

JUSTICE AND MERCY CONTENDING FOR SHALOM
Towards an Anglican Social Theology
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Since February 2016, activists, community developers, directors of non-profit organizations, clergy, organizers, and other church leaders have gathered annually to worship, reflect, teach, share, and collectively discern the Anglican Church in North America's mission to care for "the least of these" (Mat. 25:40). These meetings, organized under the direction of the Matthew 25 Initiative, have been centered on a guiding theme: "Justice and Mercy Contending for Shalom." What have emerged over the course of these several meetings are the beginnings and fragments of a theological vision for understanding the social mission of the Church and her call to embody the peace of Christ in the world.¹ Yet important work remains to be done to develop and extend these ideas, weaving them together with insights from the Church's historic theological tradition, in order to articulate a robust theological vision of the Church's social engagement, consistent with the beliefs, practices, and commitments of the Anglican tradition. In short, the Anglican Church in North America possesses a wealth of institutions, organizations, and initiatives pursuing the work of justice and mercy. What remains is the task of developing a coherent and compelling theological framework to interpret and understand this work and to inspire new forms of social engagement to care for the least of these in North America. In what follows, I explicate the theme "Justice and Mercy Contending for Shalom," in order to sketch an Anglican social theology—that is, a theological vision of the Church's relationship to the various dimensions of social life and her participation in social life as a mode of witnessing to and working for the kingdom of God. In doing so, I offer a conceptual framework for both clergy and practitioners to locate their individual and collective works of justice and mercy within a larger account of God's redemptive action in the world and the Church's social witness and mission.

The sketch proceeds in four parts, each exploring and developing an aspect of the theme. Part I, "Beginning with the End: Shalom," delineates the eternal, eschatological shalom toward which the Church is oriented in her pilgrim life in the world. Through a reading of St. Augustine's "two cities," I offer an account of how such an eschatological orientation leads the Church to bear witness to this shalom in her social engagement and to seek the welfare and common good of the polities in which she finds herself. In Part II, "The Interrupted Middle: Eucharist and Social Mission," I explore how the Church encounters God's shalom sacramentally in her Eucharistic life, and thus how the Eucharist both assembles Christians into a social body and sends them in mission to the world. In this section, I argue that the Church's engagement in public life should consist in both social *witness* and social *work*. I develop the former in an ecclesiological register by describing the Church as the sacrament of the shalom of God, and the latter through what I term a "sacramental politics of solidarity." Part III, "Working Toward the End: The Church's Praxis of Justice and Mercy," considers justice and mercy as two central modes of the Church's social mission and elaborates what a sacramental politics of solidarity entails. My treatment of the themes of justice and mercy here aims at analytical precision, detailing their various senses and clarifying how they shape Christian discernment and deliberation about engagement in social matters. Finally, in Part IV, "Contending: The Spirituality of Contemplative-Activism," I conclude with a meditation on the notion of "contention"—the Church's struggle for justice and mercy in an unjust and merciless world—and how such contending might be sustained by a spirituality of

¹ Video, audio, and print versions of the addresses given at these meetings can be accessed at www.anglicanjusticeandmercy.org.

“contemplative-activism.” Each of these four sections contributes to a theological vision of the Church’s social engagement wherein justice and mercy are pursued not merely out of obedience to Christ, but also as a means of worshipping him and growing deeper in the knowledge and love of God.

Before beginning, a word must be said regarding the notion of an “Anglican social theology.” What makes this theological vision distinctively *Anglican*? The following sketch operates with the conviction that Anglican social theology, both historically and in its contemporary manifestations, exhibits at least four characteristics. First, like both worship and doctrine in the Anglican tradition, Anglican social theology is characterized by its dual emphases on Word and sacrament. Developing a robust social theology entails careful attention to the witness of Sacred Scripture and its social teachings, alongside a vibrant sacramental vision of the world. What follows is thus an attempt to integrate biblical exegesis, sacramental theology, and moral philosophy within a theological account of the Church’s engagement in the social world. Second, Anglican social theology is both evangelical and catholic. The Church’s social mission is evangelical insofar as her ministry of justice and mercy are constitutive of her proclamation of the gospel of Christ’s kingdom and salvation, and it is catholic insofar as it is concerned with the social meaning of the Church herself, the body of Christ in the world.² Third, Anglican social theology is biblical and Augustinian. To acknowledge the central role of Sacred Scripture in Anglican social theology is to identify the way Anglicanism has insisted on the primacy of Scripture for Christian life and belief, but also, and more specifically, to appreciate the way careful attention to the moral, social, and political features and implications of the biblical writings have long been a dominant component of Anglicans’ engagement with the Bible. To say that Anglican social theology is identifiably Augustinian is simply to acknowledge the important role Augustine and Augustinian theology has played historically in Anglican writing and thinking about the relationship of the Church to the social sphere. From Richard Hooker to John Keble, William Temple to Oliver O’Donovan, the great social thinkers of the Anglican tradition have seen Augustine’s theology and social vision to be invaluable resources for considering the social mission of the Church. Finally, Anglican social theology is grounded in a rich theology of the incarnation. A central concern of late 19th and early 20th century Anglican social thought especially, the doctrine of the incarnation grounds the Church’s social work and witness in the conviction that Christ’s assumed humanity hallows all human life, including social life, as the space in which God’s transformative and redemptive grace is at work. I suggest the centering of Jesus’s teaching in Matthew 25, and his identification with the poor and afflicted therein, in recent discussions around the social mission of the Anglican Church in North America is a continuation of this great legacy of reflecting on the meaning of the incarnation for social life.

The theological vision developed in these pages follows these four characteristics of Anglican social thought in order to push them in new directions and articulate afresh a vision for the Church’s social mission today. Its aim is to begin the work of developing an Anglican social

² In the Anglican tradition, at least since the mid-19th century, scholarly work in social theology has most often been produced by Anglo-Catholic and Broad Church Anglicans, while Evangelical Anglicans have generally been more concerned with and engaged in social *praxis*. Beginning in the late 1970s, however, Evangelicals began to produce more sustained and systematic reflections on the relationship between Christianity and social action. See Alan Storkey, *A Christian Social Perspective* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 1979); John Gladwin, *God’s People in God’s World* (Nottingham: Intervarsity Press, 1979); J. Andrew Kirk, *Liberation Theology: An Evangelical View from the Third World* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1979). For a comprehensive treatment of the subject, see Jonathan Chaplin, “Evangelical Contributions to the Future of Anglican Social Theology,” in *Anglican Social Theology: Renewing the Vision Today*, ed. Malcolm Brown (London: Church House Publishing), 102–132.

theology of justice and mercy for the twenty-first century and a theological vision of social engagement to inspire North American Anglicans to see the kingdom of God come “on earth as it is in heaven.”

I. Beginning with the End: Shalom

The Biblical Vision of Shalom

Creation was formed in, is ordered to, and will be consummated as shalom. Translated most often in the Old Testament as “peace,” shalom designates that “wholeness” or “well-being” characteristic of original creation and Edenic harmonious existence. Perry Yoder’s threefold delineation of the notion of shalom in the Old Testament still proves salutary for understanding the multiple layers and dimensions which make the peace of shalom more comprehensive and multifaceted than simply the absence of violence. Shalom, Yoder contends, is a kind of positive peace, and includes 1) material prosperity and well-being, wherein the conditions for human flourishing are met or exceeded; 2) peaceable and just social relations within and without one’s communities; and 3) moral health within and between persons, the absence of deceit, fraud, and oppression, and the presence of truthfulness, integrity, and righteousness.³ In short, shalom designates the flourishing of life in all its forms. The prophet has all three of these dimensions in mind when he writes of the eschatological rule of the Messiah:

For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace [*shalom*].
His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace [*shalom*]
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this (Isa. 9:6–7).⁴

For the prophet, the Messiah’s eternal shalom will be instantiated in divine rule, and founded and maintained in perfect justice and righteousness.⁵ “Righteousness and peace will kiss,” the Psalmist declares (85:10). Such pairings in the Old Testament of the objective realities of peace and flourishing with the moral qualities of righteousness and justice identify the extent of shalom’s wholeness. Shalom names not simply the absence of conflict, but the right ordering and

³ Perry B. Yoder, *Shalom: The Bible’s Word for Salvation, Justice, and Peace* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 1998), 11-13. See also Gerhard von Rad, “Shalom in the Old Testament,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 2:402–6; Claus Westermann, “Peace [*shalom*] in the Old Testament,” in *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies*, ed. Perry B. Yoder and Willard M. Swartley, trans. Walter W. Sawatsky (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2001), 37–70.

⁴ All scriptural citations from NRSV.

⁵ Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 79-81.

arrangement of things, achieved and maintained in the right way. Shalom is the fullness of creation's abundant life, maintained in justice and righteousness. As such, shalom is an operative feature of both the order of creation and the order of redemption, for it names both the original state in which creation was conceived ("God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good." Gen. 1:31), as well as its transformed and redeemed state as new creation ("Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth." Rev. 21:1). As Christopher Wright puts it, "Creation provides the paradigm of redemption,"⁶ and thus shalom names the continuity between the social harmony of Eden and its elevation in grace in the new Eden.

These characteristics of the Hebrew notion of shalom are continued and extended in the New Testament's use of the language of *eirene*, also translated "peace." Though the term appears in nearly every book of the New Testament, it comes to the fore particularly in the letters of Paul and Luke-Acts where it is associated most often with the kingdom of God, the proclamation of Christ, and the establishment of reconciling peace between God and creation through the death and resurrection of Christ.⁷ *Eirene* also carries political overtones, as its use, particularly with reference to the kingdom of God announced and enacted by Jesus, implicitly pits Christ's peace against *pax Romana*. Whereas this latter form of peace was the ultimate goal of Rome's imperial policy of subjugation of the nations and establishing a unified political order under Greco-Roman language and culture, Jesus grants *eirene* to his disciples in the form of the Holy Spirit ("Peace be with you," he says three times as he breathes upon them the Holy Spirit [John 20:19, 21, 26]). *Eirene* names that peace which is made between God and the baptized through the ministry of Christ (Rom. 5:1–10; Col. 1:20), and which thus orders the common life of the faithful in harmony and friendship. The Letter to the Ephesians thus speaks of the Church as the domain of Christ's peace among previously hostile parties, specifically Jews and Gentiles:

For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father (2:14–18).

This passage embodies what N.T. Wright has shown to be the profound connection in the Pauline writings between salvation and ecclesiology. The overcoming of hostility and reconciliation between Jew and Gentile is not simply a social reality ancillary to the establishment of peace between God and the redeemed. Peace between Jew and Gentile is constitutive of the salvation accomplished by Christ, for it is a peace established through the union of both groups with Christ's own body. Both peace with God and peace between persons are aspects of the one movement of Christ's redemption. As Wright puts it:

[T]he cross of Jesus Christ not only rescued sinful human beings from their eternal fate but also rescued humanity from its eternal antagonism. And the author of Ephesians clearly thought that those two were part of the same act of redemption, intimately linked aspects

⁶ Christopher J.H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 138.

⁷ Willard M. Swartley, "Peace," in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 585.

of the single purpose of the one God, aimed at the healing of creation.⁸

Peace, in other words, is one way the New Testament speaks about the salvation wrought by Christ, specifically as it relates to the social embodiment of that salvation in the redeemed community. The peace described in Ephesians 2 belongs to the people of God, joined to Christ's body and established as a sacramental and proleptic participation in the "one new humanity" called into being by Jesus. This new humanity, however, is realized fully only eschatologically in the New Jerusalem, the Eternal City of God, where all strife shall cease and peace shall reign eternally. In both Old and New Testaments, shalomic peace has an eschatological inflection, even as it is identified with the good order of original creation and the apocalyptic inauguration of new creation in the cross and resurrection.

Shalom and the "Two Cities"

Why begin a sketch of the Church's social theology with an exposition of the theme of shalom? I introduce shalom here as the eschatological end toward which the Church's social work and witness of justice and mercy is directed because it profoundly shapes how the Church understands her participation in earthly social life and its relation to eternal blessedness. Importantly, eternal shalom is described in Sacred Scripture, particularly the Revelation of St. John, as taking a particular social form—the relationship of a *people*, rather than simply individuals, to the divine Trinity. To be sure, beatitude includes a deeply personal union of individual persons with the Triune life, but such union appears within and amidst a more determinative social one—namely, the Church's union with Christ her head. In his ultimate vision of consummate salvation in Revelation 21, St. John draws on specifically civic language and imagery to describe redeemed humanity's eternal life with God. "I saw the holy city," he writes, "the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (21:2). The new creation, according to the Seer, is centered on the social life of an eternal city: the perfected form of the earthly holy city of Jerusalem. As such, the eschatological shalom of the eternal city of God stands as the perfected form of human social existence—the realization of perfect justice and charity within human relations and between human creatures and God—against which all earthly polities and communities are to be judged.

That heaven is portrayed in Sacred Scripture as a thriving city was noted among several patristic writers concerned with eternal blessedness and its meaning for temporal social and political existence. Perhaps no other writer developed this line of thought more eloquently than St. Augustine in his *City of God*, wherein the image of two cities—Babylon and Jerusalem, the "earthly city" and the "heavenly city," the "city of man" and the "city of God"—frames his account of the Church's pilgrimage on earth to God.⁹ For Augustine, there are fundamentally only two societies to which humans may belong. On the one hand, the city of God names that eschatological *res*

⁸ N.T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 172.

⁹ My reading of Augustine's "two cities" in what follows is particularly indebted to the work of Luke Bretherton, William Cavanaugh, and Rowan Williams. The meaning of Augustine's two cities metaphor is famously contested, grounding varying political theologies from the Lutheran "two kingdoms" doctrine to Anabaptist and neo-Anabaptist separatisms. I take Bretherton, Cavanaugh, and Williams to be the best representatives of an Augustinian account of the Church and secular authority that privileges the distinct political identity of the Church without capitulating to an over-realized eschatology or a spiritualizing of the Church's social existence. See Luke Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); William T. Cavanaugh, "From One City to Two: Christian Reimagining of Political Space," in *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2011); Rowan Williams, "Politics and the Soul: Reading the *City of God*," in *On Augustine* (New York: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2016).

publica constituted by the true Church of the present age and the New Jerusalem of the age to come. On the other hand, there is the earthly city, exemplified by the figure of Babylon, which, because of its contempt for God and lust for power, can never fully achieve justice (and certainly not shalom) but only relative peace through coercion.¹⁰ The two cities, in other words, exhibit a division not *within* society (say, between “spiritual” and “secular” authority) but *between* societies. The earthly and heavenly cities are rival performances of public life,¹¹ each claiming to embody a true “public” or *res publica*.¹² The Church on earth, Augustine sees, exists between these two cities, even as she shares in both, because of her mixed nature (*corpus permixtum*). On earth, that is, “the two cities are intermingled.”¹³

The key scriptural passage for Augustine’s envisioning of the activity of the Church between the two cities is Jeremiah 29, the prophet’s “Letter to the Exiles,” which contains directions for Israel’s mode of life outside of her home in Jerusalem and within the foreign land of Babylon. “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel,” the prophet writes:

to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare (29:4–7).

The prophet is not confused about who rules the land the people of God find themselves in, nor the nature of this rule. It is a “strange land” (Ps. 137:4), filled with idols and temptations, and its rulers oppress and subjugate God’s people who are called to live in freedom. Babylon is not Israel’s final home. Nevertheless, the Lord expects Israel to make herself at home, so to speak, in this foreign land. She is to establish herself in it as a resident among neighbors, tend its land and yield its produce, raise and nurture children in its neighborhoods, pray for its peace, and seek its common good and welfare, all the while looking ahead to her final return to the city of the Lord. In short, she is to enjoy and contribute to the peace of Babylon. Augustine reads Jeremiah 29 as an image of faithful Christian participation in earthly social and political life. His commentary on the passage allegorizes Israel and Babylon with an eye toward the Church and the earthly city:

[W]e also make use of the peace of Babylon—although the People of God is by faith set free from Babylon, so that in the meantime they are only pilgrims in the midst of her... And when the prophet Jeremiah predicted to the ancient People of God the coming captivity, and bade them, by God’s inspiration, to go obediently to Babylon, serving God even by their patient endurance, he added his own advice that prayers should be offered for Babylon, ‘because in her peace is your peace’—meaning, of course, the temporal peace of the meantime, which is shared by good and bad alike.¹⁴

Despite the inherent limits of politics in the earthly city, in other words, Augustine nevertheless affirms the Church and earthly city’s shared pursuit of finite goods, common objects of love, and

¹⁰ St. Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin, 2004), XIX.17. Hereafter cited as *De civ. Dei*.

¹¹ Cavanaugh, “From One City to Two,” 63.

¹² Williams, “Politics and the Soul,” 111.

¹³ *De civ. Dei* XIX.26.

¹⁴ *De civ. Dei* XIX.26.

relative peace. “The earthly city...desires an earthly peace,” he writes, “and it limits the harmonious agreement of citizens concerning the giving and obeying of orders to the establishment of a kind of compromise between human wills about the things relevant to mortal life.”¹⁵ Here, then, we are introduced to a third type of peace, in addition to the perfect shalom of original and consummated creation and the shalom sacramentally experienced in the Church’s life. This third type of peace Augustine calls “earthly peace” or “temporal peace,” and he sees it as a genuine good of earthly life, even while only a shadow of the eternal peace of the city of God. What Augustine realizes about the Church’s social existence between Babylon and Jerusalem is that she shares a common life with the peoples of the earthly city, and that this common life is centered on the pursuit and establishment of this temporal peace. Christians are no doubt “citizens of heaven” (Phil. 3:20), destined for perfected shalom, but this heavenly citizenship does not exempt them from the duty to seek the welfare of the earthly city in which they find themselves and work towards the realization of its temporal peace.

The mission of the Church in the earthly city, according to Augustine, is both to witness to the eternal, perfect peace of the city of God—shalom, in its proper sense—as well as to build up the common life of the earthly city, seeking its common good and contributing to its flourishing. Indeed, these activities of witness and tending a common life are not separate tasks but two dimensions of the unified social work and witness of the Church, which is to anticipate and embody the coming shalomic life of the heavenly city, precisely *in the midst* of the earthly city, by caring for and building up its life-giving goods.¹⁶ In other words, the Church, oriented toward the eternal city of God, anticipates its coming by tending the seeds of the kingdom in the soil of the earthly city. The Church discovers in the common life of Babylon, amidst many temptations and forms of domination, genuine goods and pursues their development and cultivation. Building pockets of the kingdom of God in the back-alleys and corners of Babylon, the Church loves her Babylonian neighbors by tending the common good of the city until, at the last day, “Babylon becomes Jerusalem,”¹⁷ and those good and life-giving features of the earthly city are taken up into the heavenly one.

It is important to note the image Augustine uses to speak of the Church in this space between Babylon and Jerusalem. Lest the reader misunderstand Augustine to be advocating the infiltration or overthrow of Babylon in order to establish the New Jerusalem on earth,¹⁸ Augustine names the Church on earth as a people in exile and on pilgrimage. As his reading of Jeremiah 29 suggests, Augustine sees the Church “in but not of” the earthly city, occupying a transient, but nevertheless lingering, status. He warns against arrangements which position the Church as

¹⁵ *De civ. Dei* XIX.17.

¹⁶ As Fr. Daniel Lizárraga has pointed out, the Church’s catholicity—her wholeness—is a sign and symbol of the final shalom of all peoples in Christ. Catholicity, in other words, is the form shalom takes with respect to the Church. This means that the Church’s ecumenical work and pursuit of ever deeper bonds of unity is linked to and constitutive of her pursuing shalom in the world. See Fr. Daniel Lizárraga, “Shalom” (Scottsdale, AZ, September 27, 2017), *Matthew 25 Gathering 2017*, <http://www.anglicanjusticeandmercy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Rev-Canon-Daniel-Shalom.pdf>.

¹⁷ I take this phrase from James K. Lee, *Augustine and the Mystery of the Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 85–86. Lee argues the relation between the earthly city of Babylon and the heavenly Jerusalem is one of conversion. I am suggesting this conversion begins, in anticipation, before the final eschatological transformation of the earthly city.

¹⁸ As Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 3, notes, “Within Augustine’s theology the visible church is as much a part of Babylon, and thus directed to prideful ends, as any other part of a society and we should be suspicious of any attempt to identify one particular take on Christianity as somehow the embodiment of the New Jerusalem now. The visible church is always a field of wheat and tares, combining the earthly city and the city of God, and so cannot be separated until the last judgment.”

guarantor and ruler of the social order, but equally counsels against fantasies of social withdrawal into gated ecclesial communities. The Church cannot legislate eschatology, but neither can she wait idly for it to come. Augustine instead calls the Church to faithfully inhabit a form of *exilic presence*, embracing its position as strangers in a foreign land in order to witness to the new life of Christ.¹⁹ According to Stanley Hauerwas, exile is the determinative form of the Church's social existence, which means that "Christianity, whether it is forced to or not by the end of Christendom, must always be a Diaspora religion."²⁰ This is to say, in Augustinian terms, that exile is the normative social and political posture of the Church until she reaches the eschatological city of God. Moreover, because exile implies separation from one's true home, Augustine understands the Church's spiritual movement toward the eternal city of God in terms of pilgrimage.²¹ But while the image of a "pilgrim Church" might imply to some a kind of "otherworldly" distance from the earthly city, for Augustine it is precisely the Church's pilgrim status that grants meaning to her engagement in earthly social life, the struggle for justice and peace, and the pursuit of the common good. For Augustine, the Church's social activity in the earthly city, like the pilgrim's journey toward her destination, is a location of *ascesis*, sanctification, and preparation for her eternal life with God.²² In the same way the pilgrim's journey contributes just as much to the spiritual meaning of pilgrimage as her destination, so the Church's tending of the earthly peace of Babylon is a participation in her ultimate enjoyment of shalomic beatitude in the eternal city of God.

To sum up the importance of this orientation of the Church's social work and witness to the eternal shalom of the city of God—what I am portraying as an Augustinian vision of *exilic presence*—we might contrast this eschatological posture to two other strategies the Church is tempted toward in her engagement in social and political life: pragmatism and utopianism. Exilic presence differs from the former in that it does not see the Church as bearing ultimate responsibility for the social order (such as with God); rather, it sees the Church as a testimony and concrete embodiment of new life in Christ within the strictures of the old order of sin and death. As exiles to the present order who trust in the providential work of God to establish the fruit of the Church's social work and witness, Christians are freed to act in creative and imaginative ways not determined by the cold calculations of pragmatic reasoning and so-called political "realisms." The Church is not called to administer the earthly city, but to bear witness to the kingdom in its midst, to protest its injustice, and to be vulnerably present to and with "the least of these" in its domain. The integrity of the Church's witness is determined by her faithfulness, not her effectiveness, and this allows her to conceive of her social witness in terms of creativity and joy, rather than the narrow options set by pragmatist programs.

If the reality that the kingdom of God is "already" being manifested on earth moves the Church to resist pure pragmatic calculations concerning the possibilities of her social work and witness, then the "not yet" character of the kingdom's deferred arrival must call her also to reject utopianisms which aspire to realize that kingdom on earth in its fullness before the Lord's coming to establish it as such. Utopianisms of this kind far too often resort to a crass "means justify the

¹⁹ Nicholas Krause and Jonathan Tran, "The Third City: Radical Orthodoxy's (Emphatically) Complex Political Theology," in *The T&T Clark Companion to Political Theology*, ed. Rubén Rosario Rodríguez (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019).

²⁰ Stanley Hauerwas, "Remembering as a Moral Task: The Challenge of the Holocaust," in *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 342, 346.

²¹ Sarah Stewart-Kroeker, *Pilgrimage as Moral and Aesthetic Formation in Augustine's Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

²² On this theme in Augustine's political thought, see Charles Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

ends” ethics, wherein the dignity and integrity of individuals is sacrificed to grand world-building projects. Such utopianisms disregard the pilgrim orientation of the Church toward a final beatific order that lies beyond history, and thus mistakenly ascribe to the earthly city, even in a reformed version, a permanent status. A Church marked by exilic presence, as detailed above, resists utopianism by binding herself to a steadfast hope in the ultimate source of her peace—the eschatological shalom of the eternal city of God—even while making use of and contributing to the peace of Babylon and tending the penultimate goods of the earthly city. Exilic presence calls the Church to see her social mission as one of faithful witness, seeking the welfare of the earthly city to which she is temporally bound but from which she will be eternally delivered.

II. The Interrupted Middle: Eucharist and Social Mission

The eternal shalom of the eschatological city of God is always coming, though never fully arriving, in the midst of the Church’s pilgrimage on earth to God. Foremost among the sites of its manifestation is the Eucharistic feast, the Church’s foretaste of her eternal beatitude. One of Augustine’s great modern interpreters, Pope Benedict XVI, named the presence of this peace in the Eucharistic celebration in terms of pilgrimage:

If it is true that the sacraments are part of the Church’s pilgrimage through history towards the full manifestation of the victory of the risen Christ, it is also true that, especially in the liturgy of the Eucharist, they give us a real foretaste of the eschatological fulfillment for which every human being and all creation are destined...[O]ur wounded freedom would go astray were it not already able to experience something of that future fulfillment.²³

In this section, I delineate how the Church’s experience of this eschatological shalom of God at the Eucharistic table both creates a particular social and political body (the “mystical body politic of Christ,” as one writer terms it²⁴), as well as provides the criterion for discerning the wounded and broken body of Christ in the world (“the least of these” whom Christ identifies himself most intimately with). The Eucharistic liturgy, I will argue, issues forth in this twofold movement of witness and work, the former which I will detail under the notion of the Church as sacrament of the shalom of God, and the latter which I will develop as a “sacramental politics of solidarity.”

The Church’s Social Witness: Sacrament of the Shalom of God

“The Eucharist makes the Church,” Henri de Lubac famously declared.²⁵ We might specify de Lubac’s claim even more with respect to the social nature of this sacrament: the Eucharist makes the Church a public, social body—the body of Christ—and a sign and symbol of the new humanity in Christ. In this way, the Church, as the body of Christ, is the sacrament of reconciled humanity and eschatological peace. A specifically sacramental understanding of the Church has deep roots in the patristic tradition, but was recovered most systematically by those associated with the twentieth-century *Nouvelle Théologie* movement, most prominently de Lubac, Hans Urs von

²³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* (22 February 2007): 30.

²⁴ Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body Politic of Christ* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

²⁵ Henri Cardinal de Lubac SJ, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons, trans. Gemma Simmonds CJ (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 88 [103].

Balthasar, and Joseph Ratzinger.²⁶ These thinkers, in their different ways, developed the notion of the Church as “universal sacrament of salvation” and “sign and instrument...of communion with God and of unity among all.”²⁷ By this they meant that the Church serves both as a sign of that form of human sociality which God intends for the world, as well as the means to realize this ultimate harmony of human persons through the reconciliation offered by God in Christ.²⁸ The Church, that is, becomes the site in which the eternal shalom of the heavenly city is made concrete and visible, even if only in its partial form. She participates in the eschatological fullness of shalom sacramentally by receiving it as gift in the Eucharistic meal, for the grace conveyed there is one which unites the baptized to each other as they are united in Christ to the divine life.²⁹ The Eucharist, as it assembles a community around the table at which Christ dispenses this grace, gathers a people in peace, binds them in unity and charity, and sends them forth into the world as witnesses to the eschatological peace to which all persons are called.³⁰

So tightly linked is the unity symbolized and enacted in the Eucharistic meal with its concrete manifestation in the Church’s visible witness that St. Paul worried the continuance of socio-economic inequalities and divisions within the Church threatened to undermine the validity of the Eucharistic celebration itself, making it an occasion of divine judgment (1 Cor. 11:17–34). He thus instructed the Corinthians to “discern the body” so that the various divisions, segregations, and dissensions of their larger society were not replicated at the Eucharistic table. Rather than reify such social divisions, the Eucharist is to interrogate, disrupt, and ultimately abolish them, such that the gathered community manifests a unique form of sociality unknown and unavailable to other social bodies. The name Christians give to this sociality is charity, for it is a participation in the life of the triune God, who is the fullness of charity itself (1 John 4:8). Charity, because it is a

²⁶ An account of the sacramental nature of the Church is at the heart of the key documents of the Second Vatican Council, such as *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*. The recovery of the Church as sacrament is not limited to Catholic theology, however, as the notion has become crucial also for contemporary Anglican thought. See the fantastic treatment of this theme in Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2011); Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Rowan Williams, “The Church as Sacrament,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 10:1 (2010), 6–12; and Rowan Williams, “Sacraments of the New Society,” in *On Christian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000).

²⁷ Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 1, 9. *Lumen Gentium* in many ways represents the fruit of the work of Nouvelle theologians like de Lubac, Balthasar, and Ratzinger. The recovery of the Eucharistic character of the Church by these and others began prior to the Second Vatican Council and played a crucial role in the development of ecclesiological teaching at the council. See Paul McPartlan, “Ressourcement, Vatican II, and Eucharistic Ecclesiology,” in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²⁸ As Todd Walatka points out, it was Balthasar who picked up on and developed the eschatological aspect of the Vatican II’s Eucharistic ecclesiology. For Balthasar, the relationship between the Church on earth and the Church in her eschatological fullness is a sacramental relation: “[T]he eschatological nature of the Church as sacrament prevents a simple identification of the church with Christ’s saving grace or with the kingdom to which it points.” Thus, the Church is “teleologically united to the world,” and, in Balthasar’s words, “the Church is running toward God’s future side-by-side with the world, only with more vision and more hope than the latter.” See Todd Walatka, *Von Balthasar and the Option for the Poor: Theodramatics in the Light of Liberation Theology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 201–202.

²⁹ Drawing on the ecclesiology implicit in the historic Anglican Eucharistic liturgies, Paul Avis contends that this eschatological quality of the Church—that “the Church on earth is united with the Church in heaven, (‘sanctorum communio’),” even while imperfectly manifesting that unity in her temporal existence—is a defining feature of Anglican ecclesiology. See Paul Avis, *The Anglican Understanding of the Church: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2000), especially chapter 7, “The Shape of Anglican Ecclesiology.”

³⁰ Paul J. Waddell, “Sharing Peace: Discipline and Trust,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004).

participation in God, is a gift of grace, and one particularly communicated by Christ in the grace of the Holy Eucharist. The public manifestation of charity in the Church's life abolishes those divisions and hostilities that constitute and sustain the social and political life of the earthly city and so positions the Church as an alien society wherever she finds herself. Charity must do this because of the manner in which the Church's citizenship is established. Whereas the social orders of the earthly city construct forms of identity and social belonging upon natural or unnatural qualities, histories, or ideals their citizens may hold in common, only the Church is ordered to a *supernatural* common good which founds her citizenship: the charity of God given by the Holy Spirit.³¹ Though realized fully only eschatologically, this charity is nevertheless present proleptically in the Eucharist, which is why St. Thomas Aquinas named it the "sacrament of charity," which is the "bond of perfection."³² St. John Chrysostom noted the way the Eucharist's breaking forth this form of eschatological charity reconfigured and refashioned political belonging and allegiance:

For when our Lord Jesus lies as a slain Victim, when the Spirit is present, when he Who sits at the right hand of the Father is here, when we have been made children by baptism and are fellow-citizens with those in heaven, when we have our fatherland in heaven and our city and citizenship, when we are only foreigners among earthly things, how can all this fail to be heavenly?³³

For Chrysostom, to be made citizens of heaven does not entail contempt for the world God has made or an otherworldly orientation that has nothing to say about Christian life in the world. Rather, for Chrysostom, the eschatological destiny of the world, manifested in the Eucharist, poses a question to all forms of social organization and belonging the world attempts, even as the Eucharist assembles the Church as a social body and alternative to oppressive and hostile social forms.³⁴ Aidan Kavanagh writes of the socio-political shape of the Eucharistic body that "in a Christian assembly's regular Sunday worship, a restored and re-created world must be so vigorously enfleshed in 'civic' form as to give the lie to any antithetical *civitas*." "The assembly," he continues, "is not a political party or a special interest group. But it cannot forget that by grace and favor it *is* the world made new."³⁵ The Eucharist, because it makes present in sacramental form the eschatological shalom of the heavenly society of charity, makes demands on the way the Church is present in the world as a public body.

A vivid instantiation of St. Paul's teaching about the Eucharist and the Church's life can be

³¹ It is for this reason that Augustine believed true friendship—the fullness and perfection of human sociality—to be available only to those friendships which share God as their ultimate object and to which the Holy Spirit is given. "True friendship," he writes, "is not possible unless you bond together those who cleave to one another by the love which 'is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us'" (*Conf.* IV.7). For Augustine, true friendship thus belongs to the domain of grace, and thus, as James McEvoy puts it, "a matter always of three persons and not simply two human partners." See James McEvoy, "*Anima una et cor unum*: Friendship and Spiritual Unity in Augustine," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 53 (1986), 80.

³² St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 73, a. 3, ad 3.

³³ St. John Chrysostom, *Heb. Hom.*, XIV, 1, 2. Quoted in Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre Press, 1945), 252. See also Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

³⁴ It must be noted how often the Church does *not* accomplish this, however, and simply reproduces the hostilities, exclusions, and alienations of the world. At her worst, the Church serves not only to mimic such relations, but as a chief instrument of their social reproduction and maintenance. One thinks, for instance, of the integral role Christian theology and preaching played in the formation of racial ideologies and a slaveholding nation [see, for instance, Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010)]. When this is so, the Church refuses the work of the Spirit in applying the effects of grace to the Church's life.

³⁵ Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1984), 175.

observed in the ministry of Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador during the brutal regime of El Salvador's military government during the late 1970s. Romero found himself faced with a repressive state apparatus, joined with paramilitary forces and death squads, that considered the Church, and especially those leaders within it who called for social and economic justice and defended the dignity of the poor, a threat to its governance. Romero's response was to turn to the Eucharist, where he discovered a form of social solidarity, grounded in the catholicity and peace it embodied, that was stronger than any form of armed resistance. In one instance, a few years before his own assassination by a paramilitary gunman while celebrating mass, Romero called for a single Eucharistic celebration for all Catholics in the Archdiocese on a Sunday morning. There would be only one Eucharist celebrated in San Salvador that day, forcing rich and peasant congregants of parishes in wealthy and poor neighborhoods to worship as one body in one place. The occasion was the funeral Mass of Rutilio Grande, a Salvadoran Jesuit priest, friend of Romero's, and fierce prophet against the injustices of the Salvadoran state, who was murdered at the hands of a member of the Salvadoran security forces. Grande had preached the subversive counter-politics of the Eucharist, which he called "the great memorial of our redemption: a table shared in brotherhood, where all have their position and place... This is the love of a communion of sisters and brother that smashes and casts to the earth every sort of barrier and prejudice and that one day will overcome hatred itself."³⁶ Grande's continual calls for the rectifying of injustices and the ceasing of the rich's war against the poor led to his martyrdom. Romero's response to Grande's killing was to call the whole Church to solidarity in repentance, worship, and prayer. Though the Salvadoran elite reacted in indignation to the scandal of being forced into pews with peasants, especially in the midst of an unfolding class war, Romero insisted on the Church's visible unity around the Eucharistic table, which disrupts and upsets the social, political, and economic divisions that mark the social order. Romero, William Cavanaugh notes,

was drawing on the power of the Eucharist to collapse the spatial barriers separating the rich and the poor, not by surveying the expanse of the Church and declaring it universal and united, but by gathering the faithful in one particular location around the altar, and realizing the heavenly universal *Catholica* in one place, at one moment, on earth.³⁷

Romero saw that the Eucharist made present, in a sacramental form, that shalom of the eternal city of God in such a way as to reshape and refashion the Church as a social body. In his case, as is often the case, the social form the Eucharist calls the Church to embody was radically at odds with the surrounding social and political arrangement. When this is the case the Church is called to witness, in a concrete, visible, and social form, an alternative form of life together marked by solidarity, mutuality, and peace.

The Church's Social Work: A Sacramental Politics of Solidarity

The Church is called not only to witness to this peace, however. The vocation of witnessing to the new humanity in Christ, of being the sacrament of the eternal shalom of God, is the first of a double-movement of the Church's social witness and work. If this first movement of witness is an *inward* one, insofar as the Eucharist draws the Church to her center in Christ, then the second movement of social work is an *outward* one into the world. This outward movement—what I will

³⁶ Rutilio Grande, quoted in William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism* (New York: T&T Clark, 2002), 122.

³⁷ *Ibid.* See also, James R. Brockman, *Oscar Romero: A Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 9–18.

call a “sacramental politics of solidarity”³⁸—is closely linked to the Church’s Eucharistic worship. This is so for at least two reasons. First, the Church’s social engagement is an aspect of her mission, and mission is the essential response to meeting Christ in the Eucharistic feast and the necessary compliment to worship. This is perhaps nowhere clearer than in the concluding words of the Eucharistic liturgy: the dismissal. “Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit,” and other similar formulations of the dismissal, make clear that Eucharistic worship issues forth in mission to the world. Indeed, the intimate relation between Eucharist and mission is implied in the term “Mass” itself.³⁹ The grace of the Holy Eucharist fuels and funds the Church’s missionary work which, as John Stott has so eloquently maintained, consists in a unified activity of evangelism and social action.⁴⁰ To separate one from the other not only distorts each but obscures Christ’s own proclamation of the good news, which promises the forgiveness of sins and seeks the liberation of those oppressed by sin in all its forms. To separate the proclamation of forgiveness from the gospel’s restoration of the whole person is to divorce the spiritual and the material, rendering the gospel a Gnostic and otherworldly matter. St. Luke’s Gospel records the beginning of Jesus’s ministry in his programmatic proclamation at Nazareth, which reveals the unified spiritual and social dimensions of the gospel proclamation:

He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news (*euangelisasthai*) to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:16b–21)

The words Jesus quotes here from the book of Isaiah, and his assertion that the prophet’s words are being fulfilled in his own person, prefigure the nature of Jesus’s teaching ministry, healings and miracles, and proclamation of the good news of his kingdom in the Gospel of Luke, wherein the

³⁸ I use the term “politics” here in a very general sense to mean affairs and activities relating to public life and the structuring of a common life. Part of what I wish to challenge in what follows is the assumption that “politics” simply belongs to the activities of statecraft or the civic obligations of voting. Instead, following Bernard Crick’s understanding of politics as “ethics done in public,” I will re-center the Church’s social work and witness as a kind of politics—one resistant to easy identifications with partisan programs.

³⁹ As John Stott notes of the traditional Latin dismissal, “*Ita, missa est*” (literally, “Go, she—meaning you, the Church—has been sent”), from which the title “Mass” is taken, “In polite English it might be rendered, ‘Now you are dismissed.’ In more blunt language it could be just, ‘Get out!’—out into the world which God made and God-like beings inhabit, the world into which Christ came and into which he now sends us” (John Stott, *Human Rights and Human Wrongs: Major Issues for a New Century* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999], 43). Likewise, Pope Benedict XVI writes, “These words help us to grasp the relationship between the Mass just celebrated and the mission of Christians in the world. In antiquity, *missa* simply meant ‘dismissal.’ However in Christian usage it gradually took on a deeper meaning. The word ‘dismissal’ has come to imply ‘mission.’ These few words succinctly express the missionary nature of the Church” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* [22 February 2007]: 51).

⁴⁰ John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1975), 23.

gospel of the forgiveness of sins and the redemption of the world is shown to have special concern for the poor and oppressed. For Jesus, mission—his own and the Church’s—consists in the unified activity of evangelical proclamation of the good news and the practical seeking of justice and peace for those the gospel seeks to transform.

Second, the outward movement of the Church into the world must necessarily follow from her inward movement toward Christ in the Eucharist because the Church encounters the crucified and resurrected body of Christ in the Eucharist and so becomes attuned also to the crucified bodies of the wounded and afflicted in the world. The Lord Jesus clearly announced his abiding presence with these persons and thus calls the Church to attend to their suffering as a way of attending to him. The key teaching of Jesus on this matter comes from Matthew 25:

Then the king will say to those at his right hand... “[F]or I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Mat. 25:34–40)

For St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Jesus’s words in this passage identify the Church’s care for the poor, afflicted, and oppressed as a kind of sacramental work, for Jesus unites himself to “the least of these,” such that those who care for these persons care for the afflicted body of Christ himself. Thus, Gregory of Nyssa writes of the poor and afflicted in a homily given during a great famine in Cappadocia in the late 360s:

The Lord in His Goodness has given them His own countenance (*prosopon*) in order that it might cause the hard-hearted, those who hate the poor, to blush with shame, just as those being robbed thrust before their attackers images of their king [on coinage] to shame the enemy with the appearance of the ruler.⁴¹

For Gregory, the afflicted bear Christ’s presence in a way similar to, but not identical with, the way in which the Eucharist bears the presence of Christ. According to Gregory, the afflicted bear Christ’s “prosoptic” presence—they “bear the countenance (*prosopon*) of the Savior,” he writes,⁴² by which he means to signal the way in which the face of Christ can be discerned in the face of the poor, oppressed, and afflicted.⁴³ Similar to both the Eucharist and icons, but ultimately unique and different from both, the joining of Christ to the suffering peoples of the earth means the Church’s care for the afflicted is “sacramental” in the broad sense of that term. It is a ministry in which those who suffer with the suffering, care for the afflicted, and stand in solidarity with the poor encounter

⁴¹ Gregory of Nyssa, “On Good Works,” in Susan Holman, *The Hungry Are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 195.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Prosopon* has a wide range of meanings, including face, person, representation, character, countenance, and mask. Here, and in what follows, I am indebted to the work of Natalie Carnes. See the discussions in Natalie Carnes, *Image and Presence: A Christological Reflection on Iconoclasm and Iconophilia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 132–137; and Natalie Carnes, *Beauty: A Theological Engagement with Gregory of Nyssa* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), 152–162.

the Christ who was poor and afflicted, suffering death for our sake. A sacramental politics of solidarity is thus rooted in the meaning of the incarnation itself, for it understands this event as the Son of God's taking on the *particular* flesh of a marginal Jewish man, born under Roman occupation—the Son's "taking the form of a slave" (Phil. 2:7). The incarnation entails the Son's inhabiting the position of oppression, in order to show forth divine solidarity with the suffering, afflicted, and oppressed of humanity. As Martin Hengel wrote, "In the person and fate of the one man Jesus of Nazareth this saving solidarity of God" with the oppressed is "given its historical and physical form."⁴⁴ In the incarnation, that is, God unites the divine life to what Franz Fanon called "the wretched of the earth," in order to bring salvation to the poor, suffering, oppressed, and afflicted, and thus to the whole human race. The incarnation is at the center of the Church's social work and witness in the world because it hallows the spaces of the afflicted and oppressed as sites of God's redeeming work of freedom. In this way, a sacramental politics of solidarity continues a central line of Anglican social thought from F.D. Maurice to B.F. Westcott to William Temple, which sees the incarnation as central to the Church's social task.⁴⁵

Much more will be said in the following section about how exactly the Church engages in and carries out this sacramental politics of solidarity, where I will focus on the notions of justice and mercy as both virtues and modes of social engagement. For now, it is important simply to appreciate the sacramental character of this work and the way it is intimately joined to the Church's worship and assembly as a Eucharistic body. In the Eucharist, the Church encounters the broken body and shed blood of the crucified Christ. She is then sent out to attend to and care for the broken and afflicted bodies of the world. The former informs the vision and virtue necessary to carry out the latter. The Eucharist, in this outward movement towards the afflicted, shapes the way the Church understands the suffering bodies she sees and touches. They are bodies with which Christ has identified himself with, and in touching, holding, and healing them, the Church does unto Christ himself.

Understanding one's care and advocacy for, tending to, suffering with, and struggling alongside the vulnerable creatures of God in these sacramental terms makes a profound difference for how such work is carried out in practical terms. First of all, a social theology framed by such a sacramental understanding of the work of the Church with and on behalf of the afflicted will be fundamentally *personalist*.⁴⁶ This is to say, it will be grounded in an affirmation and recognition of the dignity of all persons, not simply because of their created status as bearers of the divine image but also because of the dignity granted them by Christ's incarnation. In such a personalist vision, the Church must see the poor and afflicted not as "means" to any social program or vision of society, but as "ends" in themselves, deserving of care, assistance, friendship, and those resources necessary for their flourishing, simply by virtue of their being persons. Second, an account of the Church's work and witness that is sacramentally construed will prioritize modes of being and working *with* the least of these just as much as working *for* them. The importance of dwelling with the poor, oppressed, suffering, and afflicted arises from the simple fact that Christians are with Jesus when they are with these persons. Contemporary Anglican thought has rightly emphasized the importance of a sacramental vision of the world which involves one in the discernment of God's

⁴⁴ Martin Hengel, "Crucifixion," in *The Cross of the Son of God*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1986), 180.

⁴⁵ See especially, William Temple, *Christianity and the Social Order* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1942).

⁴⁶ I mean to use the term "personalism" in its broadest sense, not simply in the manner used by "Thomistic personalism," which, though helpful, often entails an anthropocentrism that goes beyond simply noting the *unique* status of human persons in creation, and unfortunately develops this fact in a hierarchical manner that undermines the human's integral relation to non-human animals and the created order.

presence in all things.⁴⁷ What I am terming a sacramental politics of solidarity attempts to further develop this theme, identifying the least of these as persons with whom Christ has especially identified himself and called his followers to attend to as a form of loving, serving, and worshipping him. Put simply, Christian disciples should be rushing to the places where the poor, suffering, and oppressed reside, simply because Christians know that Christ will be present in those places. Christ's partiality for the plight of the poor and oppressed is part of what theologians have intended to convey in the notion of the "preferential option for the poor."⁴⁸ By this, Christians have understood the justice and love of God to involve a "nonexclusive partiality" toward the plight of victims of oppression and suffering, and, precisely because of this, a Christian duty to "opt" for their care, flourishing, and freedom.⁴⁹

Prioritizing modes of being and working *with*, rather than simply *for*, the least of these is important for two additional reasons. First, a Church whose work of seeking the freedom and flourishing of the poor and oppressed is grounded in a prior shared life with them will guard against such work becoming paternalistic and simply another form of domination. A shared life with the afflicted generates an understanding of what burdens and threats such persons face, and thus what such persons truly need. It leads the Church to listen to their concerns, rather than presume to know the nature of their needs. Moreover, rooting the Church's work for and on behalf of the afflicted in an ongoing shared life with them leads the Church to understand her work of accruing and distributing the necessary resources for their flourishing to be not simply a "handout" or a philanthropic gift from the powerful to the powerless. Rather such labor is seen as the Church's collective work of caring for all her members. Such a vision, however, assumes an understanding of the poor and oppressed as *part of* the body of Christ, not alien to her. Though the Church is often tempted to consider the poor and oppressed as categories of persons "out there," Christ's teaching that "the least of these" belong to him suggests otherwise. The Church's call to belong to the poor, to be a Church *of* the poor, is constitutive of her very identity. Second, in order for work with and on behalf of the poor and oppressed to be truly Christian, it must be rooted in a profound *solidarity* with them, for this is the mode in which God's mission in Jesus Christ to be with and for God's people occurs. As Sam Wells identifies, the life of Jesus exhibits precisely this dynamic, for Christ's work of reconciliation in the cross and resurrection was continuous with, and the culmination of, a life of solidarity with humanity. Christ's "working for" humanity's salvation—his atoning and reconciling work—and his "working with" them—his calling them to discipleship and empowering them for the work of mission and ministry—was rooted in "the thirty years in Nazareth" he spent "*being with us*."⁵⁰ A Church whose social work and witness is grounded in the central reality of the incarnation must ensure that her important *work for* the poor and oppressed—advocacy, mercy, and charity—as well as her even more essential *work with* them—empowerment and seeking justice in partnership with them—is grounded in an enduring *being with* them in solidarity and friendship. Few people have understood the dangers of pursuing social justice apart

⁴⁷ See, for instance, Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2011); Gerald R. McDermott, *Everyday Glory: The Revelation of God in All of Reality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018).

⁴⁸ On the history and place of this term in Christian social ethics, see *The Option for the Poor in Christian Theology*, ed. Daniel G. Groody (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); and John O'Brien, *Theology and the Option for the Poor* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992). For a study of the Scriptural roots of the theme, see Norbert Lohfink SJ, *Option for the Poor: The Basic Principle of Liberation Theology in the Light of the Bible*, ed. Duane L. Christensen, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Berkeley, CA: BIBAL, 1987).

⁴⁹ Walatka, *Von Balthasar and the Option for the Poor*, 13.

⁵⁰ Samuel Wells and Marcia A. Owen, *Living Without Enemies: Being Present in the Midst of Violence* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 42.

from this embodied solidarity better than the community organizer Saul Alinsky. It was out of frustration with paternalist forms of charity that kept the poor dependent and powerless that Alinsky coined his famous principle of organizing: “Never do for others what they can do for themselves.”⁵¹ The work of solidarity is fundamentally about empowering the poor and oppressed to act for themselves, to discover agency, and to participate fully in our common life. A sacramental politics of solidarity seeks to empower the powerless because it sees their unrealized and frustrated capacities to contribute to the common good to be a denial of the dignity Christ bestows upon them by virtue of his incarnation. It thus seeks not simply the alleviation of their suffering, but the enabling of their full contribution to their societies and communities. A sacramental politics of solidarity is judged by the simple principle that the well-being and flourishing of a community—including that community called the Church—is judged by the well-being and flourishing of those within it who are the least well off. Solidarity names the virtue and activity of living into this reality. A sacramentally construed account of this solidarity understands the work of being with, working with, and working for the poor and oppressed as sacred, in so far as Christ has promised his presence in it.

III. Working Toward the End: The Church’s Praxis of Justice and Mercy

Thus far, I have sketched the outlines of a social theology within which the Church might locate her varying and diverse forms of social work and witness. I have shown how the Church’s eschatological orientation toward and pilgrimage to the eternal shalom of God shapes how the Church considers her social activities on this side of eternity. I have also shown how this shalom breaks forth from eternity into the present in the sacrament of the Eucharist, gathering the Church into a public body that witnesses to God’s eternal peace in her concrete life. The Eucharist, I have argued, also sends the Church out into the world to embody a sacramental politics of solidarity, wherein the poor, oppressed, afflicted, and marginalized are tended to as persons with whom Christ has made himself especially present, and thus persons deserving of freedom and flourishing. This theological sketch has attempted to provide a frame within which Christians might consider their individual and collective ministries and missions of caring for the least of these with whom Christ has identified. In what follows, I move from this larger theological frame to an analytical consideration of two central theological notions: justice and mercy. I do so primarily through the work of St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the Christian tradition’s most careful and astute writers on the subjects. Thomas’s work on justice and mercy represents a profound synthesis of the teachings of Sacred Scripture with the analytical precision of the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition, and it stands as one of the most robust and percipient treatments of justice and mercy in the Christian theological tradition. For Thomas, justice and mercy are principal modes in which Christians care for and tend to the suffering and afflicted. They are also twin virtues that must always be held together, each defining and directing the other. “Justice and mercy,” Thomas explains, “are so united, that the one ought to be mingled with the other; justice without mercy is cruelty; mercy without justice, profusion.”⁵² Defining what exactly justice and mercy designate and identify is important, for these terms are frequently invoked in discussions around social issues and appealed to in arguments about contentious subjects of social life with little clarity about their meaning. The

⁵¹ Saul Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989). See also, Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

⁵² Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels Collected out of the Works of the Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. John Henry Newman (London: Saint Austin Press, 1997), 152.

purpose of the analytical work in this section is to carefully describe and delineate what Christians mean when they use these concepts. Doing so will aid Christians in their understanding of the nature of the work God has given them to do and how best to carry out such work in faithfulness to God and God's kingdom.

Justice

One of the ways Christians have historically tried to define and understand the nature of justice is by delineating its varying senses and types. This has often been achieved by distinguishing between justice in its "general" sense and justice in its "particular" sense, a distinction I employ in what follows. Regarding justice in its general sense, I will consider two aspects: justice as a divine attribute and justice as a human virtue. In considering justice in its particular sense, I will examine two types of justice: commutative and distributive. Finally, I will offer a word on the notion of "social justice."

1. Justice as Divine Attribute

Justice is at the heart of God's identity. Sacred Scripture clearly teaches that the God of Israel, made known to us in Jesus Christ, is a just God. God's justice is manifested throughout Sacred Scripture in manifold forms. God's deeds are righteous (Ps. 65:5; 145:17); God faithfully carries out promises and upholds God's covenant (Is. 61:8); God liberates the oppressed (Ps. 103:6), judges the oppressor (Mal. 3:5), and upholds the cause of the poor and vulnerable (Ps. 140:12). In short, insofar as God carries out God's will on earth, this can be said to be justice. Justice, as it applies to God, can thus be understood by examination of God's just actions. Yet according to St. Thomas Aquinas, justice does not simply describe God's actions in history; it names an attribute of the divine essence. God *is* just. This is the case not because God is fair in God's transactions and exchanges with equals—what we will soon examine as *commutative* justice—but rather because God "gives to all existing things what is proper to the condition of each" and "preserves the nature of each in the order and with the powers that properly belong to it."⁵³ Justice belongs to God in this sense, and thus more closely resembles *distributive* justice, to be considered below. This is so, first of all, because the Trinity is a perfect mutuality of persons and in the Trinitarian life God "renders to Himself what is due to Himself" (*ST I*, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3). Secondly, God's relation to creation is one of justice because, as Thomas puts it, "He gives to each thing what is due to it by its nature and condition." In this sense, what is due to creatures in the order of justice is not something imposed upon God by creatures; rather, because God is the creator and cause of all things, God's giving to creatures their due is "according to the divine wisdom" of the Creator. Thomas continues, "And although God in this way pays each thing its due, yet He Himself is not the debtor, since He is not directed to other things, but rather other things to Him" (*ST I*, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3). It is appropriate, because of this fact, to consider God's justice the "the fitting accompaniment of His goodness" (*ST I*, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3). Justice, as Thomas understands it, belongs to the divine essence, and, consequently, "justice must exist in all God's works" (*ST I*, q. 21, a. 4).

2. Justice as Human Virtue

Understanding the way in which justice is first of all an attribute of God's being is critical for coming to understand the nature and meaning of justice as a human virtue. For Thomas, the human virtue of justice takes a shape similar to its divinely perfected form, existing in a relationship of analogy. The virtue of justice, he writes, is "a habit whereby a man renders to each one his due

⁵³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 21, a. 1. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *ST*.

by a constant and perpetual will” (*ST II-II*, q. 58, a. 1). What is due to persons can take the form of both things and actions, owed by both other individuals and the social whole. But determining what persons are owed—that is, what justice entails—requires a correlative account of *right*. Justice presupposes right. This is precisely why Thomas addresses the matter of right in the *Summa* before the entailments of justice. As he puts it elsewhere, “If the act of justice is to give each man his due, then the act of justice is preceded by the act whereby something become his due.”⁵⁴ For Thomas, this act whereby human persons acquire rights is creation. In other words, for Thomas it is the human person’s status as creature of God that grounds her claim to certain rights. These rights are truly hers, even while they are grounded in a reality apart from her, and in this way Thomas differs from post-Enlightenment writers of the classical liberal tradition.⁵⁵ It is also for this reason that Thomas says the proper “object” of the virtue of justice is “the Just” (*ius*), for in acting justly a person intends the right ordering of creation (*ST II-II*, q. 58, a. 1). Furthermore, two categories of right relate to this fundamental principle of rights being grounded in creation. First, natural rights (*ius natural*) are those rights which belong to persons by virtue of their nature (*ex ipsa natura rei*) and are thus revealed in the natural law.⁵⁶ Second, certain “positive” rights are derivative of natural rights, but not directly grounded in the particular nature of persons. These rights are due to persons on the basis of human convention, through agreements, laws, customs, promises, etc. The fulfilling of rights of this kind, Thomas explains, are also binding on persons and communities insofar as they demand the fulfilling of certain bonds and promises, unless they are directly “contrary to natural right,” in which case “the human will cannot make it just.”⁵⁷

But what *particular* rights do persons possess by nature? For Thomas, the answer to this question is directly tied to his account of the nature of human persons—their composition and teleological orientation toward beatitude. Ordered to the end of friendship with and contemplation of God, Thomas believes basic natural rights to food, drink, shelter, friendship, knowledge, etc. are necessary for persons to pursue their natural fulfillment as human creatures. A full delineation and exposition of the various rights human persons possess by virtue of their being creatures, however, is not my intention here. What is of concern here in understanding the *virtue* of justice is not so much the particular rights one is obligated to see fulfilled for others, but rather the formal structure which grounds and frames persons’ exercising the virtue of justice. In the most general terms, the just person habitually offers to others what is their due. While I have thus far explained the latter portion of this formulation (how and why persons are owed certain things—namely by “right”), a word must also be said about what makes the just person *virtuous*, as opposed to simply dutiful. It is true that, for Thomas, justice is primarily concerned with external actions. While other virtues like prudence and temperance have the moral agent herself as their primary subject matter, justice is primarily concerned with this person’s relations to *others*. Therefore, justice is not about individual persons’ obedience to an abstract law or command, but rather what they owe to other persons. As such, justice privileges actions over internal dispositions as its locus of operation. Thomas writes that “in the realm of what is just or unjust, what man does externally is the main point at issue.”⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, 2.28. Quoted in Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 45. Much of my account of justice as a virtue follows Pieper’s discussion of justice in this book.

⁵⁵ See, for instance, UN General Assembly, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (Paris, 1948), which grounds human rights in the simple fact of being human—which is to say, human rights are self-evident. The obvious problems with this approach appear when vast disagreement surfaces as to which rights are self-evident.

⁵⁶ Pieper, *Cardinal Virtues*, 48.

⁵⁷ *ST II-II*, q. 57, a. 2, ad 2. Quoted in Pieper, *Cardinal Virtues*, 48.

⁵⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, 5, 1. Quoted in Pieper, *Cardinal Virtues*, 60.

Likewise, Josef Pieper writes, “‘The other person’ is not affected by my subjective disposition, by what I intend, think, feel, or will, but only what I do. Only by an external act will the other receive what is *his*, his due.”⁵⁹ Nevertheless, while the principal concern of justice as a descriptive category is to distinguish certain just actions from other unjust actions, to *be* just—that is, to have justice as a virtue—does necessitate certain internal qualities as well. The particular manner in which just actions are carried out, Thomas explains, matters for counting a person just. The truly virtuous person, he explains, performs virtuous actions “with promptitude and pleasure” (*ST* I-II, q. 107, a. 4), and this is true of the just person, as well. The just person loves justice itself, for God is just, and because of this disposition she acts with reverence toward God. Moreover, because virtue identifies an “operative habit of the soul,” to use Thomas’s language, the just person is one whose pattern of life is marked by a perpetual rendering unto others what is their due. In other words, the just person does not simply perform just deeds spontaneously or episodically, but *lives a just life*. Justice, in this sense, is the true and proper condition for the realization of justice in social life, for the establishment of the *conditions* of justice without the formation of *just people* is not justice at all.

3. Commutative Justice

The above delineation of justice as a human virtue and its analogical relation to divine justice describes what I have called justice in its “general” sense. There is a second sense in which justice may be used, however—what may be called “particular” justice and which refers not primarily to the habits, passions, and dispositions of individual persons, but to the structures of a community’s social life and the sphere of public action.⁶⁰ In other words, as Jean Porter puts it, “particular justice is oriented towards others rather than oneself, and concerns actions rather than passions.”⁶¹ Regarding this particular sense of justice, which governs the relations between persons in social life and the relation of the social whole to particular individuals, two important types of justice must be distinguished: commutative and distributive justice. Regarding the first, commutative justice governs the realm of human interaction wherein persons and institutions make exchanges with one another—what Thomas refers to as “mutual dealings between two persons” (*ST* II-II, q. 61, a. 1). Commutative justice ensures that such exchanges are regulated by fairness, reciprocity, and a respect for the rights of all parties. As David Hollenbach puts it, commutative justice “calls for equivalence in what is gained and lost on both sides of an exchange,” so that such exchanges can rightly be said to be free and mutual.⁶² Because it deals primarily with exchanges between individuals or institutions, commutative justice is often associated with the economic sphere, though it is not exhausted by it. The ethics of labor and wages, for instance, is a matter of commutative justice.⁶³ Against race-to-the-bottom strategies for determining the wage owed to workers, wherein employers seek to pay the least amount possible to their laborers in exchange for their labor-power, commutative justice requires employers to remunerate a just wage in

⁵⁹ Josef Pieper, *Cardinal Virtues*, 60.

⁶⁰ On the difference between general and particular justice in Thomas, see Jean Porter, “The Virtue of Justice (IIa IIae, qq. 58–122),” in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 272–286.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² David Hollenbach, SJ, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 193.

⁶³ Though, it should be noted, the just wage also belongs to the domain of *distributive* justice, insofar as the wage contracts between labor and capital do not exist in the abstract, but within particular social contexts. Those who give wages have obligations not simply to individual workers, but also to their societies as a whole. Thus, a just wage is determined not simply by labor’s free choice to accept a wage—and the extent of this freedom is a complex matter itself—but also by whether or not such a wage contributes to the common good of a society. On these matters, see John A. Ryan, *A Living Wage: Its Ethical and Economic Aspects* (New York: MacMillan, 1920).

accordance with the full value of the labor performed. Certainly, determining the nature of labor's value is a disputed matter among political economists,⁶⁴ but what is absolute is the demand which justice places upon such an exchange of labor for wages. This demand is that a just wage be determined not solely by profit motives, but more determinatively by the value of labor itself and its just recompense. In short, such exchanges must be governed by commutative justice. Labor and wages are just one example of matters that fall within the domain of commutative justice. One might consider issues of trade and prices, restitutions after harm, and various contractual relations in similar terms.

4. Distributive Justice

If commutative justice concerns what individuals owe to one another, distributive justice refers to what societies as wholes owe to individuals—how the common goods of a social body are justly distributed. Distributive justice governs how the collective benefits and burdens of a society are rightly and justly distributed among that society's members.⁶⁵ According to Thomas, such distribution should be determined proportionately according to each member's contributions and needs (*ST II-II*, q. 61, a. 2). First and foremost, what is owed to individuals by their societies are those goods necessary for them to live a minimally decent life—the provision of basic needs, education, healthcare, basic freedoms, etc. This principle that just distribution of societies' material goods should, at minimum, provide for the basic needs of all persons is a central theme for nearly every early Christian writer on the subject of wealth and poverty. For such thinkers, the possibility that wealthy persons might live in luxury while others lacked basic necessities was a grave sin and an inexcusable evil.⁶⁶ The goods of the earth and the resources produced through cultivating these goods were first and foremost to be used to meet the basic needs of all persons, and only afterward available for other forms of enjoyment. Patristic thinking on this matter was grounded not simply in the New Testament's teaching regarding the poor (e.g. Luke 3:11; James 2:14–17), but also in the people of Israel's structuring of provision for the poor and needy in their common life and in the legal mechanisms ensuring this provision. Deuteronomy 14, the chief text defining the people of Israel's obligations for annual tithes, delineates two types of tithes for alternating years in a seven-year cycle.⁶⁷ The first is a tithe given to the temple and consumed by its donor and his family in Jerusalem during festival days. The second, however, is a tithe not made to Jerusalem but reserved for local distribution to the poor:

[Y]ou shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for that year, and store it within your towns; the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake. (14:28–29)

⁶⁴ The longstanding dispute being between those who advocate a “labor theory of value,” wherein the value of labor is an objective quality, and those who locate labor's value in subjective matters, such as “market value.”

⁶⁵ See Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (15 May 1891): 33.

⁶⁶ On this theme, see such homilies as Clement of Alexandria's “Who is the Rich Man that Shall be Saved?”; Basil the Great's “I Will Tear Down My Barns”; Gregory of Nazianzus's “On the Love of the Poor”; and Gregory of Nyssa's “On Good Works” and “On the Saying, ‘Whoever Has Done It to One of These Has Done It to Me.’” For patristic readings on the theme, see *Wealth and Poverty in Early Christianity*, ed. Helen Rhee (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017). See also Helen Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich: Wealth, Poverty, and Early Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), and *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, ed. Susan R. Holman (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

⁶⁷ On these redistributive policies in ancient Israel, see Gary A. Anderson, *Charity: The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 26–28.

For Israel, creation itself was considered a common gift intended by God for the provision of all persons within Israel's midst. Creation was understood to be a common good to be justly distributed. Thus, in addition to practices of Sabbath and Jubilee which structured the social and economic life of God's people, Israel's legal code required tithes to be distributed to the poor and those without property in order to maintain a just common life.⁶⁸ This biblical theology of creation, and its implications for distributive justice, profoundly shaped the Patristic theological imaginary around matters of justice.

Secondly, distributive justice also entails that societies grant access to and distribute proportionately their common goods. Clean water, education, public transportation, use of public property, access to healthcare and legal systems, etc. are goods held in common by members of society and thus must be so positioned as to allow all persons to access them. Importantly, distributive justice does not necessarily entail the division of society's goods be done *equally*—that is, with a kind of blind horizontal equity. Rather, distributive justice directs proper distribution according to persons' needs and vulnerabilities. For instance, societies allocate funds for public housing and housing assistance not to all equally but to those in need. In cases like these, distributive justice seeks to distribute such goods *disproportionately*—that is, to those in need rather than equally to all. Yet, the benefits of such provision for persons' basic needs, like housing, are not limited to those persons alone, for the social whole benefits from these persons' needs being met. Just distribution of common goods enables a more active and participatory citizenry and empowers a greater number of persons to contribute to and participate in a community's economic, cultural, and social life. In this way, distributive justice aims to allocate a society's basic goods and common goods such that all have their basic needs met and are able to contribute to the common good.

5. Social Justice

A final word should be said regarding “social justice.” In contemporary parlance this term is either used to refer to what has been described above as distributive justice, or it is used in a largely general sense to refer to all aspects of justice having to do with the social order. In its primary and original sense, however, social justice refers to something much more particular and often neglected in popular discourse. Social justice refers specifically to what individuals owe to the common good, and in this way it constitutes the necessary complement to distributive justice. Whereas the latter refers to the relation of obligation running from whole (society) to part (individuals), social justice refers to how the parts relate to the whole. Because an essential characteristic of human flourishing is that persons meaningfully participate in their various communities and contribute to their common good, social justice names this relation of persons to societies and the necessary conditions for their full participation in them.

This definition of social justice has its roots in what Thomas Aquinas called “legal justice” (*iustitia legalis*), wherein “legal” possesses a far broader meaning than its contemporary usage. “The virtue of a good citizen,” Thomas writes, “is [*iustitia legalis*], whereby the person is directed to the common good” (*ST II-II*, q. 58, a. 6). The modern articulation of social justice in Christian social ethics, which follows Thomas's line of thought here, was perhaps most prominently introduced by

⁶⁸ One of the most important contemporary initiatives to consider the practical significance of Old Testament teachings on money and economy is the UK-based evangelical group the Jubilee Centre (<http://www.jubilee-centre.org>), which seeks to apply the “relationalism” of Old Testament ethics to questions of labor, finance, property, welfare, the family, environment, criminal justice, and more.

Pope Pius XI's *Quadragesimo anno*.⁶⁹ For Pius, and for much of Christian social ethics since, both Catholic and Protestant, social justice is the primary principal which directs the purpose and behavior of social institutions, associations, and citizens. That is, social justice holds persons and institutions responsible to act for the common good, rather than merely competitively with others or for the sake of self-interest alone. A society's persons and associations have, in other words, a fundamental relation of obligation to the common good.⁷⁰ Indeed, their own welfare and good is dependent on their ability to participate in the common good. Social justice, as a species and type of justice, concerns this responsibility for the common good.

Social justice also has a critical second aspect, however. Persons and associations can only contribute to and provide for the common good insofar as they possess the agency and capacity to do so. This means that social justice also concerns the necessary conditions which allow persons to fully participate in their societies. Such necessary conditions include political freedom, economic security, dignified and decent work, stable and flourishing families, and other such preconditions for a prospering social life. In this way, the common good is actually dependent on social justice, just as social justice is dependent on, and in a reciprocal relation with, distributive justice. For the common good to be realized, all persons in a society must be able to render what is due to the common good; to render what is due to the common good, persons must receive what is *their due* from society and have their basic needs met; and individuals have their basic needs met and receive their just due when a society rightly fulfills its obligations of distributive justice. The aim of social justice is thus participation in a society's pursuit of the common good, and this is a profoundly theological matter. A principal commitment of Anglican social thought is that human beings are fundamentally social beings, created for community and destined for flourishing within it.⁷¹ As Anna Rowlands explains, "A Christian concern for participation in community (social justice) as the basis of well-being" is rooted in "a Christian account of what it is to be human."⁷² Just social orders are those which properly account for this reality by enabling all persons, even the most disadvantaged, to meaningfully participate in and belong to their communities—on a political, social, cultural, and economic level.

The intention of this explication of the various senses of justice is to sketch a framework within which Christians, especially those engaged in ministries of justice-seeking, might judge how best to address dilemmas and concerns of social life. Whether a social ill is determined to be a matter belonging to the order of justice (instead of, say, the order of charity) will have profound implications for the way such an ill is addressed. For instance, matters belonging to justice are properly within the domain of government and will involve law, public policy, authority, even compulsion, while matters determined to belong to the order of charity by definition cannot be coercively enforced and so will be addressed through other social bodies and means. Moreover, identifying which type of justice a particular social dilemma belongs to will also profoundly shape the way it is addressed. Returning to the example of the just wage exemplifies this. If the right to a

⁶⁹ Pius XI, *Quadragesimo anno* [15 May 1931]. See also Christine Firer Hinze, "Quadragesimo anno," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth Himes et al. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 151–174.

⁷⁰ On the relation of social justice to the common good, see Thomas Hughson SJ, "Social Justice and the Common Good: What Are They For?" in *Catholic Social Teaching in Global Perspective*, ed. Daniel McDonald (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 1–35.

⁷¹ See especially, Temple, *Christianity and Social Order*, 64–69.

⁷² Anna Rowlands, "Fraternal Traditions: Anglican Social Theology and Catholic Social Teaching in a British Context," in *Anglican Social Theology: Renewing the Vision Today*, ed. Malcolm Brown (London: Church House Publishing, 2014), 141.

just living wage is determined to be simply a matter of communicative justice between employers and labor, then societies will most likely seek to satisfy wage justice through labor laws, securing a minimum wage, and empowering unions. If, however, the right to a living wage is determined to be a matter of distributive justice, then societies will be more inclined to satisfy this right through guaranteed employment, wealth redistribution strategies, and even universal basic income policies. Understanding the various senses of justice and their requirements largely determines the strategies and policies governing how such social matters are addressed. For Christians engaged in the work of seeking justice, a robust and nuanced understanding of the various dimensions and types of justice enables a more careful and prudent deliberation about ways to address realities of injustice and suffering.

Mercy

As was noted above, mercy is the necessary companion to justice. Delineating the dynamics and entailments of mercy for Christian engagement in social life requires less detailed conceptual analysis than has been given to justice, even as it is equally important as justice. I now want to offer a brief description of mercy as a mode of social engagement and care for the least of these with whom Christ identifies. I do so by treating mercy first as a response to suffering and secondly as a mode of confronting and opposing social structures of oppression and violence.

1. Mercy and Suffering

In its most proper sense, mercy names that virtue which leads persons to respond to the suffering of others with compassionate action. Thomas Aquinas observes that the meaning of the virtue of mercy, or *miseriordia*, is closely tied to its etymology: “For *miseriordia* is named from the fact that someone has a wretched heart (*miserum cor*) over the wretchedness of another” (*ST II-II*, q. 30, a. 1).⁷³ He thus defines mercy as “the compassion in our heart for another person’s misery, a compassion which drives us to do what we can to help him” (*ST II-II*, q. 30, a. 1).⁷⁴ Mercy, in this definition, has two essential movements. First, mercy entails an experience of compassion—a “suffering from the suffering of the other,”⁷⁵ to use Emmanuel Levinas’s phrase—and thus a sense of solidarity with the afflicted. However, compassion is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of mercy. The second movement of mercy is one of action—the alleviation of another’s suffering. Compassion finds its concrete manifestation in merciful action. Thomas recognizes this composite nature of mercy by naming it both a passion and an action (*ST II-II*, q. 30, a. 3), and these two aspects of mercy are deeply and intimately entwined. As Robert Miner observes, mercy felt as a passion which does not manifest in concrete action to alleviate suffering is a failure of mercy.⁷⁶ Mercy demands action. The specific form of action it requires is an alleviation of the suffering of the other, either “by removing the cause of suffering or by providing what is missing.”⁷⁷

Though often disparaged by ancient Greco-Roman philosophers as a defect opposed to

⁷³ Translation taken from Robert C. Miner, “The Difficulties of Mercy: Reading Thomas Aquinas on *Miseriordia*,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 28.1 (2015), 74. Much of my account of mercy follows Miner’s careful treatment of Thomas’s teaching on mercy in this article.

⁷⁴ Cited in Yiu Sing Lúcas Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes: Biblical Studies and Ethics for Real Life* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 196.

⁷⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, trans. Nidra Poller (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 63.

⁷⁶ Miner, “Difficulties of Mercy,” 78–82.

⁷⁷ Miguel J. Romero, “Aquinas on the *corporis infirmitas*”: Broken Flesh and the Grammar of Grace,” in *Disability in the Christian Tradition: A Reader*, ed. Brian Brock and John Swinton (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 119.

justice, mercy was instead championed by the earliest Christians as a participation in the ministry and compassion of Christ and ultimately a reflection of divine mercy toward creation. Gregory of Nazianzus expresses this conviction in his oration “On the Love of the Poor,” when he writes of Christ’s commandment to love: “I must conclude that love of the poor, and compassion and sympathy for [them], is its most excellent form. For God is not so served by any of the virtues as he is by mercy, since nothing else is more proper than this to God.”⁷⁸ Similarly, Aquinas argues that mercy is so central to the heart of God that all of God’s actions toward creation can be said to embody mercy (*ST I*, q. 21, a. 4), and so persons participate in the divine life when they likewise practice mercy, for mercy “likens us to God as regards to similarity of works” (*ST II-II*, q. 30, a. 4, ad 3). Gregory of Nyssa pushes this relation of mercy to participation in God still further, connecting works of mercy to *theosis*: “Mercy and good deeds are works God loves; they divinize those who practice them and impress them into the likeness of goodness, that they may become the image of the Primordial Being.”⁷⁹ For writers like Nyssen, Nazianzen, and Aquinas, human merciful action mimics the mercy of God. Mercy, both human and divine, names the particular form charity takes in the specific context of suffering and affliction. In this sense, mercy is closely tied to the preferential option for the poor, vulnerable, and oppressed, for mercy is the expression of charity toward these persons in particular in a way that responds directly to their suffering. It is no surprise, then, that Thomas argues that “of all the virtues which relate to our neighbor, mercy is the greatest” (*ST II-II*, q. 30, a. 4). Regarding external works, he goes on, “the sum total of the Christian religion consists in mercy” (*ST II-II*, q. 30, a. 4, ad 2).⁸⁰ This insistence on mercy as the preeminent form of love of neighbor, as Todd Walatka points out, is rooted in Jesus’ paradigmatic teaching about neighbor-love: the parable of the Good Samaritan. Upon being asked, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus tells the parable and explains that the one who fulfills the commandment to love one’s neighbor is “the one who showed mercy” (Luke 10:25-37). Mercy, in other words, is charity responding to suffering.

2. Mercy and Structural Oppression

In addition to being a response to suffering and thus a deeply interpersonal reality, mercy also entails a larger social and political orientation. This is an entailment of the aforementioned reality that mercy must lead those who practice it to seek the alleviation of the afflicted’s suffering, for this suffering is often caused not only by specific individuals but also by unjust and oppressive social structures. In instances where persons suffer from these structural injustices, it is not enough simply to perpetually bind the wounds of the afflicted; mercy demands opposing and dismantling the sources of harm. In this way, mercy has a decidedly social dimension. Numerous examples exist in the Christian tradition of such socially-structured forms of mercy. One thinks of Basil of Caesarea’s founding of a poor hospice in the midst of famine and the ravages of widespread poverty. As Susan Holman suggests, so organized and comprehensive were Basil’s relief efforts, and so expansive was the hospice, that Basil’s project actually redrew Caesarea’s city boundaries, shifting the population away from the old city center to a new center around this institutionalized form of mercy.⁸¹ In Basil’s case, mercy entailed not simply care for those suffering from famine, but a reordering of the

⁷⁸ Gregory of Nazianzus, “Oration 14: On the Love of the Poor,” in *Gregory of Nazianzus*, ed. Brian S. Daley SJ (New York: Routledge, 2006), 78.

⁷⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, “On Good Works,” in Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 197.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Walatka, *Von Balthasar and the Option for the Poor*, 154.

⁸¹ See Holman, *Hungry are Dying*, 74–76. It is probably the combination of this literal re-making of the city of Caesarea, as well as the social instantiation of Christian charity in such comprehensive form, that caused Gregory of Nazianzus to term Basil’s project the “new city.”

entire social arrangement which produced their alienation. Basil's efforts quite literally restructured his society's civic life around the alleviation of the poor's suffering. One also thinks of Martin Luther King Jr.'s work to challenge racial inequality in America by attacking one of the chief structural mechanisms perpetuating black suffering: political disenfranchisement. Securing civil rights and dismantling segregation at the structural level was, for King, a means to address the structural mechanisms perpetuating black oppression in America and give black Americans the freedom to determine their own futures. King's championing of redistributive economic policies sought to buttress political enfranchisement with the material resources to necessary to sustain full participation of black communities in social and political life. Such is the work not only of justice, but also of mercy. Jon Sobrino notes the profoundly intimate relation between mercy and justice, writing that "since poverty and suffering are massive and have historical causes, mercy must be historicized as a struggle against injustice, in favor of justice."⁸² He refers to instantiations of mercy in this regard as "structural mercy" and "enduring mercy," insofar as mercy seeks to find expression in effective, liberating form.⁸³ Sobrino's point here is simply an extension of Thomas's insight that mercy involves an alleviation of suffering and entails a removal of the object causing a person harm. As John Stott explains, "It is never enough to have pity on the victims of injustice, if we do nothing to change the unjust situation itself."⁸⁴ Because of the way suffering becomes systemic and coalesces in structural form in the modern world, mercy's alleviation of suffering must involve opposition to structures of violence and harm, changing the situation of injustice itself.

Speaking of mercy in terms of responding to "structures" of oppression and injustice recalls also the insights of two important figures who thematize the social nature of mercy: Pope John Paul II and Oscar Romero. John Paul II famously coined the term "structures of sin" to speak of the way certain social forms in the modern world express and perpetuate evils beyond what mere individuals can accomplish.⁸⁵ Likewise, Romero writes of "social sin" and the crystallization of human sin in historical social forms:

Throughout the centuries the Church has, quite rightly, denounced sin. Certainly it has denounced personal sins, and it has also denounced sin that perverts relationships between persons, especially at the family level. But it has begun to recall now something that, at the Church's beginning, was fundamental: social sin—the crystallization, in other words, of individuals' sins into permanent structures that keep sin in being, and make its force to be felt by the majority of people.⁸⁶

Such social manifestations of sin perpetuate sin and engraft it into the very fiber of social life. The pervasive effects of social sin, buttressed by structures of oppression, domination, violence, and poverty, demand that mercy respond to suffering at both the individual/interpersonal level *and* the social/systemic level. Consider, for instance, how merciful action might respond to the asymmetrical, disproportionate experience of poverty and social precarity among black Americans. Christian mercy certainly begins with generating solidarity with victims of racialized poverty across

⁸² Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor*, 26–27.

⁸³ Jon Sobrino, *Witnesses to the Kingdom: The Martyrs of El Salvador and the Crucified Peoples* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 200–202. See also, Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994).

⁸⁴ John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 292.

⁸⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987): 36–37.

⁸⁶ Oscar Romero, *Voices of the Voiceless: The Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements*, trans. Michael J. Walsh (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 68.

racial and class lines, as well as providing relief for such poverty through the provision of necessary goods and resources. But mercy concerned with this alone leaves intact the social and structural forces that impose poverty and precarity upon black Americans at rates far more severe than white Americans experience. Mercy demands a theologically informed social analysis able to discern how realities like the enduring legacy of slavery, racially discriminatory voter ID laws, mass incarceration, low rates of home ownership among black Americans due to historically racist housing and lending policies, and other such social realities have perpetuated black suffering and will continue to do so until repaired and accounted for.⁸⁷ Mercy, that is, demands dismantling social structures that harm, oppress, subjugate, and exploit vulnerable persons, building social forms of flourishing, and fashioning, to again use a phrase from John Paul II, a “culture of life.”⁸⁸

By delineating this social dimension of mercy and the way mercy must play a critical role in shaping the structural features of our social life, I hope to have revealed also the intimate relation mercy has to justice. Rather than existing in an antagonistic relation, justice and mercy both are directed toward the realization of earthly peace and just and merciful social arrangements. Justice and mercy, in fact, belong to and interpret one another. As Daniel Harrington and James Keenan have suggested, mercy calls for an intensification of justice for the most vulnerable—that is, those who suffer from the lack of justice.⁸⁹ Mercy is the virtue which presses persons to secure justice for *all* persons, and to opt especially for the realization of justice for the vulnerable and oppressed. A sacramental politics of solidarity that prioritizes justice and mercy as modes of Christian social engagement will thus seek to avoid the problematics of employing either justice or mercy without the other. Mercy shapes justice so as to attend to the plight of the most vulnerable; justice shapes mercy by broadening it to include not only interpersonal forms of care and relief, but the ongoing repair of social structures bent on harming society’s most vulnerable members. And both, when rooted in a life of solidarity with the least of these that discerns in them the presence of Christ, empower the Church to live into her social mission of guarding and protecting the dignity of all persons and advocating for their freedom and flourishing. Justice and mercy are the means by which the Church contends for shalom.

IV. Contending: The Spirituality of Contemplative-Activism

Thus far I have sketched the contours of an Anglican social theology in order to provide a theological framework within which to locate the Church’s various activities of social mission, witness, and work. I have suggested that a properly theological account of the Church’s work in this regard must be positioned with respect to the eschatological destiny of creation—namely, God’s perfect, eternal shalom. Accounting for this eschatological orientation, I have argued, leads the Church to see her social mission as one of both work and witness. The latter, I suggested, should be construed in terms of the Church’s public witness as the sacrament of the shalom of God and her social embodiment of this peace in her common life. The former, I proposed, can be specified as a sacramental politics of solidarity. Finally, I have shown how the Church might discern the implementation of such a social theology by analyzing the various senses of justice and mercy, as

⁸⁷ See, for example, Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012); Keeanga-Yamahitta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016); and Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” in *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy* (New York: Penguin, 2017), 163–210.

⁸⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (25 March 1995): 21.

⁸⁹ Daniel J. Harrington and James F. Keenan, *Paul and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 206.

well as how careful and attentive use of these concepts aids the Church in her prudential judgments concerning the appropriate means of addressing social injustices and ills. To conclude, however, I wish to offer some remarks regarding the actual *praxis* of contending for shalom through works of justice and mercy. The notion of “contending” presumes that the Church’s work of justice and mercy, insofar as it seeks shalom in an unjust and merciless world, will be one of *struggle*. Faithfully enduring and bearing such contention and struggle will require Christians to cultivate certain dispositions, habits, and a robust spirituality in order to carry out the Church’s social mission in the world. I wish to close, then, by pointing to how “contemplative-activism,” or a spirituality marked by the dialectical movement between prayer and action, embodies these qualities and sustains Christians in the struggle for God’s shalom.

The vocation of the “contemplative-activist” is exemplified perhaps most compellingly in the work and lives of Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, and Peter Maurin. For all three, faithful Christian action in the world depends upon a life of deep prayer and fervent devotion if it is to be sustained over a lifetime and maintained through conflict and struggle. Day, for example, was known to be a faithful attender of daily Mass and weekly confession, as well as a ferocious reader of Sacred Scripture, often spending up to two hours each day meditating upon Scripture.⁹⁰ She understood herself to stand within a spiritual tradition stemming from St. Thérèse of Lisieux which hallowed ordinary life in the world and the everyday as sites of divine activity and presence. The fruit of Day’s contemplative life was extraordinary: she founded the Catholic Worker movement, opened a hugely successful hospitality house, led anti-war and pro-worker demonstrations, built peace coalitions and movements, cared for countless poor, homeless, and destitute persons, and more. She sought, in her words, to integrate the “street apostolate” and the “retreat apostolate,”⁹¹ the spiritual life and social engagement. According to Day, the relationship between her activism and contemplativism centered on the experience of gratitude.⁹² Indeed, it was the experience of giving birth to her daughter, Day recalled, and the profound gratitude she experienced as a result, that led her to a life of activism. “The final object of this love and gratitude,” she wrote, “was God. No human creature could receive or contain so vast a flood of love and joy as I felt after the birth of my child. With this came the need to worship, to adore... [M]y very experience as a radical, my whole make-up, led me to associate myself with others, with the masses, in praising and adoring God.”⁹³ For Day, this movement from gratitude toward God to solidarity and care for others was at the heart of contemplative-activism.

Moreover, it was this orientation of gratitude toward God that Day believed properly shaped the expression of one’s work with and for the poor, oppressed, and afflicted. Gratitude means that one acts most fundamentally not out of desperation, guilt, or outrage, but out of genuine love for God’s creatures and creation. Indeed, maintaining this disposition of gratitude, and acting out of plenitude rather than lack, is critical for guarding one’s work in the social world from becoming a matter of self-interest and egoism. As Thomas Merton puts it:

What is the relation of [contemplation] to action? Simply this. He who attempts to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening his own self-understanding,

⁹⁰ On Day’s spiritual life and its relation to her activism, see Jessie Bazan, “Dorothy Day: The Contemplative Catholic Worker,” *Obsculta* 10.1 (2017), 73–86.

⁹¹ Dorothy Day, *Dorothy Day: Writings from Commonweal*, ed. Jordan Patrick (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 106.

⁹² Daniel G. Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice: Navigating a Path to Peace* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), 171.

⁹³ Quoted in Nancy L. Roberts, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 26.

freedom, integrity, and capacity to love, will not have anything to give others. He will communicate to them nothing but the contagion of his own obsessions, his aggressiveness, his ego-centered ambitions, his delusions about ends and means, his doctrinaire prejudices and ideas. There is nothing more tragic in the modern world than the misuse of power and action.⁹⁴

Merton's sensitivity to false motivations intruding upon the work of caring for and working with the poor expresses a profound understanding of the need for such work to be rooted in a spirituality of freedom which understands God to be the fundamental and primary actor in Christian social work and witness. When one enters the field of the social from the realm of contemplation and prayer, wherein one becomes centered and oriented to the primacy of God, one approaches the least of these in openness, gentleness, and receptivity. Prayer serves as the means by which one discerns and discovers God's preceding work in the world and joins it, rather than initiating such work and then conceding to the temptation to make one's ideology, political project, or vision of the world primary.

Contemplative-activism also assures that Christian social work and witness is approached and evaluated by properly Christian criteria—that is, by its faithfulness to God and God's kingdom, not simply its effectiveness. Interpreting and assessing the Church's social mission purely in terms of the latter tempts one to despair when the cause of justice and mercy faces loss and defeat. A vision of the Church's social mission premised on the centrality of faithfulness and witness, however, can bear loss, opposition, and failure in hope. Indeed, such is the logic of one of the Christian tradition's most important modes of engaging the hostilities of the social and political order: martyrdom. Taking martyrdom as emblematic of Christian social mission leads one to understand the true effectiveness of Christian action beyond the immediate and empirical, lying ultimately in the hands of God working in history to establish God's kingdom. The imperfect experience of God's kingdom in history, moreover, comes not in social and political progress but in and through struggle, opposition, and defeat. The activist's constant return to contemplation and prayer fights discouragement, apathy, and despair within such struggle by constantly orienting one beyond the situation at hand and toward God's good future, when God's kingdom will be finally established in the fullness of shalom. Contemplative-activism cultivates the virtue of hope such that one's attitude toward one's situation is not determined by the pain of struggle, nor foreclosed by the despair of loss, but sustained by the promise of God's shalom and God's ultimate victory over sin and injustice. In this way, contemplative-activism provides the necessary spiritual comportment for a Christian social mission characterized by tension, conflict, and opposition. Hope is the necessary virtue for enduring struggle.

A Church on mission in the world to seek justice and mercy, to work for shalom in the anticipation of God's final restoration of the world in the fullness of shalom, means confronting the social and political order in its unjust and merciless nature. A Church intent on speaking truthfully about, witnessing to, and seeking peace within such an order will face sustained opposition, resistance, and hostility from those persons and structures that benefit from its arrangement in unjust and merciless ways. Christians bear this struggle, this contention, in hope and confidence in the victory of Christ's cross and resurrection. They find strength and power in the Church's ongoing life of prayer, contemplation, and worship, which continually fills them with the grace of the Holy Spirit and sends them out again into the world to witness to God's shalom in works of

⁹⁴ Thomas Merton, "Contemplation in a World of Action," in *Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master*, ed. Lawrence S. Cunningham (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 375.

justice and mercy. A Church firmly rooted between Christ's cross and new creation, between Babylon and Jerusalem, between the earthy city and the shalomic city of God, contends for this shalom, justice, and mercy "on earth as it is in heaven."