

Justice in the International Order

Of late years, justice has mainly been discussed in view of the problems of international politics and questions of international law. It is quite easy to understand why; the brutal lust of power, which respects no precepts of justice, but cynically overrides all the limitations of law as a matter of course, can work itself out with least restraint in the field of international relations; and because, on the other hand, it has become clear that all orders of justice within the State, all endeavours for social and economic justice, are frustrated by war as it now is. The cry for a just order among the nations is therefore particularly urgent. This urgency, however, is confronted by the equally undeniable fact that it is particularly difficult even to form concrete ideas of a just order in this sphere, not to speak of the actual, apparently insuperable difficulties which lie in the way of its realization.

Nor does the teaching of Scripture give us any direct guidance. The subject finds no place in the New Testament. It is true that we have there the one unity embracing all peoples and abolishing all differences between peoples and races, the *corpus mysticum Christi*, the Church of Jesus, in which loyalty to one Master takes precedence of all other loyalties, and the “patriotism” of those who have their *patria*, country, conversation, “household”^a in Heaven supersedes all national patriotisms. The *regnum Christi* has no national or racial frontiers. It alone is the unconditional, unlimited community of all men all over the world. But this unity exists as an actual fact only where Christ is recognized as Lord. Only the submission in faith to this one Master, Who is the Lord of

^a Eph. ii. 19; Phil. iii. 20.

lords, creates it, because the sundering power of earthly dominion is only overcome by the recognition of that Lordship.⁸⁶ But since, in the New Testament, the community of Christ is assumed to be a “little flock,” a minority scattered all over the earth, but nowhere dominant, and that not only in the contemporary but in the historical future, we are given no picture of peace on earth among the nations. On the contrary, prophecies abound of the most terrible tyrannies and wars among the peoples as the end of future history before the final consummation which transcends history, the resurrection of the dead and the Last Judgment.^b The hope of peace among the peoples is alien to the New Testament. The hope of “an earth in which dwelleth righteousness” is bound up with the expectation of “new heavens and a new earth”^c – that is, with the expectation that the conditions of life in the reality of earthly history will entirely pass away. The reign of peace belongs to metahistory, to the realm of eternal life. The last ages of earthly history, however, are not in any way looked to as times of perfect peace but as times of an unprecedented world tumult.

The attitude of the Old Testament seems different. Everyone is familiar with the moving picture of the reign of peace,^d when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, when not only men, but the animals which are man’s grim enemies shall lie down in peace side by side and the lion eat straw like the ox. But Isaiah’s lovely picture of the future is not contained in history; it is the end of history. He too sees that future which is not bound by the conditions of earthly life, a future in which, for that very reason, even the subhuman creatures obey other laws than those familiar to us in the ages of earthly history. Even if the prophetic pictures of this ultimate future are painted in earthly colours with earthly figures, what is meant is a state of things which is no longer of this earth, which transcends time. We cannot therefore draw any conclusions for the possibilities of international relations in earthly history from these apocalyptic visions. But if, in Scriptural

^b Mark, xiii; Rev. xv. ff.

^c 2 Pet. iii. 13,

^d Isa. ii.4., xi. 6 ff.

zeal, anyone were to attempt to find standards of international law for the international relations in the Old Testament, he would only show that he had no feeling for the special and unique character of the history of Israel. The relations of the Chosen People to the other nations were regulated by the peculiar law of the Old Covenant, in which Israel was not only a nation, but also a religious community. The religious intention, the expansion of the community of Jehovah, was also a political intention; the dominion of Israel over other nations, that is, political imperialism, was not yet clearly distinguished from a universal religious mission. That distinction was first drawn in the New Testament. Hence the Old Testament can only be regarded as the source of standards for international law in so far as such use is admissible from the standpoint of the New Testament. But then, just as in the New Testament, nothing tangible emerges – nothing, that is, but the principles which have guided our investigation from the outset – justice conceived as the rights of the individual and the rights of the community, freedom of individuals and the common welfare. Scripture gives us no hint of what that would mean in the sphere of international law. Hence, as far as lies in our power, we must try to ascertain it ourselves.

A preliminary question, however, must first be cleared up. The Church is charged with the duty of proclaiming the gospel of repentance and reconciliation to the nations. Hence it has to call upon them to turn away from their godlessness, injustice and egoism. Its duty is to show how the catastrophe which has befallen the international order of our day is attributable to that godlessness, injustice and self-seeking. Hence it has the right to say that only a spiritual conversion of the nations would render a just and peaceful ordering of international relations possible. That has also been recognized by leading statesmen who now have a voice in the future of international relations. A number of them are convinced that nothing would promote a better international order than a sincere return of the nations to the Christian faith.

On the other hand, when the time for making peace comes, statesmen must act whether that conversion has taken place or not. They cannot postpone the new order until the conversion

of the nations is fulfilled, for they fully realize that the Church of Christ will hardly achieve in the immediate future what it has failed to achieve in two thousand years. In so far as they are Christians, they also know that Scripture contains no promise that a general conversion will take place within historical time; they know that the community of the disciples of Jesus will always remain a minority, and thus that they, as statesmen, have to reckon with a world much of which cannot be called Christian at all, and a large part only in a very vague sense.⁸⁷

In the present work, the problem is considered not from the standpoint of the preaching Church, but from, that of the Christian statesman. We ask, with him, what could be the meaning of the expression “a just international order” in the present situation. Hence we do not ask what kind of international order would be possible if all men were good Christians, but what is possible on the assumption that a small minority of men are good Christians, the only assumption that a statesman can go upon. Hence we shall not follow the usual – and perhaps admissible – course taken by the Christian proclamations^e of today, and embark on our investigation with a sermon and mingle exhortations to greater justice in thought and intention – which are good and necessary in their place – but with the critical consideration of the fundamental problem of practical politics in the international sphere – namely, what is the meaning of a just international order here and now.

But if the statesman should ask us, who are not statesmen, by what right we take it upon ourselves to speak at all in this matter, our answer will be that the Christian faith implies two things which are of importance for the practical statesman too, and which Christian faith alone combines. The first is an incorruptible realism which, without falling into cynicism, allows nothing to be glossed over by optimistic idealism, the second is an absolute justice of intention arising from the clear knowledge of the principles of justice and obscured by no doctrinaire disregard of practical possibilities. We shall, however, have to

^e In particular, the peace proclamations of the Pope. *Vide* Note 81.

be on our guard against overstepping the limits of principle and entering upon questions of practice, which are really beyond our competence.

(1) The Order of Peace

The mere fact that it has not yet been possible to establish an order of peace among the nations shows that we have to reckon with the fact of evil in the sphere of international relations more than anywhere else. Within its own territory, the individual State has again and again succeeded in overcoming anarchy by its monopoly of force, and in establishing a peaceful order in which every individual can feel relatively secure. The *bellum nomium contra omnes* has been eliminated. Except for individual crimes, the citizen can count on going about his business in peace and safety without being put to the necessity of self-defence. The individual State has achieved this peaceful order – its most primary and essential function – by monopolizing for itself and its central organ all power and the right to kill. The more unequivocally, the more absolutely it does so, the more secure is the foundation of the order of peace, and the less that sinister background of political power, the right to kill, becomes manifest.

But it is as if evil, repressed by the lawful force of the police and armed power of the State, must of necessity burst forth in more appalling form in the relations between the States. The very power of the State, which was the means of establishing peace within its frontiers, becomes, in the international sphere, the most potent factor of anarchy. Evil, suppressed but not overcome in the State, having found no outlet inwards, erupts outwards all the more violently. The State, beneficently powerful internally, becomes a brutal oppressor and robber with respect to the outside world. It is the Christian's duty to face these facts with all the realism of his insight into sin and to relinquish all idealism. The conduct of the nations among themselves is not very different from the conduct of individuals in a completely anarchic society. There may be some who are more concerned for justice and peaceful concord than others, but the total picture of the world of nations forces one to the conclusion that every State, according to the measure

of its power, is out to take as much of the good things of this earth as it can and to leave to others only as much as they force it to leave or as seems necessary in its own interests. The distinction between peaceful and warlike States is illusory. If we ask whether there are nations or States which are prepared, of their own free will, to forgo advantages which their power would permit them to secure, or whether they are not at all times prepared to take by force whatever seems advantageous to them, the answer can hardly be in doubt. The sphere of international relations is dominated, apart from rare exceptions, by a purely egoistic principle of power, veiled more or less by diplomatic courtesy, but mitigated only by the calculation that wars are expensive and their issue often or generally uncertain. Up to the present, in any case, national egoism, the intention of every State to take as much as possible and to give only what cannot be withheld, has been, practically speaking, the dominating motive in the relations of States to each other. Whether this national egoism achieves its aims rather by indirect and diplomatic, or by direct and warlike methods, is a subsidiary question and determined less by the warlike character of a nation or a ruling class than by outward circumstance. A relatively unassailable State can give weight and effect to its self-seeking in a less warlike fashion than one less favoured by its situation. A satisfied, self-sufficient State which has all the economic necessities and is, purely by reason of its size and "potential," an opponent to be feared, can better camouflage its lust of power by peaceable gestures than another which would first like to have what the others have got. The wealthy nation, or the nation which has acquired wealth, whose ambitions of power are more or less satisfied, can afford a display of peaceableness, since it has as great an interest in preserving the *status quo* as the poor one in changing it, while the poor State, being out for change, must take upon itself the odium of disturbing the peace. Judged from the standpoint of justice, the conservative egoism which aims at peace is no better than the egoism which aims at war. Those who claim their national monopolies as their self-evident right must be prepared for others simply not to recognize that monopoly and therefore to become aggressive. This is said merely in order to demonstrate the

egoism of power in its two forms – the conservative and unwarlike and the aggressive and warlike – as the dominant principle of international relations, in comparison with which the difference between warlike and unwarlike is of minor importance. In this twofold form, evil dominates the picture of political reality. Even the difference between the egoism of power on a small and on a large scale is merely relative. Minor States participate in the egoism of power no less than great ones, although here, as in the individual sphere, the egoism of the smaller is, so to speak, more pardonable than that of the great. Their peaceableness is often mere resignation and the shrewdness which realizes that their comparative powerlessness simply rules out any active and aggressive policy of power. It would be foolish to imagine that we can see in their attitude any special national virtue, a natural modesty or self-effacingness.

In view of the incontestable fact that evil – namely, national or imperial egoism – dominates the nations, what can be the substance of the first postulate of justice, an order of peace? The first point to be emphasized is the extreme urgency of this postulate. It takes unqualified precedence of all other social problems. For until the international anarchy, manifested in the constant round of preparation for war, threat of war and war, is overcome, all that social justice can achieve will become more and more illusory, since war has developed in such a way as to call all civilization and all culture in question.

It is no longer admissible to speak of war as people used to do. For what is war to-day is no longer what war used to be. There are two points to be borne in mind here, which have given the problem of war, and with it the problem of the order of peace, a quite unprecedented turn in our day. The first is the fact of world war, the fact that in most recent times the mutual involvements of nations have become so general and so close that war can, and almost must, become a world conflagration. The age of local wars is over; the age when all war means world war has come. The second new fact is total war. In former times there were wars carried on by armies of mercenaries which certainly caused great regional devastations and disturbances of peaceful life. On the other hand, they did not greatly affect the peaceful activity of the