

**A COMMENTARY ON THE
EPISTLE TO THE
ROMANS. WITH A
REVISED TRANSLATION**

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A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. With a Revised Translation by Edward Purdue

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A REVISED TRANSLATION.



BY

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PREFACE.

VERY many Commentaries have been written on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, but I have never met with a person of competent judgment who would maintain that any of them affords so complete an exposition of the sentiments of the apostle as to render it superfluous to attempt further to explain or illustrate his meaning; on the contrary, it seems to be generally regarded as a reproach to scholars and divines, that the interpretation of so many passages, in this, as well as in other parts of the Sacred Volume, should continue still to be involved in uncertainty, and to afford occasion for dispute. Happily, this uncertainty in no wise attaches to the leading truths of the Gospel embodied in the creeds; these are so fully, and so clearly revealed, that no person, who has had opportunity to study the Bible, can justly complain of want of sufficient instruction on any essential point of doctrine or of duty; and although, when different interpretations of the same passage of Scripture are proposed, only one of them can truly represent the mind of the inspired writer, and it may happen, that they are all erroneous; yet even when expositors fail to discern the precise meaning of a difficult text, it does not often happen, at least in the case of honest inquirers, that their deviation from it is such, as to lead them to a statement that is absolutely false; so effectual a restraint is laid on the licence of interpretation by the force of those truths that are clearly revealed. But although a remedy is provided, in the clearness of the leading truths of revelation, against much of the mischief that might result

from a misinterpretation of obscure and doubtful texts, there is still so much evil to be apprehended from such misinterpretation, and charity has suffered so grievously in the controversies to which it has given rise, that I know not in what way the Church can be served more usefully, than by freeing from uncertainty and from error, the interpretation of those passages of the Divine Word that are most liable to be misunderstood, to the end "that all who confess the faith of Christ, agreeing in the truth of God's Holy Word, may live in unity and godly love." It is in the hope of contributing, although it be but in a very small degree, to an end so desirable, that the following pages have been committed to the press. In preparing them, I have relied chiefly on the light afforded by the apostle himself to guide me to a correct interpretation of his words. In many cases, where his language seems obscure, either a careful examination of the adjoining context will suffice for its elucidation, or else, in other passages of his writings, the same or analogous expressions will be found, divested of obscurity, so as to suggest their meaning where it appears doubtful. Next to the writings of the apostle himself, the LXX. version of the Old Testament furnishes the surest key to the peculiarities of his style; we have abundant reason to believe that it was his favourite manual; his numerous citations of Scripture are drawn, almost exclusively, from its pages, and his mind was so deeply imbued with it, that it has, in many instances, evidently imparted its colouring to his language and style. While regarding these as the safest guides to a right interpretation of the apostle's language, I have not neglected to avail myself of such other illustrations of it as I have been able to derive from the Greek classics. In seeking assistance from the labours of others, I have had recourse, not so much to the works of professed commentators, as to those of our standard divines; especially to the great luminaries of the seventeenth century—to Smith, to Barrow and to Taylor; and also, although not to the same extent, to Hooker, and Bishop Butler. To Archbishop Whately's "Essays on some of the Difficulties in the Writings of St. Paul," I am indebted for several useful suggestions, and particularly for some valuable remarks on the doctrine of imputed righteousness, and on the doctrine of election. In the passages quoted from Smith, I have occasionally taken the

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liberty to abridge, and otherwise to modify the author's remarks, but without altering their import. I have used a like freedom, but more sparingly, with most of the others whom I have quoted. Numerous as are the minute variations in the MSS. of the epistle, it is wonderful how little they affect its substantial meaning; chapter vii. 6, 25, are, I believe, the only passages in which I have thought it necessary to depart from the received text; in the former, because it is destitute of MS. authority, and scarcely consistent with fact; in the latter, because a slight transposition of a few words removes an apparent incongruity, and exhibits a clear connection in what were otherwise disjointed.

The translation which I have given is, for the most part, identical with our authorized version; but in some places, for the sake of stricter accuracy, or of greater clearness, I have ventured to depart from that justly revered model. The changes thus introduced are not very numerous, and, I hope, carry in themselves, or in the notes which follow them, a sufficient justification. The diversity of opinion concerning the meaning of some passages of this epistle is such, that whatever view one takes of them must be maintained in opposition to the authority of distinguished names. In my exposition of those passages, I have not deemed it advisable to divert the reader's attention from the course of the apostle's argument, by turning aside to controvert the opinions of others; it seemed better to consign all discussions of a controversial character, whether relating to the interpretation of doubtful texts, or to doctrines founded thereon, and also all questions of verbal criticism, to an Appendix. I have there assigned the reasons on which my interpretation of most of the difficult passages of the epistle is founded, and considered such other interpretations of them as seemed most deserving of notice.

I need scarcely observe, that in the reasonings employed in such discussions, it were, in most cases, idle to expect the force of demonstration; it is no small triumph when they leave on the mind a conviction amounting to moral certainty; but even arguments which fail to establish decisively the conclusion in support of which they are adduced, may yet increase its probability to such a degree, as materially to abridge controversy, and lessen the sources of dispute, and

thus may be of essential service to the cause of charity and truth. If the following pages prove, in any degree, serviceable to that holy cause, they will so far have fulfilled the wishes of the Author, and not have been written in vain.

INTRODUCTION.

St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans was written at Corinth, towards the close of his second visit to that city (chap. xv. 25), that is, according to the most probable calculations of sacred chronology, in the beginning of the fifty-eighth year of the Christian era, which was the fourth of the reign of Nero, and twenty-four years after the ascension of our Lord. In the course of those four and twenty years, the missionaries of the Gospel had borne their divine message through a great part of the Roman empire, and even to places beyond its limits, preaching at first exclusively to their countrymen, the Jews; it was only by express direction from heaven that they addressed themselves to the Gentiles, whose claim to be admitted to the privileges of the Gospel were, by most of the Jewish converts, regarded as incomplete, unless to baptism they added the rite of circumcision, and observance of the law of Moses (Acts xv. 1-5). Even after the Council of Jerusalem had, by a formal decree, decided that the Gentile converts should not be compelled to submit to the yoke of the ceremonial law, there were multitudes of Judaizing brethren who, so rooted are the prejudices which a system of ceremonies is apt to engender, would not hold communion with any that refused to conform to their cherished rites.

This question, concerning the duty of conforming to the requirements of the Jewish law, was, for many years, the most fruitful source of dissension in the infant church; other controversies might, for a season, disturb the harmony of some of its branches, but the efforts of the