

Philip Turner, *Christian Socialism: The Promise of an Almost Forgotten Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021), pp. 216 + xix. ISBN: 9781725259409
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Philip Turner's interest is the group of Church of England clerics in the nineteenth and first part of the twentieth centuries who sought a new direction for the church's witness informed by reflecting on the Christian Gospel in light of the challenges posed by economic structures of the time. It includes a broad range of figures, with bishops and archbishops such as B.F. Westcott, Charles Gore and William Temple, as well as lay people and clerics who struggled to find a place in the church, such as R.H. Tawney, John Ludlow and F.D. Maurice.

Although Turner is attentive to the differences among those he studies, he detects elements of a common Christian Socialist program. The Christian Socialists offered an anthropological challenge to the values of the dominant capitalist society. It is false, they thought, to believe that human beings are made for individualism and competition. Instead, people are made for society and cooperation. To address this, Christian Socialists argued for prioritizing duties over rights, rebuilding community, and orienting societies toward Christian love.

In a structured and clear fashion, Turner describes and evaluates the theology and ethics of the Christian Socialists. He is measured and reasoned, finding perhaps his greatest point of critique in their over-reliance on the Incarnation as a doctrinal root for their work, arguing that while it 'provides a powerful defense of the social ideals of equality and social fellowship . . . it fails to take sufficient account of the power of human rebellion against God and his purposes, and it overmoralizes the person and work of Christ'. This is a work of theological ethics. At times, however, I thought it would be strengthened by greater biographical information. Some of the figures Turner engages with are, at least to this reader, somewhat obscure. Moreover, many of the Christian Socialists worked out their theology in their ministry. We cannot understand Charles Gore apart from understanding the Community of the Resurrection and the Christian Social Union. Turner does mention this, but mostly in passing. At times, the reader may be well served by having at hand the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* or, barring that, Wikipedia.

Repeatedly, Turner asserts that the challenges of our time are similar to those of the Christian Socialists. They had the industrial revolution, we have the digital revolution. They had what they disparaged as 'political economy', we have neoliberalism. So it is not surprising that Turner concludes his book by pointing to the influence of Christian Socialists on Rowan Williams and John Milbank. This is interesting – though the section on Williams is too short and that on Milbank perhaps too long – but I would have been more interested in a further probing of the differences between the world of the Christian Socialists and our own. One that springs to mind is the way immigration has transformed many Western societies into multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and multi-cultural communities. For Christian Socialists, it was important that social duty take place over individual rights. Turner writes, 'it is difficult to imagine such a complex set of ideals that make up their social vision having much traction apart from a populace already shaped by a strong sense of duty to the members of the community of which they are a part'.

This is not to say that we cannot speak meaningfully of duties in today's pluralist societies. But it does raise the question of how the communal grounding for this theological project may have shifted in the intervening decades.

At the outset of the book, Turner limits himself to a consideration of Church of England figures. This is understandable but also regrettable. Christian Socialism found its way to the United States as well, perhaps nowhere more compellingly than in the figure of Vida Scudder. Scudder's extensive writings combined with her dedication to various social ministries, particularly the settlement house movement, would have made her a worthy dialogue partner for the figures Turner studies. It would have added some welcome gender diversity as well.

Throughout the book, Turner seems to have a larger point to make about the church of his own time. He has made these points forthrightly in earlier books such as *The Fate of Communion* but here he seems to let them slip out of the side of his mouth. When he writes that 'an undue optimism about the progressive powers of love lay deep within the hearts of the Christian Socialists and indeed remains with Anglican churches to this day', I wanted him to either make this point fully in relation to the church of our time or not make it at all. When he writes that Christian Socialists believed it was not the role of the church to pronounce on public policy and that 'advocacy for particular measures on the part of the governing bodies of churches . . . has produced not a united Christian witness but factionalism within and between the churches', I again wanted either more or less.

The Christian Socialist tradition may be flawed and imperfect but it is worth engaging with as we reflect on our ministry. In helping retrieve an 'almost forgotten tradition', Turner is to be commended.

Jesse Zink
Montreal Diocesan Theological College, Montreal, QC

Margaret Willes, *In the Shadow of St Paul's Cathedral* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2022), pp. xii + 299. ISBN 978-0300249835.
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On 29 December 1940, Herbert Mason was on fire watch atop the *Daily Mail* building in Carmelite Street, just off London's Fleet Street. Looking eastward during the worst raid of the Blitz, he saw St Paul's shrouded in smoke and dust; waiting patiently, just minutes later the smoke cleared sufficiently for him to take the picture that became iconic in the battle to buoy up the spirits of Londoners. It captured that sense of Britain fighting alone for the soul of Europe. St Paul's continues to have a symbolic significance throughout Britain, but interestingly that is not new. Margaret Willes' excellent account of the history and importance of St Paul's churchyard adds remarkably to our understanding of that small enclave in the heart of the City of London and its role in the production, publishing and selling of books and thus in the realm of communications down the centuries. She describes the churchyard as the *Times newspaper of the Middle Ages!*