

charity and with the Holy Spirit poured forth into our hearts. And charity is active, the Holy Spirit is fruitful, as our quotations have shown. There is a law of Christ as well as a law of Moses. The good work of fulfilling the law of Christ, which a man performs after his justification by faith, and which is an effect of divine grace and in no way derogatory of the absolute pre-eminence of grace, is capable of earning the reward of eternal life. It is something a man can 'boast about in himself', something he can take a legitimate pride in, provided—and it is a supremely important *proviso*—he remembers that the good he does is worth nothing apart from its foundation of grace.

Luther distorted and misapplied one element of Christian teaching to the point of serious heresy, and with disastrous consequences to Christendom. But he did do Catholic Christianity one important service. In a Catholic society such as Europe was in the fifteenth century, when everyone is baptized in infancy, and everyone belongs to the Catholic Church, it is very easy to take the Christian life for granted and to forget its deep foundations on faith and the grace of Christ. Where this happens Catholic piety and Catholic morality can become depressingly shallow. Shallow morality and shallow piety, as the event showed, are only too liable in time of temptation to fall away. Luther's violent reaction against current superficiality forced Catholics of every degree and station in the Church to look to their foundations, and to thirst more eagerly for the living fountains of grace.



JUSTICE IN ISRAEL: KEY TO THE COVENANT

By R.S.

I. *Justice and Judgment*

JUSTICE or righteousness (they translate the same Hebrew word: *tsedek*) is that by which Israel lives, that by which it maintains its existence as Yahweh's chosen people. To act righteously, or justly, is to act in such a way as to maintain the covenant.

When Yahweh intervened to deliver the Israelites from Egypt, he set them apart from all other nations; and on Mount Sinai he

bound them to himself by a perpetual contract. They became a nation *set apart* for Yahweh, who although Lord of all the world freely chose them for his own through no merit of theirs. By this act Yahweh revealed his righteousness to Israel, and even imposed it on them too through the law, as the charter of the covenant. So the Hebrew law is quite unlike the law of other peoples: it is entirely theological, and is not the expression of the will of the people or of their ruler. Apart from God, there is neither law nor justice in Israel. The people were to respond in obedience to the law, thereby moulding themselves to the *right order* of Yahweh's creative will for them. Obedience is the response of the righteous nation, bringing down the blessings of Yahweh upon them, blessings that mirror creation itself. Justice in the people, obeying the commands of their God, is met by the justice of Yahweh himself, who blesses them with the *light* of his guidance and with life-giving fruitfulness. On the other hand, disobedience brings the corresponding curses. Israelites are 'committed' to Yahweh, and whether they like it or not he is everywhere about them. The blessings and curses which punctuate certain parts of the books of the law are powerful reminders to the people of God's presence in the covenant. Israel is constantly faced with its commitment to God and its position of responsibility as his chosen nation.

We have said that the 'right order' of God's will is impressed upon Israel by means of the law, which formulates the moral demands of the covenant. This notion of right order is important, because, like the blessings of life and light, it reflects the original creation of cosmic order from chaos, although now it is on the moral level that Yahweh moulds his people. In Isaias, Yahweh curses those who upset this order:

*Woe to those who call evil good,
and good evil,
who exchange darkness for light,
and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet,
and sweet for bitter!*

*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
and shrewd in their own sight! . . .
for they have rejected the law of Yahweh of hosts.*

(Is. v, 20-24.)

Righteousness, proper to Yahweh, is required of Israelites in their relations towards him and between themselves, so that the covenant may be upheld. God and his covenant-nation make a unity, just like a man with his family. In both cases there is a complex but dynamic whole whose existence depends on the preservation of certain definite relations between each part of the whole and all the others: each must act according to the particular role that is his, and so contribute to the harmonious development of the whole unit towards the shape of the mould of Yahweh's righteousness.

Unjust actions on the moral level disturb the equilibrium of the covenant, and by them the doer loses the favour and approval of Yahweh; he loses righteousness. Justice demands the restoration of the proper relation between the wrongdoer and his neighbour. To re-establish this relation is to *justify* him who was wronged. To justify someone means to obtain for a man, who for any reason lacks it, his due place within the covenant. By justifying the man whom one has wronged one regains one's lost righteousness before Yahweh. It is interesting to see how this early notion of justification, by which a person is accorded the place to which he is entitled, persisted even until the new testament. In Luke vii, 29, which uses the Greek parallel word for to 'justify', we read: 'And all the people hearing . . . justified God'. In other words, they recognized God for what he is, and gave him due honour.

In return for justifying his covenant-partners, Yahweh demands that, in addition to bare obedience, they honour and trust in him, exclusively and without reserve. They are to put all their confidence in him to supply their needs, to protect them from danger and sickness, and to lead them to victory in battle against their common enemies. An important example of this demand for faith early in scripture is the demand which Yahweh made of Abraham. Sara was too old for child-bearing, and she found the thought laughable that she might have a son. But 'Abraham trusted Yahweh, who *counted it as justice in him*' (Gen. xv, 6). Here again, this notion finds its way right through to the new testament: positive use is made of this particular text by St Paul (Gal. iii, 6; Rom. iv, 3; cf. Jas. ii, 23), whose teaching is justification by faith (faith of course being a principle of action).

If we leave aside those few sections of the old testament which

give evidence of Greek influence (for example Wis. viii, 7, where justice is clearly one of the four cardinal virtues of the Greek philosophers), justice is never an abstract quality or habit of mind for the Israelite. Justice is an action rather than a state. It is a duty imposed at a particular moment, an immediate and concrete demand for action of a definite kind. A Hebrew who acts justly is a just man, as in the case of Abraham we have quoted; whereas we tend to think the other way round—a man acts justly because he is virtuous. The Hebrew Bible demands not virtue as such, but right action, practical justice, for maintaining the harmony of Yahweh's will for Israel.

The covenant itself is essentially moral in character, as is manifest from the fact that the words 'covenant' and 'commandments' are sometimes used interchangeably (e.g. Deut. iv, 13; III Kings viii, 21). The Israelite is morally committed by the law in every department of his life, private and social; and he who obeys in everything is just. To take one small example, the law permits lending to a fellow-Israelite, without interest, and the taking of a pledge as security for the loan. But if a poor man gives his only coat as security, the lender must return it to him each night 'that he may sleep in his coat and bless you, and *it shall be righteousness to you before Yahweh*' (Deut. xxiv, 13).

We have seen that justice, or righteousness, in the old testament is a complex notion, at once religious, in that God himself is righteous and justifies his faithful covenant partners, and also moral, as demanding compliance with the definite set of commands of the law. When God justifies a man, it means that he has recognized the man's innocence and his entitlement to a place in the covenant. This recognition by God of a man's innocence (or guilt, for that matter) is a 'judgment' (*mishpat*). God's just judgment is according to the man's rightful position in the covenant; and this 'right' too is the man's *mishpat*, since it is that in him by which he is to be adjudged. Clearly, to 'justify' and to 'judge' have rather similar meanings, and they are not always distinct in scripture. In general, to judge with righteousness one must have both the will and the power to maintain the covenant. A man's justice is his innocence, which is recognized by a judgment. Ultimately, Yahweh is the Judge. But he is not in the least like a modern judge who, symbolized by a blindfold figure holding a pair of scales, applies equitably a legal code

having a status logically prior to his own. Yahweh judges in the manner of a great king of antiquity, exercising his rightful dominion of life and death over his subjects. The law according to which he judges is his own will, his design for his kingdom as a whole.

It is the role of an upright judge to ensure the realization of the just order of things (*right order* once again) by imposing it in particular cases. This is why the warrior-leaders of Israel in its early days in Canaan were called 'judges' of the people. Because of the covenant, the enemies of Israel were the enemies of Yahweh too. Israel's leaders were judges because by Yahweh's oracular guidance they determined what the covenant *order* required—that is, the destruction of enemies barring settlement in the promised land—and then enforced the just requirement by routing the enemies (the victory being entirely due, of course, to Yahweh's fighting on Israel's side).

The warrior-leader's role of 'judging' Israel means that he must use his strong position of influence and honour to support and protect from injustice all those who do not violate the covenant. Naturally, the people look to him for the blessings and the 'justices' (cf. the Song of Debhora, Judges v, 11) which come ultimately from Yahweh. After the establishment of the monarchy this charismatic function of a single representative figure becomes concentrated in the king, Yahweh's chosen, anointed ruler and mediator for the people. It is seen at its zenith in the reigns of kings David and Solomon. Especially from the time of Yahweh's oracle through Nathan promising to establish David's royal house for ever, the king is recognized as the source in Israel of Yahweh's righteousness. He is referred to as the 'breath of our nostrils, the anointed of Yahweh' (Lam. iv, 20) and as the 'lamp of Israel' (II Kings (Sam.) xxi, 17), since he is the channel for the divine creative blessings upon the nation, life and light. A righteous king maintains the covenant by imposing Yahweh's will upon Israel in his inspired judgments. Of this important charism Solomon is the example *par excellence*. 'Give your servant an understanding heart to judge your people', he prayed, 'that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this your people, which is so great?' (III (I) Kings iii, 9). 'And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and largeness of heart as the sand on the sea shore' (*ib.*, iv, 29).

II. *Israel's Failure, and Vision of the Future*

But Solomon failed to maintain his righteousness. From then on the monarchy fell into schism, to be followed by growing decadence, punctuated only by occasional weak attempts at reform. Social evil followed hard on the corruption of the monarchy. The old classless peasant society of the Judges period now began to give place to a rising urban civilization, with its familiar attendant evil of the concentration of wealth in the hands of relatively few landowners and merchants. The kings were determined to centralize control of the nation as a whole so far as possible. Accordingly there arose in the towns a new class of administrative officials owing allegiance directly to the king. The 'elders', local leaders who had emerged from within the independent tribal societies, found their influence passing to the new commercial and political aristocracy. It was against these last that Isaias raised his voice:

*I will give children to be their princes,
and boys shall rule over them.
And the people shall be oppressed,
every one by another,
and every man by his neighbour;
the youth will be insolent to the aged,
and the base to the noble. (Is. iii, 4f).*

Here, once again, is a good example of that inversion of 'right order' which represents a departure from the will of Yahweh for his people. Corruption increased in both kingdoms, as the new professionals gained in power at the expense of the displaced peasants, the rural proletariat, 'the people of the land'. There was no place for religion in those circles where concern was all for political jockeying, for expansion of land-holdings, or for the new international commerce that arose in Solomon's time. The rich turned 'justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth' (Amos v, 7). It was among the oppressed poor that pure Yahwism continued to flourish; and it was on their behalf that the prophets, led by Amos, aimed their vivid and powerful invective against the rich careerists. For the prophets, the 'poor' and the 'afflicted' are identified with the 'just'. But let the prophets speak for themselves:

For wicked men are found among my people;
 they lurk like fowlers setting snares;
 they lay a trap,
 but it is men they catch!
 As a cage is full of birds,
 so are their houses full of treachery.
 Therefore they have become great and rich,
 they have grown fat and sleek.
 They know no bounds in deeds of wickedness;
 they judge not the cause,
 the cause of the orphans, that they may be happy;
 the right (*mishpat*) of the needy they do not judge.

(Jer. v, 26-28.)

Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob,
 and rulers of the house of Israel,
 who abhor the right
 and pervert all equity,
 you that build up Sion with blood
 and Jerusalem with iniquity!
 Her rulers judge for bribes,
 her priests instruct for hire,
 and the divining of her prophets is for money!
 Yet do they lean upon Yahweh, saying:
 'Is not Yahweh in the midst of us?
 No evil shall befall us!' (Micah iii, 9-11.)

The official priestly religion has fallen into decadence: all is easy confidence that, because Yahweh is bound to Israel by the covenant, nothing can go wrong with the nation, no catastrophe can come upon them. "They smooth away the wound of my people lightly, saying "Peace, peace", when there is no peace" (Jer. vi, 14). But surely Yahweh will protect them in the event of trouble? Their false security is shattered by the prophets, who warn Israel that Yahweh, so far from helping them, will bring retribution upon them for their repudiation of justice:

Woe to you that desire the day of Yahweh! . . .
 It is darkness, and not light;
 as if a man fled from a lion,
 only to meet a bear! (Amos v, 18ff.)

Utterly bewildered, they will cry out to Yahweh:

*Why have you struck us
so that there is no healing for us?
We expected peace, but there came nothing good;
a time of healing, but behold, terror!* (Jer. xiv, 19.)

Yahweh has turned against his people because their sacrifices are empty of meaning, their prayers mere lip-service; justice has vanished from their worship, for they do not offer it with righteousness:

*I hate, I despise your feasts,
your assemblies I hold in disgust! . . .
Take away from me the noise of your songs;
let me not hear the sound of your harps.
But let the right flow down like waters,
and justice like an everflowing stream.* (Amos v, 21-24.)

Aghast at the spread of corruption in Jerusalem ('the once faithful city has become a harlot, Sion that was full of justice'), Isaiah turns his thoughts to a future time of regeneration, when

*Sion shall be redeemed by justice,
and those in her who repent by righteousness.*
(Is. i, 27.)

An eternal epoch of justice is to be inaugurated by the expected Davidic Messiah:

*Extensive is his government,
and there is boundless peace
upon the throne of David
and over his kingdom,
to establish it and uphold it
in justice and righteousness
henceforth for ever.* (Is. ix, 6.)

The Messiah himself will know how to 'refuse the evil and choose the good' (vii, 15)—the very charism for the judgment of right order which Yahweh had granted to Solomon. Moreover, he is acclaimed by the title 'Prince of Peace' (ix, 5). Peace and order are to characterize the messianic era:

*and the work of righteousness shall be peace,
and the effect of justice shall be quiet
and security for ever.* (Is. xxxii, 17.)

Nation will not lift up the sword against nation, and all creation will rejoice in the peace it knew before the fall of Adam (e.g. Is. ii, 4; xi, 6 ff.).

But Isaias, in common with other prophets, envisages the return of all creation to right order as the outcome only of a great and testing crisis for the chosen people. Since Israel has rejected him, Yahweh has appointed an imminent day of judgment, when the proud who refuse to honour him will be overthrown:

*For Yahweh of hosts has a day
against all that is proud and haughty,
against all that is exalted and high. . . .
And men shall enter the caves of the rocks
and the holes of the earth,
from before the terror of Yahweh
and the glory of his majesty,
when he rises to terrify the earth. (Is. ii, 12, 19.)*

This 'day of Yahweh' is seen as the climax of the lawsuit that has been argued back and forth between Yahweh and Israel through the centuries. The legal trial began with the very birth of Israel as a nation at the exodus from Egypt, when the people put Yahweh to the test in the desert at Meriba (*ribh*=contention, lawsuit), saying: 'Is Yahweh among us, or not?' (Ex. xvii, 7). The case is a favourite theme of the prophets, who show Yahweh pleading his justice as against his unfaithful covenant-partner: 'Judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard' (Is. v, 3). But in the old testament the justice of God can never be separated from the figure of God as Judge. Just as *mishpat* is used for each of the stages of adjudication (the inherent 'right' of each party, the just weighing up and recognition of this right, and the final pronouncement of judgment—vindication and sentence), so Yahweh himself is to appear ultimately as judge in the very case in which he was the plaintiff. In early times judgment necessarily meant vindication for Israel as a whole, and destruction, or at least subjugation, for the gentiles. But although this theme is still echoed by the prophets, it frequently gives place in their writings to a new development. Judgment can still conclude the lawsuit only with the justification of Yahweh and those loyal to him; but no longer are the loyal simply identified with the nation as it stood. The evident unrighteousness of the new ruling classes in

the towns makes such an outcome difficult to conceive. So Yahweh will strike down the wicked of Israel by bringing strong gentile nations against them (Is. v, 26 ff.; x, 5 ff.), and only a righteous remnant will survive. Israel will be reduced to a tenth, like a forest that is destroyed. Finally, even the few remaining trees are to be hewn down. But of these 'the stump is a holy seed' (Is. vi, 13), from which will sprout the new, justified, messianic Israel. This is to be the unending kingdom of peace and material prosperity, which Yahweh's anointed will establish.

Meanwhile, in the face of the rejection of the covenant-God by so many in Israel, and the easy assumption by others of a prerogative for the chosen people binding Yahweh to intervene in their favour, the prophets before the exile strove hard for a return to the original atmosphere of the Sinai covenant; but without avail. The last attempt at reform under Josias failed, and it was clear to the more far-sighted that Israel was altogether unable to live up to its commitment under the covenant. How then was Yahweh's plan for the moulding of his people to proceed? For Jeremias and Ezechiel Yahweh's design is now seen in a new light. He will conclude a new and eternal covenant with his people, in which the law will not just be an external code of regulations, but an interior inspiration implanted in the heart, to be lived by. Under the old covenant, justice was primarily collective, a national concern. But now the emphasis is to move towards the *individual* (e.g. Ez. xviii; Jer. xxxi, 29 ff.), as well as towards *interior* righteousness. The first step is to be taken by Yahweh himself, who will pardon their sins and justify them; then each man will *know* Yahweh and be united to him in his heart. The clearest statement of this inspired vision of the 'new testament', to be established by Christ after six more centuries, is the oracle to Jeremias (but cf. Ez. xxxvi, 25-9):

Behold the days shall come—oracle of Yahweh—when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Juda; not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke although they were my possession—oracle of Yahweh. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days—oracle of Yahweh. I will put my law deep within them, and I will write it on their hearts. Then

I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbour, saying to one another 'Know Yahweh!' But they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest—oracle of Yahweh; for I will forgive their crime, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jer. xxxi, 31-4.)

III. *The New Order*

The predicted retribution fell upon Israel. Jerusalem was taken and laid waste; even the holy temple of Yahweh was destroyed; the ark of the covenant disappeared for ever; the people were exiled from their promised land. In the long misery of exile there was desperate need of some new note of hope, if the religion of Israel was not to disintegrate and vanish altogether. In *Isaias xl-lv*, 'written' then, and in the prophets who 'wrote' after the return from exile, attention is directed forwards to the new world in which the people will be established in perfect justice, a state of innocence like that before Meriba. From this time on, justice loses much of its punitive significance as a sanction for sin; the exile is deemed to have accomplished the just judgment of Yahweh against his unrighteous people:

*Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and proclaim unto her
that her evil is ended,
that her iniquity is expiated,
that she has received from Yahweh's hand
double for all her sins. (Is. xl, 2.)*

Instead, justice now comes more and more to be seen as deliverance for the oppressed and exiled, and their restoration. In other words, justice and righteousness are now frequently identified with the longed-for salvation:

*Heavens, dispense righteousness like the dew,
and let the clouds shower it down!
Let the earth open, that salvation may sprout forth,
and let righteousness spring up together,
that I, Yahweh, shall create. (Is. xlv, 8.)*

Yahweh himself is 'a just God and a Saviour' (*Is. xlv, 21*). The converse of salvation is confusion; to be saved is to be *set in order*, according to Yahweh's will:

*They have all been put to shame and confounded,
the makers of idols go in confusion together.
But Israel is saved by Yahweh
with everlasting salvation. (Is. xlv, 16 ff.).*

It is inconceivable that the Creator of the cosmos, the ordered universe, should leave his people in disorder:

*For thus says Yahweh, . . .
who formed the earth and made it
(he established it;
not as chaos did he create it,
he formed it to be inhabited): . . .
'I did not say to the race of Jacob,
Seek me in chaos!
I, Yahweh, speak with justice;
I declare right things.' (Is. xlv, 18 ff.)*

Moreover, there is another development in the new age of justice: the new covenant is to be not only eternal, but also *universal*. The new and righteous Israel is to be given a mission to all peoples, that they too may see Yahweh's glory and be delivered:

*I, Yahweh, have called you in righteousness;
I have taken you by the hand and moulded you.
I have appointed you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations, to open the eyes of the blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness. (Is. xlii, 6 ff.)*

In Israel after the return from exile there came into being a small group of extremely righteous men, who modelled their religious thought to a large extent upon Jeremias. This prophet, more than any, finding himself cast out by men, had taken refuge in Yahweh, with whom he maintained a deeply intimate and moving dialogue. It is his post-exilic disciples who, in so many of the psalms, describe themselves as humble, poor, persecuted (and sometimes ill) followers of Yahweh. Their thoughts play continually around the relation between human and divine justice, usually on the individual plane. If a man abandons himself entirely to God, and is morally just in his conduct, God must uphold him since God is righteous. Similarly, God must intervene to strike down the wicked. If immediately the unrighteous seem

to prosper while the just suffer, it cannot be for long; for then life would have no meaning. But these psalmists were tortured by the conflict between their interpretation of life and concrete experience: the wicked continued to flourish, the just to be afflicted! This too is the problem dealt with at length by the book of Job. In Job the problem is never really solved. The conclusion reached (in a magnificent dialogue: xxxviii-xlii, 6) is that God's justice utterly transcends the understanding of man; but the application of God's justice and justification to mankind is not explained in Job. Certain of the psalms (e.g. xv, xxix, xxxvi, xlvi, lxxii) seem to catch glimpses of the solution of a just retribution in survival after death. But a clearer statement of this had to await the last book to be written in the old testament, Wisdom. By this solution the old idea that the righteous were justified by God with his blessing was not contradicted; quite the contrary. But happiness ceased to be related to righteousness as practically an automatic manifestation of it, and became instead an eschatological reward.

One final development remains, at which we have already hinted when we spoke of Jeremias' prophecy that God would put his law into men's hearts. In Ezechiel's rather similar prophecy of the new covenant, he said:

... I will cleanse you; and I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk according to my laws. . . .
(Ez. xxxvi, 25-7.)

The emphasis here is strongly upon the initiative taken by God himself in man's salvation. Gratuitously he will save and justify, if only man himself does not prevent this by sin:

*No! Yahweh's hand is not too short to save,
nor is his ear too dull to hear.
But your iniquities have made a separation
between you and your God;
and your sins have veiled his face from you
so that he does not hear. (Is. lix, 1 ff.)*

Because, on the human level, 'judgment is set aside, and righteousness is held at a distance' (Is. lix, 14), that is why, on the divine level, 'judgment is far from us, and righteousness does not over-

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

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

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

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



SOCIAL JUSTICE

T.M.D.

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