

**Approaches of Modern Literary Criticism
To
Paul's Speech At The Areopagus (Act 17:16-34):
An Evaluation**



(Apostle Paul delivering his sermon at the Areopagus in Athens, by Raphael Sanzio, 1515. © UK, Victoria and Albert Museum / V&A Prints id: 319980)

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PREFACE

The writing of a thesis is not an easy task. For me it represents the beginning of a new journey in the field of academics. It is, if I may say so, a touch of a well of knowledge, which allows one to experience new and profound things. It is the time when one is challenged and at the same time inspired to continue to search deeper and deeper within the hope that certain knowledge can be attained. At the end of such a venture, one finds himself wondering at the sight of such great knowledge and shocked that all it was achieved represents only a touch of the surface of the well.

The writing of such a work would not have been possible without God's help and the support of those people who in his providence have been brought into my life. I am grateful to God for each one of them. I would like to thank especially Dr. M. Ruf and Prof. Dr. A. Merz, who have been a constant source of encouragement and support throughout my studies at Utrecht University, as well as during the process of the writing of this thesis. The final product of this work is due to their assistance, too.

In addition to my professors, I would also like to thank Mr. Ariel Barrera who by his reading of this thesis helped me overcome my poor English. I am especially grateful to my lovely wife Ligia who has always been beside me during this time and has comforted me in the hardest moments of this past year.

I regard this thesis as a great opportunity that has been offered to me to expand my knowledge in the Christian Scriptures and to come to a greater appreciation of the word of God.

Dragos-Stefanita Manea,

Badhoevedorp, June 2011

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PART ONE – INTRODUCTION

The Areopagus Speech is probably one of the most interesting and disputed passages of the entire Scripture. At the basis of this account lies a speech that, according to Luke in the book of Acts, Apostle Paul delivered in Athens (i.e., Areopagus) before some of the most cultured people of the Greco-Roman world. This narrative becomes interesting and at the same time attractive for scholars of the Acts of the Apostles for it encloses an eye-catching language. Intertextual allusions in relation to the Hebrew Scriptures and to Greek secular literature have often been noticed. On this basis, from the earliest times onwards scholars of the Scriptures have attempted to study Paul's speech on different grounds.

References to Paul's speech in Acts 17 can be traced from the earliest times onwards in the writings of scholars of the Scriptures. Since the Post-Apostolic Period, an interest in this speech, or parts of it, has been manifested. Throughout time, this piece of work has been examined using different methods of interpretation. The aim of this thesis is to offer insight into one of the most recent methods of interpretation used in examining the Areopagus Speech, namely modern literary criticism.¹ This thesis asks how the rise of modern literary criticism among scholars of Acts has contributed to the interpretation of Luke's Areopagus narrative. In other words, it is examined whether the rise of modern literary criticism looked anew in the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech, and whether such an assessment has indeed come with new insights in relation to Paul's speech. In order to accomplish the task,² this thesis focuses on four main chapters.²

As the first part is the general introduction of the thesis, the second part attempts to introduce the reader to a global perspective on examination of the Areopagus Speech. Examples from literature that take into consideration either parts, or a full-length of the text of Paul's speech are offered. These examples cover a vast period of time, namely from the second century A. D. up to the 1970s, when the rise of modern literary criticism became prominent in the study of the Acts of the Apostles. Hence, a Post-Apostolic, a Protestant Reformation, and a Critical Period interests in the Areopagus Speech are examined in this second part.

¹ "The approach known since 1910 by the umbrella designation of *new (literary) criticism*, sometimes bluntly called 'the' synchronic approach, is typical of the English-speaking contribution to biblical interpretation. Not so much a method as a basket of methods working broadly along common lines, it was appropriated in biblical interpretation especially in America. Paralleled by related Israeli and European literary approaches (e.g., Y. Zakovitsch, the German 'Werkinterpretation,' L. Alonso-Scholke [stylistics of poetry], and J.P. Fokkelman [stylistics of narrative]), North American scholarship continues to play a leading role in this field." See, J. A. Loader, "Twentieth Century Interpretation," *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation*, ed. S. E. Porter (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 375.

² That is without counting the Introduction (part one) and the Conclusion (part six).

In the third part, particular attention is paid to five modern literary approaches and to their influence in the interpretation of Acts 17:16-34. These are: B. Witherington – an ancient rhetorical analysis of Acts 17:16-34; M. L. Soards – as analysis of Acts 17:16-34 in light of the other speeches in Acts; K. D. Litwak – a framing in discourse analysis of Acts 17:16-34; C. H. Talbert – an ancient biography analysis of Acts 17:16-34; and R. C. Tannehill – a narrative unity analysis of Acts 17:16-34. Alongside a representation of the work of these scholars, this chapter also presents a short overview of the focus of modern literary critics in interpreting the Acts of the Apostles.

At the center of the fourth part lies an investigation of how the new literary methods of interpretation contribute to an understanding of the Areopagus Speech. An examination of five authors and their work has led to an identification of new aspects that literary criticism brings about for an interpretation of Paul's speech. Some of these more important aspects are pointed out in this chapter. In addition, some pitfalls of modern literary criticism in relation to an analysis of the Areopagus Speech are also listed in this chapter.

The fifth part of this thesis attempts to take the new aspects that modern literary criticism elevates for an interpretation of the Areopagus Speech and examine them in light of the previous findings from the second part of the thesis. Interpretive aspects from the period before the 1970s that resemble modern literary criticism are taken into comparison with those aspects beginning with 1970. Such an assessment endeavors to provide a better picture of how modern literary criticism looked anew in assessing Paul's speech, and whether it differentiates itself from older interpretations of this text.

Finally, the concluding chapter (i.e., part six) lists the main findings of the thesis. In this section, a critical acclaim of the results of modern literary criticism is offered.

PART TWO – A HISTORICAL SURVEY

2.0 A Short Survey in the History of Interpretation of Acts 17:16-34

It did not take much time for the writings of the New Testament to be accepted and acknowledged as authoritative texts. Beginning with the second century A. D. onwards, the New Testament writings became equal in recognition with the Old Testament writings. Because of this recognition, Christian writers began to use extensive portions of the New Testament in their works. Unfortunately, it is not precisely known how great the interest of the first Christian writers in the book of the Acts of the Apostles was. In fact, a total number of nineteen works referring to or commenting on (parts of) the book of Acts are all that remain from the second century up to the fifteenth century.³ These nineteen works came to us in the form of homilies and commentaries. It is necessary to say that not all of these writings paid attention to the Areopagus Speech. The only complete work on the Acts of the Apostles from this time is that of John Chrysostom. Some of these works treat only a portion of the Areopagus Speech (e.g., Thomas Aquinas) and do not endeavor to present a full examination of the text. The fifteenth century marked a renewed interest in the book of Acts. With the birth of the Protestant Reformation, the interest in the Acts of the Apostles increased and the number of commentaries and works on this theme expanded. However, as it will be shown later in this chapter, it is in the eighteenth century and forward that marked an explosive interest in the interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles and implicitly of the Areopagus Speech.

The subsequent lines will first highlight the work of the Post-Apostolic Christian exegetes on the Areopagus Speech. This will not exhaust all the opinions on the matter but it endeavors to present some of them. Christian exegetes, such as Justin Martyr, Ambrose of Milan, John Chrysostom, and Thomas Aquinas are taken into consideration in this chapter. This study, then, will continue with an examination of writers from the Reformation Period. The works of John Calvin and John A. Bengel in relation to the Areopagus Speech will be analyzed. Finally, this chapter will be concluded with an examination of some scholars of the eighteenth century up to the 1970s, which marked the rise of modern literary criticism. In this chapter, no attempts will be made to provide an exhaustive survey of the interpretation of Acts 17:16-34. Instead, the focus of this study will be limited to a number of authors that I have considered important for this section.

³ W. W. Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1989), 7. Among these authors are: Origen, Didymus the Blind, Eusebius, John Chrysostom. For a complete list of the nineteen authors, see, Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 7.

2.1 The Pre-Critical Era: A Post-Apostolic Interest

In the period following the Apostolic Era there are a number of Christian authors who manifested an interest in Paul's speech at the Areopagus. Some of those were Justin Martyr, Ambrose of Milan, John Chrysostom, and Thomas Aquinas. These authors, together with their writings are going to be explored in order to see an interpretation of Acts 17:16-34 in the time prior to the Reformation. At this point, no attempts will be made in critiquing on their views of Acts 17:16-34. Instead, this section will only inspect their knowledge of such a text alongside with their interest in examining it.

Justin Martyr (ca. 110 - ca. 165 A. D.) was a Gentile Christian teacher who before his conversion to Christianity spent valuable time in philosophy searching for the true meaning of life.⁴ He is one of the first Christian authors from the Post-Apostolic Period who displayed knowledge of Acts 17:16-34 in his writings. More specifically, in his *Second Apology*⁵ addressed to the Roman Senate, Justin Martyr appears to display knowledge of Paul's speech at the Areopagus. This is most evident in the way Justin describes Socrates' teaching in terms that remind of Acts 17 (i.e., 'unknown God'). Due to this fact, there is a great probability that Justin (*II. Apol.* 10.5-6) talks in his accounts about the same situation recorded by Luke in Acts 17:23. Justin seems to see Socrates as a kind of an apostle sent to Athens to preach there about the divinity that is ignored. His contemporaries mainly rejected Socrates' proclamation on the grounds that he was introducing new gods, and by that, he did not manifest recognition of the gods of the state. In consequence, Socrates ended up in front of the Athenian tribunal being charged for introducing new divinities.

Justin Martyr's account of Socrates resembles very much Luke's account of Paul before the Areopagus.⁶ This may be an echo of a common practice of the Greco-Roman world in the Lucan Areopagus Speech. Paul, as Socrates, preached the Word of God to the Athenians, ended up in front of a council, was inquired about his message, and finally the God that he proclaimed was rejected. The similarity between the two accounts testifies about the fact that Justin Martyr may have thought of Luke's report as a means to establish a connection between Christian revelation

⁴ A. Roberts, and J. Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1950), 159-160.

⁵ Justin Martyr's *Apologies* (I & II) are the earliest extant writings written on behalf of the Christians. See, Roberts, and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 160.

⁶ E. Haenchen observed decisive references in *I Apol.* 50:12 of Justin Martyr and the book of Acts, and considers that there are grounds to attribute *II. Apol.* 10.6 to the influence of Acts 17:23. See, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The West Minister Press, 1971), 8-9. M. Marcovich takes into account that Justin Martyr's speech may allude to Acts 17:23. *Iustini Martyris Apologiae pro Christianis Dialogus cum Tryphone* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 28. Nonetheless, the opinions are divided on Justin Martyr's knowledge of the Areopagus Speech. A. Gregory considers that "the question as to whether Justin here draws on Lukan tradition or merely on common Christian ones remains unresolved." See, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus: Looking for Luke in the Second Century* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 321.

and pagan understanding of that revelation. According to Justin Martyr, the Greeks had a certain understanding of the true God, yet because this was limited, they often contradicted themselves (*II. Apol.* 10.3). Justin observes that even Socrates, who drew the attention of the Athenians to the unknown God, had a partial knowledge of God. Thus, if Justin Martyr had in mind Paul's speech when he wrote his second apology, he must have interpreted some aspects of the content of the speech in terms of natural revelation by strictly relating it to examples from the Greco-Roman world.

The Areopagus Speech continued to be examined in the fourth century in the writings of Ambrose of Milan. Ambrose of Milan (ca. 339 - ca. 397 A. D.) was a well-educated Christian and a bishop of Milan.⁷ He was trained in law and manifested a real interest in the ecclesiastical and liturgical life of the Church. In his works, which contain dogmatic treatises, ethical works, sermons, and letters written to different people and on different occasions, he used ideas as well as extensive quotations from Acts 17:16-34. One of the most prominent quotations of Ambrose from Acts 17:16-34 is found in his letter to Horontianus (*XLIII.* 10).⁸ In this letter, Ambrose answers Horontianus' concerns with regard to the sacred narrative (e.g., why man, the highest work of God's creation, was made the last).⁹ In order to answer these concerns, Ambrose made use of the text of the Scriptures, both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In his opinion, a man although created the last is the greatest being – 'the dearest and the nearest to Him' (*XLIII.* 11). As a way to prove that, Ambrose made use of different passages from the Scriptures among which is also Acts 17:27-28. He used these verses to describe the relation of a human being with his/her Creator. In this letter, Ambrose employed Acts 17:27-28 to point to men's origin and to serve as a confirmation that men are indeed created in the image of God; hence, men are God's offspring. As beings created in the image of God, humans are rational responsible persons with a strong ability to search for God. According to Ambrose, the 'rational nature' inherited within a person is what makes one seek for God. The presence of such ideas indicates that Ambrose was aware that the Areopagus Speech includes aspects of natural revelation.

Further on, at the end of the fourth century and beginning of the fifth century John Chrysostom provided Christianity with a full-length exegetical assessment of the Areopagus Speech. Chrysostom (ca. 347 – 407 A. D.) was a well-known preacher of his time.¹⁰ He is especially renowned for his series of exegetical sermons. An important number of these sermons came down to us, of which a complete series of homilies on Acts can be mentioned. When one gets together all

⁷ M. Wiles, *Church Fathers*, Encyclopedia of Christianity, ed. J. Bowden (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 254.

⁸ See, *The Letters of S. Ambrose*, A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, Anterior to the Division of the East and West: Translated by the Members of the English Church (Oxford: James Parker & Co., and Rivingstons, 1881), 291.

⁹ *The Letters of S. Ambrose*, 287.

¹⁰ Wiles, *Church Fathers*, 256-257.

these sermons in a single book, they form the earliest full commentary on the Acts of the Apostles that we presently have. It is little wonder that John Chrysostom's homilies on Acts are often called by scholars 'A Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles.'¹¹

Due to Chrysostom's interest in the book of Acts, a complete assessment of Acts 17:16-34 is enclosed in his homilies number XXXVIII and XXXIX. When one examines these two homilies, it can be observed that Chrysostom's manner of interpreting was mainly exegetical with an emphasis on relating the content of a sermon to the life and faith of that time. For example, Chrysostom's sermon on Acts 17:16-34 is divided in two parts: (1) the exegesis of the passage, and (2) the application of the content.

The first part, exegesis, consists of explaining to his audience the meaning of different words (e.g., δεισιδαιμονεστέρους, vs. 22), introducing the Stoics and Epicureans and their beliefs, illuminating some of the ideas that Luke/Paul used in the speech (e.g., was Paul on trial? Was the unknown God, Christ?), as well as making use of rhetorical literary categories to describe this speech (e.g., Paul's way of speaking is called 'encomium'). In his exegesis, when he refers to vss. 27-28, Chrysostom carefully makes a distinction between Christian and secular traditions, between what Greek poets said, and what Paul implied about these traditions. He sees that the secular, in the words of Aratus, speaks of Jupiter, whereas the spiritual, in the words of Paul (i.e., Scriptures), speaks of the true God. Chrysostom thinks that when Paul drew on these secular traditions, he used them to build on his argument that the pagan knowledge of divinities asserts some truth about the true God. However, that knowledge was not enough since Paul made that pagan truth explicit in vss. 24-26 when he explains to the Athenians the main doctrine about God. The second part of the sermon discusses the spiritual and moral application of the text. For such an appreciation of the text, Chrysostom at times made use of other passages from the Old and New Testaments (e.g., Ps 1:13; Rom 14:9; 1 Cor 2:14; 2 Cor 5:10) and engaged them to support a practical application of the text. For example, Chrysostom made use of Rom 14:9 (πάντες γὰρ παραστησόμεθα τῷ βήματι τοῦ θεοῦ) in order to show that the words spoken to the Athenians in Acts 17:30 (τὰ νῦν παραγγέλλει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντα πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν) apply to his audience at that time, too.

This kind of assessment of the text made Chrysostom's work superior to that of the previous exegetes studied so far in this chapter. His interpretation follows very closely the characteristics of the Antiochene Christianity that was more concerned with exegesis and not allegory.¹² Even though Chrysostom's exegesis should not be understood in terms of the modern expression of exegesis, his work remains very critical due to his methodology. It is clear that Chrysostom often

¹¹ S. Walton, *Acts, Theological Interpretation of the New Testament: A Book-by-Book Survey*, gen. ed. K. VanHoozer (Grand Rapids, Michigan: 2008), 74. See also, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. P. Schaff (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1980), 1.

¹² Wiles, *Church Fathers*, 257.

surpasses the borders of a text by differentiating between secular ideas (e.g., Aratus' sentence) and their re-use in Acts 17, as well as by engaging rhetorical literary categories (e.g., encomium) in his critical assessment. Nevertheless, he was concerned to prove that Paul's audience was exposed to a complete testimony of the Scriptures and to show how such a text could be applied to the daily Christian life. Chrysostom's commentary of the Areopagus Speech also resonates with a time in the interpretation of Paul's speech when natural revelation is not anymore that prominent but still present.

Moving into the thirteenth century, not much before the rise of Renaissance, the Areopagus Speech served as a model of interpreting the Scripture through the means of philosophy and reason for scholars such as Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225 - ca. 1274) was one of the most important philosophers and theologians of his time.¹³ As a Catholic Priest, Aquinas devoted his life to studying and writing. In this respect, he wrote many works of theology out of which the most influential is probably *The Summa Theologica*. *The Summa Theologica* is a work that encloses three parts: one is on God, one on ethics, and one on Christ.¹⁴ In the first part of *The Summa Theologica*, Aquinas made use of Acts 17:28, which is Luke/Paul's quote of Aratus: '*sicut et quidam poetarum vestrarum dixerunt, genus Dei sumus*' (ST. I.Art.8.2). This quotation is used in a context where Aquinas answers to the question whether sacred doctrines could be a matter of argument. According to Aquinas, the sacred doctrines make use of human reason in order for one to come to a clearer understanding of the holy teaching. At times, the sacred doctrines make use of the authority of philosophers, who in the past by natural reason were able to come to an understanding of the truth. A good example in this respect is Aratus, who was quoted by Paul in his sermon in order to emphasize that sacred doctrines indeed also use the authority of the philosophers apart from the canonical Scripture and the authority of the doctors of the Church. It seems that for Aquinas, Acts 17:28 was an example of natural revelation, which in the past had been beneficial for some philosophers and poets (e.g., Aratus) to come to a certain understanding of the truth and implicitly of God.

2.2 The Pre-Critical Era: A Protestant Reformation Interest

As it has been shown in the previous section of this chapter, the period preceding the Protestant Reformation does not reflect a great interest in the examining of Acts 17:16-34. A number of Christian authors did pay attention to the Areopagus Speech, but they did not exceed it with their interpretation.¹⁵ Furthermore, the interest in the book of Acts did not impress either; a number of

¹³ R. M. Hutchins, *Great Books of the Western World: Thomas Aquinas*, nr. 19, vol. 1 (Chicago/London/Toronto: William Benton Publisher, 1952), v-vi.

¹⁴ The third part of Aquinas' *The Summa Theologica* is an unfinished work.

¹⁵ Out of the nineteen works, only few of them mention Acts 17:16-34. The most important of them have been cited in the previous section, 2.1 *The Pre-Critical Era: A Post-Apostolic Interest*.

just nineteen authors manifested an interest in this New Testament book. However, beginning with the Protestant Reformation and continuing up to the nineteenth century, which culminated with the rise of historical criticism, the situation changed radically. It is worth mentioning that, from the Reformation up to the birth of historical criticism there are almost two-hundred works that dealt with the Acts of the Apostles.¹⁶ Among the most important writings on the Acts of the Apostles are the commentaries of John Calvin, John Lightfoot, Hugo Grotius, and John Bengel. As it was the case with the works from the Pre-Reformation Period, not all of these two-hundred writings from this period dealt necessarily with Acts 17:16-34. For instance, John Lightfoot's commentary on the New Testament does not treat chapter seventeen of the Acts of the Apostles at all.¹⁷ In this section of this chapter, the commentaries of scholars such as Calvin and Bengel will be taken into consideration.

John Calvin (1509 - 1564) was one of the most important theologians and exegetes of his time.¹⁸ Among his works, he wrote a commentary on the Acts of the Apostles.¹⁹ His commentary comes with an extensive assessment of Acts 17:16-34. Although Calvin wrote a few centuries before the rise of the Critical Era, his work on Paul's speech at the Areopagus is marked by a historical-grammatical method of interpretation. According to this method of interpretation, in examining a passage Calvin looked for the intended meaning of the author and for what the original readers would have understood. Concerned with what the author was trying to communicate in a text, Calvin did not show an appreciation for a mass of opinions, instead he focused on an exposition of the text. Farrar, in his lectures given at Oxford, compared Calvin's commentary with other Reformed writers' work (e.g., Zwingli, Pellicanus) and called to attention the fact that Calvin in his commentaries 'never drags his weary reader through a bewildering mass of opinions, of which some are absurd, the majority impossible, and of which all but one must be wrong.'²⁰ Farrar was convinced that Calvin's exposition is clearer than that of his contemporaries, and it focuses on the vital things that are voiced in the text. Calvin's method of approaching the Scriptures was considered at that time a very valuable tool that helped one to deepen his appreciation for the Scriptures over that of the masses.

¹⁶ Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 8.

¹⁷ John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*, vol. 4 Acts-1 Corinthians (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publication, 1989).

¹⁸ M. L. Mattox, *Reformation*, Encyclopedia of Christianity, ed. J. Bowden (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1012. For a detailed impression about Calvin as an exegete and theologian see, F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation: Eight Lectures Preached Before the University of Oxford in the year MDCCCLXXXV* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1886), 342 ff.

¹⁹ For this study, I used the English edition of Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, edited by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 2, trans. by J. W. Fraser (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1965).

²⁰ Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, 344.

When Calvin's commentary on Acts 17:16-34 is examined, one sees that he divides the Areopagus Speech between two persons, Luke and Paul. Luke is certainly the more prominent figure; he is the author of the narration. Paul, on the other hand, is the genuine author of the speech, which was then recorded by Luke in his work. Calvin is often concerned with what Luke really said about a person (e.g., Paul), a place (e.g., Athens) a philosophy (e.g., Epicureanism), or about Athenian's poets (e.g., Aratus).²¹ Nevertheless, he is also aware of Pauline features in the Lukan Greek language ('I grant that the apostles, according to the Hebrew idiom, often use the preposition *in* instead of *per*')²² and of extensive knowledge of Pauline concepts in his interpretation of the Areopagus Speech (i.e., Romans 1:20), thus, he considered the Lukan account an expression of the Pauline theology. Important for Calvin was the historical background in which elements of the speech occurred (e.g., Aratus' poem) as well as a grammatical and a theological consideration of the text. Of great value for Calvin was also to allow Luke to speak about the things he witnessed and to permit Paul to complement the Lukan account. A historical-grammatical interpretation required Calvin to pay attention to the author's choice of words in order to allow the text to speak for itself. For example, in his discussion of Acts 17:34 in relation to the outcome of Paul's sermon, Calvin's interpretation is straightforward following Luke's own words without adding unnecessary explanations that the text may not support: 'Since Luke names only one man and one woman, it appears that at the beginning the number of believers was small.'²³ However, Calvin does stop and discuss certain Greek words (e.g., δεῖσιδάμιον) that he considered of great importance for his audience in order to grasp a genuine understanding of Paul's speech. Although Calvin was aware of the presence of aspects of natural revelation in Acts 17:16-34, he is careful to communicate that the natural revelation serves as a guide towards God, and that the true knowledge of the divinity is a gift that comes from God.²⁴ Calvin thinks that Paul's speech does not focus on human ability to know God, but on the fact that Athenians are without excuse in the light of the evidences displayed to them. The writings of the Athenian poets indeed contain confessions about the true knowledge of God, yet Paul's audience purposely ignored it even after his speech.

The interest in the Areopagus Speech continued to be advanced by scholars other than Calvin. John A. Bengel (1687 - 1752) was a scholar of the Scriptures who 'launched the modern science of New Testament textual criticism' and the author of 'one of the most influential commentaries on the New Testament ever written.'²⁵ Written originally in Latin,²⁶ his commentary was as influential as Calvin's commentary; however, it was alleged as a better-polished work in terms of writing. As

²¹ Torrance, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 103-127.

²² Torrance, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 119.

²³ Torrance, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 127.

²⁴ Torrance, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 119.

²⁵ Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 15-16.

²⁶ In its original title *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*, published in 1734. I used for this study the English translation by C. T. Lewis and M. R. Vincent, *Bengel's New Testament Commentary*, vol. 1 Matthew-Acts (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel, 1981).

Gasque remarked when he talks about Bengel's work: 'Bengel has the gift of careful and exact expression... He used words sparingly ... choosing each expression carefully, until every sentence is a model of terse and polished expression.'²⁷ Throughout Bengel's commentary, evidences that he generally avoids long unnecessary discussions and refuses to debate with other commentators can be seen. Such an approach was used in order to allocate more space to what the text has to say and by that to allow a reader to grasp the full meaning of a text. The same approach is also applied when it comes to the interpretation of Acts 17:16-34. At times, he briefly comments on certain verses (e.g., vs. 20 is commented on in just over one line), and focuses more on those verses which can lead to far-reaching conclusions because of their linguistic and theological problems (e.g., vs. 23 is commented in two pages and a half).

Bengel's interpretation of Acts 17:16-34 takes place within an expository-historical framework, which provides a reader with well-organized and concise information about the text. The goal of this method of interpretation is to prove the author's theological or linguistic point of view with facts, as opposed to one's estimation of it. In his examination of the Areopagus Speech, Bengel observed that there are striking connections between ancient Greek literature and the canonical Scriptures together, and Acts 17:16-34. Bengel regards these connections as a valuable key for an interpretation of the Areopagus Speech. For instance, Bengel called to attention the fact that vs. 24 ('live in temples built by hands') may be a reminiscence of Stephen's speech in Acts 7:48 ('live in houses made by human hands'). Based on such findings, Bengel remarked that the Lukan Paul is somehow speaking like the Lucan Stephen. Also, the fact that vs. 26 ('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') resonates with Deut 32:8 ('When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided up humankind, he set the boundaries of the peoples, according to the number of the heavenly assembly') was highlighted. Advancing the information found in the book of Deuteronomy, Bengel touched on the point that this could be an evidence for the fact that the Areopagus Speech may as well be built up on reminiscences of Old Testament thought. Moreover, when he discusses about the inscription 'to an unknown god,' he detected that the text (Acts 17:16-34) supports allusions to ancient Greek literature, e.g., Epimenides' purification of Athens. In order to show that there are connections between Paul's speech and Epimenides, Bengel drew upon the work of Diogenes Laertius, a 3rd century Greek biographer. It seems that in the past, when the Athenian people experienced a pestilence, an unknown god was called upon to help with the plague. A Cretan philosopher named Epimenides taught the Athenian people a way to escape that pestilence: 'He took sheep of black and white fleeces, led them to the Areopagus, and allow to go from it whithersoever they pleased; instructing

²⁷ Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 16.

those who followed them to sacrifice each sheep wherever it lay down, *to the proper God*.²⁸ As a response to the Athenian request and to their recognition of that god, the plague ceased. Without a doubt, such literary parallel was valid for an interpretation of Paul's speech, since the chief value of Bengel's commentary stands in its exposition of the Scripture.²⁹ All the characters and places in the story have a history, and for Bengel details about their past were of great importance for a proper understanding of the Lucan account.

Bengel's expository-historical framework does not only show obvious connections between other literature and Acts, but also proves that all these connections are certainly important elements for the interpretation of Acts 17:16-34.³⁰ The importance of this commentary is even more significant when one keeps in mind that up to this point in time there were not many scholars of the Acts who attempted to interpret the Areopagus Speech in these terms.

2.3 The Critical Era: An Interest in Acts 17:16-34

The end of the eighteenth century marked a change in the interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles. Until this point in time, the tendency was to view the book of Acts as the history of the Christian Church. This traditional understanding of Acts began to weaken as the exegetes noticed more and more the fragmentary interpretation of the history presented by Luke in his work. In fact, the book was charged as presenting not the history of all the Apostles, but the history of Peter and Paul.³¹ Some scholars' view on Acts became even more critical as Paul's message was examined in relation to the things written in Paul's epistles. As a result of this attempt, the new criticism started to ask: 'What is the purpose of Acts?'³² The answer to this question divided the scholars of Acts in two groups, those who believed that Luke wrote generally to suit his purpose (tendency-criticism), and those who considered that Luke was unable to provide a better account (source-criticism).³³

This dispute marked the rise of the modern critical study of the book of Acts. The tendency-criticism was concerned with the understanding of Luke's goal when he wrote his account. The advocates of tendency-criticism, such as F. C. Baur (1792 - 1860) did not emphasize a critical interpretation of separate speeches such as the Areopagus Speech. Their main concern was the reconciliation of a biblical book with the purpose of the author. The advocates of source-criticism, however, did pay extra attention to the speeches in Acts. One major source critical volume is that

²⁸ Lewis and Vincent, *Bengel's New Testament Commentary*, 867.

²⁹ Lewis and Vincent, *Bengel's New Testament Commentary*, vi.

³⁰ As it will be further shown in this thesis, modern literary criticism also paid attention to connections between ancient literature and Acts.

³¹ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, 15.

³² Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 21.

³³ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, 15.

of A. von Harnack.³⁴ Harnack's focus in his commentary was mainly concentrated on clarifying the issue of sources in Luke's work, so the interpretation of Acts 17:16-34 in his work serves the purpose of answering the question of sources. This examination of the text tests the trustworthiness of the Lukan account. According to Harnack, the places described (i.e., Athens, Agora, Areopagus), the people mentioned (i.e., Epicureans, Stoics, Athenians, Damaris, Dionysius), the words used to describe people (Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ πάντες καὶ οἱ ἐπιδημοῦντες ξένοι εἰς οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἠὲ καίρου ἢ λέγειν τι ἢ ἀκούειν τι καινότερον cf., 17:21), and the knowledge of the poetical Greek quotations (e.g., Aratus), all testify of a cultured writer (i.e., Luke) who painted 'his portraits on a background of the very best tradition.'³⁵

Following Harnack's work and starting with M. Dibelius (1883 - 1947), a new critical method of interpretation has been applied to the book of Acts, namely form-criticism. Dibelius first applied this method to the Acts of the Apostles in 1923.³⁶ The idea behind this method was that at the back of the final form of the text of Acts small units of text are present. These small units form the authentic tradition of Acts; therefore, they should be first examined in order to do justice to a text in Acts. From this moment on, the history of interpretation of Acts has been marked by a time when the study of Acts 17:16-34 became of great interest to the scholars of the Acts of the Apostles.

Dibelius applied this critical method to both the narratives and the speeches in Acts. An analysis of Paul's speech at Areopagus³⁷ led Dibelius to affirm that this sermon is not necessarily Christian and only its conclusive part beginning with vs. 31 makes this message Christian.³⁸ In order to reach this conclusion, Dibelius divided Paul's speech in three units: the pre-speech unit, the speech unit, and the conclusion unit. Examining the speech thoroughly, Dibelius observed that the first part of the speech is in nature philosophical with an emphasis on Stoic ideas, the second unit is based on Old Testament ideas expressed in a Hellenistic language, and the conclusion unit is generally Christian, however best understood within a philosophical framework. Dibelius' approach has challenged very much scholars of the Acts of the Apostles and after his death in 1947, it set the agenda for further criticism of the speech.

The early 1950s marked the limits of form-criticism and the rise of a new approach in the interpretation of Acts, namely redaction-criticism. If form-criticism attempted to evaluate a text in smaller units, redaction-criticism was concerned with the entire material. A pioneer of redaction-criticism was H. Conzelmann. The famous speech at the Areopagus did not remain still in front of

³⁴ A. von Harnack, *The Acts of the Apostles*, trans. J.R. Wilkinson (New York: Putnam, 1909).

³⁵ Harnack, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 108.

³⁶ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, 35.

³⁷ M. Dibelius, "Paul on the Areopagus," *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. H. Greeven; trans. M. Ling (New York: Scribner's, 1956).

³⁸ Dibelius, *Paul on the Areopagus*, 56.

the new criticism. Scholars such as Conzelmann continued to pay attention to this text, however at this time from another angle. In his works: ‘*The Address of Paul on the Areopagus*,’³⁹ and commentary on Acts,⁴⁰ Conzelmann analyzed Paul’s speech within the framework of redaction-criticism. He set the premise that the Areopagus speech must be interpreted as the literary speech of Luke and not of Paul.⁴¹ Since Luke in his account drew upon Greco-Roman historiography, he certainly created what Paul must have said in any particular situation. So, according to Conzelmann, the question whether Luke ‘still had reliable reports about what Paul had actually said is only a secondary one.’⁴² The speech as a Lukan creation is also reinforced by the fact that the Areopagus speech does not reflect ideas and thoughts similar to those written in Paul’s epistles. Furthermore, Conzelmann paid particular attention to the similarities between Lukan expressions used in the Areopagus speech and those present in the Greco-Roman world. For example, the expression in vs. 23 (Ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ) is considered a Lukan redaction of texts such as that of Pausanias 1.1.4 (βωμοὶ δὲ θεῶν τε ὀνομαζομένων ἀγνώστων καὶ ἡρώων καὶ παίδων τῶν Θησέως καὶ Φαλήρου). This conclusion is supported by the fact that until today no inscription in that form has been discovered.

Following Conzelmann, E. Haenchen continued Dibelius’ work by using a type of form-criticism. Haenchen, unlike Dibelius, was interested in what is the real subject of Acts.⁴³ Starting from the premise that Acts is about λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ and its growth, he endeavors to interpret the book of Acts as Luke’s product concerning the Early Church. However, the point here is not that Luke’s account is not trustworthy, instead Haenchen emphasized that there is little evidence that Luke made use of written sources for his work, and a compilation of insufficient oral sources might have been used in his account. This is exactly what Haenchen proves when the Areopagus speech is examined. The narrative framework of Acts 17:16-34, he thinks, is composed of a diversity of insufficient oral sources, such as the following: ‘the many temples and images, the special religiosity of the Athenians, their philosophical schools, the Areopagus (hill and court!), the Socratic dialogues in the market place, the introduction of new gods, the Athenian curiosity.’⁴⁴ These sources united together in a narrative unit gave birth to Paul’s speech. The diversity of sources contributed more or less to create a universal picture of Athens, therefore Luke directs Paul’s message to the whole of Athens and not necessarily to a specific audience (e.g., Greco-Roman), philosophy (e.g., Stoic), or place (e.g., Areopagus). In conclusion, for Haenchen, the

³⁹ H. Conzelmann, “The Address of Paul on the Areopagus,” *Studies in Luke Acts*, ed. by L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

⁴⁰ H. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. J. Limberg, A. T. Kraabel, and D. H. Juel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

⁴¹ Conzelmann, *The Address of Paul on the Areopagus*, 218.

⁴² Conzelmann, *The Address of Paul on the Areopagus*, 218.

⁴³ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, 49.

⁴⁴ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, 527.

Areopagus speech becomes an ‘ideal scene’ that talks about a universal purpose that might be hard to translate into reality.⁴⁵

Successive to Haenchen, the study of Luke-Acts became ‘a storm center’ in the interpretation of the Acts of the Apostle.⁴⁶ Many commentaries and separate treatments of the Areopagus speech appeared on the academic market. Up to the 1970s, scholars such as Gartner,⁴⁷ Stonehouse,⁴⁸ Jenkins,⁴⁹ and Hemer⁵⁰ all continued to manifest an interest in the interpretation of Acts 17:16-34. Interesting enough is that during the 1970s and continuing with the 1980s, the interest in this passage increased considerably. However, the new wave of scholars such as Talbert⁵¹ challenged the old method of interpretation (e.g., redaction- criticism) and moved towards a new means of examination, namely modern literary criticism.

A short survey on the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech has shown that as early as the second century A. D. Christian exegetes such as Justin Martyr, Ambrose of Milan, John Chrysostom, and later Thomas Aquinas have manifested interest in relation to Paul’s speech. Up to the Reformation Period, scholars of Acts 17:16-34 sought to interpret the text in relation to examples from the Greco-Roman world (e.g., Socrates’ trial before Areopagus), in relation to philosophy and reason, as well as in relation to rhetorical literary categories (e.g., encomium). With the rise of the Protestant Reformation, the Acts of the Apostles became the source of many commentaries, and the Areopagus Speech has been exposed to different methods of interpretation (e.g., historical-grammatical, and expository-historical). However, it is the eighteenth century that marked a new period in the interpretation of Acts. During this period Paul’ speech has been examined in turn by means of source-criticism, form-criticism, and redaction-criticism. Nevertheless, beginning with the 1970s and continuing into the 1980s, scholars of the Acts of the Apostles had begun to interpret this book in terms of modern literary criticism, a study that endeavors to examine a text in its final form.

⁴⁵ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, 528.

⁴⁶ W. C. Van Unnik, “A Storm Center in Contemporary Scholarship,” *Studies in Luke Acts*, ed. by L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 15.

⁴⁷ B. Gartner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation*, trans. by C. H. King (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1955).

⁴⁸ N. B. Stonehouse, *Paul before the Areopagus and Other New Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1957).

⁴⁹ D. T. Jenkins, “Paul Before the Areopagus,” *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 64 (1971), 86-89.

⁵⁰ C. J. Hemer, “Paul at Athens: A Topographical Note,” *NTS* 20 (1974), 341-350.

⁵¹ C. H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005).

PART THREE – MODERN LITERARY CRITICISM

3.0 Modern Literary Criticism and Acts 17:16-34

In the previous section, it has been shown that the Areopagus Speech has occupied the attention of the scholars of the Acts of the Apostles from the earliest times onwards. A significant number of authors have paid attention to this speech and comment on it using methods that they thought would suit the interpretation of the text in their time. As a result of this long history of the interpretation of Acts 17:16-34, different methods of analysis came to life. When unsatisfied with the result of the previous methods of interpretation, certain scholars of the Acts of the Apostles have endeavored to look anew.⁵² Beginning in the 1970s, little by little, scholars of the Acts of the Apostles moved into a new era of interpretation, namely literary criticism.⁵³ This new method made the Areopagus speech one more time subject to interpretation.

The goal of this chapter is twofold. First, it presents a short overview of the methods used by modern literary critics in interpreting the Acts of the Apostles. Secondly, it seeks to map recent trends in the literary criticism of the Areopagus Speech. It will limit its focus to major works (e.g., commentaries) with a particular interest in examining a variety of literary approaches.

3.1 Literary Criticism

Literary investigations are not a totally new thing. It seems that since the Enlightenment, literary analysis has been engaged in the study of Acts.⁵⁴ Literary aspects that deal with structure, theme, motifs, and source were investigated by most of the critics in their interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles, particularly when it came to the Areopagus Speech. However, the modern literary critical study of the Scriptures differentiates itself from the classical understanding of a literary analysis. As it has been pointed out previously, certain scholars of Acts indeed employed in their work literary aspects (e.g., structure, theme, motif, source, and purpose of a text), but their goal was historical and not literary *per se*. In general, literary aspects were engaged only as part of a

⁵² C. H. Talbert, "Shifting Sands: The Recent Study of the Gospel of Luke," *Interpretation* 30 (1976), 381-395.

⁵³ This is also a time when the new impulse on the interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles has generally shifted geographically. It is not anymore a German-dominated research, yet an Anglo-American dominated research. J. A. Loader has noticed that the 'synchronic approach, is typical of the English-speaking contribution to biblical interpretation,' see, "Twentieth Century Interpretation," *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation*, ed. S. E. Porter (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 375. And F. S. Spencer noted, 'A small but significant group of biblical critics, mostly from North America, begun to question certain aspect of redactional analysis from a literary standpoint,' see, "Acts and Modern Literary Approaches," *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: Ancient Literary Setting*, vol.1 ed. B. W. Winter, and A. D. Clarke (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993), 381.

⁵⁴ Spencer, *Acts and Modern Literary Approaches*, 382. See also, R. N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 2nd edition (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 113-115.

method, such as source criticism, not necessarily as a critical method by itself.⁵⁵ The modern literary-criticism conversely is preoccupied with a literary technique used by an author, and with the effect a technique has on a text.⁵⁶ Whereas the criticism prior to modern literary criticism focused on examining the genuine form of a text, the modern literary criticism attempts to examine the final form of a literary text, despite its redaction.

3.1.1 Modern Literary Criticism: Methods Used for Interpretation of Acts

Modern literary criticism could be defined as ‘the analysis of the meaning of a written text by means of the study of the style, and how that meaning is communicated by an author(s) to a reader(s).’⁵⁷ Although historical values are not dismissed, this critical approach does not necessarily focus on the historical values of a text, but on the form of a text with a particular interest on how the form (e.g., narrative) impacts meaning. In doing that, the new literary criticism has considered for its study types of literature. As types of literature (i.e. narrative, poetry, and discourse) are represented in both the Old and New Testaments, literary criticism revolves around these types.

Having said that, two of the most used methods of modern literary criticism are called narrative criticism and rhetorical criticism. Besides this classification, it is safe to say that modern literary criticism also includes considerations of genre (e.g., ancient biography, ancient historiography, ancient novel), and reflections on the use of the Scriptures as a key to understand an author’s writing.⁵⁸

3.1.1.1 Literary Criticism: A Focus on Narrative

As it has been said above, the Scriptures are composed of narrative units. The narrative nature of the Scripture is what makes a text be a literary story. As a literary story, a narrative text asserts important features about an author’s capability in composing it. It also displays concerns for the final form of the story in a text. This approach is a shift away from the historical critical method, in that it does not emphasize the need to explore the meaning of a text in its historical background but it considers meaning as part of the final form of a text.

⁵⁵ T. K. Beal, K. A. Keefer, and T. Linafelt, “Literary Theory, Literary Criticism, and The Bible,” *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. J. H. Hayes (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 79.

⁵⁶ A. B. Spencer, “Literary Criticism,” *New Testament Criticism & Interpretation*, ed. D. A. Black, and D. S. Dockery (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1991), 228.

⁵⁷ A. B. Spencer, *Literary Criticism*, 245.

⁵⁸ M. C. Parsons, “Acts,” *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation*, ed. S. E. Porter (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 8.

The subsequent lines will center on the main characteristics of literary criticism as a focus on narrative. The term ‘narrative criticism’ has been first referred to by D. Rhoads in one of his articles. In his own words:⁵⁹

“Literary criticism, or more precisely that branch of literary criticism which looks at the formal features of narrative, is one such fresh approach with new questions for Gospel studies. Biblical scholars have long practiced literary criticism, sharing source criticism and redaction criticism and form criticism in common with literature scholars. But literary criticism is a broad field encompassing many approaches to a text, and only recently have biblical scholars begun to investigate the formal features of narrative in the texts of the Gospels, features which include aspects of the story-world of the narrative and the rhetorical techniques employed to tell the story. I shall refer to such investigative areas of literary criticism as ‘the literary study of narrative’ or narrative criticism.”

As Rhoads noted, at that time narrative criticism was yet to be further developed. This new trend was at its incipient phase and scholars were still searching for a definitive name for it e.g., ‘the literary study of narrative or narrative criticism.’ Regardless of the name of the method, Rhoads acknowledged at that time that this was a fresh approach in the study of the Scriptures; an approach that scholars employed to investigate formal features of the narratives in relation to the Gospels. Soon after that, the study of the narrative moved into the book of Acts and it further reached the whole Scripture at a narrative level.

Principally the narrative criticism of the Bible is a study of literariness of biblical texts, with a particular interest on how literature works. Thus, it places a lesser stress on theological ideas, it deemphasizes historical assumptions, and it lets go of grammatical issues. At the core of this method lie techniques such as: plot, character, style, rhetoric, point of view, imagery, and so forth. Examining these techniques, narrative criticism pays attention to details related to rhetorical devices, characterization and role of characters, the narrator’s style/point of view, and the setting of narrative events:⁶⁰

1. Rhetorical devices such as: repetition, framing narratives, figures of speech/rhetorical figures, and figures of thought are important in that they persuade a reader in his assessment of a text to reach the interpretation that was intended by an author in his work.

⁵⁹ D. Rhoads, “Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark,” *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50, No. 3 (Sept., 1982), 411-412.

⁶⁰ J. L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Backer Academic, 2005), 20-21. For an account on reading Luke-Acts as Biblical narrative, see W. S. Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts: Dynamics of Biblical Narrative* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).

Rhetoric is a part of a discourse and it is considered the means by which an author persuades a reader to reach the intended point of view of an author.

2. Examining the depiction of characters in a narrative leads one to important information about who they are in the narrated world. Generally, characters reveal themselves through their speech, actions, and appearances. All this information comes from the point of view of an author who selects what is essential to say and what not to say about a character according to his purpose in a narration. An author's characterization of the characters reveals information about the role one character plays within a narrative.
3. The narrator's point of view is important for a narrative critic because it asserts something about the narrator's worldview and about what a narrator wants his/her reader to see. The narrator already made his choices in relation to what his/her characters say and in relation to a scene or the progression of a narrative. Thus, for a narrative critic, understanding the narrator means understanding what to look for.
4. The background/setting of a narrative is of great importance for a narrative critic. The narration may be surrounded by a religious or a socio-cultural setting; it may take place in a geographical (e.g., Judea, Athens), topographical (e.g., hill, river), political (e.g., Rome), temporal (e.g., night, day) and other settings. All of these data set the stage for a critic to understand why a conflict arises and what the factors that provoke it are.

This kind of methodology has marked a re-birth of the biblical text in that it claimed back the life of the Scriptures, which was seriously diminished by the historical critical methods.

3.1.1.2 *Literary Criticism: A Focus on Rhetoric*

Rhetorical criticism, as narrative criticism, is part of the methods of synchronic analysis.⁶¹ One of the first scholars who came with the designation 'rhetoric criticism' was J. Muilenburg in his work '*Form Criticism and Beyond*' delivered at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in 1968.⁶² In his own words:⁶³

“What I am interested in, above all, is in understanding the nature of Hebrew literary composition, in exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of a literary unit, whether in poetry or in prose, and in discerning the many and various

⁶¹ Synchronic analysis is focused on the analysis of a text in its final form; it is also concerned with the internal relationships created between text's parts. See, A. Pintero and J. Pelaez, *The Study of the New Testament: A Comprehensive Introduction*, trans. D. E. Orton and P. Ellingworth (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2003), 500.

⁶² J. Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (Mar., 1969), 1-18.

⁶³ Muilenburg, *Form Criticism and Beyond*, 8.

devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole. Such an enterprise I should describe as rhetoric and the methodology as rhetorical criticism.”

It is to say that his main concern was to apply rhetorical criticism to the Old Testament literature. His method was not necessarily something totally new, since rhetorical criticism has its roots in the classical rhetoric of the Greco-Roman world. Instead, the new rhetorical criticism that Muilenburg talks about is more of a modern focus on the ancient rhetoric. The modern principle behind this methodology lies in the fact that if the writers of the New Testament have used similar interests, goals, and techniques with the Greco-Roman orators, then the writings of the New Testament could be interpreted in the light of specific ancient literary devices. As Melick observed, the modern scholars began to ‘look for specific literary devices that gave clue to the composition of the passage. If these devices could be found, they would unlock the interpretation of the text.’⁶⁴

Rhetorical criticism, as any other branch of modern literary criticism, attempts to interpret the text of the Scriptures as a whole rather than at the level of individual pieces. It generally sees a text as an intended product able to persuade a reader towards its right interpretation. Being preoccupied with the text in its final form, a rhetorical critic is not bothered if a text is a product of editing or an imitation of a past work, a critic rather inspects why an author chose to transform a text in that form and what was the author’s intent. In doing that, rhetorical criticism focuses on the following points,⁶⁵

1. The literal intentionality of a text – a rhetorical critic looks for the point an author developed in a text;
2. The form of a literary text – a rhetorical critic focuses on how a text was put together by an author.

and underlines the following assumptions:⁶⁶

1. A literary text can reveal author’s purpose within itself;
2. The author of a text has intentionally used in his material rhetorical devices in order to persuade his reader to a proper understanding of a text;
3. The writing consists of formal content, and a reader would have expected and understood such a formal writing.

Based on these points and assumptions, rhetorical criticism underlines that a correct identification of a rhetorical unit through lexical devices (e.g. inclusion; repetition; rhetorical questions) and

⁶⁴ R. R. Melick Jr., “Literary Criticism of the New Testament,” *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation: A Complete Library of Tools and Resources*, ed. D. S. Dockery, K. A. Mathews, and R. B. Sloan (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Pub., 1994), 439.

⁶⁵ Melick Jr., *Literary Criticism of the New Testament*, 440-441.

⁶⁶ Melick Jr., *Literary Criticism of the New Testament*, 441.

assessment of a rhetorical unit using rhetorical categories (e.g., invention; arrangement; style) may disclose both the situation between writer-reader, as well as writer's intent.

3.1.1.3 Literary Criticism: A Focus on Genre

Besides narrative criticism and rhetorical criticism, literary criticism also includes consideration of the text's genre. Genre is basically a category of writing, which helps the interpretation of a text by categorizing literature according to a text's form (e.g., prose). Among the genres that are used for the interpretation of the New Testament are: gospel, epistle, apocalyptic, story, history, biography, novel. At times, a text of the New Testament can belong to one genre or to a mixture of genres.⁶⁷ That mostly depends on one's categorization of a text. Since some of the above genre cannot be applied to Acts, the subsequent lines will only mention those that are generally related to the study of this book.

In modern research, the book of Acts was bordered by history, biography, or novel among other types of genre.⁶⁸ A literary examination of Acts may reveal that each one of the previously mentioned genre can apply to this book and they can make a good case for its interpretation.

1. Scholars of history genre inspect a text in order to find out whether a text conforms to a first-century method of recording history;
2. When it examines a corpus of literature, scholars of biography genre try to find out whether that corpus of literature was at any level shaped by the patterns of an ancient biography;
3. Scholars of novel genre evaluate a corpus of literature in terms of both history and fiction. The advocates of this approach see Luke as a writer in that he was not only concerned to provide information for his reader but also to entertain them.

An emphasis on genre may lead one to a better assessment and interpretation of a text. That is due to the fact that a genre narrows a text to a particular literary type and it allows one to analyze that text within a specific literary framework. By doing that, genre categories help in the detection of the meaning of a text.

3.1.1.4 Literary Criticism: A Focus on Biblical History

Another category that will be presented here is the focus of literary critics on biblical histories. The concept of 'biblical history' is generally used in relation to all the historical books of the Old Testament that hold together a number of features (e.g., language, themes, models, literary

⁶⁷ Parsons, *Acts*, 8.

⁶⁸ D. G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Michigan/Cambridge: Apollos, 2009), 8-15.

techniques).⁶⁹ Among those who look at Luke as a writer are also scholars who interpret Acts in terms of biblical histories, that is, Luke has consciously modeled Acts on the basis of the history found in the Old Testament Scriptures. As Parson regarded it in his own words: ‘Finally, while the search for oral and/or written sources in Acts has subsided, the interest in Luke’s use of Scripture as a key to his hermeneutic and theology has increased.’⁷⁰

The critics of Luke as a biblical historian argue that for the writing of the book of Acts, Luke made extensive use of biblical language as well as of Old Testament themes and models. An immersion in Luke’s use of the Old Testament in his writings reveals that the Lucan concept of history derives from the Old Testament Scriptures. As a result of this, Acts is often interpreted in terms of biblical history.⁷¹ The subsequent lines highlight some features of biblical history:⁷²

1. Old Testament language. Biblical history analyzes the language of Acts manifesting a particular interest in syntax, especially in the use and positioning of conjunctions, prepositions, and articles. As a result of this analysis, it is often acknowledged that Acts is built on a Semitic language. At times, Lucan patterns of writing are considered to reflect an Aramaic and a Hebrew model. The cause for such a language in Luke is frequently thought to be current to an influence of the Septuagint.
2. Themes. Theme study is an important tool in interpreting Acts as a biblical history. The purpose of theme study in Acts is to reveal points of contact between Acts and the Old Testament. These points of contact revolve around important subject matters that help one to understand Luke’s purpose on a small scale (e.g., the reading of Deut 32:8 in Acts 17:26), or on a bigger scale (e.g., Jerusalem as a bridge between Israel and the Church).
3. Old Testament models. Scholars also focused their attention on Luke’s use of the Old Testament patterns as a means of composing various narratives in Acts. This study asserts that Luke was aware of Old Testament models and he freely used them in modeling his stories (e.g., Paul, Jonah and the account of the shipwreck), the characters in a narrative (e.g., Paul as a model of Moses), and their language description.
4. Old Testament literary techniques. It is believed that a number of Old Testament literary techniques have been used by Luke in his account. Some of these are: the repetition of a pattern (1 Kings 14:19-20, 31; 15:8, 24 // Acts 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 28:31), the use of speeches as an introduction or sum up of a unit (1 Kings 8:22-53 // Acts 4:24-30), the structure of history (1 Samuel 8:8; 10:18-19; 12:6 exodus and conquest - age of the judges - rise of monarchy // Luke-Acts: law and the prophets – Jesus – apostolic age – post

⁶⁹ B. S. Rosner, “Acts and Biblical History,” *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: Ancient Literary Setting*, vol.1 ed. B. W. Winter and A. D. Clarke (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993), 68.

⁷⁰ Parsons, *Acts*, 8.

⁷¹ Rosner, *Acts and Biblical History*, 68.

⁷² Rosner, *Acts and Biblical History*, 68-78.

apostolic age), and the writing of an account based on main characters (Genesis is based on Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph // Acts is Peter and Paul based).

3.1.1.5 *Literary Criticism: A focus on Modern Methods of Interpretation*

This final section, which deals with literary critical approaches in the book of Acts, will present a final method of interpretation, namely framing in discourse. This method is generally applied to the speeches in Acts, but it may also hold great promise in further illuminating Luke's writing.

Framing in discourse is a modern literary technique used for interpretation of a narrative. This method is governed by the principle that every means of communication is shaped by a certain frame of reference. It is applied to a wide range of materials in both film and literature. Although the concept of 'framing' is generally attributed to G. Bateson,⁷³ who observed that communication, verbal or non-verbal, cannot be understood outside of a frame of interpretation, the framing in discourse technique is commonly connected to Deborah Tannen and her work '*What is a Frame? Surface Evidence for Underlying Expectations.*'⁷⁴

Tannen's framing in discourse can be classified in terms of discursive strategy, a method generally used as a means of persuasion. Framing in discourse asserts two things: (1) something about the author and his/her narrative, and (2) something about the reader and his/her perception of a narrative. The strategy behind a narrative can be unlocked only when one understands the framework in which a certain narrative functions and what a narrative intends to communicate in that framework. However in doing so, the concepts of 'frame' and 'framing' become very critical for understanding what is meant by framing in discourse.

A frame is a mental structure that shapes the way one sees the world.⁷⁵ In other words a frame is a structured set of notions which provides meaning within a specific surrounding. One's worldview is shaped by his/her collection of frames. When one hears a word, a certain frame is turned on. The same is within a written text; words, beyond their denotative sense, also evoke a frame. For example, the word 'house' could border one's understanding of the word according to his/her frame of reference. 'House' could mean a villa, as well as a cottage, or even a small construction of hay and wood.

Framing, then, consists of attributing to a certain concept (e.g. word, expression, narrative, discourse) a specific frame or frames in order to make a concept mean what an author wants it to

⁷³ G. Bateson, *A Theory of Play and Fantasy: A Report on Theoretical Aspect of The Project for Study of the Role of the Paradoxes of Abstraction in Communication* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972).

⁷⁴ D. Tannen, "What is a Frame? Surface Evidences for Understanding Expectations," *Framing in Discourse*, ed. D. Tannen (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 15-56.

⁷⁵ G. Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant! Know your Values and frame the Debate: The Essential Guide for Progressives* (White River Junction: Chelsea Green, 2004), xv.

indicate. In order to do that one must acquire a language that would fit his/her worldview. However, framing is not necessarily about language, it is about ideas. In framing, the language is the vehicle that carries and evokes ideas.⁷⁶

Framing in discourse can be carried through the use of figures of speech and certain grammatical constructions. Probably the most used are metaphors.⁷⁷

3.2 Modern Literary Critical Trends in Interpretation of the Areopagus Speech

In order to see how modern scholars of the book of Acts engaged a literary critical method in their works, five authors will be examined. These authors have been chosen particularly for their interest in examining Acts 17:16-34 in light of literary criticism. All of these authors interpreted the Areopagus Speech in light of a distinct literary approach from each other. Thus, I limited this study to the following five different views on the matter. These are: B. Witherington – an ancient rhetorical analysis of Acts 17:16-34; M. L. Soards – an analysis of Acts 17:16-34 in light of the other speeches in Acts; K. D. Litwak – a framing in discourse analysis of Acts 17:16-34; C. H. Talbert – an ancient biography analysis of Acts 17:16-34; and R. C. Tannehill – a narrative unity analysis of Acts 17:16-34. At this point, no attempts will be taken in critiquing any of these five works. Instead, in this section space will be allocated for a presentation of a work of each one of these authors.

3.2.1 B. Witherington – An Ancient Rhetorical Analysis of Acts 17:16-34

The Areopagus Speech was studied among other methods in light of ancient rhetoric. B. Witherington operates in his commentary⁷⁸ at a level of rhetoric in regard to both the speeches and the narratives. More specifically, he considers the Acts of the Apostles a sort of Hellenistic historiography, which bears similarities with it in form, method, and general arrangement of material.⁷⁹ The kind of historiography that is discussed here is based on rhetoric. Witherington points to the fact that the period following Aristotle marked an explosion on writing of history by means of rhetorical conventions. As he states it: ‘By the time we arrive at the first century A. D. some works that claimed to be *ιστορία* often owed more to declamation and Greco-Roman rhetoric than to careful historical study of sources and consulting of witnesses.’⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant!*, 4.

⁷⁷ Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant!*, 4.

⁷⁸ B. Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998).

⁷⁹ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 39.

⁸⁰ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 40.

Luke's use of rhetoric, or of the art of persuasion, is held by Witherington at a level with that of the most serious Greek historians (e.g., Polybius).⁸¹ The style, the content, and the arrangement of the material, he argues, suggest that Luke endeavored to be heard as a serious Hellenistic historian; a historian whose literary form of the text, choice of words, and arrangement of material show familiarity with rhetorical conventions used by Hellenistic rhetoricians in persuading an audience. According to Witherington, Luke's use of rhetoric is generally seen in his prologues, speeches, summaries, and Paul's trip at the end of Acts.⁸²

Witherington discusses the Areopagus Speech in light of Luke's literary artistry. Examining the speech from a literary point of view, he claims that Luke is responsible for arranging the material in a way that would provide valuable indices through his narrative in order to show his audience how the speech should be interpreted.⁸³ In his assessment of the speech, Witherington first provides a discussion concerning the literary style of the speech and its function in the narrative. Then in the second part, a detailed assessment of textual and lexical concerns is offered.

The Areopagus Speech reveals that Luke intended to persuade his audience to a certain interpretation of his text. According to Witherington this is clear when one notes that the Areopagus Speech is the place where both Luke's ethnographic interest and universalist approach (i.e., salvation for all) come together.⁸⁴ An analysis of the literary style of the text shows that the speech goes towards this goal. If vs. 16 is a general introduction that serves mostly to make an audience familiar with what is to follow in the narrative, vs. 17 defines who Paul is i.e., an intellectual (i.e., διαλέγομαι) capable to stand the intellectuals of his time. Witherington observes that the same word (i.e., διαλέγομαι) used by Luke in 17:2 is utilized in 17:17 where it serves as an indicator that the narrator used this word in a succession of narratives to build up Paul's portrayal. Since Paul had to confront intellectuals of his day (i.e., Epicurean and Stoic philosophers), the following verse (i.e., vs. 18) makes it clear that a presentation of Paul as a capable intellectual person comparable to Socrates was envisaged here by Luke.⁸⁵ Furthermore, Witherington considers that the choice of words such as δαιμόνιον (vs. 18), ἐπιλαμβάνω (vs. 19), and ξενίζω (vs. 20) represent allusions to Socrates, to his trial at the Areopagus, and to the facts that the Areopagus experience should not be regarded as a friendly one.

Further examination of the Areopagus Speech led Witherington to notice that Luke indeed portrayed Paul as an orator and that he structured the speech in accordance to rhetorical devices.⁸⁶ For Witherington, the fact that in vs. 22 Luke describes Paul as 'standing in the midst' of the

⁸¹ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 44.

⁸² Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 46.

⁸³ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 512.

⁸⁴ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 511-512.

⁸⁵ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 514.

⁸⁶ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 517.

council, where he delivers his discourse, is imperative for an examination of the speech in terms of rhetoric. He partitions the speech as it follows: '(1) exordium, including *captatio benevolentiae*, vv. 22-23; (2) *propositio*, v. 23b; (3) *probatio*, vv. 24-29; (4) *peroratio*, vv. 30-31.'

⁸⁷

The first part, exordium, begins with the formula 'men, Atheniens' introducing the audience which is being addressed. This kind of speaking was a common way of addressing an audience in Athens, and it functions in asserting that Paul's audience was much larger than those who represented the council. *Captatio benevolentiae* is regarded as one of the functions of the exordium since it includes words such as *δεισιδαιμόνων*, which expresses in a proverbial way the religiosity of the Athenians, thus a negativistic sense is also in order here, namely superstitious. According to Witherington a negativistic sense of exordia is in order and resonates very well with what Lucian affirmed about Areopagus, namely one must not 'offer complimentary exordia to secure the goodwill of this court (*De gymn.* 19).'

⁸⁸ This kind of reading is regarded as being in agreement with vs. 16 when Paul was provoked by idols and with the word *σέβασμα* (vs. 23), which is generally used for worshipping of an idol, thus envisaging negative overtones.

The second part, *propositio*, is introduced as a balance 'between contact with the audience and condemning their idolatry.'

⁸⁹ Witherington notices that the Athenians worship an unknown God, but they do not know this God. Without Paul's proclamation, the Athenians would never know the true God. A similar picture, argues Witherington, is drawn upon in Rom 1:20-23:⁹⁰

"This way of putting it is not much different from what we find in Rom. 1:20–23. Rom. 1:23 shows that instead of proper worship pagans have chosen to honor images or idols resembling humans or animals, just as Paul saw in his tour of Athens. Rom. 1:22 says their thinking was futile because they rejected what they could know of the true God from creation and so their minds were darkened. As we shall see, this comports with what is said in Acts 17:27 about pagans groping around in the dark for the true God. In both texts there is an affirmation of natural revelation but not of anything that amounts to an adequate natural theology as a response to that revelation."

The third part of the speech, *probation*, vss. 24-29, introduces the audience to truth about the true God. As Witherington points out, in this speech 'Greek notions have been taken up and given new meaning by placing them in a Jewish-Christian monotheistic context.'

⁹¹ Throughout the speech,

⁸⁷ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 518.

⁸⁸ According to Witherington, the Athenians 'were truly too superstitious, even building altars to gods whose names they did not even know, just to protect themselves!' See, Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 520.

⁸⁹ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 523.

⁹⁰ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 523.

⁹¹ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 524.

Luke draws upon both Greek and Jewish concepts. Verse 24 records the Greek term ‘cosmos’ in relation to the Creator of the world. However, Luke is careful to explain in the same verse that the Creator that he envisages here is the ‘Lord of heaven and earth,’ as the Hebrew Scriptures would use it. Furthermore vs. 25 is used by Luke to portray Paul in the footsteps of Socrates, in a discussion whether human service to God is possible. Part of the explanation is given in vss. 26-27 where Luke draws upon Scriptures (Gen 1:27-28; 2:7) to explain that humans are created beings, so, God cannot be served by men, rather God is close to his creation. Witherington points out that Athenians would not have been in ignorance of such a thing. However, they had understood it in other terms i.e., they originated from the soil of their land. According to Witherington, the effect of this verse is to present ‘the dilemma and irony of the human situation.’⁹² Although the true God is omnipresent, close to all human beings, Athenians stumble in the darkness despite Paul’s proclamation. Moreover, vs. 28 is regarded as an effort to translate familiar ideas into the minds of the audience. Witherington affirms that:⁹³

“From a rhetorical point of view the function of the quotation or quotations here is to cite an authority recognized by one’s audience to support one’s point. It would have done Paul no good to simply quote the Scriptures, because the audience did not know and one that had no authority in the minds of these hearers. Arguments are only persuasive if they work within the plausibility structure existing in the minds of the hearers.”

Finally vs. 29 confirms that the argument is not necessarily against building idols, but it goes against such a worldview that the true God is like gold, or an image formed by the human imagination.

The abrupt ending of the last part of the speech, *peroratio* vss. 30-31, is held by Witherington as an evidence that Luke drove his audience to ‘a point of decision and judgment.’⁹⁴ As a result, vss. 32-34 attest that the speech produced some positive results (e.g., conversion of Dionysius), as well as a mixed answer to his discourse (e.g., some were unconvinced; some were prepared to hear more).

The content of the speech is considered Christian throughout all the narrative. As Witherington affirms in the beginning of this speech, Luke’s ethnographic interest connects with his universalist interest. God has overlooked the time of pagan ignorance, but now as his salvation is made known to all the nations through Christ’s death and resurrection such ignorance will no longer be accepted.

⁹² Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 529.

⁹³ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 530.

⁹⁴ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 531.

3.2.2 M. L. Soards – An Analysis of Acts 17:16-34 in Light of the Speeches in Acts

M. L. Soards has also endeavored to interpret the Areopagus Speech from a literary point of view. Interested in how all the speeches in Acts work together in the Lukan account, Soards examines the Areopagus Speech in comparison to the other speeches in Acts. In his work on the speeches,⁹⁵ Soards states that his goal is ‘concerned with both the part the speeches play as a whole in the work as a whole and the place of Acts itself in the ancient world.’⁹⁶ From his point of view, examining the speeches in isolation of each other turns the book of Acts into ‘a series of episodes’ and transforms it into a ‘peculiar narrative.’⁹⁷ Conversely, an examination of the speeches in light of other speeches in Acts will reveal consistency among the speeches at the level of form and content.

Soards argues that the unity and dynamism of the Lukan account can be seen when all the speeches in Acts are considered. As he expresses it:⁹⁸

“By considering *all* the speeches in Acts together one may understand and interpret the book along these lines – diverse personalities, ethnic groups, communities, geographical regions, and historical moments are *unified* in Acts largely through the repetitive occurrences, form, and contents of the speeches.”

An examination of form and content of the speeches led Soards to the conclusion that the speeches in Acts revolve around a mixture of Greco-Roman and Jewish literature.⁹⁹ If the form of the speeches fit a Greco-Roman historiography, their content relates to the Septuagint. Finally, although the speeches reflect the fragmentary writing of the Greco-Jewish historians, the repetitive accent of the speeches makes Acts a separate work from all of these.

Soards discusses the Areopagus Speech in the larger scheme of Luke’s narrative, following the church council in Acts chapter 15 and Paul’s ministry in Macedonia. The big narrative of Acts 17:16-31 is divided by Soards in two units i.e., (1) the stage for Paul’s speech vss. 16-21 and (2) the speech itself vss. 22-31.¹⁰⁰

The first unit, vss. 16-21, is regarded as the stage for Paul’s speech. Information about Paul and his first encounter with Athens (i.e., Paul’s spirit was provoked cf. vs. 16), concerning Athens (i.e., a city full of idols cf. vs. 16), in relation to Paul’s audience (i.e., Stoics and Epicureans cf. vs. 18),

⁹⁵ M. L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994).

⁹⁶ Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns*, 13.

⁹⁷ Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns*, 13.

⁹⁸ Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns*, 15.

⁹⁹ Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns*, 157-161.

¹⁰⁰ Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns*, 95-100.

and about Paul's proclamation (i.e., vs. 18 Jesus and the resurrection) is provided for Luke's readers. Besides these, vss. 19-22a described Paul's encounter with his audience (i.e., 'we wish to know...' vs. 20) and Paul's role before the Areopagus (i.e., orator cf. vs. 22a). As Soards notes: 'in 17:20a Luke describes Paul's physical positioning prior to the outset of the speech. First, Paul is σταθείς ("standing"), the recognizable posture of a Greek orator ...; and he is located ἐν μέσῳ ("in the middle") of Areopagus.'¹⁰¹

The second unit, vss. 22b-31 is structured by Soards in terms of a judicial rhetorical speech with deliberative overtones.¹⁰²

1.0 Paul's Refutation of the Philosophers' Charge (vv. 22b-28)

1.1 Address (v. 22b)

1.2 Paul's Observations (vv. 22b-23a)

1.3 Paul's Declarations (vv. 23b-28)

1.3.1 Statement of Purpose (v. 23b)

1.3.2 God the Creator (v. 24a)

1.3.3 God the independent Lord (vv. 24b-25a)

1.3.4 God the Source of All (v. 25b)

1.3.5 God and Humanity (vv. 26-27)

1.3.6 Poetic Perceptions (v. 28)

2.0 Paul's Pressing of Charge (vv. 29-31)

2.1 Identification of Faculty Logic (v. 29)

2.2 Contrasting Times (v. 30)

2.3 The Surety of Divine Judgment (v. 31a)

2.3.1 The Day of Appointed Judgment (v. 31a)

2.3.2 The Evidence (v. 31b)

¹⁰¹ Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns*, 96.

¹⁰² Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns*, 96.

The speech encloses two main lines of thought: (1) Paul's refutation of the philosophers' charge for the proclamation of new gods, and (2) Paul's pressing of charges towards Athenian people. The speech in its nature is held as deliberative.

The first line of thought (1.0) opens with the expression ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι (1.1), which is an ethnic designation to salute an audience also used by Luke in Acts 1:11. It further describes Paul's observation (1.2) regarding an altar inscription to a ἄγνωστος θεός, and his declaration (1.3) of the Athenians' ignorance. Soards considers that this part of the speech is built in such a way that the reference (i.e., ἄγνωστω θεῷ) becomes a motif in the speech, being repeatedly used in vs. 23 and vs. 30 when it refers to the times of ignorance.¹⁰³ Paul's declaration (1.3) stands in continuity with Luke's refutation of the philosophers' charge against Paul. Soards points out that Paul's declaration encloses two statements: the first is about God's character (vss. 24-25) and the second concerns God's relation with human beings (vss. 26-27).¹⁰⁴ According to Soards, the first statement either suggests a language of the Septuagint (e.g. Isa 42:5 // vss. 24-25) or reflects ideas from earlier speeches (e.g., Acts 4:24 // vs. 24a). For example, the theme of God as Creator (vs. 24a) is comparable with Acts 4:24, which declares God as the Maker of the heaven and the earth. Also the wording ὁ ποιήσας ('the one making' cf. 4:24) attests similarity to ὃς ἐποίησεν ('who made' cf. 14:15) in Paul's speech to gentiles, and both express the same idea with ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας ('God who made') conform 17:24. Besides these examples, vs. 24b-25 (i.e., the idea that God cannot live in human building and does not require man's help) reiterates Stephen's speech in Acts 7:48 as well as Peter's declaration stated in 10:36, which asserts that God is Lord. Finally vs. 25b is a repetition of Paul's speech at Lystra (14:17). The second statement, which concerns God's relation with human beings (vss. 26-27) alludes to some parallels in Acts and the Septuagint (Deut 32:8). Soards considers that vs. 26 (God is responsible for the destiny of nations) resonates the language and thought of Paul's speech at Lystra (Acts 14:16), and the mention of καιρός in vs. 26 parallels Acts 14:17. Soards also points out that vs. 27 (i.e., the idea that God is close to everyone) reiterates Peter's statement in 10:35 (God accepts all the nations). Finally, vs. 28 marks the end of Paul's defense before the Athenians.

The second line of thought (2.0) marks the end of Paul's defense before Areopagus, and presents Paul's offensive.¹⁰⁵ The first verse (vs. 29) identifies the faulty logic of Athenians, who hold an altered image of God. The condemnation of idolatry is in view here and Soards identifies it with other similar thoughts in Acts 15:2 and 21:25 (i.e., the accusations of eating food offered to idols). Verse 30 recalls the theme of ignorance and repentance already voiced in other speeches (i.e., Acts 3:17; Acts 2:38) and it furthermore indicates the purpose of Luke's book, namely salvation is

¹⁰³ Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns*, 97.

¹⁰⁴ Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns*, 97-98.

¹⁰⁵ Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns*, 98-100.

universal. The last verse of the speech (vs. 31) attests the imminent coming of God's judgment, as it can be seen in the use of ὄρισεν ('he has set') which was also voiced in vs. 26. Soards observes that Luke points to Jesus as the man (ἐν ἀνδρὶ) by whom God will judge humankind (a common thought of Acts 2:22) and portrays Jesus as the 'future judge of the living and dead' cf. Acts 10:42. Nevertheless, echoes of other speeches can be found in vs. 31, especially on the theme of judgment (e.g., 2:20; 3:19-20).

A last point that Soards remarked in the speech is the abrupt ending of Paul's proclamation.¹⁰⁶ As in the case of the other verses, Soards sees a connection between this incident and Acts 2:36-37 in which circumstance the multitude displeased with Peter's speech stopped him from his talking.

3.2.3 K. D. Litwak – Areopagus Speech. A Framing in Discourse Analysis

K. D. Litwak has also endeavor to examine the Areopagus Speech. This exercise of continuous looking for 'the right method' in the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech had led scholars even to look into recent literary approaches that are usually applied to the study of modern literature. This is the case with Litwak. In his work *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, Litwak engages a modern literary technique called 'framing in discourse' for an interpretation of Paul's speech.

Litwak's main thesis is that 'through the narrative technique of 'framing in discourse' Luke uses the Scriptures of Israel to lead his audience to interpret Paul's speech as standing in continuity with anti-idol polemic of Israel's prophets in the past.'¹⁰⁷ The role of the intertextual echoes of the Scriptures in Acts 17:22-31 is seen as going beyond the simple fact of providing sources for Paul's speech. It is recognized as providing legitimacy to Paul's speech and confidence to Luke's audience. In order to develop his methodology, Litwak focuses on two main points: (1) the speech itself and (2) the larger function of intertextual echoes in Paul's speech.

In assessing (1) the Speech, Litwak first focuses on Paul as a prophet. Marks of Old Testament prophetic reminiscences are often used in relation to Paul and his ministry in Acts. Connections between the book of Isaiah and Acts are often pointed out as an example that Luke characterized Paul as a prophet (e.g., Isa 49:6 // Acts 9:15-16; Isa 6:9-10 // Acts 26:16-18). Based on such examples, Litwak asserts that 'it would ... be no surprise to Luke's audience to see Paul speaking as a prophet in Acts 17.'¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns*, 100.

¹⁰⁷ K. D. Litwak, "Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31," *Biblica* 85 (2004), 216.

¹⁰⁸ Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 200.

Furthermore, Litwak moves deeper into the Areopagus Speech paying attention to Luke's use of intertextual echoes of the Old Testament in Acts 17. He opines that, in general, scholars observe parallels between Paul's speech and the Scriptures, but they fail to take this beyond just an observation. Thus, he argues that these parallels represent 'intentional intertextual echoes that are pervasive in Paul's speech and have a purpose far beyond simply making Paul's speech parallel in thought.'¹⁰⁹ A strong connection between the Old Testament prophets and Paul is envisaged here. Paul's speech is seen as standing in continuity with the oracles of the Old Testament prophets, which talk about the same theme, namely condemnation of idolatry. In addition to that, although recognized as a part of Paul's speech, Litwak considers that a Greek philosophical context can be hardly considered important for the background of the speech. That is true for several reasons: (1) the quote of Aratus is not situated in a Greek background, (2) the stress in the speech is on the Scriptures of Israel (e.g., anti-idol polemic), and (3) statements such as judgment and resurrection clearly do not reflect a Greek worldview.

A verse-by-verse examination of Acts 17:23-31¹¹⁰ has led Litwak to considerable findings of scriptural traditions. When referring to scriptural traditions, Litwak did not include only direct quotation from the Old Testament, instead he also assesses echoes of Old Testament thoughts. Since in his study, Litwak listed as much Old Testaments echoes as possible, the subsequent lines will present only some of these intertextual echoes in relation to each verse examined.

In his opinion vs. 23 (i.e., worshiping the unknown god) is very much in thought with Isaiah's anti-idol polemic (Isa 40-48), with Jeremiah's concern for the nations who do not know God (Jer 10:25), and with Psalm 78:6 which addresses those who are ignorant of God.¹¹¹ Verse 24 states two truths about God, and both are reminiscent of a Old Testament language.¹¹² First, God is described as the maker of the world and of all that it encloses. This is similar with Gen 1 and with Isaiah's description of God as the Creator of the stars (Isa 40:25-26). Secondly, it is affirmed that God does not live in temples made by human hands. This idea is comparable with 1 Kings 8:27, 1 Chr 6:18, and Isa 66:1-2a which acknowledge that God cannot be contained by an earthly form of sanctuary. In vs. 25, the idea that God has need of nothing is seen as a recollection of Isaiah's proclamation of God's self-sufficiency (cf. 42:5).¹¹³ This is also true when Acts 17:25 is compared with Psalm 50:7-13, which emphasizes that God indeed has need of nothing from human beings. Verse 26 is held as affirming another truth about God, namely God is sovereign over humans.¹¹⁴ In this case, intertextual echoes of Acts 17:26 have been detected as being in close relation to Gen

¹⁰⁹ Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 201.

¹¹⁰ Only verses 28 and 30 are omitted in his study, which is probably due to the fact that vs. 28 echoes Greek background and vs. 30 teaches more a New Testament thought.

¹¹¹ Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 203-204.

¹¹² Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 204-206.

¹¹³ Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 206.

¹¹⁴ Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 206-207.

2:7-8, which talks about God's creation of men, to Gen 5 and 10, which articulate the beginning of individuals and of nations, respectively to Gen 11:9, which verbalizes God's dispersion of men upon the face of earth. Furthermore, vs. 27 revolves around the motif of seeking God and echoes words of the prophets of Israel.¹¹⁵ Paul's message voiced at Athens (e.g., a concern for people to seek God) is enclosed by similar traditions of the Old Testament. For instance, the people of Israel were often told to seek for God (Deut 4:29), Solomon was told to seek God and he will find him (1 Chr 28:9), and the Psalmist called for people to seek God (62:1; 68:7). Moreover, vs. 29 is closely linked with the anti-idol polemic in the Old Testament.¹¹⁶ It is particularly echoing Isaiah's statement 'to what will you liken the Lord and to what likeness will you liken him?', and Isaiah 44:19 that talks against those who make idols. Finally vs. 31(God as a Judge) is perceived as a reminiscence of the Psalms 9:9; 95:13; 97:9, which affirm that God will judge people in the future.¹¹⁷

The multitude of scriptural traditions found in Paul's speech made Litwak think that these echoes might be an intentional part of Luke's narrative strategy. Thus, in the second part of his study, which is concerned with the larger function of intertextual echoes in Paul's speech, Litwak argues that the function of these scriptural traditions could be unlocked by using a modern literary technique called 'framing in discourse.' Aware of the fact that he borrowed this technique from Tannen, he defines this concept as follows:¹¹⁸

"The concept of framing in discourse, discussed by Deborah Tannen, is the notion that the way a narrative is introduced and presented provides clues as to how to understand the narrative or creates expectations on the part of the audience regarding the ensuing narrative. For example, the familiar words, 'it was a dark and stormy night', prepare the audience for a detective murder mystery or the like. The phrase 'once upon a time', when read by a 'competent reader', i.e., someone with the necessary background assumed by the author, would lead the reader to expect a fairy tale. These two introductory phrases have a very different effect, and create very different expectations for an audience than, say, a news report that begins with the words, 'Here are our top stories'. The first example leads an audience to expect a specific genre of fiction. The last phrase leads an audience to expect the reporting of actual events that have just happened. Since framing in discourse is a basic part of how narration, including dialogue, is structured, it is only natural to look for framing in discourse in Paul's Areopagus speech."

¹¹⁵ Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 207-208.

¹¹⁶ Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 208-209.

¹¹⁷ Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 209-210.

¹¹⁸ Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 210.

Litwak shows that Luke is responsible for framing Paul's experience at Athens. That is clear in some instances. For example, Litwak points to: (1) the way Luke's narrative begins (i.e., Paul was provoked by idols vs. 16) and (2) the way Paul's speech is developed (i.e., echoing scriptural traditions). Both of these points are regarded as intended clues for the understanding of the speech, especially for Luke's audience. The incipient sentence of Luke's narrative in Acts 17:16 (i.e., Paul being provoked by Athens full of idols), Litwak believes is meant to lead Lucan audience 'to expect a narrative about condemnation of idolatry.'¹¹⁹ Furthermore, Luke's framing of Paul's speech with Old Testament scriptural echoes would have also contributed to lead his audience to interpret Paul's speech in terms of Old Testament thought. Paul's speech, as Litwak proved in the first part of his study and developed in its second part, stands in relation to the Old Testament oracles of the prophets, who emphasize the condemnation of idol worshipers and teach about the true God. By framing his narrative like that, Luke intended for his audience to interpret the Areopagus Speech as 'an instance of prophetic anti-idol polemic.'¹²⁰

Finally, Litwak proves that the framing in discourse technique helped Luke to prove that there is continuity between Paul's speech and the message uttered by the prophets before him.¹²¹ Both, Paul and the prophets taught that idols are false gods, proved that God cannot live in a temple made by hands, and proclaimed that a future judgment will come upon those who worship idols. Thus, this technique allowed Luke to authorize Paul's message. According to Litwak, 'by looking to the revered past, and showing how the present is like it, historians validate present events.'¹²² Luke validates Paul's present message by showing that Paul took the same action as the prophets in the past when they dealt with similar situation of idolatry. The framing in discourse technique enabled Luke to legitimate the faith of his audience by showing that Paul's interpretation of the Old Testament is authentic and that those who believe it are legitimate.¹²³

By showing these things, Litwak is convinced that Luke is 'responsible' for the final form of Paul's speech as well as for the function of Areopagus Speech in his writing.¹²⁴ He does not see Paul's speech looking like this in its original form. Nonetheless, Litwak considers that the Areopagus Speech could be a model of Luke's use of the Scriptures in order to further understand the use of his writings elsewhere.

¹¹⁹ Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 211.

¹²⁰ Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 212.

¹²¹ Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 212.

¹²² Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 214.

¹²³ Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 214.

¹²⁴ Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 215.

3.2.4 C. H. Talbert – An Ancient Biography Analysis of Acts 17:16-34

Areopagus Speech did not escape the attention of Talbert either. Recognized for his interest in examining Luke's writing from a literary point of view, Talbert innovatively came in his work with a method that reads the Acts of the Apostle in terms of large units of thought and examines their relationship to Luke's writings as a whole.¹²⁵ The focus of Talbert's commentary is on the final form of the text. In order to proceed with this method, Talbert considers that the book of Acts should be read in the interplay between the precanonical context, that is 'hearing Acts as volume two of a narrative of which the Third Gospel was volume one,' and the canonical context, that is 'separate from Luke and set between the Gospels and the Epistles.'¹²⁶ Reading Acts in these terms, Talbert understands this book as both (1) a narrative of fulfillment that describes how Messiah accomplished God's mission and how his followers continued God's program, and (2) as a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles.¹²⁷ As a result of this approach, Acts is studied in terms of successive narratives that provide information, on the one hand, about Jesus and his followers, and on the other hand, about Jewish people and Pauline Christianity. At the core of his method lies a type of ancient biography often used in connection with parallels from Jewish and Greco-Roman literature for the understanding of each episode. Acts can be considered a biographical work on the following grounds: (1) it relates something about the life of the founder (i.e., Jesus) and of his followers (especially seen in Luke-Acts), and (2) it describes the life of a people (especially seen in the Acts of the Apostles). As Talbert argues:¹²⁸

“An ancient auditor in the precanonical period would have taken Acts to be volume two of Luke-Acts, would have heard its story against the background of the plan of God's fulfillment in the events of the narrative, would have regarded it as a succession narrative giving the biography of the founder of the Messianist movement and an account of the founder's followers...”

and,

“How would an ancient auditor have heard Acts when it was read in its canonical context—that is, separated from Luke and set between the Gospels and the *Epistles*? ... Acts, taken alone, would naturally have been regarded as a *bios* of a people, the church, ... would have been heard to describe the character or essence of Jesus' disciples as a distinctive people after the resurrection/ascension.”

¹²⁵ C. H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Reading the New Testament Series (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2005).

¹²⁶ Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, xiv, xxvi.

¹²⁷ Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, xv, xxvi.

¹²⁸ Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, xxxvi.

Having said that, Talbert attempts to interpret the Areopagus Speech in terms of its larger narrative unit i.e., Acts 17:1-34.¹²⁹ That means, Talbert regards the mission in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9), the mission in Berea (Acts 17:10-15), and the mission in Athens (Acts 17:16-34) as part of the same unit. Whereas the first two small units are catalogued as summaries, the third unit is held as a fully developed incident in Athens. Although all three units assert something about real events in Paul's life, the story in Athens is the major focus in the big narrative Acts 17:1-34.

The importance of the speech is given especially by the way the Areopagus Speech is framed in relation to the previous two smaller units i.e., 17:15 – to Athens; 18:1 – left Athens. The Areopagus Speech becomes a fully developed narrative in which a detail account of one of Jesus' followers is given. According to Talbert, the third unit can be divided in three sections: (1) the context, (2) the proclamation Acts 17:22-31, and (3) the conclusion Acts 17:32-34.¹³⁰

The first part of the Speech, Acts 17:16-21, introduces the reader into the topic of the section, namely an attack against pagan idolatry.¹³¹ The usual pattern of Paul going first to minister to those in synagogues (Thessalonica - Acts 17:1; and Berea – Acts 17:10) is present in Athens, too cf. Acts 17:17. However, Talbert argues that by the insertion of vs. 16, Luke endeavored to change the attention of his audience. A reader would understand that this section is not anymore about a usual experience in synagogue, but it is about Paul's experience in a place full of idols. Carefully outlining the literary patterns of the Areopagus Speech, Talbert provides explanations to the text by drawing upon parallels from Jewish and Greco-Roman literature. Paul's experience is given from a Greek ancient point of view. His similarity with Socrates in teaching (i.e., 'dialoguing') and in location (i.e., 'marketplace') made Talbert see connections to figures from Greek literature (e.g., street preachers). Unlike Socrates, Talbert considers that Paul is not on trial before the Athenian council, but he is used to satisfy the Athenian curiosity.

Talbert divides the second part of the speech, which encloses Paul's address to Athens, in three smaller units: vss. 22-23 – the introduction, vss. 24-29 – the common core, and vss. 30-31 – the Messianist conclusion.¹³² He points out that the first unit is an appeal to the Athenians to know the unknown god, whereas the second unit is the essence of the speech, which is to be read in a precanonical context. This observation is based on the structural organization of the text, namely a chiasmic pattern: vss. 24-25 ABB'A', and vss. 26-29 A''B''.¹³³

¹²⁹ Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 147.

¹³⁰ Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 150.

¹³¹ Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 150-153.

¹³² Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 153-157.

¹³³ Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 154.

A—Who God is: creator (v. 24a)

B—Implication for worship: no temples (v. 24b)

B'—Implication for worship: no sacrificial cult (v. 25a)

A'—Who God is: giver of life, breath, everything (v. 25b)

A''—Who God is: maker of humans to seek after him (vv. 26–28)

B'—Implication for worship: no idols (v. 29)

The chiasm reflects how one would have heard Paul's speech. According to Talbert, the structure of the speech clearly shows that it stands in continuity to Luke-Acts. The content of this speech is designed by Luke to reach pagan philosophical critic in relation to who God is (e.g., Epictetus 4.7.6 – 'God has made all things in universe'; Seneca, *Epistles* 95.47 – 'God seeks no servants; He himself serves humankind') as well as to reach a Hellenistic Judaist audience (e.g., Acts 7:48-Stephen's speech). Furthermore it points to philosophical (e.g. Clement of Alexandria quoting Zeno, *Miscellanies* 5.76 – 'men shall neither built temples nor make idols'), to Hellenistic Judaism concepts (e.g. Wis 15:16-17 – 'the Creator is not to be represented by the created'), and to a reflection on how God is to be worshipped. Finally, Talbert points that these two truths about God are also reflected elsewhere in Luke. In relation to who God is, Luke wrote that God is the maker of all human beings (Luke 3:23-38) and showed that God is close to the human race so that people might seek him (Acts 14:17); and in relation to how one must worship God, Luke made it clear in Acts 7:41-43 and 14:15 that God cannot be represented by lifeless idols. Talbert argues that the Lucan Paul used the 'common Mediterranean philosophic critique of temples, sacrifices, and idols' without 'appearing ridiculous to his philosophic audience,' nor 'violate the conscience of a Hellenistic Jew or a Lucan Messianist.'¹³⁴ By this kind of approach, a wide variety of audience was reached. If the second part of the speech was suggested to be read in a precanonical context, the last unit of the speech draws upon information from the Pauline epistles, thus requiring vss. 30-31 – the Messianist conclusion – to be read in the canonical context. The conclusion of the speech asserts two things: (1) Paul's audience is called now to repentance, because (2) God has fixed a day of judgment. As Talbert expressed it, both information are reflections of Pauline thought:¹³⁵

“There is first the call for repentance. ‘God has overlooked the times of ignorance [of Gentiles—14:16; of Jews—3:17; 13:27; cf. Rom 3:25], but now he demands that all people everywhere repent’ (2:38; 3:19; 14:15; Luke 24:47). Second, there comes the basis for the call to repentance: ‘because he has established a day on which he will judge the world with justice [24:25; cf. Rom 2:5, 16; 1 Thess 5:2, 4] through a man he has

¹³⁴ Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 156.

¹³⁵ Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 156-157.

appointed [10:42], and he has provided confirmation for all by raising him from the dead' (2:24; 10:40; 13:33)."

According to Talbert, only the information about Jesus' resurrection goes beyond his audience's comprehension. The notion of judgment was not a foreign idea for the Mediterranean world (e.g., Lucian, *Zeus Catechized*, talks about judgment).

Finally Acts 17:32-34 is the conclusion of the whole narrative. It describes the outcome of Paul's message, as well as the common reaction of Paul's audience concerning his proclamation of resurrection.¹³⁶ Talbert, again brings examples from both Acts (24:25) and Greco-Roman world (Lucian, *Peregrinus* 7-8,34) to show what could be a typical reaction of disagreement. If in Acts the postponement is a sign of unbelief, in Lucian scoffing is typical for fringe figures.

3.2.5 R. C. Tannehill – A Narrative Unity Analysis of Acts 17:16-34

The Speeches in Acts have attracted attention of many scholars, among whom is also R. C. Tannehill. Tannehill entitled his major work on Acts, '*The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*,' a 'new kind of commentary.'¹³⁷ The purpose of his work is to show how the unity of Luke-Acts is preserved 'through narrative developments.'¹³⁸ In other word, Tannehill focuses on units of text, smaller or larger, as conveyers of meaning. In doing so, he understands that at the core of every narrative in Acts stand literary methods that envisage influencing its reader.

Tannehill attempts to examine the Areopagus Speech from a narrative critical point of view, so he looks at Acts 17:16-34 as to a self-interpretive unit within the context of Luke-Acts. By this, Tannehill demonstrates that important parts of the Areopagus Speech voice themes that run throughout Luke-Acts. He shows that a study of the Areopagus Speech at a narrative critical level helps one to acquire information that leads to the narrator's point of view in the speech, namely God's salvation envisages all the nations. The speech becomes important for two things, on the one hand, it indicates an interest in spreading God's message to all the people, and on the other hand, it deals with 'issues that emerged from core values affirmed in the narrative as a whole.'¹³⁹

On a big scale, Tannehill's method argues that the Areopagus Speech is part of the big narrative of Luke-Acts. Within this narrative, it asserts information about the episodes that follows Paul's speech (i.e., Paul's ministry in Corinth and Ephesus) and it presents the inception of a new phase in the history of redemption, namely the proclamation of God's message to all nations.

¹³⁶ Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 157.

¹³⁷ R. C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, Vol. II The Acts of the Apostles (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986), 8.

¹³⁸ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 8.

¹³⁹ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 210.

Indebted to the work of Paul Schubert on the Areopagus Speech, Tannehill proves that the Areopagus Speech is not a foreign body in the book of Acts, but it is an inclusive part of Luke's technique to reveal his goal.¹⁴⁰ Important parts of the speech, such as the verses 24, 24b, 26, 30, and 31 represent themes that were already in attention of Luke in Luke-Acts. Verse 24, which emphasizes the theme of God as Creator, was already considered two times by Luke in his work (i.e., Acts 4:24; 14:15) before being mentioned in Acts 17:24. Verse 24b, which promotes the idea that God cannot be enclosed by a human building, is a reflection of a previous Lukan thought, namely Stephen's statement before Jews in Acts 7:48. Furthermore, vs. 26 (the idea that all people were made from one) is inherited in Luke's genealogical interest that traces Jesus' genealogy back to Adam (cf. Lk 3:38). Moreover, vs. 30 (i.e., God's command to repentance) is similar to Jews' ignorance regarding Jesus (Acts 3:17-19; 13:27) and to Jesus command that repentance is to be proclaimed to all the nations (cf. Lk 24:47). Finally, vs. 31 (Jesus as judge) is also a theme pronounced by Peter in Acts 10:42-43. In this respect, the Areopagus Speech is considered a mirroring of the universal goal of God's saving word already proclaimed at the beginning of Luke's gospel in the words of Simeon ('a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel' cf. Lk 2:32).

Tannehill further indicates that Paul's speech does not only deal with already promoted themes in Lukan works, but it also asserts something about the episodes that follows Paul's speech, namely Paul's ministry in Corinth and Ephesus.¹⁴¹ Athens has marked the fulfillment of what was previously proclaimed in Luke, namely the gospel will be preached to all people. The gospel is proclaimed in Athens to people who are not related to Jewish people, and continues the same pattern in Paul's ministry in Corinth, and Ephesus. As Tannehill puts it in his own words:¹⁴²

“The order of the narrative invites us to understand Paul's work in Corinth and Ephesus in light of the programmatic speech in Athens. This speech is the charter of a mission that can reach all because it no longer depends on the instructions of Gentiles by the synagogue, which has prepared some to accept the God of Israel revealed in Scriptures. Paul speaks to Athenians but proclaims the God of all, who is close to every individual, an uneducated Ephesian as well as a sophisticated Athenian, thus providing the foundations for a mission that reaches beyond Athens.”

Athens becomes the place where God's message turns universal, and the place that marked the beginning of a new experience in Paul's ministry. According to Tannehill, this aspect of announcement of God's plan in its universal scope is particularly seen in Paul's speech before the

¹⁴⁰ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 211-212.

¹⁴¹ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 212-214.

¹⁴² Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 213.

Ephesians elders. Acts 20:27 makes it clear that Paul has proclaimed Athenians the whole plan of God and no one was excluded (Jews or Gentiles). So, Paul is innocent of the blood of all of them (cf. Acts 20:26). In favor of this, Tannehill argues that the Areopagus Speech is Luke's presentation of God's plan in relation to humanity as a whole.

Besides showing the universal goal of God's salvation with humanity, the speech also provides a model of encountering an audience outside of religious settings.¹⁴³ In this respect Tannehill observes that Paul is addressing both an official corpus of people, who were responsible with the administration of the city, and to the Athenian philosophers. Therefore, the goal of this speech consists first in advancing points of view familiar to a Greco-Roman audience, secondly in pointing to God's displeasure toward a city full of idols, and finally in culminating to a call to repentance. By this kind of speech, the Athenians are given a complete picture of God's new plan. Moving from their misunderstanding of God (God lives in temples; God is served by human hands; God is like gold; cf. vss. 24, 25, 29), the speech culminates with a positive remark which articulates that God is not far for each one of them (cf. vss. 27, 28). The speech functions to show that even if they ignored God in the past, Athenians and Jewish people are part of God's big family. The concept of family in Luke becomes more evident in his use of the term γένος (race), which in Luke-Acts always refers to 'a human group with a common origin and social life.'¹⁴⁴ Thus for Tannehill, the speech asserts the universal scope of Paul's mission by showing that all human beings are part of God's family and that God is not far from those who seek for him.

In this chapter, a methodology used by modern literary criticism in interpreting Paul's speech at Areopagus has been presented. Beginning in the 1970s and continuing until the present, literary critics have explored the book of Acts on grounds of new literary methods of interpretation. As it has been pointed out, a variety of new literary methods have been used. Some of these methods have been exhibited in this chapter. At a certain level, the new procedures/tendencies in interpretation the Areopagus Speech could have been observed throughout a presentation of a number of scholars and their works in relation to Acts 17:16-34. At this point, it is worth mentioning that this kind of approach has been taken in order to investigate how these new literary methods contribute to an understanding of the Areopagus Speech. To this matter, it is now turned towards an examination in the following chapter.

¹⁴³ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 215-220.

¹⁴⁴ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 219.

PART FOUR – AN EVALUATION

4.0 An Evaluation of Modern Literary Criticism

In the previous chapters, it has been shown that the Areopagus Speech has drawn the attention of Christian writers from the earliest times onwards. During all this time Paul's speech has been interpreted in light of many critical approaches and it was subject to many interpretations. Nevertheless beginning in the 1970s and continuing into the twenty-first century, the interpretation of Paul's speech has borne the marks of the influence of modern literary criticism. Literary critics of this period have explored the book of Acts on grounds of new literary methods of interpretation. Some of these literary methods were exhibited in the third part of this thesis. In the present chapter, it is investigated how the new literary methods contribute in general to the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech. Although a number of authors and their works have been explored in the previous chapter, the focus of this chapter, implicitly of this thesis, is not to critique an author but to focus on the literary method *per se*. Thus, this study will not expand on literary criticism in general, but it will limit its focus to an examination of the new aspects that literary criticism brings about for an interpretation of the Areopagus Speech. In this respect, a short appraisal of modern literary criticism is also in view in this chapter.

4.1 Contributions of Literary Criticism for Interpretation of Acts 17:16-34

An examination of Acts 17:16-34 in light of modern literary criticism reveals that the Areopagus Speech has been studied within this category by various literary approaches. As we have seen in the third part of this thesis a wide range of literary approaches have been taken into consideration for the examining of the Areopagus Speech. These are: B. Witherington – an ancient rhetorical analysis of Acts 17:16-34; M. L. Soards – an analysis of Acts 17:16-34 in light of the other speeches in Acts; K. D. Litwak – a framing in discourse analysis of Acts 17:16-34; C. H. Talbert – an ancient biography analysis of Acts 17:16-34; and R. C. Tannehill – a narrative unity analysis of Acts 17:16-34. In the subsequent lines of this study, some features that modern literary criticism brings about for an interpretation of the Areopagus Speech will be highlighted. All of these contributions of modern literary criticism are based on the findings in the works of the authors listed above.

4.1.1 An Emphasis on Luke's Literary Artistry

Modern literary criticism has brought to life Luke's literary artistry.¹⁴⁵ Regardless of the use of a literary method, literary critics examine the Areopagus Speech in light of Luke's literary artistry.¹⁴⁶ This includes considerations of elements of literature, such as: background setting, tone of conversation, text features, argumentation, character depiction, imagery, and conclusion.

A concern for Luke's literary artistry is evident in the works of the scholars examined in this thesis. In turn Witherington, Tannehill, and Soards have pointed to the fact that Luke intentionally allowed hints in his writings in order to lead his readers towards his target. For example, in the work of Witherington, elements of the speech (i.e., Athens; Areopagus) and parts of the structure of the speech (e.g., conclusion) are considered intended hints of Luke's literary artistry. Locations such as Areopagus are regarded as a strategic scene chosen by Luke in order to better pronounce his purpose in Acts, namely salvation is for all regardless of one's ethnicity.¹⁴⁷ From a literary point of view, the Areopagus is not necessarily a historical device, but it becomes a Lukan literary device employed to persuade his readers towards his goal. Similarly in the work of Tannehill, Luke is held accountable for displaying Athens as a mark of the fulfillment of a Lukan theme i.e., the gospel needs to be proclaimed to all people. This theme is not something new in Luke, since it is a subject already pronounced in his writings elsewhere (Lk 2:30-32). Instead, this theme is important because its fulfillment starts in Athens and from there it is carried out among the nations. Hence, Athens becomes in the Lukan narrative the point where the gospel reaches all people, not only Jews or proselytes but also pagan philosophers. In addition, Tannehill holds Athens also as a marker that points to the beginning of a new experience in the Gentiles' world which is meant in the end to expand towards all the nations (i.e., Corinth, and Ephesus), therefore from a literary point of view Athens is the place where Paul's message becomes universal.¹⁴⁸

Furthermore, Witherington considers that the abrupt ending of the speech is due to Luke's stratagem to lead his audience to a point of decision and judgment. Looking at the speech in this manner, one does not have to answer anymore the question whether Paul's attempt to spread the word of God in Athens was or was not a successful experience. According to Witherington, an examination of the text from Luke's literary point of view reveals that this text is not necessarily

¹⁴⁵ Modern literary critics by "re-establishing the text's 'realism' on a literary basis, ... have helped to give it greater credibility...". See, G. Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Downer Groves, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 485.

¹⁴⁶ For more information about 'The style of Luke' see, A. Pinero and J. Pelaez, *The Study of the New Testament: A Comprehensive Introduction*, trans. D. E. Orton and P. Ellingworth (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2003), 491-493.

¹⁴⁷ B. Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998), 512.

¹⁴⁸ R. C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, Vol. II The Acts of the Apostles (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986), 213.

concerned with the results of Paul's mission, instead it focuses on the decision and judgment an Athenian was going to make as a response to Paul's proclamation.¹⁴⁹ Then, both a positive as well as a negative answer can be expected in this narrative. On the one hand, there is a positive response, namely the conversion of Dionysius, and on the other hand, there is a mixed answer in relation to Paul's speech i.e., some were unconvinced by Paul's utterance, others were ready to listen more to Paul on another occasion. Certainly, looking at the Areopagus Speech from Luke's literary artistry also helps to the resolution of conflicts that always prompted the Areopagus Speech (e.g., Paul's result in Athens); such conflicts can now be solved on a literary basis.

A consideration of Luke's literary artistry also helped literary critics in terms of character development/depiction and text's structural analysis and interpretation. Soards and Witherington found it useful to pay attention to Luke's literary artistry in these regards. According to Soards, Paul's physical positioning prior to the speech is described in a language that points to the posture of a Greek orator (i.e., σταθείς, ἐν μέσῳ).¹⁵⁰ It is believed that Luke's depiction of Paul before the Athenians in this speech attests something about Luke's literary artistry. A closer examination of the narrative reveals that the kind of Greek words Luke used within the text (i.e., σταθείς, ἐν μέσῳ) were carefully chosen to point to his intentions for Paul. It is obvious that Paul among other things is an orator. Soards holds Luke accountable for his choice of words and for a depiction of Paul in these terms. Paul is a cultured intellectual, portrayed in such a way that he can stand any scholar of his time. Witherington has also recognized this piece of information in his commentary.¹⁵¹ Luke's positioning of Paul in the midst of the Athenian council, where he delivers a discourse, is part of Lukan strategy to point to Paul as an orator and as a capable intellectual equipped to stand even the most cultured people of Athens. Nonetheless, a depiction of Paul as an orator has also implications on how one would have expected the text's structure to look like. If Luke indeed depicted Paul in terms of an orator, then for literary critics rhetorical devices must rest at the basis of the speech. A detection of such rhetorical devices has led literary critics to examine the Areopagus Speech in terms of a rhetorical analysis. As a result, Paul's speech has been interpreted in terms of a forensic speech (Witherington) as well as a deliberative performance (Soards).

An emphasis on Luke's literary artistry is further noticeable in the use of imagery. It is often pointed out by critics that Luke used his literary artistry in shaping Paul's speech. The image of an Athens imbued with idols and that of a Paul provoked at the sight of the idols are both held as intended hints of what one should expect to happen in the development of the narrative.¹⁵² For

¹⁴⁹ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 531.

¹⁵⁰ M. L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 96.

¹⁵¹ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 517.

¹⁵² K. D. Litwak, "Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31," *Biblica* 85 (2004), 211.

example, a connection of Paul's character depiction in the story (i.e., Paul provoked by the idols) with the image of an Athens full of idol-worshipping people would have directed one to expect a narrative about condemnation of idolatry. Approaching the Areopagus Speech from this point of view, it provides one with clues about how Luke's narrative is meant to function together. Whereas dividing Luke's narrative in smaller pieces would have lost sight of any Lukan literary artistry and it would depict Luke in terms of a compiler, rather than a writer. More about the importance of examining the text in its present form will be discussed in the next section.

4.1.2 *An Emphasis on Rhetorical/Narrative Units of Text in Their Present Form*

Another contribution of literary criticism in the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech consists of an emphasis on a narrative as a whole, rather than attempting an analysis in terms of individual expressions or passages in a narrative.¹⁵³ In other words, this approach 'accepts the value of the document as it stands, rather than seeking to find how the individual parts came about or had meaning on their own.'¹⁵⁴ By rhetorical/narrative units of text in their present form is meant that the Areopagus Speech has been taken into consideration for study as a text in its final form (e.g., rhetorical composition) as well as in terms of a rhetorical composition that emphasizes the relationship between the text in question and the book of Acts as a whole (i.e., Paul's speech in relation to the other speeches in Acts). This is most clear in Witherington's and Soards' interpretation of Paul's speech, who attempt to examine it in terms of a rhetorical composition, thus it is assessed how Luke as a writer set the speech to function in its present form in his account. Such an examination differentiates itself from the work of Talbert, Tannehill and Litwak who explore the Areopagus Speech within the context of corpora of texts (e.g., Luke-Acts-Pauline Gospels; Luke-Acts; Luke-LXX).

Witherington considers that the speech is a rhetoric unit written to be part of the larger Lukan history recorded by means of rhetorical conventions. Thus, a rhetorical structure has been assigned to the speech: '(1) exordium, including *captatio benevolentiae*, vv. 22-23; (2) *propositio*, v. 23b; (3) *probatio*, vv. 24-29; (4) *peroratio*, vv. 30-31.'¹⁵⁵ In order to acquiring a meaning in terms of rhetoric, Paul's speech is not divided into smaller pieces of text and it is neither examined how its

¹⁵³ Outside of modern literary criticism, the tendency in interpreting a text is to focus attention on a particular word or on certain verses in a text. This is true for two reasons: (1) either the text is atomized and one focuses on particular verses in interpreting a passage, or (2) due to source-criticism many scholars believe that not the whole text is original. By this kind of examination a text is taken out of its literary strategy, it is departed from its literary context, and it is to a certain extent made to fail its force as a whole. See, T. Longman III, "An Appraisal of the Literary Approach," *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, gen. ed. Moises Silva (Leicester: Apollos, 1996), 132. See also, T. Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Academie Books, 1987).

¹⁵⁴ R. R. Melick Jr., "Literary Criticism of the New Testament," *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation: A Complete Library of Tools and Resources*, ed. D. S. Dockery, K. A. Mathews, and R. B. Sloan (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Pub., 1994), 452.

¹⁵⁵ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 518.

individual parts came together. As a rhetorical unit, Paul's speech was studied as an entity that is able to provide meaning in its present form (e.g., rhetorical structure), otherwise it is considered that one can lose sight of Luke's intention in his text.

In addition, literary criticism provides opportunity to interpret the Areopagus speech in light of other texts that are part of a similar literary structure. In our case, the Areopagus speech could be examined in relation to the other speeches in Acts, and at their turn all the speeches in Acts can be examined in relation to Luke's purpose in his writings as a whole.¹⁵⁶ A comparative analysis of all the speeches in Acts shows that they are all linked together by common themes. They all hold together details about a wide variety of personalities, display information about ethnic groups and communities, point out to a variety of geographical regions, and unify historical moments. A consideration of the Areopagus Speech in light of the other speeches in Acts contributes to the interpretation of Paul's speech by displaying information about the development of Lucan Paul's character up to his experience in Athens (i.e., an ability in confronting even the most educated men of his time), it further reveals that the message of God spread to ethnic groups outside Judaism (e.g., mission in Corinth, Ephesus), and it points out that the word of God will continue to be proclaimed further towards all the nations (e.g., Rome). Without a doubt, this kind of assessment displays literary aspects specific to Lukan style that run throughout all the speeches and it shows how some of these literary aspects climax in the account of the Areopagus Speech. Due to the fact that the speeches mark important moments in the Lucan story, an understanding of how Luke used these literary aspects is useful in determining the role of the Areopagus Speech narrative in the context of the speeches in Acts, as well as in the context of corpora of texts (e.g. Luke-Acts); as it will be shown in the next section. However, these literary aspects cannot be unlocked except if one recognizes the presence of such literary intentions in the Lucan narrative.

4.1.3 An Emphasis on Corpora of Texts

Literary criticism sheds a better light on the Areopagus speech by dealing with corpora of texts and with their relation as a whole. A tendency of literary critics is to use narrative criticism in order to highlight the relationship between the unfolding narratives and the story they hold together within a literary work. In this respect, literary critics manifested an interest in the narrative structure of a larger unit (e.g., Luke-Acts) working through matters such as plot development, character development, climax of a story, and implied reader.¹⁵⁷ These matters are important to guide a literary critic to see how a text relates to other forms of texts and together to the writing of an author as a whole.

¹⁵⁶ M. L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 13.

¹⁵⁷ D. A. Carson, and D. J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005), 58.

Examining Talbert's assessment of the Areopagus Speech, we have seen that he has styled the book of Acts as succession narrative, which stresses the relationship between Jesus' ministry and the ministry of his followers, consequently the relationship of the Acts of the Apostles with Luke's Gospel and the Epistles. In this regard, Acts becomes a narrative of fulfillment, which asserts how Messiah accomplished God's mission (The Gospel of Luke) and how his followers continued God's program (The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles). It also serves in pointing to the fact that a unity in Messiah has been realized between the Jewish people and all nations. Examining Paul's speech at the interplay between a canonical and a precanonical reading allows one to see that the Areopagus Speech plays an important role by climaxing the spread of the word of God through Jesus' followers among the gentiles, including the educated and the ordinary. The Areopagus Speech is seen as being part of the phase two of Jesus' followers' mission (the acts of Paul - Acts 13-28) which relates to the whole Lukan writing by asserting something about the life of one of Jesus' followers (i.e., Paul).

Moreover, an emphasis on corpora of texts has opened a door to interpret the Areopagus Speech as an unfolding narrative in the larger Lukan literary work, Luke-Acts. Tannehill has proposed that the unity of Luke-Acts is preserved through narrative development.¹⁵⁸ A narrative, in our case the Areopagus Speech, is a conveyor of meaning that points to the unity of Lukan writings. Paul's speech contributes to this unity particularly in revealing within itself themes that run throughout Luke-Acts.¹⁵⁹ Themes such as: God the Creator, God's transcendence and immanence, and God's salvation for all the nations are only some of the themes that Luke emphasizes in both Paul's speech and Luke-Acts. Highlighting the place of the Areopagus Speech in Luke-Acts, it also reveals that Paul's speech is a conveyor of meaning for the larger Lukan literary work. The Areopagus Speech climaxes Luke's writing by pointing to the place where God's salvation becomes universal (e.g., pagan philosophers are exposed to the Gospel) and by confirming the inception of a new phase in Paul's ministry (i.e., mission in Corinth and Ephesus) and in the history of redemption, namely God's message begins to be spread to the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8).

4.1.4 An Emphasis on Author's Persuasion of the Implied Reader

Literary critics have also contributed to an interpretation of the Areopagus Speech in their attempts to determine how various signals within a text guided the implied reader in deciding the text's meaning. As Johnson states when he discusses about Luke's rhetorical intentionality: 'The way the composition itself is put together suggests readers with certain characteristics and capabilities.

¹⁵⁸ R. C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, Vol. II The Acts of the Apostles (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986), 8.

¹⁵⁹ See especially vss. 24, 24b, 26, 30, and 31. The themes developed in those verses are in attention of Luke throughout his writings.

Analysis of the composition's rhetorical or narrative logic also reveals not only the writing's argument but also something about the direction in which that argument wishes to turn its intended readers.¹⁶⁰ As far as the Areopagus Speech is concerned, Witherington called the attention to some signals present in the Lukan narrative that are meant to provide insights as how one should appreciate Paul's speech.¹⁶¹ For example, at the very beginning of the speech there is a hint in vs. 16 that provides an indication (i.e., Paul's temper) how Paul encountered with Athens. Paul's temper is depicted by the Greek word *παροξύνετο*, which in the Septuagint refers to God's anger in regard to an idol-worshipping Israel (e.g., Deut 9:18; Isa 65:3). Such a hint correlated with the manner Luke builds Paul's portrayal i.e., a man (orator) standing in the midst of the Athenian council (vs. 22), would have decisively contributed to the way the implied reader encountered Luke's account. Possibly, in this scene Paul would have been remembered as an orator whose message stands in conflict with the worldview of Athenians. If that is true, then it seems that from the very beginning of his account Luke intentionally introduces hints that are meant to provide information about what is to be expected in this episode. In an ideal scenario (e.g., one is aware of all these Old Testament and Greek features) the implied reader would have certainly picked up Luke's signals about Paul and would have interpreted the speech according to these lines.

Furthermore, Litwak has also pointed in his assessment of the Areopagus Speech to some Lukan signals that are meant to lead the implied reader to the right interpretation of the text.¹⁶² Litwak thinks that in the development of Paul's speech Luke used intertextual echoes of the Old Testament as the main signal of persuasion towards the implied reader. As it has been presented in the third part of this thesis, many Old Testament echoes were found current in the development of Paul's speech. Scholars such as Litwak regarded these Old Testament intertextual echoes valuable indices towards how the implied reader would have encountered Lukan material. Accordingly, it was held that those echoes led the implied reader to understand the Areopagus Speech as 'an instance of prophetic anti-idol polemic,' a narrative about condemnation of idolatry whose goal is to teach about the true God.

Talbert has furthermore noticed some important signals that may have persuaded one towards a proper understanding of Luke's narrative.¹⁶³ They are mostly connected to the introduction of the speech. The introduction of the Areopagus narrative (Acts 17:16-21) is regarded as a key for the understanding of what is going to follow in the text. The usual Pauline pattern, i.e., first ministering to those in synagogues (Thessalonica - Acts 17:1; Berea - Acts 17:10) is present in

¹⁶⁰ L. T. Johnson, "Literary Criticism of Luke-Acts: Is Reception-History Pertinent?," *JSNT* 28.2 (2005), 160.

¹⁶¹ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 512.

¹⁶² Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 210.

¹⁶³ C. H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Reading the New Testament Series (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2005), 150-153.

Athens in a slightly different way (Acts 17:16-17). By inserting vs. 16, Luke attempts to change the attention of his audience. A reader would have understood that the following section of the speech is not anymore about a usual experience in synagogue, as it happened in Thessalonica and Beroea, instead it is about Paul's ministering in a place full of idols. Using such a hint, Luke calls the attention of his readers to the fact that the Areopagus Speech is about another kind of audience, an idol-worshipping audience, who is in great need of a message about the true God. This is visible in the manner the speech is outlined (e.g., in a chiasmic structure which talks about who God is, how God is to be worshipped, and the implication of worship that requires the extinction of idolatry). More about this, it will be discussed in the following section when the structure of the speech is dealt with.

4.1.5 An Emphasis on Ancient and Modern Literary Models

Modern literary criticism helped to an interpretation of the Areopagus Speech by providing tools (i.e., ancient and modern) for an analysis of the structure of Paul's speech. As we have shown in the third part of this thesis, scholars of Acts have examined the Areopagus Speech through modern (e.g., framing in discourse) and ancient (e.g., rhetoric) methods of interpretation. Talbert's ancient biography, Witherington and Soards' classical rhetorical assessment, and Litwak's modern method of interpretation (i.e., framing in discourse) can be mentioned. One of the advantages of having such tools for interpretation consists of the way they open a door to understand how the Areopagus Speech was constructed. As Melick also observed when he talks about the contribution of literary criticism to biblical studies:¹⁶⁴

“...literary criticism contributes uniquely to biblical studies in providing tools for analysis of the structure of a document. Here the parallels to other first-century literature provide helpful insights. The NT writers were products of their time in the way they constructed their materials. A sensitivity to such parallels, therefore, helps sharpen the analytical tools of biblical scholars.”

Insights from Greco-Roman literature as well as insights from Jewish literature have pointed to ways the Areopagus Speech could be interpreted. These include a focus on characters in the story and a focus on the structure of the text. An emphasis on Paul's character in the Lukan narrative has often alluded to Paul's depiction in view of a Socratic model. Furthermore, allusions to Paul as a prophet have also appeared on the scene of the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech. However, the most influential depiction of Paul is that of Paul as an orator. In consequence, attempts to interpret the Areopagus Speech by means of rhetorical conventions and by means of the Old Testament intertextual echoes have been voiced by various scholars. Besides that, a focus on the

¹⁶⁴ Melick Jr., *Literary Criticism of the New Testament*, 453.

structure of the text has shown striking similarities between Paul's speech and the techniques of ancient oratory.¹⁶⁵

In our presentation of Paul's speech in terms of rhetoric two advocates of this method were given, Witherington and Soards. Although their approach is different, especially in their focus on types of rhetoric, they both presupposed that the Areopagus Speech has been influenced by classical rhetorical conventions, especially by the forensic and deliberative types.¹⁶⁶ The structure of a forensic speech, as it is described by Aristotle (*Rhetoric* III. 13-19), is organized according to the following structure: *exordium*, *narratio*, *partitio*, *confirmatio*, *reprehensio*, and *conclusio*. The organizational structure of a deliberative speech follows the same pattern as in a forensic speech except that it misses the refutation, *reprehensio*. Although the two types of speeches are close in structure, they both address a different situation.¹⁶⁷ The former centers its attention on a judge of the past with a particular interest in accusing or defending; thus, its outcome resumes to just or unjust. The latter focuses on a judge of the future with a particular attention to inspire an audience to advocate for the good and by that to avoid a potential future danger. It has been argued that Luke presents the Areopagus Speech according to a rhetorical structure similar to that voiced out by Aristotle. Soards fitted Paul's speech within the category of a forensic type, yet rhetorical deliberative in purpose.¹⁶⁸ Even if he did not outline the speech according to an Aristotelian pattern, he indeed showed in its presentation that Luke envisaged Paul as delivering a deliberative speech in a judicial situation. A deliberative speech in this case would attest a judge of the future in the following: (1) Paul speaks about the Athenians' wrong, (2) Paul sees the necessity for Athenians to switch back to good (as their poets warned them), and (3) finally by their turning to good a possible future danger would be avoided (God's judgment). On the other hand, Witherington aligned the speech according to an Aristotelian forensic type: '(1) *exordium*, including *captatio benevolentiae*, vv. 22-23; (2) *propositio*, v. 23b; (3) *probatio*, vv. 24-29; (4) *peroratio*, vv. 30-31.'¹⁶⁹ A forensic speech in this case would validate a judge of the past by showing the elements of wrongdoing and attacking idolatry present in Athens, as well as in

¹⁶⁵ P. E. Satterthwaite, "Acts Against the Background of Classical Rhetoric," *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: Ancient Literary Setting*, vol.1 ed. B. W. Winter, and A. D. Clarke (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993), 357-360. For more information about classical rhetoric see, G. A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

¹⁶⁶ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 518. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns*, 96.

¹⁶⁷ R. C. A. Higgins, "'The Empty Eloquence of Fools': Rhetoric in Classical Greece." *Rediscovering Rhetoric: Law, Language, and the Practice of Persuasion*, ed. J. T. Gleeson and R. C. A. Higgins. (Sydney: Federation Press, 2008), 22.

¹⁶⁸ Soards follows Kennedy's discussion about the value of Paul's speech at the Areopagus. He sees traces of a judicial situation in Paul's speech, yet he also observes that a deliberative aim in Paul's speech cannot be totally dismissed. See, G. A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill/London: The University of Carolina Press, 1984), 129-131.

¹⁶⁹ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 518.

asserting that Athenians are presently unjust because of their ignorance of the true God and worshipping false idols.

Besides a comparison of Acts to ancient works of Greco-Roman historiography (e.g., Witherington; Soards), there are also scholars who paralleled Acts to a Greco-Roman biography (e.g., Talbert).¹⁷⁰ There are evidences that Luke shaped his account somehow similarly to the work of the third century Greek biographer Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* that deals with the lives of the philosophers and with that of their successors. Luke-Acts in this respect comes close to Diogenes's work by presenting the life of Jesus (The Gospel of Luke) and that of his successors (The Acts of the Apostles). Approached like that, Luke's work as a whole underlines the unity of the salvation-history, in which the Areopagus Speech plays a role in asserting how salvation climaxes in the Gentiles' world and how the word of God becomes a universal message for all the nations. More about this has already been said in the previous sections in this chapter. However, the point that is made here is that ancient biography represents another tool that literary criticism provides for the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech.

Acts, and implicitly the Areopagus Speech, has also been provided with modern methods of investigation. An advocate in this regard is Litwak, who attempts to interpret the speech from a framing in discourse point of view.¹⁷¹ As it has been mentioned in the third part of this thesis (see section 3.1.1.5), at the basis of this method of interpretation there is a principle which states that communication, verbal or non-verbal, cannot be understood outside of a frame of interpretation. Litwak found in the Old Testament history a frame of interpretation for Paul's speech. If Luke has consciously modeled Acts based on the history found in the Scriptures, then the Old Testament becomes the frame through which Luke is framing the Areopagus Speech and the means by which the implied reader would have understood and interpreted Luke's account. Thus, the Old Testament Scriptures also represents a literary parallel for the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech.

4.2 A Short Appraisal of Modern Literary Criticism

Since the concern here is to see how literary criticism looked anew in the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech, some cautions are also in view in this chapter. The subsequent lines will highlight some of literary criticism's pitfalls in relation to an interpretation of the Areopagus Speech. These drawbacks are based on the examination of the works of the five authors presented in the third part of this thesis.

¹⁷⁰ C. H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (Missoula, Montana: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975), 134.

¹⁷¹ Litwak, *Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31*, 210.

(1) *An objection to the focus of literary criticism: it emphasizes the structure and function of a text above its meaning.*¹⁷² This does not indicate that meaning is not part of an examination. Instead, literary critics attempt to examine the Areopagus Speech by looking first at the structure and function of the speech before getting to its meaning. As it has been noticed such an approach has led to different kinds of findings in relation to the structure and function of the text, and finally such an approach affected its meaning. For example, Witherington differs in his assessment of the structure and function of the Speech (i.e., rhetoric forensic) from Soards (i.e., rhetoric deliberative), and both of these differ from Tannehill (i.e., narrative unity of Luke-Acts), Talbert (i.e., larger narrative unit Acts 17:1-34), and Litwak (i.e., biblical history). Witherington pointed out that the structure of the speech is rhetorical and functions at a forensic level, thus with a meaning in terms of a judge of the past. Soards considered that the speech fits better a rhetorical structure with a deliberative function, so emphasizing a meaning in terms of a judge of the future. Furthermore, Tannehill regarded for the speech a structure in terms of a narrative that points to the unity of Luke-Acts (function) and displays a meaning in terms of God's universal goal of salvation. Moreover, Talbert situated the speech in a larger narrative structure (i.e., Acts 17:1-34) functioning in the context of Paul's mission to gentiles, thus producing a meaning in terms of an attack against pagan idolatry. Finally, Litwak pointed out to a structure in terms of a biblical history, which functions in the context of the Old Testament Scriptures, thus producing a meaning in terms of historical validation of present events.

The above examples show that the structure of a text plays a significant role in producing a text's meaning. In certain cases, the way one looks at a text and at its structure could be determinative for its interpretation. Without a doubt, the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech was affected by the different analytical structures assigned to it. As it has been shown in this thesis, the specifics of Paul's speech were derived from a variety of directions (e.g., Greek literature; Old Testament Scriptures) and the meaning revolved around these guidelines. Then it is asked, how is a literary critic suppose to get to the author's intended meaning when there is so much uncertainty concerning the structure that one should assign to the Areopagus Speech?

(2) *An objection to the method of literary criticism: it sometimes applies modern literary methods of interpretation to ancient literature.*¹⁷³ This is the case with Litwak, who applied what modern literary critics call the theory of framing in discourse (see section 3.1.1.5). As it has been mentioned earlier in this study, this modern method of interpretation presupposes that communication, verbal or non-verbal, cannot be understood outside of a frame of interpretation.

¹⁷² Melick Jr., *Literary Criticism of the New Testament*, 453.

¹⁷³ M. A. Powell, "Narrative Criticism," *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. J. B. Green (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Carlisle: Eerdmans/Paternoster Press, 1995), 254. See also, Longman III, *An Appraisal of the Literary Approach*, 126-128.

For Litwak, the frame is the Scriptures of the Old Testament through which is thought that Luke shaped his account and by which he provided enough hints for his readers to acquire such an interpretation. Although by choosing an ancient frame (i.e. Old Testament) for an ancient text (i.e., Areopagus Speech) Litwak's method does justice to a composition of the Areopagus Speech, yet when this method is applied, it remains anachronistic.¹⁷⁴ What actually Litwak does is that he takes a new method of interpretation (framing in discourse), he adapts it by using the Old Testament Scriptures as the frame that stands at the basis of this method, and he finally applies it to an ancient text (i.e., Paul's speech). Even though Litwak might be right that the Old Testament Scriptures may constitute a frame of reference to Paul's speech, it is not clear whether Luke produced his speech exclusively alongside this kind of frame, since strong evidence of Greek ancient rhetorical devices is also present in the text. As Witherington noticed when he talks about Luke's use of rhetorical conventions in the Areopagus Speech: 'Arguments are only persuasive if they work within the plausibility structure existing in the minds of the hearers.'¹⁷⁵ Without a doubt, he considers that ancient rhetoric is 'the frame of reference' that made best sense in the minds of Luke hearers and fit best Paul's speech. Then, one may wonder if an ancient rhetorical model can also be taken as a frame of reference to Paul's speech, and whether a rhetorical frame of reference does more justice to Paul's speech than Litwak's choice does. However, since neither one of these two frames (e.g., the Old Testament Scriptures; a rhetorical structure) belong to a modern method of interpretation, a use of such ancient frames within the context of a modern method requires an adaptation. Litwak is an example of such methodology. He employed a modern method of interpretation in his study by adapting it to fit to an ancient text. It is clear that when biblical scholars apply modern methods of interpreting recent literature to biblical text, these methods have to be adapted simply because texts from Antiquity are different from modern texts. The danger does not only consist of applying a modern method of interpretation to ancient literature, rather it rests on the fact that modern literary critics due to their frustration, at time, revisit their work and try to reinterpret the same text in relation to other new modern methods as they make room in the field of biblical academic world.¹⁷⁶

(3) *An objection to the approach: sometimes scholars tend to apply a favorite approach and lose sight of a text*¹⁷⁷ or (4) *they are unsure what ancient literary parallel should be attributed to a document.*¹⁷⁸ A diversity of approaches to the Areopagus Speech is obvious, as well as an

¹⁷⁴ This method is anachronistic in the sense that Litwak does not apply the method to the text as it is meant to be applied. For a more detailed account of what 'framing in discourse' presupposes see section 3.1.1.5. For other examples, see also, W. W. Klein, C. L. Blomberg, and R. T. Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas/London/Vancouver/Melbourne: Word Publishing, 1993), 438.

¹⁷⁵ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 530.

¹⁷⁶ Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 254.

¹⁷⁷ C. C. Black, "Rhetorical Criticism," *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. J. B. Green (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Carlisle: Eerdmans/Paternoster Press, 1995), 275.

¹⁷⁸ Melick Jr., *Literary Criticism of the New Testament*, 453.

emphasis on ancient literary parallels to it. Talbert has argued that the main body of the speech (vss. 24-29) stands in continuity with Luke-Acts and must be read in the precanonical context of Acts, and the second part of the speech (vss. 30-31) should be read in the canonical context, since it draws upon information from the Pauline epistles. In contrast, Tannehill sees the speech as a part of the big narrative of Luke-Acts. According to Tannehill, the themes and ideas presented in Paul's speech should be regarded in continuity with Luke-Acts and the speech as a whole as an inclusive part of Luke's technique to reveal his goal within his writings. Without a doubt both authors made their point and have shown that Paul's speech makes sense in each one of the two cases. However, one may ask what is the basis of each one of these methods of interpretation, and if that basis indeed does justice to the text. For example, at the basis of Talbert's interpretation lies a Greek ancient biography (i.e., Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*), which is dated around third century A. D., so, at a later time than Luke's work, which was written around 80-85 (A. D.).¹⁷⁹ Giving the date matter of the two works, the choice of such a biography as base for the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech may remain questionable on the grounds of subsequence in time, as well as on the grounds of criteria by which one decides the best literary parallel for the interpretation of Paul's speech.

(4) The choice of the right ancient literal parallel or literary model is also an issue. It has been shown that various scholars paralleled the Areopagus Speech to different ancient and modern literary models. Talbert has pointed that Paul's speech can be part of Luke's biographical work Luke-Acts, in which the Areopagus Speech provides information about the life of Jesus' followers. Conversely, Witherington and Soards have compared the book of Acts to an ancient work of Greco-Roman historiography shaped by ancient rhetorical conventions. In this case the Areopagus Speech becomes an episode that is part of a history (i.e., Acts) written by means of rhetorical conventions. Litwak has proposed a modern literary model (i.e., framing in discourse) that has the Old Testament as a frame of reference at its basis. Examining the Areopagus Speech in light of such literary models, sometimes one can get the impression that some alleged parallels are a bit far-fetched. Although I am aware that the search for the most apt 'model' or 'parallel' is part of the game, the diversity of the models proposed for the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech makes one asking whether a scholar indeed found the right ancient parallel and if he/she does justice to the Areopagus Speech by applying that method of interpretation.

At the center of this chapter stands an investigation of how the new literary methods of interpretation contribute to an understanding of the Areopagus Speech. An examination of five

¹⁷⁹ B. D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 139, 158.

authors and of their works has led to an identification of several particular emphases that modern literary criticism brings about for an interpretation of Paul's speech. Some of these more important aspects have been pointed out in this chapter. In addition, some points of critique concerning modern literary criticism have also been presented. For a greater appreciation of what literary criticism has been offering to an interpretation of the Areopagus Speech, in the fifth part of this thesis we now turn to an inspection of this new aspects that modern literary criticism brought about. These literary aspects will be examined in light of some aspects that were considered for an interpretation of the Areopagus Speech in the period prior to the 1970s.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ See section 2.0 A Short Survey in the History of Interpretation of Acts 17:16-34.

PART FIVE – A COMPARISON OF METHODS

5.0 A Comparison of Old and New Interpretive Aspects of the Areopagus Speech

Some of the most important aspects that literary criticism brings about for an interpretation of the Areopagus Speech have been presented in the previous chapter of the thesis. The fourth part of the thesis helped to orient how literary critics approach the Areopagus Speech, and it exposed some of the tools that are often used in its interpretation. The present chapter attempts to take these particular emphases that literary criticism elevates for an interpretation of the speech and examine them in light of our previous findings in regard to the Areopagus Speech (see section 2.0). Such an assessment will provide a better picture of how modern literary criticism looked anew and how it differentiates itself from older interpretations of the speech. This chapter does not intend to exhaust all the potential examples that one may find in this regard, yet it proposes an examination of some examples that I considered most valuable for the purpose of this thesis.

5.1 Aspects in Interpretation of the Areopagus Speech

In the following sections, the study of the Areopagus Speech is divided into two main streams of thoughts. Interpretive aspects of the Areopagus Speech prior to the rise of modern literary criticism and interpretive aspects of the Areopagus speech generated by the rise of modern literary criticism are compared. In order to do that, space will be allocated in the first two sections of this chapter for a short presentation of these interpretive aspects. In the first section (*Interpretive Aspects Prior to 1970*), a short overview of some interpretive aspects of the Areopagus Speech prior to 1970 will be given. In the second section (*Interpretive Aspects Beginning to 1970*), some of the interpretive aspects that modern literary criticism brought about in the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech will also be presented. Finally, a number of interpretive aspects (prior to 1970) that resemble modern literary interpretive aspects (beginning to 1970) will be taken into comparison in the third section.

5.1.1 Interpretive Aspects Prior to 1970

A short survey on the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech has shown that Christian exegetes, up to the Reformation Period, such as Justin Martyr, Ambrose of Milan, John Chrysostom, and Thomas Aquinas have endeavored to examine Paul's speech by different methods of interpretation. In their assessment of the text, they used examples from the Greco-Roman world (e.g. Socrates' trial before Areopagus), they placed the speech in the context of philosophy and reason, and they attempted to interpret it in relation to rhetorical literary categories (e.g.

encomium).¹⁸¹ The Protestant Reformation has also contributed to the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech using methods of interpretation such as historical-grammatical and an expository-historical analysis. The eighteenth century marked a new era in the interpretation of Acts. During this period, Paul's speech was examined in turn by critical methods of interpretation such as source-criticism, form-criticism, and redaction-criticism.

The Post-Apostolic Period up to the rise of Protestant Reformation reveals that Paul's speech was of interest mostly because of certain aspects of its content, namely natural revelation. Scholars of that time focused on this one main aspect of the content of the speech in order to show that according to the Christian teaching there is natural revelation. Such a reading testifies that the early Christian writers, up to the Reformation, acknowledged that a certain understanding of God is available to all human beings. In order to support their reading of the Areopagus Speech, Christian authors of that period had drawn in their interpretation upon echoes from the Greek world. Among the most important connections drawn upon in their interpretation of Paul's speech were allusions to Socrates. In antiquity, Socrates served as an example of a person who had certain natural knowledge of the true God and as a philosopher who by means of reason exhorted Athenians to become acquainted with the unknown God.¹⁸² This category is of great interest for this study since modern literary criticism has also made use of Socrates as a possible hint in the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech.

The period of the Protestant Reformation witnesses a shift in the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech. The concept of natural revelation is not anymore at the center of the text; instead, it represents one aspect in the text. The focus of the text does not necessarily boil down to human ability to know God, but on the fact that the Athenians are without excuse in light of such evidences that are displayed in their sight. In this respect, the use of the Old Testament Scriptures in the Areopagus Speech plays a determinative role in proving it. If in the Post-Apostolic Period, Socrates was used as an example of how the Areopagus Speech talks about natural theology, in the Reformation Period and further on, considerations of the Scriptures of the Old Testament as a key in the interpretation of Paul's speech are at its basis. The most obvious connection between the Old Testament and Paul's speech are found in vs. 24 // Ps 50:9, 10, and vs. 26 // Deut 32: 8; 2: 5, 9; Ps 74:17; 115:16; Jer 5:24.¹⁸³ In both instances (vss. 24, 26), Paul tries to expose the Athenians to the

¹⁸¹ See John Chrysostom's XXXVIII homily on Acts of the Apostles in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. P. Schaff (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1980), 232-239.

¹⁸² Allusions to Socrates as a model for Luke's Areopagus Speech can be found in Justin Martyr's *II. Apol.* 10.5-6. More details about Justin Martyr and his knowledge of Luke's speech are given in the second part of this thesis under the headline 2.1. *The Pre-Critical Era: A Post-Apostolic Interest.*

¹⁸³ Besides those passages mentioned above, there is a more extensive list of other allusion to the Old Testament on page 871, see, C. T. Lewis and M. R. Vincent, *Bengel's New Testament Commentary*, vol. 1 Matthew-Acts (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel, 1981), 871.

right doctrine about God, and to make known to them who God is. Such considerations allowed one to see that Paul's speech resonates in thought with the Old Testament Scriptures, and that they play a role within the speech by showing how pagan philosophers were reached with doctrines above nature.¹⁸⁴

Furthermore, connections between ancient literature and the Areopagus Speech have also been noted. A parallel that interest here is that between the Greek biographer Diogenes Laertius (e.g., Epimenides' purification of Athens) and the Areopagus Speech as both talk about certain elements included by Luke in his account (e.g., the unknown God).¹⁸⁵ Such parallel served especially as a reference to show that during Epimenides' life¹⁸⁶ evidences that the unknown God is the proper God existed. By this, it is shown that points of contact between ancient literature and Paul's speech were acknowledged for the interpretation of Acts 17:16-34. As it will later be shown in this chapter, such ancient literary parallels were also used by modern literary criticism.

The Critical Era, unlike the Pre-Critical Era, has manifested an interest in looking at the Areopagus Speech through Luke's glasses. Paul's speech is not anymore Paul's, but it represents Luke's account. In this period, Luke's role as a writer becomes the issue at stake. The Areopagus Speech has been put under the loupe of source-criticism, form-criticism, and redaction-criticism especially during the Critical Era. As an overall conclusion, such examination has revealed that the Areopagus Speech represents Luke's own creation built up on the background of a wide variety of traditions. Although scholars did not come to a consensus regarding the authenticity of the Lucan account, almost everyone agree that Luke had drawn upon Greek secular models of interpretation (e.g. Socrates),¹⁸⁷ upon Greek literary devices (e.g. *captatio benevolentiae*),¹⁸⁸ upon Old Testament ideas (e.g., all men are descendent from one),¹⁸⁹ and Greco-Roman historiography¹⁹⁰ in order to shape his account. In light of the things said above, Luke becomes a writer and a creative author who arranged his materials in order to suit his agenda, and the Areopagus Speech turns into an ideal scene in which his character (i.e., Paul) utters Lucan concepts and ideas rather than those of his own (Pauline). As Luke's role as a writer is at stake in the study of modern literary criticism, the aspects raised by the older literary criticism (e.g. redaction-criticism) are especially of

¹⁸⁴ Lewis and Vincent, *Bengel's New Testament Commentary*, 865-872.

¹⁸⁵ Lewis and Vincent, *Bengel's New Testament Commentary*, 867.

¹⁸⁶ Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948), 13.

¹⁸⁷ E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), 527.

¹⁸⁸ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, 520.

¹⁸⁹ M. Dibelius, "Paul on the Areopagus," *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. H. Greeven; trans. M. Ling (New York: Scribner's, 1956), 36.

¹⁹⁰ H. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. J. Limberg, A. T. Kraabel and D. H. Juel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 218.

importance for this study in crystallizing how/whether modern literary criticism looked anew in the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech.

Ancient parallels, the use of the Old Testament Scriptures, and Luke's role as a writer represent some of the most important interpretive aspects that scholars of the Scriptures have used when dealt with the Areopagus Speech prior to 1970. We now turn to see how modern literary criticism impacted the Areopagus speech especially on these three points.

5.1.2 Interpretive Aspects Beginning with 1970

Beginning to the 1970 onwards, which culminated with the rise of modern literary criticism, the tendency of scholars of the Acts of the Apostles was to look at Luke especially in his role as a writer. Within this category (Luke the writer), consideration of ancient literature and of the use of the Old Testament in the Areopagus Speech are at home. In the third part of this thesis, five authors who stress such considerations have been presented. The subsequent lines provide a short overview of such interpretive aspects that are emphasized by modern literary criticism in the study of the Areopagus Speech.

An emphasis on Luke's role as a writer reveals that modern literary critics have interpreted the Areopagus Speech in terms of Lucan artistry. This kind of assessment has led them to look for hints that resemble Luke's style inside of Lucan writings as well as outside of them (i.e., ancient literature). Evidence that Luke shaped his account following closely a type of Greek ancient biographical work (e.g., Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*) has been pointed out as a potential interpretive aspect for the Areopagus Speech. In addition to parallels to Greek biography, interpretive aspects in terms of ancient rhetoric as a tool for the interpretation of Paul's speech have also been proposed. At least two models have been offered, namely forensic and deliberative types.

Furthermore, in modern literary criticism another tendency is to look at the Old Testament writings as an intentional part of Lucan narrative strategy. An examination of the speech has revealed that themes and ideas from the Old Testament have been used in the Lucan account of the Areopagus Speech. An emphasis on the Scriptures of the Old Testament has led scholars to consider the speech in line with the Scriptures of Israel, and to interpret it in line with a Christian message rather than to a secular speech. Such considerations have revealed that the Old Testament Scriptures play a more important role in the Areopagus Speech than making Paul's speech parallel in thought. They reveal insights about Luke's purpose in this speech, provide clues about how to depict the characters in the story, and limit the boundaries within which the speech provides meaning.

The writings of the Old Testaments and ancient literature have been used as models for an interpretation of the Areopagus Speech, but our study of modern literary criticism has also shown that there is a tendency to look for models outside Christian writings, namely ancient literary models (e.g., Socrates). A comparison of the two lines of thoughts will show how each side has made use of Socrates, Old Testament Scriptures, and ancient literary models in the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech.

5.1.3 A Comparison of Interpretive Aspects: Prior and Beginning to 1970

If in the previous two sections some interpretive aspects of the two periods of time have been pointed at, in this section a comparison of these aspects is in order. This section attempts to point out through a comparative method how/whether modern literary criticism looked anew in its assessment of Paul's speech. A comparison between some of the interpretive aspects highlighted by the critical period prior to 1970 and some of the interpretive aspects emphasized by modern literary criticism are in view in this section. In the previous two sections of this chapter, we have seen that there are some tendencies in the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech that are stressed by both classes of scholars. Some of these are overlapping at a certain level, and some of them even point to a certain extent to some similarities in terms of meaning. Therefore, an examination of modern literary criticism in light of the previous periods of interpretation is in order.

(1) *There is a tendency to stress Luke's role as a writer.* Both lines of interpretation¹⁹¹ have more or less proposed that Luke could be studied in terms of his role as a writer. We begin with the previous periods of interpretation (prior to 1970). Within the periods of interpretation prior to modern literary criticism, however, it is the Critical Era (here I am especially referring to redaction-criticism) that has emphasized Luke's role as a writer in the study of the Areopagus Speech. An examination of one of the advocates of redaction-criticism has led to some valuable observations on how this critical method of interpretation encountered Luke's role as a writer in the development of Paul's speech. The following observations have been noticed:¹⁹² (a) the Areopagus Speech must be interpreted as Luke's literary speech and not Paul's, (b) the speech does not draw upon a Pauline set of thought or ideas, as a result Paul must not be regarded speaking here, and (c) the setting of the speech is created by an ideal scene in which Paul meets

¹⁹¹ By 'lines of interpretation' I mean an inclusion of interpretative aspects of Areopagus Speech prior to 1970, as well as of modern literary criticism that followed this period. Besides modern literary criticism, Luke as a writer has been mostly taken into consideration within critical era especially by redaction-criticism. See, L. L. Cranford, "Modern New Testament Interpretation," *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scriptures*, 2nd edition, ed. by B. Corley, S. W. Lemke, and G. I. Lovejoy (Nashville: Broadman Press, 2002), 147-162.

¹⁹² These observations represent an outcome of an examination of Conzelmann's "*The Address of Paul on the Areopagus*" in the second part of this thesis. See, H. Conzelmann, "The Address of Paul on the Areopagus," *Studies in Luke Acts*, ed. by L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 217-230.

Athenian philosophers. For Conzelmann, and thus for redaction-criticism in this case, the Areopagus Speech becomes ‘a purely literary product’ in which ‘Luke is neither offering an excerpt of a real address, wherever delivered, nor does he want to sketch a model sermon for handy use by a missionary. Rather, as a historian he composes a unique situation which is of permanent importance just because of its uniqueness.’¹⁹³ The value of this situation does not rest in the ‘historical worth of its details,’ instead, it represents an ideal scene that describes an example of how Christianity encountered a Greco-Roman philosophical culture from a position of faith in Christ. As Conzelmann noted: ‘It documents for us how a Christian around A.D. 100 reacts to the *pagan* milieu and meets it from the position of his faith.’¹⁹⁴ In the end, Conzelmann’s assessment of the text demonstrates that this address plays a role only in showing a unique situation in which the establishment of the truth of the faith cannot be stopped even by its rejection of the wisest people of that time.¹⁹⁵

Modern literary criticism has looked anew at Luke’s role as a writer by examining Acts as a piece of literature reflecting a history of that time. A phase of such history is Paul’s speech in Athens. The Areopagus Speech does not represent an ideal, unique piece of literature, but it is a piece of information that corresponds to a determined point in the history of the Early Church in which the Gospel reaches even the most educated people of that time. Modern literary critics do not consider the text an ideal composition as it was previously labeled by advocates of Critical Era, but they recognize that the style, the content, and the arrangement of the material envisage Luke to be heard at the level with the Hellenistic historians.¹⁹⁶ Hence, Luke the writer is envisaged here as a historian. It was pointed out that Luke’s writings reflect organizational features at the same level with the writings of the historians Polybius and Ephorus. Luke’s way of handling the Areopagus Speech (i.e., a summary of an event) and the manner in which the speech is set to function within Lucan historical account (i.e., as an unifying element) resonates with Polybius’ way of writing history. Polybius articulated that: ‘The peculiar function of history is to discover, in the first place, the words actually spoken, whatever they were, and next to ascertain the reason why what was done or spoken led to failure or success’ (XXII. 25b).¹⁹⁷ In such a case, a historian had to make his part by searching for information according to ‘the most diligent inquiry’ and report accurately to an audience what was said on an occasion, and even of that only the things that are the most ‘vital and effectual’ (XXXVI. 1a).¹⁹⁸ Nevertheless, it is clear that Polybius is very critical to those who

¹⁹³ Conzelmann, *The Address of Paul on the Areopagus*, 227.

¹⁹⁴ Conzelmann, *The Address of Paul on the Areopagus*, 218.

¹⁹⁵ Conzelmann, *The Address of Paul on the Areopagus*, 227.

¹⁹⁶ B. Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998), 33-35.

¹⁹⁷ W. R. Paton, *Polybius, The Histories IV*, Loeb Classical Library, trans. by W. R. Paton, ed. G. P. Goold (Cambridge/London: Harvard Univ. Press/William Heinemann LTD, 1976), 371.

¹⁹⁸ W. R. Paton, *Polybius, The Histories VI*, Loeb Classical Library, trans. by W. R. Paton, ed. G. P. Goold (Cambridge/London: Harvard Univ. Press/William Heinemann LTD, 1980), 355-357.

departed from the way Hellenistic historians recorded history: ‘A writer who passes over in silence the speeches made and the causes of events and in their place introduces false rhetorical exercises and discursive speeches, destroys the peculiar virtue of history’ (XXII. 25b).¹⁹⁹ If Luke indeed followed the Polybian way of treating history, as advocates of modern literary criticism argue, then the Areopagus Speech can definitely be regarded as a channel through which those things that were the most important and belong to this phase of Christian history had been indeed reported down to us in a trustful manner.

Furthermore, both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles bear similarities of arrangement to the historical writings of Ephorus. Ephorus is known for arranging his writings according to geographical and chronological matters.²⁰⁰ Although Ephorus’ work did not survive, and information about his work come only from other sources,²⁰¹ Polybius regards Ephorus the first and only writer of his time who really undertook to write a universal history.²⁰² In this respect, Luke’s literary style reveals a geographical arrangement of his material similar to that of Ephorus by providing an account of how Jesus’ followers, beginning in Jerusalem, have spread the word of God throughout a wide variety of geographical regions. Luke the writer also endeavored to present a sort of history by telling the story of the spreading of the Gospel, beginning with the life of Jesus and, in a second phase, with Ascension and Pentecost. This account includes how Jesus’ followers, beginning in Jerusalem, have spread the word of God to all the nations, reaching even the most educated men (Athens) of that time. The Areopagus Speech plays an important role in Lukan history by showing that the Gospel indeed started to be spread towards all the nations. Soards has pointed out in his assessment of the Areopagus Speech that Paul’s speech proves its universalistic accents especially when it is studied together with the other speeches in Acts. It unifies Lukan narrative by means of a repetition of major themes (i.e., God as Creator, Savior, and Judge) and stresses a universalistic Lukan agenda (i.e., salvation is for all). Such a comparison of Luke’s work with that of other ancient historians has led the advocates of modern literary criticism to indicate that Luke as a writer has endeavored to present through his artistic literary style those things of the Christian history that were most vital (e.g., Paul’s encounter with pagan audience) and effectual (e.g., the spread of the Gospel to all the nations). It is worth mentioning that the new literary criticism is less skeptical about the historicity of what Luke reports. While the critical disciplines from the Critical Period thought that it would not be possible to say anything reliable about true history, modern literary criticism tends to be more optimistic. In this respect, modern literary

¹⁹⁹ Paton, *Polybius, The Histories IV*, 371.

²⁰⁰ R. Drews, “Ephorus and History Written KATA GENOS,” *The American Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 84, No. 3 (Jul., 1963), 244-255.

²⁰¹ F. Pownall, *Lessons from the Past: The Moral Use of History in Fourth-Century Prose* (Michigan: Michigan University Press, 2004), 113.

²⁰² W. R. Paton, *Polybius, The Histories III*, Loeb Classical Library, trans. by W. R. Paton, ed. G. P. Goold (Cambridge/London: Harvard Univ. Press/William Heinemann LTD, 1979), 81.

criticism looks anew and take a step forward from the old method of interpretation of Luke as a writer (i.e., redaction criticism) and shows that Luke the writer, was also concerned in his account to allow some things of the Christian history run through his literary artistry.

(2) *There is a tendency to look at the Old Testament writings as to a valuable interpretive aspect in the analysis of Paul's speech.* Since the earliest times of the interpretation of the New Testament, the writings of the Old Testament have been used as a key to explain certain aspects related to the content of the Areopagus Speech. As it has been exposed in the second part of this thesis, Ambrose of Milan had used parts from the Areopagus Speech in relation to the Old Testament Scriptures to prove that men are created in the image of God and that they are rational responsible persons. Certainly, this had an implication on the outcome of the interpretation of Paul's speech in terms of natural theology, for Ambrose acknowledges that man, by being God's offspring, is a human rational being with an inherited ability to search for God. Furthermore, scholars from the Reformation Period onwards have noticed extensive allusions to the Old Testament in the Areopagus Speech and became aware of the fact that Paul's speech may have been built on reminiscences of Old Testament thought. Bengel has shown in his commentary on the New Testament that Paul's speech resonates in thought with the Old Testament Scriptures.²⁰³ The most obvious connection between these two writings are found in vs. 24 // Ps 50:9, 10 and vs. 26 // Deut 32: 8; 2: 5, 9; Ps 74:17; 115:16; Jer 5:24.²⁰⁴ In both cases, vss. 24 and 26, Paul tries to expose the Athenians to the right doctrine about God as well as to teach them about who God is. An immersion of Paul's speech into the Old Testament Scriptures served for Bengel as an indication of how Paul legitimated his message before the Athenians. This legitimacy comes from an attestation that his message is based on the deeds of a superior Ruler, who is in control over all humanity (e.g., Deut 32:8; Ps 74:17). Besides legitimizing Paul's message, the use of the Old Testament served even a greater purpose in Paul's speech, namely it introduced the Athenians to revealed theology. As Bengel pointed out that elsewhere in the speech 'Paul, though drawing his discourse from natural Theology, yet blends with it some things from revealed Theology ... For even the Gentiles are to be won by doctrine above nature.'²⁰⁵ An examination of Bengel's commentary on Paul's speech has led to some valuable observations: (a) the speech should be understood as a Christian message proclaimed to the Gentiles, (b) it should not be understood in terms of a Lucan creation, at least not in terms of his literary artistry as it was discussed above, (c) the speech does not reflect a Lucan composition, instead it revolves around Paul's way of doing and saying things, and (d) the speech is about Paul's using of the Old Testament quotations as a means of persuasion, and not about Luke's emphasis of these quotations. Based on these

²⁰³ Lewis and Vincent, *Bengel's New Testament Commentary*, 865-872.

²⁰⁴ Besides those passages mentioned above, there is a more extensive list of other allusion to the Old Testament on page 871, see, Lewis and Vincent, *Bengel's New Testament Commentary*, 871.

²⁰⁵ Lewis and Vincent, *Bengel's New Testament Commentary*, 871.

observations, it can be said that the Pre-Critical Period stressed throughout Bengel's commentary that the Old Testament Scriptures represented a key to illuminate/make clearer elements in the speech in order to understand its message. In this sense, the Areopagus speech stands as a Christian message voiced by Paul in order to help a pagan audience make the transition from a natural knowledge of God towards a revealed theology.

Modern literary criticism did not only take a step forward from redaction-criticism and critical era in showing a more positive perspective concerning the historicity of the events and speeches recorded by Luke, but it also looked ahead and differentiates itself from Bengel's interpretation, too. The use of the Old Testament in the study of literary criticism has shown that these portions of the Scriptures mean more to the Areopagus Speech than making Paul's message parallel in thought to the Old Testament (i.e., testifying that his message is Christian) or make the transition from a natural knowledge of God towards a revealed theology. They are held as valuable indices of how the speech functions and how one would have interpreted it. For example, it has been said that Luke's use of the Scriptures of Israel would guide his audience to envisage Paul as a prophet of the Old Testament; a prophet whose message stands in continuity with an anti-idol polemic of the prophets in the past.²⁰⁶ This outcome has its basis on the fact that Paul's behavior in this narrative resonates with that of the prophets of Israel, who at the sight of idolatry went on and uttered God's punishment towards Israel unless repentance was attained. As a help to prove that Paul was indeed depicted in lines with the prophets of Israel, literary criticism often makes use of the big context in which the Areopagus Speech is set to function, that is Acts, or even Luke-Acts. An examination of Luke's depiction of Paul in Acts discloses valuable examples in which Luke, without a doubt, envisaged Paul as a prophet cf., Isa 49:6 // Acts 9:15-16; Isa 6:9-10 // Acts 26:16-18. Correlating Paul's image of a prophet with the way Paul displays his message at the Areopagus may indeed reveal that Luke's use of the Old Testament Scriptures plays a role in describing Paul as a prophet and in showing how Paul's speech functions within its context. According to modern literary criticism, an emphasis on Luke's use of the Old Testament would first serve to provide legitimacy for Paul's speech. Following the model of ancient historians who by paying attention to the past events validate present affairs, modern literary criticism considers Luke as the one who attests that Paul's message is not 'recent', neither suspect. Instead, it is an 'old thing' even older than the greatest Greek philosopher, Plato.²⁰⁷ Luke validates Paul's message not only by showing that it is in line with an old religion and with what earlier happened in God's history with his people as reported in the Scriptures, but also in revealing that Paul took the same action as the prophets in the past when it was dealt with a similar situation of idolatry. Secondly, by Luke's use of the Old

²⁰⁶ K. D. Litwak, "Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22-31," *Biblica* 85 (2004), 216.

²⁰⁷ B. D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 161-162.

Testament, modern literary critics show that Paul's message uttered at the Areopagus is trustworthy and it bears confidence to those who hear it because it was written in line with the sacred Scriptures.

(3) Among the things said above, in the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech *there is also a tendency to look for ancient literary models for Paul's speech*. The search for ancient literary models endeavors to discover tools that may lead to an interpretation of Paul's speech. Scholars were driven in their search for ancient literary models by different purposes. There were ancient Christian authors who have noticed parallels between ancient literature and Paul's speech, and took that literature as a base of an interpretation without advancing on that information. There are modern scholars from the Critical Period of interpretation who looked for such literature in order to discover the source, form, and redaction of Lucan material. Finally, there are scholars from the modern literary side of criticism who consider ancient literary materials as a main tool for an analysis of the structure of the Lucan writings.

In the second part of this thesis, we have seen that since the second century onwards Christian writers have endeavored to look at the Areopagus Speech in light of a Socratic model. Socrates did not write any books, he is mostly known for his exemplary way of living as well as for his prints in the life of the Athenian people due to his dramatic death.²⁰⁸ According to Plato, the authorities of Athens charged Socrates for evil things, namely that he 'is a doer of evil, who corrupts the youth; and who does not believe in the gods of the state, but has other new divinities of his own.'²⁰⁹ Similarly to Socrates, Paul seems to be represented in terms of a herald of new divinities. This is most clear in the Lucan use of Greek words such as δαίμωνιον. At the root of this word rests the Greek sense of 'divinities or gods' alongside a charge of one being a herald of foreign or strange divinities. According to Witherington, it is believed that such a word is the very one which led to the death of Socrates.²¹⁰ Justin Martyr is among the first Christian writers who used the portrayal of Socrates in his writings. Although I am aware of the discussion that is going on in relation to Justin's use of the Acts of the Apostles,²¹¹ I find convincing the argument forwarded by Haenchen that Justin's use of θεὸς ἄγνωστος (II *Apol.* 10:6) is in accordance with the Lucan expression ἄγνωστω θεῷ, and that once with Justin's writings a knowledge of Acts of the Apostles can be

²⁰⁸ J. M. Reynolds, *When Athens Met Jerusalem: An Introduction to Classical and Christian Thought* (Downer Groves: IVP Academic, 2009), 58, 64.

²⁰⁹ B. Jowett and J. Harward, *Plato, The Great Books of the Western World*, ed. R. M. Hutchins, trans. by B. Jowett and J. Harward (Chicago/London/Toronto: William Benton Publisher, 1952), 203.

²¹⁰ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 515. For a discussion about 'herald of strange gods' see, B. W. Winter, "On Introducing Gods to Athens: An Alternative Reading of Acts 17:18-20," *Tyndale Bulletin* 47.1 (May, 1996), 71-90.

²¹¹ See footnote nr. 6.

recognized in the writing of the Post-Apostolic Period.²¹² Furthermore, Rowe has noticed that as early as the second century Christian scholars were interested in examining Paul's speech in relation to allusions to texts from the Greco-Roman world in order to develop an account about pagan knowledge of the true God.²¹³ It is very much possible that Justin in his apology drew upon Luke's writings and Socrates in order to prove that pagans indeed displayed knowledge of the true God. In this instance, there is reason to believe that in the second century Justin made use of an analogy between Socrates and Paul primarily to provide an account whether pagans indeed had knowledge of the true God or not.

Moving into the Critical Era, scholars of the Acts has also endeavored to pay attention to Luke's allusive references to Socrates in the Areopagus Speech. Haenchen observed that Lucan Paul behaves similarly to Socrates in some instances: 'Paul speaks in the marketplace to every man—like Socrates. They think he is introducing new gods—like Socrates. And Socrates came before the court on that account and was sentenced to death.'²¹⁴ In this narrative, Socrates' model plays a role within the larger context of Luke's 'motif technique.' Composed of a number of motifs, a motif technique is meant to describe an 'ideal scene,' which does not necessarily represent Luke's own experience of Athens.²¹⁵ Besides allusions to Socrates, this 'ideal scene' encloses Luke's own imagination of Athens, of its idols, of Athenian religiosity and of their philosophical interest. Such elements correlated with an image of Athenian curiosity present a new kind of situation, namely 'Greek wisdom lends itself to Christian interpretation.'²¹⁶ If this is the goal of the Areopagus Speech, then a depiction of Paul that evokes Socrates functions within Luke's 'ideal scene' only to suit a kind of program of the apostolic mission and not necessarily to show a true model that Paul might have ever employed in his mission. Thus, for Haenchen, Socrates is an interpretive model for the study of the Areopagus Speech as long as this analogy functions at a level of Luke's creation and it is not taken into account for an encounter with a real situation in Paul's life.

Modern literary criticism, on the other hand, has seen more into these allusive references to Socrates than some scholars of the Pre-Critical and Critical Periods have endeavored to see. An emphasis at a level of literary criticism of Paul in terms of the Socratic model has revealed that Luke is presenting Paul as a new Socrates in a historical situation as opposed to an 'ideal scene.'

²¹² Haenchen noted some connections in *I Apol.* 50:12 of Justin Martyr and the Book of Acts, and considers that there are grounds to attribute *II. Apol.* 10.6 Ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ to the influence of Acts 17:23. See, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The West Minister Press, 1971), 8-9.

²¹³ C. K. Rowe, "The Grammar of Life: The Areopagus Speech and Pagan Tradition," *New Testament Studies* 57 (2010), 32.

²¹⁴ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, 527.

²¹⁵ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, 527-528.

²¹⁶ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, 530.

Witherington and Soards have noticed Socratic thought inside the Areopagus Speech.²¹⁷ The fact that Paul was advancing some strange divinities (vss. 18, 20), that Paul was brought before the Areopagus (vs. 19), and that he was standing in the midst of the Athenian council (vs. 22) were regarded by literary critics as getting their full force after the Socratic model. In this instance, a depiction of Paul that evokes Socrates serves to depict Paul in terms of a cultured scholar who can oppose the most educated men of his day. Even more interesting is that an implementation of Socratic allusions in Paul's speech had to some extent repercussions on how literary critics further interpreted the narrative. Since Paul, as well as Socrates, was brought to the Areopagus due to his proclamation, then Paul is charged to present an argument for his teaching. So, the situation has often been regarded to be judicial.²¹⁸ As we have seen in the third part of this thesis, Witherington and Soards have proposed two ancient rhetorical models of interpretation for the Areopagus Speech i.e., forensic and deliberative. If Paul takes a defense before the Athenian council, then a forensic interpretation is in order, since the central idea of a forensic speech is to draw one's attention to a judge of the past with a particular interest in accusing or defending; hence its outcome resumes to just or unjust. Yet, if Paul's speech is premeditated, then a deliberate speech before the Athenian council is in order. The focus of a deliberative speech in this case is on a judge of the future with a particular attention to inspire an audience to advocate for the good and by that to avoid a potential future danger. An emphasis on allusions to Socrates lends to literary criticism tools for an interpretation of Luke's writings. Literary criticism took advantage of such literature and looked forward into it to find out the kind of persuasive devices Luke used in modeling Paul's speech. As we have seen, Paul is a new Socrates who utters his defense by means of rhetorical devices. By looking anew into these allusions, literary critics found out that Socrates' model does not function to Paul's speech as an example of natural theology (pre-critical interpretation), nor does it represent a category of sources implemented in an 'ideal scene' (critical interpretation), yet it helped in depicting Paul in terms of a cultured scholar able to oppose the most educated men of his day.

This chapter has revealed that modern literary criticism has endeavored to take a step forward from an older interpretation of the Areopagus Speech. A comparison of methods between the two lines of thoughts has illustrated that examples from ancient literature (e.g. Socrates), from the Old Testament, and an emphasis on Luke's role as a writer have been stressed within both periods of interpretation. An exposition of such interpretive aspects from the earliest times up to the critical era has shown that modern literary criticism has endeavored to take into consideration these older

²¹⁷ See, Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 96; and, Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, 515.

²¹⁸ Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 96.

interpretive aspects and use them as a launching platform in taking new steps in interpreting Paul's speech. As it has been shown in this chapter, modern literary criticism has emphasized a new kind of understanding of the Areopagus Speech in relation to each one of these interpretive aspects.

PART SIX – CONCLUSIONS

6.0 A Critical Acclaim of the Results of Modern Literary Criticism

This thesis has endeavored to show how modern literary methods of interpretation such as literary criticism, set its marks on the study of the Areopagus Speech. For a greater appreciation of how literary criticism interpreted Paul's Speech, five methods within this category have been presented and evaluated in this thesis. Since the field of literary criticism is so wide and confusion is often noticed concerning its particularities, in the third part of this thesis a short overview on this new method of interpretation has been offered. The goods that are claimed by literary critics and by the method itself have been compared with interpretive aspects from the previous periods of interpretation of the Areopagus Speech. Such an examination has revealed that Paul's speech is a 'trendy passage,' which has been taken into consideration by scholars of the Scriptures from the earliest times onwards (section 2.0). Although throughout the history of interpretation Paul's speech was the subject of many methods of analysis, it seems that scholars of the Acts of the Apostles did not give up the quest for the 'right' method of interpretation, at least not yet. As the history shows it, new methods of interpretation appeared and disappeared. Modern literary criticism is one of the methods that have appeared recently in the study of the Acts of the Apostles. The rise of this method has culminated with a new kind of assessment of the Areopagus Speech (section 3.0). As the previous methods of interpretation have shown their limits, modern literary critics endeavored to look anew for better tools. An evaluation of such 'new tools'²¹⁹ has revealed the most essential characteristics and pitfalls of modern literary criticism in assessing Paul's speech (section 4.0). For an illustration whether modern literary criticism has brought its contribution to an interpretation of the Areopagus Speech or not, interpretive aspects held by the previous periods of interpretation (section 2.0) together with interpretive aspects promoted by modern literary criticism (section 4.0) have been brought together in a comparison of methods (section 5.0). Based on the findings of this research, it has been argued that modern literary criticism has indeed looked anew in interpreting the Areopagus Speech. The subsequent lines will highlight the findings of this thesis.

²¹⁹ I am referring to modern literary criticism as a new method for interpreting the Areopagus Speech. As we have seen in the third part of this thesis, modern literary criticism has used a wide variety of tools in coming to an understanding of the Areopagus Speech.

6.1 General Contributions

Modern literary criticism has emphasized the following interpretive aspects in studying the Areopagus Speech:

(1) *Luke's literary artistry.* It has been argued that Luke intentionally allowed hints in his account of the Areopagus Speech in order to permit his readers to follow the goal of this narrative. Historical locations (e.g., Athens, Areopagus), ethnographical aspects (e.g., Epicureans, Stoics), rhetorical devices (e.g., forensic speech), rhetorical allusions (e.g., ἐν μέσῳ), intertextual echoes (e.g., Old Testament Scriptures), etc., are all regarded as Lucan literary devices employed to suit his agenda in the Areopagus speech and to offer hints for his readers in how the text is to be interpreted.

(2) *Luke's persuasion of the implied reader.* Literary critics have contributed to an interpretation of the Areopagus Speech in attempting to determine how various signals within the Areopagus Speech guide the implied reader in deciding the meaning of the text. Important hints have been found in the introductory verses of Paul's speech and in the way the text's composition is put together. They both hold power to suggest the implied reader with certain characteristics of the text, and to reveal the writing's direction and argument. For example the expression κατείδωλον ... πόλιν (vs. 16) is regarded as a hint to direct the implied reader towards an understanding of the speech in terms of a message displayed against an idol-worshipping audience. It has also been argued that Old Testament intertextual echoes are the main signal of persuasion that Luke used towards the implied reader. In this respect, Old Testament echoes led the implied reader to understand the Areopagus Speech as an instance of a prophetic anti-idol polemic, a narrative about condemnation of idolatry that teaches about the true God.

(3) *An emphasis on the text in its present form.* Modern literary criticism values the text of the Areopagus Speech as it stands, rather than seeking to find how its individual parts came about or provide meaning on their own. In this regard, Paul's speech has been studied as a rhetorical composition, as a biblical narrative, and as a unit of text that can provide meaning within its own context, smaller (e.g., in the context of the other speeches in Acts) or larger (e.g., in the context of Luke-Acts-Pauline Gospels, or Luke-Acts). When the speech is taken outside of these literary contexts, the force of the text as a whole as well as the function of the Areopagus Speech is believed to be seriously diminished.

(4) *Ancient and modern literary models of interpretation.* Modern literary criticism provides tools (i.e., ancient and modern) for an analysis of the structure of Paul's speech. Using modern (e.g., framing in discourse) and ancient (e.g., rhetoric; biography) methods of interpretation a

number of ancient literary models have been proposed for an analysis of the structure of the Areopagus Speech. Attention has been given to rhetoric, to an account of an ancient biography (i.e., Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*), and to the Scriptures of the Old Testament in the composition of the Areopagus Speech. An examination of the Areopagus Speech in light of such literary models has revealed that ancient literature represent a valuable tool for the analysis of the structure of the Lucan account.

6.2 A Triumph over the Previous Periods of Interpretation

An evaluation at a comparative level between the older interpretive approaches and modern literary criticism has revealed that the previous periods of interpretation have also made use of interpretive aspects that modern literary criticism generally employs within its affairs. However, the difference between the two lies in the new focus that modern literary criticism takes. When the Areopagus Speech is taken into comparison with the older methods of interpretation, modern literary criticism looked anew in the following directions:

(1) *Paul's speech is not to be interpreted anymore in terms of natural theology.*²²⁰ Throughout the time, it has been pointed out that Paul's speech is an example of natural theology by attesting that pagan philosophers have indeed acquired a certain understanding of the true God. The speech has also been held accountable as an example that human beings are indeed subject to their rational nature that predisposes and enables them to seek God. Modern literary criticism has departed from such an interpretation by asserting that the Areopagus Speech represents a plain Christian message, which Paul during his mission proclaimed to a pagan audience. It is not about how natural theology brings humanity to the true God, yet it exhibits how the Christian message has spread around the worlds and reached all the nations.

(2) *The Areopagus Speech represents Luke's account of Paul's speech, and it makes the case for a historical account.* Up to the Critical Era, scholars were inclined to talk about Paul as the author of the speech. Furthermore, within the Critical Era²²¹ this view has changed and scholars have argued for Luke and not Paul being the author of the speech. Nevertheless, they considered this speech an 'ideal scene' without historical precedent in Paul's life. So, the Areopagus Speech was charged being a purely literary product. The new literary criticism has advanced on this idea that Luke (not Paul) is the author of the speech and it promoted a less skeptical view about the historicity of what Luke reports. So, literary criticism tends to be

²²⁰ As it has especially been proposed in the Post-Apostolic Period. To a certain extent, traces of natural theology can also be found during the Reformation Period, and Critical Era. See the second part of this thesis.

²²¹ Conzelmann's work on the Areopagus Speech has been examined in this regard. For Conzelmann and other scholars who promoted such an interpretation see section 2.3 *The Critical Era: An Interest in Acts 17:16-34*.

more optimistic about the historicity of the speech. In this respect, literary critics has taken a step forward from the older methods of interpretation (e.g., redaction-criticism) by showing that Luke the writer was also concerned in his account to allow some things of the Christian history run through his literary artistry. Since the Areopagus Speech represents a determined point in the history of the Early Church (a stage when the gospel spread around and reached even the most educated people of that time), literary critics believe that Luke recorded in this account those things of the Christian history that were most vital (Paul's encounter with pagan philosophers) and effectual (the spread of the Gospel to all the nations) for his readers.

(3) *The Old Testament Scriptures shed light in the interpretation of the Areopagus Speech not only in illuminating Paul's message or in regarding it as Christian, but also in asserting something about its function.* It has been said that Paul's speech is intersected by a great variety of Old Testament thoughts.²²² Before the rise of modern literary criticism, these Old Testament intertextual allusions were mainly held as an indicator of the type of speech that was delivered at the Areopagus (e.g. Christian),²²³ or in some instances as a help to trace down the source, form, and redaction of the text. However, modern literary criticism took a step forward and regarded these Old Testament allusions as valuable indices of how the speech functions in the bigger Lucan narrative, as well as how one would have interpreted it. The Areopagus Speech has been considered a kind of biblical history in which Paul's message becomes a sample of that of the Old Testaments prophets, who at the sight of idolatry went on and uttered God's punishment towards those involved in idolatry.

(4) *Ancient literary models represent a key to interpret the Areopagus Speech.* As scholars from the previous periods of interpretation were driven by different purposes²²⁴ in their search for ancient literary models (e.g., Socrates), the scholars from the modern literary side of criticism consider ancient literary models a valuable tool for the analysis of the structure of the Areopagus Speech. If Luke is the product of the ancient world, then at the basis of his work must lie techniques similar to those used in the literature of his time. Thus, ancient literary tools (i.e., rhetoric) and literary works (i.e., ancient biography) have been proposed for an interpretation of the speech. A quest into ancient literature led literary critics find out that these literatures/literary models do not function purely as parallels to Paul's speech (pre-critical

²²² See especially Litwak's work on the Areopagus Speech, section 3.2.3 *K. D. Litwak – Areopagus Speech. A Framing in Discourse Analysis.*

²²³ Bengel in his commentary asserts that the Areopagus speech represents a Christian message voiced by Paul in order to help a pagan audience make the transition from a natural knowledge of God towards a revealed theology.

²²⁴ Ancient Christian authors have noticed parallels between ancient literature and Paul's speech and took that literature as a kind of a model for an interpretation of the Areopagus Speech, however, for some reason they did not advance on that information. Modern scholars from the Critical Period of interpretation looked for such literature mainly to discover the source, form, and redaction of the Lucan account.

interpretation), nor do they represent a category of sources implemented in an ‘ideal scene’ (critical interpretation), yet they represents valuable ancient literary tools for the analysis of the structure of the Areopagus Speech.

6.3 Problems Raised by This Research

As it has previously been shown, modern literary criticism has its own positive aspects. Even though its contribution cannot be easily dismissed, some less fortunate aspects of literary criticism in interpreting the Areopagus Speech should also be pointed out.

Modern literary criticism makes use of certain assumptions in its assessment of the Areopagus Speech. Here are some of the assumptions that rest at the center of Paul’s speech:

- (1) *The writer (Luke) intended a literary text;*
- (2) *The text was transmitted in a formal type, and the implied reader was comfortable with such an address;*
- (3) *Luke had consciously employed literary devices in his speech;*
- (4) *The implied reader was aware of the presence of literary devices/hints and looked for them in order to interpret the Areopagus Speech;*
- (5) *The implied reader was, to a certain extent, a cultured reader who could follow Luke’s writing;*
- (6) *The text has a purpose, and it is capable of revealing its own purpose.*

Certainly, such assumptions must be carefully considered when engaged in the study of the Areopagus Speech. As scholars of literary criticism were careful to see and point out such assumptions within the Lucan text, concerns whether Luke was aware of such matters when the Areopagus Speech was recorded remain at stake.

6.4 Matters that Should Accompany Further Research

Furthermore, considerations of ancient literary models, discussion of genres, and modern methods of interpretation in the study of the Areopagus Speech point to uncertainty. Although this study has shown that by this kind of tools, modern literary criticism contributes to an interpretation of the Areopagus Speech by claiming back the life of the text that was buried under uncertainty by the older historical critical methods of interpretation, the modern literary criticism is still uncertain in some regards:

(1) *Modern literary criticism has not yet decided if Paul is either an Old Testament prophet, a Greek ancient orator, a Socratic figure, or a kind of a mixture of all of these.* A real concern is how one reconciles Litwak's conclusions (Paul as a prophet) with those of the advocates of ancient rhetoric (Paul as an orator). Furthermore, how one would assess these views with that of Tannehill and Talbert, who do not think of Paul as a prophet, neither as an orator, yet they look at the Areopagus Speech in the context of Luke-Acts. For the former (i.e., Tannehill) Paul is more of a missionary who by his speech at the Areopagus fulfills what has already been proclaimed in Lk 2:32, so Paul becomes the proclaimer of God's universal salvation. For the latter (i.e., Talbert), Paul reveals a Socratic image, but he does not play a further role into that except being used to satisfy an Athenian curiosity.

(2) *It neither settled down the kind of message Lucan Paul used in the speech.* Is it a message in terms of biblical history, or a message in terms of a Greek ancient model? Another concern is that a consensus has not yet been reached on the matter whether Paul spoke as an Old Testament prophet or as a Greek orator. Discussions on this matter have been at stake among scholars of New Testament studies. Litwak considers that Paul indeed had and exercised an authority like that of the prophets of the Old Testament.²²⁵ However, a caution is in order here, since Paul, unlike the prophets of the Old Testament, was not necessarily preoccupied with Israel's sin, but with the conversion of the pagans.²²⁶ This question becomes even more interesting when one notices that scholars of literary criticism, besides consideration of Paul as an Old Testament messenger, have also proposed Paul delivering his message following a Socratic model (e.g., διελέγομαι).

(3) *It has not been agreed upon the point whether the Areopagus Speech should be read in the precanonical or canonical context of Acts.* A precanonical reading emphasizes that Paul's speech makes better sense when it is read in the context of Luke-Acts; in this case the speech focuses on Lucan ideas. A canonical reading stresses that the Areopagus Speech can make sense when it is read separate from Luke and set between the Gospels and Epistles; in this case the speech reflects a mixture of Lukan and Pauline ideas. Modern literary critics have not decided to what extent the Areopagus Speech is a Lucan composition, and to what degree Pauline ideas play a role in the function of the speech.

²²⁵ Grudem seems to share the same point of view. See, W. A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy: in the New Testament Today* (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1990), 47-50.

²²⁶ B. Witherington III, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downer Groves/Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 135.

(4) *A consensus has not been reached in discussions of genre either.*²²⁷ It is not sure whether the Areopagus Speech is structurally shaped by an ancient biography, a historiography, or a biblical history.²²⁸ A quest for the correct parallel is still at stake among modern literary critics.

(5) *Modern literary criticism encountered difficulties in choosing the right type of rhetoric for examining the Areopagus Speech.*²²⁹ As I have shown in this thesis, scholars have endeavored to read into this speech more than one type of a rhetorical arrangement of the text. Thus, the analysis and interpretation of the speech may slightly differ from one case to another, and the outcome of such a methodology might be dangerous by permitting in the text a variety of meaning.

6.5 Final Remarks

A final remark in relation to modern literary criticism concerns the results of an examination of the Areopagus Speech. It seems that they are quite disparate. It has been shown that every scholar examined in this thesis came with an innovative method of interpretation. The speech has been exposed to Greek ancient literature, to biblical literature, as well as to modern methods of interpretation. As a result of such a diverse exposure, the Areopagus speech has been charged with a variety of interpretations:

- (1) *Litwak – an Old Testament anti-idol polemic;*
- (2) *Witherington – a forensic situation;*
- (3) *Soards – a deliberative state of affairs;*
- (4) *Talbert – an attack against pagan idolatry;*
- (5) *Tannehill – the spread of the Gospel to all nations.*

Not only their interpretation but also the context for examination varies. Litwak allowed the Areopagus Speech to function within the context of the Old Testament Scriptures. Witherington found meaning for Paul's speech in the Greek ancient rhetoric. Soards studied the speech in the

²²⁷ D. Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the 'Acts of the Apostles,'* Society for New Testament Studies, trans. by K. McKinney, G. J. Laughery, and R. Bauckhman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 26-42. See also, D. E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1989), 77-80.

²²⁸ Considerations of Acts as a 'historical novel' have also been advanced. See, R. I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

²²⁹ Sandnes has approached the Areopagus Speech in relation to the three types of rhetoric mentioned in the rhetorical textbooks in antiquity (forensic, deliberative, epideictic). Although a case could be made for at least two of the three models, his conclusion was that Paul's speech should be studied according to the deliberative type. See, K. O. Sandnes, "Paul and Socrates: The Aim of Paul's Areopagus Speech," *JSNT* 50 (1993), 13-26.

context of the other speeches in Acts. Talbert regarded this episode at the interplay between the precanonical and canonical context of Acts. Finally, Tannehill examined it in the big narrative unity of Luke-Acts. Such information shows that these scholars can hardly be labeled as a group of researchers at all. Their approaches and results seem to be too disparate.

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