

*APOLOGETIC ARGUMENT FROM THE NAMES IN  
ROMANS XVI.*

IN perusing lately the sixteenth chapter of Romans it struck me with special force that the number and character of the names here given furnish an apologetic argument not sufficiently emphasized and used.

This chapter (xvi. 1-24) is part of the Epistle to the Romans. It is found in its proper place in all the manuscripts and versions, so that it stands in an entirely different position from Mark xvi. 9-20. Moreover the Epistle was accepted as genuine by the Roman church without the shadow of a doubt, so far as the records of antiquity bear witness.

It is true that some have rejected chapters xv. and xvi. altogether as spurious. It would appear that this was the case with Marcion in ancient times. But the very words which Origen uses with regard to Marcion's treatment of the chapters (*abstulit, dissecuit*) seem to imply that they were at the close of the Epistle before that heretic's day. In modern times Baur took up a similar position, though Hilgenfeld, his successor as leader in the Tübingen School, holds that they are genuine and in their proper place.

There are some modern critics of weight who accept chapter xvi. as Pauline, but maintain that here it is in the wrong place. It was probably an Epistle, or part of an Epistle, to the Ephesians, or of this Epistle as sent to the Ephesians as well as to the Romans. So Renan, Reuss, Weiss, and others. But this view is maintained chiefly on subjective or alleged internal grounds, and not on historic facts. In no case is the chapter appended to the Ephesians, and not a hint has come down from antiquity that it is out of its proper place. Indeed the roll of names itself makes that impossible. It is impossible that such a multitude of

names could have been accepted by the church at Rome as members and distinguished workers in it, if they had not been actually so. We therefore accept chapter xvi. 1-24 as an integral part of Romans.<sup>1</sup>

Now the lists of names here given are at first sight utterly antagonistic to the idea of the Epistle being a forgery. Let us try to suppose for a moment that it actually was a forgery. In that case what would have been among the conditions necessary to get it most successfully palmed off as genuine? One condition would have been that no name should have been used in connection with the writing of it by Paul except his own. The introduction of other names, whether real or fictitious, would have opened up the way to the inevitable detection of the fraud. Again, another condition, corresponding to the above, would have been to address it to the church at Rome, without mentioning any names at all professedly connected with that church. For to do this would in like manner have opened up the way to certain detection. When a bill is forged, the name of the professed acceptor thereupon is sure to lead to detection, equally so whether it be the name of a real or fictitious person. When the time for dealing with the bill arrives, then, if the name be that of a real person, it is at once discovered by reference to him that his name has been forged; if the name be fictitious, it is at once discovered on inquiry that there is no such person. Thus it follows that in either case equally the forgery is brought to light. A forgery to be successful must, as far as possible, avoid putting forth names, whether real or fictitious.

But let us see how the matter stands. Paul, the professed author, mentions as forming part of his immediate circle at the time of writing no less than eight persons ex-

<sup>1</sup> For details, cf. Meyer's *Commentary*, critical introduction to chapter xv. Hilgenfeld, *Einleitung*, pp. 320 ff.; Weiss, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. i., pp. 320 ff. (Clark); Holtzmann, *Einleitung*, pp. 256 ff.

pressly named. Now it is difficult to suppose any forger bold enough to run the tremendous risk of detection by introducing so many names. If they were fictitious, then, from their alleged standing in the Church or community, the forgery must at once have become known, and the whole fraud would have been revealed. It is certain, however, that the names were real, some of them, such as Timothy, being beyond the possibility of suspicion. In this case, on the supposition that the Epistle was a fabrication, when the attempt was made to foist it in upon the Church, some of these men were sure to hear of it or come across it, and they would have been able at once to detect the forgery. Timothy (v. 21) was a close friend of Paul, and well known throughout the churches, and no one was more likely to know that the Epistle was a forgery if that was really the case. Tertius, "who wrote this Epistle" (v. 22), surely knew whether he had actually written it or not, and whether or not it was Paul who had dictated it to him. Gaius, "the host of the whole Church," and "Erastus, the chamberlain of the city" (v. 23), were both men in a public position, and well known in the Church and community, and therefore sure to have discovered it, if a forger had used their names illegitimately. These names accordingly form "References" of the highest order, guaranteeing that the Epistle was the genuine work of Paul. Such a use of the names of prominent men is not after the manner of the forger. It is one of the marks of the genuine author.

Again, let us look, on the other hand, at the persons to whom Paul sends salutations in the church at Rome. The explicit names are twenty-seven in number. Let us endeavour to suppose for a moment that all these names are sheer fabrications, and that no such persons had ever lived in connection with the Roman church. In this case we have to face the unlikely fact that any forger should have had the audacity to construct such a list, and the folly to run

the risk of certain detection to which it must have laid him open. When the Epistle made its way to Rome, even though it was a generation after the pretended time of writing, many of the members of the church there would have been able to say, "There never were any such persons in connection with our church; their names are not on our communion rolls, and therefore this must be the production of a forger." It is perhaps possible that two or three names might have dropped out of memory in the course of a few years, but that was not possible with twenty-seven names. In short, in view of the fact that the Epistle was accepted by the Roman church, the large number of names makes it incredible that the Roman list can be a fabrication.

It will appear still more impossible that the Roman names can have been mere fabrications when we consider not only the number but the standing of the persons to whom the Apostle is represented as sending salutations. They were not obscure men, unknown in the Church, for many of them, if real persons, must have been well known. This certainly was the case with Priscilla and Aquila, "to whom all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks" (v. 4). It must have been the case with Andronicus and Junia, who were "of note among the Apostles" (v. 7). It must also have been the case in some degree with Mary, "who bestowed much labour on you" (v. 12); with Tryphæna and Tryphosa, "who laboured in the Lord," and with Persis, "who laboured much in the Lord" (v. 12). Again we say, if these names were fictitious, the members of the Roman church, even a generation after the accepted date of the Epistle, must have known the fact, and thus when the Epistle was launched upon the Church must have been able to detect the forgery. The supposition of forgery therefore becomes untenable.

On the other hand, let us now suppose that the Roman names are genuine. This is the conclusion to which we

have just been led by finding that the theory of forgery will not work, and it is further proved by the fact that the Roman church accepted the Epistle without the echo of a doubt. In that case these twenty-seven names constitute a powerful body of testimony in favour of the Epistle. They are in an emphatic sense "References," authenticating its genuineness. They are sufficient in number; they are adequate in character; they had excellent means of knowing the facts; they are—some of them at least—persons of position and well known in the Church. Very particularly there were some amongst them personally acquainted with Paul. This was true of Priscilla and Aquila, "my helpers in Christ Jesus" (v. 3); of "my beloved Epænetus" (v. 5); of Amplias and Stachys, "my beloved" (v. 9). There were even some amongst them who were positively "kinsmen" of Paul. This was true of Andronicus and Junias, "my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners" (v. 7), and of Herodion, "my kinsman" (v. 11). The fact then that the Roman church accepted the Epistle is proof that these names were all genuine, and being genuine they carry with them a powerful authentication of the Epistle as the work of Paul.

The list of persons mentioned belonging to the circle around Paul and at the Pauline end of the chain of evidence is an overwhelming guarantee of the genuineness of the Epistle, while the list of Roman names taken in connection with the reception of the Epistle furnishes a similar guarantee at the Roman end. But Phœbe comes in between in a peculiar way to link the two ends together. It is generally accepted that she is to be regarded as the bearer of the Epistle, and let it be noted that she is represented as an intimate friend of Paul's and a person of standing in the Church—"the deaconess of the church which is at Cenchreæ," and "a succourer of many" (v. 1, 2). Now, if the name and "commendation" of Phœbe were a pure fabrication, no Phœbe ever came to Rome, and the Romans

must have at once detected the fabrication and rejected the Epistle. But they accepted it, thus showing that Phœbe and her "letter of commendation" were alike realities. But if so, then Phœbe's personal testimony comes in and is most important. She knew Paul well, and came directly from him. She must have known that she received the Epistle from his hand and that it was genuine. Thus we have the Pauline end of the chain of evidence connected with the Roman end by the personal testimony of Phœbe. The chain of evidence furnished by the names is therefore complete.

We thus see that this chapter (xvi. 1-24), with its apparently almost barren list of names, turns out to contain within it a most important apologetic argument. It is a separate and independent proof of the genuineness of the Epistle to the Romans. But this is an Epistle which bears explicit testimony to the cardinal facts of Christ's history, with which apologetics have mainly to do. Paul, a junior contemporary of Christ, testifies therein amongst other things to the facts that our Lord was "of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. i. 3); that He died on the cross (v. 6, vi. 6); that He rose from the dead, and was thereby "declared to be the Son of God with power" (i. 4, vi. 4, 5, 9, etc.); and that He ascended to heaven and took His place at the right hand of God (viii. 34). These facts carry with them the system of Gospel truth.

We only mention in closing that a similar argument with regard to the genuineness of Colossians might be constructed from the last chapter of that Epistle, in which we have eleven names mentioned in a similar way. The same holds good with regard to 2 Timothy, in which Epistle we have nineteen names mentioned besides that of Timothy.

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