

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

CHAPTER IV. VERSES 1-5.

THERE are many indications that St. Paul distinctly foresaw the deadly influence which Oriental mysticism was likely to exert upon the faith and morals of the Christian Church. The ascetic tendency was without doubt present in the Essenic communities so highly extolled by Josephus, Philo, and Pliny. In Ephesus, the early ministry of Apollos, before he had understood or accepted the Pauline doctrine, had been so successful that he had baptized numerous disciples into the faith of the kingdom of God as it was proclaimed by John the Baptist. A few years later Paul feared that grievous wolves would enter into the flock of God, and that among the elders of the Church at Ephesus would arise those who would teach perverse things. The perversity was not simply a substitution of certain counsels of perfection in place of the Divine life. These proposals to abstain from all gratification of the flesh, and to obtain access to God by ascetic regimen, were based upon speculations about the nature of matter and the inherent evil of the flesh as a physical organization. If the physical universe were the workmanship of a power alien from that of the Supreme Being, then the Christian doctrine of the manifestation of God in the flesh was at stake. The Apostle John, in this city of Ephesus, did subsequently encounter the identical delusion of those who denied the true humanity of the blessed Lord; and in later years numerous sects arose in Asia, Syria, Phrygia, and North Africa, who coupled

fantastic views of the person of Christ, and rash and wild speculations touching the Incarnation, with theories of human life which threatened to break up the kingdom of God, and shatter all loyalty to the Supreme Giver of life.

It is not surprising that the prophetic mind of St. Paul should have anticipated this morbid and perilous delusion, nor that he should have been reminded of it when "the mystery of godliness" filled his thoughts with its own effulgent glory. He proceeds to say: "*The Spirit speaketh expressly,*" i.e., the Holy Ghost, who was ruling the Christian Church and directing the career of the Apostles, had given express utterance to a certain prophetic oracle. It will not do, with Heydenreich, to translate "*spiritual men.*" The Apostle does not hesitate to refer the outlook into the future to the source of all prophetic insight—to the Holy Spirit of God. The "express" utterance may, nay, must have come from the lips of living men, but it was nevertheless accepted as a Divine premonition. If it had come to the Church through the special consciousness of Paul, he would probably have written, "I know in the Spirit," or, "the Lord said unto me;" but by using a word which in later Greek¹ is invariably used for definite speech, he implies that the customary method by which the Spirit made known his will had been employed in this instance. *The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in later times or seasons.* The word *καιροῖς* is used here almost in the sense of *χρονοῖς*. The essential idea of the latter is a "duration or period of time;" while

¹ Polybius and Strabo use the adverb. The earlier writers use the adjective *ῥητός*, in the sense of "settled and defined by speech."

the former word (only used in this place in similar construction) denotes "season," "opportunity," "critical moment," and probably suggests that the later times, when what he is about to describe may be expected to take place, will be "hours of crises" charged with great consequences to the Church;—in these crises, *certain persons will depart from the faith*. The phrase is not synonymous with "the last days" preceding the coming of the Lord to judgment, but with moments not far distant, when courage, fidelity, and loyalty to truth would be of infinite service. "The faith" here is "the mystery of godliness, which is confessedly great," and (as in Acts vi. 7; Jude, 3; Rom. i. 5; 1 Tim. vi. 21; 2 Tim. iii. 8) is used here for the great *object* which Christian faith embraces. *Giving heed* (*cf.* Chap. i. 4) *to deceptive spirits*. Paul recognizes here and elsewhere the dominion of the evil one, the supernatural energy and personal source of evil and falsehood. There is one great Spirit of Truth; there are numerous spirits of error and untruth, "rulers of the darkness of the world." Two or three thoughts are suggested: (1) The interference and anarchy effected by this energy are not physical, but spiritual. He refers not to any imperfect work of God in nature, but to "spiritual wickedness in high places." (2) These "spirits" are "*deceiving*," not *coercing*, powers. They can be exposed, detected, resisted, and overcome. Moreover, (3) they do not entangle or vitiate our responsibility, and cannot baffle us unless we "give heed" to them. This becomes more clear when we find that these apostates from the faith will give heed also *to the teachings of dæmons—i.e.*, to the doctrines emanating from

devils. The Apostle is not referring to "doctrines about devils;" for the linguistic usage of the New Testament shews that the genitive is here "of the subject."¹ The genitive clauses which follow are not in grammatical apposition with "the dæmons," as this would imply that the false teachers *were* the dæmons, or that the dæmons were suffering from seared consciences; but several clauses are prepositional adjuncts to the description of those who "give heed to the spirits that deceive and to the teachings of devils." They will act thus *in the hypocrisy of false speakers, who have been branded on their own consciences.* Their hypocrisy consists in falsifying the great facts of nature, in disloyalty and treachery to the Supreme God, while they profess to have attained a higher Christian life. The delicacy of conscience has been branded as with hot iron, seared and made insensitive by the cautery of a burning lie. The language is as strong as words can make it, and blazes with the fire of a holy indignation. We are almost amazed to find that the "devilish" doctrine against which the Apostle protests by anticipation is,—

Verse 3.—Forbidding to marry, and commanding² to abstain from meats, which God made (once for all) for participation with thanksgiving by the faithful and by those who have attained a full knowledge of the truth. The Catholic Expositors are explicit in admitting the evil of these suggestions. Augustine³ draws a distinction between abstaining from marriage as a counsel of perfection and forbidding it as a sin ;

¹ Cf. Col. ii. 22 and Jas. iii. 15, for his description of the wisdom which is not "from above."

² Cf. for this construction 1 Cor. xiv. 34. *Καλούντων* is equivalent to *λέγων μη*; the *μη* is dropped in the second clause.

³ Cont. Faust, xxx. 6.

between abstaining from meats for religious or moral purposes and doing so from the persuasion that they are in themselves evil. "The one," says he, "is the doctrine of Apostles and Prophets, and the other the doctrine of devils." The use which the Romish and ascetic writers have made of a few passages in the New Testament in apparent praise of celibacy runs, however, perilously near to that which is here condemned, by creating imaginary virtues and supererogatory merits. The gloss, often insisted on, that the Roman Church has never condemned marriage as such, does not go to the root of the delusion which was early transferred from Essenic asceticism, from Oriental Dualism, and from Buddhism into the Church of Christ. The supposition that there is any relation more saintly than that between a husband and wife, anything purer than a mother's love, or than the parental and filial relations arising from marriage, is closely blended with the claims of a hierarchy and the pretensions of Rome. In the earliest times it was associated with, and arose out of, ideas of the flesh, which compelled a different reading of "the flesh of Christ" and promoted the speculation that the Logos descended into a phantasmal body which had no real existence. It was this which rendered it imperative that all who would resemble Christ should reduce the body by continual mortification to a phantasmal or unreal state. Josephus shews that the Essenes had gone quite far enough in this direction already to make the prophecy thus quoted by Paul perfectly comprehensible and necessary.¹ Considerable light is thrown upon this ascetic dietary by Philo, "*De Vita Contemplativa*," c. iv., "The Thera-

¹ B. J. ii. 82 ; Ant. xviii. 1, 5.

peutæ eat nothing of a costly character, but plain bread and a seasoning of salt, which the more luxurious of them do further season with hyssop; and their drink is water from the spring; for they oppose those feelings which nature has made mistresses of the human race, namely, hunger and thirst, giving them nothing to flatter or humour them, but only such things as it is not possible to do without. On this account they eat only so far as not to be hungry, and they drink just enough to escape from thirst, avoiding all satiety as an enemy and plotter against both soul and body.”

There was a vast difference in degree between this counsel of perfection and that pursued in hundreds of Buddhistic monasteries, and moreover that which was subsequently followed by the African and Syrian recluses, and by multitudes who submitted to the more stringent ascetic rules, by men and women who have thought to praise God by feasting on stinking fish and inhaling the incense of rancid tallow, by laceration of the flesh and revolting filthiness of person and attire; but the principle, the dualistic root of the evil, is the same in both cases, and the Apostle in these grand words supplies the true antidote to it. Paul did not meet the speculation of Cerinthus, or Saturninus, or Marcion, by anticipative argument, but he maintained a counter-position of immense significance. His position was, that the Creator of the world has purposed the joy of his creatures and would have them take his gifts as a holy eucharist. He implied that those who have received the faith of Christ are alone adequately alive to the beneficence of God.¹

¹ The absence of a second article before *ἐπεγνωκόσι* shews that this clause, together with *πιστοῖς*, expresses one idea, and does not justify any reference to some special *gnosis* acquired by a party or clique in the Church.

Verse 4.—Bengel takes the $\delta\tau\iota$ (“that”) as introducing THE TRUTH, which, when deeply appreciated or accepted, will justify the thankful reception of God’s gifts. It is better, with Huther and Ellicott, to take the $\delta\tau\iota$ as causal, and as providing a confirmation of the preceding sentence, for two reasons: (1) “The truth” is, in Biblical usage, not an isolated proposition, or a solitary principle, however great, but the whole complex of the Divine thought, the accurate expression of the reality of things. (2) There are parallelisms in the language of the sentence which now follows with that which has preceded.¹ We take it, then, as follows:—*Because every creation of God is good, beautiful, or excellent, and because nothing is to be rejected if it be received with thanksgiving.*

There is a reference here to the root-principle of Hebrew revelation, that “all things are of God,” that God pronounced all things to be very good. Deep knowledge of the goodness of God’s workmanship and a delight in his supreme and holy will are accompaniments of the highest faith. Here is the resting in and with God which is the true Sabbatism. Coleridge put the idea grandly in his “Religious Musings,” for, when portraying the man who has “saturated” his “constant soul” with the truth of the Divine Love, he says,—

“From himself he flies :
 Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze
 Views all creation ; and he loves it all,
 And blesses it, and calls it very good !
 This is indeed to dwell with the Most High !
 Cherubs and rapture-trembling Seraphim
 Can press no nearer to the Almighty’s throne.”

¹ The $\kappa\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ with $\epsilon\kappa\tau\iota\sigma\epsilon\nu$, the repetition of $\mu\epsilon\tau\grave{\alpha}$ $\epsilon\upsilon\chi\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\tau\iota\alpha\varsigma$ and $\mu\epsilon\tau\grave{\alpha}$ $\lambda\eta\mu\psi\iota\nu$ with $\lambda\alpha\mu\beta\alpha\nu\acute{o}\mu\epsilon\iota\nu$.

St. Paul elsewhere said (Romans xiv. 14) "that nothing is common on its own account" (*per se*), and, verse 20, "that all things are pure to the pure mind." Our Divine Lord "purified all meats"¹ by the grand assertion that "nothing from without entering into a man has the power to defile him." Wettstein, and many Commentators since, here quote the noble line in the "Iliad" of Homer, "the glorious gifts of the gods are not to be rejected by thee." St. Paul, however, inserts an important condition: "*if it [the κτίσμα] be received with thanksgiving.*" Thanksgiving sweetens common mercies by recognizing the hand of the Giver. Prayer and supplication are incomplete without thanksgiving. (Phil. iv. 10.) The wings of prayer are praise. Because we have received so much, we trust the infinite fulness of Love. The *eucharistia* of the Apostle is not a mere sense of gratification; it is not the eager or greedy clutching at the possible delights of the flesh or of the mind. Paul speaks of a communion with God, a response to the great Giver, a lifting up of heart to Him who gives. There is a safeguard here from possible abuse of the glorious liberty of the sons of God; while the words which follow make it quite clear that St. Paul justified no license, and would himself turn every meal into a eucharist, into a Divine service. *For* (says he) *it is made holy* (not declared to be pure and holy) *by the Word of God, and intercession or prayer.* The verb ἀγιάζεται is not merely declarative, but causative.

¹ That is, if we are to take the critical reading, καθαρῶν, in St. Mark vii. 19. Cf. Tischendorf, Lachmann, and Tregelles. Origen made this use of the passage as it stands in St. Mark's Gospel.

It describes an action which is productive of a holy thing. The common food of earth is not defiling nor cursed in the hands or lips of one who consciously receives it from the Holy God, and does so with *the word of God and prayer*. Some have supposed that the "Word of God" is the talismanic utterance of the sanctifying name of God, and others that it is the revealed distinction of the clean and unclean meats,—a position which would be strangely discordant with Paul's whole doctrine of food. I prefer to take here the "Word of God" as the revelation of God in the Scriptures, which warrants our reception of the Divine gifts, which is often peculiarly adapted to be the medium of expressing to God our thanksgiving and prayer for his mercies. That Word of God gives life-sustaining power to the creatures of his hands. Man does not live by bread alone, but by the Word proceeding from the mouth of God. The religious acts which Christian people customarily perform over their food need fresh consideration. Some mumble a talismanic charm without meaning or reverence; others take the opportunity for uttering lengthened prayer for spiritual blessings. It would be well to study how best to give to our daily bread a sanctifying meaning and sacramental value, how we can most sincerely and consciously receive gifts from God, and consecrate them by telling Him our gratitude. Charles Lamb asked why we should say "grace before meat," and not "grace before Milton." Why, indeed? Yet why should we ever lose so good an opportunity of realizing our dependence and sanctifying the "creatures of God"?

The "Apostolic Constitutions" (vii. 49) preserve an early Christian grace, which is not without interest: "Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who hast nourished me from my youth, who givest food to all flesh. Fill our hearts with joy and gladness, that we, always having all sufficiency, may abound unto every good work, in Christ Jesus our Lord, through Whom to Thee be glory, honour, and power for ever. Amen."

Here is another, which Chrysostom tells us was used in certain religious fraternities:—

"Glory be to Thee, O Lord, O Holy One; Glory be to Thee, O King, for Thou hast given to us food for our gladness. Fill us with the Holy Spirit, that we may be found well pleasing in thy sight, and not ashamed when Thou shalt render to every man according to his work."

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NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

CHAPTER II.

HAVING thus described the state of the Heathen world, St. Paul proceeds to draw an inference from what he has said on the subject. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O Man!" To most ordinary readers this inference appears very strange; and it does indeed involve a serious difficulty, which few of the Commentators have shewn themselves able fully to appreciate. It is not till Verse 17 of this Chapter that St. Paul expressly declares whom he has been addressing in the words "O Man!" We see, however, that it must be one who represents either the Heathen society, of which he has been just speaking, or the Jews. But as it is certain that the Heathen society