



Justice: Rights and Wrongs

Nicholas Wolterstorff

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Wide-ranging and ambitious, *Justice* combines moral philosophy and Christian ethics to develop an important theory of rights and of justice as grounded in rights. Nicholas Wolterstorff discusses what it is to have a right, and he locates rights in the respect due the worth of the rights-holder. After contending that socially-conferred rights require the existence of natural rights, he argues that no secular account of natural human rights is successful; he offers instead a theistic account.

Wolterstorff prefaces his systematic account of justice as grounded in rights with an exploration of the common claim that rights-talk is inherently individualistic and possessive. He demonstrates that the idea of natural rights originated neither in the Enlightenment nor in the individualistic philosophy of the late Middle Ages, but was already employed by the canon lawyers of the twelfth century. He traces our intuitions about rights and justice back even further, to Hebrew and Christian scriptures. After extensively discussing justice in the Old Testament and the New, he goes on to show why ancient Greek and Roman philosophy could not serve as a framework for a theory of rights.

Connecting rights and wrongs to God's relationship with humankind, *Justice* not only offers a rich and compelling philosophical account of justice, but also makes an important contribution to overcoming the present-day divide between religious discourse and human rights.

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