iwrrovuction.] THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS. [en. 1.   
   
   
 SECTION III.   
 WITH WIAT OBJECT IT WAS WRITTEN.   
   
   
   
 1. In answering this question, erities have been divided between tno   
 claims of the unquestionably most important doctrinal portion of the   
 Epistle, and the particular matters treated in the parenthetical section   
 (eh. ix.—xi.) and the conclusion (ch. xiv.—xvi.). It has not enough   
 been borne in mind, that the occasion of writing an Epistle is one thing,   
 —the great object of the Epistle itself, another, The ill-adjusted ques-   
 tions between the Jewish and Gentile believers, of which St. Paul had   
 doubtless heard from Rome, may have prompted him originally to write   
 to them: but when this resolve was onee formed,—the importance of   
 Rome as the centre of the Gentile world would naturally lead him to   
 lay forth in this more than in any other Epistle the statement of the   
 divine dealings with regard to Jew and Gentile, now one in Christ. I   
 will therefore speak separately of the prompting occasion, and the main   
 object, of the Epistle.   
 2. The eulogy of tho faith of the Roman Christians, which St. Paul   
 met with in all his travels, could hardly fail to be accompanied with notices   
 respecting their peculiar difficulties. These might soon have been set at   
 rest by his presence and oral teaching : and he had accordingly resolved   
 long since to visit them (ch. i. 10—18). Hindrances however had   
 oceurred ; and that advice which he was not as yet permitted to give by   
 word of mouth, he was prompted to send to them in a letier.   
 3. The contents of that letter plainly shew what their difficultics   
 were. Mixed as the chureh was of Jew and Gentile, the relative posi-   
 tion in God’s favour of each of these would, in defect of solid and broad   
 views of the universality of man’s guilt and God's grace, furnish a sub-   
 ject of continual jealousy and irritation. And if we assume that the   
 Gentile believers much preponderated in numbers, we shall readily infer   
 that the religious scruples of the Jews as to times and meats would be   
 likely to be with too little consideration overborne.   
 4, From such cireumstances we may well conceive that, under divino   
 guidance, the present form of the Epistle was suggested to the Apostle.   
 The main security for a proper estimate being formed of both Jew and   
 Gentile, would be, the possession of right and adequate convictions of   
 tho universality of man’s guilt and God’s free justifying grace. This   
 aecordingly it was Paul’s great object. to furnish ; and on it he expends   
 by far the greatest portion of his labour and space. But while so doing,   
 we may trace his continued anxiety to steer his way cautiously among   
 the strong feelings and prejudices which beset the path on either hand.   
 If by a vivid deseription of the depravity of Heathcndom he might he   
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