Paul, the Athenians, and the Breath of Life: Acts 17:22-31

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PAUL, THE ATHENIANS, AND THE BREATH OF LIFE

ACTS 17:22-31

SUBMITTED TO DR. JOHN R. LEVISON
AND THE SEATTLE PACIFIC UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF A MASTER OF ARTS IN CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE

BY
BILL HORST
JULY 25, 2011
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCS</td>
<td>Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJA</td>
<td><em>American Journal of Archaeology</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AnBib</td>
<td>Analecta biblica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arch</td>
<td><em>Archaeology</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASNU</td>
<td>Acta seminarii neotestamentici upsaliensis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAFCS</td>
<td><em>Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCOTWP</td>
<td>Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEC</td>
<td>Biblical Encounters Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFCT</td>
<td>Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BST</td>
<td>Bible Speaks Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTCB</td>
<td>Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Christianisme Antique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBQ</td>
<td><em>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEJL</td>
<td>Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoLBC</td>
<td>Collegeville Bible Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTSRR</td>
<td>College Theology Society Resources in Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUANTS</td>
<td>Catholic University of America, New Testament Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATD</td>
<td>Das Alte Testament Deutsch</td>
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<tr>
<td>EC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESV</td>
<td>English Standard Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCBS</td>
<td>Fortress Classics in Biblical Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNT</td>
<td>Handbuch Zum Neuen Testament</td>
</tr>
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<td>HTR</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRS</td>
<td>How to Read Series</td>
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<td>HSCP</td>
<td>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Interpretation</td>
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<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>JETS</td>
<td>Journal of Evangelical Theological Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPSTC</td>
<td>Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JQR</td>
<td>Jewish Quarterly Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>JQRMS</td>
<td>Jewish Quarterly Review Monograph Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSBLE</td>
<td>Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSJSup</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods: Supplement Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSNT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSNTSup</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JST</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTS</td>
<td>Journal of Theological Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JWCI</td>
<td>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lat</td>
<td>Latomus</td>
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<tr>
<td>LCL</td>
<td>Loeb Classical Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSTS</td>
<td>Library of Second Temple Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Mission Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAC</td>
<td>New American Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCV</td>
<td>New Century Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIB</td>
<td>New Interpreter's Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICNT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICOT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the Old Testament</td>
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<td>NIV</td>
<td>New International Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NovT</td>
<td><em>Novum Testamentum</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>New Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTT</td>
<td>New Testament Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTL</td>
<td>Old Testament Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>OTTM</td>
<td>Old Testament Message</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAI</td>
<td>ΠΙΑΙΔΕΙΑ: Commentaries on the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACS</td>
<td>Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series</td>
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<td>PNTC</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBLEJL</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and Its Literature</td>
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<td>SBLSP</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCS</td>
<td>Septuagint Commentary Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSC</td>
<td>Social-Science Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVTP</td>
<td>Studia in Veteris Testaemnti Pseudepigrapha</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNTC</td>
<td>Tyndale New Testament Commentaries</td>
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<td>VC</td>
<td><em>Vigiliae Christianae</em></td>
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<td>WAS</td>
<td>Wilson Authors Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>WBC</td>
<td>Word Biblical Commentary</td>
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<td>WUNT</td>
<td>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</td>
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INTRODUCTION

In a recent review of John R. Levison’s *Filled with the Spirit,*¹ Frank D. Macchia argues that Levison has “unnecessarily widened the gap between the pneumatologies of the two Testaments.”² In Levison’s analysis, the Old Testament conceives of spirit as inherent to human life, present from birth and closely tied with wisdom, knowledge and learning. In the New Testament, spirit is associated with faith in Christ rather than universal human vitality, leading Levison to argue for a substantial discontinuity between the notion of spirit filling in the Old and New Testaments.³ Macchia, while generally affirming of the book, argues that there are significant points of pneumatological continuity between the testaments which Levison overlooks, including Paul’s speech to the Athenians in Acts 17:22-31. He finds expressed in this discourse the journeys of scattered peoples, inspired and influenced by the spirit of a God who is “not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27), and proposes that this text, which is mentioned in *Filled with the Spirit* only in a passing footnote, deserves thorough exegetical consideration in light of Levison’s work.⁴ Macchia touches on this same connection

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⁴ Macchia, “Spirit of Life,” 75.
briefly in his recent book *Justified in the Spirit*, in which he puts more focus squarely on Acts 17:28 – “in [God] we live and move and have our being.”

While Paul cites Scripture frequently in his speeches, he typically does so in the context of the synagogue, temple, or in front of someone familiar with Judaism. In Athens only passing mention is made of the synagogue (17:17), and Paul’s speech is delivered to the “men of Athens” (ἀνδρες Ἀθηναίοι; 17:22), including Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in particular (17:18). While we would readily expect Paul to use Scripture when teaching in the synagogue, we might wonder what the point would be of doing so before a pure Greek audience, to whom Scripture is of no consequence. Paul makes no direct reference to any Bible verse or any aspect of the history of Israel in his Athenian speech, which would seem to support a reading of this text as a purely Greek appeal to a purely Greek audience, where Paul need not bother to import anything Jewish in order to communicate the gospel of Jesus. Further, Paul does make direct reference to the Athenians’ “own poets” (17:28), which is unparalleled in Acts. In fact, the very phrase which is so central to Macchia’s interpretation, “In him we live and

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6 Acts 9:20-22; 13:14-47; 17:2-3, 10-11; 18:5; 28:23-28. Even Agrippa is said to be “familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews” (26:3; see 26:1-29). The speech in Lystra (14:15-17) is the only other place where Paul could be found to allude to Scripture in a pagan context, though we might also consider that Paul and Silas “spoke the word of the Lord” to the jailer and his household (16:32).

move and have our being” (17:28), is often attributed to a Greek poet (on which see below), and does not linguistically resemble anything in the Hebrew Bible. The Athenian address is thoroughly oriented around the concerns of its pagan Greek audience. Can we really expect to find that it also contains as a central idea the biblical concept of a universal spirit of life?

The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate that Paul’s speech to the Athenians in Acts 17:22-31 does include, contrary to expectation, biblical allusions, as well as concepts and turns of phrase that bear a strong resemblance to those of other Hellenistic Jewish texts, especially those related to the breath of life. Part I will argue that Paul’s address contains biblical allusions, and that Isaiah 42:5 in particular is a key intertext for this passage. Part II will demonstrate that, while there are points of contact between Paul’s address and extant Greco-Roman texts, many such connections are qualified by fundamental differences from Paul’s speech. Finally, part III will argue that Paul’s address includes elements consistent with Hellenistic Jewish texts, and that these connections are more congenial to Paul’s address than many of the Greco-Roman connections. Even when Paul addresses a pagan Greek audience with no biblical or Jewish knowledge, and even when he goes out of his way to appeal to Greco-Roman poetry and religious observance, he is still found to do so in a way that is true both to Scripture and to Jewish idiom.
PART I: BIBLICAL ALLUSIONS IN THE ATHENIAN ADDRESS

Macchia’s basic contention regarding Acts 17:22-31 is that the text reflects an Old Testament pneumatology of spirit as inherent to human life. He cites Genesis 2:7 as archetypical of the spirit of life, and Levison begins his exploration of Spirit-filling in Israelite literature with the same verse, so we will begin by considering Genesis 2:7 as an intertext for Acts 17:24ff.

THE GIVING OF LIFE IN GENESIS

Commentators often find in Acts 17:25 an allusion to Genesis 2:7, where God forms the first human from the ground and “[breathes] into his nostrils the breath of life (LXX ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς),” making him a “living being (ψυχὴν ζωσαν).” Πνοή, which occurs in the New Testament only here and in Acts

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8 Macchia, “Spirit of Life,” 75.
10 Levison, Filled, 14ff.
12 For our purposes, the MT does not differ substantially from LXX.
2:2,\textsuperscript{13} appears frequently in the Septuagint, usually as a translation of נפシア,\textsuperscript{14} and often in parallel with πνεῦμα/נפש,\textsuperscript{15} Genesis 2:7 is the first instance of πνοή in the Septuagint, and is prototypical of a series of texts which reflect a notion of breath as animating principle – the difference between a living creature and dust.\textsuperscript{16}

The combination of creation (Acts 17:24), God’s giving of ζωή and πνοή (Acts 17:25) and the descent of all human nations from one individual (17:26) naturally evokes the Adamic narrative of Genesis 2:4ff for Christian readers,\textsuperscript{17} but the echo must be seen as primarily conceptual, since the only linguistic commonalities are the use of ζωή and πνοή, the former of which is quite common in the Septuagint, New Testament, and Hellenistic literature.\textsuperscript{18} The lack of linguistic connection between Acts 17 and Genesis 2:7 raises the question of whether a closer parallel can be found with another biblical text.

\textsuperscript{13} In Acts 2:2, the disciples of Jesus hear the sound of a rushing wind (πνοή), which ultimately fills the house in which they are seated.


\textsuperscript{15} Job 4:9; 27:3; 32:8; 33:4; 34:14; Isa 42:5; 57:16.

\textsuperscript{16} Gen 2:7; 7:22; Job 27:3; 32:8; 33:4; 37:10; Isa 42:5. Other texts use πνεῦμα in the same way: Gen 6:3; Ps 51:10-12; 104:29-30; Job 12:10; Eccl 3:19-21; 12:7.


\textsuperscript{18} An extensive sampling of the usage of ζωή can be found in Georg Bertram, Rudolph Bultmann and Gerhard von Rad, "ζάω, ζωή (βιόω, βίος), ἀναζάω, ἰζόν, ζωογονέω, ζωοποιέω," TDNT 2:832-72. It is also worth noting that πνοή (an earlier form of πνοη; Friedrich Baumgärtel, Werner Bieder, Hermann Kleinnecht, Eduard Schweizer and Erik Sjöberg, "πνεῦμα, πνευματικός, πνέω, ἐμπέω, πνοη, ἐκπνεῶ, θεόπνευστος," TDNT 6:334.) is used of Zeus in a known Orphic hymn: "Ζεὺς πνοη πάντων, Ζεὺς ἀκαμάτου πνόσ άρμη" (Otto Kern, Orphicum
ISAIAH AND PAUL

THE GIVING OF LIFE IN ISAIAH

A comparison of language shows that a far stronger linguistic similarity exists between Acts 17 and Isaiah 42:5 than between Acts 17 and Genesis 2:7. Within the first Isaianic servant song (42:1-9), the LORD is spoken of as creator of the world and sustainer of all life that walks upon the earth. This verse bears a strong resemblance to Paul’s description of God in his speech to the Athenians, as can best be seen through a side-by-side comparison of Acts 17:24-25 and LXX Isaiah 42:5:\textsuperscript{19}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LXX Isa 42:5</th>
<th>Acts 17:24-25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A οὗτως λέγει κύριος</td>
<td>B ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thus says the Lord,</td>
<td>The God who made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας</td>
<td>C’ τὸν κόσμον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the God who made</td>
<td>the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ πῆξας αὐτὸν,</td>
<td>D καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heaven and pitched it;</td>
<td>and all the things in it,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὁ στερεώσας τὴν γῆν</td>
<td>C οὗτος οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who established the earth</td>
<td>this one, of heaven and earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ</td>
<td>A ύπάρχων κύριος …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the things in it</td>
<td>being Lord …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textit{Framenta} (Berlin: Berolini Arud Weidmannos, 1963), §21a). The similarity between πνοή πάντων and ζωὴν καὶ πνοήν καὶ τὰ πάντα (Acts 17:25) further calls into question the echo of Genesis 2:7 in the same verse, since a comparable linguistic parallel can be found in a Hellenistic text.

\textsuperscript{19} My translation is at times awkward in order to preserve the parallelism of specific phrases.
καὶ διδοὺς πνοήν τῷ λαῷ τῷ ἐπ᾽ αὐτής
and gives breath to the people who
(are) upon it
καὶ πνεύμα τοῖς πατῶσιν αὐτήν,
and spirit to those who walk on it
καὶ πνεῦμα τοῖς πατῶσιν αὐτήν,
he himself gives to all life and breath
καὶ τὰ πάντα.
and all things

Though there are a number of clear similarities between these two texts, some
differences are worth noting. The inclusion of πᾶς words (part D and E above) gives the
passage a more universal tone, and is consistent with the overall frequency of πᾶς
words in Paul’s speech.20 Paul’s use of κύριος in part A suits the purposes of Paul’s
polemic against idols (on which see below), as God is not only the maker but also the
Lord of heaven and earth.21 Τὸν κόσμον is seldom used to refer to the whole of creation
in the Septuagint translations of Hebrew Bible texts,22 but is used frequently in this way
within the Hellenistic Septuagint texts,23 so its presence in Paul’s speech (C’) is perfectly
consistent with the Hellenistic Jewish textual tradition.24

20 Forms of πᾶς are used eight times in the ten-verse speech (17:22, 24, 25 (2), 26, 30 (2), 31), and
also in the preceding verse (17:21).
1971), 522.
22 The exception would be LXX Gen 2:1 and perhaps Prov 17:6. Κόσμος in LXX typically refers to
adornment (e.g. Ex 33:5f; Esth 4:17; Isa 3:18ff) or heavenly bodies (e.g. Deut 4:19; Isa 13:10).
23 See e.g. 2 Macc 7:9; Wis 7:17; cf. Odes 12:2.
The servant song includes synonymous parallelism between “gives breath to the people who (are) upon it (διδοὺς πνοῆν τῷ λαῷ τῷ ἐπ’ αὐτῆς)” and “spirit to those who walk on it (πνεύμα τοῖς πατοῦσιν αὐτήν)” (E) where Paul’s speech has the single assertion that God “gives to all life and breath and all things (αὐτῶς διδοῦς πᾶσιν ζωήν καὶ πνοὴν καὶ τὰ πάντα).” The verb (διδοὺς) is the same in both verses, and in both πνοὴν is one of the objects, but the synonymous indirect objects in Isaiah are replaced by “all (πᾶσι),” which may function to avoid the covenantal nuance of τῷ λαῷ, or may simply serve as a shorter paraphrase.25 Πνεύμα is not present in Paul’s speech, while ζωή and τὰ πάντα are included. The reason for this is less clear, and we will need to return to it below.

Isaiah 42:5 lists various creation events in a manner that matches the order of Genesis 1.26 God “made heaven and pitched it” (Gen 1:6-8), “established the earth” (Gen 1:9-13), and “the things in it” (Gen 1:20-25) including “the people…who walk on it” (Gen 1:26-27). While this is by no means a comprehensive account of Genesis 1, it is fair to say that Isaiah is congenial to Genesis 1:1-2:4. In light of this, the statement that God “gives breath to the people upon [the earth] and spirit to those who walk in it” can be read as

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25 Examples of the use of λαός to speak of Israel in Acts include 2:47; 6:8; 13:17; cf. Luke 24:19; Gaventa, Acts, 218; Conzelmann, Acts, 117. If πᾶσι is taken as a way to avoid the covenantal nuance of τῷ λαῷ, then the difference is appropriate in light of Paul’s audience and the universal nature of his speech. If it is taken as a simple paraphrase or the omission of parallelism, then it is of little consequence for our purposes.

reminiscent of the giving of breath in Genesis 2:7. While Genesis 2 speaks only of the
in-breathing of Adam, Genesis 6:3, 17 and 7:22 confirm that the breath of life is present
in all breathing creatures. The same concept of an animating breath of life is reflected in
various other texts where breath is associated with life, or where the taking of breath is
associated with death (see Job 12:10; 27:3-4; 33:4; 34:14-15; Ps 104:29-30; 146:4; Eccl 3:19-
21; 12:7; cf. Ps 51:10-12[12-14]), so we can speak of a breath of life tradition in the
Hebrew Bible that is archetypically expressed in Genesis 2:7 and reflected in other texts,
including Isaiah 42:5. In light of this, while Genesis 2 does not specifically say that God
gives breath to the people living on the earth, Isaiah 42:5 can be seen as reminiscent of
the Adamic breath of life.

In spite of the aforementioned differences between Isaiah 42:5 and Acts 17:24-25,
the echo indicates the presence of a tradition pertaining to the Adamic breath of life in
Paul’s speech. God gives breath to all, creating and sustaining life on the face of the
earth. This is congenial to the later statement that in God “we live and move and are”

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27 So Christopher R. Seitz, “The Book of Isaiah 40-66,” NIB 6:364. Note that while תְּנַשֶּׁא/πνοή is
used of the breath of life in LXX Gen 2:7, רוח/πνεῦμα is used of the same breath of life in Gen 6:17;
cf. Gen 6:3. MT Gen 7:22 combines the two with נַשָּׁא/πνוֹחַ, though this is rendered simply as πνεῦμα in LXX. Both terms can be used to speak of the animating breath of life in Genesis, so the
synonymous use of both terms in Isa 42:5 does not lessen the echo in any substantial way.

28 Levison discusses these texts in a similar light in Filled with the Spirit, 14-33.

29 Westermann points out that the creation and in-breathing of one man is not present in Isa 42:5,
but maintains that a bestowal of the breath of life on the human race is expressed; Claus
Westermann, Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary (trans. David M. G. Stalker; OTL; Philadelphia:
Westminster Press, 1969; trans. from Das Buch Jesaiah, 40-66; 1st ed.; DATD 19; Göttingen:
(Acts 17:28), and serves Paul’s purposes in dispelling the perception that he is proclaiming “foreign deities (ξένων δαιμονίων)” (Acts 17:18). The God who Paul proclaims is unknown to the Athenians (17:23), but is not foreign, for God sustains their lives and the lives of all who walk on the earth, and is “not far from each one of us” (17:27).

ANTI-IDOL POLEMIC IN ISAIAH

An echo of the first Isaianic servant song is appropriate in Paul’s speech, in part because of Paul’s polemic against idolatry. Paul arrives in Athens unexpectedly, and while he waits for Silas and Timothy (Acts 17:15), his spirit is provoked within him because Athens is full of idols (17:16). This leads him to argue in the synagogues and the agora (17:17), and ultimately brings him to the Areopagus (17:22). In his address at the Areopagus, Paul states that “God…does not live in shrines made by human hands” (17:24), that God does not need service from humans (17:25), and that “we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals” (17:29). There is a strong anti-idol theme throughout the passage, and we can see how Paul’s portrait of God as creator of the world (17:24), giver of breath (17:25), and progenitor of all human nations (17:26-29) essentially serves the purposes of his anti-idol polemic. God does not live in shrines made by human hands (χειροποιητοίς; 17:24b), but rather humans live in a world made by God (ὁ ποιήσας; 17:24a). God does not need any service from human hands (17:25a), but humans need

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God, who gives them life, breath, and everything (17:25b; cf. 17:28a). It is because we are God’s offspring (17:28b-29a) that we should not suppose God is like an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals (17:29b). While Paul says much about God’s creation of the world and sustenance of human life, the primary telos of this material is his argument that idol worship is ignorant (17:30a), and that the Athenians should repent (17:30b).

Isaiah 40-48 represents a key anti-idol polemic of the Old Testament, within which the first servant song (42:1-9) appears. Isaiah 42:1-4 speaks of Israel as the LORD’s servant, upon whom God has put נָחַל (LXX πνεῦμα), in order to bring justice to the nations and win their hope. Verse 42:5 introduces a commissioning statement from the LORD to Israel, which includes bringing Gentiles from darkness to light (42:6-7), rejecting idol worship (42:8), and making new things known (42:9). Paul’s use of Isaiah 42:5 should not be understood merely as the choice of an appropriately concise summary of God’s creation and sustenance of life on earth, but as part of an appeal to idolatrous people on behalf of the creator.

**ISAIAH AND THE MISSION OF PAUL**

The four so-called servant songs of Isaiah are of substantial importance to Luke-Acts. Lukan texts regarding the ministry of Jesus often echo the servant songs,

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31 MT is much more ambiguous about the identity of the servant, but Jacob and Israel are specifically mentioned in LXX Is 42:1.

suggesting that Jesus is identified with the suffering servant,\textsuperscript{33} and especially the servant’s call to be a light to the nations.\textsuperscript{34}

The book of Acts also associates the servant songs with Paul’s mission. In Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas address Jews and Gentiles in Psidian Antioch, and identify their mission to Gentiles with Isaiah 49:6:

[W]e are now turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles (εἰς φῶς ἐθνῶν), so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’ (Acts 13:46-47)

While Isaiah 49:6 is part of the second servant song and Isaiah 42:5 is part of the first, both passages share a common call on the servant to be a light to the nations.\textsuperscript{35} While he does not specifically quote from Isaiah, Paul later speaks of his mission to bring light to the Gentiles again when giving an account of his conversion to King Agrippa in Acts 26. Jesus tells Paul:

I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles (ἐθνῶν) — to whom I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me. (Acts 26:17-18)


\textsuperscript{35} Isa 42:6; 49:6. Note that ἐθνός can potentially be translated “nation” or “Gentile.” NRSV, for instance, translates the word “Gentile” in Acts 13:46-48; 18:6; 26:23; 28:28, but translates it “nation” in Acts 24:10, 17; 28:19. In LXX it typically translates the Hebrew ׃ (e.g. Gen 10:20; Ex 33:13; Esth 3:14) which has the corporate but not the individual meaning (i.e. “nation” but not “Gentile”); BDB 156.
A few verses later, Paul claims that his message is simply a declaration of what Moses and the prophets said would take place:

…that the Messiah must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles (ἔθνεσιν). (Acts 26:23)

Jesus is described as the suffering, anointed one (χριστός; cf. Isa 42:1-4) of the Lord, with a mission to bring light to the nations. In this case, the light is also brought to Paul’s people (i.e. Israel), and comes through Jesus’ distinction as the first to rise from the dead (cf. Acts 17:31-32). Paul’s mission is to declare this message of Jesus’ resurrection to Jews and Gentiles in order to bring about repentance (Acts 26:20), so again we see the importance of the Isaianic servant songs to Paul’s identity and goals.36

In Romans 15:14-21, Paul speaks of his mission to the Gentiles by the grace of God, and quotes specifically from Isaiah 52:15 (the fourth servant song):

I make it my ambition to proclaim the good news, not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on someone else’s foundation, but as it is written, “Those who have never been told of him shall see, and those who have never heard of him shall understand.” (Romans 15:20-21)

While this text does not explicitly mention ἔθνος, this is the clear sense of “those who have not been told,” both in Romans (15:16, 18) and Isaiah (52:15a). This first Pauline epistle thus corroborates the importance of the servant songs to the identity of the Pauline mission, and in particular the servant’s call to be light to the nations.

CONCLUSIONS ON ISAIAH AND PAUL

Acts 17:24-25 bears strong linguistic similarity to Isaiah 42:5, which is consistent both with Paul’s anti-idol polemic and the overall portrait of Paul in Acts as a servant of the LORD, sent as a light to the nations in the footsteps of Jesus. For these reasons it should be seen as a strong intertext in the Pauline address to the Athenians.

In Paul’s address to Athens, the echo of Isaiah 42:5 is especially appropriate because Paul is appealing to the nations at their intellectual center. Though the Athenians would not be able to recognize the biblical allusion, the biblically-informed reader of Acts finds that Paul’s appeal to Athens, and for that matter, the nature of his purpose there, is rooted in biblical prophecy.

THE DESCENT OF MANY FROM ONE IN GENESIS

After describing God’s creation of the world in Acts 17:24-25, Paul says:

From one (ἑνός) [God] made all human nations to dwell upon the whole face of the earth (ἐπὶ παντὸς προσώπου τῆς γῆς). (Acts 17:26a)

The descent of all humanity from one common ancestor naturally evokes the narrative of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2-5. Eve was made from Adam (Gen 2:21-23), and is the “mother of all living” (Gen 3:20), so Adam readily fits the description of the “one” from whom all humanity was made. Likewise, the dwelling of human nations on the earth is reminiscent of the divine commission for humans to “fill the earth” (Gen 1:28; 9:7), the

37 It is worth noting that Paul’s audience includes not only Athenian Greeks, but also “the foreigners living there (οἱ ἐπιδημοῦντες Εἴνοι).” While the context of the speech is Athens, Paul truly does address “the nations” through various intellectual representatives (Acts 17:21).
settling of humans in various lands (Gen 10) and their scattering “upon all the face of the earth” (ἐπὶ πρόσωπος πάσης τῆς γῆς; Gen 11:4, 9). While Isaiah 42:5 makes a more direct intertext for Acts 17:24-25 than does Genesis 2:7, the intertextuality between Acts 17:26 and Genesis complements the reference well in light of the resemblance between Isaiah 42:5 and Genesis 1-2.

CHILDREN OF GOD IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

The Hebrew Bible occasionally uses familial language to express the relationship between God and Israel. In Exodus, the LORD tells Pharaoh to let Israel go out into the desert because “Israel is my firstborn son” (4:22). Hosea likewise says:

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. (Hos 11:1)

Both texts speak of Israel collectively as one child of God, in contexts that emphasize mutual faithfulness between both parties.

Amos speaks of Israel as “the whole family that [the LORD] brought up out of the land of Egypt” (Amos 3:1). The LORD tells them, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (3:2). For Amos, Israel is not one collective child of God, but rather a family uniquely elected by God.

While Exodus, Hosea and Amos use familial language, the notion of a familial relationship between God and Israel serves to set Israel apart from all other peoples.39

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38 The phrase “face of the earth (πρόσωπος πάσης γῆς)” appears many times in Genesis, often pertaining to the inhabited earth as a whole: 2:6; 4:14; 6:7; 7:4, 23; 8:8, 9, 13; 11:4, 8, 9; 19:28; 41:56.

39 Peterson identifies these texts, along with Rom 9:4 and Gal 4:1-5, as examples of familial language used to express Israel’s distinctive relationship with God; David Peterson, The Acts of...
Paul’s claim that “we also are [God’s] children” (Acts 17:28b) actually serves the opposite purpose, unifying all nations in their common descent from God (17:26). There is a fair amount of tension, then, between the familial language of the Hebrew Scriptures and Paul’s claims about God’s nearness to all humans (17:27).

CONCLUSION TO PART I

While Genesis 2:7 bears similarity to Acts 17:24-25, Isaiah 42:5 serves as a better intertext because of linguistic connections, consistency in the context of anti-idol polemic, and the importance of the Isaianic servant songs to the mission of Paul in Acts and his letters. The text expresses God’s creation of the world and the giving of breath to all who live on the earth, and thus serves as a pneumatological point of continuity between the Old and New Testaments, along the lines suggested by Macchia, though with respect to a text he does not explicitly mention: Isaiah 40-48. While Levison accurately identifies Isaiah 42:1ff as an example of a special spiritual anointing,40 he neglects to address the presence of the universal, creational pneumatology in Isaiah 42:5, which may in turn have led him to give more attention to Acts 17:24-25 as a point of pneumatological continuity between the testaments.

Paul’s description of the descent of all human nations from one ancestor (Acts 17:26) readily recalls the expansion of human settlement in Genesis 1-11, which

the Apostles (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 500. Rom 9:4 says that God’s adoption belongs to Israel. In Gal 4:1-5 Paul says that “we” received adoption as God’s children when the fullness of time had come.

40 Levison, Filled, 44, 242, 246.
complements the creational pneumatology of Isaiah. While this connection is consistent
with Macchia’s argument for continuity between the testaments, we must also note the
lack of similarity between the Hebrew Bible and Paul’s claim that all humans are God’s
children (17:28). While Paul’s speech contains biblical elements, this particular element
cannot be fully attributed to Old Testament thought.

PART II: POINTS OF CONTACT BETWEEN HELLENISM AND THE ATHENIAN
ADDRESS

Writing in 1939, Martin Dibelius called Paul’s Athenian address “as alien to the
New Testament...as it is familiar to Hellenistic, particularly Stoic, philosophy.”41 While
Dibelius’ claim has since been seriously challenged by other scholars,42 it serves to
underscore the reality that Paul speech in Athens is particularly oriented around the
interests of its pagan Greek audience in a way that other speeches in Acts are typically
not.43 As we might expect, there are significant points of contact between known
Hellenistic texts and Paul’s speech.

London: SCM Press, 1956; trans. from Aufsätze Zur Apostelgeschichte; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and
Ruprecht, 1956), 63.

42 For a description of the most relevant sources, see Haenchen, Acts, 527-529.

43 Paul’s speech at Lystra in Acts 14:15-17 is routinely identified as a passage similar to Acts 17:22-
31 in its orientation around a pagan rather than Jewish audience. E.g. Dibelius, Studies, 63.
THE GIVING OF LIFE IN OVID

Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* bears some resemblance to the giving of life and breath by God in Acts 17:25b. Deucalion, son of the Titan Prometheus, survives a flood that wipes out all human life. He cries out:

Oh, would that by my father’s arts I might restore the nations, and pour *(infundere)* – as he did – life *(animas)* into the moulded clay. *(Metam. 1.363-64)*

Prometheus, who first formed humanity from earth and water (1.76-86), is said to have poured life into the first humans, presumably making them alive. The function of infusing *anima* approximates the breath of life – it is an animating principle that makes the difference between clay and a living human being. However, there are a few noteworthy differences between the giving of life in Ovid and the giving of life in Acts 17:25. While it is the creator God who gives life in Paul’s speech, it is Prometheus – a Titan rather than a proper god – who does the animating in Ovid. Prometheus’ giving of life is also a one-time occurrence. The event of which Deucalion speaks is in the past, and he wishes it could be repeated in his present situation. On the other hand, the present participle *διδοὺς* in Acts 17:25b suggests a perpetual giving. God does not cease to give life and breath any more than God ceases from being Lord *(ὑπάρχων κύριος; Acts 17:25a)*. While there are other known examples of the giving of life in Greco-Roman mythology,⁴¹ they occur in texts dated to the second century or later,⁴² so we will

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not give them consideration here as a background for Acts. This leaves us with one very imperfect match between Acts 17:25 and Greco-Roman mythology.

THE DESCENT OF MANY FROM ONE IN THE MYTHOLOGY OF PANDORA AND PROMETHEUS

Paul’s description of God’s making of all nations from one ancestor (Acts 17:26), while it has a clear biblical referent in Adam, does not have as clear an equivalent in Greco-Roman mythology. The closest figure would be Pandora, the first woman from whom all other women are descended (Hesiod, *Theog.*, 590). However, Hesiod is clear that there was already a race of men living on the earth when Pandora was made (*Theog.* 592), so Pandora does not represent a progenitrix for all humanity, but rather the introduction of women into human existence. Likewise, in Pseudo-Apollodorus and Pseudo-Hyginus, it is humans, not a human, who are created from water and earth (*Lib.* 1.7.1; *Fab.* 142). Later texts about human creation confirm that Greco-Roman mythology typically conceives of the creation of a race of people rather than one common ancestor.46

The initial formation of humanity in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (1.76-86) refers to the establishment of “human” in the singular (*homo* – *Metam.* 1.78; *hominī* – *Metam.* 1.85), but it is ambiguous whether the text refers to the creation of a single initial human or the

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45 More detail on the development of mythology related to Prometheus, Athena and Pandora can be found in the appendix.

46 Cf. Lucian, *Lit. Prom.* 3; *Prom. on Cauc.* 13; *Et. Mag.* (s.v. Ἴκόνιον). Cf. also the re-creation the human race after Deucalion’s flood in Ovid, *Metam.* 1.395-415.
initiation of humanity.\textsuperscript{47} The text certainly does not speak explicitly of the descent of all other people from one common ancestor, and thus is only marginally related to Acts 17:26, where it is the descent of the various nations from one person that receives focus.

THE ANTI-TEMPLE AND ANTI-IDOL TEACHING OF THE STOICS

Paul states that God “does not live in temples made by human hands” (Acts 17:25), an idea which has precedent in Stoic and other Hellenistic philosophy.\textsuperscript{48} While none of Zeno’s writings survive, Diogenes Laertius says that Zeno’s Republic “prohibits the building of temples, law courts and gymnasia” (DL 7.33). Diogenes does not explain Zeno’s reasoning, but some insight is available through Plutarch, who criticizes Stoics for affirming Zeno’s teaching yet participating in aspects of the temple cult anyway.

[I]t is a doctrine of Zeno’s not to build temples of the gods, because a temple not worth much is not sacred and no work of builders or mechanics is worth much. (\textit{Mor.} 1034B=SVF 1.264)

A fragment of Seneca expresses a similar thought regarding idols:

They supplicate them with bended knee…and while they look up to these so much they contemn the laborers who made them. (\textit{Frg.} 120=Lactantius, \textit{Div. Inst.} 2.2.14)

\textsuperscript{47} Miller translates these as “man” in the sense of humanity; Frank J. Miller, trans. \textit{Metamorphoses} (LCL; London: W. Heinemann, 1916), 9.

\textsuperscript{48} We will not be able to cover all relevant Hellenistic texts here, but have chosen several Stoic texts to serve as an example. A more comprehensive handling of relevant texts can be found in Dibelius, \textit{Studies}, 41-45 and Gärtnert, \textit{Natural Revelation}, 203-228.
While Zeno denies the value of temples, Seneca denies the value of idols. Both base their position on a low estimation of the value of the human producers of the idols, which bears some resemblance to Paul’s claim that the creator God does not dwell in temples made by human hands. It should not surprise us that Paul would say things consistent with Stoic thought, since his audience includes Stoic philosophers (Acts 17:18) and he quotes from Aratus in Acts 17:28. However, we may note that Paul’s anti-idol polemic has a significant difference in that it does not cite human inferiority, but rather divine superiority as justification. For Paul, God’s not dwelling in structures made by humans is predicated on humans’ dwelling in a world made by God.

GOD’S LACK OF NEED IN SENeca

Paul says in Acts 17:25a that God is “[not] served by human hands, as though he needed anything (προσδεόμενός τινος).” Dibelius calls God’s lack of need “a departure from Old Testament ways of thought,” since the Hebrew Bible does not contain any explicit mention of the idea. The statement does, however, bear a strong resemblance to a passage from one of Seneca’s epistles:

49 Of course, both texts come through non-Stoic authors, and we cannot be certain that they portray the Stoics’ positions accurately. This is especially true of Plutarch, who summarizes rather than quotes.

50 Dibelius, Studies, 42.


52 Again, we will not be able to cover the notion of divine self-sufficiency in Hellenistic writings comprehensively, but will use Seneca as an example. For a more thorough handling of relevant texts, see Dibelius, Studies, 41-45 and Gärtner, Natural Revelation, 203-228.
God seeks no servants. Of course not; he himself does service to humankind, everywhere and to all he is at hand to help. (Ep. mor. 95.48)

The statements made by Paul and Seneca sound similar, but there are some key differences to how they function within their larger context. While Paul’s statement appears in the context of creation material (17:24, 26), Seneca does not mention any sort of creation, describing instead God’s sovereign involvement in the lives of mortals (Ep. mor. 95.48-49). While Paul presents a clearly monotheistic notion of God, Seneca switches between speaking of “God (deus)” and “gods (deos),” evidently regarding multiple deities. While Paul’s aim is to refute idolatry, Seneca seeks to discourage unnecessary cultic practices – such as bringing mirrors to Juno (Ep. mor. 95.48) – since the gods are sufficiently worshipped through reverence and imitation (Ep. mor. 95.50).

Seneca uses the sovereignty of the gods to refute the notion that the gods need to be served by mortals, while Paul uses the claim that God is creator and ruler of heaven and earth to show that humans should not craft shrines and idols at all. As with our examples of Stoic anti-idol teaching, Paul claim about God’s lack of need proceeds from God’s creation of the world and sustenance of life within it.

CHILDREN OF GOD IN ARATUS AND CLEANTHES

After stating in Acts 17:27 that God is “not far (μάκρων) from each one of us,”53 Paul justifies his claim with the citation of Hellenistic poets: “as even some of your own

53 The notion of the nearness of God (and even that God is “not far”) has biblical, Hellenistic Jewish and Stoic precedent. Cf. Isa 55:6; Ps 145:18; Philo, Spec. Leg. 1.30-31 (quoting Deut 4:4); Josephus, Ant. 8.4.2; Seneca, Ep. mor. 41:1; 95.47-50. Pervo, Acts, 434, 438.
poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’” 54 This is a direct quotation from the Aratus of Soli, a disciple of the Stoic Zeno. 55 Paul’s quotation is part of a longer proem to Aratus’ Phaenomena, which is generally congenial to the Athenian address:

Let us begin with Zeus, whom we men never leave unspoken. Filled with Zeus are all highways and all meeting-places of people, filled are the sea and harbours; in all circumstances we are all dependent on Zeus. For we are also his children (τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος εἰμέν), and he benignly gives helpful signs to men, and rouses people to work, reminding them of their livelihood (βιότοιο), tells when the soil is best for oxen and mattocks, and tells when the seasons (ʔώραι) are right both for planting trees and for sowing every kind of seed. (Phaenomena 1-9)

Aratus speaks of Zeus as present in all things, and people as dependent on him. The notion that humans are children of Zeus, expressed in verse five (and quoted by Paul),

54 This is actually preceded in Acts 17:28a by the phrase, “In him we live and move and have our being (ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζωὴν καὶ κινοῦμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν),” and while this text is important to Macchia’s reading (Justified, 33, 121, 197), its background is not completely clear. It has often been taken as a quotation of a lost text from Epimenides of Crete (J. Rendel Harris, “A Further Note on the Cretans,” The Expositor 7.16 (April, 1907): 332-37; Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, English Translation and Commentary (vol. 4; of The Beginnings of Christianity: Part I: The Acts of the Apostles; ed. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake; London: Macmillan and Co., LTD, 1933), 217; Marshall, Acts, 289), but much Acts scholarship does not accept this claim based on a lack of hard evidence (John B. Polhill, Acts (NAC 26; Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 375-76; Darrell L. Bock, Acts (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 568. Dibelius accepted this claim in his 1939 essay but later renounced it; Studies, 18, 50). The text does not have a recognized biblical precedent, but the ἐν is generally thought to be instrumental (Robert W. Wall, “Acts,” NIB 10 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001), 247; Pervo, Acts, 438), in which case the statement is consistent in character with the quotation from Aratus (see below), having to do with God’s provision for and sustenance of human life.

has everything to do with the reliance of mortals on Zeus's assistance in the process of obtaining livelihood (βιός).\textsuperscript{56}

The phrase Paul uses also closely resembles a statement in Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus, which says: “from you we have our being” (ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ γένος ἔσμέν; Hymn to Zeus 4=Clement, Strob. Ecl. 1.1.12). In Cleanthes’ poem, humans are again referred to as the offspring of Zeus, but this time the sense is much stronger that Zeus is the origin of human life as active principle in the world (φύσεως ἀρχηγέ; 2), of whom humans are an image (μίμημα; 4). Both Aratus’ and Cleanthes’ texts have relevance for Paul’s statements about the nearness of God (17:26-27), though they are not in their original contexts consistent with Paul’s appeal to God’s identity as creator of the world (17:24-26a).

CONCLUSION TO PART II

The mythology of Prometheus includes the formation and enlivening of the earliest humans as a one-time occurrence rather than as an ongoing provision (Ovid, Metam. 1.363-64). All women are said to be descended from Pandora (Hesiod, Theog., 590), but she is not the progenitor of all humanity, since men already populated the earth (Theog. 592). Though these mythological texts bears some resemblance to the giving of life in Acts 17:25 and the descent of all humans from one ancestor in Acts 17:26,

\textsuperscript{56} Kidd (Aratus, 161) states that Zeus is called father because Zeus is the origin of life, but this does not seem to be supported by the text. Perhaps more accurately, Zeus’ fatherhood is an expression of the idea that Zeus is the origin of life, but life in the sense of βιός rather than ζωή. LN 260, 505, 558.
we must conclude that Isaiah 42:5 and Genesis 1-11 make for much closer precedents, both linguistically and conceptually.

While the Stoic teachings of Zeno and Seneca bear resemblance to Paul’s claims that God is not served by human hands, does not live in structures, and is not like an idol (Acts 17:24b-25a, 29), their claims are not anchored in God’s identity as creator of the world, and do not serve the same purposes. While we must recognize with both Dibelius and Gärtner that Paul’s claims along these lines have Hellenistic philosophical background,\textsuperscript{57} we should also be mindful that God’s identity as creator is central to Paul’s discourse in a way that is not reflected in the Stoic texts we have considered.

The most direct connection between Paul’s address and known Hellenistic literature is Aratus’ \textit{Phaenomena}, from which Paul quotes explicitly (Acts 17:28b=\textit{Phaen.} 5). Paul’s use of familial language to express God’s nearness to all people does seem to be rooted in Hellenistic rather than Old Testament thought, though Paul links this to God’s identity as creator where Aratus does not.

\textbf{PART III: POINTS OF CONTACT BETWEEN HELLENISTIC JUDAISM AND THE ATHENIAN ADDRESS}

While there are significant points of contact between Acts 17 and various Greco-Roman texts, there are a number of Hellenistic Jewish texts which match elements of the passage even more closely than non-Jewish texts, and at times even more closely than the relevant Old Testament texts.

\textsuperscript{57} Dibelius, \textit{Studies}, 42; Gärtner, \textit{Natural Revelation}, 218.
ANTI-IDOL POLEMIC IN THE LETTER OF ARISTEAS

While Isaiah 42:5 is strongly echoed in Acts 17:24-25, and while the intertext is appropriate in light of the anti-idol polemic of both texts, it should be noted that there is a key difference between these passages. While Paul speaks against idolatry to Gentiles, the anti-idol polemic of Isaiah 40-48 is addressed almost exclusively to the people of Israel.58 The portrait of God as creator of the universe and sustainer of life in Isa 42:5 is addressed to a people who already have a covenant relationship with God, while the Athenian address is an appeal to the nations on behalf of the creator and sustainer of life.59

The Letter of Aristeas, written in the second or third century B.C.E.,60 includes an appeal to Gentiles on behalf of the creator God,61 coupled with anti-idol polemic. The letter narrates a visit from Aristeas and some Greek companions to the high priest Eleazar. In response to one of their questions, Eleazar explains:

that God is one; that his power is revealed universally, every place being filled with his sovereignty; that no secret, human, earthly activity escapes

58 The one potential exception is the address to the coastlands in Isa 41:1-7, which includes a reference to an artisan and a goldsmith in 41:7. While these trades are associated with idol production elsewhere in Isa 40-48 (see 40:19-20; 44:11; 46:6), no mention of idolatry is specifically made in Isa 41, leaving the reference a bit ambiguous. It is at least generally true that the anti-idol material of Isa 40-48 is directed towards Jews.

59 It should be noted that all discussion of a text’s audience here pertains to the implied audience.


his notice but all human deeds and all future events are revealed to him.

(Aris. 132)

This bears a strong conceptual resemblance to Paul’s statements that the creation is organized so as to reveal the creator and that God is “not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:26-27). Eleazar’s initial statement in 132 is followed by a polemic against idolatry (Aris. 134-151), in which he states that pagans make idols, products of human invention, of stone and wood (Aris. 135-136; cf. Acts 17:29). The idolaters’ major error consists in their attempt to deify created things, which are their equals (Aris. 136). The implication is that only the creator – who sovereignly fills every place and supervises all human actions (Aris. 132) – is worthy of worship.

The most overt appeal for common ground between Jews and Greeks comes at the letter’s opening, when Aristeas claims before the king that they and the Jews worship the same God by different names:

They worship the same God - the Lord and creator of the universe, as all other men, as we ourselves, O King, though we call him by different names, such as Zeus and Dis. This name was very appropriately bestowed upon him by our first ancestors, in order to signify that He through whom all things are endowed with life and come into being (ζωοποιοῦνται τὰ πάντα καὶ γίνεται), is necessarily the ruler and Lord (κυριεύειν) of the universe. (Aris. 16)

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62 Aristeas 190 likewise speaks of God as the sustainer of the human race, “providing them with health and food and everything else (τὰ λοιπὰ) in due season.”

Again, God is identified as creator and maker of life. Ζωοποιέω does not appear in the Septuagint, but does appear in a number of New Testament texts, often in the context of explicit contrast between life and death. The sense of the word would seem to imply something similar to the animating breath of life of Genesis 2:7, though Aristeas does not use the language of in-breathing. Even though the only point of common language between the texts is the use of ζω- words, it would seem that Aristeas reflects a notion of human creation similar to the breath of life of Genesis 2:7, which makes the difference between inanimate matter and a living creature.

This passage is not so much anti-idolatry as an appeal for Greek acknowledgement of the God of the Jews, who is the same God the Greeks call Zeus. Likewise Paul, speaking of the unknown god altar, implies that the God he proclaims is also worshipped by the Athenians – “What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you” (Acts 17:23). Like Paul, Aristeas couples God’s identity as creator of

64 Jn 5:21, 6:63; Rom 4:17; 8:11; 1 Cor 15:22, 36, 45; 2 Cor 3:6; Gal 3:21; 1 Pet 3:18.

65 Jn 5:21, Rom 4:17; 8:11; 1 Cor 15:22, 36; 2 Cor 3:6; 1 Pet 3:18.


67 It should be noted that in both Aristeas and Acts 17, the appeal is for Gentile recognition that the God of the Jews (or Paul) is already known to and worshipped by the Gentiles. The goal is for Gentiles to recognize the validity of Jewish/Pauline religion, not for Jews to recognize the validity of Gentile worship. Barclay demonstrates this in detail regarding Aristeas; John M. G. Barclay, Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE) (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996), 143-150. Likewise, while Paul lends some validity to Athenian culture (Acts 17:23, 28), his goal is ultimately for the Athenians to turn from idols to the God who raised Jesus from the dead (17:30-31). The Athenians worship God “in ignorance (ἀγνοοῦντες)” (17:23b, 30a), while Paul proclaims the truth (17:23b) in order that they would repent (17:30b).
the universe with God’s lordship of the universe (κυριεύειν - Aris. 16; ὑπάρχων κύριος - Acts 17:24). We may also note the similarity between ζωοποιοῦνται τὰ πάντα (Aris. 16) and διδοὺς πάσι ζωὴν (Acts 17:25), and perhaps even between καὶ γίνεται (Aris. 16) and καὶ ἐσμέν (Acts 17:28). Though the linguistic similarities are too faint to allow a claim that Paul alludes to Aristeas in Acts 17:22-31, it can be seen as a conceptual precedent within Hellenistic Judaism, where divine creation and rule of the universe, divine sustenance of life on earth, and anti-idol polemic are combined with an appeal to Gentiles on behalf of the God of the Jews.

ANTI-IDOL POLEMIC IN WISDOM OF SOLOMON

Wisdom of Solomon includes another polemic against idolatry, spanning chapters 13-15, which employs creational themes, particularly the Adamic in-breathing, and shares significant common language with Acts 17:22-31.

The Sage criticizes as fools those who pay heed to created things but fail to acknowledge their creator (Wis 13:1-5). Such people go astray while seeking and desiring to find God (ζητοῦντες καὶ θέλοντες εὑρεῖν; 13:6). Likewise, Paul says that God appoints the times and boundaries of the existence of nations (Acts 17:26) “so that they would search for (ζητεῖν)...and find (εὑροεῖν) [God]” (17:27). In both texts, ζητέω and εὑρίσκω describe the search for God by people living within God’s creation.

In Wis 13:10-19, the Sage turns his polemic more squarely and specifically against the use of idols:

But miserable, with their hopes set on dead things, are those who give the name “gods” to the works of human hands,
gold and silver fashioned with skill,
and likenesses of animals,
or a useless stone, the work of an ancient hand. (Wis 13:10)

Idols are dead and unworthy of devotion because they are the work of human hands
(ἐργα χειρών ἄνθρωπων), fashioned by human skill (τέχνης) from gold (χρυσὸν),
silver (ἀργυρον) and stone (λίθον). Likewise, Paul tells the Athenians, “we ought not to
think that the deity is like gold (χρυσῷ), or silver (ἀργυρῷ), or stone (λίθῳ), an image
formed by the art (τέχνης) and imagination of mortals (ἀνθρώπου)” (17:29). Both
verses use the same three materials – gold, silver, and stone – in the same order,68 and
also speak of human skill as inadequate for the creation of a god. Both passages also
have as a broader theme the inadequacy of that which is made by human hands
(χειροποίητος – Wis 14:8; Acts 17:24; ἄνθρωπων χειρών – Wis 13:10b; Acts 17:25; cf.
Wis 13:10e; 15:17). In addition to common language, Paul and the Sage have
complementary statements at the conceptual level. While the Sage points out that the
idol is inadequate because it needs help from humans (Wis 13:15-16), Paul makes it clear
that God does not need anything (Acts 17:25a). The idol is dead (Wis 13:1, 10, 18; 15:5,
17), while God gives life to all (Acts 17:25b).

The Sage goes on to describe a potter who fashions vessels out of clay, for both
clean and unclean use. The destination of a vessel is not dependant on any trait of the
clay, but rather on the decision of the potter (Wis 15:7) – as it were, the potter is
sovereign over the clay forms. Such a potter then fashions a god from some of the clay –

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68 This connection is made by Gärtner, *Natural Revelation*, 220.
a preposterous act, since potters are themselves mortals made of earth (15:8). The potter fails to recognize God’s sovereignty over their own life and death; their work is vain because:

they failed to know the one who formed them  
and inspired them with active souls  
and breathed a living spirit into them. (Wis 15:11)

Recapitulating Genesis 2:7, the Sage describes God as the creator of life, who gives breath and takes it away. For a potter to worship a god of their own creation is to not know (ἀγνοέω, cf. Acts 17:23, 30) the God who formed them, who inspired them with an active soul (ἐμπνεύσαντα αὐτῷ ψυχὴν ἐνεργοῦσαν), and who breathed a living spirit (ἐμφυσήσαντα πνεῦμα ζωτικόν) into them. An idol is dead because it is made by the hands of a human being (Wis 15:16-17; cf. Acts 17:24, 29), whose spirit (πνεῦμα) is borrowed.

The Sage does make some significant modifications to Genesis 2:7. Whereas the first human of Genesis became (ἐγένετο) a living soul (ψυχὴν ζωσάν), an active soul (ψυχὴν ἐνεργοῦσαν) is one of the things in-breathed (ἐμπνέω) in Wisdom of Solomon. In a Hellenistic context, it is easier to speak of a person having a soul than becoming one.⁶⁹ The Sage describes a borrowed soul (cf. Wis 15:8) that God puts into a mortal body through in-breathing.⁷⁰

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⁷⁰ David Winston, The Wisdom of Solomon (AB 43; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1979), 286-287; John R. Levison, Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988), 53. Gilbert lists many similar texts and argues that the notion of borrowed soul is
The active soul is accompanied by the in-breathing (ἐμφυσάω, as in Gen 2:7) of a living spirit (πνεύμα ζωτικόν), whereas in Genesis it is the breath of life (πνοήν ζωής). Where Genesis has πνοή, Wisdom has πνεύμα, and where ζωή appears as a genitive of purpose in Genesis it appears in Wisdom as an adjective describing the πνεύμα. The same phrase occurs in Alexandrian medical terminology, and would be consistent with a notion of soul or spirit as an element independent of the body but dwelling within the body. However, the verse remains consistent with Genesis 2:7 in the essential truth that the in-breathing of God makes a God-formed object into a living being.

The Sage’s language is reflective of a Hellenistic milieu that is not shared by Genesis 2:7. Nonetheless, his use of in-breathing in the anti-idol polemic of Wisdom 13-


71 ζωής in Gen 2:7 is most naturally read as a genitive of purpose because it’s effect is to make the clay human into a ψυχήν ζωής. An analogous statement could be made about the Hebrew grammar of the MT, where חייו נשמת appears as a construct chain and results in the human becoming a חיה נפש.


73 Levison, Portraits, 53. The parallel grammar of Wis 15:11b-c would call for the two in-breathing phrases to be read as mutually-glossing explanations of the same animating principle. Cf. Ernest G. Clarke, The Wisdom of Solomon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 101; Gilbert, 213. Reese, however, takes πνεύμα and ψυχή as two separate components of a tri-partite human makeup, as can be found expressed in 1 Thess 5:23; Influence, 84. Josephus, Ant. 1.1.2 is a much clearer example of a restatement of Gen 2:7 where πνεύμα and ψυχή are reinterpreted as two aspects of the human makeup that are inserted (ἐνέβησα) into the body. Josephus uses only one verb and does not incorporate any obvious parallelism. Cf. Louis H. Feldman, Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary (vol. 3 of Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary; ed. Steve Mason; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 13.
15 is consistent with Paul’s Athenian speech in that the production of idols is portrayed as ignorant, and this claim is based on God’s identity as the giver of life.

*Wisdom of Solomon* 13-15, especially 13:10 and 15:11, makes for a key intertext with Paul’s anti-idol polemic in Acts 17:24-29, where the maker of the world (17:24), in whom we live and move and have our being (17:28; cf. 17:25), is elevated over figures made by human hands (17:24-25).

**GOD’S LACK OF NEED IN JOSEPHUS AND SECOND AND THIRD MACCABEES**

While Seneca expresses the notion that God does not seek servants, God’s lack of need is also present in a number of Hellenistic Jewish texts. In the eighth book of *Antiquities*, Josephus describes the dedication of Solomon’s temple. Solomon extends his hands to the temple and blesses it, beginning with the following words:

> It is not possible for humans by their works to do God a favor, for the sake of the good things they have experienced. For the Deity requires nothing at all (ἀπροσδείης) and is superior to any sort of recompense. But…it is necessary for us to praise your majesty and thank you for your benefits to our house and the people of the Hebrews. (*Ant.* 8.4.3)

In the context of the temple cult, Josephus affirms that God is not in need of anything, but rather gives to humanity without the possibility of being repaid. Thanks and praise

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24 Book eight of *Antiquities* is essentially a paraphrase of 1 Kgs 2:13-22:40//2 Chr 1-18. While *Ant.* 8.4.2-3 corresponds fairly well to 1 Kgs 8:10-43//2 Chr 5:11-6:33, the passage quoted here is quite different from the MT and LXX which are essentially consistent:

> O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart (1 Kgs 8:23//2 Chr 6:14)

do not benefit God, but are appropriate because of God’s blessings on Israel. Solomon is not under the impression that the temple serves God (cf. Acts 17:25a), nor that the God can adequately inhabit it (this is stated later in Ant. 8.4.3; cf. Acts 17:24b), but rather recognizes it as a benefit to the Hebrew people.

In Second Maccabees, Nicanor threatens to level the temple and build one to Dionysus in its place (2 Macc 14:33). Once Nicanor departs, the priests extend their hands toward heaven (2 Macc 14:34) and call upon God:

O Lord of all, though you have need (ἀπροσδεής) of nothing, you were pleased that there should be a temple for your habitation among us (2 Macc 14:35)

Again, the temple is not thought to serve any need of God’s, but rather serves to benefit the covenant people as a means of God’s habitation among them.

Third Maccabees contains a similar statement, with a stronger creational motif. Amidst trial and tribulation of political conflict, the high priest Simon extends his hands toward the sanctuary of the temple and blesses the Lord of all creation (3 Macc 2:2), saying:

You, O King, when you had created the boundless and immeasurable earth, chose this city and sanctified this place for your name, though you have no need (ἀπροσδεεί) of anything (3 Macc 2:9)

Again, the creator of the world requires nothing from the created. Rather, the temple is a sign of God’s faithfulness to Israel and a place where their prayers are heard (3 Macc 2:10-11).
While Seneca’s claim that God seeks no servants sounds similar to Paul’s claim that God is not served by human hands, the assertions of Second and Third Maccabees and Josephus have the added similarity that they pertain, implicitly or explicitly, to the creator God of Judaism.\textsuperscript{75} These texts, especially Third Maccabees, which along with Paul is explicitly creational (3 Macc 2:9; Acts 17:24-25), bear an even closer similarity to Paul’s claims in Acts 17:24b-25a than does Seneca.\textsuperscript{76}

THE USE OF ARATUS BY PSEUDO-ARISTOBULUS

While Acts 17:28b is a clear appeal by Paul to Hellenistic philosophy, even this has a precedent in Hellenistic Judaism. The pseudepigraphal Aristobulus\textsuperscript{77} also quotes Phaenomena 1-9 as part of an argument that Greek writers actually speak of the God of the Jews, though they use the name Zeus:

And Aratus also speaks about the same things thus: “Let us begin with God…we are all his children…” I believe that it has been clearly shown how the power of God is throughout all things. And we have given the true sense, as one must, by removing the (name) Zeus throughout the verses. For their intention refers to God, therefore it was so expressed by us. (Fragment 4:6-7 = Eusebius, Praep. Evang. 13.13.6-7)

\textsuperscript{75} Additional parallels can be found in Philo, Det. 54-56; Deus Imm. 56.

\textsuperscript{76} It should be noted, however, that none of the texts in this section reflect the giving of life and breath that Paul expresses is Acts 17:25b.

\textsuperscript{77} Five fragments of Aristobulus are quoted in the works of Eusebius. Aristobulus dedicates his work to Ptolemy (Fragment 3:1 = Praep. Evang. 13.12.1), and the second book of Maccabees refers to Aristobulus as Ptolemy’s teacher and a member of the priestly family (2 Macc 1:10). The fragments are typically dated to the middle of the (second century B.C.E.) and represent an attempt to reconcile Jewish tradition and Hellenistic philosophy by showing that the philosophers made use of the books of Moses. A. Yarbo Collins, “Aristobulus,” The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (ed. James H. Charlesworth, vol. 2; New York: Doubleday, 1985), 831-836.
Pseudo-Aristobulus appeals to Aratus’ poem, indicating that what is said of Zeus is actually true of God (i.e. the God of Moses; 4:3), particularly that God’s power is throughout all things. This particular concept is not overly important to Aristobulus’ theology, but rather serves as one of several examples proving that the philosophers agree: “it is necessary to hold holy opinions concerning God” (Frag. 4:8). Aristobulus’ use of Aratus, like Paul’s, serves as part of an appeal to an implied Hellenistic audience by establishing common ground between Hellenistic philosophy and Jewish monotheism.79

RESURRECTION AS THE GIVING BACK OF LIFE AND BREATH IN SECOND MACCABEES

In the second book of Maccabees, a mother and her seven sons are arrested and tortured for their refusal to forsake God’s law (7:1-41). Despite the gruesome punishments exacted on their bodies, the family remains faithful, each in turn expressing their confidence that they will receive their bodies anew through a posthumous resurrection.80

78 Pseudo-Aristobulus uses other key Greek philosophers alongside Aratus, including Plato and Pythagoras (Frag. 3, 4), Orpheus (Frag. 4), Homer and Hesiod (Frag. 5), arguing that they crafted their own philosophical writings from the Mosaic Scriptures (Frag. 4:4). Collins, “Aristobulus,” 831. In the case of Aratus, Pseudo-Aristobulus attempts to show that Isaiah 66:1 and Phaenomena 1-9 share the same concepts about God’s pervasive presence in creation. Frag. 4:5.

79 While Pseudo-Aristobulus uses philosophical texts corroborate the Hebrew Scriptures, Paul is not explicit in his quotation of Scripture, and rather uses elements of Hellenism to corroborate his proclamation about God.

80 Other than Dan 12:2-3, this text is thought to be the earliest known expression of a Jewish hope for life after death; Peter F. Ellis, Jeremiah, Baruch (CBC 14; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press,
The key point of connection between 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 17 occurs when the mother gives a word of encouragement to her suffering sons:

I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath (τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὴν ζωὴν), nor I who set in order the elements within each of you. Therefore the creator of the world (τοῦ κόσμου), who formed the family of humanity and of all things (πλάσας ἀνθρώπου γένεσιν καὶ πάντων), will in his mercy give breath and life back (τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὴν ζωὴν... ἀποδίδωσιν) to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws. (7:22-23)

Here the giving of τὸ πνεῦμα and τὴν ζωὴν expresses both the initial impartation of life at birth (7:22) and the return of life through resurrection (7:23). The old and new creations are united, and God is recognized as sovereign over both. Though Acts 17:25 speaks of God “διδοὺς...ζωὴν καὶ πνοὴν” rather than “τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὴν ζωὴν...ἀποδίδοσιν,” the similarity remains striking, especially given the importance of resurrection in Acts 17:16-34. Both texts also use forms of ὁ κόσμος to refer to God’s...

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1986), 122. While Wright understands this as a future earthly resurrection (N. T. Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God (vol. 3 of Christian Origins and the Question of God; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 150; cf. 4 Macc 18:17), it should be noted that the text is not so precise, and it could be understood in a more abstract sense (see Jan Willem van Henten, The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees (Leiden, New York, and Köln: Brill, 1997), 175-184; cf. 4 Macc 7:19; 17:17-18).

81 The connection between Acts 17:25 and 2 Macc 7:22-23 is noted by Lake (Acts, 215), Conzelmann (Acts, 142), and Barrett (Acts, 841), but none of these go further than to state the presence of an intertext. Πνοή and πνεῦμα are relatively interchangeable in LXX, appearing in parallel in Job 4:9; 27:3; 32:8; 33:4; 34:14; Isa 42:5; 57:16. Both words can refer to breath as animating principle (πνοή - Gen 2:7; 7:22; Job 27:3; 32:8; 33:4; 37:10; Isa 42:5; πνεῦμα - Gen 6:3; Ps 51:10-12; 104:29-30; Job 12:10; Eccl 3:19-21; 12:7; Tob 3:6; Bar 2:17; TAbr 1 17:3; TGad 5:9), Josephus replaces πνοή with πνεῦμα when paraphrasing Gen 2:7 (Ant 1.1.2), and the Sage uses πνεῦμα in recapitulation of Gen 2:7 (Wis 15:11). Dibelius and Bruce claim that πνοὴν is used in Acts 17:25 for the sake of assonance with ζωὴν. Dibelius, Studies, 46; F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 382.
creation (2 Macc 7:22; Acts 17:24), both refer to the descent of humanity by divine facilitation (2 Macc 7:23; Acts 17:26, 28), and both use the masculine plural of πᾶς to refer to creatures in the world (2 Macc 7:22; Acts 17:25).

The same concept is expressed with roughly the same language again in Second Maccabees, when more than five hundred soldiers are sent to arrest a Jewish elder named Razis (14:37-46). Razis commits suicide to avoid capture by the soldiers, calling upon “the Lord of life (τῆς ζωῆς) and breath (τοῦ πνεύματος)” to give them back (ἀποδίδωμι) to him again (14:46). Once more, the giving back of life and breath is used to describe a posthumous resurrection.

The echoes of 2 Maccabees in Acts 17:22-28 imply a connection between the God-given breath of 17:25 and the theme of resurrection in 17:18, 31-32. The giving of life and breath in Paul’s speech serves not only to challenge idolatry, but also to undergird Paul’s presentation of Jesus’ resurrection. The same God who gives life and breath to all can give them back to one.

The echoes also underscore the influence of Hellenistic Judaism in Paul’s Athenian speech. While the resurrection of Jesus is a uniquely Christian element in the passage, the general concept of bodily resurrection, while quite foreign to the Athenians (Acts 17:32; cf. 17:18), does have precedent in Hellenistic Jewish literature.

While Pervo calls Paul’s use of κόσμος “one concession to Greek philosophical language” in Acts 17:24 (Acts, 434), the intertext between 2 Macc 7:22-23 and Acts 17:24-25 qualifies such a claim. Paul’s use of κόσμος may just as easily be due to the influence of 2 Macc 7 as to the influence of Greek philosophy.

THE PROMINENCE OF THE BREATH OF LIFE IN OTHER HELLENISTIC JEWISH TEXTS

Some additional texts deserve mention in order to demonstrate that the notion of the breath of life is generally prominent in Hellenistic Jewish texts. Ben Sira, in an exhortation to steward one’s property throughout life, urges his readers:

While you are still alive and have breath (πνοή) in you, do not let anyone take your place. (Sir 33:21)

Πνοή here represents an animating principle – the difference between life and death. Not unlike Job (LXX Job 27:3), Ben Sira calls for consistent behavior as long as one has breath.

Tobit, amidst compounded frustration, cries out to God for the mercy of death:

So now deal with me as you will; command my breath to be taken from me, so that I may be released from the face of the earth and become dust. For it is better for me to die than to live, because I have had to listen to undeserved insults, and great is the sorrow within me. Command, O Lord, that I be released from this distress; release me to go to the eternal home, and do not, O Lord, turn your face away from me. (Tob 3:6)

While Tobit expects his existence to continue in his “eternal home,” πνεῦμα here is the difference between a living body and dust. Tobit recognizes that his possession of πνεῦμα is predicated on the command of God, and asks God to take his breath away.

Baruch, though a bit more ambiguous, seems to express a similar interplay between immortality and death:
The dead who are in Hades, whose breath has been taken from their bodies (Ἕν ἐλήμφθη τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτῶν ἀπὸ τῶν σπλάγχνων αὐτῶν), will not ascribe glory or justice to the Lord (Bar 2:17).

Though Baruch expresses belief in some sort of continued existence in Hades, the focus is not the nature of that existence, but rather that the dead can no longer give glory to the Lord. As with Tobit, the taking away of the πνεῦμα makes the difference between a living body and dead σπλάγχνον.84

In Antiquities 12.2, Josephus closely paraphrases a substantial portion of The Letter of Aristeas. He renders Aristeas 16 as follows:

Both these people and we also worship the same God, the framer of all things. We call him, and that truly, by the name of Zeus, because he breathes life into all people. (Ant. 12.2.2)

Where Aristeas calls God “the one by whom all live (ζωοποιοῦνται) and are created (γίνεται),” Josephus says that God “breathes life (ἐμφύειν τὸ ζῆν) into all people.” Here the breath of life, given to all people, appears in the context of common ground between Jews and Greeks. Though we cannot know for certain that Josephus’ source matched ours, it is most probable that the difference reflects a choice of style and not a source issue.85 This suggests that in Josephus’ first century context, and to his Greco-Roman audience, God’s making all people alive could be naturally communicated with the language of universal in-breathed life.86

84 Πνεῦμα also functions as animating principle in TAbr 1 17:3 and TGad 5:9.

85 Hadas, Aristeas, 18.

86 Ἐμφύεσαι is used in the NT only in Jn 20:22, where Jesus breathes the holy Spirit into his disciples. In LXX it appears in Gen 2:7; 1 Kgs 17:21; Job 4:21; Wis 15:11; Nah 2:2; Ezek 21:36; 37:9.
Philo Judaeus discusses the breath of life in Genesis 2:7 many times in his writings, presenting a variety of interpretations which cannot be enumerated in detail here. Suffice it to say that Philo generally understands the breath of life as an impartation of the soul of the soul – the reasoning mind (ψυχή), which is not made of any created thing, but rather consists of πνεῦμα (Her. 55-57). While Philo ascribes ψυχή to all living creatures, humans are distinct because of the ψυχή, which alone is the image of God (Opif. 66). It is the πνεῦμα that is in-breathed (Opif. 134-135), which is the substance of the ψυχή. While Philo’s handling of Genesis 2:7 is quite unique among known Hellenistic Jewish texts, its prominence in his work underscores the importance of the text to Philo and presumably in Alexandrian Judaism.

In Job 4:21; Ezek 21:36 it refers to the breath of God’s wrath, but in Gen 2:7; 1 Kgs 17:21; Wis 15:11; Ezek 37:9 it pertains to in-breathed life.

87 Opif. 134ff; Leg. All. 1.31ff; 3.161; Det. 80ff; Plant. 19f; Her. 56f; Somn. 1.34; Spec. 4.123; Virt. 203ff; QG 1.4f; 2.56ff; cf. QG 2.8. Note that Gen 2:7 is also referred to with respect to molding but not in-breathing in Leg. All. 1.53-55, 88-96; 2.4-13, 19, 71-73; Congr. 90.


89 While Philo differentiates between the in-breathed reason and the body molded from blood and clay (Her. 57), he describes the body as:

[held] together and quickened as into flame (ζωπυρεῖται) by the providence of God, who is its protecting arm and shield, since our race cannot of itself stand firmly established for a single day. (Her. 58)

Though this statement does not include in-breathing language, the use of ζωπυρέω implies a bodily enlivening along the lines of Gen 2:7. Ζωπυρέω is also used in LXX 2 Kgs 8:1, 5 in reference to the child that Elisha restores to life. Cf. H.G. Liddell, A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1996), 345.
CONCLUSION TO PART III

*The Letter of Aristeas* includes an appeal to Gentiles on behalf of the creator God over against idols (*Aris*. 132), and also claims, not unlike Paul (*Acts* 17:23), that the God of the Jews is the same God the Greeks call Zeus, who makes all mortals alive (*Aris*. 16; cf. *Acts* 17:25). The Sage likewise criticizes the production of idols because they are composed of created materials (*Wis* 13:10). *Wisdom* 13 shares a great deal of common language with *Acts* 17, including the use ζητέω and εὐρίσκω to describe all peoples’ search for God (*Wis* 13:6; cf. *Acts* 17:26), χειρῶν ἀνθρώπων and τέχνης to describe the human construction of religious objects (*Wis* 13:10; cf. *Acts* 17:24, 29), and χρυσὸς, ἄργυρος and λίθος to describe the materials from which idols are constructed (*Wis* 13:10; cf. *Acts* 17:29). The Sage goes on to accuse idolaters of failing to know the one who formed and inspired them (*Wis* 15:11; cf. *Acts* 17:25). Both *Aristeas* and *Wisdom of Solomon* include creational and particularly Adamic themes in the context of anti-idol polemic, and make for important precedents to Paul’s polemic against idolatry (*Acts* 17:24-29) within Hellenistic Judaism.

Josephus includes in Solomon’s temple dedication an assertion of God’s lack of need (ἀπροσδείης) based on divine superiority (*Ant*. 8.4.3). Josephus, like Paul, recognizes that the temple does not serve God (*Acts* 17:25), and that God does not inhabit it (*Acts* 17:24), but rather affirms it as a benefit to the Hebrew people. The priests of *Second Maccabees*, like Josephus’ Solomon, extend their hands and affirm that God needs nothing (ἀπροσδείης), and that the temple is a blessing to Israel (2 Macc 14:35). In *Third Maccabees*, the high priest Simon extends his hands to the temple and affirms God’s
creation of the world and the blessing of the temple as a place for God’s name to dwell with Israel, though God does not need (ἀπροσδεεῖ) anything (3 Macc 2:9). All three texts speak of God’s lack of need in the context of temple cult, and base their claims on God’s adequacy rather than human inadequacy. While Seneca expresses something like God’s lack of need in Acts (cf. Ep. mor. 95:48), these Hellenistic Jewish texts must be seen as bearing stronger resemblance to the notion of divine sufficiency in Acts 17:24-25.

While Aratus’ influence on Acts 17 seems undeniable, the use of Phaenomena in an appeal to Gentiles for common ground has precedent in Pseudo-Aristobulus, who quotes Phaenomena 1-9 (Frag. 4:6-7) in his effort to demonstrate agreement between Moses and Greek philosophers (Frag. 4:8). In a sense, Pseudo-Aristobulus could be seen as an even closer parallel to Acts 17 than Aratus, since the ultimate purpose of the reference is similar to Paul’s.

Second Maccabees refers to resurrection as God’s giving back of life and breath (τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὴν ζωὴν…ἀποδίδωσιν; 2 Macc 7:22-23; cf. 2 Macc 14:46), with language very similar to Paul’s claim that God “gives to all life and breath and all things” (διδοὺς…ζωὴν καὶ πνοήν; Acts 17:25). Both passages use ὁ κόσμος (2 Macc 7:22; Acts 17:24) and πᾶς (2 Macc 7:22; Acts 17:25), and both refer to God’s facilitation of the descent of humanity (2 Macc 7:23; Acts 17:26, 28). The various linguistic and conceptual connections make Second Maccabees a fairly strong intertext for Acts 17:24-25, and underscore the relevance of God’s giving of life and breath (Acts 17:25) to the theme of
resurrection in Acts 17. The God who gives life and breath to all can also give life and breath back.\textsuperscript{90}

God’s giving of breath to mortals as an animating principle is generally prominent in Hellenistic Jewish literature, which further corroborates the Hellenistic Jewish nature of Acts 17. Ben Sira refers to life in terms of the continuation of πνοή (Sir 33:21), Tobit asks God to end his life by taking his breath away (Tob 3:6), and Baruch speaks of the dead as those whose breath has been taken from their bodies (Bar 2:17). Josephus paraphrases the claim of Aristeas that by God all are made alive (ζωοποιέω) and come into being (γίνομαι; Aris. 16), saying instead that God “breathes life (ἐμφύειν τὸ ζήν) into all people” (Ant. 12.2.2). The in-breathing of Genesis 2:7 is also important to Philo, who quotes and interprets it in many of his writings.\textsuperscript{91} While Isaiah 42:5 is a more direct precedent for the claim that God “gives to all…breath” (Acts 17:25), the concept is also thoroughly consistent in character with Hellenistic Jewish literature.

CONCLUSION

While Macchia rightly points out that Paul’s speech to the Athenians should be seen as a point of continuity between the Old and New Testaments, and that Genesis 1-11 is important to this dynamic, he does not make reference to Isaiah 42:5, which is arguably the most direct intertextual connection between Acts 17 and the Old Testament.

\textsuperscript{90} Levison does not handle the “life and breath” texts of Second Maccabees, though it seems they would fit in well with the rest of his work in Filled with the Spirit.

\textsuperscript{91} Opif. 134ff; Leg. All. 1.31ff; 3.161; Det. 80ff; Plant. 19ft; Her. 56ft; Somn. 1.34; Spec. 4.123; Virt. 203ff; QG 1.4f; 2.56ff
“spirit of life” pneumatology. Macchia also fails to acknowledge the importance of Hellenistic Jewish elements within the text, especially the importance of Second Maccabees to the theme of resurrection. His review of Filled with the Spirit as a whole makes next to no reference to Hellenistic Judaism, though Levison devotes one of the book’s three parts to the subject.

Levison’s chapter on “Spirit in the Shadow of Death” does not mention Isaiah 42:5, though he otherwise deals with Old Testament breath-of-life texts thoroughly. Consideration of the pneumatological nature of this text might have paved the way for recognition of Acts 17:22-31 as a point of continuity between Old and New Testament conceptions of spirit, which would ultimately have enriched Levison’s analysis of the pneumatology of Acts. While Levison rightly identifies Acts 17 as a place where Paul eschews a bifurcation between old and new creations, he fails to recognize the importance of resurrection as a giving back of life and breath. The Athenian address has much to do with “Jesus and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18), and its pneumatology should be seen as one of both old and new creation, held together in harmony by a Hellenistic Jewish notion of the breath of life.

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93 Levison, Filled, 109-221.
94 Levison, Filled, 14-33.
96 Levison, Filled, 251.
Paul’s use of Scripture when addressing a non-Jewish audience is indicative of the Bible’s centrality to his mission and identity. Paul does not simply use Scripture as a means to appeal to people who trust Scripture; rather, Scripture is inherent in Paul’s work as a servant of the Lord, which challenges any claim that Paul is portrayed as supercessionist or otherwise less than fully Jewish in Acts. At the same time, both biblical and Hellenistic categories ultimately fall short in an analysis of Acts 17:22-31. The most comprehensive context for Paul’s speech is found in Hellenistic Jewish literature, where Israelite and Hellenistic thought are both influential. Paul speaks to the Athenians as a Hellenistic Jew, called to be “a light to the nations” (Acts 13:47) on behalf of the God who “gives to all life and breath and all things” (Acts 17:25).
APPENDIX: PROMETHEUS, ATHENA AND PANDORA IN GRECO-ROMAN AND OTHER LITERATURE

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<td><strong>Pre-Roman Texts</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hesiod, <em>Theogony</em>, 570ff</td>
<td>7th-8th cent. B.C.E.</td>
<td>[Hephaistos] took earth, and molded it...into the likeness of a modest young girl, and the goddess gray-eyed Athene dressed her and decked her in silverfish clothing, and over her head she held, with her hands, an intricately wrought veil in place, a wonder to look at.</td>
<td>The first woman is fashioned from the earth and adorned by Athena and Hephaistos. She is the common ancestor of all women, though a race of men already dwells on the earth (592).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hesiod, <em>Works and Days</em>, 60ff</td>
<td>7th-8th cent. B.C.E.</td>
<td>[Hephaistos mixed] earth with water, and [infused] it with a human voice and vigor, and [made] the face like the immortal goddesses, the bewitching features of a young girl; meanwhile Athene [taught] her skills, and how to do the intricate weaving...</td>
<td>The first woman is fashioned from earth and water in the image of the goddesses. She is given many gifts from various deities, and for this reason is named Pandora (“all-gifts”; πᾶν + δώρα, 81).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aeschylus, <em>Prometheus Bound</em>, 107-109; 436-506</td>
<td>5th cent. B.C.E.</td>
<td>I hunted out and stored in fennel stalk the stolen source of fire that hath proved to mortals a teacher in every art and a means to mighty ends...I taught them to discern the risings of the stars and</td>
<td>Prometheus gives humanity fire, which represents not only a practical means of survival, but subtly also the fire of wisdom from which proceed all aspects of human civilization.(^98)</td>
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their settings…inventions I devised for mankind.

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<th>Source</th>
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<tr>
<td>Plato, <em>Protagoras</em>, 320ff</td>
<td>4th cent. B.C.E.</td>
<td>[Prometheus stole] Hephaestus’s fiery art and all Athena’s also he gave…to man, and hence it is that man gets facility for his livelihood. Prometheus steals artistic wisdom and fire from the workshop of Hephaistos and Athena and gives them to humanity, making them closer to deity than the animals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philochorus of Athens, <em>FGrHist</em> 328 F 10.</td>
<td>3rd cent. B.C.E.</td>
<td>[I]f anyone sacrifices an ox to Athena, it is necessary also to sacrifice a sheep to Pandora Pandora and Athena are also closely associated in the cultic practices of Athens.</td>
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**Early Roman Texts**

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<td>Ovid, <em>Metamorphoses</em> 1.76-86</td>
<td>~ 9 C.E.</td>
<td>…that earth which [Prometheus mixed with fresh, running water, and moulded into the form of the all-controlling gods… Prometheus is said to have formed the first humans from earth and water to resemble gods. This is associated with the unique human intellect (86).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovid, <em>Metamorphoses</em> 1.363-64</td>
<td>~ 9 C.E.</td>
<td>Oh, would that…I might…breathe (infundere), [as Prometheus did,] the breath of life (animas) into the molded clay. Deucalion wishes to pour life into molded clay in order to reconstitute humanity, just as Prometheus first formed humanity (cf. 76-86).</td>
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**Post-New Testament Texts**

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<td>Juvenal, <em>Satires</em>, 14.35</td>
<td>1st-2nd cent. C.E.</td>
<td>One or other young man may reject this behavior, if his heart is fashioned by [Prometheus] with generous skill from a superior clay Juvenal speaks metaphorically of Prometheus’ skillful fashioning of people from clay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-</td>
<td>2nd cent.</td>
<td>Prometheus moulded</td>
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<th>Narrative Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Apollodorus, <em>Library</em>, 1.7.1</td>
<td>C.E.</td>
<td>men out of water and earth and gave them also fire, which, unknown to Zeus, he had hidden in a stalk of fennel.</td>
<td>basically makes a concise summary of prior content regarding Prometheus, as seen in Aeschylus and Ovid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-Hyginus, <em>Fabulae</em>, 142</td>
<td>2nd cent. C.E.</td>
<td>Prometheus…first fashioned men from clay. Later Vulcan, at Jove’s command, made a woman’s form from clay. Minerva(^{100}) gave it life (<em>animam dedit</em>) and the rest of the gods each gave some other gift. Because of this they named her Pandora.</td>
<td>Prometheus fashioned the first men from clay, while Vulcan formed Pandora and Minerva gave her life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucian, <em>Prometheus on Caucasus</em>, 13</td>
<td>2nd cent. C.E.</td>
<td>I [Prometheus] molded my material – with water mingling clay – and created man, calling in Athene to aid me in the task.</td>
<td>Prometheus and Athena make the first humans from clay and water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucian, <em>A Literary Prometheus</em>, 3</td>
<td>2nd cent. C.E.</td>
<td>Prometheus conceived and fashioned them…he was practically their creator, though Athene assisted by putting breath into the clay and bringing the models to life.</td>
<td>Athena “ensouls” Prometheus’ clay models, making them alive (<em>ἐμψυχά τα πλάσματα</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porphyry, <em>Ad Gaurum</em> 11=GLAJJ §466</td>
<td>3rd cent. C.E.</td>
<td>[T]hose who play Prometheus in the theatre are compelled to make the soul enter the body... However, perhaps the ancients [wanted to show] that the animation takes place after the conception and formation of the body. The theologian of</td>
<td>Porphyry seems to indicate that Prometheus plays were common in his day, which included the animation of a body. Porphyry makes a connection between Prometheus mythology and Genesis 2:7.</td>
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\(^{100}\) Vulcan, Jove and Minerva are the Roman equivalents of Hephaistos, Zeus and Athena, respectively.
<table>
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<td>Tertullian, Apology, 18.3</td>
<td>3rd cent. C.E.</td>
<td>[God] made all things, who formed man from the dust of the ground (for He is the true Prometheus who gave order to the world by arranging the seasons and their course)</td>
<td>God is compared to Prometheus on the basis for forming humans from the dust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etymologicum Magnum (s.v. Ἰκόνιον)</td>
<td>12th cent. C.E.</td>
<td>Zeus commanded Prometheus and Athena to form (πλάσσω) idols from the clay and called the winds to breathe (ἐμφύσῃσαι) and to complete living beings.</td>
<td>After Deucalion’s flood, Prometheus and Athena make new people from clay and wind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-Lactantius, Metamorphoseon</td>
<td>15th cent. C.E.?</td>
<td>Prometheus...formed man out of earth, into which Minerva infused breath (cui Minerva spiritum infudit).</td>
<td>Minerva gives breath to the people formed by Prometheus.</td>
</tr>
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