

THE INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL COMMENTARY

A
CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL
COMMENTARY

ON THE

FIRST EPISTLE OF ST PAUL
TO THE CORINTHIANS

BY THE

Right Rev. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, D.D., LL.D.
BISHOP OF EXETER

LATE PRINCIPAL OF KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON
FORMERLY PRINCIPAL OF BISHOP HATFIELD'S HALL, DURHAM
HONORARY FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD

AND THE

Rev. ALFRED PLUMMER, M.A., D.D.

LATE MASTER OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DURHAM
FORMERLY FELLOW AND TUTOR OF TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD

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The
International Critical Commentary
on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and
New Testaments

UNDER THE EDITORSHIP OF

THE REV. CHARLES AUGUSTUS BRIGGS, D.D.

*Professor of Theological Encyclopædia and Symbolics
Union Theological Seminary, New York*

AND

THE REV. SAMUEL ROLLES DRIVER, D.D.

Regius Professor of Hebrew, Oxford

THE REV. ALFRED PLUMMER, M.A., D.D.

Late Master of University College, Durham

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EDITORS' PREFACE

THERE are now before the public many Commentaries, written by British and American divines, of a popular or homiletical character. *The Cambridge Bible for Schools*, the *Handbooks for Bible Classes and Private Students*, *The Speaker's Commentary*, *The Popular Commentary* (Schaff), *The Expositor's Bible*, and other similar series, have their special place and importance. But they do not enter into the field of Critical Biblical scholarship occupied by such series of Commentaries as the *Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum A. T.*; De Wette's *Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum N. T.*; Meyer's *Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar*; Keil and Delitzsch's *Biblischer Kommentar über das A. T.*; Lange's *Theologisch-homiletisches Bibelwerk*; Nowack's *Handkommentar zum A. T.*; Holtzmann's *Handkommentar zum N. T.* Several of these have been translated, edited, and in some cases enlarged and adapted, for the English-speaking public; others are in process of translation. But no corresponding series by British or American divines has hitherto been produced. The way has been prepared by special Commentaries by Cheyne, Ellicott, Kalisch, Lightfoot, Perowne, Westcott, and others; and the time has come, in the judgment of the projectors of this enterprise, when it is practicable to combine British and American scholars in the production of a critical, comprehensive Commentary that will be abreast of modern biblical scholarship, and in a measure lead its van.

THE INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL COMMENTARY

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The Commentaries will be international and inter-confessional, and will be free from polemical and ecclesiastical bias. They will be based upon a thorough critical study of the original texts of the Bible, and upon critical methods of interpretation. They are designed chiefly for students and clergymen, and will be written in a compact style. Each book will be preceded by an Introduction, stating the results of criticism upon it, and discussing impartially the questions still remaining open. The details of criticism will appear in their proper place in the body of the Commentary. Each section of the Text will be introduced with a paraphrase, or summary of contents. Technical details of textual and philological criticism will, as a rule, be kept distinct from matter of a more general character; and in the Old Testament the exegetical notes will be arranged, as far as possible, so as to be serviceable to students not acquainted with Hebrew. The History of Interpretation of the Books will be dealt with, when necessary, in the Introductions, with critical notices of the most important literature of the subject. Historical and Archæological questions, as well as questions of Biblical Theology, are included in the plan of the Commentaries, but not Practical or Homiletical Exegesis. The Volumes will constitute a uniform series.

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FIRST EPISTLE OF ST PAUL
TO THE CORINTHIANS

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PREFACE



MORE than fourteen years ago I promised to Dr. Plummer, Editor of the "International Critical Commentary," an edition of this Epistle, of which I had the detailed knowledge gained by some years of teaching. Almost immediately, however, a change of work imposed upon me new duties in the course of which my predominant interests were claimed, in part by administrative work which curtailed opportunities for study or writing, in part by studies other than exegetical.

I had hoped that in my present position this diversion of time and attention would prove less exacting; but the very opposite has been the case. Accordingly my task in preparing for publication the work of past years upon the Epistle has suffered from sad lack of continuity, and has not, with the exception of a few sections, been carried beyond its earlier chapters.

That the Commentary appears, when it does and as it does, is due to the extraordinary kindness of my old friend, tutor at Oxford, and colleague at Durham, Dr. Plummer. His generous patience as Editor is beyond any recognition I can express: he has, moreover, supplied my shortcomings by taking upon his shoulders the greater part of the work. Of the Introduction, also, he has written important sections; the Index is entirely his work.

While, however, a reader versed in documentary criticism may be tempted to assign each *nuance* to its several source, we desire each to accept general responsi-

bility as contributors, while to Dr. Plummer falls that of Editor and, I may add, the main share of whatever merit the volume may possess.

It is hoped that amidst the exceptional number of excellent commentaries which the importance of the First Epistle to the Corinthians has called forth, the present volume may yet, with God's blessing, have a usefulness of its own to students of St Paul

A. EXON:

EXETER,
Conversion of St Paul,
1911.

INTRODUCTION

§ I. CORINTH.

WHAT we know from other sources respecting Corinth in St Paul's day harmonizes well with the impression which we receive from 1 Corinthians. The extinction of the *totius Graeciae lumen*, as Cicero (*Pro lege Manil.* 5) calls the old Greek city of Corinth, by the Roman consul L. Mummius Achaicus, 146 B.C., was only temporary. Exactly a century later Julius Caesar founded a new city on the old site as *Colonia Julia Corinthus*.* The rebuilding was a measure of military precaution, and little was done to show that there was any wish to revive the glories of Greece (Finlay, *Greece under the Romans*, p. 67). The inhabitants of the new city were not Greeks but Italians, Caesar's veterans and freedmen. The descendants of the inhabitants who had survived the destruction of the old city did not return to the home of their parents, and Greeks generally were for a time somewhat shy of taking up their abode in the new city. Plutarch, who was still a boy when St Paul was in Greece, seems hardly to have regarded the new Corinth as a Greek town. Festus says that the colonists were called *Corinthienses*, to distinguish them from the old *Corinthii*. But such distinctions do not seem to have been maintained. By the time that St Paul visited the city there were plenty of Greeks among the inhabitants, the current language was in the main Greek, and the descendants of the first Italian colonists had become to a large extent Hellenized.

The mercantile prosperity, which had won for the old city such epithets as ἀφνειός (Hom. *Il.* ii. 570; Pind. *Fragg.* 87, 244), εὐδαίμων (Hdt. iii. 52), and ὀλβια (Pind. *Ol.* xiii. 4; Thuc. i. 13), and which during the century of desolation had in some degree passed to Delos, was quickly recovered by the new city, because it was the result of an extraordinarily advantageous position, which remained unchanged. Corinth, both old and new, was situated

* Other titles found on coins and in inscriptions are *Laus Juli Corinthus* and *Colonia Julia Corinthus Augusta*.

on the 'bridge' or causeway between two seas; *πόντου γέφυρ' ἀκάμαντος* (Pind. *Nem.* vi. 67), *γέφυραν ποντιάδα πρὸ Κορίνθου τευχέων* (*Isth.* iii. 35). Like Ephesus, it was both on the main commercial route between East and West and also at a point at which various side-routes met the main one. The merchandise which came to its markets, and which passed through it on its way to other places, was enormous; and those who passed through it commonly stayed awhile for business or pleasure. "This *bimaris Corinthus* was a natural halting-place on the journey between Rome and the East, as we see in the case of S. Paul and his companions, and of Hegesippus (Eus. *H.E.* iv. 22). So also it is called the *περίπατος* or 'lounge' of Greece" (Lightfoot, *S. Clement of Rome*, i. pp. 9, 10). The rhetorician Aristeides calls it "a palace of Poseidon"; it was rather the market-place or the Vanity Fair of Greece, and even of the Empire.

It added greatly to its importance, and doubtless to its prosperity, that Corinth was the metropolis of the Roman province of Achaia, and the seat of the Roman proconsul (Acts xviii. 12). In more than one particular it became the leading city in Greece. It was proud of its political priority, proud of its commercial supremacy, proud also of its mental activity and acuteness, although in this last particular it was surpassed, and perhaps greatly surpassed, by Athens. It may have been for this very reason that Athens was one of the last Hellenic cities to be converted to Christianity. But just as the leaders of thought there saw nothing sublime or convincing in the doctrine which St Paul taught (Acts xvii. 18, 32), so the political ruler at Corinth failed to see that the question which he quite rightly refused to decide as a Roman magistrate, was the crucial question of the age (Acts xviii. 14-16). Neither Gallio nor any other political leader in Greece saw that the Apostle was the man of the future. They made the common mistake of men of the world, who are apt to think that the world which they know so well is the whole world (Renan, *S. Paul*, p. 225).

In yet another particular Corinth was first in Hellas. The old city had been the most licentious city in Greece, and perhaps the most licentious city in the Empire. As numerous expressions and a variety of well-known passages testify, the name of Corinth had been a by-word for the grossest profligacy, especially in connexion with the worship of Aphrodite Pandemos.* Aphrodite was worshipped elsewhere in Hellas, but

* *Κορινθιάζεσθαι*, *Κορινθία κόρη*, *Κορ. παῖς*: *οὐ παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἐς Κόρινθον ἔσθ' ὁ πλοῦς*, a proverb which Horace (*Ep.* i. xvii. 36) reproduces, *non cuiusvis homini contingit adire Corinthum*. Other references in Renan, p. 213, and Farrar, *St Paul*, i. pp. 557 f.

nowhere else do we find the *ιερόδουλοι* as a permanent element in the worship, and in old Corinth there had been a thousand of these. Such worship was not Greek but Oriental, an importation from the cult of the Phoenician Astarte; but it is not certain that this worship of Aphrodite had been revived in all its former monstrosity in the new city. Pausanias, who visited Corinth about a century later than St Paul, found it rich in temples and idols of various kinds, Greek and foreign; but he calls the temple of Aphrodite a *ναίδιον* (VIII. vi. 21): see Bachmann, p. 5. It is therefore possible that we ought not to quote the thousand *ιερόδουλοι* in the temple of Aphrodite on Acrocorinthus as evidence of the immorality of Corinth in St Paul's day. Nevertheless, even if that pestilent element had been reduced in the new city, there is enough evidence to show that Corinth still deserved a very evil reputation; and the letters which St Paul wrote to the Church there, and from Corinth to other Churches, tell us a good deal.

It may be doubted whether the notorious immorality of Corinth had anything to do with St Paul's selecting it as a sphere of missionary work. It was the fact of its being an imperial and cosmopolitan centre that attracted him. The march of the Empire must everywhere be followed by the march of the Gospel. The Empire had raised Corinth from the death which the ravages of its own legions had inflicted and had made it a centre of government and of trade. The Gospel must raise Corinth from the death of heathenism and make it a centre for the diffusion of discipline and truth. In few other places were the leading elements of the Empire so well represented as in Corinth: it was at once Roman, Oriental, and Greek. The Oriental element was seen, not only in its religion, but also in the number of Asiatics who settled in it or frequently visited it for purposes of commerce. Kenchreae is said to have been chiefly Oriental in population. Among these settlers from the East were many Jews,* who were always attracted to mercantile centres; and the number of them must have been considerably increased when the edict of Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome (Acts xviii. 2; Suet. *Claud.* 25). In short, Corinth was the Empire in miniature;—the Empire reduced to a single State, but with some of the worst features of heathenism intensified, as Rom. i. 21–32, which was written in Corinth, plainly shows. Any one who could make his voice heard in Corinth was addressing a cosmopolitan and representative audience, many of whom would be sure to go elsewhere, and

* Philo, *Leg. ad Gai.* 36; cf. Justin, *Try.* 1. It is unfortunate that neither the edict of Claudius nor the proconsulship of Gallio can be dated with accuracy.

might carry with them what they had heard. We need not wonder that St Paul thought it worth while to go there, and (after receiving encouragement from the Lord, Acts xviii. 9) to remain there a year and a half. Nor need we wonder that, having succeeded in finding the 'people' (λαός) whom the Lord had already marked as His own, like a new Israel (Acts xviii. 10), and having succeeded in planting a Church there, he afterwards felt the keenest interest in its welfare and the deepest anxiety respecting it.

It was from Athens that St Paul came to Corinth, and the transition has been compared to that of passing from residence in Oxford to residence in London; that ought to mean from the old unreformed Oxford, the home of lost causes and of expiring philosophies, to the London of our own age. The difference in miles between Oxford and London is greater than that between Athens and Corinth; but, in St Paul's day, the difference in social and intellectual environment was perhaps greater than that which has distinguished the two English cities in any age. The Apostle's work in the two Greek cities was part of his great work of adapting Christianity to civilized Europe. In Athens he met with opposition and contempt (Acts xvii. 18, 32),* and he came on to Corinth in much depression and fear (1 Cor. ii. 3); and not until he had been encouraged by the heavenly vision and the experience of considerable success did he think that he would be justified in remaining at Corinth instead of returning to the more hopeful field in Macedonia. During the year and a half that he was there he probably made missionary excursions in the neighbourhood, and with success: 2 Corinthians is addressed 'unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in the whole of Achaia.'

So far as we know, he was the first Christian who ever entered that city; he was certainly the first to preach the Gospel there. This he claims for himself with great earnestness (iii. 6, 10, iv. 15), and he could not have made such a claim, if those whom he was addressing knew that it was not true. Some think that Aquila and Priscilla were Christians before they reached Corinth. But if that was so, St Luke would probably have known it, and would have mentioned the fact; for their being of the same belief would have been a stronger reason for the Apostle's taking up his abode with them than their being of the same trade, τὸ ὁμότεχνον (Acts xviii. 3).† On the other

* This attitude continued long after the Apostle's departure. For a century or two Athens was perhaps the chief seat of opposition to the Gospel.

† It is possible that this is one of the beloved physician's medical words. Doctors are said to have spoken of one another as ὁμότεχνοι (Hobart, *Med. Lang. of St Luke*, p. 239).

hand, if they were converted by St Paul in Corinth, would not either he or St Luke have mentioned so important a success, and would not they be among those whom he baptized himself? If they were already Christians, it may easily have been from them that he learnt so much about the individual Christians who are mentioned in Rom. xvi. The Apostle's most important Jewish convert that is known to us is Crispus, the ruler of the Corinthian synagogue (Acts xviii. 8; 1 Cor. i. 14). Titus or Titus Justus may have been his first success among the Roman proselytes (Acts xviii. 7; Ramsay, *St Paul the Traveller*, p. 256), or he may have been a Gentile holding allegiance to the synagogue, but not a circumcised proselyte (Zahn, *Intr. to N.T.*, i. p. 266). Acts xviii. 7 means that the Apostle taught in his house, instead of in the synagogue; not that he left the house of Aquila and Priscilla to live with Titus Justus.* About Stephanas (1 Cor. xvi. 15, i. 16) we are doubly in doubt, whether he was a Gentile or a Jew, and whether he was converted and baptized in Athens or in Corinth. He was probably a Gentile; that he was a Corinthian convert is commonly assumed, but it is by no means certain.

A newly created city, with a very mixed population of Italians, Greeks, Orientals, and adventurers from all parts, and without any aristocracy or old families, was likely to be democratic and impatient of control; and conversion to Christianity would not at once, if at all, put an end to this independent spirit. Certainly there was plenty of it when St Paul wrote. We find evidence of it in the claim of each convert to choose his own leader (i. 10-iv. 21), in the attempt of women to be as free as men in the congregation (xi. 5-15, xiv. 34, 35), and in the desire of those who had spiritual gifts to exhibit them in public without regard to other Christians (xii., xiv.).

Of the evils which are common in a community whose chief aim is commercial success, and whose social distinctions are mainly those of wealth, we have traces in the litigation about property in heathen courts (vi. 1-11), in the repeated mention of the *πλεονέκτης* as a common kind of offender (v. 10, 11, vi. 10), and in the disgraceful conduct of the wealthy at the Lord's Supper (xi. 17-34).

The conceited self-satisfaction of the Corinthians as to their intellectual superiority is indicated by ironical hints and serious warnings as to the possession of *γνῶσις* (viii. 1, 7, 10, 11,

* Justus, as a surname for Jews or proselytes, meant (like *δικαίος* in Luke i. 6) 'careful in the observance of the Law.' It was common in the case of Jews (Acts i. 23; Col. iv. 11). Josephus had a son so called, and he tells us of another Justus who wrote about the Jewish war (*Vita*, i, 9, 65). It is said to be frequent in Jewish inscriptions.

xiii. 2, 8) and σοφία (i. 17, iii. 19), by the long section which treats of the false and the true wisdom (i. 18-iii. 4), and by the repeated rebukes of their inflated self-complacency (iv. 6, 18, 19, v. 2, viii. 1; cf. xiii. 4).

But the feature in the new city which has made the deepest mark on the Epistle is its abysmal immorality. There is not only the condemnation of the Corinthians' attitude towards the monstrous case of incest (v. 1-13) and the solemn warning against thinking lightly of sins of the flesh (vi. 12-20), but also the nature of the reply to the Corinthians' letter (vii. 1-xi. 1). The whole treatment of their marriage-problems and of the right behaviour with regard to idol-meats is influenced by the thought of the manifold and ceaseless temptations to impurity with which the new converts to Christianity were surrounded, and which made such an expression as 'the Church of God which is at Corinth' (i. 2), as Bengel says, *laetum et ingens paradoxon*. And the majority of the converts—probably the very large majority—had been heathen (xii. 2), and therefore had been accustomed to think lightly of abominations from which converts from Judaism had always been free. Anxiety about these Gentile Christians is conspicuous throughout the First Epistle; but at the time when the Second was written, especially the last four chapters, it was Jewish Christians that were giving him most trouble. In short, Corinth, as we know it from other sources, is clearly reflected in the letter before us.

That what we know about Corinth and the Apostle from Acts is reflected in the letter will be seen when it is examined in detail; and it is clear that the writer of Acts does not derive his information from the letter, for he tells us much more than the letter does. As Schleiermacher pointed out long ago, the personal details at the beginning and end of 1 and 2 Corinthians supplement and illuminate what is told in Acts, and it is clear that each writer takes his own line independently of the other (Bachmann, p. 12).

§ II. AUTHENTICITY.

It is not necessary to spend much time upon the discussion of this question. Both the external and the internal evidence for the Pauline authorship are so strong that those who attempt to show that the Apostle was not the writer succeed chiefly in proving their own incompetence as critics. Subjective criticism of a highly speculative kind does not merit many detailed replies, when it is in opposition to abundant evidence of the most solid character. The captious objections which have been