

## **Romans**

### **Response Paper #4**

The letter to the Romans community was addressed to a community of which Paul had heard of but only knew some of the members. Romans was written as a way of introducing himself and announcing his intention to visit the Roman Christians (Rom 15: 28-29). His tone suggests that he wants to instruct them and to find favor by trying to please them; and his words are chosen carefully so as not to offend and are free of attacks unlike most of his Epistles. The church at Rome was originally comprised of Jews but under the rulership of Claudius, the Jews had been driven out thus, the church became a predominantly Gentile church. The Roman community was made up of both Jew and non- Jews who were followers of Jesus, but it is not clear who Paul was addressing.

The history of Rome is complex in that the Roman Republic was an oligarchy of nobles whose rulership continued for almost five centuries. It was established in the year 509 B. C, the Roman Republic. Rome was a relatively wealthy city and included several economic classes: including slaves, free individuals, official Roman citizens, and nobles of different kinds which were political and military. First-century Rome was known to be filled with all kinds of decadence and immorality, from the brutal practices of the arena to sexual immorality of all kinds.

By the mid second century B. C, Rome was a city with serious problems that was severe to the entire empire. There was crime and lawlessness by the working class that increased because of unemployment. The working-class had sold their farms and property under the dominion of Rome to move to the city capital to enjoy the lavish lifestyle but that was short lived because they had used up all their fortunes in the pursuit of pleasure. During the last century of the Roman Republic there were many political parties. Heightened political awareness produced controversial point of views and demands from particular parts of the population. And the poor sought more support from the government.

After a decade of Civil war, economic problems of inflation and unemployment resulted in price controls and job restrictions producing hereditary occupation classes and so prevented a change in residence. More people became involved in farming and country life prospered in the agriculture economy.

Romans undoubtedly contains material pertaining to many of the complex questions the Christian church has wrestled with on course of history ( Zetterholm 2009). Nevertheless, the opening verses contain the formal features of Roman diplomatic correspondence clarifying the sender, who is represented, by what authority, and to whom it is written. The way that God places women and men in right relationship to himself, Paul declares, is wholly apart from any system of law. Those systems do not work, as he has sought to show in the opening part of his letter, but the way

of God achieves his objectives, and it does it in a way that is sketched out in the Bible.