

be beaten up by the student ; while the more lengthy ones stand out like citations from a ballad-book. Worse yet, those indirect citations, so dear to all writers reared in Jewish modes of thought, are not indicated at all. We would venture a wager that ninety-nine out of a hundred educated Christians have yet to learn that the following originates in the Old Covenant, not in the Gospel—"If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink : for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (Prov. xxv. 21, 22 ; Rom. xii. 20). A like ignorance prevails in the matter of the saying, "Ye are a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pet. iii. 9). This we know to be used by polemical text-mongers as if overthrowing the Roman theory of an official hierarchy. They would probably be surprised to find that it comes from the Law of Moses (Exod. xix. 6). These interesting links between the two Covenants remain obscured to the public by a silly prejudice against adopting in a translated Bible the convenient usages of modern literature. To give another instance from the Revised N. T., the questionable alteration of "charity" to "love" might gain some adherents were it indicated that "love covereth all sins" stood long ago in the A. V. of Prov. x. 12 ; in fact that 1 Pet. iv. 8, is a loose citation, not an original Apostolic precept.

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*THE RESTORATION OF ORDER IN A CHURCH
THREATENED WITH DISSOLUTION.*

FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

NEARLY two years had passed since the Apostle Paul had vindicated the cause of Christian liberty in Galatia (early

¹ Written for the *EXPOSITOR* by Professor Godet, and translated by Mrs. Harwood-Holmden.

in the year 55), when at the Passover season, 57, toward the close of his ministry in Ephesus, he was led by circumstances of unusual gravity to write the letter which has come down to us in the canon of the New Testament as the First Epistle to the Corinthians. It is generally supposed that this letter was followed a few months later by that known to us as the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. We shall show that a very much longer interval must have elapsed between the two letters.

But however this may be, the two writings are closely linked together by the subjects of which they treat. Both bring vividly before us the most violent crisis through which the work of St. Paul had to pass. The Church of Corinth was the most brilliant crown of his labour, but it was also that which he had the greatest difficulty in defending against the inroads of moral evil and the attacks of his adversaries.

The first Epistle brings before us the commencement of the struggle; the second, its happy issue. Between the two intervened days of anguish, such as the Apostle never experienced in any other stage of his history. Hence in no other of his letters do we get such an insight into his deepest feelings—the warmth of his heart, the keenness of his intellect; in a word, into his whole idiosyncrasy. Just what the great rifts in the earth's surface are to the geologist, revealing to him its hidden depths, such are to us these two epistles, in which with emotion long repressed (in the first letter), but at length finding vent (in the second), he lays bare to the Church of all ages the recesses of his spiritual life.

But it is not the Apostle alone whom we here learn to know as nowhere beside. It is also the primitive Church in the early manifestation of its new life and creative power, and at the same time in its early errors and the experiences of its tumultuous youth.

In Galatia we saw the Gospel striving to break the weary yoke of Mosaic observances by the introduction of a spiritual Christianity. At Corinth, on the other hand, we see the new religion at issue with the license of the Greek spirit, and find the Apostle enforcing the principles of Christian discipline necessary to regulate these wills so impatient of all control. If after eighteen centuries we are able to realize vividly to ourselves what was the life of the Church in the days of the Apostles, we owe it primarily to these two letters. The German *savant* Weizsäcker was therefore justified when he spoke of them as "a fragment which has no parallel in ecclesiastical history."

An interest of a secondary nature attaches moreover to the first of these writings. Through the circumstances of the case, the Apostle was led to treat in it of a number of heterogeneous subjects. We know how acute is his logic when he has one question before him for discussion, when he has to sound and analyse one subject, to demonstrate or refute one thesis. Of this we have an example in the Epistle to the Galatians, and we shall come to one even more remarkable in the Epistle to the Romans. But when he sat down to dictate his First Epistle to the Corinthians, he had before him nine subjects, all of them important, all except one of a practical nature, and all wholly distinct. Will he be able to bind all these together in one connected chain of argument? or will he for this once abandon logic? Were he to do this, Paul would be no longer Paul; and we shall find it a task of no small interest to trace the skill with which he classifies and connects subjects so widely differing.

I.

The city of Corinth, "one of the glories and lights" of ancient Greece, had been destroyed by the Romans about two centuries before the time when the Apostle visited

it. Already for more than a century it had been rebuilt. Inhabited largely by foreign settlers, among whom were a number of Romans, as well as by the descendants of the old Greek population, and possessing also a Jewish colony, it had rapidly risen to great prosperity, like those cities of the United States which have grown in the course of a few years from mere villages to huge emporiums of commerce.

It has been calculated that Corinth was, in the time of St. Paul, a league and a half in circumference, and had a population of from six to seven hundred thousand inhabitants, of whom two hundred thousand were freemen and the rest slaves. This rapid development was due to its privileged position on the isthmus which separates the *Ægean* from the Ionian Sea, and to its two harbours, *Cenchreæ*, by which it had free communication with Asia, and *Lechæum*, whence its ships sailed westward. In addition to the extensive commerce secured to Corinth by this unique position, it had various sorts of industries. Nor was it lacking in the culture of the fine arts and of the wisdom of the Greeks. It had its schools of rhetoric and philosophy, and it was its boast that no one could walk along any street in Corinth without encountering a sage. In spite of all this wisdom and culture, however, the morals of the city were notoriously corrupt. The temple of Venus, which crowned the citadel, was a sort of monument of the vices of the city. The expression, "to live like a Corinthian," had become a proverb through the whole of Greece.

Into the midst of this brilliant but dissolute city the message of salvation was suddenly carried at the close of the year 52. Let us picture to ourselves a man of about fifty years of age, in the garb of an artisan, entering this busy city, and going through its streets in search of a workshop where he may earn his daily bread. Who could have imagined that this man, apparently so insignificant, carried

with him the leaven which was to infuse new life into that whole mass of moral corruption?

St. Paul was not long in finding a fellow worker with whom he could carry on his business. This was a Jew named Aquila, lately come from Rome with his wife Priscilla. They received the Gospel from the lips of the working man who had come to lodge with them, and from that time they were his faithful co-workers in the great cause to which he had devoted his life. It has been said that Aquila was already a Christian when he came from Rome to Corinth; but the text of the Acts is opposed to this assertion, which is often advanced only in order to prove the Judæo-Christian character of the Roman Church in its origin. For about two years Paul carried on his business as a tent-maker and his apostolic ministry side by side. He began by preaching Christ in the Jewish synagogue, as his custom was. "To the Jew first, afterwards to the Greek," he himself said in his Epistle to the Romans (Rom. i. 16). After some time he had the joy of welcoming two of his fellow-labourers, Silas and Timotheus, whom he had left behind or sent back to Macedonia, to visit and strengthen the Churches recently founded in that province. Encouraged by the presence of his two friends, he redoubled his preaching labours, till his adversaries became so exasperated that he was compelled to retire with his adherents into a neighbouring house belonging to one of them, in order there to carry on his work more peaceably.¹

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians he himself describes how he felt at this trying time. "I was with you," he says, "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (chap. ii. 3). When speaking to the Jews he was wont to take his stand upon the writings and prophecies of the Old Testament. Now in addressing the Greeks, lovers of

¹ See Acts xviii. 1 (and fol.).

wisdom and eloquence, one would think he might be tempted to attract them by more elaborate forms of oratory and by the profundities of speculative philosophy; but the severe and holy simplicity of the Cross forbade him to have recourse to such methods. He stood therefore all unequipped before those curious Greeks who came to hear him, and in preaching to them nothing but Christ crucified he had to rely solely on the "power and demonstration of the Spirit," with which God might be pleased to accompany the message.

Nevertheless a great multitude of believers joined themselves to him. Among them were "not many wise men, not many mighty, not many noble" (chap. i. 26, etc.), but hearts broken by a sense of sin, who found in Christ crucified "the wisdom of God and the power of God."

Thus passed the two years which the Apostle spent at Corinth, in the midst of the perpetual conflicts and crosses which he enumerates in Acts xviii., and in consequence of which, shortly before Pentecost (54), he departed for Jerusalem and Antioch, leaving behind him the largest and most flourishing Church he had yet founded.

We have substantial grounds for placing the composition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians three years later, towards the close of St. Paul's stay in Ephesus, in the spring of 57. Indeed, it is from Ephesus that he writes. This is evident from what he says (1 Cor. xvi. 8), "But I will tarry at Ephesus till Pentecost"; and also from verse 19 of the same chapter: "the Churches of Asia salute you." The note appended to this Epistle in the old version, "This Epistle was written from Philippi," arises from a misunderstanding of the expression, "When I shall pass through Macedonia, for I do pass through Macedonia" (chap. xvi. 5). This expression, "I pass," has been taken to express an actual presence, while really it only indicates the plan of St. Paul's proposed journey.

As to the time when this letter was written, that is indicated by the following facts. Paul has with him Apollos, who came to join him at Ephesus, after having visited Corinth (Acts xvi. 12). Now this Alexandrine teacher was only converted by Priscilla and Aquila (at Ephesus) in the course of the year 54. After that he had gone with letters of commendation from them to Corinth, where his ministry had been very effective (Acts xviii. 24-28), and he had then returned to Ephesus. All this must have occupied a considerable time, say, two years at the least. We arrive at a still more exact date if we remember that towards the close of his stay at Ephesus St. Paul resolved to transfer his ministry from the East to the West, and that in preparation for this great change he sent two of his helpers, Timotheus and Erastus, into Greece, to visit the Churches there (Acts xix. 22). This voyage of Timotheus into Macedonia and Achaia is twice mentioned in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. From these passages we learn that Paul wrote after the departure of Timothy for Greece, but that his letter was intended to reach Corinth before that young disciple, doubtless because the letter would go direct by sea from Ephesus to Corinth, while Timothy made a northerly circuit, passing through Macedonia. This coincidence clearly fixes the date of our Epistle. It must have been written about the close of Paul's sojourn at Ephesus, shortly before Pentecost, in the year 54 (1 Cor. xvi. 8). These conclusions are confirmed by what the Apostle says at the beginning of chapter xvi., with reference to the collection made in all the Churches for the poor saints at Jerusalem. We see from the two chapters which the Apostle devotes to this subject in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (chaps. viii., ix.), and from the reference to it in the Romans (chap. xv. 26-33), that he had resolved to make this the closing act of his ministry in the East; and it was doubtless with a view to stirring up the bene-

volence of the Churches that, as we have already observed, he had sent Erastus and Timotheus into Greece.

Three years then had not passed away since St. Paul left Corinth when he wrote the first canonical Epistle to that Church. What had been transpiring in that time? and what were the circumstances which led him to write in such a strain?

II

The first important event had been the arrival of the brilliant Alexandrine teacher Apollos. We are told in the Acts of the Apostles (chap. xviii. 27, 28), that having been commended to the Church of Corinth by Aquila and Priscilla, he "helped them much which had believed through grace: for he powerfully confuted the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." By his oratorical gifts and his knowledge of the Scriptures Apollos led many of the Jews into the faith, and gathered around him a considerable party in the Church. The admiration of which he became the object was no doubt accompanied, on the part of some, by invidious comparisons with the true founder of the Church. The devoted friends of Paul were hurt at this, and took occasion to assert very emphatically their preference for the great Apostle who had brought them out of darkness into light. This rivalry would have been comparatively unimportant but for an element of a graver nature which was soon introduced. Did the Apostle Peter himself come to Corinth? This seems scarcely probable, for his ministry among the Jews in the East kept him fully employed for a long time in that region; but we know that Christians of Jewish extraction, living in Gentile lands, continued to attend the yearly feasts at Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 20-22). Many Christians from Corinth would no doubt do this, and would thus have the opportunity of meeting the

Apostle Peter, of hearing his accounts of the life of the Lord, and seeing the fruits of his labours. Nothing could be more natural than that they should form an ardent attachment to him personally, and draw a comparison between him and St. Paul, to the disadvantage of the latter. Now Peter continued to observe the ordinances of Moses, while Paul attached very little importance to the old ritual. Those who on this account preferred Peter to Paul would not intend to make the Mosaic ordinances binding on Gentile Christians. Peter himself did not do this. They simply followed in the track of the Apostle Peter, observing the law of Moses themselves, without binding the same yoke upon the Gentile believers.

Nevertheless it appears that there were at Corinth other members of the Judaising party, who, on what they considered to be the authority of Christ Himself, went further, not only than Paul or Apollos, but even than Peter. In reply to those who said, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas," there were some who had the boldness to say, "And I of Christ" (1 Cor. i. 12). One is fain to ask by what right they dared make such a claim, to the exclusion of the rest. Did they pretend that by vision or direct inspiration they were under the special guidance of the glorified Master, and thus had equal authority with the Apostles, or might even place themselves above them? It would rather seem, from some passages in the Second Epistle, that this group of Christians was in connection with emissaries sent from Jerusalem, who pretended to have known the Lord during His life on earth, and to possess higher illumination as to His person and work than either St. Peter or St. Paul. From these passages, and from the places which St. Paul assigns to these men in the enumeration of the four parties, we gather that they must have formed, so to speak, the extreme right of the Judaising party. Taking their stand on the example of

Christ, who had observed the law to the very end, and on such sayings of His as these, "I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil," and, "Ye have one Master, even Christ,"—they protested against the concessions made to Paul by the Twelve with regard to the Gentile converts, and sought to nullify them by establishing among the Gentiles a sort of Christianity compatible with the Jewish monopoly, which they would maintain at all costs. These people had gained access to the Corinthian Church, and there formed the fourth party, which said, "I am of Christ."

We see at once how melancholy a change had passed over the Church of Corinth since the Apostle's departure. But this was not the only danger to which this community, once so flourishing, was exposed. The levity of the Greeks, checked for a time by the seriousness of the Gospel and by the presence of Paul, had again asserted itself in many of the Christians. The love of money, impurity of life, a return to heathenish festivals, were all endangering the work of God. Some even dared to justify themselves by Paul's favourite maxim, embodying the principle of Christian liberty on indifferent matters, "All things are lawful for me" (1 Cor. vi. 12), and made this a cloak for licentiousness. Those who were not carried away with these errors asked themselves what was the right course to pursue under such circumstances. There had already been an interchange of letters on the subject. The Apostle had replied, to the question put to him, that there must be no association with those who conducted themselves in this manner. The Corinthians had replied that in that case they must needs go out of the world (1 Cor. v. 9). In order to clear up this difficult question, and others relating to marriage, to the behaviour of women in the assemblies, to the right use of spiritual gifts such as the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy, it was thought well to send three deputies to

Ephesus, and these men—Stephanatus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus—were at this very time with St. Paul, and were awaiting the return of Timothy before starting again for Corinth (1 Cor. xvi. 17, 18).

Lastly, the Apostle had received from another source information as to the state of the Church. A lady named Chloe, either a Christian from Ephesus who had been staying in Corinth, or a native of Corinth who had come to Ephesus, had brought Paul news of the Church. It was particularly through some of her household that Paul had heard of the party names which were so harmfully dividing the Church (1 Cor. i. 11).

Thus much we are able to ascertain of the events which had been transpiring at Corinth from the time of the Apostle's leaving the city to the writing of this first Epistle. Must we yet add to these circumstances, as many do, another visit of Paul himself to this Church? Reference is indeed made in several passages in the second Epistle to two visits made by Paul to Corinth, which would imply that Paul had visited the city a second time since the foundation of the Church. But we have already expressed our conviction that the first and second canonical Epistles are separated by a much longer interval than is generally supposed, and it is to this interval between the first and second letters that we assign the second visit. Else why does the Apostle make no allusion to it in his first letter, but refers exclusively to circumstances connected with the founding of the Church? We have now before us the general facts preceding the writing of this letter, and may proceed to study it in detail.

F. GODET.

(To be concluded.)
