



# **St. Paul's discourse and dialogue with King Agrippa and Governor Festus as a model for contemporary inter-religious understanding and communication**

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## **Abstract**

In a day in which there are different religious systems vying for acceptance and probably even dominance, it is high time to identify a peaceful model for inter-religious understanding and communication. St. Paul had several interactions with the Jewish leaders, monarchs, and government officials on religious topics and issues between A.D. 60 to A.D. 62 at Caesarea. His interaction with King Agrippa II and Governor Festus can be used as a paradigm for contemporary inter-religious understanding and communication. Even though St. Paul's life was hanging on a balance as a prisoner about to be transported to Rome, he did not resort to violence, verbal abuse, or rain down curses, when his religious claims were questioned. Instead, he argued as a seasoned philosopher, prayed as a pious saint, and appealed as a prisoner in chains with humility for the 'veracity and the reasonability' of his truth claim. The article will interact with a few philosophical themes that surface during this discourse and dialogue and also attempt to trace St Paul's use of rhetoric in his discourse. The title of this article is '*St. Paul's discourse and dialogue with Governor Festus and King Agrippa II as a model for contemporary inter-religious understanding and communication*'. The primary source for

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this article is the book of Acts in the New Testament and the secondary source would be dictionaries and books.

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## 1. Introduction

Religion has existed from time immemorial. Man's commitment to religion is well-attested, so much so that human beings are referred to *Homo religiousus* (Bayne, 2004, p. 79). Religions are not only plentiful, but also varied. Some have estimated the presence of more than four thousand religions in the world (Fairchild, 2021). The various religions differ from each other and these differences often times lead to divisions and conflicts. The past and the present are ripe with examples of religion fuelled honour killings, persecutions, and violence.

This article proposes St. Paul as a role model for inter-religious communication. The genius of St. Paul is not just in his interaction with divergent philosophical and religious concepts, but also in the manner in which he communicates his concepts. St. Paul had several interactions with the Jewish leaders, monarchs and government officials on religious topics during his imprisonment in Caesarea in-between AD 60 to 62 (Acts 24-26).

The climatic discourse was the one that he had with King Agrippa II and Governor Festus recorded in Acts 25:13-27; 26:1-32 (Bible, New International Version, 2016). Within this climatic discourse, there were two interesting dialogues. The first dialogue is between Governor Festus and St. Paul (Acts 26:24), where Festus shouts to St. Paul that his great learning has made him insane. St. Paul respectfully denies it and asserts what he was saying was 'true' and 'reasonable' (Acts 26:24). The second dialogue is between St. Paul and King Agrippa II (Acts 26:26,27), where, King Agrippa II questions if St. Paul was persuading him to become a Christian in a short time. St. Paul replies in the most 'pious' manner possible. He says that his prayer is whether it takes a short or a long time, his desire is that all those who listen to him may become like him, except for his chains (Acts 26:29).

Even though St. Paul's life was hanging on a balance as a prisoner about to be transported to Rome, he did not resort to violence, verbal abuse or rain down curses when questioned, instead, he argued his case as a seasoned philosopher, prayed and appealed as a pious saint. Malherbe commenting on this discourse says that St. Paul 'has been presenting himself as a responsible philosopher, one who speaks freely or boldly, but also one who speaks sober truth' (Witherington, 1998, p. 750).

The purpose of the article is to trace the rhetorical device used by St. Paul in his discourse and to interact with a few religious and philosophical concepts that surface during this discourse and dialogue. The title of this article is '*St. Paul's discourse and dialogue with King Agrippa and Governor Festus as a model for contemporary inter-religious understanding and communication*'.

This article will first make an attempt to understand the context of this discourse, then analyze the content of the discourse, and finally conclude with some learnings for contemporary inter-religious communication.

## **2. Context of this discourse**

### **2.1. Historicity of St. Paul, King Agrippa II and Governor Festus**

Before we embark on the context for this discourse between Governor Festus, King Agrippa II, and St. Paul, it is only fitting to comment briefly on sources for their historicity. St. Paul's life and teaching can be ascertained by analyzing the New Testament records. Klaus Haacker, writing on the life of St. Paul in '*Cambridge Companion to Apostle Paul*' (Haacker, 2013, p. 19) notes that the historical knowledge of the life of Paul comes entirely from the New Testament, mostly from the Acts of the Apostle as the only narrative source, supplemented by a number of autobiographical passages or remarks in the letters of Paul (including some letters whose authorship is disputed). Even though questions arise concerning the authenticity of these records (Taylor, 2021, p. 28), the common consensus among New Testament scholars is that one can ascertain the life and teaching of St. Paul from the Acts of the Apostles and from his seven undisputed epistles found in the New Testament (Harrill, 2012, pp. 7-13).

Since, this article deals with the discourse of St. Paul in Acts, its authorship and the date of composition are worth mentioning. Traditionally, Luke the physician and the travel companion (Rasily, 1997, pp. 5,6) of St. Paul has been identified as the author of the Acts of the Apostle. Ben Witherington confirms this tradition by analyzing the internal and external evidence for it(Witherington, 1998, pp. 52-60). Even though there is a debate concerning the date of the composition of Acts, it appears that this book was probably composed prior to AD 64, which most likely was the year that St. Paul was martyred (Paul - A Short Introduction, 2001, p. 9).

Joel Green notes that the history of 'Festus' can be ascertained from the Acts of the Apostles and from the writings of Jewish Historian 'Flavius Josephus' (Green, 1992). The history concerning King Agrippa II can be gleaned from 'Josephus' and the Acts of the Apostles. Craig Keener notes that, 'Josephus's record shows that Agrippa visited Roman officials frequently' (Keener, 2014, p. 406).

## **2.2. Historical background for St. Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea**

After St. Paul completed this third voyage of missionary undertaking, he came to Jerusalem in A.D 58. His friends were aware of the animosity of certain Jews. He was viewed as one who preached against the Jews, the law, and the temple. Thus, in order to appease them and to demonstrate that he was still living in obedience to the law (religious), his friends requested him to accompany four other men in a Jewish ritual of purification in Jerusalem. He consented to this advice and went to the temple in order to give notice of when the rites of purification would end (Acts 21:17-26). During St. Paul's visit to the temple for this purpose, he was spotted by the Jews who were already at odds with him. They stirred the whole crowd, took hold of him, and accused him of not only teaching against the Jews, their law, and their temple but also defiling the temple by bringing Greeks into it. The entire city was aroused, people came running from all directions, seized and dragged him, and finally shut the gates with the intention to kill him. The Roman commander on hearing this ran and rescued St. Paul from the rioters and took him to the barracks (Acts 21:27-34).

St. Paul was then given an opportunity to speak to the crowd, but it resulted in further shouting from the raging Jews (Acts 21:37-40; 22:1-23). St. Paul was then presented before the Sanhedrin. At the Sanhedrin, his reference to a contentious topic, the resurrection triggered a war of words and dispute between the Pharisees and the Sadducees (Acts 22:30; 23:1-11). The Jews were unrelenting in their determination to kill St. Paul, but their plot was uncovered and reported to the Roman commander. It was then that St. Paul was safely escorted by two centurions to Governor Felix in Caesarea (Acts 23:23, 24), a coastal city where the Roman procurator of Judea usually resides (Sanders, 2001, pp. 18,19).

### **2.3. St. Paul's first discourse in Caesarea**

At Caesarea, Felix presided over the first defense of St. Paul against his accusers, namely the chief priest, elders, and a lawyer named Tertullus, who had come from Jerusalem. (Acts 24:1-21). St. Paul was accused of being a 'trouble maker'; 'stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world'; 'ringleader of the Nazareth sect' and one who was about to 'desecrate the temple' (Acts 24:5).

St. Paul began his defense by acknowledging the rule of Felix and expressed his gladness to defend himself in his presence. St. Paul was probably attempting to elicit favorableness and cordiality, a common rhetoric practice. St. Paul then denied the accusation levied against him and invited Felix to verify it for himself (Acts 24:10-13).

In his defense, St. Paul affirmed that he worships the God of the Fathers, a reference to 'Yahweh', as a follower of the Way, a reference to those who believed in Jesus as the promised Messiah and that he believes the law and the prophets, the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. St. Paul for the most part is in agreement with the belief system of his Jewish accusers but is not impressed with them calling the 'Way' as a sect. St. Paul then denies having caused any disturbances in the temple in Jerusalem. Luke notes that Felix who was familiar with the 'Way', adjourned the proceeding (Acts 24:22).

After several days Governor Felix came along with his Jewish wife Drusilla, sent for St. Paul, and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Jesus Christ. But, when St. Paul discoursed on 'righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come', Felix was afraid and said 'That is enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you' (Acts 24:25). It is quite interesting to note that St. Paul's discourse elicited a response. Luke observes that Felix continued to talk with St. Paul hoping for a bribe, and left him in prison for two years in order to please the Jews. After Felix's time as a Governor came to an end, he left St. Paul in prison for two years under Porcius Festus (Acts 24:27), who was appointed by Nero as a Governor of Judea in the autumn of A.D 60(R. K. Harrison, Howard F. Vos, Cyril J. Barber, 1985, p. 432).

#### **2.4. St. Paul's second discourse at Caesarea**

When Governor Festus arrived at Caesarea, the chief priest and Jewish leaders pressed charges against St. Paul, however, Luke reports that they were unsuccessful to prove their charges (Acts 27:5). Just like Felix, Governor Festus in his attempt to please the Jewish people asked St. Paul if was willing to stand trial at Jerusalem, but he refused. St. Paul in his defense argued that he has not done anything wrong against the law of the Jews, the temple or against Caesar. St. Paul declared that if he was found guilty of anything deserving of death, he was willing to die. Here, St. Paul appeals to his conduct and ethics. However, if the charges that were levied against him were not true, he asserted that no one had the right to hand him over to Jews (Acts 25:10,11). St. Paul then uses the privileges of his Roman citizenship to good effort and appeals to the emperor Caesar (Acts 25:12).

#### **2.5. Paul's third and climatic discourse at Caesarea**

When King Agrippa II and his wife Bernice came to Caesarea, Festus discussed St. Paul's case with him (Acts 25:13,14). Festus was unaware of the religious controversy surrounding St. Paul and was at the loss of words to detail a charge sheet against him. It is for this reason that he seeks the help of King Agrippa II. Kenner notes that since 'Agrippa was authorized even to appoint "high priests (*Jewish Antiquities* 20.179, 196), Festus can obtain Judean

advice more important than that of St. Paul's accusers' (Keener, 2014, p. 406).

## **2.6. The Religious belief of St. Paul, King Agrippa II, and Governor Festus**

The Jews in the 1<sup>st</sup> century believed in a 'personal God who had revealed Himself through miraculous interventions into history, in oral pronouncements of divinely authenticated prophets, and in inscripturated truth' (Gromacki, 1998, p. 27) and St. Paul as a Jew would have subscribed to this belief too. Commenting on St. Paul's religious beliefs, Sanders observes that he 'believed in one God; he thought that there were other powers in the universe besides God; he thought that God was exercising a grand plan in history, and he thought that individuals could decide to be with him or against him.' (Sanders, 2001, p. 41).

It must be pointed out that St. Paul's religious belief took a drastic change after his religious experience on the road to Damascus. Even though St. Paul shared the basic tenets of Judaism, he was at odds with the Jewish religious leaders as the account in Acts and his Epistles indicate. St. Paul faced opposition from the Jewish religious leaders because of his proclamation of 'Jesus' as the promised Messiah, ruling out the necessity for adherence to the Mosaic law and circumcision as a prerequisite for salvation and inviting the Gentiles as joint heirs with the Jews.

King Agrippa II, religious beliefs can be ascertained in this narrative itself. Governor Festus and St. Paul affirm King Agrippa II's knowledge concerning the Jewish religion, its customs and controversy (Acts 26:3) as well as his belief in the prophets of the Old Testament (Acts 26:27). Governor Festus's religious belief is unknown except that he was unfamiliar with the Jewish religion. One can make the case that just like every other educated Roman, he viewed the reports of the supernatural as madness (Acts 26:24).

It is quite obvious that these three historical individuals had divergent religious backgrounds. The interaction between 'Festus', a political governor, 'Agrippa' a King with religious knowledge, and 'St. Paul' a prisoner who had religious knowledge and religious experience are worth analyzing for inter-religious understanding and communication.

## **2.6. The dispute in general was concerning 'Religion'**

Governor Festus reported to King Agrippa II that the disputes between St. Paul and the Jewish religious leaders were 'about their own religion' (Acts 25:19a). Religion in the ancient Mediterranean world concerned 'about one's relations to the transcendent', but in this context, 'Religion' probably refers to as a 'system of cultic belief or practice' (Danker, 2000, p. 216) of the Jewish people. It is interesting to note that Festus identifies St. Paul's religion with that of the Jewish religious leaders by grouping them together.

## **2.7. The dispute specifically concerned 'Religious claims'**

Governor Festus was able to identify the specific contentious issue at stake between St. Paul and his accusers. He points out that it was concerning a 'dead man named Jesus whom Paul claimed was alive' (Acts 25:19). The following can be inferred from this statement. First, Governor Festus as a Roman official recognized the historicity of the person of Jesus. Second, he identifies Jesus as a 'man' and not as a 'Messiah' or 'God'. Third, he was fully convinced of the death of Jesus, courtesy of his identification of Jesus as a 'dead man' (Acts 25:6), and finally, he viewed the resurrection of Jesus as a mere 'truth claim' or 'faith claim' by St. Paul.

Even though Governor Festus was in agreement with the historicity of the life and death of Jesus, nevertheless, he viewed the resurrection of Jesus as merely St. Paul's 'truth claim'. It is quite normal for people in this natural world to be skeptical of the 'dead man' rising. The likes of David Hume in the past and Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris and the late Christopher Hitchens would scoff at this proposition (Craig, 2002, p. 28). Philosophers would label such a claim as merely a 'Religious claim' or in the category 'anti-realism' language (Bayne, 2004, pp. 93, 94).

Thus, one can conclude that the Romans viewed 'the person and the death' of Christ as a 'reasonable' assertion and 'the resurrection' as of matter of 'faith'. It was these kinds of tensions that sparked the 'Reason and Faith' debate in the world of philosophy.

### 3. The Content of this dialogue

St. Paul as a 1st-century philosopher uses 'rhetoric' to argue the reasonability of his 'truth claim'. An argument does not necessarily mean to quarrel about something, but rather, an 'argument in the philosophical sense is a set of statements which serves as premises leading to a conclusion' (J.P. Moreland, William Lane Craig, 2003, p. 28). Aristotle in the 'Art of Rhetoric' (Aristotle, 2004, pp. 17,73) emphasizes three ingredients for persuasive communication. They are 'ethos', referring to the credibility of the speaker, 'pathos', referring to the appeal to the emotion, and 'logos', referring to the content and the logic of the argument.

One cannot be sure if St. Paul was aware of the writing of Aristotle or any other philosophers (Paul and the Giants of Philosophy - Reading the Apostle in Greco-Roman Context, 2019, p. 2), but it appears that he was probably using 'rhetoric' in his discourse. An argument can be made that St. Paul as a Philosopher has used the rhetorical device of 'ethos', 'logo' and 'pathos' in his discourse and dialogue with Governor Festus and King Agrippa II.

#### 3.1. St. Paul appeals to his zealous religiosity to establish his credibility - Ethos

St. Paul attempts to establish credibility as a speaker by offering a brief biography of himself. St. Paul says that the Jewish people have known how he has lived his life (Acts 26:4a). They had known him since he was a child in his own country, referring to Tarsus as well as those in Jerusalem (Acts 26:4b). They could even testify that he conformed to the strictest sect of the Jewish religion, living as a Pharisee (Acts 26:5). Here, Craig Keener points out that 'The appeal to many potential witnesses is not unusual; it occurs even in Plato's version of Socrates defence' (Keener, 2014, p. 407).

St. Paul then explains the outworking of zealous animosity to the followers of the 'Way', a reference to Christians. St. Paul says that he was convinced to do everything possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 26:9). He had imprisoned many and cast his vote against them when sentenced to death (Acts 26:10). He went

from synagogue to synagogue to punish them. He tried to force them to blaspheme. He was obsessed with persecuting them and even went to foreign cities to persecute them (Acts 26:11). E. P. Sanders notes that, 'The one activity which can be ascribed to Paul the Pharisee with certainty is the persecution of the Christian movement' (Sanders, 2001, p. 9).

St. Paul is attempting to convey to his audience that in view of his religious upbringing, religiosity, zealous animosity, and persecution, he would have been the last one to proclaim that the 'dead man 'Jesus' was alive'. In other words, he is arguing for the 'ethos', credibility as a speaker.

### **3.2. St. Paul appeals to 'logic' for the resurrection from the dead - Reasons**

St. Paul is said to have used classical rhetoric in his argument, just like the philosophers before his time. According to Plato, 'Socrates used the question-answer method in his philosophical pursuit.' (Norman L. Geisler, Paul D. Feinberg, 1980, p. 40), likewise, St. Paul also posits a question to convey his point. He questions, 'Why should anyone consider 'incredible' (ἄπιστος) for God to raise the dead' (Acts 26:8). The word, ἄπιστος could be rendered as 'unbelievable' (Danker, 2000, p. 103) or 'unreasonable'. As the purpose of the article is not only to trace the rhetorical device used by St. Paul in his discourse but also to interact with some Religious Philosophical themes, it is worth analyzing St. Paul's statement in Acts 26:8.

There are probably three reasons for St. Paul's rhetorical question. First, as a religious Jew, he was probably aware of God raising dead people in the Old Testament. Elijah raised the Shunamite woman's son from the dead (2 Kings 4:11-37). Just as philosophers use the writings of yester years' philosophers for gaining knowledge in a particular field, St. Paul's religious traditions would have enabled him to gain knowledge of the ability to raise people from the dead in the present. Second, as a pharisee, the resurrection was at the core of his belief system (Acts 23:6-8). Third, St. Paul is a 'theist'. There is every possibility for him to reason that if a supernatural being 'God' exists, then supernatural events are logically possible (Acts 26:7). Philosophers have argued for the

miraculous by saying, 'For if a transcendent, personal God exists, then he could cause events in the universe that could not be produced by causes within the universe.' (J.P. Moreland, William Lane Craig, 2003, p. 568). Thus, St. Paul had every reason to question people's skepticism in God's ability to raise someone from the dead in light of logic, and past and present religious traditions.

### **3.4. St. Paul's appeal to his personal religious experience at Damascus - Revelation**

Religious experience is also one of the sources of knowledge in the field of philosophy (Bayne, 2004, pp. 43-45). Sanders, a Pauline scholar notes that St. Paul also had an 'experience' in the year 33 that shaped his life (Sanders, 2001, p. 10). St. Paul narrates his religious experience to Festus and Agrippa.

In one of St. Paul's journeys, as he was going to Damascus with the authority of the chief priests, he saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around him and his companions at around noon (Acts 26:13). He fell down and heard a voice in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads' (Acts 26:14). St. Paul responded by asking about the identity of the voice by addressing it as 'Lord' as he was familiar with the account of the burning bush in the Pentateuch. The voice replied, 'I am Jesus, you were persecuting' (Acts 26:15).

This 'Jesus of Nazareth', this 'dead man' appeared to St. Saul. E.P Sanders notes that this was the time when 'God revealed Christ to him' (Sanders, 2001, p. 11), the moment of 'Revelation', a definitive event that happened in his life (Dulles, 2001, p. 228).

The voice gave instructions and commissioned St. Paul. St. Paul is instructed to get up and stand on his feet and the voice speaks, 'I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me' (Acts 26:16). The voice assures that St.

Paul would be rescued from the Jewish and the gentiles (Acts 26:17). This probably refers to physical protection. The voice then sends him to open the eyes of the people, to turn them from darkness to light, and to turn them from the power of Satan to God

so that they may receive the forgiveness of sins and a place among those sanctified by faith in the Lord (Acts 26:18).

There is plenty of parallelism between the experience of St. Paul and the Prophet of old, 'Moses' (Exo 3:1-15). It was an experience similar to that of Prophet Moses where he saw the light and heard a voice calling him by name. Just as the voice identified himself as 'I am', the voice in Damascus identified himself as 'I am Jesus'. Just as the 'I am' caused leprosy and then cleansed Moses, likewise St. Paul was inflicted physically with blindness and then restored. Just as Moses was given a mission, St. Paul was given a mission to be a light to the Gentiles and to testify about Jesus before kings and rulers. Just as Moses had Aaron to support and affirm his calling, St. Paul had Ananias to support, affirm, pray and care for him.

After narrating his testimony, St. Paul tells King Agrippa that he was not disobedient to the vision from heaven and therefore preached in Damascus, Jerusalem, Judea, and to the gentiles (Acts 26:19,20). St. Paul cites this as the reason for the Jews seizing him in the temple courts and attempting to kill him (Acts 26:21).

St. Paul's 'religious experience' or his 'revelation' has not only been narrated by Luke, (Acts 9:3-19) but has been narrated by St. Paul while speaking before the Jewish audience, the Jewish religious leaders, and before kings and governors. Even if there might be some skepticism in Luke's account, St. Paul writes about his moment of 'revelation' in his undisputed first epistle, the Epistle to the Galatians (Gal 1:16). He also writes to the Corinthians that he has seen the resurrected Christ (1 Cor 9:1). Later, when he describes the content of the Gospel, he lists the appearance of the resurrected Christ to Cephas, then to the Twelve, then to more than five hundred people at the same time, many of whom were still alive in St. Paul's lifetime, he also appeared to James, then to the Apostles and then finally to him (1 Cor 15:3-8a).

### **3.5. St. Paul's appeal to the 'Scripture' attestation - Tradition**

St. Paul in his discourse says that he was on trial because of his hope in what God promised his ancestors (Acts 26:6). The promise in a nutshell is the birth, life, death, and resurrection of God's Messiah. St. Paul asserts that whatever he is preaching is exactly what the Prophets and Moses had predicted that Christ was to

suffer, be raised to life, and be proclaimed as light to the Jews and the Gentiles alike (Acts 26:23). St. Paul is thus appealing to the Scriptures to validate his beliefs. Just as scholars including philosophers would use other scholars and philosophers to validate their hypotheses or theories, St. Paul likewise appeals to the tradition.

### 3.6. Festus's climatic outburst – 'Learning leading to Insanity'

St. Paul has so far used 'ethos' and 'logic' in his discourse. As St. Paul was continuing his discourse, Festus became agitated. This is probably the climax of this entire discourse. Governor Festus interrupts St. Paul' and shouts with a loud voice, 'You are insane, Paul' (*Μαίνη, Παῦλε*) (Barbara Aland, 1998) and blames St Paul's 'great learning' (*τὰ πολλά σγράμματα*) (Barbara Aland, 1998) (Danker, 2000, p. 2006), for this insanity (Acts 26:24).

St. Paul may have marshalled his arguments to convince Governor Festus, but for him, it was 'utter insanity'. Craig Keener points out that Festus 'may be referring to St. Paul's Jewish learning (26:4-5) and probably also his visionary claims (26:13-19), Festus gives the usual answer that educated Romans gave to concepts so foreign and barbarian to them as resurrection' (Keener, 2014, pp. 408,409).

C. K. Barret also gives the rationale for the outburst of Festus, "the story of a crucified and risen Messiah is nonsense, (a) because a king would not proceed by the way of suffering and death, and (b) because dead men do not rise up" (Barrett, 2004, p. 1167). The first objection was probably because of the prevailing Jewish belief in the identity and the role of a Messiah and the second objection has to do with 'Reasons'. As a non-religious person, it was quite normal for him to believe that in the natural world, dead people do not raise up. Such a claim is utter 'madness' and unreasonable'.

### 3.7. Paul's response – Truth and Reasonability

St. Paul who has so far travelled extensively, addressed various gatherings, established many churches and written many significant letters, one who had a great number of followers is labelled as being 'Insane'. St. Paul has a past of being very violent and he could have responded in a hostile manner, however, St. Paul retorts respectably by denying this accusation and by

asserting that what he was saying was 'true', *'αληθείας'*, referring to 'the content of what is true, *truth'*, (Danker, 2000, p. 42) and 'reasonable' *'σωφροσύνης'*, referring to soundness of mind, *reasonableness, rationality* (Danker, 2000, p. 986).

Aristotle has defined truth as, 'To say of what is, that it is, and of what is not, that is not, is true' (Norman L. Geisler, Paul D. Feinberg, 1980, p. 247). St. Paul asserts that what he has been saying is true and reasonable. His religious upbringing, initial skepticism, and zealous animosity are true. His 'religious experience', the revelation of 'Jesus' himself is true and reasonable. His appeal to the 'tradition' of Old Testament Scripture is true and reasonable. His appeal to the possibility of God's ability to raise the dead is reasonable.

St. Paul is not afraid or ashamed to declare the 'truth and the reasonability' of his claim that the 'dead man Jesus is indeed alive' and that God has indeed revealed this 'Jesus' to him on the road to Damascus.

### **3.8. St. Paul's appeal to King Agrippa II - Personal belief, History, and Pathos**

St. Paul now addresses King Agrippa II specifically. St. Paul is pleased to speak to the king for two reasons, namely because the king was aware of historical facts and because these events did not occur in a corner. It was a rather public event and could not have escaped his attention (Acts 24:26). Here, St. Paul like the other speakers of the 1<sup>st</sup> century 'appealed to public knowledge' (Keener, 2014, p. 409), to an 'event' that took place in history.

The life, deeds, teachings, trial, death, and resurrection of 'Jesus' did not go unnoticed as though they happened in some corner (Acts 26:26). Darrell Bock in his book, *'Studying the Historical Jesus'* notes that just as there are biblical accounts for the evidence for the historicity of Jesus, there is also non-biblical literary Evidence for Jesus. He lists pieces of evidence from Roman sources *'Suetonius, Claudius 25.4'*, *'Tacitus, Annals 15.44'*, *'Pliny the Younger, Epistles 10.96-97'*; from Syrian source *'A Syrian Philosopher, Mara Bar Sarapion'*; Jewish source namely *'Josephus'*, who writes on 'James the Just' and on 'Jesus' and *'Rabbinic sources* and evidence of debate with church fathers' (Bock, 2002, pp. 45-63).

St. Paul then turned to king Agrippa II and asked him if he believed the prophets. This is a rhetorical question, anticipating or implying a positive response. St. Paul is aware that King Agrippa II believes the prophets (Acts 26:27). When King Agrippa II is cornered, he becomes conscious of St. Paul's intention and just as Governor Festus interrupted St. Paul's discourse with an accusation, King Agrippa also questions 'Are you persuading me to become a Christian in such a short period of time' (Acts 26:28).

St. Paul replies in the most 'pious' manner possible. He says that his prayer is whether it takes a short or a long time, his desire is that all those who listen to him may become like him, except for his chains (Acts 26:29). St. Paul as a saint not only invokes 'God', but as a prisoner, does not want them to suffer like him. St. Paul is probably appealing to 'pathos', and 'emotions' and not forcing his belief on people. However, King Agrippa II like Pilate, Festus, and Felix did not proceed further in their pursuit of truth. King Agrippa II merely concluded that St. Paul's action did not deserve death or imprisonment and noted that if St. Paul had not appealed to Caesar, he would have been set free (Acts 26:32).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Mankind's attachment and commitment to religion are well attested in history. Among the various philosophies out there, it is religious philosophies that have had the greatest impact on humanity. There are several religions, each vying for acceptance and in some case even dominance. This has resulted in religious conflicts worldwide. There is a need for mutual understanding, respect, and a peaceful and non-violent manner of inter-religious communication.

St. Paul was proposed as a model for inter-religious communication. Even though St. Paul's life was hanging on a balance as a prisoner about to be transported to Rome, he did not resort to violence, verbal abuse, or rain down curses when questioned by Governor Festus and King Agrippa, instead, he argued his case as a seasoned philosopher for 'truth' and the 'reasonability' of his claim by peaceful dialogue and the use of rhetoric in AD 60 in Caesarea.

He used the art of 'ethos' by arguing for his credibility as a speaker by narrating the biography of his childhood, religious upbringing, initial skepticism, and zealous animosity towards the people of the Way. He then used the art of 'logic' to argue for the veracity and the reasonability of the resurrection of Jesus. He argues that it is quite reasonable for God to raise people from the dead. He then used the argument from tradition by citing the prediction of the Scriptures. He narrates his 'Religious experience' in encountering the risen Jesus at Damascus and history as the sources of knowledge. At the end of his discourse, he does not force his beliefs on others but prays as a saint and appeals as a prisoner with absolute humility by using the art of 'pathos'. Malherbe is right when he comments about this discourse that Paul is presenting himself as a responsible philosopher (Witherington, 1998, p. 750).

St. Paul's discourse with King Agrippa and Governor Festus in the spirit of 'ethos', 'logos', and 'pathos', can be used as a paradigm for peaceful inter-religious communication.

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