

*THE HISTORIC SETTING OF THE PASTORAL
EPISTLES.*

(ii) The Argument from Religious Contents.

A GOOD deal of what falls under this heading has already been said by anticipation, and still more must come after (iii.), when a final effort will be made to show that the impression that the Pastorals are un-Pauline in spirit is ill-grounded. Apart from the specific topics dealt with, as to which enough has been said to show that they do not necessarily imply a date later than Colossians and Philippians, it is argued that the way in which they are handled, viz., less argumentatively and more "dogmatically" than can be believed of Paul, is a serious objection. But in writing to Timothy and Titus to enjoin on them resolute *application* of principles which had long been well understood between him and them, it would be needless for Paul to do more than indicate the practical applications, with occasional allusion to principles. Yet the principles are supported by reminders (meant for those whom they are charged to "put in mind," quite as much as for their own reassurance) of the Divinely-given apostolate which lay behind all "his Gospel" and gave it incomparable authority over against the views of possible gainsayers (see below for analysis of 1 Tim. i.). This explains the "dogmatic tone," which is quite natural under the conditions presupposed. Such undeveloped or allusive reference to his familiar principles is specially natural, since "in the cases of the resurrection being allegorised (2 Tim. ii. 18) and marriage repudiated, it is feasible to detect distortions or exaggerations of Paul's own teaching." But it is mere question-begging to speak of terse, compressed polemic in characterising errors, for the guidance of familiar friends, as "indiscriminate denunciations." The more we are able

to read between the lines, the more of discrimination we discover and the more appropriateness.

But it will be said,¹ "Christianity is here set forth as already becoming more and more 'a form of sound words,' a crystallised creed, whose teaching is the vital point . . . , while unusual prominence is assigned to the more tangible and practical tests of Christianity." Waiving the fitness of the epithet "crystallised," the simple answer is, Why not? Is not this an inevitable necessity according to the experience and practice of every foreign missionary? And what evidence is there that it would be untrue to Paul's own methods, especially as his experience of his converts' actual needs increased? No one suggests that Paul ever gave his converts "a form of sound words" by itself, i.e., apart from inspiring teaching as to principles and motives in the power of which all precepts were to be understood and obeyed as "in Christ." But neither is there any suggestion in the Pastorals that the precepts in question were to be regarded *in abstracto*, apart from the living faith in the living God in and through Christ which alone entitled a primitive Christian, especially in a Pauline Church, to rank as such. This can go without saying for Timothy or Titus; but it is again and again implied in the way in which conduct is referred to, as "fair deeds" which are the final proof that men "holding a form of godliness" have not "denied the power thereof" (2 Tim. iii. 5). They are but the outward side of the "seal" of God's possession; "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness" (ib. ii. 19). It is the body of such ethical teaching, setting forth the ideal of Christ-like living, that the Pastorals describe as "the wholesome instruction" (ἡ ὑγιαينوῦσα διδασκαλία, 1 Tim. i. 10; Tit. i. 9, ii. 1; 2 Tim. iv. 3; cf. 1 Tim. vi. 3), reposing on the "principles of the faith" (οἱ λόγοι τῆς πίστεως, 1 Tim.

¹ As by Dr. Moffatt in the *Encyc. Brit.*, xxvi. 992.

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iv. 6; cf. vi. 3, and 4 *νοσῶν*). Now there is no sign that these latter, the contents of distinctive Christian faith, hope, and love, had assumed the formulated shape of a creed—beyond the baptismal confession—though they were perfectly well understood (see 1 Cor. xv. 2 ff.; comp. Eph. iv. 4, 6, “one Lord, one faith, one baptism”). But as regards the ethical standard for the guidance of “faith unfeigned” and “a good conscience” (1 Tim. i. 5), the wholesome “teaching” (*διδασχῆ*) or “instruction” (*διδασκαλία*), it was no doubt more definitely formulated in the oral instruction or “tradition” (*παράδοσις*), “the fair deposit” (*παραθήκη*) which Paul, like other Christian apostles and teachers, must have given to his converts from the earliest days.¹ This element in his teaching is apt to be overlooked, because elsewhere the references to it are rather incidental; but they are really quite distinct, both in the Thessalonian Epistles (1 Thess. iv. 1 f., “charges” to regulate their “walk,” 2 Thess. ii. 15 “the traditions which ye were taught,” cf. iii. 6), and in Romans vi. 16 f., where we meet the “type of teaching” (*τύπον διδασχῆς*), bearing on “sin” and “obedience,” unto which the Roman Christians had been “handed over” (cf. xvi. 17, “contrary to the teaching which ye learned”). We may infer, too, something of its contents—which may well have been arranged somewhat on the principle of the “Two Ways” (of Life and Death) embodied in our “Teaching of the Apostles”—not only from the rather uniform lists of vices in Galatians v. 19, 1 Corinthians v. 10, Colossians iii. 5, 8 (cf. Romans i. 24 ff.), but also from the moral instruction in Romans xii.—

¹ When we read in 2 Timothy i. 13, “Have as outline pattern (*ὑποτύπωσιν* εἴχε) of wholesome words the things which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus,” nothing more formal need be implied than in 1 Corinthians xv. 2 ff., where Paul refers to “the word” of his Gospel as he “handed it on” to the Corinthians, the testimony to Christ as risen being “among first things.” The true sense of 2 Timothy i. 13, as of much else in the Pastorals, has often been obscured by imperfect rendering.

xiii., and the element common to Colossians iii. 5 ff., Ephesians iv. 17–vi. 9. In Ephesians v. 5 reference is made to certain ethical principles as familiar to the readers; while it is added, “Let no man deceive you with empty words,” as though breach of such principles involved no penalty—very much the sort of danger implied in parts of the Pastorals (cf. also Eph. iv. 14). Such stress as the Pastorals lay on ethical conduct as the natural fruit and test of “godliness” (εὐσέβεια), is often treated as sub-Pauline “moralism.” But as we have seen, there is here really nothing alien to what we find in Paul’s admitted writings¹; nor is there any real trace of that divorce of ethical precepts from the distinctive Christian dynamic of “faith working by love” which is the essence of religious “moralism.”

Space forbids any complete application of the above principles to the Pastorals as a whole. But a brief synopsis of 1 Timothy—which is said to be the least “Pauline” of all—followed by more detailed analysis of its opening chapter, may here be given by way of example.

The general theme of 1 Timothy is the way men and women (ii. 8 ff.) should act, corporately (ii. 1 ff.) and individually, in the Church (iii. 15), and especially as official members with special functions to perform (iii. 1–13). Further, in connexion with the revealed truth of the Incarnation, of which each Church is a support, mention is made of some prophetic warning (possibly in a Jewish apocryphal writing) as to the danger of falling away from (the) true faith, a danger calling for such ministry as Timothy’s, to remind the brethren of the truth (iv. 1–6). To this end he must watch himself in thought and practice, as being an example and aid to others (iv. 7–16). His attitude to various special classes in the Church is then outlined, along with hints as to their respec-

¹ This subject is developed rather more fully in the article *Paul* in the *Encyc. Brit.* xx. 946 f., 950 f.

tive duties (v. 1–vi. 2). A brief aside follows, directed against any who suggest other ideals, and passing into a warning against worldly gain as a deflecting motive (3–10). Timothy is solemnly charged to shun such tendencies and live the life already set forth, with Christ's example and appearing ever in mind (11–16); the subject of riches, their danger and duties, is again alluded to (17–9); and after a final charge to him to guard against false *gnosis* (cf. Col. ii. 3 f., 8 f., Eph. v. 14 f.), the Epistle ends with a collective blessing to Timothy and those under his care.

Mingling with this general line of thought are several personal touches (e.g., iv. 7*b*, 8*a*, with v. 23; iv. 12–14, cf. iii. 14 f.; vi. 13 f.) which add not a little to the actuality of the whole. The references to theoretic errors play a relatively small part and are made as indirectly as possible, as though to cause the minimum of offence to individuals with whom Timothy might actually be confronted. This perhaps explains, too, the grammatically unfinished form of the opening sentence (i. 3 ff.), so avoiding a definite application to the situation at the moment—a phenomenon in any case unlike a forger's methods.

Then in chapter i. note the following features:—

Ver. 1. “An apostle . . . according to the commandment of God” (so Rom. xvi. 16), comp. Galatians i. 1. “Christ Jesus our hope,” comp. Colossians i. 28: “Christ in us, the hope of glory”; also Colossians iii. 4, “Christ our life.” “Genuine (*γνησίωφ*, cf. Phil. iv. 3 *γνήσιε σύνζυγε*, ii. 20 *γνησίως*) child in faith”—a thoroughly Pauline phrase.

Ver. 2. “Mercy,” added to the usual “Grace,” does not make the blessing less Pauline (cf. Gal. vi. 16), but suits the tried state of Paul and his circle, is thoroughly Jewish in style, and is not like one slavishly copying Paul.

Ver. 3. “Not to teach a different doctrine” (*ἐτεροδιδασκαλεῖν*), comp. Galatians i. 6–9.

Ver. 4. "A dispensation of God that is in faith," surely a distinctively Pauline idea, but without verbal parallel. So for the description in verse 5 of "the end of the charge," comp. Romans xiii. 10, and see Galatians v. 6, "faith working by love"; 1 Corinthians iv. 4, of a good conscience (*οὐδὲν ἔμνησεν συνείδητα*); 2 Timothy i. 5, "faith unfeigned" (in a passage generally thought Pauline); and for the whole verse cf. Philemon 5 f.

Ver. 6. The genesis of error in thought from a defective conscience, here and in verse 19, is Pauline in idea, cf. Col. ii. 18.

Vers. 7-10. The limited and negative function of the Law, as relative to sin (Gal. iii. 19), is very Pauline; comp. Romans vii. 14 ff. The list of sins here given recalls Romans i. 29-31, but differs widely in form. That the "wholesome instruction" is not a new Legalism is made clear by what immediately follows.

Ver. 11. "According to the Gospel of the glory of the Blessed God, with which I was entrusted"; comp. 2 Corinthians iv. 6; and for the implicit contrast of the Law and Gospel in point of Divine "glory," ib. iii. 7-11, Romans iii. 23. *δὲ πιστεύθη ἐγὼ* is Pauline both in thought and expression, Romans iii. 2, 1 Corinthians ix. 17, Galatians ii. 7, 1 Thessalonians ii. 4; and the last of these passages, "Even as we have been approved of God to be entrusted with the Gospel, so we speak," is parallel also to what follows.

Vers. 12-14. Most characteristic throughout, even in language, e.g., "enableth me" (Phil. iv. 13, "I can do all things in Him that enableth me"), "ministry" (*διακονία*, see esp. 2 Cor. iii. 6, iv. 1, v. 18, cf. Rom. xi. 13). "Grace . . . abounded exceedingly" (*ὑπερεπλήονασεν ἡ χάρις*; cf. Rom. v. 20, *οὐ δὲ ἐπλήονασεν ἡ ἁμαρτία, ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν ἡ χάρις*).

Vers. 13, 15 f. Such self-reproach recalls 1 Corinthians xv.

9, Ephesians iii. 8, but in quite independent form. The reasons too assigned for the election of so unworthy a person are most characteristic, especially that in verse 16. All this is as like Paul as it is unlike a later Paulinist ; and this is true also of the adoring Doxology in verse 17 (cf. Rom. xvi. 27), which opens with a highly Jewish phrase, " the King of the ages " (cf. Rev. xv. 3).

Ver. 18. To dwell on Timothy's vocation as also manifestly God-given, is like Paul.

Ver. 19. " Faith " has both the shades of meaning, subjective and objective, which occur in Paul's letters (see below) ; neglect of " faith " in the heart leads to loss of " the (Christian) faith " as " the truth of the Gospel " (Col. i. 5).

Ver. 20. The names given are otherwise unknown ; while the idea of temporary discipline, rather than final penalty, as befitting such cases, is the same as in 1 Corinthians v. 5, and is unlike a forger.

Two things seem to stand out from such an analysis : first, the combination of Pauline ideas with fresh and independent modes of expressing them ; secondly, the chapter is all of a piece, and not to be resolved into a Pauline basis (such as some see in the autobiographic verses 12-16) with later additions. Nor are these phenomena peculiar to this chapter : they run throughout the whole Epistle and its fellows. If it be replied that the way in which the Pauline ideas are stated is more " tame," less daring and paradoxical, than our average impression of Paul's admitted letters would lead us to expect, one may ask whether this is not quite natural. Our general impression is apt to be coloured most strongly by the more striking and individual parts of his writings, which are at once the more polemical in form and the earlier. Here, however, Paul is professedly giving a summary and allusive exposition of his teaching by way of reminder ; and he is doing it in his later years, when his

thought, like that of other men, would tend to assume that more measured and balanced form which is the mark of mature experience. What we look for in such circumstances is comprehensiveness rather than intensity of expression, justly balanced statement (showing full consciousness of all the factors, especially the moral) rather than incisiveness, and a tendency to safeguard one's meaning from misapprehension. There are qualities which mark all Paul's writings subsequent to Romans, or even inclusive of the practical part of that Epistle. He is now much concerned with the problem of getting his converts to grasp things on their practical side, and adapts his exposition to this end. It "is not irksome" to him to do this, if for them it is the "safe" course (Phil. iii. 1). There is a simple directness and clearness of statement, which comes to ripe wisdom in the school of life, that is apt to be undervalued because it is less boldly suggestive than certain of the utterances of the prophet's earlier ministry of the same message. But the prophet may be none the less alive to the old truths in their own ideal grandeur and sweep; only his love for actual men and women, even the slow and commonplace types, is more developed, and he will take pains to make the essentials of practical religion as plain to them as possible. The theologian stoops to think and speak as the pastor of the Lord's silly sheep: therein he is made perfect in love—"love out of a pure heart and . . . faith unfeigned," but also "out of a good conscience" towards the Chief Shepherd who gave Himself utterly for their sakes. Professed "Pastorals," even by a Paul, *should be judged as pastorals*; and if these letters can be read afresh in this light, I question whether they will be found really un-Pauline either in style or contents.

But where can room be found for them in the known life of Paul? To this aspect of the problem we must next turn.

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