

20. *Strange things.* The clause may be rendered: "For surprising things you are bringing to our ears." Never before had his audience heard any teaching such as Paul was bringing them. His message startled them into attention by the strangeness of its contents.

We would know. That is, we wish to know (cf. on v. 19). Their consuming passion was "to know," to acquire knowledge.

What these things mean. Paul had been able to sketch only the outline of his message (v. 18). His hearers now wanted to have its import and application explained to them.

21. *All the Athenians.* Rather, "all Athenians." This verse is a parenthesis to explain those that precede. The restless inquisitiveness of the Athenian mind was proverbial. In words almost identical with those Luke here uses, Demosthenes formerly reproached his fellow citizens for idling away their time in the agora, asking for news of Philip of Macedon's movements or of the actions of their own envoys, when they should have been devoting their efforts to preparation for war (*First Philippic* 10-13 [43]).

Strangers. That is, resident foreigners, of whom there were a great many in Athens. The intellectual life of the city attracted a very mixed group—young Romans sent to finish their education, artists, sight-seers, philosophers, and curiosity seekers from every province in the empire, and even beyond.

Spent their time. More literally, "were having leisure for." The tense of the Greek verb implies that this was their constant state of mind. If all one's time is spent in a certain occupation, there is no leisure for anything else. The Athenians could find time for the pursuit of novelty, but for little else besides.

Some new thing. Literally, "some newer thing," or, as we would say, the "very latest news." This propensity of the Athenian populace is confirmed by statements of classical authors. Thucydides represents

Cleon as complaining of his countrymen that they were in the habit of playing the part of "spectators of words and hearers of deeds" (*History* iii. 38. 4; Loeb ed., *Thucydides*, vol. 2, p. 63). Reference has already been made to a like charge laid by Demosthenes.

22. *Mars' hill.* Rather, "the Areopagus" (see on v. 19). If the apostle was standing atop the rocky hill, he looked down upon the temple of Hephaestus to the northwest, and up to the Parthenon that rose above him on the Acropolis. On the height of that larger hill stood the colossal bronze statue of Athena, who was regarded as the tutelary goddess of her beloved Athens. Below the apostle lay the city itself, which was veritably "full of idols." See illustration facing p. 352.

Men of Athens. Although this is a respectful opening, the speech that follows is not that of a man on trial (cf. on v. 19), but of an ardent advocate of peculiar, but cherished, beliefs. Paul adopts the language of Athenian orators. This was in keeping with his custom of adapting himself to his audience (see on 1 Cor. 9:19-22). That Paul was able to do this speaks highly of his ability. Luke compresses the apostle's speech into ten verses (Acts 17:22-31), but it is probable that Paul spoke at much greater length, especially before so distinguished an audience.

Perceive. Gr. *theōreō*, "to behold," "to look at," suggesting that Paul was basing his remarks on what he had seen.

Too superstitious. Gr. *deisidaimonesterōi*, a comparative adjective formed from *deidō* ("to fear") and *daimōn* ("deity"), and translatable as "more god-fearing." The Greek word (*deisidaimōn*) was used in both a good and a bad sense. A *deisidaimōn* was a consulter of soothsayers and a believer in omens. He would, for instance, avoid making a journey if he saw a weasel on the road. A conspicuous example of this overreligiosity in high places is that of Nicias, the Athenian general, who was always oppressed with a sense of the jealousy of the gods, and therefore countermanded important strategic movements, because there was an eclipse of the moon (*Thucydides History* vii. 504). The emperor Marcus Aurelius, a Stoic (*Meditations* i. 16)

congratulates himself on being, not a *deisidaimōn*, but, from his mother's devotion, a *theosebēs*, a devout man (*ibid.* i. 3). Paul was not likely to employ a word in a derogatory sense at the very beginning of his speech. He would rather be commenting on the scrupulous way in which the Athenians sought to acknowledge all forms of deity. Such an opening would gain the attention of the philosophers, and the Athenians in general.

23. Passed by. Rather "passed through," that is, through the city, either in leisurely wandering or while entering the city and penetrating to its center.

Beheld. Gr. *anatheōreō*, "to look at attentively," "to observe accurately."

Devotions. Gr. *sebasmata*, "objects of worship," rather than "acts of worship." Paul had seen and studied many of the numerous statues and their inscriptions. He politely identifies these sculptures as the Athenians' deities, the objects of their worship. Thus he sought to create good will at the outset that he might receive a continued hearing. He was intent on winning, not alienating, his audience.

Found an altar. The Greek has an emphatic conjunction between the words translated "found" and "an altar," so the phrase should read, "found also an altar," that is, in addition to the host of devotional objects already noted. The Greek word for "altar" (*bōmos*) is used only here in the NT, but it appears in the LXX, where it sometimes refers to heathen altars (Ex. 34:13; Num. 23:1; Deut. 7:5).

With this inscription. Literally, "upon which had been written."

To the Unknown God. Gr. *agnōstō theō*, "to an unknown God." This unusual ascription has been the center of much discussion. Some have doubted the existence of an altar with such an inscription, and others have thought that Paul or Luke referred in the singular to an inscription that was generally found in the plural, that is, "to unknown gods." A reasonable solution of the problem can be found in a consideration of ancient references to altars bearing similar inscriptions. Four of these may be mentioned: (1) Pausanias (c. A.D. 150) says that on the road from Phaleron, one of the harbors of Athens, there

were altars to gods that were called unknown (i. 1. 4); (2) the same writer records that at Olympia there was also an altar to unknown gods (i. 14. 8); (3) Diogenes Laërtius (i. 110), an early 3d century writer, tells how Epimenides of Crete was invited to help Athens in the time of great pestilence. The Cretan took some black and some white sheep to the Areopagus and turned them loose to wander through the city. Wherever one of the sheep lay down, a sacrifice was offered, and an altar was erected on the spot. The memorials of this atonement bore no name. (4) Philostratus (c. A.D. 200), in the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (vi. 3), makes special mention of Athens, where, says he, there were even altars to unknown deities. Such references are sufficient to establish the fact that the Greeks did erect altars to gods whose names they did not know. Although, outside the NT, there is no known record of an altar bearing the inscription in the singular, "to an unknown god," the evidence above cited demonstrates the possibility that such an altar existed in Paul's day. The presence of such an altar would be in harmony with what is known about Athenian religious philosophy. The inhabitants of the city were anxious to propitiate all deities, and erected altars to an unknown god, or to unknown gods, in order that none might be neglected. Such a practice represents the ultimate confession, similar to that which has sometimes been heard on the lips of modern scientists, of man's impotence to solve the problems of the universe. A Latin counterpart of the Greek inscriptions is found on an altar discovered at Ostia, the seaport of Rome, and now in the Vatican Museum. This altar presents a Mithraic sacrificial group, and bears the inscription, "The Symbol of the Undiscoverable God." An altar has also been found at Pergamum with a broken inscription in Greek apparently dedicating it to unknown gods.

Whom. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "what" and "this" instead of "whom" and "him." Paul doubtless used the neuter pronouns, although he was referring to the Deity, since the Athenians were as yet ignorant of the personality of the living God. He may also have had the

Godhead in mind, as in v. 29, where the Greek word for "Godhead" (*theion*) is neuter.

Ignorantly. Gr. *agnoountes*, a participle meaning "unknowing." Here Paul makes a play on Greek words. He declares that the "unknown [*agnōstos*] god" is the One "which you [who are] unknowing [*agnoountes*] are worshiping."

Declare. Gr. *kataggellō*, "to announce," "to proclaim." In v. 18 the philosophers had used virtually the same word (*kataggeleus*, "an announcer," "a proclaimer") to describe Paul as "a setter forth of strange gods." Paul does not trouble to deny the charge, but takes the word (*kataggellō*) and uses it to justify his own procedure. In this way he was able to introduce the true God, whom he loved and served.

24. God. Now that Paul is speaking of the true God, he drops the neuter form of v. 23 and employs the masculine gender. This places the One whom he worships on a higher plane than the gods of the Athenians.

That made the world. Here the apostle gives the ultimate identification of the God to whom he is referring—He is the Creator. This distinguishes Him from all false gods (see on Jer. 10:10-12). Creation by a personal God was a teaching opposed to both Epicurean and Stoic philosophy, yet Paul so states it that it arouses the wonder and interest of his listeners, and he is allowed to continue. The word translated "world" (*kosmos*) was used by the Greeks with reference to the ordered universe, and might embrace both "heaven and earth" (cf. on Matt. 4:8).

All things therein. The intrepid speaker leaves no room for misinterpretation of his words or the insertion of skeptical ideas—God not only made the universe, but created all things therein. Such teaching rings the death knell of pagan mythology.

He is Lord. Rather, "He, being Lord." This places Paul's God immeasurably above all other supposed deities, and makes Him the possessor and ruler of the whole universe.

Dwelleth not in temples. See on Acts 7:48; cf. John 4:21-24. While speaking of "temples" Paul would probably be pointing to the magnificent examples of Greek

architectural skill with which he was surrounded in Athens. His teaching of the omnipresence and transcendence of God made pagan worship seem futile and divorced from the high spiritual qualities he was now proclaiming.

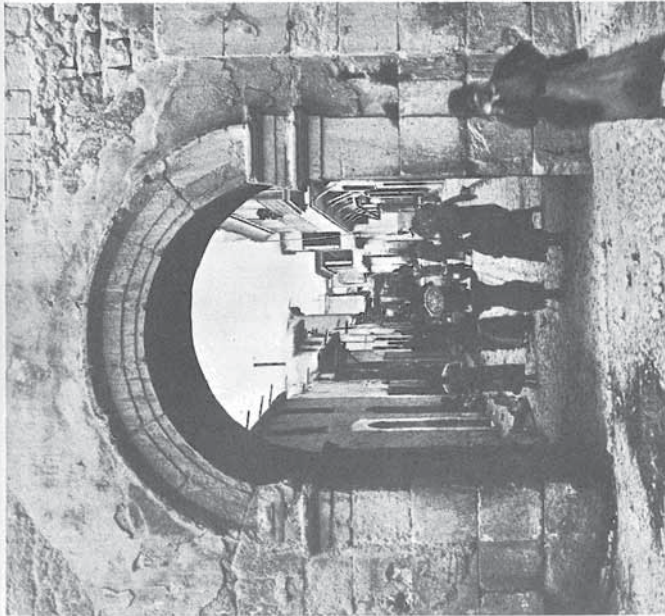
25. Worshipped. Gr. *therapeuō*, "to treat," "to heal" in a medical sense, but here used with religious significance, and meaning "to serve." Paul is emphasizing the spiritual nature of the service that God expects from men, in contrast with the materialistic worship that unregenerate men tend to give.

He needed any thing. Literally, "[as though] needing anything in addition." Pagan religions represented their gods as dependent on, and covetous of, men's gifts. Paul explains that the true God is different. Men should think of God as the supreme giver, not requiring anything at their hands but justice, mercy, and humility (Micah 6:8). Other Jewish and heathen writers had borne witness to the same truth. David had said, "Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it" (Ps. 51:16), and the Latin Epicurean poet Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura* ii. 649-651; Loeb ed., p. 131) had written of the divine nature, saying that it was "without danger, itself mighty by its own resources, needing us not at all, it is neither propitiated with services nor touched by wrath."

Giveth to all. By these words Paul included his hearers, and states that they too are dependent upon the God of whom he is speaking.

Life, and breath. These two nouns may be taken to comprehend man's mortal existence. God gives man original life, and maintains that life by granting him physical breath. Thus Paul emphasizes man's utter dependence on the one true God.

26. One blood. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of "blood," which word may have been later added to clarify the thought. Paul is stating the historical truth that all men, and consequently all nations, sprang from one common ancestor, Adam. The belief was one that no Greek, and especially no Athenian, was likely to accept. For such, the distinction between Greek and barbarian was radical and essential. The one



ATHENS: MARS' HILL AND THE ACROPOLIS

ALISON FRANTZ

In the left foreground appears the barren, rocky hill known as the Areopagus, or Mars' Hill (see on Acts 17:16, 19, 22), where Paul delivered his famous speech before the philosophers of Athens. In the background, and overlooking the Areopagus, is the Acropolis, on which several temples stood in the time of Paul. From left to right can be seen the ruins of the Erechtheum, the world-famous Parthenon, the Propylaea, and the little temple of the victorious Athena.

DAMASCUS: THE STREET CALLED STRAIGHT

EWING GALLOWAY

The Eastern Gate shown in this picture leads through the ancient city wall, still existing in parts, to the street in Damascus which is generally identified as the one "called Straight" (see on Acts 9:2, 11), one of the oldest known streets in the world. (Upper left.)

TARSUS: ANCIENT ROMAN GATEWAY

SABIT MEREY

Paul doubtless passed through this Roman gateway, in the west wall of the city, which led to the seaport and to Iconium. To the left is the modern road which follows the ancient route. See on Acts 9:11. (Lower left.)

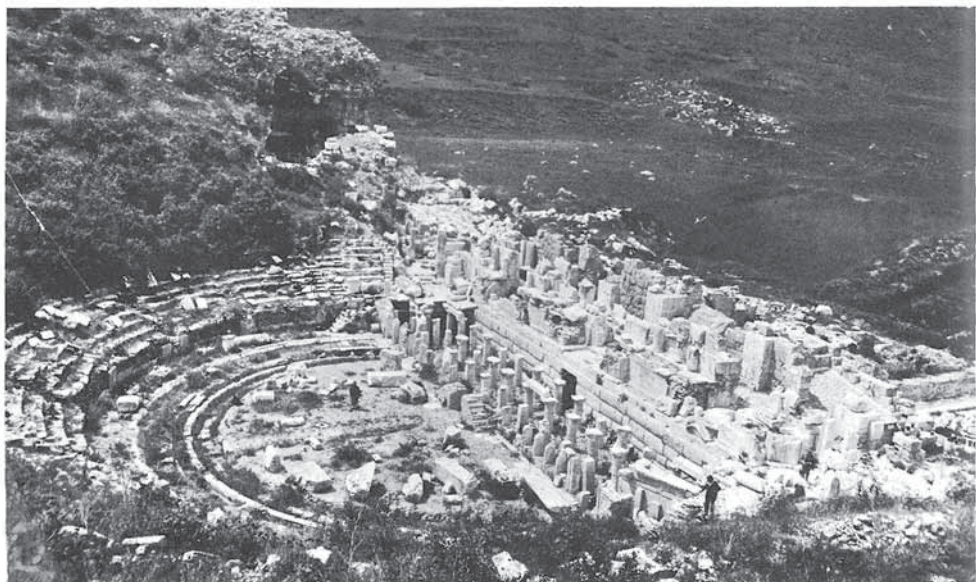




SIEGFRIED H. HORN

CORINTH: THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF GALLIO IN THE AGORA

In the left center can be seen the excavated remains of the Judgment Seat (Gr. *bēma*) of the Roman governor, before whom Paul was led to defend himself. Flanking the *bēma* on either side was a waiting room with marble benches to accommodate the petitioners who came to seek audience with the governor. In the background can be seen the ruins of the Temple of Apollo. See on Acts 18:12.



EWING GALLOWAY

EPHESUS: THE GREAT THEATER

The great theater at Ephesus, which seated 24,500 people, was one of the largest in Asia Minor. The tiers of seats built on the slopes of Mt. Pion, as well as the orchestra, lying between the seats and the stage, are both well preserved. The stage, with its many-storied back wall, lies in ruins as here shown. The demonstration of the Ephesians against Paul was held in this theater (see on Acts 19:29).

was by nature meant to be the slave of the other (Aristotle *Politics* i. 2. 6). But there was no place in Paul's theology for a "superior" race. He believed the Genesis account of the creation of man. He saw the oneness of physical structure, of potential or actual development, which forbids any one race or nation—Hebrew, Hellenic, Latin, or Teutonic—to assume that it is the cream and flower of humanity. Compare Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11, where Paul stresses the unity achieved through belief in Christ. The Christian is doubly obligated to recognize the oneness of men—through creation and through salvation.

All the face of the earth. A further link in Paul's chain of reasoning. The Creator intended men to populate all parts of the earth, without assigning superiority to the inhabitants of any particular section.

Hath determined. Gr. *horizō*, "to mark out the boundaries," "to appoint," "to determine." The form of the word used here is a participle, and may be translated "having determined."

Times before appointed. Gr. *prostetagenoi kairoi*, "appointed times [or "seasons"]." The sense is more readily perceived if the word "their" is inserted so that the phrase reads, "having determined their appointed times." The word "times" (*kairoi*) refers to historical epochs rather than yearly seasons. The reference is to God's knowledge of men's affairs.

Bounds. That is, God, through His providence, has fixed the natural boundaries, or limits, for the nations (see on Dan. 4:17; cf. Deut. 32:8).

27. Seek the Lord. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "seek God," and some evidence may also be cited for the reading "seek the Godhead." But the meaning is clear: God so planned His creation that all who wished might seek and find Him.

If haply. Gr. *ei ara ge*, "if then indeed," or "that then indeed." God expects men to seek Him. The only doubt involved derives from the fact that often men do not choose to do so.

Might feel after. Gr. *psēlaphaō*, "to handle," "to touch," "to feel," used in the LXX for the act of groping in the dark (Deut. 28:29; Job 5:14; etc.). This aptly

describes men's blind groping for knowledge of the Supreme Being.

Find him. The altar to the Unknown God was a witness that they had not found Him. "The world by wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. 1:21). But Paul brought the assurance that the true seeker could know. God desires to be found. He is "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Not far. The whole clause is very emphatic, and literally reads: "And yet He is not far from each one of us." There is no doubt expressed in Paul's words; he is rather making a positive statement of fact. The Lord is near to men, even when they do not acknowledge Him. This makes it a comparatively simple matter for men to find God, for He is by their side, awaiting their awakening and aiding their efforts to discover Him. God can and does reveal Himself according to the measure of zeal and earnestness shown by those who seek Him. At this point the Stoics would see parallels between their own teaching and Paul's thinking, but the Epicureans would be repelled, for the apostle's words constituted an attack on the basic atheism of their system.

28. In him we live. The whole clause literally reads: "In [or "by"] Him we are living, and are being moved, and are existing." The words of the apostle express the thought that not merely our initial dependence is on the Creator, but that all our activities—physical, mental, and spiritual—are derived from Him. In the teaching of Paul the personality of the omnipotent, omniscient God is not merged, as is the God of the pantheist, in the impersonal Soul of the world, but stands forth with awful distinctness in the character of Creator and Sustainer of all life. "Through the agencies of nature, God is working, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, to keep us alive, to build up and restore us. . . . The power working through these agencies is the power of God" (MH 112, 113).

Your own poets. It is possible that this phrase refers back to the first statement in this verse, as well as forward to the quotation that follows. The words "for in him we live, and move, and have our being" are an almost exact quotation from a stanza

that appears to have been written by Epimenides the Cretan (6th century B.C.), and is recorded by the 9th century commentator Isho'dad:

"They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one—

"The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies!

But thou art not dead; thou livest and abidest for ever;

For in thee we live and move and have our being"

(quoted in F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* [The New International Commentary on the New Testament], p. 359).

This passage is interesting, not only in view of the possible connection of Epimenides with the altar "To the Unknown God" (see on v. 23), but particularly because it contains the quotation Paul uses of the Cretans in Titus 1:12. That Paul quoted Epimenides in the latter instance increases the probability that he also had his verse in mind here.

The second phrase, "for we are also his offspring," is clearly a quotation from a Greek poet, and was confessedly so used by Paul. It comes from Aratus (c. 270 B.C.), who was a friend of Zeno, founder of the Stoics. Like Paul, Aratus was from Cilicia. His didactic poem, *Phaenomena*, dealing with the main facts of astronomical and meteorological science as then known, opens with an invocation to Zeus, and contains the words that Paul quotes:

"From Zeus let us begin; him do we mortals never leave

unnamed; full of Zeus are all the streets and

all the market-places of men; full is the sea and the

heavens thereof; always we all have need of Zeus

For we are also his offspring"

(*Phaenomena* 1-5; Loeb ed., p. 381).

The quotation would at once catch the attention of Paul's hearers. By quoting from their own literature, Paul illustrated his policy of becoming "all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:22). They would recognize that they were not dealing with an uneducated Jew, like the traders and exorcists

so common in Greek cities, but with a man possessed of a culture like their own, and familiar with the thoughts of their poets. There is no need to exaggerate Paul's classical scholarship, but it is clear from the references here mentioned, and from the quotation in 1 Cor. 15:32, that the apostle was acquainted with Greek authors and was able to introduce apt quotations from their works when the situation warranted. By so doing he does not necessarily endorse the sentiments revealed in the contexts of the words he utilizes, but merely uses Greek writers to illustrate the higher teaching he presents.

Paul's psychological approach at this juncture is instructive. The apostle does not tell them at the outset that they have too high an opinion of themselves, that they are only creatures of the dust, children of the devil. Instead, he points out that they have taken too low an estimate of their position. They have forgotten that they are God's offspring, and have counted themselves, even as the unbelieving Jews had done, "unworthy of everlasting life" (Acts 13:46).

29. The offspring of God. The apostle immediately uses the words of the Greek poet (see on v. 28) to combat idolatry. If we are indeed God's "offspring," our conception of Him should mount upward, rather than descend to idols, which, being made by men, are below them. Although he subscribes to the same truth that is uttered by the OT prophets (1 Kings 18:27; Ps. 135:15-18; Isa. 44:9-20), Paul's tone in speaking of idolatry is very different from theirs. He has studied the beginning of idolatry, and instead of speaking of it with scorn, hatred, and derision, he speaks of it with pity toward those who are its victims.

Ought not to think. As a man is of more honor than material things, how far above these must the Godhead be.

Godhead. Gr. *theion*, "divinity," "deity." *Theion* is used by Josephus (*Antiquities* viii. 4. 2 [107]) and Philo (*The Unchangeableness of God* xxiii [105]) for the one true God, and is here employed by Paul as a term acceptable to his Greek audience.

Gold, or silver, or stone. The first word would remind the Athenians of the lavish

use of gold in the colossal statue of Athena by Phidias that stood in the Parthenon. Silver was not commonly employed, but the shrines of Artemis (Diana) at Ephesus (see on ch. 19:24) are examples of its usage. "Stone" was the term commonly applied to the marble of Mt. Pentelicus, which was so widely used in the beautiful sculpture and architecture of Athens.

Graven by art. Rather, "graven [or "sculptured"] work of art."

Man's device. Rather, "thought [or "imagination"] of man." This and the preceding phrase reveal Paul's awareness of the art with which he was surrounded in Athens.

30. Times of this ignorance. The clause literally reads "The times of ignorance therefore." The word here used for "ignorance" (*agnoia*), and the words for "unknown" and "ignorantly" in v. 23 are from the same root, and illustrate the closely woven texture of Paul's speech. He characterizes and partially excuses the whole pre-Christian period as being based on lack of knowledge, especially knowledge of the divine.

Winked at. Gr. *hupereidon*, "to overlook." The English phrase, as now used, suggests not merely tolerance, but a conniving at, and condoning of, the wrong. Paul was actually deriving some comfort from the thought that ignorance lessened the guilt of, and thus the punishment due to, the heathen world. In the past ages of the world there had been a "passing over" (*paresis*) of men's sins in that full retribution had not fallen upon sinners. This was due to the forbearance of God (see on Rom. 3:25). In His great mercy, the Lord was granting forgiveness to men, on condition of repentance, because of Christ's atoning sacrifice.

But now. There is no word for "but" in the original. However, the Greek phrase points up the contrast between the past times of ignorance and the present time of enlightenment ushered in by such preaching as Paul's.

Commandeth. Or, "proclaims," "announces," "declares."

All men every where. A comprehensive phrase that embraces every human being, and harmonizes with the worldwide na-

ture of the gospel commission (cf. Matt. 24:14; Mark 16:15).

Repent. God has pointed out man's sinfulness, but His rich mercy has made it possible for him to find forgiveness, on condition of repentance.

At this point in Paul's address the reaction of both Stoics and Epicureans, who had followed Paul's thought, would begin to undergo a change. The Epicurean might regret the mistakes he had made in his search for enjoyment. But a change such as repentance implied—a change of mind, a loathing of one's past and a resolve to live on a higher plane in the future—was altogether alien to his thoughts. The Stoics, on the other hand, accepted the consequences of their actions with serene apathy. They gave thanks that they were not as other men, that they had been able by their own efforts to attain to ethical perfection. But the idea of repenting had not as yet dawned on their thoughts (cf. Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* i. 1-16).

31. Because. Or, "inasmuch as." Paul deduces the call to repentance from the fact of the coming judgment.

A day. That is, a certain time, not necessarily a literal day.

Will judge. Gr. *mellō krinein*, "to be about to judge," or, simply as a future, "will judge," "to intend to judge." Paul, quoting from Ps. 9:8, is emphasizing the certainty, and possibly the proximity, of the judgment (cf. Acts 24:25; Rom. 2:5, 6, 16). The proclamation of a coming judgment is an integral part of Pauline and Christian doctrine (see on Rev. 14:6, 7). Christianity does not leave men in ignorance of what awaits them, but gives a comprehensive, though necessarily brief, survey of events to come. But the thought of a judgment is rarely welcome to mankind. Men do not like to face the prospect of coming before the judgment bar of God. The Greeks were no exception in this respect, and it is probable that, from this juncture onward, the Epicureans and Stoics strongly resisted Paul's exposition.

World. Gr. *oikoumenē*, "the inhabited earth" (see on Matt. 24:14; Luke 2:1). The word was also commonly used to designate the Roman world, or the civilized world in contrast with barbarian regions.

In righteousness. That is, in a righteous atmosphere, justly (cf. Ps. 9:8; 96:13; 2 Tim. 4:8).

By that man. Literally, "by a man." From what follows, it is clear to Christians that Paul is referring to Jesus, but the record of the speech does not show that the apostle had an opportunity publicly to identify the "man" (see on v. 32).

Whom he hath ordained. That is, appointed, particularly for the work of judgment. Compare on Acts 10:42; Rom. 2:16.

Given assurance. That is, has furnished grounds for confidence.

Unto all men. The word for "men" does not appear in the Greek, but Paul is again stressing the universal nature of the gospel call.

Hath raised him. The resurrection of Jesus is here introduced as an earnest of God's intentions toward mankind, in respect to the judgment and, by implication, to His giving eternal life through Christ Jesus. Paul was denied the opportunity of developing his theme, for his mention of the resurrection aroused the scorn of his listeners and brought his speech to an abrupt end. Had the address been complete, Paul probably would have spoken in more definite language about the life and work of Jesus and His key position in God's plan for mankind. Notice how his argument progresses. Paul first speaks of God as the Creator of the world and of man, and of the regulations He made for man's abode on the earth. He then reasons that all this should inspire men to know that God is far exalted above men. This should lead them to seek after Him, knowing that such a Creator is never far away, and is awaiting the approaches of His creation. But now the days when unenlightened men had to depend on God's revelation through nature are at an end. He has spoken through the Son of man, whom the resurrection proved to be the Son of God. Through this Son, God will judge the world, for which judgment men should prepare themselves by repentance.

32. When they heard. Respectful attention appears to have been granted the apostle until he broached the subject of the resurrection from the dead. That the dead should be raised appeared incredible

to the Epicureans and Stoics, as well as to the Greeks generally, and even to the Sadducees (cf. Acts 23:8; 26:8; 1 Cor. 15:35). The world then, as now, was prepared to believe in the immortality of the soul, but was unwilling to accept the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

Some mocked. The Greek tense implies that they began to mock, that is, at this point in Paul's speech. The word "some" may include both Epicureans and Stoics.

Hear thee again. Some may have had a genuine desire to hear more on such a vital subject, but it does not appear that they ever again heard from the Apostle to the Gentiles. Compare the attitude of Felix (ch. 24:25).

34. Howbeit. That is, on the other hand, in happy contrast with those who rejected Paul's message.

Clave. Gr. *kollaō* (see on chs. 5:13; 9:26). There was a drawing power in the apostle's character and words that attracted men to him. Some have accounted Paul's Athenian speech a failure, but such judgment is not fair in view of the converts he gained.

Dionysius the Areopagite. That is, a member of the council of the Areopagus (see on v. 19). In earlier times, at least, the constitution of the council required its members to have filled a high magisterial function, such as that of archon, and to be above 60 years of age. Probably, therefore, this convert was a man of some note. According to a tradition, ascribed by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* iii. 4. 9, 10; iv. 4. 23) to a bishop of Corinth, this Dionysius became the first bishop of Athens. An elaborate treatise on *The Celestial Hierarchy* is extant under this man's name, but is of a much later date, probably of the 4th or 5th century. The legend of the Seven Champions of Christendom has transformed Dionysius into the Saint Denis of France.

Damaris. Possibly, *Damalis*, "heifer," a fairly common Greek name. There is no identification of this female convert. Chrysostom and others believed her to be the wife of Dionysius, but this has no basis in any known fact.

Others with them. The contrast between this and the "great multitude" at Thessalonica (v. 4) and the "many" at Berea (v.

12), is significant. No less striking is the lack of any mention of Athens in Paul's epistles. The nearest to mention is the probable inclusion of the Athenian Christians among "the saints which are in all Achaia" (2 Cor. 1:1). When Paul came to Corinth, he found audiences of a lower intellectual level, and he preached to them accordingly. He "determined not to know any thing among" them, "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). He concentrated his message upon the cross of Christ, and the Spirit of God gave him marked success. But at Athens, Paul was led of the same Spirit to talk to the philosophers, and adapted his address to their mental habits. He did not gain numerous converts, as above noted, but a church was founded, which remained a constant and honorable memorial to the power of the gospel to rescue men from slavery to sin and temptation and to make them free in Christ Jesus. Compare AA 240, 241.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1-5 2T 695
- 1-34 AA 221-242
- 2-5 AA 229
- 3 GC 405; SR 373
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