

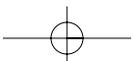
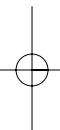


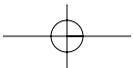
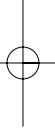
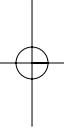
TYNDALE NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

VOLUME 6

TNTC

ROMANS





TYNDALE NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

VOLUME 6

GENERAL EDITOR: LEON MORRIS

ROMANS

AN INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY

F. F. BRUCE



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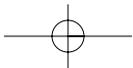
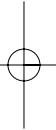
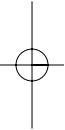
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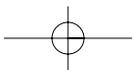
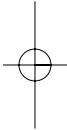
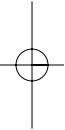
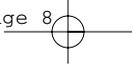
To Ella
in memory of Athol



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The sustained argument of this letter makes it impossible to bring out its meaning adequately on a verse-by-verse basis. The procedure adopted, accordingly, is to present an exposition of the successive divisions of the argument, each section of the exposition being followed by more detailed verse-by-verse comments on the division just expounded. The student who wishes to consult this work for help on a particular verse should therefore read the exposition of the passage within which that verse falls as well as any comment that may be provided expressly on the verse itself.



GENERAL PREFACE

The original Tyndale Commentaries aimed at providing help for the general reader of the Bible. They concentrated on the meaning of the text without going into scholarly technicalities. They sought to avoid ‘the extremes of being unduly technical or unhelpfully brief’. Most who have used the books agree that there has been a fair measure of success in reaching that aim.

Times, however, change. A series that has served so well for so long is perhaps not quite as relevant as when it was first launched. New knowledge has come to light. The discussion of critical questions has moved on. Bible-reading habits have changed. When the original series was commenced it could be presumed that most readers used the Authorized Version and one could make one’s comments accordingly, but this situation no longer obtains.

The decision to revise and update the whole series was not reached lightly, but in the end it was thought that this is what is required in the present situation. There are new needs, and they will be better served by new books or by a thorough updating of the old books. The aims of the original series remain. The new commentaries are neither minuscule nor unduly long. They are exegetical rather than homiletic. They do not discuss all the critical questions, but none is written without an awareness of the problems that engage the attention of New Testament scholars. Where it is felt that formal consideration should be given to such questions, they are discussed in the Introduction and sometimes in Additional notes.

But the main thrust of these commentaries is not critical. These books are written to help the non-technical reader to understand his Bible better. They do not presume a knowledge of Greek, and

all Greek words discussed are transliterated; but the authors have the Greek text before them and their comments are made on the basis of the originals. The authors are free to choose their own modern translation, but are asked to bear in mind the variety of translations in current use.

The new series of Tyndale Commentaries goes forth, as the former series did, in the hope that God will graciously use these books to help the general reader to understand as fully and clearly as possible the meaning of the New Testament.

Leon Morris

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

It is fitting, at the outset of this Tyndale Commentary on Romans, to remind ourselves of William Tyndale's own estimate of the letter as 'the principal and most excellent part of the New Testament' and 'a light and a way in unto the whole scripture' He goes on:

No man verily can read it too oft or study it too well; for the more it is studied the easier it is, the more it is chewed the pleasanter it is, and the more groundly it is searched the preciouser things are found in it, so great treasure of spiritual things lieth hid therein.¹

Readers or interpreters of Paul, especially when they find themselves strongly attracted by his personality and reasoning power, are frequently tempted to tone down those features in his writings which are felt to be uncongenial, not to say scandalous, to modern tastes. It is possible to go along with Paul so far, and then try to go farther, not by accepting more of his teaching, but by unconsciously modifying his concepts so as to bring them into closer conformity with current thought. But a man of Paul's calibre must be allowed to be himself and to speak his own language. Well-meant attempts to make him prophesy a little more smoothly than in fact he does can but diminish his stature, not enhance it. We of the twentieth

1. From the prologue to Romans in Tyndale's English New Testament (1534 edition).

century shall grasp his abiding message all the more intelligently as we permit him to deliver it in his own uncompromising first-century terms.

I have used the opportunity provided by this revised edition not only to replace the AV by the RSV as the basis of the commentary, but also to incorporate the results of twenty years' further thought and study. I am greatly indebted to the excellent commentaries which have appeared since my first edition was published in 1963; among these the works of Ernst Käsemann and C. E. B. Cranfield call for specially honourable mention.

F. F. Bruce

CHIEF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ad loc.</i>	At the place (under discussion).
AV	Authorized (King James') Version, 1611.
BAGD	W. Bauer, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i> , translated by W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, second edn. rev. and augmented by F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker (Chicago, 1979).
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands (University) Library, Manchester.</i>
<i>EQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly.</i>
E.T.	English Translation.
<i>ExT</i>	<i>Expository Times.</i>
GNB	Good News Bible (Today's English Version), 1976.
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature.</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies.</i>
LXX	Septuagint (pre-Christian Greek version of the Old Testament).
mg.	Margin.
MT	Massoretic Text (of the Hebrew Bible).
NEB	New English Bible, 1970.
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> , edited by Colin Brown (Exeter, 1975–78).
NIV	The Holy Bible, New International Version, 1978.
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies.</i>
<i>RGG</i>	<i>Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart.</i>

- RSV American Revised Standard Version, Old Testament, 1952; New Testament, ²1971.
- RV Revised Version, 1885.
- SJT* *Scottish Journal of Theology*.
- s.v.* Under the word (being discussed).
- TB Babylonian Talmud.
- TDNT* *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, translated by G. W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, 1964–76).
- ZNW* *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The occasion of the letter

Paul spent the ten years from AD 47 to 57 in intensive evangelization of the territories east and west of the Aegean Sea. During those years he concentrated in succession on the Roman provinces of Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia. Along the main roads of these provinces and in their principal cities the gospel had been preached and churches had been planted. Paul took with proper seriousness his commission as Christ's apostle among the Gentiles, and now he might well contemplate with grateful praise not (he would have said) what he had done, but what Christ had done through him. His first great plan of campaign was concluded. The churches he had planted in Iconium, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus and many another city in those four provinces could be left to the care of their spiritual leaders, under the overruling direction of the Holy Spirit.

But Paul's task was by no means finished. During the winter of AD 56–57, which he spent at Corinth in the home of his friend and

convert Gaius, he looked forward (with some misgivings) to a visit which had to be paid to Jerusalem in the immediate future – for he had to see to the handing over to the elders of the church there of a gift of money which he had been organizing for some time past among his Gentile converts, a gift which he hoped would strengthen the bond of Christian love between the mother church in Judea and the churches of the Gentiles.¹

When that business had been transacted, Paul looked forward to the launching of a plan which had been taking shape in his mind over the past few years. With the conclusion of his apostolic mission in the Aegean lands, he must find fresh fields to conquer for Christ. In making choice of a new sphere of activity, he determined to go on being a pioneer; he would not settle down as an apostle in any place to which the gospel had already been brought; he would not 'build on another man's foundation' (Rom. 15:20). His choice fell on Spain, the oldest Roman province in the west and the chief bastion of Roman civilization in that part of the world.

But a journey to Spain would afford him the opportunity of gratifying a long-standing ambition – the ambition to see Rome. Although he was a Roman citizen by birth,² he had never seen the city whose freeman he was. How wonderful it would be to visit Rome and spend some time there! All the more wonderful because there was a flourishing church in Rome, and several Christians whom Paul had met elsewhere in his travels were now resident in Rome and members of that church. The very fact that the gospel had reached Rome long before Paul himself ruled out Rome as a place where he could settle for pioneer evangelism; but he knew that he would continue his journey to Spain with all the more zest if he could first of all refresh his spirit by some weeks of fellowship with the Christians in Rome and then, perhaps, be provided by them with a base for his advance into Spain.

During the early days of AD 57, therefore, he dictated to his friend Tertius – a Christian secretary possibly placed at his disposal by his host Gaius – a letter destined for the Roman Christians. This letter

1. See comments on Rom. 15:25–32 (pp. 262–265).

2. See Acts 22:28, 'I was born a citizen.'

was to prepare them for his visit to their city and to explain the purpose of his visit; and he judged it wise while writing it to set before them a full statement of the gospel as he understood and proclaimed it.³

One reason for his setting this full statement before them may have been his awareness that his message was being misrepresented by his opponents in various places; he seizes the opportunity to set the record straight. But more than that: he probably wishes to involve the Roman Christians in his ministry. He bespeaks their prayers for his safety in Judea; but if it turned out that he was 'not only to be imprisoned but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus' (Acts 21:13), he would like to know that the continuation of his witness – especially its western extension to Spain – could confidently be entrusted to such a faithful body of people as the Christian community of Rome.

2. Christianity at Rome

It is plain from the terms in which Paul addresses the Christians in Rome that the church of that city was no recent development. But when we try to ascertain something about the origin and early history of Roman Christianity, we find very little direct evidence to help us, and have to reconstruct the situation as far as possible from various literary and archaeological references.

According to Acts 2:10 the crowd of pilgrims who were present in Jerusalem for the Pentecost festival of AD 30, and heard Peter preach the gospel, included 'visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes'. We are not told if any of these were among the three thousand who believed Peter's message and were baptized. It may be significant that these Roman visitors are the only contingent from the continent of Europe to receive express mention among the pilgrims.

In any case, all roads led to Rome, and once Christianity had been securely established in Judea and the neighbouring territories, it was

3. Other suggestions of the purpose of the letter are made by some contributors to *The Romans Debate*, ed. K. P. Donfried (1977).

inevitable that it should be carried to Rome. Within two or three years, if not (as Foakes-Jackson thought) 'by the autumn following the Crucifixion, it is quite as possible that Jesus was honoured in the Jewish community at Rome as that He was at Damascus'.⁴ The fourth-century Latin Father who is called Ambrosiaster says in the preface to his commentary on this letter that the Romans 'had embraced the faith of Christ, albeit according to the Jewish rite, without seeing any sign of mighty works or any of the apostles'. It was evidently members of the Christian rank and file who first carried the gospel to Rome and planted it there – probably in the Jewish community of the capital.

There was a Jewish community in Rome as early as the second century BC. It was considerably augmented in consequence of Pompey's conquest of Judea in 63 BC and his 'triumph' in Rome two years later, when many Jewish prisoners of war graced his procession, and were later given their freedom. In 59 BC Cicero makes reference to the size and influence of the Jewish colony in Rome.⁵ In AD 19 the Jews of Rome were expelled from the city by decree of the Emperor Tiberius (see p. 99), but in a few years they were back in as great numbers as ever. In the time of Claudius (AD 41–54) we have the record of another mass-expulsion of Jews from Rome. This expulsion is briefly referred to in Acts 18:2, where Paul, on his arrival in Corinth (probably in the late summer of AD 50), is said to have met 'a Jew named Aquila, ... lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome'. The date of this edict of expulsion is uncertain, although Orosius may well be right in placing it in AD 49.⁶ Other

4. F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *Peter, Prince of Apostles* (1927), p. 195.

5. *Pro Flacco* 66.

6. *History* 7.6.15f. According to Dio Cassius (*History* 60.6), Claudius had already imposed some restrictions on the Roman Jews at the beginning of his principate: 'As the Jews had again increased in numbers, but could not easily be expelled from the city because there were so many of them, he did not actually drive them out but forbade them to meet in accordance with their ancestral customs.' See F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (1971), pp. 279–282.

references to it appear in ancient literature, the most interesting of which is a remark by Suetonius in his *Life of Claudius* (25.2), that Claudius ‘expelled the Jews from Rome because they were constantly rioting at the instigation of Chrestus (*impulsore Chresto*)’. This Chrestus may conceivably have been a Jewish agitator in Rome at the time; but the way in which Suetonius introduces his name makes it much more likely that the rioting was a sequel to the introduction of Christianity into the Jewish community of the capital. Suetonius, writing some seventy years later, may have known a contemporary record of the expulsion order which mentioned Chrestus as the leader of one of the parties involved, and inferred that he was actually in Rome at the time. He would know that Chrestus (a variant Gentile spelling of *Christus*) was the founder of the Christians, whom he elsewhere describes as ‘a pernicious and baneful class of people’,⁷ and it would seem quite a reasonable inference to him that Chrestus had taken an active part in stirring up these riots.

Priscilla and Aquila appear to have been Christians before they met Paul, and were probably members of the original Roman group of believers in Jesus. We do not know where or when they first heard the gospel; Paul himself never suggests that they were his children in the faith. We may be sure that the original group of believers in Rome consisted predominantly, if not entirely, of Jewish Christians, whose departure and dispersal followed Claudius’s expulsion order.

The effects of the expulsion order, however, were short-lived. Before long the Jewish community was flourishing in Rome once more, and so was the Christian community. Less than three years after the death of Claudius Paul can write to the Christians of Rome and speak of their faith as a matter of universal knowledge. The expulsion edict would have lapsed with Claudius’s death (AD 54), if not indeed earlier.⁸ But in AD 57 the Christians in Rome included not only Jewish but Gentile believers. Some of the latter may have

7. *Life of Nero* 16.2.

8. Cf. G. Edmundson, *The Church in Rome in the First Century* (1913), pp. 80, 84; T. W. Manson, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (1962), pp. 37–40.

stayed on in the city after the expulsion of their Jewish brethren; if so, their numbers were greatly augmented by the time Jewish Christians were able to return. Paul indeed has to remind the Gentile Christians that, even if they are now in the majority, the base of the community is Jewish, and that they must not despise their Jewish brethren just because they outnumber them (Rom. 11:18).

In fact, the Jewish basis of Roman Christianity was not soon forgotten. As late as the time of Hippolytus (died AD 235) some features of Christian religious practice at Rome continued to proclaim their Jewish origin – an origin, moreover, which should be sought in sectarian or nonconformist Judaism rather than in the main stream.⁹

If the greetings in Romans 16:3–16 were addressed to Rome (see pp. 266–271), then we may find in them some interesting information about members of the Roman church in AD 57. The people to whom greetings are sent by name included Christians whom Paul had met in other places during his missionary activities and who were at this time resident in Rome. Some of them were very early Christians, like Andronicus and Junias (or rather Junia), who, as Paul says, were ‘in Christ’ before himself and were well known in apostolic circles and may, indeed, have been reckoned as apostles themselves (16:7). The Rufus to whom greetings are sent in 16:13 has been tentatively identified with the son of Simon of Cyrene mentioned in Mark 15:21; Paul may have known him and his mother at Syrian Antioch. Priscilla and Aquila, who had been compelled to leave Rome eight years previously, were now back in the capital, and their house was one of the meeting-places for church members there. (The fact that the basilica, the regular style of early church edifice, preserves the outline of a private Roman house, reminds us that the house-church was the regular Christian meeting in primitive times.)

By AD 57, the year in which Paul wrote to the Romans, Christianity may already have begun to make some impact in the higher reaches of Roman society. In that year Pomponia Graecina,

9. Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition* 20.5. Cf. M. Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (1961), pp. 114f.

the wife of Aulus Plautius (who conquered the province of Britain for the Roman Empire in AD 43), was tried and acquitted by a domestic court on a charge of embracing a ‘foreign superstition’, which could have been Christianity.¹⁰ But, to the majority of Romans who knew anything about it, Christianity was simply another disgusting oriental superstition, the sort of thing that the satirist Juvenal had in mind sixty years later when he complained of the way in which the sewage of the Orontes was discharging itself into the Tiber.¹¹ (Since Antioch on the Orontes was the home of Gentile Christianity, Juvenal probably thought of Gentile Christianity as one of the ingredients in that sewage.)

When, seven years after the writing of this letter, Rome was devastated by a great fire, and the Emperor Nero looked around for scapegoats against which he could divert the popular suspicion which (quite unjustly, it may be) was directed against himself, he found them ready to hand. The Christians of Rome were unpopular – reputed to be ‘enemies of the human race’¹² and credited with such vices as incest and cannibalism. In large numbers, then, they became the victims of the imperial malevolence – and it is this persecution of Christians under Nero that traditionally forms the setting for Paul’s martyrdom.

Three years after he sent this letter, Paul at last realized his hope of seeing Rome. He realized it in a way which he had not expected when he wrote. The misgivings which he expressed in the letter (15:31) about his reception in Jerusalem proved to be well founded. Not many days after his arrival in Jerusalem he was charged before the Roman governor of Judea with a serious offence against the sanctity of the temple. His trial dragged on inconclusively until Paul at last exercised his right as a Roman citizen and appealed to have his case transferred to the jurisdiction of the emperor in Rome. To Rome, then, he was sent, and after shipwreck and wintering in Malta he reached the capital early in AD 60. As he was conducted north along the Appian Way by the courier force in whose custody he was,

10. Tacitus, *Annals* 13.32.3–5.

11. *Satire* 3.62.

12. Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44.5.

Christians in Rome who heard of his approach walked out to meet him at points thirty or forty miles south of the city and gave him something like a triumphal escort for the remainder of his journey. The sight of these friends proved a source of great encouragement to him. For the next two years he remained in Rome, kept under guard in his private lodgings, with permission to receive visitors and to propagate the gospel at the heart of the empire.

What happened at the end of these two years is a matter of conjecture. It is not at all certain if he ever fulfilled his plan of visiting Spain and preaching the gospel there. What is reasonably certain is that, a few years later at most, he was sentenced to death at Rome as a leader of the Christians, led out of the city along the Ostian Way and beheaded at the place then called *Aquae Salviae* (modern Tre Fontane). His tomb lies beneath the high altar of the basilica of *San Paolo fuori le Mura* ('St Paul Outside the Walls').

The blood of the martyrs, however, in Tertullian's words, proved to be seed.¹³ Persecution and martyrdom did not extinguish Christianity in Rome. The church in that city continued to flourish in increasing vigour and to enjoy the esteem of Christians throughout the world as a church 'worthy of God, worthy of honour, worthy of congratulation, worthy of praise, worthy of success, worthy in purity, pre-eminent in love, walking in the law of Christ and bearing the Father's name'.¹⁴

3. Romans and the Pauline corpus

'St. Paul's letter to the Romans – and others' was a title suggested for this letter by T. W. Manson.¹⁵ He believed (not without good reason) that, in addition to the copy of the letter which was taken to Rome, further copies were made and sent to other churches. One pointer

13. Tertullian, *Apology* 50.

14. This description comes from the preface of Ignatius's *Letter to the Romans* (c. AD 110).

15. The title of a lecture first published in *BJRL* 31 (1948), pp. 224–240, reprinted in T. W. Manson, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (1962), pp. 225–241, and in K. P. Donfried (ed.), *The Romans Debate* (1977), pp. 1–16.

to this is the textual evidence at the end of chapter 15 (see pp. 35, 266), which might indicate that there was in circulation in antiquity an edition of the letter which lacked chapter 16 – a chapter which, with its personal greetings, would have been relevant only to one church.¹⁶

This one church, as is argued below (pp. 268–271), was the Roman church. It was for the Roman church that the letter was specifically designed. The copy received by that church was certainly treasured, copied and recopied. About AD 96 Clement, ‘foreign secretary’ of the Roman church, shows himself well acquainted with the letter to the Romans; he echoes its language time and again in the letter which he himself sent in that year on behalf of the Roman church to the church of Corinth. The way in which he echoes its language suggests that he knew it by heart; it could well be that it was read regularly at meetings of the Roman church from the time of its reception onwards.

It is clear from Clement’s letter that by AD 96 some of Paul’s letters had begun to circulate in other quarters than those to which they were sent in the first instance;¹⁷ Clement, for example, knows

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16. This one church, in Manson’s view, was Ephesus: Paul designed Romans 1 – 15 for Rome, but added chapter 16 to a copy which he sent to Ephesus. This I find improbable (see pp. 266–268). Much more improbable is the theory that the letter to the Romans, as we know it, is the expansion of an earlier general letter ‘written by St. Paul, at the same time as Galatians, to the mixed Churches which had sprung up round Antioch and further on in Asia Minor’ (K. Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, 1914, p. 363; cf. F. C. Burkitt, *Christian Beginnings*, 1924, pp. 126–128).
17. Paul himself took some initial steps to secure a wider circulation of some of his letters; cf. his directions in Colossians 4:16 that the Colossian and Laodicean churches should exchange letters received from him. His letter to the Galatians was sent to several churches. It is implied in Galatians 6:11 that originally the one MS was taken from church to church, rather than that one was sent to each church; but some of the Galatian churches would make copies for themselves before passing it on. The letter to the ‘Ephesians’ was probably

and quotes from 1 Corinthians. And not many years after, an unknown benefactor of all succeeding ages copied at least ten Pauline letters into a codex from which copies were made for use in many parts of the Christian world.¹⁸ From the beginning of the second century Paul's letters circulated as a collection – the *corpus Paulinum* – and not singly. The second-century writers, both 'orthodox' and 'heterodox', who refer to the Pauline letters knew them in the form of a corpus.

One of these writers, of the 'heterodox' variety, was Marcion, a native of Pontus in Asia Minor, who came to Rome about AD 140 and a few years later published an edition of Holy Scripture. Marcion repudiated the authority of the Old Testament and held that Paul was the only faithful apostle of Jesus, the earlier apostles having corrupted his teaching with judaizing admixtures. Marcion's canon reflected his distinctive views. It consisted of two parts: the *Euangelion*, an edition of the Gospel of Luke which began with the words, 'In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar Jesus came down to

composed as an encyclical, and may have been despatched in a number of copies, with blanks left in verse 1 for the address to be supplied – in one early copy the address supplied in the blank space was evidently 'Laodicea'. Between the original reception of Paul's letters and the publication of the *corpus Paulinum* there may have been smaller, regional collections, such as a collection of the letters sent to the churches of Macedonia (1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philippians) and one of those sent to the province of Asia (Philemon, Colossians and Ephesians).

18. G. Zuntz thinks that the corpus was compiled and published at Alexandria; it was evidently a critical edition, showing signs of 'dependence upon the scholarly Alexandrian methods of editorship' (*The Text of the Epistles*, 1954, pp. 14–17, 276–279). This is at least more probable than the once popular view that it was compiled in Ephesus (cf. E. J. Goodspeed, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 1937, pp. 217–219; C. L. Mitton, *The formation of the Pauline Corpus of Letters*, 1955, pp. 44–49), a romantic embellishment of which was J. Knox's thesis that the prime mover in the compilation of the corpus was Onesimus, bishop of Ephesus c. AD 100 and former slave to Philemon (*Philemon among the Letters of Paul*, 1935, ³1960).

Capernaum, a city of Galilee' (cf. Luke 3:1; 4:31), and the *Apostolikon*, comprising ten Pauline letters (excluding those to Timothy and Titus).

Galatians, for which Marcion had a natural predilection on account of its anti-judaizing emphasis, stood first in his *Apostolikon*. The other letters followed in descending order of length, the 'double' letters (i.e. the two to the Corinthians and the two to the Thessalonians) being reckoned for this purpose as one for each pair. Romans thus came after 'Corinthians'. To each of the letters a Marcionite preface was attached in due course.¹⁹ The Marcionite preface to Romans runs thus:

The Romans are in the region of Italy. These had been visited already by false apostles and seduced into recognizing the authority of the law and the prophets, under pretext of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle calls them back to the true faith of the gospel, writing to them from Athens.

This is not the inference which a reader would naturally draw from Paul's argument in this letter, but Marcion and his followers approached the apostolic writings with firmly held presuppositions. Where they found statements in Paul's letters running counter to these presuppositions, they concluded that the text had been tampered with by judaizing scribes, and emended it accordingly (see pp. 34–37). But such was the influence of Marcion's edition, well beyond the limits of his own following, that many 'orthodox' MSS of the Pauline letters contain the Marcionite prefaces.

Our oldest surviving MS of the Pauline letters, dating from the end of the second century, contains the shorter corpus of ten letters together with the letter to the Hebrews. This MS (Papyrus 46, one of the Chester Beatty biblical papyri) comes from Egypt, and in Egypt (unlike Rome) Hebrews was regarded as Pauline as early as AD 180. In P⁴⁶ (as this MS will henceforth be called) Romans comes first.

19. This is said in awareness of the view about the Marcionite prefaces expressed by J. Regul, *Die antimarcionitischen Evangelienprologe* (1969), pp. 13, 85, 88–94.

Romans comes last among the Pauline letters sent to churches in another document from the closing years of the second century, the 'Muratorian Canon' or fragmentary list of New Testament books recognized at Rome. This list includes the longer Pauline corpus of thirteen letters, for after the letters to churches it adds those addressed to individuals – not only Philemon but also Timothy and Titus.

In the order which ultimately became established Romans takes pride of place among the Pauline letters. Historically, this is because it is the longest letter, but there is an innate fitness in the accordance of this position of primacy to a letter which, above all others, deserves to be called 'The Gospel according to Paul'.

4. The text of Romans

a. English Versions

This commentary is designed as a companion to the study of the text of Romans; it cannot be used without constant reference to the letter which it endeavours to expound and annotate.

The text on which the commentary is based is that of the RSV (1971 edition); but it can be used equally well with the NEB (1970) or the NIV (1978). In all three of these the English translation is based on what is called an 'eclectic' Greek text. That is to say, in each place where existing witnesses to the Greek text differ in the readings they present, the translators have chosen that reading which, in their judgment, corresponds most closely to the wording of the biblical author. They have not given their preference to a single 'best' MS or group of MSS, as had been done in some earlier versions of the New Testament.

b. The early Pauline text

How many copies of the letter to the Romans were in circulation between AD 57 and the end of the first century cannot be known. But, from the time that the *corpus Paulinum* was compiled at the beginning of the second century, Romans, like each of the other Pauline letters, no longer circulated separately but as a component part of the corpus.

The question naturally arises whether some evidence may not have survived in the textual tradition of the letters which goes back