

wide open the door to a larger life and a richer service beyond. All things are yours; but they are all yours to use for love's service, that because you have lived, and loved, and served, and suffered, if need be, society shall be richer, and life shall be nobler, and humanity shall be nearer its God.



Paul at Athens¹

By Lyman Abbott

And yet he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness.—Acts xiv., 17.

In this article I shall make no attempt to reproduce the scene: Athens, with its architectural magnificence and its intellectual decay; the people, with their shallow curiosity and their spiritual unconcern; Paul, the one earnest because the one unselfish and faith-endowed man among them, speaking to an audience as dead to spiritual truth as the stone images which surrounded them.² Enough for our purpose that it was a city of superstition and agnosticism. The two great schools reached the same substantial conclusion by different roads—an absolute ignorance concerning all spiritual verities. The Stoics were pantheists, in whose thought the world was God; the body was soul; death was absorption of the fragment into the All; reason was the standard; pleasure and pain were indifferent; good and evil, shadows. The Epicureans were materialists, in whose thought there was no God; the universe was an accident; life was a set of chances; the body was man; happiness was the standard; death was dissolution; good and evil, only shadows. Standing before such auditors, he thus addressed them:

Ye men of Athens, in every point of view I see you more than others reverential to the gods. For, passing through and looking about upon the objects of your veneration, I found even an altar on which was inscribed: "To an Unknown God." Whom, therefore, not knowingly ye worship, him declare I unto you. The God who made the world and all things therein, he that is Master of heaven and of earth, not in hand-made temples dwells, neither by hands of men is served, as though he needed any things; he that gives to all life, and breath, and all things;³ and has made of one blood all the nations of the earth that they may dwell together, having fixed the appointed seasons and limitations of their abode, that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being; certain, also, of your own poets have said, "For we are also his offspring." Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by the art and design of men. Howbeit, the times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by a Man whom he appointed, whereof he hath given assurance to all in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Thus Paul met the agnosticism of his own age. How would he meet the agnosticism of ours?

He begins by securing a common ground, a common starting-point, for the agnostics and himself. "In every point of view I see you more than others reverential to the gods."⁴ He begins with commendation, not with criticism. He excites their sympathy, not their wrath.

We make a great mistake in attempting to controvert error by direct assault. Falsehood is like an earthwork: the more shot are buried in it the stronger it becomes. Crime is always to be reprehended; error not. For under no crime is there virtue; but under every error there is a truth. The Romanist, bowing before the Virgin Mary, worships the motherhood there is in God. The atheist, denying that there is a God, protests against the idolatry which demands worship for our images and pictures of the Deity. A truth-seeker will find some truth in every error, as it is

said that chemistry can find some gold in almost every soil. You cannot convince a combatant by conquering him. To denounce errorists is to confirm them in their error; to acknowledge their honesty and earnestness of purpose is the first step toward convincing them. I may not believe that man ascended from an arboreal ancestor of hairy habit and furnished with a tail; but if I am to discuss with an evolutionist, I must find some truth in evolutionism. If I can find none, I am not the man to conduct the discussion. When the rich young ruler came to Christ with the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Christ did not pronounce a sermon against justification by works; he told him to keep the commandments, and left him to find out and confess for himself that he lacked something. Denunciation of agnosticism is cheap, easy—and useless.

Paul, starting with commendation, continued in a spirit of generous recognition. Truths are set in antithesis. Agnosticism is a protest against idolatry, and a true protest. It is to-day the protest of a reverential instinct to the theology which has made a phrenological chart of the Almighty and mapped out all his attributes. It was in Athens the protest of an intelligent but unspiritual philosophy against the theology which had mapped him out in stone. We make our idols with the pen; they made theirs with the chisel. Paul put himself with the agnostic: "He that is Master of heaven and of earth dwells not in hand-made temples, neither by human hands is served." He is not bodied forth in hand-made books, neither by human words is he defined. I think if Paul were living to-day and had to meet the agnosticism of the nineteenth century, he would do it by attacking the theological idolatries of the nineteenth century. "I agree with you," he would say. "Can you by searching find out God? No. Can you find out the Almighty to perfection? No. Away, then, with your images of stone and your images on paper; away with your conceptions and ideas of God which are but subtle idols; away with your notion that your service counts for aught, as though He needed anything! Away with your narrow and narrowing thought 'that he dwells in hand-made temples,' and that only those seek him who go to church and accept the preacher's pictures as a photographic likeness!" Their images were not God; our imaginings are not God. God transcends knowledge. Though we know him, he is yet the Unknown.

If Paul were living in our day, he would not ransack the writings of Huxley and Tyndall and Spencer to prove them atheists. He would ransack them for a different purpose. He would try, not to make the worst, but the best, out of them. He who quoted, not Lucretius, but Aratus and Cleanthes, would find evidences of theism, not of atheism, in modern philosophy and modern science. He would not refuse to welcome Mozoomdar because he was not an orthodox Trinitarian; he would look in Matthew Arnold, not for sentences against inspiration, but for sentences witnessing to a living God; he would cite the last page of Huxley's monograph on Hume as a testimony—in some sense an unconscious testimony—to the trustworthiness of spiritual perception; he would find in Herbert Spencer's favorite phrase, the Unknown and the Unknowable, unintentional witness of consciousness to the Infinite One, in whom we all live, and move, and have our being, and whom, therefore, we all recognize in spite of ourselves. He would cull even from Robert Ingersoll, not his worst blasphemies, but his reluctant testimonies to the divine in man and about man. For every man bears witness, in spite of himself, to the Eternal Goodness; and, even when he is arguing that God is not, testifies, by his very language, that God is.

Christian Endeavor Topics, Daily Readings: July 17—Building together (Ezra iv., 1-4); July 18—Taking counsel together (Ex. iv., 27-31); July 19—Going to meeting together (Ps. lv., 14-16); July 20—Talking by the way (Luke xxiv., 13-32); July 21—Fellowship in service (Acts iii., 1-16); July 22—Fellowship of the disciples (Acts ii., 42-47); July 23—Topic: Fellowship in work (Acts xviii., 3; John xvii., 20-26).

¹ International Sunday-School Lesson for July 16, 1893.—Acts xvii., 22-31.

² The material for a picture of Athens, both material and mental, may be found in the Bible Dictionaries and the popular Commentaries. See especially Conybeare and Howson's "Life and Epistles of Paul."

³ For the authority for, and more specific interpretation of, this address, see my Commentary on Acts.

⁴ Not, as in our English version, "too superstitious." It is not a criticism. The translation given above is as nearly literal as can well be given.

Books and Authors

Socialism in America¹

The author of this book analyzes what he calls the American spirit. This is exclusively the Anglo-Saxon, and pretty much exclusively the New England, spirit. The negroes, the foreigners, the Southrons, contribute nothing of any consequence toward it. This is a spirit of liberty—that is, carefully regulated liberty; equality—that is, equality of opportunity; and fraternity? Well—no! fraternity is a sentiment and does not mean much, except sympathy for the suffering. It is also a spirit of practical conservatism, of individual enterprise, of competition, of public spirit, of optimism. The question which the author then proceeds to consider is, What will a people possessed of this spirit do in the matter of social and industrial change? How far will they be likely to go? We do not regard this as a very important inquiry. It assumes that this American spirit is both infallible and immutable. It is neither. It certainly is not safe, in a discussion of Socialism, to assume that the American spirit is infallible, for the Socialist will frankly reply that he thinks it needs changing and proposes to change it. Nor is it safe to assume that it is immutable. It has already changed a great deal, and is certain to change a great deal more. The American spirit is, after all, only another name for the *Zeitgeist*, and the *Geist* is sure to change with the *Zeit*. Nor does Mr. Gilman seem to us to throw much prophetic light on the question what this American spirit is likely to do with proposals for future social and industrial reform. He uses the *Zeitgeist* as a convenient standard by which to measure both Individualism and Socialism. He tests Individualism as interpreted by Herbert Spencer and by "A Plea for Liberty," and makes it very clear that the American is not a consistent individualist. He tests Socialism as represented by "Looking Backward," and shows very clearly that the American is not a consistent Nationalist. And then he takes up certain proposed social and industrial reforms and undertakes to consider what the American spirit will do with them. So far as he can see, it will certainly do what it has done, and perhaps will do what it is doing—and nothing more. It will carry the mails, but will not operate the telegraph. It will furnish free school-books, but not free school lunches. It will come to a nine-hour day, but not to an eight-hour day. It will exercise some governmental control over the railroads, but will not own and operate them. It will put the water-works under municipal control, and will allow the gas-works and electric lighting to be put under municipal control, but not the street railways. It will permit local prohibition by town and county, but not State and National prohibition. It will provide opportunities for voluntary arbitration, and possibly will provide compulsory arbitration in the case of railways, but not for other industries. This is history and criticism; but it is not philosophy, much less prophecy. It shows what is and has been, but throws very little light on what is to be. In some respects it is not even abreast of the latest results of experiment. Thus, it proposes the sale of franchises to the highest bidder, in the face of the utter failure of that method to secure any share of the profits of the franchise for the people, as demonstrated by the experience of New York and Brooklyn. It is oblivious of the result of leasing the franchise for a term of years, as illustrated by the experience of Toronto.

Mr. Gilman has undertaken to write one book and has written another. He has undertaken, by a consideration of the American spirit, to determine what measure of so-called Socialistic reform is practicable and advantageous. He has in fact only told us what has been accomplished, and why he thinks some other things cannot be accomplished. What the community wants is some guiding principle or principles by which it can be aided in determining the ever vexed problem how to adjust liberty and organization. That is the problem of the centuries, ever reappearing, at one time in the Church, at another time in the State.

¹ *Socialism and the American Spirit*. By Nicholas Paine Gilman. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston.

Just now it is appearing in industry. Individualism, if it were consistent, which it never is, would preserve liberty and sacrifice all the advantages of organization; it would land us in Rousseau's primitive garden. Socialism, if it were consistent, which outside of romances it rarely is, would preserve the advantages of organization and sacrifice liberty; it would land us in Plato's Republic—or worse. Mr. Gilman's book is, in our judgment, a quite conclusive demonstration that neither solution is satisfactory; and there are probably some readers who need this demonstration. But the question still remains how to adjust the two so as to give an organized and ordered liberty. Mr. Gilman can see nothing but opportunism. Opportunism is empiricism, and empiricism is not science. What the community wants is a principle, or some principles, which it may apply in determining what is just and what feasible. Individualism offers such a principle—but one we believe to be unsound—in its declaration that the only function of government is to govern. Socialism offers such a principle—which we also believe to be unsound—in its motto, From every one according to his ability, to every one according to his needs. But there are some other principles, not quite so high-sounding, which light the pathway toward the future. Paul enunciates one in the law, Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal. That law and the economic law, Labor is a commodity to be bought in the cheapest market, are mutually destructive of each other. Christ enunciates one in the law, He that is greatest among you, let him be servant of all. We theoretically recognize this in politics, but we repudiate it in industry. Professor Ely, in application of these laws, has enunciated one which we believe is probably the first one for the community to understand and execute: All natural monopolies must be under the control of the people. Stephenson enunciated one which even yet is but dimly understood by students and writers on this subject: Wherever combination is possible, competition is impossible. Jevons has enunciated one which, if accepted and acted on, would revolutionize all organizations, whether of labor or of capital: Combinations should be perpendicular, not horizontal; that is, not of all laborers in competition with all capitalists, but of one set of laborers in combination with one set of capitalists, competing with another combination of laborers and capitalists. We cannot but wish that Mr. Gilman had brought his large knowledge—and it is large—to bear in elucidating some of these fundamental principles of the industrial order, instead of contenting himself, and trying to content his readers, with an endeavor to fix on what is to be by simply describing what has been and is.



A New Work on Wagner

Mr. Henry T. Finck, who has for many years preached the gospel of all that is truly progressive in music, has issued, through Charles Scribner's Sons, two stout volumes entitled "Wagner and His Works." Mr. Finck has long been known as an earnest disciple of the Bayreuth master; and his fearless advocacy of Wagner, the courage with which he has put forth his views even when these were directly opposed to convictions of long standing, and his trenchant literary style, have made his musical criticisms in the "Evening Post" as effective as they have been interesting. No musical critic has done so much to advance the cause of Wagner in America; for Mr. Finck was a Wagnerian proselyter when certain critics who are now posing as the great and only original Wagnerites were still in their symphonic swaddling-clothes. Mr. Finck's writings are usually entirely untechnical, and perhaps few of his readers are aware how well he is equipped technically, because he does not bore them by constantly parading his book-learning before them. But he studied music at Harvard under Professor Paine, and doubtless knows a tritonus when he sees it as well as those pedantic critics who never fail to let the public know that they have discovered one. In brief, Mr. Finck's musical criticism does not contain matter which interests neither lay nor professional musician because the former cannot understand it, and the latter