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THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
Asbury Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
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by  
Donald M. Vorp  
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Approved:

Herbert Livingston

George A. Turner

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## CHAPTER I

### PROBLEM AND PROCEDURE

Over half of the twentieth century is gone. But it will be a long time before it is dead. For the life span of this century has been characterized by unheard of happenings that mankind cannot easily forget. It has been a century of scientific discovery. But along with this, it has been a century of spiritual re-discovery. God has again been recognized as having a vital share in the affairs of the world. Men have again been recognized as needing the sense of purpose and perspective that personal Christian faith supplies.

Close to the heart of this religious renaissance is an aspect foundational in the present study. The re-discovery of the Bible has been a significant achievement in the present century. Its pages yet remain unread by many. Its truths are still unheeded by most. Yet its relevance for individual life, national and international welfare has been re-asserted by politicians as well as preachers; scientists as well as theologians. This present-day interest in and importance attached to the Scriptural record and Biblical ideas has been a formulative factor in the origin of the present study.

## I. PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The immediate purpose of this study is to ascertain the meaning of the Biblical concept of righteousness as expressed in its distinctive Biblical context. The ultimate purpose of the present study being to gain a clearer understanding of the Biblical concept in its relevance for contemporary evangelical thought and life.

Importance of the study. The present study finds its justification in two closely related factors. The first is the demanding need in this day for a standard of living that will be characterized by moral rectitude and earnestness. Life must not only be better. It must be right. Both men and nations are now called upon to possess and demonstrate righteousness. World survival depends on the willingness of the human family to meet this demand for righteousness.

The obvious issue that ensues from today's need for righteousness is the need to know and understand the nature of righteousness. Since it is basically a religious term and fundamentally a Biblical idea, any investigation desiring objectivity must begin with the Biblical concept. For only as the Biblical ideology

is properly investigated and correctly interpreted can a satisfying standard of righteousness be attained and maintained either in public or private life. This presents itself as the second justifying factor in the pursuit of this study.

The present study necessarily involves certain limitations. It will be seen that this work does not involve an analysis of all Biblical appearances of the term, righteousness. To deal with all such occurrences would have taken the present study outside its specifications. It will be noted also that this study does not include an analysis of extra-Biblical terms and ideas. This is not to disparage the relatedness that such concepts may or may not have had with the Biblical concept. Rather it is merely a confinement to the Biblical ideal due to limitations in time and research. It is hoped that these limitations will in no wise hinder a fair and accurate assessment of the subject.

## II. PROCEDURE

Organization of the study. The first area of investigation has been the Old Testament, the content of which forms the basis for understanding the New Testament. To ascertain the Biblical concept, therefore, this study



must begin with those writings constituting the canonical Old Testament in which the attempt will be made to objectively ascertain and assess the teaching relative to the concept of righteousness. Following this chapter dealing with the Old Testament concept, there is a chapter on the righteousness-concept as seen in the New Testament. It is intended that this chapter will set forth objectively the New Testament ideology as expressed in the terminology of the times, for the purpose of seeing it in relation to what has gone before, namely, the Old Testament teaching on the concept. In the final chapter, there is found the summary of the findings of the various chapters together with the conclusions reached in the course of the study.

History and present status of the problem. There is extant a volume of material on the general subject of righteousness. Numerous articles of both an exhaustive and limited nature have repeatedly appeared in theological journals and periodicals.<sup>1</sup> Still other significant articles have appeared in theological dictionaries and religious encyclopedias. Of frequent occurrence also are chapters on the subject appearing in books on related

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Bibliography for listings of relevant contributions.

subjects, i.e., Biblical theology and linguistic studies. To date, the present writer has seen but two books dealing exclusively with the general subject.<sup>2</sup> Neither of these works deal extensively with the Biblical concept and the present writer has not seen any one work which bears significantly on the subject and purpose of this study, i.e., investigating and comparing the righteousness-concept of both Testaments as they together formulate the whole of the Biblical concept.

Method of Procedure. Words have been called the "στοιχεῖα of Christian theology."<sup>3</sup> That is, they are the first and fundamental principle of all doctrine. To grasp their meaning, and to grasp it correctly, is therefore a significant step in this and every study which has as its foundation stone words in the original languages. It is proposed that this study will proceed by

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<sup>2</sup>R. H. Kennett and others, Early Ideals of Righteousness (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910); Gottfried Quell and Gottlob Schrenk, Righteousness (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1951).

<sup>3</sup>Richard C. Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament (New York: Redfield, 1857), p. 9.

inductively gaining an acquaintance with relevant Biblical terminology in an effort to be as objective as possible. It is hoped that such procedure will guard against the frequent delinquency of scholarship to let doctrinal prejudices take precedence over intellectual honesty.

## CHAPTER II

### THE OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

This chapter is intended as a survey of the Old Testament terminology and ideology relating to the concept of righteousness. It is not intended, as it cannot be in such short perspective, to be an exhaustive analysis of terms or related ideas. Rather will it be the nature of a survey by which to gain a background and understanding of the concept as it generally appears throughout the Old Testament.

To do this, the basic meaning of the word in question must be clearly grasped and therefore will be considered under the aspect of terminology. In addition, two phases of the Old Testament concept as expressed in the righteousness of God and man must be herein studied.

#### I. TERMINOLOGY

One of the more prominent family of words in the Old Testament is that derived from the Hebrew word-root tsdq (צדק). It along with its cognates occurs more than five hundred times which in itself is some indication of importance. In some four hundred instances, this word

is translated "righteousness" or "righteous". On other occasions it is rendered by such words as "just" (Job 9:2) and "justified" (Job 11:2).<sup>1</sup>

The original meaning of the root פָּרָא has frequently been an area of controversy. Etymological investigations have revealed a similar root in Arabic to which appeals have been made in an effort to resolve conflicting views of the word. But the Arabic has also proven to be an area of diverse opinion. The issue centers in the Arabic root tsdq which Noldeke and Delitzsch affirm as meaning straight or firm.<sup>2</sup> For them, the Hebrew root פָּרָא derives from this its meaning of straight or perfect. Contrary to these is the opinion of Skinner who holds the Arabic to mean essentially trustworthiness or genuineness.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, for Skinner, the root פָּרָא takes its character from the Arabic and signifies genuineness or hardness.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Scripture references here and throughout are to the American Standard Version of 1901 unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup>Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Psalms (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), I, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup>J. Skinner, "Righteousness in the Old Testament", A Dictionary of the Bible, James Hastings, editor (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), IV, pp. 273-274.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

While most scholars favor one to the exclusion of the other, there seems to be no valid reason for such choice. Any idea of straightness includes in varying degrees at least, a sense of firmness, stability, and genuineness.

It has been assumed that righteousness as meaning straightness or conformity could hardly be a primitive idea.<sup>5</sup> Yet the Biblical implications are to the contrary. For the concept of righteousness is fundamental to the earliest record of the Biblical revelation, namely Genesis. There one finds either by implication or explication the primordial essence, and in fact, the central core of this Old Testament concept. Reference is here made to the first appearance of the root *PTY* in the Biblical record in Genesis 15:6 and also in Genesis 18:25. Both of these references would indicate the existence of a norm, and in each, conformity is ascribed to man and God respectively.

Accordingly, the Biblical emphasis as found in the root-word is twofold. Therein is acknowledged the existence of a norm. Yet the content of the Biblical concept is stronger. For not only does a norm or standard exist. It is rather the universal presence of a universally perfect

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 274.

standard whose essence is Right. So that the Biblical concept as seen in  $\text{רָצוֹן}$  is of a perfect standard existent in the framework of the universe issuing a demand for conformity. The emphasis being not alone on the standard but a perfect standard; the demand being not only for conformity but conformity to the right.<sup>6</sup> That which corresponds with or conforms to the standard is both right and righteous, whether it be God or man, place or thing.

A survey of  $\text{רָצוֹן}$  in its four forms is now intended.<sup>7</sup> The first forms to be investigated are  $\text{רָצוֹן}$ , the masculine noun, and  $\text{רָצוֹנָה}$ , the feminine noun. These are to be followed by the adjective,  $\text{רָצוֹן}$ , and the verb,  $\text{רָצוּ}$ .

$\text{רָצוֹן}$  -- masculine noun. The basic meaning of this word can be seen in Leviticus 19:36, where there is reference to "just weights ( $\text{רָצוֹן} \text{ וְשִׁבְרֵי}$ )". Here it is intended to convey the meaning of rightness, correctness, or normalcy. Used in another sense, the word indicates

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<sup>6</sup>A. B. Davidson, The Theology of the Old Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), p. 130.

<sup>7</sup>The following work has been largely the basis for the vocabulary studies in this chapter: Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: At The Clarendon Press, 1907), pp. 841-843.

righteousness in government. This was expressed of God by the Psalmist when he says, "Righteousness and justice (וְצִדְקָתְךָ וְיִשְׁרָאֵל) are the foundation of thy throne."<sup>8</sup>

Thus God's rightness in terms of His dependability and genuineness is asserted. This rightness in Divine government lays the basis for the operation of human government. Moses' instruction was to "judge righteously (בְּצִדְקָתְךָ וְיִשְׁרָאֵל)".<sup>9</sup>

In a third instance, the masculine noun is expressive of rightness in speech, or truthfulness. This is the meaning conveyed by the Psalmist in his charge against the boastfulness of man, "Thou lovest evil more than good, and lying rather than to speak righteousness (בְּצִדְקָתְךָ)".<sup>10</sup> Another use of this form of the word is seen where the Psalmist writes, "Thou hast loved righteousness (בְּצִדְקָתְךָ) and hated wickedness (וְשִׂנְאֵת עָוֹן)".<sup>11</sup> Here the emphasis of the word is upon righteousness as the ethically right; the ethical connotation being made stronger by contrast with wickedness.

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<sup>8</sup>Psalm 89:14; cf. also Psalm 85:11-13.

<sup>9</sup>Deuteronomy 1:16; cf. Leviticus 19:15; Proverbs 31:9.

<sup>10</sup>Psalm 52:3; cf. Proverbs 12:17; 16:13.

<sup>11</sup>Psalm 45:7; cf. also Psalm 17:15; Proverbs 1:3; Ecclesiastes 7:15.



In like manner, the "righteous man" and "righteousness" are elsewhere contrasted with iniquity and sin.<sup>12</sup> Again, the masculine noun is used as suggesting vindication. This meaning is illustrated, for instance, in Isaiah 41:10, "fear thou not, ... ; be not dismayed, ... ; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness (רְפָאָה)." Under this aspect of vindication, salvation and redemption are the resultant accompaniments.<sup>13</sup>

רְפָאָה -- feminine noun. This form of the root-word is frequently used to express meanings also conveyed by the masculine noun. The first of these is truthfulness expressed in Isaiah 48:1, "Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, . . . who swear by the name of Jehovah, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness (רְפָאָה)." <sup>14</sup> Another meaning similar to both nouns is righteousness as the ethically right. David's "Psalm of Praise" in II Samuel 22:21 uniquely expresses this idea.

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<sup>12</sup>Ezekiel 3:20-21; Hosea 10:12-13; Isaiah 64:5.

<sup>13</sup>Psalms 40:11; 51:16; 119:123; Isaiah 51:5; 58:8; Jeremiah 23:6.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. also Jeremiah 4:2.

"Jehovah rewarded me according to my righteousness (יְהוָה יְצַדֵּקְנִי)".<sup>15</sup> But the first significant use of this noun, as distinct from the masculine form, is its use to express righteousness as a matter of deeds and activity. This sense of the word is well illustrated in Genesis 18:19 where God's will for Abraham and his family is, "that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness (יְהוָה יְצַדֵּקְנִי) and justice". Here and elsewhere throughout the Old Testament, a significant emphasis is "to do" and "the doing" of righteousness.<sup>16</sup> The feminine noun is further distinct from the masculine in that its plural usage signifies righteous acts. In Judges 5:11, Deborah refers to "the righteous acts of Jehovah (יְהוָה יְצַדֵּקְנִי)".<sup>17</sup>

It would seem valid, therefore, to assume that while these two nouns frequently express related meanings, they are nevertheless distinct in the usages noted above. This, then, is not to conclude with Snaith that there is no difference in meaning between the masculine and feminine forms

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<sup>15</sup>Cf. also, Deuteronomy 6:25.

<sup>16</sup>Psalm 106:3; Proverbs 15:9; 21:3, 21; Isaiah 56:1; 58:2; Ezekiel 18:5, 22.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. also, Isaiah 64:5; Daniel 9:18; Micah 6:5.

of the noun.<sup>18</sup> For at least two distinct meanings are expressed by the feminine form while at the same time being absent in the masculine usage. But neither is this to conclude, with others, that God's righteousness is most frequently expressed by the masculine form and man's righteousness by the feminine.<sup>19</sup> The present study of these two nouns offers no justification for any attempt to make them either the same or separate. Rather it has revealed them as being both distinct and related in their usage.

רָצוּף --adjective. This form of the root-word means straight, perfect, or correct.<sup>20</sup> With but one exception, this adjective is always applied to persons.<sup>21</sup> Its first appearance in the Biblical record is in Genesis 6:9 where it is descriptive of Noah, "Noah was a righteous (רָצוּף) man". Here, as elsewhere throughout the Old Testament, it conveys the idea of being right or correct in

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<sup>18</sup>Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (London: The Epworth Press, 1944), p. 72.

<sup>19</sup>George A. F. Knight, A Christian Theology of the Old Testament (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959), p. 245.

<sup>20</sup>Brown, Driver, and Briggs, op. cit., p. 841.

<sup>21</sup>Deuteronomy 4:8.

one's character and conduct as these relate to God.<sup>22</sup> It is significant that this adjective is also used to express this idea as it relates to God.<sup>23</sup> Its usage, as such, is strongly ethical. In other instances, this form conveys the meaning of fairness and firmness in administering justice and meting out judgment. This meaning is attached to God; men know Him to be "a righteous (׀ַׁׁׁׁׁ) judge".<sup>24</sup> A third meaning conveyed by this adjective is seen in Genesis 20:4 where Abimelech asks, "Lord, wilt thou slay even a righteous nation (׀ַׁׁׁׁׁ-ׁׁ)?" The idea expressed here and in similar passages is blamelessness or innocency.<sup>25</sup> And yet a further idea is suggested by the usage of the adjective. In Isaiah 41:26, the prophet records the words of Jehovah, "Who hath declared it from the beginning that we may know? and before-time, that we may say, He is right (׀ַׁׁׁׁׁ)?" The contextual setting of this verse pictures Jehovah calling upon idolaters to send forth prophets who shall disclose the

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<sup>22</sup>Genesis 7:1; 18:23-28; Psalm 7:10; 11:3; Jeremiah 20:12.

<sup>23</sup>E.g., Genesis 18:25.

<sup>24</sup>Psalm 7:11.

<sup>25</sup>Exodus 23:8; Proverbs 18:17.

past and foretell the future. But none came forth to prove themselves. Hence the idolaters cannot be right since they did not prove themselves to be true. The use of the adjective here would point then to being right in the sense of being true.

יָצַד--verb. A basic sense of this verb is to be righteous. Illustrative of this use is Psalm 19:13. There the Psalmist prays to be divinely restrained from presumptuous sins and, "Then shall I be upright (יָצַדְתִּי)".<sup>26</sup> This verb also conveys the meaning of being right or in the right. This is the idea intended by Job, when in 33:12, he addresses God, "Behold I will answer thee, in this thou art not just (אֵלֹהִים יָצַדְתָּ)".<sup>27</sup> In only one instance does this verb appear in the Niphal stem. This form of the verb is found in Daniel 8:14, where in the words, "then shall the sanctuary be cleansed (יִצְדָּק)", the idea of being righted or purified is expressed. As it appears in the Piel, the verb conveys the idea of declaring right or causing one to appear right. When so

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<sup>26</sup>Cf. also Job 35:7.

<sup>27</sup>Genesis 38:26; Job 9:15.

used, its basic meaning is to justify. This meaning appears in various references, among which is Elihu's rebuke of Job in Job 33:32, "If thou hast anything to say, answer me: Speak, for I desire to justify thee (פָּדָה פָּדָה)." <sup>28</sup> Following directly from this meaning of פָּדָה, as it appears in the Piel, is its occurrence in the Hiphil form which bears significantly on the present study. One meaning of this verb-form is found in Psalm 82:3 where unjust and merciless acts are rebuked, "Judge the poor and fatherless: Do justice (פָּדָה פָּדָה לְ) to the afflicted and destitute." <sup>29</sup> Here the idea conveyed is doing justice or righteousness, that is, doing as and what one ought. A second meaning of the Hiphil is found for instance, in Deuteronomy 25:1. There, in the law respecting judgments, it is written, "If there be a controversy between men . . . and the judges judge them; then they shall justify (פָּדָה פָּדָה לְ) the righteous, and condemn the wicked." <sup>30</sup> In this fashion, the Hiphil

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<sup>28</sup>Job 32:2; Jeremiah 3:11; Ezekiel 16:51-52.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. also II Samuel 15:4.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. also Exodus 23:7; I Kings 8:32; II Chronicles 6:23; Job 27:5; Proverbs 17:15; Isaiah 5:23; 50:8.

verb-form is used to denote the meaning: to justify, or, to pronounce right those who are right. In addition to these meanings, there occurs yet another. This is suggested by the Hiphil as it occurs in Isaiah 53:11, "by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify (יְצַדֵּק) many; and he shall bear their iniquities."<sup>31</sup> The meaning here is clarified by the verbal form itself. As it appears here and throughout the Hebrew language, the Hiphil bears with it a causative force. So that its occurrence specifies both the originator of the causative act and the object of the causative action, as well as defining the action itself. As it appears in Isaiah 53:11 and Daniel 12:3, the Hiphil verbal form, יְצַדֵּק, in the opinion of the present writer, is a morally-causative term. Accordingly, its meaning is to make righteous.

There are opposing views which deny this meaning in favor of the more forensic meaning, to give one standing or to put a person in the right.<sup>32</sup> Justification for these

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<sup>31</sup>Cf. also Daniel 12:3.

<sup>32</sup>Ernest DeWitt Burton, A Critical And Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle To The Galatians (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), p. 464.; C. W. Dodd, The Bible And The Greeks (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), p. 46.; J. - J. Von Allmen, "Righteous", Vocabulary of the Bible, J. - J. Von Allmen, editor (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958), p. 373.

meanings is sought in the fact that, for some, the prevailing usage of  $\text{P}^7\text{Y}$  is forensic.<sup>33</sup> To be sure, this is an emphasis of the root-word occurring frequently in Old Testament Scriptures. But acknowledgment of this fact must be accompanied by the assertion of another, that the content of the root-idea from its earliest is primarily moral; this being determined by the relationship existing between the demand for righteousness and the standard of righteousness as it is found in the moral nature of God.

In its four forms then, the root  $\text{P}^7\text{Y}$  appears in varied contexts, a survey of which has revealed its usage in three basic categories. In the first instance, the word has reference to material objects or physical properties. It designates a conformity to accepted standards and is applied in such cases to weights and balances (Deuteronomy 25:15); peace offerings (Deuteronomy 33:19); and the city of Jerusalem (Isaiah 1:26). The second category is the word's occurrence in its God-related aspects. It speaks of God's rightness and conformity in terms of His character (Job 36:3); His government (Psalm 85:11); and His redemptive

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<sup>33</sup>E.g., Burton, Dodd, Von Allmen.



activity (Isaiah 41:10). In the third category, the reference is to man as an individual and to men as a nation. The word, in this connection, denotes conformity in terms of character and conduct as it applies to being in the right or on the side of right (Job 9:15); to being righteous (Job 10:15); and to doing right (Psalm 106:3).

Such usage signifies the root-idea of the word as conformity, i.e., rightness or that which is as it ought to be. In every occurrence of the root, this idea is basic and finds its nearest English equivalent in righteousness.

## II. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

Maurice voiced a common Hebraic opinion when he said, "Upon our thoughts of God, it will depend, in one time or another, whether we rise higher or sink lower as societies and as individuals."<sup>34</sup>

Hebrew life was built around this idea of the centrality of God. Out of this God-concept came the distinctiveness of the Hebrew religion without which

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<sup>34</sup>Marcus Dods, The Prayer That Teaches To Pray (Cincinnati: Cranston & Curts, n.d.), p. 43.

its origin is unaccounted for.<sup>35</sup> Not only the existence but the essence of Hebrew religion was founded on its idea of who and what God was, as well as what His demands were upon men. It is such an idea that leads to a consideration of the righteousness of God.

The righteousness of God is at once a positive and comprehensive term. It is first definitive of the basic character of God. As such, it is no principle abstractly asserted about Him but rather it is a quality of character actually possessed by Him.<sup>36</sup> The Old Testament Scriptures are emphatic at this point. In Psalm 97:2, the Psalmist declares of God, "Righteousness (רְצוּן) and justice are the foundation of his throne." This emphasis is forcefully found again in Isaiah 45:21, "and there is no God else besides me, a just God (רַב־צְדָקָה) and a Saviour". And in Zephaniah 3:5, another of the Biblical writers confidently asserts, "Jehovah in the midst of her is righteous (רַב־צְדָקָה); he will not do iniquity".<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Snaith, op. cit., pp. 11-20.

<sup>36</sup>Davidson, op. cit., p. 129.; G. Ernest Wright, The Challenge of Israel's Faith (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1944), p. 58.

<sup>37</sup>Cf. also Isaiah 42:21; 45:24.

To this extent, righteousness, as applied to God, is first an attribute of Deity; a qualitative part constituting the whole of the Divine essence. It is to be regarded as expressing the moral rightness or ethical completeness of God. To the degree that this rightness and conformity characterize God, He is what He ought to be; therefore He is righteous.

This concept bears obviously on another, that of the holiness of God. The relationship existing between the two is significant. The word commonly translated "holiness" in the Old Testament is that having as its root, the radicals *ו.ק.ד.* Previous studies have established the meaning of this word-root as separation and purity.<sup>38</sup> When applied to God, it designates not one out of many attributes but the totality of His nature.<sup>39</sup> As such, it is in Him a quality wholly unoriginated and underived. But this is not all. Of equal importance is the fact that holiness, as God's essential Being and perfect nature, is taken by Him as the standard governing

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<sup>38</sup>George Allen Turner, The More Excellent Way (Winona Lake: Light and Life Press, 1952), pp. 22-23.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

both Himself and His creatures. So that holiness and righteousness, as existent in God, are related, while being at the same time distinct. The two are distinct in that holiness is the essential nature of Deity while righteousness is one attribute of this nature. Yet the two are closely linked. Holiness demands righteousness. His righteousness is His conformity, not to external laws but to Himself as the standard. He is holy; therefore He must be righteous. And He is righteous because He is holy.

Not only does holiness demand righteousness but righteousness means holiness. To exclude from God moral rightness and ethical conformity would be to diminish and destroy His holiness. For Him to be righteous is to be holy.

The foregoing is further significant in revealing the distinctive Biblical setting of the righteousness-concept. It admits, as did extra-Biblical usage, of the existence of Right; a standard with which life, whether animate or inanimate, must conform if it is to be termed righteous. But the peculiarness and distinctiveness of Hebraic usage is seen in its bold assertion that Yahweh is Himself the perfect standard. In the person of God,

Israel's God, Right was found as the eternally existent standard. So that righteousness in the Old Testament is appropriately known as a "God-referred righteousness,"<sup>40</sup> Apart from Him it was but a meaningless word and a vague concept. And only as righteousness is considered in terms of conformity to His laws can it be validly known as either Hebraic or Biblical.

The Old Testament concept of the righteousness of God points yet to a second idea. It is to be found in those Biblical passages which ascribe to and expect from God rightness in conduct. The first significant appearance of this meaning is in Genesis 18:25. There Abraham queries, "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right (יִשְׁפֹּט יְיָ)?" The idea conveyed here is that righteousness in God affects Divine deeds and is therefore a matter of conduct. In like manner, the Psalmist pleads with God, "Oh continue . . . thy righteousness (יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׁפֹּט) to the upright in heart."<sup>41</sup> Here Divine righteousness is illustrated as something displayed toward or conveyed to

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<sup>40</sup>Gehardus Vos, Old and New Testament Biblical Theology (Toronto: Toronto Baptist Seminary, 1947), p. 249.

<sup>41</sup>Psalm 36:10; cf. also Psalm 85:13; 103:17; 145:7, 17.

the man of integrity. In a similar vein, Jehovah speaks in Isaiah 45:8, ". . . let the skies pour down righteousness (יִשְׁפַּרְשׁוּ יְהוָה יְשׁוּעָה)". The command spoken here by Jehovah points to righteousness as a quality revealed in and through Divine action.<sup>42</sup>

Hebrew religion, as it appears in the Old Testament, leans heavily on the truth of Divine sovereignty.<sup>43</sup> The essence of this idea was man's acceptance of God's power and right to do as He pleased. As such, the righteousness-concept bears significantly on it. For moral rightness, as possessed by God, is man's surety that Divine sovereignty will be exercised accordingly. So that God has not only the right to do as He pleases but He is pleased to do the right. His own moral conformity is then, the central and controlling factor. It is unfortunate that much previous investigation of the present subject lacks the emphasis on this moral-ness of Divine righteousness.<sup>44</sup> This neglect results in the conclusion

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<sup>42</sup>Cf. Psalm 98:2.

<sup>43</sup>Isaiah 45:9-12; Jeremiah 18:1ff.; Daniel 11:16.

<sup>44</sup>E.g., Burton, op. cit., pp. 460-464; Dodd, op. cit., pp. 42-59; R. H. Kennett, Mrs. Adam, and H. M. Gwatkin, Early Ideals of Righteousness (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910), pp. 5-30; Gottfried Quell and Gottlob Schrenk, Righteousness (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1951), pp. 1-6, where the moral content of the concept is almost totally, if not completely, neglected.

that the righteousness-words are fundamentally forensic and the confusion of righteousness with justice. To equate them is to miss the distinctive Biblical emphasis given to each of them. While closely related, the two are not one and the same. The righteousness of God is not the justice of God. Rather, God's righteousness demands and assures His justice. He is righteous before He is just and He is just because He is righteous. He acts justly, deals fairly and without partiality, because of who and what He is. He can do no other since He imposes upon Himself the demands of His own righteous nature. Consequently His right character, as the self-imposed norm for all His action, confidently assures His right conduct; in this case, the exercise of His sovereignty and the display of His justice. It is evident, therefore that righteousness and justice are not to be equated. God's righteousness is His moral rightness. His justice is His response to and the result of His righteousness.

In terms, then, of His ethical activity, God's righteousness was His right conduct in any situation; doing the right in every case whatever the right happened

to be.<sup>45</sup> As Judge, it was His to clear the innocent and condemn the guilty.<sup>46</sup> As Ruler, He must guide and provide.<sup>47</sup> As God of Israel, He was to save and sustain.<sup>48</sup> His conduct had to be consistent with His character--holy, righteous, merciful, and good.

Righteousness thus applied to the activity of God takes on several characteristics:

1. The righteousness of God is rectifying. It is seen at work in history as a corrective quality and force. It is not only a moral quality possessed by God but a judicial element displayed in the figure of God as judge. The root shpht occurring in the form of mishpat is found in frequent association with the root shph.<sup>49</sup> The meaning attached to the former is to judge.<sup>50</sup> The emphasis of the word being

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<sup>45</sup>Davidson, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>46</sup>Psalm 5:12; 7:8.

<sup>47</sup>Psalm 5:8.

<sup>48</sup>Psalm 51:14; Isaiah 50:8.

<sup>49</sup>Psalm 72:2; 94:15; 98:9.

<sup>50</sup>B. Davidson, The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited, n.d.), p. DCCXXXIII.



judicial in nature, its use covers all phases of reaching a just decision.<sup>51</sup> The judge-image is freely applied to God whose responsibility it is to decide on and declare free the innocent while deciding on and punishing the guilty. Such action from God is always to rectify the wrong and the wronged. It is always done in righteousness. That is to say, God's action always conforms to Himself, the Standard and Source of all right. And at the same time, His action is His righteousness manifested as a rectifying force.

2. The righteousness of God is revelational. That is, God is righteous in that He reveals the right to men. By this act of revelation, the way of righteousness and the way to be righteous are made plain.

While God is Himself the embodiment of the standard of right, this standard is expressed more concretely toward men in terms of His law. Not that the law and the standard are totally

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<sup>51</sup>Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1958), p. 97, where the opinion is sustained that the word cannot be limited in meaning to rendering a verdict.

different; instead the standard is expressed in and through the law. For the law is God's self-revelation of His will for man.

Divine revelation of and through the law is more clearly seen in the covenant relationship. Through the covenant, at a point in history, God entered into a personal relationship with Israel.<sup>52</sup> The emphasis of such a relationship was the establishment of an intimate circle of communion.<sup>53</sup> Of equal import was the fact that the covenant was also a contract. Through it, obligations in the form of Divine law were revealed to men.<sup>54</sup> Communion was conditioned on obedience to these obligations. Through these demands, the Divine standard of Right was revealed. They point to the righteousness of God as that ethical element present in His conduct which reveals the right.

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<sup>52</sup>Exodus 19:4-5; Deuteronomy 7:7ff.

<sup>53</sup>Th. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), p. 141.

<sup>54</sup>Cf. Chapter II, Section III, "The Righteousness of Man", for further elaboration of the law and its content in relation to righteousness.

3. The righteousness of God is redemptive. It is not merely a corrective force or a revelational element. It is a beneficent power actively engaged in aiding right and righteousness. In a revealed righteousness, men come to know what is right. But through a redemptive righteousness, men are helped to achieve the right that has been disclosed and to attain the righteousness that has been demanded.

There are those who see Divine righteousness as a positive assertion of God's nature but not a characteristic attribute.<sup>55</sup> It becomes descriptive of what God does rather than definitive of what He is. The fallacy lay in the assumption that the Old Testament is concerned not so much with the person of God as it is with the providence of God. While Old Testament religion is highly flavored with emphasis on God's relations with men, it does not begin here. Rather does it begin at the starting-point of all religion--the nature of Divine personality.

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<sup>55</sup>Knight, op. cit., p. 245.

The emphasis of religion, and specifically of Hebraic religion, is on a God who is before He acts; a God who does what He does because of what He is.

Hence the righteousness of God is a matter of ethical activity because it was first a matter of His moral completeness and conformity. To assume the one without asserting the other is to dwarf the righteousness-concept and miss the Biblical meaning. God's ethical activity in the form of providence without His moral rightness as a Person would have no proper motivation. Moral conformity without His ethical considerations would have no purpose for existence.

This active aspect of God's righteousness does, however, prove to be a significant emphasis of the Old Testament. Here righteousness and salvation are linked.<sup>56</sup> God saves because He is righteous. This is nowhere more vividly expressed than in

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<sup>56</sup>E.g., Psalm 51:4-5; Psalm 85:13; Isaiah 46:13.

Isaiah 45:21, "and there is no God else besides me, a just God and a Saviour.

What has previously been defined as the moral quality of His nature now sets itself to work. And in the totality of His Being, Jehovah gives Himself to sharing in the life of men; reviving and restoring human life to the Divine demand.

Needy men knew such a God to be somewhere present in life. Hence God is seen in the Old Testament not only as a God righteous in character but as a God righteous in conduct. To the Hebrew, such righteousness manifested itself in grace to the needy and mercy to the oppressed. The Psalms are a characteristic evidence of these elements. There men frustrated by life's problems present their case to a God whose deeds can be brought to bear on their needs. Illustrative of such are men's cries to be lead (Psalm 5:8); to be delivered (Psalm 31:1; 71:2); to be exalted (Psalm 89:16). These human needs are met through the righteousness of God--the quality He both possesses and manifests.

Of significance to this redemptive aspect of God's righteousness is the covenant relationship previously discussed.<sup>57</sup> It was therein noted that certain obligations ensued upon the establishment of this relationship. They were obligations that involved God as well as man. The demand placed upon Israel was for obedience to and compliance with the law of God.<sup>58</sup> The demand placed upon God by His initiation of the covenant was to fulfill His pledge of aid and victory to Israel.<sup>59</sup> To do what He promised to do was for Him to be righteous.<sup>60</sup> And to do so was to manifest His righteousness in and through His redemptive activity.

It is significant, as is pointed out by Davidson, that God's righteousness is also

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<sup>57</sup>Supra, p. 29.

<sup>58</sup>Deuteronomy 6:25; 7:11.

<sup>59</sup>Deuteronomy 7:12ff.

<sup>60</sup>John A. Bollier, "The Righteousness of God, A Word Study", Interpretation--A Journal of Bible and Theology, 8:405, January, 1954.

an effect.<sup>61</sup> Isaiah saw it and of it declared, "but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness (צדקתו) shall not be abolished."<sup>62</sup> This, to the prophet's mind, was a condition divinely-produced. So that God not only possessed righteousness and manifested it, but He also produced it. This aspect of righteousness as a condition having its source in God may rightly be viewed, with Davidson, as a significant meaning of God's righteousness. Yet this is not all. For this condition or state of righteousness may likewise be viewed as the result of God's redemptive activity, since such activity has this condition as the goal of its operation. Accordingly, it may be interpreted within the second aspect of God's righteousness, i.e., Divine ethical activity manifested in conformity to the standard of the Divine nature. As such, it appears with the ideas of salvation and deliverance as the resultant

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<sup>61</sup>Davidson, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>62</sup>Isaiah 51:6; cf. also, Isaiah 33:5.

accompaniments of God's activity. The activity itself may rightly be termed apart of the root of Divine righteousness while the effects are the fruit produced by it. While the righteousness of God, in terms of His right character, is expressive of the idea of holiness, His right conduct includes the idea of goodness, i.e., that beneficent quality by which God seeks to impart gifts and blessings to His creation.<sup>63</sup> To the Psalmist, righteousness (יְשׁוּעָה ) embraced goodness (טוֹב ).<sup>64</sup> And to such a degree, the right conduct of Jehovah was characterized by goodness. Accordingly, the blessings and benefits bestowed upon men were an evidence that God had acted righteously and therefore in goodness. Mercy was shown to all (Psalm 145:9). Grace was communicated to all (Micah 7:9). Com-

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<sup>63</sup>H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1941), I, p. 362.

<sup>64</sup>E.g., Psalm 85:13; 103:17; 145:7, 17.



passion was manifested to the distressed (Jeremiah 12:15). Forgiveness was found for the penitent (Psalm 130:4). These passages evidence, therefore, the extent to which the righteousness of God was inclusive of the idea of goodness.

### III. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF MAN

The righteousness of man as it appears in the Old Testament well illustrates a profound Hebraic truth. For the Hebrew, righteousness is no philosophical principle or ultimate value. It is rather an idea invested with value only as it becomes a quality personalized in the life of man. It is, then, a concept far removed from abstraction; being characterized rather by moral significance and ethical vitality.

The Old Testament vocabulary for righteousness reveals what men were and defines what the righteousness of man was. In the present study, this vocabulary has received previous treatment under the aspect of terminology.<sup>65</sup> There it was seen that the root  $\text{קָדַשׁ}$ , as it occurs in its four forms, is frequently applied to

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<sup>65</sup> Supra, pp. 7ff.

individual life. In such instances, righteousness is used in its proper sense of conformity, i.e., being and doing what the standard required, thereby being and doing what one should. This elemental idea of <sup>P78</sup> was expressed in various ways. On occasion, it was applied to individuals who were in the right (Job 9:15) or on the side of right (Psalm 35:27). Then again, in relation to man, it meant being righteous (Job 10:15) or doing right (Psalm 106:3). But whatever the life-situation or the thought expressed, the basic idea conveyed is conformity. So that a person is <sup>P78</sup> when his life conforms to or corresponds with the standard.

The standard is therefore the all-determining factor. As in the idea of Divine righteousness, so in the idea of human righteousness, the standard is the nature of God itself. And further, it is God's nature as possessing righteousness that is the standard for men. To the extent that God conforms to Himself as the Standard, He is righteous. But the self-imposed standard of His own nature not only demands His conformity to or consistency with it but it also demands conformity and consistency from His creation.<sup>66</sup> Accordingly, for God to

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<sup>66</sup>C. Ryder Smith, The Bible Doctrine of Man (London: The Epworth Press, 1951), p. 37.; Wiley, op. cit., p. 374.

possess and be possessed by <sup>PT</sup> was for Him to demand the <sup>PT</sup> of man. Yet not only was man to be righteous, but he was to be righteous in the degree to which God was righteous. And the degree of righteousness that characterized God was qualitative; that is the righteousness possessed by God was the quality of moral rightness contained in His character and demonstrated in His conduct. And in this sense, righteousness was to be the quality that characterized man's character and conduct.

Apparently contrary to this view are those Scriptures which assert that no living man is righteous.<sup>67</sup> Yet the meaning is clear. While the demand of the Divine nature is for righteousness to be possessed by man in the degree in which it was possessed by God, the demand is not for righteousness to exist in man to the extent in which it exists in God. It is a matter of quality and not quantity.<sup>68</sup> Man is neither expected to be nor can he be possessed of God's absolute and underived

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<sup>67</sup>Job 4:17; Psalm 130:3; 143:2.

<sup>68</sup>Turner, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

righteousness. Rather, he is expected to be and can be possessed of that quality of conformity or moral rightness as it is demanded by and found in God. In the degree then, to which man is called to be like God, he can be like Him.

One meaning, therefore, of the righteousness of man may be taken to be this Divine demand upon man for a righteousness that resembles God's.

It is at this point, however, that difficulty arises. Man is expected to be righteous. Yet the Old Testament does not see him as righteous.  $\text{רָצוּ}$ , as it includes the idea of being straight, is often contrasted with  $\text{יָשׁוּׁר}$  or the absence and lack of straightness.<sup>69</sup> And instead of the quality of  $\text{רָצוּ}$ , man is characterized by  $\text{תִּישָׁר}$  or perversion.<sup>70</sup> These elements foreign to righteousness not only indwell man's being but they characterize his behaviour as well. Man is seen, in this sense, as a rebel; one whose life is lived in rebellion ( $\text{יָשׁוּׁר}$ ) against God.<sup>71</sup> In yet another sense, man is characterized

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<sup>69</sup>Snaith, op. cit., p. 72.; cf. Exodus 23:7; Psalm 45:7.

<sup>70</sup>Isaiah 21:3; Lamentations 3:9; I Samuel 20:30.; Kennett, et. al., op. cit., pp. 3-5.

<sup>71</sup>II Kings 8:20; Isaiah 1:2; Amos 4:4.

by moral failure, a missing of the mark ( $\chi\psi\iota\tau$ ).<sup>72</sup>

Accordingly then, man is a creature whose character and attitude possesses an evil bent and whose conduct and activity is characterized by rebellion. As such, the moral rightness God demands is absent. And in no way is man able to meet the Divine demand through self-attainment. For to do what he ought, he must be what he is not--righteous. The problem then, is one of attaining the righteousness God demands, since man's righteousness is neither self-contained nor self-attained.

It is this problem which now draws within the scope of the present study a brief analysis of the covenant and the Law as these relate to the attainment of human righteousness.

The idea of the  $\text{ברית}$  is not peculiar to Hebraic life and religion. It very early appears among Semitic peoples bearing record to its nature as a bond between two contracting parties.<sup>73</sup> The covenant is always accompanied by specified obligations, which, if not met,

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<sup>72</sup>Judges 20:16; Job 1:22; Psalm 51:5.

<sup>73</sup>Jacob, op. cit., p. 209.; Vriezen, op. cit., p. 139.

sever the relationship.<sup>74</sup> Both of these aspects are to be noted in the covenant between Yahweh and Israel.<sup>75</sup> By a free act of His grace, God here chooses a people for His own possession and establishes communion with them. Here Yahweh initiated the relationship, so that it is a relationship by election. But if it is to continue, it must be, on the part of both, a relationship in obedience. For, as in every covenant, obligations were imposed and, here they are in special reference to Israel and consequently, refer to every member of the nation.

In this manner, the Law originated as both the embodiment and revelation of these demands. As such, both its purpose and content bear on the righteousness-concept.

As to the purpose of the Law, it is important to observe that it was the accompanying result of the covenant.<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, a vital distinction now

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<sup>74</sup>Jacob, op. cit., p. 210.

<sup>75</sup>Deuteronomy 7:1-10.

<sup>76</sup>Deuteronomy 7:7-11.

appears between the covenant and the Law. The former is seen as a relationship; while the latter is the result of the relationship.<sup>77</sup> While the covenant is God's establishment of communion with man; the Law is man's expression of obedience to God, thus assuring the continuance of communion.

Therefore, it is clear from the first that the Law originated not as the way to righteousness but as a way of obedience.<sup>78</sup> It was not given to bring men into fellowship with God, since God had already entered into fellowship with man through the covenant. Its purpose, therefore, was not man's justification either through declaration or impartation. Thus men are neither justified nor made righteous by the Law, since in fact, its very existence is backed by a totally different purpose.

The purpose for the revelation as contained in the Law relates significantly to the content. If the Law was to lead man to righteousness, its content,

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<sup>77</sup>Davidson, op. cit., p. 280.

<sup>78</sup>Job 25:4; Psalm 143:2; Isaiah 57:12; 64:6.

then, was legalistic and ritualistic. This was, to many Israelites, the real character of the Law.<sup>79</sup> For such, the Law's purpose was to provide them with righteousness by their rigid adherence to its elaborate forms. This was the scene upon which Amos, Hosea, and Micah entered in the eighth century. And through them came a re-assertion of the Law's spiritual essence.<sup>80</sup> For these prophets,  $\text{רָצוּן}$  was a matter of right conduct. Their concern was over misguided conduct displayed in bribery, injustice, and drunkenness.<sup>81</sup> But in addition,  $\text{רָצוּן}$  was, to them, a matter of right character. And their greatest concern was with ill-formed character that needed righting, which when characterized by conformity would assure righteousness in conduct.<sup>82</sup>

Keeping clearly in mind that the righteousness of man is demanded by God; that man does not possess it

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<sup>79</sup>Wright, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

<sup>80</sup>Notwithstanding Snaith's opinion that this arose with these prophets as basically new truth; Snaith, op. cit., p. 60. On the contrary, however, this is hardly justifiable in the light of the Law's spiritual essence emphasized in I Samuel 15:22; Psalm 40:6, 51:16.

<sup>81</sup>Amos 2:6; Micah 1:5.

<sup>82</sup>Hosea 4:7, 10; Isaiah 1:18, 28.



by nature; and that it is not the Law's purpose to provide it, the source of and provision for human righteousness must now be considered. And to do so, attention must be focused again on the covenant. And here in the relationship established by Yahweh with Israel is seen the source and provision for man's righteousness. Here the Standard of Right becomes the Source for and the Supplier of man's righteousness. Here the Divine righteousness itself is displayed in providing for the demand of His own nature to be met. Within this divinely-established relationship, the righteousness of man centers in his response to the covenant. To the extent that the individual affirms his faith in God personally, by willfully and submissively accepting the privilege and responsibility of the relationship, to that extent is the individual righteous.

It is here that Genesis 15:6 is especially relevant. There it is said of Abraham: "And he believed in (אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה) Jehovah; and he reckoned (חָשַׁב) it to him for righteousness (לְצִדְקָתוֹ)." <sup>83</sup> As found

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<sup>83</sup>Cf. also, Psalm 106:30-31.

here, an all-important factor in the idea of man's righteousness is presented. And that factor is the link that exists here and throughout the Old Testament between faith and righteousness. The righteousness of Abraham and of all those who possessed it in the Old Testament resulted not from the law but by faith. That is, faith was not identified with righteousness and regarded as constituting it. Instead righteousness resulted from faith. Men who served Jehovah and who bore the faith-quality in mind and heart were acquitted before God and accepted by Him. Thus the Old Testament concept, as it relates to man, points to the theological doctrine of justification, under which faith in Jehovah is imputed for righteousness. In consequence of this, man is freed from guilt, and righteousness, for him, means a changed status from that of the guilty sinner to a justified believer.

But the present writer believes the Old Testament concept to go further. For man's need for righteousness goes deeper. The demand issued to man from the nature of God calls for more than a change in one's standing. The sin-vocabulary in the Old Testament

indicates the inner distortion that plagues man; a perversion of nature that cannot be righted by the declarative act of justification. The moral demand from God and the moral need of man therefore, as dealt with in the present study, is to the present writer, suggestive of righteousness as not only imputed but imparted; as not merely a change in the person's standing before God but of an actual change within the person. This is most assuredly an emphasis of the Old Testament concept; substantiated by the moral content of the righteousness-vocabulary; by the moral causativeness attached to the Hiphil verb form; by the moral demand of God as well as the moral need of man; and finally by the fact that God's provision is for an actually present righteousness within the individual.

As such, righteousness in man is that quality of heart or attitude of mind that indicates conformity to the Divine Standard and consistency with Divine righteousness. To the degree that the individual possesses this character-rightness, <sup>P<sup>78</sup></sup> includes holiness or the idea of moral blamelessness and purity.

Then again, righteousness in man is that quality that characterizes his conduct and indicates conformity

to the Divine Standard and consistency with Divine righteousness. With respect to conduct,  $\text{P}^7\text{Y}$  may be said to include the idea of goodness. And righteousness is ascribed to man's behaviour in the degree to which goodness is manifested.

It is essential that the relationship existing between these two aspects of conformity, i.e., character and conduct, be understood. The former is a quality possessed by the individual while the latter is a quality manifested in his life. In view of this distinction, the two are necessarily related to the extent that righteousness, while not attained through good works, nevertheless results in them. So that he who is righteous is such in so far as his deeds spring from a right spirit within, and to the extent that a right spirit within results in good deeds without.

In conclusion, the following distinctives of the concept of righteousness in the Old Testament may, therefore, be noted: the root  $\text{P}^7\text{Y}$ , by which the concept is expressed, denotes conformity to the norm, hence rightness without deviation. As such, it appears in reference to both God and man. It is descriptive of that moral rectitude

in nature which exists underived in God and which must and can exist in a derived sense in man. It may be said to be synonymous with holiness to the degree that the nature of God and man is morally blameless and perfect; the perfection of God being absolute while man's is relative. It also expresses that rightness of conduct which God demonstrates and man must manifest. In this sense, righteousness comes to include the idea of goodness in terms of ethical activity. So that righteousness in the Old Testament is both right being and right behaviour; holiness possessed and goodness demonstrated.

## CHAPTER III

### THE NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

This chapter is designed to set forth the content of the New Testament teaching on righteousness. To achieve this end, particular instances of its occurrence must be observed and analyzed. Obviously, however, this chapter cannot discuss to the full every occurrence and peculiar emphasis of the righteousness-concept. Therefore, this chapter will be devoted to only those specifics which can contribute most significantly to arriving at the general notion of righteousness in the New Testament.

In view of this desired end, the present chapter will contain, first of all under the aspect of terminology, an analysis of the word itself. Following this survey of general New Testament usage, righteousness in the teaching of Jesus will be enlarged upon. After this, there will follow a discussion of righteousness as seen in the teaching of Paul.

#### I. TERMINOLOGY

As it appears in the New Testament, the concept of righteousness is expressed through the word *dikaiois*

and its cognates. The basic meaning attached to *δικαίος* is: that which is right or as it ought to be.<sup>1</sup> As such, the *δικαίος* -vocabulary conveys the positive idea of conformity. This primary meaning is forcefully supported by the appearance in the New Testament of a kindred word, *ἀδικός*. The latter is repeatedly used to convey the negative idea of nonconformity.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, within the confines of the New Testament, the *δικαίος*-words appear in translation as righteousness; the opposite and contrasting emphasis of unrighteousness being the translation of the word *ἀδικός* and its cognates.

It is significant that the *δικαίος*-words as righteousness are not peculiar to the New Testament. This is pointed out by their occurrence in the Septuagint where they appear as the Greek rendering for the forms of the Hebrew root, *דק*. There *דק* is rendered by the *δικαίος* vocabulary in some four hundred and

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<sup>1</sup>H. Cremer, Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), p. 183.; this work has served largely as the basis for vocabulary studies in the present chapter.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 201.

fifty-two instances.<sup>3</sup> In the remaining twenty-one, the Hebrew is translated by such words as *ἔλος* and *δικαίωμα*.

Such usage of *δικαίος* significantly reveals a connecting link between both Testaments. So that the *δικαιοσύνη* of the New Testament may be regarded as having its roots, not in the koine or Hellenistic Greek of that day, but in the Greek of the Old Testament. New Testament writers, therefore possessed not only a background knowledge of Old Testament truths. They likewise were acquainted with the Septuagint Greek as a vital expression of these, and through which vehicle, Old Testament truths found expression and fulfillment in the New Testament.

In this way, it is clear that the vocabulary of righteousness-words as they occur in the New Testament have been strongly colored by Old Testament usage. To discover the sameness or distinctiveness of each is the anticipated outcome of this study.

A survey of the *δικαίος* -vocabulary is now proposed. To be investigated first is the noun, *δικαιοσύνη*. Following which the adjective *δικαίος* and the verb *δικαιοῶ* will be analyzed.

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<sup>3</sup>Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (London: The Epworth Press, 1944), p. 163.



δικαιοσύνη --noun. The noun, δικαιοσύνη, occurs ninety-two times in the New Testament. Its first appearance in the New Testament is in Matthew 3:15. There Jesus urges John to baptize Him, saying, "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness (πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην )." Righteousness here, as elsewhere throughout the New Testament, is seen as that requirement imposed upon life and demanding conformity.<sup>4</sup> Further expression of this idea is seen in those passages which predicate righteousness as God's in the sense that the demand for righteousness originates in Him and is thus termed δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ .<sup>5</sup> Another sense in which this noun appears is illustrated, for instance, in Luke 1:75. There in the "Benedictus", Zacharias proclaims man's service to God must be, "In holiness and righteousness (ἐν ὁσιότητι καὶ δικαιοσύνη ) before him all our days." Righteousness here is that conformity which answers to the Divine requirement and is to be understood as that quality of rightness which is to

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<sup>4</sup>Cf. also, John 16:8, 10; Acts 10:35; 13:10; 25:25.

<sup>5</sup>Hebrews 1:9; James 1:20; II Peter 1:1.

characterize man's outer life.<sup>6</sup> In like fashion, the noun appears with reference to that rightness which is to be evidenced in man's inner life. In I Peter 2:24, the apostle has it thus, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness (τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ ζήσωμεν)".<sup>7</sup> In still other passages, δικαιοσύνη reaches the sense of acceptance with God, the basis of which acceptance is found in the conformity expressed by the preceding use of righteousness. This is the idea conveyed in Romans 4:9 where it is recorded, "for we say To Abraham his faith was reckoned for righteousness (εἰς δικαιοσύνην )."<sup>8</sup>

δικαίος --adjective. The primary meaning attached to δικαίος has been noted as right in the sense of conformity.<sup>9</sup> In Luke 1:6, it is said of Zacharias and Elizabeth, "And they were both righteous before God (ἦσαν δὲ δίκαιοι ἀμωότερον ἐναντίον τοῦ Θεοῦ

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<sup>6</sup>Also I John 2:29; 3:7, 10.

<sup>7</sup>Also Matthew 5:6; II Peter 2:21.

<sup>8</sup>Also Romans 5:17; I Corinthians 1:30; Hebrews 11:7; James 2:23.

<sup>9</sup>Supra, p. 50.; Cremer, loc. cit.

walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." Here, as in other places, the adjective conveys the idea of being right in character and conduct as these relate to God.<sup>10</sup> Again, further usage of *δίκαιος* would signify its meaning in some cases as being right in the sense of being just. Used in this way, the adjective appears in Romans 3:26 and is there applied to God," for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just (*εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον* ), and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus."<sup>11</sup> Here *δίκαιον* as "just" signifies that aspect of God's nature which demands that He Himself must satisfy the requirements of His own self-imposed standard; and further, that in relation to man, His consistency with this Divine standard must be, will be, and is evidenced in fair dealing and impartial judgment. On still other occasions, this adjective is used to express the idea of being right in the sense of being innocent. This is illustrated in its application to Christ Himself in Matthew 27:19 where Pilate is entreated by his wife,

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<sup>10</sup>Matthew 1:19; Mark 6:20; Luke 2:25; 23:50.

<sup>11</sup>Also II Timothy 4:8; I John 1:9.

"Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man (*δικαίῳ ἐκεῖνῳ*)".<sup>12</sup> While the use of *δικαίος* is no doubt pointing here to Christ's moral flawlessness, the context would also convey the idea of His legal and moral innocence in relation to the charges brought against Him.<sup>13</sup> Another sense in which the adjective *δικαίος* appears, is its usage as "just" to denote one's relationship of acceptance before God. Such is the idea conveyed by Romans 2:13, "for not the hearers of the law are just before God (*δίκαιοι παρὰ [τῷ] θεῷ*), but the doers of the law shall be justified".<sup>14</sup> Whether *δικαίος*, as it appears here can validly be seen as meaning more than "just before God", will be determined by the following analysis of the verb.

δικαιοῖω --verb. One of the meanings derived from this verb is to vindicate or defend. In Matthew 11:19, wisdom is said to be vindicated or "justified by

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<sup>12</sup>Cf. also Matthew 27:4 where many manuscripts read *αἷμα δίκαιον* for *αἷμα ἀθῶν*; 27:24.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. also Matthew 5:45; Luke 14:14; Acts 24:15; as well as Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 where *ὁ δίκαιος* appears as one of the distinctive titles given the Messiah.

<sup>14</sup>Also Romans 5:19.

her works (εδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς )." And again in Luke 7:29, the same idea of being defended or vindicated appears in the following words, "And all the people when they heard, and the publicans, justified God (ἐδικαίωσαν τὸν θεόν. )". In still other instances, δικαιώω means to justify or declare righteous. Among its many appearances in this New Testament sense, is that occurring in Romans 3:24, "being justified freely by his grace (δικαιούμενοι δωρεὰν τῆ αὐτοῦ χάριτι) through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus". The force of the verb here is representative of its occurrence throughout the New Testament to denote God's act of pardoning a man's sins and releasing him from the guilt and penalty of sin. Accordingly, the emphasis of the verb is not only on God's act in behalf of man but on man's status resulting from the act. So that the verb δικαιώω also appears in New Testament usage to mean being right or what one ought to be in the sense that he is cleared, approved, accepted. Romans 3:20 points, as do other passages, to this meaning of the verb, "because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight (οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σαρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ )".<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Cf. Romans 4:2; Galatians 2:16; 5:4.

For many students of the New Testament, these legal-forensic meanings are the predominant ones conveyed by the verb, and in fact, the predominant emphasis of the righteousness-vocabulary.<sup>16</sup> Their view, as such, has been largely determined by their view of the Old Testament concept as it is expressed in both the Hebrew and Septuagint Greek. On the contrary, however, the present study assumes an opposite view of the verb *δικαίω*, and therefore of the whole New Testament vocabulary for righteousness. To the present writer, *δικαίω* assumes, along with previously considered meanings, the meaning to make righteous. It derives this specific meaning from its basic content, which is fundamentally and generally moral. That is, the primary idea expressed by the *δικαίω* -words is moral and religious as distinct from legal and forensic. This is determined by the basic notion of the root which this study has recognized as

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<sup>16</sup>Cf. Ernest DeWitt Burton, A Critical And Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle To The Galatians (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), pp. 468-474.; C. H. Dodd, The Bible And The Greeks (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935), pp. 50-59.; William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle To The Romans (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1900), pp. 28-31.; Gottfried Quell and Gottlob Schrenk, Righteousness (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1951), pp. 19-25.

conformity or rightness. While this conformity is, in every case, considered in relation to a law or standard, the emphasis is not on the law and therefore, the central idea is not to be taken as legal or forensic. Rather, the emphasis is on the conformity demanded by the law, which demand is basically moral and which necessarily results in the essentially moral content that must, therefore, be attached to the idea.

That this is a valid assumption rests firmly on New Testament Greek as expressing primarily the same vocabulary-emphasis as that contained in the Old Testament and expressed through the Greek of the Septuagint.

In view of this then, *δικαίω* comes in this study to mean "make righteous" as well as "declare righteous." Whether the former is the predominant emphasis over the latter cannot be properly evaluated, at least from the use of *δικαίω* itself. The present study, from the point of purpose, is not concerned with the predominance of one to the lessening of the other, but with the importance of both, in light of their relation to the total New Testament teaching. In accordance with this purpose, then, these two aspects of the same word will later be more fully considered in their proper

Scriptural context, i.e., the Pauline teaching on righteousness.<sup>17</sup>

By means of this survey then, the specific content of the *δικαίος* -words has been determined. The latter as meaning conformity or rightness is the basic idea present in every occurrence of the word. More specifically, the noun *ἡ δικαιοσύνη* means conformity to or consistency with the standard in terms of character and conduct. As such it is required of and applied to both God (Matthew 6:33) and man (Matthew 5:20). In the adjective *δικαίος*, there is expressed the idea of rightness in the sense of being accepted as right or on the side of right (Romans 2:13); being righteous (Matthew 9:13); being just, i.e., fair and impartial (Luke 12:57); and being innocent (Matthew 27:14). Through the verb *δικαίωω*, the basic notion of rightness appears as being right or being in right standing (Romans 3:20); declared righteous (Romans 3:26); and made righteous (Romans 3:28, 30).

## II. RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS

The New Testament vocabulary of righteousness as it is represented by the *δικαίος* -words, appears approx-

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<sup>17</sup>Infra, Section III, Chapter III.



imately forty-two times in the recorded sayings of Jesus. Of these, a predominant number appear in the record according to Matthew, twenty-four instances being found there. Significance may be attached to the prominence which this gospel gives to Jesus' views on righteousness. Matthew's gospel has traditionally been held by New Testament scholars as "the Jewish Gospel".<sup>18</sup> That is, through a well-ordered account of Christ's life, Matthew desired to face the Jews, believing and unbelieving, with the evidence that Jesus was in fact the promised King, in whom the Old Testament was not contradicted but fulfilled. Therefore, the sayings of Jesus given particular note by the gospel writer are those bearing significantly on Jewish life. In this may be discovered a reason for Matthew's wide use of *δικαιοσύνη* in the life and thought of Jesus, since righteousness, i.e., conformity to a law, was the sum and substance of the then-present Jewish life.

A brief analysis of the *δικαίος* -words as Jesus used them is significant. On nine occasions, Jesus employed the positive noun *ἡ δικαιοσύνη*.<sup>19</sup> Its use,

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<sup>18</sup>Henry Clarence Thiessen, Introduction To The New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1943), p. 138.

<sup>19</sup>Matthew 3:15; 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33; 21:32; John 16:8, 10.

as such, points to righteousness as moral rightness or conformity, which quality is both defined and demanded by moral law. The adjective *δικαίος* is used by Jesus in twenty instances.<sup>20</sup> Of these, sixteen references bear the meaning of being actually righteous and being accepted as righteous. The remaining four usages of *δικαίος* appear in relation to righteous blood, i.e., innocent (Matthew 23:35); and in three cases, it is employed by Jesus to denote that inadequate and false righteousness of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:28, 29; 25:37). The verb *δικαιοῶ* is present four times in the recorded words of Christ. Its first appearance would indicate that man's words are to be a determinative factor in either condemning him or justifying him, i.e., presenting him as, in a certain sense, guiltless (Matthew 12:37). It occurs again in the sense of wisdom being vindicated (Luke 7:35) as well as man's attempt to set or prove himself right (Luke 16:15). Finally as used by Jesus, *δικαιοῶ* signifies God's act of pardon; man's status

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<sup>20</sup>E.g., Matthew 9:13; 10:41; 13:17, 49.

of acceptance; and, in addition, man's state of moral renewal (Luke 18:14).

From this analysis of the *δικαίος*-words in the thought of Jesus, the righteousness-concept emerges under a twofold aspect, namely, the righteousness of God and the righteousness of man. It is now intended to consider these aspects as they appear in Christ's teaching.

#### The Righteousness of God

The *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ*, as viewed by Jesus, is present in the high priestly prayer. In John 17:25, Jesus prays, "O righteous Father (*πατὴρ δίκαιε*), the world knew thee not, but I knew thee; and these knew that thou didst send me". Here *δικαίος* must be interpreted in the light of its moral content. Consequently, it is to be understood as conveying the idea, not of God's legal demands, but of the moral rightness which characterizes His Being.<sup>21</sup> As such, *δικαιοσύνη* appears as that quality of conformity which as an attribute of God,

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<sup>21</sup>C. T. Wood, "Righteous, Righteousness", A Dictionary of Christ and The Gospels, James Hastings, editor (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), II, p. 529.

constitutes part of the Divine essence. It is expressive of that underived moral blamelessness and perfection which exists in God. To the extent that He possesses within His own nature this intrinsic quality of moral rightness, He is what He ought to be; therefore He is righteous.

In view of this, the distinction Jesus drew, if any, between God's holiness and His righteousness remains to be considered. As it occurs in the New Testament, holiness is most commonly represented by *ἅγιος* and its cognates.<sup>22</sup> This family of words is repeatedly used throughout the New Testament to denote the character of the Christian.<sup>23</sup> On only several occasions is this word employed to denote the holiness of God.<sup>24</sup> In only two instances is it used by Jesus with reference to the Father, and in both, stress is laid on God's name, i. e., His nature.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>For a fuller treatment of the holiness-vocabulary of the New Testament, Cf. George Allen Turner, The More Excellent Way (Winona Lake: Light and Life Press, 1952), pp. 81-84.

<sup>23</sup>E.g., Romans 1:7; I Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1.

<sup>24</sup>Luke 1:49; Hebrews 12:10; I Peter 1:15; I John 2:20.

<sup>25</sup>Matthew 6:9; John 17:11.

In John 17:11, Jesus prays, "Holy Father ( *Πάτερ ἄγιε* ), keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are." Here the name, i.e., the nature, of God is of primary import. Jesus' appeal, as expressed here, is for the preservation of His disciples from evil and their separation from the world. This essential element of preservation and separation from evil characterized God and found expression in the idea of holiness. Hence as the holiness-vocabulary, in reference to God, appears in the teaching of Jesus, the emphasis is upon separation and preservation. While this does not and cannot exclude the idea of moral purity, the latter, to the mind of Jesus, is intimately bound up with the *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ*. Accordingly, God's righteousness, then, is seen as both resulting in and resulting from His holiness. In the first, His moral rightness as one attribute of His nature makes possible the sum of all His attributes--holiness. He is therefore holy because He is righteous. In the second, His absolute purity and freedom from evil results in a Being characterized by conformity. He is therefore righteous because He is holy.

Yet this is not all. For Christ accepted God's righteousness as not only a quality possessed by God, but

a quality which when possessed manifests itself in His activity. And the activity itself, when springing from this inner qualitative dynamic, becomes righteousness demonstrated. In such manner does Christ reveal this as a meaning attached to God's righteousness. His words in John 17:25 acknowledging God's rectitude are vitally linked with God's revelation. This is observed in the relatedness of His words, "O righteous Father . . . thou didst send me". Here God's self-possessed rightness of character becomes a self-disclosed rightness in conduct. The result is His redemptive revelation as it inheres in Jesus Christ. Accordingly then, the rightness existent in God's nature was evidenced rightness in His conduct. His right being demanded His right behaviour. His right behaviour was the demonstration of His right being. And the ensuing result of right being and right behaviour on the part of God was His revelation to man and His redemption of man.

Jesus' teaching on the righteousness of God contains yet a third element. This is expressed in His words as found in Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness (τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ); and all these things shall be added unto you." Jesus'

allusion here to the *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ* is similar to that of other New Testament passages.<sup>26</sup> For while, in the thought of Jesus, God possessed moral rightness in character and manifested it in conduct, He also required it in men.<sup>27</sup> So that to seek *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ* was to seek after that conformity and consistency which God demanded.

This was, in the thinking of Jesus, an all-determining factor in defining the content of the righteousness-concept. For Him, the *δίκαιος* family of words signified righteousness in its proper sense of conformity, i.e., being and doing what the standard required. Yet to accept this was insufficient for both God and man, hence it was not sufficient for Jesus. Men needed to achieve conformity to the standard but they must first be aware of the standard. In view of this, therefore, a primary emphasis of Jesus' teaching is upon the standard as well as the conformity it demanded. And there is no hesitancy on the part of Jesus to define the standard as the very person of God Himself; His own nature being His self-imposed norm upon His creatures.

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<sup>26</sup>Romans 3:5; James 1:20.

<sup>27</sup>Alexander Balmain Bruce, The Kingdom of God (New York: Scribner and Welford, 1891), p. 187.

While Jesus interpreted the righteousness of God as a qualitative attribute and qualitative action as well as a Divine requirement upon man, He also saw it as a Divine provision. So that Jesus' injunction in Matthew 6:33 to seek "his righteousness (τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ)" appears to mean more than the moral rightness God possesses and requires. It takes on the sense of seeking after that moral rightness which God provides.

#### The Righteousness of Man

The meaning and implications attached by Jesus to the righteousness of man may best be considered in their contemporary setting. Therefore, in an effort to highlight Jesus' teaching on this aspect of the righteousness-concept, it is intended to begin here with a discussion of the then-prevalent Judaistic view of righteousness.

The traditional Jewish concept of the standard of righteousness bears significantly on this aspect of the present study. While the standard of and for righteousness cannot be separated from the Law, neither can it be equated with the Law. Yet a pronounced error of Judaism during the life of Christ was this very matter of equating



the two.<sup>28</sup> There was, for the Jew of this day, an absoluteness and finality about the Law.<sup>29</sup> This sacredness attached to it and veneration for it gradually lead to the Rabbinic movement to guard and preserve the Law by making a "hedge" about it.<sup>30</sup> These increased efforts for safeguarding the Law resulted in error, the end of which was the perversion of the standard of righteousness. Hence the norm for righteousness became inherent within the Law; the standard no longer being the nature of God but the revelation of God.

Thus the Law and the standard were equated in traditional Judaism. As such, it signified the demand for conformity while at the same time defining the conformity demanded. In accordance with the norm, i.e., the Law, righteousness came to consist of acts of conformity to the Law. And increasingly, stress was laid

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<sup>28</sup>Ernest DeWitt Burton, A Source Book for the Study of the Teaching of Jesus in its Historical Relationships (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1923), p. 91.

<sup>29</sup>Harvie Bennett Branscomb, Jesus and the Law of Moses (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1930), pp. 27ff.

<sup>30</sup>Bruce, op. cit., p. 198.

not only on conformity in this respect but on the pre-dominance of good deeds over evil ones; the former balancing the scale in the day of Judgment.<sup>31</sup>

In this fashion, the essential content of righteousness was distorted. As it came to mean outward conformity to the Law, so it came, in other instances, to mean outward conformity to specific aspects of the Law; other elements being neglected.<sup>32</sup> Illustrative of this error were the Pharisees in whom religion existed as legality and formalism. Their righteousness consisted in rigid adherence to the ceremonial law, while the moral law of love and mercy was neglected. Here Judaistic righteousness consists in observance of the Sabbath feast-days by abstinence from all work, and, guarding oneself against defilement in accordance with the Levitical code of purity. Thus righteousness was not conceived of as moral rectitude in character or attitude but was rather outward acts in line with the Levitical code.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Quell and Schrenk, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>32</sup>Hans Hinrich Wendt, The Teaching of Jesus, trans. John Wilson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), I, pp. 45ff.

<sup>33</sup>C. A. Anderson Scott, New Testament Ethics (Cambridge: At The University Press, 1948), pp. 31-33; Wendt, loc. cit.

Viewing the Law and the standard as synonyms then, the demand and need for conformity arises out of the Law itself as the standard. Again, to the extent that the Law is the standard, the nature and content of conformity is defined by the Law itself. And in like fashion, in so far as the Law is the standard, the way to achieve conformity is determined by the Law itself. As the commandments are kept and obedience rendered, merit, i.e., favor, acceptance, is earned in the sight of God and righteousness is thus self-attained.

This is the common concept Jesus attempts to counteract and correct. He begins by asserting God's nature to be the norm for all righteousness. In so doing, He distinguishes between the Law and the standard. The two bear significantly on one another, yet they are clearly distinct. The standard of righteousness is the nature of God, while the Law as an act of Divine revelation is the vehicle through which the demands of His nature are conveyed to men.

Accordingly in the teaching of Jesus, the content and nature of righteousness differs from that of Judaism. For the latter, conformity was in terms of obedience to the Law. But in the thinking of Jesus, conformity or

rightness takes on a strong moral content. This is determined by God's nature as the standard of righteousness; His nature being characterized by moral rightness, which rightness in turn is demanded of men. This elemental idea of rightness is therefore seen as both demanded by and defined by the standard. Men were to possess and manifest that qualitative rightness which characterized God in His character and conduct. And Jesus views as *δικαίος*, he who possesses this consistency with the standard. *δικαιοσύνη* in man is therefore to be understood as conformity, i.e., being and doing what was required, thereby being and doing what one should.

The moral-ness which Jesus attached to the *δικαιοσύνη* of man is further emphasized by noting His indictments against the Pharisees.<sup>34</sup> The issue with Him was not the importance which the Pharisees attached to righteousness but rather the type of righteousness they stressed as important. As has been observed, their emphasis was "legal performance in the sight of God, rather than transforming fellowship with God."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Matthew 23:1ff; 25:37.

<sup>35</sup>Henry C. Sheldon, New Testament Theology (Boston: The Heintzemann Press, 1906), p. 11

In view of this, therefore, Jesus' indictment is at once a proclamation and a revelation. It is a proclamation against a detailed righteousness prescribed by tradition and bound by legalism. It is a proclamation against righteousness that is self-centered and consequently self-regarding.<sup>36</sup>

Accompanying His negation of such righteousness, Jesus ends with the positive note of revelation. It is His revelation of dispositional righteousness. It is His revelation of the inner attitude that must serve as the motivation for outer activity. A volume of deeds was to be backed by a virile disposition. As such, Jesus viewed the righteousness of man as righteousness in man, i.e., that morally qualitative state actually possessed within and actively expressed without.<sup>37</sup> It is in this sense that righteousness occurs in Matthew 5:20, "For I say unto you, that except your righteousness (*ὑμῶν ἡ δικαιοσύνη*) shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

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<sup>36</sup>Harvie Branscomb, The Teachings of Jesus (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1931), p. 165.

<sup>37</sup>Wendt, op. cit., p. 257.

Righteousness appears here as a conformity that goes beyond Pharisaical legality and reaches within the spirit of the person. As such, it will be a righteousness that exceeds, that is greater in content and higher in value because it is essentially deeper in its roots.

It is repeatedly emphasized by Jesus that man does not naturally possess this moral rectitude. In recognition of this lack, He views man as sick and diseased. This is illustrated by His words in Mark 2:17, "They that are whole (οἱ ἰσχύοντες ) have no need of a physician, but they that are sick (ἔχοντες ): I came not to call the righteous (δικαίους ), but sinners (ἁματωλοὺς )." In place of the character-rightness he ought to possess, man is by nature and in his nature distorted and perverted (διαστρεφω ).<sup>38</sup> In a similar sense, man is characterized not by acts of conformity but by acts of moral failure (ἁμαρτάνω ).<sup>39</sup> Man was fundamentally bad and basically wrong at the core; his heart life being characterized by a disposition toward evil (πονηρία<sup>40</sup> ).

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<sup>38</sup>Matthew 17:17; Luke 9:41.

<sup>39</sup>Matthew 18:15; John 5:14.

<sup>40</sup>Matthew 22:18.

Accordingly then, Jesus saw man as a creature essentially wrong at the pivotal point of his life--the heart. He viewed man's condition as more than wrong acts and his life characterized by more than moral delinquency or failure. Jesus knew man as he was by nature and in his nature, possessed by a mindedness toward evil and characterized by moral obliquity. The result of this life-condition being man's failure to be what he ought and do as he ought. As such, he neither possessed within himself nor manifested outside himself the  $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\eta$  God required.

Man, in view of his natural tendencies and God's demands, must find a source and supply for the righteousness demanded of him. This aspect of righteousness in the teaching of Jesus necessarily involves a brief analysis of two related subjects, i.e., the Law and the Covenant.

Throughout the course of His ministry, Jesus was careful to guard His relationship to the Law. On occasions, it was feared that He was antagonistic toward the Law. Yet His attitude is more properly seen not as antagonism toward the Law but as criticism of its interpretation and

application. A significant passage in this connection is Matthew 5:17, where, in addressing His disciples, Jesus said, "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil (ἵνα πληρωθῶμαι)." Here Christ reveals part of His Messianic mission, not a purpose and plan de novo but one committed to bringing to fulfillment truth previously revealed and demands already operative on men. Accordingly then, His way and work is no appendage to former systems but is instead the fulfillment of all that has gone on before. And with particular reference to the Law, the idea conveyed is that of attaining, completing, making possible the Divine Ideal as it is expressed through the Law.<sup>41</sup>

Two facts are therefore clear. In the first, the relationship of the Law to righteousness is noted. The former is seen not as the way to righteousness but as the way through which God communicates to men the

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<sup>41</sup>John Wick Bowman and Roland W. Tapp, The Gospel From The Mount (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), p. 58.; Samuel Dickey, The Constructive Revolution of Jesus (New York: George H. Doran Company, n.d.), p. 51.



requirements of righteousness. As such, it is clearly seen that the Law was never intended to declare or make men righteous. Therefore to speak of Christ accomplishing what the law could not do is to speak only a partial truth.<sup>42</sup> For, in addition to this, it must be noted that the Law cannot do what it was never intended to do. Consequently, acceptance with God in the teaching of Jesus nowhere appears as resulting from good deeds or obedience to the Law.

This points to the second fact made clear by Christ's statement in Matthew 5:17. There the relationship of Christ to the Law and to righteousness appears in a significant contrast. Righteousness does not come through the Law since, in fact, it cannot. Yet righteousness does come through Christ in whom the Ideal of the Law finds complete realization.

The δικαιοσύνη that man needs finds its source and supply in Jesus Christ. As such, righteousness comes from God as well as being centered in God. Thus in a distinctive way, the righteousness of man is the righteousness of God realized in him.

Yet how is it that righteousness can become and

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<sup>42</sup>E.g., Ibid.

does become an actually-present quality of man's nature? This is resolved in the same way the provision was made-- through Jesus Christ. Thus righteousness, as it is provided by God and as it can characterize man, cannot be properly understood apart from the person and work of Christ. As such, it is to be interpreted in the light of the covenant relationship. With God's revelation in Christ, the New Covenant previously foretold was established.<sup>43</sup> Though its beginning was rooted in Divine initiative, its continuance was based upon human response. And it is within the framework of this New Covenant that man's righteousness can be more accurately observed, since his righteousness is determined by his response to the covenant, i.e., God's act of deliverance in Christ. In so far as man personally and individually exercises faith toward God by acknowledging and accepting the obligations of the covenant, to that extent is he righteous.

It is clear from the teaching of Jesus that faith (πίστις), as a quality of trust and confidence in God

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<sup>43</sup>Jeremiah 31:31-34.

is significantly related to righteousness (*δικαιοσύνη*), i.e., the quality of rightness before God. The relatedness of these two ideas is observed in Matthew 21:32 where Jesus addresses the chief priests, "For John came unto you in the way of righteousness (*ἐν ὁδῷ δικαιοσύνης*), and ye believed him not (*οὐκ ἐπίστεύσατε αὐτῷ*); but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye saw it, did not even repent yourselves afterward, that ye might believe him." The suggestion here is that John came proclaiming a way of life, the right way of life, which way was rejected by unbelief in the person. A lack of faith in John necessarily resulted in, for these priests at least, a lack of righteousness. On other occasions in the ministry of Jesus, the quality of faith was likewise held to be the necessary human attitude before a Divine act could or would be evoked.<sup>44</sup>

Thus the relationship of faith to righteousness as derived from the general content of Jesus' teaching is not one of identification but of cause and effect. That is, faith is in no wise reckoned to man as righteousness. Rather, righteousness is the result of faith

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<sup>44</sup>Matthew 8:10; 15:28; Mark 10:52; Luke 7:9; 8:25.

in the sense that it is provided for and made possible in man by his confident attitude toward God. Consequently, the *δικαίος* man stands accepted before God, being justified or declared righteous because of his faith.

But to the mind of the present writer, Jesus' teaching on this aspect of righteousness infers more than the idea of justification. This is pointed out by the demand of God, which in the thought of Jesus, is for an inner conformity. Again from the standpoint of his nature, Jesus views man as morally tainted and unsound. So that man's need is seen by Jesus to be that of *μετάνοια*, an inner change of mind, an "about-face of the personality".<sup>45</sup> To the extent that an individual was characterized by this *μετάνοια* or resoluteness to change, to that extent would he be changed. That is, man's volitional choice to change or reform necessarily results in the operation of Divine grace by which he is changed and transformed. Thus *δικαιοσύνη* and *μετάνοια*, as applied to man, appear related in the teaching of Jesus. The former may be said to denote

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<sup>45</sup>Bowman and Wick, *op. cit.*, p. 163.; cf. Matthew 4:17; Luke 13:3; 15:7.

that state of moral renewal and rightness which is effected in man by grace and through faith. The two are thus distinct in that *Μετάνοια* is a humanly-willed change, while *δικαιοσύνη* is the resultant condition from a divinely-wrought change. From this viewpoint, righteousness is therefore to be regarded as both imputation and impartation, the former resulting in a changed status; the latter resulting in a changed state.

As such, righteousness in man is that disposition of heart or attitude of mind which indicates conformity to and consistency with the Divine standard of righteousness. It is therefore seen as Godlikeness in man in the sense that it is a quality of nature akin to God's and a quality of nature derived from God. To the degree that the individual possesses this rightness of character, *δικαιοσύνη* includes holiness or the idea of moral blamelessness and purity.

Then again, righteousness in man is that quality of rightness which is manifest in his conduct in conformity to and consistency with the Divine standard. With respect to conduct, righteousness includes the idea of goodness. Righteousness is thus ascribed to man's behaviour in the degree to which goodness is demonstrated.

The relationship existing between these two aspects of conformity, i.e., character and conduct, is an important factor in Jesus' concept of righteousness. While both are essentially qualitative and moral, the former is a quality actually possessed by the individual and the latter is a quality actively expressed within his life. As such, they bear significantly on each other in the sense that righteousness is not produced by but results in good works. Consequently, Jesus' emphasis was upon conduct and good works.<sup>46</sup> Yet it was not on these per se but only as they were the outflow of a morally-right disposition.

### III. RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE TEACHING OF PAUL

The vocabulary of righteousness as represented by the *δικαίος* -words is nowhere more prominent than in the Pauline writings. In its various forms, *δικαίος* occurs ninety-eight times in Paul's writings. Of these, the verb *δικαιοῶ* is used in twenty-five instances; the adjective *δικαίος* fourteen times; the noun *δικαιοσύνη* twice; *δικαίωμα* five times; and *δικαιοσύνη* fifty-two times.

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<sup>46</sup>Matthew 7:17, 21; 25:31ff.; Luke 6:44.

The Pauline meaning attached to the *δικαίος* - vocabulary has long been an area of theological dispute. While the general New Testament usage of this vocabulary has appeared in the present study under the aspect of terminology, it is nevertheless essential that this vocabulary be examined in its characteristically Pauline context. Accordingly, then, there follows an investigation of these words as used by Paul. It needs to be said that such an investigation, while attempting to be objective, must necessarily be selective, since every occurrence of the word in its Pauline context cannot be treated. In view of this, the following survey will be characterized by general as well as specific content. The first form of the righteousness-vocabulary to be considered will be the verb *δικαίω*, followed in turn by the adjective *δικαίος* and the nouns *δικαίωμα*, *δικαίωσις* and *δικαιοσύνη*.

*δικαίω* --verb. As this verb occurs in Pauline thought, it is commonly defined as pronounce or declare righteous. (Romans 3:4; I Timothy 3:16).<sup>47</sup> In other instances the word occurs as meaning pardon

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<sup>47</sup>William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, A Critical And Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle To The Romans (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1900), p. 30.

(Romans 3:20; 4:2) and in other cases pardon and grace (Romans 3:24). That this is the sense in which Paul employs the verb, is for many, a "commonplace of Protestant exegesis".<sup>48</sup> Traditionally, its content is viewed as almost totally forensic. Yet, as Snaith suggests, this juristic sense cannot stand as the primary emphasis.<sup>49</sup> If the *δικαίος* -words as they appear in the Septuagint are essentially judicial, as is contended by Sanday and Headlam, then there can be no objection to interpreting them as such.<sup>50</sup> However, if the *δικαίος* -vocabulary is used as the rendering of the Hebrew root *רָצַח*, and the moral content attached to this root is acknowledged, then in like fashion, the *δικαίος* family of words achieves a basically moral content. And further, if the righteousness-concept of the Scriptures, and more particularly of Pauline thought, is in any way related to God as the Norm, then *רָצַח* of the Old Testament and *δικαιοσύνη* of the New Testament must necessarily assume a primary moral and religious

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<sup>48</sup>W. A. Stevens, " *Δίκαιος* ", The American Journal of Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1897), I, p. 443.

<sup>49</sup>Snaith, op. cit., p. 165.

<sup>50</sup>Sanday and Headlam, op. cit., p. 31.



significance. On the contrary, however, this aspect of righteousness as deriving its moral meaning from the nature of God is lacking in almost all previous investigations of this subject. Consequently, Pauline usage of the verb *δικαίω* has traditionally appeared as meaning to judge righteous and never to make righteous. Almost without exception, every treatment of *δικαίω* is introduced by the words, "But it cannot mean to 'make righteous.'"<sup>51</sup> Along with this, it is to be acknowledged that the word *δικαίω* in itself does not convey the meaning to make righteous. But the content and hence the meaning of the righteousness-words is, to a degree, derived from the Norm. In view of which, the Pauline use of *δικαίω*, as interpreted by the present study, is seen as combining both the idea to declare righteous and to make righteous.

*δικαιος* --adjective. Pauline usage of this word is, in many cases, similar to the general meaning attached to it in the New Testament. As such, it appears with reference to persons and denotes their acceptance before God (Romans 5:7), as well as those possessed or not possessed of absolute conformity (Romans 3:10). The adjective is further used by Paul to express right action (Ephesians 6:1; Philippians 1:7) and right dealings with

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

other (II Timothy 4:8). The adjective occurs again in Pauline thought as expressing a significant and characteristically Pauline truth -- the relationship between righteousness and faith. Indicative of this is Romans 1:17 where it is said, "But the righteous shall live by faith *ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦς.*"<sup>52</sup> That is, life is not granted to the righteous as a reward or gained by them through obedience. But it is the possession of him who in faith and by faith resolutely relates himself to Jesus Christ. In Romans 3:26, it is recorded, "for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just (*εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον* ), and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." The thought conveyed here is that in Christ's sacrifice, God is seen as both *δίκαιος* and the *δικαιοῦντα* . Finally, Paul uses the adjective in Romans 5:19 to indicate the result in man of the finished work of Christ.

*δικαίωμα* --noun. Of its five appearances in Paul's writings, this word is translated ordinance on three occasions (Romans 1:32; 2:26; 8:4). In its

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<sup>52</sup>Also Galatians 3:11.

two remaining instances, this noun appears in reference to the redemptive activity of Christ. In Romans 5:16, the apostle says, "And not as through one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment came of one unto condemnation, but the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification (εἰς δικαίωμα )." The use of the noun here indicates acquittal and has reference not to action but to its result.<sup>53</sup> In a similar vein, the noun appears in Romans 5:18, "So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness (δι' ἑνός δικαιώματος ) the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. Here Paul employs to signify the act of acquittal.

δικαίωσις --noun. This word appears but two times in Pauline thought. The first of these is Romans 4:25, "who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification (διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν )." Here Christ's resurrection is seen as happening with a view to bringing about

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<sup>53</sup>Dodd, op. cit., p. 27.; Vincent Taylor, Forgiveness and Reconciliation (London; Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1948), p. 41.

man's justification.<sup>54</sup> The second Pauline use of this noun is in Romans 5:18, ". . . even so . . . the free gift came unto all men to justification of life (Εἰς δικαιοσύνην ζωῆς)." The use of δικαιοσύνη, as it appears here, denotes the justifying act.

δικαιοσύνη--noun. This noun is found fifty-two times in the writings of Paul and an analysis of it is necessarily limited. Of particular import here is the content, of what appears as the Pauline formula, δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ.<sup>55</sup> This use of the noun appears first in Romans 1:17 where Paul writes, "For therein is revealed a righteousness of God (δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ) from faith unto faith". Here δικαιοσύνη appears as a moral quality of rightness that characterizes God.<sup>56</sup> It is further revealed as morally-right activity on the part of God; which activity is not only right but it is also redemptive. Accordingly then, the Apostle

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<sup>54</sup>Sanday and Headlam, op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>55</sup>Romans 1:17; 3:5; 3:21-22, the absence of the article in these references is indicative of the anarthrous construction; emphasis being on character or quality.

<sup>56</sup>C. H. Dodd, Gospel and Law (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), p. 9.; Sheldon, op. cit., p. 202.

uses the righteousness of God to signify a quality possessed by God and a quality demonstrated by God among men. A further aspect of this *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ* is that moral rightness which God requires of men because it is a part of His own self-contained nature.<sup>57</sup> And yet again, Paul conceives of God's righteousness as not only His demand for righteousness but also His provision for righteousness in man.<sup>58</sup> And therefore, man's *δικαιοσύνη* has its source in God and is therefore a gift of God.<sup>59</sup> Righteousness cannot therefore be separated from God and His revelation in Christ. Accordingly, the apostle states that the law is not the way to righteousness, "for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for naught."<sup>60</sup> In contrast to righteousness and the Law, Paul relates righteousness to faith.

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<sup>57</sup>Cf. Romans 3:5; 3:22; 3:26; II Corinthians 5:21.

<sup>58</sup>Frederick Brooke Westcott, St. Paul and Justification (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1913), p. 166.; cf. also Romans 3:21-22.

<sup>59</sup>Burton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle To the Galatians, p. 472.

<sup>60</sup>Galatians 2:21; 3:21.

In Romans 9:30, the apostle says, "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith".<sup>61</sup>

From this survey of *δικαίος* and its cognates as they appear in the Pauline writings, several significant elements are noted. The verb *δικαίω* must be regarded as a moral-forensic term. Consequently, the content of the word as both moral and legal suggests a basic twofold meaning of, to declare righteous and to make righteous. The noun *δικαιοσύνη* is repeatedly employed by Paul in his concept of *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ*. The righteousness of God is to be understood in a fourfold sense; the moral conformity He possesses; the moral conformity He demonstrates in all His activity; the moral conformity He demands from His creatures; and the moral conformity He makes possible in fulfillment of His demand.

### The Imputation of Righteousness

A fundamental aspect of the Pauline teaching on righteousness is the emphasis placed on justification.

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<sup>61</sup>Romans 10:4; 10:6; Philippians 3:9.

The apostle viewed it, first of all, from the standpoint of man's need. All men had sinned (Romans 3:23) and were facing the penalty of judgment and death (Romans 6:23). As a consequence of his rebellious acts and wrong deeds, man was deprived of fellowship with God. Sin had severed the ties of his sonship and his relationship toward God was basically wrong. Man stood no longer before God as an accepted son but as a guilty sinner. His relation to God was that of a condemned man. Hence an emphasis of Pauline thought is on man's justification, i.e.,; a change in his relationship from penalty to pardon. Through this Divine act, a man is absolved of his guilt and accepted as righteous before God. As such, the justified individual possesses a new standing before God.

Yet this Divine act by which man is declared righteous and accepted as righteous is only possible through a personal act of faith on the part of the man involved. This is illustrated by Paul in Romans 4:9, "To Abraham his faith was reckoned for righteousness (ἡ πίστις εἰς δικαιοσύνην )."<sup>62</sup> Thus significance is attached to the relationship existing between righteousness and

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<sup>62</sup>Cf. Romans 4:3; 4:24; 10:4.

faith. The two are not identical. Faith is the condition for righteousness but nowhere does faith appear as constituting righteousness.<sup>63</sup>

Viewed in this way then, the Pauline doctrine of justification appears as the imputation of righteousness because of man's personal act of faith.

### The Impartation of Righteousness

The Pauline view of man was not only such as to require a change in his standing before God, but it was to require a change within the person himself. For man's nature was infected by the presence of a sinful principle. His life was affected by his proneness to evil. As such, man's need was for a changed disposition as well as a changed relationship. Man needed to be acquitted of his guilt and pardoned from his sins. That could be met by the declarative act of God. But man's need to be free within from the presence and power of sin could be met only as he was made righteous through an act of Divine grace. Through the infusion or impartation of righteousness, man's nature is morally renewed. He is then possessed in nature by moral rightness and in turn manifests

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<sup>63</sup>H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1941), II, p. 400.



moral rightness in His activity.

Hence the Pauline teaching on righteousness is broadened to include man's initial sanctification achieved through the impartation of righteousness; which act of Divine grace must be accompanied by man's response in faith.

In conclusion, the following aspects of the New Testament concept of righteousness may be noted: the word *dikaiois* and its cognates, by which the concept is expressed, denotes conformity to the norm, thereby insisting on rightness without deviation. As such, its usage throughout the New Testament is applied to both God and man. It denotes that moral rightness of nature which exists intrinsically within God and which quality of nature is to exist in a derived sense within man himself. To the degree that both God and man are characterized by this quality of moral rectitude, righteousness includes the idea of holiness. The New Testament vocabulary also expresses that rightness of conduct God demonstrates and man must manifest. Accordingly, righteousness includes the idea of goodness in terms of ethical activity. In essence, then, the New Testament concept involves both right being and right behavior.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter is to be a succinct restatement of the most pertinent developments and findings of this study. It will be necessary to consider first the development and the Old Testament concept. This is to be followed by a summarization of the New Testament concept. And finally, this chapter will contain a discussion of the total Biblical concept as it is seen in the results of the present study.

Turning first to the Old Testament, righteousness was seen as conformity to a norm. The concept was fundamentally moral in content, though necessarily forensic as well. While the various vocabulary forms were expressive of certain factors, the elemental idea of conformity remained. In this sense of conformity, righteousness was predicated of God. He was known to possess within Himself this quality of rightness. And to the extent that it was His moral blamelessness, to that extent did His righteousness include His holiness. In like manner, it was seen as that quality of goodness visibly manifest in all His activity. Righteousness

predicated of God was righteousness demanded of men. The emphasis was on a derivative quality of character and conduct that was to characterize man as it characterized God. To the extent that man was a sinner and his nature sinful, righteousness would be both imputed and imparted to him depending upon the response of his faith in personal obligations toward the covenant. Thus it is noted that within the confines of the Old Testament, an actually present righteousness was possible.

As it is found in the New Testament, righteousness denotes conformity to the norm. In contrast to Old Testament usage, conformity is almost wholly ascribed to persons.

In the teaching of Jesus, righteousness was ascribed to God; to God in the sense that He was intrinsically righteous; demanded man's righteousness; and provided for man's righteousness. In the sense that He was morally pure and guiltless, to that degree was He characterized by righteousness. While to Jesus, men were to be like God, they were by nature far removed from the ideal. And for Christ, the righteousness of man was what men ought to be and can be through a will-

ful change and the exercise of faith.

As revealed in the Pauline writing's, righteousness retained its root idea of conformity. The two essential aspects of righteousness, to Paul, were justification--righteousness imputed through faith--and sanctification--righteousness imparted through faith. Thus was it possible for man to be declared and made righteous.

In the light of the present study, these distinctives characterize the total Biblical concept of righteousness: conformity is the essential meaning of righteousness; holiness of character and goodness in conduct constitute the Divine requirement; man can possess an actual righteousness.

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