Theological Studies
72 (2011)

PAUL'S USE OF *DIKAIO-* TERMINOLOGY: MOVING BEYOND N. T. WRIGHT'S FORENSIC INTERPRETATION

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The article argues that Paul's use of dikaio- *terminology, the language of "justification," has been too narrowly construed by N. T. Wright in his latest monograph on the subject. Wright's position, that Paul employs the language of justification to signify a divinely bestowed change in status, tells only part of the story. This language also connotes real transformation. A unique feature of the article is that it starts with an analysis of the phrase "righteousness of God" in 2 Corinthians 5:21.*

IN HIS RECENTLY PUBLISHED *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision*,[1] N. T. Wright offers a concise interpretation of Paul's theology of justification. The monograph is Wright's response to a book by John Piper, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis.[2] Piper's critique—which is rooted in a defense of the "old perspective" view of

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[1] N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2009).

[2] John Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2007). Interest in Paul's theology of justification is evident from the number of monographs and collections of essays on the topic published in the last decade. See, e.g., Peter Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001); David E. Aune, ed., *Rereading Paul Together: Protestant and Catholic Perspectives on Justification* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006); Michael F. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies in Paul, Justification, and the New Perspective* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2007); Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009); and Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009).

justification[3]—presented Wright with the opportunity to defend and clarify his position, one that calls into question some cherished Reformation interpretations (e.g., what is meant by *sola fide* and the imputation of righteousness). While it is not accurate to label Wright's work polemical, his passionate energy adds vim and vigor to his typically eloquent prose.

To summarize Wright's conclusions: Justification is a crucial aspect of God's covenantal plan to deal with the problem of sin and the subsequent alienation of people from God and from one another. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, the faithful Israelite, God's righteous judgment has been enacted. The power of sin has been defeated on the cross, God has vindicated Jesus by raising him from the dead, and God now declares "acquitted" or "righteous" all who are "in Christ," who confess him as "Lord." This declaration of "righteous" entails their being given the status of family membership in God's renewed covenant. It is this new family, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, to which the promises made to Abraham were pointing all along. The divinely declared verdict is a present reality for those who are "in Christ." But it also points to the future, final judgment, when the dead are raised and judged. Because their lives will have been empowered by the Spirit, the future judgment of people's deeds will match the previous declaration of their "being-in-the-right."

Overall, there is much to commend in Wright's analysis. He emphasizes the importance, for Paul, of God's faithfulness to the covenant with Israel—a covenant established for the rescue and restoration of all creation. In doing so, Wright appropriately insists that God's saving action through Christ be understood within the larger story of Israel. He also appreciates the wide scope of "Paul's vision."[4] Wright, who is often

[3] This view emphasizes God's declaration of forgiveness/justification of sinners, faith as belief in God and trust in Christ for salvation, and the salvation of individuals. "Old perspective" distinguishes this view from the "new perspective" on Paul. Scholars associated with the latter attempt to interpret Paul in light of what we know about his first-century Jewish context. This impacts the way they understand Paul's use of the phrase "works of the Law" (*erga nomou*) and what he means by "faith" (*pistis*). Against an older understanding of *erga nomou* as indicating a type of "works righteousness" (i.e., salvation by human accomplishment), new perspective scholars contend that the issue for Paul was his opposition to ethnocentricity, i.e., he opposed attempts to make Gentile Christian converts become Jews. Rather than read "faith" as denoting only "belief" and "trust" in God's saving action through Christ, new perspective scholars interpret it more broadly as "faithfulness," which also entails the response of obedience. In addition, new perspective advocates highlight ecclesiological aspects of Paul's writings, especially God's plan for unity among Jewish and Gentile Christians. It should be noted that there is much diversity among scholars who adopt the new perspective.

[4] The phrase is part of Wright's subtitle.

associated with the "new perspective" on Paul, brings together elements in his letters that zealous adherents of the "old" and "new" perspectives tend to keep apart.[5] He convincingly demonstrates that Paul's theology focuses both on the forgiveness of sins and on the formation of a renewed people (consisting of Jews and Gentiles); in other words, on both soteriology and ecclesiology.

One area where Wright's "both-and" impetus is missing is in his interpretation of Paul's use of *dikaio-* terminology, the language that brings us to the heart of what the Apostle means by "justification."[6] Prominent in Wright's work is his claim that the metaphor of the law court—in particular, the ancient Hebrew law court—underlies much of Paul's exposition.[7] Indeed, Wright claims that when Paul employs *dikaiosynē* and its cognates, "he regularly uses them with the Hebrew overtones in mind."[8] The specific overtones involve how righteousness is understood vis-à-vis the judge and the person on trial. Judges are "righteous" insofar as they act in accord with the rules and laws pertaining to them in their role as arbiters. Defendants are "righteous" only insofar as the court declares them "acquitted" or "vindicated." In other words, the defendant's righteousness refers to a status created and bestowed by the judge, not to the defendant's moral character, whatever it may be. The upshot of the law court imagery for Wright is twofold: (1) righteousness means two very different things, depending on whether we are speaking about the judge's righteousness or the defendant's righteousness (and, a fortiori, about God's righteousness or human righteousness); and (2) it makes little sense to speak about a judge's bestowing righteousness (whether the judge's [e.g., God's] own, or someone else's [e.g., Christ's]) to the defendant.

[5] See n. 3 above. Although James D. G. Dunn is widely regarded as having coined the phrase "new perspective," Dunn credits the origin of the phrase to Wright, who used it in his 1978 Tyndale Lecture (see *Justification* 28). However, Wright has more recently advocated for the need to go beyond the notions of "old" and "new" perspectives, while retrieving the best elements of both. See N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

[6] For the purpose of this study, *dikaio-* terminology focuses on the substantive *dikaiosynē* (usually translated "righteousness," but also "justice" and "justification"), the verb *dikaioō* (typically rendered "justify," but also "acquit" and "vindicate"), and the adjective *dikaios* ("righteous" or "just"). Part of the difficulty in making sense of Paul's meaning is the translation of the terms, as the various renderings show. Even more challenging, however, is getting at what Paul actually means when he uses this language. That is the burden of this article.

[7] The law court is one of four dimensions of Paul's teaching about justification that Wright sets forth. The other three are covenant, eschatology, and Christology. According to Wright, these four form the framework in which Paul's teaching must be understood. See Wright, *Justification* 86–108.

[8] Ibid. 90.

Is Wright correct to insist on the prevalence and significance, for Paul, of the law court metaphor—including the specific features outlined above—especially as it pertains to the revelation of God's righteousness? Undoubtedly, the image of the law court is important to him (as a cursory glance at Romans 2 amply demonstrates). But does it exhaust the coloration and tone of his use of *dikaio*- terminology? Does it accurately reflect Paul's views on how the working out of God's righteousness impinges on human beings, and on how God's righteousness and human righteousness relate to each another? I submit that Wright's schema leads him to miss out on some of the rich nuances of meaning that Paul connotes when using *dikaio*-language, including the famous passage about justification in Romans 3:21–26, and thus to define justification too narrowly. Expressed in positive terms, my thesis is that Paul expresses with *dikaio*- terminology both forensic and transformational meanings; that is, God not only creates a new status of "forgiven" for those who receive the good news in faith, but also transforms and empowers them to become more Christ-like.

The starting point of my analysis is 2 Corinthians 5:21, an underappreciated text in the discussion of what Paul means by the phrase *dikaiosynē theou* ("righteousness of God"). After making an initial case from 2 Corinthians for a broader interpretation of *dikaio*- terminology, I turn to two texts, Galatians 2:15–21 and Philippians 3:7–11, to bolster my claim for a more robust reading of this language. I then investigate Romans 1:17 and 3:21–26, arguing that even these "classic texts" on justification yield a richer meaning than the forensic interpretation typically offered. I conclude with some implications of this study.

SECOND CORINTHIANS AS A STARTING POINT

The majority of instances of *dikaio*- language is found in Paul's letters to the Galatians and (especially) to the Romans. It is therefore no surprise that passages from these letters dominate the discussion of what Paul means by this terminology. However, I would like to reshuffle the deck of cards, as it were, and lead with a different card, that is, with a passage from another letter. Even more, I want to try a thought experiment. Let us suppose for a moment that the only instantiation of the phrase *dikaiosynē theou* in Paul's epistles was 2 Corinthians 5:21, where Paul famously declares, "The one who did not know sin he [God] made sin for our sake, in order that we might become in him [Christ] the righteousness of God (*dikaiosynē theou*)."[9] How would we understand what Paul means by the "righteousness of God"? And how would we understand how this righteousness is then related to human beings?

[9] All translations of Scripture are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

"Becoming the Righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21)

Second Corinthians 5:21 is the climax of an argument that begins back at 2:14. This lengthy section is Paul's defense of his apostolic ministry—or, more precisely, his defense of the manner in which he exercises it. (The occasion for this defense was criticism of Paul by other missionaries who influenced the opinion of some Christians in Corinth.) It is noteworthy that, near the opening of his argument, Paul claims that his apostolic ministry is a manifestation of the new covenant, wherein God has brought to fulfillment the covenantal promises found in Ezekiel and Jeremiah. These promises involved God's sending God's Spirit into human hearts to empower people to live in God's ways (3:1–6).[10] But, as Paul explains, the Spirit's empowerment bears fruit in a paradoxical fashion: through servant ministry, a ministry characterized by humility and suffering after the manner of the humility and suffering of Jesus (4:1–15).[11] What makes fidelity and perseverance in such a difficult ministry possible is the belief and hope in the resurrection of the dead (4:16–5:10).

Paul's apostolic defense crescendos in 5:11–21. There he insists that it is Christ's love that impels him[12] to engage in servant ministry (5:14). Then, as Wright correctly argues, Paul sets forth a series of four two-step assertions that reaches its climax in 5:21.[13] In schematic form, the two-step assertions are: (1) a statement about Jesus' death and its saving effects; and (2) a statement about the gospel ministry, the ministry of the new covenant, that results from Jesus' death (and, implied, resurrection).[14] The first instance is found in 5:15:

[10] The pertinent texts are Ezekiel 11:19–20 and 36:26–27; and Jeremiah 31:31–34.

[11] In 2 Corinthians 4:5 Paul reveals to the Corinthians that he is their *doulos* ("servant" or, better, "slave") on account of Jesus. For an explanation of Paul's exercise of ministry as continuing the story and character of Jesus, see Thomas D. Stegman, "*Episteusa, dio elalēsa* (2 Cor 4:13): Paul's Christological Reading of LXX Ps 115:1a," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69 (2007) 725–45.

[12] Paul uses the first person plural pronoun throughout 2 Corinthians 5:11–21. Given the thrust of this passage as his defense of his way of being an apostle, I take the pronouns here to refer primarily to Paul (and to others who, like him, have been called to engage in apostolic ministry). As I will argue, however, much of what Paul says about himself can be extended to all Christians. For more on the vexing challenge of rendering the precise referents to first person plural pronouns in 2 Corinthians, see Maurice Carrez, "Le 'Nous' en 2 Corinthiens," *New Testament Studies* 26 (1980) 474–86; and David Filbeck, "Problems in Translating First Person Plural Pronouns in 2 Corinthians," *The Bible Translator* 45 (1994) 401–9.

[13] See Wright, *Justification* 160–65.

[14] Jean-Noël Alletti also recognizes the interplay between statements about God's initiating action in Christ and Paul's resulting ministry in 5:18–21, although he arranges verses 19–21 in a chiasmus. See "God Made Christ to Be Sin

a. Christ died for all;
b. we who are living now live for Christ rather than for ourselves.

The second occurrence is in 5:18, with the added emphasis that "all this is from God"—that is, God is the source of Jesus' saving mission as well as of the subsequent ministry inaugurated by the Christ event, a ministry that enacts reconciliation:

a. Through Christ God reconciled us to himself;
b. God has bestowed on us the ministry of reconciliation.

The third instance is in 5:19, which reiterates and fills out the previous claim:

a. In Christ God was reconciling the world[15] to himself, not counting trespasses against them;
b. God now entrusts to us the message of reconciliation.

Before proceeding to the fourth occurrence of the two-step assertion of Christ's saving death and the ministry that results, it is important to appreciate what Paul states in 5:20. There he illustrates how he engages in the ministry of reconciliation, as he makes the verbal appeal, "Be reconciled to God!"[16] Even more important is Paul's claim to be an "ambassador" for Christ, one through whom God makes this appeal. An ambassador is one whose message—conveyed via both words and comportment—is to be recognized and received as the message of the one he represents. Thus Paul claims to represent Jesus and, by extension, God through his activity as a minister of the new covenant (3:6).

This extraordinary claim then leads Paul to offer his fourth, climactic two-step assertion, which functions both as the grounding and summary of all he has been contending since 2:14:

(2 Corinthians 5:21): Reflections on a Pauline Paradox," in *The Redemption: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Christ as Redeemer*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (New York: Oxford University, 2004) 101–20, at 102–3. Wright's structure, in my view, is to be preferred, because the climax of Paul's defense in v. 21b pertains to his ministry.

[15] While Paul understands God's act of reconciliation as cosmic in scope (e.g., Col 1:20; Rom 8:19–21), the immediate context (esp. "not counting their trespasses against them") suggests that *kosmos* refers here specifically to the world of human beings. See Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003) 141.

[16] Most translations add "you"—with reference to the Corinthian community—as the recipient of Paul's exhortation to be reconciled. But this misses Paul's point. While the Corinthians are far from being a model community, their existence as *ekklēsia* (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 2:1) bears witness to their having already been reconciled to God. Paul will exhort the Corinthians in 6:1, two verses later, not to receive the grace of God in vain.

a. God made Jesus, the one who did not know sin, to be a sin-offering for us;[17]
b. so that, in him, we might become the righteousness of God.

So, what does it mean to "become the righteousness of God" in 2 Corinthians 5:21? Given the larger and the more immediate contexts—and here I agree with Wright's reading of this passage—Paul is offering a description of the ministry that flows from the Christ event. In light of Jesus' death and resurrection, Paul as a minister of the new covenant now participates in and continues God's activity of reconciling the world to himself. Paul participates in the work of reconciliation not only by proclaiming the gospel with words but also by embodying it through his servant ministry after the manner of Jesus.[18] It is crucial to note that underlying this interpretation is the understanding of God's righteousness as God's covenant faithfulness, expressed by God's action through Christ to deal with the problem of sin and to bring about the possibility of a renewed humanity that is reconciled and at peace with God.[19] Therefore, in this understanding, "righteousness of God" refers both to God's character—as marked by covenantal fidelity and love—and to the divine action emanating from that character.[20]

What is striking here is that Paul is enabled *to become* "the righteousness of God," to truly embody the character and work of God.[21] Observe how this interpretation suggests that the working out of God's righteousness

[17] It is beyond the scope of this article to offer an extended analysis of what Paul means by "God's making Christ to be sin." For interpreting the second use of *hamartia* ("sin") in 5:21a as "sin offering," see Thomas D. Stegman, *The Character of Jesus: The Linchpin to Paul's Argument in 2 Corinthians* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2005) 185–87. For a discussion of the various interpretive options, see Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005) 449–54. It is important to keep in mind that, as Gorman points out, for Paul Christ's death has a "polyvalent character . . . as sacrifice for sins *and* redemption from Sin *and* fulfillment of the covenant (and more)" (*Inhabiting the Cruciform God* 102, emphasis original).

[18] See also Wright, *Justification* 165.

[19] Wright correctly understands that the promises made to Abraham were for the purpose of dealing with the problem of sin (Gen 3) and the subsequent fracturing of humanity (Gen 11). See Wright, *Justification* 118.

[20] Thus *dikaiosynē theou* can be characterized as both a possessive genitive (God's righteousness as an attribute) and a subjective genitive (God's righteousness as an activity). See N. T. Wright, "On Becoming the Righteousness of God: 2 Corinthians 5:21," in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 2, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, ed. David M. Hay (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 200–208, at 205.

[21] Aletti captures the sense well: "The 'we might become' signals that we have been transformed: our righteousness is not a pure forensic declaration, but a real new human nature" ("God Made Christ to Be Sin" 117). Aletti's reference to the transformation of all Christians anticipates one of my conclusions.

vis-à-vis human beings entails more than the bestowal of a declared status. Paul's wording and argument intimate a close relationship between how God's righteousness has been manifested through Christ and the righteousness the Apostle "becomes." In other words, there seems to be a genuine sense of continuity between God's righteousness and Paul's, one that exceeds what Wright's law-court schema allows for (wherein the judge's and defendant's righteousness are two very different realities, and wherein it does not make sense to say that the judge bestows his righteousness on the defendant). Given his interpretation of "becoming the righteousness of God" in 2 Corinthians 5:21, it is ironic that Wright consistently insists elsewhere that *dikaio*- terminology denotes only God's bestowal of a status (usually in forensic terms, as being declared "acquitted" or "forgiven").[22]

Let me supplement this reading of 2 Corinthians 5:21 by pointing to some other features of the immediately preceding and following contexts:

- Paul refers to the result of God's saving action through Christ in 5:17 as "new creation," that is, through Christ God has intervened definitively to set the world aright.
- Connected with the "new creation" is a new way of being human, the way exemplified and compelled by "the love of Christ" (5:14). When Paul states at the end of 5:14 that "all have died" as a consequence of Christ's dying "for all," he refers—as the following verse suggests—to dying to the mode of existence marked by living for oneself (i.e., to human existence characterized by ego-centrism and self-aggrandizement). In other words, Paul teaches that Jesus' saving death (and resurrection) has unleashed a new possibility, namely, living for the sake of Jesus. Implicit here is that living for the sake of Jesus entails living as he did by loving and giving himself for others (see Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2).
- The Christ event effects a real transformation in people (at least potentially). Paul refers to an element of this transformation in 5:16, where he indicates that those "in Christ" now "know" or "regard" others in a new way. This new way is here defined negatively as no longer regarding others "in a fleshly manner" (*kata sarka*), a phrase that signifies the lack of the Holy Spirit's power and influence.[23] Conversely, it is the Spirit who enables the epistemological transformation Paul speaks about here. Indeed, recall that his apostolic defense began with an allusion to God's

[22] I have been puzzled that Wright's understanding of 2 Corinthians 5:21 does not seem to duly influence his interpretation of the phrase *dikaiosynē theou* elsewhere in Paul's writings. One of my motivations for introducing my thought experiment is to highlight this discrepancy.

[23] Paul employs the phrases *kata sarka* and *kata pneuma* ("according to the Spirit") as antonyms in Romans 8:4–5. See Galatians 5:19–23 for the contrast between the Spirit-empowered life and a way of living that lacks this dynamism.

Spirit at work in hearts. It is the Spirit of God who is the transforming agent.

- The conjunction in the middle of 5:21 is *hina*, which expresses purpose (and thus should be translated "in order to/that"). Paul's wording here indicates that God has acted through Christ for a particular purpose: "in order that" the righteousness of God be incarnated in the Apostle (as well as in others).
- Finally, in 6:1–2 Paul cites and appropriates words from Isaiah 49:8—from the so-called second Isaian Servant Song—thereby offering more clues as to how he embodies God's righteousness. The broader context[24] of the cited passage speaks of God's encouragement of the servant who feared he had toiled in vain, an apt allusion to Paul's experience vis-à-vis the church in Corinth. Even more telling, the passage recounts God's making the servant a light to the nations (i.e., the Gentiles) so that salvation may reach to the ends of the earth, which fits Paul's understanding of the mission he received from the risen Christ—to preach him among the Gentiles (Gal 1:16) and to bring about their "obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5).

Keeping in mind our thought experiment, let us take stock of the themes and motifs that constellate around the reference to *dikaiosynē theou* in 2 Corinthians 5:21, the climax of Paul's apostolic defense. We learn that the phrase "righteousness of God" refers to God's action—grounded in God's character—of saving the world through the death (and resurrection) of Christ Jesus. This saving action is described as God's work of reconciliation, which results in the ushering in of the new creation. God's saving work in Christ is continued through the ministry of Paul (and others who are similarly called)—through preaching and, especially, through servant-comportment. The latter, a manifestation of the transformation of life in the new creation, is marked fundamentally by living no longer for oneself but for Christ. Finally, "becoming the righteousness of God"—understood as participating in God's work of reconciling the world to himself—is the ongoing purpose of God's saving action initiated through the Christ event.

"Becoming the 'Amen' to God for Glory" (2 Cor 2:18–22)

Although the phrase *dikaiosynē theou* appears in 2 Corinthians only in 5:21, the dynamics observed there appear elsewhere in the letter. In fact, Paul foreshadows his apostolic defense in 1:18–22.[25] This passage begins

[24] Richard B. Hays has made the case that, when Paul alludes to or cites Scripture, he usually has in mind the entire context of the passage in question. See *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 1989).

[25] This claim presumes the reading of 2 Corinthians as a literary unity. While the unity of 2 Corinthians is still debated, many recent commentaries interpret the text as a single coherent letter. See, e.g., Matera, *II Corinthians*; Harris, *Second Epistle*

with an allusion to the "faithful" (*pistos*) character of God (1:18). God's faithfulness has been revealed in that all God's promises have found their "yes" in Jesus (1:20), whom Paul names here as "Christ"/"Messiah"[26] and "Son of God" (1:19). God's faithfulness to the promises is another way of saying the "righteousness of God," God's covenant fidelity. But Paul also points to Jesus' agency in this connection. He insists that in Jesus the yes has come to be (1:19). Jesus was not yes and no; rather, his entire life, culminating in his death on the cross, was an expression of his unconditional yes to God, an expression of the Son's complete obedience to the will of the Father. It is therefore no surprise that later in the letter (4:4) Paul describes Jesus as the "image of God" (*eikōn tou theou*) who is associated with "glory" (*doxa*). In this fashion, he connotes an understanding of Jesus as the second Adam[27] who reveals what authentic human existence involves: full obedience to God's will, an obedience that redounds to glory. As such, he is the one through whom the covenant God has fulfilled God's promises.

When Paul states in 1:19 that Jesus' yes to God has come to be, he employs *gegonon*, the perfect tense of the verb *ginomai* (become). The perfect tense in Greek signifies activity completed in the past that has ongoing ramifications in the present. Jesus' yes, leading to his death on the cross (Phil 2:8), has created a new possibility for human beings. Paul refers to this new possibility in the second half of 1:20, which reads literally: "Therefore, through him [Christ] the Amen is to God for glory through us."[28] Paul employs the transliteration (from the Hebrew) "Amen" as a

to the Corinthians; and Jan Lambrecht, *2 Corinthians*, rev. with updated bibl. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2007).

[26] While formerly most scholars held that Paul used "Christ" as, in effect, a proper name, Wright (among others) has been at the forefront of arguing that Paul regularly employs the term to signify Jesus as Messiah, a position now widely accepted. See *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991) 41–55; see also Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997) 477–539. In this connection, Gordon D. Fee aptly comments that Paul knew that Jesus' earthly life was characterized by servanthood (Phil 2:7), "which was as radical a departure from Jewish messianic expectations as was Jesus' being a crucified Messiah" (*Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007] 525).

[27] For a good summary of Jesus as "second Adam," see Fee, *Pauline Christology* 513–29.

[28] Supplying the verb from the two instances of *ginomai* in 1:19. There is no justification in the Greek text for translating, as Wright does, "that is why, through him, we speak the 'Amen' to God, for his glory, through us" (*Justification* 166). The NRSV similarly reads, "For this reason it is through him that we say the 'Amen,' to the glory of God." Such a "liturgical" interpretation misses the thrust of Paul's intent, which focuses on the leitmotif of faithfulness.

shorthand way of expressing human steadfastness and fidelity.[29] Notice that the Amen is directed "to God" (*tōi theōi*). That is, Paul alludes here to his (and his co-workers') faithfulness to God, his yes to God, which is "for glory" (*pros doxan*). He then goes on to explain in 1:21–22 that it is God's gift of the Spirit that empowers him to walk in the way of fidelity to God, after the likeness of Jesus' yes."[30] What is important to appreciate is that this understanding of "Amen" is consonant with what Paul signifies in 5:21 by "becoming the righteousness of God."

I have been suggesting, as a thought experiment, that we consider 2 Corinthians as if it were our only source for understanding what Paul means by *dikaiosynē theou*. That, of course, is not the case. The phrase "righteousness of God" appears elsewhere in Paul's writings, most prominently in his magisterial letter to the Romans, where God's righteousness is a key, if not the key, theme. I will turn to this letter shortly. While it is obviously necessary to track Paul's usages of the phrase within the context of the specific passages where they occur—as well as within the larger argument of the letter as a whole—I contend that many of the themes and motifs I have gleaned from 2 Corinthians in connection with *dikaiosynē theou* will illuminate what Paul teaches in Romans. Indeed, I propose that the constellation of themes and motifs set forth above offers a better background for understanding Paul's use of *dikaio-* terminology in Romans than the Hebrew law court metaphor on which Wright insists. It is worth noting that Romans was written shortly after the composition of 2 Corinthians; in fact, it was most likely composed in Corinth.[31] Prima facie, this

[29] For a complete explanation, see Stegman, *Character of Jesus* 142–44. Compare Revelation 3:14, where the risen Jesus is called "the Amen, the faithful and true witness."

[30] Paul creates a word play in 1:21 by juxtaposing the phrase *eis Christon* (in Christ) and the participle *chrisas* (has anointed). This juxtaposition, as Jerome Murphy-O'Connor suggests, reinforces the conviction that "God has made Paul another Christ, which means that he grants him the grace to be totally reliable as Christ was" (*The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians* [New York: Cambridge University, 1991] 24–25). To be sure, what Paul says about himself (and his coworkers) in 1:21–22—namely, that he has been anointed and sealed by the gift of the Spirit to grow in Christ-like fidelity—also pertains to all Christians. I develop this point in connection with the analysis of Romans below.

[31] In Romans 16:23, near the end of the letter, Paul sends greetings from Gaius, whom he describes as "my host and the host of the whole church," and from Erastus, the "treasurer (*oikonomos*) of this city." Gaius here is likely the Gaius referred to in 1 Corinthians 1:14. He must have been wealthy, as he seems to have had a house large enough to host the entire *ekklēsia* in Corinth. Erastus is to be identified with the Erastus whose name appears on a first-century inscription (which can still be seen in part), where he is identified as an aedile who paid for the paving of a city square in Corinth. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1993) 749–50.

fact makes plausible the similarities between 2 Corinthians and Romans that I intend to demonstrate.

BOLSTERING A MORE ROBUST READING OF *DIKAIO-* TERIMOLOGY

Before looking at some key passages in Romans, I want to look at two other passages, one from Galatians and one from Philippians, to strengthen my claim that Wright overemphasizes the law-court metaphor with its focus on the judge's declaration of a status. These passages will illustrate that the themes and motifs gleaned from 2 Corinthians are not limited to that particular letter.

Galatians 2:15–21

Galatians 2:15–21 is one of the crucial passages in the debate over what is meant by "justification by faith." Near the beginning of the passage is a flurry of instances of the verb *dikaioō* (four times in 2:16–17), all in the divine passive, as Paul distinguishes the means by which God has acted on behalf of humankind:[32] whether *ex ergōn nomou* (by/through works of the Law) or *dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou* (see immediately below). The context here is Paul's confrontation with Peter over the issue of table fellowship between Gentile and Jewish members of the Christian community in Antioch (2:11–14). In light of the agreement reached in Jerusalem about what was required of Gentiles who were joining the nascent Jesus movement (2:1–10), Paul regarded the withdrawal from table fellowship by Peter and other Jewish Christians as an act of hypocrisy.[33] For my purposes, it is sufficient to set forth three points about this passage.

[32] For the moment, I refrain from offering a precise translation of *dikaioō* (normally rendered "justify"). I will return to this issue in my concluding remarks.

[33] It is important not to read Luke's version of the so-called "Council of Jerusalem" (Acts 15:1–21) into Paul's account. The latter makes no mention of any stipulations concerning abstinence from food that had been sacrificed to idols and from what had been strangled and thus still had blood in it (Acts 15:20). That Paul knows nothing of these stipulations seems clear from the question that arose in Corinth about the propriety of eating idol meat. Rather than answer the Corinthians' question with a single word, "no"—which he could have done had he known of the decree as depicted in Acts—he offers a complex, highly nuanced, and at times tortured answer that goes on for three chapters (1 Cor 8:1–11:1). See Richard B. Hays, "The Letter to the Galatians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 11, ed. Leander E. Keck et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000) 181–348, at 225–26.

First, it is best to interpret the contested phrase *pistis Iēsou Christou* as referring to the "faithfulness of Messiah Jesus."[34] God's saving action, expressed by the verb *dikaioō*, has been accomplished, first and foremost, through Christ's death, as Paul makes clear in the opening lines of the letter (1:4). (To be sure, God's offer of salvation through Christ must, from the vantage point of human beings, be received and appropriated by faith; in fact, this is the import of the clause "even we have believed in Christ Jesus" in the middle of 2:16.) The subjective genitive reading of *pistis Christou* appropriately highlights the centrality of the Christ event in Paul's exposition here.

Second, it is interesting to note that Wright shies away from an exclusively forensic interpretation of *dikaio-* terminology in this passage, although he still insists that Paul's usage denotes only the divine conferral of a status. That is, given the context of the dispute over table fellowship in the Christian community, Wright argues that Paul's meaning here is that God has acted through Christ to reconstitute the people of God: both Jews and Gentiles are now welcome to belong to the true family of God on the basis of Jesus' faithfulness, his faithfulness unto death. Wright therefore insists that the verb *dikaioō*—understood from the vantage point of a person who receives God's gift—refers here to receiving one's status as a member of God's people.[35] He later asserts that, throughout this passage, *dikaio-* terminology denotes a divinely granted status rather than "a moral quality."[36] But this way of delineating the exegetical alternatives—"righteousness" as a bestowed status or as a moral quality—simply does not do justice to Paul's presentation. It is not an either-or proposition for him.

[34] Thus as a subjective genitive, rather than the objective genitive reading, "faith in Christ." While the proper translation of the phrase *pistis Christou* is still debated, an increasing number of scholars are convinced that the subjective genitive reading is correct. Christ's faithfulness refers to his obedience to God, manifested by his self-giving love for humanity (and thus his "obedience unto death"—Phil 2:8). For a good summary of the arguments for the "faith/fulness of Christ" interpretation, see Richard B. Hays, "*PISTIS CHRISTOU* and Pauline Theology: What Is at Stake?" in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 4, *Looking Back, Pressing On*, ed. E. Elizabeth Johnson and David B. Hay (Atlanta: Scholars, 1997) 35–60. For a helpful summary of the arguments for the traditional "faith in Christ" interpretation, see, in the same volume, James D. G. Dunn, "Once More, *PISTIS CHRISTOU*" 61–81. Wright sides with the subjective genitive reading (*Justification* 117).

[35] See *Justification* 116. In his summary of the passage, however, Wright reverts to using forensic language: "The criterion on which the verdict is based is, for the negative verdict, sin" (121). Whether the accent is on the status of "forgiven" or on the status of "a member of God's people," Wright's interpretation is exclusively guided by the notion of a judge's conferral of a status.

[36] Ibid. 121. Later, in his treatment of Romans 3:21–26, Wright argues that what God's action expressed by the verb *dikaioō* brings into being is a status, not "a moral character" or "an infused virtue" (206).

Nor does "moral quality" rightly capture what is at issue for Paul, which is how those who are given a status are also transformed and empowered to be in a certain way.

The latter observation leads to the third point. Paul himself points to a transformation at the end of the passage in question. There he refers to the "grace of God" (2:21) that allows him—and, by extension, all those who receive this gift through faith—to live "to God" (2:19).[37] In 2:20 Paul describes both the source and manner of his living "to God." The source is "Christ who lives in me." Given the way Paul can employ as synonymous the phrases "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of Christ," and "Christ in you" (see Rom 8:9–10), it is reasonable to conclude that the source of Paul's living "to God" is the Spirit. And the manner by which Paul does so is this: "Now the life I live in the flesh I live by the faithfulness of the Son of God,[38] who loved me and gave himself for me" (2:20). That is, God's saving action brings not only a new status but also a Spirit-enabled transformation by which Paul embodies the pattern of Jesus' self-giving love. Such is the way of life in the new creation (Gal 6:15). This way of living "to God," in obedience to the divine intention for humanity, offers an important clue for understanding what it means to live "to God for glory" (2 Cor 1:20): one gives glory to God by conforming oneself to the divine will and by imaging forth the character of God, which is revealed through God's Son as self-giving love. The Spirit-empowered transformation indicated here is an essential aspect of Paul's use of *dikaio*-terminology.[39]

Philippians 3:7–11

Philippians 3:7–11 supports my claim for a broader reading. There Paul explains, in 3:9, that the righteousness he has is from God (*ek theou dikaiosynē*) and that this righteousness, which is appropriated by faith, is *dia pisteōs Christou*. To fully understand Paul's meaning, it is necessary to

[37] Paul's use of the first person pronoun in 2:19–20 is, as Gorman rightly points out, representative (*Inhabiting the Cruciform God* 116). That is, the referent is all Christians. Scott Schauf has demonstrated that 2:20 is an integral part of Paul's argument about justification in 2:15–21; indeed, he claims that this verse offers a depiction of justification. See "Galatians 2:20 in Context," *New Testament Studies* 52 (2006) 86–101.

[38] As in 2:16, I translate the variation of *pistis Christou* as a subjective genitive.

[39] To be sure, Wright makes a distinction between "status" as a divinely bestowed verdict and the subsequent life one lives in response to this status (see *Justification* 144). While the distinction is valid, it too narrowly constricts Paul's use of *dikaio-* terminology to the bestowal of a status. As Gorman argues, "there can be no justification without transformation" (*Inhabiting the Cruciform God* 51). Gorman also regards Galatians 2:15–21 as a key passage for rendering a "thick description" of Paul's use of *dikaio-* language (see 63–72).

appreciate that the verses in question are set at the beginning of a passage (3:7–16) in which he holds himself up to the Philippians as an example of following the pattern of Christ.[40] The pattern of Christ has already been set forth by the great christological hymn in 2:6–11. Indeed, many commentators, including Wright, point to the echoes from the hymn that Paul sounds in 3:7–11.[41] I limit myself to making two observations about this passage.

First, once again it is best to interpret *pistis Christou* here as a subjective genitive. That is, the righteousness from God is mediated through Jesus' faithfulness. But I would add that, in the first strophe of the Christ hymn (2:6–8), Paul has already revealed what he means by Jesus' faithfulness. Most fundamentally, it refers to Jesus' obedience to God, the obedience that led to his offering his life on the cross. Jesus' fidelity to God, throughout his life and ministry, was accompanied by—indeed, was expressed by—his loving, humble servant-existence for the sake of others.[42] In short, Jesus is portrayed (at least in part) in the first half of the Christ hymn as the second Adam who, through his obedience to God and his imaging forth God's self-giving character, showed forth what authentic human existence entails.[43]

Second, Wright argues that Paul's primary meaning in 3:9 is that, in Christ, the Apostle "now has 'a righteous status from God,' the status which God bestows."[44] But the following verses, which have an explanatory

[40] In fact, immediately following 3:7–16, Paul exhorts: "Symmimētai mou ginesthe" (3:17), which Morna D. Hooker aptly translates, "Be imitators *with* me" (Hooker's italics) rather than the usual rendering "Be imitators of me." See "The Letter to the Philippians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible* 11:467–549, at 534.

[41] See Wright, *Justification* 144. For a fuller treatment of "Christ's and Paul's parallel examples of renunciation of their own prerogatives," see William S. Kurz, "Kenotic Imitation of Paul and of Christ in Philippians 2 and 3," in *Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 103–26.

[42] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor similarly contends that two character traits of Jesus particularly impressed Paul: (1) his steadfastness and faithfulness to the mission given him by God; and (2) his kindness toward those around him in which "he gave himself totally to others in love" (*Paul: His Story* [New York: Oxford University, 2004] 33).

[43] Among those who read the Christ hymn in Philippians 2 against the background of Genesis 1–3 are Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Christological Anthropology in Phil. II:6–11," *Revue Biblique* 83 (1976) 25–50; Wright, *Climax of the Covenant* 56–98; James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998) 281–88; and Hooker, "The Letter to the Philippians" 503–6. Wright and Hooker are correct in insisting that the Adam-Christology here entails more than the obedience of Jesus in his humanity. The obedience referred to in Philippians 2 includes the preexistent One's obedience to the Father's will by becoming human. In fact, as Gorman points out, the Christ hymn also reveals the "kenotic character of God" (*Inhabiting the Cruciform God* 9–39).

[44] Wright, *Justification* 151.

function, suggest that there is much more than a divine bestowal of status involved here. Philippians 3:10–11 reads: "that I might know him [Christ] and the power of his resurrection, and have a sharing in his sufferings, being conformed to his death, that if possible I may arrive at the resurrection of the dead." When Paul says that he wants to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection, he implicitly points to the power of the Spirit that comes from the risen Lord.[45] Empowered by this Spirit, Paul can share in Jesus' sufferings, which include those involved in humbling himself (Phil 2:8; compare 2 Cor 11:7) as well as those entailed in servant ministry (2 Cor 4:5). Paul describes the fullness of sharing in Jesus' sufferings as "being conformed" (*symmorphizomenos*) to Jesus' death, to the ultimate expression of his self-giving love. And, as was the case in 2 Cor 3–5 (esp. 4:14; 4:16–5:10), being conformed to Christ—which is another way of talking about transformation—is set within the context of hope in the resurrection ("that if possible I may arrive at the resurrection of the dead" [Phil 3:11]). The key point, once again, is that Paul uses *dikaio-* terminology for more than God's forensic declaration of a status; it also connotes transformation after the likeness of Christ.

DIKAIO- TERIMOLOGY IN PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

We are now positioned to look at some key passages in Romans, where the righteousness of God and its outworking are central concerns. As I will demonstrate, Paul continues to employ a rich reading of *dikaio-* language throughout this letter—even in 3:21–26, a passage closely analyzed in the dispute over what he means by justification.

Paul brackets the letter to the Romans by stating that God is now at work to bring about the "obedience of faith" (*hypakoē pisteōs*) among all the nations (1:5 and 16:26). This literary inclusion is significant because it points both to the universal scope of God's saving activity and to the fruit of its reception by people—namely, faithful obedience.[46] In 1:5 Paul claims that he has received the grace of apostleship in order to bring about faithful obedience. Moreover, this faithful obedience is "for the sake of his [the Lord's] name," which evokes the biblical notion of Israel as the nation obedient to God.[47] Now all peoples, Jews and Gentiles (1:16), are called to embody what it means to be members of God's people. This call is mediated by the preaching and servant ministry of Paul (and others similarly

[45] On the intimate linkage between the Holy Spirit and the presence of the risen Jesus, see Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999) 116.

[46] Rendering *hypakoē pisteōs* as a subjective genitive, i.e., as obedience, which faith works out.

[47] See Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1996) 40.

called), who himself has become the righteousness of God, empowered to participate in God's work of reconciling the world to himself (as indicated in my analysis of 2 Cor 5:21).

Romans 1:17

The first instances of *dikaio-* terminology in Romans appear in 1:17, where Paul refers to the revelation of the "righteousness of God" (*dikaiosynē theou*) and cites Habakkuk 2:4: "the righteous one [*ho dikaios*] will live by faith/fulness." Paul asserts that in the gospel—the good news about what God has done through Messiah Jesus in order to bring about salvation—God's righteousness has been revealed.[48] Moreover, the revelation of God's righteousness is intricately connected with faith, as the highly condensed phrase *ek pisteōs eis pistin* (literally, "out of faith into faith") makes clear. Paul then illustrates this claim with the Scripture quotation from the prophet Habakkuk.

The dense formulation of Romans 1:17 requires a great deal of unpacking. Fortunately, Paul supplies more details in 3:21–22, where he restates and expands his initial declaration. For the time being, I want to pause over two details in 1:17. First, the cryptic phrase *ek pisteōs eis pistin* suggests that the revelation of the righteousness of God has a specific source—indicated by the preposition *ek*[49]—that is marked by faith/fulness; in other words, God's righteousness has a primary—one may say foundational—manifestation. The formulation *ek pisteōs eis pistin* also suggests that the revelation of God's righteousness has a particular purpose or goal—indicated by the preposition *eis*[50]—characterized by faith/fulness; in other words, the manifestation of God's righteousness is directed toward a telos. The last point is significant because it highlights a nuance that most interpretations, including Wright's, miss (as I will demonstrate below).

Second, Paul's citation of Habakkuk 2:4 is more than a proof text for the importance of faith.[51] The quotation picks up the phrase *ek pisteōs*, which intimates, as I have just noted, the primary manifestation of God's righteousness. Paul makes clear that the revelation of this righteousness is in and by the gospel of God (1:16–17), the gospel that concerns God's "Son,

[48] The verb "reveal" is *apokalyptō*, which denotes the eschatological quality of God's action here.

[49] See *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000) 297, under *ek*, 3.g.

[50] Ibid. 290, under *eis*, 4.f.

[51] Wright also reads the quotation from Habakkuk as more than a simple proof text. He surmises that the entire context of the writing is what Paul has in mind, a context marked by injustice within Jewish society at the time the prophet wrote (*Justification* 182).

who was descended from David according to the flesh" (1:3). Paul has also stated in 1:2 that this gospel had been promised beforehand to the prophets in the sacred writings. It is significant that Paul's first citation of a prophet in Romans appears in the second half of 1:17. These factors, I propose, converge to make the case for a christological reading of Habakkuk 2:4, one that functions to shed light on what is meant by the phrase *ek pisteōs*.[52] That is, Paul appropriates this text as a messianic prophecy pointing to Jesus as "the righteous one" (*ho dikaios*) whose character and life were marked by fidelity to God's ways.[53] Paul returns to the essential role played by Jesus in the revelation of God's righteousness in 3:21–26.

Before doing so, however, Paul describes the condition of humankind that preceded God's decisive intervention through Christ (1:18–32). The picture is not pretty. According to Paul, humankind in general was characterized by ungodliness and wickedness (1:18). The marks of "ungodliness" (*asebeia*) included refusing to honor God (1:21), exchanging God's glory for images of human beings and other creatures (1:23), choosing to serve creatures rather than the Creator (1:25); in short, failing to give glory to God and to reflect, as *imagines Dei*, the divine goodness. Tellingly, the Greek term for "wickedness" is *adikia*, which can also be rendered as "injustice" or "unrighteousness." The list of vices in 1:29–31, pointedly introduced by *adikia*, catalogs the type of attitudes and behaviors that have led to breaking down human relationships and rending apart groups of peoples. Moreover, Paul includes his own people, the Jews, in this bleak portrait of humanity (2:17–24; 3:11–18). Although as God's special people they were entrusted with the divine oracles (3:2) and were called to be a light for the nations (2:19), they too failed. Paul then encapsulates the situation of humankind—both Gentiles and Jews—in 3:10: "No one is righteous [*dikaios*], not one!"[54]

[52] See also Douglas A. Campbell, "Romans 1:17—A Crux Interpretum for the *Pistis Christou* Debate," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113 (1994) 265–85.

[53] Jesus is called "the righteous one" in Acts 3:14; 7:52; and 22:14. He is referred to as "righteous one" (i.e., without the definite article) in 1 Peter 3:18 and 1 John 2:1. Moreover, the author of Hebrews cites words from Habakkuk 2:3–4 that strongly suggest a messianic reading of this text (Heb 10:37–38). For *ho dikaios* as a messianic title, see Richard B. Hays, "'The Righteous One' as Eschatological Deliverer: A Case Study in Paul's Apocalyptic Hermeneutics," in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards (Sheffield, UK: JSOT, 1989) 191–215. For another example of Paul's christological reading of an Old Testament text, see Stegman, "*Episteusa, dio elalēsa* (2 Cor 4:13)" 725–45.

[54] These words are from Ecclesiastes 7:20, with the words *oude heis* ("not even one") added for emphasis. In Romans 3:10–18 Paul sets forth a catena of ten OT passages that makes the case for the unremitting sinfulness and wickedness of all human beings.

Despite Israel's complicity in human ungodliness and wickedness, Paul denies that Israel's faithlessness nullified God's covenant faithfulness (3:3). But then how would God deal with the problem of sin (Gen 3) and the consequent fracturing of the human race (Gen 11)—a situation compounded by the infidelity of Israel, the covenant people through whom God promised to rescue the world, to make right what had gone wrong? The stage is set for Paul's dramatic restatement about the revelation of the righteousness of God.

Romans 3:21–26

Paul declares in 3:21–22 that God's righteousness has "now" (*nuni*) been manifested *dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou*.[55] As was the case in Galatians 2:16, 20 and Philippians 3:9, this variation of the phrase *pistis Christou* should be translated "through the faithfulness of Messiah Jesus." Jesus is "the righteous one" (*ho dikaios*) whose fidelity to God's will led to his obedience unto death.[56] Paul refers to this fidelity unto death in 3:25: "whom God put forward as an expiation through his [Christ's] faithfulness (*dia tēs pisteōs*) by means of his blood (*en tōi autou haimati*)."[57] The phrase "through the faithfulness of Messiah Jesus" fills out and explicates the compact expression *ek pisteōs* in 1:17 and thus points to Christ's faithfulness unto death as the primary manifestation of God's righteousness. But it is important to recall from the brief analysis above of Galatians 2:20 that Paul also understands Christ's offering himself on the cross as an expression of his love for humankind.[58] Even more, as Paul will

[55] Similar to how the verb *apokalyptō* functioned in Romans 1:17, Paul's use of *nuni* signals what Ernst Käsemann has called "the eschatological turn" (*Commentary on Romans*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980] 92). Käsemann adds, "For Paul the new aeon has already broken into the old aeon in Christ and it is spread abroad with his death" (ibid.). The expression "in the present time" (*en tōi nun kairōi*) in 3:26 reiterates the eschatological force.

[56] Similarly, Wright interprets *dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou* as a subjective genitive (*Justification* 203–204). He refers to Jesus as "Israel's faithful representative" (ibid. 135).

[57] The translation in the RSV—"whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, *to be received by faith*" (emphasis added)—is tendentious, taking Paul's meaning far beyond what the Greek text warrants.

[58] As Gorman points out, "Christ's death is a *unified act of faith toward God and love toward others*. His faith and love are inseparable—two sides of one coin" (*Inhabiting the Cruciform God* 62, emphasis original). Gorman goes on to point out that joining faith and love in this manner corresponds to the two tables of the Law, serving as antidotes to the ungodliness and wickedness to which Paul referred in Romans 1:18. Gorman rightly concludes that we must understand Christ's death as the "quintessential *covenantal* act" (ibid., emphasis original). His interpretation coheres nicely with my argument for Jesus as "the righteous one."

explain in Romans 5:8, Jesus' love unto death is also an expression of God's love: "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." Jesus, the righteous one, manifests God's righteousness by his self-giving love.

What are the implications of Jesus' death (and, implied, resurrection) for human beings? Here Wright seems to be on solid ground with his forensic interpretation. Indeed, Paul has been employing law court imagery throughout the preceding paragraphs, beginning with 2:1. Dealing with the problem of sin must certainly be part and parcel of the revelation of God's righteousness (3:23). Thus Paul explains in 3:25–26 that although God had previously passed over sins—a forbearance that could call into question God's righteous character—God now demonstrates that God is "righteous" (*dikaios*). God does so through the redemptive death of Jesus through which God now declares "righteous" (i.e., "forgiven") those who respond with faith to the good news. Paul twice uses forms of the verb *dikaioō* (3:24, 26) to signify the divine declaration of the status of "righteous," a status that is pure "grace" (*charis*) and "gift" (*dōrea*) [3:24].

But does the forensic interpretation exhaust Paul's meaning here? Wright is unequivocal in asserting that it does:

> Notice what has *not* happened, within this law court scene. The judge has not clothed the defendant with his own "righteousness." That doesn't come into it. Nor has he given the defendant something called "the righteousness of the Messiah"—or, if he has, Paul has not even hinted at it. What the judge has done is to pass judicial sentence on sin, in the faithful death of the Messiah, so that those who belong to the Messiah, though in themselves "ungodly" and without virtue or merit, now find themselves hearing the law court verdict, "in the right."[59]

Nevertheless, four significant details in the text lead me to propose that even here, in Romans 3:21–26, Paul is up to something more than setting forth a merely forensic sense of the doctrine of justification.

First is the reference in 3:23 to human beings "falling short of the glory (*doxa*) of God." This summary of the human condition evokes the story of Adam and the notion of human beings created in God's image.[60] As such, their primary vocation is to give glory to God by obeying the divine will and imaging forth the divine character. This, I propose, is exactly what Messiah Jesus, "the righteous one," did by 'loving us and giving himself for us' (see Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2).

[59] Wright, *Justification* 206, emphasis original.

[60] Other commentators who see an allusion to Adam in 3:23 include C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975–79) 1:204–5; and James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (Dallas: Word, 1988) 178–79.

Second, the main verb in 3:21–22, *pephanerōtai* ("has been manifested"), is in the perfect tense.[61] Recall from my treatment of 2 Corinthians 1:19–20 that the perfect tense signifies a past action that has enduring implications.[62] The past action here is, of course, Messiah Jesus' faithfulness unto death. And the ongoing ramifications? Undoubtedly, God's bestowal of the status of "righteous" is a key consequence. But is it the only one that Paul intimates here?

That the Apostle intends more than the bestowal of a status is suggested by a third significant detail. Paul's way of formulating the revelation of God's righteousness sets forth not only the means of that manifestation—"through the faithfulness of Messiah Jesus"—but also its purpose or goal. The notion of goal is indicated by the preposition *eis* in the phrase *eis pantas tous pisteuontas*.[63] Wright interprets this phrase "for the benefit of all who believe."[64] But *eis* does not denote "for the benefit of." Rather, Paul's word choice indicates that the revelation of God's righteousness has as its telos the creation of a people marked by faith. This is how he fills out and explains the phrase *eis pistin* in 1:17. How, then, should we render the participle *pisteuontas*?

We can turn to a fourth significant detail to shed light on this question. At the end of 3:26 Paul refers to the recipient of God's saving action (expressed by the verb *dikaioō*) as *ton ek pisteōs Iēsou*. This phrase is usually rendered "the one who has faith in Jesus."[65] However, the use of the definite article followed by a prepositional phrase beginning with *ek* typically denotes origins, participation, and/or membership.[66] In fact, Paul uses a similar expression in 4:16—*tōi ek pisteōs Abraam*—to mean "to the one who shares Abraham's faith."[67] Therefore it is best to translate *ton ek pisteōs Iēsou* as "the one who participates in the faithfulness of Jesus."[68]

[61] The verb appears in 3:21 and is presumed at the beginning of 3:22. *Phaneroō* is used here as a synonym of *apokalyptō* in 1:17. See n. 48 above.

[62] Brendan Byrne captures this sense well: "The saving righteousness of God has been revealed in Christ crucified not simply as an event of the past now over and done with, but as something inaugurated by this historic event and continuing on down to the present, as something still available to those who respond to the preaching of the gospel with faith" ("Living out the Righteousness of God: The Contribution of Rom 6:1–8:13 to an Understanding of Paul's Ethical Perspective," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 [1981] 557–81, at 574).

[63] See n. 50 above.

[64] Wright, *Justification* 203, original emphasis removed.

[65] See, e.g., NAB and NRSV. The latter, in a footnote, offers "who has the faith of Jesus" as an alternative translation.

[66] See Stanley K. Stowers, "*Ek Pisteōs* and *Dia tēs Pisteōs* in Romans 3:30," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989) 665–74.

[67] See, e.g., the RSV and NRSV.

[68] Similarly, Douglas A. Campbell translates *ton ek pisteōs Iēsou* as "the one who lives out of the faithfulness of Jesus" (*The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3.21–26* [Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1992] 171).

Returning to the telos of the manifestation of God's righteousness, I propose that the participle *pisteuontas* signifies not only believing that God has acted definitively through Christ to bring new life (although that is certainly included). It also connotes growing in faithfulness after the manner of Jesus, "the righteous one," whose fidelity to God's will led to the offering of his life, in love, on the cross.[69] Recall that Jesus' faithfulness unto death is the primary manifestation of the revelation of God's righteousness. Through his redemptive death, God offers the gift of forgiveness to those who respond to the gospel proclamation with faith. But God's gift also entails the empowerment to participate and share in the faithfulness of Jesus—to walk in the way of his obedience to God's will, to embody his self-giving love for others. This is the ongoing ramification, the goal toward which the revelation of God's righteousness moves. It is, in short, life in the new creation. And all this is entailed in Paul's use of *dikaio-* terminology in Romans 3:21–26.[70]

Notice how this interpretation of Romans 3:21–26 resonates with what I found in 2 Corinthians 1:18–22. In fact, while the language in the two passages is different, their structure and content are remarkably similar, as the following table demonstrates:

Textual feature	**2 Corinthians 1:18–22**	**Romans 3:21–26**
God's faithfulness	1:18 – "God is faithful"	3:3 – "the faithfulness of God"
God's faithfulness as covenant fidelity	1:20 – all God's promises find their fulfillment in Christ	3:21 – God's righteousness witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets
Pivotal role of Jesus in God's plan	1:19 – in Messiah Jesus the "yes" has come to be	3:22 – "through the faithfulness of Messiah Jesus"; 3:24 – "redemption in Christ Jesus"
Jesus' obedience / faithfulness	1:19 – "yes" to God	3:22 – Jesus' faithfulness
Perfect tense of key verb	1:19 – *gegonen* ("has come to be")	3:21 – *pephanerōtai* ("has been manifested")
Ongoing ramifications enabled through God's gift	1:20 – "the Amen to God for glory through us"	3:22 – telos of faith/fulness 3:26 – participating in Christ's faithfulness

Moreover, this reading of Romans 3:21–26 coheres well with Paul's reference, in 2 Corinthians 5:21, to "becoming the righteousness of God." Recall that this expression referred to Paul's role as Christ's ambassador,

[69] For a comparable expansion of what Paul means by *pistis*/*pisteuō*, see Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God* 79–85.

[70] See also Campbell, who suggests that "a connotation of recreation and transformation should be recognized as present" in the two instantiations of *dikaioō* in 3:24 and 3:26 (*Rhetoric of Righteousness* 174).

as one who exhorts to reconciliation and who embodies servant ministry after the manner of Jesus' self-giving love. In addition, recall that this way of incarnating God's righteousness was the expressed purpose (*hina*) of God's acting through the sacrificial death of Christ. Now we see in Romans 3:21–26 that all peoples are called to participate in Jesus' faithfulness, manifested by love and self-giving, as the ongoing effect of the revelation of the righteousness of God. Fittingly, people are called to participate by ministers like Paul who proclaim "Messiah Jesus is Lord" and who engage in servant ministry after the manner of Christ (2 Cor 4:5).

Confirmation Elsewhere in Romans

I have been proposing that a broader reading of *dikaio*- language makes better exegetical sense of Romans 1:17 and 3:21–26. This interpretation is confirmed by other parts of the letter, as can be seen by the following examples.

In 5:1 Paul employs the expression *dikaiōthentes ek pisteōs*—typically translated as "justified by faith"[71]—in connection with God's gift of peace. As was the case with the fourfold use of *dikaioō* in Galatians 2:16–17, the passive voice here indicates that God is the agent performing the action. The phrase *ek pisteōs* echoes Romans 1:17, where we saw that it refers to Jesus as the righteous one whose faithfulness unto death is the primary manifestation of God's righteousness (Rom 3:22). Indeed, Paul makes Jesus' role explicit in 5:1–2: through Christ we have peace with and access to God. Peace is the fruit of reconciliation, and it is surely no accident that Paul refers to God's work of reconciliation through Jesus' death a bit later in the passage (5:10–11). In this connection, Wright insists that Paul distinguishes sharply between the notions of "justification" (understood as a forensic declaration) and "reconciliation."[72] But Paul uses the two terms in synonymous parallelism in 5:9–10, which suggests a closer, more organic relationship between them than Wright claims.[73] To be sure, one can argue that there is a conceptual difference between being declared "righteous/innocent" and being reconciled to God. But that Paul operates out of a

[71] See, e.g., the RSV, NRSV, and NAB. Embedded in this translation is the understanding that it is the individual Christian's faith that is referred to here.

[72] "But justification and reconciliation are not the same thing" (Wright, *Justification* 225). The verbal form "reconcile" is *katallassō* (5:10); the substantive "reconciliation" is *katallagē* (5:11).

[73] Romans 5:9–10 reads: "Therefore, because we have been brought into right relationship (*dikaiōthentes*) through his [Christ's] blood, even more shall we saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled (*katēllagēmen*) to God by the death of his Son, even more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." Gorman also reads these verses as parallel and concludes that "justification means reconciliation to God" (*Inhabiting the Cruciform God* 55).

systematician's fondness for precision, which, as Wright's interpretation suggests, is doubtful. As I noted in 2 Corinthians 5:18–21, reconciliation is an essential aspect of the outworking of God's righteousness. And this has implications for how the verb *dikaioō* is to be understood and rendered, something I take up in my concluding remarks.

In 5:15–21 Paul offers a comparison between Adam and Christ. More precisely, he sets forth the imbalance between the deleterious effects of Adam's disobedience and the much greater and glorious consequences of Jesus' obedience. This passage is shot through with *dikaio-* terminology,[74] much of which has forensic connotations, as Paul contrasts condemnation (following Adam's disobedience) with acquittal. Acquittal, it should be noted, follows upon the "act of righteousness" (5:18) of Christ, the second Adam, whose life was characterized by faithful obedience to God (and thus once more we see Paul highlighting Christ's role in the revelation of God's righteousness). But the status "acquitted" does not exhaust Paul's meaning here. In 5:19, after explaining that in the wake of Adam's disobedience, many were "made sinners," he states, "by [Christ's] obedience many will be made righteous (*dikaioi*)."[75] Jesus' action provides the basis for people to live in right relationship with God and to become truly righteous, empowered to live obediently to God's ways.[76] Such a way of life expresses how grace "reigns through righteousness, leading to eternal life" (5:21). It is the way of life that manifests the new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), the way of life Paul also refers to as the "obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5; 16:26).

After explaining the effects of baptism—including being enabled to live "to God" (*tōi theōi*; Rom 6:10–11)[77]—Paul uses the term *dikaiosynē* in connection with the proper behavior that should mark those who have been baptized. In 6:18 he states that those who have been set free from sin "have become enslaved to righteousness." With this unusual expression Paul conveys the paradox of Christian freedom: life in Christ entails incarnating his manner of self-giving servant love (see Gal 5:1, 13). As I have shown, it was through Jesus' self-giving love—culminating with his death on the

[74] *Dikaios* (5:19); *dikaiosynē* (5:17, 21); *dikaiōma* (5:16, 18); *dikaiōsis* (5:18).

[75] The verb *kathistēmi* has the sense of "cause" or "make." See *A Greek-English Lexicon* 492, s.v. *kathistēmi*, 3.

[76] See Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1997) 92. Concerning Paul's use of *dikaiōma* in Romans 5:16, 18, and 8:4, Johnson also suggests that Jesus' righteous act enables others to fulfill what the Jewish Law justly requires (91). Indeed, in Galatians 5:14 and Romans 13:8, Paul teaches that love of neighbor (understood in the sense of servant love) fulfills the whole Law. Elsewhere Johnson has persuasively argued that Romans 5:15–21 is Paul's "plain explication" of Romans 3:21–26. See Johnson, "Romans 3:21–26 and the Faith of Jesus," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44 (1982) 77–90, at 89.

[77] See the comments above on 2 Corinthians 1:20 and Galatians 2:19.

cross—that God's righteousness has been manifested. On the basis of their new situation, Paul then exhorts the Christians in Rome to yield themselves to righteousness (6:19), to the pattern of Christ's life.[78]

In 8:28–30, following his lengthy treatment of God's gift of the Holy Spirit, Paul refers to God's overarching plan for humanity. There he speaks of God's setting apart a people "to be conformed to the image (*eikōn*) of his Son." God's ultimate plan—the goal of the covenant promises—is to form a new family of brothers and sisters of whom Jesus is the first-born (8:29). The "family resemblance" is manifested in Jesus, whom we have seen is the image of God par excellence (2 Cor 4:4). To be conformed to the image of Jesus is to be transformed by the Spirit into "the template of a new humanity,"[79] which the second Adam revealed, marked by obedience to God and servant love. Thus empowered by the Spirit to embody self-giving love, the new family continues to manifest God's righteousness. Paul then goes on to relate—speaking from the vantage point of God[80]—that those whom God has set apart, God has also called and glorified (8:30). Between the verbs "call" and "glorify" is the verb *dikaioō*, which is usually rendered here as "justify."[81] But "justify"—at least in the sense of being declared and given the status "righteous"—does not do justice to the logic of Paul's presentation here. Being conformed to the likeness of Christ entails transformation and empowerment.

Finally, Paul's exhortations in 12:1–15:13 substantiate what I have been setting forth. The opening and closing exhortations illustrate this well. Paul begins in 12:1 by encouraging the Roman Christians to offer their very lives "to God" (*tōi theōi*), which evokes his calling them to yield themselves to righteousness (6:19). Paul instructs them, on the basis of their being transformed, to discern "the will of God" (12:2).[82] This is precisely what people who have been re-created in God's image are called to do. Moreover, near the end of his parenesis (15:1–3), Paul exhorts the Romans to avoid being self-serving and to seek to please and build up others—which is another way of expressing "live not for yourself but for Christ" (2 Cor 5:15). He grounds this instruction with the example of Jesus (15:3). In the same vein,

[78] In this connection, it is interesting to note that Wright recognizes that the instances of *dikaiosynē* here do not directly denote God's granting of the status of "righteous"/"acquitted"; rather, the most one can say is that they connote this (*Justification* 230).

[79] Quoting Johnson's apt phrase (*Reading Romans* 133).

[80] This explains Paul's use of the past (aorist) tense of "glorify." The perspective is God's all-knowing vision.

[81] See, e.g., RSV, NRSV, and NAB.

[82] Paul uses the verb *metamorphoomai* ("be transformed") twice, here in Romans 12:2 and in 2 Corinthians 3:18 (both as divine passives). In the latter passage, Paul makes explicit that it is the Spirit who transforms people into the image of Christ.

Paul's final exhortation in this section is "welcome one another, just as Christ has welcomed you" (15:7). He then reminds the community of how Christ became a "servant" (*diakonos*)[83] to show forth God's character—described here in terms of "truthfulness"—and to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs (15:8). Notice how this description is an apt summary of how Jesus' self-giving servant love manifests God's character and covenant faithfulness—in short, God's righteousness. Paul's exhortations to "God's beloved in Rome" (1:7) are therefore based on his understanding that the Spirit-empowered community gathered around Christ and consisting of Jews and Gentiles (15:9) is called to be the ongoing manifestation of the *dikaiosynē theou*.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that when Paul employs *dikaio-* terminology, his usage goes beyond a merely forensic sense. N. T. Wright, from whom I have learned much in understanding Paul's writings, does not set forth the full meaning in the Apostle's employment of this language. While Wright succeeds in many ways in his attempt to go beyond the divide between old and new perspectives, his reading of *dikaio-* language is overly determined by the forensic terms set by those against whom he argues (mostly, followers of the great Reformed theologians, Martin Luther and John Calvin). I proposed using 2 Corinthians as a starting point of analysis to offer a fresh way of setting the parameters for the discussion. The reference to the "righteousness of God" in 5:21, coming at the climax of Paul's apostolic defense, sheds different light on his use of righteousness language—for instance, his becoming the righteousness of God, as revealed in his servant ministry; how this ministry is central to God's work of reconciliation; and how all this is a manifestation of the new creation in Christ. The light shed by 2 Corinthians, in my view, helps to make fuller sense of the crucially important statement in Romans 3:21–26 (as well as several other passages in Romans). Pauline scholars agree that the Apostle set forth a multifaceted understanding of the Christ event and its significance for humankind.[84] My point is that Paul's *dikaio-* terminology expresses more than one facet. By focusing on forensic imagery, Wright overly restricts what Paul means by this language. He thereby sets forth an impoverished interpretation of "justification."

[83] Compare Philippians 2:7, where Christ is described as emptying himself, becoming a "slave" (*doulos*).

[84] See, e.g., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Paul and His Theology: A Brief Sketch* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1989) 59. Fitzmyer employs the image of a decahedron to illustrate Paul's multifaceted understanding of the saving consequences of Christ's death and resurrection.

I close by focusing on three of the implications of the foregoing analysis. The first pertains to the issue of translation—in particular, to the translation of the verb *dikaioō*. To consistently render this verb as "justify" is, I think, problematic. The word is overly fraught with forensic connotations. To be sure, the term as Paul uses it includes the sense of God's pronouncing the verdict of "forgiven" or "acquitted," a verdict that anticipates the definitive judgment at the final assize. But I have indicated several instances where that meaning does not fully capture what Paul is saying. For example, in Galatians 2:16–17, where the question is who can share in table fellowship in the Christian community, the verb connotes God's granting the status of covenant membership (something that Wright himself suggests). But given the element of transformation found later in that passage (Gal 2:20), the verb surely connotes more than the conferral of a status. It also entails the actual making or adoption of the recipients into members of God's family (see Gal 4:4–7).[85] Where *dikaioō* is closely connected with God's work of reconciliation, as in Romans 5:1, the sense of "bring into right relationship" should be highlighted. And in other passages, where the transformation and empowerment of people are emphasized (Rom 3:26; 8:29), the translation "make righteous" captures well Paul's meaning.[86] This last point leads to a second implication.

Wright's use of forensic imagery leads him to distinguish sharply between God's righteousness and human righteousness. He claims that the latter is to be understood as a status conferred by the judge, the declaration of "righteous" or "acquitted." It has nothing to do with the intrinsic character of the person receiving the verdict, and it certainly is not to be confused with God's righteous character. To be fair, throughout

[85] How to capture these dynamics with a single word or phrase is challenging. Some commentators have tried to maintain the language of "justify"/"justification" while expanding what they mean by these terms. Two recent examples come from Bird and Gorman. According to Bird, "justification is the act whereby God creates a new people, with a new status, in a new covenant, as a foretaste of the new age. . . . Justification is forensic . . . , eschatological . . . , covenantal . . . , and is effective (sanctification cannot be subsumed under justification but neither can they be completely separated)" (*Saving Righteousness of God* 4). Gorman offers, I think, a better definition: "Justification is the establishment or restoration of right covenantal relations—*fidelity* to God and *love* for neighbor—by means of God's grace in Christ's death and our Spirit-enabled co-crucifixion with him. Justification therefore means co-resurrection with Christ to new life within the people of God and the certain *hope* of acquittal/vindication, and thus resurrection to eternal life, on the day of judgment" (*Inhabiting the Cruciform God* 163–64, emphasis original).

[86] As Marie-Joseph Lagrange pointed out nearly a century ago,"verbs in *oō* mean to make what their root indicates. Thus *dikaioō* ought literally to mean 'make righteous' ("La justification d'aprés Saint Paul," *Revue biblique* 11 [1914] 321–43, 481–503, at 337, my translation).

Justification Wright appropriately argues against the notion of an extraneous, "imputed" notion of righteousness, whether that of God or of Christ. But once again, it seems that he allows the terms set by his interlocutors to overly determine the issue. Paul's own way of expressing things—such as in 2 Corinthians 5:21, where he uses the striking expression "becoming the righteousness of God"—calls Wright's rigid distinction into question. So too does Paul's linkage of the transformation that marks life in the new creation with *dikaio-* terminology.[87] Assuredly, human righteousness is a gift, enabled only by the bestowal of God's Spirit (and thus in no way am I suggesting any type of "works righteousness"). It is best to speak of participating in the ongoing revelation of God's righteousness. The "middle term" between God's righteousness and Spirit-empowered human righteousness is Jesus, "the righteous one." As God's Son, Jesus the Messiah revealed the righteousness of God through his self-offering, in love, on the cross; in other words, he manifested God's character as self-giving love.[88] As one "born of woman" (Gal 4:4), Jesus exemplified what it means for human beings to live as the image of God, in "obedience of faith." The resulting spectrum between God's righteousness and human righteousness is therefore one of real continuity.[89]

A third implication pertains to the background of Paul's exposition. I suggest that the imagery and content of Isaiah 40–55 (often referred to as "Second Isaiah") form a key horizon for Paul's use of *dikaio-* terminology. Throughout these chapters, God calls Israel and the nations to assemble in a court-like setting. There God reveals God's righteous character as tending toward the salvation of God's people (see, e.g., 45:19–25). But even more to the point, what the prophet persistently announces is that God is summoning a group of faithful Israelites to put into action God's saving will by returning from exile in Babylon to their homeland in Zion.[90] By so doing, they will manifest to the nations God's power and glory, and

[87] Recall, e.g., Paul's stating that, in light of God's action expressed by *dikaioō* (Gal 2:16–17), he now lives by the very "faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (2:20); and his statement about being "conformed to the image of his [God's] Son" (Rom 8:29).

[88] God's character is also demonstrated by the outpouring of God's Spirit in human hearts (Rom 5:5).

[89] This is in line with what Gorman has recently set forth about the appropriateness of using the term "theosis" in order to get at Paul's soteriology: "theosis means that humans become *like* God. . . . Theosis is about divine intention and action, human transformation, and the *telos* of human existence—union with God" (*Inhabiting the Cruciform God* 5, emphasis original).

[90] See Richard J. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading: An Interpretation of Second Isaiah* (New York: Paulist, 1984) 55–56, 153–54.

thereby become "the icon of Yahweh."[91] Another relevant feature is that, in Second Isaiah, the concept of faithful Israel centers on a figure whom God calls "servant."[92]

It is well known that throughout his writings Paul alludes to texts from Second Isaiah. Note that he aligns himself with the figure of the Isaian servant in 2 Corinthians 6:1–2, the verses that immediately follow 5:21 with its reference to "becoming the righteousness of God."[93] Paul also interprets Jesus through the figure of the servant. Recall that, just prior to the mention of *dikaiosynē theou* in 5:21, Paul makes the striking statement about God having made Christ to be a sin-offering. A number of commentators read this statement as an allusion to the fourth Servant Song (Isa 52:13–53:12), which portrays a suffering figure—called *dikaios* (the "righteous one")—who serves well the many and bears their sins (53:11).[94] Paul's use of *dikaio-* terminology evokes several features of Second Isaiah: God's righteousness manifested in the action of saving God's people; a chosen "righteous one" whose service and suffering are the means through which God saves; and a people called and empowered to be the "icon" or "image" of God. Isaiah 40–55 thus seems to be more relevant for understanding Paul's use of *dikaio-* language than the law-court setting proposed by Wright.

[91] The quoted phrase is from Clifford (*Fair Spoken and Persuading* 54). The word "icon" comes from the Greek *eikōn*, which is typically translated "image," as in the phrase "image of God" (*eikōn theou*).

[92] See Isaiah 42:1–9; 49:1–13; 50:4–11; and 52:13–53:12.

[93] See the final bullet point near the end of the section "'Becoming the Righteousness of God' (2 Cor 5:21)" above.

[94] See, e.g., Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997) 313. In the Septuagint (LXX) version of Isaiah 53:11, the servant is called *dikaios*. His action of serving others is conveyed by the verb *douleuō* (literally, "be a slave"), the same verb Paul employs in Galatians 5:13 where he exhorts the community "through love be servants/slaves to one another." It is related to the verb *douloomai* ("be enslaved"), which Paul uses in Romans 6:18—"you have become slaves of righteousness."