

# OUR DAILY BREAD

By Dr. Viggo Starcke

**H**UMAN EMOTIONS are older than human reason. Religion and ethics are very old; their age is measured in terms not of centuries but of geological periods, so old are they. Thought, science and intelligence are very young, only a few thousand years old.

Human hope for material progress is based upon the evolution and further clarification of thought, science and technique. Through them man can learn to master the forces of nature, but they cannot give him mastery of himself. To know thyself, to control thyself and ennoble thyself, is an art to be cultivated as such.

Human hope for social progress and citizenship, for growth in happiness and dignity is based upon man's feelings for right and wrong. The great and fundamental questions of existence are all very simple and everyone is able to understand them. Small details are often complicated and difficult of understanding. Some people cannot see that. They are so absorbed in details of small things that they do not see the great things at all. The shrewd Italian statesman Machiavelli understood that. He said: "People are always provoked by small injustices but never by great injustices."

Therefore, if we have to speak to common people about great and external things, it is important to make quite clear what we mean by the words right and wrong, justice and injustice, righteousness, love and charity. Reason can explain the difference between these ideas. It depends upon the heart which way you will follow.

## Justice

Let me try to illustrate this in a simple way; if I have access to a working-place, some land to work upon, and if I plough the field, harrow the soil, sow the seed, harvest the crop, grind the flour and bake the bread—my daily bread—then there is a voice within me saying: "My Bread is Mine!"

If you also have a working-place where you earn your daily bread, you also say: "My Bread is Mine!"

We all feel that this is right. The sentence: "My Bread is Mine!"—that is the beginning of justice.

### **Self Righteousness**

If I am interested only in my own bread and in my own right, it is a narrow and limited sense of justice. It is the righteousness of the Pharisees, and except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees, we shall in no case enter that form of human living for which we are created.

### **Righteousness**

I want the right to use a working-place and the right to the bread I have produced. You want the same rights for yourself. Most people hear the voice: "My Bread is Mine!" But if we listen, there is another voice within us which bids us "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you!" This voice speaks not only about my right, but also about your right. It speaks of righteousness and not only self righteousness. It says not only: "My Bread is Mine!" but also: "Your Bread is Yours!"

### **Love**

Then you feel that justice is filled with a warm and human feeling for your neighbour. "Your Bread is Yours!" This is love. There is no greater love in man than this: to give to other people, your fellow men, the same right, freedom and opportunities as you want for yourself, and to let them earn their own bread in their own way, so that they can be masters of their own bread.

### **Injustice**

If you have done your work and earned your bread, and I stretch out my hand and take it, saying: "Your Bread is Mine!" we all feel that this is wrong. It is theft and robbery. Theft and robbery are punishable at law. Therefore I can try to get your bread in other ways. In olden days I could enslave you or make you my serf.

Under modern, normal social conditions I can do it in a more genteel way, although with the same result.

I can own my own land, my own working-place, but I can also own the land that is necessary for you and for others. If you and others have no access to land and employment, the result is unemployment. Then I can say: "You are allowed to work here, but I shall have a greater or smaller part of your daily bread. Your Bread is Mine!"

It is theft, it is robbery, even though the law allows it. Law and righteousness are not the same thing, but they ought to be, and they certainly shall be.

### **Charity**

Even if you have access to a working-place, you can have a bad crop; your harvest can fail; you can become ill or crippled, so that you are not able to earn your own bread. Then in your extremity, perhaps, my warm heart tells me to help you. I may take my own bread and give it to you, saying: "My Bread is Yours!"

This is charity. Some people believe that charity is the same as love and righteousness. It is not so. Charity is lovely, and charity, alms and subsidies can be necessary where people are not able to help themselves. But how much better it is when charity is not necessary, when poverty, hunger and unemployment do not exist. We cannot do without charity in catastrophes and under exceptional conditions, but we cannot do with charity alone.

Charity can be dangerous for me, because I run the risk of beginning to pride myself that I am good. It can give me a false feeling of good conscience, false because I try to relieve poverty and unemployment without trying to discover or to remove the causes that lead to such conditions.

Charity can be dangerous for you, too, if you become accustomed to assistance and look upon it as a right. Your independence and self-respect will be lost and the mainspring in your character broken.

### **Social Welfare**

Your crop can fail and disease can break you down so that want and scarcity come to your house. My warm

heart tells me to help you, but my cold brain tells me to do so, if I can, without myself incurring any great sacrifices. Then I go to my neighbour's house, around the back door, take his bread and give it to you saying: "His bread is Yours!"

That is Social Welfare, Social Legislation, Social Security, and all that. It is distorted charity in that I am trying to help you by doing injustice to my neighbour. Politically applied, it is the politicians' excuse for refusing to promote the reforms that can remove the causes of poverty. In this way political life is corrupted and develops into strife between parties, those gaining power with your vote who can make the best show of giving subsidies only to you and imposing taxes only on your neighbours.

### **Community**

The key to social life is co-operation. It is an institution so natural and so obvious that you can depend upon it in freedom. If we work together freely under free contract and in mutual confidence, we are able to produce much more bread and many more goods. We can pool our bread and wealth in fellowship, community or communion. "Our Bread is Our Bread!" If we thus freely pooled our goods it would be all right.

### **Communism**

If we were *forced* to do so it would be a very different thing. Compulsion and constraint could produce a pooling of goods so as to say: "Our Bread is Ours" but only apparently, for the real expression should be: "Your Bread is Ours!"

Communism preaches that each member shall work according to his capacity and receive according to his needs. But as my ability is not as great as yours, I produce less than you do. In return, my need and my appetite is greater; in fact, it could be enormous. Therefore, if we pool our products under direction of the state and divide the result in some equal way, I eat my share of bread immediately and say to you: "Let us share

again!" Communism is organised and socialised injustice.

### **Equality**

Men's abilities differ. Let us suppose that we have the same share of land, of equal size and quality, but that we differ in character, habits and efficiency. You are clever and energetic; you rise early in the morning and work until late in the evening. I am lazy and incompetent; I sleep until late in the morning, and in the evening I play cards at the inn.

You are able to produce three loaves a day. I am able to produce only one loaf a day. But envy is in my heart and kind politicians are hurt in their tender feelings. They declare that man has not created himself; some are born clever and gifted, others are born simpletons. That is right. But then they conclude that we have to equalise, make conditions even, be "egalitarians," and that is not right.

You produce three loaves and I produce one loaf, which, if the total were divided, would be two for each of us. It certainly would be equality—equality in conditions—but it would not be justice, should the kind politicians take one of your loaves and give it to me.

The result is not even practical. I can manage to live on one loaf a day and when I can have one of yours in subsidies, why should I rise at all tomorrow? Absenteeism and shirking is the result. The next day I produce nothing at all. And you exclaim, annoyed; "Here I am working hard the whole day. I toil and moil, I take the risk, but the state takes the profit. Why trouble so much?" The next day you produce only two. The community is thus made poorer. We see it in every country, in every branch of activity, in every working place.

### **Planning**

If you are clever and I am not, we resolve to put you in office so that you can rule and govern, organise and direct, sitting at your desk writing papers, proclamations, schemes and budgets, collecting statistics, conducting enquiries and preparing five-year plans. I have to work,

obey and suffer, reading the forms you are writing, writing the forms you are reading, seriously hampered by restrictions, rationing, allocations and control. The result is less bread, worse bread. This is the Planned Economy, Red Tape, Bureaucracy, State Control, Socialism. "My Paper is your Bread."

### **Our Daily Bread**

Love and justice are ethical, and they are an important part of religion. They are not only right; they are commonsense, practical and productive. As long as we keep saying: "What shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" we are like the heathen and shall never be able to get all these things.

Man shall not live by bread *alone*, but by spirit and inspiration, by love and righteousness. Man cannot live *without* his daily bread. Therefore we pray this simple human petition: "Give us this day our daily bread!" In a world so rich, so great and so blessed as this, it should be possible. Here is room enough, here is sunshine enough, here is technique enough, but here is not love and righteousness enough.

We have still among us fellow beings living in poverty, in unemployment, in bad houses or without a roof over their heads. We hear of wars and rumours of wars and that nation shall arise against nation. Today we are able to produce more than we can eat, more than we can drink, more than we can use; and still we have people who hunger and thirst and feel cold. We live in a world of abundance and misery, of progress and poverty.

Let us hunger and thirst!—but let us hunger and thirst after righteousness! And right is this: The bread you have produced is yours. The bread I have produced is mine! *But the pre-requisite for every form of daily bread is that that which none of us has produced must belong to all of us—the riches of the earth and the powers of nature revealed in the value of land.*

## STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

**T**HE collection of the rent of land for the community by the Taxation of Land Values is not the only reform necessary, but it is the first reform and it would make all other reforms easier. The social and economic effects of raising public revenues by land-value taxation would be three-fold.

**IN THE FIRST PLACE**, taxes that now fall upon wages and production could be abolished. No one need be taxed for building a house or improving a farm, for bringing things in from other countries or for adding in any way to the general stock of wealth. Everyone would be free to make and save wealth; to buy, sell, give, or exchange, without hindrance, any article of human production the use of which did not involve any public injury, infringe in any way the freedom of others or result in their exploitation. All those taxes which increase prices as things pass from hand to hand, falling finally upon the consumer, could be dispensed with.

**IN THE SECOND PLACE**, a large and constantly increasing fund would be provided for the community's use as the labour, enterprise and industry of the people increased the value of land.

**IN THE THIRD PLACE**, and most important of all, the monopoly of land would be abolished. The economic effect of taxing land values, whether land be used or not, would be to make certain that all land was put to its best use. The effect of thus freeing the land would be to make it available for the many needs of labour and capital. The temptation and power to speculate in natural opportunities would be gone. The speculative value of land would be destroyed as soon as it was known that the land value "tax" would be increased as fast as land value increased. The benefits would go not to individuals but to the community generally — individuals, however, retaining the full results of their labour and enterprise.

Thus the fundamental cause of the present unequal distribution of wealth would no longer exist. When men have equal rights to the value of land and are able to produce freely and on equal terms with their neighbours, when they are freed from monopoly and privilege in all its forms, then employment will cease to have the underlying implication of economic servitude and take on its natural form — that of free and open co-operation. Wages will then be carried up to what is truly their natural rate — the full value of the produce of labour — and will be kept there.