



ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ AND DASEIN: ON BEING, RIGHTEOUS

An Exegesis of Galatians 3:6-14

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Introduction

The Enlightenment and subsequent Modern age has given the world a myriad of benefits but has come at a price. Positivism, and its potential move to scientism, leads humanity to focus more on what is controllable and visible, and less on what is underneath. This certainly has not always been the case, and was not the dominant worldview of Paul, who would have been far more comfortable considering spaces of spirit. This paper attempts to rehabilitate a perspective of Galatians 3 through the work of Heidegger and argues that Paul is making claims not about observable actions, but instead about invisible spaces and people's very beings. Instead of justification resulting in a series of actions (one acts under law or acts under faith), it is primarily an issue of redefining space and that Jesus Christ opens our Being (the Heideggerian *Dasein*), δίκαιος, to live in a space of faith.

Background of Galatians

Varying scholars propose that Galatians was written between 49-58 CE, but “the truly important chronological issue is not its absolute date, but rather its place in the chronological order of Paul’s letters... [Galatians] antedates all of the Corinthian letters, and Romans comes after them.”¹ Therefore, Galatians is one of Paul’s first letters, and one of the first available that attempts to seriously work out his Christology. The letter was generally directed to a series of churches in the Galatia region, now part of the Anatolia region of Turkey, although the exact series of churches it was intended for (the northern or southern Galatian churches) remains

¹ Martyn and Paulus, *Galatians*, 19–20.

debated.² The genre of the letter has been argued, with Martyn's point well made: "If we assume... that Galatians must conform essentially to the recommendations of the ancient rhetoricians, we will put the letter into a straitjacket."³ The main thesis of the letter is to respond to concerns that Gentile members of the Galatian church would be required to conform to Jewish laws and practice (especially circumcision) in order to be full members of the church. Galatians 3:6-14, the main pericope for this paper, is the first of Paul's exegetical arguments of Hebrew Scripture to solidify his claims about Jesus. Paul's use of quotes of the Hebrew Scripture is not uncommon – over the course of his letters in the New Testament, he makes 131 separate references, and quotes the Torah more than any other section of the Hebrew text.⁴ This makes sense for a rabbi *par excellence*, as Paul notes on multiple occasions.

Personal Translation of Galatians 3:6-14⁵

⁶ Καθὼς Ἀβραὰμ “ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην”⁶.
Just as Abraham “*believed in God and he himself was accounted into dikaiosness*”,

⁷ γινώσκετε ἄρα ὅτι οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, οὗτοι υἱοὶ εἰσιν⁷ Ἀβραάμ.
You all know therefore that the out-of-faith-ones, *those* are sons of Abraham.

⁸ προῖδοῦσα δὲ ἡ γραφὴ ὅτι ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοῖ τὰ ἔθνη ὁ θεὸς, προεηγγελίσαστο τῷ Ἀβραάμ ὅτι “ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη”⁸.
And the Scripture's foreseeing – that God *dikaiosified* out-of-faith Gentiles – proclaimed the good news in advance to Abraham that “*they (all the Gentiles) would be blessed in you*”

⁹ ὥστε οἱ ἐκ πίστεως εὐλογοῦνται σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ.
So that the out-of-faith-ones were being blessed with faithful Abraham.

² “The Oxford Bible Commentary - Galatians - Introduction - Oxford Biblical Studies Online.”

³ Martyn and Paulus, *Galatians*, 21.

⁴ “The Old Testament in Paul.”

⁵ Where germane, textual variance and Scriptural reference by Paul is noted by way of footnote.

⁶ Genesis 15:6

⁷ υἱοὶ εἰσιν is transposed in varying texts, but neither choice seems to make any change in the translation.

⁸ Genesis 12:3; 18:8

¹⁰ Ὅσοι γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσὶν, ὑπὸ κατάραν εἰσὶν· γέγραπται γὰρ ὅτι “ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ὃς οὐκ ἐμμένει [εν]⁹ πᾶσιν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτά”¹⁰. For as many as out-of-work-of-law they are under curse; for it is written that “*cursed all who do not abide in all the things written in the Book of the Law, the construction of it.*”

¹¹ ὅτι δὲ ἐν νόμῳ οὐδεὶς δικαιοῦται παρὰ τῷ θεῷ δῆλον, ὅτι “ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται”¹¹.

And that in Law no one was made dikaiosified in the presence of God clearly: “*that the righteous out-of-faith will be alive:*”

¹² ὁ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως, ἀλλ’ “ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ [ανθρωπος]¹² ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς”¹³. But the law is not out-of-faith, but “*the one who constructs these [human] things will live in them*”.

¹³ Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἐξηγόρασεν ἐκ τῆς κατάρας τοῦ νόμου γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατάρα, ὅτι γέγραπται· “ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ὁ κρεμάμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου”¹⁴, Christ – us – he redeemed from the curse of the Law, the one who became in behalf of us curse, that it is written: “*cursed in totality the one who hangs on wood*”

¹⁴ ἵνα εἰς τὰ ἔθνη ἡ εὐλογία τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ γένηται ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ¹⁵, ἵνα τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος λάβωμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως.

In order that into the Gentiles the blessing of Abraham might come to be in Christ Jesus, in order that the promise of the Spirit we might receive through the faith.

Traditional Perspectives

There are three primary approaches to this pericope (and specifically 3:10-14): “law/gospel antithesis, apocalyptic fulfilment, and redemptive historical.”¹⁶

⁹ The majority of texts include εν where noted. Again, this does not make a marked difference in translation, but the English tends to add “in”, anyway.

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 27:26

¹¹ Habakkuk 2:4

¹² The majority of texts add ανθρωπος into v. 12. However, the Unicals in large part (with the exclusion of a portion of D, Codex Claromontanus), exclude it. This will be discussed later.

¹³ Leviticus 18:5

¹⁴ Deuteronomy 27:26, 21:23

¹⁵ Some texts invert “Christ Jesus”. This has little effect in the translation.

¹⁶ Willitts, “Context Matters,” 105.

Law/Gospel Antithesis: The first approach, which can largely be considered a traditional approach (including one posited by Luther and Calvin) states that “the law is thought to bring a curse (3:10) because no one can perfectly do all that is required by the law... one cannot earn salvation by ‘doing the law’ ... thus there is an emphasis on ‘faith in Christ’ *over against* the ‘doing of the law’.”¹⁷

Apocalyptic Fulfillment: The second perspective, forwarded primarily by Martyn, is that Paul attempted to set up a “Textual Contradiction” between Habakkuk 2:4 and Leviticus 18:5, and “argues that Paul replaced the fundamental assumption that ‘the two texts have their origin in a monolith that is larger and more fundamental than either of them’ ... for Martyn it is not the inability or ability of the people to keep the law that is at issue here, but it is the *irrelevance* of the law in light of God’s apocalyptic intervention in Christ.”¹⁸

Redemptive historical: The third perspective, represented by Garlington but also J.M. Scott and N.T. Wright, suggests that this pericope should be “read in a ‘historical’ manner. Paul’s argument ‘is not a topical discussion of faith and works, but an *epochal delineation* of the respective places of νόμος and πίστις in salvation history.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., 107.

¹⁸ Ibid., 107–8.

¹⁹ Ibid., 108.

Dasein and δίκαιος: Heidegger and Paul

The forgotten being of being

However helpful that each of the three traditional perspectives are, they each have the same significant lacuna: they do not consider the state of being of the individual. Martin Heidegger, in his *magnum opus* *Being and Time*, explores the issue immediately:

“It is said that ‘being’ is the most universal and the emptiest concept. As such it resists every attempt at definition... everybody uses it constantly and also already understands what is meant by it. Thus what troubled ancient philosophizing and kept it so by virtue of its obscurity has become obvious, clear as day, such that whoever persists in asking about it is accused of an error of method... at the beginning of this inquiry the prejudices that constantly instill and repeatedly promote the idea that a questioning of being is not needed cannot be discussed in detail. They are rooted in ancient ontology itself.”²⁰

The problem Heidegger sees right from the outset is that the concept of being is apparently so obvious that it is taken for granted, and has been since antiquity. In Section 2 of Part 1, The Formal Structure of the Question of Being, he begins to work towards asking the question about being, aware that “if it is a – or even *the* – fundamental question, such questioning needs the suitable transparency.”²¹ He begins to lay out the concept of asking a question as a search “for beings in their thatness and whatness.”²² Heidegger reiterates the issues of question being as a vague but “average” enterprise – humanity understands, but it also does not understand. An important part of this process is that “insofar as being constitutes what is asked about, and insofar as being means the being of beings, beings themselves turn out to be what is interrogated in the question of being. Beings are, so to speak, interrogated with regard to their being. But if they are

²⁰ Heidegger, Stambaugh, and Schmidt, *Being and Time*, 1–2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²² *Ibid.*

to exhibit the characteristics of their being without falsification they must for their part have become accessible in advance as they are in themselves.”²³ Heidegger recognized both that the work of questioning being requires that the question be turned around back on the one asking it, and that individual cannot be disassociated like the hope of the Cartesian “I”.

Dasein

Dasein means “there-being” when translated from German. *Dasein* is what makes us unique as humans. As Ricoeur states, “...*Dasein* is not a subject for which there is an object, but is rather a being within being. *Dasein* designates the *place* where the question of being arises, the place of manifestation; the centrality of *Dasein* is simply that of a being which understands being.”²⁴ It is the space where humanity, in its uniqueness, is able to understand the world, and begin to relate to other humans: “Regarding, understanding and grasping, choosing, and gaining access to, are constitutive attitudes of inquiry and are thus themselves mode of being a particular being, of *the* being we inquirers ourselves in each case are... this being [*Seiende*], which we ourselves in each case are and which includes inquiry among the possible of its being, we formulate terminologically as *Dasein*.”²⁵

The Ontic and Ontological

Heidegger also indicates that *Dasein* has two means of understanding: ontic and ontological. A convenient way to sum the difference between the two is that “the ontic distinction of *Dasein* lies in the fact that it is ontological.”²⁶ Briefly, Heidegger uses ontic to describe the

²³ Ibid., 5.

²⁴ Ricoeur and Thompson, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 54.

²⁵ Heidegger, Stambaugh, and Schmidt, *Being and Time*, 6.

²⁶ Ibid., 11.

scientific ways in which a person can categorize. Weight, size, mass, psychological type, *et cetera*, can all be considered ontic categories. Ontological, on the other hand, deals with the fundamental Being of things, and how humans are about to go about the business of “being-in-the-world.” For instance, one could consider a fork. A fork could be weighed, its chemical makeup could be determined: those would be ontic. However, ontologically speaking, one would think of fork in such a way that permits a person to go about the business of, say, a being that is eating. It is important to note that for Heidegger, all ontic studies pre-suppose an ontology. It is how one can distinguish the difference between a fork and a ball of foil – they might weigh the same and have the same chemical make-up (and therefore not be distinguished ontically), yet humans would consider the ontological quite differently.

δικαίος in context as *Dasein*

In the translation for this paper, the cognates of “δικαίος” in Galatians 3:6-14 were left transliterated. There is a reasonable amount of debate around the way Paul understands the way humanity operates in the world are subsequently made δικάιος – whether there is a “cosmological apocalyptic eschatology” (the supernatural battle of good and evil by way of Spirits that leads to the enslavement of humanity) or “forensic apocalyptic eschatology” (the willful rejection of God on the part of humanity).²⁷ However, it is limiting to Paul’s argument to just presume that there are only two tracks of thinking. Instead, it is better to consider that “dikaiosness is a matter of *creational theology* and not specifically covenantal.”²⁸ By resolving “δικαίος” into “righteousness” or

²⁷ Martyn and Paulus, *Galatians*, 98, n. 51.

²⁸ Surburg, “Rectify or Justify?,” 75.

“justified,” it does not give it the same sense of fundamental being – that humanity may be **δίκαιος**.

If one resolves **δίκαιος** as *creational* theology related to fundamental being, then it is not too far to presume that Paul might be talking about *Dasein* by another name. **Δίκαιος**, then, could be considered not “righteousness” as some kind of action that happens *because* of the person one is, but simply *what humans are*.

The ontic and ontological **νόμος** and **πίστις**

One of the weaknesses of the traditional approaches to Galatians 3:6-14 is that they seem to focus primarily on the ontic aspects of law and faith, committing the same lacuna that Heidegger was concerned about. Each seem determined to discuss the characteristics of law and faith (i.e. law = curse, faith = righteousness), without attending to the ontic. This due to **δίκαιος** being considered a characteristic of a person (an individual is righteous) as opposed to the being itself – **δίκαιος** as *Dasein*.

What would an ontological **νόμος** and **πίστις** resemble? It is helpful to consider them within the framework of Heidegger’s *world*, or *welt*. Heidegger notes a multiplicity of meanings, and for the purposes of this study, definitions one and two are especially germane:

1. World is used as an ontic concept and signifies the totality of beings which can be objectively present within the world.
2. World functions as an ontological term and signifies the being of those beings named in 1. Indeed “world” can name the region which embraces a multiplicity of beings. For example, when we speak of the “world” of the mathematician, we mean the region of all possible mathematical objects^{29 30}.

²⁹ Defining objects as ideas, feelings, thoughts, memories, imaginings, actualities, and possibilities.

³⁰ Heidegger, Stambaugh, and Schmidt, *Being and Time*, 64.

Within the translation of the pericope, it is possible to see how Paul is using language to develop a “world-of-law” and “world-of-faith”. Three specific points of translation help to bolster the argument:

ἐκ/ἐξ

In the translation for this paper, some words and phrases are translated more directly than what is in the NRSV. One is the preposition “ἐκ/ἐξ” in the phrases “ἐκ πίστεως” of vs. 7 and 8 and the related phrase “ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εισίν” of v. 10. This may seem a semantic issue, but “a closer examination reveals that ἐκ, like many prepositions, contains a theology *in nuce*.”³¹ The NRSV tends to render out the “ἐκ/ἐξ” from the translation in varying ways, losing the ablative, which allows for an idea of source and separation.³² Leaving “out-of” allows for both faith and law to be spaces where individuals come from, and not just simple acts of *being* faithful, or *relying* on the law. People come “out-of” worlds of faith and of law. Furthermore, along with Martyn³³, Young gives some credence to this as he that Paul uses these phrases not as pejorative statements, but more as descriptors: people of the law being “a Jewish community that saw its *raison d’être* in the Sinai covenant and its law.”³⁴

ποιῆσαι/ποιήσας and “construct”

Similar thinking went into translating “ποιῆσαι/ποιήσας” in vs. 10 and 12 as derivations of “construct.” Friberg in particular gives an opportunity to move beyond do or make³⁵, stating

³¹ Garlington, “Paul’s ‘Partisan ἐκ’ and the Question of Justification in Galatians,” 587.

³² Brooks and Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek*, 165.

³³ Martyn and Paulus, *Galatians*, 308.

³⁴ Young, “Who’s Cursed-and Why?,” 81.

³⁵ Although in the NRSV, the phrase “τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτά” seems to all but disappear in v. 10, so it does not seem to be of importance for the translators here.

that the word is “active... and the translation varying widely to suit the context.”³⁶ This again allows imagery of space – that something is being created, a place where individuals can come “out-of” law.

Ἀνθρώπος in 3:12

As noted earlier, the word *ἄνθρωπος* (human) is added into the majority texts, but nearly all of the Unicals do not have it. The word is specifically within the quote Paul is referencing from Leviticus 18:5. Both the Septuagint and the Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae text add the Greek and Hebrew (אָדָם) forms of “human” into the text. A cursory review of the literature gives no scholarly investigation into the change. One potential reason may be that it is presumed to be redundant. The King James Version of Leviticus 18:5b reads “...which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.” The NRSV reads “by doing so one shall live: I am the LORD.”

However, by eliminating *ἄνθρωπος*, it seems to eliminate the “humanness” of the law construct. In his usage of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians, Paul makes no mention of the LORD, leaving only the mention of humanity living out of law, and not, instead, out of faith.

Authenticity, Inauthenticity, and the νόμος-κόσμος

Authenticity as it relates to Heidegger’s thought is in part the development of Soren Kierkegaard, as he urged “that each of us is to ‘become what one is.’”³⁷ Kierkegaard felt that “on the one hand, he... condemned aspects of his contemporary social world, claiming that many people have come to function as merely place-holders in a society that constantly levels down possibilities to the lowest common denominator.”³⁸ Humanity lives, thought Kierkegaard, as only

³⁶ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*.

³⁷ Varga and Guignon, “Authenticity.”

³⁸ Ibid.

a shadow of what it could be, and causes people to live in despair. On the other hand, “he rejected the view that a human being should be regarded as an object, as a substance with certain essential attributes. Rather than being an item among others, Kierkegaard proposes to understand the self in relational terms: ‘The self is a relation that relates itself to itself..’”³⁹

Heidegger takes the Kierkegaard’s concept of the self and echoes it in *Dasein*: “Rather than being an object among others, *Dasein* is a ‘relation of being’...a relation that obtains between what one is at any moment and what one can and will be as the temporally extended unfolding of life into a realm of possibilities.”⁴⁰ The neologism that Heidegger uses to describe authenticity, *Eigentlichkeit*, can be directly translated as “‘ownedness’, or ‘being owned’, or even ‘being one’s own’, implying the idea of owning up to and owning what one is and does.”⁴¹ For Heidegger, what is translated in English as “authenticity” is the ability of *Dasein* to not just be wholly taken by the cultural constructs of the world, but instead “owning” oneself.

In the context of Galatians, Paul polemic against the “teachers” who are claiming the need to be circumcised could be considered his call to *Eigentlichkeit* – Christians need not “own” something that they are not. Instead, they should consider taking up and owning their *world* – that is, Christian life after Jesus Christ.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Galatians 3:6-14 Reconsidered

In light of Heidegger, Galatians 3:6-14 has an entirely new schema for the interpretation:
who is δίκαιος-εν-ό-νόμος? Δίκαιος-εν-ή-πίστις?

Paul, for his part, does not seem to have a problem with the law. He is very clear throughout his letters in the New Testament, including Galatians, that he was someone who understood and followed the law as well as anyone, and is proud of it. Yet by way of the Damascus Road experience and Paul meeting Christ, he recognizes that there is something greater and more meaningful – a transcendent redeemer. Paul has recognized that the νόμος-κόσμος does not lead to an authentic δίκαιος: “*Dasein* always understands itself in terms of its existence, in terms of its possibility to be itself or not to be itself. *Dasein* has either chosen these possibilities itself, stumbled upon them, or in each instance already grown up in them.”⁴²

Paul, then, must at the same time both explain what he has found, but also refute the polemics his opponents, who seem to be pulling the Galatians towards νόμος-κόσμος. He finds that dual argument in Abraham.

In using Abraham as his central figure, Paul makes a brilliant argument that reaches before the law and demonstrates πίστις-κόσμος. Abraham was δίκαιος-εν-ή-πίστις before there had been the construct of νόμος-κόσμος – *Dasein* had dwelled in faith before it had dwelled in law. That πίστις-κόσμος, in turn, is the same that can be shared by the Gentiles: everyone can live as authentic δίκαιος-εν-ή-πίστις. In fact, the Galatians faith was foretold to Abraham – they were part of the promise in the grains of sand and stars in the sky!

⁴² Heidegger, Stambaugh, and Schmidt, *Being and Time*, 11.

In contrast, then, the νόμος-κόσμος was never going to allow the δίκαιος to live authentically. It was only through Christ – the same one who broke through Paul on the Damascus Road – who vividly represented that through the crucifixion. Christ represented the most authentic living out of δίκαιος-εν-ό-νόμος, and met a tragic end. However, Christ is resurrected (and meets Paul) as δίκαιος-εν-ή-πίστις – the same faith as Abraham. Jesus, then, provides everyone the truest example of the inauthenticity of δίκαιος-εν-ό-νόμος in his example, but by taking on its curse (or its inauthenticity) is able to save.

This again does not seem to be wholly disparaging to the law – Paul is not saying that the law is terrible, or that he regrets its existence or his adherence to it. Rather, he’s saying Jesus Christ (specifically the δίκαιος-εν-ή-πίστις of Christ) moved beyond the νόμος-κόσμος, and with him comes the opportunity for a new kind of wholeness with God: δίκαιος-εν-ή-πίστις that νόμος-κόσμος just could not achieve.

Issues and Further Considerations

Δίκαιος as קִדְּוָה or טוֹב?

One issue that is of concern is what the Hebrew equivalent of δίκαιος might be. If one considers δίκαιος as an ontic category, then the word “קִדְּוָה” would make the most sense. Translated as “righteous”, it tends to be the word used to describe people and events that were just. Specifically, it is used in Genesis 15:6, a passage that Paul references in Galatians 3:6 when beginning his exegesis on Abraham.

However, if one considers the creational aspect of δίκαιος as *Dasein*, then perhaps the word “טוֹב” would be more germane. This word, translated as an “essence of goodness,” is what

Elohim calls the Creation in Genesis as he⁴³ creates it. This moves away from the concept of δίκαιος as only a construct of language or action, but allows it to be a state of being. However, this lack of support inter-canonically is worth keeping if one continues to move forward with δίκαιος as *Dasein*.

Δίκαιος in Philippians

In Philippians 3:6, Paul writes κατὰ ζήλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος. The use of δικαιοσύνην in this circumstance is more specific to righteousness in its traditional use: "...as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless."⁴⁴ This again relates to Galatians 3:6 and the description of Abraham as someone who is righteous. Going forward, it will be beneficial to consider what this means in regards to the δίκαιος as *Dasein* hypothesis. Δικαιοσύνην could be the ontic description of the ontological δίκαιος, which would allow both definitions to operate within Galatians and elsewhere in Paul's letters, including Romans.

Conclusion

As nascent theologians, the idea of engaging with other theologians can be intimidating enough. The idea of placing philosophers in conversation with Scripture, especially as one as impenetrable as Martin Heidegger is even more intimidating. Moreover, it stands to reason that as our society moves ever towards secularism that philosophy and theology are ever-more incompatible, and that "people are too wearied and disappointed to try yet another synthesis after so many have failed."⁴⁵ However, just like Tillich (who himself was responding to Heidegger)

⁴³ Elohim is rendered masculine in the Hebrew text.

⁴⁴ Philippians 3:6, NRSV

⁴⁵ Holmes, "The Role of Philosophy in Tillich's Theology," 167.

remarked, “we must try again!”⁴⁶ Conversations like this with Heidegger in Galatians open up new opportunities to consider old texts, breathing fresh life. It may be in those overtures during moments of the most trepidation that are able to expand our horizons and live as *δίκαιος-εν-ή-πίστις*, just as Paul had intended.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

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