

Teaching Jesus in a world of many religions: globalisation and Christianity

Dean Zweck

Australian Lutheran College

ACLE 3, October 2008



Teaching Jesus among world religions

Christianity was a global religion centuries before the word 'globalisation' became trendy.

- 'From Jerusalem to the ends of the earth'
Acts 1:8
- Christianity becomes global in scope in the age of discovery – 16th and 17th centuries
- Christianity penetrates every continent in the age of colonialism – 19th and 20th centuries











REGIO
CIVITATIS





IN CHRISTUS REGIS.
THE HOUSE OF STANISLAW
POLSKICH BROTHERS
FROM BRITAIN GARDEN
AND MASS ASSOCIATION.
IN THE GREAT LAND
AND THE GREAT WORLD
THIS FORM WAS.
IDENTICAL ASSOCIATION
BROTHERS OF THE POLISH
GOVERNMENT IN GREAT
AND IT IS APOST'

"POMOC NAJ NA OJCZYZNY LONO"





中華聖母為我等祈

REGINA Sinarum ora pro nobis





ΤΗΝ ΠΑΡΑΝ ΒΑΓΙΒΑ ΜΕ ΕΙΣ ΤΕ ΑΝΑΤΙΘΗΜΙ
ΒΕΝΟΙΣ ΟΙΚΟΓΕΝΕΙΑΣ ΙΩΑΝΝΕΣ ΠΕΡΕΛΑΜΒΗ ΣΑΛΑΣ

Teaching Jesus among world religions

Examples of the globalisation of Christianity in Australia

- A concert of the religious music of a French Catholic played by a Chinese woman in a Uniting Church in Australia
- The ethnic mix of our school communities
- A world of many 'religions' in our schools

Teaching Jesus among world religions

Teaching Jesus in a world of many religions.

- How do we do this?
- What's the point?
- What's the content? What kind of Jesus do we teach?
- Where do we start?

Teaching Jesus among world religions

1. In a world of many religions, teach Jesus with gentleness and respect.
 - ... always ready to make your *apologia* to anyone who asks you about the reason (*logos*) for the hope within you (1 Pet 3:15)
 - The fragile situation of early Christians in the polytheistic world of the 1stC
 - How should we do 'gentleness and respect' in our teaching of Jesus?

Teaching Jesus among world religions

2. In a world of many religions, teaching about Jesus is a cross-cultural task.
 - The shift from the Jewish context of Jesus' ministry to the Greco-Roman world of the Gentile mission
 - Paul: 'I have become all things to all people'
 - What does this mean for us?

Teaching Jesus among world religions

3. In a world of many religions, teaching about Jesus must be grounded in the proclamation of one true and living God.
 - Early mission preaching/teaching: one true and living God; one Lord Jesus Christ
 - Why this point is so important for our teaching today

Teaching Jesus among world religions

4. In a world of many religions, it is important for Christians to recognise that 'the God revealed in Jesus Christ is the same God hiddenly at work throughout the world in all the religions of humankind' (Braaten).
 - Paul at Lystra, Acts 14:8-14
 - Paul in Athens, Acts 17:16-34
 - The recognition of Anutu in New Guinea

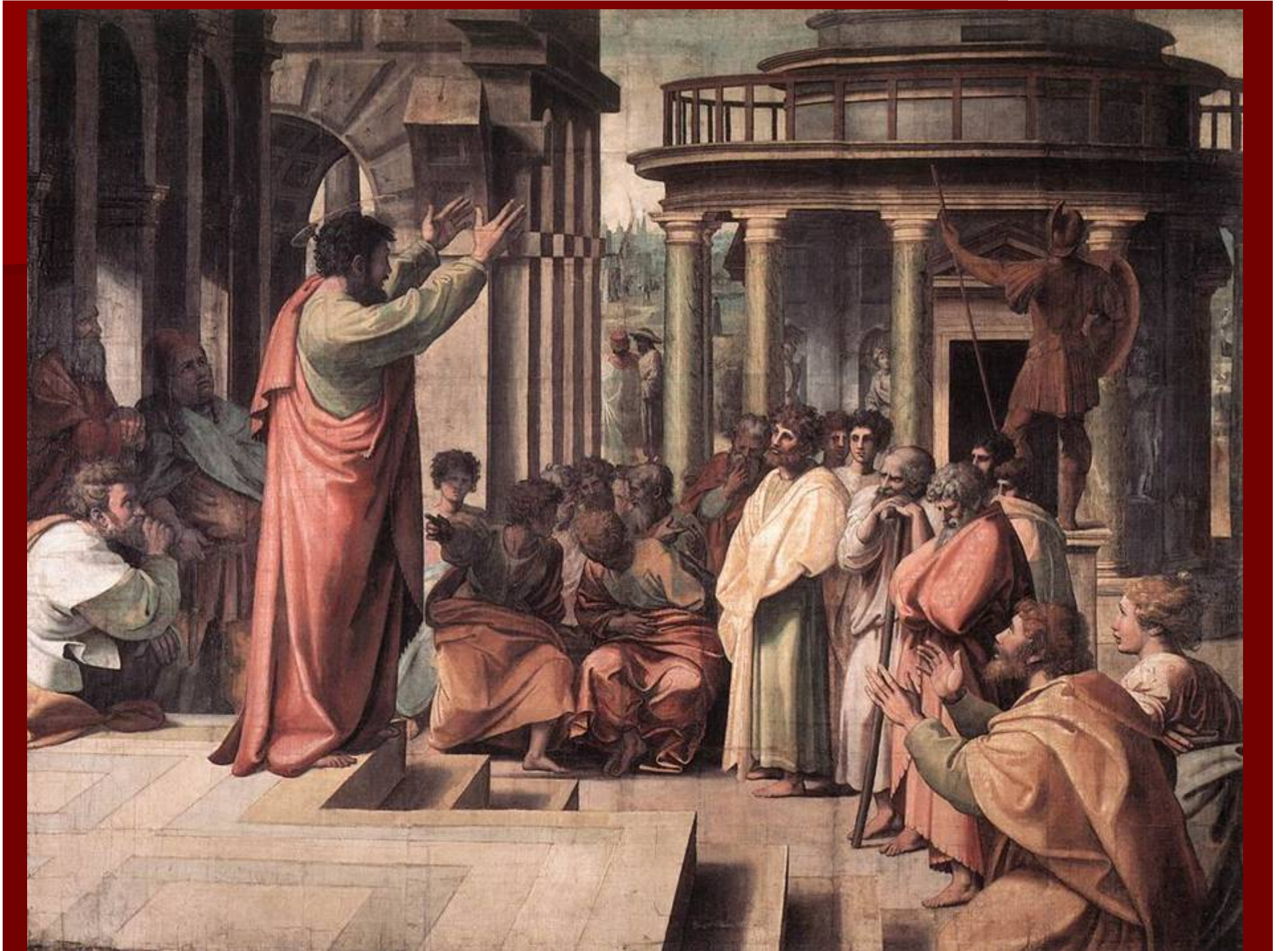


PAUL CURES A LAME MAN AT LYSTRA









Teaching Jesus among world religions

5. In a world of many religions, teaching about Jesus must be faithful and orthodox, and therefore involves both Christological and Trinitarian theology.
 - The pressure to dumb-down Jesus
 - ‘It’s all about Jesus!’ – not enough!
 - The unavoidable question: *Who do you say that I am?* (Mark 8:29)

Teaching Jesus among world religions

6. In a world of many religions, teaching Jesus means faithfully and respectfully presenting the Christian belief that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world.
 - A hard saying
 - 'Salvation in no one else' Acts 4:12;
yet remember that God's mercy is infinite,
and God alone is the judge

Teaching Jesus among world religions

7. In a world of many religions, faithful and orthodox teaching about Jesus will be patient and respectful, always looking for points of contact and opportunities for bridge-building.

- How do other religions regard their prophet?
- How do they regard Jesus?
- Where is the common ground?

Teaching Jesus among world religions

8. In a world of many religions, teaching Jesus faithfully means that the topic of sin and grace cannot be avoided, because implicit in that teaching is a call to repentance.
 - In the ministry of Jesus, the apostles, and of the church down through the ages
 - The classroom is not for proselytising, yet the message of repentance not to be suppressed

Teaching Jesus among world religions

9. In a world of many religions, the best way of teaching Jesus is to let the Gospels speak for themselves.
 - recognising that they were written for specific situations
 - wrestling with how we reinterpret them for the situation of young people in our schools

Teaching Jesus among world religions

10. Teaching Jesus means modelling Jesus: be a 'little Christ' (Luther)

- The cruciform life: a life shaped by the death and resurrection of Christ
- Seeing Jesus in their teacher
- Learning for life is learning to live the Christ-life

Teaching Jesus among world religions

11. In a world of many religions, those teaching Jesus need to have a theology of world religions.
 - Many resources presuppose an evolutionary approach to the origins of religion
 - The biblical model: people responded to God's self-disclosure, but because of the corruption of sin, 'original monotheism' broke down

Teaching Jesus among world religions

12. Conclusion:

The approach found in the *Christian Studies Curriculum Framework* is warmly recommended

Teaching Jesus among world religions

Christian Beliefs

- Key Idea 1 - Christian believe God is one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- Key Idea 2 - The person and work of Jesus the Christ is central to Christianity
- Key Idea 3 - A Christian world view is shaped by the biblical teaching of sin and grace

Teaching Jesus among world religions

Christianity in the World

- Key Idea 1 – Religious beliefs and ideas shape people's thinking and actions
- Key Idea 2 – People express their spirituality in various contexts within and beyond Christianity
- Key Idea 3 – People make decisions using a range of religious perspectives and ethical frameworks