

take us' (Is. lix, 9). But Yahweh also tells them that they must be righteous in themselves and act morally, *because* his salvation will soon come and his justice will be revealed (Is. lvi, 1). Israel waits, and hopes for the light to come:

*We all growl like bears,
and moan like doves;
we look for judgment, and there is none;
for salvation, and it is far from us. (Is. lix, 11.)*

They know that without righteousness on their side they cannot hope for salvation; and yet without God's justification their own righteousness is ineffectual. The awaited justice of God, to be revealed and established on earth by his Christ, will transfigure the moral activity of man. Then the new Israel will be bound by a new and everlasting covenant to God, who will place his Spirit in the hearts of men. . . .

Such was the glimpse caught in the old testament of the new order that was to come—the order of grace.



SOCIAL JUSTICE

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'SOCIAL JUSTICE' could hardly be bettered as a phrase: it has a nice, modern ring about it, and no discernible meaning. The modernity of the phrase must, I think, be traced to the word 'social', because after all 'justice' is a very old word, and in any case the modern campaigners do not seem to be so intense about *that* part of the catch-phrase. We are all, it must be agreed, 'socialists' in some sense nowadays, whatever our views on justice may be. It is understandable therefore that in the phrase 'social justice' the emphasis will be on 'social', and that the word 'justice' will be added merely for rhythmic reasons. The rather medieval-sounding question—but is not all justice social?—is thus irrelevant from the start; and any attempt to understand how the same groups of people can demand at one and the same

time the abolition of the death-penalty and the introduction of birth-control, or can deplore the control of government by capital whilst enthusing about the control of capital by government, would do best not to start from the notion of 'justice'. Justice is merely an appendix: the essential aim could be summed up rather as follows: 'Be solicitous therefore saying: 'What shall we eat, and what shall we drink and wherewith shall we be clothed? . . . Seek ye all these things first, and the kingdom of God and his justice shall be added unto you.'

It is perhaps the greatest heresy of this age, this idea that the above sentence becomes acceptable if the 'we' is stressed, if we become solicitous not solely for our own persons but for those of our neighbours as well, if we become socially-minded. You will find it said indeed that the sermon on the mount, which this sentence parodies, was the first promulgation of that great Christian truth: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. The burden of the sermon on the mount was 'Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect'; and 'Love your neighbour' is the second Christian commandment patterned on a first—'Love the Lord your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind'. The Christian puts the kingdom of God and his justice first, and socialism and security and 'common humanity' second.

There is an interesting corollary to this difference of Christian and modern principle. The world of 'social justice' always tends to be a rather abstract one: it concentrates on remedying matters six thousand miles away, it gets most worked up about the injustices most likely to hit the headlines (for this is the way of it: only rarely does an incident hit the headlines because it is specially unjust). Whereas for the Christian the headlines in the paper are perhaps the least important influences on his course of action; the local news on the second page is perhaps a little more important; the even more local news that did not get into the paper at all very much more important; and the things that aren't 'news' at all, but the eternal truths of human nature and its working are of all influences the most important. The dust may be rising six thousand miles away, but it appears to the Christian a speck compared with the log in his own eye.

Perhaps this makes the Christian's field of action smaller—I do not know—but a field of action which becomes bigger does not

necessarily become better. The Christian in his smaller field drives deeper; for to say truth he does not only look beyond 'society' to justice, but he looks beyond justice to love. He is not able to fob himself off with raising wages, if he is not prepared to lay down his life for his employees; and he does not delude himself that he is prepared to lay down his life when he is not even prepared to cut down his standard of living. For by 'love' the Christian does not mean this humane kindness which saps away the mind and will of so many characters in modern novels, the kindness which supports euthanasia because the man is in pain (though innocent) but deploras capital punishment because the man is to be put in pain (though guilty). By 'love' the Christian means Christ's love that lays down life, first for the sake of the kingdom of God, and secondly for the sake of justice to humanity.

Of course, it is not the case that Christians are indifferent to the very real material requirements of their neighbours. Indeed, it is because attention to the corporal works of mercy is so clearly seen as a Christian duty in this age, that in an article like this, one can afford to warn against exaggeration. It would be wrong to limit Christianity to this; or even merely to place this first in Christianity. It may be true that men will not listen to the preaching of the gospel until they have full stomachs, and that it will therefore become doubly necessary for Christians to hasten to fill those stomachs. But the fact still remains that preaching the gospel is more important. Campaigning for justice between God and man is more important than seeing that a social security obtains between man and man.

Let me take, for example, the case of South Africa. I have lived for many years in England, and I now have lived for several in South Africa, and one thing that struck me immediately is how much more Christian the Union appears. Nowhere in England could you rely in a university debate upon your opponents accepting the word of the Bible; nowhere in England could you have found people so anxiously scrutinizing their *own* consciences after an incident such as Sharpeville. The feeling after Suez seems to be the nearest comparison. The truth is that the situation in South Africa is not altogether the simple one of the bad white sitting on the poor black; it is above all not a situation to be discussed sheerly in terms of 'social justice'. The temptation is always to see the situation as another example of the good little

liberals being overcome by the evil forces of conservatism (and a conservatism at that which does not even speak English). Someone once said that the 'liberal' should really call himself the 'prodigal', and I think we might take the *bon mot* a little further. For he is like the 'prodigal son' of the parable, a more attractive character in many ways than the righteous elder son, but still requiring to return to his Heavenly Father before he can be saved.

In the debate over South Africa we are seeing two parodies of the Christian position at each other's throats. On the one hand there is the 'prodigal', who has often not reflected at all on the difficulties of the course of action he thinks South Africa should take. He has not even become aware that what is taking place in that faraway corner of the world is a drama of evolution which is soon to spread over the earth. For, as Père Teilhard has felt it necessary to remind us, the earth is round, and that very roundness is now setting us the problem of two levels of civilization in the same area of the world's surface. The problem of the meeting of East and West culture has never been so critical because the levels were never so far apart; the previous meetings of European and African have never been so critical because the African has never been so vigorous and the European never so indigenious. We have an evolutionary problem on our hands in South Africa where there are two indigenous populations at two different stages of culture, and something has to be done about it. South Africa is the first country to meet the problem, but it is coming to the world. South Africa is not so much the rearguard of the nineteenth century, as the van of the twenty-first. In these circumstances it is perhaps understandable that she is making a mistake; she thinks that she can hold the flood back. She has still to learn the lesson of Canute.

Into this situation the liberal jumps: seeing so clearly, as it is so easy to see from six thousand miles away, the ideal solution, and ignoring the practical difficulties. On the other hand, here in South Africa we have the other and in many ways less attractive parody of the Christian position: one which blinds itself to ideals and seeks its excuse in the difficulty of practice: the elder son who complains that 'for so many years do I serve thee, and I have never yet transgressed thy commandment . . .'. The Calvinist has always been sure of predestination, and the Afrikaner Calvinist (made conscious of his nationality by the Englishman) is now sure of the

destiny of the nation. He is the nearest thing in the modern world to the Israelite of the time of David. He has his great trek behind him, he has entered his promised land, he has at last taken over the reins of government and made himself responsible for the peoples of the land. His background has not gradually seduced him into believing that democracy is always the best form of government (as it has the Englishman); he knows that he is *meant* to be the guardian of Christian civilization here in Africa, and from their lower level of civilization it is obvious that God means the Africans to serve him for some little time yet. The larger view just puzzles him. He knows it cannot be true, but he is rather worried by God's carelessness in allowing black nationalism to develop just at this moment. He cannot see that he is really deifying his own survival, that God has become no more and no less than he was for the earliest Israelites—a tribal God. But this too is understandable, for it seems quite impossible to get nations to realize in the modern world that their duty to survive is not absolute. The gentleman in Europe, who believes that once entered into a war a country must seek victory and survival at all costs, has more than a log in his eye to deal with, before he turns to that six-thousand-mile-away speck.

Here, of course, in South Africa itself, the situation is more than a speck. And if the two parodies are not the answer to the matter, what is the Christian to do? He must return to his heavenly Father; return to the sermon on the mount, He must remember that the field he must convert is what lies nearest to him personally: he must not allow himself to be served ahead of an African in the shops, he must try to get out of the habit of thinking of all Africans as 'kitchen-girls' and 'garden-boys', or of saying that 'there is a native at the door' when he means that the 'headmaster of the school at St Euphemia's Mission has called'. He has to reform himself first, not necessarily to the ideals of democracy, or to those of 'social justice', but to the realization that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek' in Christ. Or, in the case of Catholics especially, who on the whole seem to realize their oneness in Christ (even when they feel it hard of God so to insist upon the matter), and who in their more spiritual moments at communion, and at Legion of Mary or Vincent de Paul meetings, feel no difficulty in behaving Christianly—Catholics especially have to realize that their union with Christ is total. Jew and Greek are not just one for Church

purposes, they are one all the time, they are never two. We only get into the habit of thinking that social integration or economic integration can be separated from religious integration, if society and economy are themselves separated from religion.

And this is perhaps the kernel of the matter, and the fact that will ensure fresh South Africas all the world over if Christians do not begin to remedy the matter now. We have to get back to the frame of mind in which 'social justice' is not a neat expression for an ideal state of affairs we have before our mind, but a rather abstract and truncated account of what our love is driving us to practise every day.

