

**THE EPISTLE TO THE
ROMANS: A
COMMENTARY LOGICAL
AND HISTORICAL**

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The Epistle to the Romans: a commentary logical and historical by James M. Stifler

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JAMES M. STIFLER

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THE
EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

A Commentary
LOGICAL AND HISTORICAL

BY

JAMES M. STIFLER, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT EXEGESIS IN GROZER THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY, CHESTER, PA.



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PREFACE

THIS book has no other aim than to make the somewhat difficult Epistle to the Romans better understood—to report to the reader what the apostle has written. It is not put forth in the interest of any theological system; it has no theory of any kind to advocate and no point to make, except by dispassionate study to ascertain the meaning of Paul's language. The commentator, even more than the preacher of the gospel, is under solemn obligation not to bear false witness against the sacred penman, not to misinterpret him, not to overlay his thought with personal views; the commentator's work is to follow down the stream of the inspired text, to measure its width and if possible its depth, but not to dig new channels for it and not to divert its flow to water his own garden.

This book is not a hasty product, but the result of many years of labor. The author has had the privilege and pleasure of guiding more than twenty classes of theological students through the Epistle to the Romans, fourteen of these using the original text. The instruction has not been given by means of lectures read or dictated by the teacher. Each word and each idea in the epistle have been discussed with the class, every member of which had the utmost liberty to suggest his difficulty, to ask questions, to oppose, to deny, or to call up the contrary view of any commentator. This book is the outcome of these years of study and discussion.

While the very words written by the apostle have been considered and weighed one by one, the result is not presented in that form, nor with any but the very least reference to the Greek. There is a large class of men, educated men, who, after all, can read a commentary with most satisfaction and profit in English. This book is especially designed for them. The voluminous works of Meyer and of Godet, even when translated, of Alford, of Sanday and Headlam, and of others, are serviceable only to those having a fair knowledge of Greek. Of the commentaries that have appeared since the Reformation, Sanday and Headlam enumerate thirty-five, very few of which can be used by any but scholars. They have their place, and are invaluable in the cloisters of the erudite. But accurate and even expert knowledge can be conveyed in vernacular speech, as is made very apparent in the excellent commentaries of J. A. Beet, of H. G. C. Moule, of M. B. Riddle,—the latter not included in Sanday and Headlam's list,—and of E. H. Gifford in the "Speaker's Commentary." There is room for more such, in which dry and arbitrary technicalities are not ex-