

What does Paul understand by the law?

Naturally, he does not understand either the law of cosmic harmony ("natural law") or the law of the polis. Rather, he understands the demands of God as they are formulated in the decalogue and all summed up in the commandment to love one's neighbor (Rom 13:9 f.; Gal 5:14) and as they are also known to the gentiles (Rom 2:1 ff.). The point of God's law, so understood, is to lead to life (Rom 7:10).

But, then, to what extent is Christ the end of the law (Rom 10:4)? Christ is the end of the law insofar as is misunderstood as the way to salvation, i.e., insofar as it is heard by human beings who will to hold fast to themselves as a "Thou shouldst!" that limits their freedom and that they can misuse by so fulfilling it as to make a claim on God and thereby establish their own righteousness, instead of opening themselves to the righteousness of God (Rom 10:3).

However, the law itself and as such, apart from this sinful misunderstanding, is permanently valid and is not ended in Christ but rather fulfilled in him, i.e., in the faith in him that works through love.

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