Between Justice and Freedom

Al-Katib al-Masri, June 1946.

There is a single question posed in every civilized place and in every cultivated milieu — posed by some people to others, and posed by individuals to themselves, at times deliberately, intentionally, and by choice, and at other times involuntarily, unconsciously, and without any choice at all.

Some people pose it to others, and individuals pose it to themselves, setting out deliberately to study and analyze it, attempting to find an answer to it, conscious of doing so and intending it; while active life itself poses it to individuals and communities at every moment and on every occasion, and people are very often unable to find for it any decisive, firm solution, or any conclusive, luminous answer. And for this reason they remain in a continual perplexity, whose traces appear plainly in their words when they speak, and in their deeds when they act.

Is the world moving toward the realization of justice, or toward the realization of freedom? This is the question — or say rather, the problem — that the nineteenth century posed to certain minds in Europe, and which came to take hold of these minds little by little until it occupied them entirely and claimed them for itself, then spread to other minds, then came to descend, step by step, from the elite thinking classes to the middle classes, then to the lower classes, then came to monopolize the whole of political thought in the closing years of the last century, until Europe was divided, because of it, into factions and parties. Then its hold over European life grew still greater in the early years of this century, especially in the aftermath of the First World War, until Europe was thrown into violent turmoil by it, and the world outside Europe was thrown into violent turmoil by it as well — one consequence of which was that the Second World War broke out, pouring upon the world all the evil and horror that it poured.

The Second World War has ended, just as the First World War ended, without either of them having found an answer to this question or a solution to this problem; the only result of the two wars was that the question remained unresolved, but grew more pressing and more urgent, and that the problem remained unresolved, but grew more difficult and more complicated. God alone knows whether the world needs a third war to answer this question and solve this problem, or whether an organized

or unorganized peace can bring humanity out of its perplexity, and set it upon one of the two paths: the path of freedom, or the path of justice.

It would be a mistake to suppose that this question is a modern one, unknown to man until the nineteenth century posed it; it is, rather, an ancient question, known to man since the most distant ages. The philosophers who study and analyze history may well be able to trace the origin of this question, and to follow its development ever since reason imposed it upon civilized man in what they call the dawn of history.

And there is no doubt that the philosophers did so: they studied civilization from its very beginnings, traced the struggle between freedom and justice through the various stages of human progress, and arrived in the end at the very perplexity and profound confusion the world now finds itself in — some of them preferring freedom, because it realizes the dignity of man, allows him to perfect himself, and secures for him his personality whole and complete; and a party among them preferring justice, because it satisfies man's need for equality, and allows him a measure of fairness that protects him from the arrogance of the strong over the weak, the domination of the rich over the poor, and the superiority of the capable over the incapable. And yet another party tried to reconcile justice and freedom, but achieved nothing of consequence by this attempt, for absolute justice and absolute freedom cannot meet, unless freedom is constrained and justice is constrained, and each is diminished at its edges, its very form thereby somewhat disfigured. Only then can they meet, in a meeting not free of a distortion that affects human life itself — freedom driving it to action and activity, and the love of justice driving it to dissension and strife — ending in this same development we witness now, as we have witnessed it in various ages, a development that sows enmity and hatred, fills life with evil, cunning, and scheming, and then drives it, time after time, into one of those wars that spare nothing and leave nothing untouched, and which grow more hideous and more monstrous with the passing of the days.

It would likewise be a mistake to suppose that this struggle between freedom and justice is confined to one human milieu rather than another, or to one place in the civilized world rather than another; the reality we can observe at every moment is that this struggle exists in all cultivated human milieus, and in every part of the civilized world as well, growing stronger and more violent where civilization advances and excels, and growing weaker, its weight lightening, where civilization stagnates and tends toward decline — but it is always present, and continuous in any

case.

It is enough to look at the civilized world in which we live today to see that the struggle between freedom and justice is violent to the utmost degree in Europe and America, and that its violence in these two continents is fiercer than in the other continents, though it varies in strength and weakness from one nation and people to another.

What matters is not that we study this struggle between justice and freedom in exhaustive detail — that is something beyond our reach, and indeed unnecessary at present — but rather that we observe the manifestations of this struggle in Europe and America, and in the lands of the Near East in particular, so as to see toward what path we are being driven, and toward what end we are being pushed. There is no doubt that the abolition of distances in time and space has bound our Near East to Europe and America in a close, daily connection, such that we cannot escape — however much we try — being affected by whatever events and troubles occur in these two continents, and whatever difficulties and problems are stirred up in them. It is certain that had the Near East been consulted when the First World War broke out, it would have preferred its own safety, and would have wished to maintain a neutrality that spared it the dangers and horrors of war. But it was not consulted, nor could it possibly have been consulted, for it was itself one of the theaters of that war and one of its objects. Nor was it consulted when the Second World War broke out, nor could it possibly have been consulted, for it was itself one of the theaters of that war and one of its targets. And it seems most likely that it will not be consulted should a third world war break out, for it will be among the most important theaters of that war, and among the most gravely threatened of its objects.

The Near East ought, then, to resign itself to the fact that it is a part of this modern civilized world, which is thrown into the most violent turmoil by this fierce and continuous struggle between freedom and justice, affected — whether it wishes it or not — by this struggle, and by whatever effect it has upon political, economic, and social life; and it is better for it to resign itself to this, to make its preparations for it, and to meet it willingly, embracing this encounter rather than being compelled into it against its will.

If there be no mount but spearpoints, the one in need has no counsel but to mount them.

The Near East has no choice but to mount these spearpoints; and should it wish to turn aside from them or avoid mounting them, it will find no way to do so. It is enough for it to know that this is not peculiar to itself, but is the inevitable fate of every part of the world, now that the distances of time and space have been abolished. And people say, with much truth, that the world today is the object of a contest between two great powers, each of which wishes to dominate it and spread its authority over it, and to subject it to whatever this requires of their respective doctrines in politics and their differing social systems.

These two powers cooperated during the Second World War, remaining in agreement so long as the war lasted, until they won the victory; but they were then unable to continue in agreement, and so proved unable to organize the peace. The war in Europe ended a year and some months ago, and the victors remain unable to settle and organize the peace, because they are unable to agree among themselves. Nor is the disagreement between them confined to the division of spoils and the distribution of the plunder; it extends far beyond that, and is far more violent than that, for it goes beyond the victorious states themselves, with all the power and reach, the strength and resources, they possess, to reach the very peoples these states represent. For the peoples themselves differ most profoundly among themselves: some of them wish to follow the path of freedom, with justice as freedom's follower rather than its leader, while others wish to follow the path of justice, with freedom as a supererogatory extra, to be realized only if justice permits its realization, and to be sacrificed if there is no escaping its sacrifice in the cause of comprehensive justice and complete equality among men.

And then the peoples differ, within their own internal lives, by this same difference that divides the states, so that there arise within them divergent parties, some of which adopt the doctrine of complete freedom, and do not hesitate to sacrifice justice if freedom requires this sacrifice, while others adopt the doctrine of comprehensive justice, and do not hesitate to forfeit freedom if the realization of justice requires its forfeiture.

And so the world witnesses this strange and remarkable spectacle: states differing among themselves, disputing over freedom and justice; parties differing among themselves, struggling over freedom and justice; and individuals differing among themselves, wrangling over freedom and justice. And life goes stumbling along its way, scarcely taking a few steps forward before it is forced to swerve to the right or to the left, and

sometimes forced to retreat altogether, restoring to people institutions they had thought gone beyond recall, departed never to return.

The confusion of a single person may go so far that he holds to the doctrine of freedom in the morning, only to hold, by evening, to the doctrine of justice. And the confusion of a single people may likewise go so far that it swerves today to the right, to support freedom, and swerves tomorrow to the left, to support justice — and by this oscillation between right and left it realizes neither freedom nor justice, but merely continues in its confusion, sinking up to its ears in muddle, and may well drag down with it other nations and peoples, insofar as they are subject to it or affected by it, to a greater or lesser degree.

All these are simple, readily observable truths, which one notices on reading the morning papers, and on reading the evening papers, except that one looks at them with a hasty glance, neither deep nor deliberate, looking at them as one looks at the events of daily life, which change with the coming of each morning and the passing of each evening. The English people, for instance, when they freed themselves last year from the rule of the Conservatives, and handed the reins of power to Labour, did no more than swerve from the path of conservative freedom toward the left, where justice lies — or say, if you will, where the aspiration toward justice lies, and where sacrifice lies, or say, if you will, where the readiness to sacrifice much of individual and collective freedom lies, for the sake of realizing this justice.

But that same English people, when it compels the Labour government to adhere to a conservative policy outside Great Britain — neither relinquishing any of its colonies, nor giving up the least of its interests in the lands that fall, to a greater or lesser degree, under its influence, but rather holding fast to the Empire exactly as it received it from the Conservative government, and preserving its interests throughout the whole world in precisely the manner the Conservatives themselves used to practice — I say: the British people, when it compels the Labour government to proceed in this fashion, does no more than retreat, swerving from the left back to the right, sacrificing a measure of justice in order to preserve that freedom of its own which has allowed it to subjugate and exploit so vast a part of the earth.

And the British people, when it frees itself from the rule of the Conservatives, and entrusts its affairs to Labour, and allows its Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary to speak of the right of peoples to

determine their own destiny, and of the world's right to be delivered from enslavement and tyranny, takes a step to the left in the cause of international justice — but it is not long before it retraces its steps, taking a step to the right in order to preserve its ancient freedom, which has allowed it to control the destiny of peoples, and lo, it proceeds in its policy toward Greece and Yugoslavia along exactly the same lines the Conservatives themselves used to follow.

And this same British people takes a step to the left, when its Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary declare that it wishes to evacuate Egypt without restriction or condition, but it is not long before it retraces its steps under the influence of the Conservatives, and lo, it attaches to that evacuation conditions that nullify it, and binds it with restrictions that prevent all movement and activity — for it sacrifices international justice for the sake of that freedom of its own which allows it to control Egypt's destiny, so that it will not evacuate her except when it wishes, and on whatever conditions and restrictions it chooses to impose.

And this same British people takes further steps to the left, when it "nationalizes" a number of British utilities, only to hesitate and retreat when the nationalization of yet another group of utilities is proposed, abolishing the freedom of individuals and groups for the sake of justice, but abolishing it only up to a point, because it has not believed sufficiently in justice; and it preserves this same freedom for individuals and groups with respect to certain other utilities, likewise because it has not believed sufficiently in justice. It is thus torn between the aspiration to justice and the preservation of freedom, and every difficulty it encounters, every problem that makes up its life, comes to it precisely from this oscillation — between the justice that would require the sacrifice of its freedom to dominate nations and peoples and to control the destiny of states and countries, and the freedom that preserves for it the power to control the destiny of these very nations and peoples.

And the French people proceeds along this same path, oscillating between freedom and justice; it goes to its general elections last October, surging powerfully to the left, forming the majority of its constituent assembly from Communists and Socialists, and lo, it nationalizes a number of its utilities — but it is not long before fear seizes it and panic takes hold of it, and lo, it rejects the constitution that this left-leaning constituent assembly drafted for it; and when it is asked to elect another constituent assembly, it swerves to the right, forming its majority from moderates, and making the leftists their followers, or something

resembling followers — showing thereby that it wants justice, but only up to a point, and that it holds to freedom more than it holds to anything else.

I may forget a great many things before I forget two conversations — one of them held between myself and an ordinary man of the people in Marseille, one day before the constitution was rejected. This man told me that he would reject the constitution the next day, because he did not want a leftist constitution, but that he would nonetheless vote for the leftists afterward, because he wanted social reform, and did not want a reactionary parliament or a government excessive in its moderation. The other was held between myself and a professor from the Sorbonne in Paris, two days after the constitution had been rejected. This professor was of leftist leanings, indeed extreme in his love of the left, and yet he had rejected the constitution alongside the men of the right. When I spoke to him about this, he said: "Yes, I rejected the constitution because I do not want to be subjected to censorship in what I publish of books, what I broadcast of essays, and what I deliver of lessons and lectures." He wanted justice, then, but on condition that this justice not restrict his own freedom when he writes or speaks. And the industrialist could say exactly what this same professor said — he rejected the leftist constitution because he did not wish to be subjected to controls over what his factories produce, and over the profit he reaps from them.

You held out hope to me, until you had made me wholly yours, with words that could bring the wild goats down from the crags to the open vale,
then you drew away from me, when I had no remedy left, and left behind, within my breast, what you left.

They love in this lofty ideal precisely this coquetry and withholding, and take pleasure in this fire that blazes within their breasts and burns their hearts with longing for justice, yet they would hate for this fire to be extinguished, for their breasts to grow cold, and for them to attain justice and feel assured that they had attained it. They love freedom in quite another way: they love to take it into their own hands, to clasp it to their breasts, and to enjoy from it the greatest possible share, never obtaining a share of it without coveting a still greater share, and never losing any part of it without their hearts breaking in anguish over the loss; for there is a very grave difference between the enjoyment of freedom and the enjoyment of justice.

For the enjoyment of freedom arouses this exhausting pleasure, because it drives one to action and activity, tempts one to toil and effort, and prevents man from ever resting or finding repose. The enjoyment of justice, on the other hand, is truly restful, for it kills ambition, tempts one toward contentment, and adorns the heart with satisfaction — or rather, imposes satisfaction upon the heart by sheer compulsion. What wonder is there, then, that man should prefer, above all, freedom, which fills him with strength and vigor, drives him toward hope and toward action, and holds him fast in this sweet, continual unease, which knows no contentment and loves no repose, rather than justice, which arouses neither strength nor vigor, drives one toward no further hope or action, and fills the heart with security and satisfaction, protecting it from unease and from fear!

And the case throughout the rest of Western Europe is just as it is in France and Great Britain: a settled love of freedom, a resolute insistence upon it, and an aspiration toward justice like the aspiration of the chaste, courtly lovers toward those they love.

It is enough to look at Belgium and the Netherlands: like Great Britain and France, they glorify justice, sing its praises, and do not mind realizing something of it on Belgian and Dutch soil, whether willingly or under compulsion — but at the same time they prefer freedom most decidedly, preferring it above all in foreign policy; for justice was not created for Indonesia, say, or for the Belgian Congo, just as it was not created for the British and French colonies, nor for weaker peoples in general. And if it was created for Europe, it was created for Europe to receive only in measured doses, like salt, a little of which improves food, while too much of it spoils the food entirely. For this reason, Belgium and the Netherlands — like France and Great Britain — preserve a wide and generous freedom for individuals and groups, while attempting to realize something of justice, so as to silence those who covet it and demand it, who never cease clamoring for social justice morning and evening.

It is not easy to discern the inclinations of defeated Germany, for she has not yet won even that small measure of freedom needed to express what she wants for her own dark future; but she has, in any case, been divided among the victors, each of whom occupies a part of her territory. And these victors are preparing the German people, or attempting to prepare it, for whatever doctrine in politics and society they themselves favor and are accustomed to. Thus Western Europe and America are preparing a part of the German people — or attempting to prepare it —

for this traditional democracy that prefers freedom to justice, and that makes social reform a means to two ends: satisfying the wretched classes on the one hand, and defending itself and preserving what remains to it of authority and power on the other. But Soviet Russia occupies a great part of Germany, and is preparing it — or attempting to prepare it — for her own doctrine in politics and society; and her doctrine is plain and well known, for she prefers justice and equality, and the abolition of competition, rivalry, superiority, and privilege, to freedom and all it entails of strife between individuals and groups, racing to secure advantages, and monopolizing those advantages once secured.

And it is this violent conflict between these two powers — the power of freedom in America and Western Europe, and the power of justice in Russia — that has made the life of the victors so difficult ever since the war laid down its burdens in East and West; it is this that has stood between them and agreement when they met last October, and when they met in April and May, and it is on the verge of standing between them and agreement again when they meet, in a few days' time, in Paris.

And the Iron Curtain which Russia is said to have drawn down before a great part of Eastern and Southern Europe is nothing but an impenetrable wall standing between freedom and justice, preventing them from meeting face to face and clashing on a single field. For Western Europe is subject to freedom, and all it entails of rivalry and strife, while Eastern Europe is subject to justice, and all it entails of domination, coercion, and the reining-in of unruly interests and ambitions. And when the Greek nation held its elections under the eyes of the British, the French, and the Americans, and the result of these elections leaned to the right rather than the left, the Russians said: these elections were not held freely, and were not safe from the interference of Western democracy and the capital that backs it.

And when Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia arranged their own affairs, whether by elections or by the establishment of provisional governments, and the result of all this was that these nations swerved to the left, the British, the Americans, and the French along with them said: these nations are not free to determine their own destiny, but are influenced, in everything they do and everything they say, by violent Russian authority. And all this means nothing except that the small peoples of Europe have likewise been forced to oscillate between the doctrines of the strong, the partisans of freedom and of justice — so that in Western Europe they lean toward

freedom, because the strong among the victors there lean toward it.

The truth is that the will of these peoples has not been granted the opportunities it ought to have been granted to manifest itself plainly, free of ambiguity or obscurity. And the Spanish situation may be among the clearest illustrations of this contest between justice and freedom. We must note that domination and coercion are the two instruments employed equally by justice and by freedom, each of them defending itself by their means, and each of them establishing its own authority by their means.

It was the British army that upheld freedom in Greece at the expense of justice, and the Russian army that upheld justice in Eastern Europe at the expense of freedom. None of the victors has an army in Fascist Spain; and had such an army existed, Fascist Spain would have leaned toward the doctrine of freedom had the army been British or American, and toward the doctrine of justice had it been Russian. But Spain is not occupied, and for this reason her situation stands as a clear proof of the sharpening of the contest between these two doctrines. As for the partisans of justice — the Russians, and the French too, so long as France itself leaned leftward — they wish to abolish the Fascist regime in Spain, even should this require military intervention in Spanish affairs; and the least of what they demand is that all the victorious states, whatever their differing doctrines, break off political relations with Fascist Spain, and that the victorious states recognize the exiled Spanish government, which established itself for a time in Latin America and now wishes to move to France. And they base their demands on the view that victorious democracy ought not to allow Fascism to survive, that the United Nations organization and the San Francisco Charter impose this as an absolute obligation, and that Fascist Spain sided with Germany and Italy, being indebted to them for her very existence.

But the British and the Americans believe here in the freedom of peoples with a belief verging on fanaticism: the Spanish people is free to choose whatever government rules over its affairs, and no outside power ought to interfere in Spain's own internal affairs, nor to impose upon Spain a government, however democratic, nor to deliver Spain from a government, however Fascist, that fought against democracy and assisted against it wherever it found a way to do so.

And the result of all this is that the Spanish people itself is divided, at least on the surface: one part of it wishes to return to the leftist

republican order, while another wishes to preserve the right-leaning Fascist order. Before the war, Germany and Italy did not hesitate to support the Fascist regime in Spain with arms; but after the war, and after democracy's victory, Great Britain and America refuse even to break off political relations with Spanish Fascism, which assisted against democracy and devised every manner of scheme against it.

The whole matter, then, comes down — before everything else and after everything else — to the struggle between these two doctrines: the doctrine of freedom, which relies upon capital, and the doctrine of justice, which relies upon communism.

And just as Russia has drawn down an Iron Curtain before Eastern and Southern Europe, so Great Britain and America are drawing down another iron curtain before Western Europe. All this may well hold danger for the future of the world, but there is something more dangerous still: that the peoples themselves are most severely divided within their own internal lives — one party among them leaning toward freedom, following Great Britain and America, and calling on them for aid against its rivals should it need to; and another party leaning toward justice, following Russia, and calling on her for aid against its rivals should it need to.

And from this it follows that the word "independence" becomes one of those hollow words, which no longer signify, at present, any realized meaning in the life of these peoples.

It was truly comical, during the electoral struggle in France, to see the partisans of freedom accuse their rivals of taking their orders from Moscow and wishing to make France a tail of Russia, and to see the partisans of justice accuse their own rivals of taking their orders from Washington and wishing to make France a tail of America.

The truth is that both sides were exaggerating, and knew that they were exaggerating. For the idea of justice has become the foundation of a doctrine verging on a religion, and the idea of freedom has likewise become the foundation of a doctrine verging on a religion. Those who incline to one doctrine or the other, and believe in one faith or the other, are of course bound to side with their partners in opinion and their brethren in faith. The alignment of the partisans of justice in France with Russia, like the alignment of the partisans of freedom there with America, is a natural phenomenon, comparable to the alignment of Muslims, at a certain time, with the seat of the Caliphate, and the alignment of

Christians, at a certain time, with the seat of Christianity in Rome.

This divide between the two doctrines, however, soon grew more complicated after the First World War, with the appearance of a middle doctrine that wished to preserve freedom while realizing justice on earth; but it looked upon neither freedom nor justice in themselves, considering them both instead from a particular angle — that of religion. For the partisans of justice among the Communists and Socialists rely, before all else, upon materialism, which denies religions altogether, and looks upon social life as a necessary result of an inevitable historical development.

And the champions of freedom — especially since the French Revolution — scarcely concern themselves with religion, and scarcely pay it any heed. If, then, a third doctrine could arise between these two, reconciling freedom and justice on the one hand with religion on the other, taking religion as the foundation for a new human life that rises above matter, ascends to the loftiest ideals, and believes that there is in man a power that cannot live, nor bear fruit, nor grant man his share of progress, except by connecting with its first sacred source through the path of faith, trust, and hope — I say, if such a doctrine could arise, its emergence would be an unmixed good, for it would repair what the Revolution had spoiled, restoring to religion its place in human hearts and its authority over souls, protecting people from runaway materialism and rebellious atheism, while at the same time guaranteeing them a moderate share of freedom, and allowing them, at the same time, a continuous striving toward the realization of justice on earth.

And thus arose Christian Socialism, which does not found justice upon historical determinism, nor make reform a mere result of material development, nor abolish the freedom of the individual or of groups, but instead founds the affairs of men upon mutual sympathy, cooperation, and love, and gathers their hearts around these lofty human and divine ideals.

There is no doubt that the horrors of the two world wars had the greatest effect in bringing this doctrine into being, and in its spread and its triumph in certain countries. These horrors that the war poured out upon people, these catastrophes that penetrated so deeply into the lives of individuals and communities, this cruelty that severed bonds of kinship God had commanded be kept joined — all this disenchanted people with their faith in the authority and supremacy of science, turned them away from this infatuation that had filled their hearts and governed their

affairs in the past century, and forced them to consider that science is not everything, that reason is not everything, and that man is not made up of reason and body alone, but possesses other faculties that ought not to be neglected, and other needs that ought not to be scorned.

And among the most important of these faculties is the faculty of feeling, and among the most important of these needs is the need for faith in a sacred power governing the affairs of man, raising him up toward good, restraining him from evil, and keeping him far from ruinous sins. And what further aided the spread and triumph of this doctrine after the Second World War was that the right to vote was granted to women in most of the European peoples, after having been confined to men alone; and for this reason Christian Socialism recently triumphed in France, through the victory of the Popular Republican Movement at the expense of the Marxist Socialists, and Christian Democracy triumphed in Italy likewise at the expense of Marxist Socialism, and this new Christian Socialism has become a force of real weight in the political life of Western Europe in general.

I do not know whether this Christian Socialism will be granted a lasting success, or whether it is merely an aftermath of the war, such that the years will scarcely pass before European life returns to its ordinary nature, and the struggle between these two doctrines — the doctrine of freedom and the doctrine of justice — resumes in full violence. For this Christian Socialist doctrine is beautiful and admirable in itself, just as the doctrine of justice and the doctrine of freedom are each beautiful in themselves; but no sooner does it emerge into everyday existence and attempt to deal with the pressing problems of life than it is afflicted by the same symptoms that afflict the other two doctrines — symptoms that make it hateful to one party of people and beloved to another.

For Christian Socialism does not abolish capital, and so capital will find reassurance in it, while those who seek pure equality and absolute justice will shy away from it. And Christian Socialism does not deny social reform, but actively promotes it, and may at times be extreme in doing so, and so extremists will exploit it to achieve some of what they want, while conservatives will be wary of it, because it costs them more than they wish to pay. And Christian Socialism, by virtue of its very name and its adherence to religion, is bound to accommodate the Church — or rather, to obey and please the Church — and so a vast segment of Europeans, and of thinkers who long ago severed every tie between themselves and the Church, will shy away from it.

Take a single example of this middle position, which puts Christian Socialism in an awkward predicament in a country like France: this Christian Socialism demands that freedom of education which the extreme conservatives themselves demand. And this freedom of education is denied by a vast number of Frenchmen, those who championed the separation of Church and State, and who compelled the Third French Republic to make education a matter for the State, subject to its authority and bound to complete religious neutrality.

There is no avoiding, then, that Christian Socialism should meet with a great deal of difficulty in dealing with this question, for the partisans of Marxist justice have not weakened, nor despaired, but have kept their strength, which grows more widespread and more triumphant day by day. In truth, Christian Socialism is on the verge of being merely one of these transitional phases, in which peoples find reassurance when exhausted by war, and burdened by crises with more effort and hardship than they can bear. But once they have rested and recovered their strength and vigor, they grow impatient with middle positions, and resume the struggle between the old and the new, between conservatism and extremism — or say, if you will, between adherence to freedom and aspiration to justice.

The one thing beyond doubt is that human nature always drives man toward progress; he never attains one stage of progress without rising toward a stage better still, for "the needs of the living never cease," as our great poet says. And material human civilization is quick to develop, and to ease, spread, and place extremity within everyone's reach. Humanity cannot but keep putting to itself this perpetual question: why is bliss granted to one group of people and denied to another? Why should people be distinguished from one another in their enjoyment of life, when they are made equal in their entry into life and their departure from it? Why should the laborer labor, and the farmer sow, both filling the earth with the means of luxury and the instruments of bliss, only for the fruit of this labor to be enjoyed by a group of people who neither labor nor sow, who exert no effort and bear no hardship in life at all?

And why should leisure be granted to a small minority of people, and hardship imposed upon the vast majority? These questions have been put to mankind since the most ancient ages, but people have not pressed them upon themselves as insistently as they do now; and they believe — rightly or wrongly, gladly or reluctantly — that justice must be the final end of life, and that true equality in enabling people to benefit from this

justice is the means of achieving this great end. If you remind them of freedom and its merits and virtues — and how many merits and virtues freedom has! — they will tell you: freedom will not feed the hungry, nor clothe the naked, nor quench the thirsty; they will tell you that the wretched man cannot benefit from his own freedom, for freedom avails only where the means to use it exist; they will tell you that freedom is a good thing, beyond doubt, but only on condition that it be granted to people after equality has been established among them, and justice settled among them, and it has become safe from all abuse and all tyranny. And they will tell you that freedom, if granted to people before justice is settled among them, will stir up rivalry among them, spread hatred among them, and sow greed, envy, and rancor in them, making enemies of one another.

And they will cite the whole of history in support of all this. They will say: justice must be realized first, and people must be made equal in their enjoyment of life, just as they are equal in their entry into it and their departure from it. Once that is achieved for them, then grant them freedom, if you wish — it will not then expose them to evil, nor stir up among them scheming, treachery, betrayal, or enmity.

You might object to them that the realization of the justice they want, and the equality they aspire to and covet, calls forth a great deal of evil — the first of this evil being the abolition of freedom, the bringing down of the strong from his strength, of the superior from his superiority, of the wealthy from his wealth, the forcing of people into similar modes of life made hateful by their very sameness, and the use of violence against them to drive them onto the right path and guide them to the straight way. You might cite for them the examples of what happens here and there in the milieus that have attempted to realize justice and equality — of unspeakable violence and unbearable domination — but they will always answer you that humanity is sick, and that the sick are not cured by coddling and indulgence, but by being made to take the medicine, however bitter and hateful it may be, and sometimes by being made to endure something even harsher, more exhausting, and heavier than the bitterest, most hateful medicine.

Peace be upon you, from an Imam — and God's own hand has blessed that worn, patched hide.

Whoever strives — though he ride the two wings of an ostrich — to overtake what you achieved but yesterday, shall be outrun.

You settled many affairs, then departed, leaving behind calamities still folded in their sleeves, unopened.