Introduction to Vida Scudder, “The Social Teachings of the Church Year”

Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook*

“The Social Teachings of the Church Year” by scholar, mystic, activist, and Christian Socialist Vida Dutton Scudder (1861–1954) was presented in 1918 as a lecture at the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts and subsequently published in the first volume of the *ATR*; a monograph with the same title was published three years later, including the entire liturgical year from Advent to Trinity Sunday interpreted through the lens of the social gospel movement. The original lecture was one of the first given by a woman in an Episcopal seminary. By her own admission, Scudder published the monograph for “liberal Christians with affection for the Prayer Book.” Scudder believed that spiritual formation should be available to all, and thus, she wrote “The Social Teachings of the Church Year” not for trained theologians, but for the people of God, schooled in faith and love through participation in the seasons of the church year.

Confirmed in the Episcopal Church in the 1870s by Phillips Brooks at Trinity Church, Boston, Scudder’s spirituality and social consciousness was soaked in the liturgical life of the *Book of Common Prayer*. A devout Anglo-Catholic, and considered the second founder of the Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross (SCHC)—a third-order devotional society for women combining social activism with intercessory prayer—Scudder was deeply committed to the creation of a new social order infused with Christian spirituality. She profoundly believed that lasting peace on earth would only come to pass in response to humanity’s collective repentance and fervent prayers. Her belief in “Social Christianity” gave Scudder a means to connect her

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devotional life with public ministry in a church with limited vocational opportunities for women.

Interested more in understanding Christian experience than in academic theology, Scudder believed that the liturgical year was both grounded in ancient truths and a living journey of the soul. Her 1918 lecture and later monograph were inspired primarily by three political convictions. First, Scudder believed that the earth was poised on the brink of a new democratic era, whereby private capitalism would yield to some form of socialism. Secondly, she was convinced that the new world order would only be safely accomplished if religion, freed from theological abstractions, nourished the souls of Christian radicals. Lastly, Scudder’s vision was grounded in the teachings of Jesus, and a catholic vision of the social order as the mystical body of Christ, present in every eucharist, the sacrament of unity, and that which brings together all creation in the kingdom of God.

Vida Dutton Scudder was a brilliant scholar, and one of the first women to attend Oxford University as a graduate student. Until her retirement in 1928 she combined a scholarly career at Wellesley College with intense social activism. For example, during one six-year period, 1887 to 1893, Scudder began the College Settlements Association, joined the Society of Christian Socialists, began her lifelong association with the Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross, and with Helena Stuart Dudley founded Denison House in Boston, the third settlement house in the United States. During the same years, she became a charter member of a worker’s organization, the Brotherhood of the Carpenter, and worked at the Christian Social Union. Not content to be a titular member of her many organizational alliances, Scudder actively contributed her time, skills, and financial resources to most of them.

As Scudder’s spirituality and social consciousness deepened, neither her family nor her employer completely understood or appreciated her radicalism. She grew increasingly uncomfortable with a life of studying English literature, and the complacency of the church amidst so much dire poverty. She was desperate to reconcile her social activism with a life immersed in prayer and silence. Scudder experienced a mental breakdown at the age of forty and moved to Italy for two years, where she was nourished by medieval literature and the lives of mystical saints. The works of Catherine of Siena and Francis of Assisi, who were not particularly popular saints among
mainline Christians of Scudder's day, spoke to her personal despair and gave her courage to challenge the institutional church as they did in their own eras. Catherine of Siena was a role model of prayer and activism for Vida Scudder; Franciscan spirituality continued to feed Scudder’s ministry throughout the rest of her life, and she became a noted authority in the field. Thirty years later, during her last trip to Italy, Scudder had a unitive experience while kneeling at the foot of the cross in San Damiano, where Francis also received his vision to rebuild the church. There and then Scudder consecrated herself to spending her life rebuilding the church to become the embodiment of Christ in the world.

Upon returning to Massachusetts from her first Italian pilgrimage, Scudder opened programs for immigrant Italians at Denison House. In 1911 she organized the Episcopal Church Socialist League, and in 1919, the Church League for Industrial Democracy. Although initially supportive of the entry of the United States into World War I, she eventually embraced pacifism. “The Social Teachings of the Church Year” was published during Scudder’s initial work in the 1920s with the American Civil Liberties Union, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. Until the end of her life, Scudder kept her red membership card from the Socialist Party in her home oratory. She did so as a constant reminder that social teachings are inextricably linked to gospel values, and that it was her vocation as a Christian to seek ways to usher in God’s kingdom on earth.
The Social Teachings of the Church Year

Vida D. Scudder*

The slow formation of a Christian social mind is one of the greatest things happening in this great epoch; for it means that Christian people are regaining a passionate allegiance to their Master’s all-but-lost ideal, the Kingdom of God on earth. In the development of this mind, a vital part is played by the seasons of the Christian year. For Church folk, at least, their solemn recurrent rhythms reveal ever new depths of meaning in the mysteries of the Faith; every one of these mysteries carries a distinct social message; in their sum, they are for the Christian the foundation and source of all sound social philosophy.

This is not a thought which will commend itself widely. Dogma is unfashionable, and the Church Year is saturated with dogma. Modern radicals appalled by the failure of Christianity to control the relations of either classes or nations, are in strong reaction against theology; when religiously disposed, they point in triumph to the revolutionary ethics of the Sermon on the Mount and summon men away from the formulae of the Church, back to the words of the Master. Christian ethics rather than Christian doctrines are the habitual source of social religion. The source is good, for no one can read the words of Jesus honestly and not be shocked in turning to contemporary life. The salutary contrast is continually pressed home, even in the newspapers! We are not allowed to forget that our industrial system habitually says: Cursed are the poor, incompetent are the meek; that some Christian manufacturers, instead of giving unto the last as unto the first, fight a living wage to the finish; that far from turning the other cheek and overcoming evil with good, many Church leaders enjoin us vigorously

* Vida D. Scudder was a professor of English literature at Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts when she presented her “Social Teachings of the Christian Year” lectures at the Cambridge Conference in 1918. A founding member of the Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross and an associate editor for ethics of the Anglican Theological Review, this essay was published in the March 1919 issue of the first volume of the ATR, edited by Samuel A. B. Mercer and Leicester C. Lewis.
to hit back when we are struck and to exact the uttermost farthing; that we do not fill the hungry with good things, and assuredly do not send the rich empty away. The abiding contradiction between Christian ethic and world-ethic is an abiding disgrace—to a compromised Christianity.

But even while stressing this contradiction, social Christians need another line of attack. For the radicalism which feeds wholly on such contrasts is ill nourished, and in disgust with the Church is likely to slip away from Christ. We need to find in our religion not only precept but dynamic, not only moral teaching but a revelation of God's actual dealings with man. In the flow of the Church seasons from Advent to Trinity, such revelation is recorded. It shows Christian experience as a living thing, based on historic facts; it shows dogma, not a mass of abstract assumptions torn out of life, but a transcript of spiritual realities encountered by the soul. These realities are the one ground of our social hope. In spite of anti-dogmatic prejudice and anti-clerical revolt, in spite of the present alignment which throws the forces of progress largely on the non-Christian side, the ultimate source of all true social philosophy is to be found, not only in the Teaching of Christ but in His Person. Unless our rising faith in social equality, in industrial democracy, in a league of free nations, be rooted in Catholic truth, one of two things will happen: either that truth will be discredited, or the social creed professed by liberals will fade away. Only from the roots of a Catholic and Christian civilization could bloom the fair flower of a cooperative commonwealth, for whose unfolding we watch and wait.

The very existence of the Church Year as presented in the Prayer Book is a tremendous witness to the social instinct. That instinct looks not only outward, but backward; it unites men, not only to their comrades now on earth, but to the vast majority who have gone before; time and space cannot bind it—it can be satisfied by nothing short of the whole Communion of Saints. And no better illustration of the vital unity of the Beloved Community down the ages can be found than the Church Year. The Anglican use rests directly on the Sarum Missal, or on the earlier Missal of Leofric, tenth century Bishop of Exeter, but the basis of the arrangement of Gospels and Epistles is the “Comes” traditionally ascribed to St. Jerome. We owe to the sixteenth century Reformers many of our most beautiful collects, as those for Advent I and II, Christmas, Quinquagesima, Ash-Wednesday. The Scottish Church gave the collect for Easter Eve, and our own Dr. Huntington supplied one of the most exquisite collects in the Prayer Book to
The fifteenth century Feast of the Transfiguration. What fuller witness could there be to a corporate humanity than this long sequence?

If initiation into a vast brotherhood defying time is the first social gift of the Church Year, the second is the searching social discipline afforded by its observance. The Puritans discarded this discipline: not only because it was Popish in their eyes, but just because it was social. To their extreme individualism, it seemed unreal to rejoice all together on the twenty-fifth of December or to grieve all together on a special Friday. But all Churches, not only those subject to bishops, are now feeling the power of these collective experiences and are adopting the great feasts and fasts. This is because we are really growing more fraternal. Men have found out that the power to feel all together does not inhibit but fulfils personality. When are we most fully ourselves? Not in solitary exaltation, but when consciousness is swept on and up by “one common wave of hope and joy, lifting mankind again.” Thousands have known such absolution and enrichment of being, even through anguish, during the Great War; such the Church in her tender wisdom steadily supplies, through the cycle of the sacred seasons. No military drill can approach her power to secure inward solidarity. By merging personal mood and emotion in her general and progressive experience, she offers incalculable gain in subtle spiritual courtesy; nor is there any more effective means of escaping the self-centeredness never more our curse than in the religious life.

And apart from personal gain, are not many men coming to perceive that the Catholic ideal, when released from automatic subjection to authority, is needed by the modern state? Its steady spiritual training in self-subordination and imaginative sympathy is potent to form the interior habits which must be the strength of a social democracy. Our national life, not to speak of the new international life just emerging, needs unity above all else, and unity worth having cannot be imposed from without, imperialisms—German or other—notwithstanding. Unity must flow forth from the spiritual organism into the political. Individualism, ultimately anarchistic, has been as much in control in our religion as in industry. The reaction has set in, but unless it works in the vital parts, it will avail nothing. The need in our irresponsible democracy of such regulating and fusing power as is afforded by Catholic tradition, must be patent to every thoughtful Churchman. Observance of the Church seasons is only one aspect of the corporate Catholic life, but it is important, for it can reach every man, woman, and child. In such observance may be found one useful
way of easing the transition from an individualistic society where each man is fighting and feeling “on his own,” to the socialized democracy where he shall discover his true existence in realized brotherhood. In proportion as this socialized democracy is achieved, its Christian citizens should find in the training afforded by the ever-changing, ever-renewed corporate experience of the Christian mysteries, the qualities most essential to health and peace in their political and industrial existence. The Catholic life should be the soul of the democratic state.

In an article of this length, it is impossible to draw out with any fullness the social implications of the successive seasons; all that may be attempted is a series of briefest hints, opened and concluded with somewhat fuller suggestions concerning the first and last of these seasons, Advent and Trinity.

The social summons of Advent rings like a trumpet call. The season is retrospective and prophetic; it looks backward to the Incarnation, forward to the Day of Doom, and within these two Comings of God in Humanity, His Coming as the Child and as the Judge, is implicitly comprised all relation of Christ to His world. The Advent message is threefold: the message of Change, the message of the Kingdom, and the message of Judgment.

The first social lesson of the Church Year is that of a perpetual flux. Movement, not stability is the law of the Christian life, and of God’s revelation in history. It is important to remember this, for institutional religion is too often static, and men seem to have an almost vicious impulse to stiffen in their minds as soon as they become religious. But the conservative habits of organized religion find no sanction in the authoritative life of the Church; the cycle of Christian experience starts on the revolutionary note of change. It is high time to awake out of sleep. Until the Lord come, the Lord is at hand! If we enter into the spirit of the season, we shall escape our obstinate clinging to things as they are, our timidities and hesitations; they will be consumed in that light of a great expectation in which Maeterlinck truly says that men should live. A high heroic temper, alert, vigilant, detached, adventurous, ready for the awesome coming wherein men’s hearts shall fail them for fear and the powers of heaven shall be shaken—such is the temper of Advent. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us cast off the works of darkness, let us put upon us the armor of light.

The second message of the season is the message of the Kingdom; it is the Coming of the King unto the daughter of Sion which the
opening Gospel records: and the second Gospel gives the meaning of
the revolutionary portents, distress of nations with perplexity: “When
ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God
is nigh at hand.” That mood of solemn expectation which the season
fosters is no vague hope or pointless fear. The signs of the true Ad-
vent are given in the third Gospel: sight for the blind, hearing for the
deaf, power for the impotent, and to the poor the Gospel is preached.
The nature of that Gospel we learn from the radiant record of the
early ministry, when the burden of the Galilean teaching was the Glad
News of the Kingdom of Heaven. Perhaps the recovery of this Gospel
is the greatest spiritual gain of our day. It is a social gospel, and a so-
cial age has naturally retrieved it; for while the Kingdom is assuredly
“within us,” no one today can think that the individualistic, far less
the ecclesiastical, conception exhausts the idea as it lay in the Mind
of Jesus. That Mind inherited the national ideal of a reign of justice
on earth, and the expectation of such reign as a future historic fact
and social reality is none the less absolute because men may become
denizens here and now of the house eternal in the heavens.

But the message of Change and the message of the Kingdom find
point and culmination throughout Advent in the message of Judg-
ment. From the first Collect to the last Epistle, the note is struck: the
Coming of the Lord, Who shall bring to light the hidden things of
darkness, the far-off divine event on which all history waits, to which
all hearts look forward. What does it mean to us Christians of the
twentieth century?

Very little, it may be feared. Effective belief in the Second Ad-
vent has by tacit consent dropped out from the Mind of the Church.
Mechanical applications have discredited it in any literal form, and
in such form it is not likely to return among educated people. At the
same time, in the central and solemn stress laid upon the doctrine by
the Church in this opening of her dramatic sequence, we are forced to
recognize a strict conformity to the emphasis placed in the Gospels on
the apocalyptic teaching of her Master; and the faithful Churchman
can hardly be content to let the whole matter slip from his mind, or to
go on year by year singing hymns he does not believe. Has the social
interpretation any help to offer?

Every phase of the Christian year has a double emphasis. It cel-
brates events—it also announces principles. The Coming of Christ,
whether at Nativity or at Judgment, is conceived as occurring at defi-
nite points of time; it is also conceived as an abiding law. Probably
the best way to gain the right attitude toward the Church teaching of the Judgment is to begin with this latter aspect. The old vision of the dead, small and great, standing before God, that vision dear to the hearts of artists, celebrated in solemn rhythms, deep in the awe-struck heart, haunts us no longer. It was replaced for a time by the thought of an individual judgment occurring at death, but now that we no longer think that probation ends when we leave the body, this thought too has failed. Judgment even for the individual is no longer conceived as one solemn climax, but as a continuous matter, involved in the very weaving of life itself. “The insects that we crush are our judges,” says Ruskin: “The moments we fret away are our judges, the elements that feed us judge as they minister, and the pleasures that deceive us judge as they indulge.”

Of course, all this is perfectly true: yet if we stop there we plainly contradict the Scriptures and deny the purpose of the Church. The Catholic faith regards judgment as not merely continuous, but catastrophic; and not merely individual but collective. The Collect speaks quite in accord with the Bible when it says “At Thy Second Coming to judge—the world.” Now we all fight shy of recognizing the religious necessity of catastrophe, but these last years should have taught us better courage. Judgment on whole epochs, on whole civilizations, is a fact. It is of high importance to restore to the Christian mind the sense that catastrophe as well as growth is a normal element in human advance. So far as this at least we can go in recovering the original meaning of the Advent season. Tranquility is not necessarily a blessing. Life, national, social, personal, is not serene progress onward and upward; turmoil and upheaval, war and revolution, distress of nations with perplexity, are an essential part of the Divine Order; and in all these the devout soul is called to see the signs of the Coming of the Son of Man.

If once we accept this attitude, we can be all the happier for it. Advent is a penitential season, but it is not a pessimistic one. The Advent scriptures rightly read are full of exultant paradoxical joy. Horror heaped on horror, men’s hearts failing them for fear—the description is cogent today. And then, what? Cower? Wait in submission the coming doom? Try to avert it by clinging tight to the accredited order? Not at all: Look up, lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. He spake a parable to them about the trees; when they leaf out, we know that summer is coming. Did it seem strange to the disciples, this likening of distress, perplexity and fear to the push of tender leaves in
spring? The Lord knew whereof He spoke. The times of judgment are the springtide of the world.

The way in which judgment is received is a severe test of character. But if the purple hangings of Advent mean any real penitence, we shall welcome that test. Many who have suffered with the world’s slow hidden pain, consumed with shame and anguish over the oppressions and corruptions which have poisoned modern life at the roots, breathe a deep breath of relief as the old order totters to its fall. What care they if dividends cease, if private profit be socialized, if classes merge in the one great class of men who labor in brotherhood? From the old rotten tree shall spring a healthy growth, whereon holiness shall burgeon as the fig leaves in the spring. Judgment, salvation, the words are interchangeable through the Advent scriptures.

Judgment then must be accepted by real Christians as an abiding and recurrent principle. It must be welcomed, no matter how upsetting it may prove. Can we go further? Can we get any good from contemplating it, not as law but as event? The question is too tremendous for humble minds to approach. We are confronted at once by the fact that belief in the Second Coming has always carried with it an unsocial fatalism. It has encouraged a mystical aloofness from life, it has cut the nerve of reform. Those who frankly call Christian ethic impossible, point out that it was conceived as a mere \textit{ad interim} policy, suitable only for a swiftly passing world order which would hardly survive one generation. Clever men are apt to counter in this way when Christian procedure is urged on them, and devout believers are often lured by the same sort of feeling to run away, metaphorically at least, into a cloister and to leave the world to its fate.

Yet since we are bidden pray, Thy kingdom come on earth, we have to believe that it \textit{will} come. The whole Scriptural treatment of the Second Advent is, of course, entwined with that millennial hope of the Jews, so alien to modern minds. The Messiah is to most people a figure of merely historic interest, and those who see in Jesus primarily not the ethical teacher but the more or less fanatical heir of an apocalyptic tradition, are inclined to place Him among the visionaries whose fallacies have misled the ages. But the Catholic mind cannot dispense with either aspect of the Lord’s teaching: and if we cannot just now form a perfect synthesis, we may at least retain valuable glimpses of what He meant. The Millennium was the Hebrew Utopia, and it may not be out of place for us to claim Christian
sanction for a utopian hope. The Lord Himself bids us not be curious concerning the day or the hour, but He does say that something is going to happen, as concrete as His birth in the time of Augustus Caesar.

It might help a little if we were to import some realism into our conception of the Kingdom of Heaven. If there is going to be a better society on earth, following a great manifestation of the judgments of God, human men and women will live in it. The Church ought to be training her children now, today, in millennial morals. It is never the Lord’s way to impose His laws on a passive people. Paradise itself will be democratic. All our growing power to act together, our civic intelligence, still pretty embryonic, our democracy, our socialism, our syndicalism, prepare for citizenship in the Heavenly City. There will be no “social service,” one earnestly hopes, in that happy time, but there will be the cooperative commonwealth: blessed citizens will have to run it, and those who are furthering justice now will be the most useful then. It is not a bad test of occupations, to ask whether they would persist in the Kingdom of God. There will be plenty for Hoover to do there; it may be harder to employ the barons of finance.

But from these fascinating and fantastic flights, one returns to sober stressing of the Advent temper inculcated by the Church: it is a temper forward-looking, releasing from convention and cowardice, charged with noble Christian excitement; and it faces the most catastrophic future eagerly, for it knows the one sure fact: Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed.

What deep tenderness in the sequence by which Mother Church, having disciplined us in awe and penitential hope, now leads us to the Crib! The God for Whose coming in judgment we have been at watch, is no stranger. Flesh of our flesh, soul of our soul, He holds out beseeching arms to Humanity His Mother. Dependent on us—mystic thought—for power to fulfil His purpose of making us whole, He asks that we nourish Him and cherish, and bring Him to His perfect Manhood. Deity self-subjected to the human! Even the social implications of that mystery are to be discerned only from the posture of prayer.

Whether we contemplate God Incarnate as the Word or as the Babe, one central fact is clear. Truth is not remote from us, not lost to straining sight in an eternal Absolute: Truth, as Newman somewhere says, is borne in the bosom of humanity and warmed by her embrace. This is the fact which modern writers, a Bergson, a Wells, think they have discovered; but like all sound thinking about God, it has long been familiar to the Catholic mind. That mind has at times thought
wrong things, probably, but it has missed no vital element essential to human need. This evolving God, this God whom man creates, who waits on man for full release of His power, this God to whom our attitude may be not only filial but maternal, is in very truth the Second Person of the Ever-Blessed Trinity. In the message of Christmas, the mystical and the social truth are one. For what responsibility is ours, whose high office it is to bring forever to the birth the Saviour of the world! Infinite Love must be born in weakness as the Son of Man. This aspect of reality is peculiarly evident today. We see a new ideal born indeed into our century—but in what tremulous infancy—waiting our tenderness, in need of our fostering. We may not go our careless way, thinking that God is strong enough to manage His world as He likes. He has chosen to be weak, to be a babe in our arms, Whom, if we will, we may dash against the stones. Asceticism and worldliness are equally discredited by the Incarnation; for the flesh is to bring to birth the spirit, and the natural and social order are to be made by us, sacramentally, a fit home for the Indwelling God.

It is not necessary to point out the exquisite social implications of the Christmas story:

To pastours and to poets appeared that angel,
And bade them go to Bethlehem, God's birth to honor,
And sung a song of solas, Gloria in Excelsis Deo.
Rich men slept then and in their rest were,
Though it shone to the shepherds, a shewer of bliss.¹

Labor was first at the Manger, but Wisdom followed soon. The Church Year moves on; and as Advent celebrates the expectation of the truth, and Christmas the birth of the truth in time, Epiphany, the ancient feast of Lights, dwells on the discovery or manifestation of the Truth. The opening Epistle gives the keynote of the season. It speaks of the Fellowship of the mystery, a Christian mystery of light, broad as the cheerful day, by which exclusiveness vanishes forever and the Gentiles are made fellow-heirs of the full largesse of God. The manifestation of the Divine can tolerate no groups, no aristocratic privilege, it must sweep all separateness away. Swiftly the precious Sundays pass,

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touching with light suggestion on the chief phases of the Holy Life, each full of social significance deserving closest study. First comes the thought of the Childhood and the years of the workman Christ at Nazareth; the teachings and the miracles, Christ talking, Christ in action, appear in brief glorious glimpses; while the Epistles furnish a running commentary, drawing out the principles implied in the Gospel narrative into the social ethic characteristic of the Christian community. It is incidentally astonishing how much Gospel teaching St. Paul can crowd into a few lines. The season is joyous; yet the undertone is increasingly stern. The Gadarenes prefer their swine to their Saviour, according to the wont of property-holders; an enemy is sowing tares. In the main, during Epiphany, Christianity faces the task of expansion rather than of repentance—but Epiphany leads out toward Lent, Manifestation toward Penitence. Three interesting Sundays with energetic Scriptures and dull names make the transition. Septuagesima presents that Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard which has plain economic application in the principle of the Minimum Wage; Sexagesima strikes the note of Christian heroism in the Epistle, and in the Gospel of the Sower suggests all that environment may mean to character. Quinquagesima, a Sunday charged with emotion, dwells on love, on death and on vision restored. “Lord that I may receive my sight!” The cry of Bartimaeus is the last cry of the Church before she craves the ashes on her brow.

Epiphany leads the gaze outward, Lent inward, Easter upward. To watch and share the expansion of the Gospel of the Kingdom is at first pure joy. But Christianity undefiled pitted against a hostile world is not the true story. Progressive revelation leads to humility, to shame.

There is no experience so private as penitence; there is no season so social as Lent. The first impulse of a man ashamed of himself is to run away and hide, but Lent has no indulgence for that impulse: “Blow the trumpet in Sion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation”—There is a fearful publicity to it all! And the sense of sin first to be engendered is the corporate, the national sense. Penitence has become unpopular. Whole systems of religion decry it as morbid, and bid us relegate it to the lumber house of obsolete oppressions while we “hold the thought” of health and stereotype our smile. Almost everybody is infected by the idea. Go in for social service and don’t worry over your own soul! All this is a reaction against overstrain which the middle-aged can remember, but it is reaction which Catholic thought cannot accept; and the best way
to revive the sense of sin while escaping unreality and morbidness is the Church’s way of resolute social shame. It is Christ’s way, too: His dealing with evil does not encourage introspection; it is full of a sane objectivity. Study of the Lenten lessons brings out with startling force the intention of the Church that personal penitence shall be rooted in the recognition of corporate wrong-doing. How impressive they are—these passages from two thousand years ago and more which might have been written yesterday!

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens and to let the oppressed go free and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry and that thou bring the poor to thine own house—when thou seest the naked that thou cover him—and that thou hide not thyself from thy own flesh?” That last phrase penetrates like an arrow to the center of our sin and shame: our class-provincialisms, our group exclusiveness, our national arrogance.

Perhaps the fading sense of sin could be restored only by the great shock of the war, which forced men to face a world delivered over to terror by the results of their wrong-doing. All thoughtful persons experience a sense of guilty responsibility for the causes which led to the explosion. The crimes of every nation, including our own, lie upon us with a bitter weight—imperialistic ambition, commercial greed, sullen class-antagonisms, tortuous dealings with those without, grasping cruelties to those within. Perhaps most of us as individuals have no immediate concern with these things; yet as we of the democratic nations receive our sight, with what terrible clearness loom before us our irresponsibility, our slipshod acceptance of false ideals, our lazy acquiescence in a world-condition sure to ripen into war! Shallow men may acquire merit by invective against the sins of Germany. That is emphatically a method closed to the Christian. Israel had enemies enough, but the prophets did not occupy themselves with denouncing the sins of Assyria; they were too busy at home.

The nobler Christian mind has expressed itself clearly on this duty of penitence:

The fact that such a calamity as this world war could come compels a rigorous scrutiny of the underlying principles of our civilization. It is a summons to the Christian church to challenge a social order based upon mutual distrust and selfish competition. It is a summons in penitence to renounce
and oppose the principles of national aggrandizement at the expense of other peoples, of economic selfishness trying to control the world’s resources, trade routes, and markets. It is a summons to the Christian discipletship to bring forth the fruits of repentance in labor for a new world order.²

The struggle will not be over in a hurry. In these years, the living leaders of the Church have a grand opportunity to bring back reality into the Lenten season. Will they rise to it?

Holy Jesu, grant us tears,
Fill us with heart-searching fears
Ere the hour of doom appears.³

The sins are social, the penitence must be social, and social must the expiation be. Lent, with its stern summons to corporate repentance, holds a constructive suggestion in the principle of the Fast. Socially applied, this will mean voluntary self-control on the part of the classes in possession of privilege, just so far as they are filled with a Christian spirit: perhaps it will have to mean glad acquiescence in expropriation. So deep-seated are the evils in modern life manifest to the purged sight, so rooted in pleasant use and wont, so entwined with much which is lovely, much which seems sacred, that the bravest men grow baffled and helpless. To keep a good social Lent is a stern experience. We must not fall back on that individualistic interpretation of virtue which has led critics like John Stuart Mill and Lowes Dickenson to see in our holy faith a separatist ideal which if widely followed would involve the suicide of civilization. We are reaching the new vision of a penitent race, bending its might to weave the laws of brotherhood into the texture of its politics. It is a glorious vision! But before it thought grows dizzy and faith all but fails.

And as our sins crush us helpless to the ground, the Church hastens to our aid, on Refreshment Sunday, in the very middle of the penitential season. Though we be tied and bound, there is a Free City whereof we are children and citizens. Though we have starved

³ From the hymn “Lord, in this Thy mercy’s day,” words by Isaac Williams (1842).
The Social Teachings of the Church Year

our brothers, there is One Who shall feed them, and us. Then, hav-
ing given sweet assurance of satisfaction for the primal needs, free-
dom and nourishment, she turns us to face the Cross. *Vexilla Regis
prodeunt!* O Tree of Glory, Tree most fair, whereon Love Crucified
forever saves the world! Away from our poor efforts, our weak con-
tribution, to the power of Him Who sinless bare our sins in His own Body,
away from self to Christ. As on Passion Sunday, we draw near to the
most holy days of the Christian year, the veiled Cross on the Altar says
to us: This darkness is the Light of the world.

Into the unfathomable mystery of social redemption, we may not
enter here. Nature does not love Crosses, and intense revulsion from
the dogmatic formulae which once gathered around the doctrine of
the Atonement has been experienced even by the orthodox. But reac-
tion has spent itself. The Suffering God in evident reality hangs for-
ever on the Rood of the World: our eyes behold Him there. Incarnate
Love cannot stop short in being born, or in manifesting the Divine
Nature in deeds of might and mercy. He can stop nowhere till He
perfect His Infinitude by stooping to defeat and death, so sounding
the depths of complete self-identification with His universe. Calvary
completes Bethlehem. It shows to all ages God entering the order of
history in the only way possible to Him in a sin-sick world. The story
of that entrance is simple and realistic. The narrative of the Passion
as the Church with solemn iteration spreads it before us from ev-
every Gospel source during Holy Week, makes it appallingly plain that
Love finds itself done to death by normal social forces. Ecclesiastical
authorities, the “intellectuals,” the law, the government—all the insti-
tutions which are the honor and the basis of stable civilization, com-
bined to try by proper legal machinery and with accredited decorum
to execute the Lord of Glory. He died because He was considered an
agitator, guilty of sedition, treason and heresy, and the mob, probably
angered that He had refused to lead a revolution to its liking, was on
the side of the executioners.

Died, be it noted, not as Victim but as Saviour. The Cross shows
forth not primarily endurance or passive sacrifice, but defiance. Pas-
sive resistance if you will: “Put up thy sword in its sheath,” but resist-
ance, not acquiescence, and resistance to the uttermost, lifted high on
that Hill of Death which is the sky-line of the world. The whole Holy
Week story shows Christ’s deliberate defiance of the existing social
and religious life. Whether He head on Palm Sunday a political dem-
ONstration which might easily have turned into revolt, or overthrow
peaceful commerce in the Temple courts, or publicly denounce the most respected members of the religious and legal world, the positive, daring, dangerous character of His actions is so clear that the authorities, of course, take Him for a demagogue. His opposition ended in disgrace and open shame, but it is the salvation of the human race.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,” says the Church in her Palm Sunday Epistle. Does the modern Church dare say Amen to that? The mystery of Divine grace not only saves us through the Cross, but identifies us with that Cross in the ceaseless work of redemption. The individual knows personal union with Christ, the Church knows corporate union: what type of living, personal or corporate, would show forth identity of mind? Individual sacrifice is essential, it is not sufficient; corporate sacrifice, in these democratic days, is necessary for the redemption of the body politic. It may be looked for in three directions—the sacrifice of a class, a nation, or a Church—and Christian folk in contemporary Passion-tides may well and profitably meditate on the three. . . . Class sacrifice! Why not? In the modern pressure toward socialization and equalization of wealth, imagine the propertied and privileged classes taking the lead in revolution under the impulse of a new Crusading chivalry or, better, in steady, peaceful legislation which should abolish property held for power and establish the poverty which could inherit the Beatitude and create the Commonwealth of Christian dreams. . . . National Sacrifice! Why not? A Crucified Nation: so full of magnanimous and unselfish solicitude for the interests of its foes that it could overcome evil with good, and if such policy met worldly failure, accept the political result. . . . Such pictures of life through the looking glass are not easy to evoke. Well, then, a crucified Church?

What can the Church do to be saved? is a question which many Churchmen are asking themselves, and the answer comes strangely close to the New Testament parallel. The Apostolic order, the deposit of faith, the rule of life and all the traditions of the past—all these she has carefully kept from her youth up, but there still seems to be something lacking to the fulfilment of her true place in the heart of the world. It may be that she still needs to sell what she has and give to the poor and accept her Master’s Cross.4

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4 Bishop Paul Jones, quoted in A Church Year-Book of Social Justice, 139.
We talk of the Church as the extension of the Incarnation; but just as the latter was not complete until Calvary, so that Church will not have completed her identification until she has given herself completely for the life of the world.5

Picture the Church, no longer watchful over her own prerogatives or possessions, even for the sake of her good works, watchful rather to gather her children into one great unity of love, that they may live by a law which the world denies; bound to follow that law and that only in political, social and industrial relations, and to take the consequences when active obedience proves impossible. Let her fling one mighty challenge to the principles which have wrecked the nations. Let her find opposing her, not as now endorsing her or seeking her favor, the forces of this world. Let her be decried, repressed, ridiculed, by the intellectual leaders, the commercial magnates, the government authorities. Let her stubbornly decline the compromises they offer: cry aloud in the wilderness to suspicious and secretive nations the law of candor and selflessness, to hostile peoples the law of forgiveness, to rival interests the law of love. Let her welcome the results sure to follow, and take the eleventh chapter of Hebrews as the Magna Charta of her liberties. Only so can she be sure of following in the footsteps of her Lord.

These last paragraphs are controversial; but it is not open to controversy that the Church is bound to devote her full power in these Passion-tides to discovering the Way of the Cross at the present juncture. And if she does so she will have her reward, for she will know that Easter joy open only to those who have passed spiritually through the grave and gate of death, and she may listen to her Risen Lord as He moves among His own, speaking to them during the Great Forty Days of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. And presently she will be calling her children to celebrate her Whitsun birthday. The Prayer Book leads us straight to the Upper Chamber, where the little group awaits the promise of the Lord. Again the Gift is not given in solitude:

Not on one favored forehead fell  
Of old the fire-tongued miracle,  
But flames o’er all the thronging host

5 Bishop Paul Jones, quoted in A Church Year-Book of Social Justice, 167.
The baptism of the Holy Ghost.
Heart answers heart: in one desire
The blending lines of prayer aspire.\textsuperscript{6}

So to the Beloved Community came the mystic wind, the mystic flame; the undivided fire sat upon each of them; and the first sign of the Spirit was the Gift of Tongues, by which every stranger and alien could understand the revelation of God. We forget sadly what the Spirit does. Every man and every class shouts its own shibboleth at its adversary, hoping to convince him—but we must “speak with other tongues, new, strange,” if we are to bear true witness to the works of God. The first word of Peter’s sermon carries the democratic message—not an easy one for Peter of all men to announce. The Holy Ghost is poured out on them all, not only on Jews but on Gentiles. The Church is formed, and there is a wonderful sense of expanding life in its story. Fellowship knows no limits. Presently it reaches over into Samaria, and the Samaritans receive the Spirit by the laying on of hands. Thus the Church still claims to give the Gift, and the consecrated touch, transmitted through the ages, is her silent witness to the unity of humanity in God.

The first result of this influx of the Spirit is then the breaking down of barriers, the creation of a democracy in Christ. And the next is the development of social organization. The first mark of it and the most distinctive, as recorded in Scripture, is the community of goods. One would not make too much of that transitory experiment in Jerusalem; yet when all modifications are granted, the Christian mind can never forget it. The meaning at lowest is that the right attitude toward property is a primary object of Christian solicitude, and that the first outflowing of the Spirit leads the Church straight to social consciousness. Principal Faunce puts the situation well:

They “had all things common,”—not only a common faith and hope and zeal, but common property also. Within the Church at Jerusalem private property largely disappeared. . . . The early Church was not only a prayer-meeting, but a mutual benefit association. Its members were not only “saved from the wrath,” but they were insured against poverty and sickness by the organization which they joined. . . .

\textsuperscript{6} John Greenleaf Whittier, “The Meeting.”
Organized relief of poverty . . . preceded all attempts at the formulation of Christian truth.\(^7\)

This is the first adventure of the Church fresh from her chrism of Baptismal fire.

The Church has now completed her contemplation of the sequence of Christ’s earthly life, and turns her children for the ensuing Sundays to follow the unfolding of His power in history and in the soul. The stress during the second half of the Christian year, is on ethics rather than on events. But, first, the faithful are uplifted in one consummate Feast, above the temporal into the eternal, and are called on Trinity Sunday to sing their Trisagion with the angelic hosts. The successive contacts of the Divine with the human celebrated by the seasons as they pass, converge toward their center and climax—the contemplation of the Divine Nature. That any conception of God is final, who would dare to claim? What future race-experience may reveal, who may dare to prophesy? But Catholic Christians claim that the symbol of the Trinity, however tentative, is the noblest adumbration yet evolved by man of his highest thought, and that it holds promise of yet unexhausted meanings to the pilgrim soul.

For the great reality which the doctrine protects is that love is in its nature eternal. This assurance the Theist, whether Unitarian or Jew, must forfeit, except by an assumption which saves his faith at the expense of his reason. Pure monotheism contemplates a Deity self-existent and solitary, Who in the dark backward and abysm of time was moved to project Himself into a created universe; love, to such thinking, is accident, not substance in the divine nature. But God IS Love—the phrase cannot be improved; and love implies original and continuous interaction among diverse centers of consciousness. According to formal logic, such interaction is inconsistent with unity; but according even to our own intimate experience, it is necessary, for we know that we never realize true Oneness in isolation. The satisfying nature of the doctrine has been discerned by Christian intuition down the ages. Here is a passage sweetly phrased from the fourteenth century *Mirror of St. Edmund*:

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Dere frend thou art to wit there is but One Godde. And thou
art to wit that no good may fail in Godde; but because that
a swete thing and a good thing is comfort of felaweschippe,
therefore may not Godde be without goodnesse of fellaw-
schippe. Then behooveth it that there be many persouns in
Godde the Heyest Goodnesse.8

And here is a modern bishop: “The uncaused self-existent Eternal is
indeed One, One God. But within the bright divine shrine and sac-
tuary of Godhead there is more-than-Oneness. Deity is no bright soli-
tude, but the Scene of mutual affection. Deity contains forever the
mighty flow and movement of an infinite Life of responding interact-
ing Love.”9 The succinct phrase of Phillips Brooks touches the heart
of the matter: “That social thought of God which we call the doctrine
of the Trinity.”

And as the doctrine expresses our best thought of Deity self-
existent, so it meets our greatest need for Deity manifest. The hope
of the ages has clung, now to an infinite purity above our tempeasts,
now to a human God subject to mortal struggle, now to a Universal
Spirit slowly coming to its own through the dross of matter. None of
these concepts can be sacrificed, all must be synthesized in an ideal
of Deity which can offer man, from whatever direction he approach,
an object of prayer. Can a better means be suggested of satisfying
these pragmatic needs than the ancient faith? The doctrine of the
Trinity satisfies and fuses the aspirations of the ages; and the race has
not grown up to it yet.

For as Trinitarian faith is the best result of religious experience
in the past, it as surely points to the future, and only in that future
can it fully come to its own. This faith has been the chief force which
has slowly instilled democracy into the world. The assertion will seem
grotesque to the outsider, but every Christian should apprehend its
truth.

It would seem hardly short of a miracle that such a conception as
the Christian Trinity should have been defined in the fourth century
and that all through the period of autocracy, imperialistic and feudal,
the Church should have cherished an idea to which so little in the
life of the state could be said to correspond. What was Athanasius

8 The Mirror of St. Edmund, chapter 28.
9 Bishop Monte, quoted in A Church Year-Book of Social Justice, 216.
done when he fought his great fight for the Homoousion? Nothing more important than this, defending the truth yet unborn that social harmony and essential organic oneness depend, not on differentiation of rank, but on diversity of function. It was a truth which could not in the nature of things be generally apprehended for many centuries; the time is only ripe today for the full apprehension of all that is implicit in the great doctrine.

During feudal times, a strong centralized authority, with power diffused through descending grades, was necessary to social stability. Social inequality was an inevitable inference, though Christian sociologists like Marsiglio of Padua or Wyclif were rarely lacking, who developed daring communistic ideas. Popular theology modelled itself on political fact. Its God was a paternal autocrat, from whom all earthly authority descended in a wonderful system, a system noble in its ideal and for a time invaluable in its working. But that system broke up. Immanent ideals, often more than semi-pantheistic, came to control the confused period of the rising democracy, and we have been living for a hundred years or more under the Dispensation of the Spirit. Now if God is experienced as the Spirit within us no less than the Father above us and the Brother by our side, our business becomes with new intensity the release and reproduction of the Divine Nature in the corporate order as in the individual soul. Not subjection nor submission but rather recreation is the final attitude of man toward his God.

“Let Us make man in our image,” says the old mystical account of creation; and whatever the historic explanation of the phrase, the Christian sees in it the assumption that the idea of God is the norm by which human society must be shaped, the type to which it must ultimately conform. When Deity was thought of as separated from His world, as monarch, or great artificer, the Trinity might well have seemed an unreal doctrine. Today, under special influence perhaps of our deepening faith in God as the Indweller, it becomes the heavenly prototype for earthly life.

In proportion as men learn to shape their institutions to accord with a deep and rich idea of Deity, they will achieve true harmony between Church and State. The Church, whatever may be said of it as an organization, possesses an ideal far ahead of what the State has yet realized; for it bids the faithful recognize in the Infinite Life which it calls them to adore, a perpetual activity of equals: “The glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.” “And in this Trinity none is afore or after
other: none is greater or less than another; but the whole three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal.” A people worshiping the Blessed Trinity could never rest in a monarchical or capitalistic society of graded ranks. The task of the ages is to evolve a society subsisting in a unity of love which shall bear some likeness to God’s sublime nature. The stubborn Catholic insistence on the absolute diversity of function combined with equality of rank within the creative energy of God is the supreme achievement of the Church’s great theology; to the Christian who believes that the Divine Life is the model for the corporate life of man, it discredits forever the old fallacy that incentive and enrichment can best be furnished by distinctions in rank and privilege, and it affords a sound and permanent basis for that ideal of social equality which is the modern goal. It is thus with good reason that an American divine speaks of “the ancient Catholic charter of human freedom,—the doctrine of the Trinity.”\textsuperscript{10} This doctrine has forced democracy on the world; it will yet, if the Church wakens to her full opportunity, reveal democracy to itself in its full spiritual glory. Only a society of equals can afford reflection of the perfect energy of perfect love.

And the diversity of function which faith discerns in the Eternal, that, too, has its human expression. We experience a perpetual outgoing in threefold manner from the perpetual life—the outgoing of that creative force which is Fatherhood, of that redemptive force by which creation is restored, of that sanctifying force by which it is sustained. Humanity rightfully at work must model its activities on the energies within the Godhead. Creation, restoration, maintenance, these are our human business, and as men choose their place according to their aptitudes in these multiform types of activity, they help the self-expression of God in the world. To compare this ideal with the civilization we know, is to be filled with dismay but not with despair. There are plenty of uses for energy outside the scope of these functions: destructive rather than creative, poisonous rather than restorative, strong to obstruct rather than to sustain the manifestation of the right and just. Like those earthly distinctions of rank, wealth, privilege, to which we blindly cling, these things are the enemy. They are the shadow of that dark power opposed forever to the Father of Lights. The Christian Church is to fight them with might and main,\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{10} Alexander V. G. Allen, \textit{Freedom in the Church, or The Doctrine of Christ} (New York: Macmillan, 1907), 3.
and she can do so today with special effect, for social thought is growing up to the great intuitions of Christianity. She is to command her children to engage only in such activities as find sanction in the divine activity, and to concern themselves centrally with the progressive hallowing of the name of God, through the reproduction of His nature in the social order. In proportion as they do so, will appear on earth that ideal commonwealth which needs no temple because lit by the central fire of sacrificial love.

With Trinity Sunday, the Church ends the successive phases of her doctrinal teaching, and surely the Anglican communion does well in presenting the other Sundays of the year under the shadow, or rather in the light, of this great Festival. Having lifted us to this height of fulfilment, and summoned us to chant our Trisagion with all creation, she has taught us all she knows, and in due time, patiently, eagerly, she will lead us to begin the great sequence over again. The remaining part of the Christian Year is devoted to the application in practical life of these great mysteries. Perhaps the social suggestiveness of these later Sundays is often more obvious and concrete than that of the preceding portion. Yet this brief study has done no more than indicate a very few of the high lights in the rich and strong teaching of social righteousness and of a religious philosophy for the corporate life, implicit in the Christian seasons as presented in the Prayer Book from Advent to Trinity.