

**SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF THE
CHRISTIAN YEAR; LECTURES
DELIVERED AT THE CAMBRIDGE
CONFERENCE, 1918**

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Social Teachings of the Christian Year; Lectures Delivered at the Cambridge Confererence, 1918
by Vida D. Scudder

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VIDA D. SCUDDER

AUTHOR OF "THE CHURCH AND THE HOUR:
REFLECTIONS OF A SOCIALIST CHURCHWOMAN," ETC.



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PREFACE

People who are indifferent to organized religion are strongly advised by the author to keep away from this book. They would find it either annoying or meaningless; at best, time spent on it would be wasted, and wasted time is a serious matter in a world where no one can read what he should.

The book is written for those who care deeply and lovingly for the Christian Church; more specifically, for those in the habit of following the Seasons of the Church Year through the Anglican Prayer-Book. More specifically still it will make its strongest appeal to persons who are awake to the social gospel on which so much salutary stress is now laid, and who want to find a harmony between the precious traditions of spiritual experience and the new life astir in our hearts, impelling us to a strange and untried world.

Christians of a liberal turn of mind and an affection for the Prayer-Book! This may seem a restricted group, but it is larger than some people think. Moreover, so far as the author is concerned, the embargo on reading is off in the case

of any persons religiously disposed. Her chief ambition will be realized, should the book quicken social passion and faith in devout minds.

Three strong convictions have inspired the writing.

The first is, that a new world-order is surely on the way. To affix labels would be premature and impertinent; but, on broad lines, what is happening is already evident. Democracy is reaching out from the political to the industrial sphere; the old class-alignments are doomed to vanish; large types of wealth and large sections of industry are to be socialized; and our children are destined to live in a civilization as different from that of our fathers as that was different from mediæval Europe. To speak more technically, a system based mainly on private capital and the incentive of private profit, is in process of yielding to a system partly at least based on some form of socialized capital, and on incentive of another kind.

The second conviction is, that the tremendous changes in prospect can only be safely accomplished if religion supplies them with a soul. A socialist and atheistic world is conceivable; but every Christian knows that it would carry its doom within it. Such a world would be a travesty of our dearest hopes. In the noble words of the

Lambeth Committee Report on International Relations (1920), "A social order for which humanity hungers is beyond the reach of merely human expedients. Nothing will establish peace on the earth but a new creation from God in response to repentance and prayer."

The third conviction is, that the ancient faith of the Cross is competent to inspire this new creation; that the principles which must guide the coming change are all implicit in the cycle of Christian truths; and that these truths urgently need to be restudied, for the light they throw on social thought and duty in these difficult times.

The subject of this book is, then, the social inferences to be drawn from the Mysteries of the Christian faith as expressed in the sacramental system of the Church. But these Mysteries are studied, not from the point of view of formal theology, but rather from that of Christian experience. It is a book for very simple people, not conversant with the discussions of the schools, but trained by Mother Church in love, and faith, and will, through her patient reiteration during the changing seasons from Advent to Trinity, of what she holds most essential and most dear.

Even while the book has been on the typewriter, a change has been passing over the spirit of the Churches. Twenty years ago, they were

hesitant and conservative; signs of sympathy with the forces, even then rising, of industrial democracy were few and far between. Christian radicals, never lacking at any moment of religious history, were generally regarded askance, and were certainly not in official favor. All but insensibly, the situation has altered. Today, courageous expressions of scarcely veiled agreement with advanced social views multiply from month to month. Reference need only be made to the stirring Statement of four Roman Catholic Bishops; to the fine "Social Creed of the Churches," issued by the Federal Council which represents United Protestantism in America; to the Report of the Archbishop's Fifth Committee of Enquiry in England; and to the epoch-making Lambeth Reports. Christianity, in Anglo-Saxon countries at least, is placing itself formally and officially, under our eyes, on the side of the New Order.

But Statements, Resolutions, and Reports are useless except as a beginning. The coming change involves a new Christian ethic, in the development of which every member of Christ's Church should share; and the formation of this ethic, in turn, demands a re-examination of the Christian formulæ from the new point of view.

This book, approaching its subject from a spe-