§ 1v.] NUMBER OF EPISTLES. [=yrropuction.   
   
 tions as to the method of making “‘the collection for the saints.” We   
 may ask,—when enjoined and how? If by the Apostle in person, the   
 directions would doubtless have been asked for and given at the time.   
 It would seem then to follow, that a command to make the collection   
 had been sent them either by some messenger, or in an epistle.   
 2. The uncertainty, however, which would rest upon this inference, is   
 removed by the express words of the Apostle himself. In ch. v. 9 he says,   
 “JT wrote to you in my letter, not to company with fornicators.” In my   
 note on those words, I have endeavoured to shew that the only meaning   
 which in their context they will legitimately bear, is, that this command,   
 not to associate with fornicators, was contained in a previous Epistle to   
 them, which has not been preserved to us. Those who maintain that   
 the reference is to the present Epistle, have never been able to pro-   
 duce a passage bearing the slightest resemblance to the command   
 mentioned.   
 8. The opinions of Commentators on this point have been strangely   
 warped by a notion conceived a priori, that it would be wrong to   
 suppose any apostolic Epistle to have been lost. Those who regard, not   
 preconceived theories, but the facts and analogies of the case, will rather   
 come to the conclusion that very many have been lost. The Epistle to   
 Philemon, for example, is the only one remaining to us of a class which,   
 if we take into account the affectionate disposition of St. Paul, and the   
 frequency of intercourse between the metropolis and the provinces, must   
 have been numerous during his captivity in Rome. We find him also   
 declaring, 1 Cor. xvi. 3 (see note there), his intention of giving recom-   
 mendatory letters, if necessary, to the bearers of the collection from   
 Corinth to Jerusalem : from which proposal we may safely infer that on   
 other occasions, he was in the habit of writing such Epistles to indivi-   
 duals or to churches. To imagine that every writing of an inspired   
 Apostle must necessarily have been preserved to us, is as absurd as it   
 would be to imagine that all his sayings must necessarily have been   
 recorded. The Providence of God, which has preserved so many pre-   
 cious portions both of one and the other, has also allowed many, perhaps   
 equally precious, of both, to pass into oblivion.   
 4. The time of writing this lost Hpistle is fixed, by the history, between   
 St. Paul’s leaving Corinth, Acts xviii. 18, and the sending of our present   
 Epistle. But we shall be able to approximate nearer, when we have   
 discussed the question of the Apostle’s visits to Corinth’.   
 5. Its contents may be in some measure surmised from the data   
 furnished in our two canonical Epistles.   
 He had in it given them a command, “not to company with for-   
 nicators,” which being taken by them in too strict and literal a sense,   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
 1 See below, § v.   
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