
Paul in Athens

Arrival on the Coast of Attica

In the life of Apollonius of Tyana, there occurs a passage to the following effect: " Having come to anchor in the Piraeus, he went up from the Harbor to the City. Advancing onward, he met several of the Philosophers. In his first conversation, finding the Athenians much devoted to Religion, he discoursed on sacred subjects. This was at Athens, where also altars of Unknown Divinities are set up., To draw a parallel between a holy Apostle and an itinerant Magician would be unmeaning and profane: but this extract from the biography of Apollonius would be a suitable and comprehensive motto to that passage in St. Paul's biography on which we are now entering. The sailing into the Piraeus, the entrance into the city of Athens, the interviews with philosophers, the devotion of the Athenians to religious ceremonies, the discourse concerning the worship of the Deity, the ignorance implied by the altars to unknown Gods, these are exactly the subjects which are now before us.

If a summary of the contents of the seventeenth chapter of the Acts had been required, it could not have been more conveniently expressed. The city visited by Apollonius was the Athens which was visited by St. Paul: the topics of discussion the character of the people addressed the aspect of everything around, were identically the same. The difference was this, that the Apostle could give to his hearers what the philosopher could not give. The God whom Paul" declared, was worshipped by Apollonius himself as" ignorantly" as by the Athenians.

We left St. Paul on that voyage which his friends induced him to undertake on the flight from Berea. The vessel was last seen among the Thessalian islands. About that point the highest land in Northern Macedonia began to be lost to view. Gradually the nearer heights of the snowy Olympus itself receded into the distance as the vessel on her progress approached more and more near to the centre of all the interest of classical Greece. All the land and water in sight becomes more eloquent as we advance; the lights and shadows, both of poetry and history,

are on every side; every rock is a monument; every current is animated with some memory of the past. For a distance of ninety miles, from the confines of Thessaly to the middle part of the coast of Attics, the shore is protected, as it were, by the long island of Euboea.

Deep in the innermost gulf, where the waters of the Aegean retreat far within the land, over against the northern parts of this island, is the pass of Thermopylae, where a handful of Greek warriors had defied all the hosts of Asia. In the crescent like bay on the shore of Attics, near the southern extremity of the same island, is the maritime sanctuary of Marathon, where the battle was fought which decided that Greece was never to be a Persian Satrapy. When the island of Euboea is left behind, we soon reach the southern extremity of Attica Cape Colonna, Sunium's high promontory, still crowned with the white columns of that temple of Minerva, which was the landmark to Greek sailors, and which asserted the presence of Athens at the very vestibule of her country.

After passing this headland, our course turns to the westward across the waters of the Saronic Gulf, with the mountains of the Mores on our left, and the islands of Agina and Salamis in front. To one who travels in classical lands no moment is more full of interest and excitement than when he has left the Cape of Sunium behind and eagerly looks for the first glimpse of that city" built nobly on the Aegean shore," which was" the eye of Greece, mother of arts and eloquence." To the traveler in classical times its position was often revealed by the flashing of the light on the armor of Minerva's colossal statue, which stood with shield and spear on the summit of the citadel. s At the very first sight of Athens, and even from the deck of the vessel, we obtain a vivid notion of the characteristics of its position. And the place where it stands is so remarkable its ancient inhabitants were so proud of its climate and its scenery that we may pause on our approach to say a few words on Attics and Athens, and their relation to the rest of Greece.

Scenery Around Athens

Attica is a triangular tract of country, the southern and eastern sides of which meet in the point of Sunium; its third side is defined by the high mountain ranges of Cithaeron and Parnes, which separate it by a strong barrier from Boeotia and Northern Greece. Hills of inferior elevation connect these ranges with the mountainous surface of the south east, which begins from Sunium itself, and rises on the south coast to the round summits of Hymettus, and the higher peak of Pentelicia near Marathon on the east. The rest of Attica is a plain, one reach of which comes down to the sea on the south, at the very base of Hymettus. Here, about five miles from the shore, an abrupt rock rises from the level, like the rock of Stirling Castle, bordered on the south by some lower eminences, and commanded by a high craggy peak on the north. This rock is the Acropolis of Athens. These lower eminences are the Areopagus, the Pnyx, and the Museum, which determined the rising and falling of the ground in the ancient city. That craggy peak is the hill of Lycabettus, from the summit of which the spectator sees all Athens at his feet, and looks freely over the intermediate plain to the Piraeus and the sea.

Athens and the Piraeus must never be considered separately. One was the city, the other was its harbor. Once they were connected together by a continuous fortification. Those who looked down from Lycabettus in the time of Pericles, could follow with the eye all the long line of wall from the temples on the Acropolis to the shipping in the port. Thus we are brought back to the point from which we digressed. We were approaching the Piraeus; and, since we must land in maritime Athens before we can enter Athena itself, let us return once more to the vessel's deck, and look round on the land and the water. The island on our left, with steep cliffs at the water's edge, is Aegina.

The distant heights beyond it are the mountains of the Mores. Before us is another island, the illustrious Salamis; though in the view it is hardly disentangled from the coast of Attica, for the strait where the battle was fought is narrow and winding. The high ranges behind stretch beyond Eleusis and Megara, to the left towards

Corinth, and to the right along the frontier of Boeotia. This last ridge is the mountain line of Parnes, of which we have spoken above. Clouds" are often seen to rest on it at all seasons of the year, and in winter it is usually white with snow. The dark heavy mountain rising close to us on the right immediately from the sea, is Hymettus. Between Parnes and Hymettus is the plain; and rising from the plain is the Acropolis; distinctly visible, with Lycabettus behind, and seeming in the clear atmosphere to be nearer than it is.

The outward aspect of this scene is now what it ever was. The lights and shadows on the rocks of Aegina and Salamis, the gleams on the distant mountains, the clouds or the snow on Parties, the gloom in the deep dells of Hymettus, the temple crowned rock and the plain beneath it, are natural features, which only vary with the alterations of morning and evening, and summer and winter." Some changes indeed have taken place: but they are connected with the history of man. The vegetation is less abundant, the population is more scanty. In Greek and Roman times, bright villages enlivened the promontories of Sunium and Aegina, and all the inner reaches of the bay.

Some readers will indeed remember a dreary picture which Sulpicius gave his friend Atticus of the desolation of these coasts when Greece had ceased to be free; but we must make some allowances for the exaggerations of a poetical regret, and must recollect that the writer had been accustomed to the gay and busy life of the Campanian shore. After the renovation of Corinth, and in the reign of Claudius, there is no doubt that all the signs of a far more numerous population than at present were evident around the Saronic Gulf, and that more white sails were to be seen in fine weather plying across its waters to the harbors of Cenchrea (see Acts 18:18; Rom. 16:1) or Piraeus.

Now there is indeed a certain desolation over this beautiful bay: Corinth is fallen, and Cenchrea is an insignificant village. The Piraeus is probably more like what it was than any other spot upon the coast. It remains what by nature it has ever been, a safe basin of deep water, concealed by the surrounding rock; and now, as in St. Paul's time, the proximity of

Athens causes it to be the resort of various shipping. We know that we are approaching it at the present day, if we see, rising above the rocks, the tall masts of an English line of battle ship, side by side with the light spars of a Russian corvette or the black funnel of a French steamer.

The details were different when the Mediterranean was a Roman lake. The heavy top gear" of corn ships from Alexandria or the Euxine might then be a conspicuous mark among the small coasting vessels and fishing boats; and one bright spectacle was then pre eminent, which the lapse of centuries has made cold and dim, the perfect buildings on the summit of the Acropolis, with the shield and spear of Minerva Promachus glittering in the sun. But those who have coasted along beneath Hymettus, and past the indentations in the shore, which were sufficient harbors for Athens in the days of her early navigation, and round by the ancient tomb, which tradition has assigned to Themistocles, into the better and safer harbor of the Piraeus, require no great effort of the imagination to picture the Apostle's arrival. For a moment, as we near the entrance, the land rises and conceals all the plain. Idlers come down upon the rocks to watch the coming vessel. The sailors are all on the alert. Suddenly an opening is revealed; and a sharp turn of the helm brings the ship in between two moles, on which towers are erected. We are in smooth water; and anchor is cast in seven fathoms in the basin of the Piraeus.

The Piraeus, with its suburbs (for so, though it is not strictly accurate, we may designate the maritime city), was given to Athens as a natural advantage, to which much of her greatness must be traced. It consists of a projecting portion of rocky ground, which is elevated above the neighboring shore, and probably was originally entirely insulated in the sea. The two rivers of Athens the Cephissus and Ilissus seem to have formed, in the course of ages, the low marshy ground which now connects Athens with its port. The port itself possesses all the advantages of shelter and good anchorage, deep water, and sufficient space. Themistocles, seeing that the preeminence of his country could only be maintained by her maritime

power, fortified the Piraeus as the outpost of Athens, and enclosed the basin of the harbor as a dock within the walls.

In the long period through which Athens had been losing its political power, these defenses had been neglected, and suffered to fall into decay, or had been used as materials for other buildings: but there was still a fortress on the highest point, the harbor was still a place of some resort; and a considerable number of seafaring people dwelt in the streets about. When the republic of Athens was flourishing, the sailors were a turbulent and worthless part of its population. And the Piraeus under the Romans was not without some remains of the same disorderly class, as it doubtless retained many of the outward features of its earlier appearance: the landing places and covered porticoes; the warehouses where the corn from the Black Sea used to be laid up; the stores of fish brought in daily from the Saronic Gulf and the Aegean; the gardens in the watery ground at the edge of the plain; the theatres ~ into which the sailors used to flock to hear the comedies of Menander; and the temples where they were spectators of a worship which had no beneficial effect on their characters.

Had St. Paul come to this spot four hundred years before, he would have been in Athens from the moment of his landing at the Piraeus. At that time the two cities were united together by the double line of fortification, which is famous under the name of the" Long Walls." The space included between these two arms of stone might be considered (as, indeed it was sometimes called) a third city; for the street of five miles in length thus formed across the plain, was crowded with people, whose habitations were shut out from all view of the country by the vast wall on either side. Some of the most pathetic passages of Athenian history are associated with this" long mural" enclosure: as when, in the beginning of the Peloponnesian war, the plague broke out in the autumn weather among the miserable inhabitants, who were crowded here to suffocation; or, at the end of the same war, when the news came of the defeat on the Asiatic shore, and one long wail went up from the Piraeus," and no one slept in Athens that night."

The result of that victory was, that these long walls were rendered useless by being partially destroyed; and though another Athenian admiral and statesman restored what Pericles had first completed, this intermediate fortification remained effective only for a time. In the incessant changes which fell on Athena in the Macedonian period, they were injured and became unimportant. In the Roman siege under Sulla, the stones were used as materials for other military works. So that when Augustus was on the throne, and Athens had reached its ultimate position as a free city of the province of Achaia, Strabo, in his description of the place, speaks of the Long Walls as matters of past history; and Pausanias, a century later, says simply that "you see the ruins of the walls as you go up from the Piraeus"

Thus we can easily imagine the aspect of these defenses in the time of St. Paul, which is intermediate to these two writers. On each side of the road were the broken fragments of the rectangular masonry put together in the proudest days of Athens; more conspicuous than they are at present (for now only the foundations can be traced here and there across the plain), but still very different from what they were when two walls of sixty feet high, with a long succession of towers, stood to bid defiance to every invader of Attica.

The consideration of the Long Walls leads us to that of the city walls themselves. Here many questions might be raised concerning the extent of the enclosure, and the positions of the gates, when Athens was under the Roman dominion. But all such inquiries must be entirely dismissed. We will assume that St. Paul entered the city by the gate which led from the Piraeus, that this gate was identical with that by which Pausanias entered, and that its position was in the hollow between the outer slopes of the Pnyx and Museum. It is no ordinary advantage that we possess a description of Athens under the Romans, by the traveler and antiquarian whose name has just been mentioned. The work of Pausanias will be our best guide to the discovery of what St. Paul saw. By following his route through the city, we shall be treading in the steps of the Apostle himself, and shall

behold those very objects which excited his indignation and compassion.

Taking, then, the position of the Peiraic gate as determined, or at least resigning the task of topographical inquiries, we enter the city, and with Pausanias as our guide, look round on the objects which were seen by the Apostle. At the very gateway we are met with proofs of the peculiar tendency of the Athenians to multiply their objects both of art and devotions. Close by the building where the vestments were laid up which were used in the annual procession of their tutelary divinity Minerva, is an image of her rival Neptune, seated on horseback, and hurling his trident. We pass by a temple of Ceres, on the walls of which an archaic inscription informs us that the statues it contains were the work of Praxiteles. We go through the gate: and immediately the eye is attracted by the sculptured forms of Minerva, Jupiter, and Apollo, of Mercury and the Muses standing near a sanctuary of Bacchus.

We are already in the midst of an animated scene, where temples, statues, and altars are on every side, and where the Athenians, fond of publicity and the open air, fond of hearing and telling what is curious and strange, are enjoying their climate, and inquiring for news. A long street is before us, with a colonnade or cloister on either hand, like the covered arcades of Bologna or Turin.

At the end of the street, by turning to the left, we might go through the whole Ceramicus, which leads by the tombs of eminent Athenians to the open inland country and the groves of the Academy. But we turn to the right into the Agora, which was the centre of a glorious public life, when the orators and statesman, the poets and the artists of Greece, found there all the incentives of their noblest enthusiasm; and still continued to be the meeting place of philosophy, of idleness, of conversation, and of business, when Athens could only be proud of her recollections of the past.

The Agora

On the south side is the Pnyx,¹ a sloping hill partially leveled into an open area for political assemblies; on the north side is the more craggy eminence of the Areopagus; before us, towards the east, is the Acropolis, towering high above the scene of which it is the glory and the crown. In the valley enclosed by these heights is the Agora, which must not be conceived of as a great "market" (Acts xvii. 17), like the bare spaces in many modern towns, where little attention has been paid to artistic decoration, but is rather to be compared to the beautiful squares of such Italian cities as Verona and Florence, where historical buildings have closed in the space within narrow limits, and sculpture has peopled it with impressive figures. Among the buildings of greatest interest are the porticoes or cloisters, which were decorated with paintings and statuary, like the Campo Santo at Pisa. We think we may be excused for multiplying these comparisons: for though they are avowedly imperfect, they are really more useful than any attempt at description could be, in enabling us to realize the aspect of ancient Athens.

Two of the most important of these were the Portico of the King, and the Portico of the Jupiter of Freedom. On the roof of the former were statues of Theseus and the Day: in front of the latter was the divinity to whom it was dedicated, and within were allegorical paintings illustrating the rise of the Athenian democracy. One characteristic of the Agora was, that it was full of memorials of actual history. Among the plane trees planted by the hand of Cimon, were the statues of the great men of Athens such as Solon the lawgiver, Conon the admiral, Demosthenes the orator. But among her historical men were her deified heroes, the representatives of her mythology Hercules and Theseus and all the series of the Eponymi on their elevated platform, from whom the tribes were named, and whom an ancient custom

¹ It is remarkable that the Pnyx, the famous meeting-place of the political assemblies of Athena, is not mentioned by Pausanias. This may be because there were no longer any such assemblies, and therefore his attention was not called to it; or, perhaps, it is omitted because it was simply a level space, without any work of art to attract the notice of an antiquarian.

connected with the passing of every successive law.

And among the deified heroes were memorials of the older divinities, Mercuries, which gave their name to the street in which they were placed, statues dedicated to Apollo, as patron of the city, and her deliverer from plague, and, in the centre of all, the Altar of the Twelve Gods, which was to Athens what the Golden Milestone was to Rome. If we look up to the Areopagus, we see the temple of that deity from whom the eminence had received the name of "Mars' Hill" (Acts 17:22); and we are aware that the sanctuary of the Furies is only hidden by the projecting ridge beyond the atone steps and the seats of the judges. If we look forward to the Acropolis, we behold there, closing the long perspective, a series of little sanctuaries on the very ledges of the rock; shrines of Bacchus and Aesculapius, Venus, Earth, and Ceres, ending with the lovely form of that Temple of Unwinged Victory which glittered by the entrance of the Propylaea above the statues of Harmodius and Aristogeiton.

Thus, every god in Olympus found a place in the Agora. But the religiousness of the Athenians (Acts 17:22) went even further. For every public place and building was likewise a sanctuary. The Record House was a temple of the Mother of the Gods. The Council House held statues of Apollo and Jupiter, with an altar of Vesta. The Theatre at the base of the Acropolis, into which the Athenians crowded to hear the words of their great tragedians, was consecrated to Bacchus. The Pnyx, near which we entered, on whose elevated platform they listened in breathless attention to their orators, was dedicated to Jupiter on High, with whose name those of the Nymphs of the Demus were gracefully associated. And, as if the imagination of the Attic knew no bounds in this direction, abstractions were deified and publicly honored. Altars were erected to Fame, to Modesty, to Energy, to Persuasion, and to Pity.

This last altar is mentioned by Pausanias among "those objects in the Agora which are not understood by all men: for," he adds, "the Athenians alone of all the Greeks give divine honor to Pity. It is needless to show how the enumeration which we have made (and which

is no more than a selection from what is described by Pausanias) throws light on the words of St. Luke and St. Paul, and especially how the groping after the abstract and invisible, implied in the altars alluded to last, illustrates the inscription "To the unknown God," which was used by Apostolic wisdom (Acts 17:23) to point the way to the highest truth.

The Acropolis

What is true of the Agora is still more emphatically true of the Acropolis, for the spirit which rested over Athens was concentrated here. The feeling of the Athenians with regard to the Acropolis was well, though fancifully, expressed by the rhetorician who said that it was the middle space of five concentric circles of a shield, whereof the outer four were Athens, Attics, Greece, and the world. The platform of the Acropolis was a museum of art, of history, and of religion. The whole was "one vast composition of architecture and sculpture, dedicated to the national glory and to the worship of the gods."

By one approach only through the Propylaea built by Pericles could this sanctuary be entered. If St. Paul went up that steep ascent on the western front of the rock, past the Temple of Victory, and through that magnificent portal, we know nearly all the features of the idolatrous spectacle he saw before him. At the entrance, in conformity with his attributes, was the statue of Mercurius Propylaeus. Further on, within the vestibule of the beautiful enclosure, were statues of Venus and the Graces. The recovery of one of those who had labored among the edifices of the Acropolis was commemorated by a dedication to Minerva as the goddess of Health. There was a shrine of Diana, whose image had been wrought by Praxiteles. Intermixed with what had reference to divinities, were the memorials of eminent men and of great victories.

The statue of Pericles, to whom the glory of the Acropolis was due, remained there for centuries. Among the sculptures on the south wall was one which recorded a victory we have alluded to, that of Attalus over the Galatians. Nor was the Roman power without its representatives on this proud pedestal of

Athenian glory. Before the entrance were statues of Agrippa and Augustus; and at the eastern extremity of the esplanade a temple was erected in honor of Rome and the Emperor. But the main characteristics of the place were mythological and religious, and truly Athenian. On the wide leveled area were such groups as the following: Theseus contending with the Minotaur; Hercules strangling the serpents; the Earth imploring showers from Jupiter; Minerva causing the olive to sprout while Neptune raises the waves.

The mention of this last group raises our thoughts to the Parthenon, the Virgin's House, the glorious temple which rose in the proudest period of Athenian history to the honor of Minerva, and which ages of war and decay have only partially defaced. The sculptures on one of its pediments represented the birth of the goddess: those on the other depicted her contest with Neptune. Under the outer cornice were groups exhibiting the victories achieved by her champions. Round the inner frieze was the long series of the Panathenaic procession. Within was the colossal statue of ivory and gold, the work of Phidias, unrivalled in the world, save only by the Jupiter Olympius of the same famous artist. This was not the only statue of the Virgin Goddess within the sacred precincts; the Acropolis boasted of three Minervas. The oldest and most venerated was in the small irregular temple called the Erectheium, which contained the mystic olive tree of Minerva and the mark of Neptune's trident. This statue, like that of Diana at Ephesus (Acts 19:35), was believed to have fallen from heaven.

The third, though less sacred than the Minerva Polias, was the most conspicuous of all. Formed from the brazen spoils of the battle of Marathon, it rose in gigantic proportions above all the buildings of the Acropolis, and stood with spear and shield as the tutelary divinity of Athens and Attica. It was the statue which may have caught the eye of St. Paul himself, from the deck of the vessel in which he sailed round Sunium to the Piraeus. Now he had landed in Attica, and beheld all the wonders of that city which divides with one other city all the glory of Heathen antiquity. Here, by the statue of

Minerva Promachus, he could reflect on the meaning of the objects he had seen in his progress. His path had been among the forms of great men and deified heroes, among the temples, the statues, the altars of the gods of Greece. He had seen the creations of mythology represented to the eye, in every form of beauty and grandeur, by the sculptor and the architect. And the one overpowering result was this: "His spirit was stirred within him, when he saw the city crowded with idols"

But we must associate St. Paul, not merely with the Religion, but with the Philosophy of Greece. And this, perhaps, is our best opportunity for doing so, if we wish to connect together, in this respect also, the appearance and the spirit of Athens. If the Apostle looked out from the pedestal of the Acropolis over the city and the open country, he would see the places which are inseparably connected with the names of those who have always been recognized as the great teachers of the pagan world. In opposite directions he would see the two memorable suburbs where Aristotle and Plato, the two pupils of Socrates, held their illustrious schools. Their positions are defined by the courses of the two rivers to which we have already alluded. The streamless bed of the Ilissus passes between the Acropolis and Hymettus in a south westerly direction, till it vanishes in the low ground which separates the city from the Piraeus.

Looking towards the upper part of this channel, we see (or we should have seen in the first century) gardens with plane trees and thickets of agnus castus, with "others of the torrent loving shrubs of Greece." At one spot, near the base of Lycabettus, was a sacred enclosure. Here was a statue of Apollo Lycius, represented in an attitude of repose, leaning against a column, with a bow in the left hand and the right hand resting on his head. The god gave the name to the Lyceum. Here among the groves, the philosopher of Stagirus, the instructor of Alexander, used to walk. Here he founded the school of the Peripatetics. To this point an ancient dialogue represents Socrates as coming, outside the northern city wall, from the grove of the Academy. Following, therefore, this line in an opposite direction, we come to the scene of

Plato's school. Those dark olive groves have revived after all the disasters which have swept across the plain. The Cephissus has been more highly favored than the Ilissus. Its waters still irrigate the suburban gardens of the Athenians. Its nightingales are still vocal among the twinkling olive branches.

The gnarled trunks of the ancient trees of our own day could not be distinguished from those which were familiar with the presence of Plato, and are more venerable than those which had grown up after Sulla's destruction of the woods, before Cicero visited the Academy in the spirit of a pilgrim. But the Academicians and Peripatetics are not the schools to which our attention is called in considering the biography of St. Paul. We must turn our eye from the open country to the city itself, if we wish to see the places which witnessed the rise of the Stoics and Epicureans. Lucian, in a playful passage, speaks of Philosophy as coming up from the Academy, by the Ceramicus, to the Agora: "and there," he says, "we shall meet her by the Stoa Poecile." Let us follow this line in imagination, and, having followed it, let us look down from the Acropolis into the Agora. There we distinguish a cloister or colonnade, which was not mentioned before, because it is more justly described in connection with the Stoics.

The Stoa Poecile, or the "Painted Cloister," gave its name to one of those sects who encountered the Apostle in the Agora. It was decorated with pictures of the legendary wars of the Athenians, of their victories over their fellow Greeks, and of the more glorious struggle at Marathon. Originally the meeting place of the poets, it became the school where Zeno met his pupils, and founded the system of stern philosophy which found adherents both among Greeks and Romans for many generations. The system of Epicurus was matured nearly at the same ties and in the same neighborhood. The site of the philosopher's Garden" is now unknown, but it was well known in the time of Cicero; and in the time of St. Paul it could not have been forgotten, for a peculiarly affectionate feeling subsisted among the Epicureans towards their founder. He left this garden as a legacy to the school, on condition that philosophy should always be taught there,

and that he himself should be annually commemorated.²

The sect had dwindled into smaller numbers than their rivals, in the middle of the first century. But it is highly probable that, even then, those who looked down from the Acropolis over the roofs of the city, could distinguish the quiet garden, where Epicurus lived a life of philosophic contentment, and taught his disciples that the enjoyment of tranquil pleasure was the highest end of human existence.

The spirit in which Pausanias traversed these memorable places and scrutinized everything he saw, was that of a curious and rather superstitious antiquarian. The expressions used by Cicero, when describing the same objects, show that his taste was gratified, and that he looked with satisfaction on the haunts of those whom he regarded as his teachers. The thoughts and feelings in the mind of the Christian Apostle, who came to Athens about the middle of that interval of time which separates the visit of Pausanias from that of Cicero. were very different from those of criticism or admiration. He burned with zeal for that GOD whom, 'as he went through the city,' he saw dishonored on every side. He was melted with pity for those who, notwithstanding their intellectual greatness, were" wholly given to idolatry." His eye was not blinded to the reality of things, by the appearances either of art or philosophy.

² On his first visit to Athens, at the age of twenty - eight; Cicero lodged with an Epicurean. On the occasion of his second visit, the attachment of the Epicureans to the garden of their founder was brought before him in a singular manner. I There lived at this time in exile at Athens C. Memmius. ~ The figure which he had borne in Rome gave him great authority in Athens; and the council of Areopagus had granted him a piece of ground to build upon, where Epicurus formerly lived, and where there still remained the old ruins of his walls. But this grant had given great offence to the whole body of the Epicureans, to see the remains of their master in danger of being destroyed. They had written. to Cicero at Rome, to beg him to intercede with Memmius to consent to a restoration of it, and now at Athens they, renewed their instances, and prevailed on him to write about it: . . . Cicero's letter is drawn with much art and accuracy; he laughs at the trifling zeal of these philosophers for the old rubbish and paltry ruins of their founder, yet earnestly presses Memmius to indulge them in a prejudice contracted through weakness, not wickedness.' - Middleton's Life of Cicero. Sect. VII.

Forms of earthly beauty and words of human wisdom were valueless in his judgment, and far worse than valueless, if they deified vice and made falsehood attractive. He saw and heard with an earnestness of conviction which no Epicurean could have understood, as his tenderness of affection was morally far above the highest point of the Stoic's impassive dignity.

It is this tenderness of affection which first strikes us, when we turn from the manifold wonders of Athens to look upon the Apostle himself. The existence of this feeling is revealed to us in a few words in the Epistle to the Thessalonians. (1 Thess 3:1) He was filled with anxious thoughts concerning those whom he had left in Macedonia, and the sense of solitude weighed upon his spirit. Silas and Timothy were not arrived, and it was a burden and a grief to him to be" left in Athens alone."

Modern travelers have often felt, when wandering alone through the streets of a foreign city, what it is to be out of sympathy with the place and the people. The heart is with friends who are far off; and nothing that is merely beautiful or curious can effectually disperse the cloud of sadness. If, in addition to this instinctive melancholy, the thought of an irreligious world, of evil abounding in all parts of society, and of misery following everywhere in its train, if this thought also presses heavily on the spirit, a state of mind is realized which may be some feeble approximation to what was experienced by the Apostle Paul in his hour of dejection. But with us such feelings are often morbid and nearly allied to discontent. We travel for pleasure, for curiosity, for excitement. It is well if we can take such depressions thankfully, as the discipline of a worldly spirit.

Paul traveled that he might give to others the knowledge of salvation. His sorrow was only the cloud that kindled up into the bright pillar of the divine presence. He ever forgot himself in his Master's cause. He gloried that God's strength was made perfect in his weakness. It is useful, however, to us, to be aware of the human weakness of that heart which God made strong. Paul was indeed one of us. He loved his friends, and knew the trials both of anxiety and loneliness. As we advance with the subject, this

and similar traits of the man advance more into view, and with them, and personified as it were in him, touching traits of the religion which he preached come before us, and we see, as we contemplate the Apostle, that the Gospel has not only deliverance from the coarseness of vice and comfort for ruder sorrows, but sympathy and strength for the most sensitive and delicate minds.

No mere pensive melancholy, no vain regrets and desires, held sway over St. Paul, so as to hinder him in proceeding with the work appointed to him. He was "in Athens alone," but he was there as the Apostle of God. No time was lost; and, according to his custom, he sought out his brethren of the scattered race of Israel. Though moved with grief and indignation when he saw the idolatry all around him, he deemed that his first thought should be given to his own people. They had a synagogue at Athens, as at Thessalonica; and in this synagogue he first proclaimed his Master. Jewish topics, however, are not brought before us prominently here.

They are casually alluded to; and we are not informed whether the Apostle was welcomed or repulsed in the Athenian synagogue. The silence of Scripture is expressive; and we are taught that the subjects to which our attention is to be turned, are connected, not with Judaism, but with Paganism. Before we can be prepared to consider the great speech, which was the crisis and consummation of this meeting of Christianity and Paganism, our thoughts must be given for a few moments to the characteristics of Athenian Religion and Athenian Philosophy.

The mere enumeration of the visible objects with which the city of the Athenians was crowded, bears witness (to use St. Paul's own words) to their "carefulness in Religion." The judgment of the Christian Apostle agreed with that of his Jewish contemporary Josephus, with the proud boast of the Athenians themselves, exemplified in Isocrates and Plato, and with the verdict of a multitude of foreigners, from Livy to Julian, all of whom unite in declaring that Athens was peculiarly devoted to religion. Replete as the whole of Greece was with objects of devotion, the antiquarian traveler informs us that there were more gods in Athens than in all

the rest of the country; and the Roman satirist hardly exaggerates, when he says that it was easier to find a god there than a man. But the same enumeration which proves the existence of the religious sentiment in this people, shows also the valueless character of the religion which they cherished. It was a religion which ministered to art and amusement, and was entirely destitute of moral power.

Taste was gratified by the bright spectacle to which the Athenian awoke every morning of his life. Excitement was agreeably kept up by festal seasons, gay processions, and varied ceremonies. But all this religious dissipation had no tendency to make him holy. It gave him no victory over himself: it brought him no nearer to God. A religion which addresses itself only to the taste, is as weak as one that appeals only to the intellect. The Greek religion was a mere deification of human attributes and the powers of nature. It was doubtless better than other forms of idolatry which have deified the brutes: but it had no real power to raise him to a higher position than that which he occupied by nature. It could not even keep him from falling continually to a lower degradation.

Greek Religion

To the Greek this world was everything: he hardly even sought to rise above it. And thus all his life long, in the midst of everything to gratify his taste and exercise his intellect, he remained in ignorance of God. This fact was tacitly recognized by the monuments in his own religious city. The want of something deeper and truer was expressed on the very stones. As we are told by a Latin writer that the ancient Romans, when alarmed by an earthquake, were accustomed to pray, not to any specified divinity, but to a god expressed in vague language, as avowedly Unknown: so the Athenians acknowledged their ignorance of the True Deity by the altars" with this inscription, To THE UNKNOWN God," which are mentioned by Heathen writers, as well as by the inspired historian. Whatever the origin of these altars may have been, the true significance of the inscription is that which is pointed out by the Apostle himself. (Acts 17:23)

The Athenians were ignorant of the right object of worship. But if we are to give a true account of Athenian religion, we must go beyond the darkness of mere ignorance into the deeper darkness of corruption and sin. The most shameless profligacy was encouraged by the public works of art, by the popular belief concerning the character of the gods, and by the ceremonies of the established worship.

Authorities might be crowded in proof of this statement, both from Heathen and Christian writings. It is enough to say with Seneca, that "no other effect could possibly be produced, but that all shame on account of sin must be taken away from men, if they believe in such gods;" and with Augustine, that "Plato himself, who saw well the depravity of the Grecian gods, and has seriously censured them, better deserves to be called a god, than those ministers of sin."

It would be the worst delusion to infer any good of the Grecian religion from the virtue and wisdom of a few great Athenians whose memory we revere. The true type of the character formed by the influences which surrounded the Athenian, was such a man as Alcibiades, with a beauty of bodily form equal to that of one of the consecrated statues, with an intelligence quick as that of Apollo or Mercury, enthusiastic and fickle, versatile and profligate, able to admire the good, but hopelessly following the bad. And if we turn to the one great exception in Athenian history, if we turn from Alcibiades to the friend who nobly and affectionately warned him, who, conscious of his own ignorance, was yet aware that God was best known by listening to the voice within, yet even of Socrates we cannot say more than has been said in the following words: "His soul was certainly in some alliance with the Holy God; he certainly felt, in his demon or guardian spirit, the inexplicable nearness of his Father in heaven; but he was destitute of a view of the divine nature in the humble form of a servant, the Redeemer with the crown of thorns; he had no ideal conception of that true holiness, which manifests itself in the most humble love and the most affectionate humility. Hence, also, he was unable to become fully acquainted with his own heart, though he so greatly desired it.

Hence, too, he was destitute of any deep humiliation and grief on account of his sinful wretchedness, of that true humility which no longer allows itself a biting, sarcastic tone of instruction; and destitute, likewise, of any filial, devoted love. These perfections can be shared only by the Christian, who beholds the Redeemer as a wanderer upon earth in the form of a servant; and who receives in his own soul the sanctifying power of that Redeemer by intercourse with Him.

When we turn from the Religion of Athens to take a view of its Philosophy, the first name on which our eye rests is again that of Socrates. This is necessarily the case, not only because of his own singular and unapproached greatness; but because he was, as it were, the point to which all the earlier schools converged, and from which the later rays of Greek philosophy diverged again. The earlier philosophical systems, such as that of Thales in Asia Minor, and Pythagoras in Italy, were limited to physical inquiries: Socrates was the first to call man to the contemplation of himself, and became the founder of ethical science.

A new direction was thus given to all the philosophical schools which succeeded; and Socrates maybe said to have prepared the way for the gospel, by leading the Greek mind to the investigation of moral truth. He gave the impulse to the two schools, which were founded in the Lyceum and by the banks of the Cephisus, and which have produced such vast results on human thought in every generation. We are not called here to discuss the doctrines of the Peripatetics and Academicians. Not that they are unconnected with the history of Christianity: Plato and Aristotle have had a great work appointed to them, not only as the Heathen pioneers of the Truth before it was revealed, but as the educators of Christian minds in every age: the former enriched human thought with appropriate ideas for the reception of the highest truth in the highest form; the latter mapped out all the provinces of human knowledge, that Christianity might visit them and bless them: and the historian of the Church would have to speak of direct influence exerted on the Gospel by the Platonic and Aristotelian systems, in recounting the conflicts

of the parties of Alexandria, and tracing the formation of the theology of the Schoolmen.

The Stoics and Epicureans

But the biographer of St. Paul has only to speak of the Stoics and Epicureans. They only, among the various philosophers of the day, are mentioned as having argued with the Apostle; and their systems had really more influence in the period in which the Gospel was established, though, in the Patristic and Medieval periods, the older systems, in modified forms, regained their sway. The Stoic and Epicurean., moreover, were more exclusively limited than other philosophers to moral investigations, a fact which is tacitly implied by the proverbial application of the two words to moral principles and tendencies, which we recognize as hostile to true Christianity.

Zeno, the founder of the Stoic school, was a native of the same part of the Levant with St. Paul himself. He came from Cyprus to Athens at a time when patriotism was decayed and political liberty lost, and when a system, which promised the power of brave and self sustaining endurance amid the general degradation, found a willing acceptance among the nobler minds. Thus in the Painted Porch, which, as we have said, had once been the meeting place of the poets, those who, instead of yielding to the prevailing evil of the times, thought they were able to resist it, formed themselves into a school of philosophers. In the high tone of this school, and in some of its ethical language, Stoicism was an apparent approximation to Christianity; but on the whole, it was a hostile system, in its physics, its morals, and its theology.

The Stoics condemned the worship of images and the use of temples, regarding them as nothing better than the ornaments of art. But they justified the popular polytheism, and, in fact, considered the gods of mythology as minor developments of the Great World God, which summed up their belief concerning the origin and existence of the world.

The Stoics were Pantheists; and much of their language is a curious anticipation of the phraseology of modern Pantheism. In their view, God was merely the Spirit or Reason of

the Universe. The world was itself a rational soul, producing all things out of itself, and resuming it all to itself again. Matter was inseparable from the Deity. He did not create: He only organized. He merely impressed law and order on the substance, which was, in fact, Himself. The manifestation of the Universe was only a period in the development of God.

In conformity with these notions of the world, which substitute a sublime destiny for the belief in a personal Creator and Preserver, were the notions which were held concerning the soul and its relation to the body. The soul was, in fact, corporeal. The Stoics said that at death it would be burnt, or return to be absorbed in God. Thus, a resurrection from the dead, in the sense in which the Gospel has revealed it, must have appeared to the Stoics irrational. Nor was their moral system less hostile to" the truth as it is in Jesus." The proud ideal which was set before the disciple of Zeno was, a magnanimous self denial, an austere apathy, untouched by human passion, unmoved by change of circumstance. To the Wise man all outward things were alike. Pleasure was no good. Pain was no evil. All actions conformable to Reason were equally good; all actions contrary to Reason were equally evil.

The Wise man lives according to Reason: and living thus, he is perfect and self sufficing. He reigns supreme as a king, he is justified in boasting as a god. Nothing can well be imagined more contrary to the spirit of Christianity. Nothing could be more repugnant to the Stoic than the news of a" Savior," who has atoned for our sin, and is ready to aid our weakness. Christianity is the School of Humility; Stoicism was the Education of Pride. Christianity is a discipline of life: stoicism was nothing better than an apprenticeship for death. And fearfully were the fruits of its principle illustrated both in its earlier and later disciples. Its first two leaders died by their own hands; like the two Romans whose names first rise to the memory, when the school of the Stoics is mentioned.

But Christianity turns the desperate resolution, that seeks to escape disgrace by death, into the anxious question," What must I do to be saved? " " It softens the pride of stern indifference into the consolation of mutual sympathy. How great

is the contrast between the Stoic ideal and the character of Jesus Christ ! How different is the acquiescence in an iron destiny from the trust in a merciful and watchful Providence! How infinitely inferior is that sublime egotism, which looks down with contempt on human weakness, to the religion which tells us that `they who mourn are blessed," and which commands us to `rejoice with them that rejoice. and to weep with them that weep!'

If Stoicism, in its full development, was utterly opposed to Christianity, the same may be said of the very primary principles of the Epicurean³ school. If the Stoics were Pantheists, the Epicureans were virtually Atheists. Their philosophy was a system of materialism, in the strictest sense of the word. In their view, the world was formed by an accidental concourse of atoms, and was not in any sense created, or even modified, by the Divinity. They did indeed profess a certain belief in what were called gods; but these equivocal divinities were merely phantoms, impressions on the popular mind, dreams, which had no objective reality, or at least exercised no active influence on the physical world, or the business of life.

The Epicurean deity, if self-existent at all, dwelt apart, in serene indifference to all the affairs of the universe. The universe was a great accident, and sufficiently explained itself without any reference to a higher power. The popular mythology was derided, but the Epicureans had no positive faith in anything better. As there was no creator, so there was no moral governor. All notions of retribution and of judgment to come were of course forbidden by such a creed. The principles of the atomic theory, when applied to the constitution of man, must have caused the resurrection to appear an absurdity. The soul was nothing without the body; or rather, the soul was itself a body, composed of finer atoms, or at best an unmeaning compromise between the material and the immaterial. Both body and soul were dissolved together and dissipated into the

elements; and when this occurred, all the life of man was ended.

The moral result of such a creed was necessarily that which the Apostle Paul described (1 Cor. 15:32): "If the dead rise not, let us eat and drink: for tomorrow we die." The essential principle of the Epicurean philosopher was that there was nothing to alarm him, nothing to disturb him. His furthest reach was to do deliberately what the animals do instinctively. His highest aim was to gratify himself. With the coarser and more energetic minds, this principle inevitably led to the grossest sensuality and crime; in the case of others, whose temperament was more common place, or whose taste was more pure, the system took the form of a selfishness more refined.

As the Stoic sought to resist the evil which surrounded him, the Epicurean endeavored to console himself by a tranquil and indifferent life. He avoided the more violent excitements of political and social engagements, to enjoy the seclusion of a calm contentment. But pleasure was still the end at which he aimed; and if we remove this end to its remotest distance, and understand it to mean an enjoyment which involves the most manifold self-denial, if we give Epicurus credit for taking the largest view of consequences, and if we believe that the life of his first disciples was purer than there is reason to suppose, the end remains the same. Pleasure, not duty, is the motive of moral exertion; expediency is the test to which actions are referred; and the self-denial itself, which an enlarged view of expediency requires, will probably be found impracticable without the grace of God. Thus, the Gospel met in the Garden an opposition not less determined, and more insidious, than the antagonism of the Porch. The two enemies it has ever had to contend with are the two ruling principles of the Epicureans and Stoics Pleasure and Pride.

Such, in their original and essential character, were the two schools of philosophy with which St. Paul was brought directly into contact. We ought, however, to consider how far these schools had been modified by the lapse of time, by the changes which succeeded Alexander and accompanied the formation of the Roman

³ Epicurus, who founded this school (for its doctrines were never further developed), was born in Samos, BC 342, though his parents were natives of Attica. He dies in BC 270.

Empire, and by the natural tendencies of the Roman character. When Stoicism and Epicureanism were brought to Rome, they were such as we have described them. In as far as they were speculative systems, they found little favor: Greek philosophy was always regarded with some degree of distrust among the Romans. Their mind was alien from science and pure speculation. Philosophy, like art and literature, was of foreign introduction.

The cultivation of such pursuits was followed by private persons of wealth and taste, but was little extended among the community at large. There was no public schools of philosophy at Rome. Where it was studied at all, it was studied, not for its own sake, but for the service of the state. Thus, the peculiarly practical character of the Stoic and Epicurean systems recommended them to the notice of many. What was wanted in the prevailing misery of the Roman world was a philosophy of life. There were some who weakly yielded, and some who offered a courageous resistance, to the evil of the times. The former, under the name of Epicureans, either spent their time in a serene tranquility, away from the distractions and disorders of political life, or indulged in the grossest sensualism, and justified it on principle.

The Roman adherents of the school of Epicurus were never numerous, and few great names can be mentioned among them, though one monument remains, and will ever remain, of this phase of philosophy, in the poem of Lucretius. The Stoical school was more congenial to the endurance of the Roman character: and it educated the minds of some of the noblest men of the time, who scorned to be carried away by the stream of vice. Three great names can be mentioned, which divided the period between the preaching of St. Paul and the final establishment of Christianity, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.

But such men were few in a time of general depravity and unbelief. And this was really the character of the time. It was a period in the history of the world, when conquest and discovery, facilities of traveling, and the mixture of races, had produced a general fusion of opinions, resulting in an indifference to moral

distinctions, and at the same time encouraging the most abject credulity. The Romans had been carrying on the work which Alexander and his successors begun. A certain degree of culture was very generally diffused. The opening of new countries excited curiosity. New religions were eagerly welcomed. Immoral rites found willing votaries. Vice and superstition went hand in hand through all parts of society, and, as the natural consequence, a scornful skepticism held possession of all the higher intellects.

But though the period of which we are speaking was one of general skepticism, for the space of three centuries the old dogmatic schools still lingered on, more especially in Greece. Athens was indeed no longer what she had once been, the centre from which scientific and poetic light radiated to the neighboring shores of Asia and Europe. Philosophy had found new homes in other cities, more especially in Tarsus and Alexandria. But Alexandria, though she was commercially great and possessed the trade of three continents, had not yet seen the rise of her greatest schools; and Tarsus could never be what Athens was, even in her decay, to those who traveled with cultivated tastes, and for the purposes of education. Thus Philosophy still maintained her seat in the city of Socrates.

The four great schools, the Lyceum and the Academy, the Garden and the Porch, were never destitute of exponents of their doctrines. When Cicero came, not long after Sulla's siege, he found the philosophers in residence. As the Empire grew, Athens assumed more and more the character of a university town. After Christianity was first preached there, this character was confirmed to the place by the embellishments and the benefactions of Hadrian. And before the schools were closed by the orders of Justinian, the city which had received Cicero and Atticus as students together, became the scene of the friendship of St. Basil and St. Gregory', one of the most beautiful episodes of primitive Christianity.

Paul in the Agora

Thus, St. Paul found philosophers at Athens, among those whom he addressed in the Agora. This, as we have seen, was the common meeting

place of a population always eager for fresh subjects of intellectual curiosity. Demosthenes had rebuked the Athenians for this idle tendency four centuries before, telling them that they were always craving after news and excitement, at the very moment when destruction was impending over their liberties. And they are described in the same manner, on the occasion of St. Paul's visit, as giving their whole leisure to telling and hearing something newer than the latest news (Acts 17:21).

Among those who sauntered among the plane trees of the Agora, and gathered in knots under the porticoes, eagerly discussing the questions of the day, were philosophers, in the garb of their several sects, ready for any new question, on which they might exercise their subtlety or display their rhetoric. Among the other philosophers, the Stoics and Epicureans would more especially be encountered; for the 'Painted Porch' of Zeno was in the Agora itself, and the 'Garden' of the rival sect was not far distant. To both these classes of hearers and talkers both the mere idler and the professors of philosophy any question connected with a new religion was peculiarly welcome; for Athens gave a ready acceptance to all superstitions and ceremonies, and was glad to find food for credulity or skepticism, ridicule or debate.

To this motley group of the Agora, St. Paul made known the two great subjects he had proclaimed from city to city. He spoke aloud of 'Jesus and the Resurrection,' of that Name which is above every name, that consummation which awaits all the generations of men who have successively passed into the sleep of death. He was in the habit of conversing daily on these subjects with those whom he met. His varied experience of men, and his familiarity with many modes of thought, enabled him to present these subjects in such a way as to arrest attention. As regards the philosophers, he was providentially prepared for his collision with them. It was not the first time he had encountered them. His own native city was a city of philosophers, and was especially famous (as we have remarked before) for a long line of eminent Stoics, and he was doubtless familiar with their language and opinions.

Two different impressions were produced by St. Paul's words, according to the disposition of those who heard him. Some said that he was a mere "babbler,"⁴ and received him with contemptuous derision. Others took a more serious view, and, supposing that he was endeavoring to introduce new objects of worship" had their curiosity excited, and were desirous to hear more. If we suppose a distinct allusion, in these two classes, to the two philosophical sects which have just been mentioned, we have no difficulty in seeing that the Epicureans were those who, according to their habit, received the new doctrine with ridicule, while the Stoics, ever tolerant of the popular mythology, were naturally willing to hear of the new "daemons" which this foreign teacher was proposing to introduce among the multitude of Athenian gods and heroes.

Or we may imagine that the two classes denote the philosophers on the one hand, who heard with scorn the teaching of a Jewish stranger untrained in the language of the schools, and the vulgar crowd on the other, who would easily entertain suspicion (as in the case of Socrates) against anyone seeking to cast dishonor on the national divinities, or would at least be curious to hear more of this foreign and new religion. It is not, however, necessary to make any such definite distinction between those who derided and those who listened. Two such classes are usually found among those to whom truth is presented. When Paul came among the Athenians, he came not with enticing words of man's wisdom," and to some of the 'Greeks' who heard him, the Gospel was 'foolishness;' (see 1 Cor. 1:18 to 2:5) while in others there was at least that curiosity which is sometimes made the path whereby the highest truth enters the mind; and they sought to have a fuller and more deliberate exposition of the mysterious subjects, which now for the first time had been brought before their attention.

⁴ The Greek word here means properly a bird that picks up seeds from the ground, and it is so used in the Birds of Aristophanes. Hence, secondarily, it may mean a pauper who prowls about the market-place, or a parasite who lives by his wits, and hence 'a contemptible and worthless person.' Or, from the perpetual chattering or chirping of such birds, the word may denote an idle 'babbler.'

The Areopagus

The place to which they took him was the summit of the hill of Areopagus, where the most awful court of judicature had sat from time immemorial, to pass sentence on the greatest criminals, and to decide the most solemn questions connected with religion. The judges sat in the open air, upon seats hewn out in the rock, on a platform which was ascended by a flight of stone steps immediately from the Agora.⁵ On this spot a long series of awful causes, connected with crime and religion, had been determined, beginning with the legendary trial of Mars, which gave to the place its name of 'Mars' Hill.' A temple of the god," as we have seen, was on the brow of the eminence; and an additional solemnity was given to the place by the sanctuary of the Furies, in a broken cleft of the rock, immediately below the judges' seats.

Even in the political decay of Athens, this spot and this court were regarded by the people with superstitious reverence. It was a scene with which the dread recollections of centuries were associated. It was a place of silent awe in the midst of the gay and frivolous city. Those who withdrew to the Areopagus from the Agora, came, as it were, into the presence of a higher power. No place in Athens was so suitable for a discourse upon the mysteries of religion. We are not, however, to regard St. Paul's discourse on the Areopagus as a formal defense, in a trial before the court." The whole aspect of the narrative in the Acts, and the whole tenor of the discourse itself, militate against this supposition.

The words, half derisive, half courteous, addressed to the Apostle before he spoke to his

⁵ The number of steps is sixteen. See Wordsworth's *Athens and Attics*, p. 73. 'Sixteen stone steps cut in the rock, at its south - east angle, lead up to the hill of the Areopagus from the valley of the Agora, which lies between it and the Pnyx. This angle seems to be the point of the hill on which the council of the Areopagus sat. Immediately above the steps, on the level of the hill, is a bench of stone excavated in the limestone rock, forming three sides of a quadrangle, like a triclinium it faces the south: on its east and west side is a raised block: the former may, perhaps, have been the tribunal, the two latter the rude atones which Pausanias saw here, and which are described by Euripides as assigned, the one to the accuser, the other to the criminal, in the causes which were tried in this court: The stone seats are intermediate in position to the sites of the Temple of Mars and the Sanctuary of the Eumenides.

audience," May we know what this new doctrine is?" are not like the words which would have been addressed to a prisoner at the bar; and still more unlike a judge's sentence are the words with which he was dismissed at the conclusion," We will hear thee again of this matter." Nor is there anything in the speech itself of a really apologetic character, as anyone may perceive, on comparing it with the defense of Socrates. Moreover, the verse 4 which speaks so strongly of the Athenian love of novelty and excitement is so introduced, as to imply that curiosity was the motive of the whole proceeding.

We may, indeed, admit that there was something of a mock solemnity in this adjournment from the Agora to the Areopagus. The Athenians took the Apostle from the tumult of public discussion, to the place which was at once most convenient and most appropriate. There was everything in the place to incline tunc auditors, so far as they were seriously disposed at all, to a reverent and thoughtful attention. It is probable that Dionysius," with other Areopagites, were on the judicial seats. And a vague recollection of the dread thoughts associated by poetry and tradition with the Hill of Mars, may have solemnized the minds of some of those who crowded up the stone steps with the Apostle, and clustered round the summit of the hill, to hear his announcement of the new divinities.

There is no point in the annals of the first planting of Christianity which seizes so powerfully on the imagination of those who are familiar with the history of the ancient world. Whether we contrast the intense earnestness of the man who spoke, with the frivolous character of those who surrounded him, or compare the certain truth and awful meaning of the Gospel he revealed, with the worthless polytheism which had made Athens a proverb in the earth, or even think of the mere words uttered that day in the clear atmosphere, on the summit of Mars' Hill, in connection with the objects of art, temples, statues, and altars, which stood round on every side, we feel that the moment was, and was intended to be, full of the most impressive teaching for every age of the world.

Close to the spot where he stood was the Temple of Mars. The sanctuary of the Eumenides was immediately below him; the Parthenon of Minerva facing him above. Their presence seemed to challenge the assertion in which he declared here, that "in temples made with hands the Deity does not dwell." In front of him, towering from its pedestal on the rock of the Acropolis, as the Borromean Colossus, which at this day, with outstretched hand, gives its benediction to the low village of Arona; or as the brazen statue of the armed angel, which from the summit of the Castel S. Angelo spreads its wings over the city of Rome, was the bronze Colossus of Minerva, armed with spear, shield, and helmet, as the champion of Athens. Standing almost beneath its shade, he pronounced that the Deity was not to be likened either to that, the work of Phidias, or to other forms in gold, silver, or stone, graven by art, and man's device, which peopled the scene before him.

Wherever his eye was turned, it saw a succession of such statues and buildings in every variety of form and situation. On the rocky ledges on the south side of the Acropolis, and in the midst of the hum of the Agora, were the "objects of devotion" already described. And in the northern parts of the city, which are equally visible from the Areopagus, on the level spaces, and on every eminence, were similar objects, to which we have made no allusion, and especially that Temple of Theseus, the national hero, which remains in unimpaired beauty, to enable us to imagine what Athens was when this temple was only one among the many ornaments of that city, which was "crowded with idols"

Paul's Speech

In this scene St. Paul spoke, probably in his usual attitude, "stretching out his hand;" his bodily aspect still showing what he had suffered from weakness, toil, and pain; and the traces of sadness and anxiety mingled on his countenance with the expression of unshaken faith. Whatever his personal appearance may have been, we know the words which he spoke. And we are struck with the more admiration, the more narrowly we scrutinize the

characteristics of his address. To defer for the present all consideration of its manifold adaptations to the various characters of his auditors, we may notice how truly it was the outpouring of the emotions which, at the time, had possession of his soul.

The mouth spoke out of the fullness of the heart. With an ardent and enthusiastic eloquence he gave vent to the feelings which had been excited by all that he had seen around him in Athens. We observe, also, how the whole course of the oration was regulated by his own peculiar prudence. He was placed in a position, when he might easily have been ensnared into the use of words which would have brought down upon him the indignation of all the city. Had he begun by attacking the national gods in the midst of their sanctuaries and with the Areopagites on the seats near him, he would have been in almost as great danger as Socrates before him. Yet he not only avoids the snare, but uses the very difficulty of his position to make a road to the convictions of those who heard him. He becomes a Heathen to the Heathen. He does not say that he is introducing new divinities. He rather implies the contrary, and gently draws his hearers away from polytheism by telling them that he was making known the God whom they themselves were ignorantly endeavoring to worship.

And if the speech is characterized by St. Paul's prudence, it is marked by that wisdom of his Divine Master, which is the pattern of all Christian teaching. As our Blessed Lord used the tribute money for the instruction of His disciples, and drew living lessons from the water in the well of Samaria, so the Apostle of the Gentiles employed the familiar objects of Athenian life to tell them of what was close to them, and yet they knew not. He had carefully observed the outward appearance of the city. He had seen an altar with an expressive, though humiliating, inscription. And, using this inscription as a text," he spoke to them, as follows, the Words of Eternal Wisdom.

- 22** Ye men of Athens, all things which I behold bear witness to your carefulness in religion.⁶
- 23** For as I passed through your city, and beheld the objects of your worship I found amongst them an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom, therefore, ye worship, though ye know Him not, Him declare I unto you.
- 24** God who made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands.
- 25** Neither is He served by the hands of men, as though He needed service of anything; for it is He that giveth unto all life, and breath, and all things.
- 26** And He made of one blood all the nations of mankind, to dwell upon the face of the whole earth; and ordained to each the appointed seasons of their existence, and the bounds of their habitation.
- 27** That they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being;
- 28** as certain also of your own poets have said." For we are also His offspring."⁷
- 29** Forasmuch, then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by the art and device of man.

⁶ The mistranslation of this verse in the Authorized Version is much to be regretted, because it entirely destroys the graceful courtesy of Paul's opening address, and represents him as beginning his speech by offending his audience.

⁷ The quotation is from Aratus, a Greek poet, who was a native of Cilicia, a circumstance which would perhaps account for Paul's familiarity with his writings. His astronomical poems were so celebrated, that Ovid declares his fame will live as long as the sun and moon endure. How little did the Athenian audience imagine that the poet's immortality would really be owing to the quotation made by the despised provincial who addressed them. The opening lines of Aratus' hymn have been thus translated, "Thou, who amid the Immortals art throned the highest in glory, Giver and Lord of life, who by law disposest of all things, Known by many a name, yet One Almighty for ever, Hail, O Zeus! for to Thee should each mortal voice be uplifted; Offspring are we too of thine, we and all that is mortal around us."

30 Howbeit, those past times of ignorance God hath overlooked, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent,

31 because He hath appointed a day wherein He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all, He hath raised Him from the dead.

St. Paul was here suddenly interrupted, as was no doubt frequently the case with his speeches both to Jews and Gentiles. Some of those who listened broke out into laughter and derision. The doctrine of the "resurrection" was to them ridiculous, as the notion of equal religious rights with the "Gentiles" was offensive and intolerable to the Hebrew audience at Jerusalem." Others of those who were present on the Areopagus said, with courteous indifference, that they would "hear him again on the subject." The words were spoken in the spirit of Felix, who had no due sense of the importance of the matter, and who waited for "a convenient season." Thus, amidst the derision of some, and the indifference of others, St. Paul was dismissed, and the assembly dispersed.

But though the Apostle "departed" thus "from among them," and though most of his hearers appeared to be unimpressed, yet many of them may have carried away in their hearts the seeds of truth, destined to grow up into the maturity of Christian faith and practice. We cannot fail to notice how the sentences of this interrupted speech are constructed to meet the cases in succession of every class of which the audience was composed. Each word in the address is adapted at once to win and to rebuke.

The Athenians were proud of everything that related to the origin of their race and the home where they dwelt. St. Paul tells them that he was struck by the aspect of their city; but he shows them that the place and the time appointed for each nation's existence are parts of one great scheme of Providence; and that one God is the common Father of all nations of the earth. For the general and more ignorant population, some of whom were doubtless listening, a word of approbation is bestowed on the care they gave to the highest of all concerns;

but they are admonished that idolatry degrades all worship, and leads men away from true notions of the Deity. That more educated and more imaginative class of hearers, who delighted in the diversified mythology which personified the operations of nature, and localized the divine presence in sanctuaries adorned by poetry and art, are led from the thought of their favorite shrines and customary sacrifices, to views of that awful Being who is the Lord of heaven and earth, and the one Author of universal life.

Up to a certain point in this high view of the Supreme Being, the philosopher of the Garden, as well as of the Porch, might listen with wonder and admiration. It soared, indeed, high above the vulgar religion; but in the lofty and serene Deity, who disdained to dwell in the earthly temple, and needed nothing from the hand of man, the Epicurean might almost suppose that he heard the language of his own teacher. But the next sentence, which asserted the providence of God as the active, creative energy, as the conservative, the ruling, the ordaining principle, annihilated at once the atomic theory, and the government of blind chance, to which Epicurus ascribed the origin and preservation of the universe.

And when the Stoic heard the Apostle say that we ought to rise to the contemplation of the Deity without the intervention of earthly objects, and that we live and move and have our being in Him it might have seemed like an echo of his own thought until the proud philosopher learnt that it was no pantheistic diffusion of power and order of which the Apostle spoke, but a living centre of government and love that the world was ruled, not by the iron necessity of Fate, but by the providence of a personal God and that from the proudest philosopher repentance and meek submission were sternly exacted.

Above all, we are called upon to notice how the attention of the whole audience is centered at the last upon JESUS CHRIST, though His name is not mentioned in the whole speech. Before Paul was taken to the Areopagus, he had been preaching "Jesus and the resurrection;" (Acts 17:18) and though his discourse was interrupted, this was the last impression he left

on the minds of those who heard him. And the impression was such as not merely to excite or gratify an intellectual curiosity, but to startle and search the conscience. Not only had a revival from the dead been granted to that man whom God had ordained but a day had been appointed on which by Him the world must be judged in righteousness.

Of the immediate results of this speech we have no further knowledge, than that Dionysius, a member of the Court of Areopagus, and a woman whose name was Damaris, with some others, were induced to join themselves to the Apostle, and became converts to Christianity.

How long St. Paul stayed in Athens, and with what success, cannot possibly be determined. He does not appear to have been driven away by any tumult or persecution. We are distinctly told that he waited for some time at Athens, till Silas and Timothy should join him; and there is some reason for believing that the latter of these companions did rejoin him in Athens, and was dispatched again forthwith to Macedonia. The Apostle himself remained in the province of Achaia, and took up his abode at its capital on the Isthmus. He inferred, or it was revealed to him, that the Gospel would meet with a more cordial reception there than at Athens. And it is a serious and instructive fact that the mercantile populations of Thessalonica and Corinth received the message of God with greater readiness than the highly educated and polished Athenians.

Two letters to the Thessalonians; and two to the Corinthians, remain to attest the flourishing state of those Churches. But we possess no letter written by St. Paul to the Athenians; and we do not read that he was ever in Athens again.

Whatever may have been the immediate results of St. Paul's sojourn at Athens, its real fruits are those which remain to us still. That speech on the Areopagus is an imperishable monument of the first victory of Christianity over Paganism. To make a sacred application of the words used by the Athenian historian, Thucydides, it was "no mere effort for the moment," but it is a "perpetual possession," wherein the Church finds ever fresh supplies of wisdom and guidance. It is in Athens we learn what is the

highest point to which unassisted human nature can attain; and here we learn also the language which the Gospel addresses to a man on his proudest eminence of unaided strength.

God, in His providence, Has preserved to us, in fullest profusion, the literature which unfolds to us all the life of the Athenian people, in its glory and its shame; and He has ordained that one conspicuous passage in the Holy Volume should be the speech, in which His servant addressed that people as ignorant idolaters, called them to repentance, and warned them of judgment. And it can hardly be deemed profane, if we trace to the same Divine Providence the preservation of the very imagery which surrounded the speaker not only the sea, and the mountains, and the sky, which change not with the decay of nations but even the very temples, which remain, after wars and revolutions, on their ancient pedestals in astonishing perfection. We are thus provided with a poetic and yet a truthful commentary on the words that were spoken once for all at Athens; and Art and Nature have been commissioned from above to frame the portrait of that Apostle, who stands for ever on the Areopagus as the teacher of the Gentiles.

Grace Notes is a ministry of Austin Bible Church, Austin, Texas

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