

THE PHILOSOPHY OF PEACE ¹

I INVITE your attention to the eighth verse of the sixth chapter of Micah:

He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

During your sojourn in this classic atmosphere you have been learning of things chiefly from the standpoint of the scholar, which posits a philosophy back of all things. It has been your business to study how scholars have classified things, how they have arranged knowledge, that out of mere knowledge you might have gained wisdom. Back of the facts of nature lies the philosophy of nature, or natural philosophy; back of all the facts of social life lies the philosophy which we call sociology; back of all the facts we know about God there is a philosophy, and we call that philosophy theology. And so, back of the problems of civilization and the establishment of peace in the earth, there lies a philosophy. It is to the study of that philosophy of peace that I wish, for a little while, to have your attention.

But what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

That sounds like the pious platitude which a priest would be expected to give to an inquirer who came to him for

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religious guidance, and yet there is a profundity in it, a sublimity in it, there is a philosophy in it which it would be well for all races and nations and kindreds to consider. We are trying to find out what will be the efficient cause of a happy equilibrium among the races of the world. Why do the nations rush to and fro? Why are the races disturbed among themselves and toward each other? It is because they are in search of the equilibrium of contentment, of happiness, and they will turn and overturn until that philosophy is found, until that equilibrium is established. Certainly it will never be found, it will never be established as long as men pursue the selfish aim of individual happiness. We must turn from the thought of ourselves to the thought of all others. We must get away from the idea that it is our right to acquire and to keep and to use, without thought of others, whatever we may lay our hands upon. We have been in the grasp of a system that we call capitalism for six thousand years, and history has proven that it is insufficient to solve the problems of human happiness. Men who have subscribed to those principles in the early part of their lives have grown in after years to see their mistake. If they did not see their mistake, they conducted themselves in a manner to lead us to believe that they discovered that they had made a mistake. You young men and women have been at study here on this campus. It is a well known fact that the great and good man who laid the foundation for this institution devoted his life diligently and earnestly to the accumulation of a fortune. In the early years of his life he doubtless had no thought of such a thing as the Rice Institute, but later on when he began to classify all the facts, all the incidents, all the realities of life, he discovered that the best use to which he could devote the results of a lifetime of labor and thought would be in the interest of others.

But if that were a single example, we might regard it as an exception. But across the boulevard yonder is another example—that hospital which can be seen from here. Around it are the spacious acres of a great park given by the same man who for some sixty years never took his mind or hand away from the task of making money; but, when the end of his days approached, he saw that the philosophy of material things that is directed merely to the accumulation of a fortune was false, and he took it all and laid it at the feet of sick men and women, boys and girls, and little children—of people who have been burdened in shops and factories, that they might be healed of their ills, and a place to play that their ills might not overwhelm them. And it is not only here, it is everywhere. Men have found that the old selfish idea of gathering to oneself is a false philosophy, and everything must be turned to another ambition. These two men have gone to eternity empty-handed, but they have left us these gems of civilization to beautify and make glorious the city in which they toiled.

The old system of seeking one's own interest is doomed. It remains to be seen whether the doom will be executed by a wild mob of socialists and bolsheviks, on the one hand, who demand these things of fortune makers, or whether it will be solved by a generous impulse of heart on the part of those who, having reached a thorough understanding of the philosophy of life, will turn over to them the fruits of life's labors before angry humanity turns to snatch them from their hands.

The problem in the mind of the great prophet from whose prophecy I have read was the question of how men can please God—how men can worship God, for to please Him is to worship Him. The poet was at a loss to know. Should he bring all the firstlings of the flock; should he

turn into the treasury of the deity the price of the rivers of oil; should he give the child of his own flesh—what should he do? The prophet remembered how Abraham had offered up Isaac. What was it that would be required of men? What price must we pay? How will we purchase world peace, national peace, individual peace, and the prophet's answer is: "I will show thee, O man, what is good; for what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

The principles of this government are embodied in a document called the Constitution. It is the constitution of our liberty. Back yonder among the free nations of Europe there is to be found in the possession of everyone of them some sort of document, written or unwritten, enumerating the rights, privileges, and immunities of free men. From the Magna Charta, recognized as one of the greatest of them, to the least of them, there is a loyalty and devotion that men pay to these instruments, these ideals, these traditions to which their hope and ambitions have clung and around which their battles for freedom have been waged.

But there is one that is greater than all these. No constitution was ever written, no charter was ever submitted, never did parliament or senate devise a means so sure to bring peace and happiness among men as these simple words of this simple old-time prophet. I don't know what you young ladies and gentlemen think about this book, and it does not matter to me particularly what your theory is. I would suggest that before you form any theory you take this book and its marvelous content and weigh it. If it is true, embrace it; and if it is not, cast it out. Whether it was written by God on tablets of marble, whether it was spoken in the words of a prophet, or whether it has resulted

from the intellectual alchemy of the ages, if it is true, take it and keep it. I submit to you this text to be weighed. One of the wise has said: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." I submit this to you to be put in the crucible. Put it to every test known to the wisdom of the world. If it is not true, cast it out, and if it is true lay it in your philosophy as a foundation stone—"For what doth the Lord require of thee,"—I will make the bold assertion, on the assurance of a conscience that merely looks frankly at the situation, there will be no peace in the world until this prophet's word is harkened to—"For what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Social justice is a condition precedent to world peace, and we may as well recognize it now as later. We may as well know it from a prophet or philosopher, for this prophet was evidently a great philosopher, as to know it when it has been written in the mingled blood of nations. The world is going to have justice, and to that end our laws have been established; to that end our senates make laws; to that end men agree to arbitrate their differences, and to that end men's purposes are directed; men's minds are fixed upon it, and the determination of the race is in that direction. There must be justice among people. If you cannot come to some court and find justice for yourself and those whom you love and in whom you are interested, there is an element of anarchy in your heart, whether you confess it or not. If the foundations of this government are secure, they will be secure in justice, and if the governments of the nations of the civilized world are to be secure, they must be secure by the universal belief, the universal confidence that men may go somewhere to some place and find ultimate justice.

“What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly?” This does not mean justice for you alone—it means justice for the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the great and the small. Justice which you can claim because you have purchased it, is not justice at all, because it may mean injustice for those who cannot purchase it. Justice which you may get by influence or position is not justice at all. It is not justice until the poorest and least can come into the highest tribunal and find his rights protected and his person secure.

Are you ready for that? If you are not ready to give it to all men, you cannot have it yourself. If you are not ready for this, there will come to your ears the low rumble of discontent from the lower elements of society, and ultimately there will come a mighty volcano of destruction. You can hear it now, the mutterings of it among all races of people who are downtrodden. There will arise a leader to lead them, and when he comes forth he will not take counsel of those who would urge moderation. From one extreme we are flung to another. Those who are lost have nobody to blame but themselves for not allowing justice in the beginning. “What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God.” Write it in the Magna Carta of civilization or it is not well written. Ancient as were the times, simple as was the prophet, it is everlastingly, fundamentally true—“What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

It is not enough to grant a man justice. No man will be permitted in the ultimate days, in the realization of the aims of civilization—no man will be permitted to do then what is not just. And human nature, unmoved by any superior philosophy, cannot do more than justice. It requires

an inspiration from without a man to do more than justice. If you are to love mercy, you must go somewhere else than to a selfish heart to get the inspiration for it. It is well known that all acts of mercy and all institutions for the expression of mercy, find their inspiration in some extraneous source. The human heart will get all that it can and keep all that it gets. Thank God there are philosophies that can move the lives of men. Call it philosophy or call it religion. In the beginning it emanates from the deity. And here I want to tell you something: there is a period in the life of a youth when he is inherently agnostic. Just as a little child learns to walk, there is a period when it toddles, and unless you have already passed through that period, you will come to the place where your mind just toddles along in the presence of these great problems of philosophy, and especially in knowing and understanding the deity. It is natural that that period should come upon you, for your mind is turning from material things to spiritual things. It is a dangerous thing, too, for there is danger of being overturned. As one takes a boat and passes over the troubled waters to climb up the ship's side to the firm deck of the ocean liner to take the journey afar, so youth must pass through a period of agnosticism. Later on, however, there come powers of thought, reason and faith, and they lay hold of the great spiritual things and after a while they believe more in the spiritual than in the material things. When they have made the change, if they do not believe in God, they are either mentally unsound or their minds have not developed. There never was a sound mind that did not believe in the deity. You say, what of Herbert Spencer? Spencer deliberately confessed his belief in the existence of a great power back of all things which he called inscrutable energy, merely a polysyllabic word for the same being that I

call God. Take the philosophers, and you will find that if they command your respect, they go back to a first cause. It matters not at all what you call the first cause. You are a worshipper when you bow down before that great antecedent of all things. In your mind you turn back toward the first cause, the inscrutable energy, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our Fathers, and if you cannot find some way to interpret that ideal to your satisfaction, you may erect an altar and dedicate it to the Unknown God. This the people did in another day, and the prophet said unto them: "Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

My love for my fellowman prompts my mercy. You cannot love your fellowman without loving God, and you cannot love God without loving your fellowman. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest I love Thee." "Then," said Jesus, "feed my lambs." There is no possible way of proving that you love God if you hate your fellowman. And so mercy to your fellowman is linked up with your faith in God. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

There will be no peace in the world until men come to show mercy to those who need mercy. There will always be an uprising of conscience against men, institutions, and nations that are indifferent to the interest of humanity at large. Men who will permit others to suffer when they can save, are devoid of the instincts of human nature. It is a singular thing that as fast as men come to positions of power and influence they recognize the responsibility of nations among nations of the world, as well as individuals among their fellows. It was an interesting thing to see how President Harding, though he had been elected on another

basis, recognized that there was a duty which this nation owed to other nations. Whatever might have been the manner of execution of that ideal, when he went to his reward, he had committed himself to that ideal. And here comes President Coolidge—scarcely has he become President of the United States before he defies men that would stop his mouth and recognizes the fact that this nation owes a responsibility to other nations of the world. The welfare of all is the object of the Father in Heaven. If, from the altars of religion, men go out into the world who do not believe in brotherhood, and who are not willing to serve their fellowmen in their disasters, their troubles and misfortunes, the altars from which they go are not the altars of the true and living God. No true religion will neglect the helpless, for religion is nothing more or less than the ministering to those who are in distress, to show mercy to those who need mercy. "For what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

I do not say that every man ought to subscribe to the peculiar views of some general ecclesiastical institution. I think ecclesiasticism is on trial to-day, and I question whether or not it can hope to come clear in that trial. There are some counts on which it will be found guilty. But, young ladies and gentlemen, it is the effort of frail men to organize religion and religious ideas, and, imperfect though the organization may be, the ideal is right. If you are right you will subscribe to the ideal. It makes little difference to me what church you belong to. But if you are opposed to the ideal which has been imperfectly organized, which the ecclesiastical order is seeking to establish, then it seems to me you have put yourself on the wrong side of the great rights and privileges of human liberty, the wrong side

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of the great business of redeeming humanity to peace, to happiness, and to God.

I believe as you grow older you will see more plainly the faults of organized religion, but I believe if your mind is sound and you yourself are honest, you will realize that ecclesiasticism has directed itself toward a problem that it behooves the earth to take as a burden on its heart and life. And if you do, you will walk humbly with your God. We too often walk proudly with our God. Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. That is the reason the church has so often failed. My kingdom is not of this world, said Jesus, and a kingdom of Jesus Christ established in the world with a show of pomp and power, riches and influence in temporal things, is a long step in the wrong direction. God's kingdom is an invisible kingdom, it is an immaterial kingdom, but it is an omnipotent kingdom. It takes possession of men's souls because they see God, makes of them ambassadors of the deity because they walk humbly with God. The sin of our race is pride to-day. We cannot hope to escape the dire results that come from the fall of pride. Doubtless some of you have run across that little poem, written in jest perhaps, but so full of philosophy:

Of all the notable things on earth,
The queerest thing is the pride of birth
Among our "fierce democracie"!
A bridge across a hundred years,
Without a prop to save it from sneers—
Not even a couple of rotten peers—
A thing for laughter, fleers, and jeers,
Is American aristocracy!

English and Irish, French and Spanish,
German, Italian, Dutch and Danish,
Crossing their veins until they vanish
In one conglomeration!

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So subtle a tangle of blood, indeed,
 No heraldry Harvey will ever succeed
 In finding the circulation.

Depend upon it, my snobbish friend,
 Your family thread you can't ascend,
 Without good reason to apprehend
 You may find it waxed, at the farther end,
 By some plebeian vocation!
 Or, worse than that, your boasted line
 May end in a loop of stronger twine,
 That plagued some worthy relation.

Such is the pride of our material lives. What must be the absurdity of a spiritual pride? What must be the sin of a spiritual pride, a pride toward God? For this sin Lucifer was hurled from heavenly heights, and for this sin he who indulges in it must inevitably fall.

My friends, I commend to you not the authority of this prophet only—weigh that and find out what it is—but for the truth of his prophecy, for its worth, its weight of goodness and truth, I submit it to you:

He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and
 what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do
 justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly
 with thy God?

WILLIAM STATES JACOBS.