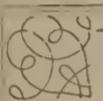


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Christian Missions illustrated by the Acts of Paul in Athens.

A S E R M O N ,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

AMERICAN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION,

AT THE

A N N U A L M E E T I N G ,

AT

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS,

SEPTEMBER 26, 1855;

B Y R E V . J A M E S A . T H O M E ,

CLEVELAND, OHIO.



New-York :

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION, 48 BEEKMAN ST  
PRINTED BY JOHN A. GRAY, 95 & 97 CLIFF, CORNER OF FRANKFORT STREET.

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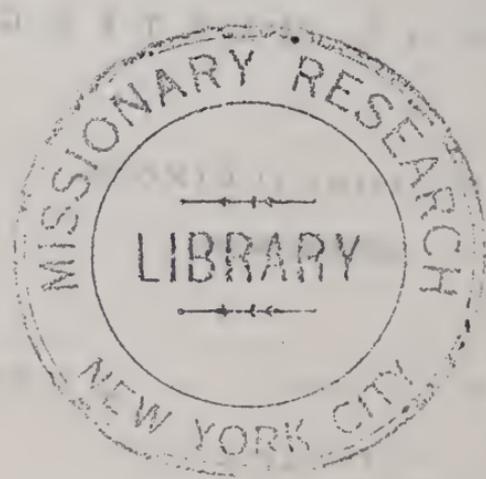
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# S E R M O N .



## CHRISTIAN MISSIONS ILLUSTRATED BY THE ACTS OF PAUL IN ATHENS.

ACTS 17: 22-3.

THEN Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

THE missionary enterprise is the præminent glory of the present age; but it is not because to this age belongs the honor of originating Christian missions, or of contributing to them any new principle or power. They are not the offspring of the nineteenth century; but the nineteenth century, with its advanced civilization, its boasted institutions, its marvellous energies, is the maturing offspring of Christian missions. They are not of modern nor of human origin. They are as old as Christianity; and they originated, with it, in the mind of God.

The enterprise was instituted by Jesus Christ, inaugurated by the Holy Ghost, and set in full operation under the Apostles; and its early successes illustrated the perfection of the scheme, and proved it to be the wisdom of God and the power of God.

To succeeding generations of Christians was committed the work, not of inventing new mission systems, nor of improving the original, but of carrying it out in strict pursuance of authoritative directions and primitive usages. Bound to conduct missions, yet laid under interdict touching any material change of them, the Church ought to be thoroughly acquainted with the divinely-prescribed principles, measures, and forces of Christian missions.

These are developed in the instructions of our Lord; and they are

exemplified, under the direction of the Holy Ghost, in the apostolic labors, especially in the acts of the great apostle to the Gentiles ; and preëminently so in the discourse of Paul in Athens. Of this discourse a distinguished modern author observes, it “ was the crisis and consummation of the meeting of Christianity and Paganism ;” and it may be regarded as a manual for missionaries in every age.

The ACTS OF PAUL IN ATHENS *claim our study, as illustrative of the ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLES of Christian missions.*

As missions, though simple in purpose are complex in plan, we shall accordingly discuss the proposed subject by a consideration

I. Of the Field.

II. Of the Work.

III. Of the Agency.

I. The Field. Christ in one word defined it: “ The field is the world.” One brief pregnant sentence of inspiration declares its moral condition, “ the whole world lieth in wickedness.”

But Christ’s instructions, as he sent forth his disciples to preach, and the general course of his Apostles, before and after his departure, point to GREAT CITIES as at once the representatives of the state of the field, and the strongholds of the powers of darkness in it, and therefore as the *principal points* of missionary attack.

The Holy Land was a field within the field, a little world amidst the great world, the favored seat for ages of partial light. Through successive judges, law-givers, and prophets, God revealed himself to his chosen people, and through kings and priests he ruled over them, and maintained among them his worship. A long process of theocratic culture trained the nation in the knowledge and fear of the true God ; and gave a religious stamp to that extraordinary race. Their literature, their civilization, their politics, their wars, even, were religious. On every institution was inscribed, Holiness to the Lord. Grievous departures from God were frequent ; but divine messages or chastisements brought back the wandering people.

The national life of the Jews had a local centre : Jerusalem was the seat of power, the place of worship. That city, crowned with the Temple, sat amidst encircling hills, a queen, to whom all the generations from David unto Christ paid tribute, and whose heritage was the memory of all the holy men of old. Jerusalem was the chief seat of Judaism, and it was the principal scene of the evangelical efforts which were expended on the field of Palestine. Within its gates, and in the courts and precincts of the Temple, Christ spoke a large share of his words, and wrought many of his mighty works ; and within those

inclosures the Apostles labored: there they prayed, and there the Spirit was poured out at the pentecostal revival.

Contemporaneously with the process of Jewish training, on the great field of the Gentile world was advancing the work of Pagan culture, conducted by priests, philosophers, and rulers, under the auspices of the god of this world. History denotes the successive stages of this culture in the arts and religions of Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome, and marks its culmination in Greece. At each period we notice the predominance of the religious element; and we see Paganism concentrating its attainments, and consolidating its powers in the great cities. Thebes, Nineveh, Babylon, were the earlier seats of the old world; where humanity congregated, where heathenism flourished, where royalty had its courts, philosophy its schools, art its galleries, commerce its marts, war its munitions, and religion its altars.

At the advent of Christ, both these cultures, Jewish and Gentile, had reached their acme, and begun to decline; and we see the signs of this in the condition of the principal cities. The glory had departed from Jerusalem. Rome and Athens, the metropolitan foci of the Gentile world, had seen the sun of their circle pass the zenith. From the flood Paganism had held the field, had trained nation after nation, had reared and ruled a succession of imperial cities; and *these* were its latest master products; Rome embodying the results in arms and government—Athens in philosophy, the fine arts, and religion. Rome was empress, and grasped the sceptre of political power; but Athens was priestess, and held the wand of spiritual supremacy. Rome gave Paganism a throne; Athens gave it more, an altar, for every divinity an altar. Hence, although but a provincial town in the Roman empire, Athens was, at the beginning of the Christian era, the metropolis of the empire of Paganism.

The ancient rhetorician uttered more than a fine rhetorical flourish when he said of the Acropolis, "Where the spirit that rested over Athens concentrated, and which was one vast composition of architecture and sculpture dedicated to the national glory and to the worship of the gods, that it was the middle space of five concentric circles, of which the outer four were Athens, Attica, Greece, and the world." And if Athens at length waned, it was because Pagan culture could go no farther, and tended strongly to decay. What Christianity had not yet gained in any city, Paganism had long held in Athens—the supreme control of institutions, usages, and classes; it consecrated to piety, taste, genius, learning, wealth, and authority: *the city was wholly given to idolatry*. Yet Athens was sinking in effeminacy and debase-

ment. Her philosophy had degenerated into the rival systems of the Stoics and the Epicureans. Her fine arts, pandering to voluptuousness in the name of virtue, and decorating galleries, streets, dwellings, and temples with the fascinating forms of shamefulfulness, had made beauty the patron of pollution. The public games and festivals, theatrical exhibitions and Eleusinian rites, were occasions of shocking obscenities, sanctioned by custom and sanctified by religion. Dead to moral incentives, the people cherished no manly aims, and made no earnest endeavors. They were confirmed idlers, and desperate news-mongers; "they spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing." The popular mind floated between philosophy and gossip, or fluctuated from devotion to debauch. Religion was supreme in Athens, but it was a religion that neither purified nor enlightened its votaries. What though the Agora, the Areopagus, and the Acropolis were studded with sacred monuments? What though every god from Jove to Bacchus, and every goddess, from Juno to Venus, had temple or altar?—this did not prevent ignorance nor vice, but fostered both.

Of the ignorance of the Athenians there could be no proof more palpable than that which was presented to the eye of Paul, as he, a stranger, and alone in the city, walked amidst countless edifices consecrated to devotion: it was the altar with the inscription: *To the Unknown God*. When we consider that there was not one such altar alone, but many, we are at a loss whether to regard this as the expression of a yearning after something higher and better than the Greek mythology furnished, or to see in it the very excess and madness of polytheistic lust, which, unsated with the multitude of familiar gods, sought to swell the number with nameless deities conjured from the dark unknown. Paul, who may have met with but one of these altars, or, seeing that each had the same inscription, attached to all the same significance, read in this an avowal of ignorance. A religion which enshrouded the mind in impenetrable darkness concerning God, could not promote enlightened philosophy or sound piety. When the world by wisdom knew not God, its wisdom was folly. Thus in Athens, the summit of pagan light, stood that monument at once of the best and the worst aspect of idol-worship, for it spoke of a yearning after God which idolatry suffered to find substantial expression, but could not satisfy with all the resources of polytheism. That altar, really the highest achievement of paganism, was a confession of its utter failure. It betrayed the poverty of mythology. It revealed the vulnerable point of paganism. To carry Athens was to conquer heathendom; and Athens showed that open door to the Gospel assailant. When,

therefore, Paul stood on Mars' hill, and pointed to that altar, he stood where he might command the entire field of the heathen world, and deal a fatal blow at paganism. And he did not fail to seize the opportunity.

Such was the relation of the cities to the old pagan world ; and as heathenism has not essentially changed in character, it has not ceased to fortify and glorify itself in cities. While, therefore, to-day, as at the first, the field is the world, the fortresses of paganism are the Calcuttas, the Bombays, the Bangkoks, the Jeddos, the Pekins, the Timbuctoos. And the primitive policy, commended if not enjoined by the sanctions of Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, should be adhered to in modern missionary operations. The cross should be planted in every heathen city. Neither expense, nor difficulty, nor danger, should deter from the occupancy of these citadels of Satan. They are the measure of the strength of paganism, and they should be the measure of the strength of missions. The estimates of men and means, of power and wisdom requisite to conduct Christian missions should be made *on this basis*. It would cause a greater outlay of resources at once, and make the struggle sharper, but the campaign would be shorter, and the expenditure in the end be less ; and the energy of the movement, being founded in a just apprehension of the scriptural method, would honor God by displaying that faith which believes that with him all things are possible.

There is no economy in conducting missions on low estimates, made on the scale of ability, liberality, or missionary zeal in the Church. The work is God's, and his is the power, and he has said : " My people shall be willing in the day of my power." He who said, The field is the world ; and who sent his Apostles into the proud cities of the Jewish and the Gentile world, He has counted the cost, and will supply the necessary forces and funds. He now only waits for his people to exercise mightier faith, and to show a commendable courage and earnestness by assailing the god of this world in his most impregnable fortresses ; then he will give Zion glorious victories, and subdue the nations under her.

The field of Home Missions differs from the foreign in these two particulars, apposite to this discussion, namely, it embraces no systems of paganism, and no cities given to idolatry. It belongs neither to Heathendom nor to Christendom, it is peculiar to the New World. The great West, embracing the largest half of the territory of this republic, is the field of Home Missions. This is rapidly filling with a promiscuous population of unexampled energy ; the potent and manifold elements of a vast social state are now seething in the gigantic

caldron ; oriental magic is here outdone by the magnificent creations of cities and states.

Preserved by a gracious providence from early discovery and conquest by the pagan powers, from the subsequent incursions of Mohammedans and Catholics, and opened at so late a period to the occupancy of chosen companies of Christians, purged and disciplined by persecutions, the North-American Continent has clearly been destined for the planting and growth of Gospel institutions, and for the predominance of Gospel principles, with ultimate reference, no doubt, to the issuing hence of influences for the evangelization of the Old World. The Church here flourishing amid favoring circumstances, might stamp the growing communities around with the right impress, and send forth also saving agencies abroad. Thus a two-fold work of evangelization devolved on the American Zion, the Home and the Foreign ; both are imperative, and are coördinate branches of one great system. While this new world can never be pagan, it may be indefinitely more or less Christian : and in proportion to the moulding energy of the Gospel in the home field will be its success in foreign lands. A great problem, to be solved by home missions, is, Whether Christianity or worldliness shall predominate in our Western cities ? It can hardly be expected that the Gospel will do more for Canton than for Chicago. And what light is cast on this problem by the actual results of the Gospel agencies in the older cities of our Eastern States ? Is Boston a Christian metropolis ? Is New-York a stronghold of godliness ? They are the centres of missionary operations, the seats of Foreign and Home Boards ; and wherever the American missionary has gone, in the far West or in pagan lands, these cities are known, and associated with Christian missions. But are Boston and New-York wholly given to the worship of God ?

Allowing that they may as properly be styled Christian cities as any in the world, will it be denied that the Gospel has but partially overcome, even in the churches, the dominant forms of worldliness ? Do not error and mammon, with divers minor divinities, dispute the ascendancy with Christ, or hold it in defiance of his claims ?

The partial influence of Christianity in its chief seats in America admonishes us that the field is emphatically the world, that it comprehends not only the far-off pagan lands, and the distant West, but the centres of Christendom, the cities of this Christian nation ; the earth is one broad mission-field ; and so intimately related are the several parts, that what is done at home will determine endeavor abroad. The Church will not send forth a more energetic Gospel than it cherishes in its own bosom. Hence, when we remonstrate against the tolera-

tion of caste in the mission-churches of India, we may expect to be answered by a reference to the covctousness tolerated in the churches of America. And what shall we say to this? That the one evil can not atone for the other; that rather the covetousness at home betrays, even more than the caste abroad, the *defect of Gospel power*, for which not the Gospel but our faith is to blame, and proclaims that the field is still the world, not one spot having yet been gained wholly to Christ; and the organized forces of sin remaining still predominant in the heart of this land, in the very city of the Pilgrims.

II. The Work. What is the missionary work? What is the message? What are the measures?

The Apostle's course in Athens is in all material points a safe directory in the operations of the foreign field.

1. We notice the promptitude with which he seized every opportunity to present saving truth. This is displayed in his disputations in the synagogue with the resident Jews and devout Greeks, in his speaking daily in the market with citizens and strangers, in his contending with philosophers of variant schools, who, suspending their own contradictions, joined to encounter the new teacher; wherever the missionary could find hearers, regardless of their gibes, he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection. He despised not the humble, he dreaded not the great. He accepted the lowest places, he spoke to few or to many, discerning in every opportunity an opening prepared by the Spirit; and confiding in the power of the Holy Ghost to render the work effectual, and to open wider doors. And when the Spirit inclined the Athenians to conduct Paul up to the Areopagus, and gave him that most desirable position, he was ready to take advantage of it. He stood before the most august tribunal in the pagan world, not, however, to be tried, but to be heard; for the grave judges of the Areopagus had caught the infection of curiosity. A great concourse had gathered about the preacher, priests and philosophers, learned citizens and strangers, artists, traders, functionaries, even women unused to such assemblages; the Pireus, the Agora, the Porch, the Garden, poured their confluent streams to the Areopagus. Christianity and Paganism were there to encounter, as the true religion and Baalism did a thousand years before on Mt. Carmel. And as on that occasion our prophet of the Lord stood alone against the heads and hosts of heathenism.

Had Paul refrained from speaking in the name of Christ till this eminent post was accessible, he probably would never have stood on Mars' hill. His previous labors in humbler localities, extending

through several days, had prepared the people, had paved the way to the Areopagus, and had honored the guidance granted from on high.

On the other hand, had the solitary missionary shrunk from so conspicuous and trying a post, and deemed it more becoming his humble character to teach in the market, or in the synagogue, he would have lost a grand occasion of proclaiming the true God, and of inflicting a stunning blow on paganism.

2. We learn what was the subject of the preacher's communications, on each successive occasion; whether he broached it at once, or approached it gradually, with every precaution of courtesy, and every prerequisite of instruction. He preached Jesus and the resurrection. With this proclamation he entered the synagogue; with this announcement he made his appearance in the Agora; with these strange words he encountered the philosophers; with these new things he attracted the people of Athens. Nor did he, by any want of explicitness, leave room to doubt whether he were setting forth deities or doctrines, or both a deity and a doctrine. He made himself understood, as a setter-forth of strange gods, and also of a new doctrine. The resurrection was that which most excited his curious and cavilling audience, and impelled them to take him up the Areopagus; for when there they said: "May we know what *this new doctrine*, whereof thou speakest, is?" A God and a Resurrection were the missionary's theme in Athens: a God who had been on the earth in the form of man, and had suffered and died for the sake of man, and who had gone away, to return again at the end of all things; a resurrection of the dead, of the buried Jesus, (which had already transpired,) and of all the dead.

3. We notice the excellent wisdom with which the preacher approached his subject in the discourse he delivered on Mars' hill.

(1.) He conciliates his captious hearers by a respectful acknowledgment of their distinguished devotional habits, and by a courteous allusion to their numerous temples and monuments sacred to religion. He does not, as our version unhappily represents, censure them for excessive superstition, but commends them for their extraordinary zeal in the worship of the gods. He could consistently express approval of the giving to religion that preëminence which it held in Athens, without sanctioning the kind of religion which prevailed there.

(2.) He startles his hearers, of every class, and rivets on himself their excited attention, by referring to an altar dedicated to the unknown God. That altar represented an awful mystery, it marked the limits of Athenian knowledge, and pointed to boundless regions of doubt and darkness beyond: and the Grecian mind, inquisitive and

speculative though it was, recoiled from that dreadful verge. Yet the preacher took his audience thither, and with an assured air, advanced as if the void beyond it were full to him of glorious truth, which he could reveal to them. That was a master measure, that passing at one step from the boasted domain of Athenian wisdom to the brink of their acknowledged ignorance, and looking thence into the vast obscure with a knowing eye, and starting from that boundary with intrepid discourse.

Paganism gives to Christianity this vantage-ground. After it has multiplied its deities indefinitely it still falls indefinitely short of fulfilling the conception of God which is in the mind; and where it stops it must raise the altar to the Unknown, and thus give a stand-point to the Christian preacher. Every missionary should find this point, and occupy it as boldly as did the Apostle.

4. We notice that the inspired preacher undertook to enlighten the confessed ignorance of his hearers. This was the next step in the order he pursued, but is the first in the proper missionary work: to make known God. "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." This included two things—declaring God's nature, and also the worship acceptable unto him. Herein as just before, the preacher set forth both a deity and a doctrine. Jesus and the resurrection are not more intimately connected than are God and worship. We have an example of the joint instruction requisite on these topics in the teaching of our Lord: "God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." In all false religions great prominence is given to worship; but the fault lies not in this, but in the rendering of worship to things that are no gods, and in the corrupting of the rites of worship. Worship was not carried to greater excess in Athens in the time of Paul than it was in Jerusalem in the days of Solomon; yet in the latter instance it was well pleasing in the sight of Jehovah. Christianity is misunderstood if it is supposed to make little of worship. It should never be said, with truth that the saints of the most High God are behind Mohammedans or idolaters in devotion.

(1.) In declaring God, the Apostle taught that He is the maker and ruler of the world, and of heaven, and of all things in the universe; that He is the creator of all peoples, the disposer of all nations, and the provider of all supplies; and that He has made all the different races of men of one blood.

From the first of these doctrines it appeared that God could not dwell exclusively in temples made by men, that no walls could inclose him, no spot contain him. He must be vastly superior, therefore, in

this to the gods of the Athenians, who were included in their several edifices, and confined to them.

From the second doctrine it was a plain inference that God needed not any offerings of food, or of money, or costly array : and in this he must be far above the Pagan deities, who were supposed to be dependent on their votaries for "material aid."

From the third doctrine it followed that God was one, that there could be no God besides ; and hence it was obvious that the polytheism of Greece was utterly false and impious. Hence, too, flowed this humiliating inference that the Athenians were not a superior race, but brothers to all mankind. Thus in one statement the unity of God and the unity of man was declared.

The ignorance concerning God's nature was, in this simple way effectually enlightened ; the Unknown was made known. And the process that revealed God, exposed the absurdity of pagan mythology, of idols, altars, and temples.

Moreover, the Athenians were hereby enlightened negatively touching the nature of divine worship ; they were taught that it was not necessary to repair to temples as the exclusive residence of deity, nor to bring to the altars of devotion offerings of a costly sort, smoking viands, and first fruits of the field. *Their* worship was thus clean swept away, with their gods ; and little glory was left to their extraordinary devotions.

(2.) They were then further and more positively instructed concerning the right worship of God. They were taught that the Creator and Ruler of nations had appointed to every people the bounds of their habitations, that they might worship Him, and render their devotions where he had cast their lot. They were informed that true worship was communion of soul with God ; and that the sincere and earnest endeavor to seek and feel after him, and to approach unto him in prayer was acceptable service ; that nevertheless he was very near unto all men ; insomuch that in him we live, and move, and have our being : hence that it was not necessary to go to some distant favored abode of God, nor to grope about blindly with a mere chance of finding him here or there in charmed circles of air.

(3.) The Athenians were still more fully instructed in the nature of God and of worship, by a revelation of the spirituality of both. God was declared to be the Father of men, of the souls of men ; and, therefore, himself a soul, or possessed of a spiritual nature, like in kind to the human spirit, but superior ; the author of all spirits, divine, uncaused, and infinite. Seeing, then, that enlightened men recognized an essential difference between mind and matter, and asserted the exalta-

tion of the human soul above the most precious materials in nature, and the most elaborate works of art, they should own the same unlikeness and exaltation, in a far greater degree, in reference to God ; and accordingly they should not think "that the godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone graven by art, and man's device." The Father of spirits and supreme over them, he should receive the homage of the soul, he should have a spiritual worship, rendered out of the heart, and tendered without intervening image or cumbrous ceremony.

So Paul enlightened the religious ignorance of the Athenians ; by revealing to them one God, creator of matter, and therefore above matter ; Father of spirits, and therefore the Supreme Spirit ; universal provider and ruler, and therefore over all, and independent of all ; omnipresent and omniscient, and therefore every place filled with his being, and every spot the house of God.

(4.) In the course of this instruction, the Apostle revealed God's sovereign disposal of nations, asserting that he determined the times of their rise, growth, and decay, and appointed the bounds of their habitation or fixed their land-marks. He thus taught the Athenians that if they enjoyed superior local advantages, a more congenial climate, a more smiling sky, than other peoples', they were indebted for these blessings not to fate or fortune, nor to their patron-gods, but to the Lord God of heaven and earth. He also admonished them that they owed to Him undivided praise and grateful homage, in the ratio of their benefits ; and that the persistent withholding thereof would forfeit their blessings, and provoke God to terminate their national existence. It could not but appear from this teaching that though unacknowledged, and hitherto unknown by them, God was and ever had been their Supreme Ruler, and had absolute authority over people and magistrates, temples and altars, customs and laws, philosophers and judges, over their gods and goddesses, their institutions and organizations, over every thing belonging to the complex entity of a nation.

From the broaching of this radical doctrine in the midst of a course of elementary instruction concerning the true God and his worship, we may infer somewhat decisive touching the duty of all the ministers of Christ to mingle with the spiritual teaching they impart sound instruction in relation to the religious obligations of nations, and to assert the supremacy of the law of God over the laws of men.

5. The work of instruction having been completed, the missionary steps from the position of a teacher to that of an ambassador ; and, as though God himself spake, he said : The times of your ignorance have passed, and the forbearance of the Supreme Being toward you because of your ignorance, has ceased ; now, God commandeth you, and all

men everywhere, to REPENT. This is the first word of the Gospel message. The humble preacher proclaims God's new message: and the authoritativeness of his manner is only equalled by the imperative-ness of the manifesto. That stern word comes from God, it is his command to all men everywhere, to barbarians and Greeks, Jews and Gentiles, to all the Athenians, to their wise men, to their venerable judges, Repent. And it was sterner, more comprehensive, because it was uttered alone, because it was not carried into specifications. It was not repent of image-worship, repent of polytheism, repent of false philosophy, of pride, of caste, of idle euriosity, of lasciviousness; but repent. Specific wrongs belonged to individual men; but the command was addressed to all men; the forms of evil in Athens were different from the forms in remote places, but the word came to all men everywhere. It was aimed, therefore, at that which was common to all nations on all the face of the earth, namely, moral depravity. Repent of *sinfulness*, repent of that wickedness of heart, out of which proceed idolatries, blasphemies, darkness, and every evil work. The axe was laid at the root of the tree. The message was urgent; repent *now*, put away at once the heart of sin, uproot instantly the accursed tree; respect not its comeliness, pause not before its stateliness, hesitate not because of its venerableness, spare it not a day, pluck it up now. There were various points involved, which sinners then, as now, might have pressed in favor of delay; as, inability, want of conviction, insufficient emotion, and the like. Other pleas of a different nature might have been used in limitation of the command to repent, the modern forms of which are, organic sins, deep-rooted prejudices, ancient customs, public institutions, property interests, national concerns, wickedness in high places. All such considerations were disregarded; no more deference was shown to the prerogatives of nations than to the pleas of individuals. The instant command—repent. swept the entire field, reached every altar and temple in Athens, demanded the renunciation of every idol, and required the immediate establishment of the worship of God in the metropolis of paganism.

6. The Apostle next announced that God had appointed a day to judge the world in righteousness; and that the judge should be Jesus Christ. The command to repent was sustained by the assertion of final judgment, involving the certainty of punishment, without repentance.

The doctrine of the unity of God and man had not been more mortifying to Athenian piety and pride, nor the preaching of repentance more humiliating, than was this proclamation of a day of judgment, when all the world should be arraigned, without distinction of race,

nation, or class, to be tried, on principles of strict righteousness, by that Man whom all the world had united to condemn and reject. It placed all men on a common platform—of depravity. It proved that God was in earnest with his creatures, and that he held them to a moral accountability, as his offspring. It brought to light a future state of existence, in which the condition of each soul should be determined by the conduct in this life. As the preaching of repentance involved the doctrine of depravity and the present fact of man's lost estate, so the preaching of final judgment involved the doctrine of future and endless rewards and punishments.

7. This all implied the reappearing of the dead ; hence the Apostle declared the general resurrection, and established it by the assertion of the actual resurrection of Jesus.

Thus far the preacher held the attention of his pagan hearers ; he had conducted them to the point where conviction of sin, and dread of judgment should have extorted the cry, What shall we do ? How shall we flee from the wrath to come?—and so opened the door to preach Christ, the Saviour of guilty and perishing sinners, when Athenian pride, prevailing over Athenian politeness, drowned in discordant clamors the preacher's voice, and abruptly terminated the great discourse in the midst of its progress, or rather at the crisis of its power. " When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said, we will hear thee again of this matter." Some mocked ; and not a few were these, nor inconsiderable persons. The stoics mocked, whose morality had been weighed in the balance and found wanting, whose philosophy had been reproved by the wisdom from above, and whose proud indifference to all things had been sensibly disturbed. The Epicureans mocked, whose skepticism was stunned, whose sensuality, disguised under the name of happiness, was rebuked, and whose frivolity was confronted with the soberness of piety and the solemnity of the judgment. The devotees mocked, whose zeal, at first complimented, was finally shown to be without knowledge and without merit, and whose gods, and altars, and offerings, were exposed. The Areopagites, too, forgetting their dignity, or fearing for its security under the preaching of a judgment higher than theirs, mocked. There was a great mocking then on Mars' hill—a fearful jeering, a fiendish scoffing. The temple of the Furies echoed the hisses, the statue of Minerva looked down derisively, the Acropolis shook with the laughter of the gods ; paganism had a jubilee ; Paul, the babbler, was silenced. While the proud ones mocked, the curious ones, greedy for novelty, said : " We will hear thee again." The extreme strangeness of the doctrines commended

the discourse to them; the revealing of the unknown God gratified their morbid craving for some new thing; the command to repent, entertained them by the utter novelty of the message; the story of a coming general judgment enchanted them, it was tidings from another world remote, and it opened to them glimpses into distant futurity; the news of the resurrection of Jesus, and of the final resurrection of the dead, set them all agape with wonderment. Surecharged with such and so many marvels, they cried: "We can hear no more now, but we will hear thee again." If Paul was silenced by the mockers, he was sickened by these merry-makers; and neither able nor disposed, perhaps, to say more, he departed from among them. He had said enough to enlighten, convict, and startle his hearers; but he had not preached the truth which converts and saves. He had delivered the mandate of the law which kills, but he had not proclaimed the message of the Gospel which makes alive. The offers of salvation, the invitations of Christ, the terms of mercy, were smothered in the utterance; and the missionary of the cross went away from Athens never, as it would seem, to return thither again.

A few persons only followed him, and hearing more fully of the way, believed: one, a man of eminence, Dionysius, the Areopagite; another, a woman of sufficient note-worthiness, or notoriety, to be mentioned by name, Damaris. Athens, like Jerusalem, rejected Christ; these two chief cities, and centres of the two reigning systems of Paganism and Judaism, judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life; and they were forsaken of God. In neither, however, was the missionary work a failure; Christ conquered them, if not by conversion, by consignment of them to remediless destruction; for while Jerusalem soon met a fate whose horrors are unparalleled in the history of Roman warfare, Athens sunk into a despicable insignificance worse than the ruin of overthrow. Therefore, notwithstanding the small success of Paul's labors in Athens, estimated by the number of converts, we may say, with another, "the speech on the Arcopagus is an imperishable monument of the first victory of Christianity over Paganism."\* And, with the same distinguished authority, we may add: "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."

From the labors of Paul in Athens we derive the following instructions concerning the mode of conducting the missionary work in the cities of the Pagan world.

1. That opportunities are to be improved as in the providence of

\* See "Life and Epistles of St. Paul," *in loc.*

God they occur. However small, they are not to be despised, and however great, they are not to be dreaded.

2. That the character, habits, and tastes of the people are to be studied, and their religious customs especially noticed, and that in these particulars they are to be treated with unaffected courtesy.

3. That their idolatry is to be traced to the point where its own inherent defectiveness appears and stands confessed, or may be exposed ; and *there* the Christian pulpit planted.

4. The missionary must then declare the true God, his unity, supremacy, and spirituality ; then teach the nature of acceptable worship ; then declare the common brotherhood of man, and the moral depravity of the race ; and the amenability of nations to God.

This is the process of enlightening the heathen.

5. Then he must preach repentance, as God's command, radical, universal, immediate repentance ; and he must enforce this duty by alleging the certainty of a future righteous judgment, at which all the world shall be assembled, and stand before the crucified Jesus, the judge ; and this he must confirm by the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

This is the preaching of the law and the testimony. And it must precede the preaching of the Cross.

If the missionary, having proceeded thus far, and opened the door by regular process to present the atoning Lamb of God, is interrupted ; if the clearness of the light, and the claims of the law, and the authority of the summons, Repent, and the awful sanctions of judgment and resurrection, alarm or enrage the people, so that they will hear no further, the missionary has nought left him but to depart from the city, his work there is done ; nor shall it be in vain. Let not the modern missionary presume that he is authorized to shun an apostolic example, that has so little to recommend it in its apparent results ; and that he shall exhibit a superior wisdom, by avoiding the great cities of paganism, adjudging them hardened and hopeless beforehand, or by adopting more moderate measures, with the view of securing a permanent footing in them. Rather let him give due heed to this rule of missionary labors, to be drawn from the acts of Paul in Athen : " Preach the word, and leave the work with God."

Of all his mission-labors, successful and unsuccessful alike, the great Apostle speaks in these inspired words of grateful approval " Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish ; to the one we are the savor of death

unto death, and to the other, the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" And he subjoins these emphatic words: "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ."

Still more emphatic, if possible, is his language following: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; easting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.\*

III. The remaining topic of the present discourse is, the Agency that Christ has been pleased to engage in the work of Missions.

This is the main topic, for it relates to the *POWER*—the *executive power*. We might presume that herein the wisdom of God would be most illustriously displayed. We might pre-suppose that a work of such magnitude that none but God could project it, and that weapons of such sort and temper that they could be furnished only from the heavenly magazine, would require nothing short of divinity in the agency. And so the Scriptures teach when rightly understood. The agency is indeed two-fold, divine and human, the Holy Ghost and the Missionary. But the Missionary is to be filled with the Holy Ghost, employed by him, controlled by him, energized by him, and subordinated in all things to his will.

The human part of the agency, as brought to view in the commission of our Lord, and exemplified by the first Missionary to the Gentiles, demands our special attention. When we have said, Christ has called men of like passions with others to be his missionaries for the conversion of the world to himself, we have declared what is true; yet, we have spoken but a small part of the truth touching the matter. The best and mightiest men are wholly unfit for this agency, of themselves; they need, in all respects, to be fitted by special divine training, and by ample divine endowments, to be co-workers with God in the salvation of the world. Neither human training, nor natural talents are disregarded; on the contrary, physieal powers,

\* Dr. Macknight's paraphrase of this passage (see 2 Cor. 10: 4-5) makes it apply particularly to such missionary labors as those of Paul in Athens: "For the weapons wherewith we carry on our war against the heathen religions, and against those who support them, are not weak, but very mighty for the overturning of fortresses erected by human policy in defense of idolatry. With these weapons we overturn the reasonings of statesmen and philosophers, and every proud imagination raised up like a rampart by the lusts and passions of men, against the knowledge of God, to prevent its entering; and we lead captive every thought, and make it subservient to the obedience of Christ."

mental gifts, and whatsoever qualification is derived from nature or from education, is, or *may be*, accepted. God has called both the foolish and the wise, both the small and the great, both the despised and the admired; but in either case he has trained and qualified them to be his servants, deeming the infirmities of some no disqualification, and the abilities of others no sufficiency, and esteeming it absolutely essential that the power of Christ should rest upon all.

In the great Apostle Paul we see an early proof that distinguished talents were sometimes respected in the choice of missionaries; yet, while we are struck with the adaptedness of Paul's versatile genius and varied acquirements to the work committed to him, we are far more impressed with the qualifications he received from God, partly by discipline, and partly through the impartation of the Holy Ghost. We can not well avoid the conviction that his native endowments were the gift of Heaven, with reference to the holy vocation whereunto he was predestined; and that his extraordinary educational advantages were providentially afforded and secured to him with a divine regard to the same purpose. He more than intimates this himself in these words of Gal. 1: 15: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace." Nevertheless, these extraordinary powers did not qualify Paul to be a minister of Christ; but, after his conversion, when God revealed his Son in him, that he might preach him among the heathen, immediately he was put on a course of preparatory training. And this was not committed to the apostles, but was conducted by the Holy Ghost himself; so Paul testifies: "Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia;" and there he lived three years, under the tuition of the Holy Ghost. During this time he had not conferred with flesh and blood, he had not seen the apostles, and "was unknown by face unto the churches of India, which were in Christ." Called to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul must needs be taught by him, and could be properly qualified only by the training of his Spirit, during a term of years. Nor did this suffice. He must be endowed with divers spiritual gifts, some strictly miraculous, (for special reasons needed in order to the fulfillment of *his* ministry,) and others supernatural, and needed by every minister of Christ. And, moreover, the Apostle must be filled with the Holy Ghost, not only as a Spirit of Inspiration, which was requisite in his case, but also as a "Spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind," which was requisite alike for all missionaries to the end of the world. It was necessary that Paul should be made a new man, a holy man, a wise,

a spiritual, a strong man; and, in order to all this, he must be "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." "Our sufficiency," saith he, "is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit." This God-given sufficiency constituted Paul AN AMBASSADOR of Christ, and of course every qualification for the duties of this office was secured, so that he was fully empowered to administer the New Testament, and to communicate the life-giving spirit of that Testament. With all these spiritual qualifications, superadded to his natural and educational, and with the spirit of Christ in him to energize his soul, and to superintend his motions of thought, word, and deed, the Apostle was "a workman that need not be ashamed," a worthy co-worker with the Holy Ghost. The earthen vessel was divinely fitted to hold the heavenly treasure. Yet it was not necessary that he should be freed from all human infirmities; rather there must needs be left, for his humiliation, the thorn in the flesh, that he might be ever reminded of his dependence on all-sufficient grace; and we know that he learned to glory in his infirmities more than in his abilities, because they were the occasion of the power of Christ resting upon him.

The amplitude of the Apostle's spiritual qualifications is truly wonderful. Independently of his miraculous gifts, which were the special prerogatives of the apostles and primitive teachers, he had many supernatural endowments, and withal he enjoyed in such fullness the indwelling of the Spirit, that he was thereby enlightened, emboldened, strengthened, sustained, and guided; and the result of all this enduring from on high, was his being fitted for every department of his arduous service, and fortified for every hardship and peril that awaited him. He was raised above fear, care, doubt, and want; he was independent of worldly policy; he sought not earthly favor, he envied not human wisdom, he deferred not to existing institutions, he dreaded not "principalities and powers." He has left us in his own words, recorded in the Acts, an account of his labors and of his fearlessness amid persecutions. Addressing the Elders of Ephesus, he said: "Ye know how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house; testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And now behold I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions await me. *But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord*

Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God."

Paul's separation from the ministers of Ephesus, on this occasion, was like the separation of Elijah from the young prophet Elisha: "They all wept sore, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words he spake, that they should see his face no more.' But in that final prayer with them all, what grace, wisdom, and power he besought to rest upon them, we may infer, assuredly, from his foregoing words: "Now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up."

This great Apostle, so mighty through the Spirit toward the Gentiles, at length finished his course, and rested from his labors. The work, as yet but begun, must be committed to other laborers; and what manner of persons ought they to be who should succeed Paul? They surely ought to be like him, if not in native talents and in learning, and in gifts of miracles, yet in training, teaching, and endowments of the Holy Ghost, so as to be suitable co-laborers of the Spirit. And that this was the divine intent from the beginning is put beyond a doubt by Scripture testimony. Not, however, that there was to be a mystical transmission of powers and prerogatives by laying on of hands, constituting an apostolical succession; but that there should be fresh impartations from the Lord—that each one called to be a servant of Christ in the Gospel, should receive the necessary gifts from on high. This is implied in the injunction of Christ to all his disciples: "Pray ye, the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." This virtually prescribes the committing of the matter of choosing, fitting, employing, and directing successive ministers and missionaries to the Lord of the harvest; this whole matter being really too vital to the success of the Gospel to be intrusted in other hands. Whatsoever instrumentalities God might see fit to use in the training of his servants, as the early precepts of godly parents, the instructions of pastors, the tuition of schools, the salutary influences of the Church, still the work is His, and the chief preparations (immeasurably so) must come from him, and are to be sought by believing prayer. In this prayer of the Church must be embraced the separating of future ambassadors of Christ from the womb, the superintending of their physical conditions, their mental development, and intellectual acquirements, the seasonable securing of their conversion, and the discipline of their souls in faith, obedience, and spirituality; also, the imparting to them of ministerial qualifications of a supernatural kind or degree, general

and special—the former making them able ministers of the New Testament, and the latter fitting each for the particular work or field to be assigned to him ; moreover, the renewal and increase of these gifts by repeated baptisms from the Holy Ghost during the course of the ministry, and the guidance of the labors, and the upholding of the laborers by the indwelling Spirit, which is pledged in the promise : “ Lo ! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

The men thus gotten from the Lord by earnest prayer, would be esteemed by the Church as worthy of confidence and support ; they would be regarded as God’s workmen, competent and trustworthy, needing little supervision of Mission Boards. They would be men full of faith, of love, and of heavenly wisdom ; therefore, fearless and strong, not ashamed of the Gospel, not daunted by opposition nor moved by persecutions, not abashed in the presence of mercenary rulers nor confounded in the midst of cities crowded with the monuments of paganism. They would stand confessed the foremost men in heavenly gifts and graces ; quite in advance of the ministry at home, as it now is, and of the Church ; insomuch that it would be difficult to find in the bosom of Christendom, the men spiritually qualified to undertake the management of Foreign Missions. Whatever modifications of the present mode of conducting missions might result, it would be altogether likely to be an improvement. So whatever changes might take place in the education of youth destined for missionary service, or in the standard of qualifications, or in the number of laborers sent forth, or in the contributions of the Church for the support of missions, might confidently be expected to be for the better. And with such a vast augmentation of spiritual power, through the supernatural endowments liberally vouchsafed, the results of missionary efforts must be indefinitely enlarged. Every foreign mission station would be invigorated, and every pagan stronghold would tremble ; “ One should chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.”

#### REMARKS.

In closing this discourse, I would call attention to the fact, that nearly every question of moment concerning the operations of Christian Missions, depends on the amount of power and wisdom from on high that shall accompany and endue the missionaries. The questions above discussed : of heathen cities as the principal seats of evangelical operations ; of the relations of Home and Foreign Missions, and of Christendom to both, and of the cities of each section to the whole field, the world ; of the methods for presenting the truth to the heathen mind ; of the boldness required to preach repentance without

qualification ; of the degree of home superintendence necessary, and many other questions of principle and of policy, that engage the attention and divide the counsels of the friends of missions, will find their solution readily in the adequate supply of laborers, whose sufficiency, as able ministers, shall be of God. Every thing relating to the management of missions must be under the direction, not of human sagacity, but of the wisdom which cometh from above ; and none but those who are liberally gifted in that heavenly grace is fit to have a voice in the counsels, or a vote in the control of this great work of God on earth.

Let me then urge with much earnestness on your hearts, my brethren, the duty of prayer for laborers of God's choosing, of his fitting, of his sending forth and superintending. The field is the same as when Paul wrought in it, the same world lying in sin, and presenting its city-seats of idol-worship ; the truth is the same, the self-same sword that Paul wielded ; the agency of the Holy Ghost is the same in power, the same in readiness : but where are the Pauls—the greater than Paul ? Evangelization waits for men of God. The sword of the Spirit waits for a hand strong enough to grasp it, for an eye steady enough to direct its blows, for a soul strung to exploits worthy of it. Men of supernatural endowments *have lived* since the days of miracles. Many of the Reformers were such men, and many of the Pilgrims too. Luther was a mighty Reformer, endued of God with energy and dauntless courage ; Whitfield was a preacher of apostolical zeal, trained and empowered by the Lord ; Martyn was a mighty missionary, whose extraordinary genius and acquirements were eclipsed by the gifts of God's Spirit ; James Brainerd Taylor was a young man, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, whose early death deprived the Church of a minister of whom it might almost be said, he was more an angel than a man. Why are there not at this day a host of men of like heavenly endowments ? Why are not the ministers at home, and the missionaries abroad, largely endued with power from on high ? Why should we be skeptical concerning supernatural gifts, and essay to carry on the enlarged operations of Christian Missions, without men trained, enlightened, and energized by the Spirit of Christ ? Shall we pretend that the cause now does not demand such men ? Rather must we not be convinced that missions have never required more imperiously the power and wisdom that come from above ? Old cities, the centres of empires of darkness, closed since the Christian era began, are now opening their gates to the Gospel. Blows may be struck in them which will be as decisive, and may be more redeeming, than those of Paul in Athens.

Obstacles, which to ordinary faith look mountainous, obstruct the progress of evangelization, and will continue to obstruct until some Zerubbabel shall be sent of God, before whom the great mountains shall become as plains. Look at our Home Missionaries; what are they now doing? Inlaying in the foundations of cities and states the elements of soundness, strength, and stability which the Gospel contributes. What manner of men, then, should they be? common men? feeble men? time-serving men? Nay! but men of holy valor, of divine wisdom, of preëminent spiritual gifts; this is God's work, and God's workmen should be employed in it. Is not God from on high calling on his people that they "pray the Lord of the harvest, that he would send laborers into his harvest"? Have we ever offered this prayer in faith, and with consideration of its import? Have we ever sounded its depths, and comprehended its breadth? Have we perceived how the *sending forth* of laborers is but one act in a series of acts, beginning with the separation of them from the womb, the superintending of their early and advancing education, the securing in due time of their sound conversion, the furnishing them with every requisite qualification, both natural and supernatural, the going with them into the harvest, and the working with them, and the supplying them with all needed resources? Shall we have faith to embrace all this in our prayer, and to bear this mighty suit to the throne of grace?

Let the officers, members, and patrons of this Association earnestly unite in this prayer. Let every monthly concert throughout Christendom groan beneath this burthen. Let all pastors strive to inspire their people with this great desire, till every closet shall be vital and every sanctuary shall be vocal, with this supplication. Let the soliciting agents, as they visit our churches, press on the people of God, on pious parents, on Sabbath-school teachers, on all who, from love to missions, contribute money to the cause, the importance of praying for laborers. Let the Foreign and Home Missionaries, as they send to us the Macedonian cry, accompany it with the earnest charge to the churches, "that they pray the Lord, that *He* would send forth laborers into *his* harvest."

The Executive Committee are pointing us to the new fields that the good hand of the Lord has so signally opened before this Association, and they are calling for men and for means to occupy those fields. Do not these favoring providences, and these pressing calls, crowd us to the mercy-seat? It is the Lord's prerogative to *send forth*; it is our privilege to pray Him to do this. If liberality is requisite, faith is far more. If the Lord will stir up his people to pray for men of might and wisdom, he will doubtless move them to give the means

of their support. It would be a luxury to such to minister of their abundance to the needs of missionaries like Paul. They would pluck out their eyes, if need be, and give them.

The world, lying in sin and shrouded in darkness, is outspread beneath the pitying eye of God; and to His view it is one wide field, white for the harvest. To Zion has been committed the instrumentalities divinely ordained for this work, and they are perfectly adapted and entirely adequate. With God is the power to execute and the wisdom to direct, the patience to continue and the purpose to complete what has been undertaken. Let now the Church, by the utmost energy of faith grasp the whole work, and throw it into the arms of God; and then say, May we thy people, O Lord! be willing in the day of thy power; we consecrate to thee our sons and our daughters, our children, our infants; graciously accept the offering, and choose from among them the best, the most promising, and take them under thine own training, put thy spirit in their hearts, endow them with wisdom, endue them with strength, make them able ministers of the New Testament, and send them forth into thy harvest; and, Saviour, go with them, and use them to bring the heathen tribes to thy feet. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

