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ARTICLE VI.

THE DISCOURSE OF PAUL AT ATHENS. A COMMENTARY ON
ACTS 17: 16—34.

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It was in the course of his second missionary tour that the apostle Paul came to Athens. From Troas in Asia Minor, he had crossed the northern part of the Ægean Sea into Europe, landing at Neapolis in Thrace, but passing on thence directly to Philippi in Macedonia where he remained and labored for some time. From there he followed the course of the great military road leading from the north of Greece to the south, as far as to Berea; whence having been driven away after a short residence by the machinations of the Jews, he set forward again, and proceeded, in all probability by sea, to Athens. It is at this point that we take up the narrative in the present Article.

The antecedent Circumstances.

Vv. 16—21. *Effect of the idolatry at Athens on the mind of Paul.*
V. 16. *ἐδεχομένου αὐτούς*, while he was waiting for them, viz. Silas and Timothy whom he had left at Berea, and to whom he had sent a message that they should rejoin him as soon as possible; see v. 15. The most natural inference from 1 Thess. 3: 1, is that Timothy, at least, soon arrived in accordance with Paul's expectation, but was immediately sent away by the apostle to Thessalonica. As Silas, however, is not mentioned in that passage, it has been supposed that he may have failed for some reason to come at this time, or if he came, that like Timothy, he may have left again at once, but for a different destination; which last circumstance would account for the omission of his name at this place in the letter. Our next notice of them in the Acts, occurs in 18: 5, where they are represented as coming down from Macedonia to Corinth, which is consistent either with the supposition just stated,—the intermediate journey having been passed over here in silence,—or with the view that they went directly to Corinth from Berea without having gone to Athens at all. Still other combinations are possible. *παρωζύεστο* — *ἐν αὐτῷ*, his spirit was aroused in him, comp. 15: 39. 1 Cor. 13: 5. The verb expresses not merely a strong but specific emotion: He was deeply moved with a

feeling allied to that of indignation, at such a profanation of the worship due to God as he saw presenting itself to his view at every point. *κατείδωλον*, an objective term, *full of idols*. The word is otherwise unknown to the extant Greek, but is formed after a common analogy, e. g. *κατάμπελος*, *κατάδεσδος*, *κατάφοβος*, etc. On the force of such compounds, see Herm. ad Vig. p. 638. The Peschito has given

the exact sense by *ܐܝܕܘܠܐܝܡܘܬܐ*, *idolis refertam*. A person could hardly take his position anywhere in ancient Athens, where the eye did not range over temples, altars and statues of the gods almost without number. One ancient writer says satirically, that it was easier to find a god at Athens than a man. Another says that there were streets there through which it was almost impossible for one to make his way, they were so crowded at all times with the sellers of the articles of idol worship. Pausanias affirms that Athens had more images than all the rest of Greece put together. Cicero, Livy, Lucian and several others still, testify expressly to this preëminence of Athens in the possession of the outward symbols of idolatry. It deserves notice, therefore, that Luke has not applied here the epithet *full of idols*, at random. The Greek language offered to him a hundred other terms which would have stated what was true in relation to a heathen city; but we see that he has chosen among them all the very one which describes the precise external aspect of Athens, which would be the first to strike the eye of a stranger like Paul. This mark of accuracy in the writer our English translators have obliterated, or at least, very nearly obliterated in making the expression refer to the devotion of the Athenians to idolatry.

V. 17. Some place this verse in a closer, others in a looser connection with the one preceding. De Wette regards *οὐν* as progressive merely *now*. Meyer adheres to the stricter sense *therefore*. The apostle's excitement of mind did not permit him to pursue the ordinary course, which was to address himself exclusively at first to his own countrymen and the heathen proselytes to Judaism. He is now moved by the spectacle around him, to commence preaching simultaneously to Jews and Greeks. Some who take *οὐν* as illative, propose to restrict it to the second clause, which is evidently forced. So Schneckenburger, Ueber den Zweck, etc., p. 84. *ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ*, *in the market*. Kuinoel's remark, *plura erant Athenis fora*, which Bloomfield also repeats, is incorrect; unless they mean by the plural the different divisions of the market, which were set apart to different sorts of traffic. It is now generally admitted that there was but one *ἀγορά*, properly so called at Athens, although Leake has shown it to

be probable that "during the many centuries of Athenian prosperity, the boundaries of the Agora, or at least of its frequented part, underwent considerable variation." See his *Athens and Demi*, p. 217. The notices in ancient writers in regard to its course and extent, have not been so arranged as to produce as yet an entire agreement of opinion among scholars. See Winer, *Realw.*, p. 112. It is certain, however, that the site of the market was never so changed as to exclude the famous *στοὰ ποικίλη*, which according to Forchammer's Plan stood off against the acropolis on the west. In this porch as is well known, the philosophers, rhetoricians and others were accustomed to meet for conversation and discussion; and hence it lay entirely in the course of things that some of these men should fall, as Luke states, in the way of the apostle.

V. 18. *τῶν Ἐπικουρεῶν*. The frivolous spirit of this sect may be traced as some think, in the first of the interrogatories addressed to the apostle. The Epicureans were the "minute philosophers," the Greek Sadducees of the age; they admitted the existence of gods, but regarded them as indolent beings who paid no attention to the actions or affairs of men; they did not believe in a providence, or in accountability, or in any retribution to come. Their great practical dogma was, that a wise man will make the most of every means of enjoyment within his reach. Epicurus, the founder of the sect, had taken some pains to guard his definition of pleasure against too gross abuse, but it served only to secure to his followers a more specious name for their profligacy. The Stoics were distinguished in some respects for a more reflecting turn of mind; but their religion, at bottom, was nothing but the rankest fatalism; and it was eminently characteristic of their philosophy, that it led them to entertain a high conceit of their own self-sufficiency, both as to progress in virtue and the attainment of happiness. They praised morality, insisted on the subjection of the passions to reason, and boasted of the perfection to which they raised themselves by this discipline. With some good elements which are not to be denied, Stoicism was yet intensely proud, self-complacent, dogmatizing; so that, on the whole, it offered quite as many points of opposition to the gospel as Epicureanism itself. It might have seemed very much to the credit of Christianity, if it had been represented as having gained, on this occasion, at least, a few proselytes from among these representatives of the highest forms of Grecian culture and learning; but no such triumphs are recorded. The manner in which these Epicureans and Stoics are described as having treated the message of the apostle, is precisely what we should look for as the natural result of their peculiar systems of belief; and, in

this point of view, the narrative bears on it, again, the stamp of historical truth. *συνέβαλλον αὐτῷ* sc. *λόγους*, which is sometimes inserted in this phrase; they interchanged words, *disputed* or *conversed with him*, comp. 4: 15. Bengel renders *congregiebantur, met with him*, as in 20: 14. The manner in which *καὶ ἔλεγον* follows, agrees best with the first sense, but cannot be said to be decisive. *τί ἂν θελοῖ*, etc., *what would this babbler say*, does he mean to say? *ἂν* with the optative here, may refer to the suppressed condition — if his words have any meaning; see 2: 12. Comp. Win. § 43. 1. Cr. § 604. *σπερμολόγος* denotes strictly a seed-gatherer, and then as used here, one who picks up and retails scraps of knowledge without sense or aim, *an idle prater*. *ξένων δαυμόνιον*, *foreign gods*, hitherto unknown to us. As the expression is cited from the mouth of the Greeks, we are to attach to it, of course, their sense of *δαυμόνιον*, and not that of the Jews. The plural may be the generalized one of the class or category, comp. Win. § 27. 2. St. § 95. 2; or it may be founded on what Paul had said to them concerning the agency of God in raising up Christ from the dead; see v. 31. Meyer and others understand it in the first way; De Wette, Bloomfield, and others, in the last. Some of the older critics explained the plural as embracing *ἀνάστασις*, supposing the Athenians to have understood Paul to speak of some goddess when he preached to them the resurrection. But one can hardly conceive that the apostle would have expressed himself so obscurely on this subject as to have given them any occasion for falling into so gross a mistake; and we are not authorized by any intimation in the narrative to impute to them anything like a wilful perversion of his language. Yet a few modern writers adhere still to this view. Bauer admits that the Athenians could have had no fair pretence in any obscurity of Paul's statement, for giving this turn to it; but he thinks nevertheless, that it is what they are represented as having said, and that they said it ironically. But even irony, if it has any point, must have its show of justification.

The Place where Paul spoke.

Vv. 19—21. *Paul is conducted to Areiopagus and requested to explain his doctrine.* V. 19. *ἐπιλαβόμενοι τε αὐτοῦ*, and taking hold upon him, not necessarily with violence, which would be at variance with the general spirit of the transaction, though the word involves often that idea; but rather by the hand, for the purpose of leading him onward; comp. 9: 27. Mark 8: 23. Luke 9: 47. *ἐπὶ τὸν Ἄρειον πάγον*, unto *Mars Hill*, to the top of it. On the force of *ἐπί*, see 10: 2.

Matt. 4: 5. 24: 16. Luke 23: 33, etc. Win. § 58 l. This common usage of the preposition deserves notice only on account of the false sense which has been so often assigned to it here, as mentioned below. The Areiopagus whither Paul was now brought, was a rocky eminence a little to the west of the Acropolis. See Leake's Athens, p. 165. The object of the movement undoubtedly was, to place the apostle in a situation where he could be heard by the multitude with greater advantage. The following description of this important locality, is given by Dr. Robinson, who visited the place. "This is a narrow, naked ridge of lime-stone rock, rising gradually from the northern end (of the city), and terminating abruptly on the south, over against the west end of the Acropolis, from which it bears about north; being separated from it by an elevated valley. This southern end is fifty or sixty feet above the said valley; though yet much lower than the Acropolis. On its top are still to be seen the seats of the judges and parties, hewn in the rock; and towards the south-west is a descent by a flight of steps, also cut in the rock, into the valley below. Standing on this elevated platform, surrounded by the learned and the wise of Athens, the multitude perhaps being on the steps and in the vale below, Paul had directly before him the far-famed Acropolis with its wonders of Grecian art; and beneath him, on his left, the majestic Theseium, the earliest and still most perfect of Athenian structures; while all around, other temples and altars filled the whole city. On the Acropolis, too, were the three celebrated statues of Minerva: one of olive-wood; another of gold and ivory in the Parthenon, the master-piece of Phidias; and the colossal statue in the open air, the point of whose spear was seen over the Parthenon by those sailing along the gulf."—Biblical Researches, Vol. I. p. 10 seq. It is obvious that the peculiar boldness and power of Paul's speech can be adequately realized, only as we keep in mind the impressive outward scene which was here spread around him.

Instead of translating *ἐπὶ τὸν Ἄρειον πάγον* as above, many have rendered *ἐπὶ, before*, a forensic sense which it often has, as in speaking of sending up a prisoner for trial, comp. 16: 19. 18: 12. 28: 8, etc.; and hence they have maintained that Paul was arraigned at this time before the court of the Areiopagus, and underwent a formal trial on the charge of having attempted to change the religion of the State. But this opinion rests entirely upon two or three expressions, which like the one just noticed, are ambiguous in themselves; while, in other respects the entire narrative, as well as the improbability of such a procedure, testify against the idea. First, we find here no trace whatever of anything like the formality of a legal process. Secondly,

the professed object of bringing the apostle *εἰς τὸν Ἄρειον πάγος* was to ascertain from him what his opinions were, not to put him on his defence for them before they were known. Again, the manner in which the affair terminated, would have been a most singular issue for a judicial investigation in the highest court of Athens. And, finally, the speech which Paul delivered on the occasion, was precisely such as we should expect before a promiscuous assembly; whereas if he had stood now as an accused person before a legal tribunal, his plea has most strangely failed to connect itself, at any single point, with that peculiarity of his situation. It proves nothing in regard to the question, to show that the court of the Areiopagus had powers (that is admitted) which would have given to it jurisdiction in the case of Paul, supposing that he had been charged at this time with subverting the established worship; since the narrative on which we must rely for our information as to what was done, not only contains no evidence that the Athenians took this serious view of his doctrine, but ascribes their eagerness to hear him to a mere love of novelty; see v. 21. Calvin, Kuinoel, Neander, Winer, Olshausen, De Wette, Meyer, Lisco, Bauer, Doddridge, and the best critics generally, at present, reject the opinion above considered. The authority of Chrysostom, among the ancient critics, stands in favor of it. Hess, Hensen, Scholz, and a few others among the Germans, also follow on that side; except that some of them would say (this is true of Hensen), that the Areiopagus was called together not exactly to try the apostle, but to hear from him some account of his doctrine. But was that one of the functions of this court? It is entirely improbable. No evidence is adduced to show it. Bloomfield, in like manner, speaks of the "decorum" with which the apostle demeaned himself before "so august a court;" and a great many of our English writers go in the same direction. The other ambiguous expressions, which have been supposed to favor the view which has been objected to, will be noticed in their place. *Ἀνάμεθα γινώσκαι*, *Can we know?* It would have been an excess, certainly, even of the Attic politeness, to have interrogated a prisoner at the bar in this manner. The object, too, of the inquiry as defined by the accompanying terms, shows clearly that they did not regard him as occupying that position.

Vv. 20, 21. *ξεριζοῦσα*, the cause for the effect, *surprising* since the things were foreign, unheard of before. *εἰσφέρετε* — *ἡμῶν*. This phrase, drawn from common life, has an appearance of the utmost reality in this connection. *εἰ ἂν θέλοι*, etc. See on v. 18. *τί* here in apposition with *ταῦτα*, is to be noticed. It is not precisely like the plural. "The singular *τί* may stand in such connections as *εἰ ταῦτά ἐστι*, when the question is, what sort of a whole, what combined re-

sult, do the particulars form?" Krüger, Gr. § 61. 8. 2. V. 21. Their only motive for making the request was, the gratification of their curiosity. Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ πάντες, now all Athenians. The omission of the article unites the characteristic more closely with the name, as its invariable attendant. Comp. Win. § 17. 10 b. οἱ ἐπιδημοῦντες, i. e. the foreigners permanently resident there; unde iidem mores, as Bengel remarks. εἰς οὐδὲν — εὐκαίρουν, spent their leisure for nothing else. The imperfect does not exclude the continued existence of the peculiarity, but blends the reference to it with the history. See similar examples in 27: 8. John 11: 18. 18: 1. 19: 14. Comp. Kühn. § 256. 4 a. Cr. 567. γ. The verb affirms, first, that they had leisure, and, impliedly, at least, an ample share of it; and, secondly, that they made the use of it which is designated καιρότερον newer, sc. than before. Win. § 36. 3. St. § 118. 4. The comparative form of the adjective or the positive could be used in this phrase; but the former characterizes the state of mind in question much more forcibly than the latter. Bengel has illustrated well the point of the idiom: Nova statim sordebant; noviora quaerebantur. Bloomfield speaks of the comparative here as loosely used for the positive. It is worth remarking, that this singular scene of setting up the apostle to speak for the entertainment of the people, occurs, not at Ephesus, or Philippi, or Corinth, but at Athens; not only the only place, in all his journeyings, where Paul met with such a reception, but just the place where the incident comes up as the spontaneous product of the state of things existing there. We know, from the testimony of ancient writers, that this fondness for hearing and telling some new thing, which Luke mentions, was a notorious characteristic of the Athenians. It would be superfluous to adduce citations in proof of this. See them, in almost any number, in Wetstein, Kuinoel, Bloomfield, and others. The entirely incidental manner in which the exemplification of this trait comes forth in the narrative here, speaks for its truth.

Outline of the Course of Thought.

The speech which Paul delivered at this time is remarkable for its adaptation, not only to the outward circumstances under which he spoke, but to the peculiar mental state of his auditors. De Wette, whose aesthetic judgment no one will question, calls it "a model of the apologetic style of discourse." "The address of Paul before this assembly," says Neander, "is a living proof of his apostolic wisdom and eloquence; we perceive here how the apostle, according to his own expression, could become also a heathen to the heathen, that he

might win the heathen to a reception of the gospel." "The skill," says Hemsén, "with which he was able to bring the truth near to the Athenians, deserves admiration. We find in this discourse of Paul nothing of an ill-timed zeal, nothing like declamatory pomp; it evinces throughout clearness, brevity, coherence, and simplicity of representation." Dr. Robinson, speaking under the impression produced on his mind by a personal survey of the scene, says that, "masterly" as the address is, as it lies on record before us, "the full force and energy and boldness of the apostle's language, can be duly felt only when one has stood upon the spot." Yet Bauer adheres to his habit of objection and dissent even here. He thinks the speech has been over-praised by critics, because Paul did not succeed in bringing it to a formal close. The astonishment which one feels as he reads the address, is not that the speaker was interrupted at length, when he came to announce to the Athenians the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, but that he could command their attention so long, while he bore down with such effect on their favorite opinions and prejudices, exposed their errors, and arraigned them as guilty of the grossest inconsistency and absurdity of conduct.

We have first the introduction, which, in the technical language of rhetoric, is eminently conciliatory. The apostle begins by acknowledging and commending the respect of the Athenians for religion; vv. 22, 23. He states next, at the close of v. 23, his design, which is to guide their religious instincts and aspirations to their proper object, i. e. to teach them what God is, his nature and attributes, in opposition to their false views and practices as idolaters. He goes on, then, in pursuance of this purpose, to announce to them, first, that God is the Creator of the outward, material universe, v. 24; secondly, that He is entirely independent of his creatures, having all sufficiency in Himself, v. 25; thirdly, that He is the Creator of all mankind, notwithstanding their separation into so many nations and their wide dispersion on the earth, v. 26; and, fourthly, that He has placed men, as individuals and nations, in such relations of dependence on Himself as render it easy for them to see that He is, verily, the Creator and sovereign Disposer, and they the creatures; and that it is their duty to seek and serve Him, vv. 27, 28. The ground has thus been won for the application which follows. At this point of the discourse, stretching forth his hand, as we may well suppose, towards the gorgeous images within sight, he exclaims: "We ought not, therefore, to suppose that the Deity is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, sculptured by the art and device of men," v. 29. And that which men ought not to do, they may not safely do any longer. It was owing to the forbearance of God

that they had been left hitherto to pursue their idolatry without any signal manifestation of his displeasure; *now* they were required to repent of it and forsake it, v. 30; because a day of righteous judgment awaited them, which had been rendered certain by the resurrection of Christ, v. 31. Here their clamors interrupted him. It is not difficult, perhaps, to conjecture what he would have added. It only remained, in order to complete his well known circle of thought on such occasions—that he should have set forth the claims of Christ as the object of religious hope and confidence, that he should have exhorted them to call on his name and be saved.

It will be seen, therefore, by casting the eye back, that we have here all the parts of a perfect discourse, viz. the exordium, the proposition or theme, the proof or exposition, the inferences and application. It is a beautiful specimen of the manner in which a powerful and well trained mind, practised in public speaking, conforms spontaneously to the rules of the severest logic. One can readily believe, looking at this feature of the discourse, that it was pronounced by the man who wrote the epistles to the Romans and Galatians; where we see the same mental characteristics so strongly reflected. As we must suppose at all events, that the general scheme of thought, the *nexus* of the argument, has been preserved, it does not affect our critical judgment of the discourse whether we maintain that it has been reported in full, or that a synopsis only has been given. On this point opinions differ.

Examination of the Discourse.

Vv. 22—31. *The speech of Paul on Mars Hill.* V. 22 *ἐν μίση* may be said obviously of a place or an assembly. It is one of the ambiguous expressions, therefore, already adverted to, which leave it uncertain whether *Ἀγίου λόγου* is to be understood of the hill merely or the court assembled there. *Ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι.* The remark just made is to be repeated here. It is the style of address which Paul would necessarily use in speaking to a concourse of Athenians; and at the same time, he might use it in speaking before judges. In the latter case, however, the Greeks oftener said *ὦ ἄνδρες δικάσται.* See Stallb. Plat. Apol. 17, A. *κατὰ πάντα,* in every respect, as it were, in every possible mode of exhibition. *ὡς—θεωρῶ,* I see you as (those who correspond to the description, viz.) more religious sc. than ordinary or than other men. For this suppression of the other term of the comparison, see on v. 21. That *διδασκαλοῦστέρον;* which is a *vox media* is to be taken here in a good sense, is rendered certain by the illustration which the apostle subjoins.

The corresponding noun has this signification in 25: 19. See the remarks of Neander on the word in his *Pflanzung*, etc., p. 318.

V. 23. *καὶ ἀναθεωρῶν* — *βωμόν*, and (not transiently but) *closely observing the objects of your religious veneration, I found also an altar*. *σεβάσματα* denotes not acts of worship, devotions, but temples, images, altars and the like. It is a generic term, as *καὶ* — among them, shows, and comprehends under it *βωμόν*. The pluperfect *ἐπεγέγραπτο* includes the present, and is to be explained like the imperfect in v. 21. *Ἄγνωστον θεῶν, to an unknown god*. "That there was, at least, one altar at Athens with this inscription," says Meyer, "would appear as historically certain from this passage itself, even though other testimonies were wanting, since Paul appeals to a fact of his own observation, and in the presence too of the Athenian people themselves." But the existence of such altars at Athens is well attested by competent witnesses, e. g. Philostratus and Pausanias. The former in his *Life of Apollonius*, 6. 2, says: *σωφρονέστερον περὶ πάντων θεῶν εὖ λέγειν καὶ ταῦτα Ἀθήνησιν, οὐ καὶ ἀγνώστων θεῶν βωμοὶ ἴδονται*. Pausanias in his *Description of Attica*, 1. 1, says: *ἐπὶ Ψαλῆρῳ* (a port of Athens) — *βωμοὶ θεῶν τε ὀνομαζομένων ἀγνώστων καὶ ἥρώων*, etc. It has been made a question here, how we are to understand the use of the plural in these passages; whether as referring to the number of the altars on which the inscription occurred, or to the number of the gods to whom the altars were dedicated. Some have assumed the latter as the correct view; and have said that Paul has arbitrarily changed the plural into the singular, in order to accommodate the fact to his purpose; or even that the writer by this inaccuracy, has betrayed himself as a person who had no direct knowledge of the circumstances which he professes to relate. But even if the inscription on these altars was in the plural, it does not follow, as has been suggested already, that Paul may not have found one having the language which he recites. Such appears to be Bengel's view. Again, it would not follow that he has necessarily misrepresented the sense, admitting that he may have substituted the singular for the plural. The heathen writers often employed *θεοὶ* to convey the general idea of divine power, providence, deity and the like.¹ With that meaning the plural could be relinquished for the singular or the singular for the plural, just as an individual pleased. Here the apostle might have preferred *θεῶν*, merely for the sake of its stricter *formal* accordance with the doctrine which he was about to advance. Kuinoel appears at a loss to decide whether the plural in the case under remark

¹ See examples of this interchange in the passages collected by *Ffanner* in his *Systema Theologiae Gentilis Purioris*, p. 102 and elsewhere.

has reference to the number of the altars, or to that of the gods. Bauer knows certainly that the latter was the fact, and proceeds to draw thence his inferences adverse to the truth of the narration.¹ Another class of critics, as Calvin, Olshausen apparently, and some others, seem to take it for granted that Paul deviated from the strict form of the inscription, but deny that he violated its proper import or availed himself of any unworthy artifice.

But even the appearance of a difficulty here vanishes entirely, when we give to the language of Philostratus and Pausanias the interpretation, which is beyond any reasonable doubt the correct one. Winer states his view of the case as a philologist thus: "It by no means follows from the passages (of the writers above named), that each single one of the altars mentioned by them, had the inscription *ἀγνώστοις θεοῖς* in the plural, but more naturally that each one separately was dedicated *ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ*; but this singular the narrators were obliged to change into the plural, because they spoke of all those altars in a collective way. It appears, therefore, that there were several altars in different places at Athens with the inscription *ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ*." See his *Realw. Art., Athen.* So also among others, Eichhorn, Hess, Hensen, Meyer, De Wette; a union of authorities, which shows that the decision on this point is not one of party-interest. It should be added that several of the older commentators render *ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ*, to the unknown God, supposing the God of the Jews, i. e. Jehovah, to be meant. Such a view mistranslates the Greek, and violates all historical probability.

The precise historical origin of these altars at Athens so dedicated, is unknown. The conjectures are various. One is that they were very ancient, and that it was at length forgotten to whom they had been originally built; and that the inscription in question was put on them at a later period, to apprise the people of this fact. If that was their character, it is not easy to see what proper point of connection the apostle could have found for his remark with such a relic of sheer idolatry. Another is, that in some time or times of public ca-

¹ His remark here is the following. "Eine solche Verwechslung der allein historisch nachweisbaren *ἀγνώστοι θεοὶ* mit dem unhistorischen und dem Polytheismus überhaupt fremden *ἀγνώστος θεός* konnte nur ein Schriftsteller sich erlauben, welcher der erzählten Begebenheit fern stand, und keine Widerlegung an Ort und Stelle zu fürchten hatte, wie diess beim Apostel Paulus hätte der Fall sein müssen." See his *Paulus, der Apostel*, etc., p. 177. De Wette having pronounced the refutation of such criticism superfluous, adds: "Jene masslose Kritik hebt sich durch sich selbst auf; und darin besteht eben ihr Nutzen, dass sie durch Ueberschreitung aller Schranken das Gefühl der Nothwendigkeit sich beschränken zu müssen weckt." See *Vorwort zur dritten Auflage* of his Commentary on Acts, 1848.

lamity, the Athenians not knowing what god they had offended, whether Minerva or Jupiter or Mars, erected these altars so as to be sure of propitiating the right one. The same objection may be made as before; since their ignorance in this case relates merely to the identity of the god whom they should conciliate, and involves no recognition of any power additional to their heathen deities. The most rational explanation as it seems to me, is that these altars had their origin in the feeling of uncertainty, inherent after all in the minds of the heathen, whether their acknowledgment of the superior powers was sufficiently full and comprehensive; in their distinct consciousness of the limitation and imperfection of their religious views, and their consequent desire to avoid the anger of any still unacknowledged god who might be unknown to them. That no deity might punish them for neglecting his worship or remain uninvoked in asking for blessings, it appears that they not only erected altars to all the gods for whom they had names, but distrustful still lest they might not comprehend fully the extent of their subjection and dependence, they built them also to any god that there might be, although they knew him not.

No one can say that it is ascribing too much discernment to the heathen to affirm this. It would be easy, as far as relates to this point, to justify the representation by any amount of proof. Not to allude to other considerations, that comprehensive address in Horace—*At o deorum quicquid in coelo regit*—the oft used formula—*si deo, si deae*—and the superstitious dread which the ancient heathen are well known to have entertained, of omitting any deity in their invocations, prove the existence of the feeling to which reference has been made. Out of this feeling, therefore, these altars may have sprung; first, because the supposition is so entirely consistent with the genius of polytheistic heathenism; secondly, because, as Neander suggests, the language which Philostratus imputes to Apollonius, *σωφρονέστερον — Ἀθήνησιν*, as quoted above, indicates that he regarded the altars at Athens of which he speaks, as the expression of such a sentiment; thirdly, because the many-sided religiousness of the Athenians would be so apt to develop itself in some such demonstration; and, finally, because Paul could appeal with so much effect to such an avowal of the insufficiency of heathenism, and to such a testimony so borne, indirect yet significant, to the existence of the one true God. Under these circumstances, an allusion to one of these altars by the apostle, would be equivalent to his saying to the Athenians thus: “You are correct in acknowledging a Divine existence beyond any which the ordinary rites of your worship recognize; there is such an existence. You are correct in confessing that

he is unknown to you ; you have no just conceptions of his nature and perfections." He could add then with truth : *Ὁν οὖν — καταγγέλλω ἡμῖν, Whom, therefore, not knowing ye worship, this one I announce unto you.* The inverted order gives point to the declaration. *ἀγνοῦντες* has the same object as the verb ; hence not ignorantly as if they did not know whither their worship was directed, but — without any just knowledge of him. The word points back evidently to *ἀγνώστου εὐσεβεῖτε* has seemed to some a strong term, as the cognate words in the New Testament always express the idea of true piety ; but the term occurs farther only in 1 Tim. 5: 4, and denotes there not the exercise of piety, but of something merely kindred to it, filial reverence. It needs only a similar modification to adapt it to the use required here.

V. 24. The connecting idea between this verse and the preceding is : *God* (whom I announce to you, being or since he is) *the Creator*, etc. To raise in the mind some proper conception of his exalted nature and glory, the apostle calls attention to his character as the Infinite Maker of all things ; whence it must be self-evident that he was not to be confounded with any of their idols, whose existence was limited by the space which they occupied. *οὗτος*, etc., *inasmuch as this one is the Sovereign*, supreme Ruler, etc. *οὐκ — κατοικεῖ*. The mass of the heathen in practice made no difference between the symbol and its object ; the block was the god ; comp. 19: 26. *ἐν ταῖς*, because the statues or images were kept in the recesses of the temples.

V. 25. The apostle illustrates the character of the true God still further, by another contrast between him and the deities of the heathen. He is independent of his creatures ; he needs nothing from them ; they can earn no merit by serving him. *οὐδὲ — διακονεῖται*, and (after a preceding negative) *he is not ministered unto by the hands of men.* The heathen considered it meritorious to lavish wealth on the temples and shrines of their idols ; they brought to them costly gifts, and even offerings of food and drink, as if they stood in need of such things, and could be laid under obligation to their worshippers. That prayer of Chryses, priest of Apollo, in Il. 1., l. 37—42, expresses the true spirit of heathenism in this respect. *αὐτὸς δίδους*. The relation of the clause is causal : *since he himself gives*. The emphasis of the pronoun arises from its opposition to the idea of others giving to him. *τὰ πάντα*, *the whole*, i. e. of the things which they enjoy. In such an expression, *τὰ* restricts the adjective to the class of objects intimated by the preceding words or the context. Yet some editors omit the article here. Comp. further, Rom. 8: 32. 1 Cor. 9: 22. Phil. 3: 8, and some others. But in most of these passages, too, the manuscripts fluctuate.

V. 26. ἐποίησε τὴν, etc., and he made of one blood every nation of men that they should dwell. This is the more obvious view of the construction, and is the one which has been generally adopted. Yet several of the best critics, as Kuinoel, De Wette, Meyer, regard ποιεῖν here as an instance of its use with an accusative and infinitive, as in Matt. 5: 32. Mark 7: 37, and translate: and he caused every nation of men (sprang) from one blood to dwell. κατοικεῖν connects itself more easily in this way, it is true, with the rest of the sentence; but the facility gained here renders the expression hard at εἰς ἓν αἷμα, so that a term must be inserted to make the thought flow smoothly. The main idea in this verse beyond question is, that God has created the entire human race from a common stock; and the more prominent way, therefore, in which the translation first stated, brings forward this proposition, appears to me to be a reason for preferring it. It is an objection to the other mode that it assigns a too subordinate place to the principal thought. But why does the apostle single out thus the universal brotherhood of the race? Olshausen says it was intended as a reproof to the Athenians for their contempt of the Jews. Meyer, Neander, De Wette and others consider it as directed essentially against the polytheism of the heathen. If all are the children of a common parent, then the idea of a multiplicity of gods from whom the various nations have derived their origin, or whose protection they specially enjoy, must be false. The doctrine of the unity of the race is closely interwoven with that of the unity of the Divine existence. This more comprehensive view of the meaning, however, does not exclude the other; since if all nations have the same Creator, it would at once occur that nothing can be more absurd than the feeling of superiority and contempt with which one affects to look down upon another. As the apostle had to encounter the prejudice which was entertained against him as a Jew, his course of remark was doubly pertinent, if adapted at the same time to remove this hindrance to a candid reception of his message. It will be observed that what is denied in regard to polytheism, is affirmed as directly true here with reference to God. The conception (I include the entire verse) thus brought before their minds was a vast one. All that power exerted in giving existence to men, controlling their destiny, exalting entire nations or casting them down, which they had parcelled out among such an infinity of gods, they are now led to think of as concentrated in a single Possessor; they get now the idea of one infinite Creator and Ruler. κατοικεῖν is the infinitive of design. The various lands which the different families of mankind occupied, with all the advantages connected with their position, God had

assigned to them, comp. Deut. 32: 8. Ps. 115: 116. Yea, he had proceeded from the very first with a view to their welfare. He designed, in creating men, that they should inhabit and possess the earth as their own; that they should all of them enjoy the manifold blessings allotted to them in the various places of their abode. It was to Him they were indebted for them, and not to accident or their own enterprise, or the favor of some imaginary god. The remark is made as a universal one, and has its justification as such in the fact that notwithstanding the inequalities which diversify the condition of nations, they have severally their peculiar advantages; it is natural for every people to esteem their own land, in some respects at least, as the best.¹ But the remark was specially aimed, beyond doubt, at the feeling of self-congratulation with which the Athenians were prone to contemplate the peculiar felicity of their own position, their national renown, their past and present prosperity. This view of the meaning prepares the way for the thought which is next introduced. *ὁρίσας* — *τῆς κατοικίας αὐτῶν*, *having fixed the appointed seasons and limits of their abode*. The second participle repeats the idea of the first, not superfluously, but with the evident effect of affirming it more strongly. The approved reading is *προσσταγαμένους*, rather than *προσταγμένους* as in the common text. The apostle, by adding this, admonishes the Athenians that they, like every other people, had not only received their peculiar advantages from the common Creator, but that they could hold them only during the continuance of his good will and favor. In assigning to the nations their respective abodes, he had fixed the *seasons* of their prosperity—the *limits* of their territory, i. e. it was He who decided *when* and *how long* they should flourish, and *how far* their dominion should extend. The remark was adapted both to rebuke their spirit of self-elation and to warn them of the danger of slighting a message from Him who had their destiny so perfectly at his command.

Another interpretation of these last words has been extensively received, which is plainly incorrect. Some have explained them as referring to the limits which God has assigned to the lives of men individually: they have their appointed seasons and bounds, beyond which they cannot pass. But that idea lies entirely out of the present circle of view, as the subject of discourse here is that of nations and not of individuals. It is also philologically inadmissible; since *αὐτῶν* can naturally refer to *ἀνθρώπων* only as connected with

¹ This principle Tacitus has recognized in his fine remark in the *Germania*, § 2: Describing that country, he says—*informem terra, asperam coelo, nisi si patria sit.*

πᾶν ἔθνος. The anti-polytheistic aim, which forms to such an extent the ground-tone of the discourse, is to be recognized perhaps, also, in this part of it. The separation of men into so many different nations, might seem to oppose the idea of their common parentage; that separation itself is therefore represented by the apostle (*obiter*) as having been contemplated in the divine plan.

V. 27. *ζητεῖν*, telic infinitive, *that they should seek*. It attaches itself more particularly to the part of the sentence which commences at *κατοικεῖν*, and states the moral object which God had in view with reference to men, in making such provision for their convenience and happiness. It was that they might be led, by such tokens of his goodness, *to seek him*, i. e. a more perfect knowledge of Him and of their obligations to Him. Some, on the contrary, make the infinitive depend, almost wholly, on the clause just before, and find the connection to be: = that excited by the proofs of his power, as manifested in the varying fortunes of nations, *they should seek*, etc. But as already explained, the controlling idea in that clause is that of the goodness of God (subject, as to its continuance, to the divine pleasure); while that of his power, as displayed in the infliction of judgments, is only incidentally involved. Again, that clause is a subordinate one, as its structure shows, and that it should break off *ζητεῖν* so much from the main part of the sentence, would be violent. *εἰ ἄραγε* — *εὐροίεν*, *if perhaps they might feel after him and find him*. *ψηλαφήσειαν* denotes, properly, the motions of a blind man, who gropes along after an object in the dark. On the peculiar Aeolic termination, see Win. §13. 2 d. St. § 69. 8. This verb, as well as the problematical form of the expression—*εἰ ἄραγε*,—are chosen, because the apostle would concede the comparative indistinctness of the light which the heathen have to guide them. *κατόικε*, *although indeed*. This clause is added to show that the concession just made was not intended to exculpate the heathen for their estrangement from God. Although so benighted as to be compelled to grope for the object of their search, it was still within reach; they had not, after all, so far to go for a knowledge of God, that they might not find it if they would. Compare the sentiment with Acts 14: 17, and especially with Rom. 1: 20.

V: 28. *Ἐν αὐτῷ* — *ἐσμέν*. We are not, I suppose, to insist on a sharp distinction between these words. They present the idea, on every side. We derive our existence solely from God; we depend on Him, every instant, for life, motion, thought, all our varied activity. From creatures thus dependent, the evidence of a Creator cannot be very deeply hidden, if they have only a disposition to seek for it. *οὐ καὶ*, *as also*, i. e. the sentiment is not only true, but has been ac-

knowledged. καθ' ὑμᾶς, viz. Greeks in distinction from Jews; not Athenians in distinction from other Greeks. Τοῦ γὰρ — ἐσμέν, *For his offspring also are we.* Derivation implies dependence. The creature cannot exist apart from the Creator. The apostle brings forward the citation correctly, therefore, as parallel in sentiment to ἐν αὐτῷ — ἐσμέν. Here τοῦ stands for the pronoun. Win. § 20. 2. St. § 94. 1. The words form the first half of a hexameter, and are found in Aratus, a Cilician poet, who flourished about 270 B. C. The celebrated hymn of Cleanthes to Jupiter, l. 5, contains almost the same words, viz. ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ γένος ἐσμέν. The same idea, variously expressed, occurs in several other Greek writers. The form of the citation the apostle took, undoubtedly, from Aratus, but says τινὲς εἰρήκασι, because, as some affirm, he had distinctly in mind, some of the other passages where the thought is found; or, according to others, because he inferred that so obvious a remark must be a common one; or, finally, because he would generalize the idea, i. e. the categorical plural: = The truth is so plain, that even your poetry recognizes it. See the grammatical references in the note on v. 18. I am inclined to think that the last is the true explanation. γὰρ καὶ, as Meyer observes correctly, has no logical connection with Paul's speech, but is to be viewed merely as a part of the citation, which it was necessary to retain on account of the verse.

V. 29. Γένος οὖν, etc., *since, therefore, we are the offspring of God.* The inference drawn here is, that idolatry is supremely absurd inasmuch as it makes that which is destitute of life, motion, intelligence, the source of these attributes to others. Comp. Isa. 44: 9 sq. χαράγματι stands in apposition with the nouns which precede, i. e. the state or form of the materials just enumerated, artificially wrought.

V. 30. The relation of this verse and the one following to the preceding one is this: Since such is the nature of idolatry, you must *therefore—οὖν*—repent of it, because God now lays upon you his command to this effect, in view of the retributions of a judgment to come. The most important word here is ὑπεριδών. It does not occur further in the N. Test., but is found often in the Septuagint, where it signifies to neglect, which is its proper classical sense, then to despise, but especially to suffer to pass as if unnoticed, to withhold the proof of noticing something which is, at the same time, a matter of distinct knowledge, i. e. in the sense of חָזַק Hiph., and Hithp., comp. Deut. 22: 3, 4, etc. In this last signification, the verb represents perfectly the apostle's meaning here. God had hitherto permitted the heathen to pursue their own way, without manifesting his sense of their conduct, either by sending to them special messengers to testify against it, as he did to the Jews, or by inflict-

ing upon them at once the punishment deserved. The idea is virtually the same, therefore, as that of *εἴαστε* Acts 14: 16, and *παρέδωκεν* Rom. 1: 24. To understand *ἐπεκρίδων* as meaning that God would not judge or punish the heathen for the sins committed in their state of idolatry, would be at variance with Paul's theology on this subject as he has unfolded it Rom. 1: 20. 2: 11 sq. Not only so, but the repentance which the apostle now calls upon them to exercise, presupposes their guilt.

V. 31. *διότι*, *because*, states the reason why the heathen also, as well as others, must repent; they could not, without this preparation, be safe in the day of righteous judgment, which awaited them. *ἐν ἀνδρὶ*, etc., *by the man whom he has appointed*. *ἀνδρὶ* omits the article because a definite clause follows. Win. §19. 4. St. § 89. 3. *ᾧ* stands, by attraction, for the accusative. *πίστιν παρασχὼν πᾶσι*, *having afforded assurance, confirmation, to all*, viz. of a judgment to come. The sentence being left incomplete, it is impossible to say just how much the apostle intended to represent as proved by the resurrection of Christ. He himself referred to it, undoubtedly, in the first place, as establishing the possibility of such a resurrection of all men from the dead as was involved in his doctrine of a general judgment; but whether he had yet developed this doctrine so far that the Athenians perceived already this bearing of the fact, is uncertain. It was enough to excite their scorn to hear of a single instance of resurrection. Again, the resurrection of Christ from the dead confirms the truth of all his claims; and one of these was that he was to be the judge of men; see John 5: 28, 29. But whether the apostle meant to extend the argument to these and other points, we cannot decide, as he was so abruptly silenced.

Effect of the Discourse on the Athenians.

Vv. 32—34. *Paul is interrupted in his speech and leaves the place.*

V. 32. The apostle was heard with attention until he came to speak of the resurrection; when, at the announcement of a doctrine which sounded so strangely to the ears of the Athenians, some of them broke forth into expressions of open contempt. It is altogether incredible that a judicial process, in the highest court of Athens, should have terminated in this manner. *ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν*, *a resurrection of the dead*. As we do not know how much of Paul's idea the Athenians had apprehended, it is doubtful whether we are to take the plural here as generic or numerical, i. e. whether Christ merely be meant, or men in general. *νεκροὶ* is one of a class of words in the New Testament which fluctuate as to the use of the article. Win. § 18. 1.

Ἀκουσόμεθα — περὶ τούτου. It is disputed whether we are to understand this as said seriously, or as a courteous refusal to hear anything farther on the subject. The latter is the more common view; Heinrichs, Kuinoel, Meyer, Hemsén, Lisco, De Wette, Bloomfield, and others adopt it. The manner in which Paul now left the assembly, and the termination of his labors, immediately after this, at Athens, favor this interpretation. Such a mode of speaking, too, was entirely consonant to the Athenian character. See, besides, the first remark on v. 84. Beza, Calvin, Grotius, Rosenmüller, are among those who would impute a serious meaning to the language. That sense lies nearer to the literal form of the words, it is true; unless one might think that *πάλιν* itself casts some suspicion upon their sincerity. Compare this with the answer of Felix, 24: 25.

Vv. 88, 84. καὶ οὕτως, *and thus*, after such an experience, with such a result; comp. 20: 11. V. 84. *τινες δέ*. This notice seems to be introduced, *but certain*, as if it stood contrasted, in the mind of the writer, with what is stated respecting the effect of Paul's address, in the preceding verse—a contrast between what was unfavorable in the result on the one hand, and what was favorable on the other. Yet *δέ* may be taken as continuative. *κολληθέντες αὐτῷ*, not adhering, but inchoatively *joining*, attaching themselves to him. *ὁ Ἀρειοπαγίτης*, the *Areopagite*, i. e. one of the judges in the court of the Areopagus. Of the number of these judges, nothing certain is known, except that it appears to have varied at different times. See Pauly's *Real-Encyclopädie*, Vol. I. p. 700 sq. Eusebius and other ancient writers say that this Dionysius became afterward bishop of the church at Athens, and ended his life as a martyr. καὶ γυναῖκα, *and a woman*, not the wife of Dionysius, as some have said, for the article and pronoun would then have been added, comp. 5: 1; or at least the article, comp. 24: 24. It has been inferred, from her being singled out thus by name, that she was a woman of rank, but beyond this, nothing is known of her.

Having delivered this speech with such a result, Paul appears to have left Athens at once, to return no more. Although he spent the most of the next two years in Corinth and the vicinity, he did not (so far as any notice exists) direct his steps again to this city. On his third missionary tour, he came once more into this general part of Greece, but at this time passed by Athens, certainly once and again, without repeating his visit thither.