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*HISTORICAL COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLES
TO THE CORINTHIANS.*

XXXIX. THE EPISTLE AND ITS PARTS.

As we have seen, Paul in this Epistle often recurs to a former topic after an interposed discussion of another topic. Thus, in order to understand chap. viii., we have had to discuss chap. x. along with it, so closely are they connected. Chap. ix. rises out of chap. vii. The Eucharist is the topic in x. 14-22 and xi. 17-34. This characteristic is so marked, that we must seek some explanation; and we shall find it in the way in which the letter was written.

It is obvious that this letter was not composed continuously at a sitting (and the same remark applies to 2 *Corinthians*). It is much too long for that; and, moreover, as we read it and compare it with the Epistle to the Galatians, we feel that, whereas the Galatian letter was thrown forth, as it were, in one single effort from the volcano of his mind, this letter to the Corinthians was written in a succession of shorter efforts, separated by intervals of thought and meditation.¹ Thus the same topic is taken up again after an interval, when reflection showed Paul that he had not exhausted what ought to be said about it.

In observing the nature of these intervals, and the signs of them in the thought and style, we must, of course, bear in mind the nature of the document. It is not a treatise, where continuity of style is a law of the work. It is a

¹ This remark also applies to the second Corinthian Epistle, in which these halts and fresh starts are so obvious that they have attracted much attention; and some scholars have been led to the erroneous idea that the parts have been put together in the wrong order; or rather, that the Epistle is not a single letter written in parts at intervals, but contains two or more distinct letters, of which the one now placed last was written first. Against this theory we shall attempt to prove that 2 *Corinthians* was a letter, sent to Corinth as it has come down to us, but that considerable intervals elapsed between the composition of the parts.

letter, where frank, unfettered utterance of the momentary tone of mind and spirit is right. A letter ceases to be a letter, if the laws of correct style that govern a formal treatise are applied to it. The perfect naturalness and spontaneousness of Paul's letters is among their most marked characteristics. The thoughts in his mind seem to crystallize in words, almost unbidden, according to the mood of the moment: pleasure, grief, thankfulness, horror, gratitude, mould the style by turns.

When we speak of intervals, we need not, of course, maintain that these are necessarily always intervals of time. Sometimes they may only be changes of emotion; but doubtless they often corresponded to breaks of time. On the other hand, we need not maintain that *Galatians* was written actually without a moment's interruption; but it was written in an absolutely unbroken sweep of emotion, and we may be quite certain that the vehemence of emotion prevented any noticeable interval of time from intervening between the beginning and the end.

We shall, therefore, speak of the intervals between the parts of the Corinthian Epistle without insisting that they all necessarily imply appreciably long lapses of time. But some of them, at any rate, correspond to real intervals of time, during which much thought and meditation occurred; and also we may be quite confident that the composition of this Epistle lasted over some considerable number of weeks, possibly some months. We cannot suppose that Paul withdrew himself for a time from his work in Ephesus in order to devote himself entirely to Corinth. His Ephesian work was heavy, continuous, exacting. He could only snatch from it short intervals for other work. Yet, at the same time, the care of Corinth lay always in his mind. Even while he was teaching and preaching in Ephesus, the thought about Corinthian needs was incubating and maturing in his heart. But the Epistle was composed by parts—

not in one volcanic eruption like *Galatians*—and it was dictated in parts, so that certain topics were treated, set aside, and recalled again for completion, as we see in the Epistle which lies before us.

We do not mean that, whenever any thought recurs after the lapse of a certain number of verses or chapters, one of those intervals (as they have been defined in the last two or three paragraphs) must have intervened between the two occurrences of the thought. On the contrary, there are what we have already described as dominant thoughts, which tend constantly to recur. Those dominant thoughts spring out of the most pressing dangers to which the Corinthians were exposed. Such, for example, was idolatry, with the inevitable low standard of life and thought connected with it.¹ The pressure of pagan surroundings and pagan habits was a continuous force tending to lower the Corinthian standard of conduct; it allied itself with everything else that was hostile to truth; and therefore the thought of this danger recurs in the Epistle very often, and is sometimes latent even where it is not clearly expressed.

We must, then, think of the Epistle to the Corinthians as lying for some considerable period beside Paul, and receiving additions from time to time, before it was sent away. It may be regarded as rather a series of letters than a single letter, though it was sent to Corinth as one. Its parts sprang separately from his mind, as the thoughts of his anxious and provident spirit demanded instant expression.

The proof of this view lies in the demonstration of the parts, and of their significance when regarded separately. This is contained in the following sections, in which, particularly, the formal proof is given that an interval of time occurred between the first and the second part.

But, first, the question arises why he did not send away

¹ Thus the thoughts of *πορνεία* and *εἰδωλολατρεία* tend to pass into one another.

each part as it was written. If his care for Corinth forced him to write a few pages, would it not also force him to send off the letter immediately, that the remedy might be applied as quickly as possible? We must, for example, think that the Galatian letter, when written, was despatched immediately. We cannot imagine Paul waiting a day needlessly after writing it. Some parts of the Corinthian letter are also extremely urgent and impassioned. Why should they be written and laid aside for weeks before being sent away?

The circumstances of Pauline epistolography furnish a ready explanation.

XI. LETTER-WRITING IN EPHESUS.

Several excellent contributions have been made in recent years to the better understanding of the New Testament Epistles through a comparison with the ordinary epistolary customs of the time. The writings of Prof. Deissmann and Prof. Rendel Harris deserve special recognition in this respect. We shall try to build on their foundation.

The want of a regular postal service seems to have exerted some influence on both the Epistles to the Corinthians. Letters could not be sent to a distance, except when the writer found some chance of safe conveyance. As to the frequency of such opportunities, we are apt to get an erroneous impression from Cicero's correspondence—especially with Atticus, which was sometimes carried on by daily letters. Atticus, as a great business man and financier, engaged in large provincial operations requiring constant communication, had at his command a considerable body of regular letter-bearers, *tabellarii*. Cicero also maintained a large establishment of slaves. When they were resident in different parts of central Italy, they could easily keep up a daily system of messengers. Moreover, Cicero, from his high position, could often avail himself of the public couriers,

who were constantly going back and forward on government service; and he seems to have done so a good deal, as, for example, when he was in his Cilician province.

Paul was in an entirely different position. He had no slaves in Ephesus to act as letter-carriers. Moreover, it is highly probable that he never entrusted his letters to any but confidential messengers, Christians, often his own subordinates and coadjutors in mission work, who could supplement the letter by verbal instructions, and might bring back to Paul reports of what they had seen. In the winter and spring of A.D. 55-56,¹ within which period 1 *Corinthians* must have been written, not many opportunities can have presented themselves for sending letters to Corinth from Ephesus. The season was unfavourable to direct voyages across the open sea, where the rocky Ægean islands offered few harbours and generally dangerous coasts. It is not to be understood that the direct passage between Corinth and Ephesus was entirely closed during the winter season. The Greeks were not such timid sailors as that would imply. But regular communication and ordinary trade were broken off, though, undoubtedly, some government vessels and occasional trading vessels watched a favourable wind and ran across. In the scarcity of vessels offering a passage—for government vessels would not be at his service—and the rarity of suitable messengers, Paul might have to wait a long time in the winter for an opportunity of sending a letter.

Now, how are we to conceive Paul to have acted? Would he wait until a suitable messenger was found ready to start, and then write a letter to be sent off with him the moment it was written? Such is apparently the general view, for the date when this Epistle was written is discussed commonly with the tacit assumption that the composition

¹ Some say a year or two earlier or later. All are agreed that the season of the year lay within those limits.

was a matter of a few days at most. For example, many modern scholars say that it must have been written at Passover—an assertion against which we have already protested on other grounds, and against which we now raise this new objection. We have seen that the composition of the letter must have lasted over a considerable time.

Paul wrote as his heart prompted, but had to wait until an opportunity occurred of sending the letter. In the meantime, new thoughts demanded expression. Thus 1 *Corinthians* was a series of shorter letters; and soon after it was despatched, 2 *Corinthians* was begun and continued in the same way.

Examples occur even in Cicero, with his abundant postal opportunities, of this kind of composite letter. In letters to his ordinary correspondents they can rarely occur, for he was not so much interested in them as to find relief in expressing his mind to them. But occasionally, in writing to Atticus, he keeps a letter beside him, and adds to it as the humour prompts him.

XLI. INTERVALS AND PAUSES IN THE EPISTLE.

The following intervals, marked by change in emotion and change in style, have come before us in the Epistle, so far as we have yet proceeded.

The first four chapters have all the appearance of perfect continuity, with an unbroken sweep of emotion. It will be shown in the following sections that Paul had actually brought his letter to an end here and arranged for its transmission, when his plans were interrupted.

Chaps. v., vi. were written immediately on receipt of some disastrous and unexpected news from Corinth. The emotion is in marked contrast with the preceding and the following chapters. The contrast is most sharply expressed

in vi. 5, "I say this to move you to shame," as compared with iv. 14, "I write not these things to shame you."

A feeling of horror pervades these two chapters, v., vi. In chap. v. this feeling rises naturally out of the subject; but it continues through vi., where the first fault rebuked is rather an error of judgment than a crime; and it soon draws back the writer's thought to the repulsive side of life, on which he was dwelling in chap. v.

Throughout these two chapters those sentences which are expressed in the first person singular are sharp and imperative in tone. They are a command.

On the other hand, in chaps. vii., viii., error of judgment, lack of sympathy and brotherliness, are implied among the Corinthians; but quiet, dispassionate reasoning and argument is Paul's method of treating their case. Where the first person singular comes in, it is either to mention Paul's own example and opinion, confidently reckoned on as likely to influence their minds, or it is an appeal to the universality of custom and law in the Churches. It states a deliberate opinion, but rarely issues a command. Even where the subject requires that a rule be laid down, it is done in a less imperative tone than in chaps. v., vi.; and the manner quickly returns to argument and statement of opinion. The two main topics of vii. and viii. are treated in a similar spirit, and end on the same note, viz., Paul's opinion and example.

Then comes a marked interval; and in ix., x., in a warm emotional tone, Paul takes up again the two topics which he has just treated.

The interval between chaps. v.-vi. and chaps. vii.-viii. is marked as clearly in style as in emotion. In the latter, Paul seems to have begun with the intention of taking up and discussing one by one the points on which the Corinthians had consulted him. Hence the orderly method, as if he were counting them one by one on his fingers.

- vii. 1. *περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράψατε.*
 8. *λέγω δὲ τοῖς ἀγάμοις.*
 10. *τοῖς δὲ γεγαμηκόσι παραγγέλλω, οὐκ ἐγώ.*
 12. *τοῖς δὲ λοιποῖς λέγω ἐγώ.*
 25. *περὶ δὲ τῶν παρθένων.*
 viii. 1. *περὶ δὲ τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων.*

Now contrast that manner with the paragraphic connexion in the preceding chapters. Notice the abrupt, excited question with which chap. vi. begins,—

Dare any of you?

and the sharp, astonished expression in the opening of chap. v.,—

It is actually reported that —

It is difficult to think that the person who dictated chaps. v.–vi. to his secretary proceeded immediately to the sober, orderly enumeration of chaps. vii.–viii. An interval of time, bringing with it greater calmness of feeling, must have occurred.

But an interval is equally well marked between chaps. viii. and ix. The style changes, and the emotion becomes far more vehement. The orderly progress of the reasoning ceases, to be resumed again in chap. xii. But in chap. ix. Paul opens with a series of questions, “Am I not free? Am I not an Apostle?” and so on. He considers that he is being examined, that he is making his defence, and that the judges who are examining him have little right to be assuming that position (ix. 3); and then his defence again turns into a further series of almost indignant questions.

We notice, too, that the sequence of thought is broken by chap. ix. The views about sacrificial meats, begun in chap. viii., are not continued till we come to chap. x.; and then the subject is taken up afresh, and treated in a far deeper way, and also in a more emotional tone. I cannot think that, if Paul had already had chap. x. in his mind, he

would have written chap. viii. as it is. In fact, x. 23 ff. repeats in a more precise way what is already said in rather confused fashion in chap. viii.

As we notice the superior clearness of x. 23 ff., we remember that chaps. vii. and viii. as a whole never strike a clear and penetrating note.¹ They lack the sure insight of the prophet and lawgiver who goes to the heart of the question. They show much good sense, taste, sympathy; but they are rather uncertain in their treatment, and leave a blurred image on the reader's mind. It is as if Paul had begun to answer the Corinthian questions before he had fully thought out the situation, and then, leaving off for a time, had returned, in chaps. ix.—x., to the same topics, with a clearer conception of the Corinthian intention in putting the questions.

That is most patent, as we compare chap. x. with chap. viii. Some may think that chap. ix. does not stand in a similar relation to vii. But our view is that, even here, the same relation holds good, though it is less clear.² As Paul thought over the Corinthians' questions, he became more clearly conscious that their suggested cure for society—viz., the urging of marriage as a duty on all Christians—was personal to himself, making the first stage, which must culminate in open questioning of his authority over them and his apostolic rights. Hence arises the personal character of chap. ix. An emphatic statement of his authoritative position towards the Corinthians was necessary.

The strength and personality³ of Paul's repeated claims to authority in this Epistle, his repeated injunctions that the Corinthians should imitate him, may easily offend the modern reader. In truth, it needs some effort before one

¹ See § XXI., p. 284; § XXIV., p. 387; § XXV., p. 294 f.

² See § XXV., p. 293.

³ iii. 10; iv. 15, 16, 21; vii. 7, 8, 40; viii. 13; ix. 1 ff.; x. 33; xi. 1, 2, 34; xiv. 18; xv. 1 ff., 31, etc.: also the frequent "I order, I give my judgment," etc.

can reconcile them with the ordinary humility, candour, and freedom from egotism or self-assertion of Paul's character. They give the occasion for the accusation which some scholars make against him, that he was excitable, irritable under opposition, unable to endure any difference of opinion or independence of judgment in those with whom he was brought into relation, surrounding himself with creatures of moderate abilities, who would obey him without questioning and follow him without murmur.¹

The reason and the need for the assertiveness of this Epistle lies in that failing of the Corinthian character (and of the Greeks generally), which we have often had to mention—their incapacity to obey, and their weakness in recognising and acting on general, moral, and legal principles. We have pointed out why Paul could not counsel the Corinthians to obey their constituted officials; but repeatedly he impresses on them the duty of obedience to their spiritual father. He felt strongly that this was a prime necessity in the present state of the Corinthian Church; and in urging it on them he is unconscious of the seeming egotism. That appearance of egotism was a minor consideration; and Paul always sacrificed all minor aims in the effort to attain the great end. On this subject, see further § XLIII.

Yet he gives a full explanation of this apparent egotism. They are to obey and imitate him, not for himself. He came to them not trusting in eloquence or in philosophy, but in the power of God, which spoke through him, ii. 1, 4 f. Personally, he had been weak, anxious, fearful. But they can safely follow implicitly what he said, and imitate what he did, because it was not his own power and skill that spoke to them.

The frequent repetition of the order "to imitate me"

¹ See, for example, Mr. Baring Gould's *Study of St. Paul*, *passim* (pp. 206, 263, etc.).

implies that it was much needed. This may seem inconsistent with the emphatic declaration in xi. 2, "I praise you that ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them unto you." But it has been rightly recognised (*e.g.* by Prof. Findlay in EXPOSITOR, June, 1900, p. 402) that this really contains a quotation from the Corinthians' letter to himself: it means, "I am glad to hear from you that ye remember me in all things."

XLII. THE FIRST LETTER CONTAINED IN FIRST CORINTHIANS.

As we have seen, the first four chapters of the Epistle are written in one sustained, continuous tone and emotion. They were dictated at one time—or, at least, at very brief intervals—under the influence of the same overmastering thought and purpose, and form as perfect a unity as the Galatian Epistle. They come to a distinct climax and conclusion. The paragraph iv. 14–21 reviews and sums up the purpose of the short letter in a pointed, emphatic way—as was Paul's custom—and states his intentions for the future. He is sending Timothy at the present moment.¹ Soon he will himself come. They should so act, as not to need rebuke when he reaches them. At this point the final greetings, which commonly lead up to the benediction, might come in with perfect propriety.

We have in these chapters a perfect little letter, a model of a religious and hortatory, warning and friendly Epistle.

The occasion of that letter was evidently the news received from the agents of Chloe (i. 11: see § IX., p. 104). It is filled with the thought that the Corinthian Christians are spending their time and energy in discussing the merits of rival preachers, backing their favourites in the true

¹ ἐπεμψα epistolary: I am sending Timothy, who will recall me to your memory when he reaches you.

Greek spirit,¹ and thus tending to fall into rival parties wearing, as it were, the badges of their respective favourites. It explains his method of teaching, stage by stage, according to the progress of his pupils.

At the same time, the letter speaks not for himself alone, but for all the Apostles. All are agreed. All stand or fall together. To balance one against another is to miss utterly the true and perfect unity that reigns among them all. Their other teachers and favourites also adapt their teaching to the stage at which they find their pupils. But all are aiming at the same result: all would try to prevent the Corinthians from this folly of pitting one teacher against the other (iv. 6).

The remedy lies in faithfulness to the first and effectual teaching, through which they had been converted.

XLIII. THE SINGLE STANDARD AND THE MONARCHICAL BISHOP.

The stress which Paul lays on the necessity of a single standard for the congregation deserves special note. Many teachers have come, and many will come, for one teacher at the beginning was not sufficient. But all are not to be trusted. There must, therefore, be some standard by which to test them.

That standard should be sought in the original teaching, viz., the teaching of the Founder of the congregation. His teaching was the true, Divine message; for it came in power (ii. 4 f.; iv. 20; ix. 2). The existence of a Church in Corinth is the proof that Paul's message was the right and the standard teaching. Paul had laid the foundation, "which is Christ" (iii. 10 f.).

Other teachers do well when they try to build on that foundation; but their superstructure will be tried and tested by fire, whether it is vital and true. The proof

¹ See § V., p. 28 ff.

of their teaching will be the same as the proof of Paul's. The power to last is the ultimate test.

In iii. 11-15 Paul is saying anew what he said to the Galatians (*Gal.* i. 6-9): "If any one else, if even I myself, should preach unto you any other gospel than that which I and Barnabas preached unto you, let him be anathema." But in that place Paul was looking from the opposite point of view. He was thinking of teachers who were building on his foundation a building inconsistent therewith. Here he is thinking of teachers who are building on his foundation what is in harmony therewith.

But the congregation needs to try the new teachers at the present moment; and it finds a standard in the first teaching, which has proved itself to be vital and enduring. The congregation itself is the living proof that the first teaching was true; and it must reject all that does not agree with that standard. To the Galatians and the Corinthians alike that is the principle which Paul urges. Even if he himself came giving a second and different message, they must reject him. His first, effectual message is the only true one.

Their standard, then, must be single. They must look to one guide alone; and that guide is their father. Many teachers will come to them; many servants will keep watch over them in their childhood:¹ but they can have only one father, Paul himself. Him they should look to and imitate.

Looking to the creative sense, the feeling for precedent in law and organization, which are evident in the growth of the early Church, we can hardly hesitate to say that here we have the germinating idea out of which grew the monarchical bishops of the following century.

¹ πολλοὺς παιδαγωγούς (iv. 15): see *Hist. Comm. Gal.*, § XXXIX., p. 381 ff.: the sentence on p. 385, which (as is there said) "may perhaps be fanciful," seems now to me to be so.

The difficulty was how this principle should be carried out after the Apostles had passed away. Paul was succeeded by the author of First Peter, and he by the author of *Revelation* i.-iii. But who should succeed later? Elsewhere I have attempted¹ to show the external causes under pressure of which one of the *Episkopoi* or *Presbyteroi* was obliged to become a president and representative of the congregation. That president-*Episkopos* was, among other things, charged with the duty of communicating with other congregations, with which is closely connected the duty of entertaining visitors and messengers from other congregations. Now from the beginning the idea is clearly discernible that the general opinion of the whole Church is Divine and right. Obviously, the person in each congregation who could best learn what the Church as a whole thought was the official charged with communication. He was the link connecting the congregation with other congregations: the sum of the scattered congregations, separated in space, makes up the Church universal: the letters, visits, and other communications are the device whereby space is annihilated, and unity attained. Thus communication between the scattered parts was the life of the Church, and the official charged with communication was obviously presented as the heir to the authority of the Apostles. So far the argument has been already stated; but we ask when and how this development was first recognised as a necessity.

Paul undoubtedly had the idea that the single authority, necessary for his Churches, must not perish with himself. In his first letter to Timothy there is latent the idea that Timothy is his delegate and representative in Asia. From the idea of delegation to that of succession the development is natural and necessary. How far Paul had foreseen that development we are denied any information. But, in fact,

¹ *The Church in the Roman Empire before 170*, p. 429 ff.

it seems beyond doubt that the president-Episkopos became the heir to the monarchical authority; and all reasonable probability is in favour of that inheritance having been contemplated by some of the Apostles themselves.

The Third Epistle of John takes us into the time before that inheritance was settled. It is addressed to Gaius, who was evidently charged with the duties of hospitality in his own congregation (v. 5). His congregation was situated on one of the great lines of communication along which Christianity spread towards the Gentiles.¹ To his care Demetrius is recommended in this letter of introduction. But a certain Diotrophes discourages and opposes that welcoming of visitors from other congregations, which Gaius extends to them; and he also resists the authority of the writer, who evidently claims the same general authority which Paul and Peter had exercised. Diotrophes, who "casteth them out of the Church," is evidently understood to be an official; and the situation implied is one of division and contention between rival influences in a congregation, such as showed the urgent need of a single standard of authority in it. He was one of those "headstrong and self-willed persons" who "kindled sedition" in Corinth² (Clem. i. 1), and beyond doubt in many other congregations.

XLII. PLANS FOR A SECOND VISIT TO CORINTH.

The fact that the composition of the Epistle extended over a considerable period affords a complete explanation of the variation between Paul's statements about his second visit to Corinth; and, at the same time, a comparison between his different statements proves conclusively that one

¹ It is needless to point out how well all this would suit the Gaius of *Rom.* xvi. 23, "mine host and (host) of the whole Church" in Corinth, on the great route between the East and Rome. The name, however, was a common one.

² See the preceding note.

of the intervals in the composition of 1 *Corinthians* must lie between chap. iv. and chap. v.

When Paul wrote the concluding paragraph of this short letter (iv. 14–21), he was sending Timothy to Corinth, and was intending to come himself shortly. 17: “For this cause have I sent¹ unto you Timothy, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways. . . . 19: But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will.” Now, if we compare this passage with the similar ones in *Philipp.* ii. 25, *Coloss.* iv. 7–9, *Eph.* vi. 21, it becomes clear that Timothy is here commissioned as a special envoy to Corinth. The four passages correspond exactly to one another. Timothy is to go direct from Ephesus to Corinth, carrying instructions and a letter. Epaphroditus is sent from Rome to Philippi with a letter,² “that when ye see him again, ye may rejoice.” Tychicus (with Onesimus) was sent from Rome to Colossæ and Ephesus bearing two letters, “that ye may know our estate, and that he may comfort your hearts.” The same word and tense is used in all four cases (ἐπεμψα, πέμψαι).

The parallel between 1 *Corinthians* iv. 17–19 and *Philippians* ii. 19–25 is even closer. In both cases Paul intimates an ulterior plan, using the same word “shortly” (ταχέως). He sends Timothy now, and will himself come shortly. He sends Epaphroditus now, and will send Timothy shortly.

But these intentions, as mentioned here, were partly frustrated, and were carried out in a different way from what is here intimated. Timothy did not go direct to Corinth; and hence Paul says in xvi. 10, “If Timothy come,” in a tone of uncertainty,³ which contrasts markedly with the assured “I have sent Timothy to you” of iv. 17. The facts are left obscure for us in the Epistle, while the

¹ Epistolary tense: in English it ought to be expressed by a present.

² See Prof. Rendel Harris's paper on *Epaphroditus, Scribe and Courier*, in the *EXPOSITOR*, Dec., 1898, p. 401 ff.

³ ἐὰν ἔλθῃ, not εἰ ἔρχεται.

march of events had made them clear to the Corinthians ; but Luke explains them in *Acts* xix. 22. Timothy was, after all, not sent directly to Corinth, but went round by way of Macedonia.

The reason for the change remains uncertain ; but probably it was due, in part at least, to the winter season, and the difficulty of getting a passage direct across the open *Ægean*. Macedonia needed Timothy at the moment ; and it was resolved that he should go there first, and afterwards, if circumstances were suitable, go on to Corinth.¹ Then Paul kept the letter which he had intended to send by Timothy, and reserved it for another opportunity and another messenger.

Nor did Paul carry out exactly his intention, here announced, of shortly going himself to Corinth. He alludes to his change of intention in 2 *Corinthians* i. 15 ff. : " I was minded to come before unto you for a second visit to confirm you, and thereafter to visit Macedonia and return to you again, so as to be ready to start from Corinth for Jerusalem in time for the Passover of the coming year " (*i.e.* March, A.D. 57) : he apologises for the change of plan, and explains that the change was not due to fickleness and wavering uncertainty of mind on his part, but was made in kindness to the Corinthians themselves. Paul did not wish to come to bring them sorrow. He wished to come to bring them happiness. He preferred to send a letter conveying his severity and reproofs, and to come later in more pleasant circumstances.

Surely, then, the reasonable interpretation of this passage must be, that Paul had intended to go direct to Corinth from Ephesus, and had intimated his intention. But bad news came. He learned that the conduct of the Corin-

¹ See preceding note. Timothy did not go on to Corinth until he accompanied Paul thither. Paul found him still in Macedonia (*St. Paul the Trav.*, p. 276).

thians required severe reproof. He resolved to reprove them by letter, to postpone his visit, and to go first into Macedonia.

Such is the sequence of events, as we gather it from 2 *Corinthians* i. 15 ff. It agrees precisely with what we see in 1 *Corinthians* iv. ff. Paul intimates his intention of soon going direct to Corinth. The visit is intimated in a kind, not in a severe tone. Paul anticipates that it will be a pleasant visit: there is not a trace of sternness or severity in the short letter i.-iv., though, of course, there is that admonition which young human converts always need—"not to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children." But the tone of chap. v. is completely changed. This new chapter is full of horror and stern rebuke. Evidently here begins the letter of severe reproof. Paul has heard the terrible news. He at once abandons all thought of an early visit to Corinth, and instead writes the letter which begins with chap. v.

But he had still beside him the letter of chaps. i.-iv., which he had intended to send by Timothy, but had retained when Timothy had to go by way of Macedonia. Paul did not destroy that letter. He sent it, but first he lengthened it by adding a long and outspoken expression of his horror and astonishment at the laxity of moral feeling in the Corinthian Church.

The lengthened Epistle had to wait for a suitable messenger and an occasion. The visit of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, who brought the letter from the Corinthians, probably lasted some time, as they either had come on some business purpose or took the opportunity of combining business with their duty as envoys.¹ Paul

¹ One sees numerous cases in which the envoys of cities (*πρέσβεις*) in this period did the same. Persons were often selected as *Presbeis* either in order to give them the opportunity of visiting Rome, or because they were going to Rome on their own business.

worked on the letter at intervals, until some time in the spring; and in chap. xvi. 3-8 he states his final intention, regardless of the discrepancy with iv. 19. He will wait in Ephesus till Pentecost, 9th May, A.D. 56. Then he will go to Macedonia, and thereafter he will visit Corinth, whence he will either go to Jerusalem (in spring of 57) or send envoys thither.

He makes in this Epistle no explanation of, or apology for, the change of plan. Probably he, at the moment of writing, did not think of the inconsistency between iv. 19 and xvi. 3 ff. He was so absorbed in serious topics that minor discrepancies did not affect him. But soon afterwards he remembered, and, as he was now beginning to compose *2 Corinthians*, he apologised in the opening paragraphs for the change and the discrepancy. In the interval, however, other changes had occurred. He was unable to remain in Ephesus till Pentecost. The riot of Demetrius compelled him to retire for the time, as freedom to speak was no longer in his power. Probably he had not waited till the three messengers were ready to return to Corinth; but had sent Titus as his envoy,¹ with instructions as to how he should address the erring Corinthians and orders to bring back a report to Paul. Titus, aware that Paul was to travel from Ephesus by way of Troas and Macedonia, returned that way; and in the coasting system of ancient travel there was no danger that the two should miss one another, inasmuch as each was on the outlook for the other. They met in Macedonia (*2 Cor.* vi. 6 f.).

It seems strange that, considering the obviously close connexion between the latter part of First Corinthians and the early chapters of Second Corinthians, many commentators attempt to interpose a long interval between them. It is obvious that the beginning of the Second Epistle was

¹ *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 284 (at the foot of the page read "winter or spring" instead of "autumn").

written before Titus returned,¹ and there is every reason to think that he would not stay long in Corinth or linger on the road, considering Paul's extreme anxiety about the state of that Church. The Second Epistle was continued after Titus met Paul and relieved his mind.

The first part was evidently written in Troas,¹ the second in Macedonia (probably Philippi).

It is remarkable how many erroneous statements have been made by modern scholars about this simple matter—all due to the inveterate habit (a legacy from the "Tübingen School") of beginning by framing an ingenious and tempting theory, and then squeezing Paul's words to suit it.

For example, one writer² infers rightly from *2 Cor.* ii. 3 that Paul had written to the Corinthians that he was not coming to them, and proceeds, "he did not write this in any extant letter. In the First Epistle he still declared categorically that he would come. It can only be inferred that he wrote it in a letter subsequent to the First Epistle, and that must have been the letter carried by Titus." This argument fails to catch the point of Paul's statements. The contradictory intentions which Paul in *2 Cor.* i., ii., implies that he had intimated to the Corinthians were not "I will come to you," and "I will not come to you": they were "I will come direct to you before I go to Macedonia" and "I will go to Macedonia first, postponing you to a later time." Both these intentions are intimated in the First Epistle (iv. 17 and xvi. 5); and the direct contradiction between them is not there explained or apologized for. Thus, as Paul feels, he has sent the Corinthians a word (*i. e.*, a letter) that is at once "Yea" and "Nay"; and he apologizes and explains.

¹ *2 Corinthians* ii. 12, the perfects ἀνεφργμένως and ἔσχηκα, "though a door has been opened unto me, I have found no relief," prove this. The epistolary tense, ἐξῆλθον ἀποταξάμενος, is used of his departure from Troas.

² In the *Commentary on the Bible*, edited by Rev. F. C. Cook, 1881.

It would, however, be endless to go over all the difficulties that have been needlessly and unjustifiably invented, and the incorrect inferences that have been drawn from the passages bearing on Paul's intended and postponed visit. One alone must be briefly noticed, inasmuch as it is especially unreasonable, viz., the theory which would place the composition of the latter chapters of the Second Epistle before the early chapters. It is clear that in *2 Corinthians* i. 15 Paul explains why he had not paid a second visit to Corinth as he had once intended, and that in *2 Corinthians* xii. 14, xiii. 1, he is looking back over two visits and forward to a third. The full explanation of this difference must be left to the Commentary on the Second Epistle. But, at least, the difference proves clearly that the final chapter of the Second Epistle was written later than the opening chapter.

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