

Righteousness and Justice

In the 1970's the Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern confessed evangelicalism's lack of social concern. "We acknowledge that God requires justice. But we have not proclaimed or demonstrated his justice to an unjust American society. Although the Lord calls us to defend the social and economic rights of the poor and the oppressed, we have mostly remained silent." The Lausanne Covenant declared, "evangelism and sociopolitical involvement are both part of our Christian duty." History is the story of suffering, oppression, poverty and injustice. Our world is thick with inequalities. Canada's foreign aid and development programs have dipped under 0.43% of GNP. A government, which penalizes parents financially for choosing a school, which reflects their belief, is unjust.

Sin is both personal and structural. Evangelicals have been preoccupied with personal sin. Liberals have been preoccupied with structural sin. The Old Testament prophets never separated their call for a personal relationship with God from the passion of justice in the political sphere. Justice attempts to bring individual and community life more into line with the character of God and with His will. A sense of justice is the minimum required to make society livable. The prophets demanded justice for the poor and the exploited. God demands righteousness. Jeremiah proclaimed: "If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers forever and ever" (7:5-9). Our Lord knew hunger and poverty. He showed His love towards the poor, condemning the rich man who had neglected the begging Lazarus by his gate.

Our allegiance is to God whose nature is revealed in the Old and New Testaments and supremely in Jesus Christ, Our Lord said, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt. 22:29). "Love your neighbour" is more than showing compassion to an individual. The Christian quest for justice is an expression of this neighbour love. We show love by not letting injustice succeed. Righteous indignation is a much-needed spiritual quality in a world where injustice abounds. A Christian should attempt to introduce God's laws of righteousness, truth, freedom and peace derived from the Scripture. Yet he harbours no illusions. Man is sinful by nature. He can never turn the city of man into the city of God. Only Christ's second coming will eradicate evil and bring anew world of righteousness and peace.

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