

DID PAUL BORROW HIS GOSPEL ?

(1) THE aim of some scholars seems to be to rob every great thinker of his originality, and to show his teaching as a patchwork of odds and ends from the opinions of others. Heredity or environment are held to count for far more than individuality. No man shall be allowed to excel other men beyond certain arbitrarily fixed limits, and if his actual achievement is not explicable by what others have thought or done before him, much which history ascribes to him must be denied as his. An extreme form of this tendency is the attempt to reduce the personalities of the Old Testament and the New to variant forms of some ancient myth. More moderate, but not historically justified, is the effort to track all the truths Jesus uttered to some Jewish source, literary or traditional. Paul has been subjected to this kind of mental analysis by many scholars, and the impression that is often left upon one is that Paul's theology is not in its main features the free and full expression of a deep and wide experience of the truth and grace of Christ, but a cunningly planned, and skilfully wrought mosaic of ideas borrowed from many sources, Jewish and Gentile. This treatment of the apostle is not a matter of indifference for Christian faith ; for by means of it first one and then another truth he has taught can be represented as alien to his Christian faith, and so the witness he bears to Christ as Saviour and Lord can be narrowed and lowered.

(2) We should be betrayed into quite as great an error if, in our zeal to defend his originality, we ignored all that he owed to his heredity and environment. For this would be to ignore facts, and still more to misconceive originality. Originality does not consist in irreceptivity or unresponsiveness to the thought and life of the past or the present. He who freely receives is more likely freely to give. The

original man will enrich his own personality from many sources, and the range of the influences which affect him vitally will be the measure of the reach of his achievements. But we must be careful to make a distinction between mechanical appropriation and vital assimilation. A man may know very much, and may think very little ; for him the thoughts of others are like the goods on the shop-shelves, which can be displayed on demand, and not like the food which is itself changed that it may nourish the body for health and strength. Another man may know far less, but what he knows has so become his own that it enables him to think more truly and wisely. This is the difference between the scholar who transmits, and the sage who transforms the thoughts of men. If we study Paul's writings we shall surely come to the conclusion that his was a mind so active in the service of an experience so intense that he did not merely borrow in order to display the thoughts of others. All that came to him from his heredity or his environment was so appropriated by his individuality that we have not said the last word needing to be said about any of his ideas when we have labelled it with its place of origin.

(3) The fear of the charge of over-subtlety should not deter us from insisting on a further distinction, as a true apprehension of all the data to be considered forces it upon us. We should separate in Paul's theology what essentially constitutes his Gospel, and what accidentally accompanies it. Paul received and expressed many ideas which did not enter into the substance of his Christian faith. To give one illustration of this distinction from each of the two most important groups of epistles as they are usually arranged, the Soteriological and the Christological. As a Jew, Paul had views about law and righteousness which he carried with him into his Christian experience, and with which in stating his Gospel against the Judaisers he had to reckon ;

and yet we cannot but feel that in his own life these views no longer lay at the centre as formerly, but gave place to convictions of personal union with Christ which were far more vital to him. In Romans vi. we are surely nearer the core of the personality of Paul than in Romans iii. Again, in Colossians and Ephesians we have a more developed angelology and demonology than in most of Paul's writings. But do we need, therefore, to assume that the reality of such existences was as important to Paul as the supremacy of Christ in God's redemptive purpose for the whole world ? Not what Paul borrowed is of primary interest to us, but what he worked into his Gospel as a needful part of it. His originality lies in his using all his knowledge to give an interpretation of his life in Christ the Lord.

(4) Keeping these general considerations before us, we may now consider some of the ideas which Paul is held to have borrowed. It has been usual to deal first with his Jewish and especially Pharisaic inheritance as the more important and to treat any Gentile influences as altogether secondary. But Sir Wm. Ramsay appears to challenge that assumption, at least in so far as he insists that the Gentile influences were far more potent factors in Paul's development than has hitherto been generally recognised. His boyhood in Tarsus before he was sent up to Jerusalem for his Rabbinic training is held to have exercised a permanent influence on his personality. "The crowning glory of Tarsus," says Ramsay, "the reason for its undying interest to the whole world, is that it produced the Apostle Paul; that it was the one city which was suited by its equipoise between the Asiatic and the Western spirit to mould the character of the great Hellenist Jew; and that it nourished in him a strong sense of loyalty and patriotism as 'the citizen of no mean city.'" (*The Cities of St. Paul*, p. 235.) These early impressions were probably confirmed and

extended by the time spent by the apostle in Tarsus after his conversion before he began his first mission from Antioch. It must be conceded that the Jewish boy, however carefully his parents must have tried to guard him against pagan influences, must have been affected by the sights and sounds around him, and have come to know something of the beliefs and habits of the Gentiles which tended to modify his Jewish exclusiveness. But Sir Wm. Ramsay claims much more than this. He maintains that the Pauline thought is "wholly inconceivable in a mere narrow Hebrew, and wholly inexplicable without an education in Greek philosophy" (p. 34).

While not pursuing the inquiry into "the relation between the philosophy of the Greeks and the philosophy which may be traced as the basis of Paulinism," he yet maintains that Paul has taken up into his thought two Hellenic ideals, for "Hellenism showed how the freedom of the individual should be consistent with an ordered and articulated government, and it organised a system of State education," and Paul insists on freedom and on education as essential to the Christian life. But Sir Wm. Ramsay himself affirms that as regards the first "we can trace this Pauline idea back to its origin in the teaching of Christ" (p. 38), and surely the phrase of James "the law of liberty" shows that the idea of freedom is involved in the distinctive Christian conception of salvation. Paul's own experience in Christ was one of spiritual freedom, and any influence of Hellenism on this idea must be regarded as altogether subordinate. Again, the second idea, the necessity of education in the Christian life, is surely not so peculiar as to need so special an explanation. The Jews, too, cared for education; Jesus had given much pains to the training of His disciples; the primitive community by the instruction of the apostles sought to foster the life of the new converts.

But we may press the question, when did these Hellenic ideas so affect his mind? He himself speaks of being born in Tarsus, but brought up in Jerusalem (Acts xxii. 3), and it is probable that his training in the school of Gamaliel began when he was twelve or thirteen. Was a youth, even a precocious one, likely to think much about liberty or education? It is most unlikely from what is recorded of his subsequent career by himself up to his conversion that he allowed himself to come under other than Jewish influences. If these two features of Greek civilisation influenced him at all during his visit to Tarsus subsequent to that event, there was here no contribution of a new element to his thought, only a confirmation and, it may be, expansion of what was his already as a Christian believer.

There is still another characteristic of Paul's thought which Sir Wm. Ramsay traces to his Tarsian environment. In the Roman Empire, owing to Hellenistic influences, national and civic exclusiveness was giving way to universalism. "Philosophy followed hard on the heels of fact, Greek thought, and especially the Stoic philosophy, was not insensible to this wider and nobler idea of a unity and brotherhood that transcended the limits of a city or a tribe; but the conception of universal brotherhood remained as yet an abstract and ineffective thought, devoid of driving power to move the world" (p. 47). "The greater idea seized on Paul, penetrated and ruled his whole nature, and made him on a sudden able to see the whole truth and compelled him to live in it." What is here suggested is that Paul owed his universalism to the fact of his living as a Roman citizen amid Greek culture. But on the same page the same author says that "the teaching of Jesus rose high above such a narrow idea" as that of Jewish exclusiveness. May not Paul have learned rather from Jesus? Nay, did not the Christian salvation, as Paul understood it, necessarily in-

volve universalism ? Here again a secondary influence is represented as primary.¹

(5) In his essay on *St. Paul and Seneca*, Lightfoot very fully discusses the relations of Paul to Stoicism. He first of all affirms that "St. Paul found in the ethical language of the Stoics expressions more fit than he could find elsewhere to describe in certain aspects the duties and privileges, the struggles and the triumphs of the Christian life," but he also recognises that "the Stoic expressions, describing the independence of the individual spirit, the subjugation of the unruly passions, the universal empire of a triumphant self-control, the cosmopolitan relations of the wise man, were quickened into new life, when an unfailing source of strength and a boundless hope of victory had been revealed in the Gospel, when all men were proclaimed to be brothers, and each and every man united with God in Christ" (*Philippians*, pp. 302, 303). As he admits the probability that "Stoic philosophy had leavened the moral vocabulary of the civilised world at the time of the Christian era," the use of the Stoic terms by Paul does not prove that he had specially studied Stoic writings, or had been taught by any of the Stoic teachers, who were ornaments of the University of Tarsus, his birthplace.

If the first argument is not conclusive, a second claims our consideration, "The speech on the Areopagus, addressed partly to Stoics, shows a clear appreciation of the elements of truth contained in their philosophy, and a studied coincidence with their modes of expression. His one quota-

¹ The writer most gratefully recognises the great debt New Testament scholarship owes to Sir Wm. Ramsay for the illumination his extensive and varied knowledge has cast on the life and thoughts of the world in which Paul did his work. He does not claim the competence to criticise any of Sir Wm. Ramsay's statements about Greek or Roman thought or life; but with all due deference to so great an authority he ventures to question some of the conclusions drawn, as overstating the influence of the Gentile environment in Paul's development.

tion, moreover, is taken from a Stoic writing, the hymn of Cleanthes, the noblest expression of heathen devotion which Greek literature has preserved to us" (p. 304). The force of this argument must be recognised ; but what the fact proves is not that Paul before his conversion was familiar with Stoic philosophy, but that as a Christian apostle he sought to know the beliefs of those whom he was striving to win for Christ, so that he might become all things to all men. Had Stoicism vitally influenced his religious thought, its traces would have appeared elsewhere than in this avowedly apologetic discourse.

The third argument is that we can find in Paul's letters "traces of the influence of Stoic diction," and two instances of this influence are given: "The portrait of the wise man, the ideal of Stoic aspiration . . . has suggested many expressions to the Apostle of the Gentiles." The contrast is, however, greater than the coincidence between the Christian and Stoic ideal ; the one is attained by dependence on Christ, the other by self-sufficiency. The cosmopolitanism of Stoicism has "its Christian counterpart in the heavenly citizenship of St. Paul" (pp. 306-7), but "the idea is transfigured and glorified." Are not these two features of Stoicism, we may ask, just those which could not be confined to the schools, but would be familiar to the common culture of the Graeco-Roman world ? That Paul was familiar with the doctrines and the terms of Stoicism need not be doubted for a moment. What we may ask, however, is : is his knowledge so intimate as to prove that he made a special study of it ? And further, did the influence in any way modify his conception of the Gospel ? To the writer it seems that both questions can be answered in the negative.

(6) Lightfoot recognises that "it is on the doctrines of the Platonist and the Pythagorean that the truer resemblances to the teaching of the Bible are to be sought"

(p. 294). Dr. James Adam, in his book, *The Religious Teachers of Greece*, has given a number of instances of "the real kinship of thought between Plato and St. Paul" (p. 360) without claiming the indebtedness of the apostle to the philosopher. For both "the visible is an image of the invisible," and from the invisible both drew their inspiration; but in this there is nothing peculiar to the two thinkers, it is the general attitude of religion. Again he points out "the parallel between Plato and St. Paul in respect of their conceptions of man" (pp. 381). Paul's *πνεῦμα* corresponds to Plato's *νοῦς* as the higher principle in man, which relates him to God; and Paul's *σάρξ* to Plato's *σῶμα* as the lower principle warring against the higher. Paul's use of *ψυχικός* in contrast to *πνευματικός* suggests that his *ψύχη* corresponds to Plato's "mortal part of soul." If we take account of the antecedents and development of Paul's doctrine of man, the resemblance will be seen to be less close than it appears, and there will be no question of dependence. Paul's use of *πνεῦμα* has its explanation in the Old Testament use of *רוח*, and his *σάρξ* has a moral connotation that *σῶμα* in his use of the word has not. His dualism is an ethical, and not a metaphysical one as is Plato's. Apart from his use of the adjective *ψυχικός* with an acquired moral reference, the term *ψύχη* does not express any antagonism to *πνεῦμα*.

Of the third instance also it may be said that the resemblance is more apparent than real. Paul did not think of the body as "a kind of prison" (p. 385) for the soul; for he shared the common Christian hope of a resurrection when the natural would be exchanged for the spiritual body. If in 2 Corinthians v. 1-4, which Dr. Adam quotes in part, he groans, "being burdened in this tabernacle" of the present mortal body, it is not disembodiment he desires, as did the Greek thinker with his metaphysical dualism of matter and

mind, nay, he shrinks from being unclothed and so found naked, and longs to be "clothed upon with the habitation which is from heaven." On this point Greek and Jewish thought are antitheses. Paul is not consistent with his usual usage of the words when in another passage quoted by Dr. Adam, Romans viii. 12, 13, he uses the phrase "the deeds of the body" as equivalent to the "flesh." For he both regarded the body as capable of sanctification, and ascribed a body to the sinless Christ; nor did he regard immortality as escape from the body, but the exchange of one body for another. That both Plato and Paul use the symbol of marriage to express "the relation of the soul to the divine" (p. 395) is an interesting coincidence which requires no further explanation. That Plato's conception of "conversion" (p. 412) should come so near to Paul's shows his moral insight; but what Paul has to say is not borrowed from any other thinker; for it is the expression of his own personal experience. What for Plato was a philosophical idea, was for Paul a historic reality.

The next example claims somewhat fuller notice. According to Plato "ideal justice or righteousness is 'present' in a human soul just to the extent to which that soul participates in the perfection at which it aims. In other words, the 'presence' of the Idea in the particular means the resemblance of the particular to its Idea" (p. 435). As Christ in the New Testament holds the same place as Plato's Idea of Righteousness, "it is consequently more than a merely verbal or superficial analogy when the relationship between the believer's soul and Christ is described in the New Testament by the formula of participation or communion." "If the idea of *κοινωνία* or fellowship is common, that of immanence is even more so" (p. 436). As in Plato the immanent idea of Righteousness makes righteous, so "the indwelling Christ, 'Christ in you' produces the Christian or Christ-like char-

acter " (p. 437). The resemblance is most suggestive ; only we must not allow it to lead us into two possible errors. It is not Plato's immanent idea that suggested to Paul or any Christian the indwelling Christ. He is personal reality in personal experience. Nor must we attempt to explain Paul's doctrine of justification by faith in some such way as this, that we are held righteous, because righteousness is in the person of Christ immanent in us. We should thus be led quite away from Paul's distinctive thought. The last illustration Dr. Adam uses needs only mention. Just as for Plato, "the whole of nature ceaselessly aspires" (p. 450) towards the Good, so Paul thinks of the whole creation groaning and travailing for the fulfilment of the Christian hope. But Paul had a certainty of fulfilment to Plato unknown.

(7) Not one of these instances requires us to assume that Paul was influenced by Platonism, and the influence of Stoicism, so far as he was reached by it, did not determine any of the distinctive features of his Gospel. Can a more potent influence be claimed for his Roman citizenship than for the Greek culture with which he came into contact ? It is not at all improbable that his Roman citizenship did modify his Jewish exclusiveness, and that it afforded him indications both of the largeness of the opportunity and the urgency of the obligation to preach the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire. It is possible also that his appreciation of Roman government, the peace it secured, and the order it maintained, quickened his sense of the operation of God's will as unchanging law in the Universe. But as a Jew and a Pharisee he did not need to borrow from Rome the august conception of inexorable moral law, which even God maintains in His dealings with men. Of Roman law he knew probably enough for the discharge of his duties, and the claim of His privileges as a Roman citizen ; but his Gospel

was not affected by that knowledge. His doctrine of adoption rests not on Jewish, but on Graeco-Roman usage ; but the sonship toward God he teaches is no merely legal relation, but a real moral likeness to and religious fellowship with God, and is essentially the same as Jesus Himself offers to men. That the legal facts used in illustration in *Galatians* are not Roman, but “ Greek in character or slightly modified from the Greek type to suit the Graecised parts of Asia ” (Ramsay’s *Historical Commentary on the Galatians*, p. 370) shows Paul’s alertness of mind, but has no significance for our understanding of his Gospel.

(8) While the influence of the Gentile world on Paul in confirming and developing tendencies inherent in his Gospel, such as his emphasis on the universality of God’s grace, and the liberty of the believer in the Spirit, must be fully recognised, yet it is certain that none of the distinctive features of his Gospel can be traced to a Gentile origin. Had he not been a Roman citizen, and had he not had some contact with Greek culture, it is probable that the impulse to be the Apostle of the Gentiles would not have been so strong and that he would not have known how most effectively to discharge the vocation to which he thus felt himself impelled. But, as he himself again and again declares, he was to his conversion, “ a Hebrew of Hebrews, as touching the law, a Pharisee,” and in the Christian apostle we are constantly meeting the Jewish scribe. It was what he learned in the school of Gamaliel that had the greatest influence on his theology next to his personal experience of the grace of Christ.

His recognition of the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures for even the Christian believer, and his method of quoting and expounding these Scriptures, were an inheritance from his Pharisaism, although at the same time it must be recognised that his Rabbinism shows itself only when, as in *Galatians* and *Romans*, he is engaged in the Judaistic

controversy and so is fighting his opponents with their own weapons, whereas when he is expressing his own Christian experience he does not quote the Old Testament so often, or interpret it so like a scribe. His theology as a scribe of the Pharisees was not one of the old things that altogether passed away when he became a Christian. One instance has already been given. His conception of "the righteousness of God" has its roots in his former Pharisaism, although at the same time it must be insisted that the doctrine is thus restricted in form and not in substance. God is moral perfection; to be conformed to it is the destiny and obligation, and to be opposed to it is the condemnation of every moral personality. This is a truth for every moral religion. That there is a moral order which must be maintained is a conviction not of Pharisaism only, but of the human conscience. In Paul's argument in Romans ix.—xi. his conception of God as absolute will appears, although it is taken up into his Christian idea of God as universal grace. In studying Paul's letters we must be careful to distinguish the surviving Jewish from the living Christian belief in God; for the one is not quite absorbed into, or transformed by the other.

In his cosmology, angelology and demonology, as well as his eschatology, he remains essentially Jewish. The element his Christian faith contributes is this, that Christ is for him both agent and purpose of Creation, that He is superior to all angels and has triumphed over all demons, that it is the Second Advent in power and glory which will usher in the general resurrection and the final judgment of mankind. The stage and most of the scenery are the same as in Jewish belief; but Paul confesses the Christ whom Judaism rejected as the chief actor in the divine drama of revelation and redemption. His doctrine of man and sin has its roots in the Old Testament. His psychology, as has

already been mentioned, is the Old Testament psychology with this difference, that in his doctrine of the flesh he emphasises man's bondage to sin, and in his doctrine of the spirit the intimacy of the believer's relation to God. The story of the Fall in Genesis iii. he takes literally, and regards Adam's disobedience as the reason for the entrance of sin and death into the world ; but he does not prove the reality and universality of sin, and so the necessity of the atonement, by any allusion to this story. His argument in Romans i.-iii. is completed before he introduces the reference to the Fall in chapter v. It is not true, therefore, that his Gospel loses the foundation he gives it, if we cannot with him share this Jewish tradition.

He fully accepted the Messianic hope of Judaism ; but for him it was transformed by its fulfilment in Christ. What he believed and taught about Christ had its basis in his own personal experience of the grace of his Saviour and Lord, and thus his doctrine of Christ is in its distinctive features an interpretation of that experience. It is not merely a development of Jewish theology. Paul taught the pre-existence of Christ, and in the famous Christological passage in Philippians ii. he seems even to represent the historical personality as so pre-existing. This teaching is not accounted for merely by showing that there was a belief in the pre-existence of all objects or persons of special religious value in some of the Jewish schools of thought. For on closer scrutiny it does appear that Paul's valuation of Christ as divine is such that the assertion of His pre-existence seems inevitable. Paul takes up into his Christology from the Jewish Messianic doctrine what is congruous with his own estimate of the person of Christ as realised in his own experience of Christ.

In what is essential to his Gospel of the free salvation of men by the full sacrifice of God in Christ Paul is expressing

the realities of his own Christian faith. Of this he truly said, "that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians i. 11, 12). And our inquiry has, it is hoped, confirmed the claim that his Gospel was not borrowed. For much that is more or less closely attached to his Gospel as its theological context he was debtor both to Greek and Jew; but if we are to be guided by the contents of his letters and his own allusions to his former life, more to the Jew than to the Greek. But whatever he may have borrowed of Jewish belief or Gentile culture, all was brought into captivity to Christ, whose bondslave it was the apostle's boast to confess himself.

ALFRED E. GARVIE.

*HISTORICAL COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLES
TO TIMOTHY.*

XXIX. THE PAULINE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY AS
EXPRESSED IN THE PASTORAL EPISTLES.

THROUGHOUT Paul's earlier letters there occur frequent expressions which reveal his way of regarding past history. To his mind the soul of history was the will of God. Do we find the same view of the world in the Pastoral Epistles? We may start by quoting one or two examples of the style in which he expresses his philosophical theory of the progress of human history. In Galatians i. 15 he says, "When it was the good pleasure of God, who set me apart even before my birth, and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles": in Galatians iv. 4, "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, that He might redeem them which were under the Law": in Colossians i. 26, "to fulfil the Word of God,