

“LUCIAN BLAGA” UNIVERSITY OF SIBIU
FACULTY OF THEOLOGY

***INCULTURATION AND MISSION IN SAINT PAUL’S ACTIVITY
AT ATHENS
(ABSTRACT)***

PROFESSOR: PR. PROF. UNIV. DR. AUREL PAVEL

Ph.d. STUDENT: ȘTEFAN MĂRCULEȚ

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Keywords: Saint Paul, Athens, inculturation, mission, Areopagus.

List of abbreviations:

A.B.-*Almanah Bisericesc;*

B.-*Biblica;*

D.E.M.-*Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement;*

I.B.M.R.-*International Bulletin of Missionary Research;*

I.R.M.-*International Review of Mission;*

R.B.-*Revue biblique;*

O.-*Ortodoxia;*

R.T.-*Revista Teologică;*

R.Td.-*Reformation Today;*

S.M.C.- *Studia Missionalia Svecana;*

S.-*Saeculum;*

S.T.-*Studii Teologice;*

V.Ch.-*Vigiliae Christianae;*

ZNW-*Zeitschrift Fur Die Neutestamentliche Wissesnschaft.*

Introduction

Analyzing a Biblical text from a missiological perspective is very different from what specialists in Biblical research are doing in their works. It is difficult if not impossible to separate missionary meaning of a biblical text from other meanings analyzed by Fathers and analyzed by researchers in this field. In fact, any biblical text can be and has to be analyzed from missiological perspective. For this reason, a large part of the present research is based on a wide range of works in the field of hermeneutics within our access to such a work, facilitated by libraries in the country and abroad. We did not want to achieve a sterile work, secluded in a technical language without the message and purpose, as unfortunately many studies are.

In recent years, research mission, pastoral theology and other fields abound in works that deplore the secularization process, the departure of societies from Christian precepts and even blaming all manifestations of modernity. Few are those who try to create bridges of dialogue with modern culture that surrounds us, for the sake of two thousand years of tradition without understanding that the greatest danger is an enclavisation of Christian communities and a transformation of the Church in different forms of Talibanism. Of course, in any case should not abandon what is specific doctrinal and inherited from the Apostles, but anchoring of the Church in reality is absolutely necessary. As St. Paul spoke to the Athenians with a language, a rhetorical style and familiar examples of their thinking in the same way the Church must find ways to communicate in the context of modern culture people, secular.

If the first part of the paper it was analyzed in detail the concept of inculturation, where this term comes, what that relevance has the concept for contemporary missionary theology, in the second part of the paper it was analyzed in chapters II and III, the text of Acts 17:16-31, the main source for the missionary work of St. Paul in Athens. I embraced Romanian form of *inculturație*, translating the English term *inculturation*, not *inculturare*, as it is encountered. When the term is used as a verb, we use *inculturare*.

To see how the Judeo-Christian ideas of Apostle and philosophical ideas existed at that time among the Athenians entered into dialogue/conflict, it is necessary to review the main currents of thought and religion with influence in high circles of the Greek old city. The purpose of this part of the paper is not to be a comprehensive presentation of philosophical and religious movements. This topic is treated in much larger works, I could tell even in entire libraries. I found it absolutely necessary for this research approach, but also for the readers more or less familiar with this area, to present broadly constituents of Athenian culture from

the time when St. Paul arrived here to preach Christ. I could not analyze elements of inculturation of speech in the Areopagus, where the Apostle uses not only quotations from Greek literature, but elements specific to the Greek rhetorical methods, without knowing the Athenian cultural interest, perhaps unique in world history.

The core part of the work is undoubtedly the Areopagus discourse analysis. Beyond the form, content and context of the speech, which can be ignored, we proposed that in every important part to identify not only the missionary teaching of St. Paul, but also constituent parts of a process of inculturation started in the first contact of Judeo- Christianity, brought by the Apostle in Athens, and the Greek culture of the city. We insist on some key elements of discourse, such as quotations from Greek poets such as Cleantes and Aratus and we will explain what it means for a missionary to be anchored in the realities of the community where he teaches. We will see how the greatest Christian missionary of the first Christian centuries make a way to the Gospel, if we can express in this way, in the vast Greek culture . History shows us what it means for global Christianity the old Greek world and its philosophical thinking for the efforts in formulating doctrines and also for the worship life of the Church. All have their roots in the seed planted by St. Paul in a symbolic land: Athens, with its heart, the Areopagus court. The biblical paradigm of inculturation, as we like to call the Areopagus speech is and will always be a living example for every missionary and especially for any missiological research . We could say that Providence took care that this part of the book of Acts to remain a landmark for any Christian mission . History and current times show that humanity is marked by a multitude of cultures, which often intersect, influence each other and often produce not only a reconciliation between peoples, but also conflicts. For this reason, the last chapters of the work try to be an analysis of how the Church should relate, should proclaim the Gospel message, to make room for Christ in a world of multi- cultural diversity and unimaginable identity. Without any kind of judgment or criticism to old or new missionary approaches , we can say that very often the Church has failed in its mission in some contexts, precisely because the missionaries did not know how to understand and to get into the cultures in order to create a connection with Christ, that should not be made by cultural settings borrowed or imposed , but by local conceptual elements. Imagine the Areopagus speech, or the sermons in Agora, based on Jewish culture. Would have had St. Paul even the minimal attention from the audience ?

Using important works of contemporary missiology, in the last part of the paper we will see what place has this biblical paradigm of inculturation not only in research but also in the Church's missionary practice. It is a kind of updated research up to this point of the paper .

Finally, we consider in this paper an overview of global concern to study and deepen this theme of inculturation and we will see that the text of Acts 17-16:31 has never missed from the scriptural foundation for this theological concept. Worldwide, aboriginal peoples' requirements, particularly in the southern hemisphere, were heard in the modern era of historic Churches, widespread in those countries. Ignorance of pre-Christian cultures and beliefs of these aboriginal peoples caused a forced christianization and the consequences were incredible. It was noted a reluctance among people to European cultures, imposed to those people with christianization. These historical examples negative stresses once again, if proof were needed, that the process of inculturation must be spread in all places where Church makes mission or evangelization using cultural elements specific to these communities, among them being all the time beliefs revealed naturally, as St. Paul found in Athens an altar of "unknown god " as a starting point in his mission.

I. Inculturation, ontological dimension of mission

In the theological discussion about *inculturation*, several anthropological terms were analyzed and used to determine the deeper meanings of the term. These anthropological terms were presented by Evelyn Monteiro¹ as follows:

- a) *adaptation* or *accommodation*, the most used terms relating to the mission and " Church planting " . Analyzing these terms, it is concluded that they express a superficial relationship between the Christian message and local cultures. In addition, the terms expressing only a marginal identification of the missionaries with the missionary ethos and local context ;
- b) *indigenization* has been reviewed and rejected because of the limits of theological meaning as it has in some languages ;
- c) *contextualization* refers to the theological formation of priests in the "non-Western" countries ;
- d) *acculturation* - denotes a contact and an interaction between cultures, as Catholic theology defined it . The weakness of this term is that in most of the times this relationship can be understood as a deeply insert of the Church into the culture.
- e) *enculturation*, is a sociological term that refers to a person that is becoming a part of a culture. This was the term that led to *inculturation*. By changing a single letter, maybe an insignificant change, it led to the definition of a concept with deep theological meaning. Inculturation is a term used in missiology that defines the interaction between the Gospel and

¹ Evelyn Monteiro Church and Culture. Communion in Pluralism, Cambridge Press, Delhi, 2004, p 52-53.

culture of peoples. In this interaction, personal beliefs are replaced by the divine word, but remain attached to the local cultures. Anthropological foundations of *inculturation* suggests a dynamic relationship, an insertion of the Gospel in a culture, an interaction and a mutual criticism.

Evangelical missions in other parts of the world than West have raised centuries ago local Churches and the need to find indigenous expressions of Christianity, in accordance with the traditions and culture of peoples. This local search Churches of self-government, self-support to increase his own power, was called indigenization, which, as we saw above was discussed when analyzing the process of inculturation and the most appropriate term to describe it. Indigenization did not mean, however, breaking the original meaning of the Gospel, as it was brought by Western missionary. This principle of indigenization has been widely discussed in the last century in ecumenical theological environment to further develop a contextual theology, in addition to the dogmatic, systematic one².

If the terms listed above belong to Western thought, it is noted that in Eastern theology, the term designated to show the relationship between the Gospel and culture is *reception*. In Orthodox theology, *reception* refers to the way of how the Holy Tradition approaches by static dogmatic definition of the councils and through her dynamic creativity. In fact, Holy Tradition is the result of perception of the Gospel into new communities, through the work of Grace, and this brought with it, unfortunately, many deviations from the true faith. Here is the theological role of hermeneutics, through which the Church comes into contact with the inculturated people and supports a reception of the Gospel in order to explain and clarify the theological concepts through the language and specific cultural elements³.

In 1962, Joseph Masson used for the first time the term *inculturation*, in his *L'Eglise ouverte sur le Monde*, although Pierre Charles introduced the term *enculturation* in theology, with the same meaning, before Masson did. The latter said that people began to appreciate, analyze and protect their cultural origins, including languages, arts, symbols, and therefore supports Masson, a Catholic missionary must be "inculturated in a variety of forms"⁴.

Jesuits embraced this theological term with its meaning, and in 1977, P. Arrupe Jesuit superior, presented the Synod of Bishops term. In november 1977, the bishops issued an

² Alan J. BAILYES, "Evangelical and ecumenical understandings of mission" in IRM, vol LXXXV, no. 339, October 1996, p 489.

³ Pr. prof. dr. Ion BRIA, *Hermeneutica teologică. Dinamica ei în structura Tradiției*, Ed. "Andreiana", Sibiu, 2009, p.82.

⁴ Hilary MBACHU, *Inculturation Theology of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15*, European University Studies, Series XXIII, Theology, vol. I, Bd. 520, Peter Lang, New York, 1995, p. 35.

official document on catechesis and considered it "an instrument of inculturation". Next year, P. Arrupe submitted a letter to all Jesuits about inculturation. For the first time, the term *inculturation* occurs in a papal document on april 26, 1979. This paper address the Pontifical Biblical Commission and urged the study of "a cultural integration of Revelation". The document was an important step for inculturation theology, since at that time, the committee referred to evidence that processes of inculturation appeared for the first time in the history of the Church, even in Scriptural context. The topic of inculturation was discussed from then more often at several meetings of Vatican⁵.

At the same time, the concept of inculturation was adopted and discussed in Protestant theological and missionary circles. In 1973, G.L. Barney proposed the use of the term for creating a link between faith and culture, and in 1974, the Federation of Asian Bishops expressed a desire to have a church that is "indigenous and ignorance at the same time"⁶. Moreover, at the time, so-called Protestant societies such as the Society of Jesus, insisted on inculturation, as a process of understanding the reality in terms of the different contextual perspectives. People can accept and understand the gospel in their own cultural, domestic, social, personal, liturgical and theological contexts⁷. This is possible just by the power coming from the Son of God Incarnate, explained Archbishop Annastasio Yannoulatos. All human cultures of creator spirit were known a watershed, through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, when He became the center of cultural creation, the Logos that underlies human existence. The turning point of cultural creation lies precisely in the Incarnation of the Son of God and not the novelty of an idea, a philosophical system, or even the revelation brought by any prophet. Christ identifies Himself with humanity and becomes a Man. His mission is not limited to correct the humanity and its cultural creations, but He became the ultimate goal of any man, which exceeds the human condition to deify⁸.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ ANNASTASIOS YANNOULATOS, Arhiepiscop al Tiranei și a toată Albania, *Ortodoxia și problemele lumii contemporane*, transl. In Romanian by drd. Gabriel Mândrilă and pr. pr. prof. dr. Constantin Coman, Ed. Bizantină, București, 2003, p. 100-101.

II. Philosophy and Religion in Athens of the first Christian century

Even though Athens had not anymore a political power in the time of St. Paul's arrival here, as it had been in the past, the city had primacy in philosophy, but he lost that of art and science, after 500 years of glory in the Mediterranean world⁹. Athenians were still living the spirit of Socrates and Pericles, and philosophy was marked by two movements:

a) *Epicurean philosophy* that encourage total materialism, denying the existence of higher spirit and claimed that each day should be lived with joy and without anything that can bring suffering¹⁰;

b) *the Stoic philosophy*, which brought in Greek thinking the concept of *Supreme Reason*, master of the world and the life of the universe; every human being has the sense and everyone's life should be guided by it, in abstinence from pleasures¹¹.

The first philosophical movement was particularly concerned about achieving happiness and the second philosophical movement, have as main idea of living life in harmony with nature. The two philosophical schools promoted two different concepts: *happiness* and *nature*, but basically, ethical translation of both was identical, like virtues to which they refer¹².

We note that the old concerns of Hellenic thought about the human being and its place in the universe were replaced in the philosophical schools of a more ethical outlook on life. Human existence on earth and its place in the cosmos are seen in this perspective¹³. Abstract notions such as "Good" of Plato, or "superhuman cosmos" of Aristotle were replaced in Athens with Epicureanism and Stoic ethics.

The two philosophical doctrines were born in the same period and even competed. Hubert Grenier considers that the birth of these two philosophical doctrines was also due to the political context of the time, when the old Greek cities have gone, leaving the place of great empires, in which the person was insignificant. The danger felt by Greek man in this new political context lead to the search for a release, through philosophy, and Stoicism and Epicureanism were organized in order to address this concern. If Stoicism sees man from the perspective of universe and considers its salvation through everything that is great, contrary

⁹ John J. KILGALLEN, "A Brief Commentary in the Acts of the Apostles", Ed. "Paulist Press", New York/Mahwah, 1988, p.138.

¹⁰ Jean-Paul BENOIT, "Combats d' Apôtres. Traduction et Comentaire du Livre des Actes des Apôtres", Ed. "Société Centrale d'Evangelisation", Paris, 1957, p.148.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² George Arthur BUTTRICK (general editor), "The Interpreter's Bible" (vol. IX), Ed. "Abingdon Press", Nashville, 1954, p. 233.

¹³ Philip F. ESLER, *The Early Christian World*, vol. 1, Ed. "Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group", Londra și New York, 2000, p. 62.

Epicureanism urges man to retreat to its limits. Morals of the two doctrines are diametrically opposed. Stoicism is an equivalent of a physics of fullness, and Epicureanism is a physics of the vacuum. First promotes human solidarity, the model of cosmic union, the other promotes an atomic dispersion model and glorifies isolation. But both point out to the same thing: obtaining the calming of the soul and removing fears and turmoil¹⁴.

According to Bertrand Russell, Epicurus was charged in dense rows by stoics that he came from a obscure family and that his mother was a charlatan priestess. Stoics accused the two that they went into the villages for reading lovely purification as Diogenes reported¹⁵. On the other hand, following Stoicism, the universe has a law that determines the laws of the land. To live in harmony with nature is one of the requirements of this law, and nature has its own rationality, you have grown to know the universe¹⁶. The two philosophical teachings regard the achievement of Happiness in different ways. Meanwhile, both philosophers agreed that supreme forces of the world can dominate humanity and that Greek and Roman gods are not the images of these forces. This concept was an advantage for Christian mission in Athens, and St. Paul used this idea¹⁷, as we shall see in later chapters.

More about the two philosophical currents will be in subdivisions that stop here to expose the general doctrines of the two streams that have marked the thinking in Athens at that time.

Athenian culture during the coming of St. Paul in the old to the Greek city was not like that of previous eras, because philosophy and literature were in transition, especially that it began to appear new ideas that will shape until the final of the third century AD. However, at that time dominated the Hellenistic spirit. In ancient Greek thought, it vanished the idea of a supreme God, to which people must show obedience and He saves them in different situations. Hellenism promote the power of the individual to achieve on their own power through detailed study of the principles governing the world and thus Aristotle, the problem spot occupied by humans in the universe is replaced by the problem of morality¹⁸.

In this cultural context, religion does not have much importance to the Athenian mind, much concerned with philosophy, even though Epicurean philosophy admitted the existence

¹⁴ Cf. Hubert GRENIER, *Marile doctrine morale*, transl. in Romanian by Marian Vazaca, Ed. "Humanitas", București, 1995, p. 51-52.

¹⁵ Bertrand RUSSEL, *Istoria filosofiei occidentale*, vol.1, transl. by D. Stoianovici, Ed. "Humanitas", București, 2005, p. 262.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 64-65.

¹⁷ J. J. KILGALLEN, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

¹⁸ PATRIARHUL IUSTIN., *Opera integrală 4. Activitatea Sfântului Pavel în Atena*, Episcopia Argeșului și Muscelului/Anastasia, București, 2002, p. 262.

of gods, whose existence was totally detached from the earthly world to be a model for every human being which is in the process to transcend this world. Epicureanism is interested in existential issues related to the universe and man, given that the movement adopted the theory of Democritus about atoms, the cells of the existence of the world¹⁹.

Besides the two major philosophical currents of Athens in the time of arrival of St. Paul, we can add some Hellenistic religions that had some influence in the life and mentality of the Greek people. Even in those days, the Eleusinian mysteries still had an important role in the life of the Greeks. Located 14 miles west of Athens, Eleusis was the center of initiation into the mysteries of Demeter, events that start each year in September and held for 10 days. At first, the celebration take place even in Athens, at Eleusinos during the summer, as a consideration for the political domination of the city. There were even small mysteries as a sacred way to Eleusis²⁰.

Another important religious movement in the Greek world was the worship of Isis, the Egyptian goddess whose famous cult has spread to many other countries. Initiation into the mysteries of Isis have some similarities with the mysteries of the goddess Demeter and therefore it was easy for the Athenians to adopt this cult. Isis cult was an important cosmological Hellenic religions, being perceived as a "queen of heaven" and "the Good Luck"²¹. If we add to this the myriad gods inherit the religious mysteries of ancient Athens Greek pantheon, which St. Paul was stunned when he came to the city and saw the temples, we can form a picture of the ancient Hellenic cities at that time and society of the time.

¹⁹ Philip F. ESLER, *The Early Christian World*, vol. 1, Ed. "Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group", Londra și New York, 2000, p. 63.

²⁰ *Ibidem.* p. 67-68.

²¹ *Ibidem.* p. 70-71.

III. The mission of St. Paul in Athens

Areopagus was also called "the hill of Ares", the Greek god of war; but the name does not necessarily refer to the Areopagus hill itself, but the meeting of elders. Athens had few places to speeches and lectures to the people, and this council have the task to judge and approve what the speaker conveyed²². Some editions of the Bible in English were translated and adapted the word "Areopagus" by the "council of the Areopagus" (Jerusalem Bible) "court of the Areopagus" (New English Bible) or "meeting of the Areopagus" (Today's English Version). Ernst Haenchen reminds that Cicero suggest that the Areopagus, composed of a small group of aristocrats (30 people) loyal to Rome, was really supreme governing authority Athens²³. Pseudo-Platonic dialogue mentions Axiochus Areopagus as an educational committee, and Plutarch mention him as "an academic committee" of the court. Cicero was asked by a decree of Areopagus to quit Roman citizenship and to stay in Athens²⁴.

St. John Chrysostom explained in the Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles why the Athenians no longer had their own laws, but were subject to the Romans. St. John wonders why Paul was brought before the old council proceedings. Holy Father states that the Athenians took the new teacher that the troubled the city before the prestigious council of judgment known as bloodshed only to intimidate this new preacher . While the Athenians were but to listen, to philosophize and to teach all day, yet they were strangers to what St. Paul preached. St. John Chrysostom observes these in his exegesis of the biblical text²⁵. Perhaps the eloquence and enthusiasm of St. Paul in preaching things unknown to them, those who are considered to be the core of philosophical and religious thought, had to be stopped, intimidated by authorities, in order to satisfy their ego . But it was necessary that the words of the Apostle Paul to be found guilty of certain things that should attained the spiritual peace of community in the Greek city.

Areopagus role in matters of education seems to have been the main purpose of the meetings. But above all, it seems that it accorded license to the 'teachers' of young men²⁶. Some researchers such as Ernst Curtius and Sir William Ramsey, claim that Hill of Ares, known as the place where gathered the Areopagus court, could not be the place where St. Paul delivered his speech in Acts because it was too small for an assembly of people who had

²² B. M. NEWMAN și E. A. NIDA, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

²³ Ernst HAENCHEN, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1971, p. 519.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ SFÂNTUL IOAN GURĂ DE AUR, *Omilia 38 la Faptele 17, 16-17*, in Philip SCHAFF (editor), *Nicene and post-nicene Fathers*, vol. series I, vol. 11, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1996, p. 437.

²⁶ Robert H. GUNDRY, *A Survey of the New Testament*, The Paternoster Press, (Exeter, Devon: 1970), p. 240.

followed him there, to listen the foreign philosophy presented here²⁷. But M. Dibelius does not agree with them and show that, in fact, Hill of Ares have enough space for people. Moreover, this kind of topics and episodes like this one disturbed daily activities and led the Athenians to go with it up the hill to talk to the Board²⁸.

Even though the Apostle Paul spoke to the Athenians on Mars Hill, it is important to note that St. Luke tries to emphasize in this chapter from his book that the Apostle had preached and it had a powerful impact on the people of ancient Greek city. It is important to emphasize here that Luke wanted to show that St. Paul's speech before the Athenian elite was at that time an important event, an event that captured the attention of citizens. This may be why Luke chose the Areopagus where Apostle preaching to the Athenians and report this event in his book, even if in reality it is not taught there. The importance of the Areopagus as a symbol of high intellectual meetings, product supreme Athenian culture may be a reason that determined to put this episode Luke the Apostle and Greeks meeting in this place²⁹.

The respect for the Athenians religiosity is an important element of the attitude of St. Paul in the Areopagus, even though for a Christian missionary with a Jewish past first contact with Athens was a shock. Apostle respected and appreciated this among the Athenians and not condemned it. This is very important for contemporary missiology. Any missionary in any context should respect the people, its religiosity and personality. The process of inculturation can not happen if people do not comply with the missionaries, the past and the old tradition of the people concerned. And at this point, the example of St. Paul in the Areopagus is really a Biblical paradigm, which is not always taken into account in history, and the missionaries did not meet respect many people's past. Nor nowadays, in the context of Christian proselytizing, respect for existing beliefs in the community is often missing. There were almost to our day extremely negative theological attitudes on foreign beliefs of Christianity. For example the dialectics of Karl Barth. Also, there were attitudes at the other extreme, who had as a direct consequence of relativistic Christianity. These attitudes are, however, far from patristic spirit of the first Christian centuries, who always found the balance on this issue, given the fact that it was necessary to live together with people of other faiths, more than ever. Philosophy, ancient thinking ideas were taken into account and philosopher as Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria or and Eusebius emphasize the universality of religious sentiment and the

²⁷ M. DIBELIUS, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p.80-81.

²⁹ A. E. HARVEY, *A Companion to the New Testament* (ediția a doua), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 452.

existence of natural religion³⁰. Knowing the history of St. Paul, it is necessary to consider that the Areopagus speech is influenced by his Jewish formation. This is why, in some parts of speech can recognize the influence of the Old Testament texts. It is the case of objects of veneration, which are mentioned in the Wisdom of Solomon 2:20 p.m.; 3:17 p.m., in a pejorative way³¹. On the other hand, being a Roman citizen, Saint Paul had a Greco-Roman education, even if the information about this education are too poor. He spoke Greek in Athens, showing that he had knowledge of Greek rhetoric, even though he considers himself a man without virtue rhetoric, a field in which is an amateur (II Cor., 11:6). However, his famous letters to churches betrays a previous education in Greek and familiarity with the Greco-Roman³².

Echoes of Old Testament theology can be seen in other points of the speech. They are not only considered parallel or similar texts, but also expressions of Jewish tradition in a different language. For example, the attitude of the Apostle regarding idolatry can not detach from the prophet Isaiah critique of such heathen manifestations. Luke uses these echoes to describe the theology of St. Paul 's firm against idolatry, he condemned a former Athens as did the prophets of Israel and Judah. St. Paul did not deviate from the Jewish prophetic tradition and attitude can be likened to the great personalities of the Old Testament, often being likened to some of them. Hellenic sources of discourse are obvious, especially since the Apostle himself quotes the Greek poets, but beyond that there is a connection with the Jewish prophetic tradition , and this aspect can not be ignored in the analysis of the biblical text³³.

Jewish culture that the Gospel has found place now came into contact with the Hellenistic one and the Gospel message is one that leads these two human creations to their perfection. On the other hand, it is important to emphasize this to show that St. Paul did not denied his Judeo-Christian identity in this adaptation and contextualization missionary activity. As we shall see, Christian missionaries should not be sacrificing their identity in dealing with other cultures in which they bring the Gospel message.

The purpose of the Apostle in the Areopagus speech is not only to identify the "unknown god" of Athens as his God, which is proclaimed by the Gospel. St. Paul tries since

³⁰ G. K. BEALE and D. A. CARSON, *Commentary in the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2007, p. 594.

³¹ Ronald F. HOCK, "Paul and Greco-Roman Education", in J. Paul SAMPLEY (editor) *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: a Handbook*, Trinity Press International, Harrisburg, 2003, p.198.

³² Ronald F. HOCK, "Paul and Greco-Roman Education", in J. Paul SAMPLEY (editor) *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: a Handbook*, Trinity Press International, Harrisburg, 2003, p.198.

³³ K. D. LITWAK, "Israel's Prophets meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17, 22-31", in *B.*, vol. 85, fasc. 2, 2004, p. 202.

the last part of verse 23 to show that its purpose is not to question the "unknown god". Its mission is to proclaim God, the One that Greeks honored before without knowing Him. Pauline proclamation is more than an act of information, rather than to make known something they did not know³⁴. So a Christian mission does not end just by a simple update knowledge of a community. It's more than that. Top made by proclamation should be continued through confession was continued through a full presentation of the revelation made by Jesus Christ, who requires all to be missionaries at any time and in any place.

St. Paul does not want to preach a new god, to add a deity in the Greek pantheon; he would bring into the attention of the Athenians the God whom he loves and who really know Him, but they do not understand³⁵. Unknown God is the same God which Isaiah prayed and asked the Unknown: "Truly You are the hidden God, the God of Israel, The Redeemer" (Isaiah 45:15)³⁶.

Proclaiming "the unknown God" by St. Paul, the Greeks worshiped deity in an ignorant way, has three major points:

1. "Unknown God" is God and the Greeks do not know;
- 2.. God can be "known" if we look in the universe and recognize his work in Universal Order;
3. Yet God remains "unknown" if we do not know Jesus Christ³⁷.

In verse 28, St. Paul explains that God is not "away" from every human being: "For in him we live and move and are, as said, and some of your own poets for generations and we are His." In some international languages such as English, the final text was translated "His children and we" or "we are His followers," "his heirs". This is the focus of the speech, when the Apostle tries to gather together Hellenistic philosophy and divine revelation in the world. The first part of verse 28 seems to be a quotation from Epimenides or other sources³⁸. This theory of citations in the first part of verse 28, being from a work of Epimenides of Crete is supported by several specialists, but heavily contested by many researchers. Formulation of St. Paul in verse 28 seems to be found in the writings of the Stoic and therefore can not support the award of the first part of Epimenides³⁹. Even if it is not a quotation from the Stoic thinker, does not mean that St. Paul did not make an allusion to this philosophical system

³⁴ J. DUPONT, *op. cit.*, p. 391-392.

³⁵ R. I. PERVO, *op. cit.*, p. 433.

³⁶ G. K. BEALE and D. A. CARSON, *op. cit.*, p. 594.

³⁷ B. M. NEWMAN and E. A. NIDA, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

³⁸ L. A. LOISIE, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

³⁹ M. GOURGUES, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

represented in Areopagus by many followers from the time of arrival of the Apostle in the Greek city. Similarities to Stoic thinking can lead us to the thought that St. Paul knew very well who listened and spoke on their meaning.

In this first part of verse 28 we see a triad of verbs: to live, move and being. This triad of verbs was used to emphasize the independence of St. Paul man to God in all sides of its existence. It is interesting that, although it is a quote or a verse from a poem Greek, though this part of verse 28 has deep links with Stoic thought. St. Paul's conclusion about the relationship between man and God reminds us of the relationship between the concept of life and the movement of Stoic philosophy and the connection of the latter with existence. Stoicism thought the links between these three concepts in hand, but never put them together, as did St. Paul at the time of the speech in the Areopagus. It is his merit to be united these concepts in such a context.

Other researchers argue that although there is clear evidence that Stoicism did not treat the three concepts together-life movement and existence-though St. Paul and St. Luke had known works stoic as they are approached in this manner and should be cited in those sources, some even belonging to Epimenides⁴⁰. Hellenic literary similarities, with different schools of philosophy are evident in this part of the speech, through the expressions used by the author, even if they are or not quotations from Greek works. Expressing ideas is common to Greek thought. This means that the author was well aware of the Greek text thought borrowed from it common expressions. This loan is important in expressing ideas not only for Biblical studies and theology, but also for history. This Biblical text attests not only the the historical existence of of currents of philosophical thought from the Greek, but their wide dissemination and knowledge circles thinking ahead⁴¹.

"As they said, and some of your own poets" is a classic formula of Hellenism to enter a quote from a specific author. Joseph A. Fitzmyer believes that the quotation would be of a single poet and not more, as one might think⁴². Using this formula in the speech shows once again how well he knew the Apostle and those for whom it was as willing to use these expressions in the Hellenistic.

⁴⁰ CK Barrett, "A critical and exegetical commentary ...", p.846-847. Sense must be distinguished in this part of the verse to which Greek philosophy see God. Here, St. Paul sees a pantheistic sense of God's relationship with the creature, but shows connection that individuals have to have divinity. Triad of verbs is here Judeo-Christian sense, not a philosophical, stoic, even if these concepts are present in Athenian thinking with other meanings (ibid, p.847-848).

⁴¹ M. GOURGUES, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

⁴² JA FITZMYER, Acts of the Apostles ..., p 610. Aristotle and Licurg are just two names of Greeks thinkers who used their formula works like this now classic intellectual circles of the Greek city of Athens (*Ibid*).

The second part of verse 28 is actually a quote from the Stoic poet Aratus (315-239 bC) who use this idea in a poem about celestial phenomena. The poem is dedicated to Zeus, the supreme god of the Stoics, which is personified here as one that established the "times" and "seasons" Apostle mentioned before. Aristobulus of Alexandria, a learned Jew of the first century after Christ, believed that Zeus is a specific reference to the Jewish God and therefore the quoted poem Zeus changed his name to that of God⁴³. The poem speaks of Zeus remembered and power:

"From Zeus to start; He never leaves us us mortals
nameless
Streets are full of Zeus
markets and all people;
And full is great as the heavens; ALWAYS November
We all need to Zeus.
For we are also his children; and the goodness of
the people gave positive signs
And woke people at work, reminding them
Livelihood⁴⁴.

Aratus was a disciple of Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism. The idea expressed in the quotation from *Phaenomena* was common the Stoic thinking an to Cleantes⁴⁵. Edwards argues that Luke's quote of Aratus is actually a takeover of text that Aristobulus⁴⁶. Regardless of where it would have taken the quotation from Aratus, in his work or in citing this text in other works, it is important that the fragment is original and known at the time the Athenian cultural environment. Aratus's poem which relates to the origin of the world in the same God was used in the Jewish. Aristobulus, a Jewish-Hellenistic author would have used this poem in explaining and interpreting biblical essay about the creation of the world⁴⁷. Should we understand from this that in the Hellenized Judaism, such arguments and texts were well known Greek literature? Did Saint Paul known well this literature and had extracted from it these arguments?

Another opinion is that the quotation from Aratus was actually very common and known to the world as a common expression. St. Paul, or St. Luke, the author of the narrative

⁴³ L. A. LOISIE, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

⁴⁴ ARATUS, *Phenomena*, apud L. A. LOSIE, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

⁴⁵ Everett FERGUSON, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, third edition, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2003, p. 362.

⁴⁶ M. J. Edwards, "Quoting Aratus: Acts 17:28", in *Z.N.W.*, nr. 83, 1992, p. 269.

⁴⁷ C. H. TALBERT, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

would have known this expression comes from Hellenism and therefore should be used in his speech. This expression would be equivalent to the so-called "Freudian slips", an expression which refers to an unconscious involvement in speech and no knowledge of the work of Freud. This quotation from Aratus would have been a reflection of the speech and not necessarily a knowledge of Greek poetic⁴⁸. Of course, the original quotation from Aratus has a profound pantheistic sense, and St. Paul knew this very well. The meaning of the poem does not mean that these words acquire a Christian meaning. If St. Paul criticized idolatry from the beginning, did not rule out the possibility that the Athenian religion to be returned to the true faith. In the same way the text of Aratus Christian gets this way. Through the Holy Spirit, all men may become the sons of God, and this could be challenged if it was argued just the poets own words⁴⁹. It is masterly way in which St. Paul manages to Christianize philosophical thinking that preceded the proclamation of God in the city of Athens, and for this reason it is a paradigm shift in missiology forever.

The claim that these words of St. Paul are found in Greek poetry first appeared in *Stromata* of Clement of Alexandria, which mentions the poet Aratus. It seems that the quote is from the first verse of a poem by Aratus and name appear on the manuscript of Homer and his *Eutalie*. Other documents, such as Syriac translations or works of other church fathers, such as Eusebius and St. John Chrysostom, appears only the poet Aratus. About this poet knows that he was born in Soles, Cilicia, around 310 bC, from a family originally from Tarsus. He was astronomer and physician, poet at the court of Antigonus Gonatas macedonian, editor of the Homeric poems to King Antiochus I Soter of Syria, professor of mathematics and student of Aristotle and Zeno. His most famous poem is *Phainomena*, praised and Calimah of Cyrene⁵⁰.

The second Greek poet quoted by St. Paul, Cleantes, was a contemporary of Aratus and led for 32 years the philosophical school of Zeno. Along with his mentor and Hrisip, poet Cleantes is considered one of the most important representatives of Stoicism. His Hymn to Zeus masterfully synthesizes the teachings of Stoicism. As Aratus, Cleantes its creations evoke human kinship with the divine, otherwise seen since Greek antiquity idea⁵¹.

⁴⁸ B. R. GAVENTA, *op. cit.*, p.252. Even had, St. Paul merit remains to be known that expression and have used it in the environment where he was born. Language has always expressions, parables, words of wisdom and indeed were used to highlight an idea without knowing orginea that quote. But St. Paul know very well that it comes from Greek literature and used it at the time and place.

⁴⁹ C. K. BARRETT, „A critical and exegetical commentary...”, p. 848.

⁵⁰ PATRIARHUL IUSTIN, *op. cit.*, p. 267-268.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 268-269.

St. John Chrysostom shows that the idea of divine providence and the bond between Creator and creation expressed in verse 28 of the Areopagus speech is expressed by Greek poets, but with reference to the god Jupiter. Paul did not here any eulogy to pagan deities, shows St. John Chrysostom, but used this text in Greek poetry known to express the reality of the relationship with God. The Apostle did not use the words " by him " but " in Him" , to emphasize even more profound the bond with the Creator and our Proniator. Also, the phrase " in Him" expresses the immateriality doctrine of the Divine Being. This expression leads the human mind to perceive God as immaterial, lacking everything needs a created world. As used in early speech example shrine unknown , without impiety and idolatrisumul praised them, as here, the Apostle Paul uses a well- known and expressed in Greek literature to express his teaching about God and exactly this phrase taken from Greek poetry. Praise is offered to God, not Jupiter. Source from which mankind derives its existence is not " impostor " Jupiter, but God himself now he teaches the Apostle. On this God not only Athenians knew him not, but imagine him in an immaterial, giving it characteristics of creation. That is why St. John Chrysostom sees here a double accuse and blame the Athenians⁵².

Patriarch Iustin is showing that it is pointless to try to identify the poet quoted by St. Paul in the Areopagus. Apostle quoted a saying of the people, but an idea that appears in ancient Greek poetry and philosophy clearly. The great Apostle has used this approach for the quotations from Scripture, so Christian arguments, had no effect to the audience. St. Paul adapts arguments against this reality and brings the audience to an argument of their own culture, their poetry and philosophy, so much cherished. The difference between the meaning given to Greek poetry this report between man and God and that preached by St. Paul is that the former have a pantheistic sense⁵³. Max Pohlenz claims that the quote in verse 28 is actually the Greek poem of Epimenides, because the syntax of the second clause is against this theory. Kauppi shows that the original text mentions the phrase "by him" and not "in it"⁵⁴.

However, these quotes made the connection between Zeus and "life / living" in Greek mythology as it was in the familiar Jewish writers. Pervoe quote from the Filocrates Aristeas "God, creator of all things and watchman, That it is He Whom They honor we honor all of us, Even if we address Him as Zeus or Dis Differently, by the old name signifies That all

⁵² St. John Chrysostom, *op. cit.*, p 440-441. Obviously as St. John Chrysostom observed in the entire speech in the Areopagus as the Apostle Paul used the pre-Christian elements, elements of thought and experience to introduce and adapt Gospel message to an audience so profound related past and his pagan heritage. St. John Chrysostom comments on this Biblical text as reference to set the framework for dialogue Apostle is still a strong argument to show that Areopagus began a process of inculturation, the planting of the Gospel in Athenian culture.

⁵³ PATRIARHUL IUSTIN, *op. cit.*, p. 270-272.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

creatures comes to life and being". Pervo use the same identification of Zeus with Dis to show That the " unknown god "from what the Apostle is the same God worshiped as the Greeks Which creator and source of life. Relationship to God has three dimensions: life movement seen in animals caracteristică plant and Humans Existence. While for others, it refers to immortality⁵⁵.

The Apostle Paul used this method of quoting Greek knowing that in the Athenians' minds they had an incontestable authority and far greater than the preacher. Greek poets quoted by the Apostle in the Areopagus were considered fathers wisdom, even the sons of the gods, and their words, their words could not be challenged in any⁵⁶.

In terms of rhetoric, to quote of an authoritative source in view of the audience is a common procedure when the speaker wishes to strengthen those exposed. If it quoted from the Scriptures, works without any authority or value before Areopagus, had no basis for argument. The audience can be convinced only by arguments drawn from sources proven to be representative and authoritative. This argument comes before the final exposure, the Apostle reveals direct faith in the resurrection and judgment to come, things hard to accept the audience. But this confession was well prepared by citing sources known, familiar and accepted by the Areopagus⁵⁷.

⁵⁵ R. I. Pervo, *op. cit.*, p. 438.

⁵⁶ PATRIARHUL IUSTIN, *op. cit.*, p. 266-267.

⁵⁷ B. Witherington, III, *op. cit.*, p.530-531. Again seen here as well was built in the Areopagus speech persuasive speaking and how much maturity dovedeit St. Paul when he showed faith in the face of the Athenians.

IV. Mission in Athens: a missionary failure?

The mission of St. Paul in Athens did not bring many converts, but it is seen as a "victory", because the Apostle showed great courage in the pagan environment, especially where Socrates was known as a previous case. He showed a great confidence and trust, being alone among the Athenians. That is why it can not be considered a failure his approach to Athens, but an example of tact in action⁵⁸. Because figures such as Dionysius and Damaris received Christian teaching makes us think of a missionary success and not a failure. This is because the two were part of the elite of Athenian society at tht time, as we saw above, deeply connected to their pagan past. St. Paul was hard to convince many of them to convert to Christianity. However, converting the two and referred to the Apostle tells us precisely that mission was successful. It was not mentioned by name other conversion, although verse 34 tells us clear that "some" thought the teaching and among these onlz two are mentioned. Along with this, Luke tells us in verse 34, others were converted with them. They were not mentioned or not focused on these conversions, in order to emphasize the success of St. Paul among the highest circles of Athens , by persuading the two to go to the new religion .

St. Paul's missionary success in Athens is the fact that he was able to find a connection point, a well-known cultural foundation audience from which to start the discussion and gain their attention and understanding. But do not forget that cultural values that St. Paul made reference in his sermon in Athens was subject to criticism from the Christian vision, which calls for repentance. These references to their cultural values of the past captured the Athenians attention and became then a commitment to obey and a better listening. This commitment entailed the culmination of his mission, namely Athens Areopagus speech⁵⁹.

Historical encounter between Christianity and the Hellenistic world has shown that we cannot talk about inculturation of Christianity without notice the process of christianization of culture. This process is more than an adaptation to local language and mentality, a simple contextualization. The process involves a transformation of conceptual resources and local values existing in that culture, to target a new synthesis, the Christian message has a catalytic role. Is there at this point only a hellenization of Christianity, as often stated, but a christianization of hellenism⁶⁰. The speech transformed and translated the pauline message

⁵⁸ E.G. WHITE, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

⁵⁹ D. G. PETERSON, *op. cit.*, p 492. The first virtue of the Holy Apostle Paul is to have known how to win the Athenians. It began first by critics, which opened the door for dialogue, his preaching. As new converted Saul was led by apostles Barnabas (Acts 9: 27) to the Jerusalem, in the same way here he was also led to the supreme authority of Athens, the court from Areopagus. Its persuasive power, inspired by the Holy Spirit, had succeeded in both cases (*Ibid*).

⁶⁰ C. GEFREE, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

into the language and the fundamentals of cultural values in Athens at the time. But at the same time, their thinking was brought to Christianity, to what God first transmitted to all peoples through His people from Palestine.

The apostle Paul used the concepts and arguments familiar to the audience just to meet them half way, as one might think. All ideas borrowed from Hellenistic literature, even those against idolatry, are nothing more than common with missionary purpose of his presence in Athens to proclaim Jesus Christ as the only way of saving the soul from perdition. This missionary attitude of St. Paul of using any argument to people away from idolatry, is often seen in his Epistles⁶¹. So his missionary work keeps its purpose in the mission of Athens and not to a defense against charges that he brought a new god in the ancient Greek city. But if we pursue these allegations and we see how the Apostle answers, we realize the wisdom of St. Paul in front of a different context. Although its presence in Areopagus is an unique episode, we can notice a continuity in the need to defend himself from some allegations from the listeners. If at Philippi, St. Paul and Silas were accused of slave masters and that they would introduce Jewish customs (Acts 16: 19-23), and if in Thessalonica Jews accused the two that disturbs the city with their teaching (Romans 17:1-8), in Athens St. Paul was put in the charge that he abused his teaching the new⁶².

The biblical text is very important to highlight the hardships faced by a missionary and to provide an example of good practice out of a tricky situation. In no way can be said to approach St. Paul in Athens is a missionary failure, no matter how few listeners were converted, although the number mentioned by St. Luke is considered by many the true. In exceptional way in which he managed to cope with this new challenge is the success of St. Paul in Athens. It was a defeat of the Apostle to the intellectual elite, but a demonstration of eloquence and adaptation in context. Abrupt end not only shows insufficient training and perhaps a wrong time for Athens to receive the gospel. This happened later, but the presence of St. Paul in Athens years ago still remembered as a milestone. The small number of converts betrays a failure, but the response is related to the response of Areopagus court that they will hear about it another time. In other words , the time of conversion was not then , the arrival of St. Paul.

⁶¹ B. WITHERINGTON, III, *op. cit.*, p. 518-519.

⁶² B. R. GAVENTA, *op. cit.*, p 254. As in the case of Philippi and Thessalonica, those who accused were the "guilty" of those facts. In Athens, idolatry is condemned by St. Paul, but it was a habit crept into the city, in the midst of people who astonished by curiosity and their freedom from any covenant (Ibid).

V. Acts 17 for contemporary missiology

A fundamental thing to remember the work of St. Paul in Athens and of great interest to the Church's mission today is the opening of the Apostle to the heathen. Luke's narrative is so broad and lofty, particularly the speech of the Areopagus, that impresses the reader, especially since in any other chapter of Acts we cannot find another sermon like this, in the pagan environment. This is because the opening of St. Paul to the Greek pagan, and ability to get the band to Jewish to contextualize the Gospel message, and paradigmatic remain fundamental to Christianity. Paul passed the barrier of labeling as "pagan" as "others" and walk among them to speak about God⁶³. Often we witness an "anathema" to a secularized society, even labeled as pagan in some cases, without showing the opening of St. Paul's Church to go among them and preach their meaning. Risk of attitudes of this kind is that the Church is seen as an enclosed, rigid and not keeping the precepts, including helping the fallen.

Church History gives us wonderful examples of conversions after mission and of nation became christian in mass and more. Beyond those moments in church history, we find holy missionaries and elected people. The question is whether missiology today can have such characteristics that could change the missionary field? Dana L. Robert brings an example of missionaries, one of the fifth century, St. Patric who was active as a missionary in Ireland and second, Bernard Mizeki, "Apostle of Shona", a mozambican missionary of the nineteenth century in South Africa, including the Shona people. If the first of these is better known, the second missionary who lived and worked near Nowadays, not so well known internationally. Born in 1861 in Mozambique, Bernard Mizeki spent his youth in South Africa in a difficult period for the African continent, after the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, when Africa was divided spheres of European influence⁶⁴. After primary education in South Africa and the baptism in the Anglican Church, he served for five years as a missionary to the Shona people. During this period, he learned their language and seven African languages, besides English, Danish, Portuguese, French, Greek and Latin, already known. He accompanied the villagers in their daily life, led religious services, taught to sing hymns and even had a garden for vegetables. But his great challenge among the Shona population was local religion and faith. Bernard Mizeki knew the concept of "ngangas" local tradition soothsayers and healers and he challenged it. Shona people believed that evil spirits of the ancestors used witchcraft against

⁶³ R. Penna, *op. cit.*, p 382. Even if the fervent Jew in other time was troubled by the depths of pagan events in Athens, he found the strength to assist them and to adapt its message to be understood and perceived as such the average asking.

⁶⁴ Dana L. ROBERT, *Christian Mission. How Christianity Became a World Religion*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009, p. 160-161.

the people. Only " ngagas " identify and destroy the work of spirits. Instead of continuing this Bernard Mizeki showed that through prayer, evil can be abolished and animal sacrifices and killing of twins, considered evil have been decimated by missionary. He taught people that Mwari name of the supreme god of Shona traditional religion is a loving God who has heard the needs of the people. At the same time, he protected his garden worship ancestral spirits by marking several crosses. The protest against British colonialists forced to leave the region and leave his wife in the mountains, where miraculously disappeared and his body was never found. His close disciple, John Capuya, accepted after this miracle to be named as the first member Shona converted to Anglicanism⁶⁵. This is an example of a missionary who managed to bring the Gospel among the local culture, as St. Paul has done in Athens. We see that the paradigm of Acts 17 found equivalent in other eras of Christianity. But even contemporary necessary mission has to be led by charismatic people and people elected? It is the mission of the twenty-first century based on these missionaries? What responsibility we all have and what we can do as Christians to be missionaries in our context, spreading the word of God in cultures around us? What are the characteristics of contemporary mission? These are some questions that must respond to contemporary missiology.

If we think of an ecumenical perspective, we can say that mission today involves the activity of all Christian denominations. At this point, the image that Christian Duraisingh, the second Secretary-General of the World Council of Churches brought to Singapore in 1975, the consultations for the future of the 1977 World Mission Council is representative: "A traditional dinner at rectangular table, as I myself have seen and participated in during the past few years, the hosts sit at the head of the table, with their bountiful resources are theirs and showing that they are in control. More importantly, when I host as I would like to get something to eat, it is agreed that I should shut up until host decides to give me a second help. Everything happens at the table is a clear demonstration that a receiver is passive, and totally dependent on the goodwill of the host's decision "⁶⁶. Metaphor of the round table where everyone is equal and should contribute something to "travel" or be a "journey" has been used to image the ecumenical meeting in Singapore, where cultural elements have certainly played a role important. Common understanding, communion and cooperation must be the key to success for today's mission. Question by Andrew Morton, a member of the Council for World

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 163-164.

⁶⁶ The quotation is taken from D. Preman NILES, *From East and West. Rethinking Christian Mission*, Chalice Press, St. Louis, Missouri, 2004, p 34.

Mission, shows the need for this collaboration: "When we change a community's self-interest to one of the common interest is a commitment to the mission?"⁶⁷.

Cooperation in mission is to help Churches grow together. If the period of church planting, the planting of the Word is over, now is the time to help these churches to develop in its own context. In this sense, knowledge of local customs and cultures, languages and beliefs in that context are the main requirements. About this, Elmer S. Miller brings a personal example of changing the way of doing mission. Being a missionary family in the Chaco, they saw with their own eyes how they changed the privileges for the mission. Missionary family called Buckwalter, he could be that local church leaders. They had to change their status to partners. Sermon their jobs led her baptismal initiatives have been replaced by listening to drum leaders, advisers and their local councilors⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Elmer S. MILLER, „Transformations of the “Missionary Mandate” in Jan-Ake Alvarsson (editor), *The Missionary Process, S.M.S.*, XCIX, Uppsala, 2005, p.102.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

Conclusion

The mission of St. Paul in Athens is a biblical paradigm of mission and inculturation, a true example for all times. The current context in which the Church carries out its mission is very difficult. We can not speak of a particular culture in a particular space, because migration has mixed communities and made possible interference between cultures. Then, globalization and secularization have removed a lot people Christian values. Media and current trends of thought have a tremendous influence in people's lives that a dialogue between the Gospel and cultures seems impossible. Moreover, we are witnessing a recall , a " exculturation " of the Gospel from culture. Human life is not guided by Christian values, law and social order are produced by other principles, that if the Church is no longer held in such a world. Of course, Christians have always lived in this world as if they were part of it, like I'm from another world, the Kingdom of Heaven. But we must not forget that the Church has the mission to bring earthly sons in her womb , and to make this possible , you should find the best ways of dialogue and communication.

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