

Power, Justice, and Love : Three Catalysts for Peace

(力, 正義, 愛—平和を促進する三つのもの—)

David Murchie

From an ethical standpoint, there are three necessary elements for true peace, viz., power, justice, and love. Without the implementation of any one of these categories of human initiative, a true, comprehensive, and lasting peace is not possible. To live peaceably, i.e., to be *peacemakers* in our world, the role of each of these “catalysts for peace” in human life must be a matter of our serious consideration ; indeed, these three ethical elements must guide our decisions and actions. Power, justice, and love, are integrally related ; they must function together if true peace is to be the result. They are not the same, but if peace is to be achieved there must be a kind of cooperative, ethical symmetry among the three. To use a sports analogy, power, justice, and love function as a team. If one of the team’s members is weak, even if the others are strong and actively contributing the whole team is weakened by the one weak player. Let us begin our discussion with a consideration of the role of *power* in peacemaking.

Power

We are all familiar with the presence and role of power in our lives. Basically, power can be understood as the ability or capaci-

ty to effect change (*potential power*) or the actual implementation of that change (*active power*). Every day, each of us utilizes power to change people and things around us ; and every day each of us is changed by power exerted on us by other things and people.

Consider these few examples. First—I am walking to school and a tree branch falls on my head, causing me to have a terrible headache. What has happened ? I have been changed by *natural power*, i.e., the power of the forces of nature. Consider another example. I rob a bank and I am caught. I am thrown into jail. In my own power I have changed the bank (e.g., the bank has less money than it did previous to my theft). However, it is also true that the *power of the law* has changed *my* life because, according to the law, I must be punished for my crime. Consider one more example. You are talking to a friend and discussing the ethics of Japan's support of the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. You think Japan is wrong to support the US, but your friend feels that Japan is right. Suppose that, as a result of her discussion with you, your friend becomes convinced that Japan is wrong to support America. In this case, you have exercised *moral power* to effect change in the social world in which you live. As you can see, there are many kinds of power, i.e., we change many things in life, and many things change us.

To some people, the use of power might seem contradictory to the idea of peace. As a matter of fact, this is not surprising, since the lack of peace is often the result of irresponsible or violent uses of power. Nevertheless, power can be exercised responsibly for good and peaceful purposes. For example, the Old Testament (OT) patriarch Joseph's responsible exercise of administrative

power saved both Egyptians and non-Egyptians from starvation caused by a severe famine. Four hundred years later, Moses was called by God to lead the Israelite people out of their life of slavery in Egypt. Unfortunately, Moses' responsible attempts to exercise *moral and religious power* were rejected by Pharaoh, the Egyptian king. Moses' efforts challenged the *military and political power* being used by Pharaoh to enslave the Israelite people. In this historical example, the ultimate result of Pharaoh's refusal to be changed by Moses' responsible exercise of *moral and religious power* was a series of punishing plagues meted out by God upon the Egyptian people and, ultimately, a miraculous defeat of Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea. In short, Moses' responsible use of *moral and religious power* was victorious over Pharaoh's prideful exercise of the *military power* and *political power* whereby he sought to keep the Israelite people in Egypt working as slaves.

A fascinating teaching in this regard is found in Proverbs 25 : 21-22 where Solomon says, "If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat ; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink ; for you will heap coals of fire on their heads, and the Lord will reward you." (Incidentally, this verse is a good example of the practical wisdom that we have in the Bible.) If we think that someone is our enemy, it is no doubt because that person possesses or has possessed power that could be used to harm us. According to the conventional wisdom, the solution to resisting such an enemy is to offer a counteracting power that inflicts enough damage on the enemy to make him stop what he is doing. The biblical solution to the problem of our relation to enemies, however, is quite different. As this passage points out, instead of responding to evil

by trying to exercise the same kind of power, but simply more of it, a more effective solution is to be found in the exercise of a different kind of power. This different kind of power does not have the dangerous risks and consequences associated with the way we normally choose to respond to enemies. In this proverb, Solomon suggests that you can defeat your enemy by helping him when he is in need, i.e., by giving him what he needs.

I think that most of you have personally experienced the truth of this verse. If you have not, I would suggest that sometime you test the truth of Solomon's words by responding to someone you do not like in a kind way, i.e., by giving that person something he or she needs. You might be very surprised at how quickly that person turns from an enemy into a friend. When you do this, you will be exercising the power of love ; i.e., by giving an enemy what he or she needs, you will use your power of love to change a broken relationship into a peaceful relationship.

As you can see, *power* is an integral part of our lives. It is an integral part of our relationships with each other. And it is an important part of our relationship with our environment. At this point, however, it is important to point out one thing, viz., that power, in itself, is a neutral category—i.e., it can be used responsibly for good purposes, or it can be used irresponsibly for evil purposes. In fact, we see power used for both good and evil purposes every day. The next question we want to consider then is what determines the rightness or wrongness of our exercise of power ? To answer this question, we must turn to a discussion of the next catalyst for peace, viz., *justice*.

Justice

Like power, *justice* has many facets and applications. Perhaps when we think of justice, we first think of settlements obtained in a court of law. This is certainly one kind of justice, and we call it *legal justice*. We read about legal justice in the newspaper every day. People face judgment in court for stealing, murder, or traffic violations. For example, if I am caught driving too fast down a street in Sendai, I will be punished in an appropriate way in order to compensate the people of Sendai for the dangerous situation in which I put them by my reckless driving. In such a situation, the criminal is properly punished. However, if justice is to be fulfilled, the punishment itself must be just, i.e., the punishment must not be too light nor must it be too severe. For example, to fine me 10 yen would be too light a punishment ; however, to sentence me to 30 years in prison would be too severe a punishment. To justly penalize a criminal for his crime, we try to determine how much damage the criminal has done to society and what he should do to compensate society for what he did. In a sense, to the extent that we possibly can, we try to find a penalty that will, in a sense, return the society to a position equal to the position it held before the crime occurred. To explain it another way, consider what a criminal has done ; he has unjustifiably taken something from society. Therefore, society is poorer than it was before the crime. At this point, it is the responsibility of the criminal to give back to society something that is at least equal in value to what he took. In short, we try to determine the specific way in which the criminal should make amends to society for what he did.

Legal justice, however, is not the only kind of justice about which we talk. We also speak about *moral justice*, *political justice*, and *economic justice*, to list only a few examples. I would suggest that at the root of each of these kinds of justice, however, is some notion of the idea of “what is properly *due*” in a situation when justice is being sought. Any solution to injustice must show more fairness and more equitableness than was evident in the original act of injustice. In other words, the result of the process of determining and applying a just solution must include some kind and some degree of *equalization*. In short, *fairness* and *equality* are important aspects of justice.

Each of us passes judgment on human actions every day, even when such actions may seem trivial. In fact, most decisions regarding the justice or injustice of an action do not take place in courts of law. We have all experienced a situation in which, though a person was hurt, we did not feel sorry for that person. Indeed, we said, “She deserved it,” or, “It’s his own fault!,” or something similar. In other words, we passed judgment on that person for what he or she did. Perhaps Person A steals 10,000 yen from Person B, but then Person C steals 20,000 yen from Person A. If we witnessed that, we would probably say that Person A got what he deserved, or, in other words, he got what was his *due*.

Such experiences can even be humorous. Consider this hypothetical example. Mr. Sato grabs Mr. Takahashi’s wallet and quickly runs away. Unfortunately for Mr. Sato, while running away he fails to see the telephone pole on the sidewalk. He runs into the pole and is knocked out. When we hear a story like this, we think that justice was served, i.e., by running into the tele-

phone pole and being knocked-out, Mr. Sato received a reasonable punishment for stealing Mr. Takahashi's wallet. Through an unusual chain of events, justice was achieved. Furthermore, it makes us smile because of the ironic way in which the various events of the story served the cause of justice. Indeed, we have a special name for such an occurrence ; we call it *poetic justice*.

In the OT book of *Esther*, we read about an egocentric Persian prime minister named Haman. Haman was deeply offended when a Jew named Mordecai refused to honor him as Haman, who, with the king's approval, had commanded all the people of the city to do. As a result, Haman raged with anger and plotted to kill all the Jews. Haman even built an unusually high gallows on which to hang the prime offender, Mordecai. The plot was foiled when the queen, a Jew (though at the time that was unknown to either Haman or the king), exposed the plot by telling the king what Haman had done. The king was furious and ordered Haman executed. This was carried out on the gallows Haman had prepared for Mordecai. In this example there is a kind of judicial symmetry to the final outcome. The self-centered and ruthless Haman wrongly planned to kill Mordecai and all the Jews ; however, the immoral act which he had so carefully planned as a punishment for Mordecai turned into a punishment that was meted out upon himself. This story about Haman is a good example of *poetic justice*.

We also see examples of justice or lack of it in political and social life. Indeed, we often react instinctively when we witness *political and social injustice*. For example, when we see government policies that take money from the poor in order to give more money to the rich, we instinctively feel that such policies are unjust.

In my country, the United States (US), at the beginning of his first term as president, George W. Bush worked to pass a tax cut that gave a great deal of money to very rich people in America and only a little bit to the poor. Many people reacted strongly to the injustice of Mr. Bush's tax cut. Furthermore, when a rich country like the US gets richer and richer but refuses to accept responsibility for polluting the planet, (even arrogantly refusing to sign the Kyoto Protocols on the environment,) we instinctively feel that that nation is acting unjustly. We also feel that something should be done to penalize countries that waste what others need, and which pollute the air and water that other nations also use. In such cases we feel that justice demands that all countries, rich and poor, should be treated equally ; and we also feel that no country should face greater social or economic barriers than any other country. Of course, to achieve equality certain countries would have to make sacrifices in the interest of equality and fairness.

In the same way, individual people have to make sacrifices so that all people can live together in harmony. Rich members of society are expected to contribute more to society than are poor members because the rich have benefitted more from society's wealth than have the poor. A *progressive tax system* is one means by which some countries seek to *equalize* the rights and opportunities of their people. And when we see the rich abusing the tax system by trying to get out of paying their fair share, we sense instinctively that such acts are unjust ; they are wrong because they are unfair, i.e., they favor some people (the rich) over others (the poor). Such actions by the privileged members of society may, according to current laws, even be legal. This should teach us

one very important lesson, viz., that *laws alone cannot guarantee social or personal peace*. Indeed, for peace to result from either *justice* or *power*, a third catalyst for peacemaking is required, and that catalyst is *love*.

Love

The Bible has much to say about *love*. It is important, however, to clarify what we mean by love when we talk about it in relation to *power* and *justice*. First, it will be helpful to understand that in the Greek language (the language of the New Testament) there are three words for love.

The first word is *eros* (エロス). *Eros* refers to the kind of passionate and physical love we witness between a man and a woman. It is the kind of love associated with sexual intercourse, though it is not limited to that. *Eros* is love characterized by intense emotional and physical feelings for the other person. It is the kind of love we usually see portrayed in Hollywood movies. It is the kind of love that is expressed between young people who are dating and between husbands and wives. *Eros* is the kind of love that is the focus of pornography—indeed, it is from the word *eros* that we get the word *erotic*, as in *erotic* movies, or *erotic* literature. I should state very clearly that erotic love is a gift from God to man. It is given to us for pleasure. It is also the divinely appointed means for having children and building families. *Erotic* love is easily abused, however, when used wrongly outside of marriage. Intrinsically, *erotic* love is beautiful, pleasurable, and productive of good relationships when used within the proper context.

The second kind of love is called *philia* (フイリア). *Philia* also can stimulate strong emotional feelings. However, *philia* is not the physical, sexual kind of love that characterizes *eros*. Rather, *philia* refers to the kind of love experienced among family members, e.g., between a parent and a child, or between siblings. This kind of love is strong, and even affectionate. However, it does not properly result in sexual activity. *Philia* is also the kind of love that we find in strong friendships. Again, though it is accompanied by strong feelings and emotions, its culmination is not a matter of sexual activity.

The third kind of love is called *agape* (アガペ). *Agape* love may or may not be accompanied by strong feelings or emotions. In a sense, from the standpoint of feelings or emotions, *agape* is probably the coldest of the three loves, simply because it is not based on feelings. *Agape* is a love that is willed. In fact, *agape* is love that can be commanded. It is love of those for whom we may not have strong feelings. It is love for those we may not even know. *Agape* is also love of the unlovely. It is love of those who do not love us ; it is love of those who offend us ; it is love of those who hurt us. It is in this sense that the New Testament (NT) speaks often about *agape* love. In fact, when the Bible is dealing with the subject of love, it is usually concerned with *agape* love. In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, chapters 5-7, Jesus speaks of the profound challenge involved in *agape* love in 5 : 43-48 :

You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I tell you : Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of

your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get ? Are not even the tax collectors doing that ? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others ? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (*New International Version*)

Loving people who persecute you is not easy. But this is the way Jesus commands his followers to love. Without a doubt, our best example of *agape* is God. We humans have sinned against God ; we have turned our backs on God. By sinning against God, we have made ourselves enemies of God. Nevertheless, God continues to love us—in spite of our rejection of his love. The apostle Paul also speaks of this kind of love in the NT letter to the Romans. Consider the following verses (Romans 5 : 6-8) :

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this : While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (*New International Version*)

During the Second World War, Corrie Ten Boom, a Christian and survivor of the Nazi death camp at Ravensbruck learned the meaning of *agape* through an interesting experience two years after she was released from the camp. She and her family suffered terribly from the terror, cruelty, and anguish of the death camp. Her sister Betsie did not make it out of the camp, dying a painful

death in that horrible place. Two years after leaving the death camp, Corrie returned to the place of the camp to tell the German people that she had forgiven them. One day, after Corrie had spoken to the people about forgiveness, a man came forward to express his appreciation for what she had said. He complimented her on her talk and told her how good it was to know that God had forgiven his sins. Corrie recognized the man as one of the guards that had been in the Ravensbruck death camp. Indeed, he told her that he had worked in the Ravensbruck camp, but that he was now a Christian. He said he knew that God had forgiven him for the awful things he did there, but he wanted to hear from her that she had forgiven him. It was a moment of true crisis for Corrie Ten Boom. Could she forgive him? Could she love him? Could she escape from the resentment she still felt because of what others had done to her family? Could she put her emotions aside and love this man? Could she *love her enemy*? Listen to her description of the dilemma she faced and its exciting conclusion.

Still I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart. But forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. "Jesus, help me!" I prayed silently. "I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling. "And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to

my eyes. “I forgive you, brother !” I cried. “With all my heart !” For a long moment we grasped each other’s hands, the former guard and former prisoner. I had never known God’s love so intensely as I did then.

Corrie Ten Boom’s experience is a beautiful testimony to the power of *agape* to change human hearts.

Love is the catalyst that binds the three catalysts (*power, justice, and love*) together. It is love that causes us to seek justice for the victims of injustice. It is love that can direct our normal human power to seek good rather than evil. Power that is not guided by love holds no promise for peace. And without the influence of love, justice offers, at best, the possibility of stability. Love without justice and power, however, is soon emasculated as a force for good change.

Power without justice is anarchy.

Power without love is tyranny.

Justice without power is irrelevance.

Justice without love is legalism

Love without justice is sentimentality.

Love without power is impotence.