

Cometh Any to Judge the Earth?:
On the Human Need for a Reckoning

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Approaches to Defending the Faith

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Introduction

“Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth.”¹ This sentiment, expressed by the biblical prophet Habakkuk, expresses succinctly an ongoing struggle of human existence. Indeed, the frustration this verse identifies is perhaps one of the most persistent human refrains. Nearly from the moment we learn to speak, we begin to protest experiences that do not fit what seems right. The cry “that’s not fair!” comes rapidly to haunt the ears of every parent, but the mother herself will also complain that there is no justice done, perhaps, for the wrongs in how her own mother or friend or employer has treated her. Whether such cries always map onto reality or not, the cries themselves are ubiquitous.

Some cases where justice is absent, however, seem especially egregious. At the risk of cliché, few men would say the horrors of the Holocaust have been or even will be properly accounted for. There are also “smaller” cases. In the foster care system, there are children who have borne in the night evils that would rend the souls of a man in the daylight. Many of these are never even discovered, much less reckoned with. Some stretch the mind and soul beyond pain, and one could sooner wish the whole world had never been than that some of these particular evils had the chance to emerge.

The experience of frustration, pain, and perplexity at unanswered longings for justice offers a puzzle to human understanding. Why do such terrors happen, and why do men react to them as they do? Potential answers to such questions abound, and they lock into larger questions about the “problem of evil,” with all that entails. If these questions have answers, the only way to them will involve close analysis of the actual experience, of what it is that actually

1. Habakkuk 1:4 KJV.

happens and what effect it has on us. When we attempt this, however, it seems we shall find that the nexus of desire, the moral sense, and the reality of the world all cries out that there must be One who comes to judge the earth. Therefore let us pass on to this analysis.

The Problem of Unanswered Justice, and That of Evil

To get a handle on the problem posed by unanswered longings for justice, it seems prudent to set the problem in the broader context of related questions. The most relevant wide frame would be the infamous “problem of evil.” Though often specifically referring to the logical problem of an apparent incompatibility between the affirmations of a good God and an evil world, the problem can also be taken more generally. There is a problem of evil in an existential or psychological mode: our selves simply call out “Why?” in the face of suffering and pain. The former problem, of the logical sort, is not of much *direct* relevance to the topic at hand, but the two do inform each other, and conclusions about the one are relevant to the other, so it is worth taking a moment to define it.

The logical problem of evil for theism, familiar to mostly all, takes a simple form going back at least (allegedly) to Epicurus: “Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?” This is itself specifically an argument about the existence of God, intending to reveal either a tension or an outright contradiction between classical notions of God and the fact that evil exists in the world.

On the one hand, the experience of unanswered longings for justice can be viewed as a subspecies or application of this problem. The human desire for justice persisting unfulfilled is simply one of many forms of suffering and evil, and as such it serves as potential material for an

argument that God does not exist. Whether this is a valid move or not, it does not help positively account for the way men experience unanswered desires for justice. So we could suggest that this makes God an unlikely or impossible hypothesis, but it would bring us no closer to finding a true hypothesis.

However, if there is any ambiguity in the argument at all, the problem can work in the other direction just as well. If it is even possible that one of the steps of the logical argument in which the problem of evil consists is a misstep, then reaching a conclusion on other grounds about what does positively account for our experiences with injustice could disprove or at least weaken the argument about the problem of evil. If, for example, we find that our experiences of injustice seem indecipherable without the hypothesis of God, then this would suggest the *prima facie* plausibility of the argument in which the problem of evils consists is misleading.

Even if, however, such a question mark were to be hung above the problem of evil as an argument against the existence of God, the “problem” would remain in the sense that one or more of its particular steps must be in error. It would remain, then, to identify where it goes wrong and give an alternative positive account of how evil in general, including in the form of unsatisfied justice, is compatible with the reality of God. This would also be beyond the scope of the inquiry at hand, but it is possible that the necessary path for this inquiry would, along the way, lead to or by factors which would indeed contribute to this further project.

So much for the relationship between the experiential problem of unanswered justice and the problem of evil. It falls next to consider what will be required to arrive at a satisfactory account of the human experience of outstanding injustice.

The Reality and the Path of Investigation

To reckon adequately with the human experience of unsatisfied longings for justice, we must start with the nature of the experience itself. What does it look and feel like? How does it “taste” and what does it do to those who go through it? To ask these questions is to look inward, to recall what happens within the heart, mind, and even body. So what *do* we find?

The first and most undeniable fact is that truly awful wrongs do fall upon men at every turn. For any particular man, some of these may happen to himself, whereas others may happen to people around him. He is also aware that many of the worst atrocities happen beyond the scope of his knowledge. While he knows, for example, that in general there is such an evil as child abuse, he also knows that he does *not* know much about when, where, or how often it takes place. What unfolds in the darkest corners, who goes unseen and unspoken from the recesses of the night—he can make out the shadow but only so that he is fully aware what casts it is more than he could ever stomach.

The observant man—or rather any man at all—also recognizes intuitively that not all of these evils are deserved. While no doubt he could imagine some of what he sees or at least has heard of being attributable to desert, he knows well this cannot be quite right in every case. Infants can suffer the unspeakable. Upon nursing babes fall crimes that make the blood run cold. Even accounting for the greatest allowances of original sin, it is impossible to perceive any congruity between the wrongs inflicted upon men by other men and what evils they may have accrued to their desert.

It is this descent of these great evils apart from desert that makes them appear as a problem at all, of course. While some lighter injustices might not seriously challenge the human soul, grave unanswered claims are harder to bear. When certain stories see the light of day, there

is a natural reflex almost to “unwish” the entire world rather than allow them to stand. This feeling is only compounded if the mind reflects for a moment to realize how many more stories it will never know. How many abominable acts have taken place in the dark and will never see the light of day at all, much less be recompensed or brought to any form of justice?

This realization can be almost crippling, especially when it raises questions about the cosmic standing of justice. What kind of world is this, anyway? Does justice have a valid place or not? On one hand, the human soul hungers and thirsts for righteousness so deeply that justice feels transcendent in nature and origin. Our bones reject with disgust any hint of the notion that what strikes us as right or wrong holds anything short of ultimate import. On the other hand, the perpetual frustration of justice and the hints that it could go perpetually unfulfilled seem to undermine this. How can justice truly be at the back of the cosmos, irreducibly true and real, if it will go forever cheated on a grand scale? Does this not instead imply it is an illusion at best or a sick joke at worst? So the very experience of injustice seems to point the reasoning soul in two rather opposite directions at the same time. Yet unless reality is divided against itself, there must be a single truth, something possible way of accounting for both ends of the paradox.

Terms of the Investigation

So how might it be possible to identify the true account that explains the riddle of justice that goes unanswered? This is an important question not merely because, to do anything at all, a method is required, but also since there are several “bad” methods conceivable. For though there is but one reality, it is sometimes obscure and different potential strategies for probing it may all yield some level of success, but not the complete kind of success that provides answers which satisfy the whole man.

This satisfaction of the whole man must not be overlooked. Hypothetically, there is an almost infinite number of theories, answers, or speculations which the imagination might be able to produce to answer any of the deepest questions in life. These are not all created equal, however. Within the realm of conceivable accounts, only those of a certain subset possess logical consistency and a basic level of congruence with the real facts of the world. Many are content with any account that belongs to this rather wide set, so long as it suits their fancy. However, an answer to anything that is truly believable to men, not only in the intellect but also in the chest and the hands, will need still more to narrow these down. Not every theory which is logically self-consistent, or which can, in the most basic technical sense, give some accounting of some sort for all the data in the universe, is truly an answer suited to human nature. What is reasonable is not quite the same as what is logically coherent.

This conflict can sometimes take more obvious forms. If a man were to tell me that my wife does not in fact love me, that rather she is a spy taking part in a long operation for which marriage to me is a minor necessity along the way, it would not be at all unreasonable for me to reject the notion without any serious consideration whatsoever. Though there is nothing logically incoherent about the man's theory, and though perhaps he might have some explanation or another for every argument I might bring up against him, the most reasonable response would simply be to ignore his account of reality.

Luigi Giussani articulates the matter helpfully in his book, *The Religious Sense*:

The truly interesting question for man is neither logic, a fascinating game, nor demonstration, an inviting curiosity. Rather, the intriguing problem for man is how to adhere to reality, to become aware of reality. This is a matter of being compelled by reality, not one of logical consistency. To acknowledge a mother's love for her child is not the conclusion of a logical process: it is evident, a certainty, or a proposal made by reality whose existence one must admit. The existence of the desk at which I work, my mother's attachment to me, even if they should not be logically developed conclusions,

are realities that correspond to truth, and it is reasonable to affirm them. Logic, coherence, demonstration are no more than instruments of reasonableness at the service of a greater hand, the more ample “heart,” that puts them to use.²

In the face of the deep perplexity which we face at the unsatisfied call of justice, then, it is first needful to say that any adequate account will need more than raw logical possibility. While logical coherence will be required of any such account, since without it we would not be making sense of anything but rather nonsense, it is not at all sufficient to a reasonable answer. A proper answer needs to account for the whole human reality, for what men experience at every level. If it cannot do so, the most natural, and indeed reasonable, response will be to disregard it (at best) or despise it as disgustingly trivializing.

If the goal is a truly human answer to a problem of human experience, then none of the elements which make up that human experience can be sidelined, omitted, or denied in forming an answer. While some of the particularities of specific experiences of some men can certainly be passed over, to answer a question about what is common to men in general, all that is common must be reckoned with. Efforts to resolve the problem simply by nullifying one of its components are not to be trusted. For even if it turned out such a conclusion were true, it would mean only that humanity is not suited for truth, so that such an answer could not be believed by humans one way or the other.

With these basic terms set for the shape of our investigation, we may proceed. In what possible ways might we account for the strange, paradoxical human experience of injustice which receives no answer?

2. Luigi Giussani, *The Religious Sense*, trans. John Zucchi (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), pg. 14.

A Survey of Hypotheses

In surveying the landscape of possible answers to the problem presented by unanswered claims of justice, it quickly appears that most of them can be categorized under a few major headings. For our purposes we can classify them under denial, harmonization, dismissal, and rectification, listed here in ascending order of plausibility (the order to be justified shortly). Let us take a moment, then, to look at what each of these entails.

The first “solution” is simply to deny the one horn or the other of the dilemma at hand. For example, there are those such as nihilists who are simply willing to deny that there is a place for justice at the back of the cosmos. Instead, the back of the cosmos is empty, and the burning feeling of justice is simply an illusion, telling mankind nothing about ultimate about the world or his place in it. This is one of the most extreme options, and there are few who take it all the way. Nonetheless many do find it appealing, and it has a certain simplicity and ease that hardly any other theory can offer. It may indeed be almost impossible to properly disprove it, even if it turns out there are other reasons to reject it.

Another possible solution is harmonization. Rather than deny one of the horns of the great dilemma, it is possible to offer an account in the evils of life and the reality of justice are simply one. Certain expressions of the doctrine of *karma* would be examples of this strategy. There is, in fact, no injustice at all. Everyone always gets what he deserves, whether this is obvious to the observer or not. The world is inexorably, even mechanistically, just in every detail. Any apparent conflict is misleading. Reality is One.

A third category of possible answers would be dismissal. Forms of this answer do are not always indeed an answer at all. Dismissal throws the problem out the window, as it were. One might claim that the problem is nonsense, quite literally a verbal construct which has no

meaning. A much more common approach, perhaps one of the most common at present, would simply confess that the problem is very hard and confusing but deny the possibility of answering it. Either life is truly absurd, including within it so much illusion and confusion that any attempt to address serious questions will necessarily fail to produce meaningful answers, or its rationality is such that no men have any epistemic access to it. Justice does appear to mean something ultimate, but it also seems to leave some of its ultimate claims unresolved, and there is, whether in principle or in fact (but absolutely so), no chance at all of making heads or tails of it.

The final major category of possible answers affirms some kind of rectification. Perhaps there is a real conflict between the justice at the back of the universe and the outstanding injustice which men experience every day, but this is a temporary state of affairs. Someday wrongs will be righted and justice will assert its rightful victory. Theories of rectification can take either temporal or transcendent forms. In a temporal form, justice is something which will develop from within human history itself. Justice *has been* wronged, but over time humanity will develop the ability to right wrongs and bring about the victory of justice in some meaningful form. In transcendent theories of rectification, by contrast, man himself will never be able to restore the rightful order of justice in the cosmos, but this could be accomplished from *beyond* the cosmos, or perhaps by the cosmos itself, transcending any of the limits of human ability to bring about an absolute reign of righteousness.

These four directions seem to exhaust the most common and plausible paths the human mind takes in pondering the most radical questions of justice and its frustration in human experience. It remains only, then, to test them against the whole field of that very human experience for which they intend to account. In doing so, it will become clear how many dead ends there really are and that only the last of these options is truly the way.

Reason and Reality: Analyzing Answers

At this point it is critical to recall the rules of analysis that were defined earlier. The true goal is, as Giussani put it, to “adhere to reality.”³ A truly adequate account of the deep convictions we all hold about justice and the crippling horror we feel at its worst violations needs to seriously reckon with the whole of this common human experience if it is to claim to make any sense of it all. So with this goal fixed firmly in mind, it shall be safe to proceed to an assessment of the proposals for dealing with unanswered justice that were outlined above.

Denial

The first solution, denial, seems almost immediately to fail all of the relevant tests. To claim that, in the end, there is no problem at all because there is no justice is to cut a gaping hole in the life of man. If anything, it is more like a non-answer, however popular it may be among some particularly edgy characters (especially on the Internet). That this account is entirely incompetent at addressing the realities it ostensibly engages with is clear from the fact that no men ever find themselves living or feeling this way. Few and far between are the men who have no interest in justice, who do not rage at hearing what is done to orphans in the dark or political dissidents behind security blockades. Even to feel nothing at the minor offense of an insult that seems unfair is rare, and those capable of this are even more rarely those who believe that justice is an illusion, but rather are usually those who believe most strongly in all moral concerns, justice not least among them.

3. Giussani, *The Religious Sense*, pg. 14.

The path of denial, then, is a non-starter. In seeking to make sense of the world of men, it cuts off more than half of that same world. The choice is basically arbitrary. Taking up one strategy for making sense of certain aspects of the human experience, it amputates other aspects of the same total human life without a sufficient *reason* to prefer one side of experience to the other. The experience of justice in both positive and negative forms is basic to how we perceive the world. To deny this is real is to leave us in such doubt about the validity of our own experiences that we likewise have no reason to take seriously the experiences by which we come to formulate such theories.

Harmonization

If denial is not a viable strategy, then, perhaps harmonization is more plausible. Maybe there is a genuine inner logic of justice to all things, and injustice is only an appearance. This, however, offers hardly any advantages for the same reasons. Though it does more honour to the real phenomena of life by admitting a true place for justice at all, the result is simply to move the arbitrary cut-off further down the line. While it is certainly true that we can find ourselves having been mistaken about a feeling of injustice—perhaps when we grow up and realize a rule we thought was unfair had perfectly reasonable grounds—to go all the way and believe there are no truly unfair developments in the world is to cut off the very branch on which those other judgments hang.

Nonetheless, there are senses in which one might affirm a certain kind of justice to all things that happen if this is not done so as to flatten out injustice as a real phenomenon on smaller scales. This is the difference, for example, between karma and Calvinism. Under many forms, karma must assume that whatsoever befall a man is precisely what he has earned in some

way, shape, or form, even if the precise timing of desserts can vary. By contrast, when a Calvinist affirms that God is at the back of all things working everything according to His good pleasure, where His good pleasure is irreducibly just, this does not imply that certain events cannot be travesties of justice in themselves which God must integrate into a larger project in order to give them a place that may harmonize with His omnipotent justice. Even in this other case, however, it is necessary to be very clear about the reality of injustice on the experiential scale. If the darkest depths of human evil can have a certain just fit into the total plan of the world, this can only be reasonably affirmed as the happy secret hiding behind the very real and very visible wrong done to justice, whether human or divine, in the act by itself, considered apart from the divine power which subjects it to work against itself for His goodness.

Dismissal

If a total harmonization will not do for our needs, what of mere dismissal? There is a certain sense in which merely throwing the question of justice out as impossible is less troublesome than some of these other options. Unlike the prior two possibilities, this does not require simply rejecting part of the human experience as false. There is no arbitrary partition between “valid” experience and “invalid” experience. Rather, both our experience of justice and our experience of wrong are allowed to stand on their own and be whatever they are, only we are not able to speak of what they are, how they relate, or even for sure whether there is in fact some deeper coherence between them. This is no doubt superior to disposing outright with major elements of human life: a “maybe” here is less deadly than a “no.”

Even so, such an abdication of reasoning has its own problems. Implicit in the dismissal of the problem as too hard or the world as too absurd is that the human need to find reason in

the world is wrong. This theory does not our basic categories of justice and injustice but it does reject the deep and ineradicable human compulsion to find answers. In the end, we find this is no less arbitrary a cut-off than the previous options. If it is superior to them, it is only in degree and not in kind. To throw up our hands at the absurdity of reality and deny the possibility of total reason is still to deny and reject a basic component of what it is to think and feel as a man.

We may again invoke Giussani here:

In these questions, the adjectives and the adverbs are the decisive words: *at its core*, what is the *ultimate* sense of life, *at its core*, what is reality made of? Why is it *really* worthwhile to exist, for reality itself to exist? These types of questions exhaust the energy, all of reason's searching energy. They require a total answer, an answer which covers the entire horizon of reason, exhausting completely the whole "category of possibility."

And reason, being coherent, will not give in until it has found an exhaustive answer.

beneath the dense blue
sky, seabirds flash by, never
pausing, driven by images below:
"Farther, farther!"

If one's understanding of reality could be satiated solely by responding to a thousand questions, and man were to find the answer to the nine hundredth and ninety-ninth, then he would still be as restless and unsatisfied as if he were at the beginning.⁴

Man is not made to accept no answer at all. While individual men may be able to throw up their hands in their conscious rational inquiry, they will almost always substitute this agnosticism with some implicit total answer to which they really refer their actions. Indeed, it is not at all clear that a man who were to fully embrace ultimate agnosticism about the moral realities of the world would be able to function at all.

4. Giussani, *The Religious Sense*, pg. 47.

A better route will require heeding C. S. Lewis' basic observation about human nature and its desires. The most memorable form of his argument is deceptively simple: "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."⁵ Some find it easy to scoff and dismiss this form of argument, but elsewhere Lewis makes his reasoning more explicit (and arguably compelling):

A man's physical hunger does not prove that that man will get any bread; he may die of starvation on a raft in the Atlantic. But surely a man's hunger does prove that he comes of a race which repairs its body by eating and inhabits a world where eatable substances exist.⁶

What is true for Lewis of desire in general seems also true for the desire for understanding of the human condition (and indeed also the desire for ultimate justice). If we are such a race that needs some total framework to make sense of itself, then surely this indicates that such a framework is indeed possible and bears some relation to our nature. To deny this, to concede ultimately that we can make no sense of the world, is to reduce ourselves to an absurdity that not only raises bizarre questions for reason (why would men feel this way about the impossible) but also conflicts with our most basic instincts and behaviours. We must therefore press on to the only remaining possibility.

Rectification

So far we have weighed denial, harmonization, and dismissal as responses to the human problem of deep longings for justice that go unsatisfied. This leaves, per our previous breakdown, only one possibility left. Can a belief in a future, perhaps indeed eschatological,

5. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (HarperOne, 2009), ch. 20, Kindle ebook.

6. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (HarperOne, 2006), ch. 1, Kindle ebook.

rectification solve the tensions that we experience when we are confronted with the most awful of innocent cries?

At once a few advantages of this approach ought to be obvious. Unlike some of the previous strategies, this brings no need to deny either the ultimate truth of justice or the regular reality of its unsettled claims. Nor must the deep need to provide a total answer be suppressed. To affirm a future rectification of all outstanding injustice is to give full weight to each of these basic components that make up so much of human moral experience. When it comes to these basic instincts, the saying of the meme can be affirmed, "It's true...All of it. It's all true."

However, this does not mean there are no ways at all for an account of rectification to fail us. As mentioned above, accounts of rectification can broadly be classified further as temporal or transcendent. We must also consider the differences between these and whether one of them is superior to the other or not.

Temporal rectification would usually take the form of Progress, the utopian vision of a future society that will eliminate injustice and produce peace on earth. The more defining characteristic of temporal rectification is that the "eschatology" involved is "by men, for men." It is a wholly immanent work. For precisely this reason, though, it is actually inadequate to the problem of unanswered claims of justice.

The problem with a temporal theory of rectification lies in its relationship to past injustice. Under no conceivable human development would it be possible to institute a justice so complete as to atone for what happened in the hidden, even forgotten, recesses of the past. Even if society were to eventually develop perfect justice for the rest of humanity's existence, this would do nothing for the old cries of blood spilled in secret, for the darkest prayers of children misused by the very men who ought to have been protecting them. A purely immanent form

of rectification, brought about by finite men alone, could never truly reach into every nook and cranny where injustice has laid its deep and deadly roots. The society of the future might be perfectly just in every respect: this will do nothing to redeem the whole of the past, even if somehow it makes up for parts of it. Yet we feel most deeply in our innermost being that even one of these claims cannot go unanswered. Not one child in the history of the human race can leave his blood perpetually unavenged, lest our whole sense of ultimate justice be overthrown.

This leaves only one option: a transcendent rectification. Somehow, when all is said and done, something or someone unconstrained by the severe limits finitude imposes upon justice will make all things right. Only by this means is it possible to guarantee that justice really does lie immutably and ultimately at the back of the cosmos, all particular injustices are as real and awful as they appear, and a total answer to the tension between these two affirmations is genuinely possible and knowable. Justice itself, understood in terms of a transcendent agency, can vindicate its own claims in the end. All things can be made new, in a way beyond the limits of an immanent eschatology.

This latter point is crucial. The difference between temporal and transcendent rectification lies in the ability to call forth a reckoning for each and every injustice that has ever been committed in the history of all things. No merely human justice can accomplish such a task, since many of the worst travesties of justice are not such as could even hypothetically be touched by later developments within the frame of history. If someone exists beyond history, however, if there is One enthroned above who comes to judge the earth, then He is free from this limitation. He can see and account for the whole of all things in a simple act and, in His final rectification, fully satisfy any claims made about ultimate justice all in a single, final sentence.

There does perhaps remain one possible objection to a proposal of transcendent rectification, however. Is it even possible at all to make up for past injustice? Is what is done not simply done, so that if God or what/whoever else allowed it to be there are some things which even so will never be reconcilable with the root of all that is fair? This suggestion, while having a certain kind of initial plausibility, seems strained for the same reason as certain other errors on this point. If this critique is true at all, then it follows that there is no answer at all to the exhaustive claims of justice across all times and places, only at best a smaller, if still quite large, example for a particular case that may never actually “finish the job”. To leave anything unsearched in this case, however, is to leave every question of value at all in continued suspense; it is as bad as offering no answer of any kind.

It must, then, be possible for a future, transcendent rectification to truly reckon with every single injustice from every time and place. Furthermore, if such a rectification is possible at all, it must be possible no how much injustice we might encounter along the way. The final chapter may still resolve all the threads, and the kingdom may come with God’s will being ultimately done. Upon this vision no superior or more adequate vision can conceivably be constructed without lapsing once more into an error already rejected.

Conclusion

Where, then, does our investigation finally lead us, if not to the Judgment Seat of Christ? If we recall, the problem goes deep. We find ourselves challenged at every turn by injustice, not minor injustice but such horrid evils that we can almost wish the whole world had never been rather than a single one of them persist unchallenged and unchecked through eternity. Even the slightest hint of such a future, the faintest whiff of such as the reality of things, calls into

question if not everything that at least a solid half of everything that we naturally feel and believe about the nature of justice and the reality of transgressions against it.

In such dire straits, there is no hope to be found in denial, harmonization, or dismissal. Each of these in its own way cuts off the human experience which gives rise to our dilemma at a different point, none of which is obviously less arbitrary or more defensible than the other. If we are to truly give heed to all of these deepest instincts of human nature, we must instead hold out hope for some kind of rectification, for an eschatology in which what is now, or has been so far, wrong shall be made right.

Yet even the belief in a future rectification is not altogether without problems. One of the most popular views on offer to the contemporary mind expects a fully immanent eschatology, a conclusion to the human story written by man, for man. This, however, finally fails to bring any complete satisfaction. What becomes of the whispers in the dark begging for aid in cases where no one will ever know? Who is to avenge the forgotten and the overlooked? This is altogether impossible unless something, but more sensibly Someone, comes to judge the earth from outside. Unless time is some day to be invaded by He who is beyond time, bringing beyond all limits of natural hope a justice so complete as to extend to every dark nook and cranny in the whole of all human history—unless this is to happen, we truly cannot make sense of the common human experience of justice and its constant violations. Anything short of this likewise cuts short every movement of the human spirit which calls forth the problem at all. We are finally left with the hope that One comes to judge the earth who in fact made it and transcends its every part, or there is nothing but confusion and despair. The world in the end is eschatological or a sick joke.

To those who truly believe in reason, who cannot rest until they have made sense out of the whole of human experience, only one of these two possibilities is really a possibility at all.

We must believe that the day of reckoning will come, and that at long last:

Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.⁷

⁷. Psalm 96:12b-13

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