

“I don’t think any commentary has surpassed Murray in theological depth and precision on the book of Romans. The sentences are complex and carefully crafted, and they are penetrating in the depth and scope of their theological richness.”

—JOHN PIPER, Founder, DesiringGod

“This has been my favorite commentary on Romans for the past 47 years. It is a must for every serious student of the Bible.”

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“I am thrilled to see this new edition of *The Epistle to Romans*. Murray’s commentary is not only an erudite and incisive exposition on one of the most important books in the Bible, it’s one of the best theological commentaries on any book of the Bible. This re-published volume will have a prized position in my library. I know I will open the pages of this classic work with regularity and with delight.”

—KEVIN DEYOUNG, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology,
Reformed Theological Seminary

“Of the numerous fine commentaries there are on Romans, over the years Murray’s and Calvin’s have been my go-to ones. This re-publication is most welcome.”

—RICHARD B. GAFFIN, JR., Distinguished Professor Emeritus
of Biblical and Systematic Theology, Westminster Theological
Seminary

“Some commentaries repay careful reading many years after they were written, and John Murray’s classic on Romans fits that category. Murray’s work is characterized by keen observation, exegetical rigor, and theological profundity. Murray wrote for scholars but also for the church of Jesus Christ, believing that the theology and teaching in Romans are eminently practical. C. S. Lewis warned us about chronological snobbery, and his admonition applies to excellent commentaries as well. I am gratified to see that Westminster Seminary Press has published Murray’s commentary for a new generation.”

—THOMAS SCHREINER, James Buchanan Harrison Professor of
New Testament Interpretation and Professor of Biblical Theology,
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“John Murray exemplified the honored role of exegetical theologian. It is essential praise to say that it can be difficult to see where Murray the exegete ends and Murray the theologian begins. This double gift is most evident in his commentary on Romans. There we see his high skills as an exegete and his interpretations of the text let him show that our theology rests squarely on the most careful reading of Scripture.”

—DAN DORIANI, Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology,
Covenant Theological Seminary

“John Murray’s commentary on Romans is a classic. As such, it continues to have an enduring shelf life and an immense impact on contemporary readers of one of Paul’s most important letters. Even when readers of Murray disagree with his exegetical moves and theological analysis, they will still be encouraged, challenged, edified, and driven back to the text by Murray’s exegesis and theological reflections.”

—JARVIS J. WILLIAMS, Associate Professor of New Testament
Interpretation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“‘Devout and meticulous scholarship,’ wrote this book’s editor Ned B. Stonehouse when it was first published. That verdict holds true over a half century later, confirming that John Murray’s Romans commentary is a classic. In an age of varying and sometimes disparaging assessments of a Reformational reading of Paul, Murray’s conviction regarding Romans (see commentary preface) deserves highlighting: ‘If we are not overwhelmed by the glory of that gospel and ushered into the holy of holies of God’s presence, we have missed the grand purpose of this sacred deposit.’ For the student, pastor, and scholarly exegete alike, this commentary remain a sure guide toward grasping that grand purpose.”

—ROBERT W. YARBROUGH, Professor of New Testament,
Covenant Theological Seminary



THE
EPISTLE
TO THE
ROMANS







THE
EPISTLE
TO THE
ROMANS



JOHN MURRAY

INTRODUCTION BY
SINCLAIR B. FERGUSON

WSP WESTMINSTER
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The Epistle to the Romans
The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes

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Introduction to the 2022 Edition

Among the evocative expressions once common in Scotland, one is a particularly appropriate description of Professor John Murray. He was “a lad o’ pairs”—a boy from a modest Highland home whose special gifts were recognised and, in the tradition John Knox had established during the Scottish Reformation, were to be developed as far as possible.

The story of that development can be told simply. John Murray was born in Sutherland in the Scottish Highlands on October 14, 1898, was educated at Dornoch Academy, enlisted as a soldier in 1917 during the First World War, and graduated Master of Arts from the University of Glasgow in 1923. By 1927, he had graduated from further studies with Th.B. and Th.M. degrees from Princeton Theological Seminary, where he returned to teach during the academic year 1929–30, before joining the newly formed faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary at the invitation of J. Gresham Machen. There he would remain, serving as Professor of Systematic Theology (and as a teaching elder in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, whose General Assembly he served as Moderator in 1961) until his retirement in 1966. Professor Murray then returned home to the family croft, marriage, and fatherhood. He died on May 8, 1975. His best-known works included: *Christian Baptism* (1952), *Divorce* (1953), *The Covenant of Grace* (1954), *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (1955), *Principles of Conduct* (1957), *The Imputation of Adam’s Sin* (1959), *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty* (1960), and the present commentary on *The Epistle to the Romans* (volume I, 1960; volume II, 1965). Many of his occasional writings were brought together in the four volume *Collected Writings of John Murray* (published posthumously between 1976 and 1982).

Thus, the small boy reared on a small croft in the Scottish Highlands became the revered Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. In addition to being a “lad o’ pairs,” he was, as those who had the privilege of meeting or hearing him recognized, “a man o’ wecht”—a man of weight—what the Hebrew Bible calls *kābôd*—worthiness, and dignity.

This gravitas was present in all Murray’s published works, and not least in his commentary on Romans. Although first published in two volumes in

The New International Commentary on the New Testament series, it has been most widely read in its “sandwiched” single volume form. Westminster Seminary Press is to be thanked for its republication in the present format. The goal is that it will again become valued by a new generation of seminary students, pastors, and students of Scripture, and that this commentary will stimulate the study of and meditation on the letter that Martin Luther once described as “purest Gospel.”¹

The impact of these pages is not only didactic, but also personal. This is by no means accidental. Among Murray’s deepest convictions was that Scripture was not to be studied as merely another work of literature. Rather, as the God-breathed word, it was intended to be “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,” in light of which, therefore, the goal of commentary writing must also be: “that the man of God might be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17, ESV). Thus, Murray’s *The Epistle to the Romans* belongs to the classical tradition of commentary writing, more reminiscent of the work of Calvin and Luther than of the modern genre of commentaries that are encyclopaedic in length and technical detail. It would, however, be wrong to assume that John Murray paid little attention to careful research. At one point, his correspondence reveals his sense of relief and joy in discovering in Scotland a copy of a 16th century work he had feared he might find only in a European library.² In addition, he was well able to discuss linguistic and exegetical nuances. But he never lost sight of the goal of a commentator in the Pauline tradition, namely the *phanerosis tēs alētheias*—“the open statement of the truth” (2 Cor. 4:2, ESV). This gives his work a certain timeless quality that fits it to any age in the history of the church.

The New International Commentary on the New Testament series was ground-breaking in its day and in some ways signalled conservative biblical scholarship’s coming of age. It is difficult for 21st century seminary students to envisage the quantum leap that has taken place in scholarly evangelical publications in the past half century. A theological student in the 1950s often had to reach back at least into the 19th century to find substantial scholarly commentaries written by evangelical authors. Today’s student can choose not only from a wide selection of individual works

1. Martin Luther, Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans (1522).

2. Iain H. Murray, *The Life of John Murray*, in *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 3:112.

but even from entire commentary series, many available at the click of a button. Professor Murray and his generation were ploughmen and planters preparing the way for the harvest that has followed.

This minor renaissance notwithstanding, the general editor of The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Ned Stonehouse, must have raised some eyebrows when he announced John Murray as his choice of author for the volume on Romans. The series was understandably dominated by the work of New Testament scholars; Murray was a systematic theologian. Why place the jewel in the crown of the Pauline corpus in the hands of someone who was not a member of the guild? Stonehouse was acute enough to know that Romans was not simply Paul's systematic theology treatise. But he was, I suspect, also aware that not all New Testament exegetes would be capable of conveying a sense of the massive theological, spiritual, and pastoral weight of Paul's *magnum opus*. As Murray's colleague, he was sufficiently familiar with Murray's exegetical skills to be confident that a work on Romans from him would not disappoint. As is evident from his Editor's Preface, Stonehouse was profoundly gratified by the result.

In the matter of commentaries, the old Latin adage is surely applicable: *de gustibus non disputandum est* (you can't argue about taste!). Different people appreciate different commentaries for different reasons. And while commentators are dutybound to discuss the entire text, inevitably an author's interests and strengths (what Murray calls "predilections") come to the fore. In Professor Murray's work, these include his exposition of the Christology of Romans not only in 5:12–21 (reflecting his detailed discussion of the passage in his *Imputation of Adam's Sin*), but also in his Geerhardus Vos-influenced treatment of 1:3–4. His exposition of 6:1–14 echoes the insights he had developed in 1957 in *Principles of Conduct*,³ and which he further examined in his treatment of definitive sanctification in 1967 in the *Calvin Theological Journal*.⁴

While some readers inevitably commented on the fact that the treatment of chapters 12–16 was markedly shorter, Murray doubtless felt that these applicatory chapters required less theological exposition than the earlier ones (not least in the light of his own earlier discussions in his *Principles of Conduct*). But here too we find him handling the text as the living Word

3. John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans, 1957), 202–221.

4. *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 2:277–293. This material was originally published in *Calvin Theological Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1, April 1967.

of God for today's churches as well as for those in first century Rome. This is certainly true of his comments on the weak and the strong, and the issue of the observance of diets and days. Moreover, since commentary readers often tend to lose interest when they come to Paul's closing greetings, it may be worth drawing attention to his comments on "Greet one another with a holy kiss" (16:16). Here, unlike most commentators, he is not content to rest with a cultural explanation but makes a contemporary application that is—at least to many readers—wholly unexpected: "Paul characterizes the kiss as 'holy' and thus distinguishes it from all that is erotic or sensual. It betrays an unnecessary reserve, if not loss of the ardour of the church's first love, when the holy kiss is conspicuous by its absence in the Western Church."⁵

In some ways, these comments on what is, clearly, not a central doctrinal statement highlight John Murray's quintessential characteristics: a seriousness about the teaching of Scripture as God's Word, a desire to understand it properly, a commitment to teach it, apply it, and to live it out in detail, and to do so within the fellowship of the love of God and his people.

In the context of the United States where he served for many years, John Murray appeared to many as unique. But in certain important respects, he was in fact a traditional example of the Reformed piety characteristic of his Scottish Highland home life. On the intellectual level, he had learned to think clearly and biblically from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which taught him that right answers arise only when right questions are asked and, as one answer led on to the next question, taught him how to think logically. On the personal level, his style of speech with its ability to place tremendous weight on words and statements, his combination of gravity and a love of humour, of rigor and affection, were all expressive of the spiritual womb that had given him birth, and the church culture in which he had been nurtured. The young Murray, as Calvin wrote of Timothy, "could suck in godliness with his mother's milk."⁶

To rehearse even these few details of his life suggests why the theology embodied in Romans would have meant so much to John Murray. The pages of this commentary are the product of a Highland boy who lost two brothers and his right eye in the Great War, and who only came to know

5. See page 545 in this volume.

6. John Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians; The Epistles of Paul to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, ed. David W. and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. T.A. Smail (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1964), 293.

the joys of marriage and fatherhood after his retirement from an astonishing academic career.

As a fellow Scot, it is a great personal privilege to commend this commentary. On Professor Murray's return to Scotland, his friend and colleague, the Old Testament scholar E. J. Young, wrote, "I remember that when I was a student and you had lectured on Romans 5:12–19 I was so moved by the content of those verses that I took a long walk that afternoon just to think about them."⁷ I was then in my teens, but only a few days after those lines were written I heard Professor Murray for the first time. He gave an address on the obedience of Christ that left an indelible mark on me. Not long afterwards I heard a version of the same lecture about which Dr. Young had written. The scene plays again easily in my mind: Professor Murray steps up to the podium, carefully places on it his red bound Aland Greek New Testament, and—while it remains unopened!—leads us, note free, through the intricacies of Romans 5:12–21 for the next hour. Fifty years later, the sense of the overwhelming significance of Paul's teaching remains with me.

It is therefore not surprising that this commentary remains a prized possession, or that I pray that the impact of John Murray's teaching will be as great on the coming generation as it has been on me. Fine commentaries on Romans have been written since this one first appeared. But this in no sense diminishes its value, nor does the fact that it is based on The American Revised Version (which Murray himself felt "leaves a good deal to be desired in the matter of translation"!). Professor Murray's approach to commentary writing transcends developments in technical scholarship, and therefore this volume remains his gift to the church for all generations. His own words both explain why this is so, and form its best introduction:

The epistle to the Romans is God's Word. Its theme is the gospel of his grace, and the gospel bespeaks the marvels of his condescension and love. If we are not overwhelmed by the glory of that gospel and ushered into the holy of holies of God's presence, we have missed the grand purpose of this sacred deposit. And it is only because the God of grace has put treasure in earthen vessels that we men have been given the task and privilege of undertaking exposition. If any success has attended this effort it is only of the grace of the Holy Spirit by

7. *Collected Writings*, volume 3, p. 144.

whose inspiration the epistle was written and by whose illumination the church has been led in the interpretation of it. Profound humility should always be ours. The excellency of the power is of God and not of us and to him alone be all praise and glory.⁸

Sinclair B. Ferguson
Westminster Theological Seminary
March 2022

8. See “Author’s Preface” on page 5 in this volume.

Note on the 2022 Edition and Acknowledgments

John Murray's touchstone commentary on Paul's letter to the Roman church was originally published in two volumes, vol. 1 in 1959 and vol. 2 in 1965, for Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.'s popular New International Commentary series. Since 1967, *The Epistle to the Romans* has been issued in a "sandwiched" single-volume format; the original two volumes bound together, otherwise unaltered from their original presentation, with pagination beginning anew after the index and appendixes to the first volume. For this new edition we have reproduced Murray's commentary as a single book consisting of two parts. Appendixes that originally appeared at the end of vol. 1 have been moved to the end of the book (what was Appendix A in vol. 2 is now Appendix E, and so on) and the indexes have been combined to serve the complete text of the commentary.

Westminster Seminary Press is grateful to Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. for granting permission to produce this new version under license. Pierce T. Hibbs, Randall Pederson, Uriah Renzetti, and Hampton Keathley all labored valiantly to complete the manuscript and are owed a great deal of praise for the quality of their work. We are especially grateful to Sinclair B. Ferguson—a 21st Century "man o' wecht"—for writing an illuminating introduction for this volume. It is our hope that a new generation of preachers, teachers, and readers in Christ's church will find in this new edition of John Murray's commentary a tested and reliable guide to their study of God's Word.

Westminster Seminary Press
April 2022



PART I:



*Romans I–VIII: Text,
Exposition and Notes*



Editor's Preface to Part I

When in the early days of the development of plans for *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* Professor Murray consented to undertake the exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, the utmost encouragement was given to press forward eagerly with the entire project. And now that the present volume is about to be published, it affords me distinct pleasure to express my gratification with the finished work. If indeed full expression were to be given to my estimate of the volume, my sense of elation might easily result in the use of superlatives. A measure of restraint must be observed, however, considering especially my intimate relationships with the author over a period of nearly thirty-five years. These associations, first as a classmate in Princeton Theological Seminary and later as colleague, have led to an enthusiastic appraisal of the author as exegete and theologian as well as a warm affection for him personally.

No effort will be made here to assess in detail the scholarly character of the work, the knowledge disclosed of the problems which have emerged in the older and newer literature, the devotion of the author to the primary responsibility of expounding the text, the pervasive note of reverential devotion to the God of the Word, the elevated style which generally characterizes it. The volume must speak for itself. It will speak differently to different readers. Unless I am greatly mistaken, however, it will be recognized on all sides as a distinguished contribution to the literature on this great epistle.

Should there be a measure of disappointment that this work is confined to the first eight chapters of Romans and that a second volume on the rest of the epistle will not be immediately available, I trust that ultimately the reader will discover lasting gain in this temporary loss. Considering the intrinsic worth of this epistle and its profound significance for the understanding of Christianity, it seemed wise not to impose upon the author any rigid limitations with regard to space but rather to allow him full and free scope to deal with the text in such a way as to do the greatest possible justice to the exegetical questions. Nothing is more disconcerting to the reader of a commentary than to discover that the more thorny questions are treated in meagre fashion, if at all. Although one cannot guarantee that every reader will attach the same value as the author to the problems dealt

with at considerable length, most readers, whether or not they agree with the conclusions reached, will doubtless appreciate the fullness of treatment at many points.

For those who are not otherwise familiar with the life and career of the author, a few biographical details may be of interest. Born in Scotland, John Murray received his literary education and a portion of his theological education, both undergraduate and graduate, in his native land, particularly in the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. In America he studied theology in Princeton for three years, and upon graduation was awarded the Gelston-Winthrop Fellowship in Systematic Theology from that institution. His teaching career began in Princeton where he served as Instructor in Systematic Theology for one year (1929–30). Since that time he has been a member of the Faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary, serving first as Instructor and since 1937 as Professor of Systematic Theology. Besides his contributions to many journals, his major publications are *Christian Baptism* (1952), *Divorce* (1953), *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (1955), The Payton Lectures for 1955, *Principles of Conduct* (1957), and *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* (1959).

These lines, while written principally to introduce the volume and its author to the public, would not be complete without some reflection upon the ultimate goal of the undertaking, shared by the author with the editor, that this work may stimulate men in our times to grapple anew with the sacred text of this epistle which stands out majestically among the mountain peaks of the New Testament writings. May the devout and meticulous scholarship of the author as it finds expression in these pages contribute richly to the end that the message of the inspired apostle may come unto men “in the fulness of the blessing of Christ.”

Ned B. Stonehouse

Author's Preface to Part I

In accordance with the aim of both the General Editor and the Publishers of *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* that these commentaries could be freely used by those who are not familiar with the original languages of Scripture, I have consistently refrained from the use of Greek and Hebrew terms in the text of the commentary. These have been included in the footnotes and appendixes. This practice has in many instances increased the difficulty. It is much easier for an expositor to discuss the exegesis of a particular clause, phrase, or word if the original is reproduced and the exposition proceeds on the assumption that the reader is conversant with the original text. But, when this assumption cannot be entertained, it is necessary to use other methods of acquainting the reader with the questions being discussed and considerable expansion is required. There are, however, compensations. The Editor and Publishers have shown good judgment in the design of furnishing a series of commentaries which the layman, unacquainted with the original languages, could conveniently use without the constant obstacle of being confronted with terms that are unintelligible. The Scriptures are to be translated so that "the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner; and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope" (*The Westminster Confession of Faith*, I, viii). And commentaries, likewise, should seek to promote the interests of those who do not know the original tongues.

In terms of the policy adopted by the General Editor and Publishers of this series, the English Version reproduced in this commentary is what has commonly been known as the American Revised Version (1901). Every Version of the Scriptures places an expositor under the necessity of presenting variant renderings of particular passages. I have done this frequently in this commentary. At certain points I have taken occasion to point out the unsatisfactory renderings of the Version quoted at the head of each section. This indicates that, in my esteem, the Version concerned leaves a good deal to be desired in the matter of translation. Readers should understand, however, that no Version of the Scriptures is perfect and, no doubt, scholars will differ with me on the matter of the most accurate or appropriate renderings. Oftentimes the renderings I have given are not proposed as

the most felicitous translations but as those adapted to convey the precise thought of the passage. I believe I have refrained consistently from taking undue liberties with the original text.

On the question of variant readings in the text of the original, I trust I have not posed as an authority on the highly specialized science of textual criticism. Frequently I have been indecisive and have tried to indicate what the sense would be of the respective readings. In many cases it would be presumptuous for me to be dogmatic in favour of one variant rather than another.

Every expositor has his predilections with reference to the details upon which he concentrates attention. This commentary is no exception. And this is simply to say that it reflects both the limitations and particular interests of the author. But I have attempted to set forth what I believe to have been the thought of the apostle on those questions which are central in Romans 1–8, and I have tried to do this in a way that is oriented to the most significant contributions made by others to the exposition of this part of the epistle. The manuscript for this book had been completed and prepared for the printer before some of the most recent commentaries of the epistle to the Romans appeared or, at least, before they came to my hand. Hence I have not been able to make reference to them.

I wish to express to my esteemed colleague, Dr. Ned B. Stonehouse, the General Editor, my deep gratitude for his forbearance and encouragement and for the corrections which he supplied at several points. He is not, however, responsible to any extent for the shortcomings which this venture in the science of exposition betrays.

I gratefully acknowledge indebtedness to the following publishers for permission to quote from the copyrighted books cited: the Muhlenberg Press, Philadelphia—Anders Nygren: *Commentary on Romans* (1949); Harper & Brothers, New York—C. K. Barrett: *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (1957)—Karl Barth: *Christ and Adam* (1957); Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, New York and Nashville—*The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. IX (1954); B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis—Joseph Pohle, ed. Arthur Preuss: *Grace Actual and Habitual, Dogmatic Theology VIII* (1934).

It would be impossible to give adequate expression to the debt of gratitude which I owe to the unnumbered sources from which assistance and stimulus have been derived. Thought and expression are always shaped by contact with the writings of others, and it is not possible to trace the various influences which have been exerted and accord to each author the proper

meed of credit. But I wish to take this occasion to express my gratitude to the authors and publishers of books in connection with which no copyright provision requires permission to quote. In the case of these, acknowledgment has been made by the appropriate identifications and citations.

To the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company for all the courtesies conferred upon me in connection with the publication of this volume I extend my warmest thanks. In this connection it is appropriate to state that the articles on "The Imputation of Adam's Sin," referred to in the footnotes and printed in four successive issues of *The Westminster Theological Journal*, are now, by the courtesy of Eerdmans, being published in book form under the title *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* and will be available in that form before the present volume comes from the press.

To Mrs. Darrell G. Harris I extend my sincere thanks for her competence in preparing the typescript.

It would be culpable beyond words to close this preface without making the acknowledgment that is supreme. The epistle to the Romans is God's Word. Its theme is the gospel of his grace, and the gospel bespeaks the marvels of his condescension and love. If we are not overwhelmed by the glory of that gospel and ushered into the holy of holies of God's presence, we have missed the grand purpose of this sacred deposit. And it is only because the God of grace has put treasure in earthen vessels that we men have been given the task and privilege of undertaking exposition. If any success has attended this effort it is only of the grace of the Holy Spirit by whose inspiration the epistle was written and by whose illumination the church has been led in the interpretation of it. Profound humility should always be ours. The excellency of the power is of God and not of us and to him alone be all praise and glory.

John Murray



Introduction

THE AUTHOR

That the apostle Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans is not a matter of dispute and for that reason, as one of the most recent commentators has said, it is “a proposition which it is unnecessary to discuss”.¹ But we must not fail to appreciate the significance of Pauline authorship when we relate this fact to the contents of the epistle.

As we read the epistle we cannot escape the emphasis that falls upon the grace of God and, more specifically, upon justification by grace through faith. It was to this gospel Paul was separated (1:1). When he says “separated” he means that all bonds of interest and attachment alien to the promotion of the gospel had been rent asunder and that this gospel had made him captive. This consecration and dedication must be set against the background of what Paul had previously been. He himself testifies that “after the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee” (Acts 26:5).² It was his pharisaism that constrained him to think with himself that he “ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 26:9) and he became the arch-persecutor of the church of Christ (*cf.* Acts 26:10, 11; I Tim. 1:13). Behind this opposition was religious zeal for a way of acceptance with God that was the antithesis of grace and of justification by faith. Hence when Paul writes this greatest polemic in the exposition and defense of the gospel of grace it is as one who had known to the fullest extent in the depths of his own experience and devotion the character of that religion which now as the bondservant of Jesus Christ he must characterize as one of sin and death. Pharisaism was a religion of law. Its religious horizon was defined and circumscribed by the resources of law and therefore by works of law. It was the spell of that religion that was decisively broken by Paul’s encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (*cf.* Acts 9:3–6;

1. C. K. Barrett: *The Epistle to the Romans*, New York, 1957, p. 1.

2. The word “Pharisees” comes from Semitic terms which convey the idea of “the separated ones”. If there is any allusion to this in Paul’s use of the term “separated” in Rom. 1:1, how totally different is the complexion of his separation and of the direction in which it was pointed as well as that to which he was separated.

26:12–18). And so Paul writes: “And the commandment, which was unto life, this I found to be unto death” (Rom. 7:10); “For I through law died to law, that I might live to God” (Gal. 2:19); “From works of law no flesh will be justified” before God: “for through the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). When Paul unfolds the antithesis between grace and law, faith and works, he writes of an antithesis which had been reflected in the contrast between the two periods in his own life history, periods divided by the experience of the Damascus road. And this contrast is all the more significant in his case because the zeal that marked Paul in both periods was unsurpassed in its fervour and intensity. No one knew better and perhaps none comparably the self-complacency of law-righteousness, on the one hand, and the glory of God’s righteousness, on the other.

The significance of Pauline authorship is not only to be appreciated as it pertains to the central theme of the epistle—there is another conspicuous feature which must be related to the fact that Paul is the author. Readers of the epistle may sometimes wonder about the relevance of chapters 9–11. They seem to disturb the unity and logical sequence of the argument. The intrusion of these chapters finds its explanation indeed in something far more important than the identity of Paul. But this factor must not be overlooked. Paul was a Jew. And not only so; he was a Jew who had been converted from that same perversity which at the time of Paul’s writing characterized Jewry as a whole. He knew the mind of the Jew as did no other. He knew the gravity of the issues at stake in the unbelief of his kinsmen according to the flesh. He assessed the dishonour this unbelief offered to God and to his Christ. “They, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:3). “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this very day” (Rom. 11:8). Paul in his missionary labours had encountered much of this Jewish hostility to the gospel (*cf.* Acts 13:45–47; 14:2, 19; 17:5–9; 18:6, 12; 19:9). But this hostility and the persecution which it engendered did not quench the ardour of love for his kinsmen, a love that constrained him to utter what has scarcely a parallel in the rest of Scripture: “I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren’s sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:3). The extent to which the grand theme of the epistle is concerned with the characteristic sin of Jewry, a sin with which he directly charges the Jew in Rom. 2:17–29, makes it inevitable, we might say, that Paul should give expression to the burning desire of

his heart for the salvation of his brethren. “My heart’s desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved” (Rom. 10:1).

There is another consideration concerned with Pauline authorship that is to be noted. By way of eminence Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles (*cf.* Acts 13:47, 48; 15:12; 18:6, 7; 22:21; 26:17; Gal. 2:2, 8; Eph. 3:8; I Tim. 2:7). In this epistle we have not only express reference to this fact (11:13; *cf.* 1:13) but the writing of the epistle proceeds from the sense of commission and obligation associated with it. The apostle takes particular pains to assure the Christians at Rome that he often purposed to go there (1:11–13; 15:22–29). Prevented from fulfilling this desire he pens the epistle in pursuance of his apostolic commission. In reading the epistle we must take into account the missionary zeal and purpose by which Paul was animated as the apostle of the Gentiles, a consideration which has close bearing upon the complexion of the church at Rome and its place in that orbit which Paul regarded as preeminently the sphere of his apostolic labours.

THE OCCASION

When correlated with the accounts given of Paul’s movements in the book of Acts there are sufficient indications given in this epistle to determine with reasonable certainty the place and time of writing. It is clear that he was on the eve of departure for Jerusalem with the contribution made in Macedonia and Achaia for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem (*cf.* Rom. 15:25–29). This would imply, to say the least, that he was near to Macedonia and Achaia. The reference to Cenchreae (Rom. 16:1), the port of Corinth, and the recommendation of Phoebe, a servant of the church there, who apparently was about to depart for Rome, are further indications of the apostle’s whereabouts when he wrote the letter. Furthermore, he speaks of Gaius as his host (Rom. 16:23). In one of his letters to Corinth he speaks of Gaius as one of those whom he baptized in Corinth (I Cor. 1:14). There is no good reason to doubt the identity of his host, when he wrote Romans, as the Gaius of Corinth.

In Acts 20:2, 3 we are informed that Paul on his third missionary journey came to Greece and spent three months there. After this he departed to go to Jerusalem and passed through Macedonia. He sailed from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread (Acts 20:6) and was hastening to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. This would mean that he had left Corinth not later than March of that year. Paul himself in his speech before

Felix referred to this journey to Jerusalem and says that he came to bring alms and offerings to his nation (Acts 24:17). There is every good reason to identify this presentation of offerings with the contribution made in Macedonia and Achaia and referred to in Rom. 15:26. The evidence would indicate, therefore, that the epistle was written from Corinth or its vicinity towards the end of Paul's three months' stay in Greece at the close of his third missionary journey. The reference to the days of unleavened bread (Acts 20:6) places the departure from Philippi in late March or early April of the year concerned. This means that the epistle must have been written in the early spring of the year.

There is difference of judgment among scholars as to the precise year in which this journey to Jerusalem took place. Most recently C. K. Barrett, while admitting that "the chronology of Paul's movements cannot be settled beyond dispute", nevertheless considers that the date 55 A.D. offers fewer difficulties than any other (*op. cit.*, p. 5). And Barrett is not alone in claiming for the composition of the epistle such a comparatively early date. More common, however, is the view that the spring in question was that of 58 A.D.,³ although W. M. Ramsay claims 57 A.D.⁴ The New Testament does not mention dates and so we are dependent for calculations of this sort upon data derived from other sources respecting such events as the proconsulship of Gallio (Acts 18:12), coincident with Paul's stay in Corinth on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1–18), and the procuratorship of Porcius Festus which began towards the end of Paul's captivity at Caesarea (Acts 24:27–25:12; 26:30–27:2).

THE CHURCH AT ROME

It was not through Paul's own missionary activity that the church at Rome had been established. And the only reasonable inference to be drawn from Paul's own witness that he would not "build upon another man's foundation" (Rom. 15:20) is that the church there had not been founded by the labours of another apostle. How then, we may ask, did a Christian community at Rome originate? If we appreciate the strategic position of Rome in the Roman Empire and the factors which were operative in the Christian

3. Cf. Theodor Zahn: *Introduction to the New Testament*, E. T., Edinburgh, 1909, Vol. I, p. 434; W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam: *The Epistle to the Romans*, New York, 1901, pp. xxxvi ff.; J. B. Lightfoot: *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, London, 1905, pp. 40, 43.

4. See his *Pauline and Other Studies*, New York, 1906, pp. 352–361.

church after the day of Pentecost, the answer to the question lies at hand. One fact which must not be discounted is that there were sojourners from Rome among those who heard Peter on the day of Pentecost and witnessed its miraculous phenomena. It is hard to believe that none of these returned to Rome. We have every reason to assume that at least some, if not many, of them were converted on that occasion and returned to Rome in the faith of Jesus. Where faith is it seeks the fellowship of the saints. But even though this one consideration is sufficient of itself to explain the origin of the Christian community and of a Christian congregation, it is only one factor and we need not suppose that it was the main factor. Were we to discount it entirely, there are many other facts which point to the virtual necessity of such a development. This milieu of conditions is so well stated by Sanday and Headlam that it is enough to quote from their "Introduction." "Never in the course of previous history had there been anything like the freedom of circulation and movement which now existed in the Roman Empire. And this movement followed certain definite lines and set in certain definite directions. It was at its greatest all along the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean, and its general trend was to and from Rome. The constant coming and going of Roman officials, as one provincial governor succeeded another; the moving of troops from place to place with the sending of fresh batches of recruits and the retirement of veterans; the incessant demands of an ever-increasing trade both in necessaries and luxuries; the attraction which the huge metropolis naturally exercised on the imagination of the clever young Orientals who knew that the best openings for a career were to be sought there; a thousand motives of ambition, business, pleasure drew a constant stream from the Eastern provinces to Rome. Among the crowds there would inevitably be some Christians, and those of very varied nationality and antecedents. St. Paul himself had for the last three years been stationed at one of the greatest of the Levantine emporia. We may say that the three great cities at which he had spent the longest time—Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus—were just the three from which (with Alexandria) intercourse was most active. We may be sure that not a few of his own disciples would ultimately find their way to Rome. . . . That Prisca and Aquila should be at Rome is just what we might expect from one with so keen an eye for the strategy of a situation as St. Paul. When he was himself established and in full work at Ephesus with the intention of visiting Rome, it would at once occur to him what valuable work they might be doing there and what an excellent preparation they might make for his own visit, while in

his immediate surroundings they were almost superfluous. So that instead of presenting any difficulty, that he should send them back to Rome where they were already known, is most natural.”⁵

A question on which there is much difference of opinion is that of the complexion of the Roman church: was it preponderantly Jewish or Gentile? It scarcely needs to be shown that there were both Jews and Gentiles among those whom the apostle addresses. The direct address to the Jew in Rom. 2:17 ff., the greetings conveyed, for example, to Prisca and Aquila (Rom. 16:3), of whom the latter at least was Jewish (*cf.* Acts 18:2), as well as to Andronicus, Junias, and Herodion whom Paul calls his kinsmen (Rom. 16:7, 11), the extensive treatment of questions of the deepest concern to the Jew in chapters 9–11, not to mention other considerations bearing upon the same conclusion, are sufficient indications of the presence in the Roman church of those who were Jewish by race. That there were Gentiles is clearly shown when Paul addresses the Gentiles: “But I speak to you who are Gentiles” (Rom. 11:13; *cf.* 11:19–31). Scarcely less apparent to the same effect is Rom. 15:8–29. In this latter passage the apostle appeals to the fact that he is “a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles” as that which emboldens him to press upon his readers the demands of Christian love and forbearance (vss. 15, 16).

The question of the relative proportions of these two groups the one to the other is not a matter that should be given undue attention. We must take account of the way in which the apostle concerns himself with the interests of both. And there is ample evidence in the epistle of the ways in which he regarded the saving interests of both Jews and Gentiles as mutually conditioning and promoting one another (*cf.* especially Rom. 11:11–15, 25–28). But the mere question of relative, numerical strength is not so important that the interpretation of the epistle is radically affected by the judgment we may be constrained to adopt.

No scholar who has undertaken to discuss this question is worthy of more esteem than Theodor Zahn. He is decisive in advocating the position that “in Rome the Gentile Christians constituted a comparatively small minority”.⁶ The various arguments he advances are among the most cogent that could be pleaded in support of this thesis. But, to the present writer, they are not conclusive. For example, Zahn says: “It is perfectly clear that

5. *Op. cit.*, pp. xxvif.

6. *Op. cit.*, p. 422.

in 7:1–6 Paul addresses the readers as if they, like himself, had lived under the law prior to their conversion and new birth. No rational man could possibly say this of native Gentiles . . . Consequently, for this reason if for no other, the question of the nationality of the Roman Christians may be regarded as settled, for it is equally clear that Paul is not here addressing a part of his readers.”⁷ The assumption on which this argument is based is that “under the law” refers to the Mosaic or Old Testament economy. It is true that sometimes the expression has that signification (*cf.* Gal. 3:23; 4:4). But it is a fallacy that has done prejudice to the interpretation of the Roman epistle at the hands of some of its ablest expositors to suppose that “under law” has this restricted scope. As is shown repeatedly in this present commentary, there is great flexibility in Paul’s use of the term “law.” And the expression “under law” cannot, on certain occasions, mean “under the Mosaic economy” nor can its signification be limited to those who as a matter of fact were under the Mosaic institution. This is particularly apparent in Rom. 6:14. The “under law” of Rom. 6:14 applies to all unbelievers, Jews and Gentiles. And when Paul says that “ye were put to death to the law through the body of Christ” (Rom. 7:4), he is speaking to all who have become the partakers of the virtue of Christ’s death. Hence Rom. 7:1–6 cannot be pleaded in support of the thesis in question without importing an assumption which reflects erroneous exegesis of a basic datum in Paul’s teaching.

Besides, when Paul says in Rom. 7:1, “I speak to them who know the law”, we may not assume that this could be applied only to Jewish converts. It is true as Zahn says that “Paul does not make a distinction between those of his readers who know the law and those who do not”.⁸ But that these were Jewish readers and that the Roman church was therefore preponderantly Jewish is not to be inferred from this fact. Gentile Christians could likewise be credited with the knowledge of the law and more particularly of the specific ordinance to which the apostle here refers. Gentiles, when they became Christians, soon became acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures and we may not forget that “a large proportion even of the Gentile Christians would have approached Christianity through the portals of a previous connexion with Judaism”.⁹ There need be little doubt that

7. *Op. cit.*, p. 375; *cf.* p. 421.

8. *Op. cit.*, p. 375.

9. Sanday and Headlam: *op. cit.*, p. xxxiv.

the Galatian churches were preponderantly Gentile.¹⁰ Yet the apostle makes frequent appeal to the Old Testament in his letter to the Galatians and he surely presupposes familiarity with Old Testament history on their part.

It is true, as Zahn points out, that the term “nations”¹¹ is sometimes used in an inclusive sense to include both Jews and Gentiles. This is surely true in several passages in the Gospels (*cf.* Matt. 25:32; 28:19; Mark 11:17; Luke 24:47). It is not unreasonable to suppose that this inclusive sense appears in Rom. 1:5, 13; 15:18; 16:26. But since this term is used so frequently in this epistle of the Gentiles as distinguished from the Jews (Rom. 2:14, 24; 3:29; 9:24, 30; 11:11, 13, 25; 15:9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 27), as also in Paul’s other epistles, there is a great deal to be said in favour of the view that “nations” throughout the epistle is to be understood as referring to the Gentiles. It is not to be taken for granted that the quotation from Gen. 17:5 in Rom. 4:17, 18, namely, “a father of many nations”, is to be understood as including the Jewish nation as well as the Gentile nations. The promise to Abraham, as appealed to by Paul, may well be understood in the sense that the fatherhood of Abraham was to extend far beyond those of whom he was father according to the flesh. So even this passage cannot be enlisted as a clear instance of the inclusive sense of the term “nations” (*cf.* Gal. 3:8, 9). In Rom. 16:4 it is more natural to render the relevant expression as “all the churches of the Gentiles” rather than as “all the churches of the nations,” “nations” being understood inclusively.

The situation in respect of usage is that in the epistles of Paul the term in question is used frequently and preponderantly in the sense of Gentiles as distinct from Jews and that although in a few instances the inclusive sense is possible and reasonable yet there is no instance in which it clearly means all nations inclusive of Jews as well as Gentiles.¹² It is quite clear that in Rom. 11:13 he is addressing Gentiles and he does so for the reason that he is the apostle of the Gentiles. It should also be clear that in Rom. 15:9–13 he is concerned with the promises of God as they concern the Gentile nations. At verse 15 he refers to the grace that had been given him by God and he reminds his readers that this grace had been given to him to the end that he might be “a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, in order that the offering up of the Gentiles

10. *Cf.* Lightfoot: *op. cit.*, p. 26; Zahn: *op. cit.*, p. 421; *cf.* pp. 173–202.

11. The term referred to is the plural ἔθνη.

12. These conclusions are concerned simply with the plural ἔθνη. Paul does speak of his Jewish people as an ἔθνος (Acts 24:17; 26:4; 28:19).

might be made acceptable” (vs. 16). This repeated appeal to the grace of God as it bore upon the Gentiles and to his own apostleship and ministry as preeminently directed to the Gentiles makes it difficult to interpret the purpose expressed in Rom. 1:13 as other than that he might have some fruit at Rome “even as among the rest of the Gentiles”, a rendering which implies the overall Gentile character of those whom he is addressing. The immediately preceding context makes it likewise difficult to regard the obedience referred to in Rom. 15:18 as other than the “obedience of the Gentiles”. Even in Rom. 16:26, though the thought is undoubtedly the ethnic universality of the revelation of the gospel mystery, yet the accent falls upon the fact that it is made known to the Gentile nations to the end of eliciting the obedience of faith in them.

In respect of the differentiation between Jews and Gentiles it is impossible for us to determine the relative proportions within the constituency of the church at Rome. But the evidence would indicate that however important in Paul’s esteem was the Jewish segment and however jealous he was to promote the highest interests of his kinsmen in their relation to God and in the unity of their fellowship in the body of Christ, yet he conceives of the church there as to a large extent, if not mainly, an example of the grace of God manifested to the Gentiles and of that which it was his aim to establish, confirm, and promote in his capacity as apostle of the Gentiles.

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Paul had not yet visited Rome. It is this fact that explains the length of that section, called above, “Introduction.” He is jealous to inform the church at Rome of his earnest desire and determination to go thither (1:10–15; cf. 15:22–29). But the fact that he had not visited Rome also accounts in part for the character of the salutation. In 1:3, 4 we have a summary of the gospel and we cannot overestimate the significance of this definition—the gospel is concerned with the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. In like manner the theme stated in 1:16, 17 must be duly appreciated in relation to what goes before and to what follows. It is this gospel, summarily defined in 1:3, 4, that he is determined to preach at Rome (1:15); zeal for this gospel and its fruits is the only reason for his determination. And in one way or another the theme, enunciated in 1:16, 17, comprehends all that is unfolded in the rest of the epistle.

The gospel as the power of God unto salvation is meaningless apart from sin, condemnation, misery, and death. This is why Paul proceeds forthwith to demonstrate that the whole world is guilty before God and lies under his wrath and curse (1:18–3:20). We might think that the apostle would have drawn the curtain of concealment over the squalor of iniquity and degradation depicted in 1:18–32. For indeed it is a shame to speak of these religious and ethical monstrosities. But Paul was a realist and instead of drawing the curtain of concealment he draws it aside and opens to view the degeneracy of human reprobation. We ask, why? It is upon that degradation that the righteousness of God supervenes, and the glory of the gospel is that in the gospel is made manifest a righteousness of God which meets all the exigencies of our sin at the lowest depths of iniquity and misery. In assessing the exigencies arising from our sin we should come far short of appreciating their gravity if we failed to take account of the wrath of God. The apostle prefaces his description of human depravity with the declaration, “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold back the truth in

unrighteousness” (1:18). To be subjected to the wrath of God is the epitome of human misery. To question the reality of wrath as an “attitude of God towards us” and construe it merely as “some process or effect in the realm of objective facts”¹³ is to miss the meaning of God’s holiness as he reacts against that which is the contradiction of himself. God’s righteousness revealed in the gospel is the provision of his grace to meet the exigency of his wrath. And nothing discloses its glory and efficacy more than this.

The righteousness contemplated is God’s righteousness. It is, therefore, a righteousness with divine quality and possessed of the efficacy and virtue which divinity implies. It is not the divine attribute of justice but it is nevertheless a righteousness with divine attributes and properties, contrasted not merely with human unrighteousness but with human righteousness. The grand theme of the early part of the epistle is justification by grace through faith. And human righteousness is the essence of the religion of this world in contradiction to the gospel of God. Only a God-righteousness can measure up to the desperateness of our need and make the gospel the power of God unto salvation.

It is this theme that is unfolded in 3:21–26. Here it is made clear that this righteousness comes through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus and the propitiation in his blood. Justification with God is that which this righteousness secures and propitiation is God’s own provision to show forth his justice that he may be just and the justifier of the ungodly. This thesis is brought to its focal expression in 5:15–21 where it is set forth as the free gift of righteousness and consists in the righteous action and obedience of Christ (vss. 17, 18, 19). Grace thus reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (vs. 21).

The apostle lays sustained emphasis upon faith—the gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes” (1:16; *cf.* vs. 17; 3:22). It is not therefore a righteousness efficient unto the salvation of all unconditionally and indiscriminately. But it is one invariably efficient wherever there is faith. We must not overlook the congruity that exists here. If it is a God-righteousness, it is also a faith-righteousness—these are mutually interdependent because of their respective natures. It is faith that places us in the proper relation to this righteousness because faith is receiving and resting—it is self-renouncing, it looks away from itself and finds its all in Christ.

13. *Cf.* C. H. Dodd: *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, London, 1934, p. 22.

This doctrine of grace might seem to give licence to sin—let us continue in sin that grace may abound (*cf.* 6:1). To the refutation of this false inference chapter 6 is devoted. The falsity is exposed by the simple fact that if we died to sin we can no longer live in it (6:2). And our death to sin is guaranteed by our union with Christ in his death and resurrection (6:3–5). The strength of sin is the law and if we have been put to death to the law by the body of Christ (7:4), we have died to sin. Furthermore, by union with Christ we have come under the reign of grace and sin can no longer exercise the dominion (6:14). This is the basis and assurance of sanctification. Christ died for us—this is our justification. But if he died for us, we also died with him—this is the guarantee of sanctification.

Death to sin, deliverance from the dominion of sin, newness of life after the pattern of Jesus' resurrection, the emphases so prominent in 6:1–7:6, might appear to teach that the believer is quit of sin and made perfect in holiness. Any such misapprehension is corrected by the delineation of the conflict portrayed in 7:14–25. This conflict is nothing less than a contradiction which inheres in the believer by reason of surviving and indwelling sin. But it is not the conflict of despair. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (7:24, 25). This is the note of triumph in the hope that makes not ashamed. This note of triumphant assurance does not negate the conflict; it is the reality of the conflict that gives the triumphal note its true character as the triumph of faith and hope. It is this same assurance that is expanded in chapter VIII. If the believer is not quit of conflict with sin in himself, neither is he quit of the afflictions which encompass his pilgrimage here nor of the conflict with adversaries. Chapter VIII teems with assurance that all things work together for good to them that love God and that they are more than conquerors through him that loved them. The span of God's grace for them stretches from its fountain in election before the foundation of the world to its consummation in glory with Christ—they were predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son and they will be glorified with Christ (8:17, 28–30).

ROMANS I



I. SALUTATION

1:1–7

¹ Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

² which he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures,

³ concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,

⁴ who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord,

⁵ through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake;

⁶ among whom are ye also, called to be Jesus Christ's:

⁷ to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The salutation of this epistle is longer than that of any other of the Pauline epistles. The reason may reside in the fact that the apostle had not founded nor had he yet visited the church at Rome (*cf.* 1:10, 11, 13; 15:22). We may not overlook, however, the strongly polemic character of this epistle. Another salutation, that of the epistle to the Galatians, is likewise of considerable length and it is apparent that the polemic of this epistle prescribed the contents of the salutation. It is highly probable that both considerations, the fact that he was unknown by face to the church at Rome and the necessity of setting forth at the outset the subject matter of the gospel so as to set the points for the polemic that is to follow, dictated the character and contents of this salutation.

1, 2 In most of his epistles Paul begins with the appeal to his apostolic office (I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; I Tim. 1:1; II Tim. 1:1). But in this instance (*cf.* Phil. 1:1; Tit. 1:1) he begins by

identifying himself as “a servant of Jesus Christ”.¹ It is not to be supposed that his purpose in doing this was to place himself at the outset in the same category as those to whom he is writing (*cf.* I Cor. 7:22; Eph. 6:6; I Pet. 2:16). Paul was preeminently humble and called himself “less than the least of all saints” (Eph. 3:8). But the purpose of calling himself “a servant of Jesus Christ” is to avow at the outset the completeness of his commission by and commitment to Christ Jesus as Lord. He was not undertaking to write this epistle at his own charges; he is the servant of Christ. It is from the Old Testament that we are to derive the significance of this title “servant”. Abraham (*cf.* Gen. 26:24; Ps. 105:6, 42), Moses (*cf.* Numb. 12:7, 8; Deut. 34:5; Josh. 1:1, 2, 7; Ps. 105:26), David (*cf.* II Sam. 7:5, 8; Isa. 37:35), Isaiah (*cf.* Isa. 20:3), the prophets (*cf.* Amos 3:7; Zech. 1:6) were the servants of the Lord. This high conception of dependence upon and commitment to the Lord the apostle here applies to his service of the Lord Jesus Christ and indicates that he has no hesitation in placing Christ Jesus in the position of “the Lord” in the Old Testament. It also shows the view of Christ credited to his Roman readers; he is commending himself to them as the servant of Christ Jesus.

Paul’s identification of himself as an apostle in this salutation, as in all others except Philippians, I and II Thessalonians, and Philemon, indicates the importance which Paul attached to his apostolic office.² On occasion, when circumstances required it, he vigorously defended his apostleship (*cf.* I Cor. 9:1, 2; II Cor. 12:11–13; Gal. 1:1, 15–17). This consciousness of commission and authority as inherent in the apostolic office reflects the unique position occupied by the apostolate in the institution of Christ (*cf.* Matt. 16:17–19; 19:28; Luke 22:29, 30; John 16:12–14; 20:21–23; Acts 1:2–8, 15–26; Eph. 2:20). It is for this reason that apostolic teaching and preaching are invested with the authority of Christ and of the Holy Spirit.

There were certain qualifications indispensable for an apostle (*cf.* John 15:16, 27; Acts 1:21; 2:32; 3:15; 10:39–41; 26:16, 17; I Cor. 9:1, 2; 15:8; II Cor. 12:11–13; Gal. 1:1, 12). It is to the pivotal qualification that Paul refers in this instance when he says “called to be an apostle” (*cf.* I Cor. 1:1). Call and apostleship go together; it is by call that he became an apostle.

1. The reading *Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ*, though supported by B and a fourth century fragment of Rom. 1:1–7, can scarcely be adopted against the testimony in favour of the reading followed in the version.

2. For an expanded study of the term *ἀπόστολος* *cf.* the article by Karl Heinrich Rengstorff in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* ed. Kittel and the English translation of the same by J. R. Coates under the title *Apostleship* (London, 1952).

And the call is the effectual appointment by which he was invested with the apostolic functions. It is the consciousness of authority derived from this appointment that alone explains and warrants the authority with which the apostle spoke and wrote (*cf.* I Cor. 5:4, 5; 7:8, 12, 17, 40; 14:37, 38; II Thess. 3:10, 12, 14).

“Separated unto the gospel of God” is parallel to “called to be an apostle.” The separation here spoken of does not refer to the predestination of Paul to the office, as in Galatians 1:15, but to the effectual dedication that occurred in the actual call to apostleship and indicates what is entailed in the call. No language could be more eloquent of the decisive action of God and of the completeness of Paul’s resulting commitment to the gospel. All bonds of interest and attachment alien or extraneous to the promotion of the gospel have been cut asunder and he is set apart by the investment of all his interests and ambitions in the cause of the gospel. It is, of course, implied that the gospel as a message is to be proclaimed and, if we were to understand the “gospel” as the actual proclamation, dedication to this proclamation would be an intelligible and worthy conception. However, the word “gospel” is not used in the sense of the act of proclaiming; it is the message proclaimed. And this is stated to be “the gospel of God” (*cf.* Mark 1:14). Perhaps the thought could be more aptly expressed in English by saying, “separated unto God’s gospel”. The stress falls upon the divine origin and character of the gospel. It is a message of glad tidings from God, and it never loses its divinity, for it ever continues to be God’s message of salvation to lost men.

In verse 2 Paul shows his jealousy for the unity and continuity of the gospel dispensation with the Old Testament. The gospel unto which he had been separated is not a message which broke *de novo* upon the world with the appearing of Christ and the ministry of the apostles. It was that which God “promised afore through his prophets in holy scriptures”. It was characteristic of the Lord himself in the days of his flesh to appeal to the Old Testament and particularly significant in this connection is Luke 24:25–32, 44–47. The apostles followed the same pattern. In this epistle we shall find that a very considerable part of Paul’s argument in support of his major thesis is drawn from the Old Testament. Here at the outset, when he is about to enunciate the subject matter of the gospel unto which he has been separated as a called apostle, he is careful to remind his readers that the revelation of the gospel has its roots in extant “holy scriptures”.

When Paul says “promised afore” he does not mean to suggest that the

disclosures given of old pertained exclusively to that which would be fulfilled and become effective in the fulness of time. This supposition would be inconsistent with what we shall find later on, especially in chapter 4. The gospel was efficacious for those who received it in the form of promise. Nevertheless, the promise feature of the Old Testament revelation must be fully appreciated and it is upon the distinction between promise and fulfilment that the accent falls in this instance. Extant Scriptures contained the gospel in promise; the subject matter with which the apostle is going to deal is the gospel in fulfilment of that promise.

It would not be feasible to limit the term “prophets” in this verse to those who were more restrictively and officially prophets. All who wrote of Christ are construed as prophets (*cf.* Luke 24:27; Acts 2:30). In this verse also it is probably more accurate to render the last clause as “in holy scriptures” rather than “in the holy scriptures”. The quality of Scripture as “holy” is emphasized and the Scriptures are distinguished from all other writings by their character as holy. The stress also falls upon the fact that the promises exist as such only in the Scriptures. There are therefore two conclusions respecting the apostle’s estimate of Scripture. (1) There was for Paul a body of writings possessed of unique quality and authority, distinguished from all other writings by their sacredness—they were truly sacrosanct. (2) He did not distinguish between the promise of which the prophets were the mediaries, on the one hand, and the holy Scriptures, on the other. It is in holy Scriptures that the promise is embodied. God gave promise of the gospel through his prophets; but it is in the Scriptures that this promise is given—the inscripturated Word is the word of promise. It ought to be apparent how here, as later on (*cf.* especially 3:2), Paul’s conception of the relation which God’s revelatory Word sustains to Scripture differs radically from that of the dialectical theology. It is significant that Karl Barth in his *The Epistle to the Romans* passes over these statements of the apostle without assessing the conception of Holy Scripture implicit in them.

3, 4 These two verses inform us of that with which the promise had been concerned. But since that which had been promised is the gospel of God we must infer that these verses also define for us the subject matter of the gospel unto which the apostle had been separated; the gospel is concerned with the Son of God. When we read: “concerning his Son”, it is necessary to determine that to which this title refers as it applies to him who is identified at the end of the passage as “Jesus Christ our Lord” (vs. 4).

There are good reasons for thinking that in this instance the title refers to a relation which the Son sustains to the Father antecedently to and independently of his manifestation in the flesh. (1) Paul entertained the highest conception of Christ in his divine identity and eternal preexistence (*cf.* 9:5; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:19; 2:9). The title “Son” he regarded as applicable to Christ in his eternal preexistence and as defining his eternal relation to the Father (8:3, 32; Gal. 4:4). (2) Since this is the first occasion in which the title is used in this epistle, we should expect the highest connotation to be attached to it. Furthermore, the connection in which the title is used is one that would demand no lower connotation than that which is apparent in 8:3, 32; the apostle is stating that with which the gospel as the theme of the epistle is concerned. (3) The most natural interpretation of verse 3 is that the title “Son” is not to be construed as one predicated of him in virtue of the process defined in the succeeding clauses but rather identifies him as the person who became the subject of this process and is therefore identified as the Son in the historical event of the incarnation. For these reasons we conclude that Jesus is here identified by that title which expresses his eternal relation to the Father and that when the subject matter of the gospel is defined as that which pertains to the eternal Son of God the apostle at the threshold of the epistle is commending the gospel by showing that it is concerned with him who has no lower station than that of equality with the Father. The subject matter of the gospel is the person who is on the highest plane of reality. Paul had already indicated his unreserved dedication to the service of Christ Jesus (vs. 1) and to the apostolic office. In this title “Son” is the explanation why this service demands nothing less than unreserved dedication to the gospel; it is not only God’s gospel but its subject matter is God’s eternal Son.

The clauses which follow obviously comprise a series of parallels and contrasts. “Born” (vs. 3) corresponds to “declared” (vs. 4); “according to the flesh” (vs. 3) corresponds to “according to the Spirit of holiness” (vs. 4); “of the seed of David” (vs. 3) appears to correspond to “by the resurrection from the dead” (vs. 4.) While the correspondences, parallels, and implied contrasts cannot be overlooked, yet we may also lay over stress upon them so as to reach an artificial result.

In the history of interpretation this parallelism has been most frequently interpreted as referring to the differing aspects of or elements in the constitution of the person of the Saviour. Sometimes the distinguished aspects have been thought to be within the human nature of Christ, the

physical contrasted with the spiritual.³ By others the distinguished aspects have been regarded as the two distinct natures in the person of Christ, the human and the divine, “flesh” designating the former and “Son of God. . . according to the Spirit of holiness” the latter.⁴ It cannot, of course, be doubted that “born of the seed of David according to the flesh” has reference to the incarnation of the Son of God and therefore to that which he became in respect of his human nature. But it is not at all apparent that the other expression “Son of God . . . according to the Spirit of holiness” has in view simply the other aspect of our Lord’s person, namely, that which he is as divine in contrast with the human. There are good reasons for thinking that this type of interpretation whereby it is thought that reference is made to the distinguished aspects of our Lord’s human nature or of our Lord’s divine-human person is not the line to be followed but that the distinction drawn is that between “two successive stages” of the historical process of which the Son of God became the subject.⁵ This view is in thorough

3. Cf. Heinrich A. W. Meyer: *Über den Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (Göttingen, 1872) ad Rom. 1:4. “This πνεῦμα ἁγίως is, in contradistinction to the σὰρξ, the other side of the being of the Son of God on earth; and, just as the σὰρξ was the outward element perceptible by the senses, so is the πνεῦμα the inward mental element, the substratum of His νοῦς (I Cor. ii:16), the principle and power of His INNER life, the intellectual and moral ‘Ego’ which receives the communication of the divine—in short, the ἔσω ἄνθρωπος of Christ” (E. T., Edinburgh, 1876, I, p. 46). See also William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam: *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York, 1926) ad Rom. 1:3, 4: “κατὰ σάρκα. . . κατὰ πνεῦμα are opposed to each other, not as ‘human’ to ‘divine,’ but as ‘body’ to ‘spirit,’ both of which in Christ are human, though the Holiness which is the abiding property of His Spirit is something more than human” (p. 7).

4. Cf. John Calvin: *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (E. T., Grand Rapids, 1947) ad Rom. 1:3: “Two things must be found in Christ, in order that we may obtain salvation in him, even divinity and humanity. . . Hence the Apostle had expressly mentioned both in the summary he gives of the gospel, that Christ was manifested in the flesh—and that in it he declared himself to be the Son of God” (p. 44). See also J. A. Bengel: *Gnomon of the New Testament, ad Rom. 1:4*; Charles Hodge: *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh, 1864), ad Rom. 1:3, 4; F. A. Philippi: *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (E. T., Edinburgh, 1878), ad Rom. 1:3, 4; Robert Haldane: *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh, 1874), ad Rom. 1:4.

5. I am indebted to Geerhardus Vos for opening up this perspective in the interpretation of the passage. See his “The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit” in *Biblical and Theological Studies* (New York, 1912), pp. 228–230. His words are: “The reference is not to two coexisting sides in the constitution of the Saviour, but to two successive stages in his life: there was first a γενέσθαι κατὰ σάρκα, then a ὀρισθῆναι κατὰ πνεῦμα. The two prepositional phrases have adverbial force: they describe the mode of the process, yet so as to throw emphasis rather on the result than on the initial act: Christ came into being as to his sarkic existence, and he was introduced by ὀρισμός into his pneumatic existence. The ὀρίξειν is not an abstract determination, but an effectual appointment; Paul obviously avoids the repetition of γενομένου not for rhetorical reasons only, but because it might have suggested, even before the reading of the whole sentence could correct it, the misunderstanding that at the resurrection the divine sonship of Christ as such first originated, whereas the Apostle merely meant to affirm this late temporal origin of the divine sonship ἐν δυνάμει, the sonship as such reaching back into the state of preexistence. By the twofold κατὰ the mode of each state of existence is contrasted, by the twofold ἐκ the origin of each.

agreement with the apostle's purpose in defining the subject matter of the gospel. The reasons for adopting this interpretation will become apparent as we proceed with the exposition.

(1) "Born of the seed of David." Whether we render thus or, more literally, "made of the seed of David" (*cf.* also Gal. 4:4), the clause points to an historical beginning. The subject of this beginning, it should be carefully noted, is the person who had just been identified in his divine and eternal preexistence as the Son of God; it is the Son of God, viewed in his intradivine identity as the Son, who is said to have been born of the seed of David. Hence, even in verse 3, the Saviour is not viewed merely as human, though it is the assumption of human nature that is reflected on when he is said to have been born. Jealousy for the eternal sonship of Christ does not eclipse the apostle's jealousy for the historical beginning of which the Son was the subject, and neither does the emphasis upon the historical in any way prejudice the reality of the eternal sonship. Here we have unmistakable emphasis upon the coexisting aspects of our Lord's person as the incarnate Son, and of particular significance is the fact that this emphasis is already clearly enunciated in verse 3 before ever we come to the contrast expressed in verse 4.⁶

In specifying "the seed of David" there is indicated the added interest of establishing our Lord's genealogy from David. The apostle had a view to Old Testament prophecy and to its vindication in the fulfilment of its promises.

(2) "According to the flesh." In the usage of the New Testament, when applied to Christ, the denotation cannot be other than human nature in its entirety (*cf.* John 1:14; Rom. 9:5; Eph. 2:14; I Tim. 3:16; Heb. 5:7; 10:20; I Pet. 3:18; 4:1; I John 4:1; II John 7).⁷ There may be particular

Thus the existence *κατὰ σάρκα* originated 'from the seed of David,' the existence *κατὰ πνεῦμα* originated 'out of resurrection from the dead'" (p. 229). This exegesis of Rom. 1:3, 4 is reproduced in Vos's *The Pauline Eschatology* (Princeton, 1930), pp. 155f. n.

6. There is no warrant for C. H. Dodd's allegations to the effect that the theology enunciated in verses 3 and 4 "is scarcely a statement of Paul's own theology. He held that Christ was the Son of God from all eternity, that He was 'in the fulness of time' incarnate as a man, and that by His resurrection He was invested with the full power and glory of His divine status as Lord of all. . . . The present statement therefore falls short of what Paul would regard as an adequate doctrine of the Person of Christ. It recalls the primitive preaching of the Church as it is put into the mouth of Peter in Acts 2:22-34" (*The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, London, 1934, pp 4f.). It is quite apparent that in this passage the highest Christology is present, as also due recognition of the significance of the resurrection in the process of redemptive accomplishment, a significance likewise recognized by Peter in his Pentecost sermon, the statement of which in Acts 2:33-36 is closely akin to and elucidatory of Rom. 1:4.

7. In this respect I am compelled to reject the interpretation of those who find in *κατὰ σάρκα* a reference simply to the bodily aspect of our Lord's human nature and I agree with those who regard it as designating human nature in its completeness, though I diverge from these same interpreters when they maintain that *κατὰ πνεῦμα ἀγιωσύνης* refers to our Lord's divine nature as contrasted with the human.

emphasis upon the physical and sensuous, as is apparent in some of these instances cited. But it is not possible in the light of the evidence provided by such usage to regard a contrast as instituted between what was physical and what was non-physical. Hence the thought reflected upon in verse 3 is that which the Son of God became in respect of human nature—he was born of the seed of David.

(3) “Who was declared to be the Son of God with power.” The word rendered “declared” is the word which elsewhere in the New Testament means to “determine”, “appoint”, “ordain” (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 10:42; 11:29; 17:26, 31; Heb. 4:7). In none of these instances does it mean to “declare”. It might be possible to derive the meaning “declare” from its use in the sense of “mark out” or “mark out the boundaries”. In this way Christ could be said to be marked out as the Son of God.⁸ But this process of thought by which to arrive at the meaning “declared” is unnecessary and has little to commend it. There is neither need nor warrant to resort to any other rendering than that provided by the other New Testament instances, namely, that Jesus was “appointed” or “constituted” Son of God with power and points therefore to an investiture which had an historical beginning parallel to the historical beginning mentioned in verse 3. It might appear that this encounters an insuperable objection; Jesus was not *appointed* Son of God; as we found, he is conceived to be the *eternal* Son, and this sonship had no historical beginning. But this objection has validity only as we overlook the force of the expression “with power”.⁹ The

8. Frequently in the LXX ὄρια means boundaries or borders and the same use appears in the New Testament (*cf.* Matt. 2:16; 4:13; 8:34; 15:22, 39; 19:1; Mark 5:17; 7:24, 31; 10:1; Acts 13:50). ὀρίζω is used in the LXX in the sense of marking out or defining the boundaries (*cf.* Numb. 34:6; Joshua 13:27; 15:12; 18:20; 23:4).

9. Notwithstanding the weight of exegetical opinion in favour of construing ἐν δυνάμει with ὀρισθέντος rather than with υἱοῦ θεοῦ (*cf.*, e.g., Meyer, Sanday and Headlam, Henry Alford, F. Godeet), there appears to be no compelling reason for this construction. II Cor. 13:4, appealed to by Sanday and Headlam as decisive, does not present a close enough parallel to determine the question. Since ἐν δυνάμει stands so closely with υἱοῦ θεοῦ and since the construction adopted fits admirably with the exegesis as a whole, there is no good reason for adopting the other view (*cf.*, for support, Philippi: *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*; Vos: *op. cit.*; J. Gresham Machen: *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, New York, 1930, p. 261; R. C. H. Lenski: *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, Columbus, 1936, *ad loc.*; J. P. Lange: *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, E. T., New York, 1915, *ad loc.*; and, most recently, C. K. Barrett: *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, New York, 1957, *ad loc.*). It must be said, however, that even if construed with ὀρισθέντος this does not rule out the interpretation given above of the verse as a whole. For, in that event, the emphasis would fall upon the power exercised in Jesus' instatement in this new phase of his lordship rather than upon the power possessed and exercised by Jesus as the Son of God in his resurrection status and glory. To emphasize the power exercised and demonstrated in the resurrection and in the investiture which followed is likewise consonant with that new phase upon which Jesus entered when, as the Son of God become man, he was exalted to the right hand of power.

apostle does not say that Jesus was appointed “Son of God” but “Son of God in power”. This addition makes all the difference. Furthermore, we may not forget that already in verse 3 the Son of God is now viewed not simply as the eternal Son but as the eternal Son incarnate, the eternal Son subject to the historical conditions introduced by his being born of the seed of David. Hence the action with which verse 4 is concerned is one that has respect to the Son of God incarnate, and it is not only proper but altogether reasonable to regard it as another phase of the historical process which provides the subject matter of the gospel. The apostle is dealing with some particular event in the history of the Son of God incarnate by which he was *instated* in a position of sovereignty and invested with power, an event which in respect of investiture with power surpassed everything that could previously be ascribed to him in his incarnate state. What this event was and in what the investiture consisted will forthwith appear. And even if we associate the expression “in power” with the verb “appointed” rather than with the title “Son of God”, this does not raise an insuperable obstacle to the interpretation in question. The apostle could still say that he was appointed Son of God with express allusion to the new phase of lordship and glory upon which Jesus as the incarnate Son entered by the resurrection without in the least implying that he then began to be the Son of God. The statement would be analogous to that of Peter, that by the resurrection God made Jesus “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). Peter cannot be understood to mean that then for the first time Jesus became Lord and Christ. He is referring to the new phase of his messianic lordship.

(4) “According to the Spirit of holiness.” Difficulties encompass every interpretation of this expression because it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Since it is parallel to “according to the flesh” in verse 3 and since the latter refers to the human nature of our Lord, it has been supposed that the term in question must have in view the divine nature. This does not follow. There are other contrasts which are relevant to the apostle’s theme in these verses, and we are not shut up to this alternative. The expression “according to the Spirit of holiness” stands in the closest relation to “by the resurrection from the dead”. The latter, it must not be forgotten, concerns Christ’s human nature—only in respect of his human nature was he raised from the dead. This correlation with the resurrection from the dead, moreover, provides the clearest indication of the direction in which we are to seek the meaning of the expression in question. Just as “according to the flesh” in verse 3 defines the phase which came to be through being

born of the seed of David, so “according to the Spirit of holiness” characterizes the phase which came to be through the resurrection. And when we ask what that new phase was upon which the Son of God entered by his resurrection, there is copious New Testament allusion and elucidation (*cf.* Acts 2:36; Eph. 1:20–23; Phil. 2:9–11; I Pet. 3:21, 22). By his resurrection and ascension the Son of God incarnate entered upon a new phase of sovereignty and was endowed with new power correspondent with and unto the exercise of the mediatorial lordship which he executes as head over all things to his body, the church. It is in this same resurrection context and with allusion to Christ’s resurrection endowment that the apostle says, “The last Adam was made life-giving Spirit” (I Cor. 15:45). And it is to this that he refers elsewhere when he says, “The Lord is the Spirit” (II Cor. 3:17). “Lord” in this instance, as frequently in Paul, is the Lord Christ. The only conclusion is that Christ is now by reason of the resurrection so endowed with and in control of the Holy Spirit that, without any confusion of the distinct persons, Christ is identified with the Spirit and is called “the Lord of the Spirit” (II Cor. 3:18). Thus, when we come back to the expression “according to the Spirit of holiness”, our inference is that it refers to that stage of pneumatic endowment upon which Jesus entered through his resurrection. The text, furthermore, expressly relates “Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness” with “the resurrection from the dead” and the appointment can be none other than that which came to be by the resurrection. The thought of verse 4 would then be that the lordship in which he was instated by the resurrection is one all-pervasively conditioned by pneumatic powers. The relative weakness of his pre-resurrection state, reflected on in verse 3, is contrasted with the triumphant power exhibited in his post-resurrection lordship. What is contrasted is not a phase in which Jesus is not the Son of God and another in which he is. He is the incarnate Son of God in both states, humiliation and exaltation, and to regard him as the Son of God in both states belongs to the essence of Paul’s gospel as the gospel of God. But the pre-resurrection and post-resurrection states are compared and contrasted, and the contrast hinges on the investiture with power by which the latter is characterized.

The significance of historical progression in the messianic achievements of our Lord and of progressive realization of messianic investiture is hereby evinced. What signalizes this progression is the resurrection from the dead. Everything antecedent in the incarnate life of our Lord moves toward the resurrection and everything subsequent rests upon it and is conditioned

by it. This is the subject matter of the gospel of God and it is that with which prophetic promise was engaged. The apostle clinches and fixes all the points of his summation of the gospel by the combination of titles with which, at the conclusion of verse 4, he identifies the person who is himself the gospel, “Jesus Christ our Lord”. Each name has its own peculiar associations and significance. “Jesus” fixes his historical identity and expresses his saviourhood. “Christ” points to his official work as the anointed. “Lord” indicates the lordship to which he is exalted at the right hand of the Father in virtue of which he exercises all authority in heaven and in earth. The historical and the official, commitment and achievement, humiliation and exaltation are all signaled in the series of titles by which the Son of God is hereby designated.

5 The mediation of Christ is something upon which the apostle will reflect again and again throughout this epistle. Here we find it for the first time. Christ is the person through whom the grace and apostleship received have been mediated. In using the plural “we received” it is not likely that he is referring to other apostles as well as to himself. Still less may we suppose that he is including other companions in labour, such as Timothy and Silvanus (*cf.* Phil. 1:1; I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1). These could not have been regarded as having received apostleship. The plural “we” could have been used as the “*plural of category*”¹⁰ when the apostle refers simply to himself. He lays stress upon his apostleship to the Gentiles in this context, and this singularity would appear to be required at this point. “Grace and apostleship” could mean the grace of apostleship. It is more likely, however, that “grace” is here the more general unmerited favour of God. The apostle was never forgetful of the grace and mercy by which he had been saved and called into the fellowship of Christ (*cf.* I Cor. 15:10; Gal. 1:15; I Tim. 1:13–16; II Tim. 1:9; Tit. 3:5–7). The grace exemplified in salvation was not, however, in Paul’s case to be conceived of apart from the apostolic office to which he had been separated. They were not separated in Paul’s conversion experience on the road to Damascus (*cf.* Acts 26:12–18), a fact reflected on in his epistles (*cf.* 15:15, 16; Gal. 1:15, 16; I Tim. 1:12–16). This is an adequate reason why both the generic and the specific should be so closely conjoined in this instance (*cf.* I Cor. 15:10).¹¹

10. The expression is that of F. Godet: *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (E. T., Edinburgh, 1880), *ad loc.*

11. There are several expositors including, for example, Calvin and Philippi who regard “grace” in this instance as the grace of apostleship and therefore as more specific. It is true that χάρις is quite frequently

The purpose for which he received grace and apostleship is stated to be “unto obedience of faith among all the nations”. “Obedience of faith” could mean “obedience to faith” (*cf.* Acts 6:7; II Cor. 10:5; I Pet. 1:22). If “faith” were understood in the objective sense of the object or content of faith, the truth believed, this would provide an admirably suitable interpretation and would be equivalent to saying “obedience to the gospel” (*cf.* 10:16; II Thess. 1:8; 3:14). But it is difficult to suppose that “faith” is used here in the sense of the truth of the gospel. It is rather the subjective act of faith in response to the gospel. And though it is not impossible to think of obedience to faith as the commitment of oneself to what is involved in the act of faith, yet it is much more intelligible and suitable to take “faith” as in apposition to “obedience” and understand it as the obedience which consists in faith. Faith is regarded as an act of obedience, of commitment to the gospel of Christ. Hence the implications of this expression “obedience of faith” are far-reaching. For the faith which the apostleship was intended to promote was not an evanescent act of emotion but the commitment of wholehearted devotion to Christ and to the truth of his gospel. It is to such faith that all nations are called.

Whether “all the nations” is to be understood as comprising Jews and Gentiles or, more restrictively, only the Gentile nations is a question on which it is impossible to be decisive. The same difficulty appears in 16:26 and perhaps also in 15:18. Most frequently in Paul’s letters “nations” is used of the Gentiles as distinguished from the Jews (*cf.* 2:14, 24; 3:29; 9:24, 30; 11:11; 11:25; 15:9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 27; I Cor. 1:23; 5:1). Paul is thinking here of his own apostleship and since he is the apostle of the Gentiles and glories in that fact (11:13; *cf.* Acts 26:17, 18; Gal. 1:16; 2:7–9) there is much more to be said in favour of the view that here the Gentile nations are in view. As the apostle of the Gentiles his office is directed specifically to the promotion of the faith of the gospel among the Gentile nations (*cf.* 1:13).

“For his name’s sake.” This should preferably be taken with the design stated in the preceding words—it is for Christ’s sake that the obedience of faith is to be promoted. It is well to note the orientation provided by

used by the apostle in the sense of a particular gift, the grace given for the exercise of a particular function or office (*cf.* 12:6; I Cor. 3:10; II Cor. 1:15; 8:6, 7, 19; Gal. 2:9; Eph. 3:8; 4:7; see also I Cor. 16:3 and possibly Rom. 15:15; II Cor. 8:1). The closest parallel in construction to “grace and apostleship” here would be II Cor. 8:4 where Paul speaks of “the grace and the fellowship of the ministry which is unto the saints”. Even though “grace” here is to be taken most likely, if not certainly, in the specific sense, yet it is to be distinguished from “the fellowship” and may not suitably be construed as the grace of the fellowship in ministering to the saints.

this addition. It is not the advantage of the nations that is paramount in the promotion of the gospel but the honour and glory of Christ. And the ambassador of Christ must have his own design in promoting the gospel oriented to this paramount concern—his subjective design must reflect God’s own antecedent and objective design.

6 The believers at Rome were examples of the fruit accruing from the promotion of the gospel—“among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ”. The use of the word “called” in this connection is significant. Paul had previously drawn attention to the fact that it was by divine call that he had been invested with the apostolic office (vs. 1). Now we are advised that it was by the same kind of action that the believers at Rome were constituted the disciples of Christ. It is not probable that “called of Jesus Christ” indicates that Jesus Christ is conceived of as the author of the call. For uniformly God the Father is represented as the author (*cf.* 8:30; 11:29; I Cor. 1:9; II Tim. 1:9). They are the called of Jesus Christ in the sense of belonging to Christ inasmuch as they are called by the Father into the fellowship of his Son (I Cor. 1:9).

7 In verse 5, as has been noted, the apostle had in mind the promotion of the faith of the gospel among the Gentiles. In his salutation to the believers at Rome,¹² however, he allows for no racial discrimination—all at Rome, whether Jews or Gentiles, are included. The particularization is defined not in terms of race but in terms of the differentiation which arises from God’s grace. Those addressed are “beloved of God, called to be saints”. In this instance he does not speak expressly of the *church* in Rome (*cf. contra* I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:2; I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1). This does not mean that in Paul’s esteem there was no *church* at Rome (*cf.* 12:5; 16:5); the omission of the term is merely a variation that appears in other epistles (*cf.* Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2). The characterization “beloved of God” Paul uses nowhere else in his salutations and only here does it occur in this precise form in the New Testament, though to the same effect is the form in Col. 3:12; I Thess. 1:4; II Thess. 2:13. The term “beloved” is a favourite one with the apostle to express the love that binds him to his brethren (*cf.* 12:19; 16:5, 8, 9, 12; I Cor. 4:14; II Cor. 7:1; II Tim. 1:2). “Beloved of God” points to the intimacy and tenderness of the love of God the Father, the embrace of his people in the bosom of his affection. It is

12. The evidence in support of the reading ἐν Πόμῃ preponderates in favour of its retention. The same applies to vs. 15.

the consciousness of this bond that binds the apostle to the saints at Rome. “Called to be saints” or “called as saints” places the emphasis upon the effectual character of the divine action by which believers became saints—it was by divine summons. They were effectually ushered into the status of saints. “Beloved of God” describes them in terms of the attitude of God to them. This is primary in the differentiation by which they are distinguished from others. “Called” describes them in terms of the determinate action of God by which his distinguishing love comes to effect. “Called *to be saints*” describes them in terms of the consecration which is the intent and effect of the effectual call. Though it is without doubt the idea of being set apart to God that is in the forefront in the word “saints”, yet it is impossible to dissociate from the term the holiness of character which is the complement of such consecration. Believers are sanctified by the Spirit and, as will appear in the teaching of this epistle, the most characteristic feature of a believer is that he is holy in heart and manner of life.

The form of greeting adopted by the apostle is essentially Christian in character. “Grace” is, first of all, the disposition of favour on the part of God, but it would be arbitrary to exclude the concrete ways in which that disposition comes to expression in favour bestowed and enjoyed. The Pauline concept of “peace” cannot be understood except on the background of the alienation from God which sin has involved. Hence “peace” is the reconstituted favour with God based upon the reconciliation accomplished by Christ. The basic meaning is indicated in 5:1, 2. It is only as we appreciate the implications of alienation from God and the reality of the wrath which alienation evinces that we can understand the richness of the biblical notion of peace as enunciated here by the apostle. Peace means the establishment of a status of which confident and unrestrained access to the presence of God is the privilege. And peace with God cannot be dissociated from the peace of God which keeps the heart and mind in Christ Jesus (*cf.* Phil. 4:7). “Grace” and “peace”, though necessarily distinguished, are nonetheless correlative in this salutation and sustain a close relation to each other even in respect of the concepts denoted. When taken in their mutual interdependence and relation we see the fulness of the blessing which the apostle invokes upon those addressed in his epistles (*cf.* I Cor. 1:3; II Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Phm. 3).

“From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The following observations will indicate the rich import of this formula. (1) “God” is here the personal name of the first person of the trinity, the Father. This is characteristic

of Paul's usage and will appear repeatedly throughout the epistle. This use of the title "God" must not be interpreted, however, as in any way subtracting full deity or Godhood from the other persons. "Lord" is frequently the personal name of Christ in distinction from the Father and the Spirit. But this in no way subtracts from the lordship or sovereignty of the other persons. These titles distinguish the persons from one another and as such they have great significance. But *theologically* they must not be construed as predicating Godhood only of the Father or lordship only of Christ. According to Paul's own testimony Christ is "God over all blessed for ever" (9:5) and in him dwells "the fulness of Godhood" (Col. 2:9). (2) It is the Father as distinguished from the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Father of believers. This is the uniform representation of the apostle.¹³ (3) The Father is not the Father of believers and of Christ conjointly. The uniqueness of Christ's sonship is jealously guarded. Christ is the Father's own Son and the distinctiveness of the relation is thereby intimated (*cf.* 8:3, 32). This is in accord with Jesus' own witness; never does he join with the disciples in addressing the Father as "our Father". And neither does he enjoin upon the disciples to approach the Father in the recognition of community with him in that relationship (*cf.* Matt. 5:45, 48; 6:9, 14; 7:11; Luke 6:36; 12:30; John 5:17, 18; 20:17). (4) The Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are conjointly the authors of the grace and peace which the apostle invokes. It is indicative of the dignity accorded to Christ that he should be represented as with the Father the source and giver of the characteristic blessings of redemption.

II. INTRODUCTION

1:8–15

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world.

⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers

¹⁰ making request, if by any means now at length I may be prospered by the will of God to come unto you.

¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

13. For a fuller treatment of this subject, see the writer's *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, 1955), pp. 110 ff.