

ROMANS 2:14-15 IN THE LATIN TRADITION BEFORE THE PELAGIAN CONTROVERSIES

I. Introduction: Romans 2:14-15 after ca. 2000 years

Even the casual student of the history of Christian thought cannot be unaware of the substantial amounts of both energy and ink that have gone into efforts either to prove or to disprove the existence of some system of natural law¹ and to clearly delineate the implications of the various arguments, either *pro* or *contra*, for those who are serious about living the Christian life.² More specifically, in deciding to tackle Rom 2:14-15, the studies in this volume have taken up the distinct challenge of reviewing this question insofar as it revolves around the Pauline passage that at least some exegetes regard as the “only” passage in which Paul *might* be making reference to the “*nomos* of nature.”³ Most students of Christianity – and especially those whose

¹ For the sake of simplicity, throughout this study an effort has been made to only capitalize the word “law” when the context makes it clear that it is the written, and esp. the Mosaic, Law that is being referred to.

² While this debate, to say nothing whatsoever of the much larger issue of the history and origins of the concept of natural law in the western intellectual tradition, cannot be allowed to detain us here, a few references do seem to be in order. While dated, the place to begin regarding the western tradition and natural law is still R.M. Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Thought* (Amsterdam: North Holland Pub. Co., 1952), esp. Chapters 1-2. Also helpful are G. Striker, “Origins of the Concept of Natural Law,” and B. Inwood, “Commentary on Striker,” in *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy Volume II*, ed. J. Cleary (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987): 79-94 and 95-101 respectively; G. Watson, “The Early History of ‘Natural Law,’” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 33 (1966): 65-74; and *idem*, “The Natural Law and Stoicism” in *Problems in Stoicism*, ed. A.A. Long (London: The Athlone Press, 1971): 216-238. For the bold claim that “St. Augustine introduced the fundamental concept of a theistic eternal cosmic law (lex aeterna) to Christian philosophy/theology,” see T. Miethe, “Natural Law, the Synderesis Rule, and St. Augustine,” *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980): 91-97, esp. 95 and 97. For the equally interesting claim that it was primarily Philo of Alexandria who was the crucial contributor to the concept of natural law by serving as the nexus of Greek philosophical thought and the Hebrew eternal law tradition, see H. Koester, “ΝΟΜΟΣ ΦΥΣΕΩΣ: The Concept of Natural Law in Greek Thought” in *Religions in Antiquity Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. J. Neusner (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), 521-541.

³ John L. McKenzie, “Natural Law in the New Testament,” *Biblical Research* 9 (1964): 6. In fact, this claim comes at the end of a discussion by McKenzie of the various Pauline phrases containing the term “*nomos*” and in support of a still larger claim that “[t]o Paul, a Jew and a Pharisee, there was only one true law, the Law of Moses.” A fuller version of what he actually writes there runs: “... if Paul speaks of a *Nomos*

studies include detailed analyses of the Christian Scriptures – are probably also well-aware that the question of whether or not these verses support some notion of natural law is by no means the only or even the most difficult of the issues that these two verses raise. In fact, contemporary exegetes have noted that Rom 2:14-15 require the reader to ask and answer at least six major exegetical questions if he or she is to obtain anything approaching a meaningful and coherent interpretation of the first three chapters of Paul's letter generally⁴ or of these two verses particularly.⁵ Briefly stated these six are:⁶

- 1) Does the mention of "ἔθνη" in 2:14 refer to Gentile pagans, whether pre- or post-Christ's first advent, or to Gentile Christians?

of nature, he does it only in Romans 2:14; and the presumption is against this meaning of the word" (italics added).

⁴ It goes without saying that this forum precludes even the most superficial reviews of the problems and issues generated by Rom 2. In fact, not a few modern exegetes regard this chapter as one of the most difficult in what all concede to be Paul's single most difficult letter. For an impressive and thorough review of the many positions that have been adopted with respect to this chapter, see K. Snodgrass, "Justification by Grace – to the Doers: An Analysis of the Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul," *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 73-75, as well as nn. 9-30.

⁵ Two of the most helpful contemporary commentaries for isolating the issues and exegetical questions raised by Rom. 2:12-16 are those of Dunn and Cranfield. Respectively, see James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, The Word Biblical Commentary 38A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), esp. 94-107 and C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Vol. I Romans I-VIII*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), esp. 152-163. Given that the latter is slightly more dated, the discussion of Dunn was given priority for much of what follows. Also thorough and very up-to-date is the work of Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), esp. 210-218. Other articles or chapters in books that may be consulted with profit include: N.T. Wright, "The Law in Romans 2," in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. J.D.G. Dunn (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge: Williams B. Eerdmans, 1996), 131-150, but esp. 143-148; H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, WUNT 29 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr(Paul Siebeck), 1983), *passim*, but esp. 25-26 and 102-109; D. Greenwood, "Saint Paul and the Natural Law," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 1 (1971): 262-279; W.C. Martin, "The Bible and Natural Law," *Restoration Quarterly* 17 (1974): 193-221, esp. 211-218; for what is certainly one of the most imaginative and challenging readings, see E.P. Sanders, "Appendix 2: Romans 2" in *idem, Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 123-135.

⁶ Less crucial to a complete and coherent exegesis of the passage but still of some interest in both Late Antiquity and in our own day is the question of whether or not the passage references Jer 31(LXX 38):33 or not and, if so, whether the reference was overt, conscious and intentional on Paul's part or whether it was merely an echo or, perhaps, even unintentional and simply a function of his having been so deeply steeped for so many years in the language and terminology of the Jewish Scriptures and traditions.

Regardless, how does this usage compare and/or relate to Paul's use of this term elsewhere in Romans and in the other books of his corpus?⁷

- 2) What is the best way to read the "φύσει" of 2:14 syntactically speaking? Does it go with what precedes it or with what follows it? That is, do these Gentiles lack the law "by nature" or is it that they can somehow follow at least some of its precepts "by nature"?
- 3) What is the precise nature of the "νόμος" referred to repeatedly in 2:14-15? That is, is it simply the Mosaic Law, in whole or in part (e.g., the Ten Commandments)? Or, is it in some sense some sort of natural law?
- 4) Whatever its nature, can this law be kept by human beings without any external assistance? That is, is perfect fulfillment of it even possible? And, if it is possible, is it realistic that anyone would perfectly fulfill it?
- 5) To what degree is Paul making use of Stoicism or of Stoic (and/or other ancient philosophical schools') language, principles or teachings here? While few would believe that Paul was a "total" Stoic, the degree to which these verses reflect Stoic views or sensibilities remains debatable.⁸
- 6) What is the source and nature of the "συνείδησις" or "conscience" mentioned in 2:15? That is, is this feature inborn or natural or is it somehow taught or developed by exposure to law and its principles?

Of course, knowledge of the issues that these verses raise for our contemporary context does not guarantee that these same questions will have been as obvious, much less as interesting, to the reader of, say, 1600 years ago. The student who goes to the early Christian tradition expecting the spokespeople for that tradition to answer all of his or her questions about a given issue or passage is bound to be disappointed. For all sorts of reasons, some of which we can discern and many of which we will never be able to uncover, the usually substantial and (almost always) interesting opinions of

⁷ For a contemporary article arguing in favor of the view that the Gentiles mentioned in 2:14 are Gentile Christians, see A. König, "Gentiles or Gentile Christians? On the meaning of Romans 2:12-16," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 15 (1976): 53-60. For a similar conclusion from a contemporary commentator, see, e.g., Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 155-156.

⁸ For a persuasive and tightly reasoned article addressing this complex issue, see J.W. Martens, "Romans 2.14-16: A Stoic Reading," *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994): 55-67. His conclusion is that, at least here, Paul is writing "*under the influence of Stoic tradition, particularly the idea of a law of nature*" (italics added).

earlier Christian generations regarding the meaning and application of the Bible must be taken on its own terms. One can almost always instructively compare and contrast the thoughts of these earlier generations with our own, but the risks of assuming that they will ask and answer our questions about the text to our satisfaction are only exceeded by the risks of assuming that they have nothing at all to teach us.

II. The Focus of this Study: Romans 2:14-15 ca. 365 to ca. 411

The aim of this study is to provide an overview of the ways in which these two verses were employed in a crucial period of the (Western) Christian tradition. More specifically, what follows will discuss the exegesis of these admittedly difficult and opaque verses as published by several prominent Latin Christian authors in the half-century prior to 411 C.E., the date to which the outbreak of the so-called Pelagian Controversies is normally assigned.⁹ It should also be noted that a significant portion of this study will be dedicated to analyzing the views of both Pelagius and Augustine on the meaning of these two verses, with special attention being paid to their respective pre-411

⁹ Of the several attempts to survey and to outline the influence of predecessors upon the thought of both Augustine and Pelagius regarding Paul, particularly helpful are: M. Wiles, *The Divine Apostle: The Interpretation of St Paul's Epistles in the Early Church* (Cambridge: CUP, 1967), *passim*; G.J.M. Bartelink, "Die Beeinflussung Augustins durch die griechischen Patres," in *Augustiniana Traiectina: Communications présentées au Colloque International d'Utrecht 13-14 novembre 1986*, eds. J. den Boeft and J. van Oort (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1987): 9-24; A.A.R. Bastiaensen, "Augustin et ses prédécesseurs latins Chrétiens," in *ibid.*: 25-57; K. Froehlich, "Which Paul? Observations on the Image of the Apostle in the History of Biblical Exegesis," in *New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff*, ed. B. Nassif (William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co: Grand Rapids, MI, 1996): 279-299. Helpful for both the "Augustinian" and the "post-Augustine" histories of the exegesis of Paul and/or of our vv. are: W. Affeldt, "Verzeichnis der Römerbriefkommentare der lateinischen Kirche bis zu Nikolaus von Lyra," *Traditio* 13 (1957): 369-406; J. Riedl, "Die Auslegung von R 2,14-16 in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart," *Analecta Biblica* 17-18 (1963): 271-281; S. Lyonnet, "Lex naturalis quid praecipiat secundum S. Paulum et antiquam Patrum traditionem," *Verbum Domini* 45 (1967): 150-161; and, most importantly, K.H. Schelkle, *Paulus Lehrer der Väter: Die altkirchliche Auslegung von Römer 1-11* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1956): esp. 77-85. M. Lackmann, *Vom Geheimnis der Shopfung: die Geschichte der Exegese von Römer 1,18-23, II,14-16 und Acta XIV,15-17, XVII,22-29 vom 2. Jahrhundert bis zum Beginn der Orthodoxie* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1952), was unavailable to me, though it was known to and incorporated by Schelkle.

corpora. It is hoped that this study, when taken together with the other articles in this volume, will, in at least a small way, help either to confirm or to disconfirm the accuracy of the claim published by G. Bornkamm almost fifty years ago that “[d]ie augustinische Exegese schwankt allerdings ... zwischen seiner vor- und nachpelagianischen Zeit.”¹⁰

III. The Data of this Study:

Romans 2:14-15 in Latin Authors (ca.)365-(ca.) 411

Excluding the excerpts taken from Origen, the works included what follows will usually be dealt with in the order in which they were written – at least in so far as their dates of composition are known. Following a brief elucidation of comments culled from the works of Origen (or actually Origen via Rufinus), the thoughts of Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrosiaster, Ambrose, and Jerome will be summarized, before a close and detailed look at passages drawn from the earlier works of either Augustine or Pelagius will be attempted.¹¹

Origen will be discussed first even though, strictly speaking, his Pauline Commentary would not have been available firsthand to monolingual (i.e., “Latin only”) western readers until ca. 406/407. Of course, this should in no way be taken to imply that western churchmen could not or would not have received a healthy dose of “Origenian” thinking on and exegesis of our verses by reading the published works of some of the West’s more prominent (and more comfortably bilingual) ecclesiastical leaders of the previous generation such as Hilary, Ambrose, or Jerome.

A. *Romans 2:14-15 in Origen’s/Rufinus’s Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*

The Availability of the Latin Version of Origen in the West.

While anyone with a working knowledge of the Christian West of the late 4th/early 5th-century A.D. and of the substantial debt that it owed

¹⁰ G. Bornkamm, “Gesetz und Natur (Röm 2:14-16),” in *Studium zu Antike und Urchristentum: Gesammelte Aufsätze* Band II, Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie 28 (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1959), 108 and n. 36.

¹¹ The ideas of the so-called Budapest Anonymous, while certainly interesting for any comprehensive study of these verses, will not be included in the body of this study, but will be relegated to an appendix following the general summary and conclusions.

to the Greek East in most things theological might surmise that both Augustine and Pelagius had at least an acquaintance with the thought of Origen generally and his commentary on Romans specifically, it nevertheless seems useful to offer a bit of scholarly support for that idea in order to set what follows in the proper degree of relief.¹² Such support is easily had via the work of C. Hammond Bammel. Hammond Bammel, easily the last generation's foremost authority on Rufinus's

¹² While his impact cannot be said to have been as profound as that of Origen, it remains at least arguable that the second most important Greek exegete for the group of Latin authors being considered in this study was John Chrysostom (d. 407). Of his impact on the Latin-speaking West – even during his own lifetime – scholars have not doubt. Note, e.g., the following summary from Allen D. Callahan, “John Chrysostom on Philemon: A Response To Margaret M. Mitchell,” *Harvard Theological Review* 88(1) 1995: 152-153: “Chrysostom enjoyed immediate popularity among Christian intellectuals throughout the empire. No other Greek patristic author was so well and swiftly published, and more manuscripts of Chrysostom's works survive than of any other Greek ecclesiastical author. *Greek excerpts of his works found their way to the Italian peninsula even before the end of the fourth century*, and between 415 and 419 the Pelagian deacon Anianus of Celeda had translated into Latin seven of Chrysostom's homilies on Paul and the first twenty-five homilies on Matthew” (italics added). It is also clear that Chrysostom had an impact on the thinking of both Augustine and Pelagius – even if both the extent and the timing of that impact continue to be debated. For example, in his “La date du <<De natura>> de Pélagé” *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 36 (1990): 281, Y-M Duval asserted that “Pélage connaissait Jean depuis au moins 404” before going on to build a case that Pelagius probably knew about Chrysostom's work earlier (as well as in greater quantity and in better detail) than did Augustine. Still more on point for the purposes of this study is the summary found on p. 53 of Wiles, *The Divine Apostle*. Wiles's observation is all the more apropos for making it plain Chrysostom was more than willing to take issue with Origen's interpretation of our vv. He writes: “Thus Chrysostom, whose emphasis lies always on the continuity of the argument in a biblical passage and on the clarity of its revelation, will have nothing to do with [Origen's claim that the senses of the word ‘law’ in Paul change with great frequency and without any explicit indications of the changes.] He is perfectly capable of recognizing the existence of different senses of the word ‘law’ in Paul's writings. Thus in Rom. ii. 14-15 he distinguishes within the two verses the three senses of written law, natural law, and law revealed in action. Elsewhere he points out that Paul sometimes uses the word to mean the whole of the Old Testament.” The text to which Wiles refers is the homily on Rom 2:17-29 that modern editions label as “Homily VI.” For the Greek text, cf. PL 60, cols. 434-437; for this trans., see NPNF (First Series) vol. 11, pp. 368-371, where under Rom 2:25, Chrysostom writes: “... there is a natural law and there is a written law. But there is one also between these, that by works. And see how he points these out and brings them before you. ‘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.’ 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. ‘Who show the work of the Law.’ Of what law? Of that by actions. For that which is by writing lies outside; but this is within, the natural one, and the other is in actions. And one the writing proclaims; and another, nature; and another, actions.”

translations of Origen, clearly pronounced on both of these points in a paper she published in 1992.¹³ There she noted that “it is not unlikely that copies [of Rufinus’s translation] would have been brought from Sicily to Africa after Rufinus’s death or perhaps even earlier direct from Rome” when Melania the Elder visited Augustine in 407.¹⁴ Later in this same essay, she reminds readers that Pelagius also knew and had read Rufinus’s translation of Origen’s commentary before going to observe that, unlike Augustine, Pelagius knew and had even interacted with Rufinus personally prior to both men fleeing Italy following the disturbing August of 410: “[Rufinus] was in Rome or its environs between about 404 and 408 and in contact with Paulinus of Nola and no doubt also with Pelagius.”¹⁵

Origen on Rom 2:14-15 via Rufinus’s Translation.¹⁶ The ten-book digest of the great Alexandrian’s commentary on Romans as made by Rufinus of Aquileia contains more than a dozen references to all or part of Romans 2:14-15.¹⁷ While, as one might expect, the

¹³ Caroline Hammond Bammel, “Rufinus’ Translation of Origen’s Commentary on Romans and the Pelagian Controversy,” in *Storia ed esegesi in Rufino di Concoridia*, Antichità Altoadriatiche XXXIX (Udine: Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1992), 131-142.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 135. Cf. also p. 137: “... I am convinced that Augustine read Rufinus’ translation of Origen’s Commentary on Romans during the period when he was producing his earliest anti-Pelagian works.”

¹⁵ See *ibid.*, 140 for the claim that Pelagius’s commentary was “influenced” by Rufinus’s efforts as well as p. 141 where the fact of Pelagius’s use of Rufinus’s translation of Origen’s *Romans Commentary* is “well known.” On this point, see also T. De Bruyn, *Pelagius’s Commentary on St Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1993), 18 and n. 112 and P. Brown, “The Patrons of Pelagius: The Roman Aristocracy between East and West,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 21 (1970), 65. The quote referencing the personal interaction between Pelagius and Rufinus is also taken from p. 141 of Hammond Bammel’s article.

¹⁶ While its focus is significantly broader than Origen’s use of Rom 2:14-15, Brian Dunkle’s “A Development in Origen’s View of the Natural Law,” *Pro Ecclesia* 13 (2004): 337-351 is very much on point for the discussion that follows *infra*. For Dunkle’s comments on Origen’s *Romans Commentary*, see esp. pp. 342-347.

¹⁷ In addition to the passages that will be discussed *infra*, see I,19 (xvi,3); II,4 (iv,4); II,6 (viii,2); II,7 (x,1), which are central for Origen’s take on Rom 2:15b-16; III,2 (ii,7); and III,2 (ii,9). As this study is primarily concerned with the reception of the latinized version of Origen’s commentary, the additional difficulties introduced by the fact that Rufinus’s translation seems to have exaggerated the prominence of natural law in Origen’s thought will not be addressed here. As noted above, given that whatever Pelagius and Augustine knew of Origen and his thought – at least on this and related issues – was only available to them secondhand, whether via Rufinus or, even less directly, via the writings of bilingual authors who had read Origen’s texts for themselves, it is really only Origen as explained by Rufinus that would seem to be relevant for the question at hand. For Rufinus’s exaggeration of Origen’s thinking on natural law, see Dunkle, “A Development in Origen’s View,” 342-343 and the *nn.* given there.

majority of these are either allusions or more or less certain quotations made in passing, there are several passages that must be given a closer look if one is to have an accurate picture of the ways in which Origen's direct exegesis of Romans – albeit via the interpretive lens provided by Rufinus – could have impacted the teachers and clergy of the early 5th-century Latin West. The clearest and most extensive treatment of our verses in the commentary is also the most obvious place to begin: II,7 (ix,1-4), i.e., the section where Rom 2:14-16 provide the *lemmata*.

According to Origen, the “law” referred to in these verses is not the Jewish cultic or ceremonial law, but to the ethical laws that are best exemplified in – if not precisely identical with – the Ten Commandments. Still more generally, he believes this law to “possibly (*fortassis*)” reference the notion that “God is one and the Creator of all things,” but that it all but certainly seems to “agree with the evangelical laws (*cum euangelicis legibus conuenire*) where everything is ascribed to natural justice (*ad naturalem ... aequitatem*).” In other words, this “law written on the hearts of the Gentiles” is most probably a form of the so-called Golden Rule (cf., *inter alia*, Tob 4:15; Mt 7:12) since “what could be nearer to the natural moral senses than that those things men do not want done to themselves, they should not do to others?”¹⁸ A few lines later, he goes on to add that this law is

“according to the Spirit, through which means alone it is possible for the law to be fulfilled. This ... is the work of the law which the Apostle says even the Gentiles are able to fulfill by nature. For when they do the things of the law it seems that God has written the law on their hearts, ‘not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God’ (cf. 2 Cor 3:3).”¹⁹

¹⁸ In what follows, all translations from Origen/Rufinus are those published in *Origen. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans Books 1-10*, trans. T. Scheck, Fathers of the Church 103 and 104 (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 2001 and 2002 (hereafter cited as “Scheck”). For the quotations given in this paragraph, see p. 131. The best Latin edition is C. P. Hammond Bammel, *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes: Kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins. Buch 1-10., Vetust Latina: Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel. Aus der Geschichte der Lateinischen Bibel*, 16, 33, 34 (Freiburg: Herder, 1990-1998). For these lines, cf. vol. 16, p. 135: “Quid enim ita naturalibus sensibus proximum quam ut quae nolunt sibi fieri homines haec ne faciant aliis?”. For a helpful and “pre-Hammond Bammel” claim regarding the general reliability of Rufinus’s trans. as an accurate reflection of Origen’s work and thought, see, e.g., M. Wiles, *The Divine Apostle*, 6.

¹⁹ Scheck, p. 132. Cf. Hammond Bammel, vol. 16, p. 136: “... secundum spiritum per quem solummodo impleri lex poterit. Hoc est ... opus legis quod etiam gentes apostolus dicit implere naturaliter posse. Cum enim agunt quae legis sunt scripta uidentur lex in cordibus eorum a Deo ‘non atramento sed spiritu Dei uiui.’”

Also relevant to a understanding of Origen's exegesis of Rom 2:14-15 are a few of his comments regarding the identity of the Gentiles mentioned in the near context. A prime example can be found at II,5 (vii,6,) i.e., a few paragraphs prior to the passage cited above and under the *lemma* for Rom 2:10. Most important to note here is that, for Origen/Rufinus, the Gentiles referred to here are *not* Christian Gentiles; rather, they are pagans or "Greeks" "who are moved by natural reason (*naturale ratione motus*)," even though they have "not believed in Christ" and, consequently, "cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."²⁰ In other words, it would seem that Origen was convinced that although pagans knew enough and were capable enough to live what would appear to others to be exemplary moral lives, this righteousness born of nature would still let them down on the Day of Judgment and in the life that is to come.

The latter sentiment is reiterated and confirmed in Book 4 when Origen offers what might well be regarded as a summary of his "mature" views on natural law generally and on its efficacy on the Day of Judgment in particular.²¹ The basis for the Alexandrian's comments here is Rom 4:13, the verse in which Paul asserts that Abraham's position as "heir of the world" was *not* obtained through law, but, rather, through the "righteousness of faith." Near the end of his comments, i.e., at IV,3 (iii,2), Origen evidences concern that perhaps the reader will either be confused by his position on the law or, what is worse, come to think that he (Origen) has contradicted himself with regard to the degree of salutariness that he sees as inherent in natural law:

Yet even if Paul should be understood to be saying these things about natural law (*de lege naturali*), in accordance with what we have

²⁰ Scheck, p. 125. Cf. Hammond Bammel, vol. 16, p. 128: "... non credit Christo et intrare non possit in regna caelorum ..." Important to note, however, is the fact that Origen is very aware that Paul sometimes varies his use of the term "Greeks" depending on the context. Under the *lemma* for Rom 3:1-4 (cf. Scheck, p. 165), for example, Origen is explicit in noting that the "Greeks" here are actually "believing Gentiles."

²¹ "Mature" here is used to denote the fact that the *Romans Commentary* is from relatively late in Origen's career and probably from ca. 246. For a discussion of this, see Dunkle "A Development in Origen's View," 338 and esp. p. 340 and n. 15. For an interesting comparison between the attitudes of Origen/Rufinus and Augustine with respect to the "prospects of Gentiles who obey the natural law" on the Day of Judgment and esp. regarding their views on the ability of those who lack faith to do good works as well as on their prospects of being rewarded (at least in some sense) for having done them, see T. Scheck, *Origen and the History of Justification. The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 58.

explained above, this will not contradict the arguments given above. For however much the law of nature may offer testimony about good and evil according to the judgment of conscience, nevertheless it cannot be put on the same level (*exaequari*) as the law of faith, by which Abraham believed God and merited (*meruit*) to be justified and to be named a friend of God (cf. Jas 2:23).²²

B. *Romans 2:14-15* in Hilary of Poitiers's Commentary on Psalm 118(119)

What is probably Hilary of Poitiers's most interesting use of our verses can be found in his comments on the "Samech" portion of his *Tractatus on Psalm 118(119)*, i.e., on verses 113-120. This work, which is thought to have been penned toward the end of Hilary's life, and most probably during the span of 364-367,²³ and which, like much of Hilary's corpus, certainly seems to have been substantially influenced by Origen's exegetical efforts,²⁴ is important both for the history of the West's exegesis of the Psalter and for its take on Rom 2:14-15. The most relevant lines come from Hilary's comments on verse 119, which, in his version, reads: "*Praeuaricantes deputauit omnes peccatores terrae, ideo dilexi iustitias tuas ...*":

The word of the prophet always expands itself far away and beyond the ordinary sense of the words. For we understand "sinners" to be those who are forsaking their received faith and their acquired knowledge of God, those who have promised one thing and now are doing something else. But these "sinners" are understood as all the sinners of the earth; the title "sinner" is ascribed to all people generally, no one is excepted. For the law is, apparently, [a law] of nature: to do

²² Scheck, p. 253. Cf. Hammond Bammel, vol. 33, p. 292: "Sed etsi secundum ea quae in superioribus disseruimus de lege naturali Paulus haec dicere intellegatur non erit contrarium rationibus superius redditis. Quamuis enim lex naturae de bono et malo testimonium reddat secundum iudicium conscientiae tamen legi fidei non potest exaequari, qua Deo credidit Abraham et iustificari meruit atque amicus Dei appellari."

²³ Following C. Kannengiesser, M. Milhau in his edition and trans. of this work for the *Sources Chrétiennes* series (cf. SC 344, p. 17) places it along with Hilary's other exegetical compositions on the Psalter "sans doute ... entre 364 et 367."

²⁴ This feature of Hilary's work has been noted so often that it has almost become commonplace. In addition to Milhau's "Chapitre IV" in SC 344 (pp. 58-66), cf., e.g., the summary remark of M. Hale Williams: "The orthodox bishop Hilary of Poitiers ... incorporated about forty thousand lines of Origen's work, loosely translated, in his treatment of the Psalms." For this see her *The Monk and the Book: Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 191.

injury to no one, to surreptitiously take nothing belonging to another, to abstain from fraud and perjury, to not plot against the marriage of another. The Apostle also acknowledged (*nouit*) this law of nature by saying [at Rom 2:14-15]: "For when the nations, who do not have the Law, naturally do things according to the Law, such people [while] not having the Law are a law unto themselves, they are showing that the work of the Law has been written on their hearts." Therefore we understand these "sinners" to be those that are forsaking the law they are receiving from nature. The one who is discovered to be a thief or an adulterer or murderer is accused (*arguet*) by the law of nature. But if he is engaging in these things, he is also a "sinner" [against] the law.²⁵

Here, Hilary, much like (and probably thanks to) Origen, seems to have assumed both that some system of natural law exists and that Rom 2:14-15 refers to that system. Indeed, despite the presence of the "apparently (*ueluti*)" in this context, the existence of a natural law is never questioned.²⁶ Moreover, it seems that Hilary has, at least to some degree, conflated – or even intentionally combined – the Law of Moses with the natural law that he has assumed to exist.²⁷ This is especially apparent when he notes that the thief, the adulterer, and the murderer

²⁵ This trans. is my own. For the Latin, cf. SC 347, pp. 168-171: "Semper prophetae sermo longe se et ultra communem sensum extendit. Nos enim praevaricatores eos existimamus, qui susceptam fidem et cognitionem Dei adeptam reliquunt, aliud pollicitos et aliud nunc agentes. Sed his praevaricatores existimantur omnes peccatores terrae; nullus excipitur, generaliter ad omnes praevaricationis nomen refertur. Lex enim ueluti naturalis est, iniuriam nemini adferre, nihil alienum praeripere, fraude ac periurio abstinere, alieno coniugio non insidiari. Nouit et hanc naturae apostolus legem dicens: 'cum enim nationes, quae legem non habent, naturaliter secundum legem faciunt, tales homines legem non habentes sibi ipsi sunt lex, qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis.' Ergo praevaricatores existimantur qui quod a natura legis accipiunt derelinquunt. Furem quis deprehensum aut adulterum aut homicidam arguet lege naturae. Sed si in his ipse uersetur, praevaricator est legis."

²⁶ Interestingly, despite the fact that Hilary can make such assumptions about the natural law, some scholars have argued that the concept was "of far less importance to him" than were other doctrines such as the nature of the godhead. See Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. II. Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century* (Leiden/New York: E.J. Brill, 1990), 123.

²⁷ On the degree of conflation that *might* be present here, cf. Colish's statement from *ibid.*, p. 125: "... Hilary [does not] assimilate the law of nature to the law of God overtly ..." Regardless of the degree of conflation that one sees here, it remains noteworthy that there is yet a third type of law under consideration: the "celestial law (*caelesti legi*). Hilary discusses this law in conjunction with Jesus's parable of the Prodigal Son (cf. Lk 15:11-32), who, as Hilary reminds his readers, confessed to his father that he had sinned "against heaven (*in caelo*). For Hilary's comments, see SC 347, pp. 170-173

“is also a ‘sinner’ [against] the law” and, moreover, is “accused” by that same “law of nature.”

It is also clear that, at least here, Hilary has taken the ‘Gentiles’ of 2:14 as a reference to all human beings (cf. ‘to all people generally’) whether Jew, Gentile Christian or Gentile pagan since, in his view, all human beings are included in the group this Psalm refers to as ‘sinners.’

Finally, note that the idea guiding his exegesis seems to be the presupposition that is only explicitly expressed later in Paul’s letter to the Romans (cf. 3:28), viz. that everyone has sinned. In other words, Hilary seems to have assumed that everyone has at least to some degree forsaken whatever knowledge of the natural law that they might have possessed or inherited. Connected to this is the fact that, in addition to knowledge of a generalized form of the ‘Golden Rule’ (cf. ‘do injury to no one ...’), Hilary seems to have taken it for granted that all people everywhere somehow intuitively know that theft, dishonesty, and adultery are wrong and, hence, are activities that always render their practitioners liable to judgment.

*C. Romans 2:14-15 in Ambrosiaster*²⁸

The still-anonymous, 4th-century, Roman churchman and exegete known as “Ambrosiaster” is included here for two primary reasons. First, it seems beyond question that he was active in Rome;²⁹ and, second, though there seems to have been almost as much confusion about him and his identity in his own era as there is in ours, it is nevertheless clear that his thought and his exegesis profoundly affected

²⁸ Although critical editions of Ambrosiaster’s major works, i.e., his commentary on Paul and his (largely exegetical) *quaestiones* on both the Old and the New Testaments (cf. CSEL 81/1-3 and CSEL 50, respectively) have been available to scholars for decades, relatively foundational work on him, his texts, and his thought is still very much in progress. In fact, study of this elusive 4th-century churchman is currently very much in vogue and will, in all probability, continue for the foreseeable future. For a recent introduction to both the person and current scholarship, see S. Lunn-Rockcliffe, *Ambrosiaster’s Political Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. Chapters 2 and 3: “Ambrosiaster’s Background” and “Ambrosiaster’s Ecclesiastical Context.” For an earlier, briefer summary, see, e.g., D. Hunter, “On the Sin of Adam and Eve: A Little-Known Defense of Marriage and Childbearing by Ambrosiaster,” *Harvard Theological Review* 82/3 (1989): 283-299, esp. 284-287.

²⁹ Today, this fact is so certain that it is probably fair to label it “common knowledge.” Cf., e.g., Hunter, “On the Sin of Adam and Eve,” 284: “... it is firmly established that Ambrosiaster composed his Pauline commentary at Rome during the pontificate of Damasus, that is, between the years 366 and 384.”

the exegesis of later generations generally and that of both Pelagius and Augustine specifically.³⁰

Our review of Ambrosiaster's take on Rom 2:14-15 will be largely limited to his Pauline Commentary,³¹ a work which offers one of the longest – if not also the most interesting – disquisitions on the Gentiles and their relationship to the law of all those that were written during this period.

Before moving to Ambrosiaster's formal comments, however, a bit of context will be helpful. First, it seems clear that Ambrosiaster brings a two-fold view of the Gentiles to his exegesis of the Bible. Briefly put, it would seem that he believed that there had always been two types of Gentiles, i.e., believing and unbelieving, and that these two types were not simply differentiated after Christ's first advent: some Gentiles, both before and after Christ, believed and some, both before and after Christ, did not believe.³² Second, it seems that, for Ambrosiaster, the only way to "eternal" justification and, by extension, to salvific faith, is through faith in God. And this is despite the fact that some may experience a "temporal" justification that will allow them to abstain from things opposed to the law.³³ In short, for Ambrosiaster, both justification and true, salvific faith are multifaceted concepts that cannot be applied haphazardly or without due consideration of the particulars of the case(s) at hand.

³⁰ Examples in support of this, while something less than "common knowledge," could nevertheless be multiplied. The link between Ambrosiaster and Augustine that is most often referenced is that found in *c. ep. Pel.* IV,4,7, where, under the name of "holy Hilary (*sanctus Hilarius*)," Augustine references Ambrosiaster's text and exegesis of Rom 5:12 (cf. CSEL 60, pp. 527-528). For Pelagius's relationship to Ambrosiaster, see, e.g., T. De Bruyn, *Pelagius's Commentary*, 2, where in what could easily be regarded as an understatement, De Bruyn simply notes that "... Pelagius was indebted to Ambrosiaster." See also, *ibid.*, n. 9, where De Bruyn rightly points out that the closeness of the relationship between the work of these two exegetes has been carefully documented by both Smith and Souter in studies published in 1917 and 1927 respectively, as well as De Bruyn's own index (cf. pp. 218-220) where he provides the reader with more than 180 links and parallels between the text of Pelagius's *Romans* commentary and the work of Ambrosiaster.

³¹ But cf. n. 32 *infra*. Ambrosiaster commented on 13 Pauline epistles – so far as we know, the letter to the Hebrews was never formally subjected to close analysis by him.

³² Cf., e.g., his comments at Rom 2:12 (Cf. CSEL 81/1, p. 73) where he observes that "*non credentes ... gentiles*" are doubly-condemned since they have not "assented (*adsenserunt*)" to the laws of Moses and haven't "received (*recipiunt*)" the grace of Christ, as well as his comments on Rom 2:16 (Cf. *ibid.*, p. 79), where he writes about "*gentes*" who are "*credentes*" and about others who are "*infidos*."

³³ See esp. *ibid.*, p. 73: "Huic sola fides opus est, per quam fiat perfectus, quia nihil illi proderit apud Deum abstinere ab adversis, nisi suscipiat fidem in deum, ut sit iustus per utraque. Illa enim temporalis iustitia est, haec aeternitatis."

Ambrosiaster begins his comments under the *lemma* of Rom 2:14 by making perfectly clear to his readers the identity of the group to which Paul must have been referring as he wrote to the Christians of Rome:

Paul is speaking about Christian Gentiles (*Gentes Christianos*), because he is the Teacher of the Gentiles (cf. 1 Tim 2:7), just as he said in another place: For I say to you Gentiles (cf. Rom 11:13), who are uncircumcised, observing neither new moon celebrations, nor the Sabbath, nor the law regarding ceremonial food (cf. Col 2:16) and who, by nature's leading, believe in God and in Christ, that is in the Father and the Son. For this is to observe the law: to acknowledge the God of the law. For the first part of wisdom is this: to fear God the Father (cf. Ps 111:10; Pr 1:7; 9:10), from whom are all things, and the Lord Jesus his Son, through whom are all things (cf. 1 Cor 8:6). Therefore, nature itself acknowledges its Creator by its own judgment, not through the law, but through the natural reasoning faculty.³⁴ For the work perceives (its) Creator within itself.³⁵

For Ambrosiaster, the 'Gentiles' of Rom 2:14 are not pre-Advent pagans; they are simply non-Jews who have come to believe

³⁴ While Ambrosiaster's belief in natural law is certainly implicit here, many clear and explicit references to the concept may be located by consulting his so-called *Quaestiones ueteris et noui testamenti cxxvii*. For example, note the following passage from *quaestio IV*, i.e., "*Quare legem non in primordio dedit*" (cf. CSEL 50, p. 24): "Primum lex formata in litteris dari non debuit, quia in natura ipsa inserta quodam modo est et creatoris notitia ex traduce non latebat. Nam quis nesciat, quid bonae uitae conueniat, aut ignoret, quia quod sibi fieri non uult alii minime debeat fieri? Adubi autem naturalis lex euauit pressa consuetudine delinquendi, tunc oportuit manifestari, ..." Also germane, though a bit far afield from the present discussion, is the fact that, for Ambrosiaster, "[t]he Ten Commandments ... are the *lex divina* and the *lex naturalis*, precepts given by God through Moses to guide humankind not only to the next life, but in this one, as well." For this as well as for the claim that Ambrosiaster's "conflation" of Christian, Roman, and Jewish law was actually an intentional "triangulation of Christian identity" meant to help him appropriate the Jewish "valorization of the Law," see A. Jacobs, "'Papinian Commands One Thing, Our Paul Another': Roman Christians and Jewish Law in the *Collatio Legum Mosaicarum et Romanarum*," in *Religion and Law in Classical and Christian Rome*, eds. C. Ando and J. Rüpke (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 95-97.

³⁵ This trans. is my own. The text translated here is the so-called "gamma" recension of the text, i.e., the third of the three extant versions and the one that is thought to represent Ambrosiaster's "final draft." For the Latin, cf. CSEL 81/1, p. 75: "*Gentes Christianos dicit, quia Magister gentium est, sicut dicit alio loco: vobis enim dico gentibus, qui incircumcisi neque neomenias neque sabbatum neque escaram legem servant et duce natura credunt in Deum et Christum, id est in Patrem et in Filium. Hoc est enim legem servare, Deum legis agnoscere. Prima enim sapientiae pars haec est: timere Deum Patrem, ex quo sunt omnia, et Dominum Iesum Filium eius, per quem sunt omnia. Ipsa ergo natura proprio iudicio creatorem suum agnoscit, non per legem, sed per rationem naturae; opus enim Opificem cernit in sese.*"

in Christ. Equally interesting is the means by which these particular Gentiles have come to faith: it does not seem that they have been converted through the direct agency of the Holy Spirit as they responded to the Gospel; rather, they seem to have come to faith in Christ simply 'by nature's leading (*duce natura*).'³⁶ Also noteworthy – though less explicit – is that this natural 'leading' is, at least in part, 'through the natural reasoning faculty (*per rationem naturae*)' and not, as one might expect, a result of the convert's ability to downplay or ignore the rational part of their mind in favor of other aspects of their being.

This comment is followed by an especially interesting observation on the nature of true faith as Ambrosiaster transitions to the text of 2:15 and that verse's claim that the Gentiles, despite not having the Law, are a law unto themselves³⁶ and that they demonstrate this by having the law written on their hearts. After citing the verse, he writes:

The sense [here] is the same in that, so long as they believe by nature's lead, they are manifesting the work of the Law, not through [keeping] the letter of the Law, but through [following] their consciences. For the work of the law is faith, which one exhibits [to be in keeping] with the commands of God, showing oneself to be a law unto oneself by one's natural judgment, because what the Law commands, one does voluntarily, so that one might believe in Christ.³⁷

That faith could be so central and, indeed, that Ambrosiaster could equate it with the "work of the Law (*opus ... legis*), while not surprising given that it is an important theme both later in Romans (see esp. Chapters 3 and 4) and elsewhere in Paul (see, e.g., Galatians), could nevertheless be taken as a tendency toward antinomianism in Ambrosiaster's theology and his exegesis – especially when his thought is compared to the writers we have encountered thus far. Equally surprising is the rather positive way he links the "natural judgment (*naturale iudicio*)" of the Gentiles with a well-functioning, if not also relatively pure, will: for Ambrosiaster, one of the byproducts of their (salvific) faith would seem to be a will that naturally or instinctively pursues God's will as expressed in God's Law. Ambrosiaster seems to have been open to the idea that at least some Gentiles

³⁶ Note that the versification – esp. where the individual verses stop and start – of the biblical text in the CSEL edition of Ambrosiaster is somewhat different than in most modern editions of the New Testament.

³⁷ Cf. *idem*, p. 77: "Idem sensus est, quia dum natura duce credunt, opus legis ostendunt, non per litteram, sed per conscientiam. Opus enim legis fides est, quam cum dictis dei exhibet, naturali iudicio ostendit semetipsum esse sibi legem, quia quod mandat lex, ultro facit, ut credat in Christum."

had and would become "God fearers" naturally, just as they would eventually become "believers [in Christ]" by nature. He also seems to have believed that the will of some of them had and would become pure enough to compel them to pursue the things commanded by the law simply through realizing that such a will is a good thing to have *in se*.

*D. Romans 2:14-15 in Ambrose of Milan*³⁸

If it is true that, in addition to the all-important and freshly Latinized Origen, there were many influential pens, like that of Ambrosiaster, busily recording exegetical insights gleaned from Paul's *Letter to the Romans* during the years between ca. 365 and ca. 411,³⁹ it is just as true that few if any were as influential upon the thinking of the West generally (or upon the thinking of Augustine specifically) as was that of Ambrose of Milan.⁴⁰

³⁸ The discussion that follows will not attempt to be exhaustive with respect to all of Ambrose's references to Rom 2:14-15. Others interesting locations include: *Exp. eu. Luc.* VII, 152 (1447 C-D) (cf. CSEL 32/4, p. 350); *Explanatio ps. xii* I,31 (cf. CSEL 64, p. 26), where Ambrose *does* apply, albeit through an allusion, Rom 2:14 to the Law of Moses and not to the natural law *per se*; *ibid.*, I,51 (cf. CSEL 64, p. 44), where he applies Rom 2:15-16 to all believers including himself; *Expositio ps. 118*, V,21 (cf. CSEL 62, p. 93); *ep.* 7,18 and 32 (cf. CSEL 82/1, p. 52 and 58); *De paradiso* VIII,39 (cf. CSEL 32/1, p. 296); *De fuga saeculi* III,15 (cf. CSEL 32/2, p. 175), where in affirming the goodness of the natural law Ambrose notes that "*Primum natura ipsa boni operis magistra est*"; and *De Iacob et uita beata* I,6,20 (cf. CSEL 32/2, p. 17).

³⁹ This development, which could be fairly termed as the West's "(Re-) Discovery of Paul" has been noted and discussed by many historians of the church at least as far back as Harnack. A landmark publication in this sub-field however was certainly A. Souter's still-helpful *The Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1927), which discusses the work of Marius Victorinus, Ambrosiaster, Jerome, Augustine and Pelagius. Shorter, but much more recent, general analyses of the West's reading of Paul in this period have been offered by M.G. Mara, "Il significato storico-esegetico dei commentari al corpus paolino dal IV al V secolo," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 1 (1984): 59-74 and K. Froehlich, "Which Paul? Observations on the Image of the Apostle in the History of Biblical Exegesis," mentioned in n. 9 *supra*.

⁴⁰ The thoroughly obvious nature of this claim, esp. if we are allowed to take the evidence found in the *Conf.* (cf. esp. Book VI *passim*) and the *c. Iul.* (cf. esp. Books I, II, and III *passim*) seriously, need not detain us here. For relatively recent reviews of Ambrose's impact on Augustine's thought from the standpoint of contemporary critical scholarship, see, e.g., J. Patout Burns, "Ambrose Preaching to Augustine: The Shaping of Faith," in *Collectanea Augustiniana: Augustine: "Second Founder of the Faith,"* eds. J. Schnaubelt and F. Van Fleteren (New York: Peter Lang, 1990): 373-386 and A.A.R. Bastiaensen, "Augustin et ses prédécesseurs latins Chrétiens," 30-34.

During his twenty-plus years of ministry in Milan, Ambrose was nothing if not productive. His theological and literary output included a large number of letters, theological treatises, scripture commentaries, ethical/ascetic tracts, funeral orations, and various homiletical treatments in the form of both *uitae* of famous (biblical) personages and more traditional *sermones*. Helpful for our purposes is the fact that throughout these various genres, the Bishop of Milan makes fairly frequent reference to the concept of natural law in general and to Rom 2:14-15 in particular. Of these many references, few if any discuss both natural law and our verses in clearer language than does his *epistula* 63,⁴¹ which, at least thus far, remains undated. Lacking much of what one might call the form of a Late-Antique letter, this text is actually Ambrose's attempt to address the concerns of his friend Irenaeus regarding the meaning of Rom 4:15, a text in which Paul claims: "For the Law works wrath; for where there is no law, neither is there transgression."⁴² Irenaeus's concern was rooted in his having jumped to the understandable conclusion, on the basis of this verse, that the Mosaic Law must have been neither good nor necessary since it only gave occasion for God's wrath and earned for much of what would otherwise have been acceptable human behavior the label "sinful." On the other hand, this conclusion was rendered paradoxical – if not thoroughly contradicted – by the obvious fact that God, at the same instant that he gave it to the Israelites through Moses, had revealed his Law to be holy, perfect, and worthy of the profoundest respect.

Ambrose's answer to Irenaeus initially addresses the latter's concern by agreeing with his conclusion, though he rather quickly moves on to qualify his agreement by introducing a much broader, *heilsgeschichtliche* perspective on both God's dealings with humanity and his revelation of the law. Especially interesting for our purposes are two closely-related assumptions Ambrose seems to have made. First is his assumption that a system of natural law exists; indeed, at no point in the immediate context of the passages discussed below does Ambrose offer an argument in favor of its existence. Second is his assumption that this system of natural law is both something God communicated to Adam in the Garden of Eden and the very thing Paul

⁴¹ In numbering this as "Letter 63," I am following the CSEL critical edition. The Maurists knew this as "Letter 73"; the English trans. in the FOTC series lists it as "Letter 83."

⁴² The trans. followed here is that found in FOTC 26, pp. 464-468, by M.M. Beyenka. The Latin (cf. CSEL 82/2, pp. 142-148) runs: "Lex enim iram operatur; ubi autem non est lex, nec praevaricatio."

was referring to in Rom 2:14-15. At the beginning of the second paragraph of *epistula* 63 Ambrose writes:

... it is certain that the Law given to Moses was not necessary. For if men had been able to keep the natural law which God the Creator planted in the breast of each one, there would have been no need of that Law, which, written on stone tablets, rather (*magis*) enmeshed and entangled the weakness of human nature (*humani generis infirmitatem*)⁴³ than freed and liberated it. Moreover, that there is a natural law written in our hearts the Apostle also teaches when he writes that for the most part (*plerumque*) "The Gentiles do by nature what the Law prescribes, and since they do not read (*legerint*) the Law, they yet have the work of the Law written in their hearts."⁴⁴

Noteworthy here is Ambrose's reference to the human race's inability "to keep the natural law." While this claim might be fairly easy to support from empirical observation, it is nevertheless remarkable both as a sign of the depth to which Ambrose's assumptions about the existence of natural law run and as evidence – albeit implicit – of his view that Adam's failure – a subject to which we will return *infra* – was a transgression of natural law just as surely as it was a transgression against God's direct injunction to abstain from the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (cf. Gen 2:16-17). Also interesting is the qualification of "for the most part (*plerumque*)" that Ambrose prefixed to the mention of "the Gentiles" that occurs at the beginning of his citation of Rom 2:14. While this could indicate that Ambrose had consulted a Greek text of Romans 2, which contains an anarthrous reference to the "Gentiles," it is even more likely to be indicative of his willingness to believe in the original and still somewhat residual power of natural law. Third is the rather loose and freewheeling way in which Ambrose references Rom 2:14-15. In addition to amplifying the text by the insertion of the reference to the Gentiles (practical) inability to "read the Law," he substantially condenses the original contents of the two verses in question.

⁴³ It is not clear to me why Beyenka has chosen to translate "*humani generis infirmitatem*" with "infirmity of human nature" rather than with the more literal (and certainly theologically pregnant) "infirmity of the human race."

⁴⁴ *FOTC* 26, p. 464; cf. CSEL 82/2, p. 143: "... certum est non fuisse legem necessariam quae per Moysen data est. Nam si naturalem legem, quam Deus Creator infudit singulorum pectoribus, homines servare potuissent, non fuerat opus ea lege, quae in tabulis scripta lapideis implicavit atque innodavit magis humani generis infirmitatem quam elaqueavit atque absolvit. Esse autem legem naturalem in cordibus nostris etiam Apostolus docet, qui scribit quia plerumque et 'Gentes naturaliter ea quae legis sunt faciunt, et cum legem non legerint, opus tamen legis scriptum habent in cordibus suis.'"

Ambrose then goes on to discuss the origin of this natural law. In his view, it is "... not written, but inborn; it is not acquired by reading, but springs up in each one as from the flowing font of nature, and men's minds drink from it."⁴⁵ Moreover, this natural law "is in itself holy, guileless, without craftiness, the companion of justice [and] free from wickedness," a description not totally unlike Paul's famous discussion of the Mosaic Law found in Rom 7:7-14. In short, Ambrose seems to regard the natural law as a thoroughly good thing that, despite its inherent goodness, actually produced condemnation.

Perhaps most important for our purposes is Ambrose's next statement about natural law: in his view, Adam, who clearly possessed this law before his sin, made a significant contribution to silencing it and, by extension, to retarding its ability to function as clearly and efficiently within the hearts of his posterity, all of whom would inherit from him his compromised nature. Ambrose writes:

This law Adam broke (*solvit*), seeking to take for himself what he had not received, so that he might be like his own Creator and Maker, so that he might claim divine honor. [...] Had he not broken the command (*imperium*) and had he been obedient to the heavenly precepts (*mandatis caelestibus*), he would have preserved for his heirs the prerogative of nature (*praerogativam naturae*) and of innocence which was his from birth. But because the authority of the natural law was corrupted and blotted out by disobedience, the written Law was determined necessary, ...⁴⁶

Near the letter's end, but still in Paragraph 10, Ambrose paraphrases many of the forgoing sentiments by again claiming that:

The Law of Moses was not needful (*necessaria*); hence it entered secretly (*subintravit*). Its entrance seems not of an ordinary kind, but like something clandestine (*furtivum*) because it entered secretly into the place of the natural law. Thus, if she had but kept her place, this written Law would never have entered in, but, since deception (*praevaricatio*) had banished (*excluserat*) that law and nearly blotted it out

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 464-465; cf. CSEL 82/2, pp. 143-144: "... lex non scribitur sed innascitur nec aliqua percipitur lectione, sed profluo quodam naturae fonte in singulis exprimitur et humanis ingeniis hauritur. [...] sancta, sine versuita, sine fraude, consors iustitiae, expers iniquitatis."

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 465; cf. CSEL 82/2, p. 144: "Solvit hanc legem Adam, qui voluit sibi arrogare quod non acceperat, ut esset sicut Creator et Conditor suus et divinum honorem affectaret. [...] Qui si non rupisset imperium et oboediens fuisset mandatis caelestibus, praerogativam naturae atque ingenitae sibi innocentiae heredibus propriis reservavisset. Ergo quia per inoboedientiam praerogativa naturalis legis corrupta atque interlita est, ideo scriptum legis aestimatum est necessarium,"

(*propemodum aboleverat*) of the human breast, pride reigned and disobedience was rampant.⁴⁷

In addition to *epistula* 63, there are two interesting locations within Ambrose's *A Commentary on Twelve Psalms* where he references Rom 2:14-15. They are found amidst his exegesis of Psalm 36 and Psalm 39 respectively.

In Paragraph 69 of his treatment of Psalm 36 (MT = Psalm 37) as he comments on verse 31, i.e., "The Law of God is in [the just person's] heart, and his steps shall not be supplanted," Ambrose is determined to see the reference to the Law of God found here as indicative of the natural law and not the Law of Moses, even though the latter would seem to be a much more obvious choice. Apparently, his primary motivation for this was a desire to highlight the ways in which the Jewish people have disinherited themselves through disobedience. After rhetorically asking "What law?" he answers by noting that:

It is not a written law, but the natural law: for, "the law is not made for the just but for the unjust" (cf. 1 Tim 1:9). The law is in his heart, it is not something recited in a perfunctory manner as by the lips of the Jews. No, for the just "believes with his heart unto justice" (cf. Rom 10:10). One who believes will also speak; but one who speaks, does not necessarily believe. Those people certainly did not believe, those of whom it is written: "This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (cf. Is 29:13). Therefore, if the Gentiles, so long as they are doing the things of the law, are a law unto themselves, understanding which things they ought to follow and which they ought to take care to avoid, how much more has the faithful and just person, the one who is living (*uiuit*) in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26), known the proper things and been able both to discern the virtuous things and to use that legal bequest of natural wisdom for the governing of himself ...⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 467; cf. CSEL 82/2, p. 147: "Non fuit necessaria lex per Moysen; denique subintravit, quod utique non ordinarium sed velut furtivum significare videtur introitum, eo quod in locum naturalis legis intraverit. Itaque si illa suum servasset locum, haec lex scripta nequaquam esset ingressa. Sed quia illam legem excluserat praevaricatio ac propemodum aboleverat pectoribus humanis, regnabat superbia inoboedientia que sese diffuderat; ..."

⁴⁸ As far as the end of the quotation of Is 29:13, the trans. is that found in Íde M. Ní Riain, *Commentary of Saint Ambrose on Twelve Psalms* (Dublin: Halcyon Press, 2000): 99. From that point forward, the trans. is my own. Ní Riain has rendered this latter portion as: "Even the Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by natural instinct those things which are of the law, and avoid those things which are forbidden by it. How much more, therefore, ought one who is a true believer and a just person, living in the image and likeness of God, know what is honourable and discern what is proper and becoming. Such a person will rightly use the natural law of wisdom and

In addition to the rather heavy-handed anti-Jewish barbs this passage contains, it is noteworthy as another example of how Ambrose assumes the existence of natural law. At the same time, his exegesis here differs from that in *epistula* 63 in that he seems to vacillate on the Gentiles degree of obedience to this natural law. Although, thanks to his use of a somewhat ambiguous “*cum*” clause, he certainly cannot be said to be asserting that the Gentiles are always or perfectly keeping the law, he does, at least for rhetorical purposes, seem to be praising them for having had a certain degree of success in the quest for knowledge of how to live. Still more important, however, is the contrast (cf. the “*quanto magis*”) that he goes on to set up between the Gentiles and the person who is both “faithful and just (*fidelis et iustus*)” – or, perhaps, the one who is “faithful and has been justified.” In short, though it is only implicit, it seems clear that, for Ambrose, the Gentiles of Rom 2:14 – at least here – are *not* believing Christians: on the contrary, they are pagans who do not seem to know much at all about the true faith or what it means to live life as one who is truly made “in the image and likeness of God.”

Finally is Ambrose’s commentary or *Explanatio* of Psalm 39(40). This composition’s reference to Rom 2:14-15 occurs in the midst of a discussion of verse 8b, which in Ambrose’s preferred version reads “... your law is in the midst of my heart (... *in medio cordis*).” He is aware that some other versions (*alii*) read “... in the midst of my womb (... *in medio uentris*).” In several important ways, the Bishop of Milan’s comments on this partial verse are very similar to what we have seen above. For example, he is just as clearly “anti-Jewish” here as he was in his comments on Psalm 36. He is also just as confident that a legitimate exegesis of this verse can and should include a reminder about the existence of natural law. Newer or, at least, clearer, however, are his ideas about how and where this natural law comes into existence:

... you may understand [the phrase “in the midst of my womb”] as the womb of the inner man, which is interpreted as “in the midst of the heart,” in which we follow the prescripts of the natural law, which not

direct his course according to it.” For the Latin, cf. CSEL 64, pp. 128-129: “Non scripta, sed naturalis; ‘iusto’ enim ‘lex non est posita, sed iniusto.’ In corde eius lex est, non perfunctorie sicut in labiis Iudaeorum; ‘corde’ enim ‘creditur ad iustitiam.’ Qui credit, et loquitur; qui autem loquitur, non continuo credit. Denique non creditur populus, de quo dictum est: ‘Populus hic labiis me honorat, cor autem eorum longe est a me.’ Si igitur gentes, cum ea quae legis sunt faciunt, ipsi sibi sunt lex cognoscentes quae sequi debeant uel cauere, quanto magis fidelis et iustus, qui ad imaginem et similitudinem dei uiuit, decora nouit et honesta decernere et uti legitimo quodam naturalis sapientiae gubernaculo, ...”

only are kept, but also come into existence (*fit*) in our hearts. That is also why it has been written: "it is not only the hearers of the Law that are just before God, but also the doers of the Law who will be justified (cf. Rom 2:13)." For there are people (*qui*) who naturally (*naturaliter*) do the things of the Law, just as the Gentiles who do not hear the Law and are a law unto themselves (cf. Rom 2:14), who are unknowingly (*incognita*) following the precepts of the Law. Therefore in these verses it is as if Christ, the Gatherer (*congregator*; cf. Jn 11:52) of the Gentile people, has taken up our person when he says that he keeps that law itself in the midst of his heart. Inasmuch as the people of the Gentile nations (*populus nationem*) fulfilled the law that they had not heard in order that they came to acknowledge Christ, whom the Law-accepting people of the Jews neither received nor thought as worthy to recognize. This is why it is written: "The ox acknowledges his owner and the ass the stable of his master, but Israel has not recognized me." Therefore, this is the womb of believers in whom the Holy Spirit is working and which he is accustomed to fill with spiritual seed, ...⁴⁹

*E. Romans 2:14-15 in Jerome*⁵⁰

Notwithstanding his obvious, though rarely admitted, appreciation of and allegiance to the exegetical methods and productions of

⁴⁹ This English trans. is my own. For the Latin, cf. CSEL 64, pp. 227-228: "... ut interioris hominis uentrem intellegas, qui in medio esse cordis accipitur, in quo naturalis legis praescripta seruamus, quae non solum custoditur, sed etiam fit in cordibus nostris. Vnde et scriptum est, quia 'Non solum auditores legis iusti sunt apud Deum, sed etiam factores legis iustificabuntur.' Sunt enim qui naturaliter ea quae legis sunt faciunt, sicut gentes qui legem non audiunt et sibi lex sunt, qui incognita sibi legis praecepta conseruant. Ergo quasi gentilis populi congregator personam nostram suscepit hoc loco Christus, ut diceret facere se legem in medio cordis sui. Siquidem populus nationum legem quam non audiuit impleuit, ut agnosceret Christum, quem populus Iudaeorum qui legem acceperat non recepit nec cognoscendum putauit, quia scriptum est: 'Agnouit bos possessorem suum et asinus praesepe domini sui; Israel autem me non cognouit.' Hic ergo credentium uenter est in quo Spiritus Sanctus operatur et eum semine spiritali implere consueuit, ..."

⁵⁰ The assertion that much of Jerome's work was known to Augustine as well as to many of the churches in North Africa and Italy – and known to them from a relatively early date – requires neither explanation nor defense: support for this has been (and continues to be) provided throughout the relevant secondary literature. Note, e.g., the comment by M. Hale Williams, *The Monk and the Book*, p. 242: "... Jerome's works seem already to have been well disseminated in North Africa when Augustine first wrote to him [in 394/395]." Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 11. Augustine's first *epistula* to Jerome is number 28 in his collection and is number 56 in that of Jerome. Also worthy of note is the conclusion reached by some scholars regarding Jerome's apparent ignorance of the Pauline Commentary written by Ambrosiaster. For this, see, e.g., R. Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St Paul's Epistle to the*

Origen, Jerome was imbued with more authority and was more quickly deferred to in matters exegetical than any other figure of the late 4th and early 5th-century Latin church. At the same time, given his thoroughly irascible nature, his hypersensitivity, and his profound penchant for generating – not to mention holding on to – both enemies and grudges, it would be an exaggeration to claim that all those who read, profited, and incorporated his work were his devotees. Indeed, even some of those who were inclined to defer to him did not always refrain from questioning either his interpretive conclusions or his doctrinal and theological positions.⁵¹ Nevertheless, because he produced so much exegetical material and, as history would have it, because so much of that material was carefully preserved, Jerome remains one of the best and richest sources we have for gaining a clear understanding of the West's views on Rom 2:14-15 during the period ca. 365-411.

Jerome's *Epistula* 121 (ca. 407). A landmark for Jerome's understanding of our verses is found in Paragraph 8 of his *ep.* 121, a composition that most probably dates from the year 407.⁵² Because it was one of several he composed in response to requests for exegetical assistance, this letter was all but certainly sent to the West soon after its completion. It may also have been put into circulation just as quickly.⁵³ In the midst of Paragraph 8, we read:

... that same Apostle teaches that the natural law has been written in our hearts. "For when the Gentiles, who do not have the Law, are naturally doing the things which are of the Law, they who do not have

Ephesians (Oxford: OUP, 2002): 4 and n. 22, where he references A. Souter's *Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St Paul*.

⁵¹ The most obvious and best-known example of this is the complicated – and often tension-filled – debates between Augustine and Jerome on both particular points of exegesis (e.g. Gal 2; esp. 2:11-21) and Jerome's enterprise of re-translating the Jewish Scriptures directly from their Hebrew and Aramaic sources. It goes without saying that the secondary literature on Jerome in general as well as on Jerome as exegete is enormous. For a brief but helpful and up-to-date biographical introduction, see S. Rebenich, *Jerome* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002); for an equally helpful but even more thorough guide to the secondary literature, see A. Fürst, *Hieronymus. Askese und Wissenschaft in der Spätantike* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2003). Note also that in 1999 Fürst published what many regard as the definitive study of the correspondence between Jerome and Augustine; see his *Augustins Briefwechsel mit Hieronymus* (Münster, Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1999). For his treatment of the exchanges between them regarding Gal 2, see the "Erster Teil," sections I-V, pp. 1-87.

⁵² For a recent publication that supports this dating for *ep.* 121, see H. Newman, "Jerome's Judaizers" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9/4 (2001): 428 and n. 23.

⁵³ M. Hale Williams, *The Monk and the Book*, p. 248. See *ibid.*, n. 26 for a short list of other letters of this type.

the Law, are a law unto themselves, who show the work of the Law written on *their own* (*suis*) hearts, with the conscience bearing witness to them (*illis*)” (cf. Rom 2:14-15). That law, which is written on the heart, encompasses all nations, and there is no human being who is ignorant of this law.⁵⁴ Hence, the whole world is under sin (*sub peccato*; cf. Rom 3:9; 3:22; 7:14), and all who are in the entire community of human beings are transgressors of the law; and for that reason, the judgment of God is just, writing in the heart of the human race: “Whatever you shall not want to be done to you, you shall not do to another” (cf. Tob 4:15). Is there possibly someone who does not know murder, adultery, theft, and every other covetous desire to be evil just from the fact that he does not wish them to be done to him? For if he fails to recognize these things to be evil, he might never lament them being done against himself. Through this natural law Cain recognized his sin, saying (ref. to Gen 4:13 follows) ...”⁵⁵

Following this mention of Cain, Jerome goes on to discuss examples of other individuals who were active before the Law was given to Moses but who knew how to evaluate both themselves and their behavior thanks to their knowledge of natural law – including Adam, Eve, and the Egyptian Pharaoh who held the Children of Israel in bondage during the days leading up to the Exodus.

Of the many exegetical claims and details that may be gleaned from this passage, perhaps the most interesting is that contained in the opening lines: although Jerome is quite explicit in his claim that the natural law is written in “our (*nostris*)” hearts, by which he presumably means the hearts of Christian believers, he immediately (and without comment) quotes Rom 2:15 in an unaltered, i.e., third-person, form

⁵⁴ Cf. this sentiment with the following lines from Jerome’s commentary on Malachi (written ca. 406), lines which clearly assert Jerome’s belief in the existence of a system of natural law, his belief that this system is inherent in all human beings, and, at least implicitly, his belief that Rom 2:14-15 offer legitimate support for these views (cf. CCSL 76A, p. 925): “... sic interpretantur, ut uxorem adolescentiae naturalem dicant intellegentiam et legem in corde perscriptam, quae omnibus hominibus insita est. Unde et gentes non habentes legem Dei, ea quae sunt legis, operantur.”

⁵⁵ This English trans. is my own; for the Latin, cf. CSEL 56, pp. 32-33: “... naturalem legem scriptam in cordibus nostris idem Apostolus docet: ‘Cum enim gentes, quae non habent legem, naturaliter ea, quae legis sunt, faciunt, isti legem non habentes sibi ipsi sunt lex, qui indicant opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis testimonium praebente illis conscientia.’ Ista lex, quae in corde scribitur, omnes continet nationes et nullus hominum est, qui hanc legem nesciat. Vnde omnis mundus sub peccato et uniuersi homines praeuicinatores legis sunt et ideo iustum iudicium dei est scribentis in corde generis humani: ‘Quod tibi fieri nolueris, alteri ne feceris.’ Quis ignoret homicidium, adulterium, furta et omnem concupiscentiam esse malum ex eo, quod sibi ea nolit fieri? Si enim mala esse nesciret, numquam sibi doleret inlata. Per hanc naturalem legem et cain cognouit peccatum suum dicens ...”

(cf. “their hearts (*cordibus suis*)” and “with the conscience bearing witness to them (*illis*)”). In fact, his only direct comment on our verses comes in the next line, one which reveals his reading of Rom 2:14-15 to be the broadest and the most inclusive of any we have encountered thus far, despite the fact that his reading is so clearly similar to (if not demonstrably dependent upon) the thought of several of his predecessors. Also significant here – and no less reminiscent of his predecessors – is the degree to which Jerome overtly links the natural law with sin and with the condemnation that sin brings with it.⁵⁶ It seems that Jerome has assigned to the natural law nearly, if not exactly, the same function and significance that Paul frequently assigned to the Mosaic Law in Romans and Galatians. In the same way that, according to Paul, the Law of Romans 7 (cf. esp. 7:7-14) brought condemnation to himself and, by extension, to all Jews, Jerome seems to have believed that the natural law has brought condemnation to all human beings in every age and in every circumstance. Finally, and in addition to the overt link Jerome makes to a negative formulation of the so-called “Golden Rule,” note the way in which he makes an explicit link between the existence of the natural law and the justice of God: according to Jerome, because God provided “all nationes (*omnes ... nationes*)” and, in fact, every individual human being who has ever lived, with the natural law, we are justified in believing that, when God judges any nation or any individual, he remains perfectly just even as his judgments remain perfectly unimpeachable.

Jerome's *Aduersus Iovinianum* (393). Interestingly, although the Jerome of 407 was more than willing to portray himself as eminently knowledgeable about the nature of the natural law, the Jerome of the early 390's, that is, the Jerome who penned a screed against the views of the “heretic” Jovinian, was just as certain that non-Christians were confused about its true nature.⁵⁷ In fact, at *adu. Iovin.* II,7,

⁵⁶ For a similar understanding of the condemnation that the knowledge imparted by nature is capable of generating, see *Tr. in Ps.* 95 (cf. CCSL 78, p. 154) where under the lemma “Etenim corripit orbem terrae, qui non commouebitur” (cf. MT Ps 96:10) he writes: “Numquam corrigitur, nisi quod ante rectum fuit, et postea deprauatum est. Sic igitur et nos, et omne humanum genus naturaliter intellegit Deum. Nullae enim gentes sunt, quae naturaliter non intellegant Creatorem suum. Licet enim lapides et ligna uenerentur: tamen intellegunt aliquid maius esse quam ipsi sunt, et in errore suo indicant se habere sapientiam, hoc est, nulla gens est quae naturaliter non intellegat Deum. Denique gentes idola colunt, hoc est, lapides et ligna uenerantur; et si forte rixam fecerint, et si iuramentum aliquod inter illos uenerit, non dicunt, lapides isti uident, ligna uident: sed, Deus uidet, et Deus audit.”

⁵⁷ To be precise, the *adu. Iovin.* can be dated with confidence to the year 393. For a recent and comprehensive study of both the context and the relevant issues, see

Jerome claims that the nations have lost so much of their original sensitivity to the real contents of natural law that they often end up labeling whatever it is that they have come to accept as normal or customary behavior as “the law of nature”:

You see clearly that not only in eating, but also in burial, in wedlock, and in every department of life, each race follows its own practice and peculiar usages, and takes that for the law of nature which is most familiar to it.⁵⁸

While this reference to natural law was primarily made as part of Jerome’s greater polemical purpose and, hence, may not reflect his most carefully considered opinion on the subject, it is also true that his use of the concept in such a context was not a simple aberration. In fact, a similar reference – complete with an overt reference to Rom 2:14-15 – occurs in Book III of his *comm. eu. Math.*, a work that he penned about five years later, i.e., in 398.⁵⁹ The crucial lines occur in the middle of Jerome’s comments on the so-called “Parable of the Wedding Banquet” (cf. Mt 22:1-14), a parable which Jesus is recorded to have employed in order to explain the true nature of the Kingdom of God and of that kingdom’s citizenry. As he comments on vv.8-9, Jerome highlights the breadth and inclusiveness of the king’s final invitation:

“Then he said to his servants: ‘The wedding feast has been prepared, but the ones who had been invited have not been found worthy; therefore, go to the far ends of the roads and call whomever you find there to the wedding feast’” (cf. Mt 22:8-9). The people of the Gentiles were not on the roads, but were at the far ends of the roads. And in this way he searched among them, the ones who were outside among the evil doers, [with the result that] some doers of good were probably discovered. The apostle dealt with this issue more fully [by writing] to the Romans that Gentiles were naturally carrying out the things that are of the Law, making it possible that they would condemn the Jews who had not been keeping the written Law. There is indeed an infinite variety among those Gentile peoples, while we know some

D. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵⁸ This English trans. is that of the NPNF, II/6, p. 394. For the Latin, cf. PL 23, col.310: “Peruides igitur, quod non solum in esu, sed et in sepulturis, et in connubiis, et in omni conuersatione unaquaeque gens suo ritu et proprietatibus uictitet: et hoc eam naturae legem putare, quod didicit.”

⁵⁹ For this date, see A. Fürst, *Hieronymous. Askese und Wissenschaft in der Spätantike*, 117-119 and 302.

to be inclined to vices and rushing headlong toward evil, we know others to be dedicated to virtuous behaviors thanks to the integrity of their morals.⁶⁰

If Jerome's *ep.* 121 represented a significant evolution from views he was willing to commit to paper in the 390's, it is also true that his thinking about natural law and about the ways to exegete and apply Rom 2:14-15 did not fully crystallize in 407. Indeed, treatments at least as significant as that found in *ep.* 121 occur in his *Commentary on Isaiah*, an eighteen book masterpiece of biblical interpretation that he completed about 408-410.⁶¹

For example, in VIII, 24, 6, commenting on Is 24:6, a verse which is part of a substantial and detailed prophecy concerning an horrible future judgment that the Lord will bring about, Jerome makes what is simultaneously a present and a future application:

Let the Jews, who boast in the fact that only they have received the Law of the Lord, hear that at first all the Gentile nations as well as the whole world received the natural law, and therefore it was only afterwards that the Law was given through Moses, because the first law had been dissipated (*dissipatus est*). Concerning this issue the Apostle declared: "When the Gentiles, who do not have the Law, naturally do things which are of the Law, these lacking the Law, are a law unto themselves; they are showing that the work of the Law has been written on their hearts" (cf. Rom 2:14-15). Therefore, those who might be observing these laws are obtaining the rewards; but those who are neglecting them are sustaining the things that were just now threatened by the prophetic word.⁶²

⁶⁰ This English trans. is my own; for the Latin, cf. CCSL 77, p. 201: "Tunc ait seruis suis: Nuptiae quidem paratae sunt, sed qui inuitati erant non fuerunt digni; ite ergo ad exitus uiarum et quoscumque inueneritis uocate ad nuptias.' Gentilium populus non erat in uiis sed in exitibus uiarum. Quaeritur autem quomodo in his, qui foris erant inter malos, et boni aliqui sint reperti. Hunc locum plenius tractat apostolus ad Romanos quod gentes naturaliter facientes ea quae legis sunt, condemnent iudaeos qui scriptam legem non fecerint. Inter ipsos quoque ethnicos est infinita diuersitas, cum sciamus alios esse procliues ad uitia et ruentes ad mala, alios ob honestatem morum uirtutibus deditos."

⁶¹ Both Fürst and Newman agree that the *Com. Is.* was finished by 410, though Fürst's view is somewhat less precise, i.e., 408-410. For these opinions, see A. Fürst, *Hieronymus. Askese und Wissenschaft in der Spätantike*, 117-119 and 302 and H. Newman, "Jerome's Judaizers," 432.

⁶² This trans. is my own; for the Latin, cf. CCSL 73, p. 317: "Audiant Iudaei, qui se solos legem accepisse Domini gloriantur, quod uniuersae primum gentes totus que orbis naturalem acceperit legem, et idcirco postea lex data sit per Moysen, quia prima lex dissipata est. De qua apostolus loquitur: 'cum enim gentes, quae non habent legem, naturaliter ea quae legis sunt faciunt, isti legem non habentes, ipsi sibi sunt lex; qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis.' Qui igitur has leges obseruauerint,

Although the specific way in which Jerome linked our verses to Isaiah's prophecy is different from anything we have seen thus far, still more remarkable is the claim he makes concerning the "dissipated" nature of the natural law. Not only has Jerome taken steps to downplay the (salvific and eschatological) significance of the Mosaic Law, and, perhaps, to distance himself from certain features of the Hebrew tradition,⁶³ he also has revealed yet another point of contact between himself and a Christian commentary tradition that has frequently made declarations about mankind's ability to eliminate or otherwise erase the gifts of God from their minds and consciences. Finally, note that Jerome returns to this theme in, if anything, still more specific terms some six books later. Commenting on Is 51:7-8 (and after quoting Jer 31:31-33 *in toto*⁶⁴), he observes:

Inasmuch as they are living in no way according to the letter, but according to the spirit, they are (re-)establishing (*instaurantes*) the natural law in their hearts. The Apostle also wrote about this: "For when the Gentiles, who do not have the Law, naturally do those things which are of the Law, these lacking the Law, are a law unto themselves; they are showing that the work of the Law has been written on their hearts" (cf. Rom 2:14-15). A point concerning that law is also made in the Psalm: "The mouth of the just man mediates wisdom, and his tongue

praemia consequuntur; qui autem neglexerint eas, sustinebunt quae nunc sermo propheticus comminatur."

⁶³ Scholars have long recognized that Jerome's hypersensitivity and his peculiar scholarly inclinations combined together to provide him with ample reason to maintain an appropriate distance between himself and anything that might be perceived as "too Jewish," regardless of whether those things were inside or outside the church. The difficulty that he faced is aptly summarized by H. Newman, "Jerome's Judaizers," 444: "The irony – and perhaps part of the underlying logic – of Jerome's frequent attacks against alleged Judaizers is that in principle no orthodox Christian of his day was more vulnerable than he to the charge of Judaizing. Here was a Christian who fraternized with Jews, not for commerce or recreation, but for the express purpose of learning Hebrew and studying Jewish biblical interpretation so that he could then pass on this knowledge to other Christians."

⁶⁴ The theological import of these vv. for the earliest Christians, who regarded them as having been (at least) proleptically fulfilled through Christ's ministry and his gift of the Holy Spirit, need not be reviewed here; in the NRSV they read: "The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

speaks justice. The law of his God is within his heart and his step will not deviate" (Cf. Ps 36:30-31 (=MT 37:30-31)).⁶⁵

F. Romans 2:14-15 in Augustine (pre- 411)⁶⁶

The goal of what follows will be the provision of a condensed but balanced picture of the Bishop of Hippo's thinking on Rom 2:14-15 prior to 411 as a means of facilitating a comparison between his early exegesis of these verses and the exegesis of his predecessors,⁶⁷ his contemporaries – especially that of Pelagius – and, though it is beyond the parameters of this particular study, the exegesis of Rom 2:14-15 by both himself and the Pelagian writers who were active after 411. As with most of the foregoing sections, what follows will not be exhaustive.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ This trans. is my own; for the Latin, cf. CCSL 73A, p. 563: "Vt nequaquam uiuant iuxta litteram, sed iuxta spiritum, instaurantes naturalem legem in cordibus suis, de qua scribit et Apostolus: 'Cum enim gentes, quae non habent legem, naturaliter ea quae legis sunt faciunt; isti legem non habentes, sibi ipsi sunt lex, qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis.' De qua lege significatur in Psalmo: os iusti meditabitur sapientiam, et lingua eius loquetur iudicium. Lex dei eius in corde illius; et non supplantabuntur gressus eius."

⁶⁶ In the following section frequent reference will be made to what is probably the most thorough analysis of Augustine's relationship to our verses published thus far: Simon J. Gathercole, "A Conversion of Augustine: From Natural Law to Restored Nature in Romans 2:13-16," in *Engaging Augustine on Romans: Self, Context, and Theology in Interpretation*, eds. D. Patte and E. TeSelle, Romans through History and Culture Series (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002): 147-172. While this chapter is certainly commendable, it is not above critique – either methodologically or in all of its textual or analytical details. For example, Gathercole says next to nothing about the ways these vv. were handled by others before or during Augustine's ministry (though he does deal substantially with the impact of Augustine's interpretation(s) on pp. 162-165), details which could really have served to set his conclusions clearly in relief. Still more disturbing are the frequent referential errors he (or his editors) allowed to creep into his text: in the space of two pages (pp. 151-152), I noted no less than three problems with respect to the locations of references to our vv. in Augustine, all of which render the work decidedly less "user friendly" than it should have been. Cf. p. 151, where all references to "Sermon 1" should read "Sermon 51"; p. 152, where the reference to "Exposition of Psalm 58" should be to "Exposition of Psalm 57"; and *ibid.*, where all references to "Letter 107" should be to "Letter 157."

⁶⁷ For a general overview of the parallels between the "early" Augustine's Pauline exegesis and that of Origen, see C. Bammel, "Augustine, Origen and the Exegesis of St. Paul," *Augustinianum* 32/2 (1992): 341-368. For an equally general overview of Augustine's attitude toward Gentile religious practices, see P. Hacker, "The Religions of the Gentiles as Viewed by the Fathers of the Church," *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 54 (1970): 253-278, esp. 270-275.

⁶⁸ Passages from the "pre-411" period in which Augustine makes more or less clear references to Rom 2:14-15 include: *ex. prop. Rm* 10, where he discusses the notion of "*contestante conscientia illorum*" from 2:15, which, incidentally,

Romans 2:14-15 in Augustine's *De sermone Domini in monte*. Augustine's earliest clear reference to our verses is found in Book II of his commentary on Jesus's "Sermon on the Mount," a work completed after he had been ordained to the priesthood but before he became a bishop, i.e., about 392 or 393, and, as will be obvious from the excerpt below, while he was still very concerned to establish his "anti-Manichaeism" credentials.

At the beginning of Chapter 9, Augustine is addressing the meaning of what he refers to as the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer, i.e., "Bring us not into temptation" (cf. Mt 6:13). Not surprisingly, Augustine's most pressing concern by the time we reach Paragraph 32 is to carefully distinguish between our being "tried (*temptemur*)," which he thinks is necessary for anyone if they are to become godly, and being "brought into temptation (*inferamur in temptationem*)," something which he does not think God ever does, even if God does sometimes allow it to happen through the agency of others. As Augustine moves on to discuss a few biblical examples involving either being

Gathercole, "A Conversion of Augustine," 159-160, critiques as being mistranslated by Fredriksen Landes in her *Augustine on Romans: Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, SBL Texts and Translations 23 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), cf. p. 4 (for the Latin) and p. 5 (for the English); *en. in Ps.* 5,13, and 9,9. *doc. Chr.* III,14,22, which is cited by Lyonnet, "Lex naturalis," 152, is early and is certainly relevant for any discussion of Augustine's views on natural law, but, as far as I can see, contains little that might be said to be anything more than an allusion to our vv. Although both interesting and important for a full discussion of Augustine's exegesis of our vv., the references to them in, e.g., *spir. et litt.* 26,43-28,49; *ep.* 157,3,15; *En. in Ps.* 118, exp. 25,4; *c. Jul.* IV,3,23-25; and *ciu. Dei* XX,26 are all too late given the parameters of this study. Finally, a word seems necessary regarding the reference to Rom 2:14 found at s.51,28 (cf. *Revue Bénédictine* 91, p. 40). Although it is traditionally dated to ca. 417/418, there are some who think it is significantly older. In fact, both E. Hill and J. Rist think there are good reasons for dating it to "before 410" if not earlier (in his comments, Rist goes so far as to say that Hill's position is still "too tentative"). For Hill's observations, see *WSA* III/3, p. 44 and n. 1; those of Rist can be found in n. 29 of his forthcoming essay "'O, ALTITUDO!': Some Problems in Augustine and Julian about Justice and Mercy: Making Philosophical Sense of some Pauline Ideas" that will be included in a volume dedicated to the use and exegesis of the Pauline corpus during the Pelagian Controversies. In addition to its difficult chronology, the reference to our vv. in this sermo is passed over for discussion here given its difficulty and obscurity: there Augustine's main concern is with the practice of infant adoption and he sees the fact that Gentiles and pagans, such as Pharaoh's daughter (cf. Ex 2:1-10), could willingly adopt the children of others as somehow supporting the notion that they had law(s) written on their hearts before they were formally and externally codified. Though highlighted by neither Hill nor Rist, the fact that Augustine applied Rom 2:14 to non-, or, at least, pre-Christian pagans, could perhaps be used to strengthen the argument in favor of an earlier date given the ways he usually exegeted it post-411; for more on this, cf. *infra*.

tried or being brought into temptation, he begins a longish discussion of the story of Job and how, in Augustine's view, it is ridiculous to suppose that Satan spoke literally and physically to God when he is reported as having asked God to tempt Job to curse God by radically reversing his fortunes.⁶⁹

From here, Augustine, in full anti-materialist mode, references Rom 2:14-16 when he explains the means by which God does speak to his creatures – regardless of either the quality or the exact status of their relationship to him:

When will [the Manichaean heretics who impugn the OT] understand that God speaks within the conscience of every man who can reason in any manner, even though he be perverse (*peruersam*)? For who but God has written the natural law in the hearts of men? This is the law of which the Apostle says: "For when the Gentiles who have no Law do by nature what the Law prescribes, these having no law are a Law unto themselves. They show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience being their witness even when conflicting thoughts accuse and defend them, on the day when the Lord will judge the hidden secrets of men" (cf. Rom 2:14-16). Even though some rational souls are blinded by cupidity (*cupiditate caecata*), every rational soul thinks and reasons. Nevertheless, it is not to the rational soul itself that we ought to attribute whatever is true in its reasoning; we must attribute it to the very light of the truth by which it is enlightened, even though feebly in proportion to its capacity, in order that it may be able to perceive some truth in its reasoning.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ The fact that Augustine would dwell upon this detail provides support for the aforementioned statement about the chronology of this work and its relationship to Augustine's anti-Manichaean efforts. In fact, it rather closely resembles the claim he makes in *conf.* that the last significant hurdle to his escape from their influence was his inability to conceive of God or, indeed, of any higher form in non-material categories. Cf. *conf.* V,10,19-V,11,21.

⁷⁰ This trans. is that of D. Kavanagh. For it, see FOTC 11, pp. 140-141; for the Latin, cf. CCSL 35, p. 122: "Nam quando illi ualent intellegere nullam esse animam quamuis peruersam, quae tamen ullo modo ratiocinari potest, in cuius conscientia non loquatur Deus? Quis enim scripsit in cordibus hominum naturalem legem nisi Deus? De qua lege apostolus dicit: 'Cum enim gentes, quae legem non habent, naturaliter quae legis sunt faciunt, hi legem non habentes ipsi sibi sunt lex; qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis, contestante conscientia illorum et inter se inuicem cogitationum accusantium aut etiam excusantium in die qua iudicabit Deus occulta hominum.' Quapropter si omnis anima rationalis etiam cupiditate caecata tamen cum cogitat et ratiocinatur, quidquid in ea ratiocinatione uerum est non ei tribuendum est sed ipsi lumini ueritatis, a quo uel tenuiter pro sui capacitate inlustratur, ut uerum aliquid in ratiocinando sentiat, ..."

Striking about this passage is how, at least here, Augustine is convinced that this natural law is genuinely present to some degree in every human being's heart even if he or she has (consciously or unconsciously) tried to erase it or to enfeeble it through sin and perversity. Apparently, the reason why this capacity cannot be done away with is precisely because it is rooted in humanity's created nature, that is, in those rational faculties that set a human being apart as "God's image." In other words, in Augustine's view, so long as any given human being (or, for that matter, other created creature, e.g., Satan) remains, at least to some degree, a rational creature with a capacity for understanding at least bits and pieces of truth, he or she apparently retains access to God's voice and God's revelatory activity with respect to both God himself and those aforementioned truths.

Romans 2:14-15 in Augustine's *Confessions*.⁷¹ Completed between nine and fourteen years before the outbreak of the first phase

⁷¹ The fact that the use of Rom 2:14-15 at c. *Faust.* 19,2, a work which probably dates from the same period as the *conf.*, i.e., between ca. 396/397 and ca. 400/403, occurs within a section that is actually part of *Faustus's* explanation of the "three types of law (*legem genera tria*)," and is not, as some readers have mistakenly assumed, part and parcel of Augustine's views (cf. Gathercole, "A Conversion of Augustine," 149) means that it should not be allowed to impact the conclusions of this section. Nevertheless, if Augustine's representation of Faustus's position is accurate, it is noteworthy that Faustus also never questions the existence of natural law. In other words, this passage provides yet more evidence in support of the conclusion that belief in some system of natural law was prevalent among educated Christians of all stripes in the Latin West of the late 4th- and early 5th-century. By the time we get to 19,2, Augustine is well into a discussion of the significance of Christ's claim that he "has not come to destroy, but to fulfill the law and the prophets (cf. Mt 5:17)." As noted *supra*, in Paragraphs 1-6 of Chapter 19, Augustine provides his readers with *Faustus's* explanation of the "three types of law (*legem genera tria*)." In Paragraphs 2 and 3, Augustine records Faustus as claiming that "... there are three kinds of law. One is, of course, that of the Hebrews, which Paul calls the law of sin and death (cf. Rom 8:2). Another is the law of the gentiles (*gentium*), which he calls the natural (*naturale*) law. He says, 'For the gentiles by nature do what pertains to the Law, and, not having the Law, they are a law for themselves, for they show that the work of the Law is written in their hearts' (cf. Rom 2:14-15). But the third kind of law is the truth. [...] Since, therefore, there are three laws, and since Jesus told us that he came not to destroy but to fulfill the law (cf. Mt 5:17), there is need of no slight care and diligence to understand which of these laws he was speaking of" (For this trans., see WSA I/20. p. 237; for the Latin, cf. CSEL 25, p. 497). Faustus then goes on to opine that, since the examples of the law that Jesus gives in the rest of Mt 5 are the "older commandments (*antiquiora praecepta*)" against murder, adultery, and false testimony, he must have been referring to his third category of law, i.e., the Law of Truth, when he claimed that he had come to fulfill the Law. His reasoning strikes the modern reader as being as odd as it is extrapolative: "As it is easy to prove, these [laws] were promulgated long ago among the Gentiles by Enoch and Seth and other righteous men like them, who were given [these laws] by resplendent angels in order to restrain ferocity among

of the Pelagian Controversy, Augustine's *Confessions*, a work which he clearly intended for a wide and diverse audience, contains at least two references to Rom 2:14-15. These two occur at I,18,29 and at II,4,9.

Though the first of these is an allusion made almost in passing, it is significant in that it is used in support of an important point about the irony, the vanity, and the moral and ethical corruption that Augustine sees as inherent in the lives of all who have not yet awakened to the fact that they are deeply immersed in a fallen and hopelessly corrupt world system. Augustine begins Paragraph 29 by noting the backwardness of those who dilligently "observe the conventions of letters and syllables received from those who so talked before them," but who also "neglect the eternal contracts of lasting salvation" which God has tried to make with them and who so willingly and glibly "hate a human being, [their] fellow-man" and who "cherish hostile attitudes." The probable allusion to Rom 2:15 is then introduced as Augustine summarizes the relative permanence of these two systems, one that is human and transient and another that is divine and eternal. Particularly germane to this study is that he does this while also linking the allusion to 2:15 to a negative expression of the Golden Rule: "Certainly the knowledge of letters is not as deep-seated in the consciousness as the imprint of the moral conscience (*scripta conscientia*), that [the worldly person] is doing to another what he would not wish done to himself (cf. Tob 4:15; Mt 7:12)."⁷² In other words, here, Augustine seems to claim that, while worldly people do willfully choose to sin, they usually retain the knowledge that what they are choosing is wrong both during and after the commission of the act in question.

Still more substantial is the more certain – but still unattributed – reference at II,4,9, where the principle described by our verses is invoked as part of Augustine's famous comments on the phenomena that surround instances of theft generally and of his theft of his neighbor's pears specifically. In fact, the reference comes very near the beginning of the paragraph when Augustine matter-of-factly acknowledges the existence of both a revealed law and a law implanted in the

human beings. Hence, who would not think that he said this about the law of the truth and its prophets?" (See *ibid.* p. 238; for the Latin, cf. *ibid.* p. 498).

⁷² All translations from the *conf.* in what follows have been taken from H. Chadwick, *Saint Augustine Confessions* (Oxford/New York: OUP, 1991), which hereafter will be referenced as "Chadwick." For this quotation, see p. 21. For the Latin, see CCSL 27, p. 16: "... certe non est interior litterarum scientia quam scripta conscientia, id se alteri facere quod nolit pati."

human heart: "Theft receives certain punishment by your law (Exod 20:15), Lord, and by the law written in the hearts of men (*et lex scripta in cordibus hominum*), which not even iniquity itself destroys. For what thief can with equanimity endure being robbed by another thief? He cannot tolerate it even if he is rich and the other is destitute."⁷³ This is then followed immediately by the Bishop's highly introspective and analytical retelling of his gratuitous theft of pears.

Remarkable here are at least two things. First is the claim that transgressions of the law, regardless of the form it actually takes, are "certain (*certe*)" to be punished. In the case of the law written on the heart, the punishment (at least partly) consists of a furthering of the internal disorder, confusion and "disintegration" that Augustine elsewhere says is a direct result of all sinful lifestyles.⁷⁴ Second is the traditional (both broadly speaking and within Augustine's own compositions) but consistently provocative claim that this law, which is so certainly punished, is also indelible: it cannot be erased from the heart of a human being regardless of their persistence in or their degree of commitment to a lifestyle of sin and depravity. Recall, for example, the claim above that this heart-written law cannot be destroyed by "iniquity itself (*ipsa ... iniquitas*)."⁷⁵ Augustine goes on to illustrate this point by noting that even the most dedicated thieves know that what they do is wrong, yet they react just as quickly as (and sometimes even more harshly than) the most justice-minded, law-abiding citizen if and when it is from them that something is stolen.

Romans 2:14-15 in Augustine's *Enarratio in Psalmo 57,1*. Like those from the *conf.*, the references to Rom 2:14-15 from Augustine's commentary on Psalm 57 (MT=Ps 58) are neither direct nor explicit. However, what makes them interesting and important is that they are exegetically consistent with those from the *conf.* and with those from elsewhere in Augustine's pre-411 oeuvre (not to mention with those from the work of several of his predecessors).

The *enarratio* on Ps 57 was probably preached, as opposed to simply dictated, in Carthage during the first decade of the 5th-century;

⁷³ Chadwick, pp. 28-29; for the Latin, see CCSL 27, pp. 21-22: "Furtum certe punit lex Tua, Domine, et lex scripta in cordibus hominum, quam ne ipsa quidem delet iniquitas: Quis enim fur aequo animo furem patitur? Nec copiosus adactum inopia."

⁷⁴ Several statements containing claims of this sort can be found in Book I of *conf.* See, e.g., I,3,3 (Chadwick, p. 4; cf. CCSL 27, p. 2) where God is said to be the one who "reassembles us (*conligis nos*)" and, still more clearly, I,12,19 (Chadwick, p. 15; cf. CCSL 27, p. 11) where we read that "the punishment of every disordered mind is its own disorder (*poena sua sibi sit omnis inordinatus animus*)."

several scholars believe there is justification for placing it near the end of 403.⁷⁵ That one of this composition's primary concerns is the status of the "natural" human heart is made clear in the very first paragraph as he tackles the difficult issue of recognizing if, and, if so, how, justice might be achieved in interpersonal relationships:

Anyone at all when questioned about what is just can easily give the right answer, as long as he or she is not an interested party! And this is not surprising, for by the hand of our Fashioner (*formatoris nostri*) truth has been written in our very hearts: "What you would not want to be done to you, do not do to another" (cf. Tob 4:15). Even before the ancient law was given no one was allowed (*permissus est*) to be ignorant of it, for even those to whom the law had not been given were held liable to be judged by this standard. But to take away from human beings any ground for complaining that they had not been provided for, that which they were not reading in their hearts was also written on tablets. For it is not that they did not have that which was unwritten, but it was that they were unwilling to read it. Now it was held before their eyes so that they would be forced to see it in their consciences, and, just as the human being had been admonished externally by the voice of God, he or she was forced to confront his or her own innermost self.⁷⁶

Following this harsh indictment of both the human will and the human heart, which, in Augustine's view, had utterly failed to be true to itself and to read (much less to heed) that of which it was so keenly aware, he goes on to explain a bit more about the purpose and the function of the revelation of an external, written Law:

Because men and women were so avid for external things that they had become estranged from themselves, a written Law was given. This was not because it was not already written in human hearts; but you were a deserter from your heart, and so you are arrested by him who

⁷⁵ For an helpful summary of published opinions on the date of this *enarratio*, see C. Meyer, ed. *Augustinus-Lexikon*, Vol. 2 *Cor-Fides* (Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1996-2002), s.v. "Enarrationes in Psalmos," by H. Müller, esp. col. 816.

⁷⁶ This is a slightly modified version of M. Boulding's English trans. as found at WSA III,17, p. 120. For the Latin, cf. CCL 39, pp. 707-708: "Aut quis de iustitia interrogatus, quando non habet causam, non facile respondeat quid sit iustum? Quandoquidem manu formatoris nostri in ipsis cordibus nostris ueritas scripsit: 'Quod tibi non uis fieri, ne facias alteri.' Hoc et antequam lex daretur nemo ignorare permissus est, ut esset unde iudicarentur et quibus lex non esset data. Sed ne sibi homines aliquid defuisse quaererentur, scriptum est et in tabulis quod in cordibus non legebant. Non enim scriptum non habebant, sed legere nolebant. Oppositum est oculis eorum quod in conscientia uidere cogentur; et quasi forinsecus admota uoce Dei, ad interiora sua homo compulsus est, ..."

is present everywhere, and you are called back to the interior of your very self. What appeal does this written law make to those who have abandoned the law written in their hearts? "Return to your hearts, you transgressors" (cf. Is 46:8).⁷⁷

Both the point and the import of this section is well-captured by Gathercole who observes that, for Augustine:

[the natural] law is universal, given before Torah, although it was not read or heeded. The abandoning of this law in the heart gave rise to an alienation within the human person – a fragmentation of nature – and the restoration of the person involved a return to oneself. [...] the universal human instinct of not wishing to be cuckolded, stolen from, or murdered gives validity to the positive prohibition of these things, which is the *content* of the universal law in the heart expressed in Tob 4:15. (*italics in the original*)⁷⁸

G. Rom 2:14-15 in Pelagius

If one sets out to describe Pelagius's views on our verses in the years immediately preceeding the outbreak of the first phase of the controversy to which he would unwittingly give his name, one's task is relatively straightforward. In fact, one need look no further than his *Pauline Commentary* and his so-called *Letter to Demetrias*, two of the small handful of extant compositions or fragments that are certainly attributable to him.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ The difference between what Augustine accepted as the text of Is 46:8 and how modern versions read is substantial; cf. the NRSV: "Remember this and consider, recall it to mind, you transgressors, ...". Again, this is a slightly modified version of M. Boulding's English trans. See WSA III,17, p. 120. For the Latin, cf. CCL 39, p. 708: "Sed quia homines appetentes ea quae foris sunt, etiam a seipsis exsules facti sunt, data est etiam conscripta lex; non quia in cordibus scripta non erat, sed quia tu fugitius eras cordis tui, ab illo qui ubique est comprehenderis, et ad teipsum intro reuocaris. Propterea scripta lex quid clamat eis qui deseruerunt legem scriptam in cordibus suis? Redite, praeuaricatores, ad cor."

⁷⁸ Gathercole, "A Conversion of Augustine," 152.

⁷⁹ As there seems to be very little in the extant portions of Pelagius's *De Natura* that is germane to the questions under consideration here, the issue of whether or not one should accept the (admittedly only probable) date of ca. 406-410 for that composition as argued by Y.-M. Duval need not concern us here. For the arguments, see Y.-M. Duval "La date du 'De Natura' de Pélage. Les premières étapes de la controverse sur la nature de la grâce" *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 36 (1990): 257-283, esp. p. 274 where he concludes that it is probably better seen as stemming from closer to 406 than to 410. What are probably the most germane statements in the near context of the fragments from Pelagius included by Augustine in his own writings can be found near the end of *nat. et gr.* 2,2, a section in which he actually mentions the "law of nature (*lege naturae*)" (cf. CSEL 60, pp. 234-235).

Rom 2:14-15 in Pelagius's *Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St. Paul*. Given that it probably represents his most formal thinking on the overall meaning and import of our verses – though, as we shall see, it certainly does *not* represent his most interesting application of them – we will begin with the comments under the Rom 2:14-15 *lemmata* in the *Romans* commentary.⁸⁰

Even the casual reader of the commentary is immediately struck by the relative extensiveness of Pelagius's comments in this section: as has frequently been observed, his usual style throughout the commentary is nothing if not succinct; occasionally it can even be brusque to the point of obscurity.

On the level of preliminary detail, it is important to note that Pelagius has defined "the Gentiles" for his readers in the preceding context. His comments on Rom 2:13 make it plain that, for him, the Gentiles of Rom 2 are actually non-Christian pagans and not simply believing Christians who are ethnically other-than-Jewish. He writes: "[Paul] explains why Jews are not better than the Gentiles. We too should fear, therefore, lest we, hearing the Law but not doing it (cf. Rom 2:13), perish *along with the Gentiles*, as he himself says elsewhere: 'Lest we be damned along with this world' (cf. 1 Cor 11:32)."⁸¹

Once Pelagius begins to unpack 2:14, the reader quickly learns that this position will not be problematic for him since he assumes that Christians, despite their being both "born again" and "new creations in Christ," have neither cornered the market on good works nor are able to claim exclusive rights to possessing at least some degree of sanctification. In a move thoroughly typical for his commentary in that it presents the reader with multiple interpretative options without ever explicitly committing to any of those that have been offered, Pelagius remains open to the possibility that this particular reference to the Gentiles might be either "those who by nature were righteous in the period before the Law" even as it might also refer to unbelievers who "even now do some

⁸⁰ Noteworthy here is Gathercole's summary statement on this section of Pelagius's *Romans* commentary, viz. that "Pelagius here is not particularly Pelagian." See his "A Conversion of Augustine," 158-159.

⁸¹ For this trans. see T. De Bruyn, *Pelagius's Commentary*, 72. For the Latin, cf. A. Souter, *Pelagius's Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St Paul*, Texts and Studies 9/2 (Cambridge: CUP, 1926), 23. For a brief but helpful survey of the issues and questions surrounding the sources that Pelagius seems to have incorporated into his commentary, see De Bruyn, 1-10. For an older but very clear statement regarding Pelagius's knowledge and use of Origen's commentary via Rufinus's trans., see M. Wiles, *The Divine Apostle*, 13.

good.”⁸² Not willing, however, to let the Gentiles off the hook and, it should be noted, in perfect keeping with what is certainly Paul’s overall point in Rom 1-3, Pelagius goes on to make it plain that the Gentiles’ possession of a law ultimately serves to incriminate them just as thoroughly as the Jews’ possession of the Law of Moses has incriminated them. He observes that in saying this “[Paul] demonstrates that they [i.e., the Gentiles] do not lack a law, so as to leave the Gentiles no excuse and to divest the Jews of the glory owing to the possession of the Law.”⁸³

An equally crucial element for a clear understanding of Pelagius’s views on our verses are his comments on the role of “the conscience (*conscientia*),” an element Paul introduced in v.15. According to Pelagius, the reader once again has two options with respect to interpretation and application. Either he can see the conscience as the means by which nature “produces (*agit*)” the aforementioned law or it can be seen as a testament – in the sense that it provides testimony (*testatur*) – to the very real and inescapable existence of the law. According to Pelagius, it would seem that everyone – even those who are loathe to admit it – are subject to their consciences since “even ... the one who fears no one else is apprehensive when one sins and rejoices when sin is overcome.” The assumption that looms large here, namely that all three groups (Jews, Gentile Christians, and Gentile pagans) are equally well equipped to know what is and is not sin due to the relatively trustworthy condition of their conscience, is addressed again, albeit without supporting argument, in his comments on 2:16.⁸⁴ There, according to Pelagius, Paul’s line about “their thoughts in turn accus[-ing] or defend[-ing] them” applies to all of humanity – a fact reinforced by Pelagius’s rather subtle shift to the first person plural at the beginning of his comment (not to mention his choice to retain the all-inclusive “we” even as he goes on to discuss a second option).⁸⁵

⁸² See De Bruyn, *Pelagius’s Commentary*, 73. Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 22 where De Bruyn provides several helpful references to the exegesis of this passage in the Latin tradition prior to Pelagius as well as to that same tradition’s presuppositions regarding the origin and existence of a natural law.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ For another passage in the *Romans* commentary which clearly expresses this sentiment, see the comments under the *lemma* of Rom 9:2 (cf. *ibid.*, p. 115): “... because [Paul] says that on this point his conscience bears him witness he shows that he tells the truth, *which the conscience corroborates in all people*, and establishes that he is not charged with lying by an accusation from within” (italics added). Cf. Souter, *Pelagius’s Expositions*, p. 72.

⁸⁵ This detail is not lost on De Bruyn. In n. 24 on p. 72, he observes that “[Pelagius’s] comment here addressed Christians as well. For Pelagius there is no essential change in the role of conscience throughout human history.”

He notes that "[Paul] asserts that there is a mental debate when we decide by lengthy deliberation what we ought to do and what we ought not to do, and that we should be judged according to this on the day of the Lord, because it proves that we were not ignorant of good and evil."⁸⁶

Before moving beyond the Romans commentary, it is important to note several of the other places in it where Pelagius either hints at or directly claims that the conscience or heart-level capacities of all "natural-born" human beings (and especially those who were living in his own day) have deteriorated to the point that (almost) all of them have "forgotten (*obliti*)" or "almost forgotten" (*paene ... in obliuionem*) what the race once clearly and unequivocally knew to be the natural law of God.⁸⁷ At 1:27, where Paul claims that those who have turned from God are "receiving in themselves the due penalty for their errors," Pelagius claims that this is "... the order of nature, that those who had forgotten God did not understand themselves as well (*ut qui Dei obliti erant nec se ipsos agnoscerent*)"; at 5:13, where Paul has claimed that "before the Law sin was in the world," Pelagius concurs by claiming that "[t]here was indeed sin before the Law, but it was not reckoned to be sin (cf. Rom 3:20) because [natural] knowledge had already almost been wiped out (*quia iam paene obliterate fuerat scientia natura[li]*)"; at 7:8, where Paul has written that "without the Law sin was dead," Pelagius comments that this was precisely because "[t]he natural law, which had [first] brought to mind what was sin, had almost been forgotten (*paene lex in obliuionem ierat naturalis, ...*)"; and, finally, at 11:24, as Pelagius tackles Paul's difficult "Olive Tree" metaphor for the post-resurrection relationship of Jews to the believing Gentiles "who were cut from what is by nature a wild olive-tree," he immediately notes that "[long ago] their fathers had fallen away from nature because they had forgotten the law of nature (*qui[a] iam [ollim] patres eorum, naturalem obliti legem, deg[en]erauerant a natura*), and, when habit had become fixed through repeated sinning, they came to be bitter and unproductive as it were by nature (*quasi naturaliter*)."⁸⁸

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Though it is not expanded upon in detail, the fact that Pelagius did teach that the Mosaic Law was revealed, at least in part, in order to renew the forgotten natural law has also been noted by J. Patout Burns, "The Interpretation of Romans in the Pelagian Controversy," *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979): 49.

⁸⁸ In order, see De Bruyn, *Pelagius's Commentary*, p. 67, 93, 102, and 129. For the Latin, cf. Souter, *Pelagius's Expositions*, pp. 16, 46, 57, and 90.

Rom 2:14-15 in Pelagius's *Epistula ad Demetriadem*. Pelagius's *Letter to Demetrias* represents the only significant chronological departure from the "pre-411" parameters that this study has adhered to thus far. The reasons for this are rather straightforward, though they do require explanation. Although the *Letter* seems certain to have been composed in 413 (or, at the latest, in 414), by which point Pelagius had already removed himself to the East, and although Pelagius was well aware of the debates that his disciple Caelestius had generated in North Africa, it seems reasonable to assume that, once the letter began to circulate, it was more *provocative* of Augustine's charges against the Pelagians than that it was written to any significant degree *in reaction* to those charges.⁸⁹ In other words, the fact that the letter was drafted in response to a request by the rich and powerful noblewoman Juliana makes it clear that even prominent Christians outside North Africa had yet to become seriously concerned with Pelagius's espousal of any "heretical" doctrines regarding humanity's post-lapsarian status or God's prevenient grace. It should also be remembered that, until at least 415, Augustine had not progressed to a point of being willing to regard Pelagius as less than a friend in Christ or even as someone who seriously needed to have his teachings corrected. A brief discussion of this letter is also worthwhile here given its actual contents: as Rees has noted, "... it contains ... our most complete and coherent account of [Pelagius's] views on the ... topics of 'the good of nature' and 'natural sanctity' and on how they relate to man's capacity to make a free choice between good and evil and thereby win merit in the eyes of God."⁹⁰

The accuracy of the foregoing quotation is confirmed almost from the letter's start. Indeed, Pelagius's comments about the capacities of human nature begin just after his brief but eloquent and rhetorically-charged salutation.⁹¹ By the time the reader gets to the second half of

⁸⁹ As B.R. Rees and others have made clear, Augustine seems to have gained access to Pelagius's letter to Demetrias at some point in 414, i.e., at about the time he composed his *On the Good of Widowhood*. In any case, he certainly had read it carefully by 417. For Rees's discussion, see *The Letters of Pelagius and His Followers* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, U.K.: The Boydell Press, 1998 (i.e., accessed by me in the combined edition published under the title *Pelagius: Life and Letters*)), 31 and 33 as well as his detailed footnote in *Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, U.K.: The Boydell Press, 1998), 6 and n. 24 including the bibliography contained therein. In what follows, all English quotations from Pelagius's *Epistula ad Demetriadem* will be taken from *The Letters of Pelagius and His Followers*, pp. 35-70. All Latin references are those found in PL 30, cols. 15-45.

⁹⁰ Rees, *The Letters of Pelagius and His Followers*, 32.

Chapter 3, he encounters Pelagius's initial defense of the natural capacity of *all* members of the human race – including Pagans – to perform morally good deeds.

Pelagius begins section 3,3 of the letter by noting that those who critique the human race's inborn and God-given abilities to choose freely either good or evil do so "from lack of faith as much as of knowledge (... *impie, non minus quam imperite*)."⁹² He then goes on to explain how the existence of virtuous pagans offers proof that this goodness is universal. He writes that the good of human nature "has been so universally (*generaliter*) established in all that it sometimes reveals itself and brings itself to notice even in pagans who do not worship God,"⁹³ before going into a disquisition on the subject of the vast number of virtuous and morally upright pagan philosophers. After noting that the source of this goodness must be from "the good of nature (*de naturae bono*)," Pelagius then concludes this chapter by noting that, comparatively speaking, all Christians should thoroughly exceed whatever degree of righteousness these good pagans have obtained since the "nature and life [of Christians] have been instructed for the better by Christ" and since they "are assisted by the aid of divine grace as well."⁹⁴

This discussion of the capacities of pagans then culminates in Pelagius's thinking regarding conscience and natural law in Chapter 4, a section which itself culminates in his most elaborate exegesis of Rom 2 generally and of vv. 14-15 specifically.⁹⁵ Pelagius's circular claims regarding the goodness and helpfulness of the human conscience notwithstanding,⁹⁶ the discussion in 4,1 serves to set up the claims

⁹¹ Note that a mere 15 lines into Chapter 1 Pelagius has proclaimed that Demetrias's choice for the veil is actually the direct result of her employing the "sword of the faith (*fidei gladio*)"; that she has done so "of her own's free will (*uoluntate*).⁹² For this, see Rees, p. 36; cf. PL 30, col.15. Note too that very similar (if not even stronger) sentiments are easily found *passim* in the letter's early chapters, see, e.g., 2,1; 2,2; and 3,1.

⁹² Note, however, that a few chapters later, i.e., in 8,1, Pelagius goes to significant lengths to clarify exactly what he means by the "good of nature." Here he is adamant that he is not claiming that we are incapable of doing evil. Rather his chief concern is to refute those who think we are "forced to do evil through a fault in our nature (*ne eius uitio ad malum ... impelli*).⁹³ For this, see Rees, p. 43; cf. PL 30, col. 22.

⁹³ See Rees, p. 39; cf. PL 30, col.18: "... generaliter cunctis institutum est, ut in gentilibus quoque hominibus, qui sine ullo cultu Dei sunt, se nonnumquam ostendat, ac proferat."

⁹⁴ See Rees, *ibid.*; cf. PL 30, *ibid.*: "... in melius per Christum natura et uita instructa est: et ... diuinae quoque gratiae iuuantur auxilio."

⁹⁵ In chapters 5 and 6, Pelagius begins a roll call of virtuous people from within the Judeo-Christian tradition, i.e., those whose story can be found within the Hebrew Bible, including Abel, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Lot, Joseph and Job.

Pelagius makes in 4,2 regarding “a certain natural sanctity (*naturalis quaedam sanctitas*)” that exists “in our minds (*in animis nostris*)” and that, by working “on the evidence [provided by] our conscience (*ad conscientiae testimonium*),” helps us all to judge between what is good and what is evil. According to Pelagius, this “natural sanctity” works by “a kind of inner law (*domestica quadam lege*),” and, in his view, is exactly what Paul was talking about in Rom 2:14-15:

This is the law which the apostle recalls (*meminit*) when he writes to the Romans, testifying that it is implanted in all men and written as it were on the tables of the heart: ... [Pelagius quotes Rom 2:14-15 *in toto*]. It is this law that all have used whom scripture records as having lived in sanctity and having pleased God between the time of Adam and that of Moses: some of these must be set before you as examples, so that you may not find it difficult to understand *how great is the good of nature (quantum sit naturae bonum)*, when once you have satisfied yourself that *it has replaced the law in the task of teaching righteousness (... eam legis uice docuisse iustitiam; italics added)*.⁹⁷

Interesting here are several points, some grammatical and some theological. First, note that this time, whether from rhetorical zeal or genuine (and new?) conviction, Pelagius has taken “the Gentiles,” which he took as a reference to non-believing non-Christians in his *Romans* commentary – at least under the *lemmata* for 2:14-15 – and which, of course, cannot be anything but anarthrous in his Latin version, as referring to “all men (*omnibus hominibus*),” instead of, as the anarthrous Greek “... γὰρ ἔθνη ...” was probably intended to indicate, a restricted reference to “some Gentiles.” Second, and more overtly theological, is the unsupported assumption that it was this “law” that “all” human beings between the time of Adam and the time of Moses “have used” if they have lived in such a way as to please God. Of course, Genesis does not make overt reference to any form of law in any of the narratives about the pre-Mosaic god-fearers, unless one

⁹⁶ Note, e.g., that in 4,1 (Rees, p. 39; cf. PL 30, col.19), Pelagius, via the inclusive language of the hortative subjunctive, calls upon his readers to “... let our conscience itself deliver its judgement on the good of nature, let us be instructed by the inner teaching of the mind, and let us learn about each of the good qualities of the mind from no other source but the mind itself.”

⁹⁷ See Rees, p. 40; cf. PL 30, col.19: “Huius legis, scribens ad Romanos, meminit Apostolus: quam omnibus hominibus insitam uelut in quibusdam tabulis cordis scriptum esse, testator: ... Hac lege uti sunt omnes, quos inter Adam atque Moysen sancta uixisse, atque placuisse Deo, Scriptura commemorat. Quorum tibi, exempli causa, aliqui proponendi sunt: ut facile intelligas, quantum sit naturae bonum, cum eam legis uice docuisse iustitiam probaueris.”

counts as an exception the laws made explicit to (or through) Noah after the flood (cf. Gen 9:1-17, esp. 4-6).⁹⁸ Third, finally, and probably most significantly, it should be noted that in this passage Pelagius seems to be claiming that, in the post-advent church age, the human race has in a sense returned to the pre-Mosaic stage since all Christians who have been properly instructed can rely once again on a resurgent “natural sanctity” since “it has replaced the law in the task of teaching righteousness (... *eam legis uice docuisse iustitiam* ...).” In other words, it would seem that Pelagius’s conception of the combined ministry of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in the present dispensation includes the idea that they have both come (or been given) in order to restore a sensitivity to the natural law that human beings, over the course of the last few thousand years, have lost as a direct result of their accumulated sins and sinful habits that, in turn, were spawned as a direct result of their ignorant imitation of Adam’s original disobedience.

IV. Summary and Conclusion

Given the degree of difficulty that is inherent in these two verses, it should come as no surprise that there is a substantial diversity of opinion regarding both the meaning and the application of them in the Latin patristic tradition between ca. 365-ca. 411. And, while all six of the questions that were listed in this study’s “Introduction” were addressed – at least indirectly – by one or more of the Latin exegetes that were surveyed here, it must be acknowledged that only a handful of the six were answered clearly and few if any were answered with

⁹⁸ On the other hand, one could perhaps argue that Cain (cf. Gen 4:1-14) somehow knew that he should not have killed his brother given that he seems to have readily accepted that some form of punishment for his actions was in order, just as one could also argue that Joseph somehow seemed to know instinctively that to sleep with the wife of his boss, Potiphar, even at the wife’s instigation, was “wicked” and “a sin against God” (cf. Gen 39:1-20, esp. v.9). Also potentially germane here are the two separate stories in which Abraham, an Egyptian Pharaoh, and King Abimelech all also seemed to know instinctively that they should be very respectful of the bond of marriage (cf. Gen 12:10-20 and 20:1-18), even if they all initially experience difficulty in doing so. It is essential to note, however, that, except for some comments about Joseph’s rock-solid will power at 5.4, Pelagius never makes reference to any of these stories – at least in this context. On the contrary, the only reason for their being included seems to be that the biblical text literally refers to them as “righteous” or “upright” before God.

perfect consistency and/or uniformity. In fact, beyond the axioms that: (1) a system of natural law exists and was been built into the warp and woof of the universe by God at its creation;⁹⁹ and (2) Paul had this inherent system of natural law in mind when he penned Rom 2:14-15, there are relatively few, if any, details regarding the exegesis and application of these verses that can legitimately be said to have been recognized by all the members of this group of exegetes. Equally significant is the way this study has been able to highlight the degree of diversity and/or ambivalence that occasionally existed within the thought of a single author with respect to Rom 2:14-15: several of these exegetes were apparently quite comfortable with adapting – if not outright altering – their opinions on these verses in order to make them more directly applicable to a given context or more closely conformable to the conventions of the genre they were aiming to produce.

The exegetical detail about which there was perhaps the most diversity and/or ambivalence is the question of the identity of the “Gentiles” mentioned at the outset of 2:14.¹⁰⁰ Some, e.g., Ambrosiaster, thought they are better seen as Christians; others, e.g., Origen and Ambrose, seem to have taken it for granted that they are pagans (though still more ambiguity could sometimes be introduced among those who held this second point of view when they took it as referring to pagans who lived *before* Christ’s first advent); and still others, e.g., Hilary and Augustine, often understood the term to refer to

⁹⁹ Given that it was assumed to have its origin in God’s creative activity and not in the will or activity of human beings, it should also not be a surprise to see many of these exegetes claiming that the natural law was incapable of being erased or destroyed by human iniquity – regardless of how badly and how frequently even the worst person sins or how corrupt he or she becomes. In short, for many of these authors, natural law can go “un-read” and unheeded, but it cannot be made to go away. An interesting point for further consideration is whether or not it was precisely such a line of thought that allowed some of them, and most notably Pelagius and those sympathetic to him, to argue so persistently for the idea that the human conscience remains trustworthy.

¹⁰⁰ While the chronological parameters of this study prevented it from being demonstrable in the study itself, note should be made of Augustine’s own ambivalence with respect to the identity of the “Gentiles” and, more precisely, of the fact that he clearly altered his views on this issue once he became enmeshed in the first phase of the Pelagian Controversy. (Note too that it is at least arguable that his discussion of our vv. in *en. in Ps.* 57 represent a landmark in what would become a fundamental rethinking (hardening?) of his earlier positions.) In other words, the fact that he could find precedent for the view that the “Gentiles” were Gentile Christians from within the Latin tradition means that he cannot have independently introduced this view into western exegesis. On the contrary, it seems more accurate to say that, in making this change, Augustine merely switched his allegiance from one more-or-less traditional view to another that was also more-or-less traditional.

all people generally. Given this level of ambiguity, it should come as no surprise that two of these authors, i.e., Jerome and Pelagius, can be shown to have offered different explanations for the identity of the Gentiles in different contexts and at different places within their oeuvres.

The exegetical details about which there was the most agreement include the (often implicit) claim that an easily accessible exemplar of the natural law exists in the so-called Golden Rule. Especially conspicuous are references to a negative form of it, e.g., that found in Tob 4:15, in contexts that also contained discussions of natural law and/or references to Rom 2:14-15. In addition to Origen, this link was made more or less explicitly by Hilary, Jerome, and Augustine. In fact, this link is so clear it seems fair to claim that, by ca. 411, it had become a *topos* among exegetes writing in Latin.

Interestingly, Origen would also seem to have been the likely source for an idea that frequently appears in passages where Rom 2:14-15 is discussed by Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, and Pelagius. All five of these authors make more or less direct statements to the effect that obedience to the natural law cannot fully (i.e., salvifically) justify anyone since obedience to it can in no way be equated with full obedience to "the law of faith," even if some, e.g., Hilary, could come very close to conflating the natural law with the Law of Moses. In other words, all these writers are in general agreement about rejecting the notion that a person may experience justification (solely) by obeying whatever portions of the natural law that are (or remain) known to him or her. Closely connected to foregoing is the way in which Origen, Ambrosiaster, Ambrose, and Jerome all expressed at least degrees of doubt with respect to whether or not the existence of natural law, which they all acknowledged to be good *in se*, has been ultimately or eschatologically beneficial for humanity: all of these exegetes seem to have been convinced that, on the Day of Judgment,¹⁰¹ the natural law will serve to further the condemnation of Gentiles by leaving them justly exposed to the just judgment of God.

In sum, this study has made it plain that, for many of the most important Latin exegetes who were active during the period ca. 365-ca. 411, Rom 2:14-15 was precisely what it continues to be for most

¹⁰¹ Less crucial, but still interesting is the way in which several of these writers could also be ambivalent about the degree of sanctification that the natural law makes possible in this life.

of the exegetes of our own day: a *lectio difficilissima* within what is probably Paul's *epistula difficilissima*.

**Appendix: Rom 2:14-15 in the so-called "Budapest Anonymous"
ca. 396-405¹⁰²**

Given that so little is known about either the actual authorship, the precise context, or the influence and impact of this commentary, it is difficult to say much about its importance for the questions under discussion in this study. However, if we may assume that Frede is correct in dating its fundamental stratum to the period 396-405 and in (ultimately) assigning its provenance to Rome,¹⁰³ it must remain at least theoretically possible that some of its contents may have influenced several of the writers and thinkers of the period in question; that it influenced Pelagius, at least to some degree, was recognized and discussed by Frede and has since been confirmed by others.¹⁰⁴ At the very least, it seems fair to conclude that the comments and the interpolations do reflect the thinking of some (and probably the northern Italian) portion of the Latin-speaking church in or around the first decade of the 5th-century.

While there are several passages in the manuscript that either offer comments on Rom 2:14-15 or reflect interestingly on ideas connected to natural law,¹⁰⁵ there are three that are particularly worthy

¹⁰² The source for this commentary is the much-discussed study by Frede. See H.J. Frede, *Ein neuer Paulustext und Kommentar*, i. *Untersuchungen*; ii *Die Texte*, *Vetus Latina: Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel*, Aus der Geschichte der Lateinischen Bibel, 7-8 (Freiburg: Herder, 1974).

¹⁰³ It should be noted that Frede's original opinion regarding the commentary was that it stemmed from "wohl in der Gegend von Aquileja." This view, which appeared in both vol. i of his *Ein neuer Paulustext und Kommentar* (cf. previous n.) and in the forward matter of his *Epistulae ad Thessalonicenses, Timotheum, Titum, Philemonem, Hebraeos*, *Vetus Latina Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel*, 25/1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1975-1982), 31-32, was later referred to as a "supposition (*Vermutung*)" and was discarded in favor of Rome. For this later, but still less than certain, conclusion, see *idem*, ed., *Epistulae ad Thessalonicenses, Timotheum, Titum, Philemonem, Hebraeos*, *Vetus Latina Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel*, 25/2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1983-1991), 1103-1004.

¹⁰⁴ For Frede's views, see *Ein neuer Paulustext und Kommentar*, vol. i, 164-215 *passim*; for a later confirmation of the commentary's influence on Pelagius, see, e.g., De Bruyn, *Pelagius's Commentary*, 4, where he observes that "Pelagius was indebted to his interpretation at a number of points, but the debt does not appear to be as extensive as that to other commentaries."

¹⁰⁵ E.g., see comment 30A (p. 32) for the Budapest Anonymous's assumption that natural law exists and that Paul both accepted and taught it; comment 31 (p. 32)

of consideration for this study. Following Frede's own system for organizing the commentary's various hands or sources,¹⁰⁶ the first can be said to reflect *both* the Budapest Anonymous and the so-called Pseudo-Jerome interpolator,¹⁰⁷ the second that of *only* the Budapest Anonymous, and the third that of *only* the Pseudo-Jerome interpolator.

Passage 1 (Budapest Anonymous and Pseudo-Jerome):

024 (p. 28): Up to this point here [i.e., Rom 2:12], the word is directed toward all those who are under obligation to the natural law, among whom the Jews are also equally included. And for that purpose the Jew is to be preferred to the Gentile, because he has the written Law of Moses in addition to the natural law.¹⁰⁸

Passage 2 (Budapest Anonymous):

40A (p. 38): Here, the Apostle is showing how, by means of a single sinning Adam, sin has entered into all human beings in this world. On account of this, no one has been able to fulfill the natural law much less the scriptural Law.¹⁰⁹

Passage 3 (Pseudo-Jerome):

42 (p. 38): Again, now the Apostle indicates the death of the soul by which 'the sinning Adam' died, just as the prophet said: 'The

for Pseudo-Jerome's claim that Rom 3:20 does not contradict Rom 2:14-15; comment 43 (p. 38) for the claim that Cain was the first "sinner" against natural law; comment 53 (p. 45) for the claim that the written law actually contains the natural law; comment 72 (p. 52) for the claim that, at Rom 7:24, Paul's teaching demonstrates the need to transcend both natural law and Mosaic Law; and, although it is somewhat more vague, comment 88 (p. 60) for the claim that there are some "saints" who have been pleasing (*placuerunt*) to God by means of the natural law, good examples being those who followed Moses as his disciples.

¹⁰⁶ For a more detailed discussion of this system, see *Ein neuer Paulustext und Kommentar*, vol. ii, 9.

¹⁰⁷ To be more precise, Frede (*ibid.*) notes that this group of comments belongs "ohne Zweifel zum Bestand des Anonymous."

¹⁰⁸ For the Latin, see *ibid.*, 28: "Huc usque sermo dirigitur ad omnes naturali obnoxios legi, in qua etiam Iudaei pariter continentur. Idcirco autem Iudaeus gentili antefertur, quoniam praeter naturalem legem et Moysi 'legem scriptam' habebat."

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 38: "Hic ostendit apostolus, 'quemadmodum uno Adam praevaricante peccatum in hunc mundum ingressum sit cunctis', eo quod tam naturalem quam scriptam legem nullus potuisset implere."

soul which sins, this same soul shall die' (cf. Ezk 18:4); 'for it has also passed through into all men,' who have transgressed against the natural law.¹¹⁰

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¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*: "Item: Nunc apostolus 'mortem' animae significat, qua 'Adam praevaricans' mortuus est, sicut et propheta dicit: 'Anima quae peccat, ipsa morietur'; 'transiit enim et in omnes homines' qui naturalem legem praevaricati sunt."