

A “NEW PERSPECTIVE” READING OF CENTRAL TEXTS IN ROMANS 1-4

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I. Introduction

The so-called “New Perspective on Paul” (NPP) has been likened to a Copernican Revolution.¹ Whether one is inclined to defend or assail it, the fact remains that Pauline studies will never be the same again. Some may try to ignore it, but apparently it is not going away, at least not anytime soon. And while many may wish that it would go away, it is my impression that much of the controversy that has surrounded the NPP is rooted in a visceral reaction on the part of various theological traditions. If any proof is required, one need only peruse the various websites on which is posted some very “emphatic” material, to say the least!

Before proceeding, two qualifications are in order. For one, I say the “so-called” NPP for at least two reasons. One, the NPP is like the New Hermeneutic—it is not that “new” any more. That the “perspective” is not so “new” is confirmed by the fact that certain scholars believe that we have now entered into the “post NPP era.”² Two, those of us who espouse one version or the other of the NPP like to think that the perspective is not so much new as a return to the “original perspective” of Paul in relation to his Jewish

¹ D. A. Hagner, “Paul and Judaism: Testing the New Perspective,” in P. Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul’s Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 75, 105. Hagner himself is quite sure that this Copernican revolution is taking us down the wrong path. But, I would ask, If the revolution is *genuinely Copernican*, how can it be taking us down the wrong path? Apart from Stuhlmacher’s book, mention can be made of only a few negative reactions, more or less, to the NPP: M. A. Seifrid, *Justification By Faith: The Origin and Development of A Central Pauline Theme* (NovTSup 68; Leiden: Brill, 1992); D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien and M. A. Seifrid, eds., *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001); id., *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume 2: The Paradoxes of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004); A. A. Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001); S. Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origins of Paul’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); S. J. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); S. Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). Another category of literature is comprised of works that offer some criticisms of the NPP and yet agree in the main that Paul does not take issue with a merit-based system of soteriology, e.g., K. Kuula, *The Law, The Covenant and God’s Plan. Volume 1. Paul’s Polemical Treatment of the Law in Galatians* (Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 72; Helsinki/Göttingen: Finnish Exegetical Society/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), esp. 65, 73. Various non-NPP scholars champion the analysis of the rabbinic materials by F. Avemarie, *Tora und Leben: Untersuchungen zur Heilsbedeutung der Tora in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur* (TSAJ 55; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1996). Yet it is to be noted that Avemarie acknowledges the grace-element in these sources, although he believes that there is a tension between grace/election, on the one hand, and works, on the other. Most strikingly, Avemarie grants that throughout this literature it is possible to speak of a “covenantal nomism.” The Torah of the rabbis cannot be divorced from this context in which the law was given: in this sense, Sander’s coinage of the phrase, says Avemarie, is certainly justified (*ibid.*, 584, n. 40).

² For example, B. Byrne, “Interpreting Romans Theologically in a Post-‘New Perspective’ Perspective,” *HTR* 94 (2001), 227-41; R. H. Gundry, in a personal communication; and the books of A. A. Das as documented herein.

contemporaries. Thus, what to many may appear to be “new” is for others of us rather “old” indeed.

For another, there simply is no monolithic entity that can be designated as *The New Perspective*. It is surely telling that even D. A. Carson acknowledges that the NPP cannot be reduced to a “single perspective.” “Rather, it is a bundle of interpretive approaches to Paul, some of which are mere differences in emphasis, and others of which compete rather antagonistically.”³ What goes by the moniker of the “New Perspective” is actually more like variations on a theme; and, in point of fact, this generic title is flexible enough to allow for individual thought and refinement of convictions. Consequently, the take on the NPP represented in this essay is quite individually mine. Though I am much indebted to E. P. Sanders, J. D. G. Dunn, N. T. Wright and many others for numerous insights, this representation of the NPP does not conform precisely to any of these scholars.

While I have advocated and defended the NPP in a more topical fashion elsewhere,⁴ the approach of this undertaking is exegetical. But even restricting ourselves to Romans 1-4, it will be possible to canvass only a very limited number of passages, what I am terming “central texts.” And even in these instances, the purpose is not to provide a full commentary as such, but to concentrate on those dimensions of the Roman letter that are germane to the purposes at hand. Among other things, this means that documentation of secondary literature has been confined to the most relevant of sources.

II. Examination of Central Texts in Romans 1-4

Romans 1:5 (16:26)

Unique to the whole of pre-Christian Greek literature, and to Paul himself, the phrase ὑπακοὴ πίστεως, occurring in Rom 1:5 (16:26),⁵ gives voice to the very design

³ Carson, in the Introduction to *Justification and Variegated Nomism 1*, 1.

⁴ See my “The New Perspective on Paul: An Appraisal Two Decades Later,” *Criswell Theological Review* ns 2, no. 2 (2005), 17-38. This is reprinted in a volume entitled *In Defense of the New Perspective on Paul: Essays and Reviews* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 1-28. This book contains other essays pertinent to the NPP. Another attempt to allay the fears of evangelicals respecting the NPP is the excellent introduction to the subject by M. B. Thompson, *The New Perspective on Paul*, Grove Biblical Series (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2002).

⁵ There is a textual problem with doxology of 16:25-27. C. E. B. Cranfield takes it to be a later editorial addition, but he ascribes it to an “orthodox source” and accounts for its presence “because its intrinsic merit commended it” (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979], 2.808-9). J. D. G. Dunn is likewise inclined to view it as a post-Pauline addition (*Romans* [WBC 38 a, b; 2 vols.; Dallas: Word, 1988], 2.913). Yet other scholars are open to the possibility of the text’s authenticity: L. W. Hurtado, “The Doxology at the End of Romans,” *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis. Essays in Honour of Bruce M. Metzger* (eds. E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 185-99; M. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 206; H. Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter the Romans: A Study in Textual and Literary Criticism* (SD 42; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 129-32. A convenient summary of the textual evidence is provided by R. J. Swanson, ed., *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines Against Codex Vaticanus. Romans* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2001), 268-71. Even if editorial, the words adequately sum up Paul’s intentions not only in chaps. 14-16 but the whole of the letter. See G. H. Parke-

of the apostle's missionary labors, i.e., he has been called to summon the nations to a believing obedience directed toward Jesus the crucified and risen Son of God, the king of Israel.⁶ Within Romans itself, the phrase is invested with a twofold significance. For one, against the backdrop of faith's obedience in Jewish literature, these words assume a decidedly polemical thrust: the covenant fidelity of God's ancient people (Israel) is now a possibility apart from assuming the identity of that people.⁷ Dunn, then, is right that the phrase neatly summarizes Paul's apologetic in the Roman letter.⁸

For another, Rom 1:5 can be looked upon as a programmatic statement of the main purpose of Romans.⁹ For this reason, Dunn again is correct in writing: "To clarify what faith is and its importance to his gospel is one of Paul's chief objectives in this letter."¹⁰ In order to appreciate the point, it will be necessary briefly to relate the importance of faith to another purpose of the letter, viz., "To redraw the boundaries which marked out the people of God."¹¹ Whereas before to be a member of the covenant community was to live within the boundary set by the law, the eschatological people have assumed a new corporate identity.¹² And since there is now "no distinction" between Jew and Gentile (1:16-17; 2:11; 10:12, etc.), Paul endeavors in Romans, particularly in chaps. 6-8 and 12-16, to expound the ethical and social responsibilities of this new corporate entity. Pursuant to this end, the letter's opening paragraph (1:1-7) draws upon concepts evocative of Israel's relationship to Yahweh and applies them to *all* the Romans, the "called" of Jesus Christ. The pivotal point of the introduction is v. 5—the obedience of faith among all the nations for Christ's name's sake—"A neat and fitting summary of his complete apologetic in Romans."¹³

Taylor, 'A Note on "εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως" in Romans i.5 and xvi.26', *ExpT* 55 (1943-44), 306.

⁶ According to *LPGL* (1432), in post-Pauline literature *περὶ ὑπακοῆς πίστεως* occurs as a book title by Melito (cited by Eusebius, *History*, 4.26.2), obviously under Paul's influence. In the Fathers, *ὑπακοή* is further construed with faith in various regards, particularly in Clement. In these sources, the effects of *ὑπακοή* are such things as salvation, life and grace (*ibid.*).

⁷ I have argued this at length in my *'The Obedience of Faith': A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context* (WUNT 2/38; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991).

⁸ Dunn, *Romans* (WBC 38, a, b.; 2 vols.; Dallas: Word, 1988), 1.18.

⁹ N. T. Wright, "The Messiah and the People of God: A Study in Pauline Theology with Particular Reference to the Argument of the Epistle to the Romans" (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1980), 11. M. Black likewise remarks that "to win obedience from the Gentiles" is "the main purpose of the Epistle to the Romans" (*Romans* [NCB; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1973], 175).

¹⁰ Dunn, *Romans*, 1.17.

¹¹ Dunn, "Romans 13:1-7—A Charter for Political Quietism?" *ExAud* 2 (1986), 61. As he remarks elsewhere (*Romans*, 2.580-81), when Paul in Rom 9:30b redefines righteousness (i.e., from righteousness as articulated by the Torah to that of faith in Christ), he is fully aware that in the process he is redefining the covenant. W. D. Davies similarly contends: "Paul demands that the people of God, belonging to Abraham, be defined in a new way. The meaning of 'descent' from Abraham has to be radically reconsidered: it no longer has a 'physical' connotation" (*Jewish and Pauline Studies* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 128). Likewise Black: "The whole inspiration of Jewish life was the Law and obedience to it; the inspiration of Christian living is Christ, apprehended by faith, and obedience to the Risen Lord" (*Romans*, 38).

¹² Dunn, "Romans 13:1-7," 61. R. D. Kaylor's *Paul's Covenant Community: Jew and Gentile in Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988) approaches the letter from this vantage point. T. R. Schreiner agrees with Dunn that Paul is redrawing the lines of what constitutes the true people of God. However, inexplicably he bypasses 1:5 without any comment (*Romans* [BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998], 45).

¹³ Dunn, *Romans*, 1.18. Commenting on Rom 15:18, Dunn remarks: "The recall of a key motif from 1:5 [i.e., "the obedience of the Gentiles"] is no doubt deliberate since it ties together precisely a key theme of

My previous studies of Rom 1:5 have yielded the following conclusions.¹⁴ (1) Although the actual phrase ὑπακοῇ πίστεως does not occur before Paul, the idea is clearly embedded in a number of Second Temple Jewish texts. The obedience of God's people, consisting in their fidelity to his covenant with them, is the product of a prior belief in his person and trust in his word.¹⁵ Far from being a quest for meritorious self-justification, faith's obedience is the appropriate response of Israel, the covenant partner, to the election, grace and mercy of God.¹⁶ Hence, the notion resident in ὑπακοῇ πίστεως is not in any sense original with or unique to Paul. Indeed, because of the prominence of the motif in the Jewish materials, there is reason to believe that when he formulates the phrase in Rom 1.5, he does so cognizant of its roots in these traditions.

But the question arises, if, formally speaking, Paul shared a theology of faith's obedience with his predecessors and contemporaries, what marked the difference between them? In nutshell, for Paul faith's obedience is possible apart from the Torah, as it functioned to distinguish Israel from the nations. Jew and Gentile alike can now be regarded as the faithfully obedient (righteous) people of God "apart from the law" (Rom 3:21). The very aim of the Pauline mission was to promote the obedience of faith *among all the nations* for the sake of Christ's name.

(2) In Rom 1:5 (16:26), Paul has chosen to coin an *ambiguous* phrase expressive of two ideas simultaneously:¹⁷ the obedience which consists in faith and the obedience which is the product of faith.¹⁸ On the level of the grammatical, although tags can be applied to the genitive πίστεως only with some reservation, the category which best

Jewish covenant self-awareness (obedience) and Paul's outreach to the Gentiles: it is precisely Paul's claim that the obligations of the covenant were being fulfilled in the faith response of the Gentiles" (ibid., 2.868).

¹⁴ See my *Obedience*, 233-53, and *Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance: Aspects of Paul's Letter to the Romans* (WUNT 79; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1994), 10-31.

¹⁵ "The Jewish position may be summarized in the sentence: fulfillment of the divine commandment is valid when it takes place in conformity with the full capacity of the person and from the whole intention of faith" (M. Buber, *Two Types of Faith* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951], 56). The very thrust of my investigation was that any antithesis between "faith" or "works" for a first-century Jew would have been considered a false alternative.

¹⁶ "The obedience of faith" for this Judaism, then, is another way of saying "covenantal nomism." Cf. Dunn, *Romans*, 1.lxv.

¹⁷ As an interesting analogy, B. Przybylski (*Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought* [SNTSMS 41; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980], 17-20) discusses the possible translations of *moreh tsedeq* in CD. He notes that the Hebrew could be rendered either "teacher of righteousness" (objective genitive) or "righteous or right teacher" (explicative genitive). He opts for the former, yet concedes that "The problem with which we have been dealing may in actual fact be a pseudo-problem arising solely out of difficulties inherent in the process of translating from Hebrew into English." Thus, "It should not be taken for granted that these two ideas are mutually exclusive" (ibid., 20). This is suggestive because it reminds us that Paul's Semitic background could easily account for a flexibility in his Greek usage, permitting more than one meaning to reside in his genitival phrases. Perhaps the most famous of such phrases is δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ.

¹⁸ Cf. Dunn, *Romans*, 1.17; H. N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 237-38; K. Haacker, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (THKNT 6; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1999), 28. While I am completely sympathetic with G. N. Davies' evaluation of the relation of faith and obedience (*Faith and Obedience in Romans: A Study in Romans 1-4* [JSNTSup 39; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990], 28-30), it is not necessary, with him, to restrict ourselves to the subjective genitive/genitive of origin. The parallels of faith and obedience in 10:16; 11:23, 30, 31 do have something to say.

conveys his intentions is “adjectival genitive;”¹⁹ that is, πίστεως is descriptive of ὑπακοή in a manner to be defined by the larger context and in keeping with the most pertinent exegetical data.²⁰ This means that “genitive of apposition” and “genitive of source,” while not inappropriate in themselves, are to be rejected as too restrictive. Consequently, the English “faith’s obedience” (or “believing obedience”) perhaps as well as any translation preserves the intention (and ambiguity) of the original.²¹ As is well known, ὑπακοή corresponds to the verb ἀκούω, which is the regular LXX rendering of שמע, especially as the latter comes across in the Shema of Deut 6:4. Wright, then, can comment that bringing the nations into “obedience” means to bring them into the family of this one God.²²

On the plane of the practical, the significance of the phrase’s ambiguity is well expressed by J. A. Fitzmyer: “Though that faith begins for Paul as a ‘hearing’...it does not stop there. It involves the entire personal commitment of a man/woman to Christ Jesus as ‘Lord’.... The word ὑπακοή implies the ‘submission’ or total personal response of the believer to the risen Lord.”²³ D. J. Moo, then, is precisely right that “obedience” and “faith” are mutually interpreting: “Obedience always involves faith, and faith always involves obedience.” Indeed:

Paul called men and women to a faith that was always inseparable from obedience—for the savior in whom we believe is nothing less than our Lord—and to an obedience that could never be divorced from faith—for we can obey Jesus as Lord only when we have given ourselves to him in faith. Viewed in this light, the phrase captures the full dimension of Paul’s apostolic task, a task that was not confined to initial evangelization but that included also the building up and firm establishment of churches.²⁴

As straightforward (and Pauline) as this is, there remains, as Wright observes, an anxiety on the part of generations of theologians that any stress on obedience creates the impression that “good moral works” take priority over “pure faith.” However, Wright correctly dismisses any such anxiety as missing the point:

When Paul thinks of Jesus as Lord, he thinks of himself as a slave and of the world as being called to obedience to Jesus’ lordship. His apostolic

¹⁹ Labeled, however, as “genitive of quality” by BDF, 91, and N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek: Volume III: Syntax* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), 212.

²⁰ Cf. Barclay’s treatment of Paul’s ὁ νόμος τοῦ Χριστοῦ (*Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul’s Ethics in Galatians* [SNTW; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988], 134).

²¹ See Parke-Taylor, “Note,” 305, for the various ways in which translators have grappled with the difficulties inherent in our phrase. The German *Glaubensgehorsam* perhaps better conveys the unity of faith and obedience than most of the English renderings.

²² Wright, “Romans” (*The New Interpreter’s Bible*; 12 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 10.420.

²³ Fitzmyer, “The Semitic Background of the New Testament *Kyrios*-Title,” *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (SBLMS 25; Chico: Scholars Press, 1979), 132.

²⁴ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 52-53. Cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.66-67; J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965), 13-14; E. Lohse, *Der Brief an die Römer* (KEK; 15th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 68.

commission is not to offer people a new religious option, but to summon them to allegiance to Jesus, which will mean abandoning their other loyalties. The gospel issues a command, an imperial summons; the appropriate response is obedience.²⁵

Romans 1:16-17

1:16-17 is customarily treated as though it were not an integral part of a context. For example, most Greek New Testaments and English translations print these verses in a paragraph to themselves, sometimes with a heading of some sort to emphasize their importance. The effect has been a tendency to detach this thematic statement of Romans from a concrete situation, which in turn has given rise to the notion that in Romans Paul is setting forth his systematic theology of the Christian faith. Particularly in the Reformed tradition the organizing center of this “compendium of Christian theology” (Melancthon) is understood to be justification by faith, normally expressed as “justification by faith and its consequences.” Commentators in this tradition then approach 1:16-17 with the announcement that the theme of Romans *is* justification by faith.

Paul Minear, however, is quite right to remind us that the γάρ which connects v. 16 with the foregoing statement should not be overlooked. “It links these verses to the preceding statements in which the apostle presented his hopes in sending the letter and in planning the projected visit to Rome.... What if there were a comma and not a period after v. 15?”²⁶ If we take Minear’s counsel, it becomes immediately evident that vv. 16-17 hinge directly on vv. 8-15 as these in turn grow out of vv. 1-7. What we have, then, is not a statement which comes out of the blue but one inextricably connected with Paul’s missionary motivation to promote “the obedience of faith among all the nations”—and particularly among the Romans; it is vv. 8-15 which supply us with the concrete life-situation that lies behind vv. 16-17. Note especially v. 15: “I am eager to preach the gospel *to you also who are in Rome.*” Thus, what Paul writes in 1:16-17 has a direct bearing on his intended visit to Rome. He wants to inform the Romans beforehand that when he arrives his message will be that of *the righteousness of God through faith which is available for all people without distinction.*

In general terms, this provides us with the purpose of the letter, viz., to be a presentation of Paul’s missionary gospel to the Romans. A more specific purpose emerges when we view 1:16-17 in light of 1:8-15 and 14:1-15:13; that is, Paul’s gospel of the righteousness of God apart from nationalistic distinctives has a direct bearing on the problem of the divisions in the Roman congregations. Paul wants to show that the gospel in principle has united all believers in Christ. Therefore, the Romans’ obedience of faith

²⁵ Wright, “Romans,” 420.

²⁶ Minear, *The Obedience of Faith: The Purposes of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans* (SBT 2/19; London: SCM, 1971), 39. Cranfield rightly notes that these verses are at the same time an integral part of Paul’s expression of his readiness to preach the gospel in Rome and also the statement of the theological theme to be worked out in the body of the letter. Yet he has missed Minear’s insight by stating: “While it is no doubt formally tidier to treat them as part of the division which began with 1.8, the logical structure of the epistle stands out more boldly when they are presented as a separate main division” (*Romans*, 1.87). It is precisely the integral relationship of vv. 16-17 and v. 8-15, preserved by Minear’s punctuation, which dictates the course of Paul’s argument in Romans.

will be strengthened and enhanced by a consistent application of the notion that God's righteousness depends on faith alone and not on ethnic identification.

When we view 1:16-17 in the light of Paul's concrete purposes, it follows that the theme of Romans is not justification by faith as such; it is, rather, the availability of God's righteousness apart from the law, i.e., the Mosaic covenant in all its particulars.²⁷ Righteousness, in other words, is no longer peculiarly that of the Torah (3:21-22). J. A. Ziesler puts it well: "God's righteousness is his own covenant loyalty, now in Paul widened beyond a covenant with Israel and made universal."²⁸ Or, to put it in the language of 1:5, the obedience of faith is now possible for all the nations apart from the distinctive "badges" and "boundary markers" of Judaism.

This is not to play down the importance of justification. Indeed, Paul makes quite a point of it in Romans and Galatians. It is to say, however, that justification itself is to be subsumed under the more inclusive category of the righteousness of God. In Romans Paul's argument about justification is the same as his argument about ethical righteousness, i.e., faith has obliterated the distinction between Jew and Gentile. One's standing before God does not in any sense depend on allegiance to the Mosaic standards, just as one's progress in holiness is likewise detachable from those standards (i.e., the law as a national covenant). To borrow E. P. Sanders' now familiar terms, "getting in" and "staying in" do not depend on adherence to the law.

In this setting, the words, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel," take on special significances. For one, the clause is the negative counterpart to the positive assertion of 1:15: Paul is eager to preach the gospel because he is not ashamed of it. Commentators are right to call attention to the fact that from the human point of view Rome posed an impressive threat to Paul's boldness in preaching. They are also right that in this world Christians always face the temptation of being ashamed of the same gospel. However, what the English speaking commentators have frequently overlooked is that this clause is actually a confessional formula. Among the Germans, Stuhlmacher, for example, has drawn attention to this. He writes that in positive terms Paul could have said "I confess the gospel."²⁹ This connection of shame and confession finds its origin in the sayings of Jesus in Mark 8:38 = Luke 9:26 as compared with Matt 10:32-33 = Luke 12:8-9. A comparison of the passages informs us that shame is a refusal to confess. It is possible that Rom 10:10-11 and 2 Tim 1:12 (cf. 1:12) are based on these dominical sayings, both of which connect a refusal to confess with eschatological judgment (which in the former text is shame).

²⁷ Dunn states it another way. He concedes that justification by faith is the theme of the main body of the letter; not, however, in classic Reformation terms but within the historical context within which Paul was writing, i.e., the apostle offers to the Gentiles the covenant blessings of the God of Israel ("Paul's Epistle to the Romans: An Analysis of Structure and Argument," *Rise and Decline of the Roman World* [ANRW 25.4; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987], 2847).

²⁸ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Enquiry* (SNTSMS 20; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 187.

²⁹ Stuhlmacher, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit bei Paulus* (FRLANT 87; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 78. See also Lohse, *Römer*, 76; O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (KEK; 14th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 86; U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (EKK 6; 3 vols.; Zürich/Neukirchen: Benziger/Neukirchener, 1978-82), 1.82; E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 22; H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (KEK; 5th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 42. Without picking up on these references, Schreiner endorses a mainly confessional understanding of "I am not ashamed" (*Romans*, 59-60).

Another significance to these words is drawn out by Wright's observation that lying behind Rom 1:16 is a text such as Psalm 71, according to which the psalmist prays: "Let me never be ashamed, deliver me in your righteousness" (vv. 1-2). Comments Wright: "'Shame' in such a context is what God's people feel when their enemies are triumphing; it is what Israel...felt in Paul's day, suffering at the hands of Rome." Therefore, "The gospel and the power of it...enables Paul to share the position of the psalmist, celebrating God's righteousness and so remaining unashamed in the face of enemies and gainsayers."³⁰

In addition to these noteworthy issues, the matter of historical importance that underlies Paul's statement is that of the confession in Judaism. The most fundamental confession of the Jew was the *Shema*, Deut 6:4. In time the *Shema* came to be epitomized by the Greek phrase "God is one." V. H. Neufeld has shown that the idea contained by this phrase became the basic *homologia* of Judaism.

This confession was the covenant or consensus in which Judaism found unity; it was her confession of faith; it was her acclamation in worship. The confession, furthermore, was the basic declaration and manifesto of Judaism to an unbelieving world; it was the standard which distinguished true faith; it was the test of faithfulness in the time of persecution.³¹

What Neufeld says finds some important historical illustrations. Josephus in recounting the massacre of Alexandrian Jews by the Romans (*J. W.* 7.418-19), makes prominent mention of the refusal of these martyred Jews to acknowledge Caesar as Lord. As O. Michel notes, "Confess Caesar as Lord" or "Name Caesar as Lord" had both religious and political overtones. "Its opposite," he says, "is confession of the one God."³² Another example comes from the time of persecution under Antiochus IV. 2 Macc 6:1-11 relates the king's reprisals against Jerusalem, which were socio-religious in character. For the writer the tragedy of the situation was epitomized by his statement that one could not "so much confess himself to be a Jew." The focus of the confession was a person's self-awareness as a "Jew." The term is practically defined by vv. 1, 24 of 2 Maccabees 6. On the one hand, the "Jew" was one who refused to forsake the laws of his fathers and go over to an alien religion; on the other, the "Jew" was determined to conform his life to the totality of the Sinai covenant.

Foundational to this conception of being Jewish was the confession of Yahweh as the one and only God. But by the nature of the case, the confession entailed Israel as well. K. G. Kuhn explains, "...Israel is the fellowship of all those who worship the one true God. This people describes itself as the chosen people, i.e., the people whom the one true God has chosen to worship and confess him *as distinct from the rest of the world*."³³ The confession, then, can be summarized as: (1) commitment to Israel's monotheistic faith; (2) commitment to the Torah and its emblems, of which the most conspicuous were the temple, circumcision, food laws and sabbath; (3) commitment to the Jewish community as a distinct ethnic entity.

³⁰ Wright, "Romans," 424.

³¹ Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (NTTS 5; Leiden: Brill, 1963), 41.

³² Michel, *TDNT*, 5.205.

³³ Kuhn, *TDNT*, 3.359, italics mine.

All this says to us that Judaism was a confessing religion, and to confess oneself to be Jewish was to commit oneself to the ideal of Israel as a social, political and religious *ethnos*; and it is precisely this which calls forth Paul's declaration that he is not ashamed of the gospel, i.e., he confesses it. He has already announced that this gospel is for the Gentile, the Greek, the Barbarian and the foolish, as well as the Jew. In vv. 6 and 7 he lifted terms from the OT which originally spoke of Israel as the peculiar people of God and applied them to the Roman Christians, "All God's beloved in Rome." Because Paul conceived of the new obedient people of God as one devoid of ethnic distinctions, he could say that his gospel is for everyone and that he is eager to preach it to everyone in Rome. But more than this, according to 1:1-4, Paul's gospel concerns God's Son. Therefore, in confessing the gospel he is confessing Jesus Christ, for whose name's sake he carries the gospel to the Gentiles. For Israel nothing could have been more shameful than a crucified Messiah. For Paul, however, Christ and his cross have become his "boast" (Gal 6:14; Phil 3:3).

Read within this context of Jewish history, Paul's boldness in confessing the gospel comes to life. For his Jewish opponents confession of such a gospel was the cause of profoundest shame and offense, because it was taken as an assault on Judaism on at least three fronts: the theological, the social and the moral. As to the first, Paul's removal of the age-old distinctions implied that Israel was no longer exclusively the exalted and glorified people of God. It implied as well that the temple in Jerusalem was no longer uniquely, in the words of 2 Macc 5:15, "The holiest temple in the world" and the eternal place of sacrifice.

The second front was the social. Dunn in particular has called attention to the social function of the law. The two key words here, he says, are *identity* and *boundary*. Dunn confirms that it was particularly in the Maccabean period that a special premium began to be placed on the identity and boundary markers of circumcision, the dietary laws, etc. This is not to say that such things were the only distinguishing traits of Jewish self-identity; but since they were the focal point of the Hellenistic attack, they became *the tests of one's loyalty to Judaism*. But Paul's gospel was taken as a direct attack upon this loyalty because it asserted that such things are no longer important for the identity of the people of God. Consequently this gospel was also interpreted as an open invitation to apostasy from the covenant.

In the third place, there was a moral dimension to the Jewish refusal to confess the gospel. The classic statement of Israel's separated status is *Ep. Arist.* 139-42, which is also an explanation as to why this was so. If in his wisdom the legislator surrounded his people with "unbroken palisades and iron walls" to prevent them from mixing with "other peoples in any matter," it was to be kept "pure in body and soul, preserved from false beliefs, and worshipping the only God omnipotent over all creation." The same connection between the break-down of the covenant and morals is observable in 2 Macc 6:1-6. Paul's gospel, then, had to bear the accusation of moral laxity because it sought to banish the boundaries which for centuries separated Jew and Gentile.

Paul confesses this gospel because "it is the power of God unto salvation." Here we find another in the series of *γάρος* in this introduction to the letter. The first clause had one, this clause has one, and 17a has one. Paul is eager to preach the gospel in Rome because he is not ashamed of the gospel; the reason he is not ashamed of the gospel is that it is God's power to save; and the reason it is God's power to save is that in it the

righteousness of God is revealed. It is necessary to see these three clauses in connection in order to grasp Paul's precise point. Remember, Paul is here confessing the gospel that both unbelieving Israel and the Judaizers refused to confess. His opponents were "nomists," devotees of the law. Their claim was that salvation was possible only through adherence to the whole of the Torah. This is clear from Acts 15:1 and from the controversy over table fellowship in Galatians 2. In this light, Paul's series of clauses connected by "for" is to be read as his come-back to the Jewish position.

"Power" in the OT is specifically God's creation-power as concentrated in his word (Gen 1 and many passages). The Judaism of Paul's day was certainly aware that the word of God is the embodiment of God's power, because such is the teaching of the OT itself (Gen 1:3, 6, etc.; Ps 147:15; Isa 40:8b; 55:10-11; Jer 23:29; cf. Wis 18:14-16). But for Paul the word of God is specifically the gospel, as in 1 Cor 1:18 it is the "word of the cross." It is *the gospel* or, according to 2:16, "my gospel" which is God's saving power. Paul again draws a direct line between his gospel and the "prophetic Scriptures." However, this is the last thing Judaism would have affirmed, because Paul's gospel, for them, was a truncated gospel; vital elements had been left out.

That which is brought by the gospel—God's powerful word of the new creation—is "salvation." Cranfield quite rightly points out that in Paul's usage "save" and "salvation" have primarily an eschatological reference. From Rom 5:9, for example, we can deduce that the negative content of salvation is that of deliverance from the wrath of God. On the positive side, we see in Rom 8 such things as the believer's glorification, adoption and the redemption of his body. This leads Cranfield to say:

The gospel is God's effective power active in the world of men to bring about deliverance from His wrath in the final judgment and reinstatement in that glory of God which was lost through sin—that is, an eschatological salvation which reflects its splendour back into the present of those who are to share in it.³⁴

Israel was looking for eschatological salvation: this was the sum and substance of the prophetic preaching. "Salvation" is but shorthand for deliverance from exile (new exodus) and the commencement of a new heavens and new earth (Isa 63:10-64:4; 65:17-25). But, as B. Byrne notes, the Jewish apocalyptic tradition reclaimed this vision of a "saved" humanity as something destined primarily for the faithful in Israel. The Qumran community, for example, promised its members that "all the glory of Adam (or "human nature") would be theirs" (1QH 17:15; IQS 4:22-23; CD 3:20; 4QpPs 37 3:1-2; cf. also 4 Ezra 6:54, 59; Jub. 22:14; 32:19). "Salvation" in such terms, he remarks, was closely tied to distinctive Jewish prerogatives such as circumcision and the law. I might add that passages like Luke 24:21; Acts 1:6 indicate that before Pentecost even the first followers of Jesus thought of this salvation in nationalistic terms. Paul, however, uses a term loaded with eschatological associations and announces that salvation is currently available through the gospel. As Byrne further comments, Paul here asserts a far more inclusive and universal scope for the saving power of the gospel: it is effective for all human beings, the only condition being the response of faith ("for everyone who believes").³⁵

³⁴ Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.89.

³⁵ Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 52.

Moreover, this is not deliverance from the Roman oppressors, not the vindication of Israel as an *ethnos*, but salvation from the wrath of God and reinstatement into his favor—and all this is *now*.

So, there was something very radical about this declaration that the gospel is God's power for salvation. For one thing, as we keep on reading in Romans, it becomes clear that one of the radical factors is Paul's charge that not only the Gentiles are under the wrath of God, but Israel is as well, and even she needs to be saved by the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is what opens up 1:18-3:20: even Israel's possession of "the oracles of God" does not exempt her from judgment. For another thing—and this really is the thrust of 1:16—God's saving power in the gospel is Jesus Christ, the subject of the gospel. According to Cranfield: "It is He Himself who is its effectiveness, His work was God's message of which He is the content. He presents himself to men as it were clothed in the efficacy of His saving work."³⁶ Here we remind ourselves of the parallels between 1:16-17 and 1:1-7. In particular, we recall that Christ was raised from the dead by the power of the Spirit; he now lives by the power of God (2 Cor 13:4). It is his power which empowers the word. Note a parallel between Rom 1:4/1:16 and 1 Cor 1:18/1:24. Paul's claim, then, is radical because he attributes to one who was crucified out of weakness and to his word all the eschatological saving power of Yahweh.

With the words, "For every one who believes, the Jew first and also the Greek," we have the most radical thing of all about the saving power of Paul's gospel; that is, it saves by faith alone apart from membership in the ancient covenant community.³⁷ We recall from Acts 15:1 that the Judaizers insisted "unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you *cannot* be saved." But according to Paul, the only thing required is faith. Notice how he places "the Jew" in the emphatic position of the last clause of v. 16. Even of him—the circumcised one—all that God demands is faith. In the words of 1 Cor 7:19 circumcision counts for nothing; it is no longer one of the commandments of God. Circumcision is not anything; what matters is the new creation, Gal 6:15. No wonder, then, that "the truth of the gospel" hinged on Titus not being circumcised (Gal 2:5).

The third "for" of these verses tells us why the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe: "For in it the righteousness of God is being revealed, from faith to faith." Here is the apocalyptic element of Paul's theology. The anticipated disclosure of God's righteousness has now come to pass as eschatological event.³⁸ But the surprise element of the present sentence is that the promised revelation has now taken place in *the gospel of Paul's proclamation* (rather than in recommitment to Israel and its Torah). Simply stated, the gospel is God's power to save because *in this gospel and it alone* God's righteousness is revealed; and God's righteousness thus revealed is his power.

Needless to say at this point time, Paul's phrase δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ has undergone a great deal of scrutiny. Is righteousness an attribute, an activity or a gift? Is the genitive

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Schreiner would appear to be correct in suggesting that "to the Jew first" reflects Paul's practice of using the synagogues of the Diaspora as a base of operations (*Romans*, 62), although we have to reckon with the fact that there comes a point at which Paul basically abandons that procedure and turns primarily to the Gentiles (Act 13:44-51; cf. 1 Thess 2:14-16).

³⁸ On apocalyptic in Paul, see my *Galatians*, 26-30.

θεοῦ subjective, objective or some other category? After a survey of the various options, Moo rightly concludes that they are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, and two or more of them are often combined in the interpretation of 1:17. Moo then notes that an attractive and popular combination is to be found in Käsemann's proposal that God's righteousness is his "salvation-creating power," a concept that incorporates the ideas of gift and an activity exercised by God, with emphasis on the latter.³⁹ I personally would combine all three: δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is a saving activity grounded in the attribute of God's covenant loyalty that results in the gift of deliverance (from exile). Consequently, debates about the genitive θεοῦ are basically pointless, especially given that the issue is not really one of Greek grammar but the Hebrew concept of God's righteousness.

The most pertinent thing we can say in the present setting is that "righteousness," in v. 17, stands in parallel to "salvation" in the previous verse.⁴⁰ This is because in the Psalms and Isaiah God's righteousness is synonymous with his salvation. See Pss 35:27-28; 72:1-4; 85:9-13; 96:13; 98:2-3, 9; Isa 9:7; 11:1-2; 45:8, 22-25; 51:5-6; 53:10b-11; 61:1-2, 11; Jer 23:5-6; Mal 4:2. In other Psalm texts, it is surely striking that the psalmist prays for the Lord to deliver him in his righteousness (Ps 31:1; 143:1, 11; 71:1-2, 15; cf. 79:9). In these instances, deliverance from the enemy is the godly person's salvation.⁴¹ The terms can be virtually synonymous because of the underlying meaning of "righteousness," *fidelity to the covenant*. Modern research has shown, to my satisfaction at least, that "righteousness" is essentially a relational concept: both God and his people are righteous when they maintain the covenant bond.⁴² See the appendix.

But Paul says more than this. The gospel is God's power to save *everyone who believes*, because in it his righteousness is revealed *from faith to faith*. By stressing the element of faith, the text takes on a different coloring. Many commentators recognize this, but they seem to overlook the significance of the last thing Paul writes in v. 16: "To the Jew first and also to the Greek." It is in light of this last phrase in v. 16 that the stress on faith makes sense: Paul here is making explicit what has clearly been just below the surface throughout the introduction, viz., that there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. Therefore, what he writes about the revelation of God's righteousness in the gospel is to be understood very much in the concrete. What matters is faith, not ethnic identity. The only distinction which has survived the resurrection is that of faith and unbelief respecting Christ.

This is confirmed by the fact that when Paul says that the righteousness of God has been revealed in the gospel, he alludes to Ps 98:2, 9 (LXX 97:2, 9): "The Lord has

³⁹ Moo, *Romans*, 72.

⁴⁰ Schreiner writes truly that the righteousness of God is crucial but intensely controversial. For a sampling of literature, see his *Romans*, 63, n. 5, and my *Galatians*, 139, n. 45. I would call specific attention to Moo, *Romans*, 79-88, and P. Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 29-32. I would add also Lohse, *Römer*, 78-82; Haacker, *Römer*, 39-42; B. Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 52-54.

⁴¹ The other side of the coin is that various psalmists pray to be vindicated because of *their* righteousness (e.g., 7:8; 18:20; 35:24). See G. Kwakkel, *According to My Righteousness: Upright Behaviour as Grounds for Deliverance in Psalms 7, 17, 18, 26, and 44* (OTS 46; Leiden: Brill, 2002). Moo (*Romans*, 83) thinks that the interplay between God's righteousness and human righteousness as expressed in the Psalms creates a tension. But I would submit that there is no tension; this is simply the bilateral nature of the covenant relationship.

⁴² See, for example, Dunn, *Romans*, 1.40-42.

made known his salvation; before the nations he has revealed his righteousness.... For he comes to judge the earth; he will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with uprightness.” In his mind also must have been such Psalm texts as 9:8; 96:13. God’s righteousness, therefore, is to be revealed to *the nations* and no longer restricted to Israel. The psalmist, as alluded to by Paul, declares that the Gentiles as well as Israel are to be the recipients of the Lord’s saving deed; both without distinction are to be regarded as Yahweh’s special possession. Furthermore, Paul’s quotation of Hab 2:4, a conspicuous instance of God’s saving deed, simply buttresses the point.

As regards God’s own righteousness specifically, this notion of righteousness as covenant loyalty has both a positive and negative side. On the one hand, “God is ‘righteous’ when he fulfills the obligations he took upon himself to be Israel’s God, that is, to rescue Israel and punish Israel’s enemies.”⁴³ Hence, Yahweh’s “righteousness” is his “act to restore his own and to sustain them within the covenant.”⁴⁴ To quote A. Hultgren: “God’s righteousness is God’s saving activity which is spoken of in the Scriptures of Israel and promised with the coming of the Messiah or the messianic age.”⁴⁵ Thus, the “the righteousness of God” which has *now* been manifested apart from the law is “God’s action on behalf of those to whom he has committed himself.”⁴⁶ This means that Paul’s doctrine of justification is primarily intended to answer the question, On whose behalf does the God of Israel go into action to effect salvation: is it Israel only or also the Gentiles?⁴⁷ On the other hand, God is righteous when he punishes Israel for her infidelity to the covenant. From this vantage point, “righteousness” becomes “wrath” (Ps 50:4-6; 97:2-5; Isa 10:22; 59:17; Lam 1:18; Wis 12:15-16; Pr Azar 4-5, 8-9). This assumption underlies 1:18-3:20. In light of the actual usage of “righteousness” language in the OT, God’s righteousness is both an activity (salvation or judgment) and an attribute. In fact, the former grows out of the latter: God acts righteously because he is righteous.

Part of the pivotal significance of Psalm 98 is that it announces the time when the Lord would come to judge the entire world “in righteousness.” That is to say, the standard of his judgment will be that of his covenant. For the psalmist the righteousness in question was that of the Torah. However, for Paul “the righteousness of God” has been

⁴³ Dunn, *Romans*, 1.41. Cf. W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 1.241-42.

⁴⁴ Dunn, *Romans*, 1.41.

⁴⁵ Hultgren, *Paul’s Gospel and Mission: The Outlook from His Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 31.

⁴⁶ Dunn, *Romans*, 1.166 (on 3:22). Among many, see further Byrne, *Romans*, 57-60; N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 95-103; id., *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 29-34; U. Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 455-77.

⁴⁷ Contra Osborne (*Romans*, 42-43), who offers the standard systematic-theological definition of righteousness: “The primary force of righteousness in Paul and here centers on the legal act whereby the repentant sinner is declared righteous by God and brought in a right relationship with him, resulting in right living” (ibid., 43). However, this is to disregard the actual backdrop of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ for the sake of a less than adequate reading of Paul. Moo is better. For Paul, as in the OT, God’s righteousness is a relational concept that brings together the aspects of activity and status, so that it can be defined as “the act by which God brings people in a right relationship with himself” (*Romans*, 74). My qualification would be that the act of righteousness restores the people of God from exile, thereby ushering them into a new covenant relationship.

removed from the Torah and placed into the gospel. When, therefore, 1:18-3:20 speak of the revelation of the wrath of God, the standard of God's righteous judgment is that of *the gospel*, not the law. Apart from the involvement of the nations in the Lord's saving deed, it was precisely the identification of the righteousness of God as the standard of his judgment of the earth that was the bone of contention between Paul and his opponents. Returning momentarily to Ps 98:2, 9, if we had the OT text alone, we would be obliged to conclude that the "righteousness" in question is to be that of the law of Moses; indeed, this is just what Israel had concluded. However, Paul's usage of the Psalm in Rom 1:17 informs us that the righteous standard of judgment has gone through an important modification.

We recall that v. 16 identified the power of the word of God with Paul's gospel, which makes no allowance for Jewish privileges; it is this gospel that Paul confesses in the face of Jewish refusal to do so. Now he goes a step further by claiming that this gospel is God's power to save because God's righteousness is revealed in it. In light of 3:21, we can infer that Paul means that God's righteousness is no longer peculiarly that of the Torah. It is just in this gospel of faith alone apart from Jewish distinctives and privileges that the "the righteousness of God" is revealed.

The radicalness of this for the Judaism of Paul's day is underscored by the question, "What constitutes the righteousness of God?" Or, "What set of requirements is to be identified with the "the righteousness of God?" For the Jew of Paul's day the answer was clear: righteousness was the totality of what God had commanded Israel in the law of Moses (e.g., Tob 1:3-12; 14:6-7; Jdt 14:10); this is the standard by which God will judge the world. Some of the Jewish texts quoted by Hultgren are much to the point. According to *T. Dan* 6:10, "Depart...from all unrighteousness, and cleave unto the righteousness of God, and your race will be saved forever." Even if we allow for Christian redaction of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, it remains that this insistence on adherence to the "righteousness of God" is typical of those books emerging from the time of the Hellenistic persecution of the Jews that localized righteousness in the Torah exclusively. In fact, the very next verse, *T. Dan* 6:11, says that Israel was to observe "the righteousness of the law of God" (this renders Christian redaction unlikely). Likewise, when, e.g., the *Psalms of Solomon* (17:28, 31, 35, 42), *1 Enoch* (71:14, 15; 38:2; 53:6; 39:6-7; 46:3), the *Wisdom of Solomon* (5:18) and *Baruch* (5:9) ascribe righteousness to the Messiah and the people of God, the law of Moses is the presupposed frame of reference.

Therefore, from a certain point of view, the upshot of the controversy had to do with the standard by which God would judge the world "in righteousness" or "righteously." For Israel it was the whole of what God had commanded her through Moses, particularly as that came to focus in the "boundary" and "identity" markers of the Jewish nation; but for Paul much of what used to be righteousness is no longer righteousness. Note that according to Acts 17:31, Paul proclaims the judgment of the world "in righteousness" (recalling Psalm 98), not, however, according to the law of Moses but "by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead." Such, of course, was the great scandal to Judaism, including the "circumcision party."

Now, against this backdrop we can see the particular thrust of what Paul means when he says that the righteousness of God is *revealed* in the gospel. Paul's opponents

would have said that *God's* righteousness is obscured in the gospel. For them *God's* righteousness is distorted in the gospel because the gospel jettisons necessary aspects of proper covenant behavior and, therefore, of God's righteous judgment. In short, *God's* righteousness for Judaism is *revealed* only in the law of Moses.

As an afterword to this discussion of "righteousness" in Rom 1:17, it must be clarified that the term assumes two distinct but closely related meanings in this immediate setting (against its OT backdrop). One is God's saving activity, as based on his fidelity to the covenant relationship. God, in other words, is righteous when he goes into action to save his people from their enemies. This is righteousness in the *positive* sense of the Lord's determination to save his people, a determination rooted in his own righteous character as the one preeminently loyal to his covenant commitment. The other is righteousness as a standard of judgment, corresponding to the *negative* side of the concept. In this regard, the Lord is righteous when he judges his and his peoples' enemies in order to liberate his faithful ones. The twist, however, in Paul's adaptation of this two-sided notion of righteousness resides in the fact that the Jewish factor is eliminated, so that God's righteous fidelity to his people now expands to include the Gentiles, and his standard of righteous judgment of the world has been shifted from the Torah to the Gospel. At the end of the day, the crucial question concerns the Christ himself. It is those who belong to him who are delivered from wrath, and it is the gospel "concerning God's Son" (Rom 1:3) which now forms the basis of the way in which God deals with the world.

All this is "from faith to faith." As Cranfield relates, these words have been understood in many different ways.⁴⁸ Paul is certainly stressing *sola fidei*: faith "from beginning to end" (NIV); righteousness comes by faith alone, not faith plus something else, viz., the requirements of the Mosaic law in its totality. "From faith to faith," then, corresponds to "everyone who believes" in v. 16 and to "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" in 3:22. However, in keeping with the basic idiom "from...to" (ἐκ...εἰς) (e.g., Ps 83:8 [LXX]; 2 Cor 3:18) and the parallel of 1:5 with 1:17, it is not farfetched to take the language as a declaration of the multi-functional character of faith in its initial, intermediate and ultimate phases. To phrase it somewhat differently, ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν very naturally plays on the two-sided nature of the Hebrew אֱמוּנָה. That is to say, the Christian life commences with "faith" and develops into "faithfulness." If this is Paul's meaning, perseverance in faith is certainly on his agenda by this choice of words, whether or not he also has in mind growth in faith.

As is his custom, Paul backs up his assertions with Scripture, not at all surprising given that he has already declared that his gospel is rooted in the "holy Scriptures" (1:2 [16:25-26]). The text invoke here is Hab 2:4: "The righteous shall live by faith" (ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται; MT: וְצַדִּיק בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ יַחִיָּה) Paul's use of this quotation entails some difficulties with respect the form of the quotation.⁴⁹ However, the matter can

⁴⁸ See Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.99-100, for the views.

⁴⁹ See Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.100-02. Paul drops the μου from the LXX's ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεώς μου ζήσεται. Μου here is probably "objective genitive," making Yahweh the object of the believer's trust. However, the MT is בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ, which unambiguously places the stress on the righteous person's own faith(fulness). This is what Paul has in mind also. I have treated Paul's use of Hab 2:4 in Galatians two other places: "Role Reversal and Paul's Use of Scripture in Galatians 3.10-13," JSNT 65 (1997), 99-101;

be simplified by getting straight to the reason why Paul cites this passage. That is to say, as when he quotes Gen 15:6 in Rom 4:3, 9, his purpose is to demonstrate from Scripture itself that faith alone is the way into covenant standing, not faith plus circumcision as followed up by “works of the law.” In other words, as is true with everything else in the introduction to Romans, the usage of Hab 2:4 is context specific.

With this in mind, we can turn to the original setting of the quotation. As stated above, Hab 2:4 is an outstanding instance of God’s intervention to save his people (his “righteousness”). In context, the prophet is confronted with the impending invasion of the holy land by the Chaldeans. The fact that a nation far more sinful than Israel should be the instrument of her judgment occasions a crisis of faith on Habakkuk’s part. God answers that in time he will punish the Chaldeans for their iniquity. In the meantime, however, the righteous of Israel will live, i.e., by their fidelity to the covenant they will survive the invasion and return to the land. Schreiner states it well: “Despite the ominous future predicted, the righteous will not turn to other gods for security.”⁵⁰ This is ὁ δίκαιος, the one who faithfully carries out the obligations of the covenant (Schreiner). Such is the original and intended meaning of “the righteous will live by his faith(fulness)” (בְּאֵמוּנָתוֹ). In the first instance, the text is not talking about the way in which one becomes initially righteous. Rather, righteousness is assumed, and Yahweh declares that the righteous person will live through the judgment by means of his adherence to the covenant. In keeping with the prophetic message generally, the return of the righteous from exile is their justification. Thus, a formal definition of justification could be stated in these terms: *justification is the vindication of the people of God when they return from exile.*⁵¹ As such, justification speaks primarily to the issue of *liberation from bondage*. This is not to deny the forensic aspect of justification, but it is to say that in the covenant courtroom vindication is with a view to the resumption of life within the covenant relationship.

How does Paul intend for us to understand the bearing of Hab 2:4 on the righteousness revealed *in the gospel*? The basic and really simple answer is that he is very much aware of the original setting of the prophecy—and therein consists the rub.⁵²

An Exposition Of Galatians: A Reading From the New Perspective (3rd ed.; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 195-96. See further R. E. Watts, “‘For I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel’: Romans 1:16-17 and Habakkuk 2:4,” *Romans and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Fee on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (eds. S. K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 3-25.

⁵⁰ Schreiner, *Romans*, 75.

⁵¹ Wright has been criticized for his stance that numerous Jews of the Second Temple period were of the belief that Israel was still in exile. The main line of criticism is the paucity of texts, it is argued, for such an assumption. My comeback would be twofold. (1) Even if the historical evidence is not satisfying to many, the fact remains that *theologically speaking* the nation was in bondage until the advent of the Messiah, who binds the strong man and plunders his goods, thereby bringing to pass the year of Jubilee (Matt 4:1-11 and pars.; 12:29; Luke 4:16-21 = Isa 61:1-3). (2) Scholars other than Wright have endorsed his basic outlook, and these need to be reckoned with. I have in mind particularly M. Knibb, “The Exile in the Literature of the Intertestamental Period,” *HeyJ* 17 (1976), 253-72; id., “Exile in the Damascus Document,” *JSOT* 25 (1983), 99-117; J. M. Scott, ed., *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions* (JSJSup 56; Leiden: Brill, 1997); C. A. Evans, “Jesus and the Continuing Exile of Israel,” *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright’s Jesus and the Victory of God* (ed. C. C. Newman; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 77-100.

⁵² Contra Moo (*Romans*, 77-78), Paul is not giving the prophet’s words a different meaning. The connection between Paul and Habakkuk is not simply that faith is the key to one’s relationship to God. Rather, the faith(fulness) of the righteous Israelite finds its correspondent in the faith(fulness) of the

His Jewish contemporaries were saying that faith(fulness) was inconceivable apart from the whole of the law of Moses; only such faith(fulness) would stand one in good stead in the last judgment. 1QHab 8:1-3 provides a famous illustration of this: “Interpreted [i.e., Hab 2:4], this concerns all who observe the Law in the House of Judah, whom God will deliver from the House of Judgment because of their suffering [or “toil”—probably a reference to the toil of obedience to the law] and because of their faith in the Teacher of Righteousness.” Paul, however, has detached faith(fulness) from its specifically Mosaic setting: “faith(fulness)” is still required, but its specific object is Christ, not the Torah. For him Hab 2:4 proves that the righteousness of God is now revealed “from faith to faith,” apart from the “works of the law.”

Paul’s Jewish contemporaries, no doubt, would have accused him of mishandling the OT text. For them, it was obvious that the prophet lived under the law and that צדקתה אברהם had specific reference to “the righteousness of the law of God” (*T. Dan* 6:11). How, then, could Paul appropriate this text for his purposes? How could he detach faith(fulness) from its anchorage in the law? In answering, two matters stand out. First of all, Paul shifts the focus of “faith” away from the law and onto the person of Christ, the subject of the gospel and the new object of faith. To be sure, pre-Christian Judaism made God the object of faith. For example, 1 Maccabees has a clear-cut doctrine of faith in the person of God (2:59, 61; cf. 4:9-11); but it is likewise true that reliance on the law (2:64) is the indispensable expression of one’s faith in God (cf. Sir 32:24-33:3). It would be a fair assessment to say that for Judaism generally God and the Torah were the twofold object of faith: to believe in the one was *ipso facto* to believe in the other. As over against such an outlook, Paul makes God *in Christ* the focal point of faith(fulness). From now on, one is able to “get in” and “stay in” by virtue of a “faith(fulness)” detachable from a Mosaic standard.⁵³

Second, it is to be conceded that Paul’s usage of Hab 2:4 (and other OT passages) involves a presupposition, viz., that God has acted definitively in Jesus Christ to save his people; he is the Messiah so long expected by Israel. This being so, the totality of the Mosaic economy had only one goal—to point to Jesus Christ (Rom 10:4; Gal 3:23-25). In the case before us, Paul draws on the typology of the last judgment found in Habakkuk and the other prophets (i.e., the Babylonian captivity and return to the land) and applies it to the higher level of the antitype. That is to say, God’s righteousness as his saving action has taken place in Christ. As such, the *eschatological* revelation of the “the righteousness of God” in the gospel (cf. 3:21, etc.) no longer takes account of the Mosaic context of the same “the righteousness of God.” Paul interprets the OT text in light of its fulfillment in Christ. Accordingly, Hab 2:4 proves Paul’s point because *it is the fulfillment which clarifies the intention of God*. Israel, on the other hand, refuses to accept that Christ is the fulfillment of the Scriptures and interprets Hab 2:4 (and others) within the cadre of its original setting apart from the perspective provided by the Christ-event. As ever, *the difference between Paul and his antagonists is Christ*.

In Paul’s citation of Habakkuk, is “of faith” connected with the verb “shall live” or with “the righteous?” As Cranfield notes, there are arguments to be made in both

believer in Christ. The real difference between Paul and the prophet is the place of the law in the righteous person’s experience of faith(fulness).

⁵³ Cf. the usage of Hab 2:4 in Heb 10:38, which places the stress on perseverance in Christ apart from a return to the law.

directions.⁵⁴ In all probability, however, vigorous debate is needless.⁵⁵ As one reads the whole of Romans (and Paul generally) it becomes apparent enough *both* that righteousness is the righteousness of faith *and* that the righteous man lives as a result of the faith which made him righteous in the first place. These are two sides of the same coin, and both ideas are inherent in the context of the Habakkuk quotation. Keep in mind, **תמונה** is always two-sided.⁵⁶

Romans 2:13⁵⁷

Here, for the first time in the letter, Paul uses his familiar verb *δικαιόω* to depict a future-eschatological event: the justification (vindication) of the “doers of the law.” From the outset of chap. 2., Paul is setting the stage for this climactic statement. Vv. 1-5 address humanity in generic terms, particularly as regards judging others when one is guilty of the same deeds (*ὃ ἄνθρωπε πᾶς ὁ κρίνων*) (v. 1). But the direct *entrée* into v. 13 is provided by vv. 6-12, which state the principle of judgment by works; this forms Paul’s rebuttal to the presumptuous person who judges others (*ὁ κρίνων*, vv. 1-5). In other words, this *ἄνθρωπος* will not escape condemnation precisely because God is an impartial judge, whose verdict is *κατὰ ἀλήθειαν* (v. 2): he will render to every man according to his deeds (v. 6). With passages like Ps 62:12; Prov 24:12; 28:4; Jer 17:19 in mind, Paul pens what in and of itself was a perfectly acceptable dictum to first-century Judaism.⁵⁸ Indeed, the notion of the vindication of the faithful is one of the commonplaces of Jewish thought (e.g., 2 Macc 7:9; 4 Macc 17:11-12; Tob 4:9-11; *Pss. Sol.* 9:3-5). Jews would have understood eschatological justification to be the inevitable outcome of their believing observance of covenant obligations and privileges, integral to which was God’s provision of sacrifice to cover the sins of his people—most prominently the Day of Atonement—and to restore them to fellowship with himself. Correspondingly, the nations are to be condemned because of their rejection of these standards.

That Paul has something else in mind, however, is indicated by the creation phraseology of v. 7: *τοῖς καθ’ ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν ζητοῦσιν ἀποδώσει ζωὴν αἰώνιον*. That is to say, consonant with 1:18-3:20, the standard of judgment is one that bypasses the Sinai covenant and roots the vindication of the individual in matters which pertain to humanity as such, not simply *Jewish* humanity. The combination of “glory” and “honor” recalls Ps 8:5’s depiction of man’s (Adam’s) creation (cf. Job 40:10). “Glory” stands by itself in 1:23 and 3:23: both times it designates the obverse of the quest delineated in 2:7. In the former, man outside of Christ has rejected the glory of Yahweh for the sake of idols, while in the latter he has failed to measure up to his capacity as God’s image (glory).⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.101-02.

⁵⁵ “Here too the continuing sharp division between translators and commentators who insist on ‘either-or exegesis’ underlines its unreality” (Dunn, *Romans*, 1.45-46).

⁵⁶ See in particular E. Perry, “The Meaning of *’emuna* in the Old Testament,” *JBR* 21 (1953), 252-56; Schreiner, *Romans*, 75. For further literature, see my *Obedience*, 10-11.

⁵⁷ See my fuller exegesis of 2:13 in *Faith, Obedience*, 44-71, along with K. L. Yinger, *Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds* (SNTSMS 105; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 146-82.

⁵⁸ See at length Yinger, *Paul*, 19-140.

⁵⁹ Most likely, Paul here ties into the equation of “glory” and “image” in Jewish theology. See Dunn, *Romans*, 1.167-68; S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (WUNT 2/4; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1981),

“Immortality” (ἀφθαρσία) in the LXX occurs only in Wisdom and 4 Maccabees. Wis 2:23 is particularly relevant: “God created man for immortality (ἐφ’ ἀφθαρσία), and made him the image of his own eternity.” This not only gives voice to the author’s conception of man’s reason for existence, it places in parallel the ideas of immortality and image: man is God’s image by virtue of his capacity for endless life. 4 Macc 17:12, especially striking in view of Paul’s present argument, makes “the prize for victory” of the Jewish martyrs “immortality in long-lasting life.” If Paul in fact has such a conception in mind, his appeal to immortality represents a reversal of the mentality of 4 Maccabees as a whole, which makes abstinence from pork of the essence of fidelity to God and thus a precondition of ἀφθαρσία (see especially 5:14-38). In the same vein, according to 2 Macc 6:18-20; 7:1, one ought to be willing to die rather than partake of swine’s flesh. Particularly striking is the connection of such refusal and the prospect of resurrection (eternal life) in 2 Maccabees 7 in its entirety.

“Life” as a creation motif is exhibited by the prominence given the idea in the first two chapters of Genesis. Outside the NT, the exact phrase “eternal life” occurs only in Dan 12:2; 2 Macc 7:9; 4 Macc 15:3, where it is tantamount to resurrection, and in 1QS 4:7, where everlasting life (עולם חיים) is clearly in view. The term features prominently in Paul’s delineation of the work of Christ and its effects in Rom 5:12-6:23. “Eternal life,” then, is equivalent to the life of the age to come, i.e., resurrection and “immortality,” and in effect a completion of the program commenced and yet interrupted with Adam.⁶⁰ Noteworthy is the phrase “the justification of life” (δικαίωσις ζωῆς) in 5:18. This is justification as it inevitably results in life and from which it is inseparable.

If we bring v. 10 into view, another creation term emerges, viz., “peace,” which is employed by the Prophets in depicting the restoration of paradise. Yahweh’s εἰρήνη (= שָׁלוֹם), in the prophetic hope, stands for his eschatological deliverance of Israel from its enemies and his recreation of all things; in short, “peace” is a return to the bliss of the Garden of Eden. From the NT’s perspective generally, εἰρήνη is the promised final “salvation” which has now transpired historically through Jesus Christ.⁶¹ A virtual synonym of “peace” is “rest.”⁶² In Gen 2:1-3, Yahweh’s own rest provides the paradigm of Adam’s rest to be enjoyed after the completion of his mandate to subdue the earth (Gen 1:28). With Adam’s fall, however, “rest” undergoes a semantic shift and likewise becomes synonymous with the “salvation” (= new creation) procured by Christ.⁶³

It is in light of these data that the adverbial phrase καθ’ ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ (v. 7) is to be given its obvious and straightforward meaning: “patient persistence in doing what is recognized to be good.”⁶⁴ This speaks of the modality of humanity’s quest to be all that it was intended to be in the design of the Creator. The “good work” of 2:7

319-20.

⁶⁰ Cf. the comments of J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: SCM, 1980), 110-111.

⁶¹ G. Von Rad and W. Foerster, *TDNT* 2.405-6, 412-15.

⁶² See my *Galatians*, 61; A. G. Hebert, *The Throne of David: A Study of the Fulfillment of the Old Testament in Jesus Christ and His Church* (London: Faber, 1941), 159-63.

⁶³ A. Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament,” *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 197-220. Cf. the use of Ps 95:8-11 in Heb 3:7-4:13.

⁶⁴ Dunn, *Romans*, 1.86.

relates to the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. Ultimately, this “good work” is allegiance to God the Creator and a refusal to be seduced by Satan’s alternate explanation of the Creator/creature relationship (tantamount to idolatry). That actual (and expected) activity is envisaged is confirmed by the synonymous expressions “obeying the truth” (v. 8) and “doing good” (v. 10), as well as by the antitheses “disobeying the truth,” “obeying wickedness” (v. 8), and “doing evil” (v. 9). Moreover, as Dunn further comments, the verb ζητέω reinforces ὑπομονή: “what is in mind is a sustained and deliberate application...rather than a casual or spasmodic pursuit of the goal.”⁶⁵ If we may state one of our major conclusions beforehand, it is just ὑπομονή, endurance in testing, that defines in large measure what is intended by “the obedience of faith” which issues in eschatological justification.

The effect of this evocation of the creation goal of man’s existence is that “God shows no partiality” (v. 11). This, in turn, opens up the way into the paragraph of vv. 12-16, where Paul’s intentions surface even more clearly. The terms used by him to bifurcate the human race (from the Jewish point of view) are significant. V. 12 distinguishes between those who have sinned ἀνόμως and those who have sinned ἐν νόμῳ. Thereafter νόμος becomes the fulcrum of the discussion of final judgment (vv. 13, 14, 15). One’s relation to the law, in other words, is reflective of the normal Jewish distinction between the people of God and outsiders: the Torah was to be the standard of the great assize, and according to it one would be vindicated or condemned. Thus, to be ἐν νόμῳ, i.e., Jewish,⁶⁶ was to be safe,⁶⁷ and to be ἀνόμως (μὴ ἔχοντες νόμον, v. 14), i.e., Gentile, was to be lost. Once again, while Paul speaks formally in terms acceptable to Jewish ears, he turns them to Israel’s disadvantage. “His real point...is that judgment will *not* depend on whether the individual starts from within the people of the law or from outside. Both will be judged; sin in both cases will be condemned.”⁶⁸

The escalating argument of 2:6-3:8 reaches a climax when 2:13 enters the picture as an explanation of why remaining within the perimeters of the law is no insurance against the eschatological wrath of God. That is to say, the possession of the Torah, including its boundary markers of Jewish identity, is not enough: “For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be justified.” Paul, in other words, grounds immunity from the condemnation of the last day in one’s performance of the law, not in pride of its ownership (as illustrated by Bar 4:3-4).

By now, it comes as no surprise that Paul draws on conceptions which in

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ On ἐν νόμῳ and similar phrases, see Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 221-22, 225-28. According to Dunn’s assessment, “Paul is referring to the typical Jewish self-understanding of the people of God as circumcised and defined by the law, as characterized by practice of the law’s distinctive features” (ibid., 228).

⁶⁷ As Sanders more than once affirms, “All Israelites have a share in the world to come unless they renounce it by transgression” (i.e., apostasy) (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977], 147, citing *m. Sanh.* 10:1).

⁶⁸ Dunn, *Romans*, 1.96. “What one finds in Romans 2,” remarks K. R. Snodgrass, “is essentially a Jewish view of judgment, but one that is radicalized and applied to both Jew and Gentile.” Snodgrass adds that Jewish texts normally accord mercy to Israel while condemning Gentiles according to their works. As for Jewish self-assessment: “The degree to which the Jews were automatically accorded mercy or were also judged according to works differs in the various writings and often depended on how much an author was pleased or displeased with his Jewish contemporaries” (“Justification by Grace—to the Doers: an Analysis of the Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul,” *NTS* 32 [1986], 78).

themselves were familiar to his contemporaries. The combination of “hearing” and “doing,” as Dunn notes, was characteristic of Judaism. Indeed, as Wilckens affirms, the *Shema* of Deut 6:4—“Hear, O Israel”—has doing in view.⁶⁹ However, what would have sounded odd was Paul’s *contrast* of the two here—hearing *versus* doing—because the respective appellations “hearers of the law” and “righteous” were complementary and overlapped in large measure:⁷⁰ hearing/believing and works are two ways of saying the same thing.⁷¹ This leads us to infer that in driving a wedge between these interdependent components of Jewish self-definition Paul has in mind *a different kind of “doing the law,”*⁷² a doing, as we shall see, commensurate with “the obedience of faith.”

Significantly, the first occurrence of δικαιοῶ in the letter is here in 2:13, where it has reference to future justification: οἱ ποιηταὶ τοῦ νόμου δικαιοθήσονται. To be sure, beginning with 3:21, Paul will explain that the ultimate vindication of the people of God has been secured by the “redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (3:24). Nevertheless, the future tense, appearing in this setting of last judgment, serves to underscore that justification properly speaking is yet to be. That “doers of the law” is to be taken at face value is confirmed by the “*parallelismus membrorum*” of 2:13a and b; that is, those who will be justified are the δίκαιοι παρὰ θεῶ. The latter phrase is steeped in the Jewish idea of conformity to the covenant, as confirmed by τὰ τοῦ νόμου and τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου (2:14, 15), to which the consciences of the Gentiles bear witness.⁷³ Attempts have been made to deny that the perspective of Rom 2:13 is Paul’s.⁷⁴ Ziesler, for example, takes it to be the expression of the Jewish viewpoint, “Used to demonstrate to the Jews that their

⁶⁹ Wilckens, *Römer*, 1.132. See also J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 268.

⁷⁰ Dunn, *Romans*, 1.97. He cites Deut 4:1, 5-6, 13-14; 30:11-14; 1 Macc 2:67; 13:48; *Sib. Or.* 3:70; Philo, *Cong.* 70; *Praem.* 79; Josephus, *Ant.* 5.107, 132; 20.44. Cf. Dunn’s comments on Rom 1:17 and 10:5.

⁷¹ Much of my *Obedience* is devoted to arguing that in the pre-Christian materials hearing and doing (i.e., faith and obedience) are tantamount to each other. Thus, a first-century Jew offered the option of hearing or doing would have rejected it as a false alternative. Cf. Dunn, *Romans*, 1.97-98; 2.582-83, 593, 613; Beker, *Paul*, 268-69; Buber, *Faith*, 56; J. J. Gunther, *St. Paul’s Opponents and Their Background: A Study of Apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian Teachings* (NovTSup 35; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 70; A. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 175.

⁷² Dunn, *Romans*, 1.97.

⁷³ Rom 2:14-16 is problematic for many interpreters of Paul (Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.155-16, and Räisänen, *Paul*, 103-6; Davies, *Faith*, 61-64, give the various views). E. P. Sanders (*Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983], 123-24) sees these verses, when compared with 1:18-32, as forming the “principal incongruity” of Romans 1 and 2 (Sanders [ibid., 123-32] and Räisänen [*Paul*, 99-108] are in agreement that Romans 2 as a whole is irreconcilable with Paul’s teaching elsewhere). Yet, even though I do think the reference is to Gentiles *qua* Gentiles, there is no basis here for the justification of man outside of Christ. The γός of v. 14 is the last in a sequence of four such γός (vv. 11-14), whose function is to buttress the impartiality of God in final judgment. In themselves, vv. 14-16 do not affirm that Gentiles or Jews can be justified by any sort of doing outside of Christ: they are simply the last link in a chain of reasoning that Jews *qua* Jews are no better off than pagans *qua* pagans, especially since the Gentiles have the functional equivalent of Israel’s law as carved on tables of stone. If anything—given the backdrop of 1:18-32—the verses teach that Jew and Gentile are equally exposed to the wrath of God because of idolatry, and both must seek “the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (3:24). To say that Gentiles at times perform the requirements of the law (ὅταν plus the subjunctive) is not to attribute to them “the obedience of faith” requisite to justification in final judgment: *man outside of Christ cannot be obedient.*

⁷⁴ The various approaches have been categorized by Snodgrass, “Justification,” 73-74; Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 125-26; H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (WUNT 29; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1983), 103-6.

traditional way of justification is really no way, because while possessing and hearing the law, they do not fulfil it.”⁷⁵ Along similar lines are those interpretations which effectively, if not formally, make the verse hypothetical, i.e., Paul formulates the principle of justification according to strict justice for the purpose of demonstrating that no one can be justified by the law (assuming the factor of sin).⁷⁶

However, such interpretations falter because there is nothing in Paul’s language to suggest either that the viewpoint represented is someone else’s (the Jew’s) exclusively or that he is speaking in hypothetical terms.⁷⁷ His pronouncement about future justification by “doing good” is as realistic as his declaration of God’s wrath upon the one who “does evil.” On this he and his Jewish interlocutor are in agreement. Indeed, it is just in terms of the *continuity* of Pauline and Jewish theology at this point that the genius of the argument of Romans 2 emerges. In other words, because the Judaism of Paul’s day knew of a future vindication based on present fidelity to the covenant, his concern is seen to be that of calling into question the prevailing understanding of who “the righteous” are and the grounds on which they may expect to be justified.

The difference [between Paul and Judaism] is that the dominant strands in the Judaism of Paul’s time started from the presupposition of a favored status before God by virtue of membership of the covenant people, which could be characterized by the very link between “hearing the law” and “the righteous” which Paul here puts in question. Like his fellow Jews and the whole prophetic tradition, Paul is ready to insist that a doing of the law is necessary for final acquittal before God; but that doing is neither synonymous with nor dependent upon maintaining a loyal membership of the covenant people.⁷⁸

This statement of the matter leads us to draw both a negative and a positive conclusion. Negatively, since Paul endeavors to undermine a nationalistic/exclusivistic understanding of judgment, his purpose is not to deny a role to human activity as such in the scheme of ultimate justification: his theology displays nothing which is inimical to

⁷⁵ Ziesler, *Righteousness*, 189. Cf. K. Kertelge, “*Rechtfertigung*” bei Paulus: Studien zur Struktur und zum Bedeutungsgehalt des paulinischen Rechtfertigungsbegriffs (NTAbh 3; 2nd ed.; Münster: Aschendorff, 1967), 143; Michel, *Römer*, 117.

⁷⁶ The various interpretations are catalogued by Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.15-52; Davies, *Faith*, 54-55.

⁷⁷ Cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.152; Davies, *Faith*, 55. Haacker, following Bultmann, takes the future δικαιωθήσονται to be “gnomic” and denies that the reference is to an actual justification at the last judgment. As another “unsoteriological” usage of δικαιόω, Haacker cites 1 Cor 4:4 (*Römer*, 64). But the same criticisms apply to this variation on the hypothetical theme. Inasmuch as 2:16 sets the scene as that of last judgment, the future tense is better understood in the concrete rather than the more abstract “gnomic” sense. According to D. Wallace, the “gnomic future” is used only rarely to indicate that a generic event will take place: “The idea is not that a particular event is in view, but that such events are true to life. ‘In the gnomic future the act is true of any time’” (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 571, quoting A. T. Robertson). But if anything, Paul has a very specific even in view. The appeal to 1 Cor 4:4 is to no purpose either, because even there δικαιόω bears the meaning of “vindicate.” It is especially striking that the next verse makes explicit reference to the judgment.

⁷⁸ Dunn, *Romans*, 1.98.

works.⁷⁹ Positively, as intimated above, we are informed that the specific character of “doing,” in Paul’s mind, is distinctive in important respects to that assumed by his Jewish counterparts.

From the entire foregoing discussion we may conclude that the passage from present justification by faith alone to future justification by the obedience of faith is natural enough, given the broader purview—and most notably the creation character—of Paul’s theology of faith and obedience. However, practically speaking, this conclusion is sufficiently important (and controversial) that something more must be said. As Sanders and Snodgrass acknowledge concerning the Jewish doctrine of judgment,⁸⁰ what is in view is not justification by “works” in any meritorious sense but *an extension of the righteousness of God in Christ*. Snodgrass in particular speaks of the apparent incongruity for modern readers of judgment according to both God’s mercy and human works. He notes that although there were abuses of both in ancient Judaism, neither the OT nor Jewish literature sensed any anomaly between the two. Indeed, Ps 62:12, normally considered to be the source of Rom 2:6, actually says: “To you, O Lord, belongs *steadfast love*, for you requite a person *according to his work*.”⁸¹

When both themes are kept together, there is no problem. When the two are separated, an over-emphasis on either could and did lead to perversion. Over-emphasis on judgment according to works could lead to casuistry and a strict doctrine of weighing. Over-emphasis on God’s mercy could lead to presumption of his mercy and neglect of obedience.⁸²

Though requiring a study in itself, it is the Christian’s union with Christ and the gift of his Spirit (Rom 8:1-4, 9; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14, etc.) which are the fountainhead of the obedience of faith. As the rest of Romans will clarify, it is *in Christ* that one becomes a doer of the law,⁸³ not in the sense of sinless perfection but of one’s

⁷⁹ Wilckens, *Römer*, 1.145.

⁸⁰ Sanders, *Paul*, 128; Snodgrass, “Justification,” 78.

⁸¹ As S. Motyer observes, in the Psalms there is a surface tension between the capacity of God’s people to be righteous and the necessity of Yahweh being merciful to a still sinful people (“Righteousness by Faith in the New Testament,” *Here We Stand: Justification by Faith Today* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986], 37-38). The tension is resolved, however, by grasping the very genius of righteousness, i.e., as both the Lord’s own saving activity and the stamp placed upon those who are caught up into that activity (ibid., 53-54).

⁸² Snodgrass, “Justification,” 78.

⁸³ To the same effect are Schreiner, *Romans*, 119, 139-45, and Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 45-47, 61-64. As Wright says, it will take Paul eight or ten more chapters to explain finally what he means by doing the law, and we must follow the argument through (“Romans,” 440). Contra Witherington, *Romans*, 82, who apparently buys into the hypothetical interpretation of 2:13, inconsistently, I would say, with comments offered later on (ibid., 106, 121-23). An adequate reply to Peter O’Brien’s criticisms of my understanding of faith and obedience would require a separate treatment (“Was Paul a Covenantal Nomist?” *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume 2: The Paradoxes of Paul* [eds. D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien and M. A. Seifrid; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004], 269-70, n. 78). Suffice it to say here that O’Brien consistently imputes to me a bifurcation of faith and obedience, as though obedience is a possibility apart from faith as its matrix and fountainhead. Yet the bulk of my *Faith, Obedience* is to the opposite effect, and O’Brien’s characterization of it is a *caricature*, no less. If nothing else, the opening chapter of the book states expressly that obedience arises from faith and is inseparable from it (see the summary of pp. 30-31). O’Brien’s misrepresentation is especially evident when, according to him, I make final salvation solely

commitment to God's (new) covenant, whose κύριος is Christ.⁸⁴ It is because of the obedience of Christ, the last Adam, that the people of God have become obedient in him, as once they were disobedient in the first Adam (Rom 5:12-19).⁸⁵ Paul himself puts it in a nutshell in 1 Cor 15:22: "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." It is in the same comprehensive sense that the author of Hebrews can say that Christ is the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him (Heb 5:9). With these necessary christological qualifications, "doing the law," in Rom 2:13, is no different in kind than the OT's classic statement of "covenantal nomism," Lev 18:5: one continues to live within the covenant relationship by compliance with its terms, i.e., perseverance.⁸⁶

Otherwise put, *in Christ* one becomes, according to 2 Cor 5:21, "the righteousness of God." This succinct statement of the believer's mode of existence flows from the foregoing words: "If anyone is in Christ, behold, the new creation" (2 Cor 5:18)! The very burden of the above exposition is that Paul depicts the obedience of faith issuing in eschatological justification as a new creation: what man in Adam has failed to obtain—glory, honor and immortality—man in Christ has. This compels me to agree with Käsemann that the righteousness of God is his sovereign power effecting a new creation:⁸⁷ "The faithful *are* the world as it has been recalled to the sovereignty of God, the company of those who live under the eschatological justice of God, in which company, according to II Cor 5:21, God's righteousness becomes manifest on earth."⁸⁸

contingent on our own desire to remain within the covenant bond and not on God's work in Christ alone. Again, the thrust of my book is the other way around, especially in the treatment of Romans 5 (chap. 4), where it is abundantly clear that the obedience (perseverance) of the believer is procured by the obedience of Christ, the Last Adam. Additionally, O'Brien should have at least read pp. 150-51, and particularly the quotation of M. D. Hooker: "Christians owe everything to the fact that they are in Christ: they are nothing and they have nothing, except by virtue of being in him. Christian faith is always the response to what God has done in Christ and to what Christ is. It seems, then, that they need the faithfulness of Christ—for how are they to have even faith, except by sharing in his?" It would have been a good idea also to have read pp. pp. 69-71 and 161-63 (in the latter, take particular notice of the quotes from G. C. Berkouwer).

⁸⁴ Sanders is wrong in relegating Rom 2:13 to a category distinct from Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10, in that it refers to all humanity who are judged by one standard, the law (*Paul, the Law*, 126). He does not allow for the fact that when Paul pens the words of 2:13, he has in mind what he will say from 3:21 onward, viz., that people are justified and become obedient *in Christ*. The person in Christ becomes a doer of the law, i.e., one who perseveres in the covenant, and is enabled to achieve what Israel and the nations could not.

⁸⁵ "Christ is the new Adam, because as the bearer of human destiny, he brings in the world of obedience" (E. Käsemann, "'The Righteousness of God' in Paul," *New Testament Questions of Today* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969], 180; cf. Snodgrass, "Justification," 81-82). Note how Phil 2:8's assertion that Christ was "obedient unto death" is evocative of the Adam motif (as it intersects with that of the Servant of Yahweh). The conjunction of v. 8 with vv. 12-13 demonstrates that for Paul Christian obedience is linked inextricably to Christ in his role as Adam/Servant, the obedient one who is to be obeyed.

⁸⁶ Moo objects that "doing the law" cannot mean this, because the choice of words is too much like the expressions "works of the law" or "works," which, according to the apostle, cannot justify (*Romans*, 147). However, Moo leans on an assumed meaning of the latter two formulations. To be sure, Paul does deny that "works of the law" or "works" can justify, but only because such "works" represent a refusal to leave Judaism and come to Christ: these are the "works" which exclude one from Christ. See my brief response to Moo's earlier study, "'Law,' 'Works of the Law,' and Legalism in Paul," *WTJ* 45 (1983), 73-100 (*Obedience*, 265, n. 83).

⁸⁷ "Δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is for Paul God's sovereignty over the world revealing itself eschatologically in Jesus" (Käsemann, "Righteousness," 180).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 181, italics his. We recall that Kertelge similarly defines the righteousness of God as his redemptive power offsetting the sway of the old aeon ("*Rechtfertigung*," 104).

Romans 3:28

Romans 3:21-31 can be termed “The Eschatological Revelation of the Righteousness of God.” 3:21 stands as a summary of the entire section: “But now the righteousness of God has been revealed apart from the law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it.” That is to say, Paul comes now to argue the thesis that the righteousness of God is no longer defined in terms of fidelity to the law of Moses, something foreseen by the OT itself. The two things stand together: Paul’s polemic against the Jewish outlook is not merely the assertion of his thesis but its proof from the Jewish Scriptures themselves. This is what accounts for his frequent and strategic appeals to the OT. It is, in addition, what dictates his choice of texts and people from the Scriptures throughout Romans.

These couple of paragraphs can be read as a recapitulation of 1:16-17 (which itself is a restatement of 1:1-7). That is to say, Paul restates the major terms of the earlier passage: “righteousness of God,” “revealed,” “faith,” “all who believe;” but he does so in such a way as to take into account what has intervened (ABA).⁸⁹ This is seen particularly in two sets of phrases which recall 1:18-3:20: (1) “there is no distinction” (3:22 = 2:11); (2) “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23 = 1:23; 3:9). V. 21 begins the recapitulation with the important phrase “but now.” This “eschatological now” (νῦν) marks the turn of the ages. See 5:9; 7:6; 16:26; Eph 2:12-13; Col 1:26-27; 2 Tim 1:9-10; Heb 9:26. The “now” is the period of the definitive fulfillment of the prophetic Scriptures, the “fullness of time,” in which God has sent forth his son (Gal 4:4), or, in terms of 2 Cor 6:2, it is the “acceptable time,” the “day of salvation.”

After informing the Romans that God’s righteousness has “now” been revealed “apart from the law” (χωρὶς νόμου) as a righteousness “through faith in Jesus Christ” (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) for all who believe,” Paul takes them on a tour of salvation history. Their justification has taken place through the redemption provided “in Christ Jesus” (V. 24).⁹⁰ It is just Christ who was destined (προέθετο) to be the propitiation or “mercy seat” (ἱλαστήριον) for their sins, with a view to the exhibition of God’s righteousness, that he might remain righteous even while justifying the one who believes in Jesus (τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ) (vv. 25-26).⁹¹ Such things being true, the

⁸⁹ On the ABA pattern in Paul (especially Romans), see A. Feuillet, “Le plan salvifique de Dieu d’après l’Épître aux Romains. RB 57 (1950), 336-87, 489-529; J. J. Collins, “Chiasmus and the ‘ABA’ Pattern of the Text of Paul,” *Studiorum Paulinorum Congressus Internationalis Catholicus* (AnBib 17-18; 2 vols.; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1963), 2.575-83.

⁹⁰ The commentators all seize on the theological import of “redemption” without giving the preposition “through” (διὰ) due consideration. Yet Paul’s language is clear enough: in strict terms, *justification transpires by means of redemption*. Since Paul was not encumbered by an *ordo salutis*, he could reverse what to us moderns is the proper order—*first* justification and *then* deliverance from sin! But what, at first sight, might strike us as being odd makes perfectly good sense given the sequence of events in the Prophets: *first* the people are delivered from captivity and *thereupon* are “justified” or vindicated as the faithful remnant returned from exile. The passages that explicitly affirm the Lord’s intention to bestow righteousness on his people, Isa 61:10; Jer 23:6; 33:16, occur in the setting of return from exile. Additionally, Isaiah 32, the background to Rom 5:1, prophecies to the same effect: righteousness, resulting in peace, is the effect of the new creation attending Israel’s reoccupation of the land.

⁹¹ The phrase τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ exhibits the “partisan” use of the preposition ἐκ; that is, ἐκ denotes belonging to an entity or group. See BDAG, 296. I have explored this usage as regards Galatians in a forthcoming article, “Paul’s ‘Partisan ἐκ’ and the Question of Justification in Galatians.”

question naturally arises, Where, then, is boasting (v. 27)? The answer is that it is excluded by virtue of the principle of faith (διὰ νόμου πίστεως), i.e., faith in Christ or “Christic faith,” as over against the principle of “works,” i.e., the works required by the law of Moses.

All of the above calls forth the bottom line: “We conclude (λογίζομεθα) that a person is justified by faith (πίστει) apart from the works of the law” (χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου) (v. 28). Several critical matters arise from v. 28.⁹²

“Justified”

The characteristic Pauline verb articulating the justification of the people of God is δικαίω, translated traditionally as “justify” (Rom 2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:1; 6:7; 8:30, 33; 1 Cor 6:11; Gal 2:16, 17; 3:8, 11, 24; 5:4; Titus 3:7). The usage of this verb in the Greek OT, the matrix of Paul’s own employment of it, is complex, especially when compared with the various Hebrew words underlying it. Δικαίω (like any other word) assumes different shades of meaning according to context. But because of its occurrence in juridical settings, meanings like “justify,” “vindicate,” “acquit” stand out and provide a forensic framework within which to place Paul’s doctrine of justification.

Yet Paul’s teaching on justification is more comprehensive than the verb δικαίω, because the idea of justification is linked to the concept of the righteousness of God in the OT. Strictly speaking, there is no independent doctrine of justification which is detachable from righteousness as a generic category. This means that the semantic range of δικαίω is broadened by its relation to the Hebrew/covenantal concept of the “righteousness of God” (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ). God’s righteousness in the OT finds two points of contact with justification in Paul.

(1) There is the forensic/judicial setting of the Mosaic covenantal courtroom. The person who is vindicated and thus acquitted of all charges is declared to be “righteous” (Hebrew צַדִּיק = Greek δίκαιος) and then treated as such. Yet it is vital to remember that even in these instances in the LXX where δικαίω is strongly forensic, Ziesler reminds us that it is forensic in the *Hebrew* sense, that is, the verb signifies “restoration of the community or covenant relationship, and thus cannot be separated from the ethical altogether. The restoration is not merely to a standing, but to an existence in the relationship.” As a result, “righteousness” in this scenario has reference to a vindicated *existence* conferred on a person by a gracious God. “What this means is that men live together in freedom, possessing their civil rights in a good society. *It is not just a vindicated status, but a vindicated life.*”⁹³ R. K. Rapa’s observation on Gal 2:16 has equal applicability to our text:

The importance of this observation for the proper interpretation of Galatians 2:16 cannot be overstated. When Paul speaks of being “justified” here, he has in mind *both* the relational forensic category of acquittal for sins *and* the consequent ethical “right” behavior pattern of

⁹² The following is adapted from my *Galatians*, 141-55.

⁹³ Ziesler, *Righteousness*, 20, 25, italics mine. See also M Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 142-43.

God's people. The one who is "righteous" or "justified" is at the same time in right relationship to God, and, *as a necessary component of that relationship*, is living an ethical lifestyle as based upon the character of God. This, Paul affirms, comes about "not by the works of the law," but rather through "faith in" or "the faithfulness of" Jesus Christ. Relational approval before God and its consequent (and necessarily attendant) ethical lifestyle is for Paul not a matter of "works of the law," as Peter's actions implied and the Judaizers must have taught. On the contrary, this circumstance can only come about through the agency determined by God. That agency is trust in God and his promises, as now...most notably bound up in the person and work of Jesus Christ.⁹⁴

To this I would add the voices of J. D. Crossan and J. L. Reed:

Faith does not mean intellectual consent to a proposition, but vital commitment to a program. Obviously, one could summarize a program in a proposition, but faith can never be reduced to factual assent rather than total dedication. Faith (*pistis*) is not just a partial mind-set, but a total lifestyle commitment. The crucial aspect of faith as commitment is that it is always an interactive process, a bilateral contract, a two-way street. Faith is covenantal and presumes faithfulness from both parties with, of course, all appropriate differences and distinctions.⁹⁵

Therefore, the one of whom "justification" is predicated is regarded as "righteous," that is, committed to the covenant and the God of the covenant in a household relationship. Likewise, Käsemann writes that in the OT and Judaism generally δικαιοσύνη has in view the relations of community members: "Originally signifying trustworthiness in regard to the community, it came to mean the rehabilitated standing of a member of the community who had been acquitted of an offense against it."⁹⁶ J. Reumann concurs that righteousness/justice/justification terminology in the Hebrew scriptures is "action-oriented," not just "status" or "being" language, and "binds together forensic, ethical and other aspects in such a way that some sort of more unified ancient Near Eastern view can readily be presupposed."⁹⁷ In brief, it is the righteous person who is recognized in his true character and thus vindicated against all charges). Just how such a conception of "justification" can square with Paul's declaration that God justifies the *ungodly* (Rom 4:5) will be clarified below.

⁹⁴ Rapa, *Meaning*, 134.

⁹⁵ Crossan/Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom. A New Vision of Paul's Words and World* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004), 385-86. Likewise R. B. Hays: the verb "justify" "Points not merely to a forensic declaration of acquittal from guilt but also to God's ultimate action of powerfully setting right all that has gone wrong" ("Galatians," [*The New Interpreter's Bible*; 12 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 2000], 11.237). At the end of the day, justification entails "rectification" (*ibid.*, 238).

⁹⁶ Käsemann "Righteousness," 172.

⁹⁷ Reumann, *Righteousness in the New Testament: "Justification" in the United States Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue, with Responses by Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Jerome D. Quinn* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 16.

(2) The other point of contact between righteousness in the OT and Paul is the outlook on Israel's future as evidenced in the Prophets and several of the Psalms. The Prophets characteristically contemplate Israel's removal into Babylonian captivity because of her idolatry. Yet one day the nation is to return to her land when Yahweh acts in power to deliver her from bondage. At the time of this new exodus, the remnant of the people will enjoy the definitive forgiveness of sins, the restoration of the broken covenant, the glorious new creation and vindication as those faithful to the Lord. It is Yahweh who vindicates the faithful from the charges of their enemies, who assume that he is unable to deliver his people and suppose that their faith in him is in vain.⁹⁸ It is he who exonerates them, when in the "eschatological courtroom" he judges their oppressors (Isa 10:5-19; Hab 2:2-20) and brings them back to the land from which they will never be uprooted again.

It is in this context of promised deliverance that God is said to act righteously on behalf of his own. Especially striking is that in a number of key passages the terms "righteousness" and "salvation" (or "be justified") are placed in synonymous parallelism, e.g., Isa 45:8; 45:21-25; 46:13; 51:5-6, 8; 56:1; 59:17; 61:10; 62:1-2; 63:1; Ps 24:6; 51:14; 71:15-16; 98:1-3, 8-9 (LXX 97:2-3, 8-9); 4 Ezra 8:36, 39-40; CD 20:20; 1QS 11:11-15; *1 Enoch* 99:10. Noteworthy as well are Ps 35:27-28 (LXX 34:27-28); 72:1-4 (LXX 71:1-4, 7); 85:11-13 (LXX 84:12-14); 96:13 (LXX 95:13); 103:6; Isa 9:7 (LXX 9:6); 11:1-2, 5; 45:8, 22-25; 51:5-6; 53:10-11; 61:11; Jer 23:5-6; Mal 4:2 (LXX 3:20).⁹⁹

Several comments are in order. First, "righteousness" and "salvation" are synonymous, at least virtually so. The logic behind this is not difficult to discern. Righteousness by definition is God's fidelity to his people within the covenant bond. As Wright expresses it, the phrase "the righteousness of God" (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) to a reader of the LXX would have one obvious meaning: "God's own faithfulness to his promises, to the covenant." It is especially in Isaiah 40-55 that God's righteousness is that aspect of his character which compels him to save Israel, despite the nation's perversity and lostness. "God has made promises; Israel can trust those promises. God's righteousness is thus cognate with his trustworthiness on the one hand, and Israel's salvation on the other." He further notes that at the heart of the picture in Isaiah is the figure of the suffering servant through whom God's righteous purpose is finally accomplished.¹⁰⁰ Psalm 98 is likewise explicit that the revelation of God's righteousness to the nations is commensurate with the fact that he has remembered his lovingkindness and faithfulness to the house of Israel. Therefore, he demonstrates his fidelity when he springs into action to deliver Israel from her bondage (note that Psalm 98 is echoed in Rom 1:16-17, which likewise places in parallel "righteousness" and "salvation"). Thus, a formal definition of the Greek phrase δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ could be stated as: "God's faithfulness to his covenant with Israel, as a result of which he saves her from her exile in Babylon."¹⁰¹ Ps 98:2 and 103:6 sum it all up: "The Lord has made known his victory, he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations;" "The Lord works vindication and justice for all

⁹⁸ It is just in this vein that the Servant of the Lord is confident that Yahweh will vindicate him from every charge of wrongdoing (Isa 50:7-8a).

⁹⁹ See the further assemblage of passages by R. H. Gundry, "The Nonimputation of Christ's Righteousness," *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates?* (eds. M. Husbands and D. J. Treier; Downers Grove Leicester: InterVarsity/Apollos, 2004), 36-38.

¹⁰⁰ Wright, *Saint Paul*, 96.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 96-97.

who are oppressed.” In both texts, “vindication” is δικαιοσύνη.

Second, the return of Israel from exile *is* Israel’s justification. Isa 45:25 in the LXX actually uses the verb δικαίωω, translated “justified” by NASB. It is true that the Hebrew of the passage can be fairly be rendered “found righteous” (as NIV). Yet the net effect is the same: the people who return from exile are the vindicated ones whose righteousness is now made evident.

Third, the Hebrew of Isa 62:1-2 speaks of Israel’s (“her”) righteousness and salvation. However, the LXX has “my,” referring to God, instead of “her.” This may be accounted for by the textual tradition followed by the LXX at this point. Be that as it may, on the theological level there is no problem, because the blazing demonstration of Israel’s righteousness and salvation is made possible only by the prior revelation of the Lord’s righteousness/salvation.

These two interrelated branches of righteousness in the OT, of which Paul was heir, combine to inform us that justification, in his thought, is the vindication of the righteous, that is, faithful people of God. In eschatological perspective, believers in Christ have been exonerated in the final assize and have been admitted into the privileges, responsibilities and fellowship of the covenant. Given the parallel of “righteousness” and “salvation” in the Psalms and Prophets, and given especially the backdrop of captivity and return from exile, δικαίωω in Paul means to “vindicate as the people of God” (when they return from exile). Historically, when the Lord caused Israel to return to the land, he vindicated the faithful remnant against the accusations of their enemies that they had rightly been taken into captivity, and that because of them Yahweh’s name had been blasphemed among the nations (Isa 52:5; Rom 2:24). Their vindication corresponds to the advent of a righteous king, the outpouring of the Spirit and the renewal of the covenant, resulting in peace and prosperity (Isaiah 32).¹⁰² In Paul, all this is transposed into the “higher octave” of what God has done in Christ at the turning of the ages—his own “eschatological courtroom.” The actual enemy of believers is not Babylon but Satan. He is the strong man who held them in the bondage of sin (Matt 12:29; Luke 11:21-22); he is “the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night” (Rev 12:10; cf. Rom 8:33-34a).

It is this cluster of ideas that is embodied by δικαίωω. If God’s righteousness is “his intervention in a saving act on behalf of his people,” then the passive voice of the verb means “to be an object of the saving righteousness of God (so as to be well-pleasing to him at the judgment).”¹⁰³ When God in Christ intervenes to save his covenant partners, he plants them again in the newly created land, the new heavens and earth, never to be removed. This is “salvation” in the pregnant sense of the term: deliverance from evil and the bestowal of “peace” on a redeemed people.

In short, justification in Paul signals deliverance from exile and freedom from bondage (again one of the key motifs of Galatians). One of the clearest indications is the relationship of Rom 6:7 and 18. In the former verse, δικαίωω is literally translated

¹⁰² Against the backdrop of a passage like Isaiah 32, Michael Gorman’s definition of justification represents a variation of the one proposed by me, but still one very much in keeping with it: “To be justified is to be restored to right covenant relations now, with certain hope of acquittal on the future day of judgment...” (*Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], 201).

¹⁰³ Motyer, “Righteousness,” 48.

“justified from sin.” As such, it forms a parallelism with the verb “liberated from sin” (ἐλευθερώω) in 6:18. The parallel is best preserved by rendering 6:7 as “freed from sin.” Therefore, when Paul writes of justification, he characteristically has in mind the new exodus on which the latter-day people of God have embarked. Moreover, this saving righteousness is cosmic in its dimensions. At the end of the day, “the righteousness of God” is actively directed at the rescue of the creation. God’s righteousness is his relation-restoring love.¹⁰⁴

Within the setting of Paul’s mission to the nations, justification functions to delineate just who are the latter-day people of God. In the eschatological new exodus which has been brought to pass in Christ, *it is Gentiles who are as much the vindicated people as Jews*, and this quite irrespective of Torah-loyalty, inclusive of circumcision and the other traditional badges of Jewish self-identity. Therefore, justification is very much a covenantal term, speaking to the issue of the identity of the people of God.¹⁰⁵

It is here that the perspective of Rom 3:21-26 is directly parallel to the outlook of Galatians. According to that passage, in his righteousness (as defined above), God has acted in Christ to remove the sin-barrier that stood between himself and an apostate humanity *in toto* (Rom 1:18-3:20). Jew and Greek alike are now the object of the saving fidelity of the God of Israel. Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23), all are now freely justified by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. The covenant with Israel always envisaged a worldwide family. But Israel, clinging to her own special status as the covenant bearer, has betrayed the purpose for which that covenant was made. “It is as though the postman were to imagine that all the letters in his bag were intended for him!”¹⁰⁶

An important corollary is that the *center of gravity* of Paul’s thought on justification is more the corporate body of Christ than the individual believer. As W. D. Davies writes:

That there was such a personal dimension need not be denied, but it existed within and not separated from a communal and, indeed, a cosmic dimension. Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith was not solely and not primarily oriented towards the individual but to the interpretation of the people of God. The justified man was “in Christ”, which is a communal concept. And, necessarily because it was eschatological, the doctrine moved towards the salvation of the world, a new creation.¹⁰⁷

Davies further points out that in both Galatians and Romans the discussion of justification by faith is immediately followed by that of the constitution of the people of God.¹⁰⁸ In the present context of Gal 2:16-17, δικαιόω has to do specifically with the

¹⁰⁴ Käsemann, “Righteousness;” K. L. Onesti and M. T. Brauch, *DPL*, 836-37; M. Barth, *Justification: Pauline Texts Interpreted in Light of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 17, 74-82.

¹⁰⁵ See W. J. Dumbrell, “Justification in Paul: A Covenantal Perspective,” *RTR* 51 (1992), 91-101.

¹⁰⁶ N. T. Wright, *Saint Paul*, 108.

¹⁰⁷ Davies, “Paul: From the Jewish Point of View,” *The Cambridge History of Judaism. Volume Three: The Early Roman Period* (eds. W. Horbury, W. D. Davies and J. Sturdy; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 715-16.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 716.

vindication/restoration of Jews who have believed in Christ. No longer do they anticipate being vindicated at the last judgment by virtue of their loyalty to the God of Israel and his law; but rather eschatological vindication has taken place at the cross of Christ (v. 20), and “works of the law” are no longer relevant—this is a matter of common and well-established knowledge.

Finally, if it be asked, How can God justify the ungodly while being consistent with the practice of the Hebrew courtroom to acquit only the righteous? The answer quite simply is that those who were formerly ungodly in Adam have been made righteous in Christ. Here the perspective Phil 3:9 is much to the point. Paul speaks of a “righteousness from God” (δικαιοσύνη ἐκ θεοῦ). It is God’s own righteousness, defined as “covenant fidelity,” that entails *the gift of righteousness*. In his own righteousness, God enables us to become what he is—righteous (2 Cor 5:21). His loyalty to his people consists in his conforming them to himself, so that he and they may live in uninterrupted covenant fellowship. God’s righteousness has provided Christ as the propitiation for sins (Rom 3:21-26). In Adam all are guilty, but God has removed their guilt by means of Christ and thus can vindicate them as his faithful people. In these actions are embodied God’s covenant faithfulness.

Without constructing a full-blown *ordo salutis*, there is a logical process whereby God is able to justify sinners. By the work of the Spirit we are united with Christ and become God’s righteousness in him; and on that basis God the judge pronounces us righteous and entitled to the full privileges of covenant membership.¹⁰⁹ After all is said and done, Luther was right that the righteousness God requires is the righteousness he provides in Christ.

“Apart from the Works of the Law”

As much debated as justification/righteousness is Paul’s famous phrase “the works of the law.”¹¹⁰ Stated simply, “the works of the law” have reference to “the obligations laid upon the Israelites by virtue of their membership of Israel,” whose purpose was “to show covenant members how to live within the covenant.”¹¹¹ These are

¹⁰⁹ I have addressed the issue of a “legal fiction” in my first reply to Piper (*Defense*, 164, n. 11). In this regard, Witherington is basically onside (*Romans*, 121-23). Moo comes close when he maintains that whereas in the OT judgment was pronounced according to the facts, for Paul God justifies the ungodly contrary to the facts (*Romans*, 87). But just to reiterate, if we are exonerated before the bar of God’s justice, it is because *in Christ* we have *really* become righteous, not because of anything intrinsic in us, but because Christ has actually clothed us with the robes of his righteousness (Isa 61:10; Jer 23:6; 33:16). Moreover, Moo cautions us against confusing justification and sanctification (*ibid.*, 75). His point would be well taken given a hermeneutic that proceeds along the lines of an *ordo salutis*. According to such a schema, one must distinguish between justification and sanctification because they refer to separate and distinct events. However, given a *historia salutis*, the two coincide at the point of entry into the new covenant (= conversion) and are not to be sharply distinguished. This is what John Murray once called “definitive sanctification” (“Definitive Sanctification,” *Collected Writings of John Murray* [4 vols.; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977], 2.277-84).

¹¹⁰ On the various interpretations of the phrase, see T. R. Schreiner, *DPL*, 975-79; Schnelle, *Paul*, 280-81. As is so of all the categories in this section of Romans 3, research on the law has been both extensive and intensive. Accessible recent sources are Rapa, *Meaning*; Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 128-61; Schnelle, *Paul*, 506-21, all with extensive references.

¹¹¹ J. D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC 9; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 135-36.

covenant works—“those regulations prescribed by the law which any good Jew would simply take for granted to describe what a good Jew did.”¹¹² For this reason, “it would be virtually impossible to conceive of participation in God’s covenant, and so in God’s covenant righteousness, apart from these observances, these works of the law.”¹¹³ As such, the phrase articulates the whole duty (and privilege) of the Jew living under the Mosaic covenant. J. L. Martyn, then, wisely cautions us that the word “works” can be misleading: “The expression simply summarizes the grand and complex activity of the Jew, who faithfully walks with God along the path God has opened up for him in the law.”¹¹⁴

From one vantage point, “works of the law” encompassed the entirety of the Mosaic legislation, with no exceptions. From another, by Paul’s day the phrase had taken on more specific connotations. Within the historical climate of Second Temple Judaism, especially from the time of the Maccabean revolt, key elements of the law had become the acid tests of loyalty to Judaism, now dubbed the “boundary markers” of Jewish self-identification.¹¹⁵ These were circumcision, food laws, purity laws, sabbath observance and temple worship. These hardly exhausted the Jew’s obligations under the law, but they did focus attention on crucial elements of his walk. This is so because it was precisely these components of the Torah which had come under attack during the Seleucid persecution of the Jews in the second century BC. Because of pagan “zeal against the law,” “zeal for the (works of the) law” became the byword of the loyalists to the Jewish cause (1 Macc 2:26-27).

In brief, writes R. B. Hays, “‘works of the law’ refer primarily to practices commanded by the law (circumcision, dietary laws, sabbath observance) that distinctively mark Jewish ethnic identity; *these symbolize comprehensive obedience to the law’s covenant obligations.*”¹¹⁶ As Hays is careful to state, works of the law are not confined to the “boundary markers.” Rather, it is the “boundary markers” which in the historical setting served to focus the faithful Israelite’s commitment to the entire revealed will of God.¹¹⁷ These were the “litmus paper” tests of fidelity. Accordingly, B. Witherington can say that by his use of the phrase Paul opposes “obedience to the Mosaic Law and seeking to be part of the community that relates to God on the basis of the Mosaic covenant.” This is objectionable because “the Mosaic Law and obedience to it is not, in Paul’s view,

¹¹² Dunn, *Jesus, Paul*, 194. H. Schlier shows that “works of the law” in some literature appear as “works of the commandments,” or in rabbinic traditions simply as “works.” These “works” constitute the “law of the Lord” as over against the “law of Beliar” (*Der Brief an die Galater* [KEK; 5th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971], 91-92). This would tend to confirm that when Paul uses the word “works” by itself, he employs it as shorthand for the longer phrase “works of the law.”

¹¹³ Dunn, *Jesus, Paul*, 193.

¹¹⁴ Martyn, *Galatians* (AB 33a.; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 261.

¹¹⁵ As placed in vogue by Dunn, *Jesus, Paul*, e.g., 192, 194. See at length E. J. Christiansen, *The Covenant in Judaism and Paul: A Study of Ritual Boundaries as Identity Markers* (AGJU 27; Leiden: Brill, 1995).

¹¹⁶ Hays, *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (eds. W. A. Meeks, et al.; New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 2185, italics mine. Cf. Hays, “Galatians,” 238-39, 251; Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 354-59. According to Sanders, “There is...something which is common to circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws, and which sets them off from other laws; they created a social distinction between Jews and other races in the Greco-Roman world” (*Paul, the Law*, 102).

¹¹⁷ This being so, the thunder is taken out of Das’ attempt to impute to Dunn a notion of works of the law that would restrict the scope of the phrase to the boundary markers (*Paul, the Law*, 155-60). Das’ criticisms are set in the context of his endeavor to argue that, for Paul, the law must be kept perfectly.

how one got into Christ, how one stays in Christ, or how one goes on in Christ. It is no longer what defines and delimits who the people of God are and how they ought to live and behave.”¹¹⁸

In arriving at such a conception of “works of the law,” recent scholarship has concentrated on the historical setting in which these words assume their significance. Apart from the general atmosphere of zeal for the law and the desire on the part of Israelites to maintain their distinctive covenant identity, especially noteworthy is the occurrence of strikingly similar phrases in the DSS (1QS 5:21, 23; 6:18; 4QFlor 1:7; cf. 1QH 1:26; 4:31; CD 13:11).¹¹⁹ The document from Qumran known as 4QMMT is particularly intriguing, because its very title, as normally translated, is *Some of the Works of the Torah* (מקצת מעשי התורה). This writing has been called a “halakic letter,” in which a representative of the sect apparently airs his grievances about “the state of the nation” to the religious/political establishment in Jerusalem. The letter contains an exhortation for its readers to follow the example of the godly kings of Israel and a warning that they will incur the curses of Deuteronomy if they do not reconsider their own beliefs and practices *vis-à-vis* the demands of the law. If the readers do mend their ways, it will be “reckoned to them as righteousness.” It is in this setting that “works of the Torah” articulates the community’s own standard of covenant life. The members of the sect thus define themselves in relation to other Jews by their distinctive “walk” (*halakah*) in the ways of Yahweh.

Crucial is an appreciation of the centrality of the Torah in Israel’s self-consciousness of being the chosen people. It is the book of Deuteronomy which gives the classic statement of the role of the Torah in the life of the people. The heart of the book (chaps. 5-28) consists of a restatement of the covenant made at Sinai. Deut 29:1 sums up the whole of that block of material: “These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb” (NASB). Throughout the book the emphasis of covenant life is sustained and reinforced in numerous restatements of the promise (and warnings): “This do and live” (Deut 4:1, 10, 40; 5:29-33; 6:1-2, 18, 24; 7:12-13). This promise does not originate in Deuteronomy, because Lev 18:5 had already said: “So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord.” In brief, “works of the law,” or its shorthand version “works,” is a way of describing the covenantal-nomistic mindset.

In particular, such sense of obligation probably came to particular expression in those commandments which focused the distinctiveness of the claim to be a people set apart by the one God. In the Maccabean crisis that meant specifically circumcision and the food laws; and there are sufficient indications thereafter that wherever Jewish identity came into question the issue of covenantal nomism would focus on these same

¹¹⁸ Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 172. To the same effect are S. McKnight, *Galatians* (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 119-21; G. W. Hansen, *Galatians* (IVPNTCS 9; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 69-70; J. A. Ziesler, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Epworth Commentaries. London: Epworth, 1992), 26.

¹¹⁹ See Rapa, *Meaning*, 53-56.

commandments and on any others which reinforce Jewish distinctiveness. Such deeds/works of the law became the test-cases for Jewish faithfulness.¹²⁰

But with the turning of the ages, the law has served its purpose in salvation history, namely, to lead Israel to Christ. “Now” justification is *χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου*. To appreciate the intent of this formula, we need to back up to 3:21: *Νυνὶ δὲ χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανέρωται μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν*. The function of the law was to reveal God’s righteousness and thereby to reveal sin. “But now,” that is, with the appearance of Jesus Christ at the end of the ages, the law has served its purpose, and God’s righteousness is no longer to be defined in the same terms as before, i.e., the particulars of the Torah. The eschatological thrust of the verse is brought into sharper focus by the phrase “apart from the law” (*χωρὶς νόμου*). This is an adverbial phrase modifying the verb “has been revealed” (*πεφανέρωται*). That is to say, at one time the righteousness of God was indeed revealed in the law, but now it has been revealed apart from the law.¹²¹ This is a restatement of 1:17: in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed as a righteousness which is *ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν*. This is one of Paul’s many startling statements in Romans. For the Jew, *God’s* righteousness was inconceivable apart from the Torah. In the words of *T. Dan* 6:11, there is “the righteousness of the law of God,” i.e., the righteousness which is defined exclusively by the law of God.¹²² But for Paul, “now” the “righteousness of God” has been revealed and, therefore, defined by the gospel. This is precisely how 1:17 puts it: *δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται*.

With these words, Paul forwards what for Judaism was a very shocking thesis indeed. But just as shocking is the claim of 3:21b that a Torah-free righteousness is the reality to which the Scriptures themselves looked. Cranfield aptly says: “That this attestation of the gospel by the OT is of fundamental importance for Paul is indicated by the solemn way in which he insists on it here in what is one of the great hinge-sentences on which the argument of the epistle turns.”¹²³ The idea here has been anticipated by 1:1-2 and itself anticipates 10:4-8. It would appear that Paul has particularly in mind those passages from the prophets which anticipated the influx of the nations into Israel.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Dunn, *Jesus, Paul*, 244-45.

¹²¹ Note that “apart from the law” occurs in 7:8-9, where it means the absence or the inactivity of the law. But here it is different and is best understood in relation to the two phrases in 3:20: “of works of the law” and “through faith.” Hence, “apart from the law” means the same as “apart from the works of the law” in 3:28 and “apart from works” in 4:6.

¹²² See further my *Obedience*, 258-59.

¹²³ Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.202-03.

¹²⁴ In the Prophets, against the dark background of Israel’s plight—dispersion among the nations, oppression by foreign powers and unfaithfulness to the covenant within Israel—a glorious future is depicted for Israel “on that day.” Israel’s enemies will be overthrown (e.g., Isa 24:23; 29:8; Joel 3:9-21; Mic 4:11-13; Zech 14:12-15; *Pss. Sol.* 17:24, 32; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 72:1-6), Jerusalem will be restored and glorified (e.g., Isa 2:2-4/Mic 4:1-3; Isa 60:1-22; Jer 31:23, 38-40; Ezek 17:22-24, 40-48; Zech 8:1-23; 14:10-11, 20-21; 1 *Enoch* 90:28-29; *Jub.* 1:15-17; Bar 5:1-4; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 4:2-4), the scattered exiles will be gathered to Zion (e.g., Jer 31:1-25; Ezek 20:33-44; Isaiah 35; Zech 8:7-8, 20-23; Bar 4:36-37; 5:5-9; *Pss. Sol.* 11:1-3; 17:50; *Jub.* 1:15-17; *Tg. Jer.* 31:23; *Tg. Isa.* 4:3; 6:13), Yahweh and/or his anointed will be enthroned in universal sovereignty (e.g., Isa 24:23; 52:7; Ezek 17:22-24; 20:33, 40; 34:11-16, 23-31; 43:7; Mic 4:6-7; 5:2-4; Zech 14:8-11; *Jub.* 1:28; *Pss. Sol.* 17:23-51), and his people will enjoy untold

Whereas for Judaism these prophecies implied that the Gentiles would have to become Jews, for Paul they implied just the opposite. Again we see how this makes especially good sense in light of the Jewish understanding of the eternity of the law. For Judaism the Torah was an end in itself, but for Paul it was only a means to an end, viz., the gospel of Christ, who himself is the law's τέλος (goal and termination).

Corresponding precisely to the revelation of righteousness χωρὶς νόμου is a justification χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου. Once again, Paul takes on a standard outlook, in this instance the belief that the Jewish faithful would be vindicated in the judgment because of their allegiance to the Mosaic law as the expression and embodiment of their faith. For all such, it went without saying that their ultimate vindication was ἐν νόμῳ (Rom 2:12; Gal 3:11; 5:4; Phil 3:6), not χωρὶς νόμου!¹²⁵ Yet for Paul, the truth lies 180 degrees from this, his former conviction as one of the faithful of Israel. From this point onward, to cling to the Torah is nothing less than idolatry (Rom 2:22; Gal 4:8-9),¹²⁶ because such zeal for the law obscures one's view of the Christ and the actual nature of his work, making the law, rather than Christ, the "Jewish gateway to salvation."

This is why faith in Christ and "works of the law" are opposites: one cannot opt for Christ's system *and* Moses' system at the same time because they are mutually exclusive options for salvation. Either one believes in Christ or one chooses to commit oneself to the law. One cannot live under both systems without destroying one or the other's integrity.¹²⁷

"By Faith"

The Torah" has now given way to faith in Jesus Christ. Henceforth, δικαιοῦσθαι πίστει ἄνθρωπον. As a working definition of faith, McKnight's is as good as any: faith is "the initial and continual response of trust in, and obedience to, Christ by a person for the purpose of acceptance with God."¹²⁸ The Greek word for "faith" in the NT (πίστις)

blessings (e.g., Isa 25:6-10a; 30:23; 35:5-6; 61:6; Jer 31:12; Joel 2:26; Amos 9:13-15; *I Enoch* 90:32-38; *Pss. Sol.* 17:28-31; *Sib. Or.* 111:702-9, 741-60).

¹²⁵ Outside of Romans, Paul uses synonymous expressions: ὑπὸ νόμον (Gal 4:21), ἐκ νόμου (Gal 3:18, 21; Phil 3:9), τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς (Gal 2:12), ὅσοι...ἐξ ἔργων νόμου (Gal 3:10), ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους καὶ οἰκονόμους (Gal 4:2), ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (Gal 4:3), and κατὰ νόμον (Phil 3:5).

¹²⁶ On these passages, see respectively my *Faith, Obedience*, 32-43; *Galatians*, 244-51. On Gal 4:8-9, see also N. J. Calvert-Koyzis, *Paul, Monotheism and the People of God: The Significance of Abraham Traditions for Early Judaism and Christianity* (JSNTSup 273; London: T & T Clark International, 2005), 104-10. It was a pleasure to find that J. A. Fitzmyer has endorsed my take on Rom 2:22 (*Romans* [AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993], 318). G. Osborne thinks this reading is an "obscure offense to set along the Jewish abhorrence of idols" (*Romans* [IVPNTCS 6; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004], 75). But I would argue that just the opposite is the case. Actual temple robbing is an obscure offense to be placed on a par with adultery. Besides, before asking "do you commit sacrilege" (ἱεροσυλεῖς)? Paul already mentioned theft, making literal temple plunder redundant. But more than anything else, idolization of the Torah is the perfect counterpoint to "you who abhor idols." The irony is that the very one who detests idolatry is himself guilty of a different kind of idolatry, the of the law. Similar to Osborne is Byrne's contention that a metaphorical interpretation of ἱεροσυλεῖς disturbs the logical sequence of thought is a *non sequitur* (*Romans*, 100).

¹²⁷ Mcknight, *Galatians*, 122.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

corresponds to the Hebrew word for “faith” in the OT (אמונה), which always signifies faith in and faithfulness to God. As the godly Israelite was to trust in Yahweh for life and salvation, the Christian has directed his faith(fulness) to Christ. Faith as such is not redefined; in essence, its OT meaning is preserved. But Paul has in view a faith which is detached from Jewish “covenantal nomism,” meaning that one “gets in” the people of God by faith alone; and once in, one “stays in” the covenant relationship by virtue of the same faith, which is no longer attached to the “works of Torah.”

Here, Paul uses the instrumental πίστει. In 3:25, he writes similarly: διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι. Elsewhere he can speak of his life ἐν πίστει...τῆ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ (Gal 2:20), and all believers are the sons of God διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (Gal 3:26). In these instances, the meaning is straightforward enough. However, one is mindful that in 3:22 he draws upon the now controversial phrase, διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Again, the instrumental sense is indisputable; but the controversy swirls around the identification of the genitive Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. The growing consensus is that Paul has in view the covenant faithfulness of Christ himself (taking the genitive of Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ to be subjective genitive). This reading is attractive in many ways; and it is undoubtedly true that the NT does represent Jesus as the man of faith, especially in the Gospel temptation narratives and the Letter to the Hebrews. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that this single phrase in Paul could bear that much semantic freight. Without championing the traditional translation for the sake of tradition, Paul’s language is best taken as our faith which is directed *specifically and exclusively* to Jesus Christ. In grammatical categories, the genitive case could be called adjectival genitive, i.e., that part of the phrase literally translated “of Jesus Christ” defines in some manner the character of the “faith” which is placed in him. A. Hultgren appropriately renders the whole phrase as “Christic faith.”¹²⁹ That is to say, the faith which was once directed to the God of Israel now finds its object in Jesus the Christ.

It is surely significant that Paul nowhere provides a formal definition of faith, simply because he presupposes the meaning to be found in the OT and Jewish tradition. What is distinctive about his teaching on faith is its *christological focus*. With the advent of Jesus the Messiah, the only legitimate faith is that which finds its repose in him, the one who is “the end of the law” (Rom 10:4). At one time, faith assumed a nationalistic bias and was meaningless apart from the devotion of the believing Israelite to the Torah, the expression of God’s covenant will for his people. But now that the “dividing wall of hostility” (Eph 2:15) has come down in Christ, faith latches specifically onto this one who has accepted all the nations without distinction (Rom 1:1-7; 15:7; Eph 2:17; Acts 2:39).

Romans 4:1-8

Our interests in this passage have mainly to do with Paul’s use of Gen 15:6 and Ps 32:1-2. In this phase of the study, I want to interact with two recent volumes that have appealed to this text in support of a more traditional reading of Paul, viz., John Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ: Should We Abandon the Imputation of Christ’s*

¹²⁹ Hultgren, “The Πίστις Χριστοῦ Formulation in Paul,” *NovT* 22 (1980), 257, 259-60. At more length, see my discussion in *Galatians*, 154-55, 172-73.

Righteousness? (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), and Simon Gathercole, *Where is Boasting?*¹³⁰ For Piper, Paul provides proof positive of the imputation of Christ's righteousness; for Gathercole, the apostle supplies us with the "smoking gun" his focus is on anthropological matters, not the badges of Jewish identity.

In this response to Piper, first of all, I would place a premium on the setting of Abraham's pilgrimage of faith that reaches a climactic point in the declaration that the patriarch was a righteous man, particularly as the Abraham narrative has a decided bearing on the way Paul uses the verb λογίζομαι in Romans 4. In a nutshell, it is *the story of Abraham* that determines the meaning of Gen 15:6, which in turn determines Paul's meaning in Romans 4.¹³¹

As translated by Piper, Paul asserts that "Abraham believed God, and *it was credited* to him for righteousness." The mainstay of his argument for imputation in Romans 4 is the rendering of the λογίζομαι as "reckoned," "counted" or "imputed." Thus, given such a translation of Paul's Greek, it follows for Piper that righteousness becomes the possession of the believer by virtue of imputation.

However, the problem resides precisely in the translation and, consequently, the interpretation of λογίζομαι. It is true that members of this basic family of words can mean "credit/charge to one's account" (e.g., Phlm 18 [ἐλλογέω]), and λογίζομαι itself is used by Paul in the sense of "keep a record of" (1 Cor 13:5). LSJ (1055) cite a couple of instances in which it bears the sense of "set down to one's account," although these are isolated instances and do not occupy any place of prominence in the verb's semantic range. However, a glance at BDAG informs one that in biblical Greek λογίζομαι characteristically means things like "reckon," "calculate," "count," "take into account," "evaluate," "estimate," "think about," "consider," "think," "be of the opinion," "look upon as" (as do LSJ).

Given such established and common usages, it is striking that Piper overlooks the fact that the most proximate occurrence of λογίζομαι to Romans 4 is Rom 3:28, where the verb can hardly be translated "impute" or "credit." Rather, Paul "considers" or "concludes" that one is justified by faith apart from the works of the law (cf. the same usage in Rom 6:11). Indeed, this strategic employment of λογίζομαι provides a very natural lead-in to chapter 4, which almost immediately quotes Gen 15:6.

It is true that BDAG translate λογίζομαι in Rom 4:4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 22 as "place to one's account" or "credit." The editors do so because these verses, they correctly note, are taken after Gen 15:6. Yet it is just Gen 15:6, *rightly understood*, that provides the linguistic and conceptual background to Romans 4. What the exegete must "reckon with" is that λογίζομαι is not an isolated entry in a lexicon, but rather part of an idiom that is Hebrew in origin.

In quoting the LXX of Gen 15:6, Paul draws upon the phrase λογίζομαι εἰς ("*it was reckoned* to him *as* righteousness"). The language of the LXX, in turn, is based on the underlying Hebrew phrase לַחֲשֹׁבָה. This idiom is common enough in the OT as

¹³⁰ I have responded to both more extensively in *Defense*, 107-221.

¹³¹ The recent book of F. Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London/New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), has demonstrated amply that Paul, in his letters, is retelling the story of the Pentateuch. See also the stimulating exposition of Abraham's pilgrimage of faith in W. Brueggemann, *Genesis* (IBC; Atlanta: John Knox, 1982).

meaning “to consider a thing to be true.”¹³² As such, the Hebrew and Greek phrases at stake are best translated as “reckon,” not “credit” or “impute.”¹³³ Piper seems to use all three more or less synonymously; but in fact they are not. English dictionaries such as *The American Heritage Dictionary* and *Merriam Webster* assign to “reckon” meanings like “to count or compute,” “to consider as being,” “regard as,” the latter being more relevant for the present purposes. In short, the point of Gen 15:6, as taken up by Romans 4, is that Abraham was regarded as a righteous, that is, covenant keeping, person when he continued to place his trust in God’s promise of a seed. This correlation of fidelity to God and the reckoning of righteousness was alive in the Jewish consciousness of the Second Temple period. According to 1 Macc 2:52, “Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and *it was reckoned to him as righteousness?*”

Having quoted Gen 15:6, with its full phraseology, “*It was reckoned to him as righteousness,*” Paul, in good midrashic fashion, singles out key words from the text, in particular “righteousness” and “reckon.” In vv. 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 22, he reiterates that righteousness “is reckoned to” individuals. As observable in Paul’s writing, shorthand expressions can serve as stand-ins for a longer string of words. The most conspicuous example is Paul’s substitution of “works” for “works of the law.” In the instances before us, “righteousness” is placed in the passive voice with the indirect object in the dative case. Thus, instead of a wording that renders more literally the Hebrew text of Gen 15:6, Paul streamlines his diction into a more recognizable Greek idiom.¹³⁴

¹³² The passages that have a direct bearing on Gen 15:6 are those which are generally translated “regard as” or “reckon,” whereby the verb, to quote G. Von Rad, gives voice to “a process of thought which results in a value-judgment, but in which *this value-judgment is related not to the speaker but to the value of an object*” (“Faith Reckoned as Righteousness,” *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* [London: SCM, 1984], 125-26). To phrase it otherwise, a thing is considered to be acceptable not because of a predisposition in the one making the judgment, but because the object commends itself by its inherent qualities. See Lev 7:11-18; 17:1-9; Num 18:25-32; 2 Sam 19:20; Prov 27:14; and especially Ps 106:31, the only other place in the OT that replicates Gen 15:6: “It was reckoned to him [Phinehas] as righteousness.” In the case of Phinehas, it was hardly a matter of imputation, but the declaration that this man was considered to be faithful to Yahweh’s covenant. A bit ironically, the passages adduced by O. P. Robertson, as cited by Piper (*Counted Righteous*, 57, n. 4), support a “non-imputational” reading of λογίζομαι (Gen 31:15; Num 18:27). I have treated these passages in more detail in my reply to D. A. Carson (*Defense*, 188-89).

¹³³ Schreiner’s reading of λογίζομαι fails to take into account the whole phrase λογίζομαι εἰς against its Hebrew backdrop, resulting in an imputational understanding of Paul’s intentions (*Romans*, 215). The same is true of Moo (*Romans*, 262). The issue is not one of crediting righteousness to human beings who inherently possess none. Rather, it is that of Yahweh recognizing and declaring that Abraham, at the point of Gen 15:6, is a faithful person. Moo, as others, maintains that Paul does not follow suit with the “typical” Jewish interpretation that viewed Gen 15:6 through the lens of Genesis 22, so that Abraham’s faith becomes his obedience. But a couple of qualifications are in order. (1) Paul seeks to distance himself from the notion that Abraham kept *Moses’ Torah*—this is the thrust of his argument. In the texts alluded to by Moo, Abraham’s obedience is inseparable from the law. (2) In principle, Paul actually agrees with the “typical interpretation,” because by the time he reaches the end of chap. 4, he begins to play up the *persevering quality* of Abraham’s faith (vv. 18-22). In essence, this is Jewish outlook on Abraham: faith developing into faithfulness. I would maintain that Paul is on the same page as James, who explicitly follows the “typical interpretation” (2:21-24).

¹³⁴ Actually, the Hebrew original of Gen 15:6 is in the active, not passive, voice. The text reads literally: “He [God] reckoned it to him [Abraham] as righteousness.”

But in every case, the point is the same: individuals are considered to be righteous.¹³⁵ In context, Paul is driving home the argument that righteousness does not hinge on circumcision and devotion to Israel's Torah. Abraham in particular is singled out, among other reasons, because he was vindicated (justified) as a righteous person before circumcision and the advent of the law. The argument gains in impact in light of the standard dogma that the patriarch kept none other than the law of Moses before Sinai (Sir 44:20; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 57:2; CD 3:2).¹³⁶ As attested in numerous sources, it was Abraham who was the first convert from paganism to the true God and his law.¹³⁷

Piper picks up on the common understanding that Rom 4:4-5 is cast in terms of a commercial transaction. Verse 4, anyway, is capable of such an interpretation, since λογίζομαι can be used in the sense of "calculating" a wage. It may well be that Paul here pauses to draw on an analogy from the business world, because, in terms of contractual relationships, λογίζομαι can mean a reckoning of payment for work done.¹³⁸

Nevertheless, the control factor over Paul's choice of words is Gen 15:6. While 4:4 may be a reflection on a well-known principle of business practice, 4:5 returns to the idiom of λογίζομαι εἰς: the believer's faith is considered to be his righteousness. Paul's thought is grounded in the sphere of the Hebrew covenant, according to which individuals are thought to be faithful when they place their confidence in the God of Israel and give concrete expression to their faith by obedience to his commands.¹³⁹ The radical thing in Paul, however, is that peoples of all kinds can be looked upon as obediently faithful quite apart from Torah observance and Jewish ethnic identity. It is those who simply place their trust in Jesus who truly walk in Abraham's footsteps, making the patriarch the father of circumcised and uncircumcised alike (Rom 4:12).

It is just such an appraisal of the reckoning of righteousness that opens up the intention of Rom 4:6: *because of its object*, faith, and faith alone, is accepted in the place of allegiance to the law of Moses, including, most prominently, the various boundary

¹³⁵ The same applies to the non-reckoning of sin to David in Paul's quotation of Ps 32:2. A. A. Anderson remarks that vv. 1-2 of the Psalm exhibit three different terms for sin, which are matched by three different expressions describing the ways of God in dealing with transgression. The third phrase, "To reckon no iniquity," says Anderson, "Seems to imply that God *no longer considers* the repentant man a sinner" (*The Book of Psalms* [NCB; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], 1.31-32, italics mine). He refers as well to 2 Sam 19:19 and considers the possibility that Ps 32:2 contains an allusion to release from a debt.

¹³⁶ See further Schreiner, *Romans*, 215-17.

¹³⁷ See in particular Calvert-Koyzis, *Paul*, 6-84.

¹³⁸ Dunn, *Romans*, 1.203.

¹³⁹ Inasmuch as the backdrop for Paul is the covenant with Israel, the "working" of Rom 4:4 is most naturally understood as "covenantal nomism," to use Sanders' famous phrase (*Paul*, 75, 420, 422, 544). In following this "covenantal nomism" model, it is not to be denied that in Rom 4:4-5 Paul challenges a works-principle in Judaism. Yet the ensuing context (vv. 9-12) supports the contention that Paul's concern is not with a merit theology, but with the works of covenant loyalty subsequent to circumcision (cf. Gal 5:3). That "the one who works" receives a "wage" (v. 4) is not a particular problem, because the "wage" in question is eternal life bestowed at the end of this age on those who remain faithful to Yahweh, whose will is enshrined in the Torah. Qualitatively, the Jewish position is no different than that embodied in the parable of Matt 20:1-16: the workers in the vineyard receive the wage of their labor, that is, the eschatological kingdom of God as preached by Jesus. Hence, the works envisaged by Romans 4 (and other passages) are just those demanded by the Torah; they accompany faith and eventuate in the life of the age to come. To be sure, works *are* a condition of "staying in" the covenant. Yet "staying in" is not "getting in." Israel's works are but its response to Yahweh's saving grace: they are tantamount to *perseverance*, not "works-righteousness legalism."

markers of Jewish identity. In strict terms, faith is *reckoned as* righteousness; that is, our faith in Christ is looked upon as tantamount to righteousness in its quintessential meaning—conformity to the will of God—because *in Christ* we have become God’s very righteousness (2 Cor 5:21).

Again, we must read Paul in light of his Jewish context and the polemics of the Roman letter. To his Jewish compatriots, righteousness was inconceivable apart from the Torah, so much so that one document can actually coin the phrase, “*The righteousness of the law of God*” (T. Dan 6:11).¹⁴⁰ Given, additionally, that faith in Paul is specifically trust in Jesus of Nazareth as Israel’s Messiah, the impact of Romans 4 is that righteousness is no longer to be assessed in terms of one’s relation to the law, but rather by one’s relation to Jesus the Christ. His purpose, then, is to argue that Abraham’s (and our) faith is considered to be covenant fidelity, with no further qualifications and requirements.

To my mind at least, this interpretation is bolstered by a consideration of the alternative. On Piper’s construction, faith is “credited/imputed for righteousness” However, this introduces at least a *prima facie* confusion. Surely, the heart of Piper’s argument is that righteousness is imputed or credited to the believer in the act of faith. This being so, in what sense can faith meaningfully be “imputed?” If righteousness is imputed by faith, then how can faith itself be imputed? It would seem that Piper has arrived at a double imputation, that of righteousness and of faith. This would appear to be a muddling of ideas, particularly as everywhere in the NT faith is predicated as the response of the human being himself to the gospel. To be sure, faith is the gift of God, but to speak of the imputation of faith makes for an odd combination of terms. By contrast, if faith is *reckoned/considered to be* righteousness, the difficulty disappears.

Piper’s reiteration of the familiar view that Gen 15:6, as employed by Paul, marked Abraham’s “conversion” is necessary for him to sustain his exegesis of Romans 4. However, even a causal reading of Genesis precludes any such assumption. Abraham was already a believer by the time of Gen 15:6. If further proof is need, it is provided by the explicit statement of Heb 11:8. Referring to Genesis 12, the author reminds his readers that: “*By faith Abraham obeyed* when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going.” To postulate, as some must, that the faith in question was something short of “saving faith” is a rather desperate expedient to evade the plain sense of the text. That Abraham was a believer before Gen 15:6 is simply confirmed by the fact that he is marked out as a worshipper of Yahweh by virtue of his erection of an altar to the Lord and calling on his name (Gen 12:8). Indeed, the entirety of the patriarch’s deportment from Genesis 12-15 is befitting that of a faithful and obedient servant.

It is just Abraham’s fidelity that forms the climactic portion of Romans 4, as Paul, in vv. 18-22, plays up the persevering quality of the patriarch’s faith:

In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, “So shall your descendants be.” He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No distrust made him waver concerning

¹⁴⁰ See my *Obedience*, 232-253, 258-59.

the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. *That is why his faith was “reckoned to him as righteousness.”*

Note particularly that I have italicized v. 22: it is for the very reason (διό) that Abraham exercised “the obedience of faith” that it “reckoned to him as righteousness.” This places beyond doubt what drives Paul’s argument in Romans 4.

In the OT, by far the most striking parallel to Gen 15:6 is Ps 106:31, the only other occurrence in the Hebrew Bible of the formula, “It was reckoned to him as righteousness.” Psalm 106 as a whole is a reproach of Israel’s idolatry in the wilderness. However, in the midst of this lengthy indictment there is one glaring exception to the rule:

Then Phinehas stood up and interposed,
and the plague was stayed.
And that has been reckoned to him as righteousness
from generation to generation.

The reference is to Num 25:13. The story of Numbers 25 opens on the note of Israel’s fornication with the daughters of Moab, who “invited the people to the sacrifice of their gods, and the people ate, and bowed down to their gods” (v. 2). The episode reaches its dramatic height when Phinehas slays an Israelite man and a Midianite woman engaged in illicit sex. He, according to the historian, was zealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel. The wrath of Yahweh was thus averted by the removal of its cause. Because of his heroism, Phinehas became the prototype of those who in subsequent Israelite history were to be “zealous for the law.” The author of 1 Maccabees in particular conceives of Mattathias, the father of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers, as a latter-day Phinehas, turning away God’s jealous anger by the execution of the unfaithful (1 Macc 2:26, 54; cf. Sir 45:23-24; 4 Macc 18:12).¹⁴¹

The mention of Phinehas in Psalm 106 is especially pertinent to our look into Gen 15:6, not only because of v. 31’s verbally similar “it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” but mainly because Phinehas is placed in conspicuous juxtaposition to the disobedient (idolatrous) of the wilderness generation. More precisely, v. 31 concludes that because of Phinehas’ zeal for God righteousness has been reckoned to him from “generation to generation.” Ziesler is right in classifying righteousness here as “covenant behaviour.”¹⁴² When, therefore, Phinehas burned with zeal for the Lord and slew the adulterous couple, he was regarded by Yahweh as a covenant-keeper by virtue of his abhorrence of the idolatry of the Moabites and his vengeance on the transgressors.

Apart from the factor of violence, which is irrelevant to Gen 15:6, Abraham and Phinehas are a matched pair: both are *considered to be* “righteous” in that they are faithful to Yahweh and his revealed will; both, consequently, are said to be covenant-

¹⁴¹ See M. Hengel, *The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A. D.* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 171-77; Garlington, *Obedience*, 113-14.

¹⁴² Ziesler, *Righteousness*, 181.

keepers, because, in point of fact, they are.¹⁴³ To be sure, it was Phinehas' *zeal* for Yahweh which was looked upon as covenant faithfulness, whereas it was Abraham's *faith* which was reckoned to be righteousness. However, both zeal and faith have the same referent—the covenant of Yahweh. In point of fact, both are the two sides of the same coin: zeal is the product of faith. Nevertheless, it is precisely Abraham's positioning before the law that enables Paul to make him the paradigm for Gentiles who come to faith in Christ.

Moving to the Dead Sea Scrolls, 4QMMT simply confirms the above data drawn from the OT. Its author encourages his readers that he has written "what we determined would be beneficial for you and your people, because we have seen [that] you possess insight and knowledge of the Law" (C27-28). At the end of his letter, the writer challenges his readers with a pair of exhortations. First, "Understand all these things and beseech Him to set your counsel straight" (C28-29). Second, "Keep yourself away from evil thoughts and the counsel of Belial" (C29). In other words, separate yourself from those who have infected you with their evil thoughts and teaching. The addressees and their associates were perceived to have expressed a willingness to "Consort with the enemy." The purpose of the document can be paraphrased in these terms: "You and I know that the enemy are deadly wrong. Let us, who know and observe the Mosaic Torah, separate ourselves from these abominable sinners." This separation from the unclean sinners and an adherence to the law will have two results. First, "You shall rejoice at the end of time when you find the essence [literally, "some"] of our words true" (col. 30). The messianic era, it is implied elsewhere (C21), was soon to arrive. Second, "*It will be reckoned to you as righteousness, in that you have done what is right and good before Him.*" Such is "to your own benefit and to that of Israel" (C31-32). Here, the recipients of the letter will be considered righteous people if they conform themselves to the sect's conception of godly behavior.

This provocative final statement has a familiar ring to readers of the NT: Gen 15:6 and the paradigm of righteous Abraham as advanced by Paul in Romans and Galatians (Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6). However, the Qumran author does not offer righteousness on the basis of faith without the Torah, but rather "in that you have done what is right and good before Him" (C31). According to context, it is the "works of the Law" that fuel such a reckoning. In agreement with the above observations on Phinehas, M. Abegg maintains that it was not Abraham but Phinehas who provided the model for 4QMMT's employment of the language of "reckoning righteousness."¹⁴⁴ No doubt, he is exactly right, simply because Phinehas and the entire zealot tradition (as spearheaded by Mattathias) was predicated on the premise of "zeal for the law."¹⁴⁵ By contrast, Abraham can be the father of all who believe because he had no connection with the law. In any event, the reckoning of righteousness, as confirmed by 4QMMT, pertains to an actual quality on the part of the readers which is looked upon as righteousness. The same is true of the numerous rabbinic references to Gen 15:6 and Ps 106:31.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Contra Haacker, *Römer*, 101, that Phinehas falls into an entirely different category to Abraham. The issue in both Gen 15: and Ps 106:31 is essentially the same.

¹⁴⁴ Abegg, "4QMMT, Paul, and 'Works of the Law,'" *The Bible at Qumran: Text, Shape, and Interpretation* (Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature; ed. P. Flint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 208-9.

¹⁴⁵ See Hengel, *Zealots*, 149-228.

¹⁴⁶ Abegg, "4QMMT," 210-12.

All in all, it is the OT/Jewish materials that form the context and define the semantic significance of the reckoning of righteousness. In virtually every instance where the Hebrew and Greek forms of reckoning occur, a value judgment is made, a judgment based on the actual performance or non-performance of individuals. But as I endeavored to stress in the original response to Piper, it is *in Christ* that one becomes the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21) and thereby is reckoned as righteousness. This is the furthest thing from “self-achievement” or synergism, because righteousness is reckoned by faith alone in Christ, apart from “the works of the law.”

Returning to Romans 4, there is the “business analogy” of vv. 4-5. Piper picks up on the common understanding that Rom 4:4-5 is cast in terms of a commercial transaction. Verse 4, anyway, is capable of such an interpretation, since λογίζομαι can be used in the sense of “calculating” a wage. It may well be that Paul here pauses to draw on an analogy from the business world, because, in terms of contractual relationships, λογίζομαι can mean a reckoning of payment for work done.” I would concede the possibility that Paul *may* be drawing on the imagery of a commercial transaction. The difference is that Piper is quite sure that such is the case, whereas I merely allow for the possibility. In point of fact, Paul’s main focus is covenant relationships, not business. The Hebrew Bible is certainly not oblivious to the reality of wages paid in return for work; but even that, among fellow Israelites, transpires within the parameters of the covenant. It is very telling that Piper and others are much more inclined to invoke secular commercial categories than the Hebrew covenant as the framework of Paul’s thought. But at least it brings to the fore the main methodological difference between us: a dogmatic/confessional reading of the text versus a historical or biblical-theological reading.

The control-factor over Paul’s choice of words is Gen 15:6. While Rom 4:4 *may* be a reflection on a well-known principle of business practice, 4:5 returns to the idiom of λογίζομαι εἰς: the believer’s faith is considered to be his righteousness, just because of faith’s object. Piper consistently suppresses this datum. Paul’s thought is grounded in the sphere of the Hebrew covenant, according to which individuals are thought to be faithful when they place their confidence in the God of Israel and give concrete expression to their faith by obedience to his commands. The radical thing in Paul, however, is that peoples of all kinds can be looked upon as faithfully obediently quite apart from Torah observance and Jewish ethnic identity. It is those who simply place their trust in Jesus who truly walk in Abraham’s footsteps, making the patriarch the father of circumcised and uncircumcised alike (Rom 4:12).

In keeping with the “business analogy” interpretation, Piper consistently renders λογίζομαι as “credit.” However, both the RSV and the NRSV translate as “reckon.”¹⁴⁷ The difference might appear at first glance to be hair-splitting—but it isn’t. To “reckon a wage” means that the wage is *calculated in certain terms*. The question is a qualitative one, as underscored by the preposition κατά, “according to.” That is to say, On what

¹⁴⁷ See again Gundry, “Nonimputation,” 18-22. Gundry’s consistent rendering of λογίζομαι εἰς as “counted to be” is tantamount to my translation, “regard as.” See additionally G. Von Rad, “Faith Reckoned as Righteousness,” *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: SCM, 1984), 125-30; W. Schottroff, *TLOT*, 2.479-82; *TDNT*, 4.284-92; id., H. W. Heiland, *Die Anrechnung des Glaubens zur Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchungen zur Begriffsbestimmung von hasab und logizesthai* (BZANT 18; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936).

basis is the wage to be paid? And the answer is: for “the one who works” the reckoning takes place “according to debt,” not “according to grace.” On the other hand, for “the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly” his faith is “reckoned as” or “considered to be” righteousness.

If it was not clear before, it must be specified now that in principle Paul certainly does preclude any kind of “works,” Jewish covenantal or otherwise, as the matrix of present justification. The gift character of God’s righteousness is never to be called into question. But for the sake of historical exegesis, it must be added that in pursuing his objective in Romans 4, Paul predicates “ungodly” (ἀσεβής) of Abraham in the same sense that Jews of this period would have used the term, i.e., *uncircumcised and non-Torah observant*. By way of preaching Paul’s text, we may certainly say that “ungodly” depicts all those outside of Christ, in their idolatry and rebellion against God the creator. However, Piper and Carson have missed the irony of the historical situation: the same Abraham who was confirmed as a righteous person in Gen 15:6 would have been deemed “ungodly” by many of his first-century descendants! But by a simple “back to the Bible” tack, Paul is able to bypass a considerable layer of tradition and assert that Abraham and the nations are in the same boat. Consequently, analogously to former, the latter need only put their faith in Christ. In blunt terms, Gentiles can forget about the Torah! This is the lead-item on Paul’s agenda in Romans 4.

Moving on to Gathercole’s employment of this segment of Romans 4, the case is made that Abraham’s justification, in various texts, was not eschatological, nor was it justification at the beginning of his covenant relationship. Rather, it was an event that took place at some point subsequent to the promise and Abraham’s belief, as well as subsequent to his obedience to the commandments. What we find in all these texts, he says, is that faith/faithfulness becomes evident subsequent to Abraham’s trials, in contrast with the biblical portrayal of faith being clearly present before the trials. So, justification, in the Jewish mindset, is subsequent to trials and to being found faithful.

This formulation is right and wrong at the same time. Right because the vindication (justification) of Abraham does take place subsequent to his entrance into the covenant relationship; but wrong because the biblical portrayal of Abraham does in fact depict the patriarch as faithful/believing in the midst of trials. Abraham’s vindication, according to Genesis, is subsequent to trials and to being found faithful. In support of this alternative interpretation, I would call attention to the fact that Gathercole and other commentators understand Gen 15:6 as Abraham’s “conversion;” before this point in the Genesis narrative, Abraham is only an “ungodly idolater.” However, this supposition founders on the progression of the Genesis story itself. Abraham’s pilgrimage of faith begins in Genesis 12, as confirmed by Heb 11:8: “*By faith Abraham obeyed* when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going.”

By the time the narrative reaches chapter 15, Abraham’s faith is beginning to wane. But once God assures him again of the promise, Abraham continues to believe and is declared to be a righteous, covenant-keeping person. This is his “justification” in Genesis: the Lord’s vindication of him as a faithfully obedient person. All this plays into Paul’s hands in Romans 4. One of the “exegetical traditions” of Judaism was that Abraham kept specifically the law of Moses (Sir 44:20; CD 3:2; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 57:2).¹⁴⁸ In

¹⁴⁸ See further Garlington, *Obedience*, 37-40; Schreiner, *Romans*, 215-17.

a rather glaring omission, Gathercole does not even call attention to this datum, apart from simply quoting CD 3:2. Here we have the actual background to Romans 4 and the point of dispute. Based on the chronology of the biblical record, it is Paul's contention that Abraham was considered to be a righteous person before circumcision and the law. Not surprisingly, Rom 4:9-15 takes up none other than these two "pillars" of Jewish faith and life: circumcision and the Torah. The polemical value for Paul is that Gentiles can be received as the faithful ones of God apart from the assumption of Jewish identity. All they need do is "walk in the footsteps of Abraham" *who had faith before his circumcision*. In order to be the children of Abraham, it is not first necessary for them to become "honorary Jews."

All this being so, the schema constructed by Gathercole is at least in need of modification. On his reading, Jewish obedience results in justification, and justification results in boasting. Given that "justification," or "vindication," in the Jewish outlook, normally pertains to the last judgment, this sequence is correct. The problem is that Gathercole attempts to set this formulation over against Pauline justification and boasting. By this time, it is necessary only to reiterate that in Paul's mind too a favorable eschatological judgment rests on covenant obedience, to which Gathercole himself assents. The difficulty is that he tries to equate Jewish justification, which is eschatological, with "phase one" of Pauline justification, an "apples and oranges" comparison. In so doing, Gathercole confuses the works of "getting in" with the works of "staying in." The reality is that ancient Jews were born into the covenant and could expect their ultimate vindication as a result of covenant faithfulness. Over against this expectation, Paul retorts that justification/vindication is to be found in Christ, and Torah works have nothing to do with it. For him, justification from beginning to end is christological: it is *in Christ* that one becomes the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21), now and in the last day. It is for this reason that the Christian boasts not in the law, but *in the Lord* (1 Cor 1:31).

Gathercole certainly does acknowledge that the christological dimension of the Christian's boast is a "crucial new component." But having said that, he lapses into the anthropological mode by insisting that the Jew is sinful and unrepentant, with the result that his boast is "something very different from the boast of the Christian."¹⁴⁹ He is right, but not for the reasons given. Rather, the two boasts emerge from two separate spheres: Torah and Christ. One cannot dwell in both at the same time. Again, Gathercole plays up anthropology at the expense of christology.

Gathercole's argument from Paul's use of David in Romans 4 does present a legitimate challenge to at least some proponents of the NPP. He is quite sure that David is the "smoking gun" that proves that Paul's focus is on anthropological matters, not the badges of Jewish identity. His point is that both Abraham and David were "ungodly" in the same sense of moral failure. By way of citing some Jewish sources as a foil, he refers to the "exegetical tradition" that David was accepted by God and justified on the basis of his works (CD 5:5 and 4QMMT, C24-25). The problem is that neither text speaks of *justification*! David is simply viewed as a righteous man whose deeds ascended to God and who was delivered from his enemies. Gathercole is here in danger of "parallelomania."

¹⁴⁹ Gathercole, *Boasting*, 261.

Even so, an honest reading of Rom 4:6-8 requires that we come to terms with the role of David in Paul's argument, as derived from Psalm 32. Gathercole is so confident that David is the "smoking gun" that he can write: "*It is crucial to recognize that the New Perspective interpretation of 4:1-8 falls to the ground on this point: that David although circumcised, sabbatarian, and kosher, is described as without works because of his disobedience.*"¹⁵⁰ His case is compelling in that David's behavior is called to the fore and challenges the assumption that Paul's polemic in Romans 4 is concerned *only* with boundary markers. Nevertheless, there is a failure to recognize that "ungodly" carries strong overtones of covenant infidelity. It is this very term, along with "lawless" and "sinners," that the writer of 1 Maccabees employs in his denunciation of Jews who apostatized to Hellenism.¹⁵¹

One may quite legitimately speak of David's ethical failure, but it is the very nature of that failure that rendered him as one outside the covenant. By his twofold sin of adultery and murder, David lowered himself to the level of the pagan world and ceased to be the representative of Yahweh on earth—*he became as one uncircumcised*. Particularly in Pauline perspective, when David broke the tenth commandment by coveting his neighbor's wife, he was turned into an idolater (Col 3:5). Such a reading makes perfect sense of Paul's argument, because Gentiles may be assured that they are acceptable to God in a sense qualitatively similar to David, who, at the time of his forgiveness, was no better *covenantal speaking* than they. No wonder, Paul can say that David pronounces a blessing on those who are forgiven apart from "works."

Gathercole recognizes a certain validity to this reply, but he avers that in this case Paul would be conceiving of the entirety of Israel as under sin and outside the covenant since they are without works of Torah. But this rejoinder is simply unmindful of the idolatry motif of Rom 1:18-3:20, with its attendant irony. Paul fully concedes that his contemporaries have performed Torah-works. But that is precisely the problem! It is their zeal for the works of the law that have obscured their vision of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, and a recognition that God's righteousness has now been embodied in him (Rom 9:16; 10:2-3).¹⁵² As argued above, it is Israel's rejection of God's eschatological plan in Christ that has rendered her unfaithful, especially considering that perfect obedience was never required of Israel as God's covenant partner. The issue was never moral imperfection, but idolatry.

Whether one accepts this explanation or not, the fact remains that Gathercole's argument respecting David is valid only in the case of those who maintain that Paul's

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 247, italics his.

¹⁵¹ See Garlington, *Obedience*, 91-102.

¹⁵² Gathercole, as many commentators, takes Rom 10:3 as a statement of Israel's attempt to "establish" its own righteousness (*Boasting*, 228), an interpretation that carries definite "works-righteousness" overtones. Yet his overview of the LXX usage of the verb ἵστημι does not include significant passages in which it means not "establish" but "maintain" the covenant. To be sure, in some cases, it does refer to *God's* establishment and/or maintenance of covenant relationships (Gen 6:18; 9:11; 17:7, 19, 21; 26:3; Exod 6:4; Lev 26:9; Deut 8:18; 9:5; 29:13; Jer 11:5; Sir 17:12; 45:7, 24). But most relevantly, in other instances, the verb speaks of Israel's responsibility to "maintain" the covenant (Jer 34[LXX 41]:18; Sir 11:20; 44:20; 45:23; 1 Macc 2:27). Particularly relevant in view of Paul's acknowledgment of Israel's zeal are Sir 45:23: Phinehas "stood firm" (στῆναι) when the people turned away; and 1 Macc 2:27: "Everyone who is zealous for the law and who maintains (ἵσταν) the covenant, let him come after me." This is Paul's real point: Israel is zealous to *maintain* "her own" (τῆν ἰδίαν) covenant righteousness and refuses to submit to God's latter-day embodiment of righteousness in Christ.

concern is restricted to boundary markers. His critique does indeed apply to some NPP scholars, but there is a notable company who would wish to dissent.

III. Synthesis

The exegesis of the selected passages in Romans 1-4 has endeavored to deal honestly with the evidence rather than push a NPP reading for its own sake. Wright is certainly correct in making this very point.¹⁵³ Nevertheless, as the NPP has provided a frame of reference, our findings can be reduced to the following.

(1) The primary issue at stake in Romans and elsewhere in the NT is christology. Even more basic than *sola fide is solus Christus*. For all that Protestantism has insisted that justification is the “article of standing and falling of the church” (*articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*), *christology* really is. *The church stands or falls with Christ*. The actual showcase of Paul’s thought is *not* justification, as time-honored as that notion is in traditional theology. It is, rather, union with Christ or the “in Christ” experience. From this vantage point, Col 1:18 exhibits the very life blood of Paul’s preaching—that *in all things he may have the preeminence*. At the end of the day, it is Paul’s “christological eschatology” that demarcates him from his Jewish compatriots.¹⁵⁴

If I may borrow from some observations on Galatians. The core issue of the Galatian letter boils down to a simple but profound choice—*Christ or the Torah*.¹⁵⁵ From Romans 14, it is clear enough that Paul was willing to allow Jewish Christians (and others) to practice the law as a matter of personal lifestyle, if they chose. But he drew the line when Torah observance was made the indispensable condition for entering and remaining within the people of God. In short, he repudiated the law as the “Jewish gateway to salvation.”¹⁵⁶ At one time, the community of the saved was in fact constituted of circumcised and law-observant people. But with the coming of Jesus the Messiah, who himself began to relax the Mosaic strictures (e.g., Matt 8:3; Mark 7:18-19; Luke 7:14; 13:10-17; John 5:9b-18), the demand of the Jewish Christian missionaries for circumcision and law-obedience is not only obsolete, it actually impedes access to God and is tantamount, no less, to idolatry and apostasy.¹⁵⁷ As Witherington so aptly puts it:

The Gospel of grace proclaims the acceptance and acceptability of both Gentiles and Jews on the basis of trust in the faithful work of Jesus Christ which justifies (or sets right) sinners, and not on the basis of works of the Mosaic Law. Therefore works of the Mosaic Law are not merely unnecessary or redundant. If they are pursued by those who are Christians as the proper manner of Christian living, as if Christians were obliged to obey the Mosaic covenant’s requirements, they amount to a fall from grace, a devaluation of what Christ accomplished on the cross. The origin, character and content of the Gospel determines the origin, character and

¹⁵³ Wright, “Romans,” 481.

¹⁵⁴ See my *Obedience*, 255-57.

¹⁵⁵ Gordon, “Problem;” Hubbard, *Creation*, 199-200.

¹⁵⁶ Räisänen, *Paul*, 177-201.

¹⁵⁷ See my *Galatians* on 3:10-13; 4:8-10.

behavior of the people of God, who are Jew and Gentile united in Christ and his finished work on the cross.¹⁵⁸

Beverly Gaventa likewise focuses the issue just on christology:

Although the issue that prompts Paul to write to Galatian Christians arises from a conflict regarding the law, in addressing that problem Paul takes the position that the gospel proclaims Jesus Christ crucified to be the inauguration of a new creation. *This new creation allows for no supplementation or augmentation by the law or any other power or loyalty.* What the Galatians seek in the law is a certainty that they have a firm place in the ἐκκλησία of God and that they know what God requires of them. It is precisely this certainty, and every other form of certainty, that Paul rejects with his claim about *the exclusivity and singularity of Jesus Christ.*¹⁵⁹

That christology is at the heart of Paul's controversy with the circumcision party is underscored by the relation of the Messiah to the Torah in the theology of the latter. Martyn very helpfully distills the thinking of the opponents as regards the Christ of the law. The Jewish Christian missionaries viewed Jesus as the completion of the ministry of Moses:

They view God's Christ in the light of God's law, rather than the law in the light of Christ. This means in their christology, Christ is secondary to the law.... For them the Messiah is the Messiah of the Law, deriving his identity from the fact that he confirms—and perhaps even normatively interprets—the Law. If Christ is explicitly involved in the Teachers' commission to preach to the Gentiles, that must be so because he has deepened their passion to take to the nations God's gift of gifts, the Spirit-dispensing Law that will guide them in their daily life.¹⁶⁰

(2) Consistent with Paul's view of the Messiah is his assessment of the role of the law in salvation history. Every Jew of the Second Temple period knew that the religious life was first and foremost a matter of reliance on God. This axiom of faith in Judaism is amply confirmed by the literature of the predestruction period, which is replete with references to faith in Yahweh.¹⁶¹ However, it is equally clear from these sources that faith

¹⁵⁸ Witherington, *Grace*, 90.

¹⁵⁹ Gaventa, "The Singularity of the Gospel: A Reading of Galatians," *Pauline Theology. Volume 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* (ed. J. M. Bassler; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 159, italics mine.

¹⁶⁰ Martyn, *Galatians*, 124-25.

¹⁶¹ Garlington, *Obedience*. Similarly, Schnelle correctly maintains that there existed in ancient Judaism the fundamental conviction that God is merciful, good and loving to his creatures (*Paul*, 283). Commenting on the Qumran *Hymn Scroll*, Schnelle writes that the confession of guilt points to dependence on God's righteousness and mercy, which he will reveal in the judgment. "God's righteousness leads to obedience to the law, but without thereby making it a matter of earning merit before God. Rather, God alone grants the

always assumed a *nationalistic bias*. That is to say, belief in the God of Israel was always to be accompanied by a steadfast commitment to the Torah, which gave concrete expression to the will of the Lord of the covenant. In brief, the law was given to regulate the life of the believing community, and genuine faith was always sensitive to the “household rules” put in place to guide the faithful in their walk in the ways of the Lord.

Given such a set of assumptions, Paul’s contemporaries were more than glad to have “outsiders” join the ranks of God’s people—but under the proper conditions. Those conditions are well illustrated by the book of Judith. According to Jdt 14:10, the Gentile Achior believed in the God of Israel, was circumcised, joined the house of Israel and remained steadfast all his days. For these “Judaizers,” it was self-evident that God was ready and willing to receive believers in God’s Messiah; but such faith could never remain alone—it had to be attended by “the works of the law” in order to be valid. But Paul disagreed, and disagreed vociferously. In light of what God has done in Christ in the fullness of the time (Gal 4:4), the law has served its purpose in salvation history, the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile has come down (Eph 2:14), and God has now received all who place their trust in Christ irrespective of ethnic distinctives and devotion to the law of Moses. In a nutshell, the only distinction that postdates the resurrection of Christ is faith versus unbelief.

By way of an important qualification, however, it should not be supposed that Paul was a Marcionite before Marcion, even though he has some very radical things indeed to say about the law in Romans and Galatians. It is not that he conceives of Israel’s Torah as an evil of some sort. Rather, he seeks to address an attitude that would keep the law around after its goal has been realized—Christ (Gal 3:23-25; Rom 10:4).

Paul’s most basic problem with the Law is that it is obsolete and therefore following it is no longer appropriate. It is not the rule of the eschatological age and it is not to be imposed in the new creation which is already coming to be. If Christ came even to redeem Jews out from under the yoke of the Law, if the Law was a pedagogue meant to function only until Christ came, if the Law was “set aside” as 2 Cor. 3:11 says, then it is a mistake, indeed a serious mistake to go back to keeping it, or in the case of Gentiles to begin to submit to it in any form or fashion. The Law had an important function and role to play in the divine economy, but the rule of the Mosaic Law has had its day and ceased to be. But it is not just the anachronism that bothers Paul about insisting that Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, must keep the Mosaic Law. What bothers him most is that keeping the Law implies in Paul’s mind that Christ’s death did not accomplish what in fact he believes it did accomplish. To submit to the Mosaic Law is to nullify the grace of God (Gal. 2:21) and to deny that justification or righteousness, whether initial or final, comes through the death of Christ.¹⁶²

devout assurance of salvation that comes from their belonging to the chosen people” (ibid., 459). Cf. my *Obedience*, 266-67.

¹⁶² Witherington, *Grace*, 354. Witherington adds: “We may sum up by saying that for the Christian Paul, the Mosaic Law was a good thing, something that came from God, but that it was limited—limited in what it was intended to and could accomplish, limited in the time-span for which it was meant to be applicable,

David De Silva writes to similar effect:

Paul's polemic against "works of the law" is not a polemic against "good works," as this is commonly but erroneously understood. Rather, Paul opposes the continued observance of a boundary-maintaining code, not only in the observance of the more obvious differentiators like circumcision, kosher laws and sabbath, but also as *an entire body of laws given to Israel as a mark of her distinctiveness and separation from the Gentiles*.... It is not in maintaining the ethnic identity of Israel (through such "works of Torah") that we are conformed to God's character or brought in line with God's purpose, but only through faith in Jesus, which results in the life of the Spirit being born in us so that we are born to life before God. Paul certainly expects the Spirit to produce all manner of "good works" in the life of the disciple (Rom 2:6-11; 6:12-13, Gal 5:13-25, Eph 2:10).¹⁶³

In light of these considerations, it follows that *the law cannot justify because it was never intended to justify*. In other words, the inability of the law to justify is rooted in eschatology. There is, one might say, a teleology of the law; that is, its sole reason for being was to point Israel and all humanity to Christ, in whom God had always purposed to vindicate his people.¹⁶⁴ This being so, Paul's assessment of his Jewish compatriots is not to be sought along the lines of "legalism," but rather an idolatrous attachment to the Torah that precludes them from accepting Jesus as the Messiah.¹⁶⁵

By way of corollary, it has to be stressed that the "works of the law" are not to be confined to the "boundary markers" of Jewish identification. Dunn in particular has frequently been misrepresented on this point, as though he restricts "the works of the law" to the "boundary markers" without allowing that the whole Torah is in view when Paul employs the phrase.¹⁶⁶ But just the opposite is the case. He states, in point of fact, that circumcision and the other ordinances were *not* the only distinguishing traits of

and limited in the group to which it was meant to be applied (namely Jews and converts or adherents to Judaism). It was but one form of the στοιχεῖα, and it was something Christ's coming had rendered no longer in effect. The people of God were no longer to be under the Guardian now that the eschatological age had broken in and those in Christ could be new creatures and walk in the Spirit" (ibid., 355-56). Such a consideration should temper Schnelle's assessment that in Galatians the law has no revelatory function and is portrayed in an entirely negative light (*Paul*, 288-89). For its day, the law did indeed have revelatory value, but that day is past. I must add, though, that in his *Romans* (102-7), Witherington has done something of an about-face, now endorsing the outlook of Carson and company in *Justification and Variegated Nomism I*. But that is a discussion for another time and another place.

¹⁶³ De Silva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 505, n. 9, italics mine.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Rappa, *Meaning*, 167. This is where the term coined by Peter Enns is so helpful. According to Enns, the whole of the OT is "Christotelic" (*Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005], 154. As regards righteousness, and everything else, Christ is the goal (τέλος) of the law (Rom 10:4).

¹⁶⁵ Wright likewise speaks of "Israel's idolatrous nationalism" (*Jesus and the Victory of God* [Christian Origins and the Question of God 2; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 462).

¹⁶⁶ It is for good reason that Dunn issues a note of protest in *Theology of Paul*, 358, n. 97.

Jewish self-identity. However, they were the focal point of the Hellenistic attack on the Jews during the Maccabean period. As such, they became *the acid tests of one's loyalty to Judaism*. "In short...the particular regulations of circumcision and food laws [et al.] were important not in themselves, but because they *focused* Israel's distinctiveness and made visible Israel's claims to be a people set apart, were the clearest points which differentiated the Jews from the nations. The law was coterminous with Judaism."¹⁶⁷ That there is a darker side to Paul's deployment of "works of the law" is not to be doubted, especially as the phrase intersects with others such as "under sin," "under law" and the "curse of the law." Nevertheless, such works pertain to practices commanded by *the Torah*, not works in the abstract or works generalized beyond their specific function of *regulating the covenant with Israel*. Given that the law is a "package deal," "the works of the law," as much as anything, mark Jewish ethnic identity and symbolize comprehensive obedience to the obligations of the Sinai covenant

In brief, to quote Hays one more time, "'Works of the law' refer primarily to practices commanded by the law (circumcision, dietary laws, sabbath observance) that distinctively mark Jewish ethnic identity; *these symbolize comprehensive obedience to the law's covenant obligations*."¹⁶⁸ As Hays is careful to state, works of the law are not confined to the "boundary markers." Rather, it is the "boundary markers" which in the historical setting served to focus the faithful Israelite's commitment to the entire revealed will of God. These were the "litmus paper" tests of fidelity. Accordingly, Witherington can say that by his use of the phrase Paul opposes "obedience to the Mosaic Law and seeking to be part of the community that relates to God on the basis of the Mosaic covenant." This is objectionable because "The Mosaic Law and obedience to it is not, in Paul's view, how one got into Christ, how one stays in Christ, or how one goes on in Christ. It is no longer what defines and delimits who the people of God are and how they ought to live and behave."¹⁶⁹

Modern hermeneutics distinguishes between the "meaning" of the text and its "significance" (or application): what the text meant and what it means. In the case of the Paul and the law debate, interpreters have sought to understand what the law "stands for." For some, it stands for a principle "works-righteousness" or "legalism." In this instance, this stress falls on a soteriology: salvation "by grace" as opposed salvation by "works" or "achievement." For others, it stands for a sociological phenomenon: Israel as a distinctive demographic entity, separated from the nations.¹⁷⁰ In actuality, it can stand for both;¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Dunn, "Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3.10-14)," *NTS* 31 (1985), 526. This essay is reprinted in *Jesus, Paul*, 215-41. That the law is coterminous with Judaism is actually affirmed by Das, who writes that the Mosaic law and the covenant were considered to be two sides of the same coin, e.g., *Sir* 39:8; *Pss. Sol.* 10:4; *Mek. Bahodesh* 6 (on Exod 20:6) (*Paul and the Jews* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003], 43, n. 65, with other literature).

¹⁶⁸ Hays, *Study Bible*, 2185, italics mine. See also Hays, "Galatians," 238-39, 251; Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 354-59.

¹⁶⁹ Witherington, *Grace*, 172.

¹⁷⁰ In this light, Num 23:9 is striking indeed:

"For from the top of the mountains I see him,
from the hills I behold him;
lo, a people dwelling alone,
and not reckoning itself among the nations!"

So is 4QMMT C7: "We have separated ourselves from the multitude of the people [and all their impurity]," along with *Ep. Arist.* 139-42.

but the matter can be expressed even more accurately. Given that for Paul the basic choice is Christ or the Torah, it follows that “works of the law” stand for any alternative to Christ. Therefore, by way of the “significance” of the text, any rival to Christ, whether cultural, religious, ideological, or “legalistic” is idolatrous by definition.¹⁷²

(3) All the above leads me to say that the bottom line issue in Romans is *soteriology*. This affirmation of soteriology as lying at the root of the letter is a necessary corrective to Wright’s otherwise excellent treatment of justification and righteousness language in the Paul. Wright maintains that justification and, consequently, the subject matter of Galatians, does not tell one how to be saved; it is, rather, a way of saying how one can tell that one belongs to the covenant community, or, in other words, How does one define the people of God?¹⁷³ To be sure, such issues are to be judged in light of the covenant context of “the righteousness of God” and similar ideas. On this, Wright is undoubtedly correct, and in this regard the ensuing exposition is much in his debt. Indeed, Romans does address the question, “Who is a member of the people of God.”¹⁷⁴ Likewise, it is true that “justification, in Galatians, is the doctrine which insists that all who share faith in Christ belong at the same table, no matter what their racial differences, as together they wait for the final new creation.”¹⁷⁵

This much said, it must be countered that Wright has constructed a seemingly false dichotomy between the identity of the people of God and salvation. It is closer to the mark to say that Romans does have to do with entrance into the body of the saved, meaning that to belong to the new covenant *is* to belong to the community of the saved. Therefore, justification does indeed tell us how to be saved, in that it depicts God’s method of saving sinners—*by faith* in Christ, not *from* works of the law—and placing them in covenant standing with himself. If justification is *by faith*, then in point of fact a method of salvation is prescribed: one enters into the realm of salvation *by faith*.

It is surely telling, not to say ironic, that the motif of return from exile, promoted so vigorously by Wright, has a great deal to say about justification as tantamount to salvation. The end of the exile signaled Israel’s release from captivity, especially as the Servant of Yahweh, endowed by the Spirit, releases the prisoners, brings the year of Jubilee and causes those who once mourned now to rejoice (Isa 61:1-3). A fact that stands out is that “righteousness” and “salvation” are placed in synonymous parallel in passages in the Prophets and the Psalms: Isa 45:8; 45:21-25; 46:13; 51:5-6, 8; 56:1; 59:17; 61:10; 62:1-2; 63:1; Ps 24:6; 51:14; 71:15-16; 98:1-3, 8-9 (LXX 97:2-3, 8-9); 4 Ezra 8:36, 39-40; CD 20:20; 1QS 11:11-15; *1 Enoch* 99:10. Noteworthy as well are Ps 35:27-28 (LXX 34:27-28); 72:1-4 (LXX 71:1-4, 7); 85:11-13 (LXX 84:12-14); 96:13 (LXX 95:13); 103:6; Isa 9:7 (LXX 9:6); 11:1-2, 5; 45:8, 22-25; 51:5-6; 53:10-11; 61:11; Jer 23:5-6; Mal 4:2 (LXX 3:20).

In typological perspective, all this foreshadows the work of Jesus the Christ, who defeats the Devil in the wilderness, binds the strong man and plunders his goods (Matt 4:1-11 and pars.; Matt 12:28-29 = Luke 11:19-22). If, as Wright correctly maintains,

¹⁷¹ Cf. my *Obedience*, 261-67.

¹⁷² No doubt, Paul would have been adamantly opposed to any scheme of self-salvation based on human performance. Passages such as Rom 4:4-5; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5 have direct applicability.

¹⁷³ Wright, *Saint Paul*, 119, 120-22, 131; id., *Fresh Perspective*, 122.

¹⁷⁴ Wright, *Saint Paul*, 121.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 122.

God's righteousness (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) finds expression in his activity to deliver his people, then it would stand to reason that such a deliverance *is* their salvation from bondage and oppression. We too, by virtue of the work of the Servant have been "justified from sin" (Rom 6:7) and "liberated from sin" (Rom 6:18).

(4) It is none other than justification "from sin" which is a hallmark of Paul's soteriology and integral to his teaching on justification. In his defense of the Reformed doctrine of imputation, John Piper has insisted rigorously that justification can have nothing to do with liberation from the power of sin. In so insisting, Piper would distinguish between the faith that justifies and the faith that sanctifies. In response, I want to bring over some material from my replies to him.¹⁷⁶

First of all, there is the matter of the verb δικαιόω. Traditional translations of this verb have been guilty of reductionism, as though the verb always and only means "declare righteous." A survey of the extant Greek literature argues quite otherwise. In point of fact, δικαιόω is not an easy verb to translate. As is true of any Greek word, there is no one English equivalent to cover its every usage;¹⁷⁷ its overall significance is determined by the cluster of ideas stemming from the OT and Paul's use of it in specific contexts. I refer simply to my previous study of the term.¹⁷⁸ The only real point to be made here is that the semantic range of δικαιόω is broad enough to cover liberation from sin as well as declarative justification.¹⁷⁹

Second, in Rom 6:7, Paul speaks specifically of being "justified from sin." Not unexpectedly, commentators are divided on the precise import of this conjunction of terms, just because of its rarity in the literature. Besides Acts 13:39, Dunn points to two other (non-canonical) occurrences of δικαιόω followed by the preposition ἀπό: Sir 26:29: "A merchant can hardly keep from wrongdoing, and a tradesman will not be *declared innocent of sin*;" and *T. Sim.* 6:1: "See, I have told you everything, so that I might be *exonerated with regard to sin*." Dunn then paraphrases the verse as "declared free from (responsibility in relation to) sin."¹⁸⁰ In this light, Piper's translation, "acquitted from" or "forgiven for," is not to be ruled out of court. The resultant English is somewhat awkward, but then so is any attempt to render Paul's Greek quite literally.¹⁸¹

D. J. Moo, in contrast to Dunn and Piper, takes "justified from sin" to mean "set free from [the power of] sin."¹⁸² Some such wording does have the advantage of smoothing out the problem of translation, while fitting quite naturally into the conceptual framework of Rom 6:1-7:6 as a whole, which is entirely devoted to the proposition that the believer has been delivered from the clutches of sin. The point only gains in strength if this text is placed against its natural backdrop of exile and return—the redemption of Israel (see below).

¹⁷⁶ Garlington, *Defense*, chaps. 4 and 5.

¹⁷⁷ See Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 249-50.

¹⁷⁸ Garlington, *Exegetical Essays* (3rd ed.; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 285-99.

¹⁷⁹ Still valuable is Ziesler, *Righteousness*, 52-58. Ziesler shows that δικαιόω in the LXX is largely forensic, but forensic in the wider Hebrew sense as including the relational element of the covenant. Moreover, the verb can broaden so as to mean "be righteous." A similar range of meanings is demonstrated by G. Schrenk, *TDNT*, 2.211-19 (including "liberate from" in Acts 13:3; Rom 6:7).

¹⁸⁰ Dunn, *Romans*, 1.320.

¹⁸¹ In accord with Piper are Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.311, n. 1; J. A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 437.

¹⁸² Moo, *Romans*, 377.

Moo, however, points to two further occurrences of δικαιόω as construed with ἀπό: Matt 11:19 = Luke 7:35, noting, however, that in these texts δικαιόω means to “vindicate.”¹⁸³ Without developing the idea at all, Moo perhaps has hit on something. I would contend that “justify” and “vindicate” are synonymous, at least virtually.¹⁸⁴ In biblical-theological perspective, the justification of the people of God is their vindication when they return to the land and resume their privileged position within the covenant. Thus, “vindicate from sin” would make fine sense as meaning that we have been absolved with regard to the charges of sin.

Perhaps the solution lies in a combination of ideas. The possibility exists that Paul has telescoped his language, so as to compact at least two ideas into one set of words. That is to say, his meaning could be: “The one who has died has been justified/vindicated, so that he has been freed from sin.” In this case, the more usual sense of δικαιόω could be retained, with, nonetheless, the stress falling on justification in its liberating effects. It would not be unlike Paul to compress complementary and overlapping ideas into a streamlined construction (the most famous of which is “the righteousness of God,” not to mention “the obedience of faith”).

If we ask what in this context would account for Paul’s peculiar turn of phrase, the answer is readily at hand, in Rom 6:17-18: “But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, *having been set free from sin*, have become slaves of righteousness” (NRSV). In this parallel (neglected by Piper), we have a clue to the unusual and almost unprecedented locution, “justify from.”

To pick up from my earlier study of justification, the motif of liberation from a captive power is entirely explicable within the cadre of the righteousness of God as his saving activity to redeem Israel from her oppressors. As Wright explains, in the setting of the Prophets, God is the judge. Israel comes before him to plead her case against the wicked pagans who are oppressing her. She longs for her case to come to court, for God to hear it, and, in his own righteousness, to deliver her from her enemies. She longs, that is, to be justified, acquitted, vindicated. And because the God who is the judge is also her covenant God, she pleads with him; be faithful to your covenant! Vindicate me in your righteousness!¹⁸⁵

In Paul, all this is transposed into the “higher octave” of what God has done in Christ at the turning of the ages—his own “eschatological courtroom.” The actual enemy of believers is not Babylon (or Egypt) but Satan himself. He is the strong man who held them in the bondage of sin (Matthew 12:29; Luke 11:21-22); he is “the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night” (Revelation 12:10; cf. Romans 8:33-34a). It is this cluster of ideas which is embodied by δικαιόω. If God’s righteousness is “his intervention in a saving act on behalf of his people,” then the passive voice of the verb means “to be an object of the saving righteousness of God (so as to be well-pleasing to him at the judgment).”¹⁸⁶ When God in Christ intervenes to save his covenant partners, he plants them again in the newly created land, the new heavens and earth, never to be removed. This is “salvation” in the pregnant sense of the term:

¹⁸³ Ibid., n. 129.

¹⁸⁴ See my “Justification by Faith,” 55-58 (passim); *Galatians*, 103-8; *Faith, Obedience*, 56-71.

¹⁸⁵ Wright, *Saint Paul*, 98-99.

¹⁸⁶ Motyer, “Righteousness,” 48.

deliverance from evil and the bestowal of “peace” on a redeemed people. In short, justification in Paul signals deliverance from exile and freedom from bondage. One of the clearest indications is the relationship of Romans 6:7 and 18. In the former verse, δικαιόω is literally translated “justified from sin.” As such, it forms a parallelism with the verb “liberated from sin” (ἐλευθερώω) in 6:18. The parallel is best preserved by rendering 6:7 as “freed from sin.” Therefore, when Paul writes of justification, he characteristically has in mind the new exodus on which the latter-day people of God have embarked. Moreover, this saving righteousness is cosmic in its dimensions. At the end of the day, “the righteousness of God” is actively directed at the rescue of the creation.

Schreiner’s exposition of Rom 6:7 is very much in accord with the one represented herein. According to Schreiner, the verb “justified” δεδικαίωται (perfect tense) is not merely forensic in v. 7, as is clear from the way the entire proposition of v. 7 relates to v. 6. The argument, he writes, seems to be that *righteousness necessarily involves freedom from the power of sin.*

This point is crucial for Paul’s argument. Justification cannot be separated from sanctification.... Only those who have died with Christ are righteous and thereby are enabled to conquer the mastery of sin. Many commentators have struggled with the use of δεδικαίωται in a context in which power over sin is the theme because they invariably limit justification to being declared righteous. The use of the verb in this context, however, suggests that *righteousness is more than forensic in Paul. Those who are in a right relation to God have also been dramatically changed; they have also been made righteous.* This is confirmed by the language of being enslaved to righteousness (cf. 6:18, 20, 22); believers have been transformed by the Spirit (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:8-9)....¹⁸⁷

Some may be surprised that John Murray comes remarkably close to the understanding of Rom 6:7 advocated by the proponents of the “new paradigm.” Far from sharply bifurcating justification and freedom from sin, Murray proposes the following:

“Justified from sin” will have to bear the forensic meaning in view of the forensic import of the word “justify”. But since the context deals with deliverance from the power of sin the thought is, no doubt, that of being “quit” of sin. The decisive breach with the reigning power of sin is viewed after the analogy of the kind of dismissal which a judge gives when an arraigned person is justified. Sin has no further claim upon the person who is thus vindicated. This judicial aspect from which deliverance from the power of sin is to be viewed needs to be appreciated. It shows that the forensic is present not only in justification but also in that which lies at the basis of sanctification. A judgment is executed upon the power of sin in

¹⁸⁷ Schreiner, *Romans*, 319, italics mine. In his exposition of Rom 1:17, Schreiner argues in detail that δικαιόω is both forensic and transformational (ibid., 64-69; also Osborne, *Romans*, 154-55). It is regrettable that Schreiner later changed his mind (*Paul: Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* [Downers Grove: Apollos, 2001], 189-217). He was right the first time!

the death of Christ (cf. John 12:31) and deliverance from this power on the part of the believer arises from the efficacy of this judgment. This also prepares us for the interpretation of the forensic terms which Paul uses later in 8:1, 3, namely, “condemnation” and “condemned”, and shows that *these terms may likewise point to that which Christ once for all wrought in reference to the power of sin (8:3) and to our deliverance from this power in virtue of the judgment executed upon it in Jesus’ cross (8:1).*¹⁸⁸

At the end of the day, whatever we make precisely of the expression “justify from” on the semantic plane, on the conceptual level the intention is clear enough: δικαιοῶ is the functional equivalent of ἐλευθερώω. In the act of justification, we have been “set free from” sin, in both its legal and behavioral effects, and have become enslaved to righteousness.¹⁸⁹ Δικαιοῶ is thus seen to be flexible enough to overlap with ἐλευθερώω.

Acts 13:38-39 presents us with the same ambiguity as Rom 6:17, and commentators are divided along the same lines as before. C. K. Barrett is of the opinion that δικαιοῶ followed by *apo* does not bear its “usual Pauline forensic sense,” but rather means something like “release from.”¹⁹⁰ Witherington rightly remarks that the language of justification and faith in Christ echoes the basic Pauline message, but in the sense that “Jesus sets one free from all sins.”¹⁹¹ Schrenk too takes the verb to signify liberation.¹⁹² On the other hand, F. F. Bruce thinks that δικαιοῶ is “justify” and should not have its force “weakened” by the rendering “be freed.”¹⁹³ J. A. Fitzmyer agrees.¹⁹⁴

Once more, we may opt for one understanding or the other, or it may be, as suggested above, that Paul’s language is telescoped, so as to include both justification and liberation (I would add that the translation “freed from” is hardly a “weakened sense,” as in Bruce’s estimation). In any event, that v. 38 makes reference to the forgiveness of sins hardly clinches Piper’s exclusive translations of “acquitted from” or “forgiven for.” If we are forgiven, we are, by definition, no longer in bondage to sin. Moreover, in the setting of the Hebrew covenant (remember, Paul is here speaking to Jews), forgiveness is always with a view to restoration to covenant privileges and responsibilities. It is vital to recall that even in those instances in the LXX where δικαιοῶ is strongly forensic, Ziesler reminds us that it is forensic in the *Hebrew* sense, that is, the verb signifies “restoration of the community or covenant relationship, and thus cannot be separated from the ethical altogether. The restoration is not merely to a standing, but to an existence in the relationship.”¹⁹⁵

(5) Gathercole’s challenge to the NPP revolves around the notion of “boasting” in Romans 1-4. Gathercole has amply demonstrated that boasting in the Judaism prior to

¹⁸⁸ Murray, *Romans*, 1.222, italics mine.

¹⁸⁹ See further Schrenk, *TDNT*, 2.218.

¹⁹⁰ Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 1.650.

¹⁹¹ Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 413-14.

¹⁹² Schrenk, *TDNT*, 2.218.

¹⁹³ Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 312.

¹⁹⁴ Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 518.

¹⁹⁵ Ziesler, *Righteousness*, 20.

and contemporary with Paul entails two elements: election/national privileges and actual performance of the Torah. His book serves as a useful and welcomed corrective to an imbalance on the part of some practitioners of the New Perspective. As he notes many times, there has been a tendency to play up sociological matters (Jewish distinctiveness and self-identity) and to play down the Torah's own requirement that one really and truly "do the law." Probably, the divide between the two on the part of certain notable scholars is not as stark as Gathercole would have us believe. Nevertheless, to the degree that he has redressed the balance in favor of a reading of Judaism and Paul that more accurately reflects the actual data, we are in his debt.

The strength of his work is that he has placed it beyond doubt that boasting in the Torah entails performance, actual doing of the law, and is not restricted to the badges of Israel's election. On the problematic side, Gathercole continues to perpetuate some of the same wrongheaded ideas about the character of Second Temple Judaism as his many of his predecessors. Germane to the argument is that Jewish boasting is bad because it entails "performance," as taken in the disapproved sense of "earning salvation." I would submit that boasting in performance is not necessarily a bad thing and that Gathercole has placed too negative a spin on the activity in question. His tack overlooks a noteworthy text such as Psalm 119, in which the psalmist "boasts" over and over again. He makes no bones about it: he has loved the law of God and has kept its statutes. Other psalmists rejoice in the fact that Yahweh has rewarded them according to their righteousness and integrity (Ps 7:8; 18:20, 24). Just as striking, Paul, in Gal 6:4, commends boasting in one's own work, as opposed to denigrating the character of others. Ultimately, the believer's boast is in Christ and his cross (Gal 6:14); but stemming from this boast is the ability to perform such "work" (ἔργον) as one may glory in.¹⁹⁶ In Romans 2, Paul's problem with the interlocutor is not that he boasts as such, but that the object of his boasting is wrong: instead of the Torah, his boast should be in Christ. This becomes evident as one keeps reading further in the letter. In representing Jewish boasting in the manner he does, Gathercole treads the same path as D. A. Carson's study of divine sovereignty.¹⁹⁷ That is to say, Jewish attitudes are made to exist in a kind of time-warp between the two Testaments, in which people lapsed into a retrograde legalism. For such scholars, the "intertestamental period" serves as a convenient foil for various theses pertaining to NT theology.

A fundamental flaw of this thesis is that Gathercole, like other scholars of his persuasion, tends to abstract Jewish "works" or "obedience" from the covenant. To be sure, he is not unaware of the factor of covenant and often enough speaks of obedience in covenantal terms. Nevertheless, practically speaking, a notable distancing of obedience from covenant is in evidence. As Dunn reminds us, Sanders did not characterize Judaism solely as a "covenantal" religion, because the key phrase he chose conveyed a double

¹⁹⁶ See my treatment of the passage in "Burden Bearing and the Recovery of Offending Christians (Galatians 6:1-5)," *TrinJ* ns 12 (1991), 178-82.

¹⁹⁷ Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension* (New Foundations Theological Library; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1981). Gathercole seconds Carson's claim that, in the Jewish sources, God responds to the "merit" of Israel (*Boasting*, 15). The problem is that what Carson calls "merit" is actually the people's required response to the covenant. If God responds to "merit" in the postbiblical materials, then the same must be true of Deut 28:1-14. But, we may presume, neither Carson nor Gathercole wants to go there.

emphasis—“covenantal nomism.” And Sanders made it clear that the second emphasis was not to be neglected. But given the traditional emphasis on Judaism’s “nomism,” it is hardly surprising that Sanders should have placed greater emphasis on the “covenantal” element in the twin emphasis, though in his central summary statements he clearly recognized that both emphases were integral to Judaism’s self-understanding.¹⁹⁸ It is just this balance of “covenant” and “nomism” that is lacking in Gathercole’s presentation of the materials. Consequently, he persists with the old notion that the Judaism contemporary with Paul was self-reliant and exhibited no real sense of dependence on the grace and mercy of God. Many examples could be cited to the contrary, but here I would refer only to a couple of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS 11:1-3, 5, 11-12, 13-15; 1QH 4:30-33; 7:30-31; 13:17) and the considerable penitential prayer tradition of Second Temple Judaism.¹⁹⁹

Apart from effectively disjoining law from covenant, Gathercole has not appreciated *the implications of covenant as the matrix of obedience*. Particularly given the setting of Deuteronomy, the Sinai covenant was established by grace and maintained by grace. The declaration of Deut 5:6, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery,” roots the covenant in none other than “redemptive grace.” Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures generally, the pervasive metaphors of father/son and husband/wife, to depict Israel’s relationship to Yahweh, carry connotations of love, intimacy and *enablement*. If Gathercole and others are prepared to charge Jews of this period with a kind of autosoterism, then Deut 30:11-14 is liable to the same accusation. Says Moses: “*You can do it*” (v. 14)! But, of course, the underlying assumption is that one can do the law as enabled by the Lord of the covenant himself. To suppose that Second Temple Jews were unaware of the way the covenant operates makes for presuppositionalism, not historical objectivity. It is only an effective bifurcation of covenant and obedience that sparks the quantum leap from works as the precondition of final salvation to “earning salvation” and “synergism.”

Similarly, Gathercole’s essay on Lev 18:5 marshals numerous texts to demonstrate that in Jewish interpretation “life” goes beyond the original scope of Leviticus to include the age to come.²⁰⁰ His findings serve as a corrective to those scholars who would restrict life to the Deuteronomic lengthening of days in the land. In fact, this exegetical tradition forms a transition into Paul’s application of Lev 18:5 to eternal life in Christ in Gal 3:12.

On the cautionary side, Gathercole’s argument requires qualification in several areas. (1) The promissory and regulatory functions of the Torah are not to be played off

¹⁹⁸ From Dunn’s review of *Justification and Variegated Nomism I*, *Trinity Journal* ns 25 (2004), 111.

¹⁹⁹ See R. A. Werline, *Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism: The Development of a Religious Institution* (SBLEJL 13; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998). Werline’s work is completely overlooked by Gathercole. That these and other prayers were rooted in biblical texts has been shown by M. J. Boda, *Praying the Tradition: The Origin and Use of Tradition in Nehemiah 9* (BZAW 277; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999); J. H. Newman, *Praying by the Book: The Scripturalization of Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (SBLEJL 14; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999). A penitential prayer consultation has been established at the annual meeting of Society of Biblical Literature. Papers and bibliographies can be accessed online at: <http://macdiv.ca/prayer>.

²⁰⁰ Gathercole, “Torah, Life and Salvation: The Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and Christianity,” *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. C. A. Evans; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 126-145.

against one another (as in his treatment of Bar 4:1), as though both dimensions cannot coexist. (2) As in his *Boasting*, Gathercole posits that there is a “frequent tension” in Jewish literature that salvation is based both on Torah-obedience and God’s gracious election. At this point, we need to be informed by Yinger’s study, which rightly concludes that there is no actual tension between grace/election and obedience: both exist quite harmoniously side by side. The tension is only in the minds of Western (systematic) theologians. (3) Gathercole maintains that Paul is in dialogue with a Judaism that thought in terms of obedience, final judgment and eternal life, not a Judaism merely organized around sin, repentance, forgiveness, exile and restoration. True enough. But the danger here is one of falsely bifurcating categories that actually overlap to a considerable degree. In particular, obedience resulting in eternal life is focused precisely on the return from exile, when the definitive forgiveness of sins would take place (Jer 31:34). In any event, obedience, in Jewish thinking, is not tantamount to “earning salvation” or “legalism,” but rather the fulfillment of covenant responsibilities, which is tantamount to faithfulness to the God of the covenant.

(6) Faith alone? Reaction to the NPP has developed along several lines. But the most aggressive opposition has come from the Reformed camp respecting the slogan *sola fidei*; and understandably, a perception that “faith alone” is under attack would call forth a strong response. However, the problem is the *perception*, not what has actually been advanced by proponents of the NPP. In point of fact, there has been a knee jerk reaction that has resulted in the defaming, no less, of individuals such as Dunn and Wright.

By way of brief “justification” of the NPP on this point, I know of none of its advocates who would seriously entertain the idea that human works “contribute to salvation” (“synergism”). Rather, the NPP is rooted in the architecture of biblical eschatology. Though commonplace and hackneyed at this point in time, it is necessary to reiterate that salvation history transpires in terms of an *Already* and a *Not Yet*. The work of Christ has been *inaugurated* by his first coming and will be *consummated* at his *parousia*. This schema might appear to be too simple and too obvious to call for any comment. However, it is just this fundamental datum that has been either bypassed or suppressed in the contemporary debates respecting faith and justification. On the part of many, there has been a failure to recognize that salvation is not finally complete until, in Paul’s words, we are eschatologically “saved by his life” (Rom 5:10).

Rom 5:9-10 stands out as fundamentally paradigmatic for Paul’s soteriology, and yet it has been surprisingly neglected in the whole “New Perspective” debate. According to Paul’s formulation:

V. 9: If we have been justified by Christ’s blood, then (how much more) shall we be saved from (eschatological) wrath.

V. 10: If we have been reconciled by Christ’s death, then (how much more) shall we be saved by his (resurrection) life.

I have treated the passage elsewhere.²⁰¹ Suffice it to say here that the past redemptive event in Christ has given rise to hope in the believer, a hope which has as its primary focus the future eschatological consummation of the new creation. Or, as Neil

²⁰¹ Garlington, *Faith, Obedience*, 74-79.

Elliott puts it, vv. 9-10 “relocate the soteriological fulcrum in the apocalyptic future: the gracious justification and reconciliation of the impious is made the basis for sure hope in the salvation to come.”²⁰² Paul thus polarizes past and future as the epochal stages of the salvation experience, with the assurance that although the consummation of redemption is still outstanding, the believer can take comfort that God’s purposes cannot fail.

In this argument “from the lesser to the greater” (*a minori ad majus* or the rabbinic *qal wahomer*), Paul asserts that Christ’s sacrifice must eventuate in the final salvation of his people in order to accomplish its goal. The salvific process is commenced with present justification, but it will not be consummated until we are finally saved. And “the process of consummating the work of salvation is more like an obstacle course than a downhill ride to the finish line. For the destiny of Christians does not go unchallenged in a world opposed to God’s purposes. The powers of evil in the form of afflictions and trials threaten continuity in their salvation.”²⁰³ Thus, Cranfield’s remark that deliverance from eschatological wrath is, in relation to justification, “very easy” fails to appreciate the formidable nature of the “obstacle course.”²⁰⁴ Given the “tribulations” (Rom 5:3) that attend the life of faith this side of the resurrection, the great thing, from the perspective of the present passage, is yet to be accomplished.

It is none other than this Already/Not Yet paradigm that underlies Paul’s explicit statement that it is the “doers of the law” who will be justified in eschatological judgment (Rom 2:13; cf. Jas 1:22). Again, detailed commentary has already been provided.²⁰⁵ It is only to be noted here that “doing the law” is tantamount to perseverance, in keeping particularly with Lev 18:5 and Deut 4:1, 10, 40; 5:29-33; 6:1-2, 18, 24; 7:12-13, all of which provide the semantic origin for Paul’s own language (cf. Luke 8:15).²⁰⁶ Scholars such as Yinger and Gathercole are quite right that the language is realistically intentioned and far from hypothetical: there is a phase of justification that is yet outstanding. As Brendan Byrne formulates the matter:

The process [of justification] is not complete. Though they [believers] stand acquitted in a forensic sense, the obedience of Christ is yet to run its full course in them; they yet hang with him upon the cross (Gal 2:19). The process of justification will only be complete in them, as it is in him, when it finds public, bodily expression in the resurrection-existence, the “revelation of the sons of God” (Rom 8:18-21).²⁰⁷

²⁰² Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul’s Dialogue with Judaism* (JSNTSup 45; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 229. See further Beker, *Paul*, 176-81.

²⁰³ J. M. Gundry Volf, *Paul and Perseverance: Staying In and Falling Away* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 81. G. C. Berkouwer also identifies continuity in salvation as the central problem of perseverance (*Faith and Perseverance* [Studies in Dogmatics; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958], 12).

²⁰⁴ Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.266.

²⁰⁵ Garlington, *Faith, Obedience*, 44-71; Gathercole, *Boasting*, 124-34; Yinger, *Paul*, 143-82.

²⁰⁶ The terminology is picked up by several Jewish sources. 1 Macc 2:67 employs the exact phrase “the doers of the law” (τοὺς ποιητὰς τοῦ νόμου) to designate loyalist Jews who would be vindicated against the Gentiles by divine justice. Similarly, 1QHab (7:11; 8:1; 12:4-5) speaks of “the doers of the law” as those who observe the community’s *halakoth*.

²⁰⁷ Byrne, “Living Out the Righteousness of God: The Contribution of Rom 6:1-8:13 to an Understanding of Paul’s Ethical Presuppositions,” *CBQ* 43 (1981), 578.

I hasten to add that synergism or some such notion of “contributing to salvation” is hardly in view; it is, rather, “righteousness,” or the expected conformity of one’s faith and life to the demands of the covenant. One may legitimately talk of obedience as the precondition of eschatological justification, or perhaps better, vindication. Yet “obedience,” in the Jewish context, is but *faithful perseverance* and the avoidance of idolatry. At stake is not “works” in any pejorative sense, but one’s loyalty to Christ from conversion to death. Such is of the essence of biblical faith. What counts for Paul is being and remaining in Christ. If for the sake of a theological formulation we wish to categorize Paul’s thought, then the “basis” of justification, now and in the judgment, is *union with Christ*. I would hasten to add that obedience as the precondition of eschatological justification is no more radical than Paul’s similar demand of confession of Christ as the prerequisite of final salvation (Rom 10:9-10).

So, what about *sola fide*? Catholic exegetes are quick to point out that the only place in the NT where the words “faith” and “alone” occur together is Jas 2:24: “You see that a person is justified by works and *not by faith alone!*” The point is well taken and needs to be pondered much more carefully by Protestant interpreters. If that had been the case, the supposed tension between James and Paul, especially on the part of Lutheran commentators, would have been never arisen. The simple answer is that Paul’s *sola fide* includes *the obedience of faith*. Among various indications, the phrase of Rom 1:17, ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, very naturally plays on the two-sided nature of the Hebrew אמונה. That is to say, the Christian life commences with “faith” and develops into “faithfulness.”

In commenting on Paul’s call to the Thessalonians, “Let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober” (1 Thess 5:6), G. Green offers the perceptive comment that this is a (I would say the) fundamental aspect of Christian ethics: “What we are is what we should do.” Because believers *are* of the light, then they must not sleep but keep awake and be sober. This moral exhortation, writes Green, finds its roots in the previous work of God in our lives.²⁰⁸ This is the familiar indicative and the imperative in Paul: become what you are.²⁰⁹ To some, this sounds like a contradiction: if salvation comes by way of a gift, then how can it make any demands? However, if at least one historical label can be evoked, such is classic antinomianism—the idea that grace cannot entail obligation. But this is not Paul’s doctrine of salvation by grace, because “God’s *claim* is regarded by the apostles as a constitutive part of God’s *gift*. The Pauline concept of grace is *inclusive of* the Pauline concept of obedience.”²¹⁰ And: “Since the imperative is integral to the indicative, the summons of Christian ethics becomes, ‘Act what you are’.”²¹¹

There are other signals as well. J.-M. Cambier has assembled some illuminating parallels between Romans and the other Paulines.²¹² As Rom 2:7, Col 1:10-11 links ὑπομονή with ἔργον ἀγαθόν, thus placing the terms in a distinctively Christian context. We might say that the believer’s “good work” (cf. 2 Thess 2:17; 2 Cor 9:8) *is* his

²⁰⁸ Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 237.

²⁰⁹ Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 626-31 (with further literature); Ridderbos, *Paul*, 253-58.

²¹⁰ V. P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 225, italics his.

²¹¹ Green, *Thessalonians*, 238.

²¹² Cambier, “Le jugement de tous les hommes par Dieu seul, selon la vérité, dans Rom 2:1-3:20,” *ZNW* 67 (1976), 190-93.

“perseverance,” corresponding to the creation pattern evident in Romans 2. Again, confirmation is to be had from Deut 30:15: “I have set before you this day *life and good, death and evil*,” an admonition integrally related to Israel’s decision whether to obey or not. Cambier himself notes that ὑπομονή designates the Christian life in a manner very characteristic of Paul. In 1 Thess 1:3, the term is joined with the triad πίστις-ἀγάπη-ἐλπίς in Paul’s praise of his readers’ “work of faith, labor of love and endurance of hope” (cf. 2 Thess 1:4). Likewise, 2 Thess 3:5 is Paul’s prayer that God would direct their hearts into the love of God and into the endurance of Christ: “The love of God in the hearts of believers is concretely the ὑπομονή of Christ which the believer lives in gentle and humble service for the benefit of his brethren.”²¹³ Paul can epitomize his own life and ministry as existence ἐν ὑπομονῇ πολλῇ: his acceptance of obstacles and difficulties “with endurance” is his faith in action.²¹⁴ Hence, the ὑπομονή ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ of Rom 2:7 for Paul is nothing but “the work of faith” (1 Thess 1:3) or “faith working through love” (Gal 5:6).²¹⁵ “For every Christian the...endurance (ὑπομονή) of trials and of the limitations of our human condition is an expression of solid faith, of hope and the love which has been given him by the Holy Spirit.”²¹⁶

Of particular note in Romans is 5:1-5—especially its conjunction of justification and the ὑπομονή which produces both δοκιμή (v. 4) and ἐλπίς (v. 5). The last mentioned does not expose us to (eschatological) shame, because God’s ἀγάπη has been poured into our hearts (v. 5). If one is permitted to cite James in relation to Paul (!): “Blessed is the man who *endures* trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who *love* him” (1:12).²¹⁷ Conspicuous here is the combination of perseverance and love as the preconditions of eternal life. In short, the obedience of faith which finally justifies is for Paul, as well as James, persevering “faith working by love.”²¹⁸ In line with both Paul and James, Heb 10:24 also exhorts Christians to stir one another up to *love and good works*.

All this simply boils down to the character of a biblical covenant. Every covenant is established unilaterally by the sovereign grace of God; and yet the human partner to the

²¹³ Ibid., 191. This runs counter to Sanders’ claim that it is “un-Pauline to require good works” (*Paul, the Law*, 129).

²¹⁴ Cambier, “judgement,” 191.

²¹⁵ It may be objected that faith in Rom 2:1-3:8 is conspicuous by its absence. However, that would be a failure to appreciate that faith is implicit in the ὑπομονή of which Paul speaks. The pursuit of glory, honor and immortality is one of *faithful* endurance.

²¹⁶ Cambier, “judgement,” 191-92.

²¹⁷ As stated above, I would submit that Paul and James are on the same page. See J. B. Adamson, *James: The Man and His Message* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 203-10, 266-307. The essential point of Jas 2:21-26 is that Genesis 22 represents the fulfillment (complement) of Abraham’s faith as recorded by Gen 15:6. Actually, both passages have to do with the patriarch’s fidelity in testing situations, as supported by James’ reference to “the perseverance of Job” in 5:11.

²¹⁸ In Fitzmyer’s words: “Paul certainly does not mean that human beings can be justified by love alone; *but can they be without it?*” As he continues, Paul’s “last word” in Galatians (6:11-18) sums up the meaning of the cross without any explicit reference to righteousness/justification, or even to faith. This leads Fitzmyer to conclude: “To me, at least, it shows that ‘the cross’ can be expressed without such recourse and that it has other aspects significant for human existence and salvation than merely justification by grace through faith” (“The Biblical Basis of Justification by Faith: Comments on the Essay of Professor Reumann,” in John Reumann, *Righteousness in the New Testament: “Justification” in the United States Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue, with Responses by Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Jerome D. Quinn* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 209, italics mine).

covenant is far from a nonentity. Quite the contrary, both privileges and obligations are entailed in covenant membership.²¹⁹ It is just the Christian believer's fidelity to the (new) covenant relationship that eventuates in eschatological justification. Such is far from synergism or autosoterism, simply because the covenant is established by grace and maintained by grace. By virtue of God's free gift of Christ and the Spirit (e.g., Rom 5:15-17; 8:1-17; 2 Cor 9:15), the Christian is enabled to bring forth fruit with perseverance out of a good and noble heart (Luke 8:15). The believer's righteousness, therefore, is none other than his/her conformity to the covenant relationship and its standards. This is *both* a righteousness that comes "from God" (Phil 3:9) *and* a righteousness that forms the precondition of eschatological vindication (Matt 12:33-37; Rom 2:13 [= Ps 18:20; 24; 62:12; Prov 24:12]; Jas 2:14-26). As Yinger has shown, the notion of an eschatological vindication based on the "works," or better, "the fruit of the Spirit" borne by the Christian (Gal 5:22-24) is simply in line with OT and Jewish precedents.²²⁰

Traditionally, Protestant theology has had grave reservations about connecting works of any sort with the ultimate justification/vindication of the believer. Nevertheless, writing of Jesus' own teaching on judgment, I defer to Scot McKnight:

Jesus should...not be made subservient to the Reformation; his theology stands on its own in its thoroughly Jewish context. Reformation theology needs to answer to Jesus, not Jesus to it. Jesus did not talk about earning salvation; he talked about what covenant members are obliged to do (or strive to do) if they wish to be faithful.²²¹

IV. Appendix: Righteousness as Covenant Fidelity

I would maintain my (and other scholars') contention that righteousness consists in covenant fidelity, in spite of Mark Seifrid's spirited arguments to the contrary.²²² In essence, Seifrid's missteps are two. (1) There is the metrological flaw of subjecting the words "righteousness" and "covenant" to a mere statistical tabulation of their concurrences in the Hebrew Scriptures (seven times), without discerning the infrastructure of how a covenant works. A sample passages indicative of this infrastructure, as ignored by Seifrid, is 1 Sam 26:23: "The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness." Here, the two terms are in parallel and are tantamount to each other.

(2) There is a failure to perceive the intertextual relationship of the seven passages in which righteousness and covenant are explicitly linked.²²³ Viewed

²¹⁹ See S. McKnight, *A New Vision for Israel: The Teachings of Jesus in National Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 33-39.

²²⁰ Yinger, *Paul*, 19-140.

²²¹ McKnight, *New Vision*, 34.

²²² Seifrid, "Righteousness Language in the Hebrew Scriptures and Early Judaism," *Justification and Variegated Nomism I*, 415-42. I have responded in detail to Seifrid in my *Defense*, 66-97.

²²³ Intertextuality is not so easy to define formally, but the gist of it is that later passages of Scripture echo earlier ones. This field of study is one of the hot buttons of hermeneutics at present. Among the mounds of literature, see R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); D. C. Allison, *The Intertextual Jesus: Scripture in Q* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000).

intertextually, there can be detected an intermingling of righteousness and covenant as embedded in the consciousness of scriptural authors. There is, in point of fact, a covenant theology that pervades the Hebrew Scriptures and constitutes an axiom among its various writers.²²⁴ If I may quote myself:

The seven passages just examined demonstrate that the correspondence of righteousness and covenant is far from casual or incidental. In point of fact, the notion of covenant forms the indispensable context and subtext of the talk of righteousness. Each of the seven presupposes and echoes previous strands of biblical tradition, and each seeks to apply to its own day foundational concepts reaching back into the earliest stages of Israel's nationhood. Statistically speaking, one may argue, as Seifrid does, that seven texts do not a major motif make. But the passages in question are not to be relegated to the status of prooftexts, as Seifrid is in danger of doing. A mere lexical analysis is insufficient to assess the fundamental significance of ideas that form the substrata and axioms of OT biblical theology. If anything, these passages take us to the heart of what covenant theology is all about—righteousness as the fidelity required of both the divine and human partners of the marriage bond that bears the name of *berith*.²²⁵

Schreiner, somewhat inconsistently I should think, aligns himself with Seifrid by denying that righteousness *is* covenant faithfulness.²²⁶ To say, as he does, that God's righteousness is a fulfillment of his covenantal promises but is not to be defined *as* his covenantal loyalty is, at best, an exercise in hair splitting (as is true of Seifrid also). It is surely impressive the OT writers reason in the concrete, not the abstract. For example, the psalmist's cry to be delivered in God's "righteousness" matches up with his recognition of the Lord's "righteous acts," "deeds of salvation" and "mighty deeds," because of which he will praise the Lord's "righteousness" (Ps 71:1-2, 15-18). Here, the author precisely equates righteousness and deliverance, as grounded in the Lord's commitment to his faithful ones. What else could it be? Another very telling indication that God's righteousness consists in his fidelity to the covenant is that δικαιοσύνη, in the LXX, serves to translate words associated with the צדקה/צדק group, mainly חסד (e.g., Gen 19:19; 20:13; 21:23) and אמה (e.g., Gen 24:49; Josh 24:14; Isa 38:19). On the negative side, it is the righteousness of God that compels him to punish the wicked (Ps 50:4-6; 97:2-5; Isa 10:22 ["destruction is decreed, *overflowing with righteousness*"]; 59:17; Lam 1:18; Wis 12:15-16). In this vein, the Prayer of Azariah commences with an acknowledgment of the justice of God's judgment against a covenant-breaking people (vv. 4-5, 8-9). God, according to Azariah, is δίκαιος, i.e., he is "righteous" because he has upheld his covenant threats to punish a disloyal nation.²²⁷ Cf. Neh 9:33; Tob 3:2; Add Esth 14:6-7; 1QS 1:26. I would agree with Schreiner (following John Piper) that God

²²⁴ See my *Defense*, esp. 71-82.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

²²⁶ Schreiner, *Romans*, 69.

²²⁷ See Moo, *Romans*, 83; Garlington, *Obedience*, 192-95.

saves his people for the sake of his name;²²⁸ yet it is illegitimate to bifurcate the glory of God's name and his righteousness as covenant commitment. Surely his name is most glorified by the display of his faithfulness to his covenant partners (even when he must punish them).

As for Paul himself, Schreiner too quickly dismisses Rom 3:1-8 from consideration. True, the passage contains its difficulties; but the root of the matter is plain enough. In a phase of Romans in which Paul is dialoging with contemporary Israel, these verses carry the dialogue to a final step. Paul here qualifies that being Jewish does indeed have advantages, particularly as regards being entrusted with "the oracles of God" (cf. Sir 1:15; 'Abot 1:1). But this is so only if Israel is faithful, which Paul denies, at least in the case of "some" (v. 3). Here he poses what will become the key issue of chaps. 9-11, viz., the faithfulness of God. Israel by and large has proven unfaithful by not believing the gospel; yet their infidelity does not nullify God's faithfulness to save the remnant of his people. However, the negative side of God's faithfulness is his determination to inflict wrath upon the disobedient (unbelieving). It is this principle which Israel must acknowledge, otherwise how could God judge the world (one of Israel's prime assumptions)?

By way of comeback, Paul's opponent resorts to what he sees as the *reductio ad absurdum* of his position. If Paul is right that the Jew will be the recipient of God's wrath (the punitive side of his covenant fidelity), then why is the Jew condemned as a "Gentile sinner." That is to say, since his infidelity, as Paul calls it, has abounded to God's glory, why is the Jew being treated on equal terms with the Gentile? Surely his condemnation must be greater than that! Surely he must promote God's glory to a degree which Gentiles could never do! Apparently, this is a question that Paul actually encountered in the synagogue. Hand in hand goes the equally blasphemous assertion that one should do evil that good might result, i.e., the good of God's glory in the demonstration of his wrath; those within the covenant might as well overthrow their covenant commitments altogether. The whole rebuttal, then, is to the effect that if Paul is right, there is no advantage to being Jewish, except to further the glory of God by intense disobedience! Paul will provide a methodical answer in chaps. 9-11. At this point, however, he simply replies that those who make such charges deserve to be condemned, because their attitude proves their actual infidelity to their God, in spite of their claims.

Especially outstanding is the usage of Ps 51:4 in v. 4: "That you may be justified in your words and may prevail when you are judged." In the original setting, David's penitential Psalm, he confesses that God's treatment of him is perfectly just, because he has engaged in sins which were in such grievous contradiction to the covenant and more especially to his role as the king of Israel. By applying the Psalm to Israel, Paul is implicating his contemporaries in the sin of spiritual adultery, i.e., the idolatry of nation and Torah. As stated just above, the Jews were complaining of the treatment they were receiving by Paul's gospel. It appeared to them that if Paul was right, God had in fact abandoned his covenant-keeping people, in which case they might as well sin to the full and stop trying to please Yahweh by performing the Torah. In reacting this way, they effectively were bringing charges against God, the one who commissioned Paul to preach

²²⁸ Schreiner, *Romans*, 69-71; J. Piper, "The Demonstration of the Righteousness of God in Romans 3.25, 26," *The Pauline Writings* (The Biblical Seminar 34; eds. S. E. Porter and C. A. Evans; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 175-202, esp. 191-99.

such a gospel. Unlike David, the Israel of Paul's day was unwilling to accept as just this God's dealings with them. Nevertheless, God ultimately will be vindicated; and it is the overall burden of the Roman letter, particularly of chaps. 9-11, precisely to vindicate him. Romans, then, is most pointedly Paul's theodicy, his justification of the ways of God to Israel. Perhaps the most succinct statement of Paul's theodicy is 3:26: God remains righteous *even while justifying the one who has faith in Jesus* (εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον καὶ δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ.).²²⁹

It is especially to be noted that in 3:1-8 that Paul uses explicit (biblical) terms for fidelity and infidelity.

Τί οὖν τὸ περισσὸν τοῦ Ἰουδαίου ἢ τίς ἡ ὠφέλεια τῆς περιτομῆς; πολὺ κατὰ πάντα τρόπον. πρῶτον μὲν [γὰρ] ὅτι ἐπιστεῦθησαν τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ. τί γὰρ; εἰ ἠπίστησάν τινες, μὴ ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργήσει; μὴ γένοιτο· γινέσθω δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἀληθής, πᾶς δὲ ἄνθρωπος ψεύστης, καθὼς γέγραπται,

Ὅπως ἂν δικαιωθῆς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σου
καὶ νικήσεις ἐν τῷ κρίνεσθαί σε.

εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀδικία ἡμῶν θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην συνίστησιν, τί ἐροῦμεν; μὴ ἄδικος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἐπιφέρων τὴν ὀργήν; κατὰ ἄνθρωπον λέγω. μὴ γένοιτο· ἐπεὶ πῶς κρίνει ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον; εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ ψεύσματι ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, τί ἔτι καγὼ ὡς ἁμαρτωλὸς κρίνομαι; καὶ μὴ καθὼς βλασφημούμεθα καὶ καθὼς φασίν τινες ἡμᾶς λέγειν ὅτι Ποιήσωμεν τὰ κακὰ, ἵνα ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀγαθὰ; ὧν τὸ κρίμα ἔνδικόν ἐστιν.

It is just the theodicy motif that forms the bedrock of the Roman letter. Hays has it exactly right: "The driving question in Romans is not 'How can I find a gracious God?' but 'How can we trust in this allegedly gracious God if he abandons his promises to Israel'."²³⁰ Theodicy, or the endeavor "to justify the ways of God to men" (Milton), means that *God has remained faithful to Israel, in spite of appearances to the contrary*. Or, to put it another way, Paul's vindicates the faithfulness of God to Israel, notwithstanding his reception of the Gentiles by faith alone and the apparent abandonment of his promises to Israel. The problem of God's fidelity, for the first-century Israelite, was that God had promised to be Israel's God as long as she remained faithful to the covenant. Accordingly, the nation had striven to renounce all outside influences and to uphold her distinct identity as Yahweh's people. However, Paul's gospel seemed to contradict the Scriptures themselves. Not only were the Gentiles, who had no regard for the law, being admitted into God's new covenant apart from circumcision and a commitment to the Torah, according to Paul, the ancient people themselves will be rejected if they refuse to believe in a crucified Messiah, i.e., one executed by his own people as an apostate and reprobate.

²²⁹ The participle δικαιοῦντα, especially as it is preceded by καί, is concessive.

²³⁰ Hays, *Echoes*, 53. See additionally Watts, "Not Ashamed," who calls attention to the factor of theodicy inherent in the quotation of Hab 2:4. The prophet's main questions are: Why does God allow wickedness to go unpunished? and How can he "justify" his treatment of the Israelites at the hand of a power more iniquitous than they?

It is just in light of these issues that Romans 9-11 enters the picture. Writes J. C. Beker: “Romans demonstrates that *the question of God’s faithfulness to Israel is answered in the gospel*, and the affirmation of God’s faithfulness demonstrates in turn the reliability of God’s act in Christ for the salvation of the Gentiles.”²³¹ It is because God has not cast off his people, whom he foreknew (11:1-2), that a remnant of them will certainly be saved by the Deliverer who comes forth from Zion (11:26-27). Therefore, *the Lord is faithful because he has done precisely what he intended to do from old, i.e., save the remnant of his people by belief in his Christ*. This is why Paul develops in detail a doctrine of the elect within the elect—the remnant—who are the recipients of God’s mercy. The word of God, in short, has not fallen to the ground (9:6). Of course, Paul’s rejoinder that his gospel (2:16) is the demonstration of Yahweh’s fidelity to Israel involves a considerable amount of redefining just who the people of God are and the precise role played by Israel in the history of salvation; it is this agenda which he pursues in Romans 9-11. Therefore, Romans 9-11 is not an appendix or an aside of the letter, but its very heartbeat.

It is too often overlooked that the subtext of Romans 9-11 is Deuteronomy 32, the Song of Moses. The very “thesis” of the Song is that Yahweh remains faithful to Israel in spite of her defection from him. Verses 4-5 of this “covenant lawsuit” contain the whole in a nutshell:

The Rock, his work is perfect;
 for all his ways are justice.
 A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,
 just and right is he.
 They have dealt corruptly with him,
 they are no longer his children because of their blemish;
 they are a perverse and crooked generation.

As the Song progresses, the Lord reiterates his complaint the nation provoked him to anger and stirred him to jealousy by their illicit union with entities which were “no gods” (v. 17) and “idols” (v. 21). For this reason, he will provoke them with a foolish nation, as quoted by Paul in Rom 10:19. But notwithstanding Israel’s exile because of her adultery, he will turn and have compassion on her (v. 36):

For the LORD will vindicate his people
 and have compassion on his servants,
 when he sees that their power is gone,
 and there is none remaining, bond or free.

It is none other than this “roadmap” of Israel’s declining and rising fortunes that forms the basis of Romans 9-11. For Paul, God has vindicated the remnant of Israel by means of the gospel of Christ. This saving activity is his righteousness, in that he has proven reliable after all to the promises that he would deliver his faithful ones from exile (*à la* Hab 2:4). M. A. Elliott’s study of *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) has demonstrated

²³¹ Beker, *Paul*, 151, italics mine.

that each of the varied and numerous enclaves of the Second Temple Period was staking a claim to the title of the true people, or the remnant, and, in the process, declaring all others to be apostate.²³² Assuming the correctness of Elliott's thesis, then Paul is seen arguing against all the groups of the Judaism of this period. Whereas each faction maintained that it and it alone constituted the "survivors of Israel," Paul asserts that the church of Christ, and it exclusively, comprises the true remnant. A radical thesis indeed in his day! And the radicalness is only increased by the recognition that at the heart of Paul's message to Israel was the proclamation of a crucified Messiah—"blasphemous contradiction in terms!"²³³

²³² I have reviewed Elliott's book in *Defense*, 223-32.

²³³ F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 166.