

**AN EXPOSITION OF THE EPISTLE
OF SAINT PAUL TO THE ROMANS,
ACCORDING TO THE ANALOGY
OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH**

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An Exposition of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans, According to the Analogy of the Catholic Faith by Morgan Dix

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EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL TO THE ROMANS,
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BY
THE REV. MORGAN DIX, A. M.

"Existenter enim plures, qui celestium verborum simplicitatem pro voluntaria
sua sensu, non pro veritatis ipsius absoluteione susceperent, aliter interpretantes quam
dictorum virtus postulare. De intelligentis enim hæresis, non de Scriptura est: et
sensus, non sermo fit crimen."—S. HILARY, DE TRINITATE.

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BY MORGAN DIX,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the
Southern District of New York.

C. A. ALFORD, STEREOTYPED AND PRINTER,

TO

THE REV. JOHN McVICKAR, S. T. D.;

MOST GRATEFULLY REMEMBERED,

AS HAVING FIRST GUIDED ME IN THE STUDY OF PHILOSOPHY,

AND THEN DIRECTED ME TOWARD THAT SUBLIMER PURSUIT,

WHEREOF SHE IS THE HAND-MAID.

THE SCIENCE OF THEOLOGY;

THIS COMMENTARY IS, BY PERMISSION, INSCRIBED,

WITH THE RESPECT AND AFFECTION OF

ONE OF HIS OLD PUPILS.

PREFACE.

It may occasion surprise, that a parish priest, who, for the pressure of the daily and incessant duties of his office, has no time left for study, and scarce any for reflection, should yet have taken in hand to prepare a commentary upon a writing so hard to understand and explain as the Epistle to the Romans: and it may seem yet more strange that he should have the boldness to submit it to public inspection. But some excuse may be found in the object had in view. For this does not profess to be a critical or learned work; and it was not written for scholars. It is but an expression of the thoughts which a man may carry about with him as a part of his burden; which sometimes burn within him; and which he would impart to others as if for his own relief. And again, it is the result of the effort to make for himself what he wanted, and what no one else has given him thus far. Whosoever will study the word of God must, sooner or later, come to this Epistle; and whosoever comes to it must feel how very hard it is to comprehend; and the writer has not, in the course of his own reading, found any commentary on it which met those difficulties precisely as they have presented themselves to his mind, and which, at the same time, has aimed at harmonizing the words of the Apostle with the Creeds and System of the Catholic Church.

The chief impediments in the way of a right understanding of this Epistle are not found in the sacred text. They block the path while yet we approach. There are certain popular explanations of its meaning, which have not only attained to notoriety, but are thoughtlessly accepted, of vast numbers of persons, as correct. By these, or by some one of them, the mind may become pre-occupied until it rests undoubtingly in them as true renderings of the Apostolic thought.

Aware of the doctrinal importance of this Letter, the masters of controversies, in all ages, have felt that they must have on their side the weight of its authority. But in their efforts that way they have not dealt justly with the object of their common desire: possession, at all hazards, would seem to have been the aim. Biassed, by temperament or by education, towards particular views, or confident in respect to the special dogmas of their schools, their labor

has been, not to learn by patience and study what God's word doth really teach, but to assert and defend the tenets of their choice and affection by whatever they could lay hands upon, in that vast array of weapons. Lutheran and Calvinist—the Solifidian and the Antinomian together, have ransacked this precious treasury in haste and fury, each party with the settled assurance that its own theories must be demonstrable thence, or discoverable therein, because each held its own theories to be certainly true. Thus the Scripture has been wrested in support of views respecting which it does not appear that a thought, even the remotest, had ever crossed the Apostle's mind; side issues have been made in the most startling and unexpected way; conclusions, true perhaps in the way of logical inference, have been sworn to as though stated in terms in the text; and the Apostle has been represented as a party to controversies unheard of in the age in which he lived.

It is thus that the mind becomes so seriously embarrassed with reference to this Epistle. For the great subjective Systems of modern date have exerted on Protestant Christianity an influence so powerful, that the ideas presented by them seem to be woven into the texture of the common thought. Men speak the language of those systems, scarcely observing that such is the case; and inadvertently attach to certain words of Holy Scripture the meanings which, in those systems, the same words hold. The Moral Sense, as we know, may become so corrupted, that a man shall scarcely be able to discern between right and wrong; in like manner the Mental Sense may be perverted by commerce with error until the power of recognizing the Truth is seriously impaired. And hence our chief perplexity with respect to this Epistle. It is not merely that the words of the holy Apostle are dark, and that there be in this, as in all his writings, things hard to understand; but, in addition, prepossessions, prejudices and foregone conclusions, have probably occupied the ground; a wrong chord may have been struck; the form of the truth may have been obscured by the mists of neighboring error. We have to deal with minds ignorant of the extent to which they have been misled; with men who think they are in the green pastures and beside the still waters, when their way is through a speculative labyrinth, built by human hands; with those who fancy that they have grasped the thought of a Paul, when they are but conning the gloss of some founder or champion of a modern sect. He, therefore, who would study this Epistle to advantage, ought (if that be possible) to clear his eyes of the film of these many inventions; to forget (if he can) the popular ideas, and even the language in which they are conveyed; to resolve that he will see in the sacred text no more and no less than what is there; and to strike at once for the centre and heart of the truth.

In proportion to the difficulty of the task is the necessity that some one should undertake it, in behalf of the members of our own branch of the Church. For we have had the misfortune to be overlaid by surrounding denominations, and confounded with them. Their distinctive doctrines have been supposed to be also held by us; and shapes have been imagined as seen in the mirror of our Formularies which they did not really reflect. Thus, *c. g.*, it is thought that in one of our "Articles of Religion" the Calvinistic ideas about Predestination are contained; while another is quoted to show us to be one with Luther in his peculiar views of Justification by Faith. And the fact that we have grown so fast has worked us harm; we have received more than we have assimilated. Numbers of persons have come to us, not under a conviction of duty, nor from a persuasion of the divine claim of the Church on conscience and soul, but merely as they were led by chance or choice; and such converts as these, although adopting our forms, remain in heart and belief that which they were. Theirs they bring with them; ours they receive but in part; and the conglomeration of opinion thus resulting threatens damage to the system. In respect to the Epistle now before us, there has been particularly felt that danger which arises from our proximity to error. We need to remind each other and ourselves that the popular lines of interpretation are not the only ones; that they are inconsistent with the principles and practices contained and enjoined in our Book of Common Prayer; and that if we know no other interpretation than these, we must feel an inconsistency between our Formularies and that supposed sense of the Scripture. The author is sure, from his own experience, that no Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans can meet the wants of the Churchman, unless in every part of it the system in which he has been trained be reverently held in view; unless such Commentary harmonize with all the Articles of the Catholic Faith, as he has been taught them; unless the Creeds and Liturgy, the same in all ages, are one with it in temper, and it with them.

Shall it be said that this is to take the very course of which we have complained, and to do that thing to which we objected when done by others? Surely not. To follow individual opinion as our guide is one thing; to be informed by the consent of the Catholic Church is another. The Reason, unaided, has no promise of success in efforts at coming to the knowledge of the truth; but the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth from generation to generation. For her the Scriptures were written; her system was settled, her sacraments ministered, her doctrines taught, her dogmas known and received to the salvation of the soul, before so much as one of the holy books of the New Testament had been penned. Centuries had elapsed since the Ascension of our Lord,