

THE RESTORATION OF ORDER IN A CHURCH  
THREATENED WITH DISSOLUTION.

FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

III.

THIS letter, which is called the first, but which was, in reality, the second, begins like all the other Epistles (except that to the Galatians), with a greeting and thanksgiving. These are contained in the first nine verses. As usual, this introduction, while taking in part the form habitual with Paul, has certain special features corresponding to the state of the Church. *Holiness*, as the seal of all true Christians, the *oneness* of the Church, based upon a common adoration of the name of Christ, are features on which Paul dwells, not without intention, in the salutation (chap. i. 1-3). And the marked omission in his thanksgiving of any reference to the moral fruits of the Gospel, while he speaks of the gifts of utterance and of knowledge, with which the Church was enriched, is very significant. This will be made the more striking by a comparison with the corresponding passages in the Epistles to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. i. 3; 2 Thess. i. 3, 4).

As we have said, the Apostle had to treat in this Epistle nine topics altogether heterogeneous. How has he managed to blend such a variety of subjects into anything like harmony? He refers first to the dissensions which had sprung up in the Church; that is to say, if we may use the expression, he begins with the *ecclesiastical question*. A little reflection will show how wise he was in doing so. It was

necessary that at the very outset he should vindicate his position in relation to the entire Church before commencing the directions which he had to give on the various matters which were to follow. He deals with this very delicate personal matter in the first four chapters. He explains first of all how he is led to speak of it. If he mentions the household of Chloe as his informers, it is probably that the Corinthians may not suppose that the news was brought by the three messengers of the Church who are with him at the time. After describing the internal dissensions in the Church, and pointing out how utterly inconsistent they are with the sole sovereignty of Christ (chap. i. 12-16), he strikes at the root of the evil by showing that it arises out of a false conception of the Gospel. The Corinthians have been thinking of the Gospel as wisdom, a system adapted to satisfy the intellect, while it is in truth *salvation*, a Divine power to rescue man from perdition (chap. i. 18). No doubt God had appealed first to man's reason, revealing Himself to it in a way full of wisdom, in the works of creation. But man, not having understood this revelation under the form of wisdom, God has humbled his proud reason by dispensing with it, and now offers him salvation by a method which looks like folly, even by the cross of Christ. Hence not many wise and mighty men joined the ranks of the believers at Corinth. And how little had he, Paul, the preacher of the Cross, attempted to have recourse to excellency of speech or of wisdom in declaring his message (i. 18; ii. 4, 5)! Not that there is not Divine and glorious wisdom contained in the Gospel. The Apostle well knows how to display this to the eyes of those whose ripened Christianity fits them to receive it (chap. ii. 6). But this sublime wisdom, which God imparts by His Spirit to His servants, that they may declare it in inspired words to those who are spiritually-minded, the Corinthians are not in a fit state as yet to receive. There-

fore the Apostle has kept them to the elements of the Gospel, like children who must be fed with milk (chap. iii. 1-4).

From the true nature of the Gospel Paul deduces that of the Christian ministry. A preacher of the Gospel, such as himself or Apollos, is not a wise man, the head of a school; he is simply the servant of Christ, the one Lord (v. 5). Hence it is absurd to set up any rivalry among the servants of God, as though they were not all engaged in the same work. For himself, he is well content to have carried out at Corinth the commission given to him, namely, to lay the foundation stone of the Church, which is Christ Jesus, leaving it to others to build upon it, which is a more difficult and delicate task. For it is possible for men to build with bad materials, or even to destroy while they think they are building up; and thus, not only their work, but they themselves may be in danger of being burnt up. The Church does not belong to its teachers; the teachers belong to the Church, and the Church belongs to Christ alone, as He to God (chap. iii. 6-23).

St. Paul is not therefore at all troubled at the things said about him in Corinth. God, the Searcher of all hearts, will try his work, as well as the work of his opponents and critics (chap. iv. 5). St. Paul explains all this as though he were speaking solely of himself and Apollos, because he would have the Corinthians learn the general lesson, not to run wild after one teacher, to the disparagement of another. They have given place to spiritual pride. They seem to be sailing on a flood-tide of glory, while the Apostles, the founders of their Church, are left behind and subjected to all the sufferings and reproaches of the present time. The contrast thus sharply drawn might well make the Corinthians blush for their folly. Paul adds that Timothy is about to come to them as his messenger. He will seek to set them again in the right way. Then Paul himself will come, if the Lord will; and he asks how he will find them

—puffed up with vain words, or still witnessing to the living power of the Gospel? (chap. iv. 6-21.)

The argument against human wisdom, which forms the basis and the substance of this first part of the Epistle, has often been supposed to apply to Apollos and his method of preaching. This is, we think, a grave mistake. Apollos, far from being a mere philosopher, was a powerful interpreter of the word of God (Acts xviii. 25-28), and St. Paul associates him closely with himself in several passages (chap. iii. 5, 6; iv. 6). How then could it be to him that Paul applies such a word as this, "God hath made foolish the wisdom of the world"? It is quite clear moreover, from chapter xvi. 12, that Apollos was even more indignant than Paul himself at the conduct of the Corinthians with regard to him.

From the ecclesiastical question, treated in the first part of the Epistle, the Apostle passes to a subject of somewhat kindred nature—a question of discipline which had arisen out of a case of scandalous impurity. It has often been said that the Apostle is here dealing with the vice of impurity itself. This is not so. He does not touch on this subject till chapter vi. Previously to that, he is speaking of the course of conduct the Church should pursue when any scandals arise in her midst. It is only an accident that in this instance the cause of offence is an act of impurity. There has been a case of fornication in the Church, and such fornication as was not even among the Gentiles. In face of so black a deed how does this Church, so proud of her gifts of utterance and of knowledge, comport herself? She seems to have passed it indifferently by. But Paul at a distance hears of the crime, and "being absent in body, but present in spirit, judges him that had wrought this thing." Rebuking the neglect of the Church, he charges her that, "being gathered together," with his spirit and the power of the Lord Jesus, such a one be delivered "unto Satan for the

destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

After this terrible denunciation, the Apostle asks what can be the cause of this effeminacy and laxity of morals pervading the Church at Corinth. He is sure that there must be some old leaven of malice and wickedness deadening their spiritual life. He suggests that it is spiritual pride. Yet when once Christ the paschal Lamb has been sacrificed for us, the life of His Church should be one continual paschal feast, in which no leaven should be found. He does not indeed wish to set up a wall of outward separation between the faithful and sinners in general; for then, as they themselves had objected, they must needs go out of the world. No; it is those who are called Christian brethren, and yet fraternise with sin, against whom he would warn them. The Church is bound to show, by refusing to keep company with such, that it does not recognise this connivance of professing Christians with sin. The Church must judge her members, as Israel of old judged offenders against the law of God, stoning them to death. The Apostle points out in this chapter two ways in which this judgment may be passed. First, there may be a collective appeal to God, that He would Himself visit the guilty (chap. v. 2). Second, the breaking off all intercourse of the faithful with the offender. I see nothing like a formal excommunication in either of these proposed measures, nor indeed throughout the chapter. The act by which the Apostle delivers the offender to Satan is not excommunication. Excommunication is not destroying the body with the view of saving the soul. The question of discipline treated in chapter v. forms the link between the ecclesiastical question (chap. i.-iv.) and the questions of morality discussed in the succeeding chapters (vi.-x.). These are four: going to law, impurity, marriage, and the eating of meats offered to idols.

From the matter of discipline the Apostle passes to the question of Christians going to law with one another before the Gentile tribunals. He would shame the Corinthians for so forgetting the obligations of Christian honour. Is it so, he says, that you, who are to judge the world and the angels, you who pride yourselves on your wisdom, cannot find one wise man among you who shall be able to decide a petty question of *meum* and *tuum* between brethren? Should they not blush at having any such disputations among themselves? Nay; are they not defrauding one another, forgetting that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God? (chap. vi. 1-11.)

But there are even graver evils among them. They have misconstrued and taken up as a general maxim words which the Apostle had used in reference to one particular thing. "All things are lawful for me," they say. Yes; anything is lawful, but for a Christian man to alienate his liberty, and bring his soul into bondage to sin. But this is what the Corinthians are doing by indulging in impurity of life, as though that were as legitimate as eating and drinking. They have forgotten that the body of the believer is to be a temple of the Holy Ghost, the very Spirit of Christ dwelling in him, so that he is not his own but Christ's; and that to desecrate this temple is to be guilty of the most deadly sin (chap. vi. 6-20).

From this subject the Apostle passes to one still more delicate and closely connected with it. This question, the advisability of celibacy or marriage, had been submitted to him by the Corinthians themselves in a letter to which he refers (chap. vii. 1). Perhaps a reaction from the laxity of morals at Corinth had led some of the new converts to regard marriage as a thing impure in itself. They probably confirmed themselves in this opinion by the example of Paul and of Christ Himself. The Apostle takes up first the question of the formation of the conjugal tie. He recog-

nises the moral beauty of the position of the man who holds himself free from any such bonds and retains his complete independence; but he admits that such a condition is not common, and is only safe for those who are specially called to it of God (chap. vii. 1-9). He next examines the questions which may arise among married people, in relation to this subject. When some difference has arisen between a Christian husband and wife, or when one is converted and not the other, so that a Christian wife perhaps finds herself joined to a pagan husband, what course should be taken? In the first case, the Apostle sanctions their separation, but forbids the Christian husband's marrying again. In the second case, he advises the Christian husband or wife not to break the conjugal tie, if the other is willing to maintain it, for the very willingness to do so implies a measure of acquiescence in the principle of Christian holy living, adopted by the new convert. As a general rule, the Apostle recommends Christians not to be impatient to change the outward circumstances in which they have been called, but to abide in their calling, even if it be that of slavery: "for he that was called in the Lord, being a bondservant, is the Lord's freeman; and he that was called, being free, is Christ's bondservant." Nevertheless, if opportunity offer for the slave to regain his freedom, he is justified in doing so (chap. vii. 10-24).

The third question touched on by the Apostle is that of the marriage of *young Christian girls*, a question which presented special difficulties, because, according to ancient custom, it was the father who decided absolutely the fate of his children, particularly that of his daughters. In Paul's view there were two arguments in favour of celibacy as preferable for young Christian girls. In the first place, there were the ever-increasing difficulties of the position, which render the life of the mother of a family more and more trying; and next, the greater freedom with which

a young girl can devote herself exclusively to the Lord's service, without having to consult in everything the will of the husband to whom she has surrendered her freedom. The Apostle extends the application of these principles to widows (chap. vii. 25-40). It is evident that he does not look upon celibacy as in itself a holier state than matrimony; he only points out that it offers more freedom and facility for Christian service. The Apostle has been often reproached for the manner in which he has treated this subject; but it would have been scarcely possible surely to reply with more circumspection and completeness to the difficult questions placed before him.

The Apostle does not fail to recognise the element of Christian liberty which enters into this subject, and this forms the link between the foregoing passage and that which follows. It seems probable that the next question, that of the lawfulness of using meats that had been offered in sacrifice to idols, may also have been laid before the Apostle in the letter from the Church. Portions of this meat were either eaten at sacred feasts or offered for sale in the market. Many Christians at Corinth felt some scruple in using such food. It seemed to them dangerous thus to come in contact with the impure spirit of idolatry. Others, on the other hand, who held broader views, were not afraid either to eat such viands, or even to partake of them at the banquets which their relations and friends held in the temple of the idol to whom the sacrifice had been offered. The Apostle takes up this question in Chapters viii.-x. He looks at them first simply from the standpoint of Christian charity, urging those who are stronger and more enlightened to remember that they should not by the imprudent use of their liberty bring sin upon the conscience of the more scrupulous (chap. viii.). Then he quotes his own example, to show the strong how they ought willingly to submit to privations for love of their brethren. He who as an apostle

might have looked to the Churches which he had founded to support him, works for his livelihood with his own hands, that the Gospel may make freer way. On the same principle, while holding himself free from all legal observances, he yet submits to them when he can hope by this means to save one soul (chap. ix. 1-23). And in thus acting, he does not labour merely for the good of his brethren, but also for his own, which he would certainly compromise if he sought only to please himself. He reminds the Corinthians of what happened to the Israelites in the desert, when they gave the reins to their lusts and murmured at the privations which God designed for their discipline. In like manner will self-indulgence be fatal to the Christian life (chap. ix. 23-x. 13). This brings the Apostle to the point about which the Corinthian Christians were most concerned, the question of the lawfulness of taking part in heathen banquets. The time has come when this difficult question must be decided, and Paul draws the line with a very firm hand. The Christian who sits at the communion table places himself by that act under the influence of Christ, who presides unseen over the sacred feast. The Israelite who eats the meat of the sacrifice offered in the temple, places himself thus under the influence of the altar and of the worship of Jehovah. In like manner, he who sits at the idol feasts places himself under the influence of the spirit of the demons, which is the spirit of idolatry. Let the Corinthians themselves judge whether they can partake, side by side, of the table of the Lord and the table of demons (chap. x. 14-21). The Apostle concludes this discussion of principles with certain practical rules, addressed specially to the strong, as to the use of meats sacrificed to idols, winding up with this supreme law: "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (chap. x. 23-32).

The Apostle has now done with the moral questions,

strictly so called, which had been brought before him, both those which he could decide positively—such as the going to law, and living in impurity; and those which must be referred ultimately to Christian liberty—such as marriage and the eating of meats offered to idols.

He now passes to an altogether different order of subjects; namely, those which relate to worship, and what might be called liturgical questions (chaps. xi.–xiv.). Of these he takes up three: the demeanour of women in the assemblies of the Church; the removal of abuses in the celebration of the Lord's Supper; the use of the gifts of the Spirit.

The Apostle begins with the one in which Christian liberty has largest scope. Woman, according to ancient usage, not only in the East, but also in Greece, was rarely seen abroad, and never under any circumstances played any public part. Even in the theatres, the women's parts were taken by men. Nevertheless it appears that in the Church of Corinth, led away by a false idea of freedom, they had begun both to pray and prophesy in the assemblies, no doubt on the plea that they were moved to do so by an irresistible impulse of the indwelling Spirit. The Apostle does not wish to put a violent stop to this spiritual movement; but he endeavours to guard against its possible ill consequences, by requiring the woman who speaks to observe the utmost modesty of dress and demeanour. If she wishes to pray or prophesy in public, she must do so with veiled head, in token of her position of dependence with regard to her husband. This dependent position is a step in the Divine order which regulates the relation of the man to Christ, and of Christ Himself to God. The angels who watch over the worship of the Church, would be offended by any demeanour on the part of woman inconsistent with a relation allied to other relations so high and holy. Woman's physical organization is itself a testimony to the modesty and delicacy which should be

the law of her life, for the long hair with which God has endowed her is like a natural veil, indicating the Divine will with regard to her (xi. 1-16).

In view of these arguments, it is impossible to say that the Apostle's prohibition is based upon the customs of the day and place, and is no longer valid. The reasons which he assigns,—the relation of Christ to God, the presence of the angels in worshipping assemblies, and the long hair given to women,—are facts which remain the same in all ages and in all places.

There were other and graver irregularities in the Corinthian Church. Adhering to the manner of the first institution of the Lord's supper, it was the custom of the early Church to celebrate it at the conclusion of a brotherly meal. The viands for this banquet were provided by the communicants themselves. The bond of true brotherliness would have required that all these viands should be placed on the table and eaten in common. But instead of this, it became the practice at Corinth for each guest selfishly to appropriate and eat that which he had sent, so that the rich would allow the poor sitting beside them to want, while they themselves had enough and to spare; and such selfish and revolting conduct precluded the observance of the Lord's supper. The Apostle tries to make the Corinthians ashamed of their conduct, by reminding them of the institution of the supper. It was not a feast intended to gratify the appetite, but a religious rite instituted by Christ to call up the most sacred of memories, and only to be observed in deep seriousness of mind. The violation of this rule would bring the condemnation of God upon them, as was already shown by the sickness which was ravaging their Church (chap. xi. 17-34).

By far the most difficult question yet remained; the right use of *spiritual gifts*. These supernatural powers, conferred by the influence of the Spirit, were based no

doubt upon the natural aptitudes of individuals. They were personal talents, of which the Spirit made use in the regeneration of the persons themselves, and which became subsequently its instruments for the propagation of the spiritual life. The Apostle enumerates as many as nine of these gifts in chapter xii. But the two principal ones, those which seem to have excited a sort of rivalry at Corinth, were the *speaking with tongues* and *prophesying*. The Apostle describes the former as a state of ecstasy in which the soul was filled with all the sweetness of the joys of salvation, and expressed this ineffable happiness by words unintelligible to those who heard them, and of which even those who uttered them had no cognisance. Yet it might happen that one of the hearers might be enabled to follow, and to give the interpretation; or even the speaker himself, when the state of ecstasy had passed, might be able to give an account of his or her experience. It is evident that this form of the gift of tongues differed materially from that on the day of Pentecost, for at Jerusalem no interpretation was needed. The language of the disciples was immediately understood by the hearers. Those who had the gift of prophecy exercised it in speech which could be at once followed by all. While, as the Apostle said, the one who spoke with tongues spoke to God, the prophet spoke to men. Filled with a sudden revelation, relating either to the requirements of the time, or to some phase of the future of the Church, he delivered his message in powerful words, designed to strengthen and encourage the assembly. The gift of tongues, from its altogether miraculous character, had strangely enlisted the sympathy of the Church. There was a third gift, which assumed a more unpretending form than either of the other two—the gift of teaching. The province of this gift was to unfold in a quiet, clear, and consecutive manner the truths of the faith. It is easy to imagine the sort of rivalry set up among these gifts. And

it was this which called for the interference of the Apostle, and has secured to us the possession of the three wonderful chapters (xii.-xiv.) in this Epistle, in which he deals with this difficult question.

The Apostle begins by defining the sphere of the Holy Spirit's operation, and he does this by describing the essential character of the work wrought by this Divine agent; namely, to glorify Christ. He then points out the unity and diversity of the manifestations of this principle, and in this respect compares this spiritual phenomenon to the organization of the human body, the life of which is *one*, while the members are many. There is no room therefore for any exaltation of the more brilliant above the humbler gifts, nor for despising these, which are really the most indispensable. Each must desire just those gifts by which he can best serve his brethren (chap. xii.).

This is the course enjoined by the supreme law of love, that virtue without which all other gifts are void, and which, with faith and hope, will outlive the gifts of prophecy and teaching. Love is even greater than its two companions faith and hope, since through it alone are we made perfectly one with God (chap. xiii.). In this pæan to Love, the Apostle places the exercise of all the gifts under the control of this sublime principle. And now, from this standpoint, he discusses the relative value of the special spiritual gifts—speaking with tongues, and prophecy. The superiority of the latter is now at once obvious. In conclusion, he gives some wise practical rules, by which he seeks to stem that torrent of miraculous gifts, which, swollen by the pride and vanity of the Church of Corinth, threatened to desolate instead of fertilizing it. He adds one word with regard to the function of teaching as regards women, condemning it absolutely, and saying it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church (chap. xiv.).

One more subject—the most important of all—remains

to be treated, and this the Apostle reserved for the close of his letter. It is a question of doctrine—the *resurrection of the body*. This is closely connected with the question whether Christ Himself rose again from the dead; for salvation can only be realized by us as it was wrought out by Him. Now it is a fact, attested by the Apostles and by Paul himself, that Christ had appeared to them in bodily form, and that He was actually raised from the dead. If this was not a fact, the Apostles are false witnesses: nay, more, it follows that the salvation of mankind was not wrought out by Christ; for if He who in His dying bore our condemnation was not delivered by resurrection from the dead, then our condemnation remains, and the Christian, in sacrificing all for the life to come, is deluded by a false hope. This is the abyss of despair, into which we are plunged if Christ is not risen. But laying afresh this foundation broad and strong (which he had for the moment hypothetically denied) the Apostle sees rising upon it the whole glorious edifice of Christian hope: the resurrection of believers on the coming again of Christ; the ultimate destruction of death by the universal resurrection, after Christ shall have overthrown, in His millenarian reign, all His enemies; and then the final act, when, the mediatorial reign being ended, Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to His Father, that God may be all in all to the sanctified believers.

Of what avail, he asks again, is it to be baptized for the dead, if the dead are not raised at all? There is still much difference of opinion as to the meaning of this expression. To me it seems that the words which follow the verse point to the conclusion that the expression is a figurative one, meant to describe the martyr's sanguinary death. He who goes through this baptism of blood in order to join a glorified Church which has no existence, must be a fool. In that case, the true wisdom is to get

as much enjoyment as possible out of the present life (chap. xv. 1-34).

But how can so strange a fact as the resurrection of a body that has become the prey of death and corruption be possible? This is a question which human reason has asked itself thousands of times in view of the promises of the Gospel, and with regard to which the strong-minded have in all ages exercised their sarcasm. St. Paul replies to it by appealing to a familiar fact of constant recurrence—the transformation of the seed, by the death which it undergoes, into a living and fruitful organism. The body raised from the dead is not the result of the gathering together of the molecules which formed the body that has gone to dust. Is there but one kind of body in the universe? Does not a glance at the earth and the heavens show an infinite multiplicity and variety of organisms? Thus the resurrection body will differ completely from the terrestrial body from which it springs; for it is to be the organ, not merely of a living soul, but, like the body of the glorified Saviour Himself, of a principle of life of a higher order, of a life-giving spirit. A transformation of the body is indispensable in order that it may become partaker of the kingdom of God, and some such change must pass even upon those who have not tasted death and are alive at the return of the Lord. A glorious victory this, a full salvation, and which we owe to Him who, by justifying us, has disarmed the law, and by sanctifying us has destroyed sin—the two pillars on which the throne of death was reared. Let us then be steadfast and immovable in the service of Him who has prepared for us so glorious a future (chap. xv. 35-58).

Such is this grand chapter, which we may doubtless take as a sample of that "wisdom among the perfect," of which Paul speaks in chapter ii. 7 and following verses.

It only remained for him to give the Corinthians the

news and the commissions with which he usually closed his letters (chap. xvi.). These are, first, directions relative to the great collection then being made in all the Churches founded by him. Next, he tells them of his intention of visiting Greece before coming to them, a change on the plan he had at first proposed. Then he exhorts them to give a hearty welcome to Timothy, who will arrive shortly after this letter. He explains that Apollos was not willing to come to them just then, but would come some other time; and lastly, thanks them heartily for the joy he has felt in the visit of the three messengers of the Church, who are still with him when he writes, and who have brought him much spiritual refreshment. He adds some greetings, and then, just as he is closing the letter, and adding his salutation with his own hand, he puts in one awful note of warning, in the name of the coming Lord Jesus Christ—the anathema pronounced on any one at Corinth who loves Him not. Then comes the final salutation.

As we have gone through the pages of this letter, have we not felt ourselves living at Corinth, and at the same time at Ephesus, reading the very heart of Paul? We have been witnesses of the troubles of the Church, and of the fatherly solicitude of Paul for its welfare. We have learned through this one primitive Church to form an idea of all the early Churches, and we see that there is nothing ideal about them. We have followed the eye and the hand of the skilful surgeon, who knows so well how to probe and bind up its wounds. For every disorder he finds in the Gospel of Christ the true remedy. He begins the treatment of each subject by a long and detailed discussion, in which he sets forth all its aspects, and thus gradually carries with him the consciences of his readers. This is his aim, and it is only at the close of this thoughtful survey of the question that he gives some simple, practical directions, generally introduced by the conjunction *wherefore* (ὥστε)

(see chap. iii. 21 ; vi. 20 ; vii. 30 ; x. 31 ; xi. 33 ; xiv. 13 ; xiv. 39 ; xv. 58). It has sometimes been asked, why, in relation to the question of meats sacrificed to idols, he did not simply solve the difficulty by the decree of the assembly at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 23-29), and doubts have even been thrown on the genuineness of this decree because St. Paul did not thus appeal to it. It has not been understood that what the Apostle desired to insure was, not a merely legal obedience, but the free consent of fully enlightened consciences (see chap. x. 15). The most remarkable thing in the Apostle's teaching is the lofty and far-reaching view which he takes of all questions, in combination with the practical spirit, the sober and balanced judgment, which always resolves them finally in the most natural and simple manner.

In conclusion, we would call attention to that which the Apostle leaves unsaid in this letter as scarcely less admirable than what is said. The attentive reader will observe on every page of this First Epistle to the Corinthians traces of deep but repressed indignation. Paul knows very well that strictures have been passed on the apostolic teaching given by him to this Church (chap. ii. 6 ; iii. 1, 2 ; iv. 1-5) ; that there are some who make a mock of his promised visit, which he is so often obliged to defer (chap. iv. 18-21) ; that some call in question the genuineness of his Apostleship, and are raising doubt about it (ix. 1-3) ; that others refuse to regard his exhortations as coming from the Lord (xiv. 38). A storm is thus gathering between him and his Church ; this is evident. Thunder is muttering in the distance ; yet the Apostle feels that it is not the time to give vent to his sorrow. He possesses his soul in patience ; and it is only from the study of the second letter that we shall learn how the crisis came at last, and how, above all the tumult of conflicting forces, Christ made His humble servant to triumph.

F. GODET.