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ESSAY ROUNDTABLE

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HUMAN LAW: A NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE ON LAW AND THEOLOGY

JENS SCHRÖTER
Professor of New Testament Exegesis and Theology and Ancient Christian Apocrypha, Humboldt University Berlin

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It is a remarkable fact that ancient Christianity did not establish a distinct legal system. The early Christians did not take over the Jewish law as the basis for the church. Rather, they accepted the administrative and legal context of the Roman Empire and developed their religious and ethical views within this framework. Consequently, unlike in Judaism and Islam, a "Christian law" was not established, even not after the acceptance of Christianity as the official religion in the Roman Empire or as Christianity became the prevailing religion in the Middle Ages and remained so into modern times. Nevertheless, Christianity developed its own perspective on legal and ethical matters. Distinctive for this view is the difference between the commitment to God's will on the one hand and the respect for human legal systems on the other.[1] In other words, Christianity developed a perspective on the relationship of law and theology that can be described as the implementation of a double directive: Christians are bound to an ethos oriented towards God's will, but at the same time they accept the rules and authorities of this world. This view also means that God's commandments found in the scriptures of Israel are now interpreted in a new way. They are not regarded as ethical and ritual rules that would separate Christian communities from society. Rather, God's law, interpreted by Jesus Christ, serves as the guideline for a life of the Christian believers within the world of the Roman Empire. Both of these concepts—the acceptance of the legislation of the society and the commitment to God's will—can come into conflict with each other, as has often happened in Christian history. Already in early Christianity it was pointed out that obedience to God should prevail over human law.

Early Christian views on legal and administrative regulations are based on a distinct set of religious symbols developed in the New Testament writings. This symbolic world enabled the new movement to survive within an often hostile and intimidating world. The cross, provocatively invoking a crucified savior as the counter-model—a "stumbling block" and a "folly" (1 Corinthians 1:23)—to the wisdom of the Greeks and to Jewish messianic expectations served as the foundation of a worldview and an ethos formulated by the first Christians vis-à-vis the value systems of pagan society. No longer a part of the synagogue, but also not simply accepting

1 See the contributions in Michael Labahn and Jürgen Zangenberg, eds., *Zwischen den Reichen. Neues Testament und Römische Herrschaft*: *Vorträge auf der Ersten Konferenz der European Association for Biblical Studies* (Tübingen: Francke, 2002); Michael Labahn and Outi Lehtipuu, eds., *People under Power: Early Jewish and Christian Responses to the Roman Empire* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).

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pagan ethics and lifestyle, the early Christians had to find their place within the religious, cultural, and political society of the Roman Empire. This triggered the question of how they should meet the challenges posed by the administrative and legal systems, as well as the hostility they faced from their pagan—and also their Jewish—contemporaries. In the New Testament we find different answers to that question.

PAUL

A first approach to the question can be found in the letters of Paul. An appropriate starting point is 1 Thessalonians 5:3: "When they say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape!"[2] The Pauline formulation probably alludes to Roman imperial propaganda of the Augustan period promising *pax* all over the empire.[3] This ideology was developed further in the time of Tiberius and Claudius and was present still in Paul's days as the idea of a *Pax Romana* or *Pax Augusta* and *aureum saeculum* or "Golden Age."

Against this ideology Paul refers to the day of the Lord that will destroy the security allegedly sustained by the Roman Empire. He ensures the community of the Thessalonians that they do not have to fear "the day of the Lord" because they live already as "children of light and of the day" and not in the darkness (5:5). They await the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ—his παρουσία, a term used four times in 1 Thessalonians with political overtones (2:19: 3:13; 4:15; 5:23). It is noteworthy that this term does not occur in Jewish apocalyptic literature before Paul but is used to announce the arrival of an emperor in Hellenistic texts since the fourth century BCE.[4] By employing this term, Paul in 1Thessalonians develops a perspective on the return of the Lord Jesus Christ with apocalyptic connotations. He refers to God's wrath that will come to all humankind at the end of time, whereas the believers will be saved by the resurrected and exalted Son of God (1:10; 5:9).

This perspective can be corroborated by observations from other letters. In Philippians 3:20 Paul uses the expression "commonwealth in heaven" (πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς) to describe the true

2 See the discussion in Christoph vom Brocke, *Thessaloniki – Stadt des Kassander und Gemeinde des Paulus: Eine frühe christliche Gemeinde in ihrer heidnischen Umwelt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 167–85. For an overview on the religious situation in Roman Thessalonica, see Christopher Steimle, *Religion im römischen Thessaloniki: Sakraltopographie, Kult und Gesellschaft 168 v. Chr. – 324 n. Chr.* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). All passages from the Bible are from the New Stardard Revised Version.

3 The hypothesis that Paul would refer to a *slogan* of Roman imperial propaganda was first introduced to Biblical scholarship by Ernst Bammel, "Ein Beitrag zur paulinischen Staatsanschauung," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 85, no. 11 (1960): 837–40. The evidence for a fixed formulation is sparse. See Joel R. White, "'Peace and Security' (1 Thessalonians 5.3): Is It Really a Roman Slogan?" *New Testament Studies* 59, no. 3 (2013): 382–95. However, the Greek or Latin terms for "peace" and "security," occasionally supplemented by others, such as "righteousness," appear together, for example on inscriptions and in literary texts. See Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "'Peace and Security' (1 Thess 5.3): Prophetic Warning or Political Propaganda?" *New Testament Studies* 58, no. 3 (2012): 331–59, who points to the numismatic, monumental, epigraphic and literary evidence of the imperial period, propagating *pax* and *securitas* on coins, altars, and inscriptions, as well as in literary documents.

4 See Adolf Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten: Das Neue Testament und die neuentdeckten Texte der hellenistisch-römischen Welt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1923), 314–20. Deissmann refers to papyri, inscriptions, and coins from the Ptolemaic and Hellenistic-Roman era celebrating the arrival (παρουσία or *adventus*) of a ruler.

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"homeland" of the Christians.[5] It is striking that it is in the same verse that the only occurrence of the term *savior* (σωτήρ) for Jesus Christ in the letters of Paul is found.[6] Paul therefore points out that the proper "homeland" of the Christians is in heaven and that their true savior is Jesus Christ. This is a sharp contrast to the Roman colony of Philippi, the hometown of the addressees of the letter. As he does in 1 Thessalonians, Paul emphasizes that the Christians should regard their present situation as believers within a Gentile environment as fading and instead expect their salvation from the exalted Lord returning at the end of time. In both letters, therefore, one might detect a political, anti-imperial dimension of Paul's theology.[7]

This approach also concerns the social formation and religious life of the Pauline communities. Paul programmatically states that the differences between Jew or Gentile, male or female, patron or slave no longer exist among the believers (Galatians 3:28).[8] The communities founded by Paul consequently consisted of members from different social and religious origin, now practicing the rituals of a new community—such as a ritual meal—and had a distinct ethos developed on the basis of the "word of the cross." According to Paul, believers in Christ, therefore, neither belonged to the synagogue nor did they form a pagan assembly, but they possessed a distinct identity and their own ethical values.[9]

A striking example of the latter is the relationship of patron and slaves. In Greek and Roman society slaves were usually regarded not as human beings but as objects. Legally, slaves belonged to the property of a patron in the same way as did houses, animals, and stock. Sometimes philosophers criticized this attitude. In an epistle to Lucilius, Seneca praises his addressee for being friends with his slave because he belongs to the same human race as high-ranking persons.[10] Paul develops a comparable view. In his letter to Philemon he does not call into question the social structure of society as such, but instead calls the social division of patrons and slaves into question from another perspective: He urges Philemon to regard his slave Onesimus no longer as a slave but as "more than a slave, a beloved brother" (Philemon 16). Within the Christian household of Philemon, therefore, the difference between patrons and slaves should no longer exist, as Paul explicitly states, "in the flesh," that is, in the conduct of daily life and "in the Lord."[11]

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5 See the similar description in Philo, *De confusion linguarum* 78: The wise men "return to the place from which they set out at first, looking upon the heavenly country in which they have the rights of citizens (πατρίδα οὐράνιον ἐν ᾧ πολιτεύονται) as their native land, and as the earthly abode in which they dwell for a while as in a foreign land." (Translation taken from Loeb Classical Library).

6 The political connotations of the designation *savior* can be observed, for example, in the usage of the term in inscriptions venerating the Roman emperor. See, for example, SIG³ 814: Nero as liberating Zeus and savior (σωτήρ); OGIS II 458: Augustus as benefactor and savior (εὐεργέτ[ης] καὶ σωτήρ). SIG³ refers to Wilhelm Dittenberger, ed., *Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig 1915–1924). OGIS II refers to Wilhelm Dittenberger, *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae* (Leipzig 1903–1905).

7 The structure and terminology of Philippians 3:20–21 has similarities with that of the "Christ hymn" in 2:6–11. See Ralph P. Martin and Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, revised and expanded ed. (Nashville: Nelson Reference and Electronic, 2004), 228–30.

8 See Bernard C. Lategan, "Reconsidering the Origin and Function of Galatians 3:28," *Neotestamentica* 46, no. 2 (2012): 274–86.

9 See Michael Wolter, "Identität und Ethos bei Paulus," in *Theologie und Ethos im frühen Christentum: Studien zu Jesus, Paulus und Lukas* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 121–69.

10 Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium* 47:1. In this letter Seneca is concerned with the treatment of slaves by their owners.

11 See Ulrike Roth, "Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus: A Christian Design for Mastery," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 105, no. 1 (2014): 102–30; G. Francois Wessels, "The Letter to Philemon in the Context of Slavery in Early Christianity," in *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter*, ed. D. Francois Tolmie (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter), 143–68.

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For Paul, therefore, the Gospel of Jesus Christ had concrete consequences that affected the stance of the Christian believers to legal and ethical norms of pagan society. Faith in Jesus Christ makes a difference in the attitude towards law and ethical rules. Of course, the Pauline communities were small groups with little influence and only a few mighty or noble members (1 Corinthians 1:26). Paul's theology is also not aimed at a transformation of the Roman Empire. Rather, he respects the political rulers as the ordinance of God for this world (Romans 13:1–7), and he does not develop legal norms for "his" communities. But there can be no doubt that for the Christians the law of "this world" is not the last and final measure. Rather, as Paul explicitly states in 1 Corinthians 6:1–11, the "community of the Saints" who will judge the world shall not bring their own cases before judges from outside the community. This passage demonstrates that Paul respects the legal system of the pagan society but claims higher standards for the believers in Christ that are oriented towards the particular position of the "saints" still living within this world.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Acts of the Apostles develops another perspective on the relationship of law and religion. In his second book Luke describes how the Christian mission, especially pursued by Paul, enters the Greco-Roman world. In Acts 5:29 Peter declares, "We must obey God rather than any human authority," pointing out that God's order to proclaim the kingdom of God has to be placed over human regulations. In depicting the encounters of the Christian missionaries with the administration of the Roman cities and provinces, Luke emphasizes the divergence of the Christian mission from the customs of the Roman world. In Philippi, Paul and Silas are accused for advocating customs "that are not lawful for the Romans to adopt or observe" (Acts 16:21).[12] Similarly, Paul and his companions are brought before the rulers of the city of Thessalonica (πολιτάρχαι) and are accused for acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar (17:6–7). Here in Thessalonica, as later in Corinth, it is the Jews who accuse Paul and his companions before the city officials and before the proconsul because they are annoyed by the Christian proclamation. According to Luke, then, the Christian missionaries are contested by Jews and Gentiles alike: from a pagan perspective they are regarded as Jews (Acts 16:20), whereas the Jews accuse them of betraying the Jewish traditions by preaching Jesus as the crucified and resurrected Messiah.

But there are also other aspects in Acts that are important for the perspective on the relationship of the early Christian movement to law and society. Luke describes the development of Christianity as a continuation of the history of Israel by the inclusion of the Gentiles. The speeches of Peter, Stephen, and Paul refer to Israel's past and the Scriptures of Israel that, in his interpretation, point to the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ and to the pouring out of the Spirit in the last days. In this way, Luke can point out that Christianity relies on a tradition as old as the history of the Greeks and the Romans. Christians do not want to challenge the political and legal system but rather to contribute to the moral and intellectual substance of the Mediterranean world. Therefore, unlike Paul, Luke describes how the early Christian movement gains a foothold in a world politically structured by the administration of the Roman provinces and religiously determined by Greek and Roman religions.[13] Remarkably, Luke is the only New

12 Luke is referring here to the rule that Romans were not allowed to adopt foreign gods. See Cicero, *De Legibus*, 2:8:19; Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 4:30:10–11.

13 See Daniel Marguerat, "A Christianity between Jerusalem and Rome," in *The First Christian Historian: Writing the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 65–84.

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Testament author who mentions other gods by name: In Acts 19 the Christian mission comes into conflict with the cult of the famous Artemis of Ephesus. In Acts 28:4 he describes that the inhabitants of Malta thought that the goddess δίκη has caused a viper to come out of the fire and fasten on Paul's hand; when they saw that no misfortune came to him, they then thought that Paul was a god—comparable to the Lycaonians in Acts 14:12, who regard Barnabas and Paul as Zeus and Hermes appearing on earth in human shape. In Acts 28:11 Luke mentions the Διοσκοῦροι, the twin brothers and sons of Zeus, as figureheads of the ship leaving Alexandria. Luke, therefore, describes the Greco-Roman culture as the context of the early Christian mission in much more detail than does Paul or any of the other early Christian writers.

It is no accident, therefore, that it was Luke who composed the earliest description of the encounter of Christianity with pagan philosophy. In Acts 17, he fascinatingly outlines the encounter of early Christianity and Greco-Roman culture by describing Paul's confrontation with Stoic and Epicurean philosophers on the Areopagus in Athens.[14] This is certainly not a report about a historical event. Rather, Luke uses the information about Paul's visit in Athens and portrays him as a Christian philosopher proclaiming the faith in the one God. The image of Paul developed in this scene differs considerably from that of earlier chapters in Acts, such as, in chapter 13, when Paul, in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, speaks to Jews and God-fearers. Whereas in this speech he proclaims the faith in Jesus Christ by referring to the history of Israel and quoting from the scriptures, in the Athenian discourse he uses philosophical terminology to proclaim the one God, creator of heaven and earth. The Paul of Acts, in this scene modeled after Socrates, can therefore speak in different tongues and is capable of bridging the gulf between Jewish traditions and the pagan world.[15] For Luke, then, the Christian mission claims to contribute in its own way to the philosophical discourse about the interpretation of the world. This also includes a distinct view on law, religion, and ethics.

"LEGAL" TERMINOLOGY

Another important aspect of the topic is the usage of "legal" terminology in the biblical writings. The terms "law" and "righteousness" frequently occur in the Hebrew as well as in the Greek Bible. The most common Hebrew terms are *torah* and *s^e^dakah*, which are usually translated in the Septuagint as *nomos* and *dikaiosynê*. The use of these terms within the scriptures of Israel belongs to a certain religious perspective that also determines their specific meaning. Related to this semantic field are also the terms "the righteous one" (*sadik*, *ho dikaios*), "to do justice" (*sad^a^k*, *dikaioô*), and "regulation, commandment" (in Greek *dikaiôma*, usually as the rendering of *ch^o^k* or *mišpat*).[16]

This translation process is remarkable for the relationship of religion and law in the biblical tradition, for it points to the emergence of two semantic fields related to specific perceptions of law and justice. The biblical concept of righteousness and law is based on the conviction that God is the righteous judge whose judges the earth with his impartiality and bestows his own righteousness to those who live in accordance with his will and commandments. Righteousness is therefore a

14 See Claire K. Rothschild, *Paul in Athens: The Popular Religious Context of Acts 17* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

15 See Daniel Marguerat, "Paul as a Socratic Figure in Acts," in *Paul in Acts and Paul in His Letters* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 66–77.

16 See David Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings: Studies in the Semantics of Soteriological Terms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 82–162.

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proper characteristic of God and at the same time a description of his relationship to the world and to humankind in particular. Thus, in Deuteronomy 32:4 God can be called "just and holy" (*dikaios kai hosios*); 1 Samuel 2:10 states: "The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth," and in Psalm 9:4 we read: "You have sat on the throne giving righteous judgment." In Psalm 50:6 and 75:8 God is called judge (*schofet*, *kritês*), who is righteous in his judgments. Therefore it is obvious that the benchmark for justice and righteousness according to the scriptures of Israel is God himself whose righteousness is beyond question because it is he himself who sets the norm for good and evil.

God's righteousness can be revealed as his mercy or as his liberating activity. In Jeremiah 9:24 we read, "I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the Lord." In Psalm 36:11 God's mercy (*chäsäd*, *eleos*) corresponds directly to his righteousness ("continue your steadfast love to those who know you, and your righteousness to the upright of heart"); similarly in Psalm 71:15: "My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all day long." In Psalm 31:2 the pious one prays, "Do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me." God condemns the guilty and vindicates the righteous by rewarding them according to their righteousness (1 Kings 8:32). These passages demonstrate that God's righteousness can be realized as his saving mercy or his compassion with human beings. The response of humankind to God's righteous and saving activity is described as "doing righteousness," also formulated as "righteousness and justice" (*s^e^dakah w^e^mišpat*; *dikaiosynê kai krisis*): Genesis 18:19; Psalm 106:3; Psalm 119:121.

This concept of God's righteousness, which corresponds to the conduct of humankind, is the basis also for early Christian perspectives on justice and law. When, for example, Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 in two important places—in Galatians 3:6 and Romans 4:3—it becomes clear that Abraham is declared righteous by God because of his faith. In a similar way, the quotation of Habakkuk 2:4 ("The one who is righteous will live by faith") in Galatians 3:11 and Romans 1:17 makes clear that righteousness and faith in God are inextricably linked with each other. Of course, for Paul true faith in God means to acknowledge God's saving power as it is revealed in the gospel. But for the present purpose it suffices to note that the concept of righteousness has its foundation in the scriptures of Israel and their understanding of God's righteousness.

For Paul it is of utmost important to emphasize that it is God himself who acts as the righteous judge whereas on the side of humankind are only faithlessness and injustice (Romans 3:3–5). This contrast is outlined in Romans 1:18–3:20, followed by the declaration that God himself is righteous and justifies the one who has faith in Jesus (3:26). At the same time, for Paul as for other New Testament writers there can be no doubt that human behavior has to be in correspondence to God's righteousness. Paul describes this as a life according to the Spirit, whereas, for example, in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and in 1 John the phrase "doing righteousness" (*poiein dikaiosynên*) is used (Matthew 6:1; Acts 10:35; 1 John 2:29, 3:7, 3:10; Revelation 22:11).

This understanding of God's righteousness as the challenge for human behavior and a guideline for ethics can be demonstrated by a look at two striking examples from the Gospel of Matthew. First, in the well-known parable of the laborers in the vineyard, a specific view of righteousness is developed. The landowner agrees with the first group of laborers on a *denar* for a day's work, whereas when employing the second group at the third hour of the day he states, "I will give you what is right" (ὃ ἐὰν ᾖ δίκαιον δώσω ὑμῖν). The surprising solution at the end of the parable is that "what is right" in the perspective of the landowner—who represents God in the parable—stands in stark contrast to what the laborers within the parable itself and also the audience would expect: All the laborers get the same reward, regardless of the actual number of hours of work in the vineyard. The parable therefore points out that God's righteousness can foil human

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understanding of "what is right": it is God's sovereignty to give whom he wants to give—in the words of the parable: to give the last as much as the first so that they have enough for their living, even if they did not have the chance to work as much as the first ones.

The second example is the parable of the Unforgiving Servant in Matthew 18:23–35. As in the parable just mentioned, also in this story the legal system—in this case the regulations concerning debts and repayment—is considered from a perspective that baffles the common treatment of this matter. The servant in the parable is admonished to be generous because he has experienced generosity himself. His right to demand repayment from his debtor is not called into question in general. But it is put into another paradigm: Human life should not just be considered within categories of earthly sustainment. Instead, it should be taken into account that eventually God will judge every human being. This view of humankind and earthly life is an important aspect in Matthean as well as in Lukan ethics. It puts legal affairs into a new paradigm in that they are regarded from the viewpoint of a commitment to God the creator of world and human beings: God's mercy and his willingness to forgive sins should be the principle of human behavior. Human beings should even be perfect as their heavenly father is (Matthew 5:48). This is a critical prefix for human law in general.

THE LAW AND GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

In the biblical tradition, it is the concept of God's righteousness that provides the basis for a distinct perception of law. "Law" is understood as *God's* law, given to his people at Mount Sinai as the commandment for a prosperous conduct of life. This perspective is modified in early Christianity in a specific way. Based on the conviction that from the perspective of the gospel the distinction between Jew and Gentile is not important anymore, the concept of law thus changed. Since the message of the gospel is open to anyone who believes in God's saving activity through Jesus Christ, the law given to Moses at Mount Sinai no longer serves any as an identity marker that would distinguish Israel as God's elected people from the nations. In a more radical way, Paul even points out that from the perspective of the gospel no one lives according to God's law because humankind in general is dominated by sin, which separates human beings from God. This overall perspective is based on a universalized view of law and righteousness. Paul can claim that also Gentiles have their law, even if it is not the Torah of Israel but "written on their hearts" (Romans 2:15). With this concept Paul does not relinquish the idea that the God of Israel will judge mankind as the righteous one according to his law. On the contrary, Paul includes the Gentiles in this perspective and claims that some of them may occasionally fulfill what the law requires (Romans 2:14). However, this does not contradict his general indictment that all mankind is accused for transgressing God's commandments.

The biblical perspective on law and righteousness is thus characterized by the conviction that God himself is the righteous one and that his law is the measure for good and evil. This concerns, first and foremost, Israel as God's elected people that is committed to the Torah from Sinai, but in a modified sense it also applies to all other peoples: Israel is committed to God's covenant with the law given at Mount Sinai as its content. The other peoples are also committed to God's commandments, because in Paul's perspective there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised as well as the uncircumcised (Romans 3:30).

The perspective on law and righteousness in the biblical tradition is therefore different from that of Greek philosophy. According to the latter, righteousness is a fundamental part of philosophical ethics. As such it plays a central role in Plato's and Aristotle's concept of the ideal *polis*. Righteousness (*dikaiosynê*) thereby counts among the cardinal virtues. This concept was taken

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up in such Jewish texts as Philo and in 4 Maccabees.[17] In these texts, Jewish faith is interpreted by taking up the Greek concept of righteousness. Other texts, however, follow the opposite path by integrating the Greek philosophical tradition into the biblical perspective. This is the case, for example, in the Wisdom of Solomon, written roughly at the same time as Philo's works. Although righteousness in this writing belongs to the virtues, the writer follows the biblical concept of righteousness as a gift from God that shall be practiced by human beings. Eventually, the righteous ones will be saved and gain eternal life. This tradition can also be found in other Jewish sapiential writings, such as Sirach and Tobit. It is this concept of righteousness that was also taken up in different ways by early Christian authors Paul, Matthew, and Luke, as well as in the letter of James.

In biblical tradition law and religion are therefore interpreted from the perspective that God himself is righteous, that his righteousness can crisscross human understanding of law and justice, and that human law always must be measured by God's righteousness that may occur as his mercy and generosity. Against this backdrop a Christian perspective on law will always be a critical one, for it will evaluate human law against the standard of God's righteousness and compassion. This perspective must be communicated in different cultural and religious contexts as a distinct view based on the biblical concept of law and justice even into the present time. This means that Christians, on the one hand, are committed to the concrete legal systems of their respective countries. At the same time, these legal systems are reflected critically against God's commandment as the measure for the human life according to God's will.

17 See Jens Schröter, "Gerechtigkeit als Thema biblischer Theologie: Ein neutestamentliches Votum" (Öffentliche Vorlesungen der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin 164, 2011), 45–73.

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