

resignation which we usually give to that phrase, but in the sense of taking responsibility for the world, having proper dealings with the world, doing justice to it, i.e. giving it its due. Likewise, *vice versa*, it would have to be said in certain respects that *coram Deo* we have quite decidedly to disregard what counts *coram mundo*. For when it comes to the question of justification before God, then the only thing that counts is, that he is justified who does justice to God, i.e. lets God be God. In the one case we have to do with a partial justification—that of the *opera*—in the other case with the justification of the very person—with faith.

But this distinction is valid only in virtue of the closest association. For who can let the world be world in such a sober, matter-of-fact way? The freedom to do so comes of letting God be God. For we cannot truly let the world be world unless we truly let God be God. For that reason the *iustitia Christiana* as *iustitia coram Deo*, and indeed as *iustitia fidei*, opens the way to, and so makes possible, the *iustitia civilis* in its character of *iustitia coram mundo*, and indeed as *iustitia operum*. Yet this fundamental insight must at once be shielded against misunderstandings in three directions.

Firstly, it is usual to regard the relation between faith and works—and for that we can now also say, between what God does and what man does—in the first instance as a relationship between power and performance. Faith is supposed to give the power for works. This way of speaking requires to be very critically examined. The basic relation of faith and works is not the communication of power for works, but the communication of freedom for them—that is, freedom to do the works in their limitedness as works and therefore also in the limitedness of the powers that are at our disposal for them. Just as faith too does not, though it is easy to misunderstand it so, primarily receive the revelation of what is to be done; but faith gives the freedom to perceive the right, because faith assigns works to their due place.

A second misunderstanding is to suppose that faith does indeed make room for the *iustitia civilis* by inciting to it, yet also produces over and above it much higher works which far surpass the *iustitia civilis*. This misunderstanding is partly caused by the ineradicable tendency to adopt a working attitude even before God and therefore to set about special works *coram Deo*, and partly by the disastrously one-sided practice of letting the *iustitia coram mundo* take its cue from the political sphere and therefore from what can be compelled if necessary by force. That is certainly a standpoint which is highly significant for the worldliness of the world. But if we would grasp the basic theological sense of *iustitia*

civilis, then we must ascribe to the *iustitia civilis* all works which can sensibly be done and are therefore right works. Even the man who is so unworldly as to give all his goods to the poor or to surrender his life in martyrdom remains, if it is rightly done (and that means if the man in question knows in faith what he is doing), within the sphere of the *iustitia civilis*, the *iustitia coram mundo*; i.e. he submits to the test of how far he is doing justice to the world by these works. For by works we can do justice only to the world, not to God. For that reason the criterion of works, precisely from the standpoint of the *iustitia civilis*, is love. In the realm of works there is no higher *iustitia* than the *iustitia civilis*! Yet for that very reason we should not imagine that with mere law-abidingness and bourgeois good conduct we have already done justice to the world and fulfilled all *iustitia civilis* in this basic sense.

A third misunderstanding is to suppose that without faith there is no *iustitia civilis* at all. Christian circles indeed are repeatedly haunted by the idea that an atheist is an immoral man and that if Christian colours do not justify an undertaking, then at least they certainly recommend it *a priori* as inspiring confidence. It is true that faith is the presupposition of the *iustitia civilis* in so far as it communicates the freedom to let the *iustitia civilis* be really only *iustitia civilis* and not to seek to derive somehow from works the justification of the person. But in spite of such misuse of the *iustitia civilis*, it can still *materialiter* very well be *iustitia civilis*. Where the *iustitia civilis* is concerned there is cause enough for believers to be shamed by non-believers, both as to discretion and as to readiness to make sacrifices. Over and above that, however, the freedom to matter-of-factness which is communicated in faith is a thing the world has to thank faith for, even without an immediate awareness of the connexion. That the idea of *iustitia civilis* has attained an isolated independence (which is admittedly wide open to falsification), is of course a major factor in the modern world. As Christians we do have ground for taking care that that is rightly understood, but hardly for seeking in principle to set it aside again. On the contrary, there are many reasons for the church to let the children of the world, who are often wiser in this respect also, remind it of the true meaning of the *iustitia civilis*.

X

Where the *iustitia fidei* gives freedom for true *iustitia operum*, so that in such *opera* of man the *opus Dei* takes place, that heralds the peace of the creation, the peace of the world at one with itself because it is at one

with its Creator. With '*iustitia coram mundo*', however, it always remains doubtful whether it is at bottom *iustitia fidei*. It remains as such in the self-contradiction of the *regnum mundi*. And the *regnum Christi* remains a kingdom of the Word whose proper proclamation encounters the perdition of the *regnum mundi* at the point where that perdition has its source and develops its real virulence: in the heart, in the *conscientia* of man. The *conscientia* is the mathematical point at which the *regnum Christi* becomes one with a *regnum mundi* stripped of its power and freed from itself in order to be mere world. But as conscience, and that means as hearer, man remains dependent on the ἀκοή πίστεως, the faith-creating Word, whose truth is observed through the two kingdom doctrine, and by whose act alone the distinction of the two kingdoms takes place concretely.