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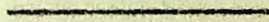
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NATURAL LAW AND THE NEW TESTAMENT



A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of New Testament Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology



by

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CHAPTER I

HISTORY AND PRESENT-DAY RELEVANCE OF CONCEPT OF NATURAL LAW

This paper will attempt to investigate elements of Natural Law which are generally alleged to appear in the New Testament. Thus a historical discussion of Natural Law and the indication of the importance of the topic for current theological discussion are in order.

Natural Law is the tenet which posits the existence of an objective order of ethical standards of right and wrong, rooted in the nature of the universe. Man can discover this objective standard and apply it to his individual needs. A theory of Natural Law is very often associated with the belief in natural theology or natural religion, i.e., that man on his own initiative can attain knowledge of God.

Throughout history the theory of Natural Law has taken on many different interpretations and has been put to many differing uses. The reason for this confusion in interpretation and use of Natural Law lies in the confusion in meaning of the words "nature" and "law" and in the ambiguity involved in combining these two. "Reason and the concept of nature are entangled in history and in the infinite variability of human desire; thus they reflect the changing sensitivities and insensitivities of man."¹ In fact,

¹James Luther Adams, "The Law of Nature: Some General Considerations," Journal of Religion, XXV (1945), 90.

"reason" can "rationalize" the existing order and make absolute good out of the relative good of the existing order. It can even sanction the evil that "good" men do. Natural Law may be used as a weapon of self-interest. "What natural law is at any particular time depends, then, upon who is using it and for what purpose."²

Thus it will be useful to present a brief overview of the development and use of Natural Law in human history, particularly in our Western tradition. We begin with the Greeks.³ The characteristic feature of the Greek νόμος concept is its foundation in religion; in the most ancient times νόμος is understood as a creation and revelation of Zeus Βασιλεύς. In the fifth century the authority of the νόμος was shaken through the Greeks' acquaintance with νόμοι of other kinds in the world and through the growing autonomous self-assertion of the Greeks as manifested, for example, in the Peloponnesian War. The Sophists began to teach that there was no objective divine law and hence that there were no gods. Over against them Socrates and Plato insisted that there were laws rooted in nature. According to Plato, the νόμος springs from a universally valid

² Ibid., 94

³ For the material on Greek Natural Law I am indebted to Otto Piper, "What is Natural Law?" Theology Today, II (January, 1946), 459-60, and Kleinknecht, "Nomos," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, herausgegeben von Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, n.d.), IV, 1016 ff.

principle, the *νοῦς*. Aristotle held that natural law principles can be learned by observing the very nature of social relations. It is, however, with the Stoics that the principle of Natural Law comes into its own. The Stoics no longer call political and social laws *νόμοι*. The true *νόμος* is to be found only in the cosmos; it is the universal reason which determines human moral action. In fact, the *νόμος* is equated with *θεός*. By virtue of the *νοῦς* or *λόγος* dwelling within him, man can recognize the *νόμος* and order his life according to it. Thus man comes to know himself and wins his freedom. Of course, the immanent, ontological character of this *νόμος* robs the divine of its transcendent nature.⁴ Roman jurisprudence adopted this Stoic view of Natural Law.

The theologians of the Eastern Church held that the Logos of the Stoic philosophers is the Son of God, who therefore hallows man's reason. Thus the Roman law of the Byzantine Empire, based on Stoic Natural Law, is also hallowed by the Son of God. This fact led to the close association of the Eastern Church with the State.⁵ In the Western Church Augustine held with St. Paul that the world has a definite order because God has made it as it is.

⁴Plutarch, *Ad Principem Ineruditum* 3:1: ὁ νόμος ὁ πάντων βασιλεὺς θανάτων τε καὶ ἐθανάτων, ὡς ἔφη Πίνδαρος, οὐκ ἐν βιβλίοις ἔξω γεγραμμένοις οὐδέ τισι ξύλοις, ἀλλ' ἐμψυχος ὢν ἐν αὐτῷ λόγος, αἰεὶ συνοικῶν καὶ παρ' ἐφυλάττω καὶ μὴ δέποτε τῆν ψυχὴν ἐὼν ἔρημον ἡγεμονίας.

⁵Piper, *op. cit.*, 462-3.

Nevertheless, his deeper understanding of sin caused him to see life outside of the Kingdom of God as the "very perversion of the true life."⁶ Yet the Western Church in time ceased to view itself as the goal of an eschatological process, as with Augustine, and came to regard itself as one sociological body among others. Aquinas' Aristotelian dichotomy between the natural and the supernatural is the basis for the belief that the believer and unbeliever alike live according to the Natural Law. God's revelation, available only in the Church, merely supplements the natural order. Since man's natural reason and will are weakened by sin, modern Thomists conclude that the Roman Church must control secular life in order to guide secular man's will and reason.⁷

In general, the Reformers believed in a God-given Natural Law. But they rejected the Thomistic dichotomy between the natural and the supernatural; for, they held, everything in this world is "natural," i.e., created by God. Since God is the only source of truth, the dichotomy between "reason" and "revelation" is also rejected.⁸ Luther's teaching concerning Natural Law has called forth a special

⁶Ibid., 464.

⁷Ibid., 464-5.

⁸Ibid., 466.

literature dealing with the question.⁹ Some interpreters make Luther a traditionalist in respect to Natural Law; others state that his treatment of Natural Law is "incidental and cursory".¹⁰ Troeltsch claimed that Luther united the Christian and the Natural Law in a conservative ethics of calling, family, and social relationships, "but this union is incomplete and ends in a patriarchal conception of natural law and glorification of state power on the one hand, and on the other an inner political and social indifference." This view has been vigorously combated by Karl Holl and the Swedish Lutheran theologians. According to their interpretation, Luther sees the Natural Law as God's demand of love.

The natural law is not conceived by Luther as a part, so to speak, of the inward, psychological furniture of human nature, but as something given in and with the 'theological conscience,' that is, the awareness of being confronted, with a mediated immediacy, by the living God Himself."¹¹

By means of the stations or orders of life, which Luther calls larvae Dei, God Himself confronts men concretely, gives them such "natural knowledge" of Himself as they have (which includes a consciousness of the Natural Law), and moves men

⁹For a list of these books see John T. McNeill, "Natural Law in the Thought of Luther," Church History, X (September, 1941), 216-7.

¹⁰Ibid., 217.

¹¹Philip S. Watson, Let God be God. An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949), pp. 112-3.

in these structures to help their neighbor.¹² Thus, in addition, these interpreters deny that Luther holds any doctrine of natural theology, if by this term one means the Thomistic and Aristotelian rationalistic deduction of God's existence from the physical universe. McNeill holds that Natural Law has no place in Luther's religious teaching concerning salvation, but that it is "determinative for Luther's political thinking."¹³ Thus for Luther the Christian finds himself in a dilemma, because he wants to transform the world by faith and love, but must also preserve mankind and uphold the orders of creation.¹⁴

Melanchton finds that Romans 1 and 2 recognizes Natural Law.¹⁵ This he says already in the Loci of 1521. Yet, because of the Fall, men do not agree to the principia practica as they do to the principia speculativa.¹⁶ Most of all the Reformers, Zwingli subjects Natural Law to the theology of faith, since he maintains that grace was operative also

¹²ibid., pp. 110-6.

¹³McNeill, op. cit., 227. See also the whole section comprising 220-7.

¹⁴Piper, op. cit., 466-9.

¹⁵John T. McNeill, "Natural Law in the Teaching of the Reformers," Journal of Religion, XXVI (1946), 172-5.

¹⁶See the discussion of Melanchton on this point in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Concordia Triglotta (Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, Mo., 1921), p. 120. Note the additions of the German to the Latin text.

among the heathen.¹⁷ Calvin, on the other hand, made a rather extensive use of Natural Law, which he also finds in Romans 1 and 2.¹⁸ Since the knowledge of Natural Law is obscured in the unbelievers, Calvin thought that a theocracy is necessary in which the believers, who fully know the law, will legislate for all.¹⁹

Natural theology provoked a great deal of discussion among the theologians of the period of Orthodoxy. In this area the Orthodox theologians went back beyond Luther to the Aristotelian theology of the Middle Ages, for they derived not only the method, but also the content and the meaning of the natural knowledge of God from Aristotelian philosophy.²⁰ Owing to the inseparable connection which exists between natural theology and Natural Law, we must conclude that Orthodoxy's use of Natural Law was also molded by Greek patterns of thought.²¹

It is well known that the Enlightenment laid great

¹⁷ McNeill, "Natural Law in the Teaching of the Reformers," 176.

¹⁸ Ibid., 180-1. Like Melancthon, Calvin equates *καρσις* of Rom. 2:15 with "intellect."

¹⁹ Piper, op. cit., 466-9.

²⁰ Jaroslav Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard: A Study in the History of Theology (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, c.1950), p. 68.

²¹ Cf. Joh. G. Baier, Compendium Theologiae Positivae (St. Louis: Luth. Concordia-Verlag, 1879), I, 15, where Daunhauer is quoted to the effect that the lex naturae is immutabilis et aeterna.

stress on both natural theology and Natural Law; this fact is in keeping with the deistic philosophy of the movement. The absolute Natural Law was set forth as rationally self-evident.²² It was on this absolute principle of Natural Law, in conjunction with the deism and the moral optimism of the Enlightenment, that the American republic was founded.²³

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have seen the complete abandonment of the concept of Natural Law by professional jurists. The Industrial Revolution and the many other political and social ferments of the nineteenth century led scholars to reexamine the case for Natural Law. And so the positivistic German school of Historical Law has demonstrated to its own satisfaction the relativity of all laws.²⁴ This positivistic theory is now dominant in the law schools and legal theory of the United States; this is evident from the expressions of the late Chief Justice Holmes and the present Chief Justice Vinson. In its extreme form this modern denial of Natural Law sanctioned the Nazi doctrine of Recht, which altogether excludes the

²²Walter M. Horton, "Natural Law and International Order," Christendom, IX (1944), 16-8.

²³Cf. the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States.

²⁴Horton, op. cit., 18-20.

possibility of international law.²⁵ The United Nations as such rejects objective international law and recognizes only the power of political sovereignty.²⁶

The present-day Ecumenical movement is wrestling with the problem of international disorder. This discussion inevitably leads the various churches to consider the question of Natural Law, the Biblical basis for Natural Law, and the responsibility of the Church to proclaim the Natural Law to the modern distraught world. In fact, this evaluation of the Biblical and theological basis for Natural Law is one of the most crucial areas of debate in the current ecumenical discussion. In general, three areas of opinion may be discerned in this debate. A great many American and British theologians hold that there are elements, equivalents, or adumbrations of Natural Law in the Bible. For example, Walter M. Horton, while admitting that the Law of Nature strictly as such is not present in the Bible, nevertheless believes that Christian ethics has a double Biblical basis: *ἀγάπη* and "the ideal of universal justice (Mishpat) implied in the Law and the Prophets, summarized by Jesus in the Golden Rule, and defined by St. Paul in Romans 2:14,15."²⁷ He further believes that the Natural Law aspect of Christian ethics can be rationally united with the Natural Law

²⁵Ibid..

²⁶Piper, op. cit., 469-71.

²⁷Op. cit., 20.

concepts of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics and with the corresponding concepts in modern India and China. In company with these non-Christian moral principles, Christian ethics should defend the inalienable rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."²⁸ G. H. Dodd, the leading British New Testament scholar, holds that since the God of creation is identical with the God of redemption, the "new law of Christ" is identical with the "law of creation." This law of creation is to be equated with the Mosaic Covenant of Genesis 9. Thus it is the Church's duty not only to establish a specific discipline or catechesis for its members but also "to pronounce in Christ's name moral judgments upon human conduct beyond the limits of its own membership."²⁹

The second position is that of Karl Barth, who passionately rejects all notions of natural theology and Natural Law. Out of his Christocentric dialectical theology Barth has developed a Christian ethics growing out from the center of the Biblical message. In this ethic Gospel and Law are closely connected. Christ is Lord also

²⁸ Cf. also Piper, op. cit., 469-71.

²⁹ G. H. Dodd, Gospel and Law: The Relation of Faith and Ethics in Early Christianity (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), p. 81. Also see Dodd's essay, "The Relevance of the Bible," in Biblical Authority for Today: A World Council of Churches Symposium on 'The Biblical Authority for the Churches' Social and Political Message Today, edited by Alan Richardson and Wolfgang Schweitzer (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), pp. 157-62.

over the world and the state. Thus the Christian Church proclaims the Lordship of Jesus to the world when it wants to address it on ethical issues. This practical application has been worked out in Barth's much-discussed recent pamphlet, Christengemeinde und Bürgergemeinde.³⁰

The third position is represented by a number of Lutherans, of whom Anders Nygren may be taken to be the chief spokesman. This tendency also firmly rejects any traditional concepts of natural theology and Natural Law as deistic in character.³¹ It holds fast to the distinction between the Old and the New Aeon, which Barth's position seems to obliterate, and stresses that the Christian Gospel cannot control politics. These men speak of the double role of the Christian in society, although they recognize that this position when carried to the extreme can lead to the dangerous "compartmentalization" between Church and human life which was evident in some Lutherans in Germany during the war. Finally, the new impulses set in motion by Nygren have not yet been developed systematically.³²

In addition, we might note that the Neo-Thomist movement in the Roman Catholic Church is also bringing to the

³⁰ Biblical Authority for Today, pp. 151-2.

³¹ Cf. Regin Prenter's essay in ibid., pp. 108-11.

³² Ibid., pp. 153-4.

fore Natural Law considerations.³³

With this historical and contemporary milieu in mind, we can proceed to investigate the Natural Law passages in the New Testament.

³³ The use to which these Neo-Thomistic considerations are being put I have indicated above on p. 4.

CHAPTER II

EXAMINATION OF NEW TESTAMENT NATURAL LAW PASSAGES

We have already pointed to the close relationship between natural theology and Natural Law. Where one is present, the other is inevitably found. Since this is true, we shall investigate, in addition to the one Natural Law passage par excellence, Romans 2:14-16, three other famous "natural theology" passages: Acts 14:15-17, Acts 17:22-31, and Romans 1:19-20.

The first-mentioned passage is the impassioned speech of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra to the throng who had mistaken the two missionaries for Mercury and Jupiter after Paul had healed a crippled man. This speech is particularly significant, since it is the first formal approach of Christian missionaries to non-Jewish people recorded in the New Testament. A brief outline of the address may be given as follows: 1) exhortation not to worship Paul and Barnabas, for they are only men, v. 15; 2) the good news that the Lystrans should turn from their idol worship to serve the living God, the Creator, v. 15b; 3) up to the present time the living God has allowed all the nations to walk in their idolatry, although He had given testimony to Himself in natural phenomena, vv. 16-17.

The fact that the word *εὐαγγελιζόμενοι* is used in v. 15 is significant. It is the only time in the New

Testament that this verb is followed by an infinitive. This missionary term points to the new message which it is the purpose of Paul and Barnabas to proclaim. For the phrase "men of like nature as you" compare Acts 10:25. In I Thessalonians 1:9 there is an almost exact parallel to v. 15b: *καὶ πῶς ἐπεστρέψατε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδῶλων δουλεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ*. The anarthrous *θεὸς ζῶν* makes this phrase almost equivalent to a proper name.¹ In fact, *θεὸς ζῶν* was originally used metonymically for "Jahweh."² The description of the Creator is a quotation from Exodus 20:11. The obvious parallel to v. 16 is of course Acts 17:30. That these parallel verses do not contradict what Paul says in Romans 1:18 ff. we shall point out later.³ In v. 17 a number of literary words and figures are used: the litotes *οὐ ἁμαρτωροί* and the words *ἀγαθουργῶν* and *καρποφόρους*. Here each of the three participles is subordinated to the one preceding it.⁴ God

¹Otto Bauernfeind, Die Apostelgeschichte, in Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1939), V, 183.

²F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, The Beginnings of Christianity: Part I: The Acts of the Apostles (London: Macmillan and Co., 1933), IV, 166.

³See p. 27. Cf. 4 Ezra 3:8: "Et ambulavit unaquaeque gens in voluntate sua," quoted by H. J. Holtzmann, Apostelgeschichte, in Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament (Dritte, gänzlich umgearbeitete Auflage; Tübingen und Leipzig: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1901), I-2, 94.

⁴Ibid.

creates joy by sending rain; this sending of rain in turn appears as a species of the genus ἀγαθουργεῖν.

The comparison of this speech with the longer parallel in Acts 17 suggests that Paul and Barnabas meant to continue with a message about the present and the future, pointing to Christ (cf. ταῖς παρῴχθιμαῖς γενεαῖς, and also the connection in I Thess. 1:9-10, σουλεύει θεῶ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ καὶ ἀκαμένει τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐκ οὐρανῶν).

The fact that the apostles here proclaim a "revelation of God in creation" is quite obvious; yet this is not the same as the traditional notion of "natural theology." This notion holds that men find the true God in creation by the analogia entis, by inferring the Creator's existence and power from the phenomena of creation. But Acts 14:16 does not state that men infer the Creator from the creature, but that God witnesses to Himself by giving rain and fruitful seasons. Second, this speech does not at all say that men received the witness of God in creation. It rather says the very opposite. Men had turned to μάταια. The fact that the apostles preached to them the good news that they should turn (ἐπιστρέφειν, 275) from the μάταια to the living God is the clearest possible indication that a rift exists between Creator and creature. In fact, all the statements of the text--that the Gentiles worshiped various deities (Jupiter and Mercury), that God had up to that time permitted them to walk in their own ways, that He nevertheless had not left Himself without witness, and that they were now to turn to

the living God--irrefutably proclaim that the revelation in creation had been spurned. Then why did the apostles even mention the fact that God had not left Himself without witness? To show them what the μαρτυρία was which they had not accepted and as a basis for telling them now who the true God is.

The longer parallel to this brief address is St. Paul's famous speech at the Areopagus in Athens. In his discussions in the market and his conversations with the Epicureans and Stoics he had aroused curiosity by his preaching of Jesus and the resurrection. Their inordinate desire for new and strange religious information caused them to take him to the Areopagus⁵ and to give a full exposition of his views.

Although the authenticity of this speech has often been attacked, even Lake states that even though he himself cannot reach a final decision as to the authorship, it commends itself as a genuinely historical narrative because of its correct local details and its description of the Athenians which agrees very well with the testimony of other writers of the time.⁶

The address can be outlined as follows: 1) the Anknüpfungspunkt (δέσσει δαιμονοεστέρους) and the text (Ἄγνώστῳ

⁵Lake, *op. cit.*, 212-3, concludes that this was not the hill northwest of the Acropolis known as the Areopagus but the council known as the Areopagus, which was the chief police commission.

⁶Ibid., 208.

θεῶ), vv. 22-23; 2) the wrongness and folly of idolatry: for God is the Creator of all things, 24-25, and has made men to seek Him, 26-27; since men are of the γένος of God, He cannot be like a product of human artifice, vv. 28-29; 3) the call to repentance and faith in Jesus and the announcement of the judgment and the resurrection, vv. 30-32.⁷

The following evidences of the literary quality of this address, in addition to the use of quotations from Greek poets, show Paul's ability to adapt himself to a Gentile audience: the use of the neuters δ' . . . τοῦτο, v. 23, and τὸ θεῶν, v. 29; the use of γέ or infrequent compound particles of γέ, v. 27; the paranomasia in ζῶντες καὶ προΐντες, v. 25; frequent alliteration; accumulation of forms or derivatives with πρὸς; repetition of ὑπέρχων (vv. 24, 27, 29); the idiomatic phrase πίστιν παρέχω.⁸

The comparative δεισιδαιμονεστέρος of v. 22 is relative and equivalent to a superlative. It appears that in itself the word is neutral in tone color and suggests neither approbation nor depreciation. Its use must be determined in each particular context. Here "superstitious"⁹ is probably too strong, but it is probably not meant as complimentary. At best the word connotes "religiosity,"

⁷We shall not concern ourselves with all of the numerous textual variants in this speech, especially those of the Western text.

⁸Lake, op. cit., 209.

⁹A. V.

not "religion."¹⁰ The altar inscription which Paul quotes has caused a great deal of investigation and discussion. It is true that no investigation has yielded discovery of an actual Athenian altar with this inscription.¹¹ Of course, the fact that we have no record from antiquity of such an inscription is no proof that this exact inscription did not exist. ὁ οὐκ ἄγνοοῦντες εὐσεβεῖτε is to be translated, "It is what you do not know but do worship that . . ."¹² V. 24 is a partial quotation of Isaiah 42:5. V. 25, οὐδὲ ὑπὸ χειρὸς ἀνθρώπων κτλ. finds a parallel in the Epicurean doctrine of the "autarchy" of God.¹³ A noteworthy textual variant is ἐξ ἐνὸς λίμματος in v. 26.¹⁴ But the best

¹⁰ Lake, op. cit., 214, although the interpreters differ.

¹¹ For the most complete discussion of the matter see ibid., "Note XIX: The Unknown God," V, 240-6, which discusses the heathen analogies to this inscription and ancient Christian exegesis which touches on it. Lake concludes that the writer of Acts knew the altars which Diogenes Laertius described as τῷ προσήκοντι θεῷ, which words may have been used on individual altars meaning, "To the unknown God who is concerned in the matter." Ἄγνώστῳ θεῷ would be a "loose but not very inaccurate paraphrase," 242. For a concise summary of the evidence see F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles (London: The Tyndale Press, 1951), pp. 335-6.

¹² Lake, op. cit., IV, 215.

¹³ Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, 2:650, "Divom natura . . . nihil indige nostri." Cited by Holtzmann, op. cit., 111.

¹⁴ This reading is found in Codex Bezae (the Western text), many unimportant uncials, the Byzantine tradition, and the Latin translation of Irenaeus. On the other side, Codices Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and Alexandrinus, minuscule 13, other minuscules, and the Vulgate read simply ἐξ ἐνός .

attested text reads, "He made of one person," namely, Adam. In opposition to the Athenians' theory that the Greeks were *αὐτόχθονες*, Paul stresses the unity of the human race.¹⁵

Yet his real purpose in mentioning this fact is to show that just as all men have one origin, so they all have one goal.¹⁶

Between the one origin and the one goal each people has its own time and space limitations.¹⁷ The limitations are imposed on them to make it possible for them to seek God.¹⁸

This is a possibility because God is *οὐ μακρὰν ἀπὸ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου ἡμῶν*.¹⁹ The *ἐν αὐτῷ* of v. 28 is equivalent to "in the power of," "by."²⁰ The words *ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν*, are probably the work of Epimenides, a

¹⁵ Holtzmann, op. cit., 111-4.

¹⁶ Hermann Wolfgang Beyer, Die Apostelgeschichte, in Das Neue Testament Deutsch (6. Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951), V, 107.

¹⁷ Perhaps the *προσ τεταγμένους καιρούς* of v. 26 refers to the Danielic view that each nation has its own appointed period. Cf. Dan. 8:10 and Lk. 21:24. Lake, op. cit., 216.

¹⁸ Beyer, op. cit. *ἐδρεῖν*, v. 27, is a loose exegetical infinitive, as is probably *κατοικεῖν* of v. 26.

¹⁹ Here the idea of immanence is added to that of divine transcendence, v. 24. Holtzmann, op. cit.

²⁰ Lake, op. cit., 217. "Das 'in ihm' von V. 28, das man auch hier mit 'durch ihn' übersetzen könnte, hat keinen tiefer mystischen Sinn als eben den echten des Wissens um die völlige Umschlossenheit alles Seins von Gott," Beyer, op. cit., 108.

half-mythical figure in Greek history.²¹ This statement Paul substantiates by a direct quotation from the Stoic poet Aratus' poem on astronomy, *Phaenomena* (c. 300 B. C.), line 5, in order to show the special relationship in which men stand to God.²² The argument in v. 29 is that since men are the γένος of God, τὸ θεῖον cannot be like gold or silver or sculpture, which are the product of human skill and belong to a different γένος.²³

The transition to the third section of the speech is formed by Paul's declaration that God has overlooked the times of their ἀγνοίας (cf. Acts 14:16 and Romans 3:25, διὰ τῆς πάρεσσι τῶν πεποιημένων ἀμαρτημάτων ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ. God now wishes to forgive the past, and that means also the great and glorious past of the Greeks.²⁴ Now is the time of decision: either for the living God or against Him. This God will act ἐν ἀρεπῇ ᾧ ἕπειτα. The judgment by the Man whom God has set apart for that purpose is "a judgment of the world in righteousness" (Psalms 96:13 and 98:9).

²¹ See Lake, *op. cit.*, V, "Note XX: 'Your own Poets,'" V, 246-51, for the rather complicated discussion of source. For a good, concise summary of the evidence, see Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

²² The τῶν of v. 28 may indicate either that the author intended to refer to both the preceding (Epimenides) and the following (Aratus) quotations, or that he knew that the words in the latter had been used also by Cleanthes in his "Hymn to Zeus," line 4. Lake, *op. cit.*, IV, 218.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Beyer, *op. cit.*, 108.

The fact that this judgment ἐν δικαιοσύνη will be effected by Christ, who has been raised from the dead, v. 31b, now calls for faith and creates the possibility of repentance and new life.²⁵

Our conclusions as to the possibility of a "natural theology" in this passage are similar to those which we drew from 14:15-17, for this passage is only a fuller development of the earlier speech. The fact that God made all men that they might seek Him and find Him and that He is nearer to each one of us than our own inner consciousness is not counterbalanced by Paul with the conclusion that therefore all men perceive Him in the creation. On the contrary, though God has given men the possibility to seek and find Him, man has done precisely the opposite. He has turned his worship to images and idols devised by his own artifice. The very fact, again, that Paul preaches *μετάνοια* presupposed that men are turned away from God. The very fact that the Man whom God ordained is risen from the dead presupposes the fact that He came to turn men in their *ἀπνοία* back to God.

Before we turn to the examination of the specific "natural theology" and Natural Law passages in Romans, we ought to devote some attention to Paul's teaching about *νόμος*. Ever since Origen the opinion has been current in the Church that Paul meant to indicate the Mosaic Law by his

²⁵Ibid., 109.

use of the article with *νόμος* and that the anarthrous Pauline usage of *νόμος* posits a general Moral Law, that is, that moral section of the Mosaic Law--the Ten Commandments--which is known by all peoples outside of Israel: in other words, the Natural Law.²⁶

In order to understand Paul's usage of *νόμος* we must study the meaning of the Hebrew word Torah (תּוֹרָה) and the usage of *νόμος* in the Septuagint, which translated the former with the latter. The original idea of the word Torah is that of a divine authority, whether that be in legal, cultic, political, or other forms. From this original root the meaning branched out in two directions: 1) Torah came to be the expression for the cultic instruction of the priests (Hag. 2:11, Mal. 2:6ff), and 2) came to mean "instruction" in general, especially in the book of Proverbs. In Deuteronomy the meaning tends to become more restricted to the idea of a written law, but nevertheless the note of "instruction" remains. In the later Psalms and in Chronicles the entire Pentateuch is meant by Torah.²⁷ In rabbinical Judaism Torah means chiefly all the Mosaic Law as law. Torah also is used for the Decalogue, and also means all of

²⁶ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, in the International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.), p. 58.

²⁷ Walter Gutbrod, "Nomos," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, herausgegeben von Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, n.d.), IV, 1037-9.

the Pentateuch. In most cases it is difficult to distinguish between Torah as "law" and as "Pentateuch." Materially, Torah becomes "law" by addressing itself to the human will. The extra-Pentateuchal books of the Old Testament were regarded as valid and authoritative only in so far as they explain the Torah (Pentateuch). God Himself is viewed as bound to the Torah. Since the purpose of the Torah is to show man that way of life by which he can gain God's approval, and since man can have life only by doing the Torah, the study of casuistry becomes important.²⁸ At the time of the translation of the Septuagint, the Hebrew word Torah had acquired this meaning, so that the word *νόμος* in the Septuagint always means Torah in the sense that the rabbis gave it.²⁹

This, then, is the basic meaning of *νόμος* for Paul: Torah as the post-exilic rabbis interpreted it. Furthermore, a number of examples show that for Paul there was no distinction between *νόμος* and *ὁ νόμος*. In Rom. 5:13,²⁰ anarthrous *νόμος* must refer to the Mosaic law, which entered the world at a particular time. In Gal. 3:23,²⁴ first *νόμος* is used and then *ὁ νόμος*, with no distinction in meaning. The

²⁸ Ibid., 1046-51.

²⁹ Ibid., 1039-40.

same phenomenon occurs in Rom. 2:23.³⁰ The lack of distinction between the two is perhaps most readily apparent in Rom. 2:12-14, where those who are ἐν νόμῳ are obviously Jews, who have the Mosaic Law, whereas τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα are the ἔθνη. Nevertheless, those who do not have νόμος do by nature τὰ τοῦ νόμου.³¹ Paul had good precedent for the anarthrous use of νόμος in the Septuagint. In most places Torah referring to the Mosaic law is translated ὁ νόμος. But νόμος occurs in many places.³²

³⁰ Eduard Grafe, Die Paulinische Lehre vom Gesetz nach den vier Hauptbriefen (Zweite verbesserte Auflage; Freiburg i. B. und Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsbuchhandlung von J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1893), pp. 4-5.

³¹ "Zu beachten ist dieser Tatbestand [i. e., that anarthrous νόμος does not mean "a" law whereas ὁ νόμος would be "the" law] etwa bei der Auslegung von R 2, 12 ff. ὅσοι ἐν νόμῳ ἡμεῶν sind nicht solche, die unter Vorhandensein irgend eines beliebigen Gesetzes haben, sondern sind, im Gegensatz zu denen, die ἀνόμως ἡμεῶν (v. 12a), Leute, die das eine göttliche Gesetz kannten u. doch sündigten. Die Heiden R 2: 14: νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες, kennen das bestimmte göttliche Gesetz nicht. Für den Gesichtskreis des Pls gab es wohl kein Volk, das nicht irgend ein Gesetz, wenn nicht gar ein rel. sanktioniertes Gesetz hatte. Wenn diese Heiden von Natur, dh also ohne das offenbarte Gesetz zu kennen, Taten vollbringen, die von diesem geboten sind, dann sind sie damit ἐαυτοῖς νόμος: sich selbst nicht "ein" Gesetz, sondern 'das' Gesetz. Würde hier νόμος ohne Artk eine Verallgemeinerung des Gesetzesbegriffs in sich schliessen, so fielen der Gedankengang auseinander," Gutbrod, op. cit., 1062.

³² For passages in which νόμος is used both with and without the article cf. Josh. 8:31, 32, 34; Ps. 118; 2 Chr. 34:14-15; Dan. 9:11. Jesus Sirach uses νόμος in referring to the Mosaic Law without the article: 19:18, 21:11, 31:8, 32:1, 35:15, 23; 36:2; 45:17. See especially 36:3 for both with and without article. Grafe, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

Paul never uses *vómos* in the plural, as did Hellenistic Judaism, since not every moral or social-political regimen of a people has for him the character of the *vómos*.³³ Thus Paul by *vómos* and *ó vómos* means the Law of Moses. "Das mosaische Gesetz ist das göttliche Gesetz schlechthin, also das allgemeine."³⁴ Of course, in Rom. 2:20 ff., 7:7, and 13:8 ff., *vómos* is equivalent to the Decalogue, but Paul makes no fundamental differentiation between the Decalogue and the remaining Old Testament law material.³⁵ However, Paul's usage of *vómos* differs from that of the rabbis in this, that for Paul *vómos* is a living will which demands the actions of man, and so one "does" the Law (Rom. 2:25, cf. Gal. 5:3 and 6:13). Above all, Paul sees in the Law the living, demanding will of God; the Law is not an abstract principle between man and God, to which God is bound. Thus the Law speaks (Rom. 3:19); it works (Rom. 4:15); it has power (Rom. 7:1). One could even say that *vómos* is equivalent to God as He reveals Himself in the Law.³⁶

³³ In Rom. 5:13, 14 Paul says that *vómos* did not exist between the time of Adam and Moses. This shows that the only *vómos* Paul knew was the Mosaic code.

³⁴ Grafe, op. cit., p. 4.

³⁵ Gutbrod, op. cit., p. 1061. It is also true that at times *vómos* means for Paul the Pentateuch: Gal. 4:21, 1 Cor. 14:34, Rom. 3:21. In 1 Cor. 14:21 *vómos* is even used for the entire Old Testament. In Rom. 3:27, 7:21, 23, 25; 8:2, 9:31 *vómos* has the meaning of "norm". Grafe, op. cit., pp. 7-11.

³⁶ Gutbrod, op. cit., 1061-3.

Finally, Paul does not distinguish in his usage of νόμος between an ethical core and the ceremonial husks. For Paul the whole Mosaic law was given in all its parts by God (Gal. 2:12-16, 3:10, 5:3).³⁷

We now turn to the consideration of the two great "natural theology" and Natural Law passages in Romans. We begin with Romans 1:18 ff. In vv. 16 and 17 Paul had announced the theme of the Epistle--that in the Gospel the righteousness from God is revealed, ἀποκαλύπτεται, from faith for faith. But Paul can speak of the revelation of the righteousness of God only when he at the same time proclaims that the wrath of God, ὀργὴ Θεοῦ, is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men. The righteousness of God is revealed, for (γάρ) the wrath of God is revealed. We can summarize the thought of 1:18-32 thus:

1. God's wrath is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and wickedness of men, v. 18.
2. This action of God's is justified, because men have the truth but suppress it by their wickedness, v. 18b.
3. This truth, τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, God Himself has revealed to them, v. 19.
4. This revelatory process is mediated by the ποιήματα, the things which God has made. Through these ποιήματα men can grasp (νοούμενα) God's eternal power and deity, v. 20a,b.
5. God has unmistakably revealed Himself in the creation for this express purpose, that men might be without excuse, v. 20c.
6. That men are without excuse is shown by the fact that although they knew God (from His Uroffenbarung), they did not glorify and thank Him as God (the pre-supposition being that to know God is to acknowledge Him as sovereign Lord). On the contrary, although they had God's light, they deliberately darkened their minds

³⁷ Grafe, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

and made themselves foolish, vv. 21, 22.

7. They showed this by giving the glory they owe to immortal God to images representing creatures, v. 23.

8. Therefore God's wrath delivers them over to perversions, vv. 24-27, and to all manner of personal and social wickedness, vv. 28-31.

The fact that men deliberately turn away from God is reinforced in v. 28 (καθὼς οὐκ ἐδοκίμασαν τὸν θεὸν ἔχειν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει), and that they are ἀναπολόγητοι is sealed in v. 32.

Thus when one sees the full sweep of the passage and does not simply concentrate on vv. 19-20 stripped of their context, one can realize the fact that Paul here teaches no "natural theology" in the sense in which we have already defined it. Paul does not deny that God is known by men. However, men do not acquire this knowledge by themselves, by their own powers of speculation. It is God Himself who reveals His ἀίδιος δόξαμις καὶ θεϊότης to men. But men have deliberately, knowingly perverted this revelation of God and worshiped the creature rather than the Creator, v. 25. It is true that God passed over this human perversion of His revelation in the time before Christ.³⁸ But now that Christ has come and God's righteousness has been revealed, His

³⁸ Cf. Acts 14:16 and 17:30 and the exposition above on pp. 14, 26. Also Rom. 3:25, εἰς ἐνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τῆς πάρεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ.

wrath lashes out over godless men.³⁹

Of course, it is true that vv. 19-20 bear a good deal of resemblance to parallels from Hellenistic and Jewish-Hellenistic philosophico-religious writings, particularly to the proofs for the existence of God (from design or the analogia entis) in these writings. Many commentators therefore assert that Paul here borrows from the Aristotelian, Hellenistic, and Jewish-Hellenistic sources and recognizes the validity of Greek "natural theology." Sanday and Headlam state that v. 20 is the "argument from the nature of the created world to the character of its Author."⁴⁰ One of the frequently cited parallels in the Apocrypha is Wisdom of

Solomon 13:1,5: Μάταιοι μὲν γὰρ πάντες ἄνθρωποι φύσει, οἷς παρῆν τὸν ὄντα οὔτε τοῖς ἔργοις προσέχοντες ἐπέγρῳσαν τὸν τεχνίτην... ἐκ γὰρ μεγέθους καὶ καλλονῆς κτισμάτων ἀναλόγως ὁ γενεσιουργὸς αὐτῶν θεωρεῖται.

Sanday and Headlam⁴¹ also quote a sentence of Pseudo-Aristotle, a Stoic of the first century after Christ, which is seen in nearly every commentary on the subject: ἄθεός ἐστις

³⁹ Cf. Günther Bornkamm, "Die Offenbarung des Zornes Gottes," Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, XXXIV (1935), 259-62, especially 258-62, where it is conclusively shown that the revelation of the ὄραθ' θεοῦ is not a timeless, ongoing action but an eschatological event that projects itself into this, the Endzeit, now that Christ has come.

⁴⁰ Op. cit., p. 43.

⁴¹ Ibid.

ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῶν ἔργων θεωρεῖται [ὁ θεός] De Mundo, 6. G. H. Dodd⁴² comments: "There is no other passage where Paul so explicitly recognizes 'natural religion' as a fundamental trait of human nature." ". . . the created universe offers sufficient evidence of its 'divine Original.'" Paul Althaus, too affirms that Paul's picture of heathenism was influenced not only by the old Testament⁴³ but also by Hellenistic Judaism, which in turn had absorbed elements of Stoicism.⁴⁴ Hans Lietzmann also lists a number of parallels from Plato, Philo, Cicero, etc.⁴⁵

In his previously mentioned essay Günther Bornkamm delineates that chain of thought in the Hellenistic and Jewish-Hellenistic philosophical writers which seems to resemble that of Paul's argumentation. There are four steps. First, the structure of the world causes man to ask about its creator and by his *ratio* to deduce the creator's

⁴² The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, in The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n.d.), p. 24.

⁴³ For v. 23 see Ps. 106:20; for v. 21 see Jer. 2:5.

⁴⁴ Der Brief an die Römer, in Das Neue Testament Deutsch (6. verbesserte Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), VI, 17.

⁴⁵ Die vier Hauptbriefe des Apostels Paulus, in Handbuch zum Neuen Testament (Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1910), III-1, 8. The latest edition of the Handbuch, which doubtless contains a fuller collection of parallels, was not available to me. As a parallel to of v. 20 Lietzmann lists the following from Plato's Republic (VI, 507:6): τὰ μὲν δὲ ὁρᾶσθαι φάμεν, νοεῖσθαι δ' οὐ, τὰς δ' οὐ ἰδέεσ νοεῖσθαι μὲν, ὁρᾶσθαι δ' οὐ.

power from the glory of his work,⁴⁶ This step corresponds with Rom. 1:20. Second, this knowledge of the creator does not mean only the theoretical acknowledgment of the existence of a first cause, but also carries with it a knowledge of the νόμος --corresponding with Rom. 1:21, γινώσκοντες τὸν θεόν and 1:32, τὰ δίκαιώματα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιγινώσκοντες.⁴⁷ Third, therefore an obedient life and the worship of God belong to the true knowledge of the creator (Rom. 1:21, οὐχ ὡς θεόν ἐδόξ-

⁴⁶ See the parallels quoted on p. 28 above. Cf. also Philo, De Specialibus Legibus I, 35: "For none of the works of human art is self-made, and the highest art and knowledge is shown in this universe, so that surely it has been wrought by one of excellent knowledge and absolute perfection. In this way we have gained the conception of the existence of God." These and the following translations of Philo are those of the Loeb Classical Library.

⁴⁷ Philo, De Praemiis et Poenis, 41-43: "Others again who have had the strength through knowledge to envisage the Maker and Ruler of all have in the common phrase advanced from down to up. Entering the world as into a well-ordered city . . . struck with admiration and astonishment, they arrived at a conception according with what they beheld, that surely all these beauties and this transcendent order has not come into being automatically but by the handiwork of an architect and world maker; also that there must be a providence, for it is a law of nature that a maker should take care of what has been made. . . These no doubt are truly admirable persons and superior to the other classes. They have as I said advanced from down to up by a sort of ladder and by reason and reflection happily inferred the Creator from His works." Also De Opificio Mundi, 3: "His [Moses'] exordium, as I have said, is one that excites our admiration in the highest degree. It consists of an account of the creation of the world, implying that the world is in harmony with the Law, and the Law with the world, and that the man who observes the Law is constituted thereby a loyal citizen of this world, regulating his doings by the purpose and will of Nature, in accordance with which the entire world itself also is administered."

λοαν ἢ εὐχαρίστησαν). Fourth, the refusal of the true knowledge of God leads to idol worship and a dissolute life (Rom. 1:24 ff.).⁴⁸

Of course, everyone admits that the ultimate presuppositions of the Hellenistic theology are at variance with those of Paul. The god at whom one arrived by traveling *κάτωθεν ἄνω* is the life principle of the world, the *νόμος κενός*, the living power which is praised with wonderment and awe approaching ecstasy. Furthermore, the Stoic view has it that when man comes to know God and the Law, he comes to the knowledge of himself, which means that man merges himself with the harmony of the "All." For Philo, the Stoic *ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ἔστιν* has its *τέλος* in communion with God, in the *ὁμολογία τῶν κατὰ βίον πράξεως*. Consequently, idol worship and immorality are the result of a lack of "understanding" and "knowing" God. Thus in the Jewish-Hellenistic view the aim of philosophico-religious teaching is to lead man from ignorance to the true knowledge of him-

⁴⁸ Philo, *De Officio Mundi*, 172: "He that has begun by learning these things with his understanding rather than with his hearing, and has stamped on his soul impressions of truth so marvelous and priceless, both that God is and is from eternity and that He that really is is One, and that He has made the world and has made it one world, unique as Himself is unique, and that He ever exercises forethought for His creation will lead a life of bliss and blessedness, because he has a character moulded by the truths that piety and holiness enforce."

self and of the divine cosmos.⁴⁹

From this explication of the ultimate presuppositions of that chain of facts in Jewish-Hellenistic literature which seems to be similar to St. Paul's chain of argumentation in Romans we can now point out sharply the basic cleavages between the Pauline and the Philonic-Wisdom pattern of thought. First, it is the purpose of the Hellenistic-Jewish theology to break down the ἀγνοία of men and to awaken in men the knowledge of God which they already have in principle. This is done by means of the argument from design and the analogia entis, which is one of the decisive points in the philosophico-religious literature of Hellenistic Judaism. But for Paul the knowledge of God is not a possibility open to man, to choose for or decide against as he pleases, but it is the inexorable reality under which the whole world stands. "Nicht die ἀγνοία θεῶν ist das Zeichen der gottlosen Welt, sondern das Wissen um Gott."⁵⁰ Since the knowledge of God is a demanding reality for all men, Paul does not at all concern himself with the question of how this knowledge comes into being. He does not find the reason for the revelation of the Creator in this, that the cosmos is the εἰκὼν of God Himself, but in that God has so willed it:

⁴⁹ This paragraph is a summary of Bornkamm, op. cit., 245-8. Wisdom 13 also contains statements on the foolishness of idol worship and the judgment of God which is visited on the heathen in the very midst of their idol worship.

⁵⁰ Bornkamm, op. cit., 249.

ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἐφανερώσεν, v. 19. The fact that God's invisible qualities are clearly perceived in the things that are made does not point to a speculative deduction on man's part but only the recognition by man of God's power and deity which are mediated through the ποιήματα.⁵¹

Second, it is significant that Wisdom 13:6 ff. hesitates between exonerating and blaming the heathen for going astray in their search for God. At any rate, their error is one of intellect and judgment, which was to begin with on the right track. But Paul does not see the reason for men's godlessness in that they erred in knowledge but in this, that men fell away from God although they knew Him, γρόντες τὸν θεόν. Thus Paul frees the arguments and concepts which he has taken from contemporary philosophy and theology from the presuppositions of Greek thought and applies them in a manner that is completely unique. This is clear also from the fact that, in addition to Stoic words and concepts, 1:18 ff. is filled with specifically Old Testament concepts.⁵²

⁵¹ The word νοούμενα does not connote "the eyes of understanding" in the Platonic sense. Paul does not speak of Platonic Ideas but of events and phenomena which God's power causes. Adolf Schlatter, Gottes Gerechtigkeit: Ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1935), p. 58. See also the comments of Anders Nygren, Commentary on Romans, translated by Carl G. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1949), pp. 102-9.

⁵² ὁπρὶν θεοῦ, v. 18; λούρετος καρδία (not νοῦς), v. 21; ὁ κτίσας, v. 25 (not τεχνίτης, Wisdom 13:1 or γεραιογενής, 13:5); it was previously mentioned, p. 29, that certain Old Testament passages sounded through 1:21, 23, 25. Bornkamm, op. cit., 250-1.

The statement of Bornkamm is significant:

Nicht um die Gotteserkenntnis als Frage und erschliessbare Möglichkeit geht es ihm, sondern um die Frage, ob diese Erkenntnis bewährt sei (1:28), ob die Wahrheit Gottes Wahrheit geblieben und ihr Macht gelassen sei (1:18, 25). So geht es ihm Röm. 1:18 ff also gar nicht um die Enthüllung des göttlichen Seins, sondern um die Aufdeckung der menschlichen Existenz. Diese ist im Grunde verkehrt, weil der Mensch Gott nicht gedankt und ihn nicht gepriesen hat; darum ist ihr Herz der Eitelkeit der Gedanken und der Finsternis des unverständigen Herzens verfallen (1:21).⁵³

A third difference lies in the positions taken by Philo and Paul as to the place of thanksgiving and praise to God in the religious life. Philo holds that praise of God is the final stage of religiosity to which man can attain. The ἐξομολογητικός τρόπος is completed in ecstasy. But εὐχαριστήριον and δοξάζειν for Paul are the practical implementation by man of his knowledge of God.⁵⁴

A fourth difference lies in the attitudes of Paul and the Jewish-Hellenistic writers toward heathen idolatry. The Hellenistic criticism calls heathen idolatry foolish because it is unreasonable. But Paul sees the error of idolatry and polytheism in this, that they are the result of man's rebellion against God. Because man has rebelled against God, he makes the creature Creator and the Creator creature. From this also comes the anarchy of their moral life. Although men changed the truth of God into a lie, nevertheless the truth of God remains standing over against the world. It is

⁵³ Ibid., 251.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 252.

clear, then, that Paul does not speak of the truth of God in order to lead men to strive for it, for it is the very truth of God which delivers men over into their own self-chosen perversion. Paul's preachment of the revelation of God in creation is the assurance that man is completely lost.⁵⁵

We have already had occasion in our investigation of Paul's use of *νόμος* to touch upon Romans 2:14-16.⁵⁶ In the first chapter Paul had lashed out at the godlessness and idolatry of the heathen Gentiles. In chapter two he directs himself to an imagined Jewish adversary who prides himself on his inclusion within the chosen people and his knowledge of the Torah. In the first eleven verses Paul shows that such pride is out of place, since God will render to everyone according to his works (v. 6); for there is no partiality before God, vv. 10-11. Vv. 12-16 make this pronouncement more explicit and concrete. What counts in the final judgment is whether people--Jews or Greeks--have "done" the Law. Only the doers of the Law will be pronounced righteous. Mere instruction in and knowledge of the Torah means nothing

⁵⁵ Ibid., 252-6.

⁵⁶ Cf. above, p. 24.

(vv. 12-14).⁵⁷

Vv. 14 and 15 show why Paul can include the Gentiles under the category of *πονηταὶ νόμου*. "When the Gentiles who have not the Law do by nature what the Law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the Law."⁵⁸ *ἕθεν* is anarthrous because Paul is not making a categorical statement about all Gentiles.⁵⁹ *ὅταν* means "whenever." Thus Paul is positing a limited fulfillment of the Law by the Gentiles. We have already seen⁶⁰ that the first three usages of *νόμος* in this passage do not refer to some general "moral law" but to the Mosais Torah. But a great many expositors see Paul adopting the Stoic idea of Natural Law in this passage because of the words *φύσει* and *ἑαυτοῖς εἶναι νόμος* (also *συρεῖδης* in v. 15). So, for example, Lietzmann, Althaus, Sanday and Headlam, and Dodd. Althaus' remark is typical: "Es gibt dort [im Heidentum]

⁵⁷C. H. Dodd, *op. cit.*, notes that some trends in popular Judaism held that it was sufficient to know the Law. "The rabbis discussed whether the 'hearing' or the 'doing' of the Law were more important. One rabbi is quoted as saying, 'If thou wilt hear' [Exod. 15:26] is the most universal rule, in which the whole Law is contained' (Rabbi Eleasar of Modi'im, quoted by Strack-Billerbeck on this passage). But orthodox Pharisaism unhesitatingly gave Paul's answer to the question: 'Not learning is the Leader into eternal life, but doing is the Leader' (rabbinic commentary on Lev. 18:4, quoted by Strack-Billerbeck)." Cf. also Wisdom 15:1-2 and 12:12.

⁵⁸Revised Standard Version.

⁵⁹Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁶⁰Cf. above, p. 24.

einen natürlichen Trieb zum Guten, der auf ein 'Naturgesetz' zurückweist."⁶¹ In addition to the passages dealing with Natural Law which we have already cited, it might be useful to add the following:

The cultivated and free-minded man will so behave as being a law to himself. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1128.⁶²

Chrysippus says: "οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν εὐρεῖν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἄλλην ἀρχὴν οὐδ' ἄλλην γέρον ἢ τὴν ἐκ τοῦ Διὸς καὶ τὴν ἐκ τῆς κοίτης φύσεως. ἐντεῦθεν γὰρ δεῖ, πᾶν τὸ τοι οὗτον τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔχειν, εἰ μέλλομεν τι εὐρεῖν περὶ ἀγαθῶν καὶ κακῶν."

Plutarch, De Stoicorum Repugnantia.⁶³

Lex est ratio summa insita in natura, quae iubet ea quae facienda sunt, prohibetque contraria. Cicero, De Legibus, I, 6:18.⁶⁴

However, in my opinion, it is going entirely too far to squeeze from 2:14 a developed "natural theology" or Natural Law. In the first place, the entire pantheistic world view of the Stoics, according to which λόγος, φύσις, νόμος, νοῦς, and God blend into one another imperceptibly, is foreign to Paul's Hebrew concept of God, man, and the world. In the second place, Paul could well have consciously or unconsciously borrowed the Stoic word φύσει and yet filled it with his own thought, so that φύσει can mean simply that Gentiles do what the Torah requires by virtue of what they find in

⁶¹ Op. cit., p. 21.

⁶² Cited by Dodd, op. cit., p. 36. He in turn quotes it from Wettstein.

⁶³ Cited by Lietzmann, op. cit., p. 14.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

themselves.⁶⁵ In the third place, Paul's statement that the Gentiles who do what the Law requires are *ἐαυτοῖς νόμος* is a paradoxical statement, since he at the same time maintains that they do not have the Law. I interpret this fourth *νόμος* in v: 14 to mean this: "Although the Gentiles, who do what the Law requires do not have the Law, nevertheless, as far as they are concerned, they are the Law for themselves." That is, when they do what the Law requires, they are the Law.⁶⁶

The interpretation of verse 16 poses a difficult problem, for it is not clear with which preceding verse this

⁶⁵ For this interpretation of *φύσει* see Schlatter, *op. cit.*, p. 90. The following remarks are also pertinent: "Die Überlegung, auf welche Weise dieser Heide dazu kommt, Gottes Willen zu erfüllen, liegt hier ferne. Durch das *φύσει* V. 14, soll einfach festgenagelt werden, dass die Erfüllung nicht auf dem Weg des geoffenbarten Mosaischen Gesetzes, sondern auf irgend einem andern Weg geschieht. Aber gerade dieser andere Weg ist nicht in eine Systematik hineinzupressen, weder in eine Systematik der 'natürlichen' noch einer 'antinatürlichen' Theologie," Christian Maurer, Die Gesetzeslehre des Paulus nach ihrem Ursprung und in ihrer Entfaltung dargestellt (Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag A. G. Zollikon, 1941), pp. 38-9.

⁶⁶ Schlatter, *op. cit.*, p. 90. "Er [der Heide] ist auch nicht für andere oder gar für alle das Gesetz, sondern nur für sich. Für sich selbst aber ist er es wirklich, da er sich mit dem göttlichen Willen so einigt, dass er ihm gehorcht." Cf. also Maurer, *op. cit.*, p. 39, and Nygren, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-4: "When he [the heathen] acts in harmony with the law, his solidarity with the law is fully certified. It could not be said better or more forcefully than Paul does: He is a law unto himself. That is not in the least to say that he has the law. Paul specifically says he does not have it, and that so insistently that he does so twice in verse 14 alone. Nor is Paul speaking of a law written in the heart; for then the heathen would indeed have the law, and that in a more intimate way than the Jew has it."

description of the final judgment by Christ is to be taken. Many expositors connect v. 12, οἱ ποιηταὶ νόμου, directly with v. 16, ἐν ἡ ἡμέρᾳ κτλ. . This solution, of course, leaves vv. 14 and 15 dangling in the air. It seems difficult to connect v. 15 with v. 16, since 15 appears to refer to actions going on at the present time (ἐρδεύονται, συμπυκνωσης, etc.). Yet I believe the best solution lies in taking them together. The Gentiles will do these things--these things will come to light--on the day of judgment through Christ Jesus. The οἷτινες of v. 15 is a "relative of quality" denoting the specific antecedent (i.e., those Gentiles who do what is required by the Law) and giving a causal tone to v. 15. The Gentiles are the Law to themselves since they show forth the work of the Law written on their hearts . . . on that Day.⁶⁷ It is to be carefully noted that Paul does not say that the Law is written on their hearts; he rather says that the work of the Law is written. This ἔργον does not mean the "effect of the Law" or the "trace of the Law," but the "concrete, specific work demanded by the Law in a particular situation."⁶⁸ Again it is to be remembered that the entire point of departure in this context is that the doing of the Law by the heathen is contrast-

⁶⁷Cf. Sanday and Headlam, op. cit., p. 46.

⁶⁸Cf. Schlatter, op. cit., p. 90. "What is written in them says: 'Do this; work.'"

ed with the knowledge of the Law by the Jew.⁶⁹ This phrase is convincing proof that Paul did not have in mind the Stoic Natural Law. Since for Paul and the other writers of the Bible God is the living, ever-active God, the *γραπτόν* does not refer to some timeless principle which is inscribed "by nature" or "by birth" on the being of man. Rather, it is God Himself who has written the *ἔργον τοῦ νόμου* on man's heart. Thus, the Gentile does not draw on some abstract moral principles when confronted by the necessity of an ethical choice, but God Himself has written on his heart what he should do in that particular situation. It should also be noted that the *ἔργον τοῦ νόμου* is *γραπτόν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις*, not on the *νοῦς* or the *ἐπιστήμη*. In fact, it is not surprising that it is the *καρδία* in which God's will is witnessed to the heathen, for in Biblical usage the heart is the inmost part of man and the point from which springs his action.⁷⁰ *καρδία* and "man" cannot be separated. If the *ἔργον* is written on the *καρδία*, this means that man as a whole, from inside out, is called upon to do God's will.

The genitive absolute of v. 15b,c describes in detail what happens when that which is written on the hearts of the Gentiles becomes manifest. According to one interpretation, the *συμμετρουούσης αὐτῶν τῆς συνειδήσεως* means that the

⁶⁹ Nygren, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

⁷⁰ For this and the following sentences I am indebted to Walter Gutbrod, *Die Paulinische Anthropologie* (Stuttgart-Berlin: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1934), p. 73.

conscience of the Gentiles bears witness to and substantiates the work of the Law written in the heart.⁷¹ Those who find Natural Law in this passage believe that the conscience bears witness to and therefore proves the existence of the Natural Law in the heart. However, in this verse the *συρείδῃσις* is pictured as a witness which is separated from the self and which passes judgment on the actions of the self. *συρείδῃσις* is "co-knowledge," "the knowledge or reflective judgment which a man has by the side of or in conjunction with the original consciousness of the act."⁷² Thus the conscience is not the source of moral obligation, as in modern thought. The words of Romans 9:1b show that this description of *συρείδῃσις* is correct: *συμμετερούσης μοι τῆς συρείδῆσεως μου ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ*, where the conscience is portrayed as standing over against the ego of Paul.⁷³

Although many interpreters believe that the clause *μεταξὺ . . . ἀπολογουμένων* refers to the conflicting thoughts within an individual person, it would seem difficult for the conflicting thoughts of one conscience to act "between one another," *μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων*, as Schlatter remarks.⁷⁴ The following sentence would therefore seem to

⁷¹ E. S., Althaus, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁷² Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 60, give an excellent discussion of the Biblical usage of *συρείδῃσις*.

⁷³ Cf. Schlatter, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-6.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

reproduce Paul's thought more closely: on the day of judgment the Gentiles will give voice to their thoughts by accusing or excusing one another. The meaning of verse 15 then is simply this: on the last day, in the judgment, the Gentiles will show that what the Law requires has been written on their hearts when their conscience stands over against their own ego and passes judgment on what they have done, and when the Gentiles accuse or else exonerate one another.

Thus the Stoic concept of Natural Law and natural theology is not to be found in Romans 1 and 2. This is not to deny with Karl Barth any revelation of God at all outside Jesus Christ. For these chapters assert emphatically that God is ever-living and active and confronts men with His truth and His will at all times. However, these passages in Romans 1 and 2 are integral steps in the unified structure of this first great section of Romans, 1:18--3:20. Both Jews and Gentiles are under the judgment of God because they have made of His revelation an intellectualistic deduction from the nature of the universe and have not understood it obediently as His word directed personally to them. The Gentiles have done this by exchanging the glory of God for that of the creature: the Jews, by making themselves the proud possessors of the Law.⁷⁵ Thus the purpose of 1:18--3:20 is to show that it is the revelation of God in creation

⁷⁵Bornkamm, op. cit., 258.

and men's awareness of τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου κραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις which hold man down under the wrath of God, so that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world be held accountable to God (3:19).⁷⁶

It would be beyond the scope of this paper to evaluate in detail the bearing which this investigation has upon the views concerning Natural Law enumerated at the end of the first chapter. But the following brief judgments could be made, however tentatively. The New Testament passages which we investigated do not connect God's revelation in the creation with the Noachian covenant. In fact, the New Testament does not even speak of a "law of creation." For Jesus and St. Paul νόμος is the Mosaic code contained in the Jewish sacred writings. However, the living God does confront men in concrete situations with the demand that they do His will. But this does not mean that the New Testament enjoins the Church to proclaim God's will as Natural Law to society. The New Testament view is that men do not lack "knowledge" of God's will but the inner relationship with God which is necessary to put this will into effect. Thus we find the New Testament writers proclaiming νόμος so that men might "know" (Rom. 3:20, 7:7) sin in the most existential way and simultaneously proclaiming the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ

⁷⁶ Other attempts to discover Natural Law in the Bible have been made. Some of these are suggested in the title of an essay by Amos N. Wilder, "Equivalents of Natural Law in the Teaching of Jesus," Journal of Religion, XXVI (1946), 125-35.

through faith in Christ.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ A prospectus of an important work dealing with the subject of this paper has just been called to my attention: Max Lackmann, Vom Geheimnis der Schöpfung (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerke). The book was published either in 1951 or 1952. According to the prospectus, the author offers a critical examination of the history of the interpretation of the four New Testament passages treated in this paper. The period of history examined extends from the second century to the beginning of Orthodoxy. The author concludes, according to the prospectus, that these New Testament passages point unmistakably to the self-revelation of God in creation. Nevertheless, he maintains, this Biblical teaching will have to be freed from certain traditional theological formulations; and new formulations will have to be devised. This book, it appears, will be indispensable for all future work dealing with the interpretation of these New Testament passages, especially in their significance for systematic theology.

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