

CHAPTER 9



God's Righteousness, Christ's Faith/ fulness, and 'Justification by Faith Alone' (Romans 3:21–26)

Murray Smith

Introduction

Romans 3:21–26 is the *locus classicus* for the Protestant doctrine of 'justification by faith alone'.¹ For five hundred years, since Martin Luther, it has been widely accepted that the apostle Paul's central concern in this passage is to declare God's gift of a new righteous status received through faith in Christ.² On this reading, Paul's declaration that 'the righteousness of God has been made known' (3:21: δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανερωται) primarily refers to God's gift to sinners of the new righteous status, and Paul's subsequent reference to 'the faith of Jesus Christ' (3:22: πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) concerns the believer's trust in Christ as the means by which this righteous status is received.³ More recently, however, a steady stream of scholars have renewed older arguments that: (i) 'the righteousness of God' (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) refers not to a new righteous status but to God's own righteous character and activity (variously understood), and/

- 1 E.g. the prooftexts for the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (WCF) §11 'Of Justification', include Romans 3:22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.
- 2 Luther, *Romans*, 60 on Romans 3:21: '[Paul] does not speak of the righteousness of God, by which God is righteous, but of that with which He clothes a person when He justifies the ungodly'.
- 3 Recent essays which defend this view, with various important nuances, include: Horton, 'Traditional Reformed View,' esp. 98; Naselli, 'The Righteous God'.

or; (ii) 'through faith of Jesus Christ' (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) refers not to the believer's faith, but to Jesus Christ's faith/fulness.⁴ This exegesis predates the controversial 'New Perspective on Paul', but has been associated with that movement in various (complicated) ways.⁵ Perhaps at least partly for this reason, it has been rejected by many seeking to defend the classic Protestant understanding of 'justification by faith alone'.

The issues involved in this discussion are complex. In this chapter, I attempt neither a thorough exegesis of Romans 3:21–26, nor a full account of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. My limited goal, as a card-carrying Protestant—a confessional Presbyterian no less!—is to demonstrate that reading 'the righteousness of God' as *God's righteousness* and 'the faith of Christ' as *Christ's faith/fulness* in Romans 3:21–26 is both exegetically compelling, *and* thoroughly consistent with the rightly cherished Protestant doctrine of 'justification by faith alone'. There is not space here to engage with a number of other closely related exegetical and theological issues. Certainly, some who argue for this reading of 'the righteousness of God' and 'the faith/fulness of Christ' also adopt positions which stand in serious conflict with the common Reformational confession of 'justification by faith alone'. Most prominently, N.T. Wright, for example, argues that Paul's 'justification' language primarily refers to the divine declaration that a person belongs among the covenant people, that Paul does not affirm the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers, and that the final judgment will be passed 'on the basis of the entire life'.⁶ These conclusions, and their theological implications, certainly do constitute a significant revision of the Reformation doctrine of justification itself. They can, however—and I will argue they should—be unbundled from the exegetical discussion about 'the righteousness of God' and 'the faith of Jesus Christ'.

The argument proceeds in three stages. First, I locate Romans 3:21–26 within the purpose and argument of Romans to show how Paul relates

4 For the bibliography, see §2.2.1 and §2.2 below.

5 For a review of the 'New Perspective on Paul', see: Smith, 'Paul'.

6 For a brief review of Wright's position, and responses to it to 2013, see: Smith, 'Paul', 19–28. For Wright's most recent contribution, see Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 775–1042, which further advances the same position. Among more recent critical responses to Wright's views on justification, see esp. Schriener, 'Justification'; Vanhoozer, 'Wrighting the Wrongs'; Starling, 'Covenants'; Cowan, 'N.T. Wright'; Horton, 'Justification', II: 336–46, 374–94.

'the gospel', to 'the righteousness of God' and 'the faith of Christ', as well as to the 'justification' of 'all who believe'. Second, I provide an exegesis of Romans 3:21–26, with particular reference to 'the righteousness of God' (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ), 'the faith of Christ' (πίστις Χριστοῦ), and 'justification' (δικαιόω). Finally, I bring Paul's teaching in this passage into conversation with the Reformation doctrine of 'justification by faith alone' by means of an analysis of that doctrine in what is arguably its most mature confessional form, namely, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (WCF §11). My argument throughout is that the primary purpose of Romans 3:21–26 is to demonstrate how *God's righteousness* has been disclosed through *Christ's faith/fulness*, which provides the only grounds for the *free justification* of all who trust in him. Paul's concern in this paragraph is first *theo-centric* and then *anthropological*, first *Christological* and then *soteriological*. While these pairs are inseparable, the order matters. I conclude that while this reading of 'the righteousness of God', and 'the faith of Jesus Christ' in Romans 3:21–26 is at variance with much of the Protestant *exegetical* tradition, it poses no threat to the classic Reformation *doctrine* of justification by faith alone but, on the contrary, it provides for that doctrine a more secure exegetical foundation.

1. The gospel, the righteousness of God, and justification by faith: Romans 3:21–26 in the argument of the letter

Romans is no systematic theology textbook. It does, however, present a sustained theological argument with its own internal logic designed to serve Paul's purpose in sending the letter to Rome. Our first task, then, is to relate Romans 3:21–26 to Paul's purposes in writing the letter, and to situate this crucial passage within the argument of the letter as a whole.

Paul's purpose in writing the letter has been variously understood, but his central concerns are relatively easily established.⁷ He writes to introduce himself to the Roman churches, and to lay out his gospel (1:1–6; 10–15; 2:16; 16:25–27), so as to unite the divided Roman churches (14:1–15:13), and win their support for his mission to the

7 For a review of proposals regarding Paul's purpose/s, see esp.: Donfried, *Romans Debate*; cf. McDonald & Porter, *Early Christianity*, 455–459.

nations, specifically Spain (15:18–20, 23–28). First and foremost, his purpose is *theological*. He writes to vindicate God and the gospel. In the face of criticism that the gospel welcomed Gentiles, and excluded Jews from the blessings God promised to Israel (3:1–8; 9:1–11:26), Paul demonstrates that what God has done in Christ *is right*: he has been true to his word and—just as he promised—has judged sin, and now justifies sinners from among all the nations, including Jews if they trust in Christ (3:1–8, 21–26; 9:6–7, 14; 11:1–2, 28–32; 15:8–13). This gospel is thoroughly consistent with all that God had spoken through the Law and the Prophets (1:2; 3:21). Second, Paul's purpose is *pastoral*. The expulsion of the Jews from Rome under Claudius (A.D. 49), and their subsequent return (from A.D. 54), seems to have placed Gentile believers in a dominant position in the churches, and exacerbated divisions between Gentile and Jewish believers.⁸ In response to these tensions between 'the strong' and 'the weak' (14:1–15:13), Paul emphasizes the deep continuity between the gospel and God's covenant with Israel (1:2; 3:21, 31; 15:8), urges Gentile believers to recognize that their inclusion amongst the ancient people of God is all of grace (11:14–32), and so calls on them to 'bear with the failings of the weak', and to 'welcome each other just as Christ has welcomed you' (15:1–7). Third, and finally, Paul also writes with a *missional* purpose. He writes to win the support of the Roman churches for his mission to the Gentiles in Spain (15:23–28). Given the tensions in the churches precisely over this issue, Paul demonstrates that the universal horizon of God's saving purposes in Christ flows out of God's faithfulness to his promises to Abraham. The mission to the nations is the culmination of God's purposes (1:5; 15:7–13; 16:26); it ought to be the concern of the whole people of God in Christ.⁹

The central theme of the letter is, unsurprisingly, closely related to this threefold purpose. Paul's central concern throughout the letter is to demonstrate that *the gospel reveals God's righteousness for the benefit of all who trust in Christ and for the sake of his own name*. First, 'the gospel'

8 Schreiner, *Romans*, 33–40, provides a concise review of the evidence for a mixed, Gentile-dominant audience.

9 Cf. Williams, 'The "Righteousness of God"', 248–255.

(τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) is central to Paul's argument in the letter.¹⁰ This is evident from its prominent position in the epistolary frame of the letter (1:1, 9, 15; 15:16, 19; 16:25), from its appearance in the opening programmatic summary (1:16), and from its function at key points in the argument throughout (2:16; 10:15–16; 11:28; 15:16, 19; 16:25). Paul defines his gospel for the Romans in his opening greeting (1:1–6).¹¹ The gospel he proclaims is: (i) grounded in God (1:1); (ii) sourced in the Scriptures (1:2); (iii) centred on God's 'Son ... Jesus Christ our Lord' (1:3–4); (iv) announced in his appointment, by resurrection, as 'the Son of God in power' (1:3–4), and; (v) orientated to the obedience of 'all the nations' (1:5–6). This short gospel summary is assumed in subsequent references to 'the gospel' and 'gospel' throughout the letter. It is significant for our purposes in at least three ways. Paul's characterization of the gospel as 'the gospel of God' (εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ) simultaneously indicates that the gospel is *from God* (source genitive), proclaimed *by God* (subjective genitive), and *about God* (objective genitive).¹² In this context, it is no surprise to find that—first and foremost—the gospel reveals *God's own righteousness* (1:16–17; 3:21–22). Further, Paul's summary of the gospel highlights Jesus' descent from David and enthronement as Lord—the beginning and the end of his earthly career (cf. 2 Tim 2:8). This indicates that Paul's gospel concerns the whole of Christ's career from his incarnation to his enthronement—from his humiliation to his glorification.¹³

10 For 'the gospel' as the theme of the letter, see: Moo, *Romans*, 25–28; cf. Hooker, 'Another Look', 54: 'The book's theme is "the gospel (or good news) of God".'

11 Schreiner, *Romans*, 30, notes that 16:25–27 forms an *inclusio* with 1:1–5 by the repetition of five motifs: (i) 'the gospel' (1:1; 16:25); (ii) fulfillment of the Scriptures (1:2; 16:26); (iii) Paul as herald of the gospel (1:1, 5; 16:25); (iv) the immediate goal of the obedience of faith among the Gentiles (1:5; 16:26); (v) the ultimate goal of God's glory in Christ (1:5; 16:27).

12 Cf. Schreiner, *Romans*, 82 recognises the twofold sense of a genitive of source ('gospel *from* God') and an objective genitive ('gospel *about* God'). Given that Paul immediately explains that God himself promised the gospel beforehand through the prophets (1:2), we also need to reckon with the sense of a subjective genitive ('gospel *revealed* or *proclaimed* by God'). Certainly, there is no need to limit the nuances of the relationship between the head noun and its genitive, unless lexical or syntactical factors demand otherwise. See Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, 13 §39; Turner, *Grammar*, 210; Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 121.

13 Vos, 'Paul's Eschatological Concept', 104, helpfully emphasizes that Paul's gospel summary ('descended from David ... declared Son of God in power') is not so much concerned with Christ's two natures (human and divine), as with his two states (humiliation and exaltation); cf. Horton, *Christian Faith*, 704: 'Eschatology, not ontology, is the point of this particular statement of the gospel'. More recently, see the helpfully nuanced analysis along these lines in: Bates, 'Christology'; Johnson, 'Romans 1:3–4'.

It therefore paves the way for his later emphasis on *Christ's life of faith/fulness*, culminating in his death and resurrection, as the manifestation of God's righteousness, and the ground of the believer's justification (3:22–26; 4:25; 5:18–19). Yet further, Paul's gospel summary highlights the deep continuity between all that God revealed beforehand in the Scriptures and his gospel for the Gentiles, and this paves the way for Paul's argument that, far from undermining God's promises to Israel, the gospel brings them to their fulfilment in its announcement of free justification for all who trust in Christ (3:24, 27–31; 4:9–12).

Second, Paul emphasizes that this gospel reveals 'God's righteousness'.¹⁴ 'Righteousness' is certainly a significant theme in Romans: the noun *δικαιοσύνη* ('righteousness') occurs thirty-four times,¹⁵ the verb *δικαιώω* ('I justify') fifteen times,¹⁶ the adjective *δίκαιος* ('righteous') seven times,¹⁷ the noun *δικαίωμα* ('righteous decree or regulation') five times,¹⁸ the noun *δικαίωσις* ('justification') twice,¹⁹ and *δικαιοκρισία* ('righteous/just verdict'), once.²⁰ The antonyms *ἀδικία* ('unrighteousness'), and *ἄδικος* ('unrighteous') are also prominent.²¹ The key phrase—*δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*—has been the subject of significant debate, which we will need to explore in due course. At this point it is enough to notice that while Paul employs the phrase a total of ten times in his letters, he does so only twice outside Romans (Rom 1:17; 3:5; 3:21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3 (x2); 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9). This already suggests that our interpretation of the phrase needs to be closely guided by its role in the argument of the letter. For this reason, it is important to note the close connections in Romans between 'the gospel' and 'the righteousness of God'. The 'righteousness of God' is not the gospel, but it is revealed in the gospel. Paul announces

14 The significance of 'God's righteousness' as an integrating theme in Romans is widely acknowledged. For important discussions, albeit with different understandings of the key terms, see esp. Käsemann, 'Righteousness of God'; Williams, 'Righteousness of God', 241–90; Wright, 'Romans', 395–412; Seifrid, 'Righteousness Language'; Seifrid, 'Paul's Use'; Irons, *The Righteousness of God*; Moo, *Romans*, 82–100.

15 Rom. 1:17; 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 4:3, 5, 6, 9, 11 (x2), 13, 22; 5:17, 21; 6:13, 16, 18, 19, 20; 8:10; 9:30 (x3), 31; 10:3 (x3), 4, 5, 6, 10; 14:17.

16 Rom. 2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:1, 9; 6:7; 8:30 (x2), 33.

17 Rom. 1:17; 2:13; 3:10, 26; 5:7, 19; 7:12.

18 Rom. 1:32; 2:26; 5:16, 18; 8:4.

19 Rom. 4:25; 5:18.

20 Rom. 2:5.

21 *ἀδικία* (x7): Rom 1:18 (x2), 29; 2:8; 3:5; 6:13; 9:14; *ἄδικος*: Rom 3:5.

this reality in his opening programmatic statement (1:16–17), which then serves to link his opening introduction of the gospel (1:1–6) to the crucial explication of God's righteousness in our passage (3:21–26). The connections from 1:1–6 to 1:16–17 are found in their common references to 'the gospel' rooted in the Scriptures (1:1, 16: τὸ εὐαγγέλιον), and to 'power' (1:4, 16: δύναμις), 'faith' (1:5, 16–17: πίστις / πιστεύω), and 'all the nations' (1:5, 16: πᾶς + ἔθνος / Ἑλλήν). The connections from 1:16–17 forward to 3:21–26 are found in 'five points of explicit overlap' which—as D. Campbell writes—together identify Rom 1:17 and 3:21–22 as 'sibling texts, if not twins.' In both texts: (i) δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is the subject; (ii) δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is the subject of a verb of revelation; (iii) δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is expanded by a similar prepositional phrase (ἐκ πίστεως) / διὰ πίστεως; (iv) a purposive εἰς construction using the πίστ- root completes the sentence; (v) the attestation of the Scriptures features prominently. The Scripturally-rooted, Christ-centred, and universally-applicable gospel of 1:1–6 is thus directly connected to 'the righteousness of God' explicated at 3:21–26 via the programmatic summary at 1:16–17. For this reason, it is no surprise to find that, like 1:1–6, the paragraph at 3:21–26 emphasizes the continuity of God's new work with his promises to Israel (3:21), the culmination of God's purposes in Christ (3:22, 24), and the universal implications of God's achievement in him (3:22–24, 27–31).²² The gospel reveals God's righteousness for the sake of his name and the benefit of all who believe. Indeed, Paul's further references to 'the righteousness of God' underline the way in which the gospel reveals that *what God has done in Christ is right*. To begin with, the gospel reveals that God does right in judging sin, not only the sin of those outside God's covenant with Israel, but also of those within it (1:18–3:21): Paul's 'gospel' declares that God will judge all people (2:16), and this reveals 'God's righteousness' (3:5). In addition, 'the righteousness of God' provides the key to understanding God's dealings with Israel and, especially, the inclusion of the Gentiles within his saving purposes (9:1–11:36). Unbelieving Jews are missing out on the promised blessing not because of any failure on God's part (9:6; 11:1–2), but because of their unbelief (11:20). More pointedly,

22 Campbell, 'The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ', 60.

it was because they 'did not submit to God's righteousness' that they have failed to receive the promised blessings (10:3). In welcoming the Gentiles, then, God has done what is right. At the heart of Paul's letter to the Romans, then, is his presentation of the gospel as it reveals the righteousness of God.

Third, the revelation of the righteousness of God in the gospel is for the benefit of all who believe, and for the sake of his own name. This emphasis on 'all those who believe' as the beneficiaries of God's grace in Christ appears repeatedly throughout the letter. Paul frames the entire letter by references to the goal of the gospel—the obedience of faith among 'all the nations' (1:5; 16:25–27; cf. 15:18). Paul frequently speaks of 'the nations' (τὰ ἔθνη 29x), and emphasizes—in a range of ways—the universal horizon of God's saving purposes, and especially the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, manifested in the inclusion of the Gentiles amongst God's covenant people (3:22, 31; 4:11–12, 16–17; 10:11–13; 11:11–32; 15:8–29; 16:26). Closely related to this is the theme of 'faith' (πίστις, πιστεύω), which Paul introduces in connection with 'the gospel' and 'the nations' in his opening gospel summary (1:5; cf. 1:8, 12). 'Faith' is further connected to 'the gospel', 'the righteousness of God', and 'all who believe', in the programmatic summary (1:16), and in our crucial passage (3:22–24). These links are further cemented by the repetition of references to 'the gospel' or Jesus' resurrection, 'righteousness', 'faith', and 'the nations' in Paul's appeal to Abraham (3:27–4:25), and at the heart of his discussion about Israel and the nations in Romans 9–11 (esp. 9:30, 10:4, 6, 8–17). Finally, Paul further connects 'the gospel', 'God's righteousness', 'faith', and 'the nations' to his ultimate concern for God's 'name' (ὄνομα) or 'glory' (δόξα).²³ This connect is again established in the letter opening, and confirmed in its conclusion (1:5; 16:25–27). Throughout the body of the letter, Paul repeatedly shows that God's 'name' or 'glory' is his ultimate concern: the essence of sin is the rejection of God's 'glory' (1:23; 3:23); Israel has rejected God's 'glory' and blasphemed his 'name' (2:24; 9:4); God has renewed his 'glory' in Christ, especially his resurrection (6:4); the

23 ὄνομα (x5): Rom 1:5; 2:24; 9:17; 10:13; 15:9; δόξα (x16): Rom. 1:23; 2:7, 10; 3:7, 23; 4:20; 5:2; 6:4; 8:18, 21; 9:4, 23; 11:36; 15:7; 16:27.

righteous give God 'glory' (4:20; 11:36); the unity of God's people in Christ is for the 'glory' of God (15:7); God's purpose is that his 'name' might be 'proclaimed in all the earth' as the one who judges and saves (9:17; 10:13; 15:9); sharing in God's 'glory' is the ultimate promise for those who trust in Christ (2:7, 10; 5:2; 8:18, 21; 9:23).²⁴ Crucially, Paul explicitly connects his 'gospel' as it reveals 'the righteousness of God' (1:16–17) to God's revelation his 'glory' in judgment (3:5–7) and his 'name' as the Lord who saves (10:1–13).

The multiple connections between Paul's 'gospel', 'the righteousness of God', 'faith', 'the nations', and the 'glory' or 'name' of God make it clear that any interpretation of Romans 3:21–26 needs to account for how this crucial paragraph contributes to these mutually interpretive themes within the argument of the letter as a whole. This essay argues that Romans 3:21–26 makes best sense when understood as Paul's most concentrated exposition of how his gospel reveals God's own righteousness, through Jesus' Christ's faith/fulness, for the benefit of all who believe, and for the sake of his own name among the nations.

2. God's righteousness and Christ's faith/fulness in Romans 3:21–26

The marginal note in the Luther Bible famously declared that Romans 3:21–26 is 'the chief point, and the very central place of the Epistle, and of the whole Bible'. There are, of course, other contenders for 'the very central place ... of the whole Bible', but this paragraph certainly plays a crucial role in Romans: it picks up Paul's opening summary of the gospel (Rom 1:1–6), and his programmatic statement of the letter's theme (Rom 1:16–17), and shows how the gospel reveals God's righteousness, for the benefit of all who believe, and for the sake of God's own name. Unsurprisingly, the paragraph is as dense as it is rich, and as difficult as it is significant.²⁵ The goal, therefore, is not to offer an exhaustive

24 This theme is rightly emphasized by Schreiner, *Romans*, 51, 139–43; cf. Grindheim, 'Theology of Glory', who helpfully shows that God's 'glory' in Romans is his 'revelatory presence', rejected by Israel, but renewed in Christ.

25 Horton, 'Traditional Reformed View', 180, lists a 'cluster of difficult questions that have momentous theological implications'.

exegesis, but to show that Paul's teaching is focused on the revelation and vindication of *God's own righteousness*, through *Jesus Christ's faithfulness*, for the *free justification of all who believe*. Concentrating, therefore, on Paul's language of 'righteousness' (δικαιοσύνη, δικαιώω, δίκαιος) and 'faith' (πίστις, πιστεύω) within the logic of the paragraph as a whole. The final section (§3) turns to the theological implications of this understanding of Romans 3:21–26, and shows that it is not only consistent with the classic Protestant doctrine of 'justification by faith alone', but provides a more thoroughly theological and Christocentric grounding for it.

2.1 *God's righteousness revealed*

First, in Romans 3:21–26 Paul demonstrates that the gospel reveals *God's own righteousness* (cf. 1:17). 'The righteousness of God' (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) is *certainly the main subject of the paragraph*. The phrase appears four times in six short verses, always with reference to God (3:21, 22: δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ; 3:25, 26: τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ). It is also the subject of the primary verb, which communicates that 'the righteousness of God' has been 'revealed' (πεφανερώται). That God himself is the source of this revelation is indicated by the passive voice of the verb (a 'divine passive'). The eschatological nature of the revelation is indicated by the strong contrast between the plight of humanity in sin (3:18–20), and the new revelation in Christ (3:21–22).²⁶ Its present and ongoing significance is indicated by the verb's perfect tense.²⁷ Indeed, the central significance of 'righteousness' related to God in this paragraph is further underlined by three further occurrences of words with the δίκ- root: God is described, once, by the adjective 'righteous' (3:26: δίκαιος), and

26 The contrast between the old age and the new is created by: (i) the temporal marker νυνὶ δὲ ('but now'); (ii) the parallel contrasting expressions 'from works of the law' or 'through the law' (3:20: ἐξ ἔργων νόμου / διὰ ...νόμου) and 'apart from the law' χωρὶς νόμου (3:21); (iii) the dual reference to the 'law' (νόμος) in 3:21: 'the righteousness of God' has been disclosed χωρὶς νόμου ('apart from law'), so that the new revelation marks a decisive break with the old, but also stands in deep continuity with it, 'being witnessed to by the law and the prophets' (μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν).

27 This holds whether we adopt the 'traditional' understanding of the Greek tense forms, or one which emphasizes the role of verbal aspect. For a brief review, see Campbell, *Advances*, 117–118. Further discussion in Crellin, 'Semantics'.

God functions, twice, as the subject or agent of the cognate verb δικαιώω ('justify'), which appears in participial form and describes, alternatively, God 'who justifies' (3:26), and 'those who are justified' [by God] (3:24).

'The righteousness of God' has been revealed! But what, exactly, does this mean? At very least, 'the righteousness of God' is a definite entity: Paul speaks not of 'a righteousness' (*contra* NIV84), but of 'the righteousness of God'.²⁸ Beyond this, however, there is widespread debate. Two key questions, therefore, must focus our discussion: (i) *how* does the genitive θεοῦ relate to the head noun δικαιοσύνη? (ii) what is the nature of this δικαιοσύνη?

2.1.1 God's own righteousness

The genitive 'of God' (θεοῦ) has been understood to refer either to a 'righteousness' people receive from God, or to God's own righteousness (variously understood). The first main option—δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as a righteousness people receive from God—relies, grammatically speaking, on reading θεοῦ as either: (i) an objective genitive with the sense of 'righteousness *that counts before* God', or; (ii) a genitive of source (origin), giving the meaning 'righteousness *that comes from* God (as a gift)'. In one form or another, this first reading goes back at least to Augustine,²⁹ received a major impetus from Luther,³⁰ and Calvin,³¹ and has been

28 Apollonius' Canon states that in genitive phrases the head noun and the genitive either both have the article, or lack it, and that such constructions are, either way, 'normally definite'; Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 239–40. Apollonius' Corollary states further that 'when both nouns are anarthrous, both will usually have the same semantic force' (pp.239–40, 250, citing Hedges, *Apollonius' Canon*). In the phrase δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, 'God' (θεός) is definite, so the whole phrase is definite.

29 Augustine, *The Spirit and the Letter*, 15.9, cited in Bray, *Romans*, 99: 'The righteousness of God is not that by which God is righteous but that with which he clothes man when he justifies the ungodly.'

30 Luther, *Romans*, 60, on Romans 3:21 (cited above n.2); cf. Luther, 'Preface', 336–337: '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 merciful God justifies us by faith.'

31 Calvin, *Romans*, on Romans 3:21: 'It is not certain for what distinct reason he calls that the righteousness of God, which we obtain by faith; whether it be, because it can alone stand before God, or because the Lord in his mercy confers it on us. As both interpretations are suitable, we contend for neither. This righteousness then, which God communicates to man, and accepts alone, and owns as righteousness, has been revealed'. In the *Institutes*, when Calvin discusses God's righteousness, he describes it in terms of God's faithfulness to his promises: 'Righteousness, therefore, refers rather to the truth of the divine promise than to the equity of paying what is due' (*Institutes* §3.18.7).

popular ever since, especially among Protestants scholars generally, and Lutherans in particular.³² This reading was popularized, in two very different contexts, by Luther's 1545 German Bible, which translates δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as an objective genitive—*die Gerechtigkeit, die vor Gott gilt* ('the righteousness which counts before God'),³³ and the NIV84, which renders δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as a source genitive—'*a righteousness from God*' (italics added).

In contrast, the second main option—δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as God's own righteousness—relies on reading the genitive θεοῦ as either: (i) an adjectival, possessive genitive, referring to an aspect of God's own character; or, (ii) a verbal, subjective genitive, referring to God's righteous acts.³⁴ This reading also claims ancient precedent in Ambrosiaster,³⁵ finds some limited acknowledgment amongst early Reformed interpreters,³⁶ and has recently gained increasing support amongst a range of scholars,³⁷ especially among a number who understand God's righteousness as his 'covenant faithfulness'.³⁸ The shift in scholarly opinion towards this reading is partially reflected in the NIV11, which now renders δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as 'the righteousness of God' (except at 3:22), and so allows for this reading, without necessarily supporting it (cf. NRSV; ESV; CSB).

32 Bultmann, *Theology*, 1.285; Bornkamm, *Paul*, 138; Conzelmann, *Outline*, 218–220; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.96–99; Carson, 'Atonement', 124–125; Irons, *The Righteousness of God*, 311–118; Schreiner, *Romans*, 125–142.

33 Cf. Tyndale's translation (1526): 'the rightewesnes no dout which is good before God'.

34 This verbal subjective genitive reading is predicated on the often unstated, but perfectly valid, assumption that δικαιοσύνη may be taken as an 'action noun' (verbal noun). Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 112, defines a verbal genitive construction as one in which 'the head noun has a verb as a cognate'. In this case, the head noun δικαιοσύνη has the cognate verb δικαιοῦω.

35 Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul's Epistles*, cited in Bray, *Romans*, 99: 'the righteousness of God is all about God's divinity ... the righteousness of God appears to be mercy because it has its origin in the promise, and when God's promise is fulfilled it is called "the righteousness of God". For it is righteousness when what is promised has been delivered'.

36 E.g. Gouge & Gataker, *Westminster Annotations*, on Romans 1:17: 'righteousness of God: Of Christ given to us by God, and received by faith'. The divines also note, however, that it is called 'righteousness of God ... because it is the accomplishment of all his promises; for so is the righteousness of God sometimes taken for his faithfulness and mercy, Rom. 3.26'.

37 Barrett, *Romans*, 29; Kümmel, *Theology*, 198; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 262.

38 Williams, 'Righteousness of God', 285; Hays, 'Justification', 3.1129; Wright, 'Letter to the Romans', 398–340; Wright, *Justification. God's Plan*, 63; Wright, 'Justification: Yesterday', 56; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 796, 804, 928; Wright, 'Translating δικαιοσύνη'; Bird, *Saving Righteousness*, 15–16.

A variant of this position, attempting to mediate the debate, argues, following the influential work of E. Käsemann, that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ operates as both a subjective genitive and a genitive of source, denoting both active God's saving power, and the gift of righteousness created by that power.³⁹ Most recently, R. N. Longenecker, D. Moo, and F. Thielman have all independently argued, with various different nuances, that God's righteousness is simultaneously an attribute to God's character (possessive genitive), God's saving activity (subjective genitive), and the righteous status granted to believers (source genitive).⁴⁰

Despite strong arguments on all sides, reading δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as a possessive/subjective genitive best accounts for the evidence: 'The righteousness of God' is God's own righteous character and actions.⁴¹ Specifically, I will argue below, 'the righteousness of God' is his fidelity to his own name, his commitment to do what is right, especially in his covenant with creation and with Israel, which involves both judging sin and saving his people. Paul declared that this righteousness of God has been eschatologically enacted and embodied in Christ. At this point, it is enough to establish that Paul speaks of God's own righteousness. Four considerations are decisive.

First, the Scriptures of Israel, which undoubtedly shaped Paul's theological understanding more than any other source, consistently speak of 'the righteousness of God' as an aspect of God's own character and actions. The precise phrase צדקת אלהים / δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ does not occur in the OT. There are, however, a number of close parallels, and these overwhelmingly refer not to a status that God confers on his people, but to God himself. The Scriptures: (i) describe the LORD by the

39 Käsemann, 'Righteousness of God', 167–193; Beker, *Paul*, 262–264; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 41–42; Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 61–65; Jewett, *Romans*, 141–142; Campbell, *Deliverance*, 677–704; Grieb, 'Righteousness of God', 65–78; Schnabel, *an die Römer*, 174–181.

40 Longenecker, *Romans*, 175 (cf. pp.168–175); Moo, *Romans*, 241 (cf. pp.73–100, 241–246); Thielman, *Romans*, 203 (cf. pp.81–93, 202–205). Also: Naselli, 'Righteous God', 217, argues that 'God's attribute of being righteous is the fundamental concept' and that in Romans 'that entails both God's gift of a righteous status ... and God's activity of saving'. He considers that 'God's gift of a righteous status is most prominent in Romans' (italics original).

41 The fine distinctions between the possessive genitive and subjective genitive readings should not be pressed too hard. Given the close connection between character and actions in Jewish thought, it is quite likely that Paul intended both connotations.

adjective 'righteous' (צַדִּיק / δίκαιος);⁴² (ii) use a noun phrase to speak of 'the righteousness of the LORD', or (in the plural) the 'righteous deeds of the LORD' (צִדְקַת יְהוָה / δικαιοσύνη + κύριος);⁴³ (iii) employ possessive pronouns to report God's self-reference to 'my righteousness' (צַדִּיק / ἡ δικαιοσύνη μου),⁴⁴ to address him by referring to 'your righteousness' (צִדְקָה / ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου),⁴⁵ or to speak in the third person of 'his righteousness' (צִדְקָה / ἡ δικαιοσύνη αὐτοῦ);⁴⁶ (iv) attribute righteousness to the LORD God in other ways.⁴⁷

The closest OT parallels to Paul's declaration that 'the righteousness of God has been revealed' (1:17: δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ... ἀποκαλύπτεται; 3:21: δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανέρωται) are found in the psalms and Isaiah: (i) Psalm 98 declares that 'the LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness (צִדְקָה / ἀπεκάλυψεν τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ) in the sight of the nations' (Ps 98:2 [LXX 97:2]). Here the context makes clear that it is God's 'marvelous' actions in history, bringing

42 E.g. Deut 32:4; 2 Chron 12:6; Ezra 9:15; Neh 9:8, 33; Pss 11:7; 116:5; 145:17 [LXX 10:7; 114:5; 144:17]; Isa 45:21; Lam. 1:18; Dan 9:14; Zeph 3:5; Zech 9:9 (?); cf. 4 Ezra 10:15–16: 'bear bravely the troubles that have come upon you. For if you acknowledge the decree of God to be righteous, you will receive your son back in due time'; 14:32: 'because he is a righteous judge, in due time he took from you what he had given'; 2 Bar. 44:4: 'he whom we serve is righteous and that our Creator is impartial'; 78:5: 'so that you may consider the judgment of him who decreed it against you to be righteous'.

43 E.g. Deut 33:21; Judg 5:11; 1 Sam 12:7; Mic 6:5; Cf. 1QS 10:23: 'For thanksgiving shall I open my mouth, the righteousness of God (צִדְקָה; [pl. = the righteous acts?]) shall my tongue recount always'; 10:24–25: 'Counselled by wisdom, I shall recount knowledge ... conforming to the righteousness of God (צִדְקָה) [sg. = God's righteous character revealed in the law/wisdom?]); 1QS 11:11–12: 'As for me, if I stumble, God's loving-kindness forever shall save me. If through sin of the flesh I fall, my justification (צִדְקָה) will be by the righteousness of God (צִדְקָה) which endures for all time'; 1QM 4:6: 'When they go to battle they shall write on their banners, "The truth of God", "The Righteousness of God" (צִדְקָה), "The glory of God", "The justice of God".'

44 Isa 46:13; 51:5, 6, 8; 56:1.

45 Pss 5:9 [ET 5:8]; 31:2 [LXX 30:2; ET 31:1]; 35:24, 28 [LXX 34:24, 28]; 36:7, 11 [LXX 35:7, 11; ET 36:6, 10]; 37:6 [LXX: 36:6]; 51:16 [LXX: 50:16; ET 51:14]; 71:2, 16, 19 [LXX 70:2, 16, 19]; 88:13 [LXX 87:13; ET: 88:12]; 89:17 [LXX 88:17; ET 89:16]; 119:40, 142, 160 [LXX: 143:1, 11; 145:7 [LXX 118:40, 142, 160; 142:1, 11; 144:7]; Dan 9:16; Cf. 4 Ezra 8:36: 'For in this, O Lord, your righteousness and goodness will be declared, when you are merciful to those who have no store of good works'; Ps. Sol. 2:15: 'I will justify you, O God, in uprightness of heart. For in your judgments is your righteousness (ὅτι ἐν τοῖς κρίμασιν σου ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου), O God'.

46 Pss 7:18 [ET 7:17]; 22:32 [LXX 21:32; ET 22:31]; 50:6; 97:6; 98:2; 103:17; 111:3 [LXX 49:6; 96:6; 97:2; 102:17; 110:3]; Isa 42:21; 59:16 [MT only].

47 E.g. Pss 89:15 [LXX 88:15; ET 89:14]; 97:2 [LXX 96:2]; Isa 41:10; Dan 9:7, 9 [LXX]; cf. Wis. 5:17–18, 20: 'the Lord ... will put on righteousness as a breastplate' (ἐνδύσεται θώρακα δικαιοσύνης) ... and creation will join with him to fight against his frenzied foes'.

salvation to his people, which have revealed his righteousness; (ii) Isaiah 56 has the LORD himself declare that 'soon my salvation will come and my righteousness be revealed' (Isa 56:1: וצדקתי להגלותי / καὶ τὸ ἔλεός μου ἀποκαλυφθῇναι), where the LXX employs the verb ἀποκαλύπτω, but translates 'righteousness' with 'mercy (τὸ ἔλεός μου ἀποκαλυφθῇναι). Here again, God's righteousness will be revealed when he acts to save his people. In OT and the early Jewish literature, then, what the LORD reveals as his righteousness is his *own character and actions*.

Crucially, and by contrast, there is no clear precedent in the Scriptures or the early Jewish literature for 'the righteousness of God' referring to a righteous status that God might grant to his people. The LORD himself *is* the righteousness of his people;⁴⁸ he *credits them* with righteousness;⁴⁹ he *clothes them* with righteousness;⁵⁰ he *works* righteousness for them.⁵¹ In none of these constructions, however, do the Scriptures speak of 'the righteousness of God'. All of the closest biblical and early Jewish antecedents for Paul's phrase refer to God's own character or actions.

Second, and crucially, Paul's use of the phrase 'righteousness of God' (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) in Romans is consistent with this biblical and early Jewish pattern (1:17; 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3 (x2)): δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ refers to God's own character and actions. This is certainly clear in Romans 3:5, where the apostle lays out a series of contrasts between Israel and God: Israel's 'faithlessness' contrasts with God's 'faithfulness' (3:3); Israel's 'lies' contrast with God's 'truth' (3:4, 7); 'our unrighteousness'

48 Ps 4:2 [ET 4:1]: 'O God of my righteousness' (אלהי צדקי / ὁ θεὸς τῆς δικαιοσύνης μου); Isa 45:24: 'Only in the LORD ... are righteousness and strength' (אך ביהוה לי אמר צדקות ועז); Jer 23:6; 33:16: 'The LORD is our righteousness' (יהוה צדקנו); 1QS 10:11: 'To God shall I say, "O, my Righteousness" (לא אל אומר צדקי)'.
 49 Gen 15:6: ויחשב לו צדקה / καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην; Ps 106:31: ותחשב לו לצדקה / καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην.

50 E.g. (i) Isaiah 61:10: 'he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness' (מעיל צדקה יעטני). The righteousness is, however, not said to be God's (*contra* NIV 'his righteousness'), and the LXX, at any rate, translates צדקה with εὐφροσύνης ('joy, merriment') rather than δικαιοσύνη; (ii) Ps 132:9 [LXX 131:9]: 'Let your priests be clothed with righteousness (ילבשו צדק / ἐνδύσονται δικαιοσύνην)'; but again, the righteousness is not said to be God's (*contra* NIV 'your righteousness').

51 E.g. (i) Ps. 72:1 [LXX 71:1] has the prayer 'give to the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness (וצדקתך /) to the royal son'. The context makes clear that this is not a righteous status, but the ability to execute justice (74:1–4); (ii) Ps. 103:6 [LXX 102:6] affirms that 'the LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed'. This also concerns God working out right outcomes for the oppressed, rather than granting them a righteous status.

(ἡ ἀδικία ἡμῶν) contrasts with ‘God’s righteousness’ (θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην) (3:5). Even those who argue that ‘the righteousness of God’ elsewhere refers to a righteous status which God gives to believers recognize that in 3:5 the phrase refers to an aspect of God’s own character.⁵² Similarly, in Romans 3:25–26, Paul affirms—twice—that God’s ultimate purpose in putting Jesus forward as a ‘place of atonement’ (ἱλαστήριον) was to demonstrate his own righteousness (3:25: ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ... εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ; 3:26: πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ). Again, there is no question here that the righteousness in view is God’s own righteousness, demonstrated through Jesus’ death on the cross.

In the more disputed passages (Rom 1:17; 3:21–22 and 10:3), Paul’s verbs encourage the recognition that God’s righteousness is an attribute of God himself, climactically revealed in Christ. In both Romans 1:17 and 3:21–22, ‘the righteousness of God’ (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) is the subject of a verb of revelation (1:17: ἀποκαλύπτεται; 3:21: πεφανέρωται). Throughout the Scriptures, God can and does reveal more than himself, but God’s own name, will, and works are at the very centre of his revelation. Given that ‘the righteousness of God’ is revealed in the gospel—the very climax of God’s work in the world—we are right to expect that this revelation relates very closely to God’s own character. In the context of Paul’s argument from Romans 1:18–3:20, which begins with the announcement of ‘God’s wrath ... being revealed from heaven’ (1:18: Ἀποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ), it is unlikely that Paul now speaks of a new human status being revealed. On the contrary, it makes good sense to say that, alongside his wrath against sin, God has now revealed—in Christ, and especially in his death—God’s own commitment to bring relief for sinners in the face of that wrath, while also judging with their sin (3:24–26). Similarly, in Romans 10:3, Paul speaks of many Jews ‘being ignorant of the righteousness of God’ (ἀγνοοῦντες τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην) so that ‘they did not submit to God’s righteousness’ (τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ὑπετάγησαν). The verbal ideas of ‘being ignorant’ and failing to ‘submit’ sit uncomfortably with ‘the righteousness of God’ as a righteous status granted to believers. They makes good sense, however, if ‘the righteousness of God’ is

52 E.g. Moo, *Romans*, 198–199; Schreiner, *Romans*, 278–80.

God's own righteousness, revealed in Christ.

Third, the understanding of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as God's own righteousness is further supported by the observation that in Romans 1–3 Paul sets the phrase in parallel with a number of other genitive constructions, all of which clearly refer to God's own character and actions. Most immediately, Paul sandwiches 'the righteousness of God' (1:17: δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) between 'the power of God' (1:16: δύναμις ... θεοῦ), and 'the wrath of God' (1:18: ὀργή θεοῦ), both of which are clearly subjective genitives referring to *God's* power and *God's* wrath, which strongly suggests that Paul also speaks of *God's* righteousness.⁵³ In the wider context, Paul employs a number of parallel phrases, all of which are best taken as subjective genitives: the 'goodness of God' (2:4: χρηστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ),⁵⁴ 'the righteous judgment of God' (2:5: δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ θεοῦ), 'the faithfulness of God' (3:3: τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ), 'the truth of God' (3:7: ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ θεοῦ; cf. 15:8), and 'the forbearance of God' (3:26: ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ). These parallels further support the conclusion that 'the righteousness of God' refers to an aspect of God's own character which has been climactically revealed in Christ.

Fourth, the use of the phrase 'the righteousness of God' (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) elsewhere in the NT (Matt 6:33; Jas 1:20; 2 Pet 1:1), as well as by Paul in his other letters (2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9) is also arguably consistent with this reading. The three references outside Paul all quite clearly refer to an attribute of God's character, on the basis of which Christians have been saved (2 Pet 1:1), or which they are to emulate in their lives (Jas 1:2), and to 'seek' in the world (Matt 6:33). Amongst Paul's letters, 2 Corinthians 5:21 affirms that Christ became sin 'so that we might become the righteousness of God in him' (ἵνα ἡμεῖς γενώμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ), which is certainly capable of being read as a reference to God's own righteousness.⁵⁵ The verb 'might become' (γενώμεθα) sits

53 Jewett, *Romans*, 142.

54 Note here also Paul's use genitive pronoun, with God as its antecedent, to refer to God's 'kindness, forbearances, and patience' (2:4: τῆς χρηστότητος αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀνοχῆς καὶ τῆς μακροθυμίας).

55 Cf. Hooker, 'On Becoming the Righteousness of God', provides a well-worked example of this kind of approach. Her construal of 'the righteousness of God' relies too heavily on Käsemann's understanding of God's righteousness as his saving power. Nevertheless, Hooker points up the inadequacies of reading δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in 2 Corinthians 5:21 as a reference to a righteous status granted to believers.

uncomfortably with the idea of a forensic declaration, which is rightly associated with Paul's teaching on justification by faith (see §2.3). Paul's logic, rather, seems to be that Christ so fully bore the sin of his people that, since they are 'in him', God's own righteousness—God's commitment to do what is right, which he has worked out in Christ—is now manifested in them. Philippians 3:9 may, at first glance, seem to be an exception to this understanding of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, since in that text Paul does indeed refer to 'the righteousness *from* God' (τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην). The preposition ἐκ certainly requires a reference to something which *comes from* God. But this is precisely the point: Philippians 3:9 is not a true parallel. That text is distinguished from Paul's nine references to God's own righteousness (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) in two ways: (i) τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην is governed by the participle ἔχων ('having'), which Paul nowhere else associates with δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, and indicates that Paul here speaks of something that people might possess; (ii) the prepositional phrase 'from God' (ἐκ θεοῦ), which Paul also does not employ in any of the other δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ texts, indicates that Paul now speaks of a righteousness which has God as its source. These syntactical distinctions make it clear that in Philippians 3:9 Paul does not speak of God's own righteousness, but the grant of righteousness *from* God, *possessed* by those who trust in Christ, which the apostle elsewhere describes by recourse to the verb δικαίω ('justify'; see §2.3 below).

By δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, then, Paul intends God's own righteous character and actions. In keeping with the Scriptures everywhere, Paul's references in Romans 3:21–22 and 25–26 to 'the righteousness of God' refer to an aspect of God's own character, now revealed most fully in his actions in Christ, rather than to the righteous status believers receive by his grace.

2.1.2 *God's righteousness as God's commitment to his own name*

But there is a second question: what kind of character and actions are envisaged by the noun δικαιοσύνη? In the Scriptures, God's 'righteousness' (דִּקְיָה / דִּקְיָה/ δικαιοσύνη) is *his fundamental commitment to do what is right, by acting consistently with his own character, especially in his covenant relationship with creation, with Israel, and through Israel for the nations*. From the beginning, the LORD is described as 'righteous'

(צדיק / δίκαιος) in an eternal and absolute sense: Moses declares that 'the LORD is righteous' (Deut 32:4: יהוה צדיק / ὁ ... κύριος δίκαιος); the psalmist concurs that 'his righteousness endures forever' (Ps 111:3: וצדקתו עמדת לעד / LXX 110:3: ἡ δικαιοσύνη αὐτοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος); he confesse to God, 'righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne' (Ps 89:15 [ET 89:14]: צדק ומשפט מכון כסאך / LXX 88:15: δικαιοσύνη καὶ κρίμα ἐτοιμασία τοῦ θρόνου σου), and he praises God, 'your righteousness is righteous forever' (Ps 119: 142: צדק לעולם / ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου δικαιοσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα). In a range of other ways, the Scriptures reveal that God's righteousness is a fundamental aspect of his character: God's righteousness means that 'his work is perfect' and 'all his ways are justice', that he is 'a God of faithfulness' and 'without iniquity' (ESV), that 'he does no wrong' (NIV).⁵⁶

God's commitment to do what is right, of course, cannot be conceived as God conforming to an absolute moral norm which stands above or outside him. Given who he is, God's commitment to do what is right can be nothing other than his utter fidelity to the norms created by his own character. God's righteousness is his commitment to act in consistency with his own 'name'. In Psalm 31, David appeals to the LORD, 'deliver me in your righteousness' (בצדקתך / ἐν τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ σου), and closely follows this with 'for the sake of your name' (למען שמך / ἕνεκα τοῦ ὀνόματός σου) lead and guide me' (Ps 31:2, 4 [LXX 30:2, 4; ET 31:1, 3]. Psalm 89, likewise, sets God's 'name' and God's 'righteousness' in parallel when it declares 'blessed are the people ... who exult in your name' (בשמך / ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου) all the day and in your righteousness (ובצדקתך / ἐν τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ σου) are exalted' (Ps 89:16–17 [LXX: 88:17; ET 89:15–16]). In the same way, again, in Psalm 143, David appeals to God, 'for the sake of your name, LORD' (למען שמך יהוה / ἕνεκα τοῦ ὀνόματός σου, κύριε), preserve my life, and in your righteousness (בצדקתך / ἐν τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ σου), bring me out of trouble' (Ps 143:11 [LXX 142:11]). The prophet Daniel, likewise, sets God's 'name' (שם / ὄνομα), his 'righteousness' (הצדקה / ἡ δικαιοσύνη), and his 'righteous acts' (צדקתך / τῇν δικαιοσύνην σου) in parallel as he acknowledges

⁵⁶ Deut 32:4; Isa 45:21; Pss 11:7; 50:6 [LXX 10:7; 49:6]; 89:15 [LXX 88:15; ET 89:14]; 97:2, 6; 116:5 [LXX 96:2, 6; 114:5]; 119:137, 142, 160; 145:17 [LXX 118:137, 142, 160; 144:17]; Zeph 3:5.

Judah's sin, and appeals for God to save his people (Dan 9:15–16, 18–19).⁵⁷ These parallels reveal that God's righteousness is, most fundamentally, his commitment to act in accordance with his own name.

God's self-revelation of this 'name'—his very character—to Moses is foundational to God's self-revelation in the OT and, indeed, the whole of the Scriptures. The LORD declared his 'name' to Moses as 'the LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty' (Exod 34:5–7 with 3:14–15). This oft-repeated description of God's character simultaneously draws attention to God's grace and justice, his mercy and his wrath.⁵⁸ God's righteousness involves, above all, his fidelity to *this* name. From the human point of view, and in the outworking of redemptive history, the divine attributes revealed in the 'name' stand in significant tension with each other.⁵⁹ God's grace and justice are not antithetical since, in biblical thought, 'justice is above all the way in which the grace and love of God are maintained and made to triumph'.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the question of *how* the LORD can be faithful to his 'name', simultaneously 'gracious and merciful', *and* 'not clearing the guilty' is one of the fundamental tensions of the biblical narrative. In this context, Paul's opening declaration that the gospel *reveals* God's righteousness (Rom 1:17) promises that the gospel will reconcile this tension, and simultaneously reveal both God's justice and his grace, both his wrath against sin, and his mercy towards sinners.

This recognition that God's righteousness is his fidelity to his own character provides the necessary foundation for an integrated account

57 Schreiner, *Romans*, 139–143 also recognizes these associations between God's 'name' and 'righteousness'. He holds that God's righteousness in Romans 1:17 and 3:21–22 is his gift of righteousness to his people, and argues God's 'desire to glorify his name' provides the fundamental reason why God grants the gift of righteousness to his people. The relationship between God's name and his righteousness is, however, even more fundamental.

58 Num 14:18; Deut 4:31; 5:9–10; 7:9–10; Pss 25:6–10; 30:5; 33:5; 40:10; 78:38; 86:3–5, 15; 103:8–9; 105:8; 111:4; 145:8; Neh 9:17, 31–32; Isa 30:18–19; Jer 30:11; 32:18; Dan 9:4; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2; Mic 7:18–20; Nah 1:2–3.

59 The Christian tradition rightly affirms, however, that within God himself, that is, within the divine 'simplicity', God's attributes exist in perfect unity. See esp. Aquinas, §I.3; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2. §196–97 (pp. 170–77).

60 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.228.

of God's righteousness in relation to the world. Modern scholarship has often set creational, covenantal, and forensic understandings of God's righteousness in opposition to each other. Properly understood, however, they belong together.

First, when considered in relation to the world, God's righteousness is a *creational* category. God's commitment to act in accordance with his own character naturally includes his commitment to act rightly towards his creation. It is no surprise, then, that God's righteousness has a cosmic dimension. In numerous texts, especially in the Psalms, God's righteousness expresses his commitment to set things right in all the world.⁶¹ To this extent, H.H. Schmid was correct to place biblical 'righteousness' language on the broad canvas of the order of creation.⁶² God's commitment to do what is right includes his determination to 'secure the good and beneficial order of creation'.⁶³

Second, however, God's righteousness is a *covenantal* category. This is in no way opposed to the first category and is, indeed, already implied by it. God's utter transcendence as Creator means that the only way creatures may have any fruitful relationship with him is if he voluntarily condescends, making himself available to them.⁶⁴ God's covenant with Adam, and through him with the entire creation, means that all of God's relationships with his creatures are covenantal from the start.⁶⁵ Thus, although the creational and the covenantal emphases of biblical 'righteousness' language have sometimes been played off against each other,⁶⁶ any dichotomy drawn between them is a false one. God's covenant with creation is foundational, and the Scriptures consistently present God's covenant with Israel as the means by which he intends to

61 Pss 9:9 [ET 9:8]; 36:7; 48:11; 65:6 [LXX 35:7; 47:11; 64:6; ET 36:6; 48:10; 65:5]; 96:13 [LXX 95:13]; 98:2, 9 [LXX 97:2, 9].

62 Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit*.

63 Seifrid, 'Righteousness Language', 426.

64 Cf. WCF §7.1 citing Isa 40:13–17; Job 9:32–33; 1 Sam 2:25; Pss 113:5–6; 100:2–3; Job 22:2–3; 35:7–8; Luke 17:10; Acts 17:24–25.

65 See esp. Gen 1:28; 2:16–17; 6:18; 9:8–17; Isa. 24:5; Hos 2:18; 6:7; Jer 33:19–22 (cf. 31:35–36). For a classic discussion of God's covenant with Adam / creation, see: Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.§ 294–296 (pp.564–571). For recent defences of an original creation covenant, albeit with various emphases, see: Vogels, *God's Universal Covenant*, ch. 1; Merrill, 'Covenant'; Bartholomew, 'Covenant', 28–30; Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 143–159; cf. Niehaus, 'Covenant', 231–33; Gentry, 'Kingdom', 28–29; Gentry & Wellum, *Kingdom*, 147–222; Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation* (2013), 1–58; Ward, *God and Adam*, 12–25.

66 E.g. Seifrid, 'Righteousness Language', 425–429; Bird, 'Progressive Reformed View', 141–142.

'set things right' in the entire creation. For this reason, it is no surprise that righteousness language appears not only in the context of God's covenant with creation, but also in close connection with his covenants with Abraham, Israel, and David.⁶⁷ To this extent, the 'covenant faithfulness' view of God's righteousness, first advanced by H. Cremer and most recently developed by N.T. Wright, is correct: 'righteousness' in the Hebrew Scriptures is commonly 'a concept of relationship', denoting right behaviour in relationship, and especially within God's covenant with Israel.⁶⁸ More specifically, this reading is certainly correct that *God's* righteousness is *manifested in* his faithfulness to his covenant promises, and in his saving actions on their behalf, and ultimately through them for all the nations and the whole of creation.⁶⁹ The 'covenant faithfulness' view is limited, however, by its tendency to *reduce* God's righteousness to his covenant faithfulness and, in some accounts, to reduce this even further to his fidelity to his *gracious* promises over against his commitment to punish sin.⁷⁰ Although 'God's righteousness' cannot be simply equated with his 'covenant faithfulness', it certainly includes it.

Third, God's righteousness is a *forensic* category. Again, this must not be set in opposition to 'God's righteousness' as a creational and covenantal category, for the simple reason that all of God's covenants in Scripture are fundamentally legal arrangements. God's covenants confirm and secure his relationship with his world and his people, and provide the terms under which the relationship is conducted. It is no surprise, then, that God demonstrates his righteousness by governing the world, establishing his righteous law, and judging justly.⁷¹ In particular, God's righteousness

67 E.g. Gen 15:6, 18: 'righteousness' and 'covenant'; Num 25:12: God's 'covenant' with Phineas = Ps 106:31 [LXX 105:31]: God reckoned Phineas 'righteous'; Neh 9:8; Ps 143:1 [LXX 142:1]. It is also significant that the LXX sometimes translates ὁσιον ('steadfast love' / 'loving-kindness') with δικαιοσύνη ('righteousness'): e.g. Gen 19:19; 20:13; 21:23; 24:27; 32:10.

68 Cremer, *Rechtfertigungslehre*, 53. For Wright's works, see n.38 above.

69 Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation* (1984), 87: '(Israel) will provide, under the direct divine rule which the covenant contemplates, the paradigm of the theocratic rule which is to be the biblical aim for the whole world'; cf. Wright, *Justification*, 154: 'God's righteousness is God's own righteousness ... His faithfulness to the covenant, to Israel, and beyond that again to the whole of creation'.

70 For a critique of the 'covenant faithfulness' reading of 'God's righteousness', see esp. Irons, *Righteousness of God*; cf. Irons, 'Is "Righteousness" a Relational Concept'.

71 Exod 9:27; 2 Chron 12:6; Job 34:17; Pss. 7:12; 9:5, 9 [ET 7:11; 9:4, 8]; 51:6 [LXX 50:6; ET 51:4]; 89:15 [LXX 88:15; ET 89:14]; 96:13; 97:2; 98:9; 119:7, 62, 106, 137–38, 142, 160, 164; 129:4 [LXX 95:13; 96:2; 97:9; 118:7, 62, 106, 137–38, 142, 160, 164; 128:4]; Isa 45:23; Jer 11:20; 12:1; Lam 1:18; Dan 9:14; Neh 9:33; Zeph 3:5.

(צדקה / δικαιοσύνη) is the basis for his judgment upon the idolatrous nations, and especially on faithless Israel. Precisely because God's covenants with creation, Israel, and David all included the promise of curses for disobedience (Gen 2:16–17; Lev 26:1–46; Deut 27–30; 2 Sam 7:14), God is repeatedly described as 'righteous' when he brings wrath upon the nations, and judgment on his faithless people.⁷² At the same time, in all of the biblical covenants, God's promise to punish sin is set within the content of his univocal and unconditional promise to bless (Gen 1:28; 12:1–3; 2 Sam 7:12–13, 15). God's 'righteousness' is, therefore also—especially—revealed when he rescues his people and punishes his enemies (e.g. Exod 9:27; Deut 33:21; Judg 5:11; 1 Sam. 12:7; Dan. 9:16; Mic. 6:5). The psalmists regularly celebrate God's righteousness as the source of blessing, and invoke God's righteousness as the grounds on which they seek deliverance.⁷³ The same dynamic is evident in the prophets, especially in Isaiah 40–66, where God's 'righteousness' (צדקה / δικαιοσύνη) is presented as the ground of Israel's hope for deliverance, and is closely associated with his salvation (תשועה; LXX: σωτηρία),⁷⁴ as well as with other descriptions of God's gracious deliverance of his people.⁷⁵ God's commitment to do what is right—his righteousness—includes both judging sin and vindicating the righteous, both executing the curses, and bringing the blessings, of the covenant.⁷⁶

72 2 Chron. 12:6; Isa. 5:16; 10:22; 28:17; 51:5; 59:16–19; Lam 1:18; Dan 9:7, 9 LXX, 14; Ezra 9:15; Neh 9:33; cf. Ps. Sol. 2:15: 'I will justify you, O God, in uprightness of heart. For in your judgments is your righteousness (ὅτι ἐν τοῖς κρίμασιν σου ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου), O God'; Wis. 5:17–18, 20: 'the Lord ... will put on righteousness as a breastplate (ἐνδύσεται θώρακα δικαιοσύνης) ... and creation will join with him to fight against his frenzied foes'; 4 Ezra 10:15–16: 'bear bravely the troubles that have come upon you. For if you acknowledge the decree of God to be righteous, you will receive your son back in due time'; 14:32: 'because he is a righteous judge, in due time he took from you what he had given'; 2 Bar. 44:4: 'he whom we serve is righteous and that our Creator is impartial'; 78:5: 'so that you may consider the judgment of him who decreed it against you to be righteous'.

73 Pss 31:2 [LXX 30:2; ET 31:1]; 35:24, 27–28 [LXX 34:24, 27–28]; 71:2 [LXX 70:2]; 85:11–14 [LXX 84:11–14; ET 85:1–13]; 119:123, 40; 143:1, 11 [LXX 118:123, 40; 142:1, 11]; cf. Dan 9:16.

74 Isa 45:8; 46:13; 51:4–5, 6, 8; 56:1; 59:16–18; 63:1; cf. Pss 65:6; 71:15–19; 98:2 [LXX 64:6; 70:15–19; 97:2].

75 See nn.43, 45.

76 Cf. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* 2 §206 (p. 222): 'He is righteous and all his judgments are righteous (Ps. 119:137; 129:4); the punishment of the wicked is often ascribed to God's righteousness (Exod. 6:5; 7:4; Ps. 7:11; 9:4–8; 28:4; 62:12; 73; 96:10, 13; 2 Chron. 12:5–7; Neh. 9:33; Lam. 1:18; Isa. 5:16; 10:22; Dan. 9:14; Rom. 2:5; 2 Thess. 1:5–10). It is also true, however, that the punishment of the wicked is usually inferred from God's wrath, and that the righteousness of God especially comes to the fore in Scripture as the principle of salvation for God's people.'

This forensic aspect of God's righteousness is not, however, the Graeco-Roman concept of distributive justice (*iustitia distributiva*), which is 'too formal and abstract to describe Israel's thought'.⁷⁷ At least partly due to the Vulgate's translation of the δικαιοσύνη by the Latin *iustitia*, the medieval church came to understand of 'the righteousness of God' in this way as 'the divine attribute by which God rewards man according to his just deserts'.⁷⁸ As Martin Luther rightly saw, this understanding of 'the righteousness of God' cannot account for the way in which Paul connects it to 'the gospel' and 'salvation' in Romans 1:17.⁷⁹ As just demonstrated, however, Paul's usage in Romans 1:17 is consistent with the Scriptures generally, which present 'the righteousness of God' as not only standing behind his judgment of sin, but also—especially—energizing his saving acts on behalf of his people.⁸⁰ In biblical usage, then, God's righteousness is God's fidelity to his own name, his commitment to act in accordance with his own character, and therefore his commitment to keep his covenant promise to bless his people and, indeed, humanity as a whole, while also judging sin. It is this righteousness that, according to Paul, God has more fully revealed in the gospel.

2.1.3 *God's righteousness in Romans*

In Romans, Paul's declarations regarding God's righteousness share these same emphases: 'God's righteousness' is his commitment to act in accordance with his own name—to do what is right—and therefore to both judge sin, and bring salvation, for Israel, the nations and, indeed, the whole creation. This holistic understanding of God's righteousness seems required by the way in which Paul introduces the theme of the *whole* of the letter by affirming that the gospel—God's climactic work in Christ—reveals God's righteousness (1:16–17). This

⁷⁷ Horton, *Christian Faith*, 269, n.20.

⁷⁸ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (1998), 52–53.

⁷⁹ Luther, 'Preface', 336–337: '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 call it, with which God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner'.

⁸⁰ Cf. Bird, *Saving Righteousness*, 15: in the Scriptures of Israel 'the righteousness of God ... is the character of God embodied and enacted in his saving actions which means vindication (for Israel and the righteous) and condemnation (for the pagan world and the wicked)'.

opening statement already encourages us to see that God's righteousness in Romans cannot be equated with the righteous status that God undoubtedly grants to those who trust in Christ. Indeed, this holistic understanding of God's righteousness is the only way to make sense of all of Paul's references to δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ. By contrast, those who seek to understand 'God's righteousness' as his gift of righteousness are forced to posit a distinction between God's 'saving righteousness' (1:17; 3:21–22; 10:3) and his 'judging righteousness' (3:5, 25–26).⁸¹ But Paul makes no such distinction. The revelation of 'God's righteousness' in the gospel (1:16–17) introduces all of the apostle's teaching regarding not only justification, but also the transformation of God's people in Christ and their eschatological hope (Rom 5–8), the place of Israel and the Gentiles in God's purposes (Rom 9–11), the life of the church in the world (Rom 12–15).⁸²

Certainly, 'God's righteousness' (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) is the source of his judgment of sinful humanity, including faithless Israel. In Romans 2 Paul warns those who are 'storing up wrath' for themselves on the 'day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment (δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ θεοῦ) will be revealed' (2:5). He then announces that 'God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all' (2:16). This judgment—which clearly includes even the covenant people—is, Paul says, 'according to my gospel,' the same gospel that at 1:16–17 is said to reveal 'the righteousness of God' (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ). Thus God's judgment on sin is rooted in 'the righteousness of God'. Likewise, in Romans 3, in the section dealing with the place of Israel in God's purposes, Paul makes it clear that God's wrath against his covenant people is an expression of his righteousness: God will be justified (δικαιωθῆς) in bringing judgment against his

81 E.g. Schreiner, *Romans*, 126–43, 319–45, repeatedly uses these categories. He does acknowledge that 'the saving righteousness and judging righteousness of God find their resolution, as 3:21–26 illustrates, in the gospel' (p.158). They are, however, on Schreiner's reading, essential different things: 'God's judging righteousness' is his activity in judging sin, while 'God's saving righteousness' is his gift of a righteous status to believers.

82 Cf. Bird, 'Progressive Reformed View', 141, on Romans 1:16–17: 'the "righteousness of God" is *not* justification by faith. There is indeed a gift of a righteous status from God (see Rom. 5:17; Phil. 3:9), but the righteousness of God introduces the entire package of salvation in all of Romans (not just Romans 1–4) including justification, redemption, sacrifice, forgiveness of sins, covenant membership, reconciliation, the gift of the Holy Spirit, power for a new obedience, union with Christ, freedom from sin and eschatological vindication'.

people (3:4 citing Ps. 51:6 [LXX50:6; ET 51:4]); he is certainly not 'unrighteous' (ἄδικος) in bringing wrath upon them (3:5).⁸³ In this sense, the 'unrighteousness' (ἀδικία) of the covenant people serves to confirm 'the righteousness of God' (θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην). So also again in Romans 3:25–26, Paul emphasizes by repetition that God put Jesus forward (προέθετο) 'for a demonstration of his righteousness' (3:25: εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ; 3:26: πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ). This demonstration was needed because 'of the overlooking of the former sins' (3:25: διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων). God has now demonstrated his righteous, Paul emphasizes, by judging sin in the death of Christ. Thus, as in the Scriptures of Israel, so in Romans 2–3, 'God's righteousness' entails his commitment to judge sin.

At the same time, and emphatically, God's righteousness is the source of the salvation made available in the gospel. At Romans 1:16 Paul declares that 'the gospel' is 'the power of God for salvation (σωτηρία) to everyone who believes'. This salvation is closely associated with God's covenant with Israel, since it is 'for the Jew first', but it also has a universal scope, since it is 'also for the Greek'. Crucially, Paul grounds this salvation in 'the righteousness of God' (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ), which the gospel reveals (1:17). In combining the language of God's righteousness (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ), revealed (ἀποκαλύπτεται), 'for salvation' (εἰς σωτηρίαν) of 'all who believe' (παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι), including 'the Greek' (Ἑλληνι), Paul unmistakably alludes to Ps 98:2 [LXX 97:2]: 'The LORD has made known his salvation (τὸ σωτήριον αὐτοῦ); he has revealed (ἀπεκάλυψεν) his righteousness (τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ) in the sight of the nations (ἐναντίον τῶν ἐθνῶν)'. This promise, Paul declares, is now being fulfilled in what God has done in Christ, and through the proclamation of the gospel about him in all the world. Romans 3:21–26 repeats and expands this same emphasis on God's righteousness as the source of God's work in Christ, which secures a universally-applicable salvation. Now, Paul explains, the revelation of 'God's righteousness'

83 Williams, 'Righteousness of God', 266–267, argues that τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ at 3:2, 4 refers to God's promise to bless the nations through Abraham. While this reading is attractive, the emphasis in 3:1–8 on God's just wrath on his faithless people suggests that τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ entrusted to the Jews should be understood more broadly to mean 'God's covenant with Israel' which included both the promise of blessing (for Israel and through them the nations) and the promise of curse on disobedience.

(δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) is the source of the 'justification' of all—both Jews and Gentiles—who believe (3:22, 24). God's righteousness, then, manifested in the gospel of Jesus Christ, is the source of a universally applicable salvation. Indeed, in the broader argument of Romans this salvation, rooted as it is in 'the righteousness of God' (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) extends even to the non-human creation, since the eschatological 'revelation' (τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν) of the 'sons of God'—that is, their resurrection—will ultimately mean the end of the curse on the earth, and the liberation of the cosmos from its 'bondage to decay' (8:18–25; cf. Isa 24:5).⁸⁴

The 'the righteousness of God', then, both in the Scriptures of Israel and in Paul's letter to the Romans, is his fidelity to his own name—his commitment to do what is right—especially in his covenant with the creation, with Israel, and through Israel for the world. It therefore finds expression both in his condemnation of sin (in Israel and the nations), and his achievement of a salvation of universal scope. This is ultimately why 'the gospel' reveals 'the righteousness of God': in Christ, and especially in his death on the cross, God has simultaneously condemned sin (3:25; 8:3), and saved sinners; he has shown himself to be both 'righteous' (δίκαιον) and 'the righteousifier (δικαιοῦντα) of the one who is of the faith of Jesus' (3:26).

2.2 *Christ's faith/fulness*

God's righteousness, Paul says in 3:22, has been revealed διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ('through the faith of Jesus Christ').⁸⁵ God's revelation of his righteousness has occurred in Jesus Christ. That much is clear. Nevertheless, as for 'the righteousness of God', the phrase 'the faith of Jesus Christ' is the subject of significant and ongoing

84 It is significant that Rom 8:18–25 links the ultimate liberation of creation (8:21: ἐλευθερωθήσεται) to human salvation (8:24: ἐσώθημεν) via the repetition of the key term hope (ἐλπίς) at 8:21 and 24. Since human salvation is rooted in 'the righteousness of God' revealed in 'the gospel' (1:16–17), the clear implication is that this cosmic liberation has the same source. See here: J. Moo, 'Romans 8.19–22'.

85 The repetition of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ at the beginning of 3:22 indicates that it remains the subject of the sentence, and πεφάνερωται remains the main verb.

debate.⁸⁶ In particular, there is significant disagreement about both the lexical import of the head noun πίστις ('faith' or 'faithfulness'), and the function of the genitive Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ('of Jesus Christ').

On the one hand, the dominant view in the reception history of the text reads πιστεύω as 'trust' and Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as the object of that trust (objective genitive): 'faith *in* Jesus Christ'. In support of this reading, it is possible to find statements in theologians as significant as Athanasius and Augustine to the effect that Christ, being God, could not have exercised faith.⁸⁷ Aquinas mounts a positive dogmatic argument to this effect.⁸⁸ Certainly, the Reformation and post-Reformation exegetical tradition strongly supports reading Paul's numerous references to πίστις Χριστοῦ as references to Christian faith *in* Christ,⁸⁹ and this view continues to receive support from the majority of commentators.⁹⁰ This reading was cemented for Protestant interpretation by Luther's German translation, *den Glauben an Jesum Christum* (1522), and is represented in all the major modern English translations (NRSV, ESV, NIV, CSB), as well as the most recent edition of the Lutherbibel (2017).

On the other hand, it is possible to read πιστεύω as 'faith expressed in faithfulness', and Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as a designation of the one who exercised that faith/fulness (subjective genitive): the 'faith/fulness *exercised by* Jesus Christ' or 'Jesus Christ's faith/fulness'. At the level of

86 For a major collection of essays, see Bird & Sprinkle, *Faith of Jesus Christ*. For recent reviews of the debate, see Easter, 'The Pistis Christou Debate'; Kugler, 'ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ'. Significant recent contributions include: Moo, *Galatians*, 38–48; McFadden, 'Does Πίστις Mean "Faith(fulness)"'; Schliesser, "Christ-Faith"; Hooker, 'Another Look'. Downs & Lappenga, *Faithfulness of the Risen Christ*. A major new study is also promised: Gupta, *Paul and the Language of Faith*.

87 Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* §2.6.9 argues that πιστόν at Hebrews 3:2 must refer to Christ as the *object* of faith and not as the one exercising faith/fulness. Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, § 15, commenting on πίστις Χριστοῦ at Romans 3:22, argues that Paul cannot mean 'the faith with which he [Jesus] himself believes', since faith is a quality of man.

88 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* §3a, q.7, a.3 argues from Hebrews 11:1 that 'where divine reality is not hidden there is no point in faith. But from the moment of conception Christ had the full vision of the very being of God ... Therefore he could not have had faith'.

89 E.g. Gouge and Gataker, *Westminster Annotations* on Rom 3:22: 'Gr. Tec. *In Jesus Christ*. Which we yield to Jesus Christ, or which faith resteth upon him'.

90 E.g. Murray, *Romans*, 370–371; Cranfield, *Romans* 1.203; cf. Cranfield, 'On the πίστις Χριστοῦ Question'; Hultgren, 'The Pistis Christou Formulations'; Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 166–167; cf. Dunn, 'Once More'; Silva, 'Faith versus Works', 227–34; Jewett, *Romans*, 278; Keener, *Romans*, 57–58; Schreiner, *Romans*, 127–49, 323–28; Moo, *Romans*, 73–100, 241–46; Thielman, *Romans*, 81–93, 202–205.

theology, the mainstream of orthodox Christology rightly refuses to allow Christ's divine nature to overwhelm his human nature. Christ, being fully human, exercised real faith and faithfulness. Thus, against Aquinas' objection (just noted), M. Allen has recently demonstrated that whether or not Paul affirms Christ's faith by the phrase *πίστις Χριστοῦ*, 'the Christ's faith coheres with and is, in fact, a necessary implication of orthodox Christology and the soteriology of the magisterial Reformation'.⁹¹ In terms of the exegetical tradition, the subjective genitive reading may or may not be able to claim ancient precedent; this is itself a matter of debate.⁹² The view was advocated by a strong minority of scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,⁹³ received a major impetus from Richard Hays 1983 monograph *The Faith of Jesus Christ*,⁹⁴ and is adopted in a significant number of more recent works.⁹⁵ In terms of the translations, the Vulgate's rendering *fides Iesu Christi* retained the ambiguity of Paul's original,⁹⁶ and this tendency persisted in Erasmus' Latin translation, and in Tyndale's English translation as 'the faith of Christ' (1526), which was followed by the KJV (1611). Modern translations have tended to remove the ambiguity in favour of the believer's faith in Christ, but the NRSV and NIV11 translation notes acknowledge 'faithfulness of Jesus Christ' as an alternative. A variation on this view holds that the phrase is deliberately ambiguous and that, at least in some of its instances, Paul intended to evoke both Christ's faith and our

91 Allen, *The Christ's Faith*, 2.

92 For arguments that some of the Fathers read Paul as referring to Christ's faith, see: Wallis, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*; Bird & Whitenton, 'Faithfulness of Jesus Christ'. To the contrary, see: Harrisville, 'ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ'; Silva, 'Faith Versus Works', 227–229; Elliott, 'Πίστις Χριστοῦ'. Cf. Matlock, 'Saving Faith', 87, who argues that when the Fathers do offer explicit comment on *πίστις Χριστοῦ* in Paul, they tend to favour the objective genitive reading.

93 Haussleiter, *Der Glaube Jesu Christi*, 109–145; Kittel, 'Πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ'; Barth, *Romans*, in loc.; Hebert, "Faithfulness"; Torrance, 'One Aspect'; Vallotton, *Le Christ*; Longenecker, *Paul*, 149–152; Howard, 'Notes', and "Faith of Christ"; Robinson, "Faith of Jesus Christ"; Williams, 'Righteousness of God', 272–278, and 'Again Pistis Christou'.

94 Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*; cf. Hays, 'ΠΙΣΤΙΣ'.

95 Johnson, 'Romans 3:21–26'; Hooker, 'ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ', and 'Another Look', suggesting that 'the phrase refers primarily to the faith/fairfulness of Christ, but that this is also something shared by those who are "in Christ"'; Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 115–116; Wright, 'Romans', 469–470, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 836–842; Longenecker, *Romans*, 409–413.

96 Howard, 'Faith of Christ', 461.

faith in him.⁹⁷ Or, pushing the interpretation even further, yet others argue for a ‘third view’ on the question, contending—primarily on the basis of Galatians 3:23–26—that πίστις Χριστοῦ for Paul is ‘not an individual disposition or character (either Christ’s or that of the believer), but rather ... an eschatological event.’⁹⁸

In engaging this debate it is important to recognise that it is possible to make too much of its theological significance.⁹⁹ In particular: (i) both the objective and subjective readings are compatible with orthodox Christian theology; (ii) Paul certainly affirms the perfection of Christ’s trusting obedience to the Father, whether he does so with this phrase or not (esp. Rom 5:18–19; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil. 2:6–8), and; (iii) Paul also certainly emphasizes the necessity of human faith *in* Christ as the only instrument of justification, not least in Romans 3:22: ‘to all who believe’. Nevertheless, as M. Hooker notes, as we approach this question, ‘we are locked firmly into the so-called hermeneutical circle’: our theology will inevitably influence our exegesis, and our exegesis will, in turn, not be insignificant for our theology.¹⁰⁰ Our exegetical conclusions will to some extent colour our theological construction of the doctrine of justification by faith, providing more or less exegetical support either for Christ’s perfect obedience as the objective ground of justification, or for human faith as its instrument.

Eight considerations tip the scales in favour of the view that Paul’s phrase πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (3:22) refers to Jesus Christ’s faith/fulness to God, rather than human faith in him. First, lexicographically, the semantic range of πίστις includes not only ‘faith’ (= ‘trust’ or ‘belief’) but also ‘faithfulness’. In the LXX, πίστις regularly translates

97 For varieties of this view, see: Williams, ‘Again Pistis Christou’, 445–446, on Rom 3:26 (otherwise Williams sees Paul using πιστεύω and πίστις for the believer’s faith, and πίστις Χριστοῦ for Christ’s faith [pp.444, 447]); Hooker, ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ, 341, concludes that πίστις Χριστοῦ refers both to Christ’s faith/fulness and ‘the answering faith of believers, who claim that faith as their own’; Hooker, ‘Another Look’, 46–62; Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ* (2002), 172, 203 on Galatians 3:7, 24; Longenecker, *Triumph*, 103–104, on Gal 3:23; Downs, ‘Faith(fullness)’, 144–45 on 2 Tim 3:15; Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 271, n.39.

98 Schliesser, “‘Christ-Faith’”; cf. Sprinkle, ‘πίστις Χριστοῦ’.

99 Cf. Matlock, ‘Detheologizing’.

100 Hooker, ‘Another Look’, 47; Cf. Myers, ‘From Faithfulness’, 291: ‘The πίστις Χριστοῦ debate involves a conflict over the fundamental shape of Paul’s theology’; Hunn, ‘Debating’, 26: ‘It is theology, not grammar, that continues to drive the debate’.

the Hebrew nouns אמונה and אמת and carries the sense of 'steadfastness', 'trustworthiness', or 'faithfulness'.¹⁰¹ Examples where πίστις means 'trust' are not entirely lacking, but they are certainly rare.¹⁰² The adjective πιστός similarly translates אמן (usually nifal) and means 'trustworthy' or 'faithful' and the cognate verb πιστεύω, by contrast, regularly translates אמן (usually hifil), and consistently means 'trust' or 'belief'.¹⁰³ In the NT, where the language of faith is particularly prominent, the senses of the verb πιστεύω ('I believe', 'I trust'),¹⁰⁴ and the adjective πιστός ('faithful') remain constant.¹⁰⁵ The noun πίστις takes on the 'active' meaning of 'trust' far more commonly than in the LXX, but still often enough means 'faithfulness'.¹⁰⁶ Taking all this into account, T. Morgan's major recent study has confirmed that not only in the LXX, but also in the Graeco-Roman world of the first century, and—in an even more heightened form—in the early Christian texts, the Greek πίστις and the Latin *fides*, with their associated word groups, are primarily used to describe *relationships of trust* which create community, and therefore involve notions of both trust and fidelity.¹⁰⁷

101 E.g. Deut 32:20; 1 Sam 26:23; 2 Kgs 12:16; 22:7; 2 Chron 31:12, 15, 18; 34:12; Ps 32:4 [MT 33:4]; Prov 3:3; 12:17, 22; 14:22; 15:27a; Hos 2:22 [ET 2:20]; Jer 5:1, 3; 7:27; 35:9 [MT 28:9]; 39:41 [MT 32:41]; cf. Wisd 3:14; Sir 1:27; 15:15; 40:12; 45:4; 46:15; Ps. Sol. 8:28; 17:40. See: Lust, Eynikel & Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, loc. cit.; Koehler & Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 1.62–63.

102 Jer 9:2 [ET 9:3] (?); Sir 22:23; 27:16.

103 Koehler & Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 1: 63–64; Lust, Eynikel & Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, loc. cit..

104 BDAG, 816–818, lists five definitions, the first three of which cover the last majority of occurrences and reflect the sense of trusting, or trusting in, or entrusting.

105 BDAG, 820–21, lists: (i) 'pertaining to being worthy of belief or trust' (glosses: *trustworthy, faithful, dependable, inspiring trust/fait*); (ii) 'pertaining to being trusting' (glosses: *trusting, cherishing faith/trust*). The majority of NT occurrences carry the first meaning.

106 πίστις occurs 243x in the GNT. BDAG, 818–20, provide three definitions: (i) 'that which evokes trust and faith' (glosses: *faithfulness, reliability, fidelity, commitment, assurance, oath, troth, proof, pledge*); (ii) 'state of believing on the basis of the reliability of the one trusted' (glosses: *trust, confidence, faith*); (iii) 'that which is believed' (glosses: *body of faith / belief / teaching*). Although 'faithfulness' is listed first, 'faith' / 'trust' has by far the larger number of examples. A cursory survey through the NT occurrences reveals that this accurately reflects the NT usage.

107 Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 14, 281. For reviews of Morgan's work, with a particular critique of her tendency to subordinate propositional content of 'faith' to relational concerns, see: Watson, 'Roman Faith'; Seifrid, 'Roman Faith'. Note also here Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance*, who proposes 'allegiance' as the most appropriate translation for πίστις. For an extended review, see Timmins, 'A Faith Unlike Abraham's'.

Paul certainly employs πίστις (142x) with both senses. On the one hand, the majority of Paul's references to πίστις have this sense of 'trust'. In Romans 4, for example, Paul's references to Abraham's πίστις rely on Genesis 15:6 (4:3: Ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ), are regularly coupled with the verb πιστεύω, and clearly refer to Abraham's trust in God's promises (4:5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16–17, 18–19, 20, 24). Abraham's trust certainly issued in faithfulness, but Paul describes that in other closely related terms (4:12: τοῖς στοιχοῦσιν τοῖς ἰχνεσιν τῆς ... πίστεως τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀβραὰμ [*to those who walk in the footsteps of the faith of our Father Abraham*]). On the other hand, Paul also employs πίστις to describe human 'faithfulness' in a good number of texts (Tit 2:10; Gal 5:22; 2 Thess 1:4; 1 Tim 1:4 (?); 2:7; 4:12; 5:12; 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22; 3:10). In Romans 3, Paul's reference to τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ surely means neither 'faith in God', nor 'God's faith', but 'God's faithfulness' (3:3). Lexicographically, then, πίστις in Paul's phrase πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ could refer either to 'faith' or to 'faithfulness' or—given the close connection between trust and obedience in biblical thought generally, and in Romans in particular—to both 'faith' and 'faithfulness' at the same time, what we might call 'trusting obedience'.

For this reason, a number of scholars have argued that the sharp linguistic distinction in English translation between 'faith' and 'faithfulness' is unwarranted, and it has become common to gloss the term as 'faith/fulness'.¹⁰⁸ Against some looser applications of this approach, K.W. McFadden has successfully shown that Paul can, and often does, disambiguate πίστις by context; πίστις means 'trust' when it is used 'interchangeably or in parallel with the verb πιστεύω', and when it has an object indicated by a preposition;¹⁰⁹ it means 'faithfulness' in Christian virtue lists, and in descriptions of character. Nevertheless, McFadden claims too much when he concludes that 'πίστις does not mean both "faith" and "faithfulness" at the same time in Paul'.¹¹⁰ That Paul *often* disambiguates the term does not mean he *always* does so, for it remains

108 See esp. Robinson, 'Faith of Jesus Christ', 76; Hooker, 'ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ', 339–340; Campbell, 'Romans 1:17', 281; Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ* (2002), 140, 151–52, 161, 203, 295; Downing, 'Ambiguity'; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 968, 1471.

109 McFadden, "Faith(fullness)"; cf. earlier protests along similar lines by: Barr, *Semantics*, 204; Matlock, 'Detheologizing', 5–6; "Even the Demons Believe", 316.

110 McFadden, "Faith(fullness)" in Paul?, 270.

a distinct possibility that in some contexts Paul deliberately works with the inherent polysemy of the term. Indeed, in biblical thought generally, and in Paul in particular, while 'faith' and 'faithfulness' are distinct, they are inseparable; trust in God is the root of faithful living; faithful living is the inevitable fruit of trust in God.¹¹¹ The goal of Paul's apostolic calling was, after all, 'the obedience of faith (ὕπακοήν πίστεως) among all the nations' (1:5; 16:26).¹¹² Moreover, such a deliberate polysemous use of πίστις would seem to be particularly appropriate when Christ is the subject of the verbal idea in the noun. In Paul's theology, as across the NT, Christ is an utterly unique figure—both fully human, *and* participating in the divine identity, both capable of exercising 'faith' in God, *and* alone utterly 'faithful' to God. Thus, despite McFadden's protest, 'faith/fulness' may well be a helpful gloss for πίστις, especially in the phrase πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Second, on grammatical grounds, it is more likely that the genitive phrase 'faith of Jesus Christ' (πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) has subjective force. To be sure, the genitive can indicate the object of faith. This is certainly the case in Mark 11:22 (Ἐχετε πίστιν Θεοῦ), and quite probably also in other texts with a personal object in the genitive (Acts 3:16; Jas 2:1; Rev 2:13; 14:12), or an impersonal object in the genitive (Col 2:12; 2 Thess 2:13).¹¹³ Extra-biblical examples of πίστις with the objective genitive are also available.¹¹⁴ Paul's usage, however, is consistent. The only other times that Paul speaks of πίστις followed by the genitive of a noun denoting a person, the genitive is subjective: 'the faithfulness of God' (3:3: τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ), is set in contrast with the 'faithlessness' (ἀπιστία) of the Jews, and must refer to *God's* faithfulness (subjective genitive), not faith *in* God (objective genitive);¹¹⁵ and the 'faith of Abraham' (4:12: τῆς ...

111 E.g. Rom 10:16; Gal 5:6; 1 Thess 1:3; 1 Tim 1:5; cf. Heb 11:4, 7, 8–9, 17–18, 23–31, 33–38; Jas 2:14–26.

112 The meaning of the phrase ὑπακοήν πίστεως is disputed, but it is best read as a subjective genitive ('the obedience exercised by faith') or a source genitive ('the obedience which comes from faith'), rather than an epexegetical genitive ('the obedience which consists in faith'). For discussion, with arguments to this effect, see esp.: Longenecker, *Romans*, 79–82; Schreiner, *Romans*, 80–82.

113 Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 116.

114 See Matlock, 'Detheologizing', 19, n.59. The point holds even if some of Matlock's examples are capable of a subjective reading.

115 ESV, NRSV, NASB render 'faithfulness of God'; NIV11 'God's faithfulness'.

πίστεως τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀβραάμ; 4:16: ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ), must refer to *Abraham's* faith (subjective genitive), not faith *in* Abraham (objective genitive).¹¹⁶ In a further twenty texts, Paul uses πίστις + genitive of a person referred to by a pronoun, and all of these also refer to the faith or faithfulness of the person, and never present the individual as the object of faith.¹¹⁷ Romans 3:3 and 4:12, 16, however, are particularly decisive: they are Paul's only uses of the πίστις + genitive of a noun denoting a person (apart from the disputed phrase), and they occur in the immediate context. This must surely strengthen the case for πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as a reference to Christ's faith/fulness.

Third, the possibility that 'faith of Jesus Christ' (πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) refers to Christ's faith/fulness is strengthened by Paul's Christological appeal to Habakkuk 2:4 in the crucial introduction to his argument regarding faith (1:17), and its expansion in 3:22. In the opening programmatic statement (1:16–17), Paul's citation of Habakkuk 2:4 serves to ground his affirmation that 'the righteousness of God' is revealed ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν ('from faith to faith'). This may mean, as the NIV renders the phrase, 'by faith from first to last'.¹¹⁸ The Greek idiom, 'from (ἐκ) X to (εἰς) X', however, does not seem to have been used to mean 'emphatically X'. It often communicates, rather, progression from one period of time to another, or from one person to another.¹¹⁹ While some commentators have entertained the former idea (from the faith of the Old Testament to the faith of the New),¹²⁰ Paul's speaks of 'the righteousness of God' being (climactically) revealed 'from faith'; the first 'faith' is somehow instrumental in the new revelation. Most likely, then, the reference is first to Christ's faith/fulness (ἐκ πίστεως) and then to the human faith which responds to him (εἰς πίστιν). Indeed, all three elements of the citation are best understood

116 Cf. Williams, 'Righteousness of God', 273–274.

117 Rom 1:8, 12; 4:5; 1 Cor 2:5; 15:14, 17; 2 Cor 1:24; 10:15; Phil 2:17; Col 1:4; 2:5; 1 Thess 1:8; 3:2, 5, 7, 10; 2 Thess 1:3, 4; 2 Tim 2:18; Phil 6.

118 Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.99–100, argues the phrase is a rhetorical way of saying 'completely by faith'; Moo, *Romans*, 76: 'the combination is rhetorical and is intended to emphasize that faith and "nothing but faith" can put us into right relationship with God'; so also Keener, *Romans*, 29–30.

119 For examples in the Greek literature, with discussion, see: Quarles, "From Faith to Faith".

120 Calvin, *Romans*, loc. cit. considers the view that Paul intends 'an implied comparison between the Old and the New Testament ... more refined than well-founded'. He suggests, rather, that 'from faith to faith' means 'the daily progress that is made by every one of the faithful'.

as speaking primarily of Christ: the designation 'the Righteous One' (ὁ δίκαιος), the reference to 'by faith/fulness' (ἐκ πίστεως), and the promise that 'he will live' (ζήσεται). This needs to be briefly unpacked.

(i) The designation 'the Righteous One' (ὁ δίκαιος) most likely refers to Christ.¹²¹ In Habakkuk 2:4, the masculine singular קִדְיִצַּא may be read as a generic singular (NIV: 'the righteous person'), but it is also capable of being read as a reference to a *particular* individual. This sense is strengthened by the LXX which translates the noun with the definite article 'the righteous (one)' (ὁ δίκαιος). The prophets certainly apply the adjective 'righteous' (קִדְיִצַּא / δίκαιος) and the noun 'righteousness' (קִדְיִצַּא / δικαιοσύνη) to the promised eschatological redeemer,¹²² and—at least partly on this basis—the designation 'the Righteous One' was certainly used as a title for the eschatological redeemer in at least some early Jewish texts (1 En. 38:2; 53:6; 91:10 (?)). Crucially, according to Luke, Paul himself spoke of Christ as 'the Righteous One' (Acts 22:14 [quoting Ananias]). It has sometimes been urged that there is 'no evidence that anyone in antiquity interpreted Habakkuk 2:4 as a reference to the Messiah'.¹²³ This may well be the case but, while a Jewish antecedent or parallel would strengthen the case that Paul read the prophecy in this way, it is not unusual for Paul and the other apostles to pioneer a christological exegesis of texts not otherwise applied to the Messiah (e.g. Rom 10:13 with Joel 3:5 [ET 2:32]; 1 Cor 8:4–6 with Deut 6:4; Phil 2:1011 with Isa 45:23). There is not space to defend it here, but a Christological reading of Habakkuk 2:4 also makes good sense of Paul's appeal to the prophecy in Galatians

121 For fuller defence of this reading, see: Campbell, 'Faithfulness', 65–66; Johnson, *Reading Romans*, 28; Keck, *Romans*, 54; Heliso, *Pistis*; Young, 'Romans 1.1–5'; Jipp, *Christ is King*, 253–57.

122 Isa 11:4–5; 53:11; Jer 23:5–6; Zech 9:9 (?).

123 Thielman, *Romans*, 205; citing Watson, 'By Faith (of Christ)', 155–59.

3:11.¹²⁴ At any rate, Paul is not the only ancient interpreter to read Habakkuk 2:4 as a prophecy of Christ: Hebrews 10:37–38 also cites Habakkuk 2:3–4 LXX (with Isaiah 26:20 LXX) to speak of Christ as ‘the Coming One’ (ὁ ἐρχόμενος), and ‘my Righteous One’ (ὁ ... δίκαιός μου).¹²⁵

(ii) Paul’s reference to ‘by faith/fulness’ (ἐκ πίστεως) also makes good sense as a designation of Christ’s faith/fulness. Habakkuk’s original prophecy certainly means more than bare ‘trust’ or ‘belief’, and includes reference to ‘his faithfulness’ (Hab 2:4b: אֱמוּנָתוֹ).¹²⁶ In the Hebrew Scriptures, the key term אֱמוּנָה consistently carries the sense of an active fidelity, and nowhere unambiguously means ‘trust’ (correctly NIV11).¹²⁷ Of course, given the inseparability of faith and faithfulness in biblical thought the distinction ought not to be pressed too sharply.¹²⁸ The faithfulness Habakkuk envisages must arise—as always in biblical thought—from trust in the LORD, specifically, in God’s promise of deliverance, granted to the prophet in the vision. Nevertheless, the prophecy makes best sense as an affirmation of the consistent teaching of the Scriptures that those who trust

124 So Howard, *Paul*, 63–64; Matera, *Galatians*, 119; de Boer, *Galatians*, 202–204. Others see a reference to both Christ’s faith/fulness and human faith: Martyn, *Galatians*, 314; Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ* (2002), 138–141; de Roo, *Works*, 206–207. In rejecting this view, Moo, *Galatians*, 206, makes two arguments: (i) πίστις (and the cognate πιστεύω ...) has referred to human faith thus far in Gal. 2–3; and (ii) ‘Hab. 2:4b almost certainly also refers to human faith/faithfulness’. The first of these is hotly disputed. The second fails to see that in Paul’s christological exegesis the prophet’s promise of life to human faith/fulness finds its fulfilment in Christ, the truly human one.

125 The Christological reference is made clear by: (i) the earlier prophecy that ‘Christ ... will appear a second time’ (Heb 9:28); (ii) Hebrews’ addition of the definite article to read ὁ ἐρχόμενος (Heb 10:37).

126 The masculine singular suffix יוֹנָה אֱמוּנָתוֹ refers not to the faithfulness of the vision, or of God, but of ‘the righteous one’ (צַדִּיק). For a review of these options, with arguments for this view, see esp. Hunn, ‘Habakkuk’.

127 Koehler & Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 1.62–63, also recognise the meanings ‘steadfastness’, ‘honesty’, ‘official duty’, ‘conscientious’, and ‘security’, but not ‘faith’ / ‘trust’; cf. Scott, ‘New Approach’, 337. Against this Hunn, ‘Habakkuk’, 227, argues that in its context אֱמוּנָה ‘does not require action because Yahweh himself will bring salvation. It only requires faith in the certainty of the vision’. But this asserts a false dichotomy.

128 Cf. Silva, *Interpreting Galatians*, 165: אֱמוּנָה means “steadiness, faithfulness”—thus implying obedience to the law’, but also stresses that for Habakkuk as for Paul, ‘there was no such dichotomy between faith and faithfulness’. See already: Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 154–155.

God, and so obey him ('the faithful'), will 'live'.¹²⁹ Certainly, the Qumran commentary on Habakkuk interprets the prophet's reference to 'faithfulness' as obedience to God's law, together with trust in the community's founder (1QpHab 8:1–3).¹³⁰ The rabbinic tradition, likewise, understood Habakkuk 2:4 as a summary of the whole law, which implies a reference to faith/fulness.¹³¹ The tragedy, as Paul shows so emphatically in Romans 1:18–3:20, is that no-one—not even anyone amongst the covenant people—has been truly 'faithful' to God. Paul underlines this failure at the crucial point of his argument in Romans 3:1–5 by employing the antonym ἀπιστία to speak of the Jews' 'faith/lessness' (3:3: ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν).¹³² In this context, Paul's opening citation of Habakkuk 2:4 appears as a prophetic announcement of 'the gospel'; the apostle appeals to it, primarily, as a prophetic affirmation of *Christ's faith/fulness*. While all people, Israel included, have been 'unfaithful' to God and so die, the 'good news'—announced beforehand by Habakkuk—is that Christ, 'the Righteous One', has been 'faithful', and so 'lives'! This reading is entirely in keeping with the original intent of the prophecy, which calls on 'the righteous' remnant amongst the Jews to trust and obey the LORD and so live. It declares that this faith/ful response has been offered by Christ, the true Israelite, the only faithful one.

129 Gen 2:9, 17; Lev 18:5; Deut 30:15–20; Ezek 20:11, 13; Rom 10:5; Gal 3:12.

130 1QpHab 8:1–3: 'this concerns all those who observe the Law in the House of Judah, whom God will deliver from the House of Judgement because of their suffering and because of their faith in the Teacher of Righteousness'.

131 *Mid. Ps.* 17A.25 and *b.Mak* 24a both report that David summarised the law in eleven principles (Ps 15), Isaiah in six (Isa 33:14–16), Micah in three (Mic 6:8), Isaiah elsewhere in two (Isa 56:1), Amos in one (Amos 5:4), and Habakkuk also in one (Hab 2:4).

132 ἡ ἀπιστία is usually translated 'faithlessness' (ESV) or 'unfaithfulness' (NIV11). Cf. BDAG, 103 §2. Alternatively, Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.180 translates ἡ ἀπιστία as 'unbelief', largely on the basis of its wider NT usage. This text actually seems to be a good candidate for a polysemous use of ἀπιστία as 'faith/lessness'. In the context, Paul states that the Jews 'were entrusted (ἐπιστεύθησαν) with the oracles of God' (3:2), but also stresses their lawless living (2:17–24; 3:5–20); taken together, this implies that their failure took the form of *failing to trust* God's 'oracles', expressed in a *failure to live* in accordance with his law.

(iii) The promise ‘he will live’ (ζήσεται) also makes good sense if applied, first and foremost, to Christ himself. Paul’s opening paragraph in Romans (1:1–5) makes clear that ‘the gospel’ was ‘promised beforehand (προεπηγγείλατο) through his prophets (τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ) in the Holy Scriptures (ἐν γραφαῖς ἀγίαις)’ (1:2). This reference to the prophetic Scriptures surely includes Habakkuk 2:4, the very first prophetic text Paul explicitly cites in the letter (1:17: καθὼς γέγραπται). It is significant, then, that Habakkuk’s prophecy declares that ‘the Righteous One by his faith/fulness *will live*’ and so appears as a prophecy of ‘the gospel’ of God’s ‘Son’, the faith/ful one, and his ‘resurrection from the dead’ (ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν) (1:3–4).¹³³ Certainly, Paul elsewhere presents Christ’s perfect obedience as the meritorious cause of his resurrection / exaltation (Phil 2:9: διό).¹³⁴ In Romans itself, Jesus’ perfect obedience, even to the point of death—his faith/fulness—together with his subsequent resurrection, is at the heart of Paul’s gospel, and closely connected with ‘righteousness’ (1:3–4; 4:25; 5:9–10, 18–19; 8:10–11).

In his crucial opening programmatic statement (1:16–17), then, Paul already suggestively characterises Christ as ‘the Righteous One’ who ‘by faith/fulness will live’.

This conclusion, in turn, suggests that in Romans 3:22 Paul refers to ‘the faith/fulness of Jesus Christ’. Given Paul’s regular habit of introducing key ideas in pithy phrases which he later elaborates and expands, 1:17 is well understood as a condensed and cryptic version of the argument developed in 3:21–22.¹³⁵ ‘From faith’ (1:17: ἐκ πίστεως) corresponds to ‘through faith of Jesus Christ’ (3:22: διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), and ‘to/for faith’ (1:17: εἰς πίστιν) is expanded by ‘to all who believe’ (3:22: εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας). The difference in the prepositions (1:17:

133 Williams, ‘Righteousness of God’, 256.

134 Cf. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* 3, §399, p.434: ‘Scripture ... over and over ... presents the state of humiliation as the way and the means by which alone Christ can attain his exaltation (Isa. 53:10–12; Matt. 23:12; Luke 24:26; John 10:17; 17:4–5; Phil. 2:9; Heb. 2:10; 12:2). The preposition διό (therefore) in Philippians 2:9 refers not to the order and logic but specifically to the meritorious cause of the exaltation. *Because* Christ humbled himself so deeply, *therefore* God has so highly exalted him’. The whole discussion (pp.433–36) is important.

135 For the connections between Rom 1:17 and 3:21–22, see §1 above.

ἐκ πίστεως; 3:22: διὰ πίστεως) is adequately explained by the immediate influence of Habakkuk 2:4 LXX at 1:17 (ἐκ πίστεως).¹³⁶ Thus, Paul's cryptic phrase in 1:17 ('from faith to faith'), expanded in 3:22 means: 'the gospel reveals God's righteousness *through* Christ's faith/fulness (1:17: ἐκ πίστεως; 3:22: διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) *to* human faith (1:17: εἰς πίστιν; 3:22: εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας).'¹³⁷ Once this connection is made it is not hard to see the same pattern of thought (admittedly without recourse to the πίστ- root) in Paul's later affirmation that Jesus' 'one act of righteousness' (ἐνὸς δικαιώματος) and 'obedience' (διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς) resulted in 'the justification of life' (εἰς δικαίωσιν ζωῆς) of those who belong to him (5:18–19). On the basis of his faith/fulness—his trusting obedience even to the point of death—God vindicated / raised Christ, 'the Righteous One', and this provides the basis for the vindication / justification / life of those who trust in him.¹³⁸

Fourth, Paul's theological syntax in Romans 3:21–22 also supports the subjective reading of διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Paul affirms that 'God's righteousness has been *revealed ... through* faith of Jesus Christ' (3:21–22). The verb πεφανέρωται is decisive: it is hard to see how *God's* righteousness could be *revealed* through *human* faith in Christ.¹³⁹ More likely, Paul intends that *God* has revealed his *own* righteousness through what *he* has done in the Messiah. M. Hooker states it well:

136 Certainly, ἐκ and διὰ can both readily indicate agency. See: BDAG, 224–25 § 3, 4: ἐκ with pp.296–97 §3d–f; διὰ.

137 Alternatively, ἐκ πίστεως at Romans 1:17 could perhaps be a reference to *God's* faithfulness. So: Barth, *Romans*, 41; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 43–44; Wright, 'Romans', 425; Hooker, 'Another Look', 55. This reading may be strengthened by the observation that Habakkuk 2:4 LXX^B adds the genitive personal pronoun μου, which may be read in the subjective sense of 'from my faithfulness' (ἐκ πίστεώς μου). There are, however, four reasons why this cannot be considered determinative for Paul's meaning in Romans 1:17: (i) the possessive pronoun is lacking in the MT; (ii) Habakkuk 2:4 LXX^A attaches the genitive personal pronoun to ὁ δίκαιός to read 'my righteous one' (ὁ δίκαιός μου; cf. Heb 10:38); (iii) even in LXX^B the genitive could be read in other ways as an objective genitive ('faithfulness *to me*'), or a source genitive ('faithfulness *granted by me*'); (iv) Paul's citation lacks the pronoun (also Gal 3:11).

138 Cf. Wright, *Justification*, 83.

139 Cf. Robinson, 'Faith of Jesus Christ', 80; Campbell, *Rhetoric*, 63–64; Hays, 'What is at Stake?', 721. To ease this difficulty, the NIV84 supplements Paul's verb 'manifested' / 'revealed' (πεφανέρωται) with a second verb 'come', so that Romans 3:22 reads 'this righteousness of God *comes* through faith in Jesus Christ'. The NIV11 strikingly omits the repetition of θεοῦ at 3:22 and supplies the verb 'given' to read 'this righteousness *is given* through faith in Jesus Christ'. Such emendations of Paul's language are hard to justify when a satisfactory explanation of his Greek is close to hand.

We expect Paul to tell us here *how* God's righteousness is revealed, and this phrase seems to provide the explanation. From the summary of the gospel in 1:2–4, and those still to come in 4:24–5, and 5:6–11, the answer is plain: he has acted *in Christ*. This suggests that Paul is referring here to Christ's own πίστις, rather than that of believers. God's righteousness is revealed *through Christ himself*, not in our response to him.¹⁴⁰

Moreover, the perfect tense-form of the controlling verb πεφάνερωται ('has been revealed') probably confirms this sense. On the traditional understanding of the perfect, the verb here indicates a past divine revelation with ongoing effects; it points to what God *has revealed* in Christ, rather than an ongoing revelation, which would seem to be required by a reference to human faith. Romans 1:17, to be sure, employs the present passive to affirm that God's righteousness 'is being revealed' (ἀποκαλύπτεται) 'in the gospel', but this difference is well explained by the context: while 1:17 affirms the ongoing revelation of God's righteousness in the proclamation of the gospel, 3:21 speaks of the past revelation of God's righteousness in Christ himself, with its ongoing effects and consequences (NRSV, NIV, ESV, CSB).¹⁴¹ But however we understand the verbal tense forms, the point here holds: it is *God's righteousness* that has been revealed, and we rightly expect that his righteousness is revealed in something *God has done*.

Fifth, the whole phrase 'through faith/fulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe' provides a balanced statement connecting Christ's faith/fulness to the human faith which responds to him. If διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ means 'through faith *in* Christ', then 'for all who believe' (εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας) repeats a very similar thought (cf. Gal 3:22). It is too much to say that this reading would make the latter phrase

140 Hooker, 'Another Look', 58–59. Schreiner, *Romans*, 325, 328, recognises the force of this argument, and attempts to counter it by arguing that 'God's righteousness has two dimensions', namely, 'God's work in history that was manifested in the atoning work of Jesus Christ', and 'the righteousness of God subjectively appropriated by faith'. The response fails because 'the righteousness of God' in Romans 3:21–26 refers to *God's* righteousness revealed in Christ.

141 i.e. πεφάνερωται is an extensive or consummative perfect (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 577). The semantic force of the perfect remains a matter of debate, with some recent discussion arguing that the Greek perfect encodes aspect rather than time at the semantic level. For a brief review, see Campbell, *Advances*, 117–118. Further discussion in Crellin, 'Semantics'.

redundant.¹⁴² Paul *could* be repeating for emphasis, with a slightly different focus, first on the object of faith ('Jesus Christ') and then on the universality of access to Christ by faith ('*all* who believe'). More likely, however, Paul deliberately distinguishes between Christ's faith, which he refers to with the noun πίστις + Χριστοῦ, and Christian faith *in* Christ, which he refers to by use of the substantive participle 'those who believe' (τοὺς πιστεύοντας). It is true that Paul nowhere makes Jesus the subject of the verb 'believe' (πιστεύω).¹⁴³ This, however, may be part of the point: there is a qualitative difference between Christ's perfect faith/fulness, and faltering human faith in him.

Sixth, two parallel διὰ / ἐκ + genitive expressions later in the paragraph (3:25, 26) further support the subjective genitive reading of διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (3:22).

(i) At 3:25 Paul explains that God put Jesus forward (προέθετο) as a 'place of atonement' (ἱλαστήριον) 'through [the] faith/fulness, in/by his blood' (διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι). Most major English translations interpret the prepositional phrase διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως at 3:25 as an objective genitive, referring to human faith, and further interpret the parallel prepositional phrase ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι as the object of that human faith (Luther, Tyndale, KJV; NIV84). Recent English translations often supply a verb (or two!) or an additional noun to support this interpretation. Thus NRSV: 'by his blood *effective* through faith'; ESV: 'by his blood *to be received* by faith'; NIV11: 'through *the shedding of* his blood—*to be received* by faith'; CSB: 'in his blood, *received* through faith'. Paul, however, nowhere else calls for faith in Christ's 'blood', or in any other object. He consistently calls, rather, for faith in God (4:3, 17, 24; 9:33; 10:11; Gal 3:6, 22; 1 Thess 1:8; Titus 3:8), or Christ (3:26; Gal 2:16; Phil 3:9; 1 Tim 1:16), or God's word (Rom 10:16), or God's power (1 Cor 2:5; Col 2:12), or a particular conviction (Rom 10:9; 14:2; 1 Cor 11:18; 1 Thess 4:14; 2 Tim 1:12), or a testimony about something (2 Thess 1:10; 2:11;

¹⁴² For a critique of the argument from redundancy see Matlock, 'Rhetoric: Galatians'.

¹⁴³ Moo, *Romans*, 246 considers this decisive; cf. Schreiner, *Romans*, 328.

2:12–13).¹⁴⁴ But Paul never calls for faith in Christ's 'cross', or 'empty tomb', or 'blood'. A more straightforward reading of the Greek, therefore, which is also more consistent with Paul's theological syntax, sees the two prepositional phrases standing in apposition to each other: 'a sacrifice of atonement through the faith/fulness (διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως), by his blood (ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι)'. The repetition of 'through the faith/fulness' (διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως), especially if the anaphoric article is original, suggests a reference back to 'the faith/fulness of Jesus Christ' (3:22), which is then further explained by the added phrase 'by his blood' (ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι).¹⁴⁵ Paul speaks, then, not of faith *in* Christ, but of Christ's faith/fulness *even to the point of death*. He presents Christ's death—referred to metonymically by 'his blood' (τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι)—as the culmination of his trusting obedience.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, as Longenecker notes, Paul sandwiches this reference to 'the faith/fulness' (διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως) between references to Christ's atoning work (προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον) and 'his blood' (ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι), which further suggests a sustained reference to what Christ has done, rather than to Christian faith in him.¹⁴⁷ Certainly, this fits well within the developing argument of the letter, where it is Christ's trusting obedience, even to the point of death, that secures justification for God's people. Romans 5:9 again affirms that the believer's justification has come 'by his blood' (ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ), and 5:18–19 emphasizes that justification comes 'through the obedience' (διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς) of Christ. These later parallels tend to confirm that it is the ground of justification (Christ's faith/fulness to the point

144 Cf. Thielman, *Romans*, 208.

145 The textual evidence for and against the originality of the article is inconclusive. The external evidence slightly favours originality: the article is present $\mathfrak{B}^{40\text{vid}}$, B, Y, C³, D², a number of minuscules, and the Byzantine text; it is absent in $\aleph$ C* D* F G; the whole phrase is omitted in A, but this is most likely accidental (cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 449). Internal considerations also slightly favour the authenticity of the article: it is conceivable that the article was added to produce an anaphoric reference back to 3:22; more likely, however, give the anaphoric use of the article at 3:30, 31, the article is original.

146 Cf. Johnson, 'Faith of Jesus', 79–80; Hooker, 'Another Look', 60.

147 Longenecker, 'Πίστις in Romans 3.25'.

of death), rather than the instrument of justification (human faith), which Paul signals by the phrase 'faith of Jesus Christ'.

(ii) At 3:26 Paul states that God justifies 'the one of the faith of Jesus' (τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ). This phrase is also often understood as reference to human faith, with the preposition ἐκ being rendered by the English preposition 'in': 'those who have faith *in* Jesus' (ESV; NRSV; NIV; cf. Lutherbible2017: *der da ist aus dem Glauben an Jesus*). The preposition ἐκ ('of' / 'from' / 'out of'), however, usually denotes source or origin, and is not used elsewhere to denote the object of a verb or a verbal noun.¹⁴⁸ More specifically, in relation to 'faith' (πίστις), Paul habitually employs other prepositions to indicate the object of faith, but nowhere unambiguously uses ἐκ in this way.¹⁴⁹ The construction ἐκ + πίστεως + noun denoting a person occurs in only three other texts in Paul: Galatians 2:16 and 3:22 also have Χριστοῦ / Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as the final noun; Romans 4:16 has Ἀβραάμ in the final position. This last text provides a particularly exact and illuminating parallel. In both Romans 3:26 and 4:16 Paul: (a) employs the generic article ('the one who');¹⁵⁰ (b) has the construction ἐκ + πίστεως; (c) speaks of the 'faith of' an individual by a simple reference to their personal name (3:26: Ἰησοῦ; 4:16: Ἀβραάμ). 'The one who is of the faith of Jesus' (3:26) parallels exactly 'the one who is of the faith of Abraham' (4:16). Indeed, the parallel is particularly striking given Paul's unusual reference to 'the faith of Jesus'—without his customary addition of the title 'Christ' or 'Lord'—which is, for that reason, highly suggestive of Jesus' own personal exercise of faith/fulness.¹⁵¹ The latter text, regarding Abraham, clearly refers not to 'the one who *has faith in* Abraham', but to

148 BDAG, 295–97.

149 (i) ἐπί: Rom 4:5, 24; 9:33 and 10:11 (cf. Isa 28:16); 1 Tim 1:16; (ii) ἐν: 1 Cor 2:5; Gal 3:26; Eph 1:13, 15; Col 1:4; 1 Tim 1:14; 3:13; 2 Tim 1:13; 3:15; (iii) εἰς: Rom 10:14; Gal 2:16; Phil 1:29; Col 2:5; (iv). πρὸς: 1 Thess 1:8; Philem 5.

150 Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 227–230.

151 Paul refers to 'Jesus' by name 212x. On only 15 occasions does he have Jesus' name without the titular 'Christ', or 'Lord': Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 12:3a; 2 Cor 4:5b; 2 Cor 4:10–11 (4x), 14b; 2 Cor 11:4; Gal 6:17; Eph 4:21; Phil 2:10; 1 Thess 1:10; 4:14 (2x).

the one for whom Abraham's faith is, in some sense, the source and pattern of their own.¹⁵² This strongly suggests that, in like manner, 'the one who is of the faith/fulness of Jesus' (3:26 τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ) refers to the Christian believer, for whom Jesus' faith/fulness is the source and pattern of their own.¹⁵³ This conclusion, of course, does not necessarily require that Abraham's faith and Jesus' faith/fulness are the source of the Christian believer's faith in exactly the same way: the Christian believer's faith is *like* Abraham's, but *grounded in* Jesus' faith/fulness. Nevertheless, the parallel is significant, and tends to confirm that Paul intends to refer to Jesus' own faith/fulness.

The parallel phrases in Romans 3:25 and 3:26 thus further underline Paul's emphasis throughout the paragraph on Jesus' faith/fulness as the means by which God has revealed his righteousness, and so confirm that in Romans 3:22, the apostle speaks of 'the faith/fulness of Jesus Christ'.

Seventh, Paul's emphasis on Christ's faith/fulness in Romans 3:21–26 is consistent with his teaching elsewhere. Specifically, Paul's four other references to πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ / πίστις Χριστοῦ all make good sense when Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is taken as a subjective genitive (Gal 2:16 [2x]; 3:22, Phil 3:9).¹⁵⁴

(i) Galatians 2:16: Paul declares that we are justified 'through faith of Christ' (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) and 'from faith of Christ' (ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ), twice employing the noun 'faith' (πίστις) with the genitive of 'Jesus Christ' / 'Christ'. He distinguishes this, syntactically, from having 'believed into Christ' (εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν), which employs the verb πιστεύω with the preposition εἰς. It seems that Paul distinguishes between two distinct but related realities: Christ's

152 NRSV: 'those who share the faith of Abraham'; ESV: 'the one who shares the faith of Abraham'; Lutherbibel2017: 'die aus Abrahams Glauben leben'.

153 Cf. Johnson, 'Faith of Jesus', 80; Wright, 'Romans', 474; Hooker, 'Another Look', 60.

154 Galatians 2:20 and Ephesians 3:12 are also important for the discussion, and may further support Paul's emphasis on Christ's faith/fulness. I pass over them here because Paul's constructions are slightly different in those texts.

faith/fulness as the ground of justification, and believing in Christ as its instrument.¹⁵⁵

(ii) Galatians 3:22: Paul seems to deliberately distinguish between 'Christ's faith/fulness' and human faith in him, in the same way he does at Romans 3:22 and 26, by referring to first to Christ's faith/fulness (ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), and then to human faith in Christ (substantival particle: τοῖς πιστεύουσιν). This is confirmed by the argument which follows (Gal 3:22–25), where Paul makes a redemptive-historical distinction between the time of the law and the time of faith.¹⁵⁶ In this context, he sets the coming of Christ in parallel with the 'coming' of 'faith' (3:23: Πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν), or the 'revelation' of 'faith' (3:23: εἰς τὴν μέλλουσιν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι); since Christ has come, so 'faith has come' (3:25: ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς πίστεως). Paul surely cannot mean that saints under the old covenant did not exercise faith in God, or in the promised Messiah, since earlier in the same passage he cites Genesis 15:6 to speak of how 'Abraham believed God' (Gal 3:6: Ἀβραὰμ ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ; cf. Rom 4:3, 5–8). It is possible that Paul speaks of the arrival of faith 'not in an absolute, but in a comparative sense',¹⁵⁷ or of the arrival of 'faith in its christological shape',¹⁵⁸ but Paul's distinction is sharper than this. Galatians 3:22–25 speaks not of the fuller revelation of the faith principle, but of the 'coming' of Christ, the faith/ful one.

155 Williams, 'Righteousness of God', 273.

156 See esp. Caneday, *Curse*, 185–186, 190–198, and 'Faithfulness of Jesus Christ', 185–205; Hays, 'Galatians', 269–70. Schreiner, *Romans*, 328, n.20 recognises the force of the argument, and accepts that 'the redemptive-historical element is certainly present in the text'. Nevertheless, he attempts to counter this argument by suggesting that 'Personal faith in Christ has now become a reality because of the shift in redemptive history ... The redemptive-historical work of Christ has created the possibility and actuality of personal faith'. There is no doubt that personal faith is a significant theme in Galatians 3, but surely Paul's appeal to Abraham demonstrates that 'personal faith' is not new with the new covenant.

157 Calvin, *Galatians*, on Galatians 3:23: 'The doctrine of faith, in short, is attested by Moses and all the prophets: but, as faith was not then clearly manifested, so the time of *faith* is an appellation here given, not in an absolute, but in a comparative sense, to the time of the New Testament'.

158 Moo, *Galatians*, 242.

(iii) Philippians 3:9: Paul speaks of having ‘the righteousness of God’ ... ‘through the faith/fulness of Christ’ (διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ), which is ‘upon the faith’ (ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει). Again, good arguments can be made on both sides,¹⁵⁹ but the syntactical distinction between πίστις + genitive personal noun (Χριστοῦ) and the preposition phrase ἐπὶ + πίστις is best taken as indicating two distinct but closely related realities, Christ’s faith/fulness and faith in him.¹⁶⁰

The recognition of Paul’s emphasis on Christ’s faith/fulness in Romans 3:22, then, is in keeping with his use of the phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ elsewhere. The syntactical distinction between ‘Christ’s faith/fulness’ and the Christian’s faith in him seems to have been a well-established distinction in Paul’s customary locutions.

Finally, reading πίστις Χριστοῦ as a reference to Christ’s trusting obedience to his Father is consistent with the broader sweep of biblical revelation, where trusting obedience is demanded of all of God’s covenant partners, from Adam, through to Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David.¹⁶¹ In the context of the universal failure of humanity in Adam to trust and obey, the Gospels, and the other NT texts, consistently present Jesus as the true Adam, true Israel, and true David—the Spirit-dependent,¹⁶² prayerful,¹⁶³ faithful,¹⁶⁴ and fully obedient Son of God.¹⁶⁵ The subjective genitive reading of πίστις Χριστοῦ is thus consistent with the portrait of

159 For a recent review, slightly favouring the objective genitive, see: Hellerman, *Philippians*, 186–187.

160 Cf. O’Brien, *Philippians*, 399–400.

161 Adam: Gen 2:16–17; Noah: Gen 9:1, 7; Abraham: Gen 17:1–17; 18:17–19; 22:16–18; 26:5; Israel: Exod 19:4–6; Lev 18:5; 26:1–46; Deut 30:15–20; Neh 9:29; 2 Chron 7:14; 33:8; Isa 48:18–19; David: 2 Sam 7:8–16; 1 Kgs 2:2–4; 3:14; 6:12; 8:25; 9:4–6; 1 Chron 22:12–13; 28:7–9; 2 Chron 6:16; 7:17–22; Pss 89:31–33 [LXX 88:31–33; ET 89:30–32]; 132:12 [LXX 131:12]; Jer 17:19–25; 22:4–5.

162 Matt 3:16 // Mark 1:10 // Luke 3:22; Matt 4:1 // Mark 1:12 // Luke 4:1; Matt 1:18, 20; 12:18, 28; Luke 1:35; 4:14, 18; 10:21; John 1:32–33; 3:34; Acts 10:38; Rom 1:4; 8:11; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 9:14.

163 Matt 26:36–46 // Mark 14:32–42 // Luke 22:39–46; Mark 1:35; 6:46; 9:29; Matt 14:23; 19:13; Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28–29; 10:21; 11:1; 22:32; 23:46; John 12:27–28; 17:1–26; Heb 5:7.

164 Heb 2:17–18; 3:2; 4:15–16; 5:7–10; 1 Pet 2:21–23; Rev 1:5; 3:14; 19:11.

165 Matt 4:1–11 // Luke 4:1–13; John 4:34; 5:19–20, 30; 6:38; 7:18; 8:46; 10:17–18; 15:10; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 2:8; Heb 7:26 10:5–10; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5. For the Gospels, see discussion in Crowe, *Obedient Son*, and *The Last Adam*.

Christ's perfect trusting obedience across the NT and, more specifically, with Paul's emphasis in Romans, and throughout his letters, on Christ's perfect obedience as the true Adam (5:12–21; cf. Phil 2:8), the son of David (1:3), and the true Son of God (1:3–4, 9; 5:10; 8:3–4, 29, 32).¹⁶⁶ Indeed, this redemptive historical logic is evident in Romans 3 itself, where Paul contrasts Israel's 'unfaithfulness' (3:3: ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν) with Christ's faith/fulness (3:22) and so presents Jesus as the true Israel.¹⁶⁷

The subjective genitive reading, moreover, creates a theologically precise and well-balanced presentation in which 'the righteousness of God' (source) is manifested through 'the faith/fulness of Jesus Christ' (agent) for the benefit of 'all who believe' (beneficiaries). This reading thus maintains a very Pauline balance between God's grace as the source of salvation, Christ's trusting obedience even to the point of death as the objective ground of justification, and human faith as the required subjective response.¹⁶⁸

For these eight reasons, it is most likely that by the phrase διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ Paul intends to emphasise Jesus' own faith/fulness—his perfect trusting obedience to the Father, which culminated in his death on the cross—rather than human faith in Christ. To be sure, Paul goes on immediately to speak of human faith as the instrument of justification (3:22b). His intention in 3:22a, however, is to indicate Christ's own trusting obedience as simultaneously the means by which God's righteousness has been disclosed, and the only grounds for the justification of those who believe. This emphasis, in turn, provides the resolution to the tension of the two aspects of God's righteousness noted above: through the faithful death of the Messiah God has found a way simultaneously to judge sin, and to extend blessing to all who believe both in Israel, and among all the nations.

2.3 Free justification for all who believe

To Paul's emphasis on God's righteousness as the source of justification, and Christ's faithfulness as the ground of justification, a third emphasis

166 For this theme in Romans, see: Kirk, 'Appointed Son(s)'; Kim, 'Jesus the Son of God'; Hooker, 'Another Look', 60–62; Bird, *Jesus the Eternal Son*, 11–23.

167 Cf. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 836–842.

168 Cf. Williams, 'Righteousness of God', 275; Hooker, 'ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ', 337.

must be added, namely, human faith as the instrument of justification. In the face of universal sin, it is thus ‘all those who believe’ (3:22: πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας) who are ‘justified freely by his grace’ (3:24: δικαιούμενοι δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι). Both the nature of this justification, and the import of Paul’s emphasis on ‘faith’ require brief explanation.

2.3.1 Justification

Paul declares that God ‘justifies’ those who trust in Christ. The verb δικαιώω (‘I justify’) appears twice in this short paragraph. At 3:24 Paul employs the present passive participle to affirm that ‘all’ who believe ‘are justified by his grace as a gift’ (δικαιούμενοι δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι). At 3:26 he employs the present active participle δικαιούντα, with God as subject, to speak of God as ‘he who justifies’ (NRSV; NIV11) or ‘the justifier’ (ESV). The contrast between the passive and the active participles serves to emphasize God as the source of human justification. The additional phrase, ‘freely by his grace’ (δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι) underscores the entirely gratuitous nature of this justification: it comes freely from God, by his unmerited favour, as a gift.

The meaning of ‘justification’, however, has been the subject of a long running debate. The Vulgate’s translation of δικαιώω with the verb *iustifico* (‘to make righteous’) and, especially, Augustine’s understanding of ‘justification’ as including moral transformation, lead to an understanding of ‘justification’ in the medieval Church as being ‘synonymous with the entire process of salvation’.¹⁶⁹ At the level of confessional theology, this remains the focus of the continuing division between Roman Catholic and Protestant understandings of justification.¹⁷⁰ The *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (2000) represents some

169 Horton, *Justification*, I: 90. For the influence of Augustine, see esp. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2005), I: 12–16; Wright, ‘Justification in Augustine’.

170 Compare: *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 492, citing the Council of Trent (1574): ‘justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man’ (italics added). Contrast: WCF 11:1: ‘Those whom God effectually calls, He also freely justifies; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them’ (italics added).

advance in mutual understanding, but is certainly not yet the resolution of these differences.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, among biblical scholars, a strong consensus—which includes those working within Roman Catholic, 'Traditional Protestant', and 'New Perspective' approaches—recognises that biblical 'justification' language is forensic language;¹⁷² 'justification' is the language of the courtroom.¹⁷³

In the OT, the verb קָדַשׁ in the hifil stem is regularly translated in the LXX by δικαιόω , and is clearly a forensic term.¹⁷⁴ In particular, the Scriptures repeatedly employ the verb in judicial contexts, sometimes with God as judge (Exod 23:7; 1 Kgs 8:32; 2 Chron 6:23; Ps 82:3 [LXX81:3]), sometimes with a human judge (Deut 25:1; Isa 5:23; Job 27:5), but always with the sense of 'declare righteous'. In a number of these texts an antithetical construction contrasts 'vindicating' (קָדַשׁ / δικαιόω) the righteous with 'condemning' the guilty (Deut 25:1; Prov 17:15; 1 Kgs 8:32; 2 Chron 6:23; Isa 5:23). Most important are two texts which speak of future justification before God: (i) the psalmist acknowledges universal human sin: 'no-one living will be declared righteous (קָדַשׁ / δικαιωθήσεται) before you' (Ps 143:2 [LXX 142:2]); (ii) Isaiah, however, declares that because the LORD is 'a righteous God and a Saviour' (Isa 45:21), 'all the offspring of Israel will be justified (קָדַשׁ / δικαιωθήσονται) by the LORD' (Isa 45:25), and even extends this promise 'to all the ends of the earth' (Isa 45:22).

In the NT, the verb δικαιόω , like its Hebrew antecedent, is also a forensic and declarative term, with the primary sense of 'declare righteous'

171 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. For a brief but judicious analysis, see: Horton, *Christian Faith*, 622–627.

172 For representative discussions see, for example: Roman Catholic scholars: Fitzmyer, 'Romans', 241–44; 'Traditional Protestant' scholars: Moo, *Romans* (1996) 227–228; Horton, 'Traditional Reformed View', 91–92; 'New Perspective' scholars: Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 198–199; Wright, *Justification* 69–71; Dunn, 'New Perspective Response', 118.

173 For a concise summary of the evidence, see Bird, *Saving Righteousness*, 17–18. For extended discussion, see Moo, *Romans*, 82–100: 'Excursus: 'Righteousness Language in Paul'.

174 Koehler & Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 1003, offers ten definitions across five verbal stems, all of which are clearly forensic; cf. Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, loc. cit. gives the primary sense in the LXX as: 'to pronounce and treat as righteous, to justify, to vindicate, to acquit'.

or 'vindicate'.¹⁷⁵ Certainly, the promise that God will 'justify' (δικαιόω) those who trust in Christ is a significant theme in Paul's letters, especially Romans and Galatians, and Paul consistently uses the verb δικαιόω in a forensic and declarative sense.¹⁷⁶ In Romans, Paul envisages the divine courtroom, and makes the judicial metaphor explicit when he couples δικαιόω with the language of 'judgment' (3:4: κρίνω; cf. 1 Cor 4:4), and bringing 'charges' (8:33: ἐγκαλέω).¹⁷⁷ This judicial metaphor is, however, not employed by Paul to evoke just any court-room scene: the verdict he has on view is that given by God the Judge in the courtroom of the final day. This eschatological reference point is indicated both by Paul's use of the future forms of the verb (2:13; 3:20, 30; cf. Gal 2:16), and by his insistence that justification concerns a person's standing 'before God' or 'in his sight' (3:20: ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ; 4:2: πρὸς θεόν; Gal 3:11: παρὰ τῷ θεῷ). It is striking, therefore, that in both references to 'justification' in Romans 3:21–26 Paul employs present participles (3:24: δικαιούμενοι; 3:26: δικαιούντα), dependent on a present indicative (3:23–24: ὑστεροῦνται) and an aorist indicative (3:25–26: προέθετο), to affirm that this 'justification' is a reality enjoyed by believers 'in the present time' (3:26: ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ). This is confirmed in Romans 5:1–11, where Paul summarizes his argument so far, and employs the aorist participle to indicate a sequence in which the believer's present 'peace with God' is predicated upon their prior justification: 'Therefore, since *we have been justified* (δικαιωθέντες) by faith, *we have peace* (ἔχομεν) with

175 δικαιόω occurs 39x in the GNT. BAGD, 249, offers the primary definition (§2): 'to render a favorable verdict' (gloss: *vindicate*). The other three definitions either do not occur in the NT (§1), or are far less common: §3: 'to cause someone to be released from personal or institutional claims that are no longer to be considered pertinent or valid' (gloss: *make free/pure*) is suggested only for Acts 13:38; Rom 6:7; 1 Cor 6:11; §4: 'to demonstrate to be morally right' (gloss: *prove to be right*) only for Rom 3:4 and 1 Tim 3:16.

176 Rom 2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:1, 9; 6:7; 8:30, 33; 1 Cor 4:4; 6:11; Gal 2:16–17; 3:8, 11, 24; 5:4; 1 Tim 3:16; Titus 3:7.

177 Romans 6:7 is the only possible exception in Romans to a forensic reading of δικαιόω. Paul states that 'whoever has died has been justified from sin' (δεδικαιώται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας). This verse has been used as evidence that Paul understood justification in terms of moral transformation as well as judicial verdict. Against this, however: (i) δικαιόω + ἀπό may be idiomatic for 'freed from' (cf. Acts 13:38–39) or 'vindicated from' (Matt 11:19 / Luke 7:35); (ii) if δικαιόω for Paul meant both 'declare righteous' and 'make morally righteous', the charge of antinomianism against him is incomprehensible (cf. 3:7–8; 6:1–2). [Ed. note: see further Chapter 6 in this volume]

God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (5:1);¹⁷⁸ 'Since, therefore, *we have now been justified* (δικαιωθέντες νῦν) by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God' (5:9). The remarkable announcement of the gospel is that, in Christ, the verdict of the final day has been brought forward into the present.¹⁷⁹ Thus, for Paul, δικαιώω denotes God's eschatological judicial declaration that a person is righteous, rather than a process by which someone is made morally righteous. Paul is certainly concerned with moral transformation, but he does not use justification language to speak about it. For Paul, rather, 'justification' is the positive verdict of the final day, announced already in the present for those who are in Christ.

The basis for this present verdict, of course, is the faith/fulness of Christ, culminating in his death and resurrection. Paul declares that for those who trust in Christ, the eschatological verdict of the final day of judgment has been brought into the present, because—in Christ's death and resurrection—the *final judgment itself* has been brought into the present. God's present justification of sinners is possible, that is, because the final judgment of their sin *has already taken place*: through 'the redemption that is in Christ Jesus' (3:24: διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), whom 'God put forward as a place of atonement' (ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον), and especially 'by his blood' (3:25; 5:9: ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι), God has 'shown his righteousness' (3:25–26). The meaning of the crucial term ἱλαστήριον (3:25) has been a matter of dispute. The key to its interpretation, however, is the recognition that the 'mercy seat' (כפרת) of the tabernacle is consistently translated in the LXX by this term.¹⁸⁰ For this reason—as was already recognised by Luther and Tyndale—Paul almost certainly refers, metaphorically, to the 'mercy

178 The textual issue is difficult. The external evidence favours the subjunctive ἔχωμεν ('let us have peace with God'). The internal evidence, however, is decisive: Paul's argument up to this point strongly leads us to expect an indicative. For detailed discussion, see esp. Moo, *Romans*, 323, n. 26; Thielman, *Romans*, 264.

179 Moo, *Romans* (1996), 228: 'This judicial verdict, for which one had to wait until the last judgment according to Jewish theology, is according to Paul rendered the moment a person believes. The act of justification is therefore properly 'eschatological', as the ultimate verdict regarding a person's standing with God is brought back into our present reality'.

180 Exod 25:17–22; 31:7; 35:12; 37:6–9; Lev 16:2, 13–15; Num 7:89; cf. Heb 9:5.

seat' or the 'atonement cover' of the Ark of the Covenant,¹⁸¹ and thus presents Christ, in his death on the cross, as the 'place' where heaven and earth meet as God and his people are reconciled by sacrifice.¹⁸² The RSV, following the influential arguments of C.H. Dodd, translated ἱλαστήριον as 'expiation', giving the sense that Jesus' death 'made amends' or 'reparation' for human sin.¹⁸³ Against this, L. Morris, among others, demonstrated that, within Paul's argument, ἱλαστήριον includes the idea of 'turning aside God's wrath' or 'propitiation' (ESV).¹⁸⁴ The term itself does not *mean* 'propitiation', but there can be no doubt that, within Paul's theology of the cross in Romans, God turned aside his own wrath through Jesus' death. God's wrath (ὀργή) is opposed to sin throughout the whole letter, and Jesus' death is the means by which the problem of sin is dealt with (1:18; 2:5, 8; 3:5; 4:15; 5:9). There should be no doubt, therefore, that Paul understood Christ's death on the cross as the 'place' where God, in the person of his Son (1:3), took upon himself the full force of his own wrath against sin, and so provided, in Christ's faithful sacrifice (3:22, 24), a demonstration of his righteousness (3:25–26), the basis for the free justification of all who believe (3:24) and, indeed, the full 'redemption' of his people (3:24).¹⁸⁵ As Paul makes clear in Romans 8:1–4, by his repetition of the language of condemnation, God has 'condemned sin' (κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν) in the flesh of his Son (8:3),

181 Weiß, 'Christus Jesus', shows that etymologically, the stem ἱλασ- refers to appeasement or conciliation, and the suffix -τήριον refers to the location in which, or the instrument by which, something is accomplished.

182 See esp. Bailey, 'Jesus as the Mercy Seat', summarizing the author's PhD dissertation; cf. now Thielman, *Romans*, 209–11.

183 Dodd, 'ἸΛΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ'.

184 Morris, *Apostolic Preaching*, 144–213.

185 'Redemption' (ἀπολύτρωσις) in Paul is a broader category than 'justification', and full discussion is beyond our scope here. The metaphor of 'redemption' is drawn from the marketplace and refers to the liberation of a slave by the payment of a price (BGAD, 117). In the NT, ἀπολύτρωσις and related words commonly refer to God's rescue of sinners through Christ (Luke 21:28; Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7, 14; 4:30; Col 1:14; Heb 9:15; cf. Matt 20:28 // Mark 10:45: λύτρον; Luke 24:21; Tit 2:14; 1 Pet 1:18: λύτρον). In the wider biblical context, the language of 'redemption' evokes the great redemption wrought by God on the part of his people when he rescued them from slavery in Egypt. These echoes are almost certainly to be heard in Romans, where Paul emphasises the great cost of the 'redemption' bought through Jesus' death, and declares that God has now worked an even greater redemption through his Son, setting his people free from their slavery to sin (3:9; 6:17–18, 22; 8:12–17, 20–23). This 'redemption' will reach its final manifestation in the 'redemption of our bodies' (τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν) at the end (8:23).

so that 'there is therefore now no condemnation' (8:1: Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα) for those who are in Christ Jesus. Moreover, in Jesus' resurrection, the final vindication has also already taken place: thus, Paul can declare that 'he was raised for our justification' (4:25: ἡγέρθη διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν).¹⁸⁶

All of this is confirmed by the important parallel between God's 'forebearance' (ἀνοχή) in Romans 2:4 and 3:26: Paul speaks, in the first text, of God's 'forebearance' (ἀνοχή) *in the present* as he bears with sin until 'God's righteous judgment will be revealed' (ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ θεοῦ) *on the final 'day of wrath'* (ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς) (2:4–5); he speaks, in the latter text, of God's 'forebearance' (ἀνοχή) *in the past* as he bore with sin until the execution of his righteous judgment against sin *in Jesus' death on the cross* (3:25–26).¹⁸⁷ J. Linebaugh states it well: 'Justification is not a separate verdict from the one God will speak at the final judgment, nor is it only 'an anticipation of the final verdict'. Justification is the final verdict—a forensic word from the future spoken in the enactment of God's eschatological judgment that is the 'now' of Jesus' death (and resurrection; cf. Rom 4:25)'.¹⁸⁸

2.3.2 Faith

The free justification promised in the gospel comes 'to all who believe' (εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας) in Christ. Paul has, as we have seen, already presented Jesus' own faith/fulness—and especially is sin-bearing, wrath-placating death—as the grounds upon which those who trust in him might be declared righteous. Jesus Christ's own 'faith/fulness' (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) secures the justification of sinners who believe. There is, however, no doubt that Paul couples his emphasis on Christ's faith/fulness to death with an equal and answering emphasis on the 'faith' of those who come to him. Indeed, Romans 3:21–26 provides the foundation for the argument Paul mounts in Romans 4, that God's righteousness is revealed through Christ for the benefit of any and all

186 For extended discussion here, see: Bird, 'Justified by Christ's Resurrection'; cf. Horton, *Justification*, II: 195–280.

187 Linebaugh, 'Righteousness Revealed', 228–30.

188 'Righteousness Revealed', 231–32.

who, like Abraham, who ‘believe God’. The transition in Paul’s focus is indicated by the occurrence of the verb πιστεύω: this verb occurs only once in the active voice in Romans 1:1–3:20, in the opening programmatic statement (1:16);¹⁸⁹ it is reintroduced in Romans 3:22, in the midst of the dense paragraph which is our focus, but occurs only once in the substantival participle ‘those who believe’ (τοὺς πιστεύοντας); the verb then becomes the focal point, however—even the dominant verb—in Romans 4, where it occurs five times (4:3, 5, 11, 17, 18, 24) in Paul’s extended interpretation of Genesis 15:6.¹⁹⁰ In this verbal form, πιστεύω clearly refers to human trust in God.

Paul clearly distinguishes this ‘trust in Christ’ from ‘works of the law’ (3:20, 28: ἔργων νόμου), since his declarataion of the righteousness of God, revealed in Christ, is sandwiched between two references to this crucial phrase. There has, unsurprisingly, also been significant debate in recent years over whether Paul’s polemic here is aimed at Jewish legalism and merit-righteousness—human moral effort designed to earn God’s favour (the so-called ‘Old Perspective’)—or Jewish presumption and ethnocentrism—trust in the exclusive ‘badges’ of covenant membership in Israel (so ‘the New Perspective’). The debates here again are complex, and there is not space here to enter them in any detail.¹⁹¹ It is enough to notice that the heart of the issue is whether Paul is primarily concerned to contrast two types of human response to God (‘trusting’ vs ‘trying’), or to contrast two stages in salvation history (‘the law’ vs ‘Christ’). Romans 3:21–26, read in its immediate context, however, suggests that this is almost certainly a false dichotomy. On the one hand, Paul is deeply concerned with the standing of sinners before God, and the fundamental question for Paul is whether a person might be ‘justified before him’ (3:20: δικαιωθήσεται ... ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ). Paul emphasizes, likewise, that justification comes ‘freely by his grace’ (3:24: δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι) which clearly discounts any idea of earning justification by merit, a point further underlined by the example

189 Romans 3:2 has the aorist passive ἐπιστεύθησαν with the sense ‘entrusted’.

190 Dunn, ‘New Perspective View’, 197, overstates the case when he says that the subjective genitive reading of πιστις Χριστοῦ ‘diminishes or sidetracks’ that which Paul highlights, namely, the need for human faith.

191 For a review, with bibliography to 2013, see Smith, ‘Paul’, 23–24. Since 2013, the most important contribution is Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, ch. 15.

of Abraham 'not working but trusting him who justifies the ungodly' (4:5: τῷ δὲ μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ πιστεύοντι δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἄσεβῃ). This is the burden of the traditional Reformation understanding, and it is clearly supported by Paul's teaching here. 'Faith' is a fundamental disposition of trust in God and his gracious provision in Christ. The 'works of the law' which Paul rejects as any basis of a person's standing before God are not merely the 'covenant markers' of membership in Israel, but any and all human effort designed to put God in one's debt.¹⁹² On the other hand, Paul is also deeply concerned with the inclusion of the Gentiles in the one new covenant people of God. At 3:21 he emphasizes that 'the righteousness of God', which provides the source for the believer's justification, has been revealed χωρὶς νόμου ('apart from law'), and the repetition of πᾶς at 3:22–23 (all who believe/all have sinned) is surely to be read with a sharp polemical edge against those who might exclude Gentiles from sharing in the blessings promised to Abraham. Certainly, that is exactly where Paul takes the argument in 3:29, where the pointed question—'Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also?'—serves to underscore the point that God will justify *all* who believe. And again, the example of Abraham in chapter 4 is significant, since Abraham's faith was counted to him as righteousness (4:9: Ἐλογίσθη τῷ Ἀβραὰμ ἡ πίστις εἰς δικαιοσύνην) *before* he was circumcised, that is, while he was still a Gentile.

In sum, Paul's insistence that 'all those who believe' are 'justified freely by his grace' primarily refers to the right standing before God of all who trust in Christ, but also includes—as an important and necessary corollary—their inclusion amongst God's covenant people. The irony here, as S. Chester has recently shown, is that these two 'perspectives'—distorted in both popular Protestantism and the extremes of the 'New Perspective' reaction to it—were actually already well-integrated in the best of Reformation-era exegesis.¹⁹³ The Reformers, that is, already recognized that Paul's argument emphasizes, *first*, that there is no question of justification being earned by moral effort, *and also* that there is no ground for boasting in Jewish (or other human) distinctives. Since the

192 Cf. Schreiner, *Romans*, 301–308, who offers an excellent nuanced discussion of this question, with recent bibliography.

193 Chester, *Reading Paul*.

gospel reveals God's righteousness, through Christ's faith/fulness, it comes to all 'without distinction' (3:22: οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολή), that is, to whoever will trust in Christ.

3. Theological synthesis: Paul's gospel and the doctrine of justification by faith alone

Paul's logic in Romans 3:21–26 leads to three exegetical conclusions. In Romans 3:21–26: (i) δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is *God's own righteousness*, that is, his commitment to act in accordance with his own character, and therefore to judge sin while also graciously justifying sinners, both in Israel, and among the nations, for the sake of his own name; (ii) πίστις Χριστοῦ is *Christ's faith/fulness*, his trusting obedience towards God the Father, ultimately expressed in his sacrificial death, in which he bore God's righteous wrath against sin; (iii) 'justification' (δικαίω) is God's eschatological, judicial, vindication of his people, announced in the present upon those who trust in Christ. The first and second of these exegetical conclusions differ quite significantly from the mainstream Protestant *exegetical* tradition. Nevertheless, the foregoing exegesis actually serves to strengthen the central insights of the common Reformation doctrine of 'justification by faith alone'. A thorough analysis of the Reformation traditions on these questions is, of course, well beyond the scope of this paper. I therefore adopt what is arguably the most mature of the Reformation-era Confessions, the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, as a kind of brief case study, and demonstrate the way in which the foregoing exegesis is not only consistent with its affirmations, but actually provides a more secure exegetical grounding for some of them.

First, the recognition that the gospel reveals *God's own righteousness*—his commitment to act in accordance with his own character, and so simultaneously judge sin and justify his people—is thoroughly in keeping with the WCF's affirmation of God's character. WCF 2.1 famously declares God's character as the God who is 'most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; and withal, most just, and terrible in His judgments, hating

all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty'. This affirmation, of course, merely repeats and preserves the biblical 'tension' between God's grace and God's justice, God's mercy and God's wrath. In this context, the Confession's chapter on 'Justification' (WCF 11) shows how God's work in Christ's resolves this tension—or, rather, how God's work in Christ reveals the true unity of God's grace and justice. WCF 11.3 affirms that Christ 'by His obedience and death' has 'made full satisfaction to his Father's justice' in relation to his people's sins. It adds, however, that since Christ was 'given by the Father for them, and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead' so that 'their justification is only of free grace'. It therefore concludes that, through Christ, 'both the exact justice, and the rich grace of God' are 'glorified in the justification of sinners'. Unsurprisingly, Romans 3:26 is among the proof-texts for this last affirmation—a verse which, as we have seen, affirms that God's own righteousness is revealed in his righteous justification of sinners. Far from there being any conflict between the Reformed doctrine of justification, and an exegesis of Romans 3:21–26 which affirms that 'the gospel reveals God's own righteousness', the two—to borrow a phrase from elsewhere in the Confession—'do sweetly comply' with each other (WCF 19.7).

Second, the recognition that Paul emphasizes *Christ's faith/fulness* is the grounds of the believer's justification is also fully consistent with the WCF's doctrine of justification. The Confession's famous 'covenant theology' emphasizes that God's covenantal relationship with human beings always demands 'perfect obedience' on the part of God's people. It famously affirms a 'Covenant of Works' with Adam, and explicates this covenant in terms of the 'life promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity', as well as the 'condition of perfect and personal obedience' (WCF 7.2; cf. 19.1). This demand for perfect obedience on the part of God's human covenant partners continues in the Confession's 'Covenant of Grace' (WCF 7.3), with the crucial distinction that, in the person of his incarnate Son, God himself undertakes to provide the necessary obedience, offered in Christ on behalf of his people. Thus, in its majestic statement on the work of Christ (WCF 8), the Confession states that 'the Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience, and sacrifice of Himself ... has fully satisfied the justice of His Father' (WCF 8.5; cf.

8.4). This emphasis on Christ's perfect obedience continues in the Confession's chapter on 'Justification', where Christ's 'obedience and satisfaction', or 'obedience and death', are mentioned three times (WCF 11.1, 3 (x2)). The Confession, moreover, emphasizes Christ's death as the culmination of his obedience and the ground of the believer's justification (WCF 11.3), while also affirming, following Paul, the crucial role of Christ's resurrection, who did 'rise again for their justification' (WCF 11.4; citing Rom 4:25).

To be sure, the Confession nowhere explicitly attributes 'faith' in the sense of 'trust' to Christ. It emphasizes, rather, Christ's perfect 'obedience'. Nevertheless, the Confession strongly implies that Christ exercised faith by drawing an unmistakable parallel between Christ's true and full humanity, and that of those who belong to him. With regard to *Christ's* obedience, the Confession explicitly affirms: (i) Christ's true and full humanity (WCF 8.2); (ii) his anointing by the Spirit (WCF 8.3), and; (iii) his 'perfect obedience, and sacrifice of Himself' enabled by the same Spirit (WCF 8.5). With regard to *Christian* obedience, the Confession explicitly affirms that: (i) true faith is the gift of God's Holy Spirit (WCF 7.3; 14.1); (ii) true faith inevitably produces the fruit of obedience (WCF 11.2); and (iii) true obedience has trust in God as its necessary root (WCF 16.2). Thus, as M. Allen has shown, with regard to the Reformed tradition as a whole, while 'affirmations that Christ exercised faith have been scant or lean', Reformed covenant theology nevertheless 'emphasizes the humanity of Christ *in a manner which provides a hospitable dogmatic environment for the doctrine of Christ's faith*, especially under the rubric of the active obedience of Christ'.¹⁹⁴ It is, therefore, thoroughly consistent with the doctrine of the Westminster Confession to attribute Spirit-enabled trusting obedience to Christ, as the necessary root of his perfect obedience and offering up of himself to God, as a sacrifice of atonement for his people. Indeed, anything less would undermine the Confession's affirmation of Christ's full humanity.

In this context, it is no surprise to find that the Reformed tradition as a whole does indeed affirm that Christ exercised faith. Calvin's *Institutes*

194 Allen, *Christ's Faith*, 154 (italics added); the whole discussion is relevant (pp.154–164).

provide strong indications that Christ exercised faith,¹⁹⁵ and his commentary on Hebrews explicitly affirms as much.¹⁹⁶ F. Turretin explicitly asks the question 'did Christ have faith and hope?' and answers in the affirmative (citing Matt 27:46; Acts 2:26; Heb 2:17; 3:2), while also carefully distinguishing between ordinary human faith in the mercy of God, which was not required of Christ, and Christ's perfect trust in God's goodness.¹⁹⁷ H. Bavinck, similarly, discusses the question and affirms that 'faith for Christ was not, as it is for us, trust in the grace and mercy of God, for this feature is something faith only obtained as a result of the state of sin in which we find ourselves'. Nevertheless, 'By nature, faith for Adam and Christ was nothing other than the act of clinging to the word and promises of God, a holding on to the Invisible One. And that is what Jesus did as well' (citing Matt 27:46; Heb 2:17–18; 3:2).¹⁹⁸ The discussion in John Owen is especially significant. He shows that Christ's full divinity, and the unity of the two natures in the one person of Christ, in no way obviated the need for the Spirit's enabling of his human nature for the whole work of redemption, from his incarnation to his glorification.¹⁹⁹ In particular, in a manner very similar to that outlined by the Westminster Confession, Owen demonstrates in some detail that the Holy Spirit enabled Christ's '*faith* and *trust in God* which, with fervent prayers, cries, and supplications, he now acted on God and his promises, both with respect unto himself and to the covenant which he was sealing with his blood' (citing Heb 2:13; Matt 27:43 [46?]; John 17).²⁰⁰ Indeed, Owen argues that Christ's sacrifice was effective in reconciling us to the Father only because, by faith, he 'voluntarily and freely offered up himself a sacrifice unto God'.²⁰¹ Thus,

195 Allen, 'Calvin's Christ'.

196 Calvin, *Hebrews*, 28, on Hebrews 2:13, says of Christ: '... if He had not been a man subject to human needs, He would have no need of such faith. Since He depends on the help of God, His condition is therefore the same as ours'.

197 Turretin, *Institutes*, Vol. 2 QXII §V.–VI. (p.348)

198 Cf. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* 3 §372 (p.312). Cf. Allen, *Christ's Faith*, 103: 'faith may be predicated of Jesus. Such faith cannot be strictly identical to the faith sinners place in him for justification, insofar as Jesus is neither a sinner nor in need of justification by means of another's representation. Given these covenantal differences, the faith of Jesus will best be considered alongside that faith exercised in the pre-lapsarian situation'.

199 Owen, *Pneumatologia*, §3–4 (pp.159–88).

200 Owen, *Pneumatologia*, §4 p.179.

201 Owen, *Pneumatologia*, §4 p.179 (also p.180).

as Allen has shown at length, ‘the faith of the Christ coheres with both orthodox Christology and Reformation soteriology and, thus, need not be feared by those within the Reformed tradition.’²⁰² This conclusion, of course, does not itself resolve the exegetical debate. It does, however, create the dogmatic space within which those who wish to affirm classic Reformed doctrine are also able to weigh merits of the exegetical case without prejudice.

Conclusion

The Protestant exegetical tradition relating to Romans 3:21–26 emphasizes: (i) God’s grace as the source of the believer’s justification; (ii) the nature of justification as a judicial verdict, by which God grants to sinners a new righteous status, on the basis of Christ’s death; (iii) faith—trust in Christ—as the sole instrument through which God’s grace of justification is received. The argument advanced here in no way opposes any of these traditional emphases and, indeed, affirms that they are all clearly evident in Romans 3:21–26. Nevertheless, the apostle’s emphasis in this crucial paragraph is first *theological* and *Christo-centric*: he affirms, first and foremost, that the gospel reveals and vindicates *God’s own righteousness*, manifested in *Christ’s trusting obedience* to the Father, even to the point of death, and that this work of Christ provides the only ground for the justification of all who believe. Indeed, far from posing a threat to the long-cherished Reformed doctrine of justification by faith alone, this understanding of Paul’s argument in Romans 3 provides it with deeper roots. For if the gospel reveals *God’s own righteousness*, it reveals nothing less than God’s commitment to act in accordance with his own name, the name which declares that he is ‘the LORD, the LORD, gracious and compassionate, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness’. On this reading, Paul’s affirmation that justification comes from God’s free grace is not limited to the brief statement in Romans 3:24 (‘by his grace as a gift’), but deeply anchored in the very name of God. In the same way, if the gospel reveals that God’s righteousness has

202 Allen, *Christ’s Faith*, 4.

been manifested in *Christ's faith/fulness*, 'the blood' which provides the ground for the sinner's justification is no arbitrary sacrifice, but the culmination of the perfect trusting obedience of the true Adam, the son of David, whose sacrifice of himself fully satisfies God's justice precisely because it was the one and only sacrifice offered in perfect faith.

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