

## Revelation of God in Romans 1

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### Abstract

Romans 1:20 is standardly interpreted as the idea that God is revealed through the general, physical universe. Against this I argue that Paul is saying that it is specifically human beings who reveal him, and that verses 18 to 20 thus provide the background for his summary of the gospel in verses 16 to 17. I argue that in verses 18 to 20 Paul is saying that unrighteousness is the result of people failing to gain the “vision” of God which would restrain it, even though this “vision” is something that, made in God’s “image”, they themselves furnish, thus providing the background for his gospel that through Jesus’ people are now manifesting the righteousness which properly furnishes that “vision”.

### I. REVELATION OF “WRATH”

In Romans 1 Paul introduces his account of how God is bringing about salvation saying

<sup>16</sup>I am not embarrassed by the gospel, for it is God’s power, power for salvation... <sup>17</sup>For in it God’s righteousness is being revealed through faith... As was written “The righteous will live through faith.” <sup>18</sup>For from heaven God’s wrath is being revealed against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who in unrighteousness hold the truth in check, <sup>19</sup>since what can be known about God is evident in them... <sup>20</sup>For since the creation of the world his unseen things, his eternal power and what it is to be God, are seen, comprehended in what he has made, so that they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup>Since though knowing God they did not glorify or thank him *as*<sup>1</sup> God, but became futile in their reasonings and their hearts, lacking understanding, were darkened. <sup>22</sup>Saying they were wise they became foolish <sup>23</sup>and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for a likeness of the image of mortal humankind... <sup>24</sup>And so God handed them over...to impurity... <sup>27</sup>...receiving back in themselves the inevitable return payment for their error. <sup>28</sup>And it was according as they did not see fit to keep hold of accurate knowledge of God that God handed them over...to do what is improper, <sup>29</sup>filled with all unrighteousness...

Paul is not embarrassed by his message of God’s “power for salvation” (verse 16) because that power is being evidenced by the revelation of his righteousness (verse 17). And at the same time as God’s righteousness is being revealed there is also being revealed his “wrath”

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<sup>1</sup> Emphasis original.

(verse 18), this being revealed in the “impurity” (verse 24) and “improper” behaviour (verse 28) of those who “in unrighteousness hold the truth in check” (verse 18 again). For there is “truth”, evident “in them” (verse 19), which should be restraining unrighteousness. But because people “did not see fit to keep hold of accurate knowledge of God” (verse 28),<sup>2</sup> and because they thus “hold in check” the “truth” about God which would restrain unrighteousness, they are “without excuse” (verse 20) for the immorality to which they are “handed over” (verses 24 and 28).<sup>3</sup>

In the Old Testament “wrath” is the execution of God’s judgement.

Therefore wait...for the day I [God] will rise up to plunder. I have decided to assemble the nations...and to pour out my wrath on them... The whole world will be consumed by the fire of my jealous anger.<sup>4</sup>

“Wrath” is thus not God’s anger itself, but rather the expression of that anger when he acts in judgement. For when God is angry “it is tangibly experienced in the world... ..as the implementation of justice...the verdict being carried out”.<sup>5</sup> And for Paul too divine wrath is

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<sup>2</sup> The Greek for “to keep hold of accurate knowledge of God” is τὸν θεὸν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει ἔχειν, literally “to have God in accurate knowledge”, where to “have” something “in” something is the idea of preserving something in a certain state. In their article on ἡσυχία LSJ give the example of ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ ἔχειν τ (“to have something in silence”) meaning to keep quiet about it. They cite how according to Herodotus the oligarchs in Corinth received an oracle from Delphi which explained and confirmed an earlier one that the son of Eetion would usurp them, and how, plotting to kill the child, they “kept quiet about this one [ie this second oracle] also” (καὶ τοῦτο ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ εἶχον, *Histories* 5.92C.1). “To have God in ἐπίγνωσις” is thus the idea of preserving accurate knowledge about him.

<sup>3</sup> Paul’s thrice-repeated “God handed them over” (v 26 as well as as vv 24 and 28) might suggest that God is responsible for the immorality. But against this is the idea of people “receiving back in themselves the inevitable return payment for their error...according as they did not see fit to keep hold of accurate knowledge of God” (vv 27-28), where immorality is presented as the inevitable result of people’s wilful disregard of the knowledge of God which is available to them. According to C.H. Dodd this “handing over” “is no more than an abstention from interference with their free choice and its consequences” (*The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), 29). More graphically J.D.G. Dunn writes “God handed them over to...freedom... The control of God once removed left them like a faulty rocket plunging out of control” (*Romans 1-8* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 73). Cf L Berkhof’s description of unholiness as “always active within us like a poisoned fountain polluting the streams of life” (*Systematic Theology* (London: Banner of Truth, 1959), 259). The point is that when God executes judgement in handing people over to immorality, he is not actively bringing about that behaviour, but simply allowing their wilful disregard of the knowledge of him to have its inevitable consequences, or as Paul puts it to make its “inevitable return payment”. In his sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” Jonathan Edwards, preaching on Deut 32:35’s “their foot shall slide in due time”, says that people “are liable to fall of themselves...as he that stands or walks on slippery ground needs nothing but his own weight to throw him down”. According to Edwards then the exercise of God’s wrath is simply the operation of cause and effect.

<sup>4</sup> Zeph 3:8. Cf “The great day of the Lord is near... That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish” (Zeph 1:14-15).

<sup>5</sup> B. Baloiian, NIDOTTE I, 382. Cf L. Morris who writes “wrath is to be discerned in the outworkings consequent upon man’s sin” (*The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (London: The Tynedale Press, 1955), 168).

“the active presence of God’s judgement”,<sup>6</sup> as is clear later on in Romans when he says “do not take revenge...but leave room for wrath”.<sup>7</sup> And as with the passage from Zephaniah just quoted he sometimes portrays “wrath” as a future event. Thus he talks about Jesus who “protects us from the coming wrath”,<sup>8</sup> and about “storing up for yourself wrath on the day of wrath and of the revelation of God’s righteous judgement”.<sup>9</sup>

But in the Old Testament God’s “wrath” is also portrayed as happening in the present. In the context of their exile in Babylon Isaiah says of the Israelites

This is a people spoiled and plundered... Who gave Jacob to the plunderer,  
Israel to the spoilers? Was it not the Lord...? So he poured out wrath upon  
them...<sup>10</sup>

We have seen in Zephaniah how God says that he will “pour out...wrath” and how he will “rise up to plunder”. But in Isaiah he **has** poured out his wrath on the Israelites, as revealed by their being “plundered” by the Babylonians. And similarly in Romans 1:18 God’s “wrath” is being revealed right now in the immorality to which people are “handed over”.

Picking up the language of Romans 1 Paul (or possibly a follower) says to the Christians at Colossae “put to death what belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire...on account of which the wrath of God comes”.<sup>11</sup> And the author of Ephesians says “no immoral or impure person...has any inheritance in the kingdom... On account of these things the wrath of God comes”.<sup>12</sup> In both these cases “wrath” can be understood as obtaining in the future. The two passages are clearly related to each other, and the shared language of “wrath”, “impurity”, “desire” etc also suggests a connection with Romans 1, where judgement is happening now. And so the “coming” of “wrath” in the former passages is probably better understood as likewise contemporaneous with the impurity etc, the latter furnishing the evidence for it. The two passages would thus be making the same point which Paul makes in Romans 1, namely that “wrath” is revealed in immoral behaviour.

The author of Colossians goes on to say that his readers should refrain from such behaviour since as believers they have “put on the new [person] which is being renewed unto

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<sup>6</sup> J.B. Green in G.F. Hawthorne, R.P. Martin, D.G. Reid (eds.) *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*, (Leicester: IVP, 1993), 206.

<sup>7</sup> Rom 12:19. Cf also how Paul characterises a present day ruler as an “agent of wrath” (Rom 13:4).

<sup>8</sup> 1 Thess 1:10.

<sup>9</sup> Rom 2:5.

<sup>10</sup> Is 42:22-25. Later on Isaiah describes Jerusalem as “you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath... Your sons have collapsed...filled with the wrath of the Lord” (Is 51:17-20).

<sup>11</sup> Col 3:5-6.

<sup>12</sup> Eph 5:5-6.

accurate knowledge [ἐπίγνωσις] in accordance with its creator's image".<sup>13</sup> And in this paper I shall argue that Paul maintained that made "in God's image"<sup>14</sup> people should have had this "accurate knowledge" of him anyway. For in Romans 1 we have seen how God's "wrath" is being revealed in the "impurity" etc of those who "did not see fit to keep hold of accurate knowledge [ἐπίγνωσις] of God" (verse 28), even though "what can be known of God is evident in them" (verse 19). In this paper shall argue that what Paul means by this is that as God's "image" people are themselves the means by which they can gain the awareness of him which would restrain such "impurity". And so when believers are "being renewed unto accurate knowledge in accordance with the creator's image" they are gaining an awareness of God which they should have had anyway. No wonder then that for the author of Colossians believers are to "put to death such immorality. For if they were already "without excuse" for such behaviour because of their failure to "keep hold of" the awareness of God which would restrain it, it follows that now, "renewed" unto such knowledge, they are absolutely without excuse.

## II. REVELATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

In Romans 1 alongside the revelation of God's "wrath" (verse 18) there is also being revealed his righteousness (verse 17). This revelation has two aspects. On the one hand there is a righteousness which belongs to people, but which is "of God" in the sense that God is bringing it about.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand there is God's inherent righteousness which is motivating him to take the initiative to bring that human righteousness about.

In Romans 3 Paul gives more details about these two aspects of righteousness.

But now, apart from Law, God's righteousness has been revealed...through faith in Jesus... For everyone has sinned and falls short of God's glory, being declared righteous as a free gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put on public display as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood...for the demonstration of his [God's]

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<sup>13</sup> Col 3:10.

<sup>14</sup> Gen 1:27.

<sup>15</sup> That this is at least part of what Paul means by the revelation of God's righteousness is indicated by his quotation of Hab 2:4's "the righteous will live through faith" (Rom 1:17), where "the righteous" clearly refers to a people who have their own righteousness. Writing to the Christians in Philippi Paul describes himself as "not having righteousness of my own which is from the Law but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that is from God" (Phil. 3:9). In other words Paul has his own righteousness, but it is not the product of his own efforts in fulfilling the requirements of the Law, but one that God brings about through faith in Jesus. Cf 2 Cor. 5:21 where Paul says that Jesus died so that "we might become righteousness of God" where, taking "of God" as a genitive of source rather than possession (how could people become "righteousness of God" in the latter sense?) Paul seems to be talking about a righteousness which is a genuine attribute of people, but which is "of God" in the sense that God is bringing it about. For more arguments that "righteousness of God" includes believers' own righteousness see W. Sanday and A.C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1895), 25.

righteousness...[the demonstration] that he [God] is himself righteous, and that he declares a person righteous through faith in Jesus.<sup>16</sup>

When Paul says “God’s righteousness has been revealed” what he seems to be saying is that there is being revealed on the one hand a righteousness of human beings, whom God “declares righteous through faith in Jesus”, and on the other hand God’s inherent righteousness, a righteousness which is revealed by him taking the initiative, “as a free gift by his grace”, to bring that human righteousness about.<sup>17</sup>

But what exactly is this human righteousness which God brings about? Some argue that people are “declared righteous” in a forensic sense, the idea being that through his substitutionary death on the cross Jesus pays the penalty for people’s unrighteousness, who are thus “declared righteous” in the technical sense that they are no longer liable to pay that penalty themselves. Others suppose that through Jesus’ atoning death people become righteous through gaining *his* righteousness, which is imputed to them through their faith in and union with him.

But that in Romans 1 by human righteousness Paul means more than just a technical or imputed righteousness is indicated in verse 17 by his quotation of Habbakuk 2:4’s “the righteous will live through faith”, where righteousness is a real attribute of “the righteous”, not just something technical or imputed.<sup>18</sup> Also the beginnings of verses 17 and 18 have a chiasmic structure, viz “righteousness of God...is being revealed...is being revealed wrath of God”, where the parallelism seems to require that if wrath is being revealed in people’s impurity and ungodliness then righteousness is being revealed in people’s purity and godliness, ie through people’s actual, not just technical or imputed righteousness. Furthermore this chiasmic structure emphasises the idea of revelation. On the one hand “wrath” is being revealed in the “impurity” etc to which people are “handed over”. On the other hand righteousness is being revealed...how? Through God’s “not guilty” verdict in some eschatological assize court? Through people gaining Jesus’ righteousness through

<sup>16</sup> Rom 3:21-26. Most commentators regard some or all of this as, or at least based on, a pre-Pauline confessional statement of the early church.

<sup>17</sup> Thus God “makes His [own inherent] righteousness manifest in us” (A. Schlatter, *Paulus der Bote Jesu* (Stuttgatt: Calver Verlag, 1934), 568). And so to the question “whether the Gospel reveals the fact that God is righteous, or communicates to men righteousness” C.H. Dodd affirms “it does both” (Romans, 9). J.H. Ropes says that righteousness of God “can be described as either the righteousness of man or the righteousness of God” (“‘Righteousness’ and ‘The Righteousness of God’ in the Old Testament and in St Paul” (JBL 22 (1903), 218-19). And P. Stuhlmacher argues that the righteousness of God includes “the gracious activity of God himself and the end result of the divine work in the form of righteousness granted to the sinner” (“The Theme of Romans” in K.P. Donfried (ed.) *The Romans Debate* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 339), though this needs supplementing with the idea that God’s own righteousness includes not just his initiative in bringing human righteousness about, but also the inherent righteousness which is motivating that activity. For according to Sanday and Headlam righteousness “not only proceeds from God but *is* the righteousness of God... The whole scheme of things by which He gathers to Himself a righteous people is the direct and spontaneous expression of His own inherent righteousness” (Romans, 34).

<sup>18</sup> See above n. 15.

their mystic union with him? How does either of these count as a “revelation” of righteousness? A human righteousness which is being revealed implies something observable which is revealing it, which suggests that Paul is talking about actual, righteous behaviour.

Finally, in Romans 5 Paul talks about how “having been declared righteous through faith...we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God”.<sup>19</sup> “Hope of glory” is the biblical, Jewish hope, a hope which Paul now applies to everyone, that though people currently ‘fall short of God’s glory’<sup>20</sup> they will be renewed so that God’s glory is manifested in them.<sup>21</sup> But given the history and state of the world how can such hope be more than just wishful thinking? What makes it more than just wishful thinking, for Paul, is that through faith in Jesus the prophesied revelation of God’s glory through human beings has **already started**. He continues “and hope does not embarrass, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts”.<sup>22</sup> What Paul is referring to here are the real and tangible changes which are taking place in believers’ lives as they respond to the revelation of God’s love in Jesus, changes which demonstrate that salvation is actually coming about. Commenting on “hope does not embarrass” J.D.G Dunn writes

...hope of completed salvation...is not a vain or idle hope, because the process has already begun. The believer’s hope...is based...in what they have already experienced...<sup>23</sup>

And so in Romans 1 Paul is “not embarrassed by the gospel” (verse 16) because “in it God’s righteousness is being revealed” (verse 17), ie changes are taking place in believers’ lives which show that salvation is actually coming about. For believers are producing the “fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ”,<sup>24</sup> the product of God’s love “poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us”.<sup>25</sup> And so believers can be confident that “he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion”<sup>26</sup> since they have the “deposit”<sup>27</sup> or “first fruit” of the Spirit,<sup>28</sup> which serves as the “guarantee of our

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<sup>19</sup> Rom 5:1-2.

<sup>20</sup> Rom 3:23.

<sup>21</sup> See Is 61:3 where Isaiah prophesies that Israel will become ‘a planting of the Lord to display his glory’, and thus will ‘set forth his [God’s] glory to the nations’ (1 Chr 16:24).

<sup>22</sup> Rom 5:5. For hope of glory not embarrassing (οὐ κατασχύει.) cf Paul’s reaction to reports that when the Corinthian Christians meet together to celebrate the Lord’s Supper differences in their relative wealth are highlighted by differences in how much they bring to eat. Criticising the insensitivity of those who bring significantly more than others he asks “do you [not] embarrass (κατασχύετε.) those who do not have [much]?” (1 Cor 11:23).

<sup>23</sup> Romans, 266.

<sup>24</sup> Phil 1:11. For righteousness producing “fruit” see also Heb 12:11 and Jas 3:19.

<sup>25</sup> Rom 5:5.

<sup>26</sup> Phil 1:6.

<sup>27</sup> 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5.

<sup>28</sup> Rom 8:23. See Gal 5:22-23 for details of what this “fruit” of the Spirit consists in.

inheritance".<sup>29</sup> And so for Paul what is revealed by its "fruit" is not just a technical or imputed righteousness, but rather a genuine righteousness, this "fruit" being the tangible evidence that the promised and hoped for salvation is actually coming about.

This revelation of human righteousness by its "fruit" is also the revelation of the inherent righteousness of the God who is bringing that human righteousness about. And it is specifically this revelation of God's inherent righteousness which grounds believers' confidence. Picking up how in Romans 3 "God's righteousness has been revealed...through faith in his [Jesus'] blood...for the demonstration...that he himself is righteous", in Romans 5 Paul continues

For it was while we were still weak that Christ died... God establishes his own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. How much more then, having been declared righteousness now, by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath.<sup>30</sup>

Paul's belief that the "first fruit" of human righteousness will carry on to its full harvest is based on what that fruit reveals about God's righteous character. For the fact that Christ died "while we were still sinners" establishes the depth of God's love for people, a love which, as he goes on to say, "neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor present nor future nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation can separate us from".<sup>31</sup> And so if God's love is as profound as Jesus' atoning death thus reveals it to be then people can have confidence that there will be no return to "wrath". For through God's initiative in "declaring righteous" *now*, "while we were still sinners", when people are completely "without excuse" for their unrighteousness, people become aware of the depth of God's love for them, and on that basis can be confident that the promised and hoped for salvation will continue.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Eph 1:14.

<sup>30</sup> Rom 5:6,8-9.

<sup>31</sup> Rom 8:38-39. For C.H. Dodd, "the life and death of Jesus Christ...constitute...an objective revelation of His [God's] righteousness" (Romans, 13), a righteousness consisting in "a form of love going beyond the limits of the natural sentiments of love in man" (*op. cit.* 75). Paul brings out the sublime nature of God's love when he describes it as "his own". Love in human beings usually involves the beloved being lovable, and so is inspired at least in part by factors external to the lover. But God establishes a love which is "his own" in that it is "prompted from within, not without" (Sanday and Headlam, Romans, 128), as demonstrated by how "as a free gift by his grace" (Rom 3:24) he takes the initiative to save creatures for whom only "wrath" is appropriate.

<sup>32</sup> By the "wrath" which believers can be confident they are no longer subject to I take Paul to be talking about the same thing he describes in Chapter 1, namely the exercise of God's righteous judgement as revealed in people being "handed over" to immorality and unrighteousness (see I. REVELATION OF "WRATH" above). In other words the revelation of God's love through Jesus' atoning death, and the consequent generation of the "first-fruits" of the Spirit, all this taking place while people *are* subject to "wrath", is the guarantee that that "wrath" will not resume, ie that that there will be no return to such immorality and unrighteousness.

For Paul these two aspects of the “righteousness of God” which are being revealed, namely the righteousness of human beings, and God’s inherent righteousness in the form of his profound love, interact and feed off each other. The process begins with Jesus, the “image” of God,<sup>33</sup> through whose atoning death God reveals his love. This revelation of God’s inherent righteousness leads to the “fruit” of real (not just technical or imputed) righteousness in human beings. This “fruit” then furnishes further revelation of God’s inherent righteousness as people are “transformed into the same image”,<sup>34</sup> God thus effecting his plan that “those he foreknew...be conformed to the image that is his son”<sup>35</sup> (ie to the image of God which Jesus is), leading to more “fruit”, leading to more revelation, and so on.

For “just as through the disobedience of one man [Adam] many were made sinners, so through the obedience of one man [Jesus] many will be made righteous”.<sup>36</sup> The idea, for Paul, is that as Adam started a process whereby unrighteousness has spread throughout the world, so Jesus has started a reverse process whereby righteousness is spreading out and replacing it, as people through their own righteousness reveal God’s inherent righteousness in the way Jesus does, leading to others through their own righteousness revealing God’s inherent righteousness, and so on until “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea”.<sup>37</sup>

For according to the Old Testament God created human beings “in his image”,<sup>38</sup> a process which began with Adam and which carried on through physical propagation, starting with Seth (along with other children) whom Adam begat “according to his image”.<sup>39</sup> Thus in a physical sense the “image” of God “grows, spreads, and advances on its way”.<sup>40</sup> But alongside this physical propagation, and likewise starting with Adam through his disobedience,<sup>41</sup> unrighteousness has also spread and grown, like weeds in uncultivated ground. As C.K. Barrett puts it “sin is a living, active...agency, and all sin needed was a means of entry into the human race. Once this was found it...propagated itself”.<sup>42</sup> And Paul’s gospel is that this historic propagation of unrighteousness is now being counteracted

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<sup>33</sup> 2 Cor 4:4, Col 1:15.

<sup>34</sup> 2 Cor 3:18.

<sup>35</sup> Rom 8:29. Cf how God has “predetermined us to be adopted as sons” (Eph 1:5).

<sup>36</sup> Rom 5:19.

<sup>37</sup> Is 11:9.

<sup>38</sup> Gen 1:27.

<sup>39</sup> Gen 5:3.

<sup>40</sup> C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11* (London: SPCK, 1974), 356.

<sup>41</sup> See Gen 3:1-7.

<sup>42</sup> *From First Adam to Last* (London: Black, 1962), 20. Note the symbolism of how as a consequence of unrighteousness Adam has to leave the fertile, fruit-filled garden which God had cultivated for him (Gen 2:8-9) and now must fend for himself where “cursed is the ground because of you... It will produce thorns and thistles” (Gen 3:17-18).



as, starting with Jesus, God's inherent righteousness is progressively revealed through the "fruit" of people's own righteousness.

In this paper I argue that for Paul human beings, made in God's "image", were always supposed to reveal God's righteousness, and in fact actually do do this. But because they "hold in check" this knowledge of God which would restrain unrighteousness, knowledge which they themselves furnish, unrighteousness has spread through the world. And his gospel is that starting with Jesus' a process is underway whereby God's righteousness is being revealed in such a way that knowledge of him is no longer "held in check", unrighteousness is being restrained, and thus the world is being restored to fruitfulness.

### III. REVELATION OF GOD THROUGH HUMAN BEINGS

The two aspects of the revelation of God's righteousness, the "fruit" of real human righteousness on the one hand, and through it the revelation of God's inherent righteousness on the other, are really one and the same thing. For God cannot be directly perceived,<sup>43</sup> any so any awareness of him will need to be in the form of an indirect "vision". And for Paul the "fruit" of human righteousness, through it revealing God's inherent righteousness, is what primarily furnishes such a "vision".

In the Old Testament "vision" of God tended to be the preserve of the prophets,<sup>44</sup> though an important exception was the formative "vision" which the Israelites received at Mount Sinai.<sup>45</sup> But in the New Testament these were superseded by the revelation of God in Jesus.<sup>46</sup> The author of Hebrews says "in the past having spoken to our ancestors through the

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<sup>43</sup> "No-one has ever beheld God" (1 John 4:12), who is "invisible" (Col 1:15, 1 Tim 1:17), and who "alone is immortal, inhabiting unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see" (1 Tim 6:16).

<sup>44</sup> At the start of several OT prophetic works the relevant prophet's "vision" is announced (eg Is 1:1, Ezek. 1:1, Amos 1:1, Mic 1:1, Nah 1:1, Hab 1:1). And Habbakuk is specifically told to "write down the vision" which he received (Hab 2:2). Cf how the days of Samuel's youth, when "Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit" (Judg 21:25), were days where "there were not many visions" (1 Sam 3:1). And one of the laments of the exiled Israel was that "her prophets no longer find visions of the Lord" (Lam 2:9).

<sup>45</sup> "Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. ...the whole mountain trembled violently and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder" (Ex 19:18-19). Also, shortly afterwards and higher up on the mountain, Moses and other leaders had an experience where under God's feet they saw "something like a laid out pavement of sapphire, clear as the frame of the heavens" (Ex 24:10). Then as Moses and Joshua climbed still further "the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai. ...the Lord called to Moses from within the cloud. To the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain" (Ex 24:16-17). And there are other instances of this sort of theophany in the OT, for example the "flaming fire" which appeared to Moses within a bush (Ex 3:2-3), the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire which guided the Israelites through the desert (Ex 14:21), the cloud in which, within the Holy of Holies inside the Tabernacle, "I [God] will be seen over the Atonement Slate" (Lev 16:2), Isaiah's vision of God "sitting on a throne high and lifted up and the skirt of his robe was filling the temple" (Is 6:1), and Ezekiel's "vision" of an "expanse glistening like ice" (Ezek 1:22), and of an "immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light" (Ezek 1:4).

<sup>46</sup> Though there are also occasional theophanies in the NT, eg when God spoke to Peter, James and John in a cloud at Jesus' transfiguration (Mark 9:2-7), the "sound like the rushing of a violent wind" and "tongues being divided up like that of fire" which came to rest on the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2:2-3), the "light

prophets...in these last days God has spoken to us through his Son [ie Jesus]... being the radiance of his glory and the exact representation of his being".<sup>47</sup> So according to this author, having previously revealed himself to the Israelites through the prophets, God now reveals himself through Jesus who manifests his glory.<sup>48</sup> As the evangelist puts it "no-one has ever seen God. The only begotten [ie Jesus]...has set him forth".<sup>49</sup>

Having "vision" of God is the key to restraining unrighteousness. Proverbs 29:18 says "Where there is no vision the people are unrestrained".<sup>50</sup> Thus in response to the Israelites' fearful reaction to God's theophany at Mount Sinai Moses he says that this is precisely the point, since "God came to give you an experience and to have his fear in your faces so that you may not sin".<sup>51</sup> But if this was its purpose it failed, because while Moses was away on the mountain receiving the Law the Israelites got Aaron to make a statue of a bull, and after making sacrifices to it they engaged in "unrestrained" immorality in the form of a drunken sex orgy.<sup>52</sup>

And in Romans 1 Paul similarly describes how the failure to preserve "vision" of God leads to unrighteousness. He says "what can be known of God is evident in them" (verse 19). But "though knowing God...they became futile in their reasonings and their hearts, lacking understanding, became darkened" (verse 21). And because they thus "did not see fit to keep hold of accurate knowledge of God" (verse 28), and "hold in check the truth" about God which would restrain unrighteousness" (verse 18), God has "handed them over...to

from heaven" which "flashed around" Paul near Damascus (Acts 9:3), and in Revelation, recalling the theophanies of the OT, "the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow resembling an emerald...flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder...a sea of glass clear as crystal" (Rev 4:3-6).

<sup>47</sup> Heb 1:1-3.

<sup>48</sup> A shift indicated by Jesus' transfiguration when on a high mountain, while Jesus is talking to Moses and Elijah (representing "the Law and the Prophets", ie God's revelation in the OT), and paralleling God's revelation of himself to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, a bright cloud envelops everyone and God says from the cloud "This is my Son... Listen to him" (Matt 17:5).

<sup>49</sup> John 1:18.

<sup>50</sup> Where the word translated "vision" is the cognate noun from **רָוָה**, the visionary "seeing" of the prophets.

<sup>51</sup> Ex 20:20.

<sup>52</sup> Ex 32:1-6. The Israelites' "vision" of God had become compromised in that they supposed that the invisible reality which had been revealed to them could be visually represented, even though, as Moses later reminds them, "you did not see any form on the day the Yahweh your God spoke at Horeb from the midst of the fire" (Deut 4:15). And so they became "unrestrained" (Ex 32:25), Moses describing the Israelites' behaviour using the participle of **פָּרַע** the verb used in Prov 29:18. Ex 32:6 says, literally, that after eating and drinking the Israelites "rose to frolic", a euphemism for sexual intercourse (cf Gen 39:14 where Potiphar's wife uses the same word when she accuses Joseph of attempting to seduce her). Idolatry and lack of sexual restraint became a recurring theme for the Israelites. At Shittim, prior to entering Canaan, adultery with local Moabite women was accompanied by the Israelites making sacrifices to Moab's god Baal Peor (Num 25:1-3). After their entry into Canaan the Israelites "prostituted themselves to other gods" (Judg 2:17). Samson was notorious for and ultimately undone by his sexual dalliances (Judg 16). And an extreme was reached when a group of Benjaminites raped a concubine to death (Judg 19). As we have seen these were days when "there were not many visions" (1 Sam 3:1), and "everyone did as he saw fit" (Judg 21:25).

impurity...filled with all unrighteousness” (verses 24 and 29). Paul is thus making the same point as Proverbs 28:19, namely that unrighteousness is the product of people failing to have a restraining “vision” of God.<sup>53</sup>

And Paul’s gospel is that God is bringing it about that people do have this restraining “vision” of himself. They gain it first, as we have seen, through the revelation of his righteousness/glory in Jesus, his “image”<sup>54</sup> and the “radiance of his glory”,<sup>55</sup> whom “God put on public display as a sacrifice of atonement...for the demonstration...that he himself is righteous”.<sup>56</sup> This “vision” then propagates itself as God’s righteousness/glory is further revealed in the transformed lives of believers who, through exposure to God’s righteousness/glory revealed in Jesus, like tanned skin or metal under a blowtorch come to manifest that righteousness/glory themselves, as they “reflecting the Lord’s glory as in a mirror are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory”.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> For knowledge or “vision” of God restraining unrighteousness cf how in the OT God complains that the Israelites “proceed from one sin to another and do not know me” (Jer 9:3), and how the exile which reveals God’s “wrath” (see Is 42:22-25) is the result of their “lack of knowledge” (Is 5:13). For this connection between righteousness and knowledge of God see in particular Hosea who says “there is no faithfulness, no kindness, no knowledge of the Lord in the land, just swearing, lying, murder, stealing and adultery... My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge” (Hos 4:1-2,6). For Hosea the Israelites have thus “exchanged their glory for dishonour” (Hos 4:7), and it is no coincidence that idolatry and lack of sexual restraint, which as we have just seen (see previous footnote) are the two principle consequences of the Israelites’ failure to retain their “vision” of God, are likewise the two consequences of failing to preserve accurate knowledge of God which Paul focusses on in Romans 1, people having “exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served creation rather than the creator” (v 25), and (echoing Hosea) “lacking understanding” (v 21) have “exchanged the glory of the immortal God” (v 23) for “passions of dishonour” (v 26) and the “impurity of their bodies being dishonoured” (v 24).

<sup>54</sup> 2 Cor 4:4, Col 1 15.

<sup>55</sup> Heb 1:3.

<sup>56</sup> Rom 3:25-26. See II. REVELATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS above.

<sup>57</sup> 2 Cor 3:18. “Reflecting as in a mirror” translates κατοπτρίζομενοι, a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament. It can also mean “beholding as in a mirror”, and translations and commentators are split between the two (“reflecting as in a mirror”: NIV, GNB, RV, NEB, JB, NLT, H.C.G. Moule (*The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1962), 24), G. Bray (“The Significance of God’s Image in Man”, *TB* 42 (1971), 217-8), and see especially M. Hooker (*From Adam to Christ* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990) 147) and the arguments of I. Nayak (“The meaning of *katoptrizomenoi* in 2 Cor 3, 18”, *ED* 55/1 (2002), 33-44); “beholding as in a mirror”: NASB, NRSV, NKJV, M.E. Thrall (*2 Corinthians Volume I* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark,, 1994), 238), R.P. Martin (*The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1959), 57), P. Barrett (*A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, London: Black, 1973 p. 110), V.P. Furnish (*II Corinthians* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 202), and see especially the arguments of G.D. Fee (*God’s Empowering Presence* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 316-7). The main argument against interpreting κατοπτρίζομενοι as “beholding as in a mirror” is why Paul should introduce the idea of indirect perception. The Vulgate removes the idea, translating κατοπτρίζομενοι *speculantes*, but as Thrall comments “the Greek verb is not so common that one can assume that the connotation of the mirror has been lost” (2 Corinthians, 292). At 2 Cor 3:16 Paul says “But whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken off”, evoking Ex. 34:34, and how when Moses entered the Tent of Meeting he removed the veil which he had been wearing outside, and thus spoke to the Lord “face to face (Ex. 33:11). This direct encounter then caused his face to radiate (Ex 34:34 again). It would be strange then, two verses later, for Paul to talk about Christians, with faces “unveiled”, being transformed through beholding the Lord’s glory “as in a mirror”. For the context seems to require that the transformation is through God’s glory being

And so it is through the “fruit” of real human righteousness that people gain the “vision” of God’s inherent righteousness. We have seen in the Old Testament, and occasionally in the New, how despite God being invisible people are able to apprehend him through sensible categories such as flaming fire, thick cloud, dazzling light, rushing wind, booming thunder, glistening ice etc.<sup>58</sup> But this type of revelation is in its nature restricted to particular times and to particular groups or individuals. And so both the Old and New Testaments have a greater focus on revelation which is available more generally. Thus when the Israelites, assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai, apprehended God in the cloud and fire atop the mountain this was not a one-off revelation on God’s part, but rather confirmation of the reality and presence of the God who had already revealed himself in rescuing them from Egypt,<sup>59</sup> and by providing them with water in the desert,<sup>60</sup> where despite their dramatic rescue from Egypt the Israelites were still asking “Is there really God in our midst, or is there nothing?”.<sup>61</sup> A one-off experience of God is not enough. For unrighteousness to be restrained “vision” of God needs to be “kept hold of”.<sup>62</sup>

Through their own righteousness, the intended product of their “vision” of God’s inherent righteousness, the Israelites were supposed to furnish a “vision” of God’s righteousness through themselves, and thus be a “light for the Gentiles”.<sup>63</sup> About Israel God says

Her righteousness will come out like the brightness of a sunny day, and her salvation like a flash of lightning. The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory.<sup>64</sup>

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*directly* perceived. It is more likely, then, that *κατοπτρίζομενοι* means not beholding but reflecting that glory, the idea being that, just as Moses reflected the glory which he was exposed to in the Tent of Meeting, so too Christians “reflect as in a mirror” the glory which they are exposed to in Jesus. For, as Paul goes on to say six verses later, through Jesus “God has shone in our hearts to [produce] the light of the knowledge of [his] glory” (2 Cor 4:6). This interpretation of *κατοπτρίζομενοι* then influences how “from glory to glory” is understood. It is standardly taken as the idea of increasing degrees of glory (eg the NIV’s “with ever-increasing glory”). However the “from” glory is better understood as the source of the transformation, the glory of God which is manifested in Jesus, through exposure to which people come to manifest God’s glory themselves (the “to” glory). Thus “‘from glory’ refers to the source of the glory...and ‘to glory’ to the resultant glory which is actually possessed by believers” (N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 188).

<sup>58</sup> See n. 45 and n. 46 above.

<sup>59</sup> Where God’s mighty acts were so “you [the Israelites] will know that I am the Lord your God” (Ex 6:7), and where in the case of the plague of gnats even Pharaoh’s magicians had to acknowledge the “finger of God” (Ex 8:19).

<sup>60</sup> Ex 17:1-7.

<sup>61</sup> Ex 17:7.

<sup>62</sup> Referring to God’s general, on-going revelation to the Israelites the psalmist writes that it was not their own efforts which gained them possession of the promised land but “your [God’s] right hand, your arm, and the light of your presence, because you loved them” (Ps 44:3), and cf “blessed are those...who walk in the light of your presence” (Ps 89:14-15).

<sup>63</sup> Is 42:6, 49:6.

The Israelites are thus to “set forth his [God’s] glory to the nations”<sup>65</sup> so that “the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it”.<sup>66</sup> For the Israelites’ “whole purpose in existing as a people is that they might reveal the Holy One”.<sup>67</sup> But we have seen how the Israelites failed in this vocation. And so there arose the idea of a Servant, an individual who was to represent Israel and fulfil that vocation himself.<sup>68</sup>

For the early Christians this Servant was Jesus.<sup>69</sup> We have seen in Proverbs 29:18 how without “vision” of God people are “unrestrained”. In the Septuagint “vision” is rendered by the Greek ἐξηγητής, denoting not the “vision” itself but its “setter forth”, the means by which the vision comes about. And in rendering the Masoretic text in this way the translator may consciously or unconsciously have been influenced by Isaiah’s prophecies about the “Servant”, who as Israel’s representative would take on her calling to “set forth”<sup>70</sup> God’s glory.

In his healing miracles Jesus “set forth” (ἐξηγήσατο)<sup>71</sup> God, revealing him through demonstrations of saving power similarly to the way God revealed himself through his mighty acts in rescuing the Israelites from Egypt. And so after exorcising a mute, to the request for a “sign from heaven”<sup>72</sup> Jesus says “if I drive out demons by the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you”.<sup>73</sup> Jesus’ point is that there is no need for a “sign from heaven” because his actions speak for themselves, just as Pharaoh’s magicians recognised “God’s finger” in the plague of gnats.<sup>74</sup>

But as in the Old Testament such revelations of God’s righteousness/glory were limited to particular times and to the particular groups or individuals who witnessed them. And so, as in the Old Testament, the New Testament also focusses on a more general revelation of God. For the author of John’s gospel the first half (chapters 1 to 11) is constructed as a

<sup>64</sup> Is 62:1-2. For לַפִּיר as a “flash of lightning” cf how, using the same Hebrew word, the chariots attacking Ninevah dash about “like flashes of lightning” (Nah 2:4), and how during God’s theophany at Mount Sinai “all the people were witnessing the thunder claps and lightning flashes” (Ex 20:18).

<sup>65</sup> 1 Chr 16:24.

<sup>66</sup> Is 40:5.

<sup>67</sup> J.N Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 142.

<sup>68</sup> In Isaiah God addresses this individual saying “you are my Servant, Israel, in whom I will display my glory” (Is 49:3). “Israel” here is not Israel the nation but the Servant/Messiah figure first introduced at Is 42:1-4, and who then takes centre stage in the Servant songs of Is 49:1-13, 50:3-11 and 52:13-53:12, a figure who will do on the nation’s behalf what she was unable to do herself.

<sup>69</sup> See Matt 8:17; 12:18-21; Luke 22:37.

<sup>70</sup> ἐξηγείσθε (1 Chr 16:24, LXX).

<sup>71</sup> John 1:18.

<sup>72</sup> Luke 11:16.

<sup>73</sup> Luke 11:20, where “has come upon you” “denotes the emphatic presence...of the kingdom” (N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 469 n. 86).

<sup>74</sup> Ex 8:19. See n. 59 above.

series of “signs” of God’s righteousness/glory in Jesus.<sup>75</sup> The author acknowledges, however, that “even though he had produced such great signs in front of them”<sup>76</sup> people still did not gain the intended “vision” of God.<sup>77</sup> And so the “signs” part of the gospel gives way to the account of Jesus’ death and resurrection, this being the ultimate “sign” of God’s righteousness/glory, the “sign” through which the whole world will gain such a “vision”.

This shift is signalled in Chapter 12 where some Greeks ask Philip if they can see Jesus.<sup>78</sup> When Jesus hears of their request he responds

The hour has come...unless a kernel of wheat...dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies it produces many seeds... I came to this hour for this reason: Father glorify your name... If I am lifted from the earth, I will draw all to myself.<sup>79</sup>

We are not told whether the Greeks actually saw Jesus, and this is indeed the point, since neither they nor anyone else now need to. For the plan is that “on the other side of the crucifixion”<sup>80</sup> all people will be able to gain a “vision” of God through the revelation of his righteousness/glory in Jesus’ atoning death.<sup>81</sup>

In this way the early Christians believed that Jesus fulfilled Israel’s vocation to reveal God’s righteousness/glory to the world. But following his death and resurrection we have seen how for Paul it is not just Jesus who furnishes this “vision” of God. Manifesting God’s righteousness/glory while alive Jesus remained a single seed. But manifesting it in his death and resurrection we have seen how for Paul that seed is now producing many seeds, as believers “reflecting the Lord’s glory as in a mirror are being transformed into the same

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<sup>75</sup> The first is Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana, whereby he “revealed his glory” (John 2:11). And the last is his raising of Lazarus. When Jesus first hears that Lazarus is ill he says to his (Lazarus’) anxious sisters “this sickness...is in order to reveal God’s glory” (John 11:4), and just before raising him from the dead he says to Martha “did I not say to you...that you will see the glory of God” (John 11:40).

<sup>76</sup> John 12:37.

<sup>77</sup> The author goes on to quote Is 53:1’s “to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” (John 12:38) and the LXX of Is 6:10’s “he [God] has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts so that they do not see...or understand” (John 12:40). Just as at his commissioning Isaiah was told that that his efforts to instil “vision” of God would fail (Is 6:9-10), neither too will Jesus’ miraculous signs be sufficient to generate it.

<sup>78</sup> John 12:20-21.

<sup>79</sup> John 12:23-24, 27-28, 32.

<sup>80</sup> C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: Black, 1957), 352.

<sup>81</sup> This central theme in John’s gospel, that of seeing God in the living, dying and resurrected Jesus, reaches its climax when, after seeing the resurrected Jesus, Thomas proclaims “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). Jesus responds “Is it because you have seen me that you have believed? Blessed are those who believe without having seen me” (John 20:29). And in John 20:30-31, in what was probably the original ending, the author states that his purpose in recording Jesus’ “signs” (now including the crucifixion and resurrection) is that his readers might do just that.

image”,<sup>82</sup> and through the “fruit” of their own righteousness are furnishing a “vision” of God themselves.

#### IV. REVELATION OF GOD “IN THEM”

We have seen how for the early Christians the Old Testament promises that Israel would reveal God’s righteousness/glory are now being realised through the atoning death of Jesus, the Servant, as people thereby gain the saving “vision” of God which restrains unrighteousness. And we have also seen how for Paul, through their own resulting righteousness, people then furnish a “vision” of God themselves. But in Romans 1 we have also seen how for Paul “vision” of God is actually available to people prior to and independent of Jesus’ atoning death. For God’s “wrath” is being revealed in the way he has “handed over...to do what is improper” (verse 28) those who “hold the truth in check” (verse 18). For “what can be known of God is evident in them... For since the creation of the world his unseen things, his eternal power and what it is to be God, are seen, comprehended in what he has made” (verses 19-20). Paul’s point is that the restraining “vision” of God has always been available to people. But “their hearts, lacking understanding became darkened” (verse 21) and they “did not see fit to keep hold of accurate knowledge of God” (verse 28).<sup>83</sup>

How did Paul believe that prior to and independent of Jesus a “vision” of God is available “in what he has made”? Romans 1:20 is standardly taken as describing a revelation of God which obtains through the inanimate, physical universe, a revelation such as that in Psalm 19:1-2 where David says

The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament is showing the work of his hand. Day after day it gushes forth speech, and night after night it makes knowledge known.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> 2 Cor 3:18.

<sup>83</sup> Paul is thus applying to humanity as a whole the failure of the Israelites, to whom God says “You blind, pay attention so you can see... Who is blind like the one committed to me... Seeing many things you do not register them” (Is 42:18-20). This failure to register the truth about God was despite the prophets’ attempts to establish such “vision”. Jeremiah says to the Israelites “though the Lord has sent all his servants the prophets to you again and again, you have not listened or paid attention” (Jer 25:4). In fact we have seen (see n. 77 above) that the prophets’ attempts had had the opposite effect, Isaiah being told at his commissioning that he would “curdle the thinking of this people, clog up their ears and smear over their eyes” (Is 6:10). And for Paul it is not just Israel but the whole human race whose eyes are “smeared over” and thinking “curdled”.

<sup>84</sup> “The heavens are telling the glory of God” can be understood as a personified cosmos praising God’s glory rather than an impersonal one furnishing evidence for it (see J.H Eaton, *The Psalms* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1967), 66). Cf “The heavens praise your wonders, O Lord, your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones” (Ps 89:5). But the fact that the cosmos “make knowledge known” does seem to imply that the invisible God is thereby revealed.

But there are difficulties with understanding Romans 1:20 in this way.<sup>85</sup> Firstly Paul's gospel is "according to the scriptures"<sup>86</sup> and "witnessed by the Law and Prophets",<sup>87</sup> ie is in line with the Old Testament. And it is notable how as a "Hebrew of Hebrews"<sup>88</sup> Paul fills his writings with quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament.<sup>89</sup> It seems odd then, to say the least, that at the start of his most sustained and systematic presentation of the gospel he should introduce a mode of revelation which apart from Psalm 19:1-2 is found nowhere else in the Old Testament.<sup>90</sup> J.D.G. Dunn, though accepting the standard interpretation of Romans 1:20, acknowledges that "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...reveals a breadth and a boldness in his apologetic strategy".<sup>91</sup> But the fact that we have to concede such a "boldness" at such a vital point in the letter should make us hesitate before accepting such an interpretation.

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<sup>85</sup> This is despite it becoming an article of faith in the Reformed tradition. Article 2 of the Belgic Confession of 1561 states that knowledge of God comes about "First, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe, which is before our eyes as a most beautiful book ...as the Apostle Paul declares (Romans 1:20)". In the English Reformed tradition this developed into the idea that knowledge of God comes from two "books", Thomas Bacon commending the "book of God's works" as well as the "book of God's word" (*Advancement of Learning*, 1605), and Thomas Browne characterising the former as "that universal and publick manuscript, that lies exposed unto the eyes of all" (*Religio Medici* (London: 1643), II.16).

<sup>85</sup> 1 Cor 15:3.

<sup>86</sup> 1 Cor 15:3.

<sup>87</sup> Rom 3:21.

<sup>88</sup> Phil 3:5.

<sup>89</sup> D.J. Harrington writes "Besides hundreds of allusions or echoes, his [Paul's] letters contain almost one hundred explicit quotations" ("Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans", *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations*, Vol. 4 (2009), 1). In the letter to the Romans alone, according to <https://oasisredditch.church/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Old-testament-References-in-Romans11.pdf>, there are 51 direct quotations, 15 paraphrased quotations, and 15 clear allusions, which means that in Romans Paul on average quotes or makes a clear reference to the OT once every five verses.

<sup>90</sup> The idea of God being revealed through the inanimate, physical universe has virtually no place in the New Testament either. The only example is Acts 14:17, where Paul says to the people of Lystra "and yet he [God] by doing good has not left himself without witness, having given you rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and good cheer". This statement that the earth's fruitfulness is evidence for God's goodness follows Paul's healing of a man lame from birth and the crowd's subsequent attempt to make sacrifices to him and to Barnabas, regarding them as the gods Hermes and Zeus in human form. Paul's statement that through the fruitfulness of the earth God has "not left himself without witness" is his attempt to direct them away from such anthropomorphism on to the idea of an invisible creator, just as in his speech on the Areopagus in Athens he remarks that when touring the city he had spotted an altar "to an unknown God", and uses this to similarly direct his listeners to the idea of a God who cannot be seen (Acts 17:22-25). The argument which Paul employs at Lystra occurs nowhere else in Paul's speeches or writings. Like his reference to the altar to the unknown god in Athens it has all the hallmarks of being an *ad hoc* move prompted by the circumstances he found himself in. At all events it should not be taken as evidence for a general commitment to the idea of a revelation of God through the inanimate, physical universe.

<sup>91</sup> Romans, 58.



Secondly, if the inanimate, physical universe reveals the invisible God it is not at all obvious what it reveals, or how it reveals it.<sup>92</sup> Gaining an understanding of God from the inanimate, physical universe is thus going to require a significant effort of reasoning. But in 1 Corinthians Paul is totally dismissive of human attempts to know God through reasoning.

Where is the wise man? ... Where the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For when...through its wisdom the world could gain no knowledge of God, it was God's pleasure to save believers through foolishness...<sup>93</sup>

But if the revelation of God "in what he has made" is interpreted as revelation through the inanimate, physical universe then Paul is implying that God *can* be known through human reasoning. What is more Paul is almost certainly wrote Romans in Corinth, among the very people whose confidence and pretensions in this regard he was so keen to correct.<sup>94</sup> And so it is hard to believe that in Romans 1:20, writing among those very people, Paul should be describing a mode of revelation which requires human reasoning.

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<sup>92</sup> Ps 19:1-2 states that the heavens tell God's "glory", and that "night after night it [the firmament] makes knowledge known", without giving any detail as to what this "glory" consists in, or how the heavens/firmament reveal it. And commentators on Romans 1:20 are similarly vague. D. Moo talks about "those basic attributes of God that may be discerned in...nature" (*The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 123) without giving any indication of what these attributes are, or how they are thus discernible, just that through nature people come to understand "something about God's existence and nature" (Romans, 105). Dodd states that for Paul "the created universe provides sufficient evidence of its 'divine original' " (Romans, 24), but again gives no detail as to how it does this. And even more vaguely Dunn comments that Paul intended his readers "to think in terms of some kind of rational perception of the fuller reality in and behind the created cosmos" (Romans, 58). R.A. Young sums up commentators' difficulties saying that they "reject a strong version of natural theology [ie some kind of cosmological or design argument] and are searching for categories to explain what Paul is saying" ("The Knowledge of God in Romans 1:18-23", *JETS* 43 (2000), 706).

<sup>93</sup> 1 Cor 1:20-21.

<sup>94</sup> In Rom 15:25-26 Paul says that he is on the way to Jerusalem to deliver a collection to the Christian Jews to which "Macedonia and Achaia [Greece] were pleased to make a contribution", implying that he wrote the letter somewhere in Greece. And in Acts 20:1-3 we are told that on this journey, after travelling through Macedonia, Paul stayed three months in Greece, where the only city he is recorded as visiting (apart from Athens, briefly) is Corinth, where he lived for a year and a half (Acts 18:11). Further evidence that Paul was at Corinth when he wrote Romans is that at the end of the letter he recommends Phoebe who was "benefactor of many...and of me" in the church at Cenchreae, Corinth's port on the Saronic gulf (Rom 16:1-2). Also he says "Greetings from Gaius, who hosted me and the whole church, and from Erastus, the city administrator" (Rom 16:23), where Gaius is probably one of the two Corinthians whom Paul says he baptized during his first stay there (1 Cor 1:14). F.F Bruce (*Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan and Scott), 1962, 371) argues that this Gaius is in fact the Titius Justus (Gaius being his *cognomen*) in whose house Paul held meetings for the majority of that time (Acts 18:7-8). And Erastus may be the Aedile (the Roman official in charge of streets and public buildings) named in an inscription discovered to the north of the Roman forum in Corinth which reads ERASTUS PRO AEDILITATE S P STRAVIT (see *Paul The Apostle of the Gentiles* (Athens: Editions Haitalis, 2003) 117). D. Guthrie argues that this is the same Erastus who in Acts 19:22 is an associate of Timothy, and who in 2 Tim 4:20 is said to have "remained in Corinth" (*The Pastoral Epistles* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1957), 178).

But the most serious difficulty with the standard interpretation of Romans 1:20 lies in the role the verse plays in the flow of thought in the second half of Romans 1. We have seen how for Paul God's "wrath" is being revealed because people "did not see for to keep hold of accurate knowledge of God" (verse 28), and thus "hold in check the truth" about him which would restrain unrighteousness (verse 18). But how does a "truth" about God which is revealed through the inanimate, physical universe restrain unrighteousness? On his walk back from Kronobäck the Swedish pastor Carl Boberg was struck by the power of God which he saw revealed in a thunderstorm, prompting him to reflect on "Thy power throughout the universe displayed".<sup>95</sup> But what difference did this revelation make with respect to unrighteousness? Was Boberg any more loving to his wife on his return home? Was he subsequently any less intolerant towards his friends? How does knowledge of God gained through the inanimate, physical universe make any difference to the way people actually behave?

There are good reasons, then, for rejecting an interpretation of "since the creation of the world his unseen things...are seen, comprehended in what he has made" which makes Paul out to be saying that the inanimate, physical universe furnishes evidence for its unseen creator.

I have argued that for Paul the revelation of God's righteousness in Jesus is the start of a process whereby that righteousness carries on being revealed in the righteousness of believers. And in line with this I propose that what Paul is saying in Romans 1:20 is that it is through **people** that "since the creation of the world his [God's] unseen things...are seen, comprehended in what he has made".

The best evidence for this interpretation is that it fills out what Paul says in the preceding verse, where he says "what can be known of God is evident in them".<sup>96</sup> Commentators have struggled to make sense of God being evident "in them".<sup>97</sup> I propose that "in them" should be taken in the instrumental sense that it is people who reveal the invisible creator.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> The fourth line of the first verse of his hymn "O Lord my God".

<sup>96</sup> Rom 1:19.

<sup>97</sup> Moo (Romans, 95) and C.K. Barrett (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: Black, 1957), 35) translate ἐν αὐτοῖς "among them", and Cranfield, similarly, "in their midst (*The Epistle to the Romans* (2 Vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), I:113-4). But why would Paul add "in them" when interpreted in this way it seems to add nothing the sense? Dunn (Romans, 56), J. Fitzmyer (*Romans* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 279), Dodd (Romans, 24), E. Kasemann (*Commentary on Romans* (London: SCM, 1973), 38), and L. Morris (*The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 73) all translate ἐν αὐτοῖς "to them" but then just four words later have to translate αὐτοῖς (this time without the ἐν) similarly. And in any case there is no good evidence that in the NT ἐν can serve as a dative in this way. BDAG ἐν 8 gives four supposed examples apart from Rom. 1:19, namely Gal 1:16, 1 Cor 14:11, Acts 2:12, and Luke 2:14, but all of these are dealt with differently by the standard commentaries (see, respectively, R. N. Longnecker, *Galatians* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 32; Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 665 n. 41; F.F. Bruce, *Acts*, 109; J. Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20* (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 267). Two other supposed examples of ἐν αὐτοῖς as dative, this time from 2 Corinthians (cited by Fitzmyer,

Further evidence that in Romans 1 it is human beings who reveal the invisible creator comes in verse 23. Two verses before Paul says “though knowing God they did not glorify or thank him *as* God”.<sup>99</sup> Instead “their hearts, lacking understanding, were darkened...and they exchanged the glory of the immortal god for a likeness of the image of mortal humankind”.<sup>100</sup> What Paul is saying is that despite the revelation of God “in what he has made” people fail to grasp his nature as immortal and invisible, and as a consequence construct and worship idols. They thus “exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served creation rather than the creator”.<sup>101</sup>

But in verse 23 what is a likeness “of the image” (εἰκόνοϛ) supposed to mean? There is a consensus, based on its use in Revelation, the Wisdom of Solomon, and the Septuagint outside of Genesis, that “image” here means the same thing as “likeness”, ie an idol, a representative statue constructed as an aid to worship. But what then is “idol of an idol” supposed to mean?<sup>102</sup>

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Romans, 279), are likewise dealt with differently by P. Barnett (*The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 216, 390). Sanday and Headlam (Romans, 42), following Calvin, translate ἐν αὐτοῖϛ “within them” (ie to men’s consciences), and R.C.H. Lenski (*The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961, 96) and H.A.W. Meyer (*Exegetical and Critical Handbook to the Epistle to the Romans*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1881) take this line as well, the former translating “in their consciousness”. But as Cranfield (Romans I, 114) points out interpreting ἐν αὐτοῖϛ as inward revelation is unlikely because καθορᾶται in v 20 implies literal seeing, and because it seems to contradict v 21 where Paul talks about hearts “lacking understanding”.

<sup>98</sup> For ἐν as the means or instrument whereby something comes about see the examples in LSJ ἐν A III. And for the instrumental use of ἐν in the NT see the many examples in R. Young, *An Analytical Concordance to the Holy Bible* (London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1939), 133. For two examples in the NT where people are the instrument see 1 Cor 7:14 where Paul says that the unbelieving husband has been sanctified ἐν τῇ γυναικί (“through his wife”), and Heb 1:1 where as we have seen the author says that in past times God spoke ἐν τοῖϛ προφήταιϛ (“through the prophets”). Commenting on this verse Chrysostom makes clear that ἐν is being used in an instrumental sense saying “you see that the ἐν is [synonymous with] διὰ [= “through”]”. LSJ observe that ἐν has this instrumental use “especially with Verbs of shewing” (*ibid.*). Thus Paul says that “each person’s work...will be revealed through fire [ἐν πυρὶ]” (1 Cor 3:13). When faced with a Philistine army Saul inquires of the Lord, but according to the LXX receives no answer “whether in dreams or by means of manifestations or through the prophets (1 Sam. 28:6), where “in”, “by means of” and “through” are all translations of ἐν. And according to Xenophon towards the end of his life the Persian king Cyrus made a sacrifice to all the gods saying “receive these thank offerings for help in achieving many glorious enterprises because you have made known to me what I ought and ought not to do both in sacrificial auspices, in heavenly signs, in birds of omen and in oracles” (Cyr. 8.7.3), where again “in” translates ἐν. In other words it is “in” these things, ie by means of them, that Cyrus learned what the gods wanted him to do or not to do. And so when Paul says that what can be known of God is evident “in them” (ἐν αὐτοῖϛ) I propose that he is similarly using ἐν to specify the means or instrument by which people gain that revelation. Cyrus gained it through sacrificial omens and through the flight of birds etc. But for Paul people gain it through themselves.

<sup>99</sup> v 21a (emphasis original).

<sup>100</sup> vv 21c, 23.

<sup>101</sup> v 25.

<sup>102</sup> Dunn says that the inclusion of εἰκόνοϛ “is probably intended to stress the distance between the reality and that which the idol is supposed to depict” (Romans, 61), where the “probably” indicates his difficulties.

Rather than using Revelation, the Wisdom of Solomon or the Septuagint outside of Genesis to explain Paul's use of εἰκῶν in verse 23 we should consider rather his own uses of the term.<sup>103</sup> In none of these does εἰκῶν mean an idol. Rather, with Genesis 1:27 where humanity is made "in God's image"<sup>104</sup> as the controlling context, in all these cases εἰκῶν is best understood as referring to humanity as his "image", either with reference to Adam, or to Jesus as the new Adam, or to Christians who are being transformed so as to be God's "image" in the way Jesus is. And so in Romans 1:23 rather than take εἰκῶν to mean an idol it is more consistent to interpret it as an allusion to Genesis 1:27, and to the creation of human beings in God's image.<sup>105</sup> This would mean that when Paul says "they exchanged the glory of the immortal god for a likeness of the image" what he is saying is that instead of worshipping the invisible, creator God people worship idols of the "image" of that God, ie idols shaped like human beings.<sup>106</sup> And the next words "of mortal humankind" can then be interpreted as Paul explicating his meaning, the genitive being either in apposition to "of the image" (instead of the invisible God people worship idols "of the image", namely idols of human beings), or an epexegetic genitive (instead of the invisible God people worship idols "of the image", by which I mean idols of human beings). Either way Paul would be picking up the point he made in verses 19 and 20, namely that made "in his image" it is human beings who reveal the invisible God. He is thus highlighting the foolishness and the irony that rather than worshipping the true God people instead worship idols "of the image", ie idols of the very things, namely themselves, who reveal what should be their true object of worship!

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Moo suggests that εἰκόνοσ is some kind of template idol from which copies are produced (Romans, 109 n. 83), an interpretation which reads a lot into the text.

<sup>103</sup> Assuming Paul to be the author of Colossians he uses it eight other times: God has marked humanity out to be "conformed to the image [εἰκόνοσ] that is his son" (Rom 8:29); a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the "image [εἰκῶν] and glory of God" (1 Cor 11:7); his readers have been used to being "the image [εἰκόνα] in the way the earthly man [ie Adam] is", but now he exhorts them to be "the image [εἰκόνα] in the way the heavenly man [ie Jesus] is" (1 Cor 15:49); "we all, reflecting the Lord's glory as in a mirror, are being transformed [into] the same image [εἰκόνα]" (2 Cor 3:18); Christ is the "image [εἰκῶν] of God" (2 Cor 4:4); Christ is the "image [εἰκῶν] of the invisible God" (Col 1:15); people should not lie to each other "having put on the new [person] which is being renewed unto accurate knowledge in accordance with its creator's image [εἰκόνα]" (Col 3:10).

<sup>104</sup> LXX κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ.

<sup>105</sup> In Romans 1 Dunn acknowledges that Paul's use of εἰκῶν may be prompted by Gen 1:27 and "the thought of man as God's image" (Romans, 61). The background of Gen 1:27 is probably also present in Paul's repeated use of the terms "male" and "female" in vv 26-27, recalling how in Gen 1:27 God created human beings "male and female". And in Romans 1 the background of the Genesis creation account is evident more generally: in v 20 God's unseen reality is seen "since the creation of the world"; Dunn comments that in the other types of idol apart from human-shaped idols which Paul lists in v 23 "the influence of Gen 1:20-25 may be discernible" (Romans, 62); and in v 32 Paul says that people collude in immorality despite knowing that those who behave in this way are "worthy of death", recalling God's warning to Adam in Gen 2:16.

<sup>106</sup> As evidenced by the anthropomorphic statues of Greco-Roman gods and goddesses in the temples of every city which Paul visited. And see n. 90 above for how after Paul healed a man lame from birth the people of Lystra regarded him and Barnabas as the gods Hermes and Zeus.

I conclude that when for Paul believers “reflecting the Lord’s glory as in a mirror are being transformed into the same image”,<sup>107</sup> and thus manifest God’s righteousness/glory in the way in which Jesus, God’s “image”,<sup>108</sup> manifests it, they are not doing anything new, but “renewed into accurate knowledge according to the creator’s image”<sup>109</sup> they are simply doing, only better, what “since the creation of the world”,<sup>110</sup> made “in his image”,<sup>111</sup> they have in fact been doing all along.

## V. SOWING THE SEEDS OF LOVE

We have seen how in the Old Testament God’s intention for Israel is that “called ‘oaks of righteousness’, a planting of the Lord to display his glory...her righteousness will come out like the brightness of a sunny day”,<sup>112</sup> and thus as a “light to the Gentiles”<sup>113</sup> she will “set forth his [God’s] glory to the nations”<sup>114</sup>. And even though “the people of Israel...have done nothing but evil...nothing but provoke me”,<sup>115</sup> for God nevertheless “my purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please”,<sup>116</sup> and

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish...so my word will not return to me empty”.<sup>117</sup>

God is going to intervene to bring about righteousness. For

As the ground brings out its growth, and as a garden causes to spring up what has been sown in it, so the Sovereign Lord will cause righteousness to spring up...<sup>118</sup>

But how exactly will God “cause righteousness to spring up”?

Listen to me, you stubborn-hearted, you who are far from righteousness. I have brought my righteousness near, it is not far away, and my salvation

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<sup>107</sup> 2 Cor 3:18.

<sup>108</sup> 2 Cor 4:4, Col 1:15.

<sup>109</sup> Col 3:10.

<sup>110</sup> Rom 1:20.

<sup>111</sup> Gen 1:27.

<sup>112</sup> Is 61:3, 62:1.

<sup>113</sup> Is 42:6, 49:6.

<sup>114</sup> 1 Chr 16:24. Cf how “Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn” (Is 60:3).

<sup>115</sup> Jer 32:30.

<sup>116</sup> Is 46:10.

<sup>117</sup> Is 55:10-11.

<sup>118</sup> Is 61:11. And so for Jesus the kingdom of God is “like a man sows the seed in the ground...and the seed sprouts and grows he knows not how” (Mark 4:26-27). But as certainly as “the ground itself bears fruit” (Mark 4:28) God is going to bring about his kingdom of righteousness.

does not delay. I will grant salvation to Zion, my glory to Israel... This is the inheritance of the servants of the Lord, the righteousness which they have from their closeness to me.<sup>119</sup>

Despite the Israelites' unrighteousness God loves them with an everlasting, love.<sup>120</sup> For "though the mountains be shaken and the hills removed, yet my loving kindness will not be shaken from its closeness to you".<sup>121</sup> Furthermore "I have brought my righteousness near, it is not far away",<sup>122</sup> "my righteousness draws near speedily",<sup>123</sup> and "near...[is] my righteousness for being revealed".<sup>124</sup> And it is their closeness to God's righteousness which will bring about the Israelites' own righteousness. For God's righteousness will in fact come so close to them that it actually penetrates their being, with the result that "as a garden causes to spring up what has been sown in it" so God's righteousness, "sown" into people, will bring about the fruit of their own righteousness.<sup>125</sup> But we have seen how what is really being revealed is **God's** righteousness which, "brought near" and "sown" into them, is manifested in the "fruit" of their own righteousness. And so "the glory *of the Lord* will be revealed".<sup>126</sup>

We have seen how for Paul, through Jesus' atoning death, God's purpose that Israel (now redefined to include non-Jews) reveal his righteousness/glory is now being realised. God cannot be perceived directly.<sup>127</sup> This means that any awareness of him can only come

<sup>119</sup> Is 46:12-13, 54:17. "From their closeness" translates the Hebrew **נִצְּחָה**, which means "from close proximity with...in the sense of origination or authorship" (**נִצְּחָה** 4, BDB, 86-87).

<sup>120</sup> After the apostasy at Mount Sinai God passes by Moses proclaiming "Yahweh, Yahweh, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6). For J.N. Oswalt this became "the foundational understanding of Israel's God" (T.D. Alexander and D.W. Baker (eds.), *Dictionary of the Pentateuch* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 851). And we have seen in Rom 5:8 how for Paul the depth of God's love for people is revealed in Jesus' atoning death "while we were still sinners" (see II. REVELATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS above).

<sup>121</sup> Is. 54:10, where again "from its closeness" translates the Hebrew **נִצְּחָה**. And again we have seen how for Paul "nothing in creation can separate us from the love of God" (Rom 8:39).

<sup>122</sup> Is 46:13.

<sup>123</sup> Is 51:5.

<sup>124</sup> Is 56:1.

<sup>125</sup> Carrying on the horticulture metaphor God says "Heavens, drip righteousness from above, clouds pour it down. Open up, earth, let salvation spout, and cause righteousness to grow together with it. I, the Lord, have created it" (Is 45:8). "I have created it" translates **בְּרָאתִי**, a verb which in the Bible occurs mostly in the early chapters of Genesis and the later chapters of Isaiah. The use of this verb thus ties the generation of human righteousness with their creation. This connection is made more explicit four verses later where, recalling, Gen 1:27, God says "I created [**בְּרָאתִי**] humankind", and also two chapters before where, again recalling the creation of humanity in Gen 1 Isaiah writes "Thus says the Lord, your creator [**בְּרָאֲךָ**], O Jacob... 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you'" (Is 43:1), the redeemed being "all who are called by name, and I have created it [**בְּרָאתִי**] for my glory" (Is (43:7). God's purpose that his glory be manifest in human beings is thus intimately linked in with his creation of them, the realisation of the former being as certain as the fact of the latter.

<sup>126</sup> Is 40:5 (my emphasis).

<sup>127</sup> See above n. 43.

about indirectly “[as] in a mirror”.<sup>128</sup> And so for Paul the answer to “Is there really God in our midst, or is there nothing?”<sup>129</sup> is found literally “in our midst”. For in Jesus God has “brought righteousness near”, and the seeds of his love “poured into our hearts” are producing the “fruit of righteousness” through which “reflecting the Lord’s glory as in a mirror”<sup>130</sup> human beings reveal their righteous, loving creator.

But this is not the instilling of some new capability by which God finishes off what was up until then an incomplete creation. For I have argued that for Paul, through their own righteousness/love, human beings have always been capable of, and in fact always have been revealing the righteous, loving God. I propose that in the normal love which human beings have for one another, in “the simple duties of family life”,<sup>131</sup> and perhaps particularly in “the normal, human love of a husband for his wife”,<sup>132</sup> Paul believed that, as Jesus has “set him forth”,<sup>133</sup> so people naturally reveal the loving God. In this way, then, “what can be known of God is evident in them”,<sup>134</sup> human beings, made in God’s “image”, being the specific means by which “since the creation of the world his unseen things...are seen, comprehended in what he has made”.<sup>135</sup>

And so Paul’s gospel is not some radical new departure for humanity. Though they may not realise it, and thus “hold in check” the “truth” which would restrain unrighteousness, through their love for others people naturally reveal God. Paul believed that through Jesus the seeds of God’s righteousness/love are being sown, and his glory revealed, in a new and decisive way. But this does not mean that up until then God was not being revealed at all. For I have argued that, in whatever limited and compromised way, Paul believed that sowing these seeds and revealing that glory are things which “since the creation of the world” people have been doing all along.

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<sup>128</sup> ἐν ἀντίγραφῳ (1 Cor 13:12). For “[as] in a mirror” denoting the indirect nature of awareness of God, rather than the quality of such awareness, see Fee, 1 Corinthians, 648. According to Louis Berkhof “All our knowledge of God is...analogical” (*Theology*, 35). The point is that no experience or language derived from and based upon visible, contingent reality can properly grasp or express what is immortal and invisible, and will inevitably be limited, indirect and analogical. As Zophar says to Job “Can you fathom the depths of God? Deeper than Sheol, how can you know them?” (Job 11:7). And so our understanding of God “must be expressed figuratively. ...knowledge of mortals is never more than a picture of the truth, the truth expressed ἐν ἀντίγραφῳ” (S.E. Bassett, JBL 47 (1928), 236).

<sup>129</sup> Ex 17:7.

<sup>130</sup> 2 Cor 3:18.

<sup>131</sup> P.T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 219.

<sup>132</sup> J.E. Crouch “The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafel”, *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments* 109 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1972), 112.

<sup>133</sup> John 1:18.

<sup>134</sup> Rom 1:19.

<sup>135</sup> Rom 1:20.

In his speech to the Athenians Paul says that God is “not far from each one of us”.<sup>136</sup> And Jesus replies to the Pharisees’ question about when the kingdom of God will come saying “the kingdom of God does not come in such a way that you can watch out for it... For the kingdom of God is here, in your midst.”<sup>137</sup> And for Paul, I have argued, God’s kingdom is “in our midst” in the human love by which people naturally reveal their loving creator.

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<sup>136</sup> Acts 17:27.

<sup>137</sup> Luke 17:21.