

by Christianity, to prefigure the "disinterested love" of the saints or the spiritual love of a St. Teresa, a Fénelon, a Madame Guyon, and others. The author of *The Rose of Sharon* was, therefore, guided by a fine artistic instinct in using this "most obscure book" as the foundation of his dramatic oratorio by dwelling, as he does in the prologue, on its spiritual significance, and in the epilogue pointing out its moral significance.

For the flame of love is as fire, even the fire of God.

Many waters cannot quench it, neither can floods drown it.

Yes, love is strong as death, and unconquerable as the grave.

The sentiment here expressed is true alike of the highest forms of human affection culminating in a consecrated union, and the noblest aspirations of the soul in its diviner yearnings after complete union with the ever blest.

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#### RECENT CRITICISM OF THE EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS.

OF late years the study of the Epistles to the Thessalonians has made considerable progress; several important works have appeared, mainly in Germany, bearing on their criticism and interpretation. Of chief importance amongst these are the New Testament *Einleitungen* of H. J. Holtzmann (3rd ed.), of A. Jülicher (in the *Grundriss der theologischen Wissenschaften*), and especially of Theodor Zahn (2nd ed., 1900); the essay of F. Spitta on the Second Epistle in vol. i. of his dissertations *Zur Geschichte und Litteratur des Urchristenthums*; and the able and exhaustive commentary of W. Bornemann on the two Epistles, replacing the work of Lünemann in the 5th and 6th editions of Meyer's *Kritisch-exegetisches Commentar*, along with P. W. Schmiedel's slighter but valuable exposition in the new *Hand-*

*commentar zum Neuen Testament.* Beside the above may be mentioned, from an earlier but recent date, P. W. Schmidt's *Der 1 Thessalonicher-brief neu erklärt, nebst Excurs über den zweiten gleichnamigen Brief*; A. Klöpfer's *Der zweite Brief an d. Thessalonicher* in the *Theologischen Studien aus Ostpreussen* (Heft 8, 1889); F. Bahn- sen, in the *Jahrbuch für protestantische Theologie*, 1880, pp. 681 ff.; Westrik's *De echtheid van den tweeden brief aan de Thess.* (Utrecht, 1879); and J. C. K. von Hof- mann's commentary, in his *Die heilige Schrift des Neuen Testaments*, part i. (2nd ed., 1869). The brief exposition of Bishop Lightfoot, published in his posthumous *Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul* (1895), pp. 1-136, is of the highest value for the detailed interpretation of the two Epistles. It contains, however, no *Introduction*, and does not discuss the question of authenticity. This is tacitly assumed throughout.

The discussion represented by the above works has gone, substantially, in the direction of re-vindicating and re- habilitating the documents in their Pauline character. The doubts made current by F. C. Baur respecting the authen- ticity of 1 Thessalonians appear to have been finally removed. This writing, along with Philippians, is now counted by all, except a few Dutch scholars of the most obstinate scepticism, amongst "the undisputed Epistles" of St. Paul. At the same time the opposition raised to the Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians has been much reduced and modified. The judgment of A. Harnack, expressed in the Preface to his *Chronologie der altchrist- lichen Litteratur* (1897), indicates the changed attitude and temper now prevailing in the Higher Criticism of the New Testament: "There was a time in which it was thought necessary to regard the most ancient Christian literature, including the New Testament, as a tissue of deceptions and falsifications. That time is past. For science it was an

episode in which it has learnt much, and after which it has much to forget." Harnack finds only one canonical book that, in his judgment, is strictly pseudonymous—viz., 2 Peter; and only the Pastoral Epistles of Paul considerably marked by interpolations. Holtzmann, the most eminent of Baur's successors, admits in regard of 2 Thessalonians (*Einleitung*, p. 216) that "the question is no longer as to whether the Epistle should be pushed down into the post-apostolic age, but whether, on the other hand, it does not actually reach back to the lifetime of the Apostle, in which case it is consequently genuine, and must have been written soon after 1 Thessalonians, about the year 54." Jülicher, a pupil of the same school, concludes his examination by saying (*Einleitung*, p. 44), "If one is content to make fair and reasonable claims on a Pauline Epistle, no occasion will be found to ascribe 2 Thessalonians to an author less original or of less powerful mind than Paul himself."

The nearer this Epistle is brought to St. Paul's lifetime, the more improbable, and needless, becomes the theory of spurious authorship. The language of II. ii. 2 and iii. 17 raises a strong presumption against personation. Professing in his first word to be "Paul," and claiming in ii. 15 the First Epistle for his own, the writer solemnly guards his readers against this very danger; to father the letter on some well-meaning disciple writing as though he were Paul, in the Apostle's vein and by way of supplement to his teaching, is to contradict the explicit testimony of the document. The Epistle is no innocent pseudograph. It proceeds either from Paul himself, or from some one who wishes to be taken for him, and who attempts to cover his deception by denouncing it. Were it conceivable that a composition of this nature, spurious throughout or in its principal passages, could have found currency in the second century, that it should have been palmed upon the Thessalonian Church within ten years of the Apostle's death—for this is what we

are asked to believe, on the assumption of inauthenticity—is a thing incredible in no ordinary degree. The presence and influence of this Epistle in post-apostolic times are better attested even than in the case of 1 Thessalonians; it is used by Polycarp (*ad Philipp.*, xi. 4), and by Justin Martyr (*Dial.*, chaps. xxxii., cx.),—viz., in chap. ii. 3 ff., the peculiar and most contested part of the Epistle, and in chap. iii. 15. In view of the two verses above referred to, these writers can hardly have employed the letter in the manner and connexion in which they do, without ascribing it to the author whose name it bears. Hilgenfeld, Pfléiderer, and Bahnsen remain alone in reading chap. ii. 1–12 as a polemic against Gnosticism (with the Episcopate for “the restrainer”), belonging to the epoch of Trajan.

The theory prevalent amongst those who still contest St. Paul’s authorship is that 2 Thessalonians dates from the juncture between the assassination of the Emperor Nero in June 68 A.D. and the fall of Jerusalem in August 70, and is contemporary with and closely parallel to Revelation xiii., xvii., and that by “the man of lawlessness” is intended the dead Nero, who was then and for long afterwards supposed by many to be still living concealed in the East, the fear of his return to power adding a further element of horror to the wild confusion of the times. A prophecy based upon a false rumour like this, and itself speedily falsified by the event, would surely have been discredited from the beginning. The original readers cannot have suspected the legendary *Nero redivivus* in “the adversary” of 2 Thessalonians ii. 3 ff. The fact is that no real trace of the Nero legend is discoverable in 2 Thessalonians (see B. Weiss’s *Apokalyptische Studien, ad rem*); this groundless speculation of Kern and Baur should be dismissed from criticism. The distinctive traits of the character and career of Nero, while they have left their mark on the Apocalypse of St. John, are wanting here. 2 Thessalonians

belongs to *pre-Neronian* Apocalyptic, and falls therefore within the lifetime of St. Paul. The true historical position is that of Spitta (*Urchristenthum*, I. p. 125; similarly von Hofmann, Klöpffer, Zahn)—viz., that in “the lawless one” of chap. ii. the image of Antiochus Epiphanes as idealized in the Book of Daniel, and of Caius Caligula as known to St. Paul, have been “smelted together,” and that the Emperor Caius represented to the mind of the writer the furthest development which “the mystery of lawlessness,” in its continuous “working,” had attained up to his own time.

Spitta's hypothesis proceeds upon the datum just stated. He conceives the real author of 2 Thessalonians to have been *St. Timothy*, writing by St. Paul's side at Corinth under the Apostle's suggestion and on his account, but writing out of his own mind and as the member of the missionary band who had been most recently present and teaching in Thessalonica. Spitta thus seeks to account both for the singular *resemblance* of the Second Epistle to the First, and its singular *differences*. (1) Under the former head it is observed that, outside of ii. 2-12, there are but nine verses in 2 Thessalonians which do not reflect the language and ideas of 1 Thessalonians. In its whole conception as well as in vocabulary and phrasing, apart from the peculiar eschatological passages, the later Epistle is an echo of the earlier; the spontaneity and freshness that one expects to find in the Apostle's work are wanting here; indeed, it is said that Paul, had he wished to do so, could not have repeated himself thus closely without reading his former letter for the purpose. Such imitation, it is argued, would be very natural in Timothy, with Paul's First Epistle before him as a model, when writing to the same Church shortly afterwards on his master's behalf and in their joint name. Amid this sameness of expression, we miss the warm gush and lively play of feeling—the *Paulinum pectus*

that glows in the First Epistle, and which vindicates it so strongly for its author. The tone is more cool and official throughout. There is a measured and almost laboured turn of speech (comp. II. i. 3-7, ii. 13 f., with I. 2-5, iii. 9 f.; II. i. 10-12, with I. ii. 19 f., iii. 11 ff.; II. iii. 7 ff., with I. ii. 7 ff.), which betrays the absence of the master mind, and the larger part played by the secretary—presumably Timothy—in the composition of this letter.

Bornemann fairly accounts for the contrast thus described by pointing out the fact that by the date of the Second Epistle Paul was immersed in Corinthian affairs, and his heart was no longer away at Thessalonica as when he first wrote; moreover, the intense and critical experience out of which the First Epistle sprang had stamped itself deeply on the soul of the Apostle, so that in taking up the pen again and writing, after a short interval, to a Church whose condition gave no new turn to his reflexions, the former train of thought and expression recurred to him, more or less unconsciously, and the Second Epistle naturally became a supplement and largely a rehearsal of the First. To this explanation may be added the two considerations: first, that the very occasion of this supplement—the continuance of the morbid excitement about the Parousia, and of the disorder lightly touched upon in I. iv. 10 ff. and severely censured in II. iii. 6-16—involved a certain surprise and disappointment, which inevitably chilled the writer's cordiality and made the emphasis of affection and the *empressement* of the First Epistle impossible in this. Galatians and 1 Corinthians exhibit fluctuations of feeling, within the same Epistle, not unlike that which distinguishes 2nd from 1st Thessalonians. Further, and in the second place, the visions rising before the Apostle's mind in chaps. i. 5-10, ii. 2-12, were of such a nature as to throw the writer into the mood of solemn contemplation rather than of familiar intercourse.

When Spitta comes to the original part of 2 Thessalonians—chaps. ii. 1–12 (the signs premonitory of the Day of the Lord) and iii. 6–15 (the excommunication of idlers)—his theory fails. He sees in ii. 5 a reminder of *St. Timothy's* teaching at Thessalonica, supposing that St. Paul's younger helper had views respecting the Last Things more definite in some respects, and more Jewish in colouring, than those of his leader, who spoke of the coming of "the day" as altogether indeterminate. He thinks that Timothy had adopted some *Jewish* Apocalypse of Caligula's time (he was conversant with "sacred writings," 2 Timothy iii. 15, and 2 Thessalonians, though quotations are wanting in it, is steeped in Old Testament language beyond any other Pauline Epistle), to which he gave a Christian turn, shaping it into his prophecy respecting "the mystery of iniquity," which lies outside of Paul's doctrine and is nowhere else hinted at in the Epistles. But considering the chasm which lay between the Pauline mission and Judaism, it is highly improbable that either Timothy should have borrowed, or Paul endorsed, a non-Christian Apocalypse; if the conception of *vv.* 3–5 goes back, as in all likelihood it does, to the epoch of Caligula, there is no reason why it should not have originated in the Apostle's own mind, since by the year 40 he was already a Christian, or amongst the ranks of the "prophets and teachers" numerous at Jerusalem and Antioch in the fifth Christian decade. Caligula's outrage on the Temple was a sign of the times that could hardly fail to stir the prophetic spirit of the Church, while it roused the passionate anger of the whole Jewish world. The expressions of 2 Thessalonians ii. 5–7 suggest that "the man of lawlessness" was no new figure to Christian imagination; his image, based on the Antiochus-Caligula model, had probably become a familiar object in other Christian circles before the Apostles preached in Thessalonica. It is true that this representation never appears

again in the Epistles. But this does not prove that St. Paul at no time held the doctrine it embodies, nor even that he ceased to hold it at a later time. The circumstances calling for its inculcation at Thessalonica were such as did not recur. In later Epistles the Parousia recedes to a more distant future, and a glorious intervening prospect for the world opens out in Romans xi.; but there is nothing in this subsequent enlargement of view to forbid the expectation of such a finale to human history, and such a consummate revelation of Satanic power preceding the coming of the Lord, as this Epistle predicts. Our Lord's recorded prophecies of the Last Judgment cannot well be understood without the anticipation of a closing deadly struggle of this nature.

Being the last of the three whose names stand in the Address of 1 and 2 Thessalonians alike, had he written II. ii. 5 *propria persona* St. Timothy would have been bound to mark the distinction—by inserting “I Timotheus, indeed,” or the like (comp. I. ii. 18)—the more so because this letter purports, even more explicitly than the First, to come from St. Paul himself (iii. 17). The entire passage, ii. 1–12, is marked by a loftiness of imagination, an assurance and dignity of manner, and a concise vigour of style, that we cannot well associate with what we know of the position and qualities of Timothy. Whatever might be said of other parts of the letter, this its unique and distinctive deliverance comes from no second-rate or second-hand composer of the Pauline school, but from the apostolic fountain-head. The other original paragraph of the Epistle, chap. iii. 6–15, speaks with the peculiar authority and decision characteristic of Paul's attitude to his Churches in disciplinary matters. If authority is more conspicuous here than tenderness, the persistence of the offence necessitates this altered tone. The readers could never have presumed that a charge so solemn and peremptory proceeded from



the third and least important of the three missionaries ostensibly writing to them, that "we" throughout the passage meant in reality Timothy alone, and that Paul, who immediately afterwards signs the letter with his own hand, had allowed his assistant to give orders that did not really proceed from himself. The additional reason alleged in v. 9 for the Apostle's "working with" his "own hands" is different from that of 1 Thessalonians ii. 9 (repeated here in v. 8), but is quite consistent therewith and pertinent to the occasion, while it is well supported by the parallels found in 1 Corinthians iv. 17, xi. 1; Philippians iii. 17; Acts xx. 34 f.

The contradiction between I. v. 2-10 and II. ii. 1-12, so often urged in evidence of dual authorship, disappears on closer examination. The First Epistle represents the Parousia as *near and sudden*, the Second as *more distant and known by premonitory signs*. But the second passage is expressly written to correct an erroneous inference which the writer conceives may have been drawn from the first, and to which, if unguardedly read, the words of 1 Thessalonians certainly lend themselves. The premonitory sign, viz., that of "the adversary's" coming, shows that the end, though it may be near, is *not immediate*. Moreover, as stated in I. v. 3 ff., it is the unbelievers, "in darkness" and "sleeping," whom "the day" will "overtake as a thief" (or "as thieves") with its "sudden destruction"; those "of the day," who are "awake" and "sober," may surely expect to have such warning and foresight as the Second Epistle helps to furnish. It is true, as Bornemann says, that if a candidate at some theological examination were to bring forward in his essay on "The Last Things" such statements as are found in these two passages, set in bald juxtaposition and without explanation, his work would be judged defective and contradictory. But St. Paul writes under conditions widely removed from these: he glances now

at one side now at another, as practical need requires, of a body of truth already orally communicated in its main outlines, with many details present to the minds of the readers and completing the sense of what is thus conveyed by writing, which he has no occasion to restate in full and recapitulate. Only when a *speedy* return of the Lord had been expected, could the thought be entertained that His day had actually arrived (II. ii. 2). The mistake that is reproved in the Second Epistle bears witness to the startling announcement made in the First Epistle, for this is its natural and almost inevitable exaggeration. No *date* is supplied in II. ii. for the advent of Antichrist; and the "times and seasons" remain equally uncertain in 2 and 1 Thessalonians. The contrast here noticeable in the two letters of Paul is found in contiguous sentences from our Lord's own predictions: Matthew xxiv. 33 gives a *preparatory sign*, while v. 36 declares the wholly *uncertain date* of the consummation.

The theories of *interpolation* have found but little acceptance. They account for the striking difference between 2 Thessalonians ii. 2-12 (to which i. 5-12 might be added) and 1 Thessalonians, and the equally striking parallelism which the Second Epistle in its other parts present to the First, by attributing to the two sections a different origin. P. W. Schmidt, in the work above referred to (see also the *Short Protestant Commentary*, by Schmidt and others, vol. II.: Eng. transl.), distinguishes a genuine Epistle of Paul consisting of chaps. i. 1-4, ii. 12*a*, ii. 13-iii. 18, treating the rest as an interpolation made about the year 69 by some half-Judaistic Christian akin to the author of Revelation xiii., wishing to allay excitement respecting the Parousia, who worked up the idea of the *Nero redivivus* into an apocalypse, and employed an old and perhaps neglected letter of the Apostle as a vehicle for this prophecy of his own. Dr. S. Davidson (*Introduction to the Study*

of the *New Testament*,<sup>2</sup> vol. I. pp. 336-348) adopted a similar view. But this compromise, while open to most of the objections that have been brought against the hypothesis of personation, raises others peculiar to itself. It ascribes to Paul an Epistle from which the pith and point have been extracted—little more than a shell without the kernel—weak and disconnected in its earlier part, and a Second to the Thessalonians following hard upon the First yet wanting in reference to the Parousia so conspicuous in the previous letter. Schmiedel prefers to regard the whole as spurious. If a partition must be made upon these lines, one would rather adopt A. Hausrath's view (in his *History of the Times of the Apostles*, translated, *ad rem*), that 2 Thessalonians ii. 1-12 is a genuine Pauline fragment, which some later Paulinist has furnished with an epistolary framework in order to give it circulation amongst his master's works.

Such conjectures are, however, unnecessary, and altogether speculative. The text and tradition of the Epistle afford no ground for believing that it ever existed in any form than that we know. Where the Apostle has the same things to say and the same feelings to express which found utterance in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, he writes in the same strain, but in a manner more ordinary and subdued as the flood of emotion that dictated the First Epistle has subsided and his mind has become engrossed with other interests. Where new ideas and altered needs on the part of his readers require it, as in i. 5-12, ii. 2-12, and iii. 6-15, he strikes out in new directions with the vehemence and originality characteristic of his genius.

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