

# **The Judgment of the Heathen: The Interpretation of Article XVIII and Romans 2:12–16**

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## **Introduction**

The impetus for this article comes from a number of personal and theological concerns. In Evangelical circles, both at a popular<sup>1</sup> and an academic<sup>2</sup> level, the question of the fate of those heathen who have not heard of Christ is often answered by reference to a judgment according to knowledge. According to the putative teaching of Romans 2:12–16, any who live in conformity to the deliverance of their conscience will be saved. Theologically, this might seem to be a lacuna in the tight net of Reformed thought, woven as it is around the centre of justification by faith alone. So much is this so that an eminent contemporary Reformed scholar can deny that Romans 2:12ff refers to heathen at all.<sup>3</sup> In examining such a divergence of opinion I would like to examine the work of two doyens of Evangelical and Reformed thought—W.H. Griffith Thomas and C.E.B. Cranfield, in order to demonstrate that on a fair exegesis of Romans 2:12–16 neither of these two positions can be sustained. From there I wish to suggest why such differences arise.

## **The Teaching Of Article XVIII<sup>4</sup>**

Of the Anglican Articles of Religion the only one which appears to address itself explicitly to the fate of those who have not heard of Christ is Article XVIII. 'Of obtaining eternal salvation only in the Name of Christ.' The full text reads as follows:

They also are to be had accursed that presume to say, That every man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that Law, and the light of Nature. For Holy Scripture doth set out unto us, only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.

At first reading this Article might seem to bind the Anglican Church to an exclusivism, teaching that only those who have consciously responded to the proclamation of Christ's gospel can be saved. Several factors make it clear that this is not so. The Latin title of the Article reads: *De speranda aeterna Salute tantum in Nomine Christi*, strictly, 'Of hoping for eternal Salvation . . .' Thus those against whom the Article is directed are within the sound of the gospel, for they know the 'name of Christ' and are able to trust to obtain salvation by it.<sup>5</sup> The 'also' of the Article seems to connect it back to the specific condemnation pronounced in Article XVI,<sup>6</sup> where it is certain that a particular group of professing Christians are in mind. Additionally, the anathema of the Article must refer to severance from Church privileges. The heretics in mind are persons who, while knowing the gospel, insist that men will be judged by the standards of their own profession. Such a position amounts to an indifference to Jesus Christ in the plan of salvation, it amounts to 'another gospel' and is rightly accursed.<sup>7</sup>

None of this is contentious; it is the implications of the positive teaching of the Article which are problematical. Most standard commentators reason that because the anathema of the Article is pronounced only against a conscious rejection of the gospel, it does not compel us to deny the possibility of salvation for the heathen. This may be true as far as the strict letter of the Article goes, but neither does it fuel speculation about the outcome of their judgment. Griffith Thomas surely exceeds reasonable exposition when he says 'Men may be saved *in* their religion, though not *by* it, and it is the latter opinion alone which the Article condemns, because it would destroy vital Christianity.'<sup>8</sup> To support statements like this one, commentators appeal to Scripture.

First, appeal is made to a principle of silence. 'I hold it to be a most certain rule of interpreting Scripture that it never speaks *of* persons when there is a physical impossibility of speaking *to* them . . . So the heathen, who died before the word was spoken, and in whose land it was never preached; are dead to the word, it concerns them not at all; but the moment it can reach them it is theirs and for them.'<sup>9</sup> Secondly, reference is made to certain key texts in the New Testament (Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:14-16; 1 Timothy 4:10) purportedly supporting a belief in the salvation of those who live in conformity with the 'law of nature.'<sup>10</sup>

These two principles would seem to be mutually contradictory; if Scripture were silent on the matter of heathen salvation then the aforementioned texts could not be enumerated. Perhaps a weaker position can be sustained, viz., Scripture speaks of the judgment of the ignorant in such a way as to be compatible with their salvation. At this point it is necessary to depart from our glance at Article XVIII. Although the Article is not *in itself* ambiguous it seems to have been

treated as a launching pad for wider theological concerns far beyond its specific purpose, even by such a fine commentator as W.H. Griffith Thomas.<sup>11</sup> The legitimacy of these concerns can only be evaluated by turning to Holy Scripture, in particular to Romans 2:12–16 as that part of holy writ which bears most closely on Article XVIII.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Interpretation of Romans 2:12-16<sup>13</sup>**

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.

There are 3 basic interpretations of this passage.<sup>14</sup>

- (i) Paul is able to view the morality of at least some Gentiles in a positive light.<sup>15</sup>
- (ii) Paul applies a thoroughgoing principle of judgment to both Jew and Gentile.<sup>16</sup>
- (iii) The Gentiles in this passage are Christian Gentiles.<sup>17</sup>

I wish now to demonstrate that (i) and (iii) are equally false horns of a dilemma, unnecessarily created by misinterpretation influenced by broad pre-exegetical viewpoints.

When coming to exegesis insufficient attention is commonly paid to the context in which Romans 2:12–16 is embedded. This is despite the fact that a fair consensus exists about the purpose of the section of the epistle 1:18–3:20.<sup>18</sup> Whereas at 1:16–17 Paul lays down the central theme of the epistle, righteousness through faith, at 1:18 he launches into a concerted attack upon the debased condition of Gentile life as he knew it.<sup>19</sup> Though he turns to the last condition of the Jew in chapter 2, explicitly at 2:17,<sup>20</sup> the pericope 3:9–20 constitutes a concluding statement concerning the condition of *all* mankind. ‘I have already charged that all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin . . . that every mouth may be stopped . . . For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law . . .’ (3:9,19f). From the evidence of the epistle itself it may safely be concluded that the central aim of 1:18–3:20 is the demonstration of a universal need for righteousness.<sup>21</sup> Given this internal logic, powerful exegetical arguments will be required to overthrow the *a priori* likelihood that 2:12–16 is in exception to a compilation of evidence in 1:18–3:20 concerning the culpability before God of mankind.

A critical question to be decided in assessing the importance of Romans 2:12–16 to the matter of heathen salvation is whether the Gentiles described therein are in fact outside the reach of the gospel. This view, simply assumed in some commentaries,<sup>22</sup> has been vigorously challenged in recent years (in what is perhaps the first commentary on Romans available in English) by C.E.B. Cranfield.

Cranfield marshals a number of arguments to support his contention that the Gentiles referred to are Christian converts from paganism.

(i) There are good reasons to suppose that Paul refers to the conduct of Christian believers in Romans 2:7, 10,<sup>23</sup> and that since the link between 2:1–11 and 2:12–16 is very close, it is likely that Christians are also referred to in vv.12ff.

On pp.151–152 of his commentary Cranfield lists ten possibilities as to the identity and activity of the persons mentioned in vv.7 and 10. He is correct immediately to eliminate the option that what is here expressed is men can earn God's approval, as this is utterly inconsistent with the central thrust of the epistle. However, he quickly puts aside the possibility that Paul speaks hypothetically here, arguing from the pre-suppositions of the Jew, so as to lead him into a recognition that even on his own presuppositions he stands condemned. The only argument offered against taking this possibility seriously is 'that there is no indication in the text that what is being said is hypothetical'.<sup>24</sup>

Yet the way that Paul turns upon the readers in 2:1–3 assumes that his opponent has been drawn along with him in the argument of 1:18–32.<sup>25</sup> The difference between Paul and this reader in the early part of Chapter 2 is not one of principle but of conduct. Paul leads this person into a snare not on account of incorrect belief *per se*, but because of a contradiction between belief and practice; in other words, his opponent is exposed as a hypocrite. If it is recognised that vv. 6–11 represent a *partial* truth about which both Paul and his adversary agree, these verses then fit neatly into the polemical tone of the epistle's first three chapters.<sup>26</sup> While Paul considers that the people answering to the description in vv.7 and 10 are Christians it is another thing to claim that *the text* expressly identifies them as such. The text contains about it a certain deliberate indefiniteness. It is sufficiently descriptive as to bring to the mind of the already convinced Christian his own approach to God, but to Paul's Jewish adversary it simply enunciates an accepted principle of retribution. The passage is 'semi-hypothetical' because it leaves out of account the reality of a righteousness by faith which makes actual that there are persons corresponding to the descriptions in vv. 7 and 10. To identify these persons as Christians for the purpose of exegesis is to go beyond Paul's argument at this point; in the process of the logic of the epistle he does not begin to expound the meaning of faith in

Christ until 3:21ff.<sup>27</sup>

(ii) Cranfield argues that since 2:28–29 defines ‘a real Jew’ in terms of spiritual circumcision, and by this Paul can only refer to a Christian, (cf. Colossians 2:11), it is to be expected that the Gentiles of 2:14ff. are likewise Christians.<sup>28</sup> The reply to this argument is essentially similar to that given under (i). The subjects of these verses are Christians, but it is not an intrinsic part of the argument of the epistle that they be *recognised* as Christians. Where Paul goes beyond contemporary Judaism at this point<sup>29</sup> is in his notion (2:26–27) that the circumcision of the heart could be regarded as a substitute for literal circumcision. That this spiritual circumcision occurs through faith in Christ becomes explicit *in terms of the epistle’s own argument* only subsequently, in 3:21–5:21.<sup>30</sup>

(iii) *Prima facie*, Cranfield’s strongest argument is that Paul deliberately echoes Jeremiah 31:33 (LXX 38:33) in Romans 2:15a.<sup>31</sup>

Jeremiah reads: δώσω νόμους μου εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν γράψω αὐτοὺς. . .

Romans reads: . . . τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν

Since the apostle so clearly uses this Old Testament text of Christians elsewhere (1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:2, 3, 6, 14; 6:16), if it is alluded to here then the Gentiles referred to must be Christian believers.

There is no doubting the verbal parallel, but what evidence have we that this is deliberately intended by Paul? Cranfield errs in not paying attention to the fact that whereas Jeremiah says that ‘my laws (νόμους μου) will be written on the heart, Romans says ‘the work of the law’ (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου) is written on the heart of the Gentile.<sup>32</sup> His explanation that ‘the work of the law’ means ‘the prescription contained in the law’ rather than works actually performed<sup>33</sup> is out of touch with the thrust of the passage. Paul’s concern at this stage of the argument in Romans is to abolish all claims to righteousness based on human deeds. So in 2:13 it is the ‘doers of the law who will be justified’ and in 2:14 it is stressed that the Gentiles ‘do by nature what the law requires.’ The ‘work of the law’ like the ‘doing’ of these verses<sup>34</sup> refers to concrete actions demanded by the law.<sup>35</sup> Only when τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου is understood in this way can the consistent emphasis on action be maintained in this passage. Romans 2:15, unlike Jeremiah 31:33, is not concerned with knowledge of the law but obedience to what it requires; given this different intention we have no reason to suppose that Paul is consciously quoting Jeremiah.

I conclude that Cranfield has offered no positive reasons for identifying the Gentiles of Romans 2:12ff. as Gentile Christians. It is now appropriate to push on to a brief exposition of this passage.

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.

The most striking thing about this verse is not that it teaches that God takes into account the different starting points of people in judging them, and so renders judgment impartially,<sup>36</sup> but that it says that *all* stand condemned before God on the basis of their actions. The Gentiles of 12a are categorically denied the possibility of eternal salvation.<sup>37</sup>

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.

Two points need to be noted here. First, Paul's use of the future tense and passive voice of *δικαιῶ* ('justify') points to the ultimate eschatological verdict of salvation.<sup>38</sup> What is in mind is the judicial verdict of the court of God. Second, Paul is adamant in Romans that 'no human being will be justified in his (God's) sight by works of the law' (3:20a), hence not only the Gentile (v.12a) but also the Jew stands condemned.

14. When Gentiles who do not have the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.<sup>39</sup>

Much in the exposition of this passage depends on one's interpretation of *φύσις* ('nature'). It has been commonly accepted that Paul adopts Stoic teaching here, viz. God has written a natural law upon the heart of man by virtue of creation. This 'light of nature' is apprehended by the immanent reason in every man, even when he is out of fellowship with God.<sup>40</sup> Such an interpretation is most compatible with a positive, even humanistic, evaluation of sinful man's potential.

Examination of Paul's own use of *φύσις* does not however support this estimation. With the exception of 1 Corinthians 11:14, *φύσις* is used in a very colourless way by Paul.<sup>41</sup> To attribute to *φύσις* in Romans 2:14 all the implications it contained in Hellenistic thought is far too metaphysical an interpretation. All the apostle is saying here is that 'as a matter of fact,' or 'as things are', we find pagan Gentiles formally i.e. outwardly, conforming to the moral precepts of the Jewish law about which they are unaware.<sup>42</sup>

On this count 'a law to themselves' (*ἑαυτοῖς εἰσὶν νομὸς*),<sup>43</sup> simply repeats the meaning of 'by nature'. Pagan Gentiles, left to themselves, are actually found<sup>44</sup> performing those deeds which accord with the Jewish conceptions of righteousness, viz. various 'good works'.

15. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them.'

If, as agreed previously, 'the work of the law' refers to concrete acts, the writing on the heart must refer to an action of God,<sup>45</sup> which leads to men doing these deeds.<sup>46</sup> Looked at in this way the true import of this verse becomes plain; even heathen man is placed under an unconditional obligation before God because he is always addressed in his innermost being by God.<sup>47</sup> The subjective impression created by this objective general revelation<sup>48</sup> is what Paul calls 'conscience' (*συνείδησις*).

Recent research<sup>49</sup> has overthrown the older popular view<sup>50</sup> that Paul adopted the Stoic view of 'conscience' as a faculty capable of guiding man to live according to nature and to direct his moral progress. *συνείδησις* is in fact a popular rather than a technical term, denoting in general the morally bad negative sense of the pain which we feel when we do something wrong. Less commonly it can mean what we call in English a 'good conscience'. Given this background Paul is teaching that the Gentiles on judgment day<sup>51</sup> will experience an internal debate, a to-and-fro in the moral consciousness (*μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν*); R.S.V. 'conflicting thoughts', of self-condemnation and self-acquittal. This sense of moral accountability, (even if it is not clear until the day of judgment to whom this accountability is due), marks man out as responsible, and even on his own terms the negative voice of conscience marks him out as predominantly culpable.

16. On that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of man by Christ Jesus.

It is too much to claim that the last few words of v.15 presage 'the possibility of unexpected surprises on the coming day at judgment'.<sup>52</sup> There is nothing in these verses which would suggest pardon on the basis of conformity to conscience. Conscience is not only co-extensive with the judgment of God, it is capable of contradicting it (1 Tim. 4:2). V.16, as with the whole passage, stands under the sober shadow of the indictment of v.12. The 'secrets of men' can only be the hidden contents of their hearts, and the apostle is so insistent elsewhere that these are evil (Rom. 3:10-18; Eph. 2:12; Col. 1:21 etc.) that the judgment of which he speaks here cannot but have a negative outcome.<sup>53</sup>

The foregoing treatment of Romans 2:12-16 strengthens the convictions with which this section of the article began. All men, Gentile as well as Jew, are equally unable to attain righteousness before God. This is evident on the basis of the passage's own witness,

into which there is no need to inject 'Christianizing' interpretations. Far from being of assistance to inclusivists and universalists this section of Romans suggests that a conscious response to the gospel of Christ is the only assured way of salvation. This conclusion goes beyond, though by no means contradicts, the teaching of Article XVIII.

## Conclusion

Without doubt both Griffith Thomas and Cranfield subscribe to the basic Reformed principle of *sola scriptura*. It may seem strange therefore that they, and many others who share this principle, should diverge so widely on the interpretation and implications of a passage of Scripture. It can only be that hidden presuppositions have influenced the work of both men. We need to be reminded that dogmatic prejudices can as easily influence the conservative as the radical side of scholarship.<sup>54</sup>

In the case of Griffith Thomas there would seem to have been a basic failure to stick to the letter of Article XVIII. It is not the task of the expositor of confessions of faith to speculate, but to bring out the meaning of what is already implicit in the confession. Cranfield's mistake would seem to be an important methodological one. While scripture should be interpreted in the light of scripture, it is illicit to allow a full blown theological position to dominate a preliminary stage of argument. In identifying the Gentiles of Rom. 2 as Christian, Cranfield has read back into the epistle qualifications concerning human existence before God, viz. the justified life, which only appear later in the Pauline argument.

More significantly, though more tentatively, subtle pressures can be discerned upon the lives of these men which operate upon us all. In the case of discussing the fate of the heathen we have a theological situation of great intensity. If the Christian does not feel a deep sense of loss at the thought of fellow human beings eternally lost, he must lack the full measure of Christ's Spirit.<sup>55</sup> Yet, if the Christian scholar is not zealous to preserve the apostolic deposit, he cannot claim to be jealous for God's glory.<sup>56</sup> Since both these states of mind can be reckoned as part of Christian sanctification they must not only be regarded as complementary but as equally desirable. A deficiency in either will lead to an imbalanced theology. That this imbalance can go in both directions I have attempted to demonstrate in this paper. The saintly Griffith Thomas apparently allowed the fog of compassion to sway his judgment to one side; the scrupulous Cranfield the defence of *sola fide* to the other. In neither case would it be fair to suppose that these deviations were conscious or deliberate. If men of such erudition can fall prey to these tendencies we may despair at the difficulty of 'rightly dividing the work of truth'.



The answer to this problem is not only more hard work from our minds, but also a greater supply of the Spirit for our hearts; for we need to keep it continually in mind that theology is an exercise of the whole person; it is, 'right prayer'.

### NOTES

1. E.g. *What Christians Believe*, Chicago, Moody Press, 1949, p.65; T.C. Hammond, *In Understanding Be Men*, London, I.V.P., 1968, pp.84, 190.
2. E.g. W.H. Griffith Thomas, *The Principles of Christian Theology*, Ann Arbor, Baker, 1976.
3. C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle To The Romans*, vols.I and II, Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1977, 1979.
4. It is beyond the purview of this article to enter into discussion on various schemes of salvation. Interested readers may refer to A. Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions*, London, S.C.M., 1983.
5. E.C.S Gibson, *The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*, London, Methuen, 1902, p.489.
6. 'And therefore they are to be condemned, which say, they can no more sin as long as they live here, or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.'
7. Cf. Galatians 1:8. That Anabaptist groups existed who held these very views is attested in a letter of Bishop Hooper, dated June 25th 1549, cited in Gibson, *op. cit.*, pp.22-23.
8. Griffith Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.260.
9. Dr. Arnold, *Life and Correspondence*, Letter LXV., cited in H. Browne, *Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 1850, p.443, and repeated in Gibson, *op. cit.*, pp.490-491, Griffith Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.259.
10. Gibson, *op. cit.*, p.491; Griffith Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.259. cf. 'Those who are faithful to the highest that they have known are unconsciously serving him (Christ) now . . . All that we must insist upon is that men are bound to do their utmost to attain to further truth, and, when it is found, to live up to it and to the claims it makes upon them.' E.J. Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles*, London, Longmans, Green, 1949, p.290.
11. A refreshing exception to this pattern is provided by D.B. Knox, *Thirty-Nine Articles*, Sydney, A.I.O., 1976, p.28f.
12. The reference to 'Law' and 'light of Nature' put into the mouths of the heretics in the Article would seem to echo Paul's 'do by nature what the law requires' in Romans 2:15a.
13. All quotations are from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.
14. For a bibliography see Cranfield, *op. cit.*, p.155; E. Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans*, tr. and ed. G.W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1980, p.61.
15. E.g. W. Sanday and A.C. Headlam, *The Epistle To The Romans*, Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1911; C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, London, Fontana, 1959; J.A.T. Robinson, *Wrestling with Romans*, London, S.C.M., 1979.

16. E.g. C. Hodge, *Romans*, London, Banner of Truth, 1970, (reprint of Philadelphia, 1864); A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, tr. C. Rasmussen, Philadelphia, Fortress, 1949, Kasemann, *op. cit.*.
17. E.g. Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*; K. Barth, *A Shorter Commentary on Romans*, London, 1959; Cranfield, *op. cit.*, cf. D. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, vol.2, New York, Harper and Row, 1978, p.241.
18. Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, pp.xliv-li, have an excellent section outlining the development of Paul's argument in the epistle. cf. G. Bornkamm, 'The Letter to the Romans as Paul's Last Will and Testament', in K. Donfried ed., *The Romans Debate*, Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1977, p.25ff.
19. For a detailed discussion on the connexion between 1:17 and 1:18, see Cranfield, *op. cit.*, pp.106-108.
20. Exactly where he begins to have the Jew primarily or solely in mind is largely irrelevant to our discussion, given the clear reference to the Gentiles as the subject of 2:12-16.
21. D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, London, I.V.P., 1970, p.415.
22. E.g. F.F. Bruce, *Romans*, London, Tyndale, pp.90-91.
23. 7. 'to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life; . . . 10. but glory and honour and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.'
24. Cranfield, *op. cit.*, p.152.
25. Especially notice 2. 'We know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who do such things. 3. Do you suppose, O man, that when you judge . . .'  
Paul often uses *οἶδαμεν δὲ* or *οἶδαμεν γὰρ* to introduce a statement of what he knows to be common ground between himself and the person addressed. e.g. Rom. 3:19; 8:28; 1 Tim. 1:18; 1 Cor. 7:14; 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:1.
26. Cranfield, *op. cit.*, p.152, indeed recognizes how an interpretation like this one would support the smooth development of Paul's argument.
27. Cf. J. Pryor, *Notes on the Greek Text of Romans 1-8*, Bible College of Victoria, 1981.
28. Cranfield, *op. cit.*, p.156.
29. E.g. Philo, *Migration of Abraham*, 92; cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6, etc.
30. It is of interest to note that reference is made to Christ only once (2:16) in 1:18-3:20, whereas 'God' appears thirty-one times. In 3:21-5:21, however, the ratio becomes 12:22. This is symptomatic of the fact that it is only subsequent to 3:21 that Paul openly begins to show his 'theological hand' about how a man is accepted by God, viz. through Christ's redeeming death.
31. Cranfield, *op. cit.*, p.158f.
32. Cf. Nygren, *op. cit.*, p.124.
33. *Op. cit.*, p.58.
34. Kasemann, *op. cit.*, p.64.
35. Kasemann, *op. cit.*, pp.64-65; G.C. Berkouwer, *General Revelation*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1955, pp.180-181. H.N. Ridderbos, *Paul*, tr. J.R. de Witt, London, S.P.C.K., 1975, p.106.  
It is to be especially noted that the plural *ἔργα νόμου* in Paul (Rom. 3:20, 28; Gal. 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10) consistently means works actually performed.
36. E.g. Bruce, *op. cit.*, p.90; Nygren, *op. cit.*, p.121; Robinson, *op. cit.*, p.27.
37. The Greek for 'perish' here is *ἀπόλλυμι*, frequently used in the Pauline epistles of the loss of eternal life. e.g. 1 Cor. 8:11; 15:18.  
cf. Hodge, *op. cit.*, p.53; Kasemann, *op. cit.*, p.62.
38. Bruce, *op. cit.*, p.901; Cranfield, *op. cit.*, p.154; Pryor, *op. cit.*, p.5. *Contra*, Hodge, *op. cit.*, p.54; Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p.59.
39. I accept the R.S.V. translation here despite Cranfield's attempt to demonstrate that 'nature' (*φύσει*) should be connected with 'law'. i.e. 'do not have the law by nature, do what . . .' *op. cit.*, pp.156-157. Although his argument is more than

- plausible if Gentile Christians are in mind, since I am convinced that Paul is speaking of pagans, it would be pointless for him to tell his readers that the heathen lacked the law by birth.
40. Cf. R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, tr. K. Grobel, London, S.C.M., 1952, p.71f; Hodge, *op. cit.*, p.55; H. Koster, *phusis*, in *T.D.N.T.*, IX ed. G. Friedrich, tr. G.W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1974, pp.251–277; pp.273–274; Robinson, *op. cit.*, p.27.
  41. Rom. 1:26, 2:27; 11:21, 24 (three times); 1 Cor. 11:14; Gal. 2:15; 4:8; Eph. 2:3.
  42. Berkhouwer, *op. cit.*, pp.179–180 and Ridderbos, *op. cit.*, p.106. make the point that whereas for the Stoic, 'nature' was the real and highest norm and written law merely its subjective expression. Paul counted the written law of the Old Testament as God's objective revelation.
  43. In Greek writers *ἑαυτῷ εἶναι νόμος* is a stereotyped expression used with reference to the man of superior virtue, who does not need the sanctions or guidance of external law. e.g. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1128 a 31–32. This meaning is impossible here; see footnote 42.
  44. Not all the time of course; this is the significance of *οταν* ('whenever') at the commencement of the verse.
  45. Their actions are a response to this writing which is done on them, i.e. they are passive in the matter of the writing's origin.
  46. It is a mistake of perhaps the majority of commentators to refer the teaching of this verse to the condition of man, 'But Paul believes in a God as ever-living and active with man, even with the heathen, in life's concrete situations, showing him what is good and what is required of him.' Nygren, *op. cit.*, p.124. Since there is no such thing as man 'by himself' there can be no such thing as a 'natural law', if by this is meant a faculty operating solely within man or within his social interactions.
  47. 'They sense that a person is set in question and that a demand is laid upon him from outside, and paradoxically they do so in their inner beings.' Kasemann, *op. cit.*, p.64.
  48. Berkouwer's *op. cit.*, pp.182–203 treatment of this theme is excellent.
  49. Especially, C.A. Pierce, *Conscience in the New Testament*. London, 1955; M.E. Thrall, 'The Pauline Use of *Suneidēsis*', *New Testament Studies*, 14, 1967–68, pp.118–125.
  50. E.g. Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p.61.
  51. Verses 15 and 16 are intimately related despite the problems seen here by most commentators. The witness of conscience may be expected both in this life *and* on the day of judgment.
  52. C. Maurer, *sunoida* in *T.D.N.T.*, vol.7, ed. G. Friedrich, tr. G.W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1971, pp.897–918, p.917.
  53. At this point, Kasemann, *op. cit.*, p.68, wavers at the end of what is otherwise a very fine treatment of vv.15, 16. He makes a distinction between the responsibility of man and God's sovereign determination of his future. The argument here is reminiscent of Karl Barth, e.g. *The Humanity of God*, tr. J.N. Thomas and T. Wieser, London, Collins, 1961, pp.49–64, who argues that we cannot limit God's freedom to save. This, however, superimposes philosophical considerations on the biblical revelation. In particular it breaks the biblical correlation between salvation and faith. cf. Bloesch, *op. cit.*, p.223.
  54. 'Every exegesis that is guided by dogmatic prejudices does not hear what the text says, but only lets the letter say what it wants to hear.' R. Bultmann, 'Is Exegesis Without Presupposition Possible?' in *Existence and Faith*, tr. and ed. S.M. Ogden, London, Collins, 1964, pp.342–351; p.343, (my emphasis).
  55. Cf. Jesus' own passion over a doomed Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37f.), and 2 Peter 3:9.
  56. Cf. Gal. 1:9, Rev. 22:19.