

*DR. MILLIGAN'S EDITION OF THE EPISTLES TO
THE THESSALONIANS.¹*

AMID many editions of the Pauline letters, that are appearing in rapid succession, almost all of them containing good work and some quite remarkable work, I may be pardoned for devoting a special measure of attention to the elaborate edition of the two Epistles to the Thessalonians by Dr. George Milligan, who shows himself heir to the taste, the industry, and the love for learning of his distinguished father. I had the pleasure of counting him for a short time among my earliest pupils, when I first entered on the work of University lecturing ; and for this reason I began to read his book with a special interest, which was increased in perusal by its merits. Dr. Milligan's edition marks in several important respects a distinct progress in method beyond the customary style of commentary on the Pauline Epistles. It not merely contains a learned and carefully pondered treatment of all the topics and subjects of discussion arising out of the Epistle, which would form the staple of a commentary of the usual kind ; but in addition it essays the difficult task of placing before the student a summary of all that recent research in certain other directions has contributed to the illustration of the Epistles.

The kind of work that I mean is especially noticeable in two directions. In the first place, much has been learned through recent discoveries about the ancient customs and

¹ *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians.* The Greek Text, with Introduction and Notes. By George Milligan, D.D. Macmillan & Co., London, 1908.

usages in letter-writing ; and the letters of Paul now appear to us as examples of a class of work which approximated in varying degrees to the literary standard according to the amount of education, literary faculty, and philosophic insight possessed by the writers, and which reveals the character of the individual writer more clearly than any other class of composition—more truly than even the formal autobiography, because the revelation is for the most part unconscious—and yet obeys certain general principles of form and arrangement, principles which were not prescribed and taught by rhetorical teachers, but which grew naturally out of the character and customs of human beings in the society of the eastern Roman Provinces. Dr. Milligan not merely has a most interesting and thoroughly well-informed Note of ten pages on St. Paul as a letter-writer, but also shows in many places that he has constantly in mind this point of view in his Introduction and Commentary and concluding Notes.

A few examples may be given of the treatment of words. The adjective *ἀτακτος* and its derivatives, the adverb *ἀτάκτως* and the verb *ἀτακτέω*, all occur in Thessalonians ;¹ but none of the three is found elsewhere in the New Testament. The adjective occurs in 1 Thessalonians v. 14, and the adverb in 2 Thessalonians iii. 6 ; and I confess that my own inclination, based on the probabilities and on the general usage of good Greek literature, would in both cases be at first to take them in the severer sense of “ disorderly living.” The verb in 2 Thessalonians iii. 7 suggests a different conclusion, and the point deserves fuller consideration.

The Authorized Version uses the translation “ unruly ” in one case, “ disorderly ” in three : the Revisers, conformably to their general principle of employing the same English word to represent a Greek word, have “ disorderly ” in all

¹ The adverb twice, the adjective and the verb each once.

four cases. Several commentaries, while following these versions, whittle away the meaning of "unruly" and "disorderly," until they bring it down in 2 Thessalonians iii. 7 to imply nothing more than neglect and idleness, though sometimes they cling to the stronger meaning in 1 Thessalonians v. 14. Now the context in 2, iii. 7 ff., so far as I can judge, places it beyond doubt that idleness is the idea involved in the words. Paul says, "As you know, my conduct at Thessalonica might in this respect be taken as an example to illustrate my precept; for I did not show myself an idler, but earned my living by hard work at a handicraft." The run of the reasoning is confused and lost, if "disorderly" in the common sense of the word is substituted for "idler"; hence the commentators just mentioned refine the meaning down till they make it into "idle." But iii. 7 is professedly given as an illustration in practice of the advice given in iii. 6, therefore the adverb in iii. 6 must be interpreted conformably to the verb in iii. 7. Consideration of the adverb in 2 Thessalonians iii. 11 raises this conclusion to certainty. If that be so, there can be no justification for clinging to the harsher meaning in 1 Thessalonians v. 14.

Here we have an illustration of the fact that a word may in the New Testament convey a different innuendo from that which is usual in the earlier literature; and, contrary to the general tendency of words to degenerate, this word changes from the worse to the less bad meaning. Dr. Milligan quotes two telling examples from papyri found at Oxyrhynchus, in which the verb refers to idleness, and rightly infers the probability (p. 154) that the ordinary colloquial sense of the word (as proved by those two cases) was intended by St. Paul "to describe those members of the Thessalonian Church who, without any intention of actual wrong-doing, were neglecting their daily duties and

falling into idle and careless habits, because of their expectation of the immediate Parousia of the Lord.

On pp. 7, 8, is an interesting note illustrating the phrase "brethren beloved of God" from the expression on the Rosetta stone about Ptolemy, "beloved of Phtha" (the same verb), and showing that the use of ἀδελφοί to denote "members of the same religious community" (though probably taken over from Judaism) was in common use in the pagan religious expression of the time. In modern times, the singular is used among the Greeks by the common people in addressing familiars, but the plural is almost confined to sermons (as the English word is among us). Dr. Milligan quotes Harnack's account of the change in the use of the word.

On p. 35, the statement that the general Biblical use of στέφανος is to indicate the wreath or garland of victory, is hardly quite accurate if the word "general" is intended in the sense of "universal" or anything approaching to universal. But the rest of this interesting note gives some idea of the wide use of crowns or garlands in ancient life, which suggests that the Biblical use is sometimes, or perhaps often, unconnected with the idea of contest and victory. Especially the wearing of garlands as a sign of religious duty by all who were engaged in religious service was probably the true cause of the connexion between the ideas "crown" and "rejoicing." The wearing of garlands at feasts and other ceremonies was due to the original religious character of all such occasions.

The long notes on παρουσία and ἐπιφάνεια, pp. 145-9, may be briefly noticed as very instructive; also those on ἀποδείκνυμι, p. 100, on φιλοτιμείσθαι, p. 53. On p. 49 telling examples are quoted of the use of κτᾶσθαι in the popular language, for the better illustration of the difficult passage 1 Thessalonians iv. 4. In 2 Thessalonians iii. 2

the translation, "perverse" or "froward" for ἀτόπων is supported on good grounds of common usage in preference to the rendering "unreasonable," which is given in both the Authorized and the Revised Version. We might readily quote a dozen more examples.

In the second place, our knowledge of the ordinary colloquial language of Greek-speaking society in the eastern Provinces about the time of St. Paul has much increased in recent years. Formerly the special character of the Greek used at this epoch was little known: almost all pagan Greek writers of the period had been lost: those of a somewhat later time employed a rather artificial literary language which was far removed from the common speech of the people. Even the language of Philo the Alexandrian Jew was more literary in type than that of the early Christians, who used, as a rule, the speech of the common people. Paul himself was a man of good education; and he employs in his letters an educated yet a colloquial language, setting before readers of a not very highly educated class the deepest thought of a new philosophy.

Until recently there was a strong general tendency to regard all phenomena of the New Testament speech which diverged from the literary Greek as peculiarities of the Christian Greek. They are now known to belong, for the most part, to the conversational and popular tongue, and to have been in general use among pagans as among Christians. From the papyri of Egypt, and the stones of the eastern Provinces generally, many contemporary documents have been gathered, some of a humbler, some of a more educated character; but all expressed in the kind of Greek which was popularly spoken and understood in the lower or higher strata of society.

It may, however, be doubted whether there is not a certain tendency among some scholars to go too far in this direction

and to eliminate too completely the old idea of a "Christian Greek." Even though the same words were used by the pagans, it may be the case—I would go so far as to say it certainly was so—that there were some, perhaps many, which acquired a special and distinct meaning to the Christians, as suited to express certain ideas of the Christian religious thought, and which thus immediately became characteristic and almost positive marks of Christian writing. The early writers did not, of course, invent new words; they took the words used in society; but the new thought gave a changed content to the existing words, e.g. *ἀγάπη*.

This class of evidence Dr. Milligan has studied deeply, and his commentary everywhere bears the impress of the knowledge which he has collected.

It would be less than fair to refrain from mentioning that the edition is founded, not only on study of these sides of a commentator's work, but also on very wide reading in almost every department of modern comment on the New Testament and the period of early Christianity. Dr. Milligan seems to have acted according to the great German scholar Lachmann's rule: to read over the whole range of applicable literature in order to comment on these two letters. I find the edition is instructive to a degree unparalleled in recent English work in this respect. It is not the work of a polymath, whose judgment is crushed by weight of knowledge about other people's opinions. There are books which show quite as wide and thorough reading and yet are far less educative as regards the range in which one may profitably look for illustration. As one who has studied the original texts rather than modern opinions about the text, and who has stood apart from or deliberately thrown aside most of the modern writers, I find Dr. Milligan's work exceptionally helpful in this respect.

Before laying aside the book, we may glance at one or two more general topics that are suggested by it.

The question is raised on p. 125 f., "How much was St. Paul in the habit of leaving to his amanuensis? Did he dictate his letters word for word, his scribe perhaps taking them down in some form of shorthand? Or was he content to supply a rough draft, leaving the scribe to throw it into more formal and complete shape? It is true that to these questions no definite answer can be given. In all probability the Apostle's practice varied with the special circumstances of the case, or the person of the scribe whom he was employing. More might be left to the discretion of a Silvanus or a Timothy than a Tertius."

It is true that no certain answer can be given to such questions as are here raised. But it may be permitted to express opinions and hypotheses on the subject, as the present writer has for many years kept these questions constantly before his mind, and been looking for indications of an answer to them. That Peter, for example, owed much to the secretary who wrote his letters for him, seems highly probable: it was the secretary who gave to the "rough draft," the "formal and complete shape" in which his first Epistle lies before us. That Paul's letters owed anything of consequence to the amanuensis seems to me in the last degree improbable. Can one imagine that the amanuensis to whom the Galatian Epistle was dictated contributed anything to the thought or the expression of that most wonderful of all letters? The whole seems to have been poured forth at one effort, like a flood of lava from a volcano. Others of his letters have evidently or probably been dictated in parts, and we can trace the points where the Apostle stopped and began again after an interval—in one case, as I believe, after a long interval;¹ but even where the interval was short there is perceptible a certain change in the tone

¹ See EXPOSITOR, sixth series, iii., 1901, pp. 224-240.

and the emotion. In those Pauline letters which were dictated in parts the influence of an amanuensis is not so inconceivable as in Galatians ; but even in them such influence seems to me to have been a negligible quantity, except perhaps in the Pastoral Epistles.¹ In all the rest the stamp of Paul is too clearly and deeply impressed to allow the suspicion of extraneous influence.

Dr. Milligan justly lays stress on the consistent use of the first person plural throughout the whole course of the two Epistles, a fact which is unique, and connects it with the opening address : both letters are addressed by Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the Church of the Thessalonians. This point of view seems to me to be inevitable. It is involved in the very idea of a letter. As was stated long ago with regard to the opening address of Galatians,² a clear distinction must be drawn between messages and salutations at the end of a letter, which are expressive merely of love, goodwill and sympathy from well-wishers, and the formal statement at the beginning that the letter proceeds from several associates. This is part of the ancient form of epistolary composition. The opening formula always was the same ; so-and-so to so-and-so. When several persons are associated in the opening address, the recipients of the letter understood that the sentiments expressed emanated from these several persons jointly. But from this it does not follow that all these persons took an equal part, and it is possible that most of them took no part in the actual composition of the letter. Just as the letter of Clement nominally emanated from the Church of Rome, and yet was indubitably the composition of the

¹ I make this exception not from positive theory on the subject, but on the negative ground that I have not as yet studied the three from this point of view.

² *Historical Commentary on Galatians*, p. 258 f.

individual who was charged with the duty of writing the letter, so it is quite allowable to suppose that the letters to the Thessalonians emanated from the three associates who had evangelized in the city and stood in a position of authority to it, and yet was the composition of Paul alone. Not that Paul can be thought to have simply assumed their agreement as a matter of course, or even to have placed their names at the beginning as merely a courteous acknowledgment of their authoritative relation to Thessalonica. The invariable use of the first person plural throughout the two letters is, I think, rightly taken by Dr. Milligan to indicate something more. The case is markedly different from that of Second Corinthians, which emanates from Paul and Timothy, or of First Corinthians, which emanates from Paul and Sosthenes ; in them the first person singular is used generally throughout the Epistle, and the autobiographical touches prove beyond question that Paul was throughout the letter thinking of himself alone. In these cases we must conclude that the mention of Sosthenes and Timothy is merely a matter of politeness : " it belongs to that fine courtesy which was part of the fabric of St. Paul's mind, that he never omitted to recognize in the fullest degree the authority that belonged to another." Hence, since Sosthenes and Timothy had each played an important part in the organization of the Corinthian Church, he could not but associate them with himself in writing authoritatively to that Church, when they were in his company at the time. In fact, it is quite safe, as I believe, to infer that Sosthenes was not with Paul when he wrote the second letter, nor Timothy when he wrote the first letter, to Corinth.

We must, I think, agree with Dr. Milligan here. Probably the whole situation was carefully discussed by the three, and the general sentiment to be expressed in the letter as their joint opinion was agreed upon ; the composition was left to

Paul, as no one will doubt ; and yet the agreement dictated the consistent employment of the plural form. Here, more than in any of the later letters, we may reasonably ask whether Paul was perhaps to some extent influenced by the opinion of others. It is a case diametrically opposite to that which we find in Galatians. There " all the brethren which are with me " are associated in the opening address with the Apostle ; but the letter is most intimately personal and individual to Paul in subject and expression. The association of " all the brethren with me " in the address showed to the recipients that the history and the sentiment contained in the letter were guaranteed by the whole Church of Antioch (if I be right in arguing that the letter was written there) : the place of origin was well known to the first readers, though it is now obscure to us, but the letter acquires an unsuspected authority and impressiveness and wealth of meaning in certain parts when this is recognized. Professor Zöckler, in his commentary on Galatians, has admirably expressed the intention of this conjoint address prefixed to the letter :¹ " he does this in order to give the more emphasis to what he has to say. He writes indeed with his own hand, but in the name of a whole great Christian community. The warnings and exhortations which are to be addressed to the Galatians go forth from a body whose authority cannot be lightly regarded." There has generally been a tendency to regard the conjoint form here, on the analogy of those just mentioned, as indicating a certain set of evangelizing fellow-travellers. But Zöckler rightly felt that this interpretation was out of keeping with Paul's mind and habit : it loses the impression of authority which would be conveyed by mentioning the individuals of the company, and it would associate with the writing persons who as individuals cannot have had any right to be regarded

¹ He of course takes it as written from Ephesus.

as authoritative in Galatia in the sense in which Silas and Timothy were authoritative in Thessalonica. But the association of a whole Church, especially if it was the Church of Antioch, the first and the leading Gentile Church, must have added greatly to the impressiveness of the Galatian letter. This is the one Pauline letter which claims the authority of a whole congregation; and we must acknowledge that the occasion and the contents are peculiarly worthy of the authorization.

This long discussion may seem to wander from our proper subject; but I believe that it is calculated to enforce the value of Dr. Milligan's reasoning, and to show how much importance must be attached to the superscription of the Pauline letters by those who would fully comprehend their practical power. Moreover in this direction may lie the solution of several difficulties, as for example the origin of Second Peter. That letter cannot be reckoned among the pure forgeries, a weak and valueless class of literature. Equally impossible is it, according to almost unanimous opinion, to reckon it as the work of the author of First Peter. It comes from some one who believed that he was authorized and qualified to write the message of Peter in Peter's name, possibly even after Peter's death.

Dr. Milligan is in entire sympathy (see p. xlv.) with the views of those who hold that Paul, from a comparatively early stage in his missionary career, had wide plans in his mind, that he interpreted in a very full sense the Saviour's command to His disciples to preach the Gospel to the whole world, and that he regarded himself as being the Apostle whose special work was to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles, and especially that portion of the Gentiles with whose ways and mind he was acquainted, viz., the Roman Empire. In fact, as a Hellene and a Roman, his immediate views were, doubtless, limited to what was currently reckoned "the world,"

i.e., the civilized world, the world of Greeks and Romans. His language seems in some cases to reach to a wider horizon, and, in a sense, he thought of the whole world, but practically his outlook was restricted to the Roman world.

It is one of the curious features of modern scholarship that this estimate of St. Paul's plans is by many, especially those of the old-fashioned and narrow "critical" ideas about the New Testament history,¹ regarded as inconsistent with his eschatology.

The conception of a quickly approaching return of Jesus the Messiah to reign on earth and of the speedy end of the world in its existing arrangement is supposed to have been so firmly fixed in his mind that he was incapable of entertaining any far-reaching plans: he was hurriedly doing a little unorganized and unplanned evangelizing, such as was possible in the short time that remained. No idea in modern scholarship has been so falsely and wrongly used as this "eschatology": no idea has been more productive of erroneous views and mistaken criticism. Paul's ideas on this subject had been misunderstood by the Thessalonians, and the very same error that they made of foreshortening his eschatological view has been committed by many modern writers. The old converts and the modern scholars alike failed to appreciate his philosophic thought. When he is speaking of the end of the world, he is, so to say, outside of time; he is contemplating the world from the point of view of the Divine and the Eternal; but in explaining his ideas he is obliged by the poverty of human thought and human speech to use the words that belong to time, and express conceptions of time. In the view of Eternity that which is certain is immediate, is now; but though the apocalyptic

¹ But it has been, unfortunately, by no means confined to this school.

outlook sees the truth as present, yet if we proceed to interpret this directly, as if that which is declared were actually beginning at the moment in the evolution of the world, we should be guilty of the profound and hopeless blunder that the Thessalonians made and the moderns are so often making, and we should be showing ourselves incapable of appreciating the higher range of religious thought.

The results of this incapacity are serious in many directions. It has led the logically minded critics, with their strict but narrow ratiocination, to reject as interpolations of a later period every expression that indicates a wider outlook in the primitive Christian history and every interpretation which finds a broader view in the plans of the Apostles. All the Apostles alike were on this theory bound fast in the fetters of this "eschatological" idea, and the Church was incapable of shaking itself free from the bonds, until the lapse of time convinced it that the facts were inexorably contradictory. Such is the modern eschatological mirage. When you find the eschatological myth in a modern book, you may at once recognize that the writer's historical view is distorted by his philosophic myopia and judge his results accordingly.

In the case of Paul this mirage is peculiarly misleading, because he combined the vision of the apocalyptic seer with the practical sense of the born administrator. In Thessalonians especially the effects are disastrous, because in this Epistle the apocalyptic point of view is most apparent, though it is never able to extinguish the practical outlook upon facts. The Roman order was the handmaid and servant of God, ordained and arranged to play its part for a season in the world and aid the Divine purposes to their fulfilment. Yet it had in it the seeds of all evil. It was capable of being perverted to the worst ends at the present; and in the future those seeds must inevitably

mature and produce their fruit. There must hereafter come the great and final conflict between Good and Evil. The lawlessness, which is for the present restrained by the Roman order will then find its leader and chief in the Emperor himself. But this gathering together of all the powers of evil will only give the better opportunity for the complete triumph of right, when the Messiah shall destroy his banded enemies.

If we admit that Jesus ever instructed His disciples to preach the Gospel to the world, not merely to Jews, if we admit that He had an outlook wider than the limits of Palestine, how can we in reason deny that the Apostles who knew those words and quoted them might have the intention of acting upon them? If they had this intention, and especially if the Roman-born Apostle of the Gentiles had the intention, how can reasonable persons maintain that he was merely skirmishing vaguely in the open, without plan or strategic intention, as he moved on from Province to Province, and metropolis to metropolis?

I have discussed this subject, from a different point of view, and in very inadequate fashion, in the *Cities of St. Paul*, pp. 425-429; and in that passage a brief comparison is made between the Apocalypse of John and the Apocalypse of Paul, and the essential similarity of thought and view between them is shown, while the dissimilarity in style and method of conceiving the thought is illustrated. It is there pointed out that, whereas John was very strongly affected by the Jewish Apocalyptic literature and his Apocalypse is moulded in the same type, Paul's Apocalypse follows a different type and expresses a more philosophic conception of the same truth. "He shared in the views of John, but he expressed them differently." I used the words that "Paul stood beyond the influence of this [Apocalyptic] class of literature, thanks to his

Hellenic education." By this I meant to lay emphasis on the very marked contrast between his and John's expression of the same idea. Some have found fault with my statement, taking it to mean that Paul had not read this class of literature, which would be an absurd and ridiculous statement, the very opposite of what I intended. I have reiterated in almost every book that I have published the opinion that the motive power and by far the strongest element in the complex character of Paul was the Jewish, but there was superadded to this the Hellenic sense of measure and "grace" (to use the term which was such a favourite with him in religious expression), together with the Roman practical sense of order. He was educated in all the Jewish learning and law; but a person who has once acquired the Hellenic philosophic insight can never let the expression of his thought be guided by the more concrete, symbolic and sensuous imagery of the Jewish apocalyptic literature. Paul's apocalypse moves on a more philosophic plane, and yet it expresses fundamentally the same view of the relation between the Church and the Empire that John expresses, viz., the conflict in which the Empire shall be annihilated, with the exception that Paul sees and lays strong emphasis on the remoteness of this conflict and the fact that the ultimate enemy is for the moment an instrument in furthering the Divine purpose, while John sees only the conflict and the victory. In John's time the hostility of the Emperors had been long made open and declared, the enemy was drunk with the blood of the martyrs, and all memory or feeling that the Imperial order had once been the protector of the infant Church was lost. There lies an age between the one and the other.

It is true that my expression was perhaps too strong; the process of correction with me is largely a toning down of too emphatic statements; and the concluding pages of

the book just quoted had not undergone the chastening experience of time, but were printed as they were first conceived. Still I might have expected that one who wished to understand would gather my meaning from the general character of my work. I am, however, grateful to those who have called my attention to a sentence which can be suitably toned down to the level of the context and of the general thought.

To many friends who have kindly communicated criticism, privately or printed it publicly, I am deeply obliged ; and even where their criticism implies misapprehension of my meaning, it guides me to remove a cause of misunderstanding. Sometimes, however, they assume a very humble degree of intelligence or education on my part, as when once a Cambridge scholar whom I did not know wrote to point out that " picker up of learning's crumbs," which is quoted in *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 243, was taken from Browning and not original to Farrar. I write always unconsciously on the assumption that the great poems of Browning are known to all readers of modern books about St. Paul ; and, on the whole, I believe that the assumption is justified.

In conclusion I may be permitted to add a paragraph of acknowledgment, which was crowded out of my article in the *EXPOSITOR* for December, 1908, apropos of Mr. Calder's recent discovery, which restored to us the text of a document known only from a copy so bad as to be useless. It is one of the most pleasant experiences of the scholar's life to confirm the conjectural interpretations or readings advanced by himself or others ; and I am extremely glad to have the opportunity of mentioning that the correction *κεντήσεων* in 1. 16 was proposed by Mr. H. Stuart Jones in a review of my *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia*, vol. ii., which he published in the *Oxford Review*, 1899, p. 202, com-

paring the same passage of Epictetus which was quoted by Mr. Calder in the EXPOSITOR, November, p. 406.

I should also take the opportunity of correcting some mistakes in the titles attached to illustrations in my book *Luke the Physician*: these crept in through error of mine in correcting the final proof. On p. xiii., no. 6: delete the words "Christian Star as a Decorative," and insert them in No. 7 in place of "Symbol of the Cross as a Decorative." On p. xiv. delete the correction on p. 328. On p. 330 fig. 7 instead of "Cross" read "Christian Star."

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