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ALAN PATON'S PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS, PROMPTED BY THE PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, " LORD, MAKE ME AN INSTRUMENT OF THY PEACE," MAY WELL BE AN EXCEPTION TO THE RULE THAT BOOKS OF PERSONAL PIETY DON'T SELL WELL OR SOUND TRUE. THE TRUTH OF THIS UNUSUAL BOOK (REFLECTIONS UPON SCRIPTURE AND UPON ST. FRANCIS) DERIVES FROM THE NOVELIST'S METHOD OF MAKING CHRISTIAN INSIGHT INTO GOD'S LOVE SPEAK THROUGH A HIGHLY SENSITIVE INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE TO LARGER SOCIAL PROBLEMS - THE RELEVANCE OF THE GOSPEL TO SOCIETY, RIOTS IN THE STREETS, THE "STRANGENESS" OF THE FAITH AS ECHOED THROUGH THE CREEDS, THE MODERN TENDENCY TO LIVE LIVES OF QUIET DESPAIR. PATON REFURBISHES OLD DOCTRINES AND GIVES THAT WORN WORD "LOVE" NEW MEANINGS BY CUTTING IT LOOSE FROM SENTIMENT AND ATTACHING IT FIRMLY TO SOCIAL ACTION. "LOVE IS NOT PRIMARILY GIVING EXPRESSION TO THOSE TENDER FEELINGS THAT ARE TO BE FOUND IN MOST HUMAN NATURES. IT IS PRIMARILY CONSENTING TO AN ORDERLINESS OF LIFE AND TO A CONSCRIPTION OF ONE'S ENERGY AND TALENTS "(P. 63)."ONLY WHEN OUR CAUSE IS THE HIGHEST, WILL ALL FEAR BE CONQUERED" (P.55). THERE IS ONE DOMINANT ASSUMPTION IN THE BOOK THAT IS AS TANTALIZING AS IT IS SUSPICIOUS: IN THE FACE OF MASSIVE DOUBT ABOUT GOD, ONE CAN ALWAYS DO SOMETHING FOR OTHERS AND THEREBY MANY WILL COME TO FAITH IN THE GOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

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