

Ernst Käsemann and the New Perspective(s) on Paul

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In James D. G. Dunn's influential "The New Perspective on Paul"¹ he makes no reference to Ernst Käsemann's influential "Gottesgerechtigkeit bei Paulus."² Although Dunn refers once to Käsemann in this essay, it is fairly insignificant, is negative,³ and does not refer to this seminal work. Yet Käsemann's thesis is fully embraced by Dunn, by Wright, by Stuhlmacher, and most other proponents (and semi-proponents) of the NPP. Indeed, insofar as the NPP has some critics, they are rarely critics of E. P. Sanders's re-evaluation of first-century Palestinian Judaism (though there are occasional critics here); most of the criticism revolves around the re-definition of "righteousness of God," and the consequent re-defining of justification. It is somewhat surprising, then, that in the essay that coined the expression "New Perspectives on Paul," its theologically most significant influence was not mentioned. Of course, the title would need to be revised if this were done, because Käsemann derived the substance of his thinking from the 1899 work by Hermann Cremer;⁴ to have acknowledged this would have required a rather-generous definition of "New," even by academic standards. In point of fact, the Cremer-Käsemann-NPP revision of "righteousness of God" is an old Protestant Liberal agenda:

¹ ," *BJRL* 65 (August, 1982): 94-122. Reprinted in *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, Louisville: John Knox, 1990, pp. 183-214.

² *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 58 (1961): 367-78, translated and re-published as "The Righteousness of God in Paul," in *New Testament Questions for Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969, 168-82).

³ "Rudolph Bultmann and Ernst Käsemann, both read Paul through Lutheran spectacles and both made this understanding of justification by faith their central theological principle" p. 185.

⁴ Hermann Cremer, *Die paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre im Zusammenhange ihrer geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen* (2nd ed.; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1900). For the relationship of Cremer to Käsemann, I am indebted to C. Lee Irons, in the first chapter of his forthcoming doctoral dissertation, in which he traces the history of "righteousness of God" from the patristic era to the present. Irons also notes that the apocalyptic power dimension of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is distinctive to Käsemann, and not derived from Cremer. Irons also observes that Cremer was a self-conscious critic of Ritschl and Harnack, even though we may perceive some similarities between the three.

to remove (or minimize) from the Christian faith the notion of propitiating the wrath of a God “who will by no means clear the guilty.” It is at least ironic, then, that what is perhaps the most salient feature of the “New” Perspective is now well over a century old.

Käsemann’s hypothesis moves the semantic domain of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Rom. 1:17 from the forensic judicial arena to the soteric and/or relational arena, “God’s saving activity” or “saving power.”⁵ This is a very significant movement, especially if Romans 1:16-17 contains the entirety of the letter in a summary form. Previously (with the notable exception of Hermann Cremer, from whom Käsemann apparently got the idea), God’s “righteousness” was either his general moral uprightness or especially that uprightness on display in God’s role as judge: “and he judges (κρινεῖ) the world with righteousness (δικαιοσύνη); he judges (κρινεῖ) the peoples with uprightness (εὐθύτητι)..” (Psa. 9:8). Paul, by the pre-Käsemann definition, taught that in the gospel God manifested (ἀποκαλύπτεται) his end-times judicial judgment when, in Christ’s cross, a Substitute bore the weight of such judgment, thereby freeing those he represented from any fear of judgment; in a word, justifying them.⁶ By contrast, Käsemann self-consciously desired to remove such judicial overtones from the expression, arguing instead that it means something like “power,” “apocalyptic power,” “saving activity,” etc.:

“From the outset it will be noticed that in the field of the Old Testament and of Judaism in general, righteousness does *not convey primarily the sense of a personal, ethical quality*, but of a *relationship*; originally signifying trustworthiness in regard to the community, it came to mean the rehabilitated standing of a member of the community who had been acquitted of an offence against it. Any interpretation which begins from the general concept and its specifically *juridical* application is bound to centre on the character of righteousness as gift and, in practice, on anthropology. But the formulation which Paul has taken over speaks primarily of *God’s saving activity*, which is present in his gift as a precipitate without being completely dissolved into it.”
172

“We see here that Paul has kept to the aspect of righteousness as *power*, implicit in the formulation itself and supported by various parallel expressions. God’s power becomes God’s gift when it takes possession of us and, so to speak, enters into us...” 173

“The widely-held view that God’s righteousness is simply a property of the divine nature can now be rejected as misleading. It *derives from Greek theology*, which speculates about such

⁵ Later, in the language of N. T. Wright, “God’s covenant faithfulness”.

⁶ And indeed, many Pauline interpreters took the expression “righteousness of God” as containing a subjective genitive, so that God was the author of a righteousness that could be given as a gift to others.

properties; it contradicts the basic sense of ‘righteousness’ within the tradition of the Old Testament and later Judaism--namely, faithfulness in the context of the community; and it proves ultimately inadequate because it postulates what cannot be convincingly intellectualized--namely, the making-over to a human being of a property of the divine nature. Δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is for Paul, as it is for the Old Testament and Judaism in general, a phrase expressing divine activity, treating not of the self-subsistent, but of the self-revealing God.

We take the decisive step along the road to the proper understanding of Paul when, and only when, we grasp the indissoluble connection of *power and gift* within the conception of the divine righteousness; having done so, we wonder why this finding has not long ago come to be taken for granted.” 174

“Paul was not primarily concerned with the Christian in some purely notional individual capacity, much less with the Christian personality. To say that a man only believes as an individual is simply to say that here, as in the case of ministry in the world, he cannot shrug off responsibility. But I find myself totally unable to assent to the view that Paul’s theology and his philosophy of history are oriented towards the individual.” 175-76

“But equally God continues in that faithfulness which is called *sedaka* in the Old Testament and is there, as in Judaism in general, bound up with the Covenant; the same faithfulness is very powerfully recalled in Rom. 9.” 180 [K. is on to something here, because the Sinai covenant is based upon righteousness, conditioned upon Israel’s obedience, though K. almost surely doesn’t get this.]

“All that we have been saying amounts to this: δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is for Paul God’s sovereignty over the world revealing itself eschatologically in Jesus. And, remembering the Greek root, we may also say that it is rightful *power* with which God makes his cause to triumph in the world which has fallen away from him and which yet, as creation, is his inviolable possession.” 180

This hypothesis, later elaborated by Peter Stuhlmacher,⁷ was also promoted by Elizabeth and Paul J. Achtemeier in their respective articles on “The Righteousness of God in the OT” and “The Righteousness of God in the NT” in *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*.

Evaluating the Käsemann Hypothesis

1. All parties agree that in the ordinary Greek usage, and in many OT texts also, ἡ δικαιοσύνη refers to God judging uprightly, as a reflection of his moral uprightness (following the observation that δικαιοσύνη in the LXX often refers to the moral uprightness of humans).⁸

⁷ *Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus* (FRLANT 87; 2nd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966).

⁸ Stephen Westerholm, “The Righteousness of the Law and the Righteousness of Faith in Romans,” *Interpretation* 58, July, 2004, pp. 253-264, esp. 254-57

Psa. 9:4 For you have maintained my just cause; you have sat on the throne, giving righteous judgment (κρίνων δικαιοσύνην).

Psa. 9:8 and he judges (κρινεῖ) the world with righteousness (δικαιοσύνη); he judges (κρινεῖ) the peoples with uprightness (εὐθύτητι).

Psa. 50:6 The heavens declare his righteousness (τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ), for God himself is judge (κριτής)!

Psa. 58:1 Do you indeed decree what is right (δικαιοσύνην), you gods? Do you judge (κρίνετε) the children of man uprightly?

Psa. 69:27 Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal (δικαιοσύνη) from you.

Psa. 71:12 O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste to help me! 13 May my accusers be put to shame and consumed; with scorn and disgrace may they be covered who seek my hurt. 14 But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. 15 My mouth will tell of your righteous acts (τὴν δικαιοσύνην), of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.

Psa. 71:24 And my tongue will talk of your righteous help (τὴν δικαιοσύνην σου) all the day long, for they have been put to shame and disappointed who sought to do me hurt.

Psa. 72: 1 Give the king your justice (ὃ κρίμα σου), O God, and your righteousness (τὴν δικαιοσύνην σου) to the royal son! 2 May he judge your people with righteousness (ἐν δικαιοσύνη), and your poor with justice (κρίσει)! [N.b. chiasm here, from “justice to “righteousness” to “righteousness” to “justice”]

Psa. 96:11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; 12 let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy 13 before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to judge (κρίναι) the earth. He will judge (κρινεῖ) the world in righteousness (ἐν δικαιοσύνη), and the peoples in his faithfulness (τῇ ἀληθείᾳ).

Psa. 98:9 before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity (ἥκει κρίναι τὴν γῆν κρινεῖ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐν δικαιοσύνη καὶ λαοὺς ἐν εὐθύτητι).

Psa. 119:40 Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life! (ἐν τῇ δικαιοσύνη σου ζήσόν με)

Psa. 119:62 At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous rules. (τὰ κρίματα τῆς δικαιοσύνης σου)

Psa. 119:75 I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous (δικαιοσύνη τὰ κρίματά σου), and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.

Psa. 119:106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules (τὰ κρίματα τῆς δικαιοσύνης σου).

Psa. 119:121 I have done what is just and right (ἐποίησα κρίμα καὶ δικαιοσύνην); do not leave me to my oppressors. [n.b. in all these the rules are righteous, and the psalmist, when he conforms to them, is righteous, appealing to an upright/righteous God to exonerate and defend him--not because such a God is “faithful,” or “powerful,” but because he is upright]

Mic. 7:9 I will bear the indignation (ὀργήν) of the LORD because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause (ἕως τοῦ δικαιῶσαι αὐτὸν τὴν δίκην μου) and executes judgment for me (ποιήσῃ τὸ κρίμα μου). He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication (τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ).

Is. 1:26 And I will restore your judges (τοὺς κριτάς σου) as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness (πόλις δικαιοσύνης), the faithful city.

Is. 5:7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice (κρίσιν), but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness (δικαιοσύνην), but behold, an outcry!

Is. 9:7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness (ἐν δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἐν κρίματι) from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Is. 16:5 then a throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David one who judges and seeks justice (κρίνων καὶ ἐκζητῶν κρίμα) and is swift to do righteousness (σπεύδων δικαιοσύνην).

Jer. 22:3 Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness (ποιεῖτε κρίσιν καὶ δικαιοσύνην), and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. [n.b. this text could be a reference to what might be called social justice rather than retributive justice]

2. The original OT evidence from Cremer and Käsemann noted that this ordinarily-judicial language was sometimes “soteric” in the OT, yet underestimated the judicial context of the so-called “soteric language.” That is, when God was said to demonstrate his “righteousness” in Israel’s deliverance, the deliverance was from the nations around her, whom Yahweh *judged*. That is, such “deliverance” anticipates the final judgment, which is soteric for the elect but *not* for the non-elect. “Righteousness” is still, therefore, juridical/forensic, and still refers to the fact that God will judge rightly; but when He judges His (and his people’s) enemies, this accrues to His people’s benefit/deliverance/salvation. Douglas J. Moo noted this problem with the Käsemann hypothesis by saying: “Thus far, it would appear that God’s δικαιοσύνη is exclusively beneficial in its operation; and, indeed, scholars such as von Rad conclude just that. But a number of texts show how short-sighted such a conclusion would be. First, several of the passages that highlight the salvific benefits of God’s righteousness also refer to the judgment that it brings on the wicked....When Israel’s enemies are in view, or when Israel breaks the terms of the covenant, God’s righteousness naturally takes on a negative, judgmental aspect (cf. Isa. 5:16; 10:22)” (*Romans 1-8*, p. 79).

Is. 51:5 My righteousness (ἡ δικαιοσύνη μου) draws near, my salvation (τὸ σωτήριόν μου) has gone out, and *my arms will judge the peoples*; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait. 6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; *for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment*, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation (τὸ δὲ σωτήριόν μου) will be forever, and my righteousness (ἡ δὲ δικαιοσύνη μου) will never be dismayed.... 8 For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool; but my righteousness (ἡ δὲ δικαιοσύνη μου) will be forever, and my salvation (τὸ δὲ σωτήριόν μου) to all generations.

Psa. 71: 4 Rescue me, O my God, *from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man*. 5 For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth.... 10 For *my enemies* speak concerning me; those who watch for my life consult together 11 and say, “God has forsaken him; *pursue and seize him*, for there is none to *deliver* him.” 12 O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste to help me! 13 May my *accusers be put to shame and consumed*; with scorn and disgrace may they be covered who seek my hurt. 14 But I will hope continually

and will praise you yet more and more. 15 My mouth will tell of your righteous acts (τῆν δικαιοσύνην σου), of your deeds of salvation (τῆν σωτηρίαν σου) all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.... 24 And my tongue will talk of your righteous help (τῆν δικαιοσύνην σου) all the day long, for they have been put to shame and disappointed who sought to do me hurt.

3. Käsemann et al. acknowledge that the δικ- language in Greek is ordinarily either moral (“uprightness”) or forensic/judicial (“an upright judge”), but suggest that in the OT the authors meant something different. But, why, then, did the translators of the LXX select this language from what was available to them in Greek? If they meant “power,” why didn’t they employ δύναμις (which Paul employed in Romans 1:16)? If they meant “faithfulness,” why didn’t they say πιστός (as Paul did at 1 Cor. 1:9)? Note, for instance: Rom. 3:1-3-- “Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. What if some were unfaithful (εἰ ἠπίστησάν τινες) Does their faithlessness (ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν) nullify the faithfulness of God (τῆν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ)?”

There was language available to the LXX translators to have said the equivalent of “faithfulness” or “power.” Why would they have chosen language that means “moral uprightness” or “judicial uprightness” unless they desired to translate the *zedekah* language this way? When Socrates, for instance, rejected Meletus’s arguments that the laws improve the Athenian youth, and insisted that Meletus tell us what *people* improve the youth, Meletus said, “The judges,” which is a translation of οἱ δικασταί (*Apology*, XII). This is why also in secular Greek of the period, a δικανικός is a lawyer, a δίκη can be a trial, and δικάζω can mean to decide, to judge, or give judgment, cf. (Liddell and Scott, *ad loc*). The LXX translators can hardly have been unaware of this, and their decision to employ such language is for the evident reason that the *zedekah* language in the OT itself appears so frequently in juridical contexts, especially that final, apocalyptic courtroom in which Yahweh will judge the entire cosmos: “He will judge the world in righteousness (δικαιοσύνη), and the peoples in his faithfulness” (Psa. 96:11, 98:9).

4. Even if δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ could mean something like “God’s power” or “God’s faithfulness” in some contexts, the context in Romans 1 is overwhelmingly juridical.⁹ I’ll say little more about this other than to cite the juridical language in the early chapters of Romans. Even if δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ were somewhat polyvalent, flexible enough to have different denotations in different contexts, the immediate context is perhaps the most thoroughly judicial in the entirety of the NT. Further, and I would suggest this to other interpreters of Romans 1:17 also, the repetition of the verb ἀποκαλύπτεται in 17 and 18, each having as its subject some attribute qualified by θεοῦ, and the second being connected to the previous by γάρ, all suggest to me that the parallel may be both deliberate and interpretively significant. That is, if we remove the qualifying and intervening words, we have this:

δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ...ἀποκαλύπτεται...

ἀποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργή θεοῦ...

Whether this is intentionally chiasmic, the parallel should at least be considered, and more work might be done attempting to understand whether, in the case of each verb the “manifestation/revelation” is redemptive-historical, and especially whether both God’s wrath and righteousness are revealed simultaneously in the events of the gospel. In other words, does not Paul say here that what is revealed in the cross is the very wrath of God against human iniquity, such as that described in 1:18 ff.? Is not the cross, for Paul, a revelation of God’s wrath against sin? Isn’t this especially so as the entire pericope moves toward the conclusions in chapter 3:25-26—“whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness...”¹⁰

⁹ Cf. my “Observations on N. T. Wright’s Biblical Theology With Special Consideration of ‘Righteousness of God,’” in *By Faith Alone*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Guy P. Waters (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), pp. 61-73.

¹⁰ Space does not permit my pursuing this line of reasoning here. But, if this line of reasoning is correct, what is “revealed” in the Gospel is neither what Cremer-Käsemann-NPP think (God’s faithfulness to his covenant or soteric apocalyptic power in a general sense) nor imputed righteousness by faith; rather, what is disclosed in the events of the gospel (the cross and resurrection) is God’s inflexible judicial righteousness/wrath. This is not to say that elsewhere in his letters Paul does not refer to imputed righteousness as a gift (e.g., Rom. 3:24; 5:17); it is to say that the specific thing being *affirmed* at Rom. 1:17-18 is that in the crucifixion God manifests that judicial righteousness towards the earth that he has held in check since Genesis 9. My point

- 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.
- 1:24 Therefore God gave them up (παρέδωκεν) in the lusts of their hearts to impurity,
- 1:26 For this reason God gave them up (παρέδωκεν) to dishonorable passions.
- 1:28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up (παρέδωκεν) to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.
- 1:29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness (ἀδικία)
- 1: 32 Though they know God’s decree (τὸ δικάσιμα τοῦ θεοῦ; AV “judgment of God”) that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.
- 2:1 Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. 2 We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who do such things.
- 2: 3 Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?
- 2: 5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment (δικαιοκρισίας) will be revealed.
- 2:6 He will render to each one according to his works: 7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.
- 2:8 and who are persuaded of unrighteousness (πειθομένοις δὲ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ)
- 2:12 For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.
- 2:13 for the doers of the law will be justified (δικαιωθήσονται)
- 2: 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.
- 3:5 But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God (θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην), what shall we say? That God is unrighteous (ἄδικος) to inflict wrath (ὀργήν) on us?
- 3:8 Their condemnation is just (ἐνδικόν).
- 3:9 What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,
- 3:10 as it is written: “None is righteous, no not one (Οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος οὐδὲ εἷς).
- 3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable (ὑπόδικος) to God.
- 3:20 For no human being will be justified (οὐ δικαιωθήσεται) in his sight by works of the law...

here, however, is to demonstrate the inadequacy of the Cremer-Käsemann-NPP view of “righteousness of God.”

-3:21 ff. But now the righteousness of God (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God (δικαιοσύνη δὲ θεοῦ) through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified (δικαιούμενοι) by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness (τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ), because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness (τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ) at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier (δίκαιον καὶ δικαιούντα) of the one who has faith in Jesus.

5. Käsemann and the early Stuhlmacher argued that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ was “technical,” when the two terms appear together. That is, while δικαιοσύνη may be influenced by the LXX, δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is an unusual term, appearing only once in the LXX, but several times (as many as eight) in Second Temple apocalyptic sources.

The arbitrariness of this was immediately spotted by Bultmann, who noted that whether δικαιοσύνη is qualified by θεοῦ, or by σοῦ, or by αὐτοῦ is irrelevant to its lexical range, noting that the latter two qualifiers appear extremely frequently in the LXX. Proof, if anyone cared to pursue it, that Bultmann's lexicographical principles were sounder than those of Käsemann, would be easily ascertained. Take any other term that could designate a divine attribute qualified by θεοῦ, and run a search and see if anyone would consider translating the attribute itself differently with or without the θεοῦ. One could trace the biblical usages of “the love of God,” for instance, and compare/contrast those to expressions where “love” manifestly referred to God, but without using the qualifier θεοῦ (“your love,” “his love”). I doubt anyone will pursue this line of testing, because we know beforehand what we would find.

The later Stuhlmacher, if not Käsemann, felt the weight of this, and desired to disencumber himself from its burden. Yet he never retracted the notion that somehow this handful of references in the apocalyptic literature informed Paul's thought, even if the expression were not technical. But this distancing will not do, and for two reasons.

First, despite the widespread attention given to “inter-textual” exegesis over the last half century, it is not at all proven that Paul was familiar with any (much less all) of these sources. That is, while he plainly cites the OT texts on occasion, and while he equally plainly refers on occasion to Greco-Roman sources, there is not yet any evidence of Pauline terminology that cannot be accounted for by the LXX, rather than inter-canonical sources. Especially when one considers that some of these sources represented the view of sectarians and/or separatists, there is *prima facie* no reason to assume that Paul had access to, or had bothered to familiarize himself with, their sources.¹¹

Second, assuming what I see no reason to assume, that Paul had familiarized himself with various apocalyptic sources, and that the revelation of *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* was the revelation of apocalyptic “power,” of some sort, what kind of apocalyptic literature was Käsemann reading, if it did not contain reference to apocalyptic warfare and judgment? Is not one of the most commonly-appearing realities in that literature the almost-Manichaean distinction between the wicked and the righteous, between the sons of light and the sons of darkness? And is it not similarly the case that “Shalom” itself is regarded in that literature as the result of some great apocalyptic upheaval in which the wicked are judged and defeated, removed from the earth (or from Palestine), so that the righteous can then dwell in peace? Can it be credibly imagined, then, that the alleged “apocalyptic power” that constitutes *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* would not be *judicial*

¹¹ I must say I am especially befuddled by the frequent reference to Qumran sources when studying the New Testament. What little we know about the covenanters is that they were separatists. The sheer geographical evidence cannot be contested: They did not reside in Jerusalem. They deliberately separated themselves from the holy city, deliberately and intentionally established an entire community separated from Jerusalem by many miles. Further, the media of their culture were profoundly different from ours. Paul, for instance, could not Google for “separatist covenanters” and come up with a web page entitled “Fire-Breathing Separatist Covenanters.org”, located at “www.qumran.net.” The notion that the literature of the various Jewish sectaries and separatists was well-known is an anachronistic conceit. Paul *may* have been aware of some of them, and he *may* have had some degree of familiarity with some of their respective literatures. But he *certainly* was familiar with the LXX, and quotes it frequently as theologically determinative. Therefore, the suggestion that other literature, which he never cited as authoritative, and never conclusively even alluded to, can be taken as a reliable determinant of his thinking, strikes me as a *petitio principii* that only appears otherwise because a virtual cottage industry has arisen in the scholarly community to study such sources. I’m inclined to think that Prof. Sandmel needs to be consulted again: “Parallelomania,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (1962): 1-13.

power, the power of the divine warrior, conquering, judging, and defeating the wicked who have ever harassed his people? Would Käsemann, Stuhlmacher, or anyone else care to find evidence in the apocalyptic literature of some sort of détente between the sons of light and the sons of darkness, as each carves out its own piece of territory and lives in blissful co-operation with the other? I think not. Even if there were texts that associated δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ in some way with the apocalyptic power that creates Shalom, such power will necessary be the same apocalyptic power anticipated in the Psalms--“For he comes, he comes to judge the earth; He will judge the world with righteousness (δικαιοσύνη), and the peoples with equity” (Psa. 98:9). The “saving power” that Käsemann referred to, according to the very inter-testamental sources themselves, manifests itself in the destruction of the wicked:

“In due time, he will sally forth in high fury to wage war against the kings of the north, being minded in his *anger to destroy his enemies* and cut down their power. This, however, will be the time of *salvation* for the people of God, the critical moment when those that have cast their lot with Him will come to dominion, whereas those that have cast it with Belial shall be doomed to eternal extinction.”¹²

6. Käsemann, Dunn, Wright, et al., evade/avoid, as did Protestant Liberalism before them, the fundamentally juridical tenor of the Bible *per se*, and of its soteriology. It was *judgment* that removed the human race from the blessedness of God’s Presence in the garden; the entire race, except for a small family, was destroyed in a *judicial flood* in the days of Noah; Israel, when disobedient, was subject to God’s repeated *judgment*; Christ died as a Substitute to bear God’s *judicial wrath* on behalf of his people, and his apostle described the new Christian faith of the Thessalonians this way: “...how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who *delivers us from the wrath to come*.” (1 Thes. 1:9-10). Peter declared, “And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be *judge* of the living and the dead.” (Acts 10:42). And Paul also said: “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will *judge the world in righteousness* by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance

¹² “The War of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness,” Prologue, in *The Dead Sea Scriptures*, 3rd ed., trans. Theodor H. Gaster (New York: Anchor/Doubleday), p. 399.

to all by raising him from the dead.” (Acts 17: 30-31). Note that Peter and Paul follow the language of the OT (Paul’s language is identical to, e.g., Psalm 96:13) in describing the redemptive activity of Christ as *culminating in* his return for judgment, to “judge the world in righteousness,” as the Apostles’ Creed does also. Biblically, we could even speak of “salvation-judgment,” because the salvation of God’s creation requires the elimination of the wicked therefrom, as Peter said: “who formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water (n.b. that floodwater may have “saved” eight souls, but it judged the entire remainder of the race!). Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.” (1 Pet. 3:20-22)

On this particular point, the “New Perspective” is a decidedly “Old Perspective,” the perspective of Adolph von Harnack, Albrecht Ritschl, and Wilhelm Herrmann, which self-consciously rejected the notion of appeasing or propitiating a wrathful deity by sacrifice as primitive, and contrary to the sensibilities of a modern (late-19th century) culture. The same sensibilities manifest themselves in the so-called New Perspective: with Protestant Liberalism, the NPP wants to talk about Yahweh establishing Shalom some day, but does not want the divine warrior to establish that Shalom through apocalyptic warfare/judgment. The only “new” thing about such a perspective is its cleverness; it is much less candid than was Protestant Liberalism, which candidly stated that the idea of propitiating a wrathful deity was repugnant. The NPP does not have the candor of Protestant Liberalism to call such things repugnant; but it is every bit as eager to remove or reduce them, this time through lexical sleight-of-hand. The “righteousness” by which the OT predicted God would judge the entire inhabited order is now relational, soteric “faithfulness” to the promise or covenant (without explaining, it might be added, how God could possibly *be* faithful to the Sinai covenant without defending Israel and defeating her harassing enemies, or even without judging *her* when she was disobedient).

In addition to the Käsemann hypothesis, we noted earlier several other NPP distinctives regarding “righteousness” and “justification.” For Wright and Dunn, “to be justified” means to be a member of the covenant people of God.

Dunn: “God’s justification is rather God’s acknowledgement that someone is in the covenant” (NPP, 190)

Wright: “Justification in this setting, then, is not a matter of how someone enters the community of the true people of God, but of how you tell who belongs to that community (WSPRS, 119)... “Within this context, ‘justification,’ as seen in 3:24-26, means that those who believe in Jesus Christ are declared to be members of the true covenant family” (129).

This is extremely confusing, and wrong-headed. It is confusing because we can never know which covenant Dunn or Wright are speaking of. Even if we omit the Adamic administration (because of the questions about whether it should be regarded as a covenant), we have two covenants with Noah, one with Abraham, one with the Israelites at Sinai, one with Phinehas and his sons to be priests, one with David’s lineage to build Yahweh a permanent house, and a pledged “new covenant” that will come in the future (Jer. 31:31). So, to confuse or conflate these seven distinct covenants is itself a substantial problem. The Gentiles, for instance, are comprehended in the Abrahamic covenant by the third pledge (and indeed, Abraham himself was an uncircumcised Gentile when he was justified, Rom. 4:10), but they are not comprehended in the Sinai covenant. On precisely a matter that interests the NPP (who are the people of God?), two of the covenants in the canonical OT give two entirely different answers, yet the NPP language is ubiquitously “in the covenant,” as though there were only one.

It is also quite wrong-headed to think that to be “in the covenant” (whichever one is being referred to) is equivalent to being justified (or anything else soteric). Were not the Israelites all included in the Sinai covenant? But were the ones who murmured and died in the wilderness (Numbers 21) justified? And if justification includes not only judgment, but sometimes *terminal* judgment by reptiles, who needs to *be* justified? Throughout her history, Israel was repeatedly on the wrong end of the prophetic law-suit; she was repeatedly judged as being *unrighteous*, though she was manifestly *in* the Sinai covenant.

The Israelites plainly did not understand “being in the covenant” as the NPP understands it. They resisted being in it at Sinai, wanting nothing to do with Moses’s thunderous deity and frightened that he would “break out against them” (Ex. 19:22, 24), frightened that if God spoke to them they would die (Ex. 20:19). Half of their psalms were laments, and most of those were laments about God’s judgment. They complained about the Sinai covenant in the wilderness (Ex. 15:24, 16:2, 17:3, Num. 14:2,29, 16:41, Deut. 1:27), and even desired to go back to slavery to the Egyptians (Num. 11:18, 14:3). They not only did not view “being in the covenant” as being justified or soteric; they obviously considered it to be a nuisance, a burden the apostles later said “neither we nor our fathers could bear” (Acts 15:10). So the NPP is way off base here, not only for its consistent confusing of the Abrahamic covenant with the Sinai covenant, but even more so for suggesting that being “in the covenant” at Sinai implied justification or anything else soteric. Consider the following, extremely-abbreviated samples:

2Sam. 21:1 Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year. And David sought the face of the LORD. And the LORD said, “There is bloodguilt (ἀδικία) on Saul and on his house, because he put the Gibeonites to death.”

Kings 8:50 and forgive your people who have sinned against you (καὶ ἕλεως ἔσῃ ταῖς ἀδικίαις αὐτῶν αἷς ἡμαρτόν σου)...

Hos. 5:5 The pride of Israel testifies to his face; Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in his guilt (ἐν ταῖς ἀδικίαις αὐτῶν); Judah also shall stumble with them.

Hos. 8:13 As for my sacrificial offerings, they sacrifice meat and eat it, but the LORD does not accept them. Now he will remember their iniquity (νῦν μνησθήσεται τὰς ἀδικίας αὐτῶν) and punish their sins (ἐκδικήσει τὰς ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν); they shall return to Egypt. 14 For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces, and Judah has multiplied fortified cities; so I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour her strongholds.

Hos. 9:7 The days of punishment (τῆς ἐκδικήσεως) have come; the days of recompense have come; Israel shall know it. 9 They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah: he will remember their iniquity (ἀδικίας αὐτοῦ); he will punish (ἐκδικήσει ἀμαρτίας αὐτοῦ) their sins.

Hos. 14:1 Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity (ἀδικίας σου).

Mic. 3:9 Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who detest justice (κρίμα) and make crooked all that is straight, 10 who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity (ἐν ἀδικίαις).

Is. 9:8 The Lord has sent a word against Jacob, and it will fall on Israel; 9 and all the people will know,... 17 Therefore the Lord does not rejoice over their young men, and has no compassion on their fatherless and widows; for everyone is godless and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly (πᾶν στόμα λαλεῖ ἄδικα).

Is. 43:24 You have not bought me sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities (ἐν ταῖς ἀδικίαις σου).

In addition to being profoundly out of accord with the realities of membership in the Sinai covenant, it might also be noted that such a viewpoint (that being “in the covenant community” is equated with justification) is functionally identical to the medieval Roman Catholic viewpoint: Those who are members of the visible Roman Church are justified; and those who are not members of that visible communion are not. If the NPP is largely motivated by an ecumenical concern, partly to reconcile Rome to Protestants and vice versa, how will it achieve such by declaring one of those parties the uncontested winner? That is, the NPP proposal is not some *tertium quid* that will invite the two previous parties to some solution between them; the NPP proposal is virtually indistinguishable in substance from the very view to which the Reformers objected.¹³

¹³ The NPP is a large reality, and I have only addressed one here: The nature and influence (and, in my judgment, error) of the Käsemann hypothesis. If I were asked to mention things about the NPP with which I largely (or even enthusiastically) concur, I would mention two, at a minimum. First, I tend to concur largely with the re-evaluation of Palestinian Judaism by E. P. Sanders; the literature of the period discloses a different religion than the characteristically meritorious view of the dominant pre-Sanders approach, which causes us to approach Paul’s problem with the law with an open mind towards other solutions. Second, and related, the NPP is surely right in saying that at least the primary Pauline objection to the Mosaic Law is that it is a covenant made only with one nation, exclusive of others. Therefore, when the Seed of Abraham comes to bring blessings “to all the nations,” the previous covenant, with its Gentile-excluding requirements, must cease.