

able. In 1883 the scientific expedition of the Palestine Exploration Fund under Professor Hull passed up the 'Arabah to the Dead Sea, visiting on the way Wâdy Musa and other parts of the Eastern range; and their report was published by the Fund in 1888. There have been the journeys of Messrs. Hornstein (in 1895), and Gray Hill (1896),¹ of Sir Charles Wilson (1898),² of Messrs. Libbey and Hoskins in 1903,³ of Brünnow and Domaszewski (1897, etc.),⁴ and, above all, the labours, travels and exhaustive researches from 1896 to 1902 of Herr Alois Musil, whose rich results in topography, nomenclature and ethnology greatly exceed our previous information and who has triangulated the whole territory.

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THE FOUR PERPLEXING CHAPTERS.

(2 COR. X -XIII.)

WE have now⁵ to study the measures taken by St. Paul for dealing with the terrible problem of the Corinthians' unfaithfulness. He would be well aware of its full meaning. It bore not merely on his happiness but on his usefulness; if the scandal lived, that was at an end. And, besides, it threatened the continuance of anything which he could regard as Christianity at Corinth. We have already seen the plain proofs that Paul despatched a letter by Titus. One question of outstanding interest remains—whether or not chapters x.-xiii. of 2 Corinthians constitute (or belong to) that letter. Not without hesitation we shall answer yes; but we shall offer a few additional conjectures, one of which at least seems almost necessary if the identification is to be maintained.

Let us first take the evidence in favour of separating these chapters from the rest of the Epistle. (1) What first of all

¹ *P.E.F.Q.*, 1897-8.

² *P.E.F.Q.*, 1898, 307 ff.

³ *The Jordan Valley and Petra* (New York, 1905).

⁴ *Die Provincia Arabia* (Strassburg, 1904-6).

⁵ See articles in *EXPOSITOR* for July and September.

offers itself to one's notice is the extraordinary change of tone. We are back from "set fair" to "stormy." It has been conjectured that Paul has received fresh harassing tidings—nothing is said of that! It has been conjectured that Paul is turning to a hostile faction—nothing is said of that either! It has been argued that his mood has changed. Obviously it has, if x.—xiii. are really the end of i.—ix.; but is such a change fair? Is it tolerable? Tastes differ; and on details of moral judgment we must allow great men to take their own way, even when it is not ours. If we speak at all in such a case, we should express surprise rather than condemnation, especially if the person we are studying is an Apostle of Christ. Yet, when one has said all these things to oneself, one turns with irrepressible repugnance from a letter which sums up its message in the words, "I rejoice that in everything I am of good courage concerning you," and goes on to say, fifteen or twenty minutes later, "I fear lest, when I come, my God should humble me before you, and I should mourn for many of them that have sinned heretofore, and repented not of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they committed." So ought no man to write, whether he be a private soldier in Christ's army or an apostle. It is *not* fair! Criticism may do for us here the immense service it has often done elsewhere, by freeing us from moral improbabilities, incredibilities, monstrosities.

(2) Not less noticeable than the beginning of the inserted passage is the close.¹ Perhaps it is even more notable. We had to argue above that no man *ought* to write as, upon the traditional view, St. Paul has written. We can now ask: Does any one endowed with wisdom cool down as St. Paul must be held to do at the last, if all chapter xiii. is of a piece? A brief quotation does no justice to the

¹ I.e. xiii. 10.

matter ; to feel the argument fully, one must read right through. Yet the verses, as they stand, are striking (“ If I come again, I will not spare you ”). “ For this cause I write these things while absent, that I may not when present deal sharply, according to the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for casting down. *Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfected ; be comforted ; be of the same mind ; live in peace ; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*” So does no man write. The tragedy of King Lear, passing into an idyllic dance of peasants—such is the impression of the paragraph as it stands. It is an absolute *non sequitur*.

(3) The two arguments already given are arguments for dividing the Epistle ; they are not of necessity arguments for placing chapters x.–xiii. earlier than i.–ix. If we can conceive of things slipping back to their worst state again, we might place x.–xiii. later. But now we come to a consideration which at least makes strongly for the opposite sequence. In x.–xiii. Paul is fulminating against intruders, and seeking to dislodge them. In i.–ix., these ingenious gentlemen have apparently passed on, bag and baggage, to preach the gospel somewhere else,¹ and Paul has to do with a weak but penitent church.

We come next to considerations which are rather difficulties than helps to the theory that x.–xiii. is the intermediate letter.

(4) Let us take first the argument of Bousset. Titus made the acquaintance of the Corinthians, and started the business of collecting, when he carried the intermediate letter ; therefore x.–xiii. (see xii. 18) must look back upon the intermediate letter just as i.–ix. does ; i.e. they date from the same point in Paul’s history. For we cannot duplicate and reduplicate the errands of Titus to Corinth.—Is that so cer-

¹ Or may we hope they had gone back to Palestine ?

tain? In a period where our information is scrappy and casual? It has been held (by Lightfoot, by Stanley, by Ramsay, perhaps by others) that Titus was among those who carried 1 Corinthians to its destination; and, although these scholars deny, or ignore, the existence of the intermediate letter, not all their arguments are removed by postulating it. Why should Titus not have gone to Corinth with 1 Corinthians? While Stephanas Fortunatus and Achaicus probably carried Paul's reply (i.e. carried 1 Cor.) home with them, yet, in view of so many anxious matters, Paul (1 Cor. xvi. 11, 12) felt the necessity of having representatives of his own at Corinth, without awaiting Timothy's rather uncertain arrival. Though Titus is not named, he may well have been of the company, and probably he showed himself the leading man. I am glad to find that Lightfoot¹ took the view which forces itself on my own mind, viz. that Titus was rising into prominence during all these transactions. He was winning his spurs at Corinth. Earlier, when Paul and the Judaizers fought over his body as a test case at Jerusalem, he may have been young, timid, passive—loyal to Paul, which was necessary, but not exactly a colleague or helper; that was not necessary, and we have no hint of that. Paul gave Titus a singular though unwelcome testimonial when he chose him to bear the brunt of the darkest hour at Corinth. Titus must have done something meantime to justify that choice; he did more by the way in which he executed his task. He was a man of growing power. The anonymous "brother" of the messages in 1 Corinthians xvi. (11, 12)—where we have direct evidence that *some* messengers went from Paul with the Epistle under orders to return to Paul—became the Apostle's right-hand man. Less important than Timothy then, he plainly comes to be of greater importance. Is there anything incredible in his being sent three

¹ *Biblical Essays.*

times to Corinth ? or even in his carrying three letters ? He was sent with two of them in unbroken sequence.

The above is a negative sort of reply, rebutting objections. But there are positive difficulties in the way of Bousset's construction. Was the dark hour at Corinth a time for raising money ? May we not infer that the Corinthians, who had asked guidance on the point in their letter to Paul (1 Cor. xvi. 1), began "to lay by in store" as soon as 1 Corinthians reached them ? And is it not a fair conjecture that it was *then* Titus "made a beginning" in them of "this grace" ? Would it not be a poor compliment, to send Titus right back to Corinth in the service of the collection (2 Cor. viii. 6, 17, ix. 5), if he had been working at it till the very moment when he started for Macedonia ? No, rather ; he had other things to work at then ; and the older task now revives. Finally, the visit when Titus took the severe letter "would have been just the time when Titus would have been most careful and the Corinthians most watchful ; any appeal to that occasion would therefore carry no weight."¹

(5) Another difficulty suggested itself to my own mind, and consequently perhaps has made more impression upon me than it should. Chapter xii., on the stake in the flesh, seems to be a climax. It is the last and highest message in self-defence. Ought it not therefore to stand where it does, at the end ? Also it is a peculiarly intimate self-revelation ; ought it not to be given to friends rather than to rebels ?

To the first suggestion one might reply that it forms a good apology for the existing order of chapters in 2 Corinthians, and that a happy accident, or wise stroke of providence, has given us this profound and closely connected body of Scriptures not perhaps as they were composed, but culminating at the noblest point. To the second suggestion : Paul had told Titus (vii. 14) that the Corinthians were loyal at

¹ Dr. Massie (on xii. 18).

heart ; and he gives full proof that he sincerely believes this when, for the benefit of the church at Corinth, even while it continues in a state of revolt, he makes this most moving and most marvellous unveiling of his inmost self.

(6) Again a difficulty has suggested itself to me, though I believe others have exploited it in the service of other constructions. When Paul wrote x.-xiii., he seems to have contemplated following up his letter by a speedy visit (xii. 14, 20, xiii. 1, 10). Is that compatible with his policy of turning his back upon the South, visiting many other churches, evangelizing Troas (ii. 12), etc. ? I do not know whether there will be any patience with the guess that *Paul when he wrote x.-xiii. meant to carry out his programme of crossing the sea to Corinth and paying the church two visits, but suddenly changed his mind and threw everything upon Titus.* This would certainly add point to the Corinthian accusation of fickleness. Paul's reply would be, The change was sudden, but it was by no means ill-considered. It was kind. It was right.

(7) Another objection might be taken to the passage regarding weighty letters and feeble personality (x. 10). Could that charge safely be dwelt upon by an authority who is exchanging personal influence for influence by letter or influence through a delegate ? The same guess which met the last difficulty would dispose of this one. When Paul wrote the words, he may have thought that a short time would see him at Corinth. At the moment of writing, sickness, not to mention pressure of work at Ephesus, may have made it impossible for him to start. And the rearrangement of his plans may have been a speedy and sudden afterthought.

On the whole then, with some hesitation, and with a tendency to rely upon the guess that Paul's plan changed after the letter x.-xiii. was written, I believe we may regard these chapters as the Intermediate Letter. It is far less

probable that x.-xiii. belong to the period just after i.-ix. To hold that, we must suppose that not only the trouble but the Judaizers returned, and gave a repeat performance *da capo*. We must also suppose that Paul was wrong in boasting to Titus of Corinthian loyalty (vii. 14), and doubly wrong in prattling of these matters to a less than half-reconciled church (*ibid.*). An odious theory, surely! Has it any probability at all?

There are two other conjectures I should like to mention. They are not difficulties in the way of the identification now under discussion. If they are helps, it is in a very small degree. (8) One has already been implied in the sketch of the Judaizers' calumnies. These men, who attacked Paul at every point, may have insinuated that he was not capable of such intellectual strain as would be involved in writing an Epistle *all his own*. This might explain the mysterious "Now I Paul myself" of x. 1, and it would lead us to agree with those who regard the fiery little letter as having been an autograph. (9) The four chapters seem to be a fragment. But is it certain that anything more than a fragment ever came into existence? The pen which the sick man had seized and plied to such purpose dropped from his hand again. He left everything else to Titus. He would not even come in person till he knew that matters were right once more in that dearly loved but infatuated church—right with him, right with God.

He sent Titus off with many warm assurances, bidding him journey on by the land route to intercept him somewhere with the good news. It must be good news; as God was faithful, the news would be good! And, so soon as his health enabled him—pricked on a little by that matter of the uproar¹—he started on his journey northwards. But he had overestimated his own powers. The great heart

¹ Acts xix. 23, etc.

which had encouraged Titus reeled and swooned anew under the strain of waiting for tidings. "Hope deferred" made it "sick." It seemed to him that his letter had been unparadoxably harsh (vii. 8). There was work to be done for Christ at Troas; indeed, there was special promise. And it was hardly physically possible that Titus should have got there. No matter; Paul simply could not work; even the gospel must grant him a holiday just then. He had to find Titus, or—if by mischance he passed him *en route*—he must find the news which Titus had left with the churches. So he crossed into Macedonia; but things went no better; "without were fightings, within were fears"; till Titus came! Oh, thank God, thank God for the unspeakable gift of good tidings! The letter which Titus presently carries back with him to Corinth is not unworthy to stand side by side with x.-xiii. It is an afterbirth of the same pain, blending with comfort and joy. Together, the two letters constitute one of the most marvellous autobiographies of a human heart. When Titus has got the money matters in order, and when Paul is calmer, and other work is done, he will follow southwards—to a meeting with these erring but pardoned children; and then to Jerusalem and prison; and then to death. And then—

It is a most marvellous spiritual autobiography; and any weakness it reveals is such as makes us both understand better, and love better, the man in whom we see it. At the same time, we could not imagine the Lord Jesus writing such a production as 2 Corinthians. Great as St. Paul is, he is truly "great in a different way." Even as a man, perhaps, our Lord Jesus belonged to another type of our varied humanity from that of His great servant.

We would give much to possess a similar if different document from the life of Jesus, had it been His will, and the will of

God His Father, to give us such a thing. Probably we could not have had it in any shape. Not even His own hand could tear aside the veil of His heart to the extent to which St. Paul bares himself in 2 Corinthians xii. That true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man, is sacred to God alone. None knoweth the Son, save the Father—the Father who is well pleased in Him. It is inevitable that Christians should strive to reconstruct the inner life of Jesus. Yet the veil hangs between us and Him, however suffused with light. Or the light itself is a veil. We cannot see into the recesses of His heart any more than mortal man can see God. None knoweth the Son save the Father.

Still, as we stand reverently by Him, there is not a little we are allowed to see or to hear out of that fulness of grace and truth. And it has its parallels with St. Paul, as well as its contrasts. St. Paul was caught up once into the third heaven, or beyond that into Paradise; when Jesus was baptized, heaven opened and descended into His breast; and there came a voice, "Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." After the rapture came to Paul Satan's messenger buffeting him; after the baptism came to Jesus the temptation in the wilderness. In 2 Corinthians we have a picture, touch after touch, of heartbreak borne in the service and in the strength of Him who said, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." In Christ's life suffering deepens until He comes to Gethsemane and to Calvary. We are allowed to hear His words, "Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And again: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" If it moves our heart strangely to enter, in our faint fashion, into St. Paul's agony, what is it to us, and what ought it to be, when we see Christ Jesus *crucified for us?*

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