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A Reappraisal of ‘From Faith to Faith’ (Romans 1:17)

Terry Wardlaw

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Es ist unerlässlich, die Redewendung in Römer 1,17 „aus Glauben zum Glauben“ richtig zu verstehen, wenn wir das Leitwort von Paulus für den Römerbrief (Röm. 1,16-17) richtig verstehen wollen. Der Autor untersucht die Idee, dass sich ein semitisches Idiom hinter dieser syntaktischen Konstruktion verbirgt. Demzufolge werden Beweise

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aus dem Hebräischen, Aramäischen und Griechischen als Unterstützung für das Argument angeführt, dass es sich hier um eine iterative, also wiederholende, und intensivierende Konstruktion handelt. Diese Interpretation ist wiederum im literarischen Kontext des Buches angesiedelt. Anschließend wird ausgeführt, wie sich diese Auffassung zu der neuen Perspektive zu Paulus verhält.

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RÉSUMÉ

L’interprétation de l’expression « de la foi pour la foi » en Romains 1.17 est cruciale pour la compréhension de la thèse de l’épître aux Romains telle que Paul l’énonce en Romains 1.16-17. L’auteur suggère que cette construction syntaxique a pour arrière-plan une tournure sémitique idiomatique. Il avance divers arguments fondés sur

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des usages en hébreu, en araméen et en grec pour en conclure que la construction concernée a une fonction itérative (indiquant la répétition) et d’intensification. Il montre ensuite comment cette interprétation s’accorde avec le contexte littéraire de l’épître, puis considère son adéquation avec la nouvelle perspective sur la théologie paulinienne.

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SUMMARY

An understanding of the phrase ‘from faith to faith’ in Romans 1:17 is integral to understanding Paul’s thesis statement for the Book of Romans (Rom 1:16–17). The author examines the suggestion that a Semitic idiom lurks behind this syntactic construction. Accordingly, Hebrew,

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Aramaic and Greek evidence is adduced as warrant for the argument that this is an iterative and intensifying construction. In turn, this interpretation is situated in the literary context of the book, and then reference is made to the relation between this understanding and the New Perspective on Paul.

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1. Introduction

As the numerous articles and monographs devoted to the subject indicate, the concept ‘faith’ proves to be central to understanding Pauline thought. In particular, this concept is central to Paul’s thesis statement in Romans 1:16–17. However, of the articles, monographs and references in commentaries to the phrase *ek pisteōs eis pistin*, ‘from faith

to faith’, in the last century, none has put forth a convincing explanation of the semantic value for this grammatical construction on the basis of sound, linguistic evidence.¹ Commentators tend to jump from syntactic or contextual evidence to traditional interpretations without connecting the chain of inference from one to the other.

Therefore, in order to break new ground by

developing a likely interpretation from the evidence, I propose to follow the suggestion that a Semitic idiom resides behind Paul's use of this phrase, and I intend to interact with traditional interpretations of this phrase on the basis of the results of the syntactic and semantic discussion. Accordingly, I shall 1) present Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek data, 2) situate the theological significance of this phrase in the overall context of the book of Romans and 3) briefly explore how this interpretation relates to the current state of the discussion regarding the New Perspective on Paul.

2. Past and current explanations

Since the phrase *ek pisteōs eis pistin* in Romans 1:17 seems to be an idiomatic expression, it is not surprising that contemporary exegetes find its meaning obscure. If commentators note Old Testament LXX evidence, then they typically mention the similar construction in Jeremiah 9:2 (*hoti ek kakōn eis kaka exēlthosan*), Psalm 84:8 (*poreusontai ek dunameōs eis dunamin*), and then point to the similar construction in 2 Corinthians 3:18 (*metamorphoumetha apo doxēs eis doxan*).

At least six major interpretations of the phrase *ek pisteōs eis pistin* have been proposed through history: 1) several early exegetes read this as a reference to the faith of the old dispensation, which then transitions to the faith of the new dispensation (e.g. Tertullian and Origen); 2) Ambrosiaster (Pseudo-Ambrosius), followed by Karl Barth and James D.G. Dunn, reads this as a reference to God's faithfulness as the source of human faith; 3) some read this as indicating a distinction between present and future faith; 4) Calvin and his followers interpret this to mean 'by faith (means) unto faith (goal, growth in degree)'; 5) this may be an intensive construction, which indicates that justification is by faith alone (e.g. Käsemann); and 6) the difficulty of this passage leads some to the belief that the phrase *ek pisteōs eis pistin* is a textual corruption.² To this list may be added the common understanding 7) 'from the faith of the speaker to the faith of the hearer'. However, not all interpreters fit neatly into these categories; for example, Melancthon's commentary assumes that God's faithfulness is the source of human faith (2, above), that there is a growth in degree (4, above) and that justification is by faith alone (5, above).³ Also, Adolf Schlatter explains 'from faith to faith' as meaning that God is the source of human faith (2, above) and that the goal of God's work is the

fruit of human faith (4, above).⁴

Among more recent treatments, Desta Heliso argues that 'although the phrase means human faith in some places and is employed ambiguously in other places, cumulative evidence suggests that in Romans 1:17 it probably denotes the faithfulness of Christ shown in his death on the cross'.⁵ He considers Galatians 3:11, Romans 9:10–10:13 and the *pistis christou* debate in order to establish the warrant for his argument. However, the shortcoming of Heliso's work is that these passages are not syntactically analogous to Romans 1:17. Moreover, on the basis of his examination of ancient rhetorical devices and practices, R.M. Calhoun puts forth the most compelling argument to date, namely that Paul intentionally employs the device of ellipsis in Romans 1:17 in order to achieve brevity in his thesis statement and in order to exploit the ambiguity in terminology and syntax for the development of the rest of the epistle.⁶ Calhoun finds the warrant for his argument in early Patristic exegesis and then concludes that Augustine's reading is correct: 'from the faith of those who preach to the faith of those who obey'.⁷

The strength of Calhoun's argument rests on his early interpretive evidence, as well as on his argument that Paul is employing standard rhetorical devices. However, in my estimation, the argument that Paul is employing ellipsis is valid only if it can be demonstrated that the phrase *ek pisteōs eis pistin* does not accord with demonstrable syntactic patterns from Paul's language environment. I shall argue below that there are indeed such demonstrable syntactic parallels and therefore an interpretation of the syntax that is present is to be preferred over an interpretation of what is conjectured to be absent.

In a move toward the present thesis, Charles Quarles recently analysed analogous syntax among classical Greek writings, and the basic linguistic parameters he puts forth seem sensible. First, Quarles assumes that Paul's usage may be idiosyncratic. However, it is likely consistent with usage from other authors. On the basis of this assumption, he turns to other ancient Greek texts and finds that the 'from ... to ...' construction in classical texts is used (a) temporally in an iterative manner (Pseudo-Plato), (b) in order to indicate a duration of time (Aristotle) or (c) in order to indicate repetition and intensification (Plutarch).⁸ Moreover, usage in the LXX may indicate duration, progression or repetition.⁹ However, the emphatic interpretation of Romans 1:17 remains

unlikely since it is not attested elsewhere.¹⁰ In my view, it is precisely the syntax of this iterative, durative and intensive usage that begs investigation in the Old Testament texts which preceded and influenced Pauline usage.

Second, Quarles articulates the following criteria for evaluating an interpretation of Romans 1:17:

1. Romans 1:16–17 is a programmatic statement; therefore, the interpretation of 1:17 should relate to key themes in the epistle.
2. The meaning of the terms should relate to Paul's normal usage.
3. The interpretation of *pistis* in 1:16–17 should share the same meaning as the quote from Habakuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17b.¹¹

I find the first and third criterion reasonable, and therefore they are of abiding worth. Since Romans 1:16–17 is generally regarded as Paul's thesis statement for the book, one would expect subsequent developments and expansions of the concept 'faith' to resonate with usage in verse 17. Further, since Habakuk 2:4 is used in order to substantiate Paul's argument, one would expect that the meaning of Romans 1:17 would lead smoothly into the natural sense of Habakuk 2:4 in the flow of discourse. However, the second criterion must be left to the side at present on the grounds that it is precisely the meaning of the key terms in Paul which scholars debate. A thorough treatment of each of the key terms in Romans 1:16–17 falls outside the scope of the present syntactic investigation. Therefore, criteria 1. and 3. will be used to test the validity of the proposed interpretation in the following discussion.

Third, Quarles finds Chrysostom's interpretation to be of greater weight than other text-external evidence because he still spoke Greek as his primary language so that his understanding reflects that of a native speaker reading the New Testament text. Chrysostom interpreted the phrase *ek pisteōs eis pistin* temporally to mean 'from the faith of the old dispensation to the faith of the new dispensation'.¹² Admittedly, on the basis of Paul's statement that the Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of both Jews and Greeks (v. 16), the interpretation of this phrase as a reference to the progression from the old dispensation to the new is a possible interpretation. Nonetheless, Quarles' reading of Chrysostom seems questionable to me. At this point in his homily on Romans 1:8–17, Chrysostom instead seems to point to

old dispensation exemplars in Hebrews 11, who were justified by faith.¹³ A reference to the distinction between the old and the new dispensations is not in focus; rather, exemplary saints who trusted God are in focus, and their lifespan happened to fall in the old dispensation. Thus, Quarles' appeal to Chrysostom's interpretation as a native Greek reading of Romans 1:17 seems less convincing. Moreover, if the distinction between the two covenants is in focus, then it does not make sense that verse 17 would be supported by a reference to Habakuk 2:4, which points toward the commonalities between the two covenants: faith. For these reasons, a fresh investigation is needed in order to refine Quarles' conclusions.

Along these lines, it seems likely that traditional Hebrew texts and their translations into Aramaic and Greek influenced Paul's thought and language to a greater extent than is suggested by Quarles' work since these were the basis for Paul's rabbinic education.¹⁴ Indeed, recent trends in Pauline scholarship emphasise the Jewish context of his epistles.¹⁵ Moreover, a second warrant for citing Semitic evidence behind New Testament usage is the influence that the Semitic language environment had upon Palestinian Greek.¹⁶ For this reason we now turn to several examples from Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Scripture in order to establish the semantic value for the syntax of the 'from ... to ...' construction both in the formative texts of Paul's thought-world and in his language environment (*langue*). In turn, we shall examine the immediate literary context of Romans 1:17 in order to establish the generic sense-selection, as well as the semantic distinctives of this passage in the flow of discourse (*parole*).

3. Evidence from the linguistic environment

In biblical Hebrew the meaning 'from ... to ...' may be expressed grammatically in several different ways. I select the following examples because they illustrate the general semantic range of the Hebrew construction that is analogous to the Greek construction in Romans 1:17. Moreover, I shall proceed from concrete, locative uses to metaphorical and abstract ones. Contextual sense-selection rules out other uses as either nonsense or unlikely. Therefore, I shall not bore the reader with a discussion of every possible semantic value for this construction in Hebrew, Aramaic and Septuagint Greek.

For our first example, the locative or directional meaning may be expressed by a *מִן* *min* of source or origin, which is in turn followed by a directional *ה* -*al*:

Gen 11:31 וַיִּקַּח תְּרַח אֶת־אַבְרָם בְּנוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בֶּן־הָרָן בֶּן־בְּנוֹ וְאֶת־שָׂרָי כְּנֵזֶה וַיָּבֹאוּ עִרְהָרָן וַיִּשְׁבוּ שָׁם׃
wayyiqqah terah 'et- 'abram banō wā 'et- lōi ben- hārān ben- banō wā 'ēi šaray kallāō 'ēšeī 'abram banō wayyēšā 'ū 'ittām mē 'ūr kašdīm lāleket 'aršā kāna 'an wayyābō 'ū 'aq- hārān wayyēšābū šām

Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there.¹⁷

Destination may also be indicated by other prepositions:

Gen 12:1 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם לֵךְ לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲרַאֶךָ׃
wayyō 'mer yhw 'el- 'abram leḵ- lakā mē 'aršakā umimmōladīkākā ūmibbēt 'ābīkā 'el- hā 'āreš 'āšer 'ar ekkā

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you."

Gen 13:3 וַיֵּלֶךְ לְמִסְעָיו מִנֶּגֶב וְעַד־בֵּית־אֵל עַד־הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה שָׁם *אֵהְיָא (אֵהְיָא) בְּתַחֲלִית בֵּין בֵּית־אֵל וּבֵין הַעֵי׃
wayyēleḵ ləmassā 'āyw minneḡeb wā 'ad- bēt- 'el 'ad- hammāqōm 'āšer-hāyā sām 'ohōlōh 'ohōlō battāhillā bēn bēt- 'el ūbēn hā 'āy

And he journeyed on from the Negeb as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai

Second, the construction ... *עַד* ... *מִן* ... *מִן* ... *עַד* ... *ad* ... may indicate extent:

Exod 11:5¹⁸ וּמָת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכוֹר פְּרִיעָה וְיִשְׁבַּע עַל־כַּסָּא עַד בְּכוֹר הַשְּׂפֹחָה אֲשֶׁר אַחַר הַרְתָּוּ וְכָל בְּכוֹר בַּהֲמָה׃
ūmēt kol- bākōr bā 'ereš mišrayim miḡbākōr par 'oh hayyōšēh 'al- kis 'ō 'ad bākōr haššiphā 'āšer 'aḥar hārēhāyim wəḡōl bākōr bəhēmā

... and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle.

Third, the temporal use of this construction most often indicates duration of time:

Exod 18:13¹⁹ וַיִּגְדַּל יְהוָה מִן־הַיּוֹם וַיִּשְׁבַּע מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הָעָם וַיַּגִּדְם עַד־הָעֶם עַל־מֹשֶׁה מִן־הַבֹּקֶר עַד־הָעֶרֶב׃
wayyigdal mimmohōrāt wayyēšēh mōšeh lišpōt 'el- hā 'ām wayya 'āmōd hā 'ām 'al- mōšeh min- habbōqer 'ad- hā 'ereḥ

The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening.

Fourth, the temporal expression, with sequential or iterative overtones, may be found:

Exod 17:16 וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־יָרֵד עַל־כֶּסֶׁ הָיָה מִלְחָמָה לִיהוָה בְּעַמְלֵק מִדֹּר־דָּר׃
wayyō 'mer kī- yāḏ 'al- kēs yāh miḡhāmā lyhw ba 'āmālēq middōr dōr
 ... saying, "A hand upon the throne of the Lord! The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

This construction consists of the particle *מִן* *min* and a null preposition in the second slot (also see Ps 106:31).

Fifth, the locative meaning may also have iterative overtones:

Exod 32:27²⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׂמוּ אִישׁ־חַרְבּוֹ עַל־יָרְכוֹ עִבְרוּ וּשְׁבוּ מִשַּׁעַר לְשַׁעַר בְּמַחֲנֵה וְהָרְגוּ אִישׁ־אֶת־אֶחָיו וְאִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וְאִישׁ אֶת־קָרְבּוֹ׃
wayyō 'mer lāhem kōh- 'amar yhw 'elōhē yiśrā 'el simū 'is- ḥarbō 'al-yārēkō 'ibrū wāšūbū miššā 'ar lāšā 'ar bammahāneh wəhīrgū 'is- 'et- 'āhīw wā 'is 'et- rē 'ehū wā 'is 'et- qarōbō

And he said to them, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.'"

Sixth, the concrete locative and directional uses may extend to metaphor, as when the Lord's commands are conceived as a way, path or journey:

Deut 28:14²¹ וְלֹא תִסְוֶה מִקַּל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה אֹתְכֶם הַיּוֹם וּנְתַן וּשְׂמַאִיל לְלִבְתְּ אַחֵרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים לַעֲבֹדָם׃
wlō 'āsūr miqqol- haddabārim 'āšer 'ānōkī məšawweh 'etkem hayyōm yāmin ūšāmō wl lāleket 'āḥrē 'elōhīm 'āḥerim lā 'oḡḏām

... and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I command you today, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

Seventh, and finally, these uses then shade metonymically into a temporal-iterative sense, as with the following examples:

1 Chron 16:23 שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ בְּשָׂרוֹ מִיּוֹם־אֵלֵינוּ׃
šīrū lyhw kol- hā 'āreš bašārū miyyōm- 'el- yōm yašū 'ātō

Sing to the Lord, all the earth! Tell of his salvation from day to day.

2 Chron 24:5 וַיִּקְבְּצוּ אֶת־הַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם צִאוּ לְעָרֵי יְהוּדָה וּקְבְּצוּ מִכָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל כֶּסֶף לְחֶזֶק אֶת־בַּיִת אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִדַּי שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה וְאַתֶּם תִּמְהָרוּ לְדַבֵּר וְלֹא מִהָרוּ הַלְוִיִּם׃
wayyiqbōš 'et- hakkōhānīm wəhalwīyīm wayyō 'mer lāhem šā 'ū lā 'ārē yahūdā wəqibšū miqqol- yiśrā 'el kešep ləḥazzēq 'et- bēt 'elōhēkem middē šānā bāšānā wā 'attem tamahārū laddāḥār wlō 'mihārū halwīyīm

And he gathered the priests and the Levites and said to them, "Go out to the cities of Judah and gather from all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that you act quickly." But the Levites did not act quickly.

Neh 8:18
 וַיִּקְרָא בְסֵפֶר תּוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים יוֹם אֶחָד מִן הַיּוֹם
 הַרְאִישׁוֹן עַד הַיּוֹם הָאַחֲרֹן וַיַּעֲשֶׂה חֵן שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי עָצְרוּ
 כְּמוֹשֶׁשׁ׃
 wayyiqrā bəṣēḫer tōraṯ hā'ēlōhīm yōm ḥayyōm mīn- ḥayyōm ḥāri šōn
 'ad ḥayyōm hā'ahārōn wayya'āsū- ḥāg- ših' at yāmim ubayyōm haššamini
 'āšeret kammišpā

And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.

Isa 66:23
 וְהָיָה מִדִּי-חֲרֹשׁ בְּחַרְשׁוֹ וּמִדֵּי-שִׁבְתוֹ בְּשִׁבְתוֹ יָבוֹא
 כָּל-בָּשָׂר לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לִפְנֵי וְהָיָה׃
 wəḥāyā middē- ḥōdēs bəḥodšō' imiddē šabbāt bəšabbattō yābō' kol-
 bāšār ləhištahāwōt ləpānāy 'amar yḥwh

From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the Lord.

Ezek 4:10, 11
 וּמֵעַתָּה וּמֵאֲכָלְךָ אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכְלֶנּוּ בְּמִשְׁקָל עֶשְׂרִים שֶׁקֶל לַיּוֹם מֵעַתָּה
 עַד-עַתָּה תֹּאכְלֶנּוּ׃ וּמִיּוֹם בְּמִשְׁקָלָהּ תִּשְׁתַּה שְׁשִׁית הַחֵיִן מֵעַתָּה עַד-עַתָּה
 תִּשְׁתַּה׃

ūma 'ākālākā 'āšer tō' kālennū bəmišqōl 'ešrīm šeqel layyōm mē'ēt- 'ad-
 'ēt tō' kālennū ūmayim bimsūrā' išteḥ šiššit ḥahin mē'ēt- 'ad- 'ēt išteḥ

And your food that you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; from day to day you shall eat it. And water you shall drink by measure, the sixth part of a hin; from day to day you shall drink.

As we focus upon the texts which formed the basis of Paul's rabbinic training, it is worth examining one more example of the temporal-iterative sense of the 'from ... to ...' construction in order to establish the linguistic path (i.e. sociolinguistic influence) from biblical Hebrew to Paul's Greek field of discourse. Accordingly, we find a similar syntactic construction in the Masoretic Text (MT) of Numbers 30:15:

וְאִם-יִהְיֶה רִשׁ יְהִרִישׁ לָהּ אִשָּׁה מִיּוֹם אֶל-יוֹם וְהָקִים אֶת-כָּל-נְדָרֶיהָ אֹ
 אֶת-כָּל-אֲקָרָהּ אֲשֶׁר עָלֶיהָ הָקִים אֹתָם כִּי-יִהְיֶה רִשׁ לָהּ בַּיּוֹם שִׁמְעוּ׃
 wə'im- ḥahārēs yahāriš lāḥ 'iśāḥ miyyōm 'el- yōm wəḥēqim 'et- kol-
 naḏārēhā 'ō 'et- kol- 'ēsarēhā 'āšer 'ālēhā ḥēqim 'ōtām kī- heḥēriš lāḥ
 bayōm šām 'ō

But if her husband says nothing to her from day to day, then he establishes all her vows or all her pledges that are upon her. He has established them because he said nothing to her on the day that he heard of them.

To my knowledge, as with the preceding texts, this example has not been mentioned in discussions regarding the syntax of Romans 1:17 to date. This statement is found in the context of the Lord's commands to Moses regarding the vows of men and women (Num 30:1-17). In context, if a woman makes a vow or pledge, her husband finds out about it and then he remains silent 'from day to day', he establishes this vow or pledge.²²

Therefore, the expression מִיּוֹם-אֶל-יוֹם *miyyōm 'el-yōm*, 'from day to day', indicates the passage of time from one day to the next. In other words, there was a period of time when her husband may have nullified his wife's vow or pledge. However, he consistently remained silent for several days with the result that it was binding.

Among the versions, this verse is found in *Targum Onqelos* as follows:

וְאִם מִשְׁתַּק יִשְׁתַּק לָהּ בְּעֵלָה מִיּוֹם לַיּוֹם וְיָקִים יֵת כָּל נִדְרָהּ אוֹ יֵת
 כָּל אֲקָרָהּ דְּעֵלָה קִיָּים וְתַהוֹן אָרִי שְׁתִּיק לָהּ בַּיּוֹמָא דְּשִׁמְעָה׃
 w'm mštq yštqw lh b'lh mywm lywm wyqyym yt kl ndrḥ 'w yt kl 'srḥ d'lh
 qyym ythwn 'ry štyq lh bywm' dšm

But if her husband remains silent to her from day to day, then he has established all her vow or all her oath which is upon her; he has established them because he remained silent on the day he heard.

Onqelos, therefore, maintains the literal translation equivalent 'from day to day'. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* renders this verse:

וְאִין מִשְׁתַּק יִשְׁתַּק וּמִתְכוּין לָהּ בְּעֵלָה מִיּוֹמָא דְּשִׁמְעָה לַיּוֹמָא חֲרוֹן
 וְיִתְקִימוּן כָּל נִדְרָהּ אוֹ יֵת כָּל אִיסְרָהּ דְּעֵלָה וּבְמִשְׁתַּקִּיהּ קִיָּים
 יִתְהוֹן אַרוּם שְׁתִּיק לָהּ וְאִתְכוּוּן וְלֹא שְׁרִינוּן בַּיּוֹמָא דְּשִׁמְעָה׃
 'yn mštq yštqw wmtkwyn lh b'lh mywm' dšm' lywm' ḥrn wytqyymwn kl
 ndrḥ 'w yt kl 'srḥ d'lh wbmštwayḥ qyym ythwn 'rwm štyq lh w'tkwwn wl'
 šrynwn bywm' dšm

But if her husband remains silent and establishes them to her from the day he heard to another day, then he has established all her vow or all her oath which is upon her; by remaining silent he established them because he remained silent to her and fixed them, and he did not loosen them on the day he heard.

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, therefore, conveys the interpretation of the phrase as literally 'from the day when he hears to another day', which assumes that this period of time is two days. *Targum Neofiti* reads:

וְאִין מִשְׁתַּק יִשְׁתַּק לָהּ בְּעֵלָה וּזִם בְּתַר יוֹם וְיָקִים יֵת כָּל נִדְרָהּ אוֹ יֵת
 כָּל קִיּוּמָא דִּי עֵלָה קִיָּים יִתְהוֹן אַרוּם שְׁתִּיק לָהּ בַּיּוֹמָא דִּי שִׁמְעָה׃
 w'yn mštq yštqw lh b'lh ywm btr ywm wyqyym yt kl ndrḥ 'w yt kl qywm' dy
 'lh qyym ythwn 'rwm štq lh bywm' dy šm

But if her husband remains silent to her day after day, then he has established all her vow or all the oath which is upon her; he established them because he remained silent to her on the day when he heard.

The translators of *Neofiti* rendered this phrase 'day after day', which is similar to *Targum Onqelos*. In the Septuagint, this verse is rendered:

ἐάν δὲ σιωπῶν παρασιωπήσῃ αὐτῇ ἡμέραν ἕξ ἡμέρας, καὶ στήσῃ αὐτῇ πάσας τὰς εὐχὰς αὐτῆς, καὶ τοὺς ὀρισμοὺς τοὺς ἐπ’ αὐτῆς στήσῃ αὐτῇ, ὅτι ἐσιώπησεν αὐτῇ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, ἣ ἤκουσεν.
 ean de siōpōn parasīōpēsē autē hēmeran ex hēmeras kai stēsei autē pasas tas euchas autēs kai tous horismous tous ep’ autēs stēsei autē hoti esiōpēsen autē tē hēmera hē ēkousen

But if he remains silent to her from day to day [lit. day from day], then he shall establish for her all her vows, and he shall establish for her the ordinances that are upon her because he remained silent to her on the day when he heard.

This literal translation preserves the meaning ‘day to day’. Behind most of these renderings is the understanding that ‘day’ does not refer to a discrete period of 24 hours. Rather ‘the day on which he hears’ is understood as duration of time – two days according to *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* – in which the husband maintains consistent silence after discovering his wife’s vow. Therefore, the evidence allows us to hypothesize that this syntactic construction is associated with the semantic value of consistent or habitual action over a period of time.

Moreover, this syntactic form is found in the MT of Jeremiah 9:2. This context points toward a further metonymic extension from a purely temporal-iterative use. This iterative sense assumes the repeated occurrence of an entire script:

וַיִּדְרְכוּ אֶת־לְשׁוֹנָם קִשְׁתָּם שֶׁקֶר וְלֹא לְאִמְנֻנָה נִבְרָו בְּאָרֶץ
 כִּי מִרְעָה אֶל־רְעָה וַיֵּצְאוּ וְאִתִּי לֹא יָדְעוּ נְאֻם יְיָ הוֹחֵה
 wayyadrəḳū ‘el- lašōnām qāšām šeqer wəlō le’emīnā gāḇarū ḥā ‘āres
 ki mērā ‘ā ‘el- rā ‘ā yāšā ‘ū wə ‘ōj lō - yāḏā ‘ū na ‘um- yhw

They bend their tongue like a bow; falsehood and not truth has grown strong in the land; for they proceed from evil to evil

In context, therefore, Jeremiah conveys the judgment of the Lord against the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Jer 8:1) and he declares that the Lord will abandon them because of their sins (9:1). The syntactic construction *mērā ‘ā ‘el- rā yāšā ‘ū*, ‘they go about from one evil to another’, emerges in enumerating the grounds upon which the Lord abandons Jerusalem: the people constantly go from one evil act to another. The use of the *yiqtal* form here indicates habitual or iterative action and the phrase *mērā ‘ā ‘el- rā ‘ū* brings focus to bear on the repeated nature of a series of wicked actions.

In turning to the ancient translations of Jeremiah 9:2, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* renders this verse *נִבְרָו מִבְּשָׂמָה לְבִשְׂמָה גְּפָקוּ, אֲרִי מִבְּשָׂמָה לְבִשְׂמָה נִבְרָו*, ‘indeed, they go about from shameful act to shameful act’. This fairly literal rendering of

the underlying Hebrew into Aramaic preserves the syntax of the original and the only significant difference between the two dialects or registers is lexical.²³ In the Septuagint, this idiom is rendered *hoti ek kakōn eis kaka exēlthosan* ‘(indeed/because) they go about from evil to evil’. Therefore, the Aramaic and Greek versions preserve the habitual and iterative interpretation of the syntax of this passage. This, in turn, lends further support for the interpretation proposed on the basis of the evidence from Numbers 30:15.

Furthermore, this construction is also found in the MT of Psalm 84:8:

יֵלְכוּ מִתְּקֵיל אֶל־תְּקֵיל יִרְאֶה אֱלֹהִים בְּצִיּוֹן
 yələkū mēḥayil ‘el- ḥayil yērā eh ‘el- ‘ēlōhim bašiyōn

They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.

In context, those whose strength is in the Lord and who make pilgrimage with their heart (Ps 84:6) will go from strength to strength (Ps 84:8a) and they shall be seen by God in Zion (Ps 84:8b). Once again, the *yiqtal* form conveys habitual action and the addition of the phrase *mēḥayil ‘el- ḥayil* brings focus to bear on the iterative nature of the action. Moreover, as I read this passage it seems possible that this construction conveys overtones of increasing strength. Thus, those who find their strength in the Lord go from one challenging situation to another, and by means of prayer (Ps 84:9) they grow in strength.

In turning to other versions, we see that this phrase is rendered *מִדְּרִישָׁא מוּ בֵּית מִקְדְּשָׁא לְבֵּית* *mn byt mqdš’ lbyt mdršy’* ‘from the holy temple to the synagogue’ in the Targum. Thus, in their socio-historical context, the rabbis understood the righteous going ‘from strength to strength’ as a reference to the righteous going from worship at the temple to listen to teaching in the synagogue while they were on pilgrimage. Thus, the sequential acts of worship and learning Torah are the basis for making pilgrimage to Jerusalem with one’s heart, and on this foundation one goes from strength to strength. In the Septuagint this phrase is rendered *poreusontai ek dunameōs eis dunamin*, ‘they shall proceed from strength to strength’. Once again, this is a literal translation which preserves the underlying syntax of the Hebrew original. Although the Targum points toward sequential acts in a roundabout manner, the underlying Hebrew of Psalm 84:8 supports the interpretation proposed for this ‘from ... to

...’ prepositional construction.

Therefore, the literal rendering of the underlying Hebrew syntax into Aramaic and Greek in each of these examples leaves an observable linguistic trace of the bridge from the Semitic idiom to the Septuagint. Moreover, the Aramaic and Septuagint translations demonstrate the understanding of the Hebrew idiom in Paul’s vernacular language environment. This, in turn, functions as a warrant for the argument that this usage resides behind the ‘from ... to ...’ construction used by Paul and his amanuensis. Moreover, each of these examples, including the dynamic translation of the Targum for Psalm 84:8, supports an interpretation of the ‘from ... to ...’ construction as a reference to habitual or consistent action over a period of time. In addition, on the basis of Psalm 84:8, there may be an element of increase over time. These examples strengthen the applicability of Quarles’ observations regarding the iterative sense of this construction in classical Greek. Although the New Testament was written in Greek and one would expect it to retain standard Greek syntax and semantics, I demonstrated that this construction exhibits a similar semantic value in the Hebrew and Aramaic texts of Paul’s religious thought-world. After this observation we turn to the use of this syntactic construction in the New Testament.

4. Evidence from the New Testament

The ‘from ... to ...’ construction is found several times in the New Testament (Matt 1:17 [3x]; Acts 1:11; Lk 10:7; Rom 11:36; 1 Jn 3:14; 2 Cor 2:16 and 3:18). In the first two cases the sense ‘from ... to ...’ is expressed grammatically with an *apo ... heōs ...* construction, and the following examples use *ek ... eis ...*. First, the ‘from ... to ...’ construction for referring to periods of time (i.e. one person to the next) is found in Greek translations of Old Testament quotations, as in Matthew 1:17 (*pasai oun hai geneai apo Abraam heōs David geneai dekatessares kai apo David heōs tēs metoikesias Babulōnos geneai dekatessares kai apo tēs metoikesias Babulōnos heōs tou Christou geneai dekatessares*). This usage is an abstract extension from the concrete, locative use, which we see in the next example. Although this temporal use provides grounds for arguing that this expression in Romans 1:17 may refer to periods of time, this sense is not likely for the following reason. Whereas it is argued that the ‘from ... to ...’ construction is used to refer to two separate

dispensations, this use in Matthew 1:17 instead uses the ‘from ... to ...’ construction in order to demarcate the boundaries of discrete periods of time. Second, the locative and directional use is found in Acts 1:11, just as in Old Testament Hebrew (*hoi kai eipan andres Galilaiοi ti bestēkate [em]blepontes eis ton ouranon houtos ho Iēsous ho analēmphtheis aph’ humōn eis ton ouranon houtōs eleusetai hon tropon etheasasthe auton poreuomenon eis ton ouranon*). This occurrence is a prototypical and concrete locative use (source-goal) from which the more abstract senses extend. Third, akin to Exodus 32:27, a locative-iterative sense emerges in Luke 10:7 (*en autē de tē oikia menete esthiontes kai pinontes ta par’ autōn axios gar ho ergatēs tou mishthou autou mē metabainete ex oikias eis oikian*), where Jesus commands the disciples to remain in one place while in a given city rather than repeatedly moving from house to house. Although the expression is a concrete source-goal reference to houses, this idiomatic expression evinces iterative overtones. Fourth, in Romans 11:36 Paul praises God’s grandeur by stating that everything and everyone finds their origin, as well as their purpose or end, in him (*hoti ex autou kai di’ autou kai eis auton ta panta autō hē doxa eis tous aiōnas amēn*). Although this is a Pauline text, the grammatical construction uses the threefold prepositional structure ‘from ... through ... and in ...’. Therefore, it is not syntactically analogous to the twofold prepositional structure of the *ek ... eis ...* construction in Romans 1:17. Fifth, an abstract, locative usage (source-goal) is found in 1 John 3:14 (*hēmeis oidamen hoti metabebēkamen ek tou thanatou eis tēn zōēn hoti agapōmen tous adelphous ho mē agapōn menei en tō thanatō*). This usage indicates the movement from one state to another, or from one discrete category or set to another (i.e. from death to life). Logically and rhetorically, this is movement from worse to better. Therefore, this occurrence provides warrant for the interpretation of Romans 1:17 as referring to the movement from one state of faith to a better one. Thus, from these occurrences we have observed the semantic movement from the concrete, locative use to increasingly more abstract source-goal occurrences in which iterativity and intensification are associated with this expression.

From this general sketch of New Testament usage, we now turn to the grammatically analogous Pauline occurrences in 2 Corinthians 2:16 and 3:18. In both these cases, the ‘from ... to ...’ construction is found with a repeated prepo-

sitional object in the syntactic form P¹X + P²X. Therefore, these two examples are almost perfectly analogous to the syntax of Romans 1:17. In 2 Corinthians 2:16 we find this construction used in the following context: *hois men osmē ek thanatou eis thanaton hois de osmē ek zōēs eis zōēn kai pros tauta tis hikanos*. In reference to *tois apollumenois*, ‘those who are being destroyed’ (v. 15), *osmē ek thanatou eis thanaton*, ‘a fragrance from death to death’, refers to the manner in which Paul and his co-workers are the fragrance (or witness, testimony, example) of Christ to those who iteratively commit one evil act of death after another.²⁴ By way of contrast, *osmē ek zōēs eis zōēn*, ‘a fragrance from life to life’, refers to *tois sōzomenois*, ‘those who are being saved’ (v. 15). Therefore, Paul and his co-workers are a fragrance (or witness, testimony, example) of Christ to those who repeatedly act righteously. Moreover, Plummer interprets this ‘from ... to ...’ construction iteratively, and then goes on to note that it is also an intensifier indicating greater depths of death and greater heights of life.²⁵ Although other commentators follow a literal translation of this passage in their own rendering, they tend to avoid exegetical comments on the grammar and meaning of the ‘from ... to ...’ construction itself. Thus, Plummer’s interpretation supports the proposed iterative and intensifying interpretation of Paul’s use of the ‘from ... to ...’ construction in Romans 1:17.

Furthermore, this construction is found in 2 Corinthians 3:18: *hēmeis de pantes anakekalumenō prosōpō tēn doxan kuriou katoptrizomenoi tēn autēn eikona metamorphoumetha apo doxēs eis doxan kathaper apo kuriou pneumatōs*. Here we find the semantically similar preposition *apo* rather than *ek* in the initial position. In context, Paul teaches from the story in which Moses covered his face with a veil because the Israelites could not look directly at his face. The ESV translation, ‘from one degree of glory to another’ (v. 18), reflects the typical contextual interpretation of this syntactic construction as a sequential and habitual change of the believer from one degree of glory to another. In other words, the transformation is not a one-time act and the growth in glory regularly occurs over a period of time. This interpretation follows the readings of Calvin, Plummer and Barrett, who also interpret this occurrence as an iterative and intensifying construction.²⁶ Thus, usage in 2 Corinthians 3:18 supports an habitual interpretation of the ‘from ... to ...’ construction in Pauline Greek as an idiomatic expression

founded on the underlying Semitic idiom. Indeed, this passage suggests the nuance of a growth in intensity during the process.

From these examples, I consider the latter two to be more pertinent for elucidating the meaning of the expression in Romans 1:17 on the grounds that these are Pauline materials and therefore weigh more heavily as evidence of Pauline grammatical usage and style. Moreover, the constructions are identical to the syntax of the passage under investigation.²⁷ Although scholars occasionally cite 2 Corinthians 10:15 and 2 Thessalonians 1:3 in support of the interpretation of *ek pisteos eis pistin* as meaning growth in faith, the syntactic expression under investigation does not occur in these examples. I exclude these two passages from the discussion on the grounds that they are not syntactically analogous.

5. Interpretation in the literary context

In the preceding discussion I provided warrant for sustaining the argument that the ‘from ... to ...’ construction in Paul is based upon the underlying Semitic idiom that is found in the MT of Numbers 30:15, Jeremiah 9:2 and Psalm 84:8. Moreover, this idiom is found across dialects with literal renderings into Aramaic. Furthermore, the literal translation of this idiom into the Greek of the Septuagint evidences the bridge from Hebrew and Aramaic to the reception of this construction into the general dialect of Paul’s writings. Moreover, the iterative and intensifying use of this construction in 2 Corinthians 2:16 and 3:18 provides warrant for understanding the same construction as iterative intensification in Romans 1:17.

Therefore, this linguistic evidence provides a foundation for the argument that the phrase *ek pisteos eis pistin* in Romans 1:17 derives from an underlying Semitic idiom in Paul’s linguistic background and this Semitic idiom is mirrored by classical Greek usage. Although the phrase occurs throughout the Old Testament, we may point to the exemplar occurrences in Numbers 30:15, which is a temporal expression indicating duration of time, as well as Jeremiah 9:2 and Psalm 84:8, where the syntax is extended to an habitual, sequential or iterative meaning in conjunction with the *yiqṭal* form. In terms of information structure, this syntax brings focus to bear on the repeated nature of the verbal idea.

What are the results of our interpretation for the reading of Romans? First, the phrase *ek pisteos eis*

pistin in Romans 1:17 indicates that God's righteousness is revealed (*apokaluptetai*) 'from (one act of) faith to (another act of) faith'. In other words, assuming that people are created in the image of God in order to reflect the glory and attributes of God (Gen 1:26–27), the attribute of God's righteousness is revealed in each act of human faith (Gen 15:6). Thus, the issue of the objective or subjective genitive in the phrase *dikaïosunē gar theou* in Romans 1:17a becomes a moot point since God is the author of righteousness, and the righteousness of God is also that which is revealed through repeated acts of faith. It is at this point that Calhoun's arguments regarding the intentional use of ambiguity in the thesis statement in Romans 1:16–17 prove instructive since both of these ideas unfold in Paul's discussion throughout the rest of the epistle. In one sense, therefore, Paul intends faith to be all-encompassing for the believer, who reflects the attribute of God's righteousness. However, previous interpretations of this phrase as 'faith from beginning to end' seem unjustified since they overload the syntax with the meaning of epistolary context that is neither based on standard and 'primed' linguistic usage nor on the standard meaning of this syntax in its language system. Although there is indeed a sense in which faith is all-encompassing, the emphatic interpretation lacks syntactic and semantic precision since it fails to note the iterative element of this construction as an ontological reality.

In sum, the common interpretations put forth by commentators do not seem to follow from the syntactic evidence. In terms of whether this faith refers to the faithfulness of God or to human faith, the occurrence of the substantised participle 'to all those who believe' in the phrase *eis sōtērian panti tō pisteuonti* in verse 16 suggests that Paul has in mind human faith rather than the faithfulness of God (i.e. semantic priming).

Second, this interpretation of *ek pisteos eis pistin* as habitual acts of trust makes sense of the immediately following quotation from Habakkuk 2:4, *hō de dikaïos ek pisteōs zēsetai*.²⁸ In context, the Lord speaks through the prophet Habakkuk in order to tell the righteous to trust Him to bring righteous judgment in spite of His delay. Even though the wicked do not seem to be punished, the godly are to trust the Lord, they are to continue to live righteous lives, and then at the right time the Lord will execute judgment. In this sense, then, the righteous trust the Lord's timing and do not lose faith even when it seems as if the wicked prosper and

will not receive their due judgment. It is precisely this type of faith that comes to the forefront with the example of Abraham, who trusted the Lord to provide an heir even when it was physically impossible (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:1–25). Although Douglas J. Moo concludes that 'Paul's quotation differs from the meaning of the original', the trajectory of Habakkuk 2:4 and the reading of Romans 1:17 that I propose fit together nicely.²⁹ This, in turn, leads to the question of whether or not Moo's reading of Romans 1:17 as placing rhetorical emphasis on faith alone allows Paul to speak freely from the passage since Moo unnecessarily finds tensions between Paul and his quotation. On the other hand, my interpretation meets Quarles' third criterion: agreement between the meaning of 'from faith to faith' and the quotation from Habakkuk 2:4.

Third, this interpretation makes sense of Romans 5:1–5, where the discourse leads from the topic of justification by faith (v. 1) to the believer's access to grace by faith and the hope of the glory of God (v. 2). This discourse sequence is interesting because for Paul the topic of justification by faith progresses to grace and boasting in the hope of the glory of God, which in turn leads directly into the assertion that we boast in our distresses (v. 3a) because suffering builds steadfastness, steadfastness character, character hope, and hope does not disappoint because the love of God is poured out in our heart through the Holy Spirit (vv. 3b–5). Much more than a dangling logical thread, verses 3–5 reveal Paul's conceptualisation of faith. The abstract concept of faith is manifested concretely in the midst of the believer's distress and suffering. Just as Abraham trusted the Lord when the fulfilment of the promise of an heir appeared impossible, hardship and persecution build the believer's character and hope in God. Moreover, this is precisely the situation in which God's love is poured out by the Holy Spirit to the one who has been justified. It is in the concrete, tough situations of life that God builds hope, and this hope encompasses a trust in the Lord despite one's situation. Moreover, as hope increases from one act of trust to another, the fallen nature is transformed by a growth in the expectation of future, eschatological deliverance. This understanding aligns with the conceptual framework of the Habakkuk 2:4 quotation which seemed pertinent to Paul in Romans 1:17. The believer should trust the Lord from one situation of injustice to the next, and these repeated acts of faith issue forth in the hope-

ful expectation of deliverance before the throne of God.³⁰

Fourth, this interpretation of *ek pisteos eis pistin* as habitual or iterative acts of faith also resonates with Paul's thought-progression from guilt and sin (1:18 – 3:20), justification by faith (3:21 – 5:21) and the problem of indwelling sin (6:1 – 8:17) to the topic of the Christian hope in the glory that is about to be revealed in spite of present sufferings (8:18-39). Indeed, whether one's distress is unjust suffering, a particular bent toward a particular sin in one's nature, or distress from the prevalence of sin in the world, absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God (8:31-39). Given Paul's Jewish heritage and calling to the Gentiles, one of his distresses took the form of grief for those among elect Israel who rejected the Messiah (9:1 – 11:36). Paul trusted that they will turn back to the Lord in the end (11:25-26). Therefore, this interpretation meets Quarles' first criterion of thematic resonance throughout the book of Romans.

Fifth, given this understanding of *ek pisteos eis pistin*, Witherington's argument for the discourse cohesion between the doctrinal discussion in Romans 1-11 and the exhortation to ethical action in Romans 12-16 is strengthened. A right understanding of God's work through Jesus Christ leads to consistent acts of obedience in the life of the believer. Moreover, this strengthens D.A. Carson's argument that justification, faith and sanctification are related terms that must be considered together.³¹ Paul understands the doctrines of sin, justification by faith, and election to have practical implications for fallen life situations in a sinful world. Paul's doctrinal discussion is not left at the level of an esoteric doctrine or platonic ideal with little to no outworking in the life of those who are justified and elect. Rather, for Paul, the doctrines of sin, justification and election have very practical implications in concrete situations. In fact, he outlines a basic sketch of some of the practical implications of these doctrines for the Roman Christians, and his ethical exhortation in chapters 12-15 suggests how they may demonstrate the righteousness of God to the world around them by means of and from one act of faith to another. Therefore, the present contextual and discourse interpretation suggests that the traditional understanding of 'the righteousness of God' in 1:17a as exclusively forensic is a bit narrow. Rather, our analysis suggests that for Paul 'the righteousness of God' is revealed both through justification, as well as through saints' concrete acts of faith.

Finally, we turn to the manner in which this interpretation relates to the so-called 'New Perspective on Paul'. In the New Perspective, the Reformation understanding of Judaism as a religion of works-righteousness has been called into question on the basis of E.P. Sanders' reappraisal of the Lutheran view of righteousness in Judaism. According to Sanders, Judaism understood righteousness as deriving from God's graciousness rather than from obedience to the law.³² This view was in turn taken up by James D.G. Dunn, who developed Krister Stendahl's argument that Paul's view of justification was chiefly an apologetic for the Gentile mission.³³ According to Dunn, the phrase 'works of the law' in Paul refers to the distinctively Jewish way of life as a boundary marker that excludes other peoples from the covenant. As is typical of new insights, Sanders and Dunn overstated the case, and subsequent scholars have refined these views in constructive ways. I heartily agree with Peter Stuhlmacher and Donald Hagner that Luther was not wrong in his interpretation of Paul, and that in fact, there were tendencies toward works-righteousness in sectors of Judaism and some of the early Jewish Christians to whom Paul wrote.³⁴ 'Judaism' was not monolithic but comprised of various factions and facets of belief.

Moreover, N.T. Wright refines Dunn's views by situating Paul's view of justification and the law within the larger biblical narrative. He relates Paul's conception of the law and justification to a more comprehensive understanding of salvation in relation to the covenant with Abraham, sanctification, eschatology and the centrality of God.³⁵ Further, D.A. Carson concludes that Dunn and Wright are not comprehensive enough in their understanding of justification and righteousness in Paul.³⁶ In sum, subsequent scholarship suggests that the abiding worth of the New Perspective on Paul has been a better understanding of Paul's Jewish background as well as an acknowledgment of the diversity in the socio-religious situation behind his writings.³⁷

The results of my interpretation of Romans 1:17 align somewhat with N.T. Wright's understanding of Pauline theology, but more closely with the general framework of D.A. Carson. Though justification is one of Paul's chief concerns in (3:21 – 8:29), Wright and Carson argue correctly that justification is related to other key Reformed and biblical themes, one of which is the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer.³⁸ Wright's typically incisive analysis of the issues identifies

one of the key shortcomings in many Western discussions of justification: the failure to relate justification to sanctification under the overarching rubric of salvation. In fact, a fully trinitarian understanding of salvation cannot dispense with the work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of sinners. Though I heartily affirm that salvation is by grace through faith alone, both a linear and a contextual reading of Romans 1:17 demonstrate that faith is also related to the revelation of God's righteousness through habitual, concrete acts of faith, and that an increasing degree of faith should be visible in the life of the believer through time and with ever-increasing experiences of God-ordained persecution and suffering. It is precisely these works which reveal the righteousness of God and redound to his glory with the revelation of his image restored in greater degree both within and through us. Therefore, understanding the development of faith in the believer as a sanctifying act of the Holy Spirit accords with the overall structure of Romans, which moves from a predominantly doctrinal discussion in chapters 1-11 to ethical implications in 12-15. Moreover, this understanding is a needed corrective to the theoretical bent in Western Christianity, which is in danger of neglecting the topics of sanctified living and the socio-ethical application of the Gospel in pastoral ministry.

6. Conclusion

We began this investigation by reviewing past and current explanations of the meaning of the phrase *ek pisteos eis pistin* in Romans 1:17. Second, we noted the range of usage of the 'from ... to ...' construction in classical Hebrew and provided a brief sketch of the bridge from Hebrew to Aramaic, and thence to Greek by way of the Septuagint and Palestinian Greek. Third, on the basis of this linguistic evidence we noted the iterative-habitual meaning for this construction in syntactically analogous examples, with possible nuances of intensification in the New Testament. This forms the foundation for interpreting the linguistic routines (*langue*) behind usage in Romans 1:17 (*parole*). Fourth, we noted that this interpretation meets the first and third criteria put forth by Quarles: 1) the iterative-intensive interpretation accords with the main themes of the book of Romans, and 3) this interpretation is based upon a similar meaning for 'faith' in Romans 1:17a and the quotation from Habakuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17b. Fifth, we

provided a brief discussion of the relation between the present investigation and the so-called New Perspective on Paul, which calls for an understanding of the Jewish background of Romans 1:17, as well as the integral relation of the concepts of justification, sanctification and faith in order to provide a contextually plausible reading.

Therefore, the preceding investigation breaks new ground by providing a detailed presentation and analysis of the classical Hebrew linguistic background of the 'from ... to ...' construction, which had not yet been brought to bear in a meaningful manner on the interpretation of *ek pisteos eis pistin* in Romans 1:17. Moreover, the investigation progressed from the analysis of linguistic routines (*langue*) to a particular analysis of the flow of discourse (*parole*) in such a manner as to avoid silencing Paul's voice in Romans with synthetic statements on 'faith' from systematic theology. It was found that in this particular context God's righteousness is demonstrated by habitual acts of faith, and that the ideal believer's faith grows in intensity through time.

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Notes

- 1 For example, Peter Stuhlmacher omits a discussion of this problematic phrase altogether (*Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994] 28–29).
- 2 Charles L. Quarles, 'From Faith to Faith: An Examination of the Prepositional Series in Romans 1:17' in *Novum Testamentum* 45 (2003) 1–21, esp. 2–5; see also Douglas A. Campbell, 'Romans 1:17 – A Crux Interpretum for the πίστις χριστοῦ Debate' in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113 (1994) 265–285; Brian Dodd, 'Romans 1:17 – A Crux Interpretum for the πίστις χριστοῦ Debate?' in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114 (1995) 470–473; Desta Heliso, *Pistis and the Righteous One* (WUNT II.235; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).
- 3 P. Melancton, *Auslegung der Episteln S. Pauls. Eine an die Roemer und zwo an die Corinther* (Wittemberg, 1527) 17–18.
- 4 Adolf Schlatter, *Der Römerbrief ausgelegt für Bibelleser* (Erläuterungen zum Neuen Testament; 4th ed.; Calw & Stuttgart: Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1902) 19.
- 5 Heliso, *Pistis and the Righteous One*, 167.
- 6 Robert Matthew Calhoun, *Paul's Definition of the Gospel in Romans I* (WUNT 2.316; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

- 7 Calhoun, *Paul's Definition of the Gospel*, 5–6, 169–86, 191.
- 8 Quarles, 'From Faith to Faith', 6–8.
- 9 Quarles, 'From Faith to Faith', 9.
- 10 Quarles, 'From Faith to Faith', 13.
- 11 Quarles, 'From Faith to Faith', 13.
- 12 Quarles, 'From Faith to Faith', 18.
- 13 J. Chrysostom, *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople* (A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church; Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1842) 30–32.
- 14 For just a few examples from among the numerous methodologies and treatments of the Old Testament and Semitic background of New Testament language, literature, and theology, see D.A. Carson and H.G.M. Williamson (eds.), *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988); Ben Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); Lars Rydbeck, 'The Language of the New Testament', *Tyndale Bulletin* 49.2 (1998) 361–368; G.K. Beale, 'The Old Testament Background of Paul's Reference to "the Fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5:22', *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 15.1 (2005) 1–38; Warren Carter, 'Constructing Images of Jesus from the Hebrew Bible' in Delbert Burkett (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Jesus* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) 127–131.
- 15 E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); J.D.G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul, revised edition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008; orig. WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); K. Haacker, 'Verdienste und Grenzen der "neuen Perspektive" der Paulus-Auslegung' in Michael Bachmann (ed.), *Lutherische und Neue Paulusperspektive. Beiträge zu einem Schlüsselproblem der gegenwärtigen exegetischen Diskussion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005) 1–15; N.T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005); idem, *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009); Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Heliso, *Pistis and the Righteous One*, 26–34.
- 16 For a consensus view and a careful statement regarding the relationship between Koine Greek in Palestine and Semitic languages, see F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (rev. Friedrich Rehkopf; 18th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001) §4.
- 17 English translations of the MT and the Greek New Testament are taken from the ESV. Translations of Aramaic Targums and the Septuagint are by the author.
- 18 Also see Exod 36:33.
- 19 Also see 1 Sam 16:13; 30:25; 2 Sam 24:15; Neh 8:3, 17, 18; 9:5; Ps 41:14; 50:1; 90:2; 103:17; 106:44; Isa 9:6; 60:15; Jer 32:31; 36:2.
- 20 Also see Ezek 40:23, 27.
- 21 Also see Jos 1:7.
- 22 This expression is then taken up in *m. Ned.* 8.2. Although a consensus maintains that the Mishnah was not written until later, the emergence of this expression in the traditions of rabbinic teaching and debate increases the probability that this phrase was part of Paul's language and thought-world.
- 23 I do not find the rendering of the Hebrew preposition לְ by the Aramaic preposition לְ to be a significant divergence.
- 24 Following Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians*, 215; Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 366–367.
- 25 A. Plummer, *2 Corinthians* (ICC; New York: Scribner's, 1915) 71–72. Similarly, William R. Baker, *2 Corinthians: The College Press NIV Commentary* (Joplin: College Press Publishing Company, 1999) 125, interprets this passage as a progression from one stage of glory to another in the Christian life; however, he links this to the larger framework of new life in this life to eternal life with Christ in the next. I agree with the progressive interpretation insofar as it relates to the connotations of intensification that are associated with the iterative construction. However, in context, I remain less convinced that this is a particular reference to glory in this life and that to come – though this would be included in the scope of progression from life to life. In contrast, Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (WBC 40; Waco: Word, 1986) 44, seems to cut the Gordian knot by following manuscripts D, G and Byzantine uncials in omitting the initial preposition ἐκ in order to provide a smoother reading without the preposition. I find this use of the manuscript evidence unconvincing; although it would be convincing if this prepositional construction did not occur elsewhere, his argument fails to take into account the multiple occurrences of the expression in Pauline writings. Difficult interpretation is not a valid reason for emending the text. Moreover, Martin (*2 Corinthians*, 72) interprets this syntactic construction in 3:18 with a progressive and intensifying meaning.
- 26 J. Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (2 vols.; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1848–1849) 2:187; Plummer, *2 Corinthians*, 107; C.K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Black's New Testament Commentary; London: A&C Black, 1973) 125; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 72; Baker, 2

- Corinthians*, 170. Plummer remains unconvinced by the interpretation of ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν as a reference to the divine glory imparted from God and then received in us, as well as interpretations of this phrase as a reference to various dispensations of glory (contra Schlatter, Bengel, Neander, Augustine, Ambrose, Ephraem and Ambrosiaster).
- 27 Outside of the Pauline corpus, as noted above, the occurrence of this construction in Luke 10:7 evidences iterative overtones. This occurrence suggests that an iterative sense was associated with this construction in the *langue* of New Testament Greek.
- 28 For a recent discussion of the meaning of Hab 2:4 in the context of Rom 1:17, see Heliso, Pistis *and the Righteous One*, 40–71.
- 29 Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 76; also Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1978) 56.
- 30 In his various discussions, N.T. Wright (*Justification*, 55–56) points to the writings of Josephus and the political turmoil of Roman Palestine as providing a more likely background for understanding Paul than the typical contemporary conceptualization of personal and individual salvation. These observations parallel my own exegesis of Romans 1:17 and 5:3–5. At the same time, I would not want to negate discussions of systematic theology as possible understandings or interpretations for consideration since personal salvation is one dimension of this overarching category.
- 31 D.A. Carson, 'Reflections on Salvation and Justification in the New Testament' in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40 (1997) 581–608.
- 32 Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.
- 33 Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*; idem, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); idem, *Jesus, Paul, and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).
- 34 P. Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective, with an essay by Donald A. Hagner* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001).
- 35 Wright, *Paul; Justification*.
- 36 Carson, 'Reflections', 585–587.
- 37 Haacker, 'Verdienste und Grenzen', 1–15; Heliso, Pistis *and the Righteous One*, 26–34; Brendan Byrne, 'Interpreting Romans Theologically in a Post-"New Perspective" Perspective', *Harvard Theological Review* 94 (2001) 227–241.
- 38 Wright, *Justification*, 10–11; Carson, 'Reflections', 583–584.