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THE LETTERS AND EPISTLES OF PAUL.

BY A. J. DICKINSON, M.A., D.D., BIRMINGHAM, ALA.

Deissman draws a distinction between letters and epistles. "What is a letter? A letter is something non-literary, a means of communication between persons who are separated from each other. Confidential and personal in its nature, it is intended for only the person or persons to whom it is addressed, and not at all for the public or any kind of publicity. There is no essential difference between a letter and an oral dialogue, and it has been not unfairly called a conversation halved. It concerns nobody but the person who wrote it and the person who opens it. From all others it is meant to be kept secret. What is an epistle? The epistle is an artistic literary form, a species of literature, just like the dialogue, the oration or the drama. It has nothing in common with the letter but its form; apart from that one may venture the paradox that the epistle is the opposite of the letter. The contents of an epistle are intended for publicity—they aim at interesting 'the public'. Everyone may read it and is expected to read it. The main features in the letter become in the epistle mere external ornament, intended to keep up the illusion of 'epistolary' form. Most epistles are intelligible without knowing the addressee and the author. The epistle differs from the letter as the dialogue from the conversation, as the historical drama does from history; as the carefully turned funeral oration does from the halting words of consolation spoken by a father to his motherless child—as art differs from nature. The letter is a piece of life, the epistle is a product of art. The letters of Paul are not literary; they are real letters, not epistles; they were written by Paul not for the public and posterity, but for the persons to whom they were addressed. The two Epistles to the Corinthians that have come down to us belong to the

group of real letters. What is it that makes the second Epistle so extremely unintelligible to many people? Simply the fact that it is out and out a letter, full of allusions which we for the most part no longer fully understand. What was originally non-literary has by subsequent development become literary. Paul was not a writer of epistles, but of letters; he was not a literary man. His letters were raised to the dignity of literature afterwards, when the piety of the church collected them, multiplied them by copying and so made them accessible to the whole of Christendom. Later still they became sacred literature, when they were received among the books of the 'New' Testament then in process of formation; and in this position their literary influence has been immeasurable. But all the subsequent experiences cannot change the original character of Paul's letters". (See "Light from the Ancient East", p. 218 ff).

That the Epistles of Paul possess as we have them all the characteristics of real letters, as above stated by Deissmann, the facts in them abundantly testify; and that they have also been raised to the dignity of epistles is equally well founded in the facts. The truth is we have here writings which are at one and the same time letters and epistles, and it is the task of the literary critic to discover how this came about. The theory advanced by Deissmann, that the church subsequently raised the letters to the dignity of epistles, will not bear the light of the facts as they are discovered from the writings; and in lieu thereof I would suggest the following: The Epistles as we have them are not single letters, but collections of letters written along from time to time by the apostle as occasions called for them. These letters the churches receiving them preserved after the immediate occasion that solicited them had passed away; and they found them helpful in the culture of the Messianic life, and cherished them on that account. Possibly also the apostle himself kept a letter-book containing copies of his important letters from time to time, such as we know were in use by three papyrus fragments containing copies of letters sent or letters received. See Deiss-

mann, p. 227. Possibly it is to these letter-books that reference is made in II. Tim. 4:13. Thus two collections of the letters grew up, one in the several churches as they received them and one in the letter-books of the apostle. Upon visiting these churches at some later period the apostle found them using and cherishing his letters, reading them in the public worship; and he then epistolized them to function the better in that office. This would also be the more necessary since the originals in many cases would have become soiled, broken and worn by use, and in need of being transferred from the letter-papyrus to the more enduring and convenient parchment. Possibly also at this time they were published by having the scribe make several copies for such members of the church as might wish to possess one. So I suggest that the theory of Deissmann be amended as above; for it seems to me that the facts testify that the apostle epistolized his own letters for the purpose of making them Scripture to function canonically in the life of the church. In this article we shall test this theory by a study of the Corinthian correspondence; but it is equally applicable to any of the other Epistles of the New Testament.

The American Revisers have recognized that there are points in the Epistles to the Corinthians where patent breaks in the context are to be observed, and have marked those points by a break in the text. Such breaks in the text are found in that Version at 1:10; 4:21; 6:20; 7:40, etc. But it is clear that similar breaks should also be made at I. Cor. 8:13 and 9:27, separating the 9th chapter from what goes before and what comes after; and similar breaks should be given at II. Cor. 6:13 and 7:1, since that section has clearly no connection either with what precedes or follows. Admitting these two additional sections, we have the Epistles divided by these breaks into fourteen sections as follows: I. 1:10-4:21; 5-6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12-14; 15; 16:1-9, 15-18; II. 1:3-6:13; 7:2-16; 6:14-7:1; 8-9; 10-13. The introductions and conclusions are best reserved for later study. Now the theory is that each of these sections originally constituted a separate

and distinct letter, written on a separate occasion, addressed to a different situation, with a distinct purpose; so that instead of just two letters written by the apostle to the church at Corinth we have fourteen penned along from time to time in the course of a correspondence, and subsequently collected into two collections according as Sosthenes or Timothy was the apostle's associate in the writing, I. Corinthians being Paul-Sosthenes letters and II. Corinthians being the Paul-Timothy letters. The current view that each of these was from the first a single letter, besides failing to account for the literary and historical phenomena displayed in the references and cross-references has these two insuperable objections. Each of them would imply a complexity of scandals, disorders, schisms and vagaries of beliefs existing in acute form at Corinth at one and the same time such as the world has never presented in any one community at one time before or since. Each of them would also imply that the apostle at Ephesus, in constant communication with the church at Corinth, allowed this acute complexity of disorders to develop to the point of breaking up the church before he put forth reasonable effort to check it; and that, too, when we know that the care of all the churches rested heavily upon him. But if each of these disorders arose and developed in a sequence of unfolding situations, and the apostle addressed a letter to the church as each arose, effectually meeting it, we have a process much more in keeping with the analogy of history, and with the apostle's well known care for the churches.

Following the chronology of Ramsay, the church at Corinth was established Sept. 51-March 53 A. D., Acts 18:1-18. The apostle then visited the East and returned to Ephesus in Oct. 53 A. D., Acts 19:1. He remained in Ephesus until Jan. 56 A.D., Acts 19:2-20:1. He then went on by Troas into Macedonia where he spent the spring and summer collecting funds for the poor saints in Jerusalem; and in Dec. of that year reached Corinth, where he spent the winter of 57 A. D. During these three years in Ephesus and Macedonia he wrote the Corinthian letters Oct. 53-Dec. 56 A.D. During

all this period we may be assured that there was a process going on in the life of the church in Corinth manifesting itself in a series of unfolding situations, and a corresponding response on the part of the apostle in Ephesus; for he was in constant communication with them through the coming and going of messengers and reports and letters. If we shall be able to arrange these fourteen letters in their proper chronological order, we may hope from them to learn to some extent what was the history of the church and the biography of the apostle the while. We may hardly expect to find the letters in the two collections in their original chronological order, since other considerations would enter into the order of their compilation.

Viewed from the matters at issue and treated in the several letters we may put the fourteen into five groups: (1). Those dealing with fornication and marriage, II. Cor. 6:14-7:1; I. Cor. 5-6; 7. (2). Those dealing with idolatrous feasts and foods, I. Cor. 8; 10; 11. (3). Those dealing with disorders of worship and beliefs, I. Cor. 12-14; 15. (4). Those dealing with the collection for the saints, I. Cor. 16:1-9, 15-18; II. 8-9. (5). Those dealing with the assault upon his apostolic rights and prerogatives, I. Cor. 9; 1:10-4:21; II. Cor. 10-13; 1:3-6:13, 7:2-16. It is worth noting that the two first of these groups treat of the "necessary things" enjoined by the Jerusalem-council, Acts 15:29, which was the apostle's mission to enforce in the Gentile churches, Acts 16:4. We would therefore expect to find the first letter among those bearing on that matter of church discipline. In 5:9 ff. we find a reference to a previous letter on this subject of fornication, and he mentions it as "my letter", indicating that there was but one received hitherto from him; and so that letter must have been the first one, and 5-6 the second. The letter referred to was one forbidding to have company with fornicators in church fellowship; but they had misunderstood him, and construed it to mean fornicators of this world, I. 5:9 ff. Now just such a letter, or extract from such a letter, is found in II. Cor. 6:14-7:1. This passage means just what the apostle says he meant in this reference; but its language is

open to just the misconstruction the Corinthians put on it. So we conclude that the first letter of the correspondence was II. Cor. 6:14-7:1; and the second was I. Cor. 5-6. In this last there is a reference to the Passover as about to be celebrated, 5:7 ff., and so we may date the writing of this letter just before that season of the year, March 54 A.D.; and the previous letter it was to explain may be dated a couple of months earlier. These two letters very naturally raised in the minds of these Greeks, with their notions of marriage, the question as to its desirability; and so they wrote to him about the propriety of the marriage relation, 7:1. It is in response to this letter of inquiry that he wrote the letter in I. Cor. 7. Allowing time for the sending of the second letter, and for the Corinthians to discuss its meaning and pertinence to their life so as to raise the question about the desirability of marriage, we may date this third letter from the apostle about June 54 A.D. The situation in the first letter is quite general, as is also the apostle's treatment of the subject from the viewpoint of the teachings of the Scriptures unto "the perfecting of holiness in the fear of the Lord", II. Cor. 7:1; but in the second the situation is specific, the incestuous man must be excommunicated, their litigiousness stopped, their indulgences in idol meats wantonly are not expedient, and the Greek unchastity is in the face of the Christian doctrine of the sacredness of the body as the temple of God. We may feel assured that this letter effectually set matters right; for such is implied in what they wrote about the expediency of marriage. Also, we may be assured that the apostle's response in his third letter about the expediency of marriage kept them from the extreme of asceticism on that matter.

The group of letters dealing with idolatrous feasts and foods would naturally follow those above. The subject is already mentioned in the second letter, 6:12 ff, where the apostle writes depreciatingly of the proverb, "meats for belly and belly for meats", as being of no decisive worth in the question at issue. It seems that the letter in chapter 8 was written in response to an inquiry from them, 8:1, and the church

has already divided into two factions over the matter. One faction, "the Strong", claiming superior intellectual discrimination and moral freedom, argued that there was but one God and an idol was nothing; and so the idol sacrifice could have no effect on either the food or the feast. The other faction, "the Weak", could not rise to this mental and moral estate; and so put quite a different construction on the liberal conduct of "the Strong". Such a highly developed situation, implying a set apology by the "Strong", must have taken some time to develop; and so we may put this letter in the summer of 54 A.D. It is worth noticing that the apostle does not argue the case on its merits, although it was one of the "necessary things" in the decree of the Jerusalem-council; but admits of the validity of the argument of the "Strong", and argues with them from grounds of loving expediency. But in the next letter, 10:1-11:1, he argues the question from the ethical and social viewpoint as dangerous to personal morality and piety. This he illustrates from the experience of Israel, who, fresh from a baptism unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea and in spite of the fellowship in the manna and the water from the smitten rock, reverted to idolatrous feasts and foods with its attendant immoralities, and tempted God unto their overthrow. It was indeed a great trial for these Greek Christians to cut themselves off from the society of their heathen friends and kindred, which the abstaining from idolatrous feasts and foods entailed; for in Greek society every social function was in honor of some deity or cult. But God would give them strength and a way of escape from every such trial. So they should flee from idolatry and make the most of their Christian Agape, symbolical as it is of the communion of its participants in the body and blood of Messiah as over against the idol feast symbolical of fellowship with current demonolatry. The point at issue therefore is one of social expediency and church fellowship; and each case ought to be decided according to the principle of the expediency of love. He commends his own example and manner of life to them. This discussion of social morality and custom

as affected by the idolatrous feasts and foods seems to have effectually disposed of the controversy at Corinth. The letter would seem to have been written early in the summer of 54. The next letter, chapter II, opens with an expression of gratification by the apostle for the obedience and loyalty of the church to his apostolic deliverances, 11:2. But a certain immodesty in dress on the part of women taking part in the public worship needs to be corrected; and certain excesses in the Agape leading to drunkenness, so that it was not possible afterwards to celebrate the Lord's Supper, need rebuke. It is patent that these disorders grew out of transferring the customs of the heathen feasts to the Christian Agape, and are the after effects of their participation in the social functions of the Greek religion and its sacrificial feasts. There are other disorders which the apostle promises to set in order by a visit to them. This letter, and the promised visit, may be dated September, 54. That the apostle made the promised visit I think is shown by the fact that in the next letter he seems to be writing from a first-hand knowledge of the situation.

A people converted from dumb idolatry to a religion finding its expression in praying, preaching, prophesying, singing, speaking with tongues would naturally go to all kinds of excesses in these gifts of the Spirit. Some of them affected these prerogatives, and their genuineness must be tested by the way in which they represented Jesus as the Messiah, 12:1-3. So the church at Corinth developed scandalous excesses, making their worship a babel of boisterous speech; and the apostle writes the letter in 12-14 to correct this abuse of the gifts of the Spirit. All gifts are from the same Spirit, to be ministered unto the same Lord, according to the workings of the same God; and so as regards their origin and manner of operation are equal. But their exercise should be determined by their capacity to be of profit to the church assembled for worship. He then sets forth the church as an organism composed of many different members for mutual service in diversity of ministrations as it hath pleased God to make it. But the one gift, that regulates the profitable

exercise of these several gifts in their ministrations, is love; and hence it is the greatest of all gifts, and necessary to the efficiency of each. This last he sets forth in the psalm in chapter 13, which he had possibly written before for use in public worship and here quotes as pertinent to his purpose. The poetic rhythm and the use of the first person would seem to show some such origin for it. He then sets forth the comparative merits of prophesying and speaking with tongues from the viewpoint of profitableness unto edification of the church, and especially to the unbeliever who may come into the meeting. He advises control of the gifts unto edification, and specially rebukes the boisterousness of the women. He appeals to a prophetic deliverance from the Lord for a vindication of his counsel, and urges all things to be done decently and in order. The situation assumed in the letter is one which would require considerable time to develop, and the letter may be dated in the November of 54, A.D.

In the next letter, chapter 15, the Corinthians are in a controversy over the resurrection of the dead, not however of the resurrection of Christ. Owing to the Greek idea of the essentially evil nature of matter some of them could not believe that there could be a resurrection of dead persons. The apostle shows that this position would deny also the resurrection of Christ as preached to them in the Gospel; and the resurrection of Christ carries with it the resurrection of the dead, just as the first-fruits imply a coming harvest. It is also necessary to the consummation of his Messianic reign. After some exposition of the nature of the risen body, such as Greeks especially would need and a revelation of the mystery of the Parousia, he urges them to be but the more persistent in the work of the Lord since the resurrection makes their work not in vain in the Lord. The situation in Corinth, besides what is involved in the argument, is further revealed in the references in verses 29-34. Some of the Corinthians had died before they received baptism and hence that ordinance had been administered vicariously for them. Denying the resurrection they had naturalized the heathen Epicurean

dictum "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die"; and by it their good morals had been corrupted from their evil companionships. They should rather quote the Christian dictum, "Awake to righteousness and sin not", as men who have a knowledge of God. In Ephesus the apostle is "in jeopardy every hour" and he "dies daily"; and "after the manner of men he has fought with beasts". But in all this danger of death he has been profited by the hope of the resurrection from the dead. It is evident from these references that the controversy in Corinth was highly developed, and the dangers in Ephesus had grown acute. We may therefore date the letter in the autumn of 55 A.D.

The next group of letters dealing with the collection for the saints, I. Cor. 16:1-9, 15-18, is clearly written in the beginning of that movement in Corinth; for it gives directions how to proceed in that ministration. The second letter, II. Cor. 8-9, was written a year after this movement began in Corinth, 8:10. This second letter was clearly written from Macedonia in the spring of 56 A.D.; and so the first one must have been written from Ephesus in the spring of 55, before Pentecost, 16:9, and was occasioned by a visit to him by Stephanas and two of his slaves, Fortunatus and Achaicus, 16:15-18. These visitors seem to have brought the apostle a contribution, and then dedicated themselves to this work of "ministering unto the saints". The letter was sent by Titus who began the work in Corinth, II. Cor. 8:6. The second letter was also sent by Titus a year later, who, with certain others, were to bring the work to its completion before the apostle's arrival. In this last letter he stirs up their zeal by commending the example of the Macedonian churches in which he was at that time pressing the work.

The next group of letters dealing with an attack on the apostolic standing and authority are given in I. Cor. 9; 1:10-4:21; II. Cor. 10-13; 1:3-6:13, 7:2-16. There is no evidence that these assailers were Judaizers, or that they were working in the interest of any fundamental doctrine; but every reference implies that they were Pharasaic schismatics, seeking to

displace the apostle and his associates in the esteem of the Corinthians for their own selfish purposes. This they hoped to accomplish by depreciating criticisms of them, and glorifying themselves. In the letter in chapter 9 the apostle begins his "defense to them that examine" him, 9:3. It is implied in this defense that his assailants charged that he was not an apostle on par with Peter, the brethren of the Lord and the rest of the apostles, because he did not receive a stated salary to maintain himself as they did, but worked as a common laborer for his living. This proved that he did not have the rights of an apostle. In this letter the apostle's attitude towards his assailants is a calm, complacent, forceful refutation of their impeachment; wherein he shows that he chose to forego his apostolic rights in that regard, that he might not burden those he was anxious to win by his preaching. He probably sent this letter by Timothy, whose mission is referred to in a later letter, I. 4:17 ff, 16:10-12. He would be specially suited for such a delicate mission, since he had been the apostle's co-worker in founding the church. Timothy had hardly had time to arrive in Corinth before some of the slaves of Cloe came bringing further information as to the situation at Corinth; and in response to this the apostle wrote the letter in I. Cor. 1:10-4:21, 16:10-12. The situation is now more highly developed, and the critics have split the church into factions. Some claimed Apollos as their apostle, some Paul, some Cephas and some Christ; and the church was divided into groups of partisans of each, contending about the comparative merits of their respective heroes. The apostle maintains the position taken in the previous letter, that whatever he was to others he was an apostle to them, "for the seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord", 9:2; and to that end answers their criticisms of his apostolic work. That criticism has now advanced to a second stage, and his preaching is being examined. They charge that he knew nothing but the cross of Christ, which was offensive to the Jews and folly to the Greeks; that he did not preach according to the accepted wisdom of the philosophers, and hence appealed only

to the weak and despised among the people; that he was not a rhetorician with persuasive words of wisdom, though there was an element of rugged spiritual power in his preaching; and therefore such a richly endowed church as Corinth ought to be able to regulate itself without him, 4:6-13. Their method was to criticise Paul, and boast of the superiority of others, especially themselves; and the apostle refers to them as "puffed up", and as "judging others". In the letter he does not deny the facts on which their charges are based, but defends his course as necessary to meet the conditions of pioneer work in laying the foundation of the church. He protests that he ignored Greek Wisdom and Rhetoric purposely that the church might be founded on the Wisdom and Power of God, rather than on that of men. He uses the occasion also to set forth the office and relation of the Christian ministry to the people whom they serve. He is now angered by the stupidity of the Corinthians in listening to these traducers, who in their conceit charge that he will not make the visit promised, in 16:5 ff, and face their charges. He assures them that he will come; and it is for them to determine whether it shall be with a rod or in love and the spirit of gentleness. He has already sent Timothy to set them right according to his ways taught in all the churches, 4:17 ff; and he and the brethren with him have as yet hardly arrived, but when he does come he should be received without despute, 16:10-11. He also besought Apollos to go with Timothy and his companions, but he was not so minded.

In the next letter the situation has reached its crisis, II. Cor. 10-13, and every sentence quivers with resentment and indignation and is pointed with sarcasm and invective. In a subsequent letter he writes of this one, "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye may be made sorry, but that ye may know the love which I have more abundantly unto you", II. Cor. 2:4. Compare also II. Cor. 2:9 with 10:6. In this letter he forces matters to an issue; and they must either break with their apostle or his assailants. The situation is much more acute

and developed. We may suppose that Timothy returned bringing bad news, and this letter is in reponse to his report. He tells us in a subsequent letter that it was sent by Titus with instructions to report to the apostle at Troas, whither he was about to go for a ministry, II. Cor. 2:12, 7:5 ff. His critics now charge that he is courageous when absent, but cowardly when present, basing their charge on the fact that he delayed to make the promised visit; that his letters were weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech of no account; that he charged nothing for his preaching, because it was worth nothing; that he was "weak", as shown by his personal infirmity and the treatment he everywhere received for his ministry in injuries, persecutions, distresses and necessities; that his preaching to them free was but to ingratiate himself with them for future exploitation, probably through the collection Titus had already begun; and this also was a reason for his apologies. On the other hand, the apostle charges that they are "false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ", when in reality they are ministers of Satan; that they "trust in themselves that they are Christ's" and set others at naught; that they show their folly by measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves with themselves in their boasting of their own superiority; that they are intruders in "stretching themselves" to evade his province in Corinth; that their work in Corinth is comparable to that of the serpent in beguiling Eve in its craftiness; that they were fools in their boasting and glorying after the flesh over their Hebrew and Christian standing. He promises to avenge their disobedience so soon as he shall have gotten the full obedience of the church, and vindicate his apostolic authority in his own province; and their end shall be according to their own works, as he had done before to those who had sinned by unchaste lives and repented not, 12:21—probably a reference to some disciplinary acts upon the occasion of his former visit mentioned in I. Cor. 11:34. He threatens to bring the case to trial when he comes, and not to spare the guilty, showing the

proof of the power of Christ which they say they seek from him. But he prefers that the church try the case itself by setting itself right, since Christ is also in them as well, unless they be reprobate; and in so doing he asks that they do no evil in order to approve him, but what is honorable even though it make him a reprobate. For he would have the church "strong" unto its own perfecting; and to this end he writes that the case may be settled before he comes, in order that his authority as an apostle may be used for building up rather than casting down, 13:5-10. So he submits the issue and urges the church to settle it before he comes on the promised visit. The letter exposes the vain boasting of his assailants, refutes their false interpretations of his conduct and infirmities, dispells their depreciatory reflections on his apostolic standing and attainments; but his object in it all is to win the church back to loyalty and sanity from its position of toleration and encouragement towards his traducers. His rebuke of the course of the church is not less severe than his arraignment of his assailants. The church is time-serving, and looks only at the things that are before their faces, 19:7. They bear with the foolish gladly, being wise themselves; for they bear with a man who enslaves them, devours them, slaps them in the face with his own self-conceit, 11:20 ff. This false estimate of self-boasting makes the apostle set forth his own apostolic authority and attainments, an immodesty he would fain have avoided, 12:11. But in all he writes the end in view is not his own personal vindication, but the preservation of the church from schism. The issue is drawn, and Titus goes to Corinth with the letter under instruction to report how it is received to the apostle at Troas. It was probably early in Dec. 55 A.D.; and the apostle, after the riot in Ephesus, goes on to Troas. Titus fails to meet him, and although a door is opened to him in the Lord, he had no relief in spirit, because he found not Titus", II. Cor. 2:12 f; and so he goes on into Macedonia. Even there he found not Titus, and "his flesh had no relief but afflictions on every side, fightings without and within fears". At length

Titus came bringing good news that the church in Corinth had followed his recommendation and settled the matter, completely vindicating the apostle and excommunicating the schismatics by a majority vote, II. Cor. 2:4, 7:5 ff. And the apostle was comforted.

In response to this report of his complete victory in Corinth the apostle wrote the letter in II. Cor. 1:15-2:13, 7:5-16, explaining that he had not made them the promised extra visit because he "would spare them" and the charge that his failure to do so was indicative of fickleness was not founded; nor was his "sorrowful letter" written to make them sorry, but to show his love for them. The cause of the sorrow was in the offender whom they had excommunicated by a majority vote, a sufficient punishment; and the apostle entreats that he be forgiven and comforted, since the action already taken is sufficient to show that the church has been proven true. He then tells about his solicitude on not finding Titus at Troas according to agreement, nor yet for a time when he arrived in Macedonia; but when he did come he brought great comfort and joy as he described in detail the effect of his letter, and how his glorying in the Corinthians was vindicated. This letter must have been written very soon after the arrival of Titus, and may be dated in Feb. 56. Along with this letter was probably sent another, II. 1:3-14, 2:14-6:13, 7:2-4, written in behalf of himself and missionary associates, "Paul's companions in travel", Acts 19:29, in response to certain helpful intervention the Corinthians had given them in the "afflictions that befell them in Asia". Those afflictions are termed "the sufferings of Messiah"; sufferings for Christ's sake which abounded in them. They were so severe that they despaired even of life itself, and their deliverance from that death was to be regarded as a manifestation of the power of God to raise the dead. The supplication of the Corinthians had helped in procuring for them the gift of deliverance, where the word "supplication" is not the one ordinarily used for prayer. We may suppose that the Corinthians made some formal petition to the Asiarchs which led to the deliverance

proof of the power of Christ which they say they seek from him. But he prefers that the church try the case itself by setting itself right, since Christ is also in them as well, unless they be reprobate; and in so doing he asks that they do no evil in order to approve him, but what is honorable even though it make him a reprobate. For he would have the church "strong" unto its own perfecting; and to this end he writes that the case may be settled before he comes, in order that his authority as an apostle may be used for building up rather than casting down, 13:5-10. So he submits the issue and urges the church to settle it before he comes on the promised visit. The letter exposes the vain boasting of his assailants, refutes their false interpretations of his conduct and infirmities, dispells their depreciatory reflections on his apostolic standing and attainments; but his object in it all is to win the church back to loyalty and sanity from its position of toleration and encouragement towards his traducers. His rebuke of the course of the church is not less severe than his arraignment of his assailants. The church is time-serving, and looks only at the things that are before their faces, 19:7. They bear with the foolish gladly, being wise themselves; for they bear with a man who enslaves them, devours them, slaps them in the face with his own self-conceit, 11:20 ff. This false estimate of self-boasting makes the apostle set forth his own apostolic authority and attainments, an immodesty he would fain have avoided, 12:11. But in all he writes the end in view is not his own personal vindication, but the preservation of the church from schism. The issue is drawn, and Titus goes to Corinth with the letter under instruction to report how it is received to the apostle at Troas. It was probably early in Dec. 55 A.D.; and the apostle, after the riot in Ephesus, goes on to Troas. Titus fails to meet him, and although a door is opened to him in the Lord, he had no relief in spirit, because he found not Titus", II. Cor. 2:12 f; and so he goes on into Macedonia. Even there he found not Titus, and "his flesh had no relief but afflictions on every side, fightings without and within fears". At length

Titus came bringing good news that the church in Corinth had followed his recommendation and settled the matter, completely vindicating the apostle and excommunicating the schismatics by a majority vote, II. Cor. 2:4, 7:5 ff. And the apostle was comforted.

In response to this report of his complete victory in Corinth the apostle wrote the letter in II. Cor. 1:15-2:13, 7:5-16, explaining that he had not made them the promised extra visit because he "would spare them" and the charge that his failure to do so was indicative of fickleness was not founded; nor was his "sorrowful letter" written to make them sorry, but to show his love for them. The cause of the sorrow was in the offender whom they had excommunicated by a majority vote, a sufficient punishment; and the apostle entreats that he be forgiven and comforted, since the action already taken is sufficient to show that the church has been proven true. He then tells about his solicitude on not finding Titus at Troas according to agreement, nor yet for a time when he arrived in Macedonia; but when he did come he brought great comfort and joy as he described in detail the effect of his letter, and how his glorying in the Corinthians was vindicated. This letter must have been written very soon after the arrival of Titus, and may be dated in Feb. 56. Along with this letter was probably sent another, II. 1:3-14, 2:14-6:13, 7:2-4, written in behalf of himself and missionary associates, "Paul's companions in travel", Acts 19:29, in response to certain helpful intervention the Corinthians had given them in the "afflictions that befell them in Asia". Those afflictions are termed "the sufferings of Messiah"; sufferings for Christ's sake which abounded in them. They were so severe that they despaired even of life itself, and their deliverance from that death was to be regarded as a manifestation of the power of God to raise the dead. The supplication of the Corinthians had helped in procuring for them the gift of deliverance, where the word "supplication" is not the one ordinarily used for prayer. We may suppose that the Corinthians made some formal petition to the Asiarchs which led to the deliverance

of the missionaries. This would account for the friendly intervention of these officials in the riot of Demetrius, Acts 19:31. Such a petition would also explain the reference in 1:13,14 to some open acknowledgment of the apostles "in part". But such a deliverance issued in a Messianic triumph, 2:14-17; and the letter enters at this point into a discussion of the Messianic ministry as compared to that of Moses, and of its meaning and value to the churches, and an interpretation of the suffering it entails, which should but the more commend it. It will be noticed that in this letter the author is throughout the ministerial "we"; whereas in the one just above it is "I". Some may doubt whether the differences are sufficient to distinguish them as two separate letters, or whether it is one letter with personal interpolations; but I am persuaded more and more that they are to be regarded as originally constituting separate letters, though I have not so indicated in the beginning of this article. Later in the early spring of 56 the apostle wrote the letter, II. 8-9, urging the completion of the collection for the saints and giving information of how that matter was being prosecuted by the Macedonians. After spending the summer of that year in Macedonia he went on to Corinth, where he spent the winter of 56-57. It was probably while with them on this occasion that the letters were compiled into the two Epistles as we have them, a Paul-Sosthenes epistle and a Paul-Timothy one.

In compiling letters and raising them to the dignity of epistles there must have been some important changes in the original writings to adapt them to their new form and function. The address and conclusions would be omitted if purely formal and containing no important matter; but where they are of value they would be conflated into the introduction and conclusion of the epistle. If we study I. Cor. 1:1-3 from this viewpoint I am sure we will observe signs of conflation; and the words "with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours" seem to have been added on the occasion of the compilation of the letters into the epistle for the especial purpose of giving epistolary

recognition and office to the final writing. Also the grateful appreciation in 1:4-9 is to serve for the epistle what we call a dedication in a book, and was put as a preface to the epistle when compiled. The messages in 16:10-20 are taken from the close of several of the letters, gathered here at the end of the epistle. The salutation in 16:21-23 "with mine own hand" is that of the apostle when he authenticated the epistle which the professional scribe had just finished by adding these words in his own hand as opposed to that of the handwriting of the scribe. In II. Cor. 1:1-2 the words "with all the saints which are in the whole of Achaia" seem to have been added when the letters were put into epistolary form; and the epistles may have been addressed to the saints of Achaia only because the contents of the letters were such that they were applicable peculiarly to those in this region. This collection is authenticated with a doxology as is also the Epistle to the Romans, 13:14.

Where a literary composition is compiled and formed from already existing writings, we must distinguish between the purpose of the writer in the original components and in the compilation. It is easy to see the purpose of the apostle in the several letters, but his purpose in the epistles is to be gotten from the order and way in which they are put together. This raises many perplexing problems, which must be solved or the theory suggested fails. Why does I. Corinthians open with the letter on the schisms in the church? Why is the letter of personal defense against his critics in 9 sandwiched between two letters treating of idolatrous feasts and foods? Why are the three letters in II. Cor. 1:3-7:16 conflated as we have them above? Why does II. Corinthians end with "the painful letter"? There are many other equally provoking questions raised by this theory, and they require extensive observation and study of the epistolary purpose of the Epistles into which we cannot now enter. It must suffice now to say that when these questions are answered it will show that the Epistles were from the first intended and formed to function canonically in the lives of Christians; for the epistolary purpose will not be found in the situation at Corinth

specially, but in the needs of Christendom for literary tools in the culture of the Messianic life. The apostle wrote the letters as the shepherd of the flock at Corinth to teach them to walk in the ways of the Christian life; and he subsequently raised these letters to the dignity of epistles to provide a Bible for Christian use. In the year 57 A.D. the Christian Bible at Corinth probably consisted in one of the gospel narratives (diegesis) referred to in Luke 1:1 and these two Epistles; but if they only knew well what was contained even in these, they were better informed in matters Christian than most people have ever been. The theory here set forth in the explanation of the epistolary genesis of the Corinthian Epistles is even more strikingly confirmed when applied to the similar phenomena presented in Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Thessalonians, Colossians, Philippians, Timothy, Titus and the Catholic Epistles.