

<b>JUSTICE, CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL VIEWS AND PRACTICES, CLUSTER</b>
<b>1) <i>Introductory Entries</i></b>
<b>Justice: Theological Views and Practices in Western Christianity</b>
<b>Justice: Theological Views and Practices in Eastern Orthodox Christianity</b>
<b>2) <i>A Sampling of Contextual Views and Practices</i></b>
<b>Justice: Theological Views and Practices in Africa</b>
<b>Justice: Theological Views and Practices in Asia, the Philippines</b>
<b>Justice: Theological Views and Practices in the Caribbean Islands</b>
<b>Justice: Theological Views and Practices in Latin America</b>
<b>Justice: Theological Views and Practices in North America</b>
<b>Justice: Theological Views and Practices by Latino/a</b>
<b>Justice: Theological Views and Practices by Womanists</b>

### **1) *Introductory Entries***

**Justice: Theological Views and Practices in Western Christianity.** In Western Christian discussion of the question of justice we may discern a trajectory, starting from Greek and Hebrew terms and concepts, which successively emphasized 1) interhuman justice as divine command, 2) the just individual, 3) thence justice as a divine attribute over against sinful humanity, 4) forensic justice as a certain nominalism\* of justice, and 5) a recovery of the sense of interhuman justice as the claim of the divine.

*Interhuman Justice.* The literature of ancient Israel, especially the prophets\* and the psalms\*, insisted upon *sedeq* and *mishpat* (Hebrew terms for "justice") as the claim and command of the divine. These terms function in parallel to indicate the imperative of interhuman, distributive justice (*sedeq*) and the divine intervention to establish that justice through the vindication of the wrongly accused or the violated and vulnerable (*mishpat*). The denunciations of the absence of justice take the form of a condemnation of the powerful's unbridled avarice and arrogance.

*From Interhuman Justice to the Just Individual.* While the social and public character of OT concern with justice is relatively non-controversial, the NT reference to *dikaioσύνη* (translated by both "justice" and "righteousness") has less often been associated with social relationships and more often with the individual's relation to God.

Plato and Aristotle presented justice as the ideal characteristic of the good society or constitution as well as the designation of the ideal character of the human being. Thus *dike* is the theme of Plato's *The Republic* in which the ideal society and the appropriate character of the (aristocratic) human person are correlated. While the relation of the person and the state could be understood together in the period of the city state, the emergence of the period of empire relegated the hope for a just social order to the messianisms characteristic of emergent Judaism and Christianities, while the just person (apart from the social order) was the theme of stoicism\* and related movements.

*Distributive Justice.* Patristic theologians like Basil\* and Chrysostom\*, relying upon the Gospels\*, insisted on a redistribution of wealth\* as a condition of divinely mandated distributive justice.

*The Just Individual.* Alexandrian\* Christianity inherited the emphasis on justice as the attribute of the good person, but this ran afoul of the growing sense of human incapacity for justice, especially in Augustine\* and his heirs. Thus while God was just, humans could not be. The theme of retributive justice (God's just punishment of sinful humanity) became the background for an attempt to reconcile divine justice with mercy\*.

*Forensic/Nominal Justice.* The idea of forensic or nominal justice responds to the problem of the apparent contradiction between justice and mercy through the notion that the judge may pronounce the verdict that a guilty person is innocent or at least will be regarded as if innocent. This appears as a counter-factual claim that rests upon the judge's sovereign power to declare the guilty innocent. This is accompanied by the claim that the innocent (the son or Christ) suffers and dies in the place of the guilty so that the guilty can be pronounced innocent or just (righteous\*) and in that sense "justified". This apparent double violation of simple justice has not gone unnoticed in the theological traditions (Abelard\* or recent feminist\* criticism of substitutionary atonement\*). The declaration that those who are guilty (unrighteous) are nevertheless innocent may also cut the nerve of the claims of interhuman justice and indeed promote injustice, as has seemed to happen in Lutheran Germany\* in the Holocaust\* or Catholic Latin\* America during the reign of the death squads.

*Interhuman Justice.* The recovery of the understanding of justice as interhuman (rather than as forensic or nominal justification\*) is found in the Social\* Gospel and in modern papal encyclicals and is most vigorously recovered in Latin American Liberation\* Theology. The work of Miranda in rereading the Bible from the standpoint of the divine claim of justice that can only be actualized as the commitment to the welfare of the other, especially the most vulnerable, draws upon the prophets and Psalms and also upon Paul\* and even John\*. Justification is the call to become an agent of justice/love.

In recent European thought, especially in the work of Derrida but also Agamben and Badiou, justice is understood in Pauline fashion as "outside the law" which nonetheless impels the law\* toward an approximation to justice, even if this always fails to correspond to the claim and call of justice. Justice is understood as social justice that takes the form of the welcome to and commitment to the other. This European recovery of justice outside the law occurs through a reading of Paul outside the confines of Christianity proper and is correlative to the awareness of the new global situation as one of empire that has certain features in common with the imperial context of Pauline counter-imperial thought and practice. THEODORE W. JENNINGS, JR.

**Justice: Theological Views and Practices in Eastern Orthodox Christianity.** Beyond varied understandings of justice, the Eastern Orthodox\* Church tradition fundamentally holds that Justice has its source in God. God's Justice is inherent to the Divine Nature, and therefore complete and perfect. In the created world only approximations to this Justice can be comprehended or achieved.

In human terms, justice is not one of many virtues, but "the good" in itself, the harmony in which all elements of virtue are integrated in a fitting and appropriate way.

For Scripture a portion of Christ's mission is "to proclaim justice" (Matt 12:18); it is a sacred duty to "proclaim justice" (Hebrews 11:32), and evil to "neglect justice" (Luke 11:42). For Basil\* (4<sup>th</sup> c.) human justice seeks to emulate divine Justice, both as restorative of the injustice in human relations (*epanorthotike*), and as retributive (*antapodotike*), although justice is difficult to comprehend and achieve (*dystheoriton*). Because of "passions" (human imperfection expressed in sinful conditions and actions), it is a constant struggle to achieve justice, to give to all their due, to reduce injustice, especially by challenging the powerful or attending to the needy (*Homily 12.8*).

Challenging the powerful in the political sphere involved the tradition of writing counsel on governance directed primarily to the Byzantine Emperors. Thus for the deacon Agapetos "equity" is a key element of justice; rulers should keep their "mind fixed on equity . . . showing forth humanity as a quality that is God-like." (*Advice and Counsel*, ch. 40). Rulers should exercise Justice on behalf of the weak, fatherless, poor, widows, and strangers. Rulers are not above the law; they are morally obligated to follow it themselves, thus conveying to the governed the importance of just behavior by all. Considerations regarding the parallel obligations of the rulers and the ruled are a condition for governing justly. The amount of power that rulers exercise is actually analogous to the requirement upon the rulers to use this power for the good of the

especially Isaiah\*, Amos\*, and Micah\*, speak of social justice. Isaiah 58 is one of the most pungent denunciations of social injustice, as are Amos 1--5: God commands in Amos 5:24, "Let justice run down like water and righteousness as a mighty stream." The entire Bible protects the weak with widows, children, and the sick representing the vulnerable in society. In the narration of Jesus' life as devoted to the vulnerable and overcoming opponents, Mark introduces the comment "the common people heard him gladly" (Mark 12:37, KJV). Social justice, from the Christian perspective is anchored in the affirmation that God is righteous and requires right dealings among human beings.

In Africa, one finds that African Religion, Islam, and Christianity all teach that the religious base of life is the nature of God as one who requires just dealings among human beings as a way of life. Social justice is not benevolence; it is a demonstration of our humanity. It is with these shared views that African believers can confront the manifestations of injustice and violence ever present in Africa as elsewhere. MUSIMBI KANYORO. See also **Reconciliation\* as a Christian Practice.**

**Justice: Theological Views and Practices in Asia, the Philippines.** Legal or forensic justice is formally enshrined in the nation's laws, but substantive justice in the sense of having real and meaningful access to the requisites of a decent human existence is the justice for which Filipino peoples long. This longing drives Philippine history since the very awakening of Philippine nationhood.

Centuries of struggle against colonial and domestic oppression provide the matrix for the specific understanding and practice of justice in the Philippines. The Christian evangelization of the Philippines took place under the auspices of Spanish\* colonialism (three and a half centuries) and U.S. imperialism (half a century). The struggle for land\* and democracy\* forms the core content of the struggle against the colonial and church authorities. Presently, it has broadened to include the aspirations of other marginalized segments of society. Justice is served to the extent that the goals of the struggle are achieved--for peasants and fisher folks, land and fishing grounds; for workers and employees, decent wages and working conditions; for indigenous peoples, ancestral land; for marginalized women and children, social services; and for the whole people, freedom from foreign domination.

Justice and human\* rights are closely related in the context of a struggle against foreign domination and domestic oppression. Most victims of human rights violations by agents of the State are perceived to be involved in one way or another with anti-government forces, both legal and underground. A very significant number of these victims come from the ranks of the religious, priests, pastors, nuns and lay workers.

The biblical view of justice was introduced in the midstream of the anti-Spanish struggle. Soon after, biblical images began to surface in the rhetoric of peasant uprisings. Quasi-religious political organizations formed the core of movements seeking justice from the Spanish colonial authorities. Religious views of justice pervaded the ideology of the late-19<sup>th</sup> c. national revolution. It was in the name of justice biblically understood that priests, religious and other church workers formed the Christians for National Liberation, which joined a communist-led insurgency in 1972 up to the present. EVERETT MENDOZA

**Justice: Theological Views and Practices in the Caribbean Islands.** What is sobering is that domination, oppression, and colonization came in the Caribbean with the arrival of the Christian church. Missionaries came with the colonizers, were often paid by them, and sought to fulfill their wishes. Then the presence of the "colonizer and the colonized" brings to the fore issues of justice, freedom, and identity, and this from two perspectives.

From the perspective of the planter class and the majority of the missionaries, issues of justice, freedom, and identity were conceived of in terms of a plantation ethic that included slavery. From the master class's point of view, justice meant peace without conflict. Peace as an expression of a just society is not a far fetched or unrealistic goal, yet it requires changing perspective.

Conversations with the slave narratives suggest that the master class really wanted peace without justice. For the enslaved people, justice meant freedom; the master class overlooked that peace presupposed an admission that a change was needed, because something had gone amiss. A peaceful community is a community that addresses a wrong that needs to be made right.

translations, which render all the terms for "justice" (e.g., *dikaioynê*) and "injustice" (e.g., *adikia*) by terms referring to individual morality (e.g., "righteousness" and "wickedness"). Similarly, despite many English translations, Paul speaks of those who practice injustice (often translated "wickedness") as hindering the truth-justice of God (Rom 1:18); of salvation as "justification," that is a manifestation of the justice of God that results in lives for grace. "For the kingdom of God is . . . justice (*dikaioynê*) and peace and joy from the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17).

distributed along with responsibilities and social burdens. For Latino/a, the heart of justice talk is the question of the legitimate criteria used to determine how distribution ought to take place. From a theological point of view, justice concerns are dealt with in relation to God as the source and ground of the good and of the meaning of human life; just relationships in society express our view of the fitting relationship with God and God's creation.

From a Latino/a point of view justice has to do with the creation of relationships that enable people to fulfill their humanity and to generate and sustain caring communities of mutual support involving a fair exchange of the available social goods and services. Beyond procedural notions of justice, Latina/o claim that the well being of the poor\* and marginal provides the standard to judge the objectivity, impartiality, and fairness of all social institutions and procedures of justice. The theological concern for the poor and marginal is given precedence over philosophical and scientific notions of justice. Religiously grounded notions of justice take precedence over rationally grounded notions of justice, and indeed are alone to provide the core motivation of love, care, and compassion that initiates and sustains a radical commitment to justice.

The Church, called to be faithful to the memory of Jesus and his mission, is given the vocation to move forward the cause of justice among the poor. Nevertheless the church has opted for the powerful and wealthy and contributed to the unjust state of affairs that has generated the reality of massive human poverty. To re-establish its true mission, the Church must become a church of and for the poor. This preferential\* option for the poor take the concrete forms of social and political advocacy and of solidarity with the struggles by which the poor, the marginal, and the voiceless seek their liberation. The church must contribute to the struggle to socialize wealth and democratize power so that "the least of these," and through them, all of us might be able to fulfill our humanity. This entails a radical transformation of society, and of our way of being. In this new society, service to the Other gives our individual and collective power, wealth, and freedom their reason for being. ISMAEL GARCIA

**Justice: Theological Views and Practices by Womanists.** Womanists\*, compelled to expose inhumane evils perpetrated against all people, define justice-making as a communal, religious engagement. Justice, a moral virtue, concerns fairness, equal distribution, retribution amid wrong-doing, and an impartial treatment of all persons in all settings. Thus justice is philosophy and praxis, thought and action. Justice arises from biblical traditions requiring social activism and life-empowering witness, a praxis opposing evil and suffering (Clarice Martin). Justice-making necessitates human participation with God, to interpret law and scripture towards securing equality.

Thus justice calls for opposing social and ecclesial systems that places yokes of injustice on women: pathological degradation, silencing, dismissing, or ignoring women (Frances E. Wood). Antithetical to Jesus' teachings, injustice forgets the dehumanization of slaves, the plantation's misogyny, and the present-day patriarchy in church and society. Womanist Justice involves seeking and loving righteousness, kindness, and walking humbly with God.

Black women, committed to scrutinizing multifaceted, systemic oppression, have long had a race-gender-class consciousness; they have formed social clubs that valued connections between critical self-understanding of, and socioeconomic response to,

oppressive realities, which they internally addressed with self-help and economic self-determination (Marcia Riggs). Against injustice, they embodied a Black Liberationist ethic that required action toward collective advancement, because God's justice required them to respond to institutionalized moral evil with social responsibility.

Womanist Justice ethics reject suffering as God's will (Emilie Townes).

Suffering is unscrutinized, cyclical, static, unmetabolized pain; by contrast, pain is a recognized, named experience used for transformation (Audre Lorde). Thus for Townes by moving from a reactive posture about suffering to a transformative posture of pain, one engages in a liberative messages of love and resurrection.

Womanist Justice engages with alternative sources of empowerment; resisting sin and evil, by using power from the periphery (Rosita Mathews). Womanist Justice denounces naïve biblicism, idealism without critical knowledge of actual experience, and dogmatic moralism; by remembering and retelling the stories of those who have suffered and overcome, Womanist Justice pursues a recentering, redemptive resistance, that redefines Black women's realities toward transformation (M. Shawn Copeland).

Womanist Justice seeks wisdom through cultural artifacts—music, art, literature that examine ideas of the divine, and the benevolence of beauty amid evil within an African holistic, religio-cultural worldview that provides renewal and healing power. These cultural artifacts afford collective exorcism: they name and expose oppression through stories of coded communication allowing a platform for speaking truth to power: birthing just engagement. CHERYL A. KIRK-DUGGAN