

**THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
ROMANS: WITH NOTES
AND INTRODUCTION**

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The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans: With Notes and Introduction by E. H. Gifford

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E. H. GIFFORD

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WITH NOTES AND INTRODUCTION.

By E. H. GIFFORD, D.D.,
ARCHDEACON OF LONDON AND CANON OF ST. PAUL'S, EXAMINING
CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF LONDON.

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INTRODUCTION.

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§ 1. AUTHORSHIP.

THE title of the Epistle in the oldest manuscripts is simply *πρὸς Ῥωμαίους*, "To the Romans;" but the first word of the Epistle itself names St. Paul as its author, and it has been universally accepted in all ages as his genuine work.

It is quoted very early, though not, as some have supposed, in the New Testament itself.

Thus in 2 Pet. iii. 15 there is an allusion to St. Paul's teaching, which in consequence of a slight resemblance in the language has been thought to refer especially to Rom. ii. 4; but St. Peter, as the context clearly shows, is referring to the moral exhortation found in all St. Paul's Epistles, based as it commonly is on the expectation of Christ's second coming.

The supposed allusion in St. James (ii. 14) to St. Paul's teaching in the Epistle to the Romans is inconsistent with the friendly and confidential intercourse of these two Apostles (Acts xv. 4, 25; Gal. ii. 9), and with the earlier date at which St. James most probably wrote. On this point, however, the reader must refer to the full discussion in the Commentary on St. James.

But the Epistle is certainly quoted

before the end of the 1st century by Clement of Rome in a passage which will be found in the Additional Note on i. 32: in the 2nd century it is quoted by Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, and Irenæus: the last-named Father repeatedly and expressly refers to it as the work of St. Paul (III. xvi. 3, 9). The internal evidence of its genuineness has carried conviction to the minds of the most cautious and the most sceptical of critics. Every chapter, in fact, bears the impress of the same mind from which the Epistles to the Churches of Corinth and Galatia undoubtedly proceeded; and even Baur and the critics of his school, who make every effort to prove the two last chapters spurious, are obliged to admit that the rest of the Epistle is the genuine work of St. Paul.

§ 2. TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING.

The passages which contain definite historical statements indicating the time and place at which the Epistle was written are all contained in the last two chapters, xv. 25-31; xvi. 1, 2, 21, 23.

But the time and place of writing can also be inferred with great probability from indirect evidence contained in I. 10, 11, 13.

This latter proof is quite independent

of the former, and when combined with it forms an undesigned coincidence between the first and last chapters of the Epistle, and a valuable confirmation of the genuineness of chapters xv. and xvi., which of late years has been much disputed.

I. *Notes of Time and Place in xv., xvi.*

At the time of writing this Epistle St. Paul was going to carry to the poor saints at Jerusalem a contribution made for them in Macedonia and Achaia (xv. 25, 26), and he hoped afterwards to visit Rome on his way to Spain (xv. 28). If we compare these passages with Acts xix. 21 and xx. 3, it is clear that the Epistle must have been written after the Apostle's arrival in Greece on his third missionary journey, when he spent three months in Corinth.

The same conclusion follows from comparing Romans xv. 25-28 with 1 Cor. xvi. 1-5, and 2 Cor. viii. 1-4, ix. 1, 2. In presence of the hostile criticism which is directed against the historical value of the Acts, it is worth notice that this second proof is independent of St. Luke's narrative.

Assuming, however, as we justly may, the authenticity and accuracy of St. Luke's history, we can fix almost within a week the date at which our Epistle was despatched.

For we learn from Acts xx. 3 that, as St. Paul was about to sail from Corinth into Syria, the Jews laid wait for him, and on this account he changed his route at the last moment and determined to return through Macedonia.

The Epistle, if written after these incidents, would almost certainly have contained some reference to them, and especially to the plot of the Jews, which the Apostle could not have failed to notice in alluding to the enmity of his countrymen in ch. xv. 31. We may, therefore, confidently infer that the letter was despatched before St. Paul actually left Achaia, and yet not long before (xv. 25).

The winter was at an end and navigation had recommenced, for "he was about to sail into Syria" (Acts xx. 3).

Yet the spring was not far advanced, for after travelling through Macedonia to Miletus (Acts xx. 16) he still hoped to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost.

We can fix the season even more exactly; for St. Paul and his company spent "the days of unleavened bread" at Philippi (Acts xx. 6), and must therefore have left Corinth some time before the Passover.

The proof that the Epistle was written from Corinth is well stated by Theodoret: "First, he commends to them Phœbe, calling her a deaconess of the Church at Cenchreæ (xvi. 1); and Cenchreæ is a port of the Corinthians. And then he also speaks thus: 'Gaius mine host saluteth you' (xvi. 23). Now that Gaius was of Corinth is easy to learn from the First Epistle to the Corinthians, for he writes to them thus: 'I thank my God that I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius' (1 Cor. i. 14).

To these arguments of Theodoret we may add that four of the seven persons named in Rom. xvi. 21-23—Timotheus, Sosipater, Jason, and Gaius—can be shown with great probability to have been with St. Paul during his second abode at Corinth. The conclusion from these various proofs is that the Epistle to the Romans was written from Corinth shortly before Easter A.D. 58.

II. *Indications of Time in i. 10-13.*

We read in this passage that the writer has not yet been at Rome, but is longing to visit the believers there, and has "oftentimes purposed" to come unto them, but has been "hindered hitherto." This purpose of visiting Rome St. Paul publicly declared during the latter part of his abode at Ephesus: "After these things were ended Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome" (Acts xix. 21).

We do not know how long the Apostle had entertained the purpose here for the first time recorded: there is no indication nor probability that it entered into the plan of his first journey to Europe

(Acts xvi. 9—xviii. 18). But we may conjecture with some probability that the desire to visit Rome had been first kindled by St. Paul's intercourse with Aquila and Priscilla when they had lately come from Italy to Corinth (Acts xviii. 1), and fostered by constant association with them during the journey from Corinth to Ephesus (Acts xviii. 26; xix. 1, 10; 1 Cor. xvi. 19). The distinct purpose therefore of visiting Rome could hardly have been formed *before* St. Paul's abode at Ephesus, nor could the statement in Rom. i. 10-13 have been made *before* the latter part of that period, a considerable lapse of time being implied in the words "*oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, but was let hitherto.*"

Again, by comparison with the contents of the Corinthian Epistles it may be clearly proved that the Epistle to the Romans must have been written *after* 2 Corinthians (see Bp. Lightfoot, 'Galatians,' p. 48): that is to say, *after* the latter part of the year 57. Thus we are brought very close to the time indicated in Rom. xv., xvi., and have found an independent proof of the correctness of the dates given in those chapters.

§ 3. LANGUAGE.

Salmeron (Proleg. I. 35) supposed the Epistle to have been originally composed in Latin, because it was addressed to Latins, written by an amanuensis who bore a Latin name, Tertius, and dictated by an Apostle who must have known Latin, as having the gift of tongues. Cornelius à Lapide discusses this fanciful notion, and modifies it by suggesting that St. Paul's Greek autograph was translated into Latin by Tertius and the translation sent to Rome. The error arose from ignorance of the fact, now well established, that for a considerable part of the first three centuries "the Church of Rome, and most if not all the Churches of the West, were, if we may so speak, Greek religious colonies. Their language was Greek, their organisation Greek, their writers Greek, their Scriptures Greek" (Milman, 'Latin Christianity,' I. i.).

Accordingly, in the Epistle itself we find St. Paul classifying mankind as "Greeks and Barbarians" (i. 14) or "Jews and Greeks" (i. 16; ii. 9, 10; iii. 9; x. 12); and in the salutations in ch. xvi. the names both of Jewish and Gentile converts are nearly all Greek.

§ 4. JEWS IN ROME.

When we pass from the author to his readers, our thoughts turn first to the origin of the Jewish colony in Rome. The first embassy sent from Jerusalem to Rome by Judas Maccabæus, B.C. 161, obtained from the Senate a treaty of mutual defence and friendship, which was renewed successively by Jonathan, B.C. 144, by Simon, B.C. 141, and by John Hyrcanus, B.C. 129; see 1 Macc. viii. 17, xii. 1, xiv. 24; and Josephus, 'Antiq.' xiii. 1.

Of the Jews who came to Rome in the train of these frequent embassies some would certainly settle there, for the commercial advantages of residence in the great capital would not be neglected by the enterprising race which was rapidly spreading over all the civilised world.

The first notice in Latin literature of the Jews in Rome seems to be the well-known passage in Cicero's defence of L. Valerius Flaccus (c. 28), where we learn that the Jews were accustomed to send gold every year from Italy to Jerusalem, and formed in Rome itself a faction so numerous and formidable that the great orator points to them as thronging at that moment the steps of the Aurelian tribunal, and lowers his voice in pretended terror lest they should overhear his words. These wealthy and influential Jews must have been settled in Rome long before the captives whom Pompey brought from Jerusalem to adorn his triumph only two years before the date of Cicero's oration, B.C. 59.

But Pompey's captives were in course of time set free by those who had bought them for slaves (Philo, Jud. 'de Legat.' c. 23), and the Jewish community in Rome was thus greatly increased. Julius Cæsar treated them with singular favour, and expressly sanctioned their worship