaching constitute background material of the greatest importance for a proper understanding of Paul's speech, in that they show more clearly than any other evidence the character and spirit of the Athenian populace, and in that they show what Paul had to take into account in attempting to bring the gospel effectively to these people. The first type of reaction noted by Luke reflects a spirit of intellectual superiority and pride, which regards with derision any seemingly less cultured teacher, *τί ἂν ῥήτοι ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος λέγειν;* (v. 18). There is some question whether Luke attributes this to the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, or simply to some of the general crowd. Lake and Cadbury take the latter view, arguing as follows:

There is much to be said for putting a full stop before these words "and some said" The sentences which follow refer to the Athenians in general, not to the philosophers who are rather mentioned as a piece

¹⁸ Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

of local color.¹⁹

However, the statement is so typical of proud intellectuals, that it is most natural to take it of the philosophers that have just been mentioned. The second statement, then would represent a more general reaction.

The word *σπερμολόγος* has an interesting history which illustrates clearly the spirit of this reaction to Paul's work. Literally it means "seed collector," and seems to have been used first of birds who pick up or collect seeds (e.g., Arist., Av. 233, 586). Then it came to be applied to people who loitered around the market-place, picking up scraps of food that might chance to fall from loads of merchandise (Eustath., Commentary on the Odyssey v, 490), and was thus used of vile, beggarly persons in general.²⁰ The word was then applied to men of the kind who picked up scraps of information, and retailed it second hand. Thus Eustathius speaks of rhetoricians who were mere collectors of words and consistent plagiarists (*δι' ὅλου σπερμολογούκτες*), and again he remarks that the word is applied to those who make a show in unscientific style of knowledge

¹⁹ Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, Translation and Commentary, in The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I, The Acts of the Apostles, edited by F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1933), IV, 211.

²⁰ Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Corrected edition; New York: American Book Company, c.1886), p. 584.

which they have gotten from misunderstanding the lecturers.²¹ Ramsay characterizes the force of the word in first century Athens by pointing out that it connotes a plagiarist who did not understand what he was plagiarizing well enough to apply it properly. It refers to one who was outside of the inner circle, one whose training and situation in life had not adequately trained him for the task he is undertaking, one who had simply aped the ways and words of the philosophers.²² It is evident from this usage that Paul was regarded in very low esteem, and was actually laughed at for his teaching as one who did not know what he was talking about. The same kind of spirit comes to the fore again in v. 32 (ἐχλεύαζον).

A second kind of reaction is evident in the words, *γένων δαιμονίων δοκεῖ καταγγελεὺς εἶναι* (v. 18). This reaction can best be described as a kind of confusion and failure to understand just what Paul was talking about. The best these people could do toward understanding it was to see it in the light of their concept of daemons, and they themselves sensed that this was inadequate, as the *δοκεῖ* indicates. The Greek words *δαίμων* and *δαμόνιον*²³ were

²¹ Knowling, op. cit., p. 367. Lake and Cadbury quote in Greek the entire passage from Eustathius, loc. cit.

²² Ramsay, op. cit., p. 243.

²³ There is very little difference in meaning between the two. *δαίμων* is infrequent in the New Testament, and *δαμόνιον* is used in its place, usually in the same sense. The only difference between them (not always observed) would be that *δαμόνιον*, being the neuter adjective, would have

quite wide and loose in their connotation. *δαίμων* was used originally as equal to *θεός*, and in the earliest times the two were used synonymously, but generally from Homer onward *δαίμων* signified divine agency generally, the working of a higher power which made itself felt without being regarded as a definite or nameable person.²⁴ However, *δαίμων* could still be used synonymously with *θεός* in Hellenistic thought.²⁵ *δαίμων* and *δαμόνιον* were used especially for inferior divine beings or undergods throughout the entire period of Greek literature. Thus Plato describes *δαίμονες* as *θεοί* or *θεῶν παῖδες νόοι ἢ νομῶν ἢ ἐκ τινῶν ἄλλων* (Apol. 27C). He likewise describes the *δαμόνιον* as a being *μεταξὺ θεοῦ τε καὶ ἀνθρώπου* (Sym. 202B). *δαίμων* was also used in the sense of fate, especially by the tragic poets, and as the guardian spirit in men, especially in later Stoic thought.²⁶ In Acts 17:18, *ξένας δαμόνιων* quite obviously is used in a general sense of gods or divinities of a foreign country or culture, not native to Athens. No connotation of evil powers is in-

less personal force, cf. Hermann Cremer, Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek, translated from the German of the 2nd edition by William Urwick (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1878), p. 168.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 168 f.

²⁵Werner Foerster, "*δαίμων, δαμόνιον*," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1935), II, 2.

²⁶Ibid. Cf. also our discussion of daemons in Greek religion, supra, pp. 61-4.

tended,²⁷ nor necessarily any a priori accusation or discrimination against these divinities. Thus the statement of the crowd taken by itself indicated neither hostility, suspicion, or derision, but above all lack of understanding and probably with the majority incredulity. It is obvious from their use of the word *δαμονίων*, that they did not gain from his preaching that he was a strict monotheist, thus their failure to grasp his meaning was quite serious.

All commentators call attention to the similarity of these words to accusations which had been brought against Socrates and others for introducing new deities. For example, of Socrates, *ἕτερα δὲ καινὰ δαμόνια εἰσφέρων* (Xen., Mem. 1, 1, 1); *φασὶ γάρ με ποιητὴν εἶναι θεῶν, καὶ ὡς καινοὺς ποιοῦντα θεοὺς τοὺς δ' ἀρχαίους οὐ νομίζοντα* (Plato, Euthyphro 3B); *Σωκράτη φασὶν ἄδικεῖν . . . θεοὺς οὓς ἡ πόλις νομίζει οὐ νομίζοντα, ἕτερα δὲ δαμόνια καινά* (Plato, Apol. 24B-C).²⁸ Josephus reports a similar case of a priestess who was executed on the charge *ὅτι ξένους ἐμύει θεοῦς* (C. Apion. 11, 37).²⁹ But these parallels by no means indicate that Paul is here being accused or indicted. In Athens the introduction of strange gods had been a capital offense, but only if by such

²⁷Lake and Cadbury, op. cit., pp. 211 f.

²⁸Bruce, loc. cit.

²⁹Lake and Cadbury, op. cit., p. 212.

an introduction the home deities were rejected and the state religion disturbed. There is nothing to show that the Athenians regarded Paul's teaching in this light, and there is no evidence that the Areopagus had cogniscance of serious charges of impiety or of the introduction of an unlawful religion.³⁰ Furthermore, the long history of the oriental intrusion into Greek religion would support the statement of Meyer, that it was never, least of all at this time, a crime to bring in foreign cults.³¹

A third facet of the nature of the Athenians' reaction to Paul's preaching is given in the words they spoke when they took him to the Areopagus (vv. 19 f.). It is quite difficult to determine with certainty just what attitude is reflected there. It may be described in general as interest, but whether sincere interest, mere curiosity, or a certain hostility is not immediately clear. The language of the words does not help much. *ὑπάκουσα*, for instance, could indicate either courtesy, sarcasm, or irony, depending on the context.³² *ξενίζοντα* need not indicate anything strange or suspicious, but perhaps would better be taken as referring to things startling or bewildering. Ramsay renders "some things or foreign fashion" connecting the words

³⁰ Knowling, loc. cit.

³¹ Meyer, op. cit., p. 91.

³² Knowling, op. cit., p. 369.

to the opinion that the apostle was an announcer of foreign gods.³³ The words, *βουλόμεθα οὐν γινῶναι τίνα θέλει ταῦτα εἶναι*, may indicate a degree of hostile demanding, "We would like to know what these things purport to be!" On the other hand, the passage need be no more than a polite request for more information about what those things meant which they did not understand.

The evidence for determining the spirit of these requests must be found mostly in the context. A great deal depends upon whether we understand Paul as taken before the Court of the Areopagus or simply out to the Hill of Ares. In the latter case, any thought of hostility would be almost out of the question, and the picture would be that of an interested curiosity. But, as will be shown presently, the evidence for the view that Paul was taken before the Council of the Areopagus for an examination of his qualifications for public lecturing is much stronger, and this throws the statements of verses 19 and 20 into a much different light. Of special interest is the word *ἐπιλαμβάνομαι*. Its meaning is simply to grasp firmly, and of itself it implies neither hostility nor friendliness.³⁴ It is used of hostile grasping, for example, in Luke 20:20, 26;

³³Ibid.

³⁴Gerhard Delling, "ἐπιλαμβάνω, ἀνεπιλήμπτος," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1942), IV, 9.

Ac. 21:30; 18:17; 16:19. It is used, on the other hand, of Jesus grasping a person in an act of healing, Lk. 14:4, and also as a sign of friendly encouragement in Ac. 9:27, 23:19. But on the view that Paul was being taken to the Court for examination, it would seem that a certain amount of dislike or dissatisfaction was involved. Ramsay goes all the way and argues as follows:

When a man, especially an educated man, goes so far as to lay his hands on another, it is obvious that his feelings must be moved. . . . There must have been some stronger feeling among the philosophers than mere contempt mingled with some slight curiosity, before they actually placed their hands on Paul. Now they certainly did not act as his friends and sponsors in taking him before the Council, therefore we must understand that they took him there from dislike and with malice.³⁵

The evidence for that degree of malice is really lacking in the text as it stands, but to a more limited extent, the arguments of Ramsay are quite cogent.

A further difficulty with the hostility theory arises in connection with v. 21, where Luke seems to be explaining why the Athenians acted as they did in this case. This passage gives the impression that the primary purpose of their questioning was mere degenerate curiosity, an interest less in truth than in novelty. The characterization is enhanced by the use of the comparative *κακρότερον*, which may mean something newer than that which had just preceded it as now up to the time of asking, thus indicating more

³⁵Ramsay, op. cit., pp. 245 f.

vividly the voracious appetite of the Athenians for some new thing.³⁶ Norden takes this view, and argues:

wenn ich frage: "gibt es etwas Neues?", so ist dies neue, das ich zu erfahren wuenche, im Verhaeltnis zu dem Stande meines gegenwaertigen Wissens immer ein Plus.³⁷

On the other hand, it may be said that the comparative was the usual degree used by the Greeks in the question "What news?"³⁸ This description of the Athenian populace is

amply corroborated in ancient literature. For instance,

Cleon describes Athens as follows (Thuc., iii, 38, 5), *καὶ μετὰ καινότητος μὲν λόγου ἀπατάσθαι ἄριστοι*; Demos-

thenes says the following (Phil. i, 10), *ἢ βούλεσθε, εἰπέ μοι, περιϊόντες αὐτῶν πυνδάνεσθαι, λέγεται τι καινόν*;³⁹ Norden, with ample justification, says of the

description in Ac. 17:22, "In der Tat: der *χαρακτηρισμός* der Athener ist vielleicht das 'Gebildetste', was ueberhaupt im N.T. steht. . . ."⁴⁰

In the light of the evident intention of Luke to point up in v. 21 the news-hounding curiosity of the Athenians, and in the light of the previous indications of dislike and

³⁶ Knowling, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

³⁷ Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1923), p. 333.

³⁸ Knowling, *loc. cit.*

³⁹ Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 334. Cf. many additional references in Norden, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

⁴⁰ Norden, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

a certain hostility, it seems best to picture the crowd as containing people with varying degrees of these attitudes. It was probably certain of the philosophic teachers who, with some dislike and mockery, saw to it that Paul was taken before the Court.⁴¹ But others no doubt followed along out of mere interest in this strange teacher and his novel teachings, some desiring only to relieve their aroused curiosity, others more interested in seeing whether Paul might have some useful bits of novel thought. And the possibility of genuine religious interest cannot be ruled out, especially in the light of the fact that Paul did make a few converts (v. 34).

The question of the scene of Paul's address must now be considered. Before the fundamental question is broached, namely whether *ἐπὶ τὸν Ἄρειον πύλον* refers to the Council of the Areopagus meeting in the Agora area or to the Hill of Ares, it will be useful to survey the historical data on each. The hill is a rocky height near the Acropolis, named after the war god Ares, because, as the story went, Ares having slain Halirrhothius, the son of Neptune, for the attempted violation of his daughter Alcippe, was tried for murder there before the twelve gods as judges (Pausan.,

⁴¹W. M. Ramsay, The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament (Fourth edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1920), p. 100, conjectures, "In Athens the professors of philosophy discover that Paul is tempting away their auditors, a very trying experience for the ordinary professional mind."

Attic. i, 28, 5). It was early chosen as the place where the judges convened, who, by appointment of Solon, had jurisdiction over capital offenses.⁴² Originally the whole trial doubtless took place on the hill, but later only the ceremonial verdicts of the court were given there.⁴³ Its traditional power was curtailed as Athens became more democratic, but it retained jurisdiction over homicide and moral questions generally, and commanded great respect because of its antiquity. Under the Romans it increased its general prestige.⁴⁴ Lake and Cadbury give the following account of its power under the Roman regime:

The Areopagus was certainly a very powerful body--the real government of Athens . . . and Athens as a civitas libera et foederata enjoyed considerable local autonomy. . . . During the preceding century it had absorbed prerogatives that other branches of the government had previously held, and it became preeminent above both Βουλή and Ἐκκλησία. The control of religious matters was doubtless the one thing it had always retained even during the period of its least influence. But in the Roman period it had jurisdiction in criminal law of other kinds. Probably Cicero's famous words are not far from the truth when he says (De Natura Deorum ii, 29, 74), "Atheniensium rem publicam consilio regi . . . Areopagi."⁴⁵

.....

The seat of the council in the first century was before the Stoa Basileios [on the Agora]. . . . According to Curtius the Areopagus in the first century was the

⁴²Thayer, op. cit., p. 72.

⁴³Lake and Cadbury, loc. cit.

⁴⁴Bruce, op. cit., p. 333.

⁴⁵Lake and Cadbury, op. cit., p. 213.

chief police commission, and had the power to control the erection of buildings and statues. Probably a subdivision was charged with the duty of keeping order in the Agora. . . . Among the activities of the Agora none would be more important than those of controlling lecturers. . . . Obviously there must have been some control over these lecturers or the scene would have rivaled Babel, and it is extremely probable--though apparently there is no demonstrative evidence--that this control was exercised by the Areopagus. The nearest approach to proof of this is that it was the council which invited Cratippus the peripatetic philosopher to lecture in Athens (Ramsay, *PTRC*, p. 247).⁴⁶

Arguments for the view that Paul addressed the Council of the Areopagus in the Stoa Basileios rather than a crowd on Mars' Hill are, first of all, of a philological nature. It has been asserted (e.g. by Blass) that Attic usage does not allow for the term Ἄρειος πάγος, used alone, to designate anything but the hill. This, however, has been disproved. Ramsay draws attention especially to Cicero, *Att.* i, 14, 5, as proof positive that Ἄρειος πάγος was commonly used as a shortened form in ordinary conversation for ἡ ἐν Ἀρείῳ πάγῳ (or ἐξ Ἀρείου πάγου) βουλή.⁴⁷ The passage reads as follows, "Senatus [i.e., the Roman Senate] Ἄρειος πάγος; nihil constantius, nihil severius, nihil fortius."⁴⁸ Ramsay argues:

Cicero, a stylist and a purist in language, would use no vulgar term. He is a perfect witness that "Areopa-

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 212 f.

⁴⁷ Ramsay, The Bearing of Recent Discovery, p. 103.

⁴⁸ Cicero, Letters to Atticus, in Loeb Classical Library, Latin text with an English translation by E. O. Winstedt (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1912), I, 42.

gus" in educated Athenian conversation was used to mean the Council in the first century B.C.⁴⁹

The following passage from Seneca corroborates the usage (De Tran. 5), "in qua civitate erat Areos pagos, religiosissimum iudicium."⁵⁰

A most important philological argument is to be found in the expressions ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ Ἀρείου πάγου (v. 22) and ἐκ μέσου αὐτῶν (v. 33). Stonehouse shows the cogency of these terms:

The prepositional phrase 'in the midst of' may be used with reference to places as well as persons: Lk. xxi. 28 refers to those who are in the midst of Judea; Mk. vi. 47 to the boat of the disciples as being in the midst of the sea. But it is exceedingly doubtful that a person or group of persons would be described as being in the midst of a hill. On the other hand, Luke repeatedly speaks of persons as being in the midst of other persons (Acts i. 15; ii. 22; iv. 7; xxvii. 21; Lk. ii. 46; xxii. 27, 55; xxiv. 36).⁵¹

Another philological point is that ἐπί with the accusative would be the correct expression for taking someone before an official court, a usage which Luke employs several times, cf. Ac. 9:21; 16:19; 17:6; 18:21; cf. also Herod., ii, 46, 156; viii, 79.⁵²

Further arguments can be adduced from geographical and historical considerations. Ramsay draws attention to the

⁴⁹Ramsay, The Bearing of Recent Discovery, p. 104.

⁵⁰Bruce, loc. cit.

⁵¹Stonehouse, op. cit., p. 14.

⁵²Knowling, op. cit., p. 368.

fact that Mars' Hill, by virtue of its size and terrain, would be a most unsuitable and inconvenient place for public assemblies and speakers. He urges also that there would be an extreme lack of fitness in the Athenians taking this *σπερμολόγος* to harangue them on a spot so inseparably associated with the dignity and glory of their city. Nor is it permissible, he argues, to suppose that a small number of philosophic inquirers retired to this quiet spot for unimpeded discussion. The scene and the speech breathe the spirit of the Agora, the open, free, crowded life of Athens. The speech itself would be an insult or a complete missing of the point if addressed only the philosophers.⁵³ One further item which adds a little support to the Council view is the designation in verse 34 of Dionysius as the Areopagite, a member of the Council, which is most intelligible on the understanding that the Council has been referred to in the preceding context.⁵⁴

Finally, the way in which Council view does full justice all to the data of the text is an argument in support of that view. Since it is most likely that the Council exercised authority over public lecturing, it is most natural that a man regarded in such low esteem by the philosophers as Paul was would sooner or later be compelled to exhibit to

⁵³Ramsay, St. Paul the Traveller, pp. 244 f.

⁵⁴Stonehouse, loc. cit.

the Council his ability as a lecturer and the unobjectionable character of his teaching.⁵⁵ This should by no means be thought of as a formal trial as there is no hint in the text of any legal proceeding, but simply as an examination of his qualifications as a public teacher.⁵⁶

Scholarly opinion has now almost completely accepted the Council view here taken. Among the scholars who take this view are Bruce, Lake and Cadbury, Knowling, Ramsay, and Stonehouse.⁵⁷ The only scholar of note known to this writer as accepting the Mars' Hill view is Dibelius, who does so, however, on the ground that the account is not historical, and the author of Acts would naturally have chosen the most prominent place for portraying his model heathen mission sermon,⁵⁸ a view which this writer cannot accept.

The setting, then, of Paul's speech is laid in a portico of the Agora, where he takes his stand before the distinguished justices of Athens' most revered body. Near him stand the cultured and critical philosophers who have brought him for this examination, and the general crowd of

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Knowling, op. cit., p. 370.

⁵⁷ Bruce, loc. cit.; Lake and Cadbury, op. cit., pp. 212 f.; Knowling, op. cit., pp. 368 ff.; Ramsay, St. Paul the Traveller, pp. 247 ff., The Bearing of Recent Discovery, pp. 103 ff.; Stonehouse, op. cit., pp. 13 ff.

⁵⁸ Martin Dibelius, "Paulus in Athen," Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte, edited by Heinrich Greeven (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951), p. 73.

Athenians and resident foreigners gathered together and mills about the porch, curious to find out what this unusual teacher from the East might have to say.

In regard to the scope of this thesis, the purpose of this study is somewhat other than mere exegesis, though exegesis, of course, is dealt with. It is intended to give the student an insight into Paul's use of the various concepts of Athens, and particularly to determine the manner in which he uses this material and his purpose in so doing. It is a study of Paul's thought, particularly in connection with his use of the various concepts of Athens, and particularly to determine the manner in which he uses this material and his purpose in so doing. It is a study of Paul's thought, particularly in connection with his use of the various concepts of Athens, and particularly to determine the manner in which he uses this material and his purpose in so doing. It is a study of Paul's thought, particularly in connection with his use of the various concepts of Athens, and particularly to determine the manner in which he uses this material and his purpose in so doing.

The thesis will be a verse-by-verse treatment of those verses which are parallel or contrast to Athenian thought. Where necessary exegetical problems have been treated, the material presented from the philosophical sources will be followed by our conclusions as to their meaning in connection with Paul's use of the material and the extent and method of Paul's use of the material they contain. Overall conclusions will be given in Chapter VII.

CHAPTER VI

STUDY OF THE TEXT OF THE SPEECH

In accord with the scope of this thesis, the purpose of this chapter is somewhat other than pure exegesis, though exegetical problems must, of course, be dealt with. It is rather to gauge the content and the extent of Paul's use of the current thought of Athens, and particularly to determine the method in which he uses this material and his purpose in so employing it as a means toward achieving his goal. Toward this end the study will concentrate especially on adducing both parallel and contrasting quotations from philosophical and religious primary sources, particularly from Stoic and Epicurean writers, coupled with an evaluation of how Paul's statements compare with the meaning of these sources. Furthermore, it will be our purpose to show the relevance of the material presented in the preceding chapters to the statements of Paul's speech.

The method will be a verse-by-verse treatment of those items which show parallel or contrast to Athenian thought. After necessary exegetical problems have been treated, the pertinent quotations from the philosophical sources will be adduced, followed by our conclusions as to their meaning in comparison with Paul's, and the extent and method of Paul's use of the ideas they contain. Overall conclusions will be given in Chapter VII.

Before commencing the actual study of the text, it will be useful to make some general observations with regard to Paul's approach, aim, and method, so that the detailed evidence can be seen in the light of its unifying principles.

The overall aim of the speech can be regarded as two-fold in the light of the background described in the previous chapter. First, and by far most important, it was Paul's aim to take the opportunity here given him to address a large and distinguished audience for preaching the gospel. The speech can be regarded in no other light than as a unified, consciously forward-moving proclamation of the act of God in Jesus Christ. Secondly, it was probably Paul's aim to make every effort to be successful in the examination to which he was being subjected, so that the gospel might be vindicated of any unwarranted charge of vulgarity, superstition, or base polytheism, and so that he might be allowed to continue his free discussions at least until his helpers should arrive.

Evidence of conscious accommodation to the Athenian atmosphere is to be found already in the linguistic style of the speech, which exhibits a considerable amount of literary and Attic elements. Lake and Cadbury have catalogued these elements as follows. First of all, the use of the neuters $\acute{\omicron}$. . . $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$ (v. 23), and $\tau\acute{\omicron}$ $\delta\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$ (v. 29; v. 1. in v. 27). Secondly, the use of $\gamma\epsilon'$ or compound particles of $\gamma\epsilon'$ (v. 27, twice). Thirdly, the paronomasia

ζωὴν καὶ πνοὴν (v. 25). Fourthly, the frequent alliteration, particularly with π (e.g., πάντως προσώπου, v. 26; πάντας πανταχοῦ, v. 30; πίστιν παρασχῶν πᾶσιν, v. 31). Fifthly, the accumulation of forms or derivatives of πᾶς, often in connection with alliteration (πᾶσι . . . πνοὴν καὶ τὰ πάντα, v. 25, plus the above examples). Sixthly, the repetition of the participle ὑπάρχων (vv. 24, 27, 29). Seventhly, the idiomatic phrase πίστιν παρέχω, which is not Paul's normal use of πίστις (v. 31).¹

Paul's approach may be outlined in general as follows. He begins by drawing attention to the religious interest of the Athenians as a whole, thereby keying the mood to the proper level (v. 22). He then seizes upon an evidence of the incomplete and inadequate character of their knowledge and worship of God, the altar "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" (v. 23), as a point of departure for proclaiming the true nature of God to them. The next section (vv. 24-9) is basically a criticism of the folly of polytheism and image worship, founded upon an ingenious description of the true personal God as Creator, Preserver, and Lord of History, which is intended to lead into Paul's real goal of presenting God as Judge and Savior (vv. 30 f.). In this section Paul presents

¹Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, Translation and Commentary, in The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I, The Acts of the Apostles, edited by F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1933), IV, 209.

the God of the Old Testament as much as possible in terms of words, concepts, and ideas which were familiar to Athenian philosophical minds, never sacrificing a whit of the true nature of God, but at the same time becoming as much as possible "all things to all men." The final section of the speech (vv. 30 f.) presents the gospel for which Paul has been preparing the ground. The most important elements of the apostolic kerygma are present: repentance, the judgment of God upon sin, Jesus as judge, and the resurrection. In this presentation of the gospel Paul's conscious attempt to meet Athenian hearers is again evident, though once more he sacrifices nothing and does not avoid the great offenses inherent in the gospel, especially the resurrection of the flesh.

It will be observable throughout the study that of all the various philosophical and religious ideas prevalent in Athens, Paul's words accommodate themselves most thoroughly to Stoic thought. The Epicureans come in more for rebuttal than for accommodation, though in cases their ideas are met positively. But this really could not be otherwise, considering the nature of Epicurean mechanism. Max Pohlenz says, "Von den epikureischen Atheisten trennte freilich den Christen eine so tiefe Kluft, dass er auf eine Bekehrung bei ihnen nicht rechnen konnte."² With respect to Greek reli-

²Max Pohlenz, "Paulus und die Stoa," Zeitschrift fuer die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, XLII (1949), 83.

gion, polytheism and image worship are, of course, condemned. But it is important to observe that a considerable portion of Paul's discussion runs head-on into a question that was being asked and debated at the ground roots of all Greek thought of this time, namely the question of the origin of the world, the ultimate cause of everything that happens, and man's relation to that cause. Thus Paul is here attempting to bring the gospel to bear upon the current problems of the particular audience which he is confronting.

δεισιδαιμονεστέρους

An understanding of Paul's intended meaning in his use of this much disputed word is of great importance for interpreting his attitude toward Greek religious aspirations and his method in this address. The etymology of the word is quite clear; it is derived from the verb *δεῖδω* ("to fear"), and the noun *δαίμων*, whose meaning has already been discussed.³

This etymology already offers the possibility of differentiation in opposite directions. As to the first part (*δεῖδω*), "to fear" can mean both "to be afraid of" and "to stand in awe of." As to the second part, *δαίμων* can refer either to the gods or to the lower divinities more compatible with superstition.⁴ The history of the word's usage has

³Supra, pp. 76 ff.

⁴P. Koets, Δεισιδαιμονία, a Contribution to the

been carefully delineated by Koets, who summarizes the results of his investigation as follows:

The original meaning of *δεισιδαιμονία* undoubtedly was 'piety, awe, reverence toward the gods' and no criticism whatever was implied in the word.

This opinion is borne out by the 'usus' of Xenophon⁵ and Aristotle,⁶ where we first meet *δεισιδαίμων* and where it simply means 'god-fearing, pious'.⁷

.....

Examples have been found throughout the whole period of Greek literature of a usage in a favourable sense and besides the significant fact has come to light, that where we find these words used in inscriptions the meaning is always favorable.⁸

Though the favorable sense is found in all periods, the unfavorable sense became the most prominent, as Koets points

Knowledge of the Religious Terminology in Greek (Purmerend: J. Muusses, 1929), pp. 5 f.

⁵Cf. Xenophon, *Agos.* xi, 8, ἀεὶ δὲ δεισιδαίμων ἦν νομίζων τοὺς μὲν καλῶς βιώσας οὕτω εὐδαίμονας, τοὺς δὲ εὐκλεῶς τετελευτηκότας ἤδη μακαρίου; cf. also *Cyr.* iii, 3, 58, *ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1315A, where he says that the subjects of an absolute ruler will be less afraid to be treated unjustly ἐὰν δεισιδαίμονα νομίζωσιν εἶναι τὸν ἀρχόντα καὶ φροντίζεσιν τῶν νέων, *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 98. Cf. the following examples from non-literary sources nearly contemporary with Paul. In an epitaph of the 3rd century A.D. we find the adjective meaning "reverent," *πᾶσι φίλος ἰσχυτοῦς εἰς τ' ἀθανάτου δεισιδαίμων*. In a temple enclosure of the goddess Aphrodite an inscription dating from 39 B.C. reads, *ἄστυλον -- ταύτῳ δικαίῳ ταύτῃ τε δεισιδαιμονία*, James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-Literary Sources (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), p. 139.

out:

Although the idea that *δεισιδαιμονία* is used exclusively in an unfavourable sense since Theophrast is mistaken, it is nevertheless true that the majority of Greek writers, who were mostly 'enlightened' and out of touch with popular religion, used it in that way, to designate those forms of piety which they regarded as ridiculous or exaggerated. But here, once again, we have noticed that there are many shades of meaning and that it is inexact to translate *δεισιδαιμονία* by 'superstition', as it very seldom means that, if we take this word in the modern sense.⁹

Perhaps the best examples of this unfavorable sense can be found in Plutarch's De Superstitione, as for example in the following quotations:

For it is not because these people saw in the heavens anything to find fault with . . . as the result of which they decided against the idea of a God in the universe; but the ridiculous actions and emotions of *δεισιδαιμονίας*, its word and gestures, magic charms and spells, rushing about and beating of drums, impure purifications and dirty sanctifications, barbarous and outlandish penances and mortifications at the shrines. . . (xi, 171A ff.).¹⁰

to see what kind of thoughts the *δεισιδαίμονες* have about the gods; they assume that the gods are rash, faithless, fickle, vengeful, cruel, and easily offended; and, as a result, the superstitious man is bound to hate and hear the gods . . . and yet, though he dreads them, he worships them and sacrifices to them and besieges their shrines. . . (xi, 170D).¹¹

The atheist thinks there are no gods; the *δεισιδαίμων* wishes there were none, but believes in them against his will; for he is afraid not to believe (xi, 170F).¹²

⁹Koets, op. cit., p. 99.

¹⁰Plutarch, Moralia, in Loeb Classical Library, Greek text with an English translation by Frank Cole Babbitt (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1928), II, 490-93.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 488 f.

¹²Ibid., pp. 490 f.

In summary Koets lists the various possible shadings of both the favorable and unfavorable senses as follows: on the favorable side the word can mean "god-fearing," "pious," "awe-struck," or "anxious because of a bad conscience"; on the unfavorable side it can mean "bigot, excessively religious," "superstitious," or "a person who believes the gods are to be feared."¹³ The main inference to be drawn from the usage of the word is that both favorable and unfavorable senses are possible at any stage in Greek literature, and it is not the date of the writing, but the relation of the author to the religion in question which determines the sense in which he uses the word.¹⁴

In regard to Paul's use of the word, it is obvious that he could not avoid any more than Plutarch could a consideration of the polytheistic worship of the Greeks as superstition and falsely directed piety. As Meyer points out, "'Gottesfuerchtig' (*θεοσεβείας*) freilich kann er nicht sagen, denn die Maechte des athenischen Kultus sind ihm keine Goetter, sondern boese Daemonen, ihr Dienst teuflischer Aberglaube."¹⁵ But this does not mean that he is using the word *θεοσεβείας* in that sense here. Since his

¹³Koets, op. cit., p. 106.

¹⁴Lake and Cadbury, op. cit., p. 214.

¹⁵Eduard Meyer, Ursprung und Anfaenge des Christentums (Stuttgart and Berlin: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, c. 1923), III, 95.

purpose is to use the religious aspirations and observations of the Athenians as a point of departure for preaching to them the gospel of the true God, it seems much more satisfactory to conclude that Paul is here underscoring their religiosity rather than their superstition.¹⁶ Knowling seems to have grasped very well Paul's meaning and purpose in using this word when he says:

it is possible that with delicate tact the Apostle made use of a word of doubtful meaning . . . which could not possibly provoke hostility at the outset, while it left unexpressed his own judgment as to the nature of this reverence for the divine 'with kindly ambiguity.'¹⁷

Yet this does not yet exhaust the importance of Paul's use of the word. Stonehouse has developed the idea that, though Paul by no means approved of the Athenian religiosity, he did regard its presence as having positive, and not only negative significance. His discussion is worth quoting at length:

So far as the analysis has proceeded, there is nothing to suggest that Paul acted on the assumption that he need only to supplement what the heathen already knew or to build upon a common foundation. However, the [Paul's] occupation with the religiosity of the Athenians can plausibly be explained as due to reflection upon the nature of man as created in the image of God and as therefore made to respond religiously to the

¹⁶ N. B. Stonehouse, The Areopagus Address (London: The Tyndale Press, 1949), p. 23. Koets, op. cit., p. 25, also prefers the translation "extremely religious" to "very superstitious."

¹⁷ R. J. Knowling, "The Acts of the Apostles," in The Expositor's Greek Testament, edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), II, 371.

Creator. However inadequate and even false the religion of the pagan might be judged to be as a consequence of sin, it would still be a fact of profound significance for the proclamation of the gospel that man retained his fundamental character as a religious being. . . . That the apostle Paul actually held such a view regarding the constitution and nature of man . . . is demonstrated in Romans i. 19 and its immediate context where he teaches that, in addition to and evidently actually prior to the revelation of God with which all men are confronted in nature round about them, there is a revelation of God 'in them.'¹⁸

This interpretation seems to do full justice both to the words in this speech and to the Pauline doctrine of man, and it affords an excellent understanding of the fitness of Paul's methodology in applying the inscription ΑΓΝΩΣΤΩΙ ΘΕΩΙ as he does.

Paul's interest in the Athenian religiosity, understood in Stonehouse's sense, is amply corroborated by v. 23, *διερχόμενος γὰρ καὶ ἀναδεδεῶν τὰ σεβάσματα ἡμῶν*. These words imply an extensive study and investigation (*ἀναδεδεῶν*)¹⁹ of the objects of worship (*σεβάσματα*) of the Athenians, such as could give him justification to say that from every indication (*κατὰ πάντα*)²⁰ they were *ὡς δεσποδαμονεστέρους*. The comparative degree can be understood in two ways, either in an emphatic sense, "very religious," or as a true comparative, "more religious," that is, than the rest of the Greeks. In either case, the idea Paul

¹⁸ Stonehouse, *op. cit.*, pp. 23 f.

¹⁹ Lake and Cadbury, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

²⁰ Knowling, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

apparently wants to convey is that, as religiously inclined as they are, they should be especially anxious to hear of the true God, who as yet has not been revealed to them.

This superabundantly religious nature of the Athenians is mentioned by several ancient writers. For example, Sophocles (O. G. 260), τὰς γ' Ἀθήνας φασὶ θεοσεβειστάτας εἶναι; Pausanias (1, 17, 1), Ἀθηναῖοι . . . θεοὺς εὐσεβοῦσιν ἄλλων πλέον; Josephus (Ap. 11, 2), τοὺς δὲ εὐσεβεστάτους τῶν Ἑλλήνων (cf. Strabo, ix, 1, 16; Livy, xlv, 27).²¹

We conclude, then, that Paul uses the word *θεοσεβειστέρος* in an ambivalent sense, reserving his own judgment until later and at the same time avoiding hostility before he can make his appeal. Furthermore, he recognizes the Athenian religious aspirations to be evidences of a God-implanted interest in the divine, which he intends to employ as a point of departure for bringing these people accurate information about the true God.

ΑΓΝΩΣΤΩΙ ΘΕΩΙ

Scholars who have sought to discredit the authenticity of this speech have found support for their thesis in the fact that though several references to unknown gods are extant, no direct evidence exists for the use of the singu-

²¹F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles (London: The Tyndale Press, 1951), p. 335.

lar, to an unknown god. Some even go so far as to say that, polytheism being what it was, such an altar would have been impossible.²² This, however, does not take full account of all the facts, and there does in fact exist evidence of altars to individual unnamed deities. The sources involved in the whole question are as follows:

1. Pausanias (i, 1, 4) says that on the road from Phalorum to Athens there were *βωμοὶ θεῶν τε ὀνομαζομένων ἀγνώστων καὶ ἥρώων καὶ παίδων τῶν Δησέως καὶ Φαλήρου.*

2. Pausanias (v, 14, 8) says that at Olympia by the great altar of Zeus there were other altars, including an altar "to unknown gods"—*πρὸς αὐτῷ δ' ἔστιν ἀγνώστων θεῶν βωμός, καὶ μετὰ τοῦτον καθαρσιῶν Διός κτλ.*

3. An inscription was published in 1910 from Pergamos in the precinct of Demeter, which probably belongs to the second century A.D. and may be plausibly reconstructed,

ΘΕΟΙΣ Α Γ (νωστός)

ΚΑΤΙ Τ (ων)

ΔΑΔΟΥΧΟ (ς)

But the inscription could also be read, *θεοῖς ἀγνωστός.*

4. Philostratus (Vit. Apol. Tyan. vi, 3, 5) tells the story of a certain Timasion who had left his home to escape

²² Albert Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, translated from the German by William Montgomery (New York: Henry Holt and Company, c.1931), p. 6.

the inconvenient affection of a stepmother, which was like that of Phaedra for Hippolytus. Unlike Hippolytus, however, he had not insulted Aphrodite, but had consistently sacrificed to her. In this respect, said Apollonius, he was wiser than Hippolytus: *καὶ αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ διαβεβλήσθαι πρὸς οὐτινα δὲ τῶν θεῶν, ὥσπερ πρὸς τὴν Ἀφροδίτην ὁ Ἰππόλυτος, οὐκ ἀξίᾳ σωφροσύνης. σωφρονέστερον γὰρ τὸ περὶ πάντων θεῶν εἶδ' λέγειν, καὶ ταῦτα Ἀθῆναι οὐδ' καὶ ἀγνώστων δαιμόνων βωμοὶ ἴδρυνται.*

It should be noted that the phrase *καὶ ταῦτα Ἀθῆναι* means "especially in Athens," and the point of the whole statement is that Hippolytus, who was living in Athens, was peculiarly foolish to insult the gods in a place which was so devoted to them (and they to it) that there were even altars to unknown gods.²³

5. Diogenes Laertius (i, 110) tells how the Athenians during a pestilence sent for the help of Epimenides the Cretan, whose solution was as follows:

He took sheep . . . and brought them to the Areopagus; and there he let them go whither they pleased, instructing those who followed them to mark the spot where each sheep lay down and offer a sacrifice to the local divinity [*τῷ προσηκουτι θεῷ*] Hence even to this day altars may be found in different parts of Attica with no name inscribed upon them [*βωμοὶ ἀνόνομα*], which are memorials of this atonement.²⁴

²³Kirsopp Lake, "The Unknown God," Additional Notes, in The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I, The Acts of the Apostles, edited by F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1933), V, 240 f.

²⁴Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers, in

In assessing the value of this evidence, Lake points out that the first four items show that anonymous altars were well known at Athens, and the Philostratus story suggests that they were unusual elsewhere. However none of these items is evidence for an altar to any one god who was specially called "unknown." On the other hand, the story of Diogenes Laertius suggests that the singular may have been used in the formula τῷ προσήκοντι θεῷ, meaning "to the unknown god who is concerned in this matter." ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ would be a loose but not very inaccurate paraphrase of this.²⁵ Stonehouse correctly points out that this story witnesses to an essentially different type of religious idea than that of the first four items, which show how polytheists might fear that their pantheon was not complete, and that there were additional gods who would be deprived of their rightful service because they remained unknown, unless altars were erected to them. But in the Epimenides story, on a specific occasion sacrifice was offered to a specific, though unknown god, from place to place.²⁶ This is still thoroughly polytheistic, but it witnesses to the kind of piety which might erect an altar to an individual unknown

Loeb Classical Library, Greek text with an English translation by R. D. Hicks (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1925), I, 115-17.

²⁵Lake, op. cit., p. 242.

²⁶Stonehouse, op. cit., pp. 18 f.

god.

It is interesting that some of the Fathers had difficulty with this problem, and Jerome, for example, flatly asserts that Paul changed the plural "gods" to the singular (Comm. Tit. 1, 12).²⁷ It is perhaps most likely that Paul found such an altar as referred to by Diogenes Laertius, and paraphrased it *ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ*, and that Jerome and the other Fathers involved knew only of the altars to unknown gods, and interpreted the passage in reference to those.²⁸

The question must now be broached as to how Paul made use of the significance of the presence of such an altar in that center of religious interest. Stonehouse shows how the existence of such an altar indicated a measure of awareness on the part of the Athenians of the inadequacy of their own religion. He expands this interpretation as follows:

the erection of the altar manifested an acknowledgment on a particular occasion that they had to do with a god not previously worshipped, one whom they had neglected and offended, and whose disfavour had to be appeased, and who, for all that, yet remained unknown. The worship of an unknown god, coming to expression within the framework of polytheism, remains the idolatrous worship of one god among many. But the singular expression of idolatry exhibited by the altar which attracted Paul's special attention, intimating as it did its own defectiveness, provided a starting point for Paul's proclamation of the living God who was unknown to them.²⁹

The method by which Paul uses this inscription as his

²⁷Lake, op. cit., pp. 242 f.

²⁸Ibid., p. 245.

²⁹Stonehouse, op. cit., p. 20.

point of departure is ingenious in that it capitalizes on the admission of religious ignorance which the inscription makes, and takes that admission as a justification for preaching to them the true God, whom they do not know. He says, ὁ οὖν ἀγνοοῦντες εὐσεβεῖτε, τοῦτο ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν (v. 23). By alluding to ΑΓΝΩΣΤΩΙ with ἀγνοοῦντες Paul is virtually reading their public profession of ignorance back upon them as a characterization of their religion. He is in effect saying, "That which you worship, acknowledging openly your ignorance, that I proclaim to you." The ignorance rather than the worship is underscored.³⁰ His intention is to awake in the minds of his hearers the realization, that a religion which confesses that kind of ignorance is surely an incomplete one, and needs correction by means of the truth about God for what He really is.

Not only does Paul characterize the Athenian religion as one of ignorance, but he makes the bold statement that he, whom they regard a σπερμολόγος, is the very one who can supply what is lacking and can give them accurate information about the true God. The ἐγὼ is emphatic; Paul is calling attention to himself. καταγγέλλω picks up the remark of the crowd, that he seemed to be a καταγγελεύς of foreign divinities. At the same time, it, like the ἐγὼ, draws attention to Paul's authority as God's messenger even to

³⁰ Ibid., p. 25.

enlightened Athenians. The word *καταγγέλλω* is used frequently in the Acts and the Pauline Epistles of the official proclamation of the gospel by divinely appointed heralds. The "word of God" is proclaimed by Paul and Barnabas (Ac. 13:5; 15:36; 17:13); "the testimony of God" was proclaimed to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 2:1); "the gospel" is that which is proclaimed by divine appointment (1 Cor. 9:11); "Jesus" (Ac. 4:2; 17:3) and "Christ" (Phil. 1:17 f.; Col. 1:28) likewise sum up the divine message. And the same word is used of the divine proclamation of Christ made beforehand by the prophets (Ac. 3:24; cf. 3:18, 52).³¹ Though such concepts were, of course, foreign to the Athenian audience, it seems a safe conclusion that Paul shows by his choice of these words that he was conscious of his apostolic authority in this speech, an authority not bound up with his character, but with his gospel message. Stonehouse concludes that since Paul here sounds the note of apostolic authority, he cannot be judged as stressing the supposedly common ground between himself and his pagan hearers, but is accenting rather than toning down the antithesis between the pagan religiosity and the Christian religion.³² While this is fundamentally true, the fact still remains that Paul is making every effort to win these people to the gospel, and to at-

³¹ Ibid., p. 30.

³² Ibid., p. 31.

tain that purpose he does in fact present the true God in the language and thought patterns of his audience, and furthermore, he centers the first group of his remarks in areas of thought where the closest correlation between divine truth and pagan thinking occurs. Stonehouse's thesis is true in this, that Paul never sacrifices or tones down the true nature of God, so as to alter his gospel to avoid offending cultured minds. But he makes every effort short of alteration to make his appeal meaningful and effective. These observations will become abundantly clear when verses 24-29 are discussed.

It might be noted in passing that though the Greek mind in general would have been averse to claims of divine authority such as Paul here made, there did exist in Stoicism a trend toward faith in supernatural revelation. This belief was usually confined to revelation through divination and omens, which many Stoics accepted, on the ground that in a pantheistic world, the divine may be revealed in any number of ways and through any number of creatures, all of which partake of divinity.³³ But that such beliefs were expanding at Paul's time can be assumed from the prominent place the doctrine of revelation took in the philosophy of late antiquity. Zeller says, "the Stoic theory of divina-

³³Eduard Zeller, The Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics, translated from the German by Oswald J. Reichel (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), p. 380.

tion leads directly to the Neopythagorean and Neoplatonic doctrine of revelation."³⁴ Similarly, the outlook of mystic and gnostic cults which were growing into prominence at this time might also show a susceptibility toward divine revelations. However, these points should not be stressed in the case of Paul in Athens, though it is conceivable that something of the sort was present.

ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιητὰς τὸν κόσμον

As Paul now undertakes to preach the true God he begins at the one point where he can expect that the heathen mind has made the most valid approaches toward an understanding of that God, namely the area of cosmology. This approach is based on the recognition of God's self-witness in the natural world, to which the natural man has some access, as Paul himself says, "Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made" (Rom. 1:20). This starting point was appropriate also for another reason, to which we have already drawn attention, namely that the question of the nature and origin of the world was a problem of current religious and philosophical interest. The antitheses between Stoic and Epicurean cosmology and the breadth of their implications for each school's

³⁴ Ibid.

interpretation of the goal of life were so sharp and pointed, that they would always have been areas of constant debate, particularly in a philosophical center like Athens. Writings of the general period show this to be the case. For instance, the philosophical debate portrayed in Cicero's De Natura Deorum gives considerable attention to cosmology. The length and detail of Lucretius' De Rerum Natura shows effectively how much alive questions of cosmology were at the time. The same is seen in a work like the De Mundo of Pseudo-Aristotle, which was apparently a product of the first century A.D., and was designed to meet both the philosopher and the less educated man.³⁵ Furthermore, the interest in cosmology of the various religious movements current at that time, such as the worship of Fate and the religious use of astrology, shows that these questions were being asked. It is evident then, that when Paul begins his gospel approach by stepping into the area of cosmology, he is being both contemporary and theologically sound.

Two things must be noted in Paul's cosmological discussion. First of all, he presents the Creator in terms which echo several Old Testament discussions of the matter. But secondly, by the same terms (with certain most significant additions) he enters the thought world of the Greek and

³⁵ Martin Persson Nilsson, Greek Piety, translated from the Swedish by Herbert Jennings Rose (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1948), p. 120.

uses language familiar to him.

The Old Testament background can be seen by comparing several passages in the Septuagint with the phraseology used by Paul in this speech. This is most noticeable in Is. 42:5, οὕτως λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ πηξάσας αὐτόν, ὁ στερεώσας τὴν γῆν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ δίδους πνοὴν τῷ λαῷ τῷ ἐπ' αὐτῆς καὶ πνεῦμα τοῖς πατροῦσιν αὐτήν. Similarities are noticeable also in the Exodus account of the creation in connection with the giving of the Decalogue, Ex. 20:11, ἐν γὰρ ἑξ ἡμέραις ἐποίησεν κύριος τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς. Ps. 145:6 is also similar, τὸν ποιήσαντα τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν, τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς. It is evident then that Paul, consciously or unconsciously, presents the Creator God in terms which have become his own through long years of living in the Scriptures.

At the same time, Paul is by no means talking past the thought-world of his hearers. His phraseology differs considerably, of course, from that which the Greek himself would employ in describing his theories. But this was by design, for Paul had a different view of the Creator to present from the one to which even the most theological Greek would aspire. But at the same time, Paul uses phraseology which would not be so offensive and appear so strange to his audience, that they would immediately close their ears to

him. This applies particularly to the ambiguity of ὁ ποιη-
σας and the addition of τὸν κόσμον.

Before adducing the philosophical parallels involved, it will be useful to examine the Greek concept of creation, so that the parallels can be seen against the proper background. Hermann Sasse gives a useful summary of the Greek idea in general when he says:

der Begriff der Schöpfung im eigentlichen Sinne (→ κτίσις) ist dem griechischen Denken unbekannt. Es kennt nur den Gedanken des Werdens (γένεσις) der Welt -- etwa aus einem Urstoff oder aus dem ἀπειρον -- und den Gedanken, dass das gegebene Gestaltlose durch einen göttlichen "Baumeister" (δημιουργός, ἀρχιτέκτων) zu einem κόσμος geordnet und gebildet wird.³⁶

In Epicurean thought, even this was not acceptable, for, as has been demonstrated,³⁷ both the mechanism of the atomic theory and the Epicurean view of the gods would rule out any thought of a cosmogony based upon the forming and constituting activity of a divine Being. The Epicurean outlook is clearly shown in the following brief statement by Cicero (H. D. xix, 51), "God does nothing, is involved in no occupations, and projects no works."³⁸ Stoic thought, on the other hand, believed firmly in the activity of divine agency in the world's origin, but this was always only a forming

³⁶ Hermann Sasse, "κόσμος," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1935), III, 874.

³⁷ Supra, pp. 34 f., 39 f.

³⁸ Robert Drew Hicks, Stoic and Epicurean (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 290.

and constructing of eternally existing "stuff," and never a creatio ex nihilo. The Stoics posited two ultimate grounds of all being, God and matter, and taught that the world was formed by the one acting upon the other. The Stoic outlook is unmistakable in the following statement of Seneca (Ep. 65, 2):

Our Stoic philosophers, as you know, declare that there are two things in the universe which are the source of everything, --namely cause and matter. Matter lies sluggish, a substance ready for any use, but sure to remain unemployed if no one sets it in motion. Cause, however, by which we mean reason, moulds matter and turns it in whatever direction it will, producing thereby various concrete results. *Causa autem, id est ratio, materiam format. . . .*³⁹

The same viewpoint is presented in different words by Cicero's Stoic (N. D. ii, 30, 75), "providentia deorum mundum et omnes mundi partes et initio constitutas esse. . . ."⁴⁰

The characteristic words used by the Stoics for God in connection with world origin exhibit the same concept. For example, *τοῦτον γὰρ αἰδίον ὄντα διὰ πάσης αὐτῆς [ύλης] δημιουργεῖν ἕκαστα* (Diog. Laert., vii, 134);⁴¹ *εἶναι δὲ τὸν μὲν δημιουργὸν τῶν ὄλων* (Diog. Laert., vii, 147);⁴²

³⁹ Seneca, Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales, in Loeb Classical Library, Latin text with an English translation by Richard M. Gummere (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1925), I, 444 f.

⁴⁰ Cicero, De Natura Deorum, in Loeb Classical Library, Latin text with an English translation by H. Rackham (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1933), p. 196.

⁴¹ Diogenes Laertius, op. cit., II, 238.

⁴² Ibid., p. 251.

artifex mundi (Sen., Ep. 65, 19).⁴³

The significant point for an understanding of the phraseology in Paul's speech is that the Stoics and others also used ποιέω and its cognates to express the activity of God in making the world. The Latin writers used facio in the same way. This usage is found already in Plato, who writes (Tim. 28C), τὸν μὲν οὖν ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντός εὐρεῖν τε ἔργον καὶ εὐρόντα εἰς πάντας ἀδύνατον λέγειν.⁴⁴ But the context of these words shows that in using ποιητὴν he meant the same thing as δημιουργός, which occurs in 28A and 29A.⁴⁵ Turning to Stoic usage, Epictetus uses a form of ποιέω for God's making of the sun (Diss. 1, 14, 10):

and it is He who has created [πεποιηκώς] the sun, which is but a small portion of Himself in comparison with the whole, and causes it to revolve, is He not able to perceive all things?⁴⁶

A form of the same word is used in the sense of "the active principle" in world origin by Diogenes Laertius (vii, 134):

They hold that there are two principles in the universe, the active principle and the passive. The passive principle, then, is a substance without quality, i. e., matter, whereas the active is the reason inherent in

⁴³ Seneca, op. cit., p. 454.

⁴⁴ Bruce, op. cit., p. 336.

⁴⁵ Sasse, loc. cit.

⁴⁶ Epictetus, The Discourses as Reported by Arrian, the Manual, and Fragments, in Loeb Classical Library, Greek text with an English translation by W. A. Oldfather (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1925), I, 102 f.

this substance, that is God [τὸ μὲν οὖν πᾶσχος εἶναι τὴν ἀποικον οὐσίαν τὴν ὅλην, τὸ δὲ ποιῶν τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ λόγον τὸν θεόν].⁴⁷

It is clear in this passage, as it was in the quotation from Plato, that the idea in ποιῶν is that of making in the sense of forming and constructing.

The employment of facio by the Latin Stoics exhibits the same usage. Seneca gives some good examples. In talking about the five "causes" of the universe, he says (Ep. 65, 9):

The agent is God [facientem: hic deus est]; the source, matter; the form, the shape and arrangement of the visible world. The pattern is doubtless the model according to which God has made [fecit] this great and most beautiful creation.⁴⁸

In the same connection, Seneca shows clearly that by facio he means "to act upon matter" (Ep. 65, 23):

All things are made up of matter and of God; God controls matter, which encompasses him and follows him as its guide and leader. And that which creates, in other words, God, is more powerful and precious than matter, which is acted upon by God [Potentius autem est ac pretiosius, quod facit, quod est deus, quam materia patiens dei].⁴⁹

Whether Paul was aware that in using ποιέω of God's creating activity he was using a word which the Greeks themselves used on occasion to express their views of "creation," cannot be definitely determined. If we assume

⁴⁷Diogenes Laertius, op. cit., p. 238.

⁴⁸Seneca, op. cit., pp. 448-51.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 456 f. Cf. also Ep. 65, 12; Cicero, N. D. 1, 8, 20.

that he was, the word would appear a conscious attempt on his part to lead his audience forward with the tender hands of a somewhat familiar mode of expression, rather than shocking them with some word or expression which would leave no doubt that his Creator differed violently from their pantheistic, quasi-personal God. Paul will show before he is finished how personal a God he is proclaiming, but at this point he seems to remain purposely somewhat ambiguous. If, however, he was in fact unaware that his words could easily be understood by the Stoics in their own sense, the effect on the hearers was none the less the same.

Though there must remain some uncertainty about *πολύ-σας*, it can be concluded quite certainly that Paul introduces the word *κόσμος* in a conscious attempt to speak the language of his hearers. It should be noted that the word occurs in none of the Old Testament passages that are here alluded to. In Greek thought, on the other hand, and especially in the Stoic outlook on the universe, the idea of *κόσμος* played a large part. The basic idea of the word in Greek philosophy is summarized by Sasse as follows:

Der *κόσμος* . . . ist zunächst die Ordnung durch welche die Summe der Einzeldinge zu einem Ganzen zusammengefasst wird, also das Welt-system in Sinne der Weltordnung. Dann erst wird *κόσμος* weiter verstanden als das durch jene Ordnung zusammengehaltene Ganze, also die Welt im räumliche Sinne, das Welt-system im Sinne des Weltalls.⁵⁰

⁵⁰Sasse, op. cit., p. 870.

Sasse points out that the Greek concept of *κόσμος* contains several unique features. The *κόσμος* is a unity, which is pervaded by an immanent norm, which orders the several elements into a whole. For the Stoics, this norm was the Logos, which, as has been previously demonstrated, is another name for the Stoic God. Furthermore, in Stoic thought in particular there is a Gesellschaft between the world and man by virtue of the fact that, as Reason pervades the *κόσμος*, so man's rational soul pervades his body.⁵¹ The Stoics laid particular stress upon the fact that the *κόσμος*, thus pervaded by Reason, was an organized, orderly arranged, orderly functioning, and beautiful whole, exhibiting both providential care and beneficent teleology. A few quotations from Stoic sources where the word *κόσμος* is used will point up the nature of their world-view. Chrysippus defines the *κόσμος* as follows (Stob. Ecl. i, 184, 8), *σύστημα ἔξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς καὶ τῶν ἐν τούτοις φύσεων· ἢ τὸ ἐκ θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων σύστημα.*⁵² Similarly in the De Mundo attributed to Aristotle, which, according to Sasse, exhibits here the influence of the Stoic Poseidonius, a similar definition is given, *κόσμος μὲν οὖν ἔστι σύστημα ἔξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς καὶ τῶν ἐν τούτοις περιεχομένων φύσεων. λέγεται δὲ καὶ ἑτέρους κόσμος ἢ τῶν ὅλων*

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 873 f.

⁵²Ibid., p. 879.

τάξις τε καὶ διακόσμησις, ὑπὸ θεῶν τε καὶ διὰ θεῶν φυλαττομένην.⁵³ In stressing the Reason which pervades the κόσμος and makes it a living being, Poseidonius says (Ap. D. L. vii, 139), ὁ κόσμος ζῶον ἔμψυχον καὶ λογικόν.⁵⁴ Marcus Aurelius speaks of the world as κόσμος διατεταγμένον (Mod. iv, 27).⁵⁵

In using this pregnant Greek concept of the world along side his more characteristically Old Testament designation, οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς, Paul appears to be telling his audience, and particularly those of the Stoic bent, "All your observations about the world as you see it are correct. It is planned, orderly, beautiful, providentially governed. And the God I preach is the God who has made it such and preserves it, the God about which you still confess much ignorance (v. 23)." Here is a definite case where Paul employs a concept from the Athenians' store in order to preach more effectively the God of the Old Testament. Paul draws their attention to their own appreciation of the greatness of this world, hence of its Maker, in order to convince them of the folly of supposing that such a God is confined in

⁵³Ibid., p. 872.

⁵⁴Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, edited by Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie (Revised edition; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1925-40), p. 985.

⁵⁵The Communings with Himself of Marcus Aurelius Antonius, in Loeb Classical Library, Greek text with an English translation by G. R. Haines (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1916), p. 82.

temples and in need of human service.

κύριος

The use of this word illustrates the approach of Paul and his choice of phraseology in much the same way that δ ποιέσας does. The Old Testament content of the word is so obvious that it need not be demonstrated, and the idea of the Lord's rule over the heavens and earth is frequent (cf. e.g., Ps. 8; 19:1-7; 50:1-6). But the word was also in use in Greek circles as a designation of the gods, as Foerster points out:

Freilich wird auch das Wort κύριος seit der klassischen Zeit auf die griechischen Goetter angewandt, bis hin in die Kaiserzeit, zuerst als Adj, dann mehr als Subst, und zwar, wenn von den Goettern ausgesagt werden soll, dass sie ueber bestimmte Bereiche verfuegen koennen.⁵⁶

The idea of the gods as lords over definite spheres can be illustrated by a passage like the following from Dion Chrysostom (Or. 37, 11), who calls Poseidon and Helios τὸν μὲν τοῦ πυρὸς κύριον, τὸν δὲ τοῦ ὕδατος.⁵⁷ As one would expect, the word is particularly forceful when applied to Zeus. Thus he is called the Lord of heaven, δ (Boelsaemon) ἔστι παρὰ φοίνιξι κύριος οὐρανοῦ, Ζεὺς δὲ παρ' Ἑλλήσι (Philo of Byblos, FHG III, p. 566 a);⁵⁸ he is like-

⁵⁶ Werner Foerster, "κύριος," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1938), III, 1045 f.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 1046.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

wise called the Lord of all, Ζεὺς ὁ πάντων κύριος (Pind., Isthm. 5, 53).⁵⁹ One further passage is interesting in connection with Paul's words, where it is said of the gods, ἀπάντων τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἑκατεῖς ὄντας κυρίου εἶναι καὶ αὐτοὺς ἔχειν καὶ δοῦναι τοῖς ἄλλοις.⁶⁰ In the specifically Stoic area, Epictetus uses the word κύριος several times in addressing the God of his piety. For example, κύριε ὁ θεός, πῶς μὴ ἀγωνιῶ (Diag. 11, 16, 13; cf. 11, 7, 12; 1, 29, 48).⁶¹

The Greek idea of κύριος used of gods was, of course, not as high a concept as that of the Old Testament. Since the gods were generally regarded to be rulers only over certain limited spheres, and were not regarded as creators or as lords of all reality, the use of κύριος was bound by the same limitations.⁶² But the important thing for understanding Paul's speech is that the word was in use, and Paul's employment of it could convey certain genuine, though limited, impressions about what Paul meant to say, without at the same time arousing hostility.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Eduard Norden, Agnostos Theos (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1923), pp. 358 f.

⁶²Foerster, loc. cit.

οὐκ ἐν χειροποιήτοις ναοῖς κατοικεῖ

With these words Paul turns his discussion to a very contemporary question which was being much debated in first century Stoicism, namely the relation between devotion to images and true knowledge of God.⁶³ The Stoic founder Zeno had been a very explicit opponent of temple and image worship. Diogenes Laertius, in describing Zeno's treatise about the ideal city, says (vii, 33), "he . . . prohibits the building of temples. . . ."⁶⁴ Clement of Alexandria, with the same treatise of Zeno before him, gives a more complete account of his views:

Zeno, the founder of the Stoic sect, in his book The Commonwealth (Ἡ Πολιτεία), says that men ought not to make temples or images, because no apparatus can be worthy of the gods. He does not shrink from writing--to give his actual words: "To build temples there will be no need: for a temple must not be held a thing of good worth or anything holy. Nothing can be of good worth or holy which is the work of builders and mechanics."⁶⁵

But, as we have previously shown,⁶⁶ Stoics as a whole were concerned with finding some way to balance their beliefs

⁶³Gottlob Schrenk, "Urchristliche Missionspredigt im 1. Jahrhundert," Studien zu Paulus (Zuerich: Zwingli-Verlag, c.1954), p. 138.

⁶⁴Diogenes Laertius, op. cit., p. 145.

⁶⁵Hawyn Robert Bevan, Later Greek Religion (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons Limited; New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1927), p. 8. Cf. also Plut., Sto. Rep. vi, 1.

⁶⁶Supra, pp. 26 f.

with the popular religion. Schrenk says:

Seit Panaitios von Rhodos (2. Jahrhundert) suchte man beides theologisch auszugleichen. Poseidonios sah in der Betrachtung der Werke der Schoepfung die unmittelbare Quelle der Gotteserkenntnis. . . . Dion von Prusa, der einige Jahrzehnten nach Paulus seine Olympische Rede schrieb, folgte dem Poseidonios, liess jedoch trotz dieser von ihm vertretenen Gotteserkenntnis aus der Natur den Bilderdienst durch symbolische Deutung bestehen.⁶⁷

Seneca, on the other hand, was a vocal as Zeno in his criticism of the value of temple building and worship. He says, "the whole world is the temple of the gods, and, indeed the only one worthy of their majesty and grandeur. . ."

(Benef. vii, 7, 3).⁶⁸ And again, "Temples are not to be built to God of stones piled on high. . . ."⁶⁹ Schrenk sums up the state of the question in the first century as follows:

Paulus weiss also, dass er Philosophen vor sich hat, die sehr schoen von jener Gotteserkenntnis reden koennen und sogar eine vergeistigte Gottesauffassung mit monotheistischer Tendenz verfolgen, dann aber doch wieder bedenklichen Kompromisz der Idolatrie Vorschub leisten.⁷⁰

The situation, then, which Paul's words here would have created may be summarized as follows. To the popular crowd, which was to a greater or lesser degree still subservient to

⁶⁷Schrenk, loc. cit.

⁶⁸Seneca, Moral Essays, in Loeb Classical Library, Latin text with an English translation by John W. Basore (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1935), III, 473.

⁶⁹Knowling, op. cit., p. 376.

⁷⁰Schrenk, loc. cit.

the polytheistic spirit, his words would have come as a rebuke based upon the nature of the true God, who was too great for any such confinement to a man-made temple. To the Stoics and to others who also thought with the higher Greek minds,⁷¹ Paul's words would have expressed a conviction which they themselves basically held, with the result that their reaction toward him would have moved in this instance in a favorable direction. At the same time, because Stoicism, and for that matter Greek thought as a whole, never really threw out completely a polytheistic or a polydemonistic outlook Paul's words would have been a rebuke also to them. But they probably would not have become aware that they were being rebuked until Paul later called them to repentance in unmistakable words. The Epicureans, with their idea of the gods, would also have been in basic agreement with Paul's words at this point, though they too were not prone actually to overthrow the popular faith, but on the contrary found certain values in it. It might be noted also that, as well as this statement of Paul fits into the thought world of his hearers, it represents again a fundamentally Old Testament outlook. (cf. 1 Kg. 8:27; also Ac. 7:48).

⁷¹For a fine example of this thinking outside of Stoic circles, cf. Euripides, frag. 986, ποῖος δ' ἄν οἶκος τεκτόνων πλασθεὶς ὑπὸ δέμας τὸ δεῖον περιβάλοι τοίχων πτυχαῖς; Bruce, loc. cit.

οὐδ' ὑπὸ χειρῶν ἀνθρώπων θεραπεύεται
προσδεόμενός τινος

This statement seems to be the one most fitted of any in the entire speech to both Stoic and Epicurean thought, and, for that matter, higher Greek thought as a whole. Norden shows how basic the idea had to be to the whole genius of Stoic thinking:

Die Stoa, die sogar ihren Weisen als ἀπροσδεῖν und αὐτάδεα zu praedizierten liebte, sprach so erst recht von ihrem Gott (vgl. Chrysippus bei Plut. de Stoic. rep. 39 p. 1052D; ἀπροσδεῖς ἄλλως ὁ θεός Plut. comp. Aristid. et Cat. 4).⁷²

Probably the most extensive Stoic statement of this thought, which reflects at the same time other ideas which Paul makes use of, is found in Seneca (Ep. 95, 47 ff.):

Precepts are commonly given as to how the gods should be worshipped. But let us forbid lamps to be lighted on the Sabbath, since the gods do not need light, neither do men take pleasure in soot. Let us forbid men to offer morning salutation and to throng the doors of temples; mortal ambitions are attracted by such ceremonies, but God is worshipped by those who truly know Him. Let us forbid bringing towels and flesh-scrapers to Jupiter, and proffering mirrors to Juno; for God seeks no servants. Of course not; he himself does service to mankind, everywhere and to all he is at hand to help [non quaerit ministros Deus. Quidni? Ipse humano generi ministrat, ubique et omnibus praesto est]. Although a man hear what limit he should observe in sacrifice, and how far he should recoil from burdensome superstitions, he will never make sufficient progress until he has conceived a right idea of God, -- regarding Him as one who possesses all things, and allots all things, and bestows them without price

⁷² Norden, op. cit., p. 14.

[omnia habentem, omnia tribuentem, beneficium gratis].⁷³

Norden points out further how fully the phraseology of Paul's speech accommodates itself to the Stoic approach:

Gerade die Wahl des Kompositums *προδεδότα* war dabei ueblich: ein Pythagoreer, der sog. Onatas, faehrt, nachdem er Gott stoisch definiert hat, so fort (Stob. ecl. I 1, 39, vol. 1 49, 20 W): *τοιαῦτα δὲ εὐσεῖς οὐδενὸς προδεδότα*.⁷⁴

Epicurean sources show just as definite convictions on this point. Lucretius says (ii, 650), "itself [the nature of divinity] mighty by its own resources, needing us not at all, it is neither propitiated with services nor touched by wrath."⁷⁵ The following passage also illustrates how the Epicurean view on this matter is founded upon its theology (v. 165), "For what largess of beneficence could our gratitude bestow upon beings immortal and blessed, that they should attempt to effect anything for our sakes?"⁷⁶ The Epicureans, however, did not on the basis of this belief shun or attempt to destroy the popular religion, but retained a tolerant attitude toward it even though they were aware of its fallacies, as the following statement of Philodemus shows (Us., 386, 11-14):

⁷³Seneca, Ad Lucillum Epistulae Morales, III, 87-9.

⁷⁴Norden, loc. cit.

⁷⁵Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, in Loeb Classical Library, Latin text with an English translation by W. H. D. Rouse (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1924), p. 131.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 351.

Let this much be said also now, that the divine being stands in no need of worship but it is natural for us to worship him above all with pious thoughts and next in importance by the rites handed down by our fathers for each of the gods respectively.⁷⁷

A few further items will illustrate how common the idea expressed in Paul's statement was in other areas of Greek thought. Plato, for instance, uses language very similar to that of Paul when he says of the world as that which has become God, that it is a being *αὐταρκής καὶ οὐδενὸς ἑτέρου προσδεόμενον* (Tim. 33D, 34B).⁷⁸ The Sophist Antiphon says of the deity (Alethia 98), *οὐδενὸς δεῖται οὐδὲ προσδέχεται οὐδενὸς τι, ἀλλ' ἄπειρος καὶ ἀδέητος*.⁷⁹ Euripides uses similar words in expressing a very strong conviction (Herc. 1346), *δεῖται γὰρ ὁ θεός, εἴτερον ἔστι ἄρδῶς θεός, οὐδενός*.⁸⁰

The fitness of Paul's statement here is so complete, that Dibelius argues that his idea is not to be found in the Old or New Testament, but is strictly Hellenistic-Judaic and Stoic.⁸¹ While it is true that the idea is never stated in so many words in the Scripture, it is such a natural and

⁷⁷ Norman Wentworth DeWitt, Epicurus and his Philosophy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), p. 261.

⁷⁸ Norden, loc. cit.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

⁸¹ Martin Dibelius, "Paulus auf dem Areopag," Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, c.1951), p. 44.

valid inference from the Scriptural picture of the transcendence of God, that it can hardly be regarded as non-Biblical.

Schrenk says against Dibolius:

Dasz Gott nichts bedarf, sondern uns alles gibt, das ist gewisz keine Haeresie, die der Verkuendiger auf dem Missionsgebiet nicht aussprechen duerfte, auch wenn er sich da sehr nahe mit der Stoa berueht. Sagt nicht mit anderen Worten auch Psalm 50, 10 ff., dasz Gott die Tieropfer nicht brauche, da der ganze Erdkreis ihm gehoert?⁸²

This is surely sufficient refutation, nonetheless it is true that Paul here steps very much in the direction of his audience's ideas in order to bring them, ultimately, to a realization of their ignorance and sin in respect to their worship of God.

θεοῦ πασι ζῶν καὶ πνοῦν καὶ τὰ πάντα

This clause is a case where Paul has used fundamentally Old Testament ideas, yet has employed terms which would have struck several responsive cords in the Stoic mind, at the same time rebuking an idea in Epicureanism which was utterly incompatible with the Christian conception of God. It is significant that Paul is again meeting head-on a question which was always controversial and thus always contemporary, namely, the question of providence.

The Old Testament background may be observed in several passages already referred to, especially Is. 42:5 and 1 Kg. 8:27. The hendiadys *ζῶν καὶ πνοῦν* is found especially

⁸²Schrenk, op. cit., p. 139.

in the creation account itself, Gen. 2:7, ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς, καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν (cf. also Prov. 24:12; Sir. 30:29; 2 Mac. 3:31; 7:9).

Stoic sources offer several fine parallels to the idea that God made the world and everything in it for the sake of men, and that He continues to preserve it. Chrysippus says (von Arnim, *II*, frag. 1131), "In the beginning the world was made for the sake of gods and of men, and all things in it have been prepared and brought to light for the good of men."⁸³ Cicero gives a further explication of Chrysippus' views in the following passage (*Fin.* *iii*, 20, 67):

For Chrysippus well said, that all other things were created for the sake of men and gods, but that these exist for their own mutual fellowship and society, so that men can make use of beasts for their own purposes without injustice.⁸⁴

Statements of a similar ring can be found also in Epictetus, for example (*Diss.* *iv*, 7), "God made all things in the world and the world itself, unrestrained and perfect, and all its parts for the use of the whole."⁸⁵ Again, "God hath constituted every other animal, one to be eaten, another to serve

⁸³Bevan, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁸⁴Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, in *Loeb Classical Library*, Latin text with an English translation by H. Rackham (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1931), pp. 286 f.

⁸⁵Ulysses G. B. Pierce, editor, *The Creed of Epictetus as Contained in the Discourses, Manual and Fragments* (Boston: The Beacon Press, c.1916), p. 19.

for tilling the land, another to yield cheese, another for some kindred use. . ." (Diss. 1, 6).⁸⁶

Epicurean sources offer exactly the opposite idea.

Lucretius is very caustic in his criticism of the believer in Providence when he says (v, 156):

To say further that for men's sake they [the gods] had the will to prepare the glorious structure of the universe, and that therefore it is fitting to praise it as an admirable work of the gods . . . is the act of a fool.⁸⁷

This passage is enough to illustrate the extreme difficulty with which Paul was confronted in attempting to bring Christ to such thinkers. The fundamental Epicurean presuppositions of mechanism and an intra-mundal polytheism come out clearly as the cause behind the Epicurean rejection of providence in the following passage from Lucretius (ii, 1090):

nature is seen to be free at once and rid of proud masters, herself doing all by herself of her own accord, and having not part nor lot in the gods. For I appeal to the holy hearts of the gods, which in tranquil peace pass untroubled days and a life serene: who is strong enough to rule the sun, who to hold in hand and control the mighty bridle of the unfathomable deep. . . .⁸⁸

The individual words *ζωήν* and *προήν* offer additional evidence of a conscious effort on Paul's part to speak in terms which were meaningful to the Stoic in particular. The idea of Zeus (for the Stoics another name for their God) as

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Lucretius, op. cit., p. 351.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 16. Cf. Plut., Flac. 1, 7, 7-10; 11, 3, 2.

the giver of all life is a consistent theme in Stoic allegorical interpretations of the traditional polytheism, and is found also in Plato. This passage in Plato shows clearly the foundation upon which such allegorizing was done

(Cratylus 396):

the name of Zeus is exactly like a sentence; we divide it into two parts, and some of us use one part, others the other; for some call him Zena ($Z\eta\nu\alpha$), and others Dia ($\Delta\acute{\iota}\alpha$); but the two in combination express the nature of the god. . . . For certainly no one is so much the author of life ($\zeta\eta\nu$) for us and all others as the ruler and king of all. Thus this god is correctly named through whom ($\delta\acute{\iota}\delta\omicron\nu$) all living beings have the gift of life ($\zeta\eta\nu$).⁸⁹

Diogenes Laertius takes up the same etymological argument in a passage in which he describes the various allegorical applications the Stoics make (vii, 147), "They give the name Dia ($\Delta\acute{\iota}\alpha$) because all things are due to ($\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha$) him; Zeus ($Z\eta\nu\alpha$) in so far as he is the cause of life ($\zeta\eta\nu$) or pervades all life. . . ." ⁹⁰ Some scholars have felt that the use of $\zeta\omega\eta\nu$ and $\zeta\omega\mu\epsilon\nu$ in this speech is a conscious allusion to this common etymological interpretation of the name of Zeus. Lake and Cadbury point out that also in verse 28 Zeus was the original theme both of Aratus and Epimenides, who apparently are being quoted by Paul, and that in the latter the word $\zeta\omega\mu\epsilon\nu$ is a play on that name. The argument

⁸⁹ Plato, "Cratylus," in Loeb Classical Library, Greek text with an English translation by H. N. Fowler (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1926), VI, 49.

⁹⁰ Diogenes Laertius, op. cit., II, 251-3.

is, how can Zeus be dead as the lying Cretans affirmed since his very name means "living," and our life depends on his living.⁹¹ Whether this conjecture can be maintained with any conviction is, of course, uncertain, but that Paul is conscious of here using a word which would have had strong overtones for his hearers can be affirmed with considerable certainty.

The use of the Old Testament colored $\pi\nu\omicron\zeta\upsilon$ would most probably have brought to the minds of the Stoics there present the overtones of their concept of $\pi\nu\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\mu\alpha$. The word was in common use as one of the several designations for the Stoic God. Zeno said, "God is a kind of air or breath (pneuma) interpenetrating even things ugly and loathsome."⁹² And this all-pervading $\pi\nu\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\mu\alpha$ was connected to some extent with the power of life in living creatures. Bevan says:

By means of this pervading pneuma the whole process of the world, the movement of each individual thing, was governed by Divine providence according to the predestined plan. The order of nature by which animals and plants reproduced their kind according to fixed types was due to this pneuma working in each kind as the specific spermatikos logos of that kind. . . .⁹³

Zeno, furthermore, called the soul of man a $\pi\nu\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\mu\alpha \acute{\epsilon}\nu\delta\epsilon\rho\mu\acute{\omicron}\nu$.⁹⁴ Obviously here there is little question of a con-

⁹¹Lake and Cadbury, op. cit., p. 215. Cf. our discussion of the Epimenides passage, infra, pp. 151 ff.

⁹²Bevan, op. cit., p. 2.

⁹³Ibid., p. xv.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 5.

scious accomodation on Paul's part in the use of $\pi\nu\omicron\gamma\acute{\nu}$. But the verbal similarity to a pregnant Stoic concept may have played a minor part in their attitude toward Paul's message. Dibelius calls attention to one further parallel to Paul's words from an extra-philosophical source, "Man koennte auch an den orphischen Zeushymnus denken Fragmt. 21a (Kern) v. 5: ΖΕὺς πνοίῃ πάντων · Ζεὺς ἀκαμάτου πνοὸς ἑμῆ.⁹⁵

To summarize our conclusions on the clause as a whole, Paul here uses an Old Testament concept in basically Old Testament terms, but both the language and concept are such that the Stoic would be inclined to nod his head in approval. Items of smaller importance also, like the addition of τὰ πάντα, which occurs in none of the Old Testament passages involved, strengthen the conclusion that Paul is consciously accomodating his language as much as he can without sacrificing any truth which he wishes to proclaim.

ἔποιήσεν τε ἐξ ἑνὸς πᾶν ἕνδος ἀνθρώπων

In introducing the idea of the single origin of all the

⁹⁵Dibelius, *op. cit.*, p. 45, n. 3. Cf. also the similarity in language and thought of the following excerpt from the Greek magical papyri (*Papyri Graecae Magicae*, ed. Preisendanz, xii, 288 ff.), "Come to me, thou from the four winds, almighty God, who didst breathe spirits into men that they should live, Master of the fair things in the universe . . . the sky is thy head, the ether thy body, the earth thy feet, and the water about thee is the Ocean, O Good Daimon. Thou art the Lord who begettest and nuturest and givest increase to all things," Nilsson, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

racés of men from a single ancestor, based obviously on the account in Genesis, Paul is making use also of a strong conviction of Stoic philosophy, which, according to Zeller, was unique in Greek thought.⁹⁶ Several references from Seneca which illustrate this have already been quoted in Chapter II; to these the following can be added. Seneca states the Stoic view very clearly when he says (Ep. 95, 52):

all that you behold, that which comprises both god and man, is one--we are the parts of one great body. Nature produced us related to one another, since she created us from the same source and to the same end [Natura nos cognatos edidit, cum ex isdem et in eadem gigneret].⁹⁷

Marcus Aurelius expresses the same belief (xii, 30):

There is one common Substance, even though it be broken up into countless bodies individually characterized. There is one Soul, though it be broken up among countless natures and with individual limitations.⁹⁸

This Stoic idea was closely connected to the one to which Paul refers in the Aratus quotation in verse 28, namely that men are all the offspring of God. Further explication of the Stoic view will be given in that connection.⁹⁹

Epicurus, on the other hand, rejected the idea of the single origin and natural relationship of all men, as Epictetus points out, Οὗτος καὶ Ἐπικουροῦς, ὅταν ἀναστῆ

⁹⁶ Zeller, op. cit., p. 21.

⁹⁷ Seneca, Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales, III, 91.

⁹⁸ The Communings with Himself of Marcus Aurelius Antonius, p. 339.

⁹⁹ Infra, pp. 159 f.

δέλη τὴν φυσικὴν κοινωνίαν ἀνθρώποις πρὸς ἀλλήλους.

. . .¹⁰⁰ The Epicurean view was that men, like all other living things, were the products of the earth. In a sense this was a single origin, and the earth is even somewhat personalized and called the mother of all, but for the Epicureans this has no relationship to any god whatsoever, and is simply a picturesque way of describing the unordered development of atomic collision and cluster. Lucretius says (ii, 991 ff):

we are all sprung from celestial seed; all have the same father, from whom our fostering mother earth receives liquid drops of water, and then teeming brings forth bright corn and luxuriant trees, and the race of mankind, brings forth all the generations of wild beasts . . . wherefore she has with reason obtained the name of mother.¹⁰¹

It is symptomatic of the Epicureans outlook that the origin of crude beasts and of man is the same, and the latter has no superadded rational divine spark as in Stoicism.

Bruce calls attention to a further aspect of the relation of Paul's statement here to Athenian feeling. He says:

The Athenians prided themselves on being *αὐτόχθονος*, sprung from the soil of their native Attica (a claim which simply means that they belonged to the earliest of Greek immigration into the land, so early that, unlike the later arrivals, the Achaeans and Dorians, they had lost all memory of their immigration). So the Greeks in general considered themselves superior to non-Greeks, whom they called barbarians. Against such claims to racial superiority Paul asserts the

¹⁰⁰Epictetus, op. cit., I, 372.

¹⁰¹Lucretius, op. cit., pp. 155-7.

unity of all men.¹⁰²

The direction in which Paul is moving must be kept in view in order to gauge the significance of his use of the idea under consideration. His argument seems to proceed along the following lines: God made all men and set them in their appointed times and places, basically with the intention that they should seek after Him. To make that possible He remained close to them, giving witness of Himself, so that men could recognize that He was their father. They did indeed recognize this (Aratus), yet they pictured the Lord of heaven and earth by man-devised and man-constructed images, and even the wise among them tolerated such idolatry. Therefore now is the hour to repent, etc. It appears then, that Paul is at the present point introducing one of several ideas by which he intends to lead his Stoic hearers to the realization of their need for repentance by building on beliefs which they themselves held, expressing at the same time genuine Christian truths. Thus he touches successively on the single origin of all men, the providential rule of God in history, the immanent presence of God, and His divine paternity of the entire human race. At the same time his words are a reasoned argument against the fallacies of Epicurean mechanism and popular conceptions, both of which are rebuked in the words under consideration. Paul's ap-

¹⁰²Bruce, op. cit., pp. 336 f.

proach at this point may be described then as one which uses valid and semi-valid ideas held by his audience and at the same time rebukes rationally such ideas as violently militate against Christianity. He employs both methods toward the single goal that his hearers see their sin and ignorance and repent.

ἔποίησεν . . . κατοικεῖν . . . ζητεῖν

There is something of an exegetical problem in the relation of the two infinitives to ἔποίησεν and to each other. They would at first appear to be coordinate infinitives of purpose, each expressing one purpose for which God made man. However, the absence of any coordinating connectives before ζητεῖν, and the unsatisfying sense which coordination gives seem to militate against this simple solution. Sensewise, κατοικεῖν appears to be subordinate to ζητεῖν: God made men basically to seek Him, and toward that end He gave witness of Himself by demonstrating His governance of world history. Pohlenz insists on connecting the two verses by such a subordination:

Paulus gar nicht von der Erschaffung des Menschen oder von seiner Ansiedlung auf Erden an sich spricht, sondern von dem Zweck, zu dem ihn Gott erschaffen hat. Er sagt ja nicht einfach ἔποίησεν (κατοικεῖν), sondern ἔποίησεν (κατοικεῖν) ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν.¹⁰³

This seems to do the fullest justice both to the language

¹⁰³Pohlenz, op. cit., p. 84.

and to the sense of the text.

ἄριστος προσηταμένους καιρούς

The word *καιρούς* presents a serious interpretive problem, as does *ἰσχυρίας* in the next clause, to a lesser extent. *καιρός* could be used either in the sense of the recurring seasons of the year, as in 14:17, *καιρούς καρποφόρους*, or in the sense of the appointed periods of existence and power of individual nations in God's sovereignty over history, as in Luke 21:24, *ἄχρι οὗ πληρωθῶσιν καιροὶ ἔθνων*. The problem has been brought to the fore by the insistence of Dibelius that the former must be the interpretation, and that the next clause must refer to man's being placed on the habitable zones of the earth, and not to his being placed within national boundaries. He uses this interpretation as evidence for his theory that this is not a speech of the Old Testament-grounded Paul but of a philosophically minded Hellenistic composer. His argument is as follows:

Dieses Verstaendnis aber ergibt sich nur bei der philosophischen, nicht bei der geschichtlichen Interpretation des Motivs. Denn die politischen Staatsgrenzen, auf die es der geschichtlichen Erklarung ankommen wuerde, sind kein Gottesbeweis. Wohl aber ist die sinnvolle Gruppierung der Menschen auf der bewohnbaren Bodenflaeche ein Beweis fuer die Existenz einer Vorsehung. Der Ablauf der Voelkererepochen wird zwar von der Apokalyptik als Offenbarung der goettlichen Macht angesehen; ein rationaler Gottesbeweis aber ist die Folge von Nationen keineswegs, denn sie bleibt raetselvoll und dunkel. . . . Dagegen sind die Jahreszeiten

ein oft angeführter Beweis fuer Gottes Weltregierung.¹⁰⁴

Most commentators have taken the opposite view, and most modern essayists have rejected Dibelius' argument. Eltester, it is true, accepts in general Dibelius' view that *καιρός* refers to the natural times of the year, but he rejects his theory of *ὁριζιάς* as the habitable zones of the earth.¹⁰⁵ Pohlenz claims that it is impossible for *καιρός* standing absolutely to mean "Jahreszeiten" and that no reader of the speech could understand it in this sense without Dibelius' commentary.¹⁰⁶ Schrenk likewise rejects Dibelius' theory on the ground that the emphasis here is on *ἔθνος*, every race of man, and not on humanity considered as a whole (as Dibelius interprets it, contrary to the grammar of the text). Thus also the expressions *οὐρίας* *πρωτῆς τεταμένους καιρός* and *τὰς ὁριζιάς τῆς κατοικίας* must be interpreted as referring to nations considered as individual.¹⁰⁷ Bruce also prefers the sense of divinely appointed periods, arguing on the basis of frequent occurrences of that idea in Paul's letters. The word *καιρός* is thus used in 1 Th. 5:1; Ep. 1:9; and the same idea is ex-

¹⁰⁴ Dibelius, op. cit., p. 35.

¹⁰⁵ Walther Eltester, "Gott und die Natur in der Areopage," Neutestamentliche Studien fuer Rudolf Bultmann (Berlin: Alfred Toepelmann, 1954), pp. 205 ff.

¹⁰⁶ Pohlenz, op. cit., pp. 86 f.

¹⁰⁷ Schrenk, op. cit., p. 140.

pressed in different words in Rom. 11:25; Gal. 4:4; Ep. 3:9.¹⁰⁸ Knowling, Lake, and Cadbury prefer the same interpretation.¹⁰⁹

The arguments of these latter commentators seem much stronger to this writer than those of Dibelius, however, the evidence seems inadequate for an absolute conclusion. But in either case, the statement of Paul would remind the Stoic of his doctrine of Providence, and he would feel that Paul was talking his language. Paul was, no doubt, aware of this, and was consciously leading the Stoics in his direction by way of their own familiar pathways.

In addition to Stoic statements on Providence already quoted in Chapter II, one might be added in line with each of the above interpretations of Paul's words. The following items from Cicero express the idea which Dibelius sees in this passage (N. D. 11, 7, 19):

Again, consider the sympathetic agreement, interconnection and affinity of things: whom will this not compel to approve the truth of what I say? Would it be possible for the earth at one definite time to be gay with flowers and then in turn all bare and stark, or for the spontaneous transformation of so many things about us to signal the approach and the retirement of the sun at the summer and the winter solstices. . . . These processes and this musical harmony of all the parts of the world assuredly could not go on were they not maintained in unison by a single divine and all-pervading spirit.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸Bruce, op. cit., p. 337.

¹⁰⁹Knowling, op. cit., p. 374; Lake and Cadbury, op. cit., p. 216.

¹¹⁰Cicero, De Natura Deorum, p. 143.

The next quotation does not exactly fit the idea of God's rule over the destinies of nations in history, but it is excellent evidence on the private level (where most Stoic thought centered) of the kind of thinking that would resemble what Paul says. Epictetus says (Manual xvii):

Remember that thou art an actor in a play, of such a part as it may please the Director to assign thee; of a short part, if He choose a short part; of a long one, if He choose a long one. And if He will have thee take the part of a poor man or a cripple, or of a governor, or a private person, Mayest thou act that part with grace! For thine it is to act well the allotted part, but to choose it is Another's.¹¹¹

Paul's words would also have called the attention of the Athenians as a whole to the bitter truthfulness of this statement with respect to the history of their own city. Any thinking Athenian of the first century would have been fully aware that the glory that was Athens was gone forever. In both culture and political power the golden age was unrepeatable and he was living merely in the afterglow. A feeling of painful humiliation must have touched many of these Athenians as they recognized that this *σπερμιολόγος* had spoken the truth.

To the Epicureans in the audience, Paul must have intended these words as a pointed rebuke. Norman DeWitt, a contemporary expert on Epicurean thought, has the following impressions of what this scene must have been like:

These words were uttered in the hall of the Court of

¹¹¹Pierce, op. cit., pp. 158 f.

the Areopagus in Athens, and, when Paul uttered them, there can be little doubt that his gaze was directed straight into the faces of the mocking Epicurean philosophers. . . . they had learned from the master that the Trojan war, for example, was 'an accident of time, place, and persons,' that history was the struggle for existence, and civilization the evolution of the unintended.¹¹²

The Epicureans also rejected, of course, the idea that the gods had anything to do with the seasons of the year. Diogenes Laertius states their theory as follows (x, 76):

we are bound to believe that in the sky revolutions, solstices, eclipses, risings and settings, and the like, take place without the ministrations or command, either now or in the future, of any being who at the same time enjoys perfect bliss along with immortality.¹¹³

Paul's conception of history would likewise come as a strong rebuttal to those who were convinced of the fickleness of Tyche in the affairs of men. The statements of Pliny and Polybius given previously¹¹⁴ show vividly the contrast.

θεοθεσίας τῆς κατοικίας

For the same reasons as given above, it seems most natural to take this also as an expression of God's sovereignty over history, with the meaning that it is He who sets the individual nations within the boundaries which separate them from other nations. Natural boundaries, such as seas,

¹¹²Norman Wentworth DeWitt, St. Paul and Epicurus (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, c.1954), p. 182.

¹¹³Diogenes Laertius, op. cit., II, 607.

¹¹⁴Supra, pp. 47 f.

rivers, mountains, etc. are probably primarily in view. At the same time, the influence which such natural barriers and habitats have upon the morale and culture of the peoples is probably also to be included in the thinking of the apostle.¹¹⁵

Dibelius' view of these words has been introduced previously, and can be given in detail at this point. He urges that it was a common idea in Greek thought that there were five zones of the earth, only two of which are habitable.

He continues:

es wird auch dankbar und zum Preis der Gottheit vermerkt, dass die beiden Zonen, die von Menschen besiedelt werden, die unsere und die entsprechende suedliche, sich von der tropischen und den beiden arktischen Zonen vorteilhaft unterscheiden. In diesem Sinn hat Cicero den Gedanken von den menschlichen Siedlungszonen im Gottesbeweis des ersten Buchs der Tuskulanen vorge-
tragen. . . .¹¹⁶

It must be borne in mind that Dibelius is interested in proving the non-Biblical character of this portion of the speech. Considered objectively though, the words of Paul, in the light of the first words of this verse, seem much closer to the Old Testament idea expressed by a passage like Dt. 32:8, *ὅτι διεμέριζεν ὁ ὑψίστος ἔθνη, ὡς διέσπερεν υἱοὺς Ἀδάμ, ἔστησεν ὅρα ἐθνῶν κατὰ ἀσινὸν ἀγγέλων θεοῦ.*

The clause under consideration may be regarded in the

¹¹⁵ Knowling, loc. cit.

¹¹⁶ Dibelius, op. cit., p. 33.

same light as the preceding as far as its relation to the philosophy and religious thought of Athens.

ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν

This concept shows again a fundamentally Old Testament basis. Norden admits, "Die Vorstellung, dass der Mensch Gott 'suchen' soll und ihn 'findet,' is freilich auch dem A.T. ganz geläufig. . . ."117 For example, Is. 65:1, ἐμφανῆς ἐγενήθη τῷ ἐμὲ μὴ ἐπερωτῶσιν, εὐρέθη τῷ ἐμὲ μὴ ζητοῦσιν. εἶπα ἰδοὺ εἰμὶ, τῷ εἶπεν οὐκ ἐκάλεσάν μου τὸ ὄνομα; AMOS 5:6, ἐκζητήσατε τὸν κύριον καὶ ζήσατε; Is. 55:6, ζητήσατε τὸν κύριον καὶ ἐν τῷ εὐρίσκειν αὐτὸν ἐπικαλεῖσθε (cf. Deut. 4:29; Ps. 14:2).

Dibelius argues that the Old Testament and Greek ideas of seeking God are considerably different. In the Old Testament seeking God is a matter of the will. However, in Greek usage generally, it is the seeking of the intellect for truth. Thus Plato says (Apol. 19B), ζητῶν τὰ τε ὑπὸ γῆς καὶ οὐρανία; Xenophon speaks of seeking divine things (Mem. 1, 1, 15), οὕτω καὶ οἱ τὰ θεῖα ζητοῦντες νομίζουσιν. In Philo one asks, εἰ ἔστι τὸ θεῖον and τί ἔστι κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν in connection with ζητήσεις περὶ

117 Norden, op. cit., p. 14.

Deo (*De Spec. Leg.* i, 32).¹¹⁸ Dibelius argues, then, that in the Areopagus speech the emphasis is on the Greek kind of seeking, a matter of the mind. He interprets the speech as saying that God has made himself knowable in nature and man is to seek knowledge of his nature from a knowledge of the world.¹¹⁹

The evidence presented by Dibelius may stand, but his interpretation of it must be questioned. The contrast between the Old Testament and Greek ideas of seeking, indeed between their respective methods of approaching the divine, surely does not prove that this speech has no Jewish-Christian character, but it merely illustrates again the principle which we have found applied throughout; Paul uses words which convey the genuine divine truth he is proclaiming and at the same time keep his hearers with him as he leads them to the gospel by way of their own incomplete and inaccurate ideas. Besides this, Dibelius's view of Greek ideas of seeking God does not take adequate account of the fact that in Greek thought of the period under consideration, especially Stoic thought, a much more religious type of approach to the divine was to be found. Norden draws attention to one reference which illustrates this:

Manilius, der hier erwiesenermassen Gedanken des Poseidonius paraphrasirt, priost im Epilog des IV. Buches

¹¹⁸Dibelius, op. cit., p. 34.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

seines stoischen Konkurrenzgedichtes zu dem epikureischen des Lucretius die Herrlichkeit des Menschen, der in die Geheimnisse der Natur einzudringen versuchte, weil Gott in seiner Brust wohnt; nicht genug damit, dass er sich die Natur unterwirft: kraft seiner Verwandtschaft mit Gott 'sucht' er Gott selbst und dieser laeszt sich von ihm 'finden,' ja Gott draengt sich selbst uns auf und bietet sich uns dar (se ipsum inculcat et offert), damit wir ihn leicht erkennen und begreifen.¹²⁰

Though there is more here, as elsewhere in Stoic thought, than mere intellectual seeking, it is just as evident how far this still falls short of the Old Testament concept.

It is perfectly satisfactory, then, to understand Paul's aim as follows: he used a pregnant Old Testament expression to denote the kind of response which God expects of His creatures, one which surely does not exclude knowledge, but stresses a personal, repentant, and believing search for a gracious God. But at the same time, he was doubtless aware of the common Greek idea of a basically intellectual search for divine truth and its movements in a more existential direction in contemporary Stoicism. For Paul the fact of their searching had a definite validity, even though the object of their search was faulty and the results were untruth. The validity lay in this, that their very seeking was evidence of God's creative purpose for all men. It would seem, then, that Paul intended, among other aims, to make these Greeks aware, that by their searches for truth they were witnessing to the truth of his teaching about

¹²⁰ Norden, op. cit., p. 16.

their Creator. He makes use, then, of these incomplete ideas as an aid, even in their inadequacy, for bringing forcibly to their minds God's intention for their lives, and their failure to bring it to realization.

εἰ ἄρα γε ψηλαφύσσαν αὐτὸν καὶ εὐροίσεν

The first problem in this clause concerns the nature of the optative with *εἰ* construction. It could be regarded simply as a future less vivid protasis, with the apodosis lacking, thus indicating an undetermined condition with a vague hope of being determined.¹²¹ This would imply that the contingency was not too likely to happen. It could be a case of the future more vivid dependent on a verb of past time, which Burton describes as follows:

When a conditional clause which as originally uttered or thought was of the first or third class and expressed by *εἰ* with the Indicative or *εἰάν* with the Subjunctive is so incorporated into a sentence as to be made dependent on a verb of past time, it may be changed to *εἰ* with the Optative. This principle applies even when the apodosis on which the protasis depends is not itself strictly in indirect discourse.¹²²

As an example he quotes Ac. 20:16, and includes the present passage under this category. This interpretation, being basically future more vivid, would make no committal as to

¹²¹ Archibald Thomas Robertson, The Acts of the Apostles, in Word Pictures in the New Testament (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, c.1930), III, 288.

¹²² Ernest De Witt Burton, Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek (Third edition; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1898), p. 100.

the probability of the fulfillment, thus would be more positive than the previous possibility. A third possibility is that the omitted apodosis is virtually contained in the protasis, and the latter expresses a possibility which is an object of hope or desire, and hence has nearly the force of a final clause (cf. Phil. 3:12; Ac. 27:12). Burton also allows this as a possible interpretation of Ac. 17:27.¹²³ In our passage this interpretation would mean that God intended that men should find him, but the optative indicates uncertainty whether anyone will ever succeed in doing so.

The evidence is not adequate for a final decision as to which of these possibilities is correct, but the third commends itself most highly to this writer. The idea of wish and purpose on the part of God definitely seems to be present, and the third choice preserves both this and the quite apparent uncertainty whether anyone can ever attain this end in full. The Revised Standard Version takes this view and gives a good translation, "that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him." Paul is affirming, then, that it was God's purpose that all men find Him, but through their fault this became a very unlikely contingency.

The meaning of *ψηλαφησείαν* presents a further problem. The basic meaning of the word is simply to "touch" or "feel,"

¹²³Ibid., pp. 111 f.

and Norden argues at length that it must have that meaning here. He argues that in both the Septuagint and the rest of the New Testament, the word has that meaning (he quotes Gen. 27:11 f.; Zech. 3:9; Lk. 24:39; Hebr. 12:18; 1 Jn. 1:1). He notes also that Jerome and Luther so take it here.¹²⁴ In the New Testament his argument stands, but the Septuagint usage is by no means confined to the meanings "touch" and "feel," but definitely has the idea of groping in the dark or groping by virtue of blindness in at least four passages (Dt. 26:29; Job 5:14; 12:25; Is. 59:10). This usage is also found in Greek literature, for example, of the Cyclops groping with his hands after his eye was put out (Hom., *Od.* ix, 416); and Plato uses it of vague guesses at the truth (*Phaedo* 99B).

The importance of this difference is that in Stoicism the materialistic idea of actually touching the Divine would fit very well into its pantheistic outlook; whereas in Christianity or Judaism, the idea that the transcendent God could be touched would be blandly out of place.¹²⁵ Linguistically, Norden has not succeeded in proving that it must mean "touch" rather than "groping after," so there seems no reason for not taking the latter meaning, which fits in so well with the following *εὐπορεῖν*.

¹²⁴Norden, *op. cit.*, pp. 14 f.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 15 f.

Stonhouse offers a very fine interpretation of the implications which this entire clause has for Paul's opinion of the value of this religious seeking of the Greeks. He says that there is no hint in this verse:

that the heathen are conceived of as having found God as a result of a groping after Him or as yearning after Him in a manner which had gained the divine approbation. There is no suggestion of a recognition of a kind of 'unconscious Christianity.' Paul is not describing contemporaneous pagan religion but rather is disclosing the divine purpose regarding man's religious response which was grounded in the creation of man and the divine rule over him. To man was appointed the privilege of religious fellowship with his Creator, and this was to be attained by way of a conscious seeking after God in response to the divine revelation. That goal had always remained, but in 'the times of ignorance' it evidently remained distant and had not been reached.¹²⁶

This interpretation gives a very fitting color to Paul's approach at this point in the speech. He is here telling these proud philosophers, in words at this stage yet somewhat veiled and of uncertain meaning, that they are really only groping around in the dark in their high-sounding aspirations toward God, and though they recognize certain valid things about Him, they have not at all succeeded yet in actually finding Him. Thus they too can come under the "times of ignorance" in verse 30, though at this point in the speech Paul is just gradually awakening them to their failure. He is still ambiguous enough that they could read their own ideas of pantheism into his words, as he seems to

¹²⁶Stonhouse, op. cit., pp. 33 f.

encourage them to do with his next two statements, for he intends to use some of the quasi-valid ideas in their pantheism to show them the folly of their toleration of image worship.

καί γε οὐ μακρὰν ἀπὸ ἐνὸς ἑκάστου ἡμῶν ὑπάρχοντα

It can hardly be doubted that Paul is here making use of Stoic pantheism, at the same time it cannot be forgotten that he is still on solid Biblical ground, for "The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth" (Ps. 145:18); "The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit" (Ps. 34:18); "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?" (Deut. 4:7). Grammatically, the clause is probably concessive, "though he is not far from each one of us." This confirms the conclusion that the goal of finding God had not been attained, and it also reflects positively on an actual relationship of God to all men in the present situation.¹²⁷

Stoic parallels to the idea of God's nearness and immanence in the world are very numerous. Several will be quoted here to show the nature of the relationship. Cicero represents the Stoic bent with the following characterization of Jupiter, "patrem divumque hominumque, et presentem

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 34.

ac praepotentem deum" (N. D. ii, 2, 4).¹²⁸ Seneca speaks of the nearness of God in these words, "prope est a te deus, tecum est, intus est. . . . sacer intra nos spiritus sedet, malorum bonorumque nostrorum observator et custos" (Ep. xli, 1).¹²⁹ Epictetus exhibits the same kind of personal feeling of God's nearness (Diss. i, 14, 14):

So that when you have shut the doors and made darkness within, remember never to say that you are alone; for you are not, but God is within, and your Daemon is within. . . .¹³⁰

Epictetus feels the moral implications of this nearness.

He says (Diss. ii, 14, 11):

Therefore the philosophers say that we are first to learn that there is a God, and that it is impossible to conceal from Him, not only our actions, but even our thoughts and emotions.¹³¹

Marcus Aurelius calls God θεὸς εἰς δὴ πάντων (vii, 9).¹³² Norden draws attention to a very close verbal parallel in Dion of Prusa (Olyn. xii, 28):

sagt er: die Vorstellung eines goettlichen Wesens sei dem Menschengeschlechte infolge seiner Verwandtschaft mit Gott eingepflanzt: ἄτε γὰρ οὐ μακρὰν οὐδ' ἔξω τοῦ θεοῦ δωκισμένοι καὶ ἑαυτοῦς . . .

¹²⁸Cicero, De Natura Deorum, pp. 124-6.

¹²⁹Seneca, Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales, I, 272.

¹³⁰William Leslie Davidson, The Stoic Creed (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1907), p. 215.

¹³¹Pierce, op. cit., p. 8.

¹³²The Communings with Himself of Marcus Aurelius Antonius, p. 168.

οὐκ ἐδύναντο μέχρι πλείονος ἀξύνετοι μένειν.¹³³

It is very interesting to note, furthermore, that the context of the passage from Aratus which Paul quotes in verse 28 contains a reference to pantheism which suggests the nearness of Zeus to men, μετὰ δὲ Διὸς πᾶσαι μὲν ἀγυαί, πᾶσαι δ' ἀνθρώπων ἀγοραί, μετὴ δὲ θάλασσα καὶ λιμένες. πάντα δὲ Διὸς κεχώμεθα πάντες (Aratus, Phaon, 2-4).¹³⁴

It is interesting to note in passing that the language which Paul uses here is particularly pointed as a rebuke of the Epicurean idea of the abode of the gods, far off in the intermundia.

ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἔσμεν

This clause is a further reference, no doubt, to Stoic pantheism, and inasmuch as it seems to be a quotation from a writing ascribed to Epimenides, it may be regarded as a kind of proof-text for the previous statement. The data on the Epimenides problem must be considered first.

Epimenides was a half-mythical figure in Greek history, who had something of a Rip van Winkle experience, and lived to a phenomenally old age (157 years according to some, 299

¹³³Norden, op. cit., pp. 18 f.

¹³⁴Callimachus and Lycophron; Aratus, in Loeb Classical Library, Greek texts with English translations by A. W. and G. R. Mair (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1921), p. 380.

according to others). It is probable that this is the same man who was reckoned among the seven sages of Greece in early tradition, and was involved in the story of the purification of the city which we have already called attention to in connection with the inscription to the unknown god.¹³⁵ There was a considerable body of literature ascribed to this Epimenides in antiquity, which is listed by Diogenes Laertius (i, 111 f.), but none of the writings are fully extant and it is not clear just how many books were involved. The point of importance is that a volume of literature rightly or wrongly ascribed to Epimenides was extant in the first century and that this literature included works about Minos.¹³⁶

The following passage had been discovered in the Syriac commentary of the Christian father Isho'dad on the Acts of the Apostles:

This, "In him we live and move and have our being"; and that, "As certain of your own sages have said, We are his offspring." Paul takes both of these from certain heathen poets. Now about this, "in him we live," etc.; because the Cretans said as truth about Zeus, that he was a lord; he was lacerated by a wild bear and buried; and behold! his grave is known amongst us; so therefore Minos, son of Zeus, made a laudatory speech on behalf of his father; and he said in it, "The Cretans carve a tomb for thee, O holy and high! liars, evil beasts, and slow bellies! for thou art not dead for ever; thou art alive and risen; for in thee we live and are moved

¹³⁵Kirsopp Lake, "Your Own Poets," Additional Notes, in The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I, The Acts of the Apostles, edited by F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1933), V, 247. Cf. supra, pp. 102 f.

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 248.

and have our being," so therefore, the blessed Paul took this sentence from Minos. . . .¹³⁷

Isho'dad does not mention Epimenides, indeed he says that the author of the poem was Minos, but his quotation proves that the phrase "for in him we live and move and have our being" came from the same poem as the description of the Grotans as liars, evil beasts, and slow bellies; and concerning the latter verse, Clement of Alexandria testifies that it was taken from a poem of Epimenides the Grotan (Strom. i, 14, 59, 1). Isho'dad probably said Minos because according to Diogenes Laertius Epimenides wrote about Minos, who may well be the speaker in this section.¹³⁸ This is not conclusive evidence that Paul is quoting Epimenides here, but is sufficient to justify a quite strong conviction that he is.

Parallels from Greek literature, especially Stoic, can be found for each element in the statement Paul uses. Norden draws attentions to several instances of the use of ἐν with God in the pantheistic sense, πάντα ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ θεῷ, οὐχ ὡς ἐν τόπῳ κείμενα· ὁ μὲν γὰρ τόπος καὶ σώμα ἐστὶ καὶ ἀκίνητον, καὶ τὰ κείμενα κίνησιν οὐκ ἔχει (Poissand. xi, 17); ἀλλ' ἐν αὐτῷ μέσωσιν πεφυκότες (Dion of Prusa, Olym. xii, 28); ἐν σοὶ πάντα (Mar.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 249.

¹³⁸Ibid., pp. 249 f.

Aur., iv, 23).¹³⁹

Norden explains what the three terms *ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμενα καὶ ἔσμεν* probably would have meant to Stoic thinkers. The *κινήσεις* is that which the things which possess only a property (*ἕξις*) have to thank for their *οὐσία*. Therefore when our passage places the three side by side, the gradation of organic life is thereby expressed:

das Leben an sich als blosser Eigenschaft wird erst durch die Bewegung zur Wesenheit, zur eigentlichen Sein. An dem somatischen Leben haben . . . auch die Pflanzen teil, bei den Tieren kommt das psychischen Leben hinzu, das durch *sensus et motus* in die Erscheinung tritt, der Mensch hat ausser dem somatischen und psychischen noch das noetische Sein. . . .¹⁴⁰

For the use of *ζῶν* attention should again be called to the Stoic use of the popular etymology of *Ζεὺς* for allegorical purposes. Chrysippus says (*Stob. ecl. i, 31, 12*), *Ζεὺς ἂπὸ τοῦ πάρι δέδωκεναι τὸ ζῆν*; and Pseudo-Aristotle makes a similar statement (*De Mundo vii, 401a, 13*), *καλοῦμεν αὐτὸν καὶ Ζῆνα καὶ Δία . . . ὡς ἂν εἰ δέχομεν εἰ ὄν ζῶμεν*.¹⁴¹

The use of *κινούμενα* should be compared with passages like the following. In a Stoic proof for the nature of God Sextus Empiricus speaks of God as the self-moving power (*δύναμις αὐτοκίνητος*), permeating the world like the soul

¹³⁹ Norden, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

of a man, the mover of all things and the source of all becoming and change (ix, 75 f.).¹⁴² Epictetus urges (Diss. 1, 14, 6):

But if our souls are so bound up with God and joined together with Him, as being parts and portions of His being, does not God perceive their every motion as being a motion of that which is His own and of one body with Himself.¹⁴³

With special sharpness Lucanus states the Stoic confession, "Iuppiter est quodcumque vides, quodcumque moveris" (ix, 580).¹⁴⁴

$\zeta\acute{\omega}\nu$ and $\kappa\iota\nu\epsilon\acute{\omega}$ are found in combination in several instances. Plato says of the world soul, the highest creation of God (Tim. 370), $\acute{\omega}\varsigma \delta\epsilon \kappa\iota\nu\eta\delta\acute{\epsilon}\nu \kappa\alpha\iota \zeta\acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\tau\epsilon \tau\acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\alpha}\iota\delta\acute{\iota}\tau\omega\nu \delta\epsilon\acute{\omega}\nu \chi\epsilon\iota\rho\acute{\omicron}\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\delta\mu\alpha \delta\ \gamma\epsilon\nu\upsilon\eta\acute{\omicron}\varsigma \pi\alpha\tau\acute{\eta}\rho$.¹⁴⁵

Cicero says, following Poseidonios (Somm. Scip. 27), "quando finem habet motus, vivendi finem habeat necesse est."¹⁴⁶ A

quotation from the Hermetic literature, showing Stoic influence, reads (Poimand. xi, 17), $\tau\acute{\omicron}\upsilon\tau\omicron \gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho \acute{\omega}\sigma\pi\epsilon\epsilon \zeta\acute{\omega}\eta \kappa\alpha\iota \acute{\omega}\sigma\pi\epsilon\epsilon \kappa\iota\nu\eta\acute{\omicron}\varsigma \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota \tau\omicron\upsilon \delta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\upsilon, \kappa\iota\nu\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu \tau\grave{\alpha} \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha \kappa\alpha\iota \zeta\omega\omicron\tau\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$.¹⁴⁷ Norden likewise points out that $\kappa\iota\nu\epsilon\acute{\omega}$

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁴³ Epictetus, op. cit., I, 103.

¹⁴⁴ Norden, op. cit., p. 21.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

and εἰμί is a characteristic combination in Stoicism, for example, Chrysippus (Stob. ecl. 1, 106, 8), κατὰ τὸν χρόνον κινεῖσθαι τε ἕκαστα καὶ εἶναι. 146

The importance of the foregoing items is that Paul is manifestly concerned with speaking his audience's language and also with employing their religious concepts, however incorrect, to lead them toward his goal. This characteristic approach has been noticeable throughout. Paul is by no means putting his sanction upon Stoic pantheism. Though the idea of God as abiding in and sustaining the world is a genuine Christian truth, Paul knows that His personality cannot be sacrificed. That the only true God is a personal God to whom man must give an account is to become unmistakably clear at the end of the speech. And even here, Paul makes no concessions to the faulty speculations of the Stoics, but is using what he can to show them by their own concepts their need for repentance. Paul intends next to adduce another quotation from Greek thought which has a close connection with the one here stated, in order to convince his hearers by means of their own higher thought of the folly of their toleration of image worship.

τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἑομεν

These words are a direct quotation from the Phaenomena

146 Ibid.

of Aratus (v. 5). Aratus was born of a good Cilician family, either in Soli or Tarsus, thus was a fellow countryman of Paul, which may have something to do with Paul's acquaintance with his writings. He was a friend of Zeno the Stoic, and his writings show considerable Stoic influence. The Phaenomena is a treatise on astronomy which enjoyed considerable popularity, to the extent that it was used as a school textbook for many generations.¹⁴⁹ Nilsson says of the importance and popularity of this book in Hellenistic times:

Astronomy became the fashionable science in Hellenistic times. No composition of that day gained such popularity as Aratos' didactic poem on the starry heavens, none was so thoroughly commented on nor so often rendered into Latin.¹⁵⁰

It will be useful to quote the context in Aratus of the passage which Paul quotes to show its overall spirit and its similarity to other statements in Paul's speech.

From Zeus let us begin; him do we mortals never leave unnamed; full of Zeus are all the streets and all the market-places of men; full is the sea and the havens thereof; always we all have need of Zeus. For we are his offspring; and he in his kindness unto men giveth favourable signs and wakeneth the people to work, reminding them of livelihood. He tells what time the soil is best for the labour of the ox and for the mattock, and what time the seasons are favourable both for the planting of trees and for casting all manner of seeds. For himself it was who set the signs in heaven, and marked out the constellations, and for the year devised what stars chiefly should give to men right signs and seasons, to the end that all things

¹⁴⁹Lake, "Your Own Poets," p. 246.

¹⁵⁰Nilsson, op. cit., p. 98.

might grow unfaithfully. Wherefore him do men ever worship first and last.¹⁵¹

It will be noticed that the latter part of this section is somewhat similar to the statement of verse 26, if one follows the interpretation of Dibelius, but as none of the same words actually occur, it is quite doubtful that Paul has any intention of referring to Aratus in verse 26.

The quotation used by Paul is also very similar to a passage in Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus (v. 4), where he says, *ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ γένος ἐγούσιν*. This composition also shows resemblances to some of the Stoic elements Paul makes use of, therefore some excerpts may profitably be quoted:

Above all gods most glorious, invoked by many a name,
almighty evermore, who didst found the world and
guidest all by law--O Zeus, hail! for it is right
that all mortals address thee. We are thine offspring,
alone of mortal things that live and walk the earth
moulded in the image of the All; therefore, thee will
I hymn and sing thy might continually. Thee doth all
this system that rolls round the earth obey in what
path soever thou guidest it, and willingly it is
governed by thee. . . . But do thou, Zeus, giver of
every good thing, wrapt in cloud and bright lightnings,
save mankind from woful ignorance; do thou, Father,
dispel it from the soul; grant that we may attain to
true judgment, which is thy stay in thy just rule of
all things; that so being held in honour we may re-
quite thee in honour, chanting thy deeds right on, as
is most fit for our mortality, since nor mortal men,
no, nor gods, have any greater privilege than duly at
all times to hymn the universal Law.¹⁵²

A number of pertinent observations can be made on this quotation. It is to be noted that Paul uses in verse 29

¹⁵¹ Gallimachus and Lycophron; Aratus, p. 381.

¹⁵² Davidson, op. cit., pp. 235 f.

the same idea that Cleanthes does when he dwells upon the contrast between the image of God in men as His offspring and the making of man-made images. Furthermore, the type of salvation prayed for here, namely salvation from ignorance, is also offered by Paul (v. 30), though, of course, his offer far transcends the idea in Cleanthes. By the same token, the Stoic lack of consciousness of real sinfulness, evident in such a prayer for salvation from ignorance alone, was one of the biggest blocks to the success of Paul's gospel preaching. Cleanthes' description of the providence of God is also to be noted as the type of piety which Paul has been making use of.

Evidence of the "offspring of God" idea in Stoicism contemporary with Paul is abundant, especially in Epictetus. In addition to the quotations given in Chapter II,¹⁵³ the following are noteworthy.

you are a piece of God, you have in yourself something that is a part of Him. Why then are you ignorant of your high descent [οὐκ ἐπέεσθαι] ? . . . Wretched one, you are carrying about a god with you, and are ignorant of it. Do you think that I mean an external god of silver or of gold? In yourself you bear Him, and you perceive not that you are defiling Him with your impure thoughts and filthy deeds (Diss. ii, 8).¹⁵⁴

This passage is interesting because Epictetus, like Paul, bases a religious appeal upon the fact of divine progeny, and also mentions the foolishness of connecting a god of

¹⁵³ Supra, p. 19.

¹⁵⁴ Davidson, op. cit., p. 216.

silver and gold with such a high concept. Using similar words, Epictetus says in another connection (Diss. i, 9,

13), *καὶ συγγενεῖς τινες τοῦ θεοῦ ἔσμεν κακεῖθεν ἐληθύνθημεν.*¹⁵⁵ In another passage Epictetus uses the implications of this idea for a statement on the nature of man (Diss. i, 3):

we are all in an especial manner sprung from God. . . . in our birth these two things are commingled--the body which we share with the animals, and the Reason and Thought which we share with the Gods. . . . what am I? --a wretched human creature; with this miserable flesh of mine. Miserable indeed! but you have something better than that paltry flesh of yours.¹⁵⁶

One further quotation can be adduced from Dion of Prusa which shows the same type of thinking (Or. κκκ, 26), *ὡς ἀγαθοὶ τε εἶεν (scil. οἱ θεοὶ) καὶ φειδοῖεν ἡμᾶς, ἅτε δὴ συγγενεῖς ὄντας αὐτῶν. ἀπὸ γὰρ τῶν θεῶν ἔφην τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων εἶναι γένος, οὐκ ἀπὸ Τιτάνων οὐδ' ἀπὸ Γιγάντων.*¹⁵⁷

Although these quotations, and the contexts in Aratus and Cleanthes, exhibit ideas somewhat parallel to what Paul has been saying in the speech, it must not be forgotten that they actually express points of view which in their proper meaning were repugnant to Paul. This raises a problem then, as to the propriety of Paul's quotation of heathen authors

¹⁵⁵ Epictetus, op. cit., I, 68.

¹⁵⁶ Pierce, op. cit., p. 10. Cf. also Diss. ii, 8; iii, 22, 83.

¹⁵⁷ Dibelius, op. cit., p. 51.

in a manner which would give the impression that he was in agreement with what they say. Moreover, Paul would appear to be contradicting his own evaluation of the Gentiles, which must include the poets, as belonging to "the times of ignorance," likewise his judgment upon the religion of Athens as one of ignorance.¹⁵⁸

It is interesting to compare Paul's use of Aratus with that of the Hellenistic-Jewish philosopher Aristobulos of Alexandria, who lived about two hundred years before Paul. Eusebius and Clement of Alexandria relate that he cited the same verse from Aratus in order to show that the Greeks believed the same as the Jews, because their wise men were monotheists who had been influenced by Moses.¹⁵⁹ Paul surely does not use Aratus in this way, for his very next words show that intends with the help of this verse to awaken the Athenians to their actual ignorance of God. At the same time, Paul may well have meant to indicate that pagan expressions of this sort could contain germs of genuine truth, despite the false contexts in which they were to be found. Other statements of Paul on natural revelation must be taken into account to clarify his position. In Rom. 1:18 ff. he maintains that the heathen always remained confronted with the revelation of God in nature, and that that contact was

¹⁵⁸Stonehouse, op. cit., pp. 34 f.

¹⁵⁹Schrenk, op. cit., p. 142. Cf. Euseb., Fraep. Ev. xiii, 12, 6; Clem., Strom. v, 14, 101, 3.

sufficient to render their ignorance and rejection inexcusable (Rom. 1:19 f.). This confrontation with the divine revelation had not been without effect upon their minds, for it brought them into contact with the truth, but their basic antipathy to the truth was such that they suppressed it in unrighteousness (1:18). Stonehouse delineates the implications of this teaching for Paul's use of heathen writers in Athens:

Thus while maintaining the antithesis between the knowledge of God enjoyed by His redeemed children and the state of ignorance which characterized all others, Paul could allow consistently and fully for the thought that pagan men, in spite of themselves and contrary to the controlling disposition of their minds, . . . were capable of responses which were valid so long as and to the extent that they stood in isolation from their pagan systems. Thus, thoughts which in their pagan contexts were quite un-Christian and anti-Christian, could be acknowledged as up to a point involving an actual apprehension of revealed truth. . . . Thus while conceiving of his task as basically a proclamation of One of whom they were in ignorance, he could appeal even to the reflections of pagans as pointing to the true relation between the sovereign Creator and His creatures. ¹⁶⁰

Stonehouse also fittingly points out that Paul certainly does not use these quotations as foundation stones in his argument, and especially not in his proclamation of the gospel, but only in a subordinate way, incidental to the main thrust of the address, which stands on strong Biblical grounds.¹⁶¹ And, as has been repeatedly shown, Paul does not intend to give full validity to the pagan beliefs, but

¹⁶⁰ Stonehouse, op. cit., pp. 36 f.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 36.

rather to achieve in his hearers a conviction of failure and fault by drawing out the full implications of their own statements.

Verse 29

Paul's argument here is quite clear and needs little comment. He picks up again the basic rebuke of the speech, sounded already in verses 24 and 25, here reinforced by arguments and citations from the Greeks' own ideas. Paul draws on both the theology and the anthropology which he has been discussing for the climax of his condemnation of Greek idolatry. This verse includes the idea that since we and the whole world are dependent upon God for all things, it is absurd to suppose that the divine nature can be like the work of men's hands. The main thought is this, as Knowling aptly states it:

that as men are the offspring of God, they ought not to think that man is the measure of God, or that the divine nature, which no man hath seen at any time, can be represented by the art of man. . . .¹⁶²

Most of what can be said about the relation of Paul's rebuke to Greek philosophy and religious thought has already been discussed. It has been observed that in Stoicism there were several voices which spoke most critically of image worship, but at the same time, Stoicism sought to maintain rather than to destroy the traditional polythe-

¹⁶² Knowling, op. cit., p. 376.

ism.¹⁶³ It has been seen that in contemporary Greek religion, both on the popular and educated levels, use of images was very popular and was strenuously defended.¹⁶⁴ We have shown in reference to verses 24 and 25 that the question of the value of images was a burning one in first century Stoic thought, and that contemporary Stoics were to be found on both sides of the controversy.¹⁶⁵ Paul steps into the center of this debate with a firm conviction based on the Old Testament, which in its full meaning brings all these Greeks under the judgment of God.

The Old Testament foundation of Paul's rebuke is a fundamental principle already in the decalogue, where, in the elaboration of the first commandment, the making of images is forbidden (Ex. 20:4 f.). The folly of image worship is unmistakable in the history of Israel and its neighbors as recorded in the historical sections of the Old Testament. Specific discussions of the absurdity of man-made idols are frequent in the prophets. Isaiah uses an argument very similar to that of Paul when he employs the transcendent nature of God as a foundation and says, "τίνοι ἄμοιῶσατε Κύριον, καὶ τίνοι ἄμοιῶματι ἄμοιῶσατε αὐτόν; The idol! a workman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold"

¹⁶³Supra, pp. 25-7.

¹⁶⁴Supra, pp. 57-61.

¹⁶⁵Supra, pp. 120-2.

(Is. 40:18 f.). Similarly the Psalmist says, "Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands" (Ps. 115:3 f.; cf. 135:15; Wisd. 13:5, 10; 15:4, 15 ff.).

Something of a difficulty arises in connection with this verse. In the speech as Luke has recorded it, this verse, together with verse 24, is the only actual condemnation which Paul makes. Thus the only sin on which he bases his call to repentance is that of temple and image worship. This presents no problem with respect to the general Athenian populace, who very obviously came under this condemnation. But there is some problem with respect to the philosophers, many of whom were basically in agreement with what Paul here said. How then could his call to repentance have had any meaning for them? That Paul intended to bring such men to repentance must be maintained, as Schrenk so convincingly urges when he says:

Die Rede will nicht sagen: Stoiker, bleibe wie du bist, ziehe nur die wahren Folgerungen aus deinem bisherigen Glauben, sondern: kehre radikal um, es kommt der Gerichtstag, wo Gott durch den einen Mann, den er auferweckt hat richten wird, in dem er jetzt schon allen Glauben darbietet.¹⁶⁶

But what does he say that is really a condemnation of the sins or ignorances of the philosopher who agreed that images were foolish? The most satisfactory answer is probably to be found in the data given previously on the attitude taken

¹⁶⁶ Schrenk, op. cit., pp. 142 f.

by the Stoics, the Epicureans, and the cultured in general toward the popular faith. Though, by their own profession, they knew that God was not like the images of man's making and though they knew that the popular polytheism was foolish and wrong, they still took no drastic steps to crush it and to enlighten all the people. In fact, both Stoics and Epicureans spoke of values in the erroneous beliefs of the populace, and justified them by allegory, daemonism, and other means. Despite their sometimes high and almost valid ideas of the divine, they remained as a whole basically polytheists. It was at this point that Paul had to attack them, for it was at this point that the folly of their own wisdom was the most evident. Considered in this light, Paul's condemnation of the heathen in Rom. 1:19 ff. was as appropriate to the philosophers as to the general crowd, if not more so because of their better knowledge. He says:

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles.

It can be maintained, then, that Paul's condemnation of the philosophers in Athens was fundamentally the same as the one he employed in his most careful and complete effort to conclude all men under sin, namely, that in spite of their

and all their wisdom. As he begins to tell them of the judgment of God and the need for repentance, he draws attention again by this word to the fact that he is speaking with authority from above and is not simply adding his bit to their speculations. Furthermore, there is perhaps some significance in the fact that Paul calls the fault of the Athenians ignorance rather than sin or some other moral designation. This may be by design, since it was no doubt normally more painful for a Greek to be called ignorant than immoral. Paul points his call to repentance at this very point where Greek pride was most established.

Writers who wish to discredit the Pauline authorship of this speech have called attention to the apparent indifference toward Greek idolatry represented by the word ἄπειρος ἰδωλῶν. With this they contrast the indignant condemnation of such idolatry by Paul in Rom. 1:18 ff. Stonehouse cites the view of Percy Gardner, who states that, while idolatry was to Paul an utter abomination, to the author of this address "it is only an unworthy way of regarding his Heavenly Father, for men who are the offspring of God, who however in past time tolerated such materialism, until a free revelation came in the fulness of time."¹⁶⁹ But such an interpretation does not take seriously the urgency of Paul's summons to repentance and his warning of the imminence of God's consum-

¹⁶⁹Stonehouse, op. cit., p. 26.

ing judgment. Stonehouse shows convincingly that Paul speaks of the same forbearance of God elsewhere, where there is no doubt that he takes sin in utter seriousness. He says:

Is what Paul states here any different from his utterance concerning 'the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God' (Rom. iii. 25)? The overlooking of ignorance, like the passing over of sins, properly signifies an attitude of forbearance, a failure to enter into final judgment with the guilty, but is by no means to be identified with complacency towards, or tolerance of, idolatry.¹⁷⁰

The episode in Lystra recorded in Acts 14 gives further evidence of the same thing. Paul was hardly moderate when, at the crowd's effort, he rent his garments and sprang forth among the crowd, crying in protest. Yet in his speech at that juncture he says that God "in past generations permitted all the nations to walk in their own ways," words which are likewise associated with a call to repentance, that they "should turn from these vain things unto the living God who made the heaven and the earth." Where idols are called "vain things" there is surely no thought of tolerance.¹⁷¹

Paul's words, therefore, should not be interpreted as though he did not hold the Athenians responsible. He indeed held them responsible for their state of ignorance, inasmuch as he shows them that their own ideas condemn the folly of their religion. At the same time he regards their ignorance

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

as a sinful ignorance, which will only lead them to judgment if they persevere in it. The significance of God's having overlooked this ignorance in the past is simply that the time for the final judgment had not yet come. The emphasis is not on the past, though, but on the "now," and the importance of these words for the audience was that they should forget the past and accept God's message with a change of heart as it presently confronted them.

ΜΕΤΑΝΟΕΙΝ

There can be little doubt that Paul is using this word in its full Old and New Testament force, of a complete and radical about-face, including renunciation of one's former sinful life and a redirecting of life toward God, both taking place in response to God's personal, eschatological call. Paul's combination here of repentance and judgment is the same message that John the Baptist and Jesus brought to the straying house of Israel, "Repent, for the Reign of God is at hand."

An investigation of the Greek concept of *μετάνοια* and of Greek feelings of liability toward God in general point up that Paul is presenting here the first real stumbling-block of his divine message. The verb *μετανοέω* and its cognate noun *μετάνοια* had two predominant meanings in Greek usage. First of all, they connoted the changing of one's mind (*νοῦς*), which by virtue of the breadth of the *νοῦς*

concept, could mean also the assumption of a new opinion, the change of one's feelings, his conclusions on a matter, or his outlook in general. From this force grew the second, namely the change of mind which issues from the recognition that the previous opinion was foolish, unbecoming, or bad, that is, "to regret," "to repent."¹⁷² This regret could cover a large number of situations. It could mean dissatisfaction with thoughts which one has had, dissatisfaction with plans which one has followed, dissatisfaction with deeds which one has done, and so forth. This dissatisfaction need not have any moral content, but could be simply the wish that one had done differently. However, the verb does not confine itself to such rational self-criticism; it can on occasion express the ethical motive of dissatisfaction with oneself.¹⁷³ But it must be observed, that this was never more than dissatisfaction with oneself over a single deed, and never a complete change. Behm says:

Wo letzteres der Fall ist und durch *μετάνοια* eine Wandlung des sittlichen Urteils, die Reue ueber begangenes Unrecht od̄ ausgedrückt wird, handelt es sich immer um den Einzelfall der Aenderung des Urteils oder des reinigen Bepfindung ueber eine bestimmte nicht mehr gebilligte Tat. An eine Aenderung der ganzen sittlichen Haltung, einen durchgreifenden Wandel der Lebensrichtung, eine Umkehr, die das Gesamtverhalten fortan bestimmt, denkt das Griechentum bei *μετάνοια* nicht. Der Grieche kann wie vor sich selbst so auch vor den

¹⁷² Johannes Behm, "*μετανοεῖν, μετάνοια*," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, n.d.), IV, 973.

¹⁷³ Ibid., pp. 974 f.

Goettern eine Sünde in actu *μετανοεῖν*. . . eine *μετάνοια* als Busse oder Bekehrung im Sinne des A u NT kennt er nicht.¹⁷⁴

It is of the greatest importance to note that both Stoics and Epicureans thought of repentance basically as something for the philosopher to rise above and to avoid. In Stoic thought it was the mark of the wise man that he had elevated himself above repentance, and as a king ruled his own person in self-sufficiency. Thus Epictetus sees *μετάνοια* only as the pain of regret for self-indulgence and its consequences when he says (Ench. 34):

When you get an external impression of some pleasure, guard yourself, as with impressions in general, against being carried away by it; nay let the matter wait upon your leisure, and give yourself a little delay. Next think of the two periods of time, first that in which you will enjoy your pleasure, and second, that in which, after the enjoyment is over, you will later repent and revile your own self [*μετανοήσεις καὶ αὐτὸς σεαυτῷ λοιδωρήσῃ*]; and set over against these two periods of time how much joy and self-satisfaction you will get if you refrain.¹⁷⁵

Marcus Aurelius, in an interesting definition of *μετάνοια*, sees it merely as a matter of a man's reproach of himself, which has no relation to his responsibility over against God. He says (viii, 10), *ἡ μετάνοιά ἐστιν ἐπιληψίς τις ἑαυτοῦ, ὡς παρονομήσῃ τι παρ᾽ ἐκείνου*.¹⁷⁶ Like Epictetus, he thinks of it merely as the regret one feels over

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 975 f.

¹⁷⁵ Epictetus, op. cit., II, 522 f.

¹⁷⁶ The Communings with Himself of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, p. 202.

some action, which serves then as a guide for determining whether to do the action or not, as in the following passage (viii, 2), "In every action ask thyself, How does this affect me? Shall I regret it [*μετανοῶν*]?"¹⁷⁷ He shows clearly the true Stoic attitude when he speaks of as a weakness of character, as when he says (viii, 53), "Carest thou to win the approval of a man who wins not his own? Can he be said to win his own approval who regrets [*μετανοῶν*] almost everything he does?"¹⁷⁸ The true Stoic's estimate of his own life ruled out any thought of the kind of repentance Paul was urging. This is tragically clear in Epictetus, who looked forward to saying to God at the end of his life (Diss. iii, 5):

Have I in aught transgressed Thy commands? Have I in aught perverted the faculties, the senses, the natural principles that Thou didst give me? Have I ever blamed Thee or found fault with Thine administration? When it was Thy good pleasure, I fell sick--and so did other men: but my will consented. Because it was Thy pleasure, I became poor--but mine heart rejoiced? No power in the State was mine, because Thou wouldst not; such power I never desired! Hast Thou ever seen me of more doleful countenance on that account? Have I not ever drawn nigh unto Thee with cheerful look, waiting upon Thy commands, attentive to Thy signals?¹⁷⁹

This from the same man who wrote so powerfully about the all-seeing eye of the ever-present God, who held men re-

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 200.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 226 f.

¹⁷⁹ Pierce, op. cit., pp. 166 f.

sponsible for their character and conduct.¹⁸⁰ It is obvious that the reason that Stoicism had no room for repentance was that Stoicism had no consciousness of the seriousness of sin and the wrath of the Creator and Judge.

For the mechanistically oriented Epicureans genuine repentance was impossible, both because there was no higher being to whom man was responsible for his actions, and also because the very aim of Epicurus was to free men from their fears of divine law, justice, and retribution. Epicurus' own statement on justice and injustice is sufficient to illustrate this (Principle Doctrines 32-4):

To all animate creatures that have been unable to make the covenants about not injuring one another or being injured nothing is just nor unjust either; this statement holds equally true for all human races that have been unable or unwilling to make the covenant about not injuring or being injured.¹⁸¹

Justice never is anything in itself, but in the dealings of men with one another in any place whatever and at any time it is a kind of compact not to harm or be harmed. Injustice is not an evil in itself, but only in consequence of the fear which attaches to the apprehensions of being unable to escape those appointed to punish such actions.¹⁸²

To both Stoics and Epicureans, therefore, Paul's plea to

¹⁸⁰ Davidson, op. cit., p. 214. It is noteworthy that Douglas S. Sharp, Epictetus and the New Testament (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1914), p. 124, offers only a single reference to anything that approximates the Biblical idea of repentance in Epictetus: "If thou wouldst be good (ἀγαθός) first believe that thou art wicked (κακός)" (Stob. 3).

¹⁸¹ DeWitt, Epicurus and his Philosophy, p. 295.

¹⁸² Whitney J. Oates, editor, The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers (New York: Random House, c.1940), p. 38.

repent would appear not only needless, but objectionable. But Paul, no doubt aware of this, makes no effort to avoid this offensive, but absolutely necessary preparation for the gospel message.

κρίνειν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ

This statement grows very much out of Biblical language and background. These words are quoted directly from the Old Testament (Ps. 9:8; 96:13; 98:9) in contexts which refer to the Messianic reign of God. The context in Psalm 96 shows clearly the eschatological and Messianic framework, and sets the words of Paul here into their proper light:

The Lord reigns! Yea, the world is established, it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth (Ps. 96:10-13).

The idea that the Lord has appointed a particular "day" for His judgment is frequent in both testaments (cf. Is. 2:12; Joel 1:15; 2:1; Am. 5:18; Rom. 2:5, 16; 1 Cor. 1:8; Phil. 1:6, 10; 1 Th. 5:2, 4; 2 Th. 1:10; 2:2). These passages show that for Paul that day was both Christ's day and a day of judgment, as he states it in the Athens speech. A statement representative of Paul's emphases is 2 Th. 1:7-10:

and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do

not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

Several factors must be noted with regard to the likely effect of Paul's words on his Athenian audience. The fundamental attitude of the Epicureans and Stoics toward moral liability over against a higher being, as discussed under *μετανοεῖν*, would make them particularly opposed to any sort of divine judgment. On the other hand, Greek religion on the popular level, and also to some extent in educated circles, was very much taken up with the idea of justice (*δικη*). Justice for them was basically retribution which counters wrongdoing. Nilsson says:

The word *dike* occurs in such phrases as *diken didonai*, *diken tinein*, literally to give, to pay, justice, which signify 'to be punished.' The word *tisis* means 'payment,' 'compensation,' but also 'revenge,' for justice and revenge are not very different. . . . For them, justice is retributive justice.¹⁸³

Nilsson shows the strength of these ideas in Greek religion by pointing out that the demand of the Greek mind for retributive justice on all wrong-doers was one of the major factors in the advance of the idea of punishment after death in the nether-world.¹⁸⁴ Further witness to the force of Greek ideas of justice, even on the educated plane, can be

¹⁸³ Nilsson, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

found in the preoccupation of several of the classic dramatists with such themes. Bevan insists that the idea was strong enough to carry through long after the bulk of traditional polytheism was on the decline. He says:

We may be sure that ordinary men continued also to be influenced by that part of the traditional religion which made for righteousness--the fear that perjury called down divine vengeance; this seems proved by the importance still attached by governments to formal oaths.¹⁸⁵

These considerations would indicate that Paul's use of the idea of divine judgment was well chosen as one that would be familiar and meaningful to the majority of his hearers. Thus even in his distinctly Christian message, Paul attempts to accommodate his language and approach to the Athenian environment.

Stoicism, despite its disdain for repentance, occupied itself to some extent with the idea of justice. For the Stoics justice was closely akin to the universal, world-permeating Logos. Chrysippus says (von Arnim, ii, frag. 326), "It is impossible to find any other origin for justice, or any other mode of its coming into being, than its derivation from God (Zeus) and from General Nature."¹⁸⁶ Epictetus speaks of it as akin to the Order in the world in the following passage (Manual 31), "Of religion toward the Gods, know that the chief element is to have right opinions con-

¹⁸⁵Bevan, op. cit., p. xxiv.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., p. 33.

cerning them, as existing and governing the whole in fair order and justice."¹⁸⁷ That this divine Order punishes those who deserve it Epictetus also affirms (Diss. iii, 24, 42), "Is there not the divine and powerful and inevitable law which exacts the greatest punishments (*κολάσεις*) from those who are guilty (*ἀμαρτανόντων*) of the greatest offences?"¹⁸⁸ Seneca once speaks in terms which suggest that the day of man's death is a sort of judgment upon his life (Ep. 26, 4), "I, at any rate, as if the test were at hand and the day were come which is to pronounce its decision concerning all the years of my life, watch over myself. . . ."¹⁸⁹ These Stoic ideas might offer a slightly better possibility for the success of appeal to the coming judgment of God, but they cannot be stressed to any extent because of the clear opposition which Stoicism in general made to any thought of genuine repentance. Though some Stoics spoke of justice and judgment, they did not consider themselves actually liable to it, because they, the wise, were conducting their lives in harmony with the divine Order. Still one is impressed with the fact that Paul makes about the closest accommodation he is able to without dulling the urgency and inescapability of his call to repentance.

¹⁸⁷ Pierce, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁸⁸ Sharp, op. cit., p. 113.

¹⁸⁹ Seneca, Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales, I, 189.

ἐν ἀνθρώποις

Here is another example of the principle previously stated, that Paul accommodates himself to the Athenian language and thought-world even in presenting the Christian gospel in its fullness. It is noteworthy that Paul avoids any names or theological descriptions of Jesus, above all the designation as God's Son, and calls Him simply "a man whom he has appointed."¹⁹⁰ The use of ἀνθρώπος instead of ἀνθρώπου appears to be a definite accommodation. Jesus' own typical designation of Himself in His manhood is υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου (cf. Dan. 7:13; Mt. 24:27 ff.; 25:31; Jn. 5:27). But Paul avoids this Semitism in speaking to Athenians, for whom such an expression would have been unintelligible, and substitutes instead the ordinary word ἀνθρώπος.¹⁹¹

The designation of Jesus as a man rather than as God or God's Son cannot be without significance. At least two cogent reasons for Paul's use of this expression suggest themselves. In the first place, if Paul had called Jesus God, he would have been interpreted as preaching just another δαίμων, as verse 18 already shows. The crowd would simply have been confirmed in their conviction that Paul was simply peddling another cult, which was to take its place

¹⁹⁰ Meyer, op. cit., p. 104.

¹⁹¹ Bruce, op. cit., p. 340.

among scores of others. And to explain the Incarnation on such an occasion and to such a crowd with sufficient clarity to overcome this kind of misunderstanding would have been virtually impossible. If Paul was to stress at all the uniqueness of his message, Jesus had to be divested of any *δαίμων* conceptions. Perhaps Paul avoids even the use of His name in order to dissociate this man from the daemon Jesus, whom they thought he was preaching. Secondly, had Paul preached Jesus as God under these circumstances, he would have given no other impression but that the very condemnation of polytheism which he had been leveling applied also to his own religious thought, and he would have appeared to have been contradicting himself. It must, however, be left as a possibility, that Paul did preach the deity of Jesus here, and that Luke did not record any references to it, but this seems most unlikely, even in a condensed speech, for such an important element would hardly have been omitted.

ἀναστήσας αὐτὸν ἔκ νεκρῶν

With this expression Paul arrives at that fact in his message which constituted the greatest foolishness to every kind of Greek religion and philosophy. Yet he makes no effort to tone it down, clothe it in vague terms, or lessen its offensiveness by artful language. He simply calls it what it was, a resurrection of a corpse. This shows more clearly than any other element in the speech the true char-

actor of Paul's effort here. His purpose was not to ease philosophers into Christianity by stressing their common ground, but it was to preach the delivered gospel, with a change of garment perhaps, but with no change of essential truths, no matter how ugly they might appear to the Greek mind.

The Greek attitude toward a bodily resurrection was strikingly stated by Aeschylus when he was portraying the occasion when the court of the Areopagus was inaugurated by the city's patron goddess Athene. Apollo says (Eumenides 647 f.):

But when the dust hath drained the blood of man, once he is slain, there is no return to life [ἀπὸς θανάτου, οὐκ ἔστι ἀνάστασις]. For this my Father [Zeus] hath provided no remedial spells, though all things else he reverseth and disposeth at his will.¹⁹²

In an environment where not even Zeus could raise the dead, surely Paul's oriental *saḥian* would hardly be granted the ability.

The Epicurean attitude on this question has been sufficiently treated previously.¹⁹³ In a philosophy where immortality of any kind was rejected, Paul's fleshly resurrection had little chance of acceptance. The Stoic attitude, though very favourable toward the doctrine of the im-

¹⁹² Aeschylus, in Loeb Classical Library, Greek text with an English translation by Herbert Weir Smyth (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1936), II, 334 f.

¹⁹³ Supra, p. 34.

mortality of the soul, was just as critical of bodily resurrection as the Epicureans, since the body was merely a shell of the baser kind of matter which served only to bind and imprison the soul, preventing its free flight to God. This is most explicit in Seneca. The following quotations may be added to those given previously in Chapter II.¹⁹⁴

In Epistle 102, Seneca goes into considerable detail in despising the body and extolling the immortality of the soul (22-26):

When the day comes to separate the heavenly from its earthly blend, I [the soul] shall of my own volition betake myself to the gods. I am not apart from them now, but am merely detained in a heavy and earthly prison. . . . we are making ourselves ready for another birth. A different beginning, a different condition, await us. We cannot yet, except at rare intervals, endure the light of heaven; therefore, look forward without fearing to that appointed hour, --the last hour of the body, but not of the soul. That day, which you fear as being the end of all things, is the birthday of your eternity. Lay aside your burden--why delay? --just as if you had not previously left the body which was your hiding place.¹⁹⁵

Seneca's disdain for the body is especially explicit in the following passage (Ep. 120, 15 ff.):

Do we not see how many discomforts drive us wild, and how ill-assorted is our fellowship with the flesh. . . . But we, to whom such corruptible bodies have been allotted, nevertheless set eternity before our eyes. . . .¹⁹⁶

It is obvious that Paul could in no way accommodate him-

¹⁹⁴Supra, p. 21.

¹⁹⁵Seneca, Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales, III, 181.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., p. 391.

self to views which were as opposed to the very heart of Christianity as these were.

The End of the Speech

A problem arises from the fact that Paul's message says nothing about Christ crucified or of salvation by faith in Him. Some commentators seek to alleviate this difficulty by supposing that Paul was probably interrupted before he had an opportunity to finish his presentation and to preach the cross and its significance. This is a possible solution, but it is not entirely satisfying. For one thing, there is nothing said in the text to the effect that Paul was not allowed to continue, or that he was actually interrupted. Furthermore, it seems a likely assumption that the Court of the Areopagus would have prevented a popular uproar from seriously disturbing its proceedings. If Paul had wanted to continue, he probably would have been allowed to do so. Stonehouse has attempted to show that the basic elements which appear to be missing from the gospel message here are actually inherent in what is recorded, and when it is remembered that Luke records only snatches of the actual speech, the problem vanishes. He urges in particular, that the message of God's grace is inherent in the preaching of repentance and the overlooking of past ignorance. He says:

Favour had been expressed in overlooking their ignorance; now there was manifested the goodness of God which confronted the Gentiles with the revelation of the day of judgment and urgently warned them . . . of the

necessity of repentance. But this command to repent expresses more than the thought of the inevitability of divine judgment upon men who fail to repent. It discloses also that the days before the dread day of judgment would come are days of grace and salvation, when men may still repent for their sins and escape the wrath to come.¹⁹⁷

It can furthermore be affirmed that Paul was by no means bound to a stereotyped pattern of preaching the gospel, and especially with such an unusual audience a good deal of individuality might be expected.¹⁹⁸ It is most important to note that in 1 Thess. 1:9 f. Paul gives a summary of the results of his preaching in Thessalonica which almost exactly approximates the form his gospel message took in Athens, αὐτοὶ γὰρ περὶ ἡμῶν ἀπαγγέλλουσιν ὅποιαν εἴσοδον ἔσχοντες πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ πῶς ἐπιστρέψατε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων δουλεύειν δεῶ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ, καὶ ἀναμένειν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν ὃν ἤγειρεν ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦν τὸν ρυθόμενον ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης. There is little need, then to raise great concerns because of the omissions which appear in the Areopagus speech as we have it.

General conclusions on this study of the text will be given in the following chapter.

¹⁹⁷ Stonehouse, op. cit., pp. 46 f.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 46.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

A summary of the conclusions reached in each of the background chapters will be given first, to be followed by a statement of our general conclusions as to the problem raised by the thesis.

Conclusions on the Background

Stoic cosmological theory was fundamentally materialistic in that it attributed genuine existence only to such things as were material, but its materialism was modified by the fact that matter was thought of as possessing a dynamic quality. Thus such things as God, force, the soul, virtue, etc. were regarded as consisting of a fine, fiery material, which was marked by the characteristics of life, therefore Stoic materialism can fitly be called hylozoism. The Stoics regarded primary matter as possessing both substance and moving force, and the latter came to be identical with the Stoic God, who was described both in material and in causal terms. The result of this equation led Stoicism into a thorough pantheism, where there was essentially no difference between God and the world, since both originated from primary matter. In early Stoicism this resulted in the concept of a very impersonal deity, however in middle and later Stoicism considerable progress was made in the direction of

monotheism.

The origin of the world in Stoic thought took place by virtue of an inherent productive principle in primary matter, proceeding in the following way: part of the original primary substance (fire, i.e., aether) condensed into the coarser material of the four elements, which was in turn acted upon by the remaining aether, i.e., God, and by Him formed into the present world. The world, after a course of time, will be resolved again into primary fire, and the process will begin all over again and continue thus forever, a doctrine of eternal recurrence. In this entire process, the Stoics held firm faith in the ruling hand of a divine Providence, which governed the universe according to a fixed, rational, and good law, and governed by the same token the life and circumstances of nations and individuals. It was at this point that Paul made considerable contact with Stoic thought in his speech, including reference to the divine origin and rule of the natural world, the divine governance of history, and the specific idea that the world was made to serve man.

Stoic anthropology taught the divine paternity of all men, and the descent of all nations from a single progenitor, both of which teachings were employed by Paul in his address. But Stoic anthropology retained the common Greek conception of the body as the prison of the soul, which ruled out any thought of a resurrection of the flesh.

The Stoics' relation to the popular polytheism was one of both criticism and accomodation. Stoics leveled severe rebukes against the folly of traditional worship, temples, images, and anthropomorphism. At the same time, Stoics sought to discover real germs of truth in the traditional religion by means of allegory, which was not difficult in that their pantheism allowed for a measure of divinity in almost anything. The significant fact for an understanding of Paul's speech is that the Stoics never thoroughly forsook a polytheistic world-view despite their gestures toward monotheism.

Epicurean cosmology, interested primarily in ridding men of any fears or superstitions about gods, found a suitable system in the mechanistic atomic theory of Democritus, according to which only atoms and empty space existed. The atoms were constantly in a downward motion, and by virtue of an innate capacity posited by Epicurus, they at times swerved from their course, collided with other bodies, set up a rotary motion, and eventually formed into worlds. This world-forming process was eternal and infinite.

All forms of life arose from the physical world by virtue of its productive capacity. Man's origin was no different from that of the beast, and only the course of time, not an innate reason (as a donum superadditum), brought about man's civilization, skills, and socialization. Man had a soul according to Epicureanism, but it was also mate-

rial, consisting of the finest and lightest atoms. Significantly, the Epicureans posited neither an immortality of the body nor of the soul; life was the result of chance and death ended all existence.

In such a system there was obviously no room for a divine providence, and such an idea was bitterly ridiculed and thoroughly rejected by Epicureans. The question was always a strong point of contention between Stoics and Epicureans, and it is significant that Paul broaches this over-current question in his speech.

Epicurean philosophy did include a belief in the existence of gods, but these gods were by no means the rulers of the universe or of the affairs of men. On the contrary, they were simply higher beings who had come into existence as a result of the same process of atomic collision and cluster by which everything else had originated. They stood at the top of the scala natura as perfect beings, resembling humans, but lacking any of their defects. Their two essential characteristics were immortality and perfect happiness. They lived in the spaces between the various worlds, enjoying the most perfect life of wisdom and virtue. The prime concern of Epicurus was to deny to them any care or concern over the affairs of men or any interference in world events. Their place in Epicurean thought was primarily only that of a logical proposition needed to perfect the system and to remove certain metaphysical difficulties,

though they also played a certain role in contemplation and piety.

The relation of the Epicureans to the popular faith may be summarized as follows. They rejected all forms of superstitious fear of the intervention of the gods in human affairs or of their punitive retribution upon mens' sins. At the same time, they made no effort to rebel openly against the traditional religion, and even took part with pleasure in its observances and festivals, claiming that they found contemplative value in such worship. Thus Epicureanism, like Stoicism, was basically polytheistic and justly came under Paul's rebuke.

The picture of Greek religion at the time of Paul was a complex and infinitely variable one. The traditional polytheism had been dealt blow after blow by philosophical criticism and political crises, and had fallen aside on the higher levels of culture. The spirit of the age was a search for personal hope in the wake of widespread fatalism. The period was marked especially by the penetration of oriental religious ideas, cults, and deities in vast numbers into Greek religious life.

One of the many religious currents of the time was a worship of Fate, which came to the fore in the wake of the collapse of the old faith. This was basically a confidence that everything that happened exhibited the fickle hand of mere chance and caprice, and that the idea of an ordered

providence or a teleological life was to be severely questioned.

Another religious stream in the Hellenistic age was the rapid advance of astrology as a religious faith. This took widely varied forms, from the quasi-scientific approach to the universe as a giant piece of clockwork whose movements could be predicted by the movements of the heavenly bodies, to the purely superstitious idea of the heavenly bodies as gods who could be appeased by ritual like any others. The movement bears witness to the preoccupation of the age with the question of the cause of all events and man's relation to that cause.

A further element of the religious milieu of Paul's time was the deification of rulers and emperors, which received its real impetus from Alexander the Great and was still very much alive in the Caesar-cults of Roman times. This facet shows how fluid the idea of deity was at Paul's time, and how far from a genuine monotheism the masses as a whole were.

There were indeed some moves toward monotheism among the general public by virtue of the spread of philosophical teaching, the new cosmological outlook and the movement toward a syncretism which was melting national gods together. But this pagan monotheistic tendency never really succeeded in wiping out the old polytheism, whose deities survived as subordinate divinities, satraps of the supreme God.

Popular piety at Paul's time shows at least two elements which are significant for understanding his speech. In the first place, it is evident that polytheism had not at all been rooted out on the popular level despite the long history of philosophical criticism. The traditional faith had suffered considerable weakening and alteration, but the popular piety of Paul's time was still thoroughly polytheistic and just as liable to his rebukes as it would have been centuries earlier. Secondly, the popularity of images and the devotion paid to them was definitely on the increase. Miracles and omens were attributed to statues, and the populace was quite fervent in worshipping them and sacrificing to them. Even many of the educated defended the use of images and devised theories about the existence of divine potency or daemons within the statues. Here again Paul's rebuke was most justified.

A further aspect of the religious picture was the expansion of the belief in daemons as personal, semi-divine beings, either good or bad, in whom divine power inhered, which could be "harnessed" for use through rites and devotions. This movement again illustrates the fluid character of the idea of the divine in the religion of this period, as a complete contrast to the unqualified monotheism of Christianity.

A final element in this period was the expansion of the mystery religions and transcendental cults, which reflect

the religious needs of the age for salvation from the pessimism of the belief in unavoidable destiny. They are evidence also for the growing search for a firmer foundation in life and a closer association with the divine, such as they offered in their teachings about regeneration.

Even at the time of its final defeat under Julian, paganism, though much refined, still showed clearly its fundamental fault, namely, that it never considered polytheism as a serious enough error to reject and destroy it completely, but, on the other hand, continued to shelter and encourage it despite the fact that many knew that God was not such. Therefore Paul's criticism of all Athenians on the ground of polytheism was fully justified.

The picture of the background of the speech given by Luke in Ac. 17:16-21 shows, first of all, that from the beginning Paul was incensed by the idols of Athens, and that this reaction was fundamental to his preaching there, as the speech itself testifies. The scene of his preaching was the bustling Agora, where he engaged in discussions with all kinds of people, including Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. The basic content of his preaching was Jesus and the resurrection, which constituted an adequate presentation of the basic elements of the Christian kerygma.

The most important background material which Luke provides concerns the varied reactions of the populace to Paul and his message. One reaction, probably that of the

philosophers, ridiculed Paul as an ignorant plagiarist, who picked up bits of knowledge here and there, but did not really understand the patchwork philosophy which he was peddling (*σπηρευδοῦτος*). A second reaction, most likely that of the popular crowd, was that of misunderstanding and misrepresentation of Paul's message. The general impression seems to have been that Paul was preaching simply another foreign cult, involving certain foreign divinities (*δαίμονια*). They apparently had no intimation that he was preaching a strict, universal monotheism. That Paul was so vocal against polytheism in his speech shows that he was making every effort to remove these false impressions.

The reaction of the Athenians to Paul's preaching is further characterized in the words which they spoke as they took him to the Areopagus, which are most satisfactorily interpreted as exhibiting a mixture of feelings among the various groups, some hostile, demanding an examination of this babblers' qualifications for public lecturing, some simply curious to find out more clearly what he was actually trying to say, some interested in new ideas and curious to see whether they might pick up something useful from Paul, and some, perhaps, with a genuine religious interest.

The evidence points to the fact, that the scene of Paul's speech was most probably the Court of the Areopagus in one of the porticos of the Agora and not the Hill of Ares. This being the case, the situation can be viewed as an exami-

nation (not a legal trial) by the Council of Paul's ability as a public lecturer and of the inoffensiveness of his teaching. His audience would include the Council, the philosophers who brought him, and a considerable contingent of the general crowd which frequented the Agora, including various degrees of education and various kinds of outlook.

Conclusions on the Speech

It became overwhelmingly evident in the study of the text that Paul makes constant reference to and use of the current Athenian thinking and debating, including all levels of education, from the wisest philosopher to the humblest Athenian polytheist. The first question that arises in the light of this realization is how much and what kind of validity does Paul attribute to such Athenian thought as he employs. That he does attribute a validity to these heathen aspirations is quite evident. In some cases it is a validity of approximation, that is, the thought expressed in the Athenian concept shows a genuine, though imperfect, knowledge of some facet of God's true nature and activity. Into this category fit the Stoic convictions that the world is a reasoned whole, that God is above temple and image worship, that God needs no servants but Himself provides for all men, that God is the Lord of history, that He is near to man, and that man is His offspring. It must be remembered, however, that in every such case Paul is aware that the Stoic idea in

question is an imperfect and largely erroneous one, though one which he is able to make use of. Schrenk rightly points out that what the heathen bring with them has to be judged and corrected by the clear light of the Scripture and the reality of Christ.¹ Paul sees further validity in Athenian thought in this, that its religious searchings and speculations bear witness to the fact of God's self-revelation in nature, and to the existence in all men of an inborn capacity and concern for the divine. Though Paul indeed considers the Athenian religion as one of ignorance, he proclaims God in this address as one whose knowledge in their midst may to an extent be taken for granted or presupposed on the basis of God's natural revelation in cosmology and history. Though this knowledge of God is imperfect and inadequate, it is available as a point of contact from which Paul can proceed to reveal God in His fullness to them.²

The main purpose of this study was to determine how Paul actually employs the Athenian thought as a tool in his approach, and how his approach is altered in order to capture for Christ the hearts of these particular hearers. It has been seen, first of all, that he begins by broaching areas of thought which were the most burning questions of

¹Gottlob Schrenk, "Urchristliche Missionspredigt im 1. Jahrhundert," Studien zu Paulus (Zuerich: Zwingli-Verlag, c.1954), p. 146.

²H. B. Stonehouse, The Areopagus Address (London: The Tyndale Press, 1949), p. 32.

the time, and which at the same time exhibited the closest contact between the higher elements of Greek thought and the genuine truths about God as revealed in the Old Testament and the Christian keryzma. Schrenk is quite right when he says:

Wir haben gesehen, dass die Rede fortgesetzte Gebiete beschreitet, wo das Alte Testament und die griechische Geisteswelt Berührungen haben und dass sie dabei das Alttestamentliche oft in stoischen Formen dem Verstaendnis der Hoerers nachor zu ruecken sucht.³

At the same time it must be affirmed that Paul is not stressing to his hearers the common ground between himself and them. His purpose is different. He broaches their problems, he talks their language, he draws attention to their religious ideas, but he does so not to approve of them, but to use them in leading his hearers to a recognition of their ignorance of God and their sin. Paul's basic reaction of indignation against the Athenian idolatry (v. 16) sets the keynote of the entire speech, but as a Christian diplomat he starts with his hearers where they are, and leads them along their own familiar pathways of thought to his goal of repentance.

Some might criticize Paul for not being more critical and polemic from the outset against the heathen philosophies. Schrenk points out that that would have been psychological suicide. The heathen audience would not have been reached by resorting only to forceful criticism. In order to have

³Schrenk, op. cit., p. 143.

any hope for success, Paul had to use the psychological tools of accommodation. But these were for him always only external means intended to gain the hearing of his audience and to lead them to repentance and acceptance of the divine revelation which he was bringing. He in no way sacrifices any essential Christian truth, nor does he in any way depend upon the heathen thought-world of the hearers as a source of this theology. He depends only on the divine revelation which he has received,⁴ as is clearly established by his constant reliance on Old Testament statements.

Starting, then, from the area of cosmology, where points of contact between heathen and Christian were, by virtue of God's self-revelation, most extensive, Paul proceeds to preach the true, personal God. He uses expressions which are sufficiently ambiguous that, though they contain the genuine truth about God, his hearers would find in them enough similarity to their own thinking that they would be inclined to agree with Paul and listen to him with greater sympathy. This would have been the case especially with the Stoics, with whom such an approach was more possible than with any other Greek philosophers. But Paul also tries as much as possible without sacrificing truth to draw the others in in the same way. Even Paul's condemnations of temple and image worship were such that the philosophical

⁴Ibid., p. 146.

minds would have been largely in agreement with them. The ingeniousness of Paul's approach is that he uses these areas in which the philosophical minds would agree with him (on their own terms) as the proofs by which he establishes his condemnation of them, namely of the folly of temple and image worship and any toleration of it. Thus in verses 24 and 25 he argues from the world-making, world-ruling, and all-giving nature of God to the foolishness of supposing that He can be served by men and confined in puny temples. In verses 26 to 29, he argues from the nature of God as the origin of all nations, the Lord of history, the ever-present God, and the Father of all men, to the foolishness of supposing that such a deity can be represented by the man-made statues of a polytheistic pantheon. It is evident, therefore, that Paul is not stressing the common ground between his religion and their philosophy, but he is using their ideas as a whip with which to drive them to their knees (through the relentless application of their maiden Reason).

The purpose of Paul's entire approach, therefore, is clearly to call all his hearers to repentance, so that they might escape the judgment of God through the work of His appointed Man. We have observed that in presenting the gospel, Paul again uses as much as possible the language and thought patterns of the Greeks, never, however, sacrificing or dulling any essential element, regardless of its offensiveness, as is most evident in his insistence on re-

pentance and his affirmation of a resurrection from the dead.

The results of Paul's speech were not phenomenal. Many laughed at him, others showed continued interest but apparently no great conviction of sin, while only a handful came to faith in Christ. On the basis of this, and on the basis of Paul's insistence to the Corinthians (his next stop after Athens) that he intended to preach only Christ and Him crucified to them (1 Cor. 2:1 ff.), some scholars have urged that Paul felt his approach in Athens had been faulty, and that he henceforth abandoned it as a method of reaching the educated. But this view does not take seriously two factors. First of all, Paul did indeed have converts, including a man of that very Council which he was addressing. Secondly, the reason for Paul's general failure was that the opposition between Greek thought and Christianity was in essence too great for any compatibility, where both remained pure. Meyer is absolutely correct when he says:

Der in Wirklichkeit trotz aller Theologie der Folgerzeit unueberbreckbare Gegensatz zwischen dem griechischen Denken und dem Christentum tritt gleich in diesem ersten Zusammenstos z der beiden diametral entgegengesetzten Weltanschauungen deutlich zutage.⁵

Paul's approach, then, was sound and good, compatible with

⁵Eduard Meyer, Ursprung und Anfaenge des Christentums (Stuttgart and Berlin: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, c. 1923), III, 105 f.

his persistent efforts to accommodate himself to his hearers, to which all his speeches recorded in Acts bear witness. Any blame for the meager fruits of his Athenian ministry must be laid at the door of the Athenian philosophies themselves, whose rationalism, convictions of superiority, and moral pride made them incompatible with Christianity, despite all the high reaches of their cosmological and theological thought.

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