Charity and Giving in Monotheistic Religions

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Healing the world with righteousness? The language of social justice in early Christian homilies

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> The very word for 'charity' in the Bible, *sedaqa*, which in its more inclusive semantic usage means 'righteousness,' is often paired with the term *mishpat* in the sense of '(social) justice.' For the giver it is a duty (*misva*) commanded by God; for the needy, it is an entitlement.[1]

> By performing these *mitzvot, tzedakah* and *gemilut hasadem*, we engage in *tikkun olam*, repair of the world.[2]

1. Introduction

In both Jewish and Islamic traditions of late antiquity, the Hebrew and Arabic words commonly transliterated *tzedakah* or *sedaqa / sadaqa* were generic terms for charity or alms that simultaneously meant "righteousness." By this inseparable double meaning—as an act done toward the needy as well as a state of being toward the divine (i. e., moral correctness)—*tzedakah/sadaqa* encompassed the idea of justice or, perhaps more precisely, social justice, in both of these traditions of the late antique Mediterranean world. Mark Cohen's definition (the first quote at the

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1 Mark R. Cohen, *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 5–6.

2 Barbara Diamond Goldin, *Creating Angels: Stories of Tzedakah* (Northvale, NJ and London UK: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996), xv.

head of this chapter) emphasizing entitlements or rights echoes Gildas Hamel's observation in 1990 that "the most frequent word used by the rabbis to express charity, *sedaquah*, meaning 'righteousness' or justice, reveals a basic attitude, namely that of the donor's obligation and the poor's right."[3] As Miriam Hoexter has noted, the Arabic *sadaqa* was "a generic term for a charitable gift and in fact voluntary charity of all sorts," although the Arabic word, *zakat*, eventually became the term for a tax incumbent on all believers until, as Hoexter notes, the tax "fell into desuetude"[4] and the *waqf*, which regulated endowment institutions, emerged as the preferred structure of administrative charity in Islamic society. Thus despite perhaps diverging applications and usages, the root *zdk* expressed for both Jewish and Islamic texts an innate understanding of charitable actions associated with religious "righteousness," almsgiving being one of the five pillars of Islam, and Jewish *tzedakah* being, as Ephrat Habas (Rubin) notes in her contribution to this volume, "simply the right thing to do." Bound into this broad concept are implied ideals such as respect for the poor person's possessions and land (if they had any), their need to stay warm at night, "fair" lending practices and interest rates, rights to benefit from social resources such as food, and certain rights to community hospitality. Further, as Barbara Goldin attests in the second quote at the head of this chapter, from a book written for a broad, popular audience, social justice, righteousness, and acts of lovingkindness (*chesed*) within Judaism are sometimes associated with *tikkun olam*, the idea of "world healing" or "world repair," a cosmic restoration that may also be linked in modern thought to ideals of peace, righteous balance, or environmental or ecological harmony.[5] Indeed in modern Jewish

3 Gildas Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine: First Three Centuries CE*, Near Eastern Studies 23 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 216.

4 Miriam Hoexter, "Charity, the Poor, and Distribution of Alms in Ottoman Algiers," in *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts*, ed. Michael Bonner, Mine Ener, and Amy Singer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 145.

5 This opening paragraph summarizing the conceptual meanings of *tzedakah* and *sadaqa* in Judaic and Arabic studies, topics that are outside my own expertise, is based on the following sources: For discussion of Hebrew terms and an understanding of how "justice and mercy" are paired in Hebrew biblical texts, I depend largely on Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East.* (Jerusalem / Minneapolis: Magnes Press/Fortress, 1995), esp. 25–44. For contemporary Jewish views on *tzedakah* and *chesed*, see Avroham Chaim Feuer, *Tzedakah Treasury: An Anthology of Torah Teachings on the Mitzvah of Charity–To*

social consciousness, "the first thing that comes to mind when many people think about *tikkun olam* is our duty to help the poor" and "the closest of those classical words for what we mean today by *tikkun olam* are, on the personal level, *chesed*, and, on the social level, *tzedek* and *mishpat.*"[6]

How might these observations on terminology in Judaism and Islam contribute to an understanding of the relationship between alms and social justice as it related to giving in early Christian texts from the late antique Mediterranean world? Christians from this period included those whose first language was Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic—thus obviously sharing cognates with Hebrew- and Arabic-speakers—as well as those whose first language was Greek, Latin, or Coptic, who used different sets of words altogether. By the time of the Islamic conquests in the seventh and eighth centuries, a number of early Christian texts on poverty relief were available and were being translated and used in settings outside their original contexts. How was the language of alms in these early Christian sermons related to concepts of social justice, "righteousness," and perhaps even the idea of "healing the world" that is now associated with *tikkun olam?* How did linguistic differences inherent in Greek vocabulary influence the development of philanthropic rhetoric in Greek-speaking Christian communities? This essay focuses particularly on two overlapping linguistic contexts in which such rhetoric developed. The first is the Syriac usage of terms and concepts in several texts where the language itself shared both the Jewish and emerging Arabic understanding of *tzedakah / sadaqa* as meaning simultaneously alms and righteousness. The second is the context of the major Greek-speaking "players" who wrote about social welfare in the fourth century using available

Instruct and Inspire (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 2000); Yisrael Meir Kahan ("The Chafetz Chaim"), *'Ahavath Chesed': The Love of Kindness as Required by God,* trans. Leonard Oschry, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1976); Jacob Neusner, *Tzedakah: Can Jewish Philanthropy Buy Jewish Survival?* Brown Judaic Studies 205 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990); Eli Shear and Chaim Miller, *The Rich Go to Heaven: Giving Charity in Jewish Thought* (Northvale, NJ and Jerusalem: Jason Aronson, 1998); and Meir Tamari, *'With All your Possessions': Jewish Ethics and Economic Life* (NY: The Free Press, 1987). For a brief discussion on the volitional aspects of Jewish charity see e.g., Jochanan Muffs, *Love and Joy: Law, Language and Religion in Ancient Israel* (NY: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, distributed by Harvard University Press, 1992), esp. 177–186. On charity in Islam, in addition to Bonner et al. see also Adam Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt,* 1250–1517 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

6 Elliot N. Dorf, *The Way into Tikkun Olam (Repairing the World)* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2005), 107, 13–14.

Greek terms to build concepts (also inherent within the range of biblical texts on justice and Jewish *tzedakah*) that we now associate with "human rights" language: equality, common race, common humanity, common good, and restorative justice.[7] Since in Greek the word for "mercy" was not necessarily equivalent to the words for "righteousness" or the idea of social justice, and since traditional Graeco-Roman views on righteousness, justice, and mercy did not include the needy poor *qua* poor,[8] how did Greek-speaking Christians argue for social justice (which they certainly did) on religious grounds based on expectations for the concrete human behaviors of sacred acts of piety and charity? Given that ideas such as mercy and love are frequently the dominant operating terms for Christian charity in the Greek language of the fourth century, how did authors construct a case for philanthropy as part of "justice" and "righteousness"? What were the perceived conflicts (if any) between these various terms in the eastern Christian tradition of this period?[9] This essay explores these questions and their potential implications for interreligious dialogue on social welfare issues today.

7 For a more detailed study on human rights language in early Christian tradition, see Susan R. Holman, "The Entitled Poor: Human Rights Language in the Cappadocians," *Pro Ecclesia* 9 (2000): 476–89; and idem, "Out of the Fitting Room: Rethinking Patristic Social Texts on 'The Common Good,' in *Reading Patristic Texts on Social Ethics: Issues and Challenges for 21st Century Christian Social Thought*, ed. Johan Leemans, Brian Matz, and Johan Verstraeten, Catholic University of America Studies in Early Christianity (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, forthcoming).

8 On the difference in focus between traditional Graeco-Roman justice/philanthropy and early Christian views, see esp. Peter Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire*, The Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures (Hanover and London: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 2002).

9 This study is limited to "eastern" early Christian texts in Syriac and Greek and does not consider Latin or Coptic sources. Nor do I discuss Greek "pagan" views on almsgiving, on which see now Anneliese Parkin, "'You do him no service:' An exploration of pagan almsgiving," in *Poverty in the Roman World*, ed. Margaret Atkins and Robin Osborne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 60–82.

2. Terminology in Early Syriac and Greek Christian Sermons

The close relationship between the various Hebrew terms used for justice and mercy is inevitably rooted in biblical texts. As Moshe Weinfeld's study of social justice in ancient Israel and the ancient Near East has demonstrated, the tightly-bound biblical association between *tzedakah*, *mishpat*, *rachamim* (mercy), and *chesed*, and the phrase commonly translated "justice and righteousness" "does not refer to the proper execution of justice, but rather expresses, in a general sense, social justice and equity, which is bound up with kindness and mercy."[10] That is, rather than civic legal "judgment," such terms evoke ideals of civic order.[11] Unlike juridical rulings in which legal "justice" might appear at odds with clemency, biblical texts suggest no such conceptual conflict when it comes to acting charitably toward the poor and those in need. Indeed, true social justice is understood as demanding an inseparable application of both justice *and* mercy, and this package of prescribed behavior manifested "righteousness" as well as "lovingkindness." This close pairing is so tightly integrated in the modern Christian tradition that the late Krister Stendahl, Lutheran bishop of Stockholm, well known for his contributions to global ecumenical dialogue, could write,

> The basic point is that we should not think of judgment and mercy as two different things. … Mercy, salvation, liberation are part of God's judgment. Judgment is mercy for those who need mercy. Judgment is justice for those who hunger and thirst after it, since they do not have it. … In the world one speaks about justice and in the church one speaks about righteousness. But Hebrew, Greek, and Latin do not offer this distinction.[12]

10 Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, 36.

11 For modern views on the relationship between justice and mercy as it may relate to religious discussion, see e.g., Martha C. Nussbaum, "Equity and Mercy," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 22 (1993):83–125; Krister Stendahl, "Judgment and Mercy," in *The Context of Contemporary Theology: Essays in Honor of Paul Lehmann*, ed. Alexander J. McKelway and E. David Willis (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974), 147–154; "The Attribute of Justice and the Attribute of Mercy," in *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, ed. Ephraim E. Urbach, and trans. Israel Abrahams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 448–461; and Jacob Neusner, "The Theological Category-Formations of Rabbinic Midrash: [3]: God's Justice and God's Mercy," in idem, *The Theological Foundations of Rabbinic Midrash* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006), 63–89. I thank Sarah Coakley for these references.

12 Stendahl, "Judgment and Mercy," 148–149.

Although, as Stendahl notes, justice and righteousness may not be distinguished in biblical terms in Jewish or Christian traditions, justice/righteousness may be clearly distinct from mercy in other languages used in the ancient Mediterranean world. In Greek it is the word for mercy (*eleos*), not the words commonly translated "justice" (*dikaios*) or "judgment" (*krisis*), that forms the backbone of charity rhetoric and the most prevalent term for alms, *eleemosyne*. In Greek Christian texts about poverty relief, "charity" concepts used not only *eleemosyne* (acts of mercy), but also other terms such as *philanthropia* (love of humankind), *philoptochia* (love of the poor), *euergetism* (good works, traditionally associated with patronage and sometimes translated into or equated with the Latin *beneficentia*) and *agape* (love). Not one of these words is inherently associated with the idea of divine justice and righteousness. Authors from both Jewish and Christian traditions have occasionally noted the apparent ideological chasm between social action for the needy that is based on entitlements and that based on "soft" concepts like "love" and "mercy."

Yet there is no question that Greek-speaking Christians in the ancient world perceived a close relationship between alms, divine justice, and righteousness. They expressed this most often in commentaries on Gospel texts such as Matthew 25:31–46, the parable of Judgment Day, when humankind will be divided into heaven-bound "sheep" and hell-bound "goats" purely by how each treated persons in need. Attentive Greek-speaking Christians drew this close association of justice and mercy in the biblical pattern from the Septuagint, and it was also present in the New Testament. For example, in Matthew's version of the Beatitudes the saying, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness (*dikaiosunē*)" is followed immediately by "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy (*eleemosyne*)"(Matt. 5:6–7). And there is no evidence that readers perceived any tension between Matthew 5:48, "Be perfect (*teleos*) as your heavenly Father is perfect," and its obvious synoptic parallel in Luke 6:36, which, by simply omitting the letter *tau*, reads, "Be merciful (*eleos*) just as your Father is merciful."[13] The audience who assumed these texts as complementary might easily view mercy as an intrinsic element within the very nature of a perfectly just God.

Despite overlapping ideas, however, righteousness was by necessity expressed in Greek using a distinctly different word from that for charity/alms if only because there is no single-word equivalent (in either Greek

13 I thank Robert J. Daly, S.J., for drawing my attention to this point.

or English) for the full meaning of *tzedakah*. Consequently, the association between mercy and justice in almsgiving depended on interpretive exegesis of translated terms rather than on a lexical equivalent. Any Hellenic Jewish readers who did not speak Hebrew or Aramaic would have had the same challenge; Septuagint texts most commonly translate *chesed* as *eleon* (mercy), *mizpat* as *krima* or *krisis* (justice, most commonly legislative justice), and *tzedakah* as *dikaiosyne* (righteousness),[14] although sometimes *tzedakah* might be translated *eleemosyne* (e.g., Ps. 33:5). How did these linguistic differences influence the development of Christian philanthropic rhetoric? To explore these questions, let us turn now to the Syriac and Greek Christian texts.

2.1 Alms as justice in Syriac tradition

For Syriac-speaking Christians, there appears to have been a direct transfer of the Hebrew double concept inherent in *tzedakah*, that is, they used virtually the same word. The Syriac word for alms is *zedqto*, meaning "the right or due of God or neighbor;" and "almsgiver" was *mzadqana*, literally "the one who justifies." Three texts illustrate how early Christians used this root word in philanthropic rhetoric: Aphrahat's fourth century *Demonstration* 20, "On the love of the poor;" the fifth-century *Life* of the bishop Rabbula of Edessa; and Jacob of Sarug's sixth-century poetic sermon, also titled "On the love of the poor."

Aphrahat's reference is somewhat obscure. Referring to the divinely-ruled relational exchange that charity effects in building a treasure-house for the rich, Aphrahat writes, "see how the almsgiver (*mzadqana*) begins to take from the needy so that through the needy his own need is fulfilled while they are alive. For he [possibly the almsgiver?] *would have enough to not be in utter need* but, when he has done this, from him the merchandise of the needy, which was purloined … the rich man gives to the poor. And when he receives, the poor man thanks the Lord of the two of them."[15]

14 Here I draw on a random comparative sample of LXX translations of these terms in Gen. 18:19, 2 Sam. 8:15, Micah 6:8, Amos 5:24, and Isaiah 5:7.

15 Trans. Adam H. Becker, "Anti-Judaism and Care for the Poor in Aphrahat's Demonstration 20," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002):305–327, at 311. The Syriac text is that of J. Parisot, "Aphraatis Sapientis Persae Demonstrationes," in Patrologia Syriaca, ed. R. Graffin, Paris: Firmin-Didot, part 1, vol. 1 (1894), pp. 893–930, here at p. 900. ll. 15–24. For a French translation, see

While Adam Becker and Sebastian Brock agree that the sense here is somewhat obscure, this passage clearly assumes alms as justice, that is, for the donor a balance between sharing goods with the needy and retaining an adequate portion for one's individual survival, "enough not to be in utter need."

This theme of living minimally as essential to righteous almsgiving is also evident in the hagiographical depiction of Rabbula, the bishop of Edessa between 411/412 and 435/436. Rabbula was a pagan convert whose mother was a Christian and whose episcopate is famous for his zeal in material divestment. Rabbula argued that "The poor are sustained not by what belongs to us, but by the righteousness (*zedqto*) of God. … According to an honest assessment, to us leaders is allowed as much as the body needs, so that we may use some of it in a simple manner—like the rest of the poor—and not as our body, which desires what is hurtful to our spirit, wills."[16] In both Aphrahat's and Rabbula's examples, "alms" imply a divestment by which the donor keeps personal goods to a bare minimum, here defined by general principles rather than explicit proportions.

The texts about Rabbula also include language about mercy and lovingkindness as part of righteous alms. According to the brief, early-sixth century Syriac *Life* of the "Man of God" (an anonymous holy beggar in Rabbula's Edessa later venerated as St. Alexis), the beggar's holy life inspired Rabbula to constantly encourage his congregation to "the love of strangers"[17] and "not neglect to support them with his gifts so that he might share in God's blessing for those who have mercy."[18] Indeed, Rabbula himself is lauded in biblical terms for his "love of the poor"[19] as he ensured food and clean bedding for the hospitalized sick, appointing deacons and deaconnesses as their nurses. To the needy wherever he found them, "On the one hand, his justice was boundless [against those who tried] to commit injustice against the poor. On the other hand, there was no limit to the riches of his kindness. … In his justice and in his

Marie-Joseph Pierre, trans., *Aphraate le sage Persan: Les Exposés*, vol. 2 (= Demonstrations 11–23), SC 359 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1989), 789–807.

16 "The Heroic Deeds of Mar Rabbula," in Robert Doran, trans., *Stewards of the Poor: The Man of God, Rabbula, and Hiba in Fifth-Century Edessa*, Cistercian Studies Series 208 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2006), 90.

17 "The Man of God:" *The Original Syriac Life*, in Doran, trans., *Stewards of the Poor*, 24.

18 "The Man of God:" *The Original Syriac Life*, in Doran, trans., *Stewards of the Poor*, 25.

19 "The Heroic Deeds of Mar Rabbula," in Doran, trans., *Stewards of the Poor*, 100.

mercy he was always guided only as God willed."[20] Thus Rabbula's example illustrates the linguistic coinherence of righteousness, lovingkindness, justice, and mercy in Syriac charity.

This Syriac elision of alms with justice is perhaps most clearly emphasized in the homily "On the love of the poor" by Jacob, bishop of Sarug (d. 521). Known for his many sermons and poems addressed largely to village audiences, it is no surprise that his sermon on the poor draws largely on agricultural imagery. After referring to sowing and picking fruit from the two trees in Eden and its garden, Jacob then literally defines the poor as soil, that is, as the earth into which he begs his audience to plant alms like seeds. He writes, "The poor are (like) a vast (piece of) land (for the purposes) of justice" and "the needy are the 'good soil' [Mt. 13:8,23] of justice … The soul does not have anywhere to sow justice if the poor are not serving as the soil (on which) to sow." In this translation, Sebastian Brock has here rendered *zedqto* as "justice" in each instance, but the translation might equally read "alms."[21]

These three texts demonstrate the Syriac Christian usage of *tzedakah* and there is really nothing extraordinary about their use of this particular word. In each the poor recipient is defined as including those one might expect: orphans, widows, homeless beggars, or other poor persons in acute need of goods for survival. While "mercy" and "kindness" are implied as imperative values within assistance, the failure to assist is fundamentally an injustice before God.

20 "The Heroic Deeds of Mar Rabbula," in Doran, trans., *Stewards of the Poor*, 90, 91.

21 For the Syriac see Paul Bedjan, *Homiliae Selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis* Vol. 2 (Paris: Lipsiae, Otto Harrassowitz, 1906), 828–829; the whole homily is pp. 816–36. Translation here is that of Sebastian Brock, personal communication, 2001, publication forthcoming. For a brief biography on Jacob, see William Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2001), 67–72. On his prolific output, Wright (70) notes that Bar Hebraeus says that Jacob had "70 amanuenses to copy out his metrical homilies, which were 760 (Jacob of Edessa says 763) in number, besides commentaries and letters and odes (*madhrāshē*) and hymns (*sughyātha*);" nearly 300 survive in European collections and very few are published.

2.2 Rights and entitlements in fourth-century Greek homilies

While Greek-speaking Christians in late antiquity sometimes had close
ties with those who also spoke Syriac, Syriac-speaking Christians were
more likely than Greek-speakers to know the other's language, and thus
texts such as those quoted above, which were probably in their day avail-
able only in Syriac, did not necessarily influence Greek concepts of phi-
lanthropy. Given this limited direction of influence, how did those whose
first language was Greek develop philanthopic rhetoric? The basic terms
in Greek have been outlined in the introduction above. This section ex-
amines how specific terms were actually used in the case for social justice
that we find in texts from several Cappadocian bishops whose writings
profoundly influenced not only theology but the rise of organizational
Christian charity in the Greek east: Basil of Caesarea, his brother Gregory
of Nyssa, and their friend and colleague, Gregory of Nazianzus. We also
find very similar terms in two sermons by a neighboring fourth-century
bishop, Asterius of Amasea. While this study does not examine the abun-
dant social justice themes in their slightly later contemporary, John
Chrysostom, he too is famous for demanding alms to the poor as a mo-
rally imperative act owed to God.[22] Key themes that are suggested by the
very specific use of terms in these texts of the Cappadocians and Asterius
include common nature and equal rights, the question of the "deserving"
poor, and the appeal to "justice and mercy" as an essential paired element
in truly righteous almsgiving.

2.2.1 *The language of common nature and equal rights*

Gregory of Nyssa's two sermons "On the love of the poor" and Gregory
of Nazianzus's *Or.* 14, a single homily with the same title,[23] call for direct

22 On John Chrysostom's preaching about poverty relief and social welfare, see esp. Wendy Mayer, "Poverty and Society in the World of John Chrysostom," in *Social and Political Life in Late Antiquity*, ed. William Bowden, Adam Gutteridge, and Carlos Machado, Late Antique Archaeology 3.1 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 465–84; and idem, "Poverty and Generosity toward the Poor in the Time of John Chrysostom," in *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, ed. Susan R. Holman, Holy Cross Studies in Patristic Theology and History (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2008), 140–58; and Rudolf Brändle, "'This Sweetest Passage:' Matthew 25:31–46 and Assistance to the Poor in the Homilies of John Chrysostom," in *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, 127–39.

23 Gregory of Nyssa: *De pauperibus amandis. Oratio duo*, ed. Arie van Heck (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964), 1–37=W. Jaeger, ed., *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* [*GNO*]

aid to homeless outcasts and deformed "lepers," individuals (both local
and displaced strangers) who the community were rejecting as repulsive,
polluted, and functionally subhuman, consequently treating them, the
bishops charged, worse than animals. Arguing for a direct compassion
that will turn this dynamic around and create mutual interdependence
between donors and sick beggars, these authors appeal to civic rights
and equality, although in these particular sermons the marginalized
poor, being outcasts, are not ordinary or recognized members of the
church or the broader community.

In *Or.* 14.24, Gregory of Nazianzus exhorts his audience to imitate
the *isotēs*, equality or evenhandedness, of God, which one translator ren-
ders "the justice of God."[24] He also uses the word *isonomia*, a Greek po-
litical term that could mean either "equity" or "equality of rights." Ap-
pealing to Eden he says, "I would have you look back to our primary
equality of rights," not the later diversity … As far as you can, support
nature, honor primeval liberty, show reverence for yourself and cover
the shame of your race (*genos*), help to resist sickness, offer relief to
human need." (*Or.* 14.26).[25]

He uses these terms to make an appeal that is not based on an eth-
nicity or politico-civic identity that might lead to practices of exclusion,
but rather intentionally broadens the definition of these terms in ways
that include most, if not all, needy persons. While some beggars are iden-
tified as locals, most of them are never identified by geographical or re-
ligious origins; they are not called Cappadocians, Greeks, nor even Chris-
tians. Some are explicitly identified as wandering strangers who were vic-
tims of natural or political disasters. Describing these homeless outcasts in
his two sermons, Nyssen argues that they deserve social justice simply be-

9.1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), 93–108 (=*Paup.* 1, also in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* [PG] 46.453–70) and 111–127 (=*Paup* 2, also in PG 46.471–90), trans. Susan R. Holman, *The Hungry are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 193–199 and 199–206. Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 14 (PG 35.857–910); for English trans., see Martha Vinson, trans., *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: Select Orations* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 39–71; and Brian Daley, S.J., *Gregory of Nazianzus*, The Early Church Fathers (NY: Routledge, 2006), 76–97.

24 M. F. Toal, ed. and trans., *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1963), vol. 4, p. 55.

25 Trans. Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 90.

cause they are *anthropon anthropoi*, "human persons."[26] And while Gregory of Nyssa does not share Nazianzen's tendency to use *iso-* words or similar allusions to equality, he does appeal to the concept of "common nature" (*koine physis*).[27] Both Gregories and Asterius (discussed below) also explicitly use broader racial and kinship terms to argue that these needy are rightly due the appropriate community obligations one owes neighbors and kin, and Nyssen also uses *homogenēs* (of [your] same race) at least once,[28] as well as *syngenēs* (kin), and *homophylos* (same race or species).[29] We see the same terminology in Nazianzen, who also uses *syngenēs* twice,[30] as well as "same" or "equal race," *phylos.* In *hom.* 14.28, he writes, "If we are expected to show *philanthrōpia* even to brute beasts, how much do we owe those of equal race (*homophylos*) and equal worth (*homotimos*)?"[31] Both Gregories use *homotimē,* meaning

26 Gregory of Nyssa, *Paup.* 2: van Heck p. 115, lines 21–23; and p. 120, lines 11–13 (also at PG 46.476 and PG 46.481).

27 See e.g., Gregory of Nyssa, *Paup.* 2: van Heck p. 117, lines 22 through p. 118, line 10; p. 118, lines 6–9; and p. 120, lines 11–13 (also at PG 46.477, 480; PG 46.480; and PG 46.481).

28 For Gregory's use of *homogenēs* see e.g., *Paup.* 2, where he emphasizes how in the incarnation God "took on stinking and unclean flesh and soul to effect a total cure of your ills by his touch-but you flee your own race (*ton homogenē*)(PG 46.476.)

29 Gregory of Nyssa, *Paup.* 2 (van Heck p. 115, lines 8–10; also at PG 46.476); and *Paup.* 1 (van Heck p. 103, lines 21–25; also at PG 46.465). On Asterius, see below.

30 Twice: in *Or.* 14:5 and 14.9, which Brian Daley translates, "compassion and sympathy for our own flesh and blood," and "brothers and sisters, we must care for what is part of our nature and shares in our slavery" (*Gregory of Nazianzus,* 78 and 79 respectively).

31 Trans. Vinson, 61, modified. Commenting on this passage, Daley notes, "It is interesting that Gregory is using *philanthropia* here to make his point. This, of course, is the word that really dominates this oration, especially in the first five chapters or so, where he identifies it as the chief of virtues, a reflection of God's creative love. But here, he's talking about kindness to animals with a term that basically means 'love of humans.' So the irony in what he's saying is increased: we show *philanthropia* (and should!) to animals that are not humans, when they are in trouble; how much more should we show it to the *anthropoi* that are *homophyleis* and of equal dignity with ourselves, precisely because they *are* anthropoi." (personal communication) And in *Or.* 14.14 Gregory writes, "They have been made in the image of God in the same way (*isos*) you and I have, and perhaps preserve that image better than we, even if their bodies are corrupted." (trans. Daley, p. 83).

"due the same honor," in their allusions to the desperate beggars whose basic needs and nature are being ignored.

Asterius of Amasea also used *homophylos* in two of his sermons, "On the rich man and Lazarus" and "Against Avarice,"[32] arguing against those who claim that economic inequalities reflect qualitative differences in human nature. In his sermon on the rich man and Lazarus, he writes, if "the nature of things were such that our life was truly represented by the inequality (*anomalia*) of [the beggar Lazarus's] career with that of the rich man, I should have cried aloud with indignation: that we who are created equal, live on such unequal terms (*anisos*) with those of the same race (*tōn homophylōn*)!"[33] And in "Against Avarice," he condemns covetousness precisely because it creates a "marked disparity in the conditions of life between human persons created equal in worth."[34] As seen above, Asterius also understands inequality as an abnormality, explicitly using the Greek word *anomalia,* a word we do not find in the Gregories' sermons; for him, "covetousness is the mother of inequality, unmerciful, misanthropic, cruel. Because of it human life is full of *anomalia.*[35]

The philanthropic rhetoric of their contemporary, Basil of Caesarea, also consists of strong, imperative, and at times apparently radical appeals for social justice and material redistribution in the interest of equity and a mercy that is rooted in divine justice and eschatological restoration. Both Gregory of Nyssa and Basil also demonstrate a certain focus on cosmic healing or "healing the world" that depends on acts of justice to the poor. Nyssen does this through his appeals to the perfect divine order of original creation and its anticipated restorative culmination, and Basil through his appeals to social order, ecological balance, and heavenly judgment (especially in his *hom.* 8, "In time of famine and drought"). In *hom.* 6, a sermon addressed to the rich who were stockpiling grain during

32 For the Greek, see the critical edition of C. Datema, *Asterius of Amasea: Homilies I-XIV: Text, Introduction and Notes* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), 6–15 (*hom.* 1 "On the rich man and Lazarus") and 26–37 (*hom. 3* "Against Avarice."). For the text given here see p. 12, lines 6–7. An imprecise translation consulted but frequently modified here is Galusha Anderson and Edgar Johnson Goodspeed, trans., *Ancient Sermons for Modern Times by Asterius, Bishop of Amasia, circa 375–405 A.D.* (NY: The Pilgrim Press, 1904).

33 Asterius, *hom.* 1.8.1, trans. Anderson and Goodspeed, *Ancient Sermons by Asterius,* 34.

34 Asterius, *hom.* 3.12.3 (Datema p. 35, l. 11–14).

35 Asterius, *hom.* 3.12.1, my trans. (Datema 35, lines 1–2).

the early days of a famine around 369, Basil appeals to the "common good" (*koinopheles*), meaning that which benefits all persons within a society, writing, "riches grow useless left idle and unused in any place, but moved about, passing from one person to another, they serve the common good and bear fruit."[36] And in his two sermons on fasting, *de jejunio* 1 and 2, Basil explicitly relates communal ideals with personal piety. Not only does the wise abstinence of fasting build one's treasure in heaven, he says, but the one who practices the proper detached control of liturgical fasting incidentally "ensures dignity to the city, right ordering in the courts, household peace and salvation;" (*de jejunio* 1.11, PG 31.184B); "it is no less useful to the public, for it maintains good order among the population" (*de jejunio* 2.5; PG 31.192B) and "greatly benefits the household, the marketplace, night and day, city and wilderness." (*de jejunio* 2.7, PG 31.196A); ultimately resulting in the "crown of justice" (*de jejunio* 2.1, PG 31.185B).[37] The justice of the common good, for Basil, is ultimately rooted in God's goodness for, he says (in *Hom.* 20), "You have not known God by reason of your justice, but God has known you by reason of His goodness."[38] Common goodness is therefore based not only on ideals of harmonious community, but on all that goodness means for the individual within the very nature and person of God.

Basil also reflects the influence of Aristotelian ideas on civic and social harmony in his second sermon on Psalm 14. Following several Biblical allusions, he writes,

> The Word orders us to share (*koinōnikos*) and to love one another, in natural kinship. After all, humankind is a civic and sociable (or gregarious) animal (*politikon gar zōon kai sunangelastikon ho anthrōpos*). Liberality for the purpose of restoration is a necessary part of the common life (*koinē politeia*) and helping one another upwards.[39]

The sentence that translates, "Humankind is a civic and sociable animal," likely reflects an Aristotelian source, since Aristotle's *Politics* 1.1.9 notes, "Humankind is by nature a civic animal," or, in the Loeb translation,

36 Basil, *hom.* 6.5, trans. M. F. Toal, *Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1959), 3.329, slightly modified.
37 My translation.
38 Basil, *hom.* 20, trans. M. Monica Wagner, *Saint Basil: Ascetical Works* (NY: Fathers of the Church, 1950), 480.
39 Basil, *Hom Ps. 14/15a*, PG 29.261CD, my translation. For further discussion see Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 112.

"Man is by nature a political animal."[40] It is virtually certain that Basil is consciously quoting something, perhaps mediated through a later philosopher, like Posidonius, rather than composing an original sentence. These examples demonstrate how concepts familiar to modern human rights dialogue existed in some form in these late antique writers and demonstrate concerns that resonate with certain similar modern interests in social and distributive justice.

2.2.2 *Who are the deserving poor and what measure is "equal"?*

As familiar as these ideas may seem to modern readers trained in "human rights" rhetoric, these authors spoke into and from a very different culture, one that was far less "democratic" about "equality" and the "justice" of alms. Daniel Caner's contribution to this volume addresses some of these challenges in greater depth,[41] but certain tensions should not be overlooked here. For example, most third- and fourth-century Christian Greek writers on philanthropy argued that all needy human beings merit aid regardless of who they are or their religious affiliations. John Chrysostom wrote, for example, "If you see anyone in affliction, do not be curious to inquire further. His being in affliction gives him a just claim to your help. … He is God's, whether he is a heathen or a Jew; since even if he is an unbeliever, still he needs help."[42] Other texts reflect similar views. But it is also evident that these ideals of "equality" were not applied in a strictly egalitarian manner. In some cases, members of the group seem to receive preference, and the group itself is defined in various ways. Nazianzen's *Or.* 14.25 is particularly interesting for its description of God's equity:

> Let us imitate God's highest and first law, which makes the rain fall on the just and sinners, and makes the sun rise equally on all. … he lavishes the basic supports of living ungrudgingly on all … [but without limit] sets them forth as the rich and common possessions of all, not in any way less-

40 H. Rackham, trans., *Aristotle XXI: Politics.* Loeb Classical Library 264 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), 8–9.
41 See also Daniel Caner, "Towards a Miraculous Economy: Christian Gifts and Material 'Blessings' in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14 (2006), 329–377; and idem, "Wealth, Stewardship, and Charitable 'Blessings' in Early Byzantine Monasticism," in *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, 221–42.
42 *Hom. Hebr.* 10.4 (PG 53.88), trans. Rudolf Brändle, "'This Sweetest Passage:' Matthew 25:31–46 and Assistance to the Poor in the Homilies of John Chrysostom," in *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, 130.

ened for this reason. Beings of like rank in nature he honors with equal gifts,
so he shows how rich his own generosity is.[43]

This assumption that "equal gifts" fall to those "of like rank in nature" may hint at Gregory's own typically upper-class perception of natural differences in status reflecting natural abilities. And in *Or.* 14.6, where he clearly ranks the poor and says they all deserve our open-hearted generosity, he notes that those whose "sufferings contradict their dignity are even more wretched than those who are used to misfortune;"[44] that is, the "genteel poor" deserve special courtesies. In general, however, it is rare to find sources that categorically exclude unbelievers, and philanthropic texts more often call for responses that range from cautious, attentive stewardship of resources to intentionally indiscriminate generosity. As church-funded charity took formal shape in the fourth and fifth centuries, it was often the ascetics who opted to practice and advise extreme generosity, while legislators skeptical about the public poor opted for cautions that resulted, for example, in the first imperial law attempting to control public begging, at least in Italy, under Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius in 382 C.E.[45] Fifth and sixth-century ascetic texts and hagiographies may speak to this critical skepticism when they encourage "truly righteous" donors to give beggars the benefit of the doubt even if they come back for second and third portions, since Matthew 25:31–46 taught that Christ dwells in the physical bodies of the poor and judges the fate of the donor's soul by how he or she treats those in need. When a sixth-century Alexandrian beggar slips into the bishop's line for handouts no less than three times in a row, for example, John the Almsgiver becomes more generous rather than less, saying, "perchance it is my Christ and He is making trial of me."[46] Another Egyptian administrator of church alms, troubled by a beggar who swindled him into giving the man four coats instead of one, dreams he sees Christ himself clothed in all four layers.[47] While these authors, like the Gregories and

43 Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 89.
44 Trans. Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 78, slightly altered.
45 *Theodosian Code* 14.18, De mendicantibus non invalidis.
46 Chapter 9 in Leontius' "Supplement" to the Life of St. John the Almsgiver, in *Three Byzantine Saints*, trans. Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977), 216.
47 John Moschus, Spiritual Meadow 230, in *The Spiritual Meadow of John Moschos*, trans. John Wortley, Cistercian Studies 139 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 212–13; it is "Nissen 12" (BHG 1450p among the "Supplementary Tales;" see Th. Nissen, "Unbekannte Erzaehlungen aus dem Pratum spirituale,"

John Chrysostom, identify the poor with the divine, others, like Basil. were more likely to identify rich donors with the divine model of generosity, appealing to them to imitate God's equity, justice, and mercy, and through this imitation attain a life characterized by a God-pleasing righteousness.[48]

2.3 A homily "On mercy and justice"

One anonymous fourth-century homily explicitly addresses the distinction between justice and mercy in Greek philanthropic rhetoric for a Christian audience. Titled "On Mercy and Justice" (*Peri eleous kai kriseōs*), its focus may suggest that there was some community tension about the distinction between these two ideas. As outlined below, the homilist advocates exactly the same essential integration between the two that is evident in the biblical sources. This sermon was apparently popular among fourth- and fifth-century Greek and Coptic audiences. While some Greek manuscripts attribute it Basil of Caesarea,[49] Coptic manuscripts attribute it variously to three other fourth-century Greek bishops.[50] These varied attributions suggest a broadly-copied and distributed text that likely both reflects and influenced popular views on social

Byzantinische Zeitschrift 38 (1938), 367, f. no 12, from the Vienna Codex of the Pratum (cod. hist. gr. 42).
48 This appeal to the rich to imitate divine generosity is also evident in rabbinic sources. TB Sanhedrin 98a, for example, relates the tale of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi meeting the prophet Elijah at the city gates of Rome. "Upon asking him what he was doing there he learned that Elijah was attending the Messiah. And what was the Messiah doing there? While he was waiting for the day when he would redeem the Jewish people he was busy treating the sores of all the lepers who lived outside the city gates. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi concluded that if taking care of lepers was not below the dignity of the Messiah, then taking care of other sick people certainly should not be below the dignity of ordinary Jews." Frank M. Loewenberg, *From Charity to Social Justice: The Emergence of Communal Institutions for the Support of the Poor in Ancient Judaism* (New Brunswick, NY and London UK: Transaction Publishers, 2001), 146.
49 *De misericordia et iudicio* (CPG 2929), PG 31.1705–1714, trans. Sister M. Monica Wagner, *Saint Basil: Ascetical Works* (NY: Fathers of the Church, 1950), 507–512. For commentary, see Paul Jonathan Fedwick, *Bibliotheca Basiliana Vniversalis: A Study of the Manuscript Tradition, Translations and Editions of the Works of Basil of Caesarea* [=BBV], vol. 2.2, pp. 1189–90. The Greek word *krisis* as it is used throughout this text appears to interchangeably denote either "justice" or "judgement."
50 The Coptic manuscripts attribute it variously to Athanasius, archbishop of Rakote; Epiphanius of Salamis; and Athanasius of Alexandria (Fedwick, BBV II,2, 1189–90).

justice. Throughout the text, the homilist recognizes that justice must find its meaning for this audience within the broad ideal of *eleemosyne*.

This sermon argues that true social beneficence is possible only when one practices *both* justice *and* mercy. Like Nazianzen, the author appeals to *isotēs*, "equality," although in this particular reference meaning the equality (or "fairness") that one applies to the justice (*dikaios*) used in treating slaves. *Krisis*, usually used for legal justice, seems here interchangeable with *dikaiosunē*, "righteousness." The sermon was probably originally intended for rural villagers, since forms of work, either trade, agricultural production, or manual labor, serve as common examples in the discussion of justice. The text speaks to some problematic situation—otherwise unknown—in which so-called benefactors provide aid to the needy (*euergesia*) that is "financed by unjust (*adikia*) gains."[51] The author appeals to Proverbs 3:9, "Honor the Lord with your righteous labors (*dikaiōn ponōn*) and give him the fruits of your righteousness (*dikaiosunē*)." He condemns, first, "honest toil" that shares nothing with God to feed the poor, which he calls robbery; and second, "defiled offerings," those gained by injustice, oppression, force, or cheating. The idea that dishonest business practices taint alms is also present in other early Christian texts.[52] Exercise *philanthrōpia* to the one you have wronged, the homilist tells his audience, "and you will fulfill mercy with justice (*eleon meta kriseōs*)."[53] Alluding to Gospel texts, the sermon exhorts the audience to "share with the needy, not only the produce of our fields and our profits, but also the work of our hands,"[54] and by this work to become, through charity, both comrade (*koinōnos*) and coworker (*synergos*) with Christ.[55]

The text also qualifies Christian ideals of total divestment by classifying them into two separate groups, its concluding references to at least some of the recipients as "the saints"[56] suggesting a focus on aiding coreligionists. Such "saints" are described in the sermon as the "perfect," ascetics who gave up all their goods and who practice an immaterial and philosophical charity (through "reason and the spirit"). But the author

51 Trans. Wagner 507; PG 31.1708.
52 See for example the third-century Syriac church manual, the *Didascalia Apostolorum* 18 (trans. R. Hugh Connolly [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929], 156–160) and the *Acts of Peter* 1, where the concept is directly refuted.
53 Trans. Wagner 509; PG 31.1709.
54 Trans. Wagner 511; PG 31.1712.
55 PG 31.1713.
56 In context probably religious ascetics.

equally assumes an audience of "others"—i.e., those who are less than "perfect"—who ought to practice "a continual sharing and common division of that which they possess that, by showing mercy, sharing their goods, and conferring benefits, they may reproduce in themselves God's *philanthropia*."[57] This bifurcation of poverty choices and alms options is one we find in other texts as well. Nazianzen's *Or.* 14.18 reflects the same two options, of ascetic total divestment on the one hand, and, on the other, the majority group who chooses to retain (and chronically share) their possessions. Gregory writes, "We must either give all things away for Christ's sake … or else we must share our goods with Christ, so that our possession of them may at least be sanctified by our possessing them well, by our sharing them with those who have nothing." Although Gregory's own wealth and class distanced him personally from any goal of manual labor, he too immediately associates these ideas with agricultural work: "Even if I were to sow for myself alone, I would still be sowing what others would later eat … so that I would have labored in vain … Shall we not, then, cast off our stinginess?"[58] And discussion of charity dynamics in some other Syriac texts, such as the *Book of Steps*, also imply a community distinction between the "upright" and the "perfect."[59] The anonymous sermon "On Mercy and Justice" is somewhat unusual among Christian texts for its strong emphasis on giving charity from the fruit of manual labor, but as a whole it is representative in how this culture within late antique society imaged social justice in the language of day-to-day realities.

57 "A continual sharing and common division (*metadoseis kai koinōnias diēnekeis parangellōn*) of that which they possess that, by showing mercy, sharing their goods, and conferring benefits (*eleountes te kai metadidontes kai charizomenoi*), they may reproduce in themselves the benevolence (*philanthropia*) of God." Trans. Wagner, 511; PG 31.1712, ll. 29–36, slightly altered.
58 *Or.* 14.18–19, trans. Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 85.
59 See e.g., Nancy A. Khalek, "Methods of Instructing Syriac-speaking Christians to Care for the Poor: A Brief Comparison of the Eighth *Mēmrā* of the *Book of Steps* and the Story of the Man of God," *Hugoye* 8(1) (2005), online at http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol8No1/HV8N1Khalek.html, accessed 5/3/05.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, this essay offers a brief overview of some very specific terms used in philanthropic rhetoric of late antiquity, and possible differences that may have affected their practical applications. These examples identify basic terms that Syriac- and Greek-speaking Christians in late antiquity used to describe concepts of social justice between the fourth and the sixth centuries C.E. The texts that use these terms do so in a manner that clearly reflects dependence on the Septuagint as well as the New Testament, using terms that appeal to concepts such as equality, civic order, and racial or kinship ties, in order to draw the needy poor into a cultural context where they might be recognized as having a legitimate place and voice.

These limited examples do not represent the opinions of every homilist from this period. For instance, Sister Nonna Verna Harrison has recently argued that Nyssen's views on social justice—seeing all of humanity as fundamentally equal—contrast sharply with that of John Chrysostom, who understood true justice as functioning best within the inherent and strict social hierarchies.[60] And while these texts do not identify a distinctive conflict between social justice and mercy, or between alms and justice, the anonymous homilist's pointed pairing of these two concepts may suggest the existence of a tension in some communities.

In considering how such texts might be relevant to modern religious responses to poverty and issues of human rights, justice, and mercy today, we must naturally be sensitive to avoid imposing inappropriate modern constructs on historical texts from another time and culture, even as they relate to something as timeless as human need and the ideologies of ownership, distribution, and justice. Despite this need for a mature caution, however, when we examine these Greek and Syriac texts from the fourth to sixth centuries, we find that they do explicitly use very similar language to that of our own day, including terms such as justice, equality, righteousness, and appeals to global trans-ethnic inclusion, with phrases such as "common human nature," "common human race," and the use of terms like *koinōphelēs*, "common good." While these authors' meanings might not exactly match our own, the treatment of the poor as part of community justice is a standard cultural ideal in

60 Nonna Verna Harrison, "Greek Patristic Perspectives on the Origins of Social Injustice," in *Evil and Suffering in Early Church and Society*, Holy Cross Studies in Patristic Theology and History (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, forthcoming).

these texts, and one for which *tzedakah* remains perhaps the best single term for its nuances of the sacred and acts of cosmic redemption or healing that may drive a vision of restorative righteousness in any age.

How a culture imagines charity and the poor depends on both the concepts of its moral tradition and the terms available in its primary language; these factors determine how these concepts are described and discussed and what inevitable nuances will coexist. A comparison such as this paper offers—between one word that has similar roots in Hebrew, Syriac and Arabic, compared to the construction of related concepts by Christians whose primary language was Greek—is even more complex than it appears since it also rests on common understandings and translations into yet another language (English) and into the various cultures of the readers. The use of different words (*philanthropia* or *tzedakah / sadaqa*) for charity does not necessarily imply a radically different set of human actions or different moral assumptions, but the lack of fixed meaning-associations may result in a tension in one language culture (such as charity being innately opposed to justice) that simply does not hold in the other (where alms and justice are expressed using the same word).

Obviously, charitable responses to poverty in any culture depend on more than how one uses a few words. They depend on a much wider range of issues, needs, tensions, cultural systems, resources, and personalities. In comparing *tzedakah*-based ideas with Greek language terms in the late antique Christian context, I am not in any way suggesting that either model is preferable over the other. In any culture, charitable terms may be used uncharitably, or narrowed into codified labels and catchwords that serve other purposes; certainly we find evidence for this across the spectrum of philanthropic texts in any religious tradition.

In consideration of these various issues, in conclusion, I suggest that these Christian texts reveal an association with the broader idea of "healing the world through righteousness" that is not incompatible with that of *tzedakah* and which has not been adequately explored elsewhere in depth as it may relate to late antiquity. Although expressed using different sets of terms—the Christian homilies more often imaging participating and entering into the ultimate realization of global restoration as part of divine lovingkindness and justice—this parallel image invites further discussion on the relationship between the broad ideas that are, in Hebrew, encapsulated in the terms *tzedakah* and *tikkun olam*. While I leave further examination of the Hebrew associations to scholars in Judaic studies, the conceptual associations in such early Christian texts offer an

important witness to intersecting ideas that may encourage any contemporary dialogue engaged in applying human rights language to a vision for social justice—and mercy—across religious traditions.

Almsgiving, *Donatio Pro Anima* and Eucharistic Offering in the Early Middle Ages of Western Europe (4th–9th century)*

Eliana Magnani

During the early Middle Ages in Western Europe, charity practice, the *pro anima* donations and alms given to churches and monasteries, had at its heart a complex system of historically defined representations in which the Eucharistic offering stood for a model of the exchanges between men and God. This system of representation evolved in three discrete periods of time, as we see through an exploration of writings on the doctrine of almsgiving and of epigraphic inscriptions and diplomatic acts from the fourth through the ninth centuries. From the fourth to the sixth century, the doctrine of almsgiving developed as a result of the creation of the social category of the poor, an evolution that affected the behaviour of the aristocracy. Following this development, in the seventh and eighth centuries, as the amount of alms and gifts made to churches and monasteries increased, the clergy progressively established itself as the mediator in the exchanges between men and God. Finally, the Carolingian shift of the ninth century heralded the expansion of the seigniorial age, when the relation between the earth and heaven began to be seen as a mystery similar to that of the Eucharist.[1]

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* Translated by Anne-Sophie Maret.
Abbreviations: ARTEM—"Atelier de Recherche sur les textes médiévaux", Université de Nancy, CNRS. See *La diplomatique française du haut Moyen Âge. Inventaire des chartes originales antérieures à 1121 conservées en France,* par M. Courtois et M.-J. Gasse-Grandjean, sous la dir. de B.-M. Tock, Turnhout, Brepols, 2001, 2 vol.; CCSL—Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina; PL—Migne, J.-P., *Patrologia Latina,* Paris, 1800–1875; RICG—*Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule antérieures à la Renaissance carolingienne,* H.-I. Marrou dir., t. XV. Viennoise Nord (province ecclésiastique de Vienne), F. Descombes ed., Paris, CNRS, 1985; t. VIII. Première Aquitaine, F. Prévot ed., Paris, CNRS, 1997.

1 Magnani, Eliana: "Du don aux églises au don pour le salut de l'âme en Occident (IVe-XIe siècle): le paradigme eucharistique", *Pratiques de l'eucharistie dans les Églises d'Orient et d'Occident (Antiquité et Moyen Âge),* dir. Nicole Bériou, Béatrice Caseau, Dominique Rigaux, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2009, vol. II, p.