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CRITICAL NOTES

WERE THE PASTORAL EPISTLES WRITTEN BY S. PAUL?

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I MUST begin with an apology. I am not a New Testament critic; what Biblical work I have done has been mainly confined to the Old Testament; and it is therefore reasonable to ask why I should venture upon the New Testament domain. But both Old and New Testament students are confronted by much the same questions and problems, and a sane and sound critical method must be alike in both cases. And one who does not profess to be a New Testament "specialist," but whose literary life has been largely occupied with the interpretation and appraisal of ancient Semitic texts has the advantage of approaching the New Testament text with an unprejudiced mind, undisturbed by the conflicting theories of its critics. "Lookers on see most the game," at all events when they have already had experience of it themselves, and where questions of authorship and the like are involved the outsider's point of view is likely not only to possess the freshness of common sense but also freedom from the shifting influence of unimportant details.

The main argument of the opponents of the Pauline authorship of the three Pastoral Epistles has been the difference in style between them and the other Epistles of the Apostle. Considering the number of modern writers whose style has varied not only at different periods in their lives but even at the same period to such an extent that had they lived in the Greco-Roman age scholars would have refused to believe their works could have been the products of the same pens, the argument is exceedingly precarious. And reading the Pastoral Epistles with the eyes of the outsider, I am constrained to deny that the argument has a foundation in fact. There is a differ-

ence in style, certainly; but it is superficial, and largely dependent on the changed conditions in the inner life of Christianity to which the Epistles bear witness. On the other hand, I am struck by what is an essential feature in the undisputed Epistles of the Apostle, and what I do not think would have been reproduced in the work of an imitator. This is the want of logical sequence in S. Paul's thought; he goes off, as it were, at a tangent from a single word which leads him suddenly and inconsequentially into a new train of ideas. This is the really important characteristic of S. Paul's "style," and it is as much a feature of the Pastoral Epistles as of those to the Romans or Galatians.

Superficially there are differences, and if the Epistles are genuine these differences must be expected. (1) The Epistles belong to a later period in the Apostles' life than those which were included in Marcion's collection. Between the two groups came the Apostle's acquittal and restoration to liberty, his journey to Spain referred to by his contemporary and companion in Rome, S. Clemens Romanus, and above all the changed conditions in the Christian Church itself. It had become definitely separated and distinguished from Judaism and was filled with teachers and writers who were endeavoring to reconcile its teaching with the philosophies and cosmological systems of paganism. A new vocabulary, with the new modes of expression resulting from this, was needed and had come into use.

(2) Then S. Paul's amanuensis would naturally not have been the same as those of his earlier Epistles. Like other writers of his time, we know that he employed a secretary and only for special purposes appended his own name to what had been written (see 2 Thess. III. 17, Phil. 19). While the thought was S. Paul's own, the mode of expressing it in Greek would have varied even more than is the case with the notes written by the private secretaries of cabinet ministers in our own days.

(3) And lastly, S. Paul had grown old; and accordingly, if we may judge from modern experience, the form in which his thought expressed itself would have been

likely to undergo a certain amount of change. The freshness of youth was departed, along with its illusions; neither S. Paul nor his converts looked forward any longer to an immediate return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead; while the Church had become an organized body with permanent institutions and a fixed place in society. The mustard-seed had been planted and was already beginning to grow into a tree.

Even more striking than the references to false teachers and forms of Christianity in which Christ became a mere philosophic abstraction or a reflection of the Babylonian god Bel are the references in the Pastoral Epistles to liturgical forms which had already become established in the service of the Church. Time after time appeal is made to "the word," a term which had already become so conventionalized as to be used without any adjuncts such as "word of God," or "word of truth." "To be believed is the word, and worthy of entire acceptance that: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Now to the king of the eons, immortal, invisible, omniscient God be honour and glory eon unto eon: Amen'" (1 Tim. I. 15-17). The quotation comes not far from the commencement of the letter, and the reference to himself interpolated between the first words and the doxology that followed them and motivated by the word "sinners" is a typical illustration of that characteristic of S. Paul's style which I have already described.

The next quotation is from an ordination service. "To be believed is the word: 'If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work'" (1 Tim. III. 1). There was, it would seem, already an "ordinal" with a fixed form of words which was recognized throughout, at all events, the Gentile churches of the Christian world. It is probable that in VI. 11, we have another quotation from the same service. At any rate it is clear that in VI. 15, 16, we find another doxology, possibly part of a hymn or canticle, which is parallel to the doxology in I. 17. "The form" or "formula of sound words" alluded to in 2 Tim. I. 13, may also have been embodied in the liturgy.

In 2 Tim. II. 11-13 we again have a fragmentary quo-

tation from a fixed service: "To be believed is the word: ' . . . for if we die with [Him], we shall also live with [Him]; if we suffer, we shall also reign with [Him]; if we deny [Him], He also will deny us; if we disbelieve, He remains to be believed; He cannot deny Himself.' " Here it is only the second part of a passage which must have been well known to his correspondents that is quoted by S. Paul.

Along with fixed liturgical forms there had grown up a number of words and expressions with a fixed technical sense unknown or unrecognized outside the Christian circle. One of those is the expression "that day," meaning the Last Day, which occurs more than once in the Pastoral Epistles.

All this implies a later period in the history of the Gentile Church than that at which the book of Acts suddenly breaks off. It is in many respects a new world to which we are introduced. There is no longer the belief that the second coming of our Lord is in the immediate future; Christianity has ceased to be regarded as a sort of offshoot of Judaism and the Roman official has already begun to look upon it as a separate and more dangerous form of religion. That there was such a second period in the life of S. Paul is testified by contemporaneous evidence. Clemens Romanus—S. Clement of Rome—states explicitly that the Apostle was able to carry out his cherished desire to carry the Gospel to Spain and the western border of the Roman Empire; and S. Clement was not only his younger contemporary, but also a resident in Rome. That the first Epistle to Timothy was written by S. Paul is expressly stated by Irenaeus, and Irenaeus was acquainted with Polycarp, the friend of Ignatius, whose birth is placed by Lightfoot about 40 A. D., less than ten years after the death and resurrection of our Lord. Polycarp himself was martyred at the age of 86, so that he must have been born shortly after the death of Nero. It is true that Marcion, who formed the first collection of the Epistles of S. Paul, did not include in it the Pastoral Letters; early Christian writers ascribe this to his heretical opinions, but it is more natural to suppose that, writ-

ten as they were to private individuals, he was unable to obtain copies of them. He failed to obtain copies even of all the Apostles' circular letters; at all events we know of one at least which has not come down to us, and it is possible that the last four verses appended to the Epistle to the Hebrews belong to another which has been lost.

The authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles is thus vouched for by a continuous tradition. And it is not only in secular history that the truthfulness of tradition has been vindicated by the discoveries of modern scientific archaeology. Recent discoveries at Rome have shown that early Christian tradition also is as trustworthy as early tradition has been proved to be elsewhere. It is only last winter, for instance, that excavations under the mediaeval church of San Sebastiano have confirmed the old tradition that the bodies of the Apostles S. Paul and S. Peter were removed from their original resting-places during the Valerian persecution (A. D. 258) and secretly buried at the bottom of a well in a catacomb above which the church of San Sebastiano now stands. Below the floor of the church have been found the remains of a basilica built probably in the reign of Constantine, and under that again the rooms of a private house from the dining-room of which a stair descended to a catacomb containing Christian sarcophagi. A long passage led from this to a niche-like chamber by the side of a well, the walls of the passage being covered with the inscriptions of devout pilgrims who at the end of the third century came to pray beside the bodies of the two Apostles after partaking of a "refrigeratio" or "agape" in the dining-room above. We can no longer, therefore, refuse to believe that the bodies removed by Constantine from San Sebastiano to his new basilica in the Vatican were really those of the two Apostles and that consequently they still rest in the sepulchre that he made for them under what is now the floor of St. Peter's Cathedral.