

“Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ Hill (i.e., AREOPAGUS), and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too SUPERSTITIOUS. For as I passed by, and beheld your DEVOTIONS, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” Acts 17:22,23.

Here is another amazing, – and entirely unplanned – event in the life and ministry of the apostle Paul. It eventuated that day in another of Paul’s world-famous, theologically brilliant, *ad hoc* sermons; delivered extemporaneously in the big middle of the huge cluster of buildings that housed the Roman-Empire-sponsored Supreme International Court of Justice, (called, the Areopagus, or Mars’ Hill) – leading – that day – to the conversion of many of God’s Elect – including the Chief Justice of that huge World Court, called, the Areopagite; to wit:

“So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among them was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.” (Acts 17:33-34)

What a day! unscripted, as they say, in the life of the Apostle Paul. (Parenthetically, how beautifully are the Providences of the Lord our God seen in orchestrating Paul’s Mars’ Hill event. Think of it, Beloved. No so-called advance men to arrange for publicity, no prior planning of any kind to line up professional advertising, no arranging for a big crowd, no offerings to guarantee financing. As a matter of fact, Paul himself did not know he would even be anywhere near Athens until a few days before the event. Nor did he know he would be anywhere near Mars’ Hill until a few moments before he was there delivering one of the greatest sermons in history. And, speaking of his sermon – IT WAS HIS SERMON ! No ghost-writing by professional speech-writers; let alone teleprompters to help with a smooth delivery.

The Providences of God brought the event to pass on this wise: A gang of cutthroat Jews, *“moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar,”* when Paul was preaching in Thessalonica. To protect Paul, we read:

“And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that, they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. BUT WHEN THE JEWS OF THESSALONICA HAD KNOWLEDGE that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.” (Acts 17:10-13)

You see, Beloved, that these busy-body Jews of Thessalonica – like the Jews at Antioch and Iconium – were making it their full-time business to follow Paul around and stir up the rabble to physically assault him. There seems to have been a network of such Jews, following Paul around, and bent upon his death – much as the lawless and godless fags do to us; anarchistic, and wearing masks for anonymity, – as they did recently at the fag-filled Democratic National Convention in Denver, and the filthy, fag-enabling Republican National Convention in St. Paul, Minnesota; to wit:

“And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, HAVING STONED PAUL, DREW HIM OUT OF THE CITY, SUPPOSING HE HAD BEEN DEAD.” (Acts 14:19)

And so, the unnamed brethren who were determinedly handling Paul’s security squad (so to speak), by the time the Jewish Hit-men got to Berea, and at the first sign of trouble – (i.e., *“they came thither also, and stirred up the people.” Acts 17:13.*) – I say, at the first sign of trouble, the *“brethren”* swung into action; to wit: *“And then IMMEDIATELY the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea; but Silas and Timothy abode there still. And they that conducted Paul BROUGHT HIM UNTO ATHENS;”* – (Note. THAT’S how Paul got to Athens. He went to bed for a nice night’s rest, in the process of a wonderfully receptive and successful preaching campaign in Berea; and, suddenly he was roused out of sleep by the *“brethren”* and spirited out of town and *“conducted”* all the long way to Athens. Having had the traumatic, near-death experience of stoning – after *“the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren,” (Acts 14:2)* – I say, having had that experience, these blessed *“brethren”* were not going to take any chances. The Bible says:

“And then IMMEDIATELY the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea.” (Acts 17:14)

When Paul went to bed that night, it is probable that the last thing in the world on his mind was suddenly taking an overnight trip to Athens, there to contend with the greatest philosophers in the world, and there to deliver one of the greatest sermons ever delivered, to a most highly-distinguished audience, including the Chief Justice of the World Court, at the center of the International Supreme Court of Justice, called Areopagus, which means, Mars’ Hill. I say, that Paul most likely never dreamed of such a thing. The wonderful Providences of God brought it all to pass.) Is not the pathway of Paul, in arriving at the great and famous city of Athens, reminiscent of all our “flittings?” **Psa. 56:8.** Is it not a study in the blessed doctrine of the absolute predestination of all things? Paul did not plan the trip. God did. Paul did not execute the trip. God did. But we get the credit; to wit:

“For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:13)

And God is carefully recording each and every glorious detail of each event – cataloguing each event, as it were – for the purpose of bringing each blessed event forth for replay and reward, endlessly, throughout eternity – for all Heaven’s saints and angels to admire; to wit:

“Thou tellest my wanderings.” (Psa. 56:8[a])

Indeed, we may marvel and revel in the event, somewhat, now, as well as throughout eternity. The Holy Ghost has given us a most complete and accurate history. It is another educational Pauline exercise in disputing and contending *“for the faith that was once and for all delivered unto the saints.”* Jude 3; to wit:

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3)

This Paul did in Athens, in the synagogues, in the streets, and on Mars’ Hill. Period.

Gill says that Athens was:

“A famous city, well known for the learning and wisdom of the ancient philosophers, who had their schools and universities in it; the former of these authorities, calls it a free city, and says, it needed no description nor commendation, its fame was so diffused everywhere. Jerom says this of it, ‘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.’ It had its name from the Greek, which signifies ‘the mind of God,’ as boasting of its divine knowledge; or, Athen, which may be interpreted ‘strangers,’ it being originally inhabited by a set of people that moved from place to place; or, because of the great multitude of strangers which flocked from all parts hither for learning, of whom mention is made in Acts 17:21; to wit:

“For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.” (Acts 17:21)

We may learn from Paul how to contend, dispute, and preach, and be always ready, to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you. 1 Pet. 3:15. *“Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ Hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things Ye are too superstitious.”* – (I.e., more than any other people that I’ve come across in my many travels, you are a bunch of faithless, fearful, timid, idolatrous Devil-worshippers.) – *“For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, (i.e., your blatant idol-worship and Devil-worship), I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye IGNORANTLY WORSHIP, him declare I unto you.”* Acts 17:22,23. And, God is through tolerating your IGNORANCE, your clever, smart-mouth, anti-God, anti-Bible, anti-Christ, God-mocking philosophies, glossed over and cloaked in the false and fraudulent mantel of reputable learning and education; to wit:

“And the times of this IGNORANCE God winked at;”* – (i.e., passed over for now, but certain to take up and deal with in His wrath later;) – *“but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” (Acts 17:30,31)

Get it? These self-anointed PHILOSOPHERS, in their boundless pomposity and arrogance, are suffering from simple IGNORANCE. They are engaged in deadly spiritual warfare with the church of God, and with God Himself.

“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but MIGHTY, through God, to the pulling down of (Satan’s) strongholds.” (2 Cor. 10:4)

We are dealing here with another form of *“vain babblings, and oppositions of science (PHILOSOPHY) falsely so-called.”* 1 Tim. 6:20. Which Paul made short shrift of; to wit: REPENT, THE GREAT DAY OF JUDGMENT IS ON THE WAY. Every Arminian preacher is, in reality, only a philosopher – his own savior. (Philosophy is the science or system of values by which one lives, as, a philosophy of life; or, the synthesis of all learning.) Every professional Bible critic – (called Higher Criticism in the Bible colleges and seminaries a few years back) – is, in reality, only a philosopher. The subject is only academic, and these Arminian preachers and popular Bible critic wisecracks fly under the radar – unless this is understood. They are, really, philosophers, masquerading as preachers and comedians.

Elbert Munsey, (1833-1877), outstanding Methodist (Arminian) scholar and preacher of bygone days, whose disputations and arguments favoring Arminianism are the leading framers of heretical Methodism to this day – I say, Munsey is a fair example of the Arminian preacher/philosopher. And Mark Twain (1835-1910) is a fair and most famous example of the Bible-critic/philosopher. Dr. Munsey was a truly remarkable man, who built such a reputation as a Methodist preacher that he literally killed himself trying to live up to it. He was only 42 years old when he died. One Methodist newspaper said of Munsey that he was *“both a philosopher and a poet, and his reasoning faculties were strong and well-developed.”*

In mocking and disputing the doctrine of Absolute Predestination of all things, Munsey spoke for all of Methodism, which has millions of members around the world, and is second only to Southern Baptists in Protestant membership. In his sermon entitled, “Why hast thou made me thus?” Munsey stated the Arminian and the Methodist case as well as it ever has been – and as well as it ever could be – stated; to wit: *“If God did really hate Esau, and consigned him to eternal punishment, before he was born, and that without reference to Esau’s works; then ESAU HAD THE RIGHT to ask God, ‘Why hast thou made me thus?’”* A highly impertinent, and even blasphemous question – especially in light of the context; to wit:

“Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?”
(Rom. 9:20)

It is obviously a rhetorical question – carrying the answer in its teeth as it comes (so to speak) – and the answer is a short, simple, and resounding, NO!! The thing formed SHALL NOT say to Him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus! Long ago, having been banished from the sane world to live in the wilderness as a wild beast for seven long years, there to be taught of the Lord until he came to his senses – the great King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar the Magnificent, spoke directly to this point; to wit:

“And at the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation; and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and HE DOETH ACCORDING TO HIS WILL in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, OR SAY UNTO HIM, WHAT DOEST THOU?” (Dan. 4:34,35)

You got that, Munsey? NONE can say unto the Most High God, WHAT DOEST THOU? – let alone, WHY HAST THOU MADE ME THUS? You got that? you ignorant, blaspheming Methodists? – every last one of you! In fact, every last Arminian heretic; – which pretty well takes care of the human race! In fact, Beloved, we have touched the fountainhead of the whole enchilada – (talk about mixing metaphors !). In case you did not understand clearly what Munsey is saying – nay, what every Methodist and every other Arminian heretic in the world is saying, whether he knows it or not – (and despite the clack-clack they fill the air with) – here’s more of his decisive heresy; to wit:

“Paul said, ‘Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?’ If that means that God condemned Esau and Pharaoh to eternal punishment, before the birth of both – that he hated Esau before he was born; and that he raised up Pharaoh for the purpose to destroy him; or that God, from a mere arbitrary prerogative in Himself, condemned any other man, or set of men, THEN ALL THE CONDEMNED HAVE A RIGHT TO CHALLENGE GOD’S JUSTICE, and to ask the question, ‘Why hast thou made me thus?’”

Now, Beloved, that is worse blasphemy and heresy than that heard in all filthy Saturday night fag bars in the aggregate in the world. No wonder God killed this Methodist marvel Munsey when he was only 42 years old! And it gets worse. Listen to more of Munsey:

“If formed for eternal condemnation, they have the right to ask the question, and if possible TO RESIST THE POWER OF SUCH A GOD. That God who made Esau, should hate Esau before he was born, and send him to hell, AND THEN TRY TO HUSH ESAU’S MOUTH IN ASKING A REASON FOR IT, by the sentence, ‘Who art thou that repliest against God?’ is irreconcilable with any idea of Justice possible to conceive of in any mind. If this, in defiance of all our ideas of justice, be justice with God, then we can never form any idea of any moral quality, and we are unprepared to understand any requirement in the Bible. If this be justice, then lasciviousness may be chastity, as far as we can form any idea of it.”

At this point, Mom could keep quiet no longer. She said in a loud voice, “Munsey just got too smart for his britches.” The truth is, the Bible is chuck full of two vital and all-important concepts, which are impossible for humans to fully reconcile, with our present limited human intellectual capacity.

But because our presently limited intellectual capacities keep us presently unable to fully reconcile these concepts, most certainly does NOT mean that they are irreconcilable to God – or to us, when we shall reach that heavenly state when and where we shall know as we are known, and where and when we shall no longer see as through a glass darkly. **1 Cor. 13:12.**

Those two concepts are, 1) The Absolute Predestination of all things by an Absolutely Sovereign God; and, 2) The Absolute Responsibility of all mankind for all their words and deeds. In a word, God predestinated you to do it; but you are responsible for doing it. God predestinated you to go to Hell; but you, because of your sins, are alone responsible for you going to Hell.

Now, you can carp, and mock, and cavil, and make a comedy routine out of those things you have no mental equipment presently to understand; – (like the smart alec philosophers disputing with Paul in the market places of Athens and on Mars' Hill; and like Elbert Munsey, Mark Twain, Will Rogers, Bill Maher, et al., etc., and, ad nauseam); – and they all go ranting and raving and blaspheming God all the way to Hell for their carping and mocking, and for every cavil, and for every blasphemous comedy routine. Or, you can adopt the simple and blessed attitudinal approach of our Savior in **Luke, chapter 10**; to wit:

“Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven – (i.e., “written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” [Rev. 13:8]) (Luke 10:20)

“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Rev. 20:15)

I.e., arbitrarily, capriciously written therein by a Sovereign God – *“FROM A MERE PREROGATIVE IN HIMSELF,”* as Munsey says – [which is the thing which so angers Munsey, and which evokes such blatant blasphemies from Munsey, who therein speaks for every Methodist and every Arminian in the world)]. **Lk. 10:20.** But the thing that angers Munsey and his crowd, is the thing that delights the heart of the Lord Jesus, above all else; to wit:

“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit (exulted), and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things (i.e., PREDESTINATION, ELECTION, REPROBATION) from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.” (Lk. 10:21)

Beloved, before the world began, and with all the teeming billions of Adam's race in His view, God made choice of which ones should be saved (election) and which ones should be lost (reprobation), and He did so because it seemed good in His sight. No further inquiry can be made as to why God did this or that. Dr. Watts puts it this way:

“Not Gabriel asks the reason why, Nor God the reason gives; Nor dares the fav'rite angel pry, Between the folded leaves. In thy fair book of life and grace, O may I find my name, Recorded in some humble place, Beneath my Lord the Lamb !”

Amen.