Prolegomena to St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and the Ephesians

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PROLEGOMENA

to St Paul's Epistles to

The Romans and The Ephesians
PROLEGOMENA
TO ST PAUL’S EPISTLES TO
THE ROMANS
AND THE EPHESIANS

BY THE LATE
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London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
AND NEW YORK
1895
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INTRODUCTION
TO THE
EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

H. R.

I
THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

[EASTER TERM, 1886.]

I propose this term to lecture on the Epistle to the Romans, in itself an enormous subject. To deal properly with it would need not merely a longer term than this, but many terms. Even however in this unusually short term I hope that by rigorous selection of topics we may be able to get some substantial hold of the Epistle; and, owing to the peculiar position which it holds among St Paul’s Epistles, even a very imperfect study of it will yield more instruction than a somewhat less imperfect study of, I believe we may say, any other single Epistle of St Paul would have done.

In this case, perhaps more than usual, the benefit to be derived from attending lectures must be proportional to the time and care spent upon the subject by members of the class in private work. The utmost that a lecturer can do is to supply suggestions which can be verified and followed up at home.
One question that often has to be discussed can here be dismissed at once—that of the authorship. There is practically no dispute among different schools (unless it be in Holland) that St Paul wrote this Epistle, or at least the greater part of it: some would except the last chapter, or the last two: but the bulk of the Epistle may be treated as confessedly written by the Apostle whose name it bears. So also as to its readers: no one doubts that they were Romans and Roman Christians. On the other hand there has been and is much discussion whether these Roman Christians were exclusively Jewish Christians, or exclusively Gentile Christians, or both the one and the other; and this question is connected with another as to the origin of the Roman Church, and its characteristics at the time when St Paul wrote.

The fifteenth chapter, if part of the original Epistle, fixes the date at a glance: but even in its absence there is hardly room for doubt. The Epistle, that is, was written at Corinth towards the close of what is called St Paul's Third Missionary Journey, shortly before he sailed for Jerusalem to make the visit which led to that long imprisonment described in the later chapters of the Acts. According to the reckoning now most generally received, this would be in the spring of the year 58, or possibly the preceding winter, when Nero had just completed the third year of his reign. This absolute or numerical date is