
CROSS-CULTURAL DIALOGUE: A POSTCOLONIAL APPROACH TO PAUL'S DIALOGUE IN ATHENS (ACTS 17:16-34)

Matulandi Arthur Tewu

Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Tomohon, Indonesia

Email: matulandiarthurtewu@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research explores Paul's speech in Athens (Acts 17:16-34) using a postcolonial lens to uncover how early Christian messaging engaged with dominant Greek cultural ideologies. The study aims to analyze how Paul positioned his message in the midst of a colonized cultural framework, focusing particularly on his use of local religious references, such as the "altar to the unknown God," to bridge theological narratives and cultural relevance. Employing a qualitative method grounded in textual and thematic analysis, the study draws from postcolonial theory, particularly the concepts of hybridity and cultural negotiation. Findings reveal that Paul's approach at the Areopagus demonstrates a dialogical method of communication in which he neither rejected nor fully assimilated Athenian culture, but reinterpreted it through the lens of Christian theology. His strategy resulted in religious hybridity that allowed his message to be more accessible within the dominant Greco-Roman discourse. This study contributes to a broader understanding of intercultural dialogue in religious contexts and emphasizes the utility of postcolonial theory for interpreting early Christian texts. The implications highlight the continued relevance of adaptive and respectful engagement in cross-cultural religious communication, particularly in power imbalances and cultural hegemony settings.

KEYWORDS

Cross-Cultural Communication, Postcolonial Biblical Criticism, Paul's Missionary Discourse



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INTRODUCTION

The dialogue between faith and culture has always been an important theme in the study of religion. One interesting example of this dynamic can be found in the story of Paul's dialogue in Athens, as recorded in Acts 17:16-34. To better understand how this dialogue took place, it is important to look at the context in which Paul had this interaction. Athens was a city that was seen as an intellectual and cultural center, as well as a center for the worship of Greek gods and goddesses, characterized by the presence of various temples, statues, and a place where Paul faced great challenges in approaching intellectually while still adhering to the core of his personal firmness. Acts 17:16-34 tells the story of Paul's encounter in Athens, an important event in his apostolic history. In this context, Paul was confronted with a polytheistic society and a strong culture. Faced with this situation, Paul applied an adaptive cross-cultural approach to build bridges of communication.

Paul provides a new perspective on how religion can interact with culture without being mutually exclusive and judgmental. He shows that the delivery of his teachings can be done by respecting and appreciating local culture, not by suppressing or even erasing local culture. Paul did not condemn idolaters but created a constructive discussion space for both to think deeply about the concept of God. Paul's actions are relevant to the current context of a pluralistic society where interreligious and intercultural dialogues are needed.

Discussing this, Marde Christian Stenly Mawikere and Sudiria Hura (2022), suggest that understanding local culture can be an entry point in delivering the gospel message. Their research shows that when elements of local culture are combined with the gospel's teachings, the community can better receive the message.

In Athens, Paul dealt with people with different religious backgrounds and complex social structures. The Athenians were polytheists, which meant that Paul's approach had to be able to reach out and adapt to existing beliefs. This shows that an effective engagement strategy must consider existing cultural elements rather than bringing new teachings directly without considering the local context.

Mawikere and Hura highlight how Paul's evangelism can be seen as a form of intercultural dialogue. Paul came with a new gospel message and sought to understand and appreciate the local culture. Thus, the contextualization approach in evangelism is not only a tool to deliver the message but also a means to create a more inclusive space for dialogue.

Deni Alfian Mba (2016) In his research, Paul's sermon at Areopagus reflects a model of tolerance that can be applied in a modern context. Paul utilized the statue "for an unknown god" as a reference to explain about the God intended in the Gospel. This shows that an inclusive and total approach is very important in interfaith interactions.

MBA explained that the model of tolerance mentioned in Paul's speech is still relevant in encouraging interfaith dialogue today. Understanding and accepting differences are essential in an increasingly multicultural society where various differences coexist. According to survey data, 65% of those involved in interfaith conversations felt more tolerant of other views after participating in open discussions. This shows how inclusive conversations can reduce interfaith conflict.

Hildegardis Dyna R.D, Yonas PAP, and Simon (2024), saw it as a peaceful evangelization strategy based on the story of Paul's evangelization in Athens. The approach Paul used to deal with the Athenians who held to the belief in gods shows that evangelism requires a deep understanding of the cultural context. Paul skillfully used elements that had long been embedded in Athenian society to explain Christ. Thus, today's modern society, which is very pluralistic, can convey the gospel message with this method.

By considering the views of Mawikere and Hura, Mba and Dyna R.D. et al, the author sees that Mawikere and Hura discuss the importance of a contextual approach in

evangelism. By linking evangelism and culture deeply. The gospel will be effectively transformed if contextualized according to local culture. MBA made a positive contribution to transparency by using the text of Acts 17:16-34 as her biblical foundation, the active attitude of Paul in Aeropagus, who appreciated the culture and communicated between faith and culture. While Dyna R.D. et al see the text of Acts 17:16-34 as a contextual approach in evangelism by utilizing local culture to convey the message of God. Mawikere and Hura, Mba and Dyna R.D. et al. deserve appreciation because they have contributed very useful thoughts in the development of theology. With their respective specialties, Mawikere and Hura conducted hermeneutic studies by focusing on an applied evangelism approach. MBA also conducted a hermeneutic research that focused on the tolerance pattern approach. Also, Dyna R.D. et al conducted a hermeneutic study focusing on the contextual evangelism approach. Of the three, no one has conducted a hermeneutic study with a Postcolonial approach. The Postcolonial approach can be applied to understand the interaction between Christian faith and the dominant culture, such as Greece at the time of Paul. Postcolonial hermeneutics encourages cross-cultural dialogue in understanding texts, bridging differences, and creating space for more inclusive understanding. This article aims to fill this gap by offering a new perspective that integrates a postcolonial approach to understand how Paul used an approach responsive to the dominant Greek culture in presenting the gospel. This research examines the event through a postcolonial approach, focusing on the interaction between the early Christian faith and the dominant Greek culture. In this context, Paul conveyed his Christian teachings and negotiated with elements of the local culture. He utilized cultural symbols, such as the "altar to the unknown God," to make the gospel message more relevant and acceptable to the Athenians. Despite resistance, Paul's strategy shows that contextual and dialogical dialogue is crucial in cross-cultural evangelism. This study also highlights the relevance of the postcolonial approach in building interfaith understanding in the modern era and opens new insights into the relationship between religion and cultural domination.

Previous studies, such as Mawikere and Hura (2022), emphasize the importance of contextual evangelism, focusing on integrating local cultural elements with gospel teachings. Their work provides practical insights into how inculturation enhances message receptivity. However, their analysis lacks a deeper engagement with structural power relations between the gospel and dominant cultures. Similarly, Mba (2016) analyzes Paul's sermon at the Areopagus as a model of religious tolerance, highlighting how Paul used the statue "to an unknown god" to bridge religious understanding. Yet, his approach remains descriptive and does not explore the socio-political implications of cultural dominance and religious power.

This study addresses these gaps by applying a postcolonial hermeneutic—an analytical framework that critically examines the dynamics of empire, power, and cultural negotiation. Unlike previous research, this study interprets Paul's approach as a contextual evangelistic effort and a form of subtle resistance against cultural imperialism. The postcolonial lens allows for a reinterpretation of Paul's actions as both adaptive and transformative, providing a critical perspective on how religious narratives can engage with dominant cultural systems while maintaining theological integrity.

This research aims to examine Paul's dialogue in Athens (Acts 17:16-34) through a postcolonial lens to uncover how early Christian messages negotiated with dominant Greek cultural systems. This study's benefit is contributing a new interpretive model for biblical texts in pluralistic societies by showing that evangelism can be dialogical, culturally responsive, and critically aware. It also provides theological insights relevant to modern interreligious and intercultural engagement, especially in postcolonial contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research method with literature study. Literature study is a series of activities related to library data collection by reading, recording, and processing research materials (Zed, 2014, p. 3). In this study, researchers collected data from various written sources, such as books, articles, and official documents, to analyze and interpret relevant information. Literature study is used here because this research can only be answered with library data, can be a preliminary study to understand symptoms in society, and library data is still reliable to answer research problems (Zed, 2014, pp. 3-4). Researchers can explore existing theories and identify gaps that need further research by utilizing a literature review. This method also allows researchers to gain a broader and deeper perspective on the topic under study, resulting in more comprehensive and meaningful findings. Literature study is relevant for qualitative research because the data is collected by searching for sources and recompiling them from books and other research results (Fadly, 2021).

For the data analysis, this study used a thematic content analysis, a method suitable for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. The analysis followed several stages:

- 1) Data Reduction: Extracting and selecting relevant texts from the literature based on the research focus.
- 2) Coding: Assigning codes to concepts such as “cultural negotiation,” “religious plurality,” “postcolonial resistance,” and “contextual evangelism.”
- 3) Theme Identification: Grouping codes into broader themes that reveal interpretive patterns in Paul’s interaction with Athenian culture.
- 4) Interpretation: Synthesizing themes with postcolonial theory to draw insights on how Paul’s message interacted with dominant cultural power.
- 5) Conclusion Drawing: Establishing meaning by linking literature findings with the study's research questions and theoretical framework

This method allows the researcher to trace conceptual linkages and ensures that interpretation is grounded in credible academic discourse, producing findings that are both theoretically rich and contextually relevant (Fadly, 2021).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Postcolonial Approach

Immanuel Tegu Harisantoso (2020) argues that Postcolonialism is an analytical framework born as a response to the influence and impact of colonialism that still exists or continues after the colonial period ends. The postcolonial approach aims to understand, criticize, and overcome the power structures and injustices that persist in societies that have passed through colonialism.

According to Gina Novtariangi et al. (2020), postcolonial theory, indigenous peoples' identities are formed through hybridity (cultural mixing), mimicry (imitation of colonial culture), and ambivalence (ambivalent attitude towards colonial culture). Therefore, the focus of postcolonial studies in

this article is to analyze the dynamic representation of indigenous identity in the novel *Kirti Njunnjung Drajat* by R. Tg Jasawidagda.

Thus, the postcolonial approach can be used to analyze how people's identities, as seen in texts, are formed and represented through concepts such as hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence. In the case of religious texts such as the Bible, the postcolonial approach stems from interpretations that emphasize power dynamics, cultural relations, and the struggle for equality for those who are marginalized or oppressed. By looking at biblical texts through a postcolonial lens, it is possible to identify the stereotypes, marginalization, and oppression reflected in the text.

Author, Year of Writing and Name of the Book of Acts

The two-part work Luke-Acts originally circulated among the churches as a complete work (Bruce, 1980, p. 15). Not having an initial title was in keeping with Greek literary tradition, where works of prose or poetry usually appeared without a title or author's name. The tradition of giving titles and author names developed later (Albright & Mann, 1967, p. XVI). It was named *Praxeis Apostolon* in the last years of the second century (Douglas, 1992, p. 563). Groenen (1992, p. 175) also, not all the Apostles are mentioned, only Peter, John and James and other figures. This shows that Luke, in writing the Acts of the Apostles, did not intend to give a comprehensive picture of all the Apostles, but rather focused on certain Apostles and other figures considered important in the early development of the Christian Church. Hakh (2024, p. 298) is more inclined to name the book Acts of the Holy Spirit because it tells a lot about the work of the Holy Spirit on the disciples. Meanwhile, naming the Acts of the Apostles means that it focuses more on the ministry/work of the Apostles. Acts is not just a historical record, but also a work that serves to build identity and legitimacy for the early Christian community.

As a writer, Lukas was instrumental in creating a narrative that not only reflected the social and political realities of the time, but also gave voice to the marginalized.

Not all Apostles are portrayed equally in Acts. Only a few Apostles receive a larger portion, such as Peter, John, and James. This reflects the hierarchy and disparity in the early Christian community, where some figures were favored while others did not receive the same attention.

The tradition of titling that developed later, rather than from the beginning, can be seen as an attempt to give postcolonial authority and legitimacy to sacred texts. Assigning certain identities and title attributes can be seen as a strategy to establish a text's canon and authority.

The different perspectives on the title, focusing more on "The Work of the Holy Spirit" or "The Acts of the Apostles," reflect the debates and negotiations in understanding and interpreting the sacred text. This can be seen as a dynamic struggle to place the Holy Spirit or the Apostles as the main focus in the early development of the Christian Church.

As described above, the Book of Acts originally circulated without a name, either the name of the book or the name of the author. The name of the book and the author were added later. Duyverman (2023, p. 79), suggests at least two

possibilities regarding the author of the book of Acts. First, Luke as the author utilized written sources in the writing of Acts, although he reworked and integrated the sources so that it is difficult to separate their origins unequivocally. The use of the first person plural "we" in some parts of the text is also debatable. The second alternative is the existence of another author, where it is argued that the author of Acts was not Luke, but an eyewitness who recorded certain events, which Luke later incorporated into his work.

Albright and Mann (1967, pp. XXIX-XXXV) argue that Luke, along with one of Paul's coworkers who is not mentioned in Acts, is considered the main candidate for the book's authorship based on the information contained in the documents. Early church teaching held that Luke was the author of Acts; however, an alternative thought also needs to be considered, namely that the second part of the book dealing with Paul's missionary work provides a more direct insight into the events, so that the documents indicate the possibility that the author was one of Paul's coworkers. The Tübingen School once believed that the author of Acts was a Gentile Christian, although the documents state that this belief should be considered irrelevant. Although there is not enough evidence to support this idea, there are times when documents mention that the author of Acts may have been another of Paul's co-workers, such as Titus. Bruce argues that the author of Acts was Luke, a physician from Antioch. Samuel Hakh (2024, p. 291) responds to this diversity of opinion by not disputing the author's name but rather by providing a definitive identity of the author as a Greek Christian who greatly contributed to the expansion of the mission and was an educated man.

In the context of the book of Acts, there are varying opinions as to who the actual author is. Whether the author is Luke, Paul's coworker, or another individual not mentioned in the text. The uncertainties and debates that arise reflect the ambivalence inherent in the context of early Christianity. The identity of the author of Acts can be considered "ambivalent" because it falls in the "in-between space" of Jewish tradition and Hellenistic/Roman influence. There is no clear consensus, given that forming early Christian identities and narratives occurred in an environment of tension, negotiation and cultural mixing.

With regard to the year of composition of the book of Acts, Hakh (2024) agrees with Udo Schnelle that it was written in 90/100 AD, Marxen (2023, p. 20) also mentions that it was written in the last decade of the first century while Duyverman (2023, p. 82) reasons that Luke was written first and then Acts, so it is estimated to be 95 AD.

The Challenge of Identity and Cultural Colonization in Paul's Dialogue in Athens (Verses 16-18)

In the previous section of this chapter, Paul and Silas visited the city of Thessalonica, where their preaching was met with resistance from the Jews who were aided by criminals from the marketplace (verses 1-9). Afterward Paul and Silas continued their journey to Berea. In this place, they still encountered resistance from the Jews from Thessalonica who came to them. Even in Berea, however, they gained many followers among the prominent women and Greek men. For this reason, the brothers in the city escorted Paul to the city of Athens, while

Silas and Timothy remained in Berea and prepared to follow Paul to Athens (verses 10-15).

Paul's journey this time gave him a new experience. Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy in the city of Athens. Historically, Athens was the largest city in the land of Greece. Around 429 BC, the city experienced its peak of glory under Perikles after the battle with Persia ended in the mid-fifth century. Life in politics, trade and culture developed rapidly (Dixon, 1997, p. 125). At that time, Athens was famous as the cultural center of the Middle East and the world's intellectual center. Many people from all over the world came to study in this city. It experienced glory in various fields of life, but later fell into the hands of the Romans in 86 BC. Behind all its glory, the city of Athens was also famous for idolatry (Brink H, 2003, p. 278).

Verse 16 states, "While Paul waited for them in Athens, his heart was saddened to see the city filled with idols." In those days, idol statues were revered as works of art and dedicated to worship. With his Jewish cultural background, Paul had an encounter with the Athenian culture. As an immigrant, Paul witnessed the differences in the Athenian culture compared to his own views. As a Jew, Paul faced unique identity challenges in Athens, there appeared to be tension between Paul's cultural and religious identity as a Jew and the Hellenistic cultural reality. The tension is seen in Paul's anguish over this worship practice. On the one hand, Paul experienced resistance to things that were contrary to his beliefs, but on the other hand, he desired to understand and adapt. Paul builds a dialog by sticking to his strong identity, while trying to engage in the Athenian society. This challenge can be understood as a shift from a tradition-bound identity to a more inclusive and diverse understanding in a postcolonial context. Verse 16 indicates that Paul had a discussion before he went further about his main purpose of delivering his teachings. He first studied the worldview of the people in the city of Athens. Because it cannot be denied that culture has a big role in influencing mindset. In this case, Paul's attempt to understand it was not easy. In this postcolonial context, it is a process of "hybridization" where Paul as an immigrant tries to bring and introduce his ideas, while he is also influenced by the local culture. In this dialog there is interaction between cultures, namely Paul and other Jews with "the people he met there" also including the Epicureans and Stoics. Dialogue here is an exchange of arguments and includes encounters and clashes between identities in this case Jewish and Athenian culture.

The relationship between these two different identities leads to a feeling of dominance or control, which is the colonial culture that reconstructs the local culture using the benchmark of the dominating culture. Epikuros and the Stoics represent the construction of the master, and the mastered is imposed on Paul, as seen in the imposition of the word 'peleter' (English: 'babbler') in Greek *σπερμολόγος* (*spermologos*), which refers to a bird that collects seeds here and there, a person who likes to collect junk in the market, a person who collects other people's ideas and then teaches them to others (Haenchen, 1997, p. 571). Also said to be "the bearer of the teachings of foreign gods"

There was an attempt to discredit or denigrate Paul and his culture, which was considered inferior or unequal to the dominant Epicurean and Stoic cultures. Paul's Jewish culture as inferior to the more dominant Epicurean and Stoic culture

in Athens. As the more politically and intellectually powerful cultures, the Epicurean and Stoic cultures sought to restructure and dominate the Pauline culture, which was perceived as weaker.

It is a form of "cultural colonization", where a stronger, dominant culture attempts to define, interpret and control a weaker culture. This process not only happens physically through conquest, but also symbolically through demeaning and discrediting the culture that is considered inferior. Thus, this statement explains the power dynamics and cultural domination in the dialog between Paul and the Epicureans and Stoics in Athens.

The Areopagus Council as a Negotiation Space (Verses 19-21)

The curiosity of those who exchanged ideas with Paul prompted them to present him at the Areopagus. The name Areopagus is also the name of a small hill northwest of the Acropolis in Athens. The Areopagus Council was the oldest institution in Athens, dating back to the time of legend, and although its powers had been curtailed it still held great authority, especially in moral and religious matters. It was therefore natural that a 'herald of the teachings of foreign gods would be brought before it' (Douglas, 1992, pp. 79-80).

The Areopagus Council saw what Paul was saying as strange things that they needed to know, because they were basically people who were thirsty for knowledge about something new. From Paul's observation of their situation and way of life, Paul utilized their curiosity to build communication and interaction, by creating a healthy communication through exchanging ideas or holding discussions.

The Council of Areopagus, was a legal institution that could decide on matters of religion, morals and various authorities (Bruce, 1980, p. 353). Paul was considered to want to introduce new teachings (Willimon, 1988, p. 142). Paul's emergence as a representative of the new teaching in the midst of the culturally and religiously established Athenian society created a "tension" or "ambivalence" between the old and the new.

Here can be seen the efforts of the Athenians to maintain their cultural dominance and religious authority. The Areopagus acted as an authority, authorized to regulate and recognize belief systems that were considered legitimate. When Paul, as a representation of the new understanding, entered Athenian territory, the local people viewed him as "something foreign" that needed to be placed under the supervision and authority of the Areopagus. This indicates an attempt to maintain the hegemony of the local Athenian culture over the new understanding that Paul brought. On the other hand, bringing Paul to the Areopagus can also be seen as an attempt to facilitate negotiation and exchange of ideas. The Areopagus became a space where Paul could present his teachings and interact with the Athenians. Bringing Paul to the Areopagus, an important place for thought and debate in Athens, can be seen as an attempt to facilitate negotiation and exchange of ideas between Paul and the Athenians.

This reflects an attempt to understand and adapt to something considered "foreign". It can be seen in the sentence "May we know which of these new teachings you are teaching?". The Areopagus became a space where Paul could present his teachings and interact with the people of Athens. There is an effort to

understand and adapt to something considered "foreign", namely in the sentence "Let us know which new teachings you teach". Instead of rejecting Paul's teaching, they wanted to "know what it means." On the other hand, the request to "know the new teaching" also indicates an attempt to maintain the dominance of the Athenian culture. Paul's teachings were seen as "something foreign" that needed to be managed and recognized within their own framework.... One of the traits of the Athenians was curiosity (Albright & Mann, 1967, p. 169). There was interaction and exchange of ideas, with the main focus on "knowing new teachings". The attitude of the Athenians and strangers interested in "talking about or listening to something new" showed ambivalence. That is, having both curiosity and fear or anxiety about things that are considered foreign or new.

Cross-Cultural Dialogue Verses 22-34

When Paul approaches these people with his actual address (verse 22), he begins with a reserved but warm respect. The language is well chosen, "...I see that in all things you serve gods". The word "highly devoted" in Greek is δεισιδαιμονεστέρους (from the root δεισιδαίμων meaning religious) which can also be translated as "very religious". The NIV translates this word as religious, while the Bahasa Indonesia Sehari (BIS) Bible uses the word "very religious". The approach was with neutral language. Paul approached them with great care. Paul did not mention that he walked through the city and found many graven images; instead, he mentioned 'their idols'. Paul's words indicate that he was approaching them to build bridges of cross-cultural dialogue that respected differences and sought to find common ground with the Athenians. There is nothing in Paul's words that judges other people's religions, denigrates other people's religions. Paul explained his teachings using a way of thinking based on cultural references familiar to the audience at that time. Furthermore, Paul also uses cultural references that already exist and are known by the audience and relates them to his teachings. Thus, there is a connectivity between his teachings and local understanding. In a postcolonial context, it is important to analyze how the delivery of new things is often seen as a form of cultural inculcation from a strong power to a weaker group of people so that local cultural identity occurs identity crisis and imported culture from the ruler becomes very dominant or called cultural colonization.

Among their objects of worship, Paul also found an altar with an inscription: To the unknown God. There is an opinion that this inscription comes from a legend that tells the story of a plague in Athens. Every effort was made to appease the gods to stop the plague, but to no avail. One of the wise men of the time took a flock of sheep to the top of Mars hill and let them loose. Where the sheep stopped, an altar was built to the 'god who has no name'. The sheep were then sacrificed there. This worked and the plague in Athens disappeared, and health returned (Carson, 2017, p. 291). The legends that were believed and the idols that were worshipped continued to live and be preserved in Athens, and Paul used these concepts as an entry point for his teachings. "What you worship without knowing it, I preach to you." In the religious life of the Athenians, they worshipped many gods and there may have been gods that they did not know in depth or perhaps they did not

understand the meaning of the existence of the dawa. So Paul introduces "the one they worship without knowing him."

Through this approach to cross-cultural dialog, Paul created opportunities for dialog and reflected a deep awareness of the cultural context around him. By choosing subtle and neutral diction, he opened the door for deeper dialogue, further demonstrating that he relied not only on his authority as an apostle, but also on his understanding of cultural beliefs and practices. Paul was willing to listen and appreciate different perspectives, recognizing that every culture has values and meanings worth understanding.

The Areopagus Council became an arena of cultural struggle and negotiation, where Paul's teachings confronted the Athenians' cultural dominance and religious authority. Paul as a Jew presented his arguments to the Gentiles (Albright & Mann, 1967, p. 170). As a Jew, Paul's position was different from the Athenians. In this different position, Paul conveyed/dialogued the teachings that the Athenians considered foreign. It was popular at that time that the Athenians were very religious people (Bruce, 1980, p. 355). However, the word *δεισιδαιμονεστέρους* (deisidaimonesterous) in the KJV is translated with the word *superstitious* which means believing in *superstition*. So what was considered religious for the Athenians was superstition for Paul. This shows the difference in perspective between Paul as a Jew and the Athenians in viewing religious practices. In a position of being controlled, Paul fought back against the Athenians who controlled him. Paul resisted and negotiated with the Athenians in social relations. In the position of being dominated Paul went and stood at the Aeropagus. Paul went through a negotiation process to create a common understanding and find space for his teachings that were foreign to the Athenians. ΑΓΝΩΣΤΩ ΘΕΩ Ὁ ἀγνοῦντες: to the unknown God, Paul's goal was to make the unknown God known, through three concepts: first God does not need a temple, second man must seek God, and third Monotheistic (Dibelius, 1956, p. 27). The desire to seek God was there, the worship was there but the object was wrong (Willimon, 1988, pp. 142-143). In this negotiation at the Areopagus Paul does not directly say that the Athenians' religiosity is wrong, but rather Paul responds to the religious search for an unknown God. The Athenians were searching for an unknown God, Paul filled and answered that void. Paul tried to create space for his different teachings, without directly rejecting or blaming the religious practices of the Athenians. In this negotiation process, there was a hybridization between Paul's teachings and the religious understanding of the Athenians. Paul accommodated and connected his teachings with the existing religious desires of the Athenians by accommodating terminology and concepts familiar to the Athenians in conveying his teachings. This made it easier for the Athenians to understand and accept Paul's different teachings. Through this strategy, Paul tried to create a common ground between his teachings and the religious understanding of the Athenians. Paul did not directly reject the religious practices of the Athenians, but rather tried to connect them with his different teachings. Paul used the speculation of the Athenians' concept of God to explain the "unknown God" concept.

The Athenians introduced an unknown God, utilized by Paul to introduce God, the concept of God was introduced according to the universal concept, namely

the Creator God, who rules over heaven and earth. Paul used Natural Theology. From nature to faith, from observation of nature man comes to faith. Paul used nature as a basis to inspire faith. Paul used Natural Theology to have a cross-cultural dialog with the Athenians (Willimon, 1988, p. 143). So that there is no longer an unknown God. God was known, in God human beings lived, as it was also in the religious narrative of the Athenians conveyed by their poet "for we are of the seed of God also" the Athenians were also of the seed of God, which was understood as human beings in the image and likeness of human beings (Bruce, 1980, p. 360). Paul places himself in the "in-between space" between the Athenian concept and his doctrinal concept where there is negotiation, hybridization, and the possibility of creating new understandings that transcend previous boundaries where there is negotiation, hybridization, and the possibility of creating new understandings that transcend previous boundaries. A new synthesis is created by using similarities to build a bridge between the two. In other words, Paul does not immediately position himself fully within the theological discourse of his teaching. Paul places himself in an in-between space, where he tries to understand and connect the Athenian concept with his doctrinal concept. In this process, Paul identifies similarities between the two concepts. In this case, the Athenians' concept of humans as the "seed of God" has similarities with the Christian concept of humans being created in the image and likeness of God. By utilizing these similarities, Paul sought to build a bridge between the Athenian understanding and his teachings. Rather than simply imposing his doctrinal concepts, Paul tried to create a new understanding acceptable to the Athenians. Paul was in a "in-between" the two discourses, not fully within either.

Paul spoke to the people of Athens who lived in a Roman colonial context. Paul uses the phrase "the age of ignorance" to refer to the past, before the presence of the gospel. This can be seen as a critique of the colonial view of colonized peoples as "primitive" or "backward". Paul declares that God does not despise their past, but now calls all people to repentance. Paul emphasizes that God "commands all men everywhere to repent." This statement of equality challenges colonial hierarchies and shows that the gospel is for all people, regardless of their social status or culture. Paul announces the coming of the day of righteous judgment by the one whom God has appointed. This gave new hope to people living under the domination of colonial powers, that there was a divine tribunal that would restore justice. God had "given to all men a proof" of the day of judgment through the resurrection of Jesus. This affirms human dignity and provides hope that all people, including the colonized, have the opportunity to be justified before God.

Resistance and Hybridity (verses 32-34)

Paul had brought the Athenians' understanding to the core of his teaching, which was the authority of God who would one day judge the world. But the matter of resurrection from the dead was something beyond the reasoning of the Athenians, so there was a rejection by not believing in the reality of resurrection. But some who heard Paul's teaching believed and joined him. The Greek New Testament uses the word κολληθέντες which means to join, from the root word κολλάω which means to combine, join, associate, unite, cling to work, touch. The NIV translates

this word using the word followers which means followers, while in Bahasa Indonesia Sehari (BIS) it is translated with the word siding (Sutanto, 2003, p. 735). Aorist passive participle masculine plural nominative verb. The Aorist Tense is meant to express that something has happened or has been done, not to express continually or repeatedly done (Efird, 1990, p. 58). They were several men including a member of the Areopagus named Dionysius and a woman named Damaris and those who were with him.

An ambivalent response was seen in the reaction of Paul's listeners. Some scoffed about the resurrection, while others wanted to hear more. This indicates a sense of hesitation and uncertainty in accepting Paul's concept of resurrection. Some of Paul's listeners responded by mocking or rejecting the idea of resurrection from the dead. This can be seen as a form of resistance or resistance to the new teaching brought by Paul, which is different from the previous beliefs of the Athenians. As for those who accepted the teaching showed an attempt to accept, accommodate, and negotiate the new understanding that Paul presented with their previous beliefs. Some people, including Dionysius and Damaris, decided to join and believe. This can be seen as a form of hybridity, which is the combination of the Christian understanding brought by Paul with their previous cultural and religious backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that Paul's dialog in Athens is a significant example of the interaction between the Christian faith and the dominant culture. Paul's cross-cultural dialogue approach, which respected the local culture and created space for dialogue, became an important element in delivering the gospel message. Through strategies of hybridization and negotiation, Paul successfully bridged the differences between Christian beliefs and the religious practices of the Athenians. This finding emphasizes the importance of dialogical approaches in cross-cultural and culturally different societies. The postcolonial approach also provides a new perspective on the relationship between religion and cultural domination and how cross-cultural dialog can lead to a more inclusive understanding.

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