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# THE EXPOSITOR.

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## *NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.*

### CHAPTER I.

THIS Epistle could not have been written if St. Peter had been at Rome at the time; nor could he have been there at any later time previous to the date of the Epistle to the Philippians. Hence, as Meyer observes, it furnishes a decisive proof that the alleged fact on which the whole Papal system rests—viz., that St. Peter for twenty-five years was exercising the functions of a bishop at Rome—is purely imaginary. But it does not follow that, as some over-zealous Protestants contend, he was never there. The tradition of his presence and martyrdom need not, and ought not, to be disputed.

In the Greeting (verses 1-7), with which the Epistle opens, two objects are uppermost in St. Paul's thoughts. (1) To assert the dignity of his apostolical office in its relation to Christ and to God. (2) To recognize the high condition of those whom he addresses, both as partakers of a Divine calling, and as placed by Divine Providence in a conspicuous position, commanding singular advantages and opportunities, as inhabiting the metropolis of the civilized world.

VERSE 1.—*Servant*: not his own, but belonging, in all that he had and was, to his Master, Christ: *whose I am and whom I serve*.—*Called to be an apostle*: a called apostle; not of his own will and pleasure, but by virtue of a heavenly *calling* [at Damascus, where he became a *chosen vessel*].—*Separated unto the gospel of God*: rather, set apart unto the preaching of the gospel of God.

VERSE 2.—There is no parenthesis. Not, *in the holy scriptures*, but, *in holy scriptures*.

VERSE 3.—*Concerning* relates to the *promise*, not *gospel concerning* (an expression never used); but *promised concerning*.—*Made*: rather, *born*.—*According to the flesh*: rather, as regards (his) bodily human nature (*κατὰ σάρκα*).

VERSE 4.—*Declared*: much better, *ordained*, as in Acts x. 42, where the Greek verb is the same. *Ordained* includes all that is signified by *declared* and something more, viz., a formal solemn investiture with the character of Sonship *with regard to the hearts and consciences of men*. In this respect God did not act simply as a witness, whose testimony only discloses, but cannot alter, the state of the case. The Resurrection, though it did not make Christ to be what He was not before,—*in Himself*,—yet, *relatively to the faith of men*, effected a most important change in his position, and might be truly said not only to *declare*, but to *constitute*, Him Son of God. The Socinian interpretation overlooks this distinction.

*With power*: rather, *mightily ordained* (with mighty overpowering display of Divine power).—*The spirit of holiness*: not the Holy Spirit, the third

Person of the Trinity; but the holiness of spirit wherewith Christ Himself was holy.—*By the resurrection*: rather, *by resurrection*. *From the dead*, rather, *of the dead* (especially that of Christ Himself, which alone St. Paul has here in view, as the Divine attestation of his holiness and Sonship).

VERSE 5.—*Grace and apostleship*: not—as many have taken it—one thing only, the grace of apostleship; but two things perfectly distinct from one another; viz., his state as one of grace or favour with God, and his apostolical office.—*By whom we (i.e., I) have received*: rather, *through whom*, through whose mediation.—*For obedience to the faith*: rather, *to the end of obedience* (of promoting obedience—the object of the apostleship).—*For his name*: rather, *for his name's sake* (by the increase of obedience to the faith God's name was increasingly hallowed and glorified).

VERSE 7.—*Called to be saints*: *saints*, not *holy persons*, but members of a body which, *as a whole*, but not otherwise, was endowed with privileges corresponding to those of Israel after the flesh; not, however, like those acquired through hereditary transmission, but bestowed by a *call* addressed to each child of the spiritual Israel individually. Thus *called saints* (*κλητοῖς ἁγίοις*) stands in opposition to *born saints*, as Christianity to Judaism.

Proceeding now to open the subject of his Epistle, St. Paul begins (verses 8–12) by endeavouring to impress the Romans with the sincerity and earnestness of his desire to form a personal acquaintance with them. He calls on God to witness it, as the long

delay in its accomplishment might seem to make it doubtful. This desire is grounded on two motives, one immediate, the other more remote. The immediate motive lay in the reports which had reached him from all quarters (*all the world*—a natural, innocent, and graceful hyperbole) as to their faith; the other, the remoter but stronger of the two, was the hope of imparting to them some spiritual gift for the establishment of their faith. But, with a fine tact of natural politeness, he would divest himself of the superiority implied in the character of a donor and benefactor, and therefore represents himself as equally interested in the end which he had in view, because of the *comfort* which he would share with them. (Cf. xv. 32. *That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.*)

VERSE 8.—*My God*: whose I am, and whom I serve (Acts xxvii. 23).—*Through Jesus Christ*: without whom he would have had neither cause nor will to be thankful.

VERSE 9.—*For*: as a proof of the sincerity of my thanksgiving.—*Whom I serve with my spirit*: my spiritual mind; with all the powers of my higher nature, sustained and guided by the Holy Spirit, for my work in the Gospel.

VERSE 10.—*Making request*: connected immediately with the end of the verse.—*Praying that I may come unto you, if by any means*: the thing desired being apparently almost hopeless.—*I might have a prosperous journey*: rather, *I might succeed in my aim*. The question was not, whether he should have

a *prosperous* journey, but whether he should be able to make the journey at all.

VERSE 13.—(*But was let hitherto.*) The Hebrew idiom renders the use of *but* for *and* allowable, but not necessary. *And was let hitherto*, without the parenthesis, would give the sense: *and, not through any change of purpose, but by circumstances beyond my control was let hitherto.*

VERSE 14.—*I am debtor*: A debt may be paid in either of two ways; by giving back that which is owed into the hands of the creditor, or by paying it to one to whom the creditor has transferred his right. So Horace:

“ Navis, quæ tibi creditum  
Debes Virgilium, finibus Atticis  
Reddas incolumem, precor.”

God, wanting nothing for Himself, makes the debt, due to Him, payable to those among whom St. Paul was commissioned to preach the Gospel.

VERSE 15.—*As much as in me is*: rather, *as far as depends upon myself*.—*Ready*: hardly strong enough for *πρόθυμον*; rather, *eager*.

VERSE 16.—*Not ashamed*: notwithstanding the contempt with which it has been received by the wise and learned of this world, *wise after the flesh* (1 Cor. i. 26–28).—*The power of God*: the great instrument by which God displays his power for the salvation of mankind.—*To the Jew first*: according to the order of Providence by which the Gospel was first preached among the Jewish people, and also with respect to the privileges they enjoyed as having committed to them *the oracles of God*. (Rom. iii. 2.)

VERSE 17.—*The righteousness of God*: not a Divine attribute; not anything in God, but that righteousness which is in man, of God; having God for its Author and Giver. This righteousness is revealed *from faith*—as proceeding from faith—to *faith*—having faith for its origin and its end, its efficient and its final cause. It must be borne in mind that the faith which St. Paul is speaking of is not only a *motive principle* of right action and godly life, but also a *state* of supreme happiness, inasmuch as it is invariably accompanied by a consciousness of the Divine favour. It is not only a *way*, but an *end* to which the way leads: faith the starting-point, and faith the goal.

Still the words *from faith to faith* perfectly admit the sense adopted by many eminent Commentators: *from one degree of faith to another*. Faith, even though essentially unchangeable, is capable of continual progress. It includes two elements; one intellectual, the other emotional; one, by which it holds the truth with a firm conviction; the other, by which it exercises a hearty trust in the promises of God. Each of these elements may be growing and gaining strength. The truth may be held with a surer grasp and a livelier hope.—*The just shall live by faith*: rather, *the just by faith shall live* (inherit eternal life).

VERSE 18.—*Revealed*: not, *made known*, but, *brought to light*: not by word, but by deed.—*From heaven* (God's throne): *i.e.*, by a visible manifestation.—*Hold the truth*: rather, restrain, keep back the truth, so as to prevent it from producing its proper effect, yielding its natural fruits, exerting its

due influence on life and conduct.—*In unrighteousness*: rather, *by* unrighteousness. How was the wrath of God revealed? St. Paul has left this to be inferred by conjecture from the context. The most probable answer seems to be that it was by the abandonment of the Heathen world to the depravity and *excess of riot* (cf. 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4) described in this Chapter. *God gave them up*.

VERSE 19.—*That which may be known* (by the exercise of man's natural faculties): so that it does not matter whether we understand *that which may be known*, or, *that which is known*. Each rendering excludes knowledge derived from preternatural Revelation; each implies that some, and practically sufficient, knowledge is within reach of human understanding.—*Shewed*: better, *manifested* (the Greek verb being that of the adjective *manifest*).

VERSE 20.—*From the creation*: rather, *since*—but not, the invisible things of Him since the creation; but, are seen *since* the creation.—*By*: i.e. *by means of*; the creation, the glass in which are *clearly seen the eternal power and Godhead*, in themselves invisible.

VERSE 21.—*Vain in their imaginations*: rather, their *thoughts*,—as the same word, *διαλογισμοῖς*, is translated 1 Cor. iii. 20,—in their notions, opinions, and reasonings concerning God. Wherein exactly did this *vanity* consist? In two things. (1) In the absence of a foundation in truth: and (2) in the positive absurdity of the idle fancies embodied in the Heathen mythology and worship.—*Their foolish heart was darkened*: not, as some have taken it, *their heart was darkened so as to become foolish*, which



would be an anti-climax; but their heart, perverted by their wilful folly in the abuse of their rational nature, was judicially darkened or blinded.

VERSE 23.—*Changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image*: rather, *exchanged the glory of the uncorruptible God, for an image*; i.e., worshipped the image instead of the glory.

VERSE 24.—*Through*: rather, *in*. Their *lusts* were not the *cause* of their *uncleanness*, but the *state* in which they were left.—*To dishonour*: rather, *that their bodies might be dishonoured*.

VERSE 25.—*Changed the truth of God into a lie*: rather, exchanged the truth of God (the true God) for a *lie*, i.e. an empty idol, a thing of nought.—*More than the Creator*: rather, instead of the Creator, so as entirely to deprive Him of the honour due to Him.—*Who is blessed for ever. Amen*. This seems to be not simply a gush of pious feeling, but connected with a practice, common among Jews and Mahometans, of introducing a doxology (as if to purify the lips) when language has been cited which is, or is deemed to be, blasphemous. Thus in the Koran: "It becometh not God to beget a son. Glory be to Him" (Sura xix. 36); "Praise be to God, who hath not begotten a son, who hath no partner in his kingdom, nor any protector on account of weakness. And magnify Him by proclaiming his greatness" (Sura lxxvii. 111); "Yet they say, The God of Mercy hath begotten issue from the angels. Glory be to Him! Nay, they are but his honoured servants" (Sura xxi. 26).

VERSE 26.—*Vile affections*: rather, *shameful lusts*.—*Change into*: rather, *exchange for*.

VERSE 27.—*Error*: their lapse into idolatry and consequent uncleanness.

VERSE 28.—*Like*: rather, *think fit*.—*Reprobate*: i.e., *depraved*.—*Those things which are not convenient*: i.e., *abominable things*.

VERSE 31.—*Without understanding*: i.e., without discernment of moral good and evil.

VERSE 32.—The last stage of sin is to take pleasure in it for its own sake when seen in others, without the excuse of yielding to the solicitation of personal lust and passion. This is the climax which it often reaches in the old, who are hardened in vice, and have lost their relish for sensual enjoyment.

It is not to be supposed that in this dark picture of the Heathen world, St. Paul meant that all the Heathen were sunk in the same corruption; and that he was not fully aware that there was an infinity of gradations between the best and the worst, and that there were many whose lives were outwardly irreproachable and might have afforded a salutary example to many Christians; we need but remember the names of Aristides, Epaminondas, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, &c. Those who abandoned themselves to the grosser forms of vice and wickedness were undoubtedly comparatively the few. On the other hand, none of those who so offended had their hearts darkened so as to be unable to discern the difference between good and evil; and, therefore, it might be truly said of them, as in verse 32, that they knew the judgment, or, rather, the ordinance of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death. The doctrine of a future retri-

bution was generally received, as we know from Æschylus,—

*Δρασάντι παθεῖν  
τριγέρων μῦθος τάδε φωνεῖ,<sup>1</sup>*

as well as from the descriptions, in Homer or elsewhere, of the details of the future punishment. At the same time, the death of which the Apostle here speaks is not simply the loss of mortal life, but death everlasting.

CONNOP THIRLWALL.

*ON THE CONTEST FOR THE BODY OF MOSES.*

JUDE, *verse 9.*

THAT to us this contest between the Archangel and the Devil is exceedingly obscure is certain; although it was apparently not unfamiliar to the countrymen and contemporaries of Jude the brother of James. In considering this obscure passage we may take one of two lines.

We may, in the first place, treat it as a mere reference to a Jewish fable; and we may say that its origin must be found in some pious imagination of the Persian era, when Jewish thought became saturated with the angelology and demonology of the far East. This is, perhaps, more or less vaguely, the opinion of most educated laymen. I will simply say here, that it seems to me inconsistent with any solid belief in the Inspiration of Scripture, and creates, therefore, much more serious difficulties than it removes. We may, in the second place, accept as

<sup>1</sup> Æsch. *Χοηφόροι*, 305, 6.