

THE EMBRACE OF JUSTICE AND PEACE: CONCERNING THE TENSION BETWEEN RETRIBUTIVE AND ESCHATOLOGICAL JUSTICE

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Summary

The article dialectically examines two Christian notions of justice: retributive and eschatological. Retributive justice denotes its expression through retaliation for sin, and eschatological justice implies its realization of complete harmony of all relationships within the renewed creation. The latter is called eschatological because, in distinction from the former, its full expression is attained through the final renewal of all creation in Christ – the eschaton which does not cancel out space and time but promotes them in perfection into eternity. The argument of the article advocates the primacy of the eschatological notion of justice within the Christian perspective, while its retributive character is being downplayed and subordinated to the logic of the former. This is accomplished through the integration of the Old and New Testament eschatologies as well as the criticism of dualistic tendencies within Christianity which inspire the prevalence of the retributive notion of justice and are actually alien to the Bible. Closely tied to the question of the character of justice is the question of the awareness of hell within Christian thinking and preaching. While the argument of the article does not question the existence of hell as the eternal state/place of the damned, it removes it from the central place it often occupies in Christian thinking.

Key words: justice, eschatology, retaliation, harmony, peace, relationship, kingdom of God, hell

Introduction

“The end of all things is near... love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:7a,8)

“How, then, can the God of love condemn people to eternal perdition?” asked an evangelist in a promotional message on an internet portal, laying ground for the punch line: “Hell is not the answer to the question of love, but the question of justice!” This overwhelmingly Protestant solution of the theological riddle consequently relegates the understanding of justice to the forensic category of litigation which establishes (or announces) who will enter the gate of heaven and who the gate of hell. Whoever ends up in hell has arrived there following the logic of justice, and whoever ends up in heaven has arrived there following the logic of grace. This perspective on justice, vitalized through the existential need for justification by faith, makes it exceedingly difficult for Protestants to theologially think through the concept of justice outside the framework of retributive or retaliatory justice. In this case, justice derives its qualifications from its combat with sin and therefore conceptually actually depends on it. Even when, following Luther’s sequence, justice is contextualized within the framework of God’s righteousness by which he justifies the sinner (Rom. 1:17), this is still retaliatory justice since it actualizes Christ’s vicarious sacrifice which exhausts God’s retributive demands for justice and thus frees up the potential of salvific grace. We may simplify the issue and state that justice is satisfied and its withdrawal allows the sinner to enter God’s presence, and the justice of the kingdom (Rom. 14:17) intuitively becomes identified with final sinlessness. If justice exists only as a battle with sin, then righteousness as the eternal attribute of God turns into a mirage because, certainly, God existed before sin.

Justice from the Israelite Perspective

It is easy to assume that this kind of reduction of, and emphasis on, the realm of justice would disappoint the author of Psalm 85. In this Psalm, he assumes the role of spokesman for the nation of Israel which endures God’s wrath for their sin in the Babylonian exile (2-8). God’s justice is now Israel’s condemnation. The author nevertheless reveals the horizon of Israel’s hope in salvation which he sees as its penitent return to God (9), which cannot be inseparably connected with the return to their homeland, now full of Yahweh’s glory (10). In this eschatological moment in Psalm 85, we read verses 10-13:

Love and faithfulness meet together,
Righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
And righteousness looks down from heaven.

The Lord will indeed give what is good,
And our land will yield its harvest.
Righteousness goes before him
And prepares the way for his steps.

Under the conditions of this restoration, retributive justice will assume a new task: “Righteousness and peace kiss each other” (10b). As a response to the springing forth of faithfulness from the earth, “righteousness looks down from heaven” (11) in proportion to, and complementary to, faith. In the metric versification of verses 10-13, justice alternates with love, faithfulness, peace and the fruitfulness of the land which points to its overwhelmingly harmonizing character. For the author of this Psalm, justice is thus an integral part of the eschatological fulfillment of the historical destiny of Israel as the people of God! It is not solely the precondition of the return, the guard at the gates of the kingdom; it is the purpose for the return and for life in the restored kingdom, namely, Israel’s faithfulness to Yahweh.

Although the concluding verses of the Psalm portray Israel’s salvation within the framework of their national return to Palestine, which is quite understandable considering the immediate challenges of their status as exiles in Babylon, this hope is expressed in language which belongs to the eschatological language of general cosmic restoration (comp. Isaiah 11). The flourishing of Israel in the promised land coincides in content with the flourishing of the world which was created by the God of Israel, with Israel in its center, of course. These are the narrative implications of the monotheistic theology of creation and covenant which has sufficient inductive corroboration in the Old Testament texts¹ and which can, without unnecessary controversy, be ascribed to the Jewish traditional hope rooted in the Tanakh (Wright, 1992:332-334). Taking into account this eschatological perspective on the hope of Israel, it then becomes evident that the notion of justice in Judaism need not decisively follow the retributive logic nor derive from the problem of sin, but can follow eschatological logic from the future harmony of the world according to the initial design of its creator. With a slightly different purpose (the reconstruction of Judaism in the period of the “Second Temple”), but one which harmonizes well with the perspective of the Psalm we have considered, E. P. Sanders writes:

Many Jews looked forward to a new and a better age... The hopes centered on the restoration of the people, the building or purification of the temple and Jerusalem, the defeat or conversion of the Gentiles, and the establishment of the purity and righteousness... The hope that God would fundamentally change things was a perfectly reasonable hope for people to hold who read the Bible

1 i.e., Genesis 15-17, Isaiah 40-55 or Daniel 7.

and who believed that God had created the world and had sometimes intervened dramatically to save his people. (Sanders, 1992:298, 303, 456ff.)

Emphasizing the theology of creation and covenant, as well as the hope for the eschatological realization of the kingdom of God as the ordering narratives of the Old Testament, is common lexicographical practice (Berković, 2007:389). What is sometimes lacking, as made evident by Sanders, is a certain merging of horizons – to use Gadamer’s term – of these theological topics, that is, the interaction of their goals and purposes. N. T. Wright would call it the great biblical narrative or Jewish story (Wright, 1992:216), and it starts thus: God created the world as the functional harmony of heaven and earth, of heavenly and earthly bodies, of living beings and natural cycles. When he declared them good, that was the declaration of justice which we have already observed in Psalm 85, and it is also expressed in other places in the Old Testament. He then committed the creation to the stewardship of the human being who by the criterion of this God-given task became designated as the creation according to God’s image (Gen. 1:26-28)². In this way, God ushered the human being into the center of the righteousness of creation which serves in creative obedience to God (Adam names animals and follows God’s instruction for living in harmony with creation). Through the disobedience of the steward over the creation, cosmic harmony is destroyed (Gen 3:17-19), and the initial harmonious nature of justice *appears* to become retributive³ (the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden). In order to re-establish the harmony of creation, and perhaps even to improve the harmony of the time before sin⁴, God needed the new man to occupy the

- 2 This is the so-called Functional model of the anthropological qualification of “Imago Dei” in the human being according to which human beings are similar to God in their function as rulers over creation. This model continues to vie for theological primacy with competing models, but it is the only one which *de facto* corresponds to the historical-grammatical criteria of the Old Testament perspective, in contrast to its rivals which are deduced notions dependant on the needs of the theological systems which have generated them (comp. House, 1992:84).
- 3 The text of Genesis indicates that the expulsion and subsequent mortality of Adam and Eve were not an act of retaliation for disobedience and rebellion, but a damage control operation and the start of the history of salvation (Gen. 3:22-24). As will become evident below, it is precisely this appearance of the retributive character of justice, later to be repeated many times in Scripture, which leads to its erroneous understanding. Although not always explicitly stated in the text, in the final analysis, Israel’s opponents must be defeated so that Israel might be free to fulfill her calling.
- 4 Certain branches of Judaism cherish the idea that the giving of the Law spelled the renewal of Eden before the arrival of sin. The Law is that by which God gives the full measure of glory to human beings and to creation, and not the original creation (comp. Kushner, 1997:32ff.). The same idea about the renewal of the original harmony of creation, but connected with the “Second Adam” – Jesus Christ – is also seen in Paul (Rom. 5:15-17).

central place of steward of the new creation. For that purpose, he calls Abraham and makes a covenant with him. He will be the originator of the people which will be the blessing to all humankind and the new steward of the new creation in the name of the creator who is his covenantal God (Gen. 12:1-3; 17,1-5). The Law of Moses was given as the ethnic-theological format of the covenant made and the definition of the people of God as such among pagan nations. For this reason, the Jewish dream is the all-embracing fulfillment of God's promises through a restored Israel in Palestine which is nothing less than the restoration of the world, the triumph of life and God's glory; in other words, the establishment of eschatological justice.

What Happened to Justice in the New Testament?

The answer to this question puts us into the theologically strained area of the (dis) continuity between the Old and New Testaments. It is quite clear that something did change in the transition from the two testaments but it is equally clear that something has been carried over through their cooperation in the common cause. For the sake of this study, we can limit this gigantic discussion about the Christian understanding of justice to the decisive question about the nature of Christian eschatology. If the eschatological events which make the New Testament literary horizon mark the end of time and space and the beginning of metaphysics and non-material eternity, then Old Testament justice as the functional harmony of creation in time and space necessarily becomes abolished and transformed into its exclusively retributive aspect. That equally implies the reward for righteousness and the punishment for unrighteousness because, in this case, the eternal results of a human's earthly choices and life are then only conceivable in the shape of "reward" or "retaliation". To caricature, the one who has built schools in the name of Jesus Christ can, in the future - which excludes the world defined by time and space - receive only a heavenly reward for his/her effort since there are no schools in eternity. Equally so, the person who has torn schools down has not prepared for themselves an eternity in ruin⁵, but a value equivalent to the evil committed expressed through the cursed power of retaliatory justice. It might be an overstatement, but it is difficult to shake the impression that the elimination or spiritualization of the continuity between material creation and eternity turns

5 This would correspond better to the functional logic of the New Testament word for hell, "γέεννα" as the Jerusalem dumping ground and incineration of unusable items and dead animals. However much one feels relief as the flames destroy the abomination of the dumping ground, one's reasons for incineration are always functional in the sanitary sense rather than retaliatory.

unrighteous persons into cannon fodder and the righteous into mercenaries.

If, however, the New Testament keeps its innovations within the bounds of the Old Testament theology of creation with corresponding eschatology, then we can rightly argue that justice, irrespective of the newness of the manner in which it was established, and the increased degree of glory, which under the Lordship of Christ's reign exceeds the original one under Adam⁶, remains an essentially cosmological harmony of the whole of creation. The understanding of justice and righteousness in the New Testament thus depends exclusively on the eschatological perspective it informs: is it a harmonious union of heaven and earth, or a dualistic concession made by earth to heaven as has often been the verdict of the Christian theological tradition from Augustine onwards.

The eschatological scenery at the end of the Book of Revelation situates the conclusion of the turbulent history of the world at the moment of the descent of the New Jerusalem from heaven to earth (Rev. 21-22). We can thus recognize the New Jerusalem as a reflective paradigm of the New Testament eschatology which, for those who submit to the New Testament authority, also retroactively directs the orientation of the eschatologically relevant texts of the Old Testament. Therefore, the New Jerusalem – which, in addition to the names of the “twelve apostles of the Lamb” inscribed in its foundations also has the names of the “twelve tribes of Israel” inscribed at its doors (21:12,14) – reveals that two separate or consecutive eschatological perspectives of the Old and the New Testament do not exist in the Bible, but one which unites them. The eschatological hope of Israel has not been abrogated or made obsolete, but has been realized together with the Christian hope, not *on the basis of* the Law which defines the twelve tribes of Israel and which has an eschatological future, but founded on the Lamb who defines the Church (the twelve apostles in the foundation of the heavenly city). Keeping the implications of the climax of the eschatological script in mind, I submit that the Old Testament vision of justice as the cosmic harmony of God's creation was adopted and further developed in the New Testament as the hope of the Church⁷.

6 When F. F. Bruce justifiably warns of the distinctions between the New and Old Testament eschatologies, he has these differences in mind rather than their substantial nature (Bruce, 2007:160).

7 I want to alleviate the boldness of this conclusion as opposed to the majority Christian theological tradition by referring to the historical overview and the interpretation of theological development presented by N. T. Wright which contextualizes the present eschatological perspective of the New Testament as the most convincing historical and theological solution to the New Testament problem (Wright, 1996:3-125).

Christ's Justice: Promise or Threat?

It has become clear by now that the eschatological model of justice receives its nature from the promise and that it appeals to the hearers' unity and hope, while the retributive model, as a threat, incites revenge or unrest in the hearer, depending on their status vis-a-vis the kingdom of justice. It is not difficult to imagine voices objecting to the "or" in the above subtitle as suggesting a false dichotomy, stating that the integrated model (promise *and* threat) would better correspond to the biblical witness. The objection is certainly not unfounded, but it conceals within itself the germ of a dualistic methodology which is exhausted in the inductive cataloging of biblical material into partial categories without any need for discovering their *harmonious* interactions or their common goal. "Today I will preach about justice as the desired harmony, and next Sunday about justice as the condemnation of the sinner. The Bible talks about both things and I want to have balanced preaching which does not fail to express the whole truth." These are the words which any preacher would utter who understands "the whole truth" as a certain *Summa theologica* – an exhaustive lexicon of theological truths which in isolation, like windows, open individual scenes of the kingdom. It is undeniable that the two aforementioned models of the Christian understanding of justice stand in tension, but the solution of setting them apart in a dualistic manner, each in its own domain, taking one and then the other on their own, is not the realization of the creative tension but the loss of theological harmony (dare we say also of theological justice?).

The eschatological perspective of Christ's announcement of „the Gospel of the Kingdom“⁸ is before all the good news for Israel how God initiates the process fulfillment of his ancient promise according to which Israel will fulfill its ideal and be the light and blessing to the world. The justice which is thereby proclaimed is not the retaliation over the conquering Roman empire, as the rabbis expected in their anxiety over the pagan rule over Israel which is rejected by Isaiah in Matthew's re-interpretation:

He will proclaim Justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, till he leads justice to victory. In his name the

8 Mt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Lk. 16:16. The notion of the kingdom is not smuggled in here as a new factor to help build the argument of the article. The notions of eschatology and the kingdom are so intertwined that the well-known New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce uses them almost as synonyms (Bruce, 2007:160).

nations will put their hope.⁹

The justice which is announced to the nations will actually revive in them the hope in its proclaimer, which is how the quote from Isaiah actually concludes. The realisation of God's plan of salvation in the eschatological justice only through the inverse consequence condemns those who stand in its way and so assumes its retributive face. According to the New Testament order of events these are first the Jews who are committed to the belief that in the eschatological foundations of the New Jerusalem is embedded Israel defined by the Law and not pseudo-Isaiah who would assume its place¹⁰. Through that concern they actually rise as the opponents of justice for which they receive from Christ horrific words of threat and retaliation for its obstruction. The Jewish opposition in the following chapter of Matthew's gospel in a paradigmatic way becomes typical of the whole humankind. Now not only individual members of Israel's nation¹¹, but also those belonging to heathen nations, those who in the light of the growing kingdom, akin to the Jews in the beginning, only later come to the position to have to make a choice regarding him. It is not so much that God will not rest until he punishes evil and retaliates for injustice, but that his project of the salvation of the whole Creation has its opponents which need to be eliminated. Their judgment thus does not come according to the requirements of justice which now invites them to partnership, but according to their obstruction of God's Kingdom¹² which now does not include only Israel in Palestine but the whole world. In the moment of the manifestation of justice:

The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Mt. 13,41-43).

- 9 Mt. 12:18b-21. I consider Matthew's gospel, the most Jewish gospel which presents a kind of bridge between the two testaments, the proper place for testing my argument which relies considerably on their continuity.
- 10 Biblical exegesis which, under the strong tutelage of Lutheran theology, takes place in the narrative antithesis between the Law and Grace, exegetes proto-pelagianism into the Jewish opposition to Christ and so remains blind to the Jewish rejection of Christ as self-righteous rejection of salvation by grace – which results in repulsion and justifiable retaliation – but the faithfulness to the tradition of the fathers which Jesus has compromised (Neusner, 2000).
- 11 The New Testament does not consider the rejection of Christ as a fault inherent to Judaism, but, as is evident in Paul, Israel is split over this issue, as many times before, and divided into the majority which, if not *de jure* then *de facto*, rejects God, and the minority – “the faithful remnant” – which accepts him (Rom. 9:27; 11:5).
- 12 As tares which subversively imitate wheat, or the bad fish which are mixed with the good ones (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50).

The realisation of eschatological justice demands the elimination of opponents who prevent its realisation – deceivers and evildoers cannot occupy the same space with God’s Kingdom. They are similar to the metaphor which Jesus made in the Gospel of John about the vine and the workers in the vineyard according to which the Father as the owner of the vineyard purifies the vine – Christ – of fruitless shoots which are cut off, gathered, dried and „collected and thrown in the fire“ (Jn. 15:6). The point is not to evoke gloating over retaliation or the horror of fear¹³ but to conjure up the well-known image of the worker in the vineyard who frees up the vine from fruitless shoots in order that those which bear fruit may may bloom better. The announcement of justice is therefore the triumph of life in the world filled with God’s glory and that is the object of God’s interest and the orientation of his people. The threat of condemnation is the secondary consequence and an organic outcome of the opposition to justice. In the circumstances of persecution or immediate obstruction of the Kingdom it can be manifested through fiery rhetorics¹⁴, but the deduction from the plan of salvation cannot place condemnation on the even footing with eschatological blessing nor be with it in any dualistic „balance“.

The Embrace of Justice and Peace

If we accept the eschatological understanding of justice, then we come to the inevitable conclusion that the harmony of justice is woven together by harmonious *relationships* (Erickson, 1985:955)¹⁵. All individual entities of creation are functionally connected and complement each other by their specific distinctions. In this way, they fulfill their God-given ideal which is impossible in partial circumstances. An informed reader might get the impression that the harmonious model of Judeo-Christian justice actually reads too much

13 “You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you” (Jn. 15:3) is a comforting assurance which Jesus includes in this discourse about falling away. It reveals that Jesus does not intend to frighten his listeners into faithfulness, but explain human destiny in light of his commission.

14 i.e., 2 Pt. 2ff., or Rev. 14:9-12.

15 On the basis of the example of Tamar who is more righteous than Judah because he does not honor his commitments towards her as her father-in-law (Gen. 38:26), and David who is declared righteous for refusing to kill Saul and thus honoring the relationship king-minion (1 Sam. 24:17; 26:23), Erickson makes the following inference about righteousness: “Clearly, righteousness is understood to be a matter of living up to the standards set for relationship.” (Erickson, 955). It must be observed, though, that Erickson would not fully support the main thesis of this article since he divides the consequences of the Fall into the disintegration of the relationship with God on the one hand, and the subjection to punishment on the other (Ibid., 944), which is, from this perspective, an unfortunate division.

Pythagorean cosmology into the biblical texts and leaves the scriptures in favor of Greek philosophy. However, we must keep in mind the essential similarities and differences. The common points encountered in “Jerusalem and Athens” – as Tertullian polemically termed it – are not found in methodological borrowing, (Christian Platonism or Scholasticism), but in joint participation in the topic which demands unity in an obviously chaotic world (Pannenberg, 2005:27-28). The Greek philosophical tradition seeks a universal system which explains the universe through the fulfillment of individual happiness (Lesky, 2001:655ff.), while the (Judeo-)Christian perspective seeks the manifestation of the only creator in a particular creation for the purpose of uniting diverse humankind and the world under his righteous, i.e. harmonious reign. Thus when Paul talks about the Corinthian Christians as functionally different, even contradictory members which are still mutually dependant parts of one – Christ’s – body (1 Cor. 12:12-30), or when he unites the creation with God’s sons in one eschatological sign (Rom. 8:18-23), we cannot accuse Paul of flirting with Athens because of some developmental implications of the classical Jewish theology of creation which he may never have abandoned.

Let us return to the notion of peace from Psalm 85. Peace is in no sense an internal state of complete self-sufficiency in which one is “free” of the stresses of this world or even sin (who even remembers sin in the context of justice?!)¹⁶. The Psalmist connects peace with one’s interaction within the harmonious relationship between heaven and earth, with the state of God’s blessing on earth manifested by its joy and fertility. The embrace of peace and justice, which is itself the harmony of relationships, suggests that justice and peace are not two separate demands but the expressions of one integrated reality. If we quickly remind ourselves here of the notion of Christian love (*ἀγαπάω*) whose relational nature is unquestionable, we attain a rounded picture of the kingdom of God in which all his attributes are alive not as a series of satisfied individual demands but as an integrated harmony. The new human in Christ is certainly in the center of the stewardship of the new creation and harmonious relationships towards heaven and earth, equally so as towards the neighbor, in the relationships of justice, peace and love. This vision of life in the kingdom, as perceived from the perspective of the present

16 Comp. Is. 43:25; Ps. 103:12. The final forgetting of sin as the existential need of the righteous can be deduced from Ps. 25:7. The objection to the forgetting of sin stems from the concern that, in that case, the sacrifice of Christ would lose its weight and the quality of love. I suppose that for that reason Christ retained the scars of his wounds on his resurrected body and not the list of the sins of his followers.

human subjection to unrighteousness as disintegrated difference,¹⁷ is brilliantly described by Miroslav Volf in his landmark study *Exclusion and Embrace*:

“There can be no justice without the will to embrace,” I remarked earlier. My point was simple: to agree on justice you need to make space in yourself for the perspective of the other, and in order to make space, you need to want to embrace the other. If you insist that others do not belong to you and you to them, that their perspective should not muddle yours, you will have your justice and they will have theirs; your justice will clash and there will be no justice *between* you. The knowledge of justice depends on the will to embrace. The relationship between justice and embrace goes deeper, however. Embrace is part and parcel of the very *definition* of justice. I am not talking about soft mercy tampering with harsh justice, but about love *shaping* the very content of justice (Volf, 1996:220).

Conclusion: Retributive Justice and Contemporary Christian Unease

Contemporary Evangelical preaching reveals marked and growing disinterest in emphasizing the retributive aspect of justice which is realized through the warning about God’s punishment/retaliation for human sins in hell (McGrath, 2007:540). However, this in itself does not support the argument of this article since one aspect of this tendency to omit the mention of retributive justice became compromised by directing the internal Evangelical debate to the biblically irresponsible speculation about “conditional human immortality” (Ibid., 541). This development gives rise to the suspicion that its starting point has less to do with a preoccupation with the kingdom of eschatological justice, and more with an escape from the unease caused by speaking about hell in the context of western public discourse. It was one thing to make threats about the flames of hell in Medieval Europe, but it is something completely different to do it in its contemporary and culturally broadened version. However understandable this unease might be, one has to take exception from it since it comes disturbingly close to Christ’s warning: “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory...” (Lk. 9:26a). Christians need to truly live in the light of eschatological justice and uphold it as the determining parameter of life and preaching, for right reasons and in the right way.

Alister McGrath opines that resentment to the zealous preaching of God’s

17 There are certainly distinctions in the kingdom too; harmony is not an amalgam which melts contingencies into indiscernability. The harmony of relationships, as their creator himself, is glorified only when it is served by distinct or even supposedly contradictory elements (such as individual believers in the Corinthian church).

righteous retaliation over sinners first manifested itself at the beginning of the 16th century through the academic reaction to the enthusiastic writings about hell by Parisian theologians. Erasmus commented that clearly they wrote in that manner because they had themselves been in it (McGrath, 2007:539). In this light, what reservation do we have about the message of the evangelist cited at the beginning of the article which, in a sense, married justice and hell and made her an adulteress in relation to the peace which she had just embraced? Hell is not the answer to the question of justice, but to the question of sin – and this is not only a matter of semantics! Let us remind ourselves of the etymological meaning of the Greek word for sin - ἁμαρτία – the term from archery which denotes missing the target. This sense suggests that we understand sin as a dynamic of living (or rather dying) by which a human being misses God's kingdom of justice and loses all relationships for which God created him or her, and thus actually loses his or her humanity. It is the state of "wailing and grinding of teeth" and the location is the "γέεννα" of Jerusalem elevated eschatologically to the level of the cosmic dumping ground, popularly called hell. It is clear that this does not solve the uneasy riddle of eternal suffering as the consequence of choices and manner of living during finite earthly life. But while Christians are called to be experienced and informed in the matters of justice, in matters of sin they are called to be babies (comp. 1 Cor. 14:20). Therefore, seeking the kingdom of justice, while at the same time being confused and confounded in the face of the abyss of its final failure, is not an excuse for Christians, but rather a responsible attitude.

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Sažetak

U članku se dijalektički promatraju dvije kršćanske koncepcije pravde: retributivna, ili osvetnička, te ona eshatološka. Pod retributivnom pravdom se misli na iskaz pravde u kažnjavanju grijeha, a pod eshatološkom se misli na realizaciju ukupnog sklada svih odnosa unutar obnovljenog stvorenja. Ova druga se naziva eshatološkom jer, za razliku od prethodne, svoj puni iskaz zadobiva u konačnoj obnovi stvorenja u Kristu tj. eshatonu koji ne dokida prostor i vrijeme, nego ih savršene uvodi u vječnost. Argument članka se zalaže za dominaciju eshatološkog poimanja pravde u kršćanskoj perspektivi dok njen retributivni karakter biva umanjen i podređen potrebama prethodnog. Ovo se čini na temelju integracije starozavjetne i novozavjetne eshatologije te na kritici, Bibliji stranim, dualističkih tendencija u kršćanstvu koje potiču dominaciju retributivnog shvaćanja pravde. Najuže povezano s pitanjem karaktera pravde je i pitanje prisutnosti pakla u svijesti i propovijedanju kršćana. Dok argument ne osporava postojanje pakla kao vječnog stanja/mjesta izgubljenih, on ga uklanja iz domene intenzivnog kršćanskog fokusa.

