

DESTA HELISO

Pistis and the
Righteous One

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Mohr Siebeck

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Pistis and the Righteous One

A Study of Romans 1:17
against the Background of Scripture and
Second Temple Jewish Literature

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To my sister Aregash Heliso (1980 – 2003)

Preface

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Addis Ababa 2007

Desta Heliso

Table of Contents

Preface	VII
Abbreviations	XIII
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1	
Analyses of Existing Interpretations	
1. Introduction	5
2. Luther's Reading of Romans 1:17	5
3. Meanings of Δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ	8
4. Two Competing Readings	13
4.1. Anthropological Reading.....	13
4.2. Christological Reading	19
4.2.1. Anthony Hanson	19
4.2.2. Richard Hays	21
4.2.3. Douglas Campbell	23
4.2.4. Ian Wallis.....	25
5. The Effect of Old and New Perspectives on Romans 1:17	26
6. Conclusions, Problems and Prospect.....	34
Chapter 2	
Background: Interpretations of Hab 2:3-4	
1. Introduction	40
2. Septuagintal Interpretation of Habakkuk 2:3-4	42
2.1. Messianic Elements in Habakkuk 2:3?.....	42
2.2. Is the Righteous One in Hab 2:4 Messianic?.....	46
2.3. Issues Relating to the Personal Pronoun Μου	51
3. Peshar Habakkuk (1QpHab).....	54
4. The Nahal Hever Text (8HevXIIgr).....	59
5. Hebrews 10:37-38: Christological or Anthropological?	61
6. Conclusions	69

Chapter 3

Christology in the Immediate Context of Rom 1:17b?

1. Introduction	72
2. The Role of Ἰᾱρ	73
3. Δύναμις Θεοῦ: Linguistic Image for Christ?	75
3.1. Δύναμις Θεοῦ: Subject or Predicate?	75
3.2. Δύναμις Θεοῦ and the Gospel	77
3.3. Δύναμις Θεοῦ and Christ	80
4. Revelation of Δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ	83
4.1. Francis Watson on Rom 1:17a	84
4.2. Revelation of Righteousness by Faith?	87
4.3. Revelation of Δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ as Divine Coming	103
4.3.1. Evidence from Psalms 98 and 143	104
4.3.2. Evidence from Enochic and Related Texts	108
4.3.3. Revelation of God in Christ	113
5. Conclusions	120

Chapter 4

Ο ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ: Generic Individual or Messianic?

1. Introduction	122
2. Righteous One in Non-Pauline Texts of the New Testament	122
3. Righteous One in the Parables of <i>I Enoch</i>	126
3.1. The Problem of the Date of the Parables	127
3.2. Textual Problems vis-à-vis Righteous One	130
3.3. The Righteous One as Eschatological Figure	132
3.4. Righteous One in Shared Interpretative Traditions	142
4. Righteous One in the Habakkuk Citation: Believer or Christ?	146
5. Righteous One and Romans 1:18-3:20	154
5. Conclusions	163

Chapter 5

ΕΚ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ: Christological or Anthropological?

1. Introduction	165
2. A Textual Conundrum	167
3. Ἐκ Πίστεως: God's Covenant Faithfulness?	171
4. Ἐκ Πίστεως: Human Faith or Christ's Faithfulness?	176
4.1. Galatians 3:11	176
4.2. Romans 1:17	181
4.3. Ἐκ Πίστεως in Romans 9:30-10:13	191

4.4. Ἐκ Πίστεως and Πίστις Χριστοῦ.....	200
4.4.1. Existing Interpretations of Πίστις Χριστοῦ	201
4.4.2. Some Linguistic Issues	203
4.4.3. Galatians 2:16 and Context.....	207
4.4.4. Romans 3:22 and Context.....	223
4.4.5. The Abraham Argument in Romans 4.....	231
6. Conclusions	239
Summary and Final Conclusions	243
Bibliography	
Primary Literature.....	255
General Reference Works.....	256
Secondary Literature.....	257
Index of References	
Old Testament	275
Apocrypha	277
Pseudepigrapha.....	278
New Testament.....	280
Dead Sea Scrolls.....	285
Ancient Writings	286
Index of Authors.....	287
Index of Subjects.....	289

Abbreviations

ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , 6 vols
BDB	Brown, Driver and Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BDF	Blass and Debrunner, <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (trans. and rev. R. W. Funk)
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentary
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
EvQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
ExpT	<i>Expository Times</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HeyJ	<i>The Heythrop Journal</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	The International Critical Commentary
IDB	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> , 4 vols
IJST	<i>International Journal of Systematic Theology</i>
IVP	Inter-Varsity Press
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JPS	<i>The Jewish Publication Society</i>
JSJS	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPS	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
JTC	<i>Journal for Theology and Church</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
LXX	Septuagint (Greek Bible)
MT	Masoretic Text (Hebrew Bible)
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NT	New Testament
NTF	Neutestamentliche Forschungen
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>

OT	Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumrân</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
ScEspr	<i>Science et Esprit</i>
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SPCK	Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge
SP	Sacra Pagina
SPB	Studia Postbiblica
ST	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
ThHK	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
ThLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TSK	<i>Theologische Studien und Kritiken</i>
TynB	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

Introduction

Rom 1:17 is one of Paul's climactic statements in the introductory section of the letter (1:1-17), which is traditionally broken up into two sections, i.e. 1:1-15 and 1:16-17,¹ and is followed by one of the distinct parts that is

¹ Since the statement must be explained along with its immediate context, particularly 1:16, it may be helpful to set out the textual variants of Rom 1:16-17 with brief comments and translations from the NRSV, the NIV and the Jerusalem Bible.

Rom 1:16-17 reads: οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι. δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται· ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται.

Textual Notes: 1) The Majority Text, the Athos (044 or Ψ) and the Leningrad (D^c [9th century CE], copy of 06 or D located in Paris [6th century CE]) manuscripts have τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ, instead of the reading τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, which is maintained in the majority of the textual witnesses: Papyrus 26 (P^{26vid}), Codex Sinaiticus (Σ), Codex Vaticanus (B), Codex Ephraemi (C), Codex Claromontanus (D), Codex Boernerianus (G), some minuscules (33 81 1506 1739 1881 2495), a few other Greek manuscripts, parts of Old Latin and Vulgate versions, all Syriac witnesses and Coptic versions. The minority reading probably stemmed from a later scribal attempt to bring the expression in line with 1:9, εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ υἱοῦ, and also probably with Paul's occasional association of εὐαγγέλιον with Christ elsewhere in his Seven Letter Corpus (so 1 Cor 9:12, 18; 2 Cor 2:12; 9:13; 10:14; Gal 1:7; Phil 1:27; 1 Thess 3:2) – it is to be noted here that in Romans Paul also associates εὐαγγέλιον with God (Rom 1:1; 15:16; cf. 1 Thess 2:8) and himself (Rom 2:16; 16:25). From a text-critical standpoint, the insertion with notably slender and late witnesses is not decisive.

2) In 1:16b, MS G omits εἰς σωτηρίαν. The motivation is not very clear, but it could be attributed to either a later scribal corruption or a conscious attempt to make the text read more smoothly.

3) In 1:16b again, MSS B, G, the Sahidic version and, predictably, Marcion omit πρῶτον. The question as to whether Marcion preserves an early variation or some of the early manuscripts are influenced by Marcion's text is an interesting one. Metzger (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [2nd edn], 447) suggests that the omission 'is perhaps due to Marcion, to whom the privilege of the Jews was unacceptable' (For a discussion of this and other textual issues, see Sanday and Headlam, *Epistle*, lxxiii-lxxv). Whatever the answer, the majority of Greek manuscripts read πρῶτον, which appears to be original in the light of the recurrence of the formula Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι in 2:9-10 and the fact that the priority or privilege of the Jews is evident in 3:1; 9:1-5; 11:16ff and 15:9. This view appears to be in tension with Paul's assertion that there is no διαστολή between Jews and Greeks (3:22; 10:12).

4) From among the fifth-century manuscripts, only MS C adds the possessive pronoun μου after ὁ δὲ δίκαιος. The influence may have come from either one of the LXX texts

itself broken up into two major sections: 1:18-3:20 and 3:21-5:21² or 1:18-3:20 and 3:21-4:25.³ What follows in this study is an attempt to critically evaluate existing interpretations of the passage in the light of exegetical considerations of relevant texts from the OT and Second Temple Judaism

(e.g. A) that read ὁ δὲ δίκαιός μου ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται or the reading in Heb 10:38. It is secondary.

Selected Translations: 1) 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith"' (NRSV). 2) 'I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith"' (NIV). 3) 'For I am not ashamed of the Good News: it is the power of God saving all who have faith – Jews first, but Greeks as well – since this is what reveals the justice of God to us: it shows how faith leads to faith, as scripture says: "The upright man finds life through faith"' (The Jerusalem Bible).

² See, for example, Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (WBC Series), vii-viii, 38; Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 14-15; Keck, 'What Makes Romans Tick?', in Hay and Johnson (eds), *Pauline Theology III: Romans* (SBL Symposium Series), 3-29, 24.

³ See Cranfield, *Romans 1-8* (ICC), xi; Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ix. See also R. Longenecker, 'A Realised Hope, a New Commitment, a Developed Proclamation: Paul and Jesus', in R. Longenecker (ed.), *The Road from Damascus: The Impact of Paul's Conversion on His Life, Thought and Ministry*, 18-42, 37f. There is a question as to whether the structural division 1:16-4:25 (or 1:18-4:25) and 5:1-8:39 is to be preferred against 1:16-5:21 (or 1:18-5:21) and 6:1-8:39 or *vice versa*. Scholars such as Nygren (*Commentary on Romans*, 26-35) and Cranfield (*Romans 1-8*, 102) have followed the former and argued that the Habakkuk citation is expounded in 1:18-4:25 and 5:1-8:39. Along this line, R. Longenecker ('Realised', 38) argues that 1:16-4:25 is the type of proclamation commonly held by all Jewish 'believers in Jesus' and 5:1-8:39 'the distinctive features of the gospel' proclaimed to the Gentiles. This may mean that Rom 1-4 (as Rom 9-11) was a homily intended for a Jewish audience and 5-8 for a Gentile audience (Scroggs, 'Paul as Rhetorician: Two Homilies in Romans 1-11', in R. Hamerton-Kelly and R. Scroggs (eds), *Jews, Greeks, and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity: Essays in Honor of William David Davies*, 271-298). In any case, 1-5 (or 1:16-5:21) and 6:1-8:39 probably is a better division, because, as Cranfield (*Romans 1-8*, 253) has rightly recognised, there are some significant connections, particularly linguistic, between chapter 5 and chs 1-4. We wish to outline the occurrence in respective chapters of some relevant terms and phrases as follows:

Chapters 1-4

δίκαιος = 4x (1:17; 2:13; 3:10, 26)
 δίκαιός = 9x (2:4; 3:4, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5)
 δικαιοσύνη = 14x (1:17; 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 4:3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 13, 22)
 δικαίωμα = 2x (1:32; 2:26)
 δικαίωσις = 1x (4:25)
 ὁργή = 6x (1:18; 2:5, 8; 3:5; 4:15)
 ἐκ πίστεως = 6x (1:17a, 17b; 3:26, 30; 4:16a, 16b)
 ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι = 1x (3:25)

Chapter 5

= 2x (5:7, 19; cf. 7:12)
 = 2x (5:1, 9)
 = 2x (5:17, 21)
 = 2x (5:16, 18)
 = 1x (5:18)
 = 1x (5:9)
 = 1x (5:1)
 = 1x (5:9)

as well as from Paul's Seven Letter Corpus and the rest of the NT. The importance of Rom 1:17 is undisputed, because since Luther the declarations it contains have shaped not only the ways in which Paul's expressions in the letter of Romans are understood but also the living, thinking and praxis of many in ecclesiastical, socio-political and cultural landscapes. Rom 1:17, along with its immediate and wider contexts, has also played a very significant role in the centuries-long diverse scholarly explications of the Law-Gospel or Judaism-Christ[ianity] antithesis. The reason behind such importance is that many regard the passage, which contains Paul's own declarative statement and its scriptural proof from Hab 2:4, as the thesis of the letter. How the passage is read therefore determines how the whole letter should be interpreted.

So, that Rom 1:17 is an important passage probably goes without saying. But why is our task in this study important? We will indicate a specific reason below, but here it is worth mentioning three general and, perhaps, obvious reasons why our task is important. First, many in the post-Sanders era may no longer view Judaism as a legalistic religion that has no place for grace, but over twenty years down the line since Sanders fundamentally challenged such a view and its interpretative basis, a focussed and extensive endeavour to deal with the passage and its context in the light of Jewish literature has not yet been made. Second, although a common understanding developed over the years between the Catholic and Protestant churches has resulted in the signing of a joint declaration that (at least, in theory) renders the longstanding doctrinal condemnations ineffectual,⁴ the underlying exegetical problems in Rom 1:17 remain and the dialogue between the two ecclesiastical traditions continues. Third, the issues embedded in the passage continue to have far-reaching social, religious and existential implications, necessitating continued effort for fresh study.

As is well known, the majority of scholars go along with the traditional understanding of 'justification by faith' that depends, by and large, on Luther's initial interpretation of the passage. A few scholars have, however, offered a reading where the person of the Habakkuk citation is understood as Christ. If this christological reading is shown to be cogent, it poses a serious problem to the traditional view that Rom 1:17 introduces and provides a framework for the doctrine of justification by faith. However, no extensive study that evaluates both readings in the light of external-contextual and internal-textual evidence has so far been done. As this study seeks to remedy that and offer a fresh and coherent reading of the passage, it will adopt several strategic steps in order to achieve its central

⁴ See also Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic – Protestant Dialogue: An Evangelical Assessment*, 100-107, 239-259 (Appendix II: *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*).

objective. The rationale of each step will be discussed at the end of the following chapter, but it might be helpful to outline those steps briefly here.

The study will start by analysing existing interpretations and isolating issues. Then the second chapter will examine the sort of interpretations given to Hab 2:3-4 by the Septuagintal translator, the producer of the Qumran commentary (1QpHab), the translator or reviser of the Nahal Hever text (8HevXIIgr) and the author of the letter of Hebrews (Heb 10:37-38). In the third, fourth and fifth chapters, we will make exegetical attempts to answer three questions from the text. The questions respectively are, first, do Paul's linguistic images in the immediate context of the Habakkuk citation, 1:16-17a in particular, in any way reflect his christological perspective? Second, is ὁ δίκαιος in the Habakkuk citation a reference to a generic individual or messianic figure? Third, is the implied subject of ἐκ πίστεως in both halves of Rom 1:17 human faith or Christ's faithfulness? In the process of answering these questions, our discussions will be informed by the results of our exegetical analyses of the interpretations of Hab 2:3-4 in the traditions of the LXX, *Pesher* Habakkuk, the Nahal Hever text and the letter of Hebrews. The process will also involve combining a comparative analysis of external evidence from Second Temple Judaism in general and the Enochic Book of Parables (*1 En* 37-71) in particular with an exegetical treatment of Rom 1:17 and internal evidence.

Chapter 1

Analyses of Existing Interpretations

1. Introduction

This chapter will focus on analysing theories and exegetical considerations relating to Rom 1:17. The result will provide us with a clearer picture of the scholarly perspectives on the passage and the interpretative problems surrounding πίστις and ὁ δίκαιος. It is probably natural to start such a task with Luther because of the relative novelty of his interpretation of Rom 1:16-17. Following a brief discussion of Luther's reading of this passage, we shall summarise scholarly views on δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, because the meaning assigned to this phrase to an extent influences the ways in which the Habakkuk citation is interpreted.

We will then organise issues raised and arguments proposed in relation to ἐκ πίστεως and ὁ δίκαιος under two interpretative categories, namely anthropological (the faith by which a justified person lives or the faith by which a person is justified) and christological (the faithfulness of Christ, by which he gains eschatological life). We do this not because we believe that these categories should be universally applicable to all texts of Romans or Galatians, but simply because such a categorisation is expedient for our discussion in this chapter. We shall analyse both categories in turn.

Subsequently, we shall overview the effect of the so-called Old and New Perspectives on Rom 1:17. In the course of this, we pay attention to the recent defences of the Lutheran view of justification by faith. Finally, we shall conclude our largely descriptive analysis by clarifying what the major problems are with the two competing readings and how the study will attempt to adjudicate between them.

2. Luther's Reading of Romans 1:17

As is well known, Luther's new interpretation was driven by his concern over the concept of the Latin *iustitia* by means of which the term δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ('righteousness of God') in his day was customarily understood as God's retributive justice. It was that concern that led Luther to

revive the Augustinian tradition where δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ was thought to be a gift that comes from God.¹ What he says in his preface to the Latin edition of his works encapsulates the extent to which Rom 1:17 influenced his thinking:

I had confidence in the fact that I was more skilful, after I had lectured in the university on St Paul's epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the one to the Hebrews. I had indeed been captivated with an extraordinary ardor for understanding Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. But up till then it was not the cold blood about the heart, but a single word in Chapter 1 [:17], 'In it the righteousness of God is revealed,' that had stood in my way. For I hated that word 'righteousness of God,' which, according to the use and custom of all the teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically regarding the formal or active righteousness, as they called it, with which God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner.

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring *greatly*, I was angry with God, and said, 'As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the Decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his righteousness and wrath!' Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. Nevertheless, I beat

¹ For analytical discussions of both Augustine's perspective and Luther's appropriation of it, see McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of Christian Doctrine of Justification I (Beginnings to 1500)*, 23-36; *II (From 1500 to the Present Day)*, 10-19. As space does not permit us to study the use of the δίκη- terms in Hellenistic Greek, it may be helpful to note a few things here. In Hellenism the meaning of δίκαιος and δικαιοσύνη developed out of the concepts surrounding the figure of δίκη. A δίκαιος is someone who conforms to δίκη ('custom', 'the divine law of universal and civic life', 'justice' [cf. Acts 28:4]). In literature and art, the figure of δίκη served to inform Zeus of evils done by humans and to punish injustice. On the whole, the idea of δίκη's cosmic rule took the shape of laws for family, natural and social orders, and norms for justice (δικαιοσύνη) developed in the political and ethical realms. In Plato's *Republic* (1-4), we notice that δικαιοσύνη became the basic virtue for Plato's ideal state, the key for ordering society and educating citizens, the foundation of the *polis*. For Aristotle, justice, in contrast with injustice (*Nic Ethics* 5.1.1, 1129a), refers to conformity to the law and fairness. In Stoicism, Chrysippus in the 3rd century BCE took up the old notion of δικαιοσύνη as (a virgin) goddess watching in heaven. As the virtue concerned with distributing things, δικαιοσύνη, which, already in Aristotle, had been brought into connection with friendship (*Nic Ethics* 8:9-12, 1159b 25-1162a 33), was divided into goodness, good fellowship and an accommodating disposition, explained as being disposed towards kindness, fairness in sharing and blamelessly dealing with one's neighbour. In subsequent thinking, δικαιοσύνη often came to be united closely with piety and also with philanthropy. For detailed discussions, see Schrenk, 'δίκη, δίκαιος, δικαιοσύνη, δικαίωμα, δικαίωσις, δικαιοκρισία', *TDNT II*, 174-225; Reumann, 'Righteousness (Greco-Roman World)', *ABD V*, 742-745; Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness*, 48-51, 255-258; Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 93; Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul: Justice, Democracy and Kingship in a Hellenistic Framework*, 36-44, 55-63, 415-450.

importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted.

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, 'In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live."' There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which a merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.' Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me. Thereupon I ran through the Scriptures from memory. I also found in other terms an analogy, as, the work of God, that is, what God does in us, the power of God, with which he makes us strong, the wisdom of God, with which he makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God. And I extolled my sweetest word with a love as great as the hatred with which I had before hated the word 'righteousness of God.' Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise.²

Luther's perspectives above were set against the Scholastics who, according to him, based their philosophical and theological frameworks on Aristotelian ethics, where one becomes righteous by performing righteous actions (*Nic Ethics* 2:1; 3:7, 9, 10), and, in doing so, attributed to human beings the potentialities of moral and religious attainment (i.e. the love of neighbour and of God, by natural powers or will).³ Central to his perspectives was his distinction between the 'righteousness of human beings', which is revealed through human teachings and in terms of which human beings can *be* and *become* righteous in themselves and before fellow human beings, and the 'righteousness of God', which is revealed through the gospel and in terms of which human beings can *be* and *become* righteous before God – the former comes from works, while the latter from 'faith alone'.⁴ That is, the 'righteousness of God' as that righteousness by which we are made righteous (justified) by faith.⁵ Faith, in Luther's view, is not only a divine gift but also an ongoing belief that 'the righteous person' is 'justified', as in the Habakkuk citation.⁶ Luther maintains that human beings are always in need of being made 'righteous', for in themselves they are always unrighteous even if they think they are

² *Luther's Works* 34:336-337.

³ See Luther's *Lectures on Romans*, 18, 105-118; see also the general introduction to this work, esp. xxxiv-lxvi.

⁴ Luther, *Lectures*, 17-18.

⁵ Luther, *Lectures*, 18. Or as Luther puts in his Romans translation, δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is 'the justice [of God] that counts before God' (*die Gerechtigkeit, die vor Gott gilt*) and by which the just (ὁ δίκαιος) lives (ζήσεται) by a gift of God, namely by faith (ἐκ πίστεως). See also *Luther's Works* 25:9, 30-31, 89, 151-152, 241-250, 440f.

⁶ Luther, *Lectures*, 19.

righteous. Thus his famous formula *simul justus et peccator* ('at the same time righteous and sinner').

Luther's new interpretation of Rom 1:17 and related texts was increasingly important during the Reformation period, as attempts were made to answer questions such as what is 'righteousness', who is 'righteous' and what is the role of 'faith' in one's existence in relation to God, Christ and the Church.⁷ These questions have also dominated much Pauline scholarship in Europe and North America throughout the modern period. Before analysing a reading of Rom 1:17 that is influenced by Luther's perspective, we summarise meanings afforded concerning the righteousness of God.

3. Meanings of Δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ

Although δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ is not a widespread phrase in NT writings outside the Pauline Seven Letter Corpus,⁸ where the genitival construction occurs eight times (Rom 1:17; 3:5, 21, 22, 25; 10:3 [2x]; 2 Cor 5:21) out of fifty uses of δικαιοσύνη terminology (thirty-four or 68% of those being in Romans), it has been a focus of long-standing scholarly debate, because the meaning it is given, as we noticed above, is decisive not only for our reading of Rom 1:17 and related texts such as 3:21-26 but also for our understanding of Paul's theology as a whole. Four main perspectives on the phrase probably are predominant: a righteous status that counts in God's court (Θεοῦ as objective genitive), God's gift of 'righteousness' (Θεοῦ as genitive of origin), God's salvation-creating power (Θεοῦ as subjective), or God's own activity and status (Θεοῦ as subjective) expressed within a covenant that establishes mutual relationship and obligation (the covenantal reading).⁹ The difficulty of explaining the term and even translating it

⁷ Calvin (*The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, 5), for instance, argued that '[m]an's only righteousness is the mercy of God in Christ, when it is offered by the Gospel and received by faith'. Melancthon also answered the questions within the forensic framework where emphasis was laid on the notion of *iustitia aliena* ('an alien righteousness') imputed to 'the believer' so that she may be 'declared righteous' or 'accepted as righteous'. See McGrath, *Iustitia II*, 20ff.

⁸ Indeed, it appears only in Jas 1:20 (δικαιοσύνην Θεοῦ), 2 Pet 1:1 (ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ Θεοῦ) and Matt 6:33 (τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ [Θεοῦ]).

⁹ On these interpretations, see, for example, H. Cremer, *Die paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre im Zusammenhang ihrer geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen*, 33f; Sanday and Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 24-25; Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 9-13; Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God*, 20-21; Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 40-41; A Shorter Commentary on Romans, 22; Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 74-78; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 23-30; *New Testament Questions of Today*, 168-182; Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer I*, 88; Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 28-32; Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*,

into modern European languages is compounded by an ongoing controversy that has chiefly concentrated on the grammar.¹⁰ As the objective genitive argument is often combined or aligned with the genitive of origin argument, the grammatical question focuses on whether the genitive in δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ should be read with a genitive of origin or a subjective sense, which we wish to summarise briefly here.¹¹

The gift sense of the righteousness of God is based on the genitive of origin interpretation, which is firmly founded on Luther's understanding of Rom 1:17. Although some scholars argue that the righteousness of God denotes a quality that is to be acquired by humanity and approved by God as something that is able to stand before God during his juridical adjudication,¹² it is this gift sense as explained particularly by Bultmann that remains predominant. For Bultmann, Paul's use of the righteousness of God stands against the idea of *iustitia* with a punitive sense.¹³ So the phrase has a 'forensic-eschatological' meaning, where it expresses one's relation to God in a court context.¹⁴ While the pious Jew would understand the phrase in terms of God's 'rightwising' verdict (i.e. giving a favourable standing before him) through keeping the law, Paul understood it in terms of God's eschatological adjudication of the person of 'faith' by pronouncing her

95-100; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 254-262; Byrne, *Romans*, 51-60; Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 49-58; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 40-48; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 69-89; Wright, 'The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections', in *The New Interpreters Bible*, 398-405.

¹⁰ There is difficulty with regard to rendering δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ into English. In this study, we have followed the more conventional rendering of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in the English speaking world, namely the 'righteousness of God'. But it should be borne in mind that translations such as 'the uprightness of God', 'the justice of God', 'God's rectifying act' and 'God's act of covenant faithfulness' can also be used. To be sure, it is difficult to find a rendering that is directly compatible with what we think the phrase denotes (i.e. God's power of salvation), but we have chosen the conventional translation because it is perhaps more flexible than others. On the translation problem, see Sanders, *Paul*, 44-49; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 257-263; Reumann, 'Righteousness' in the *New Testament: 'Justification' in the United States Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue*, 11; Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 334ff.

¹¹ Käsemann (*Commentary*, 28), perhaps rightly, complains that focussing on grammatical rules may have contributed to the difficulty by wrapping 'material problems in a thick fog'. But grammar cannot and should not be neglected. For good summaries of the grammatical discussions relating to the genitive phrase in question, see Sanday and Headlam, *Epistle*, 24-25; Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 97-99; Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?*, 100-107.

¹² See, for example, O'Neill, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 38, 70-72, 168; Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, 159-181.

¹³ Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament I (TNT I)*, 270-285; see also Reumann, 'Righteousness', 3-11.

¹⁴ Bultmann, *TNT I*, 272.

‘sinless’ not in the sense that she is ethically perfect but in the sense that on her is conferred the divine free gift as a result of which she is placed in a new relation to God and no sins are counted against her.¹⁵

Several grammatical and exegetical arguments have been put forward in favour of this interpretation: first, in 10:3 τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην means the status of ‘righteousness’ given by God as opposed to a status achieved by one’s efforts (cf. Rom 5:17; 1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9).¹⁶ Second, the words ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν cannot be shown to be a natural expression for Paul unless the righteousness of God is understood as the status conferred on humanity. In other words, ‘faith’ has to be both the beginning and culmination in terms of sharing the ‘righteousness of God’ through it.¹⁷ In connection with this, third, in 3:22, the reading δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ... εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας makes it clear that the righteousness of God is received by those who believe. Fourth, the Habakkuk citation is in favour of this argument because of its focus on the ‘justified’ person rather than God’s act of ‘justifying’ a person.¹⁸ Fifth, the fact that ‘1:18-4:25 expounds the words ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως and 5:1-8:39 the promise that the man who is righteous by faith ζήσεται’¹⁹ agrees with the interpretation that takes δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in 1:17 as the righteous status bestowed by God.

Notwithstanding these arguments, some scholars have resisted the interpretation that takes θεοῦ as a genitive of origin and δικαιοσύνη as the status graciously conferred on humanity. Schlatter at the turn of the 20th century pointed out the interpretation’s tendency to exclude the denotation of the phrase as God’s activity in divine-human relations.²⁰ Schlatter’s concern was revived by Käsemann, who, without rejecting the gift sense, defined δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as God’s power that creates salvation (*heilsetzende Macht*).²¹ Müller,²² Stuhlmacher,²³ Kertelge,²⁴ and Fitzmyer²⁵ (to

¹⁵ Bultmann, *TNT I*, 276f, 281-285; see also ‘ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ ΘΕΟΥ’, *JBL* 83 (1964) 12-16. Conzelmann (*An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*, 218-220) basically agrees with this Lutheran-Bultmannian explanation, although he concedes that in Rom 3:5 the phrase denotes a ‘property’ of God.

¹⁶ See also Nygren, *Commentary*, 74-76.

¹⁷ So Nygren (*Commentary*, 78-81).

¹⁸ See also Nygren, *Commentary*, 81-92.

¹⁹ Cranfield, *Romans I-8*, 98.

²⁰ Schlatter, *Romans*, 20. Dodd (*Epistle*, 10-13) too argued that, for Paul, δικαιοσύνη along with the genitive θεοῦ denotes the divine action in redressing the wrongful oppression and delivering his people from the powers of evil. See also Barrett (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 29-31), who, like Dodd and others, argues that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is not merely God’s property or attribute of being righteous, but also his activity of doing right as the righteous judge.

²¹ With extreme caution, Käsemann (*Commentary*, 30) also thought it probable that

mention only a few) have followed Käsemann's interpretation in various ways. Fitzmyer gives a forensic-ethical definition to the phrase: God's uprightness manifested in judicial activity. For Kertelge, the phrase denotes God's redemptive activity on the basis of 'faith in Christ'.²⁶ Kertelge more or less agrees with Stuhlmacher, who interprets the phrase in terms of the cosmic power of God as Creator (*Schöpfermacht*).²⁷ God's creative or salvific activity, for Stuhlmacher, takes place 'in and through Christ' and is strictly related to 'faith/believing'.²⁸ He differs slightly from Müller, whose work focuses on Rom 9-11 but who takes the block as an integral part of the theme announced in 1:17 and, in so doing, interprets the phrase within the lawsuit framework, where God is victorious against Israel (and the world).²⁹

Amongst post-Sanders scholars, Wright is happy to adopt the subjective genitive interpretation of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ but unhappy to go along with Käsemann and his followers completely.³⁰ He understands the term with a sense of 'covenant faithfulness'.³¹ This is similar to the views held by Moo

'Paul did take over this characteristic catchword as a fixed formula from Jewish apocalyptic'.

²² Müller, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit und Gottes Volk: Eine Untersuchung zu Römer 9-11*.

²³ Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation, Law, and Righteousness: Essays in Biblical Theology*, 68-109.

²⁴ Kertelge, 'Rechtfertigung' bei Paulus: Studien zur Struktur und zum Bedeutungsgesamt des paulinischen Rechtfertigungsbegriffs.

²⁵ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 254-262. In his recent commentary, Schreiner (*Romans*, 66) too appears to accept this perspective as valid.

²⁶ Kertelge, 'Rechtfertigung', 67, 85.

²⁷ Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus*, 78-83; *Letter*, 30. See also Michel (*Der Brief an die Römer*, 88-92), who understands δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in terms of divine judgement and eschatological gift of salvation.

²⁸ Stuhlmacher, *Letter*, 31.

²⁹ Müller, *Gottes*, 57ff, 104f.

³⁰ Wright (*Saint*, 103) regards an understanding of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ on the basis of the technical usage of the phrase in Judaism as 'an ingenious impossibility'. Others have also argued against the phrase being a fixed formula on the grounds that a genuine technical term does not vary in its formulaic use, as happens in Judaism and Paul where the phrase or its equivalent is used. See, for example, Ziesler, *Meaning*, 170; Way, *The Lordship of Christ: Ernst Käsemann's Interpretations of Paul's Theology*, 190-193; Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (PPJ), 494f; see also Manfred Brauch's Appendix in Sanders PPJ, 523-542. But see Campbell (*The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans* 3.21-26, 163; *Romans* 1:17 – A *Crux Interpretum* for the Πίστις Χριστοῦ Debate', *JBL* 113 [1994] 265-285, 270), who does not speak of the technical usage of the phrase in the Second Temple period but goes along with Käsemann.

³¹ Wright, *Saint*, 101, 103, 107; see also his Unpublished DPhil Dissertation (1980), *The Messiah and the People of God: A Study in Pauline Theology with Particular Reference to the Argument of the Epistle to the Romans*, 57, 64; and 'A New Tübingen School? Ernst Käsemann and His Commentary on Romans', *Themelios* 7:3 (1982) 6-16.

and Dunn.³² Wright has recently adopted a political reading of the term within the framework that in Romans Paul is setting Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός over against Κύριος Καῖσαρ and, in doing so, countering the imperial ideology.³³

In any case, several grammatical and exegetical arguments have been put forward in favour of the subjective genitive reading of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ:³⁴ first, in view of the connection between 1:16b and 1:17, δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ can be understood in the light of δύναμις θεοῦ. That is, as θεοῦ is subjective and δύναμις is God's power in action, so also are θεοῦ and δικαιοσύνη. Second, in ὁργή θεοῦ in 1:18, θεοῦ is a subjective genitive and ὁργή an activity of God. So on the basis of the parallelism between 1:17a and 1:18, δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ should again be understood similarly. Third, in Rom 3:5, 25 and 26 the genitives θεοῦ and αὐτοῦ must be subjective, hence Paul must have understood δικαιοσύνη as a power rather than a status. Fourth, in some of the relevant OT texts (e.g. 1 Sam 12:7; Ps 98:2),

³² Moo, *Epistle*, 70ff. Differing from Wright, Dunn (*Romans* 1-8, 41; *Theology*, 340-346) explains δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ with a notion of discharging sociological responsibilities or meeting relational obligations generally. Martin (*The Righteousness of God in Romans: A Study in Paul's Use of Jewish Tradition* [Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Marquette University, 1991] has argued that Paul was interested in none of the interpretations given so far. For Martin, Paul's main concern was to address through the use of scripture the social/cultural issues of 'soteric domain' (whom God saves rather than how God saves humanity), so δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is viewed as God's salvation of the faithful person *qua* faithful, the paradigm of whom is Jesus, whose resurrection stood for the 'vindication' of the faithful.

³³ See Wright, *Saint*, 88; 'Letter', 404-405; Blumenfeld, *Paul*, 302-414. Other scholars, in an essay collection entitled *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, have also contended that Romans is part of Paul's gospel which stands against Roman imperial ideology. Georgi, in an article ('God Turned Upside Down', 148-157) that condenses the thesis of his earlier work *Theocracy in Paul's Praxis and Theology*, which was first published in German in 1987 and translated into English in 1991 (see esp. 81-104), for example, argues that the *Acts of Augustus* (ch 34) has δικαιοσύνη as one of the four attributes demonstrated by Augustus, whose birthday (September 23) is considered as the day that gave a new aspect and beginning to the whole universe. Elsewhere, the *princeps* was identified with *Iustitia*. So for Georgi, Paul's use of δικαιοσύνη (and other terms mentioned above) betrays his intention to counter the imperial political ideology that has the new cult of *Iustitia* in its centre (see also Neil Elliott's article 'The Anti-Imperial Message of the Cross', 167-183). Georgi admits that Paul's use of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is derived from the Jewish Bible, but he still argues that the evidence stated above suggests that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is to be understood against the Roman ideological and judicial framework (p. 149). According to Hays (*The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* [2nd ed], xlii), although the parallels that Georgi adduces between the imperial ideology and the situation Paul addresses in Galatia are 'few and imprecise', Georgi's suggestions 'may actually make better sense in relation to Romans'.

³⁴ See also Cranfield, *Romans* 1-8, 96.

when צדקה or δικαιοσύνη is attributed to God, it is referred to as the activity of his saving and judging power. Fifth, δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ or an equivalent phrase was a fixed formula in some Jewish apocalyptic traditions of the Second Temple period, and if Paul took over the formula from those traditions he would have understood it with the sense of God's activity/power within a cosmic setting.³⁵

4. Two Competing Readings

The idea of justification by faith is based as much on the meaning of Paul's declarations in Rom 1:17 as on the way in which the verb δικαίωω (or the passive δικαιοῦσθαι) is understood in relation to πίστις/πιστεύω.³⁶ Indeed, the first half of Rom 1:17 is thought to be about 'righteousness by faith' while the second half (namely the Habakkuk citation) is about 'the person who by faith is justified'.³⁷ Thus the righteousness in the first half is the righteousness that is acquired by the person of the citation (the Christian) through 'faith'. We have termed this reading anthropological, as against christological – in the latter the person of the Habakkuk citation is Christ. We wish to analyse both readings in turn.

4.1. Anthropological Reading

There are perhaps three things that characterise what we call the anthropological reading of Rom 1:17. First, the syntax of the passage suggests that the righteousness of God is to be understood as righteousness given to believers and ἐκ πίστεως as the faith exercised by any individual person. Second, ὁ δίκαιος in the Habakkuk citation represents a person who was ungodly but is now justified or declared righteous. Third, the means through which one's justification takes place is 'faith'. It may be helpful to elucidate these factors briefly.

³⁵ Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit*, 74-91, 174-175. Stuhlmacher (*Letter*, 31-32) warns us against establishing a false alternative between God's activity/power and God's gift, but for this to be true δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ has to be understood as something embodied in Jesus rather than a mere status one receives at the judgement forum. Otherwise, in Rom 1:17 in particular, it has got to be one or the other.

³⁶ The English word 'justification' is based on Paul's use of the substantive δικαίωσις in Rom 4:25 and 5:18, which is probably based both on the Hebrew מְשִׁיב (cf. Lev 24:22) and the Greek δικαίωω (Exod 23:7; Deut 25:1; 1 Kgs 8:32; Ps 50 [MT 51]:6 [cf. Rom 3:4]; Isa 5:23; 50:8; 53:10-11; Mic 7:9 [cf. Job 4:17; Ps 7:9-12; 119:1-8; 143:2; Ezra 9:15]). All 18 occurrences of the verb in Romans (cf. 1 Cor 4:4; 6:11; Gal 2:16, 17; 3:8, 11, 24; 5:4) are: 2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 26b, 28, 30; 4:2, 5, 25; 5:1, 9, 18; 6:7; 8:30, 33.

³⁷ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 254.

First, *Justification by Faith and the Syntax of Rom 1:17*. The argument that ‘justification by faith’ is the theme of Rom 1:17 is based on the syntactical link between ἐκ πίστεως and δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ (as opposed to ἐκ πίστεως and ἀποκαλύπτεται) in the first part of Rom 1:17 and ἐκ πίστεως and ὁ δίκαιος (as opposed to ἐκ πίστεως and ζήσεται) in the second part.³⁸ So Rom 1:17a is understood as saying that ‘the righteousness of God from (through) faith to (for) faith is revealed’ rather than ‘the righteousness of God is revealed from (through) faith to (for) faith’. Similarly, Rom 1:17b is understood as saying that ‘the righteous one by faith shall live’ rather than ‘the righteous one shall live by faith’. Nygren admits that such a syntactical link is not self-evident, but he and Cranfield still espouse it on the grounds that the accent is ‘definitely’ on δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ; δικαιοσύνη ἐκ πίστεως becomes a technical term for Paul (cf. 9:30; 10:6); ‘Paul almost certainly meant ἐκ πίστεως to be connected with δίκαιος’; and the central thought in 1:17 is ‘about faith, and only about faith’.³⁹

The significance of accentuating δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ and linking it with the prepositional phrase, it is said, is that the resulting meaning decisively marks a distinction between the righteousness (in the sense of ethical perfection that merits forgiveness from and acceptance by God) earned by the ‘law’ and the righteous status proffered altogether by ‘faith’.⁴⁰ So on the basis that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is synonymous with δικαιοσύνη ἐκ πίστεως (as opposed to δικαιοσύνη ἐκ νόμου), the former is (also) ‘human righteousness’ because ‘it is proffered to him and accepted by faith’.⁴¹ This argument is corroborated by the following things. First, in Rom 3:21-22 where

³⁸ See also Oepke, ‘εἰς’, *TDNT II* (420-434), 430; Leenhardt, *Epistle*, 56; Wilckens, *Brief I*, 88-89.

³⁹ See, for example, Nygren, *Commentary*, 78-81; Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 100. But other anthropological readers such as Michel (*Der Brief*, 90-91) and Lohse (*Der Brief an die Römer*, 82) take ἐκ πίστεως with ζήσεται.

⁴⁰ Cranfield (*Romans 1-8*, 100) sets out the sense of 1:17a: ‘For in it (i.e. in the gospel as it is being preached) a righteous status which is God’s gift is being revealed (and so offered to men) – a righteous status which is altogether by faith.’ Williams (‘The “Righteousness of God” in Romans’, *JBL* 99 (1980) 241-290, 257), also, ventures this paraphrase: ‘when the word is proclaimed that he who is righteous (that is, reckoned righteous, justified) on the basis of faith shall live in God’s presence and when this word is effective in creating its own proper response, which is also faith, the righteousness of God is being revealed by God and experienced by man’.

⁴¹ Nygren, *Commentary*, 77-79. Barrett (*Epistle*, 29-31) also equates the manifestation of ‘the righteousness of God’ with God’s act of doing his righteous judgement in his court. His verdict is either Guilty or Righteous. The articular ὁ δίκαιος in the Habakkuk citation, therefore, refers to the person who by faith is declared ‘righteous’ and who will live, i.e. experience salvation at the last judgement. For Barrett, ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν is rhetorical (‘faith from start to finish’) and ἐκ πίστεως in the Habakkuk citation modifies the adjective.

δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is taken with πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ('faith in Jesus Christ'), that appears to be contrasted with the law. Second, Romans 1-4 as a whole is about who through/from faith is righteous. Third, when he makes the transition from the first part of the letter to the next, Paul sums it up thus: δικαιοθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως (5:1). The phrase ἐκ πίστεως in relation to δίκαιος, δικαιοσύνη and δικαιοῶ in various references in Romans (e.g. 3:30; 5:1; 9:30, 32; cf. Gal 3:8; 5:5) denotes 'the believer's faith'.⁴² In short, since the titular adjective ὁ δίκαιος in Rom 1:17b refers to the justified person and such an interpretation does not involve taking ἐκ πίστεως in 1:17a in a sense other than the believer's faith, δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in connection with ἐκ πίστεως means justification through faith rather than through the law.

Second, *Justification in Rom 1:17 as the Justification of the Ungodly*. The idea of justification, as indicated above, partly depends on the meaning of the verb δικαιοῶ, which is given diverse senses: 'declarative' ('declared righteous' in a forensic sense, i.e. 'acquitted by God from charges'),⁴³ 'effective' ('made righteous' in an ethical sense, i.e. made virtuous or morally regenerated)⁴⁴ and 'creative' ('made righteous' not in the sense of 'made virtuous' but 'forgiven' or 'cleared' by grace within a relational context)⁴⁵ – many subscribe to both declarative and effective senses.⁴⁶ More to the point, Paul's expressions in Rom 1:17 are informed by the notion of the justification of the ungodly, as in Rom 4:5. As this is clearly and representatively explained by Wilckens, a brief summary of his discussion will suffice. Wilckens argues that Paul's declarations in Rom 1:17 explain his statement in 1:16. That is, in the first half of Rom 1:17 Paul explains why the gospel is the power of God for salvation: because it reveals righteousness that is by faith. Then in the second half Paul asserts that salvation or life is given to those who believe (παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι). The goal of εὐαγγέλιον is actualised in 'faith' (*Glaube*) and the goal of 'faith', which can be exercised by both Jews and Greeks, is the justifica-

⁴² Cranfield, *On Romans and Other New Testament Essays*, 91.

⁴³ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 116-118; Moo, *Epistle*, 227-228; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 177-179.

⁴⁴ So Käsemann (*Commentary*, 96), though he admits that this sense does not exclude the forensic sense of 'declaring righteous'. But see Campbell (*Rhetoric*, 171) who prefers the effective sense of δικαιοῶ ('set right') and equates this sense with 'to save', hence 3:26c is understood as expressing God's active involvement in 'saving (or "setting right") the one who lives out of the faithfulness of Jesus'.

⁴⁵ Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 76. For Barrett, 'justification' means an act of forgiveness on God's part, so '[f]ar from being a legal fiction, this [act] is a creative act in the field of divine-human relations' (p 76).

⁴⁶ See, for example, Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 40-41; Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 95; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 116-119, 347; Stuhlmacher, *Letter*, 63-64.