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PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

AND

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

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PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

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PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

AND

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

I N T R O D U C T I O N

I N T R O D U C T I O N

The problem to be discussed in this paper is expressed in the question: "Is there a concept of justice in the teaching of Jesus?" At the outset of the study it is necessary to give attention to the meaning of the term justice. Primarily, justice is the principle of fair dealing between men. Justice in thought and judgment is adherence to the principle of fair dealing. A just act or attitude is one which adheres to the principle, and exhibits the quality of fair dealing. In the Scriptures, the term justice is used as an equivalent of righteousness. Justice or righteousness is regarded as an attribute of God. The ground of justice as a principle of relationship between man and man, then, is the character of God. Justice is also the principle of relationship between man and God. Justice is embodied in the will of God. The content of God's will for men is expressed in the moral law. The moral precepts of the Old and New Testaments are for the Christian the most adequate expression of the content of the moral law. Righteousness or justice in human thought and action consistence in performance of the obligations defined in the moral law as expressed in the Old and New Testaments.

Moralists define three offices or kinds of justice involved in the performance of the moral law:

- (1) Commutative justice or honesty, which gives to every man his property including that pledged to him by promise;

(2) Distributive, or vindicatory, justice, which gives to every man his exact deserts of reward or punishment; and

(3) General, public, or rectoral justice, which carries out all the ends or aims of the law, though not always through the precise channels of commutative or distributive justice. It involves the making of laws in accord with obligations, rights and interests of citizens or subjects. It seeks to set and administer rewards and punishments in an equitable manner that will render protection as well as promote virtue.

"The word justice, or righteousness, is used in Scripture sometimes in a wider and sometimes in a more restricted sense. In theology, it is often distinguished as *justitia interna*, or moral excellence, and *justitia externa*, or rectitude of conduct."¹

In theology, the different offices or kinds of justice have a direct and important bearing on the doctrine of the atonement. Connected with this is the problem that has sometimes been called the central problem of contemporary theology—the relation of divine justice to divine love. The penal substitution theory of the atonement holds that the justice and benevolence of God are distinct attributes and that God can not forgive sin apart from satisfaction of the demands of retributive justice. It is held, therefore, that Christ because of the infinite worth of His person fulfilled by His sacrifice on the cross the demands of divine justice against the sins of those human beings who are elect of God unto salvation. The rectoral or moral influence theory of the atonement holds that only the guilty party can satisfy the claims of divine justice against him and that

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1. Hodge, Charles: Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 416

substitution is not admissible. Therefore, the value of the atonement is held to be its power to promote virtue. A similar problem arises in connection with a study of the teachings of Jesus to discover His concept of justice as the principle of right relationships between men. There is one theory that Jesus' emphasis on love teaches a form of self sacrifice which subordinates the rights of an individual to his duties to others. This raises the question whether love as a principle of human relationship excludes or includes strict justice. The relation of love and justice in the principle of just or right relationships between men, as taught in the gospels, is the problem of this paper. Does Jesus teach a mere benevolence toward others or is retributive justice the norm of divine-human and man to man relationships?

This problem has important ethical implications. Can an adequate social ethic be derived from the teachings of Jesus which will be applicable to the problems and relationships of the present age? Were the precepts and principles of Jesus meant only for a new order to be established in the world by the intervention of God? Is it necessary to develop an interim ethic to guide the actions and relationships of Christians in the orders of human society until the new order be established where the principles taught by Jesus will be applicable? It is widely accepted that in a society of sinful men no practical ethic can be founded on benevolence apart from strict retributive justice. Shall Christians refuse to recognize the necessities of the world and sacrifice themselves as witnesses to the divine benevolence? Is the ethic of Jesus adequate both for the needs

of the present age of society and for the kingdom of God as well?

The Christian Gospel has been very influential in shaping the world's conceptions of moral obligations and ideals. But that the social ideals of the world have been only imperfectly penetrated by Christian principles is undeniable. However, there are indications that in many phases of life Christian principles are being discarded for others which offer more spectacular and efficient methods of achieving a better world.

"The common life of mankind is increasingly being built upon a post-Christian basis; it is leaving Christianity behind it. This applies of course primarily to the west; but the actual repercussions of Christian influence in those parts of the world where the church is a small minority, justify the assertion that even there the general ideas and forces governing the common life have a post-Christian character. Motives and ideals, which either sprang directly from Christian sources or had an affinity with it, have become independent, have gained a momentum and energy of their own, and are now deliberately turning against their origin. The problems which it raises for the church are very different—and far more difficult—from those arising out of its encounter with the pagan world in the early stages of its history. Not only does this drift away from Christianity create a peculiar immunity against the Christian message; a post-Christian civilization which becomes conscious of its own powers and possibilities soon adopts an anti-Christian attitude; it seems to be forced to develop its own doctrine of salvation, its own forms of worship, its own dogma and ethos, in opposition to but also often in extraordinary similarity to the church."¹

This tendency in the political and social life of the world lends particular urgency to the necessity for Christians and the church to clarify their position in relation to the issues before present-day society and offer any solution that the teaching of Jesus suggests for the problems of the world.

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1. Nils Ehrenstrom (ed.): Christian Faith and the Common Life, pp. 5f.

In approaching the study of the concept of justice in the teaching of Jesus, the first part of the paper will be given to a brief survey of the outstanding social-political systems of the present day whose ethics show post-Christian characteristics. Liberalism, communism, and fascism are the dominant philosophies of the world today that claim to draw from Hebrew-Christian ideals and to a greater or lesser extent have sought to displace Christianity. Each system claims to retain all that is valuable in the Christian tradition, and to be more realistic than Christianity in its approach to practical problems. Probably their reaction against Christianity is partly justified by the fact that there is considerable difference of opinion among Christians as to the essential nature of Christian ethics.

"The traditional habits of life, upon which our civilization is based, give rise to habits of thought and reflection which prevent us from understanding Christianity. Yet Christianity is the motive force behind the development of our civilization. So long as we do not understand Christianity we do not understand ourselves or what is happening to us. Yet, so long as we employ our traditional forms of reflection misunderstanding is unavoidable. What we call the Christian tradition is the product of the Jewish mind, which is the reflective aspects of the Jewish habits of life, which are very different from our own. Europe is beginning to realize that its central problem is the Jewish problem. This new realization links up the crisis of our civilization with the understanding of Christianity."¹

The attempt to discover Jesus' concept of justice will begin with a brief survey of Hebrew literature and life which form the background of Jesus' teaching. The study of Jesus' teaching to discover His idea of justice will be limited to those portions of the synoptic gospels which offer light on the subject.

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1. John Macmurray: The Clue to History, p. ix

The length of the paper does not allow for any large attention to particular ethical problems in present-day affairs. Rather, it must be confined largely to seeking basic principles.

"Christian Ethics is not a code of laws, but a statement of fundamental principles. The interpreter of Christian ethics therefore seeks to discover the universal principles behind Old and New Testament judgements, separating them from the details which are derived from particular circumstances and for this reason are relative."¹

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1. Andrew R. Osborn: Christian Ethics, p. 104

. . . but let justice flow down as waters—
righteousness as an unceasing stream!
—Amos v.24

. . . this commandment we have from Him,
that he who loveth God love his brother also!
—I John iv.21

PART ONE

PREVAILING SOCIAL SYSTEMS

AND

THEIR CONCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE

CHAPTER I

The Liberal or Democratic Conception of Justice

CHAPTER I

THE LIBERAL OR DEMOCRATIC IDEA OF JUSTICE

The social-political system known as democracy, which has come to be the prevailing one in western Europe, the Americas, and the British Dominions, resulted largely from the ideas and movements that marked the rise of the modern era in history and, up to the twentieth century, have been the most characteristic and outstanding achievements of the era. This body of doctrine has been known as liberalism. It is derived from various sources and has affected all areas of life and thought.

"Liberalism is the body of doctrine that claims for the individual freedom from interference of any kind—in his religious life, in the expression of his opinion, in his economic activity. Its philosophical core is the doctrine of individualism; the canons of its ethics are those of the individual conscience; in the realm of science it moves to the conviction that man may by rational inquiry become master of the universe; its religious corollary is the idea of tolerance and freedom of belief from the power of the state; its political faith is the rule of law and the doctrine of laissez-faire; its economic program is the Manchester ideal of free trade, free enterprise and the competitive system; its legal vestments are freedom of contract and the sanctity of property; it is saturated with an optimism about human possibilities; its dream is the dream of progress. Liberalism is thus not a simple and satisfying universal formula but a complex tissue of belief ramifying into every area of life."¹

The medieval period of European history was characterized by a provincialism in social life bound to the political system of feudalism. Commerce and industry, science and education were in

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1. Max Lerner: Ideas are Weapons

their rudimentary stages and were not the significant factors of the era. The cohesive element in medieval civilization was Roman Catholicism which gave it a predominantly religious and other-worldly outlook.

The renaissance of learning revived the secular and materialistic attitudes of ancient culture. The confidence of learned men in the world view fostered by the church was shaken, and its monopoly on all phases of life in the interests of salvation was questioned. Men began to seek the pleasures and possibilities of life for their own sake. Renewed investigation of the Scriptures and other Christian records convinced many that the claims of the papacy were exaggerated. Many even among churchmen concluded that the dependence of humanity on ecclesiastical hierarchy and organization was not so necessary as had been insisted. Moreover, the corruption of church leaders was very inconsistent with their sweeping claims to be moral and spiritual leaders. The element in the church that demanded reform, backed by the economic and political powers that found the Catholic system detrimental to their ambitions, was able to wrest large sections of European Christendom from the control of Rome. Not only was the papal control over faith and salvation broken, but at the same time the combination of feudal provincialism and religious universalism gave way to a movement toward political nationalism that involved the nationalizing of religious organization as well. The breakdown of church opposition against usury, the influence of the crusades in opening up new avenues to commerce and

enlarging the desires for its merchandise, as well as the need for funds by the monarchs who were increasing their power at the expense of the feudal nobles, caused the rise of a commercial plutocracy in place of the old feudal nobility as the influential class of Europe.

Professor Laski,¹ from the viewpoint of Marxian economic determinism, points out the decisive influence of class interests in the movement. The rising middle class at first accepted the doctrine of the divine right of kings and supported the rise to power of the absolute monarchs because they considered a strong central power in the nation, which would bring a greater measure of internal peace and a strong foreign policy, as essential to commercial success and freedom of trade. Later, the same middle class, having established itself economically, sought political rights and power that would enable them to manipulate the state more directly to their own advantage. The entrance of liberalism into the realm of political theory evolved the concept of human and property rights that were beyond the power of the state. Parliamentary government limited by a constitution and bill of rights were among the chief political institutions developed. The carrying out of ideas implicit in older forms of government and of law, together with the influence of reformed theology, had a part in the movement as well as the influence of class interests. To effect their revolutionary purpose, the middle class rallied the proletariat and agrarian elements to their

.

1. Cf. Harold J. Laski: *The Philosophy of a Business Civilization*

support. But, having established themselves politically, they tried to limit the benefits of democracy to their own class, and tried to halt the movement of political and economic power into the hands of the masses. Having established themselves by radicalism and revolution, the middle class became zealous advocates of order and conservatism. Having overcome the domination of a landed aristocracy, they established a plutocracy holding power by reason of their ownership of capital.

"Men's imaginations could not help being caught by the claims which liberalism staked out for the freedom and tolerance and expansion of the human mind. But as happens with all doctrine, the men who stood to profit from the triumph of liberalism identified these lofty claims with their own class interests. They equated their own power in society with the universal and permanent truths which they discovered about human beings everywhere. Liberalism as a revolutionary instrument had helped bring the new revolutionary capitalist class into power; they made out of it, in the sweep of their zest and recklessness, a universal; but when a new class took this universal, and extracted its implications and learned its lesson all too well, the bourgeois thinkers called a halt. They tried to prune liberalism, limit it, hedge it in. They saw that the liberties they had with its aid wrested from the feudal nobility and the church potentates and the despotic monarchs could by the same token be wrested from them by the underlying population."¹

The failure of liberalism to carry out its ideas to a logical conclusion in the social order gave rise to the workingman's movement that culminated in Marxian Socialism. The threatened success of communism and the blow to the liberal ideal caused by the first World War drove the middle classes back to a reliance on fascism that represents a sort of revival of absolutism.

Where a Marxian can regard liberalism as primarily an out-

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1. Lerner, op. cit., p. 345

growth of class interests, a Catholic writer sees in it a result of false religious ideas.

"Liberalism arose as the result of individualism. Individualism holds that every man has a right to make his own affirmations and a philosophy of life, without any reference to tradition or social organisms such as the Church and State. This spirit of individualism had its root deep in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. About that time the idea arose that religion should be a purely individual affair, that each man should be free to interpret his Bible as he saw fit, without any regard for a supreme court to judge the correctness of the interpretation. This idea known as private interpretation of the Bible was manifestly unsound, for a man left to himself is no more capable of drawing up his own religion than he is of drawing up his own astronomy. It was not long until individualism jumped out of the sphere of religion, into the realm of politics and economics."¹

1. The Liberal-Democratic View of Man

As already indicated, the fundamental doctrine of liberalism is the individualistic view of man. Every man is regarded as a personality of intrinsic value, not primarily a member of a particular class or race or nation. As man is the fundamental unit, so the only basic group to which he belongs is the universal group, mankind. In his cooperation with other men and by means of the institution that they develop together, he seeks to perpetuate his ideas and the experience he has gained, and to fulfill his needs and to meet his desires. They are meant to serve man, and not he to serve them. They are his creations that have no reality apart from the men who comprise them. Man does not so much aim to adapt himself to them as to modify

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1. Fulton J. Sheen: Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity

them, and even to replace them or withdraw from them. Man is the measure. Moreover, liberalism holds that the measure of man is the same for all individuals. Every man counts for one and no man counts for more than one. In spite of the differences between men, the essence of humanity resides not in those factors that differ but in those which all share. All men have equal rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is characteristic of liberalism that the essence of the individual is expressed in terms of legal rights. Walter Lippmann holds that the meaning of the term individual can be discovered by tracing the process of human emancipation.

"In the dominion of man over man, be it the master over his slave, the despot over his subjects, the patriarch over his wives and children, the nexus is personal and those who are underneath are in effect the property of those above them. But as their relationships are progressively defined by law and custom in terms of specific rights and duties, this personal and possessive nexus dissolves. By the reduction of general supremacy to particular obligations, something is left over—a residual essence in each man which is not at anyone's disposal. That essence becomes autonomous. And so out of the slave, who was a living person treated as a thing, there emerges a person who is no longer a thing."¹

In his reconstruction of liberalism, Lippmann gives the law a large place as the means of justice. There is plenty of justification in the record of human history for lack of faith in personal relationships as guarantees of liberty. But it is doubtful if law will ever achieve the desired result. The status of law as a guarantee of liberty is about that accorded by Jesus to the Mosaic divorce statute: "for your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment." Law can

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1. Walter Lippmann: An Inquiry into the Principles of the Good Society, pp. 374f.

declare one's rights but can not establish them. Neither can law guarantee the fulfillment of duties. There is a loss of the sense of human interdependence and of mutual responsibility involved in this definition of the independence of the individual. A corollary of this dogma in the system of liberalism is that a man's possessions are his own and he is under no legal obligation to share them with others. So in the very heart of liberal doctrine, in the guarantee of individual rights, there is the seed of another tyranny, plutocracy.

Anyone may by the lawful use of his abilities acquire and keep for himself as much as he is able. It is his right as an individual. But the circumstances of life always deprive some while enriching others. A person who is guaranteed the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness may yet be deprived of the material necessities of life and happiness and forced to a disadvantageous bargain with those that have. Thus in a sense he is deprived of liberty, at least to a certain extent. Of course liberalism has always encouraged charity towards the unfortunate. However, the rights of the more fortunate are not always balanced by duties. If a man has stayed within the law, he is regarded as having done justice, even though his neighbor may be left destitute. His charity is an act beyond justice and to a certain degree obligates the recipient.

Liberalism exhibits profound faith in human reason to overcome the imperfections of human nature and the evils of the social order. In fact, evil is generally equated with ignorance and inability, and education and law are regarded as the means of overcoming it. Man is considered as a rational being, at least potentially, and liberalism

has always taken an optimistic view of his perfectability and of the inevitable progress of humanity.

2. Liberalism in Economics

In the economic realm, liberalism is connected with the capitalistic system. The right of free enterprise guarantees that everyone may invest his capital and labor as he desires. The free market, rather than a planned economy, is the determining factor in production. If a product is needed and desired, it sells readily at good prices. Thus labor and capital are drawn to produce more. Every laborer is theoretically free to sell his labor where and at whatever price he wishes. No one forces him to labor, but his need for the necessities of life and lack of their means of production, forces him to seek work. Because of his inability to withhold his labor from the market without losing the benefits of it, he is at a disadvantage in bargaining with men who have land or money or goods that retain their value if held till the market is advantageous. The industrial revolution, with its greatly increased productivity and improved means of transportation which enlarged the possible market, has made for interdependence among people and a rise in the material standard of living. However, the concentration of the means of production in the hands of a few has put the majority at a disadvantage in the open market. Yet another problem raised by the free market is how to make capital and labor mobile enough to meet its changing demands.

F. J. Sheen has held that the capitalist system has proved

itself un-Christian. He lists as the three basic tenets of liberalism:

- 1) the state must not interfere with business,
- 2) no collective bargaining,
- 3) no interference with the absolute right of property.

Lippmann, however, holds that this sort of capitalism, characterized by "rugged individualism" and demanding a "laissez-faire" attitude on the part of government, is a degenerate form of liberalism that is not true to the fundamental ideas of the doctrine. He believes that regulation is necessary to keep a free and open market. He believes, however, that any attempt at large scale economic planning is bound to be fatal to the market and bring a totalitarian economy and dictatorship, while replacing an economy of abundance with an economy of scarcity from which the industrial revolution has freed the world. On the other hand, he believes that attempts to master or manipulate the market by means of trusts, tariffs, monopolies, and the like are equally inadequate. Moreover, he holds that the Marxian view of an inevitable breakdown of the capitalistic system is mistaken, because the sources of trouble are not in its essential tenets but in the incidental factors which capitalism ought to overcome in its course of development.

"It was the historic mission of liberalism to discover the significance of the division of labor; its uncompleted task is to show how public policy may best be adapted to this mode of production which specializes men's work, and thereby establishes an increasingly elaborate interdependence among individuals and their communities throughout the world. The liberal philosophy is based on the conviction that, except in emergencies and for military purposes, the division of labor cannot be regulated successfully by coercive authority, whether it be public or private, that the mode of production that mankind generally began to adopt about a hundred and fifty years ago is in its essence

a market economy, and that, therefore, the true line of progress is not to impair or abolish the market, but to maintain and improve it. . . . The market is not something invented by speculators for their profit, or by classical economists for their intellectual pleasure. The market is the only method by which labor which has been analyzed into separate specialties can be synthesized into useful work. . . . The division of labor and its regulation in markets are two inseparable aspects of the same process of producing wealth, and the failure to understand that truth is a sure sign of the failure to understand the technical principle of production in the modern world."¹

3. The Liberal Conception of The State

Liberalism holds that the state exists as an arbiter between individuals and private interests, and that it is not an order or institution that has its own level of existence to which individuals must subordinate themselves. "Its powers are not inherent but derived, like the power that drives a machine or handles a tool. They draw nothing from themselves, everything from the consent of the governed."² The democratic state rose in, and by means of, struggle against monarchs that claimed supremacy over all personal and property rights. They considered their prerogatives to be based on natural law, and ultimately to be grounded in the divine will. In order to overcome such an attitude, liberalism set over against it the conception of both personal and property rights as inalienable. But it soon became clear that such a claim was too sweeping. As a consequence inviolable property rights could be used to deprive inalienable personal rights of all content. It became clear that if the law declared

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1. Lippmann: op. cit., pp. 174ff.
2. Horace M. Kallen: Individualism: An American Way of Life, p. 159

and defined rights and duties, the law could modify them in the name of the people. But no agency or individual was regarded as trustworthy to ascertain and exercise the will of the people. The problem then was

"how to organize the indubitable and inalienable power of the mass in order that it might achieve its own best interests. And since it was obvious that no mass of men can as a mass make more than the simplest decisions of yes and no, and its physically incapable of administering its affairs, the practical question was how a government can be made to represent the will of the people."¹

This requires not only machinery for setting up the government, with checks and balances to prevent its taking too much power, but also some means of changing the personnel and policies of the government according to the popular will.

"Democracy is a form of government consciously postulated upon the recognition of the fact that consent may be withdrawn. Functionally, it is the operation of political devices designed to keep consent continuous and vital. These include the party system and recognize the necessity, significance and security of an opposition. The more genuine the opposition, the more simple, direct and fluent the shift of power from party to party, the more stable the political establishment. In times of crises, the opposition fuses with power, and government becomes dictatorship by consent. In normal times it may happen that the difference between parties is artificial and negligible and the conflict between government and the opposition something on the pattern of a framed-up prizefight."²

Because government personnel is bound to change there must be some unchanging factor to perpetuate those elements of the state's activity that continue to have the consent of the people. This is the reason for the important place given to a framework of law and a relatively permanent judiciary. Lippmann moreover holds that all officials of a

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1. Lippmann: op. cit., p. 253
2. Kallen: op. cit., pp. 161ff.

democratic state must be characterized by a judicial temper. A popular legislature must delegate legislative powers in technical matters to special commissions. But these commissions have no sovereignty and legislators must preserve a judicial attitude toward them and their findings. They must also judge between the conflicting interests that they represent. This idea of the state as a conciliator and arbiter is considered a type of government based on human experience and suited to human ability.

"It is possible for ordinary men to decide whether individuals are dealing justly with each other; it is even possible for them to take the long view and to say whether the rights that are being exercised, say in exploiting the land or in employing child labor, injure the interests of posterity. But who can say that this man's scheme for administering the social order is better than that man's? No one can prove his case; each can only make promises. Because none can be verified, the claims are then asserted the more willfully. The result is to degrade the consensus of opinion into an irresolvable conflict of particular interests. But to aim at justice among the interests of individuals is to keep opinion wholesome by keeping it close to intelligible issues . . ."¹

This makes it the primary duty of the state to dispense justice. The dependence on litigation is defended because it gives the right of initiative to the injured party and encourages settlement by agreement between the parties involved instead of looking to the state to take care of all matters.

The liberal state regards the public official as under law equally with other individuals. Though it is recognized the modern society requires a large body of officials and a large variety of services best carried on by public agencies, so long as these public

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1. Lippman: op. cit., pp. 294 f.

officials and services are controlled by law they do not violate the fundamental principles of the liberal state.

"Liberalism has no reason to deny that everyone is under the law. But it does deny that anyone is under the authority of public officials. . . . The alternatives to liberalism are either to do nothing, which is in effect to abrogate human society and to return to a state of nature, or to treat individuals and groups as conscripts under official command, which is to institute a totalitarian state. The liberal method of social control by defining reciprocal rights and duties avoids both horns of the dilemma. While the practical application presents many difficulties, we may be reasonably certain that no other method of social control is more promising. Indeed we may go further and say laissez-faire as understood in our times is mere social uncontrol, and that the new absolutisms do not seek to solve the problem but to suppress it."¹

The critics of liberalism in its present form hold that it began as a movement in protest against the inadequacies of law and judicial procedure to deal with the rapidly changing and ever more complex situations of society. Only a strong administrative power is able to meet and master situations as they arise. The judiciary is always slow, cumbersome, and conservative, more interested in preserving the law than in doing justice to the particular problem. Moreover, Lippmann is charged with confusing totalitarian dictatorship and democratic social and economic planning.

While the implications of liberalism regarding social justice have never been fully embodied in the common law, yet it is doubtful if any law can ever be adequate guarantee of social justice. No law can take into account all factors nor apply adequately to every specific situation. Neither can any official or agency, whether ad-

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1. Ibid., p. 312

ministrative or judicial, be wise enough to adequately interpret the law perfectly. The good will and understanding of men must be the determining factor.

CHAPTER II

The Fascist Idea of Justice

CHAPTER II
THE FASCIST IDEA OF JUSTICE

In seeking to define the fascist idea of justice, attention must be given to the underlying ideas and leading aims of fascism, which are basic to and determine its idea of justice. "National Socialism" as it has been developed in Germany is the most significant form of fascism and indicates its various aspects:

a social-political movement,
an underlying philosophy, and
a social system in which its ideas have been worked out.

It is here taken as typical of fascism generally. The particular view of man and of community determines the content of justice as the principle of fair dealing between individuals. The fascist idea of justice as the principle of right relationship between the individual and government is modified by the fascist idea of the totalitarian state. Finally, the peculiar attitude of National Socialism toward ideals that claim to be universally valid leaves little room for justice conceived as an absolute and immutable quality of reality, and therefore determinative in all human relationships.

Fascism as a social-political movement was the outgrowth of a particular social situation—the breakdown of the prevailing system. This breakdown resulted from a stalemate between the two forces of political democracy and industrial capitalism. The failure of free enterprise in business and industry to effect a fair distribution of goods, and to guarantee a measure of the world's wealth, and of

security, to all persons through gainful and permanent employment, caused a trend toward socialization as fast as political power came into the hands of the people through the extension of the franchise. But even among the workers there was little enthusiasm for a thorough collectivization. Also there was a failure on the part of popular leaders adequately to grapple with the pressing problems. As a result, democracy not only aroused the opposition of strong economic interests but also lost the confidence of the masses. This gave fascism, represented in Germany by the National Socialists, its opportunity. The party had the support of economic leaders, of the army, and of the masses to a sufficient extent to guarantee its rise to power. The leaders were mainly opportunists who appealed to the prejudices and interests of all groups. Apparently many joined from selfish motives, hoping for personal gain, or aiming to turn the movement to the support of particular interests. But the movement involved more than opportunism. Many sincere persons joined for patriotic and high motives. Also, National Socialism had deeper roots than the immediate economic and political situation. It was affected by the philosophical ideas of certain German thinkers who formed a line reaching back to the eighteenth century. The persons who put forth these ideas differed in many respects, but were agreed on certain fundamental ideas of a nationalistic nature. These were adopted by the National Socialist movement and have borne fruit in the social, political, educational and religious developments in Germany since the party came to power.

National Socialism is opposed to and contemptuous of democ-

racy and liberalism, of Marxianism and internationalism.

"The National Socialist and affiliated doctrines are fundamentally opposed to liberal democracy, as well as to its Christian foundations and its socialistic trends and implications."¹

In the years since the Nazis gained control of the Reich, the legislative and judicial branches of the government have been merged into, or subordinated to, the executive. The offices of president and chancellor have been united in the person of the Leader. Individual rights have been expropriated by the government and no area of life is left outside the realm of state control. No effective criticism of the government by press, pulpit or popular voice is permitted. The interests of capital and labor have been merged into one government-controlled "community of work." The labor unions were dissolved, their funds confiscated, and the labor leaders replaced by party men who command the Labor Front. Economic demands of labor were set aside and "cultural" substitutes in the form of education, recreation, and so on, were offered. Wages were pegged at the lowest point reached during the depression, but longer hours raised the total. Unemployment was eliminated by the re-armament program. The Nazi regime caused less change in the owner-manager group of business and industry than in any other professional group. This not only refutes the claim that German capitalism was controlled by the Jews, but also reflects the early alliance between fascism and capitalism. Nazi party men were given lucrative posts in business and industry to supervise the companies in the interests of the state, but the real owners and

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1. Aurel Kolnai: The War Against the West, p. 17

managers were retained for the actual task of administering the community of work, and to a large extent retained their economic privileges. Education, agriculture, science and religion were likewise put under rigid state control and geared to the party's program for the nation. Attempts were made to develop distinctively German philosophy, art and science. The bases of these already existed in nationalistic attitudes and ideas and necessities.

1. The Totalitarian State

The fascist movement has been called the first counter-revolution to set itself up as a true revolution, remodelling society by the negation of liberty and the emancipation of tyranny. Its proponents welcome its destruction of freedom as the birth of a new kind of liberty. The expropriation of individual rights is looked on as relieving the state of obstacles to its free and fruitful activity. The only right left to citizens is the right to obey the law, without having any voice in the making of law and without any assurance as to the kind of law that will be made. Since the leaders theoretically are at one with the people they can not fail to make laws that are to the advantage of the people. German Christians even support this theory of the totalitarian state on theological grounds. They quote Luther to the effect that man is hopelessly evil, and that the state is therefore instituted of God to show him the right and to guide him in the doing of it. Since all authority comes from God, the Leader is right in listening to the voice of God rather than to the voice of the people. Moreover, every nation is the creature of God, and there-

fore there can be no objection to the totality of the state which represents the nation. Other forms of state than the fascist are condemned because they are set up as representing certain ideals and rights over against the rights reserved to the people and are therefore alien to the people and not identified with it. At the same time democracy is regarded as a vice and the negation of the state, because authority is vested in the people who take no responsibility for their decisions. Fascism boasts of being more responsible because the Leader takes full responsibility for his actions. However, the fascist idea of responsibility means freedom to act without restraint by any consideration. In democracy the leader acts on behalf of the people and is responsible to them and restrained by a constitution.

Fascism is openly contemptuous of the common people, yet appeals to them because it recognizes something in man that, in times of difficulty, longs for infallible leadership that will be authoritative and relieve the citizen from responsibility for making decisions.

"The people detest being dragged into majorities; they detest being pestered with projects; they yearn for direction in which they can believe and nothing more." (Adolf Hitler, National Socialist Party Convention, Nürnberg, 1937.)¹

Fascist leadership unifies the people by centering all their energies and emotions on a single aim, the carrying out of a project apart from and outside the realm of the public welfare. Its primary concern is foreign policy and it thrives on enmity.

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1. Quoted by Kolnai: The War Against the West, p. 128

In the totalitarian state, the field of politics embraces all of life, and yet, in a deeper and truer sense, there is no politics because the people are given no real part in the making of public policies.

"Everything is political in the sense that everything is bound to serve a political trend; nothing is political in so far as no politics can evolve without the toleration of public controversies and competitive beliefs within the bounds of a legal order."¹

Only one party is permitted—the political elite that forms and carries out policies with the obedient help of the unpolitical people. But even the elite are in theory identified with the leader, so that in effect the leader is the state. The individual citizen is of no intrinsic value.

2. The Organic Community

Fascism regards community not as the association of free personalities that are yet interdependent, but as a super-personal organism—community beyond personality. The community has its own level of existence. In fact, personality resides there rather than in the individual. The Volk Shape or Type is the basic reality, manifest in the life of the people. They are inter-related as the parts of the body. The leader is the head of the body. His personality is the personality of the community. He alone is completely personal. Other individuals of the community are personalities to the extent

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1. Ibid., p. 176

that they share the personality of the leader. He has the power of self-determination for the entire group; he makes its decisions and determines its attitudes, and to a large extent controls the destiny of ^{all} its members. The members of community share the personality of the leader only through emotional identity with him. The term we-experience has been used to express the state of mind that characterizes members of an organic community. Identity rather than interdependence characterizes this concept of unity.

Organic community inevitably involves inequality. Where the essence of community is interdependence and association of free personalities, equality is possible in spite of individual differences. So long as every individual is regarded as a free personality he is in that respect equal to all others. But where the leader is regarded as the personality of the community, the supreme incarnation of the Volk type, then individuals who share in the Volk type to a lesser extent, being less perfect products of it, fulfill their destiny by serving him who is an incarnation of their own essence, more themselves than they are if apart from him.

Whereas love is the unifying factor in the Christian idea of community, honor is exalted as the emotion more suited to join the members of organic, fascist community. As love is typified in the relationship between members of the family, honor is typified by the relations between fellow soldiers of an army. As honor replaces love, so the army replaces the family as the basic social organization. Hitler has testified to the consciousness of purpose, power

and unity that he experienced on becoming a soldier. Probably due to this, and his alliance with Junker militarists, he has made the German soldier the ideal for his followers. Moreover, the military ideal had strong roots in the German nation. It had not been discredited and charged with failure as was the Weimar republic. The Nazis insisted that the German army was never defeated but only betrayed. So Hitler has used the army as a means to effect his ideal of organic community, of unity with inequality. Every soldier feels himself an essential part of the whole army, but is entirely under the control of superiors, having given up the right of self determination, and being prepared to obey orders he has had no part in making.

"Soldiery to the neo-nationalist mind is not a necessity but a religion; not a rampart of normal life but its main content; not a condition, nor a profession, but the determining prototype of community."¹

The concept of honor, involving a sense of solidarity with one's fellows and obedience to superiors, is made the basis for the leader cult that characterizes fascism. Since the leader is considered a super-human daemon or "charismatic" man, he is the object of an attitude of faith and loyalty that approaches worship. In order to foster this attitude, the personality of the leader is idealized by means of propaganda, and by setting him off from his fellows to a certain extent. The leader comes to be looked on as omnipotent and infallible because of his mystical unity with the Volk "Shape" (Gestalt). The philosopher whose ideas set forth this mystical concept

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1. Kolnai: op. cit., p. 84

is Rosenberg, the official philosopher of the Nazis. He professes to find the basis of this in certain neo-Platonic mystics and in the medieval German mystic, Meister Eckart. The result of this identifying of the leader with divinity is to make him immune from criticism by others and to discourage self-criticism as well. He does not share in normal affectional and intellectual relationships with men and women.

As to the effect of this idea of organic community on the followers of the leader, it leads to an attitude that exalts the relation between men, as soldiers, and toward their leader above the importance of the ties between members of the family. Also, Männerbunde, or man to man love, is considered as on a higher plane than love between the sexes. As a result of this militarism, women are relegated to a secondary place, while manhood and the manly virtues are emphasized. However, manhood to the Nazi is different from the manliness admired by Christian and liberal philosophy. It is apt to be a boisterous display of irrational dynamism. Critics further point out that the discouraging of the more normal intellectual and emotional intercourse between the sexes deprives men of a wholesome influence and opens the way for a morbid and undesirable sort of relationship with regrettable results. This may be illustrated by the account given of the influence of women in the life of Hitler by the ex-Nazi Rauschnig. "It is to women's encouragement that he owes his self assurance . . . women indeed launched him on his career."¹ If

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1. Hermann Rauschnig: The Voice of Destruction, p. 264

this is correct, it appears that the man who is regarded as the paragon of German manhood won his power by exploiting the support of women and depends for inspiration on the rather hysterical admiration of the sex that is deemed unworthy of equality with the German soldier.

The attempts to achieve solidarity of the national community by denying the rights of individuals, the equality of the sexes, the importance of the family and the other lesser forms of community, all tend to magnify the power and idealize the personality of the leader. But there is reason to believe that the method will not strengthen but weaken the community. The leader becomes indispensable and irreplaceable because of the multiplicity of ties between him and the people, and the extent to which all depends on his judgment. The "feet of clay" in the fascist community is its head. Instead of being a solid pyramid on which the head rests, it becomes an inverted pyramid that rests on its head. The injustice that is done individuals by de-personalizing them is no more deplorable than that done the leader by idealizing him as the personality of the entire community.

3. The Fascist View of Man

While all forms of fascism regard the masses as unfit for political action and accept a form of social Darwinianism that asserts the right of the strong to rule the weak, certain neo-nationalist and Nazi thinkers of Germany have gone farthest in elaborating a doctrine of man consistent with the fascist concept of social inequality. The tendency of these thinkers, of whom Ludwig Klages is regarded as the

leader, have replaced the logocentric with a biocentric view of human nature.

"What is now meant by human nature is simply the human subsection of impersonal Nature. . . . The spiritual side of man is sufficiently and exclusively accounted for by his belonging to animated Nature; his spiritual existence does not center in the sphere of logic as such or of ethics as such. . . . Briefly, men are not different units of reason or subjects of law, they are different specimens and types of an important manifestation of experimenting Nature."¹

The Volk "Shape" or "Type" (Gestalt) is manifest in men. The leader is the man in whom the Type is most completely manifest. He is a sort of supernatural person who embodies the ideal that the race is to achieve by careful breeding. Thus the men of a particular folk or nation are divided into two groups, the Herrenmensch and the Herdenmensch, "the daemon and vermin."

The mind-spirit is replaced by the body-spirit. Body and soul become factors of equal rank in human nature. Human will and activity are regarded as manifestations of inherent natural forces, rather than of a free spirit. This naturalistic vitalism in the doctrine of man leads to an aversion to civilization in the sense of the recognition that man is a rational creature capable of understanding and adjusting himself to rational ideals. Instead there is an over-emphasis on the primitive ideas of irrational forces that govern life. This leads to a dynamism that revels in mere activity. The criterion of activity in culture, politics and education becomes "grandeur and fruitfulness" rather than justice and rationality. This dynamism is

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1. Kolnai: The War against the West, p. 178

adverse to the belief that improvement of the human race is possible in any other way than through breeding. While fascism is eager to use the technical achievements of civilization, it is questionable whether science and art can survive where they are rigidly controlled by the state for its own purposes.

Since the Volk Shape is the basic reality, the concept of mankind, of which each race is simply a part, no longer holds. There are simply a number of races which are the products of different Types. German fascism classifies these in a sort of hierarchy. Some races are primary, Herrenvolk, inherently destined to rule, and other races are secondary, or Herdenvolk. The Germanic race is the master race. Other closely allied groups such as the Anglo-Saxon likewise have a large measure of primary character. Among the predominantly secondary races are the Jews and the Negroes. The criterion by which they profess to determine the position of a people is a pseudo-biological principle of pure and mixed blood strains. Because of the purity of the German blood strain it is the most reasonable basis for breeding of the super race that is destined to rule the world.

4. Religion and Ethics

Since the nation is to fascism the only significant unit of society which takes precedence over all others, religion and ethics must be reinterpreted in such a way as to become a support to the state. God is identified with the Volk or national "Shape" or "Type" (Gestalt). Thus the Volk is holy, being the sole medium through

which God reveals Himself to and in man. In the "we experience" of national solidarity and devotion to the leader, the supreme daemonic embodiment of the Type, men commune with divinity. As Kolnai has expressed it, "We" are divine, and "We" are "incarnate in our daemon leaders." Divinity is manifest in the strong hero. The hero's supremacy and right to rule depends entirely on his ability to gain and hold power. Therefore it becomes clear that the essence of divinity is force or power.

"The skeleton of a heathen religion, at least in the sense that concerns us here, in the sense of a moral Pagan mysticism, of political activity burning with the fire of supra-human forces, can be described by the brief formula: Relativity of Value—Absoluteness of Power."¹

Faith becomes simply surrender to force in the person of the leader. Basic truth in the form of dogma gives place to myth which is simply a mirror to one's nature or kind, to racial or national Shape. No myth is ever susceptible to exact interpretation in the form of universally valid laws or ideals. The activity of the leader is the only definite manifestation of basic truth.

"Communion with the true Absolute beyond the hierarchy of vital strength and military command is deliberately cut off; divine sanctity is expropriated for the vital treasury of the Race, divine sublimity is hired to give prestige to a particular community."²

Kolnai proceeds to point out the aspects of Christianity from which its interpreters start who wish to conform the faith to fascism without giving up Christian imagery and terminology. Christianity claims to have unified mankind in the love of God. Therefore,

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1. Kolnai: op. cit., p. 232
2. Ibid., p. 233

it is inferred that every nation is freed from the demands of the law of a Jewish God and free to follow its own forms of devotion. This, together with the argument that the state is necessary to deal with sin, is the argument used to appeal to Lutherans. To the Calvinistic mind, it is represented that the number of God's elect is to be identified with the German race. Also, Christ's new interpretation of the law is distorted to mean its negation.

"No law of moral conduct, no objective canon of goodness receives credit; there remains only mere faith in the Savior, or the sovereign decision of individual conscience, or—and this is the important point—the sovereign moral competence of secular authorities as a substitute and an expedient for the practical needs of man, whose earthly existence is invariably and irrevocably tarnished with sin and must be wielded accordingly."¹

The appeal to the Catholic church is based on its natural conservatism as an established, property-holding power. Fascism pictures a division of spheres of influence and points to a supposed similarity between the totalitarian state and the spiritual hierarchy with its historical connection to the medieval doctrine of the corporate society, where the individual is subordinated to the whole.

In the realm of ethics, fascism holds that there is no higher law which mankind is obliged to obey, but that each national or racial group is free to follow its own genius. This is not an ethical relativism that refuses to accept any particular code as definitive for all men and all times, holding that no single code ever completely achieves absolute truth. Rather, Nazi relativism denies the existence of absolute truth. Power is the only criterion and loyalty to the

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1. Kolnai: op. cit., p. 250

who holds power outranks any moral consideration.

"Each folk of one blood has its own special genius or folk-spirit, which defines the destiny of the folk, and the true way of life for all its members. For one people it means dominance, for another subservience, by a profound natural necessity and right. This necessity or destiny is at once biological and cultural. To it the whole folk-life—family, education, government, religion—must be subordinated. Economic activities, far from being basic to all the rest, are merely one more tributary factor, subject to the most rigid management by the folk leaders, without concern for so-called economic laws. By stern selection of biologically pure stock, by regimented education, one party government, controlled religion, and army-like co-ordination of labor, business, scholarship, art, journalism, and all other pursuits, individual differences and competing interests must be as far as possible eliminated. The folk or community demands supreme loyalty of every member, and is closed to every other of another race. Man is above all a vessel of irrational gregarious instincts, and the ideal community is a splendid large ant-hill."¹

This closed system effectively cuts off any appeal to rational ideals of universal validity. It claims to be more realistic than the democratic and Christian philosophies that are based on universals. But the particulars to which Nazism appeals have less discernible basis in reality than those ideals which they condemn. While fascism has appealed to certain aspects of human nature and exploited to advantage the minor differences between philosophies that they oppose, there is evidence that their refusal to recognize facts that do not fit their system constitutes a reckless disregard of the natural laws they profess to honor, which will eventually undermine their whole system.

To turn specifically to the subject of justice, fascism refuses to recognize the principle of justice as representing an un-

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1. Robert Lowry Calhoun: What Is Man? p. 48

alterable aspect of basic reality. They prefer to talk of "German justice" as if justice too were determined by Volk Type. In accord with their view that man as an individual has no intrinsic significance apart from his relation to the group, they talk of the "justice of the whole" as opposed to the Jewish individualistic, nomistic idea of justice. They object to making conscience into formulae.

CHAPTER III

The Communist Idea of Justice

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Communism, or collectivism in the sense of common ownership of, or equal sharing in the benefits of property, is a plan and method that has been proposed and tried by different and very diverse groups at various times in history. A sort of communistic arrangement of a voluntary nature existed for a time among the early Christians (Acts 2:44f., 4:32). Later Christian movements, as the Wycliffite, Hussite, Anabaptist and others which emphasized a return to primitive Christianity, either advocated or experimented with communistic arrangements. The idea has been tried at other times under the stress of social and economic crises.

Nineteenth century socialism rose first as a paternalistic movement sponsored by capitalists like Robert Owen. However, it was the labor union movement, on which the theories of Karl Marx were based, which are the bases of present-day communism. Hegel's dialectic furnished the philosophical foundation for the thought of Marx. Hegel was an idealist who held that the Absolute gave rise to its counterpart in nature which through the medium of mind strove to apprehend and return to that from which it came. The resulting synthesis was defined as spirit. Thus it was regarded as a universal truth that every idea gave rise to its antithesis which to a degree negated but did not entirely destroy the thesis. Marx, in accepting Hegel's dialectical method, rejected his idealism and applied it instead to the

reality of history. Thus his system is materialistic in that it rejects the otherworldly element whether in the medieval or Platonic, the religious or philosophical sense. Marx, however, also rejects the classical materialism and takes reality, rather than mere materiality or atomism, as his basis. His reality makes room for mind, though he makes action rather than thought normative.

"The rapid advance of evolutionary biology and of quantum physics, together with the upsurge of revolutionary social energies since 1789, have done much to promote the more fluid Marxist version of materialism. Instead of hard unchanging atoms, this version regards all reality as consisting of physical processes in perpetual struggle and periodic advance. Nature is not a machine, but a kind of vast growing thing—wholly impersonal and unconscious, but dynamic, fluent and progressive. There is real progress, not merely continual reshuffling and eventual stagnation: hence, "historical materialism." And this process, best seen in the process of animal evolution and social history, comes about through conflict: Hence, "dialectical materialism."¹

Marx saw in the rise of the labor union movement, to represent the workers in their struggle against the capitalists, the setting for class conflict that would be one of the great dialectical movements of history. He predicted that the outcome of the struggle would be the eventual formation of a classless society—an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. This hope, and the method by which it would be fulfilled, were set forth in the Communist Manifesto, published in 1848 by Marx in collaboration with Friedrich Engels. The manifesto urged the proletariat to weld themselves into a disciplined class in order to seize the means of political power and overcome bourgeois supremacy. State

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1. Calhoun: What is Man? p. 47

capitalism could then be established through abolition of the private ownership of land and the right of inheritance, graduated income tax, a national bank with state capital, state ownership of the instruments of production, communication and transportation. Only workers would be citizens, equal distribution of population would be effected, and free education of children provided.

"As can be seen, Marx stressed four concepts: first, economic determinism—the doctrine that economic factors have been the determining element throughout all history—otherwise known as the economic or materialistic interpretation of history; second, the idea of the class struggle; third, the inevitability of the dictatorship of the proletariat; and fourth, internationalism as opposed to international rivalry."¹

Marx was instrumental in the formation of an international socialist movement, but it was never as significant as the various national movements. With the collapse of imperial Russia, the communist minority under the leadership of Lenin gained power. Lenin was a doctrinaire Marxist, but, faced with the necessities imposed by the practical problems of the revolution, he proved to be an able opportunist. Due to the difficulties of applying communism to the predominantly agricultural society of Russia, Lenin might have compromised, at least temporarily, with the peasants and bourgeoisie if they had proved cooperative. But, having effectively destroyed all the elements of internal resistance and the opposition of foreign powers, the communists established a dictatorship of the proletariat in order to institute state capitalism. Lenin had intended to govern by means of a national assembly, but the election showed the communists in a minority; so it

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1. Erik Achorn: European Civilization and Politics Since 1815, p. 343

was decided to govern through the people's councils or soviets, in which the communists had control. In order to guarantee control to the communist party, the workers were given a larger proportion of representation because the communists were most numerous among them. Only one party was permitted and it was regarded as trustee for the interests of the proletariat.

After Lenin's death Stalin gained control of the party and exiled Trotsky, his chief rival for the place left vacant by Lenin. Under the leadership of Stalin, the nation adopted the tremendous blueprint of national industrialization known as the Five Year Plan. By a tremendous drain on the national wealth and at great cost in human life and energy, the program was carried through. At the same time agriculture was collectivized in the form of huge, mechanized state farms, and the kulaks or independant peasants were eliminated. Though present-day Russia has not, and does not claim to have reached a classless society and a completely communistic set-up, yet the revolution has established itself and accomplished almost unbelievable results. It stands as the center and embodiment of the communist movement as outlined in the writings of Marx.

1. The Communist Conception of Man

Marx doctrine of man is largely determined by his idea of economic determinism.

"He is fundamentally a producing animal, who supplies his own needs (as no other animal does) with tools and productive operations of his own devising. All the rest of his life—social organization, language, morals, thought systems—grow out of

his economic activities. To these the whole of his life is instrumental, being a useful sort of bodily functioning, which can speed up, by swift seizure of crucial opportunities, the otherwise slower process of the dialectic in human society, where it operates through ruthless class struggle."¹

It is not alone that the needs of man affect his ideals, though it is true that the satisfaction of physical needs is of primary importance in human life. Because of this fact, Marx approached the problem of human nature through action rather than thought. In this he broke with the Young Hegelians of his day. They held that it was largely by thought that man apprehended the nature of the Absolute from which all is derived. Therefore by means of thought, of the mind, man discovered his own nature. It was the Hegelian position that human nature is not given at birth, but is discovered and developed. Marx accepted this view but insisted that it was through his actions rather than his thought that man discovered his true nature. He realized that in thought a man might readily deceive himself as to his true nature. Our thought pictures of ourselves are usually tinged by desired and do not represent us as we actually are.

Marx rebelled against the classical theories of economics that regarded products as establishing their own values by the operation of automatic economic laws. To Marx, the determining factor in economic products was the amount of human labor involved. He saw them as crystallizations of human labor. As a consequence, he denied to the entrepreneur the right to a share in their value or surplus value because he had not expended work in their creation.

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1. Calhoun: op. cit., p. 47

2. The Communist Idea of Community

Since man is primarily an economic being, the basic factors in community are economic. It is the exchangeability of economic products that unites men. Human society is united by the need for, and exchange of, goods and services. Classes arise within society when the means of production (land, capital, machines, and the like) come under the control of one group within society who use them to exploit those who have not the means of production themselves. When the owner class treats human labor as a commodity to be bought and sold without regard for the needs and rights of the worker, then capital and labor are at odds and the stage is set for class conflict. Communism aims at a classless society where all will be workers and none will benefit from unearned wealth. All will receive according to their need and contribute according to their ability.

Communism discounts racial, national, religious and cultural divisions of mankind and envisions a truly international, world wide community that will embrace all mankind. Russian communism has succeeded in bringing a remarkable degree of unity to the diversity of nations and races that comprise the Soviet Union. However, the national, religious and racial bonds of mankind seem to be stronger than Marx anticipated. Even in Russia, nationalism and religion are not dead. There was fear that communism would seek to destroy the family as a type of community inimical to a totalitarian state and a collectivist society. Apparently great freedom was at first allowed in marital affairs. In later years there is evident a movement to strengthen family life.

Since the proletariat is considered to be the only significant social class, there is a tendency to discount all social ties beyond its bounds. The communist owes loyalty only to the movement itself. Since the communist party is considered the trustee for the interests of the proletariat, the program of the party demands absolute loyalty. Moreover, because Russia is the only state embodying the communist principles and program, and controlled by the communist party, every part member must be loyal to Russian policy, whether it happens to be purely national in purpose, or for the good of the international party movement.

"Every Communist and fellow traveller from the time of Marx and Lenin to the present has a single and alien loyalty. This loyalty is not to God or to humanity, it is not to his country, but only to the proletarian revolution and to Soviet Russia which incarnates it. Therefore the Communist and Fellow traveller, however excellent his general character, is always loyal to the ever changing Party line. He is under no obligation to tell the truth unless it aids his cause. He can never be trusted in any trade union, or teachers' union or strike or other movement to be loyal to our cause if it differs from his own."¹

The communist ideal is of a classless community and it has the potentiality to become such. But its insistence on the loyalty of all adherents, to any particular community that embodies or aims to establish the ideal, causes disruption of community whenever communists have fellowship with non-communists even in associations for very restricted functions or enterprises. This is in line with the idea that force is the necessary and inevitable method for furthering the dialectical advance of history toward the classless society.

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1. Sherwood Eddy: "Russia in The World Crisis"; Christianity and Crisis, Vol. I, No. 13, July 28, 1941

The question is also in order as to whether the method will achieve the desired result. Is a classless society possible without the perfection of human nature? Will the process of history bring inevitably the perfection expected? Even in a classless society some members must manage the vast enterprise of production, and certain disciplinary functions of government will doubtless have to be retained. Over a period of time a group of administrators will arise who are to some degree alienated from the workers by functions, and may develop dissimilar interests. The communist program recognizes that there must be groups in society with various functions. But it still remains to be seen whether the administrator group will refrain from entrenching themselves as a class that will exploit their ability to manipulate the processes of government. Finally, it remains to be seen whether when the economic needs and demands are satisfied the dialectic process of conflict and revolution will cease.

3. The Communist Idea of the State

Marxism looks on the state as the social instrument by which the communist revolution will be accomplished. The party is to achieve political control of the state, by parliamentary means if that be possible, or by violence if the opportunity offers for more rapid advance in this way or if no other means are open. Having secured control of the state and established state capitalism, with the consequent destruction of all social classes other than the proletariat, the party may liquidate the state and cede much of its function to the workers. As the aim is the international union of socialist

republics there will be no need of the state to control foreign relations. Instead of the state as a system whereby a group of men control their fellow men, communism aims to establish a group to administer things for the benefit of all men.

Following the idea of Marx, Lenin instituted a dictatorship of the proletariat as the type of state best suited to institute the classless society. In effect the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia has become the dictatorship of an individual who controls the party and the government that are to manage the interests of the workers. In regard to the principles of the Soviet government and constitution, Achorn writes:

"The Soviet system is to a unique degree the outgrowth of an ideal; and since this ideal has made the constitution a document peculiar unto itself, certain underlying, unwritten principles must constantly be kept in mind: 1. "Citizen" is synonymous with productive worker. 2. The dictatorship of the proletariat in practise means the dictatorship of the Bolshevik party. 3. The Bolsheviks regard the constitution, not as an act of self limitation, but as no more than an explanation of the mechanism through which the party governs, "subject to change without notice," therefore, whenever and to whatever extent the party shall see fit. These principles account for the fact that theory and practise are not infrequently in exact antithesis according to western standards, and that the Soviet constitution is a caricature of most democratic constitutions."¹

4. Religion and Ethics

It has been pointed out by students of Marx that his earlier works show less of an anti-religious attitude than his later writings. Since the essential ideas of his philosophy seem to have been fixed in

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1. Achorn: op. cit., p. 516

his mind at a rather early age, perhaps he like many later Marxists felt that communism and Christianity were not incompatible. Considering the reception that Marx' philosophy received, it is not hard to realize his attitude toward organized religion as well as toward other institutions of nineteenth century society. Rugged individualism in business and largely unregulated exploitation in industry, together with economic imperialism in government policies, were characteristic of the bourgeois-capitalist society that he knew. The influential and established churches of the time were largely controlled by governments or by bourgeois elements. Some churches were wealthy property owners that practised the same types of exploitation as other landlords. The social implications of the Gospel were not emphasized even by churches that dealt directly with the common people. Consciously or unwittingly, the church was cloaking much gross materialism on the part of laymen and the institution itself under the garb of ethical idealism. To a scholar so keen and far seeing, the blindness and necessary commitments of the churches must have seemed brazen hypocrisy. Moreover, the tenor of his philosophical ideas was not conducive to religious ideas.

Likewise in Russia, Communism faced a corrupt and unenlightened church, associated with and abetting the oppressive powers of the system from which it derived privileges. If the Russian church had been obviously sympathetic with the plight of the people, the measures of the revolutionists might not have been so harsh. However, the economic interpretation of history, the materialistic bent of its philosophy, and the totalitarian nature of its program excluded to a

degree the possibility of a religious view of man. Yet there is an element in the communist philosophy and in the type of loyalty it demands which approaches religious ideology and resembles religious devotion.

"Marx himself, unconscious of wishful thinking, was able to find a system that contained all his desires and was cooperating with him. He imagined that he had discovered by strictly scientific processes the laws which made the ultimate victory of the proletariat practically demonstrable. There was in his system, however, a residue of quasi-religious faith that he did not recognize. His prophetic vision was a secularized version of the oft repeated apocalyptic vision of a redeemed society for the disinherited classes. Marx had thus read his own revolutionary purpose into the structure of the universe. He assumes as a religious faith, without the necessity of proof, that the world is evolving of its own necessary motion, by a dialectic procedure "from the lower to the Higher," to install a reign of justice with iron necessity. This is not science but religion."¹

Nicholas Berdiaev, in The Meaning of History, represents Marx as having rejected belief in a personal Supreme Being and in a Messianic person or nation, and transferring his faith to a hypothetical natural process and his Messianic hope to the proletarian class.

Marx, however, did not idealize the proletariat, but believed that their circumstances would drive them to act as the agents of the dialectic in history. Following Hegel's concept of the dialectical movement, while substituting action for thought, and economic for ideal factors, he saw in the class struggle a negation of human society that was the basis for a new social synthesis. Marxians seem to hold that since economic factors are the basis of both human nature and community, then economic exploitation and conflict are a negation

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1. Eddy: loc. cit.

of both humanity and community. The man who exploits his fellows is to that extent interfering with the development of their human nature. Also, to the extent that the exploiter is unaware of his exploitation, or is committed consciously to it, he has forfeited human nature and human rights. The violence of the proletariat and the destruction of other classes are accepted as inevitable, in the confidence that the dialectic in history will make that revolutionary energy effective in the establishment of a new humanity and a classless society, where the dialectical movement will rest and there will be no longer any reason for or drive toward exploitation and violence.

Probably the followers of Marx have been more unrealistic and dogmatic than Marx himself in interpreting his ideas. Marx confined himself mainly to the economic development of his ideas and did not develop them metaphysically. Those of his followers who did undertake the task were too simple-minded in their theories. There is not enough consideration given to the fact that man can remain essentially human and temperate in attitude even toward exploiters. Large areas remain where fellowship is possible even between those who are exploited economically and their exploiters. Communism discounts the ties of race, nation, religion, and culture and regards the class cleavage as so serious that it delimits rather than divides humanity. The inference seems to be that humanity is temporarily destroyed, both classes having been to a degree de-humanized. Humanity is to be re-established only in the new classless society. Since only the proletariat is destined to survive, the bourgeois has lost claim to any consideration as a class.

"There is no morality except class morality, for the benefit of one's allies in the struggle. The enemy has no rights. But some day there will be no class enemies. In the classless society evolution will move to a new plane."¹

It must not be concluded that the theories of Marx are untrue or have been proved impracticable. Marx rendered a real service in his criticism of pure idealism and of the classical economics. Moreover, he made a valuable contribution in emphasizing the importance of economic factors in human life and history. In destroying what he called the fetishism of economic theorists who held that products establish their own relations to one another, he laid the foundations of a more realistic and humane economic system.

"The experience of the Soviet Union enables us to test Marxian theory by the Russian experiment. In general that experience seems to show that Marxism is essentially correct in its economic theory. It appears, however, to be wrong in its theory of the state, its estimate of human nature and its belief in the dialectic process as an iron law of necessity in the universe."²

"Sooner or later, the question will become more insistent whether this theory, though in many respects very modern, is not basically a revival of primitive ideology in too uncritical a form."³

It can not be denied that within the realm of communism itself, and in accord with its theory of human nature, the Soviet experiment has established a measure of justice and equality that is remarkable.

"At several points I believe that Soviet Russia, with all its titanic and barbaric evils, if it is true to its own ideals, will yet challenge the world and will make history: Here is a country that has dared to socialize or share all means of pro-

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1. Calhoun: What is Man? p. 47
2. Eddy: loc. cit.
3. Calhoun: loc. cit.

duction, all land and all wealth, and yet has succeeded to the extent that unemployment has for years been eliminated, and, they believe, forever. Here is a nation that seeks to give approximately equal justice to all, in order to end permanently poverty, slums and glaring injustice. Here is a land that is seeking to build a classless society where there shall be neither rich nor poor, Jew nor Gentile, white nor black, and where already there is less race and color prejudice than in any nation in the world."¹

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1. Eddy: loc. cit.

PART TWO

SOCIAL JUSTICE

IN

ISRAEL'S LAW AND PROPHETS

CHAPTER IV

Provisions for Social Justice in the Mosaic Law

CHAPTER IV

PROVISIONS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE MOSAIC LAW

Among the sacred writings of the Jews that comprise our Old Testament, the Torah, or Law, contains the fundamental principles and social regulations of the Jewish theocracy. Included are the civil, ecclesiastical, sanitary and ritualistic codes. Since these books of the Torah were the most highly esteemed among the records of the Jewish people, it is to be expected that any ethical teacher among the Jews would base his doctrine on them. This was the practise of the rabbis in Jesus' day. He shared their respect for the Law, professed to accept its principles and claimed that His message and the precepts that He laid down were in a line of historical and doctrinal continuity with the writings of the Old Testament.

"Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth shall pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:17-19.)

Various theories exist regarding the date and authorship of the books of the Torah. It is still an unsettled question among scholars. Conservative scholars long have insisted that the books were composed in substantially their present form by Moses himself, or by his contemporaries. If this view be correct, then the law codes of the Jewish state were essentially complete at the entrance of the

tribes into Canaan, at the beginning of their history as a nation. Another widely accepted view is that these books were composed over a considerable period of time, probably by members of the temple priesthood. They are thus thought to include material from records and laws of the kingdom period, revised and edited, and added to, by members of the priesthood during and after the exile in Babylonia. It is assumed, from the varying viewpoints that different sections seem to indicate, that at least two traditions and perhaps more are represented. If this theory be correct, the laws of the Pentateuch represent not only the inspired writings of Moses the Lawgiver or the traditions derived from him, but also the results of Israel's national experience. Not only are there insights based on the nation's experience and relations to the laws of Egypt, but there may be here what was considered best in Babylonian codes. The problem here is not to consider the sources of the records, but to point out that the books existed in their present form in the time of Jesus and the social provisions found in them would form the background for His own teachings on social justice. Also, because these laws were known and revered by the Jews, Jesus would of necessity teach in the light of them in order to be understood by His contemporaries.

1. The National Covenant with God

God is regarded in the Torah as a personal being whose relationship with His people can be expressed most adequately in terms of an ethical covenant. The relationship between Jehovah and Israel is not merely natural, as if He were the supernatural father of the

nation. Neither is it a purely nationalistic relationship, as if God were a monarch or warlord. Moreover, the power and influence of Jehovah in the world is not conditioned on the existence of the Hebrew nation. He is the eternal God who created and world and governed it from the beginning. He chose Israel from among the nations, having called Abraham from his country and promised to make of his seed a nation as a reward of his faith. Thus He was revealed as a God who called men according to His purpose, who delighted in faith and rewarded it. He was a God who kept His word to men. Therefore, having covenanted with Israel, He was a God who would be loyal to His promises to the nation. He expected reciprocal loyalty and righteousness on the part of the people of the covenant. National prosperity could be considered as God's reward for the nation's faithfulness in adherence to the terms of the covenant. The cause of national adversity could be found in the nation's desertion of the covenant (Deuteronomy 28; Leviticus 26).

The national covenant was regarded as binding not only on the group as a whole, but also upon every individual. As it laid certain obligations on all individuals, by the same token it bestowed certain rights and a measure of dignity: "I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, . . . and showing lovingkindness unto thousands of them that love and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20:5,6).

"The essential thing in this religion is not a mysterious act performed by one man or a small class of men on behalf of the whole community; it is an intelligible, reasonable service performed by every member of the community on his own behalf and on behalf of the whole community. It is an affirmation of a

covenant, an understanding that the whole community makes with God, an agreement to obey God's law. . . . How does this confer dignity on the common man? Every man, be he king or peasant is a covenanter with God. The observance of God's law is an act of free choice which he must make. Thus man is made in the image of God. God is a Creator. And man is a creator: creator of his own life, co-creator of the common life. He has the dignity of a free spirit, freely choosing his destiny; and, therefore, the responsibility of a moral being, who must choose aright in order to safeguard the rightness of the common life. Dignity and responsibility are inseparable; neither can exist apart from the other. If we expect responsibility we must first accord him the conditions of dignity."¹

The covenant idea, then, is an important reason for the many provisions in the law to guard individual rights. Heavy penalties are provided for harming another's person. Deliberate murder is a mortal offense (Exodus 21:12). Not only life but also freedom is thus protected. The penalty is death for stealing and selling into slavery a fellow Israelite (Exodus 21:16, Deuteronomy 24:7). A man who is injured has a right to compensation for loss of time and expenses from the party that is responsible (Exodus 21:18f.). If a man's animal hurts a person, the animal is to be stoned and the owner must pay damages. If the animal was known to be vicious and not kept in, the owner may be fined or even be made to forfeit his life, according to the seriousness of the damage. Even the person of slaves was protected. If a man caused his slave to suffer permanent impairment or loss of an organ or member, the slave was to be set free. If the injury was such as to be curable, the loss of the slave's service and the cost of healing were considered as punishment for the owner. But, if a man killed a slave in a fit of anger, the man was to be punished

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1. Gregory Vlastos: Christian Faith and Democracy, pp. 20f.

(Exodus 21:20ff.). Similar provisions were made for protection and restitution of property.

Not only a person's life, but also his independence was protected by the Jewish law. An insolvent debtor, or a man who could not make fivefold restitution for a theft he had committed might be sold to satisfy his creditor. But the servitude of an Israelite might not be prolonged beyond seven years. At the end of the period he might voluntarily attach himself to his master for life, if it was mutually agreeable. In setting a servant free, the master was commanded not to send him away empty handed, but to give him provisions to help him make a new start and maintain his independence.

Every man was guaranteed justice in the courts according to the Mosaic law. The strongest emphasis was put upon the right of the poor, but no judge was permitted to be partial to a man on account of his poverty (Leviticus 19:15). The rule of justice was to be strict retribution in cases of personal injury (Deuteronomy 19:21) and in all matters "righteous judgment" without respect of persons was enjoined (Deuteronomy 18:18ff.). Likewise, strong measures were provided to ensure reliability in witnesses. Rumor was not acceptable as a basis for conviction. At least two witnesses were required to convict a man of mortal offense and the witness had to be ready to take the lead in carrying out the prescribed penalty. A malicious, false witness is to receive the same penalty as carried by the crime he sought to accuse his fellow man of having committed. In all matters an accused person has the right of trial by the elders and judges of his own community. If the case was too difficult to be settled thus, it

was to be appealed to the priests of the tabernacle. Repeated warnings appear in the law against judges taking bribes, and they are urged to guard the rights of the helpless (cf. Deuteronomy 17:19).

Provisions were made in the Mosaic law to provide economic opportunity and justice for everyone. The land was to be divided as nearly as possible in equitable portions to be held by the families of Israel. In order that none might be unduly enriched or disinherited, women were allowed to inherit provided the inheritance was kept in the tribe to which it belonged (Numbers 36). This provision applied where there were no male heirs. In a case where the man who was married died without any heir, the law or redemption permitted one of his kinsmen to become the husband of his widow and the first born son was considered as the legal son and heir of the deceased. Every fifty years, at the jubilee, all land that had changed hands for any reason was restorable to the family to whom it had originally been allotted. Sales of real estate were to be made in accordance with this provision and the price fixed by the number of years remaining until the jubilee (Leviticus 25).

Ordinances were established to aid the poor and the unfortunate. A working man who depended on wages for his livelihood was to be paid promptly by his employer--on the day the money was earned (Leviticus 19:13ff.). No interest was to be charged a poor man for a loan and any pledge or security that was taken had to be restored for the owner to use whenever he had need of it (Deuteronomy 24:10). If a man fell into servitude because of debt or misfortune, he was entitled to every consideration. He was to be treated by his master as

a brother and as a servant of God, instead of as a common slave. Also, his servitude was limited to a period of seven years. For sojourners and others without possessions, the gleanings of the fields and that part of the fruit of the vineyards and orchards which was dropped or passed over were left as their right. The Book of Ruth indicates that it was regarded as a meritorious act purposely to leave a generous amount. Fields and orchards that were left fallow every seventh year, while the value of this from an agricultural standpoint is questioned, at least served a purpose in that whatever grew there of itself was the portion of the poor. Probably, too, the leaving of certain portions which were gathered by the poor themselves instead of being distributed directly, served to encourage self reliance and avoided putting the beneficiaries under direct obligation to the benefactor. Rather the law made them beneficiaries of God. The aim of these provisions is stated to be not merely the relief of poverty, but its abolition. The attitude was the universal obedience to the law of God would eliminate need.

"Howbeit there shall be no poor with thee . . . if only thou hearken unto the voice of Jehovah thy God, to observe to do all this commandment which I command thee this day." (Deuteronomy 15:4,5)

But this idealism is not permitted to stand as a blinder to the need that does and will exist, nor is it allowed to be an excuse by which any may avoid aiding the unfortunate, for there appears immediately after this statement the following:

"If there be with thee a poor man, one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother . . . For the poor will never cease out of the land;

therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt surely open thy hand to thy brother, to thy needy and to thy poor in thy land." (Deuteronomy 15:7 ff.)

Not only the poor among the Israelites but also the strangers living among them are guaranteed justice. They have the same right to the fruit of the fields and to justice in the courts.

"For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the sojourner that sojourneth with you, a statute forever throughout your generations: as ye are, so shall the sojourner be before Jehovah. One law and one ordinance shall be for you and for the sojourner that sojourneth with you." (Numbers 15:15 f.)

It is not to be inferred that in all respects there was no difference made between the Israelite and the stranger, or that they were to have equal rights in every respect. A foreigner could be held in perpetual servitude and there was no seven-year limit on a debt owed by an alien to an Israelite. However, with certain restrictions, a non-Israelite might share the benefits of the covenant. Descendants of the Ammonites and Moabites who had opposed the march of Israel toward Canaan might not be admitted to the Hebrew community until the tenth generation (Deuteronomy 23:3). An Edomite, being a member of a brother nation, or an Egyptian, on the ground that Israel had sojourned there, could be admitted after three generations. But the Canaanites were not to be accepted, but rather driven away, because they were regarded as hopelessly corrupt and their religious ideas and practises, which were abhorrent to Jehovah, were a constant temptation to the Jews. In case of war with foreign nations, it was provided that peace should first be offered and only if the terms were refused was the war to be prosecuted. Meager as these concessions may seem, they at least indicate that Israel was not exclusively nationalistic, and realized

that as God was the God of all nations other than Jews had rights in His sight. Moreover, Israel is encouraged to remember that they were once sojourners and that in such a condition Jehovah had mercy on them: "A sojourner shalt thou not oppress: for ye know the heart of a sojourner, seeing ye were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 23:9).

2. The Influence of a Pastoral Background on Jewish Law

An important factor in the development of Jewish social ideals as represented in the Mosaic law was their background in a pastoral environment. To the mind of the ancient Hebrew, urban-agricultural civilization was associated with social inequality and stratification, oppression of the poor, corruption of morals, false practices and ideas in religion, loss of freedom, and infidelity to God's law for men. The pastoral type of life was associated with true religion, high morality, freedom from oppression, and social equality. The foundations of Jewish religion, morality and law were laid in a pastoral environment, and the basic tenets were adopted with reference to the needs of a pastoral situation. The "ethic of Mosaism" was "based on the very simple hard, communal life of the nomad, free from the vices of a more complex civilization of commerce and agriculture."¹

The traditions of the Pentateuch regarding the beginnings of the Hebrew people and their development into a nation emphasize the

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1. Oesterly and Robinson: The Religion of the Semites, Part II, ch. 5, sec. 6

importance of pastoral ideals. Abraham and his family are represented as having been called by God to leave the supposedly agricultural and urban culture of Chaldea to take up the life of nomads in the land of Canaan. His life as a shepherd, dependent on the providence and protection of God, is put in sharp contrast to that of the more settled Canaanites and Egyptians. His descendants continued the nomadic form of life. Disaster came to them as a result of their connection with the oppressive civilization of Egypt. It continued to be considered the most unhappy episode of their early history. Moses, who was used by God to deliver them from Egypt, spent forty years as a shepherd in the wilderness of Sinai and was so employed when God called him to his work. Before Pharaoh, Moses represents the God of the Hebrews as a God who is to be worshipped in the wilderness (Exodus 3:18). It is in the wilderness that Israel enters into the covenant with God who makes His presence known on the bleak crags of Sinai. Not only the moral law, but also the ritual practices of the Jews were centered on practices and symbols common to shepherd life. The nomadic ideal continued throughout the history of the Hebrew kingdoms to be influential and normative in morality and religion, at least for those who sought to be loyal and to keep the nation loyal to the covenant with Jehovah. The nomadic ideal and the worship of Jehovah that went with it seem to have remained stronger among the people who settled in the rough hills of Judea than among the northern tribes. There the more fertile land was conducive to agriculture, and the cults that went with that form of life seem to have been more influential. But the independent spirit of the nomad kept the tribes from forming a united kingdom

until they were pressed by enemies and felt that the leadership of Samuel's sons as judges was inadequate because they perverted justice and took bribes. But Saul the first king was afflicted with alien political and religious ideas. The freer spirits were not content with this oppressive leadership and rallied to David, whom Samuel had anointed as successor to the house of Saul, which had alienated by autocratic manners those who were loyal to Jehovah. David was a man of pastoral background and by occupation a shepherd. He was supported by the priests who were loyal to Jehovah, and by those who were the victims of civilization—"everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him." The incident involving Nabal the Carmelite indicates that David employed himself in protecting the semi-nomadic herders of the Judean wilderness. Though Nabal did not appreciate his services, his men testified to their value. This may be typical of the divided attitude toward a monarchy on the part of the Jews who retained most of the nomadic ideals and methods of life. It may be that by his proving what service the monarchy might render even to these independent nomads, David finally won their support and was able to establish himself as king in Judah and later win the support of the more settled tribes to the north. The nomads and priests of Judea seem to have been then and later the most conservative elements in preserving the worship of Jehovah as established in the desert. Out of this environment and attitude also rose the prophets who sought to preserve the ideals of the nomadic life in the settled agricultural and commercial surroundings.

McCown has summed up the social practices and ideals of the

nomadic Semites, to whom the tribes of Israel belonged, as follows:

"The Semites have been variously described because there are so many varieties of them. As to the real grass-land breed, however, there is closer agreement. It has been said, to be sure, that the nomad is naturally democratic, but that the Semite was aristocratic. Both are true. He was democratic in the simplicity of his life, in the relative uniformity of social standards and achievements for all members of each group, and in the readiness of each to sacrifice himself for certain accepted group mores. In spite of the dominating social solidarity he was an individualist in so far as his mode of life demanded action in limited groups where each individual counted large, and where each was often required to act for himself. He was an aristocrat because the family was the basic unit of society, and family honor and glory necessarily were the highest goods of life. In other words, nomadic democracy is not a matter of political institutions. It means, rather, simplicity in the accepted standard of living and in the organization of society. It stands in marked contrast to the luxury and complexity that arise in an agricultural-commercial society."¹

It was the purpose of the Mosaic law to adapt social principles, derived from the nomadic mode of life, to the more settled type of agricultural life adopted in Canaan. Also, the sense of human dignity derived from the fact that every member of the community was a covenanter with God added another incentive to the effort to embody in the law of the land provisions to protect the person and property of all men, and to guarantee a measure of freedom. Economic and social justice to everyone was rightly regarded as an indispensable method in carrying out the covenant with God and avoiding autocratic power by rulers which would mean subordination and oppressive servitude to the majority of the people.

The type of social organization envisioned in the books of the Pentateuch has been described as an ecclesiastical utopia. It is

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1. Chester Carlton McCown: The Genesis of the Social Gospel, p. 126

true that the priests are made the trustees and administrators of the covenant and the regulations derived from it. But checks are put upon their power. They are to be supported by the people that they serve. The method of support, the tithe, is so arranged as to bear with approximately equal weight on all men. The priests are not to own land of their own. They are given privileges necessary for the carrying out of their duties, but are also restricted in various ways to guarantee their fitness of the work that is given them. Their work did not cover all phases of life. They had authority in religious matters with certain functions in relation to health. Also they were the final interpreters of the law which related to all phases of life. But they were not given power to modify it. Education for citizenship and even in religious knowledge seems to have been largely in the hands of the family, which was the basic and most important unit of society. Probably the head of the family had authority in most of the affairs of life. So far as possible public affairs were left to the elders of the immediate communities. Even in national affairs there were from the time of Joshua leaders who had charge of military affairs and were not of the priestly tribe.

The only reference to a king in the books of the Torah is at Deuteronomy 17:14ff. He is to be an Israelite and is to be chosen by God. The inference is that the people, not the priests, are to determine whom God has chosen. However, he is to govern and give judgment according to the law which was in the hands of the priests. He is strictly forbidden to enrich himself at the expense of the people or by foreign alliances.

CHAPTER V

The Demand for Justice in the Messages of the Prophets

CHAPTER V

THE DEMAND FOR JUSTICE IN THE MESSAGES OF THE PROPHETS

1. Development of the Hebrew Social Order

To what extent the Hebrew legal system was developed at the time the Hebrews entered Canaan, and how far they attempted to put its regulations into effect, is not clearly discernible. But numerous factors made partial failure inevitable. The land was not entirely subjugated for generations, so portions of it could not be allotted and occupied by the tribes. Also, as the story of Achen indicates, though he failed, some individuals gained undue amounts of the spoil from the Canaanite cities. This gave them an advantage over their fellows. But, even in the ordinary course of events, opportunities and misfortunes would cause certain inequalities of possession. The presence of subjugated but undestroyed Canaanites, as well as some who were not even conquered, would serve to introduce the Israelites to their social and religious practices. It would be natural for the conquerors to adopt such of these practices as were considered necessary to success in the new mode of life they had taken up. Since some of the magic and ritual practices of the Canaanite fertility cults were opposed to the Mosaic moral code and appealed to the basest human instincts, they would be a snare to the newcomers and religious confusion was bound to result. Moreover, those communities that were allowed to survive as servants would constitute the beginnings of a

slave class permanently deprived of equal rights. That they were allowed to survive at all is represented as contrary to the divine will (Exodus 23:28). Their presence in the land, and the necessity for keeping them from becoming over-powerful or influential, would make inevitable a double standard of justice. The principle stated in the law that there was to be only one law for both the Jewish and the foreign person would be impractical. A permanently subordinate element in the population would furnish a precedent for similar treatment of unfortunate Jewish brethren. While some servitude had always existed, the more settled mode of life would make changes of status more difficult. The idea of relaxing debts and redistributing property at stated intervals would be much more complicated when lands and houses instead of flocks and herds were involved. Greater inequality would make for more resistance to the plan. As a consequence of the agricultural economy many persons over a period of time sank into a state of peonage or slavery, through misfortune or injustice. On the other hand more fortunate individuals increased in wealth, acquired large holdings of land, and gained influence and power over their neighbors. Their wealth gave them a sense of independence and lessened their concern for the welfare of the whole group to which they belonged. Their larger stake in material possessions enlarged their field of personal values and increased their desire for survival. The old communal bonds began to disintegrate and a stratified social order was developing. "The majority of the Hebrews seem to have accepted the new ways without question, but there were those with sufficient insight and independence to reject much of the new."¹

That the Hebrews to a considerable extent seemed to follow nomadic ways even after their settlement in Canaan is indicated by the fact that "every man did that which was right in his own eyes," and the establishment of a monarchy was long resisted and delayed. Then, after the kingdom was strengthened by Solomon, it continued to become more oppressive. Solomon entered into international commercial ventures and had to employ forced labor on his enterprises. Through intercourse with other nations, strange modes of worship, unethical forms of magic cults and licentious idolatry were introduced. Because of Israel's situation on the main highway of the world these commercial opportunities and strange customs offered another conflicting set of ideals.

"It is not merely a dual, but a triangular conflict in which the Israelites were involved. Palestine, especially Judea, is a frontier between three types of civilization, nomadic, agricultural, and commercial. The Hebrews had no sooner adapted themselves to agricultural conditions in Canaan than they were thrown into a new conflict with the active commercial life of the coast and the transcontinental trade routes."²

The Hebrews attempted to meet this situation by strengthening the central government of their king at the expense of tribal and individual liberties, and by international compromise that affected even religion. The resulting materialism, selfishness and idolatry drew the fierce denunciation of the prophets. The contrast between this situation and the old customs of simple living and strict moral standards that were interested in the welfare of all members of the group gave the

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1. McCown: The Genesis of the Social Gospel, p. 128
2. Ibid., pp. 129 ff.

prophets that perspective from which to criticise contemporary conditions. The result was inspired insights into the religious duty of men and the meaning of social righteousness that are valid even today.

2. The Message and Method of the Prophets

Throughout the history of the Hebrew nation there existed a group or guild of men who were known as prophets. They seem to have been seers or soothsayers of dervish-like character who, under the influence of the spirit, uttered ecstatic prophecies. Samuel and Elisha are mentioned in connection with them, but seem not to have been members of their organizations or communities. The Scriptures indicate that they were frequently hired by national leaders or by individuals to give advice on various sorts of problems and to predict the outcome of projected enterprises. Too commonly, these prophets predicted as they thought those who paid them wished rather than according to any insight they may have had as to the truth of matters. That such a course was expected of them may be inferred from the words of Amaziah, priest of Beth-el, to Amos: "O thou seer, go, flee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread and prophesy there: but prophesy not any more at Beth-el; for it is the king's sanctuary and it is a royal house" (Amos 7:12f.). It appears that any prophet attached to that shrine was supported by royal funds and expected to back royal policies. Amos disclaims any connection with professional prophets and acknowledges only God as his authority, the

One who determines his message. As to his support, he derived it from his labors as a herdsman and farmer. What was true of Amos seems to have been characteristic of the prophets whose words are recorded in the Scriptures. They were not professional soothsayers, but laymen from various walks of life, who were given unusual insight into the will of God for His chosen nation and had an acute sense of the extent to which Israel had proved unfaithful to the covenant.

Every prophet directed his message toward the particular problems and evils of his own day. Yet all accepted similar ideals, and in a sense there is a message common to all of them. One feature was the demand for national repentance and overthrow of all false religious cults in favor of a return to Jehovah that would involve more than a nominal loyalty. The second typical feature was a passion for social justice which was regarded as the only partial application of the principles of the covenant. Like Amos, the prophets all leaned toward the ideal of the simple life as being more nearly in accord with the will of God than the corrupt commercial type of existence.

"They saw its luxury and consequent effeminacy and debauchery as unmixed evils to be scorned, despised and feared. The tendency to centralization and the exercise of autocratic royal authority, the rise of a class of rich nobility with the consequent depression and oppression of the ordinary peasant they saw as the crying evils of their times. The individualism which enriched the few at the expense of the many they could not brook.

"On the positive side what the prophets adopted from the nomadic ideal may be briefly stated . . . In the most concise terms it was simplicity of life and equal rights for all. They were perfectly aware that, when some live in luxury, others must live in want; that when certain groups rise too high in their standard of living, others must fall too low. Therefore, they demanded economic justice, economic democracy, that is, democracy in the distribution of the good things with which God has blessed the earth."¹

In relation to the Hebrew state, the prophets are found throughout the period of the monarchy denouncing the arbitrary use of power by the monarchs of both kingdoms. They upheld the right of the commoner to the protection and possession of his life and property as it was guaranteed to him in the law. Elijah's denunciation of Ahab for his injustice to Naboth when the latter refused to sell his vineyard is taken as a striking but typical instance of the prophetic attitude.

"One will search in vain the literature of the ancient world to find anything like this. Elijah is not a priest. He has no official position of any sort. The terrible judgment he has just delivered is sedition and lese majesty. In any other Oriental court the king's guards would have struck him down without even the formality of a trial. But here, the chronicle has it the king of Israel . . . 'lay in sackcloth and went softly.' This story, I repeat, is without parallel in the literature of any other people before the rise of Christianity."²

In the reign of David, the prophet Nathan had condemned the king for his injustice to Uriah the Hittite, and David likewise had been grief stricken, accepting the prophet's denunciation as the voice of God.

The great conflict led by the prophets against Baal worship took place in the ninth century. Elijah is the chief figure in that as well. Out of it emerged at least an outward recognition of Jehovah, but the other cults still flourished and the social life of the nation was little changed. The Baalim seem to have been of Phoenician origin and represented the god of commerce as the high places were connected with the fertility cults.

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1. McCown: op. cit., p. 147
2. Vlastos: Christian Faith and Democracy, pp. 17f.

Amos may be taken as typical of the mid-eighth century prophets. His message may be summed up in terms of justice. He indicts Israel's neighbors for their merciless violence and injustice in dealings with one another, showing no regard for human rights but slaying or selling into slavery whole nations. Then he draws a parallel in the practise of the Israelites that they were not so ready to recognize. They likewise slew the weak and enslaved the unfortunate by their corrupt practices: "they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes" (Amos 2:6). They indulge in false religious practices which they use as an excuse for their injustice: "they lay themselves down beside every altar on clothes taken in pledge" (2:8). Amos predicts national calamity as the result of such sins. But repentance, manifest in social justice, can yet save a remnant of Israel:

"Seek good and not evil, that ye may live; and so Jehovah the God of Hosts will be with you, as ye say. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: it may be that Jehovah, the God of Hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph." (5:14f.)

Religious feasts and offerings are not acceptable as substitutes for justice. If Israel will not hear the word of God it shall be taken away from them.

Hosea, the contemporary of Amos, likewise lays emphasis on the people's disloyalty and regards that as the source of all their troubles. He regards their infidelity as an injustice to God who has chosen and redeemed and blessed Israel. Moreover, he insists, Jehovah rather than the Baalim of Canaan has given them fruitful vineyards, abundant harvests and growing flocks (Hosea 2:8ff.). But Hosea does

not fail to connect a right relation to God with justice toward one's fellow men. No clear distinction is made between social and religious duties. They seem to be regarded as one (Hosea 10:4,12; 12:6).

Micah, a prophet in Judah in the days of Hosea and Amos, speaks repeatedly and bitterly of the injustice and oppression practiced by the leaders of the nation. Where Hosea emphasizes apostasy from the worship of Jehovah as the source of social evil, Micah, who lived in Judah where the temple worship was prominent in spite of many other cults, sees in social sins the evidence of apostasy from the true worship of Jehovah:

"The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet they lean upon Jehovah, and say, Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? no evil shall come upon us" (Micah 3:11).

Micah's summary of the true social and religious life is in words very similar to those of Hosea:

"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8).

Isaiah's testimony, which comes from the same period as Micah's, gives a similar picture of corruption and oppression in Judah (Isaiah 3:13ff.). Like Amos, he denounces empty ritualism and calls for right living:

"What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or or lambs, or of he-goats. . . . Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." (Isaiah 1:11,16-17)

"The problem of the eighth century prophets had been the temptations

of prosperity. That of the seventh century was to maintain faith under adversity."¹

In the last years of the kingdom of Judah, Jeremiah, like his predecessors, emphasized the necessity of justice to please God. His words to the king of Judah on one occasion were:

"Thus saith Jehovah: Execute ye justice and righteousness, and deliver him that is robbed out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the sojourner, the fatherless, nor the widow; neither shed innocent blood in this place" (22:3).

During Jeremiah's time, Judah rashly and unsuccessfully tried to defeat Egypt at Megiddo. From that time till the destruction of Jerusalem the nation was under Egyptian or Babylonian domination, and repeatedly conspired against their masters. But the prophet saw the futility of their procedure. They had broken Jehovah's covenant and were suffering the consequences. Now they were breaking the covenants forced on them by foreigners in the belief that Jehovah would help them. The prophet saw in their actions only another sin against Jehovah, the covenant-keeping God who had been loyal to Israel when they were disobedient to Him.

"Jeremiah counselled submission to Babylon, submission to the inevitable punishment at the hands of Jehovah. After that, a purified remnant, purged by the sufferings of the nation, should eventually take the place that Jehovah had promised them and carry on the racial name and task. Jeremiah does not indicate the practical means by which it was to be accomplished. But he sets forth the inner nature of morality in terms that admit of no ambiguity. The law which was to govern the restored nation was not to be a code put together by learned priests and zealous prophets, but God himself would write it on men's hearts. No man should teach another, but all equally should know Jehovah and

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1. McCown: op. cit., p. 178

his will. He who achieved the conception of this "new covenant" had reached the highest possible comprehension of religion and morality. He pictures an ideal of democracy which we shall never reach, but toward which we shall ever be striving. It is the legitimate development of the fundamental prophetic idea. It finds its fullest embodiment, as the writer of the Hebrews is quick to see, in Jesus."¹

The social teaching of the great pre-exilic prophets may be summed up as follows:

1. There is a natural order in the creation, based on the just character and immutable nature of God and demanding social justice in human society.

2. Social justice can not be replaced by ritualistic religion and magic as means of achieving harmony with the natural order of the universe and of fulfilling the commands of God.

3. This divine order can not be transgressed by a nation with impunity, but only at the cost of national calamity.

4. God will destroy sinful nations and by His power inaugurate an era of peace and prosperity, based on an order of righteousness and justice.

Jesus claimed that His teaching was in line of succession with, and in conformity to the message and principles of the Old Testament prophets. It may be expected, then, that He would accept the prophetic demand for social justice and loyalty to God as fundamental principles of His doctrine.

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1. McCown: op. cit., p. 179

3. The Social Message of the Post-Exilic Prophets

The prophet Ezekiel was a contemporary of Jeremiah, though probably he was considerably younger. He was a member of the priesthood and had been taken to Babylonia in the captivity of Jehoiachin thirteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem. His prophecies, delivered to the Hebrews in exile, portray Israel as suffering the just punishment for her sins against the covenant with Jehovah. The unfaithfulness of the nation is the chief sin in his sight, and includes the practice of idolatry and subservient collaboration with their neighbors and in particular with Assyria and Babylon. Moreover, he indicts the shepherds of Israel, the leaders, who have fed themselves instead of the sheep, who have fostered violence and condoned iniquity. He accuses them of perpetrating social injustice as well as indulging in false religious practices.

"Behold, the princes of Israel . . . have been in thee to shed blood. In thee have they set light by father and mother; in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the sojourner; in thee have they wronged the fatherless and the widow . . . Slandrous men have been in thee to shed blood; . . . they have taken bribes to shed blood; thou hast taken interest and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbors by oppression, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord Jehovah." (Ezekiel 22:6 ff.)

Jehovah announces that the people of Israel shall henceforth be punished each according to his own sins. Yet for the sake of His own honor Jehovah will restore and reunite the kingdoms of Israel. The loyal priests are to be reestablished on a new temple to be built on a magnificent scale in a new city. The social and ceremonial law will then be obeyed and the land shall be allotted to the scribes

according to the plan of the Torah. Provision will be made for the priests and Levites, and a portion of land is set aside for the prince that he may not need to live from the nation. In view of this hope, Ezekiel calls on the princes to set their hearts and conduct right: "remove violence and spoil, and execute justice and righteousness; take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord Jehovah" (Ezekiel 45:9).

"Post-exilic Judaism unfolds the principles of Deuteronomy in both their worst and their better aspects. Jeremiah's younger contemporary Ezekiel, with all his high conceptions of individual responsibility, marks a distinct decline below the level of religion and morality found in the few verses regarding the "new covenant." His long and detailed scheme for a Palestinian Utopia, while it differs in detail, is based upon the same principle as Deuteronomy and the holiness code of Leviticus. Written law is to guard so completely against the possibility of error that men will have no alternative but to do God's will. Legislation is to produce a perfect society, static and sin-proof. This became the normative idea of Judaism."¹

McCown does not have any very great enthusiasm for the Deuteronomic code, regarding it as a prophetic-priestly compromise of the kingdom period. But the important factor of both Deuteronomy and Ezekiel, so far as this study of the background of Jesus' thought and teaching is concerned, is that the demand for social justice is there. Certainly He did not accept the ideal of a static, legalistic, priest-ridden society, if such was truly contemplated. The question is, rather, did He accept the concept of social justice and demand that it be guaranteed to all men, not only in the Kingdom of God to come, but even in the imperfect society of the present age

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1. McCown: op. cit., p. 180

The post-exilic prophet Zechariah follows the tradition of his predecessors in demanding that social justice must be established if the favor of Jehovah is desired.

"These are the things that ye shall do: Speak ye everyone the truth with his neighbor: execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates; and let none of you devise evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate saith Jehovah." (Zechariah 8:16-17)

Malachi also calls upon the people of Israel to live righteously that they may have the blessing of Jehovah. He warns that the judgment of God is against the "sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against the false swearers, and against all that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the sojourner from his right" (Malachi 3:5).

PART THREE

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES

IN

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

CHAPTER VI

ELEMENTS IN JESUS' ENVIRONMENT
THAT CONDITION HIS SOCIAL TEACHING

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The message and mission of Jesus can not be fully understood without an understanding of the environment in which He lived and labored. In order to be understood, any teacher must speak in terms familiar to his hearers. His words will be understood in the light of current literary and everyday usage.

"Even when we are dealing with divine revelation in its simplest and purest form, like unworn and untarnished coins fresh from the mint, we must remember that it takes two to tell the truth, one to speak and one to hear. None can receive a revelation that is unrelated to his education, his habits of thought and his experience of life. The ethics of the New Testament must not be taken out of their historical setting. Ideas must be given through something, and the something is a very imperfect human nature and social environment."¹

Jesus would naturally be understood by His hearers in the light of the Old Testament, rabbinical writings, and the apocalyptic literature. Moreover, the current problems of life would condition the understanding of the people whom He taught. The day in which He lived was a time of widespread unrest in Palestine. Perplexity and despair had seized on the minds of many. Religious teachers seem to have been admired and valued in relation to the solutions that they could suggest for the prevailing difficulties in political, social, and religious life.

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1. W. R. Inge: Christian Ethics and Modern Problems, p. 28

1. The Political Situation in First Century Palestine

From the time that the Jews returned from exile, Palestine seems to have been in almost constant turmoil. Records of the Persian period, including the book of Nehemiah, show conspiracy and ridding by neighboring tribes against the restored Jewish community. In the period of Greek rule, Antiochus Epiphanes made determined efforts to destroy the religion of the Jews. This attempt to Hellenize the land, and the persecutions that accompanied it, probably account in part for the opposition of the Jews to Hellenic culture. The rise of the Maccabean dynasty brought to the nation a period of independence. But the period of prosperity was short, and in the end the policies of that dynasty seem only to have deepened the rift between the common people and the priestly aristocracy. The struggle for power between Aristobulus and Hyrcanus had devastating effects on the nation and was the cause of Roman intervention. During the Roman civil wars the land was plundered and only after the establishment of the empire under Augustus did it enjoy a measure of peace. Even during the reign of Herod the Great uprisings were frequent. That the revolutionists often had the sympathy of the nation is indicated by the Sanhedrin's indictment of Herod for murder after he had crushed a certain insurrection. After Herod's death came another period of turmoil. A delegation of Jews went to Rome to petition the emperor for a Roman proconsul instead of Archelaus who succeeded his father. The request was not granted at that time, but ten years later Archelaus was deposed and a Roman governor appointed. Antipas in Galilee

and Philip in the regions east of Galilee seem to have been successful in the task of keeping the peace for a generation. Probably Palestine was better governed by the Romans in Jesus' day than it had previously been under its own rulers.

2. The Economic Situation in Jesus' Time

The first century of the Roman empire was a time of prosperity, in which most of the world shared to some degree. Even in Palestine there were the marks of a flourishing culture. Commerce and city building, agriculture and fishing were important activities of the land. But the common people and especially those of the rural regions did not share in the good times to as large an extent as did the commercial classes. In fact, recent studies of economic conditions in first century Palestine suggest that "the Jewish nation was confronted with the severest crisis in its long history."¹ One of the factors in the crisis was economic depression due to two causes: "(1) to increasing overpopulation without sufficient relief; and (2) to over-taxation, civil and religious, which combined to crush initiative and destroy every incentive to accumulate property."² In addition to the burden of political taxation, the Jews were subject to heavy exactions in tithes, offerings, and sacrifices for the support of the temple and the priesthood. The religious establishment was so huge that the priests supported by the people were required to give only

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1. Frederick C. Grant: The Economic Background of the Gospels, p. 140
2. Ibid., p. 205

two weeks a year of temple service. Dr. Grant estimates that as much as forty per cent of a Galilean's income went for taxes and tithes. Moreover, the land was badly overcrowded and the land holdings were small. It is said that the western shore of the Sea of Galilee was almost a continuous city. Josephus records that the region of Galilee contained two hundred and forty fair sized villages and towns. Lands to the east that had once been a sort of open frontier and grazing country were now filled with foreign settlers. Due to long cultivation, crop lands had lost much of their fertility. Methods of fertilization were either unknown or could not be practiced under prevailing conditions. Jewish farmers could not well compete with more fertile regions like parts of Egypt. Slave labor on large estates offered unfair competition with small scale independent farmers. Since the civilization of the time was mainly commercial and centered around the cities, agriculture was at a disadvantage and received little of the public money spent by rulers.

"There were just grounds for the bitterest dissatisfaction on the part of the mass of the population, who not only suffered but also saw before them no hope of improvement or escape, but rather progressive and inevitable enslavement."¹

3. The Psychological Problem of the Jewish Nation

In addition to the political oppression and economic difficulties which the Jews suffered, their religious faith added a psychological problem. From the Old Testament they derived the social ideal

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1. McCown: The Genesis of the Social Gospel, p. 307

of the simple life and a belief in human equality. Every man was to have a share in the economic and political benefits of the nation. But in Jesus' day they found themselves impoverished and deprived of economic freedom. Thousands of Jews had prospered from commercial enterprises but the official ideal was still an agricultural situation where every man possessed his own vine and fig tree, tilled his own land, or moved about freely with his flocks and herds. Also, their history recorded a glorious past when Jerusalem was the center of an empire and the Jews were a free people. Now they were oppressed and despised by pagans. Probably many of the Jews had a feeling of inferiority in face of the accomplishments of the pagan culture which the law forbade them to share. Even the current form of religion aroused a feeling of despair. The tradition of the scribes and Pharisees exalted a life of study as against a life of action. Those who did not know and keep all the regulations of the law and the traditions were considered irreligious. But experience showed that it was impossible to perform all the acts perfectly.

The other side of the Jewish psychological problem was a conviction that the nation had been chosen of God and given a profound revelation of God such as no other people had ever received. They had a system of morality that was plainly above that of others. Though the pagans prospered, their Scriptures assured the Jews that it was only a temporary success due to the sins of the chosen people and that God intended to institute a new order in which righteousness would be rewarded and Jerusalem would become the center of a world-wide empire where Jehovah would be worshipped by all the nations. Many of

the Jews had a boundless faith in the miraculous. They believed that they had only to start a revolution against their overlords in order to win the supernatural help of God.

4. Jesus' Relation to Contemporary Judaic Groups

In the Palestinian Judaism of Jesus' day there were diverse and numerous sects or movements. Outstanding among these were the Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes. The Sadducean group was the religious aristocracy of the land, the hereditary priesthood associated with the temple at Jerusalem, and a strong element in the Sanhedrin. Their interests were most closely associated with those of the Jewish nobility, most of whom seem to have been priests, and with the others of the country's wealthy minority. They were the most ready to enter into connections with the ruling political powers and are reported to have been friendly toward Hellenistic civilization. They recognized only the Mosaic law as authoritative and binding, possibly because it was the legal basis for their own power and position. As rulers and men of wealth, they stood for law and order. They rejected the scribal traditions and the doctrine of immortality, which were highly regarded by the Pharisees.

The party of the Pharisees was a sort of middle class sect. They prided themselves on their piety, and carefully observed all the precepts of the ceremonial law and the traditions of the elders. Most of the scribes and rabbis belonged to this group. The scribes were not a sect, but a learned profession dedicated to the study and inter-

pretation of the law. They came to have much influence among the people because of their piety and learning, and later their party attained dominance in the Sanhedrin. Though they accepted into their group any who were willing to meet their demands, these were such that only the well-to-do could meet them readily. Thus, without so intending, they became an exclusive group. Edersheim estimates the number of the Pharisees at about fifteen thousand, and points out that they were not a sect in the strict sense of the word but only represented one type of attitude toward and interpretation of tradition.

A third religious group of Jesus' day was the Essenes, not so clearly defined or so prominent in the New Testament. They were a small group of separatists who cut themselves off from the religious community of Judaism, as well as from the common life. They gathered in semi-monastic communities of celibates. They were interested in theosophy and angelology, and were tinged with Eastern mysticism and sun worship. They seem to have made a fetish of serving one another, though they had a hierarchy of asceticism and purity among themselves. There is no indication that either Jesus or John the Baptist had any connection with them.

Another group in the Jewish religious community were the Am-ha-arets (people of the land), those Jews who were not included in the other groups, and ^{were} generally despised by them as irreligious since, due either to inability or unconcern, they did not keep the ceremonial law strictly. The ritual requirements, including those accretions of tradition on which the Pharisees insisted, were too complicated and impractical for a poor man faced with the necessity of daily work.

The great Pharisaic rabbi, Hillel, held that no Am-ha-arets is religious. Because of their contempt for them, the Pharisees usually classed the publicans and sinners with the more pious common people. Jesus was condemned for associating with them and as a result came to be considered one of the irreligious. By birth and employment as well as by choice, Jesus was one of the common people. He championed them against the pride and contempt of the Pharisees, and against the oppression of the Sadducees of the temple priesthood. Where other groups in Judaism had largely disregarded the real needs of the average man, Jesus promised him justice and laid down principles of life that were for all men equally, making no distinctions of wealth or rank.

Jesus' words make it plain that He regarded none of the religious groups of the day as having a program adequate to meet the needs of the whole nation. The crisis that faced His people was so serious that Jesus would certainly not ignore it. Considering the background of His life, and the purpose of His mission, it is natural to expect that the message of Jesus would involve certain definite principles to govern not only the relation of men to God but also the relation of men to one another.

CHAPTER VII

JESUS' ETHIC OF LOVE—THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS

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The ethical teachings of Jesus are often characterized as the law or ethic of love, because He makes love the basic principle of relationship between man and man and between men and God. The emphasis on love is not original with Jesus. He is at one with the Jewish scribes in regarding the two commands found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18 as the summary and highest principles of the Old Testament teaching. It was in reply to a question of a scribe that Jesus stated these commands and had the scribe's approval in His selection:

"Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."
(Mark 12:29-31.)

Jesus accepted these commands from the Old Testament, but it was the content that He gave them that formed the unique and inspired aspect of His message.

1. Jesus' Conception of God

Jesus was not primarily an ethical but a religious teacher.

"It has sometimes been argued that Jesus' teaching dealt primarily with duties and obligations which men owe their fellow men, and that the theological side to it was secondary and unimportant—an accident due to the fact that in that day everything was in some way related to religion. The ethical teaching, it

is maintained, is still valid and useful, though the theology is outworn and must be stripped away from the practical teaching to which it is attached. The fact is, however, that Jesus taught primarily a certain religious view of life. The ethical and moral elements flow directly from the religious teaching. The more we study the records, the clearer this becomes. Everything he did and said springs from a religious basis, his sense of God's presence and God's character."¹

Jesus regarded God as characterized by love for men and a concern for all His creation, which was best expressed in human terms by analogy with the love of a father for his children. While Jesus referred to His own unique experience of God's fatherhood and love, He generally based His teaching of the subject on experiences common to all men. He reminded His hearers how God cared for all the little creatures of nature, how He bestowed gifts on all men in the form of rain and sunshine. Moreover, Jesus insisted that God was directly accessible, and He taught His followers to offer their praise and prayer directly to Him. But He did not conceive of the love of God as a mere grandfatherly benevolence, that neither took responsibility for nor administered punishment to His children. God is holy, and because of His goodness can not compromise with or disregard evil. As the prophets of Israel's past, Jesus pronounced sure judgment on willful sinners. But God is ever ready to forgive the penitent, just as a father is overjoyed to receive again into his house the prodigal son whom he loves, and to restore him to a place of equality with his more faithful brethren. He may therefore be approached as "Father" by the most unworthy of men. Moreover, God is active in His goodness toward men. He seeks to pour out His blessings not in the measure they are de-

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1. Harvie Branscomb: The Teachings of Jesus, p. 146

served but to the extent that men are able to receive them. It was this boundless love of God that formed the basis for Jesus' acceptance of the two commands for men. Their love to God could never achieve the fulness of the goodwill and concern that God first showed to them. In justice to God they could only seek to return in a measure His affection for them. The second commandment indicated the only practical way in which they could demonstrate their love to God.

"It is of profound importance to recognise in this connection that although the Second commandment is like unto the First in that it demands the development and exercise of the spirit of love, yet it comes second, not first. Love of man can exist without the conscious love of God, . . . but it is the love of God which can alone universalize and moralize and spiritualize the love of man. In short, the love of God is the only secure and permanent basis for the love of man which strives to secure the well-being, both temporal and eternal of the object of its love. A love of man which is not based on the love of God is always liable to succumb to the temptations of self-gratification, self-interest, and sentimentality."¹

2. The Meaning of Love

The term love has been used to cover so many types of attitudes and emotions that the word must be carefully defined before it can be understood in the proper sense in which Jesus used it. In the Gospels, two Greek verbs are used which are each translated "love" in the English versions. One is philein, which (like the noun eros that does not appear in the New Testament) refers to an emotion or natural feeling. "This is a feeling or passion that cannot be con-

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1. H. D. A. Major, T. W. Manson, and B. D. Wright: The Mission and Message of Jesus: An Exposition of the Gospels in the Light of Modern Research, p. 152

trolled or summoned at will, and which a man can seldom experience toward God, or towards men in general, whom often he 'doesn't like!'"¹

On the other hand, the Greek term agape does not signify an emotion,

"but a deliberate disposition of the will—something within everyone's control if he chooses to have it so. We can put God indisputably first; and we can care impartially for the interests of those we like and those we don't like."¹

Love, then, is not an emotion; neither is it altruism. This latter attitude tends to be a subjective standard, that in sacrificing the interests of the self for the supposed good of others may be unjust to the self, to the ones who are supposed to benefit, and to society as a whole. Moreover, love is not a refined form of self-interest as some forms of utilitarianism seem to believe. The meaning of love as used in the New Testament may be defined by the term mutuality. This conception of love takes into consideration the rights of the self, the other, and the will of God. Thus, love as an emotion is only part of love as activity. Love, then, can be an effective instrument of social improvement so long as the principle of mutuality is not violated.²

The Great Commandments begin with a recognition of the unity of God and then conceive of the response of man to God as involving the whole human personality. A man is to love God with his whole heart. Following Jewish usage, this may be taken to mean his moral consciousness. "With thy whole soul," according to Hebrew psychology, refers

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1. Charles Gore: The Philosophy of the Good Life, p. 184

2. Gregory Vlastos: "What Is Love?"; Christendom, Autumn, 1934

to the vital emotion. "In the soul . . . lies the individuality, in the case of man his personality, self, ego . . ."¹ This aspect of man's love for God comes nearest to the idea suggested by philein. It may be that strength here refers to the element of action which is sometimes left out of idealistic conceptions of love. The fourth exercise of love toward God, "with all thy mind," is mentioned only by Jesus and is not found in the Septuagint or the Massoretic texts.

"There is good reason (so that great scholar Archdeacon Charles thought) for regarding Jesus as responsible for adding intellectual love as the fourth factor or element in his four-square love of God . . ."²

Since the meaning of love, as it was conceived by Jesus, is so inclusive of the entire man, and unites all his energies, attitudes, and ideals in worship of God, it can not but form the basis of any ethic that may be derived from the teaching of Jesus; for the love of God that is the subject of the first commandment can not be separated from the problems raised by the second. Worship is never purely a private affair between a man and his God. It must affect his relations with other men. In actual life the first commandment is inseparable from the second. The complications which sin and ignorance present in the carrying out of these commands will be considered later.³ At this point there is need for consideration of the meaning given by Jesus to the term neighbor.

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1. G. H. Oehler: Theology of the Old Testament, p. 149
2. Major, et al.: op. cit., p. 151
3. Cf. Section 4

3. The Meaning of the Term Neighbor

According to the Gospel by Luke (10:25 ff.), the lawyer, who led Jesus to state the commandments that summed up the law and to give an enlarged concept of love, also asked for a definition of neighbor. In reply, Jesus gave not a definition, but a story which in effect universalized the concept of neighbor by showing that love could find opportunity for the expression of neighborly affection in the most unexpected situations, in the most unfortunate circumstances, and from the most unpromising people. Jesus does not describe the man who was going along the Jericho road as to his nation, business or piety. But, inasmuch as a certain lawyer asked the question, it may well be that Jesus meant for the questioner to picture himself in that condition. Because he mentioned eternal life in asking his question and because of his choice of commands he may well have been a Pharisee, the most exclusive group in Judaism. The old law had provided that strangers were on a par with Israelites before the law, and entitled to neighborly treatment. But after the exile, in order to save their race, religion, and culture, the Jews developed a nationalistic exclusiveness that excluded foreigners. This seems, however, to have allowed for the inclusion within the Jewish neighborhood of those who accepted the law and were initiated into the community of Judaism. But within this had grown up more exclusive groups. The priestly aristocracy formed a neighborhood based on birth and position. But they seemed open to alliance with the ruling groups of Greeks and Romans and Herodians more than to an affiliation with common Jews.

The Pharisees opened their ranks to any who fulfilled the law, as they interpreted it. It was a neighborhood based on piety. Their insistence on the keeping of the ceremonial law made them look on the priest and Levite as more acceptable than the "am ha-arets" or common people. Their combined piety and nationalism would make association with a Samaritan unthinkable. While they were theoretically non-exclusive, their interpretation of the law made it impossible for the average man to belong. They were fond of calling themselves the neighbor group, but it was a closely confined neighborhood.

When the man on the Jericho road had been attacked by robbers, the very exclusiveness and purity that the Pharisees exalted was against him. In his naked condition, there was nothing to mark him as a man fit to arouse the sympathy of the priest or Levite. Moreover, to have aided him would have defiled the ceremonial purity of those who held to the Levitical code. Nothing could have more pointedly demonstrated the impractical nature of these regulations than the fact that in a special emergency, when life hung in the balance, they were a hindrance rather than a help.

"Priest and Levite represented the national aristocracy of that period. It was to them that one might have looked for a manifestation of Judaism at its best. They above all others should have known how to fulfil the commandment given in Leviticus 19:18. Their callousness stands in sharp contrast to the ideal of which they were the official guardians."¹

Jesus pictures the Samaritan who was under no compulsion to fulfill the commandment as yet more than meeting its requirements. He thus

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1. Major, et al.: op. cit., p. 554

indicates that common sense and natural compassion come nearer to the ideal than those who boasted of their acceptance of the law and profited by their association with it.

The lawyer was forced to enlarge his conception of neighbor to include even a Samaritan who was helpful and friendly. Jesus made the standard of association, not mere condition of life and acceptance of the law, but a living faith manifest in an attitude of love to all and action in service to others. But as He turned around all the beliefs of the Pharisees and scribes and rabbis, so here He did not let the lawyer rest with an admission that he must recognize as neighbor anyone who helped him. Rather, Jesus charges him, "Go, and do thou likewise." This is the idea stated in His "Golden Rule." Men must not merely recognize neighborliness but take the initiative in showing mercy and good will. Jesus put intellectual love into the worship of God and put the expression of action into the love of men for their fellows. The concept of neighbor is expanded and service is made the norm of neighborliness. Where the neighborhood had set the area of service, now love was fundamental and knew no bounds.

4. Jesus' Conception of Man

In accepting the command "thou shalt love thy neighbor" as the basis of His ethical teaching, Jesus accepts also the measure "as thyself." This is no idealization of man, nor is it an attempt to make an ideal man as the standard. Jesus' teachings clearly show that He accepted man as he was and is, realizing all the difficulties that

sinfulness puts in the way of love. Jesus never condoned or overlooked the sin in man. Neither did He countenance a fatalism or pessimism that claimed the sinfulness of man as its justification for accepting a sinful world and humanity without any efforts to improve them.

"There have been, in fact, two forces tending to destroy the moral appeal and impetus of the Gospel. One is the pessimism of much religious orthodoxy, which regards this world as so utterly "fallen" and corrupt that it is itself beyond redemption, so that the purpose of the Gospel is not to save the world but to save individuals out of the world; the other is the rationalism of much modern and rationalistic philosophy, which thinks that there is no more amiss with human nature than increase of knowledge and spread of education can put right."¹

The fact that Jesus commanded men to love God and their fellow men is indication that He rejected the pessimism which believes that nothing can be done with humanity. But the devastating criticisms and sharp denunciations of individuals, of certain groups, and of all men, prove that Jesus cherished no optimistic illusions that humanity needed nothing to be done with it.

The Scriptures represent man as made in the image of God, from whom he receives all that he has and is—life and all life brings. Because God is love, because He is a social being who loves, He first created men and endowed them with spirit that they might have fellowship with Him. Man, then, is under the obligation and given the opportunity to respond to God's love. The only adequate response to love is love. God endowed man with the capacity to love. Man is the

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1. William Temple: "Christian Faith and the Common Life"; in Oxford Conference book of the same title, Nils Ehrenstrom, Ed., p. 48

result of divine love, and in love man fulfills the purpose of his creation and expresses his true nature.

Though man is made in the image of God, he is also a part of nature because he is a creature. Therefore he is conditioned by nature and the limitations it imposes. Finiteness and egocentricity are limitations of creatures in nature. The new-born baby has a very restricted sphere of apprehension: he has no objective knowledge of himself. But if he could formulate his view of reality, he would consider himself as the center of the world. Other persons would simply be known as they ministered to his needs and desires. As the child grows to apprehend more of the world, he learns that there are other persons than himself with wants and needs of their own. He discovers that he can not have all his own notions satisfied, and that, even for his own good, he must recognize the desires of others and satisfy them to a degree. Growing affection for those about him and education concerning human rights lead him to recognize the interests of others even for their own sake. Reason will enable the individual to recognize the rights and interests of persons beyond the range of natural impulse or personal obligation. But the sense of obligation weakens as distance, and sometimes as familiarity, increases. But the mind is never able to conceive the interests of others as well as those of self. The nearest a person can come to apprehending the interests of another is to imagine himself in the other's place. Therefore, the command to "love thy neighbor as thyself" and to do unto others as you would that they do unto you, is a command adjusted to the finite,

egocentric human mind. Jesus made abundant allowance for the limitations of human nature. He referred to persons who were outcasts from the Jewish religious community as sick, in need of a physician, and worthy of mercy. He saw the good in people and rejoiced to see a display of faith or generosity. He rewarded the faith of the centurion, the Syrophenician woman, and others who sought healing. He saw the despair and spiritual bewilderment of the multitudes, "and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34). Jesus was not a perfectionist with no sense of reality. He knew what was in man and discriminated finiteness from sin.

"It is, therefore, not egocentricity which is sin, as is frequently assumed by modern theologians. Egocentricity is a natural limitation of nature. Sin is expressed not in making the self the center of the self, as in animal existence, but in the more spiritual enterprise of making the self the center of the world. Sin is not a quality of nature but of the spirit. It is the pretension of finite nature, unwilling to accept its finiteness. It is the ambition of man, seeking to make himself God and being involved in rebellion against God as a consequence."¹

Jesus recognized and dealt with this sinfulness in man. He had known temptation and could sympathize with men. But He never glossed over sin or its results. He saw how the Pharisees mistook their artificial piety for fulfillment of the whole law, and how the Sadducean trust in position led them as well as the Pharisees to pride, injustice and exploitation. He saw their moral failure that led them to denounce His work as Satanic, and called their attitude an unforgivable sin. The

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1. Reinhold Niebuhr, in Christian Faith and the Common Life (Oxford Conference book), p. 76

apostasy of Judas, the conspiracy and violence of the religious leaders, showed to Jesus the depths of sin in man. Still He believed that most men were capable of learning the will of God and opening their lives to the influence of His Spirit that they might live according to the law of love.

"The love commandment is not only an ultimate criterion of judgment upon all human actions which fall short of love. It is also a guide for the approximation of love and justice which make up the warp and woof of everyday existence."¹

5. Love as a Principle of Action

The command to love one's neighbor stands in the book of Leviticus at the conclusion of a series of commands condemning specific types of social injustice: theft, failure to pay wages when due, false oaths, unfair advantage of the helpless, injustice in legal decisions, and slander. So the command to love is not postulated on any romantic idealization of the neighbor, but on a recognition of the probability that there will be disputes and injustice. In such a situation men are encouraged not to harbor hate, or bear grudges, or seek vengeance: "thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbor, and not bear sin because of him." Love is not to be merely an ideal but also an instrument for overcoming social differences and the personal sins that cause them. Jesus was doubtless aware of the context of the command and apparently expected it to be understood in the light of the

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1. Niebuhr: loc. cit., p. 78

context. The command was meant to face and overcome difficulties.

A command to love is a paradox, for where love is no command is necessary; where there is not love, it can not be coerced. Love, as an emotion, is spontaneous. To demand it is to stifle it. But the love commanded by Jesus, as noted earlier in this chapter, is a matter of the will and is subject to commands. It was by disobedience that the fall of man and the corruption of his nature came about. The action, no doubt, followed the thought. Desire and evil intention lie behind acts of sin. This is inferred in Biblical interpretations of the fall of man. Jesus recognizes the fact in His interpretation of the Mosaic law. He forbids anger, lust, insincerity, and hatred. But there needs to be discrimination even on the matter of thoughts and attitudes. Not all anger is wrong in Jesus' sight. There is a righteous indignation that is wholesome. Moreover, Jesus testified that even His own mind was not free of tempting thoughts. The human brain is a very busy and imperfectly controlled organism. It records and remembers many impulses and sensations, even against the better judgment and conscious will. To insist on a perfectly pure mind is to make one a hypocrite or drive him to despair. A man can control his actions better than he can repress and censor the images that pass through his mind. But there is a difference between being tempted and denying the thoughts of evil, and allowing them to remain in or near the sphere of consciousness where they can so entrench themselves and develop that in an emergency or at the moment of temptation they will decide a person's course of action.

It is not strictly true that Jesus was interested in thoughts rather than actions. He was interested in both. Rather He was interested in the will, which means the entire personality functioning as a unit. The outward actions and words manifest the dominant motives and desires. The motives and desires and thoughts determine the action. But the mind itself is largely conditioned by the impact of the impulses caused by actions of others. No ultimate, effective cause can be found and isolated in the individual himself. They are closely related, distinguishable only in thought. But for a prime cause one must go back of man to God. Since the influence of God is defined by the term love, it must then be the nature of the active principle in relations between men. So love is in man as in God an effective principle of action, not a mere ideal.

Because of the disability under which man labors due to sin, Professor Niebuhr has called the law of love "an impossible possibility," which creates a wholesome tension between the ideal and the possibilities of the actual. In some ethical systems based on the teaching of Christ, the wholesome tension has become an intolerable tautness which has broken down into a static dualism. In other cases, the ideal has merged with the possible in an unjustified optimism or the real has merged into the ideal as an ineffective principle entirely separated from the actual. Dr. Niebuhr has attempted to restore the tension out of the elements found in Augustinian-Lutheran, Liberal, and Crisis theology. But Jesus is less concerned with the impossible than with the possible. His viewpoint, which is

best described as religious, is not dualistic but recognizes the divine as effective in the actual. Jesus' saying that "with God all things are possible" may well sum up His view of the possibilities of man under the power of God.

In the attitude toward man that Jesus revealed, as might be expected He took a basically religious viewpoint. For Jesus, the outstanding fact about man was not his sin nor his ability but his relation to God. He had hope for man because He knew God as Creator, Father and Savior.

"If man cannot love God and his neighbor as he ought, and if his full realization of himself as human person depends upon such love to widen and deepen his being to its full dimensions, then plainly his only hope is that God in some sense loves him powerfully enough to quicken and guide his love in return."¹

Jesus knew the failure of God's chosen people to keep the covenant that they had sworn to uphold. He realized that much of the Jewish attitude toward God was wishful thinking and that, instead of the glory which they thought would soon come to their nation, their national policies were trending toward disaster. Because He knew God's intention and purpose was salvation, He could speak of the coming Kingdom of God in spite of His forebodings of national calamity. God had created man in His own image and had assumed responsibility for man. So, men were sons of God at least in a natural sense, and were potentially sons of God in a moral sense.

"Christ laid down the love of love; he also offered the redemptive sacrifice of his perfect obedience to the Father and thereby

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1. Calhoun: What is Man? p. 71

supplied the power to those who, by spiritual union with him, offer a perfect obedience, to fulfill that law. But to others that law presents a demand which they cannot meet; nothing outside themselves prevents them, but by their own selves they are prevented. The Christian who considers what action he should taken in any emergency or what policy he shall as a citizen support must allow for this fact." 1

This suggests another reason for the adequacy of the two great commandments, and the corollary of the second, the Golden Rule, as principles of social action. God's love to men is not limited by the responsiveness of men. So when men are redeemed by the power of God their ability to love others, and God, is increased. The principle is still adequate. As they receive the greater benefits of God's love, men are under more obligation to respond by loving Him and their fellows. As they love more they are the more worthy of love. But this worthiness is a measure of duties as well as of rights. As man is able to love more perfectly, he is the more required to do so.

"If the ground of all the universe and of our own being is Personal Love, to which we owe our origin and our maintenance, then it may be that as we penetrate to that which is ever more than ourselves and yet is also the very life of our life, we may find the ability which we now lack."2

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1. Temple: op. cit., p. 51
2. William Temple: Nature, Man and God, p. 196

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAW OF LOVE AS THE PRINCIPLE OF COMMUNITY

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According to the definition of love as mutuality, the principle of community is an affirmation of both rights and duties on the part of individuals who comprise a community. The fascist concept of organic community is based on identity rather than mutuality. Duty of all individuals is affirmed but rights are denied. The good of all members is identified with that of the leader. In the liberal concept of community, the rights of individuals are affirmed to the exclusion of duties. Everyone is free to withdraw from the group. But the law of love declares that a man is free, not from, but with his fellow men.

"He that would save his life shall lose it and he that would lose his life for my sake shall find it." The ethical implication of this statement is that only by giving oneself in service can the fullness of individual personality be achieved. Obedience to God's will in service to others promotes not only the good of others but of the self. In all phases of community the rights of the self, the other or others in general, and the will of God must be upheld if the ideal community is to result. There are always three parties to any act of community. If the right of anyone is violated, mutuality is violated. Moreover, the duties of all three parties must be fulfilled. The Hebrew idea of the covenant and Jesus' idea of God as Father represent the realization that God has recognized certain duties toward men and

that He always fulfills His part.

1. The Family as a Type of the Ideal Community

Certain of Jesus' sayings about the family indicate somewhat His idea of the nature of community. As He was teaching one day in a crowded house, His mother and brothers came asking for Him. When someone brought Him word of it, He looked about Him and said to His listeners: "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." (Mark 3:35). In Matthew's version of the statement, He is recorded as saying, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven." This may bring us nearer to Jesus' concept of community. As He used the analogy of a human father to explain the relation of God to men, so He used the analogy of the human family to indicate the nature of human relationships in the ideal community.

"The saying . . . gives us a glimpse of the personal aspects of Jesus' conception of the reign of God. It was to be constituted by a number of people whose spirit of mutual service and fellowship would make it a social body with the ethical quality and value of a family group."¹

In the Gospel according to Mark, this incident and statement regarding His family follow immediately after the record that even His friends thought that He was "beside himself" because of His zeal and persistence in teaching and working. The scribes at the same time decided that He had a demon. The suggestion, then, is that Jesus' family heard these reports and came to take Him home. Jesus

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1. Branscomb: The Gospel of Mark, p. 75

does not by this statement mean to criticize or belittle the concern of His kin, but rather uses the opportunity to drive home an important truth that "the supreme relationships are not physical but moral and spiritual; and loyalty to these relationships comes first in life."¹ It has been one of the hardest problems of history to convince men of this fact. It is so much easier to conceive one's duty to his immediate family, tribe or race. Sometimes the claims of the family are taken as a means of avoiding one's duty to his fellow men. The family becomes only an enlarged area of selfishness.

Family life has ever been on a high plane in Jewish life. Family loyalty has been a strong cohesive factor in Jewish society. The Hebrew law assigned important functions to the family, including that of religious instruction. It was the institution best suited to form a basis and model for the type of community Jesus envisioned. By making the will of God rather than physical affinity the motivating force, Jesus did away with the factors of finiteness and egocentricity. Moreover, He made "doing" the will of God, rather than "believing," basic. This makes possible areas of fellowship far larger than the group which accepts the whole Gospel and a particular interpretation of it. A Christian can have fellowship even with non-Christians in certain areas of life where they are devoted to the same ideals and engaged in common activities.

When Jesus uses the analogy of family life, He probably does not take it as an example of full agreement and absolute congeniality.

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1. Major, et al.: op. cit., p. 65

When we speak of the brotherhood of man, we frequently have in mind an association of individuals who feel a genuine liking for one another and are in agreement such as to exclude unpleasant differences. We regard a brotherhood as a voluntary association from which we can withdraw at will if we cease to find it congenial. However, such an idea of brotherhood rests on no real basis in actual family life. Every family is bound to have disagreements. Members of a family find one another irritating. Sometimes the clash of personalities develops dangerous rifts among the members. Few families are characterized by complete congeniality. Rather, the outstanding characteristic of the family is that there is an underlying bond of community that outlasts and overcomes differences. Jesus' own family is as good an illustration as any. They seem to have been critical of His work. They thought Him beside Himself. But they did not repudiate Him. Rather they tried to care for Him and came to seek Him. His mother continued to be solicitous and was present at His death. His brothers finally came to respect Him and believe His Gospel. Jesus denied their right to interfere with His work, but He did not denounce or repudiate them. Even on the cross He made an effort to provide for His mother. But Jesus saw that the family is characterized by a natural bond of unity usually sufficient to overcome all differences. He affirmed that there was likewise a spiritual bond that embraced all men and united them to God. He affirmed that the brotherhood of all men and the fatherhood of God were facts that ought to outweigh and would outlast all differences.

Jesus proposes the law of love toward God and man, based on

God's love for men, as a principle of mutuality that would unite all mankind with ties more powerful than those which held together members of a family. The ties of physical and blood affinity have ever been the strongest in the world. Jesus proposed a principle that would supersede them and still retain all their values without the limitations that characterized them. Reference is made to this proposed fellowship in Mark 10:29-30:

"Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the Gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

Jesus instituted a community and announced a universal family to which men belonged as truly as they belonged to the natural family. As the family gives men their physical being and nurtures their physical, mental, and moral life, so men receive their being ultimately from God and within the spiritual community or family are nurtured unto eternal life. Jesus' statement that men should receive "in this time" what they were called on to give up if they broke with their families in becoming Christians, indicates no purely idealistic rewards without any basis in reality. Rather, the inference appears to be that the principle of love which He preached, though it was based not on natural affection but on good will, would in effect establish a community which would produce relationships as abiding and happy as that between members of a family. Moreover, all the material resources of the Christian community would be available to meet the needs of its members. Membership in God's universal family is as exacting and as re-

warding as membership in a natural family.

It is likely that Jesus foresaw differences and difficulties within the community of His followers. There were disputes even among the twelve. The Jewish religious community and nation, though recognizing the same God and the same basic ethical principle, were seriously divided. Jesus saw that the divisions within had become so deep that Judaism formed no adequate basis for a united nation. If Jewish independence could have been achieved as the apocalyptists believed, it would have been no blessing to the nation. Jewish history taught by its tragic records that the downfall of the kingdom had begun with its division. A nation or a religious community where division is deeper than unity, where exclusiveness is affirmed and cooperation denied, can not endure.

Jesus' interpretation of the Mosaic divorce statute may serve as a further illustration of His view of community. The Pharisees asked if it were lawful for a man to divorce or send away his wife. Jesus asked what the law taught. They replied that divorce was allowed by a man giving his wife a written statement of the fact that he had divorced her. Apparently the right to institute this proceeding, as authorized in Deuteronomy 24:1, lay only with the husband. Ancient law generally regarded a woman as the property of her husband. In general, Hebrew law made provision for the rights even of those parties who were ordinarily helpless. So this requirement of a legal document would prevent hasty action. Moreover, if a woman could produce a divorce certificate, another man would not hesitate to marry her out of fear that the first husband would cause trouble.

This would help women who had no means of support. Since marriage was usually arranged with the bride's parents and she would return there if divorced, means of support would not be an issue in most cases. A special law protected women taken captive in war who were married and later divorced.

Thus the divorce statute, while the result of "hardness of heart," sought to protect the victims. But Jesus referred to the fact that divorce was not in accord with God's original intention.

"But from the beginning of creation, male and female made he them. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and the two shall become one flesh so that they are no more two but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." (Mark 10:6-9)

Jesus was interested in the basic principle, not in what was expedient. It appears that among the Pharisees the Mosaic statute was taken as sufficient ground for holding that divorce was lawful. The question in their circles centered on what were the lawful causes of divorce. The school of Shammai held that infidelity was the only ground on which divorce was allowable. The school of Hillel permitted divorce for even trivial reasons. Both found their justification in the ancient law. Jesus, following a principle approved and used by the Pharisees, set against their contentions a more ancient precedent. God's intention in the creation of humanity was that man and woman should be joined in marriage. Any rupture of the relationship, and any practice that caused a break, were against God's will. Jesus does not hesitate to acknowledge that marriage itself involves a certain break between the parties concerned and their home and parents. But

He saw it not as a break but as a natural step in the progress of life.

In the same way Jesus offered a new concept of community. It involved a break with Jewish ideas of exclusiveness and group loyalty. Yet Jesus saw it not as a break but as a necessary development. Every individual is a member of the family into which he is born. He is not a member by choice. On the other hand, the parents choose to be parents, but they can not choose the sex, personal characteristics, or temperament of the child. Even the husband and wife are not united in marriage—in an Oriental community such as Jesus lived in—purely on the ground of personal choice and spontaneous, emotional attachment. The Jewish community accepted the doctrine, stated by Jesus, that men and women were meant to marry. To a large extent the arrangements for marriage were made by the parents of the pair concerned. Not their wishes but their nature were considered basic. Subjective affection was considered less important than more objective considerations of background, congeniality of families, and common customs. It was expected that affection would follow. In the case of children, the love and service rendered by parents causes affection for parents. Moreover, the natural tendency to parental affection induces love of parents for children, regardless of the sex, or temperament, or physical condition of the child. Also it appears that man is meant for community. The natural orders of society are not based on choice, nor dependent on affection. Rather, participation in them gives rise to affection and assent. But the natural orders of society function under God's will, for the accomplishment of certain ends. Jesus denied

the right of family to stand against the will of God, even if it was affirmed by only one member as against the group. Also, Jesus acknowledged that the family has not the right to claim the same sort of loyalty from a child under its care, and from an adult member who has married and established a family of his own. A social order may not only transgress the will of God, but may also assert its claims over its members beyond the time or sphere of its usefulness. What is true of the family may be true of large forms of community in other areas of human relationships.

"The persistence of old patterns of life which do not fit the modern situation but which have great momentum make any solution of our problems difficult. Reinhold Niebuhr makes a distinction here between what he calls 'senility and sin.' He says: 'Since death in nature comes by senility as well as sin, all purely moralistic interpretations of history are mistaken.' The momentum of senile systems creates much of our difficulty."¹

Jesus saw that the family was an enduring institution and ought not to be broken. But in the same statement He recognized the limitations of its claims and control over its members. He was up against much the same problem in relation to the Jewish religious community. He recognized that it was built on eternal principles. But its sects were making their particular interpretations sources of ruptures in the community. Each sect divorced itself from those that did not agree with it and so they were destroying the community itself. On the other hand, the various current interpretations were making unjustified claims on its members and hindering the fellowship that should have existed and the natural development that ought to have taken

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1. John Coleman Bennett: "Christian Faith and the Common Life" (Nils Ehrenstrom, ed.), pp. 183 ff.

place. Jesus made action, in accord with the great, principal commandments, the basic requirement. The sects emphasized secondary factors that could not be universalized.

2. Factors in Community which Strengthen Mutuality

Two factors in community which are derived from and serve to strengthen love or mutuality may be considered, forgiveness and service.

a. Forgiveness

Jesus spoke frequently of the possibility and need for forgiveness. In the prayer that He taught His disciples is the petition, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." This suggests that divine forgiveness is conditioned by a forgiving spirit in the one that seeks God's pardon. This fact is made more explicit by other statements (Mark 10:25, Matthew 16:14-15). If one does not forgive his fellow men--if he does not accept and affirm the reality of forgiveness, he is not likely to accept the forgiveness of God. But a spirit of forgiveness is necessary in the maintenance of fellowship. A sense of guilt that can not be removed in the one party, and a feeling that desires vengeance or holds a grudge in the other party, cause a tension and aloofness that soon destroy mutuality. Since mistakes and misdeeds are bound to occur, there must be a way to overcome the rifts they cause if community is to endure.

"The crown of Christian ethics is the doctrine of forgiveness. In it the whole genius of prophetic religion is expressed.

Love as forgiveness is the most difficult and impossible of moral achievements. Yet it is a possibility if the impossibility of love is recognized and the sin in the self is acknowledged. Therefore an ethic culminating in an impossible possibility produces its choicest fruit in terms of the doctrine of forgiveness, the demand that the evil in the other shall be borne without vindictiveness because the evil in the self is known."¹

Because men realize that love is an ideal that, even in action, can never be perfectly reached, and yet realize that the community of which love is the essence is more important than any difference, they are willing to forgive the failure of others because they themselves fail and need forgiveness. Forgiveness is the factor that restores mutuality when love fails. When Jesus said to the man with palsy, "Thy sins are forgiven," the people were pleased and the scribes shocked that anyone could so effectively proclaim forgiveness. But Jesus recognized—in this and in such other statements as His advice to Peter that he ought to forgive times without limit—that unless men recognize God's readiness to forgive, and their need to acknowledge it in their own relationships with others, society could not survive on a religious basis which recognizes the holy will of God. Because the scribes did not accept the principle of free forgiveness, and because they did not teach it or act on it, they were in a degree responsible for the serious divisions within the Jewish community that threatened its total disruption. Jesus proposed forgiveness rather than divorce as a means of overcoming "hardness of heart" and sin in family life, and in the larger community.

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1. Reinhold Niebuhr: An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 223

b. Service

The scribes accepted the two great commands as did Jesus. They too recognized action as the test of love. The scribe asked Jesus, "What must I do to be saved?" But the scribes and Pharisees failed to carry their theories into practice. They were high-minded men. Probably they were sincere in their hypocritical piety. They really thought that they were fulfilling the will of God, and Jesus doubtless recognized this. Consequently, it was harder for Him to touch them and lead them to a recognition of their shortcomings. Consider the parable of the Pharisee and the publican:

"When the Pharisee recites his virtues in the Temple, there is no conscious deception in his prayer. He is not addressing a prayer meeting, but God, whom he believes to know all and see all, God whom he could never hope to fool as he might his glib fellows. The Pharisee's prayer expresses sincerely his habitual self-awareness. And what he says is perfectly true. He is not an extortioner; he is not an adulterer . . . His performance measures up to his professions. But he is a hypocrite just the same. . . . 'For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased.' The source of his unreality is pride, the pride of class."¹

They profess love, but practice pride. Jesus regarded humility as the proper manifestation of love. But humility, as Jesus conceived it, is no mere passive acceptance of injustice. With Jesus, humility is active. It takes the form of service. The Pharisees liked to have bestowed on them the indications of honor: chief seats, salutations, special robes. Jesus urged his followers not to seek these, but to serve. He found a world where leaders and men of power ruled their

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1. Gregory Vlastos: Christian Faith and Democracy, pp. 33f.

fellows and demanded service. Such an attitude aroused resentment and envy. The Jews hated the Romans who oppressed them. The common people hated the upper classes. But it was a hatred that desired as much to change places with the oppressors as to change the system and attitudes that produced them. Jesus saw that only service which sought to help as a basis of respect could hold society together. He did not condemn the desire to be first, but said, "He that would be first among you shall be servant of all." He warned them not to follow the way of the Gentiles and try to gain supremacy by ruling over others.

"The contrast that Jesus draws here could not be more striking. Here is the top of the social pyramid: Caesar, the man of absolute power in so far as human power can ever be absolute . . . And there at the bottom: the despised, ignorant, degraded slave. He is the pattern of human greatness. If you want to be great you must be like him. . . . I do not know any idea in history that is more revolutionary than this idea that Jesus taught and lived: that the measure of human greatness is not one's ability to dominate, but one's ability to serve. In so far as this idea is accepted by men, the structure of society is altered, the conditions of human life are transformed."¹

Jesus' insistence on service was not only meant to describe the perfect community but, by inference, indicated the possibility of community and cooperation in certain, limited areas. A Mohammedan and a Christian may not worship together, but they could cooperate in fighting a fire. Christians, Jews and atheists may join in civic enterprises. Jesus could heal the daughter of a Canaanite woman and the servant of a Roman centurion. He could commend the faith of both, though to a strict Jew each would have been as an infidel. Jesus

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1. Vlastos: op. cit., pp. 25f.

seems to have betrayed no race prejudice. He identified Himself with despised classes and sought, sometimes with success, to redeem individuals who followed professions which to His fellow Jews were signs of hopeless degeneracy.

On the other hand, Jesus could be sharply critical of individuals and groups whose ideas and practices were opposed to the common good. Often the persons and the practices He condemned were to others the indications of righteousness. One of the factors that Jesus looked upon as a hindrance to fellowship was wealth: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Jesus saw that the rich young ruler who came to him lacked one thing—love. He thought that eternal life was something to be gained for himself and added to his other possessions. Jesus challenged him to use his wealth to help those who were in need and to give his life in service as a disciple. When the man went away sorrowful, preferring to keep his possessions, Jesus spoke of riches as a distinct hindrance to those who wished to enjoy the wealth of spiritual fellowship in the kingdom of God. Jesus asked him to do only what the disciples had done, as their reply to Jesus indicates. The ethical implications of the incident are that a man who is self-centered can not fully enter into community based on mutuality. Not riches, as such, but the selfishness to which they ministered was the bar to the young man's success in service. A community of men desiring to serve one another has the basis for unity. A group of men who all want to be served can have true fellowship neither with God nor with other men.

3. Jesus' Attitude toward the State

a. The Tribute Question

Among the ethical problems that have plagued the church, and the lives of individual Christians, throughout all the centuries of its existence, is the problem of loyalty to the state and acceptance of its claims. The reply of Jesus to the question regarding tribute is often referred to as giving the principle by which the problem could be solved. The three synoptic gospels agree that this question was asked in order to trap Jesus. The Herodians joined forces, in order to carry out the conspiracy, with the Pharisees. The party that supported Herod's family would of necessity justify the power of Rome because their patrons held authority only by leave of Rome. The Pharisees were generally nationalistic, favoring independence, but not in any large number counselling revolt. However, they hoped for a restoration of Jewish independence, and the Messianic hope of Israel was bound up with the idea of political freedom from foreign overlords. If Jesus should answer that tribute was unlawful, the Herodians would immediately demand His arrest by the officers of the Roman governor. He would be classed as a revolutionary, guilty of sedition. If He should admit that tribute was lawful, He would be denounced by the Pharisees as unworthy to claim the right of Messianic leadership. A stand in favor of Rome would mean the rapid loss of popularity and followers, even among the most loyal. Clearly the plan of the questioners was not to elicit information or to discover if Jesus could propound a new or more adequate principle by which to

settle this perplexing difficulty that was to cause the destruction of Jerusalem a generation later. The purpose of the conspiracy was to get Jesus out of the way by having Him arrested as a political rebel, or by discrediting Him in the eyes of the people.

"Neither Pharisees nor Sadducees wished rebellion against Rome. What united the two major parties in the Sanhedrin against Jesus was the fear that his attacks upon them would completely undermine their authority over the people. He was exposing their villainy, their weakness, their lack of constructive leadership. They were against him because he was stirring up the masses against them, and their leadership, their privileges, and their emoluments were threatened. They were against him because he was more revolutionary than any Bolshevist. Not only were his social ideals entirely different from theirs, but his methods also were so mysteriously unintelligible to them as to fill them with indescribable forebodings."¹

Because they did not comprehend Jesus, and had good reason to fear Him, two groups that were generally at odds united to trap Him. No doubt their question was carefully worded so that Jesus could not avoid the issue. The question, as recorded, is identical in the three synoptic gospels. There is good reason to believe that it was remembered just as it was stated. It was simple and the answer was unforgettable. Jesus had based His teaching on the law. He had interpreted it as one having authority. So His enemies ask for an answer in terms of the law. His skill at expounding the law had made Jesus popular. Now they had planned that it should be His undoing.

"Is it lawful (for us) to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?"
(Mark 12:14, Matthew 22:17, Luke 20:22.) Jesus was not deceived as to

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1. McCown: The Genesis of the Social Gospel, p. 371

their intention, and did not hide from them His perception of their evil design. His request that they bring Him a penny must have rather spoiled their impressive set-up, but could not have dismayed them. It is conjectured that the manner of stating "they brought" one suggests that, since the Roman coin was not allowed in the temple because it bore an image, someone had to be sent to bring one in. In reply to His enemy's question, Jesus had asked why they tempted Him and then commanded a coin to be brought. Even in this delicate predicament, when they thought they had the upper hand, Jesus took command of the situation. Now He asked another question, "Whose is this image and superscription?" They had to admit it was Caesar's. He had put them on the defensive. His reply left nothing to be said. Like the question, it appears in identical form in all three gospels: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

Jesus' statement in effect announced the tribute lawful, or at least left the Herodians no room to take issue. Likewise, the Pharisees had an answer that in no way detracted from their concept of the majesty and primacy of God's will. Moreover, the statement was thoroughly in accord with all of Christ's teaching. In the light of His other teaching, it is clear that He meant to put the demands of God first. But even a Herodian Jew could not question that principle. But Jesus did not merge the two claims, and identify that of God with that of Caesar. He did not make the demands of Caesar a definition of the will of God.

"There is one point that is usually overlooked in a discussion of this story, namely, that it was necessary to ask Jesus this question in order to know his position on the Roman question. Nothing could better demonstrate his absorption in the religious problem. His message demanded repentance and obedience to God. He seems to have rejected the ardent hopes for a restoration of the Kingdom of David. His thought was above the political struggles of the hour, fixed on obedience in spirit and purpose to the will of God."¹

This brief statement of Jesus has been variously appraised as to its value as a principle of the relation between church and state, and as a guide to the individual in properly distinguishing his loyalty to the state and his duty to God. Just as the full content of its meaning is to be understood only in the light of all Jesus' teaching, so the meaning given to it by Christians depends largely on their interpretation of Jesus' gospel. H. D. A. Major, writing as a British Christian, puts large value on the reply of Jesus.² On the other hand, Martin Dibelius, German-Lutheran theologian, begins his discussion of the New Testament message in relation to the orders of human society with an explicit warning against making too much of this or other New Testament statements on the state.³ Another commentator says of the reply that it is

"apparently an ethical platitude. Everybody knows that this is right; the real question is to decide what does belong to Caesar, and that Jesus referred back to his inquirers."⁴

This reply seems to give, at least, Jesus' view that man must give God loyalty and still do his duty as a citizen.

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1. Branscomb: op. cit., p. 215 (The Gospel of Mark)
2. Cf. Major, et al.: op. cit., p. 148
3. Cf. Ehrenstrom: Christian Faith and the Common Life, p. 19
4. Theodore H. Robinson: The Gospel of Matthew (The Moffatt New Testament Commentary), p. 180

b. The Function of the State

It has been suggested that Jesus' use of the coin as symbolic of the Roman government may signify that He understood what history has made evident—that the Roman empire was a vast commercial enterprise. It was built on the desire to make money. It protected and profited by commerce. It was truly a business civilization. The coin was a fitting symbol of it. It may be that Jesus' reply to the question about tribute is an acknowledgement that the state has a function and that it has right to such support as enables it to fulfill, and in some cases, rewards it for fulfilling, its function. A democratic state is supported by the people who comprise it in order that it may fulfill the requirements they have laid down for it by democratic procedure. But in the case of Roman control over Palestine, no democratic procedure or ideals were involved. The failure of the Jews to handle their own affairs and keep the peace by means of their own leaders made possible Roman intervention and control. No doubt the pax Romana made possible an unprecedented amount of commercial activity with a consequent increase in the amount of money in circulation. Whether it meant any real advantage to the nation is doubtful, but it is certain that the commercial classes and those who directly supported the regime did benefit. The men who asked Jesus about tribute were Herodians, who probably held positions through their political activity and support of the dynasty, and Pharisees. The Pharisees were nationalistic, but they were largely middle class people. Probably many of them engaged in commercial pursuits and

other enterprises made possible by Roman control. It is probable that both groups owed something to Caesar. It may be of interest to wonder what Jesus would have replied if the question had been asked in sincerity by the common people among whom He lived and worked most of the time, and whose rights He championed.

Another fact that must have been apparent to Jesus was that not only, or even mainly, did oppression emanate from Roman authorities. The Jewish leaders took advantage of the people, probably exploiting the nation's hatred of Rome. He definitely mentions some sins of the leaders against their people, which suggests that He felt as did the prophet who criticized the shepherds of Israel for devouring instead of feeding the sheep. He speaks of scribes "that devour widow's houses and for a pretense make long prayers." One statement of Jesus that is thought to refer to a certain oppressive measure of the Romans, which would fall mainly on the common people, counsels submission and the doing of even more than was required. The statement, "whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two," is thought by some commentators to be a reference to the practice of Roman military detachments, in that they impressed people through whose villages they passed to carry, or furnish animals to transport, their baggage. This would in reality be a small matter beside the loss of all one's property at the hands of a fellow Jew.

Inasmuch as Jesus made no definite statement of His idea of the value of the Roman domination, or of His conception of the state, it must be inferred from other sources. Jesus accepted the law and the prophets. In them no condemnation of the state is made. Only the

abuses of its power are criticized. The Old Testament made little differentiation of sacred and secular authority. The law of God was regarded as being in the keeping and subject to the interpretation of the priests. The same law was regarded as binding on them and on kings. The state was regarded as having been instituted in Israel because of the people's need and desire for a more unified command against enemies. Deuteronomy and Ezekiel seem to regard the king as subordinate to the priesthood in an ideal society. The situation that existed in Jesus' day could scarcely have been regarded as true to the will of God. The Roman power had been established by military might, and the Herodian dynasty held power because of its support. But Jesus regarded the Jewish priestly aristocrats of the Sanhedrin as untrue to their trust. Probably He regarded the Romans as meeting a need and fulfilling a purpose in the common life of His day. He must have held that loyalty to God took supremacy over loyalty to the state. It is implied in His reply to the question about tribute. Moreover, the supremacy of God is emphasized and loyalty to His will required in all Jesus' teaching. In this He is at one with the law and the prophets. His attitude on the tribute indicates that it did not interfere with the nation's or the individual's duty to God. Since He regarded the leadership of the nation as corrupt, it may well be that like the prophets He considered foreign domination a divine judgment. In a similar situation, Jeremiah counselled obedience to their covenant with Babylon. Jesus seems to have assumed that Roman rule ought to be accepted as an act of God, to be removed by God in His own time.

As a general principle, it may be assumed that Jesus regarded the state as having a function in the common life which was not incompatible with God's will. But His reply to the tribute question seems to leave it to the discrimination of His followers to discern that function and its limits. The whole of His teaching, and the principles of the law and the prophets, must furnish the norm of judgment. Briefly stated, Jesus' attitude toward the state is that its worth is measured by the service it renders.

CHAPTER IX

THE PRINCIPLE OF JUSTICE IN JESUS' ETHICAL TEACHING

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1. The Value of the Individual

Closely associated with Jesus' teaching on love as the basis of the moral law is His emphasis on the importance of the individual. In human history and thought, even beyond the bounds of the Christian church, the doctrine of the dignity of every person has been one of the most influential doctrines derived from the gospels. In His emphasis on the worth of personality, Jesus develops to its fulness the teaching of the Old Testament. The covenant idea which regarded every man as having a direct responsibility to God bestowed dignity on the individual. Not his wealth or ability or position but his relation to God was the measure of his worth. In recognition of this, the law made numerous provisions for the protection of human rights. The prophets boldly championed the rights of the individual against leaders who had little regard for the worth of men. It was the prophetic message that God demanded justice for all from the national leaders. But the society in which Jesus lived was very careless of the rights of men. Rank, wealth, nationality were all more important factors in determining a person's worth than was his relation to God. The needs of the individual received very little attention. He was always the servant of the group or of an individual of higher rank.

In His teaching and actions Jesus takes a different attitude. He apparently considered an individual as important as a crowd. He was always ready to give attention and help to any person that sought it. The person's rank, creed, race or condition seems to have made no difference. He taught Nicodemus who came to Him by night in Jerusalem. He was just as ready to instruct the Samaritan woman of ill repute whom He met beside the well as He paused to rest. The Roman centurion, the Syrophenician woman, Zacchaeus the publican and the scribe who questioned Jesus about the greatest commandment, all received his help and commendation. The many works of healing which the gospels record were done in response to individual needs. Jesus did not use this power to attract followers or to advertise Himself. Often He hesitated to heal because of the undesirable publicity that He received. But need and faith always won a response from Him. The parables of the lost coin and of the one lost sheep out of a flock of a hundred illustrate God's concern for every individual. In the parable of the last judgment the basis of reward is the consideration that has been shown to individuals who have been called the least brethren of Christ. Likewise, it is stated that the rewards of the kingdom are for individuals:

"There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, . . . or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundred fold now in this time . . . and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29f.).

In matters of moral obligation and of ethical action, Jesus puts the responsibility on the individual. Every man is called on to love God and his fellow men because of God's love for him. On the basis of the two great commandments, Jesus' conception of the individual may

be summarized in two points. (1) God has created man as an ethical person capable of fellowship with the divine. (2) Further, man is intended for fellowship with other men. As an ethical being capable of fellowship with God, man has certain rights. As a person among other persons man has certain duties. The command to love recognizes that man is capable of acting voluntarily, and is responsible for his actions.

A corollary of individuality is freedom. But the second command indicates that man's freedom is not to be construed as freedom from others, but freedom with others. It is freedom in community and for the sake of community, not freedom from the duties imposed by community. Freedom in community indicates that an individual's duties towards others are balanced by rights which others are bound to respect. The law of love affirms the sanctity of unity in community and asserts the duty of every individual to contribute to the strengthening of that unity. Justice is the principle that affirms the sanctity of individuality in community. The second command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," infers that the right of the individual is not submerged in the duty to love—that is, to sacrifice the good of the self for the welfare of the group. Rather, the suggestion is that the good of the individual is compatible with the welfare of the group. Hence it has been said that the love required of men in ethical relationships with their fellows may best be defined as mutuality. But mutuality also involves justice, which serves to unify men as well as to guarantee their individual rights. Because the community is composed of individuals and has no existence apart from the

individuals that compose it, whatever fosters individuality in community fosters community.

"The supreme principle assuring order and harmony in human relations is justice. Justice is essentially the same as righteousness, but it is thought of primarily in its reference to human relations, whereas righteousness is a dynamic principle in the moral order of the world. Righteousness is an attribute of God, and men are righteous in so far as they resemble God in character. Justice is applied righteousness, and for that reason it is particularly associated with law-courts which exist for the purpose of maintaining right human relationships. For the purpose of ethics, however, there is a danger in this distinctively legal reference. Justice is something grander and finer than anything that can be expressed by legal decisions, which may on occasion be unjust. In its widest sense, justice is one with that dynamic principle of righteousness which does in the moral universe what the force of gravitation does in the physical. Without gravitation the systems of the stars would fly asunder in a cosmic catastrophe; without righteousness and justice human society would become chaos."¹

2. Jesus' Teaching on Divine Justice

Jesus followed the Old Testament in His teaching that "righteousness is a dynamic principle in the moral order of the world." His teaching on justice in human relations may be approached by way of His words regarding the justice of God. Just as He insisted that it was the duty of men to recognize the love of God by their response in loving their fellow men, so He insisted that men must live in the consciousness that God will do justly. The beatitudes are clear statements of the fact that those who live in accord with God's will can be certain of their just reward. The claim of Jesus that He respects and fulfills the law is indication that He accepts justice as the princi-

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1. Osborn: Christian Ethics, p. 17

ple of human relationships. Moreover He said, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). Then follows Jesus' interpretation of certain commandments of the decalogue; namely, Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not forswear thyself. The new teaching that He gives is not a relaxing of justice, but rather an indication that justice in its fullest sense required more than a merely literal observance of the commands. In effect, He teaches that love of fellow men is necessary not as a substitute for justice but as the only adequate fulfillment of the demands of justice. Jesus does not require less than justice, nor does He lay down a principle that is other than just. Rather, He requires a fuller justice, which does more than give literal obedience. Following His interpretation of the commands, there appears that section of Jesus' teaching which has given more trouble to ethical teachers than any other portion of the gospels.

The precepts in Matthew 5:38-48 seem to some an indication that Jesus was not interested in social justice. In place of the Old Testament principle of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," Jesus offers the precept "Resist not him that is evil." Some interpreters incline toward the view that the precepts of this section are not meant to be general principles, but were to be applicable to particular situations which the people of Palestine at the time of Jesus had to face. The precept to turn the other cheek is regarded as a reference to a common form of insult, that of smiting a person on the cheek with the back of the hand. The Talmud prescribed a heavy

fine against the offender. If Jesus had reference to this fact, then He is not here counselling non-resistance to violence that would endanger life. He is instead forbidding the spirit that seeks revenge. Likewise, it is suggested that the command to go the second mile refers to a practice of the Roman military establishment which angered the people of the land. The soldiers required the villages through which they passed to furnish men and animals to transport their baggage. Probably the practice was legal, but exasperated the independent Jews. The next command indicates a legal situation. There is no indication that the idea of injustice in the courts enters here. On the other hand, the law provided that a man could not be deprived of his cloak, to say nothing of his coat. But at least it is inferred that the claim of the creditor has some standing before the law. The next precept encourages men not to turn away from those who would borrow of them. The law commanded that a man in need was to be helped by a loan without interest. Probably Jesus is encouraging a fulfillment of the law, if these commands are meant by Him to have general application. Another type of interpretation holds that these commands were meant only for the band of disciples in the interests of missionary work.

"Undoubtedly the Sermon on the Mount was addressed to the band of disciples and it has special reference to their missionary task of preaching the gospel and exemplifying it by their lives. The task was no easy one and Jesus indicated clearly that it would involve suffering and persecution. It is natural to conclude then that the smiting would be in connexion with the opposition and persecution they might expect. On no account were they to manifest the spirit of revenge. As his followers, Jesus told them they were to be givers, even to the extent of complying with unjust demands. The spirit of giving and loving service had nothing in common with that of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for

a tooth'; rather it implied a willingness to suffer wrong, always provided it were for righteousness sake. The limitation is significant. In itself the enduring of persecution is not meritorious; it is of value only when it comes because the disciple has been opposing evil. Nor is it a blind purposeless acceptance of oppression; it is an active virtue involving a definite stand for righteousness and a strenuous effort to establish it."¹

The section that follows these precepts brings out the principle that is involved. Jesus' disciples are commanded to love even their enemies and persecutors, "that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." That God loves all men is indicated by the fact that he has so ordered His creation that all persons share in the common blessings that sustain life, regardless of their attitude toward God who gives all things. Because it is the will of God that all men shall know Him and live in fellowship with Him, God makes known His love in order to save them. Men can do no less than show a similar concern and love for other human beings: "Ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." But, as the beatitudes and other teachings of Jesus indicate, there is a principle of justice involved in the relation of God to men. Even the willingness of God to forgive the sins of men is linked with their willingness to forgive the trespasses of their fellow men:

"If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive your trespasses. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14f.)

Jesus refers at times to a day of divine judgment when the good and evil among men shall be separated and rewarded according to their

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1. Osborn: op. cit., pp. 268f.

deeds. He even speaks of an unforgivable sin which will not be passed over by God. In accord with this fact of divine judgment, Jesus urges His disciples to take the initiative in showing a brother his sin. In the book of Leviticus, where the second Great Commandment appears, the context indicates that this love of the brethren which is commanded is to be a motive and means for overcoming sin and enmity. Jesus takes up this same line of teaching in Matthew 18:15ff.: "If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between him and thee alone." If the brother refuses to acknowledge his fault even in the face of witnesses, then the matter may come before the group. If the brother still will not listen, he is to be considered as outside the fellowship of the faithful, having forfeited his rights by denying his duties. This teaching seems to imply what Jesus and the prophets clearly taught in regard to judgment. The same righteousness and love of God which seeks to win men, may also become wrath to destroy the disobedient. Here Jesus seems to imply that the men were to exercise judgment through love as did God. The God of love is also the God of wrath.

When Jesus bestows on the church the right to judge its members, He does not contradict His admonition to "Judge not that ye be not judged." What He forbade was presumptuous judgment by an individual or group on a basis that they would not be willing to accept as the standard by which they were to be judged. What He permits is a recognition in practice of the standard of judgment which they recognize as God's measure for themselves. Jesus teaches that divine righteousness is the basis of justice in human affairs. Since God is

just, men are to be just; because God is love, men are to return His love by service to their fellows. But can love and justice exist side by side in God or in human society? Are they not mutually exclusive? There can be no doubt that Jesus taught the love of God. It is equally certain that He pronounced the judgment of God on all that was evil. In reference to the Pharisees, Jesus once said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13). In His teaching regarding the divine judgment, Jesus repeatedly referred to the day of judgment when "the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds" (Matthew 16:27). It is clear that Jesus expected the kingdom of heaven to be established and ruled in justice. The question then arises, whether the present age is to be characterized by the love of God and the coming age by His just rule. The conclusion appears to be that judgment is recognized by Jesus even in the present age. Many of His statements on divine justice are referred entirely to a future day of judgment when God will separate the tares from the wheat, the sheep from the goats, and establish the kingdom of righteousness. However, it was the message of the prophets whom Jesus professed to follow that judgment was carried out by God even in the ordinary workings of His will in the universe. Both God's love and His justice are to be consummated and perfected with the establishment of the kingdom at the day of the Lord. Both His love and His justice are operative in our present world and are normative for human relations.

3. Mutuality Involves Both Love and Justice

The term mutuality has been used to describe the relationship that is characteristic of Christian ethics. According to the teaching of Jesus and the Old Testament as summed up in the two Great Commandments, every ethical situation is a tri-partite relationship. The will of God, the rights of the individual and the interests of other individuals or of the whole group, must be considered in determining a right attitude or course of action. Liberalism tends to magnify the individual at the expense of the common good. Communism and Fascism tend to emphasize the rights of a particular group or class at the expense even of the individuals that compose it, and with very little regard for the rights of any persons or groups outside it. All three systems tend to identify the will of God with that of the dominant party, or else to deny the existence or righteousness of God altogether. Liberalism depends largely on law to guarantee and define the rights and duties of the individual and the group. But as was pointed out, no law can adequately cover all situations, and strict adherence to law in the form of enactments rather than principles is less than true justice. Fascism seems to conceive of justice as the right of the stronger to oppress the weaker. Christian ethics takes into account all factors. Both the individual and the group are recognized as having rights and duties. The emphasis on the will of God enables the Christian ethic to conform to reality and avoid a hopeless pessimism and an unfounded optimism.

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