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The Moral and Religious
Appeal of Social Science

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If you look up the word science in the dictionary you will find that one of the meanings is "truth ascertained" or "pursuit of knowledge or truth for its own sake". As the Great Teacher said, "Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free". We must therefore be prepared to trust and follow a great truth irrespective of the apparent difficulties that appear in the way.

The majority of people, unfortunately, are apathetic towards the study of Social Science or economics; they imagine it is a confused subject and too difficult for the average mind to grasp; nevertheless it is to be regretted that many of these apathetic people pose as authorities when election time comes around and persuade unthinking people to "stick to the party ticket". However there are many people, and the number is growing because suffering is causing them to think, who care little and understand little about economics but a moral appeal influences them. They are beginning to realise that the present world affliction is due to ignoring basic principles, and that all has not been well with the policies followed by national leaders.

It must be now plain to every thinking person that no government of this or any other country is unique enough to violate or ignore the laws of moral science with impunity. Men and nations do not break natural laws, they rebel against them and are themselves broken. Unfortunately it seems to be an inexorable law of nature that mankind only learns by suffering; having suffered, the people are commencing to think; they are prepared to reform the present system after the war is over—and we all hope that will be soon. The most insidious enemy to every reform is that valueless concession which agrees to the principle of it, and regrets the present

is not the time. This has been the cause of a lot of our trouble. The time was never opportune for economic disarmament, but the fact is that economic disarmament—which has been constantly and consistently advocated by world conferences—will have to precede military disarmament; we tried to do the disarming the other way round; we were thus fostering a policy that would inevitably lead to war, while weakening ourselves. It has cost us dearly.

There are laws of moral science, just as there are laws of mathematics, astronomy, and other physical sciences; it has to be remembered that the same inflexible quality attaches to the laws of moral science as to the others. People believe that the laws of moral science can be changed at the behest of legislatures and the exigencies of climate and geography. This is not so. The moral law is absolute. As Herbert Spencer wrote: "Morality and Truth know nothing of geographical boundaries, or distinctions of race. The moral law is universal, is no respecter of nationalities; and between men who are the antipodes of each other, either in locality or anything less, there must still exist the same balance of rights as though they were next door neighbours in all things".

Most political parties differ only in degree, not in principle. It is the duty of the School of Social Science to show to all parties the moral law; the plummet line of righteousness that must be the guiding factor in all sound legislation.

As a guide to morality and religion in social affairs one could not do better than to study the exhortations of the old Prophets of Israel. The keyword of all their teaching was righteousness, which is justice. They emphasised the need for righteousness in all relations of life. Justice and morality was the constant appeal of the prophets. "The great cry of God's prophets for justice rises like the roar of a mighty storm and fills the skies with forbidding thunder. Execute justice. Do this and all will be well. If you do not do this desolation will fall upon you". Impassionately and fearlessly did they denounce social wrongs. Human nature never changes; the prophets had to deal with the same evils that are prevalent to-day; there was unscrupulous oppression of the poor and helpless by the rich and powerful. There was sordid political intrigue, business dishonesty, and of course

land-grabbing. These iniquities, especially land-grabbing, the prophets constantly and vehemently attacked. They preached justice and morality to high and low. Nothing else would do. Their vision of a perfect society was through and through moral. Religion in their day, as I am afraid it has also in these days, had been confounded with ritual and superstition. The things that really matter have been overlooked.

The early prophet Amos, startled the people by delivering God's message of rebuke, "I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies, take away from me the noise of thy songs, I will not hear the melody of the viols. But let judgment roll down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream". Outward ceremony is not what the Almighty wants; it is not even a substitute; it is liable to mislead people. Individual piety, church attendance, mechanical prayer, and conformity to conventional ideals of personal salvation, may actually block the way to the realisation of justice when preached as a sufficient way of life. It requires more than that.

A writer in a recent issue of the "Hibbert Journal", summed up the position in words to the following effect. The evils that we should have removed and did not, are the evils that actually brought about this war. If a man keeps an unhealthy drain open at his back door, it is as certain as anything in every day affairs can be that his children will be plagued with fever, and that he may from time to time be in anguish by seeing them droop and die. Would it not be stupidity and folly for him, in the midst of his grief, to humiliate himself before God and confess that he had put his money upon horses and imbibed intoxicants, if at the same time, if in defiance of all the laws of elementary health he insisted in keeping open the filthy drain at his door which was the source of all his trouble? Our social evils and want of political morality are bad enough, God knows, it may be within the reach of His far-reaching purpose to stab us wide-awake to them in these searching days. But they are not the main source of our present woe. The "logic of events" has been at work and has set in motion an avalanche. A set of political conditions (based as we know on land monopoly and trade restriction, those are our unhealthy drains)—have been allowed to work out their accustomed evil fruit in their accustomed evil way. Hell has been let loose on us, and the reasons

are not so very mysterious. If the judgment of God can be said to be manifest in these events at all, it is a judgment directed primarily against folly in our external affairs. All nations based their policy on selfishness, they had not learned the lesson of brotherhood. There is now a readiness—vaguely worded—among many of the world's leading statesmen to admit these faults and failings.

Those wishing to lead the people, be they religious institutions, statesmen or politicians, must recognise justice comes first. Prayers, oblations, and offerings—even charity and social legislation—cannot take the place of honesty, truth, and straight dealing between man and man and nation and nation. The Christian ethic orders, "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you". Modern practise says, "Do to others what they have done to you". A religion or reform that ignores morality and justice, as it all too commonly does, was in the time of the prophets, and is now, an abomination to Jehovah. As Jeremiah warned the people, "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by injustice and his chambers by wrong, that useth his neighbour's services without wages and giveth him not for his work".

It is a fundamental fallacy to confuse true religion with ritual—the basis of religion is justice and righteousness, nothing else really matters. Justice, truth, and morality alone endure and live. Injustice and falsehood, selfish national policies, and monopolies may be long-lived and powerful; but doomsday comes at last as it came at the time of the French Revolution—as it has come upon the world to-day.

Natural justice is the conformity of human lives and actions to natural order, and this collection of physical and moral laws existed before any positive institutions among men. And while their observance produces the highest degree of prosperity and well-being among men, the non-observance or transgression of them is the cause of the extensive physical evils which afflict mankind.

How is the world to be redeemed from war, poverty, want and injustice? We are told by the application of Christian principles to our social life. That means nothing less than

the transformation of human society; to point out the principles that ought to govern the conduct of men and nations towards each other; to furnish a clear decisive rule of right which shall guide them in all the relations of life—in our politics, our industry, our ecclesiastical system, our homes and our minds. It can be all summed up in the phrase, "The Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man".

The institution of a just social and international system can be established in three ways:—

(1) By Divine intervention, or (2) By supernatural or miraculous means. Many hope in one of these two ways because it would be so easy; it would require no effort or thinking by the individual. Would we then be better men and women without having to use our intelligence? Would mankind be able to rise to the high destiny appointed for them without thinking and struggling? The nation without a vision dies. All nations were in danger of dying for this reason. Their minds had been too weak to sustain their bodies. The third way is by our own efforts; by using our God-given intelligence, finding out the natural law and following it. As is stated in the preface to "Social Problems", by Henry George: "There is in human affairs one order which is the best. That order is not always the one which exists; but it is the order which should exist for the greatest good of humanity. God knows it and wills it; man's duty it is to discover and establish it".

To discover and establish it is the object of the School of Social Science. You can take for your motto the words of Winstanley (1650). He clearly saw the evils of the land enclosures in England. This is what he wrote: "True religion and undefiled is this—to make restitution of the earth which hath been taken and held from the common people". Your main text book, "Progress and Poverty", shows the way. It is a narrow but a straight way—and few there be that find it—and fewer still prepared to fight for it. Remember this—all the way down the pages of history it has been the remnant that redeems a society or a nation. A small band of earnest workers with a sure sense of right and the purpose and will to drive their message home to the people.

In the words of a great Georgian (Max Hirsch), "Justice will prevail at last. But stone has to be laid upon stone with infinite toil; the mortar that holds them together has to be mixed with human sweat and suffering, in order that mankind shall at last possess a fit habitation for a perfect social State. To have been a faithful soldier in this fight, a faithful soldier in the army of freedom, to have laid one stone in this glorious building, to have done ever so little to bring the Kingdom of God upon earth—surely to have done this—nay, even to have attempted it with all one's might, is sufficient reward for all the work, the fret and toil and the sacrifices that are involved in it. Surely, if we can be but certain to have done this, then when our last hour comes, when the merely selfish things men strive for lose their flavour, when riches and honors drop from us like worn-out habiliments, we may then feel that though our names and our very existence be forgotten, we yet have left imperishable footprints on the sands of time, yet we have not lived our lives in vain".

Extract from the Rectorial Address delivered by General Smuts at St. Andrew's University, 1st October, 1934:—

"The vision of freedom, of the liberation of the human spirit from its primeval bondage is perhaps the greatest light which has yet dawned on our human horizon. It forms the real spur of progress, the lure of our race in its ceaseless striving towards the future. According to Plato, the movement of the world is from brute force to freedom, from fate or necessity to reason, from compulsion to persuasion. Man's progress through the ages is from a regime of domination to one of understanding, consent and free co-operation. It is also our inescapable programme for the future. More and more the will to freedom should be our real motive power. In the uncertainties and paralysing perplexities of to-day, freedom should not merely be our abstract political ideal but a creative force inspiring our young men and women to noble action.

"Inner freedom and harmony of soul; social freedom and equality before the law as the foundation of the State; international freedom in the rule of peace and justice; these should be the creative ideals of the new age, instead of the sterilizing repressions of the past, and the still more sterilising tyrannies

which are forging new shackles for the human spirit. Creative freedom is the watchword of the New Order, to the realisation of which we should bend our energies.

"I have no doubt the present disquieting phase will pass, and that a new renaissance of the European spirit will follow. What a glorious opportunity to our youth to-day to live in times when the situation is once more fluid and the world is once more in the re-making! Are we going to leave a free field to those who threaten our fundamental ideals and our proudest heritage from the past? Or are we going to join in the battle which has been going forward from the dawn of history—for the breaking of our bonds and the enlargement of our range of free choice and free action? Remembering the great appeal of Pericles which rings through the ages, let us seek our happiness in freedom, and bravely do our part in hastening the coming of the great day of freedom".

When Henry George was asked whether the Single Tax was the remedy for all social ills he replied "No, but freedom is; and the Single Tax is the tap-root of freedom".

All the world's vast social problems can and must be solved by the application of social science.

For further information apply to the N.S.W. School of Social Science, Box 666 F.F., G.P.O., Sydney. Telephone: BW 6602.

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