

The number of commentaries that agree with Knox that Paul uses faith "in another sense" makes one hesitate, but a comparative study of the New Testament quotations of Habbakuk 2:4 (Gal. 3:11; Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:38) in their context does not support that point of view. The translation "my righteous one" (*ho dikaios mou*) in Hebrews 10:38 makes it impossible. *Emunah* (Heb.) means faithfulness to the covenant, very close to *hesed* (steadfast love), in Habbakuk 2:4; and this understanding of faith makes sense here. It is no wonder Knox resorts to "five meanings" of faith in the New Testament! If *ek pisteōs eis pistin* means faith "from start to finish," then it is more consistent to say that the justified person, the righteous, shall continue to live by faith. As he continues in faith he shall continue to live (cf. 8:12 f.; 14:13-23). God's righteousness is revealed, received, and retained *ek pisteōs eis pistin*, faith from beginning to end. This is the meaning of faithfulness, according to this writer's view.

With the presentation of the main theme in terms of salvation (*soteria*) and righteousness or justification (*dikaosunē*), Paul is now, in reverse order, ready to expound justification in 1:18-4:25 and salvation in 5:1-8:39. Nygren has observed that references to faith appear 25 times in chapters 1-4 and only twice in 5-8, while references to life appear 25 times in chapters 5-8 and, not counting the theme, only twice in 1-4!

I. Justification (1:18-4:25)

1. The Need for Justification: the Wrath of God Against the Gentiles (1:18-3:20)

(1) God's Wrath Against the Gentiles (1:18-32)

a. Ungodliness (1:18-25)

(a) Ignorance (1:18-23)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is

plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; ²¹ for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles.

Before the righteousness of God is resumed in detail (3:21-4:25), *the wrath of God*, which explains the need for God's righteous act, is described in both the Gentile world in general (1:18-32) and the Jewish world in particular (2:1-3:20). It is very significant that Paul says both the righteousness of God (1:17) and the wrath of God are revealed (cf. Col. 3:6; Eph. 5:6). The relationship between the two is the holy love of God. Most commentators reject Dodd's efforts to relax this tension by his interpretation of righteousness as a personal act in opposition to wrath as an impersonal process of sin and retribution. Wrath is usually an eschatological act of the future (2:5,8,16; 1 Thess. 1:10), but v. 18 is in the present tense and is better translated "the wrath of God is now being revealed." This wrath is revealed in both the created order of the natural world (v. 18), when it is disrupted, and in the social order (13:5), when there is disorder. It is related to both damnation (2:5,8) and salvation (5:9). See the comment on 9:22.

This wrath is against all ungodliness (*asebeia*) and unrighteousness (*adikia*). The two words correspond to the two tables of the moral law, and, despite the denial by many, the rest of the chapter is an elaboration of the two ideas. God's truth—God's disclosure of himself to man in the created order here and now—is hindered or held down by unrighteousness. Murray makes more of a distinction between hindrance and suppression than most commentators, but hindrance does seem to be a little closer to the Greek. The ungodliness of man is manifest in both religious ignorance (vv.

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18-23) and idolatry (1:24 f.).

Religious ignorance in the Old Testament is often the result of man's unfaithfulness to the covenant (Isa. 2:3), but the ignorance here is the result of man's rejection of the knowledge of God made possible in the created order. The RSV translates *to gnoston* as *what can be known*, but it is perhaps better to say "what is known." This conclusion is strengthened by the claim that this knowledge is plain to them, *because God has shown it to them*. This is a possibility as old as creation, for God's invisible nature is revealed through visible nature, but not in a way to excuse the worship of the natural order of things (cf. Acts 14:15). The revelation is not a vague impersonal power. It is purposive power, personal power, even his eternal power and deity. This is not the so-called natural theology of the age of reason when evidence for an absent deity was argued from design in nature. The God of Paul is a Presence at work in the created order now. He is the Person in the process rather than the God of the gaps. Early Barthianism neglected and even denied this revelation of God in creation. Not even Emil Brunner saw positive value in this revelation. This revelation in creation outside of man is supplemented by a revelation in conscience within man (2:14-16).

The possibility of this perception of God in creation has both Hebrew and Greek background. The emphasis of the Old Testament is on the revelation of God in history, but the revelation of God in creation is not ignored, especially after the development of the doctrine of creation (e.g., Isa. 40-45; Psalms 19,104). Sin distorts but does not destroy the possibility of perception. The mind indeed may become reprobate (1:28), but it may also be renewed (12:2). The mind makes possible perception.

The Gentiles once knew God, a further evidence that *to gnoston* is to be translated "what is known" rather than "what can be known," but *they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became*

futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Their thinking process became *dialogismos*, speculation without perception, empty reasoning. The Greek word translated *senseless* in the RSV means the lack of understanding. The word translated *minds* is *kardia* (heart), a Greek word with Hebrew content. The heart may be "evil continually" (Gen. 6:5), but it has many other functions (2:5,15,29; 5:5; 6:17; 8:27; 9:2; 10:6). In 1:21 the mind is the evil heart without its good functions, and this is the cause of darkness (cf. Eph. 4:17-19). God has become a vague shadow, a big blur!

Speculation that does not acknowledge God leads to idolatry. It dishonors him and does not give thanks. Such people are not atheists; they are ingrates. The glory of God that is the purpose of man is exchanged for the glory of man. Mortal man has displaced the immortal God in their thoughts (cf. Wisd. Sol., 2:23; 3:4). Sin marks man off as mortal, subject to death (7:9; 8:11), and God alone is immortal by nature (1 Tim. 1:17). In Christ the human spirit will receive immortality at death (2 Cor. 5:4) and the human body at the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:53).

Sin has turned a great possibility into a great perversion. Psalm 106:20, speaking of the golden calf said: "They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass." Enoch 99:8 f. elaborates this: "And they will become godless by reason of the foolishness of their hearts, and eyes will be blinded through fear of their hearts and through these they will become godless and fearful, because they work all their works in a lie and they worship a stone" (see also Wisd. Sol., 12-14). This was the view of pious Jews toward the religious ignorance of the Gentiles, but see Romans 2:14-16 for a more positive approach. The roots of this paragraph reach back to Gen. 1-3, as M. D. Hooker has demonstrated.²¹

²¹ "Adam in Romans 1," *New Testament Studies*, VI, 297 ff.

(b) *Idola*

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(a) *Defile*
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(b) Idolatry (1:24-25)

²⁴Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.

The idolatry introduced in 1:23 is further interpreted in 1:24-25. The dishonoring of God has led to the dishonoring of the body. The defilement of the heart is indicated by the defilement of the body. These become the main ideas in 1:26-32. God's wrath from this point is thrice described as God giving them up to indulge in idolatry (v. 24), immorality (1:26), and animosities (1:28) (Leenhardt). Note that 1:26 ff. and 1:28-32 speak not only of God giving them up at the beginning but of the penalty at the end. This is their present predicament and punishment. Desire, like mind, may have a function that is good or bad, but here it is sexual lust that dominates life (cf. 7:7). Sexual immorality is the sign of "the big lie."

b. Unrighteousness (1:26-32)**(a) Defilement of the Human Body (1:26-27)**

²⁶For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, ²⁷and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

The moral classification of sin into two classes, the sensual and the antisocial, is now used (cf. 1 Cor. 5:10 f.; Gal. 5:19-21; Rom. 13:13; Col. 3:5,8; Eph. 5:3-5; 1 Tim. 1:9 f.). Paul's terms are the defilement of the human flesh and the defilement of the human spirit (2 Cor. 7:1). The defilement of the human flesh is clearly manifest in homosexuality, for it is obviously unnatural, contrary to the sexual nature, *para phusin* in Paul's Greek phrase. It is declared unnatural on the basis of the Old Testament view of the man-woman

relation. Sex as well as mind may be good or evil. It is good if it is between a man and a woman completely committed to each other in marriage. It is this oneness that is symbolized by the sex act (Gen. 2:18-25). This is supported by the facts of experience.

Homosexuality is no new form of sexual behavior. The two forms of perversion (woman with woman, man with man) are two of ten forms of unrighteousness mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:9 f. It was common practice in the pagan world. Most of the early Caesars were homosexuals. Suetonius said of Julius Caesar: "He was every woman's man and every man's woman." The *Satires* of Juvenal also reveal the rotten eroticism of Roman society.

In utter disgust at pagan morals Paul turns to God with the praise of a doxology that may indicate liturgical usage, but rabbinical writings abound with praises such as "the Holy One (blessed be he)" (cf. Rom. 9:5). This is continued even in Latin theology, and Augustine's *Confessions* is a classic example. Augustine's *City of God* (XIV.2) adopts Paul's theology to Latin language by dividing sins into carnalities and animosities. His Pauline perspective is plain when he says: "It is not the corruptible flesh that makes the soul sinful, but the sinful soul that makes the flesh corruptible" (*ibid.*, XIV.3).

(b) Defilement of the Human Spirit (1:28-32)

²⁸And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct. ²⁹They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³²Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them.

This third clap of thunder about the wrath of God, his abandonment of sinners in their sins, makes fascinating usage of the Greek language. The use of paronomasia

as well as to Gentiles. This recalls the day of the Lord in Amos 5:18-20.

The judgment of God will be not only according to truth, but also *according to . . . works*. This second way of stating the standard of God's judgment is frequently affirmed in the Old Testament (Psalm 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Jer. 17:10), and it is adopted at many places in the New Testament (2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Peter 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12). Knox thinks this standard of works is a threat to Paul's idea of justification by faith, but most other commentators disagree with him. Leenhardt has well said: "This does not imply any contradiction with the principle of the free justification of the believer independently of his works. The two principles have not the same object." A judgment on the basis of works is not the same as justification by works.

The judgment of God in contrast with the distorted and partial judgment of man is in full focus after v. 6. Barrett has rightly recognized two different couplets of Hebrew poetry in vv. 7-10. Immortality and eternal life are again used in the Hebrew sense of that which God alone by nature has and not in the Greek sense of the natural immortality of the human soul. Along with glory and honor they can be given only by God. All of these are closely associated with the resurrection of the dead in 1 Corinthians 15:42-54, and more will be said about glory at Romans 3:23; 5:2; 8:18,21. All of this is in store for those who possess patience, a term often associated with hope (1 Thess. 1:3; 1 Cor. 13:7; Rom. 8:24 f.).

The very opposite of those who possess patient endurance are those who show the spirit of a hireling, a haggler. The RSV translation has *those who are factious*, but this is based on the false etymology that traces the word *eritheia* to *eris* (strife) rather than to *erithos* (reward). Paul lists the word here translated "factious" with *eris* (2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20), so it does not mean the same; and the spirit of a hireling or a haggler is suitable in other

places (Phil. 1:17; 2:3). Such self-seeking and rebellion will receive wrath and anger (*orgē* and *thumos*), two words that often appear together and are very similar in meaning (cf. Rev. 16:19; 19:15). Wrath is again future as in 2:5.

The second couplet (vv. 9-10) continues the contrast. Tribulation and anguish for men is the result of the wrath and anger of God. Peace is added to the gifts of the first couplet.

The order of good and evil is reversed, but the meaning of the first couplet is included and expanded. The real shock in regard to tribulation and distress is the phrase *the Jew first*. The Jew is first also in glory and honor and peace (cf. 1:16), but the Jew is not allowed to have it only one way. First in opportunity puts the Jew first in judgment (cf. Amos 3:2).

The whole argument of these verses has led to the conclusion: "For there is no respect of persons with God" (KJV). The "no partiality" of the RSV is too weak. Milligan considers this word *prosōpolēmpsia* (respect of persons), found only here and in Colossians 3:25; Ephesians 6:9, together with *prosōpolēmpptes* (Acts 10:34) and *prosōpolēmpsteō* (James 2:9) "the earliest definitely known Christian words, not in the Septuagint or non-Christian writings" (A.T. Robertson).

(b) *Jews Compared to Gentiles in General*
(2:12-16)

¹² All who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴ When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

The focus of attention now broadens into the Gentile world in general, including

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even the barbarians, and the literary style includes again two couplets of Hebrew poetry (vv. 12-13), a parenthetical comment (vv. 14-15), and a distinctively Pauline conclusion (16).

The couplets begin with a contrast between those without the law and those with the law. God's impartiality does not remove this distinction. Gentiles who sin without the law will perish, but Jews who sin with the law will be judged, an implication of a greater degree of damnation. This recognition of Gentiles as outside the law was clearly stated in 1 Corinthians 9:21 ("To those outside the law I became as one outside the law—not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ—that I might win those outside the law"). Three laws give man light: the laws of nature, Moses, and Christ.

The second couplet is concerned solely with those who have the law, and the superiority of doing over hearing is crucial. This is not new for the law itself, for keeping the commandments means *doing* them (Lev. 18:5). Only he who *does* will live. This was not forgotten in rabbinic writings as the following quotations from *Pirke Aboth* indicate: "The chief thing is not to discuss but to act" (1:17). And: "He whose works exceed his wisdom, his wisdom endures; but he whose wisdom exceeds his works, his wisdom does not endure" (3:10). James 1:22 continues the wisdom teaching: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." Paul approaches the problem from a different angle, but the contradiction Luther feared does not seem to be there. Romans 2:13 has in mind justification before God rather than man, but it is good wisdom teaching.

Paul's main point is that the hearing of the law is not sufficient to protect the Jews against the judgment of the law. The right relation to God is one of faith, and this is established by the righteous act of God in those who believe, Gentile or Jew. There is no difference.

The parenthesis in 2:14-15 is plainer in the ASV than in the RSV. This return of

thought to the Gentiles, who are without the law, is intended to make clear that there is a type of law in general revelation apart from the Mosaic law in special revelation. This so-called natural law receives rough treatment from Nygren, but it is there just the same, and there is no evidence it is an interpolation. Those who do by nature (*phusei*; cf. Gal. 2:15; 4:8; Eph. 2:3) what the Mosaic law requires are a law to themselves. This is good, not bad, in Paul's mind.

Hebrew and Greek ideas are united in the use of heart and conscience. The law written in the Gentile heart is to be compared to the law written on stone or in Scripture. Conscience, a Stoic concept of man's natural moral constitution, is a further witness that the Gentiles are a law to themselves when the law is written in their hearts. The reference in Paul is more toward human nature rather than to the universal nature in Stoicism. Despite Paul's feeling of Jewish superiority, 2 Esdras 3:36 allows for "individual men" in other nations who had kept the commandments of God.

Gentiles may come to a knowledge of God through the light of creation (Rom. 1:19 f.) and conscience (2:14 f.). Paul has previously spoken of conscience both in a pagan (1 Cor. 10:28 f.) and in a Christian sense (2 Cor. 1:12; 4:2; 5:11), but here he has in mind the pagan conscience, despite Luther and Karl Barth. Later, Paul will speak of his own Christian conscience (9:1). Calvin was wiser than Luther on this point, for his comment was: "There never was a nation so barbarous or inhuman that it did not regulate life by some form of law. . . . We see clearly from that that there are certain original conceptions of right which are imprinted on the hearts of men by nature." This is not as likely to come from conscience as through the Scriptures, but those who have only creation and conscience are not as responsible to God as those who have the Scriptures also. The greater the opportunity the greater the responsibility. Therefore, the Jew who is only a hearer of the law and



not a doer is under greater condemnation than a Gentile (cf. Gal. 3:10-14).

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 All will be brought to light when God judges the secrets of men (cf. 2:5-10; 14:11 f.; 2 Cor. 5:10). Paul's gospel declared that the final judgment would be by Jesus Christ (cf. comment on 1:4). The truth in creation and conscience by general revelation and the truth in the old covenant find fulfillment and will be finally judged in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

b. The Jews and the Law (2:17-29)

(a) The Jews and the Law in General (2:17-24)

¹⁷ But if you call yourself a Jew and rely upon the law and boast of your relation to God ¹⁸ and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed in the law, ¹⁹ and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰ a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—²¹ you then who teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴ For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

The diatribe style is intensified as Paul paints a portrait of the Jews that vividly compares *knowing* the law with the moral failure of the Jews in the *doing* of the law. The high self-esteem of the Jew is all out of focus with his low self-examination. The tone is much that of Jesus when he said: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach but do not practice" (Matt. 23:2-3).

The preaching part of the portrait lists some of the privileges that gave the Jews a sense of superiority over the Gentiles. A long conditional sentence has for its protasis or subordinate clauses four verbs with a participle followed by four nouns and

another participle. These ten phrases summarize the special privileges of the Jews. The name Jew first appears in the time of the Exile, and it became a mark of distinction. Dependence on the law has been mentioned in 2:13, and boasting in God was the very basis of true worship (cf. Jer. 9:24; 1 Cor. 1:31). The Greek speaks only of "the will," but this is no doubt the will of God.

The fourth phrase originally meant "you test the things that differ," but it came to mean the approval of the good or excellent (cf. Phil. 1:10). It means to know the difference between right and wrong. All of this grew out of the instruction or catechism in the law, and they are not bad as such. Paul never denies the special relationship of the Jew to God (2:25; 3:1; 9:3-5; Gal. 2:15).

The four nouns (vv. 19-20) describe the role of the Jew among the Gentiles. The *guide to the blind* could be blind himself (cf. Matt. 15:14; 23:16-22), but the Lord called Israel to be a *light* to the nations (Isa. 49:6). This was a strong belief in later Judaism: "For their enemies deserve to be deprived of light and imprisoned in darkness, those who had kept thy sons imprisoned, through whom the imperishable light of the law was to be given to the world" (Wisd. Sol. 18:4). As an instructor of the Gentiles the Jew is a *corrector* (cf. Heb. 12:9, same word, discipline). *Teacher* takes the role one step beyond that of corrector, for a corrector was not necessarily a teacher. If the words *blind*, *darkness*, *foolish*, and *children* seem too harsh for the Gentiles, let it be remembered that the Jews at times called Gentiles dogs (cf. Mark 7:27). The Jew used the law as an embodiment or form for knowledge and truth, perhaps in the instruction of proselytes, but this form could at times be without power (2 Tim. 3:5).

The apodosis or main clauses of this long conditional sentence continues with a third group with five parts (vv. 21-23). This is in the form of five questions that expose the moral failure of Judaism. The Jewish