

shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.'

It was only a matter of method. The devil offered them without the Cross, did he? There was small temptation in that. Was Jesus likely to go back on the very purpose for which He had come into the world? The temptation lay, not in any personal consideration, but in consideration for the people of Israel.

For the Gentiles are not to be brought to God by a compromise between Jewish and Gentile ideas of God, such as the Herodians were working for.

That is not to fulfil the promises, but to reduce them to ridicule. From first to last the promises were that the Gentiles should *come to Zion*. The last of all the prophets was in the direct succession when he spoke of the City of God and said, 'The nations shall walk amidst the light thereof; and the Kings of the earth do bring their glory into it.'

The Herodians with their homage to all kinds of Gods and cultures were more dangerous than the Pharisees or the Sadducees. And to them the sternest word was spoken, 'Get thee hence, Satan.' For there is only one living and true God, and it is written, 'Him *only* shalt thou serve.'

The Preaching of Justice.

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'Justice, justice.'—Dt 16²⁰ (R.V. Marg.).

CIRCUMSTANCES do not alter Truth, but occasionally they alter the perspective in which we see it or the emphasis with which we state it. And while war-time has not cancelled any of the New Testament doctrines or duties, it has certainly thrown up into stronger relief some of the great discoveries of Old Testament experience. Some of us are not ashamed to confess the help the Old Testament has been to us during these last difficult months, when the strain on faith has been so heavy. The New Testament was produced, its fundamental facts came into history, in the era of the Roman peace. We have no clear indication of how the Apostles and their immediate followers would have behaved in a time of world-warfare,—of how the Great Exemplar Himself would have led in such a time; we are left with general principles of personal meekness on the one hand, of loyalty to the State on the other, which are differently interpreted by different men equally devout and sincere. This has led lately to a wistful re-examination of the Old Testament on the part of many—conscious that they must ever correct its tempers by the Christian ideals, yet thankful for prophets and psalmists, historians and law-givers who had to confront world-shaking experiences akin to our own. If the charge is brought against us that we

are meantime living in the Old Testament when we ought to be living in the New, we answer that at least a few discoveries were made in the Old Testament times which our Lord did not cancel and which nothing discovered since has ever annulled. One of these is that the Lord is a God of justice, and that righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne. That note—not entirely forgotten, perhaps, but scarcely emphasized since younger days when we first discovered the prophets and came under the spell of Thomas Carlyle—has been forced back into our preaching by the time. This doctrine, after being for a period an accepted commonplace, has become a passionate necessity: in such an hour there is no other resting-place.

The repetition here—*Justice, justice!*—almost suggests a momentary wave of emotion breaking over the lawgiver's soul. Men of law are not usually given to emotion; they do not dip their pens in flame; if they allowed passion to sway them, they could not do their work with the rigid, undeviating exactness which it requires. So for the most part the lawgivers of the Old Testament leave emotion to the prophets; they themselves go about their cold work in their cold way. Here, however, it looks as though, even in a mere passage of rule and regulation, the writer's pen trembled

for a moment in his hand under the pressure of an ideal passionately desired. 'Justice, justice,' he writes, as if heart and pen were for the moment enthralled by the word that was more than a mere commandment—a vision descending out of heaven from God, a deep and tremendous necessity for man if he would make his life in this world safe and prosperous.

Here we touch one of the most fundamental instincts of our human nature. It is often visible in the life of a child, the sense of fair-play, the tearful perplexity occasioned by some small injustice in home or school, the passionate resentment when a youthful martyr has been unjustly punished. And it emerged with great vividness also in the thought of humanity, in days when the world was a good deal nearer to its childhood than it now is. When the thought of Greece was at its best, the idea of justice and the idea of God were almost interchangeable.¹ Justice was the daughter of Zeus. Aeschylus was the poet of justice,—of a power from whose pursuit, whether for reward or for punishment, no human soul could escape. 'Justice hath not suffered him to live' was the thought of the Maltese barbarians regarding Paul, put into words by a Hellenic mind. And in the Old Testament the same thought is central: the momentary passion of this law-giver's reference is but the electric spark which tells of a powerful current: the ideal of justice gripped the Hebrew conscience with a force which can still be felt. Principal Harper, writing of these very Deuteronomic codes, admirably summarizes the Hebrew conception as comprising three elements—first, that justice should be cheap; second, that it should be accessible; and third, that it should be impartial,—the phrase in v.¹⁹, 'Thou shalt not respect persons, nor take a gift,' is characteristic. No doubt the doctrine of impartiality took grim forms. But even the *lex talionis* was meant to be impartial; it could be invoked by the poor against the rich as much as by the rich against the poor. It was the doctrine of human brotherhood in a sour and unripe stage of development. It was the idea of equality encased in a hard shell. And because the men who proclaimed this doctrine of justice were so sure that the Power reigning in the highest was a power making for righteousness, they were not ashamed to claim divine sanction for

¹ Cf. Adam, *The Religious Teachers of Greece*, p. 145; Ramsay, *Luke the Physician*, p. 11.

it and to utter it with a 'Thus saith the Lord.' Justice was to them more than the secret of a stable society: it was the will and commandment of the Almighty.

This primal instinct of the human conscience has risen again to the surface with extraordinary force: since the devastation of Belgium and some other things that have happened, multitudes have come to feel, more or less articulately, that in the last analysis this is the thing that matters most, and that there is no secure basis for the kingdom of love or for the peaceful progress of civilization except as justice reigns among men. Here is an appeal to which at the present time men are unusually sensitive, a cause for which many of the best are giving their all. Is it not possible for the Christian preacher to make good use of this, holding this thought in his hand like a lamp and turning the light of it in various directions—say, towards theology, towards society, and towards eschatology?

1. There is a theological message here,—something that bears witness to God. We need it all the more because our minds work in the opposite direction to those of Jewish lawgivers and prophets. They believed in God, in a God with a character, and therefore they believed in justice as the expression of His will. There are many among us who, if they move upon a theological track at all, must move the other way, and here is a thought by which perhaps they may be helped to climb to Him. Here is a holy and accepted message—a message so accepted that it moves armies and fleets and calls men from their homes and their dearest possessions. Whence did this idea come? Must not this flame in human hearts have been lit at a fire greater than itself? If the souls of men have a sense of justice, then must we not accept Carlyle's doctrine that 'the great soul of the world is just'? No blind-force theory of the universe is adequate to account for the sense of justice in human hearts, any more than it is adequate to account for the instinct of pity and love. Flame comes from flame. Writing can come only from a hand that writes. And if this word 'Justice' is written times without number upon the page of history, and freshly now upon the heart of civilization, we may take it as the signature of Him whose name is Holy.

2. There is also a social message here, for if it is only upon the bed-rock of justice that international relations can be made stable, it is only on the same basis that the social fabric within our own

borders can be secure. We are catching a glimpse just now of that on which all things rest, without which all things shake and rock. And though, in the war, we are absorbed in one special application of the message, there are other applications that will not wait long after the war is over before they clamour for attention. This was beginning to be apparent even before the war began. People were getting tired of charity. They were, indeed, beginning to be afraid of charity. They had come to realize that mere charity, as a remedy for human sorrow and need, had been rather a ghastly failure. They were wondering whether it was not time to try a little justice in its place. Large gifts to church or charity from those who did not treat their own employees fairly were beginning to look specially odious. And there was a deep and widespread feeling among social workers of all types that the whole system we had allowed to grow up was tremendously and tragically unfair. The war has meantime interrupted the efforts that might have been made to reach a better state of things. But the interruption has been only temporary, and we must be prepared for the hour when many who have been fighting for international justice away from our shores will come back to raise the same banner in a more peaceful but no less urgent way among ourselves, and to tell us that a civilization which is worth risking one's life for must be made habitable for those who survive.

When Jeremy Taylor wrote of Christian Justice in the *Holy Living*, it was characteristic of his age and standpoint that he should treat first of 'Obedience to our Superiors.' When we think of social justice to-day, we most readily turn to the other side of the matter—the duties of those who are in possession to those who are more or less disinherited. But the complete ideal includes both sides: it includes the loyalty of conscience to the smallest and humblest task; it includes also a scrupulous care on the part of those who hold the greater posts and privileges that those whose lives they control shall not be robbed of anything essential to a complete and healthy existence. Here is indeed a two-edged sword, which requires careful handling. 'For although the poor must fare no worse for his poverty, yet in justice he must fare no better for it; and although the rich must be no more regarded, yet he must not be less. And to this purpose the tutor of Cyrus instructed him, when in a controversy where a

great boy would have taken a large coat from a little boy, because his own was too little for him and the other's was too big, he adjudged the great coat to the great boy; his tutor answered, "Sir, if you were made a judge of decency or fitness, you had judged well in giving the biggest to the biggest; but when you are appointed judge, not whom the coat did fit but whose it was, you should have considered the title and the possession, who did the violence, and who made it, or who bought it." And so it must be in judgments between the rich and the poor: it is not to be considered what the poor man needs, but what is his own.'¹

3. The same light shines upon the Future. The same instinct of justice as so unsparingly condemns the present makes a better and fairer future inexorably necessary, if this universe is to be counted in any sense rational. Men's thoughts worked along that line long ago. It was one thing for prophets and lawgivers to preach justice; it was another for kings and common men to put those teachings into practice. And injustice built in Israel, as elsewhere, a dark and terrible kingdom. Kings were unjust to their people. People were unjust to one another. Commercialism had its slaves and victims, when the poor were sold for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes. And worst of all, the warrior empires of the world—ambitious, grasping, conscienceless—trod down the smaller peoples into bondage and death. So the instinct for justice, deprived of its rights in the present, turned to the future as to its kingdom. The day of justice was not yet: it was coming: it must come. This promised Day of the Lord was to be a day of stable equilibrium for human society, a day of just judgment upon the evil-doer and of just recompense to the man who feared God, a day when the wounds of the world should be closed by the Sun of Righteousness arisen with healing in His wings.

The logic of that ancient hope still holds. The more loudly the cry for justice calls from the human heart, the more it seems to call in vain to the god of things-as-they-are, who is very like 'the god of this world.' The greater the need, therefore, to guide this expectation towards the God of things-as-they-are-to-be, who is very like the God of the prophets and of the Christ. In short, the greater the need of an Advent hope. Men's thoughts of the final judgment, so far as they believe in it at

¹ *Holy Living*, iii. ii.

all, have been slowly changing. A century ago the supreme question relating to that day was—How shall man justify himself before God? Souls of our own day, believing and reverent, often show unconsciously but plainly that for them the centre of interest in eschatology has shifted: it is now the question—How shall God justify Himself before men? how shall He show that all along His administration of His universe has been wise and righteous? It is the preacher's task to show that here also, as in its social aspects, justice is a two-sided thing, and that if we are deeply right in expecting the Judge of all to satisfy our instinct for justice, this very demand on our part may recoil upon ourselves in condemnation if we have failed in righteous dealing towards God and man. If we emphasize the latter side, it is a warning to which the deepest things in nature and life give weight: it makes us tremble in our hope, and turn again from God's righteousness to the gospel of His mercy. But if we preach the former side, as we must sometimes do, it gives us an advent conception real, ethical, and permanent, so that we

can rejoice in our trembling and lift up our heads to look for new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness shall dwell. Rousseau wrote once in bitter sarcasm to a wealthy and powerful man who had wronged him, 'You belong to a class which relieves you from the necessity of being just,' and human nature on many a flimsy pretext escapes too often from that necessity. Therefore when all is done that can be done along the line of effort and education, we look higher than human nature to bring in the desired consummation. God's day is coming. He Himself is coming, the Just and the Merciful. The souls that realize the meaning of this hope take from it for themselves and for humanity a humble confidence:

Fear not; He made thee dust:

Cling to that sweet word 'Just';

All's well with thee if thou art in Just Hands.

They also learn a grave responsibility,—as the Master said, not to beat their fellow-servants, not to eat and drink with the drunken, but to have lamps lit and loins girt and to be themselves like men who wait for their Lord.

The Denials of Peter.

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IV. GENERAL FEATURES IN THE SCENE OF THE DENIALS.

It was into the courtyard of a house of this type that Jesus was led somewhere about 3.30 or 4 o'clock on that dark and bleak March morning. He was closely followed to the gate by Peter and John. The Synoptists, indeed, say that Peter followed 'at a distance' (*μακρόθεν*, Lk.; *ἀπὸ μακρόθεν*, Mt., Mk.); but there is no real discrepancy between their statement and that of the Fourth Gospel, which says that John entered along with Jesus into the courtyard, and that Peter was standing outside the gate. Both disciples followed separately from one another,¹ and from the guards who were conducting Jesus; but,

although Peter was at a distance, he had to keep near enough to follow the company through the streets; and there occurred a halt somewhere, probably at the outer gate of the house of Annas, when the Roman soldiers handed over the prisoner to the custody of the Jewish leaders and marched away to their barracks in the castle Antonia. There were no Romans at the mock trial in the house of Annas, and no Romans at the legal trial before the official meeting of the High Council which began about sunrise, 6 A.M. This absence led the Synoptists to neglect also their presence at the arrest: in other words, that detail perished from the oral tradition of the early Church in Jerusalem, and only John added it in his Gospel.

During the delays thus caused, Peter came up, and was stopped at the gate by the doorkeeper. She had allowed John to pass because he was a known person in the household; but she stopped Peter, until John, perceiving that Peter had not entered, spoke to her, and induced her to admit

¹ That is suggested (though not proved absolutely) by the Synoptists' silence about John, and it is quite consistent with the expression of the Fourth Gospel; but John when still outside the gate perceived that Peter was there (as will be seen later).