

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

We now look upon the scene where the Gospel of Christ appeared for the first time confronting the wisdom of the world. Paul, the foremost leader of the Christian cause, stood upon the marbled summit of the Areopagus, and before him were ranged upon the circling seats the leaders of Grecian thought. To their eyes it was the Gospel standing upon trial, and dismissed with silent contempt; to the enlarged view of heaven it was the learning of man arraigned and sentenced before the bar of God. To all outward appearance it was an uneven match—one man standing alone before many; but one man with the eternal truth and the almighty God upon his side is a majority, and the enduring victory was won by the apostle Paul. He stood surrounded by the outward symbols of a religion the most fascinating ever devised by man, the worship of beauty in its noblest forms; surrounded, too, by the learned men of the age, in the capital which was the center of the world's intelligence. Wisely did the apostle address that assembly, beginning with a courteous recognition of their zeal for worship and their longing after God, and showing that their craving was met in the Gospel alone. Yet with all boldness he attacked their errors. With the statues of the gods on every hand he declared that the Godhead is not like unto images made by man; before a people proud of their origin he asserted the unity and brotherhood of all races; in presence of men who held to the eternity of matter he proclaimed God as the Creator of all things; in the face of scornful glances he preached the resurrection of the dead and the judgment to come.

Verse 22. Mars' hill. The Areopagus, or hill of Mars, was an eminence in Athens, northwest of the Acropolis, and rising sixty feet above the valley. Here sat in council the most distinguished citizens of Athens. Before them stood the apostle, not on trial, but making a clear statement of Christianity at the request of philosophers who had previously heard him. The report of Paul's address is very meager, though precise, and gives only the line of thought in what was without doubt an extended discourse. **Men of Athens.** Paul begins his speech by a dignified form of address employed by Athenian orators. **Too superstitious.** Better, "very reverential and religious." This was not an accusation, nor yet a compliment, but a recognition of the fact that the Athenians were a worshipful people. There were at least thirty thousand statues in Athens, all objects of worship. (1) *Notice that the disciple of Christ can see that there is a germ of truth in the heathen forms of religion.*

23. As I passed by. In walking from the seaport to the city he may have passed several altars with the inscription referred to. Several ancient writers refer to them. **Beheld your devotions.** Not the worship itself, but the things worshipped. **An altar.** The Greek altars, which were usually beautiful marble structures, small but highly ornamented, were to be found everywhere, and they stood in honor of unnumbered gods and goddesses. But in all the Hebrew world there was only one place of sacrificial worship. **TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.** Such worship arose from a feeling of uncertainty and a deep desire to omit no divinity from their devotions. **Whom therefore,** etc. In all their ignorance they were groping after God, and now the apostle was about to proclaim him, the very Being whom they sought. Paul's opening words showed great skill in attracting attention, employing an illustration, avoiding the

charge of introducing a new object of worship, recognizing the element of truth in their religion, and yet not lowering the standard of the Gospel.

24. God that made the world. Paul begins his argument with the declaration that there is a personal God, not a personification of nature. (2) *We must see God if we would worship him aright.* **Lord of heaven.** Paul presents no picture of Olympus with his feasting deities, but one God over all. **Dwelleteth not in temples.** The most beautiful temples ever wrought by human hands rose before Paul as he spoke, yet he declares that they do not enshrine God. (3) *The only fit temple for God's indwelling presence is that of the heart which God has created.*

25. With men's hands. The popular heathen conception of sacrifice was that the gods needed food and drink, and were dependent on men for such services; the Hebrew doctrine was that the sacrifice represented man's consecration to a higher power and the coming of the Redeemer. **Seeing he giveth.** Since our all comes from God, and we are absolutely dependent upon him, it follows that, while he cannot need us, we need him. (4) *We worship God, not for his benefit, but for our own.*

26. Hath made of one blood. Here Paul attacks another of the ideas rooted in the Greek mind, that they were a people of nobler origin than other races. (5) *The unity of man is the natural inference from the unity of God.* (6) *Since all are children of one Father all are brothers.* **Determined the times.** "Their appointed seasons." God has given to each people the sphere of their activity, their duration, and their mission in the world, so that all history shows his plan. **The bounds.** How far their dominion shall extend, and how they ought to use it. (7) *Let our nation remember that God has bestowed its noble heritage.*

27. That they should seek the Lord. The