

[1 Cor 1:10-13, 17](#)

Reading 2

Jerome Biblical Commentary

**(II) Part I: Condemnation of Disorders (1:10-6:20).**

**(A) Factions and Christian Wisdom (1:10-4:21).**

(a) THE NATURE OF THE DISSENSION (1:10-17). The perfect harmony that should have reigned among Christians because of their fellowship and unity in Christ had been shattered at Corinth. Chloe's messengers informed Paul of the factions in the community. After he had left Corinth, other missionaries and Jewish Christians representing different movements that were agitating the Church came to the city. Within a short time, rival factions formed within the community. Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew trained in the Philonic school of exegesis and an eloquent orator, had made a strong impression on the better educated minority of the Corinthian Christians. Jewish Christians originally from Palestine or Syria boasted of their attachment to Cephas (Peter) and won a following among their Corinthian colleagues. The majority of the faithful, poor freedmen and slaves, incited by the pretensions of the other factions, boasted of their attachment to Paul, the apostle of Corinth. Was there a fourth faction, a Christ party? Or is the cry "I belong to Christ" Paul's personal protest against the factions in the community? Although Paul never again expressly mentions a Christ party, and Clement of Rome (*ca.* AD 95) in his letter to Corinth omits a Christ party in his enumeration of the factions that disturbed the community in Paul's day (*1 Clem.* 48), the phrase does suggest a group whose members boasted of a special relationship to Christ not shared by other Christians. H. Lietzmann and E.-B. Allo see the Christ party as mystics who rejected all human teachers and pretended to be guided by revelations received directly from Christ through the charismatic gifts. Paul would refer to them again in 2 Cor 10:17. A moral laxity is attributed to them. But J. Huby and others think the Christ party were Judaizers who had known Christ during his earthly life and now challenged Paul's apostolic authority. They would be the adversaries he excoriates in 2 Cor 11:12-29.

**12** There were in the Corinthian community Christians with "knowledge" (*gnōsis*), who entertained liberal ideas about the right (*exousia*) given them by Christian liberty. There were others, called "the weak," who were scrupulous about eating meat offered to idols (ch. 8-10). The attitudes of both groups, similar "to the strong" and "the weak" of Rom 14:1-15:13, point to a Jewish rather than to a Hellenistic origin.

**13** Observant Jews had a traditional horror of anything connected with idol-worship and considered food offered to idols to be "unclean" (Dn 1:8; Jdt 12:1-2; Acts 15:20, 29).

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Or *Orientalia*

Paul's references to "the knowledge" of the strong seem to indicate a special gift or charism that conferred a skill in practical morality and casuistry similar to the special knowledge of the Law and its applications that distinguished the scribe from the ordinary Jew. J. Dupont offers strong evidence for this conclusion. He would identify "the knowledgeable strong" with the Christ party. "If the charismatic phenomena of the Corinthian church show a connection with the spiritual experience of the primitive Jerusalem community, the importance attached to gnōsis in the list of the charisms is due to the influence at Corinth of Jewish preachers who would seem to have been at the bottom of the factions in the community, and, to be more precise, would be the promoters of 'the Christ party'" (*Gnosis*, 261). The Gentiles in the community probably ranged themselves with these "pneumatics" and with the Apollos faction (*ibid.*, 257-61, 374-77; cf. S. Lyonnet, *Bib* 35 [1954] 489-97, *Bib* 37[1956] 17-27).

**14** In 1 Cor 16:12 Paul suggests that Apollos and Cephas had no personal responsibility for the formation of the factions that rallied around their names. There is no evidence that Peter had ever visited Corinth before the composition of this epistle.

**15** **10.** This solemn appeal for unity is based on the Christian profession of faith in the Lord Jesus. *all say the same thing:* This common Gk expression does not refer to agreement in words only, but means "to be in perfect agreement." *perfectly united:* The word *katartizō*, "to restore, put in order," suggests a mutual adjustment and adaptation, a readiness to give in to one another in the interests of harmony. *purpose:* Christians must be united in their thinking (*nous*) and in the goal and direction (*gnōmē*) of their lives.**11.** *quarrels:* This suggests that the factions had reached the stage of recrimination and sharp language.**12.** *Apollos:* The Alexandrian Jew converted to Christ at Ephesus by Aquila and Priscilla and described as an eloquent speaker, well versed in the Scriptures (Acts 18:24-28). *Cephas:* From Aram *kēphā*, "rock," "which is translated "Peter" (Jn 1:42), is the surname given to Simon by Jesus.**13.** Such factions founded on attachment to ministers of Christ involve a dogmatic absurdity. Paul indicates this with biting sarcasm. There is only one Savior, Christ who died on the cross, into whom men are incorporated by baptism, no matter who administers it.**14-16.** Paul has baptized so few persons in Corinth that no one can seriously pretend he was baptized in Paul's name. *Crispus:* The former head of the Corinthian synagogue, his conversion sparked the growth of the church (Acts 18:8). *Gaius:* A wealthy man with a house large enough to accommodate the Christian assembly (Rom 16:23). *Stephanas:* The first Christian convert in Corinth. Paul praises him for his dedicated service to the church. Accompanied by Achaicus and Fortunatus, he delivered to Paul at Ephesus the letter from the Corinthian community that Paul answers in the second part (1 Cor 16:15-18).**17.** No special mission was needed to baptize, and Paul usually left the administration of baptism to others. This does not imply any disdain for it; Rom 6:3-12 and 1 Cor 6:11 indicate Paul's high regard for the sacrament of incorporation into Christ. Yet Paul is an apostle sent by Christ to preach the gospel. *not with wisdom of*

*discourse*: Not with wordy wisdom, employing the technique of the philosopher or the rules of studied eloquence and artificial rhetoric, but by speaking simply and forthrightly in order not to detract from the power of Christ's cross.

**16** (b) THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS (1:18-25). It is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the revelation of God's saving power.

### Haydock's Catholic Commentary

**Ver. 10. &c.** *That there is no schisms....contentions, &c.* To hinder these, was the chief design of this letter; one saying, *I am of Paul*, &c. each party bragging of their master by whom they had been baptized, and made Christians. *I am of Apollo*, the eloquent preacher, and *I of Cephas*, the head of the apostles, and of the whole Church; whilst others, the only party not to be blamed, contented themselves with saying, and *I am of Christ*. --- *Is Christ divided?* Is not your salvation, is not your justification in baptism, and all gifts from him? (Witham)

**Ver. 11.** *Of Chloe*. It is worthy our observation, that St. Paul does not here mention any one person in particular, lest he might expose any one to the resentment of the rest, but mentions only in general terms the house of Chloe. (St. Chrysostom; Theophylactus)

**Ver. 12.** Chloe was a Christian woman of Corinth. Apollo is the person mentioned, Acts xviii. 24. &c. Cephas is St. Peter, so called in the Syriac tongue. (Bible de Vence)

**Ver. 13.** *Was Paul crucified for you?* Though says St. Augustine brothers may die for brothers, yet the blood of no martyr is shed for the remission of a brother's sin. See also St. Leo the Great, serm. xii. de pass. Dom.

**Ver. 14.** *I give God thanks that I baptized none of you, but, &c.* It is strange that Quakers should from hence pretend, that St. Paul condemned baptism, when he only tells them, he is *glad* they were baptized by some other, rather than by him, lest they should say, they were baptized in his name, or think that baptism had a greater virtue, when given by a minister of greater sanctity; whereas it is Christ only, who is the chief minister, who gives grace in baptism, and in the other sacraments. This makes him say, *was Paul crucified for you, &c.* He tells them the occasion why he baptized few, because he was sent chiefly to *preach* and to be their apostle, whereas other inferior ministers were employed in baptizing. (Witham)

**Ver. 17. &c.** *Not to baptize*. That is, the first and principal intent, in my vocation to the apostleship, was to *preach* the gospel, before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. (Acts chap. ix. 15.) To *baptize* is common to all, but to *preach* is peculiarly the function of an apostle. (Estius; Menochius; Grotius) --- I was sent to *preach the gospel*,

*not with wisdom of speech, and as he says in the next chapter, (ver. 13.) not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, &c. The Spirit of God, which guided the thoughts and pen of St. Paul, and the other sacred writers, inspired them to deliver the gospel-truths with great simplicity, without the ornaments of an artificial human eloquence, lest the cross of Christ should be made void, lest the conversion of the world might be attributed to any human means, and not to the power of God, and of Christ crucified. (Witham)*

An Exposition of First Corinthians by Charles Hodge

### **OF THE DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCH OF CORINTH. VS. 10-16.**

As one of the principal objects of this epistle was to correct the evils which had arisen in the church of Corinth, the apostle adverts, first, to the divisions which there existed. He exhorts the members of that church to unity, 1 Cor. 1:10. The reason of that exhortation was the information which he had received concerning their dissensions, 1 Cor. 1:11. These divisions arose from their ranging themselves under different religious teachers as party leaders, 1 Cor. 1:12. The sin and folly of such divisions are manifest, in the first place, because Christ is incapable of division. As there is one head, there can be but one body. As there is but one Christ, there can be but one church. And in the second place, because religious teachers are not centres of unity to the church. They had not redeemed it, nor did its members profess allegiance to them in baptism, 1 Cor. 1:13. These divisions, therefore, arose, on the one hand, from a forgetfulness of the common relation which all Christians bear to Christ; and, on the other, from a misapprehension of the relation in which believers stand to their religious teachers. Paul expresses his gratitude that he had not given any occasion for such misapprehension. He had baptized so few among them, that no man could suspect him of a desire to make himself the head of the church or the leader of a party, 1 Cor. 1:14-16.

***1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but (that) ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.***

There is but one exhortation in this verse, which is expressed first in general terms, "that ye all say the same thing;" and is then explained in the negative form, "that there be no divisions among you;" and then positively, "that ye be perfectly joined together."

***By the name of our Lord Jesus Christ***, i.e. out of regard to Christ, Romans 12:1, 15:30. Their reverence and love of Christ, and regard for his authority as their Lord, should induce them to yield obedience to the apostle's exhortation. It was not out of respect to him, but out of regard to Christ they should obey. This renders obedience easy and elevating. ***To say the same thing*** ( τ ο α τ λ γ ει ν ) is a phrase of frequent occurrence to express agreement. It may be so understood here, and then the following clauses are explanatory. Or, it may be understood in reference to 1 Cor. 1:12, of outward profession. "Do not say I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, but all say the same thing." The former explanation appears the more natural.

**And that there be no divisions among you**, literally, **schisms**. The word ( **σχισμα** ) means,

1. A **rent**, as in a garment, Matthew 9:16.
2. Difference of opinion, John 7:43.
3. Alienation of feeling, or inward separation.
4. In its ecclesiastical sense, it is an unauthorized separation from the church.

The schisms which existed in Corinth were not of the nature of hostile sects refusing communion with each other, but such as may exist in the bosom of the same church, consisting in alienation of feeling and party strifes.

**But (that) ye be perfectly joined together.** The original word ( **καταρτ** ) means **to repair, or to mend**, Matthew 4:21, **to reduce to place**, as a dislocated limb; **to render complete**, or **perfect** ( **πριο** ); then figuratively, **to restore** or **set right** those in error; **to prepare, to render perfect**. Hence in this place the sense may be, "That ye be perfect," as the Vulgate renders it; or, "that ye be united," as in our translation; or, "that ye be reduced to order." The context shows that the idea of union is what the apostle intended. They were not to be divided, but united. This union was to be both **in mind** and **in judgment** ( **νοού** and **γνμη** ). The former term may refer either to the intellect or feelings. The latter in the New Testament always means judgment or opinion. When the words are united, the former is most naturally understood of feeling, a sense in which the word **mind** is often used by us. The unity which Paul desired was a union in faith and love. Considering the relation in which Christians stand to each other as the members of Christ, dissensions among them are as inconsistent with their character, as conflict between the members of the human body.

**1:11 For it hath been declared unto the of you, my brethren, by them (which are of the house) of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.**

This verse contains the reason of the foregoing exhortation. He urges them to union because he had heard they were divided. **By those of Chloe**, whether the persons referred to were the children or domestics of Chloe is left undetermined. Chloe was a Christian woman well known to the Corinthians; whether a member of the church in Corinth whose people had come to Ephesus where Paul was; or an Ephesian whose family had been to Corinth, and learned the state of things there, is a matter of conjecture. All Paul wished was to assure the Corinthians that he had sufficient evidence of the existence of contentions among them. This word ( **ριδέ** ) **strifes, wranglings**, explains the nature of the schisms referred to in the preceding verse. These strifes, as appears from what follows, were about their religious teachers.

**1:12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.**

This explains the nature of these contentions. In almost all the apostolic churches there were contentions between the Jewish and Gentile converts. As Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and Peter of the Jews, Galatians 2:8, it is probable that the converts from among the Gentiles claimed Paul as their leader, and the Jewish converts appealed to the authority of Peter. It is plain from the contents of this and of the following epistle, that these contentions were fomented by false teachers, 2 Corinthians 11:13; that these teachers were Hebrews, 2 Corinthians 11:22, and that they endeavored to undermine the authority of Paul as an apostle. The two principal parties in Corinth, therefore, were Gentiles calling themselves the disciples of Paul, and Jews claiming to be the followers of Peter. The Gentile converts, however, were not united among themselves. While some said, we are of Paul; others said, we are of Apollos. As Apollos was an Alexandrian Jew, distinguished for literary culture and eloquence, it is probable that the more highly educated among the Corinthian Christians were his peculiar followers. Apollos is a shortened form of Apollonius, as Silas is of Silvanus. The first governor of Egypt appointed by Alexander bore that name; and probably on that account it became in that country so exceedingly common. As the Judaizers objected to Paul that he was not an apostle, these followers of Apollos undervalued him as a preacher. He was neither a philosopher nor a rhetorician after the Grecian school. We shall find the apostle defending himself against both these classes of objections. Who those were who said, we are of Christ, it is not so easy to determine. It is plain that they were as much to blame as the other parties mentioned. They must therefore have claimed some peculiar relation to Christ which they denied to their fellow believers, 2 Corinthians 10:7. Whether this exclusive claim was founded, as some suppose, on the fact that they had themselves seen and heard Christ; or whether they asserted their superior and more intimate relation to him on some other ground, is altogether uncertain. It would appear from the frequency with which Paul speaks of certain persons in Corinth "glorying in the flesh," and "in appearance," that this party claimed some peculiar external relation to Christ, and that their views of him were "carnal," or worldly.

***1:13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?***

The grounds of our allegiance to Christ, are, first, that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God; second, that he hath redeemed us; third, that we are consecrated to him in baptism. All these grounds are peculiar to Christ. To no other being in the universe do believers stand in the relation which they all sustain to their common Lord. As, therefore, there is but one Christ, but one redeemer, but one baptism, Christians cannot be divided without violating the bond which binds them to Christ and to one another.

***Is Christ divided?*** Of course the answer must be in the negative. As Christ is incapable of division, as there can be but one Christ, the church cannot be divided. It is contrary to its nature to be split into hostile parties, just as it is contrary to the nature of a family to be thus divided. As the head is one, so are the members.

***Was Paul crucified for you?*** Did Paul redeem you? Were you purchased by his blood, so as to belong to him? If not, then you are not his, and it is wrong to say, We are Paul's. Believers bear no such relation even to inspired teachers, as to justify their being

called by their names. They are called Christians, because they are the worshippers of Christ, because they belong to him, and because they are consecrated to him.

***Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? ( ε το νομα )***, literally, unto the name, i.e. in reference to Paul, so that he should be the object of your faith and the one whose name you were to confess. By baptism we are brought into the number of the disciples and followers of him into whose name, or in reference to whom, we are baptized. As, therefore, all Christians are baptized unto Christ, and not unto the apostles, much less any uninspired teacher, it is Christ whom they should confess, and by his name they should be called.

***14, 15 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.***

Although it was the duty of the apostles to baptize, Matthew 28:19, yet Paul rejoiced that it had so happened that he had administered that ordinance to only a few persons in Corinth, as thus all pretext that he was making disciples to himself, was taken away. Paul did not consider this a matter of chance, but of providential direction, and, therefore, a cause of gratitude. Crispus was the chief ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, whose conversion is recorded in Acts 18:8. Caius is mentioned in Romans 16:23, as the host of the apostle.

***1:16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas; besides I know not whether I baptized any other.***

Stephanas was one of the three messengers sent to inform the apostle of the state of the church in Corinth, and to deliver the letter to which reference is made, 1 Cor. 7:1; comp. 1 Cor. 16:15,17. Paul says he baptized the **household** or family of Stephanas. Under the old dispensation, whenever any one professed Judaism or entered into covenant with God as one of his people, all his children and dependents, that is, all to whom he stood in a representative relation, were included in the covenant and received circumcision as its sign. In like manner under the gospel, when a Jew or Gentile joined the Christian church his children received baptism and were recognized as members of the Christian church. Compare Acts 16:15,33.

***Besides I know not whether I baptized any other.*** The nature of inspiration is to be learnt from the declarations of the Scriptures and from the facts therein recorded. From these sources we learn that it was an influence which rendered its recipients infallible, but it did not render them omniscient. They were preserved from asserting error, but they were not enabled either to know or to remember all things.

#### **PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS MANNER OF PREACHING. VS. 17-31.**

The apostle having been led to mention incidentally that he had baptized very few persons in Corinth, assigns as the reason of that fact that his great official duty was to preach the gospel. This naturally led him to speak of the manner of preaching. It was one of the objections urged against him that he did not preach "with the wisdom of words," that is, that he did not preach the doctrines taught by human reason, which he



calls the wisdom of the world. Through the remainder of this, and the whole of the following chapter, he assigns his reasons for thus renouncing the wisdom of the world, — and resumes the subject of the divisions existing in the church of Corinth at the beginning of the third chapter.

1. His first reason for not teaching human wisdom is that God had pronounced all such wisdom to be folly, 1 Cor. 1:19, 20.

2. Expedience had proved the insufficiency of human wisdom to lead men to a saving knowledge of God, 1 Cor. 1:21.

3. God had ordained the gospel to be the great means of salvation, 1 Cor. 1:21-25.

4. The experience of the Corinthians themselves showed that it was not wisdom nor any other human distinction that secured the salvation of men. Human wisdom could neither discover the method of salvation, nor secure compliance with its terms when revealed. They were in Christ (i.e. converted), not because they were wiser, better, or more distinguished than others, but simply because God had chosen or called them, 1 Cor. 1:26-30.

The design of God in all this was to humble then so that he who glories should glory in the Lord, 1 Cor. 1:31.

***1:17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.***

**For** indicates the connection. “I baptized few, for I was not sent to baptize, but to preach.” The commission was, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” This does not mean that baptism was not included, but it does mean that baptizing was very inferior to preaching. It is subordinated in the very form of the commission, “Go ye therefore, **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them,” etc. The main thing was to make disciples; recognizing them as such by baptism was subordinate, though commanded. Baptism was a work which the apostles seem to have generally left to others, Acts 10:48. During the apostolic age, and in the apostolic form of religion, truth stood immeasurably above external rites. The apostasy of the church consisted in making rites more important than truth. The apostle’s manner of speaking of baptism in this connection as subordinate to preaching is, therefore, a wonder to those who are disposed unduly to exalt the sacraments, as may be seen in Olshausen’s remarks on 1 Cor. 1:13-16. We must not infer from this that baptism is of little importance, or that it may be safely neglected. Although Paul controverted the Jewish doctrine that circumcision secured salvation and was necessary to its attainment, he nevertheless admitted that its advantages were great every way, Romans 3:2. And in the Old Testament it is expressly said that the uncircumcised man—child should be cut off from the people, i.e. deprived of the benefits of the theocracy. While therefore it is unscriptural to make baptism essential to salvation or a certain means of regeneration, it is nevertheless a dangerous act of disobedience to undervalue or neglect it.



His preaching Paul describes by saying it was “not with the wisdom of words,” ( **ο κ υ σοφ λ γου** ). So far as the signification of these words is concerned, the meaning may be,

1. Not with skillful discourse, that is, eloquence.
2. Or, not with philosophical discourse, that is, not in an abstract or speculative manner, so that the truth taught should be presented in a philosophical form. According to this view the doctrine taught would still be the gospel, but the thing rejected and condemned would be merely the philosophical mode of exhibiting it.
3. The meaning may be, not with a discourse characterized by wisdom; that is, the contents of which was human wisdom, instead of truths revealed by God. The context is in favor of the interpretation last mentioned. In this whole connection the apostle contrasts two kinds of wisdom. The one he describes as the wisdom of the world, the wisdom of men, or of the rulers of the world.

By this he means human wisdom, that which has a human origin. This he pronounces to be folly, and declares it to be entirely inefficacious in the salvation of men. The other kind of wisdom, he calls the wisdom of God, i.e. derived from God; the hidden wisdom, consisting in truths which human reason never could discover. The former he repudiates. He says, he did not come to preach the teachings of human reason, but the testimony of God. He was among them in the character, not of a philosopher, but of a witness. As in what follows the apostle argues to prove that human wisdom is folly and cannot save men, and gives that as the reason why he came preaching the doctrine of the cross, it seems plain that this is the meaning of the passage before us. “Christ sent the to preach, not with wise discourse, that is, not with human wisdom — not as a philosopher, but as a witness.” His preaching therefore was the simple exhibition of the truth which God had revealed.