

Echoes of Aristotle in Romans 2:14– 15: Or, Maybe Abimelech Was Not So Bad After All

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In this study I argue that the Greek of Romans 2:14–15 contains explicit allusions to three phrases from Aristotle, and that Paul combines these allusions with Old Testament (OT) echoes to explain why his fellow Jews have not brought God's light to the Gentile world—namely, they did not exhibit the exemplary moral performance God called them to. If even Gentiles such as Aristotle recognize the place of the inner urge to do what is right, that recognition exposes the underperformance of Paul's fellow Jews. This helps to show that the Gentiles who do not have the law are those outside the aura of God's special light from Israel, rather than Christian Gentiles. This further shows that Paul endorses a form of natural-law thinking and that Christians do no disservice to Paul if they develop this thinking further.

This particular study arose in the course of examining Paul's use of the Old Testament (OT) in his letter to the Roman Christians. In particular, I discovered that applying criteria that were developed for discerning echoes of the OT, resulted in finding echoes of an unexpected source, namely Aristotle, in the course of Paul's argument. I will argue that three phrases from Romans 2:14–15 seem to be deliberate evocations of Aristotelian expressions:¹ of these, the first has received some attention from commentators (even if only to reject it), while the second and third seem to have gone unnoticed.² Recognizing these echoes, in turn, helps us to perceive something of how Paul approached natural law.

Of course, there are many interpretive disagreements over Romans 2:12–16. (There seems to be no section of Romans without such interpretive disagreements.) I had originally intended to write a brief note on three phrases in two verses, but the project grew larger as it became necessary to address larger interpretive

issues. The results of this study, if they are valid, can help to adjudicate some of these disagreements. I will show how these results might also be taken up into a particular reading strategy for the whole of Romans. Because many students of natural law might not be aware of these challenges, I thought it wise to uncover them and show how to deal with them.

I will begin by setting out the text of Romans 2:12–16 with a list of some of the main interpretive questions about the passage. I will next discuss criteria for discerning echoes, especially echoes that do not have their source in the OT. Finally, I will offer my proposals for the echoes I find in this passage and consider the consequences for reading Romans 2:14–15 as well as for reading Romans 2 in the context of the whole letter.

Anyone who argues for the presence of echoes must make many judgment calls, and the wise person will recognize that some of these are of less certainty than others. It will be one thing to establish that Paul’s Greek wording is very similar to passages in Aristotle; it requires an argument to infer from these similarities that Paul is *echoing* the Greek philosopher. To go from there to a larger reading strategy requires even more judgment calls, and it will not be possible in this brief article to defend them all (never mind interacting with everything anyone else has said in favor of other reading strategies). Nevertheless, if the discussion here provokes further thought on Paul’s message, I will count this a success.

The Text and Some Questions About It

¹²For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.

¹³For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

¹⁴For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.

¹²Ὅσοι γὰρ ἀνόμως ἥμαρτον, ἀνόμως καὶ ἀπολοῦνται, καὶ ὅσοι ἐν νόμῳ ἥμαρτον, διὰ νόμου κριθήσονται.

¹³οὐ γὰρ οἱ ἀκροαταὶ νόμου δίκαιοι παρά [τῷ] θεῷ, ἀλλ’ οἱ ποιηταὶ νόμου δικαιωθήσονται.

¹⁴ὅταν γὰρ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν, οὗτοι νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες ἑαυτοῖς εἰσιν νόμος.

¹⁵They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

¹⁵οἵτινες ἐνδείκνυνται τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν, συμμαρτυροῦσης αὐτῶν τῆς συνειδήσεως καὶ μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν κατηγορούντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων.

¹⁶on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

¹⁶ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὅτε κρίνει ὁ θεὸς τὰ κρυπτά τῶν ἀνθρώπων κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου διὰ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

The debates about this passage relate to questions about Paul’s view of the law and its function as well as his view of justification. Many take verse 13 as stating the general requirement for justification (understood as a legal verdict about one’s right to stand before God’s judgment). Seen this way, Paul’s statement is often taken as a hypothetical: *If* someone were to achieve perfection as a doer, that person would be justified. Others suppose that the word *justified* here is not the state into which believers have already entered (such as would be indicated by the aorist participle in Romans 5:1) but an eschatological vindication—in which case the statement can cohere with OT passages dealing with the importance of faithful living on the part of God’s people.³

I am focusing here on verses 14–15, and I find that there are two main camps. The first supposes that by *Gentiles, who do not have the law*, Paul is describing Gentiles as such: They do not have the law because God gave the law to Israel. Nevertheless, these Gentiles can do good things, due to the work of the law written on their hearts (v. 15), that is, due to a kind of natural (φύσει, by nature, v. 14) moral impulse. Traditionally, this has been taken to lend Pauline support to some kind of natural-law position; many recent studies suppose that Paul is echoing Stoic views here. I will call this the “unbelieving Gentile interpretation.”⁴

The second view is that these Gentiles are *Christian* Gentiles, who now do what the law requires (v. 14) because of their Christian faith.⁵ I will call this the “Christian Gentile interpretation.” Those who take this view typically punctuate φύσει (by nature, v. 14) to go with ἔχοντα, thus yielding, *who do not have the law by nature* (i.e., by birth, cf. Gal. 2:15). Members of this camp also find an echo of Jeremiah’s new covenant prophecy (MT, Jer. 31:31–34; LXX, 38:31–34) in *the work of the law written on their hearts*. This echo is taken as strong support for the argument that the people in mind are Christians, that is, have received the new covenant. While those who favor the unbelieving Gentile interpretation can accept the argument for φύσει, they generally reject the alleged echo of Jeremiah.⁶

It is worth pointing out that, while the unbelieving Gentile interpretation certainly favors some kind of natural-law position as underlying Paul's argument, the Christian Gentile interpretation is in itself neutral on the question of natural law in Paul (although many proponents do in fact reject such a view).

Finally, when it comes to the flow of verses 15–16, with its apparent reference to the final judgment, there is some disagreement among those who follow the unbelieving Gentile interpretation over whether these Gentiles will be judged favorably—some say that it is possible, while most find Paul to be very doubtful. The Christian Gentile interpretation can see a favorable outcome as a confirmation of verse 13, where the Christian faith and obedience of these Gentiles will be vindicated at the last judgment.

Criteria for Discerning Echoes

The proposal of Ramiz Atallah demonstrates for us the value of criteria for assessing whether an alleged echo is worth considering.⁷ Atallah argues that the *conscience* in Romans 2:15 is best understood in the light of the Osiris myth from ancient Egypt. It is startling to find as a footnote at the end of the last paragraph of the essay the following reflection:

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

I call this startling because it seems obvious to deal at the *beginning* with accessibility questions, rather than to save them for a later study. That is, it would have made sense to address whether there were any channels by which ancient Egyptian thinking might have been accessible to New Testament (NT) writers, as well as to at least some members of their audiences. If there is no evidence for such channels (and Atallah offered none), the proposal will have great trouble in getting off the ground. Such evidence as there is for any kind of channel, for example, the histories of Herodotus, a Greek from Halicarnassus (ca. 484–430 BCE; an outsider to Egyptian culture) or the Egyptian Manetho (ca. 240 BCE; an insider), does not address these topics.⁸ Therefore in this case, it does not look fruitful, at least *a priori*, to search for other NT texts that could be illuminated by parallels from ancient Egyptian religion.

Further, the alleged Egyptian parallels support taking the conscience (συνείδησις, v. 15) as an objective testimony to one's deeds on the day of judgment, rather than as a subjective experience (as it is usually taken). It would have been more helpful if Atallah had discussed whether there is any evidence that the Greek terms would likely have been read this way.⁹

Anyone can claim to have found an echo of one text in another. The key question for us is, by what criteria can we properly make the shift from, *I can imagine* that my author is alluding to this other author, to *You ought to accept* that my author is alluding to this other author? That is, we must *warrant* the shift, if we are to play fair both with our author and with our contemporary audience.¹⁰

Unless our author directly tells us that he is making an allusion, we are left to infer it, and thus we must build a case based on arguments. Generally speaking, to be valid, this kind of case must fulfill four requirements:¹¹

- (1) *Empirical adequacy*: Our case must cover all of the data without fudging.
- (2) *Simplicity*: All things being equal, we prefer the case that has the fewest complicating assumptions, qualifications, and exceptions.
- (3) *Coherence*: A good case must be consistent with itself and with good logic.
- (4) *Fruitfulness*: A good case opens up fresh understanding for other topics.

To apply these requirements to the specific case of alleged echoes, we need criteria by which to evaluate whether a deliberate echo is likely to be present. Some of the most helpful efforts at establishing sound criteria come from scholars studying how Paul used the OT.

Richard Hays rendered a valuable service when he put forward a set of seven criteria for discerning echoes (i.e., literary allusions):¹²

- (1) *Availability*. Was the proposed source of the echo available to the author and any of the original readers?
- (2) *Volume*. The volume of an echo is determined primarily by the degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns; how loudly does it evoke the alleged precursor?
- (3) *Recurrence*. How often does Paul elsewhere cite or allude to the same scriptural passage?
- (4) *Thematic coherence*. How well does the alleged echo fit into the line of argument Paul is developing?
- (5) *Historical Plausibility*. Could Paul have intended the alleged meaning effect? Could his readers have understood it?

- (6) *History of Interpretation*. Have other readers, both critical and precritical, heard the same echoes?
- (7) *Satisfaction*. With or without clear confirmation from the other criteria listed here, does the proposed reading make sense?

In my judgment, this list does not give as much weight as I would prefer to *explicit verbal echoes* as the first criterion, nor does it indicate where the burden of proof lies when such explicit echoes are missing. However, it does serve as a place to begin, and we can benefit from the criteria.

In his Ph.D. thesis, Timothy Berkley refined Hays' list along the following lines:¹³

- (1) *Common vocabulary*. This appears between the OT passage and the Pauline text.
- (2) *Vocabulary clusters*. There are several significant vocabulary correspondences between the Pauline text and the OT context.
- (3) *Links with other texts*. The vocabulary links with other OT texts that may also be in Paul's mind.
- (4) *Explication*. The OT text that meets these criteria sheds light on Paul's argument.
- (5) *Recurrence*. Paul refers to this text (or its larger context) elsewhere, either in the same letter or in another.
- (6) *Common themes*. The themes found in the OT reference are also important in Paul's context.
- (7) *Common linear development*. The themes develop in Paul in the same order as they appear in the OT text.

Berkley indicates that he has amplified and refined Hays' criteria of *volume*, *recurrence*, *thematic coherence*, and *satisfaction*; his list does answer more of my own observations on Hays' list. At the same time, he acknowledges that he has omitted the criteria of *availability* and *historical plausibility* because these are not really in question when dealing with OT references in the NT. He has dropped the criterion of *history of interpretation* because he has discovered echoes that other scholars have overlooked.

Berkley's list may be better for the specific task of examining Paul's use of the OT, but the items he has dropped from Hays' list are important in the larger project of discerning how biblical writers allude to other writers—whether these be OT authors using OT texts, or NT authors using the OT (or even using other parts of the nascent NT), or canonical authors using noncanonical texts. Furthermore, the list we use is a heuristic device—it helps us use good critical

thinking in answering a question that requires us to make judgment calls. No one should suppose that the procedure is a mechanical one.¹⁴

Therefore, for this project, I find Hays' criteria to be the more flexible heuristic, but I will allow Berkley's criteria concerning common vocabulary and vocabulary clusters to make Hays' volume criterion more specific. In particular, I must show not only that Paul's words echo Aristotelian phrases exactly (this is the easy part) but also that Paul had these phrases available to him and might reasonably have expected at least some of his audience to recognize them, as well as the fact that Paul uses Aristotelian phrases elsewhere in his letters. Finally, I must show that this illuminates the argument Paul is making in these chapters of Romans.

Phrases from Aristotle in Romans 2:14–15

The three apparent echoes of Aristotle in Romans 2:14–15 are the phrases, *they are a law to themselves* (ἐαυτοῖς εἰσιν νόμος), *the work of the law* (τὸ ἔργον του νόμου), and *accuse or even excuse* (κατηγορούντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων).¹⁵ None of these Greek expressions has an analogue in the LXX.

They Are a Law to Themselves

In the course of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle discusses the witty (εὐτράπελος) man, in contrast to the buffoon (βωμολόχος); he commends the way that a free man (ἐλεύθερος, i.e., a gentleman or civilized man) carries out his jesting. The lawgivers (νομοθέται) have forbidden certain forms of verbal abuse, and probably some forms of joking should be forbidden as well. In IV.viii.10 (1128a, 31–32) Aristotle sums it up:

ὁ δὴ χαρίεις καὶ ἐλεύθεριος οὕτως ἔξει, οἷον νόμος ὦν ἑαυτῷ	the refined and free man will have this manner, <i>being</i> , as it were, <i>a law to himself</i>
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The point is that such a person needs no imposed law to make him behave the right way; he has some kind of internal monitor that guides him. This is the force of the expression, *being a law to himself*.¹⁶

The similarities between Paul's phrase (ἐαυτοῖς εἰσιν νόμος) and Aristotle's (νόμος ὦν ἑαυτῷ) are striking: the predicate noun νόμος with a reflexive pronoun (in the dative case), and the appropriate form of εἰμί.¹⁷

Although some commentators deny that Aristotle's passage is relevant here,¹⁸ it actually fits Paul's assertion:¹⁹ some people, even without an external law (i.e., the law of Moses), are able to guide their behavior to do what the law requires because in some other way they perceive what is right.²⁰

The Work of the Law

In Aristotle's work on *The Art of Rhetoric*, I.xv.7 (1375b), we find the following discussion:

καὶ ὅτι τὸ δίκαιον ἔστιν ἀληθές τι
καὶ συμφέρον, ἀλλ' οὐ τὸ δοκοῦν·
ὥστ' οὐ νόμος ὁ γεγραμμένος· οὐ
γὰρ ποιεῖ τὸ ἔργον τὸ τοῦ νόμου
... καὶ ὅτι βελτίονος ἀνδρὸς τὸ
τοῖς ἀγράφοις ἢ τοῖς γεγραμμένοις
χρῆσθαι καὶ ἐμμένειν

Further, that justice is real and
beneficial, but not that which (only)
appears (to be just); nor the written
law either, for it does not do *the work*
of the law.... And that it belongs to
the better man to use and to abide by
the unwritten rather than the written
(laws).

Aristotle's phrase, *the work of the law*, is identical to Paul's, except that Aristotle has the second definite article, which makes no difference here.²¹ In context, the expression refers to the *proper* work of the law, that is, the administration of real justice, which often transcends written laws. Aristotle has just argued that we must have recourse to general law and fairness (τῷ κοινῷ νόμῳ καὶ τοῖς ἐπιεικέσιν, I.xv.4–6) as potentially more just than the written law. The general law is according to nature (κατὰ φύσιν) and therefore does not change (cf. I.xiii.2).

If Paul is using Aristotle's phrase here, he is referring to a kind of justice that transcends the limitations of written laws; this is written on the hearts of the Gentiles to whom Paul has been speaking. This would mean that such people have a perception of what is just that goes beyond whatever written laws they might have.²²

Accuse or Even Excuse

In the same context of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, I.xv—the beginning of a section on inartificial proofs (περὶ τῶν ἀτέχνων πίστεων)—the philosopher lists the proofs (laws, witnesses, contracts, torture, and oaths), and says (I.xv.3 [1375a]):

Πρῶτον μὲν οὖν περὶ νόμων
εἴπωμεν, πῶς χρηστέον καὶ
προτρέποντα καὶ ἀποτρέποντα καὶ
κατηγοροῦντα καὶ ἀπολογούμενον ...

First, then, let us speak of the laws,
how one must use (them) when
persuading and dissuading, and
accusing and excusing ...

The person who makes a forensic speech may use the laws, whether written or unwritten, for these tasks, among which are *accusing* and *excusing*: the same two verbs in the same order that Paul uses to describe what these Gentiles' conflicting thoughts (μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν) do.²³ The conscience and

conflicting thoughts, it seems, are the evidence that the work of the law is indeed written on their hearts.²⁴

Is a Pauline Allusion to Aristotle Credible?

It is one thing to show that the three Greek phrases in Romans 2:14–15 look very much like three phrases from Aristotle. It is another thing altogether to show that they *could* represent a deliberate allusion to the thoughts these phrases express in Aristotle. Could Paul—or anyone else—have had access to these texts, or at least to these phrases? Could Paul reasonably have expected anyone in the Roman congregation to understand the allusions? To consider this will require discussions about Paul’s education, about the transmission of Aristotle’s works in the Graeco-Roman world, and about the communicative strategies that Paul displays.

Critical treatments of Paul and Aristotle usually center on the question of whether Paul was familiar with Aristotelian instruction in rhetoric. There is still much disagreement on this point. For example, two studies that are nearly contemporary, both with titles that are almost identical (What Has Aristotle to Do with Paul?), came to opposite conclusions about the usefulness of rhetorical analysis on the basis of Aristotle’s categories.²⁵ Bruce Winter’s argument that Paul had some acquaintance with rhetorical techniques but generally did not use them, preferring the plain style, seems to cover the data.²⁶ If Paul was indeed familiar with rhetorical ideas, it is uncertain whether he received this familiarity from a formal education, through his own study, or simply through absorbing such notions from his surrounding culture.²⁷

As to the matter of the publication of Aristotle’s works, there is evidence that the main center for the study of these works had shifted to Rome in the first century BCE.²⁸ Cicero was familiar with Aristotle, as were Josephus (*Against Apion*, i.176–182), Justin Martyr (*Trypho*, chap. 2), Galen (throughout *On the Natural Powers*, e.g., §§8–9), and Diogenes Laertius (*Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, bk. 5, chap. 1).²⁹ Aristotle’s texts themselves might not have been widely available, but portions of them seem to have been accessible in handbook form.³⁰ Further, it is possible that some of his sayings had worked their way into general use among the educated (along the lines of Shakespeare in English).³¹

It does seem, however, that Paul had some awareness of Aristotelian phrases and used them. Besides the phrases paralleled in Romans 2:14–15, it also appears that Paul used such phrases elsewhere, for example, in Galatians 5:23 and 1 Corinthians 11:14 (see Appendix 3 for examination).

In view of the discussion here, it is reasonable to suppose that in some way or another Paul had access to some sayings of Aristotle. In every case examined here—1 Corinthians 11:14; Galatians 5:23; Romans 2:14–15—Paul uses these phrases in a manner that is consistent with their original sense in Aristotle, although there is no evidence that he is expounding the Greek philosopher. Rather, he finds phrases ready-made to express his meaning, and shows an awareness of their origin. To put it another way, attention to the meaning of the phrase in Aristotle can shed light on Paul’s meaning, and *vice versa*.

Could Paul have reasonably expected anyone in the Roman congregation to understand his allusions? If the availability of Aristotle was as suggested above, and if there were at least some members of the congregation from the educated social strata (a fair possibility),³² then this was a reasonable expectation for Paul. As a comparison, consider that the letter to the Roman Christians is shot through with quotations from and allusions to the Greek Old Testament (LXX), yet the congregation was doubtless composed of people with varying degrees of familiarity with Israel’s Scriptures: cf. Romans 11:13, addressed to Gentiles, among whom there would be new converts who did not know the Scriptures well. Further, Paul’s “olive tree” image surely comes from Jeremiah 11:16, but this might not have been obvious to many of the Gentile believers. Nevertheless, Paul could count on those who did catch his allusions to explain them to the rest of the body.

Other Old Testament Echoes in Romans 2:12–16

Of the several possible Old Testament echoes, the crucial ones for this discussion occur in Romans 2:13, 15.³³

Romans 2:13: Hearing and Doing

In Romans 2:13 Paul contrasts the hearers of the law (οἱ ἀκροαταὶ νόμου) with the doers of the law (οἱ ποιηταὶ νόμου), who alone will be justified (δικαιωθήσονται). These terms do not occur together in the LXX: ἀκροατής appears in Sirach 3:29 and Isaiah 3:3, while ποιητής only appears in 1 Maccabees 2:67. The cognate verb ἀκρόομαι (to listen, hear: Isa. 21:7; Wis. 1:10; Sir. 6:35; 14:23; 21:24) and the noun ἀκρόασις (hearing: 1 Kings 18:26; 2 Kings 4:31; Eccl. 1:8; Isa. 21:7; Sir. 5:11; cf. 1 Sam. 15:22,) likewise do not appear in opposition to *doing* (ποιέω and cognates). The nuance of ἀκρόομαι and cognates is typically *to listen, to heed*, that is, it does not imply hearing (only). The use of ποιητής in 1 Maccabees 2:67 is especially pertinent to our text because it refers to the

doers of the law (οἱ ποιηταὶ τοῦ νόμου), that is, Jews who are deemed faithful to the law of God with true piety.

In the NT, the two terms do appear in contrast, in James 1:22–25. Apparently, then, by the time of the NT writers, the opposition between hearing (only) and doing could be expressed both with the verbs ἀκούω and ποιέω (Matt. 7:24–27; Luke 6:46–49; 8:21) and with the nouns ἀκροατής and ποιητής.

The idea that there is a proper connection between hearing (Hebrew *sh-m-*) and doing (Hebrew *-s-h*) has its roots in passages such as Deuteronomy 6:3:

καὶ ἀκουσον Ἰσραηλ καὶ φύλαξαι
ποιεῖν ὅπως εὖ σοι ἦ καὶ ἵνα
πληθυνθῆτε σφόδρα καθάπερ
ἐλάλησεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς τῶν
πατέρων σου δοῦναί σοι γῆν
ρέουσαν γάλα καὶ μέλι

And hear, O Israel, and guard
yourself to do, that it may go well
with you, and that you may multiply
greatly, as the Lord, the God of your
fathers, has said, to give you a land
flowing with milk and honey

(Cf. also Deut. 5:27; 7:12; 19:9 LXX; 30:12; 31:12; 2 Kings 18:12; Jer. 11:4; 6; Sir. 3:1.) The failure to hear in order to obey appears in Ezekiel 33:31–32:

³¹ἔρχονται πρὸς σέ ὡς συμπορεύεται
λαὸς καὶ κάθηνται ἐναντίον σου
καὶ ἀκούουσιν τὰ ῥήματά σου καὶ
αὐτὰ οὐ μὴ ποιήσουσιν ὅτι ψεῦδος
ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτῶν καὶ ὀπίσω τῶν
μισμαμάτων ἡ καρδία αὐτῶν

³¹And they come to you as a people
comes together, and they sit before
you and they hear your words and
they will not do them; for a lie is in
their mouth and their heart (follows)
after defilements.

³²καὶ γίνῃ αὐτοῖς ὡς φωνὴ ψαλτηρίου
ἡδυφώνου εὐαρμόστου καὶ
ἀκούσονται σου τὰ ῥήματα καὶ οὐ
μὴ ποιήσουσιν αὐτὰ

³²And you are to them like the sound
of a sweet-voiced, well-tuned harp;
and they hear your words and they
will not do them.

When hearing the law and doing the law are in opposition, then the assumed subjects are Jews; the question is whether they simply presume on their privilege as God's people (hearing only) or actually embrace that privilege in faith and true piety (cf. 1 Macc. 2:67). This indicates that Paul is probably invoking this dynamic in Romans 2:13, explaining why (γάρ, "for") all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law (v. 12). The doers of the law are faithful Jews, and they will be justified (δικαιωθήσονται): the future is used, either in the sense of their final vindication (cf. Matt. 12:37), or else as a kind of gnomic future describing what always happens when an occasion offers.³⁴

Romans 2:15: An Echo of the New Covenant?

As indicated above (section 1), those who follow the Christian Gentile interpretation for Romans 2:14–15 generally find an allusion to Jeremiah’s prophecy of a new covenant (MT Jer. 31:31–34; LXX 38:31–34) in the expression in verse 15, the work of the law written on their hearts (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν). This allusion is held to secure the reading that the Gentiles here are Christians. Those who favor the unbelieving Gentile interpretation accordingly reject the allusion.

It does look likely that Paul does indeed allude to the new covenant prophecy; however, that does not of itself entail the Christian Gentile interpretation. The LXX renders Jeremiah’s text (31 [38]:33) as follows:

³³ὅτι αὕτη ἡ διαθήκη ἦν διαθήσομαι
τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ μετὰ τὰς ἡμέρας
ἐκεῖνας φησὶν κύριος διδοὺς δώσω
νόμους μου εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν
καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν γράψω
αὐτούς καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς θεόν
καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μοι εἰς λαόν

³³For this is the covenant that I will
make with the house of Israel after
those days, declares the Lord: I will
(surely) put my laws into their mind,
and write them on their hearts, and I
will be their God, and they shall be
my people.

The wording of Jeremiah 38:33, ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν γράψω αὐτούς [i.e., νόμους μου] (upon their hearts I will write them, i.e., my laws) does seem to come close to that of Romans 2:15.³⁵ The adjective γραπτὸν (written) of Romans 2:15 easily corresponds to the verb γράψω (I will write),³⁶ the dative plural καρδίαις (hearts) as the location of the writing in both texts corresponds, and the singular noun νόμος (law) can be connected to the referent of the pronoun αὐτούς, that is, the plural νόμους (laws), especially since the Hebrew original has the singular *tôrâî* (my law).³⁷

There are some differences, however. One is the preposition governing καρδίαις: Romans 2:15 has ἐν (on), while Jeremiah 38:33 has ἐπὶ (on, upon). The difference is not great, since both are locative expressions and can be explained by supposing that Paul quoted from memory. Another possibility, which is relevant to the overall reading of Romans 2 (see below) is the likelihood that the quotation at Romans 2:24, while technically from Isaiah 52:5 (LXX), also evokes Ezekiel 36:20. This is significant in that Ezekiel 36 is generally acknowledged to contain one of Ezekiel’s new covenant prophecies (vv. 22–38). In the section about the internalization of the law (vv. 26–27), God promises, a new spirit I will put *within you* [LXX ἐν ὑμῖν] ... I will put my Spirit *within you* [LXX ἐν ὑμῖν]. If Paul was indeed alluding to Jeremiah 38:33 from memory, then interference from the companion text in Ezekiel can explain why he used the preposition he did.

The other difference is the fact that Paul wrote of *the work of the law* being written on people's hearts, using an expression unattested in the LXX but known in Aristotle. This opens up the possibility that whatever Paul's purpose might be in alluding to the new covenant, we are not free to suppose without argument that he was giving a straightforward exposition of it. I suggest that he is using the allusion for ironic effect in his whole flow of thought. To support that suggestion, I will briefly discuss what the new covenant prophecies mean in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and argue that Paul uses them in a manner consistent with the prophets' own intent. This is a very large area, and, for the sake of space, I will only outline my analysis.

Christian readers generally take the letter to the Hebrews as implying that the primary reference of the new covenant is the era initiated by Jesus' death and resurrection, with its change of sacraments, dissolution of the church-state nexus (or theocracy) that the law of Moses instituted, and its new openness to people of all ethnicities. This is not the place to examine the use of the prophecy in Hebrews; suffice it to say that none of this list of issues comes up in the course of that letter. More important for the present purpose is that none of the acknowledged new covenant prophecies ever implies that they are addressing any new way in which God's people are to be administered. These acknowledged prophecies are in the MT: Jeremiah 31:27–40; 32:36–44; 50:5 and Ezekiel 11:14–21; 16:59–63; 34:25–31; 36:22–38; 37:26–28.³⁸ These are all set in the context of the Babylonian exile (in some cases, as impending; in others, as already occurring). They all explain that the reason for the exile is the sorry spiritual situation among God's people (specifically, Judah as what is left of Israel) in which people have the privileges of covenant membership but do not embrace those privileges by a living and obedient faith. The purpose of the exile is to purge the unfaithful from the people (cf. Isa. 1:24–28); afterward God will reestablish the survivors in the Promised Land, and bring about a genuine internalization of the law. This will enable Judah to carry out its calling among the nations, as the Gentiles go from blaspheming the God of Israel because of his people's unfaithfulness (Ezek. 36:20, 22) to knowing the true God (Ezek. 36:36). The coming of the heir of David (Jer. 33:14–17; Ezek. 34:23–24) is closely tied to this: his task is to lead God's people in living faithfully in order to bring light to the Gentiles. (This is the only sense in which the prophecies are Messianic in their orientation.)

A further feature of these prophecies is what we may call their ethnocentricity—that is, they are focused on what God will do for the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jer. 31:27, 31, cf. vv. 36–37; 50:4); they are also focused on the return from Babylon as a key event in the outworking of the promises. The blessing-to-the-Gentiles theme comes in as a consequence of this (Ezek. 36:36; 37:28).

The return from Babylon, coming in waves as it did, is portrayed as *part* of the fulfillment of this line of prophecy. Indeed, when the postexilic prophet Zechariah wants to reassure the restoration community of God's continuing commitment to them, he reiterates, "they shall be my people and I shall be their God" (Zech. 8:8), using the words found in Jeremiah 32:38; Ezekiel 11:20; 36:28; 37:23 (cf. Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 37:27). Judah's willingness to accept the reforms under Ezra and Nehemiah would be a further outworking of the promises, but nothing corresponds to "they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest" (Jer. 31:34)—the full remedy to the initial problem of presuming on privilege instead of embracing it. (The pious would probably say that it awaits an eschatological fulfillment.) Near the end of Paul's discussion of the future for Israel (Rom. 9–11), he cites Isaiah 59:20–21 (Rom. 11:26–27). Some specialists think that Paul incorporated a part of Jeremiah 31:33 into this quotation (this will be my covenant with them). If that is so, and if Paul's expectation in Romans 11:13–32 really is that the remedy will come to the Jewish people as a whole at some unknown future time, which in turn would bring further blessing to the Gentiles (both of which seem likely to me; see below), then it does appear that Paul read this cluster of prophecies in the way I have described them.

It is not difficult to imagine a Jewish person in Paul's day who knows all this and reckons himself a participant in this new covenant;³⁹ perhaps when Paul addresses the Jew in Romans 2:17, he is personifying the whole people.⁴⁰ Because later in Romans 2 Paul will assert that Israel has not fulfilled its calling of being a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness (i.e., to the Gentiles), it follows that Paul did not agree that his countrymen as a whole were in fact properly enjoying the new covenant. (He certainly allowed for individual exceptions.) I conclude, then, that Paul is using his new covenant allusion with ironic intent. This will factor in to a good reading for the argument of Romans 1–3, as argued below.

An Integrated Reading of Romans 1–3

One approach to the next step would be to show how the results so far contribute to a coherent reading of Romans 2:12–16. However, because there are so many decisions to be made about so many details, it will be better to argue for a flow of thought for these first three chapters of Romans, as a setting for this small section. To be sure, the process is an interactive one: the perception of the larger picture affects the perception of the smaller section, while the details of the smaller section may require a revision of the larger picture.⁴¹

The Goal of Romans as a Whole

I begin with the purpose that Paul had in writing, in order to see how (or whether) these chapters serve that purpose. Because there is so much disagreement among Pauline scholars over the reasons for Romans,⁴² I am aware that I risk their ire by observing that the letter wears its occasion and purpose on its surface: Paul intends to visit Rome, both to spend time with them in mutual encouragement (1:9–15) and to receive their help for his planned mission to Spain (15:22–29).⁴³ The reflections on the Old Testament story and expectations that begin the letter (1:1–7) and conclude it (15:8–13) show that Paul aims to accomplish his purpose by showing the Roman believers where they fit in the big story of God’s work in the world so that they will act accordingly.

The introductory paragraph (Rom. 1:1–6) sets the tone. Here Paul describes the gospel of God (presumably the same as what he calls my gospel in 2:16) as the announcement that Jesus, by virtue of his resurrection, has been installed as the promised Son of God (i.e., the king in the line of David),⁴⁴ and has thereby inaugurated the long-awaited time in which the Gentiles will be brought to the obedience of faith (cf. also 16:26). That is, the gospel (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) in this letter deals with the overarching narrative of what some call the *historia salutis*: this is the story in which God has revealed his righteousness (1:16–17), a term that here must be stressing God’s faithfulness to keep his promises.⁴⁵ It is this story and its implications that Paul wishes to discuss among the Roman Christians who include Greeks and barbarians (1:14–15)⁴⁶ as well as some Jews.⁴⁷

In Romans 15:8–13, Paul cites several Old Testament passages that express the desire and expectation that the Gentiles will come to know the true God (Ps. 18:49; Deut. 32:43 LXX; Ps. 117:1), that is, that Israel’s calling would be carried out (Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:6). He caps this catena by quoting Isaiah 11:10, which clarifies that it is under the rule of the Davidic Messiah that Israel will finally succeed in bringing light to the nations.

In 15:14–21, Paul describes his own ministry to the Gentiles, no doubt seeing it as having a special place in the unfolding of God’s plan for the Gentile world (cf. 1:5–6; 16:25–27).⁴⁸ This sense of what time it is in the overarching story is the context for Paul’s intended mission to Spain (15:22–32)—a place that Paul may well have taken to be the end of the earth (Isa. 49:6; cf. Acts 13:47).⁴⁹ Within that same passage, Paul also speaks of the relief offering for impoverished Jewish Christians in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25–27), which would certainly cement the unity of Jewish and Gentile Christians.

It is within this understanding of the present as the time the prophets had promised that Paul addresses the question of his fellow Jews who are not Christians

(chapters 9–11). The present era is, to Paul, the time during which the fullness of the Gentiles will come in (11:25); and although there is controversy about the proper interpretation of *all Israel will be saved* (11:26), it makes the most sense in the light of Paul’s reading of the prophets to suppose that he anticipates a future conversion of the Jews (probably to be followed by further blessing to the Gentile world: vv. 12, 15).⁵⁰

Paul has general moral instructions for the believers’ response to *the mercies of God* (12:1) in chapters 12–13. He offers more specific instructions in 14:1–15:7 that deal with the weak (14:1) and the strong (15:1), which seems straightforwardly to refer to Christians with strongly Jewish scruples about observing boundary markers (food, 14:2; special days, 14:5) and those who do not.⁵¹ The main point of Paul’s admonition to them is that they must live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together they may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—which, in view of the Scripture citations that follow, requires that Jewish and Gentile Christians display their unity by joining in common worship rather than by forming separate congregations based on their affinities. These special instructions can be seen to flow directly from Paul’s view of what time it is in God’s overarching story.

Fitting Romans 1–3 into the Whole Letter

I will now argue that Romans 1–3 serve the overall plan of Paul’s letter to the Romans by setting the historical stage for the gospel (as it is defined in 1:1–6; see above). He introduces the section by asserting that in the gospel God’s righteousness is revealed (1:16–17), and places that against the revealing of God’s wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (1:18).

Students of Romans debate over whether in 1:18–32 Paul is describing the Gentile world in general, or at least the Graeco-Roman world with which he was familiar. In such a debate, Paul’s claims seem to be overstated because not all Gentiles were like this (and 2:14–15 as commonly interpreted seem to conflict with Paul’s sweeping accusations).⁵² However, it is probably simpler to make two moves in reading this section: first, we should notice the predominance of past tense verbs in 1:21–32, which indicates that Paul is telling a story, narrating specific events; indeed, this narrative sounds a great deal, in tone, like that of Genesis 6:1–7, or, more broadly, Genesis 1–11 (see Appendix 4). The second move is to allow Paul to speak in generalities, like the Old Testament authors do, without supposing that this means to exclude all consideration of the fine structure.⁵³

In such a setting, Paul addresses anyone who might agree with him in his moral revulsion (2:1). Paul here simply refers to “O man, every one of you who

judges,” without saying who this might be (whether Jew, morally sensitive pagan, or both). Nevertheless, it will become clear as Paul proceeds that however encompassing the category of 2:1 might be in theory, the main aim of this chapter is to explain that the Jews, whose calling was to be God’s answer to human sin, had not carried out that calling (Gen. 12:1–3; cf. the allusion to Gen. 1–11 above).⁵⁴ This is clear from the way that 2:17 resumes the second person singular address (from 2:1–5) and specifies that Paul is speaking to the Jew (whether a specific one, or the whole people personified).⁵⁵ The Jewish people were to carry out their priesthood to the nations, especially by their faithfulness to God—that is, by personal embrace of the grace that was on offer in God’s covenants (cf. Deut. 4:6–8), which would be called the circumcision of the heart (Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 9:25–26; cf. Ezek. 44:7). That is, they were never to presume upon their privileges as God’s chosen people but were to make use of those privileges for the sake of the world. They were not to presume that God’s commitment to preserve the *people* (a corporate notion) entailed a similar commitment to preserve the *persons* (particular members), irrespective of their covenant authenticity.⁵⁶

That this is Paul’s theme is clear from 2:24, where he quotes an Old Testament text, “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” Although Isaiah 52:5 LXX supplies the actual text of this citation, many agree with the Nestle-Aland cross-reference, which adds Ezekiel 36:20 to the background of likely sources. This is sound because Ezekiel makes it clear that it was the unfaithfulness of Israel/Judah that defiled God’s name (which would explain why the name was blasphemed).⁵⁷

In this context, the conclusion of 2:28–29 sounds familiar:

²⁸οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἐν τῷ φανερωῖ Ἰουδαίος
ἐστὶν οὐδὲ ἡ ἐν τῷ φανερωῖ ἐν σαρκὶ
περιτομή,

²⁸For no one is a Jew who is merely
one outwardly, nor is circumcision
outward and physical.

²⁹ἀλλ’ ὁ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαίος,
καὶ περιτομὴ καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι
οὐ γράμματι, οὐ ὁ ἔπαινος οὐκ ἐξ
ἀνθρώπων ἀλλ’ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ.

²⁹But a Jew is one inwardly, and
circumcision is a matter of the heart,
by the Spirit, not by the letter. His
praise is not from man but from God.

The ESV has added the word *merely* in verse 28, and rightly so: The goal here is to explain who is the real Jew, that is, the one who actually displays the Old Testament ideal.⁵⁸ It strikes the Old Testament specialist as odd to find that some New Testament specialists call this a redefinition of the people of God.⁵⁹ This is instead a restatement of an OT principle, used to explain why the OT story looked as it did, that is, the people who were called to be the solution ended up being part of the problem.

This flows into 3:1–8, where Paul reaffirms that there is still an advantage to being a Jew; but that advantage was never intended to work automatically. Paul finishes the preparatory part of his presentation in 3:9–20, with a catena of Old Testament passages about human sinfulness (excerpts from Pss. 14; 5; 140; 10; Isa. 59:7–8). In light of the Old Testament story that he has summarized, it is no surprise that most of these focus especially on wickedness among God’s own people, due to their unfaithfulness to the covenants; the only exception is Psalm 14:1–3, which probably refers to Gentile oppressors.⁶⁰ That is, we have what a Jew would have considered the expected situation in which the Greeks are under the power of sin, and the horrifying result that the Jews as well (who had the advantages of Romans 3:1–8 but failed to embrace them) are under the power of sin.⁶¹

The transition of 3:21, but *now* (νυνὶ δὲ) brings us to the time of Paul’s mission: the one true God, who is the Creator of all, is the God to whom both Jews and Gentiles are accountable and who has acted to bring both Jews and Gentiles under his care through their faith in Jesus Christ (3:29–31).

This way of reading finds support from Paul’s discussion of Abraham in Romans 4: Abraham is the predecessor and father in faith to both believing Jews and Gentiles.

Fitting Romans 2:12–16 into the Whole of Romans 1–3

If this is the argument of Romans 1–3, how does the section, 2:12–16, fit into it?

To begin with, 2:1–11 make it clear, in line with the flow of chapters 1–3, that no privileged status (e.g., as a Jew) can deliver anyone from God’s judgment apart from repentance (2:4), true faith, and patience in well-doing (2:7). In this sense, God shows no partiality, whether in judgment or reward (2:11; cf. 10:12; Acts 10:34).⁶²

Verse 12 continues this theme with its connector *for* (γάρ) elaborating the idea. Those who have sinned without the law are doubtless Gentiles, and they will perish without the law, because they have not received its advantages. Those who have sinned under the law are surely Jews who are unfaithful to the covenants, presuming on their privileges; they will be judged by the law (cf. vv. 5–6). Verse 13 continues this theme further (for, γάρ), insisting again on the principle that privileges (hearing) that are not acted upon do not benefit anyone (see part 5a above), least of all at the day of judgment (cf. v. 6).⁶³

Verses 14–16 continue this point (for, γάρ), namely God’s evenhanded treatment for all mankind. Recognizing the echoes from Aristotle will help us to follow

Paul's argument. It makes little difference whether we take the dative φύσει (by nature) with the phrase before it (Gentiles who *by nature* do not have the law) or with the phrase after it (*by nature* do what the law requires), although the latter is more likely (see Appendix 1). The point is that there are people with an inner monitor or regulator that guides their behavior. Another way to put this is to say that by their behavior, they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, that is, they have a perception of what is just that goes beyond whatever written laws they might have. For such people, their conscience, which also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts, which accuse or even excuse, are further evidence that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Verse 16, in referring to the day when God judges the secrets of men, reiterates the theme of final judgment that recurs in these chapters (2:5–6, possibly 13; 3:6; cf. 14:10). That is, however hidden the truth about human hearts may be for however long, the truth will finally come to light: Paul's gospel narrative makes clear that the whole story is headed to this end.

If Paul is indeed echoing Aristotle here, then it makes sense to take these people as Gentiles without any contact with the law of Moses (those who are ἀνόμωος, verse 12)—that is, for Paul, Aristotle is testimony to a widespread moral sense, and what would be Paul's rhetorical goal in making such allusions? To begin with, as noted above, some see the allowance for moral pagans in 2:14–15 to be at odds with the sweeping denunciations of 1:18–32. It is unlikely that Paul would have seen it that way, however. If he derived the pattern for the denunciation from the Old Testament,⁶⁴ he might well have latched on to the Old Testament's ready allowance for pagans who do what is morally good.⁶⁵

The Old Testament has several ways of portraying Gentiles who show a sound moral sense. To begin with, there is the allowance of moral perception—even to the point of adopting sound insights into the authorized religion of Israel (Ex. 18, the advice of Jethro; Prov. 31:1–9).⁶⁶ If it was the case that New Testament *Haustafeln* derived something of their form and content from Hellenistic analogues, this would reflect a similar outlook. Certainly the stress on a good reputation among unbelievers (e.g., 1 Tim. 3:7; 1 Peter 2:12–15) assumes some level of moral perception among their neighbors, as does the task of the governing authorities (Rom. 13:1–7).⁶⁷

Second, there are clear instances in which the biblical authors describe the moral performance of the Gentiles as a way of contrasting that with the moral underachievement of some Israelites; for example, Genesis 12:18–19, Pharaoh upbraids Abram on moral grounds; 20:1–18, Abimelech pleads innocence and upbraids Abraham; cf. 21:22–34; 26:6–11, 23–33; 38:26, Judah acknowledges that Tamar is more righteous than he; 1 Samuel 6:1–9, the Philistine clergy show deeper

insight into God's presence than the Israelites had done;⁶⁸ Jeremiah 39:11–14, Nebuchadnezzar showed more concern for Jeremiah's well-being than Zedekiah had done; Ezekiel 5:6–8, the people of Jerusalem have not even acted according to the rules of the nations around them; Jonah 1:11–14, the Phoenician sailors do not want to be guilty of Jonah's blood. The implication is that one had a right to expect more of the Israelite. This is probably Paul's implication in 1 Corinthians 5:1 (sexual immorality of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans).

Third, the Old Testament describes Gentiles who come under the sway of the God of Israel, who show more zeal and faithfulness than the Israelites themselves: Joshua 2:1–14, Rahab sees more clearly than many Israelites; Ruth 1:11–12, Ruth clings faithfully to Naomi; 1 Samuel 7:1–2, the people of Kiriath Jearim, a Gibeonite town (Josh. 9:17), care for the ark more respectfully than the Israelites of Beth-Shemesh; 2 Samuel 15:18–22, David's foreign bodyguard shows more loyalty than most Israelites; 1 Kings 17:8–16, the widow of Zarephath acknowledges something that most Israelites do not, cf. verse 24 with 19:36–37; Jeremiah 38:7–13, Ebed-Melech, an Ethiopian eunuch serving in the king's house, acts to save Jeremiah from the muddy cistern into which the Judean leaders had cast him; cf. 39:15–18; Jonah 1:16; 3:5–10, the Phoenician sailors and the citizens of Nineveh show more faith toward the Lord than Israel;⁶⁹ compare with Luke 4:25–27.

Paul's rhetorical purpose in Romans 2:14–15, with his allusions to Aristotle, is to evoke the second motif mentioned above, namely that in which a Gentile outperforms one of Abraham's descendants in the moral realm. This seems to be the force of 2:26–27:

²⁶ἐὰν οὖν ἡ ἀκροβυστία τὰ
δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου φυλάσσει, οὐχ
ἡ ἀκροβυστία αὐτοῦ εἰς περιτομὴν
λογισθήσεται;

²⁶So, if a man who is uncircumcised
keeps the precepts of the law, will not
his uncircumcision be regarded as
circumcision?

²⁷καὶ κρινεῖ ἡ ἐκ φύσεως
ἀκροβυστία τὸν νόμον τελοῦσα σὲ
τὸν διὰ γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς
παραβάτην νόμου.

²⁷Then he who is physically
uncircumcised but keeps the law
will condemn you who have the
written code and circumcision but
break the law.

The performance of the uncircumcised person puts into relief the circumcised person's failure to embrace the covenant properly. That is, by citing the performance of Gentiles, Paul is aiming to show that the vaunted new-covenant experience of his fellow Jews does not amount to much and certainly does not fulfill Jeremiah's (or Ezekiel's) words.

Although verse 26, by this reading, may seem to imply that the moral pagan may expect to be justified, that is a hasty conclusion: after all, circumcision is for Paul a position of privilege but not a guarantee of personal justification (cf. v. 25).⁷⁰ Further, Gentile converts to the Lord were to be circumcised in the OT, so the man who is uncircumcised would not be a Gentile convert to Judaism (cf. the third OT category). When Paul speaks of Christian Gentiles, who remained uncircumcised (a major point for Paul), he says that they can make jealous his fellow Jews (11:14), and this makes it unlikely (or at least not obvious) that Paul is referring to such Gentiles.

Conclusion

The echoes of Aristotle, together with the flow of thought in Romans 1–3, favor a version of the unbelieving Gentiles interpretation. Paul, like the OT, is using the existence of such people to show the reason that the Jews had not brought light to the Gentiles; namely, they had not personally embraced the covenant. (Like the OT, Paul was speaking of the people as a whole, not of particular members who had certainly done so.) Paul’s overall goal in Romans 1–3 is to recount the OT story to explain how, properly read, it led to an expectation of the arrival of the Messiah and of how he would finally bring blessing to the whole world (the expectation that Paul’s gospel met).

Does Paul’s argument support or presuppose a kind of natural law? The answer is yes it does but not by virtue of the terms used (such as *by nature* and *conscience*, which are less distinctively Stoic than some students think; see Appendix 2). Rather, the OT motif that Paul is evoking, in which moral pagans outshine unfaithful Israelites implies a view of human nature in which moral perception (and sometimes performance) still remains from the original created state. Paul does not develop this idea, but it follows from this study that his notion of universal human sinfulness does not forbid Christians who accept Paul’s apostolic authority from developing a version of it.

Appendix 1: “By Nature” in Romans 2:14

There are two possible explanations for the role of the dative φύσει (by nature) in Romans 2:14, ὅταν γὰρ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν: both take the dative as an adverbial (either means, cause, or reference), but the first and probably more common takes it with the following verb ποιῶσιν: when they *by nature* do. The second explanation takes the adverbial with the participial phrase τὰ μὴ ἔχοντα: who *by nature* do not have.

The arguments in favor of one analysis or the other depend on both syntax (word order) and the lexical semantics of φύσις.

Syntactical analysis favors the first explanation because φύσει occurs outside the attributive phrase.⁷¹ The unambiguous way for Paul to ensure the second analysis would be to write τὰ φύσει μὴ ἔχοντα (or τὰ μὴ φύσει ἔχοντα if the stress is on *not by nature*). Compare Galatians 4:8, τοῖς φύσει μὴ οὐδὲν θεοῖς that *by nature* are not gods). Therefore, it is no surprise that a native Greek speaker, Chrysostom, takes the first analysis for granted.⁷²

The BDAG lexicon gives four senses of φύσις that appear in the NT, which can be paraphrased as follows: (1) the conditions or circumstances as determined by birth; (2) the natural characteristic of something; (3) the regular order of things; and (4) a natural kind, creature. These senses correspond to the senses listed in LSJM, although the wider Greek literature adds another sense, which is found in the philosophers that we might simply call nature.⁷³

It is well-known that φύσις does not appear anywhere in the LXX where there is a Hebrew original extant; in fact, it is limited to Wisdom (7:20; 13:1; 19:20), 3 Maccabees (3:29), and 4 Maccabees (1:20; 5:8, 9, 25; 13:27; 15:13, 25; 16:3). These instances employ BDAG senses 2, 3, and 4. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the NT writers use the word in a fashion that is compatible with what we find in the wider Greek world.

The discussion of C. S. Lewis is helpful here.⁷⁴ He observes that in ancient Greek, φύσις commonly means (like Latin *natura* and Germanic *kind*) “sort or character or ‘description.’” Hence, *by nature* will tend to mean, “by virtue of the kind of thing something is.” The Gentile, then, is the uncircumcision by nature (ἡ ἐκ φύσεως ἀκροβυστία; ESV: he who is physically uncircumcised)—that is, his uncircumcision is by virtue of the kind of parents he has (which shows how this word can be used to refer to what the circumstances of birth provide; cf. Gal. 2:15). These adverbial uses might seem to favor taking φύσει here with the participial clause (the Gentiles do not have the law by virtue of the kind of parents they have), but there are also examples of φύσει in the sense of by virtue of inherent characteristics (Gal. 4:8; Wisdom 13:1), which can modify the verb ποιῶσιν: they do what the law requires by virtue of the characteristics inherent in being human.⁷⁵ Paul himself does not offer an exact parallel to this latter explanation, but Philo does: in *Special Laws* ii.69 he says, “for servants are free *by nature* [φύσει], no human being is *naturally* [ἐκ φύσεως] a slave.”⁷⁶ Here the adverbial refers to the characteristics inherent in being human.⁷⁷

Where does this leave the discussion? Semantically, φύσει is intelligible with either syntactical analysis, and the basic argument advocated in the body of this essay will still be the same. Syntax seems to favor the conventional analysis, which associates φύσει with the verb ποιῶσιν.⁷⁸

Appendix 2: Specifically Stoic Notions in Romans 2:14–15?

There are many reasons why students of the NT have sought parallels between the Stoics and the NT. The early church apparently seemed to outsiders as a kind of philosophical school, and many leaders fostered this impression to protect the churches against persecution. The Stoic school had great appeal in the Roman world, and Josephus used that appeal in describing the Pharisees (*Life*, 12; cf. *Against Apion*, ii.168). Further, Acts 17:22–34 seems to present Paul as making his appeal especially to the Stoics in Athens. In Paul’s time, the Stoics were perhaps the chief proponents of the argument from design,⁷⁹ and the speech in Athens addresses that idea with phrases from the Jewish Scriptures.

Many who have understood Paul to be arguing on the basis of some kind of natural-law reasoning in Romans 2:14–15 have proposed connections with Stoic ideas on the subject, even going so far as to suggest that these ideas *influenced* Paul. There are at least three fatal difficulties with this line of argument: (1) Paul’s terms here are not indisputably Stoic; (2) the Stoics were not the only ones who had an idea of natural law; and (3) it is probably incorrect to say without further warrant that overlap of terminology reveals ideological influence, as opposed to, say, the terminology providing a convenient way of expressing biblical concepts.⁸⁰

It was once common to refer to Paul’s use of the term συνείδησις (conscience) as Stoic, implying that the Stoic ideas had influenced Paul.⁸¹ One still finds such comments,⁸² even though, in 1955, C. A. Pierce argued that this word comes not from the Stoics or any other technical philosophical usage but from Greek popular thought.⁸³ Although it has been necessary to qualify some of Pierce’s results,⁸⁴ the basic point that the term originated not in Stoicism but in popular usage, can stand.

Finally, the reference to nature has been taken as evidence of a Stoic origin for Paul’s thoughts here. Certainly the Stoics stressed that the virtuous life is living in agreement with nature,⁸⁵ but Paul’s use of the term φύσις (as discussed above) is not limited to the Stoics’ way of speaking. Indeed, Paul would likely have rejected emphatically the way Stoics virtually deified nature.

John Martens has argued that Paul's contrast of natural relations (ἡ φυσικὴ χρῆσις) with those that are contrary to nature (ἡ παρὰ φύσιν) in Romans 1:26–27 has cast the language in Stoic technical terms, and this therefore should help us to see Stoicism as the proper backdrop of 2:14–15.⁸⁶ The difficulty with this is that the terms κατὰ φύσιν (according to nature) and παρὰ φύσιν (contrary to nature) are more widespread than the Stoics, appearing as early as Plato (*Phaedrus*, 251a; *Laws*, i.773b–c, viii.841d).⁸⁷ Josephus uses the term κατὰ φύσιν to describe the only kind of sexual relation the law recognizes as proper (*Against Apion*, ii. 199). The Stoic technical sense of Nature as a purposeful force is probably not what lies behind these expressions: rather, the ordinary sense of nature as the characteristic of something, due the kind of thing it is (in this case male or female), does a far better job of explaining these expressions. The necessity of male and female for reproduction is what makes heterosexual relations natural.⁸⁸ Likewise, Martens' suggestion that τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα (what ought not to be done) in Romans 1:28 is a Stoic technical expression must be qualified.⁸⁹ First, Martens notes that Paul's wording is a slight mistake in his use of this term, the proper wording being παρὰ τὸ καθήκον. This, though, may just as well indicate that Paul was not using the term technically. Second, the verb καθήκω, including its substantival participle τὸ καθήκον / τὰ καθήκοντα, is well attested in the LXX in the sense to be fitting, proper,⁹⁰ and Paul's usage is quite consistent with what he found in the LXX.⁹¹

Certainly the Stoics had a notion of natural law, although there is some dispute about what exactly that notion looked like in the original Stoics.⁹² By the time of the NT, however, Stoic-influenced writers such as Cicero and Philo had a version of the doctrine that is recognizable to us today.⁹³ There is no reason to doubt that Paul, like other Christians and Jews, used this doctrine as a point of contact in his apologetics to the Graeco-Roman world.⁹⁴ The body of this article has already argued that Paul's main influence for his doctrine is the motif in the OT itself. Further, this topic is not limited to the Stoics (as already documented here), and there is no reason to believe that Paul used the technical terms of the Stoic teachers.

It makes far better sense to suppose that (at least some of) the words that Paul used were “in the air,” as part of popular conversation in the Graeco-Roman world and that Paul capitalized on this conversation.

Appendix 3: Other Pauline Citations of Aristotle

It will help the credibility of my case for echoes of Aristotle in Romans if we can show that there are similar echoes that illuminate other places in Paul. There are two good candidates. The first is Galatians 5:23:

κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος. against such things there is no law.

These are identical words to the expression in Aristotle’s *Politics*, III.viii.2 (1284a, 13):

κατὰ δὲ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστι νόμος, αὐτοὶ γὰρ εἰσι νόμος *but there can be no law dealing with such men as those described [i.e., with men distinguished in outstanding virtue], for they are themselves a law*

This may suggest that the pronoun τοιούτων in Galatians 5:23 be taken as a masculine, *such people*, rather than a neuter, *such things*. Bruce draws the parallel with Aristotle, explaining Aristotle’s passage as follows:⁹⁵

In Aristotle (*Pol.* 3.13, 1284a) the statement κατὰ δὲ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστι νόμος is used of persons who surpass their fellows in virtue (ἀρετή) like gods among men. They do not need to have their actions regulated by laws; on the contrary, they themselves constitute a law (a standard) for others (αὐτοὶ γὰρ εἰσι νόμος).

This is a possible reading of Aristotle’s passage, though the context is addressing the question of people whose excellence makes them stand out from the general population. Thus, Aristotle may well have been saying that the law does not regulate such people; they instead regulate themselves (cf. 1 Tim. 1:9).⁹⁶

Bruce may be right when he says, “Paul probably does not quote directly or consciously from Aristotle: the saying may have passed into proverbial currency, like many phrases from Shakespeare or the AV which are frequently quoted without awareness of their source. However, he offers no evidence for this explanation.”

In 1 Corinthians 11:14–15a, Paul makes the following argument:⁹⁷

¹⁴οὐδὲ ἡ φύσις αὐτῆ διδάσκει ὑμᾶς ὅτι ἀνὴρ μὲν εἰς κομᾶ ἀτιμία αὐτῷ ἔστιν, ¹⁵γυνὴ δὲ εἰς κομᾶ δόξα αὐτῇ ἔστιν;

¹⁴Does not *nature itself teach* you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, ¹⁵but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory?

The phrase ἡ φύσις αὐτὴ διδάσκει is almost identical to a phrase in Aristotle's *Poetics*, xxiv.12 (1460a):

<p>διὸ οὐδεὶς μακρὰν σύστασιν ἐν ἄλλῳ πεποίηκεν ἢ τῷ ἡρώῳ, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ εἶπομεν αὐτὴ ἡ φύσις διδάσκει τὸ ἀρμόττον αὐτῇ διαιεῖσθαι</p>	<p>So no one has made a long composition in (any meter) other than the heroic hexameter, but, just as we said, nature itself teaches the meter to be chosen that fits it.</p>
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Except for a slight variation in word order (the location of the intensive pronoun αὐτή, although in both phrases it is in predicate position with respect to its noun), the two phrases from Paul and Aristotle are the same. They seem even to have the same meaning: *nature itself teaches* is apparently an idiom for *it is a matter of common observation*. This is clear from Aristotle's reference to *just as we said*, which is referring to the beginning of his section on the heroic hexameter (xxiv.8 [1459b]) where this meter has been shown fitting from experience (ἀπὸ τῆς πείρας). This means that in this expression Aristotle is not using *nature* (φύσις) in any strongly philosophical sense. Paul's argument makes good sense if we take the expression in the same way: It is a matter of common observation in the Graeco-Roman world that long hair is a disgrace for a man and a glory for a woman.⁹⁸

Appendix 4: Storyline in Romans 1:16–32

In the body of the essay, I have mentioned my view that Romans 1:16–32—especially verses 21–32—can be treated as a narrative, a condensed telling of Genesis 1–11, with evocations especially of creation and flood. Similar narratives, covering the same time period, include Wisdom 10:1–4 (cf. 14:12–31 on the origin and effect of idolatry) and Josephus, *Antiquities*, I.ii–vi.⁹⁹ In this appendix, I give my grammatical rationale for reading this passage that way.

Studies of the grammatical patterns of NT narratives show that typically the author uses the aorist (usually indicative, sometimes circumstantial participle) to convey the main line of his narrative sequence (the storyline); this kind of study goes by the name *discourse analysis* or *textlinguistics*.¹⁰⁰ When viewed in this light, it appears that Romans 1:16–32 has a basic storyline with introduction and conclusion paragraphs surrounding it.¹⁰¹

Romans 1:16–32, Analysis and Comments

In the analysis that follows, I will use italics for words in the text for which I have a note and underline the verbs that convey the main storyline. The English text will suffice for our purposes here.

(1:16–17) Preface to Chapters 1–4

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the *gospel*, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the *righteousness of God* is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

Comments:

Verse 16: *gospel*. See 1:1–6, defining it as the announcement of the new stage in the story.

Verse 17: *righteousness of God*. In view of the definition of *gospel*, this must mean God’s righteousness, his faithfulness to keep his promises (especially to bless the world by way of Abraham’s family).

(1:18–20) Introduction to 1:18–32

¹⁸For the *wrath of God* is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and *unrighteousness* of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the *creation* of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Comments:

Verse 18: *wrath of God*. Cf. Genesis 6:8 LXX, where God was angry (ἐθυμώθη) that he had made man.

Verse 18: *unrighteousness*. Cf. Genesis 6:11, 13 LXX, where the earth was filled with unrighteousness (ἀδικία).

Verse 20: Probable theological reflection on the creation account (Genesis 1).

Further connection to the flood story: Noah was a righteous (δίκαιος) person, Genesis 6:9 LXX; cf. the righteous person in Romans 1:17.

(1:21–23) Begin the Storyline

²¹For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile (ἐμταιώθησαν) in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened (ἐσκοτίσθη). ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools (ἐμωράνθησαν), ²³and exchanged (ἔλλαξαν) the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal *man* and *birds* and *animals* and *creeping things*.

Comments:

Verse 23: *man ... birds ... animals ... creeping things*. Terms from Genesis 1:24, 26 LXX.

(1:24–25) Second Story Paragraph

²⁴Therefore God gave them up (παρέδωκεν) in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Comments:

Verse 25: Probably an explanation and amplification, rather than part of the storyline (likewise vv. 26b–27, 29–31)—even though there are aorist verbs.

(1:26–27) Third Story Paragraph

²⁶For this reason God gave them up (παρέδωκεν) to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Comments:

Verses 26b–27: See note on verse 25.

(1:28–31) Fourth Story Paragraph

²⁸And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up (παρέδωκεν) to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Comments:

Verses 29–31: See note on verse 25.

(1:32) Final Paragraph: The Result of the Events

³²Though they know God’s decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Notes

1. I am therefore making a different kind of argument than that of Peter Frick, “Johannine Soteriology and Aristotelian Philosophy: A Hermeneutical Suggestion on Reading John 3,16 and 1 John 4,9,” *Biblica* 88, no. 3 (2007): 415–21; Frick does not contend that the Johannine author had Aristotle in mind, only that Aristotelian categories can be helpful tools for analysis.
2. However, J. J. Wettstein, *Novum Testamentum Graecum* (1752; repr., Graz, Austria: Akademischen Druck und Verlagsanstalt, 1962), does point to some relevant texts (2:32–33, on Rom. 2:14–15).
3. A short summary of views appears in Klyne R. Snodgrass, “Justification by Grace—to the Doers: An Analysis of the Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul,” *New Testament Studies* 32, no. 1 (1986): 72–93, at 73. I agree with many of his points, though unlike Snodgrass, I do not dismiss the views that I oppose as “ways of evading the text.”
4. Advocates of this position include the commentaries of Meyer, Sanday and Headlam, Dodd, Barrett, Käseman, Dunn, Fitzmyer, Moo, Schreiner, Wilckens, Talbert, and Lohse; cf. James Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 44–45; Friedrich Kuhr, “Römer 2 14f und die Verheissung bei Jeremia 31 31ff,” *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 55, nos. 3–4 (1964): 243–61. This goes back at least as far as John Chrysostom (*Homilies on Romans*, no. v), and probably to Origen (as cited in G. Bray, *Romans Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 67a).
5. Probably the most thorough argument for this position comes from Simon Gathercole, “A Law unto Themselves: The Gentiles in Romans 2.14–15 Revisited,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 85 (2002), 27–49. Allies include the commentaries of Cranfield and Jewett; cf. N. T. Wright, “The Law in Romans 2,” in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996), 131–50 (at 143–46).
6. An exception is John L. McKenzie, “Natural Law in the New Testament,” *Biblical Research* 9 (1964): 3–13, at 7. He takes Jeremiah to be referring to a direct communication of the law, which seems an odd notion to attribute either to Paul or to Jeremiah (see below); cf. as well Fitzmyer’s commentary, 311.

7. Ramiz Atallah, “The Objective Witness to Conscience: An Egyptian Parallel to Romans 2:15,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 18, no. 3 (1994): 204–13. This essay was first published in *Themelios* 10, no. 3 (1974).
8. There is a Loeb edition of reconstructed fragments of Manetho, based on citations in ancient authors; the editor is W. G. Waddell (1940). Cf. also Gerald P. Verbrugge and John M. Wickersham, *Berosus and Manetho, Introduced and Translated: Native Traditions in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996). Herodotus describes the customs and history of Egypt in book 2 of his *Histories*.
9. For more on συνείδησις (conscience) in the NT, see Appendix 2.
10. Arthur Gibson, *Biblical Semantic Logic* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981), refers to “a modal fallacy, that of promoting possibility to necessity without empirical or logical warrant” (p. 31). See the brief discussion in C. John Collins, *Science and Faith: Friends or Foes?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 25–26.
11. Mentioned in Collins, *Science and Faith*, 428; cf. also Ian Barbour, *Religion in an Age of Science* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 34–35.
12. Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale, 1989), 29–32. Cf. the citation and comment in C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2006), 30–31.
13. Timothy Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant to Circumcision of the Heart: Pauline Intertextual Exegesis in Romans 2:17–29* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 60–65.
14. Robert Renehan, “Classical Greek Quotations in the New Testament,” in *The Heritage of the Early Church: Essays in Honor of the Very Reverend Georges Vasilievich Florovsky*, ed. David Neiman and Margaret Schatkin (Roma: Pontificum Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1973), 17–46, discusses what he calls “verbal echoes and thought recurrences” on pages 21–28. However, since he lacks criteria for establishing such echoes, his examples are not often persuasive.
15. For the sake of this discussion, I will cite Bible texts from the ESV, and classical texts from the Loeb edition, with the English adapted to match the ESV as needed. Likewise, when I give a translation of the LXX, I will modify the ESV (based on the Hebrew) to match the Greek.
16. The Latin equivalent occurs in the poem *Astronomica* by Manilius (finished some time after the death of Augustus in 14 CE), 5.495: Of the person born under the rising of the Eagle he says, “he is a law unto himself [*ipse sibi lex est*], and rushes violently wherever his fancy takes him.” This carries the same force as the Greek expression of someone whose guidance comes from within.

17. Thus, this passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics* is a better parallel than the text in Aristotle's *Politics*, III.viii.2 [1284a, 13]: κατὰ δὲ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστι νόμος, αὐτοὶ γὰρ εἰσι νόμος, but there can be no law dealing with such men as those described [i.e., with men distinguished in outstanding virtue], for they are themselves a law, in which the reflexive pronoun is absent. (However, with the first part of this sentence compare Galatians 5:23, κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος; see Appendix 3.)
18. For example, Moo's commentary, 151n40. Gathercole, "A Law unto Themselves," 38n62 (but referring only to *Politics* III.viii.2; see above note), dismisses it as "an extreme case of parallelomania."
19. Those who agree with the connection include (among others): David Greenwood, "Saint Paul and Natural Law," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 1, no. 3 (1971): 262–79, at 264; Wilckens' commentary, 134n314; Meyer's commentary, 92 (with n. 3); Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology*, 45.
20. Although the term *law* (νόμος) in Romans generally refers to the law of Moses, it seems clear that Paul is using this phrase as a play on the term—the playful jesting of a gentleman (ἡ τοῦ ἐλευθερίου παιδία), as Aristotle would call it (IV.viii.5).
21. Probably to stress that the genitive expression, τοῦ νόμου, is functioning as an attributive adjective: cf. K. L. McKay, *Greek Grammar for Students* (Canberra: Australian National University, Department of Classics, 1977), §13.2.9. Thus, the Greek expression in Aristotle means "the work that is of the law," that is, the proper work of the law. It is not far in meaning from Paul's τὰ τοῦ νόμου, the things of the law, (ESV what the law requires) in v. 14.
22. Finding an echo of Aristotle's phrase here has the further advantage of allowing for the distinction between the singular *work* of the law and the plural *works* of the law—the plural expression is uniformly negative in Paul (e.g., Rom. 3:20, 28; Gal. 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10), and the singular (found only here) is clearly viewed in a positive light. This tells against the argument of Akio Ito, "Νόμος (τῶν) ἔργων and νόμος πίστεως: The Pauline rhetoric and theology of νόμος," *Novum Testamentum* 45, no. 3 (2003): 237–59; at 249–50 he argues that the singular and plural expressions refer to the same thing.
23. The Greek expression might be rendered, "the thoughts between one another," giving the idea that *between one another* (μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων) refers to the inner debate of one's own thoughts (as Fitzmyer takes it, commentary, 311; cf. Barrett, commentary, 53, and Chrysostom, Homily v). This connects the reciprocal pronoun ἀλλήλων with the noun λογισμῶν, and Chrysostom is evidence of its naturalness; the alternative (see the commentaries of Meyer, Sanday and Headlam) is to connect ἀλλήλων with the preceding αὐτῶν, so that the phrase refers to these Gentiles' debates among one another. The ESV rendering can go with either interpretation. The echo from Aristotle's

Rhetoric may be thought to favor the second because that is Aristotle's topic in its context; however, λογισμός is not normally used of *debates* (unlike the cognate διαλογισμός, cf. Luke 9:46), and thus it is better to find here an image based on the Aristotelian passage in which Paul portrays the inner thoughts as if they were in debate.

24. On the matter of conscience, see Appendix 2.
25. Steve Walton, "What Has Aristotle to Do with Paul? Rhetorical Criticism and 1 Thessalonians," *Tyndale Bulletin* 46, no. 2 (1995): 229–50 (finds it useful); Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "What Does Aristotle Have to Do with Paul? An Evaluation of Rhetorical Criticism," *Calvin Theological Journal* 32 (1997): 458–68 (denies that classical rhetorical categories are appropriate for Paul). Unfortunately, Weima does not interact with Walton.
26. Bruce Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 246–52; cf. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 98–100. See further Janet Fairweather, "The Epistle to the Galatians and Classical Rhetoric: Parts 1 & 2," *Tyndale Bulletin* 45, no. 1 (1994): 1–38, at 25–34.
27. Cf. Abraham Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 29–59; Edwin A. Judge, "St. Paul and Classical Society," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 15 (1972): 19–36, at 30–31.
28. David Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series (Chico, Calif.: Scholars, 1981), lays out the evidence for a renewed availability of Aristotle's works in the late first century BCE (37–38, 45). For a theory of how this came about, cf. Richard Shute, *History of the Aristotelian Writings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888).
29. Arthur Stanley Pease, "Caeli Enarrant," *Harvard Theological Review* 34, no. 3 (1941): 163–200, suggests that Aristotle's work *De Philosophia* had an influence on Philo.
30. On which cf. Robert M. Grant, "Irenaeus and Hellenistic Culture," *Harvard Theological Review* 42, no. 1 (1949): 41–52: "Early Christian writers commonly take their quotations of Greek philosophical opinions from handbooks" (41).
31. The person who reads James Rogers, *The Dictionary of Clichés* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985) will conclude that William Shakespeare and the King James Bible have been very productive sources for English clichés and idioms. An educated English speaker who has read little of either will nevertheless find himself "quoting" these sources.

32. Cf. Edwin A. Judge, “The Reaction against Classical Education in the New Testament,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 9, no. 2 (1985): 166–74, at 168.
33. Thus, I will not pursue whether v. 16 is an allusion to Ecclesiastes 12:14, with τὰ κρυπτά (ESV, the secrets) as a rendering of Hebrew *kol-ne ‘lām* (ESV, every secret thing), while LXX has πᾶν παρεωραμένον (every overlooked thing). For the rendering of the Hebrew verb ‘*l-m* with κρύπτω and compounds, see 2 Kings 4:27; Job 42:3; Lam. 3:56.
34. W. W. Goodwin, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb* (Boston: Ginn, 1897), §66. Cf. also McKay, *Greek Grammar for Students*, §24.8.3. The same question for this verb form applies elsewhere in Paul: Romans 3:20, 30 and Galatians 2:16.
35. Gathercole, “A Law unto Themselves,” 41–43, makes a vigorous case for this.
36. Some (e.g., the commentaries of Meyer, Käseman, Lohse, Moo) have suggested that Paul’s use of γραπτός here alludes to the so-called unwritten law (νόμος ἄγραφος), that is, the natural law. In response, one might suggest that Paul is alluding to Aristotle’s phrase *the written [law]* (ὁ γεγραμμένος [νόμος]), which occurs in *Rhetoric*, 1.15.3–8 [1375a–b] (the same context in which two of Paul’s phrases do occur, see above) and is set against the unwritten [laws or requirements of right] (οἱ ἄγραφοι νόμοι or τὰ ἄγραφα [δίκαια], cf. I.xiv.7). The result would be a Pauline play on words, where the unwritten is written on the heart. This scenario is unlikely, though because Aristotle uses the perfect passive participle (γεγραμμένος) as his adjective, and the line of interpretation suggested in the text seems to account better for Paul’s argument. Further, *unwritten* in Aristotle does not coincide with *natural* law, for which his term is κοινός (general or common): cf. *Rhetoric*, 1.13.2 [1373b]; *Ethics*, 10.9.14 [1180b]; Plato, *Laws*, 793A; Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2.155. For older places where *unwritten* does correspond to *natural*, cf. Sophocles, *Antigone*, 454 [ca. 442 BCE]; Socrates in Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 4.4.19; Demosthenes, *De Corona*, 275 [ca. 330 BCE]; Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1.10.3 [1368b]. For the unwritten law as natural law in Philo, cf. *On Abraham*, 5, 16, 276.
- The upshot is that perhaps Paul is alluding to this tradition, but if he is, he is not limiting himself to Aristotle.
37. The Göttingen LXX records small variation in the textual tradition between the singular (according to MT) and the plural; the plural is surely the LXX. Perhaps the LXX translator read consonantal *twrty* as if it were *tōrōtay* (my laws) instead of MT *tōrātī* (my law), as in Jeremiah 26:4 [LXX 33:4]; 44:10 [LXX 51:10].
38. This is of course a topic meriting extensive discussion of its own, and I hope to offer one of my own some day. At this point, all I can do is refer to some sources that I judge to have handled the questions well. For helpful exposition from a Jewish perspective, cf. Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and*

- Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 735–38. Joshua Moon, *Restitutio ad Integrum: An 'Augustinian' Reading of Jeremiah 31:31–34 in Dialogue with the Christian Tradition* (Ph.D. Thesis, University of St. Andrews, 2007), shows that the kind of interpretation I am favoring actually has an antecedent in Augustine and shows up from time to time in Western Christian exegesis; he also provides his own careful exegetical discussion of his title passage (although the nature of Moon's work as a thesis means that it does not develop the connections with Ezekiel that I will discuss here). Robert S. Rayburn, *The Contrast between the Old and New Covenants in the New Testament* (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1978), provides a detailed exegetical treatment of several passages in Paul and Hebrews that refer specifically to Jeremiah 31. Although there are refinements I might make to some of Rayburn's specific points, I find his overall case satisfying.
39. There is evidence for this possibility from Second Temple Jewish writings; for example, the book of Baruch (ostensibly written in Babylonian exile by Jeremiah's companion, Baruch 1:1–4, although the extant Greek version is commonly dated to the second century BCE, or even later), invokes the hope of restoration that will result from spiritual renewal in exile (2:30–35; 3:5–8), echoing passages such as Jeremiah 24:7; 32:40; 31:33 (see E. Tov, *The Book of Baruch, also Called 1 Baruch (Greek and Hebrew)* [Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975], 25, 27). *Jubilees* 1:22–25 (ca. 161–140 BCE) also envisions Israel's return to faithfulness, leading to God's circumcising their hearts (echoing Deut. 10:16; 30:6); the overall tone of the book is optimistic about the author's own time (see discussion in James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], 132–34, 139–41; and, for the likelihood that Paul had some awareness of its themes, see 147). The community at Qumran saw themselves as having entered the new covenant (cf. *Damascus Document* 6:19; 8:21; 20:12: Hebrew text available in Chaim Rabin, *The Zadokite Documents* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958] and Eduard Lohse, *Die Texte aus Qumran* [München: Kösel Verlag, 1964]). Some have suggested that these texts point to a continuing-exile motif (notably N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 268–72); my only comment on that point is that the self-representation of these works portray the new covenant as either imminent or already realized in the second century BCE, and that I take Paul as showing that his Jewish contemporaries had not yet received the fullness of what was foretold. That is, if I have read Paul rightly, he is not disputing the general line of interpreting the new covenant prophecies, which seems sound but instead the way his contemporaries applied it (which is unduly optimistic).
40. As suggested in N. T. Wright, "Romans," in *New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 10, ed. Leander Keck et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 393–770, at 445a; cf. also Simon Gathercole, "Romans 1–5 and the 'Weak' and the 'Strong': Pauline Theology, Pastoral Rhetoric, and the Purpose of Romans," *Review and Expositor* 100, no. 1 (2003): 35–51, at 41.

41. This overall reading owes much to the stimulus of N. T. Wright, “Romans and the Theology of Paul,” in *Pauline Theology, Volume 3*, ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 30–67, and worked out in more detail in his “Romans.” Charles Talbert, *Romans* Smith & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, Ga.: Smith & Helwys, 2002), has also been very stimulating. At the same time, there are many differences of judgment on matters of detail. Like Wright, I acknowledge that there is an enormous body of secondary literature that could be cited and commented on, but I must forego that if I am to finish this essay in finite space. I will therefore note of a few key matters as I proceed and supply a bibliography at the end.
42. For a recent (and brief) survey of the kinds of opinions offered, with another proposal, cf. Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 163–91. Watson agrees with those who think that “Paul’s letter addresses tensions within a divided Roman Christian community” (191). He acknowledges that “it is possible that Paul knew comparatively little about Christianity in Rome.” In contrast, see Simon Gathercole, “Romans 1–5 and the ‘Weak’ and the ‘Strong.’” Unlike Watson, Gathercole thinks it “practically certain that Paul knew what was going on in the Roman church” (36); like Watson, he thinks it is almost certain that Paul is writing to address disputes that are occurring between Roman Christians” (37). I grant with Gathercole that the greetings of Romans 16 suggest acquaintance with a fair number of Christians in Rome, but the instructions are nevertheless stated in fairly broad terms—which supports Watson’s reservations about how closely Paul knew the situation on the ground. In any event, the reading offered here includes the importance of unity among Jewish and Gentile Christians, without making that the central purpose of the letter.
43. Agreeing with Snodgrass, “Justification by Grace—To the Doers,” 75. Jewett’s commentary makes this goal primary, with a fascinating discussion of the linguistic situation in Spain that would likely have made the practical Paul especially eager for Roman help (pp. 1, 74–79). Jewett does not seem to recognize the imperative provided by the *historia salutis* (as argued here), and as a result there is much in his overall interpretation that invites further examination: see John M. G. Barclay’s extensive review of Jewett’s commentary in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31, no. 1 (2008): 89–111, with Jewett’s reply in the same issue, 113–18.
44. Cf. Psalm 2:7; Hebrews 1:5; Acts 13:33.
45. Cf. Galatians 3:8, where Paul says that the Scripture “preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham,” which he proves by citing a “blessing to the Gentiles” text from Genesis—apparently a mixture of Genesis 12:3; 22:18, on which see C. John Collins, “Galatians 3:16: What Kind of Exegete Was Paul?” *Tyndale Bulletin* 54, no. 1 (2003):

- 75–86, at 81. By *gospel* here, Paul could not have meant the doctrine of justification by faith because he considered it *already present* to Abraham (in Gen. 15:6: cf. Gal. 3:6; Rom. 4:1–3).
46. E. A. Judge, “The Reaction against Classical Education in the New Testament,” 169–70, connects these terms, together with *wise* and *foolish*, with traditional Greek distinctions between those with a proper education and those without.
 47. Students of this letter do not agree on how wide a spectrum of the Roman Christians was included in the intended audience of Romans. For example, Stanley Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale, 1994), 21–33, vigorously defends the view that the letter addresses itself to Gentile Christians only. If, however, one identifies the *weak* and *strong* of 14:1–15:7 as Christians with Jewish scruples and without them (see below) and allows that at least some of the weak were actually Jewish, then, because 14:10 speaks to both groups (cf. v. 3), it follows that the intended audience included Jewish Christians. In this light, passages such as 9:24 (with *us* including members of the Roman church) can be read at face value.
 48. Observe that in 15:21 Paul cites Isaiah 52:15 to justify his ambition to bring the message everywhere in the Mediterranean world. This text comes from a context in Isaiah that describes the Servant of the Lord, a figure that Paul (cf. 10:16; 2 Cor. 6:2; Acts 13:47; 26:18), along with other New Testament authors (e.g., Matt. 8:17; 12:18–21; Acts 3:13, 26 [παῖς]; 1 Peter 2:22–25), took as the promised Messiah. It is striking how much of Isaiah’s description of the Servant is given over to his mission to the Gentiles.
 49. It is doubtful that Acts 13:47 presents Paul as taking to himself the description in Isaiah 49:6; it is rather that Paul sees himself as an emissary of the Servant and that “turning to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46) is carrying out the Servant’s work.
 50. To put it simply (and briefly), I find that the general line of exegesis in Cranfield’s commentary, 553–88, leads to a more persuasive reading of Paul than does the argument of Wright, “Romans,” 679–95.
 51. For further discussion, cf. Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*, 175–77.
 52. All proposed readings for these passages must now acknowledge two very strong reactions to them: the first is E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), who explains (123–35) what he takes to be contradictions in this part of Romans by suggesting that “in Romans 1:18–2:29 Paul takes over to an unusual degree homiletical material from Diaspora Judaism, that he alters it in only insubstantial ways, and that consequently the treatment of the law in chapter 2 cannot be harmonized with any of the diverse things which Paul says about the law elsewhere” (123). The second reaction comes from Heikki Räisänen,

Paul and the Law (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 94–119 (endorsing Sanders’ view at 101n43), who finds a conflict between the universal sinfulness of Romans 1:18–32 and the possibility of Gentiles doing the law in 2:14–15. Both seem to accept the traditional opinion that the purpose of Romans 1–3 is “to demonstrate (or illustrate) the universal sinfulness of all (3:9, 20), so as to lay the ground for Paul’s solution: righteousness by faith in Christ” (Sanders, 123; cf. Räisänen, 95–96). Both of these authors appeal to what they take to be the face value of Paul’s words; but they make no allowances for literary and rhetorical techniques Paul might have employed and expected his audience to discern. Rather than offer a point-by-point critique, it seems better to offer a reading here that aims to account for all the particulars of the text and to follow a line of thought (if possible). In particular, neither of these authors gives enough weight to Paul’s own statement of his “gospel” (1:1–6; cf. 16:25–27), nor to the stated purpose of the letter (1:11–15; 15:24).

53. Perhaps the implication is not so much that every single person commits these deeds, as that the moral and social gatekeepers have no interest in protecting people from them (cf. 1:32). In any case, there is no reason to think that Paul took these words to imply that every last Gentile, at all times, was as thoroughly perverse as possible: The Old Testament, which has likely supplied the pattern for the denunciation here, also allows that there are Gentiles (maybe even many of them) who do well in the moral sphere—at least in comparison with Israelites. On this point, see below.
54. For the argument that the addressee is a Jew throughout the chapter, cf. Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*, 197–99; and S. Gathercole, “Romans 1–5 and the ‘Weak’ and the ‘Strong,’” 40–44. This is better than the reading that Thorsteinsson proposes in his *Paul’s Interlocutor in Romans 2: Function and Identity in the Context of Ancient Epistolography* Coniectanea Biblica (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003); he argues that the interlocutor in this whole chapter is a Gentile who wants to call himself a Jew. He argues this from 2:1, whose initial $\delta\iota\acute{o}$ (therefore) he takes to imply that the person condemned is one of the same group he has described in 1:18–32; and from 2:17, $\epsilon\iota\ \delta\epsilon\ \sigma\acute{\upsilon}\ \text{Ἰουδαῖος ἐπονομάζῃ}$ (but if you call yourself a Jew). However, the reading proposed here accounts more readily for *therefore* in 2:1 (because God called Abraham to be the solution to the world’s sin, and Abraham’s family did not carry out their calling); it also accounts for the use of $\epsilon\pi\omicron\nu\omicron\mu\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ in the LXX, where the verb simply designates someone calling the name of someone or something, that is, it carries no nuance of pretension. If there is any negative nuance of the verb here, it is explained by Paul’s description of the real Jew in 2:28–29.
55. Cf. also the way that 2:6 uses Psalm 62:12 and Proverbs 24:12 (the tense of the verb makes Paul closer to Ps. 62:12, while the relative pronoun is closer to Prov. 24:12). Both of these texts refer to the works a person (in OT context, a Jewish person) does to show the sincerity of his professed faith. The point is that pretence or profession

- (not to mention privilege) are not enough: There must be deeds that vindicate that profession.
56. George P. Carras, "Romans 2,1–29: A Dialogue on Jewish Ideals," *Biblica* 73, no. 2 (1992): 183–207, takes Paul to be refuting Jewish writings such as Wisdom 11:9–10, which speak of God's commitment to his people. There are also many prophetic texts that speak this way, and Carras seems to have missed the people-persons distinction that is crucial for these ancient writings.
 57. Akio Ito, "Romans 2: A Deuteronomistic reading," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 59 (1995): 21–37, notices the relevance of both Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:20 (p. 27), but he interprets Paul to be saying that it is the exile itself that dishonors God (p. 32), and thus misses the point of both Ezekiel and any texts from Deuteronomy that Ezekiel may have been applying. Gathercole, "Romans 1–5 and the 'Weak' and the 'Strong': Pauline Theology, Pastoral Rhetoric, and the Purpose of Romans," 45, makes a similar confusion.
 58. Cf. Philippians 3:3, "we are the *true* circumcision," adding *true*.
 59. For example, in Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant to Circumcision of the Heart*, 216; Mark Seifrid, "Romans," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 607–94, at 639a.
 60. It is possible, though, that Psalm 14:3 (*all have turned aside*) hones in on Israelites who have joined the Gentile oppressors of 14:1–2; the verb *turned aside* (Hebrew *sûr*) often refers to Israelites committing apostasy (i.e., turning aside from the Lord). However, this is unnecessary, and Paul's addition of *none is righteous* (apparently supplied from Eccl. 7:20) shows that he intended the passage to be a description of all mankind.
 61. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, declares that Paul "badly twists the original meaning of the Biblical sayings" (99); but the reading here, which claims to follow Paul's thought, sees it otherwise.
 62. Jouette M. Bassler, "Divine Impartiality in Paul's Letter to the Romans," *Novum Testamentum* 26, no. 1 (1984): 43–58, takes the assertion of impartiality in 2:11 to be the pivot point of 1:16–2:29.
 63. This seems to be the sense in which N. T. Wright intends to be taken in his "Romans," 440b: "Justification, at the last, will be on the basis of performance, not possession."
 64. Compare the categorical denunciation of Leviticus 20:23–26 with the more respectful Ezekiel 5:6–8: this is significant because of the widely recognized relationship between Ezekiel (a priestly prophet) and Leviticus. Apparently, Ezekiel did not see the categorical denunciation as excluding the respect.

65. Recognizing Paul's rhetorical purpose will also help to show that the question of whether such moral persons are justified is not Paul's main point. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 125–26, and Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 103–7, both contend that Paul is plainly allowing that these Gentiles will achieve a level of moral performance that will qualify them for justification at the final judgment. As already indicated, though, this assertion seems to be missing Paul's rhetorical point, in which the question of justification for these moral Gentiles does not come up. Besides, in this context (see comments on 2:6 above), one's works are indeed crucial at the final judgment but as the right response to the knowledge of God: They function as an index of whether that knowledge is authentic. In regard to the Gentiles mentioned here, Paul does not comment on that matter. Further, in mentioning Gentiles (anarthrous ἔθνη) and in using the conjunction *when* (ὅταν, whenever), Paul does not comment one way or the other on how many Gentiles there are who do this or how often, only that it happens. See further the explanation of Romans 2:13, 16 in Paul's argument given here. For more on whether these Gentiles might receive justification, see below.
66. Apparently, we are to see Jethro as having some reverence toward the true God, cf. Exodus 18:9–12. However, his advice comes from his general good sense. As for the words of King Lemuel (Prov. 31:1–9), factors that show this to be of foreign origin include: Lemuel is not the name of any Israelite king; there are Aramaic forms in verses 2 (*bar* son) and 3 (*m^elakîn* kings); no mention is made of the LORD. (Bruce Waltke, *Proverbs 16–31*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 503, says that Lemuel “is probably a proselyte to Israel's faith,” but his only evidence is the supposed unified authorship of both parts of Proverbs 31. I will save my dispute of this for another occasion because the matter is irrelevant to the question at hand. After all, it is something that his mother taught him, and we have no reason to think she was an Israelite or a proselyte.) His mother's instructions for the ideal king—even a non-Davidic one—are relevant to Israel because Israel's king is to embody and exemplify the renewed humanity that Israel was chosen to be. Indeed, such words are called an oracle, meaning they have divine authority. Though it comes from outside Israel, it has become a naturalized citizen in the canonical wisdom; that is what makes it an oracle.
67. Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.6.8, explains that he commends biblical faith to all people by stressing its coherence with natural justice.
68. For more discussion of this passage, see C. John Collins, “*miqreh* in 1 Samuel 6:9: ‘chance’ or ‘event’?” *The Bible Translator* 51, no. 1 (2000): 144–47.
69. For discussion, see C. John Collins, “From Literary Analysis to Theological Exposition: The Book of Jonah,” *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 7, no. 1 (1995): 28–44.

70. Is it possible that Paul might have allowed that there were righteous Gentiles, people outside God’s special revelation but who nevertheless came to some genuine knowledge of God? Certainly some of the Patristic authors allowed for such, for example, Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, xlvi, but that question is outside the scope of this study.
71. Most clearly articulated in Fitzmyer’s commentary, 310. Gathercole argues against this point in “A Law unto Themselves,” 35–36 but does not address the point about the definite article (at least none of his supposed counter-examples present quite the same issue). On the other hand, Cranfield (commentary, 157n2) takes this point and offers instances in which Paul “places a word or words dependent on the participle after it instead of before it.” However, his list does not really prove what he thinks it does: most are instances of an accusative object (2:9, 10, 21, 22) or a dative object (14:18, with a messy attributive phrase). Only one comes close to being a genuine parallel (14:1, with a dative of reference). Nonetheless, the point remains about ambiguity: None of these proffered parallels suffers from ambiguity issues like 2:14 does, and we are left to rely on what is more syntactically normal.
72. Homily v (on Rom. 2:14): φύσει δὲ ὅταν εἴποι, τοῖς ἐκ φύσεως λέγει λογισμοῖς (NPNF: But whenever he saith *by nature*, he means by the reasonings of nature); Homily vi (on Rom. 2:25): “*For when the Gentiles,*” he says, “*which have not the Law.* What Law, say? The written one. *Do by nature the things of the Law* [φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῆ]. Of what Law? Of that by works. *These having not the Law.* What Law? The written one. *Are a law unto themselves.* How so? By using the natural law.”
73. The lexicographer will note that Aristotle seems to move effortlessly among several of these senses in his *Politics*, 1.1.8–11 [1252b–1253a].
74. C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), especially pages 24–74 s.v. “nature.”
75. Ephesians 2:3, τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς—by nature children of wrath—can go with either sense 1 or 2, in an adverbial usage of φύσει.
76. Philo may be disagreeing with Aristotle’s idea that some human beings are by nature slaves (φύσει δοῦλοι), *Politics*, 1.2.13 [1254b].
77. Cf. Aristotle’s famous dictum (*Politics*, 1.1.9 [1253a]), ὁ ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῶον: the human being is *by nature* a political animal, that is, by the characteristics that distinguish humans from other animals.
78. Some who have taken the Christian Gentile interpretation have nevertheless acknowledged the syntactical argument for φύσει. However, they take *nature* to refer to the new nature a believer has as a Christian (Gathercole, “A Law unto Themselves,” 35n43 cites Augustine and Barth as examples). The reply has been that such a sense for φύσις is unknown, and that Paul would not describe the believer’s new obedience

that way. The second point is probably right, but the first must be qualified by the apparent usage of φύσις as *new nature* in Ignatius' letters to the Trallians (1:1) and Ephesians (1:1). Nevertheless, the overall argument of this article steers us away from finding such a sense here.

79. See David Sedley, *Creationism and Its Critics in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
80. For example, 1 Timothy 6:10, “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils” is so close in wording to the saying attributed to the Cynic Diogenes (4th century BCE) in Diogenes Laertius (3rd century CE; *Lives*, vi.50, with μητρόπολις *mother-city* rather than ρίζα *root* being the only real difference) and so unlike anything in the LXX, that one must suppose that the author of 1 Timothy used a common saying from his environment. Nevertheless the sentiment is so consistent with biblical wisdom (cf. Prov. 10:2; 11:1, 4, 28; 14:31; 15:27; 16:8, 16, 19; 21:6; 22:16; and so forth) that it will hardly do to say that the popular saying has “influenced” the NT author.
81. For example, Dodd’s commentary: “Paul is speaking exactly like a Stoic.”
82. For example, James Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology*, calls it a “strikingly Stoic term” (51); cf. Barrett’s commentary.
83. C. A. Pierce, *Conscience in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1955).
84. For example, Bruce F. Harris, “ΣΥΝΕΙΔΗΣΙΣ (Conscience) in the Pauline Writings,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 24, no. 2 (1962): 173–86, takes exception to Pierce’s view that the moral conscience is normally of past actions as guilt or of present ones as a warning against infringing divine commands. He shows that the Greek term can also refer to an inner commendation of conduct. Harris comments on Romans 2:15, reasonably inferring that “the conscience surely can commend as well as condemn” (178). See also C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Words*, 181–213; Margaret Thrall, “The Pauline Use of συνείδησις,” *New Testament Studies* 14 (1967): 118–25. Examples that confirm Harris’ point include Romans 9:1, where Paul’s conscience bears him witness of his sincerity; and Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2.218, where each individual, *having his conscience bear witness to himself* [αὐτῷ τὸ συνειδὸς ἔχων μαρτυροῦν], has believed that God is pleased with obedience to the divine law.
85. Cf. Diogenes Laertius on Zeno, 7.87–88. The expressions ὁμολογουμένως τῆ φύσει (agreeably to nature), ἀκολούθως τῆ φύσει (consistently with nature), and κατὰ τὴν φύσιν (according to nature) seem to be interchangeable in this context.
86. John W. Martens, “Romans 2.14–16: A Stoic reading,” *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994): 55–67 (quoted from p. 57). See also David A deSilva, “Paul and the Stoa: A Comparison,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38, no. 4 (1995): 549–64, at 551–52.

87. Cf. also *Laws*, 8.836c, διὰ τὸ μὴ φύσει τοῦτο εἶναι, because this [male touching male] is unnatural.
88. Thus, the suggestion of Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 94–95, that *natural* and *unnatural* have to do with preserving male control and female subordination in the sexual act is out of line with the evidence. The passages in Plato and Josephus both include reproduction in their context. Compare also Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.1.4 [1252a]: necessity produces the union of female and male for the sake of begetting; with mankind as with the other animals and with plants it is *natural* [φυσικόν] to desire to leave behind another of the same sort as oneself. Thus, the common-sense reading of these passages is well founded. Probably Paul would say that the common-sense perception of things is grounded in God’s creation order (e.g., Gen. 2:24).
89. Martens, “Romans 2.14–16: A Stoic reading,” 57 (and note 10).
90. Possibly with the implication that what is fitting has been assigned, for example, Exodus 5:13, and so forth. For the participial expression, cf. also *Letter of Aristaeus*, 227, 245.
91. Diogenes Laertius, 7.107–108, says that Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, was the first to apply τὸ καθήκον to conduct, but this is doubtful, in view of how Xenophon uses the term in *Cyropaedia*, 1.2.5 (ὅπως καὶ οὗτοι τὰ καθήκοντα ἀποτελεῶσιν, that these too might fulfill *their duty*). At any rate, the LXX usage is not obviously dependent on the Stoic. Cf. also MM, 312a–b, who likewise explain Paul’s usage by senses of the word that are well attested in the Greek of the period (i.e., not limited to the Stoics).
92. Paul A. vander Waerdt, “The Original Theory of Natural Law,” *Studia Philonica Annual* 15 (2003): 17–34, argues that the early Stoics focused on intentions rather than specific rules. Phillip Mitsis, “The Stoics and Aquinas on Virtue and Natural Law,” *Studia Philonica Annual* 15 (2003): 35–53, opposes him by arguing that even the early Stoics had a notion of rules as well as intentions.
93. Richard A. Horsley, “The Law of Nature in Philo and Cicero,” *Harvard Theological Review* 71, nos. 1–2 (1978): 35–59, establishes this point; he also establishes how eclectic the discussion had been.
94. For examples of this kind of Jewish apologetic, consider André Myre, “La loi de la nature et la loi Mosaique selon Philon d’Alexandrie,” *Science et Esprit* 28, no. 2 (1976): 163–81; Abraham Terian, “Some Stock Arguments for the Magnanimity of the Law in Hellenistic Jewish Apologetics,” *Jewish Law Association Studies I: The Touro Conference Volume*, ed. B. S. Jackson (Chico, Calif.: Scholars, 1985), 141–49; John W. Martens, “Unwritten Law in Philo: A Response to Naomi G. Cohen,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 43, no. 1 (1992): 38–45; Hindy Najman, “The Law of Nature and the Authority of the Mosaic Law,” *Studia Philonica Annual* 11 (1999): 55–73; idem.,

“A Written Copy of the Law of Nature: An Unthinkable Paradox?” *Studia Philonica Annual* 15 (2003): 54–63; Gregory Sterling, “Universalizing the Particular: Natural Law in Second Temple Jewish Ethics,” *Studia Philonica Annual* 15 (2003): 64–80.

95. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians NIGTC* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 255–56.
96. Bruce, 259, says: “Aristotle’s statement shows some (rather remote) affinity with what Paul says here; it has more in common with the observation in 1 Timothy 1:9 that ‘the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient.’” By the alternative explanation of Aristotle given above, Galatians 5:23; 1 Timothy 1:9; and *Pol.* III.viii.2 are much more similar. Cf. J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 213, who makes no connection with Aristotle but does draw a parallel to 1 Timothy 1:9. Note also the similarity with Aristotle’s phrase, νόμος ὧν ἑαυτῶ, discussed in §3a above.
97. A sampling of recent studies on this passage includes: John P. Meier, “On the Veiling of Hermeneutics,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (1978): 212–26; Troy W. Martin, “Paul’s Argument from Nature for the Veil in 1 Corinthians 11:13–15: A Testicle Instead of a Head Covering,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123, no. 1 (2004): 75–84; Martina Böhm, “1 Kor 11,2–16: Beobachtungen zur paulinischen Schriftrezeption und Schriftargumentation im 1. Korintherbrief,” *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 97, no. 2 (2006): 207–34. None of these mention the Aristotelian parallel.
98. This way of reading Paul’s phrase fits well with the suggestion of Bruce Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 131–33, that in the Roman world, long hair on a man carried the social stigma of the passive partner in homosexuality, while cropped hair on a woman indicated that she had been publicly humiliated as an adulteress. Taken this way, Paul could certainly use this expression with a little more emphasis on the role of nature because he was focusing on matters of sexual propriety rather than on headgear, and he considered sexual morals to be grounded in nature, which for him was God’s creation order.
99. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 85–94, acknowledges these parallels, calling them examples of a recognized category, “decline of civilization narratives.” I agree with Stowers (90) that Genesis 3–11 is the relevant background; I disagree with him that Paul is primarily concerned to describe “how idolatrous and vice-ridden gentile culture became the way it is now (that is, Paul’s time).” The proper context for 2:1 is the call of Abram (Gen. 12:1–3), as discussed above. Stowers also denies that Romans 1:23 (“exchanged the glory of the immortal God”) is alluding to Psalm 106:20 (an allusion that would imply that Paul is describing Israel). I agree with Stowers that Paul is not including Israel in his description; if Paul alludes to Psalm 106:20, it is to acknowledge with the psalm that in this event Israel acted like the Gentiles.

100. See Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 21–24, based on observations of the Gospels (discussing the use of the historical present as well). Other Pauline narratives follow this pattern as well: cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3–8; Galatians 1:11–24; 2:1–14; Philippians 2:6–11. Although 1 Thessalonians 1:4–10 and 2:1–3:5 involve narrative elements (they recall Paul’s experiences among the Thessalonians), they do not narrate a sequence; nevertheless, Paul does use the aorist for the main events.
101. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2001), argues that Romans 1:18–32 “deal not only with Gentile sin but also with Jewish failure”; he finds Jeremiah 10:12–15 to be “the OT text that most closely parallels Romans 1:18–32” (173). The analysis offered here better accounts for the features of the text.

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