

CHAPTER 17

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS 17

Ver. 1. *Now when they had passed through Amphipolls*, etc.] A city of Macedonia, where it is placed by Pliny^{f833}; according to Ptolomy^{f834}, it was in that part of Macedonia, which is called Edonis, and was near Philippi, and lay in the way from thence to Thessalonica; Harpocratian^{f835} says, it was a city of Thrace, formerly called “the Nine Ways”; it was upon the borders of Thrace, and had its name Amphipolis from the river Strymon running on both sides of it, making it a peninsula; it was also called Crademna, and Anadraemum; it is now in the hands of the Turks, and by them called Empoli; this city was originally built by Cimon the Athenian, into which he sent ten thousand Athenians for a colony, as the writer of his life reports^{f836}. The apostle only passed through this place; it does not appear that he at all preached in it, or at any other time, nor do we read of it in ecclesiastical history, nor of the following place:

and Apollonia; this is also placed by Pliny^{f837} in Macedonia, and is said by him to have been formerly a colony of the Corinthians, and about seven miles from the sea; and by Ptolomy^{f838}, in that part of Macedonia called Mygdonia, and with him its name is Apollonia of Mygdonia; it was situated by the river Echedorus, and was famous for Augustus Caesar’s learning Greek here, and is now called Ceres: there was another of this name in the region of Pentapolis, and was one of the five^{f839} cities in it; and another in Palestine mentioned by Pliny^{f840}, along with Caesarea; and by Josephus^{f841}, with Joppa, Jamnia, Azotus, etc. but this was near Thessalonica; it is said to be about twenty miles from it: here also the apostle did not stay to preach the Gospel, nor is there any mention made of it elsewhere in the Acts of the Apostles, and yet Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas, is said to be bishop of Apollonia; (see Gill on “~~2101~~Luke 10:1”), but whether the same place with this, or whether fact, is not certain;

they came to Thessalonica; a free city of Macedonia^{f842}; it was formerly called Halis^{f843}, and sometimes Therme; it had its name of Thessalonica from the victory which Philip king of Macedon obtained over the Thessalians; and not from his daughter Thessalonica, the wife of

Cassander, who also had her name from the same victory: in this place a sedition being raised, and some magistrates killed, Theodosius the Roman emperor suffered seven thousand men to be slain; and when he came to Milain, Ambrose bishop of that place having heard of it, would not suffer him to enter into the church and receive the Lord's supper, until he repented of his sin, and made public confession of it ^{f844}. Thessalonica has been since the head of a new kingdom erected by Boniface marquis of Montferrat; it was for some time in the hands of the Venetians, but was taken from them by Amurath emperor of the Turks ^{f845}. The Italians call it now Saloniki; it has been since inhabited by Christians, Turks, and Jews, and chiefly by the latter, their number, according to their own account, is fourteen thousand, and their synagogues fourscore. There always were many Jews in this place, and so there were when the apostle was here, for it follows;

where was a synagogue of the Jews; it seems as if there was none, neither in Philippi, nor in Amphipolis, nor in Apollonia: why these two last places should be passed through by the apostle, without making any stay at them, cannot be said; it is very likely he had, as in some other instances before, some particular directions from the Spirit of God, there being none of the chosen vessels of salvation to be called there, at least, at this time, when there were many at Thessalonica.

Ver. 2. *And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them*, etc.] To the Jews in their synagogue; for though the Jews had put away the Gospel from them, and the apostle had turned to the Gentiles; yet he still retained a great affection for his countrymen the Jews, and as often as he had opportunity, attended their synagogues, in order to preach the Gospel to them;

and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures: that is, out of the Old Testament, concerning the Messiah, the characters of him, the work that he was to do, and how he was to suffer and die for the sins of men; and this he did three weeks running, going to their synagogue every sabbath day, when and where the Jews met for worship; and made use of books, which they allowed of, and of arguments they could not disprove.

Ver. 3. *Opening*, etc.] That is, the Scriptures of the Old Testament, explaining and expounding them, giving the true sense of them; so this

word is frequently used in Jewish writings^{f846}, as that such a Rabbi j tp, “opened”, such a Scripture:

and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; he set this matter in a clear light, and made it plain and manifest, from the writings of the Old Testament, that there was a necessity of the Messiah’s suffering and rising from the dead; or otherwise these Scriptures would not have been fulfilled, which have said that so it must be; for these things were not only necessary on account of God’s decrees, and the covenant transactions the Son of God entered into, and on the account of the salvation of his people; but because of the types, promises, and prophecies of the Old Testament: the Scriptures which the apostle opened and set before them, and reasoned upon, showing the necessity of these things, very likely were such as these, (~~<0085>~~Genesis 3:15, ~~<0221>~~Psalm 22:1-31) (~~<2810>~~Isaiah 53:1-12, ~~<2901>~~Daniel 9:1-27, ~~<3160>~~Psalm 16:10, ~~<3182>~~Hosea 6:2) with many others:

and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ; he showed that all the things which were spoken of Christ, or the Messiah, in those Scriptures, were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, who was the subject matter, the sum and substance of his ministry; and therefore he must be the Messiah, and the only Saviour and Redeemer of lost sinners.

Ver. 4. *And some of them believed*, etc.] That is, some of the Jews, power went along with the word, and faith came by it, and they believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah, and that what the apostle preached concerning him was the truth; and this they received in the love of it, and cordially embraced it, and made a profession of it:

and consorted with Paul and Silas; associated with them, and privately conversed with them, as well as publicly attended their ministry; for when souls are converted, they love to be in company with believers, and especially with the ministers of the Gospel, to hear their discourses, and learn from them the doctrines of grace:

and of the devout Greeks a great multitude; these were Gentiles who were proselytes to the Jewish religion; and these in greater numbers believed, and joined themselves to the apostles, and became followers of them, than there were of the Jews, who were the most averse to the Gospel, and were more hardened, and incredulous:

and of the chief women not a few; some of the wives of the principal men of the city were become proselytes to the Jews, and these attending synagogue worship, and hearing the discourses of Paul from time to time, were convinced and converted, and professed faith in Christ Jesus; and these converts laid the foundation of a Gospel church in Thessalonica, of which church Silvanus is said to be the first bishop; (see Gill on “²⁰⁰Luke 10:1”). In the “second” century there were martyrs for Christ here; and to the inhabitants of this place, Antonintus Pius the emperor wrote in behalf of the Christians there, to give them no disturbance ^{f847}; in the “third” century there was a church here; Tertullian ^{f848} makes mention of it: in the “fourth” century ^{f849} Theodosius the emperor was baptized at Thessalonica, by Acholius bishop of that place; who first asked him what faith he professed, to which he replied, that he embraced and professed that faith which the churches in Illyricum, who were not yet infected with the Arian heresy, namely the same which was of old delivered by the apostles, and afterwards confirmed at the synod at Nice; in this century Ireminus, Paulinus, and Alexander, were bishops of Thessalonica: in the “fifth” century it was a metropolitan of Macedonia, and Anysius was bishop of it, and so were Rufus and Anastasius: and that there was a church here in the “sixth” century is manifest from hence, that their bishops, for fear of the emperor Anastasius, agreed with Timothy bishop of Constantinople, whom the council at Chalcedon had anathematized; and in this age Pope Gregory, among others, wrote to Eusebius bishop of Thessalonica, that he would not receive any of a military habit into monasteries within three years: in the “seventh” century a bishop of this place assisted at the sixth council at Constantinople; and in the same age it was the seat of an archbishop: in the “eighth” century there was one Thomas bishop of this place, and also Theophilus, who was present at the Nicene synod; in the ninth century a bishop of Thessalonica was beaten with two hundred stripes, for being against image worship.

Ver. 5. *But the Jews which believed not*, etc.] The Alexandrian copy, the Vulgate Latin, and Syriac versions leave out the words, “which believed not”; but whether this character is expressed or not, it is certain that the unbelieving Jews are here intended:

moved with envy; at the success of the apostles, many of their own people and of their proselytes, and some of the better sort being converted by them: or “with zeal”; for what they called the glory of God, but it was not according to knowledge; it was a blind and ignorant zeal, a zeal for the

rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses, and for the traditions of the elders:

took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort; or of the market folks, who sat and sold things in the market, and were generally of the meaner and vulgar sort, as the word may signify; or who stood idle in the market place, squandering away their time in an idle manner, not caring to work, and so were fit persons, and who could easily be gathered together, for such service as the unbelieving Jews employed them in; or they were a sort of officers and servants, that attended courts of judicature, and cited persons thither, and assisted in the business done there, and who were commonly men of profligate and abandoned lives:

and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar; they raised a mob, and made a clamour, which brought people out of their houses to inquire what was the matter, and so gave great disturbance and uneasiness to the inhabitants:

and assaulted the house of Jason: who by what follows appears to have been a disciple of Christ, a believer in him, and the host of the apostle and his companions, who being an inhabitant of Thessalonica, at least having a dwelling house there, received them into it. This Jason is said to be one of the seventy disciples, and afterwards bishop of Tarsus, but this is not certain; nor whether he was a Jew or a Greek, very probably the former: we read of Jason the brother of Onias the high priest, a Jew, “But after the death of Seleucus, when Antiochus, called Epiphanes, took the kingdom, Jason the brother of Onias laboured underhand to be high priest,” (2 Maccabees 4:7)

whose name was Jesus, the same with Joshua, but as Josephus ^{f850} says, he called himself Jason; and so this man’s Hebrew name might be Jesus or Joshua, and his Greek name Jason; and very likely he was a believer in Christ before the apostle came to Thessalonica, and it may be is the same who is spoken of in (^{<61>}Romans 16:21). (See Gill on “ ^{<61>}Romans 16:21”). Some of the ancients ^{f851} make mention of a disputation between Jason, a Christian Hebrew, and Papiscus, an Alexandrian Jew, but there is no reason to believe that he is the Jason here spoken of:

and sought to bring them out to the people; they expected to have found Paul and Silas in Jason’s house, where they lodged, and their intention was to have dragged them out and exposed them to popular fury, to be beaten

or stoned by the people; and so the Arabic version reads, “requiring those two apostles, that they might set them before the people”; or put them into the hands of the mob, which they had gathered, to do as they would with them.

Ver. 6. *And when they found them not*, etc.] In Jason’s house, as they expected:

they drew Jason, and certain brethren: the Syriac version adds, “who were there”: in Jason’s house, who either came along with the apostle, and lodged with him there; or they were some of the inhabitants of Thessalonica, who were lately converted, and were come thither in order to have some Christian conversation; these with Jason the rabble seized on, and in a rude and violent manner dragged them out of the house, and had them,

unto the rulers of the city: the civil magistrates, the judges in courts of judicature, to which some of these belonged;

crying in a very noisy and clamorous way;

these that have turned the world upside down: the Syriac version reads, “the whole earth”: the apostles, according to the cry of these men, had thrown the whole world into disorder, and had made disturbances in kingdoms and cities, wherever they came; and had made innovations in religion, and turned men from their old way of worship to another; these; say they,

are come hither also; to make the like disorders and disturbances, as elsewhere.

Ver. 7. *Whom Jason hath received*, etc.] Into his house in a private manner, and has entertained, contrary to law, which forbids men to receive and entertain persons of seditious principles, and practices, for this is mentioned as a charge against Jason:

and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar; both the apostle and those with him, and Jason, and the brethren, whom they now had set before the magistrates, who were all of the same sentiments and practices; and which were opposite to the decrees of the Roman emperor, and the Roman senate, who suffered none to be called a king but whom they pleased; whereas these men taught, saying,

that there is another king, one Jesus; but then though they said he was a king, yet not a temporal one, but one whose kingdom was spiritual, and not of this world; and therefore asserted nothing contrary to the decrees of Caesar, or what was in the least prejudicial to his worldly interest and glory.

Ver. 8. *And they troubled the people, and the rulers of the city,* etc.]

Fearing some revolution would be made, and some new king, or rather tyrant, would start up, and usurp a power over them; or that they should come under some suspicion or charge with the Roman government, and should be called to an account, for admitting such men and tenets among them; with such fears were they possessed,

when they heard these things; alleged against the apostle and his company.

Ver. 9. *And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other,* etc.]

That is, received satisfaction from them, by the defence which they made for themselves, and the apostles, by the account that they gave of them and of their doctrines; whereby it plainly appeared to the full satisfaction of the magistrates, that their principles had no tendency to move sedition, or to alter the form of their government, or to do anything detrimental to Caesar, as was suggested: the Syriac, and Arabic versions render it, “took sureties”; of them for their good behaviour, and that they would be forthcoming, whenever called for:

they let them go; about their business, to their own houses, and company, and did not inflict any punishment upon them, or commit them to prison.

Ver. 10. *And the brethren,* etc.] The believers in Thessalonica, the young converts there, who were full of love and affection to their spiritual fathers:

immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea; another city in Macedonia: and so it is placed by Pliny^{f852} in the north part of it; and, according to Ptolomy^{f853} it was, in that part of Macedonia called Emathia, and was not far from Pella, the native place of Alexander the great. It is now called Veria; some say it was called Berea from Beraea, daughter of Beres, son of Macedo, by whom it is said to have been built; others from Pheron; and some think it has some agreement with the Syriac word Barja and Baraitha; since what is called Berytus, is Beroe with others: there was besides this another Beraea, a city of Syria, which Josephus^{f854} speaks of; and is mentioned by Pliny^{f855} along with Hierapolis and Chalcis, and very likely is the same that is spoken of in:

“But the King of kings moved Antiochus’ mind against this wicked wretch, and Lysias informed the king that this man was the cause of all mischief, so that the king commanded to bring him unto Berea, and to put him to death, as the manner is in that place.” (2 Maccabees 13:4)

Hither the brethren sent Paul and Silas, when it was night and dark, and they could pass unobserved, in order to preserve them from the fury of the mob.

Who coming thither; to Berea; that is, Paul and Silas:

went into the synagogue of the Jews; which was in that city; not being at all daunted or discouraged with what they had met with at Thessalonica.

Ver. 11. *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica*, etc.] That is, the Jews at Berea were more noble than the Jews in Thessalonica, as the Syriac version expresses it; for the comparison is not between the native inhabitants of Berea and Thessalonica, but between the Jews that dwelt in these places: and the one being “more noble” than the other, does not refer to their birth, lineage, and descent, as in (~~4025~~ 1 Corinthians 1:26) few such were called; and besides, both sorts were Jews, and of the same descent; and as for the proselytes in both places, there were some of the chief and honourable women converted in each: but to their minds, dispositions, and manners; the one were more candid, and ingenuous, and open to conviction and susceptible of the word, than the other; and used the apostles with better manners, with more mildness and gentleness, willing to hear what they had to say, without contradicting and blaspheming, and to examine with patience and candour what they delivered. Not that there is in any man, nor was there in those men naturally a disposition to attend to, and regard the Gospel of Christ; for there is a natural enmity in the minds of men to it, and with them it is folly and nonsense; nor are there any previous dispositions in the minds of men qualifying them for the grace of God; nor is anything of this kind a reason why some, and not others, are called by grace, for all are children of wrath, and none better than others; but this more noble disposition of mind and conduct was owing to the grace of God bestowed upon them; and which showed itself in the following instance:

in that they received the word with all readiness; or “who received”, etc. which is a character, not of the Thessalonian Jews, as some think; though it

is true of them that they received the word with joy of the Holy Ghost, and not as the word of man, but as the word of God, it coming to them not in word only, but in power, (~~SOME~~ 1 Thessalonians 1:5,6 2:13) but of the Beran Jews, who exceeded them, who showed at once a readiness and eager desire to attend the Gospel, and embrace it. This is to be understood not of the essential word Christ; though as it is true of him, that he is the word, and he is said to be received, and that readily and willingly, so these Bereans did receive him by faith, they believed in him, and made a profession of him; nor of the written word, for that is designed by the Scriptures, which they searched daily, and by which they examined, tried, and judged of the word they received; but of the word spoken by the apostle, the word of truth, the Gospel of salvation: this they received into their understandings, not merely notionally, so as to give their assent to it; but spiritually and experimentally, so as to feel the power, and enjoy the comfort of it, their understandings being opened by the Spirit of God for this purpose; otherwise the Gospel is unknown unto, and rejected by the natural man: they received the love of the truth, or the word of truth into their affections, not with a mere carnal flashy affection, arising from a principle of self-love; but with a spiritual affection of the Holy Ghost, with real solid gladness, it bringing the good news of salvation by Christ to them who saw themselves miserable, and undone: they received it into their hearts, so that it had a place there, and worked effectually in them: they believed it, not with a mere historical faith, but from the heart obeyed this form of doctrine delivered to them; and this they did with all readiness, as an hungry man receives his food, and greedily feeds upon it, or as a man ready to perish receives and lays hold on anything that offers for his safety.

And searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so: they did not dispute with, and cavil at the apostle, as the Thessalonian Jews first did, (~~4HTD~~ Acts 17:2) nor did they receive the word, right or wrong, or with an implicit faith; but they immediately betook themselves to reading and searching the writings of the Old Testament, to see whether the things which the apostle preached, concerning the Messiah, his incarnation, obedience, sufferings, death, and resurrection from the dead, were agreeable to them, or no; determining, if they were not, to reject them, but if they were, to embrace them, as they did; (see ~~4RFD~~ John 5:39) and this they did continually day after day. They were neither backward to hear and receive the word, nor slothful to examine it.

Ver. 12. *Therefore many of them believed,* etc.] What the apostle preached, and in Jesus of Nazareth, as the true Messiah, and professed their faith in him, upon finding, through reading and searching the Scriptures, that the characters of the Messiah agreed in him, and that what the apostle delivered were entirely consonant to those writings:

also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men not a few; besides the Jews, there were Gentiles also, both men and women; who were proselytes to the Jewish religion, and who were persons of figure and credit, especially the women, who were also converted and believed in Christ. These converts were the beginning of a Gospel church state in this place, which continued many ages after. Timon, one of the first seven deacons of the church at Jerusalem, is said to be bishop of Berea; though, according to others, Onesimus, the servant of Philemon, was the first bishop of this church: even in the fifth century mention is made of Lucas, bishop of Berea, who was present in the synods of Chalcedon and Ephesus; yea, in the ninth century, there were Christians dwelling in this place^{f856}.

Ver. 13. *But when the Jews of Thessalonica,* etc.] The unbelieving Jews there,

had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea; which they came at, either by persons that came from thence to Thessalonica, or by letters sent them:

they came thither also; as the Jews from Antioch and Iconium came to Lystra on a like account, (~~414B~~Acts 14:19)

and stirred up the people; the common people, the natives of the place, against the apostles; suggesting that they were wicked men, and enemies to all laws, human or divine, civil or religious.

Ver. 14. *And then immediately the brethren,* etc.] That were at Berea, the new converts there:

sent away Paul, whom they knew the Jews mostly sought after, and were offended with:

to go as it were to the sea; the Aegean sea, or Archipelago, near to which Berea was: this seems to have been done, in order to make the people conclude that he intended to take shipping, and go into some other parts of the world, when the design was to go to Athens by foot, and so be safe

from any lying in wait of his persecutors: the Alexandrian copy, the Vulgate Latin, and the Oriental versions read, “to go to the sea”; to the sea side, whither it seems he did go; and yet it looks as if he did not go by sea, but by land, to Athens:

but Silas and Timotheus abode there still; at Berea, to confirm and strengthen the young converts there made.

Ver. 15. *And they that conducted Paul*, etc.] From Berea to the sea side:

brought him unto Athens; a famous city in Attica, where both ^{f857} Pliny and Ptolomy ^{f858} place it, well known for the learning and wisdom of the ancient philosophers, who had their schools and universities in it; the former of these calls it a free city, and says, it needed no description nor commendation, its fame was so diffused everywhere. The account Jerom ^{f859} gives of it is,

“Athens, a city in Achaia, dedicated to the studies of philosophy, which though but one, is always used to be called in the plural number; its haven, called the Piraeum, is described as fortified with seven walls.”

The city itself stood about two miles from the sea; it had its name either from the Greek word *νησωνη*, which signifies the mind of God, as boasting of its divine knowledge; or rather from the word *ἄγτα*, “Athen”, which may be interpreted “strangers”, it being originally inhabited by the Pelasgi, who were a set of people that moved from place to place ^{f860}; or because of the great multitude of strangers which flocked from all parts hither for learning, of whom mention is made in (~~4171~~ Acts 17:21). The inhabitants of it have been called by different names; when under the Pelasgi, as Herodotus ^{f861} observes, they were called Cranai; when under King Cecrops, they went by the name of Cecropidae; when Erechtheus had the government, they changed their name into Athenians; from Ion, the son of Xythus, their general, they were called Ionians. This city has gone through different fates: it was burnt by Xerxes, about 480 years before Christ; some years after that it was taken by Lysander; and after that restored to its ancient liberty by Demetrius; after this the Romans were possessed of it; and now it is in the hands of the Turks, and goes by the name of Setines. In Beza’s ancient copy it follows, “but he passed through Thessalia, for he was forbidden to preach the word to them”; for as he came from Berea to Athens, he must come through Thessalia; but he made

no stay here, but passed through, being forbid to preach the Gospel here, as he had been before to preach it in Asia and Bithynia, (~~416~~ Acts 16:6,7) nor have we any account anywhere else of the Gospel being preached in Thessaly; and in the second century, we read of Heathenism prevailing there, and of many gross acts of idolatry, particularly at Pella in Thessaly, a man was sacrificed to the gods: though in the beginning of the fourth century there were bishops out of Thessalia at the synod of Nice; and so there were at the synod at Sardica, about the middle of the same century: in the sixth century, Dion, bishop of Thebes in Thessalia, was in the first synod at Ephesus; and Constantinus, bishop of Demetrias, and Vigilantius of Larissa, both cities in Thessalia, were in another at the same place ^{f862}.

And receiving a commandment; or “a letter from him” as one copy and the Syriac version read; that is, the brethren from Paul:

unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed; to Athens, where he now was: they departed; from Paul at Athens, and came back to Berea.

Ver. 16. *Now while Paul waited for them at Athens.* etc.] That is, for Silas and Timotheus:

his spirit was stirred in him; not only his soul was troubled and his heart was grieved, but he was exasperated and provoked to the last degree: he was in a paroxysm; his heart was hot within him; he had a burning fire in his bones, and was weary with forbearing, and could not stay; his zeal wanted vent, and he gave it:

when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry; or “full of idols”, as the Syriac and Arabic versions render it. So Cicero says ^{f863} that Athens was full of temples; and Xenophon ^{f864} observes that they had double the feasts of other people; and Pausanias ^{f865} affirms, that the Athenians far exceeded others in the worship of the gods, and care about religion; and he relates, that they had an altar for Mercy, another for Shame, another for Fame, and another for Desire, and expressed more religion to the gods than others did: they had an altar dedicated to twelve gods ^{f866}; and because they would be sure of all, they erected one to an unknown god; in short, they had so many of them, that one ^{f867} jestingly said to them, our country is so full of deities, that one may more easily find a god than a man: so that with all their learning and wisdom they knew not God, (~~412~~ 1 Corinthians 1:21).

Ver. 17. *Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews*, etc.] There being a synagogue of the Jews here, and there being many Jews settled in this place, hence we read in Jewish writings^{f868} of men going from Jerusalem to Athens, and from Athens to Jerusalem; and hence it may be accounted for, how many of the Athenian philosophers came to be acquainted with the books and sentiments of the Jews, from whom they borrowed many things; since there were so many that dwelt among them, and doubtless had for years past, as well as by their travels into Egypt: and a Jewish synagogue being here, the apostle went into it, according to his usual manner, and began with them, as he was wont to do, preaching the Gospel to the Jews first, and then unto the Gentiles: with them he disputed, not about idolatry, or the worship of many gods, to which they were not addicted; nor about the one true and living God, whom they knew and professed; but about the Son of God, about the Messiah, contending and proving that Jesus of Nazareth was he:

and with the devout persons; that is, with the Gentiles, who were proselytes to the Jewish religion, and worshipped the God of Israel with the Jews, in their synagogues, but knew nothing of Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation by him:

and in the market daily with them that met him; where there was a concourse of people; and where, after the apostle had been once or twice, the people came purposely to meet with him, and to hear his discourses, and reason with him about points in religion: the Syriac version renders it, “in the street”; and then the sense seems to be, that as he met persons in the street, day by day, as he walked along, he would stop and talk with them, about religious things, and about their idolatry, vanity, and superstition.

Ver. 18. *Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans*, etc.] These were so called from Epicurus, the son of Neocles, who was born 342 years before Christ, and taught philosophy at Athens, in his garden; the principal tenets of which were, that the world was not made by any deity, or with any design, but came into its being and form, through a fortuitous concourse of atoms, of various sizes and magnitude, which met, and jumbled, and cemented together, and so formed the world; and that the world is not governed by the providence of God; for though he did not deny the being of God, yet he thought it below his notice, and beneath his majesty to concern himself with its affairs; and also, that the chief happiness of men

lies in pleasure. His followers were called “Epicureans”; of which there have been two sorts; the one were called the strict or rigid “Epicureans”, who placed all happiness in the pleasure of the mind, arising from the practice of moral virtue, and which is thought by some to be the true principle of “Epicureans”; the other were called the loose, or the remiss Epicureans, who understood their master in the gross sense, and placed all their happiness in the pleasure of the body, in brutal and sensual pleasure, in living a voluptuous life, in eating and drinking, etc. and this is the common notion imbibed of an Epicurean.

And of the Stoics: the author of this sect was Zeno, whose followers were so called from the Greek word “Stoa”, which signifies a portico, or piazza, under which Zeno used to walk, and teach his philosophy, and where great numbers of disciples attended him, who from hence were called “Stoics”: their chief tenets were, that there is but one God, and that the world was made by him, and is governed by fate; that happiness lies in virtue, and virtue has its own reward in itself; that all virtues are linked together, and all vices are equal; that a wise and good man is destitute of all passion, and uneasiness of mind, is always the same, and always joyful, and ever happy in the greatest torture, pain being no real evil; that the soul lives after the body, and that the world will be destroyed by fire. Now the philosophers of these two sects

encountered him; the Apostle Paul; they attacked him, and disputed with him upon some points, which were contrary to their philosophy:

and some said, what will this babbler say? this talking, prating fellow? though the word here used does not signify, as some have thought, a sower of words; as if they meant, that the apostle was a dealer in many words, a verbose man, and full of words, but not matter; but it properly signifies a gatherer of seeds; and the allusion is either to a set of idle people, that used to go to markets and fairs, and pick up seeds of corn, that were shook out of sacks, upon which they lived; and so the word came to be used for an idle good for nothing fellow, and for one that picked up tales and fables, and carried them about for a livelihood. So Demosthenes, in a way of reproach, called Aeschines by this name; and such an one was the apostle reckoned: or the metaphor is taken from little birds, as the sparrow, etc. that pick up seeds, and live upon them, and are of no value and use. Harpocratian says ^{f869}, there is a certain little bird, of the jay or jackdaw kind, which is called “Spermologos” (the word here used), from its picking

up of seeds, of which Aristophanes makes mention; and that from this a base and contemptible man, and one that lives by others, is called by this name: from whence we may learn in what a contemptuous manner the apostle was used in this polite city, by these men of learning.

Other some, he seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; other than those worshipped in the city of Athens: this was the charge which Melitus brought against Socrates;

“Socrates (says he ^{f870}) has acted an unrighteous part; the gods, whom the city reckons such, he does not, introducing other and new gods.”

Aelianus ^{f871} represents him as censured by Aristophanes, as one that introduced *ξενας δαιμονας*, “strange gods”, though he neither knew them, nor honoured them. The reason why they thought the apostle was for bringing in other gods, than which nothing was more foreign from him, was,

because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection: the Syriac version reads, “and his resurrection”; that is, the resurrection of Christ; the Arabic version renders it, “the resurrection from the dead”; the general resurrection; both doubtless were preached by him, (see ^{<4173>}Acts 17:32) Jesus they took for one strange and new God, they had never heard of before, and “Anastasis”, or “the resurrection”, for another; which need not be wondered at, when they had altars erected for Mercy, Fame, Shame, and Desire, (see Gill on “^{<4176>}Acts 17:16”).

Ver. 19. *And they took him,* etc.] Not that they laid hands on him, and carried him away by violence, as a derider of their gods, and an introducer of new ones, in order to punish him; but they invited him to go with them, and they took him along with them in a friendly manner, and had him to a more convenient place for preaching and disputation, and where were many learned men to hear and judge of his doctrine; and this appears from their desire to hear what his doctrine was, and from his quiet departure, after he had ended his discourse:

and brought him unto Areopagus. The Arabic version seems to understand this of a person, rendering it, “and brought him to the most skilful, and the judge of the doctors”; to be heard and examined before him, about the doctrine he preached, who was most capable of judging concerning it; and this might be Dionysius, who is called the Areopagite, and was converted

by the apostle, (~~4173~~ Acts 17:34). The Ethiopic version renders it, “they brought him to the house of their god”; to one of their idols’ temple, the temple of Mars, which is not much amiss; for we are told ^{f872}, that Areopagus was a street in Athens, in which was the temple of Mars, from whence it had its name; but the Syriac version renders it best of all, “they brought him to the house of judgment, or “court of judicature”, which is called Areopagus”; and so it is called “Martium judicium”, or Mars’s “court of judicature”, by Apuleius ^{f873}, and “Martis curia”, or the “court of Mars”, by Juvenal ^{f874}, for it was a court where causes were tried, and the most ancient one with the Athenians, being instituted by Cerops, their first king; and is thought to be near as ancient, if not fully as ancient, yea, as more ancient than the sanhedrim, or the court of seventy elders, appointed by Moses among the Jews. It was called Areopagus, because Ares, or Mars, was the first that was judged there ^{f875}. The case was this, Alcippe, the daughter of Mars, being ravished by Habirrhothius, the son of Neptune, and caught by Mars in the very fact, was killed by him; upon which Neptune arraigned Mars for the murder, and tried him in this place, by a jury of twelve deities, by whom he was acquitted ^{f876}. Hither Paul was brought, not to be tried in a legal manner; for it does not appear that any charge was exhibited against him, or any legal process carried on, only an inquiry was made about his doctrine, and that only to gratify their curiosity:

saying, may we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? for they had never heard of Jesus, nor of salvation by him, nor of the resurrection of the dead; these were all new things to them, and therefore they were the more curious to ask after them, new things being what they were fond of: wherefore they call his doctrine new, not so much by way of reproach, as suggesting it to be a reason why they inquired after it, and why they desired him to give them some account of it; and that it should be a new doctrine with them, or if they reproached it with the charge of novelty, it need not be wondered at in them, when the Jews charged and reproached the doctrine of Christ in like manner, (~~4107~~ Mark 1:27).

Ver. 20. *For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears*, etc.] Strange doctrines and strange deities, such as they had never heard of before:

we would know therefore what these things mean; they desire he would explain these things to them, and let them know the rise, and ground, and nature, and end, and design of them.

Ver. 21. *For all the Athenians*, etc.] The natives of Athens, who were born and lived there, and were inhabitants of the city, and free of it:

and strangers which were there; who came there from several parts of the world, to get wisdom and knowledge, to learn the several arts and sciences, and to attend the several sects of philosophers they made choice of:

spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing; that is, they did so for the most part; and this was the complexion and taste of the generality of them; and with this agrees what Demosthenes himself says of them ^{f877},

“we, says he (for the truth shall be said), sit here, **ουδεν ποιουντες**, “doing nothing” — — inquiring in the court, **ει τι λεγεται νεωτερον**, “whether any new thing is said.””

The character of such persons is given, and they are described in a very lively manner by Theophrastus ^{f878}. The Jewish doctors, at this time, were much of the same cast in their divinity schools; the usual question asked, when they met one another, was, **ϙωδj hm**, “what new thing” have you in the divinity school today ^{f879}?

Ver. 22. *Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill*, etc.] Or of Areopagus, as it is better rendered in (^{<44716>}Acts 17:19) for it is the same place, and it is the same word that is here used: Paul stood in the midst of that court of judicature, amidst the Areopagites, the judges of that court, and the wise and learned philosophers of the different sects that were assembled together:

and said, ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious; or “more religious”, than any other persons, in other places, which has been observed before on (^{<44716>}Acts 17:16) they had more gods, and more altars, and more festivals, and were more diligent and studious in the worship of the gods, than others. And this manner of addressing them, both as citizens of Athens, and as very religious persons, and who, as such, greatly exceeded all others, must greatly tend to engage their attention to him.

Ver. 23. *For as I passed by*, etc.] Or “through”; that is, through the city of Athens:

and beheld your devotions; not so much their acts of worship and religion, as the gods which they worshipped; in which sense this word is used in (~~2~~² Thessalonians 2:4) and the altars which were erected to them, and the temples in which they were worshipped; and so the Syriac and Arabic versions render it, “the houses”, and “places of your worship”; and the Ethiopic version, “your images”, or “deities”,

I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Pausanias^{f880} speaks in the plural number of altars of gods, that were named unknown, at Athens; and so says Apollonius Tyanaeus to Timasion^{f881} it is wisest to speak well of all the gods, especially at Athens, where there are altars to unknown gods: it may be, there were altars that had the inscription in the plural number; and there was one which Paul took particular notice of, in the singular number; or the above writers may speak of altars to unknown gods, because there might be many altars with this inscription: the whole of the inscription, according to Theophylact, was this;

“to the gods of Asia, Europe, and Lybia (or Africa), to the unknown and strange god;”

though Jerom^{f882} makes this to be in the plural number: certain it is, that Lucian^{f883} swears by the unknown god that was at Athens, and says, we finding the unknown god at Athens, and worshipping with hands stretched out towards heaven, gave thanks unto him: the reason why they erected an altar with such an inscription might be, for fear when they took in the gods of other nations, there might be some one which they knew not; wherefore, to omit none, they erect an altar to him; and which proves what the apostle says, that they were more religious and superstitious than others: or it may be they might have a regard to the God of the Jews, whose name Jehovah with them was not to be pronounced, and who, by the Gentiles, was called “Deus incertus”^{f884}; and here, in the Syriac version, it is rendered, “the hidden God”, as the God of Israel is called, (~~23~~²³515 Isaiah 45:15) and that he is here designed seems manifest from what follows,

whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you; which could not be said by him of any other deity. God is an unknown God to those who have only the light of nature to guide them; for though it may be known by it that there is a God, and that there is but one, and somewhat of him may be discerned thereby; yet the nature of his essence, and the perfections of his nature, and the unity of his being, are very little, and not

truly and commonly understood, and the persons in the Godhead not at all, and still less God in Christ, whom to know is life eternal: hence the Gentiles are described as such who know not God; wherefore, if he is worshipped by them at all, it must be ignorantly: and that they are ignorant worshippers of him, appears by worshipping others more than him, and besides him, or him in others, and these idols of gold, silver, brass, wood, and stone; and by their indecencies and inhumanity used in the performance of their worship: wherefore a revelation became necessary, by which men might be acquainted with the nature of the divine Being, and the true manner of worshipping him; in which a declaration is made of the nature and perfections of God, and of the persons in the Godhead, the object of worship; of the counsels, purposes, and decrees of God; of his covenant transactions with his Son respecting the salvation of his chosen people; of his love, grace, and mercy, displayed in the mission and gift of Christ to be the Saviour and Redeemer of them; of the glory of his attributes in their salvation; and of his whole mind and will, both with respect to doctrine and practice; and which every faithful minister of the Gospel, as the Apostle Paul, shuns not, according to his ability, truly and fully to declare.

Ver. 24. *God that made the world, and all things therein*, etc.] In this account of the divine Being, as the Creator of the world, and all things in it, as the apostle agrees with Moses, and the rest of the sacred Scriptures; so he condemns both the notion of the Epicurean philosophers, who denied that the world was made by God, but said that it owed its being to a fortuitous concourse of atoms; and the notion of the Peripatetics, or Aristotelians, who asserted the eternity of the world; and some of both sects were doubtless present.

Seeing that he is the Lord of heaven and earth; as appears by his being the Creator of both; hence he supports them in their being, and governs all creatures in them by his providence.

Dwelleth not in temples made with hands; such as were the idol temples at Athens; nor in any other edifices built by man, so as to be there fixed and limited; no, not in the temple at Jerusalem: but he dwells in temples that are not made with hands, as in the temple of Christ's human nature, in which the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, and in the hearts of his people, who are the temples of the Holy Ghost. This strikes at a notion of the Athenians, as if God was limited, and circumscribed, and included within the bounds of a shrine, or temple, though it is not at all contrary to his

promises, or the hopes of his own people, of his presence in places appointed for divine worship, but is expressive of the infinity and immensity of God.

Ver. 25. *Neither is worshipped with men's hands*, etc.] Or “served” with them; or “ministered unto” by them, as the Syriac version renders it: and the sense is, that men by worshipping God do not give anything to him, that can be of any use or service to him; he, being God all sufficient, stands in need of nothing; for external worship is not here intended by worshipping with men's hands, in distinction from, and opposition to, internal worship, or to the worship of God with the heart; but that whether it be with the one or with the other, or both, nothing is given to God, as adding any thing to his essential glory and happiness:

as though he needed anything; for he does not, he is “El Shaddai”, God all sufficient; nor can anything be given to him, he has not; or otherwise all perfection would not be in him: but that he cannot be indigent of anything, appears from hence,

seeing he giveth to all life and breath; or “the breath of life”, as the Ethiopic version renders it; this God breathed into man at first, and he became a living soul; and every animate creature, everyone that has life and breath, have them from God; he gives them to them, and continues them:

and all things; that are enjoyed by them, and are necessary for their subsistence, and for the comfort of life, and for both their use and profit, and for their delight and pleasure; wherefore he that gives them all things, cannot want anything himself, nor receive anything at their hands. This clause is left out in the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions.

Ver. 26. *And hath made of one blood*, etc.] That is, of one man's blood; the Vulgate Latin version reads, “of one”; and the Arabic version of Deuteronomy Dieu reads, “of one man”; of Adam, the first parent of all mankind, and who had the blood of all men in his veins: hence the Jews^{f885} say,

“the first man was $\mu\iota\ w[\ I\ \zeta\ wmd$, “the blood of the world”;

and this by propagation has been derived from him, and communicated to all mankind. They also say^{f886}, that

“the reason why man was created alone (or there was but one man created) was, on account of families, that they might not be stirred up one against another;”

that is, strive and contend with one another about pre-eminence: and they add,

“that the righteous might not say we are the sons of the righteous, and ye are the sons of the wicked.”

And it is a certain truth that follows upon this, that no man has any reason to vaunt over another, and boast of his blood and family; and as little reason have any to have any dependence upon their being the children of believers, or to distinguish themselves from others, and reject them as the children of unbelievers, when all belong to one family, and are of one man’s blood, whether Adam or Noah: of whom are

all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth; for from Adam sprung a race of men, which multiplied on the face of the earth, and peopled the world before the flood; these being destroyed by the flood, and Noah and his family saved, his descendants were scattered all over the earth, and reseeded it: and this is the original of all the nations of men, and of all the inhabitants of the earth; and stands opposed to the fabulous accounts of the Heathens, which the apostle might have in his view, that men at first grew up out of the earth, or after the flood were formed of stones, which Deucalion and Prometheus threw over their heads; and particularly the Athenians boasted that they sprung out of the earth, which Diogenes ridiculed as common with mice and worms. But the apostle ascribes all to one blood:

and hath determined the times before appointed; how long the world he has made shall continue; and the several distinct periods, ages, and generations, in which such and such men should live, such and such nations should exist, and such monarchies should be in being, as the Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman, and how long they should subsist; as also the several seasons of the year, as seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night; and which are so bounded, and kept so distinct in their revolutions, as not to interfere with, and encroach upon each other; and likewise the several years, months, and days of every man’s life; (see ^{<800>}Job 7:1 14:5) to which may be added, the times of the law and Gospel; the time of Christ’s birth and death; the time of the conversion of

particular persons; and all their times of desertion, temptation, affliction, and comfort; the times of the church's sufferings, both under Rome Pagan and Rome Papal; of the holy city being trodden under foot, of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, and of their being killed, and their bodies lying unburied, and of their resurrection and ascension to heaven, (~~6120~~ Revelation 2:10 12:6 11:2,3,9,11) (~~6112~~ Revelation 11:12) the time of antichrist's reign and ruin, (~~6135~~ Revelation 13:5) and of Christ's personal coming, and the day of judgment, (~~5165~~ 1 Timothy 6:15 ~~4173~~ Acts 17:31) and of his reign on earth for a thousand years, (Rev 20:4-6). All these are appointed times, and determined by the Creator and Governor of the world:

and the bounds of their habitation; where men shall dwell, and how long they shall continue there the age or distinct period of time, in which every man was, or is to come into the world, is fixed and determined by God; nor can, nor does anyone come into the world sooner or later than that time; and also the particular country, city, town, and spot of ground where he shall dwell; and the term of time how long he shall dwell there, and then remove to another place, or be removed by death. And to this agrees the Ethiopic version, which renders the whole thus, "and hath appointed his times, and his years, how long they shall dwell"; (see ~~6538~~ Deuteronomy 32:8) to which the apostle seems to refer.

Ver. 27. *That they should seek the Lord*, etc.] Or "God", as the Alexandrian copy and others, and the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions read; their Creator, and kind Benefactor, and who has appointed their time of life, and their habitations for them; and this should engage them to seek to know him, who has done all this for them, and to fear and serve him, and to glorify his name:

if haply they might feel after him, and find him; which shows, that though it is possible for men, by a contemplation of the perfections of God, visible in the works of creation and providence, so to find God, as to know that there is one, and that there is but one God, who has made all things; and so as to be convinced of the vanity and falsehood of all other gods, and to see the folly, wickedness, and weakness of idolatrous worship; yet, at the same time, it very strongly intimates, how dim and obscure the light of nature is; since those, who have nothing else to direct them, are like persons in the dark, who "feel" and grope about after God, whom they cannot see; and

after all their search and groping, there is only an “haply”, a peradventure, a may be, that they find him:

though he be not far from everyone of us; not only by his omnipresence, and immensity, whereby he is everywhere; but by his power in supporting all in their being; and by his goodness in continually communicating the blessings of providence to them.

Ver. 28. *For in him we live, and move, and have our being*, etc.] The natural life which men live is from God; and they are supported in it by him; and from him they have all the comforts and blessings of life; and all motions, whether external or internal, of body or of mind, are of God, and none of them are without the concurrence of his providence, and strength assistance from him; though the disorder and irregularity of these motions, whereby they become sinful, are of themselves, or of the devil; and their being, and the maintenance of it, and continuance in it, are all owing to the power and providence of God.

As certain also of your own poets have said; the Syriac version reads in the singular number, “as a certain one of your wise men has said”; but all others read in the plural; and some have thought, that the apostle refers to what goes before, that being an Iambic verse of some of the poets, as well as to what follows, which is a citation from Aratus^{f887} and whom the apostle might have called his own, as he was his countryman; for Aratus was a native of Solis, a city of Cilicia, not far from Tarsus yea, some say^{f888} he was of Tarsus, where the apostle was born: but Aratus being an Heathen, and the apostle speaking to Heathens, calls him one of them; and the rather, that what is cited might be the more regarded by them: though the expression is also^{f889} said to be in an hymn to Jove, written by Cleanthes, who taught at Athens; and so the apostle addressing the Athenians, might, with greater propriety, say, “as certain of your own poets say”: it is also said to be in Aratus the astronomer, and in the poet Homer; so that the plural number may well be used. Which is,

for we are also his offspring; the offspring of Jove, says Aratus; which the apostle applies to the true Jehovah, the Creator of all men, by whom, and after whose image, they are made, and so are truly his offspring; upon which the apostle argues as follows.

Ver. 29. *Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God*, etc.] In the sense before given; for the apostle is not here speaking of himself, and other

saints, as being the children of God, by adoption, and by regenerating grace, and faith in Christ Jesus, but as men in common with others, and with these Athenians:

we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device; for men themselves, who are the offspring of God, and made after his image, are not to be compared to graven images of gold, silver, and stone, but are vastly preferable to them, they being formed by their art, and the device of their minds; and much less then should God, the Creator of men, and from whom they spring, be likened to, or represented by, any such thing; for so to think of God, is to think very unworthily of him; for if to think thus of ourselves, who are descended from him, would be a debasing of us, then much more to think so of God, the Father of spirits, must be a depreciating of him; and which by no means ought to be done, and argues great stupidity: if living rational creatures are not to be equalled to, and compared with, senseless statues, much less God, the former of men and angels.

Ver. 30. *And the times of this ignorance God winked at,* etc.] Not that he approved of, or encouraged such blindness and folly, as appeared among the Gentiles, when they worshipped idols of gold, silver, and stone, taking them for deities; but rather the sense is, he despised this, and them for it, and was displeased and angry with them; and as an evidence of such contempt and indignation, he overlooked them, and took no notice of them, and gave them no revelation to direct them, nor prophets to instruct them, and left them to their stupidity and ignorance:

but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; that is, he hath given orders, that the doctrine of repentance, as well as remission of sins, should be preached to all nations, to Gentiles as well as Jews; and that it becomes them to repent of their idolatries, and turn from their idols, and worship the one, only, living and true God: and though for many hundreds of years God had neglected them, and sent no messengers, nor messages to them, to acquaint them with his will, and to show them their follies and mistakes; yet now he had sent his apostles unto them, to lay before them their sins, and call them to repentance; and to stir them up to this, the apostle informs them of the future judgment in the following verse. Repentance being represented as a command, does not suppose it to be in the power of men, or contradict evangelical repentance, being the free grace gift of God, but only shows the need men stand in of it, and how necessary and requisite it

is; and when it is said to be a command to all, this does not destroy its being a special blessing of the covenant of grace to some; but points out the sad condition that all men are in as sinners, and that without repentance they must perish: and indeed, all men are obliged to natural repentance for sin, though to all men the grace of evangelical repentance is not given: the Jews ^{f890} call repentance *hbwçth twxm*, “the command of repentance”, though they do not think it obligatory on men, as the other commands of the law. The law gives no encouragement to repentance, and shows no mercy on account of it; it is a branch of the Gospel ministry, and goes along with the doctrine of the remission of sins; and though in the Gospel, strictly taken, there is no command, yet being largely taken for the whole ministry of the word, it includes this, and everything else which Christ has commanded, and was taught by him and his apostles; (~~4830~~ Matthew 28:20).

Ver. 31. *Because he hath appointed a day*, etc.] The day of judgment is fixed by God in his eternal purposes, and is sure and certain, and will come, though it is not known by men or angels; and this is a reason why God will have the doctrine of repentance everywhere published, both to Jews and Gentiles, since all must come to judgment: and the day for it is appointed by him,

in the which he will judge the world in righteousness; the whole world will be judged, and every individual in it, good and bad, righteous and wicked; and this judgment will be a righteous one; it will proceed according to the strict rules of justice and equity, and upon the foot of the righteousness of Christ, as that has been received or rejected by men, or as men are clothed with, or are without that righteousness:

by that man whom he hath ordained; Beza’s ancient copy reads, “the man Jesus”: not that the apostle means that Christ is a mere man; for then he would not be fit to be a Judge of quick and dead, and to pass and execute the definitive sentence; which requires omniscience and omnipotence: but preaching to mere Heathens, he chose not at once to assert the deity of Christ, though he tacitly suggests it: but intended, by degrees, to open the glories of his nature and office to them, he being the person God had from all eternity ordained, and in time had signified, should have all judgment committed to him, and by whom the last judgment shall be managed and transacted:

whereof he hath given assurance to all men: or full proof, both of his being the Judge, and of his fitness to be one, and also of the righteousness, according to which he will judge:

in that he hath raised him from the dead; whereby he was declared to be the Son of God; and when all power in heaven and in earth was given to him; and which was done for the justification of all those for whose offences he was delivered: and this seems to be the reason why the apostle calls Christ the Judge a man, that he might have the opportunity of mentioning his resurrection from the dead.

Ver. 32. *When they heard of the resurrection of the dead,* etc.] Of a certain man that the apostle said God had raised from the dead, though they knew not who he was:

some mocked; at him, and at the doctrine he preached: these very likely were of the Epicurean sect, who disbelieved a future state; though, as Tertullian observes ^{f891}, the doctrine of the resurrection was denied by every sect of the philosophers: it is a doctrine of pure revelation, and what the light of nature never taught men, and by which men being only guided, have declared against, and have treated it with the utmost ridicule and contempt. Pliny ^{f892} reckons it, among childish fancies, and calls it vanity, and downright madness to believe it; as does also Caecilius in Minutius Felix ^{f893}, and who even calls it a lie, and places it among old wives' fables; and Celsus in Origen ^{f894} represents it as exceeding detestable, abominable, and impossible.

And others said, we will hear thee again of this matter; some think these were of the Stoic sect, who held a future state, and that the soul would live after the body, and had some notions which looked inclining to this doctrine: however, these thought there might be something in what the apostle said; they could not receive it readily, and yet could not deny it; they were willing to take time to consider of it; and were desirous of hearing him again upon that subject; in which they might be very open and upright; and this might not be a mere excuse to shift off any further hearing at that time, like that of Felix, in (~~420~~ Acts 24:1-25:27).

Ver. 33. *So Paul departed from among them.*] As it was high time, when they fell to deriding and scoffing at him; for hereby they judged themselves unworthy of the Gospel ministry: the Ethiopic version adds, "from Athens"; but it does not appear that the apostle went directly out of the

city; we read afterwards of his departing from Athens, (~~480~~ Acts 18:1) but the sense is, that he went out of the Areopagus, from that court of judicature; and from among the judges of it, and the philosophers of every sect, that stood around him in it; they having no more to say to him, nor he to them. And this shows, that he was not brought to be tried and judged, in order to be punished, but only to be heard concerning his doctrine; of which, when they had heard enough, he departed quietly, no one molesting him, unless with scoffs and jeers.

Ver. 34. *Howbeit, certain men clave unto him, and believed,* etc.] There were some who were ordained to eternal life, to whom the Gospel came in power, and they received the love of the truth, and their hearts and affections were knit unto the apostle; and they followed him, and kept to him, and privately conversed with him, and believed his doctrine, and in Jesus Christ, whom he preached unto them; to these the Gospel was the savour of life unto life, when to the scoffers and mockers it was the savour of death unto death: and this is the fruit and effect of the Gospel ministry, wherever it comes:

among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite; a judge in the court of Areopagus: how many judges that court consisted of, is not certain, nor whether there was one who was superior to the rest; if there was such an one, Dionysius seems to have been he, since he is called the Areopagite. The business of this court was not only to try causes of murder, which seems to have been the original business of it; but by these judges the rights of the city were preserved and defended, war was proclaimed, and all law suits adjusted and decided; and they made it their business to look after idle and slothful persons, and inquire how they lived^{f895}: they always heard and judged causes in the night, in the dark, because they would only know facts, and not persons, lest they should be influenced by their afflictions, and be led wrong^{f896}; they were very famous in other nations for their wisdom and skill, and for their gravity and strict justice. Dolabella, proconsul of Asia, having a woman brought before him for poisoning her husband and son, which she confessed, and gave reasons for doing it, referred the matter to a council, who refused to pass sentence; upon which he sent the case to Athens, to the Areopagites, as to judges “more grave” and “more experienced”^{f897}: and hence these words of Julian the emperor

“let an Areopagite be judge, and we will not be afraid of the judgment.”

This Dionysius the Areopagite is said, by another Dionysius, bishop of the Corinthians, a very ancient writer^{f899}, to be the first bishop of the Athenians, which is more likely than that he should be a bishop in France. It is reported of him, that being at Heliopolis in Egypt, along with Apollophanes, a philosopher, at the time of Christ’s sufferings, he should say concerning the unusual eclipse that then was, that “a God unknown, and clothed with flesh, suffered”, on whose account the whole world was darkened; or, as, others affirm, he said, “either the God of nature suffers, or the frame of the world will be dissolved”: it is also related of him that when he was converted by the apostle at Athens, he went to Clemens, bishop of Rome, and was sent by him with others into the west, to preach the Gospel; some of which went to Spain, and others to France, and that he steered his course to Paris, and there, with Rusticus and Eleutherius his “colleagues”, suffered martyrdom^{f900}. The books ascribed unto him concerning the divine names, and ecclesiastical hierarchy, are spurious things, stuffed with foolish, absurd, and impious notions, and seem to have been written in the “fifth” century.

And a woman named Damaris; some of the ancients, and also some modern writers, take this woman to be the wife of Dionysius; but had she been his wife, she would have been doubtless called so; however, by the particular mention of her name, she seems to have been a person of some note and figure: the name is a diminutive from $\delta\alpha\mu\alpha\rho$, Damar, which signifies a wife.

And others with them; with these two, as the Arabic version renders it; that is, with Dionysius and Damaris. These laid the foundation of a Gospel church at Athens. Dionysius, as before observed, was the first bishop, or pastor of it; it is also said that Narcissus, one of the seventy disciples, was bishop of this place; (see Gill on “~~200~~ Luke 10:1”). In the “second” century Publius was bishop of the church at Athens, who suffered martyrdom for Christ in the time of Hadrian; and was succeeded by Quadratus^{f901}, who was famous for a writing he presented to the said emperor, in favour of the churches in common, and the success of it, about the year 128; at the same time, Aristides, a famous philosopher and Christian, flourished in the church at Athens, who wrote an apology for the Christian religion; and also Jovius, a presbyter and martyr, and a disciple of Dionysius; likewise

Athenagoras, a man of great learning and piety, who wrote also an apology for the Christians, and a treatise concerning the resurrection of the dead, which are still extant; the former was written to the emperors Antoninus and Commodus: in the “third” century mention is made of the church at Athens; and Origen^{f902} speaks very honourably of it, as meek and quiet, and desirous of approving itself to God. In the “fourth” century it appears that there were Christians there, since Maximus the emperor stirred up wicked men to molest and distress them; and there was a Christian school there, in which Bazil and Gregory Nazianzen were brought up. In the “fifth” century there was a church in this place; and in the “sixth”, a Christian school, in which Boethius Patricius learned the liberal arts; and in the “seventh” century mention is made of a bishop of Athens, who was in the sixth council at Constantinople^{f903}: thus far this church state is to be traced.