

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis

Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary

Bachelor of Divinity

Concordia Seminary Scholarship

6-1-1952

For Christ Is the End of the Law for Righteousness to Everyone That Believes Romans 10:4

Howard Raymond Hilsabeck

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_hilsabeckh@csl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/bdiv>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hilsabeck, Howard Raymond, "For Christ Is the End of the Law for Righteousness to Everyone That Believes Romans 10:4" (1952). *Bachelor of Divinity*. 895.

<https://scholar.csl.edu/bdiv/895>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Bachelor of Divinity by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

"FOR CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS
TO EVERYONE THAT BELIEVES"

ROMANS 10:4



A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity



by

Howard Raymond Hilsabeck

April 1969

Approved by: *Frederick W. Danhe*
Adviser

Frederick W. Danhe
Reader

3-7-1996
X

BV
4070
C69
B3
1969
C.2

175390

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. <u>TELOS</u>	3
III. <u>NOMOS</u> - Usage in Scripture as Traced by W. Gutbrod . . .	6
IV. THE IMMEDIATE AND WIDER CONTEXT OF ROMANS 10:1	16
V. VARIOUS INTERPRETERS OF LAW AND GOSPEL	21
VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	38
BIBLIOGRAPHY	43

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A pastor once advised, "Don't go overboard in theology!" This was good advice, especially for an entering seminary theological student. But it is hard to follow.

The little Greek phrase, *τέλος νόμος Χριστός*, found in Romans 10:4, is the case in point. Translated, "Christ is the end of the law," this simple, little phrase is profound theology though Paul wrote only three words. But, of course, there are more than three words in Romans 10:4--and many more in the context of the passage--which leads us into our problem.

A few articles in various periodicals and journals are entitled in various languages with the epigrammatic phrase--CHRIST THE END OF THE LAW! For example, one finds "Finis legis Christus" as the title of an article dealing with Romans 10:4.¹ And again, "Christus, des Gesetzes telos."² In The Expositor, Alfred E. Garvie, doing studies in Pauline theology, heads them: "The End of the Law."³ These are the key words, the very opening words of Romans 10:4-- *τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστός*.

But while they are the key words, so that a present-day theological student noted that the Jewish reader was doubtless as startled with them as a Christian would be today to see a bare altar with the inscription

¹Erwin E. Schneider, "'Finis legis Christus,' Rom. 10,4," Theologische Zeitschrift Basel, XX (1964), 110-22.

²Felix Fluckiger, "Christus, des Gesetzes telos," Theologische Zeitschrift Basel, XI (1955), 153-57.

³Alfred E. Garvie, "Studies in the Pauline Theology: The End of the Law," The Expositor, VIII (1909), 33-48.

"GOD IS DEAD," they are not the only words of the verse. The entire verse reads: *τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστός εἰς δικαιοσύνην* "For Christ is the end of the law FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS") *Ποῦτι τῷ Πιστεύοντι* ("to everyone that BELIEVES").

Thus Christ did not end the law--period! In spite of the legalism in His and Paul's day and in spite of the prevailing idea of seeking righteousness by means of the law among the Jews, the apostle is not flatly declaring that Christ ended the law. It is the care of the writer to make this clear. It is also the intention of the writer to make clear what "law" in Romans 10:4 and in what sense Christ ended that law. Our investigation will deal in depth with the words *τέλος* and *νόμος*, bringing in *δικαιοσύνη* and *πίστις* as they shed light on our key phrase, "CHRIST THE END OF THE LAW." We will deal with the context of Romans 10:4; the Pauline corpus; other passages of New and Old Testament; the opinions of other interpreters. Finally, there will be a concluding statement.

The phrase, "GOD IS DEAD," takes on significance when we add, "God is dead for the rich man," or "God is dead as far as the unbeliever is concerned." So the words, "Christ is the end of the law," take on their true significance in the light of the righteousness of those who believe in Jesus.*

*Romans 10:10 uses *πιστεύεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην*. "[For in the heart man] BELIEVES FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS . . ." supporting the view that righteousness and faith are vital to our understanding the end of the law.

CHAPTER II

TELOS

We will start with the Greek word, ¹τελος, asking how Christ might be the END of the law. This Greek word poses a problem. For there are at least two alternative meanings (and others as we shall see in a moment) which present the exegete with a choice in this verse. They are Christ the TERMINUS of the law or Christ the GOAL or FULFILLMENT of the law. In Romans 3: 31, after declaring that the righteousness of God has been declared apart from the law (3:21) and through faith (3:22), Paul goes on to say that this does not destroy the law ("God forbid!") but establishes it. This would seem to rule out TERMINUS and call for GOAL as interpretation. In Romans 6:14, Paul states that we are not under law but under grace; he then goes on to talk about the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:2). Likewise he writes to the Galatians about fulfilling the law of Christ (6:2) and to the Corinthians about being under the law to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21). This would seem to indicate TERMINUS, one law ending that another might begin.

In 2 Corinthians 3, there is a contrast between the two covenants, Old and New, where the word ¹τελος comes into play (3:13). Here again there is a strong sense of TERMINUS, one covenant being abrogated for another. If we may reach outside the Pauline corpus for a moment, we recall the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.

We might ask, "If Christ has fulfilled the law, has it then terminated? Is this what Paul means in Romans 10:4?"

An exploration of the word $\tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ in various New Testament passages reveals the following usage: Luke 1:33, "And he shall reign . . . and of his kingdom there shall be no END." 1 Peter 4:7, "But the END of all things is at hand." 2 Corinthians 1:13, "For we write . . . and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the END." In these passages $\tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ is used in the sense of TERMINUS. And there are others: Jesus loved His disciples unto the END (John 13:1); Jesus told His disciples they would be hated for His sake but he that endured to the END would be saved (Matthew 10:22; Matthew 24:6, 13 are also about enduring to the END).

In other passages we detect a different kind of meaning in $\tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$. Luke 22:37, "For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, and He was reckoned among the transgressors; for the things concerning Me have an END." 1 Timothy 1:5, "Now the END of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned." 1 Peter 1:9, "Receiving the END of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." In these passages $\tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ has the force of goal, fulfillment. The things written about Jesus, the commandment, faith have a goal or fulfillment toward which they run.

In two passages, one from Romans and another from 1 Peter, it would appear that $\tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ would bear the translation "result." Romans 6:21-22,

What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the END of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the END everlasting life.

1 Peter 4:17, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the END be of them that obey

not the gospel of God?" In other words, if we follow the flesh and obey not the Gospel the results (τέλος) would be disastrous!

Through most of the New Testament passages with τέλος, however, there runs the sense of TERMINUS. Robinson's Greek-English lexicon lists the bulk of passages with τέλος under this sense of the word. In some places τέλος is used adverbially in the New Testament (1 Peter 3:8; Luke 12:5, for example) and here, too, the meaning of TERMINUS comes through.

And still it is difficult to declare TERMINUS the meaning of this Greek word in Romans 10:4. In Revelations 1:8; 21:6; 22:13, Christ is referred to as τέλος. John says that Jesus is Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the END (τέλος). It is language that bespeaks everything being summed up in Christ. Why could not Paul have had this in mind when he wrote Romans 10:4?

In his book, The Mystery of Israel,⁴ H. L. Ellison translates the last phrase of 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 (εἰς τέλος), "But the Wrath has come upon them for ever (FOR GOOD AND ALL: εἰς τέλος)." Arndt and Gingrich⁵ gives this as a possibility for the translation of the εἰς τέλος phrase. If this is correct, then what Paul is saying is that FULLY, COMPLETELY God's wrath has come upon those who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and persecuted the apostles. Then why could Paul not be saying that is fully and completely summed up in Christ in Romans 10:4?

⁴H. L. Ellison, The Mystery of Israel (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1966), pp. 14 and 20.

⁵William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 819.

CHAPTER III

NOMOS

The Use of Nomos As Traced by Gutbrod

W. Gutbrod, contributor to the Gerhard Kittel "Word Book," traces in scholarly fashion the usage of *νόμος* in the Greek-Hellenistic world; down through the Old Testament (books of the law, prophets, post-exilic times); and finally the use of the word in the Gospels and epistles of the New Testament. He notes again and again the connection between the covenant people of God (the fact that God elected Israel to be His people) and the giving of the law. For example, in his discussion of *νόμος* in Moses and in the prophets, he says:

Yahweh has chosen Israel as His people, and Israel has acknowledged Yahweh as its God. This fundamental OT principle is the direct basis of these laws. They express the claim of Yahweh to dominion over the whole life of his people which belongs to Him in virtue of His election.⁶

There is no promise of reward in the laws since God has already chosen Israel by covenant: "For this reason there is reference to punishment for violation but not to any special reward for fulfillment."⁷ God has established His covenant of grace. The law prohibits what would destroy the relationship Yahweh has made (compare Exodus 23:21-22; 32:10,19; 33:3,13,15).

Gutbrod concludes that all valid law is linked with the revelation of God at Sinai. In explaining the Deuteronomic understanding of the law

⁶W. Gutbrod, " *νόμος*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated and edited by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1967), IV, 1036.

⁷Ibid., IV, 1037.

he says:

Proclamation of the law is preaching . . . exhortation which seeks to encourage cheerful fulfillment in gratitude for God's action . . . (it is) not a code but confrontation with the living God. So the tendency is toward inwardness, the demand for a close relation with Yahweh, not just external legality.⁸

The law is not a casuistic code of regulations but gives a general direction in which God's people are to go, being repeatedly summed up in the law of love (Deuteronomy 6:5; 7:9; 10:12). Deuteronomy shows, too, God's blessing is promised for the observance of the law: "This blessing consists in the full and unhampered enjoyment of what the people is given by its God in its land, just as the curse for despising the Law consists in withdrawal of this gift."⁹ If blessing for keeping the law is to be distinguished from reward for fulfilling it, one must keep a sharp eye!

Gutbrod finds the deepest insight into the nature of the law in Jeremiah (31:33) where the new covenant is prophesied. Jeremiah, he contends, finds the weakness in the Deuteronomic attempt to understand the OT covenant and the law. It is sin which breaks the relationship between God and His people and does not allow them restoration by any law:

Only the act of God which creates the whole man anew by putting the Law in his heart, only a new covenant of God, can guarantee the time of salvation. Thus Jeremiah points to something which is outside OT revelation but is fulfilled in the NT.¹⁰

It must be pointed out here that sin was understood only too well in Deuteronomy as breaking the covenant of God's grace (compare Deuteronomy 31:25-27).

⁸Ibid., IV, 1011.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., IV, 1011-12.

Tracing the law through the post-exilic period, Gutbrod sees a new development in the understanding of it. "After the return its decisive concern was to do His will. Israel had to obey God's Law to live. The Exile had made this plain."¹¹ The law takes on an increasingly independent position and significance. Worship according to the law becomes overwhelmingly important, even a fulfillment of the law. The meaning of Torah as revelation and instruction pass over into *voyns* as keeping and doing. The starting point of God's covenant election of grace fades. The Pharisees arise as a group composed of men determined to adhere to the law and the law alone in all circumstances. Increasingly, the righteous man is the man who is conversant with the Torah; reward for keeping the Torah will be attained hereafter. The reward of resurrection is assigned for faithful observance of the law (2 Macc. 7:9).

Gutbrod sees the law coming to have a full mediatorial position between God and man.¹² But it is just this position that leads to hopelessness and despair. For while the law gives life to him who does it, sin prevents it--when a man recognizes and takes his sins seriously. This mediatorial position of the law decisively changes, annuls, the basic starting-point of the law, namely, that God has revealed Himself graciously to Israel as God; graciously redeemed Israel from Egypt; and thus Israel is bound to obey. So important has the law become that even God Himself is bound to obey: "The first three hours of the day God sits and occupies Himself with the Torah."¹³ While Gutbrod does not want to press this admittedly poetic expression too far, yet he finds it typical of the

¹¹Ibid., IV, 1013.

¹²Ibid., IV, 1050.

¹³Ibid., IV, 1057.

all-dominant position of the Torah after the exile.

Even the Messiah will not bring a new Torah. He will Himself study and keep the Torah, teach the reasons for it, bring defaulters back into subjection to it, and give the Gentiles at least one part of the Law. He receives the promises applicable to Him because He occupies Himself with the Torah, Midr. Ps. 2:9.¹⁴

Gutbrod sees distinctions made within Israel on the basis of individual knowledge of the law. Thus, the scribes come to occupy an important position in the Israelite community. But it is the law as mediator which is Gutbrod's most telling point: "The aim of the Torah is to show man what he should do and not do in order that, obedient to the Torah, he may have God's approval, righteousness, life, and a share in the future world of God."¹⁵ He is most convincing to me on this point, especially as proceeds into the New Testament.

In the synoptic Gospels, Gutbrod sees Christ deposing the law from its position of mediation. "What determines man's relation to God is no longer the Law and man's relation to it. This decisive position is now occupied by the Word of Jesus, indeed, by Jesus Himself."¹⁶ He cites numerous passages in the synoptics to back this, for example, Matthew 10: 32, where confession or denial of Jesus; loving Jesus more than father, mother, son, daughter; taking up His cross; losing one's life for Him decides the eternal destiny of man. He considers Mark 2 (see verses 18-28) with the new wine in new bottles and the incident of Jesus and His disciples in the grain fields on the Sabbath Day which leads to His assertion, "Therefore the Son

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., IV, 1058.

¹⁶Ibid., IV, 1060.

of man is Lord also of the sabbath." He finds further demonstrations that the law no longer plays the role of mediator when Jesus blesses the children (Mark 10:13), in the beatitudes (Matthew 5:3), and the saying of Jesus in Matthew 11:28 ("Come unto Me."). His interpretation: Jesus pronounces rest (*ἀνάπαυσις*) for those who have found no rest under the burden of the law. Dietrich Bonhoeffer holds a similar position and comes to a conclusion we have already noted in Gutbrod: "the law is not itself God, nor is God the law. It was the error of Israel to put the law in God's place, to make the law their God and their God a law."¹⁷ As noted in the previous paragraph, Gutbrod is most persuasive at this juncture of his look at the law in Israel.

And yet Gutbrod sees that though the law loses its mediatorial position for Jesus, whom Paul calls the one mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5), Jesus also affirms the law. Rightly understood, it stands: "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." (Luke 16:16-17). He quotes Jesus as not coming to destroy the law (Matthew 5:17); Jesus rejecting confession of Himself when combined with *ἀνομία* (Matthew 7:23); Jesus stating that He is free from the law and yet keeps it (Matthew 17:24).

Jesus firmly negates the Law in so far as it stands as a mediator between God and man. He firmly negates the righteousness of the Law. The Law is forced out of its key position by the person of Jesus Himself . . . however, Jesus also affirms the Law rightly understood.

¹⁷Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship (New York: MacMillan Company, 1961), p. 111.

For obviously this deposition of the Law from its position of mediation is not meant to be a general repudiation of the Law.¹⁸

Gutbrod sees the questioner in Mark 12:34, who asked about the first commandment of all, as not far from the kingdom of God because he recognized the law's requirement of love but still expected to fulfill it by his own achievement. He sees Jesus' criticism of the law a confirmation and establishment of it (compare Paul, end of Romans 3). He sees Jesus restoring the law to its original Old Testament sense.

And what is that sense? Certainly it is a wide and broad sense, not confined to the decalogue. In the Old Testament the claim of God was upon his total life (moral, religious, political) just as Jesus put a total claim upon His disciples in the New Testament. Jesus expounded about Himself to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus out of Moses (Luke 24:27) and Philip found the Messiah in the law of Moses (John 1:45). Paul was taught "according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God." (Acts 22:3) The Old Testament Israelite and the New Testament disciple knew the total claim of a God of grace upon his life:

What is the law? What is its content? Where is it announced? The catechisms of all Christian churches refer to the Ten Commandments, and this statement is certainly not incorrect, yet when the New Testament uses the term "law" it implies more . . . "Nomos" in the New Testament means that total reality in which the people of Israel, and the apostles as far as they belong to Israel, find themselves.¹⁹

Gutbrod sees conflict concerning the law in the early community although he feels it was concerned less with the law and more with an understanding

¹⁸Gutbrod, IV, 1061-62.

¹⁹Werner Elert, The Christian Ethos, translated by Carl J. Schindler (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), pp. 50-51.

of Jesus as the Messiah promised by Scripture. He sees the purely Gentile Christian churches free from the law with the consent of the early community; the purely Jewish Christian churches keeping the law with the consent of Paul.²⁰ One wonders about this judgment. Were there such PURELY Gentile or PURELY Jewish Christian churches, either free from the law or keeping it with Paul's consent? Gutbrod thinks that Jewish Christian communities were conscious of obedience to the law for the sake of winning the Jews for the Gospel. But he states, "They did not believe that by achieving this obedience man could attain to righteousness' before God."²¹

Then Gutbrod analyzes the usage of νόμος in Paul. He sees it as that which demands action from man, the doing of the law (ἔργα νόμου).

Only along these lines is there any point to the question of Romans 7:7--"Is the law sin?" i.e., is the will present in the Law sinful? The positive equivalent of Romans 7:12 is to the same effect: "The law is holy," the will of the Law, the Law in its demand, is holy.²²

Paul's negation of the law, according to Gutbrod, is a consequence of the cross, when Paul saw that freedom from the law could be achieved in this way alone. Paul's criticism of the Jew (Romans 2:17) was the Jew does not do it; does not render obedience to God; and the goal of the law is the doing of it. The law, as Paul argues, has to do with ἔργα not πίστις.

Gutbrod sees in Paul the relationship of νόμος to sin very simply one of prohibition. The law forbids sin and that is simply a negative expression of the positive fact that the law is God's good will. Even the

²⁰Gutbrod, IV, 1066.

²¹Ibid., IV, 1069.

²²Ibid., IV, 1070.

positive statements of the law, such as "love your neighbor as yourself," do not alter the fact for Gutbrod that primarily the law in Pauline usage forbids sin. Forbidding it, the law unmask it and makes it come to life, though it is already there before man comes into contact with the law. Citing Romans 3:20 and 7:7, where Paul says that the knowledge of sin comes by the law, Gutbrod claims Paul is not suggesting now man has subjective insight into his need for redemption because he knows he is a sinner. Rather, claims Gutbrod, man simply cannot appeal to the law for vindication, for the law unmask him as sinner. "The true effect of the Law is to nail man to his sin."²³

Having made this point in Paul, he urges that the law leaves no other way for man to secure righteousness before God than by faith in Christ and by the pardoning grace of God. He cites the schoolmaster illustration of Galatians 3:22; also Philipians 3:9 ("And be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.") Gutbrod believes the translation from the sphere of law to grace takes place only by death, listing such passages as Romans 7:1, (marriage bond severed by death); Galatians 2:19-20 ("crucified with Christ"); Colossians 2:20 ("dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world"). By His death Jesus annulled the verdict of the law against us. The law was fulfilled.

In summary, Gutbrod sees the law primarily used in Paul as the law that prohibits, unmask, and condemns sin. But he also sees it as the law that promises (Romans 1: Abraham), the law which commands (Romans 3:31), and

²³Ibid., IV, 1074.

the law which instructs (*διδάχῃ*). As to the latter, Gutbrod comments, "It does not have the weight which an appeal to the Law has in Judaism. Furthermore, this use of the Law does not, on the whole play a significant role."²⁴ He sees Paul ready to keep the Mosaic Law in ministering the Gospel (1 Corinthians 7:18; 9:2). He does not see this as legalism but a renouncing of freedom for the brother.²⁵

Gutbrod looks at *νόμος* in the rest of the New Testament as in the "Period after the Conflict," that is, the conflict concerning law in the early Jewish-Gentile community. He declares that the true theme of Hebrews is not the relation of law and Gospel but the relation of the priestly ministry of the Old Testament to the priestly ministry of Jesus. There is a distinct similarity between Hebrews and Paul:

We find in Hebrews, too, the same distinctive turn of thought as in Paul. In the light of the fulfillment, the verdict is reached that the Law not only could not reach its goal but that it was not meant to do so, that its true purpose is to point to Christ by nailing man to his sin in order that he may find access to God by the only way proclaimed in Scripture . . . Jesus.²⁶

In James, Gutbrod sees the theme of relation of faith and works in contrast to Paul's theme of relation of faith and the law. In John, he sees the law-question as less central than in the synoptics though he notes that *νόμος* is used more often in John than in Matthew. However, the disciples are bound to the Son, not to the law:

If a man rejects Jesus as the Christ, his appeal to the Law is shown to be a revolt against the Scripture, cf.

²⁴Ibid., IV, 1077.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., IV, 1079-80.

esp. John 5:30ff. True belief in Moses and hence in the Law, true hearing of this revelation will necessarily lead to acknowledgement of Jesus. Rejection of Jesus, then, is also rejection of the revelation of the Law.²⁷

Gutbrod calls attention to John 8:17 ("It is also written in your law") and John 10:34 ("Is it not written in your law?") where Jesus defends His own words with the law.

It is with the use of *νόμος* in John that Gutbrod's article ends and he fashions this summary: "In so far as Jesus as the Son of God and Christ replaces in every respect all other mediators, including the Torah, the Torah is both destroyed and fulfilled."²⁸

If Gutbrod has evaluated correctly the role of *νόμος* among the Jews at the time of Paul--and I believe he has, particularly his conclusion that the law had become mediator, a position rightly belonging to the Messiah alone--then his summary statement above that Jesus destroyed and fulfilled the Torah (BOTH!) leads us toward a proper understanding of Romans 10:4. Could it not very well be that as far as God's total claim on man (*νόμος*), Jesus has fulfilled (*τέλειω*) that righteous requirement (compare Romans 8:4) and ended (again *τέλειω*) the vain quest of seeking righteousness through the law (compare Romans 9:31-2; 10:3)?

This brings us to the immediate context of the passage in question, the subject of the next chapter.

²⁷Ibid., IV, 108h.

²⁸Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE IMMEDIATE AND WIDER CONTEXT OF ROMANS 10:4

The immediate context of Romans 10:4 is certainly chapters 9 to 11 wherein Paul speaks of the seeming rejection of Israel, "his kinsmen according to the flesh" (9:3). After speaking of God's election of Israel in the major part of chapter 9, Paul turns to the matter of man's (and his people Israel's) responsibility in his "rejected" predicament. The Gentiles were not pursuing righteousness, but they attained it--the "righteousness of faith" (9:30). On the other hand, Israel was pursuing the righteousness of the law (νόμον δικαιοσύνης) and did not attain it (9:31).

Thus beginning at Romans 9:30-31, Paul introduces the section that leads up to 10:4, our problem passage. Israel did not attain righteousness because they sought it by works and not by faith (ὡς ἐξ ἔργου --"as if they ever could from works," 9:32). They stumbled at the stone of stumbling, namely Jesus Christ (9:32-33). Thus Paul's great desire and prayer to God is for their salvation (10:1); Israel has a zeal for God but not according to real knowledge (10:2); they sought their own righteousness and not God's (10:3), "FOR CHRIST IS THE END (terminus and/or goal) OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES" (10:4).

The route of the law for righteousness (δικαιοσύνην τῆν ἐκ νόμου, 10:5) is doing its works and living thereby; the righteousness of faith (ἡ δὲ ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη, 10:6) is very near (in mouth and heart), and it is near to both Jew and Gentile: "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved" (10:13). The section in which Romans 10:4 is found

stretches from approximately 9:30 to 10:13. In our search for the meaning of the "END-OF-THE-LAW" phrase, the relationship between the "law of righteousness" (which occurs twice in 9:31), the "righteousness of God" (occurs twice in 10:3), and their (the Jews') own "righteousness" (10:3) must be understood.

Before examining various commentators, past and present, and their exegesis of Romans 10:4, we shall ourselves seek a wider context of the passage, both in the book of Romans and other New and Old Testament passages. In Romans 2:27, *νόμος* and a verb form of *τέλος* are used together when Paul compares the circumcision (of the Jews) to the uncircumcision (of the Gentiles): "And the uncircumcision-by-nature (namely, the Gentiles) when they fulfill the law condemn you who through the letter and circumcision are a breaker of the law."* The KEEPING and BREAKING of the law are clearly in contrast. A passage in James (2:8) also forms a parallel of the same two key words of the Romans 10:4 passage: "If indeed you keep the royal law according to the Scripture--'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'--you do well."** Again, the sense of *τελείτε* is that of KEEP, FULFILL, although the question poses itself--Does James use *νόμος* in the same sense Paul uses it in Romans?

Paul unmistakably speaks of the TERMINUS of the law, though he does not use *τέλος* and *νόμος* to do it, in the opening verse of Romans 7: "Or, are you ignorant, brethren--for I speak to those who know the law--that the law has rule over a man as long as he lives?" (7:1). He goes on to describe

* καὶ κρίνει ἡ ἐκ φύσεως ἀκροβυστία τὸν νόμον τελοῦσα
 δε τοῦ διὰ γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς πέρα βάνην νόμου.

** Ἐλ μέντοι νόμου τελείτε βασιλικὸν κατὰ τὴν γραφήν
 Ἰαχτηροῦσιν τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν, κατῶς κριεῖτε.

a married woman bound by law to her husband as long as he lives, but not bound (*ἐλευθέρα ἐστίν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου*) if and when he dies. "So that, my brethren, even you have died to the law through the body of Christ in order that you might be another's, even His who rose from the dead . . ." (7:4).

A verse throwing light on Romans 10:4 is Galatians 2:21. Three times in Galatians 2:16, Paul says we are not justified by the works of the law. In verse 20 he proclaims he lives by the faith of the Son of God. Verse 21: "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if through the law there is righteousness (*διὰ νόμου δικαιοσύνη*), then Christ died to no avail." Here the law and righteousness are placed in opposition to one another as, I believe, they are in Romans 10:4 (and context--9:31; 10:3). Paul denies man gains righteousness through the law. That way, if there had been a way to righteousness through the law (compare Galatians 3:21), is TERMINATED. Paul once thought there was a way to righteousness through the law: "touching the righteousness which is the law, **[I was]** blameless." (Philippians 3:6) But he no longer thought it: "If you died with Christ to the elements of the world, why do you submit to rules and regulations as if still living in the world?" (Colossians 2:20).

Two verses in Acts lend themselves to our study. They reveal the contrast and tension between the law and Christ, which we noted in Chapter III, and which is significant in understanding the "END-OF-THE-LAW" phrase in Romans 10:4. At Antioch, Pisidia, Paul preaches a lengthy sermon (Acts 13). Toward its conclusion he states:

Let it be known therefore to you, men, brethren, that through This One the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; and from all things of which you were not able to be justified by the law of

Moses, by This One everyone who believes shall be justified. (Acts 13:38-39).

He immediately exhorts them, quoting the Old Testament (Habakkuk 1:5), not to come under the judgment of the prophets who prophesied of those who would not believe even if it were told them in detail.

The second passage is Acts 21:20. When Paul came back to Jerusalem after his missionary journeying and found the situation to be as dangerous as told him along the way, he reported to the Church what God had accomplished among the Gentiles through his ministry. "Those who heard it glorified God and said to him, You see, brother, how many myriads there are among the Judaeans [Jews] who believe and all zealots who are of the law." The apostles then urge Paul to join four others in performance of a temple vow to show the Jews in Jerusalem that they have heard much rumor about his "law-breaking" and that he holds the line and keeps the law.

Furthermore, witness Paul's circumcision of Timothy (Acts 16:3) "because of the Jews which were in those quarters" and his refusal to circumcise Titus (Galatians 2:3). John's words in the first chapter of his Gospel are: "The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." There is tension between the law and Christ!

Further background to the law and Christ is provided in the Old Testament. After giving of the law, God is constantly reminding Israel what will happen if it does not keep His law. For example, Leviticus 26:

But if ye will not hearken unto me and will not do all these commandments; and if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments but that ye break my covenant; I also will do this unto you: I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague that shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. (vv. 14-16)

"WHICH IF A MAN DO, HE SHALL LIVE IN THEM" said the law (Leviticus 18:5). Paul wrote both the Romans (10:5--the verse following our problem passage) and the Galatians (3:12) about this hard fact of the law.

Later in the prophets there is a glimpse of a new covenant. Isaiah speaks of an everlasting covenant God will make with His people (61:8); Ezekiel speaks of a covenant of peace that shall be an everlasting covenant (37:26-28). And there is the afore-mentioned passage from Jeremiah:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (31:31-34)

These Old Testament passages point toward the FULFILLMENT of a promise of God. They point toward the END of the old covenant and beginning of a new.

With this background, immediate and more general, to Romans 10:4, we turn our attention next to some interpreters and commentators of the *τέλος*, νόμος, δικαιοσύνη, and πίστις of the passage in hand: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes."

CHAPTER V

VARIOUS INTERPRETERS OF LAW AND GOSPEL

Martin Luther believed the law no longer applies to the regenerate person in any way, this in the sense of his being liberated from the reign of the law over him (Romans 6:15). The law cannot burden, torture, curse, drive the regenerate because they do "without instruction, admonition, coercion or impact of the law what they ought to do according to God's will."²⁹ But Luther knew that flesh and spirit are part of every man:

Though law and gospel are irreconcilably separated, they are closely allied by their impact upon the heart . . . In so far as it is flesh, it is under the law; in so far as it is spirit, it is under the gospel. When I look at myself everything is flesh, i.e., sin. When I look upon Christ I am totally holy and pure and know nothing whatever of the law.³⁰

Calvin, on the other hand, believed that the law is intended for the new, spiritual man. He taught that the law itself serves as an incentive for the new man to fulfill it. He is influenced in this, says Werner Elert, by his original assumption that the law is not judgment but a rule of life. And, interestingly, Elert posits this interpretation as a distinct possibility.³¹ Over against this view of law stood Luther who saw the law as accuser and who could not see a third use of the law that would only instruct and not condemn.

²⁹Elert, p. 299.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 296-97.

³¹Ibid., p. 63.

Luther's theological work, The Bondage of the Will, shows most clearly his view of Christ the TERMINUS of the law. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston state, "Nowhere does Luther come closer, either in spirit or in substance, to the Paul of Romans and Galatians than in The Bondage of the Will."³² The two translators see Erasmus' lesser concern with doctrine and doctrinal statement and Erasmus' greater concern with morality, namely, that the churchman should guide himself by the moral law of Christ. But such was not Luther's concern. To Luther the denial of man's free will was the foundation of the doctrine of God's grace, the first step for anyone who would understand the Gospel and come to faith in Christ:

To the Reformers, the crucial question was not simply, whether God justifies believers without works of law. It was the broader question, whether sinners are wholly helpless in their sin, and whether God is to be thought of as saving them by free, unconditional, invincible grace, not only justifying them for Christ's sake when they come to faith, but also raising them from the death of sin by His quickening Spirit in order to bring them to faith.³³

The Reformers, of course, differed in their interpretation of the Law, as we noted before with reference to Calvin and Luther.

To Luther, Jesus' generation was a Judaizing, law-bound one; and he saw his own generation bound to the false laws of the papacy. The answer for both generations, according to Luther, was Christ freeing us from the law. Luther recognized the fear among the Jews when the Gospel freed men from the law of Moses. Nevertheless the Gospel held the field: the godly

³²Martin Luther, The Bondage of the Will, translated by J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1957), p. 1:2.

³³Ibid., pp. 58-59.

were told not to use liberty for license and indulge the flesh, and the ungodly were left to themselves.³⁴

Everywhere Martin Luther looked in Scripture he saw the law showing man his impotence to keep it: the Psalms, Isaiah, John, the epistles of Romans and Galatians. Everywhere that Erasmus in his Diatribe pointed out man's ability to keep the law--man's freedom of the will--Luther hastened to declare just the opposite:

God is trying us, that by His law He may bring us to a knowledge of our impotence . . . Human nature is blind, so that it does not know its own strength--or, rather, sickness; moreover, being proud, it thinks it knows and can do everything. God can cure this pride and ignorance by no readier remedy than the publication of His law.³⁵

So, for example, in Genesis 1:6,7, where Erasmus would see Cain, of his own free will and ability, overcoming sin crouching at the door--"thou shalt rule over him"--Luther would see the strength and grace of God being offered Cain in His Word by which Cain could master the threatening danger.

Luther sees the need of man to experience the work of the law so that he may recognize his sin, have a sense of death, and not scorn God's mercy in His Word, "I desire not the death of a sinner." The New Testament, according to the Luther, consists of promises and exhortations; the Old Testament consists of laws and threats. The New Testament exhortations are intended to stir up those who have already obtained mercy and have been justified so that they might energetically bring forth the fruits of the Spirit and righteousness given them. Man cooperates with God AFTER his regeneration. Luther saw those most zealous of the works of the law as

³⁴Ibid., p. 94.

³⁵Ibid., p. 153.

furthest from fulfilling it.

He [Satan] . . . holds captive at his will all that are not wrested from him by the Spirit of Christ.

.....
If I lived and worked to all eternity, my conscience would never reach comfortable certainty as to how much it must do to satisfy God.³⁶

Luther considered the Diatriba of Erasmus to be a confusion of the Old and New Testament--Erasmus seeing laws and commandments in the New Testament rather than the work of the Holy Spirit. He doubtless thought this same confusion existed in Paul's time. Toward the end of The Bondage of the Will, Luther echoes the words of Paul at the end of Romans 9, beginning of chapter 10:

If the Jews, who followed after righteousness with all their powers, fell into unrighteousness instead, while the Gentiles, who followed after unrighteousness, attained to the un-hoped-for righteousness, by God's free gift, it is equally apparent from their very works and experiences that man without grace can will nothing but evil.³⁷

Anders Nygren has some precise remarks in his Commentary on Romans relative to *τέλος νόμου*. "When God revealed His righteousness in Christ, He put definite end to the law as a way of salvation."³⁸ Nygren translates Romans 10:1 thus, "Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified." He declares that no longer can any righteousness be built from below, that is, originating in man--in his works or character. There is no righteousness in man. Without the law and without man's cooperation, God's new righteousness has been revealed and it belongs to each and everyone who believes.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 312-13.

³⁷Ibid., p. 310.

³⁸Anders Nygren, Commentary on Romans (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1916), p. 370.

Comparing Romans 3:21-22 and Romans 10:4, Nygren sees a connection.*

Where Paul speaks of *χωρίς νόμου* (3:21), Nygren equates it with *τέλος νόμου* (10:4). Whereas Romans 3:22 reads "to all who believe"; the other reads, "to everyone who believes." Nygren summarizes:

Thus in Christ the dominion of the law is brought to an end. Yet that does not mean that the way is thereby opened for lawlessness and unrighteousness; it means that he who believes in Christ has passed from one kind of righteousness to another, from a worthless righteousness to one that is true, from righteousness by law to the righteousness of God, which is the same as righteousness through faith. With full confidence Paul can tell how through Christ there is really an end of the law, because the inner intention of the law--which it is not able to effect--is realized through faith.³⁹

Thus for Nygren the sending of Christ into history is the beginning of something new. The law is at its terminus--past! Yet he makes the further observation:

Yet this must not be construed as an ordinary historical judgment, to the effect that the law ceased to function at a given point in time. The statement about the "telos" of the law applies only to those who have through Christ been made sharers in the righteousness of the law. Otherwise, outside of the realm of faith, the law still rules.⁴⁰

This observation, echoed by Luther, thrusts directly at what Paul is saying in Romans 10:4. The law does not cease to function either for the believer or for the unbeliever. *τέλος νόμου* has qualification!

When it comes to interpreting Romans 8:4 ("That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,") Nygren argues strongly that Christ does not give us the power

*Romans 3:21-22-- *Νυνὶ δὲ χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανερώται μαρτυρούμενη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν, δικαιοσύνη δὲ θεοῦ, διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ, εἰς πάντας καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας.*

Romans 10:4-- *τέλος γὰρ νόμου χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην παύει τὸν πιστεύοντα.*

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 379-80.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 380.

to fulfill the law. Bespeaking the view of some commentators that the believer has been so changed that he can fulfill the requirements of the law now by his works, Nygren categorically denies this: "'Righteousness by the law' never ceases to be, for Paul, an expression of the false way of salvation."¹ His argument is that the law was to bear witness to the righteousness of God and in so doing confront man in his sin and condemn him. What Nygren calls the positive purpose of the law, namely, that it bears witness to the righteousness of God and eternal life, is fulfilled in us through Christ and by the fact that we are "in Him," not by our keeping the law.

- The following reveals how Nygren thinks the law is ended:

The law is completely eliminated, as far as righteousness and freedom, condemnation and the wrath of God are concerned . . . [the Christian] has died unto the law; and he no longer lives for himself . . . to be "in Christ" is full and complete righteousness . . . to be free from Wrath, Sin, the Law, and Death.

.
The new order has vanquished the old . . . God put an end to the old order . . . Through Christ (the believers) are now placed under the new order of the Spirit.²

Rudolf Bultmann identifies νόμος as the law of the Old Testament, when used by Paul, except in passages where it has the general meaning of norm (principle) or compulsion, constraint, citing Romans 7:22-8:1 for the latter; and Romans 3:27 for the former usage. Bultmann takes νόμος as the law of the Old Testament because passages from the Pentateuch are cited as νόμος, as for example from Genesis 2,3,17; also passages from the psalms and prophets.³ He sees the law, also, as God's total legal demands

¹Ibid., p. 317.

²Ibid., pp. 310-12, 316.

³Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), pp. 259-60.

both for Jew and Gentile. It has been radically abolished, Bultmann believes, for the man of faith.^{l4} But this does not erase the fact that it still contains God's demands and the Christian, though not under the law but under grace, still finds those demands valid for him.^{l5}

What Bultmann believes is that the Christian is able to know the will of God (which he equates with the demands of the law^{l6}) by or within himself (Romans 12:2) and he does not need the instruction of the law for this. This is possible through the new relationship established by faith. Under the law Bultmann finds man's situation desperate because there was (and is) no true fulfillment of the law. He cites Galatians 3:10; the argument of Paul beginning in Romans 1:16 and summarized in the third chapter; 2 Corinthians 3:6,7,9; and then declares that Paul went farther than saying man cannot achieve salvation by works of the law: "He is not even intended to do so."^{l7} It is at this juncture that two prior statements of Bultmann come to mind:

God's demand encounters man concretely in the "nomos", the Law of the Old Testament, the purpose of which is no other than to lead man to life (Romans 7:10; cf. Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:12b).

As the law was given "for life" (with life-giving intent), the keeping of it would bestow life (Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:12).^{l8}

These statements--though they are followed by Bultmann's further exposition of Paul, to wit, that the law brings to light man's sinfulness; that the purpose

^{l4} Ibid., p. 261.

^{l5} Ibid., p. 262.

^{l6} Ibid.

^{l7} Ibid., p. 263.

^{l8} Ibid., pp. 259, 262.

of the law is to lead man to death so that he might see God's grace (compare Luther)--cause me to twist within myself at God's intention with the law. For if man was not intended to achieve salvation by the works of the law, then how could it be the purpose of the law none other than to lead man to life? The two would appear to contradict each other. Did the law originally intend to give life? We shall give answer to this in the conclusion of the paper.

Interpreting Romans 10:4, Bultmann recognizes the mutually exclusive ways of justification (by works and by faith); thus Paul is saying, "Christ means the end of the Law; he leads to righteousness everyone who has faith."⁴⁹ For Bultmann, Romans 10:4 is a decisive contrast between salvation by works and salvation by faith. "Man's effort to achieve his salvation by keeping the Law only leads him into sin, indeed this effort itself in the end is already sin."⁵⁰

What meaning does the νόμος still have for us? Bultmann says that man is led into sinning, that is, a practical, experiential knowledge of sin by the law, in order that he might be led back again into the right relation with God (Romans 5:20). The law is God's *πρόσωπον* (Galatians 3:24) to lead us to Christ. The law puts man in a desperate situation "which he does not recognize as such until the message of grace hits its mark in him."⁵¹ And so in the end, according to Bultmann, it becomes clear God's law is not against the promises of God (Galatians 3:21); but it remains, as it always had. It is identified by Bultmann as the "spiritual law" of Romans 7:14;

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 263.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 264.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 266.

the "law of Christ" mentioned in Galatians 6:2, and *ἀγάπη* :

Now for the first time its real intention comes to fulfillment: God has removed the powerlessness of the Law ("what the law weakened by the flesh could not do") in order that the just requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."
(Romans 8:3f.)⁵²

Bultmann sees the law of Moses abolished but the eternal will (that is, law) of God going on. But he sees, at the same time, a continuity--the new taking over from the old, the Law of Christ from the Law of Moses.

C. K. Barrett in From First Adam to Last translates Romans 10:4, "Christ is the end of the law with a view to effecting righteousness for everyone who believes."⁵³ He sees the law's termination because with Christ came the new age, the law belonging to the old age. Righteousness is a new, divine gift, accepted by faith. Quoting Romans 13:8, Barrett sees Paul summing up the Old Testament law as love which is binding on Christians.

Barrett says that Moses was misunderstood and Judaism was guilty of this misunderstanding. He adds, "Moses himself preaches the righteousness of faith, though admittedly in such a way as to invite misunderstanding."⁵⁴ This is quite a mouth-full. It recalls a contemporary pastor's conjecture whether some of the "Gospel" of the Old Testament wasn't lost? A quick comparison of the Old Testament passages dealing with the verb "believe" or the noun "faith" to those New Testament passages dealing with the same reveals a preponderance, perhaps five or six to one, of such passages in the New Testament. Genesis 15:6 seems to stand out like a lonely star at times. Perhaps Barrett has a point!

⁵²Ibid., p. 268.

⁵³Charles K. Barrett, From First Adam To Last (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 66.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 80.

On the other hand, Barrett sees part of the New Testament where Jesus could be misunderstood as a new Moses, which view, Barrett claims, Paul does not take.⁵⁵ He sees Moses and Jesus as adversaries, standing over against each other. "So far as Moses represents the way of man's own religious and moral righteousness, he is the enemy."⁵⁶ To rightly understand Moses, according to Barrett, we must see the law of Moses provided a channel for the obedience of faith to flow in and that it supplies an example of the gracious, saving activity of God. When Christ came, He was not a new law-giver but the interpreter and even the establisher of the law. But so radical was His interpretation, and so personal, Christ became its end or termination.

While Luther, Nygren, Bultmann, Barrett form a like-minded set of commentators regarding "*τέλος* *ἵνα* *ἴδωμεν* *Χριστόν* . . ." others take a different tack. For example, C. E. B. Cranfield in an article, "St. Paul and the Law", sees GOAL as the correct interpretation of *τέλος* : "For Christ is the goal of the law, so that righteousness is available to every one that believeth."⁵⁷ He states that the ultimate goal of the law is not the condemnation of sinners, but Jesus Christ.⁵⁸ The law points to the One who would really do the righteousness of it; this One, Jesus, is the goal, meaning, the substance of the law because He truly loved God with His all and His neighbor as Himself. Jesus was utterly obedient.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 79.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 79-80.

⁵⁷C. E. B. Cranfield, "St. Paul and the law", Scottish Journal of Theology, XVII (1964), 19.

⁵⁸Ibid., XVII, 18.

Then Cranfield contends, "For Paul, the law is not abolished by Christ."⁵⁹ Romans 7:10, especially the phrase *ἡ ἐντολή ἡ εἰς ζωὴν*, holds much meaning for Cranfield and he cites it at least four times in building his case for the validity of the law for Christians today.* Searching Paul's writings, he believes Christ has freed us from the vain quest of righteousness by works of the law; he believes also we have been discharged from the law insofar as it was a bondage. Cranfield contrasts the old, legalistic way of understanding the law to the new, right understanding and use of the law by the power of the Spirit. For him, the law is not abolished. Rather, when men turn to Christ they see the law's true glory. Following Calvin, he maintains the law and the Gospel are essentially one and has no truck with

the view (characteristic of Lutheranism) that in the law and gospel two "different modes of God's action are manifested," the ultimate unity of which, while it may indeed be supposed to exist in God, has not yet been revealed to us men.⁶⁰

An illustration of this view of the law is found in a sermon of Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), a Scottish minister, based on Romans 10:4 and 1 Timothy 1:5 ("Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned.") Chalmers posits a two-fold aspect of the law--(1) to build up character and (2) to acquire a title to heaven. He proceeds to assert the first, using 1 Timothy 1:5, and to demolish the second, using Romans 10:4. Chalmers speaks of the legal disposition of

⁵⁹Ibid., XVII, 65.

* Supra, pp. 27-28.

⁶⁰Ibid., XVII, 68.

the heart in all ages to inherit heaven by human merit and righteousness ("this do and live").

This no doubt was one great and primary end of the law-- even that man, by the fulfilment of its requirements, might obtain for himself a right to its rewards. But this end of the law, man hath hopelessly frustrated by his own disobedience.⁶¹

On the basis of Romans 10:4, he states the law has been set aside and Christ put in its place. He achieved a justifying righteousness for us by His perfect obedience. But then Chalmers goes on with the 1 Timothy 1:5 text and calls for the development of virtue, the acquiring of a rightness of character in man, by use of the law. The law is "a perfect guide and exemplar of all virtue,"⁶² it "still retains the office of a guide and of a stimulant."⁶³

But it is just by our observation of the law, as a law of piety, and purity, and equity, and kindness, that we arrive at that personal righteousness, which makes us meet for Heaven's exercises and Heaven's joys . . .⁶⁴

The law for Chalmers has ceased as a covenant but not as a rule of life; good works are of no avail for justification but are inseparable from sanctification.

In G. O. Griffith (St. Paul's Gospel to the Romans), there is a chapter concerning "Man and the Law," wherein the author sees the divine law performing two functions. The first function is similar to other commentators' views that we have previously considered:

I found that there was a rebel self in me, which, though willing to use the Law, was never willing to surrender to its holy and inward claims: and the

⁶¹Thomas Chalmers, Sermons and Discourses (New York: Robert Carter, 1846), I, 122.

⁶²Ibid., I, 124.

⁶³Ibid., I, 125.

⁶⁴Ibid.

more firmly the Law laid its inexorable hand upon me, the more fiercely that rebel self resisted. The Law said, Thou shalt have no other gods before Me, and my heart clung to its own secret idols. The Law said, Thou shalt not covet, and even in the house of God my ambition was coveting the chief seats and the highest honours.⁶⁵

Griffith calls this function of the law that of an irritant, an "agent provocateur," in which a good and just law serves to excite man's perverse self-will. It is this function that Griffith devotes most space to, but he also sees another function of the law that Paul brings out toward the end of Romans:

As he shows us toward the end of the Epistle, he is well aware that if human society is to be kept, even temporarily, within the bounds of order and stability, Law there must be, and that as such it is the ordinance of God for the restraint of disruptive anti-social action.⁶⁶

Griffith calls this the secular function of the law; and while he admits it is powerless to change human nature, we sense the "right understanding and use of the law" that Cranfield declared for in his article and that other commentators have declared for, too.

It remains for C. H. Dodd in his little book, Gospel and Law, to give a final (and clear) relation between these two teachings of Scripture and to open our understanding to the legalistic (law) and evangelical (Gospel) knot with which we have been dealing. Years before his Columbia University lectures (1950) which led to this book, Dodd translated Romans 10:4 thusly: "Christ is an end to law, so as to let every believer have righteousness."⁶⁷

⁶⁵Gwilym O. Griffith, St. Paul's Gospel to the Romans (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1949), p. 83.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 84.

⁶⁷Charles H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1932), p. 165.

He declared that Christ must put an end to the law, else righteousness would not be available to every believer; and added that since the experience of the Christian Church shows that righteousness is available, the Jewish way of righteousness through works of the law must be wrong.

In Gospel and Law, Dodd argues strongly and convincingly that the growth of the ethical part of Christianity, its precepts and admonitions, is out of the theology and religion of Jesus. He traces this in the pattern of the epistles, especially those written by Paul, and in the Gospels. He writes that ethical teachings came out of the historical facts, the didache out of the kerygma; and that the Old Testament law arose in the same fashion:

The classical formulation of the moral law in the Old Testament begins, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before me."⁶⁸

So closely does Dodd see the ethical and the historical in Scripture that he declares of 1 John there is no possible separation of Gospel and commandment.⁶⁹

Man is on a new footing with God through the Gospel. And yet any reasonable reader of the Sermon on the Mount, reading it without prejudice, would see a "new law" superceding the law of the Old Testament.⁷⁰ He calls it a bias of the churches of the Reformation to refuse to see Christianity as a new law in any sense, such passages as Romans 10:4 and 6:14 which were taken up by the Reformers, lending weight to this bias. It would supposedly blur the splendor of the Gospel of God's free grace to sinful men to look upon it as a "new law!"

⁶⁸Charles H. Dodd, Gospel and Law (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), p. 11.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 45.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 64-65.

Dodd avails himself of 1 Corinthians 9:21 and Galatians 6:2 (the "law of Christ" passages written by Paul) plus the so-called doctrinal, hortatory sections of his epistles to show that there is a proper understanding of Christianity as a new law. "It is not, then, so clear, after all, that Paul intended to repudiate the understanding of Christianity as a new law."⁷¹

While Dodd understands both testaments as covenants God made and expected man to fulfill and both testaments resting on the motif of deliverance, he understands the difference is that the New Testament was written on man's heart. Here he recalls Jeremiah 31 and delves into 2 Corinthians 3. Exploring the latter, he declares:

The contrast of the "written word" and the "spirit" is central and crucial to the conception of the Christian law, and it is important to enquire what is the precise contrast intended.⁷²

Dodd sees the old covenant as down "black and white," a code of rules and regulations to be carried out "to the letter." He quotes Ephesians 2:15, "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances . . ." and declares that such are done away with in Christ and that in their place is a law written on the heart.

"Written on the heart" means to Dodd that the Christian is not permitted simply to follow his conscience or some subjective, inner light. Jesus taught with authority. The "I say unto you" of Jesus corresponds to the "Thus saith the Lord" of the Old Testament prophets.⁷³ So where Dodd starts

⁷¹Ibid., p. 66.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 68-69.

⁷³Ibid., p. 70.

to find the difference between the old covenant and the new is with the word, "covenant"; and he turns to John 3:16 to see the quality of God's love (*ἀγάπη*) and the direction of God's act of love, namely, eternal life in the New Testament or Covenant.

Here, then, is the basic statement of the obligation which the new covenant entails, in consequence of the divine action by which it was initiated. It is an obligation to reproduce in human action the quality and the direction of the act of God by which we are saved.⁷⁴

Dodds wants to be very sure this is not interpreted as a "law of commandments contained in ordinances." So he takes the word of Jesus to turn the other cheek and states that this points us in the direction of Christ--His forbearance, His patience, His unwillingness to coerce people. Dodd believes that even when we make half-frustrated efforts to overcome our pride in turning the other cheek, we have obeyed Christ's command; we have moved with the quality of love in the direction of eternal life.

Believing strongly that Christ gave precepts with authority and to be obeyed, Dodd uses the example of tithing. It can be seen in the Gospels that the precise carrying out of the tithe, down to the tenth sprig of mint, could leave a person short of justice, mercy, and the love of God. In contrast to the law of the tithe, Jesus says:

"You cannot serve God and property." "Do not accumulate capital on earth." "No one who does not renounce everything he has got can be my disciple." "Sell all you have and give alms, and so provide yourselves with purses that will never wear out." "Give to everyone who asks."⁷⁵

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 71.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 76.

These statements are clear, says Dodd. They are to be taken seriously. They are to be obeyed. But we cannot share the rich young man's verdict that we have successfully kept them but we must rather press forward with Paul toward the mark and for the prize. We have the quality of love, the direction of eternal life, but not as yet the attainment.

It turns out, then, that the law of Christ works by setting up a process within us which is itself ethical activity. His precepts stir the imagination, arouse the conscience, challenge thought, and give impetus to the will, issuing in action.⁷⁶

Dodd concludes by stating that the law of Christ is applicable to nations and governments as well as members of the Church; that as the God of creation is also the God of redemption, so the law of Christ is the law of creation; that the Church must establish a discipline for its own members and pronounce in Christ's Name moral judgments upon human conduct beyond its own membership; that we need the grace of God even to try to begin to fulfill the law of Christ; and that the Gospel cannot be understood apart from its ethical implications.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 77.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is apparent that the tension in the Romans 10:4 passage rests with the Greek words *τέλος* and *νόμος*. *τέλος* requires an understanding of TERMINATION and/or GOAL while *νόμος* requires an answer to the questions, "What is meant by law? How is the law terminated or fulfilled?" This immediately drives us into the context of the verse; into the chapters of Romans that form a contextual entity with Romans 10:4; indeed into the epistle of Romans, the epistle of Galatians, other letters of Paul where he speaks of the law and Christ.

Every exegete and theologian must conclude that Paul is addressing a problem peculiar to the Romans in his time. The fulfilling of the law, doing its works, had become a very real choice for righteousness. Yet our study has indicated that this was not only a problem then but also before Christ came (see Gutbrod's study in Chapter III) and since (Luther's day, for example). Therefore we conclude that it is a problem of human nature, flesh-and-blood. It is a problem today with us, that is, our flesh, too, seeks righteousness before God by works of the law. Paul therefore relevantly speaks to our day and age in Romans 10:4, though so many seem oblivious of God, much less their relationship to Him!

Since Paul is addressing an acute problem (of justification either by works of the law or through faith in Christ) to the Romans, it must also be concluded that he slants his view of the law. He must. Just as an evangelist slants his words in attempting to stir up the Spirit of witnessing among

a congregation of Christians, Paul has slanted his words about the law to the Roman congregation. He does not say all about the law that can be said. He does not because he is attacking a problem that requires only what must be said about the TERMINATION OF THE LAW AS A WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS TO GOD. This is exactly what he does in Romans 3:19 ("that every mouth may be stopped"), slanting his use of the law to render us sinners; to TERMINATE any and all self-justification in God's sight. James, on the contrary, attacks the equally serious matter of a dead faith, urges the works of the law, and goes so far as to say, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). The problem, the situation, require it!

Therefore Paul does not do justice to the best of Judaism, the faithful of his day and previous days for whom the law was not a way of justification. The remnant were not keeping the Torah for the sake of rule-keeping and merit-earning, but simply because they were obedient to Jahweh in whom they believed and trusted. John Bright, pointing out the good stuff of which Judaism was made, speaks to our day in these words:

Repelled by all legalism, we have come close to the point of apologizing for any duty religion seems to involve, nay, have offered a religion almost without the demand of duty at all. Can it be said that in casting off all religious duty, we have ended up admitting no duty--save to ourselves? It is time that we heeded the lesson of the Holy Commonwealth: that religion, aside from all that it does for man, lays before him a duty and demands that he do it. Christianity does involve duty. And that duty is to obey God, not in general and as it is convenient, but in every detail and without exceptions. On this account, it is to be feared, scribe and Pharisee will enter the Kingdom of God ahead of us.⁷⁷

⁷⁷John Bright, The Kingdom of God (New York, Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), p. 177.

In The Cost of Discipleship Dietrich Bonhoeffer speaks eloquently of the same need for obedience in our day.

But the duty we need to be reminded of does not come by a reminder from the law of Moses, which law embraced not only the ten commandments but all the rules and regulations of civil law that God gave Israel (compare Numbers 19:14; 31:21 where Torah is used for the law when a man dies in a tent and law of man in battle).^{*} A new era began with Christ. The law of Moses which embraces all that God imposed by letter--moral, political, ceremonial--terminated with the new covenant so clearly prophesied by Jeremiah (31:31) and others. The new era brought the Holy Spirit of power, spoken of in Acts, spoken of by Paul in Romans 8, spoken of and understood in the parenetic sections of his epistles. It was the Holy Spirit (not the law!) by which Jesus' disciples were empowered to do the Father's will.

The law with its negative emphasis of "Thou shalt not," revealing sin, crucifying the sinner, has been succeeded by the positive emphasis of the Spirit of joy, love, peace, and others (Galatians 5). Christ who was crucified for us and rose from the dead brought this all about:

Christ is the end of the nomological existence and thereby also the originator of a new existence. Because God has accepted the atonement of the guilt of all, that guilt is now expiated. Henceforth there can be a guiltless existence which is no longer subject to retribution and to death. Those who saw him die found that inconceivable because under the law, whose final operation they witnessed, it was impossible. They only understood it when they saw the risen Christ. We too can henceforth only encounter the risen Christ.⁷⁸

^{*}2 Esdras 14:21--"For thy law has been burned, and so no one knows the things which have been done or will be done by thee." A highly revealing passage from the Apocrypha where the law embraces both history and prophecy.

⁷⁸Elert, p. 104.

Paul did not know that his blameless life (Philippians 3:6) according to the law was of no account until God intervened with His grace.

Werner Elert declares:

Paul did not arrive at his conclusions, however as the result of his study of the laws. As long as he was a Pharisee he understood the law as a Pharisee. He did not owe his insight to the personal instruction of Christ; in that sense he was never a disciple. It came to him when the crucified and risen Lord called him completely out of his law-bound existence.⁷⁹

It is in this light, I maintain, that we must understand Paul's words in Romans 7:10, "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." In his law-bound existence Paul saw the commandment and law leading to life. "Under grace," visited by the risen Christ, Paul understood that the law only appeared to lead to life but really led to death. In Deuteronomy 6:25; 21:13, Moses speaks of civil righteousness.

But Moses knew that the law could not really give life:

Take this book of the law and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God that it may be there for a witness against thee. For I know thy rebellion and thy stiff neck; before, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death?
(Deuteronomy 31:26)

Werner Elert, who provided many insights into this problem of the END OF THE LAW, will be my next-to-last spokesman. This quote has much to say to the practical matter of parish preaching and ministry:

If Christ is to gain power over men, he himself must be preached and that Word of God differs from the law of retribution. The true mission of the church begins here. Only when it is carried out in this spirit do we enter into the reality of the kingdom of God in which

⁷⁹Elert, pp. 66-67.

forgiveness, not retaliation, prevails, where the entire legal order is invalidated.⁸⁰

A beloved pastor-friend, the Rev. Fred Loose, whose friendship and insights into the Scripture have enriched my parish ministry, will have the last word. He has emphasized this at many local pastoral conferences: "The law said, 'The soul that sinneth it shall die.' Christ said, 'The soul that sinneth it shall live.'" He made it very easy to see that Christ both FULFILLED (τελέω) and TERMINATED (τελέω) what the νόμος said.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- The Apocrypha of the Old Testament. Edited by Bruce M. Metzger. New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- Arndt, Wm. F., and Gingrich, F. Wilbur. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957.
- Barrett, Charles K. From First Adam to Last. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. The Cost of Discipleship. New York: MacMillan Company, 1964.
- Bright, John. The Kingdom of God. Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953.
- Bring, Ragnar. "Das Gesetz und die Gerechtigkeit Gottes," Studia Theologica, XX (1966), 1-36.
- Bultmann, Rudolf, Theology of the New Testament, Vol. 1. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951.
- Chalmer, Thomas. Sermons and Discourses. 3rd complete American edition. New York: Robert Carter, 1846.
- Cranfield, C. E. B. "St. Paul and the Law," Scottish Journal of Theology, XVII (1964), 13-68.
- Dodd, C. H. Gospel and Law. New York: Columbia University Press, 1951.
- Dodd, C. H. The Epistle of Paul to the Romans. New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1932.
- Elert, Werner. Christian Ethos. Translated by C. J. Schindler. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957.
- Ellison, H. L. The Mystery of Israel. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966.
- Everist, Burton. "Relation of NOMOS to Life of Christian according to St. Paul's Letter to the Romans." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1964.
- "
Fluckinger, Felix. "Christus, des Gesetzes telos," Theologische Zeitschrift, XI (1955), 153-57.

- Griffith, G. O. St. Paul's Gospel to the Romans. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1919.
- Gutbrod, W. "Nomos," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. IV. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967. pp. 1036-91.
- Kimpel, Julius V. "The Meaning of NOMOS in the Epistles of St. Paul." Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1939.
- Luther, Martin. The Bondage of the Will. Translated by J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston. Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1957.
- Nygren, Anders. Commentary on Romans. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1910.
- Robinson, Edward. A Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament. New York: Harper, 1858.
- Pump, Ernest Gordon. The Righteousness of God: Luther Studies. London: Hedder and Stoughton, 1962.
- Schneider, E. E. "Finis Legis Christus, Romans 10,1," Theologische Zeitschrift, XX (June 1961), 110-22.
- Smith, Robert. "Biblical Teaching on the Eschatological Vision of God." Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1962.