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Recognizing the Gods (Acts 14.8–10)

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Little attention is given to the stare and the loud voice of Paul in the healing of the cripple in Acts 14.8–10. This article examines these two actions and suggests that far from being incidental in the narrative they help to explain how the Lystrans recognized that 'the gods have come down' in Paul and Barnabas. In both Graeco-Roman texts and in Jewish literature, the stare and the loud voice are indicators of the action or presence of the gods. In addition, the command 'arise' is commonly given by divine beings in Jewish texts.

The cry 'The gods having become like men came down to us' and the desire on the part of the Lystrans to offer sacrifices[1] (Acts 14.11–13, 18) are commonly understood to be in response to the healing of a crippled man by Paul. This understanding is mainly based on 14.11: 'the crowds seeing what Paul had done . . .' (οἱ τε ὄχλοι ἰδόντες ὃ ἐποίησεν Παῦλος). Bruce, for example, says the Lystrans wanted to sacrifice 'seeing the instantaneous cure performed on the lame man';[2] Barrett similarly writes: 'A miraculous healing profoundly impresses the local residents';[3] and Haenchen agrees: 'It is Paul's mighty work which leads the ὄχλοι into this error.'[4] But was it only the cure itself that caused the Lystrans to recognize the gods in Paul and Barnabas? What did the Lystrans actually see Paul doing? They saw him stare (14.9) and heard him speak in a loud voice (14.10). I suggest that it was this behaviour of Paul, as much as the resultant healing, that evoked the response.

It was not unknown for healers and wonder-workers among the Greeks to be offered sacrifices and to be acclaimed as gods. According to Diogenes Laertes, sacrifices were offered to Empedocles after he had brought a woman to life who had been in a trance and not breathing for 30 days. He went among the people as 'no

1 It is not stated explicitly in v. 11 to whom they wished to sacrifice. However, v. 18 would suggest that Paul and Barnabas were to be the recipients.

2 F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1977) 291.

3 C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994–8) 1.663.

4 E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971) 426.

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more a mortal but an immortal god' (θεὸς ἄμβροτος), he was crowned with fillets and flowery garlands and held in awe (σεβάζεται) on entering any town. At his death, it is said, a very loud voice (φωνῆς ὑπερμεγέθους) was heard calling his name in the middle of the night, but all that was to be seen was a light in the heavens and a glitter of lamps (8.62). Pythagoras was also seen by his followers to be an emissary of the gods (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.1) and the wise healer Apollonius was thought by some to be a god (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 8.5).[5]

However, there is a difference between honouring a healer as a god or as divine (θεῖος) and thinking that the gods have come down in the form of healers, as in the case of the Lystrans with Paul and Barnabas. Were there any give-away signs that caused them to make this identification? A character in Homer's *Iliad* says when seeing Poseidon, who came in the guise of Kalchas, the diviner: 'No, that it is not Kalchas, the seer. Without difficulty, I recognized from behind the trace of his feet and legs, while he was going away. The gods are recognizable' (13.70–72). So there were ways of recognizing the gods, as Vermant says: 'As well-camouflaged as a god may be in the skin of a mortal, there is something "off", something in the otherness of the divine presence that remains strange and disconcerting even when the god is in disguise.'[6]

Was there something 'off' in Paul that helped the locals to identify and acclaim him as a god? Acts 14.8–10 offers four clues which suggest a positive answer. The first is that Paul comes to Lystra as a stranger; the second is Paul's stare; the third, his loud voice; and the fourth, his command to the cripple. I will examine each factor, but the main focus will be on Paul's loud voice as the tell-tale sign that 'the gods came down'.

I. Paul the Stranger

'Generally speaking one may say that in Antiquity anyone who did something that was not understood or that was considered miraculous ran himself the risk of being looked upon as a god.'[7] While this may be true of 'anyone', it was especially true of the stranger (ξένος). Attention is not often given to the fact that Paul and Barnabas come to Lystra as strangers. Luther Martin pays implicit attention to it by noting that Zeus and Hermes are the gods who protect strangers and are their patrons, and that the locals show hospitality to Paul and Barnabas

5 For the close relationship between prophet, healer, and gods, see A. B. Kolenkow, 'Relationships between Miracle and Prophecy in the Greco-Roman World and Early Christianity' (*ANRW* 2.23.2, Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1980) 1470–506.

6 J.-P. Vermant, 'Mortals and Immortals; The Body of the Divine', *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays of J-P Vermant* (ed. F. Zeitlin; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1991) 43.

7 G. Mussies, 'Identification and Self-identification of Gods', *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World* (ed. R. van den Broek, T. Baarda, J. Mansfeld; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988) 2.

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just as the local Phrygian couple Philemon and Baucis did to Zeus and Hermes who came to them as strangers according to Ovid's legendary tale (*Met*. 8.611–725).[8] While that myth is noted now by almost all commentators on this passage, the significance of the gods coming as *strangers* in the form of Paul and Barnabas is rarely noticed.

Strangers were often associated with strange occurrences in a community. Stählin says of the ξένος: 'He is a man from without, strange, hard to fathom, surprising, unsettling, sinister', and to such outsiders were often attributed magical powers.[9] That the gods appear in the guise of strangers is a notion classically expressed by Homer: 'For the gods disguise themselves as strangers from abroad, and assuming the most varied shapes, wander through the cities' (*Od*. 17.485f.; compare also *Od*. 13.311–13 and 1.111). Dionysius of Halicarnassus tells the myth of the stranger Hercules whom the locals at Pallantium thought to be divine (θεῖος) because he delivered them from a robber (1.40.1).[10] Many other examples could be given, but Anderson's summary will suffice: 'Something in society is going awry; a holy man appears – something of a mysterious outsider, and somehow or other the situation is put to rights: the price of corn goes down, the thief is found, the epileptic is calmed, and that is all part of the way society works.'[11]

The stranger Paul comes to Lystra and heals a man crippled from birth. This power of the stranger provides a clue to the Lystrans that Paul is a god come down. But more significant for this identification are Paul's stare and his loud voice.

II. The stare

Before examining the significance of Paul's stare, attention to the word ὁμοιωπαθεῖς in Acts 14.15 might illuminate more clearly what the Lystrans meant when they said that the gods came down to them 'like humans' (ὁμοιωθέντες ἀνθρώποις, v. 11). In 14.15, Paul pleads that he is a human with πάθη not like those of the gods but like those of the Lystrans themselves. This suggests that when the

8 Luther H. Martin, 'Gods or Ambassadors? Barnabas and Paul in Lystra', *NTS* 41 (1995) 152–6. Martin's interest is in the apostles' role as ambassadors of God and not in their stranger-ness.

The Philemon–Baucis myth is not the only one to be noted. There is also the myth of Zeus and Hermes visiting in disguise the poor, widowed and impotent bee-keeper Hyrieus who showed them hospitality. As a reward, the gods promised him a child if he were to sacrifice a bull, make water on its hide and then bury it in his wife's grave. He did so, and nine months later a son was born to him, named Orion, 'he who makes water/rain' (Ovid, *Fasti* 5.493–544). Given the desire to sacrifice bulls (14.13) and Paul's sermon about who it is who supplies rain (14.17), this myth should not be overlooked.

9 G. Stählin, 'ξένος κτλ', *TDNT* 5.2–3.

10 See also Catullus, 64.384; Ovid, *Met*. 1.212; and Eunapius, 467–469.

11 G. Anderson, *Sage, Saint and Sophist: Holy Men and their Associates in the Early Roman Empire* (London/New York: Routledge, 1994) 219.

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Lystrans think Paul is one of 'the gods come down to us' they are referring more to his πάθη than to his physical form. Rather than being seen as some kind of 'incarnation' of the god or the god in human 'form', Paul is instead seen as being possessed by the πάθη of the gods. According to Galen, the πάθη are those emotions, passions, and actions which are external. So, for example, he thinks that exhaling and transpiring (ἐκπνοὴ καὶ διαπνοή) are natural activities but inhaling (εἰσπνοή) is an affection (πάθος, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, 8.719). Galen also defines πάθος as 'a motion in one thing that comes from some other thing' and as 'a motion contrary to nature' (6.491, 492). He distinguishes between ἐνεργείαι, which are natural motions – like moving the leg – and πάθη, which are not natural motions but are externally caused and related directly to the ψυχή. I suggest that Paul's staring and speaking with a loud voice were understood by the locals as signs that the πάθη of the gods had entered Paul, and this interpretation Paul rejects.[12]

To cite Mussies again: 'Above all else it is the eyes of the gods that are described as having a special quality, either bright or shining or frightening.'[13] That this includes the stare is clearly stated by Heliodorus who says that the gods look straight ahead and without blinking (τοῖς ... ὀφθαλμοῖς ... ἀτενὲς διόλου βλέποντες καὶ τὸ βλέφαρον οὔποτε ἐπιμύοντες) and that this peculiarity is indicative of their true nature (*Aeth.* 3.13.2–3). According to Acts 14.9, Paul stares (ἀτενίσας) at the crippled man. The locals see this as something 'off' in Paul which reveals what they believe to be his true identity as a god or as being possessed by a god.

Paul's stare is generally ignored or passed over with very little comment in the scholarship. Some German scholars sense its significance, but usually interpret it as the sign of a magician or *Wundertäter* rather than as characteristic of a god. Schille, for example, refers to 'das magische Starren' and speaks of its 'magische Wirkung'.[14] It is a verb used to indicate a significant action and so one that deserves to have more attention paid to it.

In the NT, ἀτενίζειν is used 14 times – almost solely by Luke, who uses it twice in the Gospel (4.20; 22.56) and ten times in Acts (1.10; 3.4,12; 6.15; 7.55; 10.4; 11.6; 13.9; and 23.1). Elsewhere, it is used only by Paul and then twice in the same context (2

12 NT Greek verb tenses are complex and the aorist particularly so. Is it possible that the aorist κατέβησαν in v. 11 implies that the Lystrans thought Paul and Barnabas to be gods *only while they were in the act of healing*, that is, while staring, speaking with a loud voice and commanding?

13 Mussies, 'Identification', 4. For an example, the green eyes of Athena inspired terror (Lucian, *Judgment of the Goddesses*, 10).

14 G. Schille, *Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas* (THNT; Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, ^{3}1989) 305. Klauck puts it down to Paul's 'prophetische Fähigkeit' (H.-J. Klauck, *Magie und Heidentum in der Apostelgeschichte des Lukas* [SBS 167; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1996] 71).

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Cor 3.7, 13). It is not uncommon in Jewish and later Christian writings. There are four important features of the verb's usage: the subject is a holy person, or a holy one is the object of the verb; the subject is often at prayer or in an ecstatic, paranormal state; there is the suggestion that the subject has suprahuman intuition; and finally, the verb is very often used in aorist participial form followed by an aorist main verb of seeing or saying. Acts 14.9–10 follows this standard pattern. Paul, in Acts, is clearly a holy man 'filled with the holy spirit' (13.9, 52). He is the subject in 14.9 who has suprahuman intuition into the crippled man. Finally, the verb is aorist participial in form (ἀτενίσας) followed by an aorist main verb of speech (εἶπεν). What may not be so obvious in this episode is that 'the subject is often at prayer or in some ecstatic, paranormal state'. But that, I suggest, is the case with Paul in this healing episode. Paul stares because he is possessed or infused – not with Hermes, as the Lystrans think, but as Luke would have it – with the living God (14.15).

Paranormal vision is explicit or implicit in virtually every use of ἀτενίζειν in Acts. The disciples stare into heaven at Jesus' 'ascension' (1.10); Stephen, in his dying, prays and stares into heaven and sees Jesus standing at the right hand of God (7.55); Stephen's opponents stare at him and see his face to be 'like that of an angel' (6.15). In 10.3–4 a centurion, at an hour of prayer and ἐν ὁράματι, stares at the angel whom he addresses as κύριε as he is in a state of great awe (ἔμφοβος). Peter also stares as he is ἐν ἐκστάσει (11.6). The verb is also used in the parallel healing miracle, namely Acts 3.1–10, as Peter heals a cripple in Jerusalem, and as Paul prepares to speak before the Sanhedrin (23.1).[15] In summary, the verb in Acts is commonly associated with holy figures, often with heavenly figures like angels, and frequently indicates paranormal vision which sees another reality, something referred to in recent literature as an ASC, an altered state of consciousness.[16] On the basis of Luke's usage in Acts, it seems reasonable to suggest that here too Paul experiences and demonstrates paranormal vision and this is what attracts the attention of the locals.

That such a state may have affected Paul's whole physical condition is not unlikely. His breathing in particular might well have altered. As Dibelius notes: 'The look and the strong breathing (called 'sighing' popularly) are healing media.'[17] The altered breathing of the healer who is possessed by a spirit or demon

15 For a closer study of this verb, see my article 'Strange Stares: ATENIZEIN in Acts', *NovT* 41 (1999) 235–55.

16 For examples of recent interest in ASCs, see J. Pilch, 'The Transfiguration of Jesus: An Experience of Alternate Reality', *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context* (ed. P. Esler; London/New York: Routledge, 1995) 47–64; B. Malina, 'Assessing the Historicity of Jesus' Walking on the Sea: Insights from Cross-cultural Social Psychology', *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus* (ed. B. Chilton and C. Evans; Leiden/Boston: E.J. Brill, 1999) 351–72.

17 M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (Cambridge/London: James Clark, 1971) 86.

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is well known. Theissen says: 'The miracle-worker reacts to situations of distress with his emotions, his pneumatic excitement', and this is reflected in the use of such verbs as σπλαγχνίζομαι and ὀργίζομαι in healing activities (cp. Mk 1.41).[18] Deep breathing, sighing, groaning, hissing, and other inhalatory noises are commonly recommended for the magical practitioner according to the papyri (see, for example, *PGM* 7.768 and 13.946).

The look of the healer and his emotional involvement in the healing process are well illustrated in the miracle-working Apollonius of Tyana. The sage comes across a demon-possessed boy and looks at him (ὁρῶντός τε ἐς αὐτὸ τοῦ Ἀπολλωνίου). The narrative continues: 'the ghost in him (the boy) began to utter cries of fear and rage, such as one hears from people who are being branded or racked ... But Apollonius addressed him with anger (ξὺν ὀργῇ) ... and ordered him to quit the young man' (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.20).

Since sickness was generally understood as a 'pathetic' condition, that is, it involved the spirit of the sick person and the demon or 'power' of the disease, it is not surprising that for healing to take place Paul the healer needed to be prepared in his own spirit and thus be able to deal with both the spirit of the cripple and the spirit causing the illness. As Hippocrates said, 'opposites cure opposites' (τὰ ἐναντία τῶν ἐναντίων ἐστὶν ἰάματα, Galen, 8.698). For the Lystrans, it is Hermes, the messenger with wings on his feet, who cures his opposite – a man crippled from birth and unable to walk (14.8). Since the soul (ψυχή) possesses the chief cause of sensation – it communicates sensation to the body (*Epicurus to Herodotus*, 64) – so in order to relieve the sensation of pain one connects with the soul. The staring of Paul suggests that he enters into another reality which enables him to see into the 'soul' of the cripple and to see there the faith to be healed (14.9). Such an ability would have been an indicator to many in Luke's audience of Paul's status: 'For the whole range of persons with divine powers ... knowledge of men's hearts seems to be the one convincing proof. The power is thought divine.'[19]

In summary, Paul's staring indicates something is 'off' about Paul – to the Lystrans it is an indication that he is really one of the gods. The stare also indicates that Paul has paranormal vision which the Lystrans read as indicative that he is possessed with the passions of the gods.

III. The loud voice (Acts 14.10)

A further distinguishing mark of the gods 'was the loud and far-reaching sound of their voice ... which (is) compared either with the sound of thunder or with that of musical instruments'.[20] That this was one of the commonly accepted

18 G. Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983) 57.

19 Kolenkow, 'Miracle', 1480.

20 Mussies, 'Identification', 7.

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attributes of a divine being is illustrated by Celsus who says that if a divine spirit (θεῖον πνεῦμα) had been in the body of Jesus, then his body would have had different features from those of others, including a different voice.[21] It is a little curious that the connection between Paul's loud voice and the loud voice of the gods is rarely, if ever, made in the scholarship. Most commentaries on 14.10 virtually ignore the phrase μεγάλῃ φωνῇ. That its significance is probably unknown is illustrated by Dunn's tentative suggestion that it might indicate Paul is 'speaking across a listening crowd?'[22]

If any attention is given to the loud voice it tends to be found in German scholarship where, like the stare, it is understood to characterize the magician. Wikenhauser thinks both actions might have to do with 'a certain power of suggestion' which made the cripple obey.[23] Others relate it to spirit- or demon-possession. Schille says the loud voice illustrates the charisma of the spirit-bearer,[24] an idea reiterated by Haenchen: 'The loud voice often betrays that the speaker is driven by the Spirit or a demon.'[25]

Very few suggest the immediate connection of the loud voice with the gods. Betz comes close, as he comments on Acts 14.10: 'Along with the healing, the powerful voice may also express the judgment of pagans that they are witnesses of an epiphany.'[26] Stählin, almost alone, comes very close to identifying Paul's loud voice as the voice of God: 'Daß in diesem Ruf Gott selber spricht, wird erstens darin deutlich, daß er den Ruf aufnimmt, mit dem er Hesekiel berief (Ez 2.1), zweitens, in der Kraft der Stimme, die den Geistträger auszeichnet.'[27] Interestingly, Barrett rejects the parallel with Ezekiel as justification for Stählin's comment, and says absolutely nothing about Stählin's second reason.[28] I suggest that Stählin is on

21 Origen, *Contra Celsus* 6,75. As Dölger notes, the voice is listed by Celsus next to greatness (μέγεθος) and bodily strength (ἀλκή) and so indicates a powerful voice: F. J. Dölger, ΘΕΟΥ̃ ΦΩΝΗ*: Die 'Gottes-Stimme' bei Ignatius von Antiochen, Kelsos und Origenes* (Antike und Christentum: Kultur- und religionsgeschichtliche Studien. 5; 2 Auflage; Münster: Aschendorff, 1936) 218–23.

22 J. G. D. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996) 190.

23 A. Wikenhauser, *Die Apostelgeschichte, übersetzt und erklärt* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, ^{4}1961) 164.

24 Schille, *Apostelgeschichte*, 305. So also R. Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Zürich et al: Neukirchener, 1986) 2.57.

25 Haenchen, *Acts*, 425.

26 *TDNT* 9.295.

27 Stählin, *Apostelgeschichte*, 191. Dölger also believes the loud voice of Paul in Acts 14.10 reflects typical belief in *Götter-Epiphanie* or *Theophanie*, but he seems ambiguous about Paul. On the one hand, he says his voice indicates that he is a great *Wundertäter* and yet he also realizes that his loud voice parallels closely the voice of Jesus in John 11 which he interprets to be the voice of God (ΘΕΟΥ̃ ΦΩΝΗ, 222).

28 Barrett, *Acts*, 1.675.

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the right track with the second of his reasons particularly. Paul's loud voice is a direct sign to the locals that the gods have come down.

IV. The loud voice in Greek and Latin literature

The phrase 'with/in a loud voice' is commonly used in ancient literature in a number of ways: for attention-claiming, in the desire to be heard, or simply to indicate shouting (for example, Dion Halic., 3.24.5; Plutarch, *Lives*: *Cat. Major* 24.2.11; Diod. Sic., 17.84.2; Lucian, *Conviv*. 16, *Alieus*, 26; and Demetrius 3.2.5). In addition, the loud voice lends authority to a command (Plutarch, *Cam*. 32.2.4); it is also characteristic of heralds (Diod. Sic. 12.34.4; Plutarch, *Cor*. 25.3.2); and it is seen as desirable in oratory (Lucian, *Bis Accusatus*, 28).

The loud voice is also common in acclamations of kings and military leaders. So, for example, Tarquinius's daughter saluted her father as king 'in a loud voice' and prayed to the gods for the state (Dion. Halic. 4.39.1). Fabius, who evoked wonder among the people, on one occasion had standards planted in front of him and was addressed μεγάλῃ φωνῇ as Father (Plutarch, *Fab*. 13.6.3). Similarly, Sulla welcomed Pompey and greeted him μεγάλῃ φωνῇ as Magnus (Plutarch, *Pomp*. 13.4.5). Pompey also evoked astonishment and awe among the crowds on the occasion when he was solemnly asked whether he had fulfilled all the requirements of military service recognized by law. Pompey replied μεγάλῃ φωνῇ that he had indeed done so, and the crowds broke out in shouts and cries of joy (*Pomp*. 22.6.6).

Prayers or vows were also often performed in a loud voice. Egyptian priests called out to hawks 'in a loud voice' during a ritual in which vows were made to the gods for children (Diod. Sic. 1.83.2), and it was the custom for Egyptian priests to pray before the king for the king's health 'in a loud voice' (1.70.5). Similarly, Lucian has a character say that at symposia, libations were poured out and prayers offered 'at the top of their voices' (μεγάλῃ τῇ φωνῇ, *Cataplus*, 11). That the phrase can indicate an altered state of consciousness is suggested by Lucian who uses it as part of the description of behaviour when an epidemic hit the community – people became crazy and sang songs and speeches from plays and tragedies μεγάλῃ τῇ φωνῇ (*Hist*. 1).[29]

That a loud and frightening voice was characteristic of the gods can be variously demonstrated from the literature: Apollo's voice terrifies Hector (*Il*. 20.375–80); the people of Ithaca are frightened by the voice of Athena (*Od*. 24.529–35); Jason and the Argonauts 'shake with fear' at the voice of Hera

29 That loud voices were associated in some circumstances with madness is illustrated also by Josephus's example of a certain Jesus who day after day cried out loudly in and against the Temple in Jerusalem. He maintained the cry even after being beaten by the authorities, who concluded that some supernatural force had incited him 'as indeed was the case'. The Romans declared him a maniac and harmless (*BJ* 6.300–309).

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(Apollonius Rhodius, *Arg.* 4.640–2). One of Lucian's characters experiences the voice of Zeus as having numinous force that strikes like thunder and evokes great fear (*Icaromenipp*, 23).[30] When Jupiter demanded fresh thunderbolts from the Cyclops on seeing the Giants coming to seize heaven, he did so with a loud voice (Silius Italicus, *Punica* 9.306–8).

If a loud voice characterizes a god, then it can be anticipated that anyone possessed by a god will also speak in a loud voice. This is often the case, particularly in relation to divine prophecy.[31] Speaking of the inspired prophet, Guthrie says: 'When the prophet speaks he is not himself. He is wrought upon and changed in a manner sometimes terrifying to behold and exhausting to himself. He is possessed by the god and becomes for the time being only a mouthpiece for the utterance of the divine voice.'[32] Virgil provides a good example:

> the prophetic Delian God breathes into her the spirit's visionary might, revealing things to come ... suddenly her countenance and color changed and her hair fell in disarray. Her breast heaved and her bursting heart was wild and mad. She appeared taller and spoke in no mortal tones, for the God was nearer and the breath of his power was upon her ... the cavern made her voice a roar as she uttered truth wrapped in obscurity. (*Aen.* 6.10–105)

Similar examples of persons possessed by the gods and speaking in a loud voice are not difficult to find. The Latin poet Silius Italicus reports a priest standing before the altar of a god in a sacred grove when 'suddenly the god entered the breast of the prophet. The trees clashed against one another, and a deep humming noise passed through the resounding grove; and then a voice, louder than any we know, burst forth into the air ...' (*Punica* 3.697–9). Later, the same writer says that Apollo at Delphi spoke with a loud voice through the priestess who was 'possessed by the god' (*Punica* 12.322–3). Lucian writes an interesting episode in which Menippus tells of his voyage with a magician (μάγος) Mithrobarzanes. The *magos* at one stage ceased muttering in a low tone and instead 'shouted as loudly as he could (μεγάλῃ τῇ φωνῇ), invoking the spirits one and all, at the top of his lungs'. His voice was so powerful that 'in a trice the whole region began to quake, the ground was rent asunder by the incantation' (*Menipp.* 9–10).[33] Lucian also reports the false prophet Alexander of Abonoteichus pretending to be in a mantic state by

30 Not surprisingly, some emperors and rulers are flattered to be told that their voices are like those of the gods and so create the same awe and response (Cassius Dio, *Hist. Rom.* 62.20.5; Suetonius, *Nero* 20; Tacitus, *Ann.* 16.22; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.39; 5.7; cf. also Acts 12.22).

31 For some examples, and for a discussion on such speech in early Christianity, see C. Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment* (WUNT 2.75; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1995). Forbes shows little or no interest in the loud voice itself.

32 W. K. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods* (London: Methuen, 1950) 199.

33 This behaviour calls into doubt Theissen's claim: 'Magicians and miracle-workers always speak softly' (*Miracle Stories*, 64).

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running full speed into a temple, entering the water, and singing hymns in honour of Asclepius and Apollo 'at the top of his voice' (μεγάλῃ τῇ φωνῇ) as he besought the god (*Alex*. 14). In another ritual action, the same prophet 'entered robed as a priest, amid profound silence, and said in a loud voice (μεγάλῃ τῇ φωνῇ), over and over again, "Hail, Glycon"' (*Alex*. 39).

In summary, the loud voice is used in a variety of contexts in Greek and Latin literature including that of the enthused state of the speaker. The loud voice can be a sign that the speaker is either possessed by the gods or seeking to be in touch with the divine through prayer and invocation.

V. The loud voice in Jewish literature

In the LXX, the God of Israel speaks 'with a loud voice' only once, namely in 1 Sam 7.10. There, God thunders ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ against the Philistines and throws them into confusion. But not surprisingly, the heavenly figure also 'cried with a loud voice' (ἀνέκραγεν . . . φωνῇ μεγάλῃ) into the ears of Ezekiel (Ezek 9.1). Nor is it surprising that the Hebrews shared with the Greeks the association of the loud voice with their god. A loud voice (μεγάλη φωνῇ) is the sign, along with darkness and fire, of the presence of God at the holy mountain (Deut 4.11; 5.22). Similarly, in Bar 11.3 God's voice is spoken of as φωνῇ μεγάλη ὡς βροντή, the thunder imagery being quite common (see, for example, Ex 19.19; 20.18; Ps 18.7–15; 29.3–9, 45.6).

In the LXX, humans commonly speak φωνῇ μεγάλῃ and predominantly in three related contexts: in the offering of corporate prayers during solemn ceremonies; in the expression of corporate praise and blessing to God; and in the expression of private or individual prayers and praise to God. In other words, it is very commonly used in the context of cultic actions. It is sometimes difficult for modern Western Christians, in particular, to envisage such acts. Many Westerners pray in controlled, stylized, almost mechanical, emotionally low-key liturgical forms and voice; but not so the ancient Israelites. Prayer and particularly praise were often ecstatic, pneumatic, inspired, 'emotional' experiences in themselves, especially in a shared, corporate context. So, during a solemn ritual of confession and repentance, certain Levites in the presence of all Israel 'cried with a loud voice' (ἐβόησαν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ) to the Lord their God and called on Israel to bless their God (Neh 9.4–5; 1 Esd 9.10; cf. also Deut 27.14 and 2 Chron 20.19). Even greater is the intensity of the experience when the foundation of the temple is laid. There is great praise of God, with vestments, cymbals, and songs of praise, with the result that people weep and shout for joy 'with a great shout' (ἐκραύγασεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ, Ezra 3.10–13; cf. 1 Esd 5.62, 64 and also Jud 14.9; 1 Macc 2.27; 5.31). When the ark of the covenant comes into the presence of Israel, the people respond by crying out φωνῇ μεγάλῃ; such a holy presence ('a god has come into the camp')

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evokes ecstatic cries (1 Sam 4.5–7). And when Israel makes a solemn confessional oath to the Lord, they do so ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ and with shouting and trumpets and horns (2 Chron 15.14). Cultic acts involve the use of loud voices. Predictably, then, 'all my angels' offer praise φωνῇ μεγάλῃ (Job 38.7).

There are also a number of instances where individuals cry out φωνῇ μεγάλῃ (Es 4.1; Job 2.12; Ezek 11.13; Dan 6.21; Sus 24, 42; Bel 41; Jud 9.1; 13.14; 14.16; 1 Macc 2.19, 27). In nearly every case, the emotion is intense – the prayers and cries are inspired by sadness, anguish, joy, great praise, and confession. Of particular interest is Sus 45–46 in which 'God aroused the holy spirit of a young man named Daniel and he cried φωνῇ μεγάλῃ'. Here, the loud voice is obviously associated with 'the holy spirit' of Daniel; it is the cry of a holy man and suggests possession or ecstasy of some kind.

Only rarely is the loud voice used in the LXX in the sense of shouting or in order to gain attention, as Potiphar's wife does (Gen 39.14)[34] or in order to be heard from a distance as with Rabshakeh (2 Kings 18.28; cf. Is 36.13; 2 Chron 32.18). Belshazzar uses a loud voice in the giving of a command (Dan 5.7) but the context certainly suggests that the king is in a state of fear and anxiety if not in an altered state of consciousness: 'His colour changed, his thoughts alarmed him, his limbs gave way and his knees knocked together' – typical of the visionary's experience in that his body is affected.

Interesting is the expression 'in a loud voice' in 1 Sam 28 which reports Saul's visit to a necromancer at Endor because he wishes to communicate with the spirit of the dead Samuel. The necromancer cries out 'in a loud voice' (ἀνεβόησεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ) on seeing the spirit of Samuel (1 Sam 28.12). This is the cry of one caught up in a very power-full and spirit-laden experience and is reminiscent of the loud voice of the *magos* in Lucian's episode.

That a loud voice is associated with frenzied, ecstatic prayer is illustrated in 1 Kings 18.27, 28 as Elijah tells the prophets of Baal to call out in a loud voice (ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ) 'because he (Baal) is a god' (ὅτι θεός ἐστιν). This need not be understood as mockery but that this is what one does in beseeching the gods.[35] And so the prophets of Baal cry aloud and, significantly, 'cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances' (18.28). This would suggest that their loud crying indicates not simply an increase in the volume of their voices, but rather a change into another state of consciousness.

This relation between the loud voice and a change in the emotional, 'spiritual', and physical state of the speaker is well illustrated in *1 Enoch*:

34 Her crying out would appear to be significant in the story since it is mentioned in vv. 14, 15 and 18.

35 In Ezek 8.18 God threatens not to listen to the prayers of Israel even if they pray φωνῇ μεγάλῃ. In other words, no matter how spiritually intense the prayer, God will not listen.

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> I fell on my face, and my whole body became relaxed, and my spirit was transfigured; And I cried with a loud voice ... with the spirit of power, and blessed and glorified and extolled. And the blessings that poured forth out of my mouth were well-pleasing to [God]. (71.11)

Here the visionary has an experience which involves his whole body, indeed, his whole self; and in such a state, he cries out with a 'loud voice'. So the loud voice is closely associated with the spirit and suggests that it is no longer the visionary speaking, but the spirit's voice using the seer's mouth as a channel.

In summary, in ancient Jewish literature the phrase (ἐν) φωνῇ μεγάλῃ is used largely in the context of prayer, blessing, and praise by both individuals and corporate Israel. It conveys a sense of high intensity involving not merely deep emotions like sadness, anguish, joy and confidence, but the very spirit or being of those involved. In some cases there is an explicit link between the loud voice and the Spirit of God or the spirit of those involved; in other cases, that link is implicit. There are also instances where the loud cry is closely related to an intense spirit-filled experience or vision.

VI. The loud voice in early Christian literature[36]

'A very important use of μεγάλῃ φωνῇ is in relation to the speech of angels, spirits, or bearers of the Spirit', says Betz, and 'because praise is rendered in pneumatic joy, it is uttered μεγάλῃ φωνῇ'.[37] This pneumatic, ecstatic understanding of the phrase is frequent in the NT. However, the only occasions on which it is used in corporate action is in the angelic liturgies of Revelation (5.12; 6.10; 7.10; 11.15; 19.1).

In the canonical Gospels, Jesus speaks μεγάλῃ φωνῇ on only two occasions – in the raising of Lazarus (John 11.43) and at his own death (Matt 27.46, 50; Mark 15.34, 37; Luke 23.46). At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus, having being in the state of prayer to the Father (John 11.42), cries 'in a loud voice' (φωνῇ μεγάλῃ) that Lazarus should come out (11.43). There is good reason to think that this is meant to be identified as the voice of God, with whom Jesus has been (and still is?) in prayer communion. In other words, Jesus here is in a paranormal state, a state of prayer and union with God. The phrase has parallels in Revelation where an angel from heaven, the presence of God, speaks in a loud voice, often in command or in proclamation (1.10; 5.2; 7.2, 10; 8.13; 10.3; 11.12; 12.10; 14.7, 9, 15; 16.1, 17; 19.17; 21.3). In these examples, the loud voice indicates heavenly authority and can be identified as the voice of God via the medium of an agent.[38]

Significantly for an understanding of Acts 14.10, in the Synoptics Jesus does not

36 I am only interested in the NT and the Apostolic Fathers.

37 O. Betz, 'φωνή et al', *TDNT* 9.293 n. 71.

38 Authority seems to be the implication of the loud voice in two other Acts passages, 16.28 and 26.24.

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speak in a loud voice when he exorcises or heals. In fact, the only time Jesus does so speak is in his dying moments. All three Synoptic Gospels use exactly this phrase (φωνῇ μεγάλῃ) in describing his death-cry. All three in their own ways link the loud voice with the *pneuma* of Jesus. So in Luke, Jesus commends his spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα) to his Father (Luke 23.46), while in Matthew and Mark, the cry is closely linked to his 'expiring' (ἐξέπνευσεν, Mark 15.37; ἀφῆκεν τὸ πνεῦμα, Matt 27.50). There is at least the suggestion that in his dying Jesus is in a state of prayer or even of possession. A number of manuscripts imply that it is the crying out and the exhaling (οὕτως αὐτὸν κράξαντα καὶ ἐξέπνευσεν[39]) that evoke the centurion's statement that this man is υἱὸς θεοῦ (Mark 15.39). It can be noted that the same loud voice–spirit connection is there in the dying of Stephen, whose vision and cry again suggest a paranormal state (Acts 7.60).

This spirit–loud voice link is apparent elsewhere in the Synoptic Gospels. On the one hand, the loud voice appears in the context of exorcisms. The demons, before leaving their occupation of a person at the command of Jesus, cry out 'in a loud voice' (φωνῇ μεγάλῃ; Mark 1.26, 5.7; Luke 4.33; 8.38; cf. Acts 8.7). On the other hand, it is used of those offering praise to God, but only in Luke (for example, 17.15; 19.37). Particularly relevant is Luke's description of Elizabeth as being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' and exclaiming with 'a loud cry' (Luke 1.42[40]). Her cry is ecstatic and suggests that Luke believes that a loud voice and Spirit-possession go hand in hand.

The clearest example of the link between a human loud voice, the voice of God, and the Spirit is found in a letter of Ignatius. The bishop writes to the Philadelphians, 'I cried out with a loud voice, the voice of God (ἐκραύγασα μεταξὺ ὤν, ἐλάλουν μεγάλῃ φωνῇ θεοῦ φωνῇ): Be loyal to your bishop and clergy and deacons'. Ignatius stresses that this cry did not come through human lips: 'No; that was the preaching of the Spirit itself' (τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ἐκήρυσσεν λέγον τάδε, *Phil*. 7.1-2). The link that Ignatius makes between his voice and that of God and the Spirit is clear. As Schoedel says: '(Ignatius) shared with many others in the Graeco-Roman world the belief that a sudden loud utterance marked the inrush of the divine.'[41]

Before leaving this brief survey of the loud voice, it is worth noting that modern studies in altered states of consciousness show that a characteristic feature of trances in shamanism is a change of voice, often increasing in tone and volume.[42] Goodman gives examples of shamans screaming as the voice gets

39 So the Bezae text. Others read (οὕτως) κράξας ἐξέπνευσεν.

40 Better manuscripts read κραυγῇ μεγάλῃ.

41 W. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (ed. H. Koester; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 205.

42 F. Goodman, *Ecstasy, Ritual and Alternate Reality: Religion in a Pluralistic World* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1988) 37.

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stronger: 'He utters a loud mutter, then disjointed sentences and loud cries', and she also offers examples of spirits' voices sounding from the mouth of the shaman.[43] Evidence is also provided by Eliade who describes a healing seance among the Chukchee of Siberia and says that a spirit 'enters the shaman's body, whereupon moving his head rapidly, the shaman begins to cry out and speak in falsetto, the voice of the spirit'.[44] In addition, Goodman has shown that shouting is typical in glossolalaic experiences and that there are anthropological reports of locals communicating with the dead in loud voices.[45] It would seem valid to conclude that across time and cultures, the loud voice is a sign of possession and of trance-like states. As Dodds notes: 'In all parts of the world the "possessed" are reported as speaking in a changed voice',[46] or, to quote Hull who, in turn, cites Österreich: 'Change of voice is a feature of possession.'[47]

Paul's loud voice is a tell-tale sign to the Lystrans that he is possessed by a god or is a god in human form. It also highlights Luke's desire to portray Paul as being a chosen vessel (σκεῦος) of God.

VII. The command

If Luke is wishing to indicate that Paul speaks with the voice of 'the living God' and not of Hermes, then it might be expected that the very words Paul speaks are words spoken by God in the scriptural tradition known to Luke. This is in fact the case. In the command to the cripple, Paul uses the word Ἀνάστηθι. In Jewish Greek scriptures, this same command is most commonly used by 'the Lord' (Deut 9.12; Josh 7.10; 1 Sam 23.4; 1 Kings 12.24; 17.9; 21.18; Jonah 1.2; 3.2; 6.1; Is 51.17; Jer 13.4, 6; 18.2; Ezek 3.22; Mic 2.10; 4.13; 6.1; 2 Esd 6.13). If it is not God or the Lord who so commands, it is an angel (Gen 21.18; 1 Kings 19.5; 2 Esd 7.2) or a prophet or king (Num 23.18; 2 Kings 8.1; 1 Chron 22.16; 2 Chron 6.41; Bar 5.5; 2 Esd 2.38). In addition, the Psalms call on the Lord to 'arise' (Ps 7.6; 9.19; 10.12; 17.13; 35.2; 44.23; 132.8). In the Pseudepigrapha, again it is common for the Lord to issue this command (for example, *Test. Abr.* B, 2.8; 3.6; 4.14). Of particular interest is *Test. Job.* 3.1–2 where the link between the command and the loud voice is explicitly made as a loud voice (μεγάλη φωνῇ), obviously that of God, calls on Job to arise (ἀνάστηθι).

In Acts itself, the command again appears often in the mouth of a heavenly

43 Ibid., 139, 142.

44 M. Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964) 255.

45 F. Goodman, *Speaking in Tongues: A Cross-cultural Study of Glossolalia* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1972) vii, xvi, 15, 61, 81 and 109.

46 E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1951) 91 n. 61.

47 J. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (London: SCM, 1974) 80.

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figure. The angel of the Lord so commands Philip (ἀνάστηθι, 8.26) and the imprisoned Peter (ἀνάστα, 12.7); a voice identified as that of Jesus commands Paul (ἀνάστηθι, 9.6; cf. 22.10; 26.16), and a voice exhorts Peter to 'rise, kill and eat' (ἀναστὰς θῦσον καὶ φάγε, 10.13; 11.7) and in 10.20, it is the Spirit who commands: ἀναστὰς κατάβηθι. The Lord gives the imperative to Ananias (ἀναστὰς πορεύθητι, 9.11) who in turn commands Paul to 'arise and be baptised' (ἀναστὰς βαπτίσαι, 22.16). As Paul does in the Lystran episode (14.10), so Peter commands the paralysed Aeneas and then the dead Tabitha to 'rise' (ἀνάστηθι, 9.34, 40), as he does also the worshipping Cornelius (ἀνάστηθι, 10.26). It would seem that without exception the command[48] is given in the context of holy figures and holy actions. It is ultimately the command of God and there can be only the response of obedience.

This command in the mouth of Paul suggests that he is an instrument or vessel[49] of the Lord, or, as Stählin says, his voice is the voice of God, and so his command is a 'heavenly' or divine command. The crippled – better, probably, the spirit or demon of crippledness – must obey. Luke almost laconically adds the result in four words: καὶ ἥλατο καὶ περιεπάτει (14.10).

VIII. Conclusion

In many ways, Acts 14.8–10 is a unique episode in the NT. It is the only occasion on which an apostle heals without any calling on the name of Jesus (cf. Acts 3.6).[50] Apart from Jesus' raising of Lazarus, it is the only instance in which a healer uses a loud voice in the healing process and it is the only instance which combines staring with a loud voice. Kahl believes that here is the only time an apostle is depicted as a B(earer of) N(uminous) P(ower) rather than a M(edium of)NP and he understands the loud voice as an indication that 'Paul himself appears here as an independent BNP who commands the healing with authority (εἶπεν μεγάλῃ φωνῇ)'.[51] It would seem that Kahl misunderstands. He claims that in this episode there is 'no divine participation',[52] it is 'without divine involvement'.[53] But the loud voice, the stare, and the command indicate precisely the

48 The command is expressed with the verb ἀνίστημι either in an imperatival form or in participial form + an imperatival form of the added verb.

49 Paul is described as a 'vessel' (σκεῦος) of the Lord in Acts 9.15.

50 The Western Text adds Σοὶ λέγω ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, which is a clear parallel to 3.7.

51 W. Kahl, *New Testament Miracle Stories in their Religious-Historical Setting: A religionsgeschichtliche Comparison from a Structural Perspective* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994) 205.

52 Ibid., 86.

53 Ibid., 96.

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opposite. The divine is certainly involved – Paul is possessed by it and is even perceived to be its physical manifestation. He is a medium of numinous power rather than an independent bearer of that power.

In summary, the loud voice and the stare are features in the Lukan narrative of Acts 14.8–10 that cannot be overlooked since they are inseparably linked to the dramatic response of the Lystrans. They are indicators or clues that Paul was possessed by a 'divine spirit' in his body, and combined with his stranger-ness and his use of the divine command to 'arise', they help understand the Lystrans' identification of him as a god, and they reinforce Luke's own claim that Paul is a chosen vessel of God.

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