

*From Canada*

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## JUSTICE THAT TRANSFORMS

by Wayne Northey

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### **Book review by Ron Dart**

*These are some of his writings on Restorative Justice over the years. They are part of a projected multi-volume series. Wayne then hopes to publish another series of his Peace/Peacemaking writings, tentatively titled Justice That Yields Peace.*

***Volumes 1, 2 and 3 are currently available.***

There has been, sadly so, a predictable tendency within the historic Western tradition to read, interpret and apply the Bible within the crime and punishment, justice ethos in a retributive manner—an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, Shylockian pound of flesh dominating the day, fair Portia banished from the stage. A rather narrow and reductionistic read of the Hebrew canon (Old Testament) has dominated and, in an imperial sort of way, colonized alternate notions of both justice and mercy that can equally be found in the Old Testament, Apocrypha and New Testament. The Jewish prophets and the Sermon on the Mount are two needful portals and correctives to a one-dimensional and reactionary read of the Bible.

There has also been a predictable tendency within the much longer historic Western and Christian tradition to develop, in greater depth and detail, via legal systems and jurisprudence, more finely tuned notions of Retributive Justice. We might ask why this single-vision approach to justice has so come to

dominate and what other options might be mined within both the Bible and the Christian Tradition that question and doubt the reigning monarch of Retributive Justice? The answer to such a nagging question can be aptly and amply answered, from a variety of angles, in this superb book by Wayne Northey.

Each of the in-depth and detailed chapters in this must-read beauty of a tome highlight, in not-to-be-missed insights, how and why the ideology of Retributive Justice has dominated, the consequence of such a reality, and why Restorative Justice has not really been tried and found wanting.

Wayne, to his credit, has spent many a decade in the restorative trenches (he was there at the beginning many a decade ago) and he tells a worthy tale about the need to, Phoenix-like, resurrect the Restorative Justice tradition. There has been a tendency to pit the liberal rehabilitative approach against the more conservative retributive approach, but the 3rd way of Restorative Justice has many a possibility worth the fuller probing. The genius of the book is the way Wayne both probes ever deeper and thinks ever wider and fuller about these timely and timeless issues. Again, I might add that Wayne's thinking and writing emerge from decades of being in the thick of the fray and the diverse articles embody such a reality.

The fact that the Restorative Justice position has often been marginalized, misunderstood or caricatured as a sort of naïve idealism is found wanting in Wayne's animated and vigorous defence of Restorative Justice. I might add that beyond the importance of Restorative Justice is the broader notion of Transformative Justice that Wayne has often pondered. I have been fortunate, over the decades, to have had Wayne lecture in

my classes in Philosophy of Law and other classes on Restorative/Transformative Justice. Students have raised tough questions about both positions and Wayne has answered each question admirably, well, charitably and wisely. This book does much the same but in a more in-depth way and manner.

The fact that Wayne engages Biblical exegetes' questionable read of the Bible when applied to justice, the way the Western Tradition has erred in significant ways in this area, and how significant approaches by the Evangelical and Reformed Christian tribes have only seen with one eye on this issue are held up for serious scrutiny by Wayne in this packed and challenging bounty of a book. Wayne has lived in the midst of these issues at the Biblical, Christian Tradition and contemporary Evangelical and Reformed levels. He knows the nuances and subtleties but he is also acutely aware of how, time and again, Retributive Justice dominates the day (and the practical implications of it). There is a unique sense in which Wayne (although probably not seeing himself as such) comes as a prophetic voice to the establishment and status quo Sanhedrin and dares to question their misread of the Bible and Christian Tradition. Again a careful read of this well-crafted book will, if read discerningly, reveal much that is often, tragically, ignored in how Christians interpret the Dostoevskian crime and punishment dilemma.

I have gently urged Wayne, over the years, to compile and thread together many of the articles he has written on Restorative Justice (and they are legion). I have no doubt that those who read and inwardly digest the articles chosen by Wayne for this unique collection and book will be generously rewarded by each read and reread. Certainly, the way Wayne immerses the curious

reader in the trying issues will refocus the way justice is often defined and understood. I do, therefore, heartily recommend this exceptional book to the reader with an open mind: their understanding of justice may never be the same again.

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