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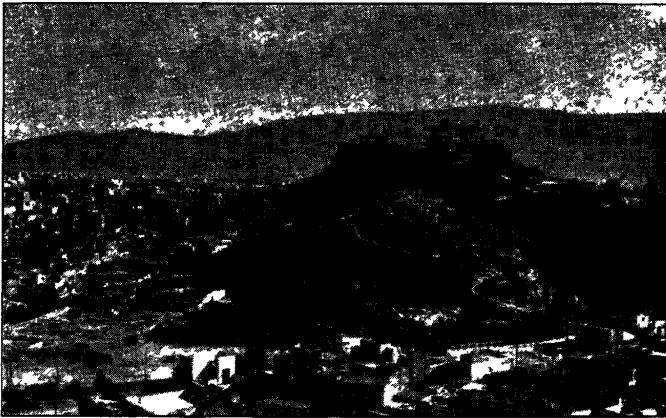


Fig 1 Athens In the background is the Acropolis, directly in front is a smaller hill the Areopagus

## **ARCHAEOLOGY AND ST. PAUL'S JOURNEYS IN GREEK LANDS**

### **PART II. ATHENS**

We have already traced the first part of the Apostle's European tour (Alexandria Troas to Beroea) and have noted the archaeological remains and discoveries in those Macedonian cities<sup>1</sup>. From Beroea Paul took ship for Athens and reached there probably in the autumn of the year 51 A.D. In all probability his stay was short, and he seems not to have planned a missionary effort but to have intended merely to wait there for Silas and Timotheus to come on from Thessalonica.

His ship doubtless docked at Piraeus, the busiest harbor of Greece both in classical and modern times. It is true that in Paul's era Corinth had forged ahead of Athens politically and commercially, and there was doubtless evidence everywhere of the destruction wrought both in Athens and

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Piraeus by Sulla and his Roman troops in 86 B.C., but one must still have been able to see in Piraeus remains of the great naval base which had made Athens the mistress of the eastern Mediterranean in her day. Since connection with this port was essential to Athens in case of siege, as early as the fifth century B.C. two parallel "long walls" (probably destroyed by Sulla) had been built to connect them, and Piraeus itself was strongly fortified. Relatively well preserved sections of these walls and ruined ship-sheds, docks, and harbor works may even now be traced.

Let us suppose that to cover the 5 miles from Piraeus to Athens and to tour the city proper Paul took the same route as Pausanias, a traveler of about a century later who has left behind him a detailed account of his visit. He proceeded from the harbor in a northeasterly direction and entered Athens by the "Dipylon" (double gate) on the west side of the city, where roads from Piraeus, Corinth, the Academy, and Boeotia converged (Fig. 2. This sketch will help the reader to keep his bearings through the subsequent pages). As he approached the gate he passed through a large cemetery and noticed that many distinguished men had been buried there. It was the custom in Greek cities to bury the the dead outside the walls alongside the principal roads. The "Dipylon Cemetery" was the largest and finest of Athens' burying grounds, and several of its superbly sculptured tombstones remain standing along the main "Street of Tombs" (Fig 3). This district was also called the "outer Kerameikos" from the fact that an early and important potters' quarter was located there. Greek (1870 ff.) and later German (1907-16, 1926 ff.) archaeologists have carefully examined graves in this cemetery dating from the eleventh century B.C. down to Roman times, and their careful record of the groups of vases and other objects placed in the graves as gifts to the dead has contributed much to modern exactitude in the dating of Attic pottery. The Germans have continued working in the Kerameikos even after the outbreak of the present war, and in 1937 they erected a fine museum in this district to house the finds. It is named the Oberlaender Museum after the late G. Oberlaender, a German-American manufacturer of Reading, Pennsylvania, who contributed very generously to the excavation fund.

Pausanias (and probably Paul) then passed through the Dipylon and found himself on a long avenue flanked with large buildings leading eastward to the Agora (market place). The agora was the political, commercial,

and social center of the ancient town, and has its equivalent in the *plateia* of the modern Mediterranean town. It consists of a large open space (usually rectangular in shape) bordered by public buildings of religious and civic purpose. The synagogue of the Jews was apparently not situated in the Athenian Agora, for Paul preached "in the agora and in the synagogue." The Agora which Pausanias describes and where Paul "disputed daily with them that met him" was situated on relatively low ground just to the northwest of the Acropolis and almost directly north of the Areopagus. This district had been examined to some extent by German and Greek archaeologists, but the expense of purchasing the land and de-

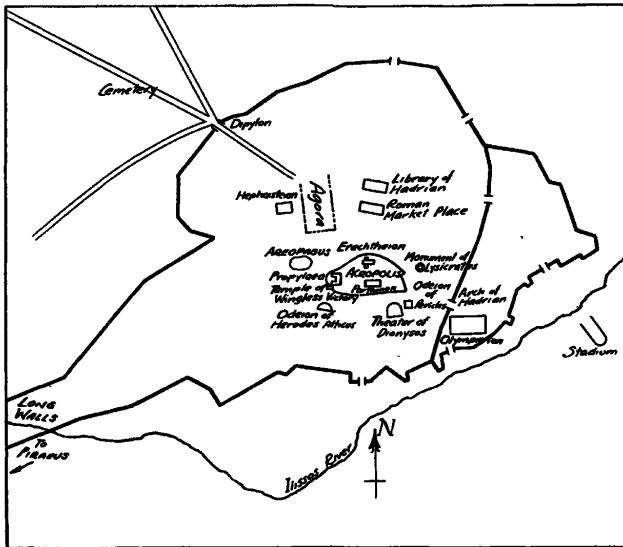


Fig. 2. Sketch map of ancient Athens.

molishing the modern dwellings had prevented any thorough excavation of the area up until 1930. Then the Greek government, realizing the desirability of such a project and wishing also to get rid of the unsightly shacks so near the Acropolis, offered to allow the American School of Classical Studies to undertake this task. A special Agora Commission was formed and work has been carried on for the past nine years. The project has been financed largely at the personal expense of Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and the large staff of excavators has been under the direction of Professor T. Leslie Shear of Princeton University. The results of the work have been provisionally published season by season in a new journal entitled *Hesperia*, and a vast amount of new material in connection with the Athenian Agora and with Greek architecture, sculpture, epigraphy, numismatics, and ceramics in general is already available (Fig. 4). The Rockefeller Foundation has also contributed funds for a museum which will be built on the excavation site at the west end of the Areopagus and will accommodate the best of the finds.

Pausanias mentioned in order and often briefly described the buildings he saw in his tour of the market place, and, although certain questions are not entirely settled as yet, the situation of the newly discovered foundations corresponds remarkably well with his enumeration. The excavators have identified the ruins of the Stoa (i.e. a long narrow portico) of Zeus, in all probability the building where the king archon, the head of Athenian religion, had his offices; the temple of Apollo Patroos (the Father); the sanctuary of the Mother of the Gods; the Bouleuterion (meeting place of the *boule*), in which the Athenian Council of Five Hundred held its sessions; the circular Tholos, where each executive section of the Council was maintained at state expense during its term of office; the temple of Ares; and the Odeion or Music Hall, an auditorium where contests in musical and oratorical skill were held. The first five of these lay in a north-south line and closed the west side of the Agora (Fig. 5). The excavators have also laid bare the foundations of two great Stoa's running parallel along the south side of the Agora and have re-examined the Stoa of Attalos which formed the eastern boundary. Only on the northern side have the limits not been established, because the line of the electric railroad to Piraeus cuts through this section and only minor excavation has been attempted north of it. It is probably in that region that one should look for the Stoa Poikile (Painted Stoa) where famous historical paintings by Mikon and Polygnotos were on view. It was in this Stoa, too, that the philosopher Zeno lectured, and for that reason the system of philosophy of which he was the founder came to be called "Stoic."

These buildings date mainly from the fifth through the second century B.C. Two especially interesting constructions, the one much earlier and the other considerably later than these, also came to light. A chamber tomb of the Mycenaean period (late fourteenth century B.C.), which had been cut into the rock in the north side of the Areopagus, was found to have partially collapsed and sealed a deposit of tomb offerings including several fine vases, gold ornaments, and a beautifully carved ivory pyxis (toilet box). It seems from its size, richness, and the character of its contents that it must have belonged to a female member of the ancient dynasty of Erechtheus, so often celebrated in Athenian myths. The other construction is a very large complex of the fourth century A.D. in the central and southern part of the Agora. It is plausibly conjectured to be the site of the University of Athens. Even in Paul's time Athens retained her intellectual supremacy and was recognized as the university city *par excellence* in the whole of the ancient world. Paul, with his fine educational background, was therefore in a position to appreciate his surroundings. Indeed, it is not difficult to picture his interest as he wandered among these famous Athenian monuments.

Pausanias goes on to say that he saw a temple of Hephaistos "above the Agora and the Royal Stoa." This should refer to a building on the hill called Kolonos Agoraios just west of the Agora, and as a matter of fact the best preserved temple in Greece still crowns this hill (Fig. 7). It has long been called the Theseion (temple of Theseus), but Pausanias' account had led some scholars to identify it as belonging to Hephaistos. The Agora excavation included a thorough study of this temple and the surrounding area, and evidence of the existence of numerous metal working shops on

the slopes around the temple makes it virtually certain that it was indeed the Hephaisteion, temple of the god of fire and metallurgy. When the rock was cleared around the temple it was found that in Roman times holes had been dug in carefully arranged parallel rows—obviously for the planting of the shrubs and trees of a temple garden.

Our traveler of a century after Paul appears to have proceeded from the Agora eastward along the north slope of the Acropolis past the Prytaneion (the Town Hall) where the sacred fire of the city was kept burning and where honored guests were entertained. Most of this area has been cleared down to the rock in a series of campaigns from 1931 to 1939 under the auspices of the American School and directed by Dr. Oscar Broneer.



Fig 3 Street of Tombs

This "North Slope" excavation has produced a good deal of fine pottery, especially from the numerous ancient wells, and important sculptural and architectural pieces and inscriptions which found their way down from the Acropolis at various times. A very interesting item was the clearing of a deep shaft leading down to a well which was once connected with the upper Acropolis by a long ingeniously built stair. It was constructed in late Mycenaean times, when there are indications at other contemporaneous sites of extensive preparations to resist attack and siege. Also, much evidence, in the form of terracotta statuettes and other small finds, came to light in connection with numerous early fertility cults located in the caves and niches in this area. Chief among these was the cult of Aphrodite and Eros.

Below (north of) the North Slope there are impressive remains of the "Roman market place," a great undertaking financed by Caesar and Augustus and intended to supplement the older market square which had become congested with monuments. It consists of a rectangular open area with a series of shops and arcades along the sides. Its excavation was undertaken by the Greek Archaeological Society in 1890 and has been carried on intermittently up until 1931, but it is still unfinished because of lack of funds. A stone's throw farther north is the great library given to Athens

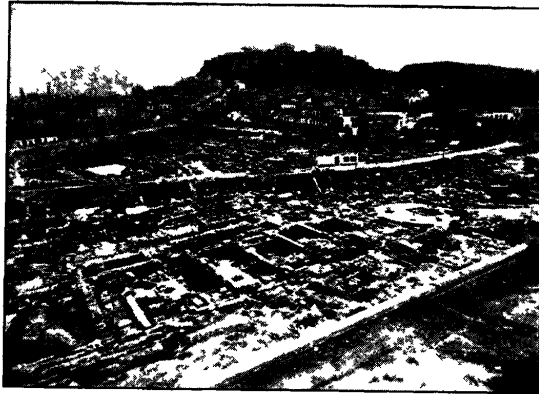


Fig 4 The Athenian Agora laid bare by American excavators

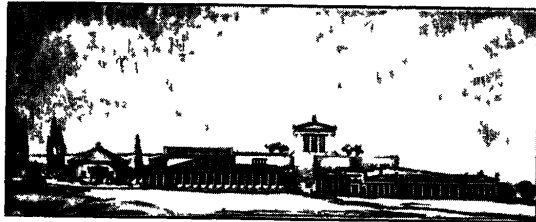


Fig 5 Reconstruction of the buildings of the west side of the Agora



Fig 6 Theater of Dionysos (photo by H Wagner)

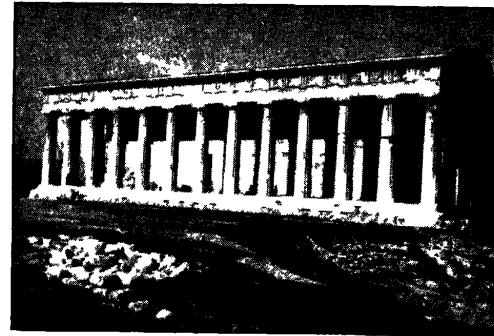


Fig 7 The Hephaesteion

by the Roman emperor Hadrian (117-138 A.D.), who was a lover of Greek culture and favored Athens especially. A somewhat earlier library, dedicated to the emperor Trajan (98-117 A.D.), has also been located in the Agora excavations just south of the Stoa of Attalos.

Pausanias continued around the north and east slopes of the Acropolis following the "Street of Tripods," so called because those who sponsored a successful chorus in the dramatic contests received bronze tripods and erected them on pedestals along this street. One of these pedestals, that of Lysicrates, is still to be seen just east of the Acropolis. It consists of a cylinder built up of blue and white marble and charmingly paneled with



Fig 8. The monument of Lysicrates.

some of the earliest Corinthian columns in Athens (335 B.C.). The bronze tripod which once stood on its marble roof has, of course, disappeared (Fig. 8). Not far from the southeast corner of the Acropolis is the Olympieion, the great temple of Olympian Zeus. Fifteen of its gigantic columns are still standing. It was still unfinished and roofless in Paul's day and owed its completion to Hadrian. Nearby is the arch of Hadrian, which marked the boundary between the old "city of Theseus" and the new and more extensive "city of Hadrian." Then, along the south side of the Acropolis the traveler saw first the Odeion of Pericles which was built to accommodate the musical contests at the great Panathenaic celebrations. It was destroyed by Sulla but was rebuilt on the same site. It was believed that this building was round because the shape is said to have been copied from the tent of the Persian king Xerxes, but excavation by the Greek Archaeological Society in the 1920's laid bare its outer walls and showed that it was rectangular and had a whole series of interior columns to support its roof. Next came the great theater of Dionysos, where the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes and their followers were produced. This structure, still fairly well preserved (Fig. 6), was remodeled time after time and its intricate history has been studied by several German

scholars. At the southwestern corner of the Acropolis a huge roofed theater capable of seating between 5000 and 6000 spectators was built by Herodes Atticus in memory of his wife, but this was after St. Paul's time and slightly after Pausanias visited the city.

The main entrance to the Acropolis has always been from the west, and it was from that direction that Pausanias approached. Its gems of architecture date almost exclusively to the fifth century B.C., the "golden age of Pericles." The impressive ornamental gateway, called the Propylaea, the exquisite little temple of Wingless Victory flanking it on the south, the majestic Parthenon, and the graceful Erechtheion with its celebrated "Porch of the Maidens" are all too well known to need comment (Fig. 9). The Greek Archaeological Service has just completed the rebuilding of the temple of Wingless Victory which had to be taken down to allow the



Fig. 9. Air view of the Athenian Acropolis. The large building in the center is the Parthenon. Behind it can be seen the Erechtheion. To the right is the Acropolis Museum; to the left, the Gateway (Propylaea). In the foreground to the right is the Theater of Dionysos; and to the left, the Odeion (Music Hall) of Herodes Atticus (*Arch. Eph.*, 1934-35, pl. 2).

strengthening of the supporting bastion. The only modern building on the hill top is the Acropolis Museum which houses the marvelous pedimental sculptures and free standing statues found in the debris used to level off the surface in the rebuilding following the Persian sack in 480 and 479 B.C. Between 1884 and 1891 the whole Acropolis area was examined down to bed rock by Greek archaeologists, and, in addition to rich sculptural and ceramic results, the foundations of a large temple were discovered immediately south of the Erechtheion. This was almost certainly that of Athena Polias, a temple which is often mentioned in Greek literature. However, Paul and Pausanias probably saw less of this building than one can see today.

Leaving the Acropolis, Pausanias visited the adjacent Areopagus, a much smaller hill lying directly to the west (Fig. 1). This was the traditional meeting place of the oldest political council of Athens. The Council of the Areopagus met on its summit, and since it was always connected primarily with trials of homicide and other heinous crimes, it convened in the open air—a precaution to avoid pollution. Pausanias tells of two white stones in this meeting place, the one on which the defendant



stood being called the "Stone of Shamelessness," and that of the prosecutor the "Stone of Pride." A rock-hewn stairway, mainly of ancient workmanship, still leads up to the hill from the southeast. Pausanias derives the name Areopagus from "pagos" (hill) and Ares, the Greek god of war; for a legend told of how the first case tried on the hill was a charge of murder against Ares. Thus, the translation "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill" is justified, since Mars is, of course, the Roman name for Ares. But another, and perhaps a more generally accepted, explanation would make the Areopagus the hill of the Arai (Curses), because, according to another tradition, the first trial on the hill was that of Orestes, who had been cursed and hounded by the Furies for the murder of his mother.



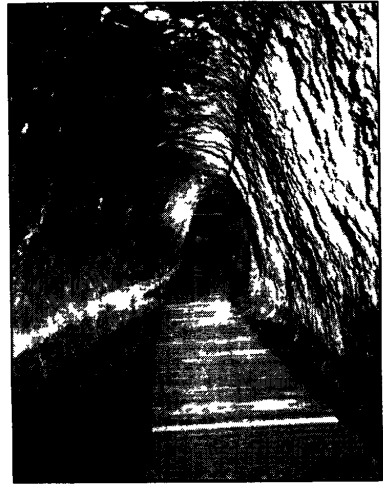
Fig. 10. On the Areopagus The cross above the rooster marks the traditional site of Paul's preaching as recorded in Acts 17.

Two of the problems in connection with the passage on Athens in the *Acts* are: (1) whether Paul was really taken before the Council of the Areopagus to expound his teaching or merely addressed the people in the Agora below, and (2) whether he was misquoting an inscription he had read when he says he saw an altar dedicated "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." Archaeology can hardly be expected to solve the first of these, but there is no historical improbability in Paul's being summoned before the Council of the Areopagus to defend himself against charges of impiety (Fig. 10). Socrates had been formally tried in somewhat similar circumstances four and a half centuries before. As yet no inscription has been found mentioning one specific "unknown god." Pausanias says that on the road to Athens from Piraeus he saw "altars of gods called unknown," and two late literary passages mention an unknown god. Hence, Paul may well have been quoting accurately from an inscription extant in Athens in his time.

If space permitted, one could mention many other excavations in and about Athens, such as the recent examination of the Pnyx, where the Athenian political assembly convened, of the fortifications of the city, and of Plato's Academy just to the west. Other extant monuments are also numerous—for example, the Stadium to the south across the Ilissos River, restored in gleaming white marble at the expense of a Greek

merchant of Alexandria to accommodate the first meeting of the revived Olympic games in 1896

Athens is still the capital of Greece, and its population, recently much augmented by the exchange of nationals between Greece and Turkey, numbers almost a million souls. Piraeus is still the greatest seaport of Greece and one of the busiest of the Mediterranean, and the whole area between the sea on the south, Mt Hymettus on the east, Mt Pentelikon to the northeast, and the Parnes range to the north and west is now a closely knit metropolis. The foregoing survey makes it clear that Athens is also the focal point for a study of ancient Greece. There the most numerous and



Figs 11 and 12. On the right is one of the Megiddo ivories, showing a Canaanite lady of cir 1200 B.C. On the left is a view of the tunnel of the Megiddo water system (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)

in general the best preserved ancient monuments are to be found, and there, too, are located the great national museums and the libraries and schools of the Archaeological Societies of America, Britain, Greece, Germany, and Italy. Hence, although it was not the most successful or important stop in St. Paul's travels in Greek lands, the space here devoted to Athens is perhaps not out of proportion to the purpose set forth in the introduction to this series of articles.<sup>2</sup>

*WILLIAM A. McDONALD, Lehigh University*

<sup>2</sup> Professor Homer Thompson of the University of Toronto very kindly furnished me with the photographs reproduced in Figures 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 10. Figures 1, 7, and 8 are photographs taken by the writer.



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