

TRANSLATION OF WORDS WITH THE STEM *DIK-* IN ROMANS

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In Rom Paul's thought is closely bound up with the meaning of a family of words based upon the stem *δικ-*: *δίκαιος*, *δικαιοσύνη*, *δικαιόω*, *δικαίωσις*, *δικαίωμα*, and *δικαιοκρισία*. A check of English versions of Rom will show, however, that translators have come up with a bewildering array of renditions. *Δικαιόω* is variously translated as "justify," "free," "acquit," "vindicate," "absolve," "declare righteous," "pronounce free from guilt," "make upright," and "put right with God." For *δικαιοσύνη* we find "righteousness," "justice," "right conduct," "uprightness," "virtue," "integrity," "holiness," "justification," "rightness of heart," and "righteous purposes."

The most consistent renditions are given by the Rheims Bible, a translation from the Vulgate. Since Jerome had used Latin words on the stem *iust-*, the Rheims Bible followed suit with the English words "just," "justice," "justify," and "justification." This selection of words has the advantage of using English words containing one stem to translate Greek words containing one stem, thereby enabling the reader to see that all these words belong to one family. The great disadvantage of this translation from the point of view of this paper and of most Protestant thought is that it connotes an ethical rather than a forensic meaning.¹ These terms

¹ According to Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* ("The International Critical Commentary"; New York, 1920), p. 460, "few words of the N.T. vocabulary have been more frequently or more thoroughly discussed than those of this group." The ethical, causative, or factitive sense of *δικαιόω* (God makes the sinner righteous, upright, morally perfect, at least potentially and in germ) is defended by the following, among

suggest that in justification God actually makes the sinner righteous instead of declaring him righteous. It has been pointed out that "Augustine really got off the track simply because he didn't know enough Greek; he failed to realize that the term *δικαίω* means 'I declare righteous.' He preferred the Latin *iustificare*, which does mean *iustum facere*: to make righteous." ²

The *New World Translation* ³ uses words based upon the Saxon stem *right*—and is about as consistent in this respect

others: E. P. Gould, "St. Paul's Use of *δικαιοῦν*," *The American Journal of Theology*, I (1897), 149-158; Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York, 1911), III, 37-40, 52-53, 57; H. Rosman, "Iustificare (*δικαιοῦν*) est verbum causativum," *VD*, XXI (1941), 144-147; Edgar J. Goodspeed, *Problems of New Testament Translation* (Chicago, 1945), pp. 143-146, and "Some Greek Notes," *JBL*, LXXIII (1954), 86-91 (reply to Metzger's review, below); S. Schmidt, "S. Pauli 'iustitia Dei' notione iustitiae, quae in VT et apud S. Paulum habetur, dilucidata," *VD* XXXVII (1959), 97-105; and J. Giavini, "Iustificatio et iudicium apud S. Paulum (Studium vocabularii)," *VD*, XLVI (1968), 169-174. Among those who advocate the forensic sense of *δικαίω* (God declares the sinner righteous; cancels charges against the believer in the heavenly court; pronounces a verdict of "not guilty" upon guilty persons) are: Wm. Arnold Stevens, "On the Forensic Meaning of *δικαιοσύνη*," *The American Journal of Theology*, I (1897), 443-450; Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. by William Montgomery (New York, 1931), pp. 205-226 (Schweitzer finds two doctrines of redemption in Paul, a forensic doctrine of righteousness through faith in Christ's atoning death, and an ethical doctrine of righteousness through dying and rising with Christ. In 1 Cor 6:11, however, *δικαίω* is used in connection with the latter doctrine to mean "make righteous" [p. 261]. Goodspeed and others fail to distinguish between Paul's two doctrines of redemption); C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (New York, 1932), pp. 51-53, 57; Bruce M. Metzger, Review of Goodspeed, *Problems of New Testament Translation*, *Theology Today*, II (1946), 562; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. by Kendrick Grobel (New York, 1954), I, 270-285. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Pauline Theology," in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, 1968), II, 817, finds that at times the forensic meaning of *δικαίω* "seems to be the only sense intended in Paul's letters . . . ; but many instances are ambiguous."

² John F. Johnson, "Luther on Justification," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXXVIII (1967), 417.

³ (New York, 1961).

as modern English permits. It renders *δικαιος* by "righteous" and *δικαιοσύνη* by "righteousness," but when it comes to the other words of this group it must, because of the poverty of English at this point, use such combinations as "declare righteous." And when translating *δικαίωμα* (5:18), the *New World Translation* reverts to the Latin stem *just*—and renders "act of justification," thus breaking its consistency and switching from forensic to ethical connotations. In Rom 6:7 *δικαιόω* is translated as "acquit."

Other translators use such a hodgepodge of terms that none but the initiated would ever suspect that Paul is using words of the same stock, and we are thrown "into a jumble of ambiguities, where we have as good chance of mental confusion as the worst enemy of truth could desire."⁴

So far as I know, the first writer to struggle with this problem of English translation was Horace Bushnell. He complains that "the mere English reader will not know, that the three words" occurring in 3:25f., "*righteousness, just, and justifier of*—noun, adjective, and participle—are all words of the same root in the original, and, of course, are as closely related in meaning, as they can be in so many different parts of speech, that are grammatical offshoots of the same word."⁵

Noting that English has no Hiphil (causative) form of the verb "to be right," Bushnell suggests "the true version":

To declare (that is, demonstrate, inwardly impress) his righteousness, for the remission, by God's forbearance, of sins heretofore committed; to declare (demonstrate,) I say, for this present time, his righteousness, that he might be righteous (stand full before us in the evident glory of his righteousness) and the justifier (right-cousser) of him that believeth in Jesus.⁶

Although I disagree with Bushnell's ethical rather than forensic understanding of justification, at least he is seeking to find English words on the root *right* with which to translate the Greek words on the root *δικ-*. Thus he has coined the

⁴ Horace Bushnell, *The Vicarious Sacrifice* (New York, 1883), II, 179.

⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 406f.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 421.

word "righteousser" to replace "justifier," but confesses that "righteousser" is "very ungrammatical," "outlandish," and a "mock-English substitute for the word 'justifier.'" ⁷

Bushnell also uses his "outlandish" word in the participial form: "... the righteousing goes on, even as the sun goes on shining when it makes the day..." ⁸

Bushnell notes that "there probably is not another version in the world that does not translate these three words all by words of the same stock, and it is a verbal wrong and corruption not to do it." ⁹ A check of some German, French, Dutch, Spanish, and Italian versions indicates that Bushnell's surmise was remarkably correct. Hence we have another incentive for seeking a homogeneous English translation.

C. H. Dodd in his commentary on Rom is also concerned about this particular problem of translation and the inadequate way in which Moffatt handled it. On 3:24f. Dodd remarks that "the terms *righteous*, *just*; *righteousness*, *justice*; *justify*; all represent Greek words from one single root. In rendering them into English we are embarrassed by the fact that there is no English verb corresponding to the adjective *righteous*, while, on the other hand, the adjective *just*, corresponding

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 409-422.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 440.

⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 179f. Contextual critics warn that words on the same stem are not necessarily related in meaning because they do not have the same history. Although this may be true of similar words in different texts separated in time and by authorship, it does not apply to this study because Rom is one writing on one theme (δικαιοσύνη) by one theologian who consciously uses words of the same family (often closely together) to convey his meaning, and it is our responsibility as translators to impart this meaning by recapturing in English the word-play in Greek. Even James Barr, who, in *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (New York, 1961), pp. 218f., cautions against "obscuring the value of a word in a context by imposing upon it the totality of its uses," admits "that the small compass of the NT, both in literary bulk and in the duration of the period which produced it, adds a plausibility to the endeavor to take it as one piece, which could hardly be considered so likely for any literature of greater bulk and spread over a larger time."

to the verb *justify*, is a much less adequate translation of the Greek adjective than *righteous*." ¹⁰

Dodd points out that in reading 3:25bf. "we must bear in mind that *righteous* and *just* are only different English renderings of the same Greek word; and so are *righteousness* and *justice*. Dr. Moffatt has chosen here to use *just* and *justice*, although in vss. 21 and 22 he had used *righteousness*, presumably because only so could the connection of these words with *justify* be made clear. But the *justice* of God in vs. 26 is the same thing as the *righteousness of God* in vss. 21-22." ¹¹ Unlike Bushnell, Dodd does not supply us with a solution to this deficiency in English.

These difficulties are also discussed by Raymond T. Stamm, who notes that the English renditions "justify" and "righteousness" prevent "the English reader from seeing the connection between the two words." Furthermore,

unfortunately this Latin word [justification] does not make plain Paul's underlying religious experience, which was a change of status through faith from a wrong to a "right" relationship with God. It conceals from the English reader the fact that the Greek word also means "righteousness." The RSV retains it because it has become fixed in the language of the church, but the translators recognize the difficulty in the marginal note on [Gal 2:] 16a (observe also the ASV mg., "accounted righteous").¹²

In his lectures and in his translation of Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament*, Grobel

ventured to revive and to use . . . an obsolete Middle English verb "rightwise(n)"—the true English counterpart of the adjective "righteous" (Anglo-Saxon: *rightwis*) and the noun "righteousness" (Anglo-Saxon: *rightwisnes*). The only alternative seems to be to use consistently the Latin cognates *just*, *justify*, and *justification*—but they are alive in English with other very misleading meanings.¹³

¹⁰ Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹² R. T. Stamm, "The Epistle to the Galatians," *The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, 1953), 549, 484.

¹³ Kendrick Grobel, *op. cit.*, I, 253, 278, 274, 271. Mrs. Grobel knows of no other writing which her late husband did on this subject.

Thus Grobel translates as follows:

... him who rightwises the ungodly (4:5).
 ... for our justification (rightwising) (4:25; 5:18).
 Rightwised therefore by faith we have peace with God (5:1).
 ... salvation ("being saved") lies in the future awaiting the "rightwised" (cf. 5:9).

In this manner, then, Grobel is able to give consistent and meaningful renditions of *δικαιος*, *δικαιοσύνη*, *δικαιώω* and *δικαίωσις*. Grobel's solution is preferable to Bushnell's, for Bushnell had only the noun "righteousser" to add to our vocabulary and no verb. Not only is "righteousser" an "outlandish, mock-English substitute," as Bushnell himself indicated, but it connotes the ethical rather than the forensic meaning.

"Rightwise," on the other hand, being a verb, can be used to translate not only the Greek verb and verbal forms but also the noun *δικαίωσις*, by using the participial form, "rightwising." Moreover, "rightwise" is a word with a history, albeit obsolete in general usage today.¹⁴ Most important, it suggests the necessary forensic sense, the change from a wrong to a *right* status before the celestial court.

Building upon Grobel's suggestions, I find that "rightwise" can be used as follows to render every instance of *δικαίωω* in Rom:

a) where *δικαίωω* appears as a finite verb, it can be translated by "rightwise" (2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 28, 30; 4:2; 5:1, 9; 6:7; 8:30), e.g., 2:13:

¹⁴ *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1933), VIII, 677, lists "rightwis(h)e," "rightwyse" as an obsolete transitive verb, meaning "to set right; to justify; to do justice to; to make righteous." The *E. E. Psalter* of 1300 uses "rightwised" (18:10) and "rightwises" (81:3). *The Hampole Psalter* (1340) reads, "He calles me, he rightwises me and glorifies me" (61:6). No usage is cited from the Tyndale, Great, Geneva, Bishops', or Rheims Bibles; in Rom these translations use "justyfye," "justify," or "justifie." *Webster's International Dictionary of the English Language* (Springfield, Mass., 1895), p. 1242, gives "rightwise" as an obsolete transitive verb meaning "to make righteous," but offers no examples of usage. Following Grobel, I use this verb in the forensic sense.

“For not the hearers of the law are righteous before God, but the doers of the law shall be rightwised.”

At first glance 3:4 appears to be an exception, since it would seem strange to speak of men “rightwising” God:

“That thou mayest be justified in thy words . . .” (RSV). Yet that is precisely the meaning here: “that thou might be pronounced righteous [that is, rightwised] by the judgment of mankind.”¹⁵

Likewise “rightwise” at first appears inadequate at 6:7, where RSV translates: “For he who has died is freed from sin.” Yet

the sense of δεδικαιώται is still forensic: “is declared righteous, acquitted from guilt.” The idea is that of a master claiming legal possession of a slave: proof being put in that the slave is dead, the verdict must needs be that the claims of law are satisfied and that he is no longer answerable; sin loses its suit.¹⁶

Hence the verse should be translated: “For he who has died is rightwised from sin.”

b) where δικαιώω appears as a participle referring to God it can be rendered by the substantive, “Rightwiser”:

“God is the Rightwiser of him who has faith in Jesus” (3:26).

“But to him who does not work but trusts the Rightwiser of the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness (4:5). God is the Rightwiser” (8:33).

I have noted that Grobel translated δικαιώσις (4:25; 5:18) as “rightwising.” This rendition is preferable to the numerous others used by the various translations. At this point, however, I would like to exhume another obsolete word, “rightwiseness” (Middle English), which means “righteousness.”¹⁷

¹⁵ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (“The International Critical Commentary”; 5th ed., Edinburgh, 1964), p. 72.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁷ *Webster's International Dictionary of the English Language* (1895), p. 1242.

I would use it as the equivalent of *δικαίωσις*, referring both to the state of those who have been rightwised (pronounced righteous, acquitted, absolved from guilt) and to God's act of rightwising (pronouncing righteous, acquitting, absolving) the sinner: "He was raised for our rightwiseness" (4:25).

"The free gift came unto all men unto rightwiseness of life" (5:18), that is, life is the "result of the state of things into which the Christian enters when he is declared 'righteous' or receives his sentence of absolution."¹⁸

As for the noun *δικαίωμα*, it is used five times in Rom (1:32; 2:26; 5:16; 5:18; 8:4) and in two senses:

a) *δικαίωμα* can refer to a declaration that a thing is righteous (*δίκαιος*), which has led to the meaning of ordinance, statute (1:32; 2:26; 8:4). Here I would propose the translation, "righteous requirement":

"Although they know God's righteous requirement . . ." (1:32).

"Therefore if the circumcision keep the righteous requirements of the law . . ." (2:26).

"In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us . . ." (8:4).

b) *δικαίωμα* can also refer to a declaration that a person is righteous (*δίκαιος*), which has led to the Pauline usage meaning God's verdict declaring sinners righteous. For this sense I propose the translation, "rightwising act":

For on the one hand judgment followed one man's act and resulted in a verdict of condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift followed many trespasses and ended in God's rightwising act (5:16). Therefore as through one transgression the judgment came unto all men unto condemnation, so also through one rightwising act the free gift came unto all men unto rightwiseness of life (5:18).

In both 5:16 and 5:18 *δικαίωμα* means "the sentence by which God declares men righteous on account of Christ's death."¹⁹

Finally, there is the word *δικαιοκρισία* (2:5), which may simply be rendered as "righteous judgment," or, "righteous

¹⁸ Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

judge," assuming that the term denotes "not so much the character of the judgment as the character of the Judge":²⁰

While you with that callous impenitent heart of yours are heaping up arrears of Wrath, which will burst upon you in the Day of Wrath, when God will stand revealed in His character as the Righteous Judge.²¹

In sum, I am suggesting that in the classroom and in scholarly works in English the six words in Romans on the root δικ- be rendered as follows:

δικαιος = righteous

δικαιοσύνη = righteousness

δικαιόω = rightwise and Rightwiser

δικαίωσις = rightwiseness

δικαίωμα = righteous requirement (1:32; 2:26; 8:4) and rightwising act (5:16, 18)

δικαιοκρισία = righteous judgment or Righteous Judge.

For in it the *righteousness* (δικαιοσύνη) of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "He who through faith is *righteous* (δικαιος) shall live (1:17)." Although they know God's *righteous requirement* (δικαίωμα) that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them (1:32). But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's *righteous judgment* (δικαιοκρισία) will be revealed (2:5). For no human being will be *rightwised* (δικαιόω) in his sight by the works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin (3:20). This was to show God's *righteousness* (δικαιοσύνη) at this time, that he might be *righteous* (δικαιος) and the *Rightwiser* (δικαιόω) of him who has faith in Jesus (3:26). But to him who does not work but trusts the *Rightwiser* (δικαιόω) of the ungodly, his faith is counted as *righteousness* (δικαιοσύνη) (4:5). Therefore as through one transgression the judgment came unto all men unto condemnation, so also through one *rightwising act* (δικαίωμα) the free gift came unto all men unto *rightwiseness* (δικαίωσις) of life (5:18).

Such a homogeneous translation will make it plain to the English reader that we are dealing with one stock of words in Greek and at the same time bring out the proper forensic

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

meaning of these terms. It should serve to bring English abreast of other languages in this respect, and hopefully it will deliver us from that "jumble of ambiguities, where we have as good chance of mental confusion as the worst enemy of truth could desire."