

*S. PAUL'S MIND AND METHOD.*

IF I may be suffered to make some remarks on Prof. Ramsay's critique on my *Study of S. Paul*, I will confine myself to the fewest words on some of the points of detail which he considers erroneous, or where he holds that I have employed unsuitable expressions, and address myself particularly to those main features in which he differs from me.

In the first place he misunderstands me in supposing that I reject the historical method. I thought I had expressed myself plainly and made my purpose clear, which was not to deal at large with the epigraphy and archæology of Asia Minor, because I had not been there with pick to excavate, and heelball to take rubbings, and I did not care to use the labours of previous hard workers, repolished and set forth in fresh terms, that add nothing new. What I sought was rather to contribute towards the history of S. Paul my own ideas as to what I considered to be the quality of his mind, what I understood from the sacred text to have been his method, and what appeared to me to have caused the antagonism he provoked.

Prof. Ramsay finds fault with me for using the expression relative to certain effusive biographers in their treatment of the Apostle. "Unctuous expletives are poured on him, till the precious balms break his head." He says, "It is proverbial that hard words break no bones; why, then, should soft words break the head of him on whom they are cast?"

As an English clergyman familiar with the Psalter, which becomes to us a very part of one's thought, and colours one's expression, I was perhaps wrong in quoting Psalm cxli. 5, with the supposition that the words of the Psalmist would be as well known to others not brought up to its use.

He also finds fault with my expression, "The rise of the

veil of history," as awkward and inappropriate. But I employed that term purposely. We thought at one time that history began with the first written chronicles; that of a people was revealed by the historian much as a set scene bursts on us when the curtain rises in a theatre. But now we know better; there is no such thick curtain in history, the prehistoric age is seen as through one of those gauze veils employed on the stage to partially conceal a change of scene or of disposition. We can see through it in part, and guess at what is beyond, but discern nothing clearly.

Prof. Ramsay is offended at my saying that the elder Apostles may have hesitated to accept the assurances of a man whom they knew to be a weathercock in his religious opinions, who had not grown up in faith under the teaching of Christ. But was he not a weathercock? persecuting the Church one day, and zealous in its cause on the morrow? I should like to know whether any Bishop in England would at once appoint Cardinal Vaughan as his suffragan, if the latter came to him with the assurance that he no longer believed in Papalism, and had become a convert to the Anglican system. I suspect he would ask him to settle down into his new convictions and give proof of stability before committing to him a responsible office.

Another point criticised by the Professor is my illustration drawn from the American Protestant missionaries in Asia Minor, proselytising among the Armenians and other native Christians; he denies that they do this, and is severe in his strictures on me for not ascertaining the facts before employing the illustration. But Mr. H. C. Barkley in his *Ride through Asia Minor and Armenia*, 1891, as well as earlier travellers, say that they do, and Mr. Barkley gives a not very flattering picture of the converts.

I may be wrong in supposing that these missionaries would strive to convert a Mussulman, and represent themselves as desirous of so doing.

The Professor complains of my confusing Berea and Thessalonica in a passage where I speak of the Thessalonian Jews being irritated against Paul. "The result was that Paul and Silas were expelled from Berea." I hastened over this part of the history of the Apostle, as I had not much to say concerning it, but as a fact we are expressly told that 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."

He further carps at a passage in which I speak of Paul and his father enjoying the rights of Roman citizenship, as implying that they acquired this by virtue of their residence in Tarsus. But I do not say this; I expressly say: "By what means the father of Paul acquired the right of Roman citizenship is not known. Such a right did not belong to the inhabitants of the town, and it must have been either purchased or granted as a reward for services rendered" (p. 47).

It is unfair of a reviewer to say, "Mr. Baring Gould does not consider that the facts and surroundings of Paul's life are of supreme importance." What I say is, that with reference to archæological and geographical detail I can add nothing, having no personal knowledge of the localities, and that I confine myself to a study of the inner life of the Apostle, the formation of his mind and opinions, and I refer to such incidents alone as illustrate this.

I do not write "in depreciation of historical study," but use such particulars only as explain the development of Paul's ideas, or went towards the formation of his character.

He is indignant at my suggestion that Paul was a bad workman. But I do not see why. He was often in dire want, and, as I state, his often infirmities, and his busy mind engaged in "the care of the Churches" would combine to make a poor handicraftsman.

He thinks it strange that I should speak of the immoralities in Paul's Churches as being a scandal. But surely Paul himself admits this, and that his converts gloried in their immorality. S. Jude agrees with this, and the Epistles to the Churches in the Apocalypse show us much the same (1 Cor. v. 1, 2; Eph. iv. 19; Jude 4, 8, 12-18; Rev. ii. 14, 20-22).

My reviewer is somewhat hasty in attributing to me opinions I do not hold. He misrepresents me as seemingly "more than half inclined to think Stephen and Paul were wrong in method, and that their action was a misfortune to Christianity." On the contrary, I think that Paul's method was a necessary supplement to that of the Twelve. But I do consider that sufficient weight has not been given to two points: 1. That the method adopted by the Twelve was one of very remarkable efficacy; they infused Christian doctrine into the very well-spring of Judaism, and from Jerusalem it was carried by those of the dispersion who came there, to the Jews scattered throughout the world. As a method of propagating Christianity it was unsurpassed for a time, but it was a method that could only be adopted for a time. 2. Next, I think it very likely that the Twelve had been commanded by Christ to offer to the Jewish nation the chance of being the great missionary evangelizing power of the world, and that it was only when this offer was finally rejected that the gospel was to be preached in another way and by others.

Prof. Ramsay finds fault with me because, he says, I lay the blame of Nero's persecution on S. Paul. I do not do this. What I have done is this. Prof. Ramsay has himself pointed out that S. Paul must have had a particular reason for appealing to Cæsar,—that the particular reason probably was to obtain the recognition of Christianity apart from Judaism as a licit religion in the empire, and that his release implies that he gained this point.

I have done no more than indicate the results. If, as Prof. Ramsay supposes, Paul was able to detach the believers in Rome from the synagogue and to organize them into a separate community,—then when, two years later, Nero desired to find some scapegoats on whom to lay the blame of the firing of Rome, he had the Christians ready to hand. But had this separation not been effected, then the believers would have remained as a party inextricably mingled with the Jews, and it would have been difficult for Nero to lay hold of them at once. All I state is a consequence rising out of the Professor's own theory. If Paul did shape his converts into separate Churches, then, obviously, they were easily get-at-able.

Prof. Ramsay says that I imply that "when you have seen one Jew you have seen all Jews; and the Jew whom he has seen is the Jew in whom the Talmud finds delight." But I do nowhere imply this. What I state is that the Pharisaic mind was not confined to Palestine, that there were rigorists and sticklers for the law in all Jewish communities, but that there was also a large body of lax Jews. Indeed we know that some were so lax as to be ashamed of their circumcision and to adopt methods of disguising it. Among these lax Jews there were doubtless some who saw that the kingdom of heaven was not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; but the great majority were lax for much the same reason that many Christians are lax, because a strict observance is inconvenient in business, in society, and interferes with pleasure. It was from this class—the best of it—that Paul gained his converts, as also from among the proselytes acquired *by* them.

And this leads to the fundamental point of difference between Prof. Ramsay and myself. He regards Paul as so thoroughly Græcised in mind and bearing that his Judaism merely tintured both. He points to his use of allusions

to the arena and the circus, and to his description of a Roman soldier's armour as evidence that he was so.

Of course the Apostle's mind was "stored with images taken from Græco-Roman life, called up without effort." It could not have been otherwise, but these "images" form the outer clothing of Paul's expression, and not the fibre of his mind. If I had lived the greater part of my life in France, I should be disposed to quote French customs, and use French terms of expression, perhaps even Parisian slang, but in grit and grain my mind would be English and English only, because formed in English schools and an English University. What I contend for is, that Paul was, as he himself states, brought up in a Pharisaic family; that he was, as he says he was, educated in a Rabbinical school at Jerusalem, at that period of life when the mind is plastic, and the opinions are taking direction.

That he used his eyes and ears when among Greeks and Romans I do not doubt; that he could talk of pieces of armour worn by a Roman soldier is no more evidence that he was steeped in Roman ideas than it would be evidence that I was of a Gallic frame of mind because I knew that French soldiers wore red trowsers.

A river in its course eats into the banks and carries away some of the soil, and that colours the stream. So the Severn in the Shropshire sandstone is red, and the Danube sweeping over the limestone rubble of the Bavarian plateau is milky. In like manner I think that Paul's mind took up a certain number of ideas from what surrounded him, but that the source of his thoughts and opinions was far away under the feet of Gamaliel.

From what we know of Paul's education there is a *primâ facie* probability that this should actually represent the character of his mind. And when we look at his Epistles, we see that in argument he follows the hackneyed course marked out for him in the Rabbinic schools. Prof.

Ramsay says that some of the arguments put by Plato into the mouth of Socrates are inconclusive. That may be, but they are Greek in character, and not Hebraic. And the arguments employed by S. Paul are Hebraic and not Greek; as demonstrations they would be pointless, except to such as were trained in Jewish schools, or to proselytes steeped to the ears in Jewish ideas.

Not only so, but I venture to think that most of Paul's ideas were also borrowed from the same source.

There is one which we are often told to regard as especially his own, as his peculiar "Gospel," as one either directly revealed to him, or which he had worked out for himself: this is the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's merits (Rom. iv. 6-25).

A Jew was taught by the Rabbis that a man was accounted just before God only if he kept the whole Law. But as this was impossible, two means were provided for his justification: one was that he should do works of mercy, and so supplement his deficiencies, the other was that he should take refuge under the imputed righteousness of Abraham and the Fathers.

It was against this latter alternative that John the Baptist preached: "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father" (Matt. iii. 8, 9). It was in favour of the former that Christ pronounced (Matt. xxv. 34-46). But Paul repudiated the former, and adopted the second alternative, merely changing the *name* from Abraham to Jesus. The doctrine was conveyed by Paul bodily out of the Synagogue into the Church. All there was in it of originality was the substitution of a name.

And I believe that it was because Paul's mind was so intrinsically Jewish that he was powerless to address and convince Gentiles. Paul, as far as we can learn from the Acts, did not preach to Gentiles, unless forced to do so.

On the contrary, he invariably went to the synagogues, where he would be in an element in which he could argue and convince. It was there that he sought his converts. It is objected that I say so. But S. Luke says so, and says so over and over again, and when we look into S. Paul's Epistles for evidence that he had captured heathen directly out of heathenism, and had done more than carry off proselytes from the synagogue, we find none.

These are matters to be decided by evidence. Prof. Ramsay and other reviewers think it sufficient to state what I have said, but do not attempt to controvert it, because they assume that the traditional conception of Paul as a missionary among the heathen is stamped with infallibility.

But, to put the whole in a nutshell, I contend—

1. That Paul's mind was moulded by Rabbinism, and that it never altered its shape.

2. That though he may have wished and proposed to go to the Gentiles, he never did do so, because he found himself incapable of convincing them with his Rabbinic method of argument based on texts taken arbitrarily and twisted about to suit his purpose. To argue on texts, you must have an opponent who knows and accepts the texts.

3. That failing to reach the heathen, he devoted his energies to detaching from the synagogues the lax party among the Jews and the proselytes they had already gained.

4. That it was due to this proceeding, greatly affecting their interests, that he provoked so much irritation among the strict Jews, breaking out into riot against him.

I contend that the evidence in favour of this view is overwhelming, and that there is none to support the traditional conception of Paul as a preacher and Apostle to the Gentiles. Moreover, I think that to understand him we must go to the teachers who had shaped his mind, when it was plastic.