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Cover: The Areopagus seen from the south in 1898. © Deutsches Archäologisches Institut. D-DAI-ATH-Athen-Bauten-0194 (anonymous).

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On the Areopagus Speech and its Reception in Second-Century Apologetics

Sven-Olav Back

Introduction

The Areopagus Speech (AS) in *Acts* 17 was used widely and in different ways by the church fathers.[1] Tertullian alluded to it when trying to discredit Marcion and his 'unknown god',[2] Irenaeus used it against the Gnostics,[3] Origen against Celsus,[4] and Augustine against both Pelagians and Donatists.[5] Gregory of Nyssa remarks against the Eunomians that these people seem very keen on anything 'new', but that they lack the humility to admit, as certain pagans did, that their god is 'unknown' to them; they imagine, indeed, that they have reached the full knowledge of God.[6]

These are but a few examples of the fathers' polemical use of the AS. More can be found in a fine article by M. Fiedrowicz, published some 18 years ago.[7] Fiedrowicz also shows that the fathers did not refer to the speech only for polemical purposes. They could also draw on it, for example, when commenting on the way a bishop should behave,[8] when reflecting on the relationship between the Christian faith and pagan philosophy,[9] or when reflecting on how to teach or preach the faith to pagans.[10] This has to be done carefully, in steps, beginning with the doctrine of the one God, then proceeding to opposing idolatry, and only then proceeding with talk about Christ, exactly as Paul did it in Athens; thus for example, did Ambrose of Milan proceed.[11] In passing, we may note that the fathers paid special attention to Paul's talk about the altar dedicated to the 'unknown god',[12] as well as his quotation of the line (or half a line) from Aratus: τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν.[13]

Fiedrowicz has investigated a vast body of material – from Irenaeus and Clement to the Cappadocians, John Chrysostom and Augustine. My task is more modest: to investigate the (possible) reception of the AS in some apologetic writings of the second century. I will begin with a short overview of the AS. Then I will go on to the *Kerygma*

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[1] Fiedrowicz 2002, 86: "Es scheint kaum eine Kontroverse im kirchlichen Altertum gegeben zu haben, in der die Kontrahenten nicht in irgendeiner Form auf die Areopag-Rede Bezug nahmen, um eigene Positionen zu begründen oder gegnerische Thesen zu widerlegen."
[2] Tert. *Marc*. 1.9.2.
[3] Iren. *Haer*. 3.12.9.
[4] Or. *Cels*. 4.5.
[5] August. *C. Iul*. 4.3.25; *Cresc*. 1.12-15–1.14.17.
[6] Greg. Nyss. *Deit. fil.* 557M.
[7] Fiedrowicz 2002.
[8] Fiedrowicz 2002, 90–91.
[9] Fiedrowicz 2002, 91–93.
[10] Fiedrowicz 2002, 93–102.
[11] *Expositio in Lucam* 6.104–105.
[12] *Acts* 17:23; Fiedrowicz 2002, 93–98.
[13] *Acts* 17:28; Fiedrowicz 2002, 98–99.

Petrou and the *Apology* of Aristides. Lastly, there are some comments on Justin Martyr's *Apologies*. I will end with Justin, and hence not deal with all the second-century apologists.

The Areopagus Speech

In the *Acts of the Apostles*, Luke has Paul deliver three great sermons: in Pisidian Antioch to a Jewish audience (*Acts* 13:16–41), in Miletus to a Christian one (*Acts* 20:18–35) and lastly in Athens to a pagan audience (*Acts* 17:22–31).[14] Commentators have often pointed out that Luke probably did not simply want to show how the apostle *did* preach or used to preach on certain occasions. Rather, this is Luke's view about how a Christian preacher *should* address Jews, Christian leaders and pagans of culture.[15] Hence, if the AS was received, reflected upon and used by later Christians, this was in line with Luke's aims when he penned it.

I will now in broad lines indicate the theme and the disposition of the speech, and then briefly comment on some points that may be either interesting or controversial, or both. But let us first recall the context as described by Luke.[16]

Paul has arrived in Athens from Thessalonica and Berea and is waiting for his companions Silas and Timothy. He is distressed to see the city full of idols. He conducts discussions (διελέγετο, 17:17) with Jews and God-fearers in the synagogue, as well as with people who happen to be in the marketplace (ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ […] πρὸς τοὺς παρατυγχάνοντας, 17:17). Some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers question him, wondering what he is trying to say. Others remark that he seems to be advocating foreign gods (ξένων δαιμονίων δοκεῖ καταγγελεὺς εἶναι, 17:18). He is brought to the Areopagus and asked to explain himself. As many commentators have remarked, Luke seems to be describing Paul's Athenian activity in terms harking back to the activity of Socrates, as it was related by Plato and others: Socrates used to discuss (διαλέγεσθαι, Pl. *Ap*. 33B) with people in the marketplace (ἐν ἀγορᾷ, *Ap*. 17D), whomever he happened to run into (ὅτῳ ἂν ἀεὶ ἐντυγχάνω ὑμῶν, *Ap*. 29D), and was accused of introducing new divinities (δαιμόνια καινά, *Ap*. 24B, 26B) into Athens.[17]

What, then, is the theme of the AS? Martin Dibelius described the speech as "eine hellenistische Rede von der wahren Gotteserkenntnis."[18] The thesis that it is totally Stoic in character – for this is what is meant with "hellenistisch" – is controversial, but Dibelius is not wrong in defining the theme: it is about true knowledge of God, γνῶσις θεοῦ. We must add, however, that it is not only about γνῶσις θεοῦ as such, but also about the consequences of this right knowledge, i.e. about how to worship God in the right rather

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[14] Dupont 1984, 382; Marguerat 2015, 161.
[15] Dibelius 1939, 50: "Die Reden antworten auf die Frage: Wie soll man reden? und nicht auf die andere: Wie hat jener Mann damals geredet?"; Dupont 1984, 385–387, 403: "Luc présente le discours à l'Aréopage comme un example et un modèle à imiter" (p. 385).
[16] *Acts* 17:16–22a. For a history of research (until 1981), and a detailed exegesis of the Lukan text, see Gatti 1982.
[17] For a more detailed discussion, involving not only the prelude to the speech (17:16–22a), but also the speech itself, see Sandnes 1993. Jervell remains skeptical regarding the Socratic echoes of *Acts* 17: "Es geht […] um derart allgemeine Dinge, dass man nicht von Parallelen reden möchte" (Jervell 1998, 443 n. 210).
[18] Dibelius 1939, 36.

than in the wrong way.[19] If people are living in error, not knowing God (i.e. in ἄγνοια), their worship will be false; they must through conversion (μετάνοια) move from ἄγνοια to γνῶσις θεοῦ and thus to true εὐσέβεια. As Jacques Dupont puts it, "La question [sc. in the AS] n'est pas de savoir si Dieu existe e ce qu'il est, mais de savoir comment se comporter à son égard."[20]

What about the disposition and the line of thought? The speech has a beginning, a middle part and an end. The beginning and the end correspond to each other. At the beginning, there is an *Anknüpfung* consisting of the reference to the altar dedicated to an 'unknown god', and Paul states: ὃ οὖν ἀγνοοῦντες εὐσεβεῖτε, τοῦτο ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν.[21] These words do not amount to a positive assessment of Greek religion. Paul does not say that the Athenians worship the true God already; he avoids this by using the neuter (ὅ and τοῦτο) instead of the masculine (ὅν and τοῦτον).[22] "Non seulement il ne dit pas que le vrai Dieu peut être l'objet implicite du culte païen, mais il prend soin d'éviter qu'on lui prête cette pensée."[23] The emphasis is on Paul now bringing an end to the Athenians' ignorance as far as the true God is concerned. For they do worship in ignorance – without knowing it.[24] At the end, there is an allusion to this ἄγνοια on the part of the Athenians and pagans in general. Paul indicates that their ignorance of God is not an innocent matter, but a blameworthy one.[25] God has overlooked it until the present, but now παραγγέλλει πάντας πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν. This is in view of the coming just judgment of the whole world, which will be carried out through 'a man' whom God appointed to this status, πίστιν παρασχὼν πᾶσιν ἀναστήσας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν.[26]

In the middle part of the speech there is, on one hand, a proclamation of the true God, the Lord of heaven and earth.[27] On the other hand, there is criticism of popular Greek piety; this criticism is delivered in the form of three negations regarding God or 'the divine'.[28]

The first negation constitutes a denunciation of temples: God does not live in man-made temples, for having created the cosmos he is the Lord of heaven and earth.[29] The second negation is a denigration of sacrifices, and maybe other types of 'care' for the gods: God needs nothing, for it is he who gives life, breath and everything to everybody.[30] The third negation is a denunciation of images: one should not suppose that 'the divine' is similar to things invented by humans and formed by them out of gold, silver and stone.

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[19] Cf. Norden 1971, 3: "[W]er die wahre γνῶσις brachte [...] garantierte den Gläubigen auch die wahre Gottesverehrung, denn γνῶσις und εὐσέβεια waren in diesen Kreisen eins."
[20] Dupont 1984, 415.
[21] *Acts* 17:22b–23. By 'Paul' here and in what follows, I mean 'Paul as portrayed by Luke'.
[22] Schneider 1982, 238; Dupont 1984, 419. Many manuscripts, especially those of the Byzantine text-type, read ὅν and τοῦτον in *Acts* 17:23; this reading is however secondary. Cf. Fiedrowicz 2002, 93–98 for references to several church fathers' reasoning based on the secondary (Byzantine) reading.
[23] Dupont 1984, 418.
[24] Rowe 2010, 41; Jervell 1999, 445: "[D]iese Verehrung (ist) von Unwissenheit und falschen Vorstellungen bestimmt."
[25] Dupont 1984, 413, 416: "[I]l ne s'agit pas seulement d'une ignorance intellectuelle, mais d'une ignorance religieusement répréhensible, d'une 'méconnaisance' dont on doit se repentir" (p. 413).
[26] *Acts* 17:30–31.
[27] *Acts* 17:24–29.
[28] *Acts* 17:24, 25 and 29.
[29] *Acts* 17:24.
[30] *Acts* 17.25.

The reason for this third negation is that humans are γένος τοῦ θεοῦ – i.e. they are created in the image of God (see below) – and things that are 'below' humans cannot represent 'the divine'.[31]

In addition to these three critical negations, there is a passage about God's twofold intention with his creation of humankind. He created it out of one person, Adam, with two purposes in mind: first, it should populate the whole earth, and second, it should seek God.[32] This seeking of God (ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν) on the part of human beings may be successful. There is no guarantee, but there is a possibility that seekers will find God;[33] this is because he is not far from any of 'us'.[34]

Why can it be said that God is near 'us'? Because ἐν αὐτῷ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν.[35] In other words: because "we are indeed his offspring", τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν.[36] Because 'we' are his offspring, God can be said to be near 'us', and hence 'we' may find him when 'we' seek him.

I will briefly comment on three points that may be of interest.

(a) The speech contains thoughts of both Old Testament/Jewish/Christian and Greek – especially Stoic – provenance. Martin Dibelius emphasized the Stoic element and downplayed the Jewish/Christian one. Bertil Gärtner did the opposite. They were both one-sided.[37] Eduard Norden was closer to the truth when talking about "das jüdisch-christliche Grundmotiv" and "das stoische Begleitmotiv".[38] In reality, it is a matter of both-and,[39] not only in the sense that there are clear instances of both the one and the other – such as the Aratus quotation in 17:28 and the references to *Is*. 42:5 in 17:24–25 – but also in the sense that we can talk about a merging of elements. Dibelius' comment on the phrase about "seeking God" (ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν, 17:27) is a case in point. According to Dibelius, the Old Testament sees the seeking of God as "eine sache des Willens", whereas in the AS it is a typically Greek phenomenon: "eine Sache des Denkens".[40] However, in

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[31] *Acts* 17:29. Regarding the question of the appropriateness of images representing gods, cf. especially Dio Chrystostom's Olympian discourse (*Or*. 12 *Olympicus*), where Dio reflects on and defends the making of images. According to Dio, having images is preferable to not having them. People need them, and the gods do not mind. The kinship (ξυγγένεια) between God and mankind means, in fact, that anthropomorphic images of gods are appropriate in principle. Dio, speaking in sight of Phidias' statue of Zeus at Olympia, argues (*Or*. 12.77–79) that this statue does adequately represent the attributes of Zeus: his sovereignty, his kingship, his fatherhood and so on. For a careful discussion of Dio's *Olympicus* in the context of Greek philosophical debate of images, see Blomqvist 1999.

[32] For the syntax of *Acts* 17:26–27, see Gärtner 1955, 153; Schneider 1982, 240–241; Dupont 1984, 395; Marguerat 2015, 170. With these commentators, I take κατοικεῖν (17:26) and ζητεῖν (17:27) as two parallel infinitives, both expressing the divine intention in ἐποίησεν κτλ. ζητεῖν is not dependent on the participal clause ὁρίσας κτλ., which determines ἐποίησεν κτλ.

[33] The grammatical construction (εἰ + the optative) suggests an expectation: "ob etwa", "ob vielleicht" (*BDR*, 15th ed. § 375). Zerwick 1990, § 403: "an uncertain expectation associated with an effort to attain something."

[34] *Acts* 17:26–7.

[35] In this much discussed line, ἐν should probably be understood in an instrumental sense: we live etc. 'through him'. Thus, for example, Schneider 1982, 241; Marguerat 2015, 171.

[36] *Acts* 17:28.

[37] Dibelius 1939; Gärtner 1955; Jervell states, with an eye on the subsequent scholarly discussion: "Dibelius unterschätzte das alttestamentliche Material in der Rede, während Gärtner…das Stoische beiseiteschob" (Jervell 1998, 444 n. 214). I agree with this assessment.

[38] Norden 1971, 3–30.

[39] Marguerat 2015, 163–164; cf. the discussion in Dupont 1984, 399–403.

[40] Dibelius 1939, 9.

the speech it is probably, or at least presumably, the case of a both-and.[41] How the seeking should be carried out is not explained.[42]

b) When Stoic thoughts are appropriated and used in the speech, this is not a question of importing foreign features and allowing these features to remain the same as they were in their original context.[43] On the contrary, these elements are – when they need to be – changed, modified, remodelled, Christianized, to fit in their new context. The article 'Acculturation' in the *New Encyclopaedia Britannica* may explain this phenomenon. There are, according to the *NEB*, two major types of acculturation, viz. 'incorporation' and 'directed change'. In the latter case, it is a question of dominance: there is a dominant power that forces its subordinates to adapt to its ways. In the former case – the case of 'incorporation' – there is a process of 'selection', of 'free borrowing' and 'modification' of cultural elements:

> The unconquered Navajo Indians, in frequent and varied contact with Spanish colonists in the 18th century, *selected* elements of Spanish culture such as clothing and metalworking techniques that were *integrated into their own culture in their own way*.[44]

In the AS, we see an example of this 'incorporation' type of acculturation: Stoic thoughts are not just taken over as such, but are integrated in such a way that their contents are modified and adapted to their new context.[45] For example, the Aratus quotation does not carry a pantheistic line of thought into the speech, for it is evident that, according to Luke, mankind is God's 'offspring' in the sense that man was created in God's image.[46] This is made clear, among other things, by the genealogy in *Luke* 3, according to which Adam was "the son of God" (*Luke* 3:38), and by the reference to Adam in the speech itself (17:26).

(c) In the speech, Paul uses thoughts appropriated especially from the Stoics in order to attack Greek popular religion. This concerns all the three negations – regarding temples, regarding sacrifices and other types of 'care' for the gods and regarding images.[47] Schneider observes:

> Die dreifache Kritik am heidnischen Gottesdienst, die zugleich Kritik am Gottesbegriff der Heiden ist (VV 24–29), nimmt die griechische Philosophie zum Bundesgenossen der biblischen Kritik am Heidentum. Offenbar geht Lukas davon aus, dass die (stoische) Philosophie zur Zurückweisung des heidnischen Volksglaubens an die Götter dienlich ist.[48]

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[41] Dupont 1984, 420–421; cf. Marguerat 2015, 170–171 (both interpretations are possible). According to Gärtner, to 'seek' God is not a function of the intellect, but rather to "live for His glory, obey and serve and worship Him"; Gärtner 1955, 152–158 (quotation from p. 155).
[42] Marguerat 2015, 171.
[43] Thus the principal error of Dibelius throughout his study (Dibelius 1939) is that he does not discuss the possibility that the Stoic-sounding phrases may have been reinterpreted in the speech.
[44] *NEB* 1, 57; italics added.
[45] For a similar strategy among the apologists, see Fiedrowicz 2000, 243–245.
[46] Dupont 1984, 408, 414. Jervell 1998, 449: "Es wird von einer Gottverwandtschaft gesprochen, das Ganze ist also ursprünglich so gemeint, dass die Menschen in sich etwas Göttliches haben. Lukas aber denkt nur daran, dass wir Menschen von Gott als Abbild Gottes, Gen 1,26f.; Ps 8,6f., geschaffen sind."
[47] For references, see Marguerat 2015, 169 nn. 32 (temples) and 33 (lack of need). On images, see above, n. 26.
[48] Schneider 1982, 242.

The *Kerygma Petrou*

The *Kerygma Petrou* (Κήρυγμα Πέτρου) is often described as a bridge between early Christian missionary preaching (as witnessed by the New Testament) and the apologetic literature of the second century.[49] Perhaps written in Egypt early in the century – for the sake of argument, about AD 110 – and known only in fragments, viz. ten quotations by Clement of Alexandria, the writing contains material which is clearly related to thoughts expressed in texts such as *1 Thess*. 1:9–10, *Rom* 1:18–32 and *Acts* 17. When discussing the AS in his *Agnostos Theos*, Eduard Norden drew attention especially to the *Kerygma Petrou* to show parallels in terms of theme and *topoi* – without, however, assuming any direct literary relationship between the two texts.[50]

It is difficult to be specific about the literary *Gattung* of the *Kerygma Petrou*, and the same goes for the structure of the work. The fragments may, however, perhaps be arranged in the right order.[51] We read, first, that the risen Jesus commands his twelve disciples to preach the Gospel in the whole world, beginning with Israel;[52] he also instructs them about what to preach.[53] Then, we see the disciples consulting the prophetical writings and finding there clear words about Jesus.[54] Lastly, we hear Peter preaching – it is not clear to whom – and thus carrying out the orders of Christ.[55]

It is here, in Peter's addressing his audience, that we – presumably – have the heart and centre of the writing, viz. the contrast between the right way of worshipping God and wrong ways of doing so. The Christians possess the true knowledge of God and worship accordingly,[56] 'in a new way' (καινῶς), 'through Christ' (διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ), 'as a third race' (τρίτῳ γένει), whereas both the Greeks and the Jews are in error and worship accordingly.[57] Real εὐσέβεια (or the true way of σέβεσθαι) presupposes true γνῶσις θεοῦ, but ignorance of and mistaken beliefs about God (ἄγνοια) lead to wrong worship.

The overall theme of this speech – right worship based on true knowledge of God – is obviously similar to the theme of the AS. Let me briefly indicate three or four more points of contact between the two speeches. (a) The reference to the (one) Creator at the beginning of the speeches. Peter says, "Know then that there is one God who made the beginning of all things and has power over their end."[58] (b) The repeated use of the word πᾶς in connection with the description of God: ἀρχὴν πάντων ἐποίησεν…τὰ πάντα ὁρᾷ… τὰ πάντα χωρεῖ…τὰ πάντα ἐποίησεν.[59] (c) The description of God in negative terms is combined with positive statements about him: he is, according to Peter's speech,

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[49] E.g. Pellegrino 1947a, 6; Schneemelcher 1989, 37; Fiedrowicz 2000, 30. Text and commentary: von Dobschütz 1893; German translation together with an introduction: Schneemelcher 1989. Important studies: Paulsen 1977; Malherbe 2014.
[50] Norden 1971, 3–7.
[51] See Paulsen 1977, 4–8. The references to the *Kerygma Petrou* follow Paulsen's system. Hence, '*Keryg. Petr.* 3b' = the second part ('b') of the third fragment. See Schneemelcher 1989, 36 n. 36 for a synopsis of three different reference systems among scholars (von Dobschütz and Paulsen, among others). Schneemelcher, too, adopts Paulsen's system.
[52] *Keryg. Petr*. 3b, 3a.
[53] *Keryg. Petr*. 3b–c.
[54] *Keryg. Petr*. 4.
[55] *Keryg. Petr*. 2a–d.
[56] *Keryg. Petr*. 2a, d.
[57] *Keryg. Petr.* 2b–c.
[58] *Keryg. Petr*. 2a; cf. *Acts* 17:24.
[59] *Keryg. Petr.* 2a; cf. *Acts* 17:24, 25[*bis*], 26[*bis*], 30[*bis*].

> the invisible who sees all things; the incomprehensible who comprehends all things; the one who needs nothing, of whom all things stand in need and because of whom they exist [ἀνεπιδεὴς, οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐπιδέεται καὶ δι᾽ὅν ἐστιν; cf. *Acts* 17:25]; the incomprehensible; the perpetual; the imperishable; the uncreated, who made all things by the word of his power, that is, his Son.[60]

(d) This 'negative theology', which was picked up from contemporary Hellenistic philosophy, is used to discredit pagan worship: the objects of worship are visible, created and perishable, whereas God is invisible, uncreated and imperishable.[61] In a similar way, as we have seen, the Paul of the AS aligns himself with Hellenistic philosophy in his criticism of Greek worship.[62]

In spite of the similarities, scholars usually do not assume any direct use of the AS in the *Kerygma Petrou*, and I agree with this assessment.[63] It is probably rather the case that the *Kerygma Petrou* reflects a way of preaching that had developed in the church and that the AS had contributed to that development. At the time of the making of the *Kerygma Petrou*, there was a common 'pool' of themes and expressions that Christian preachers and writers could avail themselves of.[64]

The *Apology* of Aristides

The *Apology* of Aristides from Athens, perhaps originally written in the time of Hadrian (AD 117–138),[65] is similar to the AS and to the *Kerygma Petrou* as far as its topic is concerned: the overarching theme is knowledge of God. "Aristide è veramente un predicatore missionario che vuol portare ai pagani la retta γνῶσις θεοῦ."[66] This right knowledge, in turn, is the basis for a morally sound life and the prerequisite for worship

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[60] *Keryg. Petr.* 2a; cf. the combination of positive and negative statements in *Acts* 17:24–25, 29.
[61] *Keryg. Petr.* 2a–b. Palmer 1983, 238.
[62] Since differences between the two speeches – 'Paul's' and 'Peter's' – are of no importance with regard to the question of a possible use of the former by the latter, we may ignore them in principle here. However, it might be interesting to look briefly at the passage of the *Kerygma Petrou* where Peter seeks to dissuade his audience from worshipping God "as the Greeks" do. Having introduced the one true God, Peter goes on: τοῦτον τὸν θεὸν σέβεσθε, μὴ κατὰ τοὺς Ἕλληνας, ὅτι ἀγνοίᾳ φερόμενοι καὶ μὴ ἐπιστάμενοι τὸν θεόν, ὧν ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν εἰς χρῆσιν, μορφώσαντες ξύλα καὶ λίθους [...] ἀναστάντες σέβονται κτλ. (*Keryg. Petr.* 2b). Does this passage suggest that the Greeks do worship the true God already, but do so in the wrong way? Clement of Alexandria thinks so: according to him, the *Kerygma Petrou* makes the point that the Greeks, or at least the "excellent" (οἱ δοκιμώτατοι) among them "worshipped the same God as we". Clement underlines that Peter did not say, "Do not then worship the God whom the Greeks worship", but instead, "not as the Greeks". This means, Clement argues, that Peter was not talking of another God but just about another way of worshiping this same God (*Str*. VI.5.39:1–5). As Pellegrino points out, this interpretation by Clement seems far too benevolent ("troppo benevola") with regard to the Greeks (Pellegrino 1947a, 21–23). Cf. the remarks on *Acts* 17:23 above.
[63] E.g. von Dobschütz 1893, 70; Paulsen 1977, 10 n. 55, 27–28, 35–36.
[64] In the *Kerygma Petrou* there is "eine Verbindung von Vorstellungen, die auch im *NT* begegnen (z.B. 1Thess 1,9f.; Röm 1,18ff; Apg 17), mit Elementen, die aus der jüdischen Apologetik stammen" (Schneemelcher 1989, 37). Cf. Alexandre 1998.
[65] Thus (with reference to Eusebius, *HE* 4.3.3) Alpigiano 1988, 129–130; Grant 1988, 38–39; Fiedrowicz 2000, 38. These scholars all propose that the *Apology* may later have been presented to Antoninus Pius in a second edition.
[66] Pellegrino 1947b, 12.

of the true God. A false view of God, on the other hand, will lead to immorality and misguided worship. These are the sure beliefs of Aristides.

The disposition of the *Apology* is clear: Aristides starts with a description of the true God, whose existence and attributes can be grasped by way of contemplating the cosmos and its design: God is, among other things, 'without beginning' (ἄναρχος), 'eternal' (ἀΐδιος), 'immortal' (ἀθάνατος) and 'without need' (ἀπροσδεής).[67] "He has no need of sacrifices or libations, but all need him."[68] We observe here similar negative epithets as in the *Kerygma Petrou*, which Aristides may well have been using.[69] Having laid this foundation,[70] Aristides goes on, with great confidence, to examine who among humans possess true knowledge of God and who are in error: ἴδωμεν οὖν τίνες τούτων μετέχουσι τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τίνες τῆς πλάνης.[71] Humankind may be divided into four groups: Barbarians, Greeks, Jews and Christians.[72] Barbarians and Greeks are totally going astray in their religion.[73] Jews are closer to the truth but still in error.[74] The Christians, however, have found the truth and are to be praised for their morality and for their doctrine,[75] which is "the door of light".[76] People living in error should stop slandering the Christians, start speaking the truth and turn to worshiping the true God.[77] All those who do not know God should accept the eternal incorruptible words (i.e. the doctrine of the Christians) and thus avoid the terrible judgment of all humankind which will take place through Jesus, the Messiah.[78]

From the preceding comments, several similarities between the *Apology* of Aristides and the AS can easily be observed: (a) the overall theme of the *Apology* (true vs. false knowledge of God, and the respective consequences) is close to that of Paul's speech; (b) the reference to the coming judgment of all humankind through Jesus;[79] (c) the use of contemporary philosophy – including 'negative theology' – to discredit 'false' religion,[80] especially (d) the idea of the true God as not being in 'need' of anything, such as sacrifices (ἀπροσδεής, *Apol.* 1.4; οὐ χρῄζει θυσίας καὶ σπονδῆς, *Apol.* 1.5; cf. *Acts* 17:25).[81] Here we may add: (e) a criticism of temples and images. The barbarians, "not

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[67] *Apol.* 1.4.
[68] *Apol.* 1.5.
[69] Seeberg 1893, 216–220; Paulsen 1977, 13; Schneemelcher 1989, 35.
[70] For a closer analysis of *Apol.* 1, see Lazzati 1938. According to Lazzati, Aristides is an exponent of a 'philosophical syncretism': he appropriates thoughts not only from Stoicism, but also from Platonism and Aristotelianism (Lazzati 1938, 41–49). He does this in service of his basic Christian convictions: "[I]l nostro apologista non ha…tentato un accomodamento della filosofia christiana alla pagana, ma esponendo verità naturali che gli erano però fornite dalla rivelazione, si è solo servito dei termini già usati nella filosofia pagana così che non è lecito definire stoico o stoico platonico questo primo capitolo" (Lazzati 1938, 50).
[71] *Apol*. 3.1.
[72] *Apol*. 2. The Greek version mentions only three groups: οἱ τῶν παρ᾽ὑμῖν λεγομένων θεῶν προσκυνηταί, Ἰουδαῖοι and Χριστιανοί (2.2). I will not here enter into a discussion of the different textual traditions (Greek, Syriac and Armenian). I have used Alpigiano's edition.
[73] *Apol*. 3–13.
[74] *Apol*. 14.
[75] *Apol*. 15–17.
[76] *Apol*. 17.6.
[77] *Apol*. 17.6.
[78] *Apol*. 17.7.
[79] *Apol*. 17.7; cf. *Acts* 17:31.
[80] Esp. *Apol*. 1; on Paul, see *Acts* 17:31.
[81] In addition to the definition of God as ἀπροσδεής in *Apol.* 1, note also the criticism and insinuations against the Greek gods for being "in need" (ἐπενδεής, *Apol.* 10.2, 5; 11.1).

knowing God, went astray after the elements and began to worship created things rather than their Creator" (μὴ εἰδότες θεὸν ἐπλανήθησαν ὀπίσω τῶν στοιχείων καὶ ἤρξαντο σέβεσθαι τὴν κτίσιν παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα αὐτούς, *Apol.* 3.2). They have also made images which they call gods, they have locked them up in temples, venerate them and guard them, fearing that they might be stolen by robbers.[82]

It seems plausible to say that the *Apology* of Aristides (3.2) makes use of *Romans* 1:25: ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα.[83] Aristides may also have used the *Kerygma Petrou*, as pointed out above. But as far as the similarities between the *Apology* and the AS are concerned, there is no convincing reason to explain them in terms of a direct use by the former of the latter. What we see is, as in the case of the *Kerygma Petrou*, a use by Aristides of common Christian material, including certain terms and themes.

Justin Martyr's *Apologies*

Let us now turn to the *Apologies* of Justin Martyr, viz. The *First Apology* and the *Second Apology*. Justin wrote these works in Rome, presumably sometime between AD 150 and 155.[84] Here we easily find several points of contact with the AS, i.e. in terms of *topoi* and expressions.

In most cases, the similarities can be explained in the same way as in the cases of the *Kerygma Petrou* and the *Apology* of Aristides: Justin picks up thoughts and phrases that were widely used in contemporary Christian preaching and teaching. So – to name a few examples – the Christians "worship the Creator of this world", knowing that "he does not need blood (ἀνενδεὴς αἱμάτων), and libations, and incense";[85] Christians also know that "God provides all things" and "has no need of material services from human beings";[86] it is an insult to the true God to give the appellation 'god' to "things that are corruptible and need to be looked after" (φθαρτὰ καὶ δεόμενα θεραπείας πράγματα, *1 Apol.* 9.3); and the false gods, but not the true God, are formed by human beings and "set up in temples".[87] There is no need to assume that Justin came to think of these matters precisely when reading the AS. It has even been argued that it is uncertain if Justin was acquainted with the *Acts*.[88]

Nevertheless, there seems to be good reason to believe that Justin was in fact familiar with *Acts* 17. I have in mind the passage in *2 Apol.* 10, where Justin portrays Socrates's vigorous struggle against the demons, to the benefit of his compatriots. Within this portrayal, there is an unmistakeable allusion to the AS: "[Socrates] urged them to knowledge, through rational enquiry, of the God who was unknown to them."[89] Here, it seems, we observe the first use of the AS in early Christian literature.[90]

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[82] *Apol.* 3.2; cf. *Acts* 17:24, 29.
[83] Alpigiano 1988, 143.
[84] Skarsaune 1988, 472.
[85] *1 Apol.* 13.1.
[86] *1 Apol.* 10.1.
[87] *1 Apol.* 9.1.
[88] For a discussion, see Gregory 2003, 317–321. Gregory argues that Justin *may* have known *Acts*, but that there is no certain evidence for this. He sees no clear allusion to *Acts* 1:8–10 in *1 Apol.* 50.12 (cf. Luke 24.49) and does not discuss *2 Apol.* 10.6; cf. below.

Justin has a high regard for Socrates. He portrays him as an example, indeed as a champion for the Christian cause ahead of time. This manner of using the figure of Socrates as an *exemplum* was common in the times of both Luke and Justin, both among Graeco-Roman and Christian writers.[91] According to Seneca, for example, Socrates was the ideal Stoic sage. Similarly, Epictetus and Dio Chrysostom depicted Socrates as 'their man'.[92] Justin's Socrates is of course Christianized: on one hand, his δαιμόνιον is never mentioned, nor his instruction regarding a sacrifice to Asclepius;[93] on the other hand, he is an enemy of the demons (viz. the Greek gods); he is accused of atheism and finally put to death on the instigation of the demons. In other words: Socrates fought the same battle as the Christians do, was accused of the same crime as the Christians and was punished in the same way as Christians in Justin's day. Socrates, as depicted by Justin, was also an instrument of the Logos, who unmasked the demons through Socrates and his "true reason".[94]

The two main passages in the *Apologies* depicting Socrates are found in *1 Apol.* 5 and *2 Apol.* 10. The first one reads:

> Since, in ancient times, wicked demons, in apparitions, committed adultery with women and seduced boys and made people see horrifying things, so those who did not rationally evaluate what the demons were doing were stunned with terror. Carried away with fear, they named them gods, not knowing they were wicked demons. And they called each of them by a name which each of the demons had given it. When Socrates attempted with true reason and judicious inquiry to bring these things into the open and to draw people away from the demons, the demons, using people who delight in evil, worked it that he too was killed, on the pretext that he rejected the gods and was irreligious (ὡς ἄθεον καὶ ἀσεβῆ) – alleging that he introduced strange new divinities (λέγοντες καινὰ εἰσφέρειν αὐτὸν δαιμόνια). And likewise they are working to bring about the same thing for us. For these things were brought to light not only among the Greeks by reason, through the words of Socrates, but also among the barbarians by the Logos himself, who acquired physical form and became a human being and was called Jesus Christ.[95]

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[89] *2 Apol.* 10.6.

[90] For scholars arguing (or assuming) that Justin alludes to *Acts* 17 here, see Benz 1950/51, 206–207; Holte 1958, 130; Hyldahl 1966, 278; Fédou 1998, 61; Skarsaune 2001, 148–149. See also Döring 1979, 152. According to Chadwick, Justin's Logos doctrine (as it is articulated in the *Apologies*) indicates that he had "deeply considered" *Romans* 1–2 and *Acts* 17 and his doctrine may be taken as "a commentary" on those New Testament texts (Chadwick 1965, 295).

[91] Döring 1979.

[92] Döring 1979, 18–42 (Seneca on Socrates), 43–79 (Epictetus on Socrates), 80–113 (Dio Chrysostom on Socrates).

[93] Pl. *Phd*. 118A. These points appear in later, more critical assessments of Socrates on the part of Christian writers. For these later views, see for example Fédou 1998, 63–65.

[94] *1 Apol.* 5.3.

[95] *1 Apol.* 5.2–4. I quote the most recent English translation, Minns and Parvis 2009, 91. In this passage as well as in the one I quote below, there are a few minor differences between the editions of Minns and Parvis (2009) and Marcovich (1994). While I prefer the text of Marcovich here and in the following passage, the differences are of no real significance in the context of the present discussion and hence may be ignored. For a discussion of the merits of various editions of the *Apologies* of Justin Martyr, see Back 2014, 26–30. I disagree with Minns and Parvis regarding the interpretation of *1 Apol.* 5.4: οὐ γὰρ μόνον ἐν Ἕλλησι διὰ Σωκράτου ὑπὸ λόγου ἠλέγχθη ταῦτα, where I think there is a reference to Logos working through Socrates: "these things were brought to light not only among the Greeks by Logos through Socrates." For this interpretation, see for example Trakatellis 1976, 112–113.

In the second passage (*2 Apol.* 10) we observe several of the same points being made about Socrates.[96] But in addition to his 'negative' or destructive function as an enemy and unmasker of the demons, there is also a 'positive' element in the portrait,[97] in that Socrates is said to have urged his compatriots to seek the "unknown god". By way of the allusion to Paul's words in *Acts* 17:23, 27, Socrates is now not only Christianized, but also 'Paulinized' and viewed as "der frühergeborene Bruder des Apostels":[98]

> And those born before Christ who attempted by human reason to see into things and to expose them were dragged into court for being irreligious and meddlesome. But Socrates, who was in this regard the most vigorous of them all, was accused of the same things as we are, for they said of him also that he brought in new divinities, and that those whom the city recognized as gods he did not. But he, throwing Homer and the other poets out of the city, taught men to shun wicked demons and those who did what the poets said, and *urged them to knowledge, through rational enquiry, of the God who was unknown to them* (πρὸς θεοῦ δὲ τοῦ ἀγνώστου αὐτοῖς διὰ λόγου ζητήσεως ἐπίγνωσιν προὐτρέπετο), saying, 'the father and creator of all is not easy to find nor is it safe for one who has found him to declare him to all'.[99]

Maybe it was the somewhat Socratic flavour of the prelude to the AS (*Acts* 17:16–22a) which inspired Justin to draw this 'Pauline' picture of Socrates. Be that as it may, let us now look at Justin's reception of the speech.

Acts 17	*2 Apol.* 10.6
ἄγνωστος θεός (17.22)	θεὸς ὁ ἄγνωστος αὐτοῖς
ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν (17.27)	πρὸς θεοῦ [...] διὰ λόγου ζητήσεως ἐπίγνωσιν προὐτρέπετο ("he urged [people] to knowledge of God through rational enquiry")
cf. also:	
εἰ ἄρα γε [...] εὕροιεν (17.27)	τὸν δὲ πατέρα καὶ δημιουργὸν πάντων οὔθ᾽εὑρεῖν ῥᾴδιον [...] ("The father and creator of all is not easy to find […]")[100]

There is no hint in Justin that the pagan worship may have the "unknown god" as its object in some way. The Greek gods are in fact demons.[101] This is what Socrates found out with the help of "true reason", and he proceeded to draw people away from the

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[96] I agree with Minns and Parvis that the so-called *Second Apology* is "a series of disconnected fragments" (Minns and Parvis 2009, 21–31, quotation from p. 27). The material, however, is authentic and from approximately the same time as the *First Apology*.
[97] Benz 1950/51, 206; Döring 1979, 152: "Sokrates ist hier nicht mehr nur der, der die falschen Götter entlarvt hat, sondern zugleich der, der den Weg gewiesen hat, auf dem der wahre Gott zu finden ist." Döring's final words about (not only seeking but) 'finding' the true God perhaps go too far; cf. below.
[98] The quotation is from Benz 1950/51, 207.
[99] *2 Apol.* 10.4–6. Minns and Parvis 2009, 311, 313. Italics added.
[100] Pl. *Ti*. 28C. On the wording of the rather free quotation, see Andresen 1952/53, 167–168.
[101] On Justin's uncompromising stance on this, see Skarsaune 1996, 591–594; Skarsaune 2001, 140–141.

demons.[102] According to Justin, this was Socrates at his best. In fact, unmasking the gods as demons is the most important task of philosophy.[103]

However, the Justinian Socrates did not only teach his compatriots to shun the demons (the gods), but also urged them to seek the "unknown god" through "rational enquiry", διὰ λόγου ζητήσεως.[104] Interestingly enough, the Justinian Socrates, then, indicated what the Lukan Paul did not, viz. how human beings are to seek God. This is left without comment in *Acts* 17:26–27 (ἐποίησέν τε ἐξ ἑνὸς πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων [...] ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν), but in *2 Apol.* 10.6 the matter is clarified: people can and should use their reason (λόγος) to seek God. We can perhaps say, then, that Justin understands the seeking of God in *Acts* 17:27 in the same way as Professor Dibelius: it is "eine Sache des Denkens".[105]

In the context of the AS, the line from Aratus, τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν (*Acts* 17:28), is a reference to humankind as having been created in the image of God. Furthermore, it is used as a rationale for the point that humans may find God when seeking for him (see above). Maybe Justin, if asked about it, would have explained Paul's thinking in this way: when God created man, he did so through his Logos – Logos was a *Schöpfungsmittler*;[106] therefore, through creation human beings are 'marked' by Logos in the sense that they partake of the Logos by their being endowed with reason; hence, they are born λογικοὶ καὶ θεωρητικοί.[107] As such they can seek God using their reason, διὰ λόγου ζητήσεως.[108]

What about finding God, reaching a knowledge of him (ἐπίγνωσις θεοῦ τοῦ ἀγνώστου, *2 Apol.* 10.6)? In the AS, finding him is a possibility, even if it is no easy matter; the outcome of the seeking is not clear: […] εἰ ἄρα γε ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτὸν καὶ εὕροιεν.[109] This thought is also articulated by Justin, but by way of the quotation from Pl. *Ti*. 28C: "The father and creator of all is not easy to find […]."[110] In *2 Apol.* 10.2 the difficulty of the enterprise is brought out by the verb πονεῖν: "Whatever philosophers and lawgivers have at any time uttered well or found was achieved by them with hardship (ἐστὶ πονηθέντα αὐτοῖς),[111] (as they were working) according to a share (or participation) in Logos (κατὰ Λόγου μέρος), by invention and contemplation (δι᾽εὑρέσεως καὶ θεωρίας)."[112]

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[102] *1 Apol.* 5.3; *2 Apol.* 10.6.
[103] Skarsaune 1996, 594, 598.
[104] *2 Apol.* 10.6.
[105] Dibelius 1939, 9. Cf. Holte 1958, 130: "It is probable that this 'searching' is understood [sc. by Justin in *2 Apol.* 10.6] more intellectually than in Paul [sc. the Paul of the Areopagus Speech]."
[106] E.g. *1 Apol.* 64.5; *2 Apol.* 5.3. Trakatellis 1976, 22–23; Heid 2001, 836; Skarsaune 1996, 604–607; Skarsaune 2001, 147–148. Minns and Parvis see no explicit evidence of the *Schöpfungsmittlerschaft* of the Logos in Justin (Minns and Parvis 2009, 62–65). They emend the text in *2 Apol.* 5.3, excising the words ὅτε τὴν ἀρχὴν δι᾽αὐτοῦ πάντα ἔκτισε καὶ ἐκόσμησε. The sentence is retained for example by Marcovich (1994, 145).
[107] *1 Apol.* 28.3; cf. *1 Apol.* 46.2, *2 Apol.* 10.8 and especially *2 Apol.* 7.1–3 and 13.3–6.
[108] For Justin's doctrine of the Logos (incl. Logos spermatikos), see esp. Holte 1958; Waszink 1964, 385–390; Skarsaune 1988, 473; Skarsaune 2001, 144–150; Minns and Parvis 2009, 61–66. On the problem how Justin's view of 'natural revelation' through human 'participation' in the divine Logos in the *Apologies* can be held together with the criticism of Platonism in *Dial*. 4–7, see Trakatellis 1976, 129–130; Skarsaune 2001, 150–154 (more briefly in Skarsaune 1996, 608); also Waszink 1964, 385–387.
[109] See above, n. 33.
[110] Holte 1958:130: "[T]he main stress here, as in Paul, is laid on Man's difficulty in finding God."
[111] Until this point I follow the translation of Minns and Parvis 2009, 309. I cannot follow their edition in the rest of *2 Apol.* 10.2.
[112] Text: Marcovich 1994, 151.

In the context of *2 Apol.* 10, drawing on the AS, Justin does not explain in what sense human beings may find God through "rational enquiry", nor does he reveal what exactly was "uttered well" or "found" by philosophers and lawgivers. However, the answer to these questions would seem to be, in the words of Skarsaune:

> With his God-given reason – Justin clarifies: given through Christ, the Logos – man may reach ethical knowledge; he can, or should, see through the illusion of idolatry and begin to seek the unknown God. However, Justin regards all true knowledge beyond this not as a product of *revelatio generalis*, but as a borrowing from *revelatio specialis*.[113]

Summary

While both the *Kerygma Petrou* and the *Apology* of Aristides show considerable similarity with the AS in theme, *topoi*, phrases and vocabulary it is only Justin Martyr who shows knowledge of the speech and has used it in 2 *Apol.* 10, viz. in his depiction of Socrates in the context of his doctrine of the *Logos*.

[113] Skarsaune 2001, 154 (my translation from the Norwegian).

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