

# **Walter Rauschenbusch and Charles Gore: Divergent paths towards a Christian social ethic**

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2003

Illumine: Journal of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society

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Original citation:

Vance, C. (2003). Walter Rauschenbusch and Charles Gore: Divergent paths towards a Christian social ethic. *Illumine*, 2(1), 43–48.

<https://doi.org/10.18357/illumine2120031573>

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# Walter Rauschenbusch and Charles Gore: Divergent Paths Towards a Christian Social Ethic

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## Abstract

*Walter Rauschenbusch and Charles Gore were contemporaries who had profound impacts in North America and England respectively in the area of Christian social thought. While they both provided theological justification for a moderate gradualist socialism their theologies are in many ways antithetical. Rauschenbusch's "social gospel," which has been predominant in North American liberal protestantism, is contrasted with Gore's "sacramental socialism," which is predominant in liberal Anglo-catholicism. This essay argues for the revival of the sacramental socialist tradition on the basis of comparison with theorists as varied as Max Horkheimer, George Lindbeck, George Grant and the Radical Orthodoxy project of John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock.<sup>1</sup>*

In June 2001, I attended a theology conference in Toronto sponsored by *Kairos*, the Canadian Interchurch social justice coalition. It was the third and final year of their Jubilee initiative, which had previously been successful in drawing attention to the plight of indebted nations. At one particular workshop, a presenter identified herself as an Anglican feminist theologian who draws her strength from the Incarnation and the Trinity. Hearing these theological ideas expressed by an activist, I felt like I had just stepped out of a dry and dusty place to stand under a waterfall: cool and bracing. However, she offered no further theological reflection and reverted to social analysis and discussions of praxis. This retreat seemed to me too characteristic of my conference experience. There was discussion of social praxis, sometimes supported by the Christian scriptures, but very little attempt to root activism and concerns for social justice back into the nature of God.

From my experiences at this conference, I believe there has been a misstep as well as a missed

opportunity: Social Gospel ideas that Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) exemplified still dominate contemporary North American Christian activism. The resulting tendency is to ignore Christian theology *per se* while stressing activism. The missed opportunity is a neglect of Sacramental Socialist traditions that are represented by Charles Gore (1853-1932). There is a weakness in the Social Gospel movement, and Gore's Sacramental Socialist tradition grounds a deeper praxis, one that is as reflective as it is active, one that is distinctively Christian. To address a lack of theological reflection in many Canadian mainline churches' social justice efforts, in this article I compare the Social Gospel ideas of Walter Rauschenbusch and the Sacramental Socialist traditions of Charles Gore on three key topics: first, their view of Christ; second, their perception of the ongoing presence of holiness in the world; and third, appropriately responsive Christian social action.

## "The Word Became Flesh . . .": Contrasting Christologies

Walter Rauschenbusch, born in Rochester, New York, to German immigrant parents, graduated from Rochester Seminary in 1886. Afterwards, he served as pastor at the Second German Baptist Church in New York's "Hell's Kitchen" area for eleven years. His encounters with urban poverty convinced him of the need for broad social reform. He returned to Rochester Seminary to become professor of New Testament and Church History, eventually writing two works that proved seminal for the developing "Social Gospel" movement: *Christianizing the Social Order* (1912) and *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917).<sup>2</sup>

Rauschenbusch's Christology, that is, his perception of Jesus Christ, is strongly influenced by his emphasis on Hebraic rather than Hellenic roots for Christianity, an emphasis he derives from nineteenth-century German Protestant theologian, Adolf von

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<sup>1</sup> This article emerges from a Spring 2003 class on 'Anglican Social Thought' with Rev. Dr. William Crockett, Professor Emeritus at Vancouver School of Theology. The author acknowledges his appreciation for Dr. Crockett's exhaustive knowledge of Anglican social thought and his enthusiastic teaching.

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<sup>2</sup> Donald M. Lake, 'Rauschenbusch, Walter', *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), p. 827. Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: Macmillan, 1912). Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1997).

Harnack.<sup>3</sup> The privileging of the Hebraic over the Hellenic means that there is no room in his theology for the metaphysical speculation beloved of Hellenism. There is no discussion of *Logos* Christology, no explicit trinitarianism; Jesus does not work miracles, and there is no discussion of the resurrection.<sup>4</sup> Rauschenbusch offers a “low” view of the nature of Jesus, focusing on his humanity, in contrast to “high” views that stress the divinity of Christ. In Rauschenbusch’s Hebraic influenced theology, it is the Hebrew prophets who are pre-eminently invoked as a source for the Social Gospel.<sup>5</sup> Rauschenbusch’s perception of Jesus is primarily of a man who belongs to a lineage of Hebrew prophets and who preaches an ethical gospel of the Kingdom of God that emphasises social works. Rauschenbusch believed that in his lifetime he was witnessing an upheaval in how Jesus and the New Testament were understood. He especially believed that Jesus’ prophetic activity was exemplary, and his purpose was to show how to live a religious life. However, Jesus was no mere social reformer in the Marxist tradition. His Kingdom of God was an explicitly religious domain characterised by justice and equity in human relations.<sup>6</sup>

Notably, Rauschenbusch’s perception of the Kingdom of God is collective, not individual, and is reminiscent of the hope of Israel for a kingdom of justice, prosperity, and happiness as announced in the Torah and Prophets. Jesus, intimated Rauschenbusch, possessed a fine nineteenth century mind in seeing that the Kingdom of God would not come in imminent conflagration, but rather through evolutionary and organic change.<sup>7</sup> Growing from person to person “[t]he kingdom of God,” says Rauschenbusch, “is still a collective conception, involving the whole social life of man. It is not a matter of saving human atoms, but of saving the social organism. It is not a matter of getting individuals to heaven, but of transforming the life on earth into the harmony of heaven.”<sup>8</sup> Rauschenbusch’s collective, ethical humanism was his

chief insight, and in his Christological conception, Jesus’ mission was to establish a society built upon the “fatherhood of God and brotherhood of men,” a characteristic phrase in his tradition of liberalism.<sup>9</sup>

Theologian Charles Gore, a British contemporary of Walter Rauschenbusch, has comparable ideas on Christian social justice that surpass Rauschenbusch’s in many ways. Oxford educated, Gore was a fellow of Trinity College and principal of Cuddesdon Theological College and Pusey House before assuming the roles of bishop of Worcester in 1902, bishop of Birmingham in 1905, and eventually bishop of Oxford from 1911 to 1919 while an activist with the Christian Social Union. Editor of the influential work *Lux Mundi*, Gore also wrote numerous theological works including *The Body of Christ*, *The Incarnation of the Son of God*, and *Christ and Society*.<sup>10</sup> Gore, like Rauschenbusch, was influenced by contemporary German liberalism, affirming the “Fatherhood of God” and the notion of a “historical Jesus.”<sup>11</sup> However, Gore also fully understood and embraced the social teachings of the Church in the patristic and medieval periods, and demonstrated a nuanced understanding of their views on wealth, property, and economics. He saw the Reformation as not entirely positive but unleashing economic forces divorced from questions of the social good.<sup>12</sup>

While Charles Gore appreciated the Hebrew prophetic tradition and recognised Jesus as part of the tradition that emphasised the centrality of the Kingdom of God, he argued that in Jesus’ baptism and crucifixion, there is clear intention to found a new order, that is, to begin the Church. While Jesus stands against hostile tyrannies of human beings he offers a cosmic victory that has eternal implications. In Gore’s explanation, the Kingdom of God is rooted both in the life and teachings of Jesus. Thus the Kingdom is transformed by Jesus’ death and resurrection and, furthermore, has an ongoing sacramental expression, that is, the celebration of the Kingdom continues to be

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<sup>3</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1997), p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Rauschenbusch complains that *Logos* theology was necessary due to Platonic influences that made God unduly transcendent. *Ibid.*, p. 179. Rauschenbusch is striking for refusing the accusation of *patripassianism*: his chiding of orthodoxy for rejecting the notion that God could suffer is widely accepted today. Cf. Jurgen Moltmann’s *The Crucified God* (London: SCM Press, 2001), p. 387.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1997), p. 153.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45-47.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Gore, *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation* (London: Murray, 1889); Charles Gore, *The Body of Christ: An Enquiry into the Institution and Doctrine of Holy Communion*. (London: John Murray, 1903); Charles Gore, *The Incarnation of the Son of God* (London: John Murray, 1891); Charles Gore, *Christ and Society* (New York: Scribners, 1928).

<sup>11</sup> Charles Gore, *Christ and Society* (New York: Scribners, 1928), pp. 42-59.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study* (Gloucester Mass: Peter Smith, 1962, 1922).

expressed in the sacraments. Gore sought to affirm historical creedal formulas on the importance of the incarnation of the *Logos*, but his thoughts on “kenotic” Christology (the idea that there is a self-limitation of the *Logos* in the Incarnation), attracted considerable criticism from those who believed he was overemphasising the humanity of Christ.<sup>13</sup> Gore was attempting an orthodox Christology “from below,” a mediating theology, a vernacular theology, that would use ideas congenial to early twentieth-century people, thereby commending orthodoxy to the modern mind. Yet, he always retained the cosmic element of the Incarnation by emphasising the recapitulation of creation with the coming of Christ.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, for Gore, the Incarnation also encompassed a cosmic redemption, not simply an imminent development of a metaphysic. The goal of the Incarnation was the redemption of the cosmos and the individual person.<sup>15</sup> This personal redemption has implications for his social thought. Redemption, or the conversion of the person, is seen as a pre-requisite for social reform. He believed that activists will come to see that development of individual character is necessary for successful social reform.<sup>16</sup>

Rauschenbusch’s “low” Christology provides a basis for social change, but in a severely truncated form, in what theologian George Lindbeck refers to as “thin narrative.”<sup>17</sup> Gore, on the other hand, believes

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<sup>13</sup> In *The Incarnation of the Son of God*, Gore developed his kenotic Christology which is predicated upon self-limitation of the *Logos* in incarnation, as referred to in Philippians 2: 5-11 where Christ is described as “emptying” himself by the Greek word, *kenosis*.

<sup>14</sup> Gore, *The Incarnation of the Son of God*, p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> By including redemption, Gore balances his theological presentation. The whole thrust of the *Lux Mundi* school was to affirm the incarnation as starting point for theology over the evangelicals’ stress upon atonement.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38. This “ethic of character” has points of contact with Stanley Hauerwas’ notion of “communities of character.” Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, Ill: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> George Lindbeck suggests in *The Nature of Doctrine* that religions function within an intratextual semiotic universe. The function of theology is to understand existence within the framework of a narrative that is part of a canon and a tradition. Lindbeck argues that theologies that attempt to redescribe religion in extrascriptural frameworks have been dominant in liberalism. He does not recommend a return to pre-critical thinking but rather grounds theology in a semiotic epistemology that seeks to be faithful to intratextual narrative. In Lindbeck’s Post-liberalism, Gore’s rootedness in a “thick” narrative without being pre-critical is admirable.

that the “Christ of faith” is not divorced from the “Jesus of history.” He roots his understanding of justice in a “thick” narrative, tapping into more of the narrative structure of Christianity by accessing the prophetic tradition and the essence of the Christian “mythos,” that is, the full Christian story. For his theological expression, Gore can summon a divine Christ who takes on flesh, dies, and is resurrected. This brings about a universal and cosmic salvation, and initiates a community dedicated to overcoming evil. This is a much more potent narrative than Rauschenbusch’s “fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man.” To view Jesus as an ethical prophet is vastly different from viewing him as an incarnate Deity.

The metaphoric power of Gore’s sacramental community is also an alternative discourse to the idea that justice is rooted in rights. Canadian Anglican philosopher George Grant has written of the poverty of the liberal rights-based understanding of justice. He speaks of the end of justice as the attempt to ground it in individual self-interest. He argues that for the Christian tradition, justice can only be rooted in love; however, it is a language that modernity cannot speak.<sup>18</sup> The incarnational tradition, represented by theologian Charles Gore, understands Jesus as the divine *Logos* who yet radically identifies with the poor, as in Jesus’ sermon in Matthew 25. This personal identification and interaction is far more powerful than rights-based discourse.<sup>19</sup> Christian theistic narratives can base justice on love and achieve a difficult victory; indeed in the demise of alternative narratives, it may be one of the greatest gifts Christians can offer their secular activist colleagues. Many contemporary Christian social activists, laypeople, and clergy are noting that, regrettably, fewer people within mainstream protestant churches are participating in social justice activities. Like my experience at the *Kairos* and conference, a pervasive “thin” narrative in the theology of Christian activists removes much of the potential for positive transformation in contemporary society.

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Alternatively, “thin” narrative typified by Rauschenbusch risks impotence because it has lost its semiotic rootedness in the Christian narrative. George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-Liberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), p. 142.

<sup>18</sup> George Grant, *English Speaking Justice* (Toronto: Anansi, 1974).

<sup>19</sup> Theologian Emil Brunner explains the relationship between love and justice, saying: “Justice is the currency love takes in the realm of the institutions.” Love predominates in face-to-face relationships. Emil Brunner, *Justice and the Social Order* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), pp. 128-129.

## “. . . And Dwelt Among Us”: Differing Perceptions of the Ongoing Presence of the Holy

Rauschenbusch contrasts the prophets' ethical fervour for social justice with a prophetic denunciation of ritual practices of cult. Not only is the Hebrew sacrificial system condemned, but all aspects of cult and ceremony are deemed suspect. For him, sacramentalism is nothing more than ceremonialism; the “prophetic” is the antithesis of the “sacramental.”

This Christian ritual grew up, not as the appropriate and aesthetic expression of spiritual emotions, but as the indispensable means of pleasing and appeasing God, and of securing his favors, temporal and eternal, for those who put their heart into these processes. This Christian ceremonial system does not differ essentially from that against which the prophets protested.<sup>20</sup>

Rauschenbusch equates the prophets' zeal for justice with the negation of priestcraft and for him, the converse could also be assumed: sacramental religion is equated with the denial of prophetic fervour for justice. This is made explicit when he praises Calvinism as a tradition which “stripped off . . . [the] ceremonial and turned religious energy into political and intellectual channels.”<sup>21</sup> The prophetic critique and rejection of ceremony renders Catholic practices that prevailed in the patristic and medieval periods as rituals that obscure the truths of religion; symbols are seen to block, rather than mediate, the presence of God.

Rauschenbusch is critical of the Church Fathers and medieval theologians, dismissing them as myth-obsessive primitives who believed in the demonic. He comments that “a theology like ours, with no demons in it, would have seemed to Justin Martyr or Cyprian to knock the bottom out of the Christian faith.”<sup>22</sup> But he defends the Gnostics who were “thrust out by the Church, and of all its [Gnostic] rich literature we have only one book left . . . . [W]e are dependent for our information on the partisan statements and garbled quotations of its enemies.”<sup>23</sup> Among the “enemies” referred to is the early Church Father Irenaeus (fl. c.175-195 CE), whose thought is integral to those who affirm the centrality of the Incarnation.

In his book *A Theology for the Social Gospel*

Rauschenbusch sees no importance in the sacraments for social justice:

Can the spirit of the social gospel give any fresh spiritual meaning to the ancient ordinances (*i.e.*: baptism, eucharist), or add anything to the theological interpretation of them? I confess I doubt it.<sup>24</sup>

Rauschenbusch does not consider that baptism, as portrayed in the Book of Common Prayer, demands a social ethic: the baptismal candidate (or the sponsors) “. . . vow that he will renounce the devil and all his works . . . and obediently keep God's commandments.” But Rauschenbusch had some appreciation for English Christian Socialism and notes that “the High Church . . . leaders are weaving solidaristic ideas into their most sacramental and ecclesiastical doctrines.”<sup>25</sup> This reference must be, in fact, to the *Lux Mundi* group and Charles Gore. Rauschenbusch believed that these Anglicans were becoming more like himself, rather than seeing a high ecclesiology, sacramental theology, and credal/patristic Christianity as a source of social reform. His *Theology for the Social Gospel*, however, seeks to undermine traditional Christianity and offer an alternative theological agenda.

Rauschenbusch, though a professor of Church History, seemed to ascribe to a naive Protestant historicism which only values the New Testament and the Reformation. For him, the Social Gospel is the completion of the Reformation where the Church's emphasis on dogma and ritual gives way to free theological thought and an emphasis on ethical practices, culminating in a theology of social improvement.<sup>26</sup>

Charles Gore, by contrast, had a great appreciation for Church history and traditional Christian theology. He believed that the Eucharist is the extension of the incarnation. Gore affirmed that: “The incarnation gaped . . . incomplete and suspended, until in all its parts and elements it was fulfilled through the Eucharist.”<sup>27</sup> He cites Ignatius of Antioch (d. 135 CE) who complained of heretics who refuse the Eucharist because they do not believe Jesus was human. If one denies that a deity can become united with humanity, one would also not believe that deity can become present in bread and wine.<sup>28</sup> The “sacramental

<sup>20</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: Macmillan, 1908), pp. 6, 7.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>24</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1997), p. 197.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177, 178.

<sup>27</sup> Gore, *The Incarnation of the Son of God*, p. 59.

<sup>28</sup> Gore affirms the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist as

principle” begins with the rejection of matter-spirit dualism,<sup>29</sup> and this negative type of dualism shows itself repeatedly within Protestantism:

There is a tendency in Protestantism . . . towards a conception of spirituality which is not completely Christian—a conception which puts the spiritual straight off in opposition to the material, so that that idea of a spiritual gift attached by divine ordinance to material conditions is rejected as unworthy of God.<sup>30</sup>

Here, Gore links sacraments with human embodiment; he sees human existence as “not material only but carnal.”<sup>31</sup> Anticipating themes so important in post-modernity, embodiment is a key theme in his theology. As humans, we create sacraments: “handshaking is the sacrament of friendship, and kissing the sacrament of love. And each in expressing also intensifies the emotion which it expresses.”<sup>32</sup> Gore links human embodiment with his theological emphasis on the incarnation:

[T]he religion of the incarnation—the religion of a Christ come in the flesh—associates the lower and material nature with the whole process of redemption, and teaches us that not without a material and visible embodiment is the spiritual life to be realized, either now or in eternity.<sup>33</sup>

The incarnational and sacramental tradition eschews dualism. It understands reality as symbolically mediated. Within this mediation of the *Logos*, the dualisms of matter/spirit, body/mind, and subject/object are resolved. Social activists often

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all Anglicans do but stops short of affirming transubstantiation. He makes an intriguing argument that transubstantiation does not reflect good sacramental and patristic theology. Using the traditional language from the 39 Articles, Gore argues that the continued presence in the host after consecration exalts the physical over the spiritual. This may be an arcane theological argument, but it again points to the importance of the sacraments in Gore’s theology, as well as the priority of classical Christology and the patristics. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-23.

<sup>29</sup> In contrast to Rauschenbusch above, Gore condemns the Gnostics as heretics who introduce this tendency to elevate spirit and demonise matter. Irenaeus is praised, but Rauschenbusch condemns him as an enemy of the Gnostics. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

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dichotomise, and there is the eternal struggle between darkness and light, spirit and matter, capitalism and socialism, globalisation and anti-globalisation, pro-choice and pro-life. Polarisation on such exceedingly complex issues becomes requisite and mediating positions suspect. However, an incarnational position that eschews dualism, such as Gore presents, demands nuanced thought on policy and issues.

### “We Have Seen His Glory . . .”: Responsive Christian Social Justice

Because he views Christ as a prophet and the prophetic mission as an ongoing activity that initiates the kingdom of God, Rauschenbusch’s theology necessarily entails social justice as the active component of his thought. Rauschenbusch speaks of “social” and “structural” sins that require social change, rather than venial sins of personal vice, because he was conscious of the critique that the social gospel places inadequate emphasis upon sin.<sup>34</sup> The Fall of humanity into sin is, thus, affirmed without personal mythic content; it is a narrative of the universal human predisposition towards selfishness and the refusal to recognise human solidarity.<sup>35</sup> For Rauschenbusch, to be Christian means to serve one’s neighbour, and sanctification is not the cultivation of personal piety alone but results in social action. Rauschenbusch contrasts his views on human solidarity with solipsistic mysticism and religious subjectivity.<sup>36</sup> To be Christian is to exist in community. Rauschenbusch asserts that “the Church is the social factor in salvation.”<sup>37</sup>

In the Church, he recognises a community which can stand against individualism. Rauschenbusch sought to establish a theological movement that would free Christianity of its dogmatic crust to reveal its essence. This essence he sees as social justice and the incremental creation of a Christian commonwealth based upon democratic socialist principles, rising against the “demonic” conspiracies of capitalism and empires.

There is much in Rauschenbusch that is striking,

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<sup>34</sup>Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*. pp. 32-33.

<sup>35</sup> “The social gospel is above all things practical. It needs religious ideas which will release energy for heroic opposition against organized evil and for the building of a righteous social life. It would find entire satisfaction in the attitude of Jesus and the prophets who dealt with sin as a present force and did not find it necessary to indoctrinate men on its first origin.” *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 119.

incisive, and powerful: his social analysis is broad and the policy positions he advocates are intriguing. It is widely assumed that, because he was a Christian and a socialist, he was a kindred spirit to the English Christian Socialist tradition represented by Charles Gore. A careful review of Gore's thought, however, demonstrates a very different theology and approach to social thought.

For Anglo-Catholic theology, the interconnections between traditional theological ideas on the creation, incarnation, and redemption, and the institution of the Church and its sacraments are integral. Characteristically, Gore moves from these dogmatic concerns to the social implications. The purpose of God, says Gore, is to "bind individual beings together in a social relationship."<sup>38</sup> Through baptism, individuals are brought into fellowship with a community whose goal is to express their unity by participating in other sacramental celebrations, including the Eucharist. In his book *The Body of Christ*, Gore examines both the Eucharist and the Church as the "body of Christ," seeing these as integrally linked.<sup>39</sup> Gore, like Rauschenbusch, refutes a type of Christian piety that sees salvation as solely personal, but Gore finds his authority in traditional theology rather than outside it. For Gore, the social responsibility of Christianity is the essence of the "pre-eminently human and social religion of the Son of Man."<sup>40</sup>

Starting from different theological viewpoints, both Gore and Rauschenbusch argue that the visible community of Christianity is essential for the fulfillment of the covenant with God. Gore stresses "that there is no divine fellowship except in human brotherhood. It is to refuse to separate acceptableness with God from the actual service of man. . . . [Y]our salvation shall lie in the life of a community."<sup>41</sup> By means wholly unlike, Gore and Rauschenbusch both arrive at a point of profound agreement: that the redemption initiated by Jesus demands the transformation of society, and that those involved in the community of redemption are obligated to take up the task.

Despite the similarities of the actions Gore and Rauschenbusch advocate, Gore's theology offers a better basis for Christian social action today. The Sacramental Socialist tradition has the possibility for being both a more effective and a faithful starting point for those in the Christian tradition working for social

justice. It offers a "thick" narrative to a secular culture. With the demise of the Marxist meta-narrative, the Sacramental Socialist tradition upholds a transcendent order that effectively supports justice, especially under the totalising tyranny of modernity. In an interview at the end of his life, even Marxist theorist Max Horkheimer made the profound observation that a just political order is not possible without transcendence. Horkheimer concluded that modernity so completely subordinates dissent that a form of justice capable of resisting modernity is not possible without a "theological moment."<sup>42</sup> Gore's Sacramental Socialism, much more than Rauschenbusch's Social Gospel, demands theological reflection and appreciates traditional Christian ideas.

Additionally, Gore's Sacramental Socialist ideas advocate traditional ritual while encouraging personal responsiveness. Such personal responsiveness derives from an emphasis on the Incarnation of God in Christ. This approach to theology and justice is consonant with Radical Orthodoxy, a contemporary theological movement inspired by Jonathan Milbank and Catherine Pickstock.<sup>43</sup> Based in post-modern discourse and yet profoundly critical of it, contemporary Radical Orthodoxy proclaims the ultimate nihilism of any discourse not rooted in theism and, much like Gore's Sacramental Socialism, seeks to root thought and action in the traditional theological ideas on the creation, incarnation, and redemption, and in the institution of the Church and its sacraments. Effective social action today must be as reflective as it is active, and Christian social justice must find both strength and nurture in the Word made flesh, the Incarnate Christ.

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<sup>38</sup>Gore, *The Body of Christ*. p. 124.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. xii-xvi.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 44-47.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 321, 322.

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<sup>42</sup> Rudolf Siebert, 'Horkheimer's Sociology of Religion', *Telos*, 30, Winter 1976, pp. 103 ff.

<sup>43</sup>John Milbank, Graham Ward, and Catherine Pickstock, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).