

ROMANS, CHAPTERS IX – XI

June 8, 2024

How can God allow such cruelty in Palestine?

His reasons will eventually shine!

The Jews are often mentioned in these “Comments” because of the important part which they play in world and Church affairs. In what is arguably the greatest of all fourteen Epistles of St Paul, he devotes three whole Chapters to them, IX, X and XI. This is because they had played such a central part in the rise and formation of the Catholic Church that early believers were scandalised by their having driven Pontius Pilate to crucify Christ, and from then on by their refusing to have anything to do with Christ, a refusal which, with few, but noble exceptions, continues to this day. In fact their accusers will say that ever since the crucifixion of Christ, they have wanted to dominate the world for the Antichrist, and that in our own time they are coming closer to their goal than ever, an unparalleled misfortune for the entire world. But the Jews will reply that all such accusations arise merely from hatred of the Jews, or “anti-semitism.”

Where is the truth? Jews were the main obstacle in the way of St. Paul’s mission to plant the Catholic Church wherever he could so as to save souls for eternity. Here is why they are so often mentioned in his Epistles, and not always favourably – see especially I Thess. II, 14–16. But every mention of them by St Paul is part of Holy Scripture, and therefore, as the Catholic Church teaches, these mentions are first and foremost the Word of God and only secondarily the word of their human author.

It follows that to accuse St Paul of “anti-semitism” is to accuse God Himself of being “anti-semitic.” Now whatever that

word is taken to mean, the meaning is ugly. But God is Truth itself (Jn. XIV, 6), and He is in no possible way ugly. Therefore whatever St Paul says about the Jews is truthful, and not "anti-semitic."

So if we want to know what to think about the Jews, and for that purpose we turn to Scripture to discover what God thinks of them, we cannot do better than turn to St Paul who had such direct experience of them in his apostolate. Turning to St Paul, we find his most complete presentation of the problem that they represent in these three Chapters of the *Epistle to the Romans*. Not that St Paul speaks mainly from any bitterness of his apostolic experience of them, on the contrary . . .

In the Epistle as a whole, the three Chapters are sandwiched between the dogmatic teaching of Chapters I to VIII, and the moral teaching of Chapters XII to XVI. In Ch. IX St Paul presents the True Israel, the spiritual Israel, consisting of those souls, Jew or Gentile, who are justified before God by their faith in Jesus Christ. It was merely prefigured by the Israel of the flesh, which included few souls that were not Jewish by race. From Moses onwards this Israel had for 1500 years the exclusive temple, priesthood and sacrifice of the one true God, but God's ultimate purpose was the training of all mankind for the Catholic temple, priesthood and sacrifice, which would come with the spiritual Israel, the Catholic Church.

In Ch. X St Paul presents the false Israel, consisting of the Jews who have heard and understood the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but have rejected it. They are not interested in that spiritual Israel, open to all mankind, where they no longer have privileged and exclusive access to the true worship of the one true God. So they will hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but refuse it, and crucify Him instead.

Ch. XI, presents the threefold reasons of God's Providence for allowing such infidelity of the Jews: it is firstly only

partial because some Jews down the ages will be the best of Catholics, as God meant them to be; secondly, the infidelity will be useful to make the Jews jealous and to make the Gentiles humble; and thirdly the infidelity will be only temporary because the Jews will convert before the end of the world.

Ultimately, Jew (or Gentile) that spurns God is merely exercising his God-given free-will, but St Paul for his part terminates the three Chapters with a brief hymn to the mysterious and unfathomable ways of God.

Kyrie eleison