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be positively seeking out what is on the consciences of Christians in different cultures if we are to apply the concerns of Gospel and Culture not only to ethics, but also to mission.

Conscience remains an important principle of Christian decision making and of analysis of Christian self-understanding. It is the nature of the case that it is involved in tensions and differences. Out of those come new possibilities. Sensitivity to our own conscience makes us alert to things we would prefer to ignore. Sensitivity to the consciences of others is the more necessary in a multicultural world where people who are different have to live together. It is also one way in which we are obliged to ask at points of tension whether a particular culture is helping or hindering the understanding and the living of the gospel. If it is better at asking questions than answering them, it is still essential those questions are asked. And if the questions keep coming back, perhaps indeed the voice of conscience, and the voice of the people, is the voice of God. Christ will have taken away our guilt, but the ongoing work of his Spirit through others and ourselves will continue to sharpen our awareness. This is the true conscientization of which we should be happy to be part.

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The Objective Witness to Conscience: An Egyptian Parallel to Romans 2:15

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Although this article was written 20 years ago, it introduces insights on the 'heart' (conscience) of a culture outside of Hebrew religion. It raises the tantalizing question, 'Did Paul have any knowledge of the Osiris myth?' The author argues that the role of conscience in [Romans 2:15b](#) is that of an objective witness on the day of judgment rather than as an inner arbiter between conflicting thought.

Since the works of B. Gärtner and of C. A. Pierce (both in 1955) little attention has been given to this important subject.

Editor

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago the writer undertook a detailed study of [Romans 2:14–15](#). One of the unresolved problems encountered in these verses is the meaning of the phrase in v. [15b](#) which is usually translated: ‘while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them....’¹ Though I came across some very interesting parallels in other literature of the period, I was still not satisfied with the explanations which were given.²

During a recent study of Ancient Egyptian religion I came across what appeared to be a most convincing parallel to [Romans 2:15b](#). It not only helped to explain the meaning of the phrase in question, but it also gave a different view of the interpretation of the whole of this difficult section of the Epistle to the Romans.

The purpose of this paper will be to demonstrate how an Ancient Egyptian concept may provide some help in interpreting a difficult New Testament text. To my knowledge this particular interpretation has not [p. 205](#) been advanced before. Indeed, scholars have traditionally neglected Egyptian backgrounds to NT thinking. The implications of this exegesis for the understanding of [Romans 1–3](#), in particular, and New Testament theology in general, will also be considered.

I. AN HISTORICAL EXEGESIS OF ROMANS 2:15B

Before attempting to interpret the phrase under consideration it is important to study the context in which it occurs. One of the most pressing questions in many of the first century churches was the matter of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the same congregation.³ It is in this context that Paul wrote his letter to the Romans. The doctrinal statements he makes must be understood against this background. In the first three chapters of Romans Paul deals with the question: ‘How is it possible for a Jew and Gentile to stand on the same level of advantage before God?’⁴ Paul answers this question by demonstrating that Jews and Gentiles stand on the same level of disadvantage before God. They have rebelled against God by not obeying his law and are, therefore, condemned.⁵ It is only by faith that either Jew or Gentile can be justified. Paul amply demonstrates that the Jew’s standing helps only in gaining access to God’s Law but not in obeying it.

Thus chapters [1](#) and [2](#) serve the purpose of preparing for the statement that ‘none is righteous, no, not one ...’ ([Rom. 3:10](#)). ‘What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all; for I have already (ie., chs. [1](#) and [2](#)) charged that all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin ...’ ([Rom. 3:9](#)).

¹ RSV. The Greek of the phrase is difficult to translate.

² See parallels discussed below, section II.

³ For this insight I am indebted to Barker, Lane and Michaels, *The New Testament Speaks* (New York, 1969), p. 200.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ In the case of the Gentiles the ‘law’ seems to be some moral principle inherent in the universe to which they have access. Cf. B. Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* (Uppsala, 1955), p. 77.

It is clear then that [Romans 2:15b](#) occurs in a context where Paul is accusing all men of having disobeyed God. In the immediate context Paul makes the negative statement that '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' ([Rom. 2:12](#)). In v. [13](#) he explains that it is not *hearing* which justifies but rather *doing*. The question immediately comes to mind: 'By what standard will the Gentiles be judged since they do not have the law of Moses?' It is in answer to this anticipated question that Paul writes vs. [14](#) and [15](#). It must be remembered that his purpose is to establish grounds for the *condemnation* of the Gentiles.

The main point of debate in the exegesis of [Romans 2:14](#) revolves around the meaning of Φύσει ('by nature'). It seems that Paul is saying that even though Gentiles do not have the Law of Moses, when they instinctively (Φύσει) act in accordance with this Law, this very action, or these works, become the standard by which they are judged.⁶ It is very likely that Paul is here depending on [p.206](#) the Jewish missionary apologetic which taught that the Noachian commandments were available to Gentiles.⁷ These were universal laws which did not necessitate a special revelation.⁸

The main points of debate in [Romans 2:15](#) are concerned with the role which συνείδησις (conscience) plays in the text. Most scholars have approached this problem by first making a word study of συνείδησις and then interpreting the phrase (v. [15b](#)) on the basis of their understanding of this word.⁹ This procedure is complicated by the fact that the background and meaning of συνείδησις as used in the New Testament are themselves greatly debated.¹⁰

To what is conscience bearing witness? Who is accusing whom? Where did Paul obtain this idea of the inner dynamics of a Gentile's soul? when and how does this process of accusing and excusing take place? These and other questions remain unresolved in relation to [Romans 2:15b](#).¹¹

Attempts have been made to find parallels to this passage in other Jewish literature. One of the most helpful of these is to be found in the *Testament of Judah*:

Know therefore, my children, that two spirits attend man, the spirit of truth and error, and in the midst is the spirit of the understanding of the mind (= conscience?), whose

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ H. J. Schoeps, *Paul* (Philadelphia, 1959), p. 224, claims that in the writings of the Jewish missionary propaganda it was an accepted fact that the heathen sometimes unwittingly fulfilled the law. This is interesting because most commentators had found Stoic backgrounds for this thinking (Cf. C. K. Barrett, *Commentary on Romans* (New York, 1957), p. 52). Both Schoeps and Gärtner, p. 77, find a relationship between Noachidic laws (which were seven in number and were used as a summary of the law for proselytes) and this context, especially the prohibitions in [Rom. 2:17ff](#). It is quite likely that Paul, as a Jewish missionary, was familiar with this teaching before he became a Christian.

⁸ Schoeps, p. 224.

⁹ Cf. Barrett, Bruce, Hodge, Pierce, etc. Gärtner is one exception to this; he seriously struggles with the meaning of the whole phrase.

¹⁰ Cf. Kittel on συνείδησις, and the excellent study by C. A. Pierce, *Conscience in the New Testament* (Chicago, 1955), which is probably the most comprehensive work available in English.

¹¹ The difficulty in the language of the phrase will probably always leave some questions unresolved. The grammatical structure of the phrase is confusing. It is often thought that there are three witnesses: (a) the Gentiles themselves (b) their consciences, and (c) their inward thoughts. A plausible approach is to view each clause as a further interpretation of the preceding one: [14b](#) expands on [14a](#), [15](#) explains [14](#), and so also [15b](#) is an amplification of [15a](#). If this is so then the 'conflicting thoughts' are very closely related to the conscience.

prerogative it is to turn it where it will. And both the works of truth and the works of error are written on man's heart.... And the spirit of truth testifies and accuses all things, and the sinner is smitten in his heart and cannot raise his face to the judge.¹²

Both in content and vocabulary the parallel with [Romans 2:15b](#) is quite impressive.¹³ 'The spirit of the understanding of the mind' seems to play a role in this text similar to that [p. 207](#) played by συνείδησις in [Romans 2; 15b](#).

A somewhat similar parallel appears in the *Manual of Discipline* 3:18–4:26. A detailed explanation is given of the spirit of truth and the spirit of perversity which contend for the mastery in man. Both these spirits 'were assigned him (ie. man) by God, to walk in them' (3:18). 'Dependent on these are the families of all mankind' (4:15). 'And he has put enmity between their divisions.... And passionate hostility pertains to all their practices, for they do not walk together' (4:17ff). 'In the present state of things the spirits of truth and of error are at war in a man's heart' (4:23). 'For God has set them in equal parts until the time of that which is decreed' (4:25).¹⁴

These passages seem to reinforce the interpretation of [Romans 2:15b](#) in terms of a struggle between a good and an evil force which reside within the heart of man.¹⁵ Paul seems to use the word συνείδησις very much in the same way as the Rabbinic literature makes use of 'the heart'.¹⁶ *Ha-yêtzet ha-tôb* (the good impulse) and *ha-yêtzet hâ-râ* (the evil impulse) are both lodged in the heart according to Jewish dogma.¹⁷ The heart has to decide which impulse to follow.¹⁸

There can be little doubt that some form of this tradition was familiar to Paul.¹⁹ It would, therefore, seem legitimate to understand [Romans 2:15b](#) as a description of the struggle in the heart of man between the impulse to do good and the impulse to do evil. Most commentators, while not necessarily using this line of thinking, conclude that Paul is describing the inner struggle of the soul of man.²⁰ The following paraphrase of [Romans 2:15](#) is representative of this interpretation:

The fact that Gentiles sometimes instinctively do what the Law requires is clear proof that these requirements are written on their hearts. Their conscience upholds this inner 'law'

¹² *Testament of Judah* 20.

¹³ Gärtner, p. 832, points out that in Greek the wording is remarkably similar to that of the Romans text.

¹⁴ Cf. T. H. Gaster, *The Scripture of the Dead Sea Sect* (London, 1957), p. 52ff. Gärtner arranges the verse in the order given here, p. 84.

¹⁵ While this would be a Western reader's most logical conclusion, it does not follow that this is the only or even the most likely interpretation—see section IV below.

¹⁶ Cf. Romans 1:21—Gärtner, p. 84, argues for this.

¹⁷ For a discussion and sources on this topic see W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London, 1949), Schoeps, p. 184, and Gärtner, p. 83.

¹⁸ Gärtner, p. 84, feels that Paul was definitely dependent on this tradition.

¹⁹ See W. D. Davies for a discussion of Paul's relationship to Rabbinic Judaism.

²⁰ The principal commentators on Romans take this view. It should be noted that this does not necessarily follow from the preceding point. That is, the fact that Paul may have been dependent on this tradition does not mean that our interpretation of the tradition is correct.

by condemning them when they break it (evil impulse prevails), and acquitting them when they occasionally keep it (good impulse prevails).²¹

Thus Paul has made his case that the Gentiles also have a standard by which they will be judged. It is because they *disobey* the law which p. 208 their conscience upholds that they are sinners.²²

II. THE OSIRIS MYTH

The cult of Osiris was one of the oldest and most influential religions in Ancient Egypt.²³ The teachings of this cult provide some of the earliest backgrounds for concepts of judgment and resurrection relating to the afterlife.²⁴

Osiris was an Egyptian king who was murdered by his brother Set. Through the intervention of his wife Isis and their son Horus, Osiris was brought back to life again (there are different versions of how this took place).²⁵ Instead of coming back to earth he became the 'King of the Dead', in which capacity he now controls the destiny of men in the afterlife. His resurrection is the model for all other resurrections of the dead. The Ancient Egyptian ritual of mummification and burial is a rehearsal of what happened to Osiris. The hope is that as Osiris was able to achieve eternal bliss, so will the dead man. To emphasize this identification the dead man was referred to by the use of 'Osiris' before his name.²⁶ In early Egyptian writings such as the *Pyramid Texts*, only kings and nobles had a hope of resurrection and could identify with Osiris. In later times there was a democratization of the Osiris myth so that its benefits became more generally applicable and available as can be seen in the *Coffin Texts*.²⁷

One of the most characteristic features of the Osiris myth is the depiction of the Judgement Scene. This scene occurs in the *Book of the Dead* which is an illustrated guidebook to the afterlife.²⁸ A copy of this 'book' was placed in the dead man's tomb to

²¹ 'Conscience upholds' = 'conscience witnesses to.' Since there is no object it is legitimate to take the law as the implied object. Barrett, p. 53, understands the phrase in this way.

²² This larger context must always be kept in mind as an attempt is made to interpret a specific phrase within it.

²³ It might even be said that this was one of the oldest and most influential religions in the Ancient World. Cf. the study of A. E. Budge, *Osiris: The Egyptian Religion of Resurrection* (London, 1911).

²⁴ Many claim that the Osiris myth is the basis for all other concepts of judgement and resurrection. See S. G. F. Brandon, *The Judgement of the Dead* (London, 1967); J. G. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris* (New York, 1907); Budge.

²⁵ Some of these accounts are difficult to reconcile with one another. The myth changes with time and the locality. Cf. H. Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (New York, 1948).

²⁶ This was first done only for kings but was later to become a general practice for the dead. It is interesting to speculate whether this has some parallel to Paul's teaching about identifying with Christ in his death and resurrection. As one studies the Osiris myth one is left with the distinct impression that New Testament theology is somehow related to it. Osiris is very much a Christ figure.

²⁷ H. Frankfort demonstrates how changes in the Egyptian state were paralleled by changes in Egyptian religion. Thus as the state became more democratized, so did the afterlife!

²⁸ Many copies and versions have been preserved. Chapters 30 and 125 of the *Book of the Dead* are of particular interest for this study, inasmuch as they deal with the judgement scene.

help him face the judgement. The following is a description of this scene as it is found in the *Papyrus of Ani*:²⁹

The scene, which is beautifully drawn p. 209 and coloured, is charged with dramatic tension. Ani and his wife, dressed in festal attire, are seen on the left, watching in attitudes of humility and apprehension, the transaction that is taking place in the middle of the scene. By the postures of the dead man and his wife the artist has eloquently suggested that, whatever may have been a person's status and achievement before death, when he enters the Hall of the Two Truths (*Maati*) for judgement, he can only abide in fear and trepidation the assessment that will then be made of his life. The impersonal nature and the ominous solemnity of this assessment is vividly conveyed by the great black balance that dominates the centre of the scene. From its beam are suspended the two scales: one contains the hieroglyphic sign of the *Ib* or heart; the other a feather, the symbol of *Maat*. The heart of Ani is being weighed against Truth (*Maat*). Kneeling close by, the jackal-headed mortuary god Anubis adjusts the plummet of the balance, to ensure absolute exactitude. To his right stands the ibis-headed Thoth, the god of wisdom and the divine scribe. Holding his scribe's palette and reedpen, he records the fateful verdict of the scales. Behind him crouches a fearsome hybrid monster, made up of the parts of a crocodile, a lion, and a hippopotamus. It is named Am-mut, the 'eater of the dead'; its function is obvious.³⁰

There are many other interesting details in the scene which are not immediately relevant to the present study.³¹ There are several hieroglyphic texts in this scene, however, which are very important. The text written before and above the figure of Ani, is that of Chapter 30 of the *Book of the Dead* in which the deceased implores his heart not to witness against him on this awful occasion. It is a prayer which was to be uttered by the deceased at the fateful moment of the weighing of his heart against *Maat*:

Heart of my mother, heart of my mother, my breast, the heart of my transformations! Rise not up as a witness against me, turn not against me before the tribunal. Act not as an enemy against me in the matter concerning the balance.... Cause not my name to smell evil in the nose of the tribunal. Speak no lie against me before the good gods. Let thy hearing be good.³²

There are several other texts which are basically Declarations of Innocence in which the deceased denies having committed sinful acts.³³ In others he declares (to the gods) the good deeds which he has done:

I did that of which men speak, that in which the gods rejoice ... I have given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothing to the naked, a boat to him that had none.... Save me, therefore, and protect me! Make no report against me in the presence of the Great God.³⁴ p. 210

²⁹ Ani was a scribe who held important ecclesiastical offices at Thebes and Abydos. The *Papyrus of Ani* dates from the beginning of the Nineteenth Dynasty (c. 1320 B.C.).

³⁰ Brandon, p. 28.

³¹ Cf. Brandon, p. 29ff.

³² *Papyrus of Ani*, II (quoted in Brandon, p. 37).

³³ Some of these are quite long and clearly demonstrate that the Egyptians had a very clear concept of right and wrong.

³⁴ J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton, 1955), p. 36a. This is remarkably similar to [Matt. 25:35](#). The Egyptian ideas of righteousness seem to be closely related to Jewish and Christian concepts.

Thus the Egyptians believed that they would be judged on the basis of the kind of life they had lived. If their life was free from evil *and* characterized by good works it was likely that they would be acquitted at the postmortem judgement. The heart, which was thought of as the seat of conscience ('the god which is in man'³⁵) was capable of acting as an independent witness against its owner at his trial after death. That is why there were prayers 'to cause that the heart of man does not oppose him in the next world'.³⁶ The prayer to the heart quoted above was often inscribed on a scarab-shaped amulet and laid on the place of the heart during the ritual of embalmment.³⁷

In summary, it can be said that the Egyptians came to think of judgement after death as a weighing of the heart, which represented a man's conscience, against truth, personified as *Maat*. A man's conscience could excuse or accuse him on the day of judgement. The basis of judgement was the quality of life of the deceased. There was an implied standard to which he had to measure up.³⁸

It now remains to see if this Ancient Egyptian concept of judgement and the afterlife sheds light on the interpretation of [Romans 2:15b](#).

III. AN INTERPRETATION OF ROMANS 2:15B BASED ON THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN JUDGEMENT SCENE

An attempt will now be made to interpret [Romans 2:15b](#) in the light of the Ancient Egyptian understanding of the role of the conscience on the day of judgement.

The role of conscience on the day of judgement as depicted in the *Book of the Dead* bears striking similarity to its role in [Romans 2:15b](#). The conscience is thought of as a witness with the possibility of either accusing or excusing its owner. This seems to be a much more straightforward parallel than the alternative proposals discussed above. This interpretation provides a plausible solution to the much debated question of the role of v. [16](#). Most translations of the text have a break between v. [15](#) and v. [16](#).³⁹ Commentators have debated at length the relation between these two verses.⁴⁰ Some have concluded that v. [16](#) follows logically from v. [13](#).⁴¹ If one understands v. [15](#) as referring to the role of conscience at a given time (ie., the day of judgement), rather than as a description of the continuous inner struggles of the soul, then there is a very natural and logical link with v. [16](#) which starts with, 'on the day when ... God judges...' The RSV would then be correct in placing no punctuation [p. 211](#) marks between v. [15](#) and v. [16](#): 'while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.'

³⁵ Brandon, p. 37.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³⁷ There is very little question as to the fact that the Ancient Egyptians feared that their heart would witness against them on the day of judgement. This provides a very interesting and illuminating parallel to [Romans 2:15b](#) as discussed below, section IV.

³⁸ Very much like the 'law' which the Gentile in [Romans 2:14](#) followed 'instinctively'.

³⁹ The writer is curious as to why the RSV and the NEB depart from the traditional punctuation and link verses 15 and 16 together.

⁴⁰ Cf. C. K. Barrett, M. J. Lagrange, and W. Sanday, *ad hoc.*

⁴¹ Cf. Barrett, p. 53.

It immediately becomes obvious that this interpretation is quite different from the one which is generally accepted.⁴² It makes the role of conscience objective rather than subjective. *It moves the whole scene from the continuing struggle between good and evil within the soul of man to the moment of accountability of a man before God on the day of judgement.*

The question which must immediately be raised is whether or not there is any justification for this kind of interpretation from the context. The first part of [Romans 2](#) is centred around the basis for judgement:

But by your *hard and impenitent heart* you are storing up wrath for yourself *on the day of wrath* when *God's righteous judgement* will be revealed. For he will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and *immortality*, he will give *eternal life*; but for those who are factious and *do not obey the truth*, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who *does evil*, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honour and peace for every one who *does good*, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality ([Rom. 2:5–11](#)).

Several things are clear from this context: (a) the focus is on what will happen at the day of judgement (b) the text is related to thinking concerning the afterlife (c) judgement is based on what a man *does*, and (d) the judgement will be completely just.

With this context in mind it becomes quite legitimate to interpret [Romans 2:15b](#) as referring to what will happen on the day of judgement, rather than what is happening within the soul of man.

The natural tendency to interpret ancient texts in a way that would make them relevant to contemporary man has the danger of reading into them concepts which may have been quite alien to the original writers. This may be true in the commonplace assumption that Paul was plagued by an introspective conscience. Krister Stendahl challenges this popular assumption as follows:

The Reformers' interpretation of Paul rests on an analogism when Pauline statements about Faith and Works, Law and Gospel, Jews and Gentiles are read in the framework of late medieval piety. The Law, the Torah, with its specific requirements of circumcision and food restrictions becomes a general principle of 'legalism' in religious matters. Where Paul was concerned about the possibility for Gentiles to be included in the messianic community, his statements are now read as answers to the [p. 212](#) quest for assurance about man's salvation out of a common human predicament.⁴³

Thus when Paul speaks about the Law being a custodian of the Jews until Christ came, the Western minds of the KJV translators added a different dimension to this thought by rendering it 'Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us into Christ' ([Gal. 3:24](#)). The Law is now thought of as the means by which *all* men come to Christ. The purpose of the law is to make man see his desperate need for a Saviour in the light of demands which he knows he cannot attain. Stendahl continues:

Paul's argument that the Gentiles must not, and should not come to Christ *via*, the Law ... has turned into a statement according to which all men must come to Christ with consciences properly convicted by the Law and its insatiable requirements for righteousness. So drastic is the reinterpretation once the original framework of 'Jews and

⁴² Sanday is typical in saying, 'St. Paul is describing an internal process ...' (p. 60) Hodge says that conscience is '... an inward monitor ...' *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, 1882), p. 86.

⁴³ Stendahl, 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West', *HThR* 56 (1963), 205.

Gentiles' is lost, and the Western problems of conscience becomes its unchallenged and self-evident substitute.⁴⁴

This may explain how commentators, without any evidence to the contrary, find it natural to interpret [Romans 2:15b](#) as referring to an inner struggle of the soul, even though the context is one of objective external judgement.

[Romans 2:14–16](#) could therefore be paraphrased as follows in the light of the Osiris myth:

The fact that Gentiles sometimes instinctively do what the law requires is clear proof that they have access to the demands of God even though this is not through the Law of Moses. Depending on the kind of life they lived their consciences will either defend them or accuse them on the day of judgement when, according to my Gospel, God will judge the things that men have tried to hide (but which were known to God and to their own consciences). Jesus Christ will be the agent of this judgement (he is Truth—the standard by which men will be judged!)

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

To recapitulate, [Romans 2:15b](#) has been understood by most commentators as referring to the role of conscience in the struggle between good and evil within the soul of man. This interpretation, although supported by some parallels in Jewish literature, scarcely suits the context of the text, which is one of final objective judgement rather than inner subjective conflict.

This study has attempted to present an alternative understanding of [Romans 2:15b](#) based on the role of conscience in the Judgement Scene of the Osiris myth. In that scene the 'heart' (equivalent to conscience) of the man being judged testifies either on behalf of or against him. It presents evidence from the life of the one being judged which [p. 213](#) determines whether he is to be condemned or acquitted. The Ancient Egyptian myth thus unfolds the possibility of understanding the role of conscience in [Romans 2:15b](#) as that of an objective witness on the clay of judgement rather than as an inner arbiter between conflicting thoughts.⁴⁵

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Ethical Responses to God the Creator

Chris Wright

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁴⁵ The present study has raised two questions which must remain for a later study: (a) Did Paul or any other New Testament writers have access to Ancient Egyptian thinking (regardless of the channels through which this was communicated)? If so, how can this dependency be determined? (b) Are there other texts in the New Testament which could be illuminated by parallels from Ancient Egyptian religion?