

Natural revelation according to Romans 1:18 – 2:16.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Natural revelation as described in Romans 1:18 – 2:16 is a neglected topic in New Testament research. For many years it has been overshadowed by other theological problems, and as a theological theme it has often been opposed, minimized or rejected – unrightfully, in my opinion. Natural revelation is an essential element of a biblical theology of revelation and the doctrine of justification. This can be seen from the position of Romans 1:18 – 2:16 in the greater context of the Epistle to the Romans. The natural revelation of God and of the law are two crucial elements in Paul’s account of sin and of justification by faith, for it is by virtue of this revelation that Paul can prove that all men are without excuse when they stand guilty before God, and this universal guilt provides the background for the revelation of God’s righteousness in the gospel.

In the past one hundred years, research on the subject has been sparse, even though it has been relatively comprehensive as far as research in the history of religions background material goes. Substantial parts of the research have been dictated by dogmatic positions. Many contributions have been brief and paraphrastic. I am therefore of the opinion that a larger treatment of this topic is needed.

My approach has been textual. The intention has been to understand this passage in its Pauline context, and to give an exposition of Paul’s view.

The literature is unevenly divided. There is relatively much on Romans 1:20, but apart from that the literature becomes more and more scant the further down into Chapter One one moves. The only exception is 1:26-27 where the amount of literature is enormous. For these verses I have sought to make use of the most important contributions. The literature is more extensive for 2:1-5, 2:6-11, and 2:12-16.

The term ”natural theology” is ambiguous and theologically tainted, and therefore I do not use it. Instead I use two other terms: 1) “Natural revelation” (of God) where ”revelation” is to be taken in an objective sense referring to God having revealed himself in creation, nature, and history. When speaking of ”revelation” I am thinking exclusively of the objective side of revelation. 2) I also use the term “natural knowledge” (of God) where ”knowledge” is to be understood subjectively, referring to man’s knowledge of the God who has revealed Himself in creation, nature, and history. When speaking of the more narrow subject of natural law, I use the same terminology. ”Revelation” refers to the objective side of the revelation of the law, and ”knowledge” refers to the subjective side of the revelation: its being known by man. I also use some anachronistic terminology when this can adequately express the concepts and statements that I am expounding.

It is my thesis that Paul describes a natural revelation and knowledge of God, and that the

knowledge of God remains intact but suppressed in mankind. Paul also describes a natural revelation and knowledge of the law, and that the knowledge of the law remains intact in mankind. This is not a new thesis. As far as the revelation and knowledge of God are concerned I have, however, stated this more precisely and given an argumentation that people know God by the way He reveals Himself through His works, which I do not recall having seen before. As far as the revelation of wrath is concerned, I maintain that there are two reasons for this one being religious and the other ethical. This is a rare interpretation. And as far as the concept of "nature" in Romans 1:26-27 and 2:15 is concerned, I argue that "nature" stands for the law in man's nature, and that this law is revelation and knowledge for these people. The real contribution, however, is a new general exposition of natural revelation as it is described in Romans 1:18 – 2:16.¹

The purpose of this study, then, is to analyze the concept of natural revelation on the basis of Romans 1:18 – 2:16, describe which aspects of God's essence and law are being revealed, and furthermore answer the question of whether or not man receives this revelation, and if so, what happens with this knowledge in man.

Obviously I have learned much from my research into this passage. Besides the great classical interpreters, there are three contributions in particular which I value highly, those being two contributions by Bornkamm² and a dissertation by Gärtner.³

¹ The most recent major contribution is Bell, *No one seeks for God. An exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 1.18-3.20* from 1998. A broader study is Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology. The Gifford Lectures for 1991* from 1993.

² *Die Offenbarung des Zornes Gottes and Röm 1-3 and Gesetz und Natur: Röm 2,14-16.*

³ *The Areopagus Speech And Natural revelation.*

Chapter 2

Context

Romans 1:18 – 3:20 is the first main section of the Epistle to the Romans, and this section has as its intention to accuse all Jews and Greeks of being under sin (cf. 3:9,20).⁴ Romans 1:18 is clearly delimited from 1:16-17⁵ in that Paul in 1:17 has described a present, dynamic, and effective revelation of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in the gospel;⁶ ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν qualifies ἀποκαλύπτεται and describes the area within which the revelation is effective.⁷ As a contrast to this, Paul in 1:18 describes a present,⁸ dynamic, and effective revelation of ὀργὴ θεοῦ from heaven;⁹ ungodly and unrighteous people who suppress the truth through unrighteousness are the objects of the revelation of God's wrath.¹⁰ V. 18 is connected to the preceding by γὰρ, and the interpretation of γὰρ is determined by what category of people Paul is thinking of in v. 18. If Paul were thinking of all mankind – including the Jews – γὰρ might have a causal force.¹¹ In this case the effective and dynamic revelation of God's righteousness through the gospel and in the believers is substantiated by the assertion that outside the gospel (ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ), God's wrath is revealed effectively and dynamically in ungodly and unrighteous people.¹² This interpretation presupposes that ἀνθρώπων is to be understood as mankind, but that presupposition does not hold. As I will argue later, in 1:18-32 Paul is thinking of a section of mankind – Gentiles as well as Jews – whose religious characteristics are ungodliness, unrighteousness, suppression of the truth, and being under God's wrath. γὰρ might be explicative, since the revelation of God's wrath as a negative counterpart antithetically explicates the revelation of God's righteousness,¹³ but since v. 18 is more likely to be

⁴ I will not address the question of whether or not Paul's arguments are consistent, or if the description in 1:18 – 3:8 is sufficient to support his conclusion.

⁵ Cf. Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit*, p. 78-80, and Schmeller, *Paulus*, p. 232.

⁶ Thus Bornkamm, *Offenbarung*, pp. 9-10.

⁷ The quotation from Habakkuk in v. 17b confirms that the revelation is dynamic, because there Paul is describing the believer.

⁸ ἀποκαλύπτεται is a timeless present in the sense that wherever this type of ungodliness, unrighteousness and suppression of the truth through unrighteousness is found (cf. vv. 19-32), God's wrath is revealed; because of this correlative relation, Paul is describing a revelation in past, present, and future, as long as this category of people is to be found.

⁹ Cf. Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 47, and Nygren, *Romarna*, p. 104; Moo, *Romans*, p. 100, rightly rejects a cognitive understanding of ἀποκαλύπτεται and stresses the "historic" meaning of the verb: becoming reality.

¹⁰ Cf. Schlatter, *Gerechtigkeit*, p. 46. Because v. 17b and v. 18 are set antithetically with regard to the content, communication, and area of the revelation, the idea that ὀργὴ θεοῦ is also revealed in the gospel (thus Michel, *Römer*, p. 97, Cranfield, *Romans I*, pp. 109-110, and Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 102) is impossible, also in the cognitive sense that the wrath of God is only perceived in the gospel (thus Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, pp. 33-34, and Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 32, who writes that the revelation of God's wrath is the flip side of the gospel – only in the gospel is God's wrath, which is an unrecognized though present reality, disclosed). It is also not possible to perceive the revelation of God's righteousness as one revelation which manifests itself as grace and love when it is bound to Christ and the faith, but which turns to wrath when it encounters opposition (thus Reicke, *Theologie*, pp. 154-155).

¹¹ Thus Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 101, and Moo, *Romans*, p. 99.

¹² Thus Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, pp. 52-53, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 108.

¹³ Thus Schmeller, *Paulus*, p. 232.

understood as a negative delimitation than as an explication, it is better to understand γάρ as a transition particle (cf. Romans 2:25; 1 Corinthians 10:1; 2 Corinthians 1:12, and 1 Thessalonians 2:1).¹⁴

It is generally agreed that 1:18-32 forms a unit, and that Paul begins a new paragraph in 2:1. Stylistically and thematically, 2:1-5 appears as a new paragraph; stylistically because of the address ὦ ἄνθρωπε in the 2nd person singular¹⁵ and because Paul changes to a diatribe-like style¹⁶ and thematically because in 2:1-5 Paul describes a new category of people. There are two decisive arguments showing that Paul is describing a new category of people in 2:1-5. Firstly, the two categories have fundamentally different attitudes towards violations of God's commandments, expressed in the verbs συνευδοκοῦσιν (1,32) and κρίνεις (2,1), and secondly, the two categories stand in different relationships to God's wrath, expressed in ἀποκαλύπτεται ὀργή θεοῦ (1,18), describing a present revelation of wrath, and θησαυρίζεις σεαυτῷ ὀργήν (2,5), describing the relationship to the eschatological wrath.

Syntactically, verse 6 belongs together with verse 5, but thematically, 2:6-11 form a new unit. In 2:1-5 Paul describes a distinct category of people, while 2:6-11 is universalistic. The distinct category of people is among his contemporaries, living in the shadow of the eschatological wrath, storing up wrath against themselves for the day of wrath, while 2:6-11 is eschatological and describes the day of wrath.

2:12-16 form a new unit. It stands explicatively of verse 11 and explains the impartiality of God, manifesting itself in His consideration of people's different situations in His judgment upon the same sin. All who sinned apart from the law will perish apart from the law, and all who sinned under the law will be judged by the law. The reason Paul gives for this is that it is not those who hear the law, but those who obey the law, which will be declared righteous. Sin presupposes a knowledge of God's law. Judgment presupposes a knowledge of God's law. Therefore, those who sinned "apart from the law" must have some knowledge of God's law. This, then, Paul explains in verses 14-16, writing about the Gentiles' knowledge of God's law.

In verse 17 Paul begins a new paragraph. Stylistically and thematically, the passage 2:17-24 distinguishes itself from the previous verses, and in 2:17-24 Paul describes the religious Jew as a type.

In Romans 1:18 – 3:20, then, Paul divides humankind into three categories (1:18-32, 2:1-5, and 2:17-24). Each time Paul describes a new category, he begins with a precise characterization.

¹⁴ Thus Lietzmann, *Römer*, p. 31, and Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 35. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 54, takes γάρ in an adversative sense.

¹⁵ Cf. Schmeller, *Paulus*, p. 232.

¹⁶ Thus Michel, *Römer*, p. 112, Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 50, and Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 122.

This enables us to identify the three groups. The first category is described in 1:18-32. In verse 18 Paul speaks of the first category as "human beings" (ἄνθρώπων). Of these "human beings", Paul says four things. Firstly, God's wrath is revealed in the lives of these people. What is thought of is an abandonment to sin (verses 24-31). Secondly, they are characterized as ungodly because of their rejection of God and their idolatry (verses 21-23 and 25). Thirdly, they are characterized as unrighteous because they have engaged themselves in sexual impurity, homosexual practice, and unrighteousness in general (verses 24-31). Fourthly, they are characterized as people who suppress the truth about God through unrighteousness. Paul uses a non-ethnic term, "men", to describe them. The continuation shows that "men" in verse 18 is to be understood in a non-ethnic sense. In the following verses, Paul uses no ethnic terms, and most decisively: he describes these people on the basis of a natural revelation. This revelation is universal and continuous. It began at creation. This universal revelation frames the term "men" as a non-ethnic and general category. Thus Paul is describing all people – be they Gentiles or Jews – who fit these characteristics: revelation of wrath, ungodliness, unrighteousness, and suppression of the truth.

The other category is described in 2:1-5. Again Paul begins with a precise characterization. In 2:1 Paul addresses a representative of this category as "a human being" (ἄνθρωπε). Of this "human being", Paul says four things. Firstly, Paul characterizes this man as a person who condemns those who violate God's commandments. What is thought of is a condemnation of the first category of people. Secondly, Paul characterizes this man as someone who violates God's commandments himself. He does the same things as those whom he condemns. Thirdly, this "man" is placed in a relationship to the natural revelation through the word διὸ which refers to 1:32. Natural revelation is the revelatory context for the condemning man. Fourthly, this man is characterized in relation to the eschatological wrath of God. This man is not experiencing God's present wrath as an abandonment to sin, but lives with an expectation of the coming day of judgment. In 2:1-5, then, Paul is describing a new category of people who take a different attitude towards God's commandments than does the first category, and who have a different relationship to God's present wrath than does the first group. Paul uses the general and non-ethnic word "human being" to describe them. The context shows that "man" in verse 1 is to be understood in a non-ethnic sense. The addition, "whoever judges" keeps "man" in its general sense. Paul uses no ethnic terms in what follows, and he describes these people from the point of view of natural revelation. These facts establish "man" as a non-ethnic and general category. Thus Paul is describing all people – be they Gentiles or Jews – who possess these characteristics: i.e. condemnation, violation, and opposition.

The third category is found in 2:17-24. Stylistically and thematically, 2:17-24 appears to be related to 2:1-5. In both passages, Paul uses a diatribe-like style, and in both passages the intention

is to establish that the category of people in question violate God's commandments. Again Paul begins with a precise characterization. In verse 17 he addresses a person who calls himself "a Jew", so unlike the two preceding categories Paul uses an ethnic term, and since in verses 17-20 "Jew" is described as a religious type, "Jew" in this passage is an ethno-religious term. Of the religious Jew Paul says five things. Firstly, he trusts in the law. Secondly, he boasts about God. Thirdly, he knows the law. Fourthly, he considers himself an instructor of others, and fifthly, the religious Jew is a violator of God's law. In spite of similarities with the category described in Romans 2:1-5, this is a new category. Here Paul is using an ethnic term, he is describing "the Jew" on the basis of the Old Testament law, and he is describing "the Jew" as part of the covenant people (verse 24). These facts establish "Jew" in its religio-ethnic sense. Thus in 2:17-24 Paul is describing all religious Jews who possess these characteristics.

Summing up. Romans 1:18 – 3:20 Paul divides mankind into three categories, all of which are described in relation to God. They are all described from the point of view of the revelation of God – be it the natural or the special revelation. They are all described in their opposition to God. Paul does this directly and markedly in the case of the first category: Paul speaks of their ungodliness, which consists in rejection of God and in idolatry. He does it directly and less markedly in the case of the second category: Paul speaks of their stubbornness and their unrepentant heart (verse 5). In analogy with the first category, the second category is characterized by the same ungodliness, which consists in rejection of God and in idolatry. For this category of man also encounters God through His works (1:20) rejects Him, and becomes involved in idolatry. Paul does it directly and again less markedly in the case of the third category: Paul speaks of their violation, and the fact that through their violations they dishonor God. They are not idolaters like the others, since their worship is shaped by God's revelation in the Old Testament. But the religious Jew is also among those who do not seek God. All three categories are described in their opposition to God's commandments. The first category know God's commandments (verse 32), but are in opposition to them in behaviour and attitude. They are the marked, obvious, and conscious sinners in the ethical sphere. They defend their sin and suppress the truth about God through their unrighteousness. The other category knows God's commandments (cf, the correlation with 1:32 and verse 2), but on the interhuman level they are not in opposition to them in behaviour and attitude. They condemn moral sin. They are the "hidden sinners" who also violate God's commandments. This happens in secret and in temptation and fall. They do not defend their sin; rather, they deny it. They are not marked, obvious, and conscious sinners, and therefore they are not struck by God's wrath here in time. They are not abandoned to sin. By their unrighteousness they distance themselves from God and show contempt for His tolerance. The third category knows God's commandments from the Law of Moses. On the

interhuman level they identify themselves with the law and wish to guide others in the law. They do not defend sin, but deny it. They are not marked, obvious, and conscious sinners, and therefore they are not struck by God's present wrath. But by their unrighteousness they distance themselves from God.

Chapter 3

The ungodly and unrighteous (Romans 1:18-32)

In Romans 1:18 – 3:20, Paul divides humankind into three categories. The first category is described in 1:18-32. In the following I will analyze the text verse for verse, and I will begin with the structure of the text.

3.1. Structure

Verse 18 has a programmatic function in the text, in that the verse stands as an interpreting summary that introduces the theme of the passage. In v.18 Paul speaks of a revelation of God's wrath which he describes in vv. 24, 26-27, and 28; ἀποκαλύπτεται ὀργή θεοῦ has the interpretative function of qualifying the triple παρέδωκεν (vv. 24,26,28) as a revelation of God's wrath. In v. 18 Paul speaks of ungodliness and unrighteousness which are described in vv. 21-32;¹⁷ ἀσέβειαν and ἀδικίαν have interpreting function, in that Paul uses them to point out that both ungodliness and unrighteousness are causes of the revelation of God's wrath. In v. 18 Paul speaks of a knowledge of the truth, and in vv. 19-20 Paul describes the revelation and communication of truth to human beings; the existence of the truth among the people who suppress it has an interpreting function, in that Paul uses it to point out that the process of darkening in vv. 21-23 does not mean that man's knowledge of the truth is eliminated. In v. 18 Paul also mentions a suppression of the truth through unrighteousness, which points out that man uses his unrighteousness as a weapon against the truth. Hence, the programmatic v. 18 is the key to the interpretation of vv. 19-32.

Verses 19-32 stand as an explication of v. 18. The first part of the explication is vv. 19-23, which make up a syntactic and thematic unit. Syntactically, vv. 19-21 belong together, and v. 21 commences a description of a process that is concluded with v. 23.¹⁸ In regard to the question of where the description of the wrath begins, Michel¹⁹ has argued that it begins in v. 21 because of the passive forms in vv. 21-22.²⁰ The argument is, however, weakened by the presence in vv. 21-23 of both passive and active forms, and it is further weakened by the triple marked structure-creating and structure-marking διὸ/διὰ τοῦτο/καθὼς παρέδωκεν in vv. 24, 26, and 28, which thematically

¹⁷ I understand ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν in v. 24 as a description of the condition that these people are in *as* they are struck by God's wrath, and εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν (v. 24) as a description of what they are abandoned to; equally, I understand αἱ τε γὰρ θήλειαι ... κατεργαζόμενοι (vv.26-27abc) as a description of these people's condition *as* they are struck by God's wrath, and εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας (v. 26) as a description of what they are abandoned to, and equally πεπληρωμένους κτλ. (vv. 29-31) as a description of these people's condition *as* they are struck by God's wrath, and εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν (v. 28) as a description of what they are abandoned to.

¹⁸ It is not correct when Wilckens, *Romer I*, p. 95, writes that vv. 19-21 and vv. 22-24 stand in parallel as two explications of v. 18, because διότι in v. 21 gives the reason for the end of v. 20, and because v. 21 commences a description of a process that is concluded with v. 23.

¹⁹ Michel, *Römer*, p. 102.

²⁰ Thus also Klöpper, *Gotteserkenntnis*, pp. 178s, Käsemann, *Römer*, pp. 39-40, and Popkes, *Aufbau*, pp. 492 and 496.

introduces the description of God's wrath. Why does Paul not write διὸ/διὰ τοῦτο παρέδωκεν in v. 21 if he is already describing God's wrath in vv. 21ss? On the basis of the thematic "therefore God abandoned them to", it is better to understand the passive forms in vv. 21-22 as descriptions of an inevitable consequence of the rejection of God.²¹

Paul has structured the explication (vv. 19-32) around the three distinct structure marks in vv. 24, 26, and 28 (διὸ/διὰ τοῦτο/καθὼς παρέδωκεν).²² Since it is doubtful whether οἵτινες can commence an independent clause in Paul²³ it is better to link v. 25 together with v. 24. Verses 19-23 form a unit where vv. 21-23 describe the guilt and the consequences of the rejection of God, v. 24 is related to vv. 21-23 and describes the punishment and the guilt in the ethical sphere, and v. 25 is related to v. 24 and has a resuming and explicating function, emphasizing the guilt. V. 26a commences the second discussion of God's punishment and of the guilt in the ethical sphere, consisting of vv. 26-27; v. 26 (διὰ τοῦτο), however, is related to v. 25 which describes the guilt, so v. 25 has a double function in the text. In v. 28 the third discussion of God's punishment and of the guilt in the ethical sphere is commenced. Paul rounds off with verse 32 which has a resuming and interpreting function in that the verse emphasizes the knowledge of God's righteous decree, and the continued opposition to God's commandments.

Thus in 1:18-32 Paul describes a process of judgment where the grounds of judgment, the evidence, and the sentence are discussed.²⁴

3.2. A programmatic statement (v. 18).

As we have seen, v. 18 has programmatic function in 1:18-32 because the verse stands as an interpreting summary that introduces the theme of the passage. Verses 19-32 stand as an explication of v. 18. In vv. 18-32 Paul is describing a section of mankind, and in v. 18 he mentions the most important characteristics of this category of people: ungodliness, unrighteousness, suppression of the truth, and God's judgment of wrath in their lives. Paul is thinking primarily of Gentiles since he is describing them from the point of view of natural revelation (cf. esp. vv. 19-20) which suggests that Paul is primarily thinking of non-Jews. But Paul is not exclusively thinking of Gentiles, since the allusion to Israel's idolatry in v. 23 (cf. Psalm 106:20 and Jeremiah 2:11) suggests that Paul is also thinking of Jews who possess these characteristics. Hence, Paul is levelling the ethnic distinction between Gentiles and Jews, and therefore he uses the general term ἄνθρωπος in v. 18.

²¹ Thereby the main argument for Popke's complicated overlapping structure, where v. 24 forms the end of a paragraph while vv. 21-24 is also the first part of the next paragraph, which is built up of three parallel parts, vv. 21-24, vv. 25-27, and vv. 28-31 (*Aufbau*, pp. 497s), falls away.

²² Cf. Popkes, *Aufbau*, p. 492.

²³ There are no examples of οἵτινες commencing an independent clause in Paul. Cf. Bassler, *Impartiality*, p. 202.

²⁴ Cf. Baasland, *Cognitio*, pp. 202-203.

I will save the interpretation of ἀποκαλύπτεται ὀργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ until I get to v. 24. The sphere where God's wrath is revealed is described with the construction ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν ... κατεχόντων (v. 18b), and in the following I will give a closer analysis of the three characteristics²⁵ which Paul mentions in relation to this category of people. The first two (ἀσέβεια and ἀδικία) I will consider together. The understanding of ἀσέβεια and ἀδικία is much debated, and the following interpretations should be mentioned.

1) ἀσέβεια and ἀδικία are antonymous; ἀσέβεια refers to an offence against God's honor²⁶ or of the first tablet of the law,²⁷ and ἀδικία refers to an offence against God's law²⁸ or of the second tablet of the law.²⁹

2) ἀσέβεια and ἀδικία are synonymous,³⁰ πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν καὶ ἀδικίαν ἀνθρώπων being an all-encompassing phrase without a clear distinction between ἀσέβειαν and ἀδικίαν, and the summarizing ἐν ἀδικίᾳ shows that Paul has used the words synonymously.³¹

3) ἀσέβεια and ἀδικία are partially synonymous. Schrenk³² wants to maintain a distinction between ἀσέβεια and ἀδικία, ἀσέβεια referring to a perverted cult, and ἀδικία referring to sexual and social perversion, but with a referral to ἀνθρώπων τῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων he adds that a razor-sharp distinction between the religious and the moral aspect cannot be maintained.

On the basis of the lexical meaning of the words,³³ ἀσέβεια may denote the godlessness of these people, and ἀδικία may denote their unrighteousness. In that v. 18 has an interpreting function in the context, it would be natural if ἀσέβειαν referred to these people's rejection of God and to their idolatry (vv. 21-23, 25, 28);³⁴ the two constitutive elements in ἀσέβειαν hence being opposition to God, and idolatry.³⁵ Also, it would be natural if ἀδικίαν referred to these people's rebellion against God's commandments. Verses 24-32 reveal that these people's idolatry is accompanied by rebellion against God's commandments, and ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν (v. 24), vv. 26b-27abc, vv. 29-31, and v. 32 are a description of these people's rebellion

²⁵ I will leave out the revelation of wrath.

²⁶ Thus Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 41, Schat Petersen, *Romerne*, p. 29, Zahn, *Römer*, pp. 89-90, Moe, *Romerne*, p. 74, and Murray, *Romans*, p. 36.

²⁷ Thus Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 49, and Michel, *Römer*, pp. 98-99.

²⁸ Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 41, Moe, *Romerne*, p. 74, and Murray, *Romans*, p. 36.

²⁹ Thus Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 49, and Michel, *Römer*, pp. 98-99.

³⁰ Thus Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 112, Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 55-56, and Limbeck, ἀδικέω, *EDNT I*, p. 32.

³¹ In LXX there are a number of examples of the two words being used together without any distinction (e.g. Psalm 73:6; Proverbs 11:5; Hosea 10:13; Micah 7:18, and Ezekiel 18:30).

³² Schrenk, ἀδικία, *TWNT I*, p. 156.

³³ Cf. Schrenk, ἀδικία, *TWNT I*, pp. 153-157, Bauer, cols. 32-33+229, Louw/Nida, 88.21 and 53.10, and Limbeck, ἀδικέω, *EDNT I*, p. 32.

³⁴ Thus Gärtner, *Areopagus*, pp. 74-76.

³⁵ The structure supports this interpretation in that the sequence in v. 18 with ἀσέβειαν first, then ἀδικίαν is repeated in the description in vv. 19-32.

against God's commandments, and consequently, God's wrath strikes them in their unrighteousness and abandons them to this unrighteousness.³⁶ ἀδικίαν, then, refers to the ethical unrighteousness of these people,³⁷ but not only that, for there is inherent in ἀδικίαν an active opposition to and hostility towards God. This strong opposition to God is expressed in ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων which reveals that the unrighteousness is also an activity contrary to the truth – which is the knowledge of God.³⁸ ἀδικίαν contains an oppositional strength and power against God, and hence it also contains a religious element. The two constitutive elements in ἀδικίαν, therefore, are violation of God's commandments (the ethical aspect), and opposition to God (the religious aspect). And therefore, ἀσέβειαν and ἀδικίαν are partially synonymous, in that they have opposition to God in common.

The third characteristic found with this category of people is that they suppress the truth with unrighteousness. τὴν ἀλήθειαν is a summary of the content of the natural revelation of God. In the context, τὴν ἀλήθειαν is defined on the basis of the explanation given in v. 19 where Paul confirms that this category of people knows τὴν ἀλήθειαν, and the explanation – with its development in v. 20 – is a statement that God has revealed Himself through His works (τοῖς ποιήμασιν, v. 20). τὴν ἀλήθειαν, then, refers to the revelation of God,³⁹ and τὴν ἀλήθειαν equals τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ (v. 19), which is defined in v. 20 as τὰ ἄοράτα αὐτοῦ. τὴν ἀλήθειαν, then, is a revelatory term, referring to God⁴⁰ as He reveals Himself through His works.⁴¹ And as far as the connotative sense of the word is concerned, it is a fair interpretation that τὴν ἀλήθειαν enhances the *reality* of the revealed God,⁴² because there is a contrast between God who is real, and the idols which are simply images without existence (cf. v. 23 and 25).⁴³

³⁶ Later I will argue for this understanding.

³⁷ Thus Gärtner, *Areopagus*, pp. 74-76. Michel, *Römer*, p. 99, and Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 56, interpret ἀδικίαν in contrast to δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ (v. 17), but that is misleading since the true contrast to δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is ὀργή θεοῦ (v. 18). Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 35, interprets ἀδικίαν in contrast to 3:5, but that is in conflict with the explication of ἀδικίαν in vv. 24-32.

³⁸ Rightly emphasized by Schlier, *Heiden*, p. 30, and Kuhlmann, *Theologia*, p. 40.

³⁹ Thus e.g. Klöpffer, *Gotteserkenntnis*, p. 170, Moe, *Romerne*, p. 75, Bultmann, ἀλήθεια, *TWNT I*, p. 244, Bornkamm, *Offenbarung*, p. 19, and Murray, *Romans*, p. 37. Barrett, *Romans*, p. 34, includes too much when he defines truth as "the fundamental truth of God as Creator, Judge, and Redeemer" – God as Redeemer is not included in the revelation of God which Paul describes in this passage.

⁴⁰ Contra Schlier, *Heiden*, p. 30, who defines "the truth" as "die wahre, unverdeckte Wirklichkeit der Dinge, in der sich Gottes Anspruch verbirgt und offenbart". Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 35, defines "the truth" as the fact that the world in its profanity belongs to the Creator: "Dem Schöpfer gehört die ganze Welt auch in ihrer Profanität. Das eben ist seine ἀλήθεια, nämlich wie in 19 die Erschlossenheit der göttlichen Welt und ihres Anspruches".

⁴¹ This does not mean a revelation of God's righteousness equalling His reliability and truthfulness (thus Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 56) or equalling His faithfulness towards mankind (thus Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 104, and Limbeck, ἀδικέω, *EDNT I*, p. 32). Cf. Also Dabelstein, *Beurteilung*, p. 76: "Aletheia meint das Wissen um Gott, wie es aus der Schöpferoffenbarung erkennbar ist. Es beinhaltet sowohl den verpflichtenden Anspruch des Schöpfers gegenüber seinen Geschöpfen als auch Gottes verpflichtende Treue gegenüber den Menschen".

⁴² Thus e.g. Bultmann, ἀλήθεια, *TWNT I*, p. 244.

⁴³ Reicke, *Theologie*, p. 159, defines "the truth" as man's righteousness, and Michel, *Römer*, p. 99, defines ἡ ἀλήθεια as "das rechte Verhalten": Schlatter, *Theologie*, p. 263-264, defines τὴν ἀλήθειαν as an ethical force; truth is a gift

The truth, then, is the content of the natural revelation of God, and the third characteristic of this category of people is that they suppress the truth through unrighteousness. The relevant lexical meaning of κατέχειν is a) "to prevent", "to hold back"⁴⁴, "to hinder" and b) "to hold down", "to suppress". Here κατεχόντων describes an activity which is directed against the truth,⁴⁵ and since this category of people have turned away from God religiously and morally and have exchanged the truth with the lie, "to hold down" or "to suppress" is the sense that best conveys Paul's meaning.⁴⁶ The participle κατεχόντων is descriptive and describes an *active* opposition which is effective in the sense that this category of people hinder that the intention behind the revelation of the truth can be fulfilled. God's intention was and is that these people should glorify and thank him (cf. v. 21), and worship and serve him (cf. v. 25).⁴⁷ κατεχόντων describes a relationship to the truth,⁴⁸ and the use of κατεχόντων implies that these people have received the revelation of God.⁴⁹ So τὴν ἀλήθειαν is, as far as the content is concerned, the content of the natural revelation of God, and since this revelation has been received, τὴν ἀλήθειαν is man's knowledge of God. Verse 18 stands as a header for the paragraph 1:18-32, and with this header Paul gives a summarizing characterization of this category of people and describes the characteristics of the people who have undergone the development described in vv. 19-23. God's wrath strikes those who have been given knowledge of God, rejected God, and turned to idolatry (vv. 24ff), and when Paul in v. 18 writes about God's wrath being revealed against this category of people, it means that τῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων is a clarifying characterization of these people's *continued* relationship towards the revelation which is communicated through τοῖς ποιήμασιν. τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων describes a relationship towards an abiding knowledge of God.⁵⁰ Through the choice

from God which makes the human action right.

⁴⁴ It is used of persons who are held back (Luke 4,42 and Philemon 13); in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 Paul speaks of something/someone that is holding back so that the Antichrist cannot be revealed.

⁴⁵ Cf. vv. 19-20 which describe the communication of the truth i.e. τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ to people.

⁴⁶ Thus Moe, *Romane*, p. 75, Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 112. Murray, *Romans*, p. 37, thinks that "to hold back" is the most adequate rendering because there is no grounds elsewhere in the NT for the translation "to suppress". This has no essential bearing on the meaning of the text since "to hold back" implies an *active* relationship to the truth: the truth is being held back with active resistance. The meaning "to maintain" or "to hold to" is impossible in this context because it gives a bizarre meaning – that they maintain the truth through unrighteousness – and because Paul mentions that they *exchange* the truth with the lie (v. 25). According to Wilckens, *Römer I*, pp. 104-105, κατέχειν means "to maintain, to take possession of", and the meaning is that these people take the truth captive, but Wilckens' interpretation cannot be reconciled with v. 25. Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 35, suggests that the verb has the meaning "binnen, bannen", but that is unlikely in the context.

⁴⁷ Contra Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 112, who thinks that the participle is a conative present participle.

⁴⁸ Rightly emphasized by Bornkamm, *Offenbarung*, p. 19, who writes that Paul is speaking of a real knowledge of God in v. 18.

⁴⁹ Cf. Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 35, Nygren, *Romarna*, p. 107, and Brooten, *Love*, pp. 221-2. Contra Reicke, *Theologie*, p. 159, who writes of the truth being in principle accessible to every person, and of the possibility of a natural theology.

⁵⁰ Thus Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 51, Bornkamm, *Offenbarung*, p. 19, and Gärtner, *Areopagus*, p. 79, who writes of a "persistent suppression of this revelation".

of the imperfective aspect an internal focus on the action is being taken, and the suppression is described from within as a durative process.⁵¹ The lexical meaning of the verb and the use of the plural form have influence on the aspectual function.⁵² κατέχειν describes an activity, and the plural form denotes that this activity takes place in a variety of situations, variety being understood distributively, meaning that each member of this category of people suppresses the truth.⁵³ With the present participle κατεχόντων Paul is emphasizing the habitual nature of the action in a distributive sense. As far as the relative temporal reference of the participle is concerned, it may be synchronous with the main verb, ἀποκαλύπτεται, or it may be timeless.

The suppression takes place ἐν ἀδικία, which could be sociative, meaning that these people are in unrighteousness, and the suppression takes place in that sphere, but since ἀδικίαν has already emphasized this element, it is better to interpret ἐν ἀδικία instrumentally, meaning that it is by means of the unrighteousness that the suppression takes place. ἐν ἀδικία not only expresses a violation of God's law, but as we have seen, there is an active opposition towards God inherent in ἀδικία. This strong opposition expresses itself in ἐν ἀδικία κατεχόντων, which shows that the "unrighteousness" is also an activity in opposition to the truth. ἀδικίαν is the weapon of this category of people against the revelation of God.

3.3. The reality of revelation and knowledge (vv. 19-20)

In vv. 18-32 Paul is describing a section of mankind, and in v. 18 he mentions the most important characteristics of this category of people: ungodliness, unrighteousness, suppression of the truth, and God's judgment of wrath in their lives. Paul is thinking primarily of Gentiles. We have seen that the two constitutive elements in ἀσέβειαν are opposition to God and idolatry. We have seen that the two constitutive elements in ἀδικίαν are violation of God's commandments and opposition to God. This category of people suppress the truth with unrighteousness, and we have seen, that "the truth" is a summary of the content of the natural revelation of God, and that the suppressing implies that these people have received the revelation of God. Paul writes about both revelation of God and knowledge of God among Gentiles. That needs an explanation. Paul provides it in vv. 19-

⁵¹ Cf. Fanning, *Aspect*, p. 103.

⁵² The aspect category is a partially subjective category, in that a writer can choose to take an internal or an external perspective on a situation. But the aspect category is only partially subjectively chosen, because the aspect of time and the character of the "Aktionsart" may narrow the possibilities. The mutual influence between aspect on one hand, and tense and "Aktionsart" on the other, means that a distinction must be made between the pure aspectual oppositions and the aspectual function. Following Bache, *Aspect*, pp. 33-145, and Fanning, *Aspect*, pp. 126Ff, I use the term "aspectual function" of the aspect in its interaction with tense, "Aktionsart", and other elements that have influence on the function of the aspect.

⁵³ Cf. Fanning, *Aspect*, p. 410; this corresponds to "general present participle" in Burton, *Moods*, p. 56, which is "timeless or indefinite" and describes those who "habitually or constantly do a given act".

3.3.1. The revelation of God (v. 19)

The first element in the explication of v. 18 consists in a demonstration that this category of people *knows* God. In v. 18 Paul spoke of a knowledge of the truth, and in v. 19a Paul gives the reason for the *existence* of truth in this category of people; διότι cannot give the reason for the revelation of God's wrath, or the existence of ungodliness and unrighteousness, or the suppression of the truth through unrighteousness, because with the exception of the end of v. 20, vv. 19-20 solely describe the communication of God's revelation to man.⁵⁴ τὴν ἀλήθειαν refers to the content of the revelation of God, and τῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικία κατεχόντων implies that this category of people have known God in the way that he has revealed himself. Hence, the reason given in v. 19 which describes the revelation of God as having been communicated to people, and thus the required equivalence between this reason and that for which this reason is given, arises only if Paul in v. 19a speaks of man's knowledge.

In Romans 1:19 Paul uses the expression τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ concerning the content of the revelation, and the expression may mean either "what is known of God"⁵⁵, or "what can be known of God"; in the latter case τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ denotes a partial revelation. Most interpreters prefer the meaning "what can be known of God" in order to prevent v. 19a and v. 19b from becoming tautological;⁵⁶ if γνωστός meant "known", Paul would be saying the same thing in v. 19a and v. 19b.⁵⁷ Thus the revelation which Paul describes here is partial. The gospel of the Son of God is not a part of it, but the gospel has been proclaimed in advance in the Holy Scriptures (cf. Romans 1:1-2). The revelation of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ takes place in the gospel (Romans 1:17), and in Romans 1:18ff Paul speaks of a revelation of God outside of the gospel. Paul understands this partial revelation in personal terms, which is why he can write that these people knew *God* (τὸν θεὸν v. 21), or that these people had *God* in their knowledge (τὸν θεὸν v. 28). In light of this, it is natural to

⁵⁴ According to Bornkamm, *Offenbarung*, pp. 12-13, Paul in vv. 19-20 gives the reason for the revelation of God's wrath on all godlessness and unrighteousness found in man.

⁵⁵ The usual meaning of γνωστός is "known", and γνωστός has the meaning "known" in all other occurrences in the NT.

⁵⁶ Rosin, *To gnoston*, p. 163.

⁵⁷ Thus e.g. Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 113, and Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 35. Gärtner, *Areopagus*, p. 74, note 1, writes, "Two renderings of τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ are possible: "what is known of God", or "what can be learnt of God". The first suits the context best, since it stresses the actual existence of the knowledge. But both readings affirm a revelation of God within men's ken." In the context (cf. vv. 19bc and 20), it is clear that τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ is not to be understood potentially, but factually, and as far as Gärtner's argument is concerned, v. 19b accentuates the factuality of the revelation, for which reason it would suit the context better for τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ to accentuate the partial aspect in order to prevent v. 19a and v. 19b from becoming tautological, also in terms of the accentuation of the reality of the revelation.

interpret τοῦ θεοῦ as a partitive genitive,⁵⁸ or the genitive might be an exegetical genitive (“God in his knowability”).⁵⁹ What τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ further comprises, Paul specifies in the following verses.

Paul further writes about τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ that it φανερόν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς, and that raises the question whether φανερόν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς refers to God’s objective revelation, or to man’s subjective knowledge.

According to Cranfield⁶⁰, v. 19a describes the objective revelation,⁶¹ and φανερόν emphasizes that the natural revelation is real, clear, and distinct. Cranfield mentions two reasons why it must be an objective revelation. Firstly, a subjective appropriation is inconsistent with v. 21, and secondly, it is unlikely that Paul is referring “exclusively to the existence and functioning of men’s inward capacities as manifestation of God”, because v. 20 refers to “physical vision”. As far as the first argument is concerned, it is a fact that exactly in v. 21 Paul is describing a subjective knowledge (γινόντες τὸν θεὸν) which does, however, not lead to recognition and worship of God. As far as the other argument is concerned, it is indeed an odd reading since in v. 19b, Paul stresses that man’s knowledge is wrought by God.

In the context, τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φανερόν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς refers to a revelation that has been communicated to man.⁶² Firstly, the statement in v. 19a gives the reason why these people *know* the truth (v. 18); hence, as a reason, τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φανερόν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς must describe man’s *knowledge*. Secondly, a reason is given in v. 19b for the statement in v. 19a, and v. 19b is explicated in v. 20 which describes the communication of God’s revelation τοῖς ποιήμασιν to man. On the basis of this interpretation, ἐν αὐτοῖς means “in them”⁶³ because Paul is describing man’s knowledge, and φανερόν cannot mean “visible”⁶⁴ since it refers to knowledge,⁶⁵ but must have a cognitive meaning and express the clarity of knowledge.

Paul continues his demonstration of the Gentiles’ knowledge of God. Having established that that which may be known about God is clear in them (v. 19a), Paul now gives the reason why he

⁵⁸ BDR 263₅ suggest either “das von (an) Gott Bekannte (Erkennbare)”, i.e. a partitive genitive, or “Gott in seiner Erkennbarkeit”, i.e. an exegetical genitive. Bell, *No*, p. 36, concurs.

⁵⁹ Thus Zahn, *Römer*, p. 91, note 68, who mentions Romans 2:4 and 1 Corinthians 1:25 as parallel expressions. Bultmann, γινώσκω, *TWNT I*, p. 719, mentions the exegetical interpretation as a possibility alongside the partitive one.

⁶⁰ Cranfield, *Romans I*, pp. 113-114.

⁶¹ Thus also Barrett, *Romans*, p. 35.

⁶² Thus Zahn, *Römer*, p. 92, Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 55, and Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 36.

⁶³ Thus Zahn, *Römer*, p. 92.

⁶⁴ According to Bultmann/Lührmann, φανερός, *TWNT IX*, p. 3, φανερόν means “visible”, and Paul is thinking of something which may be beheld by means of the senses, while the beholding itself is also a knowledge.

⁶⁵ If one understands v. 19a as a description of God’s revelation “among” them, it would be natural for φανερόν to mean “visible” (thus Moo, *Romans 1-8*, p. 99).

can be sure about this. The reason is that God himself has communicated the knowledge to them. The phrase ὁ θεὸς αὐτοῖς ἐφάνερωσεν has been interpreted as a reference to the objective revelation,⁶⁶ and this would mean that Paul's intention with v. 19b would be to accentuate that God has willed this revelation,⁶⁷ and it takes place at his initiative.⁶⁸ In the preceding, I have argued that ὁ θεὸς αὐτοῖς ἐφάνερωσεν refers to the subjective appropriation of the objective revelation of God.⁶⁹ ὁ θεὸς is the subject of ἐφάνερωσεν, and Paul emphasizes that God is the active agent when it comes to man's appropriation of the revelation, and that man is receptive and receiving.⁷⁰ This means that both the objective revelation in creation, nature, and history, and the subjective knowledge is willed and wrought by God.⁷¹ The implied object of ἐφάνερωσεν is τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ. The verb ἐφάνερωσεν is a term of revelation which denotes a conveyance of knowledge, and therefore in this context it has a dynamic-cognitive content since it refers to God's active communication of the knowledge of God to these people. ἐφάνερωσεν does not describe God's eternal power and divine character (cf. v. 20) being made visible,⁷² but to knowledge being communicated.⁷³ Most commonly, φανεροῦν is used in contrast to that which was formerly hidden and secret, but in this context there is no implicit or explicit contrast to a time when the knowledge was hidden and out of reach,⁷⁴ and this is due to the fact that v. 19b gives the reason for v. 19a

⁶⁶ Thus Barrett, *Romans*, p. 35, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 114.

⁶⁷ Thus Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 57.

⁶⁸ Thus Bornkamm, *Offenbarung*, p. 20, and Dubarle, *Manifestation*, p. 204.

⁶⁹ Thus Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 35.

⁷⁰ Rightly emphasized by Dubarle, *Manifestation*, p. 205, and Moo, *Romans 1-8*, p. 99. Contra Feuillet, *Connaissance*, p. 74, who denies that there is a revelation and instead speaks of reflection by the light of reason.

⁷¹ Rightly stressed by Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 57, and Bell, *No*, pp. 40-41 and 80-82. If v. 19b only spoke of the objective revelation of God, it would be a sheer tautology in relation to v. 19a.

⁷² Contra Bultmann/Lührmann, φανερώω, *TWNT IX*, p. 4, Brown, 'Revelation', *DNTT III*, p. 321, and Bockmuehl, φανερώω, pp. 93-98. According to Bultmann/Lührmann, the meaning "sichtbar machen" is found in 1 Corinthians 4:5 and Romans 1:19; otherwise, φανερώω and ἀποκαλύπτω are synonymous in Paul (*TWNT IX*, p. 4). Bockmuehl, φανερώω, p. 95, writes that φανερόν in 19a denotes that which is empirically evident, and that ἐφάνερωσεν in 19b expresses that God is concretely-empirically observable. Bockmuehl argues with the verb καθοράται which denotes a visual perception. We shall later see that καθοράται does not denote an observation, but knowledge, and that τοῖς ποιήμασιν (v. 20) stresses that this is an indirect revelation of God.

⁷³ Bockmuehl, φανερώω, pp. 93ff, interprets φανερώω too narrowly, in that according to Bockmuehl, in Corpus Paulinum φανερώω is used to express something being made publicly visible (e.g. in judgment texts, 1 Corinthians 4:5), of a historically observable manifestation (in the history of the passion of Jesus; Romans 3:21; Romans 16:26; Colossians 1:26), and of the visible-making in the incarnation (1 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Timothy 1:9b-10) and the parousia (Colossians 3:4). It is uncertain whether Colossians 4:4 is an exception to the rule of being made visible and observable. In the summary, Bockmuehl, φανερώω, p. 99, emphasizes that φανερώω expresses something being observable and being made publicly visible. It is denied that φανερώω denotes revelation in the ordinary sense, and that φανερώω is synonymous with ἀποκαλύπτω.

⁷⁴ What is characteristic about the use of φανερώω in Corpus Paulinum, is that it denotes an unveiling, a manifestation, a making visible, and it almost always stands implicitly or explicitly in contrast to a former time which was characterized by veiling, secrecy, concealment, and invisibility. This is clear, for instance, in the revelatio-scheme of which there are a number of examples in Corpus Paulinum (Romans 16:26; Colossians 1:26; 2 Timothy 1:10; Titus 1:3). It is occasionally used synonymously with ἀποκαλύπτειν (compare Romans 1:17 with 3:21, and Ephesians 3:5 with Colossians 1:26), but apart from that there is a distinction between the verbs (contra Lührmann,

which describes a universally valid ordinance.⁷⁵ φανεροῦν may be characterized as a "verb of accomplishment",⁷⁶ and as far as the aspectual function is concerned, the aorist aspect of verbs of accomplishment indicates that a process takes place and progresses to its conclusion or limit, where the process ends. ἐφάνερωσεν, then, describes a process of revelation which progresses to its completion, its final climax.⁷⁷ The indirect object αὐτοῖς also has an influence on the aspectual function in that the indirect object in the plural marks that ἐφάνερωσεν refers to a plurality of situations. The plurality has a distributive force, in that αὐτοῖς marks that this revelation takes place and reaches its final climax in every single person that belongs to this category of people.⁷⁸ αὐτοῖς is the category of people that Paul has mentioned in v. 18, i.e. Gentiles (primarily) and Jews.⁷⁹ The aorist (ἐφάνερωσεν) summarizes the many situations as a whole; the plurality of revelations is seen from the outside as a whole.

In 1:18-32 Paul is thinking primarily of Gentiles and in v. 18 he writes about both revelation of God and knowledge of God among Gentiles. That needs an explanation, and the first part of the explanation (v. 19) consists in a demonstration that this category of people knows God. Paul uses the expression τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ concerning the content of the revelation, and writes about the clarity of the knowledge of God. The reason is that God himself has communicated the knowledge to them. ὁ θεὸς αὐτοῖς ἐφάνερωσεν refers to the subjective appropriation of the objective revelation of God.

3.3.2. The content of the revelation (v. 20)

Paul writes about a revelation and knowledge of God among Gentiles. Verse 19 tells that God himself has communicated the knowledge to them. But the existence of a revelation and knowledge of God among the Gentiles still needs an explanation. This Paul provides in vers 20. Verse 20ab stands as an explication of v. 19b; γὰρ could be causal and state the reason why God has

Offenbarungsverständnis, p. 160, and Butlmann/Lührmann, φανερόω, *TWNT IX*, p. 4).

⁷⁵ ἔστιν in v. 19a is gnomic.

⁷⁶ Fanning, *Aspect*, pp. 149ff.

⁷⁷ In Bache's terminology, φανερόω will be one of the verbs that express "telicness", i.e. "expresses an activity or process conceived of as having a natural or logical terminal phase" (*Summary*, p. 11, and *Aspect*, pp. 148f).

⁷⁸ Fanning, *Aspect*, pp. 167-168.

⁷⁹ Baasland, *Cognitio*, pp. 197-198, wants to understand the statements in v. 19 concerning the knowledge of God as statements about the Jew's knowledge of God the argument being that Paul does not otherwise speak of a revelation outside of Israel, and that Paul would not be able to speak without reservation of a revelation of God among Gentiles. According to Baasland, Paul maintains Israel's primary position in the accusation in vv. 1:18ff. However, Baasland's interpretation cannot be carried through because of v. 20 which describes a universal revelation which is communicated τοῖς ποιήμασιν. In this context we may also refer to Bietenhard, *Gotteserkenntnis*, p. 288, who denies there being a "natural theology" in Paul. Bietenhard writes: "Würde der Jude dem Heidentum echte Gotteserkenntnis zubilligen, dann gäbe er dadurch faktisch die Offenbarung durch die Thora preis; er gäbe auch Israels Prägogative als auserwähltes Volk preis" (p. 288). Paul, however, thinks differently!

communicated his revelation to “them”, but since v. 20ab focuses on how the communication takes place, it is better to understand γὰρ in an explicative sense. In this explication Paul describes more closely how God communicates the revelation to man. First, Paul uses τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ as a characterization of the content of the revelation, and through the apposition ἢ τε αἶδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θειότης, the content is further specified. τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ equals τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ (v. 19) and τὴν ἀλήθειαν (v. 18). τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ may be interpreted in two different ways.

According to the first interpretation, τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ denotes invisible attributes.⁸⁰ The argument is that Paul uses the plural form. The apposition (ἢ τε αἶδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θειότης) may be restrictive, meaning that God only reveals two of his attributes,⁸¹ or it may be accentuating, meaning that Paul mentions two prominent attributes,⁸² or exemplifying,⁸³ or all-embracing, θειότης being a general term for God’s attributes.⁸⁴ ἢ τε αἶδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις might be a term for one of God’s attributes, but the question is whether θειότης is a well-chosen term for another of God’s attributes, or a well-chosen term for all of God’s attributes. θειότης is a *hapax legomenon* in the NT, and it is rare in the Jewish literature of Antiquity. It is found in Wisdom 18:9 where θειότης is used as a term for the God of Israel, and τὸν τῆς θειότητος νόμον is God’s law.⁸⁵ The author of the Book of Wisdom has probably chosen θειότης as a term for God in order to adjust to the terminology of Greek readers.⁸⁶ In the Epistle of Aristeas (Ep.Ar. 95) there is a single occurrence with the same meaning; at this place the Epistle of Aristeas depicts the sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem, and θειότης is used as a term for the God of Israel. θειότης is found once in Josephus (Ant. 10:268) where it is used of Daniel; δόξαν θειότητος denotes Daniel’s God-given “glory”, which hence possesses a divine character.⁸⁷ In Hellenistic literature, θειότης is used of gods to denote their divinity, of the divinity of the soul, and of people to whom divinity is ascribed, e.g. in connection with the emperor cult.⁸⁸ Kleinknecht⁸⁹ gives a precise characterization of θειότης⁹⁰

⁸⁰ E.g. Klöpffer, *Gotteserkenntnis*, p. 171, Zahn, *Römer*, pp. 92-93, Moe, *Romerne*, pp. 76-77, Feuillet, *Connaissance*, pp. 212-213, Michel, *Römer*, pp. 99-100, Murray, *Romans*, pp. 38-40, Dubarle, *Manifestation*, p. 205, Cranfield, *Romans I*, pp. 114-115, and Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, pp. 57-58.

⁸¹ Barrett, *Romans*, p. 35.

⁸² Thus Zahn, *Römer*, p. 92, and Lietzmann, *Römer*, p. 31.

⁸³ Thus Feuillet, *Connaissance*, p. 213, and Dubarle, *Manifestation*, p. 206. Feuillet, by the way, holds that Paul mentions three of God’s attributes: power, eternity, and transcendence (p. 212).

⁸⁴ Thus Michel, *Römer*, p. 100, note 8, and Murray, *Romans*, p. 39.

⁸⁵ At this place a specific law is spoken of, the content of which is rendered in verse 9cd.

⁸⁶ Thus Ziener, *Begriffssprache*, p. 47, and Larcher, *Sagesse III*, pp. 1003-1004.

⁸⁷ It is found once in Philo (Op.Mun. 172) as an alternative reading.

⁸⁸ Cf. Nash, θειότης, pp. 1-16, Moulton/Milligan, *Vocabulary*, p. 286, Kleinknecht, θειότης, *TWNT III*, p. 123, and Cook, *Logic*, pp. 510-511.

⁸⁹ Kleinknecht, θειότης, *TWNT III*, p. 123. The translation is from *TDNT III*, p. 123.

⁹⁰ In the light of the usage of θειότης, its meaning cannot be summarized as in Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 115, writing about θειότης that it is a Hellenistic term referring to the divine nature and attributes. Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 106,

when he writes that θεϊότης is "that which shows God to be God, and gives Him the right to worship". θεϊότης in the Jewish literature of Antiquity and in the hellenistic period is not a technical term that denotes one particular attribute in God. However, if one interprets ἡ τε αἰδῖος αὐτοῦ δύναμις as an attribute, it would only be natural and fair for the closely connected θεϊότης to also denote an attribute in God, but as we have seen, the usage of θεϊότης is varied and versatile. In that light, it is hard to interpret ἡ τε αἰδῖος αὐτοῦ δύναμις and θεϊότης as two of God's attributes, and that makes it problematic to determine τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ as a term for God's invisible attributes. Neither is θεϊότης a technical term for the sum of God's attributes,⁹¹ and therefore it is problematic to interpret ἡ τε αἰδῖος αὐτοῦ δύναμις and θεϊότης as terms for God's attributes, since it would seem unnatural for Paul to first speak of one specific attribute and then add a term covering all God's attributes. It would thus be logical for the two juxtaposed elements to each denote one attribute.

According to the other interpretation, τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ is a term for God's character, and because of θεϊότης, that interpretation is preferable. τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ denotes God's invisible character,⁹² and Paul uses the neuter form to describe the abstract concept of the invisibility of God.⁹³ It is a fundamental idea in Pauline theology that in this present age the believer does not walk by sight, but by faith (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:7); God is invisible (Colossians 1:15 and 1 Timothy 1:17), and Paul also maintains the idea of God's invisibility when it comes to God's revelation τοῖς ποιήμασιν, in that τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ is qualified through the adjectival participle τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα. God's revelation is indirect in that it is localized to τοῖς ποιήμασιν and communicated through these works. In this way, God's invisibility is protected.⁹⁴ The invisibility is also not broken by the verb καθορᾶται (v. 20) which has τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ as its object. τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ is qualified by τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα, and in that way Paul specifies that it is the character of the invisible God that is known through His works, which are "seen". Hence, καθορᾶται comes to mean "perceived" or "known". By τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ, Paul marks that invisibility is a constitutive element in the character of God.

As an apposition to the ontological τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ, ἡ αἰδῖος αὐτοῦ δύναμις is also an ontological characterization, and in the context, δύναμις is related to creation (cf. ἀπὸ κτίσεως

note 179, writes similarly about θεϊότης which is characterized as a concept within the hellenistic philosophy of religion: "θεϊότης... meint die Natur (...) bzw. die Eigenschaften des Göttlichen".

⁹¹ Cf. Michel, *Römer*, p. 100, and Murray, *Romans*, p. 39.

⁹² E.g. Michel, *ὄρατός*, *TWNT V*, p. 370, and Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 37.

⁹³ Cf. BDR 263.

⁹⁴ Consequently, αὐτοῦ is not a partitive, but a qualifying genitive.

κόσμου which is inclusive in the context), to the preservation of creation, and to history.⁹⁵ αἰδιος is a temporal category in that it is determined in relation to ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου. Paul writes that God is known as an eternal power since the creation of the world, i.e. as eternal at creation. With the ontological ἡ αἰδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις, Paul emphasizes that power is a constitutive element in God's nature.⁹⁶ Paul also emphasizes that God's power does not break the invisibility, but participates in it, ἡ αἰδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις being in apposition to τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ. With the ontological ἡ αἰδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις, Paul stresses God's transcendence and power in relation to creation and in relation to that which is created and its history.⁹⁷

The second element in the apposition is θειότης, which has already been described, but which may be further defined. θειότης could refer to the transcendence of God⁹⁸ since Paul maintains the basic distinction between God as Creator and that which is created. In other words, transcendence is constitutive for the concept of the divine. In the context, θειότης could also be understood in the light of δύναμις, so that God's θειότης consists in His actions of δύναμις.⁹⁹ In other words, eternal power is constitutive for the concept of the divine. The juxtaposition of δύναμις and θειότης, however, more likely points in the direction of two different characterizations of the person. The most obvious clarifying definition of θειότης, though, is found by interpreting θειότης in light of v. 21a since verse 20 and verse 21 are closely connected. In verse 20 Paul states that God's invisible character, defined as eternal power and divinity, can be known by man, and with the consecutive εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοῦ ἀναπολογήτους Paul introduces the consequence of this knowledge of God's invisible character. ἀναπολογήτους implies that God, when He reveals Himself τοῖς ποιήμασιν, reveals Himself as a demanding God with a claim on man's recognition and worship. ἀναπολογήτους implies that the revelation of God's invisible character, defined as αἰδιος δύναμις and θειότης, includes a revelation of God's right to recognition. What is implicit in verse 20, becomes explicit in verse 21a where Paul gives the reason why these people are without excuse, the reason being that these people did not honor and thank God as God. The reason and the

⁹⁵ In Corpus Paulinum, God's power (δύναμις) is used of God's saving power in the gospel (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 2:5); of God's saving power which enables the believer to endure tribulation (2 Corinthians 4:7 and 2 Timothy 1:8); of God's active and vivifying power in the believers (2 Corinthians 13:4; Ephesians 1:19; Ephesians 3:16; Ephesians 3:20; Colossians 1:29, and 1 Corinthians 6:14 (God's power of resurrection)); of God's power of calling when Paul was called to be an apostle (Ephesians 3:7); Christ is identified with God's power (1 Corinthians 1:24), and angels are called angels of God's power (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

⁹⁶ Käsemann, *Römer*, pp. 37-38, reduces the content of the revelation by concentrating it on power. Conzelmann, *Grundriss*, p. 272, reduces the knowledge of God to the fact that God is not the world. This is an unnecessary reduction because according to Paul God reveals Himself as a person who wants to enter into a person to person relationship with man.

⁹⁷ Cf. Dubarle, *Manifestation*, p. 206.

⁹⁸ Thus Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 37.

⁹⁹ Thus Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 106.

recapitulating γνόντες τὸν θεὸν ties verse 21a closely to verse 20. With the words "honored" and "thanked", Paul explicitly states that God revealed Himself as a demanding God with a claim on man's recognition and thanksgiving. "They did not honor and thank Him as God" (verse 21) thus defines θειότης. The right to recognition and thanksgiving is constitutive for the concept of the divine, and θειότης consequently is "that which shows God to be God, and gives Him the right to worship".¹⁰⁰

In verse 18 Paul uses the expression τὴν ἀλήθειαν concerning the content of the revelation, in verse 19 τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, and in verse 20 he uses τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ and through the apposition ἢ τε αἶδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θειότης, the content is further specified. When Paul writes concerning the content of the revelation of God in verses 18-20, he also writes about the knowledge of God among the Gentiles. When and how God communicates this knowledge to the Gentiles, Paul tells in vers 20.

3.3.3. The time of the revelation (v. 20).

In Romans 1:20, Paul describes the communication of the revelation of God to these people, and with ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου, Paul gives a temporal definition of the revelation of God's invisible character, ἀπὸ being temporal, and κτίσεως being a *nomen actionis*, describing the act of creation.¹⁰¹ The temporal¹⁰² ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου denotes the *terminus a quo* of the revelation¹⁰³

ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου can be defined more precisely, in that it may be exclusive (God revealed

¹⁰⁰ Kleinknecht, θειότης, *TWNT III*, p. 123 (the translation is from *TDNT III*, p.123), Gärtner, *Areopagus*, p. 137, note I, and Dabelstein, *Beurteilung*, p. 77. In earlier times, scholars distinguished between θειότης and θεότης; thus Trench, *Synonyms*, pp. 7-10, who claimed that θειότης is more vague, more abstract, and less personal than θεότης (cf. the rejection of this distinction in Nash, θειότης, pp. 1ff). Michel, *Römer*, p. 100, note 8, thinks that θειότης refers to God's attributes and θεότης to "das Personseins Gottes" (similarly Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 115); the distinction is often backed up with a reference to Colossians 2:9 where θεότης refers to the divine person. θειότης is, however, an ontological definition in Romans 1:20, and therefore it is unwarranted to characterize θειότης as a vague, more abstract and more apersonal characterization of God's divinity.

¹⁰¹ An alternative interpretation is that ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου denotes the source of knowledge, but that is not very likely in the context because the immediately following element (τοῖς ποιήμασιν) refers to the source of knowledge, and ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου would be tautological (cf. Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 114). But even if ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου did denote a source of knowledge, it would still carry a temporal sense because the phrase would also mark when the knowledge was possible.

¹⁰² Thus e.g. Zahn, *Römer*, p. 93, Barth, *Speaking*, p. 291, Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 114, and Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 58.

¹⁰³ O'Rourke, *Romans 1,20*, p. 302, mentions as a third possibility that ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου denotes the one who knows God's invisible character ("by the creature in the world"); i.e. that ἀπὸ is equivalent with ὑπό and κτίσις with ἄνθρωπος (cf. Colossians 1:23). This interpretation is linguistically possible (cf. Bauer col. 176 V.6, and BDR 210:2), but not very likely since Paul is not primarily focusing on the one to whom God is revealing Himself, but on the appropriation of the revelation, and therefore the temporal ἀπὸ corresponds best with τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα. Linguistically, it is also most natural to take ἀπὸ in a temporal sense. But even if ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου does denote whoever knows, the expression also carries a temporal value in that it also marks that the knowledge was and is possible as long as there are creatures in the world.

Himself after creation)¹⁰⁴ or inclusive (God revealed Himself in creation). The latter is right. Paul's intention has been to describe the relationship of this category of people to God as He has revealed Himself through His works, and that means that the mention in v. 25 of God as Creator is a part of τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ (v. 19). ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου also emphasizes the idea of creation (κτίσεως is a *nomen actionis*), and although it is not stated explicitly, it is a fair interpretation in light of v. 25 that ἡ αἴδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις has been active in creation. God reveals Himself and is known as αἴδιος δύναμις and θειότης precisely through these ποιήμασιν (v. 20), and that implies that these ποιήμασιν are wrought by God. ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου, then, is inclusive, and Paul is describing a revelation that began in creation.

The next question is whether Paul is thinking of a continuous revelation which also has a present significance (for Paul), or if he is thinking of a temporary revelation in - and thus limited to - primeval times. The argument for a temporary revelation in primeval times is for one thing that Paul has described mankind's idolatry, sin and wickedness in the light of Genesis 1-3, and that hence Romans 1:18-25 is describing Adam's history, and for another that Romans 1:23 states that man loses the image of God. As far as the first argument (Romans 1:18-25 being a description of Adam's history) is concerned, Hooker¹⁰⁵ and Jervell¹⁰⁶ have pointed out a number of verbal similarities between Genesis 1-3 and Romans 1:18ff.¹⁰⁷ Hooker thinks that the description of man's wickedness in Romans 1 is phrased on the basis of the account of Adam in Genesis 1-3.¹⁰⁸ Paul is thinking of a revelation of God which was given to Adam prior to the fall.

There are, however, some marked differences between Genesis 1-3 and Romans 1:18-25 which make this interpretation problematic. Firstly, Genesis 2-3 shows that God reveals Himself to Adam directly in word and deed (Genesis 2:16f; 2:19). For example, God calls on Adam and speaks to him directly without a mediator (Genesis 3:9ff). So the revelation of God described in Genesis 2-3 is more intimate and direct than the revelation of God described by Paul in Romans 1:19-20 (cf. τοῖς ποιήμασιν v. 20), and therefore, if Romans 1:18-25 were to be a summary of Genesis 1-3, Paul could not have written that God revealed Himself indirectly through His works.¹⁰⁹ Secondly, there is the context of the fall: according to Genesis 1-3, Adam and Eve originally lived without sin, and

¹⁰⁴ Owen, *Scope*, pp. 134-135; Owen does not think that the Gentiles know God as Creator.

¹⁰⁵ Hooker, *Adam*, p. 300.

¹⁰⁶ Jervell, *Imago*, pp. 320f.

¹⁰⁷ Hooker, *Adam*, p. 300, mentions τὰ πετεινά, τὰ πετράποδα, and τὰ ἔρπετά which are mentioned in the same order in Genesis 1:20-25; ἄνθρωπος refers to Genesis 1:26f (cf. Hyl Dahl, *Reminiscence*, pp. 287-288); εἰκόν and ὁμοίωσις are found in Genesis 1:26 – ἐν ὁμοιώματι (Romans 1:23), however, comes from Psalm 106:20; the significant thing is that the element from Psalm 106:20 which is left out by Paul (μόσχου ἔσθοντος χόρτον) is replaced by a wording of which every single word except φθαρτός is found in Genesis 1:20-26.

¹⁰⁸ Hooker, *Adam*, pp. 300-301. Thus also Barrett, *First Adam*, p. 17f, Milne, *Genesis*, pp. 10-12, and Dunn, *Christology*, p. 101.

¹⁰⁹ Thus O'Rourke, *Romans 1,20*, p. 305.

not until the fall did sin enter man's world; the context of man's fall in Romans 1:18ff, on the contrary, is sin, in that the concessive γνόντες τὸν θεὸν (v. 21) is simultaneous with οὐχ ἔδόξασαν and ἠὺχαρίστησαν. Thirdly, Adam is not described as an idolater in Genesis 1-3,¹¹⁰ whereas idolatry is one of the main themes of Romans 1:18-32. Fourthly, Genesis 1-3 does not depict the sexual perversions which are emphasized in Romans 1:18-32. Hooker¹¹¹ refers to some rabbinic traditions which associated the fall with sexual desire; the serpent's temptation was a temptation to sexual impurity, or Adam and Eve had sexual intercourse with demons, but even if we were to assume that Paul linked the fall with sexual desire and perversion, there would still be a marked difference, in that the sexual desire is described as part of the reason for the fall, whereas in Romans 1:18-32, Paul is describing the sexual perversions as the consequence of the fall and as the area where the judgment of God's wrath is revealed. Fifthly, God's punishment on the fall in Genesis 3:14-19 does not correspond to God's punishment (i.e., his wrath) as it is described in Romans 1:24ff. In Genesis 3:14ff, God's punishment strikes Eve in relation to the serpent (we leave out the punishment on the serpent in v. 14), to pregnancy and childbirth, and to her husband, and God's punishment strikes Adam in relation to his work and to the dust in his body, whereas the wrath in Romans 1:24ff is an abandonment to sexual impurity (v. 24), homosexual practice (vv. 26-27), and unrighteousness (vv. 29-31).¹¹² The final and most decisive argument against this interpretation is the use of present tense forms in Romans 1:18ff, but before I analyze those, I will present the other argument in favor of the interpretation that Paul is describing a primeval revelation.

The other argument that Paul is thinking of a temporary revelation in primeval times is, as before mentioned, that Romans 1:23 describes man's loss of his original image of God.¹¹³ The question is whether τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ is a characterization of man's original image of God, and whether ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνοσ φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου is a characterization of man's image of Adam and of the animals after the fall.

¹¹⁰ Hooker, *Adam*, p. 302, writes, "... there is nothing in the Genesis narrative itself to suggest that Adam was an idolater", however, on p. 301 she writes, "In listening to the voice of the serpent, Adam ... by placing himself in subservience to a creature, has opened up the way to idolatry."

¹¹¹ Hooker, *Adam*, pp. 301-302.

¹¹² Cf. Wedderburn's criticism of Hooker (in *Adam*, pp. 414-416).

¹¹³ Hooker, *Adam*, p. 305, and Jervell, *Imago*, pp. 321 ff; in relation to Romans 1:23, Hooker writes, "Thus we find in this verse a triple contrast: Man did not only exchange the worship of the true God for that of idols; he also exchanged intimate fellowship with God for an experience which was shadowy and remote, and he exchanged, too, his own reflection of the glory of God for the image of corruption" (p. 305). Cf. Wedderburn, *Adam*, pp. 417-419; Wedderburn thinks that there are several layers and dimensions in Paul's allusions to the OT, and in relation to Romans 1:23, he mentions three layers, one of which being these people's exchange of the object of their worship, and the second being that their nature was changed from being in the image of God to being in the image of Adam. Wedderburn (*Adam*, p. 419), however, rejects the idea that Romans 1:18ff can be limited to one specific period of time: "This story (Romans 1:18ff) is not timeless – compare the aorists of vv. 21ff – , but it is not to be pinned down to any particular point in the Old Testament story; the essence of Israel's history and man's history as a history of turning ever further away from God is summed up vividly in this account."

The question here is whether it is Genesis 1:20ff or Psalm 106:20 (possibly combined with Jeremiah 2:11) that is the primary source of Romans 1:23. Romans 1:23 sounds as follows:

καὶ ἠλλάξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνοσ φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου
καὶ πετεινῶν καὶ τετραπόδων καὶ ἔρπετῶν

Psalm 106:20 sound as follows according to the LXX (105:20):

καὶ ἠλλάξαντο τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν
ἐν ὁμοιώματι μόσχου ἔσθοντος χόρτον

The comparison suggests that the basic structure is taken from Psalm 106:20; the basic structure of the verse is: ἠλλάξαν τὴν δόξαν ... ἐν ὁμοιώματι. Paul may also have had Jeremiah 2:11 in mind,¹¹⁴ but the basic structure in Romans 1:23 is adopted from Psalm 106:20. This is further backed by the fact that in the context of Psalm 106, τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν (Psalm 106:20) refers to God's δόξα. A comparison with Genesis 1:20ff suggests that Paul uses a terminology from that passage to describe the idolatry of mankind.¹¹⁵ The fact that the basic structure is taken from Psalm 106:20 indicates that this is the primary source. If we turn to the context, there are a number of factors therein that point against the interpretation that Romans 1:23 refers to a primeval event.

Firstly, there is the use of plural forms in the passage. Paul is not describing one particular man, but men; the use of plural forms might be explained on the basis of an "in Adam" conception, but there is no trace of such a conception in this paragraph.

Secondly, Paul uses present forms.¹¹⁶ There is the present participle κατεχόντων in v. 18; this adjectival participle has a defining function and categorizes this group of men as ones who suppress the truth through unrighteousness. With the choice of the present aspect, an internal focus is placed on the action, and the suppression is described from within as an unlimited process.¹¹⁷ The lexical meaning of the verb and the use of the plural has influence on the aspectual function. κατέχειν describes an activity, and the plural form indicates that this activity takes place in a plurality of situations, the plurality being understood in a distributive sense, each member of this category of people being engaged in the suppression of the truth.¹¹⁸ With the present participle κατεχόντων, Paul stresses the habitual in a distributive sense. As far as the relative temporal meaning of the participle is concerned, it may be simultaneous with the main verb ἀποκαλύπτεται, or it may be timeless. The interesting thing in this context is that τῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων

¹¹⁴ Cf. Hyldahl, *Reminiscence*, p. 285.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Hyldahl, *Reminiscence*, p. 288, Qwarnström, *Paulinsk*, pp. 151-152, Hooker, *Adam*, pp. 300ff, and Jervell, *Imago*, pp. 320-321.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Gärtner, *Areopagus*, p. 79.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Fanning, *Aspect*, p. 103.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Fanning, *Aspect*, p. 410; this corresponds to "general present participle" in Burton, *Moods*, p. 56, which is "timeless or indefinite" and describes those who "habitually or constantly do a given act".

describes the suppression of the content of the revelation by this category of people, τὴν ἀλήθειαν corresponding to τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ (v. 19), which refers to God's revelation τοῖς ποιήμασιν (v. 20). I.e. in Paul's day, this category of people have a knowledge of God's revelation because κατεχόντων presupposes a relationship to the revelation. The participle which is timeless or simultaneous with ἀποκαλύπτεται extends the time of the revelation to also include Paul's day.¹¹⁹

There is the present form ἔστιν in v. 19, and in terms of the aspectual function, the present aspect of states denotes the continued existence: τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ remains clear in them.¹²⁰ The object ἐν αὐτοῖς also has an influence on the aspectual function in that it shows that there are a plurality of situations, understood in a distributive sense: in every individual belonging to αὐτοῖς, τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ is clear.¹²¹ In terms of tense, ἔστιν may be a gnomic present, expressing "generalized continuing or repeated occurrence".¹²² The use of the gnomic ἔστιν emphasizes that Paul is describing a general, and hence also present, revelation.

The last present form that we will look at in this context is καθορᾶται in v. 20. καθορᾶται is a state, and in terms of the aspectual function, the present aspect of states denotes the continued existence: τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ remain seen/known. The objects αὐτοῖς (v. 19b) and αὐτούς (v. 20c) have an influence on the aspectual function, showing that there are a plurality of situations, understood in a distributive sense: every individual still knows God. In terms of tempus, καθορᾶται is a habitual present, denoting a situation in a more general time frame¹²³ and expressing "generalized continuing or repeated occurrence".¹²⁴ The use of the habitual καθορᾶται emphasizes that the revelation of God is present in a more general time frame.¹²⁵

Paul, then, uses a number of present forms which mark the present reality of the revelation. The present forms denotes simultaneousness in relation to the time of writing, as well as marking the continuity of the revelation. In other words the present forms express the habitual and the general.

However, Paul also uses aorist forms in the paragraph 1:18-25, and we will look at the aspectual meaning of these in the following. There is the aorist form ἐφάνέρωσεν in v. 19b, which covers the same period as ἔστιν in v. 19a, but with the aorist form, an external perspective has been taken on the event.¹²⁶ It is clear in the context that the aorist form does not refer to a finished event

¹¹⁹ The temporal meaning of the present indicative is "simultaneous with the time of speaking/writing" (Fanning, *Aspect*, pp. 198-199 and 206).

¹²⁰ Cf. Fanning, *Aspect*, p. 137.

¹²¹ Cf. Fanning, *Aspect*, pp. 167-168.

¹²² Fanning, *Aspect*, p. 210.

¹²³ Fanning, *Aspect*, pp. 205-206.

¹²⁴ Fanning, *Aspect*, p. 210.

¹²⁵ Cf. Fanning, *Aspect*, pp. 205-206.

¹²⁶ Fanning, *Aspect*, p. 255.

in the past, but tells of a series of reiterated revelations in a distributive sense, i.e. God has revealed Himself to every member of this category of people.¹²⁷ τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φανερόν ἐν αὐτοῖς and ὁ θεὸς αὐτοῖς ἐφανερώσεν refers to the same revelation; with the present form ἐστίν, Paul takes an internal perspective on the process of revelation, and with the gnomic present form, Paul expresses "a generalized continuing or repeated occurrence", and with the aorist form ἐφανερώσεν he takes an external perspective on the process of revelation, and the complexive aorist form summarizes the reiterated revelations in the past as a whole.¹²⁸

In vv. 21-23, Paul mainly uses aorist forms which are of the same type as in v. 19b (ἐφανερώσεν), i.e. complexive aorists, telling of a series of reiterated events, actions and incidents, and the repetition is understood distributively.¹²⁹ It is true, then, of the category of people which Paul is describing in this paragraph, that every member of the category has known God (v. 21), every member has failed to honor and thank God (v. 21) etc. In every aorist form, an external perspective has been taken, so that the situation denoted by the verbs has been looked upon as a whole.

In this paragraph, then, Paul uses a number of complexive aorists which tell of a series of reiterated events, and which have a distributive force. Therefore, the aorist forms cannot be used to support the interpretation that Paul is thinking of one completed event in the past, an event in man's primeval days. With the changing between present and aorist, Paul takes both an internal and an external perspective on the revelation of God and describes its continuity since the creation of the world, and as far as the knowledge of the revelation of God and the rejection of the same, he also takes an internal and an external perspective and stresses the habitual, the iterative and distributive.

Thirdly, a primeval event implies that prior to the fall there was a period without sin and guilt, but there is no trace in the text of an original period of innocence. When Paul describes the revelation of God τοῖς ποιήμασιν and the reception of the revelation, he does not separate the reception into two periods with an original reception in faith, worship and thanksgiving, and a later rejection, beginning with the fall. In Paul's account, sin is presupposed from the beginning, and Paul describes no other response on the part of the people concerned than οὐχ ἐδόξασαν ἢ ηὐχαρίστησαν (v. 21).

¹²⁷ Fanning, *Aspect*, p. 258, has, as a subunit of the complexive aorist, the iterative or distributive aorist: "The aorist may relate a *series* of repeated actions or states", and Fanning describes this type more closely: "The multiple situations may be either iterative (one individual repeating the action or state) or distributive (each one of a group involved with the occurrence once or more)."

¹²⁸ Cf. Fanning, *Aspect*, p. 256, writing about the complexive aorist, "Here the aorist indicative makes a summary reference to a past action or state as a whole ..."

¹²⁹ Gärtner, *Areopagus*, p. 79, thinks that the aorists in 1:21f are gnomic: "More probably, Paul is referring to mankind's present disregard of the knowledge of God that all may achieve; in other words, he is using the gnomic aorist".

Fourthly, the description of the lost image of God in v. 23 comes too late – from a structural point of view. In verses 21-23, Paul draws the outline of a process which begins when people, in spite of their knowledge of God through τοῖς ποιήμασιν, reject God by not honoring and thanking him. These people are then carried away in a process which Paul describes with terms like ἐματαιώθησαν, ἐσκοτίσθη (v. 21), ἐμωράνθησαν (v. 22). This means that their exchange of the image of God with an image of Adam does not take place until *after* a development in them has already taken place. If the original image of God is lost through sin, Paul should have mentioned it already in v. 21.¹³⁰

I conclude that ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου is the terminus a quo (in an inclusive sense) of the revelation, and the use of the generalizing ἀνθρώπων (v. 18), of plural forms, of present and aorist forms, as well as the structure of the text demonstrates that Paul is not thinking of a primeval revelation, neither exclusively nor as one of the dimensions of the text, nor is he describing Adam's history. Instead, Paul is describing a *continuous* (*constant* and *continued*) revelation which began with creation, continued since creation, and is also a present revelation.¹³¹

3.3.4. The locus of the revelation (v. 20).

Paul writes about a revelation and knowledge of God among Gentiles. In verse 18 Paul uses the expression τὴν ἀλήθειαν, in verse 19 τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, in verse 20 τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ and ἡ τε αἰδῖος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θεϊότης concerning the content of the revelation and knowledge of God. Verse 19 tells that God himself has communicated the knowledge to them, and in the preceding section, the time of the revelation was described, and we saw that Paul described a continuous revelation which began at creation, and which has gone on since creation. This revelation was also a revelation in Paul's day. In this section we will look at the locus where God reveals Himself. In v. 20, Paul writes about τοῖς ποιήμασιν which objectively communicates the revelation of God, thus indicating the source of the revelation. There are various interpretations of τοῖς ποιήμασιν. Some understand τοῖς ποιήμασιν exclusively as the works of creation, i.e. the product of God's original creation.¹³² Others understand τοῖς ποιήμασιν more broadly as referring to that which was produced at creation as well as to God's creative activity in nature.¹³³ Others let τοῖς ποιήμασιν refer to God's

¹³⁰ Jervell's interpretation (*Imago*, p. 326) is inconsistent when he also states that the image of God is lost through sin (cf. Romans 3:23).

¹³¹ There is general consensus that the revelation is continuous.

¹³² E.g. Schmidt, *Römer*, p. 35, Moe, *Romerne*, p. 76, Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 38, and Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 106.

¹³³ According to Klöpper, *Gotteserkenntnis*, p. 173, τοῖς ποιήμασιν refers to the original works of creation and to the acts which uphold the created world and maintain its order.

works in creation and history,¹³⁴ and yet others interpret τοῖς ποιήμασιν more generally concerning God's works in creation, in nature, and in history.¹³⁵ Thus, there are several possible interpretations which must be evaluated in the light of the context. As far as the near context is concerned, we have seen in the preceding section that ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου is temporal and designates the fact that the revelation began in creation. In the following section we will see that the participial clause τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα qualifies τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ, and that the most natural thing to do is to link ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου to the main verb καθορᾶται. We will see that νοούμενα and καθορᾶται in 1:20 are synonymous and describe the same process of knowledge. Because God's invisible character (τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ) is known since the creation of the world (understood inclusively), and since νοούμενα describes the same process, it means that this knowledge has been apparent since the creation of the world (understood inclusively), and since this knowledge is communicated through τοῖς ποιήμασιν, it has to be directly related to the creation; τοῖς ποιήμασιν refers to that which is created. From the context it is given that τοῖς ποιήμασιν includes in its reference to that which was produced at creation. On the other hand, it is not possible in light of the context to assess whether Paul has also been thinking of the ongoing creation in nature and of God's acts in history as a locus where God reveals Himself. In light of the use of ποίημα in the LXX¹³⁶ and in the NT¹³⁷, it would be natural if Paul used τοῖς ποιήμασιν generally of that which God produces and creates.¹³⁸ When we take into account the two speeches in Lystra and at the Areopagus (Acts 14 and 17), we can see that Paul means that the ongoing creative activity of God in nature (Acts 14:15-17 and 17:24-28) and in history (Acts 17:26-27) is a revelation of God, and in light of that we can deduce that τοῖς ποιήμασιν refers generally to that which God creates and produces as well as to God's acts in history.

3.3.5. The communication of the revelation (v. 20).

In the two preceding sections we have seen that God's revelation is an ongoing revelation ever since the creation of the world, and that God reveals himself in that which is created, in nature, and in

¹³⁴ E.g. Feuillet, *Connaissance*, p. 211, Michel, *Römer*, pp. 99-100, and Althaus, *Römer*, p. 18.

¹³⁵ E.g. Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 57, and Gärtner, *Areopagus*, p. 138. According to Barth, *Speaking*, p. 291, τοῖς ποιήμασιν refers not to created things, but to deeds and acts.

¹³⁶ In the LXX, ποίημα is used of that which man produces or creates (Isaiah 29:16), of people's actions (Judges 13:12; 1 Samuel 19:4; Ecclesiastes 2:17), of people's activities "under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:14 and 2:17), of God's works and activity (Ecclesiastes 7:13 and 8:17), generally of God's activities (Ecclesiastes 11:5), of God's act of judgment against those who persecute the pious (Psalm 63:10 (LXX); 91:5 (LXX); 142:5); of God's acts in history (1 Samuel 8:8) and of God's creative activity from beginning to end (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

¹³⁷ ποίημα is only found twice in the NT; here and in Ephesians 2:10 where it refers to God's new creation of the believers.

¹³⁸ Cf. Gärtner, *Areopagus*, p. 138, who deduces from the usage in the NT and the LXX that "ποιήματα covers not merely the testimony of nature but also all God's works, everything that can bear witness to God".

history. The objective revelation is communicated to mankind, and Paul describes the communication in v. 19b and v. 20a respectively.

In v. 20a, Paul describes how God's revelation is communicated to man. Paul writes: τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ... τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται, and when we analyze the construction syntactically there are two possibilities:

a) νοούμενα is an adverbial participle. One possibility, then, is that νοούμενα has a modal force;¹³⁹ τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται describes the way in which καθορᾶται takes place. In this case the verb καθορᾶται and the participle νοούμενα are simultaneous. Another possibility is that νοούμενα is explicative, explaining and complementing καθορᾶται;¹⁴⁰ i.e. καθορᾶται is interpreted as τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα. If so the construction is as follows:

τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ (subject)

καθορᾶται (verb)

ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου (temporal – the time from which the nature of God is seen)

τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα (modal/explicative)

b) νοούμενα is an adjectival participle, and τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα stands attributively to τὰ ἀόρατα.¹⁴¹ Since there is congruence in number and gender between τὰ ἀόρατα and νοούμενα, the most natural thing would be if νοούμενα is linked to τὰ ἀόρατα, rather than letting νοούμενα modify καθορᾶται, which would be grammatically repulsive. The construction is as follows:

τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ (subject)

τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα (attributive)

καθορᾶται (verb)

ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου (temporal)

It has no bearing on the interpretation of the construction whether one understands the participle modally or explicatively or as an adjectival participle, since as in any case the participle qualifies καθορᾶται either directly as a modal or an explicative participle or indirectly as an adjectival participle, but for grammatical reasons it is better to take νοούμενα as an adjectival participle.

As far as the meaning of νοούμενα is concerned, it cannot denote an observation.¹⁴² For one thing, it refers directly or indirectly to τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ, and for another, it is doubtful whether

¹³⁹ E.g. Michel, *Römer*, p. 99, and Michaelis, ὄρατός, *TWNT V*, p. 370.

¹⁴⁰ E.g. Gärtner, *Areopagus*, pp. 136-137, Murray, *Romans*, pp. 38-39, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 115.

¹⁴¹ Thus Klöpper, *Gotteserkenntnis*, p. 174, and Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 37; Käsemann's argument is that according to Pauline theology, one cannot in this age "behold" God (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:18 and 5:17), and hence, νοούμενα must be linked to ἀόρατα, but that argument is not decisive, since καθορᾶται can also denote a knowledge.

¹⁴² Thus Fridrichsen, *Auslegung*, pp. 164-166, Zahn, *Römer*, pp. 93-94, Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 115, and Bell, *No*, p. 41.

νοεῖν can have the meaning "to observe".¹⁴³ νοούμενα denotes a knowledge.

καθορᾶται may mean "is seen" or "is perceived", but since τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ is the object of καθορᾶται, καθορᾶται means "perceived" or "known",¹⁴⁴ and further clarifying that καθορᾶται denotes a knowledge, Paul adds the adjectival participle which makes it clear that καθορᾶται refers to a knowledge.¹⁴⁵ It is God's invisible character, known through His works, which is "perceived". καθορᾶται and νοούμενα, then, are synonymous.

τοῖς ποιήμασιν belongs together with the adjectival νοούμενα, and the instrumental τοῖς ποιήμασιν describes that which communicates the knowledge. In the preceding section we saw that τοῖς ποιήμασιν refers to God's works in creation, nature, and history, and that the knowledge of τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ is communicated through God's works. τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ is qualified by the adjectival participle as that which is known through God's works, and in that way Paul emphasizes two things. One that it is not a direct self-revelation, but an indirect one, in that God reveals Himself through His works, and two, that it is not a visible revelation of τὰ ἀόρατα, since these people gain knowledge of God through His works.

Thus, the participial clause τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα neutralizes the paradoxical expression, τὰ ἀόρατα ... καθορᾶται. The phrase τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα does of course presuppose an observation of God's work of creation, His ongoing creation in the course of nature, and His intervention in history, but καθορᾶται does not describe an observation, but a knowledge.

The preposition ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου belongs together with the verb καθορᾶται¹⁴⁶ and marks that this knowledge has been communicated since the creation of the world (the *terminus a quo* of the knowledge). In v. 20, then, Paul describes man's *knowledge* of God¹⁴⁷ as He has revealed Himself in creation, nature, and history. This interpretation is confirmed in the context. First v. 20 stands as an explication of v. 19b where Paul described that God brings about man's knowledge of

¹⁴³ According to Behm, νοέω, *TWNT IV*, pp. 947-949, the lexical meaning of νοεῖν is "to perceive", "to grasp", "to recognise", "to understand", "to consider", "to pay attention to", "to conceive", "to imagine", and in the LXX, in later Hellenistic-Jewish writings, and in the NT, νοεῖν is used of an intellectual understanding, not of observation. There are no grounds for claiming that νοεῖν may have the meaning "to observe". See further Bauer, col. 1093, and Harder, νοῦς, *DNTT III*, p. 128.

¹⁴⁴ Thus e.g. Klöpper, *Gotteserkenntnis*, pp. 172-174, Feuillet, *Connaissance*, p. 68, and Harder, νοῦς, *DNTT III*, p. 128. According to Cook, *Logic*, p. 503, note 22, καθορᾶται refers to a visual process because of the combination with νοούμενα, and because "works" are seen. Because of its position, however, ποιήμασιν belongs together with νοούμενα.

¹⁴⁵ If νοούμενα were modal or explicative, it would clarify that καθορᾶται denotes an intellectual process (thus Michaelis, ὄρατός, *TWNT V*, pp. 369-370, and Gärtner, *Areopagus*, pp. 136-137).

¹⁴⁶ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου could qualify νοούμενα, but it seems too obvious to stress that this process of understanding takes place since the creation of the world when the knowledge is communicated through the works of God, which after all presuppose God's creation. If on the other hand one links ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου with the main verb, καθορᾶται, the prepositional phrase fills an important function in the sentence because it emphasizes that since creation no one will be able to excuse himself with the claim that he did not know God.

¹⁴⁷ Thus e.g. Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 38, and Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 105.

Himself. Secondly the interpretation is confirmed by v. 20 because man can only be without excuse if he has known God in His revelation. Thirdly, the interpretation is confirmed by γνόντες τὸν θεὸν (v. 21), which describes a real knowledge of God.¹⁴⁸

The use of νοούμενα in v. 20 has occasioned the involvement of the anthropological concept of νοῦς in the interpretation, νοούμενα being considered to be a function of νοῦς. And when νοῦς has been involved, it has often been interpreted as a term for man's reason, and the role of reason in the appropriation of God's revelation has been stressed. The congeniality of reason with the revelation has been stressed, along with the teleological definition of reason and reason's ability to reflection and deduction.

Looking at the use of νοῦς in Paul, there are no examples of νοῦς denoting the divine, the God-related, or the God-homogeneous element in man. Nor would it be in harmony with Pauline anthropology for νοῦς to denote a divine element in man, let alone contain a drive towards God. Nor does νοῦς have a neutral meaning in the Pauline corpus; it is always defined by man's relationship to God. Either νοῦς is involved in and deeply influenced by man's rebellion against God, and in that case νοῦς is ματαιότης (Ephesians 4:17) or controlled by σάρξ (Colossians 2:18) or ἄδόκιμος (Romans 1:28; cf. 1 Timothy 6:5; 2 Timothy 3:8; Titus 1:15). Or νοῦς is defined by the gospel (Romans 7:23+25; 12:2; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 2:16; Philippians 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:2). With certain modifications, I can endorse Jewett's definition of νοῦς: "Νοῦς is the constellation of thoughts and assumptions which makes up the consciousness of the person and acts as the agent of rational discernment and communication".¹⁴⁹ The last part of the definition must be modified as νοῦς does not always function as the element in man which determines the direction and carries the action (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:14-15,19 and Romans 14:5).

Since νοῦς is understood as being dynamically active in the Pauline Corpus, it is difficult to interpret a possible implied νοῦς in Romans 1:20 as reason. It is not impossible to interpret νοεῖν as a function of νοῦς, but then it is not likely that νοῦς is a term for man's reason. Because νοῦς is always determined by man's position in relation to God, it is unlikely that by Romans 1:20 Paul would want to stress natural man's ability to receive a revelation from God and know God. The decisive argument, however, is the context: νοούμενα must be interpreted in connection with v. 19, and in v. 19 ὁ θεὸς αὐτοῖς ἐφάνερωσεν describes the communication of God's revelation to man, and Paul stresses that the knowledge of God through that which is created, through nature, and

¹⁴⁸ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 116, eliminates the knowledge of God, and Barrett, *Romans*, pp. 35-36, expresses Himself vaguely in connection with the exegesis of v. 20 when he writes that "men set in God's world should have perceived that they were his creatures and that their Creator stood infinitely above them", and "these truths – where they are perceived at all – are perceived by the mind".

¹⁴⁹ Jewett, *Terms*, p. 450.

through history is God's activity in man. As a consequence of this, Paul cannot in v. 20 be describing a cooperative process of revelation where God does His part by revealing himself in that which is created, in nature, and in history, and man does his part by knowing God through reflection and deduction. The process of revelation with its objective revelation and the subjective knowledge is monergistic, in that God is the subject of both revelation and knowledge. The choice of the passive voice (voούμενα), then, is meaningful¹⁵⁰ and determined by the monergistically described process of revelation, and the passive voice emphasizes that the knowledge is given.¹⁵¹ The passive voice stresses that it is a knowledge which is experienced rather than a knowledge of which man is the active subject.¹⁵² The passive meaning is sustained by the fact that the main verb, καθορᾶται, is also in the passive voice and has a passive force. As previously mentioned, καθορᾶται denotes a process of knowledge, and the passive voice emphasizes that God's invisible character is "perceived" or "known".

Paul, then, understands the knowledge as a revelation. First a description of a deduction from that which is created to a creator, or from the order, the regularity, and the harmony in the universe to a cause, *i.e.* God, is absent. Also, there is no description of how man reaches a knowledge of God's existence, but there is a description of which aspects of God's character are known by God's works. Second Paul uses ἐφάνηρῶσεν of man's knowledge and stresses the passive character of the knowledge. The knowledge is given by God. Since God is the active party, and man is the receiving party as far as the subjective appropriation is concerned, and considering the emphasis on man's receptivity, it is hardly probable that τοῖς ποιήμασιν voούμενα should denote a rational reflection or a logical deduction in which man reasons from the works back to God as creator. As far as the knowledge of God is concerned, Paul rather thinks in categories of revelation, in that the revelation of God's invisible character is communicated through God's works in creation, nature, and history, and God's works have the character of signs: they reflect and reveal God's nature.

The subjective knowledge of God as He reveals Himself in that which is created, in nature, and in history, is God's activity in man. The reception is not conditioned by presuppositions in man such as his being equipped with reason which enables him to receive a revelation, but is sovereignly wrought by God. The knowledge is not brought about through mystical contemplation or through an inner vision, but is communicated through some external means, *i.e.* the works of God (τοῖς ποιήμασιν) which reflect God's character. Through the revelation in God's works, the knowledge is

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Michel, *Römer*, p. 99.

¹⁵¹ Bauer's translation is highly unfortunate: "d. Unsichtbare ... wird mit d. Auge der Vernunft geschaut" (cols. 1093).

¹⁵² Contra Fridrichsen, *Auslegung*, p. 166, who thinks that the passive voούμενα has an active force and describes the property of the logical subject, and Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 58, who writes about "some kind of rational perception of the fuller reality in and behind the created cosmos".

wrought in man.

3.3.6. The scope of the revelation (v. 20)

In the section concerning the time of the revelation, the conclusion was that Paul described a continuous revelation which began at creation; in the section concerning the locus of the revelation, the conclusion was that that which is created, nature, and history (τοῖς ποιήμασιν v. 20) are the loci where God reveals Himself. In the section concerning the communication of the revelation, the conclusion was that the appropriation is effected by God; the knowledge of God is a gift. In this section we will look at the question of the scope of the revelation. In the analysis of the locus of the revelation, we reached the conclusion that the revelation is communicated through that which is created, through nature, and through history, and that fact points to a general revelation with a universal application. However, in the section concerning the classification of man we have concluded that in 1:18-32 Paul described a section of humankind. Paul drew a portrait of ungodly and unrighteous Gentiles and Jews who suppress the truth about God through unrighteousness (cf. 1:18). Therefore, when Paul in 1:19-20 speaks of the revelation of God and the communication of the revelation, this revelation and the communication thereof is described in relation to this section of humankind. Therefore, ἐν αὐτοῖς and αὐτοῖς in v. 19 and αὐτοῦς in v. 20 encompass not all of humankind, but only a section. However we still have to maintain that this revelation (vv. 19-20) is general and has a universal application, due to the following factors: Firstly, as has already been mentioned, the revelation is communicated through that which is created, through nature, and through history, all of which are generally accessible, thus we have an indication that the revelation is universal. The presupposition for the revelation is the means of revelation, the works of God (τοῖς ποιήμασιν), which have an objective and generally accessible character. After all, man lives in the created world which reveals God; man lives in nature which reveals God; and he is a part of history which reveals God. Therefore, the individual man cannot avoid God's objective revelation without denying the world, nature, and history, nor can the individual man avoid the receiving of the revelation, for it is wrought in man by God (cf. v. 19c). Secondly, there is the correlation between 1:18-32 and 2:1-5. In the section concerning the classification of man, one of the conclusions is that 1:18-32 and 2:1-5 describe two different categories. Another of the conclusions is that διὸ in 2:1 introduces a deduction from 1:32a; hence, when Paul can draw a deduction from the knowledge of τὸ δικάσιμα τοῦ θεοῦ of the first category (1:18-32) of people, this implies that the second category of people (2:1-5) are in possession of the same knowledge. The knowledge of τὸ δικάσιμα τοῦ θεοῦ is communicated through natural revelation, and therefore the revelatory context of both categories

is the same, in that both are described from the point of view of natural revelation. The second category of people, which also includes the Jews, have knowledge of God's law and righteous decree, it having been communicated to them through natural revelation. In that light, it is evident that God's revelation in that which is created, in nature, and in history, is general and universal.

3.3.7. The consequence of the revelation

In vv. 19-20, Paul describes God as having revealed Himself through creation, through nature, and through history as the eternally mighty and demanding God. Paul describes this God as having been known, and that God has wrought this knowledge, and at the end of v. 20, Paul describes the consequence of this knowledge of God.

εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους may be understood in three ways: 1) the clause may be final, 2) the clause may be final-consecutive, and 3) the clause may be consecutive. Michel¹⁵³ and Barrett¹⁵⁴ interpret εἰς τὸ εἶναι as final, which would mean that the clause describes God's intention with natural revelation. However, a purely final interpretation is impossible because the sentence is linked to the main verb, καθορᾶται, and as we have seen, καθορᾶται describes the knowledge of God wrought by God as He has revealed Himself in that which is created, in nature, and in history, and in v. 21 Paul describes God's intention with this knowledge of Himself: man was to honor and thank God (cf. also the definition of θεϊότης).¹⁵⁵ Sanday/Headlam¹⁵⁶ and Moe¹⁵⁷ interpret εἰς τὸ εἶναι as final-consecutive, which would mean that the clause describes an intentional consequence. The meaning is that it was God's intention that the men should be without excuse if they sinned.¹⁵⁸ Käsemann¹⁵⁹ and Cranfield¹⁶⁰ interpret εἰς τὸ εἶναι as consecutive, which would mean that the clause describes the consequence, and this is the best interpretation, for two reasons. Firstly, the honoring and thanking of Himself (v. 21) is God's intention with the knowledge of God, and secondly, the reason given for εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους in v. 21 shows that the clause is consecutive, focusing unambiguously on the guilt of the men.¹⁶¹

¹⁵³ Michel, *Römer*, p. 101.

¹⁵⁴ Barrett, *Romans*, p. 36.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 107.

¹⁵⁶ Sanday/Headlam, *Romans*, p. 44.

¹⁵⁷ Moe, *Romerne*, p. 77.

¹⁵⁸ Thus also Zahn, *Römer*, p. 94. According to Nygren, *Romarna*, p. 110, εἰς τὸ is final, but Nygren interprets the clause in the same way as Sanday/Headlam and Moe when he writes, that according to Paul it is God's will for whoever turns away from Him to have no excuse. Thus also Murray, *Romans*, p. 40.

¹⁵⁹ Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 38.

¹⁶⁰ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 116.

¹⁶¹ Burton, *Moods*, p. 162, Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 38, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 116, rightly draw the reason for the consecutive understanding from v. 21.

3.3.8. Conclusion

In 18b-20 we find a natural revelation of God and a natural knowledge of God. This has been generally questioned by scholars. I will mention some characteristic recent interpretations. For instance, I can mention Barrett¹⁶² who, on the basis of εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογίτους, writes, "It is not Paul's intention in this and the following verses to establish a natural theology; nor does he create one unintentionally".¹⁶³ Although it is true that it is Paul's intention to establish that these people are without excuse, and although it is equally true that vv. 18b-20 are part of an argumentation which points in the direction of the conclusion that all are guilty, and all are under sin (3:9+19-20), Paul's production of evidence against this category of people requires that God has revealed Himself to them, and that they have received the revelation. That they are without excuse not only presupposes a natural revelation of God, but also a natural knowledge of God. The factuality of the knowledge among people who have only the natural revelation is a necessary element in Paul's argumentation, for without the factuality of the knowledge it would be impossible to give a reason for the guilt.¹⁶⁴ Therefore, Paul's argumentation requires that he involve a natural revelation of God and a natural knowledge of God. The consequence (εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογίτους) determines the use of the natural revelation of God and the natural knowledge of God and determines which elements Paul involves. Therefore, it is quite correct that Paul does not have it as his intention to state a doctrine of natural revelation, but Paul does introduce it in his argumentation.

A variation of the argument of intention is set forth by Cranfield¹⁶⁵ who writes, "The result of God's self-manifestation in His creation is not a natural knowledge of God on men's part independent of God's self-revelation in His Word, a valid though limited knowledge, but simply the excuselessness of men in their ignorance." Cranfield's argument is based on a false alternative between having a natural knowledge of God and being without excuse. Paul does not operate with this alternative; on the contrary, he stresses the factuality of the subjective knowledge in v. 1, in v. 19a+b and in v. 20, and in vv. 21ff, v. 25, v. 28, and v. 32, the factuality of the knowledge is the very thing which emphasizes the guilt of man.

Another objection against the presence of "natural theology" in this passage consists in the minimizing or elimination of all references to man's knowledge of God as He has revealed Himself in creation, nature, and history. Thus Cranfield eliminates all the expressions in vv. 18b-20 which

¹⁶² Barrett, *Romans*, p. 35.

¹⁶³ Thus also Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 116, Käsemann, *Römer*, pp. 36-37. Käsemann writes that a natural theology is hardly reconcilable with Paul's eschatology and Christology, and adds, "Wir haben zu beachten, dass er hier nicht aufklärt, beweist, verteidigt oder bloss 'anknüpft', sondern anklagt" (p. 37).

¹⁶⁴ Rightly stressed by Hauge, *Revelatio*, p. 105.

¹⁶⁵ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 116.

refer to man's natural knowledge of God. τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ becomes "God, in so far as He is objectively knowable, i.e. knowable in the sense of being experienceable",¹⁶⁶ and later, this is explained as though they have not known Him. Verse 19ab refers to the objective revelation,¹⁶⁷ νοούμενα and καθορᾶται refer to a physical vision,¹⁶⁸ and in connection with εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοῦς ἀναπολογήτους, Cranfield writes, "... men ought to have recognized, but in fact have not recognized, Him".¹⁶⁹ How much there remains of a "natural theology" is limited, if it is only the revelation itself that is an objective reality. But as we have seen, it appears from verses 18, 19, and 20 that man have known God as He has revealed Himself in His works.

A third objection has been raised by Käsemann;¹⁷⁰ according to Käsemann one cannot speak of a natural theology in Paul's writings because in the genuine Pauline letters, the creation is not an independent doctrine, and the view of God's creative act and man's createdness and of the world which is found in Paul, has an eschatological orientation. Therefore there are no statements which concern the beginning of the world theoretically and specifically. The reality prior to the Fall cannot be reconstructed, nor can it be seen as an ideal state compared to the present life. Of God he only speaks about His relation to people and the world after the Fall, and God's character and attributes are not reflected on as such. Paul does not refer to διοίκησις and τάξις in the cosmos to give a reason for a knowledge of God. The metaphysical questions are alien to Paul. The first of Käsemann's arguments, that the creation is not an independent doctrine in Paul, and that Paul does not theoretically concern himself with the beginning of the world, does not hold, for the question is not whether it is an independent and theoretical doctrine, but whether the creation is incorporated into Paul's argumentation. And it is, at least in one respect in that the creation of the world is the terminus a quo of the revelation, and for another in that, that which is created, is part of τοῖς ποιήμασιν, which is the locus of the revelation and the objective instrument in the communication. This means that Paul refers to the creation in his argumentation with the intent of establishing that these people are without excuse. The second of Käsemann's arguments, which consists of a delimitation in relation to reality prior to the Fall, is irrelevant because Paul does not distinguish between before and after the Fall in this context. Paul describes a revelation which began with creation and which has since then continued in an unchanged form. This means that God has revealed and is revealing His invisible character, both as eternal power and as divine, for Adam and all later generations.

¹⁶⁶ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 113.

¹⁶⁷ Cranfield, *Romans I*, pp. 113-114.

¹⁶⁸ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 115.

¹⁶⁹ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 116.

¹⁷⁰ Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 36.

Paul involves the natural revelation of God and the natural knowledge of God as a link in an argumentation that has the intention of proving that all who belong to this category of people are without excuse with respect to God. Those elements of a natural revelation and knowledge which Paul uses, are therefore to be understood as being in agreement with Paul's argumentation and the intent of his argumentation. Paul's intention is to confirm the reality of natural revelation and knowledge. In this paragraph, Paul is primarily thinking of Gentiles who are outside the scope of special revelation, and in order to prove that they, too, are guilty, he must refer to the fact that God has also revealed Himself to them through that which is created, as well as through nature, and through history, and that God has wrought a knowledge of Himself in them. For guilt towards God presupposes a knowledge of God. Because of the intent of the argumentation, an objective revelation in that which is created, in nature, and in history is an inevitable necessity.

3.4. The rejection (vv. 21-23)

In verses 18-32, Paul describes a section of mankind, namely the people who experience God's wrath. Their ungodliness, unrighteousness and suppression of the truth are religious-ethical characteristics. In verse 18, Paul states his thesis: God reveals His wrath upon ungodliness and unrighteousness of man who suppress the truth through unrighteousness. And in verses 19-32 he gives an explication of the thesis. The first part of the explication is verses 19-20. Here Paul gives a reason for his claim that these people know the truth. God has revealed Himself to these men and communicated His revelation to them. The content of the revelation is defined as that which may be known about God (verse 19), as God's invisible character (verse 20), which is further defined as His eternal power and divinity. Paul also describes the communication of the revelation, which means that these people know God as He has revealed Himself. Paul writes that the knowledge of God is evident in them (verse 19a), that God has revealed Himself to them so that they know Him (verse 19b), and he describes a knowledge which is given to them (verse 20). God's invisible character which is known through His works is perceived. In verse 20, Paul describes the time of the revelation. It is a continuous revelation which began with creation and which has gone on ever since. He describes the locus of the revelation (verse 20). God reveals Himself in that which is created, in nature, and in history. The "truth" spoken of in verse 18, then, is *both* God's revelation, which equals that which may be known about God and equals His invisible character, *and* man's knowledge of God. These people's knowledge of God is identical to the content of the revelation of God. With this part of the explication, Paul has provided proof of these people's knowledge of God. With "so that they are without excuse" Paul describes the consequence of this knowledge of God. This ending of verse 20 tells us of Paul's intention with this argumentation. Paul introduces the

natural revelation of God and knowledge of God in order to establish that this category of people are without excuse.

The second part of the explication of verse 18 follows in verses 21-23. Here Paul provides proof that these people are guilty. He speaks of their rejection and idolatry. Verse 21 is syntactically linked to the end of verse 20 (that they are without excuse), and the reason Paul gives for this conclusion is that these people do not honor and thank God although they knew Him. Paul provides the premise that was missing in verse 20. As a reason for his claim that these people are without excuse, Paul writes that although they knew God, they did not honor and thank Him as God, but became futile in their thinking, and their senseless heart was darkened. Although they thought they were wise, they became fools, and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an image made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles (verses 21-23). This part of the explication of verse 18 describes rejection and idolatry. It also raises the quite legitimate question: What happens to these people's knowledge of God? Is it not quite true to say that it is lost since Paul writes about futile thinking, a senseless heart, of darkening and foolishness and idolatry? Can it with any justice be maintained that there is a knowledge of God in the middle of this futility, folly, darkening, foolishness, and idolatry? Can it with any justice be maintained that there are remnants of a knowledge of God left in these people? And if indeed there are remnants of a knowledge of God, should it not, then, be localized to their idolatry? And does this not mean that the knowledge of God becomes perverted and distorted? Or does not verse 23 show that Paul is thinking of Adam, and that the whole issue of God revealing Himself in that which is created, in nature, and in history, and that man thereby know Him, is a false issue?

The second part of the explication, then, raises a series of questions because these verses describe the attitude of these people towards the God that they have come to know through that which is created, through nature, and through history. Verses 21-23 are a part of the issue of a natural revelation, and one must not base one's understanding of the natural revelation of God and knowledge of God upon verses 18-20 alone. Verses 21-23 must be taken into consideration. This is evident.

3.4.1. Four models

In the following, then, I will analyze verses 21-23. But before I do this, I will give a detailed account of four characteristic models of interpretation. The final one I will only give a sketch of since it is the model that I support, and I will hence give a more detailed argumentation for it in the analysis of verses 21-23.

a) First model: A primeval revelation

According to the first model, Paul in Romans 1:18-32 describes a primeval revelation to Adam. One argument for this is that Romans 1:18-32 is a description of the story of Adam, and another is that Romans 1:23 is a description of the fall where Adam loses the image of God.¹⁷¹

As far as the first argument is concerned, Hooker thinks that the description of man's wickedness in Romans 1 is worded on the basis of Genesis 1-3, and that Romans 1:18ff is therefore a description of the account of Adam.¹⁷² She writes that for Adam it is true that God revealed that which may be known about Himself (v. 19), and that God's invisible attributes since creation were clearly knowable in that which is created, and that Adam was without excuse. More than anybody else Adam knew God, but Adam did not honor Him and became futile in his thinking and darkened (v. 21). Adam's fall was due to his wish to become like God and gain knowledge of good and evil, but in reality he became a fool although he claimed to have become wise (v. 22). Adam also lost the glory of God which was reflected on his face (v. 23), and by believing the serpent he obeyed and gave himself over to the created thing rather than the Creator (v. 25). Adam knew God's righteous decree, but not only did he break it, he also approved of Eve's breach of it (v. 32). In her interpretation of Romans 1:18-32 Hooker uses both plural and singular forms and the name Adam, and she thinks that both Romans 5 and Romans 1:18-2:16 "is framed ... in terms of man's solidarity with Adam".¹⁷³ So Paul is thinking of a revelation of God which was given to Adam before the fall, and therefore the contrast is between man's (Adam's) knowledge of God before the fall and his imperfect knowledge of God after the fall, or between the direct vision of God and the partial knowledge of God which is imperfect because of man's sin.¹⁷⁴ Romans 1:18-32, then, tells the story of Adam, and when plural forms are used and "man" are spoken of, it is due to mankind being "included" in Adam. The first argument does not stand.

The second argument¹⁷⁵ in favor of the interpretation that Paul is describing a primeval revelation to Adam in Romans 1:18-32 is that Romans 1:23 describes man's loss of his original image of God.¹⁷⁶ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθαρτοῦ θεοῦ denotes man's image of God.¹⁷⁷ φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου refers to Adam, and the idea in ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνοσ φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου is that man

¹⁷¹ In the section on "The time of the revelation" I have already reported these views and rejected them.

¹⁷² Hooker, *Adam*, pp. 300-301.

¹⁷³ Hooker, *Adam*, p. 306.

¹⁷⁴ Hooker, *Adam*, pp. 303-304.

¹⁷⁵ On this, see the section on "The time of the revelation". The arguments are interrelated, but I treat them separately for the sake of clarity.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Hooker, *Adam*, p. 305. The most thorough argumentation for Romans 1:23 referring to a primeval event is found in Jervell, *Imago*, pp. 320-328. Jervell thinks that Romans 1:23 refers to both a primeval event where man lost the image of God, and to the present time where the image of God is lost with every sin committed. The latter element is the one given most attention by Jervell.

¹⁷⁷ Jervell, *Imago*, p. 321, thinks that Romans 1:23 reflects both Genesis 1:26f and Psalm 106:20.

becomes like Adam or bears the image of Adam. As we have seen, this argument also does not stand.

b) Second model: A lost knowledge of God

According to the second model, the knowledge of God is lost. Within this model it is said that the knowledge of God is real, or just a possibility, and that this real or possible knowledge of God is lost. The argumentation is taken from Romans 1:21-23. In Romans 1:21 Paul notes that this category of people do not recognize the eternal, almighty, transcendent and demanding God, and in verses 21b-23 he describes the consequences of the rejection: they become futile in their thinking, their heart becomes darkened, their understanding of themselves becomes false, and they involve themselves in idolatry. This description is interpreted to the effect that these people lose their knowledge of God. They begin with God's revelation in that which is created, in nature, and in history, all of which surround them, and which they cannot evade; they "see" the eternal, almighty, and transcendent God through His works; but the knowledge of God is only the beginning, because when they do not recognize God as God, they are led into a process that has the consequence that they completely lose their knowledge of God. Once they have become darkened and have involved themselves in idolatry, they no longer know God. This interpretation is found in Eichholz,¹⁷⁸ who describes how it was possible for man to know God. God's creative power and His wisdom were accessible to human knowledge and reason, but man refuses this knowledge and always evades it.¹⁷⁹ Eichholz's thesis is that the original possibility of knowing God has become a lost possibility, and that man no longer know the Creator.¹⁸⁰ This is also true of the pagan religions which are without knowledge of the Creator. Eichholz finds in Galatians 4:8-9, which is a parallel to Romans 1, a confirmation of his claim that man do not know the Creator through the religions. In Galatians 4:8, Paul writes, "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods". In Eichholz's interpretation, the verse means that Paul knows of no worship of the Creator in the worship of the idols, which Eichholz takes as an expression that they did no longer know the Creator. Eichholz also mentions 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 as a factual parallel. In verse 9b, Paul writes, "how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God". Eichholz interprets this verse, too, as an expression that the Gentiles did not know the Creator while they served their idols. Finally, he mentions Ephesians 2:12 as yet another factual parallel. There Paul characterizes the Gentiles as "without hope and without God in the world".

¹⁷⁸ Eichholz, *Theologie*, pp. 68-78. The same interpretation is found in Bell, *No*, pp. 34-35 and 93ff.

¹⁷⁹ Eichholz, *Theologie*, pp. 68-69.

¹⁸⁰ Eichholz, *Theologie*, pp. 69-71.

In the context, "their thinking became futile" (verse 21) may be interpreted as expressing the fact that their thinking was deprived of the divine reality, and "their senseless heart was darkened" (verse 21) expresses the fact that God's existence was hidden from them because of the darkening of their hearts. Thus the Gentiles no longer know God in their religious worship and one might ask if this interpretation is not confirmed in Galatians 4:8, Ephesians 2:12, Ephesians 4:18, 1 Thessalonians 4:5, and 2 Thessalonians 1:8¹⁸¹ where Paul characterizes the Gentiles as people who do not know God?

First we will look at Galatians 4:8 where Paul writes of the past of the Gentile Christians: They did not know God. That could mean that the Gentiles are without a theoretical knowledge of God. In the context, there are two factors that determine the interpretation of οὐκ εἰδότες θεὸν. One factor is the correlation between the participial clause and the main clause in verse 8. The adverbial participle has a causal force and gives the reason why they were slaves to the idols.¹⁸² This correlation tells us that with οὐκ εἰδότες θεὸν Paul describes a lack of a saving knowledge of God. The other factor that determines the interpretation of οὐκ εἰδότες θεὸν is the antithesis to γνόντες θεόν in verse 9. The two participial clauses stand antithetically. γνόντες θεόν is further characterized by the reinforcing μᾶλλον δὲ γνωσθέντες ὑπὸ θεοῦ which describes the election of God.¹⁸³ This was wrought through the preaching of the gospel and through faith. The antithetical γνόντες θεόν describes the saving union of faith with God, and it confirms that οὐκ εἰδότες θεὸν is also understood existentially as the saving knowledge of faith. This is the knowledge that the Gentiles were lacking.¹⁸⁴

In Ephesians 2:11-13 Paul writes of the past and present of the Gentile Christians. The basic structure in the verses is defined on the basis of the contrast between being outside of Christ (verse 12) and being in Christ (verse 13). The time without Christ means that they were without God. Hence, it describes that they are without the saving knowledge of God.

In Ephesians 4:17 Paul writes of Gentiles who live in the futility of their thinking. Paul gives the reason for this with two participles in verse 18. The reason is for one thing that they are darkened in their understanding, and for another thing that they are separated from the life of God.

¹⁸¹ Eichholz also mentions 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, but that passage does not shed any light on whether the Gentiles know God. Paul writes in verse 9 of the members of the church that they turned to God from the idols to serve the living and true God. The verse tells us that the Gentile members of the church did not serve God (in their idols) prior to their conversion. But Paul writes nothing about whether the Gentiles had a theoretical knowledge of God before they were converted.

¹⁸² It is better to understand the participle as causal rather than temporal because it actually states the reason why they were slaves to idols, and because Romans 1:21-23 shows that knowledge of God without honor and thanksgiving is the reason why the Gentiles fall into idolatry.

¹⁸³ Schlier, *Galater*, p. 202, Musner, *Galater*, p. 292, and Kjær, *Afguder*, pp. 31-32.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Bultmann, γινώσκω, TWNT I, pp. 703-708, who emphasizes the practical element in the knowledge of God; knowledge is also recognition, service, and obedience.

Linked to the latter participial clause is διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν τὴν οὖσαν ἐν αὐτοῖς.¹⁸⁵ This gives the reason for their being separated from the life of God. Hence, this "ignorance" must imply a break with God. This is further confirmed by the next co-ordinate reason which speaks of hardening. It qualifies the "ignorance" as deliberate and oppositional.¹⁸⁶

In 1 Thessalonians 4:5 Paul writes of "the Gentiles who do not know God". τὰ μὴ εἰδῶτα τὸν θεὸν is an adjectival participle which stands attributively to τὰ ἔθνη. This may be interpreted in two ways. Either the Gentiles lack an intellectual and theoretical knowledge of God, and since the near context (verses 3-8) focuses on God's will, the meaning is that when they lack knowledge of God, they of course also lack knowledge of the ethical will of God.¹⁸⁷ In the near context, this interpretation is problematic. Paul writes of God's will in verse 3 and defines God's will as "that you should be sanctified". In that which follows, Paul makes "sanctified" more concrete as avoiding sexual immorality,¹⁸⁸ as acquiring a wife in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust.¹⁸⁹ This shows that with θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ Paul is thinking of practice. Hence, the participial clause refers to the Gentiles' lack of knowledge of God in faith, recognition, and obedience, for that is the knowledge that might give the Gentiles another practice so they would avoid sexual immorality (see verses 7-8).

In 2 Thessalonians 1:8 Paul writes about the eschatological judgment coming upon those who do not know God. In the context there are two factors that determine the more precise interpretation of μὴ εἰδῶσιν θεὸν. One factor is the parallel expression which speaks of disobedience. Since it is a parallel expression, it is fair to assume that τοῖς μὴ εἰδῶσιν θεὸν also denotes a deliberate rejection and disobedience. The other factor is the contrast to the believers. "Those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel" are those upon whom punishment and destruction will come at the eschatological judgment (verses 8-9). The believers stand as a contrast group (see verse 10). They are not touched by the punishment and the destruction. This contrast qualifies the two groups in verse 8 as unbelievers, i.e. there is an element of rejection and unbelief in the phrase μὴ εἰδῶσιν θεὸν, so with μὴ εἰδῶσιν θεὸν Paul is not thinking of a theoretical ignorance of God,¹⁹⁰ but of a

¹⁸⁵ It is possible that the two prepositional phrases give the reason for both participles.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Gnllka, *Epheserbrief*, p. 224, who writes, "Darum ist er (i.e. the ignorance) von der "Verhärtung des Herzens" nicht weit entfernt". The same view is found in Best, *Ephesians*, p. 420.

¹⁸⁷ See references in Kjær, *Thessalonikerbrev*, p. 126, note 36.

¹⁸⁸ It is of no bearing on the interpretation whether verses 3-6 is one exhortation to avoid sexual immorality, or if there are two exhortations to avoid sexual immorality (verses 3c-5) and not to exploit one's brother economically (verse 6; see Kjær, *Thessalonikerbrev*, pp. 126-127).

¹⁸⁹ For more details on the relationship between the infinitives in verses 3-4, see Kjær, *Thessalonikerbrev*, p. 121.

¹⁹⁰ In Romans 11:30, Paul characterizes the Gentiles as disobedient, and in verse 30 he characterizes all (both Jews and Gentiles) as disobedient, so "disobedience" is a common characteristic.

breach and a lack of recognition of God.¹⁹¹

We may conclude that Galatians 4:8-9, Ephesians 2:12, Ephesians 4:18, 1 Thessalonians 4:5, and 2 Thessalonians 1:8 do not describe the Gentiles' theoretical knowledge of God, but their lack of a saving knowledge of God, their separation from God, and their denial of God. Therefore, these texts cannot be used to support the interpretation that the Gentiles have lost their original knowledge of God.

It is also a weakness in Eichholz's interpretation that he does not involve Romans 1:18 in his interpretation, for in that verse Paul gives a characteristic of the category of people who have rejected God and who became futile in their thinking, darkened, and idolaters. Paul notes that these men suppress the truth through their unrighteousness; "the truth" being the knowledge of God which has been communicated through God's revelation in that which is created, in nature, and in history, and the suppression *presupposes* a relationship to an abiding knowledge of God. This category of people have not escaped the revelation of God, but must still suppress and repress it. Eichholz does also not involve Romans 1:32 which stresses that this category of people have an ongoing knowledge of God's system of justice; in spite of their rebellion against God in the ethical sphere, they still know God's commandments and know that God punishes transgressions with death.

Hence, when Paul writes that these people became futile in their thinking and darkened, it is not to be interpreted as a complete description of their knowledge. Both the futility and the darkening are related to their idolatry. With the phrase, "their thinking became futile", Paul negatively notes that the religious ideas that dominate them after their rejection of God are out of touch with God. With the phrase, "were darkened", Paul positively notes that idolatry fills out their religious ideas and dominate them after the break with God. Paul explains the darkening partly as self-deception (v. 22), partly as idolatry (v. 23).

The idea in this model is that the knowledge of God (as reality or possibility) that has been communicated to this category of people through that which is created, through nature, and through history, has disappeared and been lost.

c) Third model: A distorted knowledge of God

According to the third model, remnants of the knowledge of God remain in man, but they are present in a distorted form. The remnants of the knowledge of God are swallowed up by the idolatry. This interpretation is found in Schlier.¹⁹² He does not think that the knowledge of God is

¹⁹¹ Best, *Thessalonians*, p. 260.

¹⁹² Schlier has proposed his interpretation in two articles, "Über die Erkenntnis Gottes bei den Heiden", and "Von den

lost completely, and to the degree one can speak of an ongoing search for the one true God, it is a search in ignorance. When Schlier presents his interpretation, he uses two facts as a starting point: 1) God has revealed Himself in that which is created, and 2) man has rejected God (reference to Romans 1:21). In the light of that he puts forward his thesis: The ongoing revelation of God in that which is created is always veiled by man.¹⁹³ The reason for this is to be found in man's nature: He will not recognize God.¹⁹⁴ The rejection of God has consequences on the knowledge of God, in that Schlier writes that the rejection of God's demand of worship is brought to completion in a "distorted variety of the knowledge of God" in the Gentiles. This distorted variety he describes partly as a veiling of the revealed God by asking for Him, and partly as a veiling of the revealed God by setting up an image of Him.¹⁹⁵

That God is in fact hidden by the Gentiles' asking for him, Schlier illustrates with a reference to Acts 17:16-34.¹⁹⁶ The Gentiles build an altar to the unknown God. "In that very place where they do not deny God's testimony in that which is created, they reveal that they have already denied Him: they honor the known God as the unknown. In that very place where the Gentiles turn to the revealed God, they only know God in the asking for God. It is ignorantly that they know God (cf. Acts 17:23b)." This asking for God is only one side of paganism, a side that is continually threatened and suppressed by the idolatry, which is a stronger tendency among the Gentiles.¹⁹⁷ Along with the rejection of God goes a divinization of creation, an apotheosis of the cosmos, and a worship of idols. But even in the idolatry, the knowledge of God is not completely extinguished, for the world thinks of the idols *as* God, and in this "like God" the knowledge of God reveals itself.¹⁹⁸ Schlier concludes that the Gentiles either hide the revealed God in the divinization of the world, which is what is characteristic of the Gentiles, or they hide the revealed God in the asking for God, and this denial is always threatened by the first form of denial of God.¹⁹⁹

In another article Schlier in detail discusses Romans 1:18-32.²⁰⁰ Schlier writes, "At this point the apostle is no longer only speaking of the revelation of God, nor is he any longer putting forward the thesis that the divinity of God is seen spiritually by the creation, but he grants that the Gentiles have known the revealed God, but that this knowledge has been lost because of their

Heiden".

¹⁹³ Schlier, *Erkenntnis*, p. 10.

¹⁹⁴ Schlier, *Erkenntnis*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁹⁵ Schlier, *Erkenntnis*, p. 12.

¹⁹⁶ Schlier, *Erkenntnis*, p. 12. My translation.

¹⁹⁷ Schlier, *Erkenntnis*, p. 22.

¹⁹⁸ Schlier, *Erkenntnis*, p. 23.

¹⁹⁹ Schlier, *Erkenntnis*, p. 25.

²⁰⁰ Schlier, *Heiden*.

disobedience”.²⁰¹ The Gentiles began with the knowledge of God, but since the Gentiles did not honor and thank God, they lost the knowledge of God.²⁰² Schlier concludes, ”This makes it clear that in the Gentiles there is no living gnosis of God, in spite of the fact that they came from it, and in spite of the fact that the power and divinity of God may be known from His works”.²⁰³ The conclusion could be understood to the effect that the Gentiles have completely lost the knowledge of God, but Schlier makes two clarifications which show that there are still remnants of the knowledge of God in them. The Gentiles have not lost all light, and the fact that they claim to be wise, Schlier sees as a sign that they still have a knowledge of wisdom, and honor it. The Gentiles have indeed evaded the wisdom of God, but they are still kept so much by it that wisdom seems attractive to them.²⁰⁴ Even the idolatry of the Gentiles also reveals their ongoing binding to God. Their religion is not atheism, and their knowledge of the world is not godless, but that does not mean that the religion of the Gentiles is a worship of God.²⁰⁵ The religion of the Gentiles is a binding to God through the idols, and ”the Gentiles are bound to God in the way that in their rejection of Him, they seek Him, and in their seeking, they reject; that in their failure to appreciate Him, they know Him, and in their knowledge, they fail to appreciate Him.”²⁰⁶ Schlier thinks that the Gentiles, blinded, seek God in idol images of created things.²⁰⁷

Another representative of this view is Gärtner. He writes that the natural revelation in Romans 1-2 is universal and includes both the knowledge of God and of the will of God. As far as Romans 1 is concerned, Paul is writing of a knowledge of God; man can know that God is the Creator and some of God’s attributes – His eternal power and His divinity (Romans 1:20) – and man can know God’s righteous decree (Romans 1:32). This knowledge stems from God’s revelation in that which is created and in nature.²⁰⁸ Gärtner stresses that Paul is not writing that man can gain knowledge, but that men actually possess that knowledge. They have received knowledge of God and know God’s righteous decree. Therefore, the knowledge of God and of His righteous decree is a reality, and a reality in all people at that, but Paul shows that these people do not use their knowledge rightly, but distort it. In spite of the fact that the Gentiles have received God’s revelation in that which is created, they turn this to the opposite of knowledge, namely ignorance of God (ἄγνοια τοῦ θεοῦ). The truth about God is changed into a lie, and the lie implies that the worship of God is

²⁰¹ Schlier, *Heiden*, p. 31. My translation.

²⁰² Schlier, *Heiden*, p. 32.

²⁰³ Schlier, *Heiden*, p. 32. My translation.

²⁰⁴ Schlier, *Heiden*, p. 33.

²⁰⁵ Schlier, *Heiden*, p. 33.

²⁰⁶ Schlier, *Heiden*, p. 33. My translation.

²⁰⁷ Schlier, *Heiden*, p. 37.

²⁰⁸ Gärtner, *Areopagus*, pp. 74+79.

materialized and turned to created things.²⁰⁹ This means that the knowledge of God is distorted and becomes ignorance of God, and this ignorance materializes itself in idolatry.²¹⁰

In this model it is stressed that the knowledge of God is not completely lost because distorted remnants of the knowledge of God remain. The knowledge of God is found originally, but is mixed with false ideas about God and eclipsed in the idol images, but this distorted knowledge of God is kept in their consciousness of being wise and in their idols.

As far as Schlier is concerned, this interpretation is clearly influenced by the wording ὁ οὖν ἄγνοοῦτε εὐσεβεῖτε in Acts 17:23b, which Schlier interprets in a positive sense. The Athenians really do worship God, but ignorantly. The much discussed ὁ οὖν ἄγνοοῦτε εὐσεβεῖτε is, however, interpreted in a negative sense by Paul in the following speech which concludes in an appeal to repentance (verse 30); thereby "you worship" is qualified as a false worship which has not brought them closer to God. Their worship is under judgment (cf. v. 31). εὐσεβεῖτε, then, is a simple description of their religious practice, and in the light of that it cannot be said that the Athenians – however ignorantly – worship God. Nor is there any link between "the unknown God" and the God that Paul preaches for them. Paul does not identify one of their gods who happens to be unknown, but the one true God.

When it comes to the question of whether in some sense these people seek and worship God in their idols, this view does not harmonize with Romans 1:23 and 25. In verse 23 Paul writes that they exchange the glory of God for an idol image, and in verse 25 he writes that they exchange the truth with the lie.²¹¹ Verses 23 and 25 explicitly tell us two things: 1) There is no mixing of the revealed truth with the lie, meaning that parts of the truth form part of the lie, thereby being distorted, but there is an exchange. 2) There is no mixing of God with idols, meaning that man represents God by means of idol images and worship God in their idols, but there is an exchange in that God is rejected as the object of worship (v. 21) and replaced by other objects of worship (vv. 23+25). Paul stresses the complete break with God in their worship. The Gentiles seek and worship other "gods" instead of God.

This interpretation also has the weakness that Romans 1:18 and 32 are not integrated into the overall understanding. Those two verses tell us that the knowledge of God remains intact in man.

²⁰⁹ Gärtner, *Areopagus*, pp. 75+79.

²¹⁰ In this connection we might also mention Lackmann, *Geheimnis*, p. 184, who writes of a twisted and captured truth which now stands in the service of the lie, and Feuillet, *Connaissance*, pp. 74-76, who writes that these people have originally been able to know God, but have since lost the ability to understand the language of creation, and the knowledge of God is corrupted. Seifrid, *Revelation*, p. 120, note 8, wants to distinguish between "the ongoing revelation of the creator in the natural order" and "its reception by fallen humanity in the form of idolatry". Seifrid, *Revelation*, p. 124, writes, "just as the knowledge of God the creator has been perverted by idolatry."

²¹¹ Verses 18 and 32 show that this exchange does not mean that the knowledge of God is lost.

d) Fourth model: A suppressed knowledge of God

According to the fourth model, the knowledge of God remains intact in man after the religious decay, but man suppresses this knowledge. This interpretation is found in Bornkamm.²¹² He writes that the knowledge of God is the reality under which the whole world stands. The sign of the godless world is therefore knowledge of God. The world has the truth about God, albeit as suppressed (v. 18), and the world knows God although they do not appreciate the fact (v. 28). A present revelation (v. 19) and a universal knowledge of God (v. 21) gives the world its character. The natural revelation has not disappeared with the fall or even become an unfruitful possibility, but is the present reason why these people are without excuse.²¹³ According to Bornkamm, the statement "they knew God" (v. 21a) has unlimited validity, which means that even in the unrighteousness and in the lie, these people have the truth about God. He grants that verse 21 may appear to contain some inner contrast in that in the beginning of the verse Paul ascribes to these people a knowledge of God, while at the same time he writes that their thinking is futile, but the very thing Paul wants to maintain is that the knowledge of God has not been nullified by man's futility and darkening. What has happened is that knowledge and thinking have been separated from one another.²¹⁴ In my opinion, this interpretation is basically correct, and in the following I will give reasons for it, clarify it, and elaborate on it.

3.4.2. The refusal (v. 21ab)

In the following, I will analyze verses 21-23, where Paul speaks of rejection and idolatry. This category of people has received a revelation of God, they know Him but rejects Him. With *διότι*, Paul gives the reason for the end of verse 20: that they are without excuse. The reason is that they did not honor or thank God as God although they knew Him.²¹⁵ Here Paul provides the premise that was lacking in verse 20.²¹⁶ That is one of the two premises of the conclusion that these people are without excuse. Since Paul provides the premise here in verse 21, it is clear that he is giving the reason for the end of verse 20.

After *διότι*, a participial clause follows. This clause sums up verse 20abc. There, Paul described the communication of the revelation of God through that which is created, through nature, and through history. Paul sums up this revelation and describes it as knowledge of God. The content

²¹² Cf. Owen, *Scope*, pp. 133-143, and Spencer, *Theology*, pp. 68-71.

²¹³ Bornkamm, *Offenbarung*, p. 19.

²¹⁴ Bornkamm, *Offenbarung*, pp. 21-22.

²¹⁵ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p. 282, thinks that it is their "futile" thinking that provides the reason why the Gentiles are without excuse.

²¹⁶ Cook, *Logic*, pp. 497-498.

of this knowledge corresponds with "the truth" (v. 18), "that which may be known about God" (v. 19), and "His invisible character" and "His eternal power and His divinity" (v. 20). The revelation of God is described as knowledge of God.²¹⁷ Paul establishes that they knew God. This appears explicitly from the wording, γνόντες τὸν θεόν. The knowledge is real.²¹⁸ This can come as no surprise since Paul has already in verse 18 spoken of an existing knowledge in these people ("the truth"), since in verse 19 he has described that God has communicated knowledge of God to these men ("plain" and "has revealed"), and since in verse 20 he has described how God communicated His revelation to man. The argument itself also presupposes that these men really knew God since it is a necessary condition for their being guilty when they do not honor and thank God. That these men know God as He has revealed Himself in that which is created, in nature, and in history, also appears explicitly in verses 28 and 32. We will return to both verses. The knowledge of God, then, is real.²¹⁹ In the context, this knowledge of God must be limited in two ways. Firstly, it must be limited to the content of the natural revelation. That is what the text is about. I.e., they know God according to the way He has revealed himself through His works. Therefore, they know God as an invisible, eternal, almighty, transcendent, and demanding God. Secondly, this knowledge of God must be limited to being a purely theoretical knowledge.²²⁰ In Biblical usage, the various words for "know" may have a rich meaning and denote faith's knowledge of God and the close relationship with God. Here the knowledge is purely theoretical.²²¹ That is made clear in what follows: They did not honor and thank Him as God. This knowledge is without thanking and honoring. It is without

²¹⁷ Schlier, *Römerbrief*, pp. 55-56, writes that honoring and thanking is the way God as Creator is known, and the knowledge of God consists in honoring and thanking. The same view is found in Bell, *No*, pp. 49-50. That definition of the knowledge of God does not correspond with Paul's description in vv. 19-20. If we are to discuss wherein the knowledge of God consists, it is the "revelation".

²¹⁸ Thus Meyer, *Römerbrief*, p. 45, Hodge, *Romans*, p. 38, Quimbach, *Lehre*, pp. 34+43-44, Moe, *Romerne*, pp. 77-78, Bornkamm, *Offenbarung*, p. 19, Barth, *Speaking*, p. 291, Gärtner, *Areopagus*, p. 79, Murray, *Romans*, p. 41, Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 38, Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 59, Moo, *Romans*, p. 106, and Chae, *Paul*, pp. 87+93.

²¹⁹ In spite of what the text reads, and in spite of the context, Cranfield, *Romans I*, pp. 116-117, denies that there is a knowledge of God, writing, "... knowing God in the sense that in their awareness of the created world it is of Him that all along, though unwittingly, they have been – objectively – aware. They have in fact experienced Him – His wisdom, power, generosity – in every moment of their existence, though they have not recognized Him". Michel, *Römer*, p. 101, Ott, *Problem*, pp. 42-45, and Eichholz, *Theologie*, pp. 69-71, write of a knowledge of God as a possibility, but that is not what the text says. Hooker, *Adam*, p. 183, and Hooker, *Note*, p. 183, places the knowledge in Adam. That same interpretation is found in Bell, *No*, p. 97; he asks if not every man at some point in time has a knowledge of God. The answer is no, and the reason given is that this fall (verse 21) is not as much mankind's history, but rather Adam's. For everybody other than Adam, the knowledge of God has never been real (pp. 98-99). Therefore, knowledge of God can only be spoken of as a possibility (p. 101). Others minimize the knowledge of God and make it uncertain and vague (Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p. 281).

²²⁰ Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, pp. 37-38.

²²¹ Reicke, *Theologie*, p. 159, defines the knowledge of God as "richtige Verehrung Gottes"; this he does on the basis of his definition of "the truth" in v. 18 as "richtige Verehrung Gottes und als Gerechtigkeit". On the basis of that he can write that all people "imstande sein sollten, ihn zu erkennen" (p. 155), that this form of knowledge of God is accessible to them, but does not become a reality (p. 159), and write to v. 21a, "Nach V. 21 haben also die Menschen im Grunde eine Erkenntnis Gottes". However, what follows in v. 21 shows explicitly that the knowledge of God is theoretical and without the proper honoring.

faith, recognition, and obedience.

The participial clause, γνόντες τὸν θεὸν, may be temporal ("when") and state the time of their not honoring or thanking Him, i.e. while they knew Him. Or the clause may be concessive ("although") and denote that in spite of their knowledge they did not honor and thank God.²²² In that case the adverbial participle stresses how incomprehensible the lack of response is. Thus the meaning is sharpened in a fine way. Regardless of whether it is temporal or concessive, the participle γνόντες is simultaneous with the main verbs, ἐδόξασαν and ἠὺχαρίστησαν. If the participle is temporal, it denotes the time when these people did not honor and thank God. If the participle is concessive, it also denotes the time when these people did not honor and thank God because it marks that this honor and thanksgiving failed to happen in spite of their knowing God. We have seen previously that Paul is not describing a primeval event of a unique character,²²³ but using plural forms and iterative and distributive present and aorist forms.²²⁴ He is describing a general phenomenon in mankind. After the fall it is constitutive of man's nature that he does not seek God (Romans 3:11). Therefore he does not seek God in this knowledge of God. After the fall, σὰρξ is a constitutive element in man's nature, and therefore the hostility that is inherent in σὰρξ will automatically reject every revelation and knowledge of God (cf. Romans 8:6-7). Man as σὰρξ and as a man who does not seek God does not allow for a period when they knew God without refusing Him at the same time. With "they knew God" (v. 21a), Paul summarizes the preceding and explicitly states that these people knew God as He had revealed Himself in His works.

In v. 21b Paul describes the refusal. With οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν ἢ ἠὺχαρίστησαν he describes these people's lack of response to the knowledge of God.²²⁵ ὡς θεὸν introduces the norm of this honoring and thanking: It must correspond to who God is. We have seen that God has revealed himself as an invisible, eternal, almighty, transcendent, and demanding God, and man's response must correspond to this. That God reveals Himself as a demanding God is an aspect that is stressed here.²²⁶ It is constitutive of God's character to be the goal, and purpose of man. Therefore, God reveals Himself as a demanding God who demands honor and thanksgiving from man. When God

²²² Lenski, *Romans*, p. 102, Moe, *Romerne*, p. 77, and Bell, *No*, p. 47.

²²³ The participle may denote that the knowledge precedes the not honoring and thanking. This means that there is a period when they know God without refusing Him, but at some point, these people fall. Bell, *No*, pp. 48-49, thinks that the participle denotes the preceding time, and therefore he interprets verse 21 as a description of Adam's fall. However, Bell thinks that Paul is *also* thinking of the fall of Israel and of every generation. But as we have seen, Romans 1:18-32 is not a description of Adam's history.

²²⁴ The aorists are gnomic (Gärtner, *Areopagus*, p. 79, and Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p. 282).

²²⁵ Here Paul describes the refusal of God and not the idolatry (contra Gärtner, *Areopagus*, p. 141, who writes that the Gentiles commit this sin of not honoring and thanking by producing an image of God).

²²⁶ Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 37, Dabelstein, *Beurteilung*, p. 78, and Pak, *Paul*, p. 60. Eichholz, *Theologie*, p. 70, writes, "Menschliche Existenz ist, lässt sich offenbar sagen, von ihrem Ursprung her als antwortende Existenz verstanden: als zur Antwort des Dankes und Lobes aufgerufene Existenz."

reveals Himself and is known as God, this demand which reaches out to man and draws him in, is also revealed and known. The knowledge of God that was given to them should therefore have expressed itself in this honoring and thanking. Thus they would have recognized God, for by honoring and thanking God they recognize God as the almighty and sovereign God who determines their lives.²²⁷ These people should have given God the honor that is due Him as God (ἐδόξασαν). The focus here is especially on His omnipotence and divinity. These people should have given God the thanksgiving that is due Him as God (ἠὺχαρίστησαν). What is in mind here is especially God as Creator and Sustainer who has given man his existence, life, and meaning.

3.4.3. The idolatry (vv. 21bc-23)

God has revealed Himself to these people through that which is created, through nature, and through history, and these people have gained knowledge of God. But they refuse Him. They do not give Him the honor and thanksgiving that is due Him as God. This starts a process. The reason for this process is that they refused God.²²⁸ In verse 21c Paul describes the first step in this process.

With an adversative ἀλλ' ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν, Paul expresses what happens next. But as he describes this, he does not continue in the active voice so as to state the complementary positive statement of "they did not honor and thank". Paul could e.g. have written, "But they exchanged the glory of God for images..." (cf. verse 23). Or Paul could e.g. have written, "But they worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (cf. verse 25). Paul does not continue in the active voice describing what these people actively did next, but changes to the passive voice in v. 21c (ἐματαιώθησαν) and continues in the passive voice in vv. 21d-22 (ἐσκοτίσθη and ἐμωράνθησαν), and not until verse 23 does Paul use the active voice again (ἥλλαξαν). The change to the passive voice shows that Paul is not only describing a process by showing what happens next, but that Paul is describing a process into which these people are swept. The passive describes what they are subjected to. After the first passive (ἐματαιώθησαν), another two passives (ἐσκοτίσθη and ἐμωράνθησαν) follow, and the relationship between the passive forms must be clarified. In the connexion with the second passive, Paul writes of "their senseless heart". This is a recapitulation, and ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδιά (verse 21d) repeats and summarizes that "they became futile in their thinking". The use of the verbs ἐματαιώθησαν (v. 21c) and ἐσκοτίσθη (v. 21d) also suggests a progression. It shows that Paul is describing a continuous process into which these people are swept. With "was darkened", then, Paul is describing what happens to this

²²⁷ Cf. Romans 4:20 where Paul writes of Abraham who gave honor to God. That is the recognition of faith (cf. Eichholz, *Theologie*, p. 65).

²²⁸ Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 60, and Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p. 282.

senseless heart. The darkening is something new. The process goes on. And on that background it might be natural for the third passive (ἐμωράνθησαν; v. 22) to describe the further development in this process. But as we will see later, it is better to understand the third passive explicatively in relation to "was darkened". ἐμωράνθησαν has been added asyndetically, and the asyndeton, then, marks a break in the process. ἐμωράνθησαν does not mark a new step in the development, but a new characterization: they became fools. The foolishness shows itself in their false picture of themselves and consists in that "they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds..." Here the process reaches its goal. The religious character of the process becomes more and more clear in the description, and it culminates in verse 23. With the passives in vv. 21c-22 Paul describes a process. The passive voice marks that these people are without resistance swept away in a fall. They become victims. The process is expressed with the words "they became futile", "was darkened", and "they became fools". The reason for this process is that they did not honor or thank God.²²⁹ The process describes the inevitable consequence of the refusal of God. The process is self-caused.²³⁰

a) They became futile (v. 21c)

The first part of the process is expressed in ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν. The verb ἐματαιώθησαν has been understood on the basis of three different connections.

a) It has been understood from the preceding γνόντες τὸν θεὸν. These people lose their knowledge of God,²³¹ for the knowledge of God can only be known when one recognizes God.²³² If they do not recognize him, their knowledge of God is lost. "They became futile in their thinking" means that their thoughts were emptied of the knowledge of God. This interpretation is possible in the near context (verses 21-23), but not in the greater context (verses 18-32). I have previously argued against this interpretation, and I will also do so in what follows. In the greater context it is not true that these people lose their knowledge of God. It is kept intact in them, but it is suppressed (verse 18), it is not appreciated (verse 28), and it is fought against (verse 32).

b) "They became futile" has been understood on the basis of the opposite – the fact that they did not honor and thank God. Futile, then, is another way of stating the same truth. "They became futile in their thinking", then, means that the thinking is emptied of honor and thanksgiving toward

²²⁹ Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 60, Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 56, and Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p. 282.

²³⁰ As mentioned before, I do not see this consequence as the revelation of God's wrath.

²³¹ Moe, *Romerne*, p. 78; Hauge, *Revelatio*, p. 104, Kuss, *Römerbrief*, p. 38, writes, "Der Mensch, der sich den unumgänglichen Konsequenzen seiner Erkenntnis verschliesst, vermag offenbar diese Erkenntnis nicht festzuhalten"; Barrett, *Romans*, p. 37, and Bell, *No*, pp. 49-50, write of an ignorance of God. Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 55, writes that the knowledge of God is kept by honoring and thanking God; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 57, points out that these people have not lost all knowledge.

²³² Moe, *Romerne*, p. 78, Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, pp. 38-39, and Bell, *No*, pp. 49-50.

God. Against this interpretation it may be said that the statement becomes tautological and says nothing beyond what Paul has already said. It may be said against this interpretation that there is no progression in thought, although this is marked with the change to the passive voice. Because he changes to the passive voice, Paul cannot be describing the same thing as he did in the preceding sentence. The passive voice marks that Paul is now writing what happens to those who do not honor and thank God as God. The change to the passive voice also becomes incomprehensible for another reason, in that it becomes difficult to understand how the futile thinking can be seen as a loss that they suffer if all that happens is that they consciously and actively refuse to thank and honor.

c) "They became futile" has been understood in connection with what follows (vv. 21cd-23).²³³ This is preferable because the other interpretations that might be possible in the near context are not feasible, and because the change from the active (verse 21b) to the passive (verse 21c) voice marks a progression. ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν describes what happens to these people next, and as we have seen, vv. 21cd-23 belong together. Verse 21c, then, belongs together with what follows. The question is how closely it belongs together with the following (verses 21d-23). Verses 21-23 describe a process from refusal (they did not honor and thank God) and all the way forward to the climax (idolatry; verse 23). The climax is phrased as follows: "... they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being...", and in the climax, "exchanged" brings together the refusal of God as well as the idolatry. The wording of the climax tells us that Paul has described a process with two phases: refusal and idolatry. The climax, then, brings together the process in verses 21-23 to one continuous process; the climax sums up the process and qualifies vv. 21-22 as a description of refusal (they did not honor and thank God; v. 21b), and as a description of idolatry (they became futile in their thinking ... they became fools; vv. 21cd-22). The climax qualifies verses 21-22 as a religious process. Since verses 21-23 describe different phases, and since the process must be split up between verse 21b and verse 21c because of the change to the passive voice, this means that something new begins in verse 21c. Verses 21c-22 are a clear description of idolatry.

Paul describes how these people became futile and describes where they became futile: in their thinking. The meaning is not that the thinking is without content in the sense that they are emptied of content, but that "futile" is a characterization of the content of their thinking. In the preceding, I have argued that these people's thinking is religious. Their thinking consists in ideas of the religious reality. It is a consequence of refusal, and it is concretized in idolatry. Because their thinking consists in religious ideas of the divine, and because it concretizes and materializes itself in idols,

²³³ Hodge, *Romans*, p. 39, Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 107, and Moo, *Romans*, p. 117.

the idolatric associations that are linked to the use of the verb in the LXX (Jeremiah 2:5 and 2 Kings 17:15 μάταια may be used of the idols, e.g. Jeremiah 2:5; 2 Kings 17:15, and Acts 14:15) resound. This thinking, then, *refers* to mythological ideas of idols.²³⁴ With ἐματαιώθησαν Paul characterizes these religious ideas as "futile", and they are futile in the sense that they are out of touch with reality. They are cut off from the divine reality (God, the truth).²³⁵ They are without connection to the divine reality since they are without honor and thanksgiving toward God (verse 21a), and they are without God since they express this exchange of God with idols.²³⁶ These mythological ideas are illusory, and since they are directed towards that which is created and see "god" reflected and depicted in that which is created, they express the lie, the dream, and the fantasy. Their idols do not exist.²³⁷

b) Their senseless heart was darkened (v. 21d)

At the beginning of verse 21, Paul has described how these people did not honor and thank God although they knew Him. The first part of the inevitable consequence of the refusal is that they became futile in their thinking. Their thinking became filled with idolatry. With καὶ ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἄσυνετας αὐτῶν καρδία Paul describes the second step in this inevitable consequence. In verse 21d it is clear that Paul is describing a process. "Their senseless heart" is a recapitulation, and "their senseless heart" sums up the fact that they "became futile in their thinking" (v. 21c).²³⁸ ἡ ἄσυνετας αὐτῶν καρδία, then, must be interpreted in the light of verse 21c. The senselessness, therefore, is to be understood in a religious sense as idolatric ideas of the divine which materialize themselves in idols. "The senseless heart" is a heart that thinks in terms of idols and wills them. "Heart" is "a man's inward, hidden self as thinking, willing and feeling subject".²³⁹ Here the primary thought is of the intellectual element and of that which is decisive for the behavior of these people. "The heart" is that which determines the will of a man and creates his activity. These two aspects are highlighted in verse 23. Therefore, when Paul writes of "their senseless heart", he describes that which governs the ideas of these people, and that which determines their will.

With ἐσκοτίσθη Paul states what happens to this senseless heart. Paul uses the passive voice

²³⁴ Cf. Reicke, *Theologie*, p. 162, and Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 57.

²³⁵ An alternative interpretation is that the verb primarily stresses the uselessness and pointlessness of their religious ideas (thus Moe, *Romane*, p. 78, Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 70, and Morris, *Romans*, p. 84). But since the context does not focus on whether it works but on truth and reality versus lie and image, it is better to interpret "futile" more in the direction of being without reality.

²³⁶ Gärtner, *Areopagus*, p. 75, note 1, writes, "Ἐματαιώθησαν, Rom. 1:21, refers precisely to men's distortion of the truth about God, and their espousal of vain ideas about the idols." In keeping with his understanding that man worships God in his idols, Gärtner thinks that the truth about God lives on in a distorted form in their ideas of God. But we have seen and shall see, these people exchange the truth for the lie.

²³⁷ See Kjær, *Afguder*, pp. 199-202.

²³⁸ "Their senseless heart" may describe the result of the futile thinking (Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 40). In any case, "the senseless heart" is either a characterization of the process or its result, and not its prerequisite.

²³⁹ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 118.

and describes what the senseless heart is subjected to. It was darkened (ἔσκοτίσθη). Paul describes the process as an ongoing fall into which they are swept. With "it became darkened", a new element is highlighted. In the near context, it is possible to interpret ἔσκοτίσθη in two ways.²⁴⁰ It can either be interpreted in light of the preceding or in light of the following. When "became darkened" is interpreted in light of the preceding, i.e. in relation to their knowing God (v. 21a), or in relation to verses 18-21a which speak of these people's knowledge of the truth, of what may be known about God, and of knowledge of God as eternal, almighty and transcendent, "dark" may be defined as diverted from the truth,²⁴¹ or as robbed of the light of the revelation of God.²⁴² But I have already argued that in the larger context (verses 18-32) it is not true that these people lose the revelation of God or the knowledge of God. Furthermore, I have argued that verse 21d is to be placed in the phase relating to idolatry. The "darkening", then, is not about the negative: their loss of the revelation and/or knowledge of God, but about the positive: their new religious ideas.²⁴³ ἔσκοτίσθη, then, is to be interpreted in light of the following.

With ἔσκοτίσθη Paul writes that these people's senseless heart, i.e. the idol-thinking and -willing man, became darkened. The passive (ἔσκοτίσθη) describes what happens to this senseless heart. Something new happens. These people are swept away in a fall which Paul characterizes as "darkening". The metaphorical "darkness" or "darken" may be used to express several different ideas. It may be used of sin on the ethical level, it may be used of a separation and alienation from God, it may be used of ignorance, i.e. lack of knowledge of the revelation, and it may be used to express blindness. The idea of ethical darkening is not under discussion in this context (vv. 21-23). Darkening as separation and alienation from God has already been stated in that they did not honor and thank, and as we have seen, v. 21d is a part of the description of the idolatry. Nor is darkening as ignorance of God a relevant interpretation in this context. I have already and will continually argue that these people still know God as He has revealed Himself in that which is created, in nature, and in history, and that is still the case after their darkening. Darkening as blindness, on the contrary, is meaningful in the near context.²⁴⁴ Their false picture of themselves reveals their blindness. They claim to be wise, but in reality they are fools. This is blindness. Their practiced idolatry reveals their blindness. They replace the real God with images of man and animals. This is

²⁴⁰ There are also some who interpret "darkened" in an ethical sense, of the evil lusts (Godet, *Romerne*, p. 184), or, like Zahn (*Römer*, p. 95), writes, "so steigen im Herzen böse Gelüste und arge Gedanken auf und drängen zu unsittlichen Taten".

²⁴¹ Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 45.

²⁴² Moe, *Romerne*, pp. 78-79. The same view is found in Hodge, *Romans*, p. 39, who writes, "they lost the light of divine knowledge"; Weiss, *Römer*, p. 82, writes that the heart was darkened because "das Licht der Gottesoffenbarung" no longer has access to the heart.

²⁴³ Thus Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 107, and Morris, *Romans*, p. 84.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Stöckhardt, *Römer*, p. 56, and Dabelstein, *Beurteilung*, p. 82.

blindness. They worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator (cf. verse 25). This is blindness. So in the context we find "darkening" as "blinding". In verses 22-23, these people's blindness is exemplified. On top of that, "blindness" is a necessary element in the description of their idolatry, for blindness provides the necessary explanation of their claim to be wise in worshiping idols, and of the very fact that they do worship idols although they are continually encountering the revelation of God, and although God is still granting them knowledge of Himself through this revelation. It is only by virtue of a sort of blindness that they can claim to be wise when they worship idols.

With ἔσκοτίσθη Paul is describing a process by which senseless man is swept away. The idolatric ideas that struck these people when they refused to honor and thank God, now take possession of man so Paul can write about the heart becoming senseless, i.e. that man's inner, thinking, willing and feeling "self" is determined and governed by these mythological ideas of idols. These ideas contain such a great power within them that they sweep man away into a darkening. They blind man so that he "sees" God, yet without seeing Him, and He knows God, yet without knowing Him.²⁴⁵ Instead he "sees" idols, and instead he knows idols. The darkening describes an aspect to their ideas of idols: they blind man, and the darkening characterizes the worship of idols as an expression of blinding.

With "their senseless heart became darkened", Paul describes the second step in the inevitable consequence by which these people are struck because of their fall from God. With verse 21cd Paul has described a process on the inside level in man. In verses 22-23 Paul describes how this finds expression on the outside level.

c) They became fools (v.22)

The asyndetically added verse 22, together with verse 23, provides a closer explanation of the "darkening".²⁴⁶ Verses 22-23, then, stand explicatively to verse 21d. In verse 22 Paul states a contrast between illusion and reality. With φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ Paul phrases a groundless claim. They claim it, but it is without basis in reality. Paul describes these people's false picture of themselves. This is an expression of their darkening (blindness). With the main verb, ἐμωράνθησαν, Paul describes their reality. This is the real picture of them. φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ can be seen as modal or causal, so that the meaning is that by claiming to be wise, or because they claim to be wise, they became fools.²⁴⁷ The folly, however, expresses itself in the idolatry,²⁴⁸ and

²⁴⁵ Stöckhardt, *Römer*, p. 56, maintains the dialectic that these people know God, while they at the same time have been darkened.

²⁴⁶ Stöckhardt, *Römer*, p. 56, Moe, *Romerne*, p. 79, Reicke, *Theologie*, p. 163, and Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 39.

²⁴⁷ Lenski, *Romans*, pp. 104-105, and Murray, *Romans*, p. 42.

²⁴⁸ See e.g. Moe, *Romerne*, p. 79, Käsemann, *Römer*, pp. 40-41, Moo, *Romans*, p. 108, and Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 87.

then φάσκοντες cannot be modal or causal since the idolatry in their ideas and their practice was caused by these people's refusal of God (verse 21b). Because of this frame of mind idolatry struck them.²⁴⁹ φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ could be temporal and state that these people became fools while they were claiming to be wise, or the participle could be concessive, which makes the most sense, in that the contrast between illusion and reality is sharpened even more. It was in spite of their claim to be wise that they became fools. In the context, both σοφοὶ and ἐμωράνθησαν refer to the idolatry. Their wisdom is their idolatry in ideas (v. 21bc) and in practice (v. 23).²⁵⁰

With ἐμωράνθησαν Paul states what these people became in reality: fools. With "they became fools", Paul gives a new characterization of this degeneration in their thinking which began in verse 21c. In verses 21c-23 Paul describes the same reality in different ways.²⁵¹ He describes the degeneration with words like "they became futile", "they became darkened", and now "they became fools". Paul is still expressing himself in the passive voice and is still describing what happens to them. They are swept away in a fall. ἐμωράνθησαν stands explicatively to "they were darkened" (v. 21d) and states that the blinding is manifested in this folly. This is further explained in verse 23 as idolatry. With ἐμωράνθησαν their idolatry is characterized as folly, and that is what it is because it is simply a worship of images of man and animals. The idols are created objects. They are perishable objects and lacking divine reality. Since ἐμωράνθησαν *refers* to idolatry, Paul may have been thinking of Jeremiah 10:14 and have used the verb on the basis of this passage. In connection with verse 21d the "folly" is characterized as blindness.

d) They exchanged (v. 23)

Verse 23 stands explicatively to ἐμωράνθησαν and describes what these people's folly consists in: they exchanged the glory of the immortal God with the image of a mortal man or animal. The verse describes their religious practice. There are two typical interpretations.

1) According to the first, what happens is that these people worship and seek God in their idols.²⁵² One can place the emphasis on their breach of a prohibition of an image. Just like God gave Israel a prohibition of an image through the Mosaic law, he has given mankind a prohibition of an image through the natural revelation, and just like Israel sinned against God by breaking the prohibition of an image and making images of God, mankind sinned against God by breaking the

²⁴⁹ The human wisdom is not the cause of the idolatry (contra Meyer, *Romerne*, p. 46), but consists in idolatry.

²⁵⁰ Hence it is not correct as Pak, *Paul*, pp. 51+60, writes, that it is their claim to wisdom that is the cause of the idolatry.

²⁵¹ Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 87.

²⁵² Thus Gärtner, *Areopagus*, p. 141, who writes that God "was changed into their images by the Gentiles", and that they "materialised Him and became idolators".

prohibition of an image and making images of God.²⁵³ Or one can place the emphasis on the fact that these people seek God in their idols. This is the interpretation that Schlier has presented, and I have reported it in the description of the third model. However, in the context, this interpretation is not feasible. The basic reason for this is v. 21b where Paul writes that man did not honor and thank God. Here Paul describes a break with God, and v. 21b interprets this exchange in v. 23 as an actual replacement. These people replace God with idols. This interpretation is confirmed and further clarified in the parallel verse 25 where Paul writes that these people worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator. Verse 25 makes it clear that the point is a break in their worship of God. The interpretation is confirmed in the wider context. Verse 18 tells us that these people suppress the truth about God. They are in opposition to God. Verse 28 tells us that these people did not see fit to acknowledge God. They are negative toward God. And verse 32 tells us that these people are in opposition to the will of God. All of this shows that these people are breaking the will of God and supporting others' breaking of it. They are in opposition to God.

2) According to the other interpretation, God is exchanged with idols. Paul is describing a religious practice. The negative side of this practice is that they replaced the glory of God. ἥλλαξαν describes a replacing or exchange: they replace God with idols.²⁵⁴ ἥλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ becomes recapitulating, repeating, in different terms, the beginning of verse 21: γνόντες τὸν θεὸν οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν ἢ ἠὲ χάρισταισαν. Both sentences describe a knowledge of God. It is explicitly stated in γνόντες τὸν θεὸν, and it is assumed in the verb ἥλλαξαν which describes a replacing of God as they know Him through His works. Both sentences describe a refusal of God as they know Him through His works. This is explicitly stated in οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν ἢ ἠὲ χάρισταισαν in v. 21b, and it is also explicitly stated in ἥλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ in v. 23. The two sentences are complementary. Verse 23 tells us that their lack of honoring and thanksgiving is a manifestation of a fundamental break and fall away from God. Verse 21 tells us that this replacement is a replacement in terms of religious practice.

When it comes to the interpretation of "the glory of the immortal God" and "images resembling a mortal human being...", there are three types.

1) Paul is describing the fall of Adam and how the image of God is replaced with an image of

²⁵³ Zahn, *Römer*, p. 97, Moe, *Romerne*, p. 80, and Michel, *Römer*, pp. 102-103; these people change the glory of the immortal God into the likeness of an image of man or animals.

²⁵⁴ The verb ἀλλάσσω may mean a) to change or alter, or b) to exchange or replace. The first meaning is not possible here. It would require that these people worship God in their images (thus Zahn, *Römer*, p. 97, Moe, *Romerne*, p. 80, and Michel, *Römer*, pp. 102-103) so that they transform the glory of the immortal God to the likeness of an image of man or animals. But because of verse 21 this is not possible, because there Paul writes that these people refused God, and hence they are not making idols in order to worship God in them.

himself or of various animals.²⁵⁵ I have previously refuted this interpretation.

2) Paul is describing the fall of Israel and of man in general:²⁵⁶ how through their sin they lose the image of God and instead acquire the resemblance of Adam or of animals.²⁵⁷ What is specifically in mind may be the episode with the golden calf and similar episodes in Israel's history, and more generally the fall of men. If this be the case, what is in mind is an original image of God which is replaced by the image of Adam or the image of animals. This interpretation must also be rejected for the following reasons:

a) Verse 23 becomes a sort of foreign body in the context. Paul is focusing on these people's relationship with God (verse 18 (the truth)), the fact that they knew Him, but refused Him (verse 21), that they worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator (verse 25), that they did not see fit to acknowledge God (verse 28), and that they deliberately rebelled against God's righteous decree (vers 32). The focus is on the relationship to God, and a loss of the image of God becomes a foreign body.

b) The parallel verse 25 interprets and clarifies that verse 23 is about the relationship to God who is replaced by idols.

c) The image of God is lost through sin (cf. Romans 3:23). According to this interpretation it is lost later. Sin is described as not honoring and thanking God (verse 21), and the image of God should have been lost the moment these people did not honor or thank. According to this interpretation, it is lost later, and only after a process started by sin (verses 21-23).

d) The image of God is lost through sin, but man themselves replace the image of God with an image of Adam or of an animal. Man are the active agents.

For these reasons, Paul is not in verse 23 thinking of the image of God and of the image of Adam and of animals.

3) Paul describes that these people replace God with idols. With τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφάρτου θεοῦ Paul states what it is that these people replace. When it comes to the interpretation of τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφάρτου θεοῦ, there is no lack of suggestions. τὴν δόξαν has been understood as the image of God²⁵⁸ or as God's qualities or attributes, as aspects of His character or of His appearance.²⁵⁹ The context, however, shows that they are replacing God Himself as the object of

²⁵⁵ Hooker, *Adam*, p. 305. Hooker thinks that there is a triple contrast: "Man did not only exchange the worship of the true God for that of idols; he also exchanged intimate fellowship with God for an experience which was shadowy and remote, and he exchanged, too, his own reflection of the glory of God for the image of corruption." Bell, *No*, p. 55 and pp. 127-130, thinks that Paul is thinking of both a loss of the image of God and of idolatry.

²⁵⁶ This interpretation is often combined with the first one.

²⁵⁷ Jervell, *Imago*, pp. 322-331.

²⁵⁸ Jervell, *Imago*, pp. 322-331.

²⁵⁹ τὴν δόξαν is "a collective term for all the divine perfection" (Hodge, *Romans*, p. 39); "die Majestät des über alles Kreatürliche erhabenen Gottes" (Weiss, *Römer*, p. 83); "die Schöpferherrlichkeit" and "die verschiedenen göttlichen

worship. In verse 21 they refuse God Himself by not worshipping and serving Him as the Creator. In verse 28 it is God Himself that they are refusing by not seeing fit to acknowledge Him. On that background, τὴν δόξαν must be a term of revelation covering God's revelation of Himself. τὴν δόξαν is God as He has revealed Himself.²⁶⁰ On the background of this interpretation of τὴν δόξαν, τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ becomes a genitive of apposition. The "glory" is the immortal God as He has revealed Himself.

With ἐν ὁμοιώματι ... ἐρπετῶν Paul states what it is that these people are replacing God with. ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνοσ causes problems because the two terms are partially synonymous. ὁμοίωμα means "image" (copy), "likeness", or "form", and εἰκόν means "image", "likeness" or "form"/"appearance". The genitive construction may be understood as "the image of the form of a mortal man";²⁶¹ as "an image, i.e. the likeness of a mortal man" where εἰκόνοσ is a genitive of apposition to ὁμοιώματι;²⁶² as "a likeness consisting in an image" where εἰκόνοσ is a genitive of apposition;²⁶³ as "the likeness of an image";²⁶⁴ as "the copy of an original image", or simply as "the copy of an image";²⁶⁵ the genitive construction may stress the poor and shadowy quality of that which replaces God ("the mere shadowy image").²⁶⁶ The two terms may be synonymous, and it is possible that Paul simply wants to stress that these men are replacing God with a "copy", or stress that it is only the likeness of an image to a mortal man, ὁμοιώματι meaning "likeness", and εἰκόνοσ meaning "image". The last suggestion may be the best. It is in keeping with Paul's usage. ὁμοίωμα is found five times in his writings, and in most instances he is using it in the sense "likeness" (Romans 5:14; 8:3, Philippians 2:7, and possible Romans 6:5 – in the last case it may simply mean "form"), and εἰκόν is found nine times in his writings, always in the sense "image" (Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 11:7; 15:49 (twice); 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:4; Colossians 1:15 and 3:10). With "the likeness of an image" Paul emphasizes the distance between the depicted persons and animals and the picture. It is only a likeness. With "the likeness of an image" Paul emphasizes that it is only an image. This interpretation is in fine keeping with the context where Paul focuses on the contrast between that which is real (God) and that which is unreal (idols and religious ideas of idols). Paul

Eigenschaften" (Stöckhardt, *Römer*, p. 57); "manifested perfection" (Sanday/Headlam, *Romans*, p. 45); "God's revealed majesty" (Moe, *Romerne*, p.79); "the sum total of his attributes as these constitute his essence, the sum of the perfections of his being" (Lanski, *Romans*, p. 105); "the sum of those perfections, ... as made manifest in God's visible creation" (Murray, *Romans*, p. 42); "die Licht- und Kraft-strahlende Atmosphäre seiner Gegenwart" (Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 107).

²⁶⁰ Thus Zahn, *Römer*, p. 96, Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 39, Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 120, and Pak, *Paul*, p. 52.

²⁶¹ Kittel, εἰκόν, *TWNT II*, p. 393, Michel, *Römer*, p. 103, Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 39, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 120.

²⁶² Zahn, *Römer*, pp. 96-97.

²⁶³ Moe, *Romerne*, p. 80.

²⁶⁴ Lenski, *Romans*, p. 106, and Murray, *Romans*, p. 42.

²⁶⁵ Jervell, *Imago*, pp. 321 and 324.

²⁶⁶ Barrett, *Romans*, p. 38, Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 41, and Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 61.

gives some examples of images of idols²⁶⁷ and with that the gods of these men. In this connection, it is not important whether these people identify the images with the gods themselves, or if the images represent the gods, or if the presence of the gods is concentrated around the images. The contrast between God and the gods is total. God is God and Creator. The gods are created things. God is real (the truth). The gods are unreal (the lie; v. 25). God is communicated through revelation. The gods are futility, senselessness, darkness and foolishness. God is eternal, omnipotent, and transcendent. The gods, being created by men, lack eternity, omnipotence, and transcendence. This contrast is stressed even more, if possible, by "the likeness of an image". The gods are not gods, and not only that, but we are only dealing with the likeness of an image. What constitutes the foolishness is the contrast between their worship and what they really know about God.

In verses 21-23, Paul begins with establishing that these people knew God. Then he describes these people's refusal of God and the fall which their refusal sweeps them away into. They become futile in their thinking, i.e. they are filled with ideas of idols. These thoughts have the effect of a darkening power within them so their senseless heart is blinded. Effects of this blindness are a false picture of themselves, and idolatry. My approach to verses 21-23 is to ask the question, What happens to the knowledge of God? If we looked at verses 21-23 in isolation from the context, the immediate interpretation would be that the knowledge of God has been lost, or that only remnants remain. But the verses belong in a wider context and must be understood in their context, namely vv. 18-32.²⁶⁸ Verse 18 describes a revelation of wrath on some ungodly and unrighteous people who suppress the truth through unrighteousness. The explication tells us that God's wrath is not revealed upon them *until* they have refused God and have engaged themselves in idolatry. This statement of the theme reveals these people at the very moment that God gives them over to sin. And at that particular moment they still have a relationship to the truth. The truth is the same as the knowledge of God, and they have a suppressing relationship to that *even after* they have refused God and have become futile, senseless, and darkened idolaters. In that in verse 18 Paul locks this category of people in the very moment when they have exchanged God with idols, verse 18 shows that the truth has remained in them. I have defined "the truth" as the knowledge of God revealed through the natural revelation, and that truth is intact in them. But it has been suppressed. So when we are to assess the question of whether the knowledge of God has been lost or distorted or preserved, verse 18 and – as we shall see – verse 32 provide an interpretative key. Verse 18 gives us Paul's own interpretation. This is the first authentic interpretation. This interpretative key also provides us with

²⁶⁷ Jervell, *Imago*, pp. 322-323, however, thinks that "a mortal man" is Adam, and that the mention of birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles is primarily a description of man's similarity to the animals.

²⁶⁸ Bornkamm, *Offenbarung*, p. 21.

the concept that we can use to bring together the two sides. The two sides are an intact and preserved knowledge of God, and darkened idolatry. The knowledge of God is suppressed. So then, with "those who suppress the truth through unrighteousness" (v. 18), we can qualify and clarify the fall that is described in vv. 21b-23.

These people move away from God in their will (they did not honor and thank), in their mind (they became futile in their thinking), in their understanding of themselves (claiming to be wise, they became fools), and in their religious practice (they exchanged...). They remove themselves from the knowledge of God. The anthropological concept "heart" is understood as having volitional as well as dynamic and active meaning components. These people are thinking, reflecting, and practicing idolaters. They are what they think and thus the knowledge of God has been removed from them. When we take verse 18 into consideration, we can see that the opposition towards God lives on in these people. The darkened and senseless "heart" has a negative attitude towards the truth. This "self" suppresses the truth and keeps it away from mind, will, action and consciousness. In this connection Paul writes of reflection, will, practice, and self-image in the religious sphere. He writes nothing about what knowledge and reflection, what will and practice, or what self-image they might have in other spheres of life. But when it comes to the religious sphere, the truth about God is singled out and kept away by force. The knowledge of God is suppressed.

3.5. The first revelation of wrath (vv. 24-25)

In verse 18, Paul states his thesis: God reveals His wrath on ungodliness and unrighteousness in people who suppress the truth through unrighteousness. Verses 19-32 are an explication of the thesis. First, Paul argues that this category of people know the truth (God). Then Paul describes the ungodliness of this category of man and argues that they are without excuse. The ungodliness manifests itself in the refusal of God and in idolatry. Paul notes that these people knew God, but they did not honor and thank Him as God. They meet the knowledge of God with refusal. This leads the people into a process which they are swept. The first step in the process is that they became futile in their thinking. The second step is that their senseless heart was darkened and the darkening manifests itself in foolishness. It shows itself in their false picture of themselves and is made concrete in their idolatry. In verses 21-23 Paul describes a process with two phases (refusal and idolatry) and with verse 23 as the climax. As a part of the explication of verse 18 Paul describes the ungodliness of this category of people.

In verses 24-32, we get the remaining parts of the explication of verse 18 in three paragraphs (verses 24-25, verses 26-27, and verses 28-31) plus a conclusion (verse 32). In the three paragraphs, Paul gives a closer description of the revelation of God's wrath and describes the unrighteousness

and ungodliness of these people.

1.5.1. The cause (v. 24)

Syntactically, verses 24-25 are linked to the preceding paragraph. διὸ introduces a consequence which is worded with παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς etc. Verse 18 is a header, and there Paul wrote about a revelation of God's wrath, and since the triple "God gave them up" in verses 24, 26, and 28 are the only places where Paul describes a punishment, "God gave them up" is a statement of this revelation of wrath. The revelation of God's wrath, then, is more closely described in v. 24, v. 26, and v. 28. In the context, this revelation of wrath is introduced as a consequence of the refusal of God and of their idolatry.²⁶⁹ διὸ introduces a consequence which is based on either vv. 21-23 or v. 23. Whether it is one or the other has no bearing on the meaning. Verses 21-23 describe two elements: refusal of God, and idolatry (in thinking, will, and practice), and verse 23 describes the same two elements: refusal of God ("they exchanged") and idolatry (in practice as the result of thinking and will). But since as the climax of verses 21-23 verse 23 sums up and qualifies verses 21-22 as a description of refusal of God and of idolatry, the most natural thing is that διὸ in verse 24 is based on verse 23. It is often stated that διὸ only links back to the idolatry, and that the idolatry alone is the cause of the revelation of wrath. This is not Paul's intention. There are three parallel revelations of wrath in the text (v. 24, vv. 26-27, and v. 28). The cause of the revelations of wrath is given in v. 23 (possibly vv. 21-23), v. 25, and v. 28. In the first two statements of the cause, Paul describes both their refusal of God and their idolatry, but in the third statement of the cause, only the refusal of God is described. This tells us explicitly that their refusal of God cannot be removed from the statement of the cause, and that the wrath is not caused by idolatry alone. But since vv. 21-23 show us that their idolatry in thinking, will, and practice is the inevitable consequence of the refusal of God, we cannot on the basis of v. 28 isolate the element of idolatry and remove it from the statement of the cause. Their idolatry is part of the cause. Hence, there are two causes of the revelation of wrath: refusal of God, and idolatry. This is in harmony with the use of the verb "exchanged" which unites both elements. Since both causes are within the religious realm, this can be characterized as the religious cause. The linking through διὸ shows explicitly that there is a religious cause (refusal and idolatry) of God's wrath. The question now is whether this is the only cause of the revelation of God's wrath. As far as this question is concerned, there are – which should come as no surprise – two interpretations.

1) According to the one interpretation the cause is solely religious. διὸ tells us that the cause of

²⁶⁹ As we shall see, there is one more reason for the punishment, namely the sin of these people on the ethical level.

God's wrath is found in vv. 21-23, and when the cause is found there, it is solely religious. The revelation of wrath consists in an abandonment to sexual impurity, and the wrath is manifested in the ethical sphere. On that background, the relationship between the two kinds of sin may be stated as such: religious sin is punished with ethical sin. Käsemann writes, "Moral perversion is not the reason, but the result of God's wrath".²⁷⁰ Religious sin is found in these people, but ethical sin does not arise until they are struck by the wrath. In this way sexual impurity, homosexual relationships²⁷¹, and unrighteousness becomes not guilt, but punishment.²⁷² According to this interpretation, God becomes the one who creates the ethical sin. This interpretation must be rejected since it makes God the cause of the sin and because it overlooks some elements in the text. In verse 24 it says, "Therefore God gave them up *in* the lusts of their hearts to impurity..." where ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν describes the condition that they were in when the wrath struck them. They were already in these lusts, i.e. also before the wrath struck them.²⁷³ In the same way vv. 26b-27abc and vv. 29-31 are a description of the ethical condition of these people which God found them in when the wrath was revealed in their lives. Their sin on the ethical level had already arisen in them before the wrath was revealed. The sin on the ethical level had gone along with the sin on the religious level.

2) According to the other interpretation there are two causes of this revelation of wrath. There is a religious cause. διὸ shows this explicitly, and the two parallel descriptions of the revelation of wrath also show explicitly that there is a religious cause of the wrath (see vv. 25-26 and v. 28). But this cause is not the only cause. There is also an ethical cause.

a) According to the context we are to expect two causes of the wrath because in verse 18, Paul speaks of two characteristics which are reasons for God's wrath. One is ungodliness (the religious cause), and the other is unrighteousness (the ethical cause). We are therefore to look for an ethical cause, and that we find in the phrase "in the lusts of their hearts".

b) When Paul writes that these people are "in the lusts of their hearts", he is describing the necessary precondition of this revelation of wrath. The revelation of wrath takes the form of the sin in the ethical level that characterizes these people. It is because they are in these impure lusts that they are abandoned to impurity. εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν defines ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν as impure lusts. The fact that this category of people are in these impure lusts, then, is the necessary

²⁷⁰ Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 43 (my translation), and Hays, *Vision*, pp. 385-386.

²⁷¹ Countryman, *Dirt*, p. 116, writes, "because the progenitors of the Gentiles forsook the true God to worship idols, God visited on them and on their progeny a characteristic kind of uncleanness, namely the desire for and practice of homosexual relations".

²⁷² Stählin, ὁργή, *TWNT V*, pp. 445-446, and Barrett, *Romans*, p. 38.

²⁷³ Thus Moo, *Romans*, p. 110.

precondition for the revelation of wrath,²⁷⁴ since it is the diverse ethical sin on the ethical level that gives the wrath its special character.

c) The pattern in verses 24-32 points to two reasons. In verses 26-27 and in verses 28-31 there are two reasons.

3.5.2. The abandonment (v. 24)

We have seen that the revelation of God's wrath has two causes: a religious cause, and an ethical cause. We shall now look at the interpretation of *παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς*. There are a number of different interpretations, and there are certain terms which are often used (passive/permission/permissive), deprivation of help (privative), punishment (judicial)), but the usage is not always consistent, and from time to time the terms used to characterize the different interpretations are employed in a confusing manner. Therefore I shall not characterize each interpretation merely through a lead word, but also describe them more closely, and hopefully employ consistent language. First I shall look at the three main interpretations.

1) The permissive interpretation. The lead word is permission or non-interference. "God gave them up to impurity" means that God allowed them to sin. It is a matter of mere permission. God does nothing to this category of people, but merely permits them to sin. Often the word "passive" is used of God's behavior. A classical representative of this interpretation is Dodd who depersonalizes the wrath and understands it as "an inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe".²⁷⁵ Man's ungodliness and unrighteousness brings with itself its own retribution. The wrath, then, is a natural process of cause and effect and not a direct act on God's part. His act is nothing more than a refraining from interference, and the really terrible thing is to fall out of God's hand and be left to oneself in a world where the choice of evil brings with it its own retribution.²⁷⁶ A picture may be employed to illustrate this interpretation. God is lying on His back on the river bank looking dreamingly at the sky while a boat is drifting by on the river. God does not interfere. He does not intervene. He is passive. There are four objections to this interpretation. a) There is the language itself. The verb *παρέδωκεν* cannot be used to express God's passive permission of sin. The verb expresses an activity on God's part. If Paul had wanted to express the notion that God permits sin, he would have chosen other words. b) A key to the understanding is found in verse 18. Here Paul writes about an effective and dynamic revelation of God's wrath, and this revelation is manifested in abandonment to impurity. *παρέδωκεν* is a statement of something active. c) Another key to the

²⁷⁴ Cf. Murray, *Romans*, pp. 43-44.

²⁷⁵ Dodd, *Romans*, p. 50.

²⁷⁶ Dodd, *Romans*, pp. 54-55.

interpretation is found in the phrase "in the lusts of their hearts" (v. 24) which tells us about the condition that these people are in when God abandons them to impurity. This abandonment means something new in the lives of these people. A change takes place in their condition. Paul expresses the change as "to impurity" and "to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves". They are already in these impure lusts, and if the "abandonment" is to be something new and mark a change, the "abandonment" must mean that God does something to them – in one way or another. But if the "abandonment" is purely passive, and if it is only the expression of a permission, no change takes place in these people's situation. The "abandonment" is an activity on God's part. d) The expressions "to impurity" and "to the dishonoring of their bodies" indicates a kind of handing over or abandonment which is not covered by words like permission and passivity.

2) The judicial interpretation. The lead word here is "handing over" or the catchword, "Sin is punished with sin".²⁷⁷ In this interpretation there is an element of movement in the verb *παρέδωκεν*. It is used of Jesus in other contexts and may shed some light on its use here. When used of Jesus, it means "to hand over" and describes how Jesus is taken away and handed over to some persons or to a certain fate.²⁷⁸ When the verb is used here of the handing over to impurity, the meaning is that these people are taken away into and handed over to impurity. The impurity and the dishonoring is something new²⁷⁹ into which they are taken away. God punishes sin, and if we think that there is one cause of the punishment, then God punishes religious sin with ethical sin (sexual impurity), whereas if we operate with two causes of the punishment, then God punishes religious and ethical sin with ethical sin (sexual impurity).²⁸⁰ Along with Moo²⁸¹ we may use the picture of a boat that is lying by the river bank. God now gives the boat a firm push that takes the boat out into the middle of a violent torrent by which it is helplessly swept away. In this interpretation, it is correctly understood that *παρέδωκεν* describes an activity on God's part, and that something new happens to these people, which changes their situation. This is marked by "abandoned" (i.e. handed over) to impurity". The interpretation lies within the lexical meanings of the verb and within an effective and dynamic understanding of the abandonment. On the other hand, the interpretation has difficulty with the other key to the understanding of the phrase "God abandoned them to impurity", namely that these men are "in the lusts of their hearts" (v. 24). This tells about the condition that they are in when God abandons them to impurity. They are already in their impure lusts, and hence no movement is described by which this category of people are taken away into another area. "Handed

²⁷⁷ Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 47, Weiss, *Römer*, p. 85, Sanday/Headlam, *Romans*, p. 45, Moe, *Romerne*, p. 81, and Moo, *Romans*, p. 111.

²⁷⁸ E.g. Matthew 20:19; 26:2; Mark 9:31; 14:41; 15:15.

²⁷⁹ Weiss, *Römer*, p. 85.

²⁸⁰ Cf. Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 47, who writes about their moral corruption as a divine penalty.

²⁸¹ Moo, *Romans*, p. 111.

over to”, then, is not an adequate rendering of παρέδωκεν, and the notion that they are punished with sin which leads them into another area, is inconsistent with Paul’s wordings in verse 24.

3) The privative interpretation. The lead word is ”withdrawal” or ”abandonment”.²⁸² In this interpretation there is an element of movement in the verb παρέδωκεν, but the movement is understood as a withdrawal from something and the verb is rendered as ”abandoned to”. The verb is here used of the abandoning of people to impurity, and the meaning is that God withdraws from these people and leaves them to their fate. The impurity is nothing new. They are already in their impure lusts, but with the abandonment, the impurity is intensified and breaks through upon them with new power. They are abandoned to it. God punishes sin (religious and ethical) by abandoning them in their ethical sin. In connection with Godet, we may use the picture of a boat that is lying in a stream. God has held on to the boat, but now He lets go, and the boat is helplessly swept away by the torrent.²⁸³ In this interpretation, it is correctly understood that παρέδωκεν describes an activity on God’s part, and that something new happens to these people which changes their situation. This is marked by ”abandoned to impurity”. The interpretation is within the lexical meanings of the verb and within an effective and dynamic understanding of the abandonment. The interpretation also takes into account the other key to understanding, namely that these people are ”in the lusts of their hearts” (v. 24). This tells us about the condition they are in when God abandons them to impurity. Hence, what is described is a movement by which God withdraws Himself from these people. ”Abandoned”, then, is an adequate rendering of παρέδωκεν, and the notion that they are punished with an abandonment to existing sin is in harmony with Paul’s wordings in verse 24. This is the interpretation that I shall expound and clarify in the following.

3.5.3. The abandoned (v. 24)

So far we have seen that there are two causes of God’s revelation of wrath: a religious cause (refusal of God and idolatry) and an ethical cause (impure lusts). We have seen that ”God abandoned them to impurity” is to be understood in a privative sense: God abandons them in their sin. That was the main interpretation. Now we shall comment on the individual elements in v. 24. ”God” is the God who has revealed Himself through His works as an eternal, almighty, transcendent, and demanding God. Now this God reveals Himself in another way. He reveals Himself in His wrath. God’s revelation of wrath is something other than the natural revelation

²⁸² Godet, *Romerne*, p. 188, Stöckhardt, *Römer*, pp. 59-60, Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 48, Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 59; Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 121, uses language which places him in both the permissive and the privative interpretation; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 68, belongs within the privative interpretation when he writes that God ”has let go of the control which restrained them from their baser instincts”.

²⁸³ Godet, *Romerne*, p. 188.

which Paul has described in vv. 19-20. For this revelation of wrath does not take place until these people have refused God as He has revealed Himself through that which is created, through nature, and through history. The revelation of wrath presupposes the natural revelation.²⁸⁴ There is a certain paradoxicality to Paul's wording. These people have refused God. They have replaced the knowledge of Him, and this replacement implies that they have cast God away from themselves as something useless and valueless (cf. v. 28). But the description of God's revelation of wrath reveals that these people have not escaped from God. They have not been able to put Him behind them, but are still in a relationship to God, namely the relationship of wrath.²⁸⁵ These people meet God in their lives, but now through this wrath.

With αὐτοὺς Paul describes who is struck by this wrath. In the context, "them" (αὐτοὺς) are identified on the basis of the preceding and of the following in verse 24. "Them" may be identified on the basis of verses 19-23 as all people, because in vv. 19-20 Paul describes the natural revelation as the revelatory context of the people who belong to the category "them". "Them" are those to whom God has revealed Himself (v. 19), which means all people. "Them" are those who "see" the invisible God through His works (v. 20), which means all people, because all are surrounded by and are a part of God's works (that which is created, nature, and history). "Them" are those who have refused God and engaged themselves in idolatry (vv. 21-23 and v. 25), which means all people. "Them" are first identified as all people. "Them" are also identified in the following in verse 24, and there, "them" are defined as those who are in the lusts of their hearts. What is meant here is impure sexual lusts. This means that "them" are narrowed down to a part of humankind, in that they may be identified as those who are in their impure sexual lusts.

The prepositional clause ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν qualifies αὐτοὺς and describes the condition of these people. It describes a condition in which they already were²⁸⁶ when God abandoned them to impurity.²⁸⁷ This understanding is preferable, for one thing because "of their hearts" marks that existing lusts in their hearts are in view, and for another thing because of the pattern of the three parallel revelations of wrath in which Paul each time describes the ethical condition in which the people find themselves when God abandones them. In analogy with the two

²⁸⁴ Contra Reicke, *Theologie*, pp. 156-158, who identifies the natural revelation with the revelation of God's wrath.

²⁸⁵ Michel, *Römer*, p. 103, writes, "Auch über den Menschen, der die Wahrheit Gottes verkehrt oder ihr gar nicht zu entrinnen sucht, bleibt Gott Richter".

²⁸⁶ I understand ἐν as having locative force; it may also be understood as having causal or instrumental force (both suggestions in Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 65), but that would not change the basic meaning: that what is meant is existing lusts in these people. If it is to be understood as causal, Paul marks that the lusts of their hearts are yet another reason for the wrath and hence already existing in man, and if it is to be understood as instrumental and denotes the instrument by which God punishes, these lusts are also already existing in man.

²⁸⁷ Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 46, Zahn, *Römer*, p. 98, Moe, *Romerne*, p. 81, Michel, *Römer*, p. 104, Murray, *Romans*, p. 43, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 122.

others, it is best to understand ἐν as a statement of an existing condition.²⁸⁸ Paul can use the Greek word ἐπιθυμία in both a positive (Philippians 1:23 and 1 Thessalonians 2:17) and a negative (most often; e.g. Romans 6:12, 7:7-8; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 2:3, 4:22; and 1 Thessalonians 4:5) sense. Verse 18 qualifies the impure lusts as unrighteous lusts. The connection with the following "to impurity" shows that sinful lusts are in mind in that the word "impurity" defines them as impure lusts.²⁸⁹ The two parallel descriptions of the revelations of wrath (vv. 26-27 and vv. 28-31 respectively) also show that the condition that these people are in is a sinful condition. Finally, verse 32, which also refers to verse 24 and verses 26-27, shows that these lusts are a violation of God's righteous decree of justice and are punished with death. So they are sinful. With the genitive τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν Paul writes where these sinful lusts are found. The anthropological concept "heart" is the inner, hidden "self" of man as a thinking, willing and feeling subject. Here the primary sense is man as desiring, these desires determining the will and generating activity. With the fall of these people on the religious level (refusal of God, and idolatry) comes a fall on the ethical level so that these people are now in the lusts of their hearts. God does not create these sinful lusts in them, but their religious fall is accompanied by an ethical fall so that this category of people may be characterized as some who are in the lusts of their hearts.²⁹⁰ The wording "in the lusts of their hearts" tells us that they are controlled by them and bound by them. They are *in* them.²⁹¹ And in analogy with the two other categories of people who are struck by God's wrath (vv. 26-27 and vv. 28-31) and who are described as some who have engaged in a new sinful practice and who are filled with unrighteousness, what is thought of with "in the lusts of their hearts" are lusts which characterize them and fill them.²⁹²

3.5.4. To impurity (v. 24)

As we have seen, there are two causes of the revelation of God's wrath, and with "in the lusts of their hearts" Paul describes the condition in which God found these people when the wrath strikes them. The lusts of their hearts is the second cause that gives the wrath its specific form. The

²⁸⁸ It is possible to understand ἐν as equivalent to an εἰς ("therefore God abandoned them to the lusts of their hearts, to impurity..."); the second phrase ("to impurity"), then, is a clarifying phrase which explains that these lusts are impure lusts. It is linguistically possible, but because of the pattern in the three revelations of wrath it is better to understand ἐν as "in". In that way we can maintain the linguistic variation.

²⁸⁹ Murray, *Romans*, p. 44.

²⁹⁰ Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, pp. 48-49, rightly writes that Paul does not explain how these lusts arise, but presupposes their existence.

²⁹¹ Stöckhardt, *Römer*, p. 59, Michel, *Römer*, p. 104, Murray, *Romans*, p. 44, and Dabelstein, *Beurteilung*, p. 83.

²⁹² It is therefore wrong to write, like Zahn, *Römer*, p. 104, that as punishment, God gives them a direction which leads them into an impure and pernicious condition, characterized by dishonor. The same view is found in Moe, *Romerne*, p. 81, who writes that God gives the lusts their outward direction and determines their outbursts in disgraceful vices. The sense is not that only lusts are intended with "in the lusts of their hearts" and only practice with "to impurity".

prepositional phrase εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν is linked to the verb παρέδωκεν and describes what God abandoned them to. It denotes the destination. The noun ἀκαθαρσία may be used of a) cultic impurity, b) moral impurity in general, i.e. sin in the ethical area, and c) sexual impurity. In addition to this place, Paul uses ἀκαθαρσία a number of times, twice in a general sense (Romans 6:19 and 1 Thessalonians 2:3), and otherwise specifically of sexual sin (2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 4:19, 5:3; Colossians 3:5, and 1 Thessalonians 4:7).

a) Countryman has attempted a cultic interpretation of ἀκαθαρσίαν.²⁹³ He denies that Paul considers homosexual acts sinful. Paul has many words which refer to sin, and that kind of words are found at the beginning where they refer to idolatry (1:18-23), and at the end of the text (verse 32), referring to verses 29-31 – a list which does not contain sexual acts. Countryman concludes, "The idea that Paul was labeling homosexual acts as sinful can be upheld only if one can show that he used other terms here with an equivalent meaning."²⁹⁴ And according to Countryman that is not possible. The question, then, is whether Paul considers this "impurity" sinful. First of all there is the programmatic verse 18 where Paul twice writes of ἀδικία, and this unrighteousness refers to the examples of lusts (v. 24), shameful passions (vv. 26-27) and unrighteousness (v. 29) that are mentioned later. The impure lusts are therefore sinful. Secondly, there is the summary in v. 32 which also covers v. 24 and vv. 26-27. It defines the impurity as a violation of God's righteous decree. The impurity is sin. Thirdly, there is the paragraph 2:1-5 where Paul writes that God's judgment is upon those who do the same, i.e act like the category of people who are described in 1:18-32. This means that God's judgment also strikes this impurity. It is therefore sin. Fourthly, Paul summarizes the paragraph 1:18-3:20 in 3:9 and writes that in the preceding he has accused Jews and Greeks alike of being under sin. He thereby qualifies the practice of these people, including the impurity, as sin. And fifthly there is the summary in 3:19-20 where the practice of mankind, including the impurity, is qualified as a violation of the law and as sin. So when Countryman claims that Paul does not characterize the "impurity" in v. 24 as sin, it is an exegesis which separates the words from their context.

b) A possible interpretation is that ἀκαθαρσία has a more general meaning and refers broadly to sin in the ethical sphere.²⁹⁵ This is not very likely. If ἀκαθαρσία is to be taken in a general sense, it also covers the sins that are mentioned in vv. 26-27 and in vv. 29-31. We would then have an unnecessary repetition, and we would also have an unnecessary break of the structure with the three parallel manifestations of wrath against the three categories of people, each with their own special

²⁹³ Countryman, *Dirt*, pp. 109-117. He writes of "impurity in its physical sense" (pp. 109-110).

²⁹⁴ Countryman, *Dirt*, p. 110.

²⁹⁵ Zahn, *Römer*, p. 99, and Lenski, *Romans*, p. 109.

ethical sin.

c) ἀκαθαρσία has a specific meaning and refers to sexual sin. This interpretation is found in two varieties. According to one of them, "impurity" refers to the examples of homosexual practice which are spoken of in vv. 26-27. Paul then firstly writes less specifically about sexual sin, and in vv. 26-27 he explains and specifies that he is thinking of homosexual practice.²⁹⁶ This interpretation is not very likely because it breaks the pattern with the three revelations of wrath which are in each case introduced with a statement of the cause and a statement of the wrath as an abandonment to sin. The natural interpretation is that Paul is thinking of three different categories of people, each with their own special ethical sin. If verse 25 were left out, and verses 26-27 had followed immediately after verse 24, one could have considered whether verses 26-27 had a clarifying function. But since Paul makes a break after verse 24 and adds a new description of the fall of these people which then serves as a reason for the next revelation of wrath, it is not fair to understand verses 26-27 as an explication of the "impurity" in verse 24.

According to the other interpretation, "impurity" refers to various types of sexual sin, but not to homosexual practice.²⁹⁷ This is the best interpretation because of the pattern with three revelations of wrath on three different categories of people. It is stated explicitly in the text that Paul is describing different types of ethical sin in verses 26-27 and in verses 28-31, and therefore what fits the pattern best is if verse 24 describes a third type of ethical sin. This interpretation is also the one that harmonizes best with the structure of a new statement of the religious cause before each new manifestation of wrath, and this interpretation takes into account the break in verse 25. But apart from arguments based on pattern and structure, there is also an argument based on content. In verses 26-27 Paul describes homosexual acts, and in verses 28-31 he generally describes a number of different types of unrighteousness, but a mention of sins of fornication – apart from homosexual actions of course – and of adultery is missing. Knowing how much according to Paul there were of fornication and sexual sins in the lives of Gentiles, and how often Paul speaks of sexual sins, it is striking that Paul does not mention them in such a systematically built-up context. The lack of mention of sexual sins apart from homosexual actions point to "impurity" referring to sexual sins, i.e. sexual relations outside of marriage, and adultery.

Paul's usage of language, and the context, points to ἀκαθαρσία referring to different types of sexual sins with the exception of homosexual sins. In Paul, ἀκαθαρσία has no cultic meaning. "Impurity" is not something external and physical, but something personal and ethical. This understanding is clear in the context. "Unrighteousness" in verse 18 is the superordinate concept

²⁹⁶ Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 48, Murray, *Romans*, p. 44, and Countryman, *Dirt*, p. 110.

²⁹⁷ Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 44, Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 122, and Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 62.

which qualifies "impurity" as unrighteousness in an ethical sense. In verse 32, "impurity" is qualified as sin which is punished by death. And if we take into consideration 2:14-16, "impurity" is qualified as violation of the law. The impure are therefore morally impure. With this understanding of "impurity" an element of separation and alienation from God is to be found. This corresponds to the emphasis of the context on the refusal of God and on the idolatry. In that case it corresponds to the understanding of "holiness" in Paul where "holy" and "holiness" both stress the setting apart from sin and consecration to God.

3.5.5. Dishonoring (v. 24)

Paul describes an abandonment to impurity. He words the abandonment with the verb παρέδωκεν, and connected to this verb is a substantivized infinitive: τοῦ ἀτιμάζεσθαι τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν. This phrase may be exegetical²⁹⁸ and provide a more specified explanation of the word "impurity", or it may be final²⁹⁹ and denote the purpose of this abandonment to impurity, or it may be consecutive and denote the consequence of this abandonment to impurity. The last possibility is the best because of the other two descriptions of the wrath (vv. 27 and 28). The consequence is that their bodies be degraded. ἀτιμάζεσθαι is a passive form with τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν as the implicit subject. Regardless of whether the infinitive is understood as exegetical, final, or consecutive, this dishonoring is a result of the abandonment to impurity. This connection defines "dishonoring" as something ethical. "Honor" corresponds to "righteousness" (verse 18) and God's "law" (2:14-16); "honor" corresponds to God's order. "Dishonoring" is that which breaks God's order and falls outside of "righteousness" and God's law.³⁰⁰ ἐν αὐτοῖς may mean "among themselves", "in themselves", "by themselves", "reciprocally", or "on themselves". By the abandonment, their impurity and dishonoring is intensified.

3.5.6. Clarifying repetition (v. 25)

In verse 24, Paul has described an abandonment to impurity and its result, the dishonoring of their bodies. What is in mind is fornication in general, and adultery. This manifestation of wrath has two causes: a religious cause and an ethical cause. Paul has stated the religious cause of the wrath in verse 23 or in verses 21-23, and he now repeats this cause. Verse 25 is an augmented and clarifying repetition of verse 23. It is a repetition, but not only that, for Paul also expands idolatry to include more than the worship of images, and through v. 25b, Paul also clarifies that he is speaking of the

²⁹⁸ Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 48.

²⁹⁹ Godet, *Romerne*, p. 189, and Moe, *Romerne*, p. 81.

³⁰⁰ Hence, what is thought of is not a social dishonoring as Countryman, *Dirt*, p. 112, claims.

worship of idols, and that idols belong to the category of created things, and that they are non-existent as gods. There are several reasons to understand verse 25 as an augmented clarification of verse 23. Firstly, both verses describe a replacement, worded partially in the same way. Secondly, in the two verses, Paul makes use of some vocabulary which refers to the same thing; there are "the glory of the immortal God" and "the truth of God", both of which refer to God in His revelation; there are "the likeness of the image of mortal man..." and "the lie", both of which refer to idols. Thirdly, there is the function of verse 25 in the context. Verse 25 being a characterization of this category of people who are struck by this revelation of wrath (verse 24) as well as a statement of the reason for this, and verses 21-23 being a characterization of this category of people and a statement of the reason for the revelation of wrath, the repetitory element stands out clearly.³⁰¹ On the basis of these reasons it is natural to understand verse 25 as an augmented and clarifying repetition of verse 23.

The οἵτινες-clause has a qualitative meaning and emphasizes a characteristic which is used to give a reason for a preceding statement. It refers to the category of people who are spoken of in verse 24, and characterizes them as people who replaced the truth, i.e. God, with the lie and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator.³⁰² The element that states the reason is clear in the context. The replacement of God with idols (verse 23 or verses 21-23) stands as the reason why God abandoned them (verse 24), and therefore it is natural that the repeated description of the replacement of God with idols in verse 25 serves to state the reason.

3.5.7. A replacement (v. 25)

Paul repeats the description of the replacement in modified language.³⁰³ μετήλλαξαν expresses an exchange or a replacement.³⁰⁴ What is thought of is not a transformation or distortion of the truth into the lie, but of replacement and substitution, because of the context which stresses the oppositional attitude of these men toward God (v. 18, v. 21, vv. 28 and 32). This category of people replace τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ. The genitive is defined by the contrast to τῷ ψεύδει, by the concretization in verse 25b, by the parallel phrase τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ in verse 23, and by the use of τὴν ἀλήθειαν in verse 18. The contrast, τῷ ψεύδει, refers to the idols, so it is natural

³⁰¹ When I am writing about verse 23 in specific and verse 25 as statements of the reason for the revelation of wrath, I am thinking of the religious cause of the wrath. As I have mentioned, there is also an ethical cause.

³⁰² In the section on structure I have argued that the relative pronoun is to be linked with the following. Others, e.g. Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 123, and Moo, *Romans*, p. 112, think that there is a break between verses 24 and 25, and that verse 25 starts a new sentence.

³⁰³ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 123, and Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 109.

³⁰⁴ μεταλλάσσω has the meaning "replace" or "exchange", and μεταλλάσσω has the same meaning as ἀλλάσσω in verse 23.

that "the truth" similarly refers to God. It will be natural, then, to understand the genitive τοῦ θεοῦ as a genitive of apposition. In the concretization of verse 25a in verse 25b, ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ corresponds to "the Creator". It is natural, then, that "the truth" refers to God.³⁰⁵ In the parallel member (τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ) I interpreted the genitive τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ as a genitive of apposition, and therefore it is natural to interpret τοῦ θεοῦ in the same way. In verse 18, Paul writes of τὴν ἀλήθειαν, which is a term of revelation referring to God as He reveals Himself through His works. On the basis of that, it is a fair conclusion that "the truth" in verse 25 refers to God, and that the genitive τοῦ θεοῦ is a genitive of apposition ("the truth, that is, God").³⁰⁶ With "the truth", then, Paul can stress that which is true as opposed to that which is false, or that which is real as opposed to that which is unreal. But since the contrast to God is the idols which are false gods because they do not exist, that which is false and that which is unreal merges in that context.³⁰⁷ As we have seen in connection with verse 23, this category of people replace the knowledge of God.

Man replace "the truth, that is, God" with the lie. In the context, "the lie" refers to the idols.³⁰⁸ This can be seen from the concretization of verse 25a in verse 25b where "the lie" corresponds with "created things". When Paul uses the abstract expression "the lie" to characterize the idols, this, as we have seen, stresses the falsehood of the idols, i.e. they are not really gods (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:9).³⁰⁹ The idols assume God's position.

3.5.8. Idolatry (v. 25)

The continuation concretizes and clarifies what this replacement means. καὶ is explicative.³¹⁰ The concretization makes it clear that this replacement involves a religious practice. Verse 25 is an augmented and clarifying repetition of verse 23. I have already argued for this, so I will not repeat it

³⁰⁵ "The truth" is an example of *abstractum pro concreto*.

³⁰⁶ Stöckhardt, *Römer*, p. 61, and Zahn, *Römer*, p. 100. This corresponds with the rendering that is often found in the commentaries, namely "the true God" (Moe, *Romerne*, p. 82 and Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 49), or "die sich erschliessende Wirklichkeit Gottes" (Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 44), or "the reality consisting of God Himself and His self-revelation" (Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 123); the alternatives are a) to understand the genitive as a subjective genitive or a genitive of origin ("the truth from God"), the thing in mind being the revelation (the truth) which God gives (thus Murray, *Romans*, pp. 45-46, and Morris, *Romans*, p. 90), or b) to understand the genitive as an objective genitive ("the truth about God), making God the content of the revealed truth (thus Lenski, *Romans*, p. 110). Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 67, turns things around when he writes that God's truth describes God's relationship to us, while the text in verse 25 focuses on men's relationship to "the truth" and "the lie".

³⁰⁷ Here "truth" does not denote truthfulness or faithfulness (cf. Romans 3:4 and 7); contra Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 109, who consequently understands "lie" as deception, and Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 63, who thinks that the truth "includes also the implication of God's reliability and trustworthiness".

³⁰⁸ Zahn, *Römer*, p. 100, Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 49, and Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 60. "The lie" is an example of *abstractum pro concreto*.

³⁰⁹ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 63, writes, "The idol is a lie (ἐν τῷ ψεύδει), a falsification of reality which distorts all man's perception (vv 21-22)".

³¹⁰ Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 44, and Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 60.

here. Paul describes an idolatric practice with two verbs.³¹¹ The one verb is ἐσεβάσθησαν. It is qualified by παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα and describes the honoring of somebody or something as God. These people worship created things, forces, and living creatures as God.³¹² The verb stands as a parallel to ἐδόξασαν in v. 21 and has the same meaning.³¹³ In verse 21 this element is expressed with ὡς θεὸν, and in the present verse with παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα. God is characterized as "the Creator", and when God reveals Himself as the Creator through His works (v. 20), he reveals Himself as a demanding God who demands worship and service from man. This worship expresses man's recognition, and this worship consists in magnification and praise. The added praise exemplifies what this worship may consist of.³¹⁴

The second verb is ἐλάτρευσαν. This is also qualified by παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα and describes serving somebody or something as God, i.e. they are serving created things, forces, and living creatures as God. In the LXX, the verb has a religious meaning and is used of serving God in a cultic setting.³¹⁵ The question, then, is whether the cultic meaning resounds here. If this be the case, what is then thought of is the offering of sacrifices.³¹⁶ In the NT the verb can also be used in a more general and figurative sense where the cultic aspect has disappeared. This is also the case the few other times it is used by Paul. In Romans 1:9 the verb has no cultic associations, but is used of Paul's ministry in proclaiming the gospel.³¹⁷ Paul is thinking of service in missions. In Philippians 3:3 and 2 Timothy 1:3 it is also used without cultic associations, of serving God in and through one's life. It has a general meaning. When it comes to the understanding of ἐλάτρευσαν in our text, Paul writes of idolatry here and in verse 23, and it might therefore be said that the cultic aspect is thought of here. But it is better to understand ἐλάτρευσαν in its broad, non-cultic meaning because the verb is qualified by παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα. Paul describes a service where God is the parameter of the service. God is the God who has revealed Himself as the eternal, almighty, transcendent, and demanding Creator-God, and the service which this God demands does not have a specific cultic nature. Paul does not mention demands of temples, certain sacrifices etc., but the service is

³¹¹ Zahn, *Römer*, pp. 99-100, Moe, *Romerne*, pp. 82-83 who writes of a further degeneration of religion and morals that that mentioned in v. 23f; the new is a worship of nature" (p. 82); the same view is found in Michel, *Römer*, p. 105.

³¹² Foerster, σεβάζομαι *TWNT VII*, p. 173, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 124, suggest that ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν be seen as a hendiadys. In the words of Foerster: "das allgemeinere ἐβάσθησθαι durch das speziellere λατρεύειν im *Kult verehren* präzisiert wird". The presupposition for Foerster's understanding is that ἐλάτρευσαν has a special, cultic meaning. This is not the case, and so the interpretation falls away. The two words express two different aspects of the right relationship to God.

³¹³ Cf. Bauers (col. 1491) rendering "religiöse Verehrung erweisen". The verb is found only in this one place in the NT.

³¹⁴ In connection with ἐσεβάσθησαν, τὴν κτίσιν is understood.

³¹⁵ Strathmann, λατρεύω, *TWNT IV*, p. 60, writes, "λατρεύειν bedeutet also genauer kultisch dienen, kultisch verehren, vor allem durch Opfer."

³¹⁶ Strathmann, λατρεύω, *TWNT IV*, p. 63.

³¹⁷ τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ is a *nomen actionis*.

described with non-cultic words like honoring and thanking (verse 23) and worshipping, serving and praising (verse 25). And this is the service which they owe to God, but which these people direct to their idols. It is therefore best to understand ἐλάτρευσαν without cultic associations and generally of man's service to God or to idols. With two verbs, Paul clarifies and elucidates that what is thought of with the replacement is a religious practice: idolatry.

The object of the worship is τῆ κτίσει, which is to be understood in a concrete sense, summing up that which is created in all its different forms as being objects of worship. What is thought of is forces of nature and things in nature (trees, mountains, rivers etc.), of animals and people (heroes, rulers, emperors etc.), and of powers. "The created thing" stands as the object of the verbs "they worshipped" and "they served", and is thus identified as an idol. It is understood collectively: the sum of the idols (cf. the exemplification of idol images and singular and plural forms in v. 23). τῆ κτίσει specifies that the idols are created. That is the category to which they belong. But according to Paul, no created thing can be God. That which is created does not belong to the category of the divine, for created things have a beginning (cf. verse 20 "since the creation of the world"); it is subject to time, whereas the divine is eternal (cf. "His eternal power", v. 20). Created things are subject to decay (cf. Romans 8:19-23), whereas God is immortal (cf. "the glory of the immortal God", v. 23). And if we take into consideration 1 Corinthians 8:6, according to Paul, it is constitutive for God's character as God to be the Creator.³¹⁸ The divine as a category is separated from the created because eternity, immortality and creative power are constitutive for God's character as God. When men reject God, the world becomes God and assumes the position of God. Thus, an apotheosis of the world takes place, which does not correspond with the nature of the world. I have mentioned several times that this revelation of God through that which is created, through nature, and through history contains a demand on man. Man owes to God to worship and serve Him. Man refuses to do this (verse 21), and verse 25 tells us that man does not stay with this rejection, but transfers the worship and service owed to God to idols. The wording shows explicitly that it is the same demand that they transfer and meet in connection with the idols. They honor and thank them (verse 21), and they worship and serve them (verse 25) *as* eternal, almighty, and transcendent Creator gods. This category of people renders to created things the worship and service that is due to God alone.³¹⁹

Paul gives no explanation as to why this category of people transfer honor, thanksgiving, worship, and service to idols. Idols arise with a demand on man in the thoughts and imaginations of man, and idolatry begins with the realization of this demand. Elsewhere, Paul suggests that demons

³¹⁸ Cf. Kjær, *Afguder*, pp. 69-71.

³¹⁹ Michel, *Römer*, p. 105, and Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, pp. 49-50.

bind people to idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:19-21 and 12:1-3),³²⁰ but that is an explanation of the binding and passion manifested by an established idolatry, explaining how people are locked in this demand. But the demonic element does not explain the origin of the demand. The demand does not come from the gods themselves since they are only in man's thoughts. Nor does it come from the demons since they simply make use of them. The demand or need comes from man himself, i.e. ultimately from God. The demand with which God reveals Himself, then, is so strong that it is transferred to the idols when man refuses to fulfill it on God. This urge is so deeply rooted in man that it *must* be satisfied. And it is in their idols. One could say that just like it is constitutive for God's character to be a demanding God, it is constitutive for man's nature to be under demand. For me, that is a natural explanation of the phenomenon that God's demands are transferred to the idols.

With *παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα*, Paul describes whom they should have worshipped and served. This could mean that these people worshipped and served created things more than the Creator so that at least the Creator got part of the worship, but in the context, what is meant is that these people solely worship and serve created things. In verse 18 Paul writes that these people suppress the truth about God, in verse 21 he writes that these people did not honor or thank God, in verse 28 he writes that these men did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, and in verse 32 that they are in word and deed in opposition to God's commands. Hence, what is meant is an exclusive relationship to the idols³²¹ ("rather than the Creator").³²² Paul characterizes God as the Creator, and as an explicit designation, that is new compared with the preceding verses (vv. 18-24).³²³ I have, however, mentioned earlier that God reveals Himself as the Creator and is thus known as the Creator, and I have written earlier that Paul describes the relationship of these people to God as He has revealed Himself through His works, and that means that God has revealed Himself as the Creator and is known by man as the Creator.

We have seen that there are two causes of the revelation of wrath. There is a religious cause (refusal and idolatry), and there is an ethical cause (sexual lusts). We have seen that "God gave them up to impurity" is to be understood in a privative sense: God abandons them in their sin. "In the lusts of their hearts" is the necessary precondition of this revelation of wrath. The revelation of wrath takes the form of the sin in the ethical level that characterizes these people. Because they are in these impure sexual lusts they are abandoned to sexual impurity. The word "impurity" refers to various types of sexual sin, but not to homosexual practice. Verse 25 is a clarifying repetition of verse 23. The replacement of God with idols (verse 23 or verses 21-23) stands as the reason why

³²⁰ See Kjær, *Afguder*, pp. 147-154 and 184-193.

³²¹ The commentaries also generally agree on this.

³²² BDR 236,3, and Bauer, col. 1236.

³²³ Implicitly, the idea of creation is expressed in v. 20 (see the section on "The time of the revelation").

God abandoned them (verse 24).

3.6. The second revelation of wrath (vv. 26-27)

Verses 24-32 are a part of the explication of vers 18. In the three minor sections (vv. 24-25, vv. 26-27, vv. 28-31 with v. 32 as a rounding-off), Paul describes and displays more closely the revelation of God's wrath and describes ungodliness and unrighteousness in this category of people. In verses 24-25 Paul described a subcategory which was governed by impure sexual lusts, and he described how the wrath manifested itself as an abandonment to sexual impurity. In verses 26-27 we get the second description of the wrath. Paul shows how God's wrath manifests itself in people who are involved in homosexual practice.

3.6.1. The cause (v. 26a)

διὰ τοῦτο introduces a sequence based on verse 25.³²⁴ With παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας Paul describes a revelation of wrath. In verse 18 Paul wrote of a revelation of God's wrath, and with the three occurrences of "God abandoned them to" in v. 24, v. 26, and v. 28, Paul describes more closely this revelation of God's wrath.³²⁵ In the first description of the revelation of God's wrath we saw that verse 23, or perhaps verses 21-23, stated the religious cause of God's wrath. In the second description of the revelation of wrath (vv. 26-27), the religious cause of this wrath is stated in verse 25.³²⁶ We shall see how much of verse 25 is a part of the cause of the wrath. There are two possibilities: Either the idolatry is the cause of the manifestation of wrath,³²⁷ or the refusal of God and the idolatry are the causes of the manifestation of wrath.³²⁸

In the first description of the revelation of God's wrath, verse 23/verses 21-23 stated the religious cause of God's wrath. It makes no difference to the meaning since both verse 23 and verses 21-23 describe two elements: refusal of God, and idolatry. The cause is stated with ἥλλαξαν with its expansions, and ἥλλαξαν expresses both the "negative": refusal of God, and the "positive": idolatry.

In the second description of the revelation of wrath (vv. 26-27), the religious cause is stated in verse 25.³²⁹ This verse describes how these people replaced the truth, i.e. God, with the lie and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator. As we have seen, the second clause (v. 25b) has an explicative function in relation to the first clause (v. 25a). Verse 25a is explained

³²⁴ Wallace, *Greek*, p. 333, writes of διὰ τοῦτο "referring back to the previous argument".

³²⁵ As I have mentioned, I do not believe that verses 26-27 are merely an expansion and concretization of verse 24.

³²⁶ With "verse 25", I of course mean the first two sentences and not the final one with the doxology.

³²⁷ Godet, *Romerne*, p. 192, Zahn, *Römer*, pp. 102-103, and Morris, *Romans*, p. 92.

³²⁸ Moxness, *Hedningenes*, pp. 17-18 and 27.

³²⁹ With "verse 25", I of course mean the first two sentences and not the final one with the doxology.

and concretized in verse 25b. That means that verse 25b alone cannot be the statement of the cause. Verse 25a is a part of the description of the cause. In verse 25a, Paul describes with μετήλλαξαν and its expansions that something is replaced with something else. Like in verse 23 it contains in itself both the "negative": refusal of God, and the "positive": idolatry, and thus both the refusal of God and idolatry are the cause of the wrath. Even in the explication in verse 25b, the refusing element resounds in the clause "rather than the Creator". We cannot, then, isolate the idolatry as the only cause of the revelation of wrath, neither in verse 23 nor in verse 25. This is confirmed by the third parallel statement concerning wrath in verse 28. Where, the idolatry is not mentioned.

The religious cause of the revelation of wrath consists of two elements: refusal of God, and idolatry. διὰ τοῦτο shows explicitly that there is a religious cause for this wrath. The consensus interpretation sees this cause as the only cause of the wrath.³³⁰ This interpretation is found among older³³¹ and newer³³² scholars alike. The revelation of wrath consists in an abandonment to dishonoring passions (= homosexual relations), and the wrath is manifested in the ethical sphere. There is, then, a causal connection between refusal and/or idolatry and homosexuality.³³³ This connection stems from Hellenistic Judaism, or is consistent with the view of Hellenistic Judaism. The idolatry is often focused on as the cause of the homosexuality, and Wisdom 14:27 is quoted. Here the idolatry is the beginning (ἀρχή), cause (αἰτία), and culmination (πέρας) of all evil. The author of the Book of Wisdom mentions a number of examples of evil in the preceding verses: adultery, murder and killings, deceit and false oaths, faithlessness and rebellion and several others, including "unnatural sexual relations" (γενέσεως ἐναλλαγῆ; v. 26). Käsemann is often quoted, writing to verse 24, "Moral perversion is not the reason, but the result of God's wrath".³³⁴ Schlier writes that the sexual perversion is the punishment of God.³³⁵ Wilckens quotes from Wisdom 11:16,

³³⁰ In the following I shall not distinguish between those who think that the cause is solely the refusal of God, or the idolatry, or both.

³³¹ Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 50, writes about "the punishment for the apostasy"; Godet, *Romerne*, p. 192, writes about the ungodliness of the world, the idolatry, and the punishment for it: the unnatural indecency; Zahn, *Römer*, p. 103, writes, "Die Ausübung dieses Lasters, welchem preisgegeben zu sein eine vom Gott verhängte Strafe für die Abgötterei ist"; Lietzmann, *Römer*, p. 34, writes that kind of sexuality that is described is "die spezifische Strafe für den Götzendienst"; Althaus, *Römer*, p. 19, writes, "Aus der Sünde wider Gott ... wird alle andere Sünde geboren. In diesem Gesetze erkennt Paulus Gottes Richterwalten, seinen wirkenden Zorn", and similarly about "des Sittlichen Verderbens, mit dem Gott die Gottlosigkeit straft".

³³² See note 337.

³³³ Aagard, *Argumentation*, pp. 130-131, Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 62, Osten-Sacken, *Evangelium*, p. 36; Strecker, *Homosexualität*, p. 133, stresses the connection between idolatry and immorality and writes, "... die Sittenlosigkeit menschlichen Lebens die Schuldhafte Folge des Unglaubens und die Strafe Gottes für solche Schuld ist". Wengst, *Paulus*, p. 74, Franck, *Bibeln*, p. 143, write that sexual relations between people of the same sex are among the concrete expressions of the idolatry; Nissen, *Bibel*, p. 171, correspondingly writes, "God's wrath comes upon the idolatry of the Gentiles which is concretized in various sins, including sexual relations between people of the same sex" (my translation). Cf. Also Brooten, *Love*, p. 213.

³³⁴ Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 43. Käsemann is quoted by Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 64, and by Hays, *Vision*, p. 385.

³³⁵ Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 62.

writing that according to this principle, idolatry as impurity against God will be effective in sexual impurity.”³³⁶ Moo writes that in the Jewish polemic against Gentile paganism, gross sexual immorality was derived from idolatry.³³⁷ He quotes Wisdom 14:12. Moo thinks that Paul is following this pattern and establishing the same relationship between idolatry and gross sexual sin, only with the difference that God is the one who establishes this relationship.³³⁸

Religious sin is present in these people, but ethical sin does not arise until they are struck by the wrath. The homosexual relations are not guilt, but punishment.³³⁹ This interpretation presupposes, and must necessarily presuppose, that the verb παρέδωκεν has the meaning ”gave over to” or ”handed over to” (the judicial interpretation).³⁴⁰ In this interpretation, God becomes the direct cause of the homosexual practice.

This interpretation can be supported by yet another observation. In verse 25 and verse 26b, Paul describes a parallel phenomenon in two different areas

Verse 25a: μετήλλαξαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ψεύδει

Verse 26b: μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν εἰ τὴν παρὰ φύσιν

In verse 25 Paul describes an exchange in the religious area, and in verse 26b he describes an exchange in the sexual area. This could point toward a causal connection between them, such that God punishes the exchange in the religious sphere with the exchange in the sexual sphere. In that way, an ”adequate repayment”³⁴¹ is brought about.

In connection with the first revelation of wrath (verses 24-25) I asked the question whether this is the only cause of this manifestation of God’s wrath. The question was answered negatively as

³³⁶ Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 109; he is commenting on verse 24, but the same applies to verses 26-27, since these are merely a concretization of verse 24. Cf. Brooten, *Love*, pp. 296-297.

³³⁷ Moo, *Romans*, p. 113.

³³⁸ This interpretation is found in a modified version in Scroggs, *Homosexuality*, pp. 109-110+113-114+116-118. He thinks that Paul’s argument is partially dependent on Hellenistic Judaism (Scroggs, *Homosexuality*, p. 112). Scroggs quotes Wisdom 14:27, but adds that Paul has made a change to this judgment, moving from the external manifestations to the deepest cause of the idolatry, ”namely that refusal to acknowledge the true, sovereign God, which refusal brings in its turn, false god, false world, false self-awareness, and false perspectives on human activity” (Scroggs, *Homosexuality*, p. 112). This sequence is to be seen as a chain of cause and effect. This becomes clear when Scroggs again addresses the correlation between idolatry and homosexuality. In the Book of Wisdom, there is a direct causal connection, but Paul adds an intermediate link. ”For him idolatry results in a false world with a false self, that is, unnatural”. And Scroggs adds, ”Thus for Paul passions directed toward people of the same sex are illustrative of the false self” (Scroggs, *Homosexuality*, p. 117).

³³⁹ Countryman, *Dirt*, p. 116.

³⁴⁰ Neither the passive nor the privative interpretation can be reconciled with this understanding since both presuppose an existing ethical sin which God allows or abandons to.

³⁴¹ Klostermann, *Vergeltung*, pp. 5-6. As far as this text is concerned, this concept in research is connected with the name of Klostermann. In 1933, he wrote an article with the title *Die adäquate Vergeltung in Rm 1,22-31*. Klostermann finds three examples of an ”adequate repayment”. Concerning this passage he writes, ”insofern sie den wahren Gott mit falschen Göttern vertauschten, überlieferte sie sie der entsprechenden Vertauschung des natürlichen Geschlechtslebens mit einem perversen”. This is a classical interpretation; Weiss, *Römer*, p. 88, writes, ”... die Unnatur auf religiösem Gebiete, auf welchem sie das Geschöpf mit dem Schöpfer vertauschten, sich bestrafte durch die Unnatur auf sittlichem Gebiet”.

I found that "in the lusts of their hearts" (v. 24) described the condition in which these people found themselves when they were struck by God's wrath. This was also the expected answer. The statement of the theme of the section (verse 18) describes two causes for the wrath, and therefore we should also look for another cause for the wrath in verses 26-27. An argument for two causes is both negative and positive. As far as the negative is concerned, three objections may be raised against the claim that there is only one cause.

a) This interpretation is linguistically problematic. It presupposes that παρέδωκεν means "gave over to", and that "dishonoring passions" means some non-existent passions. But is it possible to imagine a giving over to non-existent passions? After all, the homosexual desire is a desire and a passion within man. Here, homosexual passion is objectivized and extrapolated to become an entity outside of man. Paul's choice of words is not suitable for expressing this interpretation.

b) The interpretation presupposes that γάρ in v. 26b is explicatory, and that verses 26b-27abc are a further explication of the sentence that states that God abandoned them to dishonoring passions. The explanation is that their women exchanged natural relations (with men) for unnatural ones, and that the men abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed in their lust for one another. But as an explanation it does not match the sentence "God abandoned them to dishonoring passions". Here, God is the active party. Here, the focus is on God's activity. In the explanation (vv. 26b-27abc), man is the active party, in that women exchange natural relations, and in that men abandoned natural relations. Here, the focus is on man's activity. A passive element (ἐξέκαύθησαν) which might correspond with God's activity is, however, also expressed. But the explanation and that which is explained do not match.

c) When it comes to the issue of an adequate repayment, the interpretation presupposes that God punishes sin in the religious sphere with a corresponding sin in the sexual sphere. Therefore the argument holds no power.

As arguments that there are two causes for the wrath, the following may be put forth:

a) γάρ in v. 26b is causal, and verses 26b-27abc state a reason why God abandoned them to dishonoring passions. There is, then, also an ethical cause for the wrath.

b) In the context, Paul states two causes. He does so in verse 18 which introduces the theme of the section. God's wrath is revealed upon ungodly and unrighteous people. Here, then, Paul, speaks of two characteristics which provide a reason for the revelation of God's wrath. Ungodliness corresponds with the refusal of God and with idolatry, and unrighteousness corresponds with their ethical conduct, which in verses 26-27 corresponds with homosexual practice. Guided by the theme, we are then to look for an ethical cause, and that is exactly what we find in verses 26b-27abc.

c) The pattern in verses 24-32 points to two causes. The three revelations of wrath stand in parallel, and it will be natural for Paul to state the same basic idea each time. In the first revelation of wrath, sexual impurity is the condition in which they already found themselves when they were struck by the wrath. In the same way, vv. 29-31 are a description of the ethical condition in which God found these people when his wrath was revealed in their lives.

d) The three different forms of the wrath presuppose three distinct groups. The religious sin is the same for all three groups, but their ethical sins are different, and it is the different character of this sin that gives the wrath its specific character. It is because they live in homosexual practice that they are abandoned to dishonoring passions i.e. homosexual passions. The sin on the ethical level had already arisen in them before the wrath was revealed. The sin on the ethical level had gone along with the sin on the religious level. God, then, is not the cause of the ethical sin.

e) In Pauline anthropology, lusts arise within man. Paul can write of sin in "your mortal body" and that believers are not to obey the desires of sin (Romans 6:12). Paul can write that the sinful passions were active by virtue of the law in our members (Romans 7:5), and in the following, Paul clarifies that it was sin that, through the commandment, produced all kinds of desires in me. Sin within man is the active party, and desire arises when sin produces it, using the commandment as its tool (Romans 7:8). Paul can write that sin living in me does what I hate, namely sin. In Galatians 5:19-21 he writes of sin as the deeds of the flesh, meaning that sin in man or in the flesh, i.e. man in his rebellion against God, is that which produces and creates sinful desires.

There are, then, two causes of this revelation of wrath. There is a religious cause. *διὰ τοῦτο* tells us explicitly that the cause of God's wrath is found in v. 25, and this cause is a religious one. Similarly, the reasons given in verses 26-27abc tell us explicitly that there is an ethical cause. In the reason that he gives, Paul describes a homosexual practice which describes the condition in which these people found themselves when they were struck by God's wrath.³⁴²

3.6.2. The abandonment (v. 26a)

When it comes to the interpretation of *παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς*, there are three different interpretations. I mentioned them in relation to verse 24, dismissing the permissive and judicial interpretations. The argument is the same as it was in that context. I shall therefore move directly to the privative interpretation.

The judgment of wrath describes an abandonment to dishonoring passions.³⁴³ In this

³⁴² Cf. Moe, *Romerne*, p. 84, who writes, that *ἐν* denotes the condition in which they found themselves, cf. v. 24.

³⁴³ Godet, *Romerne*, p. 188, Stöckhardt, *Römer*, pp. 59-60, Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 48, Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 59; Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 63, lies within the privative interpretation when he writes that God "has let go of the control

interpretation there is an element of movement in the verb παρέδωκεν, in that God withdraws from this category of people, thereby abandoning them. They are left to their own fate. The dishonoring passions are already taking place in these people, but the abandonment means that the dishonoring passions are intensified and break forth upon them with renewed strength. In this interpretation it is correctly understood that παρέδωκεν describes an activity on God's part, and that something new happens with these people which changes their situation. The interpretation lies within the lexical meanings of the verb, and within an effective and dynamic understanding of the abandonment. The interpretation also takes into account the other key to the understanding, namely the reason given in verses 26b-27abc. This describes the condition in which they find themselves at the time of God's abandonment to dishonoring passions. Therefore a movement is described whereby God withdraws Himself from these people. "Abandoned" is therefore an adequate rendering of παρέδωκεν, and the idea that they are punished with an abandonment to existing sin is in harmony with Paul's wordings in verse 24. In the following I shall elaborate and clarify this interpretation.

So far we have seen that there are two causes of God's revelation of wrath: a religious cause and an ethical cause. We have seen that "God abandoned them to dishonoring passions" is to be understood in a privative sense. This was the main interpretation. Now we shall comment on the individual elements of v. 24. "God" is the God who has revealed Himself through His works as an eternal, almighty, transcendent, and demanding God. This God now reveals Himself in His wrath. The revelation of wrath presupposes a natural revelation. There is a certain paradoxicality to Paul's wording. These people have rejected God, but the description of God's revelation of wrath reveals that these people have not escaped from God. These people are still in a relationship to God.³⁴⁴ But now it is a relationship of wrath.

With αὐτοῦς Paul describes who is struck by this wrath. In the context, "them" are identified from the preceding (v. 25 and vv. 19-23), and from the following in verses 26-27. "Them" can be identified on the basis of verses 19-23 as all people, for in vv. 19-20 Paul describes the natural revelation as the revelatory context for the people who belong to the category "them". "Them" are those to whom God has revealed Himself (v. 19), which includes everybody. "Them" are furthermore those who have refused God and involved themselves in idolatry (vv. 21-23 and v. 25), which includes everybody. "Them" are also identified in the following in verses 26-27, and there "them" are defined as those who practice homosexuality. Thus the term "them" is narrowed down to a section of humanity in that they can be identified as those who are engaged in homosexual

which restrained them from their baser instincts".

³⁴⁴ Michel, *Römer*, p. 103, writes, "Auch über den Menschen, der die Wahrheit Gottes verkehrt oder ihr gar nicht zu entrinnen sucht, bleibt Gott Richter".

practice.

The prepositional phrase εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας is linked to the verb παρέδωκεν. It denotes the goal. It stands in parallel with εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν in verse 24 and with εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν (v. 28) and describes what this particular category of people are abandoned to. πάθη (passions) is stronger than lusts (ἐπιθυμία, cf. v. 24) and denotes the lust or desire that sweeps man helplessly along and controls him.³⁴⁵ Man is subject to his passions. The genitive ἀτιμίας is a qualifying genitive and characterizes these passions as dishonoring.³⁴⁶ ἀτιμίας corresponds with ἀτιμάζεσθαι in verse 24. Like the impure lusts led to dishonoring, these passions are also dishonoring. The reason given in verses 26b-27 shows that these passions are dishonoring because they break with God's order.³⁴⁷ The characterization "dishonoring", the reason stated in verses 26b-27, and the greater context show that Paul also considers these "passions" sinful.³⁴⁸ It is not only the homosexual act, but also the homosexual passion that is sinful. The dishonoring passions are defined in vv. 26b-27 as homosexual passions.³⁴⁹

3.6.3. Survey of interpretations of vv. 26b-27

Before I move on to commenting on the individual parts of verses 26b-27, I will give a survey of the most important recent contributions to the interpretation of verses 26-27. In 1986, von der Osten-Sacken wrote that homosexuality is not a theme in New Testament research.³⁵⁰ That assessment was correct at the time. Since then, things have turned around, and homosexuality is a theme in New Testament exegesis. This means that previously there has not been much debate about Romans 1:26-27, and the most important scientific commentaries on Romans, from Meyer to Moo, reflect this fact. The commentaries often give a paraphrase of the text. The verses are seen as unproblematic. But this picture has changed in the research from about 1980 and on.

a) The classical interpretation. I begin with this interpretation which is the typical interpretation and which reigned till about 1980. This interpretation is a compilation of commentaries and a few specific contributions.³⁵¹ According to this interpretation, Paul describes homosexual practice between women and between men, the focus is on the practice, and this

³⁴⁵ In the Pauline literature, πάθος is also found in Colossians 3:5 and 1 Thessalonians 4:5.

³⁴⁶ Moe, *Romerne*, p. 83, Michel, *Römer*, p. 105, and Moo, *Romans*, p. 113.

³⁴⁷ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 64, defines "dishonor" as "worthy of no respect", and that goes for man's respect of himself as well as respect for others.

³⁴⁸ Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 61.

³⁴⁹ E.g. Murray, *Romans*, pp. 46-47, Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 44, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 125. As has already been mentioned, some think that verses 26-27 repeat and concretize verse 24 (e.g. Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 109).

³⁵⁰ Osten-Sacken, *Evangelium*, p. 28.

³⁵¹ Meyer, Godet, Stöckhardt, Sanday/Headlam, Zahn, Lenski, Moe, Lietzmann, Schlatter, Michel, Kuss, Schlier, Käsemann, Wilckens, Cranfield, Dunn, Morris, and Moo.

practice is a manifestation of God's wrath. The natural relations for women are with men and the unnatural ones with women, and similarly, the natural relations for men are with women and the unnatural ones with men. The "natural" is typically understood as the order of nature, and sometimes as the order of creation. It is typical that this order of nature or of creation is not further elaborated on. The wages is interpreted as the abandonment and sometimes as consequences of the homosexual practice, and the going astray is interpreted as their exchange of the truth with the lie. Homosexual practice is a sin. My understanding lies within this interpretation although there are elements toward which I take a critical stance. I shall return to this later.

b) In the book *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* from 1980, Boswell also deals with Romans 1:26-27. He thinks that Paul is describing heterosexuals who commit homosexual acts: "What is even more important, the persons Paul condemns are manifestly not homosexual: what he derogates are homosexual acts committed by apparently heterosexual persons".³⁵² In the same way he writes, "It would completely undermine the thrust of the argument if the persons in question were not 'naturally' inclined to the opposite sex in the same way they were 'naturally' inclined to monotheism." According to Boswell there is "no clear condemnation of homosexual acts in the verses in question". Boswell's interpretation is based on the understanding of *παρὰ φύσιν*. "Nature" in Paul corresponds to the "character" of a person or a group of persons.³⁵³ Hence, the word "nature" in Romans 1:26 is to be understood "as the *personal* nature of the pagans in question".³⁵⁴ When Paul writes *παρὰ φύσιν*, *παρὰ* does not mean "against", but rather "more than". This is the meaning of the preposition in verse 25, and the same phrase is also found in Romans 11:24 where *παρὰ φύσιν* is used in the parable of the olive tree. Here Boswell renders it as "against nature" and writes that God is portrayed as one who acts "against nature". Therefore it cannot have a moral meaning, but denotes a behavior which is unexpected, unusual, and different than what would happen under normal circumstances. Therefore he renders it as "beyond nature".³⁵⁵ The conclusion: "Paul believed that the Gentiles knew of the truth of God but rejected it and likewise rejected their true 'nature' as regarded their sexual appetites, going beyond what was 'natural' for them and what was approved for the Jews. It cannot be inferred from this that Paul considered mere homoerotic attraction or practice morally reprehensible, since the passage strongly implies that he was not discussing persons who were by inclination gay and since he carefully observed, in regard to both women and the men, that they changed or abandoned the 'natural use' to

³⁵² Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 109.

³⁵³ Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 110.

³⁵⁴ Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 111.

³⁵⁵ Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 112.

engage in homosexual activities.”³⁵⁶ I will mention three points of criticism. First it is not true that Paul is describing homosexual acts committed by heterosexuals. This group do not replace a heterosexual practice with a homosexual practice, but they replace a knowledge of the natural with a homosexual practice. I shall elaborate and give reasons for this later. Secondly, it is not true that there is no clear condemnation of homosexual acts in the verses. The homosexual acts are the object of God’s wrath and hence sinful, and in the context they are defined as “unrighteousness” and as breaches of God’s righteous decree. Thirdly, Boswell defines the concept of “nature” in a wrong way. He renders it with words like “character”, “disposition”, “personal nature”, and “what was ‘natural’ for them”.³⁵⁷ The presupposition for this definition is that Paul is describing heterosexuals, but this is not true. When Boswell further writes that Paul is not discussing “persons who were by inclination gay”,³⁵⁸ “nature” becomes sexual orientation and disposition, which becomes individualistic and anachronistic.³⁵⁹

c) *The New Testament and Homosexuality* by Scroggs was written in 1983. When it comes to the interpretation of Romans 1:26-27,³⁶⁰ Scroggs thinks that Paul is dependent on Hellenistic-Jewish propaganda against the Gentiles, and that Paul is thinking about pederasty: “... the likelihood is that Paul is thinking only about pederasty”.³⁶¹ Paul may be thinking of “the more degraded form of it”.³⁶² The reason given for this is that “[t]here was no other form of male homosexuality in the Greco-Roman world which could come to mind”.³⁶³ He writes that Paul “must have had, *could only have had*, pederasty in mind.”³⁶⁴ Paul’s use of “nature” in his argumentation does not stem from the Bible or from Jewish sources, but from Greek sources. According to Scroggs, Paul is attacking pederasty, i.e. adult men’s sexual relations with boys, or young men’s sexual relations with somewhat younger men. Scroggs does not provide much argumentation for this interpretation. The only argument is that this is the kind of homosexuality that is known in Greco-Roman culture. Scroggs’ interpretation presupposes that Paul is dependent on Greek sources and not on the Old Testament or on Jewish sources. This is doubtful. Scroggs’ interpretation also leaves decisive

³⁵⁶ Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 112-113. A similar interpretation is found in Stowasser, *Homosexualität*, pp. 519-520, who writes of verse 27 that it is about people who, although they know better, knowingly and willingly turn away from their actual heterosexuality, and that it does therefore not take a stance on constitutional homosexuality.

³⁵⁷ Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 110-112.

³⁵⁸ Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 112.

³⁵⁹ Hays, *Vision*, pp. 388-389, writes that neither Paul nor anyone else in antiquity has “sexual orientation” as a concept, which renders it an anachronism. Moxness, *Hedningenes*, p. 13, writes, “It seems more correct to assume that there is no reflection, neither in Jewish texts nor in Romans 1:26-27, on such a division of people in two categories on the basis of sexual preferences” (my translation).

³⁶⁰ Scroggs, *Homosexuality*, pp. 109-118.

³⁶¹ Scroggs, *Homosexuality*, p. 116.

³⁶² Scroggs, *Homosexuality*, p. 117. Cf. Furnish, *Teaching*, p. 78, who writes, “... it was the more degraded and exploitative forms of pederasty that the Apostle and his contemporaries had in view...” (my translation).

³⁶³ Scroggs, *Homosexuality*, p. 116.

³⁶⁴ Scroggs, *Homosexuality*, p. 122. The italicization is the author’s own.

elements in Paul's argumentation out of consideration. Paul's wordings show that he is describing an adult-adult relationship (verse 27). He writes "with other men", not "with boys/young men".³⁶⁵ Paul is not speaking in age specific categories, but in gender specific categories.³⁶⁶ "With other men", "one another", "their delusion", and "in themselves" all describe an adult-adult relationship characterized by reciprocity and common responsibility and guilt.³⁶⁷ The mention of the female homosexuality in verse 26 also does not fit in the pederastic model.³⁶⁸ There is nothing in Paul's usage of language that shows or suggests that he is only thinking of pederasty. Scroggs grants this.³⁶⁹ A narrow cultural reading of the text, reading it on the basis of the forms of homosexuality in Greco-Roman culture known to us, is a misunderstanding of the intention of the text. Paul's intention with the text in verses 18-32 is to describe sin in the religious sphere (refusal of God and idolatry) and in the ethical sphere (sexual impurity, homosexuality, and unrighteousness).

d) In 1989, Countryman's book, *Dirt, Greed, and Sex*, was published. When it comes to the understanding of homosexual actions in Romans 1:24-26, Countryman thinks that the mention of impurity (v. 24) refers to homosexual actions. He understands "impurity" as cultic uncleanness and not as sin.³⁷⁰ Paul does not use any term for sin relating to homosexual actions.³⁷¹ Therefore he understands "lusts" in a neutral sense, and "dishonoring" (v. 24) and "shamelessness" (v. 27) as socially degrading and not as sin.³⁷² The concept of "nature" he understands as "the continuity of an organism with its past", and the Gentiles having exchanged their nature means that they have lost a certain continuity with their most distant past.³⁷³ What, then, are the homosexual acts? They are "contrary to the Israelite code of purity and therefore certainly dirty from a Jewish perspective".³⁷⁴ And Paul "treated homosexual behaviour as an integral if unpleasingly dirty aspect of Gentile culture. It was not in itself sinful, but had been visited upon the Gentiles as recompense for sins".³⁷⁵ Countryman's interpretation is wrong, because homosexual practice is subject to God's wrath and is qualified as sin ("unrighteousness", verse 18), as a violation of God's righteous decree (verse 32) in Romans 1:18-32, and in the greater context (1:18 – 3:20) as a violation of God's law (3:9 and 20-

³⁶⁵ DeYoung, *Meaning*, p. 439. An accurate criticism of Scroggs is found in DeYoung, *Homosexuality*, pp. 157-159.

³⁶⁶ A criticism of this interpretation may be found in Osten-Sacken, *Evangelium*, p. 34.

³⁶⁷ DeYoung, *Meaning*, p. 440, and *Homosexuality*, p. 158. Moxnes, *Hedningenes*, p. 12, also criticizes Scroggs' position: "It is therefore more natural to take it as a general rejection of sexual relations between men" (my translation).

³⁶⁸ Thus Osten-Sacken, *Evangelium*, p. 34, and DeYoung, *Meaning*, p. 439.

³⁶⁹ Scroggs, *Homosexuality*, p. 130.

³⁷⁰ Countryman, *Dirt*, pp. 109-110.

³⁷¹ Countryman, *Dirt*, p. 110.

³⁷² Countryman, *Dirt*, pp. 112-113.

³⁷³ Countryman, *Dirt*, p. 114.

³⁷⁴ Countryman, *Dirt*, p. 113.

³⁷⁵ Countryman, *Dirt*, p. 117.

21).³⁷⁶

e) Hays has come up with several contributions to the interpretation of Romans 1:26-27. The following survey is based on a paragraph in the book *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* from 1997 (1996). Hays writes that Paul's accusation only stands if "these human beings are actually in rebellion against God". He writes about "humanity's primal rebellion" and clarifies this in relation to verse 21: "Paul does not argue on a case-by-case basis that every single individual has first known and then rejected God; instead, thinking in mythico-historical categories, he casts forth a blanket condemnation of humankind."³⁷⁷ Hays acceptingly quotes Scroggs' expression that the whole paragraph (vv. 18-32) is "Paul's real story of the universal fall", and he also acceptingly quotes Käsemann: "For the apostle, history is governed by the primal sin of rebellion against the Creator, which finds repeated and universal expression."³⁷⁸ The paragraph, then, is "a diagnosis of the human condition. The diseased behavior detailed in verses 24-31 is symptomatic of the one sickness of humanity as a whole." Man's rebellion against the Creator is the fundamental disease. The examples of unrighteousness in verses 24-32 are symptoms of this disease. Hays writes, "The reference to God as Creator would certainly evoke for Paul, as well as for his readers, immediate recollections of the creation story in Genesis 1-3, which proclaims that 'God created humankind in his own image ... male and female he created them', charging them to 'be fruitful and multiply' (Gen 1:27-28). Similarly, as we have noted in our discussion of divorce, Genesis 2:18-24 describes woman and man as created for one another and concludes with a summary moral: 'Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.' Thus the complementarity of male and female is given a theological grounding in God's creative activity." A few lines further down on the page, Hays writes, "When human beings engage in homosexual behavior, they enact an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual reality: the rejection of the Creator's design."³⁷⁹ So Hays characterizes homosexual behavior as "rejection of the Creator's design" or as "rejection of created sexual roles".³⁸⁰ He raises the question of where the concept of "nature" comes from, and what it means. In Greco-Roman philosophy and literature, the opposites natural/unnatural are often used of heterosexual and homosexual behavior. This usage of language is adopted by Hellenistic Jewish writers, and Paul is writing from the standpoint of this Hellenistic-Jewish context. When it comes to the definition of the concept of "nature" (φύσις), Paul identifies "nature" with the created order, and Hays adds, "The understanding of 'nature' in this conventional

³⁷⁶ Schmidt, *Straight*, pp. 64-85, has a detailed and accurate criticism of Countryman's interpretation.

³⁷⁷ Hays, *Vision*, p. 385.

³⁷⁸ The quote is from Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 43.

³⁷⁹ Hays, *Vision*, p. 386.

³⁸⁰ Hays, *Vision*, p. 386.

language does not rest on empirical observation of what actually exists; instead, it appeals to a conception of what ought to be, of the world as designed by God and revealed through the stories and laws of Scripture.”³⁸¹ According to Hays, ”nature” is the created order, God’s ”creative design”, and it is not accessible through empirical observation, but by revelation in Scripture. In his summary, Hays stresses that Paul is not describing ”the individual life stories of pagan sinners”, but giving ”a global account of the universal fall of humanity”.³⁸² Hays mentions that many claim that Paul only condemns homosexual acts committed by heterosexual persons, and that Paul’s negative judgment cannot be used on persons who are ”naturally of homosexual orientation”. This is rejected: ”The ’exchange’ is not a matter of individual life decisions; rather, it is Paul’s characterization of the fallen condition of the pagan world.”³⁸³ There are elements in Hays’ interpretation that I disagree with. This includes the question of whether Paul is thinking in mythico-historical categories where I think that Paul is thinking in individual-historical categories so that the fall away from God in the religious sphere and in the ethical sphere is both historical and individual. And it includes the question of Paul’s dependence on Hellenistic Judaism as far as the concept of ”nature” is concerned. The ideas that are linked to ”nature” when it is used in the context of homosexual practice, such as reproduction, active/passive roles, characterization as ”man-woman”, and feminization, are not found in Paul. This makes it doubtful whether Paul has adopted ”natural” and ”against nature” from them.

f) In Schmidt’s book *Straight and Narrow* from 1995, the author touches on Romans 1:26-27. The paragraph 1:18-32 is a unit where Paul ”equally condemns same-sex relations and other behaviors that he mentions in the following verses”.³⁸⁴ ”Same-sex relations are singled out” as ”the first evidence of worshiping something other than the true God is that humanity will make of itself something other than true humanity.” Paul writes ”from the standpoint of hellenistic Judaism”, which viewed same-sex acts as ”revolting in that they represent a revolt against the created order”.³⁸⁵ Schmidt denies that verses 26-27 are to be interpreted in an individualistic way. In verses 18-32, Paul is ”describing not individual actions but the *corporate* rebellion of humanity against God and the kinds of behavior that result”. The word ”exchange” ”denote the movement from worship of God to worship of images”. He describes ”the sweep of history”. The word ”exchange” is also found in verse 26: ”The point is that same-sex relations are a *specific* falsification of right behavior (immorality), made possible by the *general* falsification of right thinking about God

³⁸¹ Hays, *Vision*, p. 387.

³⁸² Hays, *Vision*, p. 388.

³⁸³ Hays, *Vision*, p. 388. Samuelsson, *Människan*, p. 92.

³⁸⁴ Schmidt, *Straight*, p. 66.

³⁸⁵ Schmidt, *Straight*, p. 67.

(idolatry).” Paul describes ”humanity that first generally and now specifically (and sexually) has replaced a truth with a falsehood.”³⁸⁶ Schmidt also denies that there is a connection between homosexual relations and idolatry. ”Rather, he is suggesting that the general rebellion created the environment for the specific rebellion: ’For this reason, God gave them up to’, not ’as a result of this they did it’.” When it comes to the usage of ”nature” and ”natural”, this usage of language is to be understood on the background of Greek and Jewish sources. Like many Jews in his day, Paul understands ”natural” and ”unnatural” in the context of creation and fall. Verses 18-32 abound with allusions to creation and the fall. These allusions ”strengthen the connection that we might already suppose for Paul between ’natural’ and the creation account of sexual differentiation and marriage. What is ’unnatural’ then, is the active negation of marriage in the form of same-sex relations.”³⁸⁷ ”Paul understands that male and female were created for each other with complementary sexualities grounded in the distinctive constitutions of their sexual organs, and that this arrangement has been legitimized only by marriage since the creation.”³⁸⁸ ”Homosexual behavior is ’revolting’ ... because it epitomizes in sexual terms the *revolt* against God. It is sinful because it violates the plan of God, present from creation, for the union of male and female in marriage.”³⁸⁹ For Schmidt, the ”natural” is primarily and basically the Biblical model for marriage between a man and a woman, and the natural is communicated through revelation (Scripture). The ”natural” is secondarily ”the distinctive constitutions of their sexual organs”, and this is communicated through ”observation of human biology”.³⁹⁰ I agree with Schmidt’s basic understanding, but I take a critical stance toward his collective-historical interpretation because I find that an individual-historical interpretation is better. And I doubt Paul’s dependence on Hellenistic Judaism.

g) Brooten’s book *Love between Women* is from 1996. According to Brooten, verse 24 belongs together with verses 26-27, and in verse 24, Paul writes of sexual impurity, and ”the sexual impurity in question in Romans relates to gender differences”.³⁹¹ Brooten asks why ”Paul define[s] homoeroticism as ’impurity’”, and in her answer she refers to Mary Douglas the anthropologist and her principle of full conformity with one’s class. Brooten writes, ”Homoerotically involved women do not conform fully to the class of women, since they take on the active sexual roles that many authors of the Roman periode describe as unnatural or monstrous for women.” ... ”This class of women ’comfounds the general scheme of the world,’ because women should, by nature, passively and subordinately receive the male organ. Passive, receptive, soft men likewise fail to conform to

³⁸⁶ Schmidt, *Straight*, p. 78.

³⁸⁷ Schmidt, *Straight*, p. 81.

³⁸⁸ Schmidt, *Straight*, pp. 81-82; the first part of the quote is from Wright, *Homosexuality*, p. 295.

³⁸⁹ Schmidt, *Straight*, p. 85.

³⁹⁰ Schmidt, *Straight*, p. 82.

³⁹¹ Brooten, *Love*, p. 233.

what should constitute the perfect class of men: active, insertive, and hard. To define as impurity this blurring of gender boundaries is to solidify the boundaries themselves.”³⁹² ”Impurity” has to do with ”gender” and means that people ”are not maintaining clear polarity and complementarity.” Verses 26-27 describe a group, and when we read verses 26-27 on the basis of ”ancient sources”, ”natural intercourse” means ”penetration of a subordinate person by a dominant one”.³⁹³ The natural intercourse is the heterosexual intercourse, and it may be ”consensual or coerced, ... such as between an adult man and woman married to each other, an adult man and free woman not married to each other, an adult man and a slave woman or slave girl, an adult man and his daughter, or an adult woman and her son.”³⁹⁴ The unnatural intercourse is between women. When it comes to sexual relations between men, these are a breach of social laws ”which he would understand as dictated by nature. The passive male has allowed himself to play the part of a woman, while the active male has taught his partner effeminacy and participated in his becoming effeminate.”³⁹⁵ Brooten understands ”nature” both as an ”order of creation” and as ”gendered human nature”.³⁹⁶ Brooten’s representation of Paul’s position is wrong. Paul does not argue against homosexual practice because it breaks with the active and dominant role of the man and with the passive and submissive role of the woman. Paul argues that it is contrary to the will of God which is a lifelong marriage between a man and a woman.

h) DeYoung’s book *Homosexuality* is from 2000. He thinks that ”’nature’ and what is ’natural’ must correspond to what God has created and legislated.”³⁹⁷ He asks the question whether Paul knew of sexual orientation, and since Plato and others knew of it, it is ”hardly conceivable that Paul and anyone else were ignorant of it.” DeYoung furthermore asks the question whether Paul would accept sexual orientation, but condemn homosexual practice. The answer is negative. Paul would not have accepted sexual orientation, since sexual orientation just like homosexual practice ”violates what God has created as his image ... and what He legislated regarding sexual behavior and marriage (Genesis 2, Leviticus 18 and 20). It violates what Jesus said about marriage. Only a monogamous union of male and female constitutes marriage on the Maker’s model (Matt 19:1-19).”³⁹⁸ It is therefore best ”to view Paul as encompassing within his understanding of ’against nature’ and ’natural’ any and all forms of homosexuality, whether orientation or behavior.” DeYoung emphasizes that Paul is describing an adult-adult relationship which is characterized by

³⁹² Brooten, *Love*, p. 235.

³⁹³ Brooten, *Love*, p. 241.

³⁹⁴ Brooten, *Love*, pp. 250-251.

³⁹⁵ Brooten, *Love*, p. 256.

³⁹⁶ Brooten, *Love*, p. 280.

³⁹⁷ DeYoung, *Homosexuality*, p. 155.

³⁹⁸ DeYoung, *Homosexuality*, p. 156.

reciprocity and common guilt. The use of the triple "replaced" helps define what is natural. Rejecting God as Creator leads to rejecting created gender roles." And the allusions to Genesis 1 show that "Genesis has shaped his concepts, reinforcing the point that homosexuality is set in contrast to creation as God designed it". Paul is influenced by Scripture, and "this dependence argues for universality."³⁹⁹ I basically agree with DeYoung. There are, however, details on which I hold a different view. This will appear from my analysis.

i) Gagnon's book *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* was published in 2001. It is the most thorough book on this subject to date. Gagnon renders his interpretation in this way: "Same-sex eroticism functions as a particularly poignant example of human enslavement to passions and of God's just judgment precisely because it parallels in the horizontal-ethical dimension a denial of God's reality like that of idolatry in the vertical-divine dimension. In other words, idolatry is a deliberate suppression of the truth available to pagans in the world around them, but so too is same-sex intercourse. Paul emphasizes this in his adoption of the phrase 'contrary to nature'. Given the meaning of 'contrary to nature' (*para physin*) and the comparable expressions used by Jewish writers of the period to describe same-sex intercourse, the meaning of the phrase in Paul is clear. Minimally, Paul is referring to the anatomical and procreative complementarity of male and female. Put in more crude terms, Paul in effect argues that even pagans who have no access to the book of Leviticus should know that same-sex eroticism is 'contrary to nature' because the primary sex organs fit male to female, not female to female or male to male. Again, by fittedness I mean not only the glove-like physical fit of the penis and vagina but also clues to complementarity provided by procreative capacity and the capacity for mutual and pleasurable stimulation."⁴⁰⁰ For Paul, this is simply a matter of "common sense observation" of human anatomy and procreative ability. "Nature", then, is not cultural convention, but "the material shape of the created order".⁴⁰¹ Gagnon's first argument is: Like Jewish writers of this period, Paul uses "contrary to nature" of homosexual intercourse, and therefore, "nature" refers to "the anatomical and procreative complementarity of male and female". Gagnon's second argument gives reasons to believe that it is an order of creation. He uses the parallelism between the relationship to idolatry and to "same-sex intercourse". The will of God when it comes to the worship of idols is visible and clear. A visual perception of God's material creation should lead to a mental perception of the nature and will of God. In the same way, nature primarily has to do with the visual perception of the man-woman complementarity. It is a matter of something material and visible which indicates God's intentions "manifest in natur". A

³⁹⁹ DeYoung, *Homosexuality*, p. 160.

⁴⁰⁰ Gagnon, *Bible*, p. 254.

⁴⁰¹ Gagnon, *Bible*, p. 256.

third argument consists of allusions to Genesis in Romans 1:18-32 which relates back to God's creation of man and woman as complementary sexual beings. A fourth argument is the use of the dishonoring of their bodies in verse 24 which, together with the reference to "unnatural use" in verses 26-27, substantiate that Paul considers "same-sex intercourse" to be an unnatural use of "the gendered body" on the grounds of the obvious incomplementarity in such an intercourse.⁴⁰² If one disregards Leviticus and asks for hints in nature which might help one to discover God's will when it comes to sexuality, the human anatomy and procreative ability is the most unambiguous and clear indication of the divine intention.⁴⁰³ I agree with Gagnon's interpretation on a number of points, but when it comes to the understanding of "nature", I disagree. I do not think that it can be discovered what "nature" is on the basis of the visible anatomic difference between man and woman. Thus, in my view, Gagnon overstates the anatomical difference when speaking of the man-woman complementarity.

k) "Religious" homosexuality. This interpretation presupposes a close connection between refusal of God and idolatry on one hand and homosexual practice on the other.⁴⁰⁴ The homosexuality is placed in a religious context. The homosexuality that is described is found among idolaters. Moxness writes of "the condemnation of homosexuality as apostasy from God".⁴⁰⁵ Franck and Nissen write about idolatry being concretized in, among other things, sexual relations between people of the same sex.⁴⁰⁶ Others still elaborate further on the interpretation so as to assign a cultic significance to homosexuality. The homosexuality that is described is religiously motivated. Paul "is writing of a homosexual practice which he knew from the temple of the idols".⁴⁰⁷ It belongs in a cultic sphere. There is such a connection to refusal of God and idolatry in the text, but the connection is general and universal. The connection is not so close that it generates homosexual practice (see verse 24 and verses 28ff). Idolatry may be cultic as well as acultic. In the text, the sexual behavior is sinful in itself, not because of place, context, situation, and association.⁴⁰⁸ The text focuses on the sexual desire as the motive of the practice, and not temple, ritual, and ceremony as the motive.⁴⁰⁹ The text is devoid of references to temple and cult.

3.6.4. A connection between idolatry and homosexual practice?

⁴⁰² Gagnon, *Bible*, pp. 257-258.

⁴⁰³ Gagnon, *Bible*, p. 264.

⁴⁰⁴ Hodge, *Romans*, p. 41, writes in connection with vers 26, "... that those sins are always intimately connected with idolatry, forming at times even a part of the service rendered to the false gods".

⁴⁰⁵ Moxness, *Hedningenes*, p. 27, and Furnish, *Teaching*, pp. 74-76.

⁴⁰⁶ Franck, *Bibeln*, p. 143, and Nissen, *Bibel*, p. 171.

⁴⁰⁷ Aagaard, *Argumentation*, p. 130.

⁴⁰⁸ Rightly Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 108.

⁴⁰⁹ Rightly Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 108.

The survey of recent contributions to the interpretation of Romans 1:26-27 clearly reveals where the areas of difficulty lie. The debate raises the question of what kind of homosexuality Paul is describing. There is the question of the connection between homosexual practice and the idolatry. Are these people who practice homosexuality a specific group of idolaters? Does their homosexual practice have a cultic nature? There is the question of the interpretation of "exchanged" (verse 26b) and "left" (verse 27a). Are these people heterosexuals who leave their heterosexual practice? Is it a voluntary and freely chosen kind of homosexual practice? There is the question of whether Paul is describing a personal or a historic development, and whether he is thinking in individual or collective terms. There is the question of the interpretation of the natural. What does "the natural" refer to? What is the parameter for what is natural? How is it conceived? Is the unnatural sinful? Is it a breach of the pattern of sex roles? Does the interpretation of "replaced" and "left" and or the use of "nature" provide a basis for claiming that Paul is describing a particular kind of homosexual practice? In short: What kind of homosexual practice is Paul describing?

In the following, I will comment on the individual elements in verses 26b and 27ab, and I will place the emphasis on the elements that recent research is focusing on. But before I begin to analyze verse 26b, I will look at the connection between refusal of God and idolatry on one hand, and homosexual practice on the other. As we have seen, some think that the idolatry generates homosexual practice. It is the punishment for idolatry. And Paul describes a homosexual practice which is found among idolaters. We shall therefore picture people who sacrifice animals and crops in temples or at altars in their homes, and where the homosexual practice may even have a conscious cultic significance. The question is whether the idolatry is a constitutive element in the homosexual practice. We shall once again look at the connection between verses 19-23 and verses 24-31.

In verses 18-32, Paul describes a section of mankind. This section is characterized more closely in verse 18 as ungodly and unrighteous men who suppress the truth, and in whom God's wrath is revealed. Paul describes this section of mankind in relation to natural revelation, but although Paul is only describing a section of mankind and keeping the condemning man (Romans 2:1-5) and the religious-ethical Jews (Romans 2:17-24) out of this description, he is describing the natural revelation and man's response to it, so it covers all people. The natural revelation is a basic universal condition for all people, at all times and in all cultures. For God has revealed Himself in His works (verse 20): that which is created, nature, and history. "For since the creation of the world God's invisible character ... has been clearly seen". Every man lives in and is surrounded by the created world, in and surrounded by nature, and in history. Hence, the natural revelation is a universal basic condition. The response to the natural revelation is also universal. It is a basic

condition. All people at all times and in all cultures have known and know God. All people have refused God and denied Him honor and thanksgiving. For since the days of Adam, man is σάρξ and in opposition to God (Romans 8:7). This is a basic condition for all people. Since the days of Adam, nobody seeks God (Romans 3:11). The refusal of God sweeps mankind away in a religious fall which results in idolatry. This fall is a universal fall and a basic condition for all people. Paul describes idolatry in terms typical of his time (idol images in verse 23), which Paul and his contemporaries were familiar with. But he enlarges the description of the idolatry in verse 25 and writes about honoring and serving "created things". This comes to expression in visible, marked and cultic forms (idols), but also in a more invisible and acultic way, namely in man's worship of himself. Colossians 3:5 tells us that Paul is also imagining acultic forms of idolatry. Idolatry in its many cultic or acultic forms is a universal phenomenon and a basic condition of mankind. Although Paul in verses 18-32 is describing a certain category of people, the description is universal, and he describes apostate man who worships gods (including himself) at all times and in all cultures. Is there, then, a causal relationship between idolatry and homosexual practice?

a) Paul is not stating a direct causal relationship so as to say that idolatry generates homosexual practice as it is stated in Wisdom 14:27. Nothing in the text points in that direction. Such a direct causal relationship would also be in disharmony with the three descriptions of the wrath. Paul is describing God's wrath on three groups who have specific characteristics: sexual impurity, homosexual practice, and unrighteousness in general. In this category of people, then, some are characterized by their impure sexual lusts and practice, others by their homosexual practice, and still others by various kinds of unrighteousness. If there were a direct causal relationship between idolatry and homosexual practice, all three groups would be characterized by a homosexual practice since they are all idolaters. A direct causal relationship between idolatry and homosexual practice, then, is not expressed in the text.

b) Nor is an indirect causal relationship between idolatry and homosexual practice expressed, so as to say that God punishes idolatry with an abandonment to homosexual practice. As we have seen, there are two causes of this manifestation of wrath. Refusal of God and idolatry is the one cause, and the homosexual practice is the other cause, and it is the latter cause that gives the wrath (the punishment) its specific form: abandonment to homosexual practice. Just as Paul is not stating a reason why these people refuse God and refuse to show Him honor and thanksgiving, he is also not stating a reason why some men engage in homosexual practice. Along with the break with God on a theological level goes a break with God on the ethical level. Sin gains strength in man and manifests itself in various areas: in sexual impurity, in homosexual practice, and in various kinds of unrighteousness.

c) Paul is also not describing a special cultic kind of homosexuality. The description in verses 26-27 is devoid of references to temple, sacrifices, and cult. And verse 27 clearly shows that the motive of the homosexual practice is sexual desire, and not money, cult, ritual, and ceremony.⁴¹⁰

There is, then, not a direct or indirect causal relationship between idolatry and homosexual practice. Paul is also not describing a special group of people in verses 19-23+25. We have already seen that. Hence, Paul is not describing a special group of idolaters in verses 19-23+25. So when it comes to the one set of characteristics of this group (verses 18-32), namely ungodliness and suppression of the truth through unrighteousness (verse 18), refusal of God and idolatry, this is a universal characteristic.⁴¹¹ When it comes to the other set of characteristics of this group (verses 18-32), namely unrighteousness in various forms, this is a special characteristic. For this group accept and defend their unrighteousness (verse 32), they live it out in practice and are filled with it. In this way this group is distinct from the category of condemning people (Romans 2:1-5) and the religious-ethical Jews (Romans 2:17-24) who do not accept or defend unrighteousness, and who do not live it out. When the last two groups sin, it is in the area of internal desire as well as in lapses that cannot be defended. When it comes to the last characteristic of this group (verses 18-32), namely the revelation of God's wrath, we are dealing with a unique characteristic. For it is only this group who experience God's wrath *in this way* as an abandonment to sin. Those who condemn and have a different relationship to God's wrath stand as a contrast (see Romans 2:5). In verses 26-27 Paul describes all homosexuals who accept and defend their homosexuality in desire and in practice, and who live out their homosexuality in practice. Paul shows that the homosexually practicing person knows God just like everyone else, and also refuses God and worships gods or himself just like everyone else.

The latter raises the question whether something is sinful because it is found in a certain type of people. Specifically: Is this homosexual practice sinful because the people concerned are idolaters? The answer is: Sin is sin, or with Paul's term in verses 18-32: Unrighteousness is unrighteousness, regardless of place, situation, person, ethnicity, or identity. For breach of law is constitutive of sin, and breach of righteousness (law) is constitutive of unrighteousness. That is why we see that sin is sin in the type of people depicted in Romans 1:18-32, in the type depicted in Romans 2:1-5, and in the religious-ethical Jew (Romans 2:17-24).

3.6.5. A reason (v. 26b)

We have looked at whether there is a special connection between idolatry and homosexual practice.

⁴¹⁰ Cf. Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 108.

⁴¹¹ Paul is not counting in the believers in this characteristic.

I rejected that. We shall now look at the individual elements in verses 26b-27. We begin with γάρ, which is causal, and Paul is stating the reason⁴¹² why God abandoned these people to dishonoring passions.⁴¹³ This, then, is the second (ethical) reason which determines the concrete form of the abandonment. We shall look at how much of the verse is a part of the reason. With the twice repeated τε, verse 26a and verse 27 are tied together. The twice repeated τε marks that the two clauses stand in parallel, and that they are correlative.⁴¹⁴ The correlative element is made stronger by ὁμοίως at the beginning of verse 27. Verse 26b describes a replacement of something with something, and verse 27ab corresponds with this as verse 27ab describes a replacement of something (“the natural relation”) with something (“were inflamed..”). Since the following participial clause (verse 27c) has a consecutive force, it is natural to include this in the reason. Verses 26b-27abc, then, are part of the reason. I keep verse 27d out of the reason since it describes the abandonment itself. The other ethical reason for the abandonment is that their women have replaced the natural sexual relations with the man and have engaged themselves in lesbian relationships, and that the men have abandoned the natural relations with the woman and have engaged themselves in homosexual relationships. As the second cause of this manifestation of wrath, verses 26b-27abc describe existing lesbian and homosexual practice which these people find themselves in when God’s wrath strikes them. The wrath, then, takes its shape according to their ethical practice.

3.6.6. A replacement (v. 26b)

Paul writes about women who have engaged themselves in lesbian practice. With αἱ θήλειαι and the following οἱ ἄρσενες, the focus is on the aspect of gender. With αἱ θήλειαι αὐτῶν Paul is describing the women of this category of people. It refers back to αὐτοὺς in verse 26a. Paul writes that their women replaced natural relations with unnatural ones. He uses the verb μετήλλαξαν which means “replaced” or “exchanged” (cf. verses 25 and 23).

The verb μετήλλαξαν is an exact repetition from verse 25. And in the simple form, it is also found in verse 23 (ἔλλαξαν). In verses 23, 25, and 26b, Paul is describing a parallel phenomenon in two different areas:

v. 23	ἔλλαξαν	τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ... θεοῦ	ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνοσ
v. 25	μετήλλαξαν	τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ	ἐν τῷ ψεύδει

⁴¹² See the section 3.6.. The cause (verse 26a).

⁴¹³ It may be explicative, in which case it gives a closer explanation of God’s abandonment to dishonoring passions. This is the standard interpretation (cf. Moo, *Romans*, p. 114, note 113).

⁴¹⁴ See BDR 444,1, and Wallace 672.

v. 26 μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν εἰς τὴν παρὰ φύσιν

In verses 23 and 25 Paul describes a replacement in the religious area, and in verse 26 he describes a replacement in the sexual area. What does "replaced" mean here? And what does Paul want to say with this clear parallelism? Firstly, we shall look at the interpretation of "replaced".

1) The word "replaced" in this context tells us that Paul is describing heterosexual persons. The persons in question are not homosexuals, but Paul "derogates homosexual acts committed by apparently heterosexual persons".⁴¹⁵ The point in Romans 1 is to "stigmatize" people who have left their calling and left the true path that they were once on. "It would completely undermine the thrust of the argument if the persons in question were not 'naturally' inclined to the opposite sex in the same way they were 'naturally' inclined to monotheism."⁴¹⁶ The reason of the sin of these people was not that they were lacking that which Paul saw as "proper inclinations", but that they had it: "they held the truth, but 'in unrighteousness'" (v. 18). Boswell does not see it as clear whether Paul made a distinction between "gay persons (in the sense of permanent sexual preference) and heterosexuals who simply engaged in periodic homosexual behavior." It is clear, however, that Paul is not discussing "gay persons but only homosexual acts committed by heterosexual persons."⁴¹⁷

It is quite clear that Boswell is trying to argue contextually for his interpretation. He bases it partly on the context in general, describing the knowledge of God and the refusal of God, and partly more narrowly on the parallel use of "replace" in verse 24 and verse 25.⁴¹⁸ When I say "trying", it is because the argument is unsuccessful. First this category of people who are described in verses 18-23+25 are not "inclined" to monotheism. They do not seek God. They are "by nature" hostile and rebellious towards God, and therefore they have not at any time wished or wanted to thank and honor God. When the parallel wordings with a replacement in the ethical sphere are taken into account, a replacement of "the natural relation" implies neither an acknowledgement nor an inclination nor a practice. On that background, a natural "inclination" to sexual relations with the opposite sex cannot be spoken of. On the contrary, the analogy demands that they are just as hostile and rebellious towards "natural relation" with a member of the opposite sex as they are hostile and rebellious towards the God who has revealed Himself. Secondly, Boswell defines the character of their homosexual practice wrongly. He distinguishes between proper homosexuals who are characterized by a permanent sexual preference, and heterosexuals who are characterized by periodical homosexual behavior or isolated acts. The people whom Paul describes in verses 26b-

⁴¹⁵ Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 109. The same view is found in Wengst, *Paulus*, p. 77.

⁴¹⁶ Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 109.

⁴¹⁷ Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 109.

⁴¹⁸ Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 110-112, substantiates his interpretation with another two arguments. One is negative, namely that "nature"/"natural" does not correspond with the concept of natural law. The other argument is positive, namely that "nature" means "character" or "personal nature". I shall wait with the interpretation of "nature".

27abc, however, have abandoned the natural relations, and the language points to the definitive and permanent nature of this shift. They have become inflamed in their desire, which describes a condition, and they practice shamelessness, where the present participle describes something characteristic or durative. The description in verse 27abc unambiguously shows the definitive and permanent nature of their homosexual practice. Thirdly, a necessary motive is lacking in Boswell's interpretation. If they are heterosexual "by nature", i.e. by inclination or sexual orientation, why do they shift to a permanent homosexual practice, denying "their true 'nature' as regarded their sexual appetites"? Why would they deny that, acting contrary to "what was 'natural' for them"?⁴¹⁹ Why would they do that? A motive is lacking.

2) The word "replaced" in this context tells us that Paul is describing a voluntary act. In the context of the replacement of the glory of the immortal God with images (verse 23) and the replacement of the truth, i.e. God, with a lie (verse 25), Wengst writes that this replacement is a deliberate act in bad faith. Similarly, "replaced" (verse 26) and "abandoned" (verse 27) describe the fact that the homosexually practicing people are deliberately and in bad faith turning away from their proper heterosexuality,⁴²⁰ Only given that premise can Paul accept guilt in connection with homosexual acts. Paul, then, is not describing "proper" homophiles or a constitutional form of homosexuality. Wengst writes that he hears from homosexual people that their homosexuality is not a decision contrary to their nature, but is lived in accordance with their nature. Paul, then, is no longer the key witness of the New Testament for placing homosexuality under the category of sin. Moxnes writes that the words "to exchange" or "to abandon" show that the sexual desires of these people were directed toward the opposite sex, and that homosexual relations were an expression of a conscious choice.⁴²¹

It is correct that this replacement takes place in bad faith. The analogous replacement in the religious area shows that the replacement is related to a knowledge. They knew God. The analogy points to the people in question in verses 26b-27 acting in bad faith. This is confirmed explicitly and unequivocally in verse 32 which states that these people know the will of God concerning sexual relations. The question is whether the replacement takes place deliberately, voluntarily, and as an expression of a conscious choice. When this replacement of natural relation with unnatural ones is interpreted on the background of the analogous example in verse 23 and verse 25, it is *not* a matter of course that the replacement is voluntary and chosen. That these people replaced the glory of God with an image (verse 23) or replaced the truth (God) with a lie (verse 25) is *not* a voluntary

⁴¹⁹ Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 112; both quotes are Boswell's own characterization of this type of heterosexual persons.

⁴²⁰ Wengst, *Paulus*, p. 77, writing, "Er setzt also voraus, dass sich homosexuell handelnde Menschen willentlich und wider besseres Wissen von der auch ihnen eigentümlichen Heterosexualität abwenden".

⁴²¹ Moxness, *Hedningenes*, p. 13; cf. Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, p. 109.

decision. According to Paul, man is by constitution antagonistic towards God. Therefore nobody seeks God. Mankind is by constitution $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi$ and therefore hostile towards God. This is a chronic condition in man. Therefore mankind also does not seek God when He reveals Himself to him. Therefore mankind does not honor and thank God, whom he knows through that which is created, through nature, and through history. Man refuses by necessity, and when he refuses, he is swept away in a religious fall which Paul describes in verses 21cd-23, and which is recapitulated in verse 25ab. The refusal of God is inevitable and necessary. The replacement is also inevitable and necessary since it is the end result of a process by which these people are swept away. The replacement in the religious area, then, does not take place voluntarily. In analogy with this, the replacement of the natural relations with unnatural ones is also not voluntary. One cannot argue for anything deliberate or voluntary on the basis of the use of "replace" in verses 23 and 25. On the contrary, the term "replace" and the partially synonymous "abandon" in this context with the analogous examples in verses 23 and 25 suggest that the replacement is involuntary and coerced. Can this be further substantiated? We have seen that verses 26b-27abc describe the condition that these people find themselves in when they are struck by God's wrath. They have already replaced and abandoned the natural relations, and they have already become inflamed in their desire. The reason for this replacement is not found in the idolatry nor in the wrath, but it is found in their desire. "In their desire" in verse 27b, then, describes the motive of their replacement. The term "in their desire" expresses that they are controlled by their desire in the same way as the first category of people in verse 24 were "in the lusts of their hearts", and in the same way as the third category of people had been filled up with all unrighteousness. The replacement, then, is caused by their desire, and they are acting in accordance with their homosexual desire.

3) The word "replaced" in this context tells us about mankind's condition. Hays writes about "humanity's primal rebellion" and clarifies in connection with verse 21, "Paul does not argue on a case-by-case basis that every single individual has first known and then rejected God; instead, thinking in mythico-historical categories, he casts forth a blanket condemnation of humankind."⁴²² According to Hays, Paul is not describing "the individual life stories of pagan sinners", but giving "a global account of the universal fall of humanity".⁴²³ "The 'exchange' is not a matter of individual life decisions; rather, it is Paul's characterization of the fallen condition of the pagan world."⁴²⁴ The meaning must be that just like Paul is not describing the individual man's rebellion against God, but a universal fall, he is also not describing the individual man's replacement, but characterizing the

⁴²² Hays, *Vision*, p. 385.

⁴²³ Hays, *Vision*, p. 388.

⁴²⁴ Hays, *Vision*, p. 388, and Samuelsson, *Människan*, p. 92.

fallen condition of the pagan world. Three comments. Firstly, it is not clear to me what the relationship between the individual and the universal is like. Is the individual man born into this condition and participates in it? Is it credited to him? Or how does it work? As far as I can tell, Hays does not address this. Secondly, the "replacement" cannot be an individual or universal choice, since according to Hays, homosexual behavior is the consequence and manifestation of the wrath. And this is true, according to Hays' premises. Thirdly, Hays' interpretation stands and falls on whether or not Paul in verses 19-23+25 is thinking in "mythico-historical categories" and describing "humanity's primal rebellion". I doubt it. As I have shown in the analysis of verses 19-20, Paul is describing a continuous revelation to all people at all times. The time of the revelation shows this. It is from the creation of the world (verse 20). The locus of the revelation (the "works", verse 20) shows it. The works are accessible to everyone since creation. The communication of the revelation (verse 20) shows it. The language shows it. Paul uses plural forms in verse 19, at the end of verse 20, and in verse 21a. When the revelation is universal and individual both in its objective form ("the works") and in its subjective appropriation (the knowledge, v. 21), the precondition of describing the replacement in verses 26-27 as a characterization of the condition in the fallen pagan world will not suffice. Paul is not writing in "mythico-historical" categories, but in "historical-individual" categories, for this revelation, the knowledge, and the refusal takes place in history, in each generation, and in each individual.⁴²⁵

4) This group of people replace a knowledge that did not lead to practice with a knowledge that does. Paul describes two parallel phenomena in the religious (verses 23+25) and the ethical (verses 26+27) sphere. The parallel is so striking that the only reasonable choice is to understand them as analogous. When we arrive at verses 26-27, we are carrying verses 23+25 in our baggage. It is therefore entirely in order to interpret "replace" in verse 26 in the light of "replace" in verses 23 and 25. What does this replacement mean on the concrete level? When we look at what they are replacing, it is clear in verse 21 that they are replacing a *knowledge* of God which did not lead to practice. The knowledge of God assumed the position in their cognition which was supposed to have determined their practice, but did not do so. So they are moving *away from* the knowledge of God. They do not lose it, but they remove themselves from it. When we look at what they replace

⁴²⁵ Schmidt's interpretation is similar to Hays', but there are differences. In verses 18-32 Paul describes "not individual actions but the *corporate* rebellion of humanity against God and the kinds of behavior that result". The word "exchange" "denote[s] the movement from worship of God to worship of images". He describes "the sweep of history". The word "exchange" is also found in verse 26: "The point is that same-sex relations are a *specific* falsification of right behavior (immorality), made possible by the *general* falsification of right thinking about God (idolatry)" (Schmidt, *Straight*, p. 78). Schmidt thinks that it is clear that Paul does not assume that every person has a heterosexual orientation, but "he explains that *created humanity* has a heterosexual orientation that has been corrupted by rebellion against God" (Schmidt, *Straight*, p. 83, and De Young, *Homosexuality*, pp. 156-157). Schmidt's interpretation is subject to objections number 1 and 3 which I raised against Hays.

the knowledge of God with, it is clear in verses 21-23 and 25 that they replace it with another knowledge which leads to practice. The idolatry-knowledge assumes the position in their cognition which determines their practice. So they move *to* a knowledge of idols, which leads to practice. So when Paul describes the parallel phenomenon in the sexual sphere (verses 26-27), it is to be understood in analogy with the replacement in verses 23+25. Nothing else will do. As an analogous phenomenon, the replacement in vers 26 means that these people replace a *knowledge* which did not lead to practice with another knowledge which leads to practice. The natural relation assume the position in their cognition which was supposed to have led to a certain practice, but are replaced by another knowledge ("unnatural relation"), which assumes the position that determines their practice. The analogy defines "the natural relation" as *knowledge*.⁴²⁶ The analogy further defines this knowledge as *revelation*. For even as the knowledge of God is communicated through God's revelation, the natural relation as knowledge is communicated through God's revelation. This is confirmed in verse 32. With the word "replace", the "natural relation" are qualified as knowledge and revelation.

Paul could have used several different verbs and wordings to express this replacement (cf. verse 27 ("abandon")). When he uses the very word "replace" in spite of the asymmetry in this replacement, a possible explanation of this is that Paul wants to stress the *teleological* intention of the knowledge of God. God reveals Himself as a demanding God. This is God's intention with the revelation. Man is therefore an existence under demand. This is a revelation-theological and a creation-theological truth.

The verb "to replace" is found in verses 23 and 25 in different forms, and as we have seen before, verse 25 stands as a reason for both verse 24 and verse 26. The verse therefore describes a common characteristic for the group of people that Paul describes in verse 24 and in verses 26-27. This characteristic is that this category replaced the truth, i.e. God, with a lie.⁴²⁷ The repetition of the verb and the nearly identical construction shows that there is a correspondance between man's sin in the religious sphere and his sin in the ethical sphere.⁴²⁸ I have previously argued that Paul is *not* describing the fall in Romans 1:18-32, but describing a continuous refusal of God based on the fall, for he presupposes that this category of people are in opposition to God. He describes that the refusal of God has consequences in the ethical sphere in that the refusal brings unrighteousness into man's life. This may be unrighteousness in the sexual area in general (v. 24) or in specific

⁴²⁶ Brooten, *Love*, p. 244, writes, "I believe that Paul used the word 'exchanged' to indicate that people knew the natural sexual order of the universe and left it behind." She does, however, not provide any reason for this.

⁴²⁷ This is then concretized in verse 25b.

⁴²⁸ I have previously touched on this fact and rejected the narrow causal relationship between idolatry and homosexual practice; I have furthermore rejected the notion of an "adequate repayment" in the sense of religious sin being punished in an adequate way in the ethical sphere.

(homosexual practice, vv. 26-27), or more generally (vv. 28-31). I have mentioned that in verse 18 Paul gives a summarizing characterization of this category of people, and both "ungodliness" and "unrighteousness" are a part of this characterization. Paul describes "ungodliness" primarily in verses 19-23, but not only there (cf. e.g. verses 25 and 32). Paul describes "unrighteousness" in verses 24-32. He exemplifies it in verse 24, in verses 26-27, and in verses 29-31. The wording in verse 26 shows that there is a correspondance with the sin in the religious sphere.⁴²⁹ Just like the refusal results in a replacement of the knowledge of God with idolatry in the religious sphere for everyone, the refusal of God results in a replacement of the knowledge of natural sexual relation with unnatural sexual relation for some.⁴³⁰

3.6.7. Lesbian practice (v. 26b)

Paul writes about women who have engaged themselves in lesbian practice, and we have seen, that these women replace the *knowledge* of the natural relation. But what does "natural relations" refer to? I have presupposed that Paul is describing lesbian practice in verse 26b.⁴³¹ This is clear because of verse 27.⁴³² Verse 26b and verse 27 are correlative (cf. τε ... τε); they correspond partially with each other in content (cf. ὁμοίως), and the same term is employed in both verses (τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν). All of this shows that verse 26b describes the same sexual relationship among women as verse 27 describes among men. On the basis of verse 27, τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν can be supplemented with τοῦ ἀρσένου. The natural sexual relation of the woman is with the man, and that against nature is with another woman.⁴³³

3.6.8. The natural relation (v. 26b)

⁴²⁹ Thus Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 125.

⁴³⁰ This is not a case of "adequate repayment" as the concept of retaliation is not in harmony with the form of the punishment as abandonment. Nor is there a correspondance between sin in the religious sphere and punishment in the sexual sphere, since the punishment corresponds with the sin in the sexual sphere and only consists in an abandonment to an already existing replacement of the natural with the unnatural. It is also not a case of the homosexual practice being both a testimony of and an illustration of the religious rebellion against God (thus Hays, *Vision*, pp. 386-387).

⁴³¹ Miller, *Practices*, p. 1, thinks that Paul is describing unnatural heterosexual intercourse in verse 26: women having noncoital intercourse with men. Miller, *Practices*, p. 3, is unfair in his criticism when he writes, "However to read the similar χρῆσις as female and male homosexuality is to presuppose a single common category for homosexuality in the mind of Paul ...". But it is not χρῆσις in itself that refers to female or male homosexuality or both, but it is the combination with τῆς θηλείας in verse 27 that shows that these "relations" in verses 26 and 27 refer to female and male homosexual practice.

⁴³² Michel, *Römer*, p. 105, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 125.

⁴³³ This is the classical interpretation; it is found, among others, in Meyer, *Römerbrevet*, p. 50, Godet, *Römerne*, p. 191, Weiss, *Römer*, p. 88, Zahn, *Römer*, p. 101, Lenski, *Romans*, p. 113, Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 68, Moe, *Römerne*, p. 84, Michel, *Römer*, p. 105, Althaus, *Römer*, p. 19, Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 50, Murray, *Romans*, p. 47, Barrett, *Romans*, p. 39, Strecker, *Homosexualität*, p. 133, Osten-Sacken, *Evangelium*, p. 34, Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 44, Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 125, Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 109, Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 62, Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 64, Moxnes, *Hedningenes*, p. 12, Moo, *Romans*, p. 114, and Brooten, *Love*, pp. 249-250.

In verse 26b, Paul writes that some women replace the knowledge of the natural relation. We saw that the natural relations are that of women with men. "Relation" (χρησιν) means sexual relation.⁴³⁴ It is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. We will supplement τήν φυσικὴν χρησιν with "with man" (τοῦ ἀρσένου) because of verse 27 which describes a similar practice among men. But what does τήν φυσικὴν χρησιν and τὴν παρὰ φύσιν mean? It is clear in the context that the natural relation *refer* to the sexual relation of a woman with a man, and that "the unnatural" ("that against nature") *refer* to the sexual relation of a woman with a woman. But the question is: Why is the one called natural, and the other unnatural? What I am asking is: By what parameter is something deemed natural or unnatural? In order to answer this, we will have to make a rather long journey. First, I will look at some texts from Second temple Judaism in order to shed light on how homosexual practice was regarded, and, if possible, why Paul expresses himself the way he does and argues the way he does. Second, I will give a survey of the interpretation of "natural" and "nature" in Romans 1:26-27, and third, I will look at the use of the word "nature" in Paul. Only then will I analyze "natural" and "nature" in verses 26-27.

a) Second Temple Judaism

In the Old Testament we find an unequivocal condemnation of homosexual practice. This is clearly expressed in the law of holiness in Leviticus 18:22. This unequivocal condemnation works into Second Temple Judaism where we also find an unequivocal condemnation of homosexual practice.⁴³⁵ As examples, we can mention the Letter of Aristeas 152, which describes a sexual defilement:

*For most other people defile themselves,
giving themselves over to one another and consummating great unrighteousness,
and countries and entire cities pride themselves in these vices.
For not only do they seduce the men,
but they also defile mothers and even daughters.*

In the Sibylline Oracles, we see a judgment on homosexual practice in several places. In III.185, it says as an example of profligacy,

*man will have relations with man,
and boys they will send to the houses of depravity.*

In Sib.Or. III.594-595, it says,

Far more than other people they guard the chastity of the marriage bed,

⁴³⁴ Thus Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 44, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 125.

⁴³⁵ See Gagnon, *Bible*, pp. 159-183. Surveys are found, among others, in Scroggs, *Homosexuality*, pp. 66-98, Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, pp. 89-102, and DeYoung, *Homosexuality*, pp. 23-136.

they do not unchastely seek relations with boys.

In Sib.Or. V, relations with boys or lawless lust for boys are mentioned in 166, 387, and 430. In Wisdom 14:26, "unnatural sexual relations", which most probably refer to homosexual practice, is mentioned.

In the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, we encounter a condemnation of homosexual practice in several places. TestLevi 17:11 speaks of "such who abuse boys and animals". In TestNaf 3:4 there is a warning against becoming like Sodom: "lest the same thing happen to you as to Sodom who changed their natural destiny". In TestBenj 9:1 there is a warning against "the Sodomites' sin of immorality". Finally there are Philo and Josephus who are particularly interesting because the subject is more elaborately treated in their writings (especially those of Philo), and because they use the words "nature" (φύσις), "according to nature" (κατὰ φύσιν), and "against nature" (παρὰ φύσιν) in connection with homosexual practice.

In the treatise "On Abraham" 135-137, Philo addresses homosexual relationships. He writes of Sodom who made themselves free from "the law of nature" (τὸν τῆς φύσεως νόμον), and as one of several examples Philo mentions "forbidden forms of intercourse"⁴³⁶, and as examples of forbidden intercourse he mentions breaking into another's marriage, and homosexual practice: "men mounted males, the active ones not respecting their common nature with the passive ones". Here Philo mentions one of the reasons why homosexual practice is a breach of "the law of nature": It is a breach of the nature of man, because the man is the active party, and the woman the passive party. But in a homosexual practice the passive party breaks his role. According to Philo, men have a common nature (τὴν κοινήν φύσιν), and it manifests itself in the man being active. Philo writes of how men were accustomed to subordinating themselves to the female things so that they were smitten with "female disease", and they were feminized and became effeminate. In what follows, Philo mentions another reason to reject homosexual practice. He writes (137) how God in His compassion as Savior and Lover of humankind "made greater the unions of men and women (which are) according to nature, which were made in order to conceive children". The sexual union of man and woman is "according to nature"(κατὰ φύσιν), and the aim of the union is to conceive children. The "natural" sexual relationship, then, refers to a relationship between a man and a woman. Here Philo states one of the reasons why sexual relations between a man and a woman are "according to nature": The homosexual relationship is unnatural because it is barren. In this text, homosexual practice is against the law of nature which corresponds to the will of God. This is clear in that God punishes Sodom for its homosexual practice.

⁴³⁶ Quotes are from the Loeb edition.

In "Special Laws", Philo speaks several times of homosexuality. In I.325 he writes about keeping all the unworthy away from the holy congregation "starting with men-women (ἀνδρογύνων) who are infected with the female disease, and who, debasing the sterling coin of nature, force their way into the passions and outward forms of debauched women". Here once again Philo focuses on homosexuality breaking man's nature. The man becomes a "man-woman", infected with "female disease", and involved in female "passions and outward forms". Man is feminized and becomes effeminate. In "Special Laws" II.50, we encounter the same thing. Here Philo writes of those who misuse their sexual organs to unlawful passions and forms of intercourse. Not only do they break into others' marriages, "but even plays the pederast and forces the male type of nature to debase and convert itself into the feminine form". The passive party is forced to assume a female form. This a a breach on man's nature.

In "Special Laws" III.37-40, Philo again describes homosexual practice. He speaks of "pederasty" as an evil and writes of the active and passive parties. He further characterizes the passive party "who habituate themselves to endure the disease of effemination, let both body and soul run to waste, and leave no member of their male sex-nature to smoulder". He describes how they adorn themselves with hairdos, and how they paint, make up, and perfume themselves. "In fact the transformation of the male nature (τὴν ἄρρενα φύσιν) to the female is practised by them as an art and does not raise a blush". These people are rightly judged as worthy to die by those who obey the law which commands that the man-woman "who debases the sterling coin of nature" is to die without hesitation. But the active party, the pederast, is also to die because "he pursues an unnatural pleasure (τὴν παρὰ φύσιν ἡδονήν)" and does his best to leave cities desolate and empty "by destroying the means of procreation". He becomes a preacher and teacher of the worst vices which are "unmanliness" (ἀνανδρία) and "effeminacy" (μαλακία). He is like a bad farmer who lets the fertile soil lie fallow so that it bears no fruit, instead working day and night in a field from which no fruit can be expected. According to Philo, pederasty is "unnatural" as far as the passive party is concerned because he breaks with his male nature (and here Philo uses the word φύσις) and becomes feminized. The passive party is infected with the female disease, "the male sex" disappears, the male nature is changed into a female one. He becomes a man-woman. As a penalty of this, he is to die. But the active party is also to die. His lust is "unnatural" because he wastes his semen. He will have no offspring. Philo illustrates this with the simile of a field. The active party lets the fertile field, that is, the womb of the woman, lie fallow, not sowing his semen where it may "sprout".

In "On the Contemplative Life" 59-62, we find much of the same as in "Special Laws" III.37-

40. Philo comments on Plato's "Symposium" and writes of the passive party that on the one side he is robbed of his manhood, and on the other side he contracts the female disease. He becomes a "man-woman". And of the active party Philo writes that he is ruined as far as body, soul, and possessions are concerned because of the consuming passion for the object of his desire – a boy. And he writes of depopulation, sterility, and infertility because he does not sow his semen in the fertile soil but in the place where nothing grows.

In Josephus' writings we also hear a harsh judgment on homosexual practice. In "Against Apion" 2.199, Josephus writes that the law recognizes only one union which is in accordance with nature (κατὰ φύσιν), namely the union with a woman, and only if it happens with the purpose of having children. In the same treatise (2.273-275), Josephus writes of sexual relations with men which are against nature (παρὰ φύσιν), and he accuses the Greeks of describing homosexual relationships among gods as an excuse for their lusts which are against nature (παρὰ φύσιν).

b) Survey of interpretations

In this section I will give a survey of characteristic interpretations of "natural" and of "nature" in Romans 1:26-27.

a) "Nature" stands for a "common-sense observation" and becomes something like an ethical-social principle.⁴³⁷

b) "Nature" is a convention. Moxnes defines nature as "the given order", which is translated into the concept "convention". "The reason why this desire was "dishonoring" was that it was a breach on *the pattern of sex roles*".⁴³⁸ Brooten defines "nature" partly as created order, and partly as "gendered human nature",⁴³⁹ and in homosexual practice the two sexes break their roles.

c) "Nature" is an unclear concept. Wengst understands "nature" as something like the biology of people and animals. For him, the concept of "nature" is ambiguous, and it tends to merge with that of "convention".⁴⁴⁰

d) Boswell defines "nature" as "character", "disposition",⁴⁴¹ and "nature" then becomes the same as sexual orientation or disposition.

e) "Nature" refers to "the continuity of an organism with its past".⁴⁴²

f) "Nature" "refers to what is the constitution of man, his being, as derived from the Creator (Genesis 1-2)."⁴⁴³

⁴³⁷ Scroggs, *Homosexuality*, pp. 117+114.

⁴³⁸ Moxnes, *Hedningenes*, p. 15 (my translation). See also Moxnes, *Honor*, pp. 212-214.

⁴³⁹ Brooten, *Love*, p. 280.

⁴⁴⁰ Wengst, *Paulus*, p. 75.

⁴⁴¹ Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 110-112.

⁴⁴² Countryman, *Dirt*, p. 114.

⁴⁴³ DeYoung, *Meaning*, p. 439. Murray, *Romans*, pp. 47-48 probably belongs in this category; he writes, "...the

g) "The natural" and "nature" is the order of nature according to Köster.⁴⁴⁴ A classical statement of this interpretation is found in Cranfield.⁴⁴⁵ "By φυσικός (here used to describe that which is κατὰ φύσιν) and παρὰ φύσιν Paul clearly means 'in accordance with the intention of the Creator' and 'contrary to the intention of the Creator', respectively."⁴⁴⁶

c) "Nature" in Paul

Paul uses φύσις 11 times and the adjective φυσικός twice. In this survey I shall discount the appearances in Romans 1:26-27. Paul uses φύσις in Romans 2:14. This is one of the most vexed examples in Paul. I shall return to the interpretation in my discussion of Romans 2:12-16 and only give a brief sketch at this point. "Nature" is a summarizing expression for "the law in man's nature" or "the requirements of the law written on their hearts".

In Romans 2:27, Paul mentions "the uncircumcized by nature" who keeps the law and who will condemn the one who is a law-breaker διὰ γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς. διὰ γράμματος stands as a contrast to ἐκ φύσεως.⁴⁴⁷ This means that "by nature" cannot be rendered as "natural", i.e. physical uncircumcision.⁴⁴⁸ This is further strengthened by the fact that the contrast disappears altogether if "by nature" is understood as "physically", because in his natural condition, the Jew, too, is uncircumcized.⁴⁴⁹ The statement of the contrast shows that "by nature" can also not be rendered as "by essence" to the effect that Paul is describing Gentiles who are in their essence and true nature Gentiles.⁴⁵⁰ Köster defines "nature" as "essence": "ἡ ἐκ φύσεως ἀκροβυστία in R. 2:27 refers to the Gentiles who "essentially", "in their true nature", are the foreskin".⁴⁵¹ In the text, ἐκ φύσεως qualifies the term ἀκροβυστία. Because of this contrast between "by nature" and "under letter", which refers to the Mosaic Law, "by nature" means by birth or by origin and refers to biological descent.⁴⁵² By virtue of his birth, the Jew is descended from Abraham and has access to the Mosaic Law and the circumcision. The Gentile is not descended from Abraham and therefore does not know the Mosaic Law and the circumcision.

In Romans 11:21+24, Paul uses the word "nature" four times. In verse 21, Paul writes of God

honourableness of the heterosexual act is implied and its propriety is grounded in the natural constitution established by God. The offence of homosexuality is the abandonment of the divinely constituted order in reference to sex."

⁴⁴⁴ Köster, φύσις, *TWNT IX*, p. 267.

⁴⁴⁵ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 125, and Bell, *No*, p. 56.

⁴⁴⁶ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 126, Bell, *No*, p. 56. Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 50, writes of created order; Strecker, *Homosexualität*, p. 135, defines "das 'Natürliche' als die gottgewollte Grundlage menschlichen Verhaltens". Hays, *Vision*, p. 387, and Gagnon, *Bible*, p. 254, Francke, *Bibeln*, p. 144, Moo, *Romans*, p. 115, and Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 94.

⁴⁴⁷ Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 69.

⁴⁴⁸ Michel, *Römer*, pp. 127+134, uses the words "leiblich" and "natürlichen".

⁴⁴⁹ See Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 174, note 2.

⁴⁵⁰ Contra Köster, φύσις, *TWNT IX*, p. 265.

⁴⁵¹ Köster, φύσις, *TWNT IX*, p. 265. Translation from *TDNT IX*, p.272.

⁴⁵² Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 174, Moo, *Romans*, p. 174, note 25, and Gagnon, *Bible*, p. 371.

who did not spare τῶν κατὰ φύσιν κλάδων. κατὰ φύσιν functions as an adjective, and the expression can be rendered as "the natural branches". The context shows that the expression "the natural branches" refers to the branches which grow naturally on the cultivated olive tree,⁴⁵³ or which naturally belong to this tree.⁴⁵⁴ Paul is referring to Jews. In verse 24, Paul uses the word "nature" three times. In figurative language, Paul addresses a fictive Gentile believer and writes, "εἰ γὰρ σὺ ἐκ τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἐξεκόπης ἀγριελαίου." The linguistically simplest way to render this is: "When you, who have been cut off from the by nature wild olive tree". κατὰ φύσιν qualifies ἀγριελαίου.⁴⁵⁵ "Nature", then, means "sort". Although it makes the statement tautological, it is the simplest and best interpretation.⁴⁵⁶ The alternative interpretation is too linguistically complicated. Here, κατὰ φύσιν describes the relationship of the branch to the wild olive tree. It can be rendered in this way: "When you have been cut off from the wild olive tree to which you belong by nature". κατὰ φύσιν, then, refers to "a branch", in this context referring to a Gentile Christian, who has "according to his sort" been growing on the wild olive tree, and who belongs to it by nature.⁴⁵⁷

In verse 24b Paul is still addressing the Gentile Christian in figurative language, writing, "and you who have against nature been grafted into the cultivated olive tree". As a contrast to κατὰ φύσιν, παρὰ φύσιν means "against nature". παρὰ φύσιν qualifies ἐνεκεντρίσθης and characterizes the ingrafting as being against nature. What does φύσις mean? Köster defines φύσις in this way: "φύσις is that which has grown "naturally" and with no artificial intervention."⁴⁵⁸ κατὰ φύσιν, then, is that which has grown naturally, and παρὰ φύσιν is that which has grown by artificial intervention, namely ingrafting. Cranfield writes in the context of verse 24 of the Gentile Christian that he has been cut off from the wild olive tree to which he "by nature" belongs and grafted into a cultivated tree to which he by nature does not belong.⁴⁵⁹ It is, however, not clear whether this is simply a description of the relationships of the branches to the different trees, "nature" remaining undefined, or if it is to be understood as a definition of "nature". κατὰ φύσιν is the naturally belonging, and παρὰ φύσιν is that which does not naturally belong. This means that this branch from the wild olive tree (i.e. the Gentile Christian) has been ingrafted into the cultivated olive tree

⁴⁵³ Köster, φύσις, *TWNT IX*, p. 265, Michel, *Römer*, p. 351, and Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 247.

⁴⁵⁴ Harder, Nature, *NIDNTT II*, p. 660.

⁴⁵⁵ Köster, φύσις, *TWNT IX*, p. 265, and Bauer col. 1733; Bauer uses the word "Naturanlage" and the characterization "durch Abstammung erwobene Naturanlage".

⁴⁵⁶ See the criticism of this interpretation in Zahn, *Römer*, p. 520, note 61, Moe, *Romerne*, p. 460, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 571.

⁴⁵⁷ Moe, *Romerne*, p. 460.

⁴⁵⁸ Köster, φύσις, *TWNT IX*, p. 265; the definition covers verses 21 and 24. Translation from *TDNT IX*, p. 271. The same interpretation is found in Gagnon, *Bible*, p. 372, who writes that "nature" "has to do ... with the organic unity of branches to the tree from which they originally sprouted. What is 'beyond' or 'contrary to' nature is the circumvention of natural processes of growth with artificial, human intervention."

⁴⁵⁹ Cranfield, *Romans I*, pp. 571-572. Similarly in Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 248, and Moo, *Romans*, p. 708.

to which he by nature does not belong. As I have mentioned, *παρὰ φύσιν* qualifies the verb *ἐνεκεντρίσθης*, and since the verb already marks the "unnatural", namely that the branch is not that which has naturally grown or naturally belongs to the tree, *παρὰ φύσιν* taken in this sense becomes superfluous and tautological. The context also shows us that the "unnatural" is not the ingrafting itself, for both wild and cultivated olive branches are ingrafted. That which is unnatural is that a branch of another sort is ingrafted into the tree.⁴⁶⁰ Because of this, and because of verse 24c, it is better to choose another understanding of "nature". Nature is "sort", and Paul writes that the branch, against its sort, has been ingrafted into the cultivated olive tree. On the real level, this corresponds to a Gentile Christian against his descent and family being admitted into the family of Abraham to which the promises are linked.

In verse 24c, Paul draws a conclusion: "How much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree". *οἱ κατὰ φύσιν* qualifies *οὔτοι*, and the natural branches are the branches which have been growing on the cultivated olive tree. Although they have been cut off from the cultivated olive tree, it is still their own tree. This shows that "nature" has to do with sort. The natural branches are cultivated olive branches according to their sort, and therefore they remain cultivated branches even after they have been cut off. The argument that the natural branches will *much more readily* be ingrafted into their own olive tree strengthens the focus on *φύσις* as sort, because that which makes it "much more readily" is precisely the fact that these branches are of the same species as the cultivated olive tree.

In Galatians 2:15, Paul writes that we (= Paul, Peter, and other Jewish Christians) are by nature Jews and not sinners of the Gentiles. There is a clear contrast between *φύσει* and *ἐξ ἔθνων*, and this contrast tells us that *φύσει* means "by birth" or "by origin". So "we" are Jews by birth, in contrast to sinners, who are of the Gentiles. That *φύσει* means "by birth" or "by origin" and has to do with ethnicity and descent is generally recognized.⁴⁶¹

In Galatians 4:8, Paul writes that the Galatians were formerly slaves to those who by nature are not gods. *τοῖς φύσει μὴ οὖσιν θεοῖς* stands as a contrast to God, whom they did formerly not know existentially. Because of this contrast to God who is the only God (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:6), *φύσει* means "by essence".⁴⁶² These idols to whom the Galatians were slaves, are not real gods.

⁴⁶⁰ Cranfield, *Romans I*, pp. 571-572.

⁴⁶¹ I randomly mention Zahn, *Galater*, p. 122, Burton, *Galatians*, p. 199, Frøvig, *Galaterbrevet*, p. 98, Schlier, *Galater*, p. 88, Betz, *Galatians*, p. 115, Dunn, *Galatians*, p. 135, Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 137, Fung, *Galatians*, p. 113, and Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 83. Köster, *φύσις*, *TWNT IX*, p. 265, defines "nature" as "der ursprünglichen Herkunft nach, die unser Wesen bestimmt".

⁴⁶² Thus Köster, *φύσις*, *TWNT IX*, p. 266; the commentaries use the word "essence" or "in reality" (thus Zahn, *Galater*, p. 209, Burton, *Galatians*, p. 227, Frøvig, *Galaterbrevet*, p. 227, Schlier, *Galater*, p. 201, Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, p. 291, Dunn, *Galatians*, p. 224, Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 201, Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 179, and cf. Gagnon, *Bible*, p.

They lack ontological reality as gods. Paul does not deny their existence (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:4-5), but he denies their existence and reality as gods.

In Ephesians 2:3, Paul writes of Jewish Christians that they were by nature children of wrath. Here, φύσει may have the meaning "by essence"⁴⁶³, or more probably "by birth".⁴⁶⁴ If the latter is the case, then Paul is stressing that the Jewish Christians – like the others – were children of wrath from their birth. This interpretation then implies a kind of original sin.

Paul's use of φύσις in Romans 2:27; Romans 11:21+24; Galatians 2:15; Galatians 4:8; and Ephesians 2:3 is relatively uncomplicated. However, when we approach 1 Corinthians 11:14 and Romans 2:14, they are much more vexed. And when it comes to Romans 1:26-27, these verses have moved from relative obscurity and into the very eye of the storm. This has happened from about 1980 and onward. We shall look at 1 Corinthians 11:14. First, I shall mention some characteristic interpretations of φύσις, and then I shall analyze the use of φύσις in the context (1 Corinthians 11:2-16). φύσις has been interpreted in the following characteristic ways:

1) φύσις is "convention" or "culture"; Paul is thinking of a cultural-social system.⁴⁶⁵ I find hardly any substantiation for this interpretation.⁴⁶⁶

2) φύσις is "the order of nature" or a created order.

3) φύσις is "natural law", i.e. commandments which God has written on human hearts (cf. Romans 2:15), and which are immediately knowable by man.

In verse 13, Paul appeals to the Corinthians' own judgment. The correlation between verses 13 and 14 shows that the norm by which they are to evaluate is what nature teaches them.⁴⁶⁷ "You" in verse 13a is identified as the "you" that are taught by nature itself (verse 13b). The identification of their judgment and the teaching of nature is also confirmed by the striking correspondance in wording:

"judge in yourselves" (verse 13a)

"nature itself teaches you" (verse 14a)

370, who writes that "by nature" means "in their created essence, their natural essence as established by the Creator".

⁴⁶³ Köster, φύσις, *TWNT IX*, p. 268, and Schlier, *Epheser*, p. 107.

⁴⁶⁴ Harder, 'Nature', *NIDNTT II*, p. 660, Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 99, and O'Brien, *Ephesians*, p. 162.

⁴⁶⁵ Fee, *I Corinthians*, p. 527, Wolff, *I Korinther II*, p. 75, Thiselton, *I Corinthians*, p. 845, and Garland, *I Corinthians*, p. 530.

⁴⁶⁶ Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 110, note 63, admits that "nature" seems to have a moral meaning in addition to the nature of man itself, but it is dismissed with the following argument: "But it would be fatuous to image that 'nature' even in the most idealized sense would have an effect on the length of man's hair." Boswell thinks that "nature" has the meaning "custom, tradition or ethical heritage", and that Paul "fuses the concept of mores with that of innate character". Fee, *I Corinthians*, p. 527, writes to verse 14 that nature teaches that it is a disgrace for a man to have long hair: "This seems to be clear evidence that by 'nature' Paul meant the natural feelings of their contemporary culture." This seems to be the argument!

⁴⁶⁷ Meyer, *I Korinther*, p. 307, Godet, *I Korinthierne II*, p. 119, and Fee, *I Corinthians*, p. 525.

In both cases, Paul stresses that it is they themselves, without an external influence, that judge, and that it is nature itself, without an external influence, that teaches. "Judge in yourselves" means judge as nature teaches you. Because of the connection with nature, which teaches them, it is better to take ἐν ὑμῖν individualistically of an inner judgment.⁴⁶⁸ αὐτοῖς qualifies ὑμῖν and stresses that it is in themselves that they are to evaluate. With the stressed "selves", a contrast arises to that outside of themselves. They are to evaluate without any external influence. Because of this contrast it is improbable that "nature" in verse 14 means "custom" or "convention". In verse 13b Paul writes what it is that they are to evaluate: Is it fitting for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? The question is to be answered with a no. In the context, verse 13b is a theologically grounded statement. It is founded on a head-structure (verse 3) and on the basis of a created order (verses 8-9). That which is fitting (πρέπον) is therefore not culture, aesthetics, convention, custom and practice. That which is fitting is God's order.

In verses 14-15a, Paul asks another question, and this time the answer is supposed to be affirmative. And in verse 15b he gives a reason. The structure can help to make clear the process of the argument and shed light on the interpretation:

13a A Judge in yourselves:

13b B Is it fitting for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?

14a A Does not nature itself teach you

14b B that is a disgrace for a man to have long hair,

15a but it is a glory for a woman to have long hair?

15b C For the long hair is given to her instead of/as a veil

The structure shows that verses 13a and 14a correspond with one another. Verse 14a is an explication of verse 13a, while at the same time it introduces an element that provides a reason. It provides the reason why Paul can appeal to the judgment of the Corinthians themselves. Verse 13b and verses 14b-15a correspond with one another. Verses 14b-15a are an explication of verse 13b. That which is fitting is that which is a glory, and the uncovered is with short hair.

In the second question, Paul speaks of "nature".⁴⁶⁹ The second question functions as the answer to the question in verse 13. "Itself" stresses that it is nature with no external influence that teaches them.⁴⁷⁰ Nature has a didactical function, and "you" is individualizing: each one of you.

⁴⁶⁸ ἐν ὑμῖν may mean "in you", "by you", "on you" or "among you". It makes no difference to the meaning which one of the first three possibilities is chosen. However, if the last possibility is chosen, the meaning is that the congregation have a plenary discussion and evaluate. Schrage, *I Korinther II*, p. 520, thinks that it means "among you", and so does Thiselton, *I Corinthians*, p. 843, who writes of "peer group pressure".

⁴⁶⁹ The question is introduced by οὐδὲ ("does not also") where "also" has an expanding force in relation to the first two arguments (verses 3-6 and 7-10).

⁴⁷⁰ Meyer, *I Korinther*, p. 307.

a) The phrase "nature itself" and the parallel "judge in yourselves" points to nature being a judge inside of them and suggests that Paul is thinking of a teaching inside of them. This speaks against the theory that external orders in nature and creation or norms of society are what is meant.

b) "Is it fitting for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?" is a theologically grounded statement. The Corinthians are to make a judgment concerning this question. The teaching of nature is the norm, and this points unequivocally to God as the source of the teaching since Paul does not let theologically grounded statements be evaluated by human reason, by culture, or by the norms of society.

c) The parallel example in 1 Corinthians 10:15 confirms this. Paul appeals to the Corinthians' judgment. Paul encourages those who have knowledge to judge. He is thinking of their knowledge of the Lord's Supper and of the Israelite sacrificial meal, and on the basis of that knowledge, Paul appeals to their judgment. The Corinthians, then, are to make a judgment on the basis of the apostolic teaching.⁴⁷¹

d) Paul uses φύσις in this sense in Romans 1:26 and 2:14.

e) It fits the context: What nature teaches, corresponds with the order of salvation (v. 3) and the created order (vv. 8-9).

The use of "nature" in this place points to "nature" bearing the meaning of God's commandments written on the hearts of men. In verses 14b-15a, Paul states what φύσις teaches us: It is a disgrace for a man to have long hair, but it is a glory for a woman to have long hair. The reason that Paul provides for the latter statement is that the long hair is given to the woman ἀντὶ περιβολαίου. The meaning of this is debated, but I understand it as *instead of* a veil, and that throughout the text Paul has been writing of long and short hair.

3.6.9. "Nature" and "natural" in verses 26-27

We have been on a rather long journey. We have seen that "nature" is used in connection with homosexual practice, and that "according to nature" refers to heterosexual relationships, whereas "against nature" refers to homosexual relationships in Philo and Josephus.⁴⁷² We have looked at the many different interpretations of "natural" and "nature" in verses 26-27, and finally we have considered the use of the word "nature" elsewhere in Paul. We shall now direct our attention towards Romans 1:26-27. In the context, it is given that the natural relation is between a man and a woman, and that against nature is between two people of the same sex. Here, Paul makes use of a well-known terminology. What we need to do now is to ask more exactly what "natural" and

⁴⁷¹ See Kjær, *Afguder*, pp. 99-100.

⁴⁷² The same usage of language is found in writers of Greco-Roman antiquity.

”nature” mean in verses 26-27. We will uncover the parameter(s) which Paul uses to discern whether something is natural or unnatural. The adjective φυσικός (verse 26) describes that which is in accordance with nature, and the opposite, as stated in the text, is against nature.

First, we shall look at the meaning of φύσις in the near context. The near context is verses 26-27, and here we find some factors which can help us pin down the meaning of the word.

a) Paul describes an abandonment to dishonoring passions, and in verses 26b-27abc we are given the second reason for this. The reason describes homosexual behavior between women (verse 26b) and between men (verse 27). The reason identifies the dishonoring passions as homosexual passions. These are against nature, and actions that are against nature are qualified as dishonoring actions. Natural relations are something positive; they are linked with honor. Sexual relations against nature are something negative; they are linked with dishonor.

b) The abandonment to dishonoring passions is a revelation of wrath. There are two reasons for this: refusal and idolatry described in verse 25, and homosexual practice described in verses 26b-27abc. Homosexual practice evokes God’s displeasure. Homosexual practice is a sin because sin is what evokes God’s wrath. Thus, homosexual practice is qualified as sin.

c) Homosexual practice is characterized as ”shamelessness”. To Paul, shame, shamelessness and dishonoring denote that which lies outside of God’s order, and honor is that which lies inside of God’s order. Shamelessness, then, is qualified as sin.⁴⁷³

d) Homosexual practice is characterized as ”delusion”. Since ”delusion” denotes a deviation from the truth, ”delusion” implies that homosexual practice is a breach of a revealed and known order. Homosexual practice is against God’s truth and order.

e) Homosexual practice is characterized as repayment. Homosexual practice, then, is the object of God’s punishment. It is against God’s will, and hence it is sin.

In the near context, the descriptive ”the natural relation” and ”against nature” carry a normative meaning. The natural relation is the ”right” relation; that is without dishonor, and that is according to God’s will. Relation that is against nature is the ”wrong” relation; that is linked with dishonor, and that is against God’s will, that is, sin. ”Nature”, then, is a normative concept for people’s behavior.

If we continue to pin down the concept ”nature” in verses 26-27 and take into account verses 18-32, once again we find some factors which can help us to discern the meaning of the word.

a) There is the header with the statement of the theme in verse 18. Here Paul describes two reasons for the revelation of God’s wrath: ungodliness and unrighteousness. Since the verse has an

⁴⁷³ Cf. to verse 27c.

interpretative function in the context, it is natural that ungodliness (ἀσέβειαν) refers to the refusal of God and the idolatry (verses 21-23, 25, and 28). In the same way it will be natural to take unrighteousness (ἀδικίαν) as referring to sexual impurity (verse 24), homosexual practice (verses 26-27), and the list of vices (verses 29-31). The frame of reference of ἀδικίαν is interhuman behavior (sexually and socially). ἀδικίαν has to do with ethics and refers to breaches of ethical norms. It is confirmed that ἀδικίαν refers to interhuman behavior in verse 29 where the term reappears and stands as a summarizing category that is exemplified in the following. ἀδικίαν is not purely ethical, since there is an active opposition to God built into it (see verse 18 and verses 31-32). So there is also a theological dimension in this concept.⁴⁷⁴ Homosexual desire and practice (verses 26-27), then, are characterized as "unrighteousness".

b) There is a clear correspondence between the exchange of the truth with the lie practiced by this category of people (verse 25) and the fact that their women replace the natural relation with that contrary to nature. As an analogous phenomenon the replacement means that "the natural relation" is a revelation from God and a God-given knowledge. For just like this category of people refuse the truth, which is what God has revealed about Himself through that which is created, through nature, and through history, and choose the lie, these people also refuse the relation that is according to nature, which is what God has revealed to them. The parallelism has bearing on our theology of revelation because God can only accuse and blaim these people for their exchange/abandonment of the natural relation if they know that this relation is natural and in accordance with God's will, just like Paul accuses and blaims these people for exchanging the truth for a lie because they know the truth. This is also confirmed in verse 32.

c) In the three parallel revelations of wrath, people are struck in their sin, be it sexual impurity, homosexual practice, or unrighteousness in general. Thus homosexual practice gains the same character of sin as sexual impurity and ethical unrighteousness in general. Hence, homosexual practice is sin just like the other kinds of sin (verse 24 and verses 28ff).

d) In verse 32, the various forms of sexual impurity, homosexual practice, and unrighteousness are characterized as actions which are punished by death according to God's righteous decree. They have knowledge of this righteous decree. The concept "righteous decree" qualifies "nature" as "law".

If we continue to pin down the concept of "nature" in verses 26-27 and draw into account the larger context (Romans 1:18-3:20), once again we find some factors which may help us to pin down

⁴⁷⁴ Here I use the word "theological" in a narrow sense of a relationship with God.

the meaning of the word. Paul operates with a natural law⁴⁷⁵ which he gradually unveils. He begins writing about "unrighteousness" (verse 18), he exemplifies this in verses 24-31, and he repeats it in verse 28. He sets this unrighteousness in a negative relationship to God: It is a means of oppressing the truth, and one cause of the revelation of God's wrath. In verse 32 he links "unrighteousness" with God's righteous decree and reveals that unrighteousness is punished with death. In Romans 2 Paul continues the gradual revelation of this unrighteousness. It is the object of God's judgment (Romans 2:2), it can be characterized as evil (2:9) and as transgression of God's law (2:12-16). In Romans 2:14-15 Paul reveals that all people have knowledge of God's law: God has written the requirements of the law on their hearts. And in Romans 3:9 Paul characterizes the unrighteousness as sin, and in 3:19-20 he describes the law as God's tool to unveil sin. In this larger context "the natural sexual relation" is defined as a relation in accordance with God's law, and the sexual relation that is against nature as a violation of God's law. And in Romans 2:14-15 Paul demonstrates that these people have knowledge of this law through its being written on their hearts. With "nature", Paul is thinking of natural law.

With this pinning down of "natural" and "unnatural" in verses 26-27, where "nature" is another word for God's law, revealed via the natural law, we can take a closer look at the survey of interpretations of "natural" and "unnatural" in verses 26-27. There are a number of interpretations that can be eliminated. "Nature" is not a common-sense-observation, convention i.e. the prevailing pattern of sex roles, an unclear or variable concept, a person's sexual orientation, or continuity with the past. Nor is "nature" a person's constitution, the order of nature, or created order. The last interpretation (order of nature or of creation) has long been the majority interpretation – and may still be! – and attempts have been made to justify it with three arguments.

The first argument is that Paul is dependent on Second Temple Judaism, or more specifically, Hellenistic Judaism. In Second Temple Judaism we find an unequivocal condemnation of homosexual practice, and writers like Philo and Josephus argue with the law of nature, with nature, and with homosexual practice being contrary to nature. Paul, then, is dependent on Hellenistic Judaism especially and repeats its views and wordings. This is not correct. None of the ideas that Hellenistic Judaism links with what is unnatural in homosexual practice are found in Paul. In Hellenistic Judaism, homosexual practice is unnatural because it hinders procreation. This argument is not found in Paul. In Hellenistic Judaism, homosexual practice is unnatural because it breaks with man's nature; he assumes the passive role and is feminized, and the active partner is accused because he encourages this feminization. We find nothing of this in Paul. In Hellenistic Judaism,

⁴⁷⁵ I understand "natural law" as a law which God communicates to all people independently of external media such as writing and word.

homosexual practice is unnatural because the passion is uncontrollable, but this argument is also not found in Paul. And finally we may encounter the argument that homosexual practice is unnatural because it is not found in the animal world. But this argument is not found in Paul. The ideas are vastly different. The parameters are different. Therefore it is not fair to claim that Paul is simply following the ideas of his time and linking to them.

The other argument that "nature" refers to created order is that the creation account in Genesis 1 is the background for the chain of reasoning in Romans 1:26-27. The idea of creation spreads throughout the text:

the creation of the world (verse 20)

his actions/works (verse 20)

likeness of an image (verse 23 refers to Genesis 1:26)

birds and animals and reptiles (verse 23 refers to Genesis 1:26)

Creator, created things (verse 25)

women, men (verses 26-27 refer to Genesis 1:27)

There are details that may be subject to discussion. I do not think that verse 23 is a partial quote from Genesis 1:26. Also, I do not think that "likeness of an image" (verse 23) alludes to Genesis 1:26 where image (εἰκόνα) and likeness (ὁμοίωσιν) are used of the image of God; in verse 23, "likeness of an image" refers to idols. The special greek words for "woman" and "man" that are used in Romans 1:26-27 are found in Genesis 1:27 (LXX) and are probably a deliberate allusion to this scripture. There is, then, an allusion to Genesis 1, and there is the idea of creation which is clearly expressed in Romans 1:18-25. The gender differentiation in Genesis 1-3 is related to the sexual union of man and woman with a view to their task of being fruitful and procreating. The gender differentiation in Romans 1:26-27 is related to the active negation of the task given in creation.⁴⁷⁶ On that basis, it is obvious that "nature" is to be understood as creation or something created and to understand the order in nature as a created order.⁴⁷⁷ Paul is thinking within an Old Testament framework. It is correct that the relationship between Creator and creation runs through the text, and that it is a fair interpretation that man relates to the way the Creator has ordered things – albeit in a negative way by breaking His orderings. On that background, it is fair to understand "natural" as a created order and "unnatural" as a breach of this order. There is probably an allusion to Genesis 1:26-27, but this foundation is too slender to be used as the basis for a major interpretation. The slender foundation is, however, supported by other texts in Paul which show that he understands the creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 as being normative for what a marriage is,

⁴⁷⁶ Samuelsson, *Människan*, pp. 91-92.

⁴⁷⁷ Samuelsson, *Människan*, pp. 90-92.

and for where sexual relations are legitimate and natural.

A third argument in favor of the view that Paul is describing a created order is found in Gagnon. He explains his interpretation in this way: For Paul it is merely a matter of "commonsense observation" of the human anatomy and reproductive ability. Here he uses the parallelism between the relationship to idolatry and to "same-sex intercourse". God's will when it comes to the worship of idols is visible and clear. A visual perception of God's material creation should lead to a mental perception of God's nature and will. In the same way, "nature" is primarily a matter of the visual perception of the man-woman complementarity. This is a case of something material and visible that indicates that God's intentions are "manifest in nature". So if one disregards Leviticus and asks for signs in nature which might help one to uncover the will of God in terms of sexuality, human anatomy and procreative ability is the most clear and unequivocal indication of the divine intention.⁴⁷⁸ Gagnon links to Romans 1:20 and writes that just like mankind may know God by observing His works, mankind may, by observing man, God's work, know what is natural. It is a matter of observation of human anatomy. I do not think that such a parallel is to be found. When it comes to the natural revelation of God, the locus of revelation is God's works in creation, in nature, and in history. When it comes to the content of the natural revelation, it is summarized in the words that God reveals His "invisible character", which are defined as "eternal power" and "divine nature" (verse 20). This identification of content does not contain an ethical element apart from the general fact that God demands man's honor and thanksgiving. On the basis of this identification of content, and on the basis of Romans 2:14-15, which shows that the natural revelation of God's law has another locus, namely the human heart, it is better to keep the two revelations separate in terms of locus and communication. I find traces of a created order in the text, but this created order is revealed to man through the natural law and through Scripture (Genesis 1-2).

Paul uses and argues on the basis of a natural law in Romans 1:18-2:16. A natural-law understanding runs through the text from beginning to end. Paul links to it already at the mention of "unrighteousness" in 1:18. He follows up at the mention of the triple revelation of wrath, which presupposes a knowledge of God's law. He makes it clear by mentioning God's well-known righteous decree (1:32). It appears at the mention of the eschatological judgment: everybody knows the truth (2:8), and in 2:14-16, Paul reaches the climax in his unveiling of the natural law. He reveals the locus and the scope of the revelation. Therefore it is odd that interpreters can overlook natural law in the text, or deny its existence for theological reasons. This goes for Romans 1:18-32 as well as Romans 2:1-16. When Boswell writes⁴⁷⁹ that it is anachronistic to read a "natural law"

⁴⁷⁸ Gagnon, *Bible*, pp. 254-264.

⁴⁷⁹ Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 100.

into Paul's words, and that the concept of "natural law" was not fully developed until more than a thousand years later, it is simply not correct. A clear and precise revelation of natural law is found in the text. This goes for 1:18-32 as well as 2:1-16.

For Paul it is a main point that the natural law and the special law are identical in their content. The special law is God's law. It was originally revealed via Moses to Israel. It has in general been abrogated. However, there is a core which has been confirmed, and which may be summarized in the commandment to love (Romans 13:8-10). It is this core that is identical with the natural law. But since the natural law and the confirmed part of the special law are identical in content, "nature" as God's law is also found in the Mosaic law. What may be thought about are two elements which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For Paul, Genesis 2:24 is a normative expression of what marriage is, and where sexual relations belong (see 1 Corinthians 7; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; and 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).⁴⁸⁰ The "natural", then, is the lifelong marriage between one man and one woman, and the unnatural is whatever breaks that, be it adultery or homosexual practice in all its forms as promiscuity or as lifelong relationships. The condemnation of homosexual practice found in the law of holiness may also be in mind. Leviticus 18:22. The condemnation of homosexual practice found in the law of holiness is a consequence of the normative understanding of marriage. When marriage according to God's will is a lifelong relationship between one man and one woman, and when sexuality belongs in this relationship, all other forms of "marriage" and all other forms of sexual practice become sinful. So we do not need to keep the two possibilities separate.

3.6.10. Against nature (v. 26b)

Paul writes about women who have engaged themselves in lesbian practice, and we have seen, that these women replace the *knowledge* of the natural sexual relation with man. We have seen that the natural sexual relation is according to God's will, and that "nature" is a normative concept for people's behavior. "The natural relation" is a revelation from God and a God-given knowledge, and "nature" is another word for God's law, revealed via the natural law. In v. 26b, Paul describes the ethical cause of the revelation of wrath in the lives of these women. He describes the condition that they were in when they were struck by the wrath. These women replaced the natural sexual

⁴⁸⁰ Cf. Balz, *Aussagen*, p. 63, who writes of a created order according to which the heterosexually defined marriage is the place for human sexuality. Becker, *Problem*, p- 53, writes, "Die Ehe ist der *einzigste Ort, an dem Sexualität unter das Stichwort der Heiligung gestellt ist* (1 Thess 4,3-5; 1 Kor 7)". Schmidt, *Straight*, p. 81. writes, "What is 'unnatural', then, is the active negation of marriage in the form of same-sex relations." Hays, *Vision*, p. 390, writes, "From Genesis 1 onward, Scripture affirms repeatedly that God has made man and woman for one another and that our sexual desires rightly find fulfillment within heterosexual marriage." DeYoung, *Homosexuality*, p. 162: "This must be the conclusion, for nowhere does he or the rest of Scripture allow for sexual expression outside a heterosexual, monogamous, permanent marriage".

relations with men and engaged themselves in homosexual practice. Of this Paul uses the phrase, εἰς τὴν παρὰ φύσιν. Since it stands in contrast to "the natural relation", the phrase must mean "with that against nature". That is the only natural rendering in this context.⁴⁸¹ The preposition παρὰ may have several meanings, including the adversative meaning "against" as here.⁴⁸²

3.6.11. The men (v. 27)

In verse 26 Paul writes about women who have engaged themselves in lesbian practice. Now in verse 27 Paul writes about men who have engaged themselves in homosexual practice. With ὁμοίως καὶ Paul introduces a similar phenomenon among men: men do the same thing as these women. The double τε ... τε expresses parallelism and correspondence and reinforces ὁμοίως καὶ. Just like these women exchanged the natural relations with men for those against nature, so also the men abandoned the natural relations with women and were inflamed in their lust for one another. The fact that Paul is describing the same phenomenon among women and men is substantiated by a number of factors:

a) The partially analogous wordings in verse 26b and verse 27a:

αἱ θήλειαι αὐτῶν μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν εἰς τὴν παρὰ φύσιν
οἱ ἄρσενες ἀφέντες τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν τῆς θηλείας

b) The repetition of τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν which suggests that Paul is describing the same phenomenon.

c) The term "dishonoring passions" which summarizes the two examples in verse 26b and verse 27.

With the choice of the term οἱ ἄρσενες for the men, the gender quality of the man is stressed. Along with the analogous term for the female, αἱ θήλειαι, it raises an association to the creation account.

3.6.12. The abandoned natural relation (v. 27a)

In verse 27abc, Paul is describing the ethical cause of the revelation of wrath in the lives of these men. He is describing the condition that the men were in when they were struck by the wrath. The participial clause (ἀφέντες τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν τῆς θηλείας) has a temporal meaning and describes what went ahead of the main verb ("they were inflamed"). Here, Paul uses ἀφέντες instead of

⁴⁸¹ Cf. Hays, *Vision*, p. 386, and Schmidt, *Straight*, pp. 77-83.

⁴⁸² Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 111-112, thinks that παρὰ has the meaning "more than" or "beyond", and that Paul describes behavior which is "unexpected, unusual, or different", but not "immoral". In this context, however, the prepositional phrase παρὰ φύσιν stands in contrast to "the natural relation", and therefore it must have the meaning "against", denoting a kind of unrighteousness and sin which is punished with the wrath of God.

μετήλλαξαν as he did in verse 26b. The two verbs do not have the same meaning. As I have mentioned, μετήλλαξαν describes a replacement where something is replaced with something else. ἀφέντες means "abandoned" and described how these men removed themselves from, or turned away from, something. In other words, ἀφέντες covers only the negative side of this "replacement". The verb serves to emphasize that these women and men really do abandon the natural relations. The other side of the "replacement" appears in the main clause. The participle ἀφέντες is to be understood in analogy with the verb "replace" in verse 26b, and that means that these men abandoned the knowledge of the natural relations and went over to another practice. The meaning is not that these men have been involved in a heterosexual practice, but that they leave a God-given knowledge of what the natural sexual relation is, and engage themselves in a homosexual practice.⁴⁸³

Paul repeats τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν from verse 26b and describes the same phenomenon. This time, τῆς θηλείας is added to the phrase, thus clarifying the meaning. The genitive describes that the men left the knowledge of the natural relations with women, which are the natural relations for these men. In analogy with this, the natural sexual relations for these women are those with men in marriage.

3.6.13. The lust (v. 27b)

In verse 27abc, Paul is describing the condition that the men were in when they were struck by the wrath. These men left the knowledge of what natural sexual relations are (verse 27a), and in verse 27b and 27c Paul describes what happened to these men after they left this knowledge. We shall look at verse 27b. Here Paul writes of men who were inflamed in their lust for one another. With ἐξεκαύθησαν Paul stresses the intensive nature of their lust.⁴⁸⁴ That they were inflamed with lust means that the lust burst into flame and swept them away.⁴⁸⁵ The context shows this. ἐν τῇ ὀρέξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους refers to their homosexual lust for other men.⁴⁸⁶ This corresponds with "in the desires of their hearts" in verse 24. Since verse 27abc is a part of the reason given for why God abandoned this category of people to dishonoring passions, "in their lust for one another" describes the condition that God found them in when He strikes them with His wrath.⁴⁸⁷ This homosexual lust is the reason why they abandoned the natural sexual relations with women. We hear of no reason why homosexual lust and practice arises, apart from the general reason that that kind of thing goes

⁴⁸³ See the argumentation in connection with the use of "replace" in verse 26b.

⁴⁸⁴ Murray, *Romans*, p. 48.

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. 1 Corinthians 7:9.

⁴⁸⁶ Moe, *Romerne*, p. 84.

⁴⁸⁷ "In their lust" includes the realization of the lust (see verse 27c).

along with the refusal of God just like sexual impurity (verse 24) and unrighteousness in general (verses 28-31).

εἰς ἀλλήλους ("for one another") refers to the men among themselves. The following shows us that. The use of the word "men" of the plural form, of "their" and "one another" shows us that Paul is describing a homosexual lust (and practice) among adult men, and homosexual relations that are characterized by mutuality and equality in willingness, in lust, and in action.⁴⁸⁸ So Paul is not describing pederasty nor homosexual relationships characterized by violence, force, and suppression.

3.6.14. Shamelessness (v. 27c)

These men left the knowledge of what natural sexual relations are (verse 27a), and they were inflamed in their lust for one another (verse 27b). To the main verb, ἐξεκαύθησαν, two adverbial participles are linked, bound together by a καὶ. In the commentaries, there is hardly any discussion of the meaning of the two adverbial participles.⁴⁸⁹ A causal, conditional, or concessive force makes no sense. Nor does a final force since the final element is alien to the context. A temporal force also does not fit the context. One possibility is the modal force.⁴⁹⁰ It makes sense: "whereby men committed shamelessness with men". It tells us in what way they were inflamed with their lust, namely in action. Another possibility is the consecutive force, which would mean that the clause describes the result of this flaming lust: "so that men committed shamelessness with men".⁴⁹¹ No matter which force is opted for, the participle qualifies ἐξεκαύθησαν ἐν τῇ ὀρέξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους and gives it an active-dynamic force.

The first participle, then, has a modal or consecutive force. Paul is describing explicit homosexual practice between men (ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσεσιν). Paul still uses ἄρσενες/ἄρσεσιν, thereby stressing the gender quality of the man. The verb κατεργαζόμενοι is used here to state that something is carried out in action. The contrast is to the lust. τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην refers to homosexual practice, which is characterized as shamelessness. For Paul, shame, shamelessness, and dishonor is that which lies outside of God's order, and honor is that which corresponds with God's order. Shame, shamelessness, and dishonor are qualified as sin. ἀσχημοσύνη is found only this one time in the Pauline letters. He may have used it because of its use in LXX where "shamelessness" can be used in a sexual context of the uncovering of genitals (cf. Leviticus 18 and 20).

⁴⁸⁸ DeYoung, *Homosexuality*, p. 158, rightly writes of "adult-adult mutuality" and "reciprocal adult mutuality".

⁴⁸⁹ For a survey of the meaning of the adverbial participle, see BDR 418, HS 231c, and Wallace, *Greek*, pp. 622-639.

⁴⁹⁰ Gagnon, *Bible*, p. 238, thinks that the participle is "denoting attendant circumstances".

⁴⁹¹ Wallace, *Greek*, pp. 637-639, mentions this meaning.

3.6.15. The wages (v. 27d)

In verse 27abc, Paul is describing the condition that the men were in when they were struck by the wrath. These men left the knowledge of what natural sexual relations are (verse 27a), they were inflamed in their lust for one another (verse 27b) and they committed shamelessness with men (verse 27c). With a καὶ, another participial clause is linked to the first one. The relationship to the preceding sentence and its meaning must be clarified. Firstly, we shall look at the function of the participial clause in the context.

1) The two adverbial participles are linked together with καὶ, and the simplest and most natural explanation is to understand καὶ as coordinating. Followingly then, we should understand the second adverbial participle in the same way as the first one.

a) If the first participle has a modal force, the second one has the same force ("whereby they receive..."). It qualifies the main verb, ἐξεκαύθησαν, and describes the way in which they were inflamed in their lust. This (the inflaming in their lust), then, is the wages. But since "wages" is described as a suitable and necessary repayment, the only natural thing is to understand "the wages" as the abandonment. And since γὰρ in verse 26b introduces a reason for the abandonment, and since the reason covers verses 26b-27abc, this interpretation does not fit.

b) If the first adverbial participle has a consecutive force, the second one has the same force ("so that they receive"). It qualifies the main verb, ἐξεκαύθησαν, and states two coordinate consequences of this inflaming in their desires: men commit shamelessness with men, and they receive the wages for their delusion. The consequence of their being inflamed in their lust is that they receive the wages. The delusion, then, is that they were inflamed in their lust, which is an inadequate reference to the delusion.

2) It is also possible to understand καὶ as continuing so that the second participial clause is linked to the first one and qualifies it. This being the case, the second participial clause may be either modal or consecutive.

a) The adverbial participle has a modal force ("and whereby"). It is related to men's homosexual practice (the shamelessness, verse 27c) and describes the way in which these men receive the wages for their delusion. The wages, then, is the homosexual practice itself. But since the "wages", as I have mentioned, most naturally refers to the abandonment, this interpretation makes no good sense. It is better to take "the wages" as referring to the punishment rather than to a part of the cause of the punishment.

b) The adverbial participle has a consecutive force ("and so that"). It describes the

consequence of the homosexual practice (verse 27c), and the consequence is that they receive the wages for their delusion. The "wages", then, is something other than the homosexual practice described in verse 27c. The wages is the abandonment. This interpretation makes excellent sense. Thus, a kind of *inclusio* appears in the text. Verse 27d corresponds to verse 26a since both describe the punishment. The last participial clause in verse 27d, then, is not a part of the reason for the abandonment. The reason for the punishment is found in verses 26b-27abc.

We shall look at the individual elements in the clause. τὴν ἀντιμισθίαν means "the wages", and inherent in the concept of "wages" lies an idea of a correspondence between "effort" and "wages". With "wages", a kind of repayment is expressed. τὴν ἀντιμισθίαν is constructed with a genitive, τῆς πλάνης αὐτῶν which denotes what the wages are for. ἐν ἑαυτοῖς denotes in what area they receive the wages, and in ἀπολαμβάνοντες, the corresponding or retaliating element resounds: They receive their due wages in return for their "effort".⁴⁹² The word τὴν ἀντιμισθίαν, then, denotes the corresponding, necessary, and deserved wages, and in the context it can only refer to the manifestation of wrath, that God abandoned them to dishonoring passions (verse 26). This is a judgment which is based on the two causes (the religious one and the ethical one), and hence it is justified. The judgment has a corresponding and retaliating form. It is therefore obvious that τὴν ἀντιμισθίαν refers to the manifestation of wrath. Here, then, we can separate out the interpretations that hold that "the wages" refers to some consequences of homosexual practice or to the eternal judgment.⁴⁹³ It is also debated what "the delusion" refers to.

1) "The delusion" (τῆς πλάνης αὐτῶν) refers to their refusal of God and their idolatry. It varies whether both elements are included⁴⁹⁴, or only the refusal⁴⁹⁵ or the idolatry.⁴⁹⁶ The wages are the homosexual practice,⁴⁹⁷ and the fact that they receive wages, then, is another way to say that God abandoned them to dishonoring passions = homosexual practice. For those who operate with only one cause of God's wrath, this interpretation is obvious since the "delusion" is the cause of the "wages". This may be the explanation of why the commentaries usually do not argue for this interpretation. Countryman has this interpretation, and his argument consists of two arguments against the alternative interpretation (interpretation number 2), which in his opinion shows that that

⁴⁹² Cf. Michel, *Römer*, p. 106, note 31, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 127.

⁴⁹³ The effects of the homosexual practice (Lenski, *Romans*, p. 116, Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 68); the physical consequences of the vice (Moe, *Romerne*, p. 84, as a possibility); the eternal punishment (Moo, *Romans*, p. 116).

⁴⁹⁴ Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 51, Godet, *Romerne*, pp. 191-192, Weiss, *Römer*, p. 90, Stöckhardt, *Römer*, p. 62, and Murray, *Romans*, p. 48.

⁴⁹⁵ Hodge, *Romans*, p. 42, Kuss, *Römer*, p. 50, Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 127, Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 110, Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 65.

⁴⁹⁶ Balz, *Aussagen*, p. 66, Countryman, *Dirt*, p. 115, and Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 62.

⁴⁹⁷ E.g. Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 50, Cranfield, *Romans I*, pp. 126-127, and Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 62.

interpretation is impossible.⁴⁹⁸

a) Against the alternative interpretation (that the wages is an abandonment to homosexual practice, and the "delusion" is the homosexual practice), Countryman adduces that nobody has yet given a satisfactory explanation of what the "wages" or the penalty is. This may be true enough if the "wages" is understood as an evil which punishes homosexual practice. This is the way Countryman reports it, and the way many understand it. The punishment, then, is something extra which comes upon people who practice homosexuality, and this extra is found in the effects and consequences of homosexuality. But the objection misses its target if the wages is understood as I do, as the abandonment to homosexual practice.

b) According to Countryman, the second problem with the alternative interpretation is that Paul uses πλάνη of a sexual act. However, in Paul, this term and the closely related terms are always used of false belief. It is correct that Paul only uses πλάνη of a religious delusion (Ephesians 4:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:3, and 2 Thessalonians 2:11), but the argument is slender since there are only three examples. When it comes to πλάνη, the material is too slender to create a pattern. The decisive thing is, as always, what the word means in the context.

2) "The delusion" (τῆς πλάνης αὐτῶν) refers to their homosexual practice.⁴⁹⁹ It is a delusion because they abandoned the revealed natural sexual relation with a person of the opposite sex in favour of the unnatural. They abandoned God's righteousness, order, and honor in favour of unrighteousness and shame. This is delusion. The "wages", then, is the abandonment to these dishonoring passions.

a) The word "delusion" (πλάνη) is used to describe a deviation from the truth or an abandonment of the truth in favour of untruth. In the near context, τῆς πλάνης αὐτῶν may refer to the fact that these people replace the truth with the lie (verse 25 and cf. verses 21-23). These men, then, know the revealed truth about God, but they deviated from it. This is delusion. In the near context, τῆς πλάνης αὐτῶν may also refer to the fact that these men abandoned the knowledge of the natural sexual relations with women. They knew the truth about man's sexuality, but they deviated from it. This is an adequate description of their delusion. In the context, then, there are two possible things that "delusion" may refer to.

b) The text describes the reason for this abandonment to dishonoring passions. If there is only one cause, and it is a religious one, it is obvious that the first interpretation is correct. But if it is true, as I have argued, that there are two causes, it is equally obvious that the second interpretation

⁴⁹⁸ Countryman, *Dirt*, p. 115.

⁴⁹⁹ Zahn, *Römer*, p. 102, Lenski, *Romans*, pp. 115-116, Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 45, and Moo, *Romans*, p. 116. Both interpretations are mentioned as possibilities in Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 62, and Moe, *Romerne*, p. 84.

is correct. As I have mentioned, Paul mentions two causes, and it is the ethical cause that determines the form of the judgment of wrath. The religious cause (refusal of God and idolatry) is the same for the three categories of people in verse 24, verses 26-27, and verses 28-31. The ethical cause is different for each category. In the ethical sphere, then, there is variation, and it is this variation that gives the abandonment its specific form. Some are in their sexual desires, and they are abandoned to sexual impurity (verse 24). Others are in their homosexual lust, and they are abandoned to dishonoring homosexual passions (verses 26-27), and still others are filled up with unrighteousness, and they are abandoned to a worthless mind (verse 28). The corresponding and retaliating element, then, is between the character of the ethical sin and the character of the abandonment. Therefore, the "delusion" refers to delusion in the ethical area, and the corresponding, necessary and deserved "wages" to homosexual practice.

In verse 27d, Paul is describing the revelation of the wrath. The wages, then, is the abandonment.

3.7. The third revelation of wrath (vv. 28-32)

Verses 24-32 stand as an explication to the thesis of the section in verse 18. In verse 18, Paul describes a revelation of God's wrath, and in the three subsections (verses 24-25, verses 26-27, and verses 28-31), Paul describes the wrath in more detail. In verses 24-25, Paul described a category of people who were controlled by sexual desires, and where God's wrath manifests itself as an abandonment to sexual impurity. In verses 26-27, Paul described a second category of people who have engaged themselves in homosexual practice, and where God's wrath manifests itself as an abandonment to dishonoring homosexual passions. In verses 28-31, Paul describes a third category of people who are filled up with unrighteousness, and where God's wrath manifests itself as an abandonment to a worthless mind.

3.7.1. The cause (v. 28)

We have seen that there are two causes of the revelation of wrath: a religious cause and an ethical cause. The religious cause of the first revelation of wrath is stated in verses 21-23 or especially in verse 23, and the religious cause of the second revelation of wrath is stated in verse 25. We have seen that the religious cause of the wrath consists of two elements: refusal of God, and idolatry. In the third revelation of wrath (verses 28-31), the religious cause of the wrath is stated in the first clause in verse 28a. καθὼς is causal. There are two reasons why verse 28a stands as a cause. The one reason is found in the header (verse 18), which lists two reasons for the revelation of God's wrath: ungodliness and unrighteousness. The header, then, identifies verse 28a as the cause. The

second reason is found in the parallel structure with the description of three revelations of wrath. Verse 28a describe the refusal of God by this category of people, and in analogy with verse 23/21-23 and verse 25, it states the cause.

In the context of the first two revelations of wrath I have discussed whether it was the idolatry alone that was the religious cause. I concluded that the religious cause consisted of both elements: refusal of God, and idolatry. This discussion is superfluous when we reach the third revelation of God because Paul mentions only the refusal of God. But although Paul mentions only the refusal of God, we cannot rule out the idolatry as a cause, in part because of the analogy with the first two revelations of wrath, and in part because idolatry is the inevitable consequence of the refusal of God. In the context, it is therefore best to operate with two elements of the religious cause.

In the context of the first two revelations of wrath, I have argued that there was both a religious and an ethical cause. Therefore, I will not take up that discussion again, but later I will argue that Paul also states two causes in relation to the third revelation of wrath. I will, however, briefly sketch the type of interpretation that operates with one religious cause, and the consequence of this interpretation. In this type of interpretation it is thought that God punishes religious sin with ethical sin. The ethical unrighteousness (verses 29-31) becomes the effect of the wrath, and a kind of adequate recompense appears in the text. Wilckens states it precisely when he writes that a correspondence comes to expression through the word καθώς which maintains its comparative force even when it is causal, and through the pun οὐκ ἔδοκίμασαν - εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν.⁵⁰⁰ In English, the pun may be rendered in the following way: Because they considered the knowledge of God unworthy, God gave them over to an worthless mind. However, the idea of such a correspondence becomes problematic when we see that the same religious cause results in three different effects in the ethical area in verses 24, 26-27, and 29-31, which give the wrath its specific form in the three revelations of wrath.

Verse 28a states the one cause of God's wrath. οὐκ ἔδοκίμασαν means that these people did not appreciate having God in their knowledge. The subject of the verb is a part of the category of people whom Paul describes in verses 18-32. They have a common characteristic, namely their ungodliness, which Paul here describes by stating that they do not appreciate having God in their knowledge. Paul has described the same refusal of God in verse 21-23 and verse 25. This category of people in verses 18-32 also have another common characteristic, namely their unrighteousness, but it finds different expressions. Some are characterized by sexual impurity, others by homosexual practice, and still others by unrighteousness in general. The last is true about this group.

⁵⁰⁰ Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 111. The same interpretation is found in Moo, *Romans*, p. 117, and Lohse, *Römer*, p. 91.

Some will understand the knowledge of God potentially as a possibility; a possibility which is rejected by these people.⁵⁰¹ τὸν θεὸν, then, does not belong together with ἔχειν. In that case, the sentence is to be translated, "Because they did not appreciate to have in their knowledge God". The knowledge of God is something potential, which they do not want. As an extension of this understanding, one may speak of a knowledge of God in the full sense of the word. Cranfield writes of τὸν θεὸν ἔχειν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει that it means knowing God "in the sense of acknowledging Him, reckoning with Him, taking Him into account in the practical affairs of one's life", and that it includes honoring and thanking God (cf. verse 21).⁵⁰² This knowledge is more intensive and strong than the knowledge mentioned in verse 21. It involves recognition and practice.⁵⁰³ Verses 28-31, however, describe a part of a category of people who have met the same revelation of God as everyone else within this category, and this smaller group of people have received the same knowledge of God as everyone else. Having God in one's knowledge is therefore the same thing as knowing God (verse 21). As we have seen, their knowledge of God is real.⁵⁰⁴

3.7.2. God's wrath (v. 28)

In the third revelation of wrath (verses 28-31), the religious cause of the wrath is stated in the first clause in verse 28a. Just like in the first two descriptions of God's revelation of wrath, the words παρέδωκεν + εἰς are used of it. This time Paul writes, παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν. This is to be understood in a privative sense just like the two previous phrases in verses 24 and 26. The code word in the privative interpretation is, as previously mentioned, "withdrawal". In the verb παρέδωκεν there is an element of movement, and we render it "abandoned". God abandons them to a worthless mind in the sense that He withdraws from them and leaves them to their own fate. The worthless mind is not something new; it is already found in them, but the abandonment means that it is strengthened and breaks forth in them ravagingly and irresistibly. God punishes religious and ethical sin by abandoning them in their ethical sin. This interpretation has the advantage that it maintains the active force of παρέδωκεν, that the abandonment results in a change of their condition, and this is the only one of the three classical interpretations that takes into consideration that this category of people already have a worthless mind. Paul describes this in verses 29-31. As we shall see, verses 29-31 are best understood as a description of the condition in which God finds

⁵⁰¹ Michel, *Römer*, p. 106, and Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 45.

⁵⁰² Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 128.

⁵⁰³ See Moe, *Romerne*, p. 84, Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 111, Moo, *Romans*, p. 117, and Lohse, *Römer*, p. 91.

⁵⁰⁴ Gärtner, *Areopagus*, p. 84, and Bornkamm, *Offenbarung*, pp. 19+21; Bornkamm writes (p. 19) of the knowledge of God which Paul does not understand as an open possibility, "sondern als die Wirklichkeit, unter der die ganze Welt faktisch steht." Baasland, *Cognitio*, p. 197, writes of a real knowledge of God which only Jews possess, and hence, the paragraph is about Jews.

these people when He abandons them to a worthless mind.

With αὐτοὺς Paul describes the people who are struck by God's wrath. In the context, "them" are identified for one thing as those to whom God has revealed Himself, who have come to know God, refused Him, and have engaged in idolatry (verses 19-23 and 25), and for another as those who are filled with every kind of unrighteousness (verses 29-31). This means that "them" may be narrowed down to a section of humanity. God is the God who has revealed Himself through His works. Now He reveals His wrath. We encounter the same paradoxicality as in the previous descriptions of God's wrath. These people wish to get rid of God in their knowledge, but they cannot escape from God. They are still in a relationship to God, namely a relationship of wrath. The prepositional phrase εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν is linked to the verb παρέδωκεν and describes what God abandons them to. ἀδόκιμος is used of that which does not pass a test. It may be rendered "unqualified" or "worthless". Together with ἐδοκίμασαν, ἀδόκιμον constitutes a pun. In the near context, ἀδόκιμον is defined in part by the following sentence and in part by the list of vices in verses 29-31. The following sentence describes the consequence of God's abandonment of this category of people to "a worthless mind": They do that which is unseemly (τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα). The worthless lies within the area of the "unseemly". ἀδόκιμον is also in part defined by the list of vices in verses 29-31, and this is especially true of the word "unrighteousness" which stands as a summarizing concept which is exemplified in the following. ἀδικία defines the "unseemly" as a breach of "righteousness", and via "the unseemly" ἀδικία defines the "worthless". The norm by which this mind is measured is "righteousness", and this, as we have seen and shall see, is identical with the law. The "worthless", then, is that which does not correspond with the law.⁵⁰⁵ In the same way as "impurity" in verse 24 is defined as "in the lusts of their hearts", and "dishonoring passions" in verse 26 is defined by the exchange of the natural sexuality (verses 26b-27), so "a worthless mind" in verse 28 is defined by "unrighteousness".⁵⁰⁶ ἀδόκιμον qualifies νοῦν. In connection with verse 20 I have defined νοῦς as "the constellation of thoughts and assumptions which makes up the consciousness of the person" and which may determine course and action.⁵⁰⁷ νοῦς is an active-dynamic concept which in this case determines action, since the abandonment to the "worthless mind" results in the realization of the unseemly. Just like "righteousness" in the ethical sense is thoughts with a cognitive content which state what righteousness is, so "unrighteousness" in the ethical sense are thoughts with a cognitive content which state what unrighteousness is. This shows that νοῦς is a constellation of thoughts and assumptions. The fact that νοῦς is active-dynamic also

⁵⁰⁵ Michel, *Römer*, p. 106, writes, "Darum gibt Gott die Menschen hin in einer Sinn, der ohne Mass und Norm ist".

⁵⁰⁶ Paul uses ἀδόκιμος a number of times, but not in the same way as here.

⁵⁰⁷ This definition is found in Jewett, *Terms*, p. 450.

shows that it cannot refer to "reason" understood as brain or cognitive capacity.⁵⁰⁸

Paul describes an abandonment to a worthless mind, and he continues with ποιεῖν τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα. The infinitive may be exegetical,⁵⁰⁹ giving a closer explanation of "a worthless mind", but since νοῦς is the constellation of thoughts and assumptions which determine the actions, the worthless mind is the cause of the actions which are described in the ποιεῖν-clause. The infinitive may be final, stating the purpose of this abandonment, or the infinitive may be consecutive, stating the consequence of this abandonment to a worthless mind.⁵¹⁰ The latter may be the best because of the concept of abandonment, and because the purpose of this abandonment is to silence the abandoned and render them guilty before God (Romans 3:19). The abandonment leads to actions, the character of which is described by τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα. Paul is using a stoic term (τὸ καθήκον) which is used of that which is one's duty and that which harmonizes with nature. This term has also found its way into Second Temple Judaism.⁵¹¹ As we shall see, the core of the Mosaic law (the ten commandments) governs Paul's understanding of the natural law, and τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα is defined by the ten commandments.⁵¹² "The unseemly" is that which is a breach of the commandments. When Paul uses this term, which is known from Stoical philosophy, it is probably with the purpose of contextualizing the natural law in making it understandable in a Greek-Roman culture.⁵¹³

The worthless thought and assumptions result in unseemly actions. This means, as we have seen, that "the worthless" and "the unseemly" are two different terms for the same ethical norm. As we have seen, "the unseemly" is defined and exemplified in the list of vices (verses 29-31).⁵¹⁴ The infinitive clause describes the consequence, and this consequence functions as the proof of the abandonment.

3.7.3. The condition (vv. 29-31)

In verse 28a the religious cause of the wrath is stated, in verse 28b the revelation of the wrath of God consists in an abandonment to a worthless mind and in verse 28c the abandonment results in unseemly actions. In ποιεῖν τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα (verse 28c) there is an understood subject: αὐτούς. To this αὐτούς is linked the adjectival participle πεπληρωμένους. An adjectival participle has a

⁵⁰⁸ Cf. Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 69, who also writes of images, i.e. thoughts, assessments, and intentions, when discussing the definition of νοῦς.

⁵⁰⁹ BDR 394,2.

⁵¹⁰ Moo, *Romans*, p. 118, and Wallace, *Greek*, p. 592.

⁵¹¹ Various versions of this term are found in Philo and in 2 Maccabees 6:4 and 3 Maccabees 4:16.

⁵¹² Among older scholars, Vögtle, *Lasterkataloge*, p. 16, and Pohlenz, *Paulus*, p. 73, reject a stoic influence on the list of vices, as does Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 45, among more recent scholars.

⁵¹³ Paul is not appealing to certain moral concepts in Greek thinking through this term (contra Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 67). He uses the term and adds content to it by first defining "the unseemly" in the list of vices and later identifying "the unseemly" as that which is contrary to the law.

⁵¹⁴ Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 53, and Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 63.

descriptive and characterizing function and more closely characterizes the subject of the sentence. Those who do that which is unseemly are characterized as people who have been filled with every kind of unrighteousness. The adjectival participle is in the perfect and denotes the present result of an action or merely the result or the condition. The consensus interpretation understands the participle with the attached terms, *μεστοὺς* and the attached terms, and the series of plural accusatives as a description of the consequence of the abandonment. The sin of this category of people is a religious one, and God's punishment strikes in the ethical sphere in that God abandones them to ethical sin. The consequence of this abandonment is that they do that which is unseemly, and the consequence is further that they are filled with every kind of unrighteousness. This is the consensus interpretation, but the question is whether it is possible. The adjectival participle *πεπληρωμένους* stands attributively to either *αὐτούς* which is the understood subject of *ποιεῖν*, or *αὐτοὺς* which is the object of *παρέδωκεν*. It has no bearing on the meaning whether the participle is linked to one or the other. The participle is descriptive and characterizes this category of people as filled up with every kind of unrighteousness. The question is: When were they filled with unrighteousness? According to the participle they are already filled with unrighteousness at the time of the abandonment. This cannot be by doing that which is unseemly because this is described as a process which began at the abandonment to a worthless mind and which continues as a process. This understanding is further strengthened when we let the implications of the perfective aspect become fully developed. It then marks the result of a completed action: they have become filled up, and now they are filled up. The consensus interpretation, then, is not possible. Therefore, the adjectival participle characterizes the persons who do that which is unseemly, or who are abandoned to a worthless mind, being already filled with unrighteousness. This is the ethical condition in which they find themselves when they are struck by God's wrath.

This understanding is supported by the first two descriptions of the manifestation of God's wrath. As we have seen, "in the lusts of their hearts" (verse 24) is a description of the condition in which this category of people find themselves when they are struck by the wrath. In the second description of the wrath there are two causes: a religious cause and an ethical cause, and it is the ethical cause that gives the wrath its specific form. The pattern confirms that verses 29-31 state the ethical cause of the revelation of God's wrath. This understanding is also supported by the structure in verses 19-32. As we have seen, verse 18 functions as a header. Verse 18 describes two causes of the wrath: a religious cause ("ungodliness") and an ethical cause ("unrighteousness"), and we are therefore to expect that Paul states two causes. Verse 18 identifies verses 29-31 as the ethical cause.

In verses 29-31 we find a list of vices⁵¹⁵ which describes the condition of this category of people when they are abandoned to a worthless mind.⁵¹⁶ "Filled up with every kind of unrighteousness etc." and "a worthless mind" are two parallel descriptions of the condition of these people. The list of vices then puts designations on the worthless thoughts and assumptions: they are unrighteous, evil, depraved etc. By characterizing these thoughts and assumptions as worthless, Paul is dealing with sin on a thought level. The list of vices consists of a mixture of terms which describe unrighteousness on the level of the mind (emotion and thought) and on the level of action.

a) Laato points out that Paul uses *πεπληρωμένους* and *μεστούς* which denote something that is total and hence include both emotions, thoughts, and actions.⁵¹⁷ b) There are terms like "God-haters", "arrogant", "boastful", "inventors of evil", "disobedient to parents", and words like "senseless", "faithless", "heartless", and "ruthless", which are comprehensive in their meaning and include emotions and thoughts. c) Laato further points out that Paul mentions sins which are not necessarily sins of actions. Among these may be mentioned "evil", "depravity", "greed", "envy", "strife", "deceit", and "malice". Therefore, the two verbs *ποιεῖν* (verses 28 and 32) and *πράσσειν* (verse 32) do not imply that what is thought of are actions as opposed to emotions and thoughts.⁵¹⁸ Emotions and thoughts are also "done" and "practiced". Paul, then, operates with sin on the level of thought, of emotion, of desire, and of action. The list of vices defines "the worthless mind" as unrighteous and evil thoughts and assumptions, and these thoughts and assumptions are exemplified in the many examples of the list of vices. In the context, the list of vices also defines "the unseemly". Terms of sexual sin or unrighteousness in the sexual sphere are absent in the list of vices. The reason for this is that Paul has mentioned sexual sin in connection with the first two manifestations of wrath. Therefore it is left out here.

The list of vices may, by linguistic criteria, be subdivided into three groups.⁵¹⁹ The first group consists of four terms in the dative, which are linked to the participle *πεπληρωμένους*. Here the verb is constructed with the dative of that with which they are filled. The second group consists of

⁵¹⁵ The three classical works on the problem of "lists of vices" are Vögtle, *Lasterkataloge*, Wibbing, *Lasterkataloge*, and Kamlah, *Form*, which describe the form and genesis of the list of vices; my interest is in the textual, i.e. how the list of vices functions in the context, and in the content, which I think is determined by the ten commandments.

⁵¹⁶ We find lists of vices in Paul in Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 5:10-11; 6:9-10; 2 Corinthians 12:20-21; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:31; 5:3-5; 1 Timothy 1:9-10; 2 Timothy 3:2-4; and Titus 3:3.

⁵¹⁷ Laato, *Paulus*, p. 113. Murray, *Romans*, p. 50, writes, "...the stress falls upon the completeness with which unrighteousness had come to exercise control over its subjects". Cf. also Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 45, Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 64, and Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 113-114.

⁵¹⁸ Laato, *Paulus*, p. 114.

⁵¹⁹ Apart from a subdivision of the list of vices based on linguistic categories, it is not possible to subdivide it on the basis of criteria based on content. It is more likely that rhetorical considerations have played in, so that with the many terms, Paul has been more interested in describing the unrighteousness in its totality than in defining it precisely in its various nuances. Concerning the rhetoric in the list of vices, see Wibbing, *Lastekataloge*, pp. 82-83, and Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 96.

five terms in the genitive, linked to μεστους. The third group consists of twelve terms which are all in the plural accusative, and which are linked to the understood subject αυτους of ποιειν in verse 28.

The first group is linked to the participle πεπληρωμενους. In this group, παση αδικια stands first, and it stands as the summarizing concept for all the following terms. It is characterized in the following terms. As a key concept it is identified in the header (verse 18) where it is found twice. "Unrighteousness" (αδικια) is defined as breaches of God's righteous decree in verse 32, and in Romans 2:12-16 it is defined as breaches of the law. The law states what righteousness is, and that which breaks the law, then, is unrighteousness. "Unrighteousness" is characterized as πονηρια (1 Corinthians 5:8) and κακια (1 Corinthians 5:8; 14:20; Ephesians 4:31), which are synonymous. They are two different words for "evil". We can render them as "evil" and "wickedness". The terms are broad and comprehensive. "Unrighteousness" is characterized as πλεονεξια (Ephesians 4:19; 5:3; and Colossians 3:5), which means "greediness" or "covetousness", or "avarice". Again, it is a broad and comprehensive term.

The second group is linked to the adjective μεστους. The adjective is linked to the understood subject αυτους of ποιειν in verse 28. The adjective characterizes this category of people in the same way as the adjectival participle, namely as people who are full of something. It is constructed with five terms in the genitive. This category of people are full of φθονου (Galatians 5:21; Philippians 1:15; 1 Timothy 6:4; and Titus 3:3), which means "envy". They are full of φονου, which means "murder" or "killing". They are full of εριδος (Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 3:3; Philippians 1:5; and 1 Timothy 6:4), which means "strife" or "discord". They are full of δολου (2 Corinthians 12:16 and 1 Thessalonians 2:3), which means "deceit", "cunning", or "treachery", and full of κακοηειας, which means "malice" or "craftiness". The five terms are broad and general.

The third group consists of twelve terms which are all in the plural accusative, and which are linked to the understood subject αυτους of ποιειν in verse 28. They all stand as appositions of αυτους and characterize this category of people more closely. ψιθυριστας means "tale-bearers"; we may render it "secret slanderers". καταλαλους means "slanderers". When it stands together with ψιθυριστας, it takes on the meaning "overt slanderers".⁵²⁰ These two terms belong together as a pair. θεοστυγεις means "God-haters"; it is usually a passive term and is used of those whom God hates, but in a list of vices it must be an active term, describing these people's hatred towards God. It may come as a surprise that in a list of vices which describes various forms of ethical unrighteousness, we encounter a term which focuses on the relationship with God. The explanation

⁵²⁰ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 131.

is most likely that there is no watertight distinction between the "religious" and the "ethical", and that the ethical also involves a distance and aversion to God. ὑβριστὰς (1 Timothy 1:13) means "violent people". One may wonder whether a specific relationship to God is stated in this term.⁵²¹ These violent people turn themselves against God, but in the literature, the term has the broader meaning "violent people".⁵²² ὑπερηφάνους (2 Timothy 2:3) means "arrogant people". ἀλαζόνας (2 Timothy 3:2) means "boasters". ὑπερηφάνους and ἀλαζόνας make up a pair. ἐφευρετὰς κακῶν means "contrivers of evil" and focuses on creativity in the area of evil. γονεῦσιν ἀπειθεῖς (2 Timothy 3:2) means "disobedient to parents".

The last four terms differ from the rest in that they all begin with a privative α. They also differ in that they are as total and comprehensive as "unrighteousness" in verse 29. The last four terms do not exemplify "unrighteousness" in verse 29, but are parallel descriptions of ethical sin. ἀσυνέτους means "senseless" (cf. verse 21). Here, "senseless" is set in relation to an ethical norm. The "senseless" is the "unrighteous", and the "unrighteous" is the "senseless", ethically speaking, because "righteousness" is life and love. Verse 32 illustrates how senseless it is: the unrighteous leads to death. The term is total and states their senseless character. ἀσυνθέτους (cf. Jeremiah 3:7-11 (LXX)) means "faithless". It stands as a parallel to "unrighteousness", so the unrighteous is the faithless, and the faithless is the unrighteous. The term is total and states their unreliable and faithless character. ἀστόργους (2 Timothy 3:3) means "hardhearted", and ἀνελεήμονας means "unmerciful", so the unloving and unmerciful is the unrighteous, and the unrighteous is the unloving and unmerciful. The terms are total and state their character.

In this list of vices Paul employs ethical terms – and a single religious term – which are total, general, and broad, and only a few specific ones. Paul makes use of terms which become synonymous and partially overlapping in connection with other terms in the list of vices. Most of the vices describe things that destroy community. They are threats to the social life in family and society. As I have mentioned several times, Paul gradually reveals what ethical sin is. He reveals it as "unrighteousness" (verses 18 and 29), as breaches of God's righteous decree (verse 32) and as violations of the law (Romans 2:12-16). The unrighteous, then, corresponds to violation of the valid core of the law i.e. commandments from the Decalogue. Therefore, a juxtaposition of the terms from the list of vices with the commandments makes sense and makes the terms from the list of vices more clear. That which is general and open becomes more concrete and specific through this juxtaposition.

Total terms:

⁵²¹ Thus Michel, *Römer*, p. 107.

⁵²² See Wilckens, *Römer I*, pp. 113-114.

ἀδικία ἀσυνέτους ἀσυνθέτους ἀστόργους ἀνελεήμονας the ten commandments

General or specific terms:

1) evil – in general in all of its facets as evil

πονηρία κακία κακοηθείας

ἐφευρετάς κακων ὑπερηφάνους covers all the commandments

2) covetousness

πλεονεξία φθόνου

8th and 10th commandments

3) murder, violence

φόνου ἔριδος ὕβριστάς ὑπερηφάνους

6th commandment

4) lying, slandering, deceit

δόλου ψιθυριστάς καταλάλους ἀλαζόνας

3rd and 9th commandments

5) hatred towards God

θεοστυγεῖς

1st commandment

6) disobedience to parents

γονεῦσιν ἀπειθεῖς

5th commandment

The 7th commandment is kept out (see verses 24 and 26-27), as is the 2th (prohibition of an image) and 4th (the sabbath). The purpose of this juxtaposition is not to prove that the terms in the list of vices point unequivocally to the ten commandments, because they do not. Nor is the purpose to prove how well the individual terms match the individual commandments. Some do, others do not. I clearly have my problems making a term like ὑπερηφάνους fit in the scheme. The purpose is to demonstrate that the terms *can* be juxtaposed with the ten commandments. That they are *supposed to* will only be seen in Romans 2:12-16.

In the third revelation of wrath (verses 28-31), the religious cause of the wrath is stated in verse 28a, in verse 28b Paul describes the revelation of the wrath of God and that consists in an abandonment to a worthless mind and in verse 28c he writes that the abandonment results in unseemly actions. In verse 29-31, Paul describes the ethical condition in which they find themselves when they are struck by God's wrath.

3.7.4. Round-off (v. 32)

The list of vices concludes the description of the third revelation of wrath, and Paul rounds off and concludes the section with verse 32. The relative clause is linked to the subject of the main clause. οἵτινες has a qualitative force and emphasizes a characteristic trait, namely that these people know God's righteous decree. In verse 32 Paul describes the same category of people as in the preceding

verses (18-31). He describes ungodly and unrighteous people. Verse 32 refers not only to the people that are mentioned in verses 28-31, but also to those mentioned in verses 24-25 and verse 26-27, and thus to the whole category of ungodly and unrighteous people. The reason is threefold. Firstly, the three descriptions of the revelation of wrath stand co-ordinately. There is not one of them that stands out from the others. Secondly, in verses 24-25, verses 26-27, and verses 28-31, we encounter various examples of unrighteousness. The header in verse 18 qualifies the ethical sin of the three groups as "unrighteousness", and this is further repeated in verse 29. The ethical sin of the three groups lies within the same sphere. The wrath as punishment is the same, and death as punishment is the same, and there is therefore nothing special about the sin of the third group. Thirdly, "the works of the law" are written on the hearts of the Gentiles, and that goes for all three groups, so in that respect there is also nothing special about the sin of the third group. The revelation of God is universal. The revelation of the law is universal, and verse 32, then, is the conclusion of the whole section and refers to all ungodly and unrighteous people.

This category of people have knowledge of God's righteous decree. τὸ δικάϊωμα τοῦ θεοῦ is defined in the following ὅτι-clause. Since τὸ δικάϊωμα τοῦ θεοῦ consists in the fact that those who practice these things are guilty unto death, it is best rendered as "God's righteous decree". δικάϊωμα may mean "ordinance", "regulation", "requirement", or "commandment", and here it denotes a decree that is valid at God's court of law. The genitive τοῦ θεοῦ is qualifying and tells us that God's righteous decree, not man's, is what is in question. The knowledge is stated with ἐπιγνόντες which is an adverbial participle with a concessive force.⁵²³ It makes most sense to understand it as concessive because of the contrast between knowledge and practice. It gives it an "in-spite-of-character" over verse 32. The participle is in the aorist, and it may be prior to or simultaneous with the main verbs ποιοῦσιν and συνευδοκοῦσιν. If it is prior to them, it would imply that these people once knew God's righteous decree, but that that knowledge has now been lost. This could be understood in connection with the abandonment to a worthless mind, meaning that the worthless mind gets to reign in them. If the participle is simultaneous with the main verbs, it means that this category of people still have knowledge of God's righteous decree, and that this is still true after their religious and ethical rebellion against God and after their abandonment to sin. It is a lasting knowledge.⁵²⁴ This interpretation is better for the following reasons:⁵²⁵

⁵²³ Thus Hodge, *Romans*, p. 43, Lenski, *Romans*, p. 125, Michel, *Römer*, p. 96, Moo, *Romans*, p. 121, and Bell, *No*, p. 61.

⁵²⁴ Thus Godet, *Romerne*, pp. 197-198, Hodge, *Romans*, p. 45, Zahn, *Römer*, pp. 105-106, Moe, *Romerne*, p. 87, Gärtner, *Areopagus*, p. 79, Bornkamm, *Offenbarung*, p. 27, Murray, *Romans*, pp. 51-52, Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 115, Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 69, Moo, *Romans*, p. 121, and Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 99. Gärtner, *Areopagus*, p. 79, and Porter, *Aspect*, p. 236, characterize the aorist in verse 32 as gnomic or timeless. Baasland, *Cognitio*, p. 19, correctly writes of a real knowledge of God's system of justice, but since only the Jews possess that, the section is about the

1) The information is irrelevant if it is a thing of the past. Thus it has no influence on the present behavior of this category of people.

2) The information makes no sense if it is a thing of the past because in that case it does not tie in with the main clause as far as the meaning is concerned.

3) The contrast between knowledge and practice shows that the mention of the knowledge has the purpose of throwing the ethical depravity into relief. If the knowledge is present, it has relevance and throws the statement about practice and approval into relief.

4) We get a parallel to the relationship to the revelation of God. The knowledge of God is simultaneous with the refusal of God, and in spite of futile thinking, darkening, and idolatry, the knowledge of God exists within them. The knowledge of God's righteous decree is simultaneous with the refusal of God and His commandments, and in spite of a worthless mind and unrighteousness in practice, the knowledge of God's righteous decree is present within them.

5) Romans 2:14-16 shows that the knowledge of God's righteous decree is a present reality.

In the ὅτι-clause, it is defined what God's righteous decree consists in. ὅτι is expegetic. τὰ τοιαῦτα refers to the aforementioned examples of unrighteousness in verses 24-31. The substantival participle is descriptive and characterizing. It tells us that Paul is not thinking of people who occasionally commit unrighteousness, but of people who practice it and who think that it is right (see verse 32b). Paul is describing a form of existence which is consummated through unrighteous practice.⁵²⁶

The people who practice "unrighteousness" are guilty unto death. What is thought of is the eschatological death. The death penalty, administered by society, cannot be in mind, since not all the forms of unrighteousness that are mentioned result in a death sentence. Death is the eschatological death (see Romans 2:5ff). The list of vices, then, is set in an eschatological perspective.⁵²⁷ God's wrath is a present reality. It strikes this category of people during their lifetime. It is an anticipation of the eschatological wrath which will strike them on the day of judgment (Romans 2:5ff).

For the first time, Paul explicitly mentions that this category of people have knowledge of God's commandments. So far Paul has spoken of a natural revelation of God which provides the foundation for the fact that these people are guilty and without excuse when they refuse God. God has revealed Himself to them, and He still does. Here, Paul is speaking of a natural revelation of the

Jews.

⁵²⁵ I have in part followed Murray, *Romans*, pp. 51-52.

⁵²⁶ Wibbing, *Lasterkataloge*, p. 115.

⁵²⁷ Wibbing, *Lasterkataloge*, p. 117, and Kamlah, *Form*, p. 19.

law.⁵²⁸ It is mentioned negatively, in that this category of people know that breaches of these commandments result in death. But in this way Paul shows that these people know the commandments and know them as God's commandments. From where do they have this knowledge? In the context there are two possibilities. Either these people have gained knowledge of the commandments through the revelation of God. When God reveals Himself through His works (Romans 1:20), He also reveals His commandments. This, however, is not very likely due to the characterization of the content of the revelation of God in Romans 1:20. Or the second possibility is that these people have gained knowledge of the commandments through God writing "the works of the law" on their hearts (Romans 2:14-16). This is more probable. God, then, reveals both Himself and His commandments and the judgment on violations of the commandments.

In this summary, Paul describes some who not only practice all kinds of unrighteousness, but also approve of others doing the same. The relative clause is characterizing, and the participle ἐπιγινόντες is concessive and states the circumstances in spite of which this category of people both practice and approve of unrighteousness. The relative clause makes it – if possible – even more incomprehensible that they act the way they do.

In the main clause, the two main verbs are tied together by οὐ μόνον ... ἀλλὰ καὶ, which has an accentuating function. Barrett writes that the words "not only ... but also" "suggest an increase in the offence".⁵²⁹ Barrett's solution is to distribute the two activities to two sets of people: "I am not speaking only of those who do these things ... but also of those who approve". Here, Barrett involves Romans 2:1-5. But Romans 2:1-5 describes another group of people. In the context, it is impossible to separate the two activities, since all the people in question practice these things. Therefore, the two activities must belong to the same group. Cranfield also claims that the structure accentuates the other activity, writing that the ones who do not themselves act, but approve of others doing so, are often more guilty than those who simply act.⁵³⁰ Both Barrett and Cranfield misinterpret the structure. Paul uses οὐ μόνον ... ἀλλὰ καὶ in different ways. He can use it to describe two different groups or categories (Romans 9:24; 13:5; 2 Corinthians 8:21); he can use the structure of the same group or activity as a way of accentuating the latter element (Romans 4:12; 4:16; 2 Corinthians 9:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:5), but he can also use the structure of the same activity to accentuate the uniting expression. The second element is a supplement, and along with the first element, Paul accentuates the whole expression (2 Corinthians 8:10; Ephesians 1:21; Philippians 1:29; 1 Thessalonians 2:8). In the context, this category of people perform both activities, and since

⁵²⁸ Brooten, *Love*, p. 263.

⁵²⁹ Barrett, *Romans*, p. 41.

⁵³⁰ Cranfield, *Romans I*, pp. 134-135.

it cannot be claimed that the approval is worse than the execution, it is better to take the structure in the latter sense. The supplement "and approve" accentuates the whole expression.

This category of people practice unrighteousness. In the context, the present tense marks the durative and characteristical. Paul adds that these people also give their approval to others who break with righteousness. *συνευδοκοῦσιν τοῖς πράσσοουσιν* tells us that this type of people defend and propagate unrighteousness. Practicing and propagating unrighteousness is meaningless in itself, but doubly meaningless when they know that unrighteousness is punished by death. But still they do so.

There are some common features between verse 18 and verse 32. Verse 18 gives a summarizing characterization of this category of people, describing them after they have gone through the process which Paul describes in verses 19-31. It tells us that these people are still in a relationship to the truth after they have refused God as He has revealed Himself, and after they were swept away in a process with futile thinking, darkening, and idolatry. Verse 32 also gives a summarizing characterization of this category of people and describe them after they have not only refused God and have become futile in their thinking, darkened, and idolaters, but after they have also been abandoned to impure lusts, to dishonouring passions, and to a worthless mind. These people still have a knowledge of God in that they still know His righteous decree. This confirms that they still possess a knowledge of God. And these people still have a knowledge of God's commandments, in that they know that those who break the commandments deserve to die. This shows that this category of people still have knowledge of the commandments even after their rebellion against them, even after their dedication to unrighteousness, and even after the abandonment to a worthless mind. The abandonment, then, does not mean that the knowledge of the commandments is lost. Of course, these people fight against God's commandments through their practice and through their defence of their practice (verse 32b). The knowledge of the commandments and the punishment for breaking them has no consequences for their lives and their attitudes to life, but the commandments are suppressed and repressed from their moral thoughts. But as the knowledge of God remains intact in this category of people, the knowledge of the law remains intact in them, but suppressed.

Chapter 4

The condemning man (Romans 2:1-5)

The first and most important text concerning natural revelation is Romans 1:18-32. I have analyzed that text, and I found that Paul described both a natural revelation and knowledge of God and a natural knowledge of the law. The next text is Romans 2:1-5. This text describes the condemning man, and here Paul speaks of two aspects of the natural revelation and knowledge.

In Romans 2:1-5 Paul describes a new category of people: the condemning man.⁵³¹ Romans 2:1-5 differs from the preceding verses in style and content. Stylistically, the change to something new is marked by the address in verse 1, and by Paul's shift to a style resembling diatribe.⁵³² When it comes to content, there are two conclusive differences between the people described here and the ungodly and unrighteous people of Romans 1:18-32. Firstly, the category of people described in Romans 2:1-5 have a fundamentally different attitude to transgressions of God's commandments. The persons in 2:1-5 condemn those who break God's commandments. Secondly, the persons of 1:18-32 experience God's wrath as abandonment to sin. The persons of 2:1-5 do not, but they do live with an anticipation of the eschatological wrath. Because of those differences, Paul is describing a new category of people in 2:1-5.⁵³³

4.1. Identity

It is a well-known discussion whether Paul's interlocutor in Romans 2:1-5 is a Jew, a Gentile, or more generally a condemning person, be it a Jew or a non-Jew. I shall not provide a survey of the discussion, but only argue that Paul is describing the condemning man in general.

1) As an address, Paul uses the general ὁ ἄνθρωπος (verse 1). "Human being" is not an ethnic term, but is used by Paul in a general and non-ethnic sense simply to describe a human being (cf. e.g. Romans 1:18; 1:23; 2:16; 2:29; 3:4; 3:5; and 3:28).

2) The non-ethnic term "human being" is made general by the apposition πᾶς ὁ κρίνων. The apposition makes the address "man" encompassing and strengthens the non-ethnic sense of "man". Paul is thinking of everyone who judges.

3) By διὸ, the condemning man is related to the preceding. διὸ introduces a deduction which is based on Romans 1:32a. The accusation against the condemning man is based on two premises, namely 1) that the condemning man has knowledge of God's commandments, and 2) that he has knowledge of God's righteous decree. Both premises are expressed in 1:32a. In 1:32a, the knowledge of God's commandments and His righteous decree are communicated through the

⁵³¹ It is generally agreed that Paul describes two different categories of people in 1:18-32 and 2:1-5. Exceptions are Weber, *Missionspraxis*, pp. 51+61, and Zahn, *Römer*, pp. 106+108, who think that 1:18 – 2,5 are a unit describing one category of people. Flückiger, *Unterscheidung*, pp. 154-158, has proposed the interpretation that 1:18-31 describes the Gentiles, and that 1:32 – 2:3 go together, describing Jews. According to Bassler, *Impartiality*, pp. 131-134, 1:32 – 2:3 is a subunit of the section 1:18 – 2:11.

⁵³² Cf. Stowers, *Diatribes*, p. 96, and Schmeller, *Paulus*, pp. 428-437. On the question of diatribe style, see Thorsteinsson, *Interlocutor*, pp. 123-150.

⁵³³ From a syntactical point of view, it may seem arbitrary to make a division in the text between verses 5 and 6, but from a thematical point of view it is justified because in v. 6 Paul uses a universalistic ἐκάστω, and in vv. 6-10 he describes a universal judgment. There is also a stylistical break between 2:1-5, which is characterized by the dialogue form, and 2:6ff, which has a more argumentative style. Cf. Stowers, *Diatribes*, p. 79, note 2, and Heiligenthal, *Werke*, p. 165.

natural revelation, and when Paul draws a conclusion from this knowledge, he shows that the condemning man is to be understood on the background of the natural revelation. Hence, "man" is defined as man in general.

4) The intention is to reveal that the condemning man also breaks God's commandments. In order to reach his goal, Paul has to prove two things. Firstly, he has to prove that the condemning man *can* be accused, and secondly, he has to prove that the condemning man breaks God's commandments. These are the two premises of the judgment. I shall leave the latter here. In order to reach his goal, Paul employs a subtle strategy, using the condemning activity of this man towards others. For through his condemning activity the man reveals his knowledge of God's commandments. Thus, Paul has reached his first goal: He has established the basis for the judgment. The condemning activity of the moral critic is the revelatory basis for the accusation. This reveals a man who acts on the basis of the natural revelation. Man is defined as man in general.

5) Verse 2 confirms that the revelatory context of this accusation is the natural revelation, because this knowledge of God's righteous judgment corresponds with what is communicated through the natural revelation of God and of the law (see Romans 1:32).

6) It is not until verse 17 that we encounter the specific address to the Jew, and this makes it likely that Paul is not addressing the Jews until verse 17.

This interpretation corresponds with the pattern in Romans 1:18 – 2:24. Three times does Paul describe a specific category of people (1:18-32; 2:1-5; and 2:17-24), and each time, he introduces in the first verse what category he is dealing with. In 1:18, Paul introduces ungodly and unrighteous people who are struck by God's wrath. In 2:1, Paul introduces condemning man, and in 2:17, Paul introduces some who call themselves Jews. Each time, Paul gives a precise religious-ethical characterization.

4.2. A deduction (v. 1)

In Romans 2:1-5, Paul writes about the condemning man in general. He addresses an imaginary interlocutor and is phrasing the address in such a general manner that he strikes every condemning person – Jew and non-Jew alike.⁵³⁴ In the following, I shall use the terms "the condemning man" and "the moral critic" of this imaginary interlocutor. The new section begins with a $\delta\iota\omicron$ which links this section with the preceding. $\delta\iota\omicron$ is a conjunction which introduces a deduction. This is the way Paul always uses $\delta\iota\omicron$. This $\delta\iota\omicron$ has been the object of much discussion.

1) Since it has often been assumed that Paul is writing of Gentiles in 1:18-32 and of Jews in

⁵³⁴ It is typical of the diatribe that the author addresses a imaginary interlocutor who represents a type.

2:1-5, $\delta\iota\omicron$ seems problematic. It does not make sense that Paul should make a deduction from Gentiles to Jews. Therefore it has either been assumed that it is a later addition,⁵³⁵ which is completely arbitrary, or that it is a colourless transition particle,⁵³⁶ which is also completely arbitrary. Considering that $\delta\iota\omicron$ is an inferential conjunction, that Paul always uses it as such,⁵³⁷ and that it makes sense as such, there is no reason to remove it or to deviate from its usual meaning.

2) $\delta\iota\omicron$ introduces a deduction. This includes a variety of interpretations.

a) Paul is describing Jews in 2:1-5. Cranfield thinks that $\delta\iota\omicron$ links back to 1:18-32. He admits that the interpretation causes problems if 1:18-32 is exclusively about Gentiles. Cranfield asks, "How can it follow from the fact that the Gentiles fall under the condemnation declared in 1:18-32 that the Jew is without excuse if he judges?"⁵³⁸ However, 1:18-32 is not exclusively about Gentiles, but about everybody's sin. On that background, $\delta\iota\omicron$ causes no problems. The meaning becomes: "Since the gospel reveals the fact of the universal sinfulness of men, the man who sets himself up to judge other men is without excuse ... he has no ground at all on which to stand."⁵³⁹ The argument is as follows:

all are sinners

therefore, the one who judges others is a sinner

Chae elaborates on the argumentation, mentioning that Paul uses $\delta\iota\omicron$ 22 times in total, and that in all other places it introduces "self-evident conclusions", and that we have the same "subjects, addressees or speakers" in that which precedes $\delta\iota\omicron$ and that which follows it.⁵⁴⁰ Therefore, Romans 1:18-32 and 2:1-5 are addressed to the same people. "Thus it seems probable that $\delta\iota\omicron$ indicates that Paul directs his accusation to the same people, or narrows down his argument from 2:1 onwards to either Jews or Gentiles, both of whom are included in 1:18-32."⁵⁴¹ Chae thinks that the condemning man has typical Jewish characteristics, and that the argument is narrowed down to concern only Jews.⁵⁴² But since according to Chae Romans 1:18-32 speaks of both Gentiles and Jews, the subject is no longer the same. Chae is not consistent. I have argued that 1:18-32 describes only a section of

⁵³⁵ Thus Bultmann, *Glossen*, p. 200, and Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 50.

⁵³⁶ Thus Molland, *Beobachtungen*, p. 9, and Michel, *Römer*, p. 113.

⁵³⁷ Thus Chae, *Paul*, p. 96, and Thorsteinsson, *Interlocutor*, p. 178. The examples that are mentioned are Romans 1:24; 4:22; 13:5; 15:7; 15:22; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 14:13; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 2:8; 4:13; 4:16; 5:9; 6:17; 12:7; 12:10; Galatians 4:31; Ephesians 2:11; 3:13; 4:8; 4:25; 5:14; Philippians 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 3:1; 5:11; Philemon 6.

⁵³⁸ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 141.

⁵³⁹ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 142. Basically the same interpretation is found in Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 123; Wilckens writes that it should really have said, "therefore, you *too* are without excuse". Similarly Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 79, who writes that Paul "is drawing out an inference from the preceding indictment where human inexcusability was stressed (1:20)." Moo, *Romans*, p. 129, thinks that "therefore" links to 1:18-19 which refers to all mankind.

⁵⁴⁰ Chae, *Paul*, p. 97.

⁵⁴¹ Chae, *Paul*, p. 97.

⁵⁴² Chae, *Paul*, pp. 99-102.

mankind and not the condemning man of 2:1-5 nor the religious Jew of 2:17-24. Cranfield's and Chae's premise is fallacious, and therefore, their interpretation falls.

b) Paul is describing Gentiles in 2:1-5. Thorsteinsson thinks that διὸ draws a conclusion from 1:18-32. He writes, "... the inferential conjunction διὸ indicates that the judging individual addressed in 2:1 is 'without excuse' precisely because he is one of the people described previously in 1:18-32, viz. Gentiles".⁵⁴³ Already by the reminder in 1:18-32, the interlocutor should have realized that he is no better than the people who are described there, "because he is one of them".⁵⁴⁴ Thorsteinsson will also not rule out that "by the vocative ἄνθρωπε Paul intends to connect the person addressed with the ἀνθρώπων mentioned in 1:18, which, in turn, supports the conclusion that the interlocutor is precisely one of them."⁵⁴⁵ According to Thorsteinsson, the logic behind διὸ is based on a personal identity between the ones in 1:18-32 and the ones in 2:1-5. But as we have seen, this is not the case.

c) Paul is describing condemning people, be they Gentiles or Jews.⁵⁴⁶ We have seen that Paul is describing one group of persons in 1:18-32 and another group in 2:1-5. Therefore, διὸ cannot connect the same group. The logic is not based on personal identity. διὸ can, however, connect the same matter. The logic is based on the fact that we find the same matter in both groups. διὸ introduces a deduction which is based on either 1:18-32 or simply 1:32a. There are two reasons that it must be verse 32a. The one reason is that at the end of verse 1, Paul uses the phrase τὰ αὐτὰ πράσσεις which links this verse with 1:32 (οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες). The other reason is that Paul focuses exclusively on breaches of God's commandments in 2:1-5. He writes nothing of refusal of God or of the present revelation of wrath. Thereby, most of 1:18-32 is counted out. What is left is the breaches of God's commandments. διὸ, then, is based on 1:32. Since verse 32b describes a fundamentally different behaviour than what we find in the condemning man, the deduction must be based on verse 32a.⁵⁴⁷ In 1:32a, Paul writes of those who know God's righteous decree, and this is where we are to find the reason for this deduction in 2:1. But as we have seen, the reason for this deduction is not that Paul is describing the same group in 1:32 and 2:1. In that case, the logic would look like this:

they know God's righteous decree
you are one of them
therefore, you are without excuse

⁵⁴³ Thorsteinsson, *Interlocutor*, p. 182.

⁵⁴⁴ Thorsteinsson, *Interlocutor*, p. 187.

⁵⁴⁵ Thorsteinsson, *Interlocutor*, p. 189.

⁵⁴⁶ Thus Bell, *No*, p. 138.

⁵⁴⁷ Schmeller, *Paulus*, pp. 273-274, and Elliott, *Rhetoric*, pp. 120-121.

On the contrary, the reason for this deduction is that we have the same knowledge in both groups. That is what verse 32a describes. The common element is this knowledge, and therefore Paul can deduce from 1:32a to 2:1.⁵⁴⁸ The logic, then, looks like this:

they know Gods righteous decree
so do you
therefore, you are without excuse

So Paul deduces from the knowledge of God's righteous decree in one category of people to that of another because this knowledge is a common element for both groups. The logic may not be readily accessible, as we are to loosen the knowledge from this category and understand it as a general knowledge. This, of course, is an objection and a weakness of the interpretation, but in defence of my interpretation I can mention:

a) It is a fact that Paul is describing one group of people in 1:18-32⁵⁴⁹ and another in 2:1-5. Therefore, Paul *cannot* make a deduction from one group of persons to the other. This creates insurmountable problems for the other interpretations that wish to maintain that διὸ introduces a deduction based on personal identity.

b) The word ἀναπολόγητος is a significant word. It is found in 1:20 and repeated here. Because of its marked position and function in 1:20 and its equally marked position in 2:1 it is fair to connect its use to 1:20. In 1:20, the knowledge of God as He has revealed Himself through His works is the reason for their being without excuse. As I mentioned in the connexion with verse 20, there is also another reason, namely their refusal of God, which is mentioned in verse 21. Analogously, it would be natural that the knowledge of God's righteous decree is the reason why they are without excuse in 2:1. Here, too, we are to supplement another reason, namely that they break God's commandments. This is mentioned at the end of verse 1. The mention of ἀναπολόγητος directs the attention towards a revealed knowledge as a precondition, and exactly that is found in 1:32a.

c) Paul admits implicitly in verse 1b that the logic is not readily accessible, as he adds another reason why the condemning man is without excuse:

Verse 32a	reason: knowledge of God's righteous decree
Verse 1a	διὸ ἀναπολόγητος εἶ, ὃ ἄνθρωπε πᾶς ὁ κρινῶν
	deduction

⁵⁴⁸ Thus Elliott, *Rhetoric*, pp. 120-121+182. Elliott denies that the judging man is a Jew (see pp. 167-190). Elliott uses the expression "an argument by analogy" (p. 120). That the common element is not personal identity is described in different variations by Moe, *Romerne*, p. 89, Nygren, *Romarna*, pp. 122-123, Murray, *Romans*, p. 56, and Schmeller, *Paulus*, p. 274.

⁵⁴⁹ This does not mean that the natural revelation has only been given to this group, nor that only this group knows of God's righteous decree.

Verse 1b ἐν ᾧ γὰρ κρίνεις τὸν ἕτερον, σεαυτὸν κατακρίνεις
reason (cognitive reason)

Verse 1c τὰ γὰρ αὐτὰ πράσσεις ὁ κρίνων
reason

γὰρ in verse 1b is causal, and Paul once again provides a reason for the statement, "You are without excuse, man, everyone who judges". The reason is that the condemning man condemns himself by his judgment on the other. The judgment on the other and the self-condemnation are identical. In the context, Paul constantly operates with two preconditions of God's judgment: 1) Revelation and knowledge of God and His commandments, and 2) refusal of God and His commandments. These preconditions are found in 1:18-32; 2:1-5, and 2:17-24. In the context, the condemnation refers to God's judgment (1:32 and 2:2), and when the condemnation is wrought by the judgment passed on the other, Paul is operating within the first precondition. For the judgment passed on the other reveals the moral critic's knowledge of God's righteous decree.⁵⁵⁰ This is the function of the reason given. This is confirmed by the added reason given in verse 1c, which shows that it is not until this point that Paul thinks of the other precondition. The second reason given in verse 1b introduces the proof of the knowledge of God's righteous decree in the condemning man. This is the cognitive reason.⁵⁵¹ The meaning and function of the second reason given (verse 1b) fixes the relationship between 2:1 and 1:32a. It shows that the reason that the condemning man is without excuse is the knowledge of God's righteous decree. Thus, Paul has established that the condemning man has knowledge of God's righteous decree, and that this knowledge is a common element in both groups in 1:18-32 and 2:1-5. One might say that the added cognitive reason in verse 1b confirms that the logic stated through διὸ is not readily accessible.

d) The mention of God's judgment in verse 2 confirms that Paul makes a deduction from the knowledge of God's righteous decree, for verse 2 is a repetition of 1:32a. The wordings are different in 1:32a and 2:2, but both describe God's eschatological judgment. The mention of the judgment in verse 2, then, serves to confirm that Paul is arguing on the basis of a knowledge of it.

The judgment on the condemning man stands as a consequence of 1:32a. Thus Paul moves the condemning man into the sphere of the natural revelation. The knowledge of God's righteous decree is communicated through the natural revelation of God and of the law. The condemning man is judged on the basis of this revelation.

⁵⁵⁰ The mention of "condemnation" and of "transgressions" in verse 1c shows that the knowledge of God's commandments implies knowledge of God's judgment on breaches thereof.

⁵⁵¹ Thus Zahn, *Römer*, p. 107.

4.3. Condemnation and self-condemnation (v. 1)

Paul writes about the condemning man in general. He addresses an imaginary interlocutor and is phrasing the address in such a general manner that he strikes every condemning person. Paul argues against his interlocutor on the basis of natural revelation. He establishes that the imaginary interlocutor is without excuse, and he characterizes the imaginary interlocutor as a person who condemns. $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma \delta\ \kappa\rho\iota\nu\tilde{\omega}\nu$ has an identifying function, in that Paul uses the participle to characterize the person that he is speaking to.⁵⁵² The object of the judgment is $\tau\tilde{\omicron}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\nu$, and in the context, $\tau\tilde{\omicron}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\nu$ refers to a person who represents the category of people that Paul described in 1:18-32.⁵⁵³ The judgment could refer to the idolatry as well as the immorality, but because of the phrase $\tau\tilde{\alpha}\ \alpha\tilde{\upsilon}\tau\tilde{\alpha}\ \pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\sigma\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ which links the verse with 1:32, and because in the following (verses 1-11) Paul focuses on breaches of God's commandments, it is better to interpret $\kappa\rho\iota\nu\tilde{\omega}\nu$ as a judgment on others' unrighteousness. This interpretation is confirmed by the strong contrast between $\kappa\rho\iota\nu\tilde{\epsilon}\iota\varsigma$ (2:1) and $\sigma\upsilon\nu\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omicron\kappa\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\nu$ (1:32), which has the ethical transgressions as its frame of reference. So, the condemning man distances himself from these unrighteous people, and this distance is expressed in his condemnation of them.

With $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tilde{\omega}\ \gamma\tilde{\alpha}\rho\ \kappa\rho\iota\nu\tilde{\epsilon}\iota\varsigma\ \tau\tilde{\omicron}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\nu$, $\sigma\epsilon\alpha\upsilon\tau\tilde{\omicron}\nu\ \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\kappa\rho\iota\nu\tilde{\epsilon}\iota\varsigma$, Paul gives the reason that the condemning man is without excuse. We have seen that this is the cognitive reason. With $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tilde{\omega}\ \kappa\rho\iota\nu\tilde{\epsilon}\iota\varsigma\ \tau\tilde{\omicron}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\nu$, $\sigma\epsilon\alpha\upsilon\tau\tilde{\omicron}\nu\ \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\kappa\rho\iota\nu\tilde{\epsilon}\iota\varsigma$, Paul describes that the moral critic's judgment on the other turns against himself as a boomerang and turns into self-condemnation. $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tilde{\omega}$ is instrumental,⁵⁵⁴ and it is by the critical evaluation of the other that he condemns himself. The meaning behind the statement is that when the moral critic pronounces his judgment on the other, he reveals a knowledge of God's commandments and righteous decree (cf. 1:32), and therefore he is without excuse when he commits the same transgressions. His condemnation is proof of his knowledge of God's commandments.

With $\tau\tilde{\alpha}\ \gamma\tilde{\alpha}\rho\ \alpha\tilde{\upsilon}\tau\tilde{\alpha}\ \pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\sigma\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \delta\ \kappa\rho\iota\nu\tilde{\omega}\nu$, Paul states the reason why the moral critic's judgment becomes a condemnation of himself, and the reason is that he commits the same transgressions that he criticizes in others.⁵⁵⁵ The condemning man, then, is a lawbreaker. $\tau\tilde{\alpha}\ \alpha\tilde{\upsilon}\tau\tilde{\alpha}$ (verse 1) refers to the

⁵⁵² Here, $\kappa\rho\iota\nu\tilde{\omega}\nu$ refers to a negative judgment, a condemnation; it is seen from Paul's comparison between the one who judges and the one who is judged that the one who is judged breaks God's commandments (cf. $\alpha\tilde{\upsilon}\tau\tilde{\alpha}\ \pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\sigma\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ v. 1). Thus e.g. Michel, *Römer*, p. 113, and Murray, *Romans*, p. 56.

⁵⁵³ Thus e.g. Schlier, *Juden*, p. 38, and Eichholz, *Theologie*, pp. 82-83.

⁵⁵⁴ $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tilde{\omega}$ corresponds to $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\tilde{\omicron}\tilde{\upsilon}\tau\tilde{\omega}\ \delta\tilde{\omicron}\tau\tilde{\iota}$ which could be causal (thus BDR 219₂), but together with the causal $\gamma\tilde{\alpha}\rho$ this is not overly probable; $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tilde{\omega}$ could be temporal, but that would weaken the identity of the two actions.

⁵⁵⁵ It is not the act of judging in itself that makes the moral critic guilty; he is guilty because he commits the same transgressions. Therefore, Barrett, *Romans*, p. 44, is not right when he writes, "Paul's point is that in the very act of judging ($\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tilde{\omega}\ \kappa\rho\iota\nu\tilde{\epsilon}\iota\varsigma$) the judge is involved in the same conduct as the man he condemns. Behind all the sins of i.29 ff lies the sin of idolatry, which reveals man's ambition to put himself in the place of God and so be his own Lord.

examples of transgressions that Paul has mentioned in 1:18-32, i.e. sexual impurity, homosexuality, and the examples of unrighteousness mentioned in the list of vices.⁵⁵⁶ But what does Paul mean when he writes that the condemning man does the same as the ungodly and unrighteous persons (1:18-32)? Do τὰ αὐτὰ πράσσεις (verse 1), τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντας (verse 2), and ποιῶν αὐτά (verse 3) denote that the condemning man performs the exact same actions as the immoral people (1:18-32)? Or do the phrases mean that the condemning person performs some similar actions? Cranfield⁵⁵⁷ refers to Matthew 5:27-28, writing that a commandment can be broken in more than one way.⁵⁵⁸ In the context, however, the only feasible interpretation is that τὰ αὐτὰ (verse 1) refers to the examples of transgressions mentioned above, because Paul's very point is that the condemning man commits the exact same transgressions as he criticizes in others. By the way, the list of vices (Romans 1:29-31) shows that Paul does not distinguish between transgressions in feeling, thought, and deed. With τὰ αὐτὰ πράσσεις (verse 1), τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντας (verse 2), and ποιῶν αὐτά (verse 3) Paul highlights that he is speaking of identical acts in the two categories of people in 1:18-32 and 2:1-5, respectively.⁵⁵⁹

5.4. Knowledge of God's judgment (v. 2)

The condemning man is without excuse, because he condemns himself, when he is condemning other people. He commits the same transgressions, and his condemnation is proof of his knowledge of God's commandments. Paul confirms, that the condemning man has knowledge of God's judgment (verses 2 and 3), because with οἶδαμεν (verse 2), Paul states⁵⁶⁰ what he and his

But this is precisely what the judge does, when he assumes the right to condemn his fellow-creatures".

⁵⁵⁶ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 80, narrows down τὰ αὐτὰ to mean primarily the transgressions mentioned in 1:29-31, but there is no documentation in the text to separate out exactly these transgressions.

⁵⁵⁷ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 142. And compare Morris, *Romans*, p. 110, who writes, "the Jew was committing basically the same sin, even though the formal expression was different".

⁵⁵⁸ Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 61, thinks that the statement about the morally judging (the Jews, in Kuss' understanding) committing the same transgressions, only becomes intelligible when it is realized that Paul is describing the bleak condition of mankind before and without Christ on the background of the salvation won through Christ. Yet Paul is not describing the condemning man from a Christian perspective, but is describing the existence of this type of man on the background of the general knowledge of God's commandments and righteous decree.

⁵⁵⁹ The accusation against the condemning man must be seen in the light of the intention of the paragraph, which is to reveal that the condemning man *also* breaks the law (3,9+20), and therefore, Paul focuses on this aspect. Paul does not consider the scope of the condemning man's transgressions in 2:1-5, but he emphasizes that the same, identical transgressions are found with this type as with the other type (1:18-32). Implicitly, however, Paul suggests a difference in that in 2:1-5 he describes the condemning man in relation to God's eschatological wrath, whereas in 1:18-32 he describes the man who breaks the law and approves of it being broken in relation to God's present wrath. For the latter type, God's wrath is a dimension in their existence, and the revelation of the present wrath is in part caused by the refusal of God (cf. 1:23-24.25-26.28), and in part it presupposes a certain immoral practice (cf. 1:24.26-27.28-31). The difference in relation to God's wrath *implies* a difference in ethical practice.

⁵⁶⁰ Barrett, *Romans*, p. 44, thinks that it is the conversation partner who is speaking here, but the statement of the conversation partner has no argumentative power on the background of Paul's accusation that the conversation partner commits the same transgressions.

interlocutor agree on.⁵⁶¹ That verse 2 expresses a generally accepted statement can be seen from a number of factors. Firstly, the use of the 1st person plural – using plural forms in a dialogue will naturally include the interlocutor.⁵⁶² Secondly, verse 1 makes it clear that verse 2 reports a generally accepted statement because the judging activity of the interlocutor implies a knowledge of God’s righteous decree (1:32). The knowledge of δικαίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ (1:32), then, is general. Thirdly, it is confirmed in verse 3 that verse 2 describes a generally accepted statement in that in verse 3 Paul reveals the inconsistency in the position of the interlocutor. He states the position, and although he phrases it from his own point of view (cf. καὶ ποιῶν αὐτά – a point of view not shared by the interlocutor!), the rhetorical question expresses the expectation of the interlocutor: he really does think that he will be able to escape God’s condemnation. ὅτι σὺ ἐκφεύξῃ τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ describes the condemning man’s relationship to τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ and shows that he has a knowledge of God’s eschatological judgment of condemnation on transgressions (cf. verse 2). τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ refers to the eschatological judgment (cf. the context), and since τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ strikes τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντας, κρίμα denotes God’s punishing judgment of wrath.⁵⁶³ This judgment is impartial because God will judge on the basis of criteria that are the same for all, irrespective of ethnic identity. This follows explicitly from the elaboration of the judgment in verses 7-10 and in verse 11. This means that the condemning man has knowledge of God’s righteous judgment on those who break His commandments.⁵⁶⁴

4.5. The illusion of the condemning man (v. 3)

The condemning man has knowledge of God’s judgment (verse 2), and with the rhetorical question in verse 3, Paul states the position of his interlocutor: the condemning man really does expect that he will be able to escape God’s condemnation.⁵⁶⁵ When it comes to the question of what makes the condemning man secure, there are two types of interpretations.

⁵⁶¹ Thus Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 50, Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 143, Dabelstein, *Beurteilung*, p. 86, and Thorsteinsson, *Interlocutor*, p. 190.

⁵⁶² Paul often uses οἶδαμεν of knowledge shared by himself and the reader or the one he has in mind, or as an introduction of a statement which will meet general acceptance from those that he is writing to or has in mind (cf. Romans 3:19; 7:14; 8:22; 8:28; and 2 Corinthians 5:1).

⁵⁶³ κατὰ ἀλήθειαν introduces the norm for τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ and denotes the justice of the judgment. Some understand κατὰ ἀλήθειαν in an adverbial sense (ἀληθῶς), but the aim is not to remind of the reality of the judgment – that is already known (cf. οἶδαμεν); nor is the aim to emphasize the inerrancy of the judgment (thus Michel, *Römer*, p. 114, note 7), but the aim is to emphasize the justice of the judgment, meaning that God will judge anyone who acts in this way.

⁵⁶⁴ τὰ τοιαῦτα is identical with αὐτά (v. 1) and refers to the examples of transgressions mentioned in 1:18-32. Schlatter, *Gerechtigkeit*, p. 76, and Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 51, think that τὰ τοιαῦτα includes more than αὐτά (v. 1), which referred to the examples of breaches of God’s commandments mentioned by Paul in 1:18-32; those examples are merely examples. However, the identical expression in v. 3 refers to the examples of transgressions described in Romans 1:18-32, and therefore, αὐτά and τὰ τοιαῦτα are identical.

⁵⁶⁵ Moo, *Romans*, p. 132.

1. It is presupposed that the condemning man is a Jew, and that it is the covenant status of the Jewish people that guarantees salvation and secures against God's punishing judgment. Dunn⁵⁶⁶ thinks that the security of the Jew is based on the covenant relationship: "More subtly, the echo of Wisd Sol 15,1ff in v.4 seems designed to undermine any Jewish assumption that God's people are free of the grosser gentile sins and that any Jewish sin is insufficient to disturb Israel's favored status as the people chosen by God". Watson⁵⁶⁷ has expressed this interpretation clearly and consistently in his description of how the Jews base their false security on their covenant status. According to Watson, Paul is "opposing the view ... that the mere fact of being a Jew guarantees one salvation, irrespective of one's deeds".⁵⁶⁸ According to Watson, in Romans 2 it is Judaism that teaches salvation by grace alone and Paul who teaches salvation by one's own accomplishments. Using the language of the reformers, Watson writes, "... the Jews teach a doctrine of *sola gratia*, and this leads them to live by the maxim, *pecca fortiter*".⁵⁶⁹ So Romans 2 is unique in that Paul claims that the Jews emphasize God's grace and the covenant which guarantees salvation, in such a way that it becomes unnecessary to keep the law.⁵⁷⁰ The question, then, is whether the Jews' false security in the face of judgment is based on the covenant relationship, and whether the covenant guarantees the eschatological salvation.⁵⁷¹ This interpretation stands and falls with the interpretation of verse 2 because Watson's interpretation is only legitimate if the statement about God's judgment in verse 2 refers exclusively to the Gentiles and not to the Jews. Watson⁵⁷² interprets verse 2 in an exclusive sense, and with a certain hesitation, Dunn⁵⁷³ expresses the same. It is, however, impossible to interpret verse 2 as a concession to the Jewish view. As I have already mentioned, τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ refers to God's punishing judgment of wrath, and κατὰ ἀλήθειαν introduces the norm for τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ and emphasizes the justice of the judgment. That Paul has understood verse 2 as an expression of a just and impartial judgment where Jews and Gentiles will be judged by the same standard is confirmed in verse 6, in the elaboration in verses 7-10 and in verse 11. According to verse 2, the moral critic has a knowledge of God's judgment (verses 2 and 3), since by οἶδαμεν in verse 2, Paul states what he and his imaginary interlocutor agree on. And this generally

⁵⁶⁶ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 78.

⁵⁶⁷ Watson, *Paul*, pp. 110-112.

⁵⁶⁸ Watson, *Paul*, p. 111.

⁵⁶⁹ Watson, *Paul*, p. 112.

⁵⁷⁰ Watson, *Paul*, p. 113.

⁵⁷¹ Murray, *Romans*, p. 55, writes that τοῦ πλούτου τῆς χρηστότητος αὐτοῦ "would indicate the riches of special grace such as the Jews enjoyed in the covenant privilege", and Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 124, thinks that Paul is thinking of the Jews who take their refuge in "des heilsgeschichtliche Privilegierten zu Gottes Güte".

⁵⁷² Watson, *Paul*, p. 110.

⁵⁷³ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 81. Thus also Carras, *Dialogue*, p. 193. Therefore, Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 80, consistently interprets κατὰ ἀλήθειαν as "in terms of God's reliability". Cf. also Michel, *Römer*, pp. 113-114: "Allgemein anerkannt (οἶδαμεν δὲ) ist die Tatsache, dass das Gericht Gottes nach dem Masstab der Wahrheit gefällt wird, wenn es sich gegen die in Röm 1,18ff beschriebenen Heiden wendet".

accepted statement in verse 2 provides the basis for Paul's argument against the position of the interlocutor. Paul's demonstration that the Jews commit the same kinds of transgressions as the Gentiles would have no meaning at all if verse 2 meant that God judges the Gentiles because of their transgressions, but not the Jews. The very intention with Paul's argument is to prove that by their judgment on others' transgressions, the moral critics condemn themselves because they "do the same" (verse 3). The condemning man, then, has a knowledge of God's righteous and impartial judgment on those who break God's commandments, and there is therefore no way that Paul's interlocutor could be expressing that his covenant status will secure salvation for him. For verse 3 to be expressing a Jewish view that the covenant is a status that guarantees salvation is irreconcilable with verse 2.⁵⁷⁴ So there is no documentation in the text for the interpretation that the condemning man thinks that his covenant status guarantees salvation and secures him against the eschatological judgment of punishment.

The view that it is typical for Jews to believe that their covenant status guarantees them salvation or gives access to God's special forbearance in the eschatological judgment has been found in Wisdom 11-15, and especially in 15:1-4,⁵⁷⁵ and Romans 2:1-5 is then a polemic against this Jewish tradition. According to the Book of Wisdom, the Jew is convinced that he will escape God's judgment, because even when he sins, he will be spared because of God's compassion (Wisdom 15:1-4). The Jew knows that God will have compassion on the elect, and that therefore God disciplines them mildly when they sin, but punishes the ungodly harshly (Wisdom 12:19-22). The Jew sees repentance as something needed by the Gentiles, rather than by Israel (Wisdom 12:1-18). The view expressed in Wisdom 15:1-4 is what Paul hears from his interlocutor. However, according to my understanding of Romans 2:1-5, the interlocutor *does not* express the view that due to a covenant status he will be saved or be met with a special forbearance, and that makes the argument void. Besides, the comparison with Wisdom 15:1-4 is unfortunate because the author of the Book of Wisdom is *not* describing Israel's relationship to God in 15:1-4. In that case the verses would fall out of the context of the Book of Wisdom and be in opposition to the soteriology of the book. The author is not thinking in ethnic categories, Israel being the righteous and the Gentiles being the godless, but is rather operating with religious-ethical categories. In the past, the contrast was between the righteous Israelites and their godless enemies (the Egyptians), but in the day of the author of the Book of Wisdom, the contrast is between the righteous (Jews and non-Jews) and the

⁵⁷⁴ Rightly pointed out by Weber, *Beziehungen*, pp. 62-63.

⁵⁷⁵ Thus Nygren, *Romarna*, pp. 120-123, Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 49, Cranfield, *Romans I*, pp. 143-144, Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 124, and Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, pp. 78+82.

unrighteous (Jews and non-Jews).⁵⁷⁶ The godless in Wisdom 1-5 are apostate Jews who persecute and oppress the righteous.⁵⁷⁷ And Solomon (Wisdom 6-10) from the past has a typological significance: he is the incarnation of the wise. Likewise, Israel and her enemies at the time of the exodus have a typological significance (Wisdom 11-19): Israel is the type of the righteous, and Israel's enemies are the type of the unrighteous. Therefore, the subject in 15:1-4 are the righteous, and since God's relationship with Israel is analogous with God's relationship with the righteous, the covenant relationship is now transferred to the righteous. Just like God had compassion on Israel when they sinned, so now He has compassion on the righteous (Wisdom 15:1), but it must be noticed that it is the righteous who find compassion. That which constitutes the concept of righteousness is conformity with the will of God, and there is therefore a volitional element in τὸ ἐπίστασθαι in 15:3a, and "to know" implies recognizing and following the will of God. Wisdom 15:3b does not mean that God grants immortality irrespective of a person's religious-ethical life because of His power of compassion, but since righteousness is immortality (Wisdom 1:15), and compliance with the commandments (Wisdom 3:9 and 6:18) secures incorruptibility,⁵⁷⁸ "to know" (εἰδέναι) is to be understood existentially: the experience of God's power which destroys death makes immortality possible for the righteous.⁵⁷⁹

2. The condemning man feels secure in the face of God's punishing judgment because he thinks that he himself is righteous. Since in verse 2, Paul is describing what is generally accepted, his interlocutor cannot be of the persuasion that he will be saved because of his covenant status or because of a special forbearance. Hence, there is only one possible explanation of their false security: the condemning man does not recognize the existence of sin in himself.⁵⁸⁰ Verse 2 determines the interpretation of verse 3, and we have seen from verse 2 that Paul and his interlocutor agree that whoever commits transgressions will be condemned. We have also seen that the interlocutor thinks that he will be able to avoid God's condemnation. Hence, the logical deduction must be that Paul's interlocutor thinks that he is without transgressions. That this is indeed the case is confirmed by the intention with Paul's argumentation. Paul identifies this type with the words πᾶς ὁ κρίνων and emphasizes in his argumentation that this type commits the same transgressions (verses 1,2,3). The statements τὰ αὐτὰ πράσσεις, τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντας, and ποιῶν αὐτά are of a revelatory character. The condemning man does not see the sin in himself, and

⁵⁷⁶ Cf. Ziener, *Begriffssprache*, pp. 83-88.

⁵⁷⁷ This is explicitly seen from Wisdom 2:12 and 3:10.

⁵⁷⁸ Cf. Kolarcik, *Ambiguity*, p. 182, writes, "If the question of mortality is resolved in faith, it leads to a virtuous life which is crowned with eternal life. If the question of mortality is resolved by reducing the meaning of life to nihilism, it leads to a life of injustice that culminates in ultimate death".

⁵⁷⁹ Thus Murphy, *Might*, p. 93.

⁵⁸⁰ Thus Schlier, *Juden*, p. 39, Schlatter, *Gerechtigkeit*, p. 74, and Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, pp. 58 and 62.

therefore Paul has to reveal that he, too, breaks the law.⁵⁸¹ This is Paul's intention. Now we can ask why the condemning man does not recognize the existence of sin in his own life. Paul does not tell us directly how this is possible, but the thought lies near that it is due to the fact that he condemns other people.⁵⁸² When the moral critic condemns others by God's standard, he places himself on God's side, and thereby he reveals his loyalty to God's standards and judgment. He becomes God's partner.⁵⁸³ Thus, the activity of judgment on others serves to immunize against God's judgment because the judging person through his activity of judgment confirms his righteousness i.e. his loyalty to God's standards and judgment. When the activity of judgment confirms and activates the self-righteousness, it may explain why the judging person is blinded to his own transgressions. The condemning man simply is not able to look through his self-righteousness. On top of that, the condemning man may refer to a proof of his righteousness: he does not experience God's punishing wrath like the ones who suppress the truth through unrighteousness (1:18-32) do.

4.6. The actual position of the condemning man (v. 4)

The condemning man does expect that he will be able to escape God's condemnation. That is an illusion. The rhetorical question in verse 4 is a part of the ongoing argument against the position of the interlocutor, and now Paul attacks the position of the interlocutor as it really is.⁵⁸⁴ The second rhetorical question (verse 4) is introduced by an η , and the meaning could be that in verses 3 and 4, Paul is describing two alternate positions in his interlocutor: Either he imagines that he will be able to escape God's punishing judgment, *or* he despises God's forbearance.⁵⁸⁵ But since the position that is described in verse 4 is related to the idea of judgment (cf. verse 4b and the interrelationship with verse 5), it is better to understand the two rhetorical questions as closely connected.

The two rhetorical questions may then be interpreted as two different interpretations of the view of the condemning man.⁵⁸⁶ Cranfield characterizes the rhetorical question in verse 4 as a reinforcing and intensifying rendering of the first one, writing, "The Jew's assumption that he is going to escape God's judgment actually amounts to contempt for God's kindness".⁵⁸⁷ Using this interpretation, the second rhetorical question assumes an explicative function, explaining

⁵⁸¹ Contra Elliott, *Rhetoric*, pp. 184-185, who thinks that Paul is attacking "the interlocutor's presumption of escaping judgement for doing the same things". Tobin, *Controversy*, p. 306, on the other hand, rightly emphasizes that "what is important for Paul in his imaginary interlocutor is the discrepancy between the interlocutor's *claim* to have a higher morality and the *reality* of the interlocutor's practice".

⁵⁸² Thus e.g. Schlatter, *Gerechtigkeit*, pp. 73 and 75, Althaus, *Römer*, p. 22, and Schmidt, *Römer*, p. 43.

⁵⁸³ Thus Schlier, *Juden*, p. 38.

⁵⁸⁴ As we shall see later, the interlocutor does not interpret his situation as conditioned by God's gracious forbearance, and the rhetorical question is stated on the basis of Paul's interpretation of the situation of the condemning man.

⁵⁸⁵ Thus Schlatter, *Gerechtigkeit*, p. 76.

⁵⁸⁶ Thus Murray, *Romans*, p. 58, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 144.

⁵⁸⁷ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 144.

whereupon the condemning man is basing his security in the face of God's punishing judgment, namely God's forbearance. The fact that God is holding back His wrath now in time is proof that he, the condemning man, will escape God's eschatological judgment of punishment.⁵⁸⁸ We have, however, already touched on that interpretation and seen that it is not valid in the context because the interpretation of v. 4 is determined by verses 2 and 3. From verse 2 we have seen that the condemning man has knowledge of God's righteous and impartial judgment on those who break His commandments, and therefore he cannot base his security on God's special forbearance. So the second rhetorical question does not have an explicativ function over against the first.

In verse 4 Paul is describing another aspect of the actual position of the interlocutor. The three nouns χρηστότητος, ἀνοχῆς, and μακροθυμίας are either synonymous, or ἀνοχῆς and μακροθυμίας are explicative of χρηστότητος, defining "kindness" as "forbearance"; the main force is on χρηστότητος in that τὸ χρηστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ (verse 4b) summarizes the three nouns; πλούτου emphasizes the overwhelming and rich character of this forbearance. The three nouns all describe God's forbearance, which in this context refers to God holding back His wrath. The following verse (verse 5) has an explicative function, in that through verse 5 Paul reveals what God's forbearance actually means: that His wrath is being withheld until the day of judgment, and that in this time the condemning man is storing up wrath which will be activated on the day of the eschatological judgment. A principle of relative grace is in activity for a period of time, because God is keeping His wrath away from this category of people.⁵⁸⁹ The despisement (καταφρονεῖς) of God's forbearance is due to ignorance (cf. ἀγνοῶν) of God's intention in holding back His wrath. We have seen from verse 3 that the condemning man thinks that he will be able to escape God's punishing judgment, and as I have already mentioned, the logical deduction is therefore that he does not think that he commits transgressions. And when he does not break God's law, but is righteous, the three terms for forbearance *do not* express his own interpretation of the situation. The condemning man does not see his life outside of God's wrath as an expression of gracious forbearance, but as proof of his own righteousness. If there is to be consistency in the theological view of the interlocutor, he cannot evaluate his existence in this life as conditioned by God's holding back His wrath because of a special mercy. This, then, means that verse 4 does not reflect the interlocutor's own theological interpretation, but expresses Paul's interpretation of the situation

⁵⁸⁸ Thus Schlatter, *Gerechtigkeit*, p. 76.

⁵⁸⁹ Because of the eschatological revelation of the wrath on the day of judgment when God's righteous judgment will be revealed (cf. v. 6), God's forbearance can neither be taken as an expression of indecision (since the forbearance has as its purpose to lead to repentance) nor as indulgence (since God is merely holding back His wrath). The fact that God is not being indulgent is also emphasized by the correlation between vv. 4-5 which shows that the capital of wrath is growing under God's forbearance (thus rightly Horst, μακροθυμία, TWNT IV, pp. 384-385).

of the interlocutor.⁵⁹⁰ So there is no documentation in the text that Paul's interlocutor thinks that he is experiencing a special gracious forbearance on God's part in this life.⁵⁹¹

4.7. The judgment (v. 5)

The condemning man does expect that he will be able to escape God's condemnation. That is an illusion (verse 3). In verse 4 Paul reveals the actual position of the interlocutor: He despises God's forbearance. In verse 5 Paul describes the *actual* situation of the condemning man over against God: He is storing up wrath for the day of judgment. With *κατὰ τὴν σκληρότητα σου καὶ ἀμετανόητον καρδίαν* Paul describes the reason for this storing up of wrath.⁵⁹² *τὴν σκληρότητα σου* is an Old Testament term (Deuteronomy 9:27 and cf. Romans 9:18)⁵⁹³ which Paul is using of the condemning man. It expresses a man's imperviousness to God. *ἀμετανόητον καρδίαν* is a heart which will not let itself be brought to repentance. In the preceding, Paul has given the proof of this "hardness" and "impenitence", and the proof is the condemning man's despisement of God's forbearance and resistance against letting God's forbearance lead him to repentance (verse 4). The hard and unchanging resistance against God is the reason for this storing up of wrath. *ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ θεοῦ* describes the eschatological judgment; *ἐν* is synonymous with *εἰς*, and *ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ...* describes the goal of this storing up of wrath.⁵⁹⁴ The meaning is that already now, by his refusal, the moral critic is storing up wrath which will be activated on the day of judgment.⁵⁹⁵ So the condemning man experiences that God holds back His wrath in the time now being. In connection with the ungodly and unrighteous people (Romans 1:18-

⁵⁹⁰ Thus Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, pp. 62-63-

⁵⁹¹ Behind the description of the actual situation of the interlocutor (v. 4), we can see the contours of the condemning man's own interpretation of his situation. The condemning man, who is well informed of the life and destiny of the ungodly and unrighteous and who identifies himself with God's standards and judgment, interprets the abandonment to lusts, to a worthless mind, and to sinful practice, as an expression of God's punishing wrath. But the condemning man does not experience a similar abandonment in his own life (rightly pointed out by Schlier, *Juden*, p. 39, Schlatter, *Gerechtigkeit*, pp. 76-77, and Barrett, *Romans*, p. 44), and this he interprets as a proof confirming his own righteousness. The fact that God is keeping His wrath away from the life of the condemning man is interpreted as an acceptance of his life. The argumentation of the condemning man is in all its simplicity: no punishment, therefore no transgression (cf. Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 63).

⁵⁹² *κατὰ* is causal (Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 145, and Moo, *Romans*, p. 134).

⁵⁹³ The related word "hardheartedness" is found in Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4; and Ezekiel 3:7.

⁵⁹⁴ It is possible to link *ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς ...* to the verb *θησαυρίζεις*, making *ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς* present, but in view of the context, this interpretation is unlikely. Firstly, there is the contrast between v. 4 and v. 5: in v. 4 Paul is describing how God holds back His wrath, and how through His holding back God wants to lead the condemning man to repentance. Therefore, v. 5 cannot describe a present revelation of wrath, but has to describe how the condemning man is now storing up the wrath that will be activated on the day of judgment. Secondly, in v. 6 Paul is describing a universal judgment, which can only mean that in vv. 5ff, Paul is describing the eschatological judgment.

⁵⁹⁵ The construction could also be an example of a brachyology where "which will break loose" or "which will strike you" is to be supplied. Or *ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς ...* is linked to *ὀργὴν*, and the temporal prepositional phrase qualifies the wrath as the eschatological wrath. In both cases, the meaning is that the interlocutor is already now causing God's wrath through his hardheartedness and impenitence, but the wrath is stored up as a capital which is not payable until *ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς*.

32), Paul has described a present revelation of wrath which consists in abandonment to sin. Here Paul is describing an eschatological wrath. It is described more closely in verses 8 and 9, and I shall therefore wait until then to define the eschatological wrath. The eschatological day of judgment is described with two expressions. One is ἡμερᾶ ὀργῆς. Paul explicates this expression in verses 6-11. "The day of wrath" is the day when God will reveal His wrath on those who are disobedient to the truth, but obedient to unrighteousness. The other is ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ θεοῦ, which Paul explicates in verses 6-11. It is a judgment based on works; it has a double outcome, and it is just, because God judges everyone by the same standard. The judgment is a revelation. It makes visible the dividing line that runs down through humankind. The dividing line is not always clear to see, because through his judgment on other people, the condemning man imagines himself to be on God's side, like the religious Jew does by his admonishing function in relation to others. The revelation is effective, in that it not only reveals, but also realizes the judgment (cf. Romans 1:18).

4.8. Conclusion

In Romans 2:1-5 Paul describes a new category of people: The condemning man. We have seen that Paul is speaking of people in general. He uses the general and non-ethnic "human being"; he generalizes "human being" by the addition "everyone who judges"; he uses no ethnic terms; and he describes the condemning man on the basis of the natural revelation. "Therefore you have no excuse, man ..." (verse 1) is a deduction based on 1:32a. This deduction tells us that the condemning man has knowledge of God's righteous decree. This knowledge is communicated through the natural revelation, and the condemning man is moved into the sphere of the natural revelation. The condemning man's judgment on others reveals his knowledge of God's commandments and judgment (verse 1). With "we know that God's judgment ..." (verse 2), Paul states that the condemning man has knowledge of God's eschatological judgment on transgressors. The condemning man's expectation of escaping God's judgment (verse 3) also reveals his knowledge of God's commandment and judgment.

The condemning man, then, has knowledge of God's righteous decree and His judgment, and thereby of God's commandments. Those are the elements of the natural revelation mentioned by Paul in Romans 2:1-5. This knowledge is maintained by the condemning man. The condemning man has met the same revelation of God as the ungodly and unrighteous people spoken of in 1:18-32. God has revealed Himself through His works for all. The condemning man has refused this revelation of God like the ungodly and unrighteous in 1:18-32. Since the condemning man possesses the same nature as the ungodly and unrighteous, he has been swept away in a fall and has ended up in idolatry like the ones in 1:18-32. But in spite of this refusal, futility in thinking,

darkening, folly, and idolatry, they still know God's righteous decree and His judgment. This knowledge has been kept intact in them. Thus, Romans 2:1-5 confirms my interpretation of especially 1:32 where I concluded that Paul was speaking of a present knowledge in these ungodly and unrighteous people.

Chapter 5

The eschatological judgment (Romans 2:6-11)

The third section in my text describes the eschatological judgment. This section also speaks of a natural revelation and knowledge.

5.1. Judgment as recompense (v. 6)

Paul has spoken of the eschatological judgment in verse 5. He has written of the day of God's wrath

and the revelation of God's just judgment. In verses 6-10, Paul more closely describes God's wrath and His just judgment at the eschatological judgment. First, Paul describes the judgment in general terms (verse 6), and then he elaborates it in verses 7-10. In verse 6, Paul states a Biblical principle: God renders according to each one's deeds.⁵⁹⁶ The judge is God. ὁς refers to τοῦ θεοῦ at the end of verse 5. The eschatological judgment has the form of retaliation. ἀποδώσει is defined in verses 7-10 and tells us how God recompenses. Eternal life is the recompense for perseverantly seeking glory, honor, and immortality (verse 7). Glory, honor, and peace are the recompense for doing good (verse 10). Wrath and anger are the recompense for egoism and disobedience to the truth, but obedience to unrighteousness (verse 8). Affliction and distress are the recompense for doing evil (verse 9). The eschatological judgment is universal and individual.⁵⁹⁷ It hits everyone, both Jews and Greeks (verses 9-10). The criterion for the judgment is deeds, and the criterion is the same for everyone (cf. verses 7-10 and verse 11).⁵⁹⁸

5.2. Survey of interpretations

Paul's mention of a judgment based on deeds has generated a big discussion, but since my project is natural revelation, I shall only sketch some main interpretations and briefly argue for the interpretation which I find to be the best. The following, therefore, is not a thorough survey of research, but merely a presentation of the major interpretations.

1) The hypothetical interpretation. The classical representative of this interpretation is Lietzmann. He writes⁵⁹⁹ that Paul argues from a pre-evangelic point of view where a righteousness by faith is not known, but a judgment based on one's own effort is expected. But since in this case Paul wants to take the idea of a righteousness based on works ad absurdum, the description of a judgment based on deeds must be purely hypothetical. There would be a judgment based on deeds if 1) the gospel did not exist, and 2) fulfillment of the law was possible. When it comes to fulfillment of the law, Lietzmann operates with a complete fulfillment, which is not possible. I shall merely state two objections to the hypothetical interpretation: a) The hypothetical interpretation presupposes that justification by faith and a judgment based on deeds are irreconcilable. They are not. b) The hypothetical interpretation is seriously weakened when one considers how often Paul

⁵⁹⁶ Paul's rendering is very close to the wording in Psalm 62:13 (LXX 61:13) or Proverbs 24:12; this wording is found scattered around in Second Temple Judaism (see Heiligenthal, *Werke*, pp. 172-175). However, Paul does not introduce it as a quote, but uses Psalm 62:12 or Proverbs 24:12 to state this principle.

⁵⁹⁷ See Heiligenthal, *Werke*, pp. 185-186+192, and Yinger, *Paul*, p. 153.

⁵⁹⁸ Paul writes of deeds in the plural in verse 6, but uses it in the singular in verse 7. This tells us that we cannot distinguish between the use of "deeds" in the plural or in the singular. The singular form has a collective force.

⁵⁹⁹ Lietzmann, *Römer*, pp. 39-40.

mentions a judgment based on deeds, and in contexts far removed from the hypothetical.⁶⁰⁰

2) The inconsistent interpretation. Paul usually writes and thinks in terms of righteousness by faith, but sometimes he expresses himself in a way that is irreconcilable with righteousness by faith. This happens in Romans 2:6-10. Judgment by deeds and righteousness by faith are irreconcilable. The inconsistent interpretation may also be stated in the way that in some places Paul writes that all are sinners, whereas in other places he writes of Jews and Gentiles who fulfill the law. The two best known recent representatives are Räisänen and Sanders. Räisänen writes⁶⁰¹ that the thesis in Romans 1:18 – 3:20 is that all are under sin, and therefore no one can fulfill the law. "Inadvertently, however, Paul admits even within that very section that, on another level of his consciousness at least, he does not share this idea. Paul's mind is divided." Sanders writes⁶⁰² that Paul's conclusion is that all are under sin (Romans 3:9+20), but adds, "Chapter 2, however, does not really argue that all are condemned. ... The offer of salvation on the basis of fulfillment of the law is held out repeatedly, and not in terms which make one think that the offer is hypothetical or that the goal is impossible to achieve".⁶⁰³ In that context Sanders quotes Romans 2:7+10+13+14f+25-28. As we shall see, a closer reading of the text shows that in verses 7 and 10, Paul is describing the believer. Thus, the accusation of inconsistency falls.

3) The inclusive interpretation. In this interpretation, Paul is describing obedient or believing Gentiles in verses 7 and 10. The interpretation may be combined with Old Testament believers (Jews and Gentiles) and with Christian believers, i.e. people who know the gospel and have come to faith. What matters here is not the combinations, but the point that Paul is either exclusively or primarily or secondarily thinking of Gentiles who do not know the gospel, but who are nonetheless obedient to God or possess a faith which is hidden to themselves, but known to God. Snodgrass writes that Paul really believed in a judgment based on deeds. "Consequently 2. 6, 10, 13, 14-15, and 26 all point to eternal life or salvation being granted to those who live obediently in accordance with the revelation they have received."⁶⁰⁴ This applies both before and after the coming of Christ. "The issue after the coming of Christ, as before, is an obedient response to the amount of light received so that God is honoured as God and a relationship with him is established."⁶⁰⁵ Snodgrass sees this obedience as a direct result of God's activity. This has nothing to do with righteousness by

⁶⁰⁰ See Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 3:8; 3:13-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 9:6; 11:15; Galatians 6:7-8; Ephesians 6:8; Colossians 3:24-25; 1 Timothy 5:24-25; and 2 Timothy 4:14.

⁶⁰¹ Räisänen, *Paul*, pp. 106-107.

⁶⁰² Sanders, *Paul*, pp. 123-132.

⁶⁰³ Sanders, *Paul*, pp. 128-129.

⁶⁰⁴ Snodgrass, *Justification*, p. 80.

⁶⁰⁵ Snodgrass, *Justification*, p. 81.

works; it is a case of "saving obedience in response to God's grace".⁶⁰⁶ It also does not rule out the death and resurrection of Christ since salvation is on the basis of Christ's death and resurrection "to the doers, those responding in godly obedience."⁶⁰⁷ Davies writes that there is a primary reference to Old Testament believers, be they Jews or Gentiles.⁶⁰⁸ But because of God's impartiality as a principle, God will accept people because of their faith in Him. Davies quotes Acts 10:43f and concludes that there is no reason to limit Paul's words to apply only to those who have a Christian faith, but that God will accept all who have a hidden faith in God before and after the coming of Christ. Deeds, then, are understood as evidence of their faith.⁶⁰⁹ The major problem with this interpretation is that Paul knows of no believing and obedient persons who relate to God through natural revelation. He describes two categories of people who relate to God as He has revealed Himself through His works, and neither of them relate to God in a positive way (Romans 1:18-32 and 2:1-5). He generalizes in Romans 3:11, writing that no one seeks God, and in 3:10 that no one is righteous. Obedience and faith are not found outside the sphere of the gospel.

4) The exclusive interpretation.⁶¹⁰ According to this interpretation, Paul is describing believers in verses 7 and 10. This includes both the Old Testament believers, who have heard the promise and the gospel (cf. Romans 1:4; 1:17; 4:3; and 4:6-8), and the believers of the new covenant, who have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁶¹¹ The judgment based on deeds is universal and has a double outcome: eternal life for the believers, and wrath for the unbelievers. In the following, I shall argue that in verses 7 and 10, Paul is describing believers who stand in the reality of repentance and who strive for God's gifts of salvation. Their perseverance and striving is theocentrically defined. In verses 8 and 9, Paul describes unbelievers, who are disobedient to the truth about God as it has been revealed to them. For both parties, the judgment is according to deeds which testify to and reveal the inner character of a person. The deeds are the outward sign of a person's inward character.⁶¹² The deeds are of an evidential character. This is the function of the deeds on the day of judgment.

⁶⁰⁶ Snodgrass, *Justification*, p. 84.

⁶⁰⁷ Snodgrass, *Justification*, p. 86.

⁶⁰⁸ Davies, *Faith*, pp. 54-57.

⁶⁰⁹ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 152, thinks that Paul is only thinking of Christians, but then adds that if we were to ask Paul, he would include Old Testament believers and even Gentiles with a hidden faith, unknown to themselves, but not to God.

⁶¹⁰ Zahn, *Römer*, pp. 114-118, Moe, *Römerne*, pp. 94-95, Cranfield, *Romans I*, pp. 151-153, Heiligenthal, *Werke*, pp. 194-197, Schreiner, *Law*, pp. 196-204, and Yinger, *Paul*, pp. 178+181-182+288-291.

⁶¹¹ There are variations within this interpretation, in that some will not include the Old Testament believers.

⁶¹² Thus Zahn, *Römer*, p. 114, who writes that deeds denote "das gesamte Verhalten des Menschen in seiner Mannigfaltigkeit, mit Einschluss der verborgensten Regungen des Willens sowohl in der Richtung auf Gott, als auf die Welt und die Mitmenschen ..."; Michel, *Römer*, p. 116, writes, "Die Werke des Menschen sind bei Paulus Ausdruck für dessen Wesen und Existenz, nicht davon ablösbare Handlungen." Heiligenthal, *Werke*, p. 195, writes of "deeds" that they "als Zeichen für die im Gericht offenbar werdende 'innere' Wirklichkeit des Menschen anzusehen sind". Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 72, writes, "In den έργα vollendet sich jeweils die menschliche Existenz". Yinger, *Paul*, pp. 159-161+181-182.

This corresponds with the eschatological judgment being a revelation. This is the best interpretation of the significance of the deeds for the following reasons:

1) Righteousness is a gift that is bestowed on the believer. The description of a judgment by deeds is framed by this understanding of righteousness (see Romans 1:16-17 and 3:21ff). A judgment by deeds where the deeds have an evidential significance, is reconcilable with a bestowed righteousness that is given to the believer. A judgment by deeds where deeds are the reason for the eternal life being given so that deeds acquire or deserve salvation is not reconcilable with a righteousness bestowed as a gift. That would give us two conflicting principles of salvation. The evidential interpretation is the only one that provides consistency in the different statements concerning righteousness by faith and judgment by deeds.

2) In verse 6, Paul writes about deeds in the plural, but otherwise he uses the singular and writes of "good deed", of "unrighteousness" and "evil" and "good" in verses 7-10. These expressions describe "wholeness" or "totality",⁶¹³ and along with the participles found in the verses, these expressions of totality describe character, nature, and existence. This shows that deed or deeds have evidential significance.

3) Deeds reveal faith or unbelief, respectively. The context in Paul shows that it is faith that is the decisive factor in the eschatological judgment by deeds. According to Paul it is only in the believer that we find the deeds that have a positive evidential character. The ungodly and unrighteous people in Romans 1:18-32 are characterized by refusal of God, by idolatry, and by refusal of God's commandments. The condemning man in Romans 2:1-5 is characterized by sin and by an expectation of wrath, and the religious Jew in Romans 2:17-24 is also characterized by being a sinner. In Romans 3:9 and 3:20 Paul summarizes his verdict: All have sinned, and no one will be declared righteous by works of the law. In Romans 3:10 he writes that no one is righteous, and in 3:11 that no one seeks God. With this underlining of universal sin and unrighteousness, it is impossible to speak of good deeds in the non-believers. This is the negative part of the argument. The positive part of the argument is that Paul writes of the believer that he fulfills the law (Romans 8:4) and has the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:2). In a theocentric perspective, "perseverance in good deeds" and doing "good" is what we can find in the believer.⁶¹⁴ In a theocentric perspective, unrighteousness and evil is what we can find in the non-believer. Therefore, the deeds are evidence of the faith and the unbelief, respectively.

4) In this part of Romans (1:18 – 2:5), Paul describes people in relation to God's wrath. In

⁶¹³ Yinger, *Paul*, p. 288, writes, "NT scholars are generally perfectly ready to argue that Paul held to a *holistic* or *unitary view of human* (or at least Christian) *works*" (Yinger's italicizations).

⁶¹⁴ See Heiligenthal, *Werke*, pp. 195-197.

ungodly and unrighteous people, God's wrath is revealed in the present as abandonment to sin. In the condemning man, God's wrath is not revealed until the day of judgment. Paul has described that in 2:5, and he follows it up with an explication of the day of judgment in verses 6-10. Since Paul is describing the eschatological judgment, it follows that he includes the believers in his description. This is the reason why Paul mentions believers at this point in his exposition. Otherwise, in Romans 1:18 – 3:20, he describes mankind in its relationship to God outside of the gospel and outside of the faith in Jesus Christ. Romans 2:6-10 and 2:25-29 are exceptions because in both places Paul is looking ahead to the eschatological judgment. In Romans 1:16-17 and 3:21ff, Paul describes people in their relationship to God through the gospel and faith in Jesus Christ.

3.2. The first display of the judgment (vv. 7-8)

In verse 6, Paul describes the eschatological judgment in general terms. Verses 7-8 explicate verse 6. The substantival participle stands attributively to ἐκάστῳ, and it may be understood in two ways.

1) δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν is the gift they receive. The three terms are objects of the word "render". ζῶν αἰώνιον is the object of ζητοῦσιν and describes what they seek.⁶¹⁵ καθ' ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ qualifies the understood ἀποδώσει and describes the norm for this recompense. The arguments for this analysis are 1) that the gift in verse 10 is "glory", "honor", and "peace", and 2) that καθ' ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ is parallel with κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ and therefore qualifies the understood ἀποδώσει. But as a critique of this, it may be mentioned firstly that we are to compare verse 7 to verse 8 and not to verse 10 because verses 7 and 8 stand antithetically. And in verse 8 it is certain that the last words ("wrath and anger") in the sentence describe the recompense. Secondly, the only natural thing is that the three objects ("glory and honor and immortality") go with the participle since they stand between τοῖς and ζητοῦσιν. Thirdly, καθ' ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ is not parallel with κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ. The former phrase focuses on perseverance, whereas the latter focuses exclusively on the deeds themselves.

2) δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν are objects of ζητοῦσιν and describe what they are striving after.⁶¹⁶ καθ' ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ qualifies ζητοῦσιν and describes the norm for their search. ζῶν αἰώνιον is the gift that they receive. It stands as the object of "render". This is the best way to analyze the construction when one looks at the construction itself and compares it with the antithetical wording in verse 8.

In the explication of verse 6, Paul mentions two classes of people. One class is mentioned in

⁶¹⁵ This is an interpretation that is found especially in older commentaries; see Zahn, *Römer*, pp. 114-115, Lenski, *Romans*, p. 148, but is also found in Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 126.

⁶¹⁶ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 147, and Moo, *Romans*, p. 137.

verses 7 and 10. In verse 7 Paul speaks of "those who seek glory and honor and immortality". The substantival participle describes that which is characteristic of them. With ζητοῦσιν, Paul describes their striving. The aim of their striving is stated with the three objects: δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν.⁶¹⁷ The three objects are three different descriptions of the eschatological gift of salvation. This can be seen from verse 10 where "glory" and "honor" are the eschatological gift of salvation. δόξαν is salvation as "glory" and refers to the believer's conformity to the Son of God, whereby he is glorified (Romans 8:18+21+30; 9:23; and 1 Corinthians 15:43). τιμὴν (Romans 9:21 and 1 Timothy 2:20-21) is God's eschatological recognition of the believer. ἀφθαρσίαν (1 Corinthians 15:33; 15:42; 15:50+53f) refers to the resurrection hope of a new, incorruptible body. The aim of this striving, then, is the eschatological salvation.

Paul, then, speaks of the aim of this striving in a specifically Christian way, and in favor of this interpretation, the following arguments may be advanced: a) The theme of Romans 1:16-18 links righteousness and faith. b) The context shows that in verse 7, Paul is describing the striving of the believer. In verse 5, Paul speaks of "hardness" and "unrepentant heart" as the reason for the storing up of God's wrath. Thereby, they are unequivocally placed in a negative relationship to God. The terms imply that if they replace their "hardness" and "unrepentant heart" and turn to God, they will no longer be storing up wrath, but will receive eternal life on the day of judgment. Those who strive for glory, honor, and immortality, are thus defined as those who have repented and stand in a positive relationship to God.⁶¹⁸ c) The three terms "glory", "honor", and "immortality" are used by Paul to describe the specific hope for the believer.⁶¹⁹ The language itself signals that Paul is thinking of believers. d) The antithetical verse 8 describes a class of people who are seen in a theocentric perspective. They stand in a negative relationship to God in that they are disobedient to the truth about God. Since verses 7 and 8 are antithetical to one another, the only natural thing is that the class of people in verse 7 are also seen in a theocentric perspective; this time in a positive perspective which is expressed as this striving for "glory", "honor", and "immortality". e) To Paul, salvation is linked to faith, and therefore this striving is the striving of the believer. f) To Paul, man is "flesh" and thus hostile to God and His gifts of salvation (Romans 8:5-8). The "mind of the flesh" is death and not life. Therefore, verse 7 is a description of believers, and "glory", "honor", and "immortality" are therefore qualified theologically as the hope of the believer. This hope is based on

⁶¹⁷ Paul partially makes use of the same terms as he used in Romans 1:18-32: in verse 23 he uses δόξα and ἀφθαρσία as predicates of God – δόξα, however, has a different meaning in verse 23.

⁶¹⁸ See Heiligenthal, *Werke*, pp. 183-184, and Davies, *Faith*, p. 56.

⁶¹⁹ Davies, *Faith*, p. 54. When Paul uses δόξα in the sense of "glory" of the eschatological gift of salvation, it is always linked with believers as expectation, hope, or gift. τιμὴ is used only once in Paul of eschatological honor (see, however, Romans 9:21). ἀφθαρσία is used of the eschatological gift of salvation in 1 Corinthians 15:42+50+53+54; Ephesians 5:24; and 2 Timothy 1:10, and always in connection with the believer.

God's revelation, and "glory", "honor", and "immortality" are therefore placed in a revelatory context which defines their hope. The striving of this group is of a theocentric character.⁶²⁰

This striving (ζητοῦσιν) is ethically qualified. καθ' ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ qualifies ζητοῦσιν and describes the norm for this striving. The prepositional phrase answers the question, How does one strive for glory, honor, and immortality? The answer is: By perseverance in doing good.⁶²¹ The ideal is not the purely contemplative life which focuses on the eschatological gifts of salvation, loosening the bond to one's fellow man and to the good. The ideal is a striving for making the good real. καθ' ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ has a qualifying influence on this striving. The converse is also true, in that the eschatological striving has an influence on this "perseverance in doing good".⁶²² This striving lives in the good deed,⁶²³ and this sets the good deed apart from general ethical conduct and makes it the deed of the believer.

For the believers, God's just judgment is eternal life. ζωὴν αἰώνιον stands as the object of ἀποδώσει, describing what God will recompense them with. Here, "eternal life" is the eschatological gift of salvation. "Glory", "honor", and "immortality" define the content of the eternal life, describing elements thereof.

In verse 8 Paul writes about the other class of people. The verse is worded in a way that makes it antithetical of verse 7. τοῖς δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας καὶ ἀπειθοῦσι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πειθομένοις δὲ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ stands attributively to ἐκάστῳ in verse 6. The construction consists of a substantival prepositional clause and two substantival participles. The construction describes the character of this class of people. The first characteristic is that they are ἐξ ἐριθείας. ἐξ denotes the motive, and ἐριθεία means either "strife" or "selfishness". In the context, "selfishness" fits better as a contrast to striving for glory, honor, and immortality through perseverance in doing good (verse 7), and it also fits the next two characterizations better. This class of people are selfish. The selfishness is the reason for the two following characteristics.

The second characteristic is that they are τοῖς ... ἀπειθοῦσι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ: They are disobedient to the truth. Paul writes about the eschatological judgment, which is universal and individual, and which will strike everyone who is disobedient to the truth. Paul describes the disobedient ones in relation to "the truth". The substantivized participle describes character, so it is the character of this class of people to be disobedient to the truth. As character it is something ongoing, existential, and

⁶²⁰ Zahn, *Römer*, p. 118, Murray, *Romans*, p. 64, Davies, *Faith*, pp. 53-57, and Moo, *Romans*, p. 137. Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 147, writes of "goodness of life ... as the expression of faith". Schreiner, *Law*, pp. 189-204, argues from Romans 2:26-29 that Paul is thinking of believers.

⁶²¹ Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, pp. 65-66.

⁶²² In this context, ὑπομονὴν means "perseverance"; it cannot mean "patience" like Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 73, thinks ("dem geduldigen, guten Werk").

⁶²³ Thus Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 72.

present. According to Romans 1:18 – 2:24, all mankind stand in a relationship to "the truth". Paul uses τὴν ἀλήθειαν in Romans 1:18 of God as He has revealed Himself in that which is created, in nature, and in history, and as He is known by man. In Romans 2:20, Paul again uses the word "truth" of the truth found in the law and known by the religious Jew (cf. Romans 10:21; 11:31; and 15:31). Both Gentile and Jew know "the truth" about God through natural revelation and special revelation.⁶²⁴ The truth is ongoingly being revealed to them through God's works (Romans 1:20) and through the Old Testament, but this class of people refuse the truth. This is totally in line with the description of the ungodly and unrighteous people in Romans 1:18-32 who suppress the truth. This is in line with the description of the condemning man in Romans 2:1-5 who is disobedient to God ("hardness and impenitent heart"; verse 5), and of the religious Jew in Romans 2:17-24 who, through his sin, is disobedient to God and dishonors God (Romans 2:23). After all, there is no one who seek God (Romans 3:11). The characterization τοῖς ... ἀπειθοῦσι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ implies an ongoing and present relationship to "the truth". This confirms my interpretation of Romans 1:18-32 where I concluded that "the truth about God" remained intact, but suppressed, in man.

The third characterization is that they are τοῖς ... πειθομένοις δὲ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ. As a contrast to the preceding participle, "but obedient to unrighteousness" is the best translation. This is a consequence of their selfishness. We have encountered ἀδικία in Romans 1:18 and 1:29. It is basically an ethical term, but also connotes opposition to God. "Unrighteousness" is a breach of God's righteous decree (Romans 1:32), and Paul has given examples of unrighteousness in 1:24+26-27+28-31. The parallel concept to "unrighteousness" is "evil" (Romans 2:9). The third characterization describes them as obedient to unrighteousness.

The judgment is characterized as wrath and anger. ὀργὴ καὶ θυμὸς stand in the nominative. We could have expected them to be in the accusative as objects of an understood "render" (verse 6), but Paul has linked verse 8 more loosely to verse 6 than verse 7. Thereby the construction is broken. We supply an ἔσται. The two terms for anger are synonymous. The wrath is qualified as God's wrath. It is God who renders; therefore, the wrath comes from Him. We have heard of God's wrath in Romans 1:18, and we have seen that the wrath manifests itself in history as abandonment (1:24; 1:26-27; and 1:28ff). Paul describes a present wrath in Romans 1:18-32. In Romans 2:1-5 and 2:6-11, we encounter God's wrath once again. Now in time, the condemning man is storing up wrath which will be activated on the day of judgment. The day of judgment is qualified as the day of wrath, and wrath and anger are God's recompense on the day of judgment. Together with the description in Romans 1:18-32, it is possible to characterize God's wrath. Romans 1-2 suggests that

⁶²⁴ It is preferable to let "the truth" refer to the revelation and knowledge of God, since in the next phrase Paul writes of "unrighteousness".

God's wrath is not an emotion, but a personal reaction. The wrath arises in God, and is thus personal. The wrath is an act of judgment.⁶²⁵ It arises because of sin; the examples in Romans 1:18-32 show that. And in Romans 2:5 the wrath arises because of man's hardness and impenitence. The wrath is God's punishing judgment on sin. Thus, the wrath is an active-dynamic concept. The three manifestations of wrath in Romans 1:18-32 show this very clearly, and even Romans 2:5 shows it in a paradoxical manner, in that God does hold His wrath back, but He will activate it on the day of wrath. The wrath is God's recompense on the day of judgment, and this also shows that the wrath is an active-dynamic concept. On the basis of Romans 12, we may define the wrath. God's wrath is refusal and distance. It is abandonment and rejection. In Romans 1:18-32, the triple παρέδωκεν defines the wrath as abandonment. In Romans 2:6-10, the wrath in its contrast to life is again defined as rejection and refusal.

5.4. The second display of judgment (vv. 9-10)

Paul writes about the eschatological judgment (verse 6) and explicate it in verses 7-10. In verses 9-10 Paul formulates two sentences that stand antithetically to each other. The sentences are not dependent on verse 6. In verse 9, we supply an ἔσται. In verse 9 Paul writes about those who are struck by God's wrath, and in verse 10 he writes about those who receive eternal life. Together with verses 7-8 they form a chiasm. "Affliction and distress" stand as a parallel to "wrath and anger". The two pairs of words correspond with one another. They describes two aspects of the same matter. The wrath and anger are the cause, and the affliction and distress are the effect.⁶²⁶ The terms θλίψις and στενοχωρία describe experience and express the suffering that strikes them at the eschatological judgment. "Affliction" (θλίψις) is often used of the trials of the believers in this world. Here it is used of the suffering of the non-believers. θλίψις is the effect of the wrath as external pressure and strain. στενοχωρία is either synonymous with θλίψις, or it is the effect of the wrath as internal plight and anguish. "Affliction and distress" describe a pressure and strain on life which hinders life and self-expression. With ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ψυχὴν ἀνθρώπου Paul once again stresses the individual, universal, and impartial character of the judgment. The class of people who encounter "affliction" and "distress" are characterized in the participial clause. The adjectival participle τοῦ κατεργαζομένου τὸ κακόν characterizes them as people who will evil. In verses 8 and 9 Paul characterizes those who are struck by the wrath. He characterizes them as selfish persons who are disobedient to the truth, but obedient to unrighteousness (verse 8) and as persons who do evil (verse 9). The two descriptions stand in parallel and mutually qualify one another. Verse 9 tells us

⁶²⁵ See Bell, *No*, pp. 31-33.

⁶²⁶ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 149, and Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 127.

that this obdience to unrighteousness manifests itself in the practice of evil. Verse 8 enlarges on verse 9 and tells us that Paul does not only give an ethical description of man, but that opposition to God and conscious consent to unrighteousness is a part of the practice of evil. In this context, "unrighteousness" and "evil" are two different words for the same thing. The relationship to God characterizes evil as evil.

With Ἰουδαίου τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνας Paul once again stresses the universal and impartial aspects. The criterion for judgment and the judgment are the same, and therefore πρῶτον has a temporal force. The temporal priority of the Jew is based on a priority in salvation history and means that the judgment will strike the Jew first.

Verse 10 stands antithetically to verse 9. Paul is still writing about the eschatological judgment, and now he writes about the destiny of the believers. We supply an ἔσται. δόξα, τιμὴ, and εἰρήνη describe what the believers will now receive. "Glory and honor and peace" stand as a parallel to "eternal life" in verse 7. The different wordings correspond to one another. They describe the same matter with different words. "Glory", "honor", and "peace" are elements of the eternal life. The various phrases in verses 7 and 10 mutually qualify one another in that "glory", "honor", and "peace" are qualified as eternal life, and in that "eternal life" is qualified as "glory", "honor", and "peace". In verse 7, Paul used "glory", "honor", and "immortality" to describe the striving of those who had repented; here "glory" and "honor" are repeated, whereas "immortality" is replaced with "peace". "Peace" is the eschatological peace.

In verse 9, Paul wrote ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ψυχὴν ἀνθρώπου, whereas here he restricts himself to a παντὶ. With "everyone", Paul once again stresses the individual, universal, and impartial character of the judgment. Everyone who possesses the character trait of doing good will receive "glory", "honor", and "peace". That is the content of the recompense for them. The adjectival participle τῶ ἐργαζομένῳ τὸ ἀγαθόν stands descriptively and characterizes them as people who do good. τῶ ἐργαζομένῳ stands as a parallel to τοῦ κατεργαζομένου in verse 9. In this context, the two verbs have the same meaning. With the participle, Paul writes about people's character. In verses 7 and 10 Paul characterizes those who have repented and receive eternal life. He characterizes them as people who strive for glory, honor, and immortality through perseverance in doing good (verse 7) and as people who do good (verse 10). The two descriptions stand in parallel and mutually interpret one another. "Perseverance in doing good" corresponds to "good" in verse 10. Verse 7 enlarges on verse 10 and tells us that Paul does not only mention the people in question from a superficially moral point of view, but enlarges the ethical question to contain a relationship to God and His gifts of salvation. The relationship to God qualifies good as good. By its mention of "good", verse 10

stresses that the practice of good is an essential element in this class of people.

For the second time in this section (1:18 – 3:20), "good" appears (see 2:7). The contrast is "evil", which Paul has described in depth in 1:18ff. "Evil" corresponds to unrighteousness (Romans 1:18; 1:29; and 2:8). Evil or unrighteousness is punished by God (2:2-3+5) and is thereby defined as breaches of God's will and order. Evil or unrighteousness is breaches of God's righteous decree and is punished by death (1:32). Here it is once again defined as breaches of God's order. Evil or unrighteousness is exemplified in 1:24+26-27+29-31, and here, too, it is set in relation to God's order and defined as breaches thereof. Evil or unrighteousness is defined as against nature (1:26-27), and as we shall see, evil or unrighteousness is set in relation to God's law in Romans 2:12-16. As I have mentioned, "good" appears in verse 7 and here. It is not defined except through the contrast with evil, and thereby with unrighteousness. Good, then, is that which is not evil and unrighteous; it is that which does not break God's order and will, and it is that which is not punished by death. The good is the natural. In Romans 2:12-16, good is set in relation to God's law.

With Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνι, Paul once again stresses the universal and impartial aspects. The criterion for judgment and the judgment are the same, and therefore πρῶτον has a temporal force. The temporal priority of the Jew is based on a priority in salvation history and means that the Jew will be the first to receive the gift of salvation. In verse 11, Paul rounds off the paragraph and states the reason for the universal judgment: God's impartiality.

5.5. Conclusion

In Romans 2:6-11 Paul describes the eschatological judgment. It is universal, individual, and impartial. The judgment is by deeds. We have seen that the deeds have an evidential function and reveal men's faith or non-faith respectively. We have seen that in verses 7 and 10, Paul describes believers. My focus is natural revelation, and we also meet that in this paragraph as a part of the revelatory context of the judgment. Those who are punished with wrath are characterized in verse 8 as "those who are disobedient to the truth" and in verse 9 as "those who do evil". Both Jews and Gentiles are in mind. Therefore, the first statement applies to the Gentiles as well, and since the judgment is universal, it applies to all Gentiles who encounter God's wrath. The statement tells us that the Gentiles know the truth about God (cf. 1:18). It has been revealed to them, it has been known and is still known, and they oppose it. The descriptive participle implies that the knowledge is a present, intact, and maintained knowledge. The second statement also applies to all Gentiles who encounter God's wrath in the judgment. Implicitly this statement tells us that the Gentiles have knowledge of God's commandments since it is an axiom in Paul that accusation and judgment presupposes knowledge. God can only accuse and judge the evil deeds of the Gentiles (cf. verses 6

and 9) if they have knowledge of God's commandments (that which is good). Therefore, the fact that God judges them implies that they have knowledge of God's commandments.

Chapter 6

The natural law (Romans 2:12-16)

In Romans 1:18-32, Paul has written about ungodly and unrighteous people who suppress the truth with unrighteousness. He has described God's present judgment on them and revealed that this judgment is caused by their ungodliness on the religious level and their unrighteousness on the ethical level. These people know God's righteous decree: that those who practice unrighteousness

deserve death. In Romans 2:1-5, Paul has written about the condemning man, his unrighteousness, and his knowledge of God's judgment on unrighteousness. Paul reveals that the condemning man is storing up wrath for the day of wrath because of their refusal of God and their unrighteousness. In connection with the description of the condemning man, Paul elaborates on the eschatological judgment. It is a judgment by deeds and implies that those who do evil will be struck by wrath, and those who do good will receive glory. In Romans 1:18-32 and 2:1-5, Paul has described these people in general – be they Gentiles or Jews – with these characteristics. He is, however, primarily thinking of Gentiles. But the decisive thing here is that Paul is describing Gentiles who will be judged because of their unrighteousness. However, this judgment demands that the Gentiles have knowledge of God's will so that they know what righteousness and unrighteousness is, because God can only accuse and judge people because of their unrighteousness when they know what unrighteousness is. Therefore, Paul has shown that the two categories of people have knowledge of God's law. This happens most clearly in 1:32 and in 2:2. But Paul has not explained where this knowledge comes from. He has described a natural revelation of God through God's works. He has described it in such a way that a revelation of the law is not included therein. Therefore, Paul still has to explain how the Gentiles know God's commandments. This happens in Romans 2:12-16.

6.1. With and without the Law of Moses (v. 12)

Paul links the verse to the preceding with a γάρ. This cannot be causal as there is nothing in verse 12 that could give a reason for the principle of God's impartiality. So it must be explicative, explaining God's impartiality in the negative judgment,⁶²⁷ as Paul writes only of perdition in verse 12. The impartiality is displayed in that all who sin ἀνόμως will perish ἀνόμως, and all who sin ἐν νόμῳ will be judged διὰ νόμου. The impartiality consists in the fact that God calculates in people's different situations in His judgment on the same sin.⁶²⁸ In verse 12, Paul states two parallel and generalizing statements. He writes of "all who" and divides mankind into two groups who perish. In both sentences, Paul uses the same word for sin (ἥμαρτον). In verse 12b it is clear that sin is breaches of the law, and since the two instances of "sinned" stands in parallel, they have the same meaning. The same sin is found in both categories in verses 12a and 12b. Paul also describes the same destiny with ἀπολοῦται and κριθήσονται respectively. They both stand in the future tense, and in this context they refer to the eschatological judgment. ἀπολοῦται describes eschatological perdition, and the parallel κριθήσονται also describes eschatological perdition. Because of the parallel ἀπολοῦται and because of the contrast to δικαιωθήσονται in verse 13, κριθήσονται has a

⁶²⁷ Murray, *Romans*, p. 69, Bassler, *Impartiality*, pp. 138+140, and Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 116.

⁶²⁸ Murray, *Romans*, pp. 68-69.

negativ meaning: "they will be condemned".⁶²⁹ The two categories have the same characteristic behavior (sin) and will meet the same destiny (judgment).⁶³⁰ But their situations are different, and this difference appears in ἀνόμως for the one group and in ἐν νόμῳ and διὰ νόμου for the other group. For the first time Paul uses the term "law" and the contrasting concept ἀνόμως.

In verse 12, Paul only mentions those who perish. This is given. Paul divides the lost humanity into two groups. This is also given. The question is who the two groups are, and what is meant by ἀνόμως and ἐν νόμῳ/διὰ νόμου respectively. The two questions are inseparably connected. I shall begin with a definition of "law" in ἐν νόμῳ and διὰ νόμου. Paul writes of God's eschatological judgment, and since law is an instrument that is used in the judgment, "law" is God's law. In verses 12-13 Paul focuses on God's law. Then I shall proceed to pinning down ἀνόμως.

a) The adverb stands in contrast to ἐν νόμῳ which means "in or under the law", and διὰ νόμου which means "by the law". Because of this contrast, ἀνόμως is "without law". This is the first definition.⁶³¹

b) ἀνόμως could be understood cognitively, so that this group in verse 12a are without knowledge of the law. This, however, is impossible in the context. When we read ἀνόμως on the basis of the preceding, we find that no categories of people are without knowledge of God's law. The one category of people, whom Paul has spoken of in Romans 1:18-32, have knowledge of God's righteous decree, including God's commandments (1:32), and the second category of people, whom Paul has spoken of in Romans 2:1-5, have the same knowledge because of the link to Romans 1:32 and because of Romans 2:2. When we read ἀνόμως on the basis of what follows, Paul writes that Gentiles have the work of the law written on their hearts (Romans 2:15) and that the Jew knows the law of God (Romans 2:17ff). All have knowledge of God's law. ἀνόμως, then, is not to be understood cognitively.

c) In verse 13, both groups in verse 12 are identified as hearers of the law, but not doers of it, and thus, ἀνόμως is paradoxically qualified as "with knowledge of law".

d) Paul's argumentation in 1:18 – 2:5 shows that ἀνόμως cannot mean without knowledge of God's law. The presupposition for being without excuse (Romans 1:20 and 2:1) is that God has revealed Himself to man, and God could not judge these people "without law" if they did not have knowledge of His law.⁶³² Revelation is a prerequisite for judgment. Therefore, all who sinned

⁶²⁹ Moo, *Romans*, p. 146.

⁶³⁰ Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 100.

⁶³¹ Because of this contrast, ἀνόμως cannot mean "lawlessly" or "godlessly" (contra Fitzmyer, *Romans*, pp. 307-308, and Thorsteinsson, *Interlocutor*, p. 162).

⁶³² Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, pp. 97-98.

without the law, have received a revelation of the law.⁶³³

When both groups in verse 12 commit the same sin, meet the same destiny, and have the same knowledge of God's law, the only fair interpretation in the context is that ἀνόμως means without the Law of Moses.⁶³⁴ Paul uses the word "law" of the Law of Moses, and ἀνόμως means without the Law of Moses.⁶³⁵ Using Bornkamm's expression, ἀνόμως has a relative and limited meaning and is exclusively set in relation to the written law.⁶³⁶ This interpretation is based on three factors.

a) Verse 12 is an explication of God's impartiality in verse 11. Verse 12 is about the eschatological judgment, and thus it describes the same matter as verses 6-10. In verses 7-10, two groups appear: Those who receive eternal life (verses 7+10), and those who encounter wrath (verses 8-9). Within both groups we find Jews and Greeks (verses 9-10). Here in verse 12 we only find those who encounter wrath, and when Paul divides them into two groups, it matches the division into Jews and Greeks.

b) Romans 2:14-15 describe Gentiles "who do not have the law". This is a parallel concept to "without law" in verse 12, and we find the same paradoxical fact that the Gentiles are without law and have knowledge of the law. Thus, those in verse 12a are identified as Gentiles. This identification is strengthened when we see that verses 14-16 are a reason or an explanation of verse 12a.

c) In Romans 2:17-24, the Jews are identified as people who have the law. Thus, the persons in verse 12b are identified as Jews. They have the Law of Moses. The contrast group is the Gentiles who do not have the Law of Moses.

Verse 12, then, describes Gentiles and Jews. The Law of Moses is linked to the Jews, and the Gentiles are those who stand outside of the Law of Moses. Paul writes of all those who sinned without the Law of Moses. "Sin" is breaches of the law, and "have sinned" is a summarizing

⁶³³ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 153, dismisses the idea of natural law and renders ἀνόμως as "in ignorance of the law"; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p. 305, has a similar interpretation: "If they sin without knowledge of its prescriptions [i.e. the Law of Moses], they will perish without respect to it: their evil and sinfulness brings its own condemnation, even though it is not the condemnation derived from the law." Thorsteinsson, *Interlocutor*, pp. 161-162, thinks that verse 12a does not say that they will be judged, but simply that they "will perish", and that verse 12b says that they be judged, but not what their destiny will be. Verses 12a and 12b are about two different things. Thorsteinsson, then, is in favor of joining Stowers, who thinks that ἀνόμως means "lawlessly" or "in a lawless manner". "Taken thus, Paul is saying that whoever (whether Jew or gentile) has acted outrageously against God's precepts will eventually be wiped out. Verse 12a seems to thus summarize the statements made in vv. 8-9." Thorsteinsson's interpretation breaks the parallelism and is inconsistent, in that ἀπολοῦνται is not a judgment, but verse 12a is a summary of verses 8-9 which describe God's judgment.

⁶³⁴ This is a classical interpretation; it is found e.g. in Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 62, Stöckhardt, *Römer*, p. 83, Moe, *Romerne*, p. 100, Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 68, Murray, *Romans*, p. 70, Bassler, *Impartiality*, p. 140, Käsemann, *Römer*, pp. 57-58, Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 132, Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 95, Moo, *Romans*, p. 145, and Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 118.

⁶³⁵ Paul uses the same type of language in 1 Corinthians 9:21 where he uses ἀνόμως of the Gentiles, meaning "without law", i.e. without the Law of Moses (see the contrast in verse 20).

⁶³⁶ Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 100.

characterization which is expressed from the point of view of the eschatological judgment. With ἀνόμως καὶ ἀπολοῦνται, Paul describes the corresponding judgment. There is a precise correspondence between the sin's character of being "without law" and the judgment's character of being "without law".⁶³⁷ The judgment is expressed with the word ἀπολοῦται. Because of the context, the verb describes the eschatological judgment, and ἀπολοῦται describes the eschatological wrath and anger (verse 8) with a different choice of words.⁶³⁸

In verse 12b, Paul writes of all those who sinned "in or under the law". He writes of the same sin in this group and writes of the context of their sin. It is ἐν νόμῳ, which describes their situation. In this context (2:12-16), he reserves the word "law" for the Law of Moses,⁶³⁹ and he uses "the law" i.e. the Law of Moses as a parameter so as to say that those without the Law of Moses are "without law". In this context, the Law of Moses is God's requirements and demands which require fulfillment in order to endure the judgment. With διὰ νόμου κριθήσονται, Paul describes the corresponding judgment. However, the corresponding element is not stated explicitly, but follows from the parallel in verse 12a. There is a precise correspondence between the sin's character of being in the context of the Law of Moses and the judgment's character of being by the Law of Moses. "By the law" denotes the norm that is employed in the judgment. The criterion of the judgment is deeds, and the norm of the judgment is the Law of Moses. As I have mentioned, κριθήσονται has the meaning "condemn".

God's impartiality is shown in that God takes into account the two different situations of the sin and considers this when He judges.⁶⁴⁰ However, the outcome and the content of the judgment are the same, just like the sin is the same. This shows implicitly that the two groups encounter the same requirements from God.⁶⁴¹

6.2. A principle of judgment (v. 13)

In verse 12 Paul uses the Law of Moses as a parameter and describes how those without the Law of Moses and those under the Law of Moses will perish because of their sin. In verse 13, a reason is given for this double statement of the fact that those who sinned, each in their context concerning the law, will be condemned.⁶⁴² The reason for this is that it is not the hearers of the law, but the

⁶³⁷ Murray, *Romans*, p. 70.

⁶³⁸ See 1 Corinthians 1:18-19; 8:11; 15:18; 2 Corinthians 2:15; 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:10.

⁶³⁹ Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 57.

⁶⁴⁰ Murray, *Romans*, pp. 68-69, and Bassler, *Impartiality*, p. 140, who writes, " ... that God can only retain impartiality in his judgment by judging the two groups, ... , in different but equivalent ways."

⁶⁴¹ Michel, *Römer*, p. 117.

⁶⁴² Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 58, and Moo, *Romans*, p. 147, think that Paul is only giving a reason for verse 12b. This is strange, since verse 12 consists of two parallel and equal sentences, and since verse 13 states the principle which is

doers of it, that will be declared righteous.⁶⁴³ γὰρ is causal. By οἱ ἀκροαταὶ νόμου is meant those who only hear the law without fulfilling it, in contrast to those who fulfill the law. Those who hear are not righteous before God. What is in mind in the context is the eschatological judgment. The verb stands as a reason for the fact that all those who sinned will perish in the eschatological judgment. The future tense is also used in verse 13b. On the basis of verse 13b, δίκαιοι παρὰ τῷ θεῷ means that the hearers of the law will not be declared righteous before God. παρὰ τῷ θεῷ denotes that righteousness is a status before God. The norm of this righteousness is the law, and when a person fulfills the law, he is righteous and can be declared righteous on the day of judgment. "Righteousness", then, is conformity with the law. When Paul writes about being righteous before God, he focuses on God as the lawmaker. Thus it is stressed that the law is God's law. In the context, δίκαιοι παρὰ τῷ θεῷ refers to a verdict at the eschatological judgment. The contrast to κριθήσονται shows this. Hearing is not enough for righteousness. Doing is necessary. Therefore, it is the doers of the law, i.e. those who fulfill it, who will be declared righteous. δικαιοθήσονται refers to the eschatological judgment. Because of the parallel δίκαιοι παρὰ τῷ θεῷ, Paul uses δικαιοθήσονται with the meaning "declare righteous".⁶⁴⁴ The verb is forensic and states an act of judgment. The contrast to κριθήσονται in verse 12b shows this. When it is the doers of the law who are declared righteous, that makes this judgment a recognition of man's righteousness.⁶⁴⁵

When it comes to the question of the identity of these doers of the law, the same four classical interpretations can be mentioned as in the context of Romans 2:6. In keeping with my principle of mentioning the interpretation that I support last, I shall mention them in another order here.

1) The inconsistent interpretation. Here I mentioned Räisänen and Sanders as representatives. I have argued against this interpretation as far as Romans 2:6-10 is concerned. In this case, the argument will be different. If 13b is read as an expression that it is possible to fulfill the law, that fulfillment of the law is righteousness, and that God will recognize this righteousness, there is inconsistency in Paul. In that case, this statement is in opposition to the judgment on the three categories of people and to the conclusions in 3:9 and 3:19-20. As an objection, it may be held out that this interpretation misses the fact that verse 13 stands as a reason for the judgment on sinners in verse 12, and that verse 13 is a principle of judgment and not a de facto description of persons who fulfill the law. Another objection would be that it creates inconsistency, and since every reading of a

decisive in the judgment of the ones in verse 12a as well as the ones in verse 12b. Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 68, is right when he writes, "V. 13 formuliert ... das allgemeine Prinzip, nach dem die in V. 12 beschriebene Verurteilung durch Gott vorgenommen wird".

⁶⁴³ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, pp. 97-98, directs this principle, that what matters is not hearing, but doing, towards the Jews alone. But verse 13 is a principle of judgment which is directed towards both Gentiles and Jews.

⁶⁴⁴ The two phrases "righteous before God" and "will be declared righteous" are synonymous.

⁶⁴⁵ Michel, *Römer*, p. 117, Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 132, and Westerholm, *Perspectives*, pp. 267-268.

text has as its starting point that there is consistency in the text, inconsistency is no advantage when there is another and more probable reading of the verse, which respects consistency in the argument.

2) The inclusive interpretation. Here, Paul is describing obedient or believing Gentiles. I mentioned Snodgrass and Davies as representatives. I have argued against this interpretation. It is in opposition to the conclusions in 3:9+19-20 and to the basic principle in Paul that only the believer will stand righteous in the eschatological judgment.

3) The exclusive interpretation. Paul is describing believers who fulfill God's law.⁶⁴⁶ The "doers of the law" are believers. Fulfillment of the law is in focus because deeds are the criterion of judgment (see 2:6ff), and the fulfillment have an evidential significance, in that the fulfillment reveals the existence of faith. This interpretation is based on three arguments. Firstly, there is the context which has described the eschatological judgment with a double outcome. Believers will receive eternal life. Non-believers will encounter wrath. In verse 12, then, Paul describes non-believers, and verse 13 is seen as a description of the other group, namely the believers. In the context, the only natural thing is to identify the "doers of the law" with the believers, who receive eternal life (verses 7+10). Secondly, there is Romans 2:26-29, which describes believers, and verse 13 is then to be read on the basis of this scripture.⁶⁴⁷ Thirdly, there is the fact that believers fulfill God's law (Romans 8:4), and therefore, "doers of the law" can be used of believers. In the context of Romans 2:6-10, I argued that Paul describes believers in verses 7 and 10. And although it would be natural in the context to understand "doers of the law" as believers, there are four things that speak against this.

a) Verse 13 stands as a reason for verse 12. The function of verse 13 is to state the reason why the two groups in verse 12 perish. The reason is that Gentiles also know the law, and therefore they, too, can be judged for not being hearers of the law.

b) Verse 13 is a principle of judgment and not a de facto description of another group who are justified through fulfillment of the law.⁶⁴⁸ The function of the verse is not to introduce the "other" group, namely the believers, but to introduce God's principle of judgment.

c) The principle of judgment states the reason why those who sin "without law" and those who sin "in the law" will perish. The principle of judgment is related to this distinction. Thus, Paul

⁶⁴⁶ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 155, Garlington, *Faith*, p. 71. Schreiner, *Law*, pp. 189+194, also belongs in this group when he sees Gentile Christians in verses 7+10 and 26-29 and writes that verse 13, like verses 6 and 7+10, teaches that eternal life will be granted on the basis of good deeds.

⁶⁴⁷ Schreiner, *Law*, pp. 196-204.

⁶⁴⁸ Thus Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 99 ("eine Gerichtsregel"), and Murray, *Romans*, p. 71. Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 99, renders verse 13 like this: "Denn das Tun entscheidet vor Gott, nicht das blosses Hören und Wissen", and Bornkamm adds, "Mehr wil die allgemeine Sentenz Vers 13 in unserem Zusammenhang nicht sagen."

introduces a distinction in verse 12, which is relevant to people who stand outside of the gospel and the faith. People who have not met the gospel and the righteousness from God (Romans 1:16-17 and 3:21ff) relate to God through the law in its two forms. Either through the law without the Law of Moses, or through the law under the Law of Moses. The distinction is irrelevant among believers, be they Jewish or Gentile Christians, because they meet God's law through the tradition of the apostles. The revelatory context of the principle of judgment, then, is the law and only the law. Therefore, Paul cannot be speaking of believers in verse 13.

d) The flow of the argument focuses on the law as the revelatory context for this declaration of righteousness. Paul illustrates God's impartiality in the judgment, in that God takes into account the difference in situation as far as the source of the insight into the law is concerned (verse 12). He speaks of the principle of judgment in verse 13, and in verses 14-16 he states the reason why those without the Law of Moses have knowledge of God's law.

Evaluated on the background of its function and intention, verse 13 is a principle of judgment and not a description of the "other" category. As far as I can see, however, it will change nothing in my overall understanding if the "doers of the law" were believers, but I doubt that that is what Paul is wanting to say here.

4) The hypothetical interpretation.⁶⁴⁹ Paul is speaking of principles, and hence hypothetically. In the context of Romans 2:6-10, I rejected the hypothetical interpretation. Here I do not. In verses 6-10 we have a de facto description of a judgment by deeds and of two groups who are recompensed with eternal life and with wrath. Here we have a de facto description of those who perish (verse 12) and of a principle of judgment (verse 13). In that verse 13 is a principle of judgment, the way is open for a hypothetical interpretation. When Paul writes of the law as an expression of the will of God, and when he identifies righteousness with fulfillment of the law, then righteousness and life are connected with the fulfillment of the law. Whoever fulfills the law is righteous and will live. In Galatians 3:12, Paul describes the law as an order of salvation. Its principle is not faith, but fulfillment of the law, and life is mediated through this fulfillment: "Whoever does these things will live by them". Whoever fulfills the law will be declared righteous at the eschatological judgment. Fulfillment presupposes a complete fulfillment, which no one is capable of. Hence, the statement becomes hypothetical.

Through the reason stated in verse 13, both groups in verse 12 are identified as hearers, but not doers, of *the law*. Those who sinned and who perish ἀνόμως, then, are hearers of the law. They have knowledge of the law. So Paul stresses the equality in terms of sin, destiny, and law, of those

⁶⁴⁹ Murray, *Romans*, p. 71, Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 132, and Moo, *Romans*, p. 148. Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 142, also belongs here although he rejects the word "hypothetical".

without the Law of Moses and those with it. In terms of sin, they have the same sin, which implies knowledge of the same standard. In terms of destiny, they will encounter the same judgment, which once again implies that they will be measured by the same standard. In terms of law, Paul explicitly writes that they have the same law, for they are hearers of the law, which implies that they know the same law.⁶⁵⁰

6.3. The natural law (vv. 14-16)

For decades, Romans 2:14-16 has been considered a problematic text. The reason for this is that there are a number of problems in Romans 2:14-16 which can be localized to the function of the text in 2:12-16 and in 1:18 – 2:16, to the context in 2:14-16 (the time aspect!) and to some marked words and expressions in the verses: There is the understanding of 1) ἔθνη, 2) τὰ τοῦ νόμου/τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου, 3) φύσει, 4) fulfillment of the law, 5) ἑαυτοῖς εἰσιν νόμος, 6) συνειδήσεως, and 7) the relationship between the conscience and the thoughts in verse 15.

6.3.1. Context and function

Syntactically, verses 14-16 is linked to the preceding with a γὰρ. This γὰρ may have an explicative or a causal meaning, but the question is what it explains or provides a reason for in the preceding. There are the following possibilities:

1) γὰρ could explain or give a reason for verse 13b,⁶⁵¹ but this is not possible. It cannot be explicative since verses 14-16 do not describe justification. Nor can it be causal, since there is nothing in verses 14-16 that could give a reason why the doers of the law should be declared righteous, since verses 14-16 are not about how a person is made righteous, nor about the relationship with God, apart from verse 16.

2) γὰρ could explain or give a reason for verse 13a,⁶⁵² but this is also not possible. It cannot be explicative since verses 14-16 are not about the hearers of the law and their status in the sight of God. Nor can it be causal, since verses 14-16 are not about righteousness nor about how a person is made righteous.

3) γὰρ could explain or give a reason for all of verse 13,⁶⁵³ but this is also not possible. The criticism here is the same as that of the first two interpretations.

⁶⁵⁰ On that background, Gathercole, *Where*, p. 198, is completely misleading when he writes, "So, it is no surprise that by the time Paul comes to 2:12-13, he is operating within categories not only that are thoroughly Jewish but also that *could only be Jewish*."

⁶⁵¹ Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 63, who, however, lets that for which a reason is given be their knowledge of the law; Moe, *Romerne*, pp. 101-102, Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 155, and Davies, *Faith*, p. 61.

⁶⁵² Godet, *Romerne*, p. 217, writes that the reason refers to verse 13, but stresses that it refers especially to verse 13a.

⁶⁵³ Weiss, *Römer*, p. 113, and Stöckhardt, *Römer*, p. 96.

4) γὰρ could explain or give a reason for verse 12b, but this is also not possible. Verse 12b describes a group that has the law, whereas verses 14-16 describe a group that does not have the law.

5) γὰρ could explain or give a reason for verse 12a,⁶⁵⁴ and this is the only possibility. Verse 12a describes a category of people who sinned "without law" and who will perish "without law". We have seen that sin and judgment presuppose knowledge of God's law,⁶⁵⁵ but Paul has not explained from where these people who are "without law" have their knowledge of God's law. This he does in verses 14-15. Therefore, this is an essential part of the argument. So verses 14-16 serve as a reason or an explanation why those who are without law have knowledge of law and can thus be judged.

6.3.2. The identity of the "Gentiles" (v. 14)

There are two classical interpretations of ἔθνη.

1) ἔθνη are Gentile Christians.⁶⁵⁶ I shall mention the most important arguments.

a) "The work of the law is written on their hearts" is an allusion to Jeremiah 31:33. Here, the new covenant is described. The allusion shows that Paul is describing Gentile Christians.⁶⁵⁷ This similarity with Jeremiah 31:33 may be the best argument for this interpretation, but the argument does not stand.⁶⁵⁸ In Jeremiah 31:31-34, a new covenant is described, which consists of four elements:

- 1) God puts His law in their minds and writes it on their hearts (verse 33)
- 2) The people are to be God's people (verse 33)
- 3) A saving knowledge of the Lord (verse 34)
- 4) Forgiveness (verse 34)

Paul mentions only one of the elements of the new covenant: God writing the law on their hearts. In

⁶⁵⁴ Hodge, *Romans*, p. 54, Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 100, Murray, *Romans*, p. 73, Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 58, and Moo, *Romans*, p. 149.

⁶⁵⁵ Paul states this principle in Romans 2:13 with the principle of judgment, that it not the hearers of the law, but its doers, that will be declared righteous. Paul states this principle in the sentences in Romans 1:20 and 2:1 concerning people being without excuse; he states it in Romans 1:32 by describing these people's knowledge of God's righteous decree, and by arguing that the condemning man in Romans 2:1-5 have knowledge of God's righteous decree and His judgment.

⁶⁵⁶ Among the older interpreters may be mentioned Mundle, *Auslegung*, pp. 249-256, Flückiger, *Werke*, pp. 26-42, Soucek, *Exegese*, pp. 102-113, and among more recent interpreters, Cranfield, *Romans I*, pp. 155-157, Wright, *Law*, pp. 143-148, and Gathercole, *Law*, pp. 27-49.

⁶⁵⁷ Mundle, *Auslegung*, p. 251, and Soucek, *Exegese*, pp. 101-103.

⁶⁵⁸ This allusion is often argued against by pointing out the difference in language between Jeremiah 31:33 and Romans 2:14. In Jeremiah 31:33, God writes the law on their hearts, but what is spoken of in Romans 2:14 is the *work* of the law. It is true that there is a difference in language, but in reality, the two expressions refer to the same thing.

Jeremiah 31, this means identification with and fulfillment of the law.⁶⁵⁹ In the Gentile Christian interpretation, it means communication of the law. The Gentile Christians do not have the Law of Moses, but God communicates the Law directly to them by writing it on their hearts. The phrase does not have that meaning in Jeremiah 31:33, and Paul also does not have that understanding of Jeremiah 31:33 as he communicates law to the church through the apostolic tradition in oral or written form.⁶⁶⁰

b) "They do the works of the law" denotes a complete fulfillment of the law,⁶⁶¹ and this phrase is synonymous with "doing good" (Romans 2:10) and "keeping the requirements of the law" (Romans 2:26) and "fulfilling the law" (Romans 2:27). Since only believers can fulfill the law (Romans 8:4), these "Gentiles" must be Gentile Christians. However, verse 14 does not describe a complete fulfillment of the law. The accusing and defending thoughts of the conscience relativizes this fulfillment to being only partial.⁶⁶²

c) The context. This concerns firstly the relationship between verses 12-13 and verses 14-16. Verses 14-16 are linked to verse 13b with a γὰρ,⁶⁶³ but as we have seen, this is impossible. Secondly, it concerns the correlation with Romans 2:7-10. In verse 10, Paul writes of believers who do good and who receive eternal life (cf. verse 7). When Paul writes of Gentiles who do the works of the law, they must be Christians.⁶⁶⁴ According to Paul there is only one way to salvation, which is by faith in Christ, and according to Paul, all are sinners, which means that the only group that may be in mind are Christians who do good or do the works of the law. On the terminological level, however, there is not much similarity:

verse 10: παντὶ τῷ ἐργαζομένῳ τὸ ἀγαθόν

verse 14: τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν

On the semantic level there is similarity, in that both expressions express that good (the law) is realized to some extent. But there are three marked differences. 1) In verse 10, the realization is unequivocal and complete, while the realization in verse 14 is ambiguous and partial because of verse 15. 2) The realization has different consequences. Whoever does good (verse 10) is promised

⁶⁵⁹ Kuhr, *Verheissung*, pp. 259-260.

⁶⁶⁰ When this covenant is seen as fulfilled in the NT (see Hebrews 8+10), then this fulfillment is to be seen under the perspective of "already and not yet". The fulfillment is partial in this age and not complete until the return of Jesus.

⁶⁶¹ Mundle, *Auslegung*, pp. 250-251, and Flückiger, *Werke*, pp. 27-29. Differently in Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 156, who writes of an incomplete obedience. Agersnap, *Paulusstudien*, p. 121, writes, "There is no evading the point that 2:14-16 is about Gentiles who are doers of the law, and that is presupposed that they are saved". Agersnap thinks that these Gentiles are Christians (p. 123).

⁶⁶² Whether "doing the works of the law" (verse 14) is synonymous with the aforementioned phrases in verses 10, 26, and 27, I shall discuss later together with the relationship between verses 6-10 and verses 14-16 and between verses 14-16 and verses 25-29.

⁶⁶³ Flückiger, *Werke*, p. 26, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 155.

⁶⁶⁴ Mundle, *Auslegung*, p. 250.

glory, honor, and peace, whereas realization of the law in verse 14 is the reason for this person being a law to himself. 3) The realization has different meanings. In verses 7+10, the fulfillment reveals the existence of faith, but in verse 14, the fulfillment proves the existence of the law.

Thirdly, it concerns the correlation with Romans 2:26-29.⁶⁶⁵ Here, Paul is describing Gentile Christians.⁶⁶⁶ Because of the similarities between the descriptions of the Gentiles in verses 12-16 and of the uncircumcized in verses 26-29, they must be identical. On the terminological level, there is not much similarity:

verse 14:	τὰ τοῦ νόμου	ποιῶσιν
verse 26:	τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου	φυλάσση
verse 27:	τὸν νόμον	τελοῦσα

On the semantic level there is similarity, in that all three expressions express that the law/the work of the law is realized to some extent. The realization is expressed with three different verbs. We encounter the same three marked differences here as we did before. 1) In verses 26-27, the realization is unequivocal and complete, while the realization in verse 14 is ambiguous and partial because of verse 15. 2) The realization has different consequences. In Romans 2:26, keeping the requirements of the law is the reason why his uncircumcision is to be regarded as circumcision. The fulfillment gets a covenant-theological meaning. In Romans 2:27, keeping the law is the reason why he will judge (eschatologically) the circumcized law-breaker. But in Romans 2:14, the realization of the works law is the reason for this person being a law to himself. 3) The realization has different meanings. In verses 26-27, the realization has an evidential significance in that the fulfillment reveals the existence of faith, but in verse 14, the fulfillment proves the existence of the law.

In the Gentile Christian interpretation, it is presupposed that in verses 14-16, Paul is writing of justification, of a complete fulfillment of the law, and of fulfillment of the new covenant. None of these presuppositions hold. On the contrary, Paul provides an argument that the Gentiles are a law to themselves, and describes a testimony to the fact that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Verse 14-16 is a demonstration of the fact that the Gentiles have knowledge of the law.

2) According to the other main interpretation, ἔθνη are Gentiles.⁶⁶⁷ There is, however, a variation as to whether it applies to some, to many – and if so, whom – or to all. I shall mention the most important arguments that ἔθνη are Gentiles.

a) ἔθνη are identified as those "who do not have the law", i.e. the Law of Moses. This

⁶⁶⁵ Mundle, *Auslegung*, p. 254, Soucek, *Exegese*, pp. 103-105, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 156.

⁶⁶⁶ I agree that Paul is describing Gentile Christians in verses 26-29.

⁶⁶⁷ Stöeckhardt, *Römer*, p. 87, Zahn, *Römer*, p. 183, Michel, *Römer*, p. 117, Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, pp. 68-82, Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, pp. 93-118, Kuhr, *Verheissung*, pp. 252-261, Bassler, *Impartiality*, pp. 141-149, Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 98, Moo, *Romans*, p. 149, and Bell, *No*, pp. 152-153.

characterization cannot be used of Gentile Christians⁶⁶⁸ since the OT was the Bible of the Christians, which meant that the Gentile Christians had knowledge of the Law of Moses. Paul also demanded love as the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:8-10 and Galatians 5:14) of the Christians, and the binding core of the Law of Moses was communicated to the Gentile Christian churches through the apostolic tradition (Romans 13:8-10). The characterization "who do not have the law" identifies these Gentiles the way they are now.⁶⁶⁹ The repetition of the characterization in verse 14b confirms this.⁶⁷⁰

b) ἔθνη are identified as those who "by nature do the works of the law". As we shall see, "by nature" describes the source of their knowledge of the law, and since this source is different from the Law of Moses, the Gentiles are identified as Gentiles.⁶⁷¹

c) ἔθνη are identified as those who "are a law to themselves". This phrase means that the law is communicated to them from themselves. This characterization identifies them as Gentiles,⁶⁷² since Gentile Christians encounter the law through the OT and the apostolic tradition. The repetition of the statement that they do not have the law clarifies that when they become a law to themselves, they are still without law. This status is not changed.⁶⁷³

d) ἔθνη are identified as those for whom "the work of the law is written on their hearts". This identifies them as Gentiles because this expression describes God's revelation of the law to them in contrast to the law of Moses, which is God's revelation of the law to the Jews.

e) ἔθνη are identified through the description of the accusing function of the conscience. The conscience serves both to defend and to accuse, and the accusing element rules out that Paul is writing of believers. What is thought of is an accusing function on the day of judgment, but on that day, the believers will not meet accusation, but acquittal. The mention of the accusing thoughts is a serious problem for those who think that Paul is thinking of Gentile Christians. Mundle pushes the problem aside, writing, "Das kann nicht bedeuten, dass das Gewissen gegen sie Zeugnis ablegt".⁶⁷⁴ So, the interpretation is not feasible.

⁶⁶⁸ Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 109, Kuhr, *Verheissung*, p. 252, and Snodgrass, *Justification*, p. 75. This objection may be countered by linking φύσει with the preceding and paraphrase like Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 158, does, " ... although they have not been brought up by virtue of their birth in the possession of God's law (like Jews), they now know it ..." But the repetition of "who are without law" in verse 14b tells us that the Gentiles' status of being without the law is an ongoing status. Davies, *Faith*, p. 62, note 1, rightly notes this.

⁶⁶⁹ Zahn, *Römer*, p. 123.

⁶⁷⁰ Moe, *Romerbrevet*, p. 102.

⁶⁷¹ Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 149.

⁶⁷² Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 123.

⁶⁷³ Davies, *Faith*, p. 62, note 1. Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 158, gives a paraphrase of verse 14b which is in fact rather revealing: "... the sense of these words will rather be that, although they have not been brought up by virtue of their birth in the possession of God's law (like Jews), they now know it and actually have in their hearts the earnest desire to obey it".

⁶⁷⁴ Mundle, *Auslegung*, pp. 254-255. Agersnap, *Paulusstudier*, p. 118, unconcernedly writes that Gentiles "will be acquitted at the judgment", and on p. 135, "Here the conscience first of all testifies positively".

f) Verses 14-16 are a reason or an explanation of verse 12a. Sin and judgment presuppose knowledge of God's law, and Paul now gives the reason why the Gentiles are able to sin and be judged without law. They are because they, too, know God's law.⁶⁷⁵ This is the function of verses 14-16.⁶⁷⁶ This is relevant for Gentiles, but irrelevant for Gentile Christians.

g) The greater context is about Jews and Gentiles. The two ethnic groups are mentioned explicitly in verses 9 and 10, they are mentioned implicitly in verse 12, and they are again mentioned explicitly in 3:9. The greater context confirms that Paul uses "Gentiles" in contrast to "Jews".⁶⁷⁷

6.3.3. The Gentiles (v. 14)

In verses 14-16, Paul describes the Gentiles, and in the following, I shall comment on the individual elements of verse 14. ὅταν ἔθνη ... φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν is a temporal clause where ὅταν + present subjunctive denotes something iterative (BDR 382). ὅταν + present subjunctive marks that the actions of the main clause and the subordinate clause are simultaneous. It is well known that ὅταν + subjunctive may denote both the time and the condition of the action of the main clause.⁶⁷⁸ Here, the temporal clause not only marks the temporal aspect, describing when the Gentiles are a law to themselves, but also describes the condition for this. The fact that the Gentiles do the works of the law is the cause, and the fact that the Gentiles are a law to themselves is the consequence. It has been discussed whether the ὅταν-clause states something unreal and hypothetical or something real and actual.⁶⁷⁹ The context determines this. The intention is to prove that the Gentiles as a category have knowledge of God's law, and since knowledge of God's law is the precondition for being able to speak of sin and judgment (verse 12a), the ὅταν-clause describes the reality.⁶⁸⁰

ἔθνη stands without the definite article, and that has caused some to understand it as indefinite, which has spawned a debate as to whether Paul is thinking of a few, many, or all Gentiles.⁶⁸¹ It is

⁶⁷⁵ Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 68, and Kuhr, *Verheissung*, p. 254.

⁶⁷⁶ Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 121.

⁶⁷⁷ Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 109.

⁶⁷⁸ Cf. Bauer, col. 1190.

⁶⁷⁹ Martens, *Reading*, p. 63, writes of an example of ὅταν which "functions conditionally", and he defines that in this way. "That is, the statement is indefinite, conditioned on the actuality of finding such a case; ὅταν implies that such a case can be found, but not that it has been found". Martens thinks that this is what Paul means.

⁶⁸⁰ Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 147.

⁶⁸¹ Meyer, *Römerbrevet*, p. 64, Weiss, *Römer*, p. 114, Zahn, *Römer*, p. 122, Moe, *Römerne*, p. 102, Michel, *Römer*, p. 117, Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 58, Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 77. Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 133, writes, "... nur Ausnahmefälle aus der massa perditionis der heidnischen Sünder meinen". Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 98, writes that Paul is appealing to "the godly pagan". Moo, *Romans*, p. 149. Martens, *Reading*, p. 66, thinks that Paul is thinking of "the stoic sage", who is, in practice, non-existing. According to Snodgrass, *Justification*, p. 80, verses 14-16 are about Gentiles and about "salvation being granted to those who live obediently in accordance with the revelation they have received." Davies, *Faith*, pp. 60-67, writes of righteous Gentiles who have faith in God and who will be declared righteous. I have already mentioned that there is only one way to salvation through faith in Christ and through an imputed

well known that one must be cautious to place too much emphasis on whether a noun stands with or without an article. The context determines whether ἔθνη is indefinite or definite. The intention is to prove that the Gentiles as a category have knowledge of God's law, and so the statement must apply to all Gentiles.⁶⁸² Only if this is the case can they sin and perish. The intention of the statement makes it universal.

Paul writes of the Gentiles and characterizes them as those who do not have the law. τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα is an adjectival participle which stands attributively to ἔθνη, characterizing them further. The participial clause tells us what is true of the Gentiles qua Gentiles, namely that they do not possess the law. What is meant by the Gentiles being without "law"? The meaning cannot be that they are without knowledge of the law since the Gentiles actually – to some extent – realize the requirements of the law, since they stand in a relationship to the law ("they are a law to themselves"), and since the work of the law is written on their hearts. Paul divides the Gentiles into two categories. The one category he describes in Romans 1:18-32, and these have knowledge of God's righteous decree (verse 32) and hence a knowledge of God's law. The other category he describes in Romans 2:1-5, and they have knowledge of God's righteous decree (cf. verses 1 and 2). The Gentiles, then, have knowledge of God's righteous decree. When they still do not have the law, a specific presentation of the law is in mind, namely the Law of Moses. The content of the law can be determined more specifically. In this context, "the law" is identified as the collection of God's binding commandments. What is thought of is that which is prescribed by the law and which can be implemented in action (cf. "do the things of the law" and "the work of the law"). It is something binding, in that the conscience accuses breaches and defends fulfillment, and in that God judges transgressions. The correlation with verse 12 also focuses on the relationship between law and sin, which confirms that the law is the binding will of God.⁶⁸³ In this context, Paul is thinking of the valid parts of the Law of Moses.

When Paul characterizes the Gentiles as those who do not have the law, he describes them in contrast to Israel, who have the law. He takes a revelation theological or salvation historical perspective on Gentiles and Jews. Israel is the chosen people, and they have received God's law in writing. This happened at Sinai. The law was communicated through Moses. The Gentiles are not the chosen "people"; they have not received God's law in writing and have not been a part of salvation history as it is expressed in the OT.

righteousness.

⁶⁸² Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 54-55, Stöckhardt, *Römer*, p. 87, and Murray, *Romans*, p. 73.

⁶⁸³ There is general agreement on this.

6.3.4. "By nature" (v. 14)

Paul writes of the Gentiles and characterizes them as those who do not have the law of Moses. The next word is controversial φύσει. It may be linked to the preceding⁶⁸⁴ or to the following.⁶⁸⁵ Both parties appeal to Paul's usage. Therefore, we shall look at the usage of φύσις in Paul.

Romans 1:26: εἰς τὴν παρὰ φύσιν (χρῆσιν) – adjectival function

Romans 2:27: ἡ ἐκ φύσεως ἀκροβυστία – adjectival function

Romans 11:21: τῶν κατὰ φύσιν κλάδων – adjectival function

Romans 11:24a: ἐκ τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ... ἀγριελαίου – adjectival function

Romans 11:24b: παρὰ φύσιν ἐνεκεντρίσθης – adverbial function

Romans 11:24c: οἱ τοῖοι οἱ κατὰ φύσιν – part of the subject (adjectival)

1 Corinthians 11:14: ἡ φύσις αὐτὴ διδάσκει – the subject

Galatians 2:15: ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι – adverbial function (probably!)

Galatians 4:8: τοῖς φύσει μὴ οὖσιν θεοῖς – adjectival function

Ephesians 2:3: ἤμεθα τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς – adverbial function (probably!)

A comparison tells us that there are no constructions that are identical or parallel to the construction in Romans 2:14. We can see that Paul most often, but not always, uses φύσις with an adjectival meaning. We can also see that there is a tendency in Paul to place φύσις between the definite article and the noun (5 times out of 10 – Romans 2:14 being kept out). This, then, is a weak indication – but only a weak one – that Romans 2:14 belongs together with the following.

Romans 2:27 is often pointed out as a parallel,⁶⁸⁶ and Wright thinks that it has a special significance since it is the next example of φύσις in Paul and is only 13 verses away.⁶⁸⁷ Based on this parallel, φύσει belongs together with the preceding. But verse 27 is *not* a parallel as it stands adjectivally there, whereas it stands adverbially in Romans 2:14.⁶⁸⁸ The usage of φύσις in Paul is not particularly clarifying. The most interesting examples are those of an adverbial use of φύσις, but the examples are few and not completely parallel. We need other arguments to determine its placement in verse 14.

In Romans 2:14, φύσει stands adverbially and may qualify either the preceding participle ἔχοντα or the following verb ποιῶσιν. If it qualifies ἔχοντα, it characterizes this non-possession of the law. It is "by nature", i.e. by birth. φύσει, then, denotes origin. Two negative arguments may be

⁶⁸⁴ Cranfield, *Romans I*, pp. 156-157, Wright, *Law*, p. 145, Bergmeister, *Gesetz*, p. 53, and Gathercole, *Law*, pp. 35-37.

⁶⁸⁵ Zahn, *Römer*, p. 122, Moe, *Romerne*, p. 102, Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 69, Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 59, Dunn, *Romans I-8*, p. 98, and Moo, *Romans*, pp. 149-150.

⁶⁸⁶ Gathercole, *Law*, pp. 36-37.

⁶⁸⁷ Wright, *Law*, p. 145.

⁶⁸⁸ Gathercole, *Law*, p. 37.

proposed against the view that φύσει belongs together with the preceding. The one argument is based on the linguistic pattern in Paul. It is only a weak indication, but the pattern does suggest that if Paul had been wanting to write about "those who do not have the law by nature", he would have placed φύσει inside the clause before ἔχοντα (τὰ μὴ νόμον φύσει ἔχοντα). The other argument is based on meaning. If we link φύσει to the preceding, it becomes meaningless and redundant.⁶⁸⁹ It does not contribute to the meaning of the sentence and has no function in it. After all, the fact that the Gentiles do not have the law by nature, i.e. by birth, is more than self-evident. This latter argument becomes strong and decisive when we see that φύσει has a meaning and function when taken together with the following, contributing decisively to the understanding of the statement.

So we are to link φύσει to the following verb, ποιῶσιν. The meaning, function, and balance of the statement requires this.⁶⁹⁰ The meaning requires it, for without this φύσει together with the verb ποιῶσιν, we are lacking a reason why the Gentiles fulfill the law.⁶⁹¹ The function requires it because φύσει states the necessary reason, thus having a decisive function in the sentence. The balance in the first part of verse 14 requires this connection to the verb ποιῶσιν because otherwise we would be lacking something to counterbalance the fact that the Gentiles do not have the law. Linked to the preceding, φύσει would only increase the unbalance. When φύσει is linked to the following, however, we get the necessary balance in the first half of verse 14 (from ὅταν to ποιῶσιν) and the necessary counterbalance to explain that these Gentiles still do the works of the law. Because of the built-in contrast in the first half of verse 14, φύσει must be linked to the following.

φύσει belongs together with the following. It is in the dative, thus stating the reason that the Gentiles fulfill the requirements of the law. In the context, there are two possible interpretations of φύσει. According to the one interpretation, φύσει states the motivation to keep the law.⁶⁹² The Gentiles keep the law "by nature", i.e. by virtue of themselves or of their own nature. φύσει denotes the reason why they *do* the works of the law. According to the other interpretation, φύσει states the source of the knowledge of the law. In the first half of the temporal clause, there is a contrast in terms of meaning between the facts that they do not have the law, but they do the works of the law. Because of this contrast, "nature" becomes a counterpart to the law. The near context confirms this. In verse 14b, Paul writes that "these ... are a law to themselves". οὗτοι refers to φύσις, "these" being those who by nature do the works of the law. This tells us that φύσις refers to man's "nature"

⁶⁸⁹ Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 64.

⁶⁹⁰ Cf. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 98

⁶⁹¹ I use the expression "fulfill the law" in a neutral sense.

⁶⁹² Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 78.

or "being", which links the "law" to man's nature. Bornkamm states yet another argument: It is only when φύσει states the reason why fulfillment of the law is found among the Gentiles that the premise (verse 14a) can support the consequence (verse 14b).⁶⁹³ In the near context it is clarified in what sense φύσει can refer to the law. Verse 15a stands as an explication of verse 14b. The explication clarifies that "man" is a man on whose heart the work of the law is written. This defines "by nature" as "by the law in their nature". "Nature", then, is a summarizing expression for "the law in their nature" or for "the work of the law written on their hearts". φύσει is a dative of cause, and the Gentiles fulfill the law "by nature", i.e. by virtue of the law in themselves or of the law in their nature. φύσει states the reason why they do the works of the law.

The Law of Moses communicates knowledge of God's law to those who have it, namely the Jews. The "nature" of man communicates knowledge of God's law to those who do not have the Law of Moses, namely the Gentiles. For them, "nature" takes the place of the Law of Moses. For the Jews, the Law of Moses is the place of God's law. For the Gentiles, man's nature is the place of God's law.⁶⁹⁴ When the law (= the work of the law) is written on the hearts, i.e. is engraved in their nature from birth,⁶⁹⁵ and when the law in their nature is constitutional for their nature, that explains why Paul uses "nature" (φύσις) of the law.⁶⁹⁶ The law belongs to their nature.⁶⁹⁷ When "nature" in

⁶⁹³ Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, pp. 103-104.

⁶⁹⁴ Cf. Hodge, *Romans*, p. 55, who writes, "His object is to show that φύσις supplies to the Gentiles the place of νόμος." Similarly in Weiss, *Römer*, p. 115, and Murray, *Romans*, pp. 73-74. Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 74, writes, "... ist dem Heiden 'von Natur' (φύσει), durch das mit ihrer Schöpfung in ihrem Menschenwesen mitgegebene sittliche Normbewusstsein zugänglich." Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 103, writes, "Φύσει bezeichnet also klar den Grund, warum es zu einem Tun des Gesetzes bei den Heiden kommt." Moo, *Romans*, p. 150, writes that Paul employs a widespread "Greek tradition to the effect that all human beings possess an 'unwritten' or 'natural' law – an innate moral sense of 'right and wrong'." Seifrid, *Revelation*, p. 122, writes that Paul "sees in 'nature' a parallel to the law's role in addressing the human being with the demands of God".

⁶⁹⁵ Cf. Murray, *Romans*, p. 73, who writes of that which is "implanted in thir nature".

⁶⁹⁶ There is no want of suggestions for a rendering of "nature": "the original condition, given with existence" (Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 64), "by themselves, by an innate moral instinct" (Godet, *Romerne*, p. 217), "das von Haus aus, Vorhandene, das Ursprüngliche" (Zahn, *Römer*, p. 123), "own inborn moral nature" (Lenski, *Romans*, p. 164), "according to the natural instinct, or by virtue of the natural knowledge of reason" (Moe, *Romerne*, p. 102), "in ihrer Geschöplichkeit" or (der Heide) "als solcher" (Michel, *Römer*, p. 117), "als solche, d. h. als ἔθνη" (Flückiger, *Werke*, p. 32), "Bezeichnung der vom Geiste Gottes geprägten 'Art' des Glaubenden" (Soucek, *Exegese*, p. 109), "auf Grund ihres Menschenwesens" (Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 69), Murray, *Romans*, p. 73, renders it "natural constitution" and "by native instinct or propension, by spontaneous impulse", Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 59, is "φύσει = von selbst", Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 152, "von sich aus", Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p. 77, defines nature like Käsemann as "von selbst" or "aus sich selbst". Moo, *Romans*, p. 150, writes of "through a natural, inborn capacity".

⁶⁹⁷ The term φύσις and its Latin counterpart are well-known terms in Greco-Roman culture, and various forms of natural law may be linked to the term. φύσις is also known from Second Temple Jewish texts, and there are examples of an idea of a natural law linked to the concept of "nature". This term, then, is well suitable to describe natural law, and therefore, Paul picks up this term and uses it to express his idea of a natural law which is God's law, and which in its content is identical to the Law of Moses (see e.g. Pohlenz, *Paulus*, pp. 75-77, Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, pp. 102-105, and Eckstein, *Begriff*, pp. 150-151). It is characteristic of Paul's view 1) that he does not identify the natural law with the law of nature, i.e. with a regularity in nature, or with nature itself, 2) that he identifies the natural law with God's law, 3) that he identifies the natural law with the core of the Law of Moses, and 4) that he describes the natural law as revelation in that it has been written by God on the hearts of men.

this context assumes the place of Law of Moses and is that which communicates knowledge of the law, then this is similar to the use of "nature" in Romans 1:26-27 and in 1 Corinthians 11:14 where Paul writes that "nature" teaches. In both places, "nature" has a didactical and communicating function.

The law in their nature or the work of the law written on their hearts, we traditionally refer to as the natural law. It is an inner law, whereas the Law of Moses is an outer law; it is hidden, whereas the Law of Moses is manifest;⁶⁹⁸ it is innate as opposed to the Law of Moses which is learned; it is written on the hearts, whereas the Law of Moses is written on tablets of stone; it is non-verbal whereas the Law of Moses is verbal (in writing); the knowledge of it is immediate, whereas the knowledge of the Law of Moses is mediate through upbringing and socialization.⁶⁹⁹

6.3.5. Fulfilment (v. 14)

Of the Gentiles who do not have the Law of Moses, Paul writes that by nature they do τὰ τοῦ νόμου, which is the things (plural) demanded and required by the Law of Moses. It is the prohibitions and commands of the Law of Moses.⁷⁰⁰ The definite article is anaphorical. It refers to the Law of Moses which is mentioned in the participial clause "who are without law". τὰ τοῦ νόμου is interpreted by ἔργον τοῦ νόμου as the required works of the law.⁷⁰¹ τὰ τοῦ νόμου is a collective term, containing all the requirements of the law. Some have thought that Paul uses the term τὰ τοῦ νόμου to stress that it only applies to a few or to some of the requirements of the law, and not all of them.⁷⁰² And it is emphasized that Paul writes τὰ τοῦ νόμου and not νόμον. But as Gathercole writes, τὰ τοῦ νόμου is not only general, but also inclusive and comprehensive. The relationship to the preceding τὰ τοῦ νόμου also requires this comprehensive meaning.⁷⁰³ In its abstract quality, the expression is non-specific and refers to all the deeds demanded by the law.

Paul writes of Gentiles who fulfill the requirements of the law. In the context, ἕθνη is to be understood individually and distributively (notice the change to the plural in verse 14a and in verses

⁶⁹⁸ Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 154.

⁶⁹⁹ The word φύσει is important in the context, but it also should not be overemphasized as though it were the decisive element which determines the whole argument (contra Wright, *Law*, p. 144).

⁷⁰⁰ Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 64, Stöckhardt, *Römer*, p. 88, Zahn, *Römer*, pp. 123-124, Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 69, Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 101, and Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 134, note 315. Moo, *Romans*, p. 150, defines it this way: "The things of the law is a general way of stating certain of those requirements of the Mosaic law that God has made universally available to human beings in their very constitution."

⁷⁰¹ The verb ποιῶσιν makes it clear that τὰ τοῦ νόμου does not refer to deeds that are done, but to deeds that are required (see Eckstein, *Gesetz*, p. 156).

⁷⁰² Zahn, *Römer*, p. 124, Moe, *Romerne*, pp. 102-103, Murray, *Romans*, p. 73, writes of "certain things which the law prescribes". Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 58, writes, "Ähnlich schwebend wird statt von νόμον von τὰ τοῦ νόμου gesprochen".

⁷⁰³ Gathercole, *Law*, p. 34. He points to the fact that this type of construction is general and comprehensive. Cf. Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 156.

14b-15). ποιῶσιν expresses a fulfillment. This may mean that every Gentile individually fulfills all the deeds of the law. The context determines this. We have seen that Paul is writing about the Gentiles and not about believers. We have seen that Paul has divided the Gentiles into two categories (Romans 1:18-32 and 2:1-5), and both categories are sinners. The statement is placed in a greater context with the conclusion that all are under sin, and no one is declared righteous by works of the law. This means that there are no Gentiles who fulfill the law completely and perfectly.⁷⁰⁴ The verb ποιῶσιν may mean that every Gentile fulfills some of the requirements of the law. But is it even imaginable that there are Gentiles who partially fulfill God's requirements? Many will deny this and claim either that Paul is writing about Gentile Christians, or that he is inconsistent. Neither is correct.

1) Firstly, it can be established that Paul writes that Gentiles fulfill the requirements of the law – to some extent or another. That the Gentiles do the requirements of the law is a de facto description since Paul wants to prove that the Gentiles have knowledge of God's law.

2) Secondly, we may point to the testimony of conscience which includes both accusation and defense. This description shows that there is also something to defend. And since the conscience has the law as its norm, there must be fulfillment to some extent or another with the Gentiles.

3) The overall intention in Romans 1:18 – 3:20 is to establish that all are sinners. Therefore, in Romans 1:18-32, Paul describes the sin of the ungodly and unrighteous people, primarily hitting Gentiles. The focus is on the fact that the Gentiles sin. We may, however, ask the relevant question whether there is anything in the texts that indicate a difference as far as the character and amount of sin is concerned. There is. There is a very decisive indication that shows that there are differences in the extent and scope of the sins of the Gentiles. The ungodly and unrighteous people in Romans 1:18-32 are struck by God's wrath in their life here and now. The wrath is an abandonment, and there are two causes of this abandonment. One is their refusal of God, and the other is their sin in the ethical area, which Paul describes with three expressions: They are in the lusts of their hearts, they have abandoned the natural sexual relations, and they are filled with all unrighteousness. The condemning man describes another category of (primarily) Gentiles, and they are not struck by God's present wrath. Their sin, then, is different. They are not in the power of their sexual lusts, they have not engaged in homosexual practice, and they are not full of unrighteousness. Therefore, they have a different relationship to God's present wrath. Their attitude towards sin on the ethical level is also different. They condemn it, whereas the ungodly and unrighteous defend and propagate it. The difference in the relationship to God's present wrath shows that there are differences when it

⁷⁰⁴ Thus Laato, *Paulus*, pp. 100-101.

comes to sin among the Gentiles.

4) Fourthly, we may include Paul's accusation against the religious Jews in Romans 2:17-24. He also accuses them of sin. That accusation is analogous to the accusation against the condemning man. If 2:17-24 were isolated from its smaller and greater context, the text might be understood as a description of the Jew as a complete and perfect sinner. But that interpretation does not stand in the context. The description in Romans 2:17-24 must be balanced with other descriptions of Jews. In Romans 9:30ff, Paul can write of Israel striving for a law that could lead to righteousness, and of Israel seeking their own righteousness. Paul can write of a single member of this category that he was blameless in regard to righteousness under the law (Philippians 3:6!). This shows that the accusation against the Jews is not to be understood as though all Jews at all times sin maximally, but that Jews also commit sin in the midst of their blamelessness and fulfillment of the law. The accusation against the condemning man is worded analogously, which opens the door to an analogous interpretation, which means that Paul is accusing the condemning man for also sinning in the midst of his righteousness and his condemnation of other people's sin.

5) Fifthly, we may consider whether Paul is blind to the world that surrounds him. After all, Paul has met several Gentiles who lead a respectable and outwardly righteous and decent life. If Paul has not seen this, he must be reality-resistant.

Therefore, it is possible and necessary to operate with a partial fulfillment of the law by Gentiles.⁷⁰⁵ We have seen that all Gentiles to some extent or another fulfill God's requirements, because the argumentation requires this, and we have seen that there are differences as to how much the Gentiles sin. Therefore, ποιῶσιν has a distributive meaning, describing that some Gentiles fulfill a few of God's commandments, others some of them, and still others many of them. As far as Gentiles are concerned, there can be no cases of perfect fulfillment of the works of the law. The realization will be without faith and love for God, and therefore only an external and superficial fulfillment.⁷⁰⁶

6.3.6. A deduction (v. 14)

Paul characterizes the Gentiles as those who do not have the law of Moses. But by the law in their nature they do the things demanded by the Law of Moses. Paul writes about a partial fulfillment of the law. In verse 14, Paul begins with a temporal clause, stating both the time and the reason for the Gentiles being a law to themselves. With οὔτοι νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες ἑαυτοῖς εἰσιν νόμος, Paul

⁷⁰⁵ Hodge, *Romans*, p. 55, Stöckhardt, *Römer*, p. 88, Zahn, *Römer*, p. 124, and Laato, *Paulus*, p. 102.

⁷⁰⁶ Laato, *Paulus*, pp. 102-103. Paul can distinguish between a fulfillment of God's law in a radical sense, which no Gentile is capable of on even one point, and a fulfillment in a relative sense.

describes the consequence. It is a deduction from deed to law.⁷⁰⁷ οὔτοι refers to ἔθνη,⁷⁰⁸ and οὔτοι individualizes the collective "Gentiles". An adjectival participial clause is linked to οὔτοι: νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες. It stands attributively and characterizes "these" more closely. The characterization is a repetition from verse 14a. It has the same meaning and characterizes "these" as some who do not have the Law of Moses. The repetition reinforces this characterization and stresses that it is in this capacity that Paul is describing the Gentiles. The characterization also shows that the Gentiles are still without the Law of Moses, and hence they are also without the Law of Moses when they partially fulfill the law, and when they are a law to themselves. The facts that the Gentiles do not have the law, and that they are a law to themselves are simultaneous characterizations.

The deduction is worded with οὔτοι ... ἑαυτοῖς εἰσιν νόμος, and this happens when they do the deeds of the law. What is Paul thinking of when he writes νόμος? The context in the verse identifies νόμος quite exactly. The law is mentioned four times in verse 14, and it is the same law all four times. The law is mentioned the first time in the phrase "who do not have the law", where the law is identified as the Law of Moses. The law is mentioned the second time in the phrase "do the deeds of the law", and taken together with the first mention, the law is identified as the Law of Moses. "The deeds of the law" refer to the deeds of the law that has been mentioned. The law is mentioned the third time in the repeated phrase "who do not have the law" and is thereby identified as the Law of Moses. Finally, the law is mentioned the fourth time in the phrase "these ... are a law to themselves". As we have seen, this is realized when they (partially) fulfill the deeds of the law, and therefore, this law has the same content. Thus, "the law" at the end of verse 14 is identified with the Law of Moses as far as the content is concerned. The Gentiles do not have the Law of Moses, but they have a law which is identical in content to the Law of Moses.⁷⁰⁹ Because of this identification, it is better to render it "the law" and not "a law".⁷¹⁰ The latter might suggest that another kind of law than the Law of Moses is in mind. So then, in "these ... are the law to themselves", the law is identical in content to the Law of Moses.⁷¹¹

⁷⁰⁷ Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 101, Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 147, and Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 58.

⁷⁰⁸ οὔτοι is a constructio ad sensum.

⁷⁰⁹ Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 101, writes, "Denn erst dieser νόμος des Nachsatzes ist nun sicher nicht das von Mose gegebene Gesetz. Seinem Inhalte nach hat sich das Begriff freilich nicht geändert".

⁷¹⁰ Thus also Murray, *Romans*, p. 74, and Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 99.

⁷¹¹ Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 101, writes, "Νόμος meint also das eine und gleiche Gottesgesetz, das Juden und Heiden nur in verschiedener Weise gegeben ist." Thus also Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 135. Eckstein, *Gesetz*, p. 154, writes, "Inhaltlich gesehen muss eine Übereinstimmung zwischen den Forderungen der Thora und denen des Gesetzes bei den Heiden bestehen". "Das Gesetz der Heiden muss also zumindest in dieser angesprochenen Forderungen mit der Thora selbst identisch sein." Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 99. Bell, *No*, p. 157, writes of the 613 commandments of the Law of Moses: "For Gentiles it is written on their hearts." He adds that the Gentiles do not have the law "as manifest" as the Jews. Contra Käsemann, *Römer*, pp. 59-60, who denies that the Gentiles have the same Law of God as the Jews and writes of a certain analogy as opposed to identity; Moo, *Romans*, p. 151, who thinks that the law here "denote the 'demand of God' generally" and does not refer to the Law of Moses.

The Law of Moses is God's law, and Paul can identify the Gentiles ("these") with God's law ("these are ..."). This raises the question in what way the Gentiles are God's law to themselves. Paul has set "these ... are the law to themselves" into two relationships which interpret the phrase. For one thing, there is the relationship to verse 14a, and for another there is the explication in verse 15. We shall look at the relationship to verse 14a first. It tells us that when these persons do the deeds of the law, they are the law to themselves. This shows that what is in mind is that they are *God's* law to themselves. God's law expresses the will of God and comes from God. "These", then, are understood in a revelation-theological manner as the locus of God's revelation of His law.⁷¹² For Israel, Sinai is the locus of the revelation of God's law. They receive it in word and writing. For the Gentile, the individual man is the locus of the revelation of the God's law. The relationship with verse 14a shows that these person are the law to themselves in the sense that these persons communicate the law to themselves. What is in mind is a knowlede of God's law, which, unlike Israel's knowledge, is not communicated through external means like word and writing, but is communicated from themselves to themselves. The dative *ἑαυτοῖς*, then, is a dative of reference or a dative of relation or a dative commodi. *εἶσιν* describes what they are when they do the deeds of the law. The phrase "these ... are the law to themselves", then, describes that these persons have a knowledge of God's law within themselves, and that they communicate God's law to themselves and confront themselves with God's law.⁷¹³

The phrase "these ... are the law to themselves" also stands in a relationship to verse 15, which explains the phrase more closely. It is explained with the expression "the work of the law is written on their hearts".⁷¹⁴ The explication tells us that the phrase "they are a law to themselves" means that God has written the work of the law on their hearts. That is why they have knowledge of God's law, and that is why they can communicate this knowledge to themselves.⁷¹⁵

Paul sets up an argumentation: When Gentiles fulfill the requirements of the law, they are God's law to themselves. With this deduction from fulfillment to them being the law to themselves, Paul provides a proof that the Gentiles have knowledge of God's law.⁷¹⁶ This is an argument of fact

⁷¹² Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 64, who writes, "for them, their own moral nature takes the place of the revealed Law".

⁷¹³ Together with *φύσις* and *συνείδησις*, the phrase *οὗτοι ... ἑαυτοῖς εἶσιν νόμος* is mentioned as a typical example of terms and phrases from Greek philosophy. Here we shall consider the phrase *οὗτοι ... ἑαυτοῖς εἶσιν νόμος*, parallels of which can be found in Plato and Aristotle (references in Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 104). Aristotle writes, "The decent man relates to these things as though he were a law to himself" (*Eth. Nic IV 1128a*). Paul uses this phrase in his own way to express his understanding, since the phrase means that God's law is written on the heart, and that man communicates God's law to himself. In Paul, the phrase has nothing to do with autonomy and independence over against laws, conventions, and statutes.

⁷¹⁴ Stöeckhardt, *Römer*, p. 89, Zahn, *Römer*, p. 125, and Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 99.

⁷¹⁵ Murray, *Romans*, p. 73, writes, "They themselves reveal the law of God to themselves – their persons is the medium of revelation."

⁷¹⁶ Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 73.

or an argument of experience. The presupposition for the deduction is that there is only one source of the ethical fulfillment of God's law, namely God's law – be it the Law of Moses or the law written on the heart. Otherwise, the argument does not stand.

6.3.7. The work of the law in the heart (v. 15)

In verse 15, Paul continues his description of the Gentiles. The relative clause οἵτινες ἐνδείκνυνται τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν is linked to οὗτοι. οἵτινες has a qualitative meaning, highlighting a characteristic quality, namely that they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. This characterization raises two questions: When do they show this? How do they show this? First, we shall look at the temporal aspect in verses 14-16. We have already seen that Paul is describing the present in verse 14. But here we shall look more closely at the temporal aspect in the whole section consisting of verses 14-16. The following possibilities may be considered:

- 1) Verses 14-16 are present.
- 2) Verses 14-15 are present, and verse 16 is future.
- 3) Verses 14-15ab are present, and verses 15c and 16 are future.⁷¹⁷
- 4) Verses 14-15a are present, and verses 15bc-16 are future.⁷¹⁸
- 5) Verse 14 is present, and verses 15-16 are future.⁷¹⁹

These are the possibilities, and in my view, the final one is the correct one. Syntactically, the relative clause in verse 15a is linked to verse 16, which describes the eschatological judgment. Thus, "show" becomes future and eschatological. The two absolute genitives are parallel, and most probably, the second one is explicative of the first one. Because of the style, form, and meaning, they cannot be separated. Because of their location, the two absolute genitives are linked in meaning to the relative clause. They answer the question: Under which circumstances do the Gentiles show that the work of the law is written on their hearts? Since the absolute genitives are linked to "show", which is future and eschatological, they, too, are future and eschatological. This means that verse 14 is present, and verses 15-16 are future.

Another question is: How do they show this? In the context, there are two possibilities: Either the Gentiles "show" this by fulfilling the demands of the law (verse 14a)⁷²⁰ or by the testifying

⁷¹⁷ Bell, *God*, pp. 147-148.

⁷¹⁸ Cranfield, *Romans I*, pp. 158+162.

⁷¹⁹ Wilckens, *Romer I*, pp. 135-136, and Gathercole, *Law*, p. 40.

⁷²⁰ Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 65, Zahn, *Römer*, pp. 126-127, Moe, *Romerne*, p. 103, Murray, *Romans*, p. 74, Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 158, and Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 134, note 315.

function of their conscience (verse 15bc).⁷²¹ Zahn has provided a classical argumentation for the first interpretation.⁷²² He thinks that verse 15a is to be closely linked to verse 14, so that the Gentiles show that the work of the law is written on their hearts when they fulfill the demands of the law. The argumentation is negative and consists in a dismissal of the possibility that it is the testifying function of conscience that shows this. 1) Conscience works within man, and thus it works in a hidden and unseen place. Therefore, conscience cannot show i.e. make seen and prove the work of the law in the heart. 2) Conscience has the function of testifying together with a first testimony, and since this first testimony is expressed by "show", it cannot consist in the function of conscience. 3) The function of conscience is described in two absolute genitives (verse 15bc), which describe the accompanying circumstances for this demonstration of the fact that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Thus, the function of the conscience cannot consist in this demonstration. Paul sets up the following logical argument:

When the Gentiles fulfill the demands of the law,
they prove that they are a law to themselves,
and thus they show/prove that the work of the law is written on their hearts

The argumentation presupposes that ἐνδείκνυται is present, but as we have seen, it is future, which means that the whole argument falls. There is also the fact that the double reaction of the conscience with accusation and defense does not match their fulfillment of the demands of the law. Therefore, we are to turn our eyes forward because the absolute genitives show us how the Gentiles show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. They do this precisely through the testifying function of conscience through accusation and defense. We shall return to this.

As I have mentioned, the οἵτινες-clause has a qualitative meaning, highlighting a characteristic quality. It has an explicative meaning, explaining more closely how the Gentiles are the law to themselves. They are God's law to themselves in the sense that the work of the law is written on their hearts. The present tense form ἐνδείκνυται has a future meaning, describing what will happen on the day of judgment. In that the Gentiles show that the work of the law is written on their hearts by the inner witness of their conscience, ἐνδείκνυται gets the meaning "shows" and not "proves".⁷²³ It has a forensic meaning because of the connection with verse 16.⁷²⁴ This is an inner, hidden process.⁷²⁵

On the day of judgment, the Gentiles show that the work of the law is written on their hearts.

⁷²¹ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 101.

⁷²² Zahn, *Römer*, pp. 126-127.

⁷²³ If ἐνδείκνυται were linked to verse 14a, it would have the meaning show i.e. make visible, since the proof is a proof of experience.

⁷²⁴ Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 157.

⁷²⁵ Michel, *Römer*, p. 120.

τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου corresponds to τὰ τοῦ νόμου in verse 14a. τὸ ἔργον is collective, summarizing the deeds of the law.⁷²⁶ By τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου, Paul is thinking of the work demanded by the law.⁷²⁷ In this context, "the law" is identified with the Law of Moses,⁷²⁸ and the demand of the Law of Moses is written on their hearts.⁷²⁹ There have been a number of speculations about why Paul writes "the work of the law" and not "the works of the law" or simply "the law". In a number of places, Paul uses "the works of the law" in the connexion with justification, writing that it is impossible to be declared righteous by works of the law. "The works of the law" has a negative meaning, which might explain why Paul chooses to use the singular form and write of "the work of the law". It is much harder to explain why Paul writes "the work of the law" and not simply "the law". A tentative answer might be that "the law" is associated too much with the Law of Moses, which would give the impression that it is the Law of Moses in its totality that is written. This is not the case. A possible explanation might also be that the very expression "the *work* of the law" emphasizes the demanding and requiring aspect of the law. These are some possible answers.⁷³⁰

Paul writes that the work of the law is written on their hearts: γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν. We have seen that Paul is not describing the new covenant, and that he is not thinking of the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:33, but that he is using a phrase from Jeremiah 31:33 to express a natural law. This phrase is well suited for describing a natural law because it can be used to describe a law which is analogous to the Law of Moses, and to describe an immediate knowledge of this law. With this phrase, a contrast to the Law of Moses arises: The Law of Moses is written on tablets of stone, whereas the natural law is written on hearts of flesh. The subject of γραπτὸν is God, since the context is speaking of God's law. ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν tells us where the work of the law is written. "The heart" is "a man's inward, hidden self as thinking, willing and feeling subject".⁷³¹ "The heart" is that which determines the will of a man and creates his activity. In the "self" of man, the demands of the law are written. They have influence on man and are capable of making the Gentiles fulfill them to some extent or another. In that the natural law is written on the heart, it is an

⁷²⁶ Moe, *Romerne*, p. 103. Zahn, *Römer*, p. 126, and Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 158, think that the singular focuses on the law as a unit.

⁷²⁷ Meyer, *Romerbrevet*, p. 65, Zahn, *Römer*, p. 126, Michel, *Römer*, p. 120, Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 106, Murray, *Romans*, p. 75, and Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 156. What is in mind is not the deed done, which is then written on the heart. That interpretation is found in Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 89, Agersnap, *Paulusstudier*, p. 129, and Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 100. That interpretation is incorrect for the following reasons: 1) because the analogous τὰ τοῦ νόμου refers to the demands of the law because of ποιῶσιν, 2) because verse 15a stands explicatively, 3) because in that case the conscience would only defend and not accuse, and 4) because the intention of the verses is to prove the Gentiles' knowledge of the law, not their fulfillment of it.

⁷²⁸ Zahn, *Römer*, pp. 126-127.

⁷²⁹ Michel, *Römer*, p. 121, and Kuss, *Römerbrief I*, p. 69.

⁷³⁰ Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 106, thinks that the singular form is used because Paul is speaking of a principle.

⁷³¹ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 118.

inner and hidden law.⁷³² As we have seen, the work of the law written on the heart corresponds to "nature" in verse 14a.

6.3.8. The testimony of conscience (v. 15)

On the day of judgment, the Gentiles show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. In verse 15a, Paul therefore explains more closely that the Gentiles are the law to themselves in the sense that the work of the law is written on their hearts. In verse 15bc, Paul explains how the Gentiles show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Paul continues with two absolute genitives in verse 15bc, and as we have seen, they are both linked to verse 15a, directly or indirectly. First, we shall sort out the relationship between verse 15a and the two absolute genitives, and I shall presuppose that the second one is explicative of the first one. An absolute genitive is "circumstantial" and can denote the temporal, causal, concessive, modal, and consecutive.⁷³³ Absolute genitives are usually temporal, but since conscience has a witnessing function, and since it is linked to the fact that the Gentiles show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, it is better to understand it as modal. Conscience shows that the work of the law is written on the hearts by testifying to it.

συμμαρτυρούσης αὐτῶν τῆς συνειδήσεως is the first absolute genitive. It raises a number of questions. To what does conscience bear witness? In the context it can only be to the fact that the work of the law is written on the hearts.⁷³⁴ To whom does conscience testify? Since the witness of conscience is an inner witness, conscience testifies to the Gentile individually.⁷³⁵ Does conscience bear witness together with anyone? Paul writes συμμαρτυρούσης, which may mean "testifies together with", "testifies", or "witnesses". In Romans 8:16 and 9:1, Paul uses the verb in the sense "testifies together with", and since there is another witness, it is better to render it "testifies together with". This of course raises the question: Together with whom does conscience bear witness? Most probably, God is in mind.⁷³⁶ Conscience testifies on the day of judgment together with God when He judges (verse 16). So there are two witnesses. There is an inner witness, namely conscience. This is an inner instance in man, and it testifies inwardly to the Gentile. There is an outer witness, namely God. He testifies outwardly through His judgment on people.

⁷³² Zahn, *Römer*, p. 126. Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 157, writes, "So steht das ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις lediglich für die Verborgenheit des Gesetzes der Heiden ..."

⁷³³ Wallace, *Greek*, p. 655.

⁷³⁴ Hodge, *Romans*, p. 56, Murray, *Romans*, p. 75, and Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 161.

⁷³⁵ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 162. Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 160, thinks, oddly enough, that conscience testifies to the Jew, but verses 14-16 are not about Jews, but about Gentiles.

⁷³⁶ It cannot be the fulfillment of the demands of the law (verse 14a) since that happens in the present, whereas the testimony of conscience is future; it cannot be together with the law (contra Barrett, *Romans*, p. 53), nor can it be together with the thoughts since these explain more closely what conscience is (contra Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 137).

How conscience bears witness to the fact that the work of the law is written on the hearts cannot be answered until the relationship between the two absolute genitives is sorted out. Linguistically, there are three possibilities:⁷³⁷

1) The absolute genitives are coordinate, linked with a coordinating καὶ, and Paul describes two witnesses: conscience and the thoughts. We translate, "their conscience testifying together with, and the thoughts among one another accusing or defending". Syntactically, this is a natural and straightforward reading.

2) With καὶ, Paul coordinates "conscience" and "the thoughts", and the last two participles are adjectival. This makes for the following translation: "Their conscience and the thoughts testifying together with, (the thoughts) which among one another accuse or defend".⁷³⁸ Syntactically, this is a strained and unnatural reading because it breaks the parallelism between the participles and has to move "among one another" to the adjectival participles.

3) Paul uses an explicative καὶ, so that the second genitive gives a closer explanation of the first.⁷³⁹ We translate, "their conscience testifying together with, that is, their thoughts among one another accusing or defending". Syntactically, this is a natural and straightforward reading. The parallelism between the two absolute genitives and between the participles is maintained, and καὶ may be explicative. This interpretation is the best because the testimony of conscience and the accusation or defense of the thoughts are coincident. a) Conscience bears witness that the work of the law is written on the heart, and the only way conscience can bear witness to that is by judging man's actions by the law as a norm. This is the only way, since we are to keep the law and conscience separate. The law is the norm of conscience, and conscience is not an extra carrier of revelation or norm, to use Eckstein's expression.⁷⁴⁰ b) The testifying function of conscience has a cognitive content and is a communication to man, and therefore, it may coincide with the thoughts because they, too, are cognitive and communicative. c) Conscience exercises an internal function in man. The thoughts exercise an internal function in man.⁷⁴¹ Therefore, they may be coincident. The use of συμμαρτυρούσης in the singular also points to an explicative understanding. Only conscience

⁷³⁷ Reicke, *Syneidesis*, pp. 157-161, has suggested a fourth possibility, according to which "thoughts" is an objective genitive to "conscience". Reice translates, "Bewusstsein der anklagenden oder auch verteidigen Gedanken". This is not linguistically possible.

⁷³⁸ Thus Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 166. Eckstein himself favors the second interpretation, and he tries to save it by claiming that it is only conscience as a phenomenon in Gentiles that is this co-witness, and not its function. This presupposes that conscience bears witness to the Jew, which is incorrect; it presupposes that the testimony is present, which is incorrect; and it presupposes that one neglects that Paul is describing the function of conscience with the participle "testifies together with". See Eckstein, *Begriff*, pp. 160-166.

⁷³⁹ Hodge, *Romans*, p. 56, Zahn, *Römer*, p. 128, Bultmann, *Theologie*, p. 217, Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 111, Stelzenberger, *Syneidesis*, pp. 80-81, Maurer, σύννοια, *TWNT VII*, p. 915, Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 161, Moo, *Romans*, p. 153, and Bosman, *Conscience*, p. 250.

⁷⁴⁰ Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 163.

⁷⁴¹ Gathercole, *Law*, pp. 44-45.

is introduced as a witness, while the statement concerning the thoughts is explicative of the first statement.⁷⁴²

To put it differently, we can say that the basic problem with keeping the two absolute genitives apart is that the accusing and defending thoughts are suspiciously similar to one of the functions of conscience, so the testimony of conscience would have to be something other than accusation and defense. And what would that be? The problem can be illustrated with Eckstein as an example. He claims that conscience is only spoken of as a phenomenon in the Gentiles and not as a function, but when he is to define what conscience is in spite of a lack of further description in the text, conscience is defined in a way that makes it suspiciously similar to the accusing and defending thoughts.⁷⁴³ Eckstein writes, "The second absolute genitive is explicative. It describes more closely how conscience works, namely through accusing and defending thoughts, and thus it explains more clearly what conscience is. In that conscience is accusing and defending thoughts, conscience has a retrospective function."⁷⁴⁴ Conscience, then, is an inner, critical instance which judges a man's actions on the basis of a norm.⁷⁴⁵ When man acts in accordance with the norm, conscience passes a positive verdict: it defends. When man acts in conflict with the norm, conscience passes a negative verdict: it accuses. The norm is the law. Conscience is related to the law, but is not identical to the law.⁷⁴⁶ Conscience is related to a "subject", but is not identical to the subject.⁷⁴⁷

In the exegetical debate concerning the definition of conscience in this place, the terms *conscientia antecedens* and *conscientia consequens* have often been employed. The *conscientia antecedens* is conscience as demanding.⁷⁴⁸ In this "preceding conscience", conscience works before the decision is made, and in this understanding there is a latent danger of a confusion of law and

⁷⁴² Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 111.

⁷⁴³ Eckstein, *Begriff*, pp. 175-179, writes, "Dagegen hat die Instanz der Syneidesis unabhängig von der zeitlichen Gleich- oder Nachstellung die Aufgabe, das Denken, Wollen, Reden und Handeln des Menschen auf die Übereinstimmung mit den bewusst oder unbewusst akzeptierten Normen des νοῦς zu überprüfen und das Ergebnis dem Menschen bestätigend oder anklagend zu bezeugen."

⁷⁴⁴ Zahn, *Römer*, p. 27, and Moe, *Romerne*, p. 104.

⁷⁴⁵ Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 115 ("als innerer Gerichtshof des Menschen"), Agersnap, *Paulusstudier*, p. 113, Eckstein, *Begriff*, pp. 175-179, Moo, *Romans*, p. 152, and Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 123. Bosman, *Conscience*, p. 251, writes, "The συνείδησις registers when behaviour does not accord with these." But in the context of the thoughts which have an explicative meaning, he also writes of "the inner debate following retrospectively on behaviour in the grey area between good and bad" (p. 250).

⁷⁴⁶ Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 160, and Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 101. Conscience is not identical to the law/the work of the law in the heart, because conscience bears witness that the work of the law is written on the heart, and because conscience is a function, whereas "the work of the law in the heart" is a condition. Contra Thrall, *Use*, p. 124, and Wilckens, *Römer I*, pp. 137+139, and Carras, *Dialogue*, p. 198. Thrall writes, "... that Paul had come to regard conscience as performing in the Gentile world roughly the same function as was performed by the Law amongst the Jews. It is easy enough to see how he could have begun to equate conscience and the Law" (p. 124).

⁷⁴⁷ Thus Eckstein, *Begriff*, pp. 177-178.

⁷⁴⁸ Bultmann, *Theologie*, p. 217. A similar definition is found in Käsemann, *Romer*, p. 61.

conscience in that conscience becomes both a knowledge of good and evil, and a demand and prompting toward the good.⁷⁴⁹ The conscientia consequens is bad conscience; classically worded by Pierce who defines conscience as the pain stemming from transgressions of God's law.⁷⁵⁰ In this "subsequent conscience", conscience works after decision and action and is an experience of pain and torment. Or it can be expressed in a more neutral way.⁷⁵¹ The two classical terms may cause more confusion than clarity, because especially conscientia consequens is used with different content. If conscientia consequens is defined in a purely negative sense as the bad conscience or the accusing conscience, Romans 2:15 does not belong here,⁷⁵² but if it is defined more broadly, it does.⁷⁵³ Conscience is described as an inner instance which judges the actions of the Gentile on the basis of the law, accusing in the case of conflict, and defending in the case of harmony. Conscience is described as a witness to the fact that the work of the law is written on the hearts. And the conscience can be a witness to this because its judgment presupposes a norm, namely the law. It bears witness, through its accusation or defense, to the fact that there is a moral standard in man.⁷⁵⁴ It is best, then, to understand καὶ explicatively, and the second genitive as a closer description of the function of conscience.

Here, μεταξύ ἀλλήλων means "with one another" and refers to the fact that when the Gentiles fulfill the demands of the law (verse 14a), conscience defends this act, but when they break the demands of the law, conscience accuses this act.⁷⁵⁵ This is the best interpretation because in verse 14a, Paul is describing a partial fulfillment of the law. The accusing and defending thoughts, then, are the judgments passed by conscience on the acts of Gentiles. ἢ καὶ does not have a weakening

⁷⁴⁹ See Eckstein, *Begriff*, pp. 171-173.

⁷⁵⁰ Pierce, *Conscience*, p. 85. Maurer, σύννοια, *TWNT VII*, p. 916. Bornkamm, *Gesetz*, p. 113, who writes, "Das Gewissen als den Umständen höchst, unbestechlichen, nicht zum Schweigen zu bringenden, den Menschen erinnerhaft quälenden Mitwisser seiner Taten, das Gewissen als das unmittelbare Selbstbewusstsein".

⁷⁵¹ Stelzenberger, *Syneidesis*, p. 81, who writes that what is in mind in Romans 2:15 is a "functional conscience" which is defined in the following way: "Gewissen im eigentlichen Sinne ist die aktuelle Funktion einer personalen sittlichen Entscheidung."

⁷⁵² Eckstein, *Begriff*, pp. 175-179.

⁷⁵³ Stelzenberger, *Syneidesis*, pp. 80-81, Maurer, συνείδησις, *TWNT VII*, pp. 915-916, writes of conscience as "subsequent", and that conscience has a function as prosecutor and judge, and that it both accuses and defends. Cf. Jewett, *Terms*, p. 444.

⁷⁵⁴ Michel, *Römer*, p. 124. As it will be known, the term συνείδησις is not found in the OT; it is a characteristic term from Greek philosophy that has entered into Second temple Judaism. Paul uses this term to express his view, relating it to God's law as its norm, and relating it to the eschatological judgment.

⁷⁵⁵ It cannot refer to an external debate or dialogue among Gentiles, since Paul is writing about "thoughts". μεταξύ ἀλλήλων may mean "mutually", so the meaning could be that the thoughts "mutually" accuse and defend one another, but that makes no sense. It is therefore better to render it "among one another", and what is in mind may be the mutual debate of the thoughts where some accuse and others defend the same act. What we get, then, is a picture of man in conflict with himself or plagued by an inner division (thus Zahn, *Römer*, p. 129). But since Paul operates with a partial fulfillment, it is best to understand it in such a way that when man fulfills the law, conscience defends man, and when man breaks the law, conscience accuses man.

force, but simply introduces the alternative.⁷⁵⁶ In that Paul speaks of both accusation and defense, the justification of the Gentiles cannot be in mind,⁷⁵⁷ nor can a saving obedience.⁷⁵⁸ Verse 15bc, then, is a decisive argument against the Gentile Christian interpretation.⁷⁵⁹

We have seen that verse 14 provides a proof that the Gentiles know God's law. The proof is a proof of experience, in that their partial fulfillment of the law proves that they have knowledge of God's law in themselves. This proof is visible and in the present. The proof is laid forward when they fulfill God's law. To this proof, Paul adds two witnesses. The one witness is conscience. It judges the acts of the Gentiles, and this judgment shows that the work of the law is written on the heart of the Gentile. This testimony is an inner testimony and is in the future. Conscience testifies on the day of judgment. This, of course, does not mean that the work of the law is not written on the heart until the day of judgment, but that Paul is writing of a testimony on the day of judgment. The other witness is God, who testifies together with the conscience when he judges mankind on the day of judgment. So Paul is writing of a proof and two witnesses that prove and bear witness that the Gentiles have knowledge of God's law.

6.3.9. On the day of judgment (v. 16)

It is generally agreed that Paul is describing the eschatological judgment in verse 16. This is so obvious that it is often just stated. In verse 16, Paul speaks of a day which is identified through the ὅτε-clause as the day of judgment. This identification is confirmed in the near context. Verses 14-16 stand as a reason or explanation for verse 12a, which describes the eschatological judgment.⁷⁶⁰ That "the day" is the eschatological day is also confirmed in the greater context, in that verses 5-11 describe the eschatological judgment, and the mention of the day of wrath and revelation of God's righteous judgment in verse 5 naturally sheds its eschatological perspective on the day that is mentioned in verse 16. Paul's usage of language confirms this interpretation, as he can use ἡμέρα of the eschatological judgment day (Romans 2:5; 13:12; 1 Corinthians 1:8; 3:13; 5:5; 2 Corinthians

⁷⁵⁶ Correctly Eckstein, *Begriff*, p. 167. Contra Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 162, and Moe, *Romerne*, p. 105.

⁷⁵⁷ Wilckens, *Römer I*, p. 136.

⁷⁵⁸ Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 124. Contra Agersnap, *Paulusstudier*, pp. 117-119, who unconcernedly writes of salvation for the Gentiles, of a positive outcome of the judgment and being acquitted in the judgment.

⁷⁵⁹ Wright, *Law*, tries to counter this. He asks, "But why then will there be uncertainty, as suggested in the strange passage in v.15b?" His answer is that they are Christians and hence not "lawless Gentiles; but the Jewish law, which is now in some sense or other written on their hearts, and which in some sense they 'do', nevertheless has a sufficiently ambiguous relation to them for them still to be concerned that the eventual issue might be in doubt. Hence, as judgment day approaches, they may well find inner conflict as they reflect on their situation." Gathercole, *Law*, p. 45, writes in defense of his Gentile Christian interpretation that in many other places, Paul reckons with the reality of sin in the Christian, and he adds, "It is quite plausible that the Pauline Christian could have copious 'accusing thoughts' and still be vindicated by God." The question is whether the believer has this uncertainty and these accusing thoughts on judgment day.

⁷⁶⁰ Regardless of whether verses 14-16 state a reason or an explanation for verse 13b or verse 13a or verse 12b or verse 12a, verse 16 is linked to the eschatological judgment.

1:14; Ephesians 4:30; Philippians 1:6; 1:10; 2:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 5:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:2; 2 Timothy 1:12; 1:18; 4:8).⁷⁶¹ There is also a kind of parallel in 1 Corinthians 4:5 where an unveiling of that which is hidden will take place on the day of judgment.

”The day” is the eschatological judgment day. It is further described in the ὅτε-clause. κρίνει (present) has a future meaning and describes a judgment. In this judgment, God will judge τὰ κρυπτὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων. We know from Romans 2:6ff that God judges man’s acts, and as we have seen, acts are judged in connection with a person’s character, i.e. faith and disobedience to God. When in this verse Paul speaks of ”the hidden things of man”, it is not in opposition to 2:6ff, but emphasizing. τὰ κρυπτὰ has as its contrast the visible and obvious. The hidden things, then, are the motives, intentions, and thoughts of man (cf. Romans 2:29; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 14:25; 2 Corinthians 4:2). So Paul emphasizes that God includes this in His judgment. It is not superficial, but goes in depth and sees men’s acts in connection with character, nature, motives, and thoughts. Paul adds that this judgment is in accordance with the gospel. The judgment by works and the gospel cannot be played out against each other.

I have mentioned that verse 15 belongs together with verse 16. Syntactically, this is the only possibility. This means that the verb ἐνδείκνυνται and the two absolute genitives become futuristic, describing what will appear on the day of judgment. I have mentioned that the two absolute genitives are modal, describing the way in which it is made evident that the work of the law is written on the hearts. It becomes evident through the testimony of conscience. This does not mean that the work of the law is not written on the heart until the day of judgment. This is impossible, since the Gentiles’ partial fulfillment of the law is proof that they are the law to themselves, and this proof is in the present. The link between verses 15 and 16 also does not mean that conscience does not start testifying until the day of judgment. Its testimony has the law as its norm, and the law is known in this life, and analogously to its testimony on the day of judgment, conscience will also testify in this life to some extent. When Paul links this testimony with the day of judgment, it is probably because that is the place where the accusing and defending thoughts of conscience sound with the ultimate clarity and strength. For the link between verses 15 and 16 shows that the testimony of conscience is identical with God’s judgment.

The Gentiles will show that the work of the law is written on their hearts on the day when God will judge the hidden things. God’s judgment shows this because judgment presupposes revelation. God can only judge man’s works if they know God’s commandments. Therefore, God’s judgment shows that the Gentiles have knowledge of God’s law. As we have seen, the most probable thing is

⁷⁶¹ Sometimes ”the day” stands alone, at other times it is qualified as e.g. ”the day of the Lord”.

that God's judgment is the witness that testifies together with conscience. However, God's judgment is not only a witness number two, but this judgment has the character of truth and revelation from which no man can run away. In the judgment, the work of the law in the heart is displayed in its glaring truth. It will also influence on the testimony of conscience, for conscience works in people who defend and approve of sin, and in people who are blind to sin. But here on the day of judgment, defences and propaganda fall to the ground. Here, scales fall from the eyes. That is probably the reason why Paul links the function of conscience to God's judgment on the day of judgment.

6.3.10. Conclusion

In Romans 2:6-11, Paul describes the eschatological judgment. It is universal, individual, and impartial. In verses 12-13, Paul explains the impartiality of the judgment. It is seen in the fact that God draws into account people's different situations in His judgment on the same sin. All Gentiles who sin "apart from the Law of Moses" will perish "apart from the Law of Moses", and all Jews who sin "under the Law of Moses" will be judged "by the Law of Moses". What constitutes the difference is a different relationship to the Law of Moses. At the same time, there is a similarity between Gentiles and Jews in that both categories are hearers of the law. What constitutes the similarity is a common relationship to God's law. Therefore, Paul can stress similarity in regard to sin, destiny, and law. In regard to sin, Gentile and Jew have the same sin, and that implies knowledge of the same standard. In regard to destiny, Gentile and Jew encounter the same judgment, and that implies the same standard. In regard to law, Paul explicitly writes that Gentile and Jew have the same law, for both are hearers of the law.

Verses 14-16 explain how the Gentiles can sin "apart from the law" and perish "apart from the law". They can because they have knowledge of God's law. Paul describes the Gentiles as a category in verses 14-16. They are characterized as those who do not have the law, i.e. the Law of Moses, but although they do not have the Law, by nature they do the works of the law. "By nature" denotes the source of their knowledge of the law. "Nature" stands for "the law in their nature" or for "the work of the law written on their heart". It is a natural law that is in mind. It is an inner and innate law, of which man has an immediate knowledge. In its content, the natural law is identical to the binding core of the Law of Moses. Paul writes of Gentiles who partially fulfill the law, and this partial fulfillment is proof of their knowledge of the law: When the Gentiles ... do the works of the law, they are the law to themselves. The Gentiles are the locus of God's revelation of His law, and the Gentiles communicate from themselves and to themselves the knowledge of this law. The Gentiles' partial fulfillment of the law is proof of experience of their knowledge of the law.

To this proof Paul adds two witnesses who will show on the day of judgment that the work of the law is written on the heart. Paul uses a phrase from Jeremiah 31:33 to describe the natural law. "The work of the law written on their hearts" stands explicatively to "nature", explaining "nature" as the work of the law in nature. The one witness is conscience, which shows through its accusing and defending thoughts that the work of the law is written on the hearts of the Gentiles. This testimony will sound on the day of judgment. The second witness is God, who judges the hidden motives of man. This witness will sound on the day of judgment.

Paul's argumentation for the fact that the Gentiles know God's law consists in a present proof (their partial fulfillment of the law) and two future witnesses who will show on the day of judgment that the Gentiles know God's law.

In verses 14-16, Paul describes a natural law and explains from where the Gentiles have knowledge of it. But when it comes to the pinning down of the natural law, there are still a few loose ends. This goes for both the terminology and the content. First, I shall look at the what texts may be included in the pinning down. In 1:18-32 and 2:1-5, Paul describes God's revelation of judgment on two categories of people who are primarily Gentiles. These texts may therefore be included in the description of the natural law. In 2:6-11, Paul describes a universal judgment, in 2:12-13 he describes both Gentiles and Jews, and in 2:14-16 he describes Gentiles (and also Jews in verse 16). These texts may therefore be included. Those are the primary texts. But Romans 2:17 – 3:20 may also be included as that section is related to Romans 1:18 – 2:16 through the conclusions in 3:9 and 3:19-20. That is a secondary text.

I shall proceed to look at the terminology. In Romans 1:18 – 3:20, Paul gradually reveals a natural law. This happens first in a negative form in that in Romans 1:18, Paul speaks of "unrighteousness" (twice) in this category of people. This unrighteousness is both a part of the reason for God's wrath, and a weapon against the truth about God. Verse 18 is a header and has an interpreting function in relation to verses 19-32, and it is therefore natural that "unrighteousness" refers to sexual impurity (verse 24), homosexual practice (verses 26-27), and the list of vices (verses 29-31). In verse 29, the term "unrighteousness" appears again, and for one thing, Paul juxtaposes it with the broad terms "evil", "covetousness", and "malice", and for another thing, he exemplifies it. The "unrighteous" is the worthless and unseemly. The frame of reference of "unrighteousness" is behavior among people (sexually and socially), and "unrighteousness" is primarily defined in an ethical sense. However, built into "unrighteousness" is an active opposition to God (verse 18 and verses 31-32). The first ethical term, then, is "unrighteousness". This category of people are punished by God because of their "unrighteousness" along with their "ungodliness", and this implies a knowledge of what unrighteousness is. Paul operates with revelation as a

presupposition for judgment (see verse 20 and 2:12-13). Since Paul is primarily describing Gentiles, "unrighteousness" is a first, negative description of the natural law. They know what unrighteousness is, and hence, by contrast, what righteousness is.

In the exemplification of "unrighteousness" in 1:24-31, something new appears. This happens in verses 26-27. Here, Paul writes of a replacement of the natural sexual relation, and there is a clear correspondence with these people's replacement of the truth with a lie. As an analogous phenomenon, this replacement means that "the natural relation" is a revelation from God and a God-given knowledge. So then, it is confirmed here that these people know what a natural relation is according to God, and know that the unrighteousness in this sphere is against God's will. In this context, Paul uses "the natural" as corresponding to God's will, and the "unnatural" as that which is against God's will.

In verse 32, Paul puts "unrighteousness" together with God's righteous decree. Paul gives a characterization of this category of people (1:18-32). "These things" are the various examples of unrighteousness mentioned in verses 24-31. The righteous decree is that those who commit unrighteousness are guilty unto death. This "death" is the eschatological death. As a part of God's righteous decree, "unrighteousness" is connected with God's standard of ethical righteousness. Paul writes of this category of people that they have a present, preserved, and intact knowledge of God's righteous decree, and this means both that they know it as God's righteous decree and that they know God's standard of righteousness. The implicit becomes explicit.

The second category of people (Romans 2:1-5) have the same knowledge of God's righteous decree. This appears from "therefore" in verse 1, and it appears explicitly in verse 2. Here, Paul speaks of a knowledge of God's judgment which corresponds with the knowledge of God's righteous decree. The "unrighteous" is the object of God's wrath. It is against God's will and a breach of God's standard for "justice". In the description of the universal judgment, the "unrighteous" is characterized as "evil" (2:9). The contrast is "good" (2:7+10). In this progressive revelation of the natural law, Paul has used predominantly negative statements, speaking of what breaks God's will: unrighteousness, the exemplifications in 1:24, 26-27, and 29-31, that which deserves death (1:32), that which is judged (2:2), and evil (2:9 and cf. 1:29). The first positive statements are those concerning "good" in 2:7+10.

Something decisively new in this progressive revelation of the natural law appears in 2:12-13 and 2:14-16. The new is the concept of "the law". It is the parameter of God's will. It states God's standard for what is righteous and good. The righteous and the good are synonymous expressions. For the law is the norm for God's judgment: It is not the hearers of the law, but the doers, that will be declared righteous (2:13). It appears explicitly from verse 13 that when it comes to those who

perish, both Gentiles and Jews will be evaluated on the basis of the law.

Through three steps Paul links unrighteousness/righteousness, evil/good with the law:

1) Paul reveals that the one subcategory of Gentiles know God's standard for the unrighteous and the righteous (1:18-32). The unrighteous in practice is part of the cause of God's punishment: wrath as a present abandonment to sin. The unrighteous in practice is the cause of God's punishment: the eschatological death (1:32). Paul reveals that the second subcategory of Gentiles know God's standard for what is unrighteous and what is righteous. They know God's righteous decree and God's judgment: the eschatological revelation of wrath (2:2+5). The eschatological death and wrath are two different expressions of the same. This is the first step.

2) The description of the eschatological judgment (2:6-11) reveals that the judgment has works as its criterion, and that the norm for the evaluation of the works is God's standard for good and evil. The eschatological judgment describes God's righteous decree (1:32) and God's judgment (2:2), and that means that what is unrighteous is that which is evil, and what is righteous is that which is good. The judgment is universal, and therefore people know God's standard of good and evil. This is the second step.

3) In 2:12-16, Paul reveals that God judges with the law as His norm. In verses 12-13 and 16, Paul describes the eschatological judgment and hence God's righteous decree (1:32), God's judgment (2:2+5), and the eschatological judgment in 2:6-11. In verses 12-13+14-16, Paul uses the law as the norm. It states God's standard, and that means that the unrighteous and evil is that which breaks the law, and the righteous and good is that which fulfills the law. The law is the parameter. Everyone knows it. On the background of 2:12-13, the judgment on these men's unrighteousness becomes an expression of knowledge of the law (1:18ff), and the knowledge of God's righteous decree (1:32) and His judgment (2:2) becomes knowledge of the law. This is the third step.

The criterion in the eschatological judgment is works. The norm is righteousness (the contrasting concept of unrighteousness) in 1:18 – 2:5, good (the contrast of "evil") in 2:6-11, and the law in 2:12-16. Thus, righteousness and good is linked to the law.

the righteous and good = harmony with the law (God's will)

the unrighteous and evil = transgression of the law (God's will)

The law, then, is the parameter for the righteous and good. This is clarified and strengthened in the following. In Romans 2:17-24, Paul describes the religious Jew and mentions his transgression of the law (2:24), and in 2:27 Paul again describes transgression of the law on the part of the Jew. The law is the parameter. The first conclusion in the section 1:18 – 3:20 is found in 3:9 where Paul writes that he has accused both Jews and Greeks of being under sin. The summary identifies "unrighteousness" and "evil" as sin. The second conclusion in 3:19-20 makes it clear that the

parameter for what is sin and thus for unrighteousness is the law. Here Paul gathers all three categories – the ungodly and unrighteous in 1:18-32, the condemning man in 2:1-5, and the religious Jews in 2:17-24 – under the label ”those under the law”. They are all under the same binding law of God, and the law pronounces the same judgment on them. The law speaks in order that the whole world may stand guilty before God.

In Romans 1:18 – 3:20, a progressive revelation of the natural law is taking place. The high point is 2:12-16. Paul distinguishes between two forms of law: the natural law and the Law of Moses. He can use the word ”law” of both (2:14-15). The parameter for the concept ”law”, however, is the Law of Moses. Therefore, he can reserve the word ”law” for the Law of Moses. The Gentiles are those ”without law”, i.e. without the Law of Moses, whereas the Jews are those ”under the law”, i.e. under the Law of Moses (2:12). The Gentiles ”do not have the law” (2:14), i.e. they do not have the Law of Moses. At the same time, he can write that the Gentiles are ”the law to themselves” (2:14), and that ”the work of the law is written on their hearts” (2:15). But in this concept of the law, the Law of Moses is the parameter.

When it comes to the pinning down of the natural law as far as its content is concerned, there are three possible ways to go. Firstly, the content may be defined on the basis of what Paul writes about ”unrighteousness” in 1:18-32. Secondly, the content may be defined through a comparison with the binding core of the Law of Moses. We have seen that the natural law is identical with the binding core of the Law of Moses. Here, we shall look at which parts of the Law of Moses are abrogated and which parts are still valid. Thirdly, the content may be defined on the basis of how Paul can sum up the binding core of the Law of Moses.

Firstly, I shall pin down the natural law through a definition of ”unrighteousness” in 1:18-32. The exemplification of ”unrighteousness” is found in verses 24, 26-27, and 29-31. Most of the terms that Paul employs are total or general and broad. Only a few of them are specific. Many of the terms are overlapping. Therefore, generally, the first pinning down will be unspecific.

Total and general terms:

”unrighteousness”, ”evil”, ”covetousness”, ”senseless”, ”faithless”, ”hardhearted”,

”unmerciful”, ”envy”, ”murder”, ”strife”, ”deceit”, ”malice”,

”slanderers”, ”God-haters”, ”violent people”, ”arrogant people”, ”boasters”, ”contrivers of evil”, ”sexual impurity”

Specific terms:

homosexual practice

disobedience to parents

The total terms ”unrighteousness” and ”evil” are used in 2:8 and 2:9, respectively. The first pinning

down provides mainly a description of unrighteousness and evil in its totality with some broad concretizations concerning covetousness, violence, deceit, sexual practice, and more specific concretizations concerning homosexual practice and the relationship to parents.

Secondly, I shall pin down the content of the natural law by means of a comparison with the binding core of the Law of Moses. We have seen that the natural law is identical in content with the binding core of the Law of Moses. So far I have presupposed that Paul distinguishes between parts of the Law of Moses that have been abolished and parts that are binding. Now I shall give a reason for that. In his letters, Paul expresses the view that the Law of Moses has been abolished. It is a provisional order that was given to Israel, to be valid until the coming of Christ (Galatians 3:19 and cf. Ephesians 2:15). In those two scriptures, Paul speaks of the Law of Moses in its entirety. In his letters, Paul mentions singular specific examples of commandments that have been abolished. He mentions circumcision (Romans 2:26; 4:9-12; 1 Corinthians 7:19, and Galatians 5:1-6), rules for eating (Romans 14:1ff; Galatians 2:12; Colossians 2:16, and 1 Timothy 4:3-5), and the Sabbath and other feast days (Romans 14:5; Colossians 2:16, and cf. Galatians 4:10). A text like 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 also presupposes that there is a part of the Law of Moses which has been abolished, and in regard to which Paul is free. He can follow these rules for social and cultural reasons, or he can set them aside for social and cultural reasons.

At the same time, Paul can appeal to the law as an expression of God's binding will. The law is God's standard for what is sin, and thus for what will condemn man (Romans 2:12-13; 2:17-24, and 3:19). The requirements of the law must be fulfilled (Romans 2:26-27 and 8:4). It expresses the binding will of God. In his letters, Paul quotes singular commandments from the Law of Moses as binding expressions of God's will. There are relatively few examples. They are commandments from the Decalogue. In Romans 2:21-22, it is the commandments not to steal and not to commit adultery; in Romans 7:7-8, Paul quotes the commandment not to covet; in Romans 13:9 it is the commandments not to commit adultery, not to commit murder, not to steal, and not to covet, and in Ephesians 6:2 Paul quotes the commandment to honor one's father and mother. These are the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 10th commandments. The 9th commandment is missing here, but it is covered by the summary in Romans 3:10-18 (see verse 13) and counted in in Romans 13:9 in the phrase "and any other commandment". In Romans 13:8-10, Paul writes of fulfillment of the law, and in verse 9 he exemplifies what he means by "the law" by quoting examples from the Decalogue. He mentions four commandments, and the addition "and any other commandment" shows that Paul is only speaking of examples. Since the examples are from the Decalogue, it is natural to understand "any"

as referring to the Decalogue.⁷⁶² This is confirmed by the fact that Paul mentions the commandment to love one's neighbor as the fulfillment and summary of the law. What is in mind, then, is commandments concerning the relationship to one's neighbor. What is in mind is commandments that regulate interpersonal and social matters. So Paul explicitly affirms commandments from the Decalogue. These commandments are still valid and binding. The Law of Moses is reduced to this binding core. When Paul can write that the Law of Moses in its entirety is abolished, but still affirm singular commandments from the Decalogue as valid, it is due to the fact that these commandments are identical with the natural law.

Thirdly, I shall pin down the content of the natural law by means of the summing up of the law in the commandment to love one's neighbor (Romans 13:8-10 and Galatians 5:14). This summing up of the Law of Moses and fulfillment of the Law of Moses in the commandment to love one's neighbor also functions as a critical principle which positively defines the valid core of the Law of Moses as commandments concerning the relationship to one's neighbor, and negatively sift away the commandments that do not concern the relationship to one's neighbor, i.e. commandments concerning cult, purity, and judicial rules for society.

The pinning down of the natural law through the factual description of it in Romans 1:18-32, through comparison with the binding core of the Law of Moses, and through the summing up of the law in the commandment to love one's neighbor shows that the natural law corresponds with commandments from the Decalogue. The three "ways" interact with each other and strengthen this conclusion.

Mankind know the natural law, but that does not mean that there is an unequivocal relationship to the natural law among men. Some live in rebellion against it in practice and in moral attitude (Romans 1:32), others live by it (Romans 2:1-5). The existence of a natural law can therefore not be read in an unequivocal way from the ethical attitudes and practices of men. Like the natural revelation of God has been suppressed, and therefore, Paul reveals it anew, the natural law has also been suppressed in a category of people, and therefore, Paul reveals it anew.

Chapter 7

Summary and conclusion

I have reached the end, and on these last pages I shall gather up the results concerning a natural revelation of God and of the law. I have operated with a distinction between (objective) revelation and (subjective) knowledge. When it comes to the question of an objective revelation, there is no

⁷⁶² Cranfield, *Romans I*, p. 677, and Finsterbusch, *Thora*, p. 102.

doubt that Paul describes an objective revelation of God. Its locus is the works of God: that which is created, nature, and history. Its time is the time of this world. It began with the creation of the world. Its content is described with words like "the truth", "that which may be known about God", "His invisible character", "His eternal power and divine nature", "God", and "glory". God reveals Himself as real, invisible, eternal, almighty, transcendent and demanding God. These elements are constitutive of God's character. The revelation is a partial revelation in that God does not reveal Himself as a gracious and compassionate God nor as a seeking and saving God. But although the revelation is partial, it is a revelation of God. The revelation is God's revelation of Himself. It is God Himself who reveals Himself. The revelation of God through His works is accessible to all, for all people are in that which is created, in nature, and in history. So in Romans 1:18 – 2:16 Paul is describing an objective revelation of God.

When it comes to the question of a subjective knowledge, there is also no doubt that Paul is describing a knowledge of God in man. Paul writes of a category of people who suppress the truth about God, and this statement presupposes a knowledge of God. In the context, "for what can be known about God is plain to them" and "God has shown it to them" describe both an objective revelation and man's subjective knowledge. Paul writes that God's invisible character is "understood" and "seen", and thus he describes man's knowledge. Paul writes of the subjective knowledge with the phrase "although they knew God", and the replacement of "the glory of the immortal God" and "the truth", i.e. God, with idols and a lie presupposes that these people know God. The same is true of the phrase that they did not see fit to acknowledge God. Paul is explicitly and implicitly describing a knowledge of God in man. It also appears from the text that the objective revelation is identical with man's subjective knowledge. The content of the revelation is man's knowledge, and this is because both the objective revelation and the subjective knowledge have God as the subject. God reveals Himself through His works, and God leads the revelation into man and turns it into knowledge. Man knows God as real, invisible, eternal, almighty, transcendent, and demanding God. So in Romans 1:18 – 2:16 Paul is describing a subjective knowledge of God.

One must of course be cautious about writing that there is no doubt about this, but it is justified. The text is clear as far as this issue is concerned. The interesting question, however, is what happens to man's knowledge when man refuses God and is whirled into idolatry in its different forms. Paul writes that man refuses to honor and thank God as God, and that he is thereby swept away in a fall which Paul characterizes with words like "they became futile in their thinking", "their senseless heart was darkened", "they became fools", and that they replaced the knowledge of God with idolatry. I have shown that the knowledge of God remains intact in man in spite of this. My two main arguments build on verse 18 and verse 32, respectively. The first argument I cannot

recall having seen in literature. In verses 18-32, Paul describes a category of people, and in verse 18 he gives a summarizing characterization of this category. The decisive thing here is that Paul zooms in on them and locks them in this characterization at a time when they have refused God, have become futile in their thinking, have become darkened and foolish idolaters. For Paul writes of a present revelation of wrath in these people, and God's wrath does not strike them *until* they have refused God, have become futile, darkened, and foolish idolaters. Of them, Paul writes that they suppress the truth, and this suppression implies a remaining relationship to the truth. "The truth" is the truth about God as He has revealed Himself, and "the truth" is man's knowledge of God which has been kept intact within him. However, these people fight against the knowledge of God by suppressing it. The second argument builds on verse 32. Here, once again Paul gives a summarizing characterization on this category of people. Paul writes of a present knowledge of God's righteous decree, and once again the decisive thing is when Paul zooms in and locks them. He does so *after* God's wrath has struck them. And God's wrath does not strike them *until* they have refused God, have become futile in their thinking, darkened, and foolish idolaters, and *until* they have markedly and consciously engaged themselves in impure lusts, homosexual practice, and unrighteousness in general. The characterization in verse 32 tells us that they still have a knowledge of God's righteous decree. This confirms that these people have a knowledge of God in that they still know God as law-giver and judge, and it tells us that they still know God's commandments.

Verses 18 and 32 have the common trait that both give a summarizing characterization of this category of people after they have been through the process that is described in verses 19-31. The descriptions are parallel, and each has its own focus. Verse 18 focuses on knowledge of God, and verse 32 focuses on knowledge of justice and of the law, but both verses reveal that God's revelation, be it revelation of God or revelation of the law, is intact in man, but suppressed. Verse 32 also tells us that this category of people suppress the knowledge of God by their involvement in unrighteousness and by their defence and propaganda for unrighteousness.

The natural revelation of God is universal and individual, and the knowledge of God is also universal and individual. God reveals Himself to every single human being through His works; every single human being knows God as He has revealed Himself, and every human being refuses God and is swept away in a religious fall which ends in idolatry. This process from knowledge to refusal and idolatry is individual and collective, and therefore it is also a process in history which means that the individual human being grows up in a culture that is characterized by this refusal and idolatry.

When it comes to the question of a natural revelation of the law, once again we can profitably distinguish between (objective) revelation and (subjective) knowledge. Paul describes a revelation

of the law. In that God can accuse, judge, and punish ethical sin, this presupposes a revelation of God's commandments. The mention of the women who replaced the natural relation with the unnatural, means, in analogy with the people's replacement of God with idols, that the natural sexual relation has been revealed to them by God and known by them. But it is not until Romans 2:15 that Paul explicitly speaks of a revelation of the law. It is stated as "the work of the law is written on their hearts". Its locus is man's heart. Its time is the time of mankind, and its content is God's law. We have seen that the natural law is identical in content with the Law of Moses. Paul abolishes the Law of Moses in its entirety (Galatians 3:19; Ephesians 2:15, and 1 Corinthians 9:19-23). It is a provisional order which has been given to Israel, to be valid until the coming of Christ. However, Paul affirms parts of the Law of Moses, namely the valid core of the Law of Moses, which is identical with the natural law. In Romans 2:14, Paul writes that the Gentiles are the law to themselves, and in the context, "the law" in this expression is identified with the binding core of the Law of Moses. There is, then, no difference in content between the natural law and the binding core of the Law of Moses. In accordance with this, Paul characterizes both Gentiles and Jews who perish as hearers of the law (Romans 2:12), where the law is the same for both categories. In the conclusion (Romans 3:19), Paul can speak of both Gentiles and Jews as "those under the law", i.e. they are under the same law; and as the ones whom "the law speaks", i.e. whom the same law speaks to. In these scriptures, the natural law is identified with the binding core of the Law of Moses.

The natural law may be pinned down through a definition of "unrighteousness" in Romans 1:18-32. Here, we get a description of "unrighteousness" and "evil" in its totality and some broad concretizations concerning covetousness, violence, fraud, sexual practice, and some more specific concretizations concerning homosexual practice and the relationship to one's parents. The natural law may be pinned down through a comparison with the binding core of the law of Moses. Paul quotes and uses singular commandments from the Law of Moses as binding. They are commandments from the Decalogue (Romans 2:21-22; Romans 13:9, and Ephesians 6:2). In the individual binding commandments, Paul can include material from the OT. This applies to the commandment not to commit adultery where Paul includes Genesis 2:24 as a created order (cf. Ephesians 5:31) and possibly Leviticus 18:22. In connexion with the same commandment, Paul includes the prohibition against incest (Leviticus 18:8 and 1 Corinthians 5:1). The natural law may be pinned down through the summing up of the Law of Moses in the commandment to love one's neighbor. This commandment functions as a critical principle which positively determines the binding core of the Law of Moses as commandments which concern the relationship to one's neighbor. Thereby, the commandments which do not concern the relationship to one's neighbor, i.e.

commandments concerning cult, purity, and judicial rules for society, are sifted away. The three pinnings down show that the natural law corresponds to commandments from the Decalogue.

When it comes to the question of man's knowledge of the natural law, there is no doubt that Paul is describing such a thing. He writes that both ungodly and unrighteous people and condemning people know God's righteous decree, and thereby they have knowledge of God's commandments. He characterizes Gentiles and Jews who perish as hearers of the law, and we are told that both groups have knowledge of the law. He writes that the works of the law is written on the hearts of Gentiles (and Jews), and this means that they have an immediate knowledge of God's law, and he writes of "whatever the law speaks to those under the law" (Romans 3:19), where "those under the law" refers to mankind. Just as is the case with the natural revelation of God, we can establish that God's revelation of the law is identical with man's knowledge of the law. All people know God's law as it is written on the heart.

A universal knowledge of God's law does not mean that mankind has an unequivocal relationship to it. Some live consciously and markedly in rebellion against the natural law, both in their practice and in their ethical attitude (Romans 1:18-32), others live by it to a certain extent (Romans 2:1-5). Therefore, the existence of a natural law cannot be read unequivocally from people's ethical attitudes and practices. The natural revelation of God has been suppressed by all people. The natural revelation of the law has been suppressed in a category of people while another category upholds it. But just like Paul reveals the natural revelation of God anew in Romans 1-2 (and in Lystra and on the Areopagus), he reveals the natural revelation of the law in Romans 1-2.

The natural revelation of the law is universal and individual, and the knowledge of the law is also universal and individual. God reveals His law in every single human being writing the work of the law therein, and therefore every single human being knows God's law. Some refuse God's law. Others respect it, spread it, and keep it to a certain extent. These two attitudes are individual and collective and historic, and that means that the individual human being grows up in cultures that are characterized by these different attitudes or a mixture of them.

The natural revelation is not a way to salvation. No one reaches a saving knowledge of God through the natural revelation of God, and no one attains to fulfilling the law through the natural revelation of the law. Paul includes a natural revelation in Romans 1:18 – 2:16 in order to state the reason why the Gentiles are without excuse and can be accused and judged. The reason is that God has revealed Himself and His law to them, but the Gentiles break with this revelation. The natural revelation of God is refused, and the natural revelation of the law cannot be realized. The aim with the use in Romans 1:18 – 2:16 is purely negative.

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