

*HISTORICAL COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLES
TO TIMOTHY*

XXVII. RELATION OF THE TWO EPISTLES

THAT there is a certain difference in tone between First and Second Timothy is evident to every careful reader. The First Epistle is not so demonstrative in its warmth and affectionateness as the second: its conclusion is by some writers considered to be "abrupt and even cold." This difference has been used as part of the basis for an argument that one or both of the letters must be regarded as wholly or partly the work of another writer than Paul. The favourite method in recent criticism of ancient Greek literature from Homer downwards has been to suppose an authentic kernel worked up into a much longer whole, or authentic fragments combined and connected and padded out, by some later hand. By this method it is believed that all the passages which are too clearly marked as Pauline to be denied by a clear-minded and unprejudiced judge can be accepted as authentic, and the rest, which is less plainly Pauline, because it adds new elements to our conception of his character and work, can be got rid of and eliminated as a forgery.

The argument that a difference in tone between two letters addressed to one person is inconsistent with authorship by a single writer implies the assumption that a man's tone in writing to a dear friend can never vary, but will always be equally demonstrative in every letter. That this assumption is groundless and false does not need to be proved or urged: every one knows that the facts of life contradict it. Where a series of letters are written in rapid succession and with a certain continuity of feeling (as, for example, a series of love-letters), the tone is likely to be more uniform.

But in a case like this, where two letters are separated by a considerable lapse of time, and where the circumstances amid which the two were composed are markedly different, there is not the slightest reason to assume that the tone must be the same, if one author wrote them.

That the ending of First Timothy is abrupt is quite true. There is no lingering over the concluding sentences, as if the writer were loath to stop without remembering and saying everything that may show his loving recollection, which is Paul's common method of ending his letters. The fact that the ending is abrupt—it consists of four words alike in the English version and in the original Greek—is sufficient explanation of the want of lingering affection in the leave-taking. You cannot linger long and express much devoted love within four words. Yet an abrupt ending is sometimes enforced or preferred in a letter to the dearest friend.

The whole argument against authenticity, founded on this difference of tone, is composed of statements and judgments made from the wrong point of view. Most of the negative reasoning in regard to these Epistles is of that character, as we observe in one case after another. The reader has only to put himself at the right point of view, and everything appears to him in proper perspective, simple and natural. Hence we shall not now stop to inquire whether First Timothy is rightly thought to be deficient in affection, or whether it is not rather the case that the intense anxiety which is expressed in the letter about Timothy's successful performance of his task is caused mainly by the very intensity of Paul's love for him. We assume for the moment that the argument is founded on a correct observation, and that the first letter shows less warmth of love than animates the second. The right question to ask is whether the circumstances in which the two letters were written

were such as tended to produce some difference in outward expression of emotion. In trying to answer that question we shall attempt to place ourselves at the right point of view ; and, in particular, we shall ask whether the abruptness of the conclusion in the first letter was, or was not, likely to arise from the situation and character of the letter.

In the first place we observe that Second Timothy was written after an absence of some length, when Paul had lost all hope of going to meet his " child." In i. 3 he says : " how unceasing is my remembrance of thee . . . day and night longing to see thee." Yet he knows that he is unlikely ever to revisit Timothy, and he expresses the hope that Timothy will do his best to come and see him. The tone of the Epistle is that of a man whose longing to see a dear friend has been growing with time. On the other hand the appearance is that First Timothy was written after a comparatively short separation, and that Paul expected within no long time to rejoin his pupil : " I exhorted thee to tarry at Ephesus, when I was going into Macedonia. . . . These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly." In these circumstances the ordinary man does not give expression in a letter to such strong affection and longing for his friend's company. Moreover, Second Timothy was written in expectation of early death : the writer was in prison and almost completely solitary : some of his friends had gone on missions, others had deserted him through fear or through desire to better their condition in life (like Demas). In such a position, with death before him, the ordinary man is more prone to express his desire and longing for the presence of an old and tried friend.

In the second place, Paul had a distinct reason for writing his first letter to Timothy, and that reason was not purely personal. It is evident to every reader, and has been shown at length in these pages, that the Apostle was full of anxiety

about Timothy's work in Asia ; that he was apprehensive lest his pupil's retiring disposition and want of confidence and boldness might lead to his being pushed aside and not properly respected among the clever and fluent and audacious Hellenes of the great Graeco-Asian cities ; that he was impelled by the deep affection which he felt for Timothy to write a letter of advice and stimulus. In the First Epistle the charge to Timothy as a manager of a great office guides Paul's whole thought, and the personal feeling towards a pupil and friend is submerged, though it influences the writer's mind. In the Second Epistle the affection for Timothy dominates Paul's mind, though never to the exclusion of the charge with which Timothy is entrusted.

Accordingly, the Second Epistle is far more personal to Timothy : it shows him far more as a human being in his relation to other human beings, and especially to Paul himself. Take, for example, the paragraphs from i. 3 to ii. 13 ; how full they are of touches personal to Timothy as Paul had known him, and to Paul in his relations with Timothy. So also iii. 9-17 and iv. 5-22.

In the First Epistle, on the other hand, while the personal element appears in a similar way in iv. 12-16, v. 22 f., and vi. 11-14, yet in all of these the charge entrusted to Timothy is also prominent and sometimes even dominant, whereas in the passages just mentioned from the Second Epistle, the charge appears rather as the underlying anxiety, and the personal feeling is dominant, sometimes entirely, sometimes less completely. In other parts of the Second Epistle the charge is more prominent, and the personal element almost disappears from view just as in the First : such are the paragraphs ii. 14-iii. 9 and iv. 1-5. The spirit of the two letters is quite similar, deep affection combined with great anxiety about Timothy's success ; but in the first letter the anxiety is so great as to submerge the affec-

tion, while in the second the love often dominates and overpowers the anxiety.

There is not in 1 Timothy the same repeated conjunction in one sentence of Paul and Timothy as in 2 Timothy. Where personal affection is dominant, the expression tends to bring together the two persons. Hence this difference, which any reader will be able easily to prove by statistics, is the natural result of the general situation.

This observation clears away a discrepancy as to fact, which has been found between a statement in the First and a statement in the Second Epistle. In 2 Timothy i. 6 Paul speaks of "the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands." On the other hand, in 1 Timothy iv. 14, this same gift was given Timothy "by prophecy with the laying on of hands of the presbytery." There has been much discussion of the seeming contradiction between these two passages; but, when they are contemplated from the right point of view, there is no contradiction, and no discrepancy.

The truth is that the form of appointment always included two distinct parts: (1) the action of the Holy Spirit; (2) the action of men, viz. (Paul and) the official authorities of the Church in conjunction. The typical case is the choice of Barnabas and Saul in Acts xiii. 2. Applying this general rule of appointment to the special case of Timothy, we may say with perfect confidence, in the first place, that Paul assumed the general form to have been followed in Timothy's case, and secondly, that every reader and every Christian at that period had the same knowledge in his mind: in Timothy's appointment the Holy Spirit, Paul, and the official authorities of the congregation had all co-operated. There was no need for Paul to mention in detail all the parties concerned in the selection and consecration of his pupil. Where Paul is thinking

specially about the close personal relation between himself and Timothy, where he tends repeatedly to conjoin Timothy and himself in one sentence, he speaks simply of "the laying on of my hands," knowing that Timothy will understand the whole situation described (so in 2 Timothy i. 6): he emphasises the personal relation between himself and his pupil, and the other parties disappear out of the language. Where, however, Paul desires more to lay stress on the solemnity and the authoritative character of Timothy's appointment, he mentions the conjunction in that action of the Holy Spirit, "by prophecy," and the presbytery, while he himself sinks out of the sentence (as in 1 Timothy iv. 14). There is found to be perfect harmony between the two allusions, as soon as we place ourselves at the right point of view. The omission of details in a complicated yet familiar picture is constantly observable throughout the New Testament.

The differences between the Epistles are not only slight in themselves, but fully accounted for by the difference in Paul's position as he wrote. Amid the superficial differences the fundamental identity of feeling in the two Epistles is quite clear. The relation of Paul as master, teacher and spiritual father to Timothy is clearly shown throughout the First Epistle, from i. 1, "Timothy, my true child in faith," and i. 18, "my child Timothy," to vi. 21, "Grace be with you." While Paul is full of anxiety that Timothy shall discharge the difficult duty successfully, the anxiety is tempered by his deliberate judgment and confidence that the younger man will acquit himself well: vi. 20 f. is full of that confidence: some have erred, but Timothy will not err or misunderstand his charge. Timothy is addressed as "Man of God" (vi. 12): while Paul expected that the Asian Christians should look up to Timothy, and that Timothy should exact from them the respect due to his

position (iv. 12), he was careful to show by this address that he paid to Timothy the same respect which he expected that the Asians should pay. He knows that Timothy has been called to the eternal life and has borne testimony to the truth in the sight of many witnesses (vi. 11 f.), and he remembers "the gift that is in" him (iv. 14).

While it is true that the Second Epistle gives more prominent and emphatic expression both to the affection and to the respect which Paul felt for Timothy, the expression moves along very similar lines: "beloved child" in i. 2, "my child" in ii. 1. Timothy has "followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith," etc.; he knows what he has learned and been assured of from childhood; it is suggested though not expressly said, that he is the "man of God furnished completely unto every good work" in iii. 17: he is contrasted with those that "turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables," with perfect confidence that he will "fulfil his ministry" (iv. 4 f.). Paul knows and reminds him of "the gift of God which is in thee" (i. 6).

Again, while it is clear that Paul in the First Epistle more emphatically and repeatedly expresses his anxiety in respect of Timothy's shyness, timidity, and too retiring disposition, lest these faults may betray him into shrinking from fully and efficiently discharging the duties and using the powers of his office, yet it is quite clear that in the Second Epistle the master entertains the same apprehensions about his pupil, and thinks the same warnings and encouragements are needed. Timothy must be on his guard against "a spirit of fearfulness," he must cultivate "a spirit of power and love and discipline," he must "stir up the gift of God, which is in" him, and not let it grow weak from disuse, as might happen to a person in whom too great shyness and lack of confidence hindered the expression of the gift.

There is actually a fault in Timothy which is more distinctly hinted at in the Second Epistle than in the First. The false teachers, clever, fluent and versatile, whose probable opposition and disrespect to the modest and not very highly educated Timothy caused such apprehension in Paul's mind, figure in the Second Epistle almost as prominently as in the First. The same kind of fear about Timothy's power to maintain the fight against them troubled Paul in both letters. In the Second he gives even clearer expression to one danger which might result to Timothy from this opposition, owing to his special character. One who is disposed to be too backward and slow in meeting the opposition may readily fall into the error of losing his temper: he endures it until it has provoked him to anger, and he begins the struggle only after he has been enraged, whereas "the Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle to all, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekness correcting his opponents; if peradventure God may give them repentance unto the knowledge of the truth and they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil" (ii. 24 ff.). Thus it might come about that Timothy, too shy and timid and (in outward appearance) meek, should fall into the opposite fault of quarrelling; and he is cautioned against it.

If one is on the outlook for contrast and difference between the First and the Second Epistle to Timothy, a far more striking divergence of tone is apparent in another direction, which will form the subject of the next section.

The abruptness of the conclusion in First Timothy is in accordance with the rather disjointed character of the letter. As has already been pointed out, Paul wrote it probably in parts, not continuously.

XXVIII. THE THOUGHT OF DEATH IN SECOND TIMOTHY.

As was natural in Paul's situation, with his own death

imminent before him, his mind turned much, while he was writing the Second Epistle, on the thought of death and of the last times. He remembers, what was and had always been a central idea in his teaching, that Christ Jesus had "abolished death and brought life and incorruption to light."

The expression "against that day," or "at that day," referring to the Day of Judgment, occurs three times in this Epistle. Paul does not use it in First Timothy nor in any other place except 2 Thessalonians i. 10 : the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians is for different reasons much concerned with eschatological ideas, the Day of Judgment, etc.

His dead helper and comforter, Onesiphorus, is referred to in very affectionate terms i. 16 ff. : the words indeed do not inexorably prove that Onesiphorus was dead, if one is strongly inclined to judge otherwise ; but they are of such a character that I feel less doubt on the matter the oftener I read the Epistle as a whole and take them in their context and surroundings.

He thinks much in this Epistle of what comes after death. He endures all things, in order that the elect "may obtain salvation with eternal glory : faithful is the saying."¹ Then follows what has by some been taken as a hymn,—

For if we died with him, we shall also live with him :
 If we endure, we shall also reign with him :
 If we shall deny him, he also will deny us :
 If we are faithless, he abideth faithful :
 For he cannot deny himself.

¹ The punctuation which (with various good authorities) I adopt seems preferable to that of the Revisers, who take the following rhythmical words as the "faithful saying." The other places where a "faithful saying" occurs favour this : compare especially 1 Timothy iv. 8-10, also Titus iii. 8. In 1 Timothy i. 15 the "faithful saying" follows these words, but in that case it is expressed with accusative and infinitive (so also in 1 Tim. iii. 1).

In a very similar passage of First Timothy iv. 8-10, the object and purpose and effect of godliness is found in the "promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." Paul's mind was not so filled with the thought of death when he wrote that Epistle: if he had been then in the same frame of mind as when he wrote the Second Epistle, "the life which now is" would have had no part in his thought, and he would have regarded godliness as desirable for the eternal glory. So again in 1 Timothy vi. 19 "the time to come" and "the life which is *life* indeed" are vaguely presented to the reader because they are not at the moment vividly present in the writer's thought; it has even been suggested by some writers that the "life which is indeed" may quite well mean simply the real Christlike life on earth, but this view appears incorrect. In the second letter to Timothy, Paul thinks much of what will happen in the last days, iii. 1-9 and iv. 3 f. There shall be a season when the power of evil is exalted, and when sin seems to be triumphant; but this shall be the beginning of the end. Then, as is invariably the case in the Apostolic writings, with the thought of that last time and the end of the world, comes also the thought that not merely is it coming, but it is even now; the evil and folly and crime of the present day is the herald and proof of what is coming; and the false teachers against whom Timothy has to contend serve as examples of the exaltation of the power of evil. The Apocalyptic visions and the eschatological teaching of the Apostle always tend to express themselves in the present tense; and this has misled many modern scholars into the false idea that the Apostles believed the end of the world to be imminent and likely to occur in their own lifetime. Those scholars misunderstand the ancient form of thought, which expresses absolute certainty and eternal truth under the form of present time.

Similarly in iv. 1-4 the thought of the Judgment Day and the appearing and kingdom of Christ on earth forthwith calls up the associated idea of the temporary triumph of evil which will precede and herald it; and this triumph is described after the analogy of the false teachers at the present moment. But in the First Epistle vi. 14, the appearing of Christ is remote, "He shall show it in its own times"; and it is only spoken of as the term of an irreproachable career. The growth and power of evil is mentioned also in First Timothy, but simply as a fact of the future and not as connected with the appearing of Christ in Judgment (iv. 1): it is regarded as the natural and foreseen development of the false teaching, which must proceed in its course of wrong.

That the same person should in one mood and frame of mind think and speak of the Judgment Day as distant, and in another mood as imminent and immediate, is thoroughly characteristic of human nature and of the New Testament style.

The words, both verb and noun, for death occur far more frequently in Second than in First Timothy: *θάνατος*, *νεκρός*, *ἀποθνήσκειν* (in a compound) are only found in the second letter.

In the First Epistle Christ is thought of mainly as the Saviour of men in the world, see ii. 4, iii. 15 f., iv. 10, v. 4 ("unto eternal life," however, in i. 16). He shows what one must do to be saved, and how one must live to be saved.

There is nothing to wonder at in this general contrast between the Epistles: it only mirrors the difference between the situation and emotion of Paul on the two occasions. The words of 2 Timothy iv. 6-9 show what he thought of his situation then, "I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come." In the first letter the thought of stimulating and encouraging Timothy to per-

form successfully his duties in Asia overpowers every other thought. Timothy must work right on to the end. In the second letter the same thought is not lacking ; it appears constantly throughout the first four chapters ; but the expression of it is coloured in a totally different way, and the explanation of this colouring does not become apparent until we come to iv. 6-9. Then we see that the idea of iv. 6 ff. has been latent in Paul's mind throughout the first few chapters. This idea constitutes the unity of the Second Epistle ; it lies hid for a time, traceable only through the tone in which other ideas are expressed ; then it forces itself to the surface, and Paul thereafter gives free course to the consequences which it brings with it. He would fain see Timothy before he dies.

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THE CAREFULNESS OF LUKE.

III.

PHILIP AND THE EUNUCH.

THE form in which the narrative of the Eunuch's conversion is introduced, "An angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying," is one that admits of two interpretations, either that the angel was a man sent by God,¹ as in Acts v. 19, xii. 7 ; in which case we compare Hosea xii. 4 and Genesis xxxii. 24, where the angel is a man : or that the angel had appeared to Philip as to a prophet in a vision. The latter is the more probable for this reason. When St. Luke has described Peter's vision at Joppa he proceeds to describe Peter's subsequent action as prompted by *the Spirit*. "The

¹ Compare what is said by Justin M., *Dial.* 75. "It has been shown in Isaiah (vi. 8) that those who are sent to announce His messages are called both *angels* and *apostles* of God."