

Knew Better

Romans 1:20-24

Dr. Pierre Cannings

I. General Revelation (No Excuses) Naked Eye vs. 20-21

a. Clear as Day

i. Clearly Seen

1. Clearly Seen -*perceive, notice*, also of inward seeing *God's invisible attributes are perceived with the eye of reason in the things that have been made* Ro 1:20
2. Understood - to grasp or comprehend someth. on the basis of careful thought, *perceive, apprehend, understand, gain an insight in—...what is invisible ... is clearly perceived* (w. the eye of the understanding) Ro 1:20

ii. Time - Since- Creation - act of creation, *creation*

iii. Clearly Seen

1. Invisible Attributes - to not being subject to being seen, *unseen, invisible*, of, divine attributes
 - a. In the doxology in 1 Tm. 1:17 ἄορατος, too, is one of the predicates of God. The designation of God as “the Invisible” is found in Hb. 11:27b: **This is not directly orientated to the definition of faith in 11:1** God is described as invisible not merely with a future reference (nor does the ἄορατος refer, e.g. to the Christ who had not yet come in this age). Yet what is described in 11:27b as the power to accept God as supreme reality in His demands and promises certainly helps us to characterize faith in its quality as in 11:1.
 - b. The value of the language, however, is that it enables him to appeal to this commonplace of Greek religious philosophy: that rational man recognizes the existence of

God (even though invisible) and his nature as eternal power and deity

- c. Paul is trading upon, without necessarily committing himself to, the Greek (particularly Stoic) understanding of an invisible realm of reality, invisible to sense perception, which can be known only through the rational power of the mind.
2. Eternal Power potential for functioning in some way, *power, might*
3. Divine Nature the quality or characteristic(s) pert. to deity, *divinity, divine nature, divineness*
 - a. “divinity” in the sense that something is θεῖον, or has the quality of the divine; that which shows God to be God, and gives Him the right to worship. later Jewish texts). It occurs once in the
- iv. No Excuse - *without excuse, inexcusable*
- b. They Knew Better
 - i. Knew - to arrive at a knowledge of someone or someth. *know, know about, make acquaintance*
 1. Paul begins here to make the transition into more familiar Jewish categories. γινόντες τὸν θεόν, “having known God” (cf. 1 Cor 1:21; Gal 4:9; John 10:15; 17:3; 1 John 4:7–8). If in Greek thought “to know God” is to perceive God as he really is (in Hebrew thought there was a strong sense of knowledge as an acknowledging, a motivational recognition which expressed itself in the appropriate worship and obedience (as in Judg 2:10; 1 Sam 3:7; Ps 79:6; Hos 8:2;
 - ii. No Honor
 1. Honor - (the cardinal sin is not to be grateful for benefactions; reciprocity requires glorification of the benefactor, hence the in to the effect that one knows how to acknowledge benefits)
 - a. To “glorify God” is to render the appropriate response due to his δόξα, “glory,” the awesome radiance of deity which becomes the visible manifestation of God in theophany and vision and which can only bring home to the individual concerned his finite weakness and corruption (e.g., Exod 24:15–17; cf. 20:18–20; Isa 6:1–5; Ezek 1; see also on 6:4 and 9:4;
 - iii. Give Thanks to express appreciation for benefits or blessings, *give thanks, express thanks, render/return thanks* (as ‘render thanks’)
 1. In contrast here Paul is obviously thinking more in terms of thanksgiving as characteristic of a whole life, as the appropriate response of one whose daily experience is shaped by the recognition that he stands in debt to God, that his very life and experience of living is a gift from God
- c. They Became

- i. Futile **render futile/worthless** pass. *be given over to worthlessness, think about idle, worthless things, be foolish* (1 Ch 21:8) *their thoughts became directed to worthless things*
 1. In Paul's writings *kenos* expresses the emptiness of all that is not filled with spiritual substance; it speaks of the "zeroness" of human words and human endeavors that lack divine content. Nothing comes from this nothingness; it is futility. Paul used *kenos* to describe the hollow utterances (see 1 Tm 6:20) spoken by Judaizers and/or Gnostics trying to entice the believers with philosophy and empty deceit (see Col 2:8; cf. Eph 5:6). In contrast, Paul claimed that his preaching was not "futile" but purposeful and effective (1 Cor 15:14). He made the same claim for his labor among the believers (1 Thes 2:1). Paul made sure that his labor had not been for nothing (Gal 2:2; 1 Thes 3:5), for he had not been a recipient of God's grace "to no effect" (1 Cor 15:10). His preaching and labor were not futile but purposeful because the One he had proclaimed and labored for, the risen Lord Jesus, had filled Paul with divine life and substance (v 14).
 2. void of understanding, not able to understand" (cf. 1:31; 10:19). *καρδία* had a broader use than its modern equivalent ("heart"), denoting the seat of the inner life, the inner experiencing "I," but not only in reference to emotions, wishes, or desires (e.g., 1:24; 9:2), but also in reference to the will and decision making (e.g., 2 Cor 9:7) and to the faculty of thought and understanding, as here
 - a. Speculations **the process of reasoning, reasoning** of polytheists
 - b. Paul's point is that man's whole ability to respond and function not least as a rational being has been damaged; without the illumination and orientation which comes from the proper recognition of God his whole center is operating in the dark, lacking direction and dissipating itself in what are essentially trifles.
 - c. Although *μάταιος* is well enough known in Greek literature in the sense "vain, empty," *ματαιότης* (8:20; Eph 4:17; 2 Pet 2:18) and *ματαιόω* (only here in NT) are almost exclusively biblical in usage. As such Paul's commentary will be heavily influenced by the ruthless negative judgment of the psalmist (39:4–5; 62:9; 78:33; 144:4; esp. 94:11) and particularly Ecclesiastes (1:2, 14; 2:1, 11, 15, 17; etc.) Paul's implication is plain: where life is not experienced as a gift from God it has lost touch with reality and condemns itself to futility. See also on 8:20.
- ii. Foolish one who lacks *σύνεσις* is **void of understanding, senseless, foolish**, implying also a lack of high moral quality

1. In the New Testament, the fool is one who refuses to recognize the truth of God as communicated through the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ (e.g., Luke 24:25; 1 Cor. 15:36; cf. Rom. 1:22). Paul charges the Corinthian Christians to become “fools for Christ’s sake” (1 Cor. 4:10; cf. 3:18), pursuing the ways of God which in the eyes of the world appear to be pure folly (1:18–25).
2. Heart - as center and source of the whole inner life, with its thinking, feeling, and volition (περιέχεσθαι=some poet said that the heart embraces perception, wit, intellect, and reflection), of humans whether in their pre-Christian or Christian experience
 - a. Darkened - ***be/become inwardly darkened***,
 - b. of the organ of spiritual and moral perception

II. Contradictions vs. 22-23

a. You Claim

i. Professing - **to state someth. W. confidence, say, assert, claim**

1. “wisdom,” was highly prized throughout the ancient world, as the wisdom tradition within Judaism itself demonstrates. In Stoicism in particular, the σοφός, “wise man,” was the ideal to be aspired to

ii. Wise - *wise, learned*, having intelligence and education above the average

1. The irony here is intentional and heavy: men claim to be wise, to have achieved the appropriate balance between their theoretical (rational) knowledge and its practical application. But their lives demonstrate the contrary, that their conduct does *not* match what they know of God. The tragedy is that they do not recognize the disparity: despite this folly they still claim to be wise; their futility is the measure of their wisdom (cf. 1 Cor 1:18–25;

b. They Became

i. Fools ***make foolish, show to be foolish*** 1 Cor 1:20.

1. Pass. in act. sense *become foolish* (Sir 23:14) φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν *although they claimed to be wise, they became fools* **Ro 1:22**

c. The Exchange

i. Exchanged to exchange one thing for another, *exchange*

1. Glory the condition of being bright or shining, *brightness, splendor, radiance*, widened to denote the *glory, majesty, sublimity* of God in general
2. Incorruptible to imperviousness to corruption and death, *imperishable, incorruptible, immortal*

ii. For

1. Image state of being similar in appearance, *image, form image*,. The cultic images of the Gentiles are contrasted with the δόξα of God which cannot be represented plastically. It is said of these

empty idolatrous figures (ὁμοιώματα) that they are fashioned in the form of human and animal bodies (εἰκόνες).

- a. Jewish tradition the idolatry of the golden calf was frequently associated with the fall of Adam: idolatry was the prime indication of the depth of man's fall, and Israel's own fall into idolatry at Sinai after God had chosen them to be his people was seen as the equivalent in Israel's history to Adam's fall after creation
2. Corruptible subject to decay/destruction, *perishable, mortal*

III. III. Give Away

- a. Gave them Over - to convey someth. in which one has a relatively strong personal interest, *hand over, give (over), deliver, entrust hand over, turn over, give up* a person *he abandoned them to impurity* Ro 1:24 judgment on sinners
 - i. *hand over, turn over, give up* a person of police and courts 'hand over into [the] custody As Military term 'surrender
- b. Lust - a desire for someth. forbidden or simply inordinate, *craving* can also indicate the origin and seat of the desire
 1. desire," can be used in a good sense (so in Phil 1:23 and 1 Thess 2:17), but more often in a bad sense, as desire for something forbidden, including, not least, sexual desire, lust.
 - ii. Hearts
- c. Impurity a state of moral corruption, give over to vileness
 - i. Paul has in view man's animal appetites, specifically the desires of the flesh, the mortal body (6:12; 7:7–8; 13:14; Gal 5:16, 24; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:5; also Eph 2:3; 4:22). Paul is still operating within the framework of the fall narratives: man's desire for freedom from constraint to do what he wants as the primal sin (see on 7:7). But he probably also has in mind another classic example of human craving which brought divine wrath upon it (Num 11:31–35) which is twice referred to in the Psalms with the formula that God gave them their desire (Pss 78
- d. Dishonored deprive someone of honor or respect, *to dishonor/shame*, an especially grievous offense in the strongly honor-shame *that their bodies might be degraded*
 - i. Paul would see the act of handing over as punitive, but not as spiteful or vengeful. For him it is simply the case that man apart from God regresses to a lower level of animality. God has handed them over in the sense that he has accepted the fact of man's rebellious desire to be free of God (in terms of Gen 3, to be "as God"), and has let go of the control which restrained them from their baser instincts. The rationale is, presumably, that God does not retain control over those who do not desire it; he who wants to be on his own is granted his wish. The important corollary also follows that Paul does not indict all human, including sexual, desire as

unclean. Rather it is only when such desire has control of man, when it becomes the most important aspect of human life, that it is condemned. Paul would also, presumably, see the divine handing over as at least potentially redemptive, if it resulted in man's recoiling from the degenerate outworking of his own freedom (cf. 1 Cor 5:5), as no doubt had been the case with many of the Gentile God-worshippers who made up his audience

Word Studies

IV. General Revelation (No Excuses) Naked Eye

Creation - **act of creation, creation**

Invisible Attributes - **to not being subject to being seen, unseen, invisible**, of, divine attributes ¹

All the other instances of ἀόρατος relate to God, → 365. In the doxology in 1 Tm. 1:17 ἀόρατος, too, is one of the predicates of God. The designation of God as “the Invisible” (→ 368) is found in Hb. 11:27b: τὸν γὰρ ἀόρατον ὡς ὁρῶν ἐκαρτέρησεν.²⁹ This is not directly orientated to the definition of faith in 11:1 (cf. 11:27a) inasmuch as the πράγματα οὐ βλεπόμενα of 11:1 are also ἐλπιζόμενα (→ 350), whereas in 11:27b God is described as invisible not merely with a future reference (nor does the ἀόρατος refer, e.g., to the Christ who had not yet come in this age). Yet what is described in 11:27b as the power to accept God as supreme reality in His demands and promises certainly helps us to characterise faith in its quality as ὑπόστασις in 11:1. Paul in R. 1:20 calls God’s invisible being τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ.³⁰ He does not say that it becomes visible in the ποιήματα, for νοούμενα καθορᾶται does not imply seeing, → 380. God does not become visible; He is revealed, cf. also ἐφάνέρωσεν in 1:19. 2 C. 4:4 shows that Christ can be called the εἰκὼν θεοῦ without any express emphasis on God’s invisibility as in

¹ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 94–95.

²⁹ The author is not interested in the question whether Moses ever saw God or not, → 331. Philo Migr. Abr., 83: ἀόρατος ὡς ἂν ὁρατὸς ὢν, is no par.

³⁰ → I, 719. The plur. is used (though the sing. is possible; cf. τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, 1:19) because of the two nouns (δύναμις and θεϊότης) in what follows. On the neut. v. Fascher, 72.

Col. 1:15. The concept εἰκὼν θεοῦ is not based solely on God's invisibility (there are other presuppositions, → II, 395), and the being of Christ as εἰκὼν is not to be understood as a making of God visible, or a removing of His invisibility.¹⁴¹ Jn. 12:45 and 14:9 are to be regarded as parallels (→ II, 395); in both, Johannine seeing means encounter with revelation, → 361.¹⁵²⁶

Eternal Power **potential for functioning in some way, power, might**⁷

Divine Nature **the quality or characteristic(s) pert**⁸. **to deity, divinity, divine nature, divineness**⁹

Subst¹⁰. of θεῖος, "divinity" in the sense that something is θεῖον, or has the quality of the divine; that which shows God to be God, and gives Him the right to worship. Thus θεϊότης is first used of the deity: Plut¹¹. Convivialium Disputationum, IV, 2, 2 (II, 665a); Pyth. Or¹²., 8 (II, 398a): ... πεπλησθαι πάντα θεϊότητος; Ditt. Syll¹³., 3, 867, 31: Artemis has made Ephesus famous διὰ τῆς ἰδίας θεϊότητος. But also of men:¹⁴¹ in the imperial cult θεϊότης is a term for the divinity of imperial majesty¹⁵² (Ditt. Syll¹⁶., 3, 900, 20: ἡ θεϊότης τοῦ δεσπότης ἡμῶν [Maximinus Daza] ... ἐπέλαμψεν. Ditt. Syll¹⁷., 3, 888, 10 [238 A.D.]; P. Lond¹⁸., II, 233, 8 [4th cent.]). It is rare in later

⁴¹¹ → 365. In Philo, too, the εἰκὼν for its part is mostly called οὐχ ὁρατή → 369.

⁵¹² Although "the question whether Paul calls the pre-existent or only the exalted Christ εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ is quite irrelevant" (→ II, 396, n. 97), it is wrong to relate Christ's being as εἰκὼν exclusively to the earthly life of the man Jesus, so Fascher, 74 f.

⁶ Wilhelm Michaelis, ["Ὀράω, Εἶδον, Βλέπω, Ὀπτάνομαι, Θεάομαι, Θεωρέω, Ἀόρατος, Ὀρατός, Ὀρασις, Ὀραμα, Ὀπτασία, Αὐτόπτης, Ἐπόπτης, Ἐποπτεύω, Ὀφθαλμός."](#) ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 369–370.

⁷ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 262.

⁸ **pert. pert.** = pertaining (to)

⁹ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 446.

¹⁰ Subst. substantive.

¹¹ Plut. *Plutus*.

¹² Pyth. Or. *De Pythiae Oraculis*.

¹³ Ditt. Syll. W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*², 1898 ff.;³, 1915 ff.

¹⁴¹ From Da. in Jos. Ant., 10, 268: ὁδὸν θεϊότητος παρὰ τοῖς ὄχλοις ἀποφέρεισθαι.

¹⁵² Preisigke Wört., s.v.

¹⁶ Ditt. Syll. W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*², 1898 ff.;³, 1915 ff.

¹⁷ Ditt. Syll. W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*², 1898 ff.;³, 1915 ff.

¹⁸ P. Lond. *Greek Papyri in the British Museum*, ed. F. G. Kenyon and others, 1893 ff.

Jewish texts (Ep. Ar¹⁹, 95: Phil²⁰o Op. Mund²¹, 172 vl²²). It occurs once in the LXX (Wis. 18:9: παῖδες ἀγαθῶν ... τὸν τῆς θειότητος νόμον ἐν ὁμοιοῖα διέθεντο).²³

Clearly Seen -**perceive, notice**, also of inward seeing ποιήμασι νοούμενα καθοράται *God's invisible attributes are perceived with the eye of reason in the things that have been made* Ro 1:20²⁴

Understood - **to grasp or comprehend someth²⁵. on the basis of careful thought, perceive, apprehend, understand, gain an insight in**—W. περί τινος instead of the obj²⁶. ἔτι οὐ νενόηκα ὅλως περὶ τοῦ χρόνου τῆς ἀπάτης *I have not yet fully understood concerning the time of deceptive pleasure* H²⁷s 6, 5, 1 v.l.²⁸.—Pass. τὰ ἀόρατα ... νοούμενα καθοράται *what is invisible ... is clearly perceived* (w²⁹. the eye of the understanding) Ro 1:20³⁰

Excuse - **without excuse, inexcusable**³¹

V. Even Though

Knew - **to arrive at a knowledge of someone or someth³²., know, know about, make acquaintance**³³

¹⁹Ep. Ar. *Epistle of Aristeas*, apocryphal Jewish account of the origin of the LXX (2nd or 1st century B.C.), ed. P. Wendland, 1900.

²⁰Philo Philo, of Alexandria (c. 20 B.C.–50 A.D.), ed. L. Cohn and P. Wendland.

²¹Op. Mund. *De Opificio Mundi*.

²²vl. *varia lectio*.

²³Hermann Kleinknecht et al., “Θεός. Θεότης. Ἄθεος. Θεοδιδάκτος. Θεῖος. Θειότης,” ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 123.

²⁴William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 493.

²⁵**someth. someth.** = something

²⁶obj. **obj.** = object, objective

²⁷Hs **Hs** = Similitudes

²⁸v.l. **v.l.** = *varia lectio* (variant reading)

²⁹w. **w.** = with

³⁰William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 674.

³¹William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 71.

³²**someth. someth.** = something

³³William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 199.

Honor - (the cardinal sin is not to be grateful for benefactions; reciprocity requires glorification of the benefactor, hence the freq³⁴. ref³⁵. in in³⁶s to the effect that one knows how to acknowledge benefits³⁷

Give Thanks **to express appreciation for benefits or blessings, give thanks, express thanks, render/return thanks** (as 'render thanks'³⁸

Futile **render futile/worthless** pass³⁹. *be given over to worthlessness, think about idle, worthless things, be foolish* (1 Ch 21:8) ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν *their thoughts became directed to worthless things*⁴⁰

In Paul's writings *kenos* expresses the emptiness of all that is not filled with spiritual substance; it speaks of the "zeroness" of human words and human endeavors that lack divine content. Nothing comes from this nothingness; it is futility. Paul used *kenos* to describe the hollow utterances (see 1 Tm 6:20) spoken by Judaizers and/or Gnostics trying to entice the believers with philosophy and empty deceit (see Col 2:8; cf. Eph 5:6). In contrast, Paul claimed that his preaching was not "futile" but purposeful and effective (1 Cor 15:14). He made the same claim for his labor among the believers (1 Thes 2:1). Paul made sure that his labor had not been for nothing (Gal 2:2; 1 Thes 3:5), for he had not been a recipient of God's grace "to no effect" (1 Cor 15:10). His preaching and labor were not futile but purposeful because the One he had proclaimed and labored for, the risen Lord Jesus, had filled Paul with divine life and substance (v 14).⁴¹

Speculations **the process of reasoning, reasoning** of polytheists⁴²

Foolish one who lacks σύνεσις is **void of understanding, senseless, foolish**, implying also a lack of high moral quality⁴³

³⁴freq. **freq.** = frequent(ly)

³⁵ref. **ref.** = reference(s)

³⁶ins **Ins, ins** = Inscription, Inschrift, inscription(s). Without a period, esp. in lists, as at the beginning of entries; the capitalized form is used in titles. In conjunction with literary works this abbr. refers to the title or description of contents.

³⁷ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 258.

³⁸ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 415.

³⁹pass. **pass.** = passive (either of grammatical form or of passive experience); also used in reference to literary portion=passage

⁴⁰ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 621.

⁴¹ Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, [*Tyndale Bible Dictionary*](#), Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 503.

⁴² William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 232.

⁴³ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 146.

In the New Testament, the fool is one who refuses to recognize the truth of God as communicated through the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ (e.g., Luke 24:25; 1 Cor. 15:36; cf. Rom. 1:22). Paul charges the Corinthian Christians to become “fools for Christ’s sake” (1 Cor. 4:10; cf. 3:18), pursuing the ways of God which in the eyes of the world appear to be pure folly (1:18–25).⁴⁴

Heart - as center and source of the whole inner life, w⁴⁵. its thinking, feeling, and volition (νοῦν κ. φρένας κ. διάνοιαν κ. λογισμὸν εἶπέ τις ποιητῆς [He⁴⁶s., Fgm⁴⁷. 247 Rz.] ἐν καρδίᾳ περιέχεσθαι=some poet said that the heart embraces perception, wit, intellect, and reflection), of humans whether in their pre-Christian or Christian experience⁴⁸

Darkened - *be/become inwardly darkened*, fig.

- ext⁴⁹. of 1, of the organ of spiritual and moral perception (Poly⁵⁰b. 12, 15, 10 Bütt.-W. v.l.⁵¹. = 566 Fgm⁵². 124b, 10 Jac⁵³. in the text [the pass⁵⁴. of moral darkening]; Plu⁵⁵t., Mor. 1120e; TestReu⁵⁶b 3:8, TestLev⁵⁷i 14:4, Gad 6:2 τὸν νοῦν):
- among polytheists ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνητος αὐτῶν καρδίᾳ⁵⁸

VI. Contradictions Abound

Professing - **to state someth**⁵⁹. **w**⁶⁰. **confidence, say, assert, claim**⁶¹

⁴⁴ Allen C. Myers, [The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 390.

⁴⁵ w. **w.** = with

⁴⁶ Hes **Hes**, date uncertain, perh. before VI B.C.—List 5

⁴⁷ Fgm. **Fgm.** = fragment, fragmentary

⁴⁸ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 508.

⁴⁹ ext. **ext.** = extension

⁵⁰ Polyb **Polyb**, III–II B.C.—List 5

⁵¹ v.l. **v.l.** = varia lectio (variant reading)

⁵² Fgm. **Fgm.** = fragment, fragmentary

⁵³ Jac. **Jac.** = Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker, ed. FJacoby—Lists 5, 6

⁵⁴ pass. **pass.** = passive (either of grammatical form or of passive experience); also used in reference to literary portion=passage

⁵⁵ Plut **Plut**, I–II A.D.—List 5

⁵⁶ TestReub **TestReub** = Testament of Reuben, s. Test12Patr—List 2

⁵⁷ TestLevi **TestLevi** = Testament of Levi, s. Test12Patr—List 2

⁵⁸ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 932.

⁵⁹ **someth. someth.** = something

⁶⁰ w. **w.** = with

⁶¹ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1050.

Wise - *wise, learned*, having intelligence and education above the average⁶²

Fools **make foolish, show to be foolish** οὐχὶ ἐμώρανεν ὁ θεὸς τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου; *has not God shown that the wisdom of the world is foolish?* **1 Cor 1:20.**

- Pass. in act⁶³. sense *become foolish* (Sir 23:14) φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν *although they claimed to be wise, they became fools* **Ro 1:22**⁶⁴

VII. The Exchange

Exchanged **to exchange one thing for another, exchange**⁶⁵

Glory **the condition of being bright or shining, brightness, splendor, radiance**⁶⁶ - The concept has been widened to denote the *glory, majesty, sublimity* of God in general⁶⁷

Incorruptible **to imperviousness to corruption and death, imperishable, incorruptible, immortal**⁶⁸

Image **state of being similar in appearance, image, form image, copy**⁶⁹ On R. 1:23 → II, 395. The cultic images of the Gentiles are contrasted with the δόξα of God which cannot be represented plastically. It is said of these empty idolatrous figures (ὁμοιώματα) that they are fashioned in the form of human and animal bodies (εἰκόνες).¹⁷⁰¹⁷¹

⁶² William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 935.

⁶³ act. **act.** = active

⁶⁴ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 663.

⁶⁵ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 46.

⁶⁶ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 257.

⁶⁷ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 257.

⁶⁸ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 155.

⁶⁹ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 707.

⁷⁰¹¹ So esp. Ltzm. R. *ad loc.* R. 1:23 is based on ψ 105:20: καὶ ἠλλάξαντο τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν ἐν ὁμοιώματι μύσχου ἔσθοντος χόρτον

⁷¹ Johannes Schneider, [*“Ὅμοιος, Ὅμοιότης, Ὅμοιόω, Ὅμοίωσις, Ὅμοίωμα, Ἀφομοιόω, Παρόμοιος, Παρομοιάζω.”*](#) ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 192.

Corruptible **subject to decay/destruction, perishable, mortal**⁷²

Creatures

VIII. Give Away

Gave them Over - **to convey someth**⁷³. **in which one has a relatively strong personal interest, hand over, give (over), deliver, entrust** *hand over, turn over, give up* a person *he abandoned them to impurity* **Ro 1:24**⁷⁴ **judgment on sinners**

hand over, turn over, give up a person ([Lat⁷⁵. *trado*] as a t.t.⁷⁶. of police and courts 'hand over into [the] custody [of]' OG⁷⁷I 669, 15; PHi⁷⁸b 92, 11; 17; PLil⁷⁹e 3, 59 [both pa⁸⁰p III B.C.]; PTeb⁸¹t 38, 6 [II B.C.] al⁸².—As Military term 'surrender

Lust - **a desire for someth**⁸³. **forbidden or simply inordinate, craving**⁸⁴ can also indicate the origin and seat of the desire⁸⁵

Hearts

Impurity **a state of moral corruption, give over to vileness**⁸⁶

Bodies

⁷² William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1053.

⁷³ **someth. someth.** = something

⁷⁴ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 762.

⁷⁵ Lat. **Lat.** = Latin

⁷⁶ t.t. **t.t.** = terminus technicus (termini technici), technical term(s)

⁷⁷ OGI **OGI** = Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae—List 3

⁷⁸ PHib **PHib** = The Hibeh Papyri I–II—List 4

⁷⁹ PLille **PLille** = Papyrus grecs de Lille—List 4

⁸⁰ pap **pap** = papyrus, -yri

⁸¹ PTebt **PTebt** = The Tebtunis Papyri—List 4

⁸² al. **al.** = alibi (elsewhere), aliter (otherwise), alii (others)

⁸³ **someth. someth.** = something

⁸⁴ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 372.

⁸⁵ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 372.

⁸⁶ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 34.

Dishonored **deprive someone of honor or respect, to dishonor/shame**, an especially grievous offense in the strongly honor-shame *that their bodies might be degraded*⁸⁷

Commentary Studies

20 τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται, ἢ τε αἰῶδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θεϊότης, “for his invisible characteristics from the creation of the world are perceived intellectually in the things which have been made, both his eternal power and deity.” The language here is scarcely characteristic of earliest Christian thought (καθοράω, “perceive,” and θεϊότης, “divinity, divine nature,” occur only here in the NT; αἰῶδιος, “eternal,”

⁸⁷ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 149.

elsewhere only in Jude 6; and ποίημα, “what is made,” only here and Eph 2:10). It also for the most part plays an insignificant role in the OT. But it is familiar in Stoic thought: the closest parallel to the ἄορατα/καθορᾶται wordplay comes in Pseudo-Aristotle, *de Mundo* 399b. 14 ff. (ἄορατος τοῖς ἔργοις ὁρᾶται); and for θειότης cf. particularly Plutarch, *Mor*⁸⁸. 398A; 665A (see further Lietzmann). And it is presumably through Stoic influence that the language entered the Jewish wisdom tradition (ἄϊδιος—cf. Wisd Sol 2:23; 7:26 = a description of Wisdom; θειότης—in LX⁸⁹X only in Wisd Sol 18:19) and influenced Philo (for whom ἄορατος and ἄϊδιος in particular are favorite terms; see, e.g., *TDN*⁹⁰T 5:368–69; 1:168); hence also the only other occurrence of ἄορατος (“unseen, invisible”) in Paul comes in the Wisdom hymn of Col 1:15–16. The same is in large part true of both the term and concept κόσμος (*TDN*⁹¹T 3:877–78, 880–82). The concept of κτίσις, “creation,” was also common to Greek as well as Hebrew thought; though it should be noted that the Christian exclusive use of κτίζω/κτίσις for the act and fact of *divine* creation reflects the same Hebrew exclusiveness in the use of בָּרָא “to create” (see *TDN*⁹²T 3:1000–1035; *TDO*⁹³T 2:242–49), in distinction to the much less discriminating use of Greek thought (see LS⁹⁴J). The verb maintains the sense of qualitative distinction between Creator and creature which is such a fundamental feature of Judeo-Christian theology (see also on 9:20). δύναμις, “power,” though more common in other connections (see on 1:16), here belongs within the same frame of reference (cf. Wisd Sol 13:4; *Ep. Arist*⁹⁵. 132; Josephu⁹⁶s, *Ap*⁹⁷. 2.167), so that it can be used as a way of speaking of God’s self-revelation and creative energy both in the singular (Wisd Sol 7:25; Mark 14:62; cf. Acts 8:10) and in the plural (particularly Philo, where the Logos can be described as the “sum” of the powers; cf. Dunn, *Christology*, 225).

Paul thus is clearly and deliberately following Hellenistic Judaism in using this kind of language as an apologetic bridge to non-Jewish religious philosophy (Fridrichsen; Pohlenz; Bornkamm, “Revelation,” 50–53; Bietenhard’s discussion is too narrowly focused)—a fact which must decisively influence our understanding of the meaning he intended his readers to derive from it. Paul is trading upon, without necessarily committing himself to, the Greek (particularly Stoic) understanding of an invisible realm of reality, invisible to sense perception, which can be known only through the rational power of the mind. With Philo he presumably would not want to say that the rational mind is able to reach or grasp God. And he ensures that his language,

⁸⁸*Mor.* Plutarch, *Moralia*

⁸⁹LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

⁹⁰*TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

⁹¹*TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

⁹²*TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

⁹³*TDOT Theological Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, ed. E. Jenni and C. Westermann or G. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.)

⁹⁴LSJ Liddell-Scott-Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*

⁹⁵*Ep. Arist.* Epistle of Aristeas

⁹⁶Josephus Josephus, *Contra Apionem*

⁹⁷*Ap.* Josephus, *Contra Apionem*

however indebted to Stoic thought, should not be understood in terms of Stoicism by giving prominence to the thought of *creation* (“from the act of creation ... the things which have been made”; “Paul speaks not of Ideas, but of things and events which manifest God’s power” [Schlatter; cf. Acts 14:17]), and by setting it within an apocalyptic framework (the revelation of divine wrath from heaven; cf. Michel, Wilckens). “The intention of the Apostle is not to infer God’s being from the world, but to uncover the being of the world from God’s revelation” (Bornkamm, “Revelation,” 59). The value of the language, however, is that it enables him to appeal to this commonplace of Greek religious philosophy: that rational man recognizes the existence of God (even though invisible) and his nature as eternal power and deity. That is to say, however precisely the phrase νοούμενα καθορᾶται should be rendered (“clearly perceived” [RS⁹⁸v]; “visible to the eye of reason” [NE⁹⁹B]), it is scarcely possible that Paul did not intend his readers to think in terms of some kind of rational perception of the fuller reality in and behind the created cosmos (cf. BG¹⁰⁰D, νοέω 1a; TDN¹⁰¹T 5:380). That this is no longer a widely acceptable world-view should not, of course, influence our exegesis of Paul. At the same time, the extent to which Paul was prepared to build his argument on what was not a traditional Jewish world-view, and indeed to commit himself to it at this crucial opening stage of his exposition, even if as an *ad hominem* argument, reveals a breadth and a boldness in his apologetic strategy.

εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους, “so that they are without excuse.” ἀναπολόγητος, “inexcusable”; in biblical Greek only here and in 2:1; see Althaus. The construction can be taken as causative (“so that”) rather than as final (“in order that”) and probably was intended to be so taken (TDN¹⁰²T 2:430–31). The point is the same as in Wisd Sol 13:8–9; cf. also 4 Ezra 7:22–24 and T. Mos¹⁰³. 1.13. This is Paul’s object; namely, to build his indictment on a large area of common ground. That his elaboration of it in more distinctively Jewish terms (vv 21ff.) would narrow the common ground quite rapidly is a risk he takes. The object is to begin from a common sense of the disproportion between human conduct (including religious conduct) and “what is known of God.” The hope presumably is that the initial common assent will make even the fringe members of the audience more open to the subsequent more Jewish analysis.

21 διότι γνόντες τὸν θεὸν οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν ἢ ἡγαρίστησαν, “because though they knew God they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks.” Paul begins here to make the transition into more familiar Jewish categories. γνόντες τὸν θεόν, “having known God” (cf. 1 Cor 1:21; Gal 4:9; John 10:15; 17:3; 1 John 4:7–8). If in Greek thought “to know God” is to perceive God as he really is (TDN¹⁰⁴T 1:690–91; cf. v 18), in Hebrew thought there was a strong sense of knowledge as an acknowledging, a motivational recognition which expressed itself in

⁹⁸RSV Revised Standard Version (NT 1946, OT 1952, Apoc 1957)

⁹⁹NEB The New English Bible

¹⁰⁰BGD W. Bauer, F. W. Gingrich and F. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the NT*

¹⁰¹TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

¹⁰²TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

¹⁰³T. Mos. Testament of Moses

¹⁰⁴TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

the appropriate worship and obedience (as in Judg 2:10; 1 Sam 3:7; Ps 79:6; Hos 8:2; cf. *TDN*¹⁰⁵ 1:704–7; Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:213 [“knowledge of God is a lie if it is not acknowledgment of him”]); note Wisd Sol 16:16. With δοξάζω, “glorify, honor,” however, we move more fully into Jewish categories (cf. already Exod 15:1, 2, 6, 11, 21). To “glorify God” is to render the appropriate response due to his δόξα, “glory,” the awesome radiance of deity which becomes the visible manifestation of God in theophany and vision and which can only bring home to the individual concerned his finite weakness and corruption (e.g., Exod 24:15–17; cf. 20:18–20; Isa 6:1–5; Ezek 1; see also on 6:4 and 9:4; *TDN*¹⁰⁶ 2:238–42). So elsewhere in Paul (15:6, 9; 1 Cor 6:20; 2 Cor 9:13; Gal 1:24) and the NT (e.g., Mark 2:12; Luke 23:47; Acts 4:21; 1 Pet 2:12).

The οὐχ ἡχαρίστησαν, “were not thankful,” is not to be understood as a kind of standard formality (as could the earlier epistolary use; see on 1:8). In contrast here Paul is obviously thinking more in terms of thanksgiving as characteristic of a whole life, as the appropriate response of one whose daily experience is shaped by the recognition that he stands in debt to God, that his very life and experience of living is a gift from God (cf. 4 Ezra 8:60); cf. Kuss. In Paul’s perspective this attitude of awe (the fear of the Lord) and thankful dependence is how knowledge of God should express itself. But human behavior is marked by an irrational disjunction between what man knows to be the true state of affairs and a life at odds with that knowledge. This failure to give God his due and to receive life as God’s gift is Paul’s way of expressing the primal sin of humankind.

ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν, “they became futile in their thinking.” διαλογισμός, “thought, opinion, reasoning”: see also on 14:1. Although μάταιος is well enough known in Greek literature in the sense “vain, empty,” ματαιότης (8:20; Eph 4:17; 2 Pet 2:18) and ματαιόω (only here in NT) are almost exclusively biblical in usage. As such Paul’s commentary will be heavily influenced by the ruthless negative judgment of the psalmist (39:4–5; 62:9; 78:33; 144:4; esp. 94:11) and particularly Ecclesiastes (1:2, 14; 2:1, 11, 15, 17; etc.) on the brevity of life and on the worthless character of so much that takes place in life. And note again the close parallel in Wisd Sol 13:1; also Jer 2:5 (see also Lagrange). Paul’s implication is plain: where life is not experienced as a gift from God it has lost touch with reality and condemns itself to futility. See also on 8:20.

ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδιά, “their foolish hearts were darkened.” Cf. particularly Ps 75:6 [LX¹⁰⁷X 76:5]: οἱ ἀσύνετοι τῇ καρδίᾳ ..., which begins, γνωστὸς ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ ὁ θεός (75:2 [LX¹⁰⁸X 76:1]); 1 Enoch¹⁰⁹ 99.8. For σκοτίζω in the figurative sense with reference to the organs of religious and moral perception, cf. 11:10 (quoting Ps 68:24) and *T. 12 Patr*¹¹⁰. (*T.*

¹⁰⁵*TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

¹⁰⁶*TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

¹⁰⁷LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

¹⁰⁸LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

¹⁰⁹1 Enoch Ethiopic, Slavonic, Hebrew Enoch

¹¹⁰*T. 12 Patr.* Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

*Reub*¹¹¹. 3.8; *T. Lev*¹¹²; 14.4; *T. Ga*¹¹³d 6.2). ἀσύνετος, “void of understanding, not able to understand” (cf. 1:31; 10:19). καρδιά had a broader use than its modern equivalent (“heart”), denoting the seat of the inner life, the inner experiencing “I,” but not only in reference to emotions, wishes, or desires (e.g., 1:24; 9:2), but also in reference to the will and decision making (e.g., 2 Cor 9:7) and to the faculty of thought and understanding, as here (see BG¹¹⁴D; Jewett, *Anthropological Terms*, 305–33); see also on 2:15 and 8:27. Paul’s point is that man’s whole ability to respond and function not least as a rational being has been damaged; without the illumination and orientation which comes from the proper recognition of God his whole center is operating in the dark, lacking direction and dissipating itself in what are essentially trifles.

22 φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν, “claiming to be wise they became fools.” σοφία, “wisdom,” was highly prized throughout the ancient world, as the wisdom tradition within Judaism itself demonstrates. In Stoicism in particular, the σοφός, “wise man,” was the ideal to be aspired to (cf. *TDN*¹¹⁵T 7:473). In using ἐμωράνθησιν Paul may have in mind Jer 10:14, particularly since it is part of the Jewish polemic against idolatry which Paul takes up in the following verses. Whether its use in Matt 5:13//Luke 14:34 throws light on its usage here is unclear: salt μωρανθή, “became insipid,” in the sense of being unfitted to fulfill its function as salt.

The irony here is intentional and heavy: men claim to be wise, to have achieved the appropriate balance between their theoretical (rational) knowledge and its practical application. But their lives demonstrate the contrary, that their conduct does *not* match what they know of God. The tragedy is that they do not recognize the disparity: despite this folly they still claim to be wise; their futility is the measure of their wisdom (cf. 1 Cor 1:18–25; *TDN*¹¹⁶T 4:845–47; 7:521).

Here the echo of the Adam narratives becomes quite strong. Not that Paul alludes to it explicitly, although the γνῶστον of v 19 may recall Gen 2:9. It is rather that the description of human aspiration for greater knowledge and a position of high regard which actually results in a decline into disadvantage and a position of low regard, set as it is in aorist terms, is obviously modeled on the account of man’s fall in Gen 3. The emphasis in the fall narratives on “knowledge” invites the use Paul makes of it, and enables him to formulate the same emphasis as Gen 3 in terms which a Greco-Roman and Hellenistic Jewish audience would recognize and respond to. Considerable use was made of the Genesis account of man’s fall in Jewish theology of this period (here note *Wisd Sol* 2:23–24; *Jub*¹¹⁷. 3.28–32; Adam and Ev¹¹⁸e; 4 *Ezra* 4:30; and

¹¹¹*T. Reub. Testament of Reuben*

¹¹²*T. Levi Testament of Levi (from Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs)*

¹¹³*T. Gad Testament of Gad*

¹¹⁴BGD W. Bauer, F. W. Gingrich and F. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the NT*

¹¹⁵*TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

¹¹⁶*TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

¹¹⁷*Jub. Jubilees*

¹¹⁸Adam and Eve Life of Adam and Eve

particularly 2 *Apoc. Bar*¹¹⁹. 54.17–19, which uses Adam in a similar piece of polemic; see further on 5:12); and the influence of the Genesis narratives is also evidenced outside the Judeo-Christian tradition proper, as the Hermetic tractate *Poimandres* in particular demonstrates (see Dodd, *Greeks*, esp. 145–69). That v 23 has in mind also the idolatry of the golden calf at Mount Sinai (Ps 106:20; see on 1:23) does not weaken the conclusion drawn here (*pace*¹²⁰ Bassler, *Divine Impartiality*, 197), since in Jewish tradition the idolatry of the golden calf was frequently associated with the fall of Adam: idolatry was the prime indication of the depth of man’s fall, and Israel’s own fall into idolatry at Sinai after God had chosen them to be his people was seen as the equivalent in Israel’s history to Adam’s fall after creation (cf. Jervell, *Imago*, 115–16, 321–22). See further Hooker, “Adam”; Wedderburn, “Adam,” 413–19; Dunn, *Christology*, 101–2.

23 ἡλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνης φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πετεινῶν καὶ τετραπόδων καὶ ἔρπετῶν, “they changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of the image of corruptible man, and of birds, and of beasts and of reptiles.” The argument now becomes almost wholly Jewish by drawing on the standard Jewish polemic against idolatry. The language here has been determined particularly by Ps 106[LX¹²¹X 105]:20: ἡλλάξαντο τὴν δόξαν ... ἐν ὁμοιώματι ... (the ἐν derived from the adaptable Hebrew preposition ב; BG¹²²D ἀλλάσσω), referring to the idolatry of the golden calf, though Jer 2:11 is probably also in view (... ἡλλάξατο τὴν δόξαν ...) and Paul no doubt had in mind the magnificent satire of Isa 44:9–20 (of which there are several echoes in vv 22–23). Not least in influence would be the sustained polemic in the second half of Wisd Sol: note particularly 11:15; 12:2–4; 13:10, 13–14; 14:8; 15:18–19 (cf. also *Ep. Arist*¹²³. 138). Typical also for the background here is the sustained polemic of the Letter of Jeremiah (*Ep Jer*) and the repeated attacks of *Sib. Or*¹²⁴. 3 (note particularly again 3:845). Jeremias, “Röm 1:22–32,” draws particular attention to *T. Naph*¹²⁵. 3.2–4. Schulz sees the background as rooted more in Jewish apocalyptic (cf. 1 *Enoc*¹²⁶h 91.4 ff; 99.2 ff.; *Sib. Or*¹²⁷. 3.6 ff.; *T. Mos*¹²⁸. 1.13; 2 *Apoc. Bar*¹²⁹. 54.17–22). See further Str¹³⁰B, 3:53–60, 60–62. For δόξα θεοῦ, “glory of God,” see on 1:21, 3:23, 6:4, and 9:4.

The use of ὁμοίωμα, “close likeness” (see on 5:14, 6:5, and 8:3), and εἰκών, “image” (cf. particularly Rev 13:14–15; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; see on 8:29), may have been prompted by the fact that the same terms are used as equivalents in Deut 4:16–18. The deliberate use of both, when one or other might have been thought sufficient, may be an example of the Semitic habit

¹¹⁹2 *Apoc. Bar. Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*

¹²⁰*pace* with due respect to, but differing from or despite the interpretation of

¹²¹LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

¹²²BGD W. Bauer, F. W. Gingrich and F. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the NT*

¹²³*Ep. Arist.* Epistle of Aristeas

¹²⁴*Sib. Or.* Sibylline Oracles

¹²⁵*T. Naph.* Testament of Naphtali (in *T. 12 Patr.*)

¹²⁶1 *Enoch* Ethiopic, Slavonic, Hebrew Enoch

¹²⁷*Sib. Or.* Sibylline Oracles

¹²⁸*T. Mos.* Testament of Moses

¹²⁹2 *Apoc. Bar. Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*

¹³⁰Str-B H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 4 vols. (Munich: Beck’sche, 1926–28)

of repeating an idea for effect (cf. Moulton, *Grammar* 2:419–20); but here it is probably intended to increase the distance between the reality and that which the idol is supposed to depict—a copy of a copy, inadequate even as a representation (“the inferior, shadowy character” [Barrett]); Lagrange cites the possibly parallel 1 Macc 3:48; we might also compare Plato’s allegory of the cave: what man sees is but the shadow of the figures on the wall (*Republic* 7.514–17). That εἰκὼν is prompted by the thought of man as God’s image is possible but less likely, since it refers also to “birds, beasts, and reptiles” (see discussion in Wedderburn, “Adam,” 416–19), though the influence of Gen 1:20–25 may nevertheless be discernible in the choice of the last four nouns (Hyl Dahl).

The ἄφθαρτος/φθαρτός antithesis (“incorruptible/corruptible, immortal/mortal”) is probably drawn ultimately from Stoic philosophy (cf. *TDN*¹³¹ 9:96) via Hellenistic Judaism, where we see it already established by implication in *Wisd Sol* 2:23 (which again has several points of contact with Paul’s exposition here) and in *Phil*¹³², *Leg. All*¹³³ 3.36 (where it also forms part of a Jewish polemic against idolatry).

We may note that the Judeo-Christian polemic against idolatry foreshadows Feuerbach’s critique of theism in general (cf. Gaugler); the critique of human *religion* is already given within the Judeo-Christian tradition (Barth; Eichholz, *Theology*, 70–76).

24 διὸ παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν, “wherefore God handed them over in the desires of their hearts.” παρέδωκεν, “hand over,” in the sense of hand over control of, responsibility for. For the usage here, cf. Acts 7:42; Rom 6:17. The threefold repetition of the same word (vv 24, 26, 28) is very effective; but the divine judgment has already been implied in the “divine passives” of vv 21–22. ἐπιθυμία, “desire,” can be used in a good sense (so in *Phil* 1:23 and 1 Thess 2:17), but more often in a bad sense, as desire for something forbidden, including, not least, sexual desire, lust. It is found regularly in the Stoics (BG¹³⁴ D) and in this sense also in the wisdom literature (*Wisd Sol* 4:12; *Sir* 5:2; 18:30–31; 23:5). Paul has in view man’s animal appetites, specifically the desires of the flesh, the mortal body (6:12; 7:7–8; 13:14; *Gal* 5:16, 24; *Col* 3:5; 1 Thess 4:5; also *Eph* 2:3; 4:22). Paul is still operating within the framework of the fall narratives: man’s desire for freedom from constraint to do what he wants as the primal sin (see on 7:7). But he probably also has in mind another classic example of human craving which brought divine wrath upon it (*Num* 11:31–35) which is twice referred to in the Psalms with the formula that God gave them their desire (*Pss* 78 [LX¹³⁵ X 77]:29; καὶ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν αὐτῶν ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς [S]; 106 [LX¹³⁶ X 105]:14–15).

εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν, “to uncleanness.” ἀκαθαρσία, “uncleanness,” has by now almost entirely lost its earlier cultic connotation and bears a clear moral sense (as in *Wisd Sol* 2:16; 1 *Esd* 1:42

¹³¹TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

¹³²Philo Philo, *De Legum Allegoriarum*

¹³³*Leg. All.* Philo, *De Legum Allegoriarum*

¹³⁴BGD W. Bauer, F. W. Gingrich and F. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the NT*

¹³⁵LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

¹³⁶LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

[LX¹³⁷X 40]], especially sexual immorality (1 Enoc¹³⁸h 10.11; T. Jud¹³⁹. 14–15; T. Jos¹⁴⁰. 4.6). For a somewhat similar train of thought cf. Phil¹⁴¹o, *Leg. All*¹⁴². 3.139. In the NT it is almost exclusively a Pauline word (9 times in the Pauline corpus); here cf. particularly 6:19; Gal 5:19; Eph 4:19; Col 3:5.

ἀτιμάζεσθαι τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς, “that their bodies might be dishonored among themselves,” i.e., might be treated in a way lacking in respect for them (in accordance with the purpose for which they were created); so, “degraded.” In linking idolatry and sexual license Paul continues to follow the line of Jewish polemic, as expressed not least Wisd Sol 14:12–27. For the denunciation of homosexual practice see on 1:26–27.

Paul would see the act of handing over as punitive, but not as spiteful or vengeful. For him it is simply the case that man apart from God regresses to a lower level of animality. God has handed them over in the sense that he has accepted the fact of man’s rebellious desire to be free of God (in terms of Gen 3, to be “as God”), and has let go of the control which restrained them from their baser instincts. The rationale is, presumably, that God does not retain control over those who do not desire it; he who wants to be on his own is granted his wish. The important corollary also follows that Paul does not indict all human, including sexual, desire as unclean. Rather it is only when such desire has control of man, when it becomes the most important aspect of human life, that it is condemned. Paul would also, presumably, see the divine handing over as at least potentially redemptive, if it resulted in man’s recoiling from the degenerate outworking of his own freedom (cf. 1 Cor 5:5), as no doubt had been the case with many of the Gentile God-worshippers who made up his audience¹⁴³

¹³⁷LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

¹³⁸1 Enoch Ethiopic, Slavonic, Hebrew Enoch

¹³⁹T. Jud. Testament of Judah (in T. 12 Patr.)

¹⁴⁰T. Jos. Testament of Joseph

¹⁴¹Philo Philo, *De Legum Allegoriarum*

¹⁴²*Leg. All.* Philo, *De Legum Allegoriarum*

¹⁴³James D. G. Dunn, [Romans 1–8](#), vol. 38A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1988), 57–63.

20. ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου. Gif¹⁴⁴. is inclined to translate this ‘from the created universe,’ ‘creation’ (in the sense of ‘things created’) being regarded as the *source* of knowledge: he alleges Vulg¹⁴⁵. *a creatura mundi*. But it is not clear that Vulg¹⁴⁶. was intended to have this sense; and the parallel phrases ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς κόσμου (Matt. 24:21), ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου (Matt. 25:34; Luke 11:50; Rev. 13:8; 17:8), ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως (Mark 10:6; 13:19; 2 Pet. 3:4), seem to show that the force of the prep. is rather *temporal*, ‘since the creation of the universe’ (ἀφ’ οὗ χρόνου ὃ ὁρατὸς ἐκτίσθη κόσμος Euthym.-Zig¹⁴⁷.). The idea of knowledge being derived from the fabric of the created world is in any case contained in the context.

κτίσεως: see Lft¹⁴⁸. *Col.* p. 214. κτίσις has three senses: (i) the act of creating (as here); (ii) the result of that act, whether (alpha) the aggregate of created things (Wisd. 5:18; 16:24; Col. 1:15 and probably Rom. 8:19 ff.); or (beta) a creature, a single created thing (Heb. 4:13, and perhaps Rom. 8:39, q. v.).

καθορᾶται: commonly explained to mean ‘are clearly seen’ (κατά with intensive force, as in καταμανθάνειν, κατανοεῖν); so Fri¹⁴⁹. Grm.-Thay¹⁵⁰. Gif¹⁵¹. &c. It may however relate rather to the direction of sight, ‘are surveyed,’ ‘contemplated’ (‘are under observation’ Moule). Both

¹⁴⁴Gif. Gifford.

¹⁴⁵Vulg. Vulgate.

¹⁴⁶Vulg. Vulgate.

¹⁴⁷Euthym.-Zig. Euthymius Zigabenus.

¹⁴⁸Lft. Lightfoot.

¹⁴⁹Fri. Fritzsche (C. F. A.).

¹⁵⁰Grm.-Thay. Grimm-Thayer’s *Lexicon*.

¹⁵¹Gif. Gifford.

senses are represented in the two places in which the word occurs in LXX: (i) in Job 10:4 ἢ ὥσπερ βροτὸς ὀρᾷ καθορᾷ; (ii) in Num. 24:2 Βαλαὰμ ... καθορᾷ τὸν Ἰσραήλ ἐστρατοπεδευκὸτα κατὰ φυλάς.

ἁΐδιος: ἁΐδιότης is a Divine attribute in Wisd. 2:23 (v. l., see below); cf. also Wisd. 7:26 φωτὸς ἁΐδιου, Jude 6.

The argument from the nature of the created world to the character of its Author is as old as the Psalter, Job and Isaiah: Pss. 19:1; 94:9; 143:5; Is. 42:5; 45:18; Job 12:9; 26:14; 36:24 ff.; Wisd. 2:23; 13:1, 5, &c. It is common to Greek thought as well as Jewish: Arist. *De Mundo* 6 ἀθεώρητος ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῶν ἔργων θεωρεῖται [ὁ Θεός] (Lid¹⁵²). This argument is very fully set forth by Philo, *De Praem. et Poen.* 7 (Mang. ii. 415). After describing the order and beauty of Nature he goes on: 'Admiring and being struck with amazement at these things, they arrived at a conception consistent with what they had seen, that all these beauties so admirable in their arrangement have not come into being spontaneously (οὐκ ἀπαυτοματισθέντα γέγονεν), but are the work of some Maker, the Creator of the world, and that there must needs be a Providence (πρόνοιαν); because it is a law of nature that the Creative Power (τὸ πεποιηκός) must take care of that which has come into being. But these admirable men superior as they are to all others, as I said, advanced from below upwards as if by a kind of celestial ladder guessing at the Creator from His works by probable inference (οἶα διὰ τινος οὐρανίου κλίμακος ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων εἰκότι λογισμῷ στοχασάμενοι τὸν δημιουργόν).

Θειότης: Θεότης = Divine Personality, θειότης = Divine nature and properties: δύναμις is a single attribute, θειότης is a summary term for those other attributes which constitute Divinity: the word appears in Biblical Gk. first in Wisd. 18:9 τὸν τῆς θειότητος νόμον ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ διέθεντο.

Didymus (*Trin.* ii. 11; Migne, *P. G.* xxxix. 664) accuses the heretics of reading Θεότης here, and it is found in one MS., ¹⁵³P.

It is certainly somewhat strange that so general a term as θειότης should be combined with a term denoting a particular attribute like δύναμις. To meet this difficulty the attempt has been made to narrow down θειότης to the signification of δόξα, the divine glory or splendour. It is suggested that this word was not used because it seemed inadequate to describe the uniqueness of the Divine Nature (Rogge, *Die Anschauungen d. Ap. Paulus von d. religiös-sittl. Charakt. d. Heidentums*, Leipzig, 1888, p. 10 f.)

εἰς τὸ εἶναι: εἰς τό denotes here not direct and primary purpose but indirect, secondary or conditional purpose. God did not design that man should sin; but He did design that if they sinned they should be without excuse: on His part all was done to give them a sufficient knowledge of Himself. Burton however (*Moods and Tenses*, § 411) takes εἰς τό here as expressing not purpose but result, because of the causal clause which follows. 'This clause could be forced to an expression of purpose only by supposing an ellipsis of some such expression as καὶ οὕτως εἰσίν, and seems therefore to require that εἰς τὸ εἶναι be interpreted as expressing result.' There is force in this reasoning, though the use of εἰς τό for mere result is not we believe generally recognized.

¹⁵²Lid. Liddon.

¹⁵³P Cod. Porphyrianus

21. ἐδόξασαν. δοξάζω is one of the words which show a deepened significance in their religious and Biblical use. In classical Greek in accordance with the slighter sense of δόξα it merely = 'to form an opinion about' (δοξαζόμενος ἄδικος, 'held to be unrighteous,' Plato, *Rep.* 588 B); then later with a gradual rise of signification 'to do honour to' or 'praise' (ἐπ' ἀρετῇ δεδοξασμένοι ἄνδρες Polyb. VI. liii. 10). And so in LXX and N. T. with a varying sense according to the subject to whom it is applied: (i) Of the honour done by man to man (Esth. 3:1 ἐδόξασεν ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἀρταξέρξης Ἀμάν); (ii) Of that which is done by man to God (Lev. 10:3 ἐν πάσῃ τῇ συναγωγῇ δοξασθήσομαι); (iii) Of the glory bestowed on man by God (Rom. 8:30 οὕς δὲ ἐδικαίωσε, τοὺτους καὶ ἐδόξασε); (iv) In a sense specially characteristic of the Gospel of St. John, of the visible manifestation of the glory, whether of the Father by His own act (Jo. 12:28), or of the Son by His own act (Jo. 11:4), or of the Son by the act of the Father (Jo. 7:39; 12:16, 23, &c.), or of the Father by the Incarnate Son (Jo. 13:31; 14:13; 17:1, 4, &c.).

ἐματαιώθησαν, 'were frustrated,' 'rendered futile.' In LXX τὰ μάταια = 'idols' as 'things of nought.' The two words occur together in 2 Kings 17:15 καὶ ἐπορεύθησαν ὀπίσω τῶν ματαίων καὶ ἐματαιώθησαν.

διαλογισμοῖς: as usually in LXX and N. T. in a bad sense of 'perverse, self-willed, reasonings or speculations' (cf. Hatch, *Ess. in Bibl. Gk.* p. 8).

Comp. *Enoch* xcix. 8, 9 'And they will become godless by reason of the foolishness of their hearts, and their eyes will be blinded through the fear of their hearts and through visions in their dreams. Through these they will become godless and fearful, because they work all their works in a lie and they worship a stone.'

καρδία: the most comprehensive term for the human faculties, the seat of feeling (Rom. 9:2; 10:1); will (1 Cor. 4:5; 7:37; cf. Rom. 16:18); thoughts (Rom. 10:6, 8). Physically καρδία belongs to the σπλάγχνα (2 Cor. 6:11, 12); the conception of its functions being connected with the Jewish idea that life resided in the blood: morally it is neutral in its character, so that it may be either the home of lustful desires (Rom. 1:24), or of the Spirit (Rom. 5:5).

23. ἥλλαξαν ἐν: an imitation of a Heb. construction: cf. Ps. 106(105):20; also for the expression Jer. 2:2 (Del¹⁵⁴. *ad loc.*) &c.

δόξαν = 'manifested perfection.' See on 3:23.

Comp. with this verse Philo, *Vit. Mos.* iii. 20 (Mang. ii. 161) οἱ τὸν ἀληθῆ θεὸν καταλιπόντες τοὺς ψευδωνύμους ἐδημιούργησαν, φθαρταῖς καὶ γενηταῖς οὐσίαις τὴν τοῦ ἀγενήτου καὶ ἀφθάρτου πρόσρησιν ἐπιφημίσαντες: also *De Ebriet.* 28 (Mang. i. 374) παρ' ὃ καὶ θεοπλαστεῖν ἀρξάμενος ἀγαλμάτων καὶ ξοάνων καὶ ἄλλων μυρίων ἀφιδρυμάτων ὑλαῖς διαφόροις τετεχνιτευμένων κατέπλησε τὴν οἰκουμένην ... κατειργάσατο τὸ ἐναντίον οὗ προσεδόκησεν, ἀντὶ ὁσιότητος ἀσέβειαν—τὸ γὰρ πολυθεὸν ἐν ταῖς τῶν ἀφρόνων ψυχαῖς ἀθεότης, καὶ θεοῦ τιμῆς ἀλογοῦσιν οἱ τὰ θνητὰ θειώσαντες—οἷς οὐκ ἐξήρκεσεν ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης ... εἰκόνας διαπλάσασθαι, ἀλλ' ἤδη καὶ ἀλόγοις ζώοις καὶ φυτοῖς τῆς τῶν ἀφθάρτων τιμῆς μετέδοσαν.

24. παρέδωκεν: three times repeated, here, in ver. 26 and in ver. 28. These however do not mark so many distinct stages in the punishment of the heathen; it is all one stage. Idolatry leads to moral corruption which may take different forms, but in all is a proof of God's

¹⁵⁴Del. Delitzsch.

displeasure. Gif¹⁵⁵. has proved that the force of παρέδωκεν is not merely *permissive* (Chrys¹⁵⁶. Theodr¹⁵⁷t; Euthym.-Zig^{158 159*}), through God permitting men to have their way; or *privative*, through His withdrawing His gracious aid; but *judicial*, the appropriate punishment of their defection: it works automatically, one evil leading to another by natural sequence.

This is a Jewish doctrine: *Pirqê Aboth*, 4:2 'Every fulfilment of duty is rewarded by another, and every transgression is punished by another'; *Shabbath* 104^a 'Whosoever strives to keep himself pure receives the power to do so, and whosoever will be impure to him is it [the door of vice] thrown open'; Jerus. Talmud, 'He who erects a fence round himself is fenced, and he who gives himself over is given over' (from Delitzsch, Notes on Heb. Version of Ep. to Rom.). The Jews held that the heathen because of their rejection of the Law were wholly abandoned by God: the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from them (Weber, *Altsyn. Theol.* p. 66).

ἐν αὐτοῖς ¹⁶⁰ⲭ ¹⁶¹A ¹⁶²B ¹⁶³C ¹⁶⁴D*, several cursives; ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ¹⁶⁵D ^{166c}E ¹⁶⁷F ¹⁶⁸G ¹⁶⁹H ¹⁷⁰K ¹⁷¹L ¹⁷²P, &c., printed editions of Fathers, Orig¹⁷³. Chrys¹⁷⁴. Theodr¹⁷⁵t; Vulg¹⁷⁶. (*ut contumeliis adficiant corpora sua in ipsis*). The balance is strongly in favour of αὐτοῖς. With this reading ἀτιμάζεσθαι is pass., and ἐν αὐτοῖς = 'among them': with ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, ἀτιμ. is mid. (as Vulg¹⁷⁷.).

On the forms, αὐτοῦ, αὐτοῦ and ἑαυτοῦ see Buttmann, *Gr. of N. T. Gk.* (tr. Thayer) p. 111; Hort, *Introd.*, Notes on Orthography. p. 144.

¹⁵⁵Gif. Gifford.

¹⁵⁶Chrys. Chrysostom.

¹⁵⁷Theodrt Theodoret.

¹⁵⁸Euthym.-Zig. Euthymius Zigabenus.

^{159*} Similarly Adrian, an Antiochene writer (c. 440 A.D.) in his Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὰς θείας γραφάς, a classified collection of figures and modes of speech employed in Holy Scripture, refers this verse to the head Τὴν ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων κακῶν συγχώρησιν τοῦ Θεοῦ ὡς πρᾶξιν αὐτοῦ λέγει· ἐπειδὴ κωλύσαι δυναμενος, τοῦτο οὐ ποιεῖ.

¹⁶⁰ⲭ Cod. Sinaiticus

¹⁶¹A Cod. Alexandrinus

¹⁶²B Cod. Vaticanus

¹⁶³C Cod. Ephraemi Rescriptus

¹⁶⁴D Cod. Claromontanus

¹⁶⁵D Cod. Claromontanus

^{166c} Cod. Sinaiticus, corrector c

¹⁶⁷E Cod. Sangermanensis

¹⁶⁸F Cod. Augiensis

¹⁶⁹G Cod. Boernerianus

¹⁷⁰K Cod. Mosquensis

¹⁷¹L Cod. Angelicus

¹⁷²P Cod. Porphyrianus

¹⁷³Orig. Origen.

¹⁷⁴Chrys. Chrysostom.

¹⁷⁵Theodrt Theodoret.

¹⁷⁶Vulg. Vulgate.

¹⁷⁷Vulg. Vulgate.

In N. T. Greek there is a tendency to the disuse of strong reflexive forms. Simple possession is most commonly expressed by αὐτοῦ, αὐτῆς, &c.: only where the reflexive character is emphasized (not merely *suum*, but *suum ipsius*) is ἑαυτοῦ used (hence the importance of such phrases as τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας Rom. 8:3). Some critics have denied the existence in the N. T. of the aspirated αὐτοῦ: and it is true that there is no certain proof of aspiration (such as the occurrence before it of οὐχ or an elided preposition; in early MSS. breathings are rare), but in a few strong cases, where the omission of the aspirate would be against all Greek usage, it is retained by WH¹⁷⁸. (e.g. in Jo. 2:24; Lk. 23:12).¹⁷⁹

20f. τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται, ἢ τε αἰδῖος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θεϊότης provides, as a matter of fact, an explanation of v. 19b; but it is probably more natural to understand γὰρ as marking the relation of v. 20f as a whole to v. 1:18f than that of only the first part of v. 20 to v. 19b. τὰ ... ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ... καθορᾶται is a notable oxymoron, no doubt intentional.¹⁸⁰¹ By τὰ ... ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ are meant God's invisible attributes (see further on ἢ τε αἰδῖος, κ.τ.λ.). For the invisibility of God compare Jn 1:18; Col 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17; Heb 11:27 (see also Gen 32:30; Exod 24:10f; 33:20–23; Judg 6:22f; 13:20ff; Isa 6:5). There is little doubt that ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου should be taken to mean 'since the creation of the world', ἀπό being understood in a temporal sense (cf. Mt 24:21; 25:34; Mk 10:6; 13:19; Lk 11:50; 2 Pet 3:4; Rev 13:8; 17:8) and κτίσις in its sense of 'act of creating': this is much more natural than to take the phrase to mean 'from the created universe' (an idea which is anyway sufficiently expressed by τοῖς ποιήμασιν). The point made is that the self-revelation of God here referred to has been continuous ever since the creation. It is

¹⁷⁸WH. Westcott and Hort.

¹⁷⁹W. Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of the Romans*](#), 3d ed., International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1897), 42–46.

¹⁸⁰¹Cf. (Ps.-)Aristotle, *Mu.* 399b. 14ff: ἀόρατος τοῖς ἔργοις ὁρᾶται.

extremely difficult to arrive at a firm conclusion about the precise meaning of τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται, and various explanations of these words are current. Thus some understand νοούμενα as virtually equivalent to an adverbial expression modifying καθορᾶται (indicating that the seeing referred to is a seeing with the mind's eye) and connect τοῖς ποιήμασιν with the combination νοούμενα καθορᾶται as a whole; while others regard τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα as an ordinary participial clause explanatory of καθορᾶται, some of them taking both νοούμενα and καθορᾶται to refer to physical sight, others taking them both to refer to mental perception.¹⁸¹¹ If the last explanation is accepted (it may certainly be argued that usage favours this interpretation of νοούμενα), the mental perception signified by νοούμενα and καθορᾶται must, in view of the tenor of the context, be understood in a strictly limited sense. But the fact that the oxymoron ἄορατα ... καθορᾶται is clearly deliberate should probably encourage us to understand καθορᾶται (and therefore also νοούμενα) as referring to physical sight and the sentence as a whole as a paradoxical assertion that God's invisible attributes are actually seen in, and through, His creation¹⁸²² ἢ τε αἰδῖος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θειότης is a clarification of τὰ ἄορατα αὐτοῦ, to which it stands in apposition. αἰδιότης is an attribute of God in Wisd 2:23. The adjective αἰδῖος occurs in the LXX only in Wisd 7:26 and as a variant in 4 Macc 10:15; in the N¹⁸³T only here and in Jude 6. It is found in pagan Greek from early times (e.g. Homeric Hymns, Hesiod), but is a favourite with Philo. The thought of God's eternity is of course common enough in the Bible, but it is characteristically expressed by other words (αἰώνιος, ζῶν). God's δύναμις is referred to again and again in Scripture, and power is so characteristic of God that ἡ δύναμις can be used as a periphrasis for the divine Name (Mt 26:64 = Mk 14:62). The term θειότης (*divinitas*, 'divinity') first appears in biblical Greek in Wisd 18:9, and occurs in the N¹⁸⁴T only here. It is a Hellenistic term (Plutarch, Lucian, Hermetic corpus, etc.) denoting the divine nature and properties; and is to be distinguished from θεότης (*deitas*, 'deity'), which denotes the divine personality (in the N¹⁸⁵T only Col 2:9).¹⁸⁶³ The phrase 'vis et natura deorum' in Cicero, *N.D.* 1:18:44, is an interesting parallel to the combination of δύναμις and θειότης here.¹⁸⁷⁴

εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους is, in view of the following causal clause, better understood as consecutive ('so that they are without excuse') than as final.¹⁸⁸¹ It is the key to

¹⁸¹¹ To take καθορᾶται to refer to physical seeing and νοούμενα to refer to mental perception is hardly possible, since it is natural to understand the action denoted by the participle to be either prior to, or contemporaneous with, and not subsequent to, that denoted by the indicative.

¹⁸²² The κατα- of the verb is intensive—so 'are clearly seen' or perhaps 'cause themselves to be clearly seen' (if the passive is to be understood in the sense described in BDF, § 314). On ἄορατος and καθορᾶν see further W. Michael's, in *TWNT* 5, pp. 370f and 379–81, respectively; and on νοεῖν J. Behm, in *TWNT* 4, pp. 947–50. It is surely more natural in this context (*pace* Michel, p. 63) to take ποιήματα in its specific sense of 'things made' (cf., e.g., Eph 2:10) than in the general sense of 'works' (including deeds).

¹⁸³ NT New Testament

¹⁸⁴ NT New Testament

¹⁸⁵ NT New Testament

¹⁸⁶³ See further H. S. Nash, 'Θειότης-Θεότης (Rom 1:20; Col 2:9)', in *JBL* 18 (1899), pp. 1–34.

¹⁸⁷⁴ Cited Michel, p. 63, n. 3.

¹⁸⁸¹ Cf., e.g., Chrysostom, col. 413; Burton, *MT*, § 411; Lagrange, p. 24f; Kuss, p. 37. The contrary view is taken by, e.g., Michel, p. 65; Barrett, p. 36.

the proper understanding of what Paul is saying in vv. 19–21. 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. A real self-disclosure of God has indeed taken place and is always occurring, and men ought to have recognized, but in fact have not recognized, Him. They have been constantly surrounded on all sides by, and have possessed within their own selves, the evidences of God’s eternal power and divinity, but they have not allowed themselves to be led by them to a recognition of Him. Barret¹⁸⁹ is surely correct over against a great many interpretations of this passage when he declares: ‘It is not Paul’s intention’ in these verses ‘to establish a natural theology; nor does he create one unintentionally’.¹⁹⁰² For the thought of men’s being without excuse compare Wisd 13:8.¹⁹¹³

ΔΙΟΤΙ introduces a statement (it includes vv. 22 and 23 as well as v. 21) in explanation of the last clause. It takes up the thought of the latter part of v. 18 and clarifies it. Verses 19 and 20 have already shown that the fact that God has manifested Himself to them renders them without excuse, and this thought is taken up by the words γνόντες τὸν θεόν; but, for the rest, vv. 21–23 focus attention on the conduct for which (having had God’s self-manifestation) they are without excuse, that conduct already hinted at in the last words of v. 18.

ΓΝΟΝΤΕΣ ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ: that is, knowing¹⁹²⁴ 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. It has been by Him that their lives have been sustained, enriched, bounded. In this limited sense they have known Him all their lives.

οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν ἢ ἡύχαρίστησαν. Having experience of God’s self-manifestation, they ought to have glorified Him as God and given Him thanks; but they did not do so. The verb δοξάζειν (it occurs five times in Romans) is used in 11:13 of Paul’s glorifying his ministry to the Gentiles, in 8:30 (with God as subject and man as object) of God’s giving men a share in His own glory (cf. 3:23; 5:2; 8:18, 21), and here and in 15:6 and 9 (with man as subject and God as object) of the response which men owe to God’s glory of recognizing Him as God, as their Creator and the Lord of their life, in humble trust and obedience (cf. 4:20; 15:7). See further on 15:6, and also on δόξαν in 1:23; and, for a suggestive discussion of the meaning of

¹⁸⁹Barrett Barrett, C. K., *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Black’s NT Commentaries), London, 1957.

¹⁹⁰²p. 35.

¹⁹¹³On v. 19 f see further A. Fridrichsen, ‘Zur Auslegung von Röm 1:19f’, in *ZNW* 17 (1916), pp. 159–68; Barth, *Shorter*, pp. 26–29; id., *CD* I/2, pp. 303ff; II/1, pp. 118ff; IV/1, p. 394; IV/3, pp. 187f and 200 (= *KD* I/2, pp. 331ff; II/1, pp. 131ff; IV/1, p. 436; IV/3, pp. 215 and 229); Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience*, pp. 47ff; A. Feuillet, ‘La connaissance naturelle de Dieu par les hommes d’après Rom 1:18–23’, in *LV* 14 (1954), pp. 63–80; S. Lyonnet, ‘De naturali Dei cognitione (Rom 1:1823)’, in *Quaestiones in epistolam ad Romanos* 1, Rome, 1955, pp. 68–108; also E. Brunner and K. Barth, *Natural Theology*, London, 1946.

¹⁹²⁴The aorist participle is used since their experience of God has necessarily always gone before their failure to recognize its true significance and act accordingly.

man's glorification of God, Barth,¹⁹³ *C*¹⁹⁴ D II/1, pp. 667 ff. (= *K*¹⁹⁵ D, II/1, pp. 753ff). The words ἡ ἡύχαρίστησαν single out for special mention one particular element in the glorification which they owed to God. They ought to have recognized their indebtedness to His goodness and generosity, to have recognized Him as the source of all the good things they enjoyed, and so to have been grateful to Him for His benefits.¹⁹⁶¹

ἀλλὰ ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν. Instead of glorifying God and being grateful to Him, they became futile¹⁹⁷² in their reasonings. This is the only occurrence of the verb ματαιοῦν in the N¹⁹⁸ T, but other words of the μάτην group occur between them thirteen times. In the LXX the word-group is prominent, and represents a number of different Hebrew roots. One particularly significant usage is in connexion with idolatry, idols being referred to as μάταια, that is, mere useless nothings. The verb occurs in association with μάταια used in this sense in the question asked by God in Jer 2:5: Τί εὔροσαν οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν ἐν ἐμοὶ πλημμέλημα, ὅτι ἀπέστησαν μακρὰν ἀπ' ἐμοῦ καὶ ἐπορεύθησαν ὀπίσω τῶν ματαίων καὶ ἐματαιώθησαν; Paul no doubt means to indicate the futility which is the inevitable result of loss of touch with reality. It is to be seen, in particular, in their thinking, in referring to which Paul uses a word which in the Bible often has a distinctly pejorative connotation (e.g. Mk 7:21; Lk 5:22; 6:8; 9:47; and Ps 94:11[LXX: 93], which is quoted in 1 Cor 3:20).¹⁹⁹¹ All their thinking suffers from the fatal flaw, the basic disconnexion from reality involved in their failure to recognize and to glorify the true God.

καὶ ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνητος αὐτῶν καρδιά. Paul uses **καρδιά** to denote a man's inward, hidden²⁰⁰² self as a thinking,²⁰¹³ willing²⁰²⁴ and feeling²⁰³⁵ subject. The fact that καρδιά is qualified by ἀσύνητος ('uncomprehending', 'void of understanding') suggests that it is the intellectual element of their inner lives which here is particularly in mind. Their heart has become darkened²⁰⁴⁶ (on the passive see above on ἐματαιώθησαν) as a result of their failure to recognize the true God. It is important to understand the significance of this statement correctly. It implies no contempt for reason (those Christians who disparage the intellect and the processes of rational thought have no right at all to claim Paul as a supporter). But it is a

¹⁹³ Barth, K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Edinburgh, 1936–69, being the English translation of the following.

¹⁹⁴ CD K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Edinburgh, 1936–69, being the English translation of the following.

¹⁹⁵ KD K. Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Zollikon-Zurich, 1932–67.

¹⁹⁶¹ For Jewish condemnation of the pride of the Gentiles, which withholds from God His glory, and of their ingratitude, see the numerous passages quoted in SB 3, pp. 44–46.

¹⁹⁷² Some (e.g. Michel, p. 65) see in the passives ἐματαιώθησαν and ἐσκοτίσθη a reference to God's judicial action; but the way in which the reference to the divine action is introduced in v. 24 seems to us to tell against this suggestion.

¹⁹⁸ NT New Testament

¹⁹⁹¹ Cf. Bengel, p. 497 ('διαλογισμοῖς, *cogitationibus*) variis, incertis, stultis'); E. Hatch, *Essays in Biblical Greek*, Oxford, 1889, p. 8; G. Schrenk, in *TWNT* 2, pp. 96–8.

²⁰⁰² e.g. 2:29; 1 Cor 4:5; 14:25; 2 Cor 5:12; 1 Th 2:17.

²⁰¹³ e.g. 10:6, 8, 9; 1 Cor 2:9; 2 Cor 3:15; 4:6; Eph 1:18.

²⁰²⁴ e.g. 2:5, 15; 1 Cor 7:37; 2 Cor 8:16; 9:7; 1 Th 3:13.

²⁰³⁵ e.g. 1:24; 9:2; 2 Cor 7:3; Phil 1:7; Col 4:8.

²⁰⁴⁶ For the imagery of the darkening of the heart (or mind) cf. Eph 4:18; also Test. Reuben 3:8; and the complementary idea of the illumination of the heart in 2 Cor 4:6.

sober acknowledgment of the fact that the καρδιά as the inner self of man shares fully in the fallenness of the whole man, that the intellect is not a part of human nature somehow exempted from the general corruption, not something which can be appealed to as an impartial arbiter capable of standing outside the influence of the ego and returning a perfectly objective judgment.²⁰⁵⁷ See further on v. 28 (ἀδόκιμον νοῦν) and 12:2 (τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοός).

22. φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν drives home the contrast between human pretension and actual fact. The asyndeton makes the statement specially striking. For all their emphatic claims²⁰⁶¹ to be wise, they have shown themselves fools.²⁰⁷² For the substance of the sentence compare 1 Cor 1:21 (the theme of the contrast between wisdom and folly runs through the whole of 1 Cor 1:18–25). The idea that Paul is here alluding to the philosophers in particular is rightly rejected by Calvin;²⁰⁸³ for, if he were, then v. 23 would be an inappropriate sequel, since idolatry did not originate with them. The reference is much more general and fundamental. Compare the descriptions in Gen 3:6ff and 11:4ff of supposed wisdom which proves to be folly.²⁰⁹⁴

23. καὶ ἥλλαξαν²¹⁰⁵ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνης φθαρμοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πετεινῶν καὶ τετραπόδων καὶ ἔρπετῶν. This statement that men have exchanged the glory of the eternal God for mere likenesses of the forms of mortal men, birds, beasts and creeping things, echoes the language used of Israel in LXX Ps 105:20[MT: 106] (καὶ ἥλλάξαντο τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν ἐν ὁμοιώματι μόσχου ἔσθοντος χόρτον) with reference to the making of the golden calf (Exod 32) and in Jer 2:11 (εἰ ἀλλάσσονται ἔθνη θεοὺς αὐτῶν; καὶ οὗτοι οὐκ εἰσιν θεοί. ὁ δὲ λαός μου ἥλλάξατο τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, ἐξ ἧς οὐκ ὠφελήσονται) with reference to their forsaking the Lord for other gods at a much later time. Compare also for the use of ὁμοίωμα and εἰκών and for the classification of the idols Deut 4:16–18 (μὴ ἀνομήσητε καὶ ποιήσητε ὑμῖν ἑαυτοῖς γλυπτὸν ὁμοίωμα, πᾶσαν εἰκόνα, ὁμοίωμα ἀρσενικοῦ ἢ θηλυκοῦ, ὁμοίωμα παντὸς κτήνους τῶν ὄντων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ὁμοίωμα παντὸς ὀρνέου πτερωτοῦ, ὃ πέταται ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν, ὁμοίωμα παντὸς ἔρπετοῦ, ὃ ἔρπει ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ὁμοίωμα παντὸς ἰχθύος, ὅσα ἐστὶν ἐν τοῖς ὕδασιν ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς). Paul uses δόξα here differently from the way in which it is used in the psalm-verse and in Jer 2:11 (in these two

²⁰⁵⁷ The Christian should of course be aware not just of such obvious facts as that judgment is often warped by self-interest and the processes of rational thought often exploited for base purposes, but also of the innumerable much more subtle ways in which the processes of thought are deflected, distorted and debilitated by the egotism of the thinker (e.g. the scholar's inability to criticize his own arguments and theories as rigorously as he does those of others). The darkening to which this sentence testifies means that, even at its best, the thinking of fallen men is never perfectly objective.

²⁰⁶¹ For the use of φάσκειν cf. Gen. 26:20; 2 Macc 14:32; Acts 24:9; 25:19.

²⁰⁷² Cf. Jer 10:14; Ecclus 23:14.

²⁰⁸³ p. 33.

²⁰⁹⁴ On this and the following verses reference may be made to E. Klostermann, 'Die adäquate Vergeltung in Röm 1:22–31', in *ZNW* 32 (1933), pp. 1–6; J. Jeremias, 'Zu Röm 1:22–32', in *ZNW* 45 (1954), pp. 119–21.

²¹⁰⁵ The variant ἥλλάξαντο may be explained as assimilation to LXX Ps 105[MT: 106]:20. It is also an easier reading, since Attic usage preferred the middle of this verb when the sense intended was 'give in exchange'.

O²¹¹T passages the reference is to Israel's glory, whereas Paul here refers to God's glory), but the substantial meaning is much the same, since what is meant by Israel's glory is God Himself. In extra-biblical Greek the primary meaning of δόξα is 'opinion', its secondary meaning 'the opinion which others have of one', so 'repute', 'good repute', 'glory'. But in the Bible the meaning 'opinion' has almost completely disappeared, and δόξα has acquired a new meaning as a result of its being used to translate the Hebrew *kāḥôd*, namely, 'glory', 'splendour', 'majesty', with reference to external appearance. So it is used to denote the manifest majesty of God (e.g. LXX Ps 96[MT: 97]:6; Exod 40:35; Isa 6:3; 40:5). In the N²¹²T it can further denote the divine quality of life. But in this verse it is best understood as referring to that self-manifestation of the true God spoken of in vv. 19 and 20. (On δόξα see further on 2:7; 3:7, 23; and G. von Rad and G. Kittel, in *TWN*²¹³T 2, pp. 235–58.) The use of ἐν with the dative to indicate the object acquired in the exchange reflects the *b^e* of the underlying Hebrew.²¹⁴¹ ὁμοίωμα has here the sense 'likeness', 'image', as in LXX Ps 105:20 and Deut 4:16–18,²¹⁵² while εἰκών here denotes the actual form of man, bird, etc., which the likeness reproduces (cf. G. Kittel, in *TWN*²¹⁶T 2, p. 393f).²¹⁷³ With regard to the animal images reference may be made to (in addition to Deut 4:16ff) e.g. Wisd 11:15; 12:24; 13:10, 14; Ep. Arist. 138 (other references in S²¹⁸B 3, pp. 60–2) and also to J. Gray, in *ID*²¹⁹B 2, pp. 673–8 on 'Idol' and 'Idolatry'.

24. διό indicates that what is related in this verse was God's response to the perverseness of men just described in vv. 22–23.

παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεός is repeated like a refrain in vv. 26 and 28. If the sentence of which these words are a part stood quite on its own, παρέδωκεν would be patient of a wide variety of interpretations; but, since this sentence has its context in Romans, that interpretation has the best claim to be accepted—all other things being equal—which agrees best with the thought of the rest of the epistle. Dodd has attempted to minimize any suggestion of a direct judicial act on God's part. 'All through this passage', he says, 'the disastrous progress of evil in society is presented as a natural process of cause and effect, and not as the direct act of God.... The act of God is no more than an abstention from interference with their free choice and its

²¹¹OT Old Testament

²¹²NT New Testament

²¹³*TWNT* G. Kittel (ed.), continued by G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Stuttgart, 1933ff. An Eng. tr. by G. W. Bromiley (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, 1964ff) is also available.

²¹⁴¹ See BDB, s.v.[מור]. But the indication of the object acquired in exchange by ἐν and the dative occurs also in classical Greek (see Sophocles, *Ant.* 945).

²¹⁵² In Deut 4:12, 15, ὁμοίωμα is used in a different sense—to denote a visible form.

²¹⁶*TWNT* G. Kittel (ed.), continued by G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Stuttgart, 1933ff. An Eng. tr. by G. W. Bromiley (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, 1964ff) is also available.

²¹⁷³ On the words ὁμοίωμα and εἰκών see further J. Schneider, in *TWNT* 5, pp. 191–7, and G. von Rad, H. Kleinknecht and G. Kittel, in *TWNT* 2, pp. 378–96.

²¹⁸SB H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* 1–4, Munich, 1922–28; 5–6 (by J. Jeremias and K. Adolph), Munich, 1956–61.

²¹⁹*IDB* G. A. Buttrick (ed.), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 volumes, New York, 1962.

consequences.²²⁰⁴ But the thrice-repeated παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεός is surely so emphatic as to suggest that a deliberate, positive act of God is meant. Another view which is surely to be rejected is that which understands παρέδωκεν to imply that God actually impelled men to uncleanness, actually made them sin. Chrysostom²²¹ rightly rejected this explanation,²²²¹ for it is hardly reconcilable with the fundamental biblical doctrine of God's absolute goodness. We must rather think in terms of God's permitting (in the sense not of authorizing but of not preventing), of His withholding His help which alone could prevent.²²³² A further question of the greatest importance still remains to be considered: Did Paul mean by παρέδωκεν an act which was absolute and final, or an act of definitely limited intent? The English expression 'give up' (used by the AV and R²²⁴V here) is liable to suggest a finality which the verb παραδιδόναι certainly does not always imply. It is significant that the same verb is used in 8:32 of God's delivering up His Son to death for our sake:²²⁵³ while this fact in no way calls in question the seriousness of what is meant by παρέδωκεν here, it ought to put us on our guard against too readily assuming that Paul must mean that God gave these men up for ever. It seems more consistent with what is said elsewhere in the epistle (e.g. in chapter 11) to understand the meaning to be that God allowed them to go their own way, in order that they might at last learn from their consequent wretchedness to hate the futility of a life turned away from the truth of God.²²⁶⁴ We suggest then that Paul's meaning is neither that these men fell out of the hands of God, as Dodd seems to think,²²⁷⁵ nor that God washed His hands of them; but rather that this delivering them up was a deliberate act of judgment and mercy on the part of the God who smites in order to heal (Isa 19:22), and that throughout the time of their God-forsakenness God is still concerned with them and dealing with them.²²⁸⁶

ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν is more probably to be understood as indicating men's actual condition, the character of their life (i.e. as having the meaning which it would

²²⁰⁴ p. 55

²²¹ Chrysostom Chrysostom, John, Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὴν πρὸς Ῥωμαίους ἐπιστολήν, in *PG* 60, cols. 391–682.

²²²¹ By implication, when (col. 414) he uses the words οὐχὶ αὐτὸς ὡθὼν of the general to whom he likens God.

²²³² Cf. Chrysostom's statement (col. 414): Τὸ δὲ Παρέδωκεν ἐνταῦθα Εἴασεν ἐστίν. In his illustration of the general he goes on to use the words γυμνῶν τῆς ἑαυτοῦ βοηθείας.

²²⁴ RV The Revised Version, 1885 (OT and NT together; NT alone 1881; Apocrypha 1894).

²²⁵³ On παραδιδόναι, which, besides this occurrence and its two other occurrences in the present chapter, occurs in Romans also in 4:25; 6:17 and 8:32; see on 4:25 and also F. Büchsel, in *TWNT* 2, pp. 171–4.

²²⁶⁴ Cf. Chrysostom, col. 415, where it is stated that God let them go, ἵνα κἂν οὕτω τῇ πείρᾳ μαθόντες, ὧν ἐπεθύμησαν, φύγῳσιν τὴν αἰσχύνην.

²²⁷⁵ He says (p. 55): 'Paul ... sees that the really awful thing is to fall out of His hands, and to be left to oneself in a world where the choice of evil brings its own moral retribution'. But did God let men fall out of His hands? Dodd's dislike of the biblical doctrine of the wrath of God seems here to have betrayed him into the enunciation of a singularly cheerless and unevangelical doctrine.

²²⁸⁶ We might perhaps compare Calvin's comment on Hos 12:4 that God fights with us with His left hand, and defends us with His right hand. (*Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*. Eng. tr., Edinburgh, 1846, p. 425). See also Barth, *CD* II/2, pp. 486ff (= *KD* II/2, pp. 540ff).

clearly have, were the word πορευομένους inserted) than as instrumental.²²⁹¹ For this expression compare Ecclus 5:2: μὴ ἐξακολουθεῖ τῇ ψυχῇ σου καὶ τῇ ἰσχύϊ σου πορεύεσθαι ἐν ἐπιθυμίαις καρδίας σου. It describes the life of those who acknowledge no higher criterion than their own wayward desires.

εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν indicates the state into which they have been given up, the prison to which they have been delivered. Compare the use of παραδιδόναι with εἰς θάνατον (e.g. Mt 10:21), εἰς φυλακὴν (e.g. Acts 8:3), εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων (e.g. Mt 17:22), εἰς θλίψιν (Mt 24:9). ἀκαθαρσία is used particularly of sexual immorality. It occurs in association with πορνεία in 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:3; Col 3:5. The connexion between immorality and idolatry is enunciated in Wisd 14:12: Ἀρχὴ γὰρ πορνείας ἐπίνοια εἰδώλων, εὗρεσις δὲ αὐτῶν φθορὰ ζωῆς. There is no need to limit the reference to sexual immorality here and in the following verses to the immorality practised in the name of religion in the various pagan cults, though Paul probably did have this in mind.

τοῦ ἀτιμάζεσθαι τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς may be explained variously, as final²³⁰² or consecutive²³¹³ or simply exegetical.²³²⁴ The second of these explanations is perhaps to be preferred to the third: the first seems least likely. ἀτιμάζεσθαι is apparently taken as middle by Greek commentators, as also by the Vulgate, the AV, and some modern commentators; but evidence of the use of this verb in the middle elsewhere in ancient Greek has not been adduced. It is probably better to take it as passive.²³³⁵ The reading αὐτοῖς is to be preferred to ἑαυτοῖς on the ground of better attestation and also because the reflexive would be a natural improvement as soon as the tendency to understand the verb as middle made itself felt. (There is no justification here for reading αὐτοῖς as αὐτοῖς.) Various interpretations of ἐν αὐτοῖς have been offered, the main ones being: (i) 'among them';²³⁴⁶ (ii) 'among themselves' (cf. εἰς ἀλλήλους in v. 27);²³⁵⁷ (iii) 'through themselves' (i.e. in an instrumental sense);²³⁶¹ (iv) 'in their own persons' (i.e. being affected in their own persons).²³⁷² Of these the first is perhaps the most natural. We may understand the sense to be that the result of their having been delivered up to uncleanness is that among them their bodies are dishonoured and abused. (On the suggestion that Paul intended to bring out a correspondence between their abuse of God's glory (v. 23: cf. v. 21) and their bodies' being dishonoured see the introduction to this subsection.)²³⁸

1:19–20 Verses 19 and 20 tell why the wrath of God is being revealed. God, in his creation, has provided sufficient evidence of himself to hold accountable all who reject that revelation.

²²⁹¹ It is taken as instrumental by, e.g., Barrett, pp. 32, 38. The Vulgate obliterates the distinction between ἐν and εἰς in this verse by rendering both by 'in' with the accusative.

²³⁰² So, e.g., Zahn, p. 98; Lagrange, p. 28.

²³¹³ So, e.g., BDF, § 400 (2); Bauer, s.v. ὁ 11:4.b. γ.

²³²⁴ So, e.g., Barrett, p. 38.

²³³⁵ If the variant ἑαυτοῖς were preferred, this would weigh in favour of the middle.

²³⁴⁶ So, e.g., Sanday and Headlam, p. 46.

²³⁵⁷ So, e.g., RV; Bispington; Michel, p. 67, as one of two alternatives.

²³⁶¹ So, e.g., Bauer, s.v. ἀτιμάζω; Barrett, p. 38.

²³⁷² So, e.g., Gutjahr; Lagrange, p. 28; Lietzmann, p. 32; Michel, p. 67, as first of two alternatives; Kuss, p. 49.

²³⁸ C. E. B. Cranfield, [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*](#), International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 114–123.

What can be known of God is perfectly clear. God himself²³⁹⁶ made it plain. Theologians call this natural revelation (as distinguished from special revelation). Attempts by the medieval church to prove the existence of God on the basis of creation are commonly held to fall short of their goal. There is no doubt, however, that creation is the work of a Creator. To demand some sort of absolute proof of God's existence is simply an indication of the recalcitrant nature of fallen humanity.

Verse 20 explains that certain invisible attributes of God have been clearly perceived since the world²⁴⁰⁷ began, specifically, his "eternal power and divine nature."²⁴¹⁸ They are understood from what has been made. The NE²⁴²B says they are "visible ... to the eye of reason."²⁴³⁹ God has revealed himself in nature in such a way as to hold all people responsible.¹²⁴⁴⁰ They are "without excuse." Seeing the beauty and complexity of creation carries with it the responsibility of acknowledging the Creator both as powerful and as living above the natural order. Disbelief requires an act of rebellion against common sense. It displays fallen humanity's fatal bias against God. Although the created order cannot force a person to believe, it does leave the recipient responsible for not believing.

The text says that people are without a defense for their unwillingness to believe. The Greek word translated "without excuse" (*anapologētos*) suggests that from a legal standpoint people had been stripped of any defense. The age-old question about the salvation of the "heathen" is clearly answered in this verse. Nature holds people responsible to believe in a God of eternal power. The question of what may or may not constitute the minimum requirements for salvation is not dealt with here. To rebel against God's self-revelation in nature is to incur the results of that rebellion. Things visible call for a power that is invisible. The idea that matter has always existed is an impossible premise for the logical mind. The view that behind the visible world there must exist an invisible Being is far more reasonable. So those who do not believe are without excuse.

1:21–23 We can reasonably expect that knowing God should lead to honoring him as God and giving thanks. But by nature people neither give¹²⁴⁵¹ him glory for who he is nor give him thanks for what he has done. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke of sun and rain benefitting both the righteous and the unrighteous (Matt 5:45; cf. Acts 14:17). God gives to all

²³⁹⁶ The phrase ὁ θεὸς stands in the emphatic position in the clause.

²⁴⁰⁷ By κόσμος Paul meant the entire universe. The term originally designated an "ornament," and the universe was described as a great jewel.

²⁴¹⁸ At this point Paul was using language common to Stoic thought, which entered Hellenistic Judaism by means of the Jewish wisdom tradition. αἰδώς, δύναμις, and θεϊότης are terms normally associated with deity.

²⁴² NEB New English Bible

²⁴³⁹ That God exists and has certain properties that distinguish him from mere mortals is clearly perceived through what he has created. Murray says that this passage is "a clear declaration to the effect that the visible creation as God's handiwork makes manifest the invisible perfection of God as its Creator" (*Romans*, 1:40).

²⁴⁴¹⁰ εἰς τὸ with the infinitive occurs forty-three times in Paul, almost always to express purpose. God's intention was to make people responsible by his self-revelation in nature.

²⁴⁵¹¹ Beginning with v. 21 Paul used the aorist tense. He was not, however, referring to pagans of some former period. The aorists are gnomic and describe what is true at all times of pagan conduct.

the basic requirements for life irrespective of their relationship to him. The proper response should be gratitude. But people choose to ignore God and come up with their own version of reality. By rejecting the knowledge of the true God, religion is born. F. J. Leenhardt calls it “the triumph of gods over God.”¹²⁴⁶² That line of foolish speculation leads to futility. Paul said that “their misguided minds are plunged into darkness.”¹²⁴⁷³ To turn from the light of revelation is to head into darkness.¹²⁴⁸⁴ Sin inevitably results in a darkening of some aspect of human existence. In a moral universe it is impossible to turn from the truth of God and not suffer the consequences. Ignorance is the result of a choice. People who do not “know” God are those who have made that choice. Understanding God requires a moral decision, not additional information.

In rejecting the knowledge of God available in creation, people claimed to be wiser than God (v. 22). Self-deification lies at the heart of human rebellion. But although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.¹²⁴⁹⁵ One cannot turn from knowledge with impunity. The rejection of truth marks the rebel as a fool. There are two contrasts here—light and darkness, wisdom and foolishness.

People participated in an unfortunate exchange. Their “wisdom” led them to barter the majesty of the immortal God for “images made to look like mortal man” (v. 23). In fact, they even exchanged the glory¹²⁵⁰⁶ of God for images of birds, beasts, and creatures that crawl along the ground.¹²⁵¹⁷ This threefold classification (cf. Gen 1:20–25) as well as terms such as “image” (Gen 1:26) suggest strongly that Paul was describing the wickedness of humans in terms of the Genesis account of the fall of Adam and Eve.¹²⁵²⁸ The worship of gods in the form of animals was common in the pagan world. In the ancient Near East people worshiped such animals as bulls, jackals, hawks, and serpents.¹²⁵³⁹ Paul’s denunciation brings to mind Ps 106:20 (“They exchanged their glory for an image of a bull”), which alludes to the Israelites’ worship of the golden calf at Sinai (Exod 32).

Although God is “immortal” (*aphtharton*), humans are only “mortal” (*phtharton*). To exchange the one who exists outside of creation, not subject to its inevitable demise, for that which at the very moment is caught in the process of decay indicates the abysmal ignorance of

²⁴⁶¹² F. J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Lutterworth, 1961), 68.

²⁴⁷¹³ “Once man had fallen from his true relation with God, he was no longer capable of truly rational thought about him” (Barrett, *Romans*, 37).

²⁴⁸¹⁴ A. Nygren writes, “When man attempts to escape from God into freedom, the result really is that he falls a prey to the forces of corruption” (*Commentary on Romans*, trans. C. C. Rasmussen [Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1949], 111).

²⁴⁹¹⁵ L. Morris notes that ἐμωράνθησαν “has the notion of insipidity about it, ... those who in their ‘wisdom’ reject God’s revelation do not enter a wonderfully exciting new life, but a life which, in comparison with the service of God, is flat, tasteless, insipid” (*The Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 86).

²⁵⁰¹⁶ The δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ in v. 23 refers not so much to his majesty and perfection as it does to his self-revelation in nature as described in vv. 19–22.

²⁵¹¹⁷ ἔρπεται is from ἔρπω, which means “to creep” (LS).

²⁵²¹⁸ Cf. M. D. Hooker, “Adam in Romans 1,” *NTS* 6 (1959–60): 297–306.

²⁵³¹⁹ J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton: University Press, 1950), 129; and *The Ancient Near East in Pictures* (Princeton: University Press, 1954), 185–89.

fallen humans. In Deut 4:16–18 God prohibited the Israelites from making images shaped like a man, any animal on earth, or any creature that moved along the ground. Paul used these same categories to describe the flight of sinners away from the knowledge of God. This decline from idols shaped like humans, to images of beasts, and even to creeping things shows that a debased mind gravitates to the lowest possible level.²²⁵⁴⁰

1:24–25 People cannot turn their backs on God with impunity. They exchanged the majesty of God for images made by their own hands, so God “gave them over²²⁵⁵¹ ... to sexual impurity.” The verb has a certain judicial quality. The NIVS²⁵⁶B note on 1:24 says, “God allowed sin to run its course as an act of judgment.” God’s wrath mentioned in Romans 1 is not an active outpouring of divine displeasure but the removal of restraint that allows sinners to reap the just fruits of their rebellion. F. Godet writes that God “ceased to hold the boat as it was dragged by the current of the river.”²²⁵⁷² The TCN²⁵⁸T says that God has “abandoned them to impurity.” Moral degradation is a consequence of God’s wrath, not the reason for it.²²⁵⁹³ Sin inevitably creates its own penalty. “One is punished by the very things by which he sins” (Wis 11:16). Through the psalmist God declared, “My people would not listen to me ... so I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own desires” (Ps 81:11–12). Divine judgment is God permitting people to go their own way.

The text speaks of “the sinful desires of their hearts.” Although the Greek word translated “desires” (*epithumiais*) may be taken in a good sense (as in Phil 1:23; 1 Thess 2:17), it normally is used of desires that are evil. Scripture is clear that the human heart is fatally inclined toward evil. What the “sexual impurity” consists of is clearly delineated in the verses that follow. It is described as “degrading ... their bodies with one another.”²²⁶⁰⁴ By practicing the abnormal vices listed in vv. 26–27, men and women actually degrade their own bodies. Our physical bodies were meant for better and more noble purposes. Sin is a virus that invades the human soul and takes its toll throughout a person’s entire being. The Greek infinitive translated “degrading” (*atimazesthai*) is present tense, suggesting the continuing practice of dishonoring the body.

In v. 23 pagans are said to have bartered away the glory of God. Now v. 25 says they have bartered away the truth of God. The truth Paul spoke of is God’s self-revelation through creation. And what did the pagans get in exchange? Hardly a bargain! In exchange for the glory of God they acquired idols. They traded the truth of God for “a lie.” Calling attention to the definite article, Morris writes that Paul was “not thinking of idolatry as no more than one

²⁵⁴²⁰ Luther noted four steps or stages of perversion: (1) ingratitude, (2) vanity, (3) blindness, and (4) total departure from God (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. J. T. Mueller [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954], 29–30).

²⁵⁵²¹ παρέδωκεν. Note the identical clause in vv. 26 and 28.

²⁵⁶ NIVSB New International Version Study Bible

²⁵⁷²² F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 1:177. J. Ziesler notes that God’s wrath “operates not by God’s intervention but precisely by his not intervening, by letting men and women go their own way” (*Paul’s Letter to the Romans* [London: SCM, 1989], 75).

²⁵⁸ TCNT Twentieth Century New Testament

²⁵⁹²³ Cf. E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 47.

²⁶⁰²⁴ The articular infinitive τοῦ ἀτιμάζεσθαι is variously understood as final (designating purpose), consecutive (indicating result), or epexegetic (explaining the previous expression).

falsehood among many. It is the lie.”²²⁶¹⁵ To turn from God is to head straight for theological and moral bankruptcy. The lie they bargained for led them to worship and serve²²⁶²⁶ that which is made instead of the Maker.²⁶³

²⁶¹²⁵ Morris, *Romans*, 90.

²⁶²²⁶ J. A. Fitzmyer says that σεβάζομαι “denotes general religious veneration,” and λατρεύω “refers to cultic worship” (*Romans*, AB [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 285).

²⁶³ Robert H. Mounce, [Romans](#), vol. 27, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 77–81.