

# The Natural Knowledge of God and Civic Righteousness\*

By John P. Meyer

The problem that has been troubling church circles of late does not revolve on the question whether there is a natural knowledge of God or not, and whether we must grant that man is capable of practicing civic righteousness. It is conceded by all concerned that man has a knowledge of God outside of God's revelation of Himself in the Scriptures. It is granted also that this natural knowledge is not an illusion, a fond dream or a nightmare as the case may be, but it agrees to the facts and is true as far as it goes. Likewise it is conceded that natural man can lead a respectable and honorable life, observing all ordinances of local and federal government, as well as the common rules of decency. We may also grant that man is capable of finding pleasure in leading such a life, not only demanding it of others.

Moreover, the problem is not whether such natural knowledge and righteousness is capable of development. It is taken for granted that God Himself implanted a concept of Himself in the hearts of men and gave them their conscience to bear witness to them about their relation to Him as their God, and of their accountability to Him for their conduct over against His inscribed law. It is understood that this inborn knowledge can be deepened and widened by a study of nature and of history, and conscience can be trained to react with greater readiness and precision. So can also the will be strengthened to produce a more vigorous civic righteousness. It is, of course, a fact too well established by experience that the natural knowledge of God can be dulled by neglect, and conscience may be blunted.

The question for us to consider is, what is the value of the natural knowledge of God with reference to the Gospel message? Does it help or hinder the creation of faith? And what is the relation of civic righteousness, not only to the righteousness of justification that avails before God, but also to Christian sanctification? Specifically, can the church incorporate the forces of the natural knowledge and of the inborn or cultivated consciousness of our obligation to our God in her program of child training and Christian character building?

In looking for an answer to our question we naturally turn to St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans first, because there he speaks in express words about the knowledge of God and the working of righteousness as found in natural man, in the Gentiles who were uninfluenced by the oral and written revelation of Himself which God had granted to the Jews. Paul takes up this matter in chap. 1, 19.

In order to grasp his meaning more readily, and to feel the weight of his argument more keenly, it will be well not to neglect the context. Hence we shall first spend some time on what precedes v. 19. There are particularly two things which demand our attention. Paul, having never been in Rome before, introduces himself to the Roman congregation and speaks at length on his office and the nature of his work. Secondly, Paul in a very formal way announces the theme of his epistle, in the course of which he will also discuss the question concerning the natural knowledge of God and of civic righteousness.

## I.

Who is Paul, and what is the nature of his work? Why does he mention civic righteousness in connection with his work? Is his work of such a nature that it is benefited by the natural knowledge of God? And can he profitably integrate the cultivation of civic righteousness in the work outlined for him by God?

Paul introduces himself as a *doulos Christou Iesou*. We mark the word *doulos*, which vividly describes the relation of Paul to Christ Jesus. In a general way it denotes that Paul is working for Jesus. However, this term stresses a certain aspect of that relation. It does not stress the work as such, work in so far as it is opposed to inactivity, to idleness or rest. If Paul had desired to stress that aspect, the fact that his relation to Christ involved toil and labor, he would have used the term *hypēretēs*. On their first mission journey Paul and

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Barnabas had John Marcus for a *hypēretēs*, (Acts 13, 5). In 1 Cor. 4, 1, Paul calls himself and Apollos *hypēretai* of Christ. In Rom. 1, 1, he uses a different word to describe his relation to Christ.

Again, by calling himself *doulos* he does not stress the fact that his work is benefiting the kingdom of Christ, that he is rendering a service in the interest of Christ. If that had been his aim he would have used the word *diakonos*. He often calls himself a *diakonos* - of God, of Christ, of the New Testament; a man to whom the *diakonia* has been entrusted, the *diakonia* of righteousness, of reconciliation, *diakonia* meaning about as much as administration. In Rom. 1, 1, however, he does not stress this aspect of his relation to Christ. He calls himself *doulos*.

*Doulos* is the direct opposite of *eleutheros*. If any one stands in the relation of a *doulos* to some one else, he has no judgment of his own, nor any will of his own. He must in every respect resign himself to the judgment and the will of his master. His duty is simply to take orders, and to carry them out to the letter. The word *doulos* (and *douleia*) does not necessarily connote burdensome labor, or unpleasant labor, as does, e.g., our English word to "slave" for some one. Nor does it even imply that the *doulos* does his work unwillingly, or merely for fear of punishment. In 1 Cor. 9, Paul stresses the fact that he is doing his difficult work most willingly; and Peter warns the bishops against performing the duties of their office either "by constraint" or "for filthy lucre." All of this is beside the mark in ascertaining the meaning of *doulos*. The only point of importance is that the *doulos* is determined in his work, not by his own judgment or desire, but only and completely by that of his master. That the stress of the concept *doulos* lies on the obedience, which a *doulos* renders is readily seen from the fact that St. Paul, on given occasions, explains the one term by the other, or substitutes the one for the other. In our Epistle, chap. 6, 16, he uses the expression to yield ourselves "*doulous* to obey," or more literally, to "present ourselves as *doulous* for obedience." In the same verse he declares: "*douloi* you are to him whom you obey." In v. 17 he thanks God that the Romans were *douloi* of sin, but have become obedient to the form of doctrine which was delivered unto them. When speaking of Christ's state of exinanition, Phil. 2, 7. 8, Paul explains the *morphē doulou* by saying that Jesus "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

A little digression will be pardoned. It may help to shed some light on our point. - A passage that is disturbing many minds and hearts today is Rom. 16, 17. 18. We shall for the present concentrate all our attention on the remark that certain people are serving their own belly, not our Lord Jesus Christ. *Douleuousin* means: they take their orders. When in our English language we call them belly-servers, this really creates a wrong impression because of the different connotation. Paul does not insinuate in the least that the division makers and "scandal" mongers are trying to gratify their carnal lusts. What he wants to say is that, their "good words and fair speeches" notwithstanding, they are taking their orders, not from our Savior, but from their own egotistic interests. He does not even say that they do so deliberately, or are at all aware of it. He states their servitude to their belly as a bare fact. - By the way, with this charge Paul does not read them out of the church. He uses the word *toioutoi*, which both generalizes and specifies. He is not limiting his remarks to some special group of errorists; e.g., the Judaizers, but includes all who cause division and offenses. On the other hand, he strictly limits his judgment to just this part of their conduct. In so far as they are such, namely people engaged in causing division and offenses, they act in the employ of their own flesh. In general, they may still be Christians, however encumbered with a vicious infection. We may translate: They serve not fully our Lord Jesus, but in a certain respect their own belly. For a similar use of "not-but" compare Phil. 2, 21, where Paul in speaking of his own chosen assistants, complains: "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

Back to our text.

If Paul is a *doulos*, then his own person, his natural endowments, his education, his social standing, etc., count for very little; the only thing that counts is whose *doulos* he is, from whom he takes his orders. Paul calls himself a *doulos* of Christ Jesus. If the Romans understand Christ Jesus, then they will know the nature of Paul's work. If they realize that Christ Jesus came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life as a ransom for many; if they realize that Christ Jesus came, to save sinners, all sinners, whether they be high or low, scoundrels or respectable in the sight of men; if they realize that He came, not to call the righteous to repent-

ance, but sinners: then they will also know what the work is that Paul is doing, and the spirit in which he is doing it. For he is a *doulos Christou Iesou*.

This is of importance for our question. Whatever use Christ Jesus has in His work of redemption for the natural knowledge of God and for civic righteousness; just so much importance must every *doulos* of His ascribe to these factors also. We shall not start an investigation now, we only mark this point to help us understand Paul's approach to the question in the body of his letter.

Next Paul calls himself *klētos apostolos aphōrismenos eis euangelion Theou*. We must not separate the various elements of this phrase, but take the whole as belonging together and expressing a single concept: God's called apostle confined to His Gospel.

The basic element in this compound concept is that of an apostle. An apostle in the general sense is an authorized representative. Like Paul in the present case, so Jesus also placed an apostle and a *doulos* in parallel, Jh. 13, 16: "The servant (*doulos*) is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent (*apostolos*) greater than he that sent him." Men that were delegated to minister unto Paul are called the apostles of those churches, e.g., Epaphroditus, Phil. 2, 25; likewise men that were delegated to deliver the great collection to Jerusalem with Paul, 2 Cor, 8, 23. Even Christ is called, not only our Highpriest, but He whom we confess as God's Apostle to us, Heb. 3, 1.

This name was then applied specifically to those men whom Jesus chose to carry His Gospel into all the world. It will suffice to refer to Lc. 6, 13, where it is recorded that Jesus chose twelve of His disciples, "whom also He named apostles." Then in a looser way other messengers of the Gospel were also called apostles. Cf. Acts 14, 4, where Barnabas is so called together with Paul. To his opponents in Corinth Paul once ironically gave the title of superfine (*hyper lian*) apostles (2 Cor. 12, 11).

When Paul in our text calls himself an apostle he wants to be understood, as always when he calls himself so, in the technical sense, as belonging to the same class with the Twelve. He emphasized this idea in several places in different ways. He combined with it the concept of a herald (*kēryx*) in 1 Tim: 2, 7 ; 2 Tim. 1, 11. Over against the Corinthians he emphasized his apostleship by pointing not only to signs and wonders as his credentials, 2 Cor. 12, 12, but to the Corinthians themselves as being living monuments to his effective apostle's work done in their midst, 1 Cor. 9, 1. 2. When both his apostolic office and apostolic authority were questioned in Galatia, he stressed the fact that he had his apostleship neither of men, nor by the mediation of any man, but by Jesus Christ Himself and God, Gal. 1, 1. Since in Rome Paul's apostleship was not questioned, he appeals to his office merely to set forth the nature of his work. He is not coming to them for his own purpose, nor with his own philosophy. He is an apostle, an authorized agent of some one else, whose work he is carrying out.

This fact he elucidates further by speaking of himself as a "*called* apostle." He did not apply for the position, he did not volunteer, but an unsolicited call came to him and made him an apostle. His own personal plans would never have made him one. They lay in the very opposite direction. He was bent, not on building up the church of Christ, but on pulling it down and destroying it. Then that majestic event, terrifying yet soul-refreshing, overtook him near Damascus. There a call came to him to accept the very Jesus whom he was persecuting as his only Savior, and to turn about and henceforth proclaim the Gospel with the same determination with which he had hitherto endeavored to wreck it. That call made him a Christian and an apostle. *Klētos apostolos*.

Yes, he is an authorized agent of God and Christ, and as such he has received very specific instructions. He is *aphōrismenos*, set aside, "earmarked." His work is circumscribed, confined, limited, restricted: *eis euangelion*. His assignment is as wide and as narrow as the Gospel. Whatever the Gospel includes is included in Paul's program; and whatever is foreign to the Gospel, must be absolutely kept out of his work.

Just as in the first phrase, servant of Christ Jesus, the genitive is the important point, so in the second the restriction to the Gospel is the decisive concept. It will be well, therefore, to call to mind some of the characteristics peculiar to the Gospel. When describing the Gospel in First Corinthians Paul applied to it the word of the prophet: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." This holds not only in case of man in general, who may be uneducated, but for the very "princes" among men, viz., those who have developed to the highest degree possible their native

abilities, including their natural knowledge of God and their civic righteousness. That all their brilliant achievements in the field of philosophy have not brought them one step nearer to a proper evaluation of Christ and His Gospel, they evinced by the fact that they "crucified the Lord of glory." It ever remains true, as Paul concludes, that "the natural man - no matter how highly he develops his natural knowledge of God and cultivates his civic righteousness - receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Jesus' judgment stands, that the things of the Gospel are "hidden from the wise and prudent." The Psalmist of old painted a correct picture of the situation when he said that the very kings and rulers among the people are the ones who band themselves together against the Lord and against His Anointed.

Paul wanted the Romans to understand, when he introduced himself as a *doulos* of Christ Jesus and as an apostle set apart for the Gospel, that he was coming to them not as an educator aiming to develop something which they already possessed by nature in embryonic form, not even as a reformer, aiming to lead people back from abuses to a purer form of worship; but that he represented a cause which is utterly foreign to natural man and which natural man cannot but hate and oppose as subversive of all moral and religious life.

The thoughts which Paul thus briefly set forth by calling himself a *doulos* of Christ Jesus and an apostle confined to the Gospel, he enlarges somewhat in his following remarks, in which he reverses the order, beginning this time with the Gospel, "which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

It will not be necessary for our immediate purpose to enter into a detailed study of all contained in these words; it will be sufficient to mark in a general way what Paul says and what he omits to say about the Gospel. In three points he bases his own Gospel work on the Old Testament. His Gospel is the very thing which God *promised* afore; God's promise was given by the instrumentality of His *prophets*; His promise is laid down in holy *Scriptures*.

The difference between the Old Testament and the New is precisely that of promise and fulfillment, and whatever is immediately implied in these terms, e.g., a difference in the degree of clearness, in the number of details, etc. The difference is not one of narrowness and bigotry on the one hand, and liberality and broad-mindedness on the other; or something like that. No, as far as content is concerned, or basic principles, and the like, the two coincide completely. *Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, Vetus in Novo patet*. Paul preaches exactly the Gospel which God promised afore, without additions, or subtractions, or alterations.

The second point is that Paul's Gospel, in the form of Old Testament promises, was conveyed by God to man through the instrumentality of His prophets. He chose His prophets, trained His prophets, and spoke by the mouth of His prophets. Were there not other wise men in the world, and learned, who by their philosophy discovered valuable truths and made them accessible to men? Think of Aristotle's book on Ethics, and the works of other philosophers along these lines. No, God could not use them. In fact, they were the very ones who led the people away from God, and their philosophy ran directly counter to God's promise. Paul's Gospel is limited to what the prophets say; they are his only source of information.

The third point narrows, the matter down still more. The promises God gave by the mouth of His prophets are contained in the holy Scriptures. The writings left behind by the prophets are holy writings, because the prophets were not their real authors. No book of human origin deserves the name holy. The writings of the prophets are holy. No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. The prophecy came not in old time by the will of men; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The writings of the Old Testament prophets were in a class by themselves: they were holy writings, majestic and awe-inspiring, because they were given by inspiration of God. In them, and in them alone, did Paul find the Gospel which God promised by the prophets, and which Paul now was called to proclaim.

Paul, in the introduction of himself to the Romans, next returns to Jesus Christ, who is the heart of the Gospel in every respect. He describes Him in these words: "Which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared (ordained) to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

To the most casual reader it must be evident that Paul is here referring to the two states of Christ, the state of exinanition and the state of exaltation. Since these are not as such a part of our present investigation, it must suffice to refer to Phil. 2, 6-11, for a general commentary. We mark merely a few of the details.

Paul takes note of the fact that the human nature of Christ was derived from the line of David. This at once calls to mind all the promises of the Old Testament concerning the Son of David, particularly 2 Sam. 7. - "Declared" (*horisthentos*) is the simple verb of which Paul had used a compound when he described himself as being "separated" (*aphōrismenos*) unto the Gospel. A word like "ordained" would express the idea better than "declared" (King James version). He was ordained with "power," highly exalted, as Paul says in Phil. 2. This was done in accordance with His "spirit of holiness," in which He rendered a perfect obedience to God, culminating in His death on the cross. Since His resurrection He now holds the exalted position as Son of God *with power* (this is the concept to be stressed), so that every knee must bow before Him and every tongue confess Him to be Christ the Lord.

Does this Jesus Christ receive any support in His work from the natural knowledge of God and from civic righteousness even in their most highly developed forms, either in His humiliation or in His exaltation? Or was Peter right when he declared, at the risk of his life, that there is none other name under heaven given whereby we must be saved? And was old Simeon right when he spoke of the Child as being set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; when he called Him a sign which shall be spoken against, not by the ignorant only, but by the very leaders of the people, the most learned and the most pious? Was the Psalmist right when he called Him the head stone of the corner, but one whom the very builders would reject?

The Gospel, with Jesus Christ as its very heart, is most exclusive. Mix in a little of man's own knowledge, ability, or effort, and at once it is turned into another Gospel which is not another.

Very emphatically Paul concludes the introduction of himself by resuming a thought he had expressed in the beginning, only now holding up the apostleship which he had been called to administer as a gift of grace by Christ Jesus to *His church*, both to him that administers it and to the Romans who are served by it: "By whom we (i.e., the writer and the readers together) have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name." "Obedience to the faith," *hypakoē pisteos*, is the obedience which consists in faith, *Glaubensgehorsam*. And all this "for his name." The NAME of Jesus Christ, the complete revelation by which we know and apprehend Him, is the only thing that counts in connection with the grace and apostleship which the church received for establishing the obedience of faith among the nations. If the natural knowledge of God and civic righteousness are a part of the *Name*, of the revelation of Jesus Christ, then may, then must a cultivation of civic righteousness be incorporated in the work of the church for creating and developing and preserving faith in the world in general, and among its own members in particular. But if the name of Jesus really is a name "all other names above," then we would be violating His wondrous name by adulterating it with this foreign element.

This concludes Paul's introduction of himself to the Romans. The words are brief, yet each one is filled to the brim with powerful thoughts concerning the all-sufficiency and the intolerant exclusiveness of Christ and His Gospel. - The following remarks about Paul's plans to visit Rome have no direct bearing on our question. We may omit them, and now take up a brief discussion of the theme of his letter.

## II.

Paul prefaces his theme by drawing attention to the fact that through the call which God gave him he is a debtor, he is bound by some obligation, to both Greek and barbarian, to both wise or educated and unwise, uneducated, and therefore is ready to proclaim the glad tidings of the Gospel also to them in Rome. The two classes which Paul here mentions as constituting the group of people to whom he is in debt are not essentially different from each other, they are for all practical purposes the same, and the two sets of terms he uses are mutually explanatory. When Paul speaks of Greeks he has in mind people who can boast of Greek culture, and when he speaks of barbarians he means those upon whom the Greeks looked down as being uneducated.

We had occasion to refer to the highly developed Greek philosophy before, in which they clarified and elevated the concepts of their natural knowledge of God and the precepts of their inscribed law, to a high degree. To Paul with his Gospel message this makes absolutely no difference. The most thorough and devout philosopher had need of precisely the same Gospel as the most uncultured and backward barbarian. No group was any closer to the kingdom of heaven which Paul was proclaiming, nor was either group farther removed from it than was the other. What a vast difference between a highly cultured Greek, whose achievements in many respects stand unsurpassed to this day, and an illiterate, superstitious barbarian! Yet as far as the Gospel is concerned Paul connects them with a *te-kai*, counting them as undistinguishably in the same class, with not a shade of difference.

The Gospel - what is it all about? Paul says that he is not ashamed of the Gospel. It was the year 58 A.D. when he wrote these words. It may have been about 20 years after that eventful day on the road to Damascus. For approximately 20 years he had, with interruptions, been proclaiming the Gospel, spending the last ten years exclusively in mission work in Galatia, in Greece, in Asia. After this long period of intensive Gospel work he says, on the basis of his experience, I am not ashamed. Meaning: the Gospel has proven its worth in every case and under all circumstances, so that I have full confidence in its efficacy.

If we look for a commentary on these words of Paul the best place to which to turn will be Second Corinthians, a letter written not long before Romans. Men had come to Corinth who tried to belittle the work and importance of Paul. In his epistle he takes up the gauntlet and with telling blows vindicates his Gospel work and utterly routs the attack of his opponents. Read chapters 10ff. We cannot go into details now, but merely take up two points of Paul's defense. In the first place, to serve as a minister of Christ does not mean an easy, care-free life, there is no glamor connected with it, nor any display of human bravado (ch. 11, 23-33). Yet, in the second place, in spite of all the personal indignities which Paul underwent in his work, the Gospel always came out victorious. "The weapons of our warfare (against the idolatry in the Gentile world) are not carnal (weak), but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (ch. 10, 4, 5). If the Corinthians wish to know the power of Paul's Gospel, all they have to do is to look at themselves and at the things in their own midst. "If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's" - where did he get it? who brought him to Christ? - "let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's" (v. 7).

In chap. 2, he accordingly compares his work as a missionary to one grand triumphal procession, with a grand array of flowers and garlands, that to the victors spells life, but certain death to the enemy. "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other the savor of life unto life." (y. 14-16).

Such has been Paul's experience with the Gospel. Ashamed of the Gospel? Ready to discard it for something better? Ready to drop some of its truths? Or ready to supplement it in order to increase its efficiency? Paul trusts the Gospel, and is convinced that any addition to it cannot but ruin it.

When it comes to dealing with the cultured Greek, Paul proclaims the Gospel to him; and when it comes to counseling an illiterate barbarian, Paul again resorts to the Gospel. If Paul should come to our conference, attend our services, visit our schools, inspect our seminary, what would he look for? By what standard would he gauge our work? He would concentrate on one thing: Do we strictly apply ourselves to the Gospel? Are we confident that the Gospel will do the work? Do we perhaps show traces of being ashamed of the Gospel by trying to make it more attractive or more palatable to the people, by supplementing it with other material or re-enforcing it with other educational programs?

Paul's words stand like a rock: I am not ashamed of the Gospel.

His reason he states in these words: "For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The emphatic position in this sentence is held by the word *power*, *God's power*. If that is the nature of the Gospel, then why hesitate? God's power is perfect, is complete. God needs no help, no assistance, no co-operation. God spoke the word, and the universe came forth out of nothing. God speaks the word of the

Gospel, and a sinner's dead heart is reborn to spiritual life; unwilling, madly resisting people are changed into people that are all willingness. Whether we think of the irresistible power of God's omnipotence, or of the sweet and suasive power of His love, who would dare try to add anything to it? That would be nothing short of sacrilege.

Paul is here speaking of God's power unto *salvation*. The redemptive work of Christ is presupposed. Christ's vicarious living and death have been performed. His triumphant resurrection has proclaimed the complete atonement for the guilt of the world, the absolution of Christ from all His sins, which were our sins. His justification, that is, our justification. In His resurrection Christ shouted out His complete victory over all our foes, over death, the devil, and hell. All this has been achieved, and now the Gospel is God's power unto salvation, His power for offering and conveying and sealing the rich blessings of Christ's work to a world of sinners.

Redemption is complete. No sinner is asked to contribute the least toward the payment of his guilt. But what are God's terms? What conditions does He stipulate, which must be met before a sinner can hope to enjoy the fruits of Christ's redemption? Paul says, "to every one that believeth." What does it mean to believe? What is faith? A detailed investigation would carry us too far afield at present; we must be content to summarize briefly. When Jesus was approached by the people of Capernaum with the question: "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" He answered: "This is the work of God - this is the work which God demands and which pleases Him - that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." In the course of the conversation He called Himself the bread from heaven, and defined faith as eating that bread. Faith is like eating, it means to take and to enjoy. If you want to call eating a work, a condition, a term, then you may also call faith by those names. Our fathers were right when they called faith the *organon leptikon*. It produces nothing, it merits nothing, it merely appropriates the blessing which God prepared for us. (We shall come back to these words of Jesus again a little later.) - Thus by adding "to every one that believeth," Paul does not limit the power of God in the Gospel, he does not lay down a condition, perhaps a very easy one, nevertheless a condition which the sinner on his part must fulfill, rather, he furnishes a foil which sets off the power of the Gospel in an all the more brighter light. The Gospel feeds the bread of life to a hungry soul.

In the following phrase we must correct the translation a little before we feel its force. The King James version reads: "to the Jew first and also to the Greek." This translation separates Jews and Greeks and puts them on different levels, while Paul combines them with a *te-kai* and applies the modifier "first" to both parties: first of all to both Jew and Greek. Here we have the cultured Greek again, and united with him as belonging to the same class we find the Jew. While the Greek cultivated natural ethics, the Jew had the advantage of possessing the written Law of God. But as far as salvation is concerned, they both belong into the same class. There is only one way unto salvation open for both, and that is the way of faith. They can be saved only if the Gospel conveys to them salvation as a gift of God and they accept it in faith.

How much do their efforts help them in this matter, namely that they have seriously tried to produce a righteousness of their own by living in accordance with their light, the one endeavoring to live up to God's commandments in His written Law, the other struggling along as best he could with his natural understanding which he developed as far as was possible for him with philosophy? How much do their efforts help them? Not one bit. Paul even says *prōton*, first of all, both Jew and Greek. Jews and Greeks head the list of people that must submit to faith, and that need God's power in the Gospel if they are to be saved. They must learn to forget about the righteousness, which they have built up for themselves, yes, they must learn to consider it as but "dung" in order to obtain the righteousness of the Gospel.

This leads us directly to the very heart of the matter. It is in the last analysis the problem of righteousness, a righteousness which will pass the test of God, which God will accept as adequate and will declare so in His judgment. It is the question of justification, which Paul now states very succinctly in the following verse: "For therein (in the Gospel) is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith."

What is the righteousness of God? Luther, though not translating literally, nevertheless renders the terms correctly when he says: *die Gerechtigkeit, die vor Gott gilt*. *Dikaiosynē* is not righteousness as such, but a righteousness so declared by a judge.

A brief study of the various words expressing righteousness will be necessary. We may begin with the verb *dikaioō*. It denotes the opposite of *katadikazō*; to condemn, cf. Mt. 12, 37. It is used for finding excuses, cf. Lc. 10, 29; 16, 15. Hence concerning the dealings of God with a sinner it denotes a declaratory act; pronouncing righteous. - The verbal noun in *-sis*, *dikaiōsis*, denotes the action as such, justifying, while the noun in *-ma*, *dikaiōma*, expresses a concrete result of the action, an act or state of righteousness, or a demand of righteousness. For the former cf. Rev. 19, 8; Rom. 5, 18; for the latter, Rom. 2, 26; 8, 4. As the latter passage indicates, this term in the usage of Paul borders very closely on the idea of a declared righteousness, which seems to be the main thought e.g. in Rom. 5, 16. See particularly Rev. 15, 4, where both Luther and the King James version translate with *Urteile* and *judgments*, respectively. (Goodspeed says: *sentences*, and Menge has: *Gerichte*.)

The word most commonly used is the one in our text, *dikaioōsynē*. Paul does not leave us in doubt about the meaning he attaches to it. He uses the word to denote a declared righteousness. He says that when God demonstrates His *dikaioōsynē* two facts stand out in bold relief, namely, that He is just and a justifier of a man characterized by faith in Jesus (Rom. 3, 26), on the basis of which he concludes that: "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (v. 28). He then devotes the entire fourth chapter to elucidate the idea of *dikaioōsynē*. He quotes from Ps. 32, where a number of terms expressing the idea of accounting are used in connection with righteousness, direct and figurative, positive and negative: "iniquities are forgiven" – "sins are covered" - "the Lord will not impute sin" - all of which Paul sums up in the one term: "God imputeth righteousness without works" (v. 6). For comparison refer to Phil. 3, 9, where Paul says that he desires to be found in Christ, not having an own *dikaioōsynē*, one out of the law, but the righteousness by means of faith, the *dikaioōsynē* from God on the basis of faith.

From this brief survey we already see that for attaining this *dikaioōsynē* Paul completely eliminates and bars all our own works, which naturally would include all works of civic righteousness. He tersely declares, after a review of the efforts of both Jew and Greek, "There is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (ch. 3, 22-24).

He says that the *dikaioōsynē* of God is, and is revealed, *ek pisteōs eis pistin*; it is from beginning to end a matter of faith. He quotes from Habakkuk in support of his statement: "The just shall live by faith."

Paul always opposes faith to works. Works are productive labor, they produce values, they benefit some one and merit a reward. The nature of faith is to appropriate, to receive. Recall what we considered above about a remark of Jesus, who once called faith a work, as in quotation marks, Jh. 6, 29. When the Jews asked Him: "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" He took up their expression "works," substituted the singular for their plural, and said: "This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Faith in Jesus is the work of God, meaning, according to the connection with the foregoing, the work which God demands, which pleases Him, and is approved of Him. Jesus then explains that this work may be described as eating the true life-giving bread from heaven, which He is Himself. What kind of work would you call that, when a half-starved man sits down at a well-decked table to eat of the delicious nourishing food? What does he produce? What does he merit? A work like that, Jesus says, is faith. In the further course of the conversation He showed that faith is the work of God in still another sense. He said: "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Faith is a work of God because God Himself must produce it in our hearts.

The righteousness of God is a matter of faith, that God-created receptive attitude of the heart, from beginning to end.

This righteousness is "revealed" in the Gospel. In itself it is a mystery, completely hidden from the eyes and minds of men. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him....The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2, 9. 14). Natural man, no matter how amply you unfold his natural knowledge of God; natural man, no matter how highly you develop his civic righteousness, still cannot even receive the righteousness of God, nor contribute anything toward receiving it. The princes of this world were the very ones that crucified the Lord of



glory. When the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing, they do so under the leadership of their kings and rulers, who take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed. When God presents Jesus as the chief corner stone for His temple, it is the very builders that reject Him. The righteousness of God is *revealed* in the Gospel. Outside of this light darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people, no matter how much they may boast of their enlightenment. All attempts to lift this darkness by anything that natural man can do with his natural knowledge and his self-made righteousness will only intensify it. What communion hath light with darkness? Light and darkness simply will not blend. Only God can call forth light out of darkness. In the Gospel is revealed the righteousness of God.

So Paul introduced himself to the Romans as a preacher confined to the Gospel, and he announced his theme as being the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel. And in the emphasis with which he stated his case he has already indicated that he cannot assign any positive function to the natural knowledge of God and to civic righteousness, in the program of the Gospel.

### III.

It is a grand theme which Paul announced to the Romans: the Gospel a divinely effective power unto salvation because of the righteousness of God by faith, which it reveals to all men, to the Jews as well first as to the Greeks.

Paul at once begins to, elucidate. He continues with an explanatory *gar*: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven."

The verb, which is ordinarily placed at the end of a sentence, here holds the emphatic first place, the most prominent in the Greek sentence: Revealed is, etc. Paul uses the same word in precisely the same form which he had used in the previous verse regarding the righteousness of God. There are two revelations, but they are not parallel, they are not on the same level; the one in the Gospel is superior, it by far outshines and conquers the revelation to which Paul refers in the present verse, though this also is a mighty one.

A question must be investigated as to the time when this revelation takes place. Regarding the Gospel revelation this is clear. That revelation takes place whenever the Gospel is preached. To express this customary continuous action, characteristic of the Gospel, Paul uses the tense which is regularly used to express this idea, the present, *apokalypsetai*. Now in the 18th verse he uses exactly the same form regarding the revelation of God's wrath, and that in the emphatic position of the sentence. To what time is he referring?

There are many who argue that Paul is here thinking of the future and that he means to say, the wrath of God will be revealed at some moment which has not yet arrived. They refer to chap. 2, 5. 6, where Paul speaks of the "day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds." There Paul, indeed, is plainly referring to the final judgment at the end of the world. It is true, moreover, that on that day a terrible revelation of the wrath of God will take place. But does it follow that Paul also in chap. 1, 18, must be thinking of this great and last Judgment Day? Paul knew his Greek. If he had *apokalypthēsetai* in mind, why should he write *apokalypsetai*? If no more cogent reasons for assuming an intended future can be adduced than a reference to chap. 2, 5. 6, then it is our duty to abide by the current meaning of the form which Paul did use, the present; and we must try to grasp the idea which he wants to convey by means of it.

We shall come back to this question soon. First we take a glance at what is being (or is going to be) revealed. Paul calls it the wrath of God, *orgē theou*. Need we remind ourselves that all statements about God's emotions must be understood as anthropopathically speaking? This, however, does not affect the reality of the state of mind in God described to us from our own level. There is such a thing as the wrath of God, although we cannot adequately conceive of it. God's wrath is just as real as is His love. It is a deception of Satan, who is trying to make us believe that, since God is Love, He cannot be capable of wrath. God's wrath is real. It is terrible. Think of some of the picturesque expressions found in Revelation, e.g., chap. 14, 10: They "shall drink of the *wine of the wrath* of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation." Or chap. 16, 1, where the seven angels are commanded: "Go your ways, and pour out the *vials of the wrath* of God upon

the earth." Moses speaks of the "fierce anger" of the Lord (Ex. 32, 12), when His "anger was kindled" (Num. 11, 1). Isaiah describes the Lord as "burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy; his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire" (chap. 30, 27). He also speaks about the pouring out upon some one "the fury of his anger" (chap. 42, 23).

The wrath of God is directed "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.." The ungodliness of men, *asebeia*, lack of reverence for God in their hearts, manifests itself in a conduct of unrighteousness, *adikia*, a violation of the holy will of God, a transgression of His holy commandments. Against this attitude and conduct the wrath of God is, revealed.

It is a mighty, awe-inspiring, terror-striking revelation. Paul says, "from heaven," *ap' ouranou*. What could be grander, more majestic than a revelation from heaven? The revelation of the righteousness of God in the Gospel cannot compare with the revelation of His wrath in awe-inspiring splendor. In 1 Cor. 1, Paul calls it the "foolishness of preaching" (v. 21). It appears so very insignificant when compared with the thundering, flashing and crashing grandeur of the revelation of God's wrath. Yet the revelation of God's righteousness in the Gospel, Paul would have us understand, is, in spite of its seeming beggarliness, mightier than the revelation of His wrath, whose thunderings it is appointed to silence.

When does this revelation of the wrath of God take place? There can be no doubt that it will culminate in the terrors of Judgment Day. But is that what Paul has in mind here? He uses, as already pointed out, the present, *apokalyptetai*, while he might easily have used the future, if that were what he meant. Furthermore, in carrying out the thoughts about God's wrath Paul repeatedly uses the past tense: v. 24, "Wherefore God also gave them up," *paredōken*; v. 26: "For this cause God gave them up," *paredōken*; v. 28: "God gave them over," *paredōken*. The judgment of God has been going on on earth with unabating vehemence ever since man gave Him cause for His wrath, and is still going on. We do not have to wait for a revelation of it in the future, it is going on before our very eyes. *Apokalyptetai*, God's wrath is being revealed, so that every one who does not deliberately shut his eyes can see it, must see it. No one will be able to hide behind ignorance, that he could not know how devouring God's wrath might be, seeing it had not yet been revealed. It is being revealed.

Terrible though the revelation of God's wrath is, there is one thing it never did accomplish, nor ever can it accomplish: to frighten men out of their sinful living, or even induce them to ask for pardon. But what the revelation of God's wrath did not do, this very thing of changing men's hearts is achieved through the revelation of the righteousness of God in the Gospel. How? Does the Gospel thunder still louder than the revelation from heaven of the wrath of God? No, rather, it is a still small voice, which as such makes no impression on the hearts of men. They regard it as foolishness, as a stumbling block. Yes, the very ones who lead the world in ethical development, both Jew and Greek, do so regard it. Yet this very weak, negligible, offensive revelation of the Gospel successfully challenges the powerful revelation of God's wrath, and actually delivers sinners from their doom, among them the scandalized Jews as well first as the sneering Greeks.

What a wonderful revelation the revelation of the Gospel must be if it can thus outshine the revelation of the wrath of God!

We next turn our attention to what Paul in our chapter has to say about the people against whom the wrath of God is being revealed. Who are the ones guilty of this wrath-provoking ungodliness and unrighteousness, *asebeia* and *adikia*? To be specific, when Paul now speaks of men "who hold the truth in unrighteousness," is he referring to a special group of men, who, perhaps, are exceptionally wicked, or does his description apply to all men? Are there certain ones among men, individuals or groups, who maliciously suppress the truth, while others are more noble in their attitude over against it? Or does his remark characterize all men as they are naturally constituted?

The latter is evidently the case. Paul simply says *anthrōpōn*, using the noun without the article. Thus he stresses the quality of being men rather than pointing to particular individuals. What he here has to say pertains to men as such, to human beings just because they are humans.

The suppressing of the truth in unrighteousness, of which they are guilty, is added by means of a participle with the definite article. This makes the participle descriptive, equal in force to an English descriptive relative clause. A Greek participle without the article is the equivalent of a conjunctive subordinate clause,

expressing cause, condition, concession, time, and the like; but a participle with the definite particle merely describes, and emphatically so.

Paul by this phrase then conveys the idea that humans, simply in so far as they are humans, i.e., all men, are properly described as checking the truth by their unrighteousness. Thus the attitude of all men is marked by ungodliness and unrighteousness. Against all men the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven.

The manner in which men repress the truth will be shown by Paul in greater detail in the following verses. Here he merely says that it is done in connection with unrighteousness. Their act of repressing the truth is not due to ignorance, it is due, rather, to the fact that they are steeped in unrighteousness. This will naturally also blind their understanding and will cause them to err. Yet they cannot plead their ignorance as an excuse, because it is self-incurred. It is not the final cause, but is itself rather the effect of a previous cause. As far as repressing the truth is concerned ignorance is not the prime cause, it is secondary, being itself produced by congenital wickedness.

Before we continue with investigating the further thoughts of Paul on the revelation of God's wrath, we pause for a moment to see what bearing, if any, the facts presented so far have on our problem. It stands to reason that if it is the nature of man to be in the grip of unrighteousness to such an extent as ever to hold down the truth in his unrighteousness, and if this is true even of both Jew and Greek first, who had shown the greatest interest in righteousness, and had made the greatest advances that are humanly possible in this direction, and if these hold down the truth in so great a measure as to call down upon themselves a vehement revelation of the wrath of God, from which only the revelation of the righteousness of God in the Gospel can save them: then no system of character building devised by man can be integrated with profit into the educational program that operates with the Gospel. Any effort to work out a combination of the two is *a priori* doomed to failure. It will prove more futile than an attempt to reenforce fire with water, or vice versa.

It is a grave charge which Paul raises against all men, headed by both Jews and Greeks, that they stifle the truth in their unrighteousness. He supports his charge (*dioti*) by the fact that *to gnōston tou theou phaneron estin en autois*.

The first word to arrest our attention is *to gnōston*. What is the meaning of this verbal adjective? While the verbal adjectives in *-teos* denote something that must be done (corresponding to the Latin gerundive), those in *-tos* usually refer to something as possible. Compare the famous statement in Jas. 1, 13: *Theos apeirastos estin kakōn*, which the King James Version renders, "God cannot be tempted," a translation which the Revised Standard Version retains. Goodspeed has: "God is incapable of being tempted." Menge translates: *Gott kann vom Boesen nicht versucht werden*, while Luther tried to bring the thought of this somewhat startling expression closer to the grasp of the common reader by paraphrasing, and substituting the intended idea directly: *Gott ist nicht ein Versucher zum Boesen*.

Many people assume that the verbal adjective in Rom. 1, 19, *gnōston*, similarly denotes something that is knowable, the meaning which the word usually has in classical Greek. In the New Testament *gnōstos* occurs 15 times, and in the 14 passages outside the one under discussion the meaning never is *knowable*, but always: *actually known*. We adduce six samples; of the remaining eight the great majority correspond to the two which we shall mention last.

In John 18, 15: 16 we are informed that John was a *gnōstos* of the highpriest. Lc: 23, 49 speaks of the *gnōstoi* of Jesus as standing afar, off, beholding His death and the accompanying circumstances. In Acts 4, 16, the members of the Sanhedrin call the cure of the lame beggar performed by Peter a *gnōston sēmaion*, manifest to all inhabitants of Jerusalem. Acts 15, 18, James says of God's works that they are *gnōsta* to Him from the beginning of the world. Most common is the use of *gnōston* with either *egeneto* or *estō*: it became *gnōston*; or let it be *gnōston*. E.g., Acts 1, 19, the suicide of Judas *egeneto gnōston*; Acts 2, 14, Peter begins his Pentecost address with *touto hymin gnōston estō*. In every one of these cases the meaning *knowable* would not make sense.

What is the meaning in Rom. 1, 19? The King James Bible translates: "that which may be known of God," for which the Revised Standard says: "what can be known about God." And Goodspeed: "all that can be

known of God." Menge agrees with them: *was man von Gott erkennen kann*; while Luther alone translates, *dass man weiss, dass Gott sei*.

We take notice that Luther does not simply substitute *das Gewusste* for *das Wissbare*, he practically changes the substantivized verbal adjective into an abstract noun, *das Wissen* for *das Gewusste*. That is what his subordinate clause amounts to, *dass man weiss*. In this he is right again.

Assuming that the adjective *gnōstos* means knowable, then the idea: "all that can be known of God" would not be expressed in Greek by the form *gnōston*, but by *gnōsta*. "All that can be known" contains a plural idea. While we in German use the neuter singular collectively: *das Wissbare*, the Greek language, more literally, uses the plural *to gnōsta*; just as Paul in the very next verse speaks of the *aorata*, the invisible things, of God. When in Greek we find the singular, *to gnōston*, this will refer to some specific thing, or it takes the place of an abstract noun. To illustrate this idiom we may point to 2 Cor. 4, 17, where Paul balances the abstract noun *to baros* in the second half of his sentence against the substantivized neuter adjective *to elaphron* in the first half: the *elaphron* (lightness) of our present sufferings produces for us a superabundant *baros* (weight) of glory. For further illustrations compare Rom 2, 4: *to chrēston tou theou*, the goodness of God; Phil. 3, 8: *to hyperechon tēs gnōseōs*, the excellency of the knowledge; Heb. 6, 17: *to ametatheton tēs boulēs*, the immutability of His counsel.

Applying this to Rom. 1, 19, we notice that none of the translators is ready to understand *to gnōston* as referring to some specific single thing that can be known or is known of God; they all translate as though Paul had written *to gnōsta*. We must read the word as an abstract noun: either, the knowableness of God, or better with Luther, the knowledge of God.

What does Paul say about the knowledge of God? He says, it is *phaneron* among them.

It might seem a waste of time to spend much effort in establishing the meaning of the word *phaneron*, which seems so apparent. In the English Bible we find it translated with "manifest" (RSV, "plain"); in Luther's, *offenbar*. Yet a comparison of a few phrases formed with this word may serve to clarify our concept. In the next chapter, v. 28, Paul speaks about a Jew who is one *en tō(i) phanerō(i)*. Both Luther and King James here render the idea with "outward," which, however, does not fully retain all the connotations of the Greek word, the opposite of which is given in v. 29 as *en tō(i) kryptō(i)* and *kardias*. *Phaneron* is something that is not in any way hidden, but is completely open to view. In Gal. 5, 19, Paul calls the works of the flesh *phanera*. Compare also the combinations *phaneron ginesthai*, Mc. 6, 14 (Herod heard about Jesus, for His name had become *phaneron*); similarly *phaneron poiein*, Mc. 3, 12 (Jesus strictly charged the evil spirits that they should not make Him *phaneron*); and *eis phaneron elthein*, Mc. 4, 22 (every *apokryphon* shall "come abroad" - so the King. James; *hervorkommen* - so Luther; "come to light" - RSV). The adverb *phanerōs* will shed some welcome light on the subject. According to Acts 10, 3, Cornelius saw an angel in a vision *phanerōs*, very distinctly.

St. Paul says, thus, that the *gnōston tou theou* is open, public, definite, without anything vague or indistinct about it. And it is so, he continues, because God made it so: *ho theos gar autois ephanerōsen*.

This fact, by the way, should confirm us in retaining Luther's understanding of *to gnōston*, *dass man weiss, dass Gott sei*. God did not provide men merely with the ability to know Him, but with an actual knowledge of Himself; as also the participle in v. 21 definitely corroborates, *gnontes*, men knew God.

At this point we may briefly refer to two occasions on which Paul in his mission endeavors made use of the natural knowledge of God, limiting our investigation for the present to the question whether he considered God as merely knowable, or as actually known to his heathen hearers, and whether he treated this knowledge as something definite, or as doubtful and hazy. We bear in mind; however, that our question does not concern the extent or the completeness of such knowledge.

When the Lycaonians considered Barnabas as Jupiter and Paul as Mercurius, and were preparing to bring them sacrifices, then Paul earnestly pleaded with them: "Sirs, why do ye these things? We are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein" (Acts 14, 15). They may not know who the true God is, but they do know that there is a God, and that He is supreme. – In Athens Paul faced leading representatives of both the Stoic and the Epicurean schools of philosophy, who unanimously charged him that his message

sounded rather strange to them. What common ground was there on which he could meet these schools and their divergent lines of reasoning? He used the *gnōston tou theou*. "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything" (Acts 17, 24. 25 - RSV). The truth of these words found a ready response in the hearts of both Epicureans and Stoics, though in their practice and in their speculations they had for a long time held it down. Nor did they now dare to deny it, for Paul could call upon their own renowned poets to support him in his statement regarding God. He borrows the language of one: "In him we live and move and are" (Epimenides) and quotes another verbatim: "For we are indeed his offspring" (Aratus; also Cleanthes - RSV).

These two incidents may serve to illustrate what Paul had in mind when he spoke about the *gnōston tou theou* as being *phaneron* in men, not as a result of their research, but because God Himself had made it known.

Yes, men have a very definite and correct knowledge of God, though limited in scope. Yet such is the corruptness of their nature that when they, even the best and most noble among them, the Jews as well first as also the Greeks, begin to operate with it they invariably suppress the truth in their inborn wickedness. What, then, can be the use of the natural knowledge of God, and what may be the design of God in revealing it, if all the systems of training for righteousness which men devise never lead anywhere but to a suppressing of the truth? Before Paul answers this question, he defines more specifically the extent of the *gnōston tou theou*, taking the manner in which God revealed it for his starting point.

He begins with an explanatory *gar*. In his argument we meet with a striking oxymoron: *ta aorata autou (theou) kathoratai*: the unseen characteristics of God are distinctly seen. They are unseen and unseeable in themselves, yet they are seen, and that distinctly. Paul uses the verb *horaō* reinforced with the perfective *kata*. What does Paul mean? God is indeed unseen, He "dwells in a light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see" (1 Tim: 6, 16). He is totally invisible to the human eye. Yet man is endowed by God with another organ of vision, with which he can perceive things that are outside and beyond the range of his physical eyes.

Paul says, the invisible things of God become visible because they are being *nooumena*. The *nous* of man has a faculty of vision which reaches beyond the things perceived with the eye. The *nous* of man receives impressions also of the invisible God, and thus the unseen things of God are distinctly seen.

What is it that thus impresses the *nous* of men? Paul says, God's works which date back to the creation of the world and are a continuation of that great work. In Lystra Paul said that the God "which made heaven and earth and the sea, and all things that are therein," did not leave Himself without witness "in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14, 15. 17). Before the philosophers in Athens he used somewhat more abstract language: "He giveth to all life and breath and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitations" (Acts 17, 25. 26). - Our mind is so constructed that when we perceive any object or witness any action, we assume that these are the result of some previous cause. And so we trace each effect back to its causes, and these in turn to some earlier causes, and so on. Our mind will not be satisfied, however, to carry on this process *ad infinitum*. We expect that at some time we shall come upon a prime mover, whose existence is not the result of previous causes. Aristotle used the term *prōton kinoun*. This being the case, the works of God to which Paul here refers, some of which he enumerated to the Lycaonians and Athenians, testify of God so that He is perceived and becomes "visible."

This truth is voiced also by heathen philosophers. Aristotle says of God: *pasē(i) thnētē(i) physei genomenos atheōratos ap' autōn tōn ergōn theōreitai*. And Cicero: *Deum non vides, tamen deum agnoscis ex operibus ejus*.

What do the works of God, His creation of the world and the continuation of this work in preservation - what do they indicate concerning God? Paul mentions two things: His eternal power and godhead, which, however, he not only joins closely together by *te - kai* but places under a single definite article, thus making practically a compound concept of the two. The Psalmist sang: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Ps, 19, 1). Infinite power, glory, and majesty, including wisdom and good-

ness, these are the things which our mind senses as we observe the works of God. *Ahnest du den Schoepfer, Welt? Such ihn ueberm Sternenzelt! - wo der Unbekannte thronet. - Brueder, ueberm Sternenzelt muss ein lieber Vater wohnen* (from Schiller's *Freude, schoener Goetterfunken*).

For *godhead* Paul uses the word *theiotēs*. In distinction from *theotēs*, which merely names the divine essence as such, the deity, *theiotēs* points to the fulness of His perfections, His glory and majesty, as it is expressed in Luke 9, 43, the *megaleiotēs tou theou*, the divinity.

All these invisible things of God, Paul says, are seen, being *nooumena*, perceived by the human mind. When things are thus being perceived, the resulting concept is influenced by two factors, by the object to be perceived and by the condition of the perceiving organ. To illustrate. Our eye can perceive only light rays of certain wave lengths, the colors that lie within the spectrum, infra-red and ultra-violet rays being invisible. So also what a man will perceive of God depends to a great extent on the construction and on the condition of his *nous*. Now it is a sad fact that the vision of our natural *nous* is warped by the inborn *opinio legis*. We cannot by nature view any divine thing except from the standpoint of the law and through the screen of the Law. A Christian with his spiritual eyes enlightened by the Gospel will take an altogether different attitude over against the works of God's creation from that of unenlightened natural men. Compare the many references to nature contained in the Psalms. Nor are the works of God in creation such that they could by themselves enlighten natural man's blind eyes. That is a power with which God has imbued the Gospel exclusively. Hence the concept which a natural man derives from a study of nature about God is in its innermost essence the very opposite of what a Christian sees in nature. Hence, though true in itself so far as the substance is concerned, yet due to the bondage of our *nous* under sin, the natural knowledge of God to be gained from His works inevitably becomes false when handled by natural man.

Because of this fact the only result which the natural knowledge of God, even in its most highly developed form, achieves for natural man, is, as Paul puts it: "so that they are without excuse." That is the actual result, and that is also the purpose at which God aims by granting this knowledge to sinners. Men are sinners, slaves in the bondage of sin, yet willing slaves - *Non invitus talis eram*, says Augustine about himself. And slaves of sin they remain in spite of all the knowledge of God they gather from a study of His works of creation. To what extremes their sinfulness will drive them Paul paints in lurid colors in the remaining verses of our chapter. Men cannot plead ignorance. They know God. But since it was against their corrupt nature to glorify God as God and to be thankful, the inevitable result was: "Professing themselves to be wise they became fools."

Today men who, like the zealous Jews and the noble Greeks of old, are endeavoring to build up a righteousness by honorable living, also cannot escape this verdict of Paul. To deny such "noble souls" all mitigating circumstances in their failure, and to charge them that they have not a shred of an excuse, may seem very harsh. And it would be unjustifiably harsh if its truth could not be established. Paul does establish it irrefutably in the following. He introduces the next clause with *dioti*, contracted from *dia touto hoti*, marking the clause as stating an evident, undeniable fact, which will invalidate any excuse men may try to offer. This evident fact is: that in spite of their knowledge of God they did not honor nor thank Him as God. The stress is on their knowledge of God and on the nature of God.

Paul says *gnontes*, an aorist, participle of *gignōskō*. This verb denotes a knowledge obtained by experience. A person may, for example, read and assimilate all that ever was published on honey and its sweetness, yet the verb *gignōskein* could not be applied to his knowledge until he tasted honey. So no one can be said to know God, as long as he knows Him only from hearsay. By applying *gignōskein* to the knowledge of the Gentiles concerning God Paul says that they knew Him because they had experienced Him. He had contacted them, and they had "tasted" His eternal power and godhead. By using the aorist Paul simply stresses the fact as such, they got to taste God, without indicating the duration or the result of the action. The fact is set down as such that the Gentiles received a knowledge of God from experience. In Lystra Paul illustrated this by pointing out that God did not leave Himself "without witness" (*amartyros*: "without giving some evidence," Goodspeed) in that God filled their hearts with food and gladness. Thus He had given them a "taste" of Himself.

The second fact is that in spite of this knowledge they did not honor Him as God. The stress is on *as God*. They honored Him, in a way. The people of Lystra were ready with elaborate sacrifices, when they

imagined that Jupiter and Mercurius had appeared in their midst. Paul gives the Athenians credit that they are unusually god-fearing, *deisidaimonesterōi*, with their countless altars and statues and shrines. Yet their service of "God" is one of gross ignorance, since they do not take into consideration God's eternal power and godhead. They should know better, that a God who created heaven and earth will not seek shelter in man-made temples; and that a God who "giveth to all life and breath and all things" cannot be dependent on man's ministrations. Although they tried to honor God, they did not honor Him as becoming to God, according to His eternal power and godhead.

What was the meaning of their attempts to honor God? In short it was this: by their sacrifices they tried to appease the wrath of God, and to merit His favor. But such "honor" degrades God. Since He is the Creator and Giver of every good and perfect gift, the only fitting honor is, as Paul puts it, to give thanks.

From bringing sacrifices to God in the spirit of thanksgiving for His unspeakable goodness to bringing sacrifices in a spirit of barter is indeed a deep fall. It is horrifying that men can so degrade the *theiotēs* and *megaleiotēs* of God. Is it conceivable that Paul should ever have thought of integrating the program of either Jew or Greek in his own Gospel work? That would have been a gross confusion of Law and Gospel, and it would simply have wrecked his Gospel work. To the Galatians he wrote: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace" (ch. 5, 4).

Though thus the fall from giving God thanks to dealing with Him on a commercial basis is truly catastrophic, the bottom has not yet been reached. It was merely the first step, so to speak, on the downgrade. As a result of the judgment of God no halting by man's insight or power is possible. The fall continues to breathtaking depths. Men are using their knowledge of God in the spirit of the Law, and the nature of the Law is to kill. Paul continues, according to the translation of the RSV: "they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened." They did do some *thinking*, not merely that they occasionally remembered God in their thoughts, but they devoted much time and energy to keen, systematic, dialectic speculations about God, His nature and attributes, man's relation to Him, and the proper way of serving Him. But their *thinking* produced no useful results, it was *futile*. Worse than that, it led them to vain and foolish ideas and actions. Far from dispelling the darkness that enshrouded their hearts, it led them only deeper into it. The darkness was intensified as a result of their *thinking*. It had to be, it could not be otherwise, since they started from a wrong premise, viz., their *opinio legis*. The RSV says that "their *minds* were darkened." This is not an improvement over the old standard version: "their *heart* was darkened." The Greek has *kardia*. *Kardia* denotes the center of the entire personality. It is not considered merely as the seat of the feelings and emotions, it is the source and controlling agent of all thoughts and strivings. It is, so to say, the "power plant" of a person's life. Thus, in the very controlling center of their lives, as a result of their intensive *thinking*, they became so inextricably caught in a dense darkness that they could not even distinguish any longer between light and darkness itself, that they mistook their darkness for light. "Claiming to be wise, they became fools" (RSV).

All of this, let us well remember, not by accident, not because of some flaw in their *thinking* process, some slip in their logic or dialectics. No, their methods of reasoning were very correct. But just because they were so correct, they could not but lead into gross darkness, on account of the unpardonable error in the premises. Instead of the spirit of thanksgiving, they started from a spirit of barter: the *opinio legis*. Their darkness is an inevitable result of their thinking. Wherever to the natural knowledge of God as such is ascribed any independent and positive value, merely in so far as it acknowledges God's existence and majestic power, that is, wherever it is not approached from the Christian standpoint of thanksgiving, there, according to God's judgment, it will produce the results as outlined by Paul.

We might be inclined to assume that in our enlightened age the following verses could not any longer be repeated as a proper description of these results: "They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles" (RSV). It may be that no images of animals will be erected to them to honor them as gods. But what is the difference when powers of good or evil are ascribed to animals or even to parts of their carcasses? What harm can a black cat do that happens to cross our way? What luck can a rabbit's foot bring when carried in our pocket? Is not the extent to which superstitious practices

increased during the war truly appalling? This, according to the judgment of God; is the legitimate fruit of the natural knowledge of God when used - I should say, abused - by man according to his inborn *opinio legis*.

In the remaining verses of our chapter Paul carries out with gruesome details to what extremes, under God's judgment, men went in their aberrations. When we read the screaming headlines on the front pages of our daily papers today, we begin to realize that Paul is pretty modern after all, his description of conditions in the world, among the most respectable people of the world, is true to fact even today. It will have little bearing on our theme to go into a detailed study of these verses. These sordid facts merely serve to illustrate and establish the truth which Paul sets forth. The natural knowledge of God achieves no other result than to deprive men of any pretext for their failings, since they apply it, and by themselves can apply it, only according to the basic lie introduced by Satan into the world, the *opinio legis*.

However, the presence in the world of a certain type of people might be cited by some one as an instance against Paul's argument. He takes up the challenge in the next chapter.

#### IV.

Before proceeding with the next part, a brief summary of the previous one will be in place, setting forth only the high spots.

We notice that, though Paul does not introduce his presentation of the natural knowledge of God as an issue in itself but merely in support of his main argument, yet he gives us a clear view of it and speaks of it in terms of high esteem. Twice he uses the word *alētheia*, once with direct reference to the natural knowledge of God. The natural knowledge of God is not a human assumption, perhaps honeycombed with error, it is correct in itself, it is truth. It is so because God Himself revealed it. It is not man-made, nor was it, like the Law of Moses, "ordained by angels" (Gal. 3. 19); no one but God Himself is the author and promulgator of it. This fact loses nothing of its importance even when we consider that man may, yes indeed should, develop his own grasp of the natural knowledge by a contemplation of the works of creation and preservation, and by his logical thinking: analysing, comparing, combining its various elements. Although our theologians rightly speak of a *notitia Dei insita* and *acquisita*, yet even man's advancement in his grasp of the truth is possible only on the basis of God's revelation, direct and in nature.

The natural knowledge of God in man is not a bare realization that there is a God, it embraces much more. Paul mentions first the *aidios dynamis*. Power, overwhelming power, this is probably the first impression anyone will receive when confronted with the vast universe. And a little reflection will add the further thought that, since this power called the universe into existence, it must itself antedate the universe, and further, that it cannot in turn have been called forth by a previous power. It must be an everlasting power (*aidios*). All the world is dependent for its very existence on this everlasting self-sufficient power. Compare Schleiermacher's definition of religion as a feeling of absolute dependence.

The natural knowledge does not stop with ascribing everlasting power, eternal omnipotence to God, it includes more. Paul sums it up, without going into details, in the one word *theiotēs*, which means God as viewed in His majesty with all His glorious attributes.

The natural knowledge of God as revealed by God to man, is so thoroughly sound and so grand that God can make it the basis of His judgment and the deciding factor in His condemnation of man. Because of its presence man is without excuse. If man did not properly use the knowledge of God so richly granted to Him by God Himself, he has only himself to blame for his loss. He cannot plead ignorance, nor accuse God of having left him with insufficient information,

Though Paul did not set out expressly to present to the Romans the doctrine concerning the natural knowledge of God as a separate article, though he mentions it only incidentally in elaborating the more important doctrine of the Gospel of Christ, which he is preaching, yet he presents a clear and pretty comprehensive view of the matter.

With the natural knowledge of God which God has granted to man, and which He has preserved to him even in the state of sin, as a background, Paul proceeds to set forth the utter corruptness of human nature by



showing how men reacted to this self-revelation of God, a revelation which, moreover, was far from being hazy or indistinct, though impaired by sin, but rather *phaneron*, very plain, thus depriving man of every pretext.

The natural revelation was granted to men in order to stimulate research; they should seek God in the hope that they might feel after Him and find Him. Though true in itself (*aletheia*, v. 25), it pointed beyond itself to a higher truth, to the truth of God as it appeared in the revelation of His Son. Yet so utterly corrupt is human nature that, instead of heeding the incentive coming from their natural knowledge of God, they suppressed for themselves this truth of God in every form by the wickedness of their heart. Though it requires only a little reflection to realize that a God whose offspring we are cannot be like silver or gold shaped by the fancy and art of man, yet they degraded the glory of the unchangeable, immortal God into a likeness of mortal man, yes of birds, of fourfooted beasts, and of reptiles.

Even when they followed their inborn urge to acquire a better understanding of God, when in their philosophy they began to speculate about Him, or in their poetry mused on Him, their thoughts became vain; what they paraded as profound wisdom was nothing but foolishness.

Such is the "ungodliness and wickedness" of natural man.

What must happen when God's wrath and righteous judgment is revealed against it, Paul states in three shocking sentences, each one of which contains the verb *paredōken*, He gave them up to something: to impurity, v. 24; to disgraceful passions, v. 26; to a reprobate mind, a mind so distorted in its views and so warped in its judgments that they thought "knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (v. 32).

It was a terrible revelation of God's wrath and judgment when He sent the flood: it is a much more devastating and appalling judgment, though not so spectacular, when He withdraws His Spirit and turns men over to their own devices. Then there is no halting any longer of the mad downward rush till the lowest depths have been reached: that men not only practice all sorts of self-destructive vices, perhaps against the protest of their conscience, but approve of them that practice them, and advocate such practices as the normal life.

This is the situation as Paul saw it. This was the condition of the world to which Paul was called to administer the Gospel. There is no remedy outside of the Gospel. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, the only power of God. It is futile to try to stem the tide in any other way, perhaps with the aid of the natural knowledge of God. The world had this knowledge before Paul came, but they neglected it in their vanity, brushed it aside, and ruthlessly trampled it under foot. Hence if any person in any system of training pins any hope on the natural knowledge of God for building up a God-pleasing moral character, he merely shows that he does not understand the seriousness of the situation nor the complete inadequacy of the natural knowledge of God to be of any help. First a rescue of the person will have to be effected through the Gospel, a new birth, then also the natural knowledge of God will be rescued and restored to its rightful position as a useful hand-maiden. But to attempt to integrate the natural knowledge of God into any system of education without previous repentance and regeneration spells utter ruin.

To return once more to v. 32, we notice not only that the lowest depths have been reached when men, driven by their unbridled lusts, drop to the stage where with an unchecked corrupt mind (*adokimos*, one that failed in the test) they attempt to justify their ruinous and shameless practices; we note further that, in spite of all this, their keen realization (*epignontes*) of the righteous judgment of God (*dikaiōma*) has not been lost, they cannot shake it off. "Yet here's a spot"; and no "Out, damned spot! out, I say" will remove it (Lady Macbeth). The judgment of God, namely, that people who practice such things are worthy of death, is bitterly felt by them as fully justified. in every respect: it is a judgment established once for all, it is *God's* judgment, it is a *righteous* judgment. They may hold it down, prevent it from exercising its influence; they may employ their rotten mind to argue against it: they cannot erase the *gnōston tou theou* from their heart. They not merely perceive it, they feel its power and influence; *epignontes*, Paul says. - And yet they persist in their depravity.

If that is the case, of what help may the natural knowledge of God be? It has demonstrated its absolute insufficiency as long as man remains in his unregenerate state. A complete change of heart, *metanoia*, repentance, is called for. If any one still insists on using the natural knowledge as a starting point for improvement, if he tries to build up any kind of God-pleasing righteousness on it, he is guilty of double condemnation, a

condemnation which may not at once manifest itself in a catastrophic destruction, but which will work in a less noticeable, yet none the less effective way by God's relinquishing him to his own devices.

With this presentation of the righteous wrath and judgment of God as here briefly outlined, Paul connects the next chapter by means of the conjunction *dio*. This word expresses a causal relation, not quite as specific as, e.g., *hōste*, but more general, somewhat like our English *accordingly*. Our King James Bible has "Therefore" (so also the RSV): "Therefore thou art inexcusable" etc.

The question arises to what specifically *dio* may refer. Does it refer only to the statement contained in the last verse of ch. 1? or does it refer to the entire section beginning with v. 18? The fact that Paul in ch. 1, 18-32, uses *dio* or similar connectives to introduce new subparts, thus building one conclusion on the other, might lead one to assume that here also he is merely adding a new part on a level with the foregoing, basing this one on v. 32. Note the "wherefore" (v. 24), "for this cause" (v. 26), "as they did not" (v. 28). Does Paul add another link to this chain by his "therefore" in ch. 2, 1?

It does not seem so. Not only does the repetition of the term "inexcusable" hark back to the identical word used in ch. 1, 20 ("without excuse"), but the very thought introduced in ch. 2 does not look like a new subpart, on a level, as such, with the various subparts in ch. 1. The three small paragraphs in ch. 1, indicated above, are joined together by the repetition in each one of the common term *paredōken*, each one of them thus denoting a new stage, a more intensified form of the judgment of God, till the climax is reached in v. 32. But in ch. 2 an entirely new element is introduced, totally different from anything said before, by referring to a man who judges, *ho krinōn*. The method also in which the *krinōn* is introduced is striking. While in ch. 1 Paul had used the third person, descriptively, throughout, he here addresses the *krinōn* directly, in the second person.

What Paul has to say to the *krinōn* is, as the *dio* shows, based squarely on what he had said in the previous chapter concerning the righteous judgment of God. Moreover, Paul assumes that the *krinōn*, does not deny this presentation in whole or in part; he rather takes for granted that the *krinōn* by the very nature of his position must subscribe to all that had been said so far. He could not pose as a *krinōn* if he were in agreement with those who try to justify the unnatural and shameful course of men as depicted in ch. 1. On the basis of ch. 1, 18-32, to which the *krinōn* subscribes, Paul now points out to him that by implication his course is just as inexcusable as that of the others.

Who is this *krinōn*? There are many *krinontes*, in fact, as Paul indicates by his *pas ho krinōn*, "whoever thou art that judgest." In ch 1, 16, Paul had very formally declared that he was speaking of the Jew, as well first, as of the Greek; and in the second chapter he twice repeats that formal expression: v. 9: there will be distress for every man that persists in doing evil, for the Jews as well first as also for the Greek; and v. 10: there will be a grand reward for every one that practices the good, the Jew as well first as also the Greek. Add to this the fact that Paul addresses the *krinōn* merely as *man, ō anthrōpe* - and we have the answer to our question. To pose as judges is not limited to any particular class or nationality; it is human, found as far as human society extends.

This cannot be otherwise, as long as what Paul said about the *gnōston tou theou* remains true. As long as the *gnōston tou theou* cannot be eradicated from the human heart, there will always be men who in the midst of the mad rush of moral degeneration will assume the role of judges.

What does Paul mean by *judging*? The verb denotes an act which is neutral in itself, meaning no more than to evaluate. In itself it expresses neither condemnation nor justification, though, naturally, it may result in either, as the case may be. Having in itself such rather pale meaning, *krinō* conveniently lends itself to many occasions. It then receives its coloring from the particular case to which it is applied. We must therefore always very carefully scrutinize the context, in order to discover what particular turn may be indicated, what in the given situation may be the connotation of *krinein*.

It seems clear from the outset that Paul is not thinking of a man who is judging merely for the purpose of exercising his mind, his analytical and critical faculties. This man is doing his discriminating, in the midst of the mad rush of the mob, for very practical purposes. Paul himself is dealing, not with academic questions, but with the most practical problem of life and death; and so is the *krinōn*.

A little farther down, where Paul is speaking of the Jew specifically, in v. 19 and 20, he uses words like "guide," "light," "instructor," "teacher." The *krinōn* by his *krinein*, whether he condemns or commends any one for his behavior, is aiming to improve conditions, to strengthen the more virtuous and to deter the offenders.

Should not Paul then commend the *krinōn*? Is he not upholding the *gnōston tou theou*? is he not trying to make this force morally and religiously effective? He certainly is trying to curb vice and to foster civic righteousness by making men conscious of their duty to God. Is he not thereby doing a most valuable work? Should Paul not join hands with him? Or should he not at least adopt his program and incorporate it into his own?

Paul does nothing of the kind. Rather, he tells the *krinōn* that with all his efforts at reform and at training people in civic righteousness he is "inexcusable." And naturally, if Paul in any way joined hands with him, he would be in the same condemnation.

Paul, of course, is speaking from the standpoint of the Gospel. He knows that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. He preached the Gospel for more than a decade, and it never failed him. He is not ashamed of it. In his youth he had been educated in the Law. He had himself been an ardent advocate of the Law. He had scrupulously tried to observe the Law. Outwardly he had succeeded in building up an unimpeachable righteousness. Yet in reality he had failed, failed miserably, until the Lord in His mercy called him to faith in the Gospel. Did he now in this new light continue to build on the old foundation? In the light of the Gospel he realized that all attempts at righteousness based on the natural knowledge of God, or even on this knowledge as reinforced by the revealed Law of Moses, are doomed to failure. They produce a righteousness which outwardly may glitter, but which in fact is worthless rubbish, yes, detrimental to the true righteousness of God. In the light of the Gospel he must tell the *krinōn* that he is without excuse, that he stands condemned for his efforts.

A few verses farther down, in v. 4, Paul tells the *krinōn* what is needed in order to check the crime wave and the vice wave that threaten to engulf human society. In one word it is "repentance," a complete change, a radical change of heart; a process which is not helped, but hindered, by cultivating civic righteousness on the basis of one's honor and by training a boy so to perform his duty toward God.

Paul begins to elucidate his verdict by stating: "for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself." The relative *en hō(i)* is an abbreviation, but it may here hardly be resolved, as customary, into *en toutō(i) en hō(i)*, rather the text demands *en toutō(i) hoti*. Paul wants to say that by the very fact that the *krinōn* evaluates the deeds of others as to their ethical worth, and tries to guide and steer people in the proper course, he stands condemned himself. He is keeping himself on the same level with those whom he is trying to correct, and from their standpoint and with the knowledge and the powers at their disposal he is attempting his reform. Paul, moreover, tells this reformer straight to his face that he, the would-be instructor, is guilty of the very same offenses as those whom he is correcting. Paul does not try to prove this charge, he is not afraid that any one will dare to deny it. He knew what happened when Jesus said to the pious men who brought the adulteress before Him: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (Joh. 8, 7). He knew that "convicted by their own conscience" they all went out (v. 8). Paul knew that every one of these self-appointed reformers would stand convicted by his own conscience when he charged them with practicing the very things which they tried to correct.

It is important that we learn to feel the full force of Paul's charge; and it is really an alarming symptom when it becomes at all necessary to make a special effort in this direction. Does it not belong to the abc of our Christian faith that we accept the total depravity of natural man? that we realize how every effort on his part to extricate himself can have no other effect than to sink him deeper into his sin and guilt? "Deeper and deeper still I fell." Yet in spite of this it seems that we easily permit ourselves to be blinded by the glittering outward results achieved through man's own efforts at righteousness on the basis of the natural knowledge of God. We laud civic righteousness as something good and valuable in itself – so long as only a man does not go to the extreme of blaspheming in direct words the redemption of Christ, nor claims that his own righteousness has real spiritual value and is something meritorious before God. Forgetting in the meanwhile the caustic remark of Augustine that the virtues of the heathen are nothing but glittering vices, and the devastating judgment of our Savior that the publicans and harlots will enter the kingdom of God before the self-righteous Pharisees: we stand ready to

accept the program of modern *krinontes*, as far as it goes, as valuable for our own Gospel work, and on that foundation to continue with our. Gospel superstructure.

Do we not feel the force of Paul's words? He says that the mere attempt of the *krinōn* to improve conditions by applying the law and the natural knowledge of God is sufficient to condemn him as being outside the kingdom of God. It is a disturbing symptom if we do not at once recoil in horror from the very idea of integrating a method which uses one's own honor and sense of duty for eliciting a decent conduct, into our Christian system of stimulating a life of sanctification by appealing to the rich mercies of God. When Paul wrote to the Romans concerning the *krinōn* that by the very fact of his judging others he was condemning himself, he had the confidence in their good Christian judgment that they would readily understand and agree with him.

Since, as the conscience of the *krinon* will testify, he is not one whit better by nature than those who have sunk to the lowest depths of sin and vice, he will have to admit that he fully deserves the righteous judgment of God. And we know, Paul continues with a progressive *de*, that the judgment of God is pronounced and executed without bias, without fear or favor, strictly according to the facts in the case, according to *alētheia*, upon those who practice such things.

But the judgment of God has so far swallowed up neither the reckless vice monger nor the self-appointed reformer of the same mind. Might this, after all, indicate that God approves of the latter's effort in spite of the fact that he too is standing on the same ground with the sinner and is guilty of the same misdeeds? Paul voices this question in the following words: "Thinkest thou this, O man that judgest them which do such things and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" In the Greek the form of a question is missing, but the sense of at least a mild question is unmistakably present. Paul assumes that the *krinōn* is deluding himself with the vain hope that perhaps by his efforts at reform he may escape the judgment of God.

This gives Paul an opportunity for the smashing blow, and at the same time for a striking statement of the only proper remedy. He begins with *ē*, thus marking this statement as a second alternative. If the *krinōn* is not so blind as to expect an escape from God's judgment, then only the following assumption remains to account for his attitude, namely, that he despises the forbearance of God, that he harbors contempt for God in his heart. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and (His) forbearance and longsuffering?"

We bear in mind that Paul is reprimanding the apparently callous *krinōn* on the basis of his natural knowledge of God, which includes also a taste of God's goodness. This *notitia Dei insita* the *krinōn* should develop with all the means at his disposal "that he should seek the Lord, if haply he might feel after him, and find him" (Acts 17, 27). His opportunity for doing so is exceptionally good. He realizes, on the one hand, that he is guilty before God, his conscience tells him so. By the very act of judging others he is condemning himself. The fact that God's judgment was held in abeyance so long, that it did not yet strike home in his case, is no proof that he deserves eventually to escape altogether. Yet for the moment he is being spared. His time of grace is thereby extended. Hence in his own case, on the other hand, he has an outstanding example of God's goodness. Why then does he neglect this opportunity? Why does he not ponder the goodness of God? Why does he not develop his inborn knowledge of God in this respect to its highest possible perfection? From a meditation of the manifest forbearance and longsuffering of God in delaying the execution of His righteous judgment, long past due in his case, he should come to a sensing of the overwhelming goodness of God, or, as Paul calls it, "the riches of His goodness."

From his own experience he should get to feel that he will never succeed in reforming the world by his judging, no matter how fair and impartial it may be. Not only does his conscience condemn all his efforts at achieving an acceptable righteousness, his experience should show him that God Himself is employing a different method in his case. His trouble is that he is not paying due attention to God's method, evidently not considering the matter as worthy of serious thought. He does not permit it to sink in, entirely through his own fault, that God is trying to lead him to repentance. God's overwhelming manifestation of His goodness in extending the time of grace for him is a token of His method of effecting a change of heart in man. But he misconstrues (*agnoōn*) God's goodness. Just as men in general hold down the truth of God in their unrighteousness, so he holds down in particular the goodness of God, which is leading him in the direction of repentance, by his contempt.

Paul is here speaking about *metanoia* in the full Biblical sense of the word. It is not modification of one's judgment in some minor detail, while the basic principle of judgment remains unaffected; it is not a slight correction here or there in one's conduct; it is a complete change in the basic attitude of the heart, an about-face, as our Augsburg Confession describes it. "Now, repentance consists properly of these two parts: One is contrition, that is, terrors smiting the conscience through the knowledge of sin; the other is faith, which is born of the Gospel, or of absolution, and believes that for sake sins are forgiven, comforts the conscience and delivers it from terrors" (Art. XII, 2-5). The goodness of God in merely deferring the due, perhaps long overdue, punishment cannot effect true repentance, but it points in that direction (*agei*), so that the *krinōn* is without excuse if he despises God's act of goodness.

Paul takes up this fact in the next verse with the term *sklērotēs*, hardness, which manifests itself in an impenitent heart. Having turned down, by the hardness of his heart, God's urging to repentance through a manifestation of His goodness, the *krinōn* must realize, so Paul warns him, that he is achieving no more than a treasuring up of the wrath of God against him, to be revealed with full force on the day of wrath and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

With these words Paul practically rests his case concerning the natural knowledge of God. In the following he carries out some details about the day of judgment, and then speaks particularly about the function of conscience with regard to it. This we must defer to a later study.

We may well pause here for brief review of some of the outstanding truths in Paul's argument.

He announced himself as a messenger of the Gospel, in which the righteousness of God is revealed through faith in Christ Jesus. The natural knowledge of God has no place in the message of the Gospel. The natural knowledge of God is *phaneron* among men, while the Gospel, according to 1 Cor. 2, 9, is something that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man." The natural knowledge of God belongs into the revelation of the Wrath of God from heaven.

The natural knowledge of God has various stages. It was written by God into the hearts of men; He revealed it, *ephanerōsen*. Man may develop it by a study of the works of God in creation and preservation. He must be impressed by the goodness of God through a study of history, where he will see how God time and again defers an over-due judgment. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3, 9).

What is the reaction of man to the natural knowledge of God? In general, Paul says, they suppress it. They neutralize it, so that it should not interfere with their licentious living. Some, indeed, turn moralists, trying to curb by their judgments the reckless living of their fellow men. But in doing so they only condemn themselves, particularly since they harden themselves over against the revelation of God's goodness as it appears even in their own personal history.

Of what value, then, is the natural knowledge of God? Of no positive value whatever in spiritual matters; and those are the only matters about which Paul is concerned as a messenger of the Gospel. Those are also the only values that dare be of interest to us as ministers of Christ. The *krinōn*, whether a private citizen, whether a lecturer on ethics in some university, whether an official of government, may impress his fellowmen, he may have some influence on their outward moral conduct, but he never can bring them even one hair's breadth nearer to the kingdom of God. No one, unless he is tinged with Pelagianism, can hail the endeavors of men centering in the natural knowledge of God as preparing souls for sanctification in the wider or in the narrower sense of the word; much less can he even remotely think of integrating the work of the *krinontes* in the Christian program of education. The only value that the natural knowledge of God has in spiritual matters is a negative one: to make a sinner realize to his consternation that he is without excuse.

The only use that we can make of this knowledge is the one Paul makes of it: to force a sinner to a realization of his damnableness and to drive him to despair. Paul does so here in the Romans passage, he did so in his mission work, as witness the two cases on record in Acts, in Lystra and in Athens. That is the only legitimate use before repentance is effected. After repentance, in a Christian's sanctification, the natural knowledge of God will play a similar role to that of the Law in its third use.

We do well to mark also particularly the following, although some things may be in the nature of a repetition. Paul is not speaking about the natural knowledge of God in the abstract, as it would appear by itself, he is interested in it only in the concrete, as it is found among men. It is not a purely academic truth which we may handle in an impersonal, disinterested fashion; coming from God, it is like the Word of God filled with divine power, forcing man to give attention (*motus inevitabiles*). The reaction of sinners - it is with sinners that Paul is concerned; as a practical realist he does not waste any time on theoretical speculation - with sinners the reaction is twofold: the ones suppress it and plunge recklessly into a life of vice and shame, the others instigate reform movements. Both are without excuse.

God has given us two kinds of Word: Law and Gospel. From the way Paul handles the natural knowledge of God it is evident that it is a part of God's Law revelation, and has the killing effect of Law. Can we make use of it? Not like the *krinōn*, who by means of it tries to curb crime and vice in the world and to stimulate decent living among men. That is not our business as ministers of the Gospel. We may use it to bring men to a knowledge of their sin, and reduce the haughty sinner to despair. We can use it as a rule or guide only after true repentance has been effected through the Gospel. To use it in any other way, perhaps as a summary of something that all religions assumedly have in common, on which each one then can build its own specific system, would be a plain confusion of Law and Gospel.

## V.

After having depicted in ch. 1, with words that no one could dare to question, the terrible results following man's abuse of his natural knowledge of God, Paul in the second chapter addressed a man who, without changing his basic attitude, tried to stem the tide of vice by moralizing and reform work. Being a *krinōn*, he carefully evaluates the conduct of men, commending some, condemning others. He may be a philosopher who in a speculative way develops ethical concepts, or he may be an educator who on the basis of the philosopher's work tries to lead men to a higher level of morality. Without fear of contradiction Paul charges the moralist and reformer with being guilty of doing the very things that he criticises.

More. Finding himself guilty of the same offenses which he severely condemns in others, he is doubly without excuse. By his very profession as a *krinōn* he must realize that he is guilty of God's condemnation. But God did not yet visit His righteous wrath on him, He spared him so far. Thus in addition to the natural knowledge of God implanted in his heart by God Himself, reenforced by an observation of God's works in creation and preservation, he has a manifestation of God's goodness in his own personal history; a goodness which has for its aim the repentance of the *krinōn*. When God strives for improvement He does not act like the *krinōn*. He employs goodness in a rich measure, forbearance and long-suffering. From this fact the *krinōn* should realize that his own basic attitude is all wrong. A complete change of heart and mind is indicated: repentance. The fact that he closes his eyes to this evident lesson and that he tenaciously adheres to his criticising, is sufficient to prove him guilty of despising the goodness of God: else he would not ignore it so completely in his system of reform.

*Inexcusable*, so Paul had said about those who abandoned themselves to a life of debauchery. *Inexcusable*, so he said about the attitude of the *krinōn*. Now he summarizes briefly in v. 5: "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

The attitude of the *krinōn* as Paul has described him may be summed in in a single word: hardness, *sklērotēs*, which manifests itself in the impenitence of his heart.

The *krinōn* of Paul, and that applies to all *krinontes* of all ages, has been tinkering with the outward conduct of men, propounding to them fine ideas, and clarifying their ethical concepts. He has been urging them to adopt these concepts as norms for their conduct, and thus to reform their mode of living, assuring them that if they will only give his system a fair trial they must succeed. It never occurred to him that the roots of the evil might go deeper, that outward living is but an expression of an inner attitude, that the most revolting crimes and vices are merely symptoms of the total corruption of the heart. He worked on the assumption that man's nature

is inherently good, that in order to achieve real goodness of life it is enough to instruct the understanding properly and to strengthen the Will sufficiently; which may be achieved by education and training.

Accordingly, his own heart remained impenitent, in spite of his intensive occupation with ethical concepts, with a study of God's works in nature, and in spite of his personal experience of God's goodness in His dealing with the offenders, the *krinōn* in particular, with great patience and forbearance. Yes, the deeper he penetrated into these matters, the more firmly he became set in his ways, convinced of the basic correctness of his position. He failed to repent. He may have been willing to waive a point or two in his system, he may even have been open to correction, and to tolerate other systems - anything short of repentance. Therein is manifested his *hardness*.

Could Paul in his Gospel work join hands with the *krinōn*, sincere and serious moralist and reformer though he was? Could he acknowledge his efforts as something good? Paul would have been unfaithful to his Lord who had called him if he had allowed any righteousness, and any program for achieving righteousness, as good, that is not built on repentance. He therefore tells the *krinōn* in unmistakable words to what all his efforts at reform really amount: *thou treasurest up*. - Do we have to remind ourselves that this judgment applies with equal force to all moralists and reformers who walk in the footsteps of Paul's *krinōn*?

Paul here uses the progressive present, *thēsauroizeis*, you are treasuring up for yourself. Does Paul really consider the work of the *krinōn* as a gathering together of valuable treasures? He is merely appropriating an expression borrowed from the ideology of the *krinōn*. The *krinōn* considers his achievements as valuable treasures. He is happy when he can credit his account with another good deed, or report another good turn. Paul borrows the expression, and apparently concedes that the *krinōn* is amassing some valuable treasures, and that his stock pile of merits is growing with every new accretion. But what these vaunted treasures really are, Paul will tell us immediately.

Again a single word suffices: wrath, *orgē*. Here the *krinōn* had imagined all along that by his endeavors he was meriting God's favor, at least he was mitigating, perhaps even appeasing, His wrath, and was teaching his followers how to achieve the same results. Had not God spared him so long? All these years he had been promoting reforms, and God, since He did not interfere by imposing punishments, seemed to be favorably inclined toward his efforts. Did not His withholding of punishment indicate at least some degree of approval? And now Paul tells him bluntly that he is laboring under a terrible self-deception. He is not gathering credit points for himself, he is increasing the wrath of God against himself. Mark the awful word *wrath*: not merely a negative lack of approval, but a positive indignation. By every step forward that the *krinōn* takes, by every good deed that he records, he merely fans the wrath of God to greater fury.

Paul is speaking from the spiritual standpoint of the Gospel. He is not considering the question at all from the angle of sociology, whether for communal life of the people the efforts of the *krinōn* are not preferable to the theory which considers a life of vice as the normal life. By the way in which he pictured the downgrade tendency in ch. 1 till the deepest depths are reached, Paul already indicated that in a certain respect the level from which things started has some advantages over the final stage. Paul is ready to grant, what everybody can grasp with his natural common sense, that the philosophy of the *krinōn* is far superior to licentiousness, from the standpoint of society. But Paul does not make the mistake of confusing social goodness, or civic righteousness, with spiritual goodness, nor of attempting to fuse the two by integrating the program of the *krinōn* into his own. Paul was not sent to preach the social gospel. His call was to preach the Gospel of redemption, achieved by Christ's death, to be appropriated by faith. And viewed from that standpoint all the socially good deeds of the *krinōn* must stand condemned as merely inciting the wrath of God to greater fury. In Pelagian fashion they serve "to obscure the glory of Christ's merit and benefits" (C. A., 11, 3).

The wrath of God may not become immediately apparent. God, who aims at repentance, who wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, may in His goodness defer even a long past due punishment; yes, having arranged to preserve this world according to certain laws, both physical and moral, may seem to reward those who adjust their lives to these laws, as our Confession is ready to concede (Note the concessive conjunction *wiewohl, quamquam*, although.) that God may honor the righteousness of reason with bodily rewards (Apol. IV, 24, p. 126). In His world government, in His outward dealings with the deeds of men,

God may even allow a difference between lesser and greater evils, as, e.g., when He instructed Moses, because of the hardness of the heart, to grant license that some one issue a writ of divorcement to his wife in other than a case of adultery. Yet Paul keeps it clear in his own mind, and warns his readers not to be deceived, that spiritually there is no difference between men, that among natural men there can be no "noble souls" whose good efforts we must acknowledge. Spiritually considered; the unalterable attitude of God toward all efforts of natural man is one of wrath.

As stated before, this may not be apparent at once; but the day is rapidly approaching when it will become evident to even the hide-bound *krinōn*. Paul says, "against (*en*) the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

Paul did already call attention to the fact that the wrath of God is continually being revealed in a way (*apokalyptetai*) by His dealings in this world in that He gives men up or over (ch. 1, 24, 26, 28) to evil. In our verse he spoke of a treasuring up of wrath, which in some way does not come to wreak destruction immediately; and now he points to a coming day of wrath when its pent-up fury will be fully revealed.

It will be a *righteous* judgment, which even such people as at first brazenly protest will be forced to admit. For the concept "righteous judgment" Paul uses a word which occurs only here in the New Testament. Among the Oxyrhynchus papyri a case is found which seems to indicate that the word was in use in court matters as almost a technical term. In the year 303 A.D. a certain Aurelius Demetrius Nilus, who described himself as *agrammatos* (unlettered, i.e., most likely, as unable to draw up his document himself) had a scribe draw up a petition for him to the Prefect of Egypt, Clodius Culcianus, saying that he makes his appeal with confidence, *euelpis ōn tēs apo sou megethous dikaiokrisias tychein*, being of good hope to obtain *dikaiokrisia* from thy eminence. Did the scribe adopt the word from Rom. 2, 5? or from official usage? (This happened during the time of the Diocletian persecution.) The papyrus plainly points, not so much to the act of judging, but rather to the sentence in which the verdict is announced. This would make very good sense also in our passage. Compare Jh. 5, 30; 7, 24 (*dikaia krisis*: "my judgment is just" - "judge righteous judgment").

The term *dikaiokrisia* leads over directly to the next section; in which Paul establishes the absolute justice of God's final sentence on that great day.

We need not spend much time on v. 6-8. For although these verses contain a great deal of valuable material, they have no direct bearing on the question for which we are seeking an answer, the natural knowledge of God and civic righteousness. They unfold the *dikaiokrisia* according to its double content. Then, when in v. 9 Paul, while describing the result of God's *dikaiokrisia*, begins to present also the motivation, we shall find much material to shed a flood of light on the role which the natural knowledge of God plays in God's economy.

When in v. 7 Paul says that the Judge will duly reward every man *kata ta erga autou*, according to his works, he does not want to be understood as though God counted the recorded good turns of a man, or balanced his merits against his demerits, to see which would outnumber or outweigh the other as the expression in the next verse, *hypōnonē ergou agathou*, and the singulars *to kakon* and *to agathon* in v. 9 and 10, clearly indicate, he considers the life of every man as a whole, composed of many individual acts. In 2 Cor. 5, 10, where he says that we all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, he also combines the singular and the plural, mentioning first the things, *ta...ha*, which a man has done, then reducing it all to the singulars *agathon* and *phaulon*. This is in accordance with the picture of the Judgment as Jesus paints it for us in Mt. 25. The individual acts constitute merely so much evidence of the basic attitude of a person, whether he be as a believer joined to Christ, or as an unbeliever separated from Him.

In v. 7 and 8, with *tois men* and *tois de*, Paul more specifically unfolds the *dikaiokrisia* of God. It seems best to take these two expressions as pronominal in character, rather than to prefix them as articles to one or the other of the following participles respectively. Another difficulty is found in the fact that Paul in the first member, *tois men*, continues his construction as governed by the verb of the preceding verse, *apodōsei*, the reward being stated in the accusative; while in the second member, *tois de*, he ends up with the nominative. But the different nature of the two groups of concepts will readily account for the change in construction. While you may give (*apodōsei*), *doxan* and *timēn* and *aphtharsian*, or even *zōēn aiōnion*, it cannot well be said that you



give *orgēn* and *thymon*. These are emotions which motivate one's giving. Hence Paul changes the construction: God's *orgē* and *thymos* will be the lot of the second group of people.

*Kath' hypomonēn ergou agathou*, thus Paul states the motivation of God's *dikaiokrisia* in the case of the first group. He will reward them according to their endurance in well-doing. What He will give them is "glory and honor and immortality," seeing they have abandoned the sham life of earthly-mindedness and are earnestly striving for real life, eternal life. On the second group the "indignation and wrath" of God will remain, seeing they "do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness." They do so *ex eritheias*. *Eritheia* is derived from *erithos*, not directly but, as the accent indicates, via the verb *eritheuō*. *Erithos* is a laborer working for hire. That is precisely what characterizes this group of people. They stand to God, not in the relation of dear children to their father, they are hirelings working for a reward. They expect credit for their work, and for their inconveniences, having "borne the burden and the heat of the day." They duly record their "good turns." Their *eritheia*, their mind of an hireling, prevents them from embracing God's truth of the Gospel of free grace in faith; they continue to the end in their original *adikia* in spite of their moralizing and their efforts at reform.

The following verses, 9 and 10, not merely amplify the concept of the judgment meted out in each case according to the *dikaiokrisia* of God, by mentioning some details, but they return to a thought expressed in ch. 1, 16, that this will apply first of all to both Jew and Greek. Condemnation and punishment will be the inescapable lot of all that reject the truth of God, and both Jew and Greek will head the list. On the other hand, to those following the good course, glory and honor and peace will be granted, and again both Jew and Greek will be the first. - For with God, Paul says in v. 11, there is no respect of persons.

The last remark about the absolute impartiality of God, both in pronouncing and in executing, His judgment of condemnation, calls for further elucidation. Are there not some people who never heard about the Law of Moses? Was not the Law of Moses prefaced by the remark: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 20, 2)? Being thus addressed specifically to the people of Israel, did not the Law, by implication, exempt all other peoples from its demands? Yet Paul himself three times so far expressly linked the Greeks together with the Jews as standing in the front line "the Jews as well first as the Greeks." How does he justify that coupling of the two peoples, and how does he harmonize it with the impartiality of God?

Paul sums up the situation in a statement which, if taken out of its connection, might seem very unreasonable: "For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law." How can any one sin "without law," *anomōs*? Does not Paul himself in ch. 5, 13, lay down the principle: "Sin is not imputed when there is no law"? If sin is the transgression of the law, then by its very definition it presupposes the previous promulgation of a law; and a sinning *anomōs* is a contradiction in the very terms. But Paul is not speaking in a vacuum when he here maintains a sinning without law. He has emphatically placed Jews and Greeks side by side as belonging into the same class as far as the question is concerned which he is discussing, great as the differences between the two may be in other respects. In ch. 3, 9, he recapitulates his thesis in these words: "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles (*Hellēnas*) that they are all under sin." Thus Paul himself restricts the *anomōs* to his classification of the Greeks with the Jews. Compared with the Jews the Greeks are living *anomōs*, because they have not the Law of Moses. Yet they are thereby not excused. Though living without the Law of Moses, they must nevertheless be charged with sinning, because, as he will show immediately, they are transgressing a law of their own which in substance is identical with the law of Moses.

That the Children of Israel, who have sinned in the Law, will be judged and condemned by the Law, no matter how much they may boast of a superior knowledge, and may pose as the teachers of the Gentiles, requires no elaborate argument: "for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but (only) the doers of the law shall be justified" (v. 13). But what about the Greeks who did not have the Law of Moses? How can their guilt be established? Yes, here the scope of the question must even be widened so as to include not only the Greeks, but all non-Jews.

Paul undertakes this proof in the following verse, v. 14, to which the first clause of v. 15 must be added: "For when the Gentiles (*ethnē*) which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts."

These words are clear in themselves and require no comment; but the facts which Paul here uses call for some further discussion. Paul is not drawing on his imagination when he says that the Gentiles are a law unto themselves because the very same work which the Law of Moses prescribes is written in their hearts. Paul knew the current systems of philosophy of his day, particularly of practical philosophy, of ethics. He met the leading philosophers at Athens on their own ground; he proclaimed the Gospel of Christ to them and called them to repentance. - It will be worth our while to review briefly some of the chief points of the prevalent systems.

The philosophy of the Greeks in Paul's day was not the same that it had been under Plato and Aristotle. The emphasis had greatly shifted. While the older philosophers had devoted themselves chiefly to the problems of metaphysics, those pertaining to the nature and the change of things, the later schools turned more to matters of ethics. Also Plato and Aristotle had discussed problems of ethics, but theirs was chiefly social ethics, considering man as a member of society, as a citizen; while the later schools gave attention preeminently to individual ethics. They could not, it is true, altogether avoid the problems of metaphysics, seeing that their ethical deductions were based on their metaphysical assumptions; but their prime interest was in the field of ethics.

In Athens Paul met Epicureans and Stoics.

In their metaphysics the Epicureans were materialists. They allowed only matter as really existing. The human soul they considered as composed of a very refined gas, which permeated the body and dissipated in death. Since they admitted no life after death, their ethical prescriptions were limited to conduct in this life. As already mentioned, they did not extensively cultivate a social ethics, telling man how to become a useful member of society; they concentrated on individual ethics, telling man how to get the most out of this life, how to attain *hēdonē*. Since misery is inevitable and pure joy unattainable, every man's aim must be to reduce pain to a minimum, coupled with a maximum of pleasure. They counseled moderation in all things. How the people heeded this advice may be seen from the common saying which Paul quotes in 1 Cor. 15, 32: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Already the most famous pupil of Epicurus, Metrodorus, reduced Epicurean ethics to the formula that "all good things have reference to the belly." It was apparently Epicurean philosophy that vexed the Corinthian Christians with doubts about the resurrection. On Areopagus Paul directed his remarks chiefly against the Stoic position.

Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, was a pantheist. The world is an unfolding of God, and will ultimately be reabsorbed into the godhead. The human soul is a spark of the deity, after death to return to its source. Everything is thus governed by an inexorable fate. Hence the supreme demand of ethics must be that man bring himself into conscious agreement with fate, striving for a willing surrender to the divine will. He must let neither pain nor pleasure affect him (*apatheia*). If things become unbearable and he can no longer control his passions: *exire licet*. - If we remember Zeno's basic pantheism, we shall also understand his rule: *Zēn kata physin*.

While the Stoics conceived of God as an impersonal being, so it seems, yet they were tolerant over against popular religion. On Areopagus Paul quoted from a poem of Cleanthes, who was a pupil of Zeno. Cleanthes addressed an ode of praise to Zeus, whose name he may seem to substitute for the Stoic Fate, yet hinting that even Zeus is subject to Fate. We here reproduce a German translation, taken from Chr. Ernst Luthardt's *Apologetische Vortraege* (4th edition, p. 228f. - An. abbreviated English translation by Walter H. Pater may be read in Will Durant's *The Life of Greece*, p. 653f.)

Hochster, unsterblicher Gott, vielnamiger, ewiger Herrscher,  
Waltender in der Natur, du Lenker des Alls nach Gesetzen,  
Heil dir! mit dir zu reden ist jeglichem Menschen gestattet:  
Sind wir doch deines Geschlechts. Ein Grundton wurde gegeben  
Jedem der Wesen zur Stimme, die leben und weben auf Erden.  
Damit will ich dich preisen und immer erheben dein Machtwort.  
Dir folgt jede der Welten, die hoch um die Erde sich waelzen,  
Wie du leitest, und deinem Gebot beugt jede sich willig.

Ohne dich wird kein Ding, du Gewaltiger, weder auf Erden  
 Noch in der goettlichen. Hoehe des Luftraums, noch in dem Meere,  
 Als was die Boesen vollbringen in eigener Geistesverblendung.  
 Aber das Unrecht weisst du zum Rechten hinwieder zu wenden.  
 Unform machst du zur Form, Unfreundliches artest du freundlich:  
 Also stimmest du alles zu Einem, das Boese zum Guten,  
 Dass es fuer Alles ein ein'ges in Ewigkeit geltendes Wort gibt,  
 Dem nur Boese sich unter den Sterblichen fluechtig entziehen,  
 Sinne beraubte! die, immer Erlangung des Guten erstrebend,  
 Nimmer erschauen des Gottes Gemeinspruch, den nicht vernehmen,  
 Dem sie mit Weisheit gehorchend ein freudiges Leben genoessen.  
 Aber sie stuermen dem Schoenen vorueber nach Jenem und Diesem:  
 Einer hat neidische Sucht in dem Herzen nach Ehre und Namen;  
 Schmucklos sinnet ein Andrer auf Klugheit nur and auf Raenke;  
 Andere trachten nach Luesten und suessen Genuessen des Leibes,  
 Maechtig sich sputend, bemueht das lockende Ziel zu erreichen.  
 Aber o Gott, Allgeber, Umdunkelter, Herrscher der Blitze,  
 Von dem berueckenden Wahnsinn, o Vater, erloese die Menschen,  
 Streif ihn von ihrem Gemuete und lass du sie finden die Richtschnur,  
 Welcher dich fuegend du Alles nach ewigem Rechte regierest,  
 Dass wir, geehrt von dir, dir wieder entgegenen mit Ehre,  
 Ewig besingend dein Tun, wie's ziemet den sterblich Gebornen.  
 Denn nicht fuer Menschen noch Goetter ist hoehere Wuerde gegeben  
 Als in Gerechtigkeit preisen die Allen gemeinsame Regel.

Making full allowance for the pantheistic undertone of this hymn to Zeus, we have here a clear expression of the natural knowledge of God and a recognition of our moral obligation over against Him to honor and obey Him, while envy, and trickery, and sensual lusts are set down as wickedness and insanity.

This ode is the effusion of a philosopher and poet. How the common man felt in his heart even about sins against the Sixth Commandment, which were generally condoned as a permissible gratification of a natural impulse, may be seen, e.g., from the remark of a certain Curio about Caesar, saying that he was *omnium mulierum vir et omnium virorum mulier*.

Paul was familiar with the ethical views generally held among the common people, he understood equally as well the philosophical systems in vogue among the educated classes. He had solid ground to stand on when he said that the Gentiles, although they had not the Law of Moses, were a law unto themselves; and that the works of Moses' Law were written in their hearts.

And yet, although he acknowledges the natural knowledge of God as correct in itself, as *alētheia*, and although he admits that the Gentiles, when they follow the dictates of their hearts, are doing "the things contained in the law," yet he has no positive use for either, neither for their natural knowledge nor for their civic righteousness, in his Gospel work. The only effect that he recognizes is that because of their knowledge the Gentiles stand condemned as inexcusable even in their best efforts.

## VI.

Since Stoeckhardt prefaces his discussion of Rom. 2, 14-16, with the remark that this short passage is among the most difficult of the entire epistle, and since he finds it necessary to devote a special paragraph to a discussion of *gar* and the relation of this section to the foregoing, we will do well not only to consider the text and the truths which it conveys most thoroughly, but also to review very carefully the line of thought that leads up to this section.

Beginning with v. 5, Paul has been discussing the final judgment of God on the last day. In v. 9 and 10 he referred to the special standing of both Jew and Greek. There is a *prōton* to be registered with reference to them both in case of a favorable and of an unfavorable verdict. Both have been highly favored by God in their

history. The Jews have received the revelation of God in the written law of Moses, and the Greeks were endowed with an exceptionally keen mind and with a deep appreciation of the beautiful and the ethical. In them in the first place was fulfilled the old prophecy of Noah that God would "enlarge Japheth" (Gen. 9, 27). Paul does not refer to this prophecy concerning Japheth, but he does very emphatically link both Jews and Greeks together, three times in his whole discourse, twice in connection with the final judgment. While with reference to their doing of the good he uses the simple verb *ergazein*, he uses the compound *katergazein* when referring to their doing of the evil, thereby showing in which direction his thoughts are running: both Jews and Greeks are steeped in evil, and hence will receive an adverse judgment on the last day.

This leads Paul to declare emphatically the great truth that there is no partiality with God, no consideration for outward advantages that any one may have. The Jews had the outward advantage of the written Law, the Greeks the advantage of their philosophy. This in itself does not give them any preferred standing; if anything, it increases their responsibility and the severity of their sentence. As many as have sinned without law will simply perish without law; but as many as have sinned in the law will not merely perish; they will be judged by the law. Paul applies the principle laid down by the Lord: "That servant which knew his lord's will and prepared not himself neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes" (Luke 12, 47, 48). The fairness of such judgment is evident from the rule that "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (v. 48).

The explanation which Paul offers in v. 13, though voicing an incontrovertible truth, that not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified, may at first sound rather trite to us. That is due chiefly to the colorless English word *hearer*. In the Greek Paul used *akroatai*. An *akroatēs* is not merely one who hears, an *akouōn*. An *akroatēs* is one who attends lectures, a pupil, a student. Now both Jews and Greeks were diligent students of the law, the Jews of the written Law of Moses, the Greeks of philosophical ethics. But all their research work in the law will not help them; only complete compliance with the demands of the law will justify.

Incidentally we note the clearly forensic character of *dikaioō*.

This line of thought Paul now continues with the difficult section v. 14-16, using as a connective the conjunction *gar*. - For a comparison I shall submit three of the more recent translations, the RSV, Goodspeed's, and Menge's.

V. 14. When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. (RSV) - When heathen who have no Law instinctively obey what the Law demands, even though they have no law, they are a law to themselves (Goodspeed). - *So oft naemlich Heiden, die doch das Gesetz nicht besitzen, von Natur die Forderungen des Gesetzes erfuehlen, so sind diese, da sie das Gesetz nicht besitzen, sich selbst ein Gesetz;*

V. 15. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them (RSV) - for they show that what the Law demands is written on their hearts, and their consciences will testify for them, and with their thoughts they will either accuse or perhaps defend themselves, (G.) - *sie beweisen ja-dadurch tatsaechlich, dass das vom Gesetz gebotene Tun ihnen ins Herz geschrieben ist, wofuer auch ihr Gewissen Zeugnis ablegt und ebenso ihre Gedanken, die im Widerstreit miteinander Anklagen erheben oder auch Entschuldigungen vorbringen.*

V. 16. On that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (RSV) - on that day when, as the good news I preach teaches, God through Christ Jesus judges what men have kept secret. (G.) - *Das wird sich an dem Tage zeigen, wo Gott die geheimen Vorgaenge im Herzen der Menschen richten wird, und zwar nach der Heilsbotschaft, die ich verkuendige, durch Jesus Christus.*

We shall not discuss these translations, we shall devote our attention to the text itself.

We notice that Paul here speaks of *ethnē*. He does not, as he did in v. 9. and 10, combine Jew and Greek. He does not even mention the eminently gifted and highly cultured Greeks in particular. He speaks of *ethnē* in general, of Gentiles of every nationality, simply in so far as they are Gentiles. Nor does he consider the Gentiles as constituting a group, as an entity. He does not say *ta ethnē*, the Gentiles, but uses the word without the defin-

ite article: he is speaking about any one who has the characteristics of a Gentile. About them he says by means of a participle with the definite article, which makes it equivalent to an English descriptive relative clause, that they have no law. He does not say *ton nomon*, as though he were referring specifically to the Mosaic Law. Of course, they have not the Law of Moses; but they may be "lawless" to an even greater extent: they may also be without a philosophically developed code of ethics. In short, they are not confronted by anything like a law to demand of them what they must do.

Of these Gentiles Paul says that they do the things demanded by the law, *ta tou nomou*. He does not say that they always do them, not even that they regularly do them. Nor does he say that they do them properly, so that the law must be satisfied with their obedience. He says *hotan poiōsin*, that is, whenever they do and to whatever extent it may be. As the verb *endeiknyntai* in the following verse indicates, he is thinking of outward acts which men can see and evaluate. In this respect Gentiles may do *ta tou nomou*.

An important remark of Paul is that the Gentiles do the commandments of the law *physei*, by nature. He opposes this idea to that of a law: they have no law to regulate their conduct, but they do the commandments of the law by nature. Their nature tells them the same things that are contained in the law. The Law of Moses and also the ethical codes of the Greek philosophers stood over against the people as demanding something of them, as imposing some duty upon them. The "lawless" Gentiles to whom Paul refers here, do the right thing as coming from within them, as being a characteristic of their nature. Yet the translation which Goodspeed offers is not correct. He says *instinctively*. If that were the case then these works of the Gentiles would automatically lose their ethical nature. Whatever is done by instinct is neither good nor bad; it is done without thinking, without choosing between several possibilities. Instinct cannot be separated from the nature of a thing, it is a part of the creature. Take away the natural instinct, and you have destroyed the being itself; it no longer is what it was before. When Paul here says *physei*, he does not want to say this is a part of their nature so that they have no choice in the matter. Else he could hardly have used *hotan*, whenever they do it; admitting by implication that there are times when they don't. Moreover, in the following he clearly distinguishes between the *physis* as such and the ethical concepts, of which he says that they are *written* in the Gentiles' hearts. As a tablet and the writing on it are two different things, so are the human heart and the works of the law written in it. Yet the two cannot be separated, the writing is indelible, though it may be badly blurred. – In this sense they act *physei*, in this sense they are a law unto themselves.

It is well to remind ourselves briefly of the aim which Paul is pursuing in this part of his argument. It is not to demonstrate that the Gentiles are capable of performing good works, it is not to determine the relative goodness of their works; it is to show God's absolute justice over against such as have sinned *anomōs*, in His consigning them to perdition. They sinned indeed *anomōs*, but they were not for that reason really *anomoī*, they were *ennomoī*. For although they had no code of laws confronting them and telling them what they must do, neither the Law of Moses nor the philosophical systems of ethics, they had the work of the law written in their hearts, so that they were a law unto themselves and knew by *physis* what to do. God did not judge them according to the superficial appearance of their case, He took all facts into due consideration. Their conscience will bear this out.

Before taking up our study of Paul's presentation concerning conscience, we may digress a little to review briefly what our Confessions have to say about the good works of natural man. Alluding to our text the Apology says: "Human reason naturally understands, in some way, the Law, for it has the same judgment divinely written in the mind" (Trgl., p. 121, 7). "Reason can work civil works" (p. 127, 27). "Although, therefore, civil works, i.e., the outward works of the Law, can be done, in a measure, without Christ and without the Holy Ghost from our inborn light" etc. (p. 157, 9). "Nor, indeed, do we deny liberty to the human will. The human will has liberty in the choice of works and things which reason comprehends by itself. It can to a certain extent render civil righteousness or the righteousness of works; it can speak of God, offer to God a certain service by an outward work, obey magistrates, parents; in the choice of an outward work it can restrain the hands from murder, from adultery, from theft. Since there is left in human nature reason and judgment concerning objects subjected to the senses, choice between these things, and the liberty and power to render civil

righteousness, are also left" (p. 335, 70). More passages of similar import might easily be adduced, in which the ability is ascribed to human reason of producing a (limited) civic righteousness.

We now reproduce in full the most striking passage which concedes that God rewards civic righteousness. "Now, we think concerning the righteousness of reason thus, namely, that *God requires it*, and that, because of God's commandment, the honorable works which the Decalog commands must necessarily be performed, according to the passage Gal. 3, 24: 'The Law was our schoolmaster'; likewise 1 Tim 1, 9: 'The Law is made for the ungodly. For God wishes *those who are carnal* to be restrained by civil discipline, and to maintain this, He has given laws, letters, doctrine, magistrates, penalties. And this righteousness reason, by its own strength, can, to a certain extent, work, although it is often overcome by natural weakness, and by the devil impelling it to manifest crimes. Now, *although we cheerfully assign this righteousness of reason the praises that are due it, for this corrupt nature has no greater good* (in this life and in a worldly nature nothing is ever better than uprightness and virtue) and Aristotle says right: 'Neither the evening star nor the morning star is more beautiful than righteousness,' and *God also honors it with bodily rewards: yet it ought not to be praised with reproach to Christ*" (p. 127, 22-24).

What our Confessions consider as an undue praise of civic righteousness, as a praise "with reproach to Christ," they express in numerous places. "*Darum ist's gut, dass man dieses klar unterscheidet, naemlich, dass die Vernunft und freier Wille vermag, etlichermassen aeusserlich ehrbar zu leben; aber neugeboren werden, inwendig ander Herz, Sinn und Mut kriegen, das wirkt allein der Heilige Geist. Also bleibt weltliche, aeusserliche Zucht; denn Gott will ungeschicktes, wildes, freches Wesen und Leben nicht haben; und wird doch ein rechter Unterschied gemacht unter aeusserlichem Weltleben und -froem-migkeit - und der Froemmigkeit, die vor Gott gilt, die nicht philosophisch aeusserlich ist; sondern inwendig im Herzen*" (p., 336, 75). "In spiritual and divine things the intellect, heart, and will of the unregenerate man are utterly unable, by their own natural powers, to understand, believe, accept, think, will, begin, effect; do, work, or concur in working anything, but they are entirely dead to what is good, and corrupt, so that in man's nature since the Fall, before regeneration, there is not the least spark of spiritual power remaining, nor present, by which, of himself, he can prepare himself for God's grace, or accept the offered grace, nor be capable of it for and of himself; or apply or accommodate himself thereto, or by his own powers be able of himself, as of himself, to aid, do, work, or concur in working anything towards his conversion, either wholly, or half, or in any, even the least or most inconsiderable part, but that he is the servant (and slave) of sin (John 8, 34) and a captive of the devil, by whom he is moved (Eph. 2, 2; 2 Tim: 2, 26). *Hence the natural free will according to its perverted disposition and nature is strong and active only with respect to what is displeasing and contrary to God*" (p. 883, 7).

And this applies to civic righteousness in its most highly developed forms.

Dr. F. Pieper, in his *Christliche Dogmatik*, asks the question: *Was ist von diesen Werken* (viz. good works of the Gentiles) *zu halten?* He answers: *Die bessere Lehrweise ist die, wenn wir mit dem lutherischen Bekenntnis die guten Werke der Heiden und die der Christen auf die zwei voellig verschiedenen Gebiete verweisen, denen sie tatsaechlich angehoeren. . . . Wir unterscheiden daher mit dem lutherischen Bekenntnis scharf zwischen Weltreich und christlicher Kirche. Im Weltreich sind die guten Werke der Heiden gut, auf dem Gebiet der christlichen Kirche sind sie Suende. So durchweg das lutherische Bekenntnis; und man muss sich wundern, dass in der christlichen Kirche eine andere Lehre sich ans Licht wagen durfte und darf* (Vol. III, p. 53f.)\*\*

This evaluation of the good works of the Gentiles contained in the Lutheran Confessions and voiced by sound Lutheran theologians is in full agreement with Paul's own verdict. Did he not emphatically declare that all people are without excuse, whether they give themselves over to their lusts, or whether they start reform movements? And here in v. 14, he shows that they cannot plead ignorance. By every one of their occasional

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\*\* It was recently quoted by some one as a "heroic" saying of Dr. Dallmann, i.e., as a hyperbole which must be taken with a liberal dose of salt, that the virtues of the Gentiles are nothing but glittering vices. Dr. Pieper in the above quotation says the same, and not with a twinkle in his eye. The expression is current among Lutheran dogmaticians and can be traced back to Augustine, who called the virtues of Gentiles *splendida peccata* (or *vitia*).

efforts (*hotan*) they give unmistakable evidence (*endeiknyntai*) that the work of the law is written within their heart.

It is "written," Paul says, *grapton*. Who wrote it? Not they themselves. This inscribed law is not the result of their speculation, reached perhaps after a slow and laborious process of reasoning by the trial and error method. It was not found by men on the basis of their experience and observation to be the most expedient to regulate human conduct as the relations of society became more complex. It consists not of conventions which through usage and training produced a custom, which then gradually acquired the force of a law. No, this inscribed law, rather, forms the starting point of all ethical thinking and judging. Men did not write it into their own hearts, they found it there written by another hand.

Who then wrote it? As a synonymous expression for the same thought Paul said in the previous verse that the Gentiles do the demands of the law by nature, *physei*. This answers the question as to who wrote the law into the hearts of men. The same God who created the *physis* is also the author of the inscribed law. Just as God in creation implanted a knowledge of Himself, of His eternal power and godhead, into the hearts of men, so He also implanted a knowledge of His holy will.

The Gentiles, by their conduct, show that they realize the authority of the inscribed law. They realize that they did not make this law themselves, and that thus they do not have it in their own hand to change it as it may suit them. This law is something which exists independently of their wishes. They may not like it, they may hate its provisions: that does not affect the law in the least. It does not yield to their wishes. It is unrelenting in its demands. Moreover, they realize that the law has authority over them which they must regard. It can demand respect for its commands. They realize that there is some one behind it who will enforce submission, be it by obedience, be it by suffering the punishment.

After having thus emphatically established the fact that all Gentiles have a law which they must acknowledge as divine and binding on them, Paul now adds two further facts in the following words: "their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

The first point we notice is that Paul sharply distinguishes between conscience and the inscribed law. They are not the same. Some people try to identify the two, but without any foundation in our text. Paul uses the word *symmartyrousēs*, i.e., *jointly* bearing testimony, or "also bearing witness," as the KJV has it.

On the other hand, conscience is not the same as the thoughts that fill the heart, accusing and condemning the person, sometimes also vindicating him. - Thus there are three things that Paul distinguishes: there is the inscribed law, there is conscience, and there is the flood of judging thoughts.

What is the relation of the three to each other?

The relation of conscience to the inscribed law is indicated in the word, *symmartyrousēs*: it joins in bearing witness. It joins hands with the inscribed law. The inscribed law testifies to its own divine origin: it was written, not by men, not by experience, not by convention, but it was written before men could formulate any ordinance or profit by their experience, it was written when their very nature was fashioned, it was written by their Creator. This is the testimony of the inscribed law about itself and its own origin. In this witness it is joined by conscience. Conscience is a second witness who fully corroborates the testimony given by the first.

We see from this that conscience is more than an activity of the intellect. Compare S. J. Baumgarten's definition: *Der Gebrauch seines Verstandes bei Beurteilung seiner Handlungen nach dem Gesetz ist das Gewissen*. It is more than a merely moral function. Compare Quenstedt's definition: *Lex est regula universalis, jubens tut vetans. At conscientia est examen sui ipsius ad istam regulam*. Leaving out of consideration that Quenstedt is really describing the activity of conscience, not defining it strictly according to its essence, we see that he finds no more in conscience than a moral function, judging the ethical merits or demerits of our conduct. According to Paul it is much more. In chap. 1, 19, he had made the sweeping statement about the *gnōston tou theou* in its widest range: "God hath showed it unto them." That includes also, according to chap. 2, 15, a knowledge of His holy will as it is expressed in the inscribed law. And in turn, this is also the content of the testimony of conscience. Hoenecke's definition covers the point: *Das Gewissen ist Bewusstsein von Gott als dem im Sittengesetz sich als heilig offenbarenden und Heiligkeit fordernden Gott (Dogmatik II, p. 364)*. It amounts to the same when in another connection he defines conscience as *das Bewusstsein von der Verpflichtung durch das*

*Gesetz als Gesetz Gottes, wie immer auch dabei Gott mag vorgestellt werden* (Cf. 1. c. footnote). Conscience is a religious function. It is a consciousness, *syneidēsis*, of man concerning his relation to the holy God, a consciousness which attests the inscribed law as the law of God and the demands of this law as divinely binding.

Conscience sets in motion the thoughts of the heart concerning a man's relation toward his God. Paul intimates that the thoughts will in the great majority of cases be accusing thoughts, although he grants that occasionally they may also rise to the defense of a person. Every time a person has violated the inscribed law, conscience will trouble him and the thoughts aroused by his conscience will be filled with fear, because, as Luther expresses it, *sie fuehlen, wie sie mit Gott uebel daran sind*.

Paul does not say that conscience is always correct, just as little as he says that the inscribed law is always correctly understood. God inscribed the law, and then it was a perfectly reliable expression of His holy will. He also gave man his conscience, and then it was an infallible witness. But as through the fall the entire nature of man became corrupt, so did also the two endowments of conscience and the inscribed law. The inscribed law is no longer clearly legible, and conscience is subject to error. Yet conscience still functions sufficiently, so that a man will have to accept God's judgment, based on the inscribed law and the testimony of conscience, as just in his own case; for God does not judge according to outward appearance, there is no *prosōpolēmpsia* with Him. He judges according to the *kardia* (cf. 2 Cor. 5, 12).

That conscience is more than an intellectual judgment, more also than an ethical judgment concerning right and wrong, that it is a religious function, becomes perfectly plain from the last verse to be discussed, v. 16: "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel."

The connection of this verse is not evident at once in the English Bible, "in the day" being a literal rendering of the Greek *en hē(i) hēmera(i)*. This sounds like an adverbial phrase of time. Yet the idea of time does not seem to fit the picture. In the preceding verse Paul spoke of the activity of conscience, arousing thoughts which accuse or defend. This process was going on in Paul's day, had been going on before, and is still going on today. It is not confined to the day of judgment, rather, on that day another judge will take over. The idea that Paul is here fixing a date has caused other difficulties. What is the tense of the verb? *Krinei* admits of two accents. It may have a circumflex on the ultimate, which would make it future; or it may have an acute on the penult, making it present. The future would fit the coming day of judgment very naturally; the present might be understood as a timeless description of that future day. The time idea induced some to assume that Paul is here not referring to the final judgment, but is speaking of a judgment which is going on now, and is being carried out by the Gospel. But in v. 5ff. Paul had very distinctly pointed to the judgment on the last day, so that his presentation would become rather unclear if here, in the end of the section, he would adopt a different use of the expression without in some way indicating the change.

The time idea thus posing questions to which it is difficult to find a satisfactory answer, it behoves us to investigate whether the *en* phrase may not have some other meaning. Luther translated *auf den Tag*, as though Paul had written *eis tēn hēmeran*. Yet he is closer to the real sense than those who cling to the time idea. The Greek *en* conveys the general idea of connection. The accusing and excusing thoughts in some way stand in relation to the last day. This is not difficult to grasp. If man in his conscience did not realize that a day of final reckoning is coming, what influence could conscience have on his conduct? If the Epicurean theory were right that death ends our existence, that as our bodies disintegrate, so also our soul evanesces into nothing, then conscience with its demands, with its testimony, with its accusations would only make itself ridiculous. The natural course indicated by the circumstances would then be the one generally followed by the Epicureans: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." But if there is a day of judgment coming in which God Himself will be the judge, and if then not only the overt acts of men will be examined, but the most secret things will be subjected to judgment, then indeed conscience can demand to be heard. That is what Paul here says: conscience acts in connection with that great day, it anticipates the judgment of that day.

With this point Paul clinches the proposition that conscience is a religious function of the human soul, it deals with man in his relation to God. An appeal to a man's conscience is a religious appeal.

What does Paul wish to say with the phrase "according to my Gospel?" We need not waste any time on the possessive "my." Paul is not speaking about the Gospel in the form in which he is preaching it as contrasted



with that of other apostles. If that were his aim then *my* would have to be placed with some emphasis, which it is not in the Greek, being expressed by the unaccented, enclitic *mou*. In chap. 1, 1, he called himself an apostle *aphōrismenos eis euangelion theou*. Well may he then in chap. 2, 16, call the Gospel his Gospel. The stress is on the Gospel.

But what is the meaning of the preposition "according to"? Does it modify the whole thought complex that a judgment of the secret things will be held by God on the last day? Does Paul wish to present this truth as a part of his Gospel message? It is a truth confessed in the Second Article of the Apostolic Creed; but a reference to that in this connection would seem rather trite and would really weaken Paul's argument. What he has been stressing so far is that conscience knows about this coming judgment and reinforces its own authority by functioning in close connection with this judgment. Why should Paul here inject the thought that also according to the Gospel we are looking forward to such a judgment? - Stoeckhardt, following earlier exegetes, points out the proper meaning of *kata*. It modifies directly the verb *krinei*. The standard according to which God will judge men is the Gospel which Paul preaches. It is neither the Law of Moses, nor some philosophical system of ethics, nor the inscribed law, which God will apply to the deeds of men. He will gauge their lives by the Gospel.

This presents a rather startling turn in Paul's argument, and yet not strange or arbitrary in the least. Had he not from the very outset proclaimed the superior authority of the Gospel? Had he not used the law throughout so far merely as the dark background against which the Gospel would shine with all the more brilliant lustre? It is really quite natural, then, that now when his discussion of the wrath of God as revealed from heaven has reached a certain climax he should with a simple turn in the expression point out that the law-judgments of men will be superseded by a judgment according to the Gospel on the last day.

This truth is underscored by the fact that God will execute the final judgment, not in person, but by Jesus Christ. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son....And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." (John 5, 22. 27). Christ is the end of the law, who through His holy life and innocent suffering and death fulfilled all the demands of the Law. He will not on the last day reverse Himself. He will not revive the Law which He ended. Since judgment is committed to Him He will judge according to the standard which He Himself established by His death.

Paul was separated unto the Gospel. He was to replace the law-idea current among the people with faith in the Gospel. He knew that he could not graft the Gospel on the Law, nor incorporate a law program into his Gospel work. The two are mutually exclusive. He could point out, and he did point out, that by the Law is the knowledge of sin, so that every mouth may be stopped; he could point out that the law in any form makes men inexcusable: and then he must invite the poor, lost, and condemned creatures to accept the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation, overruling all Law.

If we now pause to review briefly the main thoughts that Paul developed so far, we realize the absolute exclusiveness of the Gospel. Paul is an apostle of the Gospel, to preach the Gospel, the whole Gospel, nothing but the Gospel. Everything that might further the Gospel he is not only permitted to use in his work, it is his duty to do so. If he neglects anything that might lead people to open their hearts to the Gospel, he would be unfaithful to his charge. Paul speaks of the natural knowledge of God, he speaks of reform endeavors, of civic righteousness, of conscience and its activity. What use can he make of these forces? Can he take over with his Gospel work where, e.g., the moral reformer leaves off? Can he continue to build on the reformer's program? We may be reasonably sure that the reformer would have been willing in due humility to offer his program to Paul to aid him in his work and to supplement his efforts.

Paul was unswerving in his attitude of separation from all moral forces outside the Gospel. He did not deny the truth of the natural knowledge of God. Coming from God Himself it cannot be false. He does not question the validity of the inscribed law, it was written by God into the hearts of men. He does not challenge the verdict of conscience. In fact, only by granting their original correctness can he justify his evaluation of these forces. His verdict concerning all of them is that they render men inexcusable. If these factors were false in themselves, their condemning verdict could not be accepted; but now it stands as God's own. Outside the Gospel, before rescued by the Gospel, all things are under the wrath of God. "All flesh is grass and *all the goodliness thereof* is as the flower of the field" (Is. 40, 6). If that were not so then Paul's Gospel would not only be

superfluous, it would be positively harmful. The sum and substance of his Gospel is a revelation of the righteousness of God from faith to faith. "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." That truth will upset the program of all moral reformers, vice versa.

The reason for this is not difficult to find. The source from which all reformers try to achieve their aim is, as Paul calls it in chap. 2, 8, *ex eritheias*, the mind of an hireling, the expectation of a reward, the *opinio legis*; while Paul's Gospel demands *metanoia*, repentance. *Metanoia*, a change of heart, is what John the Baptist preached in order to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. The risen Jesus told His disciples that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" Luke 24, 47). Repentance is what Paul preached on his mission journeys, as witness his words in Lystra and on Areopagus (Acts 14, 15; 17, 30). He faulted the reformer because he hardened his heart in impenitence. Only by way of repentance does the Gospel save a sinner. - Paul does not here say by what means repentance is produced in the heart of a sinner. He merely points out the unreconcilable difference between the Gospel and the principles of the reformer. The reformer uses the condemning verdict of God's natural revelation of Himself and His holy will as a motivation in his efforts at reform, while Paul asks the sinner to bow to their condemning verdict and to accept new life from the Gospel.

Paul did not deceive himself by stressing that a clean and honorable life is better than a life of vice and knavery; that civic righteousness, after all, is something good. And if it is something good, why should he in his Gospel work not approve of it and build on it? Civic righteousness is something good from the social standpoint, but from the spiritual standpoint it is sin. Paul did not confuse these two, he did not make himself guilty of a logical *quaternio*. Nor did Paul deceive himself that the reformers of his day and the schools which they founded were purely civic organizations. He knew that they were operating with the natural knowledge of God and with the highly religious function of the soul, called conscience. He steered clear of begging the question: he did not call an organization which emphasizes the "fulfillment of one's duty to God" as a person's highest obligation: a purely civil organization, without any religious element, - and then console himself that hence cooperation with it would not in itself constitute unionism.

In demanding repentance Paul did not fear failure. Just as he was fully aware that all efforts of the reformers achieved nothing else than to incite the wrath of God to greater fury, so on the other hand he was fully convinced that the Gospel, and the Gospel alone, was able to achieve its purpose of rendering the sinner righteous before God. It is the power of God unto salvation. It is not a weak, carnal implement, but mighty before God to the pulling down of strongholds. Any one who finds it necessary, or convenient and helpful, to supplement his Gospel work with other motives, no matter how much lip-service he may do to the Gospel, in truth does not fully trust the Gospel, he is secretly ashamed of the Gospel. Paul for his person has renounced the hidden things of shame; he does not adulterate the Word of God, but as of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God he speaks in Christ. He is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.

"What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3, 7-9).