

these strange things mean." The irony was in the implied disparagement of what they had already heard from Paul. "It cannot mean much if we cannot take it all in at a glance!" is what the errorists of to-day intimate, as the errorists did in Athens. It is "strange"—that is, not at home in the realm of culture—if it be brought by any one who is not a pantheist, or a materialist, or at least an agnostic. Paul accepted the challenge, took his position, and began his testimony for Jesus.

His reply was polite, without any mixture of irony, and is in this an example to all Christian teachers. He stood amid an inspiring environment. If he looked up, there stood the Acropolis, beauty-crowned, with the noblest products of the highest art piled in richest profusion and most graceful arrangement on the noblest altar in the land, an offering to the gods worshiped by the populace, but despised by the philosophers. If he looked down upon the city, there was that wondrous temple of Theseus, the colossal Minerva, and the temples of the Furies and of Victory. Everywhere worship had brought the skill of art to its adornment, and the best fruits of the age grew on the tree of its religion, even when that religion was idolatrous.

Paul opened with words of politeness. A preacher of religion, he recognized his hearers as religious. He told them that wherever he turned his eyes he perceived, in all their works of art, that the Athenians were a more than commonly God-fearing people, intimating that he had seen no such exhibitions of religiousness in the other cities of Greece. It was a delicate compliment to their city, of which they were manifestly intensely proud. This wise exordium opened the way for the introduction of his own religion. He called their attention to the fact that in their beautiful Athens there was an altar inscribed, "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD;" and he mentions the fact rather in commendation than in disparagement. Such was the spirit of the apostle. His manner, also, is worthy of study. He employed

all the admissions of their religion and philosophy, attacking nothing that is not radically wrong. Whatever a select circle of philosophers might hold, there was planted ineradicably in the nature of man the belief in the existence of God. Every form of idolatry was proof of that, and the munificence of expenditure in the temples about them proved that the theistic idea was at once powerful and practicable. It wrought itself out in altars of exquisite beauty, and sanctuaries of surpassing splendor. Whatever, whoever, wherever God is, the instinct of the human heart is to honor Him. When fancy and imagination had been exhausted, there might still be a God—there might be gods—who should be honored. The feeling after God was gratified by erecting an altar to a god not yet known to the Athenians, or, if known to their ancestors, was lost to them. Here, on such an altar, stood graven the confession of knowledge and ignorance. It was not "To the Unknown God," for that would be an acknowledgment that there was but one God, and all their other altars were useless. Nor was it inscribed to "God the Unknown." He might be known to others, if not to them. The legend on the altar was the pathetic confession of the Athenians that there was a God, and that—they did not know Him.

Here was a pungent appeal to the philosophers about Paul. The people wanted to know God. The Stoics, the Epicureans, and the Academicians had been in Athens for generations. Were the philosophers no wiser, no better than the common people? If so, their philosophies were valueless. If they were wiser and better, why did they not teach the people about God? "They did not know?" Then this is a confession of ignorance. "What, therefore, ye worship in your ignorance," says Paul, "this set I forth unto you."

This is the stand for Christian teachers to take in this century. Let them say to the pantheists, the materialists, the agnostics of our age: "Gentlemen, teach the people God. If you cannot