

Biblical Theological Seminary
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The Book of Romans
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ROMANS 1 AND 2: GOD IN COSMOS AND CONSCIENCE

Introduction

Compare modern secular society with ancient Greco-Roman:

Theoretical atheism more common now, but not unknown then

Practical atheism rather common in both societies

Paul's argument from general revelation:

Opens his section on human guilt before God (1:18-3:20)

1st part on man without Bible (1:18-2:16)

2nd part on man with Bible (2:17-3:8)

Not going to exegete whole section 1:18-2:16

But a few selected verses showing "God has not left himself w/o witness" even to those without the Bible.

Man's Responsibility (1:18)

God is angry at man's sin

Man suppresses God's truth

Evidence from the Cosmos (1:19-20)

God's invisible attributes (divine nature, eternal power)

Revealed, perceived, plainly seen, understood, w/o excuse, suppress truth

In or by the things that are made

How? Not told, but hint in "things that are made"

cp Ps 19:1 "handiwork"; Acts 14:17: gives rain, crops, food, joy;

Acts 17:24-29: man is God-made not vice versa

i.e., the evidence relates to a maker analogy (cp Dorothy Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker*)

Probably details left open so men can rethink in terms of each generation's knowledge and technology

Even in antiquity, the marvelous nature of mankind, life, environment realized; didn't look like work of chance (note universality of belief in God, below).

Though argument thought to be somewhat diluted by Darwin's evolutionary theory, evidence has come on strong in recent years: universe with origin, life not accidental, design in inanimate universe.

Evidence from the Conscience (1:32; 2:1; 2:14-15)

Rom 1:21-32 sketches consequences of rejecting God

Theoretical: replacement of God by man & lesser animals
(theism => polytheism, animism)

Practical:

Abandonment of created sex for perverted
(marital sex => free sex, homosexuality, bestiality => various diseases)

Abandonment of created morality for perverted
(disapproval, avoidance of sin => practice, approval of wickedness)

God's invisible attributes (righteousness, impartiality, justice)

Revealed, perceived, plainly seen, understood (well enough to judge others), w/o excuse (2:1), suppress truth (in approving wickedness in self & friends, 1:32)

In or by one thing that is made (human conscience)

How? Not told, but suggestions in context

Collective Conscience Argument:

see Samuel Zwemer, *The Origin of Religion*

Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts*

Anthropologists have found that evolutionary model of rising level of religion not in accord with observations; animists, etc., believe in a high god from which they have become estranged.

C.S. Lewis has compiled lists of moral standards found throughout mankind; see his *Abolition of Man*

Individual Conscience Argument:

C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*: universal; not reduceable to logic, preference

Kenneth L. Pike in "Christianity and Culture: I. Conscience and Culture" *Journal ASA* 31 (1979): 8-12: universal; anger as calibrating conscience

Conclusions

We as Christians can cooperate with God's work in the hearts of unsaved people by calling their attention to the sort of things we have discussed here.

We need to realize that discoveries in modern science, both physical science and the human sciences, though regularly given a secular spin, actually provide good evidence for the sort of thing that Paul is calling our attention to here in Romans 1 and 2.