

## SOME DEVOTIONAL NOTES ON 2 TIMOTHY ii. 1-15.

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VERY REV. LE B. E. FRENCH, M.A., Dean of Clonfert.

THE Pastoral Epistles are Pauline, whether actually composed by St. Paul or not. The second epistle to Timothy in particular seems to many unmistakably a genuine letter of the great Apostle to the young overseer of the Church at Ephesus. It "contains numerous personal details which are too trivial to have been invented." It is possible that "some of Paul's notes to his fellow-workers were expanded by later writers into the Church manuals we now possess"<sup>1</sup>; but as regards this epistle a fairly recent commentator says, "If this is not the genuine work of St. Paul, a natural and intimate letter to his friend, disciple, and successor, then we have a performance which it would be impossible to match in the whole record of 'pseudepigrapha,' and difficult to parallel in the best achievements of modern literary art."<sup>2</sup> It is with only a short extract from the epistle we are now concerned. The opening words of the verses under consideration are closely connected with what has been already written. St. Paul has exhorted his "beloved child" in the faith and delegate in his apostolic office to zeal and courage and faithfulness to his commission: "Stir up the gift which is in thee through the laying on of my hands. For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness, but of power and love and discipline (or 'moral influence.') Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner," etc. "Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me. . . . That good thing which was committed unto thee guard through the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." Timothy appears to have been of a timid disposition. He was not a man of a robust constitution, and his "often infirmities" may have caused a certain inertness which at times perhaps led to an appearance of slackness in duty. And so the Apostle further charges him to "strengthen himself in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (The verb is probably in the Middle Voice.) The inference usually drawn from such language<sup>4</sup> is perhaps confirmed by 1 Corinthians xvi. 10, "If Timothy come, see that he be with you without fear." In the verses which follow St. Paul treats in several figures of the character and the work of the "man of God" who is the "Lord (Christ's) servant." Both these titles are applied to Timothy in these epistles, and it is obvious that the Apostle is addressing him throughout not merely as a baptised

<sup>1</sup> Peake's Commentary, *The Pauline Epistles*.

<sup>2</sup> R. St. G. Parry.

<sup>3</sup> Farrar; so also A. E. Burn and H. L. Goudge in *New Commentary*, "the 'discipline' is that of others as well as of self."

<sup>4</sup> Cf. 1 Timothy iv. 14.

disciple, but as the duly commissioned servant of God. It is in the hope that we who have been called to "the same office and ministry appointed for the salvation of mankind" may profit by a "devotional" study of this passage that I venture to expand and apply to ourselves some of the thoughts suggested by St. Paul's words.

(1) Timothy is pointed to the example of a *soldier* in his devotion and disinterestedness. "Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier." The minister of Christ is a *soldier*. He is bound by the solemn oath—the "sacramentum"—of his ordination vows. Hardness ("suffer hardship with me") is his daily portion. A life of ease and luxury and self-indulgence is unbecoming all who have at their Confirmation pledged themselves to "continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto their lives' end";—"Nay, I will drink His cup; my vow is taken";—but, above all, in the ordained servants of God devotion and disinterestedness are looked for as a matter of course. The soldier forsakes home and loved ones and the ordinary comforts of life at the call of Duty. His motto is, "When Duty calls or Danger, be never wanting there." It is said to him, "Go, and he goeth; Come, and he cometh"; "Theirs not to make reply, theirs not to reason why." Even so the faithful minister is obedient. He "reverently obeys" those to whom is committed "the charge and government over him." He leaves it to God to order his course. His life is a continual oblation upon Christ's altar, and his burnt-offerings are offered only in the place which the Lord his God has chosen. The late Dean Farrar said, "My strength during all my life has been precisely this, that I have no choice. During the last thirty-six years God has twelve times changed my home, and fifteen times changed my work. I have scarcely done what I myself would have chosen. The support of my life is to know that I am doing what God wishes, and not what I wish myself." When a relative of mine<sup>1</sup> was ready for service in the Mission field the Church Missionary Society asked him to which country he would prefer to go, Africa or North-West America. He replied, "Certainly not North-West America," but a man was so badly needed in that unattractive sphere of work that he was sent to labour within the Arctic Circle, and there for many years he "suffered (much) hardship," "as a good soldier" of Christ. The soldier "does not entangle himself with the affairs of this life." Even so the true minister concentrates his energies upon his calling, "that he may please Him that enrolled him." He does not greatly care whether he pleases others or not. Regard for human opinion is a great snare. We need constantly to bear in mind the warning of the O.T. prophet, "Cease ye from man in whose nostrils is breath,"—a fleeting, evanescent thing like breath! I remember hearing the late Bishop Archdall<sup>2</sup> say in an address to his clergy, "I have reached a time of life in which the fear of man has very little effect upon me."

<sup>1</sup> The Ven. T. H. Canham, D.D., late Archdeacon of Yukon.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop of Killaloe and Clonfert, 1897-1912.

He clearly implied that this state is not easily reached. But perhaps some of us are more "easily beset" by the desire for human praise or esteem. We have all, at any rate, to watch against the sin of those who "loved the glory of men more than the glory of God." The temptation unduly to regard human opinion besets us in subtle ways. We dread perhaps what we call "trouble in a parish," and covet the reputation of "getting on well with" our people. Certainly it is our bounden duty to "set forwards quietness, peace, and love" among them. Certainly too "the Lord's servant must not strive, but in meekness correct them that oppose themselves." This advice is given to Timothy, but "quietness" in a parish is sometimes merely another name for stagnation, and when we read the Acts of the Apostles we see that wherever St. Paul went there was a row.

(2) Timothy is reminded also of *the discipline of the Athlete*. "If a man contend in the games he is not crowned, except he have contended lawfully." Here we have St. Paul's favourite metaphor. Elsewhere, we know, he uses it of all disciples, as in the Epistle for Septuagesima Sunday. Some of us have had some little experience of athletic training in the past. We look back wistfully to days "in the distance enchanted" when "not a feverish minute strained the weak heart and the wavering knee," when we were content to deny ourselves not a little in the hope of winning the prize; but perhaps we do not always remember that the Christian minister or pastor or priest should live a "regular" life. A clergyman's wants should be few. "The simple life" is for him the normal state, for his own sake, and "that he may make both himself and his family wholesome examples to the flock of Christ." He exercises strict discipline in Eating and Drinking, in Smoking, in Recreation. A Mission was held in one of our parishes some years ago, and afterwards a lady who stayed in the same house as the Missioner said he was "a greedy man; he wanted something of everything that was on the table." I know not whether this criticism of one unknown to me even by sight was justified or not, but does it not, to use an appropriate metaphor, "leave a nasty taste in the mouth"? We remember One Who taught His hostess that His wants were easily supplied. "A few dishes or even one would suffice." St. Paul practised severe self-discipline for his own sake; "I beat my body black and blue, and drag it as a conquered slave, lest by any means after that I have preached to others I myself should be rejected." We find it hard to realise that one "to whom to live was Christ" needed this mortification of the flesh, but every now and then some shameful record shows what cause the preachers of the Gospel have for unceasing watchfulness, "lest on the eternal shore the angels, while our draught they own, reject us evermore." I have referred to Recreation,—a subject on which there is room for much diversity of opinion and practice, and will now only recall something related of Bishop Fraser, of Manchester, one of the most devoted and respected bishops of Queen Victoria's reign. When he was a country parson he brought two horses to the forge. The

smith, recognising their quality, asked if he intended to hunt with them. "Yes," he said, "I can find time for it, and the exercise will do me good." The smith replied that if the Vicar hunted he could not go to Church; Mr. Fraser never again rode to hounds.

A clergyman should practise discipline *in the arrangement of his time*. A man once excused himself to Mr. Spurgeon for not praying much by saying he "had not time." "After all," said Mr. Spurgeon, "you have just as much time as anyone else; it is only a question of how you use it." This could not be said with truth to everyone, but most of us can as a rule dispose of much of our time as we please. Perhaps some of our leisure time might with advantage be given more to prayer. Self-discipline too may be exercised in the cultivation of *our minds*. The author of that notable book, *John Inglesant*, is reported to have said that its object was to exalt the unpopular doctrine that a man's first aim should not be the good of his neighbours, but his own culture. "Man is an artist working at himself." A verse in the Epistle to the Hebrews may enforce this truth, at least if we adopt the reading of many ancient authorities, "Ye have your own selves for a better possession and an abiding one."

(3) The Apostle notes also *the diligence of the Gardener or Harvestman*.<sup>1</sup> "The husbandman that laboureth must be the first to partake of the fruits." He applies to God's servant the word by which our Lord describes His heavenly Father in the allegory of the true Vine, "My Father is *the husbandman*"; even as elsewhere St. Paul calls himself and his fellow-workers "labourers together with God," and those among whom their ministry was exercised "God's husbandry." The word translated "laboureth" implies "toil to weariness." It is found several times in St. Paul's writings; e.g. 1 Timothy v. 17, "the elders that *labour* in the word and teaching." Dr. Hatch showed, it may be admitted, in his Bampton Lectures that, at all events in later days, teaching was not expected from all the presbyters, but we may doubt whether this was the case in N.T. times when there could not have been many presbyters in any particular area. They were elders from Ephesus, where Timothy was now in charge, whom the Apostle exhorted to "feed the Church of God"; and in the verse before us he perhaps meant merely that some "toiled" more than others in preaching and catechising. We must not greatly press the force of a single word, unless indeed we believe in Verbal Inspiration, but that St. Paul uses this word with a sense of its proper significance is rendered probable by its conjunction in other places with "*μóχθος*." In two of his undoubted epistles he says to the Thessalonians, "Ye remember our *labour and travail*, working night and day, . . ."; "neither did we eat bread for nought . . ., but in *labour and travail*, working night and day." He refers to the hard work of twisting and twining in his hands in his trade as a tent-maker the coarse goats' hair and other materials.

<sup>1</sup> So Weymouth; cf. Farrar, "the toiling husbandman has the first claim to a share of the harvest."

Is our work "*Κόπος*"? Are we "husbandmen that labour," "Fishermen that toil all" the day, if not "all the night"? Insurance companies are said to recognise that the ministerial profession is conducive to longevity, and I have known this attributed to a clergyman's "quiet, easy life." We may feel this to be unjust, but perhaps we have cause to pray that we may "live more nearly as" we sing—

"As *labourers* in Thy vineyard, still faithful may we be,  
Content to bear the burden of *weary days* for Thee;  
We ask no other wages when Thou shalt call us home  
But to have shared *the travail* which makes Thy kingdom come."

The saintly Edward King, bishop of Lincoln, had one word framed over his study mantel-piece,—"*Κόπος*." It may sometimes have sounded a note of reproach to his clergy who visited him.

We encourage ourselves now and then with the words of a "free-thinking" poet :

"With aching hands and bleeding feet  
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone;  
We bear the burden and the heat  
Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.  
Not till the hours of light return,  
All we have built do we discern."

But what if the leaders of Free-thought and Agnosticism know more of "aching hands and bleeding feet" than the ministers of Christ?

(4) Lastly, the charge is given to be "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, *handling aright the word of truth*." The exact force of the metaphor in this verse is not clear. Two other translations are given in R.V. margin. The verb employed is a rare word, and is found in the LXX, in Proverbs iii. 6, "He shall *direct* thy paths." It meant literally "cutting stones square to fit." St. Paul means, we may suppose, that the "diligent" and "approved" workman exercises *discrimination* in his use of "the word of truth." By this expression he doubtless denotes *the Christian message*, and this is a message which centres in Christ, Who is "the Truth." He speaks of his "gospel" in v. 8, and we see that it was based upon Christ,—Christ Incarnate (as the conjunction of the two sacred Names, Jesus Christ, perhaps indicates), Christ Crucified, Christ Risen. In the first epistle he reminds Timothy of "the mystery of godliness"—the divine secret now revealed concerning the human and glorified Christ. So also when he briefly recapitulates to the Corinthians "the gospel which he preached unto them," it is clear that it was a message concerning the crucified and buried and risen Christ. St. Paul would have had little use for the moral essays and historical lessons with which too often "the hungry sheep" have been "fed" (?) since his day; nor would he have cared for juggling with such texts as "top-not come down," though his love of allegory might have made him patient of a discourse upon "Nine and twenty knives." He would have rivalled the late Bishop Chadwick<sup>1</sup> in his scorn for the class of sermons which may be

<sup>1</sup> Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, 1896-1916; a keen debater in the General Synod of the Church of Ireland.

described as "pseudo—politico—economic." And he had no more doubt that the Church had a "pattern of healthful words,"<sup>1</sup> a "good deposit" of doctrine, "committed" especially to the "stewards of the mysteries of God," which was to be "guarded through the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us," than St. Jude had that it is the duty of all believers "to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints." Few scholars, I imagine, agree with Dr. Gwatkin's interpretation of v. 13: "Timothy is not told to keep an existing creed, but to make an outline for himself."<sup>2</sup>

It is noteworthy that, as in the words which immediately follow the passage upon which these simple notes are based, wherever in the N.T. the future of the Church is forecast she is almost always represented as engaged in a contest with false doctrine.

"Rightly to divide the word of truth"; to be ready to give milk to the babe, nourishing food to the young Christian, and strong meat to the full-grown; this requires not only careful preparation of sermons, but constant study and much prayer. We remember the Bishop's address to the candidates for the Priesthood, which we owe to Archbishop Cranmer, in which they are bidden "continually (to) pray to God . . . that by daily reading and weighing of the Scriptures, they may wax riper and stronger in their Ministry." We should be among those entrusted to our care "*Prophets*,"—forth-tellers of truths learned in solitary communion with God, as Moses learned long ago. Again a verse from the Epistle to the Hebrews may help us: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed thee in the mount."

In v. 7 St. Paul says, "Consider what I say." Few of us can do this without shame and deep humiliation, certainly not he who now speaks, and who fears that he may pass judgment upon himself. "No branch of palm I merit, no street of shining gold." Well, "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things." And does not what St. Paul goes on to say suggest the antidote for all that may depress us? "Consider what I say; *for the Lord shall give thee understanding in all things.*" Here is the remedy for all causes of Failure; here the spring of Hope for the time that is left to us; here the source of Wisdom and Strength. Yes; all are here; "Consider what I say,—the Lord."

<sup>1</sup> The *New Commentary* gives a different interpretation of 2 Tim. i. 13: "Represent wholesome teaching received from me," etc., and quotes Parry, "Seldom has a text been more consistently mishandled." But is this the force of "ἔχει," "hold in thyself a pattern of," or "hold thyself as a pattern of"? cf. "pattern" in 1 Tim. i. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Early Church History*.