

5-1-1978

# A Study of Acts 17:16-34, and Its Relationship to the Apostle Paul and Athenian History and Religion

James Allan Conley

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A STUDY OF ACTS 17:16-34, AND ITS RELATIONSHIP  
TO THE APOSTLE PAUL AND ATHENIAN  
HISTORY AND RELIGION

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A Research Paper  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
Western Evangelical Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Religion

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by  
James Allan Conley

May 1978





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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It was the purpose of this investigation to determine the significance of Acts 17:16-34, by developing an exposition of this passage and studying the uniqueness of Paul's ministry as it relates to the historical and religious background of the Athenians.

#### II. JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

This study was taken from Acts 17:16-34 and was found to be most interesting. This area of study has been chosen for several reasons: (1) to study the life of Paul and his ministry; (2) to exegete Acts 17:16-34 in order to study this section in-depth; (3) to investigate the material found within Acts 17:16-34 in order to gain greater insight into these verses; (4) to develop a better understanding of the importance of the Homeric Pantheon.

#### III. DEFINITIONS

The following words have been discussed so as to give a greater insight into the nature of this material.

Apostle. An apostle is one who is a delegate or a messenger and is sent by God with a special commission



in mind. This Biblical term often refers to the twelve followers that Jesus Christ selected to be His disciples. Paul proclaimed equality with these apostles,

Because through a heavenly intervention, he had been appointed by the ascended Christ Himself to preach the gospel among the Gentiles, and owed His knowledge of the way of salvation not to man's instruction but to direct revelation from Christ Himself, and moreover had evinced His apostolic qualifications by many signal proofs.<sup>1</sup>

Paul. Paul was a follower of Christ due to his acceptance of Jesus Christ as his Savior on the road to Damascus. He was born in the Roman city known as Tarsus. This city was at its height at this time. It is evident that through archeological findings, Tarsus was located at the Northeast tip of the Mediterranean Sea. Paul learned the trade of tent making when he was in his youth. This supplied him with an income all the years of his ministry. Born the son of a Pharisee, he also learned Jewish Law and Old Testament Literature under the scholar Gamaliel. Paul was one who could identify with the Jews because of his Jewish background and could also identify with the Romans because of his Roman citizenship as received through his father. He learned the rabbinical ways of the scholars and became an active persecutor of Christianity until his conversion on the road to Damascus. As an apostle of the Christ, Paul proclaimed His Deity and Messiahship. He loved Christ and preached for Him no matter what the

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Henry Thayer, Greek and English Lexicon of The New Testament, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970) , p. 68.

consequences held for him. (This information was secured from an accumulation of the study of the entire book of the Acts.)

Homeric Pantheon. The word Homeric is derived from the Greek Poet Homer, who created the Greek religion into an amalgamation of gods. The word pantheon is used in his writings to refer to the many-god system of religion. Many of the gods in this system, as set up by Homer, were created by him but some of the others are older in nature. Homer has given us a lot of information concerning the functions and the characteristics of the Greek gods. Homer expressed to mankind, through poetry and song, man's human existence. He expressed men's attitudes toward the gods as they came into the life of his heroes. Two writings are especially attributed to the Greek Poet Homer. These writings are known as The Odyssey and The Iliad.

Athens. Athens was a city of great prominence during the Hellenistic civilization of Greece and was the capital of Attica. The city itself was named after the goddess Athene. The city was centered around a rocky hill known as the Acropolis. Athens was about four and one half miles from the sea. Two walls about two hundred and fifty feet apart, connected the city with its harbor known as Peiraeus. The city was first ruled by kings, but was later ruled by hereditary magistrates called archons. These archons were leaders of the land owning aristocracy. The government of Athens later became the city-state or sometimes it was better known as the polis.

#### IV. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The method of procedure in this investigation is both inductive and deductive. The writer is convinced that, in an analysis of this type, any evidence of a bias or a predetermined conclusion on the part of the investigator would greatly influence the results of the research.

Chapter two deals with an in-depth exposition of Acts 17:16-34. A study is made on this section with an intense study in the Greek text. As a result of this investigation, it is determined that a further study on Paul and the history of Athens should be made.

Chapter three deals with the history and the religion of the Athenians. This chapter also deals with a discussion of the Homeric Pantheon. A discussion with separate descriptions of each one of the twelve gods is presented. A number of their descriptions is covered. Also the philosophy and concepts surrounding each god are discussed.

In chapter four, the uniqueness of Paul's ministry is dealt with along with a discussion of Paul's call from God and his life experiences as a traveling missionary. A number of personal experiences of Paul is cited.

Chapter five deals with an analysis of the gods of the Homeric Pantheon and the One True God that Paul worshiped. Also contained in this chapter is a summary of the entire investigation.

## V. DELIMITATION

The purpose of this investigation is to determine the significance of the life of the apostle Paul and how it related to the historical and religious background of the Athenians. The religious background of the Athenians will be limited to the twelve gods of the Homeric Pantheon. The gods discussed are these: Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Apollo, Artemis, Hephaestus, Athene, Ares, Aphrodite, Hermes, and Hestia.

## VI. SOURCES OF DATA

The key sources used in this research are these: Joseph Henry Thayer's, Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament; John B. Noss, Man's Religions; The New American Standard Bible; and Alexander S. Murray's, Manual of Mythology. Other sources that were also helpful to this research were Harrison's, Religion of Ancient Greece; Croiset, Hellenic Civilization; Gayley, Classic Myths; Longenecker, The Ministry and Message of Paul; Moe, The Apostle Paul; Bradford, Paul the Traveller; Bornkman, Paul; and Ogg, The Odyssey of Paul. These resources were relevant and very helpful to this research.

## Chapter II

### AN EXPOSITION OF ACTS 17:16-34

#### I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains an exposition, which means an explanation or interpretation, on Acts 17:16-34. Various resources were used in order to examine the importance of the text. Resources used included lexicons and commentaries. Various resources were studied in order to expose an interpretation of this passage in Acts. As a result of this investigation, it was determined that a further study of Paul and the history of Athens should be made.

#### II. A LOOK AT THE GREEK TEXT

##### Important Phrases

The Greek text has several important factors included within its body that many times are not picked up in an English translation. This chapter deals with some of those phrases.

Verse 16 is full of important words that need to be discussed. ἐκδεχόμενον could be translated "awaiting" or "wait for."<sup>1</sup> The apostle Paul, while in Athens, was

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<sup>1</sup>F. Wilbur Gingrich, Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1957) , p. 63.

awaiting for them. **Αὐτοὺς** or "them,"<sup>2</sup> in this verse, refers to two men mentioned in verse 15, talking of Silas and Timothy. While Paul was awaiting them, his spirit (**πνεῦμα**), was **παρωξύνετο**. The word **παρωξύνετο** comes from the word **παρωξύνω**, which means "to become irritated" or "provoked to wrath."<sup>3</sup> Paul, while in Athens awaiting for Silas and Timothy, became provoked because he was **Θεωροῦντος κατείδωλον τὴν πόλιν**. This could be translated as follows: He was "beholding the city full of idols"<sup>4</sup> or "images."<sup>5</sup> These idols will be discussed in another chapter.

Verse 17 states **διελέγετο μὲν οὖν**, or "he was reasoning with them,"<sup>6</sup> **ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ**, or "in the synagogue."<sup>7</sup> One may now ask, who worshipped in the synagogue? The scripture passage reads, **Τοὺς Ἰουδαίους καὶ τοῖς σεβομένοις καὶ ἐντῇ ἀγορᾷ κατὰ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν πρὸς τοὺς παρατυγχάνοντας**. This can be translated as "the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace

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<sup>2</sup>Joseph Henry Thayer, Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 85.

<sup>3</sup>Gingrich, p. 164.

<sup>4</sup>Rev. Alfred Marshall, The R.S.V. Interlinear Greek-English New Testament, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), p. 545.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>New American Standard Bible, (Carol Stream, Illinois: Creation House, Inc., 1971), Acts 17:17.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

everyday with them that met him."<sup>8</sup> Paul was not only proclaiming the word of God to the Jews and to the ones at the marketplace, but he was also proclaiming Jesus Christ to anyone chancing to be there or **πρὸς τοὺς παρὰ τοὺς ἄγοντας**. The New American Standard Version translates this verse as;

So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the marketplace everyday with those who happened to be present.<sup>9</sup>

Commentaries, for the most part, seem to agree as to the importance of this verse. They feel that Athens afforded him ample confirmation of what he had already learned.<sup>10</sup> Paul, while awaiting his friends, became very troubled when he saw that the city was wholly given to idolatry.<sup>11</sup> So deeply was Paul troubled about the people of this city filled with monuments and altars to pagan gods, that he simply could not restrain himself any longer.<sup>12</sup> He went first to the synagogue to discuss his faith with devout Jews; and before he knew it, he was speaking on the streets and in the marketplace.<sup>13</sup> This, of course, was

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<sup>8</sup>F.F. Bruce, The New International Commentary On The New Testament, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976) , p. 348.

<sup>9</sup>NASB, Acts 17:17.

<sup>10</sup>F.F. Bruce, p. 348.

<sup>11</sup>Acts 17:16.

<sup>12</sup>Eugenia Price, Learning to Live From The Acts, (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970) , p. 97.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p. 97.

an ordinary occurrence for the people of Athens. Philosophers frequently made their proclamations in the marketplace.

The next verse tells what the philosophers had to say about Paul's proclamation. There were two types of philosophers which were conversing with him. These were the Epicureans and the Stoics. The philosophies of these two schools are very complex. Both of these schools are important to the flow of this chapter as one will see by looking at their basic structures.

Stoic Philosophy. This philosophy was founded by Zeno, who was born around 350 to 360 B.C. The Stoics derived their name from the Greek word stoa, which meant a porch. Zeno taught Stoicism from a certain porch in Athens known as the Painted Portico. Zeno was followed by Cleanthes who taught in 260 B.C., and Chrysippus in 240 B.C. Chrysippus was considered the intellectual founder of Stoicism.<sup>14</sup>

Basically, Stoicism was a system of equating their god with the forces and the laws of the universe, along with the view that reality was one unitary whole, with no individual parts. Fire was the ultimate substance with their god. Nature was controlled by a higher force known as the Logos, which was divine and was contained to a small degree in every man. The true essence of humanity was in the mind. As a member of the Logos, man can perceive and ascend to a belief in predestination, which makes all

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<sup>14</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963) , p. 811.



events necessary and reduces evil to a mere appearance. Therefore, the Stoics referred to this predestination as fate. Man is able to live in harmony with nature because to a Stoic, the gods did not interfere with the dealings of mankind on this earth.<sup>15</sup>

Epicurean Philosophy. Epicureanism appears to be a different philosophy in many ways. Epicurus lived around 341 to 270 B.C. He taught that nature, rather than reason, was true reality. Nothing existed in this world but the atoms and a great void.

Epicurus stressed pleasure and the good things of life. The chief purpose of man was to achieve happiness. The Epicureans denied the creation, judgment, and any kind of resurrection. For the Epicurean philosopher, his highest endeavor was to search for the mental and the intellectual pursuits of life. The lesser souls, or those not philosophers, should seek to pursue the lower goals of sensual satisfaction in order to fulfill their goals of pleasure. Epicurus held that the goals of man would all assimilate into the total structure of the whole. Epicurus taught that the soul was composed of fine atoms and that it communicates sensation throughout the body.<sup>16</sup>

The philosophies of these two schools were most complex. These philosophies dealt with the importance of knowledge and then the Homeric Pantheon filled their void with the misconception of the truth.

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, p. 256.

### Exegesis of Acts 17:18-34

Some philosophers accused Paul of being **ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος**. The New American Standard Bible translates this phrase as "this idle babbler."<sup>17</sup> The RSV translates this phrase as "ignorant plagiarist."<sup>18</sup> The word literally translated means "picking up seeds"<sup>19</sup> or rather "lounging about the marketplace and picking up a subsistence by whatever may chance to fall."<sup>20</sup> It may be translated also as "getting a living by flattery and buffoonery."<sup>21</sup> The philosophers felt that he did not know what he was talking about. Some said he was **ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος**, while others said he was **ξένων δαιμονίων δοκεῖ καταγγελεὺς**. Some proclaimed him as this idle babbler while others proclaimed him as an announcer of foreign demons. The philosophers accused him of these things because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. The philosophers could not comprehend a Messiah or a resurrection as evident by the fact that they did not accept the message of Paul.

The philosophers took and brought Paul to the Areopagus, also called the **Ἄρειον Πάγον**. The Areopagus was a rocky hill located not far from the Acropolis in

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<sup>17</sup>NASB, Acts 17:18.

<sup>18</sup>RSV, Acts 17:18.

<sup>19</sup>Thayer, p. 584.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

the city of Athens. The Areopagus was dedicated to the god Mars, or Ares, as he was sometimes called.<sup>22</sup> The story behind the Areopagus was somewhat interesting. According to Greek Religion, Mars had murdered Halirrhothius, son of Neptune, because he had attempted to rape his daughter Alcippe, and was tried at the Areopagus before the twelve gods who served as judges.<sup>23</sup>

The philosophers were attempting to serve as Paul's judges. They brought him to the Areopagus because he was on trial. They asked him;

May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. We want to know therefore what these things mean.<sup>24</sup>

Verse 21 appears to be an interesting verse in this chapter. This verse attempts to explain the reason that the philosophers took Paul to the Areopagus. The verse reads;

Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.<sup>25</sup>

The Athenians did not understand the real truth involved in the resurrection of Jesus Christ so they wanted to hear more of what Paul had to say to them. Paul felt very fortunate to be able to speak on behalf of Christ.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid, p. 72.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, p. 72.

<sup>24</sup>NASB, Acts 17:19-20.

<sup>25</sup>Acts 17:21.

When he had first entered Athens, he was quite perturbed at the idolatry found within the city. Paul stepped forward and stood in the midst of the Areopagus and began to preach to them. Paul's sermon was intelligent and right to the point. He was speaking to philosophers so he had to persuade them on a very intellectual level. Paul's sermon appears in verses 22-31 and then the results of his sermon appear in verses 32-34.

Verse 22 is the beginning of Paul's sermon. He steps forward and speaks these words; "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects."<sup>26</sup> If one examines the Greek text, the following words appear.

**ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι κατὰ πάντα ὥς δεισιδαιμονεστέρους ὑμῶν θεωρῶ .** A translation of this verse is;

"Men, Athenians, in all things, how very religious you,

I behold."<sup>27</sup> Note the word **δεισιδαιμονεστέρους** .

This word comes from the word **δεισιδαίμων** which means "reverencing god" and "the gods, pious or religious."<sup>28</sup>

In this Acts account, the Greek text reads

**κατὰ πάντα δεισιδαιμονεστέρους**, which might be interpreted as "being religious without the knowledge of the true God."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Acts 17:22.

<sup>27</sup>Acts 17:22.

<sup>28</sup>Thayer, p. 127.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

In the opening remarks of Paul's sermon, he points out the reason for his sermon. In Paul's opening statement, he appeals to their sense of conscience. Paul states, "I observe that you are very religious in all respects."<sup>30</sup> In making this statement, he wanted to appeal to the inner feelings of the philosophers. Paul was praising them for their religious nature but he was chastising them because they were not worshipping the One True God. Paul's memory also served him well. He had recalled seeing an altar with this inscription, "To An Unknown God."<sup>31</sup> The Greek text contained the following words; Ἄγνωστω Θεῷ. The term Ἄγνωστω, which is translated "unknown"<sup>32</sup> stems from the root word γινῶσκω, which means to know. Therefore, Paul was proclaiming a God not known to the Athenian philosophers. Paul then addressed them and said, "What, therefore, you worship ἄγνοοντες, or "ignorance"<sup>33</sup> this I proclaim to you."<sup>34</sup> Paul attempted to attack their spirituality. He wanted attack them at a point where it would do the most good. He went on to proclaim God as he knew Him.

The next section is Paul's sermon to the Athenians. His message speaks of God as the creator and the resurrected

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<sup>30</sup>NASB, Acts 17:22.

<sup>31</sup>Acts 17:23.

<sup>32</sup>Thayer, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup>NASB, Acts 17:23.

<sup>34</sup>Acts 17:23

Christ. According to the New American Standard Version, Paul's sermon reads as follows.

The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; and He made from one every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; or in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring.' Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.<sup>35</sup>

This message from Paul is filled with insights which seem to be helpful to this writer. In verse 24, one can see the creativeness of God. He proclaims the God who made the world and all the things in it. The Greek text stresses the greatness of God. The words, **ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας τὸν κόσμον**, as translated means "the God, the One having made the world."<sup>36</sup> Paul says that since God is the Lord of heaven and earth, He does not dwell in temples made with hands nor is He served by human hands.<sup>37</sup> Paul was stressing the creation of God

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<sup>35</sup>Acts 17:24-31.

<sup>36</sup>Acts 17:24.

<sup>37</sup>Acts 17:24-25.

possibly due to the fact that the Epicureans denied the creation of God because they held matter to be eternal.<sup>38</sup> The idea that He is not served by human hands was presented because Paul wanted to express to the philosophers that God cannot be confined within any man-made temple, and He also is not dependent upon man's service.<sup>39</sup> This might be a point of contact between Paul and the Epicureans because the Epicureans stressed the self-sufficiency of God.<sup>40</sup> Continuing on in verse 25, Paul proclaims that God Himself gives to all life and breath and all things. Of course, describing God as the author of life and breath would meet with the approval of the Stoics because they believed God was the author of life.<sup>41</sup>

Verse 26 would also meet the approval of the Stoics because it reads:

He made from one every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation.<sup>42</sup>

The Stoics believed in the unity of man and when Paul mentioned the phrase, "He made from one," the Stoics would have felt that Paul was referring to a unitarian God.

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<sup>38</sup>Thomas Walker, The Acts of the Apostles, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1965) , p. 379.

<sup>39</sup>William Neil, The Acts of the Apostles, (Greenwood, South Carolina: The Attic Press, Inc., 1973) , p. 191.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Acts 17:26.

The section that reads, "having determined their appointed times,"<sup>43</sup> may mean the times appointed by His providence.

Verse 27 is a conclusion to the preceding verse. God's purpose is that men should seek Him and know Him through obedience. God, who is infinitely great and self-sufficient, has manifested Himself as the creator of the universe. Verse 27 reads; "...that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us."<sup>44</sup> God created man with a free will so that he would search for Him. For example, that men might grope for Him, like a person who is blind gropes in the dark. The Gentiles, who did not have a revelation, had to grope after God, as the principle of spiritual life so that they may find Him.<sup>45</sup>

The next verse illustrates again the message that Paul was proclaiming. Paul says, "For in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are His offspring.'"<sup>46</sup> God is our very source of life and existence. Our entire being is from God and we cannot exist apart from Him. The phrase, "For we are His offspring,"<sup>47</sup> probably refers not only to the Stoic

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Acts 17:27.

<sup>45</sup>Adam Clark, Commentary on the Bible, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1967), p. 1006.

<sup>46</sup>Acts 17:28.

<sup>47</sup>Acts 17:28.



poet Aratus, but possibly also Cleanthus. Aratus wrote a poem entitled "Phaenomena," and Cleanthus wrote "Hymn to Jupiter." Both of these poets' words seem to have used the same phrase as quoted by Paul.<sup>48</sup> Paul was quite probably well acquainted with the writings of these poets. The phrase **τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἑσμέν**, might be translated "For we are His offspring."<sup>49</sup>

Verse 29 speaks of mankind as the children of God.

Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.<sup>50</sup>

Paul's statement, "Being then the offspring of God,"<sup>51</sup> is a very emphatic statement. It is emphatic in that Paul uses this phrase to bring out an emphasis in his message. The inference that Paul makes is quite strong and conclusive. The Greek words, **γένος οὖν ὑπάρχοντες τοῦ Θεοῦ** would emphasize the idea of being God's offspring.<sup>52</sup> Paul goes on to tell his audience not to see God as **χρυσῷ**, "gold"<sup>53</sup> **ἀργύρῳ**, "silver"<sup>54</sup> **λίθῳ**, "stone"<sup>55</sup> or **καράγματι τέχνης**, "art form."<sup>56</sup> To Paul God is not an idol made by hands, but rather He is Spirit or **τὸ θεῖον**, "Divine Nature,"<sup>57</sup> as this may be translated. Here, Paul has attempted to meet the philosophers on their own ground

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<sup>48</sup>Clark, p. 1006.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid. <sup>50</sup>Acts 17:29.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid. <sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Neil, p. 192. <sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid. <sup>56</sup>Ibid. <sup>57</sup>Ibid.

by using the language and the ideas that were common to paganism as well as Christianity.<sup>58</sup>

In verse 30, Paul proceeds with his message and interjects an invitation. "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent."<sup>59</sup> This is, for this writer, somewhat of a difficult passage to interpret. The phrase, "the times of ignorance God overlooked,"<sup>60</sup> is to be interpreted that God was so gracious to His people that He overlooked their ignorance. Paul said these people needed to repent. The word here is **μετανοεῖν**. This word means "to change one's mind."<sup>61</sup> Paul wanted these philosophers to change their minds. Paul wanted this change of minds because;

He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.<sup>62</sup>

God has fixed a day in which He will judge the world. No one knows when this time will come. When this time comes, God will judge the world in righteousness through Jesus Christ. God appointed Jesus to die for the sins of mankind. God knew that He had furnished proof to all men by raising Christ from the dead. At this point

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<sup>58</sup>Neil, p. 192.

<sup>59</sup>Acts 17:30.

<sup>60</sup>Thayer's p. 405.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Acts 17:31.

a problem arose. The philosophers did not believe in a resurrection of the body. They believed in ionic destruction which was the view that all parts of the body would be dissolved. They believed that when man died, so did his soul. As a result of their disbelief, some began to **ἐχλεύαζον**, or "sneer."<sup>63</sup> Still others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this."<sup>64</sup> Some had no interest in Paul's message but others were very interested in what he had to say. After his message, Paul departed from their presence.

The results of Paul's message are recorded in verse 34.

But some men joined him and believed, among whom also was Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.<sup>65</sup>

Nothing is known concerning Damaris. She could have been the wife of Dionysius. Dionysius the Areopagite was a member of the Areopagus.<sup>66</sup> Many legends have grown up around him. For example, he was believed to be the first bishop of Athens, the author of a fifth-century work on mystical theology, and the original St. Denys, patron saint of France.<sup>67</sup> Also, others believed with the two previously described.

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<sup>63</sup>Acts 17:32.

<sup>64</sup>Acts 17:32.

<sup>65</sup>Acts 17:34.

<sup>66</sup>Neil, p. 193.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

### III. SUMMARY

This chapter was an exposition of Acts 17:16-34. An attempt was made to explain this passage by using various resources which included lexicons, commentaries, the Greek text, and other sources. These resources were considered in order to better evaluate the material. The Greek text was consulted in order to make an in-depth study into this passage. This chapter attempted to show the importance of Paul's message as he proclaimed it to the Athenians. The material covered was intriguing and most enlightening to this writer.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF ATHENS DURING THE TIME OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

#### I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains information about the religious and secular history of the city of Athens before the time of the apostle Paul. This history was still influencing Greek culture during Paul's time. An in-depth study was conducted of the religion of the Athenians along with a brief sketch of the history of Athens. Various resources were consulted in order to give an accurate account of the history of Athens. Also included in this chapter was a study of the poet Homer and the emphasis given to love among the Athenians. Also the moral and immoral conditions of Athens were discussed.

#### II. A SECULAR HISTORY OF ATHENS

##### Background

In ancient times, Athens was the capital of Attica, one of the Greek states. Athens was located 200 miles south of Thessalonica.<sup>1</sup> The city of Athens was named after its patron goddess Athene. It was located near a rocky hill called the Acropolis, and was located  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles from

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<sup>1</sup>J. McKee Adams, Biblical Backgrounds, (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1965) , p. 205.

the sea.<sup>2</sup> There were two walls, approximately 250 feet apart, which connected the city of Athens with its harbor known as the Peiraeus.<sup>3</sup> There is an interesting story concerning the historical beginning of the city of Athens. Some believe the city was founded by a man named Cecrops who had come from Egypt around 1556 B.C.<sup>4</sup> Also, Athens was ruled by kings until about 1068 B.C. and then it was ruled by archons. The most famous archons were Draco, who issued laws in blood, and Solon, who gave the state a constitution.<sup>5</sup> Athens soon became a small empire after the defeat of the Persians at Marathon in 490 B.C.<sup>6</sup> Athens reached its highest peak during the reign of Pericles (459 B.C. - 431 B.C.).<sup>7</sup>

Codrus was the last king of Athens and was a contemporary of Samuel.<sup>8</sup> After this last king, the rule of Athens fell under men called archons. Archons, which changed periodically, were ruling Athens through the time of the Apostle Paul.

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<sup>2</sup>Merrill C. Tenney, Pictorial Bible Dictionary, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963) , p. 83.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>William Watkiss Lloyd, The Age of Pericles, A History of the Politics and Arts of Greece, (London, England: Macmillan and Company, 1875) , p. 2.

<sup>8</sup>Adams, p. 204.

Athens, in Paul's times, had a population of at least a quarter of a million people and it was the seat of Greek art, science, and philosophy.<sup>9</sup> It contained a large university and was also well known politically.<sup>10</sup>

#### Important Geographical Sites

Athens was known for many things including Mars Hill, the Acropolis, and the Propylaea of Mnesicles. The erection of every building in Athens was in some manner connected with the gods of Hellas.<sup>11</sup> The Propylaea of Mnesicles was a fascinating marble porch, which served for sacrifices and worship.<sup>12</sup> At the rear of the Propylaea stood a statue of the goddess Athena which was almost 66 feet in height.<sup>13</sup> Beyond the statue was located the Erechtheum, which was dedicated to Athena and Poseidon.<sup>14</sup> Also located at Athens was the porch known as the Caryatids which was an exquisite sculpture.<sup>15</sup> Other Greek architecture found within this city were the Temple of Athena Victorious, and of course, the Parthenon.<sup>16</sup> Its elevation

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<sup>9</sup>Tenney, p. 83.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Adams, p. 206.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

was approximately 500 feet above the sea.<sup>17</sup> It took a period of 10 years to build and then it was later dedicated during the age of Pericles.<sup>18</sup> Other structures of greatness were The Temple of Dionysus, The Temple of Aesculapius, The Temple of Zeus, The Stadium, The Tower of the Winds, The Temple of Theseus, The Agora, and The Areopagus.<sup>19</sup>

As Paul would have landed at Piraeus and traveled 5 miles into Athens, he would have passed through the Dipylon Gate and most likely would have continued on to the Agora.<sup>20</sup> The Agora was the political, commercial, and social center. The Agora is mentioned in Acts 17:17. Across the Agora, the Apostle would have noticed the "Painted Stoa," which was so named because Polygnotus and Micon had done the paintings on the wall.<sup>21</sup> The "Painted Stoa" was also the porch from which Zeno gave his philosophy.<sup>22</sup>

Along the east side of the Agora was the Stoa of Attalus.<sup>23</sup> The king of Pergamum, Attalus II, built the structure around 150 B.C.<sup>24</sup> Pfeiffer gives the following

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>20</sup>Charles F. Pfeiffer, The Biblical World, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1966), p. 112.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Merrill C. Tenny, Pictorial Bible Dictionary, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), p. 811.

<sup>23</sup>Pfeiffer, p. 112.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.



description of the Stoa of Attalus.

It was some 38 feet long and 64 feet wide, it was faced with a two story colonnade of 45 columns, Doric at the base and Ionic at the top. The second story was reached by stairs at either end. Behind the colonnade were 21 shops. In front of the stoa, about half way along the east side of the Agora, stood the Bema or public rostrum where officials could address crowds gathered in the square.<sup>25</sup>

Across from the Agora stood the Odeum, or the theater of Agrippa, which was built around 15 B.C.<sup>26</sup> The auditorium would seat around 1000 people which would be placed in 18 rows.<sup>27</sup>

A few feet away stood the Bouleuterion or the Senate house. This building was constructed in the form of a theater.<sup>28</sup>

East of the Greek Agora was the Roman Agora. This site had been planned by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., and was completed by Augustus Caesar.<sup>29</sup> According to inscriptions, it had been erected between 10 and 2 B.C.<sup>30</sup> As recorded by Pfeiffer;

The Market consists of a rectangular open area with a series of shops and arcades along the sides. Exterior dimensions are 367 feet by 315 feet. The interior courtyard, paved with marble, is 269 by 187 feet. This courtyard is surrounded by an Ionic colonnade, through which entrance was gained to the shops. Monumental entrances were constructed both at the east and west ends of the Market. There the Doric columns were almost 26 feet high and carried a pediment.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.      <sup>26</sup>Ibid

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.      <sup>28</sup>Ibid, p. 113.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, p. 114.      <sup>30</sup>Ibid.      <sup>31</sup>Ibid.

In Acts 17:22-31, Paul appeared before the Areopagus. The term Areopagus referred to both a court and a hill.<sup>32</sup> Paul was brought to the Areopagus to answer the questions that had arisen against him. The Areopagus, also known as the "hill of Ares," is a 377 foot hill located west of the Acropolis and north of the Agora.<sup>33</sup> It was believed that the god Ares had stood trial here for the murder of the sea-god Poseidon. Due to this fact, the hill later served as an ancient courthouse.<sup>34</sup> Pfeiffer makes the following description of the interior region of the Areopagus.

On two stones on top of the hill, the accuser and defendant sat facing each other. The hill was ascended by sixteen steps cut in the rock.<sup>35</sup>

As Paul stood amidst the Areopagus, most likely he could see the Acropolis located across from the Areopagus. Of course other New Testament cities also had their own acropolis, which served as the towns civic and religious center.<sup>36</sup> Other Acropolis were located at Corinth, Philippi, and Samaria.<sup>37</sup> Along the south slope, at the southeast corner of the Acropolis, stood the Odeum of Pericles. This structure was constructed around 440 B.C.

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Tenney, p. 69.

<sup>34</sup>pfeiffer, p. 114.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Tenney, p. 10.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

but was later destroyed during the First Mithradatic War in 86 B.C.<sup>38</sup> Later the Odeum was reconstructed by Ariobarzanes of Cappadocia.<sup>39</sup> The Odeum was a rectangular structure some 270 feet long on the north side.<sup>40</sup>

Located west of the Odeum was the Theater of Dionysus, which was considered to be the mother of other Greek theaters.<sup>41</sup> It is believed that Lycurgus constructed the theater about 330 B.C.<sup>42</sup>

Another structure found at Athens during the time of Paul was the Great Stoa which was some 535 feet long and 85 feet wide and was built by Eumenes II, king of Pergamum.<sup>43</sup> This structure was designed to serve as a shelter for the theater audience.<sup>44</sup>

Also located on the Acropolis was the Parthenon. This great marble structure measured 238 feet in length and 111 feet in width.<sup>45</sup> It was circled with 46 Doric columns which stood 34 feet high.<sup>46</sup> This structure was dedicated to the goddess Athena. Enclosed within the entire structure were sculptures which depicted the birth of Athena, the contest between Athena and Poseidon for Attica, and the Doric frieze.<sup>47</sup> The Doric frieze was divided into 92 panels which consisted of many legendary and mythological scenes.<sup>48</sup> Located within the colonnade was the Ionic

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<sup>38</sup>Pfeiffer, p. 114.    <sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.    <sup>41</sup>Ibid.    <sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 116.    <sup>44</sup>Ibid.    <sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.    <sup>47</sup>Ibid.    <sup>48</sup>Ibid.

frieze. This frieze was 524 feet in length and consisted of 600 figures which were important to the life of the Greeks.<sup>49</sup>

These tremendous structures were for the most part dedicated to the gods and these structures influenced the people and their way of life.

First, excavations have brought the market place (Greek Agora) to light, and it is possible today to draw a fairly complete plan of it.<sup>50</sup> Secondly, there is a keen observation hidden away here that reveals close knowledge of local customs.<sup>51</sup>

Excavations have shown that people greatly depended upon the market place. Paul used this meeting place to his advantage. "He disputed in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the market daily."<sup>52</sup>

### Political Evolution

Athens was known to have controlled several of the eastern Mediterranean States under the leadership of Pericles.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Oscar Bronur, "Athens, City of Idol Worship," BA (Feb., 1958) , p. 17.

<sup>51</sup>J.A. Thompson, The Bible and Archaeology, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968) , p. 389.

<sup>52</sup>Acts 17:17.

<sup>53</sup>Charles F. Pfeiffer, The Biblical World, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1966) , p. 110.

The polis, or city-state, was the political unit which formed the nucleus of Greek politics.<sup>54</sup> The acropolis was where the people could take refuge from attack.<sup>55</sup> The political development of the polis varied at different times. As a result, four major types of government evolved.

1. Monarchy limited by an aristocratic council and a popular assembly, as described in the Homeric epics;
2. Oligarchy ("rule of the few"), arising when the aristocratic council ousted the king and abolished or restricted the popular assembly.
3. Tyranny, imposed by one man who rode to power on the discontent of the lower classes.
4. Democracy ("rule of the people"), the outstanding political achievement of the Greeks, which emerged after the tyrant was deposed and the popular assembly revived and made the chief organ of government.<sup>56</sup>

During the course of the seventh century B.C. at Athens, the council of the nobles became supreme.<sup>57</sup> The king was replaced by nine aristocratic magistrates called archons, and they were chosen each year by the council to exercise the king's civil, military, and religious powers.<sup>58</sup> The nobility took over the land on the plain, whereas the peasants either became sharecroppers, slaves, or hill dwellers.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>T. Walter Wallbank, Alastair M. Taylor, Nels M. Bailkey, Civilization Past and Present, (Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman and Company, 1971) , p. 43.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid, p. 44.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

The Athenian nobles started having problems amidst their government so they sought reform. In 594 B.C. a man named Solon became the sole archon and ruled over the lower class.<sup>60</sup> Solon made many new reforms for the Athenians. Some of the reforms that he advocated were:

1. He canceled all debts and forbade any future debt bondage for the lower class.
2. He stimulated trade and industry.
3. He granted important political rights, but not equality.<sup>61</sup>

Unfortunately, problems arose over the reforms of Solon. His reforms were not accepted widely among either class. The poor had not received land nor political equality while the nobles felt they had been betrayed.<sup>62</sup>

### III. A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF ATHENS

#### The Homeric Pantheon

The Homeric epics had a very large influence upon the Greeks and their religious system.<sup>63</sup> The word Homeric is derived from the Greek Poet Homer, who introduced into the Greek religion an amalgamation of gods. The word Pantheon is used in his writings to refer to a many-god system of religion. Many of the gods in this system, as set up by Homer, were created by him but some of the

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>John B. Noss, Man's Religions (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), p. 58.

others are older in nature.<sup>64</sup> Homer has given a lot of information concerning the functions and characteristics of the Greek gods. Homer expressed to mankind through poetry and song, man's human existence. He expressed men's attitudes toward the gods as they came into the life of his heroes.<sup>65</sup>

Most of the information that comes to us about the Greek Dark Ages which followed the Dorian invasion, comes to us from the blind Ionian Poet Homer.<sup>66</sup> Two writings are attributed to this Greek Poet. These writings are known as The Odyssey, and The Iliad. Through these writings one can see his vivid imagery in his writings. The following quote shows his use of imagery.

The values that gave meaning to life in the Homeric Age were predominantly heroic values-the strength, skill and valor of the preeminent warrior. Such was the earliest meaning of aretē, "excellence" or "virtue," a key term throughout the course of Greek culture. To obtain aretē-defined by one Homeric hero as "to fight ever in the forefront and outvie my peers"-and the imperishable fame that was its reward, men welcomed hardship, struggle, and even death. Honor like fame, was a measure of aretē, and the greatest of human tragedies was the denial of honor due to a great warrior. Homer makes such a denial with the theme of the Iliad: "The ruinous wrath of Achilles that brought countless ills upon the Achaeans" when Achilles, insulted by Agamemnon, withdraws from battle.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid, p. 57.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>T. Wallbank, p. 42.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

Homer was the creator of a Panhellenic religion. This means he culminated all the gods of Greece into an amalgamation of gods consisting of old gods and goddesses along with the local heroes of the time.<sup>68</sup>

The Poet Homer had a very different concept of the creation of the world than did the apostle Paul. Homer expressed the creator of this world as Oceanus or rather, the Ocean. Homer does not tell us how the earth and heavens sprang from him or whether they had been co-existent from the beginning.<sup>69</sup> We are told by Homer that the ocean encircled the earth with an enormous stream. He says the region of the stream was filled with many wonders. Oceanus and his wife Tethys, both lived there.<sup>70</sup> Within the circle of water the earth lay spread out like a dish with mountains arising from it. The heavens then appeared on the outer edge.<sup>71</sup> The outer edge was suppose to be tilted slightly so as to let water enter and flow on to the land.<sup>72</sup> The space between the heavens and the earth then appeared as the air and the clouds. The area above the clouds was supposedly composed of pure ether in which the sun, moon, and the stars existed.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Noss, p. 56.

<sup>69</sup>Alexander S. Murray, Manual of Mythology, (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1973) , p. 21.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.



The sun rising in the eastern sky and remaining all day was believed to be under the guidance of a god in a chariot drawn by four white horses.<sup>74</sup> Then night was caused by the chariot sinking into Oceanus. The God would then put his chariot on a ship and sail during the night around to the east so as to begin a new day. Homer organized his pantheon of gods, consisting of twelve in number, into the Olympian deities. These twelve gods vary with the source of information. The most common twelve are these: Zeus (Jupiter), Hera (Juno), Poseidon (Neptune), Demeter (Ceres), Apollo, Artemis (Diana), Hephaestus (Vulcan), Athene (Minerva), Ares (Mars), Aphrodite (Venus), Hermes (Mercury), and Hestia (Vesta). Even though the gods of Homer's pantheon only numbered twelve, the Greek system of gods was far more complex than this.<sup>75</sup> (The charts of the system of the gods as presented by Homer and the complete system of Greek gods appear in the Appendix.)

In Homer's writings, the gods no longer live in a variety of places, but now rather they live in a heavenly region known as Mount Olympus.<sup>76</sup> At one time, it was believed that Mount Olympus was an actual mountain top in Thessaly but Homer changed this concept into a heavenly region.<sup>77</sup> Also the word Olympus referred to a special region above the sky from which, to express its height,

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

it was said by Greek religion that at one time, a brazen anvil fell nine days and nine nights before it reached the earth.<sup>78</sup>

The lower order of deities, because they had no place in Olympus, were restricted to the earth.<sup>79</sup> For example, the Fountain Nymphs were restricted to the fountains and the springs, the Oreades, or Mountain Nymphs were restricted to the hills and the mountains; the Dryades, or Nymphs of trees, were restricted to trees.<sup>80</sup>

### The Gods of Homer

The gods discussed in this section were the more generally accepted gods of Homer as the deities that inhabited Mount Olympus.

The Greeks adhered to a triple succession of the supreme rulers. Uranus represented the heavens and was viewed as the husband of the earth. He would, by his warmth and his moisture, produce life and vegetation.<sup>81</sup> Uranus was a son of Gaea. He later married his mother; their offspring were known as the Titans, the Hecatoncheires, and the Cyclopes.<sup>82</sup> The Hecatoncheires were creatures with

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>82</sup>Charles Mills Gayley, The Classic Myths In English Literature And In Art, (New York: Ginn and Company, 1911) , P. 4.

one hundred hands. These beings were called Cottus, Gyges, and Briareus.<sup>83</sup> The Cyclopes also were three in number and included Brontes, Steropes, and Arges.<sup>84</sup> These creatures had only one eye which was located between the nose and brow.<sup>85</sup>

The Titans were grouped into a series of twelve deities. They consisted of Oceanus and Tethys, Hyperion and Thia, Crius and Eurybia, Coeus and Phoebe, Cronus and Rhea, Japetus and Themis.<sup>86</sup>

Cronus and Rhea. The main Titans of importance were Cronus and Rhea. Gaea, the mother of Cronus and Rhea provided Cronus with a sickle which he used to wound his father periodically.<sup>87</sup> Eventually the Titans were set free and married their sisters and produced a numerous family. Cronus was known as the "ripeners, the harvest god." Uranus was deposed from the throne and was succeeded by his son Cronus. Cronus married his own sister Rhea, a daughter of Gaea. This union brought forth Pluto, Poseidon (Neptune), and Zeus (Jupiter), Hestia (Vesta), Demeter (Ares), and Hera (Juno).<sup>88</sup> Gayley

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<sup>83</sup>Alexander S. Murray, Manual of Mythology (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1973) , p. 26.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid, p. 27.

<sup>88</sup>Gayley, p. 5.

gives the following information concerning Cronus.

Cronus, however, having learned from his parents that he should be dethroned by one of his own children, conceived the well-intentioned but ill-considered device of swallowing each as it was born. His queen, naturally desirous of discouraging the practice, -when it came to the turn of her sixth child, pawned off on the insatiable Cronus, a stone carefully enveloped in swaddling clothes. Jupiter (or Zeus), the rescued infant, was concealed in the island of Crete, where nurtured by the nymphs Adrastea and Ida, and fed on the milk of the goat Amalthea, he in due season attained maturity.<sup>89</sup>

Zeus. When Zeus reached maturity, he was aided by Gaea and persuaded Cronus to yield back into light the sons and the stone he had swallowed. After this was done, a war broke out between Cronus and Zeus.<sup>90</sup> Alexander Murray gives the following concerning the battle.

The seat of war was Thessaly, with its wild natural features suggestive of a conflict in which huge rocks had been torn from mountain sides and shattered by the violence with which they had been thrown in combat. The party of Zeus had its position on Mount Olympus, the Titans on Mount Othrys. The struggle lasted many years, all the might which the Olympians could bring to bear being useless until, on the advice of Gaea, Zeus set free the Cyclopes and Hecatoncheires, of whom the former fashioned thunderbolts for him while the latter advanced on his side with force

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>Murray, p. 30.

equal to the shock of an earthquake...The rebels were partly slain or consumed, and partly hurled into deep chasms, with rocks and hills reeling after them, and consigning them to a life beneath the surface of the earth.<sup>91</sup>

After this tremendous battle, the council of the gods met and they chose Zeus to be the Sovereign of the World.<sup>92</sup> After this council, Zeus delegated positions out to his family. He delegated to his brother Poseidon, the kingdom of the sea and the water, and to his brother Hades, the government of the underworld.<sup>93</sup>

Zeus was highly respected throughout the Greek world. He was considered to be the god of the light and had control of all the phenomena of the heavens and changes in the weather.<sup>94</sup> According to Greek Mythology, Zeus had been married several times. He first married Metis (Cleverness). When he discovered that she would have a child, he swallowed the child due to the fear that the child would depose him.<sup>95</sup> He next married Themis (Justice) and fathered Astraea and Horae. His greatest love was Hera (Juno) due to her many charms.<sup>96</sup> Zeus loved Hera very much but he secretly indulged in sexual intercourse with other women. Hera was the mother

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Gayley, p. 6.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Murray, p. 36.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid, p. 39.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid, p. 40.

of Hebe, Ares (Mars), and Hephaestus (Vulcan).<sup>97</sup> These were the legitimate sons of Zeus. From Zeus's adulterous love affairs, the following information was given of him.

From secret intercourse of this kind Demeter (Ceres) bore him Persephone (Proserpina); Leto (Latona) became the mother of Apollo and Artemis (Diana); Dione the mother of Aphrodite (Venus); (Graces); Semele of Dionysus (Bacchus); ~~Mara~~ of Hermes (Mercury); Alcmene, of Hercules.<sup>98</sup>

Hera. The second major deity found within the Homeric Pantheon was Hera (Juno), the sister and wife of Zeus. Hera was the daughter of Cronus and Rhea but was raised by Oceanus and Tethys. Hera married Zeus without the consent of her parents.<sup>99</sup> Homer often described her as a jealous, angry, and quarrelsome individual. Evidence of her personality is reflected in The Iliad. Hera deludes Zeus and sends him to sleep in book fifteen.<sup>100</sup>

Hera's favorite companions in periods of peace, were the Charites (Graces) and the Horae (Seasons).<sup>101</sup> Her constant companion was Iris who was the goddess of the rainbow.<sup>102</sup> There were many festivals held in her honor. One was held every fifth year at Olympia in Elis. The ceremony consisted of girls and women racing with their

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Gayley, p. 22.

<sup>100</sup>W.H.D. Rouse, Trans. Homer: The Iliad, (New York: The New American Library, 1938) , pp. 164-173.

<sup>101</sup>Murray, p. 49.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

hair streaming down and wearing short dresses.<sup>103</sup> Hera was mostly worshipped by women. Some worshipped her as a bride, others as a wife, and still others as a helper in childbirth.<sup>104</sup>

Poseidon. Poseidon was a brother of Zeus and was the controller of the water and the sea. Neptune's palace was located in the far depths of the sea, near Aegae.<sup>105</sup> The beasts of the sea sported around him often. A very unusual myth has grown around Poseidon and Athene over the sovereignty of the soil of Attica. In order to settle the dispute, it was agreed that the two should compete so as to see who could produce the greatest wonder.<sup>106</sup> Murray gives the following information concerning this contest.

With a stroke of his trident, Poseidon caused a brackish spring to well up on the Acropolis of Athens, a rock 400 feet high and previously altogether without water. But Athene in her turn, caused the first olive tree to grow from the same bare rock, and since that was deemed the greatest benefit that could be bestowed, obtained for all time sovereignty of the land, which Poseidon thereupon spitefully inundated.<sup>107</sup>

In Poseidon's territory, his powers were conditional and limited. Many times his realm was invaded by other

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid, pp. 49-50.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Gayley, p. 56.

<sup>106</sup>Murray, p. 52.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

gods.<sup>108</sup> Poseidon was only surpassed by Zeus himself when it came to his relations with women. He fathered several children including Aigaion, Polyphemus, Nausithoas, Scherie, Pelias and Meleus, Otos and Ephialtes.<sup>109</sup> Most of these children had different mothers but all of them had the same father.

The worship of Poseidon was not confined to the maritime States, but prevailed throughout the coastal area. Temples in his honor were found in Thessaly, Boeotia, Arcadia, Aegae, Helice, Samos, Corinth, Nauplia, Tenos, Taenarum, and Athens.<sup>110</sup> In a worship experience, human sacrifices were offered, some horses were thrown into the sea while others were buried alive.<sup>111</sup>

The rightful wife of Poseidon was Amphitrite, the daughter of Oceanus and Tethys. She was usually represented as having long flowing hair with the toes of a crab.<sup>112</sup>

Poseidon was an unusual character in Greek Mythology. He was connected with everything that dealt with the water or the sea.<sup>113</sup>

Demeter. Demeter, sometimes called Ceres, was a daughter of Cronus and Rhea. She was the goddess of sowing

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<sup>108</sup>J.W. Fradenburgh, Departed Gods, (New York: Hunt and Caton, 1891) , p. 30.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>Murray, p. 55.

<sup>111</sup>Fradenburgh, p. 31.

<sup>112</sup>Murray, p. 57.

<sup>113</sup>Gayley, p. 43.



and reaping, and she was attributed the capacity of bringing forth the fruits of the earth. She was a sister to Zeus and was the mother of Persephone.<sup>114</sup> She was considered the all-nourishing mother and she watched over the growth of the grains. An important thought concerning her worship was given by Murray.

The mysterious evolution of life out of the seed which is cast into the ground and suffered to rot - a process of nature which both Paul (I. Corinthians XV. 35) and John (xii. 24) compare with the attainment of a new life through Christ. The seed left to rot in the ground was in the keeping of her daughter Persephone, the goddess of the lower world, the new life which sprang from it was the gift of Demeter herself.<sup>115</sup>

Demeter was considered to be the goddess of agriculture, and supposedly she first introduced the art of agriculture to the world. When Hades carried off her daughter, she set out in a chariot drawn by winged snakes in order to find her daughter.

Each year after harvest time, when the fields laid bare, then her worshippers were reminded of her loss of Persephone. There were two types of festivals which were held in her honor. One festival was called the Haloa which was a mere harvest festival. The other festival was called Thesmophoria and was representative of the introduction of civilization.<sup>116</sup> The festivals, as held in Halimus in Attica, were held between October

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<sup>114</sup>Murray, p. 69.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid, p. 70.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid, p. 72.

9th and was continued to October 13th.<sup>117</sup> At night wild orgies were held at which loud and mysterious ceremonies were mixed with loud amusements.<sup>118</sup> On her head she wore a modius or corn measure as a symbol of fertility.<sup>119</sup>

Apollo. Apollo, also known as Phoebus Apollo, was known as the son of Zeus and Latona.<sup>120</sup> Apollo was the god of the sun. His name Phoebus signified the radiant nature of warm sunshine. Soon after his birth, Zeus wanted to send him to Delphi, but rather Apollo chose to spend a year in the land of the Hyperboreans, where for six months there was sunshine.<sup>121</sup> A large serpent, known as Python, had crept forth from the slime and had begun to haunt the earth after the flood. After this encounter, Apollo slew Python with arrows from his silver bow.<sup>122</sup> Apollo was a representation of the radiance of the sun and many other corresponding ways including;

1. As the personification of youth and beauty.
2. As god of earthly blessings.
3. As god of the herds that graze on the fields which are warmed by him--a character in which he appeared herding the cattle of Laomedon.

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid, p. 73.

<sup>120</sup>Gayley, p. 26.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid, p. 27.

4. As god of medicine who provided for the growth of healing plants.

5. As god of music, for everywhere were heard happy, joyful sounds, when his kindly beams spread light and warmth over nature.

6. As god of oracles which reveal the secrets of the future, as the light of heaven dispels all darkness, and detests nocturnal gloom.<sup>123</sup>

Several celebrations took place in Athens dealing with the god Apollo. There was the Thargelia, which was held in May and represented the ripening of the first-fruits.<sup>124</sup> Another festival called Metageitnia, occurred in August which represented the god of harvest and plenty. In October, the first-fruits were presented to him, and in September, a festival occurred which symbolized him as a helper in battle.<sup>125</sup>

Artemis. Apollo's twin sister was Artemis or Diana and was largely worshipped at Ephesus. She was the daughter of Zeus and Leto. She was born on Mount Cynthus, located on the Island of Delos. She was the virgin goddess and was associated with her brother, the prince of archery in all of his adventures.<sup>126</sup> It was believed that she was roaming the woods and groves by night. Artemis despised love because she considered it a weakness. Artemis imposed upon her nymphs, vows of

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<sup>123</sup>Murray, pp. 105-106.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid, p. 108.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid.

<sup>126</sup>Gayley, p. 29.

continual maidenhood. If any violations occurred, she would deal with them immediately.<sup>127</sup> As a huntress, her favorite animal was the male deer. There are several interesting stories concerning Artemis and her stag. One such story of how a crime was committed was the following piece of information.

Agamemnon had killed a stag, so Artemis detained the Greek fleet, on its way to Troy in the harbor of Aulis, and exacted from him the sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia.<sup>128</sup>

Another story explains that Actaeon, a mighty huntsman had seen the goddess bathing and due to this fact, he was transformed into a stag and was devoured by his own hounds.<sup>129</sup> Artemis was considered to be the goddess of the female productive power in nature. Artemis was represented as carrying a torch and clad in long heavy robes with a large veil covering the back of her head.<sup>130</sup> On her brow, she wore a half-moon. The Artemis of the Ephesians was quite different in nature than the Artemis at Athens. Her sacrifices consisted of deer and oxen, as well as the fruit presented to her which had to be clean and faultless, representing Artemis as a virgin goddess.

Hephaestus. Hephaestus, sometimes called Vulcan, was known as the divine personification of the fire that burns upon the earth. He also represented the fire that

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<sup>127</sup>Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>128</sup>Murray, p. 120.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid, p. 124.

arose from volcanic eruptions. He was the son of Zeus and Hera, but his birth caused a continual quarrel between them.<sup>131</sup> He once took his mother's side and Zeus grabbed him by the heels and cast him out of Olympus. Another time he took his father's side and Hera cast him out of Olympus. Falling deep into the sea, he was found by Eurynome and Thetis who cared for him.<sup>132</sup>

Hephaestus was the blacksmith for all the gods. Poets following Homer attributed his workshops to be located under different volcanic islands. He constructed the buildings that the gods lived in along with the scepter of Zeus, the shields and the spears of the Olympians, the arrows of Apollo and Diana, the breastplate of Hercules, and the shield of Achilles.<sup>133</sup>

There is some problem as to the wife of Hephaestus. Some authors say his wife was Charis, which was the name recorded in the Iliad. She was the youngest of the Graces. The Odyssey proclaims the wife of Hephaestus as being Aphrodite. He had no children whoever his wife may have been. He was considered to be a glorious god and even good-natured for the most part.

Athene. Athene, sometimes called Minerva or Tritogeneia, sprang from the brain of Zeus. Hephaestus laid open the head of Zeus with an ax and Athene sprang forth. She was the goddess of the storm and the flashing

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<sup>131</sup>Ibid, p. 86.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid.

<sup>133</sup>Gayley, p. 25.

thunderbolt.<sup>134</sup> She was also the goddess of war. She was eternally a virgin and was considered to be the goddess of wisdom, skill, spinning and weaving, and horticulture and agriculture.<sup>135</sup> She single-handedly overpowered the giant Enceladus. She was the constant companion of Hercules and she helped Perseus slay the Gorgon Medusa.<sup>137</sup> Along with Hera, she protected Jason and the Argonauts.

She was known by a variety of titles which included, the Polias, "protectress of cities;" Soteira, the "savior;" Glaucopis, "blue-eyed goddess;" Parthenos, "the virgin;" Hippias, "tamer of horses;" Ergane, "mistress of industry;" Nike, the "victorious;" and Mechanitis, "ingenious."

Several festivals were held each year in her honor. One was called Panathenaea, which was held to commemorate her war against the Giants. Sacrifices were offered to her on several occasions. The services of her sanctuary were conducted by two virgins which were elected for a period of one year.<sup>138</sup>

Ares. Ares, commonly called Mars, was also a son of Zeus and Hera. He was known as the god of the storm and the hurricane but was better known as the god of war.

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<sup>134</sup>Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid.

<sup>136</sup>Murray, p. 97.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid, p. 101.

He was the most fierce of all gods and perhaps this was due to the fact that he took pleasure in the slaughter and massacre of men.<sup>139</sup> Homer, in The Iliad, represents Ares as the most noted warrior of the age, who, because he was impelled by rage and the lust of violence, was exulted by the noise of battle.<sup>140</sup> Many times he fought on foot and sometimes he fought from a chariot drawn by four white horses.<sup>141</sup>

Ares had four sons whose names were Terror, Trembling, Panic, and Fear. His daughter's name was Enyo and she was the ruiner of cities, and was the leader of the blood-thirsty demons.

The Odyssey (viii. 266), gives us the following information concerning Ares and Venus. The story says that Ares went to Venus in order to make love to her and when he was detected by Apollo, who informed Hephaestus of this matter, Hephaestus captured the two and brought them before the gods of Olympus. Venus was the secret lover of Ares, and this relationship indicated the peace and rest that followed the turmoil of war.<sup>142</sup>

In the city of Athens, one could find the Areopagus, or "Mars Hill." It was here that Ares was brought before a court of justice due to the fact that he murdered Poseidon.

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<sup>139</sup>Ibid, p. 81.

<sup>140</sup>Gayley, p. 23.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>142</sup>Murray, p. 83.

Festivals, athletic competition, and martial games, were all held in his honor. Chariot races were held twice a year on his behalf. One was held in March and one in October.<sup>143</sup> In early times, human sacrifices were offered to Mars whereas later, animals sufficed. The animals chosen to by his symbols were the dog and the vulture.<sup>144</sup>

Aphrodite. Another goddess involved in the Homeric Pantheon was Aphrodite, who was commonly called Venus. Aphrodite was the goddess of love. She was the divine personification of Greek conception. She was the daughter of Zeus and Dione. She was the goddess of gardens and flowers.<sup>145</sup> She was born among the foam of the sea and was often accompanied by the following gods.

Her son Eros (Amor or Cupid), The Charites (Graces), the Horae, Himeras (God of the anxieties of love), and Pitho (Suadela, or the soft speech of love).<sup>146</sup>

Aphrodite was very much in love with the young shepherd Adonis. She was very grieved at his death due to the attack of a wild boar. Her grief was so great that she would not allow the dead body to be taken away from her until the gods agreed to let her live with her lover on the earth for half a year and then let her live with him in the lower world for the rest of the time.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup>Ibid, p. 84.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid.

<sup>145</sup>Gayley, p. 32.

<sup>146</sup>Murray, p. 92.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid.



Aphrodite, of course, had other lovers which included Anchises, to whom she bore Aeneas. The legitimate husband of Aphrodite was Hephaestus who had to punish her on several occasions due to her unfaithfulness in their marriage. A festival was held in her honor once every year and was called Veneralia. A part of this ceremony included nocturnal dances and sexual orgies which transpired among the gardens.<sup>148</sup> The month of April was sacred to her. The symbols of Aphrodite were the dove, ram, hare, dolphin and swan.<sup>149</sup>

Hermes. Hermes, often called Mercury, was the son of Zeus and Maia, who was the daughter of Atlas. He was the deity to whom was due the profileness and welfare of the animal kingdom. Hermes was swift as the wind and he was the herald of Zeus. He had wings on his low-crowned, broad-brimmed hat and wings on his feet.<sup>150</sup> He was considered to be a beautiful specimen of youthfulness and power. He was known by several names which included, Psychopompos, (Guide of departed souls), Oneiropompas, (Guide of dreams), and Enagonias (Model for youth).<sup>151</sup> Hermes was known for his cunning and good humor. In the early years of his infancy, he stole the sceptre of Zeus, Aphrodite's girdle, Poseidon's trident, the sword of Ares, the tongs of Hephaestus, and Apollo's bow and arrow.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup>Ibid, p. 94.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid.

<sup>150</sup>Gayley, p. 34.

<sup>151</sup>Murray, p. 134.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid, p. 136.

The primitive form of Hermes worship included the worship of the herds. The oldest center of his worship took place in Samothrace and the islands of Imbros and Lemnos.<sup>153</sup> Murray gives the following information concerning the attributes of Hermes.

The attributes of Hermes were the caduceus or kerycoeum, that is, a short staff with a pair of wings and a knotted snake attached to it, and the petasus or winged cap. Beside him sometimes, is a cock or a goat. For sacrifice he delighted in the tongues of animals, a suitable sacrifice to the god of oratory.<sup>154</sup>

A very interesting story appears in Murray concerning Zeus and Hermes. Hermes had been ordered by Zeus to release Io from the watchful eyes of Argus. He was to use no force. Argus was a creature with one hundred eyes. In his deepest sleep he only closed fifty eyes. Hermes presenting himself to Argus, commenced in the following manner. Hermes began by telling Argus amusing tales and then suddenly he produced a shepherd's pipe. He then began to play several tunes which after awhile, had Argus completely asleep with all eyes closed. As soon as the last eyelid closed, Hermes slew the Argus and rescued Io.<sup>155</sup>

Hestia. Hestia, commonly called Vesta, was a sister of Demeter, and was a daughter of Cronus and Rhea. She was the first born child of Cronus and Rhea, therefore she was the older sister of Zeus, Juno, Neptune, Pluto,

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<sup>153</sup>Ibid, p. 137.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid, p. 139.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid, p. 137.

and Demeter.<sup>156</sup> She was the goddess of the hearth, the home-fire, and the guardian of family life. Her sanctuary was built in the shape of a fire.<sup>157</sup> As the goddess of pure element, Hestia hated love and remained in an unmarried state, therefore becoming the guardian of virgin modesty.<sup>158</sup> Her priestesses, six in number, performed a duty which was to feed the sacred flame. They wore white robes, a fillet around the hair, and a veil.<sup>159</sup> The girls selected for this service were between the ages of six and ten, and they had to serve in the temple for thirty years.<sup>160</sup> The sacred flame of Hestia was never to go out and if it did, the priestess responsible was condemned by the high priest to a dark chamber and then flogged.<sup>161</sup> For the crime of forfeiting her chastity, she was sent to "criminals field." She was placed in a subterranean chamber and provided with a bed, a lighted lamp, and some bread and water. The chamber was then closed with her in it, the earth was thrown over it and made smooth with the priestess left to die.<sup>162</sup>

The sacred fire was renewed on March 1 of each year, and on June 15, her temple was cleaned and repaired. On

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<sup>156</sup>Gayley, p. 35.

<sup>157</sup>Murray, p. 78.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid.      <sup>162</sup>Ibid.

June 9, a large festival was held in her honor and was called the Vestalia.<sup>163</sup> Only women were allowed in the temple and they had to enter barefooted.<sup>164</sup>

#### IV. SUMMARY

The Greek culture greatly influenced Paul and the rest of the world. By studying world history, one can see the great influence that the Greeks had on the world. The Greek empire was extensive throughout the European continent. Paul was traveling throughout these areas which were influenced by Greek religion and culture. He was preaching to people who were influenced by the Greek myths and had been taught these myths from childhood. By looking at what was happening in Acts, one can see references that illustrate that Paul was preaching to people who were greatly influenced by Greek culture. Paul was preaching during the time that Greek influence was at its height. Due to the spread of the Greek myths, it became very difficult for Paul's ministry to be successful. This is evidenced in Acts 17 which says that some sneered at the teaching of Paul. People believed in these myths and because of this, it became a barrier to Paul's ministry.

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<sup>163</sup>Ibid, p. 81.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid.

## Chapter IV

### THE APOSTLE PAUL AND HIS MINISTRY

#### I. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a general survey was made of the apostle Paul and his ministry. Various resources and biographies were used in order to analyze the apostle Paul and his ministry as it related to Acts 17:16-34. This study included the conversion of the apostle Paul and then continued on after his conversion. Also interwoven into the analysis of the apostle Paul was an investigation of his ministry and how it relates to the importance of the passage in Acts 17:16-34. Various interpretations were studied in order to obtain a general survey of the apostle Paul and his ministry.

#### II. THE APOSTLE PAUL

##### Personal Details

Background. Paul was born and raised in a strict Jewish family which lived among the Diaspora.<sup>1</sup> The city of Tarsus, where he was born, was the capital city of the region and the Roman province of Cilicia.<sup>2</sup> Tarsus was

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<sup>1</sup>D.M.G. Stalker, trans., Paul, by Günther Bornkamm (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1971) , p.3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

located close to the Mediterranean Sea at the edge of the Tarsus Mountains. During Paul's time, Tarsus was considered to be a trade and commerce center. It was also considered to be a flourishing Hellenistic center.<sup>3</sup> The city of Tarsus was quite impressive to the onlooker. Tarsus lacked some of the splendor of Ephesus and was not as highly favored as the city of Corinth. Tarsus contained several paved streets, elaborate bridges, and exclusive baths and fountains.<sup>4</sup>

The Jewish law prescribed that a boy begin the study of the Hebrew Scriptures at the age of five years and then begin the study of the Law at age ten.<sup>5</sup> Most likely Paul was immersed as a boy in such a curriculum as well as being taught in the synagogue school and at home.<sup>6</sup> Jewish sentiment also asserted the nobleness of manual labor, and advised that scholarship and physical activity go hand in hand.<sup>7</sup>

It is highly regrettable that no record concerning the background of the head of the household into which

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Richard Longenecher, The Ministry and Message of Paul, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), p. 21.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

Paul was born has been found. The background about Paul's father, beyond the fact that he was a Pharisee, a tent-maker,<sup>8</sup> and presumably a man of some financial standing in the city of Tarsus, can only be speculation.<sup>9</sup> From the fact that he was a free-born Roman citizen,<sup>10</sup> it is assumed that he must have belonged to one of the old Jewish families that had taken up its residence in Tarsus at the time of early colonization.<sup>11</sup> Readers of the New Testament have discovered that one of Paul's most important advantages was his Roman citizenship (Acts 22:28).

At the age of thirteen, a Jewish boy became a bar mitzvah ("son of the commandment"), at which time he took upon himself the full obligation of the Law and the more promising boys were directed into a rabbinic school under able teachers.<sup>12</sup> There is a deep controversy over the time when Paul came to Jerusalem. One side of the controversy suggest that Acts 22:3 be punctuated as follows: "Brought up in this city (Jerusalem), at the feet of Gamaliel educated according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers." This would allow for a residence

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<sup>8</sup>It is assumed the father was a tentmaker for the reason that we know Paul was, and it was the Jewish custom for sons to follow their father's trade or profession.

<sup>9</sup>Roy L. Smith, From Saul to Paul, The Making of an Apostle, (Nashville, Tennessee: Tidings, 1962), p. 20.

<sup>10</sup>Citizenship could be acquired by an outright purchase or by being born into a family with hereditary citizenship rights.

<sup>11</sup>Smith, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup>Longenecker, p. 22.

in Jerusalem prior to this rabbinic training and would tend to discount Tarsian influence in his rearing.<sup>13</sup> The other side of the controversy feels the following is a more appropriate interpretation. "Brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated according to the law of our fathers" (as NASB and RSV), which would associate his coming to Jerusalem with his rabbinic instruction.<sup>14</sup> This writer would adhere to the latter interpretation as it appears to be more logical.

The Aramaic vernacular would have been the language of Paul's home. He would have spoken this in his later days as freely as a native of Palestine. Paul also would have learned the ancient Hebrew which was the original language of the Sacred Scriptures.<sup>15</sup> Greek was the language of a Hellenistic community, and it was the Septuagint version of the Scriptures that the Jews of Tarsus employed.<sup>16</sup> The child's lesson book was the Scriptures, and his life long familiarity with it was evidenced by his ability to quote from it later on in his years.<sup>17</sup> The education of the young Jewish boy was quite unique and very thorough. The first three or four years was the instruction in the fundamentals; and then at the age of ten, he was engaged

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>David Smith, The Life and Letters of St. Paul, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1969), p. 22.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. Schürer, The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, II. ii. p. 49.

<sup>17</sup>Smith, p. 22.



in learning the Law.<sup>18</sup> Due to the scarcity of books in those days when they were only transcribed by hand, and due to the difficulty of working the cumbersome scrolls, the method was, as it is still in the East,<sup>19</sup> oral repetition (mishnah).<sup>20</sup> The learning process was long and hard but it became quite effective as one could see by looking at the history of Paul. Also with Paul's religious teaching, he was also taught the trade of tent-making. This served to be quite useful in the latter life of Paul. It is believed that tent-making had a thriving industry located at Tarsus. Cilicia abounded in goats and their hair was woven into a stout fabric called cilicium. This served as tent-curtains.<sup>21</sup>

During Paul's early years, he studied under Gamaliel. Gamaliel, the Elder, was the grandson of Hillel the great, who had been distinguished by the gentleness of his disposition and the liberality of his sentiments.<sup>22</sup> Gamaliel was a philosopher and a very strict Pharisee who was devoted to the Law and loyal to his nation.<sup>23</sup> After

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<sup>18</sup>The curriculum of a child's education from its commencement in the home until manhood was thus defined (Aboth, V. 21, appendix): 'At five years old he comes to the reading of Scripture, at ten to mishnah, at thirteen to the practice of the commands, at fifteen to talmud (doctrine) at eighteen to marriage.' Cf. Schurer, II. ii. p. 52.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Walter Tyndale, An Artist in Egypt, p. 107.

<sup>20</sup>Smith, p. 23.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Schürer, II. i. p. 44.

<sup>22</sup>Smith, p. 28.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

Paul's instruction under the great Gamaliel, he left the rabbinical college as a well disciplined teacher with a very pious attitude as seen in Paul's enthusiasm in destroying Christians.<sup>24</sup>

### The Martyrdom of Stephen

Background. Gigantic things had been taking place in the Holy Land during Saul's sojourn at Tarsus. At the age of fifteen Saul was at the House of Interpretation (a school of learning), while our Lord was living in Nazareth and earning His daily bread in a carpenter's shop. The years passed and in the spring of A.D. 26 Jesus was manifested at Bethany beyond Jordan as the Messiah, the Promised Savior, and entered on His public ministry; and in the spring of A.D. 29, He was crucified on Calvary and raised from the dead on the third day.<sup>25</sup> Most likely this news had reached Saul. Saul, being a pious Jew, had come to Jerusalem to attend the passover; and he would certainly attend the synagogue of the Cilicians and Asians, and hear Stephen's arguments and bear his part in the argument.<sup>26</sup> In the sharp encounter, Saul found himself no match for the Holy Spirit. In reality, it was a humiliating experience for Saul and his friends. They became advocates of the devil and would not acknowledge the truth. They raised the cry of blasphemy, and proceeded to indict Stephen before the Sanhedrin.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Smith, p. 34.

<sup>26</sup>Smith, p. 41.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

Their charge was announced and they produced witnesses to substantiate their false claims. They accused Stephen of blasphemy and proceeded to bring Stephen to justice before the Sanhedrin. They specifically charged Stephen with the attempt to overthrow the Temple and the supersession of the Law.<sup>28</sup> Of course, one can read the defense of Stephen in Acts. Saul was present at the scene of the crime. It is felt by this writer that Saul was definitely in agreement with the murder of Stephen as he held the garments of others while they stoned Stephen. Saul, as did the others, saw Stephen as a threat to them and their beliefs. They needed him out of their way.

### The Conversion of Paul

Background. Saul was traveling to Damascus to extradite and persecute Christians when he was suddenly struck by a great light from heaven. According to the account in Acts, one discovers that as Saul was approaching Damascus, a sudden light flashed around him and he fell to the ground. Saul heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"<sup>29</sup> Saul responded, "Who art Thou Lord?"<sup>30</sup> And He responded, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting."<sup>31</sup> He was told to arise and enter the

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>The New American Standard Bible, (Carol Stream, Illinois: Creation House, Inc., 1971), Acts 9:4.

<sup>30</sup>Acts 9:5.

<sup>31</sup>Acts 9:5.

city, and he would be told what to do.<sup>32</sup> Stricken with blindness for three days, Paul was residing at the home of a man named Judas who lived on "the street called Straight," when a Christian disciple by the name of Ananias was sent by God to minister to him.<sup>33</sup> It was through Ananias that Paul's sight was restored, he was baptized as a Christian, and further instructions were given to him concerning God's purpose for his life.<sup>34</sup>

Paul's Ministry Begins. After the conversion of Paul he spent three years in Arabia and Damascus. Since the Jews seem to have been very antagonistic in Damascus, it is probable that he spent the larger part of the time in Arabia.<sup>35</sup> There is some speculation as to the length of time Paul spent in Arabia and Damascus. His final departure from Damascus was hastened by the intense hostility among the Jews in the city.<sup>36</sup> As Paul was beginning to mature in the Lord, he "increased in strength and they took counsel to kill him."<sup>37</sup> According to the account in Acts 9:25, his friends helped him escape over the wall

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<sup>32</sup>Acts 9:6.

<sup>33</sup>Longenecker, pp. 31-32.

<sup>34</sup>Longenecker, p. 32.

<sup>35</sup>Benjamin Willard Robinson, The Life of Paul, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1936) , p. 60.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, p. 61.

<sup>37</sup>Acts 9:23.

by letting him down in a basket. After his escape from Damascus, Paul attempted to join the disciples in Jerusalem but was not readily accepted. The disciples were afraid of Paul because of his past history. Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how, on the road, he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. Barnabas told how Paul had also been with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. He continued telling the disciples how Paul had been talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews, but they were attempting to put him to death. When the disciples learned of the plot of the Hellenistic Jews to murder Paul, they brought him down to Caesarea and then sent him away to Tarsus.<sup>38</sup>

The next mention of Paul comes to us in Chapter 13. In the second verse, the Holy Spirit spoke the following words: "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."<sup>39</sup> This commission by the Holy Spirit was the beginning of Paul's and Barnabas' first missionary journey. After a time of fasting and prayer, Paul and Barnabas left to begin their journey.<sup>40</sup> According to further information in the Acts account, Paul and Barnabas left the assembly and went down to Seleucia and from there

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<sup>38</sup>Acts 9:25-90.

<sup>39</sup>Acts 13:2.

<sup>40</sup>Acts 13:3.

they sailed to Cyprus.<sup>41</sup> In Chapter 13, Paul's experiences on the island of Cyprus can be read. After ministering in Cyprus, they set sail from Paphos and sailed for Perga in Pamphylia.<sup>42</sup> After they arrived at Perga, John left them and returned to Jerusalem.<sup>43</sup> Continuing on with the First Missionary Journey, Paul went on to Pisidian, Antioch; Iconium; Lystra; and Derbe. In these various cities, he encountered opposition due to his religious faith in Jesus Christ. Paul was being persecuted immensely due to his teaching and preaching.<sup>44</sup> After leaving Antioch, they came through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia.<sup>45</sup> After preaching the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia and then from there they sailed to Antioch.<sup>46</sup> After their arrival in Antioch, they gathered the church together and then began to report the things that had taken place on their journey.<sup>47</sup> After a lengthy visit, Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem due to the dissension that had arisen over circumcision.<sup>48</sup> After they sojourned in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas began discussing a return visit to the brethren

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<sup>41</sup>Acts 13:4.

<sup>42</sup>Acts 13:13.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Acts 13:14.

<sup>45</sup>Acts 14:24.

<sup>46</sup>Acts 14:25-26.

<sup>47</sup>Acts 14:27.

<sup>48</sup>Acts 15:2.

in the various cities where they had previously preached. They agreed on the journey but then a problem began to arise. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them whereas Paul did not want him to come along. There arose such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another and Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus, whereas Paul chose Silas and departed and headed for Syria.

After the contention between Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Silas began the Second Missionary Journey. After leaving Antioch, Paul and Silas traveled through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches.<sup>49</sup> Their journey consisted of traveling through Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia, and Galatia. It also included travels through Troas, Samothrace, Neapolis, and Philippi.<sup>50</sup> Various happenings took place throughout these cities, but they were not part of this research. After leaving Philippi and their problems behind, they traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, Thessalonica and Berea. After leaving Berea, Paul was at Athena waiting for Silas and Timothy to come. While he was waiting, his spirit became provoked as he was beholding the city full of idols. After leaving Athens, they came to Corinth.<sup>51</sup> The rest of Paul's journeys are found in the Appendix. Paul's three journeys are mapped out in the Appendix section of this research.

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<sup>49</sup>Acts 15:35-41.

<sup>50</sup>Acts 15:41 - 16-12.

<sup>51</sup>Acts 18.

### III. SUMMARY

In this chapter, the background and ministry of Paul has been discussed. Several resources were consulted in an attempt to analyze the apostle Paul and his ministry along with how it would have come about that he would have been in Athens in Acts 17:16-34.



## Chapter V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### I. SUMMARY

The summation of the major findings of the entire study, the conclusions arrived at on the basis of those findings, and the suggestions for further study, were recorded in this chapter.

It was the purpose of this investigation to determine the significance of Acts 17:16-34 by developing an exposition of this passage and studying the uniqueness of Paul's ministry as it relates to the historical and religious background of the Athenians.

This study has proved beneficial and worthwhile. Earlier, Chapter II showed the importance of knowing Greek and being able to translate into English some truths of the Greek text.

Chapter III was an attempt to show the importance of Greek culture and how it differed from the ministry of the Apostle Paul. This chapter was helpful in showing the difference between Paul and the Homeric Pantheon.

Chapter IV dealt with the background and life of the Apostle Paul and how his ministry fell within the scope of the text in Acts 17:16-34.

## II. CONCLUSIONS

There were several conclusions that were arrived at as a result of the entire investigation. It was concluded that studying the Greek is very important to the life of the minister. That is, unless one can do an exposition of a passage in the Greek text itself, he will have certain limitations in his ministry which could include interpretations of scripture.

The historical study made in this research was most rewarding. Paul was preaching throughout the Greek world and he was constantly dealing with people who were influenced by Greek religion and culture.

The Apostle Paul was a man of God and he was acquainted with the Greek way of life. This helped him to be able to withstand many hardships and problems which related to the Greek culture as they arose within his life. He was a man acquainted with grief and he knew that Christ was the only answer to the problems of the day.

The God of the Apostle Paul was far superior to the deities of the Greeks.

Jesus Christ is the Savior of mankind, and no other gods can compare to His lovingkindness, His gentleness, and His supreme nature.

## III. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The writer concluded this research with both a sense of satisfaction and a sense of need for further

information. The research made within this study has greatly added to the knowledge of this writer and hopefully will add to his storehouse of Biblical knowledge for further use. At the same time, however, this writer was aware that this research was not exhaustive. A thorough and more complete study could be made of the Classical Myths and how they relate to the New Testament. Also, an inductive study could be made of the entire Acts account. This could include information concerning the meaning and background of the Apostle Paul and his relationship to the Greek world.



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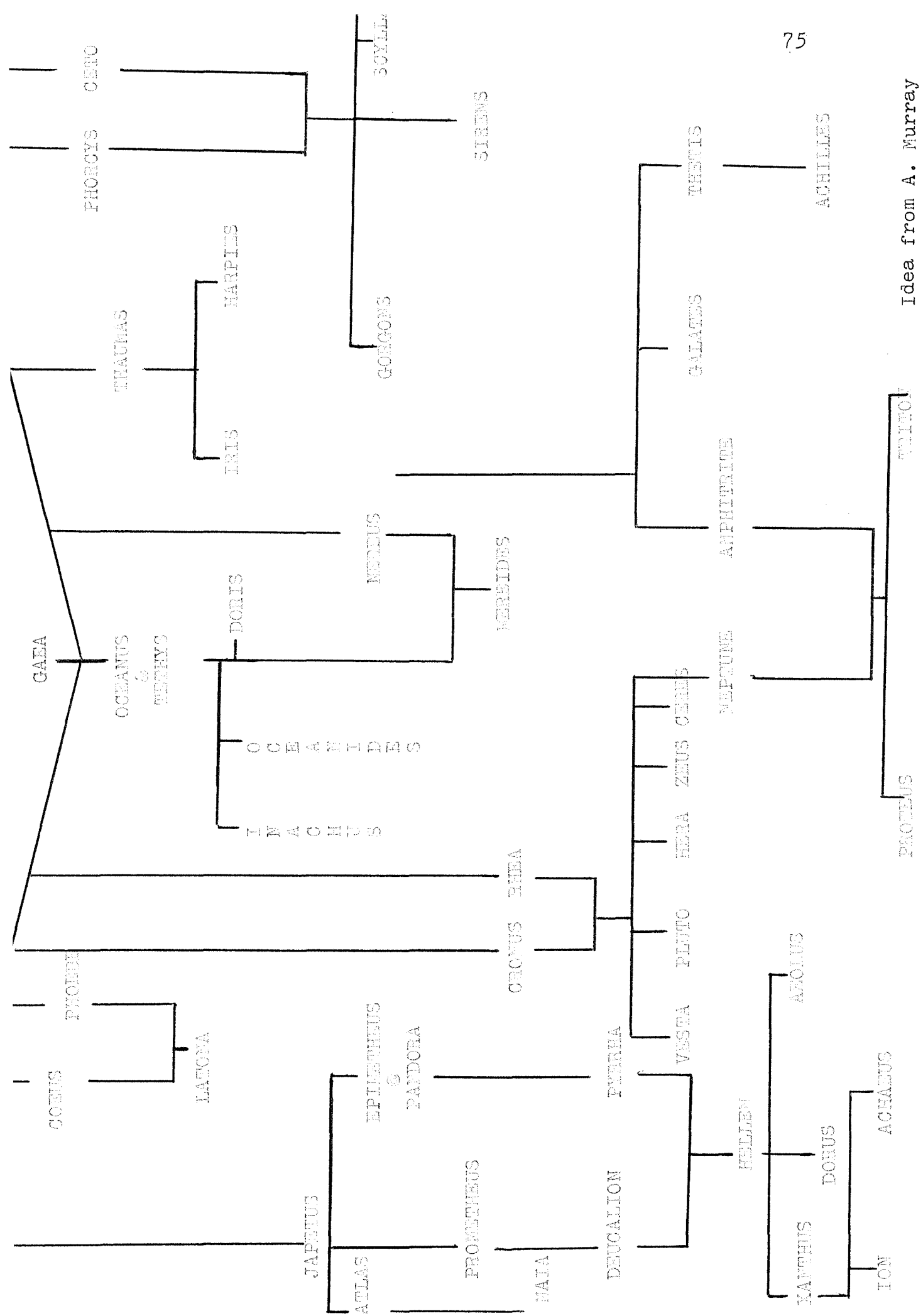
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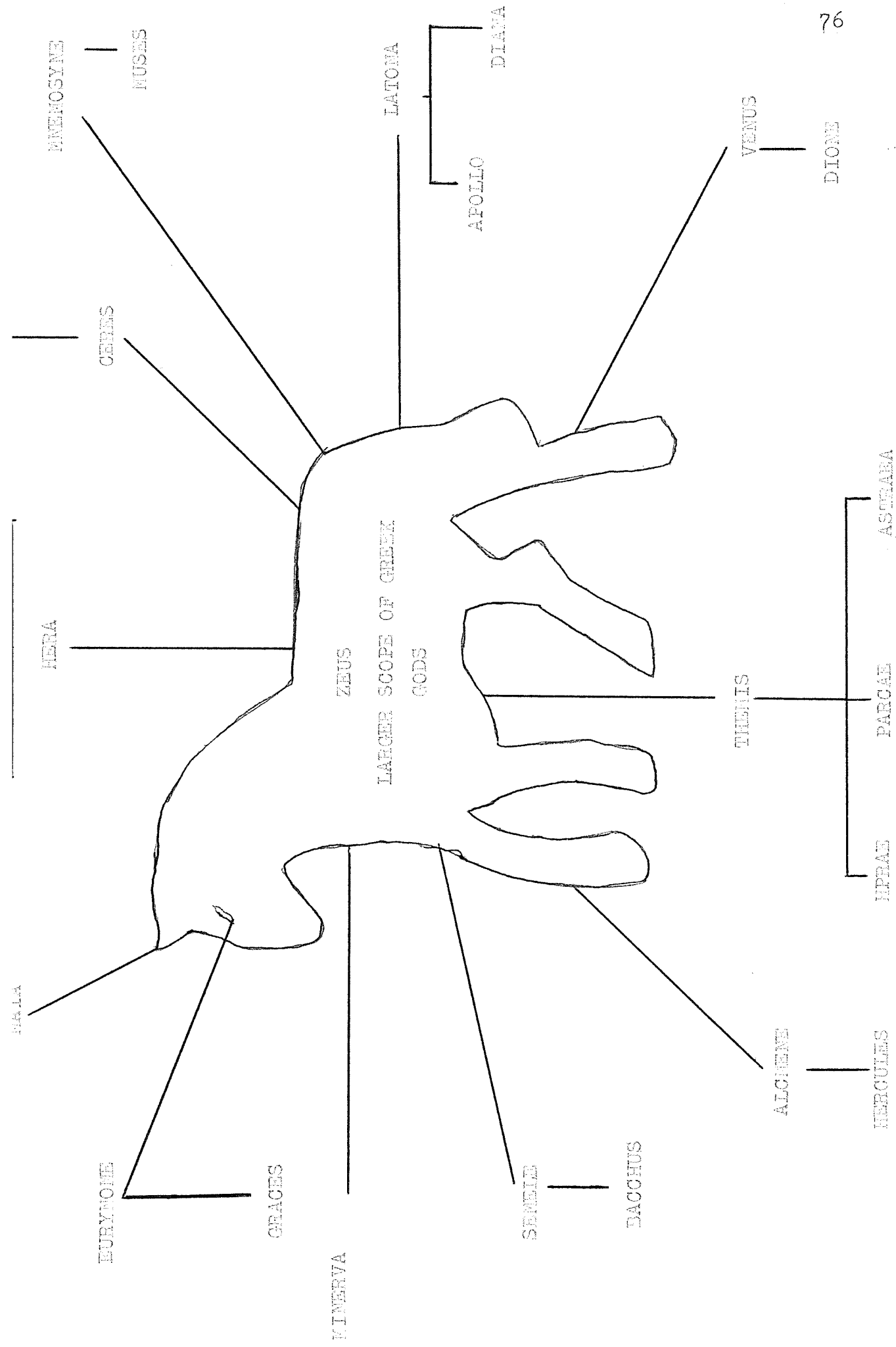
## APPENDICES



THE HOMERIC PANTHEONGREEK NAMESROMAN NAMES

ZEUS*****	JUPITER
HERA*****	JUNO
POSEIDON*****	NEPTUNE
DEMETER*****	CERES
APOLLO*****	APOLLO
ARTEMIS*****	DIANA
HEPHAESTUS*****	VULCAN
ATHENE*****	MINERVA
ARES*****	MARS
APHRODITE*****	VENUS
HERMES*****	MERCURY
HESTIA*****	VESTA





Idea from A. murray

Paul's  
First Journey

THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

