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## SERMONIC.

### PAUL AT ATHENS.

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*Ye men of Athens, etc.*—Acts xvii : 22-31.

THE methods and the utterances of the greatest missionary produced by Christianity must be well worth the study of all Christian workers. In his apostolate Paul chose great cities as the centres of operation, and was undoubtedly directed and assisted therein by the Holy Spirit. He was in Jerusalem, in Athens, in Rome—the cities that represented religion and culture and power. Perhaps for the generation existing in the nineteenth century there are few points in the great apostle's history more needful and profitable to study than his visit to Athens, because it presents to us the first contact of Christianity with culture as developed in high art and philosophy. These were the only fields for culture, as science cannot be said to have existed in that day.

Paul seems to have had no just idea of Athens before reaching that city; but his quick eye took in the strategic advantages of the place for Christian movement, and he sent back to Berea for Silas

and Timothy, that he might have these valued coadjutors in his apostolic work. In waiting for them he was not idle. He studied Athens. While thus engaged he employed every opportunity that presented itself to plant the seed of the Gospel.

The city was about sixteen centuries old when Paul saw it, and during a few of the centuries immediately preceding his visit it had been magnificently adorned by architecture and sculpture in the interests of the prevailing idolatry. Everywhere there were temples; the small were elegant, the large were magnificent. Everywhere there were altars to all the gods known to Greek mythology; and in the liberality and hospitality which ordinarily accompany spiritual indifference, there were to be found altars inscribed, "To the Unknown God."

The gratification of this aesthetic instinct could not blind Paul to the deadly cancer which was eating out the spiritual life of the people under this complexion of external beauty; nor did he for a moment feel that he was a mere curious traveler, or forget for a moment that he was a Christian missionary. On the Sabbath-day he reasoned with the

[The first several sermons are reported in full; the remainder are given in condensed form. Every care is taken to make these reports correct; yet our readers must not forget that it would be unfair to hold a speaker responsible for what may appear in a condensation, made by another, of his discourse.]