

## Study-Travel in New Testament Lands.

BY PROFESSOR ADOLF DEISSMANN, D.THEOL., D.D., BERLIN.

### II.

THE steamers and railways are and must be important in a New Testament tour for the fundamental historical reason mentioned in my *St. Paul*:<sup>1</sup> the great lines of communication in ancient times, which were the paths of the earliest Christian missions, have in the main been adhered to by the modern steamship and railway lines. I have noticed since that this remark, obvious no doubt as soon as spoken, has been made by Ramsay himself<sup>2</sup> with regard to western Asia Minor: it must of course have suggested itself to others also. Any one, therefore, who wishes to visit the New Testament regions for study purposes with only a limited amount of time at his disposal is compelled to use the steamers and the railways. I do not think there is any scholar at the present day who would go to Ephesus or Laodicea by any other way than by rail from Smyrna, or to Corinth except by rail or steamer to New Corinth, or who would equip a caravan of camels to take him from Beyrout to Damascus or from Afium Kara Hissar to Konia. Ramsay himself, who occasionally refers to the displacement of the older means of locomotion by railway traffic as if it were a matter

<sup>1</sup> P. 134 of the German edition; p. 201 of the English translation.

<sup>2</sup> *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, London, 1890, p. 59. I fail to grasp how Ramsay could so misunderstand me as to say (*Teaching of St. Paul*, p. 446) that I see no difficulty in St. Paul's having visited Angora because I was able to get there easily by train. Of course I meant that St. Paul could easily reach a city that was so well situated on the great ancient lines of communication, lines which repeat themselves in their modern counterparts. I do not say that because the railway now runs there, therefore it was easy for St. Paul to travel; the railway runs there now because there was an ancient line of communication there which might easily have been used in his day by St. Paul. In the same way Ramsay (p. 4) reproduces my words about the route from Colossæ to Ephesus so erroneously as to make absolute nonsense. I said (*St. Paul*, p. 18): 'At the present day it would be possible, on horseback and then with the railway, to get from Colossæ to Ephesus in a single day in case of need,' in the time of St. Paul, therefore, 'in a few days' journey.' Ramsay in his quotation omits the two corresponding notes of time (1 day now, a few days in the time of St. Paul), which are certainly correct, and makes me announce the fact to the world that it is now possible to travel from Colossæ to Ephesus on horseback and by railway. Again on p. 446 he states this point very obscurely.

of course,<sup>3</sup> and who has no doubt travelled hundreds of miles in the railway carriages of Asia Minor, has pointed out both in his writings and in conversation with me the high value especially of the German-built railways in Asia Minor for the scientific study of the country. On a 'study-journey,' which has to be done with limited time and limited means, it would be downright folly to avoid the railway. I quite agree with Ramsay when he praises 'the old slow fashion'<sup>4</sup> of travel, which he himself pursued with admirable skill and success, but there need be no quarrel between good and better than good. I know the old slow method from personal experience. Apart from Jerusalem and other places that I visited in Palestine which are more important for the understanding of St. Paul than are Lystra, Derbe, etc., I reached Antioch in Syria, Hierapolis in Phrygia, Miletus, and Pergamum, among other important New Testament places, by slow routes: Hierapolis *per pedes apostolorum*, Miletus on horseback, the two other cities by driving. In doing so I experienced exactly the feelings that Ramsay so finely describes of a modern gradually approaching the great scenes of the history of our religion. The first sight of Antioch with its sharply defined ancient walls, or of the castle hill of Pergamum, and the white cascades of sinter at Hierapolis,<sup>5</sup> is an experience most stimulating to the historic imagination, and the first distant view of Jerusalem from El Bireh as you come from the north was to me fairly overwhelming. If I could make my choice for another study-journey, I would choose the 'slow' method, preferring the open carriage to every other possible means of conveyance<sup>6</sup>; but the conditions essential to this free choice are not likely to be fulfilled in my own or indeed in most

<sup>3</sup> *Luke the Physician, and other Studies in the History of Religion*, London, 1908, p. 107: 'Until a few years ago you entered the bridge on horseback or on foot; now you enter in a railway carriage.'

<sup>4</sup> *Teaching of St. Paul*, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> The hot springs come pouring down the slope and leave behind a white sinter which makes the whole hill white.

<sup>6</sup> There is a personal reason for this: an injury to my left knee received at the end of my military service at Tübingen in 1886 is some hindrance to me whenever I travel.

cases—one must have unlimited time and unlimited means.

There is nothing for it, therefore, but to stick to the combined method: to travel quickly where you can, and slowly where you must.

Is, after all, a rapid journey barren of profit? Are the days lost that are spent on the railway and the steamer? I deny it most emphatically. It depends very much on the traveller, especially on the degree to which he has prepared himself for the journey, and upon his receptive powers. I can of course say nothing as to my own personal qualities in this respect, I can only certify that *to me* the 15 'railway days' on my two journeys furnished an abundance of impressions that *to me* were most valuable. I must remark that I experienced on both my journeys what is not infrequently reported by travellers in Greece and Anatolia—a marked increase of receptivity, a sort of regeneration of the inward eye, a delightful freshness and comprehensiveness of the imagination. It is just what happens with one's camera: in such sunshine all the pictures turn out better. We were on several occasions fortunate enough to travel with people who knew the country well (German railway officials, Anatolians, etc.), and what profitable hours of converse they were that we had concerning the parts we were traversing, and the East in general. Moreover, many of the regions through which the railway passes are in their larger outlines so simple or so readily grasped that, at the leisurely rate of progress of Oriental trains, you can very often obtain the same impressions as Ramsay thinks only possible by the 'old slow way.' What person possessed of some mental culture and the slightest knowledge of how to look at things can travel by rail from Athens viâ Megara to New Corinth without experiencing deep emotion? Is it not the same with the descent through the Yarmuk valley to the Sea of Tiberias? or the passage of the eleven bridges in the gorges of the Kara Su before Biledshik? Has not Ramsay himself, the upbraider of noisy trains,<sup>1</sup> taken snapshots with his camera at this very spot from the moving train?<sup>2</sup> These are landscapes which affect

us vehemently by their powerful and characteristic outlines. It is, of course, much easier to take in the simpler regions as one is carried along, say in the district round Gordium, or certain parts of Lycaonia, or the monotonous fields of crumbled lava in the Trachonitis.

If the railway days are regarded as working days, they also become days of harvest. Each of these days must be prepared for and made the most of, just like the days 'free from trains,' as Ramsay calls them. The day is not wasted by going to sleep in the train; newspapers, fortunately, there are none. Instead of them you have ready at hand, even in the railway carriage, the necessary learned apparatus: the maps, recent monographs, modern books of travel, Strabo, the New Testament, the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, the Apostolic Fathers. Every appropriate portion of text has been marked and noted long ago in preparation for this journey; and after animated discussion with your fellow-travellers of like tastes, each of whom—ancient historian and archæologist, ecclesiastical historian, Bible student—has his contribution to make, the texts and the maps go from hand to hand. Before reaching Philomelium you read the letter of the church of Smyrna to the church of Philomelium concerning the martyrdom of St. Polycarp; before Philadelphia and Sardes you run over the messages in the Revelation of St. John. Then, when these cities rise up before the eagerly observant eye of the traveller, now thoroughly awake to every impression, the ancient text, so venerable and so familiar, for whose sake the place is sacred to us, blends with the impression of the moment, which is indeed brief but may be deep if there is any depth in the traveller, and the result is a new and complete picture, a thing of joy, with one advantage that nothing can replace: it is of our own making. Afterwards, in revising the literature of the subject at home, the individual picture we have brought back from the journey, helped out by notes, sketches, and photographs, becomes a fixed point from which to get our bearings historically. Should we venture to speak of any of these individual pictures, the critic may ridicule or cast doubts upon our treasured possession, but no gesture of irony will ever be able to deprive us of what we have once—rapidly but surely—gained for ourselves.

<sup>1</sup> *Teaching of St. Paul*, p. 4: 'nature cannot speak amid the noise of the train.' That is a very bold assertion. When Nature speaks, and because Nature speaks, I hear her voice above the noises made by man.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the pretty view of the rocky precipices on the Kara Su, taken 'from a window of the German railway train pass-

ing through the gorge' (*Luke the Physician*, p. 107, with Plate I.).

The railway days are also by no means unproductive in the sense of deepening our view of Oriental civilization — literally our *view*. The greatest fact in the history of recent Oriental civilization is the coming of modern technical methods into a world that had remained on an ancient and medieval footing. Everybody knows this, for it is to be read in every newspaper; but here too, how living our borrowed knowledge becomes through seeing with our eyes. We notice little things that an outsider would think of no importance, and often it is to them that the quickening effect is due.

When you have been seeing for days the ancient Anatolian plough at work in the fields as you pass by on the railway, and then catch sight of a whole truck-load of new ploughs of modern type alongside the goods-shed at Akshehr station (Philomelium), that one small observation brings the great fact referred to vividly before the imagination. At Alwanlar station a countryman in a two-wheeled ox-cart, its wheels spokeless and consisting of mere wooden discs, drives up the embankment leading to the goods dépôt, and there we have the most primitive and the most modern form of vehicular traffic side by side. That disc-like wheel trundling beside the railway in Ramsay's 'old slow fashion' is certainly the earliest ancestor of all wheels; the late Roman sarcophagus from Ambar Arassi in Lycaonia, which we had seen in the Imperial Museum at Constantinople, had already taught us that such wheels were in use in Asia Minor in ancient times. The two-wheeled ox-cart itself, however, with its solid wheels, is not infrequently met with in modern Asia Minor. I found it again on an ancient relief from Ephesus published by J. T. Wood, and traced it back to the wall-pictures at Medinet Habu, of the twelfth century B.C., where the Pulasata (Philistines) are seen travelling with their wives and children in carts of this description.

Reflecting on this juxtaposition of the ancient and the modern we easily come to see the parallelism that obtains here as elsewhere between externals and the essence of things. The railway in Asia Minor conveying goods loaded up from the primitive Phrygian peasant's cart, and the modern plough invading the agricultural system handed down from immemorial ancestors, become to us symbols of the great facts for the sake of which we have become pilgrims in this land. We hear something of the marching-rhythm of the spiritual

forces which thousands of years ago made their way in here from abroad, new creative energies, conquering and to conquer. When to this Philomelium a roll of the Septuagint first was brought, when the news of Jesus Christ first came, then, as now to-day, there was growth in Anatolia, and the Apostle who more than any one brought about that growth must be counted in the ranks of the pioneers of Anatolia, beginning with the Greek colonists and thinkers, and ending with the European engineers and German officers.

The days on shipboard yielded me no less rich a harvest than the days on the railroad. I do not mean the few days on the 'big' steamers, where instead of the East you see not unfamiliar specimens of Europe and America in their best clothes facing prodigious menus; I mean, of course, the days spent on Levant steamers of small and middling size. On these ships was the Orient, and I would indeed not willingly miss the opportunities I had of observing the life of the people there. A religious service held in the evening between decks by Siberian and Russian pilgrims to Jerusalem on board the *Korniloff* in March 1909, off Rhodes, gave me, for example, an overwhelmingly magnificent impression of ancient popular religion allowed to grow up wild, the like of which I had seldom experienced.<sup>1</sup>

Ramsay,<sup>2</sup> influenced by his recollections of a voyage with Mecca pilgrims on a Turkish steamer, denies the possibility of studying the popular life of the East 'in the sordid and degrading surroundings of a crowded Russian steamer deck.' He says it is not 'the natural East' that one sees there, but 'the East mean and denaturalized,' and Russian and Siberian peasants can convey no impression of the ancient popular life of the East. To which it must be replied that different travellers see things differently; if Ramsay learnt nothing on board a Turkish pilgrim steamer,<sup>3</sup> it does not follow that it was impossible for me to learn anything on the Russian.

I do not at all see why the dirty surroundings should prevent me from doing so. They ought rather to be, paradoxically speaking, a help than a hindrance, for it must be confessed (without prejudice to my enthusiasm for the East) that wherever the common people are concerned, and fre-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my sketch, 'Jerusalem the Holy City' in *The Constructive Quarterly*, June 1914.

<sup>2</sup> *Teaching of St. Paul*, pp. 444 f.

<sup>3</sup> I envy him the voyage.

quently elsewhere also, the East *is* still at present dirty and unhygienic rather than (according to our doubtless better ideas) clean.

And the principal thing is: the East as represented by these masses of pilgrims is certainly 'low,' but not on that account 'denaturalized.' Like any other area of civilization, the East has in all times and places possessed the same, relatively unalterable, lowest class, which still to-day acts as a foundation to support the higher and indeed the very highest culture. Where you come upon what Ramsay calls the 'mean' East, it is not something denaturalized, but something natural, that you encounter. Shall we never get rid of the mistaken doctrinaire notion that the rude is always a 'degeneration' of the elegant? Is the wild plant less old than the cultivated? Cultivated varieties can run wild again, but in almost all cases the wild is a forerunner of the cultivated. I fear that in that reference to the 'denaturalized' East there lies something more than horror at the sordid surroundings—horror which I respect, and which I share at least as earnestly as the refined Scottish scholar. I seem to detect a depreciation of all popular, unconventionalized wild growth, and an over-appreciation of cultivated varieties—the same over-appreciation of the conventional which seems to me to be the real motive of all the opposition to my picture of St. Paul.

Ramsay's statement that Russian and Siberian peasants cannot picture to us the popular life of ancient Asia is specious, but it is also incautious. It is obvious that I always mean indirect light when I conceive of the ancient East as illuminated from the modern East, and I have deeply pondered the question, how far the theory of an 'unchanging East' may be a danger to research. But it seems to me to be certain that the condition of soul which I call 'pilgrim piety,' and which was a great power in the ancient East, is alive to-day, so far as essential characteristics are concerned, in modern pilgrimage religions of the East, be they Christian, Jewish, or Mohammedan.

So too it is justifiable to assign to the East the religiousness of the Russian lower orders, even if it be necessary to distinguish between an eastern and a western type of the same. I do not hold the position of a certain Berlin historian, who maintains that Eastern Europe begins at the Elector's Bridge at Berlin, but it cannot be denied that Russian popular religion and Russian popular culture in

general are strongly rooted in the religion and culture of the ancient East. A scholar friend of mine told me once that when he goes from St. Petersburg to Athens he is struck by the strong resemblance it presents to Slavonic civilization. Shall we not get nearer to the truth if we put the problem of this no doubt correctly observed resemblance on another footing? I at least cannot help thinking that what my friend took to be 'Slavonic' at St. Petersburg and at Athens is really the Eastern, the ancient Eastern, basis of civilization common to the two cities.

I may say that the 'pilgrim piety' I refer to was noted by me in 1909 not only on the *Korniloff*, but week after week in all possible varieties of manifestation, from the reception of Mohammedan pilgrims returning from Mecca by their neighbours in their Anatolian homes, to the numerous examples I had of it in the Holy Land, where I often saw the pilgrims from the *Korniloff* and thousands of their companions at the holy sites, and on the way thither. My respect for them constantly increased, in spite of the extreme crudity of their ways of expressing their religious feeling.

My observation of the Russians in the Holy Land taught me how completely the Russian popular religion is an organic part of the religious East. Magnificent specimens of humanity (for so they often are), earnest and blissful in their devotion to a degree not likely to be approached by the mockers of their clumsy movements, they are, in all that relates to soul, perfectly at home in Palestine. The sacred fire that they take so carefully from the Holy Sepulchre and carry home in their lanterns to Siberia—they really brought it with them themselves: should that fire ever be denied the Greek Patriarch on the Great Sabbath (Easter Eve), the Russian peasant will bring it down from heaven.

I shall continue to recommend to the travelling scholar those small Levant ships which in a few days gave me so much. The 'big' ones may be recommended to people who wish to travel in luxury. Had I to choose between the big and the little, there is only one case in which I would give the big the preference: if Sir William Ramsay were on board I should want to join him. I would first let him say anything he liked against me, and then, when the storm was over, amid surroundings hygienically beyond reproach, I would endeavour to learn all I could from him.