

Acts 17.28

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ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν, ὡς καὶ τινες τῶν
καθ' ὑμᾶς ποιητῶν εἰρήκασιν, Τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν.

THE GREAT AREOPAGUS SPEECH in *Acts* has generated a considerable literature, and this particular verse has played a prominent role in the discussion.¹ The following points may be taken as established:² (1) The plural *τινες τῶν . . . ποιητῶν* is a normal Greek method of introducing a *single and specific* poetic quotation.³ (2) There is in fact only one piece of poetry cited here, namely *τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν*=Aratus, *Phaenomena* (beginning of) verse 5.⁴ (3) Commentators who have maintained, because of the plural *τινες*, that the author of *Acts* is also quoting Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*, verse 4, *ἐκ κοῦ γὰρ γένος ἐσμέν*, are wrong.⁵ (4) Those who, for the same reason, argue that *ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν* is a poetic quotation are also wrong.

It is with these last words that the present paper is concerned. Are they a (prose) quotation or an original coinage on the part of

¹ For references see especially Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia 1971, transl. from the 14th German ed. of 1965) 516, 524–25. I do not pretend to have read all the literature. As a matter of convenience, the author of *Acts* shall be referred to as Luke; no judgement on actual authorship is intended. For a good statement on this question see A. D. Nock in *Gnomon* 25 (1953) 502=*Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* II (Cambridge [Mass.] 1972) 827.

² See especially my paper "Classical Greek Quotations in the New Testament" in *The Heritage of the Early Church*, Essays in honor of Georges Florovsky=*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 195 (Rome 1973) 37–42.

³ *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 40–42. To the examples there adduced add Arist. *Pol.* 1252b 7ff *διό φασι οἱ ποιηταὶ* (there follows Eur. *IA* 1400); Theod.Met. *Misc. philos. et hist.* p.515 Mueller-Kissling *καὶ ποιηταὶ δέ φασι* (there follows Mel.fr.adesp. 103 Page); Zenob. 5.100 *διὸ καὶ κτώπτοντες αὐτὸν οἱ ποιηταὶ ἔλεγον* (there follows Philemon fr.190 K.); see also Pearson on Soph. fr.1048 (for *Et.Gud.* p.142.46) and Ammonius *s.v.* *διαβόητος*, p.35.15 Nickau. Naturally, *τῶν ποιητῶν τινες* may also be used in a strict plural sense, e.g. Isocr. 2.3, 9.72; Diod.Sic. 3.65.

⁴ *ἐσμέν* is a trivialization of Aratus' *εἰμέν*.

⁵ See further below, p.353.

Luke? And if the latter, was there a model for them? Opinions have differed. Eduard Norden, for instance, compared the language preserved in Arius Didymus, *Epitome* 26 (= H. Diels, *Doxographi Graeci* p.461.23–25): ὁ δὲ Χρύσιππος χρόνον εἶναι κινήσεως διάστημα. . . καὶ κατὰ μὲν τὸν χρόνον κινεῖσθαι τε ἕκαστα καὶ εἶναι. He went on to conclude, “Wenn wir endlich noch die bekannten stoischen Etymologien erwägen: Ζεὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ πᾶσι δεδωκέναι τὸ ζῆν (Chrysippos bei Stob. ecl. I 31, 12W.), καλοῦμεν αὐτὸν καὶ Ζῆνα καὶ Δία. . . , ὡς ἂν εἰ λέγοιμεν δι’ ὃν ζῶμεν (Ps. Aristot. de mundo c. 7 401 a 13), wo also die Übereinstimmung mit der Stelle der Acta sich bis auf die Verbalform selbst erstreckt, so werden wir in ζῶμεν, κινούμεθα, ἐσμέν stoische Begriffe zu erkennen haben, die aber vielleicht erst der Verf. der Acta zu einer formelhaften, feierlich klingenden Trias verbunden hat.”⁶ Haenchen’s comment *ad loc.* is, “This anticlimax has not yet been found elsewhere. That Luke himself constructed it is unlikely: he would himself have maintained no such immanence of man in God as the wording of the text asserts. It must be a matter of a received Stoic formulation. . . .Hommel (199) proposes a triadic Platonic formula.”⁷ Before considering the question of a specific philosophical source, a more fundamental point should be made.

ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν: It can be shown that this phrase, both in diction and in form, is idiomatic Greek of a familiar type. Formally, the words constitute a tricolon, an old and frequent pattern of the Greek language. Eduard Fraenkel has called attention to “. . . the widespread type of ‘tricolon’ in which the third member is expanded.”⁸ The words that follow in *Acts* (ὡς καὶ τινες. . . γένος ἐσμέν), with the final ἐσμέν echoing the earlier ἐσμέν, probably have reference primarily to the third member and in a sense may serve to make the entire verse a tricolon of this expanded type. But expanded or not, there is a formal tricolon here. As for the diction, it too reveals a very old and characteristic feature of Greek, the collocation of several verbs as an emphatic means of expressing

⁶ Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos, Untersuchungen zur Formgeschichte religiöser Rede* (Leipzig-Berlin 1923) 22.

⁷ Haenchen, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 524 n.3. The Hommel reference is to H. Hommel, “Neue Forschungen z. Areopagrede Acta 17,” *ZNTW* 46 (1955) 199.

⁸ Fraenkel on Aesch. *Agam.* 1243; see also the *General Index* to his edition of *Agamemnon*, s.v. τρίκωλον (vol. III p.841).

existence. Among the verbs found so collocated are εἶναι, ζῆν and κινεῖσθαι (as well as other verbs of motion, e.g. ἔρπειν, περιπατεῖν). The evidence for this usage is quite abundant; examples which chance to occur in the philosophers are often quite untechnical Greek. I offer some illustrative material: *Il.* 1.88 ἐμεῦ ζῶντος καὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ δερκομένοιο (cf. *Od.* 16.439); *Il.* 17.447 πάντων, ὅσσα τε γαῖαν ἔπι πνείει τε καὶ ἔρπει (= *Od.* 18.131); Aesch. *Pers.* 299 ζῆ τε καὶ φάος βλέπει; *Agam.* 677 καὶ ζῶντα καὶ βλέποντα;⁹ Soph. *Phil.* 883 ἀνώδυνον βλέποντα κάμπνέοντ' ἔτι (tricolon); *Trach.* 234–35 ἰσχύοντά τε | καὶ ζῶντα καὶ θάλλοντα κοῦ νόσω βαρύν; Eur. *IA* 1225 ζῶσάν τε καὶ θάλλουσαν; fr.372 τὰ Δαιδάλεια πάντα κινεῖσθαι δοκεῖ | λέγειν¹⁰ τ' ἀγάλασθ'; Antiphanes fr.221 K. ζῶντα περιπατοῦντά <τε>; Aeschin. 3.94. . . τὰ δέκα τάλαντα, ζῶντων¹¹ φρονούντων βλεπόντων ἔλαθον ὑμῶν ὑφελόμενοι (tricolon); Dem. 18.72 ζῶντων καὶ ὄντων Ἀθηναίων; Antipho Soph. fr.60 D.-K. ζῆ τοῦτο [*sc.* ἡ παιδείας] καὶ θάλλει διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου; Pl. *Symp.* 203E θάλλει τε καὶ ζῆ [*sc.* Ἐρωσ]; *Resp.* 369D τοῦ εἶναι τε καὶ ζῆν ἔνεκα; *Legg.* 945D ἡ πᾶσα οὕτω θάλλει τε καὶ εὐδαιμονεῖ χώρα καὶ πόλις; Arist. *Gen.Corr.* 318b25 καὶ ζῆν καὶ εἶναι; Iambl. *VP.* 212 [= D.-K. *VS*⁹ I.476.16] ἡ εἰς τὸ εἶναι τε καὶ ζῆν ἄφικται; LSJ *s.v.* φρονέω IV “... ζῶν καὶ φρονῶν alive and in his right mind, freq. in Inscr. . . .” εἶναι used of deities in an expanded tricolon is found already in Homer, *Il.* 2.485 ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστε, πάρεστε τε, ἴστε τε πάντα; so also Xen. *Cyr.* 8.7.22 θεοὺς γε τοὺς ἀεὶ ὄντας καὶ πάντ' ἐφορῶντας καὶ πάντα δυναμένους, οἳ καὶ κτλ.

I conclude that, so far as diction and structure are concerned, the words ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν could have been composed even by someone *qui numquam philosophum audivit*. Even κινούμεθα, which has often conjured up formal theories of Motion, κίνησις, is as old as Homer in a non-technical sense, *Il.* 1. 46–47: ἔκλαγξαν δ' ἄρ' οἴστοι ἐπ' ὤμων χωρόμενοι, | αὐτοῦ κινήθέντος· ὁ δ' ἦϊε νυκτὶ εἰοικώς.¹² It is important to have thus established the roots of this language in normal, prephilosophical Greek. It does not follow that Luke had no philosophical source. For it is an easy matter to produce comparable

⁹ Toup conjectured χλωρόν τε καὶ βλέποντα on the basis of Hesychius: χλωρόν τε καὶ βλέπον(τα)· ἀντὶ τοῦ ζῶντα. See Fraenkel *ad loc.*

¹⁰ λέγειν F. G. Schmidt: βλέπειν MSS.

¹¹ So *P.Oxy.* IV 703: ὀρώντων MSS. (More precisely, because of a gap, it is uncertain whether the papyrus had ζῶντων instead of, or in addition to, ὀρώντων. The former is more probable.)

¹² Cf. κινεῖσθαι in Eur. fr.372 (*supra*).

texts from formal philosophy. Pl. *Soph.* 248E–249A *ὡς ἀληθῶς κίνησιν καὶ ζώην καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ φρόνησιν ἢ ῥαδίως πεισθησόμεθα τῷ παντελῶς ὄντι μὴ παρῆναι, μηδὲ ζῆν αὐτὸ μηδὲ φρονεῖν, ἀλλὰ σεμνὸν καὶ ἄγιον, νοῦν οὐκ ἔχον, ἀκίνητον ἕτερος εἶναι*; Note that *μηδὲ ζῆν—εἶναι* constitutes a tricolon with expanded third element. A tricolon in Aristotle, *De anima* 414a12–13 is quite close in formal structure to the *Acts* passage: *... ἡ ψυχὴ δὲ τοῦτο ᾧ ζῶμεν καὶ αἰσθανόμεθα καὶ διανοούμεθα πρώτως*. Particularly interesting is an entry from the Pseudo-Galenic *Definitiones Medicae* (19.355 K.): *... ψυχὴ ἐστὶ πνεῦμα παρεσπαρμένον ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ σώματι δι' οὗ ζῶμεν καὶ λογιζόμεθα καὶ ταῖς λοιπαῖς αἰσθήσεσιν ἐνεργοῦμεν ὑπηρετοῦντος τοῦ σώματος*. Three tricola with quite similar openings (*ᾧ ζῶμεν ~ ἐν ᾧ ζῶμεν ~ δι' οὗ ζῶμεν*) from very different authors—Aristotle, Luke, a doxographer. A pattern of traditional formulations is emerging. Here too belongs *δι' ὃν ζῶμεν*, which Norden cited from the Pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo*.

Clearly, whether from the viewpoint of Greek in general or of philosophic Greek in particular, *ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν* is, in diction, phrasing and structure, established usage. This may show that Luke had a real feeling for Greek idiom, not that he has necessarily introduced an actual quotation here. Indeed, were it not for the fact that *τινες τῶν... ποιητῶν*—another piece of idiomatic Greek—had, through a misunderstanding of the plural, conditioned readers to expect two quotations, it is doubtful whether anyone would ever have regarded the words in question as borrowed goods. For the thought-sequence itself strongly argues for the presence of a single quotation, as a paraphrase will make clear: “For in Him we live and move and have our being, *as I can demonstrate even (καὶ) from your own literature*: ‘For indeed we are the offspring of this one’. (29) Being therefore God’s offspring we ought not . . .” The quotation from Aratus is introduced as a formal ‘proof’ of the preceding statement. Then verse 29 begins by paraphrasing the quotation and drawing an inference therefrom (*γένος οὖν ὑπάρχοντες τοῦ θεοῦ...).* If verse 28 had begun with a quotation, the *καὶ* in *ὡς καὶ τινες* would have little point, and the plural *τινες*, which cannot look backwards and forwards at the same time, would seem to be doing precisely that. Bad Greek and bad rhetoric.¹³

¹³ In the paper referred to in n.2, I argued that there were only three ‘classical’ quotations in the *New Testament* (Aratus in *Acts* 17.28, Euripides or Menander in *I Cor.*

The question of philosophic content may now be considered. Attempts to pronounce the words peculiarly Platonic are fanciful and may be dismissed. It is a widely-held opinion that ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμὲν is specifically Stoic. Norden, as we have seen (*supra*), was a strong advocate of this position. His arguments are not cogent. (1) A doxographic handbook, in an account of Chrysippus' teaching about time, collocates κινεῖσθαι and εἶναι. It has been documented above that such collocations are normal even in pre-philosophical Greek. (2) The "well-known Stoic etymologies" of Zeus derive the word from ζῆν and διὰ; in one passage of the *De mundo* the etymology is explained by the words δι' ὃν ζῶμεν, "where the agreement with *Acts* extends even to the verb form." The derivations of Zeus from διὰ (= Δία) and ζῆν (= Ζῆνα) are Stoic in the sense that the Stoics accepted them. They are neither original with that philosophical school nor peculiar to it. The etymology from διὰ is probably alluded to already in Hesiod, *Erga* 2–3 and in *IG* 14.268 (Selinus, 5th cent. B.C.); both etymologies in Pl. *Crat.* 396B . . . δι' ὃν ζῆν ἀεὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ζῶσιν ὑπάρχει. Other passages could be cited. The parallelism in δι' ὃν ζῶμεν ~ ἐν ᾧ ζῶμεν fits a normal pattern and is nothing unique; the evidence has already been given. All this quite apart from the fact that there is not the slightest reference to a 'Zeus' etymology in *Acts*. What point would it have in a speech proclaiming to the Greeks the ἄγνωστος θεός? Haenchen described the words in *Acts* as a "received Stoic formulation"; he considered it improbable that Luke coined them because "he would himself have maintained no such immanence of man in God as the wording of the text asserts." The argument is fallacious; if Luke had strong theological objections to the thought, he would no more have borrowed the formulation than have composed it himself.

Even though some of the evidence adduced is thus faulty, it would be foolish to deny the presence of Stoic coloration in the Areopagus

15.33, 'Epimenides' in *Ep. Tit.* 1.12). I repeat briefly here an argument presented in detail on pp.42–45 of that paper. Certain church fathers, Greek and Latin, appeal to these quotations in order to justify the study of pagan Greek literature by Christians. "Three quotations," as I there wrote, "from all of the New Testament . . . are not many. The probable inference is plain: If these Christian apologists for the classics had known of other quotations in the New Testament which would have bolstered their argument, they surely would have cited them. We must conclude that they knew of no others . . ." (p.45). This argument from silence still seems to me to have a certain force; it tells against the presence of a *verbatim* Stoic (or other) quotation here.

speech. Clearly Luke had some familiarity with popular Greek culture and philosophy and uses it to very good effect. That he was steeped in Greek philosophy cannot be demonstrated. The most tangible piece of evidence is the citation from Aratus, and that unfortunately is ambiguous: (1) Aratus was a Stoic. (2) The quotation comes not from a formal philosophical treatise, but from an extremely popular poem on astronomy. Luke did not therefore have to study philosophy to be familiar with the passage. Nevertheless the fact remains that he was able to produce an apt motto from a relevant Stoic context.¹⁴ ἐν αὐτῷ is often taken to be proof of formal Stoic pantheism; this is the point of Haenchen's reference to the 'immanence of man in God' in this verse (*supra*). The prepositional phrase need not be so interpreted; even Plautus, *vir comicus*, can write "*Iuppiter, qui genu' colis alisque hominum, per quem vivimu' vitalem aevom | QUEM PENES spes VITAE sunt hominum omnium eqs.*" (*Poen.* 1187–88). Similarly here ἐν αὐτῷ could be interpreted to mean 'we are dependent upon God for our very existence', an unobjectionable statement for a Christian. Compare Dem. 18.193 ἐν γὰρ τῷ θεῷ τὸ τούτου τέλος ἦν; see further LSJ *s.v.* ἐν 1.6. The closest parallel to ἐν αὐτῷ ζῶμεν may well be Christian, *John* 1.4 ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν. But the educated Greek reader would more likely take the words in a Stoic (pantheistic) sense. This ambiguity, which results in a sentence acceptable to both Greek and Christian, is no coincidence. Luke knew exactly what he was about and coined a phrase perfectly suited to his purposes. It is much less probable that he found ready-made a Stoic quotation of such theological flexibility. If this analysis is correct, Luke knew something of Stoic pantheism; it need not have been a great deal.

Consideration of Stoic accounts of pantheism leads to the same result. For the regular way of expressing this doctrine in Stoicism is to say that the deity pervades, is immanent in, all reality, not that man is immanent in God. Proclus in Plat. *Tim.* p.297 Schneider [= *SVF* 2.308.3–4] ὁ γὰρ αὐτὸς θεὸς . . . διήκει διὰ τοῦ κόσμου καὶ διὰ τῆς ὕλης κτλ. Alexander Aphr. *De mixtione* p.224 Bruns [= *SVF* 2.112.29–31] . . . μεμῖχθαι τῇ ὕλῃ λέγειν τὸν θεόν, διὰ πάσης αὐτῆς διήκοντα κτλ. Clemens Alex. *Protr.* p.58 Potter [= *SVF* 1.42.18–20]

¹⁴ For the aptness of the original context in Aratus, see M. Dibelius, *Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte*³ (Göttingen 1957) 49–50.

... τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς ... διὰ πάσης ὕλης ... τὸ θεῖον διήκειν λέγοντας. Diogenes Laertius 7.147 [=SVF 2.305.17ff] εἶναι δὲ τὸν μὲν δημιουργὸν τῶν ὄλων ... κοινῶς τε καὶ τὸ μέρος αὐτοῦ τὸ διήκον διὰ πάντων ... Δία μὲν γὰρ φασι δι' ὃ: τὰ πάντα κτλ. Observe that δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα (compare δι' ὃν ζῶμεν etc.) is explicitly linked with the all-pervasiveness of the deity. Scholars have been too quick to see ἐν αὐτῷ as a specifically Stoic phrase and concept; it is not.

There is one further, and tantalizing, clue. In the *Hymn to Zeus* of the Stoic Cleanthes a phrase occurs so similar to Aratus' τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν that many have believed that both passages are being quoted in *Acts*. That is not the case (*supra*), but it is not unreasonable to suppose that Luke could have known both passages. Here are verses 4–5 of Cleanthes' *Hymn*:

ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ γένος ἐσμέν, †ἦχου†¹⁵ μίμημα λαχόντες
μοῦνοι, ὅσα ζῶει τε καὶ ἔρπει θνήτ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν.

In verse 5 ζῶει τε καὶ ἔρπει is a collocation of verbs of the same formal type as in *Acts*; many examples have already been adduced. All three verbs of *Acts* have their counterparts in these two verses—ζῶμεν/ζῶει, κινούμεθα/ἔρπει, ἐσμέν. It is very tempting to see here the very Stoic material whence, in part at least, Luke fashioned his own original creation ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν. This is undemonstrable; these lines remain a valuable final comment upon our passage.

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¹⁵ For the most recent discussion of this still unsolved *crux* see G. Giangrande in *AntCl* 42 (1973) 181–84.