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Social Justice: Does Who Christ Is Matter?

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A Problem

Deficient reception of social teaching by Catholics and Protestants prevents common witness on faith and justice in the United States. Is something similar the case in other countries? Partial or complete non-reception occurs to some extent in churches or Christian movements--Catholic, Episcopal, United Methodist, Presbyterian Church USA, Society of Friends, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, American Baptists, Disciples of Christ, Evangelicals for Social Action, the Eastern Orthodox-- that have taken definite stands and issued public statements on matters of social, racial, economic and environmental justice.¹

There is a theological reason for deficient reception, apart from non-theological factors such as inadequate distribution of materials, ineffective pedagogy in classrooms and catechesis, outdated seminary courses, or the sociological condition of ‘culture wars’ between traditional and progressive views on abortion, homosexuality, stem cell research, same-sex marriage, etc. The theological reason is lack of clarity on a connection between faith and social justice compelling enough to shape a practical mentality.

A US Conference of Catholic Bishops 1998 Task Force Report identified this problem among Catholics.² Many practicing Catholics, their inquiries disclosed, did not treat the Church’s social doctrine as integral to the Trinitarian, Christological core of faith involved in their active participation in Eucharistic liturgies. I take interpret this

¹ On the Catholic situation see Thomas Hughson, S.J. “Public Catholicism: An American Prospect,” in *Theological Studies* 62 (2001) 701-729 and the Appendix to this paper.

² <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/summary.shtml>

disconnect to be why so many regard the key principles of social doctrine to be remote from faith and why they treat practical applications as advisory on politically-charged issues that are themselves shifting and subject to many interpretations. Contrarily, principles and their political applications in protection of unborn life have been clearly taught and are well-known.

In parallel fashion, many grass-roots Protestants have not recognized a faith/justice linkage in the social agenda of the mainline Protestant churches. Sociologist Brian Steensland points out that since the 1960's mainline Protestant advocacy for social justice, minorities, and the poor moved away from invoking explicit theological and moral justifications.³ Notwithstanding religious motives and an overall religious perspective, until recently mainline advocacy on behalf of the poor had come to adopt the public language and concepts of technical policy analysis. This was the case especially for the National Council of Christian Churches USA, which served as a public voice and vehicle for the social vision of mainline Protestant churches.

The result was loss of clarity on an underlying faith-understanding. The NCC and mainline Protestant advocates of social justice had omitted the language of faith-convictions and appeal to biblical sources. Their practice, without explicit biblical warrants and a theology to accompany it, lost the support of many grass-roots believers on issues that involved a critique of US government policy or the ethos of US economic, social, and cultural life. Doubt set in about whether or not their commitment to social justice agenda had a very strong link to the biblical sources faith. People in the pews

³Brian Steensland, "The Hydra and the Swords: Social Welfare and Mainline Advocacy, 1964-2000," in Robert Wuthnow and John C. Evans, editors, *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism* (2002) 213-236 at 214.

began to see Protestant social teaching as an echo of a secular, liberal outlook. They demanded that their churches cease financial support for NCC social programs.

Protestant and Catholic disconnect between faith and justice not only divided individual churches' and members' faith from the public life of democracy but forfeited a common witness on behalf of real yet limited ecumenical agreement on the social implications of the gospel. No common witness on a visible, national level has emerged. Many individuals and local organizations, it is true, bear common witness but they have almost no public visibility.

A Proposal

So I'd like to re-open the basic question. Does Christian faith involve an orientation to social justice? Why? There can be many theological responses and liberation theology is one from which we all have learned. But I'd like to set out on a theological path less traveled. I look to John Courtney Murray, S.J. and Jacques Dupuis, S.J. as trailblazers on a path of Logos Christology.

Moreover, and perhaps controversially, I propose to focus on the divinity of Christ revealed in the Gospel of John and professed in the Christian Creeds. The thesis is that the divine Logos, the Word Incarnate, acting as Creator through the divine nature not the human nature of Jesus the Christ is the ultimate principle of social justice, so that faith in Christ involves an orientation to social justice. Before setting out to expound a Logos Christology already including a relation to social justice, what is 'social justice'?

“Social justice,” states *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* “concerns...the social, political, and economic aspects and, above all, the structural

dimensions of problems and their respective solutions.”⁴ Social ethicist Bryan Hehir defines the personal, ethical aspect of social justice as the virtue of attention to and decision on “the structural requirements for a just society focused on the human rights and needs of each person.”⁵ This presupposes a capacity in some or many to analyze the “functioning of the major public institutions of the social, legal, economic, or political orders.”⁶ Analysis involves, further, calling into question every societal status quo in its actual, de facto not declared or de jure success in meeting the minimal needs and basic rights of citizens. There follow deliberations and decisions on how to promote a concrete social condition in which all people, equal in dignity, are able to participate in the social, economic, cultural, civil, political life of a society. This generates advocacy of several sorts to move basic institutions toward functioning for the benefit of all not the few.

What connection does social justice have with Christ? Undoubtedly, setting out in the direction of Logos Christology involves a shift from a more familiar approach to understanding Jesus. Colin J. D. Greene remarks that, with exceptions like Karl Rahner, Paul Tillich, and Karl Barth, “the question of Jesus’ divinity and his relation to the God he represents—have taken second place to the concern to retrieve the historical Jesus as the primary focus of Christology.”⁷ Richard A. Norris remarks on, “a new type of

⁴ Pontifical Council on Justice and Peace, English translation by the Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2005) 201, nn 89/90.

⁵ Bryan Hehir, “Social Justice,” in Richard McBrien (general editor) *HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (1995) 1203-1204. Hehir also points out that social justice is an advance beyond “general justice” because of insight into “the structured organization of society” with emphasis on “the need to shape the institutional patterns of social life in accord with the demands of justice so that commutative and distributive justice may be more easily fulfilled,” 1204.

⁶ Hehir, 1204.

⁷ Colin J. D. Greene, *Christology in Cultural Perspective: Marking Out the Horizons* (2003) 134.

Monophysitism—a tendency, in the face of its own strong sense of the incompatibility of divine and human agencies, to reduce Christ not to a God fitted out with the vestiges of humanity but to a human being adorned with the vestiges of divinity.”⁸ According to Norris, modern Christology all but exclusively centers on Jesus’ humanity as the one (monos) nature (physis) in Christ.⁹

Why? Well, I would hazard this opinion. More than two centuries after an Enlightenment critique of Christological dogma inaugurated a search for an historical Jesus concealed behind the dogma, I have heard Catholic preaching against a supposed over-emphasis on Christ’s divinity that has blocked Catholic appreciation for Christ’s humanity as being like our own. The preacher’s accompanying explanation usually adds that over-emphasis on Christ as divine developed in reaction to Arius’s fourth century denial of that divinity. The idea of a one-sided Western Catholic emphasis on Christ’s divinity may come as a surprise to Eastern Catholics and Orthodox who have perceived Western liturgy, doctrine, devotion, and spirituality as preoccupied with the humanity of Jesus.

⁸ Richard Norris, Jr., “Chalcedon Revisited: Historical and Theological Reflection,” in Bradley Nassif, editor, *New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff* (1996) 140-159 at 155.

⁹ Sarah Coakley points out some problematic features in Norris’ article in insightful objection to several readings of Chalcedon, in “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not? Some Reflections on the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian ‘Definition’,” in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, S.J., and Gerald O’Collins, S.J. editors, *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God* (2002) 143-163. It is not clear to me that Norris relies so completely on George Lindbeck’s *The Nature of Doctrine* as to back away from all ontological content, as Coakley argues. I think that Norris brings the mysteriousness of Jesus and belief in him to the fore by insisting on the logical and real incommensurability in Chalcedon’s affirmation of Jesus’ two natures.

Consequently a Western Catholic argument that faith and social justice are linked in light of John 1: 1-14 on the eternal divine Logos Who is the incarnate Jesus departs from conventional expectations in both East and West. In the West the main expectation looks to an argument from the human nature, human freedom, human historicity of Jesus. In the East expectation of a Western Catholic would be the same. So, without minimizing the correctness and importance of a Christology ‘from below’ I wish to explore its inseparability from a ‘Christology from above’ by focusing on the latter.

The proposal here is that the hypostatic union of the divine Logos with the humanity of Jesus institutes an indissoluble conjunction between social justice and faith. This does not overlook the role of a Jewish vision of social justice that Jesus inherited from the Torah and the prophets, then amplified in light of Who he is, and to which the New Testament witnesses. Scripture scholars have done a great service by recovering biblical themes dealing with social justice.¹⁰ Likewise social ethicists have developed the social-ethical meaning of those biblical themes to the great advantage of the church and theology. This proposal, however, centers and grounds the biblical vision and social ethics in precisely Who Jesus is as Logos incarnate. For that identity is ultimately why standards and values for a just society appear in Scripture as part of Israel’s covenantal way of life. They belong first of all to the divine Logos, Whom Israel’s wisdom literature eventually identified in a preliminary non-trinitarian way through a personified *hokma* (Hebrew)/*Sophia* (Septuagint)/*Wisdom*.

¹⁰ See, for example, Bruce Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible* (1996), Joseph Grassi, *Informing the Future: Social Justice in the New Testament* (2003), and John Donohue, S.J., “The Bible and Catholic Social Teaching: Will This Engagement Lead to Marriage?” in Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M. editor, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations* (2004).

To advance this inquiry I will step aside from the most obvious question, “what in Christianity grounds the link between faith and social justice?” Instead, in the context of religiously pluralist societies¹¹—and which today are not?—it will be more productive to ponder another question, “How can social justice be part of the church, Christian faith, and discipleship when commitment to social justice is not distinctively Christian?” Christians, that is, agree with Jews, Muslims, and Buddhists in America, no less than with people at a distance from any religion, that slave labor by children in India or Pakistan, racism in the United States, economic exploitation in many places, or any number of specific kinds of injustice, offend human dignity, violate human rights, and are to be changed.¹² For example, does this cross-border agreement mean Christian resistance to child slavery in common with people adhering to several other religions as well, might not be authentically Catholic and Christian because of that commonality? I hazard the opinion that most Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants immediately will answer no, resistance to slavery is authentically Christian along with being common.¹³ I think this answer comes from a correct, intuitive apprehension of values that Christology underwrites.

Why? Social justice belongs essentially but not uniquely to Christ, to Christianity, and to Christian because it is tied indissolubly to Who Christ is as divine Logos. For

¹¹ On increasing religious pluralism in the United States, see Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a ‘Christian Country’ Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (2001).

¹² For select texts from various religions, collected articles, and relevant excerpts from works that all bear on connections between religions and social justice, see Roger S. Gottlieb, *Liberating Faith: Religious Voices for Justice, Peace & Ecological Wisdom* (2003).

¹³ See Ram Cnaan, with Robert Wineburg and Stephanie C. Boddie, *The Newer Deal: Social Work and Religion in Partnership* (1999) on the basis for social justice in a number of religions.

Catholic Protestant, and Orthodox churches that have made public statements in support of human rights, human dignity, and social justice there is a Christological and not only ethical and biblical-theological principle at work. It is their lived not always argued answer to a question about Jesus that the New Testament places before every person, church, and generation of Christians, “Who do you say that I am?”

What Jesus taught and did expressed his being, his identity. His presence, words, and actions reveal the ultimate, saving depth of Jesus’ identity to be the divine Logos through Whom all creation has come to be, and in Whom it continues to exist.¹⁴

Christianity stands or falls on who Jesus is,¹⁵ not just on what He did, taught, and suffered. The indissoluble link between Christian faith and social justice originates in the person who Jesus is, not only the message he delivered by word and example. Who then is this Jesus of Nazareth? What is his identity?

Not designed to keep readers in suspense, John’s gospel declares his identity at the outset. The Prologue to John’s Gospel says with hymnic reverence, “the Word was with God, the Word was God...and the Word became flesh.”¹⁶ Nonetheless, I agree with

¹⁴ See Morna Hooker, “Their Thoughts Are Not As Our Thoughts,” in John C. Cavadini and Laura Holt, editors, *Who Do You Say That I Am? Confessing the Mystery of Christ* (2004) 33-49. She highlights major elements in an understanding of the Logos/Word in the Prologue:

...the Word was understood to be God’s agent in creation, and had been identified with Wisdom in the books of Proverbs and Wisdom. The Word of God came again and again to the prophets, revealing to them the will of God. The Word is also identified with the Law, the embodiment of God’s will, revealed on Sinai to Moses.

She adds, “It is *this* Word who is made flesh, v. 14, *this* Word who dwells among us...” 43.

¹⁵ This is a salient element in Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo?* which has been badly appropriated and then rejected because reduced to a theology of penal substitution.

¹⁶ The hypothesis of a pre-Prologue Logos hymn remains in debate. See Herman Ridderbos’s valuable, “The Structure and Scope of the Prologue to the Gospel of John,”

Herman Ridderbos's exegesis that this proclamation of divine 'descent' does not purport to be the first thing known about Jesus. It comes first in the gospel in order to reveal the deepest identity of one already known to disciples. His humanity is the first thing known about Jesus. John teaches that this is not the full reality of Jesus.

John's gospel does not begin the way Mark's gospel does, with anecdotal description of how some came to follow Jesus of Nazareth whom they come to know in very human interactions. Rather, the Prologue presupposes all this and then interprets this Jesus already known to His followers.¹⁷ This Jesus is the Word, the Logos, in the flesh. John I identifies Jesus (so obviously human, historical, Jewish, linked to John the Baptist, good news to hearers, preached by apostles and disciples) as the Logos through Whom all creation has come to be.¹⁸

Moreover creation does not exist as an instantaneous simultaneity no longer dependent on the creating source once it has come into existence. Not all parts and phases of it come into existence at the origin, whether this be the Big Bang or not. Rather, the Logos continually creates and sustains all in existence as its source. Patristic authors drew out the principle that the Creator was the ultimate source of order in creation, however variously that order can be conceived. As the ultimate source of order the Logos can be said to rule or govern creation, without removing the reality of human beings as a created principle ordering creation in conjunction with the Creator.

in David E. Orton, compiler, *The Composition of John's Gospel: Selected Studies from Novum Testamentum* (1999) 41-62.

¹⁷ See Joël Delobel, "Christ, the Lord of Creation," *Louvain Studies* 16 (1991) 155-169, on how the resurrection generated "the impression of a 'something more' that was already evoked by the astonishing actions of the earthly Jesus..." (165) and that supported affirmation of Jesus' divine character.

¹⁸ Pauline and deuteropauline letters attributed creation to Christ (1 Cor. 8:6, 2 Cor. 5:17, Eph. 2:10, 15, Col. 1:15-17, Heb. 1:1-3a) before John's gospel circulated in final form.

Moreover, the humanity of Jesus enters into some participation in that divine governance, phase by phase from public ministry, through death and resurrection and after the Ascension. Jesus, not simply the Logos, is the Pantocrator, Lord of Lords, Alpha and Omega, the one before Whom every knee on heaven and on earth shall bend because the Father has given to him all authority in heaven and on earth. He will judge all things at the right hand of the Father. (We may recall one of Ignatius's reverent ways of referring to Jesus as *Senor y Creador*, Lord and Creator.)

The issue then ceases to be whether or not Jesus in his public ministry acted in a way, or taught content, that approximates what today we understand by 'social justice'. Instead, and immanent within that, the issue is whether or not the union of divine and human in the Incarnation already introduced an orientation toward social justice. The answer can be yes, because the Logos labors for justice before, during and after the Incarnation, and not only through the humanity of Jesus in himself and as represented by Christianity. The influence of the creating Logos is omnipresent, universal, and extends far beyond the historical particularities of Christian churches.

While Rahner's thesis of anonymous Christianity pertains to the order of redemptive grace and has been evaluated variously, I do not think that in the created order the omnipresence of the Logos and the universal possibility of a human response in the form of self-transcending human consciousness reaching judgments of value on justice can be doubted as easily.

That is, and I acknowledge a debt to Jacques Dupuis's *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* and other essays here,¹⁹ not all the Logos' divine power

¹⁹ Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (1996)

and action is or can be mediated through Jesus' created humanity.²⁰ Jesus' miracles and resurrection were manifestations of divine power in which his humanity was involved by participation. The divine power worked in, with, and through Jesus' human nature but not from it as from an ultimate source. But, unlike miracles, the Logos Who is Jesus does not enact all divine power (*Logos asarkos*) through the created reality of Jesus' human nature (*Logos ensarkos*). The two natures in Jesus are not only distinct but remain incommensurate as uncreated and created. The created nature of Jesus cannot participate in and mediate the Logos in absolute fullness. Absolute fullness of divine mediation and self-communication is reserved to the inner-trinitarian processions.

In particular, the act of the Logos creating, sustaining and ordering all that has come to be, in John 1, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians and Hebrews cannot be attributed to the created capacities of Jesus' human nature, including his human consciousness and subjectivity. The created does not create, and cannot act as Creator. Divine power to create cannot be communicated or handed over to what is created. Not even the created human nature of Jesus is its own source of existence anymore than any or all human beings, and the cosmos as a whole, are their own complete cause. All has come to be by the creating Logos. But Jesus' humanity is not eternal and uncreated. Consequently it does not because it cannot create. The creating Logos is immanent and omnipresent to creation and the Incarnation did not terminate this immanence and omnipresence, which continue after the Incarnation but not in virtue of Jesus' humanity.

²⁰ The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith called into question Dupuis's *Logos asarkos/Logos ensarkos* (*Logos not-fleshed/Logos enfleshed*) distinction. Gerald O'Collins defended Dupuis on the unity of Christ to the satisfaction of the Congregation.

To suppose that the Incarnation suspends the Creator/creature difference in Jesus is to think exactly what Chalcedon set aside as the error of Monophysitism.

Monophysitism blended Jesus' human nature into the divine nature to the loss of the full reality of his humanity. That obliterated the reality and logic of the distinction, co-presence, and co-operation of divine and human natures. Chalcedon taught the distinctness, and non- confusion of the divine and human natures of the one and the same Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Word made flesh.

Now, while creating does not proceed from the humanity of Jesus, it cannot be divided from it either, since Jesus is one and the same. Jesus who is the Logos Incarnate creates, it is true, but not with the powers of his human nature. Creating, sustaining, and ordering all of creation, the changing cosmos, all earth's species and processes of evolution, and humanity, is the act of the distinct divine nature of the Logos as it operates without being mediated by Jesus' human nature (*Logos asarkos*).

The humanity of Jesus with all its individual traits realizing generic capacities cannot be separated from this divine activity of the Logos, yet cannot be identical with it either since the human and divine natures remain distinct. Whatever belongs to the Logos belongs to Christ. If there is something of social justice in the creating activity of the Logos, it belongs to Christ and cannot be ignored by those who believe in Christ, even if it does not proceed from Jesus' human nature.

And there is something of social justice in the creating activity of the Logos. Here I acknowledge another debt, to John Courtney Murray in his book *We Hold These Truths*:

*Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition.*²¹ The omnipresent, immanent activity of the Logos as Creator includes the ordering of creation, often called divine governance, and this involves influencing human societies toward justice. (Might Ignatius of Loyola’s grasp of the universal operation of the Logos be why he installed in the Constitutions at # 622 the principle that, “the more universal the good is, the more it is divine”?)

The creating Logos as ultimate source of order in society and history was an insight of John Courtney Murray (1904-1967) in *We Hold These Truths*. Following Aquinas, Murray identified justice as a following of the ‘natural law’ guiding people in accord with the Creator’s ordering of creation. Murray conceived justice as a work of reason. And he linked the work of reason that is justice to the Logos immanent in history. He explained that,

...he who entered the stream of history as its Redeemer is the Logos, Eternal Reason. Through His Spirit He is still immanent in history, there to do a work of reason—that work of reason which is justice, and that work of pacification which is in turn the work of justice.²²

This, by the way, is not Christian over-assimilation of Stoic doctrine on the logos as the ordering principle immanent in the cosmos.²³

²¹ John Courtney Murray, S.J., with an Introduction by Peter Lawler and Forward by Walter Burghardt, S.J., *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (2005; first edition 1960) Chapter 8, “Is It Basket-Weaving? The Question of Christianity and Human Values,” 165-182. This was originally published separately with a few differences in 1953 as “Christian Humanism in America,” in *Social Order*, 3 (May-June) 233-244.

²² Murray, 178.

²³ ²³ It is mistaken to attribute patristic Logos Christology to the influence of Platonism or Stoicism. See M.J. Edwards, “Justin’s Logos and the Word of God,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3, 3 (1995) 261-280, and Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Ch. 2, “The Cosmic Christ in the Early Fathers.” Edwards points

The “stream of history” is the realm of human events rather than of cosmic nature. Seeking justice and peace is just, reasonable, and enacts a human hearkening to the wisdom of the Logos available as the most basic dictates of reason, the elemental principles of natural law. Perhaps that could be re-formulated in terms of an intuitive sense of right and wrong cultivated in the world’s religions. Human orientation toward just social existence is part of a larger human attention to what is reasonable among people and in all relationships. This can and does occur in all people, societies, and religions. And can be ignored or violated in all as well, including Christianity.

How does the Logos influence history? I think it can be approached as follows. The Logos acts within human beings as the divine source of humanity’s natural light of reason, and not only through visible Christianity, gospel, and faith. Whether this enlightenment can be salvific is a question Dupuis answers in the affirmative. Here the focus is on the created order subsumed into grace that transforms it yet never annihilates it when purging sin from it.

The omnipresent Logos, light already in the world before the Incarnation, enlightens human beings by creating them in a nature endowed with reason.²⁴

This is a capacity for self-direction toward, among other values, justice and peace.

out that the Stoic logos was not personal, not transcendent or divine, and not part of Israel’s wisdom literature.

²⁴ David McLeod reads John 1:4 on “light” as referring to a pre-Incarnation light “related to creation, not salvation,” and locates it in knowledge of God in Adam and Eve before the Fall, and in a residual capacity to see the reflection of God in the created world (Rom. 1:20) in “The Creation of the Universe by the Word: John 1:3-5,” in *Bibliotheca Sacra* (April-June 2003) 187-201. I agree, with the qualification that acknowledging the world as creation and from God can be salvific. Also, I do not share McLeod’s alarm at some misguided efforts in ecotheology, though I do not concur with pantheism or panentheism.

This is to act in society and history according to natural law and so in accord with the Logos Who is its source.

This is how the Logos does a “work of reason” in history, by exercising an influence as the ultimate source for created, reasonable human nature that inheres in persons who are continually dependent for existence in and as this nature on the Logos Who is the divine source of reason and what is reasonable. The scope of the influence of the Logos is the same as the extent of creation, and here, of humanity.

This is a universal influence far beyond membership in Israel and Christianity. It leads Murray to conclude that,

Hence all efforts, by whomsoever put forth, toward the rationalization of human society, its ‘justification’, and its pacification, are put forth in the line of action of the Logos Himself. He is in mysterious alliance with them.²⁵

Human struggles for justice and peace are in “mysterious alliance” with the Logos’s divine “work of reason” whether people realize it or not, believe in Christ or not. Murray implies that this does not depend on the extent to which people accept the gospel in faith but on the extent to which they in practice seek a just ordering of society and a consequent social peace regardless of their relation to Jesus in his humanity.

I’d like to comment on Murray’s position. It points to both an ultimate and a proximate source and norm for justice. The ultimate source and norm for justice is the wisdom of the creating Logos. The proximate norm is rational human nature, or in

²⁵ Murray, 178.

Loneragan's terms, self-transcending human subjectivity reaching authentic judgments of value on what is just. The normative aspect deserves attention.

Some guiding norms for social justice are necessary insofar as social justice transcends and completes commutative and distributive justice in everyday dealings because it looks to the basic institutions of a society. Social justice also goes beyond what may be seen as the immediate well-being of individuals. To assist human beings live in accord with the creating Logos (*Logos asarkos*), there are three mediations of the Logos as ultimate norm for justice. The most universal and possibly in general the weakest access is through self-transcending human consciousness. This is the realm of natural law and conscience. This receives Murray's attention. The second mediation, more concrete, definite and less open to errors is Israel's Torah. The laws and institutions specify and externalize wisdom of the Logos. The third and fullest mediation is the humanity, mind, heart, wisdom, and communication of Jesus. Jesus is the Logos in the flesh and acts, teaches, and initiates practices in accord with the Logos. Dupuis takes up the two in their salvific effect.

Scripture, though, presents all three mediations: conscience and natural law (wisdom literature, Romans); Israel's reception of divine wisdom (Torah, prophets and the writings); and Jesus's own way of life and teaching (whole New Testament). It seems that the Qu'ran, the Upanishads, the teachings of Gautama Buddha, Confucius, and probably many shamans like the Native American Black Elk also mediate aspects of the wisdom of the Logos (*asarkos*) on justice. Their mediation, of course, is somewhat more like that of the Torah in anchoring fundamental moral principles to a transcendent order, if that may be said about Buddhism.

Further, and to refine interpretation of Murray's statements, he referred to "justice" plain and simple. But justice divides into distributive, commutative, and social justice. He did not detail or specify one kind of justice or another. Still, he focused on what introduces reason into social existence. Murray's very broad perspective has most affinity with what Catholic Social Teaching named 'general justice' that Pope Pius XI in *Quadregesimo anno* built up into 'social justice', a theme influential in Murray's early thought.

Murray said that all efforts toward a just social order, "are put forth in the line of action of the Logos himself." The slightest of inferences goes on to affirm that this means all efforts toward social justice. Accordingly, when individuals and groups of all sorts and convictions in matters of religion think and act toward a just social order, they are allies of the Logos, whether aware of it or not. Anyone, any group, of whichever religion or none, whose social goals, judgments, values, and actions lie in the direction of social justice, serves the Logos' s governance of creation, history, and society. So, to answer the question posed by the title, yes, who Christ is does matter for social justice.

Conclusion

Finally, to return to the contextual question about Christians and non-Christians who act for social justice, it now will be clear that Christians and non-Christians alike are acting in what Murray called a "mysterious alliance with the Logos." Their concern for justice already binds them together and not on the basis of whatever secular theory they also may hold, and not on the basis of shared belief in Christ. All the more then are fellow Christians bound together among themselves by their common concern for justice. The concern takes its rise from their humanity in its universal aspects, from the Torah in

the Hebrew Scriptures, and above all from the historically mediated person and message of Jesus witnessed in Scripture and tradition.

Moreover, faith in Jesus (*Logos ensarkos*) includes affirmation on the Logos Who acts universally and constantly (*Logos asarkos*) to elicit social justice. Faith involves the whole of Who Christ is, including divine power not mediated through the human nature of Jesus. The divine nature of the Logos Who is Jesus acts continually and universally, and not only through the historical particularity of Jesus' human subjectivity and the visible reality of Christianity based in it.

Fidelity to Who Christ is, then, grounds a Christian search for common ground on social justice with all others, of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Confucian, Zoroastrian, animist religious convictions, or of no professed religion. In seeking social justice they too act in mysterious alliance with the Logos, because commitment to social justice serves the ordering purpose of the divine Logos. This is why Catholics can bear common witness with other Christians on behalf of social justice. At the same time faith in Christ Who is the Logos supports practical and theoretical alliance on behalf of social justice with adherents of other religions, and with secular humanists and atheists. Who Christ is matters.

At the same time this position does not claim that social justice is the substance of Christianity. As a universal work of the immanent Logos, influencing humanity toward social justice cannot be the precise and distinct *novum* of Christ and salvation. All societies and religions have the seeds of justice in them, not only Christianity. The Logos is always and everywhere laboring for justice, not just through the churches and their members. Social justice is not distinctively Christian. The primary visible mission of

Christ and the Holy Spirit is not to promote social and other modes of justice in human social existence.

Movement toward justice belongs to the universal ordering, the educating, of creation by the immanent Logos not all of which is mediated by the humanity of Jesus and Christianity. Bringing a human order of justice was not the central aim in Christ's mission begun in the Incarnation, as if his humanity were primarily *instrumentum justitiae* (instrument of justice) rather than *instrumentum salutis* (instrument of salvation). Salvation exceeds and arises at a point much deeper than social justice. And yet, Jesus' humanity cannot be separated from all that the Logos is.

Consequently, faith in Christ cannot be separated from social justice. The humanity of Jesus mediating salvation cannot be separated from the divine Logos Who is the ultimate principle of ordering societies toward justice. Jesus in the flesh is the incarnate Logos, Word of God among us. Jesus is one and the same, so his humanity dedicated to our salvation cannot be separated from the Logos universally drawing humanity toward justice as well as saving by communicating grace.

Christian faith cannot be separated from justice, especially social justice, without blurring the identity, and not only the message, of Jesus. Who Christ is matters for social justice.

APPENDIX: Sociological Information

In 1998 the US Catholic Bishops conference received a Task Force report that something less than success characterized American Catholic education in CST. However, earlier, in *What Does the Lord Require? How American Christians Think About Economic Justice* (1992), Stephen Hart had summed up public opinion research by saying that, “*The only religious factor consistently related to economic attitudes is denominational group: Catholics and those with no religious affiliation are consistently but not dramatically more liberal on economic issues,*” 156, italics in original). A ‘liberal’ attitude on economic issues was readiness to have government assist the poor. Is that not a sign of influence from CST, which likewise sees a role for government in assistance for the poor?

Moreover, in *Catholicism USA: A Portrait of the Catholic Church in the United States* (2000), Bryan T. Froehle and Mary L. Gautier concluded from social-scientific data that, “measured in terms of voting, party identification, or attitudes on political issues, Catholics continued to be the most Democratic group of white Christians,” if only by a small margin (pp. 29-32). Again, more than 2/3 (69%) considered government programs to help the needy to be “very important” (p. 33). A hypothesis accepted as likely to explain this ‘Catholic difference’ was a “Catholic imagination” (Andrew Greeley) or a “Catholic ethic” (John Tropicman) (p. 33) that counteracted the predictable self-interest of middle and upper-middle class Catholics. Are not the fact and the explanatory hypotheses signs that CST has had a major influence in the direction of social justice?

A ‘Catholic difference’ in attitudes toward poverty in America can be accepted as valid. This social-scientific finding, however, does not refute the 1998 Task Force judgment that there is a problem in American Catholic reception of CST.

Why? What both studies pointed to is widespread American Catholic social charity, not necessarily the social justice characteristic of CST. Neither finding clarified whether or not the ‘Catholic difference’ incorporated social justice. James Davidson et al. in *The Search for Common Ground* (1997) and *Catholicism USA* had found that “helping the needy” was the most commonly held (97%) element in

Catholic identity. And yet this did not necessarily involve social analysis, social justice, or change in social structures. For example, 65% of American public opinion according to the Gallup Social Audit (1998) favored government assistance to the poor. But more than 2/3 of that group wanted assistance to take the form of education and training, not structural change in external conditions or in taxation policies. Education and training are crucial forms of social charity but they do not address systemic kinds of causes for poverty.

So, while American Catholics do not share a popular view that poverty is the fault of the poor, neither are they a distinguishable body of opinion in favor of structural change (e.g. income transfer by progressive taxation). American Catholics do not look at poverty (or other injustices) in light of the social analysis and structural concerns characteristic of social justice in CST.