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TH604: Christian Ethics: OA

Week 10: 5 3 1 Chapter 10

QUESTIONS:

1. How does God exercise the relationship between love and justice?
2. What is the relationship between freedom and justice?
3. What are the three primary theories or paradigms for defining distributive justice?
4. What are the two main categories of justice?
5. Why is it wrong to make the government solely responsible for administering justice?

ANSWERS:

1. God exercises His love always through and within the parameters of justice. When He enforces justice it is usually in a loving manner (p221-222).
2. Freedom and justice tend to go hand and hand. According to Hollinger, when one pursues justice, they are actually pursuing freedom (p224-226).
3. According to Hollinger, there are three theories and paradigms that actually define distributive justice which are, merit, and equality and need (p226).
4. The two main categories of justice are retributive and distributive (p217).
5. It is wrong to make the government solely responsible for administering justice because by doing so, it will take the responsibility away from the church and even taking away the personal responsibility from individuals and it also gives too much power to a governing body who is also a “fallen institution” (p236).

TERMS:

1. Distributive Justice: Is seen as being positive in nature because it focuses on various types of rewards such as a person’s “rights, opportunities, services and treatment” which is due to who that person is, what they have done and accomplished and what groups they belong to (p217).
2. Meritorious Justice: Merit that focuses primarily on what a person did to earn what they received. It’s giving a person what is owed to them based off of the virtue of their “actions, efforts and impact” (p226-229).
3. Egalitarian Justice: According to Hollinger, egalitarian justice is based upon, “equal outcomes and equal access. This means that everyone is given “equal access to jobs, rights housing and pay” (p229-231).

SUMMARY:

The term “justice” has been a complex issue that is difficult to get every individual, institution, culture and church to agree on. Many see God as the only one to administer justice as they rely on the scripture that tells us in Matthew 7:1 where Jesus warns his disciples by saying, “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” The other scripture that Christians and the church hold onto as the basis of judging is found in James 4:12 which states, “There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?”

Another thought is that justice should be administered only by government or law. In this explanation, laws are given to keep order in culture and society; however, if someone breaks that law within that particular culture or society, for example by committing murder, then it becomes the responsibility of governing body to execute justice, such as a verdict of the death penalty. Even with that some believe that justice should be rendered, but that the death penalty is extreme and should be given only be God because only life and death should be in God’s hands. Nevertheless, they are alright and in agreement that life in prison is acceptable and a suitable punishment.

Although justice is one of the major themes in the Bible, it does not give a plain explanation of how this justice is to be administered in society. Hollinger explains in this chapter that although there are various avenues of justice and also that many continue to debate the rational, what it should look like and how it is effective, he speaks of how all of the above have a responsibility to uphold justice in some form or fashion. Justice must be rendered by earthly governing bodies to keep safety in the land for the people. Christians and the church have a responsibility to render justice by upholding who and how the church is governed. Institutions have a responsibility to render justice when it pertains to how business is conducted. All in all individuals have a responsibility to uphold justice because it holds them responsible to being humble and culpable to doing the right thing.

So, when dealing with the topic of justice and whose responsibility it is and what justice actually looks like and how it is administered, Hollinger definitely explains how all have the responsibility laid at their feet to uphold it in some form or fashion. Because humanity is in a fallen state and it has the propensity to commit sin and make both good and bad decisions that affect everyone, whether mentally, physically, emotionally, etc., justice is necessary and all have a responsibility to make sure it is upheld.