

# ONE ROAD TO PEACE: TENDER LOVE, FIRM JUSTICE

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**A**LMOST A decade ago, the Jesuits of the United States held a large and important conference with the comprehensive theme of 'Peace and Justice, Evangelization and Development, Church and Civil Society'. I remember the way in which the keynote speaker, the wise and witty Horacio de la Costa S.J., brought us in his first words to appreciate the difficulty of our understanding. The most important word in that long title, he remarked, was the word, 'and'. What would happen, he asked, if each of its three occurrences it was replaced by the word, 'or'. He was not suggesting that we make such a substitution, but the change would at least alert us to the high degree of tension present in each pair of terms.

Similarly here, one wonders whether some heuristic purpose might be served by an 'or' formulation of the relationship between peace, on the one hand, and love/justice, on the other. Does peace — within oneself, with other persons, and within the larger society — depend more on love or on justice? If we had to choose just one road to peace, which would it be — the road of love or the road of justice? The question is, of course, badly put. But putting it in such terms does not seem incongruous with the tendency I have observed in many people, including myself, toward dichotomizing love and justice. Today there is a widespread tendency to see justice as a kind of fall-back position to which we have recourse when love is inoperative or inefficacious. The more intense love becomes — between spouses, for example — the less room there is for justice, in such a view. Love has to do with communion, justice with conflict. Love is for dealing with intimates and friends, justice for negotiating with strangers and enemies. Or at most, when it comes to the quest for peace among classes, races, peoples, nations, love provides motivation and stamina, but is properly an affair of the heart, a private

matter, whereas justice alone governs the struggle to provide the structured order in which public peace consists. To speak of love as a political reality today is to court the suspicion of sentimentality.

Let us acknowledge that this inclination to dichotomize love and justice is not wholly implausible. The affective resonances evoked by the two terms are quite opposite, at least for us today (I suspect that New Testament Christians understood the terms as less sharply opposed). When someone speaks of love we are drawn to a mood that is tender, soft, intimate, warm, vulnerable. Love has to do with communion of hearts, the sharing of deep personal values by two friends, or at least by a group small enough for the members to know one another face to face. It is true that, especially through the influence of the gospel, the notion that love is to be extended beyond the circle of intimates to strangers, to the anonymous masses of humanity, even to enemies, has been accepted as a human ideal. As the scope of the term is broadened, however, it seems to lose something of the qualities that most distinguish it, and to be reduced to civility, a vague solidarity, or general benevolence. At the same time it remains at a considerable distance, in its emotional overtones, from the term, justice.

Justice, the virtue that assigns to each that which is due, induces a mood that is, if not cold, at least cool, distant, firm, objective. It is hard for us to think of justice without immediately introducing the note of conflict, potential or actual. Though love makes claims on us, the claims of justice are more pointed, more identifiable. And though we conceive that justice (and injustice) can happen between persons, the interpersonal realm does not seem to be its native turf. In fact, engagement in a justice relationship toward another person is experienced as moving in some sense into the impersonal and objective side of life. Perhaps we feel that, in order to deal effectively with the rational claims of justice, it is necessary to mute what is more highly personal in the partners so as to become more detachedly contentious.

One can appreciate, then, why love is so often seen as going beyond justice. If humans are destined for communion with one another and with God, if ultimately all conflict and contention will be transcended, then justice seems destined to wither away as love becomes more perfect. At best justice might be seen as holding the line while love is gaining the strength to prevail; and at worst it appears to represent a failure of love, and becomes a regrettable substitute for love. From this point of view, justice is conceived as

the best that can be pragmatically expected of nations and peoples. The complexity of structures, the difficulty of communicating among large numbers, the embodying of prejudices in traditions, systems, customs, make it a practical necessity to settle for a justice which may, indeed, be enhanced or supported by whatever love people may bring to it, but which does not include love within its own ambit.

It would take us beyond the scope of this article to ask where historically this disjunctive tendency came from. I do think that some traditional theological accents are partly responsible. Those who studied moral theology three or more decades ago will recall the commonplace way of asking about a particular moral obligation: Does it bind in justice or only in charity? Where legalism prevailed, preoccupation with the obligation of restitution was one way of rendering love no more than a remote horizon for the shaping of moral imperatives.

Given this dominant view, insistent on keeping love and justice at a decent distance from each other, one is not surprised to observe that the promotion of peace in our day seems to take place out of two very different moods. The classic augustinian definition of peace as *tranquillitas ordinis* is accented in two quite opposite ways. Where the road of love is chosen for the journey to peace, it is the *tranquillity* or harmony characterizing true peace which is emphasized. Those who walk this road and invite others to journey with them are often inclined to say: Look after love, and justice — and peace — will look after itself. A change of attitude, conversion of the heart, becomes the key to peace in this approach. Those who specialize in spirituality and psychology will more often be found taking this view. The development of healthy persons and healthy relationships, it maintains, is the greatest contribution anyone can make to peace.

Where the road of justice is chosen, however, there tends to be an accent on the necessity of structural change as prior condition for genuine peace. 'Development is the new name for peace'. The formula of Paul VI's Encyclical, *The Development of Peoples*, enshrines this accent, as does the keynote of John XXIII's Encyclical, *Peace on Earth*, with its insistence on *order*. Here the augustinian definition is accented as the tranquillity of *order*. Unless love results in an *ordered* complexus of objective, public relationships which give each person, group, social and political entity its due, there will be no peace.

Now there are very few who would deny that peace is a work both of love and of justice. And different persons and groups can be called

to accent one rather than the other. But to the degree that these two paths to peace are conceived as completely separate, do we not lose powerful energies from the struggle for peace? Is there not some way of conceiving love and justice which, while respecting differences, would include them both as aspects of a single integrated whole? I believe that since the pioneering work of moral theologians like Gillemann and Häring, we are in a position to develop a more integrative understanding of love and justice, to the profit of the quest for peace. Especially within the roman catholic tradition, but also with such protestant thinkers as Paul Tillich, this more integrative tendency has been at work, overcoming a previous wariness of letting love intrude into the public arena.

I would not contend that the social teaching of the Church has consistently affirmed such a view. But I do find hints in several documents that the general catholic bias toward integrating has been at work with respect to love and justice in society, particularly with reference to peace in the world. A glance at several of these documents is worth while, before attempting a theological reflection.

The Encyclical Letter which was devoted most centrally to the theme of peace was Pope John's *Peace on Earth* of 1963.<sup>1</sup> Its very first sentence presents *order* as the key to peace. 'Peace on earth . . . can be firmly established only if the order laid down by God is dutifully observed' (no 1).<sup>2</sup> Subsequently this divinely prescribed order receives a fourfold characterization. It must be 'grounded on truth', 'guided by justice', 'moved by . . . charity', and 'realized in freedom' (no 35).<sup>3</sup> Pope John elsewhere referred to 'the four pillars of the house of peace'. He returns to the theme later, but it is interesting that in place of the term love he prefers to speak of active solidarity, brotherhood and a concern for the common good. This was also the case in Paul VI's Encyclical *On the Development of Peoples*. Perhaps both pontiffs and their advisors felt that the secular world was more open to the language of solidarity than to the language of love.

A few years after Pope John's Encyclical, the second Vatican Council, in its *Constitution on the Church in the World of Today*, briefly touched on the relationship of peace, love and justice.

This peace cannot be obtained on earth unless personal values are safeguarded and men freely and trustingly share with one another the riches of their inner spirits and their talents. A firm determination to respect other men and peoples and their dignity, as well as the studied practice of brotherhood, are absolutely necessary for the

establishment of peace. Hence peace is likewise the fruit of love, which goes beyond what justice can provide (78).<sup>4</sup>

The 'going beyond justice' characterization of love, a rather common conception among theologians, is, while expressive of a certain primacy of love, all too easily susceptible of a dichotomizing interpretation. There is a sense, as we shall see, in which love is never beyond justice, as the two are inseparable.

The bishops of Latin America, in the historic Medellin Conference of 1968, had separate documents on justice and on peace, but, in the latter document, linked them with each other and with love. 'Peace is, above all', they said, echoing the passage of Vatican II which we have seen, 'a work of justice. It presupposes and requires the establishment of a just order' (no 14).<sup>5</sup> They go on, after alluding to Augustine's definition, to say that 'peace is the fruit of love', and 'love is the soul of justice. The Christian who works for social justice should always cultivate peace and love in his heart' (no 14).<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the episcopal synod of 1971, in its statement on 'justice in the World', provides us with the most forceful statement of the inseparability of love and justice. 'The whole of the christian life is summed up in faith effecting that love and service of neighbour which involves the fulfilment of the demands of justice. . . . Christian love of neighbour and justice cannot be separated. For love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely a recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbour. Justice attains to inner fullness only in love. Because every man is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a brother of Christ, the Christian finds in every man God himself and God's absolute demand for justice and love' (no 33ff).<sup>7</sup>

Though these statements fall considerably short of enunciating a theology of love, justice and peace, they do point towards a broad tendency (not contradicted by the final sentence of the Vatican II Constitution) in the direction of an intimate link between love and justice in their relationship to peace on earth. They thus provide a background for the following reflections.

A simple reflection on interpersonal love can suggest, I think, that love and justice are not totally separate attitudes or virtues, but stand rather in an intimate mutual relationship. An appropriate starting point is an understanding of love as a mutual drive towards communion on the part of two or more persons. St Ignatius, in his 'Contemplation for gaining Divine Love' (*Spiritual Exercises*, 231), speaks of love in this way. It is, he indicates, a mutual exchange and

sharing of all one has and is. Such a process makes two persons become one. This is the miracle effected by love — otherness is transcended. Jesus refers to this same characteristic of human love in its natural prototype when he repeats the teaching of Genesis on husband and wife, and then adds, 'They are no longer two, therefore, but one body' (Mt 19,6).

But is it not at this point that love and justice would seem to go their separate ways? If love dissolves otherness, what room is there for justice, whose very concept demands otherness? Precisely here lies the key to understanding the relationship. The communion of truly human (as of divine) love does not demand — in fact it excludes — the absorption of the beloved by the lover. In the very drive toward communion, love affirms the otherness of the other. Both as benevolence — desiring what is good for the one loved — and as desire — wanting for oneself the benefit of the other's return of love, the love of communion desires that there *be* an other, as recipient and respondent. In this view, justice becomes both intrinsic expression and intrinsic condition of love. If love bids me desire to be one with the other, justice bids me desire the otherness of the other. The traditional term, *alter ego* (other self) wonderfully embodies this unfathomable mystery of mutual love, in which otherness is both transcended, and, in the very transcending, more powerfully affirmed.

Paul Tillich, following a similar ontology of love (as does Robert Johann), speaks of justice as the form of love. The augustinian-thomistic tradition, from a different perspective, puts it the other way round: love is the 'form' of justice, and of all the virtues. In either case, justice may be seen as the inherent structure of love, necessary if love is to be true to itself. Love is actualized in justice; justice is, so to speak, love's body. And so there is no love without justice, and no justice without love. What kind of a love would it be which would swallow up the one loved, or which would be indifferent to whether the one loved retained in fulness all the endowments that made him or her a unique self, worthy of love and respect? And what kind of a justice would it be which did not anchor its respect for the dignity and rights of the other in the recognition of a radical kinship and a mutual call to communion. Love without justice is devouring; justice without love is alienating. Tender love and firm justice are two linked aspects of any relationship of persons, groups, or societies which purports to be human.

As the image of God is, so is God himself. Though we are not

accustomed to use the language of justice to designate the relations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the divine persons are actually an infinite paradigm of justice. The Father, who shares his infinite perfection with the Son, is at the same time, with infinite passion, desirous that the Son be Son, not Father. So too with the Holy Spirit. Radical otherness within radical communion — the great mystery of love is also the great mystery of justice — and peace.

The same relationship of love and justice obtains in the creator/creature relationship. As Karl Rahner has expressed it dialectically, God, as the infinite creator, by his very constitution of the universe in radical dependency on himself, at the same time (not in spite of but because of that dependency) constitutes it in its otherness from himself, in a certain autonomy even over against himself. In the human creature this autonomy includes the God-given freedom to say No to the absolute giver of that very freedom. The infinitely gracious love which radically makes us be, also just as radically *lets* us be and *requires* that we be. Perhaps the real point of the catholic insistence on the possibility of human merit before God, and of the celebrated satisfaction theory of redemption of St Anselm and others, is to safeguard this crucial mystery of the coincidence of love and justice. Nothing manifests better God's infinite respect for humans whom he has made according to his own image than his dealing with them within a covenant of justice.

It may appear to some readers that reflections such as these are speculative and sterile, having little to do with the promotion of peace, or with a spirituality which provides motivation and stamina for peacemaking. I do believe, however, that a theoretical effort toward integrating love and justice can have important consequences touching motivation, attitudes and behaviour of those who would promote peace in the world.

Those whose approach to peace has been along the road of love can be helped by the realization that genuine love calls for justice, and that the only true peace is also a work of justice. The road of love runs past the marshes of sentimentality and softness. The temptation of a love not sharpened by justice is to be bland and even immorally compromising. Wayfarers on this road tend to seek comfort for themselves and others too exclusively in the tender arms of the Good Shepherd. Their action for peace in the world very often consists in intercession that costs little, together with donations to worthy causes that leave the structures of injustice unchallenged, and sometimes even bolster them. Sentimental lovers of peace are

fair game for crafty manipulation which would instil in them a bias against those deeply committed to justice, who often do not appear to speak the easy language of reconciliation.

The dawning of a concern for justice within a pilgrim of love can bring a new appreciation of the importance and role of structures and institutions in human affairs. Sometimes such persons are professionally engaged in structures and institutions — they may be corporation lawyers, financiers, public officials, military leaders — but for lack of a justice dimension in their christian faith they have never fully integrated their important secular work with the fulfilment of God's call to them. They may practise personal honesty, but are often insensitive to the institutional sins of which they may be the unwitting technical servants. For such persons, the day on which they come to realize that they cannot walk in love without journeying in justice is a day of great challenge, perhaps, but also a day on which God calls them to deeper levels of love — a love more fully integrated with justice.

A final benefit for pilgrims on love's road in the discovery of the inseparability of love and justice is that they are enabled or encouraged to find a place for anger in their spirituality. Anger is a gift of God, dangerous to be sure, but no less a gift. We sin with respect to anger not only by excess — by violence, for example — but by not letting its energies flow in the cause of righteousness and truth. There is nothing like engagement in a just but controverted cause to release the resources of human anger. The humiliating realization that we employ it badly, and that we have to learn over a lifetime to channel its energies into courage and hope — all this is a discipleship which reveals how shallow and fragile our love for others is, and enables us at the same time to bring more of ourselves to the struggle for peace. St Augustine saw anger as one of love's two beautiful daughters — the other was hope. One might also say that, when exercised justly, anger is a godparent of peace.

On the other side, those who by temperament, education or circumstance find themselves walking towards peace on the road of justice will be similarly benefited by assimilating a theology which insists on the integration of justice and love. Their temptations — and the remedies — are directly opposite to those we have just considered. Especially as they plunge into a pluralistic and secular society which has little use for personalism in public affairs, they may find themselves reducing the issue of peace to a problem of massive and radical structural change. Particularly if they have not

come to terms with their own shadow, and project its darkness not only onto iniquitous systems but onto the persons who manage or serve them, the firmness of justice can degenerate into a ruthless, bitter and destructive alienation. While mouthing professions of solidarity with the oppressed they can weaken the inner communion with every human being which gives that solidarity its distinctively human quality.

When the struggle for justice becomes intense, and especially when it becomes clear that no early or full victory is in view, the temptation to violence, physical, psychological or social, can be overwhelming for any individual or group whose emotional commitment and risk have been great. If the passion for justice has not been permeated with a generous and forgiving love, it may be taken captive by the evil forces which simply reproduce and multiply the injustice being combated. How to resist and conquer evil without doing evil and even becoming evil is perhaps the most serious challenge experienced by any liberation movement. Those who have never cared enough about justice to experience this challenge are in no position to cast stones at those who handle it badly. But it remains true that the decisive act of human liberation took place not in Jesus's cleansing of the temple but in the helplessness of his crucifixion. Justice, to be true to itself, must seek to be effective. But it needs to listen to the voice of love saying that failure may have to be accepted for the sake of an eventual triumph that is not of human making. The peace that Christ gives is beyond all human understanding and achievement. The most we can do is dispose ourselves for its bestowal as gift, by trying 'to act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with the Lord' (Mic 6,8).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Recent Church social teaching will be cited in this essay according to the splendid collection, with commentary, of Gremillion, Joseph: *The Gospel of Peace and Justice. Catholic social teaching since Pope John* (Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1976). Further commentary will be found in David Hollenbach, S.J.: *Claims in conflict: retrieving and renewing the Catholic Human Rights tradition* (Paulist, New York, 1979).

<sup>2</sup> Gremillion, *op. cit.*, 201.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 458.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 459.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 520.