



## Dependence, Liberation, and Justification

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### I. INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY: JUSTICE AND RIGHTS

The view of God and human society represented in the Augsburg Confession is closer to Aquinas than to the societies of late twentieth century post-industrial capitalism. This essay investigates some of the differences in the understanding of the relationship of individual and society and of justice, justification, and the interests of marginalized groups.

The view in the Augsburg Confession is “the medieval picture of an organic, hierarchically ordered society, in which the various classes of [human beings] had been ordained to serve one another’s needs.”<sup>1</sup> The superordination and subordination of classes and stations were taken for granted as natural law, as was the subordination of women, children, and servants within the “natural” order of the family. A descending view of this hierarchical order discloses increasing dependence, with the vast peasantry at the bottom holding the fewest resources of power and the least authority.

In this society, order and obedience are prerequisite to peace. Toward this end rights and responsibilities were articulated in law for each social station. Justice in this context was thought to consist in the observance or enforcement of the “law” to protect rights “deriving by custom from [one’s] position in the social hierarchy.”<sup>2</sup> Included among these rights were “subsistence rights” for the poor. These rights depended upon a prior assumption.

For most people through remembered time, work was taken for granted. Work was the struggle for subsistence and, excepting natural calamity or war, the resources through which human effort yielded subsistence were usually available. Most people were peasants of one kind or another, and they worked and earned their subsistence by tilling the land, and sometimes

<sup>1</sup>David Miller, *Social Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976) 289.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 277.

by handicrafts as well. The lives of peasants were usually mean, filled with unrelieved toil for only the barest livelihood....Nor were peasants ordinarily independent in the sense of being free from domination by others....Peasants lived shackled, in Hobsbawm’s words, by the “double chain of lordship and labour.”<sup>3</sup>

This situation was mitigated somewhat by the medieval concept of subsistence rights. “[T]he rich had a responsibility to ensure the subsistence of the poor that tempered their authority, and the

poor had a right to subsistence that mitigated the burden of their duties to the rich.”<sup>4</sup> This right to subsistence did not have to be “earned” or merited by any characteristic other than occupying the station of peasant. The church reinforced the legal right of subsistence by emphasis on claim rights based on need.

Here the doctrine that by natural law all property was originally held in common became of practical importance. Because God had in the beginning given the earth to all men to enjoy in common, it followed, first, that no one had a right to take for himself more than he needed, and, second, that a man had only a right to take that of which he made good use.<sup>5</sup>

When circumstances prevented subsistence through the usual labor of feudal society, the rich were both legally and morally obligated to meet the peasants’ claim rights of need out of their superfluous wealth. However, “the function of justice was to preserve the existing hierarchy, rather than to provide criteria for social reform. In short, while we can recognize elements of our own notion of justice in feudal thought, feudal society clearly lacked our idea of social justice as a goal to be achieved.”<sup>6</sup> Feudal society also antedated by centuries any concept of personal rights, as opposed to rights of station. Absent too was the “problem” of the relationship between individual and social good. The organic, hierarchically ordered society was an ordering of groups and stations into which individuals were born.

In this context, the Reformers redefined the soteriological significance of all work. The system of hierarchical civil stations now becomes the sole vehicle for the expression of the “new obedience” of faith. The interlocking social dependencies are the loci of the commands, laws, obedience, good order, ordinances of God, stations, and calling to which the Augsburg Confession refers. The Gospel does not challenge this hierarchical view of society in history. Rather, it enables each believer to fulfill her or his station and its attendant responsibilities with new “affections” of the heart.

Further, the Reformation ethic posited that out of the “inward and eternal mode of existence and righteousness of the heart” (Augsburg Confession XVI) the “true Christian” would forego claiming her or his rights within the feudal system. The superiority of eternal life supersedes temporal well-being for the individual Christian, who is thus free to exercise self-denial in response to the

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<sup>3</sup>Frances Fox Pivan and Richard A. Cloward, *The New Class War: Reagan’s Attack on the Welfare State and Its Consequences* (New York; Pantheon Books, 1982) 44-45.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 45.

<sup>5</sup>D. Miller, *Social Justice*, 278-79.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 281.

other’s need and in obedience to feudal, civil authority. This is stated repeatedly by Luther; the following is an example:

I said above that these things do not concern a Christian, and that he cares nothing about them. He lets anyone who will rob, take, cheat, scrape, devour, and rage—

for the Christian is a martyr on earth. Therefore the peasants ought properly to stop using the name Christian and use some other name that would show that they are men who seek their human and natural rights rather than their rights as Christians. For obtaining their rights as Christians would mean they should keep quiet about all these matters and complain only to God when they suffer.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the Lutheran view changes the medieval concept of subsistence rights. That is, the true Christian will make a distinction between person and station. The subsistence rights which attend the station of the poor are not claimed by the individual Christian for her or his own needs. On the other hand, the Christian in a public station must defend the subsistence rights claimed by others in the feudal system. To put this in another way, the individual believer is dependent on God alone and so is free to sacrifice all rights in society. At the same time, those who occupy stations of civil authority and responsibility are particularly bound to protect the rights of all, i.e., to maintain justice according to the law and, if they are truly Christian, to moderate the severity of the law when human need and so-called “rights” demand it. The “freedom of the Christian” is thus an individual, inward freedom *coram deo* which takes a personal form of self-sacrifice and a public form of social responsibilities. The public order provides the material content of social dependence and justice. Liberation could be anachronistically said to refer to the religious freedom of the Christian which does not give immanent freedom in terms of economic, political, or social status. Indeed, it is a mark of the Christian not to claim this freedom but to wait for official authority to grant it.

The freedom of the gospel is valid only in matters relating to the relationship between you and God, and not in matters between you and your neighbors. For God does not want robbery with sacrifice [Is 61:8]. Neither does he want anything to take place or anyone to do anything that is harmful to one’s neighbor. In fact he wants everything to be done for the benefit of one’s neighbor.<sup>8</sup>

Justice is the legal enforcement of the rights and responsibilities attendant to place in society, and the Christian will forego the rights, if claiming them would entail violation of the social order. But the Christian will also accept the responsibilities entailed within the organic, hierarchically ordered society.

What happens when such a society is no longer the presupposition of the concept of justice?

Before capitalism, Time and God combined to make people accept the world as they found it, so long as subsistence rights were respected. But capitalism destroyed subsistence rights and fractured the traditional community. In

<sup>7</sup>Martin Luther, “Admonition to Peace,” *Luther’s Works*, ed. J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann (56 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955-76) 46.40.

<sup>8</sup>Martin Luther, “Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows,” *Luther’s Works*, 44.313-14.

doing so, however, it challenged, undermined, and finally destroyed the authority

of tradition in every sphere of life....Capitalism thus showed by its achievements that human action matters, that authority can be defied, and that people can mobilize to remake the world.<sup>9</sup>

In the political liberalism which emerged from the Enlightenment and in individualistic competitiveness which emerged in capitalism, the medieval hierarchical structures of social dependence were broken. The new theory of individualism “abandoned any notion of a natural hierarchy in society, and began instead with the idea that men were born free and equal, possessing sets of rights which derived from their inherent natural capacities.”<sup>10</sup> The rejection of a system of God-given and hence natural orders and stations opened the door for arguments from “Nature and Nature’s God” in which the latter became more and more a rhetorical affirmation of political utilitarianism. Autonomous individuals, not stations and orders, become the basic unit of society. Government and even society as a whole are viewed as voluntary associations created to serve the wants and interests of autonomous individuals and “ideally at least should be readily modifiable if those wants and interests changed. A man’s [sic] duty was no longer to remain within his station, but instead to take on whatever tasks, and reap whatever rewards, his abilities would allow him.”<sup>11</sup>

Justice is now the requital of desert; it is a procedural criterion which allocates reward and punishment according to “merit.”

This criterion [requital of desert] is stressed to the exclusion both of the protection of rights and of the fulfillment of needs. Of course, in individualist theory the rights of property are inviolable, and contracts must be enforced, but the ultimate ground for these views is either utilitarian or else resides in the conception of justice [as requital of desert].<sup>12</sup>

In the United States this has developed into acceptance of personal rights on a natural rights model but the rejection (in government policy domestically and internationally) of the categories of rights stipulated, for example, in the “International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights” of the United Nations.

Guided by the attempt to secure a foundation for human rights that is independent of a person’s contingent social relations, the natural rights model leads to a view of rights that guarantees above all else the protection of the person against the onslaught of institutions and other persons. It thus ignores conditions regarding the individual’s position in society that are essential to understanding what human interests are most important, all things considered. This is why the natural rights model cannot make sense of most economic and political rights, and why it cannot provide a plausible argument for the greater intrinsic importance of personal rights.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup>F. Pivan and R. Cloward, *The New Class War*, 150.

<sup>10</sup>D. Miller, *Social Justice*, 289.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 289.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 291f.

<sup>13</sup>Charles R. Beitz, “Human Rights and Social Justice,” *Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Policy*, ed. Peter G. Brown and Douglas MacLean (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1979) 58.

During the development of the natural rights theory and the correlative view of the autonomous individual related only by voluntary contract to the social order, justice as desert according to individual effort grew to entail another distinction. The distinction between the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor became a principle in political economy, thus undercutting completely the economic subsistence rights of the medieval period.<sup>14</sup>

The development of individualism and capitalism made possible the perception that “human action matters, that authority can be defied, and that people can mobilize to remake the world.”<sup>15</sup> The development of the social sciences undergirded this view of human agency, pointing in particular to the social construction (and hence the possible deconstruction) of the world. “Time and God” are no longer seen as running the show. Rather, human beings are the historical agents who create society for good or ill. The autonomous individual is by definition not dependent, and liberation is at best liberty as noninterference in the activities of the autonomous individual.

This picture is bought, however, at the price of denying the social constitution of the individual, the dependence of the individual on social, economic, and political structures for survival, and the development of large classes of people on whose backs the myth of the autonomous individual of capitalist political economy has been built. For these classes, their dependence is a function of oppression, and liberation would entail a definition of justice in which rights are not attributed solely to individuals in their autonomy but also to persons in their constitutive social relations.

The procedural definitions of justice in liberal political theory have been challenged in recent years. The theory entails a view of the moral agent in relation to society which is in the end disempowering. The moral agent as portrayed by John Rawls is “a pure, unadulterated, ‘essentially unencumbered’ subject of possession,” a self given prior to community and related to it only by the feelings and sentiments of co-operation.<sup>16</sup> Justice as fairness in Rawls’ theory establishes a disjunction between the self and the social good. The self can be motivated by the good of society but cannot be in any sense subject to that good.

The good of community cannot reach *that* far, for to do so would be to violate the priority of the self over its ends, to deny its antecedent individuation, to reverse the priority of plurality over unity, and to allow the good a hand in the constitution of the self, which on Rawls’ view is reserved to the concept of the right.<sup>17</sup>

Sandel’s conviction that individuals in society are more “thickly constituted” by the shared final ends of the community than Rawls can admit leads Sandel to reject the priority of justice as fairness in ethics. Justice as fairness is inadequate to address the substantive question of the social good, the common welfare.

<sup>14</sup>See D. Miller, *Social Justice*, 293-94, and F. Pivan and R. Cloward, *The New Class War*, chapters two and three.

<sup>15</sup>F. Pivan and R. Cloward, *The New Class War*, 150.

<sup>16</sup>Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 92, 149.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 149.

## II. LIBERATION AND JUSTIFICATION

The past five years under the Reagan Administration in the United States have seen “the recurring conflict between property rights and subsistence rights, which originated with the emergence of capitalism itself.”<sup>18</sup> Popular movements in the United States in the 1930s and 1960s claimed subsistence rights as political rights. The state, which had been the political support of the property rights of capitalism, albeit under the guise of the separation of economics and politics, became more vulnerable to democratic influence.<sup>19</sup> In 1981 Pivan and Cloward were cautiously optimistic that the “doctrine that prescribed the separation of the political and economic spheres, and by institutional arrangements...made the separation seem natural” was “in ruins.”<sup>20</sup> In the late 1980s that qualified optimism seems tragically premature.

The erosion of the subsistence rights gained in the New Deal and the Great Society programs continues. The feminization of poverty entails growing rates of infant mortality, malnutrition, homelessness, and other signs of oppression. The health of black and Hispanic groups is significantly more endangered than is that of the white population. The growth of the economy is built of paper entrepreneurialism<sup>21</sup> and the unemployment of millions. The service economy is built on the labor of documented and undocumented immigrants, single mothers, divorced women, and unskilled workers who still do not earn enough to rise above the poverty level. The suicide rate among farmers in the Midwest is at a record high. The military grows daily and looks to Nicaragua and Honduras for fields for its training exercises. Major segments of the United States are suffering the same victimization inflicted on other nations.

In this situation neither justice as requital of desert nor justice as fairness determined by deontological individuals (Rawls) is adequate. Theologians within oppressed groups in the United States are turning to a corporate model of pluralism (as opposed to the liberal, individualist model). In the corporate model, oppressed groups have standing in the ethical question of justice. Justice entails equality of condition, not merely individual meritocracy and equal opportunity. The general definition of justice as “communal right relationship” can be made more specific with respect to a “substantive conception of what is good for human persons” by a practical criterion: “the meaning of justice is discerned particularly by the way the community deals with those who are most marginalized or are not well placed to defend their own needs and interests.”<sup>22</sup>

It is definitionally true of oppressed groups, however, that their interests are not the criterion by which the dominant society judges justice. The self-interest of the powerful depends on the denial of the interests of the powerless. Justice for the most marginalized, the “forgotten ones,” cannot be addressed

<sup>18</sup>F. Pivan and R. Cloward, *The New Class War*, 41.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., chapter 4.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 150.

<sup>21</sup>Robert B. Reich, *The Next American Frontier* (New York: The New York Times Book Co., 1983).

<sup>22</sup>Beverly Wildung Harrison, *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics* (Boston: Beacon, 1985) 177.

without acknowledging the right of the marginalized to their own self-interest. Peter J. Paris

discusses this aspect of the development of the black churches in the United States in the past three decades.

In our day various activities in the black community at large (and especially in those interracial associations and institutions including black churches in predominantly white denominations) are motivated by racial self-interest in a new way. That is to say, blacks generally no longer feel that they are betraying their ideal societal vision [= interracial community and justice] by working vigorously for such racial goals as political determination, economic development, preservation of predominantly black schools (private and public), construction of senior citizens homes in the black community....[G]rowing numbers of blacks see no inherent moral problem with this pursuit of race interests.<sup>23</sup>

It is here that the issue of liberation runs into conflict with the official positions on justice in the Lutheran Church in America. In these positions “prudent self-regard” is at best relegated to the least preferable way to pursue what is “civilly right.” But prudent self-regard is certainly not part of Christian love.<sup>24</sup> In the statement on economic justice is the following:

Justice takes place at the intersection of serving love and enlightened self-interest. All sinners, including Christians, are still able as the corrupted image of God to act justly out of such self regard; and forgiven Christians are empowered to move beyond such self regard. By the power of Christ working in them, they are freed to enlarge the conventional limits of justice.<sup>25</sup>

This distinction between “enlightened self-interest” (which is undefined) and acting “sacrificially for their neighbor’s sake” is necessitated by the distinction between justice and righteousness.

The attempt to equate human justice and divine righteousness distorts Christ’s Gospel and undermines God’s law. In the name of liberty, such self-righteousness enslaves; in the name of life, it kills; in the name of abundance, it lays waste. God’s holy wrath is provoked when humans presume to rule society by a spurious “gospel,” thereby weakening the possibility of realizing justice, peace, and civil order under God’s law.<sup>26</sup>

This distinction between law and gospel, justice and justification, as posed in this passage discloses the perspective from which these social statements are written. It is not the perspective of the oppressed. Nor does the statement make much sense when viewed as an address to the oppressed. However, the universal judgments made about the human imply that the oppressed are included.

Because human beings, both individually and collectively, are self-centered, self-serving, and self-justifying, their defining and doing of justice are in-

<sup>23</sup>Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 132.

<sup>24</sup>See, for example, the Lutheran Church in America’s social statement, *Human Rights: Doing Justice in God’s World* (New York: Division for Mission in North America, 1978).

evitably tainted by the rationalization of special interest. This sinful rationalization often leads to such errors as the pitting of benevolence against justice and the confusion of justice with righteousness.<sup>27</sup>

The point here is not to question whether sin is universal but rather to question whether “special interest” is necessarily what the statement claims. In my experience, the charge of “special interest” and, by implication, of sinfulness is raised every time representatives of oppressed groups speak out within the church for justice for these groups. The institutional ethic of the Lutheran Church in America operates on the assumptions of liberal moral theory in which only the “objective, *disinterested*, universal observer” of a Kantian universe is authorized to make moral judgment. These assumptions are identified with self-sacrificial Christian love. The effect is to throw into question every attempt by the marginalized groups of Christians to achieve just participation in the church and in society. Oppressed Christian women, oppressed Christian blacks, oppressed Christian American Indians, etc. are charged with the norm of self-sacrificial love construed in individualistic terms and hence prevented from acting on a corporate view of justice except as we are willing to be labeled as sinners *for so doing*.

Of course, this could all be subsumed under the rubric of “bold sinning,” just as all activity in the temporal realm is in Lutheran theology. But the question must be put more sharply. Are actions by the oppressed for their own self-interest by definition the same as the self-interested actions of the dominant group? Are distinctions among political and economic aspects of differing social-historical location irrelevant, on the grounds that self-interested action and Christian love are always mutually exclusive? If this is so, and if we may take for granted that the dominant group will not act in the interests of the oppressed, then this ethic condemns the Christian oppressed to self-negating passivity with regard to their own well-being.

The justified self appears to be a transcending, eschatological self only externally bound to others in history. Paul Tillich’s criticism of the “transcendental” interpretation of history is illuminating in this regard:

History is the place in which, after the Old Testament preparation, the Christ has appeared to save individuals within the church from bondage to sin and guilt and to enable them to participate in the heavenly realm after death. Historical action, especially in the decisive political realm, cannot be purged from the ambiguities of power, internally or externally. There is no relation between the justice of the Kingdom of God and the justice of power structures....After history has become the scene of saving revelation, nothing essentially new can be expected from it....[This attitude’s] most obvious shortcoming is the fact that it contrasts the salvation of the individual with the transformation of the historical group and the universe, thus separating the one from the other.<sup>28</sup>

Tillich points in particular to “the transcendental attitude toward politics, social ethics,



and history in Lutheranism.” It is ironical, he says, that this same

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols., Chicago: University of Chicago, 1951-63) 3.356.

type of Protestantism also “has had the most positive relation to nature and has made the greatest contribution to the artistic and cognitive functions of culture.”<sup>29</sup> To exclude “culture as well as nature from the saving processes in history” leaves the realm of history inadequately interpreted theologically. Míguez Bonino has addressed this same issue.

Traditional Protestant theology—and much Roman Catholic post-Vatican II thought, which follows a parallel line—is so concerned with the prevention of any “sacralizing of human projects and ideologies” that it seems to some of us to result in emptying human action of all theological meaning. The God-reference seems to mean the relativization, the restriction, the limitation of any human project or achievement to the realm of the penultimate, and therefore, whether explicitly or implicitly, to that which is perhaps dispensable, optional, or at least not “ultimately” significant!<sup>30</sup>

In relation to the problem of the self-interest of the oppressed group and the individual self-sacrifice posed in Lutheran ethics, the following question emerges from these interpretations. Is there any relationship between the person as justified and the person as a historical being constituted in part by social-historical relationships? Is the justified self a social self at all? Or does the justifying Word in some sense separate the self from the world and thus make self-sacrifice only an apparent risk?

In a study of Lutheranism, Eric Gritsch and Robert Jenson write the following:

The self before God and the self before men [sic] do not necessarily coincide. That I shall be one self, the same before God and before men, is what I await from the last Fulfillment. Now I hang between two selves, “crucified” in my moral self-fulfillment.<sup>31</sup>

This division of the self into eschatological and historical selves is a view of Christian freedom much like the freedom of the deontological self in contemporary liberal philosophical ethics. That is, justification presupposes, indeed creates, an “antecedently individuated self” which is wholly free, unbounded by community and history. This self, however, is simultaneously bound to be the “servant” of the neighbor but, as subject, without any means of relationship with the neighbor. Only by denying the common natural humanity which the justified self shares with others, i.e., only by “self-sacrifice,” is the justified self able to “be a little Christ” to the neighbor. The salvation of the individual and the transformation of the historical group and the universe are still contrasted and separated.

In an analysis of Reinhold Niebuhr’s view of moral agency, Ruth Smith writes,

The “real” and “essential” issues of the self are removed from social-historical

life. Thus the relations of social-historical life are in no sense seen

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>José Míguez Bonino, "Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification from a Liberation Perspective," *Sanctification and Liberation*, ed. Theodore Runyon (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981) 50-51.

<sup>31</sup>Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 149.

to be constitutive of the self. The actual conditions of freedom for particular people are not explored. Historical freedom is not discussed in relation to theological freedom.<sup>32</sup>

Smith finds in Niebuhr two views of the self, the formal, free, transcendent self which is capable of self-sacrificial *agape* in inter-personal relationships and the social-historical self which is determined by competing interests in the political balance of power in collective society. She argues that Niebuhr remains individualistic in his ethics even while he attacks the atomism of bourgeois society after the collapse of organic feudal society. This is because there is no connection between the "real" self and the social-historical self. They are parallel lines which do not meet.

If the parallel lines do meet eschatologically, it is not necessarily the case that this view yields an understanding of politics, economics, and culture—the social—as within the saving processes in history. The traditional affirmation that God rules through the law and the gospel and that the Kingdom of God will prevail eschatologically over the Kingdom of the devil has not been articulated in such a way that transcendent individualism is avoided. Indeed, it seems likely that this continuing bifurcation of selves really means that God becomes a substitute subject for human beings in historical action.<sup>33</sup> The self-sacrifice of the individual Christian is a vacating of the human in order that the Holy Spirit may function as the actual agent. The historical quietism of Lutherans politically and the tendency to separate economic issues from faith is due not simply to a misapprehension of the Reformation teaching about good works as the fruit of faith. It is also due to the separation of the historical self, the self *coram mundo*, from the justified self, the self *coram deo*, and the substitution of divine agency for human agency in the justified self. Justification by grace through faith is supposed to generate freedom before God, and out of this freedom from self-righteousness neighbor love is to flow. But unless some fuller articulation of sanctification of the social-historical person is made in Lutheran ethics, it is not possible to maintain that it is a human being who is loving the neighbor. Then "history is a meaningless game and [our] humanity a curious detour."<sup>34</sup> In this connection Dorothee Soelle points to a fear in orthodox Protestantism, "the fear that God, as a result of human development, will become less important, that human creativity detracts from the power of the divine presence."<sup>35</sup>

If we take more seriously than Luther did his own denial of a body/spirit dualism, and if we take seriously the contemporary view of person as a unity of individual and social identity, then a new articulation of justification must be made. If the whole individual-social person is the auditor of the Word, the individualistic interpretation of justification is wrong. The person is constituted in part by relationships. These relationships of political, economic, cultural, and

<sup>32</sup>Ruth L. Smith, *The Individual and Society in Reinhold Niebuhr and Karl Marx* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation at Boston University, 1982) III.B.3.

<sup>33</sup>J. Míguez Bonino, "Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification from a Liberation Perspective," 62.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Dorothee Soelle with Shirley A. Cloyes, *To Work and To Love: A Theology of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 39.

social identity must also be addressed by the Word of grace. It is the social-historical self who is declared righteous, not a self abstracted from this identity. Thus, justification must address the unjust dependence of the oppressed, for this oppression is part of who the oppressed are. Justification, whether called forensic or a "metalinguistic event" (Gritsch and Jenson), must be not only an "unconditional eschatological pronouncement" of the acceptance of the individual sinner for Christ's sake. Justification should no longer be interpreted by "lordship" and enslavement, the feudal categories of Luther's "The Freedom of a Christian." Rather, categories must be used which point to the interdependence of persons—categories of community.

The question is not, "What is necessary for my individual salvation?" with its concomitant answer of faith, "The Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none." The question is rather, "Given that human life is embodied in personal form that is both individual and social, how can salvation be articulated in a way that does not address only the individual aspect of the self?" "Descending beneath oneself into the neighbor"<sup>36</sup> is an image from a hierarchical social view which suggests a monarchical self which is condescendingly emptied (and which is articulated by Luther in terms of *kenosis*). Given the options of dependence and independence, such imagery is inevitable. If, however, one adds the option of interdependence, then *kenosis* as a prototypical norm for human agency becomes not love of neighbor necessarily but possibly denial of neighbor. This is especially clear when oppressed groups in society are told to take *kenosis* as the theological enforcement of their "low estate." Then justification and justice are mutually exclusive. A new articulation of *social* justification by grace through faith raises a whole set of questions quite different from the questions generated by works righteousness in the 16th century.

<sup>36</sup>Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian," *Luther's Works*, 31.371.