

St. Paul and the Modern Note in Missions.

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I RECENTLY presided at a Missionary Meeting held under the auspices of the C.M.S.

The meeting was addressed by two speakers—one a clergyman, the other a lady missionary. Both came from the field of work in India; both were young, and extremely intelligent as well as indisputably earnest and devoted. The lady speaker described the method of teaching the natives of India—at least, in the locality where she worked—and frankly averred that it was common to take some point of Indian belief and use it as furnishing, wherever possible, a starting-point for Christian teaching. She illustrated this method by saying that the incarnation of Krishna, which his devotees eagerly look for, might be taken as a way of introducing the doctrine of the Incarnation of our Blessed Lord.

The clerical speaker followed with an earnest plea for Educational Missions. He emphatically declared that sympathy with the educational wants of India is, when wisely manifested by missionaries of the Gospel, a powerful stimulus to interest native hearers in the truths of the Christian Revelation.

In short, the two addresses were penetrated by the modern note, and dyed deep with the modern colour. Scarcely conscious, perhaps, of the atmosphere which they had so deeply inhaled, these representatives of the younger missionary method and temper revealed, most clearly, that many of the notions, once accepted without question, and in vogue in every missionary circle, have been profoundly modified. Wholly as I sympathize with the modern mind in every sphere, and believe that only by it can any situation ever be saved from rust and decay, I felt constrained to utter a gentle warning to my hearers and to the accomplished speakers. I said in effect that there might be a danger, against which we ought to guard, lest those distinctions between “the truth as it is in Jesus” and all forms

of Oriental speculation should be overlooked. I urged that there might be a danger, too, that to-day the West may become Orientalized, not less real than the danger that the East may become Occidentalized.

In talking over the matter, subsequently, with one of the two missionaries, I found that the classical instance on which such speakers depend is that of St. Paul in the Areopagus. I am free to confess that in that glorious instance they find a most abundant justification for going a long way along the path on which they have travelled so far and so freely. Whether the Apostle will support them in every step is properly open to debate. But the appeal is good, and, therefore, to understand that greatest of all Christian apologias becomes very important. That no one who only reads the Authorized Version of St. Paul's speech on the Hill of Ares can properly understand it, I am positive. I am positive, too, that in order to understand that speech, we must dismiss the mischievous notion that the Apostle made a mistake in speaking there as he did, and was inevitably, if not justly, punished by the most signal failure in his career. That he spoke then, as Stier and Alford maintain, under the full and distinctive inspiration of the "Spirit of Jesus," I hold to be incontrovertible. With these views, and under the impulse of that interesting incident which I have briefly narrated, I have ventured to re-translate the great speech in the Areopagus, and now offer it to the attention of the Christian reader, in the hope that it may assist to some clearer ideas of what is due to those natural feelings and views of religion to which St. Paul paid such just and noble homage in the great discourse.

ST. PAUL IN THE AREOPAGUS (Acts xvii.).

And Paul having been placed in the middle of Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I see on all hands that you revere the unseen Powers in no common degree. For, as I passed along and reviewed the objects of your worship, I even found an altar, on which had been inscribed (the words), 'to GOD UNKNOWN.'

Him, therefore, Whom you worship without knowing it, do I announce to you. That God, Who made the world and all things which are in it, being from its origin Lord of heaven and earth, does not inhabit temples made by hand ; nor is He tended by the hands of men, as though in need of someone else ; for He it is Who is ever giving to all life and breath and all things. He, too, made out of one element every nation of men to inhabit the entire surface of the earth, marking out for them allotted periods of time, and the limits of their habitation ; that so they might seek for God, if they would but feel after and find Him, though He is originally no long way off from each one of us ; for in Him we live, and move, and are essentially ; as even some of your favourite poets have said, 'for we are also His offspring.' We, then, being originally God's offspring, ought not to think that the Divine is similar to carving in gold or silver or stone, the product of man's art and imagination. Those times of ignorance, however, God has overlooked ; but now He announces to men that all in all places should repent, having regard to the fact that He has appointed a day in which He proposes to judge the inhabited world in righteousness, in a Person, Whom He marked out by raising Him from among the dead, and thus furnishing proof-positive to all."

