

Christians.³¹ Insofar as they are now Christians but once were not, Luke's readers have been on both sides of the threshold and thus share some experiences in common with all of the Athenian characters. The speech and its literary framework together contribute to characterization. Luke's characters in turn function as vehicles for theological reflection, and a reader's capacity for identifying with certain characters in a story makes possible the actualization of the text's meaning. The Areopagus narrative serves as a sobering reminder to Luke's readers that God's call to repentance, while directed at all irrespective of nation, will be ignored more often than not. In this light, the narrative mitigates the sense that the Jewish mission has been, by comparison with the Gentile mission, an utter or unique failure.

³¹ The biblical resonance of the Areopagus speech may imply the presence of scattered Jews in Paul's implied audience or may reflect a concern on Luke's part to present the good news in terms that speak to Jewish Christians in his own day. Notwithstanding the exceedingly sweeping yet quite common claim (e.g. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts: 246-47*) that the Christian mission was limited exclusively to Gentiles when Luke is writing, it is very possible, even probable, that there remained in Luke's audience Jewish Christians who had converted years earlier when there was still an active, if not thriving, Jewish mission. Paul's sermon in this perspective has not only a Gentile audience in view but serves as an aid to Christians reflecting on the full significance of their conversion from Judaism as well.