

1. To what extent Niebuhr has an extremely dubious works-righteousness conception of salvation (in principle, if not in fact) becomes clear from statements such as the following: "The Kingdom of God, of which the Sacrament is the symbol, is on the one hand the peace that comes to the soul when it turns from sin to righteousness [= moral peace]. It is on the other hand the peace of divine forgiveness, mediated to the contrite sinner who knows that it is not in his power to live a sinless life on earth [= religious peace]" (*Love and Justice*: 223; cf. 282: "we are 'saved by faith' and not 'by works'; which is to say that our final peace is not the moral peace of having become what Christ defines as our true nature, but is the religious peace of knowing that a divine mercy accepts our loyalty to Christ despite our continued betrayal of him"). Along with all the other problems this formulation raises, the very idea that God accepts our loyalty to Christ makes clear the extent to which the whole perspective is that of what man does or doesn't do.

2. That Niebuhr understands the "perfectionism" of Jesus' ethic to entail martyrdom and political irresponsibility in the face of injustice is entirely clear (cf., e.g., 28, 39, 276 f., 286). He also says, of assertion of the rights of the disinherited and of the use of coercion that the struggle for social justice involves, "both are incompatible with the pure love ethic found in the Gospels" (34). In the same way, Niebuhr takes the love perfectionism exhibited by "religious," as distinct from "political," pacificism (278) to be "a symbol of the Kingdom of God, lest we accept the tragic sin in which the struggle for justice involves us as ultimately normative" (277). (The correct position, I should think, is that *both* responsibility and irresponsibility can, under certain circumstances, be symbols of the Kingdom of God—that the performance of the person involved in the struggle for justice is not a bit less symbolic than that of the person who withdraws from the historical scene, or chooses the way of martyrdom. Love resists evil—precisely as love and not as something else!) Against Niebuhr's statement that assertion of the rights of the disinherited and the use of coercion "both are incompatible with the pure love ethic found in the Gospels," Bultmann says—in my opinion, correctly—"when the prohibition against retaliation and the commandment to love, even to the point of loving the enemy, are established

[*sc.* as they are by Jesus in the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount] as divine demand, then the implication is that justice—*not to be sure, simply as such, but rather as the individual's laying claim to justice for his private interests*—does indeed contradict the divine demand. What God demands is not the renunciation of justice in the sense of the ordinances that regulate the community, but rather the renunciation by the individual of *his* rights in the concrete moment, i.e., of his use of the ordinances of justice to further his own interests against the neighbor” (*Existence and Faith*: 204; italics added). In other words, Bultmann makes clear that what is incompatible with Jesus’ ethic is not assertion of the rights of the oppressed and the coercion necessary to secure and maintain those rights but simply the use by the individual of the ordinances of justice to assert—not simply his own interests (though, admittedly, Bultmann does not emphasize this distinction), but—*his own* interests *against* the interests of the neighbor. “God demands *more* than justice demands and can demand; for while the latter always allows the human will a certain amount of free play, God claims man’s will in its entirety” (202 f.). Therefore, Bultmann can say that “at the same time [*sc.* that Jesus represents God as demanding the individual’s whole will, and hence his surrender of his rights against the neighbor], the idea is also implied—though without being explicitly stated—that justice has a legitimate meaning when it stands in the service of the demand of love, or, in practical terms, when it serves the community Moreover, with the idea that justice receives its meaning from the demand of love there is also given a criterion for criticizing and further developing positive justice” (204). Obviously, what Bultmann sees—and Niebuhr quite fails to see—is that, whereas justice has to do with the “*what*” of action, love has to do with its “*how*” (203). Thus he can account for Paul’s relativization of martyrdom and self-sacrifice (in 1 Cor 13:3) in a way that Niebuhr cannot. “A life of justice that is determined by the thought of service and fulfills the original purpose of justice to bind man to his fellow man is not touched by [Jesus’] polemic . On the contrary, he affirms that God demands justice and righteousness” (161).