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# THE CHURCH SOCIALIST LEAGUE, 1906-1923:

# ORIGINS, DEVELOPMENT AND DISINTEGRATION

IAN GOODFELLOW

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Durham.

Department of History

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## ABSTRACT

IAN GOODFELLOW - THE CHURCH SOCIALIST LEAGUE, 1906-1923: ORIGINS, DEVELOPMENT AND DISINTEGRATION

This thesis, in examining the life cycle of the Church Socialist League provides a case study in Christian Socialism.

The C.S.L. was the third Anglican Society to be founded in the phase of Christian Socialism that arose in the last quarter of the nineteenth century: it emerged within that tradition in response to the increasing political momentum of the Labour Movement which first achieved significant Parliamentary presence in the 1906 General Election.

This study examines the context in which the League arose, the membership, organisational development and life of the League and the conflicts and circumstances which led to its dissolution.

The society was distinguished from its predecessors by an explicit avowal of Socialism combined with an open attitude in theology and churchmanship. Within the League's membership three elements may be detected - Socialist, Catholic and Intellectual. The history of the League demonstrates the interplay between these elements in the context of the circumstances of the time, notably developments within the general field of the Labour and Socialist movement and the war and its aftermath. As a result the character of the League changed markedly in the course of its existence. Each of the three elements made a bid to control the League. As a result of internal tensions and external circumstances the League broke up: it was a failure in synthesis.

In its full commitment to political and economic Socialism it posed acutely the central problem of Christian Socialism - the relation between secular political principles and Christian theology - and demonstrated the difficulty, and perhaps the impossibility, of giving stable and effective institutional expression to the relationship between two 'ideologies'.

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PART 1 ORIGINS

## CHAPTER 1 - CONTEXT

The Church Socialist League came into being at a Conference at Morecambe on June 13th 1906.[1] It was born out of a tradition, by an event. The tradition was that of Christian Socialism: the event the General Election of 1906 at which the increasing momentum of the Labour movement first made a significant political impact with the return of twenty nine M.Ps to Westminster.

Genealogists of Christian Socialism have outlined an ancient and impressive ancestry, speaking of a 'thin red line' stretching back in Church History through Levellers, Diggers, Hussites, Poor Men of Lyons to the Early Fathers, the Apostles and thence even into pre-Christian times in the ethical utterances of the Hebrew prophets.[2] Although John Ball[3] occupied an honoured place in the hagiology of the Church Socialist League (C.S.L.), the links between twentieth century Christian Socialism and many of these earlier movements are decidedly tenuous, not merely in time but also in circumstance and spirit.[4] A more umbilical connection can be made with the Christian Socialists of 1848-54 in the person of

1. Labour Leader, June 22 1906, account by Paul Stacy, a participant. The Conference was also reported by the local newspaper, The Lancaster Observer and Morecambe Chronicle, 15th June, in minute detail. Northern based daily newspapers, Manchester Guardian and Yorkshire Post both carried full accounts on 14th June. P.E.T. Widdrington in his account of the Church Socialist League in Commonwealth, April 1927, erroneously gives date as June 18th.

2. E.g. Stanley Evans, Christian Socialism: a Study Outline and Bibliography (1962)
   Edward Charles, Christianity and Socialism, article in Christian Socialist , March 1976.

3. The banner of the London branch of the C.S.L. consisted of a 'portrait' of John Ball. Articles on John Ball in Church Socialist, July and August 1912.

4. K. Leech in 'The Christian Left - Then and Now', a paper given at a conference of the Jubilee Group on 1st May 1976, distinguishes seven models and themes on which the Christian socialist tradition has drawn through history.

Stewart Headlam. Headlam, who had been taught and inspired at Cambridge by the theologian of that group, F.D. Maurice[5] (1805-1872), was present as a veteran Christian Socialist at the Founding Conference of the C.S.L. amongst friends and colleagues whom in turn he had inspired towards Christian Socialism. Whilst the term 'Christian Socialist' was used before the formation of Maurice's group[6], the activities of Maurice and his associates, J.M.F. Ludlow, Charles Kingsley, Thomas Hughes and E.V. Neale, are normally regarded as the starting point of Christian Socialism in any recognisably modern sense. It was a movement, not an organisation, and it was short-lived: after 1854 the interests and activities of the group diverged.

Almost a quarter of a century was to elapse before another Christian Socialist group appeared. It was in 1877 that Stewart Headlam (1847-1924) founded the Guild of St Matthew (G.S.M.) in Bethnal Green. This development was significant not only because it inaugurated a revival[7] of Anglican Christian socialism which was to be sustained through many decades - indeed, well beyond the scope of this present study - but also because in it there came together potent forces from two important mid-century sources in the social theology derived from Tracts on Christian Socialism[8] and the sacramental

5. F.G. Bettany, Stewart Headlam: A Biography, (1926), pp.19-25.

6. Stanley Evans, Op.Cit., p.20, cites John Rabine of Birmingham, 'a leading co-operator', as using the term in 1837; M.B. Reckitt, Church and Society in England from 1800 (1940), p.88, refers to a book published in 1839 by T.H. Hudson entitled "Christian Socialism explained and defended and compared with Infidel Fellowship, especially as propounded by Robert Owen, Esq." In 1850 Maurice's group began publishing 'Tracts on Christian Socialism'.

7. Peter d'A Jones, The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914 (Princeton, 1968), gives a comprehensive survey of this period.

8. C.K. Gloyn, The Church in the Social Order, (Pacific, 1942), pp.113-142 examines Maurice's theology and its social implications.

catholicism of the writers of Tracts for the Times and their successors. These two ingredients were henceforth to feature prominently in Anglican Christian Socialism. The establishment of the G.S.M. is also significant in that for the first time an organisation, as distinct from an informal grouping, had appeared in Christian Socialism: indeed it has frequently been asserted that the Guild was actually the first Socialist society to be founded in England[9], but in considering this assessment much depends on the precise meaning attached to the term 'socialist' A Christian Socialist organisation having been established, numerous other societies, Anglican, Free Church and undenominational, were in due course to follow in its wake. The G.S.M. remained small in numbers[10]: it was, in Vidler's words, essentially a 'ginger group' within the Church.[11] Churchmen who wished to find organisational expression for their Christian social concern, but who felt that the G.S.M. did not entirely suit their purposes[12] founded a second society, the Christian Social Union (C.S.U.) in 1889[13]. The year 1889 was important both for the labour movement and the Church. It was the year of the London Dock Strike (August 19 - September 14): it also saw the publication of two collections of essays, Fabian Essays and Lux Mundi[14] which became seminal works for the British Labour Movement and the Church of England respectively.

9. Occasional Paper of the Guild of St Matthew No.36, Nov.1906, p.5, Warden's Address; The Church Socialist League by Rev. G. Algernon West - leaflet, 1906, Conrad Noel papers, Brynmor Jones Library, Univ. of Hull; James Adderley, Christian Socialism, Past and Present: 1 G.S.M. Article in The Commonwealth , December 1926.

10. Ibid.

11. Alec R. Vidler, The Church in an Age of Revolution (1961), p.99.

12. S. Paget ed., Henry Scott Holland: Memoir and Letters, (1921), p.242 (Chapter by Charles Gore entitled 'Holland and the CSU').

13. P. Dearmer, The Beginnings of the CSU. Article in The Commonwealth, May 1912. Although the initiators of the C.S.U. did not belong to the G.S.M. there was nevertheless considerable overlap in membership. Dearmer points out that three of the four group secretaries elected for London in 1891 were G.S.M. members.

14. An assessment of the significance of Lux Mundi is given in A.M. Ramsey 'From Gore to Temple, the Development of Anglican Theology from Lux Mundi to the second World War' (1960).

The avowed purpose of Lux Mundi was 'to put the Catholic faith into its right relation to modern intellectual and moral problems', and the fusion of the critical spirit of modern scholarship with the Catholic tradition of the Tractarians did much to establish the 'Liberal Catholic' school of thought. Two of the contributors to the volume, Henry Scott Holland (1847-1918) and Charles Gore (1853-1932) took a leading part in the formation of the C.S.U. Not surprisingly therefore the new society added to its inheritance from the G.S.M.[15] an academic dimension to contribute to the Christian socialist movement; this dimension, like Maurician theology and Tractarianism was to be of continuing importance. Seventeen years after the establishment of the C.S.U., a third Anglican society, the Church Socialist League (CSL) came into existence, by which time the pioneering G.S.M. was twenty nine years old. With two societies of different and distinctive hue already in the field it might have been considered superfluous to add a third. To this question of the inadequacy of the existing societies to meet the situation as perceived by the conference members at Morecambe in 1906 we shall return when we examine that conference at which the possibility of amalgamation with the G.S.M., even on the basis of a modified Guild, was considered and rejected, whilst adhesion to the C.S.U. was not regarded as a serious option.

The development of the Labour and Socialist movement in general had, like that of Christian Socialism, an early and a later phase in the nineteenth century, a phase of experiments and theory and a phase of organisations. Following Marx, historians of the movement, in considering the early and middle parts of the century, commonly distinguish between the 'Utopian' Socialism associated with Robert Owen (1771-1858), and the 'Scientific' socialism associated with Karl Marx (1818-83) and Fredrich Engels (1820-95).[16] Yet despite the labours of

15. Dearmer loc. cit. p.130. 'We may safely describe the Guild of St Matthew as the soil from which the new plant sprang up.'

16. e.g. H.W. Laidler, A History of Socialist Thought (1927), p.v.

these three Olympian figures , H.M. Hyndman, (1841-1921), leader of the Marxian Social Democratic Federation, writing in 1910, could tell Christian Socialists that "so recently as 1881 there was no Socialism, no Socialist literature and practically no set of Socialists in this island."[17] The period between that date and the General Election of 1906, which is our particular concern in connection with the foundation of the C.S.L., saw the Labour Movement develop politically towards a Labour Party, and industrially to the 'New Unionism', the emergence into the Trades Union field of the less skilled workers. As in the case of Christian Socialism a number of organisations, with their accompanying journals, appeared, as the tempo of the movement quickened.[18] In 1881 Hyndman's book 'England for All' presented Marx's teachings to the English public and in the same year he founded the Democratic Federation, which in January 1884 first issued its organ, 'Justice'. In the same month there was founded a second society, the Fabian Society, different in style and method, destined to be vastly more significant and to exercise an immense influence on the subsequent development of the movement. In August 1884 the Democratic Federation changed its name to the Social Democratic Federation.

17. H.M. Hyndman, 'The Downfall of Liberalism and the Uprising of Socialism'. Article in the Church Socialist Quarterly, April 1910.

18. J. Clayton. 'The Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain 1884-1924' (published 1925) is a survey of the period by one who was himself deeply involved in it, and the broad outline of this section is drawn largely from this book. Clayton mentions by way of 'credentials' his involvement in the GSM, the ILP, the Fabian Society and the Gasworkers' and General Labourers' Union, his work as an election agent, his articles for 'Justice' and the 'Labour Leader', his pamphlets for 'Clarion', and his personal friendship with H.M. Hyndman, Keir Hardie, Edward Carpenter and Stewart Headlam (p.ix). As the title suggests, the book is written from the standpoint of disillusionment with what the author considered to be the transformation of the Socialist movement into a movement of social reform. It made a strong impression on the Christian Socialist and historian of the movement, Gilbert Clive Binyon. ('I want', p.13, unpublished typescript, Binyon papers, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.)

By the end of the year, however, internal dissensions led to a secession from the movement and the formation of another Society, the Socialist League, by one of the S.D.F's most notable members and its treasurer, the poet and craftsman, William Morris (1834-96). The League, however, had a short life: in 1890 it was captured by anarchists, at which point Morris established the Hammersmith Socialist Society[19], which was active until its founder's death. Meanwhile the dock workers' strike in London in 1889 had registered the first major success of the 'New Unionism'. This 'New Unionism' was to bring to the movement not merely an impressive increase in membership, but also much more overtly political, and indeed, socialist interest. In the field of publications the highly influential Fabian Essays appeared in 1889 and Robert Blatchford's magazine 'The Clarion', from 1892, was not merely to satisfy a readership but almost to create, with its clubs, vans and fellowship, a way of life. In 1894 items from 'The Clarion' were published in book form as "Merrie England" and the enormous sales gave a further powerful boost to socialist propaganda. In contrast to the message of the S.D.F., the Fabians and Blatchford were each presenting, to their respective audiences, middle class intellectuals and the mass of the people, versions of Socialism, evolutionary or ethical, which did not depend on the economic theories of Marx. Many Socialists who saw parliamentary action as the route to their goals were increasingly dissatisfied with the labour link with the Liberal party. The growing mood favouring separate parliamentary representation led in 1893 to the creation, at Bradford, of another organisation, the Independent Labour Party. From 1894 this organisation also

19. This Society was more important than the name, with its rather 'parochial' connotation would suggest. Gustav Holst, for example, became a member and learned about Socialism from Morris. He set several of Morris's poems to music, was invited to be first conductor of the Hammersmith Socialist Choir, and wrote the slow movement of his Cotswolds symphony (Symphony in F, Opus 8) in memory of Morris. For a number of years from 1914 Holst was to be closely associated with Thaxted Parish Church where the famous Christian Socialist, Conrad Noel, was Vicar. Imogen Holst, 'Holst', (1974), pp.21-23, 28, 40-46.

issued its own paper, Keir Hardie's 'Labour Leader'. Given the existence of three societies, S.D.F., Fabians and I.L.P., and the Trade Union movement, it was clear that electoral chances would be enormously enhanced if these organisations could be induced to co-ôperate and particularly if the man-power and money of the unions could be ranged behind the push to parliament. This desire found fruition in 1900 with the establishment of the Labour Representation Committee (L.R.C.) a federation of the three Societies and the Trade Union Congress, though a year later the S.D.F. pulled out. It was under the L.R.C. banner that twenty nine parliamentary seats were won in 1906. Shortly after their arrival in Westminster this group adopted the title 'Labour Party'. In the preceding three decades both the Christian Socialist movement and the Labour and Socialist movement in general have shown themselves to have been made up of a number of different elements, and this characteristic resulted in a tendency towards the spawning of new bodies and to fission, though in the L.R.C. some measure of co-operation was achieved. Nevertheless before the close of 1906 each had created three societies. Each had a more extreme doctrinaire society, the G.S.M. and the S.D.F., and each had a rather élitist, intellectual middle class organisation of gradualist temper, the C.S.U. on the one hand and the Fabian Society on the other, with access to the corridors of power, ecclesiastical and secular respectively. It would be unwise and indeed misleading to pursue the parallels further. With the formation of the C.S.L., however, the question arose as to how far this third Anglican Socialist body was to be a kind of spiritual arm of the third political society, the I.L.P. As we shall discover, a significant part of the history of the C.S.L. was to be taken up with this matter of relationship to the political labour movement.

The environment into which the Church Socialist League was born was one of the substantial alienation of the urban working classes from organised religion. Indeed to confuse the metaphor, this alienation could be regarded partly as parent, partly as environment, since Christian Socialism may be viewed, in some sense, as an aspect of the Church's response

to the presence of an urban population largely without religious attachment. Though it is questionable how far the participants in the movement were themselves conscious of this consideration as a leading, motivating factor in their actions there may be some justification, from a sociological standpoint, in viewing the movement as an unconscious, instinctive, institutional reaction to an adverse situation. Timely evidence about this adverse situation was provided in 1904 by the publication of the results of a comprehensive and thorough statistical survey of attendance at almost every conceivable place of worship in London.[20] This survey, commissioned by the 'Daily News', directed by a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society, the journalist Richard Mudie-Smith[21], took place over the period November 1902 to November 1903. Its findings confirmed those of a more limited exercise, the 'British Weekly' Census of 1886 and those of the social investigator, Charles Booth, who for his purposes had rejected the statistical method, and whose attempt to estimate the religious life of Londoners appeared while the 'Daily News' Census was in progress.[22] Moreover the statistical methods employed were of almost unassailable soundness.[23] Allowing for the fact that comparisons between the 1886 British Weekly census and the Daily News survey must be made with care because of the different methods employed, it is abundantly clear that in the seventeen years separating the two counts there had been a further sharp decline in church attendance, particularly in the case of the Established Church where there were now only three worshippers in 1902-3 for every four in 1886, despite an increase of some 500,000 in the population of London in that period.[24] The volume in which the statistics are presented contains a number of essays commenting on areas

20. R. Mudie-Smith (ed), The Religious Life of London (1904)

21. Who Was Who, 1916-28.

22. Mudie-Smith op.cit. p.188 (C.F.G. Masterman 'The Problems of South London')

23. Ibid. The methods are set out in Chapter 1. For a minor quibble on methods see e.g. p.189.

24. Ibid pp.281-4.

and aspects. Despite occasional traces of denominational partisanship and some inconsistencies between, and indeed sometimes within, contributions, a definite general picture emerges both from comments and figures. The survey indicated that 'even in neighbourhoods where both men and methods are alike admirable the majority of the inhabitants remain ... uninfluenced and untouched'.[25] Furthermore there was a strong correlation between the poverty of a district and low attendance figures at church. The higher the population density of a neighbourhood the lower was the percentage attending church.[26] A comparison of a middle class district with a working class district in South London reveals that 30.6% of the population of the middle class district attended church, but only 6.5% of the working class one.[27] The monumental Daily News census relates only to London but it seems unlikely that the situation in the great provincial cities differed greatly from that in the capital. As early as 1833 in a 'detailed and authoritative work' entitled 'Manufacturing Population of England', Dr Peter Gaskell, a surgeon who seems to have lived in the Manchester area, comments on the religious scepticism of modern factory workers.[28] Comparatively recently, the religious history of one major provincial industrial city has been investigated in depth.[29] The author, E.R. Wickham, finds that the broad generalisations and conclusions that emerge from his study of Sheffield are substantially those of any large industrial city of the country.[30] Wickham's first basic conclusion is that 'from the emergence of industrial towns in the eighteenth century the working class, the labouring poor, the common people as a class, substantially, as adults, have been outside the

25. Ibid p.10

26. Ibid p.26f.

27. Ibid p.197f.

28. Quoted by A. Steele, Helen Fleetwood: an early industrial novel, in Crucible, Sept. 1968 pp.143-4.

29. E.R. Wickham, Church and People in an Industrial City (1957)

30. Ibid p.13.

churches. The industrial working class culture pattern has evolved lacking a tradition of the practice of religion'.[31] For the Christian Socialist the situation at the turn of the century was both critical and challenging: the same industrial changes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had produced conditions leading both to the alienation of the urban masses from organised religion and to the emergence within these masses oforganised socialism, in some cases of an avowedly anti-religious nature. From the point of view of the foundation of the C.S.L. this extensive, established and increasing alienation was significant in two respects. In the first place it indicated the magnitude of the task facing any body, and particularly an Anglican body, aiming to make headway with the working classes. Secondly it indicated the small constituency from which the Church of England could recruit personnel to perform it. The past four decades had seen activities by the Church for the working class - even, perhaps, with the working class - but the prospect of an Anglican movement by or of the working class, seemed not to be a real starter, however much it might be needed.

Nevertheless, though the statistics of worship were gloomy, there were some shafts of light both from the direction of the labour movement and from the churches. The workers might be absent from the pews, the '<u>Clarion</u>' might raise a shrill anti-Christian shout but the debt of the Labour movement to the Christian religion was evident in ideals and insignia, and a residual Christian culture easily detectable in the language of its leaders. Whilst perhaps few people would accept without qualification the assertion of Mr George Thomas that Christian Socialism has been the driving force of the Labour Movement ever since it began,[32] few would deny that the contribution of the Christian faith has been considerable. The link between Nonconformity, especially Methodism, and the Labour movement is a well-mined historical seam: whilst the extent of the contribution may be a matter for debate, its existence is not.

31. Ibid p.14

32. S. Mayor. <u>The Churches and the Labour Movement</u> (1967), p.5 (Foreword by George Thomas, M.P.)

I.L.P. spokesmen drew on the vocabulary and imagery of religion "I sought out the apostles of the new creed", says Ramsay MacDonald, describing his admission to the S.D.F. in Bristol as a young man. "Then came the formal welcome to the stranger who had strayed into their midst. We had all the enthusiasm of the early Christians in those days. We were few, and the gospel was new." He goes on to describe the coffee house in which the admission ceremony was to take place, where "the dimly-lit small upper rooms with the hard penitential forms, impressed the novice with a sense of awe and expectation. That coffee shop was a cathedral, and its odours were the smells of sacrifice which were being offered up to Demos."[33] Keir Hardie told the House of Commons in 1904 that the unemployed man was "the human Christ whose crouching figure bore the accumulated sorrows of our complex civilisation; who was always being sacrificed and crucified in the interests of commercial greed."[34] If, then, we must speak of alienation, we must speak also of affinity. Indeed Keir Hardie could declare to the readers of the '<u>British Weekly</u>': "I claim for Socialism that it is the embodiment of Christianity in our industrial system";[35] and Ramsay MacDonald looked forward to a time when 'Christianity and Socialism, the Church and Socialism' were 'interchangeable terms'.[36] Thus, whilst the S.D.F. took an 'anti-religious' stance and the Fabian Society adopted a lofty neutrality (though clerics, notably the Christian Socialist, Stewart Headlam, served on its Executive Committee and wrote tracts under its auspices), the third Society, the I.L.P. spoke, in much of its membership, a language which Christian Socialists found familiar, and generated an atmosphere in which they need not feel estranged. Even among what might be styled the epiphenomena of the Labour Movement, there were grounds for hope: though the existence of Labour Churches, Socialist

33. Quoted in an article on Ramsay MacDonald's connections with Bristol <u>Western Daily Press</u>, 11th May 1935.

34. Hansard. <u>Parliamentary Debates</u>, 19th February 1904.

35. <u>British Weekly</u> 18th January 1894, quoted in Pelling, <u>The Origins of the Labour Party</u> 1880-1900 (1954).

36. <u>The Church Socialist Quarterly</u>, July 1909. Report of MacDonald's speech to the Annual Conference of the Church Socialist League.

Sunday Schools and even perhaps Clarion clubs could be regarded as evidence of failure on the part of the traditional religious bodies, their presence could also be seen as testifying to the continuing needs for fellowship and institutionalised religion which the traditional churches, if inspired anew, might appropriately aim to meet. In some cases Christians took a hand in setting up the Socialist Sunday Schools, as in Bristol where a Socialist Sunday School was founded in 1898. The membership of the Bristol Socialist Society which sponsored it was of all faiths - Christians, Jews, Secularists, Spiritualists, Theists, Theosophists - with Socialism as a common factor. Not surprisingly attempts to draw up an agreed basis for the school ran into difficulties. The final formula, embracing as far as possible the conflicting viewpoints of the Society's membership, and set out on cards inviting subscription to the school's funds, showed both how near - and how far - these institutions were from mainstream Christianity. "Socialism", it declared, "is a religion teaching Morality and the Brotherhood of Man as taught by Christ and others. Its central principle (its God) is Love - Love of Humanity. It strives to abolish unjust laws and customs which enable the idle rich to rob the industrious poor. It demands honesty, truthfulness, frankness of character and purity of life".[37] As for the Labour Churches, Lewis Donaldson, a future Chairman of the C.S.L., could see in them a re-affirmation of some of the cardinal doctrines of the Catholic Church ("every schism has presented some truth, albeit isolated from the proportion of all truth"): re-union with these 'seceding masses' should come when 'the Church at large has repented of its apostasy and is prepared practically to admit the truth for which the Labour Churches undoubtedly stand'.[38] Meanwhile the Churches themselves had taken steps to try to maintain and, hopefully, increase their contact with the working classes. The Settlement movement[39], the Christian Socialist movement

37. S. Bryher, 'An Account of the Labour and Socialist Movement in Bristol, Part II (1931), p.54.

38. F.Lewis Donaldson, The Church and the 'Labour Church' in W.H.Hunt, ed. Churchmanship and Labour: Sermons on Social Subjects (1906), pp.100-101.

39. Toynbee Hall was founded in 1884. As a result of some feeling that it had an insufficiently doctrinal basis for this work, Oxford House, accepting as residents only professed churchmen and acting in close co-operation with local parish churches was founded in 1885. These pioneering institutions were widely imitated. Reckitt, op.cit, p.123.

itself, the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon and the Adult School movements, the concept of the 'institutional' Church - all of these developments[40], many of them stressing the notion of 'brotherliness', were directed to this end. In the Church of England the growing concern about social issues and Socialism was reflected in discussions and statements from official bodies and influential spokesmen. At the Church Congress of 1887 Bishop Alexander of Derry read a paper on 'Christianity and Socialism'[41]. On July 27th 1888 an encyclical letter from the Bishops assembled at Lambeth commended the study of problems connected with Socialism[42]. That Lambeth Conference received a report drawn up by a Committee on Socialism and submitted it to the consideration of the Churches of the Anglican Communion, and also received a report of a committee appointed to consider the subject of the Church's practical work in relation to Socialism[43]. Though the conclusions were predictably cautious - they advocated small-scale land proprietorship and shares in co-operative societies, not state collectivism, to which they raised objections - the very fact that the subject received an airing at such an exalted level was significant[44]. In 1890, the Bishop of Durham, Brooke Foss Westcott, delivered a paper on Socialism to the Church Congress, meeting at Hull[45]. He sought especially to commend the subject to the careful study of the younger clergy[46]. His paper was concerned not with the various types of Socialism viewed in

40. Many of these developments are examined in Mudie-Smith, op.cit.

41. Reckitt, op.cit., p.133.

42. Randall Davidson, ed. The Five Lambeth Conferences, 1867-1908 (1920), p.119.

43. Ibid., p.121.

44. Ibid., pp.136-141.

45. B.F. Westcott, Socialism, a paper read at the Church Congress, Hull, by the Rt. Revd. Brooke Foss Westcott, D.D., Lord Bishop of Durham on Wednesday, October 1st 1890.

46. Ibid., p.3 (Page references are to the edition published by the G.S.M., 1890. The C.S.U., of which Westcott was President, also published the paper.)

practical economic terms[47], but he wished, rather, to "consider the essential idea which gave, or still gives, vitality and force to these different systems" and "to indicate the circumstances which invest the idea with paramount importance at the present time".[48] The burden of his exposition of the philosophic basis of Socialism is the contrast between Socialism and Individualism (rather than Socialism and Capitalism) and in his examination of the antithesis between competition and co-operation there are distinct echoes of F.D. Maurice's Tract on Christian Socialism, No.1, published in 1850, in which he declared:

> "The watchword of the Socialist is Co-operation; the watchword of the anti-Socialist is Competition. Anyone who recognises the principles of co-operation as a stronger and truer principle than that of competition has a right to the honour or the disgrace of being called a Socialist".[49]

Westcott declared that the office of believers now must be to "show that Christianity which has dealt hitherto with the individual, deals also with the State, with classes, with social conditions and not only with personal character."[50] Moving to his conclusion he stated: "We cannot doubt that God is calling us in this age, through the characteristic teachings of Science and of history, to seek a new social application of the Gospel."[51] Compared with the often strident and inflammatory utterances emanating from the G.S.M. and later from the C.S.L. and the Catholic Crusade, the tone and content is mild and reasonable.

47. He did, however, throw out a suggestion on wage labour which was much debated by later Christian Socialists. "Wage-labour, though it appears to be an inevitable step in the evolution of society is as little fitted to represent finally or adequately the connection of man with man in the production of wealth as at earlier times slavery or serfdom." Ibid., p.8.

48. Ibid., p.3.

49. Quoted in Reckitt, op.cit., p.89

50. Westcott, op.cit., p.10.

51. Ibid., pp.13-14.

Nevertheless it came to be regarded, even by 'advanced' exponents, as one of the 'founding documents' of Christian Socialism.[52] The term Socialism, said Westcott, "has been discredited by its connection with many extravagant and revolutionary schemes but it is a term which needs to be claimed for nobler uses."[53] It may be said that his paper did much to achieve this objective. His immense prestige, as front rank Biblical scholar and prelate of an important see, went far towards giving the stamp of establishment respectability to the notion of Socialism and towards making the way clear for an easier profession of it and acceptance of it by members of the Church of England. Discussions on social issues and Socialism ensued at diocesan conferences. The Newcastle diocesan conference in 1895 passed a resolution that a decent wage 'should be the first change upon products',[54] an idea which was to surface again in the Convocation of Canterbury and at the Lambeth Conference of 1908[55] and indeed at subsequent intervals in the story of Christian Socialism. Alongside resolutions went intellectual scaffolding: F.W. Bussell, for instance, took as his subject for the Bampton Lectures of 1905, 'Christian Theology and Social Progress'.[56] The year of the General Election, 1906, saw the publication of two volumes testifying further to the concern of the Churches with the social situation. In February there appeared, under the Editorship of G. Haw, a volume of essays by clerics and laymen of several denominations, under the title 'Christianity and the Working Classes'.[57] In reviewing the situation and analysing its

52. The radical Conrad Noel in an eleven page reading list entitled 'A Church Socialist Guide to Literature, Part II', describes Westcott's 'Socialism' as "perhaps the finest exposition of the philosophic basis of Socialism as contrasted with Individualism." It was a catholic selection including items published by the Fabian Society, the Clarion, the Social Democratic Party, the I.L.P., the C.S.U. and the G.S.M. The list appeared in The Optimist, July 1908.

53. Westcott, op.cit., p.3.

54. Quoted in Vidler, op.cit., p.100.

55. Davidson, op.cit., pp.413-5.

56. Published under that title in 1907.

57. A reprinting was called for by October 1906.

causes, the contributors told again the depressing tale of the massive divorce of the great mass of the working people from the life of the 'official' churches, but there was some slight comfort to be gained from the fact that the indifference and antagonism seemed to be directed not against the person and teachings of Christ but rather against 'ecclesiasticism' and its manifestations. 'Christianity and the Working Classes' was followed shortly by 'Churchmanship and Labour', a collection of twenty eight 'Sermons on Social Subjects' preached by six Anglican clergymen and one layman in St Stephen's Church, Walbrook. Five of the sermons, under the heading 'Labour and the Church' were preached by F. Lewis Donaldson, who had achieved a certain fame as the leader of the march of the Leicester unemployed to London in 1905 and who was later to be a chairman of the C.S.L., whilst another five were by Conrad Noel, later to be Organising Secretary of the League and one of its most energetic and colourful personalities. Two men who were also to be prominent in the C.S.L. were contributors to Haw's volume: George Lansbury, a future Chairman and The Hon. the Revd. J.G. Adderley. Meanwhile the clergy were showing their solidarity with the working classes in more visible form. In May front page headlines in the Daily Mirror announced 'Clergy join the Procession of London's Unemployed'.[58] It reported that a procession of the workless had marched from the Embankment to Hyde Park on the previous day. Fr. William[59], of St Philip's, Plaistow, had led the West Ham and Plaistow men. Four large photographs were published which featured prominently the processional banners, one inscribed 'The Church in West Ham - In the name of Christ we claim that all men should have the right to live', another bearing the words 'God and the Church teach that all should work. We ask for work for those who want it.'

58. Daily Mirror, Tues. May 15th, 1906.

59. Fr. William produced a booklet entitled 'Workless and Starving' published by The Church Press, Plaistow, June 1906. Fr. William was a priest of the Society of the Divine Compassion, an Anglican community established at Plaistow on the Franciscan model on 20th January 1894. J.G. Adderley, later to be prominent in the C.S.L., was one of the three founding members. (James Adderley, In Slums and Society (1916), pp.72, 79; T.P. Stevens, Father Adderley (1942) p.21)

In the quarter-century then preceding the formation of the C.S.L. we find revealed to us the stark statistics of alienation, but we find also on the part of the churches, increasing awareness, concern and engagement in the condition of the working classes and their economic and political aspirations. Beatrice Webb, surveying the sociological scene in 1884, decided that social questions had eclipsed religious concerns as the vital questions of the day[60]: by 1898 her fellow Fabian, Bernard Shaw, could observe that "Religion was alive again, coming back upon men, even clergymen, with such power that not the Church of England itself could keep it out."[61] Indeed Conrad Noel was able to declare that with Socialism his childhood interest in entering the priesthood returned and he was 'eventually ordained into the social democratic organ and instrument of the Divine Commonwealth and became a minister of the Church of England'.[62] It would indeed have been surprising had the Christian Church not made some response to its situation. As the American Protestant writer Walter Rauschenbusch pointed out in the not dissimilar context of the industrialised U.S.A., "the warning of justifiable self-interest runs in the same direction as the call of duty and each reinforces the other."[63] He went on to observe that "if the present class struggle of the wage-workers is successful and they become the dominant class of the future, any religious ideas and institutions which they now embrace in the heat of their struggle will rise to power with them, and any institution on which they turn their back is likely to find itself in the cold."[64] On this side of the Atlantic, writing in 1906, Dean Kitchen of Durham expressed a similar view. "Each age", he stated, "has trends and currents of its own, which it feels and is carried along with; if any system,

60. E.g. MS Diary March 16th 1884, quoted in My Apprenticeship, pp.182-9 (Penguin edition)

61. G.B. Shaw, 'Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant', Preface to Vol.II (1898), pp.vi & vii.

62. The Optimist, April 1908, 'An Interview with the Rev. Conrad Noel, Organising Secretary, C.S.L.'

63. W. Rauschenbusch, Christianity and the Social Crisis (1907), p.287.

64. Ibid. p.331.

religious or political, fails to recognise these movements, and neglects them, the penalty is that they in their turn will be neglected."[65] A few months after the publication of this view the Church Socialist League was to be launched as a forthright endeavour to remedy this neglect. The Dean wrote to the founding conference to wish all success to the movement. "The Church", he said, "has a special call to rally the working world, and to show them that we do care for the social problems under which they struggle."[66] His support was from the touch-lines: he did not apparently join the Church Socialist League.[67]

65. G. Haw (ed) Christianity and the Working Classes (1906), p.52

66. The Lancaster Observer and Morecambe Chronicle, 15th June 1906.

67. Dean Kitchen was, however, active with the 'milder' reformist C.S.U. See e.g. Commonwealth, May 1906, p.151.

# CHAPTER 2 - PRELUDE & FOUNDATION

The first faint stirring of life which can be definitely connected to the birth of the C.S.L. is to be found in a letter, signed 'A Durham Priest' and dated 14th August, which appeared in the '<u>Labour Leader</u>' of 18th August 1905[1]. During that summer the <u>Labour Leader</u> had aired the matter of the relationship of the clergy to the Labour movement. The issue of June 23rd reported the return to Leicester of the unemployed who had marched to London: it also carried 'An Open Letter to the Clergy' from Keir Hardie in which, taking as a text '... but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head', he called upon the clergy to stir themselves and do something about the misery and suffering caused by unemployment. He ended by telling the clergy:

> "If you will do none of these things" (he had suggested that they should preach and demonstrate in connection with the Unemployment Bill) "and have nothing else to suggest then you need not be surprised if the world, which is after all a practical place for practical people, goes on its way forgetful even of your existence. It is deeds not words which will win the world for Christ."

The letter from 'A Durham Priest' arose out of the ensuing correspondence[2]. In it the writer remarked that there were many clergy of the Church of England who were utterly dissatisfied with the attitude of the Church to the social

1. G.C. Binyon in <u>The Christian Socialist Movement in England</u> (1931) p.190, states erroneously that this letter was sent 'just after the Election' (of January 1906). S.H. Mayor, <u>The Churches and the Labour Movement</u> (1967) p.224, and P. d'A Jones, <u>The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914</u> (1968) p.247, quote Binyon in this connection. R. Groves '<u>Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement</u>' (1967) p.34 also has the same version, but without indication of source.

2. The same issue (18th August 1905) also contained a leading article on 'Church and Socialism'. Correspondence continued for several weeks. The issue of September 8th contained an article entitled 'The Church and Socialism - what is meant by politics' by Rev. F. Lewis Donaldson and Revs. W.E. Moll and J.G. Adderley aired their views on September 15th. All three men were to be prominent in the C.S.L.

conditions of the day, but owing to isolation and want of organisation were unable to express themselves in any adequate way or exercise a definite influence on behalf of the cause that appealed to their conscience no less than to head and heart. "I have long felt", he continued "the need for some effort to bring together the clergy who are more or less in sympathy with the aims and methods of the I.L.P., to decide on some common line of thought and action. We are Socialists because we are Churchmen and resent the awful perversity which marks the Church of the Carpenter of Nazareth. I venture to suggest, not because I am anyone of consequence, but because someone must do it, that the time has arrived for some united action on the part of those who are more than in name Christian Socialists".

He invited clergy who were in agreement with his suggestion to send their names and addresses to 'Durham Priest, Office of the Labour Leader'. "If there is sufficient response to this proposal", he concluded, "arrangements might be made for a meeting at some central place to consider what may be done." The editor, expressing willingness to forward any letters, added, by way of commendation: "We may remark that the letter signed 'A Durham Priest' comes from a clergyman whose name and office entitle his communication to attention and respect." The identity of the writer was revealed when, on September 1st a letter appeared signed 'G. Algernon West, the "Durham Priest".' West had been Vicar of St Thomas, Bishop Wearmouth in Sunderland since 1901[3]. Apparently a considerable number of letters had been forwarded by the Labour Leader to West and on September 8th the paper published a letter expressing support for West's views and signed 'Another Durham Priest'. Nevertheless some ten months were to elapse before West's suggestion of a meeting was to materialise. In that interval there took place the General Election of 1906: that event and a subsequent pioneering conference of clergy and labour at Mirfield were to provide the impetus to translate West's germinal notion into institutional reality.

3. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.

The formation of the Independent Labour Party at Bradford in 1893 had reflected the increasing political awareness and activity in the North of England and subsequently accelerated it[4]. By the time of the General Election of 1906 much patient sowing of political seed had taken place and the Labour Representation Committee was well established. Inevitably a number of clergy of Socialist sympathy or persuasion, whether through deduction from their theology, observation of the lives of their parishioners or both, had become noted for their interest in and work for the Labour movement before its arrival as a parliamentary force in 1906[5]. The Election campaign showed that the number of these clerics who were Labour sympathisers, the kind of people whom West had in mind in his letter to the Labour Leader of August 18th 1905, was very considerable, and Ramsay MacDonald paid tribute to the great assistance that Socialist Churchmen had given in the Election[6]. Conrad Noel told the readers of the Clarion[7] that "Socialist candidates were helped by Socialist priests at East Leeds, South Leeds, Wakefield, Dewsbury, Blackburn, Halifax, South West Ham, Chester-le-Street, Middlesbrough, Norwich, West Bradford, Newcastle, Burnley, Leicester, Birmingham and in other places; Hyndman had three Anglican parsons on his platform, Jowett had three working for him and many priests who had no Labour man to support wrote to the papers on behalf of independent action." Help, as Noel's list indicates, was not restricted to the I.L.P. One of those

4. For a review of this period by one who was involved in it see J. Clayton 'The Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain 1884-1924 (1926). For detailed later surveys see H. Pelling, The Origins of the Labour Party 1880-1900 (1954) and F. Bealy and H. Pelling, Labour and Politics, 1900-1906 (1958).

5. P.E.T.Widdrington 'Christian Socialism Past and Present, IV The Church Socialist League' in Commonwealth, April 1927. Widdrington mentions ten Northern clergy. Five of these were later to be officers of the C.S.L., and a sixth a member of its committee.

6. Occasional paper of the Guild of St Matthew No.34, February 1906, p.5, extracts from correspondence received.

7. Clarion, Friday March 16th, 1906.

whom Hyndman, leader of the Social Democratic Federation, invited to help him at Burnley[8] was the Revd. Percy Widdrington (1873-1959)[9] who was to be a member of the C.S.L. throughout its life and for a period its Chairman[10]. From Burnley, Widdrington went on to Accrington to support Dan Irving, also on the S.D.F. ticket, and thence to Preston to support the trades union candidate who won the seat[11]. At the Middlesbrough hustings one future Chairman of the C.S.L., George Lansbury, was supported by another future Chairman, Rev. T.C. Gobat[12], Vicar of St James, Darlington. The Labour campaigns generated much fervour- "I have never witnessed any enthusiasm to equal that displayed in the North during that memorable fight", said Widdrington[13] - and the results were greeted with acclaim, even rapture. "By many who had known the beginnings of the Labour Party, the return of thirty[14] members was regarded as an earnest

8. P.E.T. Widdrington. Those were the Days - article in Christendom, March 1947. Widdrington shared the platform with, amongst others, Bernard Shaw and Lady Warwick, who was also to become a member of the C.S.L. (Church Socialist, July 1912, gives frontispiece photograph, biographical note and article 'Some Church Socialists and their views - vi - The Countess of Warwick'). Hyndman lost by some 300 votes and would have won, says Widdrington, but for a momentary display of tactlessness which estranged the Roman Catholic vote. He was, he told Widdrington, naturally prejudiced against Christianity. "I remember", says Widdrington, "a remark of his: 'If your father had diverted £150,000, the money he inherited, to the creation of a Trust to force on parishes Calvinistic hell-firers would you feel well-disposed towards the Church?'"

9. For life of Widdrington, see M.B. Reckitt, P.E.T.Widdrington (1961).

10. Church Socialist, October 1916, p.200.

11. Widdrington, loc.cit.

12. George Lansbury in Molly Gobat, T.C. Gobat: His Life, Work and Teaching - A Memoir by his daughter (1938), pp.42-3. Lansbury became Chairman of C.S.L. in 1912 (Church Socialist, June 1912, Report of Annual Conference). Gobat was Chairman for the last year of the League's existence (C.S.L. Committee minutes, 7th June 1922, Stacy papers, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds).

13. P.E.T.Widdrington, Christian Socialism, Past and Present - IV - The Church Socialist League. Article in Commonwealth, April 1927.

14. The thirty members includes one member who joined the L.R.C. after the election. For details of the election see G.D.H. Cole, British Working Class Politics, 1832-1914 (1941) p.283 ff.

that only a few years could delay the triumph of the cause. A wave of hope swept over the country: a new day was dawning"[15]. Joseph Clayton, like Widdrington looking back over two decades, speaks also of the rejoicings. "Edward Carpenter's song, 'England arise, the long long night is over', was chanted all over the country with fervour, and the last line of that popular anthem, 'England has risen, and the day is here!' came from the throats of multitudes with the thankful solemnity of a Te Deum"[16] Nor were the Te Deums occasioned solely by any narrow exclusively secular and political view of the result: the Churchmen who had been involved in the campaigns saw the outcome through the eyes of Christian commitment and found in it joy, hope, and opportunity. Reviewing the post-Election scene in the North East, the Revd. W.E. Moll of St Philips, Newcastle, a veteran Socialist[17] who was shortly to be one of the founding fathers of the C.S.L., declared that in the North there was a tremendous opportunity for those who were "Socialists and definite Christian and Churchmen also. A purely materialistic exposition of Socialism is powerless to touch the democracy here, but when it is presented with all the ethical enthusiasm engendered by the living faith of the speaker it goes straight home"[18]. The vast majority of the new Labour M.Ps seem to have had some Christian attachment or conviction: according to one commentator only two of them were 'not believers'[19]. Lewis Donaldson was forthright in his assessment: "For an explanation of the Labour triumph ... he (a Leicester correspondent) should have referred me to God. For He it is who by means of His faithful workers among the poorer classes has long been educating their civic and political conscience towards better things[20]... The Labour

15. Widdrington, loc.cit.

16. Clayton, op.cit., p.130.

17. Optimist, October 1907, "Moll ... whose name is a household word in Labour circles in the North" (West)

18. Occasional paper of Guild of St Matthew, No.34, February 1906, p.3.

19. F.H. Stead, The Story of Social Christianity Vol.II (1924), pp.179-180. Stead was Warden of Browning Hall 1894-1921. The work is avowedly homiletic in tone (see Preface, p.V), part history, part Christian apologetics, and is somewhat unsympathetic to the Established Church, particularly the High Church wing.

20. Lewis Donaldson, The Church and the New Labour Movement in W.H. Hunt (ed), Churchmanship and Labour, Sermons on Social Subjects (1906) p.83. Much of this sermon and the next one in the series (The Church and the Labour Church) were conflated into an address on The Church and the new Labour Party given by Donaldson in Bristol on March 27 1906 (Western

Party challenges the existing order of society. It is a religious cry it raises[21].... The official Church has failed to see in the outstretched hands of labour the veiled appeal of Christ Himself .... Intrinsically the Church has the same ideals (as Labour) viz. the moral and physical well-being of the people. The doctrine of the Incarnation, the witness of the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, even her mode of worship, point directly to an alliance between the Church and a movement involving ideas so eminently Christian as those of the Labour Party. It is therefore inevitable that the two must coalesce, or rather that the one shall absorb the other, and that the Church, awakened out of its temporary alliance with the 'upper classes' and recognising, however, tardily, in the Labour movement, the call of the enlightened and quickened moral consciousness of the people for reform in the external arrangements of social life, will by the very law of her being, absorb this last manifestation of the Holy Spirit's work in society ...."[22]

Not absorption or even coalescence but dialogue on a large scale took place in a conference of Clergy and members of the I.L.P. and S.D.F. at the House of the Resurrection, the Anglican monastery at Mirfield on May 5th 1906[23], and we may see this Conference as one of the stepping stones leading towards the foundation of the C.S.L.[24] The Superior of the Community of the Resurrection, Father W.H. Frere (1863-1938), a former C.S.U. group secretary for East London[25], and Father

21. Ibid. p.85.

22. Ibid. p.90.

23. Report of a Conference of Clergy and Members of the I.L.P. and S.D.F. The compiler (anonymous) gives his address as House of the Resurrection and report is dated 30th June 1906. Report acknowledges help from newspaper reports, especially Church Times and Yorkshire Post. Stacy papers, Hayward collection.

24. Conrad Noel papers, Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull. Unidentified newspaper/magazine cutting of article by Noel entitled 'The Socialist League of the Church of England.' N.d., but from internal evidence probably May or early June 1907.

25. Percy Dearmer, 'The Beginnings of the C.S.U. 1889-93' in Commonwealth, May 1912.

P.B. Bull (1864-1942) had both spoken for Labour candidates in the General Election campaigns[26], and at the Community's Chapter Meeting of February 17th they were given permission to invite members of the Labour Party and sympathetic clergy to a Garden Party on May 5th. The invitations specified the subjects for discussion as:-

> "1. Educational - How are we to spread the principles of Socialism?
>
> 2. Practical - What can be done at once? A social programme"[27]

which seemed to suggest that the conference might be casting the Church in the role of handmaid to the achievement of socialism. It presented a stage on which no agnostic or atheist need feel reluctance to tread. The catchment area was limited basically to Lancashire and Yorkshire, and invitations were issued to a large number of members of the I.L.P. and S.D.F. in these counties, to secretaries of branches of the C.S.U. in the immediate neighbourhood, and to as many clergy as were known to be Collectivists in sympathy with the Labour movement. Despite the counter-attraction of an important Labour conference at Wakefield, which incidentally was addressed by Church and Labour leaders in the persons of the Bishop and Keir Hardie[28], a large gathering representative of both sides

26. Mirfield Chapter Minutes, December 30th 1905 registers decision of an Extra-Ordinary Chapter held on 28th December allowing Paul (Bull) to be absent on January 2-3 to speak for the Labour candidate. (Minutes deposited in Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York.) Report of Conference refers to Frere's electioneering activities.

27. Archives, Community of Resurrection. Cutting of article by W. Leach entitled 'The House of the Resurrection' in 'Forward', n.d. Across the top of the cutting in what is possibly Bull's handwriting appear the words 'Forward - a dirty little rag published in Bradford'. Another cutting in the same collection reveals 'Forward' as being the official organ of the Bradford I.L.P. and bears a long front page article by Bull on the 'Ideals of Labour' (Forward No.113, January 19th, 1907)

28. Church Times, May 11th 1906; Report of Conference, loc.cit., p.2.

assembled at Mirfield. At the beginning of the proceedings some three hundred were present, and an estimated further hundred arrived later[29], clergy and delegates from the secular Socialist societies attending in roughly equal numbers[30]. The first resolution, proposed by Fr. Bull, called for more co-operation between the organisations of the Church and Labour. A Labour delegate from Bradford, however, argued that co-operatior with the Church, as the Church, was impossible at present, since in the main it was reactionary. He proposed, therefore, an amendment so that the resolution should read:-

> "That this Conference desires to see more co-operation between the Socialist members and agencies of the Church and Organised Labour with a view to spreading the principles of collectivism and developing a more aggressive propaganda."[31]

Fr. Bull, and the seconder of the resolution, a Mr Haslip, an Agnostic Councillor from Horsforth, accepted the amendment which was duly carried nem.con?[32] Fr. Bull's stirring speech eulogising Socialism, and in the tradition of Maurice and Westcott contrasting the motives and consequences of competition and co-operation, was, inevitably, received enthusiastically. Drawing to a conclusion he told the conference that the ideal of Socialism was stamped with the mark of God's approval. "Christian Socialists believed that the social ideal was according to the will of God the Father, and the teaching of God the Son, and they were sure that it could never be realised except by the inspiration and power of God the Holy Ghost - uniting men into one vast brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God."[33] Unlike Donaldson who, a few weeks previously in his Lenten addresses, had spoken to a Church audience of coalescence and indeed absorption of

29. Report of Conference, p.2.

30. Leach article, loc.cit.

31. Church Times, loc.cit.

32. Report of Conference, loc.cit., p.8.

33. Ibid., p.5.

Labour by the Church[34], Bull, more realistically stressed the note of co-operation. "For this high aim", he reminded the conference, "the resolution proposed that the Christians who were Socialists and the Socialists who were not Christians should 'co-operate', not amalgamate. This was no scheme for capturing the one party or the other, but a scheme for uniting as fellow workers as far as possible for their common end all classes of social reformers. The present selfish system could only be abolished by the power of Christianity and so the Socialists needed the 'co-operation' of the Church; while on the other hand the Church needed the help of that splendid flame of enthusiasm which burned in the hearts of secular Socialists who in their labours on behalf of brotherhood often put Christian men to shame. He hoped, therefore, that the meeting would lead to a friendly feeling between the various Socialist organisations inside and outside the Church and to a more vigorous propaganda."[35] Bull's speech expressed sentiments which were to be echoed at the founding conference of the C.S.L. at Morecambe. The first half of this Mirfield conference was to be taken up with discussion on this resolution calling for co-operation: in the second half attention was turned to those practical issues which the members felt to be most urgently in need of promotion, the feeding of children, a national scheme of old-age pensions, the provision by the State of work for the unemployed and the taxation of unearned incomes. Discussion of these practicalities was interrupted by what proved to be the dramatic climax of the afternoon - the arrival from the Labour Conference at Wakefield, of Mr Keir Hardie M.P., whose appearance brought the members to their feet amid rousing cheers. Hardie expressed his delight at being present at what he called "this remarkable, this unique gathering." He observed that a few years ago a gathering of this kind, if proposed, would have been scouted, as an attempt on the part of the Church to 'nobble' the Socialist movement."[36]

34. Hunt, op.cit., p.90

35. Report of Conference, p.5.

36. Ibid., pp.3 and 9 ff.

In a speech resonant with eloquent emotion and ethical idealism, Hardie addressed himself not only to the immediate practical issues before the conference but, with the aid of allusions to Christ's teaching on brotherhood, oneness and unity, and suggestions of sacrifice, he presented to his audience an apocalyptic vision of the socialist future, eminently acceptable to both 'sides' of the conference. It is instructive to compare accounts of the proceedings from the Church and the 'secular' wings. The Church Times, ever eager to discern evidence of catholicism, even in improbable places, was able to 'redeem' the Scotsman and Nonconformist Hardie by observing that "there was something almost Catholic in his pleading for individual sacrifice for the good of the whole race", though clearly his contribution was felt nevertheless to be limited on the spiritual side. The paper also derived evident satisfaction from the tributes paid to the great help given to the Socialist and Labour cause by High Church clergy and, one suspects, almost equal satisfaction from the personal testimony of some delegates that Dissent was becoming increasingly allied with the interests of capital and that the advocacy of Socialism had made attendance at chapel impossible for them. There were signs of a somewhat patronising air in some of the references to cloth caps, 'aggressive secular dress', and the free mixing of ' priest and scholar and artizan all for once meeting on a common level', whilst much play was made of Keir Hardie's 'evident ease' in such company as indicated by 'the smoking of his cherished pipe'[37]. Though such references may grate on modern ears, we may also see in them testimony that such a conference was indeed novel and remarkable. The Church Times correspondent thought that it was perhaps the least conventional conference that he had ever attended. From the 'other side', W. Leach, reporting for 'Forward', the organ of the Bradford I.L.P., took a rather consciously detached view, writing in the tone of an outsider for outsiders, professing previous ignorance of the Community and assuming it amongst his readers, describing

37. Loc.cit.; see also Optimist, October 1906, Letter to the Editor, p.6.

Mirfield and the meeting with just the slightest suggestion of the superiority of sardonic Secular Man. Like the Church Times correspondent, Leach too found the conference an unusual experience: he ends his article with the statement:- "I came away with a splitting headache. I am not used to such company."[38] Nevertheless, despite indications of condescension in each, both Church Times and Forward, from their differing standpoints, found much to admire in the conference: the former in "the reverence with which our Lord and His teachings were always referred to", the latter in that "every clergyman who spoke voiced Socialism in clear and uncompromising terms". In reviewing the proceedings the Superior hoped that the Conference would mark a new starting point: the conferees were clearly satisfied with it and called for the experiment to be repeated.[39]

For our particular interest, the foundation of the C.S.L., the conference was significant in a number of ways. In the first place, as is frequently the case with hospitality, it did much to create closer ties of friendship and respect between clergy and Labour leaders on both sides of the Pennines. The Church Times, considering the early part of the conference, commented that there was "clearly some degree of suspicion at the back of the [Labour] delegates' minds." The meeting, however, gave the opportunity for the acceptable ventilation and absorption of criticism of the Church's record and role. Two of the clerical speakers themselves pointed to the Church's shortcomings. The bloodletting which took place clearly had a beneficial effect. Moreover, one clergyman, the Revd. W.B.Graham, assured the Socialist agnostics that they were Christians in spirit without knowing it: indeed in the days of the Roman Empire they would have been labelled as Christians and duly put to death. Perhaps the realisation that they lived in a more tolerant age engendered a feeling of well-being and rendered the suggestion

38. See footnote 27. Perhaps the tone of the article occasioned the 'dirty little rag' caption.

39. Mirfield Chapter Minutes, October 6th 1906, record that Superior and Paul (Bull) given permission to invite Socialists to a conference on April 27th. Reports of Conference in e.g. Labour Leader May 3rd, 1907 and Optimist, July 1907.

plausible, even gratifying, rather than merely irritating. Whatever the case, the speech, concluding with the scriptural declaration "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me", brought cheers from the audience. The warmth of the community's reception also played its part. The Church Times reporter decided that the Labour delegates' suspicion of the clergy had completely vanished before the end of the day. At tea, he observed, no doubt with a certain element of bias, that "the men who had been most eager to pose as Agnostics were now most eager to declare their respect for those Christian men who had received them and desired to work with them and for them as brothers". If such was the case it could only be easier in the future for Christian Socialists to be regarded as having a legitimate and accepted place within the Labour movement. Secondly, the level of response to the invitation to the Mirfield Conference - roughly two hundred clergymen and two hundred Labour delegates who were prepared to talk with them about co-operation, both groups drawn very largely from two northern counties - was an encouraging numerical indication of the potential basis for further development on these lines and a confirmation of the supposition made by West, in his letter to the Labour Leader, that there were many clergy of Labour sympathies whose activities could be co-ordinated. Thirdly, the Mirfield Conference was significant in that it explored some of the terrain and expressed some of the notions that were to feature at Morecambe: despite some very obvious differences in basis, content and aims - the latter meeting for instance was very largely clerical in composition - the Mirfield Conference can be seen as in some respects furnishing a prototype for Morecambe or at least as providing valuable experimental data.

Meanwhile, in the North East, West had not been idle. In an interview published in the Optimist he answers the question "What suggested the formation of the C.S.L.?[40] He does not begin the story with his letter to the Labour Leader of August

40. Optimist, October 1907, An Interview with Revd. G. Algernon West, Chairman of the C.S.L., by the Editor.

18th 1905 but with the General Election of January 1906. However, he refers to the situation of Labour clergymen in relation to the General Election in terms almost identical to those used in the letter[41]. "The last General Election", he says "revealed the fact that many Churchmen throughout the country were in sympathy with the Labour Party and gave active support to Labour candidates, but nearly all such were acting with all the weakness and discouragement that comes from isolated unorganised effort. It was obvious that if all this Socialist conviction and action within the Church could be unified and consolidated it would enormously strengthen our position and influence." He made this suggestion to some of his friends and found that they had similar thoughts[42]. Again there is no mention of the response elicited by his Labour Leader letter and referred to by the newspaper. His account of the League's formation does not correspond in every respect with two accounts from Widdrington[43] of the sequence of events leading from West's reflections on the General Election to his chairmanship of the Morecambe Conference. West, having found that others shared his views, tells us that he then "had the advantage of constant communication with my good friend Moll, of Newcastle - whose name is a household word in Labour circles in the North - and together we worked out the scheme which was in the main submitted to the Morecambe Conference." [44] He tells us that their deliberations matured in the woods at Saltburn, a place which he now regards 'almost as sacred'. Widdrington in the earlier of his accounts, tells us that "the idea of forming a Church Society committed to the acceptance of Socialism originated in the discussion of a small group of priests engaged in a preaching mission at Morecambe a few weeks after the election. The leader in these discussions was Algernon West".[45] In his second account, written

41. A possible reason for Binyon's erroneous chronology. See footnote 1.

42. Optimist, October 1907, Ibid.

43. Commonwealth, April 1927, p.119; Christendom, March 1947, p.22.

44. Optimist, loc.cit.

45. Commonwealth, loc.cit.

twenty years later and some forty after the event but occurring in an article dealing at some length and in considerable detail with his life in the period 1903 to 1906 and giving the impression of being based on diaries or other records of the time, he presents a slightly different version. "The idea of the conference originated with Algernon West and W.E. Moll, my old Vicar, but it was a Parish Mission at Morecambe which brought the idea to fruition. The missioners were Algernon West and T.C. Gobat[46]. Gobat, like West, was a priest from the north-east coast: one of the most loved and able of the northern clergy. During the Mission, Hastings[47] and I attended a number of committee meetings at which the projects of the conference were discussed and a letter of invitation framed."[48] The apparent slight confusion between these various accounts arises from their incompleteness and a tendency, perhaps, in pinpointing the origins, to place different emphases on the original broad germinal ideas and the later, more detailed schemes and arrangements. Widdrington's article in Christendom certainly seems to bear out this interpretation. Putting the various accounts together the likely sequence of developments is as follows. West, finding in the campaigns and results of the General Election massive encouragement for the ideas he had expressed in his letter to the Labour Leader in the previous August, sounded out friends of like persuasion and found further support. These ideas were elaborated and consolidated in discussions with Moll from neighbouring Newcastle - the 'Saltburn conversations'. Later, during the Parish Mission at Morecambe, West, Gobat, Hastings,Widdrington, Canon Gorton,

46. Molly Gobat, op.cit., pp.57-58 makes no mention of her father's involvement either in the Parish Mission at Morecambe or the conference at Mirfield (Church Times, May 11th 1906). She does however mention West's letter to the Labour Leader and his 'Saltburn conversation' with Moll and her account is open to the interpretation that her father was 'in the movement' before the actual foundation of the C.S.L. She is probably reliant, at least in part, on information from the Revd. G.C. Binyon who worked with her father and contributed an appreciation of him to the book. Incidentally, p.61, she corrects Binyon's dating of the ending of the League.

47. Hastings was Rector of Halton, near Lancaster, and Widdrington was his curate. Christendom, loc.cit., p.18.

48. Ibid., p.22.

the Rector of Morecambe[49], and perhaps others, hammered out the specific details and arrangements for the conference and devised a letter of invitation. This letter[50], dated 14th May 1906, echoed the sentiments expressed in West's letter to the Labour Leader of 18th August 1905. It spoke of the many Anglican clergy who were convinced that it was "the Church's duty to inspire, encourage and support every effort that seeks to bring to the People a larger and richer Social and Economic Life as well as one more moral and spiritual[51]. There is a feeling that the Church as a whole fails in this Duty, that there is a distinct lack of corporate action on Social questions; that to the vast multitude of the People the Church stands as a figure dumb and unheroic, without interest in their struggles for Life and Living." Reference is made to the impotence of individual clergy scattered throughout the Church. The time was ripe for an effort to unite the clergy "who are convinced that the Church ought to promote social amelioration".[52] An attempt should be made "to form within the Church itself an organisation which would seek to influence the Church in its Diocesan and Ruri-Decanal Conferences, and in other ways force to the front the consideration of the People's Problem." The whole position would be discussed and definite proposals for joint action considered at a conference to be held at Morecambe on June 13th and those who were in sympathy with the aim expressed in the letter were invited to attend. The letter set out

49. Optimist, loc.cit. West Says "I should also add that the League in its initiation owed a great deal to Canon Gorton, Rector of Morecambe who entered so heartily into the arrangements which made it possible to hold the Conference in his parish."

50. Copy of letter in Conrad Noel papers, Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull.

51. Ibid. Capital letters as in the original, i.e. 'People' and 'Social and Economic Life', but not 'moral' or 'spiritual'. N.B. also the order.

52. This particular phrase was described by Widdrington as "a most temperate way of expressing what was in our mind". Christendom, loc.cit. No doubt the framers of the letter were anxious to avoid putting off potential collaborators by a too extreme expression of their views.

four subjects for discussion at the conference:-

1. Deductions from the last General Election
2. Ideals of the Labour Party
3. Duties of the Church
4. Proposal for corporate action

The letter went out over the signatures of West (Chairman), Gorton and Hastings (Secretaries) and twenty eight other clerics. All six clergy - West, Pinchard, Donaldson, Widdrington,Bull and Gobat - who in time were to occupy the chairmanship[53] of the C.S.L. appeared on this list, and another nine were certainly to be prominent in varying degrees in the life of the C.S.L., particularly in the early days[54]. Among the signatories were at least eight who had attended the Mirfield Conference, held nine days before the date of this letter, including the conveners, Frere and Bull, and two of those who had been involved in drawing up the plans for the Morecambe Conference, Gobat

53. For officers of C.S.L. see, successively, Optimist, Church Socialist Quarterly and Church Socialist, passim. The only layman to be chairman was George Lansbury, 1912-13.

54. Conrad Noel, who was to be a leading member of the League for much of its life and probably its most colourful personality, states in his Autobiography (1945) p.59 that he, together with Moll and Widdrington called the conference at Morecambe. There is no other evidence to support this assertion of Noel's involvement and the list of signatories to the letter of invitation (deposited amongst Noel's papers in Hull University Library) does not bear his name. Noel and Widdrington had served together as curates of Moll in Newcastle, the former from 1898-1900, the latter from 1897-1901. By 1906 Noel was attached to St Mary's Hampstead (Crockford's Clerical Directory). It is just possible that Noel was involved in the Morecambe Parish Mission and hence in the discussions on arrangements for the conference but if that were the case,Widdrington would presumably have referred to the fact, particularly in view of Noel's future prominence in the C.S.L. A more likely explanation is that the account in Noel's Autobiography is inaccurate. It was published posthumously and edited by Sidney Dark. Dark points out in his Foreward that the work had been dictated by Noel when he was in failing health and not revised. 'It had the inevitable characteristics of the work of a man whose great powers were nearing their end.' There are other apparent chronological inaccuracies, e.g. in Noel's account on p.107 of the formation of the Catholic Crusade.

and Gorton[55]. Presumably the response to West's Labour Leader letter and the Mirfield Conference of 5th May together with other personal contacts provided an adequate mailing list.

Compared with the Mirfield meeting the conference at Morecambe was small in attendance, more specific in aim, and, in the foundation of an organisation that was to run for seventeen years, more significant in achievement. Paul Stacy, who had been present at the impressive Mirfield conference[56], and who was to be a stalwart of the C.S.L. throughout its life, reported the Morecambe meeting in the Labour Leader[57], and in his account there is just the suggestion of disappointment in the size of the attendance for which he compensates by stressing the magnitude of ideas and spirit which he found there. "We were only a small gathering in the Rectory gardens at Morecambe on June 13th", he begins, "but the tone was one of exhilarating confidence. After all, it does not matter how small a movement is in its beginnings provided it is big with ideas. Did not the I.L.P. begin in little efforts - so little as to be outside the ken of ordinary politicians? Or as someone remarked last Wednesday, the Church herself began with a few dozen enthusiasts on the Day of Pentecost."[58] On the other hand Widdrington who, as we have seen, had been involved in making the immediate arrangements for the Conference and who does not appear to have attended the one at Mirfield, was clearly gratified by the response. "The Conference, when it assembled in June, exceeded our anticipations. It brought together over sixty priests and a few laymen."[59] Widdrington's attendance figure is the highest of those given in the various accounts: the local newspaper and Noel, writing in The Commonwealth at

55. Neither Church Times (May 11th, 1906) nor the 'Report of the Conference' from C.R. gives a list of those attending. Of the estimated attendance of 200 clergy the Church Times gives the names of only 22 of the parochial clergy, amongst these Canon Gorton and 'the Rev. J. Cobet, Darlington', surely a misprint for the Rev. T. Gobat, Vicar of St. James, Darlington.

56. Church Times, loc.cit.

57. Labour Leader, June 22nd, 1906.

58. Ibid.

59. Commonwealth, loc.cit.

that time, both provide a list of names under the formula 'among those present' and each, including the sprinkling of laymen, falls just short of sixty[60]. The imbalance between clergy and laity reflects West's initial thinking about a conference as expressed in his letter to the Labour Leader which had arisen in the context of discussion in that paper on the clergy and the Labour movement. The inclusion of laity in the Morecambe Conference was clearly an afterthought: "nothing was said", remarks Widdrington,"in the letter [of 14th May 1906] about inviting lay people to join the new society, an omission which was corrected when the conference met and quite a sprinkling of laymen arrived."[61] The 'sprinkling' is perhaps more accurately described as a few drops: lists of participants identify positively only three by name - Cllr. Tom Richardson, described as 'miners' representative on the Durham County Council, Mr A.E. Harrison, secretary of the Lancaster Trades Council, and Miss Gorton, presumably a relation of the host[62]. Richardson, who had worked as an agent in the election campaign at Chester-le-Street[63], was the only layman to address the conference. He introduced the second item on the agenda, 'Ideals of the Labour Party', making what the Yorkshire Post described as "a forceful speech, delivered in the Durham vernacular"[64]: perhaps his role at the conference was that of obligatory grass roots local Labour politician. The members of the conference were drawn overwhelmingly from the North. The Mirfield conference had recruited mainly from Yorkshire and Lancashire: at Morecambe these two counties provided about forty members with the home county predominating in a ratio of rather more than two to one. The other northern counties provided a further ten. Only a handful therefore came from further afield; four came from the Midlands, and two from

60. Lancaster Observer and Morecambe Chronicle 15th June 1906; Commonwealth, July 1906, p.223.

61. Christendom, loc.cit.

62. See footnote 60.

63. Lancaster Observer etc., loc.cit. Moll seems to have been involved personally in the Chester-le-Street campaign (Occasional paper of the Guild of St Matthew, No.34, Feb.1906, p.3) Richardson therefore may have been invited by Moll. It is also likely that West (Sunderland) would have known him.

64. Yorkshire Post, June 14th 1906.

London[65]. Almost half of the signatories to the letter of invitation appear not to have attended the conference. There was an almost total absence of Church dignitaries: there was one Bishop, in ecclesiastical 'trade jargon' a 'returned empty', Hamilton Baynes who had been Bishop of Natal from 1893 to 1901 and who was then Vicar of St Mary, Nottingham[66]. Bishop Baynes preached the sermon at the special Evensong on the eve of the conference, but he did not, apparently, join the new organisation[67]. There were two Canons: S. Falle,Hon. Canon of Carlisle and Hon. Sec. of the Church Congress, who became Dean of Jersey later in the year and W. Moore Ede, Hon. Canon of Durham, who became Dean of Worcester in 1908[68]. Falle joined the C.S.L., Moore Ede did not, though he clearly had, and retained, much sympathy for its position and work.[69] The Community of the Resurrection was represented by Fathers Healy and Bull. The vast mass of conference members were parochial clergy - incumbents and curates from the coalfields and industrial areas of Lancashire, Yorkshire, the North East and West Cumberland, together with a few from the neighbourhood of Morecambe itself. Of the two or three who came from the more remote Arcadian fastnesses of Westmorland, one , at least, the Revd. R.W. Harris, had served his Socialist apprenticeship in the metropolis[70].

65. Lancaster Observer etc., loc.cit.

66. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.

67. The Church Socialist League - First Report (March 1907), list of members. (Archives, Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield)

68. Crockford's Clerical Directory 1923.

69. C.S.L. - First Report; Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1909: article entitled 'Agencies outside the Church which are working for Social Redemption' -Dean of Worcester. (A lecture delivered at Cambridge to candidates for Holy Orders) "I don't suggest you shall all join the Church Socialist League. I declined to do so myself, because I am not prepared to endorse it in its entirety, its economic basis of universal collectivism ...."

70. Crockford's Clerical Directory details Harris's appointments in east London. Commonwealth, May 1912, p.134 indicates involvement in beginnings of C.S.U.

The conference made its way through the agenda with the expression of predictable rhetoric. The chairman, West, in his opening remarks, struck an ancestral chord by quoting from a sermon preached by Charles Kingsley in 1851[71]. The connection with venerable Christian Socialist forbears was also made by Stewart Headlam. He was clearly the meeting's great celebrity. Present amongst admirers, friends and former disciples[72], Headlam received a great ovation. "We were all anxious for Mr Headlam's turn", wrote Paul Stacy[73]. Introduced as "the noblest Roman of them all" and a pioneer[74], the Warden of the Guild of St Matthew described himself as "the direct successor of Maurice, Kingsley and the first Christian Socialists of the mid-nineteenth century".[75] The crux of the day's business was the fourth item, proposals for corporate action, and the key question was whether another organisation was needed. Perhaps no-one could more appropriately or more pointedly have asked that question than the Warden of the G.S.M.: Headlam duly asked it.[76]

The position of the Conference in relation to the G.S.M. and, to a lesser extent, the C.S.U., clearly invites scrutiny.

71. Labour Leader, loc.cit.

72. Commonwealth, April 1927, pp.119-120. Widdrington speaks of "men like Moll, Kennedy, Donaldson and Paul Stacy, who had learnt their theology from Headlam and looked up to him as disciples to a master".

73. Labour Leader, loc.cit.

74. Yorkshire Post, loc.cit.

75. Lancaster Observer etc., loc.cit. At least one other member of the Conference also had personal links with Maurice, but does not seem to have declared them to the meeting. "I knew Maurice, attended his lectures at Cambridge, sometimes went to hear him preach ... I also went with a few others to his house to listen to him expound moral philosophy (The Dean of Worcester, Dr W. Moore Ede: What we owe to Frederick Denison Maurice and those whom he influenced and inspired - pamphlet, n.d., 1933?, p.5)

76. Lancaster Observer etc., loc.cit.

West, from as early as the summer of 1905, seems to have envisaged the possibility of a new organisation. As we have already seen, his letter to the Labour Leader (18th August 1905) and his reflections on the post-Election situation of 1906 (as recorded in the Optimist, October 1907) speak of the isolated, unco-ordinated, and therefore weak, activities of scattered individuals. The question of whether the G.S.M. or even the C.S.U. could be made to meet the perceived needs of the situation was, as Widdrington[77] informs us, considered at the talks preceding the Conference, and insuperable objections were raised, both then and at the Conference itself. The letter of invitation[78] echoed West's previously recorded views and suggested that the time had come to form an organisation. Again, no reference was made to the fact that Societies were already in the field, the C.S.U. now well into its second decade, and the G.S.M. of almost thirty years' standing. Curiously, however, more than half the signatories to this letter were members of the G.S.M., including its Warden, Stewart Headlam[79]. Moreover Headlam was invited to introduce the third item on the Conference agenda, Duties of the Church, and, as we have seen, he received a rousing welcome from the members[80]. Noel, who had served as secretary of the G.S.M.[81] urged the very considerable advantage of keeping to the Guild and suggestions for an extended and slightly altered G.S.M. were made. Although tributes were paid to the Guild's fine traditions and present value, and although several members of the G.S.M. were present, the conference was convinced that for the particular work it had in mind a new society was required.[82]

77. Commonwealth, loc.cit.

78 Conrad Noel papers, loc.cit.

79. Christendom, loc.cit.

80. Lancaster Observer etc., loc.cit.

81. Justice, Oct.1st 1904, e.g. carries an article on Christian Socialism by Noel, described as Hon.Sec. of the G.S.M.

82. The Chairman, West, told Headlam that the proposal for a new society was because many felt 'that nothing at present existed to do the work they felt ought to be done if the Church was to take her proper attitude towards social questions'. Lancaster Observer etc., loc.cit.

"Our own scheme being negatived", says Noel, "Mr Headlam threw himself wholeheartedly into the Conference, and made many valuable suggestions as to the formation of the new league"[83]. Widdrington, too, remarks that Headlam "behaved with magnanimity, and did not press the claims of the G.S.M."[84]. Despite his public front at the Conference Headlam was clearly disappointed by the outcome. A week after the Conference in a memorandum[85], marked 'Private and urgent', which he sent to members of the Guild, he expressed his feelings. Pointing out that the new society, though formed in the North, was to cover all the English Dioceses[86], he had come to the conclusion that he could not advise the continuance of the Guild unless much more support was forthcoming. The Guild was without a Secretary and it was in debt. He remarked that "the general stir of the last few months and a considerable increase in our work have only brought us in a few new members: the expectation which I had formed of a large increase in members as a result of the Morecambe Conference has not been realised." He wanted to find out whether the present 230 members of the Guild would, in addition to their subscription, guarantee between them a sum of at least £50 a year for three years: if so they might still keep the Guild's flag flying. "The alternative .... is that the Guild should be dissolved, and if this is to be done, the

83. Commonwealth, July 1906,pp.222-3: The Church Socialist League Conference at Morecambe, by Conrad Noel.

84. Christendom, loc.cit.

85. Memorandum from the Warden to the Members of the Guild of St Matthew, June 20th, 1906. Copy in Conrad Noel papers, University of Hull. This communication was subsequently printed in Occasional Paper of the G.S.M. No.35, September 1906.

86. This statement appears to be at variance with that made by Headlam's biographer that he "seems to have come to a working arrangement in accordance with which the C.S.L. was to have a free hand in the north" (F.G. Bettany - Stewart Headlam : A Biography 1926, p.93).

formation of the new League, which will maintain some of our principles in an attenuated way, offers an opportunity for doing it." The Guild survived[87]:in September its Council, while regretting that it had been thought necessary to start a new society, and while wishing the League all success, expressed the view that there was still most important work for the Guild to do.[88]

The Morecambe Conference members found the G.S.M. unsuited to their purposes on four main grounds: its moribund condition, the extreme and uncompromising nature of its expression of Catholicism, its political stance and its involvement in what were regarded as irrelevant, or at best, peripheral activities. There was, too, a miscellany of minor objections.[89] Though the term 'moribund', employed by Widdrington, was perhaps too harsh a description of the Guild's condition, it was certainly not in a flourishing state: the Annual Report for 1906 revealed a total membership of 237, scarcely an impressive achievement after twenty nine years of activity.[90] It had known more prosperous days. P. d'A Jones in his study of the Christian Socialist revival analyses the decline of the G.S.M. He cites a number of reasons - the demise of its magazine, The Church Reformer, in December 1895; Headlam's involvement in the Oscar Wilde affair, which, though courageous, led to a number of resignations; the rift between the mercurial Guild member, C.L. Marson and the Warden; and Headlam's deprecation of the I.L.P. and overpartiality to the Liberals, which Jones considers to be his greatest error of judgement. He pinpoints 1895 as the year in which the tide turned against the G.S.M. There was an unsuccessful attempt to unseat Headlam from the Wardenship

87. The Guild struggled on through various vicissitudes until 1909 when Headlam wound it up. (Bettany op.cit., pp.92-3 gives Headlam's reasoning in the matter in April 1909, but the Guild proceeded to an A.G.M. on 21st September, where in fact the Agenda gave every indication that its existence would continue.)

88. Occasional Paper of the G.S.M. No.35, September 1906, p.8.

89. Commonwealth, July 1906, pp.222-223 and April 1927, pp.119-120; Christendom, March 1947, p.22.

90. Occasional Paper of G.S.M. No.35, September 1906, p.6.

in that year, interpreted by Jones as "a personal victory for Stewart Headlam, but an ultimate defeat for the Guild of St Matthew"[91]. In June 1903 in a memorandum to the members of the Guild's Council, Headlam asked whether it would not be well for the Guild quietly to dissolve[92]. The Church Times, reporting the G.S.M's Annual meeting later in that year found that the society had fallen on evil days. There were 270 members on the books but the attendance at the annual meeting was lamentably small and the reporter found many "signs of atrophy"[93]. In contrast, by 1904 the situation seems to have been more encouraging: reporting that year's Annual meeting the Church Times speaks of a "large gathering" - the draw, however, may have been that G.K. Chesterton was billed to speak[94]. By 1906, in the wake of the General Election, there were further hopeful signs. A flourishing new group, thirty strong, had been started in East Ham, and there were hopes of further additions to the membership.[95] A special meeting was held in February to welcome the new Labour M.Ps[96]. Widdrington and Moll, so soon to be directly engaged in setting up the C.S.L., were unable to be present but wrote, associating the recent Labour victories with the efforts of the Guild over the years. Moll hoped the Guild would take on a fresh lease of life as a result of this encouragement[97]. An 'Address from the Clergy to the Labour Party', expressing congratulations, sympathy and support was drawn up by the Council of the G.S.M.

91. P. d'A Jones, op.cit., pp.145-158.

92. Memorandum to members of the Council of the Guild of St Matthew, June 25th 1903 (Conrad Noel papers, University of Hull)

93. Church Times, September 25th, 1903.

94. Ibid., September 30th 1904. The large gathering was apparently greatly disappointed that G.K. Chesterton was unable to the present.

95. Occasional paper of the G.S.M. No.34, February 1906, p.1.

96. Ibid, p.2; Clarion, Friday March 16th 1906, full report by Conrad Noel under title 'Socialism in the Church'.

97. Occasional paper of G.S.M., No.34 February 1906, p.3.

and signed by 165 clergy[98]. Given this level of activity the Guild could not be easily written off, nor does it seem unreasonable that, in this atmosphere, Headlam should have hoped for, even expected, a strong transfusion of Northern enthusiasm from the Morecambe meeting. However the instincts of the conferees were probably right: the G.S.M's fortunes had fluctuated for more than a decade, its base was small and, approaching its thirtieth year, it was probably somewhat set in its ways - too much, perhaps, to be easily adapted to meet the needs of the new situation. Moreover, Headlam, despite attempts to unseat him[99], and his own offer in 1903 to stand down[100], showed great tenacity over his occupancy of the Wardenship: he had become, in fact, the permanent leader of the organisation he had founded. The Guild, moreover, was financially dependent on the Warden: the accounts for 1906 reveal that roughly a quarter of the society's total income came from a loan from its leader[101]. It would have been difficult to have conceived of the G.S.M. without Headlam at the helm. To have accepted the G.S.M. as a vehicle at Morecambe would have involved accepting Headlam as the driver. It was a point not likely to have been lost on West. Again, the judgement was probably sound. In the last years of the Guild Headlam found the pressure for change from the younger

98. Copy of the address, dated, with signatories, in Conrad Noel papers, University of Hull. Not all the signatories were G.S.M. men, but the list was circulated inviting them to join. Occasional Paper of G.S.M. No.35 September 1906, p.6 indicates that Address originated with Council of G.S.M. The signatories included those who were primarily involved in setting up the Morecambe Conference - West, Moll, Gobat, Hastings and Widdrington - together with many of those who attended, Kitchin, Dean of Durham, who sent a letter to the conference, Frere, Superior of the Community of the Resurrection, Bull, his fellow convener of the Mirfield Conference, and another ten members of the Community of the Resurrection. Scott Holland of the C.S.U. also signed.

99. See footnote 91.

100. Memo. Headlam to G.S.M. Council members, June 25th 1903. In the light of the history of Headlam's occupancy of the Wardenship it is questionable whether this offer represented a genuine intention or was merely a tactical move.

101. Occasional paper of the Guild of St Matthew No.35, September 1906, p.9. Headlam had provided a similar loan in 1905.

set decidedly trying: his inflexibility, or as he saw it, his loyalty to the distinctive traditions and witness of the Guild, was finally demonstrated by his readiness in 1909 to disband the organisation rather than have transformation thrust upon him.[102]

Given the Catholic flavour of Anglican Christian Socialism the objections to the Churchmanship of the G.S.M. may seem more surprising, particularly in view of the presence at Morecambe of a sizeable G.S.M. contingent including several who were close friends of Headlam and, indeed, his progeny in the movement.[103] Not all the conference members, however, had been reared on this diet. The Church Times described the Morecambe Conference as representative of all schools of theological thought[104]. Significantly perhaps, West, despite his G.S.M. associations[105], was more like Westcott than Headlam in his Churchmanship[106]: indeed, he had received his theological training at the Church Missionary Society's College at Islington, an institution of an ecclesiastical colour very different from that of the Headlamites[107]. Speaking of the Conference, however, Widdrington is insistent that the formation of the C.S.L. should not be regarded as the surrender of the Catholic basis of the old Guild: those who had learned their theology from Headlam were not the type of people to surrender any essential belief in order to form a new society. "On the sacramental basis of the Faith", he tells us, "the conference was emphatic. So emphatic was it that one eminent broad Churchman left the conference in disgust, and several others who attended the

102. Bettany op.cit. pp.90-92.

103. Commonwealth, April 1927, p.119.

104. June 22nd, 1906.

105. P.d'A Jones, op.cit., p.242 states that West joined the G.S.M. in December 1893, but gives no source. Occasional Paper of the G.S.M. No.35, September 1906, gives details of a celebration of Holy Communion at West's Church in connection with the patronal festival of the Guild, i.e. three months after the formation of the C.S.L.

106. Binyon, op.cit., p.193. Amongst other places Binyon worked in the North East.

107. Crockford's Clerical Directory; Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church.

conference did not join the League." Nevertheless, whatever were the feelings at the conference of Widdrington and those who shared his viewpoint, key erstwhile disciples of Headlam such as Moll, Kennedy, Donaldson, Stacy and Widdrington himself, did join the League[108]; and moreover, the written basis of the League, hammered out in the afternoon, reflected no such explicit emphasis. In its 'Form 1' - a list of Principles, Object, Methods, Rules and Constitution - there is only one reference to the sacraments, the first of the clauses under 'Methods' requiring members "to cultivate by the regular use of Prayer and Sacraments the life of brotherhood"[109] Widdrington felt that the objections to the theological position of the G.S.M. centred not so much on its essentials as on its expression and its external manifestations[110]. He speaks of a gulf dividing the North from the South in ecclesiastical outlook at that time. The Catholicism of the North was of a more sober habit. "We did not employ the word 'Mass' and the cultus of Our Lady was not familiar to any but a few of the clergy ... There were Anglo-Catholic outposts here and there, but most of us had to be content with a minimum of externals and to tread warily lest we should destroy the possibilities of winning our people." Though Headlam's speech at the Conference obviously delighted Stacy - "this was the old teaching repeated last Wednesday, and never before had it come with quite so much freshness and force"[111] - it was probably, by its tone and content, a tactical error if Headlam's hope was to enlist the Morecambe men in the Guild's ranks. Among the speeches at the Conference where the religious references tended to touch on ethical implications and duties and on such basic, broad and acceptable concepts as the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man and the work of the Holy Ghost, Headlam's

108. The C.S.L., First Report, loc.cit.

109. The Optimist, October 1906, pp.63-64.

110. Commonwealth loc.cit. Christendom loc.cit.

111. Labour Leader, loc.cit. Bettany, op.cit., p.219 describes Stacy as one of Headlam's most devoted followers.

contribution strikes a rather incongruous, almost strident note. References to the seven sacraments and particularly to the sacrament of penance were scarcely likely to commend him to "all schools of theological thought". From the chair, West, in answer to Headlam's question about the advisability of forming another organisation, declared that the Guild of St Matthew only attracted men belonging to one theological party[112]. In a printed leaflet about the League issued after the Conference West softens this criticism: The Guild, he states, does not appeal to Churchmen of all schools of thought[113]. In their decision to found a new organisation the conference members were governed by the realities of Church life in the north, and indeed across the country: if they were to have a strong, broadly based comprehensive movement they could not risk excluding potential members by espousing an organisation bound up unmistakably with a particular ecclesiastical tradition.

Widdrington saw the political objections to the G.S.M. as being more crucial than its expression of Catholicism: "it was the political alignment of the G.S.M. even more than its ecclesiastical vocabulary which determined us to form a new society"[114]. Such a statement from Widdrington is perhaps a little surprising when one considers the contents of his letter in February, 1906, apologising to the Guild for his absence from the special meeting to welcome the new Labour M.Ps. In this letter, full of the enthusiasm of the moment, he declares, a propos of Guild members, that "our relation to the Labour Party has never been that of sympathetic outsiders ... We have drawn no fine distinctions between Christian Socialism and Economic Socialism. We have identified ourselves with the definitely Socialistic and Labour organisations. We have stood side by side with the men who were working for the Social Revolution"[115]. It was around this time too that the Council

112. Lancaster Observer etc., loc.cit.

113. Copy in Noel papers, University of Hull. Also printed as Form II in Optimist, October 1906, p.64.

114. Commonwealth, loc.cit.

115. Occasional paper of the Guild of St Matthew No.34, February 1906, p.5.

of the Guild was to present its 'Address to the Labour Party'. Nevertheless, if the G.S.M., as the more 'advanced' of the two Anglican Christian Socialist Societies, and containing within its ranks, at that time, many who would soon find a more congenial habitat in the C.S.L., responded positively to the post-Election mood, it had not always been so. As far back as 1891, Percy Dearmer (1867-1936) , no doubt with some of the radical impatience of youth, was complaining about the political atmosphere of a G.S.M. meeting:- "I was full of a great sick feeling about the clergy after the Guild of St Matthew debate - just the arguments one has heard about the suffrage and every other reform. So that a 'horror of darkness' came over me, and I asked myself whether the clergy could ever come to Christian views since even out of that small, disreputable G.S.M. there arose 10 Tories ..."[116]. It is likely that in his article on Morecambe in Commonwealth,Widdrington's assessment, making due allowance for the variations in political standpoint between individual members, reflects more accurately the political traditions of the Guild than the manifestations of post-Election excitement, including his own letter, to which we have alluded. Particularly, perhaps,was this assessment true of the Warden himself. Speaking of the Morecambe men's view of the Guild, Widdrington observes: "If its presentation of religion struck the northerner as London, Brighton and South Coast, its politics bore too close a likeness to the Metropolitan Radical Federation. Headlam was the outstanding figure in the Guild and throughout his life he was a Radical with Socialist leanings. He held that the best way of achieving a new state of society was through the Liberal Party, which, as time went on, would shed its Whigs. The G.S.M. might have easily been mistaken for a Henry George Society with a traditional attachment to the Liberal Party"[117].

116. Draft of a letter to a friend in his diary, dated October 1st 1891. Quoted in N. Dearmer, The Life of Percy Dearmer (1940) p.71. In January 1910 after a meeting of the C.S.L. at Warwick Castle at which he had been one of the speakers invited by Lady Warwick, Dearmer, who was nearing the end of his time as Secretary of the C.S.U. said, "Now I shall soon be free and able to join up with you all". I have found no evidence that Dearmer ever did join the C.S.L.

117. Commonwealth loc.cit.

On one occasion Headlam declared "Yes, I am a Socialist, but I thank God I am a Liberal as well"[118]. He was associated with the Church of England Liberal and Progressive Union[119], a body "founded in 1904 for the purpose of consolidating the forces of Liberalism and Progress within the Church of England and of resisting attempts made to use the organisation of the National Church for the benefit of the Conservative Party."[120] In letters to Stacy when he is not using his own writing paper, or that of the London County Council Education Offices, it is that of the National Liberal Club[121]. In the context of the Morecambe Conference, however, the Liberal connection was not a recommendation. Widdrington points out that in the North Liberalism was beginning to be a discredited creed with the workers. In their eyes it was committed to the old order: the Labour Party was the pioneer of a new order. "Liberalism was merely a system of politics: Labour was an industrial programme with a religious dynamic. That was the position in 1906, and in the years that followed".[122] The Socialism of the Guild then, and more particularly of Headlam, such as it was, had too many links with Liberalism and too many associations with Henry George's Single Tax proposals to commend itself to the Collectivist crusade which was gathering momentum at the time of Morecambe, where a Socialist cleric from Salford was moved to confess "We are all for compulsory Socialism by confiscation"[123]. It was Widdrington's considered opinion of the Guild that "at no period of its existence was it in full sympathy with the Labour movement"[124].

118. Bettany, op.cit. p.214.

119. Times, October 31st 1906. Report of the Annual Meeting of the Union, at which Headlam was present.

120. The Church and Elections, pamphlet by C. Roden Buxton, being a paper read at the Church Congress, Barrow in Furness, October 1906. The back page of the pamphlet sets out the purposes of the Church of England Liberal and Progressive Union. (Conrad Noel papers, University of Hull)

121. Stacy papers, Hayward Collection. (In possession of author)

122. Commonwealth, loc.cit.

123. Yorkshire Post, 14th June 1906.

124. Commonwealth loc.cit.

Some of Headlam's other multifarious and well-known involvements were also felt to be a disadvantage. Widdrington suggests that the Guild was too closely identified with what some regarded as the idiosyncracies of the Warden, such as the Church and Stage Guild, and his interest in the ballet[125] - matters which some felt would not cut much ice with North-country trades unionists.[126] Noel pointed out that the Guild was associated with a policy of secular education (another of Headlam's enthusiasms), believing that religion was best taught in conjunction with worship in the Parish Church. Such matters were not the concern of the conference. "The League", wrote Noel "refuses to risk the rejection of its Socialist propaganda by pronouncing on other points, or having a policy on matters indifferent to Socialism and controverted amongst good Socialists."[127] There were one or two other minor objections - for instance, some felt that the very name 'Guild' was a little parochial and that something with more 'national' connotations was required.[128] The mood of the Morecambe Conference was single-minded: there was a determination that nothing however admirable or important "should swamp the one thing this Conference wanted to urge, propagate and stress."[129] Both before the Conference, and again during it, the G.S.M. was carefully weighed in the balance, but found wanting.

The other established society, the C.S.U., was much larger than the G.S.M. and better connected. Although like the G.S.M. its origins were in the south of England it had branches in the north: indeed in the C.S.U. notes in The Commonwealth for May 1906, the month before the foundation of the C.S.L., we find that of the nine group or branch meetings reported, seven took place in the north, five of these in Lancashire and two in the north east. Several of those who attended the Morecambe meeting were members.[130] Yet Widdrington, considering whether existing

125. Christendom loc.cit.

126. M.B. Reckitt op.cit. p.43

127. Commonwealth, July 1906, p.223.

128. Ibid. p.222.

129. Ibid.

130. Ibid.

societies could serve the purposes of the Morecambe conferees, dismisses the C.S.U. in a sentence in one account and gives it no mention at all in the other. "The C.S.U. for obvious reasons did not lend itself to the kind of action we had in view" was his verdict[131]. Haw, in a book published in February 1906, gives us a clue to these 'obvious reasons'. "There was a time", he writes, "when it was thought that the Christian Social Union .... would win work people. That time is past. The objects of the Union are excellent .. But the spirit is wanting. Work people do not belong to the Christian Social Union. The Labour Movement knows nothing of it. The Union is now largely an appendage of the High Church party, whose social zeal workmen welcome while filled with amazement to see it associated with a form of Church worship and institutionalism that to them are as far removed from the Christ of the New Testament as Freemasonry or Mohammedanism"[132]. An article on the C.S.U. in The Guardian considered that the society would do invaluable service if it only succeeded "in preparing the minds of the upper and middle classes to meet in a right spirit the advent of the new social order which will take something away from them and give it to others whose necessity is greater".[133] It was in the middle and upper classes that the C.S.U. made its impact: the concern of the Morecambe conference was more directly with those masses whose necessity was indeed greater. Binyon, who joined the C.S.U. in 1899[134], points out that in the C.S.U. there were different conceptions of what was meant by 'the Christian Law'. (The first of the listed 'Objects' of the C.S.U. was to claim for the Christian Law the ultimate authority to rule social practice.)

131. Commonwealth April 1927, p.119.

132. G. Haw, Christianity and the Working Classes (1906), p.25.

133. The Guardian, Wednesday August 10th, 1904. Article: 'The Evolution of the C.S.U., Mary E. Christie.

134. G.C. Binyon, 'I want ...' unpublished typescript (1927?) p.4 Binyon papers, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.

"For some, perhaps one in a hundred, it meant the consciousness of a God-willed social order hovering as it were over the actual world: for others it meant simply being true and just in all their dealings within and assuming capitalist society"[135]. A pamphlet produced by the Oxford University branch of the C.S.U. in 1906 speaks of the three principles of Christian Socialism as being the principles of Interference, Thought and Balance and considers that one of the main functions of the Christian Socialist is to strike the true balance between extremes. "In all questions of social reform there is likely to be just this tendency to extremes and the need of such a mean as Christian Socialism can alone supply - not a state of inaction or indifference but a keen love of what is true and just, an entire enthusiasm for God's method of salvation."[136] The moderate tone and the reference to 'social reform' (rather than 'socialism') are significant - a far cry from some of the sentiments expressed at Morecambe. The article in the Guardian, to which we have already referred, concedes that in its charter of principles and rules the word 'Socialism' does not appear, but it maintains that the principle of Socialism is there. This was not a view shared by West at Morecambe. It was only towards the close of the day that the question of the C.S.U. was raised. Already the name and constitution of the new League had been provisionally discussed when the suggestion was made that the C.S.U. covered the ground and the conference members might rest content with that body. The suggestion was massively outvoted.[137] In answer to the question as to what difference there was between the new League and the Christian Social Union West replied, "The difference is vital. This League will consist of definite Socialists. The Christian Social Union does not."[138]

135. Ibid, p.5.

136. C.S.U., Oxford University Branch, Three Principles of Christian Socialism. Pamphlet dated Trinity Term 1906. [Noel papers, University of Hull]

137. Commonwealth, July 1906, p.223.

138. Yorkshire Post, loc.cit.

The reply was amplified in the printed statement about the League which followed the conference. "The Christian Social Union has interested, through its valuable literature, a large number of respectable people who think it quite safe to describe themselves as Christian Socialists without in the slightest degree having any belief in the common ownership of the sources of production or distribution, and are, therefore, not Socialists at all. The new League requires its members to be convinced Socialists, in the historical and economic meaning of the word. It is thus a Society within the Church, composed exclusively of Socialists"[139] Headlam incidentally was even more scathingly dismissive, speaking of "the Christian Social Union, with its dignitaries and philanthropists, always learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth".[140]

In setting up a new organisation, the intention of the Morecambe Conference members was to complement the work of the other societies[141], not to compete with it. Noel reported that most of them belonged to one or other of these societies and did not intend to resign but they wanted a special society to do a special piece of work[142]. There is ample evidence of the continued participation in the affairs of the older societies by those who founded the C.S.L.[143] The 'urgent memorandum' which Headlam sent to G.S.M. members after Morecambe produced some response to his appeal for a "Guarantee Fund" and men who had joined the C.S.L. were among those who came to the rescue.[144] Moll was the preacher at the service

139. Noel papers, University of Hull; Optimist, October 1906, p.64.

140. Occasional Paper of G.S.M., No.36, November 1906, p.4, Wardens Address at 29th A.G.M. of G.S.M., 24th September. In the same speech Headlam also made a withering reference to the C.S.L.: "the new Church Socialist League, started by our friends and members in the North, who seem to think that there are some people who will find a religious basis for Socialism in the Protestant religion, rather than in the Catholic faith, who have yet to prove their strength, but to whom we wish hearty God-speed ..."

141. Manchester Guardian, June 14th 1906.

142. Commonwealth loc.cit.

143. E.g. Occasional Paper of Guild of St Matthew No.40; C.S.U. leaflet No.14 'The Unemployed' is by Lewis Donaldson [n.d. but leaflet No.8 is dated 1907]

144. Occasional Paper of G.S.M., No.35, September 1906, p.8.

marking the twenty ninth anniversary of the foundation of the Guild and at the supper which followed he explained the reasons which had led to the setting up of the C.S.L.[145] At its A.G.M. in September 1906 the Guild reacted to the new Christian Socialist situation by making some rather cosmetic alterations in its rules, the effect of which was to give a more Socialist glow to the society's countenance: as far as Headlam was concerned they merely expressed more plainly than before what had always been the Guild's principles, but he commended them because they met"the wishes of some of our younger members for whom the traditions of our Guild are insufficient".[146] The leaflet 'The Guild of St Matthew, what it is and who should join it', first issued in 1895, was re-issued in 1906[147]. Nevertheless, despite signs of vitality, adaptability and support, and although the First Report of the C.S.L.[148] was able to speak of "kindly relations with the C.S.U. and the G.S.M.", the foundation of a new and enthusiastic Christian Socialist Society was bound, however unintentionally, to affect the vigour of the existing organisations by syphoning off some of the available energy and interest from the limited number of avowed Christian Socialists in the land. Particularly was this the case with the G.S.M.: the C.S.U. operated in a rather different manner and orbit. Headlam continued to have trouble with his "younger members", and the shadow of the League hung over the last years of the Guild. One resolution at the Annual Meeting of 1908 called for a pledge that the Guild was committed to Socialism as defined by the various Socialist societies (including the C.S.L.), and that "any utterance or action on the part of a Guild member, inconsistent with the advocacy of Socialism, so understood, is incompatible with loyalty to the Guild", whilst a second called for close co-operation and consultation with the C.S.L. The first was defeated and the second was withdrawn.[149]

145. Ibid.

146. Occasional paper of G.S.M., No.36, November 1906, pp.2-3.

147. Copy in Conrad Noel papers, University of Hull.

148. Loc.cit., p.3.

149. Occasional Paper of the G.S.M., No.44, September 1909, p.5.

Headlam said of this occasion that it was "perhaps the most dangerous moment in our history."[150] It was these dangerous moments and the attitudes of which they were a manifestation that led Headlam to disbound the Guild. In a letter to the Guild's Treasurer in 1909 he wrote:- "The only thing we do is to talk about a definition of Socialism ... I don't want the name of the Guild to be captured by a few people out of touch with our work ... The Church Socialist League will provide a home for these people when the Guild is dead."[151] As for the C.S.U., it survived through various vicissitudes until after the first World War when it lost its identity in the Industrial Christian Fellowship.[152]

The basis and rules of the new organisation were drawn up during the afternoon of the Morecambe Conference[153], though the preliminary meetings had presumably done much spade-work. Both the G.S.M. and the C.S.U., influenced by the theological climate in which they had emerged, were committed to studying social questions in the light of the Incarnation. During the discussions at Morecambe an attempt was made to have some similar obligation included in the written Basis of the new League. Widdrington was the instigator. "I had the feeling", he tells us, "that the most important purpose of a Church Socialist League was to elaborate a Christian approach to the problems of the new era. So I ventured to plead for the inclusion in the Basis of 'The adumbration of a Christian Sociology'.[154] At that time the phrase 'Christian Sociology' was strange and therefore my amendment to the Basis received little or no support." The idea was demolished by a "witty but mischievous" speech by Father Bull, who denounced the phrasing

150. Bettany op.cit., p.91.

151. Ibid., p.92.

152. John H. Heidt in 'The Christian Social Union', an article in I.C.F. Quarterly, July 1977, gives a more accurate account of the end of the C.S.U. than that of many writers.

153. Lancaster Observer etc. loc.cit.

154. Christendom loc.cit.; Commonwealth April 1927, pp.120-121. It also appears to have gained little attention from those who reported the conference. Of the various accounts only Widdrington's seems to refer to it.

of the proposal as "savouring of intellectualism and unintelligible to the simple, both Christian and Labour".[155] The proposal was defeated, but the notion was not dead as we shall discover.

The Conference finally decided on the following Basis for the League:-

Principles:-

1. The Church has a mission to the whole of human life, Social and Individual, Material and Spiritual
2. The Church can best fulfil its social mission by acting in its corporate capacity
3. To this end the members of the League accept the principles of Socialism.

Object

To secure the corporate action of the Church on these principles

Methods

1. To cultivate by the regular use of Prayer and Sacraments the life of brotherhood
2. Members undertake to help each other in fulfilling the object of the League by speaking and lecturing and in other ways
3. Members shall co-operate as far as possible to secure the consideration of social questions at their Ruri-decanal and Diocesan Conferences, and the election of Socialists on these and other representative bodies
4. Members shall work for the disestablishment of the Patron, and the substitution of the Church in each parish in conjunction with the Church in the Diocese in the Patron's place

155. Ibid. The Widdrington school of thought had a certain fondness for 'adumbration'. Father Bull had a point - the 'adumbration of a Christian Sociology' would seem at least as likely to put off Northern artisans as Headlam's passion for the ballet.

5. To secure the due representation of the wage earning classes upon all the official representative bodies of the Church.

Rules

1. Membership - Open to all members of the Church of England
2. The members are pledged to make themselves familiar with at least one branch of social reform.

Constitution

1. The members shall form themselves into groups with a secretary for each Diocese
2. There shall be an Executive Committee consisting of two representatives from each Diocese
3. There shall be an annual minimum subscription to the central body of 1/= per member.[156]

This Basis did not remain immutable for all time: in the course of the League's life there were various attempts, some successful, to amend it.[157]

We find present at Morecambe three components of Christian Socialism which, like the intertwined strands of a rope, appear and re-appear throughout the history of the movement - a political element, in the form of Socialism, an intellectual element, exemplified in the call for 'an adumbration of 'Christian Sociology' and an ecclesiastical element, illustrated by the assertion of the importance of a Catholic and sacramental basis. At Morecambe, in the enthusiasm and euphoria still emanating from the Election, supremacy went to Socialism.

156. Optimist, October 1906, pp.63-4, prints this Basis (as Form 1), together with an official explanatory 'gloss' (Form 11). Church Times, June 22 1906, also prints the Form 1 version including the last two words 'per member', missing in the Optimist.

157. The extracts from the Basis which are mentioned by Widdrington in his account of the Conference in Christendom, March 1947, p.23, reflect later expansions and alterations. The original version is as quoted above. M.B. Reckitt in his biography of Widdrington, pp.44-45 appears to be following the Christendom article.

M.B. Reckitt in his biography of Widdrington, whose views he largely shared, makes the interesting point that the very order of the items on the Morecambe Agenda determined that the conference would start not from any consideration of Christian doctrine but from the political situation and the ideals of the new party, in the face of which the Church was required to consider its duties, and that such a standpoint was to be reflected in the Basis of the organisation.[158] The name of the society was itself significant. The Labour men who met at Bradford in 1893 had balked at the term 'Socialist': it was felt that its appearance in the title would limit the development of the new party and so it remained The Independent Labour Party.[159] No such considerations directed the Morecambe conferees in 1906: the new body which emerged was not the Church Labour League but, uncompromisingly, the Church Socialist League. Its members, all of them, were to be convinced Socialists in the ordinary meaning of the word, "moved by the conviction that the reconstruction of society on Socialist lines is the extension of God's kingdom on earth".[160] The League's formularies, as drawn up at Morecambe, make its Socialist stance abundantly clear: they give little explicit expression to the 'intellectual' element and the specifically Catholic element. There are references to lecturing and to members becoming familiar with a branch of social reform, activities which would seem to presuppose a certain amount of study, and as already noted, the sacraments are mentioned in Method 1, but these statements fall far short of the notions entertained by Widdrington and Headlam. It is easy, however, in stressing the absence of a full-blown Catholicism, to minimise the ecclesiastical ingredient. The formularies are frank: the League is a society within the Church, its anticipated sphere

158. p.44.

159. H. Pelling, op.cit., p.124.

160. Optimist, loc.cit.

of work, at this stage, is within the Church and, again at this stage, its structure is based on the diocese. Moreover the members "are Socialists because they are Churchmen"[161]. Nevertheless Widdrington's dissatisfaction with the Basis was evident. In the hurry and excitement of the Conference, he felt important standpoints were lost and there was a tendency to make a too facile identification of Christianity with Socialism[162]. However, although the novel and most striking feature of this latest society was its unambiguous declaration for Socialism and although sacramental Catholicism and 'intellectualism' found little expression in its written basis, the C.S.L. in reality was a kind of federation of elements. Catholicism and the intellectual aspect, if absent in formulae were still present in personnel, in individuals and in the society as a whole. The interaction of these three forces - Socialism, Catholicism and 'intellectualism' - their waxing and waning, their quest for expression and primacy was to determine much of the internal history of the League. For the present, the enthusiasm of the moment held them in a coalition transcending disruptive dissent and a society emerged less Catholic than the G.S.M., less intellectual than the C.S.U. but more socialist than either.

The new body, moreover, consciously aimed to respond to the mood and needs of the moment. In this fresh outburst of Christian Socialism in the North of England we can find some parallels with the surge of 'secular' socialism in the early 1890s which had led to the establishment of the I.L.P. in that area. As one writer puts it, "Here was a widespread agitation ... Socialism was now more than the fad of a few London intellectuals ... thousands were turning towards it as offering the hope of redress for their pressing grievances ... The time had now come for the establishment of a national party which would be more representative of the new converts than the sectional societies of the metropolis could ever become ..."[163] The first germ of the C.S.L., expressed in the columns of the I.L.P's Labour Leader

161. Ibid. This phrase appeared in West's original letter to the Labour Leader.

162. Commonwealth loc.cit.

163. H. Pelling, op.cit., p.103.

For the moment the new society was simply in being. "What the future of the League may be none can say, but, for the present, its existence within the Church is significant, and its principles and methods demand the consideration of all earnest and thoughtful people", said West in his post-Conference statement[173]. Meanwhile the League set its face towards Barrow-in-Furness and the Church Congress. There the newly elected Provisional Committee would report to a further meeting.[174]

173. Optimist, loc.cit.

174. Lancaster Observer etc. loc.cit.

PART II - DEVELOPMENT

## CHAPTER 3 - A NETWORK OF BRANCHES

From within the Church of England there had now emerged an organisation definitely committed to Socialism and a leadership now existed: it remained to be seen whether the development had come too late to enlist a substantial rank and file membership. Both existing societies had conspicuously failed to attract grass roots membership. As we have seen, the G.S.M., after nearly thirty years, numbered fewer than three hundred members, whilst the C.S.U., though a much larger organisation, lacked a commitment to full-blown economic socialism: its intellectual and elitist atmosphere did not commend it to working class membership nor were its aims in this direction. The infant C.S.L. emerged from the Morecambe conference with a nucleus of thirty five members[1], predominantly clerical in composition and northern in base, to set about the task of creating a national network of branches and a mass membership of both clergy and laity within the Church of England.

Church congresses were to be a favourite ready-made shop window for the Church Socialist League. "We stirred up the Church Congresses held at Swansea, Barrow-in-Furness, Leicester and elsewhere" wrote George Lansbury[2], and the pages of successive periodicals, The Optimist, The Church Socialist Quarterly and The Church Socialist, bear out his statement. Given its northern origins and composition, the C.S.L. was fortunate in that within four months of its foundation a Church Congress was to be held in the industrial town of Barrow-in-Furness and that the Secretary of the Church Congress was Samuel Falle, a C.S.L. member who was Vicar of St James, Barrow-in-Furness from 1899 to 1906 and subsequently Dean

1. C.S.L. - 1st Report, March 1907, p.2 (Noel papers, University of Hull). Noel, in his report in Commonwealth, July 1906, p.223, gives a figure of 45, but the lower figure is to be preferred since the First Report was compiled by the Secretary (of the Conference and of the League) and Noel was never one to minimise the strength and activities of the C.S.L.

2. George Lansbury, My Life (1928), p.5. The Barrow Congress preceded that at Swansea. Much of the other comment on the C.S.L. in this passage is confused and unreliable. Lansbury stated (p.8) that almost every word of the biography had been written entirely from memory.

of Jersey[3]. They were fortunate too that with a year of Labour electoral successes and in that overwhelmingly industrial location, they entered a forum in which socialist opinions found free expression. The Daily Express correspondent, under a headline 'Militant Socialists', described Wednesday October 3rd as 'Labour Day' at the Church Congress[4]. "Never before" he proclaimed "in all the forty-six years of the Church Congress have the placid country vicar, the absorbed theologian and the groper amid ecclesiastical traditions received such an awakening from the advocates of Labour". The Pall Mall Gazette reported that "at the evening meeting held for deliberation on 'The Church and the People' the addresses were of a militantly Socialist character and sober Churchmen learned from their newspapers next day that 'absurd, fantastic and impracticable theories had passed uncriticised and even cheered to the echo'".[5] An Editorial in the Optimist averred that "the Barrow Church Congress will be remembered as the Socialists' Congress".[6] A member of the League's Provisional Committee, made a stirring speech. "Pointing towards the bridge leading from the furnace and shipyards to the town of Barrow the Rev. F.L. Donaldson exclaimed:- 'Look at that bridge with 10,000 working men walking across it and meeting us face to face and ignoring the deliberations of this congress of the National Church ... Is the passionate desire which animates the great Labour movement to have no expression in the National Church? ... The danger in which the Church now stands is that she is becoming the monopoly of the upper classes. I trust that in these deliberations we shall come to recognise that the voice of the people is in reality the voice of God' ... The Socialistic Dean of Ely[7] ... Bishop-designate of Truro, led the night attack ... supported by Mr T. Summerbell M.P., Mr George Lansbury[8] of Poplar and Miss Gertrude Tuckwell. It was necessary to rub one's eyes and gaze at the Bishops and

3. Church Times, June 22nd 1906; Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.
4. October 4th 1906.
5. October 5th 1906.
6. January 1907.
7. Not a member of C.S.L.
8. Summerbell and Lansbury both joined the League (First Report, List of Members). As far as is known they were the only men who were both M.Ps and members of the League at the same time. Slesser became an M.P. after the League had been wound up.

other dignitaries to assure oneself that this really was the Church Congress and not Mile End Waste ... 'From tonight I am a Socialist after the fashion of Charles Kingsley and Bishop Westcott', said Dr Stubbs, Dean of Ely."[9] He had not, be it noted, become a Socialist after the fashion of the C.S.L. but, given the virtual absence of the gaitered species from the Morecambe Conference, such a declaration could only be welcomed. The C.S.L. meeting attracted a large number of Barrow working men, with a few clergy and ladies: the advance publicity given to it by the Labour Party in Barrow contributed greatly to its success.[10] New members joined. One of these was a Londoner, Edith Mansell-Moullin, who was to be the League's Treasurer from 1908-1911. "I at once joined the League ... I felt here was the answer to the question I had been asking myself for years: 'How am I to apply my Christianity to the social relations of life?'"[11] Clearly the C.S.L. could not have asked for a more smooth and satisfactory slipway for its national launching than was afforded by the Church Congress in the ship-building town of Barrow-in-Furness.

After nine months of the League's existence its Committee issued a short report[12] to indicate its condition and prospects and to give advance warning of the Annual Conference scheduled for Scarborough three months later. This document showed that there had been a steady increase in C.S.L. membership. The number on the books stood at exactly 130: a majority of these had been attracted by what they had heard of the new society whilst others had joined as a result of the propaganda meetings which had been held at Newcastle, Sunderland, Darlington, Barrow, Lancaster, Manchester and Leeds. Branches had been formed at Newcastle, Sunderland and Manchester and it was hoped that another would result from the Leeds meeting. Secretaries had

9. Express, loc.cit.

10. C.S.L. - 1st Report, p.2.

11. Church Socialist, October 1912, article 'Some Church Socialists and their views - VIII - Mrs E.R. Mansell-Moullin.

12. C.S.L. - 1st Report.

been appointed for ten dioceses - five in the North of England, three in the Midlands, one in the South and one in Scotland. The membership was now almost exactly half clerical, half lay. Of the sixty two clergy, six were monks from Mirfield. Among the ranks of the laity were twelve women[13] and one Member of Parliament, Thomas Summerbell of Sunderland, whose firm printed the report. Roughly six out of every seven members came from the North and Midlands: of the rest London provided three members, there were two from South Wales, two from Buckinghamshire and solitary members from places as improbable as Hawarden, Hoddesdon, Great Yarmouth and Yarmouth, Isle of Wight. The Secretary mentioned that a Publishing Fund would be needed and contributions were invited. There was satisfaction with the state of the League in March 1907. "As we look back on the months that have elapsed since June 1906", stated the report, "we cannot help feeling greatly encouraged. If the numbers of the League increase at the present rate we shall soon be a large and powerful society."

The Conference at Scarborough was preceded, as had been the meeting at Morecambe, by a conference of Clergy and Labour at Mirfield. In neither case was there any formal link between the conferences but in both years the Mirfield Conference helped to step up the tempo of Socialist enthusiasm in the north at a convenient time. This Conference, on April 27th, was possibly on an even larger scale than the one in 1906, but appears to have had a smaller proportion of clergy. J.H. Hastings, the C.S.L. Secretary, reported the meeting for The Commonwealth and he estimated the attendance at between five hundred and six hundred[14] - mainly delegates from the Socialist Societies of Lancashire and Yorkshire, with what he called 'a fair sprinkling of clergy'. He also remarked that there were a

13. This number assumes that the designation Mrs or Miss has been given in all cases.

14. June 1907, p.184. The Labour Leader (3rd May 1907), on the other hand, suggests a much more modest event - 30 delegates from Socialist organisations plus a number of clergy and most of the students. The Clarion takes an intermediate position stating that 300 people took part in the Conference (press cutting, n.d. C.R. archives). Judging by the success of the 1906 conference and the continued momentum of the Labour movement the Labour Leader figures appear to be the least likely to be correct.

good many women present, many of them being delegates. Fr. Frere, the Superior, in welcoming the delegates alluded briefly "to the differing circumstances which marked off this second Conference from the first - notably the passing away of a slight element of suspicion which surrounded last year's doings." The agenda was not dissimilar: the previous year's resolution, calling for co-operation, was re-affirmed and there followed resolutions on Old Age Pensions, the Suffrage, which brought forth a speech from Mrs Pankhurst, and the Unemployed. All the resolutions were moved by members of the C.S.L. - Fathers Frere, Bull and Healy of the Community, and Lewis Donaldson. Donaldson's motion on the Unemployed was seconded by Mr J.R. Clynes M.P., who, says Hastings, "voiced the thoughts of many when he expressed his desire, not for a new Theology but for a fuller return to the old Social Gospel of the Founder of Christianity" - an indication that the religious element in the conference was probably primarily ethical rather than doctrinal in nature. Hastings felt that it was an interesting and important gathering and that gratitude was due to the Community of the Resurrection for giving these opportunities of demonstrating the awakening of the Church in the North to her duty. "There is no doubt whatever", he continued, "that the spirit of Socialism is growing amongst Churchmen - that the implications of the Gospel are being more fully realised - one might almost say, that we are at the beginning of a new revival of practical religion." The Optimist was even more emphatic. The general impression left after the Conference, the Editor declared was:- "Surely this: Socialism is the natural outcome of sincere Christianity." He continued:- "We believe that these conferences stand at the beginning of a parting of the ways. The Church is rallying for a great social advance. She is leaving the paths of reaction for the forward reaches in the pilgrimage of man." [15]

The next forward reach in this pilgrimage was the League's Annual Conference some six weeks later when the Chairman, West, told the members, "We are Socialists, therefore, because our Christian philosophy leads us to recognise Socialism

15. Editorial, July 1907.

as a Divinely inspired thing, making for the fulfilment of the Divine purpose for the social redemption of man."[16] For its early meetings, as we have seen, the League remained in northern territory and for the venue of its first Annual Conference it chose a northern seaside town, Scarborough. Reports of the Conference revealed that the League was now around 200 strong, an increase of fifty per cent within the previous three months.[17] Conrad Noel, who had emerged as Hon. Organizing Secretary of the League urged on the society to further conquests. Opening a discussion on the extension of the League's work, he stressed that "no one should join who had not the missionary spirit, and was not prepared to give a considerable part of his time and income to spreading the principles and increasing the membership of the League ... He would like to see a rule that each lay member should be under obligation to make at least one convert, and each priest at least three converts during the year, or to give some explanation to the annual Conference of failure to do so ... The League was not to start with the idea of being a small body; it was a little leaven now, but its circumference was to be the whole lump: it was to be a large society", though, he added, "it must not sacrifice quality to quantity."[18] Despite the wide national vistas of Noel's exhortation, the Conference somewhat tamely decided to hold its next annual meeting at another northern town: they would move from seaside to spa and gather at Buxton.[19] Although it was unadventurous not to advance south of the Trent, Vera Brittain who grew up in Buxton gives a clear indication that the comfortable classes of the town could be accurately described as a mission field for the members. "Before the War" she wrote "I had heard academically of Socialism - it was one of the subjects discussed at Sir John Marriott's Buxton

16. Ibid. The Philosophy of our Position - Presidential Address by The Revd. G. Algernon West, Scarborough Conference of C.S.L., June 2nd 1907 [The date should have read 4th June]

17. Church Times, June 14th 1907; Conrad Noel, newspaper article 'With the Church Socialists at Scarborough (press cutting, no identification, n.d., Conrad Noel papers, University of Hull); C.S.L. 1st Report, loc. cit. This figure is possibly an under-estimation: calculations from the Secretary's speech to the 1908 Conference give a figure of 286 for the time of the Scarborough Conference.

18. Church Times, loc.cit.

19. Ibid. This venue was later changed and the 1908 Conference took place in London (Optimist April 1908, report in July issue)

lectures, though his attitude towards it may be imagined - but the existence of the Labour Party, though I must have known of it, made no impression upon my political consciousness".[20]

Whether or not the forty or so members present at Scarborough[21] went out inspired by West's lofty identification of Socialism with the Divine purpose or impelled by Noel's stirring missionary call, or both, the recruiting momentum of the C.S.L. continued. By October West reported a membership of about 260, twice the number of a little over six months ago, when the First Report had been issued. West felt that the League's progress had exceeded their most hopeful expectations. There were now twelve branches. He pointed out that it had members all over the country and was not by any means confined to the North. "We are hoping", he said, showing a touch of Northern chauvinism, "for much development this winter, especially in London, which is the most backward place in England from our point of view." The only obstacle to rapid advance was lack of funds. Indulging in a flight of fancy he said "If some penitent and converted capitalist would give us a few thousand pounds we should be able this winter to cover the country with branches."[22] Meanwhile Noel, then living in Essex and a Streatham curate, J.A. Grant had the matter of London in hand. A letter to the Church Times in July announced that a London and Home Counties Branch was being formed[23]: it was in fact started, not inappropriately perhaps, on Guy Fawkes Day, 1907[24].

By the following Spring it was some 70 strong and the decision was made to abandon Buxton and head for the capital for the next Annual Conference and to hold a big public meeting in conjunction with it.[25] Meanwhile membership was well over five hundred and new branches had been formed:

20. Vera Brittain, Testament of Youth (1933), p.401 (Fontana edition, 1979).

21. Noel, loc.cit.

22. Optimist, October 1907, 'An Interview with Rev. G. Algernon West.'

23. July 12th, 1907.

24. Optimist, April 1908, p.176.

25. Ibid.

some even had weekly meetings, and the extent of their activities was such that the Branch Reports Section of the April issue of the Optimist, ran to seven pages. Conrad Noel estimated that members of the League had addressed over 1000 meetings during the last four months.[26] By the time of the Annual Meeting (June 2nd) membership had reached 600: it had more than doubled since the last Conference. A sixth of the total were clergy but this was a smaller proportion than previously: calculations from membership lists indicate that in the last eight months, whilst some ten clergy had joined, over three hundred of the laity had become members.[27] There were now eighteen branches[28]: thirteen of these were in the North, including a cluster of infant branches in Lancashire, and two in the Midlands, with London, Croydon and Bristol making up the total. Significantly however the northern branches, though more numerous, were being overtaken in membership. Whilst old established branches such as Newcastle and Darlington, though growing, could muster only 39[29] and 12[30] members respectively; Birmingham had recruited 70, Leicester 100 and London, including Croydon, now had 120.[31] Though, with the re-election of West of Sunderland as Chairman and the appointment of Moll of Newcastle to the new post of Vice-Chairman, the North-East was still at the helm, the centre of gravity of the League was likely to shift with the emergence of these new young giants in the Midlands and South.

In January 1909 the Chairman, West, addressed the members through a letter in the Church Socialist Quarterly.[32] He could now report a membership of 800 and the existence of twenty

26. Ibid. An Interview with the Revd. Conrad Noel.

27. Optimist, July 1908, Report of 2nd Annual Conference; Optimist, October 1907, loc.cit.

28. Map showing dates of formation of C.S.L. branches - Appendix 1.

29. Optimist, July 1908, Branch report. This, however, was an increase of about a quarter since February.

30. Optimist, October 1908, Branch reports.

31. Ibid.

32. The Optimist was acquired by the C.S.L. and its title was changed to 'The Church Socialist Quarterly or Optimist' (Optimist, October 1908, p.267). The first issue under the new title came out in January 1909.

branches, reports of whose activities took up no less than fourteen pages in this issue of the periodical. A Lancashire Federation of branches had been established with a formal Constitution, while the Leicester branch, where membership was still growing steadily, claimed to be making a deep impression on the life of the town. West exhorted the members to yet more progress, encouraging every member to secure a convert and setting a target of 2000 members by the end of the year. Somewhat ominously, however, he raised again the question of finance. "We need money badly", he said. Many members had not yet paid their subscriptions and the Secretaries of branches had not sent them on to headquarters. In February, Noel, writing about the League for the enlightenment of an S.D.P. readership[33], claimed that the Society's membership was little short of 1000, though, in the light of statements at the Annual Conference later in the year, this estimate was probably a slight exaggeration. Noel's article was written in connection with a great demonstration organised by the London Branch to plead the cause of the unemployed. Nearly three thousand people gathered in Trafalgar Square on February 13th and the event, which was well covered by the press, gave the League a great deal of publicity.[34] In his address to the Annual Conference at Leicester in May, read, in his absence through illness, by Hastings, the Secretary, West expressed satisfaction over past progress and optimism for the future. Whereas less than three years ago they had started with fewer than fifty members and had one branch, today they were nearly a thousand strong, with twenty five branches. "As time goes on", he said, "there can be no doubt that our progress will be at a much greater rate."[35] This Conference, West's last as Chairman, was highly significant in the history of the League in two respects: firstly in regard to decisions about the organisation's relationship to the Labour political movement, a subject which will be considered later in this study, and secondly in terms of a clear geographical shift

33. Justice, February 13th 1909. Article by Conrad Noel, 'The Church Socialist League and the Unemployed'.

34. Church Socialist Quarterly, April 1909, Branch Reports.

35. Ibid., July 1909, Report of Annual Conference of C.S.L.

in the League's centre of gravity. West had planned to hand over the chairmanship to his deputy and neighbour, Moll of Newcastle but, for reasons which will be discussed later, a North Eastern apostolic succession did not take place and the League emerged with all its six principal officers, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, General Secretary, Organising Secretaries and Treasurer, drawn from the Midlands and London areas.[36] The Executive Committee at a later meeting recognised that the North was very inadequately represented both in the list of officers and on the Executive Committee: the situation had arisen through the rather unsatisfactory electoral arrangements of the League whereby officers and committee were elected only by those members present at the conference, rather than by ballot of the entire membership. Such a constituency was likely to be unrepresentative, with the host area being disproportionately strong. Steps were taken to remedy the situation by co-option of Northern members on to the Executive and by devising a ballot of all members for such elections in the future.[37] In the same issue, Noel, the Organising Secretary, declared that he hoped to give a considerable portion of his time in the following winter to the North of England: he would gladly help in starting new branches or do his best to strengthen weak ones. Despite his emphatic dislike of public schools - he was at Wellington and subsequently at Cheltenham[38] - we can, perhaps, detect some residual traces of 'house spirit' in the exhortation to inter-regional rivalry with which he concludes this piece: "There should now be a healthy race between north, midlands and south for the largest memberships; thus swiftly and strongly our National League will be increased."[39] However notwithstanding the Executive Committee's action and Noel's encouragement, the North-East and indeed the North as a whole,

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid. Report of Executive meeting of June 4th.

38. Conrad Noel, Autobiography (ed. S.Dark), 1945, Chapter II 'The Glorious Tradition of our Public Schools'.

39. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1909. Note from Organiser.

never regained its previous ascendancy. There were other disquieting items to set alongside the triumphant story of rising membership that summer. The Hon. Treasurer told members that £50, a not inconsiderable sum in 1909, would have to be raised at once to meet the current expenditure of the League. A special Emergency Fund was to be opened straight away to raise money to pay outstanding debts then considerably overdue: until these were paid the League could not continue to hold meetings in new places.[40] Signs of tension and dissent were also apparent within the membership: West, though elected, in his absence, to the Executive Committee resigned and could not be persuaded to change his mind. The Editor of the Quarterly also resigned but returned on his own terms.[41] Nevertheless, the League continued to add to its ranks. By the end of the year the membership fell just short of 1200, and the branches, including the Central Branch, the 'collective' of isolated members, numbered thirty five.[42] The London Branch alone accounted for one sixth of the membership. West's target of 2000 by the end of the year had not been reached, but the Secretary still felt able to speak of 'useful progress' and to comment that "during the coming year the League ought largely to increase its membership."

The League was not, however, to continue to increase its numbers year by year in the manner of a geometrical progression. Not only was West's target of 2000 members not to be reached by the end of 1909, it was not to be reached at all: nor was the Secretary's anticipation of a large increase in membership to materialise. After the steep ascent of the first three years, the indications are that the League then reached a plateau. Widdrington, in his account of the League in 'The Commonwealth'[43], quotes no membership figures later than those for 1909 and the practice of quoting membership figures in the organ of the League ceases, which may well be an indication

40. Ibid. Hon. Treasurer's Report.

41. Ibid. Executive Committee Report.

42. Church Socialist Quarterly, January 1910, Secretary's Report. Widdrington (Commonwealth, July 1927) indicates that a membership list was published in November 1909, and gives the figure for London branch membership.

43. Ibid.

that increases, if any, were small and that the upward curve of expansion had flattened out. Moreover, there are signs that the membership figure included many whose attachment to the League was merely nominal. In the election of the Executive Committee by ballot in 1910 only 52% of the electorate polled. Commenting on this fact the Editor of the Church Socialist Quarterly remonstrated: "For some time it has been felt that the energy of some branches has been mainly conspicuous by its absence .... 'To rest is to rust', and we fear the corrosive process has progressed to an advanced stage in many places."[44] As we have seen branches varied enormously in size and vigour. Several small sickly C.S.L. branches survived only briefly: some fourteen branches, eleven of them in the North, whose foundation or activities are recorded in 1908 and 1909 seem to have left, in the League's annals, no trace of their existence thereafter. Branches came and went: roughly a quarter of the branches recorded in 1912 seem not to have existed in 1909. There were, however, indications that it was becoming more difficult to establish new branches. In October 1910, perhaps in the first flush of enthusiasm, the newly appointed full-time salaried Organiser (surely a sign of vitality in the society) listed twenty towns where branches should shortly be founded: in the event only six branches were established, and of these, two lasted less than three years, another was not founded until three years later whilst a fourth was inaugurated nine years after its predicted arrival![45] At Letchworth in 1913, from the distribution of two thousand letters and notices and a well attended public meeting there was gleaned a membership of only nine to found a branch there.[46] Confident hopes that branches would be established at Middlesbrough and Southampton as a result of vigorous Church Socialist activity at the Church Congresses of 1912 and 1913 were not fulfilled.[47] On the other hand

44. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1910. Editorial
45. Ibid. October 1910, Editorial notes.
46. Church Socialist, March 1913, League Notes.
47. Ibid. December 1912, League Notes; November 1913, The C.S.L. at the Church Congress.

Branch Reports in the Church Socialist reveal many signs of great vitality and progress, particularly in London, where before the end of 1913, the branch had twenty groups.[48] The situation across the country was decidedly uneven but, over all, when gains and losses were taken into account, the total membership probably showed little change. In 1912 some twelve hundred signatures were obtained by the branches to a 'Remonstrance' drawn up by the League[49], but this figure can give only an extremely rough indication of the League's strength since many non-members may have signed it and, equally, many members may have failed to do so. In the same year the League moved nearer to reality in statistics of membership: a report from the Organising Secretary to the Annual Conference stated that a revision of membership lists in most of the branches had reduced the membership of the League, but it was obviously a more genuine figure than in former years. The picture he presented was of a slimmer but fitter League: there was more energy and more activity. "On the whole", he averred, "the League was altogether in a healthier state than last year".[50] In the December 1912 issue of the Church Socialist, he was able to announce, "We are growing in numbers and more work is being done than ever before".[51] However, he gave no statistics, which was perhaps a sign that such growth was relatively modest. The number of branches active in the two or three years preceding the First World War suggests a fairly stable state.

The elections at the 1912 Annual Conference gave further demonstration of a trend which had become evident in 1909, the southwards movement of the centre of gravity of the League. The London Labour M.P., George Lansbury, was elected Chairman, and of the other elected officers the Vice-Chairman and The Hon. Treasurer were Midlands based, whilst the Hon. General Secretary came from London.[52] The composition of the new

48. Ibid. November 1913.

49. Ibid. June 1912, Report of Annual Conference.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., December 1912, Some Church Socialists and their views: x The Revd. C. Stuart Smith.

52. There were now only four elected officers, there being one salaried Organiser instead of up to two honorary ones.

Executive Committee revealed even more starkly the dominance of London. Much of the previous annual conference had been given over to constitutional matters: the Executive Committee's structure now ensured that there was representation for each region of the country but, at the same time, account had to be taken of the actual geographical distribution of members. In the event, of the twelve seats, the South West, North West and North East each had one and the Midlands two, whilst the South East occupied the remaining seven. Even more telling of the North's fading fortunes was the surprising fact that the representative for the North East was a Midlands incumbent, Widdrington, Vicar of St. Peter's, Coventry![53] Significantly, too, by 1912, the Northern based periodical, successively known as 'The Optimist' and 'The Church Socialist Quarterly', had given way to the London based 'Church Socialist'.

In this review of the course by which the C.S.L. established itself as an institution two features, then, stand out: firstly we find a phase of rapid growth followed by a relatively static period, and, secondly, there is a shift in the League's centre of gravity from the North to the Midlands and the South East. Given the small membership of the League - a probable maximum of some twelve hundred scattered over the country - and its association with two large and complex forces in the Church of England and the Labour movement, it is difficult to advance explanations of these two features with any degree of certainty, but some clues do emerge. As we have seen, the Labour electoral successes in 1906 generated much enthusiasm, even euphoria, and it would be reasonable to expect this feeling to find expression in the fortunes of organisations within the Labour movement. We find that the I.L.P. grew rapidly between 1906 and 1909, from 375 branches to over 900.[54]

53. Church Socialist, June 1912, Report of Annual Conference. The North East was better represented at the end of its life when one of its pioneers, Revd. T.C. Gobat of Darlington, was a member of the Executive, and subsequently Chairman, and there was also a lay member from Hartlepool. (C.S.L. Executive Committee Minutes, 1922 - Stacy papers, University of Leeds). Widdrington, incidentally, provides a personal reflection of this trend in his sequence of moves from Newcastle, to Lancashire, to Coventry and finally to Essex (Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923).

54. The Reformers' Year Book, 1909, p.152, entry on 'The Independent Labour Party'.

Similarly the Fabian Society, much more comparable in size, if not in flavour, to the C.S.L., showed a three-fold increase in the period 1906-10, when it expanded to forty-six provincial branches.[55] It would seem then that the C.S.L's rapidly rising membership at this time was part of a more general surge of interest in and commitment to the Labour movement and its associated organisations and in this atmosphere it would be natural for those who were both Churchmen and Socialists to join the Church Socialist League. After all, as we saw in Part I of this study, the League itself owed its inception largely to these particular circumstances. In addition, the League had the advantage of the initial burst of energy and enterprise characteristic of a new organisation: allied with this force was the dynamic of a religious commitment to motivate the membership and give the League a sense of mission, even, in its more exhilarated moments, of destiny. Moreover in Conrad Noel the League possessed an officer able to act as an effective catalyst to turn this situation to good account. Looking back over the life of the League Widdrington goes so far as to attribute to Noel the League's achievement in this first phase: "The early success of the League was due to its first organising secretary, Conrad Noel. No priest in the country could claim so wide and intimate a knowledge of the Labour movement. His name was familiar in every industrial area."[56] He was "a leader of prophetic fire and the best propagandist the League ever had".[57] In this early period it is also probable that the new League profited from appearing to be more attuned to the mood of the moment than those societies which had entered the field many years before: the C.S.L. testified at its foundation that it was being created to meet a need for which the existing societies did not cater. Apart from the political 'spirit of 1906' and the internal dynamics of the League, there was some evidence in the Church at large of the emergence of a climate more conducive to Christian Socialism, or at least to the discussion of matters of concern to Christian Socialists. At the Pan Anglican

55. E.R. Pease, History of the Fabian Society (1916), pp.185 &191 (1963 edition)

56. Commonwealth, April 1927, p.121.

57. Ibid., July 1927, p.222.

Congress of 1908 among the items for debate on the agenda was 'Christianity and Socialism', which aroused enormous interest and produced a succession of speeches in support of Socialism and though some confused socialism and social concern the general effect was encouraging.[58]

By 1909, however, some of these conditions were less obviously favourable. The General Election factor had lost much of its potency with the lapse of time and the discovery that the Labour Party, in the realities of parliamentary engagement, was not immune from the political viruses of opportunism and compromise. Some of the doubts and disillusionment find expression in I.L.P. membership statistics where we find that the period of expansion has been followed by one of decline. Between 1909 and 1914 the I.L.P. lost 200 branches and almost 8,000 members.[59] The same period however witnessed a massive increase in Trades Union membership: the total figure rose from 2.3 millions to 4.1 millions[60], of which,respectively, only 1.4 millions and 1.6 millions appear to have been affiliated to the Labour Party.[61] The issues which had created these apparent divisions in the Labour movement were likely to find echoes in the C.S.L., creating a time of re-appraisal rather than of advance. Controversy over the election of 1910[62] followed divisions over affiliation to the Labour Party in 1909.[63] More particular to the society itself problems over finance and constitutional arrangements hampered its work as we have seen. By 1909 the League's first vigorous burst was over but the problems and divisions, though enough to check further rapid advance were not sufficiently severe to cause decline or disruption: the League had built up sufficient head of steam in its first three years to maintain its numbers over all during the succeeding three.

58. General Report of the Pan-Anglican Congress (1908). Volume 2 deals with this area of the Congress.

59. Report of N.A.C. of I.L.P. to 29th Annual Conference 1921, quoted in W. Kendall, The Revolutionary Movement in Britain, 1900-1921 (1969), p.330.

60. T.G. Williams, The Main Currents of Social and Industrial Change, 1870-1924, (1925), Appendix III.

61. G.D.H. Cole, 'British Working Class Politics, 1832-1914 (1941), p.306, table showing 'Affiliated Membership of the Labour Party, 1900-1918.

62. Commonwealth loc.cit.

63. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1909, Report of Annual Conference.

In considering the second trend in the development of the C.S.L., the move away from an exclusively northern base towards dominance by the Midlands and London, the parallels with the mainstream Labour political movement are less close. At the founding conference of the Independent Labour Party the preponderance of the north of England was very marked, with the Midlands, London and the rest of the country being poorly represented by comparison. Of the 124 delegates, 48 came from Yorkshire, nearly half of these from the Bradford area, 32 from the industrial areas of Lancashire and Cheshire, and 9 from the North East and Cumberland, whilst the Midlands were represented by only 6, London sent 15 and the rest of southern England produced only 3 participants.[64] The General Election results of 1906 suggest that this broad picture had changed little in the intervening decade: the apparent switch of primacy across the Pennines is probably explained by the strong local presence at the Bradford Conference rather than by a dramatic deepening of hue in the Red Rose and a corresponding paling in the White. Two thirds of the Labour seats were won in the North; thirteen in Lancashire and Cheshire alone: the Midlands returned two Labour men and London three. In January 1910, by which time in the C.S.L. the dominance first of the Midlands and then of London had been felt, we find that the total of Labour M.Ps from the Midlands has risen to eight, though if we consider the Miners elected in 1906 who subsequently joined the party the increase is more modest. Lancashire and Cheshire, where six C.S.L. branches seem to have disappeared between 1908 and 1910, held their own but in the December election the Labour M.Ps were reduced from thirteen to ten. The position in the rest of the north was reasonably static. However, whilst in the C.S.L. the fortunes of the London branch were very much in the ascendant, we find no comparable advance on the Labour front at the polls: there were three M.Ps in 1906, two in January 1910, a rise to four in December of that year but a fall back to three by 1918.[65]

64. Cole, op.cit., p.138. Eleven delegates came from Scotland.

65. Ibid. Appendix II p.302. Labour Party Statistics: Labour Party Representation by Regions, 1900-1918.

As we have observed, with a society as small as the C.S.L. and with its dual allegiance, we cannot expect to explain its development simply in terms of a correspondence to national trends in the Labour movement in general - these can do little more than throw out one or two interesting parallels: other factors specific to the organisation itself need to be considered. Though cradled in the north and attempting originally to recruit clergy who were broadly in sympathy with the I.L.P., whose stronghold, in 1906, was the industrial north, the C.S.L. from the outset aimed to become a national organisation. This very aim presupposed at least a diminution in Northern dominance. Moreover, in 1909 several key northern figures virtually disappeared from the C.S.L. scene. West, who had conceived the idea of such a society; who in the Morecambe Conference had achieved a tactical triumph, enlisting support from Headlam and other G.S.M. men in calling the meeting but neutralising expectations of assimilation and succeeding in bringing to birth a new organisation, in basis and aspiration much in the image of his original ideas, and who had then presided over the first three years of rapid growth, resigned the chairmanship. He was elected to the Executive Committee but declined to take his seat.[66] Though the elections of 1910 placed him again on the Executive he appears to have taken little further part in the life of the League. In 1909 he had moved ten miles south from Sunderland to Easington where, in the words of his son, Bishop G.A. West, he "quietened down": he still took part in Election campaigns in support of Labour but the ongoing propagation of Christian Socialism seems not to have been a feature of Easington parish life.[67] Similarly Moll, who had helped West to plan the society and had been prominent as committee member and Vice Chairman, disappeared as suddenly and as totally. A third key member, Hastings, who as we have seen had acted as Secretary for the Morecambe Conference and subsequently for the League, combining the office with the Treasurership until 1908, resigned his office in the same year. Though he was

66. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1909, loc.cit.

67. Interview with Rt. Revd. George Algernon West, 24th July 1977. Bishop West suggests that there may have been some agreement with Moule, the Bishop of Durham, that his father would not actively proclaim Socialism at Easington: there was some opposition to his going to the parish.

elected as a member of the Executive for 1909-10, he too seems to disappear from the annals of the League. Of the League's five elected officers, then, the three northern members all resigned leaving the Treasurer, Mrs Mansell-Moullin of the London branch and the Organising Secretary, Conrad Noel, based in Essex, as the survivors.[68] The C.S.L. was small enough and young enough as an institution for the personality factor to be important in its development. The North, with the exception of Claude Stuart Smith, who became the standard bearer for the original spirit and first ideals of the League[69], threw up no new significant leaders. On the other hand two large proletarian Midland parishes had as incumbents men of strong personality and vigour in Lewis Donaldson, who had achieved a certain fame in the Christian Socialist and Labour movements before the founding of the C.S.L. and Percy Widdrington who had been deeply involved in setting up the Morecambe Conference and who was to remain a considerable figure in the Christian Socialist movement throughout his life. These two men were each to serve as both Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the C.S.L. Furthermore, a Birmingham incumbent Arnold Pinchard, succeeded West as Chairman and piloted the League through the years 1909-12. London too provided leadership following the'eclipse' of the north: Lansbury became Chairman as did the 'expatriate' Mirfield man, Fr. Bull, when he was based at the Community's London priory, Revd. W.H. Paine was secretary for six years and four members of the London branch served as Vice Chairmen.[70]

In many respects London is best regarded as a special case. Any organisation aiming to be truly national is likely to find an important and probably a prime place for London.

68. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1909 loc.cit.

69. A sample of Stuart Smith's attitudes can be found in Church Socialist, December 1912, 'Some Church Socialists and their Views-x-The Rev. C. Stuart Smith. For an assessment by a leader of an opposing school of thought in the C.S.L. see Widdrington in Commonwealth, July 1927, p.221.

70. Appointments of officers and committee members are recorded at the relevant times in the League's periodicals. Church Socialist lists them inside covers in all issues.

Despite West's comments about the 'backwardness' of London, the G.S.M. and the C.S.U. were essentially London based and many leading members of the C.S.L. had received in London their early first hand formative experiences of working class life. The League made its first foray to the capital as early as its second annual conference: it was able to do so because the Christian Socialist soil of London had not proved too infertile and the chief tillers, Grant and Noel, were men of great energy and enterprise.[71] It is however in the structure of the branch that the London situation was unique and we may perhaps speak of an 'institutional' or 'structural' factor in considering the success and dominance of the London branch. The London branch was not a branch in the sense that other branches scattered up and down the country were: with its numerous groups, seventeen in 1911, twenty in 1913, London was more like a federation of branches, a kind of'super-branch', for the London groups were numerically viable as independent branches, many of them having a much larger membership and a more vigorous life than the smaller provincial branches: the Woolwich group did, in fact, decide to establish itself as a completely independent branch in 1912.[72] This two-tier system of group and branch, each with its own calendar of meetings and activities, clearly had advantages for the development of the League in London. It sustained and encouraged groups by breaking down isolation and enabling them to share in the fuller life of a larger unit and by co-ordinating all C.S.L. work in the capital in one 'branch' it made possible the widest availability and most effective deployment of resources - sherry and harpsichord Socialists in Hampstead and beer and skittles Socialists in Bethnal Green could support and enlighten each other. These features of the life of the London branch emerge clearly in the branch reports submitted to the League's periodicals. It would be impossible to pinpoint a critical size, or determine a 'take-off point' in the growth of a C.S.L. branch, but in speaking about 'the institutional factor' in relation to the London branch, it

71. Commonwealth loc.cit.

72. Church Socialist, August 1912, Branch Reports.

is obvious that the size of the branch enabled it to develop a much more vital institutional life, with a range of activities and sense of momentum impossible to attain by, say, ten members in Hawarden without prospect of numerical breakthrough. We find, for instance, that the Church Socialist was, initially, the magazine of the London branch: it was published by the branch's own Propaganda Committee[73] Moreover most of the great public demonstrations and meetings took place in London and were organised by the London branch thus reflecting and confirming its special importance in the League.

We can, then, see the growth of the C.S.L. in London as an individual case. We see no clear parallels with the political Labour movement as in the case of the North and the Midlands, but we find factors peculiar to London itself: the London base of the two earlier Christian Socialist societies perhaps giving a more obvious residuum; the determination of the League to have a presence in the capital and the zeal of those who initiated it; its being the natural location for any 'national' demonstration or activity, and its unique two-tier branch structure enabling it to employ to the best advantage the concentration of a large population in a relatively small area and the particular resources of a capital city. It is perhaps this last factor which is most important in comparing the C.S.L's performance in London with that in the rest of the country: it is necessary to realise that because of its 'federal' nature the London branch was not strictly comparable with other branches, nor the London region comparable with other regions.

Looking at the country as a whole there are traces of some 54 branches. There was also a branch in New Zealand, which is listed in the Church Socialist for a number of years. There was too a Church Socialist League in the United States.[74] The C.S.L. Annual Conference at Bristol in 1912 received a report from the American Organising Secretary.[75] In 1916

73. Ibid. January 1912, p.1.

74. H.W. Laidler, A History of Socialist Thought (1927), gives a brief sketch of Christian Socialism in the United States.

75. Church Socialist, 1912, Organising Secretary's Report to Annual Conference.

the League's Treasurer, the Revd. W.C. Roberts, in his address to the C.S.L. Conference at Birmingham put in a plea for development in America: "If our Society is to do anything much we need a strong American branch."[76] The American C.S.L's links with the British society seem, however, to have been slight and of a distant fraternal rather than a close filial nature: a note in the Executive Committee minutes of a meeting in 1920 merely records the reading of a letter from the Secretary of the Church Socialist League in America reporting the visit of Bishop Paul Jones, their president, to this country - no contact or action was apparently envisaged.[77] Despite Roberts's stress on 'Internationalism' in his address in 1916[78] the C.S.L. remained a British, indeed basically an English organisation, which given its roots and rules, is scarcely surprising - three branches were started in Wales, one in Scotland and the remaining fifty in England. The largest number of branches in existence in any one year seems to have been 35, in 1909: of several of these, however, we catch only the most fleeting of glimpses, and the position around the years 1912-13, when the members' lists had been revised and the somewhat misleading earlier mushroom growth eliminated, gives a truer estimate of the number of effectively established branches, at which time the figure oscillates between 26 and 30. After 1912 only nine more branches were founded: two in the North, three in the Midlands, two in the South East, one in Wales, and in the South West, one rather freak transitory development at Dartmoor Prison, where a number of C.S.L. conscientious objectors were interned and constituted themselves into a branch of the League.[79]

In considering the distribution of branches one would expect to find them located in areas where the population had some commitment to the Labour movement, namely the great

76. The Herald, September 23rd, 1916, Anglican Priest's Appeal to the Church.

77. C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes, 30th June 1920. (Stacy papers, University of Leeds)

78. Herald, ibid.

79. Church Socialist, December 1917, p.239. Letter from Hon. Sec. of Dartmoor Prison Branch (recorded in earlier issues of Church Socialist in list of branches as Princetown) gives date of foundation as May 1917.

industrial areas and urban centres of the country. The map[80] showing location of C.S.L. branches gives such a broad correspondence: the 'industrial triangle' with its base in South Lancashire and the West Riding[81] and its apex in London stands out fairly clearly with a heavy concentration of branches; there is a predictable cluster of branches in the North East and there are outliers in Glasgow, Bristol and Cardiff. Such an approach, however, though it may explain Salford does not explain St Leonards-on-Sea. The locational map reveals both some surprising gaps within the great urban and industrial areas and some unexpected developments outside them. Tees-side remained remarkably resistant to C.S.L. efforts, as has already been noted, though a branch did run in Hartlepool for some three years after the war. Although two clerics from West Cumberland, one from Carlisle and two from Barrow were present at the Morecambe Conference, one of whom was elected to represent the Carlisle diocese on the Provisional Committee[82], no branch ever emerged in the West Cumberland coalfield or in Barrow-in-Furness, despite the fact that the League had made its first major public appearance at the 1906 Church Congress in Barrow. Hull and Nottingham were two other major centres where the League had no presence. In South Wales a branch existed only briefly in Cardiff. Other obvious centres for C.S.L. activity acquired branches surprisingly late: Bradford, where the I.L.P. had its genesis, seems not to have had a branch before 1912, and Sheffield not until the latter part of 1913. By contrast the C.S.L. established branches in less obvious places such as Bath, rural Essex, Brighton and Taunton. The network of branches of an organisation which comprehended places as far apart, geographically and culturally, as Glasgow and Worthing, cannot be explained solely in terms of the distribution of heavy concentrations of working class people or the existence of 'secular' Labour political organisations.

80. Appendix I.

81. County names current during the period of the C.S.L. are retained for this study.

82. Lancaster Observer and Morecambe Chronicle, June 15th 1906.

It would seem that the question of the distribution of C.S.L. branches can most usefully be approached via three 'layers': the environment created by working class populations and 'secular' Labour organisations, the 'deposit' of Christian Socialism largely from the work of the two older societies, and, operating within the situation created by these factors, and building on existing 'achievements', the particular activities of C.S.L. members.

We have already referred to the first 'layer' and indicated the broad, rather inexact correlation between it and the distribution of C.S.L. branches: given the presence of active Labour political organisations in large towns such as Bristol[83], Coventry[84] and Newcastle[85], for example, it is not surprising to find that C.S.L. branches grew up in these cities. In centres like these, men who were later to be prominent in the C.S.L. had become involved in the Labour political movement long before the birth of the League - Stacy, for example, at Bristol[86], whilst still a layman, and Moll at Newcastle[87]. Indeed, as our review of the foundation of the C.S.L. has shown, one of West's aims was to link together clergy who were politically active in the Labour cause. However, whilst it is not surprising to find that C.S.L. branches grew up in such centres as we have indicated, their formation was by no means inevitable.

83. S.H. Bryher, An Account of the Labour and Socialist Movement in Bristol, Part I (1929) and Part II (1931), deals with the long tradition of both 'secular' and Christian Socialist activities in the city.

84. K. Richardson, Twentieth Century Coventry (1972), especially p.190-193. Both S.D.F. and I.L.P. were active early in Coventry and a Coventry Labour Representation Committee was founded in December 1902. Richardson's account of these activities is based on local newspapers of the period. His brief account of Christian Socialist activity in the city is not entirely reliable.

85. Optimist, January 1908. Interview with Rev. W.E. Moll. Moll relates how on moving to Newcastle in 1893 he found a little local Fabian Society there holding small meetings and an I.L.P. branch struggling for life.

86. Bryher op.cit., Part II, pp.42 and 57.

87. Optimist, loc.cit.

For a branch to become established it was necessary for there not simply to be an abundance of Socialists but a sufficient number of people with an allegiance to both Socialism and the Church, together with the leadership to initiate, sustain and direct the life of a branch. Given the substantial alienation of working class people from the life of the institutional Church the catchment area was much reduced. Furthermore, in considering those working class people who were Church people one must take account of the innate conservatism and conformity often prevalent in Church circles, sometimes expressing itself politically in the 'Tory deference vote' of workers - a phenomenon not, of course, restricted by any means to Church people. Adderley, a C.S.L. stalwart, points out in a letter to the Church Times in 1911 on the subject of the Labour troubles that his parish (Saltley, Birmingham) teems with railway workers who are mostly 'rabid Tories'[88]. The working class person who was both active Christian and active Socialist, and who, moreover was prepared to devote time and energy to a Christian Socialist organisation was probably a member of a comparatively rare species. One can detect a note of understandable satisfaction in the reports in the C.S.L's periodicals from those branches with rising membership roles: perhaps, in the light of these considerations, it was no mean achievement for a city of the size of Leicester to find a hundred people to join a C.S.L. branch.

As well as its inheritance from the 'secular' labour movement, the C.S.L. had also an inheritance from previous labourers in Christian Socialism - our 'second layer'. It is perhaps no accident that the initiative towards founding the C.S.L. came from a priest in the Durham diocese, and that the North East was one of the early strongholds of the League (insofar as so slender an organisation can be said to have strongholds), for B.F. Westcott, first President of the C.S.U. was Bishop of Durham from 1890 to 1901. Widdrington,

88. August 25th 1911. For further comment on tendency of working class church-goers and middle class church-goers to be more conservative on many issues than non-church-goers see D. Martin 'Sociology of English Religion', (1967), p.58.

in his account of the C.S.L., singles out Westcott as being responsible for creating an interest in Socialism among the clergy of the North and he cites as the starting point not Westcott's famous address on Socialism to the Hull Church Congress in 1890, but the publication in 1892 of his Charge: 'The Incarnation: a Revelation of Human Duties' - "surely", says Widdrington, "one of the classics of Christian Socialist Literature".[89] In the same year Westcott gave effective demonstration of his concern with the social order by his successful mediation in the Durham coal mining dispute.[90] Algernon West acknowledged the influence of Westcott's teaching and his person: "My personal knowledge of him is one of my memory's best treasures".[91] Although Westcott's Christian Socialist influence was a personal one, the C.S.U. itself had done some pioneering work in the north. An early member, Percy Dearmer, relates how with 'a democratic Doctor' he spent a fortnight in 1893 touring round Yorkshire lecturing on Socialism, largely to village audiences, with the Bible as handbook[92]: it is probable, however, that this activity was undertaken in a private capacity rather than officially on behalf of the C.S.U. In the wake of the 1906 Election we find considerable C.S.U. activity in industrial areas - in March 1906, for instance, there are reports of C.S.U. meetings in Sunderland, Newcastle, Manchester, Liverpool, Accrington and Stockport.[93] Other things being equal, it is likely that it would be easier to establish a C.S.L. branch in a town that had experienced some Christian Socialist teaching, albeit of a different character, than in one that had not: we do, for instance, find that in all these towns the C.S.L. was able to establish a branch in its early days, three of them being among the League's first batch of branches.

89. Commonwealth, April 1927, p.119.

90. For a relatively recent treatment of this episode, see Geoffrey Best, 'Bishop Westcott and the Miners' - The Bishop Westcott Memorial Lecture 1966 (1967).

91. Optimist, October 1907, Interview with G. Algernon West.

92. N. Dearmer, The Life of Percy Dearmer (1940), p.93.

93. Commonwealth, May 1906, p.151.

The case of the G.S.M. is rather different because the society was much smaller. The vast majority of provincial members of the Guild were perforce isolated individuals, unattached to any kind of branch or group. The influence of the G.S.M. was, however, widely, if thinly, spread: ten years before the C.S.L. came into being the Guild reported that there were only eight English and Welsh dioceses in which it had no members.[94] Only three of these, Carlisle, where as we have seen the C.S.L. later failed to establish a branch, Chester and Ripon, had any appreciable industrial or urban areas. The Guild also made its presence felt through lectures not only in London but up and down the country, and Headlam tried to make himself widely available: in the year of the C.S.L's foundation, for instance, he gave more than thirty talks throughout the length and breadth of the land from Glasgow to Tunbridge Wells and from Norwich to Bristol.[95] The latter city was distinguished by actually having a branch of the G.S.M.: it had been revived in March 1905 after a lapse of some six or seven years and it appears to have been particularly active in the year preceding the formation of the C.S.L. with visits from Bro. the Rev. Paul Stacy, a Bristolian by birth[96], Bro. the Rev. F.L. Donaldson, both of whom were to be prominent in the C.S.L., and the veteran Christian Socialist, Bro. the Rev. C.L. Marson[97]. The addresses by Donaldson and Marson were well reported in the local press[98], and Marson's stirring sermon was reprinted in The Socialist Christian more than quarter of a century later.[99] A branch of the C.S.L. was founded in Bristol early in 1908[100]. The parish of St Agnes appears to have been one of the two key parishes in G.S.M. activity in Bristol and it was to play a central role in the life of

94. Occasional Paper of the Guild of St Matthew, No.4, October 28th 1896.

95. Ibid., No.35, September 1906 and No.36, November 1906.

96. Stacy papers, Hayward Collection, in possession of author, give biographical details.

97. Occasional paper of G.S.M. No.35, September 1906, Report of Bristol Branch.

98. Western Daily Press, March 28th 1906 and May 2nd 1906.

99. The Socialist Christian, June 1932, pp.137-9, 'The Unconquerable Cause - Sermon to the Guild of St Matthew at St Agnes, Bristol, May 1st 1906.

100. Optimist, April 1908, C.S.L. notes and Branch Reports.

the C.S.L. in that city: its Vicar, A.S. Rashleigh, presided over the first meeting of the Bristol C.S.L. branch[101] and took an active part nationally in the League's affairs, serving for a number of years on the Executive Committee[102]. The Register of Services of the parish reveal what appears to be an interesting transfer of allegiance: in 1906 there are special sermons and collections for the G.S.M.; in 1907 Conrad Noel gave a lecture at which, rather surprisingly, the collection was given to the C.S.U. and in 1909, the year of the G.S.M's demise, he returned and on this occasion the collection, a better than average one, was given to the C.S.L. For several years thereafter there are special services and collections for the C.S.L.[103] The winding up of the G.S.M. in 1909 and, from 1910, the difficulties encountered by the C.S.U., which in any case had much less obvious overlap with the C.S.L., meant that the mantle of much of Anglican Christian Socialism fell upon the C.S.L. and left the way open for it to profit from the work of those who had gone before it. As we have seen, the majority of the clergy who attended the C.S.L's founding conference at Morecambe were already members of the G.S.M. or the C.S.U.: some leading C.S.L. figures, Donaldson[104], for instance, and Adderley[105] belonged at one time or another to all three societies. Though Noel, in his account of the Morecambe Conference[106], states that the conferees, whilst inaugurating a new organisation, in general did not intend to sever their connections with the older ones, and whilst this may have been their genuine intention, in practice it

101. Ibid.

102. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1909, Report of Annual Conference, and Church Socialist Quarterly and Church Socialist passim.

103. Register of Services, St Agnes, Bristol (Bristol City Record Office)

104. Church Socialist, March 1912 - Some Church Socialists and their views, III - F. Lewis Donaldson.

105. Ibid, September 1912 - number VII in series - The Hon. and Rev. J.G. Adderley.

106. Commonwealth, July 1906, p.222.

is difficult to see how they could effectively serve two Christian Socialist masters, however much each claimed, in meeting a different need, to be complementary to the other. From 1906, or shortly afterwards, it was clear that the society with impetus and apparent relevance to the current situation was the third organisation to enter the field, the C.S.L., and it is probable that the kind of transfer of allegiance illustrated in the Bristol experience took place in a number of centres, particularly if there was a desire for a more explicit and robust Socialism. The C.S.L., then, benefitted from the fact that the earlier societies had sown seeds and provided cultivators in a number of areas within the urban and industrial terrain of the country.

Turning, thirdly, to the activities of these men in their C.S.L. livery, together with those who subsequently joined them, we find that a number of parishes stand out as being of key importance in the establishment of a network of branches: we find a large number of prominent C.S.L. men associated with a relatively small group of parishes. At St Philip's, Newcastle, for instance, with Moll as Vicar, Widdrington served a curacy from 1897 to 1901, Conrad Noel from 1898 to 1900 and Paul Stacy from 1900-1905 - whatever other significance this particular concentration possesses it says much for the emotional stamina and constitution of Moll. All these men were to be involved in the foundation of the League and to play an important part in its history. Across the Pennines, the small parish of Halton near Lancaster gave the C.S.L. its first Secretary, Hastings, whilst his successive curates were Widdrington (1903-6) and Proudfoot (1906-10), editor of the Optimist, and, when it changed its title on being taken over by the C.S.L., the Church Socialist Quarterly. In the Midlands we find a C.S.L. 'cluster' round St Peter's Coventry: Widdrington (Vicar, 1906-18), Stacy (Widdrington's successor as Vicar and brother of Widdrington's first wife, the well known Socialist speaker, Enid Stacy), G.C. Binyon (Curate 1904-8) the historian of the Christian Socialist movement, George Ten Bruggenkate (Curate 1910-1912) author of the C.S.L. pamphlet 'Catholicism and Socialism' and

Felix Matthews (Curate, 1911-1915), member of the Executive Committee. At St Marks, Leicester, Donaldson was assisted by Claude Stuart Smith (Curate 1903-10) who became a vigorous full-time salaried Organising Secretary for the League, and J.M. Maillard (Curate 1915-19) who was to serve as Hon. Secretary of the League. In the South East Noel's assistants at Thaxted included Harold Buxton (1911-14) later a member of the Executive Committee, and Jack Grant (1912-15) who with Noel was the first secretary of the London branch and who also acted with Noel as Hon. Organiser of the League. In London, Noel (1900-1905) and Egerton Swann (1905-1914) were successively curates of St Mary's, Paddington Green.[107] Up and down the country there are several other examples of parishes with which two or more C.S.L. men have been associated: there almost seems to have been something of a Socialist succession established in some parishes. An examination of the patronage of such parishes and of those from which the Morecambe conferees came reveals no pattern - they include aristocrats, local and distant, incumbents of local large parishes, Bishops, presumed relations and even, in one case, the incumbent himself is the patron. We have, instead, a network of personal connections, a kind of Church Socialist clan full of dynastic ties, with new recruits attracted by reputations, accepted by mutual commendations and assimilated into the group to assume senior status in due course. The 'clusters' which this 'extended family' of Christian Socialist clergy formed were important in two ways in connection with the establishment of a network of branches. In several cases the parish in which the 'concentration' was found became the nucleus of a branch. Branches were based not on particular parishes, but on towns: in practice, however, we find that in most towns one particular parish provides the

107. Information on clerical appointments in this section is taken from Crockford's Clerical Directory (1923 edition) and information on C.S.L. appointments from the League's journals and from Executive Committee minutes in the Stacy Papers (University of Leeds). The Rev. J.A. Grant describes himself as 'residing at Thaxted' (Church Socialist, May 1912) and R. Groves (Conrad Noel and The Thaxted Movement, p.105) states that Grant moved to Thaxted for health reasons and that he did weekend duties in the Church and helped to edit the parish magazine. He appears to have been a 'regular helper' rather than a full-time curate of the parish. Noel tells us that the first bishop under which he served at Thaxted refused to license his assistant curates (Autobiography, p.101)

focal point - St Philip's Newcastle, St Mark's Leicester and St Peter's Coventry are such parishes as were also for example, St James Darlington and St Agnes Bristol. Secondly these 'clusters' provided in themselves small scale schools and training grounds in Christian Socialism, refining and reinforcing the ideas which the newcomer brought and facilitating the development and deployment of abilities for the benefit of the branch and of the League as a whole The existence of some branches, Elland[108] for example, was the result of the work of 'graduates' of these 'schools'. Certain parishes therefore stood out as strong centres or points of influence and while the leadership in the parish remained committed to the League's cause they retained their eminence in the League.

The Church Socialist League centres outside the main industrial and urban areas present a variegated pattern. The concentration of Church Socialism in the unpromising pastures of north west Essex was a direct result of the patronage of the Countess of Warwick. Lady Warwick was the patron of three livings in this area: in 1908 she presented E.G. Maxted to the tiny benefice of Tilty, in 1910 Noel to Thaxted and in 1918 Widdrington to Great Easton[109]. Maxted had spent eight years in curacies in Battersea and Lambeth. He came to Tilty with a virile Socialism which he proclaimed pugnaciously in the hamlet and the neighbourhood in the face of considerable organised opposition. He wrote about his battle to introduce Socialism to Tilty in The Clarion and subsequently published the account in the form of a pamphlet[110]. His activities and the associated disturbances came to the notice of the national press:

108. Stacy sustained the Elland branch from its foundation until his move to Coventry. Stacy papers (Hayward collection and Leeds University) and C.S.L. journals passim.

109. Crockfords Clerical Directory 1917 and 1923. Noel's cousin and one-time curate, Noel Buxton, later Bishop of Gibraltar, bought the advowson of Thaxted from Lady Warwick to secure, as Noel puts it 'the right kind of succession'. There was alarm because Lady Warwick "finding herself hard up ... began selling her livings to Protestant trusts" (Noel, Autobiography, pp.100-101)

110. E.G. Maxted, 'The Trials and Troubles of a Socialist Vicar' (1909) - Conrad Noel papers, University of Hull.

"Owing to the kind attention paid to us by the Daily Express" Maxted tells us, "Tilty is rapidly becoming famous as the first village in Essex to stand for Socialism."[111] Noel writes of these times in expansive vein: "Two or three years ago Socialism was almost unheard of in Essex. Today it is the chief topic of conversation."[112] However it was not, evidently, the chief form of activity for the Church people of the area. An Essex branch of the C.S.L. was started with Maxted as secretary, but despite his gritty efforts and the power house of Thaxted, the branch soon expired[113]. Turning to the other end of the land, in April 1908, Noel as Organising Secretary reviewing the League's progress, announced that it seemed likely that the first country branch would be established at Waddington near Clitheroe[114]. The existence of a Clitheroe branch is recorded from 1909 to 1913. Not surprisingly, however, the C.S.L. made little impact on the countryside. The basic problem of low population density faces any organisation attempting to establish itself in a country setting. To this factor must be added the innate conservatism of country church-going folk and, re-inforcing it, the power of local employers, which in the more personal context of the countryside could act as an effective deterrent to 'rebellious' allegiances. Commenting on the Thaxted situation, a local resident writes: "Very understandably people were reluctant to identify closely with the C.S.L. being almost wholly employed by the Liberal and Nonconformist owned sweet factory, and ..., the Tory farmers, whom to both anything to do with Socialism or Catholicism was an anathema"[115]

111. Ibid.

112. Unidentified press cutting, article by Conrad Noel, n.d., but from internal evidence late 1909. (Noel papers, University of Hull)

113. Church Socialist 1912, 1913 passim - The branch appears to have come to an end before May 1913.

114. Optimist, April 1908, p.102

115. Stanley Moss, sometime Sacristan of Thaxted Church. Letter 11th June 1977.

Another and very different area in which the League established short-lived footholds was that of the Universities. Enterprise in this area was a natural development for the C.S.L.: a number of leaders had themselves been actively involved in Christian Socialism as undergraduates - Donaldson, for instance, with a dozen other undergraduates had founded a branch of the G.S.M. at Oxford[116] - and the creation of opportunities to expose the next generation of potential leaders made sound strategic sense; moreover the notion of involvement in the academic world was especially attractive to those, such as Widdrington, who wished to promote and stress the intellectual aspect of the League's activities[117]. C.S.L. branches, however, were established only at Durham, Oxford and St David's, Lampeter. The existence of a C.S.U. branch in Durham University is recorded as early as 1892[118], and in the North East's heyday in the C.S.L., Durham became the first university to be associated with the League, West reporting in 1908 that a branch had been formed at St Chad's College. Gobat had addressed members of the college, with the Principal presiding, and at the close of the meeting twelve men joined the C.S.L. with three more following later[119]. In July of that year the C.S.L. branches of Northumberland and Durham met in conference in the city of Durham and decided to hold several meetings in the city to help the branch that the undergraduates had formed. However, neither this particular scheme of support nor the Durham University C.S.L. branch seems to have come to anything: after 1908 we hear nothing further of that particular centre. In January 1909 an article in the League's journal stated that the C.S.U. had 'a very large' (but unspecified) membership in Oxford, and the writer

116. Church Socialist, March 1912. 'Some Church Socialists and their views: III, F. Lewis Donaldson.

117. Stacy papers (Hayward collection) reveal that the promotion of work in this field was an abiding interest with Widdrington (e.g. pamphlet of 1934 'The League of the Kingdom of God : its work and its future', p.6)

118. Commonwealth, May 1912, p.136, P. Dearmer, 'The Beginnings of the C.S.U.'

119. Optimist, April 1908, Letter from Chairman. Branch Reports.

went on, perhaps rather tactlessly or provocatively, to tell his C.S.L. readers that it "really does more than any other society in the University to awaken our interest in social problems and excite a new recognition of the need for reform".[120] The following month, Noel, writing in Justice,[121] accounced that the President of the Oxford Union was a member of the League, but there seems to be no record of a branch in the University until 1912 when it appears in the list of branches in the Church Socialist but is not mentioned thereafter. The issue of the Church Socialist for June 1913 carried a notice about the University Socialist Federation which had come into being as a result of a conference of members of all University Fabian Societies held at Manchester in April 1912. "Though Fabian Societies are generally the most suitable for Universities" it declared, "the Federation does not exclude other societies and in particular is anxious to assist in founding branches of the Church Socialist League in theological colleges."[122] There were, however, no reports of new C.S.L. branches being established in the student world until 1915 when an optimistic note from St David's College, Lampeter commented on a very successful (summer) term and stated that the branch was now well established and hopeful for the future. One of the professors had been elected President[123]. The portents seem to have been mis-read: by 1916 the Lampeter branch had disappeared. Other attempts to gain a footing in Universities and colleges apparently produced no results. Noel stated in 1909 that the League had for some time been anxious to develop a branch at Cambridge University. Through the courtesy of the local Fabians he had managed to get in touch with two or three Church Socialists and a secretary had emerged. He hoped that Gobat who visited Cambridge from time to time would perhaps be able to develop the work there[124]. This Cambridge overture seems to have made

120. Church Socialist Quarterly, January 1909. L. Bradgate 'Young Oxford and the Socialist Movement'.

121. February 13th 1909. Article by Noel, 'The Church Socialist League and the Unemployed'.

122. p.16.

123. Church Socialist, September 1915, League notes.

124. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1909. Note by Organiser.

little further progress: as late as 1920 Noel's erstwhile assistant, Charles Jenkinson, then a mature undergraduate of 32[125], was writing to the Executive Committee on the question of forming a branch at Cambridge[126]. In the same report Noel informed his readers that at the invitation of the Principal he had visited Lichfield Theological College to lecture on the Church and Socialism and thereby had been able to put the principles of the League before the students. However despite Noel's efforts and the promise of support in the Theological College field from the University Socialist Federation the League does not seem to have established any branch in these institutions: in August 1916 a letter from the Executive to the members on the proposed reconstruction of the League remarks that "A further question to be considered is the steps to be taken in order to establish branches of the League at the Universities and Theological Colleges"[127]. Despite then its continuous interest in this area the League failed to establish any significant and persistent presence. The historian of the Student Christian Movement has spoken of the alienation of students from organised religion in most of the newer establishments of higher education at this time: he considered it to be a by-product, often unconscious, of the increasing study of science at the expense of the arts[128]. Nevertheless, in 1908, at a time of great C.S.L. expansion, the Fabian Society had six branches in the Universities[129] compared to the C.S.L's one, and, as we have seen, it was later to create a University Socialist Federation from a conference of University Fabian Societies. It is perhaps significant that the Federation, naturally, considered Fabian Societies to be the most suitable for universities and, with perhaps just a hint of condescension, it offered help to the C.S.L. in setting up branches not in universities,

125. Noel op.cit., p.90; H.J. Hammerton, 'This Turbulent Priest' (1952) pp.16,31.

126. C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes, January 28th 1920 (Stacy papers, University of Leeds).

127. Copy in Davey papers (on loan to author)

128. Tissington Tatlow, The Story of the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland (1933), pp.52, 425.

129. Cole, op.cit., p.237, footnote.

but in theological colleges. Turning to the ancient universities Oxford seems to have had a very strong branch of the C.S.U. from the foundation of the society and from Cambridge came its first president, B.F. Westcott, then Regius Professor of Divinity[130]. It is, of course, difficult to attain stability in university societies, subject to the transitory nature of the clientele and their passing enthusiasms, unless the society also attracts the support of the fixed population of senior members of the university. It is perhaps this last factor which may have accounted for the C.S.L's relative lack of success. From the beginning the C.S.U. had an academic flavour and numbered amongst its supporters people of standing in the academic world: the Fabian Society likewise was intellectual in attitude and membership. Even the more flamboyant G.S.M. was committed to study: moreover it had the advantage in its early days of being a pioneer - even if it did not suit all tastes it was the only Christian Socialist brand name available. The C.S.L. came late in the day when societies acceptable to academics were already established in the universities. Representatives from universities and colleges were conspicuously absent from its founding conference. The Morecambe Conference had little time for intellectualism and although the C.S.L. clearly desired a presence in the universities the uncompromisingly activist and propagandist tone of its early years may not have commended it in those quarters. By the time the intellectual element, submerged at Morecambe, came to the surface and became more assertive in the life of the League, the C.S.L. was already, as an institution, in decline and though it numbered in its ranks men like Maurice Reckitt, on the fringes of the academic world, and R.H. Tawney, very much of it, it established no further footholds in this ground.

130. Commonwealth, loc.cit.; Church Socialist Quarterly, January 1909, loc.cit.; Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (1958).

Among other C.S.L. branches were two in Somerset. The Taunton branch was formed early in 1909[131], probably as a result of C.S.L. involvement in the by-election in February[132]. The report of the campaign, which was written by the person principally involved, described the C.S.L. as being "well in the front line of attack." The local clergy are reported as giving "a 'silent' consent to the capitalistic forces." The C.S.L. support came from outside: Geoffrey Ramsey from Bath, the author of the report, tells us that he carried on a vigorous campaign for the whole six days of the contest whilst A.S. Rashleigh of St Agnes, Bristol presided at a large meeting. The Chairman of the League sent a message of goodwill and encouragement and among Labour leaders who spoke was one who was also a member of the League, George Lansbury[133]. The Fabian candidate, Frank Smith, was also supported by Henry Slesser[134], later to be a C.S.L. member and Solicitor-General in Ramsey MacDonald's first administration. By July 1910 the Taunton branch, though describing itself as 'optimistic', reported that its numbers were small and that it was engaged in very uphill work against great odds[135]: we hear nothing further from it - by 1912 it had certainly perished. If no change of political heart took place in any of the local clergy the prospects of success for the branch would appear to have been dim from the very start. The other centre in this county, Bath, is not generally associated with Socialism, Christian or otherwise. In 1895, however, a Bath Socialist Society had been formed as a result of missionary work by Socialists from nearby Bristol[136], and we have already noted that the mainstay of the C.S.L. involvement in the 1909

131. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1909, Note by Organiser.

132. It is just possible that the C.S.L. involvement in the by-election arose because a branch already existed in Taunton, but that seems unlikely. Neither the account of the C.S.L. by-election activities given in the Church Socialist Quarterly (April 1909) nor the reference to it by Henry Slesser (Judgement Reserved, p.19) later a C.S.L. member, mentions any C.S.L. branch at this time.

133. Church Socialist Quarterly, April 1909. Taunton Election - report by Geoffrey Ramsey.

134. Henry Slesser, Judgement Reserved (1941), p.19 and passim.

135. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1910, Branch Reports.

136. Bryher, op.cit., Part II, p.70.

Taunton by-election was Geoffrey Ramsey, a Bath incumbent who had served a curacy at Bearpark, Durham from 1904 to 1907[137], the period when priests from the North East were taking a leading part in the formation of the League. The annals of the League do not indicate the date of the founding of the Bath branch but it was certainly in existence by 1912 and in November of that year the Branch Secretary wrote to George Lansbury congratulating him on the definite stand he had made for the enfranchisement of women and for the independence of a 'Socialist Party' in the House of Commons[138]. By 1914, however, the branch had ceased to exist.

Seaside Sussex provided the site for another series of C.S.L. branches. The St Leonards-on-Sea branch seems to have been a case of two or three middle class persons being gathered together in the name of Christian Socialism and a branch arising in the midst of them. An entry in the Church Socialist Quarterly of January 1910 gives the date of formation as May 3rd 1909 and notes(with quiet satisfaction it seems) that it is the first branch to be formed in that part of England[139]. Reckitt, an Oxford undergraduate at the time of its foundation, describes the genesis of the branch:
**"When I joined the League I at once set about exploring the** possibilities of starting a local branch, but the locality did not offer much encouragement. A seaside resort, the religious life of which was dominated by what has been unkindly called 'London, Brighton and South Coast religion', was not a promising field in which to proclaim 'the political, economic and social emancipation of the whole people, men and women, by the establishment of a democratic commonwealth in which the community shall run[140] the land and capital collectively, and use them co-operatively for the good of all', as a goal for the social energies of the Church. In fact, I doubt if anything

137. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.

138. Letter - Gertrude Francis, Hon.Sec. of Bath C.S.L. to George Lansbury, 28th November 1912 (Lansbury Collection, British Library of Political and Economic Science, L.S.E.)

139. Branch Reports.

140. A misprint for 'own', the version given in C.S.L. literature.

could have been got going at all but for one propitious circumstance."[141] The propitious circumstance was that there lived in St Leonards Ruth Kenyon: Reckitt then met her for the first time and she became "my oldest friend and a companion through every phase of the movement in which I have worked since then."[142] Ruth Kenyon had long been involved in the Christian Socialist movement - she had been connected with the C.S.U. but had not been entirely satisfied with it[143] and in the first list of C.S.L. members, published in March 1907 her name appears.[144] The founding meeting of the branch took place in no bare and draughty public hall: rather, as Reckitt relates, "a drawing-room meeting was (somewhat incongruously)[145] held in our house to inaugurate the branch, and out of a very bewildered company of the genteel who assembled to hear this surprising message proclaimed, only a few had the initiative to enrol. But a few more came to us from less improbable sources and the Hastings and St Leonards branch began to make a name for itself in the league. We ran quite successful public meetings in the hall appropriate to such demonstrations, at which the star speakers of the Church Socialist League appeared."[146] The report in the Church Socialist Quarterly of January 1910 speaks of a small nucleus, steadily growing and having reached a membership total of thirteen. Despite its slender roots in an unpromising field, the branch, sustained by the powerful commitment of Ruth Kenyon and Maurice Reckitt, proved more durable than most of the others that had arisen in improbable locations: it lasted from 1909 until near the end of 1916. Other Sussex seaside

141. M.B. Reckitt, As It Happened (1941), pp.246-7

142. Ibid.

143. Interview with Maurice Reckitt, 30th December 1976.

144. The C.S.L. - 1st Report - March 1907 (Community of the Resurrection archives)

145. The house was owned by Reckitt's father, a director of the family firm, the Hull based chemicals concern, Reckitts.

146, Reckitt, op.cit., p.248.

ventures of the C.S.L. were a branch at Worthing, reported by the Organising Secretary in July 1912 among his list of new branches[147] but apparently expiring around the end of 1914, and Brighton, founded in the twilight years of the League in 1920 though Conrad Noel had declared as early as July 1909 that every effort would be made early in the autumn to start a branch there[148]. Perhaps these branches may be seen as a manifestation of'London, Brighton and South coast religion' in its Socialist guise.

Upper and middle class members and any other isolated Church Socialists scattered throughout the land were linked together, as we have observed, in a device called the Central Branch.[149] Where one or two such individuals with enterprise and commitment lived in the same locality they might form a small branch, as we have seen in the case of St Leonards-on-Sea, but in general, to find the rank and file to sustain the life of a branch, location in the industrial areas and the great cities was necessary.

This survey of the expansion of the C.S.L. from its small beginnings to its state of maximum membership indicates that, as an institution, it succeeded partly in attaining its objectives. It succeeded in establishing a national network of branches, raising its standard, in some cases briefly, in others for the duration of the League, in places both probable and improbable, throughout the land. There were a few gaps in areas where Christian Socialism might have taken root but in general the blank spaces on the map were those tracts which presented a distinctly uninviting habitat for the C.S.L. In establishing this network it achieved what might be regarded as a 'respectable' membership roll: three

147. Church Socialist, July 1912. Report of Organising Secretary to Annual Conference.

148. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1909, Note by Organiser.

149. The London branch also had a Central Group for those who could not be attached to a local group.

times that of the G.S.M. at its numerical peak and not beyond comparison with a body as influential as the Fabian Society[150]. It did not succeed in becoming a mass movement. It did not even become the largest Christian Socialist body within the Church of England: the C.S.U. in the year of the C.S.L's formation had five times the membership of the latter organisation at its peak[151]. The more extravagant hopes of the League's early leaders did not materialise. Conrad Noel, to whose dynamism so much of the early expansion of the League was due, published his book 'Socialism in Church History' in 1910. He ends his sweeping survey of Scriptures, Jewish and Christian, and successive phases of Church history by introducing the Church Socialist League as the grand climax of the tale he has told and an agency with an opportunity for almost limitless achievement in the future:-

> 'There is one body within the National Church which has not yet been mentioned. The Church Socialist League is the most vigorous champion of Catholic democracy that has yet taken the field. Its power is already out of all proportion to its numbers; its growth has been phenomenal; its activities are numberless. It alone has the unreserved confidence of the secular movement. A colossal work lies before it. If the League has the energy and the wisdom, it may act like leaven upon the sluggish conscience of the age. It may be that God is raising up its members for the revival of the national religion and for the hope of an international Catholicism. The Church Socialist League may prove itself one of God's chiefest instruments for translating "Christianity" into the religion of Jesus Christ, and the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of Heaven'.[152]

150. A Fremantle, This Little Band of Prophets (1960) pp.18-19: "The Fabian Society never had more than 4,000 members; at the time of its greatest influence which then extended into the Liberal and Conservative parties, it had under 1,500". The C.S.L's maximum membership reached in the pre-war period, was around 1,200. In 1913 the Fabian Society reached its maximum membership for the pre-1918 period with 2804 in the parent society and about 500 in local societies (Pease, op.cit. p.232)

151. I.C.F. Quarterly, July 1977, p.7 - John H. Heidt, 'The Christian Social Union'.

152. pp.283-4.

Manifestly the C.S.L. failed to measure up to this role and to fulfil this destiny: the League may still have been growing rapidly at the time when Noel wrote those expansive words; by the time the book was published this phase was at an end. A more obvious, less qualified future vision, whose accuracy time should demonstrate, would have been to foretell that of the three Christian Socialist societies in the Church of England the one that would achieve by far the largest membership would be that which was least Socialist[153] in outlook and most middle class and academic in composition.

153. Strictly speaking, the C.S.U. could be regarded as Socialist only in the Westcottian sense of being opposed to unconstrained individualism, but though its stance was more that of social reform than socialism, it is always regarded as one of the Anglican Christian Socialist societies and as an integral part of the movement.

# CHAPTER 4 - THE MEMBERS

"We have ... made membership of the League as broad as Church membership", wrote Noel after the first annual conference at Scarborough in 1907, "so that men and women duly christened, but in some cases cold-shouldered out of Church attendance and discouraged from communion by the infidelity, cant and bigotry of the conventional Pharisee will be welcomed as members and workers in the Church Socialist League."[1] Despite the easy entry terms - G.S.M. and C.S.U. members had to have been confirmed - recruits, as we have seen, did not come in great numbers: they did, however, come in considerable variety. Aristocrat, artisan and academic, clerk, coachbuilder and curate, docker, doctor and dispensing chemist, insurance agent and incumbent, monk and Member of Parliament all found a place in the League.[2] In this heterogeneous collection, however, it was not the butcher, the baker or the candlestick maker but the cleric who dominated in directing the League's affairs. For sixteen out of its seventeen years' existence the League had a clergyman as chairman. The main offices of the C.S.L.- Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer - were filled some twenty-six times and on seventeen occasions the office-holder was in Holy Orders.

In the nineteenth century the clergy had been drawn almost exclusively from the middle and upper classes and predominantly via the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The late Canon Roger Lloyd in his survey of the Church of England from 1900-1965 - a "meditation on an historical theme", as he styled it - remarked that by the beginning of

1. Conrad Noel papers, University of Hull. Unidentified press cutting, n.d. (but 1907), entitled 'With the Church Socialists at Scarborough', by Conrad Noel (Organiser, C.S.L.).

2. Church Socialist, 1912, passim; C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes, 24th November 1920 (Stacey papers, University of Leeds); Letter - Mrs M. Richards (formerly Mrs Jervis, nee Wormell, sometime Secretary, Coventry branch) to author, 28th June 1977; C.S.L. First Report, March 1907 (Archives, Community of the Resurrection); Letter - Miss E.V. Edgley (former member, Darlington branch) to author, 26th March 1977; Letter - Mr Geoffrey Gobat (son of Revd. T.C. Gobat, sometime Chairman of C.S.L.) to author, 27th March 1977.

the twentieth century the type of man offering himself for ordination was beginning to change. He cited as sole evidence for this observation a decrease in the proportion of candidates from Oxford and Cambridge - in 1899 they made up only 61% of the total - and a steady rise in numbers from what he calls "the great provincial universities with a theological faculty, especially Dublin and Durham."[3]: that such a modest change in the source of recruitment - a matter of shades within a colour rather than a different part of the spectrum - could attract comment is a reflection both on the monochrome nature of the traditional social and educational background of the clergy in the nineteenth century and on the viewpoint of a particular Cathedral dignitary in the middle of the twentieth.[4] In 1918, the report of an Archbishops' Committee of Inquiry declared that "it is plainly desirable that the clergy should be drawn from every class and that far more opportunities should be open for boys of the working class to receive that wide education and that special training which will qualify them for the ministry."[5] - a sentiment subsequently to be echoed from time to time. The great barrier to any major change in the pattern of recruitment was a financial one. The religious orders, the Society of the Sacred Mission and the Community of the Resurrection, were the first bodies to attempt to deal with this problem.[6] In the Community of the Resurrection, Father Paul Bull, who was to play an important part in the affairs of the C.S.L., informed a chapter meeting that he had some fifteen boys from poor homes who wanted to become priests but their desires were frustrated because their parents could not afford the expensive education. Bull pointed out that in such cases training for the ministry in the Unitarian, Wesleyan and Baptist bodies could be

3. R. Lloyd, The Church of England, 1900-1965 (1966), pp.75-76. Lloyd's figures are based on 'The Supply and Training of Candidates for Holy Orders', a report of a committee set up by the Convocation of Canterbury in 1899.

4. Lloyd was Sub-Dean of Winchester. Son of a colonel and educated at Shrewsbury and St John's College, Cambridge (Who's Who 1966).

5. Christianity and Industrial Problems, being the Report of the Archbishops' Fifth Committee of Inquiry (1918) p.103.

6. Lloyd, op.cit., pp.149-150.

provided without cost to parents: in the Church of England, he observed - "we have invented a class priesthood with a money qualification."[7] Bull's plea was taken up: the idea of a Training College for candidates for Holy Orders was approved on July 5th 1902, a sub-committee was formed to draw up a report[8] and the College of the Resurrection began its work later that year.[9] Although a start had been made at Kelham (Society of the Sacred Mission) and Mirfield, the scale of these enterprises in the early years of the century was such that in numerical terms the impact on the social and educational composition of the clergy was very slight: of the 400 and 300 enquiries which the colleges respectively received each year, they approved 100 each but could accept only twelve.[10] The report, 'Christianity and Industrial Problems', to which reference has already been made, concludes its comment on the desirability of having clergy drawn from all social classes and of providing the necessary educational and training facilities for working-class boys, by commending efforts already made in this direction and suggesting that they should be greatly multiplied. In its 'Summary of Conclusions' the report is more forthright: it declares that "no boy who has a vocation for the ministry should be prevented by poverty from entering it."[11] Clearly much remained to be done in effecting any appreciable change in the social categories from which the clergy were drawn. On the University front, although the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth saw the establishment of a university in many of the great cities, the educational catchment area for clerics was not greatly broadened. Unlike Oxford and Cambridge, the new universities had not grown out of the soil of religion: in different places and in various combinations, civic activity, the call from leaders of industry for increased scientific

7. G.L. Prestige, The Life of Charles Gore (1935), p.218.
8. Mirfield Chapter Minutes, July 5th 1902.
9. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1967-8, p.2048.
10. Lloyd, op.cit., p.149.
11. pp.103 and 108.

and commercial knowledge, and the generosity of local benefactors were among the initiatives contributing to their origin.[12] These new institutions were free from religious tests and they wished also, as far as possible, to be unencumbered by religious controversy.[13] While Manchester had a faculty of theology, the Charter of Liverpool University on the other hand explicitly declares that 'no theological teaching shall be given by or under the authority of the University.'[14] In some other universities theological books were excluded from the libraries. Beyond the occasional 'university sermon', the institutional apparatus of religion - chapels and services - was not provided by these new universities and the initiative for religious activity tended to lie with the students working through such bodies as the interdenominational Student Christian Movement. In some cases Divinity has been added to the range of subjects offered.[15] In the period under review, however, these institutions did not provide an obvious or welcoming avenue for the aspiring ordinand: moreover, they were so recent in foundation that even in the case of those who felt a vocation after entering them or graduating from them, or of any original spirits who, through enterprise or rebelliousness, deliberately sought out an avowedly 'secular' university as a prelude to Orders, or those who were sent to Leeds from Mirfield, the numbers passing through and being ordained could make no great statistical impact on the ranks of the clergy. Despite,then, some decline in the predominance of Oxford and Cambridge, which nevertheless retained their traditional function as the most favoured educational route for the cleric, and the foundation of several new universities, the range of those in which the clergyman was educated was not greatly extended: well established institutions with their ecclesiastical roots and connections, such as the kindred Trinity College, Dublin, dating from the

12. T.G. Williams, The Main Currents of Social and Industrial Change, 1870-1924 (1925), pp.223-224.

13. J.R.H. Moorman, A History of the Church of England (1961 edition), pp.409-410.

14. B. Truscott, Redbrick University (1943), p.172, quoted in Moorman, op.cit., p.410.

15. Moorman, ibid.

reign of Elizabeth I, the University of Durham and King's College, London, made up most of the balance.[16] Again, despite the pioneering efforts of Kelham and Mirfield and expressions of concern from other ecclesiastical voices, the cost of education and training for the ministry remained a major and largely insurmountable barrier to any substantial widening of the class base from which the clergy were drawn. There were then, only some very modest changes in the educational and social background of the clergy in the period under review: the pull of tradition, the nature of the new universities and the problem of student fees combined to determine that the pattern should not be markedly different from that inherited from the previous century.

Though unlike the majority of their brethren in political commitment - the more extreme utterances at Church Congresses and Conferences notwithstanding[17] - the C.S.L. clergy seem to have been broadly typical of the body as a whole in social and educational background. Of the twelve clergy elected to office in the C.S.L.[18], nine were graduates of Oxford or Cambridge; of the remaining three one had gone to the college of the Church Missionary Society, another to the London College of Divinity and briefly, without graduating, to University College, Durham, whilst the third was a product of the Society of the Sacred Mission's college at Kelham. A survey of a further thirty clergy who were not officers of the League but who were prominent at various times, shows a smaller Oxford and Cambridge element (thirteen) but is otherwise broadly similar.

16. Editions of Crockford's Clerical Directory in this period give clear indication of this situation.

17. "Whatever may be said of the central or official Church, the Church as represented locally, whether in town or country whether clerical or lay, remains, I fear, a body which as a whole the social reformer or the Labour man regards as something which is alien to his needs and aims, which he finds irresponsive and dull." (Gore in S. Paget [ed.] Henry Scott Holland : Memoir and Letters [1921], p.250)

18. Some of these twelve men held office on more than one occasion, hence the figure 17 on page 104.

Durham (five, three being from Hatfield College), King's College, London (three) and Trinity College, Dublin (two) provide another ten: more than three quarters of the sample, therefore, are drawn from these five institutions, whose importance in relation to the whole field of clergy education we have already noted. Four of the sample were non-graduates who had been trained in theological colleges, one of them at Kelham. Another two were Mirfield men who had graduated from Leeds: the Community gave ordination candidates pre-graduate education where necessary and sent them to Leeds where the Hostel of the Resurrection was established. Apart from them only one cleric in this sample had been educated at one of the new civic universities.[19]

There is evidence that a number of these C.S.L. clergy were financially well-endowed and socially, and in some cases politically, well-connected. Adderley, Noel and Gobat would have improved on the later popular boast 'Lloyd George knew my father': their fathers knew the Grand Old Man. To Mrs Gladstone Adderley's father was "the kindest of dear William's enemies";[20] Noel's father was converted from Unionism by talks with his friend W.E. Gladstone[21], and Gobat owed his place at the Clergy Orphan School (now St Edmund's, Canterbury) to a nomination from Gladstone who had been a personal friend of his father.[22] In the ranks of the C.S.L. clergy, the aristocracy were represented by Adderley and Noel. The Hon. and Revd. J.G. Adderley (1861-1940) was the fifth son of Sir Charles Bowyer Adderley of Hams Hall near Birmingham, a politician and sometime President of the Board of Trade who became the first Baron Norton in 1878.[23] Adderley, educated at Eton and Christ Church,[24]decided to take Holy Orders after consulting the Archbishop of Canterbury, E.W. Benson, who was a very close friend of his father, and Benson, apparently, always took a

19. Sample compiled from names appearing in C.S.L. periodicals etc. and newspapers. Educational details from Crockford's Clerical Directory, editions of 1917, 1921/22, 1923.

20. J.G. Adderley, In Slums and Society (1916), p.194.

21. Conrad Noel, An Autobiography (1945), p.7.

22. Molly Gobat, T.C. Gobat : his life, work and teaching (1938), pp.10-11.

23. T.P. Stevens, Father Adderley (1943) p.9.

24. Who Was Who (1941-1950)

fatherly interest in him. Frederick Temple, who succeeded Benson as Archbishop, was Adderley's diocesan in London: he, too, had known him since he was a boy. Leading Churchmen of his own generation were numbered among his friends - Henry Scott Holland, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford and Hensley Henson and Cosmo Gordon Lang whom he got to know during his work as Head of Oxford House in Bethnal Green, and who were to become Bishop of Durham and Archbishop of Canterbury respectively. After working in slums and in society in London he was 'called' (he thought that was the right expression) to go to Saltley, a large industrial parish in Birmingham, most of which his father had inherited as a young man. For the greater part of the C.S.L. period he was working in Saltley and in another Birmingham parish[25], but in 1918 he was appointed by the Duke of Bedford to the parish of St Paul's, Covent Garden[26]. Conrad Le Despenser Roden Noel (1869-1942) tell us that he was of Swiss and German ancestry on his mother's side and Irish Norman and English on his father's side: "I might easily have become a cosmopolitan - I actually became an internationalist". At the time of Noel's birth his father had a position at court - Groom of the Privy Chamber - a role for which his radical opinions made him ill-suited and from which he was released after four years service. The illness of Noel's mother led to the family's wintering at San Remo on the Italian Riviera. When schooldays began the journey to Italy for the holidays proved too expensive and Noel stayed with his grandmother, Lady Gainsborough, a Lady-in-waiting to Queen Victoria, in a large solemn house in Hyde Park Square, from whence, accompanied by a footman he paid visits to the Connaught Square house of an enterprising and somewhat eccentric aunt, Lady Forrester. A decline in his father's fortunes led to his removal from one public school to another and his wild behaviour led to his removal from Cambridge. He was rusticated for a term but never returned: instead,

25. J.G. Adderley, op.cit., pp.56 and 58 (Benson); p.65 (Temple); p.17 (Scott Holland); p.19 (Henson and Lang); pp.114 and 117 (Saltley).

26. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.

prepared by private tuition he proceeded to Chichester Theological College. He was examined for ordination by a cousin by marriage. On the day appointed for his ordination the Bishop of Exeter informed him that he could not proceed: he detected, he feared, dangerous signs of both Romanism and pantheism in the young ordinand. In the wake of this hiatus and following indignant letters to the Bishop from Noel's father, who had been a friend of F.D. Maurice and as something of a philosopher and Christian thinker was prepared to contest the bishop point by point, Noel repaired to Lambeth Palace for an interview with Westcott, the Bishop of Durham, who was staying with the Archbishop and who had already befriended him. No post in the Durham diocese materialised from this meeting, but when Noel did serve in the North-East, as curate to Moll in Newcastle, his bishop was his cousin. He was also to serve under him when he became Vicar of Thaxted.[27] Another group of C.S.L. clergy themselves came from a clerical background. J.H. Hastings, first Secretary and Treasurer of the League represented the 'hereditary proprietor' element. Hastings served as curate to his father at Halton-on-Lune from 1901-1903. The father occupied the largest house in the parish and Harold Hastings the Manor House - there was no Rectory.[28] In 1903 he succeeded to the family living: one of the first acts of the twenty six year old incumbent was to employ Widdrington, then aged thirty, as curate and lecturer, Widdrington having been put in touch with Hastings by Scott Holland.[29] Theodore Crombie Gobat (1864-1937), another of the C.S.L. pioneers, was the grandson of a clergyman of Swiss birth who became the second Bishop in Jerusalem under the controversial Anglo-Prussian scheme, and son of a North

27. Noel, op.cit., pp.1, 7, 9, 10, 13, 24, 26, 35, 37, 40 and 59. On p.37 Noel states that his father had come under the influence of Maurice: in an interview printed in the Optimist, April 1908, p.100 he states that his father was a friend of Maurice.

28. Letter from Canon J.C. Houghton, Rector of Halton, to author, 17th March 1977; Crockford's Clerical Directory 1923.

29. Christendom, March 1947, p.18 - Article by P.E.T. Widdrington, 'Those were the days'.

Wales incumbent.[30] Gilbert Clive Binyon, who claimed to have joined in the space of eight years, 1899-1907, the C.S.U., the Fabian Society, the C.S.L. and the I.L.P.[31], was also a son of the parsonage, but from what appears to have been a rather more prosperous family background than that of Gobat, with whom he was closely associated.[32] A passage in his papers provides an example of the sense of social guilt which may well have been a common experience and a motivating factor among those of his class who turned to Christian Socialism. Beatrice Webb, for example, remarks that the origin of the social ferment of the eighteen-eighties is to be found "in a new consciousness of sin among men of intellect and property ... a collective or class consciousness; a growing uneasiness, amounting to conviction, that the industrial organisation which had yielded rent, interest and profit on a stupendous scale had failed to produce a decent livelihood and tolerable conditions for the majority of the inhabitants of Great Britain."[33] In speaking of his Socialism Binyon recalls this 'incident' in his later 'teens'[34]. On a visit to Manchester he went to explore some slums from the rents of which part of the income was derived that paid for his schooling. "The squalor that I saw made me feel ashamed and guilty and that a sovereign that happened to be in my pocket really by rights belonged to the dwellers in this wretched street." He hastened to add, in defence of his father, that one would have gained a wrong impression of him if one had thought of him as a slum landlord: "he might have been quite well-to-do but in his first curacy in a Lancashire town he gave away considerable sums of money (and ruined his health) during the distress caused by the cotton famine".[35] In the university world, Ronald Knox (1888-1951) who appears to have joined the League as an undergraduate,[36]

30. M. Gobat, op.cit., pp.9-10.

31. G.C. Binyon, "I want", p.4, unpublished typescript, Binyon Papers, University of Leeds.

32. M. Gobat, op.cit., passim.

33. B. Webb, My Apprenticeship (1926), pp.191-3 (Penguin edition, 1971).

34. He is looking back some 20 to 25 years.

35. Binyon, op.cit., p.4.

36. Justice, February 13th 1909. Article by Noel, 'The Church Socialist League and the Unemployed'.

was a son of Dr E.A. Knox, Bishop of Manchester. His biographer tends to play down his Socialism, calling it "a slight and transient infection":[37] however, it lasted long enough for Knox, after ordination and as Fellow and Tutor of Trinity College, to serve as Chairman of the C.S.L's short-lived Oxford University branch.[38] He left the Church of England in 1917[39] and found distinction in another communion. Knox was a visitor to Mirfield[40] where Father Frere (1863-1938) the Superior, and Father Paul Bull (1864-1942) were prominent C.S.L. men. Frere's background was also mainly clerical over several generations, his ancestors filling a mixture of church and university posts[41], whilst Bull who went on to Oxford from the Woodard school[42]at Hurstpierpoint, to which he returned for a spell of schoolmastering, was the son of a Clerk of Journals in the House of Commons.[43] Other C.S.L. clerics came from a variety of backgrounds within the middle classes. William Corbett Roberts (1873-1953), who was the League's Secretary through an important part of its history, came of a conventional prosperous Victorian Nonconformist background, though his mother's family were Evangelical Anglicans and one of his uncles was a clergyman. His father's family were Congregationalists of Welsh origin. His grandfather had migrated from Wales to London and founded a building firm which prospered. His father, debarred as a Nonconformist from Oxford and Cambridge, took a London University degree,

37. Evelyn Waugh, The Life of Ronald Knox (1959), p.75 (Fontana edition, 1962)

38. Church Socialist, issues of 1912 - Lists of branches.

39. Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church.

40. Waugh, op.cit., p.76.

41. Papers of W.H. Frere, Mirfield Deposit, Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York.

42. Nathaniel Woodard (1811-1891), the founder of the 'Woodard Schools' became convinced, while a curate in East London, of the necessity of establishing public schools which would provide a sound middle-class education on a definite Anglican basis. In 1848 he outlined his ideas in 'Plea for the Middle Classes'. Hurstpierpoint was founded in 1850, two years after his best known foundation,Lancing (Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church)

43. Who Was Who 1941-50.

continued the family business, became a magistrate and Chairman of the Governors of the North London Polytechnic. After Oxford the second son carried on the business and also became Chairman of the Polytechnic Governors whilst the third son became literary editor of the New Statesman and of Time and Tide. From a household of books, culture and ample money for a comfortable existence Roberts went to Merchant Taylors School and thence as a Scholar to Oxford where he took a First and "became a Socialist, very much on the pattern of his class and generation, shocked, morally and emotionally, by the ugliness of social injustice and inequality, but caring much less about the political implications".[44] The manufacturing classes were represented by Hewlett Johnson (1874-1966), son of a wire manufacturer of Upton Grange, Macclesfield. From King Edward's School, Macclesfield he went to the Victoria University, Manchester - the only notable C.S.L. cleric, other than Mirfield men at Leeds, to have attended one of the new universities - where he took his B.Sc. and the Geology prize. His maternal grandfather, Alfred Hewlett, was a Doctor of Divinity known as'the Spurgeon of the North': Hewlett Johnson eventually gravitated to Oxford to read Theology and was awarded the D.D. degree himself in 1924.[45] From a more artistic background came Paul Stacy (1870-1960). The Stacys, he tells us, were a family of Norman origin: he was descended from a branch which had moved to Somerset in the late fifteenth or the sixteenth century. His father, Henry Stacy, was an artist well-known in the Bristol district.[46] His mother, daughter of a Birmingham merchant, also had artistic gifts as pianist and painter of miniatures. At their Bristol house there was a garden room which had been "built by a former owner as a place of recreation for working class lads". It was put to a variety of purposes by the Stacys.

44. Susan Miles, Portrait of a Parson, (1955), Foreword and Chapter I, passim. (Susan Miles was a pseudonym for Ursula Roberts, wife of W.C. Roberts - letter from Revd. J. Spilman, Rector of Crick, Northants to author, 24th May 1977. Roberts was Rector of Crick, 1909-17).

45. Who Was Who, 1961-70; Dictionary of National Biography.

46. Paul Stacy, My Strange Knowing of Christ in Britain (1958), p.1, unpublished typescript (held at St Peter's Vicarage, Coventry).

Paul's father used it as a studio; it was a base for the dancing activities of his sister Edna and it was also used as "a centre for religious and political purposes, dramatic readings ... and social gatherings of many kinds". Among the visitors were Bernard Shaw and the young Vaughan Williams. Paul and his elder sister Enid "caught the enthusiasm for Socialism which was growing steadily at that time" - Enid became a well known Socialist speaker in this country and in the United States, received the attentions of Ramsay MacDonald but married Percy Widdrington and died in 1903 at the age of thirty five.[47] The Stacy studio became one of the regular meeting places of Socialists in Bristol. One of them recalls: "It still lingers in my memory as some enchanted Hall of Dreams. There was music and song and dance. Enid's sisters were wonderful dancers. How proud she was of their beauty! The Guild of St Matthew was working hard under the Revd. Stewart Headlam to release Britain from its Puritan ban on dancing and the stage generally. Enid's sisters' dancing was for us a solemn rite ... Night after night bands of Socialists, young and old, would meet for study and debate, and terribly practical work too, for the unemployed and unskilled workers ... Never did our meetings break up without our singing one of Morris's songs to a crooning Irish melody."[48]

This sample of some leading C.S.L. clerics with backgrounds peopled by politician, courtier, civil servant, squire, bishop, priest, urban landlord, commercial entrepreneur, don and artist suggests, then, that the body probably represented a typical cross-section of the various strands of upper and middle class English society of the period, perhaps in its more progressive manifestations. The annals of the League provide some evidence also of the comfortable financial position of some of these men. W.H. Paine, who had served a five year curacy in Sunderland in the parish of which West later became Vicar

47. Biographical notes by Paul Stacy in Stacy Papers, Hayward collection (in possession of author); information from Revd. P.N. Hayward, literary executor of Revd. Paul Stacy.

48. S. Bryher, An Account of the Labour and Socialist Movement in Bristol, Pt.II (1931), p.23.

and who was Domestic Chaplain to Bishop E.S. Talbot both at Rochester and Southwark,[49] relinquished ecclesiastical posts to act as Secretary of the C.S.L. from 1909 to 1915. West, in a Chairman's letter to members on the pressing need for money, was able to announce that Paine had "most generously placed his time and service at the disposal of the League voluntarily".[50] Paine was also a generous contributor to C.S.L. funds. A special fund was created to pay for an Organizing Secretary, and discounting one gargantuan subscription of £150, 118 contributors, individuals and branches, paid in a total of some £370 between August 1910 and May 1913, when the fund was wound up - an average of just over £3 per contribution. Only twelve of these 118 subscriptions were for £10 or more, and of these seven were from clergy, A.S. and Mrs Rashleigh contributing £35, W.H. Paine £30, W.P.B. Shelley £19, J.G. Adderley 15 guineas, A.A.D. Mackenzie £15, and Conrad and Mrs Noel and Claude Stuart Smith £10 each.[51] Mrs W.H. Paine was also a generous contributor to the funds of the London parish, All Saints', Margaret Street.[52]

Although we may regard the C.S.L. clerics as broadly typical of the Anglican clergy as a whole in social and educational background, three points call for comment. In the first place, despite the evident enterprise, energy and ability of several of the C.S.L. clergy, none of them achieved major promotion in the Church during the life of the League and few after it. Adderley was made an Honorary Canon of Birmingham Cathedral in 1913[53] by Bishop Russell Wakefield. "Before I sat under him as a Bishop", Adderley writes, "I did the same as a borough councillor under the best mayor that Marylebone ever had. He was ... the first person who had the courage to honour a declared Socialist by making him a Canon."[54] Dr Wakefield also showed a sympathetic attitude

49. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923

50. Church Socialist Quarterly, January 1909, p.77.

51. Church Socialist, September 1913, p.18. Organising Secretary's Fund - List of Subscriptions and Donations.

52. All Saints, Margaret Street, Church and Parish Paper, April 1924, p.90 (Stacy papers, Hayward Collection).

53. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923

54. Adderley, op.cit., p.128.

towards the League in his action in agreeing to present to the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury in February 1912 'The Petition of the Church Socialist League' on the subject of the labour unrest.[55] Donaldson left Leicester in 1918 after which he seems to have played little part in the central affairs of the C.S.L. He was made an Honorary Canon of Peterborough in 1918 and in 1921 he became a Residentiary Canon[56], the pinnacle of C.S.L. preferment in the period. W.H. Frere, Superior of the Community of the Resurrection from 1902 to 1913 and again from 1916-22, was consecrated Bishop of Truro in 1923[57], the year the League came to an end, and he appears to have been the only C.S.L. man to have become an English diocesan bishop. Despite his important role in the early days of the League, he seems to have taken little part in its later activities: he made a strong criticism of the wording of the C.S.L. 'Remonstrance' which called on the Bishops to espouse the cause of the striking workers in 1912[58] but thereafter seems to have faded out. He had interests other than Socialism: he was an expert on liturgical matters and his papers contain much on ecclesiastical items but little on Socialism.[59] One C.S.L. member was consecrated to an overseas diocese: Harold Buxton became Archdeacon of Cyprus in 1928 and Bishop of Gibraltar in 1933.[60] R.E. Ramsay who may have been a League member became Bishop Suffragan of Malmesbury in 1927[61]: he was curate to Rashleigh at St Agnes, Bristol from 1910-1918[62] where he certainly took part in services arranged for the C.S.L.[63] As a curate he could have avoided such duties only with difficulty so his participation in them does not of itself prove membership of the C.S.L. However, it is unlikely that he would have

55. Church Socialist, March 1912, 'The Petition of the Church Socialist League'.

56. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.

57. Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (1958)

58. Church Socialist, June 1912, Report of Annual Conference, referring to letter from Frere.

59. Papers of W.H. Frere, Mirfield Deposit, Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York.

60. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1967-8

61. Ibid., p.2050, 'Bishops Suffragan'.

62. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.

63. St Agnes, Bristol, Register of Services (Bristol City Record Office).

undertaken to serve a curacy with Rashleigh unless he had been in sympathy with the incumbent's known Socialist views and for most of his curacy he was also Warden of the Clifton College Mission in the parish.[64] There is at least a strong possibility that he was a C.S.L. member. A later incumbent of St Agnes, quotes the recollections of an aged parishioner. "One small anecdote I heard recalls Rashleigh's socialist curate Ramsay who went on to be a Bishop of somewhere or other. The then young brother of one of my elderly parishioners was a member of the curate's Bible class, but after some while stopped going. When questioned on this by his parents he is reported to have said that he was fed up of going because Ramsay only ever talked politics and not the Bible."[65] One English see, one overseas bishopric and possibly one suffragan bishopric would seem to be the meagre tally of episcopal appointments from C.S.L. men. The only other C.S.L. man to attain high office was Hewlett Johnson. Ramsay MacDonald appointed him Dean of Manchester in 1924 and in 1931 he moved to Canterbury where he earned some notoriety as 'the Red Dean', retiring in 1963 to live at what he called 'The Red House'.[66] One of the League's former chairmen, Lewis Donaldson, again under the patronage of Ramsay MacDonald in 1924, attained the not inconsiderable dignity of becoming a Canon of Westminster, at the age of 64.[67] W.E. Moll (1856-1932), the veteran Socialist campaigner and 'tribune of the People' as Widdrington described him, was offered the Deanery of Carlisle, but, as an elderly man in failing health, he realised that the work was beyond him and declined the offer.[68] Apart from these instances ecclesiastical honours for C.S.L. men seem to have been confined to a few honorary canonries. Donaldson and Lansbury in a memoir on Gobat - two former C.S.L. Chairmen paying tribute to a third - both regretted that the Church

64. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.

65. Letter, Revd. Keith Kimber to author, 2nd June 1977.

66. Who's Who 1966; Who Was Who 1961-70; Dictionary of National Biography.

67. Letter from Rt. Revd. Hewlett Thompson, Bishop of Willesden to author 21st January 1977, giving biographical details of his grandfather, Lewis Donaldson.

68. Obituary notice for W.E. Moll, newspaper cutting, unidentified, n.d. (Stacy papers, Hayward collection); Christendom, September 1932, article by P.E.T. Widdrington, 'A Priest in Politics: William Edmund Moll (1856-1932).

had not given him scope for his great ability. Donaldson, himself a man of ability long denied high office, wrote "For such a preacher and teacher the Church of England itself gave no adequate sphere. Though orthodox in his theological principles and of irreproachable character and devoted life, and though 'the common people heard him gladly', official ecclesiastical convention kept him 29 years in a comparatively restricted post when his gifts should have been used in a Cathedral centre or in some great city."[69] Lansbury added "Those who are real Socialists and Pacifists get very little chance of preferment in the Church."[70] League men were aware of this situation when they advocated Socialism - or, if they were not, warnings were soon heard. The curate, Widdrington, on his return from his 1906 electioneering campaign, was told by Hastings, his Rector, "Well, you have burned your boats. As far as preferment is concerned, you are finished."[71] Widdrington remained a parish priest throughout his career: over forty years from ordination and at the age of 66 he was made an Honorary Canon of Chelmsford.[72] Stanley Joad, who joined the C.S.L. as a student in London and who, as a young priest, had considerable contact with Noel at Thaxted[73], recalls: "The C.S.L. as a whole was regarded as a rather dangerous society to belong to. I was myself warned by a priest that I need not expect preferment if I belonged to it."[74] Joad, like Widdrington, was eventually made an Honorary Canon after long parochial service.[75] "None of us" wrote Sidney Dark, looking back to Noel's days as a curate, ever prophesied high ecclesiastical preferment for Conrad."[76] He was "the

69. M. Gobat, op.cit., p.28.

70. Ibid., p.46.

71. Christendom, March 1947, p.21 - P.E.T. Widdrington, 'Those were the days'.

72. Biographical note in Davey papers (on loan to author). Mrs Davey is the daughter of P.E.T. Widdrington.

73. R. Groves, Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement (1967) pp.164, 174. Groves obtained information from personal contact with Joad (see Groves papers, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick)

74. Groves papers (Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick)

75. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1967-8. Joad became an Hon. Canon of Ripon in 1948.

76. Noel, op.cit., p.ix, Foreword by Sidney Dark.

born iconoclast, with a never failing impish delight in outraging conventions and in upsetting the respectable"[77] - not the stuff of which Church dignitaries are made. Ironically, after his long and eventful ministry at Thaxted, genuine and affectionate tributes were paid by 'the establishment'. At Noel's funeral service, his Bishop said: "I remember Conrad Noel when I was a young student. I remember him giving an address on the political principles which were dear to his heart. I remember the fire in his eye, the flash, the zeal, the passionate enthusiasm of his words as he advocated those principles which, in those days, meant extinction of every hope of professional success, but such a thing as professional success never crossed his mind ... I believe it to be literally true that he was the greatest personality among the clergy in this diocese as a student, as a writer, as a religious and political leader, as a man of artistic and musical sense, and most of all, as a saint of God. In him were assembled many and diverse gifts, any one of which would have given distinction." As Widdrington said of the Church of England, "she mistakes the Via Media for the Via Sacra. To her all prophets, until they have been safely buried, are either cranks or fanatics".[79] The C.S.L. was certainly not a via media and equally evidently it was not a highway to ecclesiastical preferment. Now it is possibly true that many C.S.L. men did not crave preferment, that they were content with their lot: Noel threw himself wholeheartedly into his parish work, making Thaxted Church, in the words of his bishop, into "one of the outstanding Churches in England today".[80] At the same time, as the Freethinker put it in a tribute, from an unexpected source, to a "generous opponent" who put "many in his debt who are far removed from his creed", Noel was "a significant figure

77. Ibid, p.viii.

78. Ibid, p.x. In a letter to Reckitt (who had obviously sent a message of sympathy) Mrs Noel says "The Bishop delivered a wonderful funeral oration - it was very kind of him but I couldn't help thinking how amused Conrad would have been at the complete change of front, he having suffered the utmost ridicule and persecution from the official C of E all his life, but I suppose it is always so with the creative spirits." Letter dated 10th August 1942 (photocopy made available to author by Revd. Peter Mayhew).

79. Christendom, September 1932, p.220. Article by P.E.T. Widdrington, 'A Priest in Politics'.

80. Noel, op.cit., p.x.

... seeking to wrestle with an obsolete system in order to make it into an instrument for social revolution"[81], and few would quarrel with this assessment. If such a battle is to be won it is advantageous - probably necessary - to capture the 'high ground'. It is instructive to compare the C.S.L. experience in the matter of preferment with the C.S.U. "that mild and watery society for social reform" as Noel once described it.[82] The C.S.U. was established by Establishment figures, recruited from the Establishment and in turn it replenished the ranks of the Establishment. As we have seen, we cannot with certainty produce three men who had been in the C.S.L. and who were elevated to the episcopate, even taking in their entire working lives and embracing suffragans and overseas stations: the C.S.U. in a single year would find three English diocesan bishops to fill the posts of President and two Vice Presidents[83]. From the year of the C.S.U's foundation (1889) down to 1913 53 episcopal appointments were made to English dioceses: of these almost a third (16) went to C.S.U. members[84]. Even allowing for the difference in size between C.S.U. and C.S.L. there was a marked contrast in the preferment fortunes of the members of the two societies. If the Church of England was, as the Freethinker described it, 'an obsolete system' it clearly preferred to be gently chided and coaxed by men from a society which Noel described as glorying in its indefiniteness[85] to engaging in the more vigorous wrestlings of Noel and his fellows.

81. Ibid., p.xi.

82. Ibid., p.71.

83. E.g. 1904 President - Bishop of Worcester (Gore), Vice Presidents - Bishop of Rochester (Talbot) and Bishop of Liverpool (Chavasse) - Information from C.S.U. publications in Archives, Community of Resurrection. Gore became Bishop of Birmingham in 1905 and Talbot Bishop of Southwark in the same year: both retained their C.S.U. offices, as did the Bishop of Liverpool.

84. M.B. Reckitt, Church and Society in England from 1800 (1940), p.153.

85. C. Noel, Socialism in Church History (1910), p.257. "It glories in its indefiniteness and seems to consider it a crime to arrive at any particular economic conclusion".

A second point about the leading C.S.L. clerics is that although in social origin they came, as we have seen, from the middle and upper classes, they had, almost without exception, first hand experience of working class life. E.R. Norman, writing of the period 1900-1920 in his survey of Church and society in England over two centuries, remarks that "radical churchmen acquired too many of their social attitudes from books and mutual discussions. They often knew very little about the social classes whose lives they sought to change."[86] These C.S.L. clergy were not guilty of this charge. The first chairman, Algernon West, spent his ministry in the industrial areas of Tyne and Wear; his close associate Moll came to Tyneside after experience in Plaistow, Clapham and Soho.[87] Pinchard who took over as Chairman from West was Vicar of a slum parish in Birmingham.[88] The next clerical chairman, Donaldson, held four London curacies - the first one was at St Nicholas, Cole Abbey where there were few poor people so he undertook parochial visitation in a neighbouring slum parish. Reflecting on his period as a London curate he said "The whole of my parochial experience confirmed the Socialist position. Poverty abounded in a terrible degree in every sphere of my experience ..."[89] After two years in a country village of 500 souls he was appointed to the parish of St Marks, Leicester, with a rapidly increasing population of 18,000 and "with scarcely any people of the leisured class dwelling in it"[90]: Bishop Creighton of Peterborough on appointing him to the benefice told him that it was the largest purely working-class parish in his diocese. Looking back over half a century Donaldson relates that the church was built (1871) purposely in the poorest part of the parish ... and was in vivid contrast to the slum property around it ...

86. E.R. Norman, Church and Society in England, 1770-1970, (1976), p.235.

87. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.

88. Church Socialist, June 1912. Frontispiece photograph of Pinchard and biographical notes.

89. Church Socialist, March 1912 - Some Church Socialists and their views - III - F. Lewis Donaldson.

90. F. Lewis Donaldson 'Letter from the Vicar', 23rd February 1897. The address is given as Nailstone Rectory (the parish he was leaving) and in the letter he is introducing himself to his new parishioners (Loaned by a former Churchwarden of St. Marks)

Moreover, in the year of my Institution as Vicar, 1896, the near relations to the slum were considerable areas of wretched housing in long, dreary and depressing streets of the jerry builders, and inhabited by the poorer sections of the parishioners. These conditions, discreditable to the city and its civic council and wretched for the victims of bad housing, contributed to the agitations which caused the clergy of St. Mark's to aid, and sometimes to lead, the efforts of the social reformers, until the Church of St. Mark became the religious centre of many social demonstrations and crusades..."[91] Fellow Midlands incumbent Percy Widdrington, who succeeded Donaldson as League Chairman, served on Tyneside with Moll and in 1906 became Vicar of St Peter's, Coventry, the largest parish in the Diocese of Worcester[92], with an industrial population of some 20,000 .[93] Paine, as well as his attendance on the episcopate, had served in Sunderland and South Lambeth; Roberts had worked at St Mary Stratford, Bow; Noel, before his thirty two year stint in the country town of Thaxted had held curacies in Salford, Newcastle and Paddington.[94] Adderley, when asked what he conceived to be his own special work, replied "To get at the rich among the Christians. This is perhaps why I have (with the exception of three years in Mayfair) always been sent to the very poor."[95] Gobat, one of the League's original planners and its last Chairman, first began to study social questions during a Sunderland curacy in the poorest parish in the town. From there he went as Assistant Missioner in the slum area of south east London served by the Clare College Mission, thence back to the

91. The Church of Saint Mark, Belgrave Gate, Leicester, Foreword by The Revd. F. Lewis Donaldson, Canon and Sub-Dean of Westminster, October 12th 1950. (Booklet. In possession of author)

92. Church Socialist, November 1912. Frontispiece photograph of Widdrington and biographical details.

93. Christendom, March 1947, pp.21-22; K. Richardson, Twentieth Century Coventry (1972), p.162.

94. Crockford's Clerical Directory 1923; S. Miles, op.cit. Ch.3; Noel, Autobiography, passim.

95. Church Socialist, September 1912. Some Church Socialists and their Views - VII, The Hon. and Rev. J.G. Adderley.

the North East to a West Hartlepool parish composed almost entirely of working-class people.[96] For the life of the C.S.L. he was Vicar of another slum parish,[97] St James, Darlington. His son Gerald, a schoolboy at the time, recalls those days: "When my father took up work in the North East, he was horrified at the dreadful state of degradation amongst working people. I used to take round Church magazines, and was indeed staggered at what I saw - people living in crumbling old street houses, perhaps 5/6 sleeping in one room, which stank of putrefaction. Old people lying in bed in one main living room and so on. How anyone could have been a parson in those days, and not drawn attention to the terrible conditions, I cannot think - and yet we had fox-hunting parsons."[98] C.S.L. clerics were to be found neither in the saddle nor the armchair. Though the League's clerical leaders were middle class, their knowledge in the first place was derived from the street rather than the study circle: they could show a concern fuelled by the plight of parishioners rather than an interest emanating from penny pamphlets, and this gave to their attitudes and utterances, particularly in the early years, an immediacy and edge which no remote academic perspective could provide.

There were indeed, as Geoffrey Gobat remarked, fox-hunting parsons. When, in 1909, W.C. Roberts (C.S.L. Hon. Treasurer, 1909-16) took the country parish of Crick in Northamptonshire, a living in the gift of his old college, St John's, Oxford, he succeeded a cleric who had been something of a 'squarson'. There was no lay squire in the village and the rector was by far the biggest landlord. Roberts's predecessor, who had been incumbent for nearly forty years[99], had ten hunters in his stable.[100] The arrival of Roberts came as a great shock. "The Churchwarden's

96. M. Gobat, op.cit., pp.13-15.

97. Letter from Miss E.V. Edgley, a former parishioner, to author 26th March 1977: 'Slum' parish is Miss Edgley's description.

98. Letter from Mr Geoffrey Gobat to author, 27th March 1977.

99. S. Miles, op.cit., pp.27-28.

100. Information from The Revd. J. Spilman, Rector of Crick, in letter to author, 24th May 1977.

wife was outraged when she heard that little girls and old ladies were being told that they need not bob when they met the new Rector or his wife. That the servants who accompanied him from Dorchester ... wore no caps and sat down to Sunday night supper with their employers, was a nine days wonder. That the Rector should allow his wife to go hatless,and worse, to sell copies of Votes for Women in the Rugby streets, set many tongues wagging."[101] The experience of the C.S.L. Treasurer, "that dreadful man who stayed only eight years", as something of a square peg in a round hole[102] illustrates one side of a third point that needs to be made in connection with these C.S.L. clergy. In considering Christian social ideals in the first two decades of this century E.R. Norman comments: "The social position of the parson was not easy. He was beset by the conventions of the class to which he belonged, in a period when class conventions were particularly rigid."[103] On the one hand, as in the case of a very conservative (and Conservative)[104] country parish like Crick, he was inhibited by the traditional expectations of parishioners: on the other hand, and perhaps in places where a more egalitarian life-style might have been welcomed, he was limited and encumbered, even if not always consciously, by personal 'social baggage' of which it was difficult to divest himself completely - the inherited 'gentry culture' of his class and the social mores and assumptions of the professional group environment of the clergy. He was subject, therefore, to a degree of social encapsulation: however radical his political or social views and however immediate his experience of working-class life, it was almost impossible for him to break out from the middle class mould and to effect anything approaching a real

101. S. Miles, op.cit. p.28. They had not stopped "wagging" more than half a century later: "Some of the very old parishioners still talk with horror of his young wife distributing leaflets in Rugby Market Place ... This was completely out of character with Rector's wives they had known." (Spilman letter - see footnote 100)

102. Spilman, loc.cit.

103. Norman, op.cit., p.234.

104. Spilman, loc.cit.

identification with the 'ordinary' people. Here and there the lives of C.S.L. clerics provide small social clues which illustrate this point. Adderley, explaining how he became a Socialist, said he was inclined to what he called 'the ordinary Radicalism of the day' and attracted by the 'slumming craze' - an eloquent expression in this context - which started just about the time he left Oxford. The 'slumming craze' took him, in fact, to Oxford House, the University 'settlement' at Bethnal Green where he became the lay head before ordination.[105] The rigours of 'slumming' in Bethnal Green could apparently be relieved by arduous activity of another kind: according to one investigator, when Oxford House was founded almost the first thing the missioners did there was to set up a squash court for their own recreational use.[106] In the early stages, living conditions were somewhat primitive, but they were soon changed and by 1916 Oxford House could be described as a 'grand' place.[107] Adderley's fellow aristocrat Noel, trying to make ends meet as a Manchester based freelance Socialist speaker, or suffering privations in a Salford parish, was rescued from time to time by an upper class lifeline thrown across the social chasm to him and his wife: "I have spoken of our poverty in the Manchester period, but sometimes we received a fat cheque from rich relations. We were then not only able to pay off our debts, but also to sample the more expensive restaurants, and to make expeditions into the country."[108] A few years later he went to start work in Paddington: "As chance would have it, I was to serve the dreary slums of Paddington from the precincts of Buckingham Palace. I could not at first find lodgings in the parish (his wife was to join him later when they had found 'a good flat'), so at the invitation of my uncle and aunt, Sir Fowell and Lady Victoria

105. Church Socialist, September 1912. Frontispiece photograph and biographical details and article, 'Some Church Socialists and their Views'- VII - The Hon. and Revd. J.G. Adderley.

106. I.C.F. Quarterly, July 1977, p.16, article by Edward Norman, 'The Church and Social Questions'.

107. Adderley, op.cit., pp.17-18.

108. C. Noel, Autobiography, p.52.

Buxton, I stayed with them at the Rembrandt Hotel in Buckingham Palace Road. They motored me over on Sundays and other days to the parish."[109] Eventually he found a lodging with a former butler of another of his aunts: this man made him as comfortable as he could, "but in the streets around Paddington Green there is always a faint smell of vermin and, do what he could, bugs and fleas were irrepressible", so Noel had to move to Edgware Road, which he found little better.[110] For some of the C.S.L. clergy the ambiguities and dilemmas of their social situation are shown in the matter of the upbringing and education of their children. Lewis Donaldson, hero of the Leicester unemployed march, and his wife Louise, also active in successive phases of the Christian socialist movement, sent their children to local schools, but did not allow them to mix with local children: their son, Ewan, even had separate Confirmation classes.[111] Gobat's son Geoffrey, who was horrified by the slum conditions in which his father's parishioners dwelt, was exposed to them only during school holidays: from the age of 10 to 17 years he was a boarder at Durham School.[112] Although they had a very happy home,"there was constant anxiety about money" observed his sister, "as the living was a poor one and school fees for four of us must have presented a large item."[113] Fellow North East incumbent, West, had not, like many of his C.S.L. associates, attended an ancient, or indeed, any university.[114] However, he sent his son to board at a small northern public school, St Bees, from whence he proceeded as an Exhibitioner to Lincoln College, Oxford.[115] When, in 1918, the Countess of Warwick invited Widdrington to leave industrial Coventry for rural Essex, he was, wrote Reckitt, "almost at the end of his resources, not only physical but economic. His young family was growing

109. Ibid., p.62.

110. Ibid.

111. B.J. Butler, Frederic Lewis Donaldson and the Christian Socialist Movement, pp.112-3 (unpublished M.Phil. thesis, University of Leeds, 1970).

112. G. Gobat, loc.cit.

113. M. Gobat, op.cit., p.18.

114. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.

115. Who's Who, 1966. Rt. Revd. George Algernon West; Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.

up in an urban invironment which was not one best calculated to promote their health. Widdrington was feeling urgent need, not only of release from financial anxieties but of time and opportunity to read and think."[116] It was an option not open to those workers who presented Widdrington with an illuminated address on his departure[117]: their children would remain to grow up in an urban environment; they and their wives would have to solve in the city their problems of finance and leisure. Perhaps the most total, and the most transparent, attempt at identification with another class was Noel's bizarre doss-house episode. He went directly from his interview with Westcott at Lambeth Palace to the South Lambeth Road to book in at a doss-house to learn something at first hand of the ways of the very poor. He stayed there for several months, with the odd break - a night or two in Brighton or dinner in Soho. He invited his cousin Noel Buxton, a partner in the Truman, Hanbury and Buxton firm of brewers, to visit him at the doss house, answering Buxton's query about appropriate dress with the suggestion that he wear an old suit. He came in such ragged clothes that some of the more superior tramps cut him dead. Noel's own efforts to be taken for one of the down-and-outs were a failure: one day he looked over the shoulder of one of them who had a gift for drawing and saw a fairly good representation of himself with the caption - 'The Broken-down Aristocrat'![118] Even in conditions more propitious than the doss house, adoption of radical views and direct contact with factory 'hands' and their families were insufficient of themselves to bridge the social gap: for the middle class parson permanently to become at one with the proletariat was well-nigh impossible in this period.

This unbridged social gap clearly had implications for those clergy who wished to function as Christian Socialists: it could be an obstacle to communication, mutual understanding and sympathy. It was not just the proverbial "man in the street" who was affected: the class divide could produce

116. M.B. Reckitt, P.E.T. Widdrington, a Study in Vocation and Versatility (1961), p.68.

117. Ibid.

118. Noel, op.cit., pp.40-41.

feelings of resentment and insecurity even in the case of a seasoned politician like Lansbury, long exposed to public meetings and varied personal social exchanges. In 1928, nearing his 'three score years and ten', he wrote: "I think it is a very good thing indeed that men like myself should attend meetings of the Union both at Oxford and Cambridge, and at the other universities throughout the country. Only last year, 1927, I spoke at the Centenary debate connected with the University of London ..... There is, however, always a feeling when speaking at such places that we are treated as rather extraordinary specimens. I rather resent this. I am sure there is nothing of this kind meant, but there is that kind of atmosphere. I found this also when being trotted round by bishops and others at a Church Congress or religious meeting of some kind or the other. When I was a member of the London Diocesan Conference and the House of Laymen I always had the feeling that I was regarded as rather an extraordinary being who had in a way strayed from my rightful quarters into those which should be reserved for another sort of person. Some of the leading men in the Church, the Bishop of London especially, use Cockney 'lingo' when speaking in the East End of London. I am certain that this does not make him appear to the workers as a workman and it is this fact which at times makes me rather hesitant when speaking either at the Universities or to meetings made up largely of middle or upper class people. I am a bit self-conscious and extremely anxious to talk just as I would talk anywhere else, and find that thinking about how I shall talk makes the task of speaking much harder than it otherwise would be."[119] Lansbury's testimony throws light on attitudes on each side of the social divide and indicates the intransigence of the problem. The existence of the class division of which he was conscious produced the feelings he described. The middle or upper class parson or professional man who wished to identify with the labour movement was faced, in this respect, with a dilemma - retention of middle class mores and speech obviously perpetuated resentment and alienation: repudiation of them and adoption of the style of the workers struck a

119. G. Lansbury, My Life (1928), pp.93-94.

note patently false and likely to be found patronising, offensive or merely ridiculous. Such a man was probably faced with the task of commending himself to the workers' movement by personal qualities great enough to transcend what, paradoxically, are in this context described most appropriately as the disabilities of birth and education. Some, like Moll[120], evidently did overcome these drawbacks: almost all had, at least, to face them. Lansbury, writing a few months before the foundation of the C.S.L., contrasted the Church situation in England with that in Ireland. "Why is it, I ask, that the Church in Ireland is comparatively so much stronger than in England? I believe it is because the Irish priesthood has been and is recruited from the people, and retains its sympathy with the aspirations and hopes of the people".[121] Later in the same year Father Bull declared: "The reason why the Church has not identified itself with Socialism was because all its ministers have been drawn from the propertied class ... We are altering all that ... Poverty is no longer a bar to the ministry."[122] Bull had in mind the training for ordination provided by his own Community and by the Society of the Sacred Mission but, as we have seen, the 'alteration' of which he spoke was too slight to have any considerable impact, certainly during the life of the League. H.A. Mess, writing in 1923, the year when the League came to an end, observes that "there is a great sense of community in the so-called public schools and in the older universities. That in itself is all to the good. Unfortunately there are grave drawbacks. There is little recognition of corporate humility as a virtue; indeed the constant appeal is to corporate complacency. And the community towards which loyalty is fostered is too narrow in social range (this is more true of the schools than of the universities), so that together with the community sense there is usually induced also that spirit of class which is the essential sin of schism."[123] Adderley declared: "The Public School

120. See e.g. Christendom, September 1932, pp.213-221. Article by P.E.T. Widdrington, A Priest in Politics; obituary notice for Moll, unidentified newspaper cutting, n.d. in Stacy papers, Hayward collection.

121. G. Lansbury in George Haw (ed), Christianity and the Working Classes (1906), p.167.

122. Labour Leader, October 12th 1906 - article by Tom Myers,"'An Hour with Father Bull' - A School of Socialist Missionaries"

123. H.A. Mess, Studies in the Christian Gospel for Society (1923), p.120

and the Universities are too much of one type. A very great deal has to be unlearned before an Eton and Oxford man" (his own educational background) "makes a good parson"[124]. Yet, the Christian Socialist clergy, themselves largely drawn from a public school and ancient university background, continued, whether from family tradition, class convention, lack of adequate alternatives or the perceived importance of a specifically Anglican connection, to send sons to expensive public schools, and whilst they did so the social divide between themselves and their working class parishioners was more likely to be maintained than to diminish.

The laity, brought into the Morecambe Conference as an afterthought, overtook the clergy in membership strength in the course of the first year of the League's existence, but, as we have seen, though they continued to dominate numerically, the Offices of the League were predominantly occupied by the full time Officers of the Church, the clergy. There was, however, a tendency for lay people to be more prominent in the London branch throughout its life, and in the central affairs of the League as a whole in its latter days. George Lansbury and Edith Mansell-Moullin were elected as the London diocesan representatives on the League's Committee at the first Annual Conference at Scarborough in 1907.[125] When the London branch of the League was established in November of that year, Lansbury became its chairman[126] and held that office until 1912[127], in which year he became Chairman of the whole League.[128] The London branch produced a number of very active lay members. In July 1914, for instance, the branch reported twenty four open air meetings: in running these events a group of four or five energetic laymen were particularly prominent, and amongst the chairmen and speakers listed for these meetings the names of only

124. Adderley, op.cit., p.228.

125. Church Socialist, October 1912 - Some Church Socialists and their Views - VIII - Mrs E.R. Mansell-Moullin.

126. Ibid.

127. Church Socialist, July 1912, League Notes, London branch.

128. Ibid., June 1912, Report of Annual Conference.

two clerics appear.[129] For a few months from the summer of 1915 the London branch actually filled all five of its Offices - Chairman, Vice-Chairman, General Secretary, Treasurer and Organiser - with lay people.[130] The early emergence of lay leadership in London and the continued lay prominence may have been aided by the particular organisational structure of the C.S.L. in the metropolis - a vast highly populated area was served by a two-tier system which was in effect a federation of 'branches' (the London groups) where the neighbourhood or area was probably a more significant unit than the ecclesiastical parish and the parish church with its clergy a less obvious focal point for leadership. Turning to the League as a whole we find that by the time the organisation ended, although the Chair was still occupied by a clergyman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary were all laymen, and ten out of the fifteen members of the Executive Committee were lay people.[131] We shall examine the closing stages of the League in the third part of this study.

"The League" wrote Noel at the time of the first Annual Conference, "is anxious for a large lay element and Mr George Lansbury and Mr T. Summerbell, M.P., are among the most active of its supporters."[132] About the same time, Noel, as we have noted, had written about the League being open to all baptised Anglicans so that those who had been disillusioned by their Church experience might be welcomed as members and workers in the C.S.L.[133] Both Lansbury and Summerbell had strayed from the Church fold. W.C. Roberts, a Bow curate who was later to serve long as C.S.L. Treasurer, played an important part in Lansbury's return (from the Ethical Society) in 1902.[134] Summerbell returned via the parish of St Thomas, Sunderland, where West was incumbent from 1901-1909. He had been brought up as a Churchman.

129. Ibid., July 1914, League Notes, London branch.

130. Ibid, July 1915. London Branch: list of officers.

131, C.S.L. Executive Committee documents, 1922-23, Stacy papers, University of Leeds.

132. C.Noel, 'The Socialist League of the Church of England' - newspaper article. Unidentified press cutting, n.d., but 1907 from internal evidence (Noel papers, University of Hull).

133. Ibid.

134. S. Miles, op.cit., p.16.

"We need not wonder", wrote West "if he, like thousands of others, for a time lost connection with the Church, as he caught the vision of Socialism and found no sympathy from those who professed a religion which had created and inspired the vision which they did not and would not recognise. Some years ago he found a sympathetic ministry at St Thomas's, Sunderland ..."[135] Both Summerbell and Lansbury came from poor backgrounds but by the time that the C.S.L. arrived each had his own business - Summerbell had a printing firm, whose name appears on most of the early C.S.L. literature, and Lansbury had a timber mill.[136] Occupationally they were small-scale capitalists, but politically they lost none of their Socialist convictions. Lansbury's long political career has been well chronicled: Summerbell's span on the national stage was short, but long enough for the Church Times to detect him as representing "the less moderate section of the Labour Party".[137] In the early days of the League several congresses and conferences heard speeches by both these men: they were together for instance at the Barrow Church Congress in 1906 - the Pall Mall Gazette named them as part of a 'solid cohort of extremists'[138] - and again at the first ever Socialist meeting in Church House in 1908, when the Labour Leader reported that Summerbell, with Donaldson, had "laid bare the lives of the poor" and Lansbury "fired a veritable powder magazine" with his references to Czarist massacres.[139]

135. Church Socialist Quarterly, April 1910, 'Thomas Summerbell'. Tribute on death of Summerbell, signed G.A.W., presumably George Algernon West. The reference to 'a sympathetic ministry etc.' is perhaps best interpreted as a modest allusion in a situation where explicit reference would have appeared unseemly, to Summerbell's return to the fold during West's uncumbency: had he 'returned' during a previous incumbency presumably West would have felt able to say so.

136. S. Proudfoot, Editor of Optimist reporting the Church Congress of 1908 in the October issue describes Summerbell as a 'son of the soil': he was, in fact, a collier's son, as he pointed out from time to time in his speeches. Dictionary of National Biography (1937-40). Church Socialist, January 1912, frontispiece photograph and biographical details.

137. October 16th 1908. Editorial, 'Church and Party'.

138. October 5th 1906. Article: 'And No Wonder'

139. June 5th 1908. Report: 'Church Socialist League. Remarkable Meeting'

Summerbell lost his parliamentary seat in January 1910[140] and died later in the year. In the same year Lansbury became M.P. for Bow and Bromley. These two men appear to have been the only members of the League also to have been Members of Parliament during the League's lifetime. As we have already noted, other lay members of the League came from a variety of occupations and backgrounds. The aristocracy was represented by the Countess of Warwick[141], socialite turned socialist, and the commercial plutocracy by Maurice Reckitt and, much less importantly, John Marshall, director of the London Department store, Marshall and Snelgrove, who was a frequent visitor to the Noels at Thaxted.[142] Lady Warwick's contribution to the League was as patron of livings, platform personality, and hostess. Her appointment of Socialists to her Essex parishes has already been described but it is worth noting that in the case of the appointment of Noel to Thaxted the outcome was rather different from what she had envisaged. Lady Warwick provided Noel with an assistant curate and a lay secretary in the hope that, released from the routine parish work, he would use Thaxted as a kind of pied-a-terre, devoting most of his time and energy to delivering Socialist lectures up and down the country; in the event Noel who had waited long for his own parish gave priority to Thaxted work.[143] Amongst other meetings Lady Warwick was one of the speakers at the great 'Demonstration' organised by the C.S.L. at Church House in April 1912[144]: she also organised two great invitation meetings on the Church and Socialism in her own homes - at Easton Lodge in Essex in July 1909[145] and at Warwick Castle in January 1910, some 350 people attending this latter meeting.[146] Reckitt was a scion of the Hull

140. G.D.H. Cole, British Working Class Politics, 1832-1914 (1941), p.291 gives statistical details.

141. Church Socialist, July 1912, frontispiece photograph and biographical details and article - Some Church Socialists and their Views - vi - the Countess of Warwick.

142. R. Groves, op.cit., p.140; C.Noel, op.cit., p.107 (Noel's chronology is somewhat confused).

143. Noel, op.cit. pp.90 and 95.

144. Copy of programme of event, in Noel papers, University of Hull.

145. E.G. Maxted, 'The Trials and Troubles of a Socialist Vicar', pamphlet 190.

146. Conrad Noel, 'Church Socialists at Warwick Castle' - press cutting, Noel papers, University of Hull; N. Dearmer, The Life of Percy Dearmer (1940), p.171.

chemical firm family, 'a rich man furnished with ability living peacably in his habitations.' Born in 1888, the 'habitations' of his youth were large, well staffed houses, with gardeners, chauffeurs, nurses and tutors in attendance.[147] In due course he found a 'conveniently large' flat in London, which brought him the time-consuming problem of mastering 'the complicated art of living in two places at once'. Split-site dwelling had, however, its compensations. "I should find it as difficult to think of having a home in the metropolis, as I should of having one not within easy reach of it. A life based on London and a life without London are unpleasant alternatives between which I could not easily choose, and I am very grateful that I have never had to do so."[148] Looking back over his life from the vantage point of his early fifties - he was to complete four score years and ten - he felt that he had been fortunate in his opportunities: "The chances others long for I have had, and nearly everything I have wanted to do I have had the opportunity to try."[149] He took the opportunity to play a large part in the affairs of the League - as Executive Committee member, writer, editor of the Church Socialist and finally Vice-Chairman[150]. Of all the lay members of the League, Reckitt made the largest contribution, becoming increasingly important in its later life, as we shall discover in the third part of this study. Leisured ladies were present in the persons of Miss Ruth Kenyon and Mrs Edith Mansell-Moullin: probably Miss Lettice Arnold can also be placed in this group. Ruth Kenyon, Justice of the Peace and member of the St Leonards 'establishment'[151], joined the League early[152], stayed with it throughout its

147. Interview, author with Maurice Reckitt, 30th December 1976; information from Revd. Peter Mayhew (Mayhew made a study - Oxford B.Litt, 1977 - of the Christendom Group, a later manifestation of Christian Socialism in which Reckitt was prominent).

148. Reckitt interview; M.B. Reckitt, As It Happened (1941), p.134.

149. Ibid., p.292.

150. C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes, passim. (Stacy papers, University of Leeds); Church Socialist, passim.

151. Reckitt interview. 'She was one of the people who ran things in the town', remarked M.B.R.

152. Her name appears on the members list in the First Report, March 1907.

life, served on its Executive Committee, edited its journal, and contributed generously to its funds.[153] Mrs Mansell-Moullin of Wimpole Street, as we have seen, another early recruit and League Treasurer from 1908-1911, was the wife of a distinguished surgeon.[154] Miss Arnold, from what appears to have been a 'comfortable' address in Horsham, acted as Secretary of the Central Branch and also served for a period (1916-21) as the League's Treasurer.[155] From the University world came R.H. Tawney (1880-1962). Tawney, born in Calcutta where his father, an Indian Civil Servant, was Principal of Presidency College and educated at Rugby and Balliol, became a figure of significance in political and intellectual circles. In 1903, like many from his social and educational background he went to Toynbee Hall for two years. He joined the Fabian Society in 1906 and the I.L.P. in 1909. He served on a number of official committees and commissions, such as the Sankey Commission on the Coal industry in 1919. Though he failed to persuade the voters at the polls - he stood unsuccessfully as a Labour candidate at a series of Elections - from 1918 he exerted a major political influence on the Party as backroom thinker and writer. Linking the worlds of education and labour, like his friend William Temple, he had a long association with the W.E.A. serving on its Executive from 1905 to 1947 - Tawney and Temple had met for the first time as 'new boys' on the platform of Rugby station: they went through the school together, on to Balliol together and remained life-long friends. Tawney was a Fellow of Balliol from 1918 to 1921 but his academic home became the L.S.E. where he was successively Lecturer, Reader and Professor of Economic History. During the C.S.L. period he published '<u>The Acquisitive Society</u>' (1921) bearing

153. <u>Church Socialist</u>, passim; C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes, passim; <u>Church Socialist</u>, September 1913, p.18 indicates a contribution of £25 from Miss Kenyon to the Organising Secretary's Fund, the fourth largest of 119 contributions.

154. <u>Who Was Who</u>, 1929-40.

155. <u>Church Socialist</u>, passim; C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes, passim.

an important analysis of the idea of Industrialism and standing to some extent in the tradition of nineteenth century mentors, Arnold, Ruskin and Morris, whilst his Scott Holland Lectures of 1922 (dedicated to Bishop Gore) formed the basis of a major work, 'Religion and the Rise of Capitalism'[156]. His particular importance in terms of the Church Socialist League lies in his membership of the Archbishops' Fifth Committee of Inquiry which produced its report, Christianity and Industrial Problems, in 1918 and his membership of the League's Executive Committee from 1920 to 1922[157]. In the professions, medicine was represented by Widdrington's Churchwarden at Coventry, Dr Richardson Rice[158], elected to the League's Diocesan Committee as representative for Worcester at the first Annual Conference[159], and the legal profession by Henry Slesser, called to the Bar in 1906, Solicitor-General in Ramsay MacDonald's 1924 Government, Labour Member of Parliament for S.E. Leeds from 1924-29, and a Lord Justice of Appeal from 1929-40.[160] From a family background peopled largely by painters and musicians at the courts and salons of Europe[161], Slesser, observing that the class divisions in the English society of his youth were

156. Who Was Who, 1961-70; Dictionary of National Biography, 1961-70, Ronald Preston, R.H. Tawney as a Christian Moralist - article in Theology, April 1966; Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, 1780-1950 (1958), Part III - Twentieth Century Opinions contains an interesting assessment of Tawney (Chapter 2) in the context of the ideas which the book examines.

157. C.S.L. Executive Committee Minutes, 24th November 1920, ff. He was elected a member of the Executive during his absense on a tour of the United States in 1920. The minutes of the meeting of 21st April 1922, chaired by Tawney, record that he was one of three persons nominated for election to Chairman of the League for 1922-23: ill health seems to have intervened during the course of this year. He is not a member of the Executive in the League's last year, 1922-23.

158. M.B. Reckitt, P.E.T. Widdrington, a Study in Vocation and Versatility, p.51

159. Church Times, 14th June 1907. Report has 'Price' instead of Rice.

160. Who's Who, 1966

161. Sir Henry Slesser, Judgement Reserved (1941), p.247.

more certain than the strata of geology, placed himself in the mesozoic or upper-middle class.[162] "Like many of the prosperous of the last century, when a boy I took the presence of persons ordained to serve me - servants, postmen, railway and omnibus men and coachmen - for granted".[163] Despite the strictures of Noel and Adderley on the public schools they were not wholly void as sources of social enlightenment[164]. "Until I came under the influence of Sanderson at Oundle I was never troubled with any doubts of the essential propriety of a system which provided me with service and comfort at no obvious hardship to myself or those who lived around me."[165] Slesser and a friend of similar social concern were influenced by H.G. Wells but felt that they needed wider knowledge of the social problem. They passed to Fabian Literature. "It was typical of our sheltered and select way of life", wrote Slesser, "that neither of us felt any desire to see or know the poor, of whom we talked so freely, at first hand; we were content to read about them in tracts and appreciate them in statistics."[166] Slesser begins his reminiscences with the statement, "In the year 1883, which was the year of my birth, there came also into existence the Fabian Society, an organisation which was profoundly to affect the social thought of England and my own ideas in particular": this society he joined in 1907. He also joined the I.L.P.[167] Later, like C.S.L. men such as Reckitt and Bull, he became involved in Guild Socialism.[168] Though coming late to the League, he became (as we shall see in the third part of this study) a figure of central

162. Ibid., p.277.

163. Ibid., p.11.

164. David Newsome in Public Schools and Christian Ideals, an article in Theology, December 1961, writes "The Twentieth Century has produced some great headmasters... By far the most idealistic of these headmasters was Sanderson of Oundle, whose hatred of the competitive spirit and whose vision of society as a vast co-operative enterprise, bound together by ties of service and integrity recalled something of the ardour and prophetic insight of John Ruskin and William Morris." (p.490).

165. Slesser, op.cit., pp.11-12.

166. Ibid., p.13. Cf. Slesser's statement with E.R. Norman's comment on clergy acquiring social attitudes in this way - see p.122 above and footnote 86.

167. Ibid., pp.9, 13 and 11.

168. Ibid., p.120 ff.

importance in the processes leading up to its termination and in the creation of a successor body, The League of the Kingdom of God: "We set about to convert the old Church Socialist League to our views".[169] During this period the group of which he speaks put forward their viewpoint in a collection of essays entitled The Return of Christendom, to which he contributed a piece on 'The Return of Dogma'[170]. The League also numbered journalists and writers among its members - Arthur J. Penty (1875-1937), architect, author, adversary of machines and advocate of mediaevalism, Cecil Chesterton (1879-1918), brother of 'G.K.C', and Holbrook Jackson (1874-1948). With A.R. Orage, Jackson, who was interested in the arts and crafts, had founded the Leeds Arts Club, with which Penty was also associated.[171] After moving to London Orage and Jackson acquired the moribund journal the New Age early in 1907[172]: it was to become, in the words of another Socialist journalist, "one of the most brilliant, perhaps the most brilliant journal this country has ever produced": it exercised an enormous influence in 'progressive' intellectual circles.[173] This achievement, however, belonged basically to Orage: Holbrook Jackson left the enterprise early in its history.[174] Nothing appears to be known about Holbrook Jackson's C.S.L. activities beyond the fact of his membership: in a handbill advertising the League he is trotted out in a short list of 'celebrities' who are members.[175]. Penty, a prolific producer of books[176],

169. Ibid., p.122

170. The Return of Christendom, by 'A Group of Churchmen' with an Introduction by Bishop Gore (1922).

171. Philip Mairet, A.R. Orage : A Memoir (1936), pp.22-23.

172. Ibid., p.36.

173. Rowland Kenney, Westering (1939), p.152; Interview with Reckitt. Looking back over half a century, Reckitt in his old age could still speak with enthusiasm, almost excitement, of the New Age.

174. Mairet, op.cit., pp.48-49.

175. Noel papers, University of Hull. Handbill has no date but internal evidence indicates late 1909 or early 1910, i.e. after the 1909 Annual Conference but before the death of Summerbell.

176. Mairet, op.cit., p.74: "he was always writing books to explain that his last one was partly mistaken".

published The Restoration of the Gild System in 1906, a work that was to be seminal in the emergence of the Guild Socialist movement[177] which was to play a large part in the later history of the Church Socialist League. Penty's interest in Christian Socialism seemed always to be ancillary to his general social and aesthetic philosophy.[178] Nevertheless he was a contributor to the League's journal[179], and to the volume of essays The Return of Christendom , and he served on the League's Executive Committee for 1921-22.[180] In 1922, in a preface to Penty's book Post-Industrialism, G.K. Chesterton, in some respects a kindred spirit, described him as "one of the two or three truly original minds of the modern world". Few, however, could wholeheartedly agree with his mediaevalist conclusions. Cecil Chesterton was also associa with Penty, Jackson and the New Age group, contributing the greater part of the 'political notes' of the magazine's first volume under its new management.[181] Converted to Socialism as a schoolboy by reading Merrie England[182], prepared for Confirmation by his friend Noel and confirmed at Dearmer's Church[183], he became involved in the Guild of St Matthew becomin Honorary Secretary[184] and later one of the critics who made matters uncomfortable for Headlam[185]. Later he was active in

177. H.W. Laidler, A History of Socialist Thought (1927), p.400.

178. Slesser, op.cit., p.120: "He was a staunch mediaevalist, and was inclined to include religion as a part of mediaeval restoration". His various books and articles also furnish evidence of this standpoint - see e.g. his essay 'The Obstacle of Industrialism' in The Return of Christendom, p.150. In his writings, religion is frequently introduced in conjunction with art - 'art and religion' is one of his characteristic phrases.

179. E.g. Church Socialist, November 1915, 'Local versus National Guilds'.

180. C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes, Stacy papers, University of Leeds.

181. Mairet, op.cit., pp.32 and 47.

182. Church Socialist, April 1912: Some Church Socialists and their Views-iv-Cecil Chesterton.

183. Noel, op.cit., pp.68-69.

184. G.S.M. literature, Stacy papers, Hayward Collection.

185. F.G. Bettany, Stewart Headlam: A Biography (1926), p.90.

the C.S.L. as speaker up and down the country, contributor to its periodicals, author of its pamphlet The Basis of Socialism and member of its Executive Committee.[186] The more famous Chesterton, Gilbert Keith, though, on his passage from agnosticism via Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism he stopped off at the C.S.U.[187]; though he was closely associated with many League members who regarded him with great affection and esteem[188]; though he took part in various League activities, notably the great Church House Demonstration of 1912 at which he declared that he was not a Socialist[189], did not apparently join the League.[190] He did not lack encouragement. J.A. Grant, in an article sparked off by G.K. Chesterton's book, 'What's wrong with the World' - one wit commenting on another wit's work - declared: "What is wrong is that Mr Chesterton doesn't join the Church Socialist League. I for one would welcome him with open arms, believing, as I do, that as far as human ends go, we are in the same boat. Were he out and out one of us, surely he would see that the one thing to keep Socialism sane is the Catholic faith"[191] G.K. Chesterton was one of those literati - J.N. Figgis and Hilaire Belloc were others - who influenced League members but remained outside their ranks. Amongst other occupational groups clerks were particularly prominent in the London branch.

186. Optimist, Church Socialist Quarterly and Church Socialist, passim.

187. G.K. Chesterton, Autobiography (1936), p.166

188. He wrote the Epilogue for the volume of essays The Return of Christendom (1922). See also Reckitt in The New English Weekly, June 25th 1936, p.211, 'Tribute to a Dead Leader': "On June 14th by what - save for one circumstance - would have been a most remarkable coincidence, there died a great Christian apologist, a notable and original poet, a brilliant writer of romances, a social critic of singular penetration and incisiveness, a considerable comic draughtsman, and the greatest democratic champion of our time. That the world could lose so much in a single day was only possible because on that day died Gilbert Keith Chesterton".

189. Christian Commonwealth, April 17th 1912. Report of proceedings

190. The American writer, D.O. Wagner in his book The Church of England and Social Reform (1930) lists G.K. as well as C. Chesterton among the members of the C.S.L., but produces no evidence (p.277). Earlier in writing of the demise of the G.S.M. he confuses Gilbert with Cecil (p.275).

191. Church Socialist Quarterly, October 1910 - J.A. Grant, Gilbertian Socialism or 'Going to Pearce and Plenty'.

Eric Noel Makeham (1887?-1917) worked for the London County Council.[192] Makeham was elected a member of the Fabian Society in 1908[193] and Brother Makeham, Hon. Sec. designate of the G.S.M.[194] became Comrade Makeham of the C.S.L. Executive[195] - the different nomenclature employed by the two Christian Socialist societies provides an interesting comparison in connotations. Harvey Baylis, a bank clerk, Stewart Purkis, a railway clerk and Robert Woodifield, a postal clerk, were all extremely active as speakers and writers, as the pages of the Church Socialist testify.[196] From London also came Fred Hughes, a member of the Archbishop's Fifth Committee of Inquiry, a C.S.L. Vice Chairman, and first Chairman of a successor body, the Society of Socialist Christians[197], who indicated his trade union connection (National Union of Clerks) after his signature on official public pronouncements by the C.S.L. Executive[198], as did Coventry member Henry Hayward of the Amalgamated Engineering Union and, from Hartlepool, Fred Belt of the National Union of Railwaymen.[199] Another C.S.L. member who became involved in the Trade Union world was Charles Jenkinson (1887-1949). The child of a poor

192. Extract from L.C.C. Staff Gazette quoted in These to his memory: a selection in prose and verse from the writings of Eric Noel Makeham (1917), p.90.

193. Ibid., p.xx.

194. Makeham was nominated by G.S.M. Executive for the post for 1909-10. Occasional paper of G.S.M. No.44, September 1909, pp.6-7. The G.S.M. was wound up in 1909.

195. Church Socialist, July 1915, Report of Annual Conference.

196. Church Socialist, branch reports, passim; series of articles by Makeham in 1912, article by Woodifield, September 1915. Makeham was killed in action in 1917 - November 1917 issue contains tribute. Occupations of Bayliss, Purkis and Woodifield from R. Groves, op.cit., pp.140 and 162.

197. Stanley Evans, Christian Socialism: a study outline and bibliography (1962), p.22.

198. C.S.L. leaflet, The Lock-out in the Mining Industry (1920).

199. C.S.L. leaflet, The Church and Industrial Morality: The Challenge of the Federation of British Industries to the Church - An Appeal to the Bishops, Clergy and Laity (1922).

family from Poplar[200], Jenkinson was involved in the early stages of the League's London branch, becoming Secretary of the Bethnal Green group[201] - "I became a Socialist at exactly twenty minutes past six one evening while sitting in the Church of St James-the-Less at Bethnal Green"[202] - where he organised a C.S.L. mission drawing crowds of five hundred people[203], and eventually Treasurer of the London branch itself[204]. Later he went as Lay Secretary to Noel at Thaxted, his stipend, as we have noted, being provided by Lady Warwick[205]. Whilst at Thaxted he became involved in the affairs of the National Agricultural Labourers' and Rural Workers' Union, becoming Secretary of the North West Federation of the Union, helping to form branches in the villages and organising support and relief for striking labourers. He was also active politically as election agent for fellow C.S.L. member, The Revd. E.G. Maxted of Tilty, another champion of the farm labourers, in his candidature for the Essex County Council and as organiser of the election campaign for the prospective Socialist candidate for Saffron Walden. Jenkinson's extensive activities in these fields caused a rift with Noel and the partnership ended.[206]

Jenkinson often decried any segregation of the clergy from the laity: an early lay sermon declares that "the separation between clergy and laity is but an aspect of that wider and more disastrous separation between religion and common life which is itself the very negation of the Gospel."[207]

200. H.J. Hammerton, This Turbulent Priest - the story of Charles Jenkinson, Parish Priest and Housing Reformer (1952), pp.16-17.

201. Leaflet advertising C.S.L. mission in Bethnal Green, n.d., Noel papers, University of Hull.

202. Hammerton, op.cit., p.26.

203. Ibid., pp.17-18.

204. Church Socialist, 1912 passim.

205. Hammerton, op.cit., p.20.

206. Ibid., pp.20-23.

207. Ibid., p.18.

Jenkinson was himself to be ordained. After war service as a medical orderly, as a kind of participating pacifist, he secured entry through his own initiative to Fitzwilliam Hall, Cambridge in 1919 to supplement his elementary schooling and self-education by an Honours degree in Law as a preparation for ordination.[208]

Those lay members whom we have mentioned were leaders in the League, prominent participants or people who had become notable through their activities in other spheres. As for the rank and file, information is scant: many there be 'which have no memorial, who are perished as though they had never been'. Stuart Smith, reporting on the Leicester branch in 1907, stated that numbers had passed the 'half-century' and that most members were working people, veteran workers in the Socialist and Labour movement, Trades Unionists and Communists for whom the I.L.P. was not advanced enough.[209] One who was Branch Secretary for Coventry for many years looks back over half a century and recalls that of the dozen stalwarts who kept the branch in being during the war years about half were factory workers, the others being a clerk, a coachbuilder, an insurance agent, a schoolmistress and the parish clergy.[210] A Darlington branch member looking back over a similar period to the 'tail-end' of the branch's life speaks of ten or twelve active members. "There were two or three graduates mixed with aspiring working men's club leaders. The rest were the usual mixture of self-'educated'(?) or ambitious working men who read H.G. Wells ... and the like and the usual inflammatory tub-thumbers".[211] Geoffrey Gobat,

208. Ibid., pp.25-31. He was later to achieve distinction for his leading part in slum clearance and re-housing schemes in Leeds where he was Chairman of the Housing Committee and Leader of the City Council. He also became Chairman of the Stevenage New Town Development Corporation (Hammerton, passim.)

209. Optimist, October 1907, Branch reports.

210. Letter - Mrs M. Richards to author, 28th June 1977. At the time that she was Branch Secretary she was Mrs Jervis. She trained as a teacher at Homerton College, Cambridge and during the war joined the Red Cross and became a VAD at a military hospital.

211. Letter - Miss E.V. Edgley to author, 26th March 1977.

looking back to his youth at St James, Darlington, remembers only schoolmasters and mistresses and local workmen as members of the C.S.L. branch.[212] These 'samples' are too few and too indefinite to have significance and they may well reflect, in part at least, the standpoint of their sources: Stuart Smith's militant Socialism, his solidarity with the proletariat and distrust of the middle classes[213] were not, it seems clear, shared by Miss Edgley[214] of Darlington and their different attitudes may have coloured their reporting. If these 'samples' say anything at all, however quietly, it would seem that they are in accord with a discernable broad trend in the life of the League - the shift in balance between a propagandist approach with close working class affinities and a middle class, intellectualist stance, the latter becoming more prominent in the later history of the League. Even a 'slum' parish like St James's Darlington included a disproportionate number of graduates in its C.S.L. branch: moreover it was probably this element which was the mainstay of the group. Meetings "were always small, consisting of the loyal graduates and the most faithful working men, who", Miss Edgley somewhat patronisingly states "were thoughtful and sincere."[215]

From this review of Church Socialist League membership certain points emerge. The laity numbered more people of repute in their ranks than did the clergy. The Revd. F.L. Donaldson had earned some recognition through his participation in the march of the Leicester unemployed, but of the C.S.L.

212. Letter - Mr Geoffrey Gobat to author, 27th March 1977.

213. For examples of Stuart Smith's attitudes see Church Socialist, December 1912, Some Church Socialists and their views-x-The Revd. C. Stuart Smith, and Commonwealth, May 1923, article by Stuart Smith entitled 'The Church Socialist League'. R. Groves, op.cit., states that 'to the end (he died in 1924) Stuart Smith called himself a Communist, using the word as William Morris had done' (p.293)

214. See footnote 211.

215. Edgley letter, cit.

Chairmen George Lansbury was the only person of real national standing. Though each was to become more eminent in his respective field after the League had disintegrated, both R.H. Tawney and Henry Slesser were becoming well established as national figures before the end of the C.S.L. period. Cecil Chesterton and A.J. Penty were well known for their writings. Reckitt had a certain prominence in the Guild Socialist movement. The Countess of Warwick was a figure whom the public could not or would not ignore - nor, probably, would she have wished it otherwise. For most of these people the C.S.L. was only one of a number of their interests and in many cases one which was not particularly central to their lives. Neither Lady Warwick in her auto-biography, Life's Ebb and Flow nor Margaret Blunden in her account of the life of the Countess even mentions her membership of the League, though covering in detail the wide canvas of her activities, philanthropic, personal, socialist and social.[216] In 1917 she wrote to Lansbury that she had been so busy with hospitals at Easton for the war wounded that she had "only been able to keep in touch with the Labour and Socialist movement through the Herald, the Labour Leader, Forward and all the little papers."[217] Lansbury, though his Christian Socialist commitment was never in doubt, served as League Chairman for only one year. Thereafter the extent of his engagement lessened, partly perhaps because of trends within the League, partly no doubt because of his involvement in national and local politics and with the Herald. In his biography the C.S.L. is included merely as one of "several movements which can be mentioned only".[218] Though at various times in the League's history Cecil Chesterton, Slesser and, to a lesser extent, Tawney and Penty played a vigorous part, similar

216. Life's Ebb and Flow was published in 1939. Margaret Blunden in both The Countess of Warwick (1967) and 'The Educational and Political Work of the Countess of Warwick 1861-1938' (1966) the Exeter University M.A. thesis on which the published book is based, mentions Lady Warwick's nomination of Socialist clerics to her Essex parishes and an article by her in the Church Socialist Quarterly but makes no reference to her membership of the League

217. Letter - Countess of Warwick to George Lansbury, August 22nd, 1917 (Lansbury papers, British Library of Political and Economic Science)

218. G. Lansbury, My Life (1928), pp.4 and 5.

considerations apply. Of this Group of the better known laity only Reckitt chose and was able to give consistently over a number of years a priority to his direct activity as a Christian Socialist, a fact which was to be of significance in the later life of the League.

Patrician and plutocratic Socialists enlisted in the League, as we have seen, and in 1908 a sub-committee was set up to consider how the influence of the C.S.L. might be extended amongst young people of the upper and middle classes especially through the public schools[219], but it was at the other end of the socio-economic scale - amongst 'straightforward' plebians rather than upper class rebels - where influential participation was lacking in this avowedly Socialist organisation. We have noted that the laity played a larger role in the closing stages of the League and that among the ten lay members of the Executive who, in October 1922, signed 'An Appeal to the Bishops, Clergy and Laity' on the subject of 'The Church and Industrial Morality' there were three Trades Unionists. Yet even among the laity they constituted a minority, being outnumbered by those following middle class occupations or even, in at least one case, having no paid occupation but living on private means.[220] Moreover, of the three Trades Unionists one was a white collar worker, Fred Hughes of the National Union of Clerks[221], whilst the background of Henry Hayward of the Amalgamated Engineering Union was probably not entirely typical of his group - he was educated, as a boarder, at Bablake School, an ancient foundation in Coventry, to which he won a free place, but despite his ability he moved from school to

219. Optimist, April 1908, Letter from Chairman of C.S.L.

220. M.B. Reckitt. Information from Revd. Peter Mayhew - letter, Reckitt to Mayhew 6th March 1975; M.B. Reckitt, As It Happened, p.293 and passim; interview, author with Reckitt, 30th December 1976. It is likely also that Ruth Kenyon, who describes herself in this context merely as 'Justice of the Peace' also existed on private means.

221. Hughes, on this document, describes himself as a member of the Archbishop's Fifth Committee of Inquiry but on an earlier memorandum his Union connection is declared - see footnote 198.

factory work as his mother was keen on securing the highest possible wages at the time.[222] The third union man was from the N.U.R. Representatives of the more basic heavy industries were conspicuously absent. Immediately after its foundation, in a statement setting before the public its position and principles, the C.S.L. declared:- "The League will concentrate its attention upon the representative bodies of the Church, and will seek to secure the election of Socialists to these bodies. Whilst the Church has some claim to be the Church of the people, it is notorious that the wage-earners of this country have little or no place in the councils of the Church. The constitution of any diocesan conference or of the Houses of Laymen is the revelation of the Church's preference for rank, position and wealth. This is as wrong as it is disastrous to the life and influence of the Church. The League will aim at securing the more adequate representation of the wage-earners on these various Church bodies."[223] Ironically, the history of the League was to demonstrate its inability to achieve such representation even in its own councils - a much easier target than those of the Church as a whole.

It was not surprising that the clergy played a leading part in the League: it was still possible as late as 1963 to publish a collection of papers under the title Layman's Church and create a mild stir.[224] Tradition accorded the clergy a principal role in most Church activities, and they had the time and commitment to discharge it to an extent often impossible to laymen active in 'the world'. The Revd.

222. Information from his son, The Revd. Peter Noel Hayward, November 17th 1982. P.N. Hayward states that his grandfather, Frederick William Hayward, and not James Starley, pioneered the bicycle with identical wheels. Henry Hayward (1885-1971) was another of those (of Summerbell and Lansbury) who were retained, or brought back to the Church through the influence of a C.S.L. priest:- "By 1906, now 21 and newly wed, he was about to sever his connections with the Church of England, considering it irrelevant and indifferent to social demands. That year, however, Percy Widdrington became Vicar of St Peter's, Coventry - and the rest you know!" Hayward became a C.S.L. stalwart and a Churchwarden. All his seven children won scholarships and moved into middle class occupations - company director, banker, hospital matron, schoolmaster, priest.

223. Optimist, October 1906, p.65, A Notable Gathering. Form II.

224. By the Bishop of Woolwich (J.A.T. Robinson) and others, with an Introduction by the Revd. Timothy Beaumont. It went through two impressions in the course of that year.

F.H. Matthews, for example, in an article entitled 'The Life of a Branch of the Church Socialist League' in the Church Socialist of April 1912, writes "I call to mind what was said to me when I first joined the League:- 'The claims of the C.S.L. must come before everything else'"- few laymen could genuinely meet a commitment of this order. We have seen that, like their brethren, the C.S.L. clergy were predominantly drawn from the middle and upper classes, and that although they had a strong commitment to the people's cause and very often direct experience of working class life, the gap between them and the workers was never completely bridged. We have seen also that despite their connections in influential circles they did not themselves occupy positions of great importance in the Church. Effectively then, they fell between two stools: in their ranks they neither had dignitaries to push the C.S.L. cause in the councils of the Church, nor, though men such as Moll, Noel, West and Donaldson were active in the Labour Movement and, it would seem in many cases highly regarded, did they have working class clergy to be "at one" with 'the people', though Stuart Smith ever true to the first ideals of the League had some success in this respect - at his funeral in Ipswich 'the unemployed' formed a guard of honour and headed the procession from church to cemetary.[225] In general, however, for both the Church and the Labour Movement- the C.S.L. clergy were essentially 'outsiders' having to create a platform rather than having one naturally.

If there was little hope of a sizeable proletarian component from the clergy on account of their origins and the 'professional caste' which they had joined - at the 1909 Trafalgar Square Demonstration the clergyman who had been an artisan, had himself suffered unemployment and "spoke straight from the heart", clearly had a certain rarity value[226] - in practice there seems to have been a

225. Stacy papers, Hayward collection, unidentified local newspaper cutting reporting Stuart Smith's funeral at which Stacy, uncle of his widow, officiated. R. Groves, op.cit., p.293 also mentions this 'guard of honour'.

226. Revd. E. Thornton of St Peter's, Hammersmith. Church Socialist Quarterly, April 1909, Branch Reports - London.

disappointingly small element among the laity, certainly at the leadership level. We have then a society avowedly Socialist without a sizeable or influential proletarian component, directed by clergy not drawn from the working class and unable either to bridge completely the social gap or to walk in the corridors of ecclesiastical power and by laity who, not drawn from the "grass roots", could not be described as truly representative of working people. We have a society bearing the title Church Socialist League but not well placed in the composition of its membership to make a major and lasting impact on either the Church or the Labour movement. Gobat desired a society that could have a wide popular appeal and aim at a large membership in local branches:[227] the C.S.L. had a limited appeal and a modest membership. Though politically it was the most radical of the Anglican Christian Socialist societies it remained clerical in direction and largely middle class in atmosphere.

227. M. Gobat, op.cit., p.61.

# CHAPTER 5 - THE LIFE OF THE LEAGUE : ACTIVITIES, ASPECTS AND ISSUES

## THE BRANCHES AND THE CENTRE

In 1909, in a mood of some dejection, Stewart Headlam remarked of the G.S.M. that all they did was to talk about a definition of Socialism, that he didn't want the name of the Guild to be captured by a few people out of touch with its work and that the Church Socialist League would provide a home for these people when the Guild was dead.[1] Those who gravitated into the Church Socialist League were to continue to find almost endless opportunities to talk about Socialism, its definition, application and destiny, but such discussion did not exhaust the League's offerings. The branch was the basic unit of the League and, as we would expect, activities varied in scale, style and scope according to place and time: whilst the Elland branch might enlist eighteen people for an 'educational' meeting[2], the London branch could draw nearly three thousand to Trafalgar Square for a demonstration on behalf of the unemployed[3], and whilst London's Bedford Park Group went for a country walk with members of the local Fabian Society and the I.L.P., in the same month the Bethnal Green Group, in support of striking workers, mounted a procession with banners, bands, stops for speeches and a large meeting outside 'The Salmon and Ball' public house with a collection for strikers' starving families.[4] Since the League operated in the dual context of a variegated and developing Socialism and an ecclesiastical and theological situation, its activities at any given time were influenced by conditions and preoccupations in these two spheres and the attempt to relate each to the other: according to the prevailing mood of the moment meetings might be devoted, for example, to a consideration of the position of children under the Poor Law[5], the position of women in

1. F.G. Bettany: Stewart Headlam: A Biography (1926), p.92.
2. Church Socialist Quarterly, January 1910, Branch Reports.
3. Ibid, April 1909, Branch Reports.
4. Church Socialist, September 1912, London Branch Notes, Group Reports
5. Church Socialist Quarterly, April 1909, Branch Reports: Sunderland.

the Church[6] or the nature of Syndicalism[7]. Nevertheless, a general pattern of activities can be discerned in the life of a branch[8]. There were three basic types of meeting - private, public and devotional: these plus occasional involvement in outside events and causes, usually in association with other agencies, formed the staple diet of the branch.

Of the private members meetings some, obviously, were basically business meetings, particularly in the case of the larger branches, whilst others took the form of mutual religio-political edification for the members, with one of their number delivering a paper which would then be discussed. As indicated, the subjects chosen often reflected whatever social, political or ecclesiastical issue was topical, with broad themes such as 'The Church and the Labour Movement', 'The Basis of Socialism', or, more introvertedly, 'The Principles of the Church Socialist League' as useful and recurrent stand-by items. Naturally, too, the subjects for lecture and discussion would often be determined by the particular interest of a member: the formularies of the League as drawn up at the Morecambe Conference declared that "members undertake to help each other in fulfilling the object of the League by speaking and lecturing (and in other ways)"... and that "members are pledged to make themselves familiar with at least one branch of social reform"[9]. Other meetings of members were wholly or partly of a social nature: in summer, rambles in Epping Forest, the Kent countryside, the Yorkshire dales; in winter a meal - a Hot Pot Supper in Coventry[10] (and, presumably, in the Lancashire branches too!), a common meal in London's Food Reform Restaurant as a prelude to the business or discussion of the evening, a Christmas party. Devotional meetings of various types though basically

6. Ibid., July 1909, Branch Reports: Birmingham.
7. Church Socialist, July 1912, League Notes: London.
8. Information in this section drawn from branch reports in Optimist, Church Socialist Quarterly and Church Socialist, and from Mrs M. Richards, sometime Secretary, Coventry branch (letter to author, 28th June 1977) and Miss E.V. Edgley, former member Darlington branch (letter to author, 26th March 1977), unless otherwise indicated.
9. Method 2 (my brackets) and Rule 2. Optimist, October 1906: 'A Notable Gathering', Form 1.
10. St Peter's, Coventry, Parish Magazine, February 1915.

intended for and attended by members of the branch were not strictly 'private' in the sense that the business, discussion and social meetings were, since, particularly in the case of celebrations of Holy Communion, they would probably be publicly advertised in the calendar of services of the church in which they were held: to this aspect of the League's activities we shall return later.

Much of the energy of branches was devoted to public meetings in an effort to advertise the League's existence, proclaim its message and gain recruits. These public meetings were often styled 'Propaganda meetings' (without, evidently, the derogatory associations which the term has acquired) or 'Demonstrations', this term being used quite literally and applied to describe a conventional, static indoor public meeting as well as those of a more physically dynamic nature. Sometimes these meetings took the form of a public debate between speakers from opposing camps - Noel[11], for instance, in London, and Adderley in Birmingham apparently triumphed over non-Socialist adversaries each before large audiences - at other times there would be the customary format of platform speeches and questions whilst occasionally a conference would be mounted, as for example in 1908 in Birmingham, where on the lines of the Mirfield Church and Labour conferences, delegates were drawn from nearly every Trade Union and Socialist organisation in Birmingham to confer with Church Socialists. As a result of their deliberations resolutions were passed on such matters as unemployment, the Licensing Bill and the Eight Hours Bill and sent to the Prime Minister, The Home Secretary, the Secretary of the Local Government Board and the Archbishop of Canterbury.[12] The public meetings would often be addressed by the League's officials and leading personalities, some of whom seem to have been

11. 'Ought Christians to be Socialists'. Report of a debate between Rev. Conrad Noel, M.A., and Frank G. Jannaway, (1909). Noel papers University of Hull. (Debate took place on May 17th, 1909. It was reported verbatim and then the report was revised by both disputants before being published as a pamphlet by New Age Press.)

12. This Conference was reported in July 1909 issue of the Church Socialist Quarterly as an item in the Birmingham Branch Secretary's report for the whole year 1908-9, the first in the Branch's existence.

accomplished orators: Donaldson, Lansbury, Gobat, Widdrington, Healy, Cecil Chesterton and, particularly, organising secretaries Noel, Grant and Stuart Smith made frequent appearances at meetings up and down the country. For the biggest events the League would enlist additional 'platform power' from outside its ranks. In the summer months a great many open air meetings were held. The London venues included Hyde Park, Chiswick, Camberwell, Clapham Common, Streatham, Wembley and Wimbledon - thirty three open air meetings were reported by this branch in one issue of the monthly journal, The Church Socialist. Members in other towns also made use of their parks and open spaces: amongst other places open air meetings took place at Bristol, Coventry, Elland, Leicester and Manchester, whilst the Liverpool branch frequently made their stand on the sands at New Brighton. Many of these public meetings were highly successful in terms of attendance figures: we read of packed halls in Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham and London; in Newcastle tickets were issued to reserve seats in advance; in Darlington a large hall could not provide room for all who wished to attend a meeting at which Gobat had invited the current chairman Lansbury and his predecessors Pinchard and West to make the speeches.[13] The contrast between the hundreds who crowded into these public meetings and the handfuls who made up the membership of many of these branches is very striking: it indicates perhaps that in an age before the domestic anchorage produced by television, and with a tradition of live entertainment, live political meetings and live public lectures, the C.S.L's well-attended public meetings may have been seen as a form of mild entertainment or painless education. Clearly mass attendance did not result in mass conversions to the C.S.L. cause. The largest meetings took place in London with Church House, Westminster and Trafalgar Square as venues. The London branch mounted a mass meeting on June 17th 1909 at Church House on the theme 'The Right to Live', with Sidney Webb as one of the speakers.[14] On April 12th 1912, the same building was the

13. M. Gobat: T.C. Gobat - His Life, Work and Teaching (1938), p.59.
14. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1909. Branch Reports.

scene for another demonstration - on this occasion, with G.K. Chesterton as a 'guest' speaker, the League was protesting against the neutrality of the Bishops in the labour disputes of the time. The large hall was packed and after the meeting at least 500 from the gathering made their way in procession to Lambeth Palace to deliver the League's 'Remonstrance'.[15] The pinnacle in C.S.L. demonstrations had, however, been reached three years earlier at the foot of Nelson's column. Reporting the meeting of 13th February 1909, the Daily News declared: "The word impressive but poorly describes the great demonstration which, organised by the Church Socialist League brought together clergymen of all denominations to speak upon a common platform in a common cause. Trafalgar Square has seen many remarkable gatherings, but few more striking than this, when Anglican and Free Churchman, Protestant and Roman Catholic, stood shoulder to shoulder, demanding for the great mass of unemployed not only the right to work, but the right to live."[16] Conrad Noel, writing the report of the London Branch in the Church Socialist Quarterly for April 1909 tells us that 13th February was "a great day for the League". Sixty ministers of religion (not, as the Daily News loosely described them 'clergymen of all denominations'), forty being Anglican clergy, had responded to the call of the London C.S.L. Groups of unemployed people had been parading streets for several days with Church Socialist announcements about the demonstration. Nearly three thousand people turned up.[17] The crowd was "mostly composed of well-dressed people of the comparatively comfortable classes. Yet the speakers were cheered enthusiastically and the resolution passed unanimously". The Daily News begins its account by quoting the wording of the resolution:

15. Church Socialist, May 1912. League Notes.
16. February 15th, 1909.
17. Widdrington in Commonwealth, July 1927, p.219, states that the audience was over 3,000.

"This meeting of Christian citizens, in view of the appalling destitution caused by unemployment, while realising that no ultimate cure is possible until the people of England are resolved to alter the basis of the present industrial system, urges upon the government that immediate steps should be taken to compel the Local Government Board to distribute the money voted for the relief of the unemployed; and demands of Parliament that the question of work, or maintenance with training, should be the first business of this Session."

The account continues:- "When Dr Clifford, that venerable champion of the poor, read this resolution from the famous plinth in Trafalgar Square on Saturday, there was silence for a moment and then there burst from the listening crowd a roar of applause that seemed to let loose the pent up feelings of London's workless army" - presumably by proxy through the relatively well-heeled audience to which Noel refers in the Church Socialist Quarterly! Headlam, described in Noel's account as 'of the London County Council' presided. The Bishop of London wrote that he was unable to be present but he expressed his eagerness to support any adequate legislation that should be introduced- Scott Holland wrote "My whole heart is with you in the cause you plead". Donaldson seconded the resolution. Noel wound up the meeting. The gathering was well reported. The Times, the Morning Post and other newspapers gave considerable space to it. It was even reported across the Channel. "Le Soir", Noel tells us, "printed a sensational account of 'La Ligue Ecclesiastique Socialiste' with its platform of two thousand clergy and its immense crowds(!)". Back in England "the Clarion spoke of the League as working a revolution in the thought of the National Church which in significance was far more important than all parliamentary and other victories at the polls".[18] Such publicity was very gratifying - the League did not always enjoy such a good press.

18. Church Socialist Quarterly, loc.cit.

Church Socialist League involvement in events and activities not organised by the society usually involved co-operation with other agencies in the Labour movement. Whatever Justice, the Labour Leader or the Clarion might be saying at the national level, relations between League branches and other Socialist societies were generally cordial with much common effort and loan of equipment and premises: no doubt this co-operation was aided in many cases by an overlap in membership between 'secular' and Church organisation. Common cause was made not just with the I.L.P. but also with the S.D.P. and later the British Socialist Party (B.S.P.). The co-operation was often made to good effect in terms of numbers: in conjunction with the I.L.P., Darlington's C.S.L. branch arranged a meeting in the town in February 1908 with Lansbury advertised as speaker[19] and more than 600 people turned up - at the time the Darlington branch consisted of ten members with a debt of £1. Though the six hundred heard an exposition of Socialism based on Christian principles the impact in terms of recruitment was the same as in public meetings organised solely by the C.S.L.: the audience were not impelled to join the League. Just over a fortnight after this meeting Noel, as Organising Secretary, visited the Darlington branch and addressed "a small but enthusiastic C.S.L. meeting". Six months later the membership was only a dozen. In considering the many instances of joint activity three main 'areas' may be distinguished. In the first place elections, both parliamentary and municipal, saw C.S.L. members heavily involved in promoting the cause of Socialist candidates in many towns up and down the land. In these cases it is not always clear how far C.S.L. members were acting merely in their capacity as Socialist citizens or doing so specifically as Church Socialists executing the expressed wishes of the local branch. However such activities were frequently reported in the Optimist, the Church Socialist Quarterly and the Church Socialist and their mention in branch reports can at least be interpreted as giving the seal of approval if not the sanction of instruction. The

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League also 'looked after its own' at Election time. In the Church Socialist Quarterly for January 1911, Lansbury records his thanks to Paine, Healy, Swann and "scores of other London comrades" who had helped him in his successful campaign at Bow and Bromley. A tract by Lewis Donaldson had been distributed outside every church in the division on the Sunday before the Election. As well as working for him C.S.L. comrades had also contributed to his election fund. Similarly, Summerbell, the Sunderland Socialist M.P., was helped by contributions from many C.S.L. members as West records in a tribute in the Church Socialist Quarterly in April 1910. Another 'area' of activity centred round May Day. The Coventry branch held its own particular celebration of this red letter festival of the Labour calendar - it instituted an Annual Demonstration at this season - and others may have had similar arrangements, but many branches joined in programmes promoted by the Labour elements of the community generally. At Bristol, for instance, there was a large May Day Demonstration, organised jointly by the Socialist societies of the district, in 1909. There were two platforms each chaired by a parson who was a member of the C.S.L. branch - the branch's report in the Church Socialist Quarterly (October 1909) interprets this fact as giving an indication of "the spirit of our I.L.P., S.D.F. and Fabian comrades towards the local C.S.L.". More lightheartedly, Darlington, with the aid of a 'wardrobe' of church vestments, put on a float to join in a Labour Day procession on one occasion.[20] A third 'area' in this category was involvement in particular social, political or industrial issues as occasion arose. In the industrial West Riding, for example, we find the Elland branch co-operating with the local I.L.P. to get the Education Committee of the District Council to enforce the Necessitous Children (Feeding) Act, and in the Midlands the Coventry branch took part in a Black Country Strikers' Demonstration, with Widdrington as one of the speakers.[21]

20. See footnote 8. Edgley letter. Year of float uncertain - probably 1923.

21. The Elland 'agitation' is difficult to date precisely as it is mentioned as one of the items in a review of the first year of the Elland branch - Church Socialist Quarterly, January 1910. The reference to the Coventry branch's involvement in the Black Country Strikers Demonstration is in Church Socialist, August 1913. League Notes.

Such, then, were the main elements in the programme of the branches. Coventry curate, Felix Matthews, contributes an article entitled 'The Life of a Branch of the Church Socialist League' to the Church Socialist for April 1912. In stressing that enthusiasm ought not to die down after a branch has started, he points out that "the very things which the C.S.L. stands for are just those things which keep alive enthusiasm". The three "things" which he singles out are politics, fellowship and religion. Politics, he opines, is not the most important part of a branch's work, but the most distinctive feature of the League as a Church Society. The branch must be ready to raise its voice at both municipal and parliamentary elections and even if there was no Socialist or Labour candidate there was a witness to be borne:- "We have to show them that, in these days, when great wrongs can only be remedied by political measures, a religion without politics is almost as empty as a religion without morals. It is the faith without works which is dead". He turns next to what he terms "the duty of fellowship". The branch must become a fellowship. Fellowship is seen as an essential condition of vigorous life. There must be a real spirit of camaraderie. Through 'socials', study circles and so forth the branch must aim at making every member alive with Socialism. "Lastly" he declares "there is our religion which must be the main source of strength of every branch." The various devotional activities all have a necessary place in the life of the branch: with the Creeds and the Gospel they make "the base on which we build". Claude Stuart Smith, Donaldson's curate at Leicester and later the League's only salaried Organising Secretary, had a scheme for creating such a base among the young people of the parish, as he explained in an article entitled "Christian Socialism for Young People" in the October 1907 issue of the Optimist. He sets his views in the context of the slow progress that had been made in the long time that had elapsed since Maurice and Kingsley. He complains that to most people a Christian

Socialist means "a Conservative churchman with a mild interest in drainage - not a Christian who is a Socialist or a Socialist who is a Christian". He speaks of a new Laodicea - neither hot nor cold. Not everyone, however, can be thus described. "We wave the red flag the more earnestly because we see in its colour the blood of Calvary and the fire of Pentecost.". The main hope, he felt, lay in the next generation: it was necessary now to catch those on the verge of manhood and womanhood. To do so he devised an elaborate scheme at St Mark's, Leicester. He started a catechism somewhat misleadingly called 'The Red Cross Guild', for, as its constitution put it, "the training of young Churchmen and Churchwomen in the principles of Christian Socialism". The Red Cross connotation was not with 'casualty' but with 'crusade'. Members of the guild were called 'Comrade' and a few older helpers were called 'Companions'. Companions had already to be members of the G.S.M., the C.S.U. or the C.S.L. The Guild's programme included devotional services, a special office, addresses and a monthly class emphasising "the social character of the Catholic Faith". He was encouraged by the scheme's success and thought it an experiment worth copying. Certainly it seemed more productive than some of the overtures to adults: the Church Socialist in August 1912 reports a six-nights mission by Stuart Smith in Stockport where there were good audiences, a good deal of interest - and two new members!

The London branch, while containing the elements which we have described, had a more elaborate structure. The numerous Groups of which the Branch was a federation each had a full range of meetings and activities and in addition there were meetings, usually monthly, of the Branch itself. There was a half-yearly Conference with a major subject for debate, a devotional element and a social element: that in October 1914, for instance, discussed 'War and the Christian Faith' in the afternoon, and following Evensong there was a social gathering with

music and dancing.[22] Sub-committees - Propaganda, Devotional and Social - were spawned. The Branch acquired its own premises in Holborn which facilitated further developments, including the establishment of a library, and also served as a London base for the League's Secretary. A choir was formed. The Branch ran a class for training members in public speaking. Some of these features were not unique to London - Preston, for instance, acquired its own premises through the generosity of a branch member and Coventry held a speakers' class[23] - but no branches could match London in range and scale of activity. In the midst of this business it was not always easy to sustain adequate links between the centre and the periphery. In the April 1912 issue of the Church Socialist the London secretary exhorts members to support the Branch meetings as well as those of the group: "The very important work of influencing public opinion, holding large demonstrations, making representation to the Bishops, issuing literature etc. can only be done by the whole League, or the whole Branch. At least one member from each Group should attend the Branch meeting. Then we would not hear complaints that no work is being done, or that Groups know nothing of what is being done."

Similar anxieties were sometimes felt about communication between the branches and the centre. At a time when the League was looking at its organisational structure after three years of rapid growth, A.J. Morris, in an article in the October 1909 issue of the Church Socialist Quarterly, stressed the vital importance of some real connection between the Executive and the branches, with lines of communication being open both ways. The Officers of the League and the Executive Committee naturally had the functions of co-ordinating and promoting the League's activity. They organised the important annual conferences when the League took stock of its position and looked for the way ahead. They issued manifestos and statements - for instance, the imprisonment of Jim Larkin drew forth a

22. Programme for C.S.L. London Branch Half Yearly Conference, 10th October 1914. (Binyon papers, University of Leeds).

23. Church Socialist, September 1912, League Notes; ibid., February 1913.

protest which was sent to the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Ireland.[24] They had responsibility for the League's publications, initially directly and later through the Central Literature Committee. A key member of the central team and the physical link with the branches was the Organising Secretary whose arduous task was to sustain the weak branches, nourish the rest, promote new growth and act generally as a kind of Socialist missionary to the Church as a whole.

Apart from literature the main inanimate link between branch and centre was finance. Branch reports from time to time mentioned debt or shortage of funds and the consequent limitations on their activities: from the centre it was a leitmotiv sounded by successive Treasurers. The centre was dependent on the branches for funds. The third item in the constitution drawn up at Morecambe stipulated that there should be an annual per capita minimum subscription of a shilling to the central body. From as early as the First Report nine months after the League's foundation branches were lagging behind in sending in their affiliation fees. The situation never improved: even when the League was vigorous and flourishing there were still periodic pleas for the submission of fees. The League's periodicals were an additional financial burden: their pages bear recurrent requests for increased sales and sad tales of current deficit. By July 1909 a crisis had been reached - as has been noted earlier, £50 was required immediately and a Special Emergency Fund was set up. In the following issue of the Church Socialist Quarterly the Hon Treasurer reported that two donations had been received in response to the special appeal. Fortunately one of these was for £50 - the other was 1/= - and the society was thereby enabled to pay off its debts, but the call for subscriptions still went out to enable the League to maintain and widen its work. The Treasurer's report in the next issue revealed that well over half the branches and nearly three quarters of the individual

24. Ibid., December 1913, p.15.

members had still to respond. Mr E. Whitley of West Kirby the donor of the £50, had given the League much needed respite but its problems continued and would soon surface again. Following Noel's acceptance of the benefice of Thaxted, plans to appoint a full-time salaried Organising Secretary[25] became urgent and a special fund was opened to finance the scheme. Again Mr Whitley's generosity served the League well: when the fund was wound up in the summer of 1913 and the list of subscribers published, it was found that Mr Whitley had contributed £150 out of a total of £518. There were no other 'three figure' contributions - the next highest was £35 - and of the 119 contributions only ten were from branches or London groups.[26] In the meantime the mainstream budget staggered along with difficulty. In order to put pressure on the slow payers sanctions were introduced. The Annual Conference at Leeds in 1911 had revised the constitution and made provision that voting papers for the election of officers and members of the Executive Committee would be issued to branches only in strict proportion to the affiliation fees received. As the 1912 Conference approached members were reminded of this provision. Some branches were more than a year in arrears. In the Church Socialist the writer of the League Notes was forthright. If the branch was spending all on propaganda, it was no excuse. If the branch was small and inactive, it was no excuse. If it had incompetent officials, they should be removed. The work of the Executive was being crippled through the non-payment of affiliation fees.[27] At the first annual conference at Scarborough in 1907 the Revd. J.A. Grant had "proposed that the League should put some kind of graduated income-tax upon its members, arranged in such a fashion as to tap the unearned income of the more opulent among them."[28] Even with an organisation

25. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1910, Editorial announces scheme and fund; ibid. October 1910 announces appointment.

26. Church Socialist, September 1913, p.18.

27. March 1912.

28. Church Times, June 14th 1907. The inside cover of the pamphlet The Basis of Socialism by Cecil Chesterton (n.d. probably 1909) bears the statement "Some members are putting a voluntary tax on their income of £1 in every £100". In its closing years the League had to appeal for £150 'in next few weeks' (Church Socialist March-April 1920 - magazine now bi-monthly) and for £500 (ibid. Jan-Feb 21). During this period of financial crisis the suggestion that members tax their incomes for the benefit of the League was put forward, without the 'unearned qualificatio and a few members expressed an intention to contribute along those lines.

bearing the title of Church Socialist League and deliberating in its first flush of idealism, a proposal so radical and potentially painful was unlikely to have a rapturous reception. It was "referred to the committee and a report on it was suggested for the next Conference."[29] By November 1912 a much more modest proposal was put forward: the Central Executive were asking League members to keep the first week in Advent as a week of self-denial. Proceeds would be used for propaganda.[30] By the following summer the tough pre-Conference line of 1912 had been replaced by indications of 'straw-clutching' as the Treasurer somewhat pathetically enquired "Can't we save something on our holidays?"[31] The League, like the G.S.M. before it, never did solve its financial problems. Its regular income was never adequate to provide a sound basis for its operations. There were other benefactors as well as Mr Whitley. The Annual Conference Report in the Church Socialist for June and July (bi-monthly) 1919 revealed that the League's solvency was due to two donations amounting to £200. The farewell tribute to The Revd. W.H. Paine, who had given his time and services freely to the C.S.L. over a number of years, on his resignation from the Secretaryship hints at the possibility of some financial support having been received from this source, speaking of innumerable acts of kindness and generosity" and stating that "he had often helped the League through difficult situations".[32] The situation worsened. In the last year of its life a document issued by the Executive Committee declared: "It is not too much to say that the League has for the past few years only continued in effective existence owing to the generosity of the Harold Buxton Trust"[33]. The balance sheet for 1922 reveals that well over half the League's income came from a grant from this source.[34] The internal conflicts and external

29. Ibid.

30. Church Socialist, November 1912. Note - Self-Denial Week.

31. Ibid., August 1913. Organisation and Propaganda Fund.

32. Church Socialist, July 1915, The Annual Conference.

33. Document marked 'Private and Confidential (for the information of League members only)' and entitled 'Report to the branches on the position, possibilities and prospects of the League'. Issued by the Executive Committee, pursuant to instructions from the Annual Conference held in June 1922. Dated 24th Jan. 1923 (Stacy Papers, University of Leeds)

33. C.S.L. Balance sheet for year ending April 30th 1922 (Stacy Papers, University of Hull).

difficulties which the League experienced and which we shall examine in the third part of this study are obvious factors in bringing about its downfall: an examination of the finances of the League in its period of fullest development and maximum strength, suggests that even without these factors its continued existence would have been in doubt unless it were to have devised some means of financial salvation.

## PUBLICATIONS

The League did not simply rely on the spoken word from platform proclamations or in study circles: it placed great importance on the written word through its periodicals, pamphlets, leaflets, occasional pronouncements and manifestos and in the writings of its members in 'outside' organs.

In its infancy the League needed publicity if it was to grow and initially it had to depend on reports by outside agencies. In the First Report the Secretary stated that members of the League were much indebted to the Commonwealth, the magazine edited by Scott Holland of the C.S.U., for giving a considerable amount of space to their doings. Another journal which took an interest in the C.S.L. was the Optimist which was later to be the League's official organ for a period. This quarterly publication, in the early days curiously and somewhat disproportionately reliant for advertising revenue on Wigan dentists, described itself as 'a Review dealing with Practical Theology, Literature and Social Questions in a Christian Spirit'. It had its roots in The Scholae Episcopi[35], a Manchester theological college which existed from 1890 to 1914.[36] At a re-union of former students in July 1905, "it was tacitly admitted that there was a Social Problem. Hence the opening for the Optimist".[37] The first issue appeared

35. Optimist, January 1906, Editorial.

36. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1967-68, p.2049.

37. Optimist, January 1906, Editorial.

in January 1906, the year of the League's foundation. Its appearance owed much to the support and encouragement of Canon E.L. Hicks of St Philip's, Salford[38] who was later to become Bishop of Lincoln. Hicks, through the intervention of Gore, then a Canon of Westminster, had the boldness to rescue Noel from the wilderness of ecclesiastical ostracism and but for his autocratic temper in the matter of the so-called Temperance question - Noel saw him accost a parishioner in the street, knock out of her hands a jug of beer being carried home for supper, and compensate her for beer and breakage[39] - he appears to have been a supporter of liberal and democratic causes. He was one of the signatories of the letter of invitation to the conference at Morecambe[40] at which the C.S.L. was founded, though he appears neither to have attended the conference nor subsequently joined the League. The magazine's editor was Samuel Proudfoot, who in 1906 succeeded Widdrington as curate to Hastings, the League's first Secretary and Treasurer, at Halton, near Lancaster.[41] The October 1906 issue of the Optimist announced the formation of the C.S.L. under the heading 'A Notable Gathering'. The links between the League and the periodical grew closer. The Optimist had started from the recognition that there was a 'social problem': the issue for April 1907 found the League's chairman contributing an article entitled 'What is the Social Problem?' The same issue also contained items from League members Summerbell and Donaldson. At the Scarborough Conference in 1907 it was decided to accept a suggestion made by the Editor of the Optimist that the League should use the journal for propaganda, information to members and reports from branches and in return raise £4 quarterly for the next year.[42] Thereafter the League dominated the magazine. The following issue contained an interview with West, an article by him, four articles by other members of the League, 'Parliamentary Notes' by Summerbell and reports from the branches.[43] The Editorial

38. Ibid, The Bishop of Manchester and Theological Colleges.
39. Noel, Autobiography (1945), p.51.
40. Copy in Noel papers, University of Hull.
41. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.
42. Optimist, July 1907, Church Socialist Notes. The Magazine sold at 6d. a copy.
43. Ibid, October 1907.

for January 1908 begins with the statement, in brackets, that "The Church Socialist League is not responsible for anything written in these notes. Its statements of policy and opinion are contained in pages 72-76 inclusively - Editor". The process of assimilation, however, continued. The report of the League's Annual Conference in the summer noted that Proudfoot was ready to hand over the Optimist to the League and the transfer was agreed.[44] In the October issue the Editorial announced that "The Optimist is now the exclusive property of the Church Socialist League ... The Optimist, during its short career of three years has striven to advance all progressive movements in Theology and Politics and under the new management no violent changes in principle are to be anticipated. ... It has been decided by the authorities of the Church Socialist League to change the title of the magazine. The January issue will be published under the title of Church Socialist Quarterly, or Optimist." The 'take-over' was an appropriate and explicable development: like the League the Optimist was northern in origins and had arisen at the same time and out of the same social ferment in Church circles. Moreover, from 1906 to 1910 the editor served as curate to the League's Hon. Secretary. The 'Optimist' part of the title receded: by July 1909 the phrase 'or Optimist' had given way to 'formerly Optimist' entered in brackets after Church Socialist Quarterly. However, in July 1911 there was no issue and by October the journal had reverted to the original and sole title of The Optimist[45], with Proudfoot still at the helm. This issue had articles from former G.S.M. leader Headlam, C.S.U. member A.J. Carlyle[46] and C.S.L. stalwart Egerton Swann, but there was no mention of the termination of C.S.L. control. Proudfoot's periodical thereafter went its own

44. Ibid., July 1908, Report of 2nd Annual Conference of C.S.L.

45. The April 1911 issue, styled Church Socialist Quarterly (formerly Optimist) is Volume 6, No.2. The October issue, styled Optimist, is Vol.6, No.3.

46. Carlyle was an Oxford don, author, with his brother, of A History of Political Theory in the Middle Ages' and of the C.S.U. Handbook 'The Influence of Christianity upon Social and Political Ideas'. He contributed from 'outside' an essay to The Return of Christendom, the volume inspired by one wing of the C.S.L. and published in 1922. See Introduction, p.9.

way with only incidental references to the League. Apart from the lack of information on the events or issues which led to the break an incidental casualty was that the League's 1911 Annual Conference was not to be reported in its journal. Two major problems can be detected during the C.S.L's association with the Optimist - circulation and editorial policy. In the issue for April 1908, before the League took over, an advertisement from a firm of clerical tailors is addressed "to the 500 Lancashire clergy who read this magazine". Perhaps, cannily, not all the five hundred who read it also bought it or perhaps it was a case of advertising licence or stagnant or falling sales, but by April 1909, when the C.S.L. had taken over the ownership, there was a plea to increase circulation: there were then only about 550 subscribers and at least a thousand were needed if the magazine was to be placed on a sound financial footing.[47] West had announced in the previous January that W.H. Smith and Son had agreed to take 'a considerable number' each quarter[48], but clearly the periodical had not caught the bookstall browser's eye. Issues for January and July 1910 repeated the need to increase sales in order to cover expenditure: though no contributors were paid and the only cost was that of printing, the financial plight of the periodical was grave - if every member were to take an extra copy the magazine would break even. On the editorial policy front we have already seen that Proudfoot, though welcoming the C.S.L. association and the funds it brought, was anxious to be able to maintain the magazine on the lines on which he had established it. As we have noted in an earlier section of this study, Proudfoot resigned the editorship in the summer of 1909. There had been a kind of triumvirate in the editorial office: it had not worked well. Proudfoot felt that it was impossible for him to carry on unless he were the sole editor. The League's Executive Committee decided to invite him to do so on this basis and to attend the meetings of the committee. He agreed. The Executive

47. Church Socialist Quarterly, April 1909, Report of Assistant Organising Secretary.

48. Ibid., January 1909, Letter from the Chairman.

Committee went on to say that everyone should try to increase the circulation of the magazine and that it was "inevitable that the editor should allow all shades of opinion of any public interest or importance, whether Socialist or ecclesiastical, to find fair and proportionate expression".[49] The periodical did continue to give a wide range of opinion with contributions from Fabians, S.D.P. and I.L.P. members, modernist and Catholic churchmen, but Proudfoot had to remind readers of this policy decision. In the Editorial for the issue of October 1910 he said that the Church Socialist Quarterly is just as anxious to propagate tolerance as it is to advance the cause of Socialism, for we are assured that the latter, which is the greater, ought to include the less." He made a plea for a catholicity of spirit. "In the last issue and this, articles by Jean Moffat Wendon[50] give rise to keen controversy and are in the main diametrically opposed to the opinions of all members of the Church Socialist League. Later there will be replies ... Writers of articles are alone responsible for the views therein expressed." From January 1912 the views of C.S.L. members were to be expressed in the Church Socialist sub-titled 'For God and the People'. By that time the London branch had long occupied a dominant place in the life of the League and the Church Socialist was one of the first productions of that branch's newly formed Propaganda Committee.[51] It was, declared the first Editorial, "an attempt to provide a monthly magazine which shall interest our own members, be a link between the various branches and scattered members of the League and at the same time be an organ for propagating our views among the general public." The advent of the London-based Church Socialist gave symbolic acknowledgement of the special place of that branch and the new magazine also had the advantages of being a monthly production and being untrammeled by sensibilities deriving from previous

49. Ibid., July 1909, Report of Executive Committee meeting of June 4th.

50. A member and sometime Treasurer of the London branch of the C.S.L. (see Optimist, January 1912 - Correspondence between the London branch and the Bishop of London's Evangelistic Council), she wrote from a Marxian standpoint.

51. Church Socialist, January 1912, Editorial and London Branch Notes.

proprietorship and editorial traditions. Writers alone, however, were to be responsible for their expression of views as individuals. Initially there were separate editions for London and country branches but in March the magazine was enlarged and subsequent editions were to contain all League news in one issue. Later in the year the magazine was taken over by the League as a whole, and its publication became the responsibility of a newly-formed Central Literature Committee[52]. By the following month, however, familiar sounds were heard again. Although all work in connection with its production was voluntary, save the printing, the magazine was running at a very heavy loss.[53] Its financial feebleness was illustrated by a somewhat unseemly domestic dispute. Successive issues of the periodical in this first year had carried frontispiece photographs of C.S.L. leaders - shades, perhaps, of the Socialist practice of placard portraits - for which the magazine had claimed the copyright, with the intention of selling copies in postcard form. The photograph of Samuel Healy had been taken by a professional photographer who was also secretary of one of the London C.S.L. groups. He claimed the copyright, threatened to sue for damages and the secretary of the Literature Committee felt compelled to ask readers for financial contributions to meet the agreed settlement of £3-10-0. Whatever the value and merits of the Church Socialist - and they were considerable - the financial cloud which had appeared so early never lifted: indeed, with the passage of time it became more menacing. The story of the latter days of the magazine belongs to this study's third part which is concerned with the decline of the League. In brief, however, by 1918 the magazine had become a bi-monthly production, by 1920 it was seriously suggested that it should be discontinued[54], and by the end of 1921 publication ceased with the negotiation of an inset in the Commonwealth to serve as the League's official organ thereafter.[55] In terms of periodicals the League then had

52. Ibid., August 1912, League Notes.

53. Ibid., September 1912, Note from Secretary of Literature Committee.

54. C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes, 12th April 1920 (Stacy papers, University of Leeds).

55. Ibid., 19th October 1921.

come full cycle: in the very early days it had been grateful for the attentions of the Commonwealth, and despite much subsequent enterprise and much criticism of the views of Christian Socialists of a different hue[56], it was grateful in its closing years to find a journalistic resting place in that periodical.

In the League's First Report the Secretary remarked that it had been suggested that the society should publish some tracts or pamphlets. The League was fortunate in possessing men with a penchant for producing such literature in Adderley, Bull, Cecil Chesterton and Noel: Adderley had written a highly successful popular novel with a Socialist theme[57], Bull was already active in the religious manuals field[58], and Noel had been introduced to the world and work of Fleet Street by the Chesterton brothers.[59] Later, others took up this work. Pamphlets and leaflets constitute a second major category in C.S.L. publications. A batch of three - the Halfpenny Series - had appeared by 1909[60]: the first from Cecil Chesterton on The Basis of Socialism and two from Noel, Socialism and the Kingdom of God and Objections to Socialism from Gospels etc., small in format and consisting of some dozen densely packed pages. By the beginning of 1910 Adderley felt that it was extremely important that the League should have a penny pamphlet on Socialism and Atheism.[61] It duly appeared - the first in the Penny Series - with the title Is Socialism Atheism? A Prejudiced Answer by James Adderley. In June 1912 a

56. See e.g. Church Socialist, February 1912, Editorial and article, 'Some Church Socialists and their Views - II - Conrad Noel', for outspoken criticism of C.S.U.

57. Stephen Remarx (1893) ran to twelve editions (James Adderley, In Slums and Society [1916] pp.168-172).

58. Collections of manuals in Archives, Community of the Resurrection.

59. Noel, op.cit., ch.XI.

60. The pamphlets bear no date but details of the constitution and officers of the C.S.L. given on inside cover indicate publication after summer of 1908 and they are advertised as new leaflets in Labour Leader, January 15th, 1909. A fourth in this series - Materialism by Donald Hole - was issued in 1912 (Church Socialist, September 1912).

61. Letter - W.H. Paine (Hon.Sec. C.S.L.) to George Lansbury (Vice-Chairman C.S.L.), dated January 21st 1910 (Lansbury Papers, L.S.E)
Adderley was willing to write the pamphlet. Paine was asking for Lansbury's approval of the idea.

second title in this series was announced - The Socialist and the Church by C. Stuart Smith.[62] Three months later two more penny pamphlets appeared - The What and Why of Socialism by N.E. Egerton Swann and Catholicism and Socialism by G.H. Ten Bruggenkate[63]. The League's Annual Conference in May 1913 resolved that a series of short leaflets should be issued for propaganda purposes.[64] These were produced by Adderley and bore the titles Why are you a Christian?, Why we are Churchmen and Socialists, Answers to Christian Fears about Socialism, Bible Texts quoted against Socialism and Socialism and the Seven Sacraments[65]. There was also a leaflet describing the aims of the C.S.L. By the end of 1913, then, the League had a veritable battery of propaganda publications. This equipment was brought to bear upon the 1913 Church Congress to good effect: "seven hundred pamphlets (including the Church Socialist) were sold, leaflets distributed and the League brought to the notice of the great majority of those who attended the Congress. Truly", continued the Church Socialist's reporter, "the experience of presenting day after day Socialist handbills to Bishops and other dignitaries is both rare and refreshing".[66] The flow of propaganda from the C.S.L. dried up with the war, but production was resumed afterwards with pamphlets from the pen of Paul Bull - Christ or Anti-Christ, David and Goliath, The Church and the League, and Catholicism and Socialism - described as "indispensable four-page leaflets for all public meetings and propaganda purposes."[67] Advertisements for all these pamphlets on the cover of successive issues of the Church Socialist point out that they are signed by their authors and that each writer,

62. Church Socialist, Note to branches and groups.
63. Ibid., September 1912.
64. Ibid., May 1913, inset giving Agenda; June 1913, Conference Report.
65. Copies in Stacy papers, University of Leeds.
66. Church Socialist, November 1913, The C.S.L. at the Church Congress.
67. Advertisement on covers of Church Socialist, November-December 1920 etc.

therefore, is allowed considerable freedom in the matter of interpretation. Clearly in this sizeable volume of production there was an element of repetition - both Ten Bruggenkate and Bull produced pamphlets bearing the title 'Catholicism and Socialism' and there is some overlap in subject matter between Chesterton's The Basis of Socialism and Egerton Swann's The What and Why of Socialism and between Noel's pamphlets and some of Adderley's leaflets, though the former are vastly more substantial. It is, however, possible to discern a trend in the subject matter of the pamphlets. The Scriptural content of the two early pamphlets by Noel[68] later gives way to a greater interest in Catholicism and the Church - a change of emphasis which corresponded to developments within the League in general. Adderley's leaflets embrace both aspects: after general observations on Christianity and Socialism his titles pass to Bible Texts quoted against Socialism and thence to Socialism and the Seven Sacraments.

As well as general propaganda literature the League also published occasional pronouncements and manifestos in relation to specific events and issues. The Labour unrest of 1912 led to the League's presenting a 'Petition' to the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury[69] and a 'Remonstrance' to the Archbishop of Canterbury[70], both subsequently issued in leaflet form. It continued to concern itself with this area. Following the report of the Archbishop's Fifth Committee of Inquiry, published in 1918, it published a pamphlet prepared, in conjunction

68. Noel's second pamphlet, Socialism and the Kingdom of God has two sections, viz. 1. Jewish Scriptures 2. Gospels. His third pamphlet has sections as follows:- 1. The Poor always with you 2. The Parables 3. With Mine Own 4. Dividing Up 5. The Tribute Money.

69. The Petition of the Church Socialist League to the Upper House of the Convocation of ..... (Copy in Noel papers, University of Hull. By a procedural oversight it proved impossible to present the petition also to the Convocation of York, as had been intended.) Text also printed in Church Socialist, March 1912 and availability as a leaflet advertised.

70. The 'Remonstrance' was presented on April 12th 1912. Copy in Noel papers, University of Hull. Church Socialist, May 1912, also printed text of Remonstrance and announced that it was being issued for signature by Church people, with a view to its presentation by deputation or otherwise to the Diocesan Bishops.

with the Student Christian Movement by Reckitt and Swann, with the title Christianity and Industrial Problems: Questions for Discussion (based on the Archbishops' Committee's Report).[71] In 1921 came a manifesto entitled The Lock-out in the Mining Industry[72]: the members of the Executive Committee who were the signatories included R.H. Tawney of the Coal Industry Commission. Predictably, it deplored the current situation and called for a system of communal ownership and public control. The resolution was given wide distribution. Acknowledgements were received from the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, the Transport Workers' Federation, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishops of London, Winchester, Chelmsford and Barking, the Labour Party, the Parliamentary Labour Party, the Minister of Labour, the Board of Trade and the Prime Minister. Ten thousand copies were printed, the bulk of them paid for and distributed by the branches and some new members were added to the roll.[73] In the following year, 1922, the Executive Committee issued another manifesto:- The Church and Industrial Morality - The Challenge of the Federation of British Industries to the Church : An Appeal to the Bishops, Clergy and Laity.[74] This publication was prompted by the declaration in a memorandum of the F.B.I. which stated, in connection with labour costs, that "the real and ultimate test must always be what industry can bear": this statement was seen as an uncompromising challenge to the principle frequently asserted by Anglican bodies that "the first charge upon any industry must be the proper maintenance of the labourer."[75] The war and its aftermath inspired further publications: in 1916 the League addressed to the Bishops a memorial on National Service which urged conscription of wealth as well as

71. Advertised in information leaflet on C.S.L. n.d. (Stacy papers, University of Leeds) and on cover of issues of Church Socialist.
72. Copy made available to author by The Revd. P. Mayhew.
73. C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes, 27th June 1921 (Stacy papers, University of Leeds).
74. Copy in Stacy Papers, University of Leeds.
75. The Appeal gives details of F.B.I. and Church statements.

conscription of life[76], and Egerton Swann wrote a three-halfpenny pamphlet entitled Reconstruction - on Rock or Sand?[77] The Church of England's own response to the war - The National Mission of Repentance and Hope launched by the Archbishop of Canterbury with the exhortation that the Church should stand forth as 'a witness before the nation at a time of unexampled crisis" - inspired the League to produce a substantial pamphlet, The National Mission Message of the Church Socialist League, which was published in 1916. The League felt that it could best play its part in this venture "not by coming forward with specific 'proposals' or cut-and-dried schemes of reform, but by seeking to render more explicit the fundamental implications which are bound up with the project of such a Mission of Witness as that to which the Church has been summoned by its leaders".[78] Fifteen hundred copies were sent out to a selected list of the clergy, an action made possible "through the generosity and kindness of a few of our members".[79] The Hon. Sec. of the financially hard-pressed Executive Committee declared that there were many ways in which it could hit many good nails squarely on the head if only others would follow that example.[80] General Elections also prompted the League to produce manifestos.[81] A publication which fits neither into the Category of general propaganda nor that of occasional manifestos was Christianity and Socialism - A Syllabus for Study Circles, prepared for the C.S.L. by Egerton Swann and Reckitt, published in January 1916, and extensively advertised thereafter on the covers of the Church Socialist until the expiry of that magazine. This pamphlet, described as "twelve articles on the Faith and its relation to Social issues, with bibliographies"[82], was a substantial and serious production, treating its subject matter in some depth.[83]

76. Text published in Church Socialist, February 1916.

77. Advertised in information leaflet on C.S.L., n.d. (Stacy papers, University of Leeds).

78. p.4. Copy of pamphlet in Stacy papers, University of Leeds.

79. Church Socialist, November 1916, Secretarial.

80. Ibid.

81. The C.S.L. Manifesto, The General Election 1910 (Jan.) was published in the New Age, January 6th 1910, p.219. Copy of C.S.L. Manifesto - General Election, December 1918, in Stacy papers, University of Leeds.

82. See footnote 76.

Pamphlets and leaflets from pressure groups and specialist societies tend often to be superficial and rhetorical, to assert rather than to analyse, to indict rather than to inform and are, as such, rightly consigned to the category of literary ephemera. The productions of the C.S.L. cannot be so lightly dismissed. The output was varied and does not easily lend itself to short judgements based on generalisations. Certainly it was all written from a standpoint of commitment - Adderley's pamphlet on Socialism and atheism recognises the fact in describing itself as 'a prejudiced answer' - and in general the aim was to convince the writer of the rightness of that standpoint and persuade him to adopt it. All tended towards the identification of Socialism of one species or another with Christianity. Within that framework, however, there was a good deal of variation. These publications differed considerably in scale and scope from one page or four page leaflets to small manuals or booklets consisting of several pages of densely packed print. Some were slight in content, superficial in treatment and popular in tone, emitting the flavour of Hyde Park Corner or the hustings - Adderley and Bull were, perhaps, natural pamphleteers and Adderley's leaflets and Bull's pamphlets are accomplished and effective examples of this genre. They were designed as popular propaganda and, presumably, made no pretentions to be otherwise. Although some of the weightier works were less declamatory in style some were, nevertheless, homiletic in approach and many were written with a partisan vigour and vitality. However, though none could be regarded as works of erudition and their source and standpoint belied any claims for them to be viewed as essays in objective analysis, the more substantial of them revealed some penetrating perspectives and gave to their subject matter serious treatment which made some intellectual demands on their readers, presenting arguments for consideration rather than mere assertions for consumption. Particularly, perhaps, was this true of the syllabus for study circles, Christianity and Socialism, drawn up by Reckitt and Swann, and to a lesser extent, The National Mission Message of the Church Socialist League, also, according to Widdrington, the work of Maurice Reckitt, who was at that time editor of the Church

Socialist.[84] Indeed, if, among C.S.L. pamphleteers, Adderley and Bull represented the 'popular' end of the spectrum, Reckitt and Egerton Swann may be said to have represented the 'intellectual' end. At least one pamphlet was a reprint of articles that had appeared in the Church Socialist, which, whilst not a scholarly journal, certainly did not aim at a plebeian readership. Egerton Swann's The What and Why of Socialism was a collection in pamphlet form of a series of articles which had appeared in the Church Socialist in 1912 on successive clauses of the League's definition of Socialism, whilst Social Credit and Christian Values by Reckitt, Stacy and Egerton Swann[85] was a reprint of a report to the League published in the March 1923 issue of Commonwealth, a journal to which the same judgement would apply. Even Ten Bruggenkate's pamphlet, Catholicism and Socialism, though unquestionably written with partisan passion, is worthy of serious attention as giving perhaps the fullest and most solid exposition of 'sacramental socialism' from a C.S.L. member. Certain themes recur frequently in all this literature - the indictment of the capitalist system, the provision of 'basic information' on Socialism, sometimes almost to the exclusion of explicit references to religion,[86] the sweeping away of common misrepresentations and misconceptions about it, particularly in its relationship to

84. This pamphlet gives no indication of authorship but is attributed to Reckitt by Widdrington writing in Commonwealth, July 1927, p.222.

85. A note at the end of the pamphlet states:- 'Canon Hewlett Johnson has assisted in the preparation of this Report, and, though no longer a member of the C.S.L., desires to associate himself with the signatories in support of it'. Copy of pamphlet in Stacy papers, Hayward Collection, in possession of author.

86. E.g. Egerton Swann's pamphlet The What and Why of Socialism, where religion is explicitly mentioned only in the last paragraph which is itself separated from sixth and final section of the pamphlet by a line of asterisks. After two references identifying Christianity with 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' and with the principle of public service (the principle of the Cross) not the principle of private gain (the principle of Judas), Swann writes:- "... the religious case for Socialism is presented more fully in other tracts in this series. Here it is enough to point out that the great Bishop of Oxford has stated that it is the business of the Church to identify herself both with the Socialist indictment of existing society and with the positive ethical ideal of Socialism." The Bishop of Oxford at the time was Charles Gore.

Christianity and compatability with it. We find these characteristics especially evident in the earlier writings where the authors often presupposed ignorance on the part of the readers about the realities of Socialism and felt it necessary to prove that it was actually possible for a person to be both a Christian and a Socialist. Looking at the pamphlets as a whole we can, with fairness, apply to the whole range Widdrington's judgement on the 'industrial' items:- "Some of the manifestos contained admirable statements of fundamental Christian principles, and were excellent propaganda. Others of them were of merely ephemeral interest."[87]

The pamphleteering and journalistic activities of League members were not, of course, confined to items published by the organisation. Adderley and Bull were both editors of series of religious manuals. Adderley's enterprise was entitled Modern Church Manuals and the eighth in this series of 32 page booklets was called Socialism and Religion: An Appeal to Churchmen[88], and written by Claude Stuart Smith, at the time Organising Secretary of the C.S.L. Bull edited Manuals for the Million. Four of these, all written by League members - Socialism and the Church and Urgent Church Reform by Bull himself, Lewis Donaldson's Socialism and the Christian Faith and A History of Socialism by Ruth Kenyon - were regularly advertised on the covers of the Church Socialist: the League was able to supply them 'by special arrangement with the Editor'. Bull and another League member, Frere, also edited Mirfield Manuals. There were over fifty booklets in the series.[89] The titles suggest a considerable variation

87. Commonwealth, July 1927, p.220. Of the 'industrial' manifestos Widdrington writes:- "These manifestos were not welcomed by the Bishops, and their signatories were marked down as 'dangerous' men."

88. Copy in Stacy papers, Hayward collection. The pamphlet bore a note giving the author's address and stating that further particulars of the C.S.L. could be obtained from him.

89. Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield, has copies of Mirfield Manuals and Manuals for the Million.

in style and approach - ranging from The Communion Book for Lads[90] by Bull to Sutton's Godly Meditations upon the most Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, by Christopher Sutton, D.D., 1668, edited by Rev. W.H. Frere, D.D.[91] Most of them are of a devotional or liturgical nature but amongst Bull's considerable output - he wrote at least seventeen and edited another - is one entitled What is Socialism?[92] The pamphlet has two sections - the first on 'What is Individualism?', the second on 'What is Socialism?' Only at the end does Bull turn explicitly to religion with two pages on 'Christianity and Socialism' followed by two on 'The Church and Socialism'. "Individualism" declares Bull "is based on the principle of Cain - 'Am I my brother's keeper?'" Bull finds that the principles of Socialism are the best expression in the sphere of economics of the teaching of Christ.[93] Under the same title, What is Socialism? Bull also produced a leaflet in a series called Seeds of Truth.[94] Its tone was popular, indeed patronising. "Many good people are quite shocked", he begins "when I tell them I am a Socialist. I am quite shocked when they tell me that they are not. Let us see what Socialism means." From Bull's leaflet we find that it is not anarchy, not atheism, not a foolish dream and not revolutionary: it is evolutionary, aims not to destroy but to liberate, is based not on selfishness but on Brotherhood, and involves equality of opportunity, common ownership of land and capital and co-operation instead of competition. Again, he ends with a paragraph on Christian Socialism, stressing the 'Brotherhood of Man' under the 'Fatherhood of God'. Bull's pamphleteering activities extended to the production of yet another series, The People's Papers: these were doctrinal in content.[95] Other C.S.L. men writing tracts

90. No.37 in the series.

91. No.53

92. No.29

93. p.28

94. No.26 in the series. Copy in archives of Community of Resurrection, Mirfield.

95. Archives, Community of Resurrection. Bull's manuals were published by Richard Jackson, a Leeds firm (as were Adderley's) and Mowbrays, the London religious publishing house.

not published by the organisation included Paul Stacy, who in March 1907 produced a sixteen page pamphlet entitled The Socialist Meaning of the Church's Facts - A friendly word to Christians who are not Socialists and Socialists who are not Christians[96], and Conrad Noel, amongst whose writings was Socialism and Church Tradition, No.17 in a series called Pass on Pamphlets published by the Clarion Press.[97] Noel was a prolific writer for newspapers and magazines contributing, for instance, to the Christian Commonwealth, for which he wrote Church Socialist notes on a regular basis, the Christian Socialist, Commonwealth, the Daily News, the Daily Chronicle, London Opinion, the Clarion, Justice, New Age - even Health and Strength. Many of these articles were not, of course, on Christian or any other kind of Socialism - they included such diverse subjects as Ibsen, music halls and 'the bodily desires' - but a good many were, and in several contributions Noel is described as 'Hon. Organiser of the C.S.L.'[98] The League was also mentioned or even specifically described and advertised in a number of these 'free-lance' pamphlets[99]: it derived a good deal of promotional benefit from the outside writings of its members.

"Our appeal to the intellect of the Church" observed Stuart Smith in 1912, "has been mainly in the form of penny pamphlets. No doubt they have a very useful and necessary place in our propaganda, but until we can produce books that will rank with Lux Mundi, for example, we shall not find our

96. Printed and published by Marmaduke Pilling, Central Hall, Elland. Copy in archives of Community of Resurrection.

97. N.d. but after the Pan Anglican Congress of 1908, to which reference is made, and before October 1910 when Stuart Smith took over as Organising Secretary of the League - the pamphlet describes the author as Hon. Organiser, Church Socialist League. Copy in Groves papers, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick.

98. Volumes of newscuttings, Conrad Noel papers, University of Hull; Groves papers, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick; Noel, op.cit., ch.XI.

99. E.g. Manuals for the Million No.12, Socialism and the Christian Faith by F. Lewis Donaldson, p.32.

intellectual footing in the Church. It is not enough to write brilliant articles in periodicals; they are useful as stimulants, but we need intellectual food." He remarked, in a rather barbed comment, that the League's "more brilliant intellectuals"[100] might occupy themselves with "satisfying the hunger for Socialist literature that is felt by deans and dons."[101] Officially the League never sponsored such a volume. However, in 1922 there appeared a collection of essays bearing the title The Return of Christendom by 'a Group of Churchmen'. Seven of the nine essayists seem to have been members of the League[102] and prestigious figures in Gore and G.K. Chesterton furnished an Introduction and an Epilogue, respectivcly. The book was a commercial success, but it was no Lux Mundi: its obvious defects in form and content have been pointed out by critics and readily acknowledged by at least one contributor, Maurice Reckitt, the only member of the group to contribute more than one essay.[103] The book was, moreover, a harbinger of the League's demise: the essayists belonged to that school of thought who wished to transform the C.S.L. and who were to be instrumental in setting up the successor body, the League of the Kingdom of God.

## LITURGICAL AND DEVOTIONAL

The first of the 'Methods' set out in the League's formularies was "to cultivate by the regular use of prayer and sacraments, the life of brotherhood"[104]: no doubt

100. Church Socialist, December 1912. Some Church Socialists and their Views-X-The Rev. C. Stuart Smith.

101. Ibid.

102. The exceptions were A.J. Carlyle of Oxford (certainly) and Niles Carpenter of Harvard (probably).

103. Interview, author with Reckitt, 30th December 1976; Reckitt, As It Happened, p.261.

104. Optimist, October 1906, 'A Notable Gathering', Form 1.

devotional activities would have developed naturally in this organisation even without specific injunction in the founding charter, though from time to time the League was reminded of the importance of this part of its activity.[105] Its importance was recognised in the institutional reflex action of appointing a sub-committee: as has been noted, the London branch established a Devotional Committee.

Of the League members, Stacy was particularly prominent in his insistence on the centrality of the devotional element.[106] In an article in the Church Socialist he makes a plea for the primacy of prayer.[107] Stacy drew attention to the role of intercession in the Missionary movement. He pointed out that in 1872 there had been established an Annual Day of Intercession for Missions at St Andrew's Tide. The result was soon felt, he declared, in the offer of more men and money. In 1898 a little quarterly intercession paper had appeared: at first the circulation was numbered in hundreds but now it stood at 120,000. Missionary zeal, he asserted, was directly connected to the volume of prayer. "We are CHURCH Socialists", he said "and prayer is our first and greatest work. It will be one of the best things that the C.S.L. has ever achieved when it has made this question of prayer its first and foremost function". He had three suggestions to make: a daily bearing in mind of the League, for example, at the recitation of the Lord's Prayer, a minute of concentrated thought on the League and its work at the daily Eucharist (presumably this suggestion could be followed by only a limited number of members) and the sending to him of subjects for intercession.[108]

105. E.g. Church Socialist, December 1912, p.5.

106. In his G.S.M. days he had produced a booklet Notes on the Lord's Service for that society (Copies in Stacy papers, Hayward Collection). He was sometime Hon. Sec. of the G.S.M. in Bristol. (ibid.).

107. Church Socialist, July 1914, The Arm of God.

108. Ibid.

Stacy's suggestion of a quarterly intercession paper was to be taken up and to him was to fall the task of compiling it through the years.[109] The provision of a special Day of Intercession had, however, been made some four years before the publication of the Stacy article to which we have referred. The League's Annual Conference in 1910 had resolved that an Annual Day of Intercession be observed by all branches of the League[110] and three years later the Annual Conference decided to extend the intercessionary period and add an element of self-denial - the week beginning on the Sunday before Advent was to be observed as a week of self-denial and prayer for the work of the League.[111] Clearly, however, Stacy felt that more could be made of these observances. The Guild of St Matthew had a specific office for recitation at its meetings: the League does not seem to have followed this practice but early in its life it published a booklet, Church Socialist League - Prayers and Hymns.[112] It contained an Invocation, the Creed, the petition 'Lord have mercy', the Lord's Prayer, two prayers from 1578, one of which seemed particularly apt for Christian Socialist use[113], and nine hymns, which included Edward Carpenter's 'England, Arise' and Ebenezer Elliot's 'When Wilt Thou Save Thy People', both from the Labour Church Book, and 'The Day of the Lord' by Charles Kingsley:

109. Some copies of C.S.L. Prayer Leaflets in Stacy papers, University of Leeds and Groves papers, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick.

110. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1910, Report of Conference at Birmingham.

111. Church Socialist, May 1913, inset on Conference Agenda; ibid., June 1913. Report of Conference.

112. Copy in Stacy papers, University of Leeds and Hayward Collection. Printed by T. Summerbell (Summerbell died in 1910 and there seems to be no evidence in other C.S.L. literature of the firm carrying on trading under that name thereafter).

113. 'Lord ... whose gifts art by goodness and free favour made common to all men but which we by our covetousness and distrust have made private and peculiar, correct thou the thing which our iniquity hath put out of order and let Thy goodness supply that which our niggardliness hath plucked away ...'

it was a short collection, not stridently Socialist in tone.[114] The Annual Conference of 1913 also resolved that a short prayer be drawn up for the private use of members of the League, each member to be supplied with a copy for regular use.[115]

A number of members published devotional material, with some tincture of Socialism, other than under the auspices of the League. In 1896, at the request of the Council of the G.S.M., Adderley had drawn up Social Prayers: A Manual of Intercession for the use of Christian Citizens.[116]

114. The tone is mild, for example, when contrasted with a liturgical item in the Stacy papers (Hayward Collection) entitled 'Litany - To be said by all Socialists and those in sympathy with Democracy, during the prayer for the King or King and Royal Family'. It contains the following petitions:-

"From the subtle and enervating influence of our earthly King -
Good Lord, deliver us
From the evil and corrupting influences surrounding the Throne -
Good Lord etc.
From all sycophancy and degrading servility to the King and Royal Family -
Good Lord etc.
From the Land and Money Lords who live on the blood of Thy People -
Good Lord etc.
Give strength to the Common People to assert their right to a fair share of the things Thou hast provided for the good of all men -
We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord
Give the People strength to withstand the allurements of those in high places to fetter the hands of the workers of this land -
We beseech Thee etc.
Open the eyes of the Common People to the cause of their misery and degradation -
We beseech Thee etc."

The leaflet is printed, n.d. (reign of Edward VII probably), and not surprisingly perhaps, gives no indication of origin except the initials 'R.L.'.

115. See footnote 111.

116. Occasional Paper of the Guild of St Matthew No.4, October 28th 1896. The Manual was recommended for use by Guild members during Advent. Adderley remarks in his book In Slums and Society (1916) that he "felt very much honoured when, during the coal strike, the Archbishops (though without acknowledgment) stole some of my own compositions from a little book called Social Prayers." (p.281).

The clergy of St Philip's, Newcastle upon Tyne, compiled Songs for the City of God for use at Sunday afternoon lectures in the church: among the contents were items from the works of Kipling, William Morris, Matthew Arnold and Swinburne and the publication received some commendation in the Manchester Guardian and the Yorkshire Post.[117] Gilbert Clive Binyon was also active in this field and in Prayers for the City of God he produced a substantial volume of devotions, considered by Stuart Smith, writing in 1918, as "perhaps the greatest gift to the Church that any member of the Church Socialist League has yet made".[118] In a rather eclectic mass of material, prayers and writings from Christian Socialists - among them Scott Holland, Westcott, Gore, Dearmer, Adderley, Hancock, Kingsley and Maurice - are prominent. The book also contains the Litany of the C.S.U.[119], whilst a section on intercessions for a week, based on clauses in the Lord's Prayer, gives an outlet for social concern under the petition 'Give us this day our daily bread' - the 'Labour of Production and Distribution', the 'Emancipation of the Workers', 'Social Justice', and 'Guidance and Power in Social Reconstruction' are among the headings set down. The volume also contains extracts from A Manual of Prayer for Private Use during the General Election of 1910, a frontispiece photograph of the centre panel of the sanctuary mural paintings of Donaldson's Church together with his commentary on the Labour theme depicted therein, and the Magnificat is printed and claimed for Christian Socialism. There is, however, much in the

117. Noel papers, University of Hull contain press cuttings from these newspapers giving information on the contents of the collection. No dates given. Noel was curate of the parish from 1898-1900, Moll being his Vicar.

118. Published under this title in 1915, by Longmans Green. Originally published by C.W. Baylis of Evesham under the title Adveniat Regnum, n.d. but not after 1912 - Stuart Smith in Church Socialist, December 1912, p.5, writes:- "a work like Mr Binyon's Adveniat Regnum should have been welcomed by our members but seems to be little used", April-May 1918, p.45.

119. Dearmer drew up a Litany of Labour for the C.S.U. N. Dearmer, The Life of Percy Dearmer (1940), p.186.

volume that has no obvious link with Socialism or even social reform and there is little which Christians who were not Socialists would find unpalatable. In 1918 there was printed for Binyon a card entitled Socialist Prayers[120], which despite the use of much traditional prayer language and phraseology, struck a more contemporary note in its five prayers - in the section entitled 'A Daily Prayer and Intercession' there is commendation of "those who voice the needs of the poor and destitute ... on public bodies, on committees" and a petition that the praying Socialist may "never be an utopian dreamer, nor yet immersed in details", whilst 'A Prayer for the World' asks God to "cast out the individualism and group-egoism which make the world a scene of conflict and confusion and thwart alike the solidarity of man and the individuality of men", and looks for the arrival of a new social order where each will receive according to his needs and contribute according to his powers. The final prayer, 'A Commendation to God of the Socialist Movement' presses Socialist formulae into intercessory use more directly than in most items in this genre, as the following extract shows:-

> "We bring before thee our work for the emancipation of the workers of the world from capitalist domination; for the collective ownership of the means of life; for the expropriation of the idle rich; for the transformation of industry into production and distribution for the good of all; for the spread of education and whatsocver tends to a fuller and truer human life.
> O Lord arise, help us, and deliver us, for thy Name's sake; put down the mighty from their seat and exalt them of low degree; give liberty, equality, fraternity, O Lord, thou Lover of mankind."

120. Copy in Stacy papers, Hayward Collection. Notice about the card in Binyon papers, University of Leeds, states that it was first printed in 1918, re-issued in 1922 and that it was to be obtained from the Fabian Bookshop. The card itself states that it is to be obtained from the printer in Oxford.

At the branch level the devotional side of the League's life helped to create and establish the focus of the branch in a particular parish, since in the case of Holy Communion ecclesiastical plant and personnel were required and moreover it was desirable to have such observances on a regular footing. Branch Notes, the London Branch Calendar and League Notes in the pages of the C.S.L. periodicals provide evidence of the devotional activities, though the picture is probably incomplete since routine and unspectacular events do not clamour to be reported.[121] The intensity of activity varied with time - there was, as we have seen, occasionally a 'drive' on this side of the League's life - and place, some branch leaders showing a particular commitment to it. At Elland for instance where Stacy was curate, corporate communions seem to have been important from the beginning. The League's 'Method 1' enjoined the use of the sacraments and a celebration of Holy Communion, with its communal aspect and its significant and symbolic use of material things was pregnant with possibilities of social teaching and the creation of group cohesion.[122]

In the larger parishes, particularly those with a more explicitly Catholic churchmanship there might be a monthly C.S.L. corporate communion, as at St Peter's Coventry[123]: elsewhere it might be quarterly or in connection with special seasons. As well as corporate communions, branches would organise meetings for intercession, and in some cases occasional 'quiet afternoons', 'quiet days' and even the odd retreat. In Lent and Advent there would sometimes be a series of special addresses for C.S.L. members. Usually these activities would not be rigidly confined to members, and from time to time more broadly based devotional activities would be mounted. At St Agnes, Bristol, for instance, the leading C.S.L. centre in the city, there was a Labour Church Parade each year from 1913 to 1917 on the Sunday nearest to May Day, with Rashleigh addressing the congregation on themes such as 'The Ideals of the Labour

121. Optimist, Church Socialist Quarterly and Church Socialist, passim, for this section unless otherwise indicated.

122. The 'theology' of the League is considered in the next section in this chapter.

123. Letter from Mrs M. Richards to author 28th June 1977.

Movement', 'Freedom of Conscience' and 'A New Earth' and the collection going to a specifically Labour destination, normally the I.L.P. and, on one occasion, to the 'Tramway Men on Strike via the I.L.P.'[124]

In this devotional sphere certain elements stand out as having special significance. All Catholic Christians give a central place to the Eucharist and indeed different groups often tend to invest it with a significance reflecting their own particular standpoint or at least to draw out and stress those aspects most congruous to their thinking: the Anglican Christian Socialists were no exception and brief allusion has been made to the social content which they saw in this sacrament. The Magnificat, too, had a special place in these circles. Noel in an article written in 1907 "to explain the origins and objects of the League and to give some record of the progress of Socialism within the Church of England" declares that the Magnificat is "the Marseillaise of the Liturgy".[125] Binyon draws his devotional volume, Prayers for the City of God, to a climax with the Magnificat which he prefaces by a passage from former leading G.S.M. member, Thomas Hancock:- "The Blessed Virgin Mary ... sings of the social revolution not as about to come down from heaven, and to occupy ages in the coming, but as having actually come. The Magnificat is the inspired summary of the tendency and direction of the future history of the humankind"![126] The verse from this canticle - 'He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek' - is clearly echoed in the prayer already quoted from Binyon's Socialist Prayers, and the following verse - 'He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away' - with its powerful combination of ethical righteousness and eschatological triumph struck a ready

124. St Agnes, Bristol, Register of Services (Bristol City Record Office)

125. C. Noel (Hon.Org.Sec.), The Socialist League of the Church of England. Newspaper cutting (n.d., no identification) in Noel papers, University of Hull. From internal evidence article written around time of Scarborough conference.

126. Section V (iv)

chord among Church Socialists with whose aspirations it so clearly harmonised. Hancock took as the title for one of his sermons, 'The Magnificat as the Hymn of the Universal Social Revolution'.[127] Church Socialists also stressed the social dimensions of the Lord's Prayer. "Percy Dearmer points out in the latest Fabian Tract", writes Noel "that daily repetition of the Pater Noster should remind Churchmen of the essentially social character of our religion. In the Lord's Prayer 'not one of the ten points is individual; all are social, and three of the petitions are distinctly what some people would call worldly while the three extra clauses are specially inserted to ensure the social application of the rest.'"[128] In the Church's calendar the C.S.L. had a special attachment for the season of Advent with its associations of the coming of the Kingdom: we have seen that the week beginning on the Sunday before Advent was set aside as a week of prayer and self-denial for the League and on an earlier occasion Advent Sunday had been suggested as an appropriate day for Corporate Communion for the League.[129] In the summer of 1912 the Organising Secretary, in floating the idea of holding a number of eight day missions simultaneously in major centres up and down the country, suggested the first week in Advent as an appropriate time for such activity.[130]

Though non-members would, of course, be able to attend Church services held publicly on the League's behalf, its devotional activities were normally an 'inside' or domestic event. However, in 1916, the year of the National Mission, the Devotional Committee of the

127. In Hancock's son, The Revd. Aidan Hancock, the CSL had a 'second generation' Christian Socialist (Letter: Aidan Hancock to Widdrington, 1st December 1903 - Davey material, on loan to author). Stacy papers (Hayward collection) contain two letters from Thomas Hancock to Stacy. For a modern study of Hancock see M.B. Reckitt (ed) For Christ and the People (1968), Chapter on Hancock by Stephen Yeo.

128. Noel, loc.cit.

129. Church Socialist, December 1912, League Notes.

130. Ibid., June 1912, C. Stuart Smith: Some Possible Methods of Work.

London branch decided by way of innovation to hold an outdoor public service in Victoria Park. Robert Woodifield, who was later to become something of an expert on Noel's theological position[131], gave an account of the event in a letter to the Church Socialist.[132] The service seems to have developed into a devotional and doctrinal 'tour de force'. C.S.L. 'comrades' from various parts of London supported the venture. The 'John Bull' banner and the banners of local groups were on display. A large crowd gathered before the service began. Woodifield stated that "it was generally considered that the service was a great success and that such a service is far more effectual than a mere propaganda meeting which consists of speaking only." He goes on to describe the content of the service:-

> "The prayers, the lessons - which were taken from Isaiah and St. James, - the hymns, and above all our Lady's revolutionary hymn, the Magnificat (before which the Chairman drew attention to its revolutionary meaning, which, in spite of its being so obvious, the conventional churchgoer entirely misses) all expressed in 'devotional action', so to speak, the essentially social, democratic and revolutionary Catholicism expounded by Comrade Purkis in his address. From that point of view the speaker simply and clearly sketched the significance of the Trinity, the Incarnation and Atonement, the Church, the Sacraments, and that friendship between the living, the departed and the triumphant Saints implied by the words 'the Communion of Saints', and the intimate connection between these Truths, vitally held, and social and economic revolution."

One is not sure whether to be struck more by the boldness, stamina and virtuosity of the speaker who, in one meeting, "simply and clearly sketched the significance" of most of

131. Reckitt (ed), op.cit., Woodifield on Noel.

132. September 1916, Correspondence.

the major Christian doctrines and related them to 'social and economic revolution', or by the feats of spiritual and intellectual digestion his hearers were required to perform! Woodifield and his colleagues, however, did not see the Victoria Park meeting as an isolated liturgical extravaganza: he reported that the Devotional Committee wanted to arrange a series of such services and he hoped that branches in other parts of the country would do likewise.

The outdoor devotional meeting which Woodifield described was, as we have seen, regarded as an alternative to a 'secular' propaganda meeting: the Church House Demonstration on Easter Friday, 1912, however, saw 'devotion' not as an alternative to propaganda and protest but as an integral element in the total presentation. The programme for the event[133] reveals a curious mixture of the liturgical and the political - such, perhaps as only a body bearing the title Church Socialist League could mount. In form the meeting seemed to have been constructed along the lines of a 'club sandwich': organ recital, hymns, creed and prayers were followed by Chairman's address, proposal and seconding of a resolution, and then came another hymn, during which a collection was taken, followed by further speeches before the presentation of the resolution to the meeting, scheduled to take place two hours after the commencement! The event was wound up by a final hymn, the formation of a procession, headed by processional cross, to deliver the resolution to its destination, and the blessing. Perhaps in this event we see the most complete integration on the 'liturgical' plane of the spiritual and political elements of the League, whose essential unity the organisation existed to proclaim.

133. Church Socialist League- London Branch. Church House Demonstration, Easter Friday, April 12th 1912. Copy in Noel papers, University of Hull.

THEOLOGY

Devotional and liturgical actions are, or should be, the outward expression of an underlying theology which informs them and acts as their basis and inspiration. The League's activities in this field were however, of a sporadic nature, often, indeed the reflection of individual initiative: while they provide clues, they do not reveal a system. One cannot, in fact, speak accurately of 'the theology of the League'. As we have seen in the first part of this study, the League emerged within a tradition as a response to a particular situation, and given that situation, those who were primarily responsible for its foundation at the Morecambe Conference took pains to avoid committing the new organisation to any particular theological or ecclesiastical stance. We have noted that the Christian Socialist stream at the beginning of the century had been fed by two main tributaries - the 'social theology' derived from the teachings of F.D. Maurice and his Broad Church successors such as Westcott, and the Catholic theology springing from the Oxford Movement, with Lux Mundi as an identifiable point of confluence. The milieu of Christian Socialism was the Liberal Catholicism which had emerged. The 'second generation' Christian Socialists took then their spiritual dynamics from the catholicism of the Tractarians and their social concern from the Broad Church Maurician tradition: they gave to the former a relevance and observable purpose and to the latter a sense of historical drive and destiny. At this time, however, Catholicism, Liberal or otherwise, though a feature of significance[134] was not a mass movement within the nation or even within the Church of England. "While the clergy as a whole, and the more militant laity" observed Masterman "have been drifting towards a Catholic position, the great bulk of the laity, faithful and unfaithful, have remained Protestant

134. C.F.G. Masterman writing of "the Catholic reaction" in his book In Peril of Change, published in 1905, speaks of "the existence of a vigorous life ... Most of the vital force of religion, as at present manifest in the Church of England, the effort towards social regeneration, the militant combat against unbelief, has enrolled under its banners". (p.316)

or indifferent ... On the one side, now, are the Catholic assertions ... On the other, is the opinion of the vast bulk of present public opinion; to which the Church and its ministers are matters of very human construction, of no particular authority or veneration; and the Sacraments at most pleasant memorial ceremonies; and ritual is absurd; and times of abstinence or special devotion entirely repugnant; and the highest aim of religion the setting forth of a sober and not too exaggerated piety, sweetening the struggle of the life of the day."[135] For many, as we have seen, the Church and its provision lacked even such minimal significance: there was widespread alienation of working class people from the ministrations of institutional religion. An explicit proclamation of the dominant Catholic tradition within Anglican Christian Socialism did not therefore offer a promising basis for any new society which aimed at a large membership and a significant role: the tactical instinct of the founders of the League was sound in avoiding such a position.

There were, however, more positive 'pointers' in the situation of 1906. George Haw, in a book published in that year, quotes views on religion expressed in a number of letters from working class people and comments: "Christianity is not assailed but Christians ... Nowhere is a word breathed against Christ."[136] Haw's equivalent to the man on the Clapham omnibus is the person he met on the train 'the other day' who, on the mention of religion, remarked "I don't hold with church-going people at all, but I will say this, I believe Jesus Christ was a downright good fellow".[137] Speaking of the indifference and suspicion felt by Labour towards the Churches, Haw adds, "Yet at no time have the great mass of the people ever ceased altogether to believe in Christ."[138] Again, despite the well-tabulated decline in the practice of public worship, the majority still claimed the services

135. Ibid., pp.314-315.

136. G. Haw, ed., Christianity and the Working Classes (1906), p.14.

137. Ibid., p.15.

138. Ibid., p.16.

of the church for the 'carriage rites' - baptism, marriage and burial:[139] some tenuous ceremonial connection was kept, therefore, with the Church, and, more importantly, millions of people who never attended church services were, nevertheless, actual members of the Church by virtue of their baptism. A third 'pointer' was the forward surge of the Labour movement and the ethical idealism it then displayed. Widdrington, recalling the foundation of the League, speaks of the spirit of the Labour movement in the North of England in 1906:- "It was not certainly for the average Labour voter so much a formulated system of economics as a protest against social injustice. It owed little to Karl Marx,but much to the Bible ... the socialism which appealed to the people was the politico-religious idealism of Keir Hardie and his disciples."[140] To set alongside the 'social problem' and the perceived inadequacy of the two existing Anglican Christian Socialist societies of Catholic hue, the one rather flamboyantly so, the other somewhat discreet, we have three 'pointers': a residual respect and reverence for the person of Jesus; the nominal membership of the Church, through baptism, of millions of non-participants; and an increasingly significant Labour movement whose ethical idealism could seek inspiration and corroboration in the teachings of the gospels and the Old Testament prophets. Given this situation the obvious corollorаries for the C.S.L. were that it should make the basis of membership as wide and inclusive as possible, and that it should make common ground with I.L.P. members in subscribing to basic Christian concepts commonly held regardless of Churchmanship. Baptism, therefore, was the basis of C.S.L. membership, which made the nominal millions eligible, and in the early days there was much talk of The Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man and the ethical teachings of the Gospels.[141] The personality, acts and teachings of the 'Jesus of History',

139. R. Lloyd, The Church of England, 1900-1965 (1966), p.72.

140. Commonwealth, April 1927, pp.118-119. Widdrington himself, as has been noted in Chapter 4 of this study, took part in the election campaign of 1906 in a number of Lancashire towns.

141. E.g. C. Noel, Objections to Socialism from Gospel etc., passim - C.S.L. Halfpenny Series No.3 (n.d. but not after 1909) and P.Bull What is Socialism, Mirfield Manuals No.29, pp.28-29 (n.d. but probably early in century).

an identifiable human person with a recorded earthly existence, and the Biblical themes of justice, compassion, healing, liberation and fullness of life, conveyed in some cases in graphic and compelling narrative, were likely to have a more ready and arresting impact on the people at large than the more abstract and intellectual constructions of dogma with the 'Christ of Faith' functioning, it would seem, according to complex and intricate rules as a kind of 'Queen piece' on the chess board of salvation. Writing in 1906, Lansbury remarked thus of the Church of England:- "However much it may be wrapped up in formulas and ceremonies its teaching, if it has any foundation at all, is to be found in the Gospels. These teach not that riches are the important thing, but that the life spent in the service of our fellows is the thing we should all strive to attain to". Later in the same essay commenting on the 'curse' of apathy and indifference, he declares:- "I at any rate think this will continue till men and women are moulded and inspired by a grand ideal. I am conservative enough to believe that the grandest ideal ever put before men and women was that which our Saviour taught two thousand years ago. To me it is a matter of indifference whether anyone else said it before him. It was taught to me by Him. Amid all the doubts and perplexities of life it stands out clear as a beacon light, and it is this:-

> 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself. This do and thou shalt live.'

Few amongst us, either rich or poor, church or chapel people, strive to do this, and the consequence is misery and wretchedness all round. We have robbed the words of all meaning, and until we get back again to a pure faith, which will result in works, there is not much hope."[142] Lansbury's statement may be seen as encapsulating in its fundamentals something of the spirit of those who, at that

142. G. Haw (ed) op.cit., p.173 and pp.176-7.

time, saw in the combination of Christianity and the Labour Movement a crusade for social righteousness, the 'grand ideal', and it was in that atmosphere the C.S.L. began.

It is sometimes pointed out that "what is often miscalled Christian morality is usually no more than natural morality",[143] and it is easy in seeking out a broad and basic formula which will command general assent in the campaign for social justice to end up with a humanism vaguely suffused by a somewhat sentimental and insubstantial religion where the Fatherhood of God is seen not in personal terms demanding response, but as a formula, an abstraction, acting as a validating reference point for the real matter of concern - the brotherhood of man. For the Church Socialists who founded the League there seems to have been little danger of such an apotheosis of humanism. "The founders of the Church Socialist League ... are Socialists because they are Churchmen" declared the official Form II issuing from the Morecambe Conference.[144] In his Chairman's Address at the Annual Conference of 1909 West was to repeat this formula in even more basic terms, substituting the word 'Christians' for 'Churchmen': "we are Socialists because we are Christians."[145] The fact that the C.S.L. membership considered their Socialism to be a consequence of their Faith had three main implications for their approach to the political and economic creed. In the first place it provided a powerful inspiration and driving force in their Socialist commitment. 'Driving force' is a term repeatedly used by Noel in this connection, even before the foundation of the League. Writing in Justice in 1904, whilst still Hon. Sec. of the G.S.M. he declares:- "By Catholic Socialism, in a word, we mean Socialism and not sentimentalism. But we mean something a good deal more than this .... If as Catholics, we find a driving force in our conviction that

143. Walter James, The Christian in Politics (1962), p.189 ff. for an examination of this question and a view which runs counter to many of the basic presuppositions of the Christian Socialists of the time which we are reviewing.

144. Optimist, October 1906, p.65.

145. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1909, Annual Conference of C.S.L., Leicester, May 4th and 5th.

we are all alike the children of one common father, we are all brothers and sisters and of the family of God, we may indeed be charged with being dreamers, but we are at least dreamers who have determined to translate their dreams into realities".[146] Again, writing in the Clarion, in reply to an article by Blatchford on 'Christian Strategy', he states:- "I venture to assert, in spite of your most vehement denial, that the main object of your attack is the popular theology of 50 years ago, and those particular interpretations of theology which run counter to our mutual convictions as Socialists. Now, I am a Catholic Socialist. I am every bit as much a Socialist as you are ... I do not mean by Catholic Socialism any vague nonsense about being kind to the poor, dear poor. That is all very excellent for old maiden ladies; but we both mean business. The driving force behind my Socialism, and the Socialism of heaps of my friends, is our Catholic belief. The Fatherhood may be a mistake; there may be no God. But if it compels me to believe in the solidarity of men, in what way does that hinder your work for humanity?"[147] Ten Bruggenkate expresses the 'driving force' aspect almost vehemently:- "Our first duty, then, is to condemn, curse and denounce the spirit of anti-Christ, which we find incarnated in the present social order and the existing economic system." With Christ and the prophets as exemplars, he pointed out, criticism was not enough. "They [the prophets] spoke in the name of God. 'Thus saith the Lord' begins their message, for they knew that God was on their side. And it is that mighty conviction which will carry us through a long weary fight. It cannot be demonstrated but it can be and is instinctively felt by us that, beyond all things, we want that fiery passion and enthusiasm which religion alone can give; that heartfelt conviction that God has sent us on a holy crusade from which it is damnation to draw back."[148] Secondly the arrival at

146. October 1st 1904. 'Christian Socialism' by Revd. Conrad Noel, Hon. Sec., Guild of St Matthew.

147. Noel papers, University of Hull, press cutting, n.d. (Blatchford replied objecting to all religions as based on untrue grounds and objecting to the Church. He couldn't understand why people like Noel and Maxted stayed in the Church).

148. G.H. Ten Bruggenkate, Catholicism and Socialism. C.S.L. Pamphlet

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147. Noel papers, University of Hull, press cutting, n.d. (Blatchford replied objecting to all religions as based on untrue grounds and objecting to the Church. He couldn't understand why people like Noel and Maxted stayed in the Church).

148. G.H. Ten Bruggenkate, Catholicism and Socialism. C.S.L. Pamphlet, Penny Series, No.4 (n.d. but from other evidence, 1912), p.16.

Socialism via the Christian faith should have guarded the Church Socialists against too optimistic a view of unconverted human nature: this note is in fact not very prominent - a result, perhaps, of the atmosphere of the time in which the belief in 'progress' had not been challenged and shattered by the cataclysm of 1914, and within this general mood, on the Socialist side the hopes engendered by the political advance of the Labour movement and on the Christian side, the prevailing theological fashion of the day with its emphasis on Incarnation rather than Atonement. Snowden, as a guest speaker at the C.S.L. Demonstration at Church House in June 1908 - he was from a different tradition[149] - is described by the Labour Leader's reporter as giving "one of the finest expositions of Socialism I have ever heard"[150]: as regards human nature, however, he seems to have shared the optimism, with its attendant theological implications, of which we have spoken. One writer, surveying the 'orthodox' Socialists, attributes to him the statement: "Human nature and human gifts only want a favourable environment to show that the one is good and the other great."[151] The 'driving force' aspect is however sometimes linked to the need for a 'change of heart' as in Bull's Mirfield Manual No.29, What is Socialism? where he writes:- "While we recognise the ideal of Socialism as Just and Right and Good, we are convinced that it can never be realised except by the Force of Religious Convictions and the power of the Cross of Christ to change the selfish heart of man"[152], whilst, in more muted tones, the final revision of the League's Basis, which served for its last five years, ended with a separate little paragraph stating:- "The League further recognises that no political, economic and social emancipation can be permanent without a change of heart

149. Dictionary of National Biography (1931-40).

150. June 5th 1908, Church Socialist League: Remarkable Meeting. The meeting was on Tuesday, June 2nd.

151. Quoted in S.T. Glass, The Responsible Society - the Ideas of the English Guild Socialist (1966), p.14.

152. Bull, op.cit-, p.28. Capitalisation as in original.

and outlook."[153] Thirdly, their faith gave to the Christian Socialists a sense of purpose, a consciousness of destiny, which, though it had to be realised and reiterated, was as overreaching as that of any contemporary secular Marxist who saw his activities as part of the inexorable working out of economic laws in the inevitability of history. The Christian Socialist felt that he was engaged in no less a task than the fulfilment of the purposes of God, with all the infinite possibility implicit in such a conception. "Idealists, dreamers, visionaries", wrote Ten Bruggenkate - "these terms of contempt are our boast, our claim, our justification, for we are bent on more than policies and programmes - our aim is the fulfilling of the Will of God"[154]. Less rhetorically, the statement which, as Form II, had emerged from the Morecambe Conference had spelt out the direction which that fulfilment should take: the founders, it stated soberly "are moved by the conviction that the reconstruction of society on Socialist lines is the extension of God's kingdom on earth."[155] In an interview in the following year, in the course of an answer to the question 'How did you become a Socialist?', West declared "Only Socialism offered a method by which the Kingdom of God could come on earth"[156]. This notion of Socialism as the agency for bringing in the Kingdom of God, and of the Church Socialists as consciously participating in this activity, was common in the League, though both the nature of that Socialism and the concept of the Kingdom of God were to be radically re-appraised as a result of developments in politics and in theology during the C.S.L's life-span, as we shall discover in the third part of this study.

153. After some eighteen months of controversy, drafting and re-drafting, the version of the Basis which includes these words came before the Annual Conference on 11th April 1918 (Davey material, on loan to author, has copy of Conference Programme; for account of Conference see Church Socialist, June-July 1918) and is subsequently printed on inside covers of issues of Church Socialist.

154. Op.cit., p.16.

155. Optimist, loc.cit.

156. Ibid., October 1907, An Interview with the Revd. G. Algernon West, Chairman of the C.S.L. - by Editor.

The Faith, then, gave a teleological perspective to the Socialist activities of League men. This perspective probably helped to counteract any tendency towards a total identification of Christianity and Socialism, an immersion of Christianity in the rising tide of Socialism or the penning of that tide behind the break-waters and sluice gates of the Christian harbour. Noel reporting in the Clarion on a meeting called by the G.S.M. in March 1906 to welcome the new Labour M.Ps, writes:- "One thing jarred upon me considerably and that was that most of the speakers claimed the Labour victories as Christian. Although the proper development of the Christian religion in the political sphere is Socialism, it does not follow that all Socialism is Christian, or all Socialists Christians. It is true that the consciously Christian forces contributed largely to the Labour triumph and that some Labour members are Christians, that most of them are theists, that very few are Agnostics, that the secular programme of these Agnostics can be cordially supported by Christians; but it is not true to say that the Labour victories are Christian victories, and it is a pity to assert it for it annoys our Secularist friends in the movement, and draws from them expressions which are Scriptural, but not polite."[157] The last sentence indicates, what otherwise one would have suspected, that this paragraph in the report may well have been in the way of a gesture towards non-Christian Clarion readers: nevertheless the general point which he makes has substance and at a time when Church Socialists were anxious to insist that Christian Socialism was "not a particular variety of Socialism, milder than the secular brand", but "simply economic Socialism as understood by the existing Socialistic societies"[158] the teleological perspective and the concept of the Kingdom of God, however interpreted, were important in the maintenance of a distinctive religious identity. Much of what we have said about the implications of being

157. March 16th 1906, 'Socialism in the Church' by Conrad Noel.

158. Cecil Chesterton, The Basis of Socialism, C.S.L. Pamphlet Halfpenny Series, No.1. (n.d., probably early 1909).

a Socialist because one is a Christian is contained in an answer given by Noel to the question, 'In recommending Collectivism do you find the Christian sanctions more effective than merely humanitarian appeals?' In an answer which, curiously, seems both to draw on the vocabulary of the Early Councils and to anticipate the theological idiom of the 1960s Noel states:- "Most certainly, if by Christian sanctions one means the conviction that we are all the children of a Being who has brought us into existence that we may discover and desire the Kingdom of God as the ground of our life, and may effectualise it in human institutions, and further, that God's will and kingdom are partially expressed in the saints, heroes and supermen of our race, and more completely in Jesus, very God of very God, and very Man of very Man. For believing these things one urges Socialism, not as some artificial chance construction for the future, but as the fulfilment for our own time of a unity and a Kingdom which is the very ground of our life and as the development in our era of the Eternal purposes of God".[159]

Not only did the League not establish itself on a particular theological foundation, it did not subsequently issue any official document setting out its theological position, and the attempt, ultimately successful in 1918, to give a more religious and Catholic flavour to the Basis aroused much controversy[160] whilst the same tendency in 1923, in more accentuated form, contributed much to the demise of the League.[161] We have to rely, therefore, for information on 'the theology of the League' to the reported speeches and writings of its members. Instead of a systematic statement we have, then, a random collection of individual utterances, passing references and incidental allusions, treatments of particular aspects or sweeping series of unexamined sentences compressed into a panoptic paragraph such as this

159. Optimist, April 1908, An Interview with Revd. Conrad Noel, Organising Secretary of the C.S.L.

160. See footnote 153.

161. C. Stuart Smith, The Church Socialist League - Commonwealth, May 1923, p.154.

passage from a pamphlet by Noel:-

> "To this end He founded a Church, to be the Social Democratic organ of the Kingdom, its economic laws including the right to work, no interest ('lend hoping for nothing in return'), common holding of land ('the earth he hath given to the children of men') no shirkers (if any will not work, neither shall he eat'). The Sacraments were social pledges of the Kingdom. The creeds had a Social Democratic significance. The Liturgy is soaked in Socialism. The Church of England in taking her stand at the Reformation on not the Bible only, but the Bible as interpreted by early Church writers, is possibly committed to communist principles which go beyond our modest Socialist proposal. But whether this be so or not, Churchmen, if they are to be consistent, must at least be 'Socialists and work with their fellow-Socialists, Christian and non-Christian alike, for the establishment of God's international commonwealth."[162]

The occasional pamphlet might give an extended treatment of some facet of theology or consider a wider canvas from a particular angle, as for example, in Ten Bruggenkate's Catholicism and Socialism, but such pamphlet literature from the pens of individual members inevitably combined exposition with persuasion and was often concerned chiefly with practical applications and policies. Theological books from League members were few: in 1910 there appeared Noel's Socialism in Church History, ranging in its survey from the Old Testament prophets to the young Church Socialist League[163], in 1913 G.C. Binyon's The Kingdom of Righteousness, a work addressed primarily "to

162. Socialism and Church Tradition by Rev. Conrad Noel, Hon. Organiser, C.S.L., Pass-on Pamphlets No.17, (n.d. but from internal evidence, 1908-1910). The same passage, as far as the sentence on the Liturgy also occurs in an article by Noel on 'Church Socialism' in The Christian Socialist, September-October 1909.

163. The League published a cheap edition of the book in 1912 (Church Socialist, April 1912, Editorial). They were not the original publishers.

those Christians who feel, and perhaps feel keenly, about the Social Question but hesitate to commit themselves to Socialism not on economic but on religious grounds"[164], and in 1922, from a particular group within the League, together with some of their associates, the volume The Return of Christendom.

A further consequence of there being no worked-out statement of a particular theological basis was that there was open access to virtually the whole range of theology: League membership was open to those who were both Socialists and members of the Church of England[165], a body of broad, comprehensive, even, perhaps, elastic perimeters in the theological field. In practice, therefore, virtually any doctrine which was not demonstrably heretical was 'available' to members and at one time or another almost every aspect of theology or Church history from which any social significance could be extracted was pressed into service. We have already indicated the obvious use made of basic notions such as the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man and of the ethical teachings of Jesus. Noel, who favoured a historical approach, pointed out the need to get back to the Old Testament prophets and to John the Baptist in considering the concept of the Kingdom of God[166]; and, concerned with the practical application of theological principles, he drew attention to what he described as the communism of the early apostles as the first interpretation of Christ's gospel, recalled "the violently revolutionary and anti-property sayings" of the early Christian Fathers and declared that "the schoolmen have been remembered with their doctrines of the right of revolution ... and their condemnation of usury".[167] At the more abstract end of the theological spectrum the doctrine of the Trinity was touched on by Bull in a Chairman's Address to an Annual Conference - he saw it as an indication that the background of the universe is social and not merely individual,

164. Preface to the work.

165. Optimist, October 1906, p.64.

166. Conrad Noel, Socialism and the Kingdom of God, C.S.L. pamphlet Halfpenny Series No.2. (n.d., probably early 1909).

167. Clarion, March 16th 1906, 'Socialism in the Church' by Conrad Noel.

personal and not merely mechanical.[168] Binyon's book, The Kingdom of Righteousness had a chapter on the Atonement, but this doctrine, with its tendency towards individualistic associations and its view of the natural order as in a state of corruption, separated and alienated from God, did not feature prominently in the statements of the C.S.L. men who viewed the human condition through an Incarnational lens and saw it in social dimensions. Sin, too, was essentially social: Ten Bruggenkate speaks of "the sin of the world, the horrors that result from landlordism and capitalism, the robbery and oppression of the stranger, the fatherless and the orphan, the devouring of widows' houses, the awful waste of human life, the senseless squandering of human capacity and potentiality in the mad race for profits, the blasphemy and mammon-worship of modern industrialism ..."[169]

The absence of an official 'League theology' meant then that members could, and did, range widely in the area of Christian thought. It meant, too, that the particular concepts which they would emphasise would be drawn from the theological baggage which they carried into the League - made up of packages of a heritage common to Christians, plus the particular traditions of their own ecclesiastical background and the prevailing theological atmosphere of the times - together with the thoughts and influences subsequently experienced and expressed in the League itself. As we have noted, the League aimed at a broad membership and representatives of all schools of theological thought were reported as being present at the Morecambe Conference.[170] Describing the League to the readers of Justice in 1909, Noel stated that it "welcomes recruits from every section and contains a sprinkling of evangelicals, broad churchmen and Puseyites within its ranks."[171] In 1917 the Secretary pointed out that there was nearly every shade of Church

168. Church Socialist, Sept-Oct. 1920, Chairman's Address to Annual Conference (held 25/26 May - ibid., Jul-Aug. 1920).

169. Op.cit., p.15.

170. Church Times, June 22nd 1906.

171. February 13th 1909, 'The Church Socialist League and the Unemployed'.

opinion in the League[172] and as late as 1919 the Chairman remarked "We are accused of being amorphous in respect of our churchmanship and of sheltering modernists and latitudinarians. The League, I am told, is strongly suspect in certain Catholic parishes".[173] There were three or four Liberal or Modernist clerics who achieved a certain prominence in the affairs of the League, and one, indeed, who was to achieve much greater prominence subsequently: men such as Egerton Swann, a leader in the London branch and in the League as a whole, Hewlett Johnson, destined for decanal fame, founder, proprietor and editor of The Interpreter from 1905 to 1924[175], a magazine advertised as representing "the main body of progressive Biblical scholars" and dealing with "ripe and advanced modern throught"[176], Samuel Proudfoot, editor of the Optimist and the Church Socialist Quarterly and F.A.N. Parker who served for a period as Chairman of the League's Lancashire Federation.[177] The first three of this quartet were among the founders of the Liberal Catholic Union just after the war; Swann was Chairman and other signatories to its manifesto included League members Harold Buxton and Fred Hughes.[178] Within the range of thought to be found in the C.S.L. probably the most idiosyncratic individualism occurs in a spirited series of pro-Marxian articles by Jean Moffat Wendon in which, amidst a few timely corrective shots at the rather romantic and unhistorical views of mediaeval monasticism entertained by some members, she demands, "Do let us Church Socialists drop talking so much of ethics, immanence,

172. Church Socialist, May 1917, Correspondence - Letter from J.Maillard.

173. Ibid., June-July 1919. The Chairman's Address to the Annual Conference.

174. Church Socialist, October 1912, 'Socialism and Theology' by N.E. Egerton Swann. This article sets out Swann's theological position at that time: 'I am personally an avowed liberal or modernist, though of a cautious and conservative type'.

175. Who's Who, 1966.

176. Church Socialist Quarterly, October 1910.

177. Ibid., July 1910, Lancashire Federation Report records Parker's resignation from post on health grounds. See April 1909 issue for an exposition of his theological views in his article 'Modernism and Socialism.

178. Church Socialist, Dec.1918 and Jan.1919, 'Extracts from the Manifesto of the Liberal Catholic Union.

the gospel philosophy and so forth, and realise that we are in a movement which contains men of all religions and none. Let us remember that whatever the motives that impel us to advocate the change to Socialism, the change itself is not an ethical one but a material one. If we will not do this we had better dissolve the C.S.L. The communist society must find room for the most diverse religious views and practices ... There is little to choose for a Socialist between Catholicism and Protestantism ... Let us be as Christian and as Catholic as we like but don't let us talk nonsense or evade facts. The Christian religion is concerned with the relation of the individual soul or man, to God, here and hereafter. Socialism is concerned with the rebuilding of human society here, more especially with the transformation of its economic basis. And in such matters the Church must do in the future what she has done in the past - follow, and not lead".[179] In fairness, it must again be pointed out that the editor of the Church Socialist Quarterly, commented in connection with a later series of articles on 'Historical Materialism' from the same pen that the author's views were "in the main diametrically opposed to the opinions of all members of the Church Socialist League"[180]: nevertheless the views were expressed, and, perhaps more surprisingly, the author was an office-holder for a while in the most influential of the League's branches, London.[181] Nevertheless the significance of this diversity should not be exaggerated: there was an obvious and strong mainstream tradition within the League. Moreover, the divisions between schools of thought were blurred: it was a matter of emphasis rather than of sharp distinctions - the League Modernists, for instance, even if emphasising this particular aspect of their position, tended to place themselves broadly in the Catholic tradition, as is indicated by the name of the society which they established.[182] Parker, for

179. Church Socialist Quarterly, October 1909, Jean Moffat Wendon, 'The Marxian Position - III' (Articles I and II appeared in the April and July issues.

180. Ibid., October 1910, Editorial.

181. See footnote 50.

182. See footnote 178.

instance, had harsh words for the Liberal Churchman's Union[183] who had "lately issued a manifesto attacking the Catholic position with regard to the Eucharist. This narrow-minded attack has caused one of our members to repent of his connection with this body." In his letter of resignation 'our comrade' writes, "As a Socialist and a Modernist of the Catholic type I am not in sympathy with the thin individualistic theology and politics which your Union stands for ..." He invites them to attack "the idolatry of Mammon worship" rather than "the idolatry of Catholic devotion."[184] Unlike Jean Moffat Wendon, most of the Socialists who joined the League felt that there was a great deal to choose between Catholicism and Protestantism. As we have seen, the bulk of those attending the Morecambe conference were members of the G.S.M. or the C.S.U.; Noel in the article in Justice, to which we have referred, states that the League's "growth has been more rapid among those Anglicans who would describe themselves as 'Catholic' than among the broad and low church schools of thought ... For the most part its members are Catholic democrats". More than a decade after the League's foundation, Swann, though pointing out that "probably no school of thought possesses a larger proportion of members who are substantially with us than that of Liberal or Modern Churchmanship" - he always felt he got the most sympathetic hearing from them - acknowledged, in surveying Christian Socialism since Maurice and Kingsley, that "organised Christian Socialism has been chiefly in the hands of more or less definite 'Catholics' in a technical sense".[185] Within the broad field of theology that was

183. Not to be confused with the Liberal Catholic Union, to which reference has just been made.

184. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1909, F.A.N. Parker, 'The Liberal Churchmen's Union'. As to the hidden identity of the offended L.C.U. member it is not clear whether the formula 'one of our members' and 'our comrade' masks the name of Parker himself or another C.S.L. member. The most likely assumption is that the person to whom the article refers is Parker, but if that is the case, there seems no obvious reason for the anonymity adopted.

185. Church Socialist, July 1917, N.E. Egerton Swann, 'Church History and Social Action, XIII - Christian Socialism since Maurice and Kingsley.

open to League members it is, then, to the preoccupations of this dominant tradition that we must look for the characteristic theological 'notes' of the C.S.L.

Four key concepts may be identified: the Incarnation, the Sacraments, the Church and the Kingdom of God. Church Socialist League members were, inevitably, heavily influenced by the Incarnational theology of the day: "It is almost a commonplace" wrote A.M. Ramsey "that a theology of Incarnation prevailed in Anglican divinity from the last decade of the reign of Queen Victoria until well into the new century."[186] Ramsey attributes this dominance in part to Westcott's prophetic teaching upon the Incarnation and social progress and in part to the dogmatic teaching of the Lux Mundi school. The volume Lux Mundi was sub-titled 'A series of studies in the Religion of the Incarnation', and two years later, in 1891, came Gore's highly influential Bampton Lectures with the title, The Incarnation of the Son of God. Not only were many of the men who joined the new C.S.L. of the right age group to have been influenced by these theological developments: several of the most influential of them - Adderley, Noel, Widdrington, Bull and Paine for example - were personal friends and acquaintances of some of its leading proponents, Gore, Scott Holland and Talbot.[187] As Church history amply demonstrates, theology, if it is to remain orthodox rather than heretical, is often a matter of balance, of holding in tension different even divergent or paradoxical elements. Theological fashions, therefore, within the orthodox fold, are usually matters of relative emphasis and the ascendancy of one school does not imply the total annihilation of another school which may be its necessary counterpart and corrective. However, in order to bring out the special significance and implications of

186. A.M. Ramsey, From Gore to Temple (1960), p.16.

187. J.D. Adderley, In Slums and Society (1916), pp.17, 34-42, 118-122; C. Noel, Autobiography (1945), p.50; Christendom, March 1947, p.18 P.E.T. Widdrington, 'Those were the days'; as a member of the Community of the Resurrection Bull was well known to Gore, its founder and first Superior - see G.L. Prestige, Life of Charles Gore (1935), e.g. p.218; Paine served as Domestic Chaplain to Talbot in his episcopates at Rochester and Southwark - Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.

a particular 'theology' it is sometimes necessary to employ some degree of exaggeration or distortion and such 'distorted' perspectives may indeed reflect something of the emphases as popularly 'received' in the period of ascendancy. The centrality of the doctrine of the Incarnation as expounded by the Lux Mundi school served as a powerful antidote to 'other-worldly' and pietistic tendencies in Christianity. The Incarnation speaks of the action of the Logos involving himself directly through his own initiative in the created world. It speaks of the 'relatedness' of man, and the natural world in which he has his being, to the Creator God: though separate, they are connected. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." (St. John Ch.1, v.1, 14). "Incarnational theology" as one sociological commentator puts it, "leads to a positive evaluation of the material and social worlds and of men and women."[188] Moreover, the Incarnational emphasis suggests a world-affirming value already made actual, which may be contrasted with the implications, drawn from an exaggerated and extrapolated Atonement emphasis, of a merely latent or potential value consequent on the completion of the transactional processes of the individually appropriated redemption of fallen men in a corrupt world. The Incarnational event - the involvement - is itself part of the redemptive process. In this emphasis, then, redemption is seen as an integral and present part of existence rather than an occasional action involving a distant Divine Being. There is then a positive mandate, even a requirement, to complete the transformation of a world thus hallowed by divine involvement through giving to all things the value accorded them by the Incarnation and co-operating to fulfil the ultimate purposes of God for them. Incarnation, with its emphasis on 'involvement' as against 'estrangement',

188. Social Compass, 1973, Vol.XX, p.35, Robert J. Bocock, 'Anglo-Catholic Socialism: A Study of a Protest Movement within a Church.

leads to an 'earthing' of religion in the world as constituted and an attempt to connect theology with observable natural and historical processes as part of the divine cosmic activity: as Ramsey points out "it is significant that no small use is made of the current concept of evolution" by these Incarnational theologians.[189] The whole of nature and the whole of man's culture and civilisation come within its purview, as receiving 'value' and requiring 'transformation'. The doctrine had obvious and powerful social implications. Ramsey points out that "because both Holland and Gore were prophets, the theology of Lux Mundi was brought to bear with overwhelming force upon the social questions of the time ... It was an outcome of the Lux Mundi appeal to the Logos doctrine that both democracy and socialism were held to be expressions of the working of the divine spirit."[190] It was with some justification that an Editorial in the Church Socialist could declare that "the inspiration of our work and teaching is the Incarnation."[191]

The connection between Incarnational theology and the sacraments is obvious: the sacraments are a consequence of the Incarnation and share the same basic principle and implications. The 'eternal' is made manifest in the 'temporal', the 'spiritual' made manifest in the 'material', the inner reality in the outward and visible sign. The 'two worlds' are related and commingled: 'the spiritual' works through and is expressed in 'the material'. The worth and basic goodness of matter is thereby affirmed and by extension the sacramental principle is applied to the whole world, which is itself seen as a sacrament, an outward and visible sign, of God's nature as expressed in Creation. The sacramental principles and practices of the Church both inspired and readily expressed the social beliefs and teachings of C.S.L. men, and this

189. Ramsey, op.cit., p.18.

190. Ibid., p.14. Ramsey points out, however, that Gore was "no exponent of optimism or progress" and was aware that "the deep corruption in human nature could bid fair to wreck both socialism and democracy" (p.15).

191. January 1913, p.1.

connection was well elaborated in a passage on 'The Social Value of the Sacraments' in Ten Bruggenkate's Catholicism and Socialism, in which he wrote:- "The Catholic religion is before all things sacramental and it is this characteristic which distinguishes it, par excellence, from Protestant individualism. For sacramental religion links up both man with man and spirit with matter. The Sacraments are corporate collective things or they are nothing and at the same time they are intensely personal. They cannot be given en bloc; they are the channels of the life of the body corporate, but each individual must appropriate them to himself by the individual act of reception. They link up spirit with matter because they teach that God's highest gifts of grace, of His very life are given to man through ordinary and material channels, like water, oil, bread and wine, given in a common house at common font and altar to members of a common brotherhood, and then they emphasise the doctrine of environment upon which Socialists insist - namely that happy, clean and wholesome conditions of life are not merely accidents which we may gladly accept or resignedly dispense with, if we find them lacking but actual means of grace. And the reverse: that the present abominable surroundings are really and truly deprivations of God, so many ways in which God is really taken out of the lives of the people. For the Church and the Sacraments are symbols of life ... and the vital principles of the Church are the principles of all life ... Her Sacraments are therefore pledges of a coming social life, symbols and expressions of real social value. Holy Baptism is the Sacrament of Equality ... It is open to all, but the same to all. There is no distinction between the Baptism of a coalheaver and a Crown Prince."[192] In the hands of Ten Bruggenkate the sacraments served as a critique of modern industrial life. "The social message of the Sacrament of Holy Communion", he continued, "is still more obvious. A communicant knows

192. pp.6-7.

that he is recognising on Sunday morning God's order at the Mass, while he has no chance of recognising on Monday morning God's order in the world." Ten Bruggenkate protested at the 'scramble and grab' of modern competitive industrialism and contrasted it with the family aspect of Holy Communion. "Why should he" (the Churchman), he asked "think for an instant that God intends His grace to be given as to a family, and His daily bread as to a pack of wolves ready to devour one another if they cannot get enough? Yet that is what the non-political Churchmanship of modern Anglican heretics involves. If on Sunday he recognises one order, on Monday he must fight the other, although he is compelled to live under it. If Holy Communion stands as the Sacrament of Fellowship, Confirmation is particularly the Sacrament of Individuality".[193] For Stuart Smith, in a series of articles on 'The Socialism of the Church', in which he acknowledged his indebtedness to Headlam who had covered this ground, and which he described as being "intended mainly for enquirers and learners who wish to understand the relation between our Socialism and our Churchmanship",[194] Confirmation was "the Sacrament of Citizenship".[195] Adderley was even able to attach social significance to the more obscure and less socially promising sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. "The world thinks it right to anoint kings with oil: the Church anoints everybody because it believes in the royalty of the race, bound together by the royal law of love".[196]

The Incarnational principle may also be extended to the Church. The Church is seen not just as a fortuitous collection of atomistic individuals pursuing their own personal salvation to be realised in another world, but rather as cellular in structure, an organism with parts related to each other with a function here and now - the

193. pp.7-8.

194. Church Socialist, January 1913, p.3.

195. Ibid., March 1913, p.4.

196. The Rev. the Hon. James Adderley, Socialism and the Seven Sacraments, C.S.L. leaflet (n.d. 1913?).

Church as a corporate entity, as the Body of Christ, his hands, his feet doing his work in the world. Alongside this notion of the Church as filled with the Spirit of Christ and essentially continuing and extending the Incarnational event and activity within the world, there is another and broader strand of thinking inspired by the Incarnational principle which emphasises perhaps 'being' rather than 'doing', and the essential unity and solidarity of the whole of mankind into which the Second Adam has entered and by his sanctifying presence revealed a universal society, even a universal created order, whose unity exists, though its reality may not everywhere be apprehended. Though a concept of the Church clearly underlies much of the thinking of C.S.L. men there is much less explicit emphasis on the Church and its teachings than one might expect from a body with a dominantly Catholic flavour, partly, perhaps, because the C.S.L. men were too conscious of the social shortcomings of the actual Church. It was difficult, in practice to draw attention to these and campaign for their rectification and at the same time to exalt, in traditional High Church terms, the authority of the Church and its dogmatic teachings. Furthermore in much traditional High Church thought, the tradition stemming from the Tractarians, the Church, as the Divine Society, is seen 'over against' the world. It is the ark of salvation from the world. Such rather negative and rejecting views of the world and notions of the Church as 'exclusive' and 'separate' ran counter to the essentially 'inclusive' and 'all-embracing' outlook of most of the C.S.L. men, whose concern was not primarily to be saved from the world but to save the world itself in the broadest sense of the term. Catholicism, even Anglo-Catholicism, was not, as the history of the League demonstrated, a monochrome tradition. In the main the Catholic Socialism of C.S.L. members preferred, in the tradition of Maurice to think of the 'real' Church as equated with humanity, with the institutionally mediated sacramental acts of Baptism and Confirmation declaring and showing forth (rather than creating) what already

was - that all men were the children of God. The emphasis was broad, therefore, and stressed the Church's corporate and inclusive character and its nature as symbol and vehicle of the divine presence, power and purpose in the world. Attention was drawn to the fact that the Church was a society founded by Jesus and that its symbols and liturgy had a social significance: these latter themes, as we have seen, crop up in the writings of Noel and Ten Bruggenkate, whilst in more than one of his manuals, Stuart Smith shows special attachment to the Pauline doctrine of 'the Body', finding in it a congruence with Socialist conceptions of solidarity. In his C.S.L. pamphlet The Socialist and the Church he bids his readers to consider "St Paul's exposition of the corporate principle, 'We are all members of one body, and if one member suffers all the members suffer with it.' Could you desire", he asks "a better exposition than the whole passage of the Socialist doctrine of the solidarity of mankind?"[197] In another manual he begins from the other end but makes the same connection:- "The Socialist philosophy of the solidarity of man is identical with St Paul's doctrine of the body. It is the very meaning of the Church..."[198]

The fourth concept, the Kingdom of God, we have already mentioned in the context of the sense of purpose and destiny which Church Socialists experienced as a consequence of their Faith. The notion of the Kingdom ties up with the other three concepts that we have considered. The Incarnation declared the 'worth' of world and matter, identified with process and trans-formation, whilst the sacramental symbols affirm and reflect this 'action': in the Kingdom concept may be seen the grand consummation of the Incarnation - the redemption of the whole, bringing all into conformity with the will of God, linking up the spiritual and the material, the temporal and the eternal in the fruition of an ultimate purpose. The Kingdom concept has been

197. p.13.

198. C. Stuart Smith, Socialism and Religion: An Appeal to Churchmen. (n.d. - between 1910 and 1913), p.26.

variously understood - the nature, the timing, the means, the relation of the concept of the Church to that of the Kingdom - both by Christians in general and by C.S.L. members in particular. Neither the Protestant view, common at the time both in 'orthodox' and 'liberal' wings, that the Kingdom is an individual state of heart, or even the traditionalist Catholic view that the Kingdom is the Church had, presumably, much support among League members. What Egerton Swann terms "the naive Christian Socialist view" that it is "primarily an earthly Utopia"[199] was important particularly in the early days, when it seemed to complement secular ideas of progress and the hopes and promise of the Labour and Socialist movement: 'Thy Kingdom come on earth' had obvious popular propaganda applications. Later, the emergence of the eschatological interpretation of the Gospels, particularly in the wake of the appearance in 1910 of The Quest of the Historical Jesus, the English translation of a study by Albert Schweitzer, required a revision of the interpretation of the Kingdom concept: it was no longer possible to make a facile historical equation of the idea of the Kingdom with that of "progress" or to identify it with Socialism, though the pages of the Church Socialist indicate that League members were somewhat slow to abandon earlier and perhaps more convenient conceptions and adjust to more sophisticated contemporary thinking.[200] Nevertheless the concept of the Kingdom, as having some reference, in greater or lesser part, to the world of history was an important one throughout the life of the League. It was the subject of statements which we have quoted on the perceived purpose of the League in its early years; it was the subject of one of the earliest pamphlets, Noel's Socialism and the Kingdom of God and it occupied a prominent part in Noel's book Socialism in Church History. "The Kingdom of heaven", he writes "a kingdom not 'of' this world, but 'in' this world, is thrust like leaven into the ages, until every avenue of human activity is leavened. The Church, established

199. Church Socialist, December 1915, N.E.Egerton Swann, 'Cogitemus Fratres'.

200. See e.g. articles by Swann, April and May 1914 and December 1915.

by God, as the mouthpiece of the kingdom, must seize every opportunity of interfering with the world, until it has transformed its evil, warring, factious kingdoms into the international commonwealth of God and of His Christ".[201] Noel's book perhaps unfortunately, was published in the same year as The Quest for the Historical Jesus. Nevertheless the concept of the Kingdom continued to be important in the League: indeed its importance, at least among one section of the membership, grew and it is significant that the main successor body adopted the title 'The League of the Kingdom of God'.

With the gradual evaporation of the euphoria generated by the 1906 election, the passing of the mood of the moment with its crusade of ethical idealism, and the increasing loss of homogeneity and direction in the Labour and Socialist movement, Church Socialists increasingly turned back to their own theological resources and traditions and the 'common front' or 'lowest common denominator' approach which, as we have seen, had characterised some of the earlier more 'official' utterances tended to give way to the latent Catholicism and deeper theological interest which had been submerged in the circumstances of the Conference at Morecambe. Whilst in 1906 West was stating that C.S.L. men were Socialists because they were Churchmen and in 1909, "we are Socialists because we are Christians"[202], by 1912 Ten Bruggenkate was asserting that "the 'idea' of Catholicism in its manward and social aspect and the 'idea' of Socialism are not similar to one another or compatible with one another, but one and the same thing"[203], whilst in the same year Felix Matthews was simply to add an adjective to West's sentence and baldly declare "We are Socialists because we are Catholic Christians".[204] The emergence of a more explicit Catholicism did not merely threaten divisions between Catholics and 'the rest': it also revealed divisions among Catholics. To this question we shall turn in Part III of this study.

201. p.8.

202. See footnotes 144 and 145.

203. Op.cit., p.14.

204. Church Socialist, April 1912, Felix H. Matthews, 'The Life of a Branch of the Church Socialist League'.

THE MONASTIC CONNECTION

It could be argued that it is easier for monks to embrace Socialism because they have already abandoned, through their vows,.privilege and the pursuit of gain, and are living a life of co-operation and common possessions. In opening the first 'Church and Labour' Conference at Mirfield on May 5th 1906, Father Frere, the Superior of the Community of the Resurrection, told delegates that "there was a special suitability about the place and the occasion, in that a Conference summoned with a view to promoting the principles of collectivism was meeting on the grounds, and at the invitation of a Community which was not merely professing pious opinions, but actually carrying out in practice a life arranged exactly on the communistic basis of 'Each for all and all for each' with a common purse into which each put all that he got and from which each received all that was necessary for the simplest living. The Superior said that he made this personal explanation because he felt that the Socialists present might feel more at home if they understood this."[205] Apart from the Mirfield men who joined the ranks of the C.S.L., Adderley also had a phase as a 'religious'. He was one of the founder members of the Society of the Divine Compassion, an Anglican brotherhood on the Franciscan model: he belonged to the Community for three years and acted as its Superior but left it before final vows were taken.[206] The role of the monasteries, however, as examples and champions of Socialism was not accepted by all Christian Socialists. Jean Moffat Wendon took Father Bull, C.R., to task for asserting that every experiment in Socialism which had ignored God had failed, but that the monasteries and sacramental life had kept the socialist ideal alive. "All this is quite unhistorical" she declared ... "The monasteries took rent and exploited the labour-power of the tenants and serfs. Their communism, such as

205. Report of a Conference of Clergy and Members of the I.L.P. and S.D.F., (1906) (Copy in Stacy papers, Hayward Collection)

206. James Adderley, In Slums and Society, (1916), pp.72, 79; T.P. Stevens, Father Adderley (1942), pp.21-22.

it was, rested on serfdom, as Athenian communism rested on slavery".[207] From a different standpoint the American Protestant writer, Walter Rauschenbusch, in his book Christianity and the Social Crisis, published in 1907, also saw the monasteries, despite their 'good works' and their communal life, as having been essentially an obstacle to the fulfilment in history of the social mission of the Church. "Now these institutions" he writes, "founded usually with noble devotion to God, with an honest desire to live the perfect life, carrying with them so many admirable effects for the religious and social life of men, were nevertheless one potent cause for the failure of Christianity to undertake its reconstructive social mission ... The energy which they [the monks] ought to have devoted to making society normal, they employed in making themselves abnormal ... The monastic movement deflected and paralysed the forces which might have contributed to a Christian reconstruction of society. It also made the very idea of such a reconstruction impossible. Every monastery was a concrete assertion that the ordinary life of men was not only evil and far removed from Christian conditions, but also that it was inherently so and incapable of real Christianization. If a man wanted to live a really Christian life, he must get out of civil society and into monastic society ... Thus the reconstructive aim of Christianity was declared impossible and the indomitable reconstructive energy of Christianity was turned to the building of ideal communities outside of the common life".[208] Despite the strictures of Rauschenbusch and regardless of whether the fascination which the Middle Ages undoubtedly held for certain League members was based on fallacious, irrelevant and perhaps romantic notions, the Anglican Community of the Resurrection undoubtedly played a significant part in the life of the Church Socialist League. Rauschenbusch's judgements on

207. Church Socialist Quarterly, October 1909, Jean Moffat Wendon, The Marxian Position - III.

208. pp.170-175. By Rauschenbusch, dogma ritualism and sacramentalism were also seen as major obstacles to the fulfilment of the Church's social mission. As in the case of monasticism his views lack an appreciation of the Incarnational dimension: on the sacraments and ritual they seem to indicate a Protestant view based more on popular superstitious usage than on a serious theological consideration of perhaps the more enlightened Catholic doctrine on the sacraments and their social implications.

historical monasticism cannot be carried over and applied in an unqualified way to the Mirfield monastery. The Community of the Resurrection was a product of the wave of contemporary Incarnational theology which we have previously described: this is a perspective which obviously could not be applied in Rauschenbusch's consideration of mediaeval monasticism but it is from this perspective that the existence, life and work of the Community of the Resurrection must be seen. The Community, in moving from its original Thames valley locations at Oxford and Radley, deliberately sought a site in an industrial area and established itself in the heart of the West Riding. Whatever the nature of its rules and domestic life, in its outward activities it has sought a positive engagement in the issues of contemporary life[209]: it has been concerned not so much with flight from the world as with fight within the world.

The enthusiasm for Socialism out of which the C.S.L. emerged was clearly present at Mirfield at this time. In January 1906, the month of a General Election, the Chapter decreed "that in all contracts and works of the Community a clause shall be inserted to ensure Trades Union wages to all employed".[210] Reporting to the G.S.M. on clergy involvement in the Election, Stacy writes: "There is one interesting bit of information which is no secret, and which you will be glad to hear. The Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield have definitely thrown in their lot with the cause ...[211] The Address from (165 of) the Clergy to the Labour Party, promoted by the G.S.M. and presented at Easter 1906, was signed by twelve men from the House of the Resurrection.[212] An article in the Labour Leader in October 1906, based on an interview with Bull, was subtitled 'A School of Socialist Missionaries':

209. For C.R. see e.g. Prestige, op.cit., passim., and G.P.H. Pawson, C.R., C.R. Diamond Jubilee Book (1952) passim.

210. Mirfield Chapter Minutes, January 12th 1906.

211. Occasional Paper of the Guild of St Matthew, No.34, February 1906, p.4.

212. Copy in Noel papers, University of Hull.

the author said that there were about twenty five members of the Community, all avowed Socialists.[213] The Conferences for Clergy and Labour called at Mirfield in 1906 and 1907 were, as we have already seen, important milestones in fostering Church links with the Labour movement and in contributing towards the foundation and establishment of the C.S.L. The League's First Report (March 1907) lists among the members Fr. Frere, the Superior, Frs. Bull and Healy, and three other members of the Community.[214]

Members of the Community continued to contribute to the life of the League. They played a significant role in the activities of the branches at nearby Leeds and Elland.[215] One of the members took over responsibility for the League's quarterly Intercession Leaflet[216] in 1921. In the previous year Bull had announced to the League's Executive Committee that he had effected a kind of mass entry of Mirfield men into League membership: he had enrolled fifteen brethren at a subscription of one shilling per head per annum - his action was approved![217] In Bull the Community gave the League one of its most energetic members, a prolific pamphleteer and penultimate Chairman, and in L.S. Thornton, who was an important figure in the League's latter years, an intellectual who became a theologian of some note[218], whilst Ten Bruggenkate who died in 1912 and who was one of the ablest and most enthusiastic of the younger members, trained for the priesthood at the Community's college, which he entered as a Conservative and left as a Socialist.[219] A member of the Community who was a personal friend of Stacy and of the Reckitt family was the historian and theologian, John Neville Figgis, who, though he did not apparently join the League, exercised a

213. October 12th, 'An Hour with Father Bull - A School of Socialist Missionaries' - by Tom Myers.

214. Copy in Archives of Community of Resurrection, Mirfield.

215. See e.g. Church Socialist, League Notes, Nov. 1912, Aug.1913, July 1914, Jan. 1917.

216. Ibid., Editorial, March-April 1921.

217. C.S.L. Executive Committee Minutes, 28th Jan. 1920 (Stacy papers, University of Leeds).

218. Papers of Lionel Spencer Thornton, C.R., (1884-1960) are deposited in Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York.

219. Church Socialist, November 1912, F.H. Matthews, 'The Late G.H. Ten Bruggenkate'.

strong influence through his writings, particularly Churches in the Modern State (1914) with its 'pluralist' philosophy and concept of corporate personality, on that group of League men, of which Reckitt was the most prominent, who became enamoured of the Guild Socialist idea as a desirable alternative to State collectivism.[220]

It is possible, however, to exaggerate the part played by the Community's members in the life of the League and the extent of their commitment to political Socialism. The Community seems to have been more important to the League in the early years - the period of the conferences - than in its later life. We have already noted that Fr. Frere fades from prominence in the C.S.L. after 1912. The remarks of Stacy in his letter to the G.S.M. and Tom Myers in his article in the Labour Leader with their suggestion of a total commitment to Socialism on the part of the community should be received with a certain caution: after all, if Myers' figure of twenty five represents the strength of the Community in 1906, unless the numbers had doubled in the preceding months, which seems improbable, only half the brethren signed the Address to the Labour Party, whilst less than a quarter had joined the C.S.L. in the period up to March 1907. Moreover the Community contained members of a lighter Christian Socialist pigmentation than that of the League: Edward Keble Talbot, for instance, who entered the Community in 1907 and became its Superior in 1922, was, like his father Bishop E.S. Talbot, a prominent member of the C.S.U.[221] In fact the Community, per se, kept a discreet official distance in its relations with Socialist bodies and activities. The Community itself did not call the Church and Labour Conferences of 1906 and 1907: it gave permission for the Superior and Paul [Bull] to do so.[222] The Chapter

220. M.B. Reckitt, As It Happened (1941), p.242; Church Socialist, June-July 1919, Paul Stacy, 'John Neville Figgis'.

221. Papers of Edward Keble Talbot, C.R., (1877-1949) in Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York.

222. Mirfield Chapter Minutes, February 17th 1906 (item 5), October 6th 1906 (item 24).

Minutes of July 20th 1907 reveal that "in answer to an application for the use of the Quarry [in Mirfield grounds] from the Mirfield Socialist Society the Superior was asked to answer that the Community is not willing that the Quarry should be used for public purposes except under the direction of a member of the Community".[223] In January 1908 there was a further resolution not to give permission to hold a Socialist Conference at the Quarry[224]. Stacy was sufficiently persona grata to be given permission to hold a Conference in the House and a meeting in the Quarry for the C.S.L. in 1914[225], though a note in the Church Socialist pointed out that "it must, however, be clearly understood that in making this offer the Community do not pledge themselves, as a whole, to the objects and methods of the League and that they do not accept responsibility for the management of the affair ..."[226] In the post-war period there was some softening of the Community's policy: in 1919 and again in 1922 the local Labour Party was allowed to hold a Garden Party in the grounds.[227]

That the relation between monasticism and Socialism need not necessarily be harmonious is illustrated in the case of Father Samuel Healy, who found a conflict between his profession as a 'religious' and his practice as a Socialist. The Mirfield Chapter Minutes record that on January 8th 1910, the Greater Chapter "resolved that, at his request, Samuel be relieved of his pledge" and that after Chapter this was duly done (liturgically) in Chapel. Tension between Healy's views and the constraints imposed by membership of the Community had been mounting. A long letter from him, expressing strong views in an uncompromising and somewhat intemperate manner and containing a number of controversial and provocative statements had been published in the Church Times on October 22nd 1909.[228] The letter

223. Item 3.

224. Ibid., January 17th 1908 (item 16).

225. Ibid., April 30th 1914.

226. June 1914, League Notes.

227. Mirfield Chapter Minutes, July 25th 1919 (item 4); April 25th 1922 (item 1.5).

228. The subject of the letter was the Church's title to its endowments.

created something of a storm in the Community and the Chapter resolved that he should be required to withdraw the letter or the Superior would write dissociating the Community from it.[229] The Mirfield Chronicle fills in more of the background to Healy's departure: "For a long time past Samuel had been growing more and more to identify the Gospel with Socialism and to lose patience with all Church authorities as acquiescing in the rule of capitalism. Convinced that it was his mission to preach Socialism he felt he could not fulfil it in the Community and lost his hold on the principles of the religious life." He had arranged to work for Mr Lansbury in the General Election and therefore sought release from his pledge.[230] Healy continued to play a prominent part in the League throughout its life.

## THE ECUMENICAL ASPECT

For the most part Christian Socialism reflected in its organisations the marked denominational divisions of the time. Ecumenical considerations were largely absent in the thought and activities of the League. Occasionally there was co-operation in public meetings: on a local scale, for example, a C.S.L. meeting at Bow with George Lansbury in the Chair had Noel and a Wesleyan minister as speakers,[231] whilst, on a large scale, the C.S.L. Trafalgar Square demonstration of February 1909 involved some prominent Nonconformists. "The London branch of the League" wrote Noel "has made a new departure. In response

229. Mirfield Chapter Minutes, October 30th, 1909.

230. Vol.2, p.435. (A member of the Community is appointed as Chronicler and he gives an individual's running account of the life of the Community to set alongside the skeletal record of the business conducted at the Chapter meetings as set out in the minute books.)

231. East London Observer, 4th April 1908, 'The Church and Socialism - Interesting meeting at Bow'. The Revd. C. Cumberland, the Wesleyan minister, had, he said, a passion in his soul for social justice and remarked, interestingly, that among the people who opposed him most were the working men themselves. He had come to the area as a Liberal but changed to Socialism because of his experience of conditions in the area.

to a suggestion of the bishops urging co-operation between Nonconformists and Churchmen on social matters, we have asked and received a ready assent from the Revs. R.J. Campell (Congregationalists), Rattenbury (Wesleyan) and Dr Clifford (Baptists) to help us by articles and speeches, in furthering our Saturday's demand to Government for immediate 'Work or Maintenance' for all unemployed persons"[232]. The cause of the unemployed inspired the London branch of the League to mount a further 'Demonstration of the Churches' in February 1921[233], followed up by a letter outlining specific proposals in October of that year, and bearing the signatures, amongst others, of W.E. Orchard, Maude Royden and Fr Vincent McNabb O.P.[234]. Parliamentary elections provided further examples of co-operation in a common cause on an 'unofficial' basis, as, for example, in the famous Colne Valley by-election of 1907, in which Victor Grayson triumphed as an Independent Socialist. F.R.Swan, reporting the event for the Optimist wrote: "Ministers of religion, representing different Churches, were associated with Labour leaders in every village and it is the general belief that their influence and splendid speeches were a determining factor in the Socialist victory". He mentions the contribution of League men West, Cummings, Graham, and others and goes on to say: "This represents a real catholicity in social religion and it is full of great promise".[235]

However, measured against the total 'volume' of C.S.L. activity, the ecumenical involvement was slight, and the smallness of the part it played invites scrutiny. A simple answer is that the Christian Socialist revival, and the foundation of the C.S.L. itself in 1906, pre-dated the ecumenical movement, which is generally regarded

232. Justice, February 13th 1909, 'The Church Socialist League and the Unemployed' by Conrad Noel, Hon. Organiser, C.S.L.

233. Church Socialist, March-April 1921, London Demonstration on Unemployment, February 19th.

234. Copy in Davey papers, on loan to author.

235. October 1907, F.R.Swan,'The Colne Valley Socialist Victory'.

as originating from the International Missionary Conference held at Edinburgh in 1910. However, the considerations which led missionary delegates to move along the paths of unity were not totally dissimilar to those facing Christian Socialists: the latter, too, were engaged in a mission, to a nation increasingly indifferent to their religious message, and to Church members ignorant or fearful of their Socialist message or frankly hostile to it. Moreover, as in the mission field there was duplication and, possibly, rivalry. These circumstances did not, however, suggest co-operation to the majority of Christian Socialists. Beyond practical considerations, though it had practical implications, a question demanding serious consideration was whether there was not a fundamental inconsistency in vigorously preaching a Socialism of universal brotherhood - people had grown up with divisions in the Christian 'brotherhood' - and yet, in maintaining rigid organisational divisions in the Christian Socialist societies, apparently denying such fraternity even amongst those who, presumably, most clearly shared a similar standpoint. Socialism, too, had its divisions and its separate societies: in the context of Christian denominational divisions and Socialist divisions the question of organisational co-operation and unity perhaps seemed neither urgent nor obvious. Certainly it was a question which seems to have received little consideration in the League.

It was a time of denominational separation rather than of co-operation: it was not, for instance, until as late as 1932 that the various species of Methodism were united. Perhaps the decline in religious observance had not gone far enough to draw the denominations closer together round the dying embers of the nation's Christian commitment. People thought naturally in terms of their own denominations and Christian Socialist societies largely followed the denominational pattern.[236] It was a matter of

236. There was a fundamental division between Anglicans and 'the rest'. The Quakers had their own Socialist Society. The Christian Socialist Society, the Christian Socialist League and the Free Church Socialist League all drew members from a number of denominations. For a treatment of the whole range of these societies see P. d'A Jones, The Christian Socialist Revival, 1877-1914, (1968).

tradition and also, given the denominational structure and apparatus, of convenience: it was natural and it was easier to work within such a framework. It was easier to achieve coherence and to define a target. The Church of England, moreover, as 'the Church of the nation', by establishment and attitude, if not by statistics, may have in consequence felt less impetus towards association with other religious bodies. In addition to the 'convenience' aspect and the 'national Church' aspect there may also have been a doctrinal aspect in some Anglo-Catholic minds with the Anglican Church being seen as part of the true Catholic Church while the Nonconformist denominations were regarded as defective and schismatic voluntary religious associations - the Anglican Church alone offering a valid basis for any common enterprise. However, the undenominational Christian Socialist Society received the support of the 'advanced' Catholic Charles Marson, a leading personality in the G.S.M. and later a member of the C.S.L.[237] On the other hand, League members such as Noel and Ten Bruggenkate felt a somewhat emotional antipathy towards Protestantism because of its individualistic and pietistic associations. In the declamatory and denunciatory Manifesto of Noel's organisation 'The Catholic Crusade', which he founded after leaving the C.S.L., we find the invitation "If you are prepared to fight the soul-savers with their Glory-for-me religion ... help the Crusade": equally, though, alongside a reference to "the smugness of dissent" we find a mention of "the safeties of the Central Party and its glorified Matins" and "the self-satisfaction of the 'real Catholics'", all of whom are

237. Jones, op.cit., pp.308-11; Heroes of the Catholic Revival: No.32 Charles Latimer Marson - no author given, published by The Catholic Literature Association, 1933. It is possible that Paul Stacy may have been involved in writing or producing material for this booklet: Stacy papers (Hayward Collection) contain correspondence about Marson's life from his widow, Clotilda. In this series Marson takes his place alongside such figures as Keble, Newman, Pusey, Mackonochie, Dolling and Stanton; Church Socialist, April 1914, Editorial: "By the death of Charles Marson the League has lost one of its most brilliant and original members."

regarded as aiming at what Noel describes as "a glucose heaven"[238]. Ten Bruggenkate, contrasted Individualism with Socialism as two philosophies of life, responsible for two conceptions of Christianity. 'Protestantism was concerned with the soul' as a kind of abstraction from the individual: 'Catholicism' was the religion of completeness, concerned with all men and the whole of man - "man doesn't possess a soul, he is one" - and on a sacramental basis it presented an organised and visible society. His distinction between Protestantism/ Individualism and Catholicism/ Socialism was not, he pointed out, quite the same as the ecclesiastical divisions commonly associated with the terms 'Protestant' and Catholic'.[239] Catholics, Tractarian and Roman, fell into his category of condemnation. "A reactionary religious system" he stated "is not always confined to, or completely identified with, modern Protestantism in the popular sense of the word, but is found flourishing in many centres of Tractarian Catholicism - for which we are still paying the penalty. In its crude and one-sided teaching, in its narrow and feeble view of sin, in its intense specialisation, it is easy to trace the beginnings of what our opponents call the 'atheism' of certain Socialists." For Ten Bruggenkate the Pope, properly viewed, was the arch-Protestant: "It is because the Pope lives in the past, theologically, ethically, philosophically, politically, economically and socially, because, when the polish is taken off he is found to be wedded to the Protestant conceptions of life and religion, that he stands as the symbol of the most powerfully reactionary body in Europe".[240] For some Catholic members of the League

238. The Catholic Crusade 1918-1936 - A reprint of its original Manifesto with an introduction and notes by Reg Groves (1970), p.15; see also Church Socialist, October-November 1919.

239. Church Socialist Quarterly, April 1911, G.H. Ten Bruggenkate, 'Catholicism and Socialism'.

240. G.H. Ten Bruggenkate, Catholicism and Socialism (1912), pp.10-11. [In Church Socialist, October 1912, Egerton Swann in an article on 'Socialism and Theology' criticised the late G.H. Ten Bruggenkate for his confusing use of terms in his tract.]

it would seem, then, that only a social democratic version of Catholicism, as defined by them, offered a true way forward. "The Catholic conception of Christianity" wrote Ten Bruggenkate, "which we believe to be the true one, and the historic one, besides showing man in his relation to God, or rather, through showing to man his relation to God, also shows him his relation to man and society and affords, so we believe, the best and the only true basis of the Socialist faith in brotherhood, justice and love."[241]

Given the religious climate of the time it is, then, perhaps not surprising that the Church Socialist League came into being as a specifically Anglican society, taking as its stated object 'to secure the corporate action of the Church (i.e. the Church of England) on these principles', which were that the Church had a mission to the whole of human life, social and individual, material and spiritual, that it could best fulfil its social mission in its corporate capacity and that to that end the members accepted the principles of Socialism. The methods to be adopted included securing the consideration of social questions at official Church conferences and the election of Socialists, including due representation of the wage-earning classes, to official bodies of the Church. Membership, it was specifically stated, was open to all members of the Church of England.[242] The ecumenical issue was, however, soon thrust upon the League by the desire of some Nonconformists to join it. A branch report from Manchester in the summer of 1907 revealed that several Nonconformists were anxious to join, but the secretary, very regretfully, had had to say 'No'.[243] Noel, then Organising Secretary of the League, opened up this issue in the Optimist in January 1908: "if we only ask for Baptism should we exclude any baptised from membership

241. Ibid., p.10.

242. Optimist, October 1906, p.63.

243. Ibid., July 1907, Branch Reports.

e.g. Nonconformists?" He suggested, by way of personal speculation, that the C.S.L. might be used by God as a vehicle of re-unification[244] - one presumes, in the light of his sentiments expressed later in the Catholic Crusade Manifesto that, unless his attitude had greatly hardened in the intervening decade, that re-unification would be envisaged on the basis of Noel's version of Catholicism. Noel, in fact, in the previous summer, in a newspaper article describing the League, had seemed to open the door, however slightly, to a consideration of the issue of baptism and membership, though the 'safety chain' of the League's rules was left in place. "Although the leaders of the movement would urge", he wrote, "that the full privileges of the Church cannot be obtained without Confirmation and Communion, the League would, of course, not deny, but rather insist, that Baptism, when properly administered, even by laymen or women, Conformist or Nonconformist, constitutes valid membership of the historic Church. It confines its own membership to Churchmen, but beyond the fact of Baptism it leaves considerable liberty to the individual in the interpretation of his claim to Churchmanship."[245] The League's membership rules remained, however, intact: even if Baptism itself, validly performed, carried no necessary denominational implications, those who were active as members of non-Anglican bodies were debarred through their denominational allegiance. An article in the Church Socialist Quarterly in 1909 announced the formation of a Free Church Socialist League, described as primarily an ethical and educational, rather than a political, organisation.[246] At the 1912 Annual Conference there was a move to make the basis of League membership more exclusive: a resolution from the Leicester branch proposed that it should be restricted to communicants of the Church of England, but the feeling

244. "'The Church Socialists and Baptism', being a letter from the Organiser of the C.S.L. to a local Secretary of the League".

245. 'The Socialist League of the Church of England' by the Rev. C. Noel (Hon. Organising Secretary), newspaper cutting, unidentified, n.d. but from internal evidence summer of 1907. (Noel papers, University of Hull).

246. July issue. 'Free Church Socialist League' by Herbert Dunnico.

of the meeting was against this amendment.[247] Later in that year from within the ranks of the C.S.L. there came through a letter to the editor of the Church Socialist, a renewed call for the League to include all baptized Christians of any denomination: the correspondent felt that the Socialist movement needed to have some visible connection with organised Christendom.[248] The issue surfaced again in 1916 when the League's Executive Committee reported that, as a result of the application of the head of a religious body not in communion with the Church of England for membership in the League, it had ruled that it could not accept nominations of ministers of Denominations not in communion with the Church of England. "The members of the League", the report stated, "will appreciate the wisdom of this resolution. Nearly every Denomination has its own social or socialist society today, and there is an Inter-Denominational Conference of Social Service Unions to which it is possible to be affiliated."[249] Obviously as the League moved nearer towards its Anglo-Catholic denouement in 1923 the prospects receded for any change in the basis of membership in the direction of ecumenism.

## THE CULTURAL AND AESTHETIC ASPECT

The death of Stewart Headlam in 1924 prompted the Manchester Guardian to write a leading article under the title 'Church and Stage', recalling his foundation of the Church and Stage Guild in 1879, his presidency of the London Shakespeare League, his efforts towards allaying Christian prejudice against the theatre and his achievement in helping to effect a change "not only from distrust to toleration, but from toleration

247. Church Socialist, June 1912, Report of Annual Conference.

248. Ibid., December 1912, 'Socialism and Theology' (editorial digest of correspondence on this subject).

249. Ibid., May 1916, League Notes - Executive Committee Report, item 6.

to a wise and enthusiastic understanding of art's place in the life of the spirit".[250] To the minds of the men who attended the 1906 Conference at Morecambe, however, Headlam's passion for the performing arts, it will be recalled, was seen, in the atmosphere of tactical utilitarianism which the League's founders breathed, as a positive reason for not identifying themselves with the Guild of St Matthew and for forming, instead, a new organisation. Nevertheless, though the League made no systematic exposition nor drew up any programme on aesthetic matters - as much as the nature of Headlam's artistic activities it was their inextricable entanglement with the affairs of the Guild that concerned the Morecambe conferees - the cultural and artistic element was a continuing presence within Church Socialism, often implicit or submerged, but surfacing in the activities and utterances of members, sometimes in a private capacity, sometimes officially. Like Headlam, the League's last Chairman, Gobat, was an enthusiast for the theatre, serving as chaplain of the Actors' Church Union and devoting a great deal of time to it, arguing the case for "municipalities providing proper theatres and suitable plays for the public" and insisting on the link between Church and Stage - "both were seeking to enlighten the people and attempt to unite humanity in a common bond of love and sympathy."[251] Noel, a member of the Church and Stage Guild whom Headlam had tried to interest in the ballet and who had been influenced, liturgically, by Dearmer with whom he had worked at Primrose Hill, made Thaxted a notable centre for music with Gustav Holst serving as choirmaster and for dancing and ceremonial.[252] The 'Patrons of the Friends of Thaxted Church' came to include not just people from diverse strands of the ecclesiastical hierarchy - William Temple, Hewlett Johnson, Hensley Henson even - but also figures from the artistic Establishment such as Flora Robson, Sybil Thorndike and Ralph Vaughan Williams.[253] Another of Headlam's associates, Charles

250. November 20th 1924.

251. M. Gobat, op.cit., pp.65-70.

252. C. Noel, Autobiography (1945), pp.79-80, 82-83, 101-102, 104-106.

253. Leaflet, Friends of Thaxted Church n.d. but contains text of letter to The Times of 15 November 1938, appealing for funds. List of signatures of patrons (Noel papers, University of Hull).

Marson, was a pioneer in the collection of traditional folk-songs and dances, a work in which he involved Cecil Sharp, with whom this activity is usually associated.[254] Penty was pre-occupied with a passion to return to pre-industrial conditions where craftsmanship and art might again flourish.[255]

All these men were well-known in the League but cultural considerations did not, of course, affect members equally or even at all. Binyon, "not greatly interested in high-art wallpapers, ... impatient of the cult of the obsolete and out-of-date", but having some appreciation of the works of man's spirit if they expressed and fostered "a religio-social outlook", attempted an analysis of a somewhat psychological nature. In looking at Socialists of different types and how in different circumstances they re-arrange and re-group themselves in different ways, he rejects as too simple an analysis a distinction between those who profess Religion and those who repudiate it. "A distinction that often counts for more" he feels "is that between those whose Socialism is at bottom religious - in some sense of the word (whether they are Christian or regard Socialism as their religion) and those for whom Socialism is merely political (whether they are also, personally, religious or not). This distinction, which doubtless still analyses the situation too simply, shows itself in a variety of ways. Those of the former type believe in conversion; they are out to make Socialists. They are impatient with the art, the education, the whole culture of capitalist civilisation. They see things in historical perspective and work for the future. The others are anxious to get things done, and do not worry very much about other people's motives; they are more or less content with the culture they find, and only wish it

254. Ibid., p.104-5; Heroes of the Catholic Revival, No.32 - Charles Latimer Marson, (1933), pp.16-17. One of Marson's books was entitled Folk Songs from Somerset.

255. This theme runs through his many books. For a statement in connection with the notion of Christendom see his chapter (vi), 'The Obstacle of Industrialism in The Return of Christendom.

were accessible to all. They are not much concerned about the future and live busy and useful lives".[256] Binyon's insights may have some value: the two attitudes which he identifies with regard to the existing culture - transformation and re-distribution - correspond to two main facets of Socialism. In the League, Stuart Smith seems to furnish an example of Binyon's first type. The Socialist movement he felt should realise that it stands not so much for an amendment of our present ideals and customs as the building of a new civilisation. "We want", he said, "a complete break-away from the civilisation of Manchester and Leeds, and not even the Hampstead Garden Suburb is our earthly paradise." The working classes "must be strong enough to break away ruthlessly from our middle-class conventions and build up a new England radically different from the old. Their England will be as different from ours as Middlesbrough from Hatfield."[257]

Though Binyon's approach, identifying two basic and distinct stances, is useful, the aesthetic aspect is more complex and requires further examination. We can identify a number of sources. At one level one can simply suggest that intelligent well-educated League members were merely involved in the common culture of the time. Social moralists and critics - Shaw, Galsworthy, Wells, Chesterton, Belloc - were active in that period. In some cases, Noel's for instance, common culture was fortified through personal links with its leading exponents.[258] The themes of Ibsen, who died in 1905, were in the air, and Ibsen is the subject of lectures by Noel[259] and Gobat[260]. A lecture entitled 'Five Modern

256. Gilbert Clive Binyon, 'I want ...', unpublished typescript (1927?), p.12, Binyon papers, University of Leeds. For an illustration of the notion of Socialism as essentially religious with the act of becoming a Socialist being seen as analogous to a religious conversion see Ten Bruggenkate, Catholicism and Socialism, pp.13 and 14.

257. Church Socialist, December 1912. Some Church Socialists and their Views-x-The Rev. C. Stuart Smith.

258. Noel, op.cit., passim.

259. Noel papers, University of Hull contain notices of lectures by him on Ibsen and Shakespeare (n.d.) Autobiography, p.104 indicates they were given during his Paddington years, i.e. between 1900 and 1905.

260. M. Gobat, op.cit., p.88.

Writers: Wells, Galsworthy, Shaw, Chesterton and Masefield' was, apparently, delivered one hundred times by Gobat.[261] The culture of the day obviously provided material, but we need to look beyond merely incidental influences: here and there the writings of the Church Socialists indicate that they regarded aesthetic and cultural values as part of a 'total' view of life.[262] In this conception they had an inspiration and inheritance from both the Christian tradition and the Socialist tradition, and in some of the concerns of Church Socialists these traditions may be seen to converge.

A fundamental source lies in the conception of the nature of God. "Beauty", points out a Christian Socialist of the next generation, "is seen as an attribute of God and therefore a Christian sociology cannot omit the aesthetic values from its consideration. A due regard for beauty is manifested in two ways: positively by the endeavour to make the things necessary to man's life, things of beauty and dignity; negatively by taking care not to spoil natural beauty". (This allied question of respect for nature also finds a theological imperative in the doctrine of creation and the concept of 'God's world').[263] In some respects this theme may be seen as a theologically derived parallel to another traditional strand in English education, the Greek conception of 'beauty' as an ultimate value, which is opposed therefore to ugliness or mediocrity and tied in with aspiration, high achievement and disinterested excellence. Travel along this route brings one close to the concept of the perfection of God. Such a concept then has implications for the creatures of such a God, in terms of aims and activities, not merely moral but 'total'.

The 'total' view of life finds expression in the first of the League's principles and finds correspondence with Catholicism, with its emphasis on completeness and 'the whole',[264] and its sacramental doctrines and rites,

261. Ibid., p.94.

262. E.g. Binyon, op.cit., p.12.

263. R. Tribe, The Christian Social Tradition (1935), p.165 and pp.164-167 for a consideration of this theme.

264. See e.g. Church Socialist Quarterly, April 1911, G.H. Ten Bruggenkate, 'Catholicism and Socialism'.

involving the use and sanctification of matter. Of the Catholic democrats of the C.S.L. Noel wrote:- "They believe also in a beautiful ceremonial, in incense, lights, music, appealing to men's various senses and testifying to the wholesomeness of bodily appetites and needs."[265] In the central sacramental rite, the Eucharist, the aesthetic aspect is linked with the doctrines of Creation, Incarnation and Redemption: in this action there is represented an offering to God of the whole of his creation, including the divine gifts of creativity given by God the Creator and incarnated in his creatures, and through the 'death' of offering, in union with the self-offering of the Incarnate Son, the hallowing of these gifts, received again, 'resurrected', for use to the glory and in the purposes of God in the context of Christ's 'new creation', the 'redeemed' world.[266] Noel makes the connection between the externals of worship and Socialism:- "Many people have been led through ritualism, which denies the divorce between body and soul, to Socialism, which denies that same divorce more strenuously."[267]

The Christian and Socialist traditions converge in the notion of fullness of life - a more abundant life, an enriched life with the means of enrichment readily available. "The League", declared Widdrington, "is up against poverty in its widest meaning - poverty of mind, poverty with regard to all the aesthetic values, with regard to the spiritual values."[268] From the Socialist side for some people "aesthetic appreciation is a characteristic of the 'better life' to which Socialism

265. Justice, February 13th 1909, 'The Church Socialist League and the Unemployed' by Conrad Noel.

266. Some of these themes are explored, without relation to Christian Socialism though there is a congregational and community context, in The Church and the Arts (1960), edited by F.J. Glendenning. E.g. p.18, apropos of the Eucharist, "Liturgy, music, drama, furnishings, architecture and the rest, came together to point us towards the Eternal God, who made himself known to us in humiliation, an ugly death and yet a glorious resurrection." Chapter 2 by E.J. Tinsley, deals with 'The Incarnation and Art'.

267. Justice, loc.cit.

268. The Willesden Call, October 24th 1913. Report of Widdrington's speech at C.S.L. propaganda meeting at Willesden Green.

is but a means of advance."[269] The aesthetic tradition from Socialism was however not merely concerned with a passive appreciation but with the active satisfaction, even the fulfilment and joy, of the worker in his work. This view, which finds expression in the works of social critics and artists such as William Morris and Ruskin, stems from a survey, from the artist's standpoint, of society and the results of modern industrial organisation on the lives and works of men, and levels its condemnation primarily at the "ugliness and spiritual sterility of capitalism rather than at its wastefulness and economic injustice."[270] The working man was seen to be engaged in dreary mechanical tasks, performed over long hours for low pay in ugly and unhealthy conditions. Commercialism and machinery, seen as having enslaved the worker, were condemned. It is easy to deride some of the practical outworkings of these judgements. "From Morris and Walter Crane", wrote one historian of Socialism, "came the curious and not altogether helpful association of English socialism with the petty handicrafts: a sentimental idealisation of hand labour which occasionally went to the lengths of attempts to revive the spinning wheel and the handloom, and the notion that there was some social virtue in hammered copper and hand-wrought ironwork."[271] C.S.L. member, A.J. Penty, one of the originators of Guild Socialism, stands firmly in this tradition. In his significant book, The Restoration of the Gild System, published in 1906, in which he acknowledges his indebtedness to Ruskin, Carlyle and Arnold[272], machinery and materialism are denounced and art exalted as the eternal enemy of commercialism. Approval went to the Arts and Crafts

269. D.F. Summers, 'The Labour Church and Allied Movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1958, p.67 footnote referring to letter from William Morris to C.E. Maurice.

270. These phrases are used by Anthony Quinton in Chapter 6, 'Thought' in S. Nowell-Smith (ed), Edwardian England (1964).

271. S.F. Markham, A History of Socialism (1930), p.116. At the time of publication the author was a Labour M.P. (1929-31): by 1951 he had become a Conservative M.P. (Who's Who, 1966).

272. pp.vii-viii.

movement as one of the forces of social reconstruction."[273] The growing influence of Guild Socialism in the League from 1912 brought in its train this particular aesthetic tradition.[274] Reckitt, the leading champion of Guild Socialism in the League, was more realistic in his ideas than Penty but, in an article in the Church Socialist in 1914, he echoes similar sentiments. Machinery is not repudiated entirely, but instead of that "mastery of the machine over man which has been the characteristic feature and medium of Industrial Capitalism since its earliest victories over the ideals of craftsmanship and brotherhood", the machine will be subservient to the work. As with Penty, inspiration is found in the Middle Ages. "The Guild idea avowedly bases itself upon the ideals and practices of the Middle Ages ... The Mediaeval note once sounded refuses to be silenced. And in that note we may detect the twin echoes of Fraternity and of the Craft spirit". In this short article there are frequent further references linking together brotherhood and craftsmanship. He looks to the future emergence of a Work State (as Penty had styled it) "in which men seek to realise themselves in their labour; and do not find their sole satisfaction in life to lie in the leisure snatched from their dull activities as hired servants of the Community."[275] This

273. Ibid., pp.17-21, 44-45, 101-3, 77-83. Given the views on collectivism expressed in this book it is not surprising that Penty's association with the C.S.L. begins only after Guild Socialism became an important influence in the organisation.

274. Widdrington in Commonwealth, July 1927, p.222 suggests that the League committed itself to Guild Socialism in 1915 by a large majority, but Church Socialist, July 1915, in the account of the Annual Conference suggests a less clean-cut verdict. "The Conference inclined to the Guild conception of the reconstruction of industry without committing itself to Guild Socialism root and branch". (p.138).

275. July 1914, M.B. Reckitt, 'The Future for the Guild System". In the last phrase quoted we can detect echoes of the 'Servile State' as depicted in the book of that title by Hilaire Belloc.

strand, with its particular champions, persisted thereafter in the C.S.L. We find it expressed, for instance,when the reconstruction of the League was being planned, in a Manifesto prepared for the Executive Committee in 1922, proposing a new basis and a new name - The Christendom League: it was the period of the preparation of The Return of Christendom, a time when Reckitt, Penty and Widdrington exercised much influence. Comment on "the bitter hostility of the business magnate" and the "chilly discouragement of the State" to the re-creation in new forms of "the essentially Christian principles of the guilds" is followed immediately by the observation that, "Beauty is strangled everywhere by economic processes devoted to the production of standardised articles on a quantitative basis, which not only degrade the abilities and stifle the creative instincts of those who have to make them, but depress the level of artistic perception in those for whom they are made. The machine which might have increased the potentialities of civilisation has, as the servant of money power, become principally a means of degrading and enslaving it."[276] In this passage one may pick up some slight traces of the scent which wafts from time to time from middle class 'progressives' - the 'aristocracy of the intellect', the self-appointed arbiters of taste, an enlightened elite, perhaps slightly patronisingly, 'legislating' for others. Alongside this perception, however, one must set the consonance of this particular aesthetic tradition with certain Christian doctrines or values - creativity, the doctrine of work, the worth of the individual, respect for and stewardship of material things, a life not determined by commerce but by a sound and satisfactory relationship to other human beings and the world they occupy together.

276. Manifesto (for consideration at the meeting of the Executive Committee on 18th October 1922.) Copy in Stacy papers, University of Leeds.

## THE LEAGUE AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

By the Basis of the Church Socialist League as revised in 1911 the organisation was committed to 'the political, economic and social emancipation of the whole people, men and women' ... and to giving 'practical effect to the sex equality proclaimed by the sacraments of the Church'[277]. The League therefore invites scrutiny in two respects: in regard to the manifestation of these principles in its own 'domestic' life as a society and in regard to its contribution to the wider cause of the emancipation of women, particularly as focused in the suffrage movement.

By and large the Anglican tradition has been for women to be prominent only in 'women only' organisations, whether in orders of nuns or unions of mothers: in mixed ones they have often been brewers of tea and suppliers of sponge cakes. Though a small number of women played an important part in the League's central affairs, the main offices were dominated by men. No woman was ever Chairman and of the ten occupants of the Vice-Chairman's post only one was a woman - Louise Donaldson, wife of the Revd. Lewis Donaldson. Two of the five Hon. Treasurers were women, Mrs E.M. Mansell-Moullin and Miss L. Arnold, as were two of the three editors of the Church Socialist, Mrs M.H. Wood and Miss Ruth Kenyon. There was usually a fair sprinkling of female branch secretaries. There seems to be no indication of any discrimination in the League on the grounds of gender but, nevertheless, on committees, in public meetings and in written propaganda, men dominated. The Editorial chair of the Church Socialist occupied by women for 5½ of its ten years existence, was, however, an influential position in the League's life.

277. There was no issue of the Church Socialist Quarterly in July 1911 when the Annual Conference would normally have been reported. By the time of the next issue, October, the journal had reverted to its original title of Optimist and the C.S.L. connection had evidently ceased. However, the report of the 1910 Annual Conference (Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1910) indicates that it was decided to refer the question of the abolition of sex inequality to the next Conference (1911), whilst the report of the 1912 Conference (Church Socialist, June 1912) refers to details of the constitution filling up so much of the Conference's time in the previous year. The Basis from which these phrases relating to women have been quoted was printed in the first issue of the Church Socialist in January 1912. It seems clear, therefore, that the Basis was revised at the Annual Conference in 1911.

In the Church as a whole League members did strive to secure for women a larger influence in its affairs. In its first year for instance the Birmingham branch devoted one of its four meetings to the position of women in the Church (and a second to women in society). Gobat introduced women as sidesmen in his church, a somewhat arresting innovation in 1914. At the meeting at which, having been proposed by the Vicar, they were elected, there were more women present than men. Gobat commented, "Considering the amount of work done and responsibility held by women in our churches, it seems to me the height of absurdity and altogether wrong that they are not placed upon our church governing bodies." He saw no reason why women should not be represented on the Church Council, the Ruri-Decanal Conference, and the Diocesan Conference.[278] Later in the same year the Church Socialist reported some advance in this area and drew attention to the League's part in it. "We think the members of the C.S.L. can claim some credit for the recent decision in Convocation that women, and not merely rate paying women, should be eligible as voters for, and members of Church Councils. They have got resolutions passed on the subject at many local vestries and Church Councils."[279]

On the wider front Stuart Smith saw the emancipation of women as part of his 'dream' of the future Socialist society. Considering 'The Home in Socialism', he foresaw a great development of communal life for much of the drudgery of household chores could be lessened by co-operative methods. He saw no reason "in the nature of things" why every wife should be expected to cook a dinner every day, whether she could really cook or not: communal kitchens could serve family meals, "either in communal eating-houses like the best of our modern restaurants or in our own houses. Of course if some home-loving woman preferred to cook her own family dinner in her own way",

278. Northern Echo, 16th April 1914.

279. August 1914, Editorial.

he adds, "she will be perfectly free to do so." In Socialism there would be room for all kinds of methods, in housekeeping as in other things. He felt that it was fairly certain that the woman of the coming age would not be inclined to unnecessary drudgery. "She will not love her husband less", he averred "but she will be his companion rather than his servant, and the wife will in many cases have her own profession just as he has his." Whether the nation would develop in the Socialist direction or not he was certain that the women's movement would bring great changes in home-life: "Family life will be modelled less on the idea of a petty kingdom, and more as a section of a great society of comrades. The family will not live its own life in a kind of enclosed community, but will share more than it now does in the communal life."[280] In a less visionary context Lansbury expressed similar judgements on the domestic servitude to which women were subjected when he addressed the League's Special Conference in 1916, to which not only members but also friends were invited. Reporting his own speech, "I upheld the view", he writes, "that women must choose their own vocation; that the present kind of homes, with all their drudgery and menial labour, should be abolished; that mothers should have much more leisure, and wherever possible labour-saving appliances should be introduced; that household work was one of the worst forms of slavery - washing days for large families were unendurable; that all this kind of work should be centralised and done by machinery; that work was a good thing when it was not forced work and was varied in character. Some speakers vigorously supported this view, others as vigorously opposed it."[281]

Lewis Donaldson, in an article in the Church Socialist, approached the women's question from the standpoint of justice. In law, with regard to marriage, divorce and

280. C. Stuart Smith, Socialism and Religion: An Appeal to Churchmen, Modern Church Manual No.8, 1912, pp.15-16.

281. The Herald, September 23rd 1916, 'The Church's Message to Labour' by Geo Lansbury.

children, he found that women were bound with 'ancient and rusty chains'; in industry they were overworked and underpaid in comparison with men; in political action they had no vote to redress their wrongs.[282] It was, of course, this last issue which presented the sharp edge of the problem. League members played their part in the suffrage campaign. Mrs M.H. Wood, as editor of the Church Socialist from January 1912 until the summer of 1915, kept the question before the eyes of members through her Editorials[283] as well as bringing the subject up in the occasional propaganda meeting.[284] The issue was also aired at branch meetings[285]. Prominent League members championed the cause. At the 1907 Church and Labour Conference at Mirfield, Paul Bull proposed a resolution in favour of adult suffrage including the extension of the right of suffrage to women on the same conditions as men, and amongst the speakers who supported the motion were Mrs Pankhurst and Miss Kenney.[286] T.C. Gobat frequently spoke at meetings called by the movement. Taking the chair for Mrs Fawcett at a meeting of the West Hartlepool Society for Women's Suffrage early in 1913, he told his audience: "It is a larger movement than the mere demand for the vote. It is a demand on the part of women for emancipation from unjust conditions. It is a demand to be free from that supposed inferiority to men. I ask you to support the movement because you are Christians, because you are lovers of justice and because you are wise men and women. If you accept the principles of the Gospel you are bound to be in favour of the women's movement, and particularly in favour of the demand of women to have and to exercise the vote". The speech called forth severe criticism in the local press.[287] Gobat was undeterred. On June 23rd he took the chair for the Women's Suffrage Pilgrims when they

282. March 1913, F.L. Donaldson 'Women and Justice'.

283. E.g. April 1912, February, May, June and July 1913, July 1914. M.B. Reckitt began his editorship with the July 1915 issue.

284. E.g. her speech at Willesden Green reported in The Willesden Call, October 24th 1913.

285. E.g. Church Socialist, February 1913, League Notes, Stockport; April 1913, League Notes, London.

286. Labour Leader, 3rd May 1907.

287. M. Gobat, op.cit., p.62.

reached Darlington on their march to London[288]. The following month saw Gobat himself in London where with Lewis Donaldson he was billed as a speaker at a 'Great Demonstration' in the Queen's Hall promoted by the National Political League in "protest against the Government's extreme coercion policy whereby women are facing death through the administration of the 'Cat and Mouse' Act and to demand the only statesmanlike alternative, the vote as the end of it once and for all."[289] The C.S.L's Annual Conference for that year had already passed a motion condemning the Government's action in regard to the enfranchisement of women and demanding the immediate introduction of a Government measure giving the vote to all adults of both sexes,[290] and the Church Congress at Southampton in the autumn found Rashleigh addressing an open-air meeting for the 'Church League for Women's Suffrage' and Donaldson preaching on 'Women's Suffrage' and addressing the Congress on the 'Women's Movement' in general.[291] Of all the League's champions of the movement, George Lansbury M.P., Chairman 1912-1913, was the most redoubtable. In June 1912 Lansbury was at the centre of a storm in the House of Commons when he followed up his questions to the Home Secretary, from whom he required detailed statistics on imprisoned suffrage campaigners - on hunger strikes, forcible feeding and hospital admissions[292] - with an extremely spirited outburst giving his judgement on the situation, which resulted in the Speaker requiring him to leave the House "in consequence of his grossly disorderly conduct."[293] The following day in a third leader The Times referred to the episode as "the foolish and unmannerly exhibition which Mr Lansbury made in the House of Commons yesterday" and

288. Ibid., p.63.

289. Daily Citizen, 8th July 1913, notice of meeting; M. Gobat op.cit. p.63.

290. Church Socialist, May 1913 Inset, Conference Agenda; June 1913, Report of Conference.

291. Ibid., November 1913, 'The C.S.L. at the Church Congress'.

292. The Times, June 25th 1912.

293. Hansard 1912 Vol.XL, p.217, June 25th.

under a report headed 'Scene in the House' it was described as "an angry tirade"[294]. By many C.S.L. members, however, Lansbury's performance was received with acclaim. "God bless you and reward you for your splendid action", wrote his erstwhile electioneering colleague, Sam Healy;[295] "You are splendid! I congratulate you with all my heart. It is something to have made that smug self-satisfied lawyer squirm" remarked Widdrington[296]; Mrs Mansell-Moullin thanked him from the bottom of her heart for his "magnificent protest"[297] while Stacy in sending his congratulations put his own particular gloss on the episode, telling Lansbury that he had "borne most splendid testimony to the Catholic faith."[298] Lansbury's protests took a more self-sacrificial form later in the year. He left the House of Commons in October because of a disagreement with the party on the subject of the franchise: he wanted the party to move an amendment to the proposed Suffrage Bill so that women would be included. The party would not back this view and Lansbury therefore resigned his seat, to fight on the issue of Women's Suffrage[299] in a by-election in his own constituency of Bow and Bromley in November. His action brought praise and admiration from League quarters. The Secretary of the Bath branch congratulated him on "a splendid fight for one of the most vital principles of Socialism" and expressed their pride that it was the Chairman of <u>their</u> League who had taken such a definite stand for the enfranchisement of women.[300] Mrs Mansell-Moullin told him: "Your magnificent fight and protest has done untold good. I was taking the chair at a big meeting at Hastings last night for Mrs Pankhurst and a tremendous shout went up

294. <u>The Times</u>, June 26th 1912.

295. S. Healy to Lansbury, June 26th 1912, Lansbury papers, L.S.E.

296. P.E.T. Widdrington to Lansbury, June 25th 1912. Lansbury papers L.S.E. The dating of this letter, as well as the content, indicate that it refers to Lansbury's questioning of the Home Secretary on June 24th and not to the exchanges leading to Lansbury's expulsion on the 25th.

297. Edith Mansell-Moullin to Lansbury, June 26th 1912, loc.cit.

298. Paul Stacy to Lansbury, June 26th 1912, loc.cit.

299. G. Lansbury, <u>My Life</u> (1928), pp.120-121.

300. Gertrude Francis, Hon.Sec., Bath branch, C.S.L. to Lansbury, 28th November 1912, Lansbury Papers, L.S.E.

from a thousand throats every time she and I mentioned your name."[301] The Bow and Bromley electorate were less appreciative: Lansbury was defeated at the polls and, as a result, he was out of the House of Commons for ten years.[302] He continued the campaign through the medium of journalism. "Lansbury", writes a near contemporary, "first as driving force and then as editor of the Daily Herald, from the first number of the paper in April 1912 gave unqualified support to the militants of the Suffrage movement and took credit, justly enough, for the great part taken by the Daily Herald and its Herald League in winning the franchise ... In return the wealthier supporters of the W.S.P.U. came to the financial assistance of the Daily Herald. "Without the enthusiastic support of these women and many thousands of their poorer sisters, there would have been no Daily Herald to write about, and it is with the very deepest gratitude that I record this simple fact."[303]

Despite this substantial support from the League and the personal involvement, whether under their own colours or those of the League, of at least four of the seven men who were to serve as chairman, the Suffrage movement, as organised, ran into some opposition in the C.S.L. In an article in the Church Socialist Quarterly in July 1910, Noel declared that "the Suffragist objective is not only distinct from but alien to the Socialist objective". He considered the measures proposed at the time and went on to conclude:- "Socialism includes, as a fragmentary but important part of its objective, electoral power for all men and all women. In Socialism there is neither male nor female. In Suffragism there is no male. Suffragism and socialism are incompatible."[304]

301. Edith Mansell-Moullin to Lansbury, 27th November 1912, loc.cit.

302. G. Lansbury, op.cit., p.121.

303. Clayton, op.cit., p.157. The footnote on this page suggests that Clayton is himself quoting from Lansbury's account of the Daily Herald in The Miracle of Fleet Street (1925). Clayton was probably about 10 years younger than Lansbury: he was an undergraduate at Oxford 'in the late eighties' (p.ix).

304. 'Socialism and Suffragism'.

Noel felt that the Women's Suffrage movement would result in votes only for privileged women and as such it was an obstacle, retarding the advent of Socialism and with it a total adult suffrage regardless of sex. Noel was not alone in 'the left' in viewing the movement critically. Rowland Kenney, despite his editorship of the Daily Herald and the activities of his sister Annie as a leading figure in the movement felt, as his personal opinion, that the Suffragette campaign was robbing the Socialist movement of its finest elements and wasting them in a fight for the vote which was of little or no use compared with industrial solidarity and the making of Socialist converts. He found himself in agreement with the judgement of Orage of the influential periodical the New Age that women's suffrage was "an indifferent thing"[305] Noel's line also reflected the antipathy of the S.D.F.[306] His article provoked spirited replies. "Some of us" wrote J. Drew Roberts "dissent most cordially from Conrad Noel's position. Women ask for the vote on the ground that they are human beings. Mr Noel does not seem to realise how deeply this injustice has burned into the mind of women today". As economic injustice is the origin of a "class war", political injustice leads to the "sex war" which Noel had alluded to as 'undemocratic'.[307] Mrs Mansell-Moullin was firm and forthright: "The man who can look at the Woman's Movement of today only as a question likely to affect one or other of the parties in the State loses the whole meaning of it ... Women, as well as men, are human ... I can have nothing to do with the so-called Socialism which puts Expediency before Justice and which denies the elementary right of citizenship to any woman until all men are enfranchised."[308] Mrs Mansell-Moullin was deeply affected by the conflict between her convictions and the views expressed by some League members. In that

305. R. Kenney, op.cit., pp.137-138.

306. Clayton, op.cit., pp.158-159.

307. Church Socialist Quarterly, October 1910, J. Drew Roberts, 'Suffragism and Socialism'.

308. Ibid., E.R. Mansell-Moullin, 'Socialism and Suffragism'.

same year she wrote to George Lansbury in December, congratulating him on his election to parliament, expressing regret that she had been unable to help and telling him of an illness. She goes on to say, however, that "had I been well I could have done nothing, for ever since that terrible meeting we had last June of the London branch of the C.S.L. on Women's Suffrage, I have pledged myself not to help any parliamentary candidate at any election until women get the vote."[309] Mrs Mansell-Moullin was at that time Treasurer of the League, an office which she had held since 1908. In the Church Socialist Quarterly of April 1911 she announced her resignation from the post. She gave her reason for resignation, since the committee had pressed her to re-consider. "For some time past", she wrote, "it has been borne in on me that the League as a whole (though I am happy to say there are many notable exceptions) does not stand for the Cause of Justice to Women, equally with men. As a woman I feel this deeply and have therefore come to the conclusion that I must concentrate on the Woman's Cause; as the complete outlawry of the whole of my sex is the greatest injustice and most serious obstacle to progress at the present time."[310] Her resignation came a matter of weeks before the Annual Conference at which the League revised its Basis to give the more explicit expression of a commitment to the emancipation and equality of both sexes to which reference was made at the beginning of this section: it is possible that the departure from office of Mrs Mansell-Moullin influenced the League in this revision, though no evidence has emerged to support this conjecture. She was the wife of a distinguished surgeon[311] and she and her husband were both deeply involved in the Suffrage movement: Mrs Mansell-Moullin was one of two hundred and twenty women arrested at Caxton Hall on November 21st 1911[312]. She was also founder and

309. Edith Mansell-Moullin to George Lansbury, December 8th 1910, Lansbury papers, L.S.E.

310. Treasurer's Report.

311. Who Was Who (1929-40)

312. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement (1931), p.359 (1978 edition). This work has several references to the Mansell-Moullins.

and Hon. Organiser of the Forward Cymric Suffrage Union.[313] She retained her connection with the League and the October 1912 issue of the Church Socialist bore her photograph and biographical details and featured her in the 'Some Church Socialists and their views' series. She took the opportunity to exhort the League to press for women's rights and she pointed out that she was giving all her time to the Women's Suffrage Movement. Thereafter she fades from prominence, and perhaps even participation, in the life of the League.

## THE LEAGUE AND THE LABOUR PARTY

The Church Socialist League, as we have seen, arose in the context of the political ferment which saw the emergence of a significant Labour presence in the House of Commons. West's letter to the Labour Leader in August, 1905, had spoken of "the need to bring together the clergy who are more or less in sympathy with the aims and methods of the I.L.P."[314] The context in which the new society came into being and the initiatives which led to its foundation threw into sharp focus the whole question of the formal relationship between organised Christianity and its adherents and political organisations. The attitude of the former to the latter was one of ambivalence. Whilst 'the tuning of the pulpits' has a part in Church history so also does a strand of detachment from the every-day business of political engagement, which has its roots in a number of discernable attitudes. It derives in part from a feeling that the Church is concerned with loftier and nobler matters than the mundane materialist and occasionally base, sordid and selfish struggles and pre-occupations of the political arena. The Christian is to set his affections on the things that are 'above': here he has no abiding city and the task of the Church is to

313. Information from 'official' writing paper in letter to Lansbury, November 27th 1912.

314. August 18th 1905.

pilot him through things temporal that he finally loses not the things eternal, a task whose execution would be handicapped and jeopardised by involvement in the business of 'the world'. It derives too from the conviction that the Church has a commission of judgement to perform upon the worldly works of man: the Church, therefore, like the Judiciary, must be 'above' politics - any partisan involvement or promotion of a particular political policy would compromise the impartiality necessary for the execution of this judgemental commission. Contributing to this notion of a necessary impartiality is the commission of the Church to universal ministration: the Church has a mission to all men in all places at all times if she is to lay claim to the term 'catholic' and this availability to all on equal terms could appear to be compromised by political engagement. Further contributions to a stance of detachment come from individualistic, and often pietistic, traditions within the Church: the notion that the concern of the Church is with the individual soul and its salvation. On the other hand, against these ideas that there was impropriety, inappropriateness or irrelevance in political involvement on the part of the Church, ran currents in another direction, some of which we have examined in considering the theology of the League. Incarnational and sacramental theology pointed to, or at least sanctioned, involvement in the affairs of the world. The concept of the Kingdom of God could be interpreted as bearing such implications as could the actions of Jesus recorded in the Gospels. Moreover Christian compassion, or mere human compassion, was confronted by social conditions which could be readily observed and whose impact could be heightened by the revelations of the 'social explorers' and could not easily be ignored. 'Ambulance' work might ameliorate, but could not itself cure, and probably could not keep pace with the dimensions of the social disease. The economic and social system itself needed to be changed and previous Christian attitudes and activities clearly did not go far enough to effect any fundamental

transformation. These realisations suggested the need for greater involvement. There is, then, a conflict between two views.

Both these views are current in the period under consideration: nor, despite the indications of growing social awareness in the Church, which we have noted earlier in this study, can one say that there was a total identification of any one view with any particular generation or ecclesiastical party. In general, it would be reasonable to expect to find in Theological Colleges some of the fresher thinking and more radical viewpoints in the Church. Noel, in 1893, found that most of his fellow students at Chichester Theological College were "Conservatives, or what were then called Unionists."[315] Noel's political scale may, however, have been calibrated somewhat idiosyncratically. More reliably in 1908 future C.S.L. Treasurer, Roberts, as Principal of Dorchester Missionary Training College, wrote "The men have had a debate tonight on 'The Parson and Politics' and have carried by a small majority a resolution that he's better out of it". He held it as a healthy sign that the students should carry a motion against his own known opinions.[316] In the same year William Temple tackled the issue of political attitudes in the Economic Review, the periodical published by the Oxford branch of the C.S.U., arguing against "the suggestion, which has never been officially sanctioned by the Church, but which has been made in effect the basis of a policy of inactivity ... that the aims and object of the Labour Movement lie outside the sphere of Christianity as such". He goes on to point out that "the Church is bound to recognise the justice, the essential Christianity of the Labour Movement" and that the Church has need of the Labour Movement and the Labour Movement has need of the Church.[317] Ten years later in an article in the Daily News he took the argument a stage further. He drew a distinction between

315. Conrad Noel, Autobiography, p.31.

316. S. Miles, op.cit., p.19.

317. April 1908, 'The Church and the Labour Party, A Consideration of their Ideals', pp.194, 195, and 197.

the Labour Movement and the Labour Party. The Labour Movement, he found, was "essentially an effort to organise society on the basis of freedom and fellowship" and as such it had a right to claim the sympathy of the Church. "The Labour Party", he went on, "is a different thing: that is a political organisation and the Church as a whole must not be attached to any political party ... but Churchmen ought to consider very carefully the formulated programme of the Labour Party and whether they should individually subscribe to it ... Most emphatically, I don't say that all Churchmen should join the Labour Party. There should be Churchmen in every political party infusing into all its activities the Christian spirit. But with equal emphasis I say that the newly-constituted Labour Party claims our attention, and if we find ourselves in substantial agreement with it we are under a plain duty to join and help it both to keep its idealistic side uppermost and to press steadily forward to the realisation of its ideals." The article was prefaced by an editorial note which informed readers that Temple had recently mentioned in Convocation that he had just become a member of the Labour Party.[318] Temple's focus on the individual Churchman and his political decision is important, for if the Churchman happens also to be a priest then his exercise of responsible choice may become a dilemma. It raises the question of how far it is, or should be, possible for him to separate his activities as citizen from his role as priest, and whether his exercise of the one may conflict, in terms of pastoral ministrations, with his fulfilment of the other. He may wear different hats but to the parishioners he is likely to be seen simply as the parson. Noel, whose reputation had preceded him to Thaxted[319], felt it necessary to write to the parishioners before his Induction: he told them "I do not intend to advocate the solution of our evils which is called Socialism from the pulpit of Thaxted Parish Church".[320]

318. 14th May 1918, 'The Church and Labour'.

319. Noel, op.cit., p.88.

320. The Country Town, June 1912, C. Noel 'Socialism and the Pulpit'. Noel is quoting from the letter he wrote and claiming that he has kept to that undertaking. Adderley appears to have been less scrupulous. In a letter, dated 4 March 1907, he writes to Lansbury: "Will you seriously consider the East Birmingham constituency? Ramsay MacDonald thinks you would be a good candidate ... My pulpit will be on your side..." (Lansbury papers, L.S.E.)

It was scarcely surprising, therefore, that the C.S.L's explicit avowal of Socialism did not automatically result in the society's affiliation to the Labour Party. Indeed, even before the League began there were indications that this issue would be controversial: the Labour Leader for September 15th 1905, carried letters from two future League men - Adderley stated that if one was a cleric it was better not to join the Party, whilst Moll declared that unquestionably clergy should join the Labour Party. "How can they possibly", he asked, "if true to their message, stand aloof?" Frere, who, with Bull, was responsible for calling the Mirfield Church and Labour Conferences in 1906 and 1907, wrestled with the problem in some depth from the angles of the individual as citizen and priest, the Church and its duty to the world, the overlap of politics with the social, moral and religious spheres, and the divisions of opinion on the nature of political creeds, with Socialism being both advocated and opposed on moral and religious grounds. Having examined the many sides of the matter he came up not so much with clear answers as with difficult questions - Can the priest speak?, Can he be silent?, Shall the Church take a side?, he asks, and answers that it may be disastrous if it does and more disastrous if it does not.[321] 'Should the League join the Labour Party?' was, however, a question which, sooner or later, the League would have to face. It required its members to be 'convinced Socialists'. It stated expressly that it was 'a society within the Church composed exclusively of Socialists.'[322] After its foundation, Noel told readers of Justice that the members of the new League would "study Socialism, teach Socialism, talk Socialism and vote Socialism."[323] There was co-operation with local Labour organisations from the outset. Summerbell, one of the twenty nine Labour M.Ps and a parishioner of League Chairman, Algernon West, joined early.[324] At its first Annual Conference

321. 'Priest and Politics, ms., n.d., contained in 'Bundle of loose papers being notes for numerous addresses given by Frere to societies, special groups etc.' - Frere papers, Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York.

322. Optimist, October 1906, p.64, C.S.L. Form II.

323. June 30th 1906.

324. C.S.L., First Report, March 1907.

the League proceeded to a definition of Socialism. "The most important business of the Conference" Noel reported "was the adoption of a definition of Socialism which would show that its members were in line with the Secular Socialist societies and wished not to rival but to help them in the accomplishment of their aims. Such a definition was all the more important, said W.E. Moll (Newcastle) as a safeguard against the admission of so-called Christian Socialists, of the we-are-all-Socialists-now, slums, leadless glaze and philanthropic variety. It was agreed that the definition settled upon should be printed in the objects and rules of the League. It runs as follows;-

> By Socialism is understood the fixed principle according to which the community shall own the land and capital collectively, and use them co-operatively for the good of all."[325]

Writing in the Optimist shortly after that Conference Noel expressed satisfaction with the League's definition but he also sounded a warning and voiced some misgivings. "We will be independent of all three parties", he declared. He noted "a slight tendency at Scarborough to adopt the resolution and policy of a certain Socialist body whose work, naturally enough, evokes our enthusiasm. Should the Independent Labour Party point of view be considered in any particular subject to be the right one, it is, of course, by no means a sign of weakness to follow a sound lead, but it would surely be a sign of weakness if in the future the League should become identified in the public mind with one particular school of thought, or fail to make its own very distinct and deliberate intellectual contribution to the Socialist movement."[326] His views found echoes in the Optimist in an article by Swann calling for Church Socialist thinking on detailed policies for the new life under Socialism and in an Editorial.[327] The

325. Conrad Noel, 'With the Church Socialists at Scarborough', unidentified press cutting, n.d., Noel papers, University of Hull. Church Times, June 14th 1907 also carries a (less graphic) report.

326. July 1907, Conrad Noel, 'Towards a Church Socialist Policy'.

327. See Swann 'The Ultimate Issues of Socialism - An Appeal for frankness', July 1908; Editorial, 'Church Socialism - What is it?'

Editorial, appearing at the time of the acquisition of the periodical by the C.S.L., pointed out the League had not been founded to render aid to the I.L.P. or other secular Socialist organisations. Whilst acknowledging that the friendliest relations existed between the League and the other Socialist societies the writer pointed out that the League reached its Socialism from different premises and that it had its own special work to do in the Church: at the same time it was insisted that the League's Socialism was real Socialism.[328]

Meanwhile Algernon West's Sunderland branch, busy helping Labour candidates in local elections and discussing Ramsay MacDonald's Socialism and Society were also considering the advisability of Labour Party affiliation. For the present, they reported in January 1908, they had made no decision.[329] In the following year, however, West required of the whole League just such a decision. In an important address read, in his absence through illness, by Hastings to the Annual Conference held at Leicester on May 4th and 5th 1909, West as Chairman, called for the League to give heed to three features - Adaptation, Assimilation and Permeation. Speaking of the first, he told members to remember that they were living in the twentieth century, not the twelfth or the twenty-fifth. "We should not be too anxious", he said, "to discover precedents in the past which have very little relation to the present nor are we serving any useful purpose by speculating on the Socialism of the future... Our business is to adapt ourselves to our present circumstances, difficulties and problems and try to make what is possible, actual. We do not want arm-chair Socialism. We have suffered much from doctrinairianism. Theories based on speculation and nothing else, bring our cause into ridicule. Our attempt to consult the spirit of departed Fathers and Schoolmen brings little or no guidance that helps us much in conditions which differ so much from the

328. July 1908, Swann, 'The Ultimate Issues of Socialism - An Appeal for Frankness'; October 1908, Editorial, 'Church Socialism - What is it?'

329. Optimist, January 1908, Branch Reports.

days when those spirits were not disembodied." Turning to his second feature, Assimilation, he stated: "It is the glory of our faith, that in its passage through life it has never shrunk from taking to itself whatever good and truth it found outside itself ... We are in danger of isolating ourselves from much that is around us and yet which contains elements we cannot afford to be without. This principle of assimilation will save us from being bigoted, narrow, intolerant and exclusive - real dangers to which we are liable". His principle of Permeation he likened to the concept of 'the leaven'. "The resolutions which come before you today", he continued, "offer opportunities for the practical application of the principles I have enunciated, as well as a way of escape from some of the perils that beset us." There were two to which he referred. The first was that the League should seek unity with all Socialists throughout the world by joining the International Congress of Socialists. Such a step would save the League from insularity, inspire it with the world-wide spirit of the movement and be "a noble attempt to give expression to the Christian conception of brotherhood which is not broken by the differences which race, language or nationality may create." Turning to the second resolution, "Nearer home", he said, "we are asked to consider our association with the great democratic movement of which the Labour Party is the natural expression. This movement offers to English Socialists today the best, if not the only, way of realising their faith. If it were possible or practical, I should gladly welcome a purely Socialist Party organised for legislative action. But ... such a party at present is an utter impossibility. As we cannot have all we want, let us have what we can. In joining this movement, we shall unite ourselves with the vast majority of Socialists throughout England, and take our place and exercise our influence in the people's great movement. If we accept and apply the principles of adaptation, assimilation and permeation, this must be the logical result. Let

us not forget that Socialism will only come when the majority desire it. The making of that majority is our business and a big business it is."[330]

In the event West's policy of political alignment did not convince the Conference. Though the members did agree to send representatives to the International Conference of Socialists, the much more important, and much more controversial proposal in favour of affiliation to the Labour Party, which was the main plank of West's Conference platform, was rejected.[331] Leading Labour politician and local M.P. Ramsay MacDonald[332], a personal friend of West, was not therefore able to celebrate the League's accession to the fold but had to confine himself to generalities when he addressed the public meeting on the final evening of the Conference.[333] Arnold Pinchard, West's successor as Chairman, firmly advocated a policy of non-alignment. At a meeting of the new Executive Committee on June 4th he "expressed a strong opinion that it seemed to him premature to raise the question of the adoption of any particular policy by the League, whether that of the S.D.P. or the I.L.P. or of any other political organisation. In his opinion it was quite certain that the League ought not to identify itself, at any rate at present, with either one or other wing of the Socialist party and that any assertion of the one policy as against the other by the League would be simply suicidal; that whatever opinions individual members of the League might hold, they had no right to express them in such a manner as to compromise the League. "We are", he said, "a society of Socialists of various shades of Socialist opinion, and our common platform is not that of the I.L.P. or the S.D.P. but that of the Church of God. Our business is to convert Churchmen and make them Socialists, but the particular tint which may colour their Socialism is no concern of the League".[334] Ironically,

330. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1909, Report of Annual Conference.

331. Ibid.

332. Information from Rt. Revd.G.A.West, son of the C.S.L. Chairman - interview with author, 21st July 1977.

333. Church Socialist Quarterly, loc.cit.

334. Ibid., Report of Executive Meeting.

the same issue of the League's quarterly review which reported these proceedings also carried an article from Keir Hardie entitled 'Should the Church Socialist League join the Labour Party?' In the coming conflict when Wealth will be arrayed against Labour, "What part", he asked, "will be Church Socialist League take in the conflict? Will it range itself wholeheartedly on the side of the working people? Already a large percentage of the members of the League are also members of the I.L.P. and are thus identified with the political side of the Socialist movement. Why cannot the League openly declare itself at this stage by affiliating with the Labour Party? The constitution of the party is such that the League can come in if it will." Hardie's reference to the constitution of the party draws our attention in fact to the confused thinking that had surrounded the League's debate on political alignment. Pinchard's comments to the Executive Committee were presented in terms of the rejection of an identification of the League with the organisation and policies of any particular Socialist political society, as if the League were being asked to affiliate to the S.D.P. or the I.L.P: though West's personal sympathies were with the I.L.P., that was not the issue he was putting before the League. He was asking the League to affiliate to the Labour Party, which was a quite different matter: the League then would not be joining a particular wing of the Labour Movement - the suggestion to which Pinchard objected - but would be taking its place alongside other organisations, such as the I.L.P., who were already affiliated to the Party, and there was therefore no reason why it could not do so, and like them, retain its own identity or 'particular tint' of Socialism. "The matter" (of the C.S.L. affiliating to the Labour Party) "seems well worth consideration", said Hardie, in concluding his article, but it was already too late: the matter had been considered and a decision had been made.

The decision was, in effect, a turning point in the history of the League. As we have noted, it was possible to detect at the Morecambe Conference three elements, or perhaps more accurately, since the categories were not sharply divided, but the divisions were blurred and there was much overlap, three areas of emphasis: a political activist Socialist emphasis, a Catholic emphasis and an intellectual emphasis. In the wake of Keir Hardie's challenging 'Open Letter to the Clergy' in June 1905,[335] and in the atmosphere of political enthusiasm, West had carried the day at Morecambe, holding the Catholic and intellectual emphases at bay and creating a society very much as envisaged by him, a society explicitly committed to Socialism 'in the historical and economic meaning of the word' and composed exclusively of Churchmen who were Socialists. The other emphases were subdued but not eliminated, as West's disparaging references to armchair Socialism, speculation, doctrinairianism, and the spirit of departed Fathers and Schoolmen testified in his Chairman's Address of 1909, and it transpired that after three years of his Chairmanship, the attempt by the founding father to exercise remote control from his sickbed and to consolidate and develop the advantage skilfully won at Morecambe was destined to failure. Four years on, Keir Hardie's letter had come too late to influence the League in the direction which West had planned. Thenceforth the League was not to become an integral and institutional part of the workers' political movement. This decision, as we have seen, also had important consequences in that it led to the virtual secession from the League of West and his League lieutenant Moll, thereby greatly weakening the activist Socialist element for the future. Moll, one of whose favourite reminiscences was to tell of a visit with his mother to see Karl Marx in London, who was proud of the fact that the prophet of Revolutionary Socialism had put his hand on his head and given him a blessing[336] - a kind

335. Labour Leader, June 23, 1905.

336. Obituary notice, The late Rev. W.E. Moll, unidentified press cutting, n.d. Stacy papers (Hayward collection)

of Socialist apostolic succession presumably, who spoke on the platforms of the Labour party throughout the North[337], was, at the time, the League's Vice-Chairman and West's designated successor. "I am especially sorry" said West "that I cannot be present to welcome my successor in the Chair. No parson in England has done as much for the cause of Socialism as the Rev. W.E. Moll. In his hands the interests of the League are safe".[338] Before the election took place, however, Moll announced that he would be unable during the coming year to give as much time to the duties of Chairmanship as his predecessor had done, owing to his being officially connected with the I.L.P. as a representative on the National Administrative Council and he asked the Conference to consider this fact in connection with his nomination to the Chairmanship.[339] The Conference clearly did consider this fact, for, as we have seen, Pinchard emerged as Chairman.

The political activist ingredient in the League, though weakened, was not entirely lost, though any prospect of ascendancy had, in fact, disappeared. As we have seen Pinchard expressed the view that it was premature to consider a policy of political alignment: it was really almost too late. For a number of reasons conditions became less propitious for such a development: the natural waning of the euphoria generated in 1906, criticism of Labour Party performance in Parliament, Trade Union grievances, adverse economic conditions, wages and prices[340] and in their wake the appearance of variants, diversions and alternatives in the form of Syndicalism, Distributivism, the Suffrage campaign and Guild Socialism, all contributed to a reduction in drive and cohesion within the Labour movement and rendered more remote and complex any prospect of political affiliation.

337. Christendom, September 1932, P.E.T. Widdrington 'A Priest in Politics - William Edmund Moll, 1856-1932'. (Widdrington was at one time Moll's curate).

338. Church Socialist Quarterly, loc.cit.

339. Ibid.

340. Cole, op.cit., p.241.

The debate continued. Writing in Advent 1909 the preface to his book Socialism in Church History, published in 1910, Noel observed that the Church "must be as ready to make temporary alliances with political parties as it is determined to entangle itself inextricably with no political party soever."[341] The year 1910, with two General Elections saw further keen debate centring largely on the Labour Party performance in Parliament. In an article in January entitled 'Should the Church Socialist League join the Labour Party?' Cecil Chesterton answered his question with an emphatic 'No'. Labour was not sufficiently 'advanced' for endorsement by the C.S.L; it was in the pockets of the Liberals. League members were faced with the collapse of a party with whose original aims they were deeply in sympathy. "The Church Socialist League is a revolutionary body" he argued. To join the Labour Party "would cut us off from the really fertile revolutionary activity in which we may yet play a great part."[342] Swann on the other hand asked members not to condemn the Labour Party too severely: he felt that in partnership with the Liberals matters were going in the right direction, if slowly.[343] A motion that the League affiliate to the Labour Party came up again at the Annual Conference and again it was rejected.[344] Political debate broke out again the following year in the League's periodical, with Chesterton, Swann and Reckitt in contention and the Editor intervening as referee to rebuke Chesterton for his intemperate language: there was much talk of the Liberal Party, the Labour Party and the relationship between the two but nobody now seemed to be suggesting that the League affiliate to the Labour Party.[345] Though this fire died down it was never entirely extinguished: as late as October 1921 the Executive Committee, somewhat surprisingly, decided that while it did not consider

341. p.8.

342. Church Socialist Quarterly, January 1910.

343. Ibid. N.E. Egerton Swann, 'A Socialist View of the Political Situation'.

344. Ibid., July 1910, Report of Annual Conference.

345. Ibid., January 1911, M.B. Reckitt 'Socialism and a National Party', and a reply by C. Chesterton, 'Socialism and the Party System'; ibid., April 1911, M.B. Reckitt, 'Socialism and a National Party: a reply to Mr Chesterton', N.E. Egerton Swann, 'Where are we now?'

central affiliation opportune, it recommended the branches to consider seriously the question of affiliation to local Labour Parties[346], while in May 1923, when the League had long expunged the word 'Socialist' from its Basis and on the eve of the Conference which planned to eliminate altogether the title 'Church Socialist League', Stuart Smith, as keeper of the Socialist bellows, made one last attempt to blow the dying embers into flame. The times he felt were critical for British Socialism and Labour: "we propose, therefore, that we should take the step of applying for affiliation to the Labour Party".[347] It was a forlorn hope, as it had been for some time past. In 1913, Widdrington, up from Coventry to address a C.S.L. meeting in London, declared "I am here to tell you that the League is not primarily a political society. It is committed to no political alliance. Two or three fruitless attempts have been made to affiliate the League to a certain body in politics. Last time the resolution was brought forward, I am glad to say it was defeated by a very large majority, for I think it would be crass foolishness, apart from the principles involved, for the League at this time, when democracy is obviously passing through a transitional phase, to affiliate itself to those parties, none of which is the ultimate form which the democratic movement will take in England."[348] The foundations had been laid by West but the future lay with Widdrington.

346. C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes, 19th October 1921 (Stacy Papers, University of Leeds).

347. Commonwealth, May 1923, C. Stuart Smith, 'The Church Socialist League', p.154.

348. The Willesden Call, October 24th 1913. Report of C.S.L. meeting at Willesden Green.

THE LEAGUE AND THE CHURCH

One of the reasons frequently given for the rejection of a political alignment was that to take such a step would create an obstacle to the fulfilment of the League's real purpose, even a diversion from its true target, the conversion of the Church. On the heels of the 'affiliation' debate at the 1909 Conference there appeared an article which, in stressing the need for the League to awaken Churchmen to a sense of their responsibilities, declared, "We must make them feel that our standpoint is not so much politics as religion".[349] After the defeat of the affiliation proposal in the following year, the Editor of the League's journal remarked, "We are glad the Conference decided not to ally itself with the Labour Party. We are in existence for a definite and distinctive work, which we can only accomplish by remaining free from all alliances: to win the Church for Socialism."[350]
As in the case of the Church's attitude to politics, the League's relation to the Church in general involved certain ambivalence and tension. In some respect the nature of the Church is to be comprehensive and, as we have seen, this may involve a tension in relation to the advocacy of particular policies - the Church has a programme to promote which could, conceivably, be on socialist terms; spearheaded by a specialist society, but it is also engaged in pastoral ministrations to all, as individuals: a specialist society of Churchmen, like the C.S.L., is by definition partial, exclusive, in practice if not in intention, and unlikely to win the assent of the whole. There is a further tension in ethos and organisation: a Socialist body is committed in theory, if not in practice, to a democratic atmosphere and mode of operation encouraging the full participation of the membership in debate, decision and activity, but the Church of England at the time, through 'Establishment', custom, institutional organisation and management and

349. Church Socialist Quarterly, October 1909, A.J. Morris, 'The Way'.
350. Ibid., July 1910, Editorial.

traditions deriving from Tractarian Catholicism, had hierarchical and autocratic associations and connotations of social privilege. As 'Form II' from the Morecambe Conference had pointed out, though the Church had some claim to be the Church of the people, wage-earners were virtually absent from its councils, and the make-up of diocesan conferences and the Houses of Laymen demonstrated the Church's preference for rank, position and wealth, which the League's founders felt, was disastrous to the life and influence of the Church.[351] A further tension, incorporating the issues already mentioned, but, as a basic attitude, going more deeply, was that between allegiance and dissociation. On the one hand the League was a body of Churchmen: by the Morecambe formularies Socialists who were not Churchmen and even sympathetic Nonconformists were denied membership, the Church basis and connection was made abundantly clear and even the organisation was to be on a Diocesan pattern.[352] On the other hand the League had come into being in the context of dissatisfaction with the performance of the Church in its relation to society: "this League has been formed with the object of uniting the clergy and laity of the Church of England, who are convinced of the social mission of the Church, and are at the same time sadly conscious of the Church's failure to realise or fulfil its mission".[353] It was a 'sad consciousness' which could easily pass over into embarrassment and exasperation when association with the Church's condition and record, particularly in the case of clerics by virtue of their "official" status, imposed obstacles and threatened credibility to the proclamation of their Socialist message.[354] The C.S.L. membership therefore had both a sense of belonging to the Church and a desire to 'distance' themselves from some of its manifestations and to criticise them.

351. Optimist, October 1906, p.65.

352. Ibid., pp.63-65.

353. Ibid., p.64.

354. For this dilemma see e.g. the C.S.L. pamphlet The Socialist and The Church (1912) by C. Stuart Smith.

There was, moreover, a certain confusion in the use of the term 'Church' by C.S.L. members. "They had set out", Chairman Pinchard told delegates to the Annual Conference in 1910, "to convert the Church of England to a better kind of Christianity"[355], and in 1912, in the first issue of the Church Socialist, Lansbury told members, "It is a mission to the Church that is needed":[356] such intentions and exhortations were frequently expressed, but it was not always clear precisely in what sense the term 'Church' was being used. In some cases, particularly in the early days, the League was addressing itself to the 'nominal' Church, i.e. the whole body of the baptised; on other occasions its attention was directed to the practising, i.e. the body of church-goers; most frequently perhaps, and most critically, it was concerned with the 'official' Church, i.e. the Archbishops, Bishops, Councils and committees who directed the affairs of the Church and formulated its policies. Sometimes it thought in terms of the 'real' Church, i.e. the Church in its true essence, as it should be and as, with the removal of present abuses and distortions, it might become.

Noel, describing the League in a Socialist organ in 1909, pointed out that it recognised that it had "a dual mission, to church-going members of the Church and to those members of the Church who partly by their own fault, but chiefly by the fault of the conventional church-goers and their leaders, have been driven outside the brick and mortar churches. All these, whether within or without the material church buildings, it seeks to convert to Socialism, appealing not only to their sense of justice and fellowship, but to their own gospels sacraments, accredited writers, Church law and Church traditions".[357] As we have seen, the constitution drawn up at Morecambe opened League

355. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1910, Report of Annual Conference.

356. January 1912, 'Some Church Socialists and their Views-1-George Lansbury.

357. Justice, February 13th 1909, Conrad Noel, 'The Church Socialist League and the Unemployed'.

membership to all baptised members of the Church of England and this open access for the second of the categories mentioned by Noel, the 'nominal' and disaffected Church membership, had the attraction both of satisfying the Church's imperative to seek 'the lost sheep' and also of making fitting amends for the Church's past failures by bringing back, through the very proclamation of a social gospel, whose who had been alienated, at least in part, by the social indifference of the Church in the past. Within months of its foundation the League was able to celebrate some success in this field. "Not the least encouraging of the many welcomes the League has received", observed the Secretary in the First Report, "is that from Socialists, once avowed Church people, but now non-Church going in consequence of the want of sympathy with their social ideals and aims displayed by the Church. These men are heartily welcoming the League, attending its meetings and doing all that in them lies to promote the success of its work".[358] We have already seen that amongst notable lay members of the League who, through the agency of parsons who were, or were to become C.S.L. members, returned to the Church's fold, were George Lansbury, Thomas Summerbell and Henry Hayward.

In some cases there could be a conflict between overtures to 'the nominal' through the advocacy of Socialism and the proclamation of a social gospel, and ministrations to 'the practising'. A League member[359], the Revd. C.D. Mason Cox of Stockport, told delegates to the first Clergy and Labour Conference at Mirfield that "with the clergy Socialism was a principle, not a fad. Their congregations were often at issue with them on the subject, and they had to suffer. Because he stood beside a Labour candidate at the last election at Stockport, his collections went down a £1 a Sunday."[360] Conrad Noel recalls an incident

358. p.3.

359. Ibid., p.5.

360. Report of a Conference of Clergy and Members of the I.L.P. and S.D.F. held at Mirfield on May 5th 1906, p.6 (Copy in Stacy papers, Hayward Collection)

which took place when he was helping Percy Dearmer at Primrose Hill (1905-1908)[361]. "My sermons", he relates, "often dealt with politics and were popular expositions of Catholic Socialism, but they became too revolutionary for an organ-builder who was one of the Churchwardens, a man of substance and an influential member of the congregation. One day he sent me my salary and accompanied the cheque by a warning that, unless this kind of preaching ceased, it would be the last I should receive. I cannot now remember my reply, but it was scathing, and I said that I would send in my resignation rather than endure the tuning of the pulpit by an impertinent official who knew nothing about theology or politics. I kept a copy of my answer and showed both his letter and my reply to Percy. He said: 'I know, Conrad; how delightful it would be if one could send him such a comment!' I told him it was already in the post!"[362] The pages of the Church Times at the time of the League's foundation and in subsequent years reveal the attitudes of a certain section of articulate conservative opinion in the Church: for the most part we find, both in editorial comment and correspondence, a parade of caution, confusion, apprehension and misapprehension. The paper viewed the growing attention paid to the 'social problem', particularly as manifested at the Pan Anglican Congress of 1908, with considerable reserve. "We are anxious, laudably enough, to 'get hold of' the labouring classes", declared the Editorial,"but there are terms upon which we cannot afford to obtain their regard". The Church's task was not to further the gospel of materialism among the working classes. "Indeed" the writer observed "the working classes require much plain and courageous speaking from the Church today. Their greed, their self-indulgence, their dislike of obedience, call for stern rebuke. By administering such reproof in the spirit of love much more than by adulation or pulpit-babblings about the tyranny of capital, will the Church be furthering the 'welfare' of the poor".[363] The correspondence

361. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.

362. C. Noel, Autobiography (1945), p.81.

363. August 14th 1908, Editorial, 'The Church and the Social Problem'.

columns of the paper often generated more heat than light: certainly they exhibited frequently a lack of understanding and sympathy for the Church Socialist position. We may take the letters of August 18th 1911 as representing possibly a nadir of comprehension of that position: to one correspondent Christian Socialism was "a contradiction in terms, of course"; another apologised to a previous correspondent "for taking Church Socialism too seriously, instead of humorously regarding it as possibly a mere stage-affectation on the part of a clique of High Church parsons"; a third asked "Father Adderley, and those who agree with him" for further elucidation on their standpoint so that he might "be able to judge whether they are Christians or Socialists". Adderley and other prominent C.S.L. men frequently entered the lists of the paper to 'correct' erroneous views and present the case for Church Socialism.[364] It was, perhaps, scarcely surprising that Pinchard, in giving his Chairman's address to the Annual Conference in 1912 should have much to say about the "ignorance, prejudice and sluggish inactivity" of church people[365], or that Adderley and Widdrington should join him in declaring that the main work and object of the League should be the conversion of Church people.[366] If for no other reason, the success of any overtures to the 'nominal' and the 'alienated' were likely to be vitiated if the 'practising' Church could not provide a habitat in which the new entrants could survive and thrive. The C.S.L. continued to beckon fellow-churchmen as, for example, in the appeals of Donaldson and Swann in 1913.

364. A good example of Church Times comment on the C.S.L. is provided by the article by regular columnist 'Lancastrian' entitled 'The Church Socialist League' in the issue of July 5th 1907, following the League's adoption of a definition of Socialism at its Scarborough Conference. For an exhaustive description and analysis of comment in the religious press (all denominations) on Labour and Socialist matters in this period see S. Mayor The Churches and the Labour Movement , (1967) passim.

365. Church Socialist, June 1912, 'The Work of the League, Being the substance of the President's Address at the Annual Conference'.

366. Ibid., September 1912, Some Church Socialists and their Views-vii-The Hon. and Rev. J.G. Adderley; ibid., November 1912, The Revd. P.E.T. Widdrington.

"The Church Socialist League", stated Donaldson, "was founded to recall Churchmen to their own principles of belief in a Kingdom of God, in a righteous society, emblem and symbol of what all life is to be. There is no great principle of Socialism which is not either implicit or explicit in the Christian Faith... The Church Socialist League asks of its fellow-churchmen something more than tolerance; it asks for adherence and comrade-ship in the great effort still necessary to call the Church back to its own ideals. It asks of the Church the courage to rely upon its own principles.[367] Swann put his demand in the context of commitment on the side of social justice. "Our challenge to the Church in fact amounts to this, that she must take sides." He cited examples from Old and New Testaments and concluded his article thus: "Therefore we put it to every faithful Churchman and Churchwoman, is it not at the present day the business of the Church as a body, and of himself or herself as an individual, to be frankly and avowedly on the side of the poor against the rich, on the side of Labour against the capitalist class, on the side of Labour-Socialist movements against the capitalist system[368]?" Four years later and more than a decade after the foundation of the League, Swann surveyed the scene. In his opinion the great bulk of the younger clergy in the towns had the right social attitudes, though they were not specialists and needed guidance, but a very large proportion of the older generation, even of town priests, were still very backward. Most of the country clergy, he decided, were 'hopeless'. The greatest difficulty, however, was with the faithful laity. "Far too many of them" he said "hate anything savouring in any way of even the vaguest sort of Socialism. The typical Churchwarden is a very tough nut to crack."[369]

367. Ibid., October 1913, F.L. Donaldson, 'Church and Socialism Face to Face'.

368. Ibid., May 1913, N.E. Egerton Swann 'The Meaning of Church Socialism - II'.

369. Ibid., July 1917, Swann 'Church History and Social Action-xii-Christian Socialism since Maurice and Kingsley'.

There were no gaitered champions to enter the ecclesiastical lists and contend for the C.S.L. in the tournament of ideas and allegiances within the Church of England. The C.S.U. abounded in bishops and in the great councils of the 'official' Church it was evident that the spokesmen for a Christian Socialist, or, more accurately in this case a Christian Social position, should be of the C.S.U. Founded in the Chapter House of St Paul's Cathedral[370], it was part of the Establishment; the G.S.M., starting life as a little group of communicants in the East End of London[371], and the C.S.L., emerging at a Lancashire working class seaside resort, had to make their contribution from outside the walls. Inevitably perhaps the 'official' Church attracted some of the C.S.L's heaviest, and most mischievously stinging, fire. The story of the C.S.L. is littered with deputations, demands, protests, processions, rebukes and even ridicule directed against the 'official Church'. An address to the Lambeth Conference was drawn up[372]: the collective of Bishops was to be made aware of this new society with its collectivist political position. The Bishop of Manchester suffered at the hands of the Preston branch in a slightly acrimonious correspondence[373], and from Conrad Noel speaking on 'Bishops and Socialism' at an I.L.P. meeting in Manchester's Grand Theatre. Noel told Socialists that they should go to the Manchester Cathedral in a body and demand that the Gospel be preached. Why could they not hear in that Cathedral words condemning landlordism, usury and private property? Their abolition was the Christian ideal. He wanted to make them thoroughly discontented with their Bishops and their clergy. "Bishops ought not to be chosen to be third rate diplomatists but leaders of men".[374] In

370. Commonwealth, May 1912, p.134, P. Dearmer, 'The Beginnings of the C.S.U., 1889-1893'.

371. Ibid., December 1926, p.374, James Adderley, 'Christian Socialism, Past and Present-I-G.S.M.

372, Optimist, July 1907, Editorial. The C.S.L. contribution was being prepared well in advance.

373. Church Socialist Quarterly, April 1909, 'The Bishop of Manchester and Church Socialists'.

374. Two unidentified press cuttings reporting Noel's speech, n.d., Noel papers, University of Hull. Meeting after 1908 (references to Lambeth Conference of 1908), possibly 1909 or 1910.

January 1910, the London branch reported that it had passed a resolution against the political failure of the Bishops and Archbishops[375]: in 1912 the whole League sent a petition to the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury[376] and delivered a Remonstrance to the Archbishop of Canterbury in connection with the Labour 'unrest'.[377] Such protest activities had miniature reflections, in scale, at the various levels of the League: George Lansbury M.P., Lewis Donaldson, Conrad Noel and Edith Mansell-Moullin representing the whole League were received at Lambeth Palace by the Archbishop[378], the 'mega-branch' of London sent a deputation to the Bishop of London[379] and the Stockport branch bearded the local Rural Dean in his den.[380] Perhaps the most uncompromising of the attacks on the hierarchy came from Claude Stuart Smith who as Organising Secretary outlined 'some possible methods of work' to provide food for discussion and thought for the branches. The eighth item on his list was 'Deputations to Bishops and Clergy' which could at the time (1912) be fairly described as an on-going League activity: the ninth item was headed 'Resignations of Bishops'. "Some of our present Bishops", declared the Organising Secretary, "are unequal to the present crisis. The conspiracy of flatterers of our Fathers in God should be broken, and they should be asked to resign and this request should be persistently made till their resignation takes place."[381] Attention was directed also to the conferences, committees and councils of the Church: for instance in its first enthusiastic year the Birmingham branch made "a desperate effort to Christianize the Birmingham Diocesan Conference."[382]

375. Church Socialist Quarterly, January 1910, Branch Reports.

376. Copy in Noel papers, University of Hull.

377. Ibid.

378. Church Socialist, August 1912. Note on visit. The visit took place on July 22nd. The proceedings being private by wish of the Archbishop, no further particulars could be given.

379. Ibid., December 1913, League Notes, London and S.E.

380. Ibid., October 1912, League Notes, Stockport.

381. Ibid., June 1912, C. Stuart Smith, 'Some possible methods of work'.

382. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1909, Branch Reports.

The tension between 'allegiance' and 'dissociation' to which we referred earlier was felt particularly keenly by Widdrington. At the end of 1912 he remarked "I am inclined to think that we have failed in patience towards our brethren. Denunciations are necessary but so are patient explanations. Whether the fault is ours or theirs I will not hazard an opinion, but the fact is patent there is a tendency for membership in the League to isolate us from our fellow-Churchmen. If the fault is ours, it is one that should be amended. Our place is in the Body and our work must be done through the Body. I think, then, our work has been too diffuse, and what is needed is to concentrate our efforts on the Church."[383] The words were prophetic - perhaps because the 'prophet' was also promoter: they indicated the attitude vis-a-vis the Church which was to become dominant in the League's later and declining years. In 1913, the year following this statement, Widdrington's Coventry branch put before the Annual Conference a resolution that "the policy of the League should aim at gaining recognition by the Church of the League as a Church Society, fulfilling an essential part of Church work; and further, it is an obligation on our members to be active in the life of the church at which they worship": the motion was duly passed.[384] The C.S.L. was not left baying its social cries from outside the city walls: the Church's war-time National Mission of Repentance and Hope had George Lansbury and Lewis Donaldson on its Central Committee[385] and the Archbishops' Fifth Committee of Inquiry, which drew up the report, Christianity and Industrial Problems had Fred Hughes, George Lansbury and R.H. Tawney among its members.[386] Egerton Swann, looking at what he described as the 'official' Church towards the end of the war, felt that it had "come on surprisingly": he noted that there was much "passive acquiescence" but the task of the League

383. Church Socialist, November 1912, 'Some Church Socialists and their Views-ix-The Revd. P.E.T. Widdrington.

384. Ibid., May 1913, Inset-Conference Agenda; June 1913, Conference report.

385. Ibid., May 1916, League Notes - Executive Committee Report.

386. p.ii of Report.

"now need be but to seek to hold up the official Church to the level of its best pronouncements ..."[387] It was a sanguine judgement, a reflection in part on the optimistic atmosphere generated by the National Mission. He said nothing about one of the League's original objectives - "to secure the due representation of the wage earning classes upon all the official representative bodies of the Church".[388] Many of the descriptions and judgements applied by Stuart Smith to the actual Church still stood and much remained to be done before the actual Church could become the real Church of his Socialist vision.[389]

387. Church Socialist, July 1917, N.E. Egerton Swann, 'Church History and Social Action, xiii - Christian Socialism since Maurice and Kingsley.

388. Basis, Method 5. Given in Optimist, October 1906, p.63.

389. C. Stuart Smith, The Socialist and the Church (1912), pp.10-16. C.S.L. pamphlet.

# CHAPTER 6 - A HIGH WATER MARK : THE SUMMER OF 1912

"An historic and beautiful city, a vigorous ... and hospitable branch as hosts, discussions which rose above the details of the constitution ... to the great principles of faith and life" - all these things, reported Stuart Smith, went to the making of a splendid Conference[1]. The Organising Secretary was describing the 1912 Annual Conference, held at Bristol and there were, at that time, grounds both in regard to the Conference and the League itself, for the feeling of well-being and satisfaction which his words convey.

The League had passed through the political turbulence generated by the 'affiliation question' in 1909 and 1910. It had survived the virtual disappearance of the 'old guard' of West, Moll and Hastings. When Conrad Noel, the Hon. Organiser became incumbent of Thaxted, the League had managed to appoint a full-time salaried Organiser, Claude Stuart Smith[2]. It had overhauled its constitution at the 1911 Conference[3]. After its first three years of rapid growth, the League, under Arnold Pinchard, who adopted policies of 'open government'[4] and 'non-alignment', political and ecclesiastical[5], had experienced a period of consolidation.

The year 1912 gave evidence of a healthy state of activity. It was heralded by the appearance of a new monthly magazine, The Church Socialist, a significant development in the League's life. Other ventures in the field of C.S.L. publications that year included a cheap

1. Church Socialist, June 1912, Annual Conference Report. May issue contains insert giving programme of the meeting.
2. Church Socialist Quarterly, October 1910, Editorial.
3. See Chapter 5, footnote 277.
4. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1909, Report of Executive meeting of 4th June. The context in which this statement was made implies, perhaps a criticism of the mode of operation of his predecessor, West.
5. E.g. ibid.; also July 1910, Conference Report, Chairman's Address.

edition of Conrad Noel's Socialism in Church History and pamphlets by Stuart Smith, Donald Hole, Egerton Swann and George Ten Bruggenkate.[6] The London branch showed particular vigour, of which the appearance of the Church Socialist, product, initially, of the branch's Propaganda Committee, was an indication. Its pages were to record the multifarious activities of the branch's sixteen groups, some of them being extremely active at this time. Moreover, the first issue of the magazine reported the formation of five new branches, whilst the Leeds branch, established as early as 1907, informed readers that its membership had nearly doubled in the last few months, but omitted to give any figures. As we have seen, the League voiced its protests on behalf of the workers with the petition to the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury in February, which but for a technical error in making the official preliminary arrangements would also have been presented to the counterpart at York,[7] and in connection with the coal miners dispute, the great Church House Demonstration on Easter Friday, April 12th 1912[8], to sanction a remonstrance to the Bishops, calling on them to espouse the cause of the strikers, and duly to present it at Lambeth Palace. We have already commented on the quasi-liturgical format of this meeting, a mixture of religious service and political event. Its exotic character, certainly by Church House standards, naturally attracted the attention of the newspapers, who reported it with some faint ridicule and not, unless on the evening there were deviations from the printed programme, with entire accuracy. "The proceedings themselves" wrote one reporter "quite apart from the speeches delivered, were somewhat bizarre to anyone not acquainted with Church Socialist methods ... The platform party entered the Hall in procession headed by a scarlet cross and bearing

6. Church Socialist, April, June and September issues give notice of these publications.
7. Note accompanying the petition as printed, copy in Stacy papers, University of Leeds.
8. Copy of programme in Noel papers, University of Hull.

Socialist banners. Behind a man in a pea-green Norfolk jacket walked a dignitary in clerical costume, edged with scarlet Socialist facings..."[9] "The resolution was moved and supported", recalled Widdrington, "in speeches of extraordinary vehemence".[10] He himself is reported in one account as "criticising his ecclesiastical superiors with a great deal of freedom and frankness".[11] Conrad Noel took the chair, and other speakers included Grant, the Countess of Warwick, "introduced not only as a member of the League but as a coal-owner"[12],(she "expressed a feeling of intense gratitude for the magnificent example set to them by the miners of the United Kingdom in true comradeship")[13], G.K. Chesterton, who "asserted that he was not a Socialist, but frankly admitted he was a revolutionist"[14], and George Lansbury M.P. After the meeting had endorsed the 'Remonstrance', a procession was formed to take the document to Lambeth Palace, absolute silence being observed during the march. "If the Church Socialist League had wished to convey the impression that Socialism was dead", reported the Daily Telegraph "and that the duty had devolved upon that earnest organisation to bury it stealthily and by dead of night, it could not have adopted a more realistic method than it did last night ...

9. Unidentified newspaper cutting, n.d., article bearing title 'Church Socialists at Work - Remarkable Proceedings', Groves papers, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick. It is a biassed and inaccurate account. It quotes verse 3 of the opening hymn (Edward Carpenter's 'England Arise!') as a typical verse of the hymns sung: in fact it is the most extreme verse of the only opening 'non-canonical' hymn. It states that the meeting concluded with the singing of 'God save the King": according to the programme it ended with Ebenezer Elliott's hymn 'When wilt thou save thy people?', of which the last line of each verse is 'God save the People'. There were no clerical dignitaries involved and the 'scarlet facings' would have had a liturgical significance, though incidentally appropriated for 'Socialist' purposes on that evening. No doubt the participants in the Demonstration would have regarded such exaggerations and inaccuracies as part of the mischievous machinations of the capitalist press.

10. Commonwealth, July 1927, p.220.

11. Christian Commonwealth, April 17th 1912. A two-column report of the proceedings.

12. Daily Telegraph, April 13th 1912. The newspaper devoted a column to the meeting and the march.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

It was a decidedly funereal affair. But it was also very picturesque ... At the head of the procession walked Mr Lansbury, in top coat and bowler hat, carrying a red cross, with taperers, or processional candle-bearers, with lighted candles on either side" ... There was borne "a banner with the picture of 'John Ball', an almost forgotten champion of the people. The clergymen, together with others, were robed in birettas and cassocks, over which some of them wore academic hoods. Behind them walked a number of ladies and gentlemen, and a heterogeneous gathering of members of the League, many of them with red scarves or red ties. Their sympathies could be in no doubt ... District members of the League carried their district banners, upon which the emblem of a red cross stood out conspicuously. Most notable of the processionists was, unquestionably, the Countess of Warwick, wearing a hat with superb ostrich feathers, and a long black silk cloak ornamented with coloured beads. Near her were several other ladies protected against the sharp April night air by seal or velvet cloaks ... The walk was a peculiarly dull affair. No music, no song, enlivened its monotony, and people who stopped in the street to witness it, wondered what it was all about". An understandably more sympathetic verdict is passed by Widdrington: "The procession was a striking one as it passed the Houses of Parliament and made its way over Westminster Bridge with the banners of many churches and guilds"[15], and later in the year Stuart Smith, in outlining to the branches some possible methods of work, includes, as one item, "silent marches, suggested by the very effective silent march to Lambeth".[16] Organised by the London branch, the event was, claimed Widdrington looking back over the League's life, "the most spectacular and effective demonstration in our history. The Church House was packed to suffocation: hundreds of people could not obtain admittance".[17] The Daily Telegraph estimated that about 1,000 people filled the great hall at Church House and

15. Commonwealth, loc.cit.

16. Church Socialist, June 1912, C. Stuart Smith, 'Some possible methods of work'.

17. Commonwealth, loc.cit.

that about 500 processed to Lambeth Palace: another account describes the procession as being nearly a 1000 strong.[18] It is instructive to compare this C.S.L. demonstration with the content of a C.S.U. pamphlet which appeared in the same year. "Now what we are pleading for" wrote E.K. Talbot, "is not that the Church should as a body take one side or the other in everlasting disputes. Plainly that is impossible. What we are asking is that all members of the Church should be alive to the fact that there are external circumstances of life which hinder and all but destroy the development of character. It is therefore a plain duty not to acquiesce in these things but to take steps to end them. And the Church's task is to be continually sending out into the world men and women who are really bending their minds to the task. They will go about it in various ways as God guides them ... Nor is there any one high road to the goal. The Church is not an oracle giving out cut and dried answers to every problem."[19] However bizarre the proceedings of the Remonstrance meeting and procession, it is clear from a comparison with the tone and content of this pamphlet, if it be a typical example of C.S.U. thinking, in which branch of Anglican Christian Socialism lay vigour and conviction in 1912: whether the C.S.L's militant certitude or the pamphlet's cautions and less exhilarated exposition represented a truer inference from Christian doctrine is another matter.

Stuart Smith set agreeable statistics before the Annual Conference delegates. During the past year some 90 devotional services had been held, 130 public meetings had taken place and there had been 250 private meetings. There was more energy put into the work of the League than ever before; the devotional side was

18. See footnote 9.

19. E.K. Talbot, M.A., C.R., The Church and Social Reform, 1912, pp. 7 and 8 (C.S.U., Oxford University Branch). Talbot's membership of the Community of the Resurrection indicates that despite Mirfield's prominence in the C.S.L. not all the monks were of that particular Christian Socialist persuasion.

much stronger; there were more members' meetings and more public meetings. On the whole, he felt, the League was altogether in a healthier state than last year. There are, however, grounds for regarding this period - the summer of 1912 - as both a high water mark, and, to change the metaphor - a turning point. It was not followed immediately by a decline in numbers. As we observed in Chapter 3 of this study, after the first phase of expansion, membership figures remained fairly stable for a number of years after 1909: it was not until the summer of 1914 that there was a discernable decline. Though the League, notwithstanding the loss from its ranks of an important original element, had survived the Labour Party affiliation disputes of 1909 and 1910, its apparent or superficial unity was to prove precarious and towards the end of 1912 we can detect the first signs of those divisions which were to change its direction, undermine its fragile cohesion and contribute to its disintegration. Some of these divisions had been implicit in its make-up from the beginning: speaking of the period before 1912 and the League's "disposition to make a too facile identification of the Kingdom of God with the teachings of economic Socialism and to swallow the formula of 'the nationalisation of the land, the means of production and exchange' as the only way 'of giving practical effect to our religion in our national life'," Widdrington states "there may have been doubts in our minds, but we suppressed them out of a sense of loyalty to those who trusted us, and perhaps out of fear of being suspected of posing as persons of superior wisdom".[20] The League, too, as we have seen, included within its ranks various shades of churchmanship. Pinchard's policy of non-alignment had successfully contained any centrifugal tendencies: any other line, he stressed, would "foster discord and disorder in their own ranks - they must keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace"[21]. It was, however, a line which could

20. Commonwealth, July 1927, p.221.

21. Church Socialist Quarterly, July 1910, Report of Annual Conference.

probably not be held indefinitely. Moreover, these barely contained divisions were to be subjected to pressures from new developments in both theology and politics leading to the reappraisal of old positions and the staking out of new ones. Stuart Smith told the 1912 Annual Conference delegates that the chief need was for the propaganda to be on a more settled plan:[22] it was a judgement derived from past performance rather than an anticipation of the imminent situation and future course of the League. Pinchard struck a more prescient note in the conclusion to this address from the chair. "We have", he said, "an enormous task before us[23], greater than that of any other Socialist society, not only to present Socialism in an intelligent way, but also to convert the Church to Christianity. While our League has had courageous faith, I am not sure we have had sufficient perseverance in giving the attention we should have to study. What we learned ten years ago is no practical use today. Socialism changes with circumstances and we must keep on adjusting our ideas. My own idea of Socialism is miles apart from what it was twenty five years ago. I think the Executive could not do more important work than to insist upon educational work among the members of branches, who must learn before they can teach. We shall then be able to meet difficulties as they arise."[24] Not all C.S.L. men, of course, exhibited such mental flexibility or even saw the need for change - Cecil Chesterton, two months previously, had stated that he was only about sixteen he supposed, when a school-fellow lent him Merrie England, that he had been a Socialist ever since and that what he believed fifteen or sixteen years ago he believed today.[25] His statement

22. Church Socialist, July 1912, Report of Annual Conference.

23. His perception may have been heightened by his exchange of 'letters of courtesy' with the Bishop of Bristol prior to the Conference's coming to the city. "The Bishop said he could not possibly feel he had any kind of sympathy with us and our work because he felt we were stirring up the forces, of the violence and power of which we were hardly aware, which would inevitably sweep away all barriers of morality and bring grave iniquities in their train". (Ibid. Chairman's Address).

24. Ibid. Chairman's Address.

25. Ibid., April 1912, 'Some Church Socialists and their Views-iv-Cecil Chesterton.

and that of Pinchard covered the same time span but indicated totally opposite reactions: the contrast suggested there would be future divisions in the League between those who held fast to odd truths once received and those who wished to accommodate new perceptions. In the latter part of the year the calm and contentment which had characterised the Bristol Conference was shattered as Noel plunged the society into controversy with the advocacy of his particular brand of Catholicism[26] whilst on the political front Syndicalism came to be discussed in branches[27] and set forth in the Church Socialist[28].

Given this flux in ideas on both 'Church' and 'Socialist' facets of the League it was unlikely that the society could easily recapture the confident cohesion exhibited in its protests in the first part of the year. The great Remonstrance meeting and march, picturesque, bizarre, almost epic in Church Socialist judgement, represented a dramatic climax to the phase of agitation and protest. In the new emerging phase of reappraisal, though propaganda meetings of course continued, Pinchard's instinct that there would be more need for thought and study was correct: the League had to take account of the current political notions that were emerging and their relation to earlier movements and, partly as a result of these developments, its roots in the Christian faith and its place in the body of believers, the Church, an area which, as we have seen, was of particular concern to Widdrington.[29] In the League's early days there was a desire to emphasise that members were really Socialists: the desire to emphasise that they were fully Churchmen, as evidenced by Widdrington in November[30], was to become more insistent,

26. Ibid., September 1912, C. Noel 'Socialism and Theology'.

27. Ibid., League Notes, Liverpool; October, League Notes, London-Battersea group. November, League Notes, London branch.

28. Ibid., December, W.H. Swift, 'Syndicalism'.

29. See Chapter 5, section on 'The League and the Church', p. and Church Socialist, November 1912, pp.4-5.

30. Ibid.

particularly as the nature and destiny of Socialism appeared less clear. Though 1912 drew to a close in a flurry of activity, particularly in the North[31], the appearance of theological controversy and new political developments bore seeds of future disruption: Pinchard and Widdrington gave pointers to future directions but they were along paths which not everyone was eager to follow. The League was entering a phase of transition.

31. Ibid., December 1912, League Notes.

# PART III - DECLINE AND DISINTEGRATION

## CHAPTER 7 - PRE-WAR DEBATES AND DIVISIONS - POLITICAL AND THEOLOGICAL

Note:- It could be argued that the lively discussions in the Church Socialist on alternatives to State Socialism, on the theological basis for Church Socialism and on the implications of new theological thought for the understanding of Christian Socialism were signs of vitality, not of decline. Presumably that element within the Church Socialist League who directed it towards the formulation of a 'Christian Sociology' in association with an avowal of Anglo Catholicism which found expression in the successor organisation, the League of the Kingdom of God, would see it as a period of development and advance towards the true basis and real task of Anglican Church Socialism. In this section, however, the term 'decline' is being used in an institutional context as a prelude to the League's disintegration: our concern in this connection is with the impact of these issues on the strength, cohesion and 'survival prospects' of the League as an institution.

"In the days which brought Orage's New Age to birth", comments his biographer, "the word 'socialism' was in this country loosely used by (and applied to) innumerable separate movements, and it actually united them to some degree. In Orage's own words: 'It was ... a cult, with affiliations in directions now quite disowned - with theosophy, arts and crafts, vegetarianism, the 'simple life', and almost, one might say, with the musical glasses. Morris had shed a mediaeval glamour over it with his stained-glass News from Nowhere. Edward Carpenter had put it into sandals, Cunninghame Graham had mounted it upon an Arab steed to which he was always saying a romantic farewell. Keir Hardie had clothed it in a cloth cap and a red tie. And Bernard Shaw, on behalf of the Fabian Society, had hung it with innumerable jingling epigrammatic bells - and cap'".[1] Orage's own brand of Socialism was an anthology

1. Mairet, op.cit., p.40.

of all these, to which from his own personal taste and experience he added a good practical knowledge of the working classes, a professional interest in economics which had led him to master Marx's Das Kapital and an idealism fed from Plato.[2] This diffuse eclecticism which had characterised Socialism was given an identifiable focal point on which Socialists could gaze with the Labour election victories of 1906. Expectations and optimism were raised and the fortunes of the fledgling party would be followed with interest. The problem about bright new dawns is that the weather on the ensuing day may prove disappointing: as time moved on from 1906 observers became more conscious of scattered showers than of bright periods. It was difficult for Labour to cut a distinctive figure in the House. From 1906 to 1910 the ruling Liberal Party could afford to ignore it, whilst Labour, with a heavy dependence on Liberal support in the constituencies could not afford to take a too obviously independent line: after 1910, though the Liberals now depended on Labour's support, Labour in turn depended on the Liberals to undo the crippling damage of the 'Osborne Judgement', whereby the House of Lords had decreed that Trade Unions had no legal right to spend money on political objects.[3] "It was impossible under these conditions", observes Cole, for the Labour Party "to make a good showing before the electorate, or to avoid some loss of confidence among the party's own supporters."[4] So, though the Labour Party might announce in 1906, through its Executive Committee, that"'Organised Labour at last has realised its power and learned how to use it', after 1910, in the ranks of organised Labour, there was by no means the sure conviction that in the House of Commons this power had been realised or was being used for 'the emancipation of Labour'. The Labour Party was decreed a failure by various hostile critics in the Trade Unions and Socialist organisations..."[5]

2. Ibid.

3. For accounts of the political situation at this time see Clayton, op.cit., chapters vii and viii (work published in 1926) and Cole, op.cit., chapter xix.

4. Cole, op.cit., p.241.

5. Clayton, op.cit., p.143.

The S.D.F., the left wing of the I.L.P., the Clarion and the New Age voiced a chorus of complaints. Dissident members of the I.L.P. joined the S.D.F. in setting up the British Socialist Party in 1911.

In part the problem was an inevitable product of the transition from protest to participation: it is easier to utter platitudes and shout slogans amplified by indignation and a sense of social righteousness than to enunciate, and persuade others to execute, practical policies from a position of weakness. The dissatisfaction, however, had deeper causes than the disagreeable spectacle of a Liberal dog wagging a rather limp Labour tail. A glance at the legislation effected by the Liberals in this period might, in fact, suggest that there were grounds not for discontent but for satisfaction from the ranks of the Labour movement. In five years of office the Liberal government had carried through a programme of apparently beneficent measures - immunity at law restored to Trade Union funds, workmen's compensation, town planning legislation, old age pensions, health insurance, the Parliament Act. In view of this legislation there might have appeared to have been some justification for considering that the small Labour contingent at Westminster had done all that could reasonably be expected in those circumstances and that it should be entitled to a proportionate share of reflected glory. There were, however, two distinct grounds for dissatisfaction. One was the belief that despite this mass of legislation the normal everyday life of most of the workers had been left untouched. In the forefront of the workers' view and totally obscuring the Liberals' social legislation was the question of wages. In that five year period real wages had fallen by 15%: whilst Members of Parliament were busy making radical alterations to the social fabric the poor were actually becoming poorer.[6] The

6. For a consideration of this subject as a prelude to an exposition of Syndicalism by a C.S.L. member see Church Socialist, December 1912, W.H. Swift, 'Syndicalism'; see also Cole, op.cit., p.241.

second ground for complaint was based on a reaction against the direction and apparent destination of social reform policies and the implications of the State Collectivism so zealously advocated from the ranks of the Labour Movement. Here Hilaire Belloc's book, The Servile State, made a considerable impact. "It is becoming increasingly certain", he wrote, that the attempted transformation of Capitalism into Collectivism is resulting not in Collectivism at all, but in some third thing which the Collectivist never dreamt of, or the Capitalist either; and that third thing is the SERVILE STATE: a State, that is, in which the mass of men shall be constrained by law to labour to the profit of a minority, but, as the price of such constraint, shall enjoy a security which the old Capitalism did not give them."[7] The Insurance Act of 1911, giving legal expression to a division of citizens into two classes - masters and men - was regarded by Belloc as evidence that the 'Servile State' had actually begun.[8] From a different standpoint there came, in the Pluralist philosophy of J.N. Figgis, another challenge to the prospect of the growing power, and possibly control, of central government over all aspects of the life of the people. Figgis, a member of the Community of the Resurrection, set out the notion of the 'corporate personality' of groups within the nation - the College, the union, the club, the family - and was concerned about the limits to State sovereignty and the freedom of smaller associations: "more and more is it evident that the real question of freedom in our day is the freedom of smaller unions to live within the whole."[9] Figgis set out his ideas in a course of lectures in June 1911: they were published in book form three years later.[10]

7. H. Belloc, The Servile State (1912), p.116.
8. Ibid., Section IX.
9. J.N. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State (1914), p.52. For whole treatment of these issues see pages 39 to 53.
10. Ibid.

This discontent and dissatisfaction with the political and economic state of affairs led to industrial unrest with a wave of strikes particularly in 1911-12 and to the search for alternative modes of organisation and practice. The alternatives - Syndicalism, Distributivism and Guild Socialism - reflected a disenchantment with Parliamentary action and the notion of State Collectivism. Syndicalism was the expression of that tradition within Socialism which asserted that 'the means of production' should be managed directly by the workers in each industry and that control of those 'means' should be acquired not through a political party organised on a territorial basis but through direct action on an industrial basis. In Britain its star rose, flickered fitfully, though, for the capitalist press alarmingly, and faded in the period 1911-1913[11]. Distributivism[12] is linked with the names of Belloc and Chesterton, who had a deep-seated antipathy towards unification and centralisation on a large scale.[13] It was, as one Anglican Church report puts it, "a re-affirmation of the principle of ownership, a demand for the widest possible distribution of small property as the indispensable basis of political freedom."[14] The idea commanded little support since its promoters were not able to relate their ideals satisfactorily to the existing conditions of society: the value of their work lies not so much in its constructive as in its critical aspect, in which they employed the weapons of satire and scorn with devastating effect on contemporary culture and institutions.[15] Through another group of middle class intellectuals outside

11. For information on this area see Clayton op.cit., pp.143-151, Glass, op.cit., pp.2-5, T.G. Williams op.cit., pp.268-269.

12. This notion is referred to both as Distributism and Distributivism: the second version seems to be most common and is adopted for this study.

13. G.K. Chesterton, Autobiography (1936), p.111.

14. The National Church and the Social Order, An enquiry conducted by the Social and Industrial Council of the Church Assembly (1956), pp.108-109.

15. See Margaret Cole, 'Guild Socialism and the Labour Research Department' in Asa Briggs and John Saville (eds), Essays in Labour History 1886-1923 (1971) p.268; The National Church and the Social Order, loc.cit.

the Trade Union movement, Guild Socialism came into prominence around 1912. It sought to steer a middle way between Syndicalism which appeared too extreme for the British environment, and orthodox Socialism. Under Guild Socialism both State and Trade Unions had a part to play. The Trade Unions re-organised as guilds, would represent the interests of producers, whilst the State would be retained to represent the interests of consumers. The citizen, since he is both consumer and producer, would belong to both organisations and his life, therefore, would be 'controlled' by two bodies of equal power, a Guild Congress and Parliament, not opposed to one another but complementary and therefore functioning in a spirit of co-operation. The 'Capital versus Labour' conflict would be replaced by that of 'Producer versus Consumer': these categories, however, are not separate entities but aspects of the life of each individual citizen and therefore, since a condition of permanent and universal schizophrenia is not to be entertained, the system, it was said, would produce social harmony. Whereas under Syndicalism, the State would merely be the nominal owner of the means of production but would exercise no control, its 'ownership' being really a legal device, under Guild Socialism there would be a partnership between the Guilds and the State.[16]

Given the C.S.L's name, basis and traditions it was inevitable that members should become involved in the ferment of the time. We have noted the keen political debate which took place in the Church Socialist Quarterly in 1910 and 1911. Cecil Chesterton who had been prominent in these debates, wrote on 'Why we want the B.S.P.'[17]: Noel joined it[18], served on its Executive Committee in 1912, but didn't appear at its Conference in 1913.[19]

16. See T.G. Williams, op.cit., pp.269-270; Clayton, op.cit., pp.151-154; Glass, op.cit., p.5; Laidler, op.cit., p.397 ff.

17. British Socialist Party. Newspaper cutting of article by C. Chesterton with that title, unidentified, n.d., Noel papers University of Hull.

18. Letter (MS) from Tom Groom of The Clarion to Conrad Noel, 2nd November 1911. Groom is glad to hear that Noel is joining B.S.P.

19. W. Kendall, The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-1921 (1969) pp.44, 56 and 331 (note 112).

Reckitt recalls that he was growing increasingly sceptical about collectivism at this time but felt that Syndicalism was not the answer - it was "so plainly an importation without any organic relation to English tradition or the industrial situation here ..."[20] Widdrington, writing to congratulate Lansbury on his stand for the suffragettes in June 1912, expressed his feelings about MacDonald: "But where were the Labour Party? I grow more and more disgusted with J.R.M. His article from 'the Green Benches' in this week's Leicester Pioneer is about the limit - his assumption of calm dispassionate judgement and deprecating of 'rash' amendments etc. etc. is simply sickening - I am sure that nothing really important will be done until the Labour members forget their 'gentility' and the compliments of the Liberal Press and proceed to do as a body what you have done as an individual ..."[21] Upon this scene of change, confusion and criticism among League members, there burst, in October 1912, the verbal meteor of Belloc's book. Reckitt wrote of "the shock to what was left of our complacency administered in the autumn of 1912 by the publication of Mr Belloc's book, The Servile State. I cannot over-estimate the impact of this book upon my mind, and in this I was but symptomatic of thousands of others who had passed through the same phases as I had. Belloc argued, with a vigorous cogency and with forceful illustration, that the whole allegedly Socialist trend, which the Fabians were so fond of boasting that they had grafted on to Liberalism, was leading not to a community of free and equal citizens, not even to any true collectivism, but to the imposition upon the masses, as the price of the reforms by which their social condition was to be ameliorated, of a servile status, definitely sundering them from the condition of those more prosperous members of the community not requiring to be subjected to such legislation. This was the inevitable consequence of a failure to re-establish the normal citizen in such a position of economic independence that he could equally

20. M.B. Reckitt, As It Happened, pp.104, 107.

21. Letter: Widdrington to Lansbury, June 25th 1912, Lansbury papers, L.S.E.

resist the unjust demands of the State and of the capitalist. 'If we do not restore the institution of property we cannot escape restoring the institution of slavery; there is no third course.' Capitalism is unstable and collectivism is unworkable; hence 'the reformers and the reformed are both making for the servile State'" In the Church Socialist Egerton Swann's article on the book revealed a similar impact. "Mr Belloc is a remarkable man" ran the opening sentence of his piece. "A few years ago we Socialists knew him only as an opponent of Socialism and we attached no more importance to him than we usually do to the ordinary run of anti-Socialists." Now, however, "he has opened our eyes to all manner of dangerous pitfalls that were yawning under our feet; he has made us radically readjust our bearings; he has awoken us from our dogmatic slumbers. Now we have drastically revised our whole estimate of the Socialist movement; we are alert and suspicious at every turn; we are prepared to resist violently many a reform which we should eagerly have swallowed not so long ago; we are all of us half-Bellocians." After outlining what he called Belloc's 'Dystopia' he pointed out to his readers that they might have just that state of affairs even if the whole of the great industries were nationalised and that it could not be denied that "the practical effect so far of the movement ... has made almost wholly for this kind of thing and not for Socialism". However, from the standpoint, presumably, of a half-Bellocian, he entered some objections: he felt, for instance, that Belloc had not been altogether fair to Socialism in treating it as simply being identical to State Collectivism and cited, as an alternative model, Karl Kautsky's On the morrow of the Social Revolution, "a classical pronouncement dating from long before the rise of Syndicalism." However, despite these, and other criticisms, we can gauge the extent and nature of the impact of the book on Swann from the ending of his

22. As it Happened, pp.107-108.

article: "We thank him for his book ... and, while we go on educating the people in economic Socialism the best practical work we can do in politics, for the present, is probably to join with him and G.K.C., and such men as Mr Josiah Wedgwood, to fight for Liberty".[23] Four months later Swann presented Church Socialist readers with the manifesto of a proposed Freedom Defence League, with objects as follows:-

I To encourage and maintain Freedom of Personal Life; of Speech; and of Propaganda

II To fight against the encroachment of Bureaucracy.

III To secure popular control of the Legislature; of the Executive; and of the Judiciary.

The manifesto was signed by Swann (Hon. Secretary), Pinchard (C.S.L. Chairman 1909-1912), Drew Roberts (another C.S.L. member), Dora Montefiore - and Josiah Wedgwood, Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton[24]: Swann, clearly, was taking his own advice.

Meanwhile Syndicalism had surfaced in the Church Socialist. An Editorial in December 1912 spoke of the profound effect of the Syndicalist Movement on British Socialism declaring that it had "killed, cut and dried 'State' Socialism". The first of a series of four expository articles by W.H. Swift also appeared in December 1912. In the middle of the series an Editorial indicated that the Syndicalist position was proving attractive. The Editor detected an undoubted leaning towards 'idealistic Syndicalism' on the part of many members but she assured those who distrusted this inclination that there was no cause for fear: "the League, as a body, cannot turn Syndicalist."[25] At the end of the series the writer of an article entitled, 'The Wilderness of Syndicalism' considered that the

23. January 1913, pp.7-9.

24. May 1913, p.9.

25. February 1913, p.2.

articles had probably harmed the League's cause and again the Editor stepped in to declare that the League was not committed to any one method of attaining the Co-operative Commonwealth.[26]

Reckitt entered the political debate in the February issue setting out his views in the light of Belloc's thesis, in the first of two articles under the heading 'The Future of the Socialist Ideal'. Sounding a note that was to be heard frequently in the future he asserted that workers needed to be released from wage slavery: "it is not conditions of comfort we demand but a condition of freedom. And such a condition is excluded by the very nature of the Servile State to which we are rapidly moving". In the second article, published in the following month, the significant word 'Guild' made its appearance. The State, he declared, was the wrong unit: there was a need for a smaller and more real unit corresponding to our activity and actual operation, namely the Guild. "Such an association we have in embryo", he said, "in the stunted and perverted Trade Union which capitalism has produced to mock the true mediaeval model of the Guild". The ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity must be satisfied in the Socialist State and only, he asserted, through Guild Socialism will they be so. By July we find a backward glance at the Middle Ages in a lengthy article from another contributor on the 'Trade Traditions of the Mediaeval Gilds', - an article occupying more than a third of the magazine - whilst in the following month there appeared an even longer article on Guild Socialism from Reckitt. His article builds up to a climax of highly speculative romanticism with talk of 'Merrie England' and patriotism arising from 'a spontaneous love of Guild and of Shire', but before doing so it touches on an item which was to be a significant ingredient in the thinking of Reckitt and his associates:- "and here we come to the heart of the matter. It is the spiritual

26. May 1913, pp.3-4.

value of the principle of association, all the strength and inspiration that comes from fellowship that is so utterly absent amongst us today." For Reckitt the Guild is not only the only true barrier against economic tyranny but something much more: he sees it as the social unit in which the average man may hope to recapture some of the joys of human society and fraternity which he believes to have been characteristic of life in the Middle Ages. Reckitt's advocacy of Guild Socialism continued and at the Annual Conference in May 1914 the first resolution, submitted by Reckitt's Hastings and St Leonard's branch, advanced National Guilds as the only just and stable basis for rebuilding Society.[27] The actual resolution was lost though Guild Socialism itself apparently commanded the support of most of the delegates.[28] Guild Socialism was a cause which Reckitt was to continue to promote with great vigour, as future issues of the League's periodical testify.

From the survey of this period of political ferment certain features call for comment. In the first place there was no clear resolution to the debate. As on the 'left' political scene as a whole, where, from different wings Hyndman of the B.S.P. saw in the new schemes "nothing but the ghost of Robert Owen rising from his grave" and "Webb ridiculed the notion of 'the mines for the miners, the sewers for the sewermen'"[29], so in the League there were those who continued to worship old gods as well as those who bowed down before new political notions. The situation is illustrated clearly by Swann's attempt in February 1913 to set forth the meaning of Church Socialism.[30] He is sure that the League's line is not social reform and equally sure that it is profoundly Christian: beyond that little seems definite

27. Church Socialist, May 1914, Insert for Annual Conference.

28. Ibid., June 1914, 'The Conference - a report and some impressions'. Perhaps the reporter was a Guild Socialist!

29. Clayton, op.cit., p.152.

30. Published in two parts in Church Socialist, April and May 1913. It was the text of a sermon preached on February 13th at St Mary's Paddington Green, but Swann's 'political' exposition does not seem to have been inhibited or distorted by any constraint of the setting.

He runs through a long catalogue of varieties of Socialist expression - among them State Collectivism, Syndicalism, Guild Socialism - and finds them all to be possible and legitimate as far as the League is concerned. "The fact is that we are not in the very least agreed except in the broadest and roughest sense as to what we mean by Socialism. Insofar as we form any definite and detailed hopes and expectations as to the future every one of us has his or her own Socialism." He finds himself settling for a view of the League's Socialism as practically resolving itself into "a broad fundamental attitude towards the social problem, into a certain religious estimation of the issues which are in question." Yet, he insists that "this open-mindedness on the part of the League does not mean that we have any sympathy with any watering-down of Socialism or that our Socialism is any less thorough-going than that of secular Socialists." The picture of C.S.L. Socialism which Swann sets forth seems too diffuse either to commend itself to 'outsiders' or to bind members in any kind of meaningful unity or purpose. Moreover the various elements were not necessarily content merely to live in peaceful co-existence within the League: Guild Socialism as promoted by Reckitt aimed to capture the League, as the resolution to the Annual Conference demonstrated, whilst, as we have seen, Stuart Smith was still raising the Labour Party affiliation question even in 1923. The League's political situation reflected therefore the fragmented nature of the Labour and Socialist political scene generally and, similarly, contained potential for future discord and divisions.

However, within this somewhat indefinite amorphous situation certain significant considerations and pointers to the future may be detected. One prominent characteristic of these pre-war years was the reaction against bureaucracy and the overbearing state with its threat to the freedom and self-expression of the individual - a matter of natural concern to Christian, and indeed, all thinkers. The tension between the

rights and interests of the individual and those of the community is a fundamental issue in political thought and organisation. The oppressed seek freedom: they can secure it only through corporate action, e.g. Socialism which may in turn bring limitations even tyranny by different methods and perhaps of a different order, but ultimately the basic condition remains the same, the aspirations unfulfilled. Syndicalism, Distributivism and Guild Socialism each appeared to grapple with this issue and offer a possible solution to the dilemma. Syndicalism faded before the war and Distributivism scarcely seemed to be a viable constructive option: it was Guild Socialism, therefore, which survived as a proposal to be considered and elaborated. The years immediately preceding the war did in fact leave a permanent legacy to the League in the form of the attachment of an articulate, influential and eventually dominant element in its membership to Guild Socialism: by coincidence, if one takes the publication in 1906 of Penty's book, The Restoration of the Gild System as marking the beginning of the Guild Socialist movement, the life of the movement covers the same period as that of the C.S.L., with the National Guilds League also breaking up in 1923, though the C.S.L's great period of expansion came early, whilst the Guild Socialist movement did not come into prominence until 1912.[31] There were certain aspects of Guild Socialism which made it particularly attractive to some League members. As we have seen, it was the creation of a group of middle-class intellectuals, mostly ex-Fabians[32], and the League contained an intellectual element within its ranks. For those intellectuals for whom the pragmatism and compromise of the I.L.P. lacked appeal, Guild Socialism offered the satisfying prospect of creating a new and carefully devised structure, as formulated, for instance in the'Storrington Document'[33]:

31. Glass, op.cit., passim.

32. Glass, op.cit., p.5, Clayton, op.cit. p.152.

33. A copy of this document, setting out a Guild Socialist system, is printed as Chapter 12 of Asa Briggs and John Saville (eds) Essays in Labour History 1886-1923. The discussions took place in December 1914, with some slight revision of the report early in 1915.

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Reckitt was one of those engaged in the week of debates from which this exposition of a Guild Socialist system emerged[34], and he was also one of those within the C.S.L. who became engaged in the task of formulating a systematic 'Christian Sociology'. If, perhaps, the emphasis and offer of State collectivism was security for the worker and that of Syndicalism freedom, a Guild Socialist emphasis was on satisfaction: it was characteristic of middle class intellectuals who probably took security for granted, and who considered Syndicalism and all its works as too immoderate and anarchical for general endorsement, that they should decide that the worker wanted, or should want, satisfaction or fulfilment in his work. It was, moreover, an emphasis in harmony with Christian thinking, in which recognition of the value and worth of each individual is seen not merely in terms of 'political rights' or 'welfare provision' but extends into all his activities, of which his work, as an expression of himself as a creature of God and as an exercise in the use of God-given talents, time and materials, is an element of crucial significance. Moreover the 'human scale' envisaged by Guild Socialism, its emphasis on fellowship and fraternity in 'manageable' units and on the real participation in decision-making by the mass of ordinary people in the activities in which they were engaged, were all consonant with a Christian assessment of the nature and dignity of man. Widdrington, surveying the League's course and contrasting the period before and after 1912, testifies to the appeal of Guild Socialism in intellectual terms and in its harmony with Christian thought, and indicates its influence in shaping the future of the League: "The opportunity for exercising our critical faculties and applying the canons of our own philosophy came when the Guild Socialist movement began in 1912 ... It placed a welcome emphasis on personality, and asserted the right of initiative and control as belonging to the ordinary man. Its philosophy

34. As it Happened, p.130.

was instinctively Christian."[35] Whether, despite the movement's name, it could also be described as instinctively Socialist was questionable. "Perhaps", writes Reckitt, "the guild movement borrowed nothing essential from Socialism except the broad ideal of a social justice requiring as a condition that the community should become trustee for what must be assumed to be national assets. In its reaction against not only State power, but the very idea of sovereigntyitself, the guild idea was far more like a revolt against Socialism than a re-interpretation of it ... The idea of responsible control for the workers of every grade in the industrial process has no necessary connection with Socialism."[36] These sentiments were a far cry from the days of votes on Labour Party affiliation. Widdrington observed:-
"I date the movement within the League away from party politics towards an endeavour to re-discover a Christian Sociology, to the time when Guild Socialism began to be discussed in the Church Socialist and in our branches."[37] Widdrington, then, gives concise expression to a sequence of significant developments in this crucial period in the League's history. The League initially had taken a stand on Socialism, incorporated a definition of Socialism into its written 'Basis', engaged in vigorous protest and agitation in the Socialist cause and come close to Labour Party affiliation. When Socialism entered into a stage of ferment and fragmentation, with State Collectivism in a condition of disarray, it no longer presented a clear cut model and programme for the League. In this period of flux a number of League men embraced, in Guild Socialism, a scheme in which they saw the embodiment of certain Christian insights. The League members, however, as Widdrington indicates, went further. The first light of 1906 Socialism having been dimmed and obscured, they turned increasingly for illumination to

35. Commonwealth, July 1927, pp.220-221.
36. As it Happened, pp.114-115.
37. Commonwealth, loc.cit.

the League's other constituent tradition, the Christian faith. The Editor of the Church Socialist detected this mood at the Annual Conference in 1913: "It is interesting to observe the development of the League", she wrote. "One thing is very clear now - the independence of thought which is characteristic of the members. In the early days we were anxious not to take any line which was not sanctioned by the I.L.P. and S.D.P. and resolutions considered dealt with practical reforms. Now we are distinctly working out a line of our own" ... This 'line' emphasised their real aim as opposed to the means of attaining it "and also the insistence on the spiritual ideas underlying our work as being the real revolutionary forces."[38]

The juxtaposition of a sense of current confusion in Socialism with a consequent turning towards the Church, its faith and doctrine, is seen clearly in the utterances and writings of Widdrington. "I have been a Socialist for more than twenty years", he declared in the Church Socialist in November 1912, "and my impression is that the Movement has lost much of its enthusiasm and power of vision ... The solution" (to the problem of social reconstruction) "as far as it exists at all, exists piecemeal among many minds, or lies potentially in the depths of the collective consciousness." Having delivered himself of his opinion of the present position of the Socialist movement in England, he turned with much more certitude and conviction to what he conceived to be the League's main work. The most effective way it could help forward Social Democracy was by working along its own lines. His ambition for it was that, in its own

38. Church Socialist, June 1913, Editorial. She felt that 'the line of their own' was 'definite without being partisan'. In the circumstances the use of the second adjective appears to be justified, but not the first.

context, it should do for the country what the Tractarians did for the Church of the last century, but it would require to have behind it "the intellectual force and the penitence, prayer and sacrifice that made the Tractarian Movement" and it would need to share "the same faith in the mission of the Church and the value of the Sacraments".[39] Almost a year later at a C.S.L. meeting he declared that Socialism was 'in the melting pot'. He made only general statements about Socialism and rejoiced at the defeat of the party affiliation idea before going on, much more positively and at much greater length, to discuss the Church context of the League's aims.[40] Later, looking back at the League and writing of the growing influence of Guild Socialism at this time he states: "It made us reconsider many ideas which we had too readily accepted, and turned our minds back to the social traditions of the Church."[41] However a turning towards the Church, its theology and traditions, was as likely to produce dissension in the League as an appeal to Socialism. Dissension would come from two sources: from the traditional divisions in theology and churchmanship reflected in the C.S.L's membership and from the impact of new developments in theology, particularly in respect of their social implications.

The first shots in theological controversy in this period were fired by Noel in an article entitled 'Socialism and Theology' in the Church Socialist in September 1912, in which he attempted to set forth his own version of Catholicism as the only adequate basis for the League's Socialism. "It has been contended in certain quarters", he wrote, "that there is a tendency to identify the Church Socialist League with a particular type of theology held by only a few Church people, and that his tendency is very dangerous. And

39. Ibid., November 1912. 'Some Church Socialists and their Views-ix-The Revd. P.E.T. Widdrington.

40. Willesden Call, October 24th 1913. Report of C.S.L. Meeting.

41. Commonwealth, loc.cit.

it must be frankly admitted that persons like myself do wish to see the League centring round a particular body of theological dogma, although they do not wish to exclude from membership those who are by Baptism actually members of the Church, but who do not at present see their way to accept the full proportion of the Faith ... Why should we exclude", he added, "those who believe in a caste priesthood with powers derived not through the people but from a very distant deity?" As far as all other theologies (save his own) were concerned, "God forbid", he said, "that we should exclude any one of them. But God forbid that any one of these theologies should become the theology of the League, for not one of them forms a basis for Socialism nor is rooted in a philosophy in the least consistent with Socialism ... There is a theology which not only agrees with the fundamental assumptions made by Socialism but which actually explains and enriches and confirms them: all other theologies darken counsel ... Why is it," he asked, "that Anti-Socialists who dwell comfortably in the present system do comfortably accept the conventional and popular theology of Romanists, Puseyites, Lutherans, Broad Churchmen and Evangelicals alike, and in fury reject this particular body of doctrine?" (i.e. Noel's ' democratic Catholicism') ... "I do not expect that the League will accept this body of theology at once, but I do expect that it will examine it with the utmost care ... I do expect it to accept this ultimately, or to perish among forgotten and worthless things." He ended with an Athanasian touch: "For this is the Catholic Faith which except a League believe faithfully without doubt it shall perish everlastingly." In the following month Egerton Swann entered the fray. He questioned whether it was necessary or wise "for those comrades who are, in the technical sense 'Catholics' to introduce their distinctively Catholic views into their Socialist propaganda, or to treat them as an essential part of the League's basis." He couldn't understand the idealizing of fourteenth century Christianity by some of their number: he considered that it had been "thoroughly

next worldly", concerned with "saving individual souls" - an "elaborate system of sky-pilotry". For his part he advocated Modernism, not, he pointed out Roman Catholic Modernism, as the fulfilment of both Catholicism and Protestantism. However, he would object to the 'Liberalising' of the League as much as to its Catholicising. He hoped that fair-minded Catholics would be equally willing to join with him in resisting the latter which, for the present, he considered to be the more pressing danger. "Many of the younger Evangelicals among the clergy are almost with us", he said. "They would join us in much larger numbers but for the widespread impression that the League is a 'High Church' organisation ... Our common Churchmanship is the only possible ground on which, in our League work, we can take our stand". Noel came in for specific censure: "Conrad Noel and his supporters are forcing things a great deal too much; such aggressiveness as marks his late article is calculated to split the League to fragments". In the following month, in the second part of the article, he declared: "The fact is we are all at sea; we have as yet hardly begun to think out our apologetic. All that the League has said as yet is only its first incoherent stammerings. We have flourished around with a few crude generalities, such as, 'The Kingdom to come on earth'. We have not attempted to settle the limits of their application or to adjust them to other aspects of the Gospel." The series of articles on 'Socialism and Theology' aroused much interest and stimulated considerable correspondence to the editor, who attempted a 'digest' in the December issue of the magazine.[42] Predictably, there was no consensus of opinion: some appreciated Noel's articles, though being less enthusiastic about his mode of expression; some welcomed Swann's views; some misunderstood them; some deprecated the publication of theological articles at all; some thought they were only for "the intellectuals";

42. Church Socialist, October 1912, N.E. Egerton Swann, 'Socialism and Theology - Catholicism, Protestantism, Modernism and Socialism'.

a Mirfield monk felt the League was indebted to Swann for his "timely protest" against attempts to identify the League with one particular school of theology - was it not, he asked, "our business to bring Churchmen of all shades of thought to stand shoulder to shoulder in the struggle against capitalism?" The Annual Conference that year had rejected a proposal that League members should be communicants[43]: in reacting to the articles one member went further in suggesting the inclusion in the League of baptised Christians of any denomination. The Editor made some attempt to clarify matters with a note on the various usages of the term 'Catholic', the last of the four usages she mentioned being "to describe the corporate and social view of religion which is held by all members of the League, believing that brotherly love and human justice are as essential as faith, and that equality before God means equality among men and women and that so-called secular things are sacred." She was, however, being somewhat sanguine in thinking that any one definition of Catholicism, however, broad, would satisfy all the League members. The debate continued. Noel organised, it appears, three theological conferences, held at Thaxted in September 1912, January and June 1913, but no clear findings emerged and divergences in opinion continued.[44] Noel presented his case again at the Annual Conference in 1913 but after a heavy morning's work the delegates failed to get to grips with the subject.[45] He had, however, as we have seen, staked out his position: he expected the League ultimately to accept his position - or perish. The issue would come up again.

43. Ibid., June 1912, Conference Report [May 1912 - list of resolutions].

44. R. Groves, op.cit., pp.128-129. Reckitt in P.E.T. Widdrington - A Study in Vocation and Versatility, mentions a conference in 1912 (pp.54-55). It seems that the conferences were organised on Noel's initiative: they do not appear to have been official C.S.L. conferences though many C.S.L. men attended. They came from a cross-section of theological schools of thought and included the Congregationalist, Dr W.E. Orchard. Groves lists some of the participants but indicates no source for his information.

45. Church Socialist, June 1913, W.C. Roberts 'Church Socialist League Conference at Coventry'.

The 'brand' of Catholicism which Noel strove to promote in the League was partly a question of doctrine and, as is testified by the string of rather diffuse imprecise adjectives attached to it by him and by others, partly a question of ethos, 'mood' and 'outlook'. One description informs us that it interprets Catholicism in the light of what may be called a divine-humanist, spiritual-materialist, social-democratic philosophy of life generally!"[46] League member Binyon speaks of two varieties of Catholicism in the society, the Maurice-Headlam variety and Tractarian Anglo-Catholicism[47]; fellow League member Woodifield gives to these two strands the labels Catholic Democrat and High Church[48], and Groves in his study, Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement, uses, as what he terms 'rough and ready guides', the descriptions 'social democratic' on the one hand and 'authoritarian and sacerdotalist' on the other.[49] The contrasts between these two approaches may be illustrated by examining very briefly some key concepts - Baptism, Church, Priesthood - from the standpoint of the understanding by adherents of the 'Noel school' of their own tradition and their perception of the 'other' tradition in Anglo-Catholicism. The starting point in the Catholicism advocated by Noel is that 'the essential truth about mankind is that it is the family and mystical Body of God'.[50] 'The baptised' are not contrasted with 'mere humanity': baptism is a recognition, a declaration, a making manifest of what already is - men are the children of God. The Maurician ancestry is obvious. This basic

46. G.C. Binyon, The Christian Socialist Movement in England (1931), p.202. Noel once said 'I am a Liberal-Humanist-Democratic Catholic, but you can't go about with a label that length tied to yourself" (Woodifield, Catholicism: Humanist and Democratic (1954), p.7.

47. Ibid.

48. Church Socialist, April 1914, Robert Woodifield, 'The Priesthood of Humanity'.

49. p.37.

50. Binyon, loc.cit. Binyon's exposition of this theology is based on a statement supplied by Woodifield (footnote, p.203).

concept also tied in well with Noel's Socialism. Groves states that "he described as 'the master thought of Socialism' the belief that 'however far gone from original righteousness, men are still in essence and being the Divine children of a Heavenly Father'. Those who thought men naturally depraved; who thought that salvation came only to those suitably baptised, or to those converted suddenly by personal revelation, or to those brought into a state of grace by priestly formula, absolutions or sacred symbols - could not possibly square their religious doctrine with a social doctrine which wanted the earth and its abundance for all men".[51] If baptism is essentially a declaration of a pre-existing status, then the Church, as the body of the baptised is the Sacrament of that universal and essential fact that mankind is the family of God. Moreover all men are God's priests: there is a 'Priesthood of Humanity'. That universal fact is shown forth sacramentally and specially focused in the Church. Within the Church itself the difference between the ordained man and the rest of the congregation is one of function: the ordained priest focuses in himself for practical purposes the power that resides in the whole congregation of the Church. This concept is contrasted with a 'caste' theory of the priesthood, separate, supernaturally endowed, autocratic. In the view of the Mass there was stressed the notion of the Real Presence as a focused manifestation of the belief that 'in Him all things consist', and the social implications of the sharing of The Body and Blood, as represented by the consecrated products of the earth. The ethos of this version of Catholicism was essentially social and democratic, emphasising in its teachings and its ceremonial, the unity of all life and the material world, as contrasted with any species of Catholicism which seemed to separate man from man, and man from God, and to concentrate on individual spiritual exercises divorced from contamination with the outside world and performed by professional practitioners of holy mysteries within a hierarchical framework. The contrast between

51. Groves, op.cit., p.130.

the two varieties of Catholicism is, of course, exaggerated, with a somewhat distorted view of the Tractarian position being presented. Noel was in fact criticised in the Church Socialist in the debate on Socialism and Theology in 1912 for "caricaturing the opinions of his fellow Churchmen".[52]

Not only was the debate among traditional theologies unresolved in this period, but the situation was further confused by the irruption of the new theological thinking on eschatology and the concept of the Kingdom of God which we considered in the section entitled 'The Theology of the League' in Chapter 5. It was necessary that League members take cognizance of the new ideas: they had important implications for Christian Social thinking. Swann attempted to enlighten his League brethren with two admirable articles on 'The Kingdom of God' in the Church Socialist in April and May 1914: the publication of the second article coincided with indications of an anti-intellectual, pro-political backlash - a report from the Editor stated that correspondents had suggested that there should be less Theology and more Socialism in the Church Socialist and that more articles written for the unlearned were required!

At the last Annual Conference in this period the Chairman, F.L. Donaldson, told delegates that they had now reached a point where the lines of division appeared to be ominously marked.[53] He was referring at that moment to Socialism: his remarks could equally well have

52. Church Socialist, December 1912, 'Socialism and Theology'. The exposition of Noel's Maurice-Headlam variety of Catholicism is drawn from Groves, Binyon and the Woodifield article (see footnotes 46, 48 and 49). A fuller exposition of this theological position is to be found in a later work by Woodifield, his Catholicism: Humanist and Democratic (1954), dedicated to the memory of Noel. See also his essay on Noel in M.B. Reckitt (ed) For Christ and the People (1968).

53. Church Socialist, June 1914. Chairman's Address to Annual Conference - F.L. Donaldson 'The Church, Socialism and Syndicalism'.

embraced the theological position of the League. In a matter of months to the tensions and divisions, political and theological, unresolved in this phase of confusion and change would be added the difficulties brought by war.

# CHAPTER 8 - IMPACT OF WAR

The Church Socialist League, naturally, was not immune from the immense impact which the war made on the nation's life. It was affected in four main areas: in opinions and attitudes; in institutional strength and organisation; in activities and in its association with the rest of the Church.

The Christian traditions, institutions and practices common to the European nations did not prevent the outbreak of war. A common Socialism across national frontiers likewise failed to prevent the outbreak of war or, subsequently, to maintain solidarity in the face of it. For an organisation drawing on both these traditions the resort to arms represented a double 'defeat'. When hostilities began, opinion became sharply divided. Socialists faced a conflict between national sentiments and international Socialist solidarity. The I.L.P. adopted a pacifist line; the B.S.P. was predominantly pacifist but its architect, Hyndman, and some of his following from the old S.D.F., taking a reluctantly 'patriotic' line, were ejected in 1915 and set up their own National Socialist Party: the majority in Socialist parties and Trade Unions followed the majority view in the nation as a whole and backed their country and its war effort, no doubt with varying degrees of fervour[1]. War was also divisive in the Christian camp. Christianity, like Socialism, is an international phenomenon. Those Anglicans of a Catholic persuasion who stressed the concept of the Church as an international divine society, who looked back to an undivided Christendom and who had ambivalent feelings about the idea of a 'national' Church, now had to face a more rampant nationalism which seemed to be a more flagrant repudiation of the Christian order of the past centuries of their affections. More generally among Christians, the destruction, suffering and death in which war consists seemed so violently and totally to negate

1. Clayton, op.cit., Chapter ix deals with this subject.

basic Christian precepts on brotherhood and love that many could be involved only after much heart-searching and some not at all. H.A. Mess, writing a few years after the war, sums up the three main attitudes of Christians towards war:- "(1) That war in a just cause is right and sometimes a duty: war is a method which is good or bad according to the end for which it is used. (2) That war is unchristian and that Christians ought to put an end to it as soon as possible; but that this can only be done by common consent, and that in the meantime the Christian must stand with his countrymen in any war which is not flagrantly unjust. (3) That war is a method fundamentally inconsistent with the spirit and teaching of Christ, and that Christians ought to refuse to participate in it .... The second view",declared Mess, "is the prevalent view among Christians in this country."[2]

Since the issue of the war brought divisions among Socialists and divisions among Christians, in a Christian Socialist organisation such disagreements were obviously inevitable and likely to be acute. On October 10th 1914, the London branch took 'War and the Christian Faith' as the theme for its half-yearly conference. E.N. Makeham ('pro') and Mary Phelps ('anti') were the speakers and the Rev. G.C. Binyon was the preacher at Evensong.[3] Makeham, who had advocated the democratic appointment, after service in the ranks, of officers in the Army and Navy[4], was himself to enlist as a private soldier and pass through the various non-commissioned grades before being killed in action as a second-lieutenant in 1917.[5]

2. Op.cit., Appendix II, 'Christianity and War' (pp.233-235). See also Chapter VIII. Mess writes from a pacifist standpoint. For comments on this area from another standpoint in a book written in the middle of the war, see W. Cunningham, Christianity and Politics (1916), Introduction (pp.1-7) and Appendix, 'The Attitude of the Church Towards War'. (pp.247-264).

3. Leaflet and ms. of sermon, Binyon papers, University of Leeds; Makeham offered his military service within two days of the declaration of war but it was, for medical reasons, rejected. He persisted and after the relaxation of the tests, he joined the army in June 1915 (S.M. [ed.] These to His Memory [1917] p.xxiv).

4. Church Socialist, October 1912, E.N. Makeham, 'The Road to Socialism - III'.

5. S.M. (Makeham) ed., These to his Memory (1917), xxiv-xxv. Tribute also in Church Socialist, November 1917, pp.208-210.

Binyon adopted a pacifist position: he was disappointed with the League's reaction to the war and he was conscious that people who felt like him were a small minority.[6] More than a decade later he recorded that 'the line taken by the Churches in August 1914 revealed to me ... how utterly different my own outlook was from that of my fellow clergy ... I would rather not write of my experiences in those years".[7] For 'Rolls of Honour', ironically, since many of them are adorned with extracts from the lines 'For the Fallen' written by his brother, Laurence, he felt a particular detestation: "I could willingly forget all this now were it not for the Rolls of Honour which have been erected in so many places of worship. These seem to glare at me from almost every church and tell me that the Church has definitely and finally repudiated those principles and ideals, which, as I see it, can be described indifferently as the Christian Law or International Socialism".[8] Before the war had been long in progress contributions from conflicting schools of thought were appearing in the Church Socialist. The Leadership of the League was divided: Widdrington, Reckitt and Swann in varying measures supported the war, while Lansbury and Donaldson opposed it. Consciences directed men to different destinations: some became combatants, some conscientious objectors. In the same issue of the magazine we find 'Impressions from the Front' contributed by a priest member who had gone out as a Forces Chaplain, and a letter bearing the address, 'Detention Cells, 3/4 Seaforth Highlanders, Ripon', from a lay member writing in defence of the position of Conscientious Objectors.[9] Some of these latter received sentences of hard labour[10] and, as we have seen, the League eventually had a Dartmoor Prison Branch. Given the range of opinions

6. See footnote 3.

7. G.C. Binyon, 'I want ...' (1927?), p.9, unpublished typescript, Binyon papers, University of Leeds.

8. Ibid.

9. August 1916.

10. Ibid., December 1917, London branch notes. H. Cheetham 2 years hard labour, C. Cheetham, 2 years hard labour - 3rd sentence.

and reactions among League members it was clearly impossible to reach a common, official League policy on the war: further than that the unresolved and keenly felt divisions threatened the precarious stability of the League. "The controversy about our attitude to the war threatened to disrupt the League", recalls Widdrington. "The Executive issued a Manifesto on National Service in which conscription of wealth was urged as a necessary corollary of conscription of life. But the Manifesto did not satisfy either the war party or the pacifists. The majority of the Executive felt that disruption could be avoided only by an agreement to make no pronouncement one way or the other. Our secretary, W.H. Paine, who had served the League faithfully for many years, felt so strongly that the League should have pronounced definitely for the war, that he resigned. The Pacifists transferred their energies into the No Conscription and the Passive Resistance societies."[11] Nevertheless, despite the decision to make no official pronouncement the debate erupted in the Church Socialist from time to time. Criticism of the Pacifist position in the August 1915 issue - aimed, said Reckitt, not at its heart but at its head - brought a rejoinder from Lansbury the following month. There were many reasons why he didn't believe in war, the chief of which were that he couldn't kill another human being, that he never yet heard of a war that settled anything and that he was brought up in the Church and taught that the greatest thing in the world is 'love', and at the same time he learned from everyday life that his country took the gospel of love in one hand and guns of various kinds in the other to teach the so-called savages and heathen what love and culture really were. Ten years after the war, Lansbury observed in writing about the League that "our God of the human race became in the minds and prayers of some of us, God of the British."[12] Reckitt, as Editor of the

11. Commonwealth, July 1927, p.222.

12. My Life (1928), p.5. Of this period Binyon remarks:- "I found what appeared to be a complete identification of God's cause in the world with the cause of the British Empire and allies ('I want ...' p.9).

Church Socialist welcomed Lansbury's letter in September 1915, expressing admiration for his consistency even if differing from his standpoint. Donaldson and Widdrington put forward their different views on Pacifism in 1916 in the March and April issues. Writing in September 1917, Charles Record, secretary of the Dartmoor Prison Branch (or Princetown Branch, as it is styled in the Church Socialist), complained, somewhat wearily, in connection with some earlier comments of Comrade Swann, that "once again we who are Pacifists are reminded in the Church Socialist of the error of our ways."[13] A correspondent at the end of the year[14] speaks of "the tacit understanding that a truce should be observed in the columns of the Church Socialist between opposing views on the question of the war": it was a fragile truce. The debate could not die down while the war went on. There was a certain apt pathos that from Makeham, speaker at the London branch's October 1914 conference, there came, despatched from the trenches in instalments, a document in the form of a symposium between three imaginery characters of different standpoints under the title "War: A Discussion". His father tells us that "the manuscript terminates abruptly, with the words of unfulfilled promise 'to be continued'. A letter, dated only a week before the writer was fatally wounded, says: 'I get very little time just now to get on with 'War, a Discussion', so I am sending on an unfinished instalment in case I should be killed before I am able to finish it.'"[15] In that year in fact grounds for further controversy and division were furnished by the Russian Revolutions, first enthusiastically applauded in an Editorial by Reckitt in the May 1917 issue of the periodical. This debate, complicated by reactions to the sequence of events in Russia and the various interpretations to which they gave rise, survived the war and was the subject of much vigorous and inconclusive jousting, not confined to League members, in the Church

13. Letter dated 22nd September 1917 and published in Church Socialist November 1917, p.215.

14. December 1917.

15. S.M. These to his Memory (1917), p.68. The text is printed on pages 61-68.

Socialist in 1919. Even at the end of the war Reckitt, in recording satisfaction at victory, felt obliged to express the view that Pacifists were making false claims that the Central Powers had been really defeated by internal revolutions.[16] To the divisions in matters of politics and theology from the pre-war period were added, then, divisions caused by the war: with the coming of peace in Europe and the task of reconstruction the League had its own peace to achieve and its own reconstruction to perform.

A second main area where the war made an impact on the League was in the institutional strength and functioning of the organisation. "Our membership declined with amazing rapidity, especially in London" observed Widdrington.[17] At the Annual Conference in 1915 the Treasurer reported that the Branch Affiliation fees amounted to £22 9s 0d. as against £34 14s 6d. for the previous year and that the subscription from central members and donations had gone down to nearly half the previous total.[18] In the following spring the Secretary declared, "In one direction our difficulties as a League are only beginning. Under the operation of the Military Service Act branches are being depleted of the men. One branch writes to the effect that they cannot carry on any longer as the secretary has had to join up with his group. Another branch, dislocated for a similar reason, shuffled the offices and expected a re-shuffle when another certain group is called up."[19] In the following month, former Organising Secretary Claude Stuart Smith wrote:- "It is quite certain that the war has had a very serious effect on the League. The absence of any news from the branches in the Church Socialist inevitably leads to melancholy forebodings as to their present position."[20] In an Editorial in January 1917 Reckitt also noted this silence, regretting that some London groups who were

16. December 1918 and January 1919 (bi-monthly), Editorial.
17. Commonwealth, July 1927, p.222.
18. Church Socialist, July 1915, Annual Conference Report.
19. Ibid., April 1916, Hon. Sec., 'Pros and Cons'.
20. May 1916, C. Stuart Smith, 'Are we ready?'

active sent in no reports, whilst in the same issue George Lansbury encouraged members to press on despite the fact that their ranks had been sadly thinned by the war. By February branches numbered sixteen.[21] The Secretary continued in 1917 to tell sad stories of depletion-"news comes from a group which was strong and vigorous before the war that only two members are left"[22] - while the London-over-the Border group responded to Reckitt's call for news by informing readers in July 1917 that all meetings were being deferred until January 1918, though there would be an 'intentional communion' on the second Sunday in each month.[23]By the end of the year the London branch was down to twelve groups[24] and in January 1918 a report on the future of the League from the Executive Committee stated that only two branches, Coventry and Letchworth had been able to maintain a vigorous life.[25] The Chairman, in a New Year Letter to members spoke of a serious decline in membership, of resources being badly crippled and of a grave position.[26] The Secretary's Annual Report for the first post-war Annual Conference, held in May 1919 revealed that there were now thirteen branches in all - eleven provincial branches, a central branch and the London branch, now down to eight groups.[27] Unquestionably then the war years were marked by falling membership and the dormancy and disappearance of branches: as we have seen[28], the number of branches in 1912 and 1913 varied roughly between twenty six and thirty but by May 1919 that figure had been halved and the once flourishing London branch had similarly lost half its groups. In view of the statistics of depletion it would be natural to see in the war an initiation and explanation of the League's institutional decline. We find, however, that such

21. Lists inside back covers of Church Socialist.
22. July, 'Secretarial'.
23. Ibid., League Notes.
24. Ibid., November 1917.
25. p.9. The Secretary's Annual Report, 1918-1919 provides a longer list stating that "Coventry, Darlington, Elland, Leeds and Letchworth did good work under discouraging circumstances". (copy in Stacy papers, University of Leeds).
26. Ibid., January 1918.
27. See footnote 25.
28. Chapter 5.

decline began before war broke out. The Treasurer reported to the Annual Conference at Preston in May 1914, that there had been a decrease in subscriptions, several branches being in arrears - a regrettable state of affairs since it meant that "strictly speaking" as the report put it "the membership is smaller than last year".[29] The list of branches in the magazine presented the situation more baldly and more brutally: in the May issue twenty eight branches were listed but in June only twenty - Bath, Clitheroe, Glasgow, Hawarden, Ipswich, Liverpool, Manchester and York had all disappeared before the war began.[30] The July issue reports the appearance of one new branch, Kettering. We have therefore a 25% reduction in the number of branches in the period immediately preceding the war: in fact the number of branches lost in that period is the same as that lost between the outbreak of war and the Secretary's report to the Annual Conference in May 1919, though proportionately, of course, the war-time loss was greater, and, over all, the branches that survived did so, for the most part, with much reduced membership rolls. Nevertheless as the war added to pre-existing divisions in opinions among the membership, so it seems, in depleting the ranks it accelerated a pre-existing trend. The explanation of the sudden fall in membership in the summer of 1914 is not clear. It may, of course, have been more gradual, its apparent abruptness being merely a reflection of the organisation's bringing itself up to date in connection with the Annual Conference - a stock-taking exercise. Regardless, however, of the time scale involved the decline may have resulted from the theological and political divisions outlined in Chapter 7 or from the fact that after May 1913, the League no longer had a full-time salaried Organising Secretary[31], or, indeed, from a

29. Church Socialist, June 1914, 'The Conference - a Report and Some Impressions'.

30. It seems possible that some of these branches subsequently revived, e.g. C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes of meeting of 8 April 1921 refers to a letter reporting temporary dissolution of Glasgow branch (Stacy papers, University of Leeds).

31. Church Socialist, June 1913, Conference Report.

combination of these reasons. Widdrington favoured the latter explanation. Telling the Annual Conference delegates in 1919 that the immediate task ahead of them was 'organisation'., he observed in his Chairman's Address that "our decline dates not from the war, but from the time when, owing to financial stringency, we were unable to appoint a successor to our Organiser, Mr Stuart Smith".[32]

The normal organisational functioning of the League was also interrupted by the war. The 1916 Annual Conference, scheduled to meet at Darlington, was cancelled. It became evident to the Chairman, Donaldson, that only a tiny group could meet at Darlington and that it would be quite unrepresentative of the League. The Government's decision to abolish the Whitsun week holidays was a final blow. Donaldson summoned an "urgency meeting" of the Executive Committee. The Committee decided, unanimously, to cancel the Annual Conference and instead to invite members, together with friends sympathetic to the League, to a special conference to be held in Birmingham in September to consider the possible reconstruction of the society.[33] After that Special Conference some eighteen months was to elapse before the League, at Eastertide 1918, again held what used to be its Annual Conference.[34] With the exception of this Special Conference, the validity of which was questioned - Stuart Smith regarded it as "contrary to the constitution of the League, unrepresentative and undemocratic",[35] the League ran from 1915 to 1918 without an Annual Conference. As a result, the work of the League was carried on by the officers and Executive Committee. The balance between this group and the branches and general membership, now enfeebled and depleted, was therefore altered massively in the direction of the former in the

32. Ibid., June/July 1919, The Chairman's Address to the Annual Conference.

33. Ibid., July 1916, League Notes - Central Executive Report; 'A Word to the Faithful, by the Chairman'.

34. Ibid., April-May 1918, Editorial.

35. Ibid., September 1916, Correspondence.

conduct of the League's affairs. Moreover, as a result of falling membership, the system of divisional representation for the Executive Committee was abandoned at the Special Conference and general representation was adopted[36] - a change which made possible a further concentration of influence in the hands of a few enthusiasts who might not necessarily be representative of the League as a whole. In the event, though Widdrington took over as Chairman from Donaldson, the Executive Committee elected in September 1916 was almost identical in membership to that elected in 1915, with Donaldson remaining on the Committee and his wife emerging as Vice-Chairman[37]. Apart from the notable defection of Noel, essentially the same body of people was to control the League's destinies for three years in which the normal and formal channels of democratic expression and communication were perforce suspended. In December 1916, the Secretary remarked that "it would be a mistake ... to estimate the position of the League by the numerical strength of the local branches. The Central Executive", he said, "is keeping the aims and objects of the fellowship before the public. Perhaps more could be done by local branches and individual members. The League is not a one-committee or a one-man show ..."[38] In fact little more could be done by branches struggling for survival or by isolated individuals: an Editorial previewing the 1918 Annual Conference acknowledged that "the work of the League has fallen upon the Executive and such branches as still retained vitality."[39]

The war also led to changes in the nature and pattern of activities undertaken by branches and individuals. The decline in numbers in most branches alone reduced the scope for activity, particularly with the removal for military service of a young and energetic element; war-time restrictions created

36. Ibid., October 1916, Organisation (Hon.Sec.).
37. Ibid., League Notes.
38. Ibid., December 1916, Secretarial.
39. Ibid., April-May 1918.

their own practical difficulties - the Secretary reported in 1917 that stringent lighting orders were keeping people indoors in big towns on dark nights[40]; the 'mood' of the war years, with an understandable stress on national solidarity and a concentration of mind and matter on the nation's war effort, did not provide a favourable climate for socialist propaganda, demonstrations, agitations or any type of activity which could be considered to divide or deflect: the League therefore turned to activities which were within the compass of its depleted ranks, possible in war-time conditions, congenial to the psychological climate of the time and congruous with trends which had been emerging in the period immediately preceding the war. As a result we find increasing emphasis on study and on the devotional element during the war. As we have seen, Pinchard in his Chairman's address to the Annual Conference in 1912 had indicated the need for more study and in war conditions it was one line of activity which it was possible both to pursue and to develop - we find, for instance, that the Student Christian Movement also increased significantly its number of 'social study circles' in the war years.[41] In the League Swann and Reckitt worked hard to engage the membership in study. "Never", declared Reckitt in October 1915, "was there a moment in which the duty of study was a more imperative one for Socialists". Those who sought to emancipate society should understand the nature of their task. "Before we can educate our masters", he added "we must educate ourselves".[42] At this time the Church Socialist in three consecutive months carried a feature entitled 'Suggestions for Theological Reading'.[43] In December Swann followed

40. Ibid., January 1917, Secretarial.

41. Tissington Tatlow, op.cit., p.594. Tissington Tatlow described the increase as having taken place despite the difficulties of war-time conditions.

42. Church Socialist, October 1915, Editorial.

43. September, October and November 1915. The notes and list were drawn up by the Devotional Committee of the London branch (To study is to pray?)

up with an article entitled 'Cogitemus Fratres' - the title seems to indicate that the pre-war plea for more articles for the unlearned had perhaps been forgotten. Swann wanted to draw attention to what he considered to be one very serious defect - "the want of intellectual seriousness". He acknowledged that there had been some improvement in recent years, "but", he wrote, "the mass of the rank and file are but little affected by this intellectual ferment. Some of the most vital and fundamental issues raised by our propaganda have as yet hardly been considered by the League as a whole ... We cannot expect the Church to take us seriously if we are not intellectually serious ourselves. The case, on the grounds of the Christian Faith, for anything like Socialism is not nearly so plain or obvious as it is apt to seem to us in our more ardent moments ... Unless we have solidly thought out both exactly what it is that we ask our fellow-Churchmen to do and how the admitted principles of the Church can be shown to oblige them to do this, we have no cause to complain if they turn a deaf ear." He linked study and devotion: they were to be regarded not as alternatives but as complements:- "During the comparative slackness of public propaganda enforced by the war we are rightly putting special zeal into our devotional activities. But a thoughtless pietism will not in itself save us. We must think as well as pray. And our thought is not likely to lead to deep or fruitful results, unless in all our thinking we are all the time praying and looking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.". In January 1916 Reckitt and Swann provided material for study with the publication of their Christianity and Socialism, a 28-page syllabus for study circles. The report of the Special Conference in the September of that year informs us that "the Secretary was instructed to urge all branches to organise Study Circles and adopt the new Syllabus, to give careful attention to the Devotional life of the branch and to adopt some form of Social Service in which all the available members could join". It was hoped that all the branches would report on their activities in regard to these three matters at the next Conference.[44] The

44. Ibid., October 1916, Organization (Hon.Sec.)

opportunity for reporting back was, as we have seen, to be delayed: in the meantime the pages of the periodical certainly indicate some activity in the first two of these categories. In both these cases - for instance, Stacy's plea for the primacy of prayer came in July 1914[45], and in the preceding September the theme for the London branch's Half-yearly Conference had been 'The devotional side of the League's work'[46] - the war intensified tendencies discernable or implicit in the pre-war period.

Indirectly the war also led to a change in the League's relationship with the "official" Church. In 1916 there was launched The National Mission of Repentance and Hope, described by Lloyd as "a vast and adventurous undertaking - the most considerable corporate act of the Church of England during the war".[47] The results, it has been generally felt, were disappointing: "the nation", writes Moorman, "was not favourably disposed towards repentance, and its natural hope was not of that kind which is envisaged by the New Testament writers but rather for personal safety and national victory".[48] Our concern, however, is not with its success or failure but with the importance to the C.S.L. of the campaign and of the 'Fifth Committee' which sprang from it, whose report is arguably the most significant achievement of the whole enterprise. Through, perhaps, what might be regarded as an ecclesiastical variant of the war-time coalition principle, and which might variously be interpreted as an indication of enterprise or of desperation, Donaldson, the C.S.L. Chairman, and Lansbury were appointed, as we have seen, to the Central Council of this National Mission of Repentance and Hope.[49] These appointments were a cause of satisfaction to the League: the Prayer leaflet for

45. Ibid., July 1914, P. Stacy, 'The Arm of God'. Stacy's initiative led to the establishment of an Intercession leaflet.
46. Ibid., September 1913, League Notes - London.
47. Op.cit., p.226.
48. Op.cit., p.414.
49. Church Socialist, May 1916, League Notes - Executive Committee Report.

July to September 1916, invited members to give thanks "that in their call to Lewis Donaldson and George Lansbury to join the Committee recognition has been made of the C.S.L. and its witness".[50] In many quarters in the League the National Mission was welcomed. There was a feeling that in the spirit and literature of the enterprise expression was being given by the "official" Church to ideas which the League had been trying to propagate for years in the face of indifference and prejudice.[51] The Prayer leaflet to which reference has been made invited members to give thanks that the leaders of the Church had been enabled to see, before it was too late, the need for National Repentance and that they had been guided to recognise in their utterances and literature 'social injustice' as one of the chief things for which repentance was necessary. As we have previously noted, the League produced a 16-page pamphlet - The National Mission Message of the Church Socialist League. Before the end of the year the C.S.L. was even getting praise from the Church Times. An item from the pen of the paper's columnist Lancastrian on October 16th reported that "What we used to call the Church Socialist League has had a successful meeting at Birmingham. It was heralded by one of the best National Mission Tracts yet written, lucid and direct, and not rhetorical ... What seems to have happened is that those social reformers among us who based their dependence upon Collectivist ideas have begun to realise that the work of social reform may not demand the adoption of any water-tight theory. We shall hear more of the League, and more of us than before will be able to view its aims with entire sympathy." Such opinion is evidence of change indeed. In the early days

50. Copy in Davey material.

51. See e.g. Church Socialist April 1916, P.E.T. Widdrington, 'The National Mission; The National Mission Message of the Church Socialist League, 1916, p.6; P.E.T. Widdrington in Commonwealth, July 1927, p.222; Church Socialist, October 1916, Editorial 'The Special Conference', p.182:- "Mr Donaldson's activities in connection with the National Mission have convinced him that there is already a new spirit in the Church, a spirit which makes it more hopeful now than ever before that the challenge of the C.S.L. to its fellow-Churchmen will be widely understood and accepted."

of the League, praise from the Church Times was as improbable as it would have been unacceptable: it was an embrace from which the League would have shrunk. It would have seen it as a kiss of death. By the end of 1916 Lancastrian's words of approval were being reprinted by editor Maurice Reckitt in the Church Socialist.[52]

The launching of the National Mission, then, helped to draw the C.S.L. more into the mainstream of the Church. The process was continued in the sequel to the 'Mission-call'. In Lent 1918 Archbishop Davidson wrote: "As we appraised the outcome of the Mission-call five subjects in the life of Church and nation stood out with obvious claim for our rehandling". One of these was "the bearing of the Gospel message on the industrial problems of today. Five Committees of our best and strongest were accordingly appointed to deal with these, and 1917 was given to the task."[53] C.S.L. membership was represented among "the best and strongest" appointed to deal with Industrial Problems: in the 28-man committee were Fred Hughes, George Lansbury and R.H. Tawney.[54] The reports appeared in 1918. Davidson commented thus: "The roadway to right knowledge and effective action is now open ... It is the most important stage of the National Mission".[55] He realised that not everybody would agree about the various recommendations and he asked for critics as well as advocates. From A.C. Headlam, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford came a heavy onslaught on the Report Christianity and Industrial Problems (the 'Fifth Report'): the Guardian printed the University sermon which was the vehicle for his attack and such was the extent of agreement with the paper's previously declared verdict that it could not refrain from breaking its normal practice of not commenting on the sermons it printed.

52. December 1916.

53. Christianity and Industrial Problems, being the Report of the Archbishops' Fifth Committee of Inquiry, 1918, Foreword by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

54. Ibid., p.ii.

55. Ibid., p.iv.

"When he declares roundly", noted the paper, "that 'this is one of the most harmful documents that has been issued in the name of Christianity since the Stuart divines taught the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings' he will carry with him a large and weighty body of Church opinion."[56] Headlam's objection that the report would have people believe "that State Socialism is an integral part of Christian teaching" was shared by Hensley Henson. He noted the membership of C.S.L. men on the committee and he made his denunciation of the Report also an occasion for an attack on the League and its publications in which he found that the distinctive notes of the Fifth Report were all present, "though the moderating language of the semi-official document is everywhere lacking".[57] Not only, then, was the C.S.L., in the persons of some of its leading members, now sailing in the mainstream of the Church, it was even being accused of having grabbed the tiller. The controversy showed that the influence of the kind of ideas propagated by the League on the social implications of Christianity was being felt in the "official" Church: equally it showed that such ideas had not won universal acceptance.

56. Guardian, February 6th 1919, p.121 'The Week'; p.133 ff., text of sermon.

57. Edinburgh Review, January 1920, p.15. H.H. Hereford (Henson was Bishop of Hereford at the time of writing) 'The Church and Socialism'. See also pp.5-6, 15-25 in connection with C.S.L. Henson himself had been criticised at the C.S.L's Church House Demonstration on April 12th 1912 - according to one report Widdrington had referred to him as "a sort of budding Bishop, one of the also rans". (Christian Commonwealth, April 17th 1912). The Fifth Report was the starting point for a C.S.L. pamphlet by Bull, Christ or Antichrist, and Henson's attack prompted another pamphlet from him, The Church and the League in which Bull scathingly contrasted Henson's statements with the principles of the League and of the Report.

Widdrington, in his Chairman's Address at the first post-war Annual Conference, observed that during the war the League had "done little more than maintain a precarious existence".[58] Eight years later, writing in Commonwealth, he described the war as having been a disaster for the League.[59] As we have seen, the war had indeeed a very considerable impact on the League. Its impact, however - on the range of opinion, on membership, on activities - consisted largely of an acceleration or accentuation of trends discernable in the pre-war period, or in the case of the relationship with the rest of the Church, the fulfilment, in part at least, of aspirations expressed before 1914. In this latter respect the war was not a complete disaster for the League from Widdrington's standpoint: through the medium of the war and the Church's response in the National Mission, the C.S.L. moved in the direction of the hopes he had expressed in 1912.[60] At the end of the war, however, "it was", as Widdrington said, "a much reduced society which was left to carry on."[61]: moreover patterns of activity and thought restricted and moulded by the war years would not necessarily disappear or become transformed with the ending of hostilities.

58. Church Socialist, June and July 1919, Chairman's Address to Annual Conference.
59. July 1927, p.222.
60. Church Socialist, November 1912, Some Church Socialists and their Views - ix - The Revd P.E.T. Widdrington.
61. Commonwealth, loc.cit.

# CHAPTER 9 - PERSONS AND POLICIES

The latter years of the League saw the resignation of Noel and the rise to prominence of what may be styled the 'Widdrington-Reckitt axis'. At the beginning of the League's story, as we have seen, three elements, strands or emphases could be identified in its composition - Socialist, Catholic and intellectual. Like the humours of mediaeval medicine these ingredients were present but unequally represented in most of the members: one element or a combination of two would predominate. At the Morecambe Conference the Socialist element promoted by West, the convenor, was in the ascendancy. Noel, in speaking up for the G.S.M., was advocating a definite and extroverted Catholicism and from Widdrington came the intellectual input in the form of a plea for the inclusion in the League's Basis of 'the adumbration of a Christian Sociology': their proposals were defeated and these elements were submerged for a season. West's attempt, in 1909, to press home the Socialist element's advantage to what was arguably the logical conclusion of affiliation to the Labour Party, ended in failure: of the other two elements Noel had given notice in 1912 that he expected the League ultimately to adopt his version of Catholicism, or perish.

Noel's attempt to 'capture' the League came in 1916 at the Special Conference in September. In July the League Chairman had spoken modestly of a conference to consider a possible reconstruction of the Society[1]: by September the task had been inflated in some minds and the Church Socialist's Editorial began with the somewhat pretentious sentence:- "This month the Church Socialist League is summoned to meet in conference to consider the future of English society and the nature of its own mission within it." At this Conference Noel presented a paper entitled 'Some Articles of the Faith' for adoption by the League as the exclusive basis for

1. Church Socialist, July 1916, p.123.

its future work. The Editor of the Church Socialist described the paper as 'finely conceived', 'splendidly phrased' and 'a very beautiful piece of work', but he also stated that it was "at once recognised to be highly controversial and those who heard it realised that it would be impossible for a conference to alter or amend so strongly individual a production. It would need to be accepted very much as it stood or not at all." It was not endorsed and Noel resigned.[2] Widdrington tells us that the voting on the issues at this Special Conference in Birmingham was close[3]: "there were those of us who if we had followed our personal inclinations would have gone with him".[4]

Widdrington and Noel had both been curates of Moll, their service in Newcastle overlapping from 1898 to 1900. Both had given support to the more uncompromising manifestation of British Socialism: Widdrington, for instance, had collaborated with Hyndman at the hustings and Noel had served on the Executive Committee of the British Socialist Party. Soon they would be near-neighbours in Essex as incumbents appointed through the patronage of the Countess of Warwick. Their Christian Socialist pedigrees therefore were not dissimilar and Noel's assertion at Birmingham in 1916 that the Church must work from its own principles, not those of any other movement, and that the only 'fixed principles' to which the League could ask Churchmen to commit themselves were the principles of the Catholic Faith found some echoes in Widdrington's thinking.[5] Widdrington did not, however, follow Noel at Birmingham: he remained with the League. Despite similarities in experience and outlook, differences in temperament, in emphases in their Catholicism, in their estimate of prospects for the League and prospects within the Church led them along separate Christian Socialist paths.

2. October 1916, 'The Special Conference' - pp.183, 188.
3. Commonwealth, May 1922, p.134.
4. Ibid., July 1927, p.222.
5. Ibid., May 1922, p.134.

Reckitt, who knew both men well and had thought a great deal about the differences between them, felt that though each wanted something more theological than the League had hitherto been, they were "terribly different people in nature". Noel, he declared, wanted a movement and he wanted to be in charge of it. The people he wanted were those who would learn the phraseology he had invented and would follow him wherever he went. Such a judgement, he considered, was 'very unkind' to Noel, but nevertheless he felt that Noel was primarily interested in ideas rather than people, whereas Widdrington was primarily interested in people, though at the same time he was concerned to put his ideas in order.[6] In making this judgement Reckitt was looking back over half a century and doing so as one who had been deeply committed to the views of Widdrington at the time under review: regardless of its charitableness in connection with Noel's aspirations, the contrast between a primary interest in ideas and a primary interest in people is not altogether helpful - Widdrington's promotion of the concept of the Kingdom of God as "regulative of all true theology"[7] and his quest for a Christian Sociology provide ample evidence of his own deep concern with ideas and his desire to influence the League towards a distinctive intellectual position. It is perhaps more helpful to contrast the activism of Noel, militant and uncompromising, with the tactics of patient persuasion and gradual influence employed by Widdrington: Noel was characteristically a rebel, Widdrington a strategic planner. The contrast in attitude and style of operation is reflected in their Catholicism and in their views of the League and the Church at large.

Noel's message was a "synthesis of uncompromising Catholicism and revolutionary Socialism".[8] The doctrine,

6. Interview: author with Maurice Reckitt, 30th December 1976.

7. Church Socialist, November and December 1920, P.E.T. Widdrington, 'The Rediscovery of the Kingdom of God'.

8. Groves, op.cit., p.165. Groves is quoting the views of Stanley Joad who was deeply influenced by Noel at this time.

the external manifestations and the political social and economic implications were an integrated 'package'. Widdrington, like Noel, professed a Catholicism of the Maurice-Headlam variety and like Noel he censured the 'barren ecclesiasticism' and pietism of the Anglo-Catholic Congress school[9]: he was, however, for tactical ends, prepared to be flexible and comprehensive in policy. "Is the League", he asked, "to remain ... a society deriving its sociology from definite Catholic principles, but aiming at those to whom the externals of Catholic worship are of secondary account? ... As one who is not a modernist and values the traditional modes of Catholic worship, I take my stand with those who desire that the League shall retain its comprehensiveness. The League has a duty to the whole Church and for the sake of that duty I am prepared to work loyally with men from whom I differ in modes of worship but whom I know to be devoted servants of Christ's Kingdom and whose right in our Church I do not question. I can detect something of value in the Swann-Song of Catholicism whilst my whole heart goes out to 'Conrad in quest of His Youth'".[10] Before 1923, however, Widdrington's attitude had 'hardened': it had become clear to him and to his associates "that the Churchmanship of the League must assume a definitely Catholic character".[11] On the political side, whilst men like Stanley Joad were being attracted by Noel's 'synthesis of uncompromising Catholicism and revolutionary Socialism', Widdrington and his colleagues were trying to rid the League of the term Socialism from its title and its basis.[12] For Noel Catholicism appears to have been both an inspiration and a system: Widdrington seems to have sought a system through or in Catholicism - Catholicism was the inspiration, rationale and route to a system, namely

9. E.g. his article, 'The Rock whence ye were hewn', Church Socialist, July and August 1920.
10. Ibid., June and July 1919, The Chairman's Address to the Annual Conference.
11. Commonwealth, July 1927, p.223.
12. Ibid., Widdrington summarises his attitudes and activity in this direction on pp.222-223.

a 'Catholic sociology'. Such a distinction may perhaps be an exaggeration of the differences but it may serve as a rough indication of particular emphases: Noel felt that in his version of Catholicism he was already in the present in actual possession of all things needful, whilst Widdrington was engaged in a search in the past to inspire a formulation for the future. Noel was ready to do battle now: Widdrington was still amassing matériel. Widdrington was more patient and more hopeful about the League and the Church. There were indications in 1916 that Noel was dismayed by what he regarded as the unsatisfactory condition of the League: his impatience had sharpened and the showdown came at the Special Conference.[13] Widdrington, for his part, considered it preferable to stay with the League to await a further opportunity of moving its membership in the direction he desired.[14] He was also more optimistic for the Church at large since he had high hopes for the National Mission of Repentance and Hope and for the part that the League might play in it[15]: Noel, Groves informs us, "did not share Widdrington's opinion that the Church was undergoing a renovation of spirit and ideas or was moving towards principles advocated by the League."[16] Far from supporting the new venture he dubbed it 'the Mission of Funk and Despair' and took no part in it[17]. Widdrington increasingly saw the League's main task as influencing the Church whilst Noel was convinced that the main duty of social democratic Catholics was "active participation in popular struggles to change the world, and with it the Church".[18] The Church Times will serve as a convenient litmus paper to indicate the extent of the divergence. In an interview in the Church Socialist

13. Groves, op.cit., pp.168, 174-5. Groves draws on Joad's memories of conversations with Noel in the summer of 1916. Noel was considering the possibility of a new movement.

14. Commonwealth, loc.cit.

15. Church Socialist, April 1916, P.E.T. Widdrington, 'The National Mission'.

16. Op.cit., p.177.

17. Ibid., p.176.

18. Ibid., p.201; M.B. Reckitt, P.E.T. Widdrington, p.92.

in 1912 in answer to the question 'What do you think are the greatest hindrances to our work?', Noel cited four items, one of which was the Religious Newspapers - "the Church Times, and its like, because they call evil good and good evil, and champion a materialism more deadly than that of Marx under the specious cloak of next-worldliness".[19] As we have seen, the Special Conference at which Noel defected and the League's National Mission pamphlet written by Reckitt both earned approval from the Church Times, Lancastrian's comments being duly reproduced by editor Reckitt in the League's periodical.

Though Noel had found the G.S.M. insufficiently Socialist[20], in its theology - Anglo Catholic sacramentalism and Maurician teachings - and its ethos and style - zestful and extroverted - it suited him well. Once the G.S.M. with its flamboyant Catholicism had gone and Noel had failed to mould the C.S.L. to his satisfaction it was natural that he should consider founding another society in which his approach and ideas might find expression. Reporting, with regret, Noel's resignation, Reckitt stated that it was understood that Noel had severed his connection with the C.S.L. not because of a refusal to assent to any of its claims, but because he felt the need for a body radically different in nature and in its method of approach to the social problem. "He himself told us", wrote Reckitt, "that he believed in the existence of more than one society to meet the different standpoints expressed at the Conference" and, added Reckitt, perhaps somewhat disingenuously, "we take it that Mr Noel was in no way seeking to lead a secession, he was rather intent upon finding a new way to set out towards the same goals." Many of the League members, Reckitt declared, "will follow with the keenest interest any steps he may take to establish a 'Company of the Redemption' to embody his

19. February. 'Some Church Socialists and their Views - II - Conrad Noel'.

20. Autobiography, p.60.

reading of the great social truths and implications embodied in our Catholic Faith".[21] A further eighteen months, however, were to elapse before Noel launched his new organisation. For the tasks which the end of the war would bring he felt, Groves tells us, that a homogeneous organisation was required.[22] He foresaw the development of a revolutionary situation and considered that "it was vital that there should be a disciplined compact ideologically united group of Catholic revolutionaries who would in the post-war struggles bear witness to the one faith which in their view could give wholesomeness to the revolution."[23]
In April 1918 a handful of people attended the inaugural meeting at Thaxted Vicarage of 'The Catholic Crusade of the Servants of the Precious Blood to transform the Kingdoms of the world into the Commonwealth of God'. Before the end of the year, Noel and his associates had composed a manifesto bearing the title, 'The Catholic Crusade to break up the present world and make a new, in the power of the outlaw of Galilee'.[24] The manifesto was long, laid out on the lines of a litany, racy and revolutionary in language and sentiment: a section on 'The Catholic Doctrine of Revolution' contains the following passage which will serve as a sample of the manifesto's militant flavour:-

> "If ... you believe with St Thomas Aquinas and other Catholic teachers, voicing the Common Tradition, that the Commonwealth may confiscate private possessions and that the workers may seize necessaries and dispossess the plutocrats, when no other means of transforming the Nation are available; if you find yourself as naturally on the side of revolution as others find themselves against it; if you believe in seizing power from below and not in social sops from above; if you believe in doing things swiftly for yourselves instead of waiting for 'enabling Bills' a better system, or till the rich fling you a few slices of what you want, or

21. Church Socialist, October 1916, The Editor 'The Special Conference'.
22. Op.cit., p.202.
23. Ibid., p.204.
24. The Catholic Crusade 1918-1936 - A Reprint of its original Manifesto with an introduction and notes by Reg Groves (1970).

> the bishops allow you to do what the Church commands you to do, or till the great Slug-God Evolution evolves something, or Progress pushes you down into Hell - Help the Catholic Crusade to shatter the British Empire and all Empires to bits ..."[25]

Noel's little group were not likely to strike terror into the heart of the Empire, but Scotland Yard's Special Branch apparently began investigating the activities of the Crusade, and informed the honorary secretary's diocesan Bishop, who demanded and secured the man's dismissal from his parochial appointment.[26] Given a Manifesto couched in such language the Catholic Crusade's appeal was likely to be limited: moreover the organisation itself adopted a selective policy in regard to membership - a period of probation was enforced on applicants.[27] Growth was limited further since groups had to be based around a parish Church with a Crusade priest as incumbent and, not surprisingly, patrons did not compete to acquire such men.[28] The Catholic Crusade remained small, never numbering more than a few hundred members.[29] It is not clear to what extent it drew recruits away from the C.S.L.: Groves claims that it was joined amongst others by members of the Church Socialist League and the National Guilds League and his reprint of the Crusade's Manifesto is dedicated to the memory of Stewart Purkis, "a member of the Catholic Crusade, and a lifelong revolutionary Socialist".[30] Purkis was certainly a prominent lay member of the C.S.L's London branch as the pages of the Church Socialist testify. At the lowest estimate, Noel in establishing the Catholic Crusade had provided institutional focus for C.S.L. men, actual or potential, who desired a combination of militant Catholicism and militant Socialism.[31]

25. Ibid., p.13.
26. Ibid., p.23.
27. Ibid., p.6.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., p.2.
30. Ibid., p.6; Note inside back cover.
31. The Catholic Crusade outlived the C.S.L. It broke up in 1936 on the Trotsky-Stalin issue, the anti-Stalin group, which included Noel then setting up a group called the Order of the Church Militant (Ibid., p.23; S.Evans, Christian Socialism: A Study Outline & Bibliography,p.22)

Meanwhile the League was increasingly falling under the influence of Widdrington and Reckitt. The Church Socialist issue of November 1912 bore Widdrington's photograph and the prescient caption:- "A brilliant and illuminating mind, he is undoubtedly destined to an increasing prominence in our movement". In the same month he was the subject in the series 'Some Church Socialists and their Views'. His answers to the questions on the present position of the Socialist movement and the main work of the C.S.L. were positive, almost authoritative in tone as he assessed the past and indicated his preferred future path. A year later the Central Executive and local committees were trying to find means whereby the League could issue statements and manifestos to the public at times when it was felt that the Church should speak out in a special way. The difficulties, it was reported, were largely those of finance and the fact that the League had no paid officers or ones who were free to give their whole time. Suggestions were welcomed.[32] Whether anyone suggested Reckitt or not, he was admirably suited to meet this need - and a salary would not be required. Certainly Reckitt emerged as a person able and willing to make a major contribution to the League's affairs.

Reckitt's importance in the League derived in considerable measure from distinctive aspects of his character, capabilities and circumstances. In the first place he did not need to take a job to earn his living. He had enough money, he said, to do the things he wanted to do and to give help where he felt it was needed.[33] In consequence he had also more disposable time than most of his fellows. At the age of 53 - not far past what was to be the mid-point of his life - he wrote an autobiography in which he stated:- "If I had to attempt a self-justification in a single word it would be 'availability'. The world is full of people with the will and the power to be useful but they have no time."[34]

32. Church Socialist, November 1913, League Notes.

33. Interview - author with Reckitt, 30th December 1976.

34. As It Happened, p.293.

To this availability he added a marked capacity for the appreciation and admiration of the abilities of other men: not only did he readily perceive and readily acknowledge the impact of others on his ideas and activities - he spoke of his 'seven great educators'[35] - he seems to have been particularly open to the influence of those whom he admired, and, while having definite views, an identifiable personality, a considerable literary output and much involvement in organisations, to have seen himself as 'a follower', a disciple, of a succession of leaders.[36] Such a mental stance derived perhaps from his condition of availability. During the period from 1912 through to 1923 Reckitt was pre-occupied with two movements - between which he tried to make connections - Guild Socialism and the Christian Socialism of the C.S.L.[37] In the one he was deeply influenced by G.D.H. Cole and in the other by P.E.T. Widdrington. Of Cole he remarks:- "It is not easy for me to write detachedly about one, by the energy, range and quality of whose mind I was continuously overborne and even intimidated for half a dozen years. I admired him enormously ..."[38] Reckitt first met Widdrington in 1913 at the C.S.L's Annual Conference. The impact on Reckitt of Widdrington's address to the Conference was something he would never forget - "it was one of the chief turning-points in my life" ... for "as I listened to him there came upon me a strong impression that something immensely important was being said to me and that here was a man who was going to make

35. The seven were Ernest Barker, H.A.L. Fisher, A.R. Orage, J.N. Figgis, G.K. Chesterton, P.E.T. Widdrington and V.A. Demant (As It Happened, passim; information from Revd. Peter Mayhew; interview - author with Reckitt).

36. Reckitt's tendency to 'hero-worship' is illustrated well by the following remarks from his biography:- "When I first established myself in London I bought and set on my sideboard photographs of Chesterton and George Lansbury, whom I thought (and still think) to have been the two Englishmen who in their different ways had done most to make the idea of democracy mean something real in this country ..." (As It Happened, p.179)

37. M.B. Reckitt, As It Happened, passim, but especially Chapters VII, VIII, XII and XIII.

38. Ibid., p.122.

a difference to my whole life".[39] At the end of his life the impression remained strong. "This is exactly the person I want", he recalled his having thought at the time. "Here was the man I wanted saying the things I wanted to hear. I had never heard them put like this before".[40] Disciple-like, Reckitt was to confront Widdrington with the question "'What am I going to do?' I can't see any occupation I've got any gifts for." Widdrington was to reply "Come along with us. You'll have plenty to say." He had noticed Reckitt's contributions to the Church Socialist: the first thing to do he told the flattered but apprehensive young man was to get hold of the journal [41] (i.e. the Church Socialist). Reckitt felt that perhaps the greatest of his many debts to Widdrington was "his implanting in me the idea that simply as an obscure and 'unemployed' layman I might find occupation that I could accept as a vocation. 'There are plenty of people in the secular movements', Widdrington told him, 'and they're mostly at a dead end. What we want now are some real lay people who'll break out of the old ecclesiastical grooves and make a new link between the Church and the World. Make it your main job to be one of them.'"[42] Reckitt, then, was greatly influenced by Widdrington: "I was", he declared, "very much a Widdringtonian".[43] At the time when he became a major

39. Ibid., p.249.

40. Interview - author with Reckitt, 30th December 1976.

41. Ibid.

42. As It Happened, p.255. This work states that Reckitt, 'troubled about a future that seemed to be leading nowhere and increasingly doubtful about the validity of Left objectives', asked Widdrington's advice and received the reply quoted above. Reckitt dates this exchange as 1917. Perhaps he asked Widdrington the same question on more than one occasion. Though the interview of the author with Reckitt took place 35 years after this book was written, Reckitt's recollections then of his first encounter with Widdrington accord well with the situation and the exchange about the Church Socialist cannot have taken place after 1915 since Reckitt became editor in that year. In the interview Reckitt states that he sought out Widdrington to congratulate him after his speech at the 1913 Annual Conference: in the book he writes that Widdrington sought him out on this occasion since he had noticed his articles on Guild Socialist times in the Church Socialist and wanted him to talk to the men of his parish (As It Happened, p.252).

43. Reckitt interview, cit.

figure in the C:S.L. he brought to the organisation certain items in his intellectual 'baggage' which were to be significant in his part in helping to shape its future course. Since he had spent most of his adult life at Oxford - he graduated in 1911 and returned to do research in 1913 - this baggage was largely derived from this source. At Oxford he had started calling himself a Socialist: "it was", he said, "considered a bit dashing".[44] He was, however, disappointed at the Socialism he found in Oxford - "it simply produced the Webbs, telling everybody what to do and not listening to anybody outside the Civil Service." By the time he left Oxford (in 1911) he still knew very little about Socialism.[45] When he returned to the University in 1913 he was holding on to a nominal Socialism while disengaging himself "from most of the ideology in which Socialists were supposed to steep themselves".[46] Like G.K. Chesterton, he called himself a Socialist because the only alternative to being a Socialist was not being a Socialist.[47] He was looking for alternatives to State collectivism and in the stimulating pages of the New Age, S.G. Hobson's articles on Guild Socialism in 1912 held a strong appeal for him.[48] Moreover "the word 'guild' re-awakened echoes of that part of my Oxford teaching which had made the strongest impression on me".[49] From Ernest Barker he had caught an enthusiasm for the mediaeval world and particularly for the guilds of the fourteenth century.[50] In more

44. As It Happened, pp.105, 110, 130.

45. Reckitt Interview, cit.

46. As It Happened, p.113.

47. Ibid. Reckitt begins the section on his political development with the significant sentence:- "I became a Socialist in 1908, and I shall always think that, for my generation, a Socialist is a very good thing to have been (p.103). Reckitt appears in general to use the term to refer to State control ideas as advocated by Fabians and Marxians.

48. Ibid., p.109.

49. Ibid., p.110.

50. Ibid., p.105; Reckitt interview, cit.

general terms, Reckitt brought to the League a propensity for study and for intellectual pursuits. It would probably be inaccurate to describe him as a don manqué: he abandoned his research - "it was not a congenial moment for abstract studies, and I am not at the best of times a research student by temperament." He turned instead to the task of planning and helping to run study circles with G.D.H. Cole.[51] It might however, be more accurate to describe him as a First Class graduate manqué: in autobiography and in interview even at the end of his life he showed an almost embarrassing concern about the details of the marks for his Oxford Finals papers.[52] In interview his statement "I got a 'First'" - a Freudian slip perhaps - was corrected a split second later: he had taken a 'Second'. He was to operate throughout his life as a member of the intelligentsia - active in seminars, study groups and summer schools, serious journalism and studious authorship. Into the inner councils of the C.S.L. then came Reckitt, a man with time and talents, critical of State Socialism, enamoured of Guild Socialism, given to intellectual pursuits - and he came as a disciple of Widdrington.

For the final nine years of the League's life the Widdrington-Reckitt axis occupied positions of power and influence within the organisation. At the Special Conference in 1916 Widdrington took over as the League's Chairman.[53] In the previous year, on Widdrington's initiative, Reckitt had been brought in to edit the Church Socialist.[54] Widdrington remained as Chairman until the Annual Conference in 1919[55] and Reckitt remained as Editor of the Church Socialist until the end of that year.[56] Obviously the Chairman and the

51. Ibid., p.130. The year was 1914.

52. Ibid., p.160.

53. Church Socialist, October 1916, League Notes.

54. M.B. Reckitt, P.E.T. Widdrington, p.62. The first issue for which Reckitt was responsible was that of July 1915 (Editorial). Widdrington was Vice Chairman at this time.

55. Church Socialist, June-July 1919, Report of Annual Conference.

56. Ibid., January-February 1920, Editorial and note on magazine.

Editor of the journal were always key figures in the life of the League: in war-time conditions, as we have seen, the relative importance of the Officers and the Executive increased and for the same reasons the magazine assumed greater significance and the influence and importance of the Editor grew as he provided the medium to link up declining and dormant branches and isolated individuals and a filter through which the ferment of new ideas could be strained. The two most influential posts in the League were held therefore by Widdrington and his friend and follower Reckitt for three critical years. On relinquishing these posts they continued to play prominent roles in C.S.L. affairs. Reckitt, an ex-officio member of the Executive as Church Socialist editor, was immediately co-opted to that body on resigning the editorship.[57] For the League's final year he served as Vice-Chairman.[58] Widdrington, as we have seen, felt that the League had suffered greatly through not having appointed an Organising Secretary in succession to Stuart Smith. In his Chairman's Address to the 1919 Annual Conference he offered his services as Honorary National Organiser, with his former curate Felix Matthews as his assistant[59], and the offer was accepted. Throughout this period, then, Widdrington and Reckitt were extremely well placed to promote their ideas within the League.

The items in the 'baggage' carried by Reckitt which we have previously mentioned - his antipathy to State Collectivism, his enthusiasm for Guild Socialism, his intellectualism - were evident in the Church Socialist from the beginning of his editorial tenure. His predecessor's editorials resembled newspaper leaders: Reckitt's were more like feature articles - his first reached a fifth page.[60] Under Reckitt the tone was

57. Ibid., Executive Committee Report.

58. Commonwealth, July 1922, p.198.

59. Church Socialist, June and July 1919, The Chairman's Address to the Annual Conference.

60. July 1915.

frequently urbane and the content almost invariably aimed at a well educated readership: it was, in Widdrington's words 'a real clearing house for ideas'[61] - there was no pretence at popularity. Widdrington himself was a frequent contributor - in February 1917 nearly half the magazine was taken up by a Widdrington article entitled 'Church History and Social Action - a Seventeenth Century Utopia' whilst three months later he contributed another lengthy article on the Oxford Movement in an issue which also contined four and a half pages of book reviews set out in minuscule print. By his own admission Reckitt saw that "no opportunity to outline and apply the Guild Idea' was missed"[62] - it was indeed mentioned in his first editorial. The advocacy of Guild Socialism in editorial and article was sufficiently marked and persistent to produce complaints: Fred Hughes, a leading London member, found the attitude of spiritual and intellectual superiority adopted by Guild Socialists and the assumption that the C.S.L. was essentially an organisation of National Guildsmen 'a trifle irritating'[63], while Swann in December 1917 felt that there was a danger at that time of the League narrowing down its activities to little more than the propaganda of National Guilds.[64] Swann also censured Reckitt for his attack on Fabian Collectivism in two articles entitled 'The Progress of Progressivism' purporting to be a review of E.R. Pease's history of the society.[65] "Here", complained Swann,

61. Commonwealth, July 1927, p.222.

62. M.B. Reckitt, P.E.T. Widdrington, p.62.

63. Church Socialist, May 1916, Correspondence. Hughes became first chairman of the Society of Socialist Christians (Evans op.cit., p.22). He took the chair at a meeting of the Society on December 18th 1925 when Reckitt came to address them on the Syndicalists. Reckitt said that with their permission he would prefer to deal with Guild Socialism in its historic aspect, that being the English form of the French Syndicalism (The Crusader, January 8th 1926).

64. Ibid., December 1917, N.E. Egerton Swann 'The Outlook for the C.S.L.

65. The articles appeared in the Church Socialist in September and October 1916.

"we have a review of altogether unprecedented dimensions, forming a considerable proportion of the bulk of two numbers of the magazine. The book reviewed has in fact been deliberately seized upon as the occasion for a searching examination of the faith and works of the Fabian Society. And this examination takes the shape of a sustained and unqualified condemnation of that body all along the line." It was, declared Swann, "a deliberate anti-Fabian manifesto - given, to boot, a peculiar prominence in the magazine".[66] Probably Reckitt's review should be seen in the context of the establishment of the National Guilds League in April 1915 and its failure to 'capture' the Fabian Society in the following month.[67] Perhaps in the light of that failure he was doubly anxious that the C.S.L. should be captured for the Guild Idea. It would be unfair to suggest that Reckitt excluded from the Church Socialist ideas opposed to his own - "an open forum was always maintained in the journal", he asserts.[68] It was not difficult however to detect in which directions the editor's sympathies lay. Widdrington declared that under Reckitt the magazine "entered on the most brilliant stage of its career ... It did much to sustain our faith during the darkest days of the war".[69] He must also have found it convenient in a period of trial and transition to have as editor of the League's organ a protégé who shared his aims for the organisation.[70]

66. Ibid., November 1916, Correspondence.

67. Glass, op.cit., pp.38-39. The semi-autonomous Fabian Research Department was 'captured' by the Guildsmen. The first Executive of the National Guilds League included Noel and Reckitt. Other League members who joined included Tawney, Lansbury (Glass p.39) and Widdrington, who joined at the outset (M.B. Reckitt, P.E.T. Widdrington, p.62). See also As It Happened, p.131 for the Guildsmen and the Fabians.

68. M.B. Reckitt, P.E.T. Widdrington, p.62.

69. Commonwealth, July 1927, p.222.

70. For a critical view of Reckitt in this connection see Groves op.cit., pp.176-177.

Widdrington, as we have seen, was anxious to move the League in a 'Church-wards' direction: this was to be the primum mobile of his policy. In his contribution in November 1912 to the series of articles, entitled 'Some Church Socialists and their Views', he was emphatic that the League's main work should be its mission to Church people and equally conscious of the League's alienation from the Church at large[71]: the one had to be promoted, the other overcome. He had been encouraged by stirrings in his own diocese of Worcester in 1915 - the Bishop's pastoral letter and a subsequent four day convention of clergy inspired a Widdrington article entitled 'An Awakening'.[72] It was, however, in the National Mission of Repentance and Hope in the following year that he saw the great opportunity: it provided both an opening for the League to exercise its mission to the Church and a chance to overcome its alienation from it. "We have criticised the Church because of her inaction", he wrote. "Now it is for us to prove the sincerity of our criticisms by the ardour with which we throw ourselves into this National Mission of Repentance and Hope ... All small propaganda societies tend to foster in their members the sectarian spirit ... It has been our misfortune to find ourselves in constant opposition to the authorities in the Church, and we have been out of sympathy with our fellow Churchmen. Our motives have been misunderstood and criticisms reverted. We have felt ourselves ostracized. We have been driven for our fellowship outside rather than inside the Church. We have almost become 'aliens to our own mother's children'. Such a state of things is to be deplored. It has been to some of us spiritually disastrous. Thank God the day of better things has come".[73] The Bishop of Worcester appointed Widdrington as Diocesan Missioner for the National Mission and he

71. Church Socialist, November 1912, pp.4-5.

72. Ibid., October 1915.

73. Ibid., April 1916, P.E.T. Widdrington 'The National Mission'.

spent eighteen months 'on secondment' in this capacity.[74] Reckitt and Felix Matthews, Widdrington's curate from 1911 to 1915, considered the National Mission to have been the "decisiye turning point" in Widdrington's life.[75] The involvement of C.S.L. members in the National Mission had implications beyond the provision of an area of present usefulness or the welcome new accord of the moment. "The new relations between the League and Churchmen", wrote Widdrington, "turned our thoughts more and more towards the re-discovery and enlargement of the social traditions of Christendom".[76] It was natural that Widdrington and his associates should turn to the Middle Ages. As Walter James points out in his book The Christian in Politics, "the classical period of thought about the Church's task in politics was the Middle Ages ... The main forms of a Christian approach to politics were laid down during this age of Christian ascendancy ... Most English Churchmen who in modern times have been interested in the relation of religion and politics have belonged to the Catholic section of the Church of England and it came easily to them to draw inspiration and ideas from the mediaeval Church".[77] Tracing his thinking in this period Widdrington declared:- "We saw that the only adequate solution of the social problem was the restoration of Christendom and that could only come through the strengthening of the Church".[78] The path along which Widdrington now aimed to direct the League clearly had implications for its constitution: it had emerged in a different atmosphere, charged with different aspirations. The 'return of Christendom' was not part of the programme of the I.L.P. sympathisers through whose efforts the League was brought to birth: for Widdrington and his associates the Socialist formularies which the founding fathers had bestowed upon the League were not merely anachronistic or irrelevant, they were a positive

74. M.B. Reckitt, P.E.T. Widdrington, p.66.

75. Ibid., p.65.

76. Commonwealth, July 1927, p.222.

77. p.19.

78. Commonwealth, loc.cit.

obstacle to the fulfilment of the goals he now envisaged. "His aim", wrote Reckitt, "was to make out of it a society which could attract the sort of Church people who were ready to accept the radical interpretation which he and those who thought like him were placing on the mission of the Church without their being required to take this as involving allegiance to any specific secular definition of social policy".[79] Widdrington felt that the National Mission and the war experience had contributed to a stronger feeling for social righteousness than at any time within memory. However, the people who experienced these feelings were not, he believed, convinced that Socialism was the answer to the 'Christianising' of industrial relations. They were not attracted by the programme of Collectivist Socialism which they considered irrelevant but they were sympathetic to the Guild idea. "The League in its present form and with its present title makes no appeal to these people... During the last few years the conviction has been growing in the minds of a group within the League that our real business is the restatement of our whole position. The goal of our endeavours cannot be expressed by any secular ideal: what we desire is the return of Christendom".[80] They were "no longer content to be tied to the tail of a Marxian kite" or to commit themselves unreservedly "to anything so contingent as a particular economic system".[81] As the Christendom star waxed, so the Socialist star waned. If the early struggles of the C.S.L. were concerned with establishing its Socialist credentials and promoting affiliation to the Labour Party, the later struggles were concerned with the removal of the word Socialism from the League's basis and title.

The Widdrington-Reckitt axis was foremost in the promotion of this policy. In the latter years powerful reinforcements joined the intellectualist camp - the

79. M.B. Reckitt, P.E.T. Widdrington, p.66.

80. Commonwealth, May 1922, P.E.T. Widdrington, 'The Future of the Church Socialist League'.

81. Ibid.

Mirfield theologian L.S. Thornton, Henry Slesser with his passion for Anglo-Catholicism and his doubts about Socialism[82], and A.J. Penty with his antipathy towards industrialism and his passion for local guilds.[83] The position of this group was further developed at a series of Summer Schools held at Paycockes House at Coggeshall in Essex from 1919.[84] At these schools there was conceived the volume of essays published as The Return of Christendom, an attempt to set forth the outlines of what this group termed a 'Catholic sociology'.[85] The word 'Sociology' is used in a somewhat idiosyncratic sense: clearly it indicates something other than the modern academic discipline bearing that name. Some of those who have used the term Christian Sociology have attempted to justify it in the face of the semantic controversy to which it has given rise. Reckitt stated that "the employment of the phrase was inspired by a desire to distinguish the object to be aimed at from the mere elaboration of a 'Christian social ethic' on the one hand and a purely theoretical Christian Social philosophy on the other".[86] R. Tribe, in his book The Christian Social Tradition (1935), essentially a Christian Socialist textbook of this particular school of thought, sees sociology as having a three-fold function - to describe, evaluate and direct. "We are now in a position", he writes at the conclusion of his argument, "to justify the term 'Christian Sociology'. It is evident that if sociology is a merely descriptive science there can no more be a specifically Christian sociology than there can be a Christian astronomy or logic. But it is equally

82. Slesser, op.cit., pp.86-87.

83. M.B. Reckitt, As It Happened, p.262.

84. Commonwealth, July 1927, p.222; As It Happened, p.258; reports, sometimes in semi-humorous vein, also appeared in the Church Socialist.

85. The adjectives 'Catholic' and 'Christian' seem to have been used interchangeably with the noun 'Sociology' by this group: invariably, however, they meant Catholic.

86. Crucible, October 1963, p.116, footnote 1.

evident that if sociology has the further function of evaluation and direction of action there is undoubtedly a Christian sociology."[87] The volume The Return of Christendom contained essays by League men Reckitt (2), Slesser, Thornton, Widdrington, Penty and Bull, plus two contributions from outside the group, one by A.J. Carlyle on 'The Mediaeval Theory of Social Order' and the other on 'The Failure of Marxism' by Niles Carpenter of Harvard. The ingredients were predictable: the need for social reconstruction, the repudiation of Marxism and State Socialism, pointers towards Guild Socialism, the necessity of Catholic dogma, the concept of the Kingdom of God - the 'Return' theme being prominent with chapters by Slesser on 'The Return of Dogma', Widdrington on 'The Return of the Kingdom of God'[88] and Reckitt on 'The Return of Christendom in Relation to Modern Society'. The book had evident weaknesses, in construction, in theology and in sociology, as Reckitt readily admitted.[89] Gore, too, whose help had been enlisted by Bull, had clearly agonized over its production[90] and in his Introduction he felt constrained, while commending the virtues of the volume to draw attention also to some of its omissions[91]. It was, however, a commercial success, being widely read,[92] in part, no doubt, because the essays were sandwiched between an Introduction from Gore and what Reckitt describes as a 'sparkling' Epilogue from G.K. Chesterton.[93] "It helped", says Reckitt, "to gain for its writers a degree of attention

87. pp.137, 139.

88. It incorporated some of the material in his article 'The Re-Discovery of the Kingdom of God' which appeared in the Church Socialist, November and December 1920.

89. As It Happened, pp.261-2.

90. Ibid.

91. Return of Christendom, pp.13-14.

92. As It Happened, loc.cit.

93. Crucible, loc.cit.

that few of them had been able to command before."[94] As far as the future of the C.S.L. was concerned, it served to consolidate its contributors as a group, to develop their corporate thinking on these matters, to provide them with a published 'statement' of their position which, for the time, could serve as a reference point, and to encourage them to travel further along the path they were exploring.[95] Since the Christian Sociology of this group was integrally related to Catholic Dogma there were further implications for the future of the League. Widdrington tells us that it was at the C.S.L's Paycockes Summer Schools that it became clear to them that the League must become definitely Catholic in its Churchmanship and that "the future of a reconstituted League would be bound up with the spread of Catholicism within the Church. We had travelled a long way from the early days when we came perilously near to believing that the establishment of a Socialist State would be the coming of the Kingdom of God".[96] The 'intellectualist tendency' in the League had travelled too, like Noel, to a conviction that Catholicism must form the essential and only basis for the League, but the ethos of this group differed markedly from that of Noel and his associates. Noel presented a synthesis of extroverted Catholicism and revolutionary Socialism, activist in attitude, challenging and protesting: the Widdrington-Reckitt axis presented a combination of intellectualism and Catholicism, academic in attitude, analysing, conceptualising, formulating, persuading. In this latter group the note of 'traditional' Socialism was so muted as to be almost inaudible: Reckitt, writing about The Return of Christendom, remarks on "the appearance of the vestigial word 'Socialism' in Fr. Thornton's preliminary explanation, and its more or less explicit repudiation in the book".[97]

94. As It Happened, loc.cit.

95. This school of thought established the periodical Christendom : A Journal of Christian Sociology in 1931.

96. Commonwealth, July 1927, p.223.

97. As It Happened, p.261.

The defeat of West's Socialist activist thrust in 1909 and the later defection of Noel, who established the Catholic Crusade for those who felt it to be essential to stand expressly for a combination of Catholicism and Socialism, left the field clear for the triumph of the third element, the 'intellectualist tendency' which came, as we have seen, to embrace a dogmatic Catholicism. The transition from engagement to intellectualism, from activism to analysis, was completed at Paycockes. The 'intellectualist' camp was not entirely homogeneous in composition - the modernist Swann was conspicuously absent from the contributors to The Return of Christendom, but, as we have seen, he shared Widdrington's belief in the prime importance of the Kingdom of God concept, he believed that the League should not be "drawn into co-operation in the ordinary political and industrial activities" of the Labour and Socialist Movement[98] and he emerged as Secretary of the successor organisation, the League of the Kingdom of God, which embodied the ideas that had emerged at Paycockes.[99] There continued, too, to be pockets of Socialist resistance fighting brave rear-guard actions against the evident advance: a correspondent, Myfanwy Westrope, asked where, in the event of a revolution taking place, the League as an agent of Socialism would stand, and pleaded that it should link up with the rest of the Socialist movement and make its influence felt[100] and Stuart Smith throughout this period persisted as an unyielding Socialist sniper, frequently from his sanatorium sick-bed.[101] The Widdrington-Reckitt axis was, however, to win the day and to the 'mechanics' of their victory we must now turn.

98. Church Socialist, September and October 1920, N.E. Egerton Swann, 'The New Issues - memorandum to the Executive of the London branch of the C.S.L.

99. Commonwealth, June 1923, 'The Birth of the League of the Kingdom of God'.

100. Church Socialist, May and June 1921, Correspondence.

101. E.g. Ibid., September 1916, Correspondence.

# CHAPTER 10 - THE MECHANICS OF CHANGE

The differences of opinion in the League about its basis and its role vis-a-vis the Church and the Labour movement acquired a new intensity in the face of the decline accelerated by the war and the stimulus to fresh thinking which the conflict occasioned.[1] By the summer of 1916 the impetus towards reconstruction was manifested in the pages of the periodical. The decision to abandon the Annual Conference in that year caused the Chairman, Donaldson, to call a special meeting of the Executive Committee to place before it three propositions concerning (1) the dissolution of the League, (2) the suspension of the League during the war and (3) a possible reconstruction of the League.[2] The first two propositions were rejected and in regard to the third it was agreed to summon a conference of members, and, significantly, "of friends sympathetic with the League though not in present membership, to consider a possible reconstruction of the Society".[3] The Conference was to meet in Birmingham in September. The door to revision had therefore been opened, and through it were beckoned not merely members but others who, though in sympathy, had not joined previously, presumably because in many cases they could not assent to the existing formularies. Reckitt, who in the previous year had experience of small pressure group conspiracy in the Guild Socialists' attempt to capture the Fabian Society,[4] declared in his Editorial in the same issue that every crisis was an opportunity, and after referring to the influences that moulded the C.S.L. in 1906, he remarked that "much has happened since those days to make many among us feel that neither the means nor the end were the true ones for the C.S.L."

1. Church Socialist, July 1916, Editorial.
2. Ibid. 'A Word to the Faithful by the Chairman'
3. Ibid.
4. As It Happened, p.131.

Among 'the many' were, as we have seen, Reckitt himself and Widdrington, his mentor. Influence towards change was found again in Reckitt's Editorial for the Conference month. The teaching and activities of the League should not be regarded complacently, he avowed, "as if these had been fixed and circumscribed by Providence and were to be subject neither to correction nor to criticism ... The failure of the attempt to hold an Annual Conference was but the last of a number of indications that the position of the League demanded reconstruction and even a re-birth. Moreover, it was generally felt that such reconstruction would involve more than the question of the machinery of organization. We should seize the opportunity to consider whether our present basis expressed most exactly the true nature of our mission and our aim; whether it would not be desirable in the course of such a reconstruction to enlist once more the aid of valued members whom we had lost and win the allegiance of others, one with us in spirit, whose support, owing to some fault perhaps of our own, we had never gained." However, the strategy devised by the Executive Committee did not go unopposed. In the same issue there appeared a letter of strong protest from Stuart Smith, writing from a Surrey sanatorium. "There is", he stated, "no place in the programme of the Conference for what is surely the most important question of all, that is whether the League has any intention of abandoning its Socialist basis or not. It is advisable to settle that question before discussing alternative Non-Socialist bases. Certainly some of us will not allow the League to abandon Socialism without a protest. We have not all bowed the knee to Belloc. Again I must protest against the character of the Conference. It is to be a meeting of such members and non-members as can afford the time and expense. Such a Conference is contrary to the constitution of the League, unrepresentative and undemocratic. It cannot legislate for the League, and its decisions will have the force of suggestions only. The Executive which has prolonged its own term of office without sanction from the League, has no power thus to overthrow our constitution and to revolutionize our character as a society." Reckitt

appended a soothing editorial note to the letter stating that he thought Stuart Smith was unintentionally misrepresenting the nature of the Special Conference and the spirit in which it had been called and pointing out that no proposal had been made to 'abandon' a Socialist basis: it was an assurance which could perhaps be made in 1916, but manifestly not in the League's closing years.

In the event Stuart Smith's tactics of forcing the 'Socialist' issue to the forefront partly paid off: the revisionists siege did not result in total capitulation. Four alternative statements were submitted for consideration by the Conference. Stuart Smith was anxious that the League "should not seem to desert Socialism in favour of any more nebulous formulas" and pointed to the danger of adopting any basis which would lead to their ranks "being flooded by well-intentioned persons of every shade of reformist thought who hoped to moralise or modify a capitalism upon which the C.S.L. had in the past and must more than ever in the future wage an uncompromising battle. The point", reported Reckitt, "appealed to the Conference, which decided ... that no change should be made in the title of the League and that the word Socialism should not be left out of any basis which might be adopted. It seemed to be the general feeling that while 'Socialism' in itself was no magic name or mystical formula commanding allegiance by whomsoever it might be uttered, it still expressed in a manner difficult to improve upon, a moral ideal hostile to the principles and practice of profiteering. But the gravest dissatisfaction was expressed both with the form of the League's present definition of Socialism and with the position it occupied at the head of our statement of principles. The Conference in general adopted the view expressed in the words that the C.S.L. was "a religious and not a political society", meaning by this that its business was essentially to proclaim principles and apply them without faltering to the social issues of today but not to identify itself with a purely economic solution which could merely be said to 'harmonize' with Christianity".[5]

5. Church Socialist, October 1916, 'The Special Conference'.

These latter sentiments, as reported by Reckitt, seem to harmonize with the views of the Widdrington-Reckitt axis. Widdrington, however, was clearly disappointed: "we could not secure the majority required to effect a drastic change".[6] The outcome of the debate was that the Executive was instructed to take all the prepared statements, plus the existing basis and the views expressed at the Conference, for re-consideration and to prepare a new statement before the next Annual Conference.[7] Though Widdrington had not immediately achieved his objectives he could draw consolation from his election to the League Chairmanship at the Special Conference[8]: he would now be at the head of the Executive charged with the task of re-formulation.

The Executive Committee went speedily to work. The results of its labours were published in the Church Socialist in January 1917[9] . The Socialist content was toned down, the word 'Catholic' appeared and there were indications of Guild Socialist influence, derived probably from Reckitt, but in general the alterations and amendments were more modest than might have been anticipated: perhaps the Special Conference debate had imposed a certain caution on the more rabid revisionists. The definition of Socialism remained but was duly removed from its prominent position at the head of the Basis to rank as fourth in a series of five 'Principles'. Moreover, this definition no longer spoke of "the establishment of a democratic commonwealth" and, more significantly, the word "collectively" disappeared: the community was still to own the land and capital as before, but not "collectively" and instead of merely using them "co-operatively for the good of all" it was now to "use them by such co-operative methods as will promote the good of all, and secure to all, as workers, the control of their own life and labour", an addition in which

6. Commonwealth, July 1927, p.222; see also Church Socialist, January 1918, 'New Year letter from the Chairman' [Widdrington] in which he describes the Special Conference of 1916 as "from the point of view of the League itself, disastrous. So far from infusing new energy into branches or enlisting new recruits it accentuated differences among us and sent delegates home wondering whether the League could survive".

7. Church Socialist, October 1916, loc.cit.

8. Ibid., League Notes

9. p.19.

The intervening fifteen months during which the same Executive Committee had been carrying on the business of the League, saw the emergence of a more drastic revision to present before the long awaited Conference. The Executive had felt that a further re-draft was needed in view of the changed circumstances both in the nation and the Church",[12] and a sub-committee had been appointed to draw up a new short Basis.[13] The version that emerged was certainly much shorter than the existing Basis or the first revision: this second draft consisted in fact of two slightly modified clauses from that first revision with an introduction which owed something to its predecessors - the rest had been pruned away. The word 'Socialism' had now disappeared from all but the title of the Society, but the definition of Socialism set out in the first revision remained. There was no mention of the State or of members' duties with regard to Churchpeople who were not Socialists or Socialists who were not Churchpeople. The Basis now read as follows:-

> "The League is a band of men and women who, believing the Catholic religion of the historic Church of Christ, and attached to the corporate and sacramental life of that Church, hold that the Faith demands a challenge to the world, involving the political, economic, and social emancipation of the whole people, men and women, through the application of the fixed principle that the community shall own the land and capital, and use them by such co-operative methods as will promote the common good and secure to all, as workers, the control of their own life and labour.
>
> The League further recognizes that no political economic and social emancipation can be permanent, without a change of heart and mind and will."[14]

This new short Basis was duly adopted and Widdrington, addressing the Annual Conference on relinquishing the Chairmanship in 1919, declared that it would last the League "for many years to come".[15]

12. Church Socialist, January 1918. The Future of the League - Report of the Executive Committee.
13. Ibid., New Year Letter from Chairman.
14. This Basis was printed thereafter in issues of the Church Socialist.
15. Church Socialist, June and July 1919.

'Many' turned out to be few. In the year in which Widdrington made that statement there was held the first of the Paycockes Summer Schools to which we have previously referred. These gatherings were to provide a new impetus for further change in the League's Basis and orientation. Again a difference of opinion emerged between the branches and the Executive Committee, and in April 1921 the Committee decided, in view of the Opposition of the branches, not to proceed with a suggested further revision of the Basis.[16] Meanwhile the 'Return of Christendom' group prepared to strengthen its hand: on the motion of the Chairman, Bull, seconded by Widdrington, it was resolved that the Executive would nominate Slesser and Penty for election to their ranks by the Annual Conference.[17]

Before the end of 1921, however, the call for a further revision of the Basis had been heard again. The Church Socialist notes in Commonwealth reported that Swann had attended the Executive Committee's meeting on 7th December "to advocate a revision of the League's Basis with a view to securing the adhesion of Distributivists and believers in the Douglas Credit Scheme as well as Socialists and Collectivists", and that after discussion the Executive Committee appointed a strong sub-committee "representative of all shades of opinion" to enquire into the matter. "A change in the League's title may be involved", the report announced.[18] The Social Credit scheme advocated by Major C.H. Douglas[19] was

16. C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes, 8th April 1921 (Stacy papers, University of Leeds).

17. Ibid.

18. January 1922, p.32.

19. "A theory of economic and social development, largely discredited, which rests on the proposition that modern economics suffer from a deficiency of purchasing power. The remedy for this situation, according to Major C.H. Douglas ... was to increase purchasing power by controlling prices and creating 'social credit' which would be distributed to consumers by discounts paid to retailers, and also by 'dividends' paid to citizens for the heritage of earlier generations." Douglas Evans in Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought, eds. Bullock and Stallybrass.

the latest novelty to attract the attention of some Church Socialists. Douglas had won the mind of A.R. Orage of the New Age,[20] which was a further recommendation to some of this group. In the last eighteen months of Orage's editorship - he resigned in 1922 - most of the New Age's 'Notes of the Week' were, in fact, written by Swann, who also contributed signed articles to the journal.[21] The scheme had also made considerable headway in the National Guilds League - the month in which Swann appeared before the C.S.L. Executive Committee on its account, there took place at the National Guilds League's Annual Conference a struggle for the control of the organization between the Communist camp and the section tending towards Social Credit, with victory going to the former.[22] The C.S.L. periodical for that same month was also dominated by the Douglas scheme with articles from Penty[23], who opposed it, describing it as a heresy, and Swann and Stacy who supported it.[24] In the following month even veteran Christian Socialist Stewart Headlam was writing to Stacy, asking: "Who is Douglas and what is his new plan for our social salvation? I have read what you sent me but it does not make the matter clear to me."[25] Headlam was not alone in this state of incomprehension: one of Major Douglas's major problems seems to have been that few people could actually understand the scheme.[26] Given the New Age and National Guilds connection it was natural that the scheme should also be attractive to Reckitt[27] who, as we have seen, was later to join with

20. Mairet, op.cit., pp.74-76; Kenney op.cit., pp.186-187.

21. New English Weekly, 30th September 1948, Obituary on Swann by M.B.R. (Reckitt).

22. Mairet loc.cit.; Kenney loc.cit.

23. Mairet loc.cit., gives interesting account of the discussions between Orage, Penty and Douglas and the ensuing breach between Orage and Penty. Penty was an advocate of local, as opposed to national guilds.

24. November and December 1921.

25. 8th January 1922 (Stacy papers, Hayward Collection).

26. Clayton, op.cit., p.153.

27. As It Happened, Ch.IX 'Social Crisis and Social Credit, esp., pp.168-171. 'I became convinced that the social credit approach represented for our day the true application of the traditional Christian sociology' (p.169). He had been converted to this position by 1921 (p.170).

Swann and Stacy in writing a C.S.L. pamphlet entitled Social Credit and Christian Values. The Douglas scheme was to exercise more influence in the C.S.L's successor, The League of the Kingdom of God, in which the three authors of the pamphlet were to occupy important offices - Reckitt was its first Vice-Chairman, Swann its first Secretary[28] and Stacy a subsequent Secretary.[29] At this point, however, it served to foment further the desire among the League's intellectuals for another revision of the Basis. Swann told the Committee that an increasing number of prominent members of the League disagreed with the Basis in its existing form. The Douglas Credit scheme, he declared, was a method of realising and stablising distributivism, to which history bore witness as the characteristically Catholic regime[30] - a point which must have appealed to the Return of Christendom group and an element of contact with their milieu which perhaps explains Swann's adherence to the L.K.G. and his acceptance of the post of Secretary. It was now, he told them, "the vital element in the social movement". He did not ask the League to commit itself to the scheme but he did want some modest changes to be made in the phrasing of the Basis. The minutes of this meeting provide a more revealing account than the report which appeared in the Commonwealth. Swann's comments were apparently followed by a resolution from the Coventry branch, submitted by Henry Hayward. There had clearly been collaboration before the meeting as the Coventry resolution called for Swann's ideas to be considered at a special meeting of the Executive. It also proposed that the further question of the present title of the League be considered and that in the meantime the Executive should be instructed "to get in touch with the groups within the Church desirous of working for the Return of Christendom". This Coventry resolution harmonised with the special interests both of Hayward's current Vicar at St Peter's, the Social Credit enthusiast

28. Commonwealth. June 1923, p.189

29. L.K.G. literature in Stacy papers, Hayward Collection.

30. C.S.L. Executive Committee Minutes, 7th December 1921 (Stacy papers, University of Leeds).

Paul Stacy and his predecessor, Percy Widdrington, then deeply immersed in the 'Return of Christendom' thinking. The sub-committee which was appointed to examine the revision question would meet at Slesser's chambers at 2.30 p.m. on a Thursday afternoon: the choice of time was an indication that it was composed of members of the professional or leisured classes. As we have observed, the report in Commonwealth described it as being 'representative of all shades of opinion'. To it were appointed Egerton Swann, R.H. Tawney and Fred Hughes - in our loose three-fold categorization of Socialists, Catholics and Intellectuals Hughes would be numbered among the Socialists - but, of the nine-man team, five, Bull, Penty, Reckitt, Slesser and Widdrington, were from the group of Return of Christendom authors.[31] The Committee resolved that Stuart Smith (specifically) and branches and individual members be invited to submit memoranda to the sub-committee. Nevertheless, from this time until their efforts met with success in the dissolution of the C.S.L. and the emergence of the L.K.G., the strong revisionist group, aligned on what we have characterised as the Widdrington-Reckitt axis, was to press forward the process of transformation in a determined, 'stage-managed' and, as the Executive Committee minutes reveal, almost unscrupulous manner.

Many League members it appears were perfectly happy with the Basis as it stood[32] and the Executive itself was not unanimous on the reconstruction question.[33] Those whose views found expression in articles and books were not necessarily representative of the League as a whole. If their plans were to succeed the revisionists needed, therefore, to persuade, and

31. Eight names were chosen at the meeting: the ninth was to be a member to be nominated by the London branch.

32. Commonwealth, July 1922, pp.196-7.

33. Memo by Organiser and Secretary to members of the Executive Committee, n.d. but from internal evidence between mid August and early-mid September 1922 (Stacy papers, University of Leeds).

perhaps manipulate, within the League and to gain adherents from outside: these things they proceeded to do. The search for allies outside began early with negotiations with the Industrial Christian Fellowship, and in February it was agreed to form a joint committee with that organization, the five C.S.L. representatives including Widdrington, Reckitt and Slesser.[34] Bull resigned the League Chairmanship in April - he believed that in view of the League's liabilities and general financial position the Annual Conference should not he held and the organisation should be wound up forthwith, but the Committee continued to make arrangements for the Annual Conference. A resolution would be put before the Annual Conference suggesting a special conference in October, of League members and sympathisers[35]: the Bristol branch would be asked to nominate someone to speak to this resolution[36], presumably to make it appear less exclusively an Executive Committee scheme. Meanwhile Widdrington wrote an article in the Commonwealth on 'The Future of the Church Socialist League': it was virtually a manifesto for reconstruction. In the present situation there was a need for a new start and new men: he drew a parallel with the case of 1906 when the Morecambe conferees were faced with the old G.S.M.[37] Reckitt followed up in the next issue by presenting his case for reconstruction: in the volume The Return of Christendom they now had "the spiritual and philosophic basis for a distinctive Catholic sociology".[38] The Annual Conference would also feature, as its grand finale, an open conference on 'What are the elements of a Christian Sociology?' with Tawney and Reckitt's former tutor Ernest Barker leading the debate.[39] The resolutions from the

34. C.S.L. Executive Committee Minutes, 16th February 1922 (Stacy papers, University of Leeds).

35. Ibid., 21st April 1922.

36. Minutes of Conference Sub-Committee, 28th April 1922.

37. May 1922, pp.133-4.

38. 'The Challenge of the Christendom Ideal, p.156.

39. Agenda, C.S.L. Annual Conference, 1922 - June 6th and 7th. (Copy in Stacy papers, University of Leeds).

Executive Committee proposing a special conference in October on the League's Basis and policy, to which 'sympathisers' would be invited, and which would be preceded by a report from the Executive of the branches on 'the position prospects and possibilities of the League'[40] were carried at the Annual Conference. The debate on them revealed as at the Special Conference in September 1916, that there was considerable division of opinion within the membership. Slesser said that the word 'Socialism', which had many meanings, failed to cover all he wished the League to stand for - those who supported the resolution had no desire to tone down their opinions but to appeal to those in the Church who felt that the Catholic Faith and the Kingdom of God should be central and fundamental; Lansbury said that the supporters of the resolution were telling the same old story - the League was always 'never growing' and there were always some who wished to pull up its roots; Stuart Smith said that the League should not be identified with any particular theological school but should seek to attach to itself all Churchmen united in thoroughgoing detestation of the existing social system.[41] Clearly the revisionists had much work to do before their plans could be brought to a successful outcome. They addressed the task with vigour. To Reckitt had been alloted the work of preparing the report on the position prospects and possibilities of the League: within a month he was presenting it to the Executive Committee, though controversial portions were referred back.[42] At the same meeting Widdrington read a synopsis he had prepared on subjects for discussion at the October conference: as in Reckitt's case the Committee curbed his excesses and required him to restrict it to headings so that the freedom of the speakers should not be limited - the revisionists were not present in

40. Ibid.

41. Commonwealth, July 1922, pp.196-7.

42. C.S.L. Executive minutes, 6th July 1922.

strength on this occasion. Nevertheless Widdrington and the sub-committee were left to select the speakers. By late summer, however, Widdrington and the Secretary sent a memorandum to the Executive Committee advising that the Special Conference be postponed - there was insufficient time for adequate preparation. Moreover criticisms of a draft 'Letter to the Branches' had indicated a divergence of views in the Executive. Greater unanimity was needed, they felt. "It does not appear" they wrote, "that all the members of the Executive are clear as to what those who have urged the need of a drastic reconstruction of the League propose". There was a need for the Executive to have its own Conference "to discuss a scheme of reconstruction and a plan of campaign for ensuring the success of the Special Conference at which the changes proposed will be either ratified or rejected". Co-operation was needed from all members of the Executive particularly in securing the attendance of likely men outside the League. As well as dissolving doubts in the Executive, postponement would provide time in which The Return of Christendom could be circulating and it was urged that a Study Circle leaflet should be produced without delay and sent to the branches. It would also provide time for members of the Executive to engage in propaganda in the branches. The Special Conference would fail if it were to be held before the necessary work of preparation had been done[43]. In this quasi-conspiratorial atmosphere a draft manifesto and statement of Basis and Objects was put before the Executive Committee in October.[44] The lengthy Manifesto, *not demanding adherence to any* secular programme, and *with its references to plutocracy, reverence for human* personality, fellowship, respect for beauty set above 'the multiplication of mean things', centralisation, vocation, and the machine as the servant of 'money-power', bore all the marks of the thinking of the Return of Christendom authors. The main criticism advanced was that the proposed new Basis and statement

43. See footnote 33.

44. C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes, 18th October 1922.

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44. C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes, 18th October 1922.

of Objects was difficult to understand[45] - a clear indication that the intellectuals who framed it, despite the avowed objective of widening the League's appeal, were out of touch with, or did not seek, the masses. Matters had indeed moved far from the spirit and strategy of 1906. The Basis and Objects set before the Committee were to prove to be almost identical to those which would be brought before the Annual Conference in the following May.[46] The references to economic and social structure were much less specific than in previous versions, the new Basis merely stating that "the Catholic Faith demands a challenge to the world by the repudiation of capitalist plutocracy, and further that it involves a social order in which the means of life subserve the commonweal". It also went on to declare the League's "devotion to the cause of the poor and oppressed as specially dear to God". Most of the clauses had a specifically 'Church' or theological content. The first Object was "the revival of the prophetic Office of the Church and the insistence on the Kingdom of God as the regulative principle of theology". Churchmen were to be awakened to the lost social traditions of Christendom and the re-creation of a Christian sociology consonant with the needs of the age. The Eucharist was to be restored as the central act of Christian worship and there was to be "the recognition and enforcement of the Church's social discipline over her own members". The last two of the six Objects referred to the 'external' dimension: there was to be "the winning of those indifferent or hostile to the Catholic Faith while standing for justice in the common life, and those within the Church who resist the Christian ordering of society" and finally there was to be "co-operation with other bodies, religious or secular, on occasions when fundamental issues of social righteousness are at stake". In all these proposals there was nothing

45. Ibid.

46. Conference agenda (Copy in Davey material - on loan to author).

which could be labelled as specifically 'Socialist' and the sub-committee indeed, in presenting the documents, felt "bound to express the opinion that if the above proposals for reconstruction are adopted the present title will not serve to describe accurately the nature and purpose of the League, or lead to that influx of members from new sources which might otherwise be anticipated". It suggested 'Christendom League' as a possible title but recognised that the branches must necessarily have the last word. This meeting was also notable in that it reported the resignations from the Executive of Hughes and Penty. The departure of Hughes was entirely predictable. Tawney, who had served alongside Hughes on the famous Fifth Committee had also disappeared from the Committee - in the summer period - and he was later to join Hughes in the Society of Socialist Christians.[47] Penty's departure is less explicable since he was one of the group of Return of Christendom essayists and the Manifesto which had been drawn up showed marked signs of his influence: we have seen, however, that he was sharply opposed to the Social Credit theory, the 'Douglas-New Age heresy', and the advance of this school of thought in the ranks of the revisionists may have impelled him to leave. The work of revision, however, went on and in November under the heading 'Proposed Reconstruction of the Church Socialist League' the proposed new Basis, Objects and Manifesto were announced in the Commonwealth.[48] The accompanying orchestration also became public.[49] There was canvassing for 'outsiders' to attend the Special Conference. The Executive wanted branches during the winter to arrange local conferences to which interested non-members of the League could be invited and at which the Organiser (Widdrington) or other members of the Executive Committee could explain proposals for reconstruction. The Organiser would be glad to hear from

47. Evans, op.cit., p.22.

48. p.308.

49. p.309.

clergy or groups of Church people who would support a society on the lines indicated in the Manifesto published in that issue of the Commonwealth. With the cessation of the publication of the Church Socialist at the end of 1921 and the subsequent utilisation of the Commonwealth to carry C.S.L. items the Manifesto was assured of reaching an audience of 'Social Christians' much wider than the C.S.L. membership.

The stage was now set for the final act in the drama of transformation. In January 1923 the Executive Committee, 'pursuant to instructions from the Annual Conference held in June 1922' issued to the branches a report ('Private and Confidential, for the information of League members only') on the position, prospects and possibilities of the League.[50] This document consisted of four elements. There was a preamble setting out the background to its production, giving reasons for the postponement of the Special Conference scheduled for the previous October but omitting to include among them the divergence of opinion in the Executive itself, reproducing the questionnaire to which the sub-committee had addressed itself and indicating the strengths and weaknesses which they had discerned in the League. The second element was the draft of the proposed new Basis and Objects, followed by a few paragraphs in justification of the proposed changes and, finally, there was some account of the existing state of the League, extracted from a report "submitted to a recent meeting of the Executive Committee. The 'features of weakness' which the group considered to exist in the League reflected, significantly, their own current concerns. They drew attention first of all to the "lack of appreciation of the primary place of Catholic dogma in our appeal, and coupled with this, too little

50. Copies of first and second editions of this document, both dated 24th January 1923, in Stacy papers, University of Leeds.

reliance upon the Sacraments and prayer as weapons in our warfare"; secondly to the "lack of historical perspective"; thirdly to "difficulties arising from the apparent duality of our allegiance - the Church and the Socialist Movement", there being a failure in this connection, "to make real to ourselves and to others that our challenge to the industrial order arises from the very nature of the Church itself". Almost equally predictably the strength of the League, in their opinion, lay in the witness it had borne to those truths that are embodied in the Church and Sacraments and in what it described as "the amazing fellowship" it had served to sustain and create amongst its members. Perhaps anticipating criticism of the move towards a more explicit Catholicism in the new basis, the compilers of the report wrote in forthright vein:-

> "We are aware that in its phrasing the basis commits the League to a more resolutely Catholic attitude than has been the case with either the existing basis or those which preceded it. In our judgement no other course is open to us. We entertain no hopes for any reconstruction of the League which does not start from the postulates of Catholic theology. A small society depends for its success on the intensity of its convictions ... In the past our efforts to get into our ranks churchmen of the Broad or Low Church schools have not met with any measure of success: it may well be argued that they have tended to the weakening of the League. Whilst we gladly recognise the presence in every section of the Church of constituencies of socially awakened Christians, we are of opinion that we must in the main rely for our membership on those who call themselves Anglo-Catholics ... Our contention is that, with a basis such as we have set forth above, there are grounds for anticipating the accession of many priests and laymen now suspicious of the League on the plea that it does not appear to them to derive its dynamic from a whole-hearted loyalty to the Catholic Church.
>
> It is a noteworthy fact that those branches of the League which have survived the tribulation of these past years are branches where the tone is markedly Catholic."

The report presented a gloomy picture of the League's condition: it was losing old members more quickly than it was gaining new ones; the branches, with a few happy exceptions, were weak, inwardly turned in activity, with several not keeping in touch with the Executive or even bothering to report to the Annual Conference; the financial position was profoundly critical which in turn limited propaganda. The presentation of report and basis as a single document allowed the persuasive juxtaposition of a gloomy picture of the League's present position with the prospect of a fresh start and a more hopeful future. "In submitting our basis and policy for your consideration", the compilers declared, "we would impress on you that the alternatives before the League are either dissolution or a bold policy such as we have outlined."

With the publication of the Report the Executive Committee nailed its colours to the mast, and in consequence resolved not to fill the three vacancies among its number though nominations had been received. If the proposals were defeated at the Annual Conference those present members who might be re-elected would resign.[51] Meanwhile the process of orchestration within the League continued with Widdrington visiting the branches to discuss the reconstruction proposals and reporting growing sympathy with the new version but reluctance to change the title,[52] and the search for external allies continued with overtures to Conrad Noel's Catholic Crusade[53], a creature of a decidedly different temperament from the Industrial Christian Fellowship, the object of the Executive Committee's attentions in the previous year. A meeting between

51. C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes, 24th January 1923. There was one dissentient to this resolution, the Revd. C.H. Norton, who later joined the Society of Socialist Christians (Evans, op.cit., p.22).

52. Commonwealth, February 1923, p.59.

53. C.S.L. Executive Committee minutes, 24th January 1923.

the Executive of the C.S.L. and the Catholic Crusade, represented by Noel and six other members was "holden ... upon the Feast of S. Thomas Aquinas (March 8th) 1923 at 7.30 of the clock".[54] The report records that at one point "various members of the Crusade (then) heckled severely" - perhaps to give an indication of their greater militancy! Discussion suggested that the divergence between the two sides could be regarded as a matter of comparative emphasis and it was decided that whilst it was desirable that neither organisation should be merged in the other there was no obstacle to the members of the Crusade joining the League individually. Crusade members were to receive invitations to the League's forthcoming Conference.

Despite the energetic efforts of the revisionists some members were not persuaded. The most substantial public protest came from Claude Stuart Smith writing under the title 'The Church Socialist League' in Commonwealth in May 1923[55], the month in which there was to take place the Conference that brought the Church Socialist League to an end. Stuart Smith wrote at the request of some members of the C.S.L. who were opposed to a fundamental change in its character to state their reasons for wishing to maintain the C.S.L. as a definitely Socialist society and for opposing en bloc the proposed new basis. He turned to the origins and early years of the society. "The League", he wrote, "claimed to be quite definitely part of the international Socialist movement and fully shared its aims. It was political, because its members believed that their Christianity must express itself in politics as in all other departments of life. It was Socialist because it found in the economics of Socialism an adequate economic expression of Christian principle."

54. 8th March. Copy of report of meeting in Stacy papers, University of Leeds. (The antique idiom quoted above and the reference to S. Thomas Aquinas probably indicates that Slesser was 'the scribe'. Reckitt took the chair. The Executive meeting which preceded it and for which F.G. Dent was Secretary was merely 'held' at 2.30 'p.m.')

55. pp.153-4.

Acting along those lines the League had "an influence within the Church and in the Labour Movement far beyond its numbers, which, however, were about four times as great as at present ... By what malign influences", asked Stuart Smith, "has the League become what it now is, a comparatively negligible body, without the respect of its opponents or its friends, devoid of enthusiasm and halting and wavering in purpose?" The War and the Russian Revolution had "set some of our leading members adrift from their previous bearings ... Some of us are no longer Socialists in any sense, and at least one is actively anti-Socialist. It is proposed therefore that the League as a whole should desert the Socialist Movement and become a non-Socialist and possibly an anti-Socialist body. To those of us who value our Socialist convictions and the past traditions of the League, this proposal seems one of treachery and disloyalty to our associates in the movement and we should prefer to see the League disband rather than adopt such an attitude. But we feel that there is the need for a Society definitely Christian and definitely Socialist, at once religious and political. If we can pull ourselves together and get back to our old clear purpose and enthusiasm there is still a future for the League." He emphasised that the proposed new society was indeed new, rather than a development of the C.S.L. "It is to be a society of strongly ecclesiastical flavour", he wrote, "confined to Anglo-Catholics and taking as its main objective the re-creation of a Christian sociology. What of those who cannot toe the Anglo-Catholic line? Some of our keenest members are among them. To confine the Society to Anglo-Catholics is to narrow its scope most seriously and to invite the repetition of the failure of the Guild of St Matthew. The work of re-creating a Christian sociology leaves no function for the great majority of our members, who have no special gifts for such a task; it cannot be done adequately by an exclusively Anglo-Catholic society, and will be far better done by the movement known as Copec, which has already enlisted most of the best minds in all the

denominations in the effort. Such of our members as are competent should unite in that effort rather than attempt the same work from an unnecessarily narrow standpoint." The proposed society was "too vague alike in its rejection of the present order and in its ideals of the future and will form merely an anti-climax to the past more glorious history of C.S.L. It will be one more of those curious little Jack Horner societies with their narrow outlook and restricted aim of which there are already too many. Nor do we regard the defence of the Catholic Faith and the promotion of Catholic worship and discipline, as our particular job. The English Church Union, the Anglo-Catholic Congress, the Society of S.S. Peter and Paul, and a host of other organisations, are devoted to these objects. Ours is to unite with all men and women of goodwill in redressing our present social evils and creating a just and brotherly order. To these ends C.S.L. has in the past been devoted, let it endeavour to serve them with renewed zeal in the future."

Stuart Smith's eloquent plea expressed the essential spirit that had animated the C.S.L. at its foundation and in its heyday, and time was to give some vindication to his forebodings about the proposed successor society[56], but the ears of the majority of members, it seems, were attuned less to the traditions of the C.S.L. and the call to revive them than to the allurements of the revisionists promising an escape from the society's currently depressed condition through a new start on a new footing in a new direction. At the Annual Conference on May 22nd and 23rd 1923 at Birmingham the new Basis and Objects were accepted virtually in the form in which they had been presented though the title was changed to 'The League of the Kingdom of God', an

56. Reckitt conceded that the L.K.G's impact had been disappointing: "It has to be said that the sanguine expectations of Widdrington and Henry Slesser that the new title and basis of the League would attract large numbers, especially of Anglo-Catholic Churchmen, who had been presumed to remain aloof from dislike of its 'Socialist' associations, never showed any signs of being realised". (P.E.T. Widdrington, p.94).

amendment proposed by the London branch.[57] Where West and Noel had failed, Widdrington by patient strategy, careful planning and persistent application had succeeded, and despite two Return of Christendom authors, Bull and Penty, having been lost from the Executive Committee in 1922. His plea for 'the adumbration of a Christian Sociology' made, and rejected, at Morecambe in 1906 now found expression in the official Objects of the new organisation, the second of which aimed at "the re-creation of a Christian sociology consonant with the needs of the age". Widdrington's theological pre-occupation centred on the concept of the Kingdom of God, which he believed "must be regulative of all true theology":[58] the new body took the concept as its title and the first of its Objects referred to its "insistence on the Kingdom of God as the regulative principle of theology." Reckitt, in his biography of Widdrington, declared that the Basis of three paragraphs and the series of six Objects[59] which formed the foundation document of the League of the Kingdom of God "embodied all that Widdrington had been campaigning for, in increasingly clear definition, for at least a decade, and in some instances for longer than that, and much of his favourite phraseology appears in it."[60]

The Conference itself showed signs of the careful 'stage-management' which had characterised the campaign to which it was the climax. The revisionists had the services of an able and experienced barrister to present their case - Henry Slesser, one of the keenest in their number. "Slesser's enthusiasm for the transformation was of great assistance to his colleagues who desired it", Reckitt informs us, "on account not only of his individual gifts, but of his standing at this time, both in the Anglo-Catholic movement and in the Labour Party. His zeal for Catholic teaching could not be called in

57. Agenda, p.3.

58. Church Socialist, November and December 1920, P.E.T. Widdrington, The Re-Discovery of the Kingdom of God.

59. These are set out at Appendix II.

60. p.93.

question from the one side, nor could his record as a spokesman for social justice from the other - he was indeed shortly after this to become Solicitor-General in the first Labour Government."[61] Slesser is reported as having given a "masterly speech."[62] The new proposals didn't imply any watering down of the League's old position, he told delegates. The programme involved radical change just as much as ever but Socialism, 'in the accepted sense', was not the only possible alternative. As Churchpeople it was their task to work out their own programme independently out of the heart of the Catholic Faith and not take up without criticism any particular programme that they might find about. Predictably he was supported by Reckitt. Less explicable is the presence of Gobat as Chairman of the League in the year of preparation for the Conference and subsequently first Chairman of the L.K.G. and Donaldson as an advocate of transformation at the Conference. To Donaldson, Stuart Smith's former Vicar at Leicester, was credited the slogan "Christianity is the religion of which Socialism is the practice" which came to be regarded as typifying the early attitudes of the C.S.L.[63], while his contributions to the League's successive periodicals centre largely on issues of social welfare and social justice. Gobat as Conference Chairman appealed for unity and deprecated a rupture by any section because it might not be able to secure everything it liked. The Conference report also spoke of "great assistance being rendered by a former Chairman, Canon Donaldson, who took this opportunity of renewing his fellowship with the League" - he had moved from Leicester in 1918[64] and seems to have faded out of

61. Ibid. Slesser, however, was certainly not a Socialist - see Judgement Reserved, Chapter 7. "The Labour Party has a left and a right wing. Many here would be proud to occupy the position of the most leftward member of the left wing and still think himself loyal to the party, so I am content to occupy that very unpopular position, the extreme right man on the extreme right!" N.d., but representing his attitude in period before end of 1925. (p.151)

62. Commonwealth, June 1923, p.188.

63. Ibid., April 1927, p.121.

64. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.

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62. Commonwealth, June 1923, p.188.

63. Ibid., April 1927, p.121.

64. Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1923.

C.S.L. activities at about that time.[65] "His support of the new departure", the Commonwealth report continued, "must have done much to reconcile to it those elements to which it might naturally have been least welcome. The League is immensely indebted both to him and to the Revd. T.C. Gobat, in that, belonging themselves decidedly to the older school of thought, they so heartily accepted this radical change of policy, and understood so sympathetically what was in the minds of the leaders of revolt". Neither Donaldson nor Gobat were ever close associates of Widdrington[66]: it is perhaps a measure of his powers of persuasion - or attrition - and tactical skill that two influential members of the 'old guard' should be advocating his case at the Conference.

The society, then, was captured by what was essentially a small pressure group of middle class intellectuals. However, it was not without loss that there was effected the replacement of the Church Socialist League, whose origins may be traced in the Labour Leader and which aimed at a large Labour following, by a body bearing the somewhat esoteric title League of the Kingdom of God, not unfairly

65. In the period following the departure of Donaldson the Leicester branch of the C.S.L. seems to have run into difficulties: "A report on the condition of the Leicester branch was submitted. The Secretary was instructed to ask the Leicester branch to maintain existence until the Organiser could visit the branch". (C.S.L. Executive Committee Minutes, 28th January 1920 - Stacy papers, University of Leeds).

66. M.B. Reckitt, P.E.T. Widdrington, p.94. Reckitt observes that for Gobat Widdrington had always maintained a very warm admiration. Gobat however, wrote to G.C. Binyon after the Anglo-Catholic Summer School of Sociology of 1934. "I hear that Conrad Noel was there. The Widdrington-Reckitt atmosphere does not attract me much; and if I had known that breezes in other directions were blowing in I should have come." Binyon states that while Gobat was thoroughly at home in the old Church Socialist League he never really took to the Christian Sociology which was the preoccupation of the L.K.G. and the Keble Summer Schools. His daughter states that he regretted rather than welcomed the change. He wanted a society with wide popular appeal. (M.Gobat, op.cit. pp.84, 61). Presumably Gobat, in the period after taking over as Chairman, on Bull's resignation, was persuaded on the lines of the report to the branches that the only alternatives for the C.S.L. were dissolution or acceptance of the new proposals.

described as "a much more 'high-brow' society occupied with theology, patristic and scholastic teaching about the social order, Christian sociology and such subjects",[67] and without commitment to Socialism or connection with the Labour Movement. The Commonwealth gave a rather self-satisfied and specious account of the final Conference.[68] "The old C.S.L.", it reported, "born at Morecambe in 1906, died at Birmingham in Whitsun-week 1923, in order that the cause for which it stood might live. It enjoyed an instantaneous resurrection, full of hope and vigour, as the League of the Kingdom of God. Its last Conference under its old name was indeed one of the most satisfactory and encouraging that it ever held".[69] There was a keen, minute discussion of almost every point and countless amendments but "in the end all differences were most happily adjusted and no one dropped the least hint of creating a schism or endeavouring to carry on a rival society under the old title. It was clearly demonstrated that a very solid foundation of unity of outlook and purpose underlay our divisions, and that we were really far more firmly and deeply based on the social message of the Catholic Faith as such than on the economic Socialism to which we are no longer committed. There is every reason to believe that the disintegrating controversies, which have been eating into the energies of the League ever since the last Birmingham Conference

67. M. Gobat, op.cit., p.61.

68. June 1923, p.188, 'The Birth of the League of the Kingdom of God'.

69. There is the suggestion here of the fiction of continuity between C.S.L. and L.K.G. which crops up, sometimes rather faintly, from time to time, e.g. The League of the Kingdom of God: What it is and what it stands for by the General Secretary, Rev. Paul Stacy (1930), p.20:- "The League was once known as the Church Socialist League, but changed its name and entirely revised its outlook in 1923 since which time it has been known as the above". Cf. with views expressed by Stuart Smith in article in Commonwealth (May 1923), referred to previously.

are now finally closed and that it has before it a splendid prospect ..." The 'Notes of the Month' in the same issue[70] also referred to the Conference in similar terms - it had been "in every way a success" and it was "with the goodwill of all concerned that the Church Socialist League became the League of the Kingdom of God ..." and so forth. These complacent and tendentious accounts provoked a letter from Charles Record which appeared in the next issue of the Commonwealth.[71] He wanted to point out "that the apparent general acceptance of the new position, so stressed in those notes, does not involve all that their writer endeavours to imply." Many had not attended because the organised efforts before the Conference had made the result inevitable. Others strove vainly through the Conference to find some other basis under which they might work. "Some of us", he wrote, "are convinced that the vital need of today is for a Christian Socialist body to address itself primarily to the workers which will take its place in the Left Wing of the Labour Party - as the mass party of the organised workers - to uphold the Faith as the necessary dynamic of a just and free social order, to seek to win those men of goodwill who have become dissatisfied with organised religion and to constitute a challenge within the movement at once to the existing order of society, and to the materialist philosophy at present unchallenged in the advanced and younger sections of Labour. We are quite unimpressed", he continued, "by those fantasies of bourgeois minds, alternatives to the principles of Socialism. Socialism after all we owe to the never quite suppressed traditions of primitive Christianity. In the new League we see no avenue for our work. We have good hopes that a society may soon come into active being to carry it on." He added, eirenically: "We trust, however, that it will be looked upon rather

70. pp.164-5.

71. July 1923, p.198.

as a body for facing a different task than as a rival organisation." Record's views like those of Stuart Smith echoed the initially dominant wing of the C.S.L. as represented by West and Moll. Reckitt conceded that there was "a fairly large minority which refused to forswear their explicitly Socialist allegiance."[72] In its March issue for 1924 Commonwealth was able to report the formation of the society which Record had in mind - the Society of Socialist Christians - and Record was to be its Secretary. The founding meeting was held on February 6th in London's Food Reform Restaurant, scene of many C.S.L. meetings. Fred Hughes, as we have noted, became its first Chairman, and other ex-C.S.L. Executive members who joined it included Norton and Tawney, who came in at a later stage. Stuart Smith was elected to the Provisional Committee at the founding meeting, but he died later that year, aged forty four.[73] The Society of Socialist Christians was not, however, a mere replica of the C.S.L. eighteen years on. It was a non-denominational body and to it came "survivors of the Socialist Quaker Society and the Free Church Socialist League".[74]

The C.S.L., as we have seen, was the third of the Anglican Christian Socialist societies, being preceded by the flamboyantly Catholic G.S.M. and the moderate and studious C.S.U. The distinctive element of the C.S.L. was its explicit commitment to full-blown Socialism. At the outset, though it was founded to perform a role for which the existing societies were considered inadequate, it nevertheless comprehended, within its confines, characteristics

72. P.E.T. Widdrington, p.94, footnote.

73. Commonwealth, March 1924, p.71; Evans, op.cit., p.22; Groves, op.cit., pp.291-2 gives an account of Stuart Smith's ministry in Ipswich at the end of his life.

74. Evans, ibid.

from its predecessors as well as its own distinctive note, dominant, as one would expect, at that time. This 'coalition' of three elements which was the C.S.L. did, as we have seen, eventually break up into three separate organisations - the Catholic Crusade, the League of the Kingdom of God and the Society of Socialist Christians. H.W. Laidler in his History of Socialist Thought has asserted that each school of thought in Socialism undergoes an evolutionary process, making it at times almost indistinguishable from the school which it started out originally to oppose.[75] Headlam's biographer quotes one of his associates who stood with him at the time of the break up of the G.S.M., and who saw in the L.K.G. a return to Headlam's position: it is a striking thing that the men of the type who were opposing him and attempted to carry out their ideas in the Church Socialist League have come to see their mistake and that their later League of the Kingdom of God abandons the position, dispute about which led to the disappearance of the G.S.M., and reverts to the very thing that Mr Headlam contended for".[76] The L.K.G. cannot, of course, despite points of resemblance, be regarded basically as a repetition of the G.S.M.: it would be just as easy to see in its intellectualism a re-incarnation of the C.S.U., and to see in the flamboyant Catholicism and idiosyncratic one-man leadership of the Catholic Crusade a reproduction of Headlam's organisation and to find in the thoroughgoing Socialism of the Society of Socialist Christians a new manifestation of the C.S.L. There are no exact correspondences and the three 'elements' do not form three separate distinctive societies for the members obviously did not fall into separate exclusive categories - rather it was a question of to which 'element' they attached greatest

75. p.681.

76. Bettany, op.cit., pp.92-93. He is quoting Mr Munro Miller.

importance. The three successor bodies can, however, be categorized according to their attitudes to Socialism and Catholicism: for the Catholic Crusade, Catholicism, as its name implies was central but Socialism was seen as integrally bound up with it; for the League of the Kingdom of God Catholicism was seen as intimately connected with the formulation of a specifically Christian Sociology, but there was no attachment to Socialism; the Society of Socialist Christians provided an organisational home for the remaining Socialist minority from the C.S.L. and, as a non-denominational society, lay outside the Catholic tradition as understood by Anglican Christian Socialism. This eventual fragmentation and loss of synthesis is an eloquent commentary both on the institutional problems attendant on Christian Socialism as exemplified by the history of the C.S.L., eliminated through internal conflicts and the impact of external circumstances and also on the wider tensions integral to the whole concept of Christian Socialism.

# CHAPTER 11 - ASSESSMENT

At its most basic and general level the term 'Christian Socialism' has been used as an 'umbrella expression' to describe attempts to relate the teachings of Christianity to Society. Christian Socialists aim to bring out what they regard as the social implications of the Faith: that it is concerned not just with the 'other' world, but with 'this' world; that it is concerned not just with individuals or even with individuals in aggregate but with social structures. The body known as The Christian Socialist Movement, founded in 1960 from a number of earlier groups and drawing its membership from many denominations defines Christian Socialism thus: "The idea of Christian Socialism is something which is fundamental to Christianity; it is simply the understanding that spiritual ideas have to be expressed in material form and that the primary material expression of the spiritual value of love is sharing. We are members one of another and sharing has to take place in society and when this is done it is called Socialism".[1] At this point the pamphlet in which this simple explanation occurs proceeds to a definition of Socialism - "the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange ..." - and in so doing illustrates a fundamental difficulty in the use of the term Christian Socialism. It has been used by, or attached to, a number of groups: they have drawn from varied sources in the religious and political traditions and by no means all who have borne the name 'Christian Socialist' would accept a Socialism thus defined as part of their belief. It is a term which has been loosely used to cover a wide range of movements and societies. G.C. Binyon spent his New Year's Day in 1924 in setting out notes for an address for 'members of Durham University' with the title 'The Present Position of Christian

1. Evans, op.cit., p.4.

Socialism'[2]. In answering the question, 'What is Christian Socialism?' he drew attention to the confusion of 'Socialism' and 'Social'. He found the term Christian Socialism had had five meanings - "'practical Christianity', social reforms, distribution of proprietorship, co-operative societies of producers and the Labour and Socialist programme." Of these five usages only the last would accord with the customary definition of Socialism to which the C.S.M. pamphlet refers. By this token the activities of F.D. Maurice and his associates would be excluded and of the three Anglican societies founded in the phase before the First World War, the 'Christian Socialist Revival', only the Church Socialist League, could with any confidence claim the title Socialist. Clearly any definition of Christian Socialism which excluded Maurice's group or the C.S.U. or the G.S.M. would make a travesty of terminology commonly accepted. The Christian Socialist tradition, therefore, must be seen as referring to a number of associations and organisations united in the general belief that the Christian Faith demands social expression and that its application in the social order will have beneficial results, but producing in policy and practice a variety of responses to the social order. It is a phenomenon which is more accurately described by the broader and weaker term 'social Christianity': commonly, however, the terms 'social Christianity' and Christian Socialism are used inter-changeably, with the latter being applied particularly to societies, even in cases where the specifically Socialist content is difficult to detect.

Christian Socialism (broadly conceived) is not merely a theoretical projection from the ethical teachings of the Bible and the doctrines and practices of the Church: it becomes incarnate in particular political, economic and social situations within

2. Ms. in Binyon papers, University of Leeds.

history. The motivation towards Christian Socialism may derive therefore both from Christian 'theoretical' perceptions from 'above' and from the observation of actual social conditions 'here below'. Indeed its varied manifestations may be regarded as the outcome of the interaction between the religious source concepts, variously interpreted, their application to particular historical situations, and the motivations of those who make the connection.

Secular Socialism, 'utopian' and 'scientific', and Christian Socialism may both be regarded as responses to the conditions created by modern industrialisation. Moreover within this general context it is in situations of particular political or economic gravity that social Christianity emerges. W.R. Ward has pointed out that not only in England but in France, Germany and the United States social Christianity surfaced in the later 1870s and 1880s and "in each case embodied the response of the privileged or established churches to harder times, much as the prehistory of social Christianity [F.D. Maurice and his group] had marked the response to the threat of revolution".[3] Walter James similarly has correlated peaks in Christian Socialist activity in England with troughs in the economy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[4]

These elements of 'general context' and 'specific situation' suggest two issues which confronted Christian Socialist groups - ideological tension and the problems of practical policy. As we have noted, the Labour and Socialist movement, with its Marxist, Fabian and I.L.P. strands and the Christian Socialist movement, with its Maurician theology fortified by Catholic vitality from Tractarian springs and its consciousness of the substantial alienation of the workers from the Church,

3. 'The Protestant Churches, especially in Britain, and the Social Problems of the Industrial Revolution' in Religion und Kirchen im industriellen Zeitalter (Berlin, 1977) pp.69-70.

4. James, op.cit., pp.108-9.

were each attempts of nineteenth and early twentieth century society to come to terms with the conditions created by industrialisation, about which the findings of the 'social explorers' increasingly revealed the details and fuelled the social conscience. The movements met in addressing themselves to the same problems. Despite the obvious points of contact in practice, there could obviously be no total identification in theory. However much the Labour and Socialist movement was seen as a practical expression of Christian principles, however much Socialism was experienced as an ethical or even spiritual movement, however much sacramental Christian Socialists insisted on the sanctity of the material realm, two 'systems' remained. It was always possible to be a Socialist without being a Christian, and many, though not 'advanced' Christian Socialists, would consider that the reverse was true. Many moreover, moved by Marxism would see such a combination as impossible. The two movements shared common ground in the campaign for social justice: they were both concerned with the brotherhood of men but Labour was not necessarily concerned with the Fatherhood of God. The Christian Faith had other and transcendental dimensions. The relationship to two ideologies - one conceived perhaps as relative and historical, the other as eternal and immutable - held obvious potential for tension and confusion in the areas of convergence. It raised inter-related questions in two areas - the nature of Christian Socialism and its mode of operation. What is the nature of this Christian Socialism? Is it 'ordinary' Socialism with a Christian motivation or a special 'brand' of Socialism and, if the latter, is it 'real' Socialism? Secondly, what kind of action can be taken? This question itself invited further considerations. From where does the mainspring for this action come - from the Socialist body or from the Christian body? If from the former is it compatible with the latter? If from the latter

is it feeble because cut off from the former? It was necessary, further, to ask in which direction the action should be taken. Should action take place within the Labour and Socialist movement, should it be directed towards mankind in general as part of the universal mission of the Church with Socialism seen as the practical manifestation of Christianity, an aspect of the 'total gospel', or should it be turned towards the Church to convert it to Socialism as a 'real' part of Christianity? As well as considerations about the mainsprings and direction of action there were practical questions about the kinds of action which were available, appropriate and likely to be effective. As compared to a Trade Union or a political society it was much less easy to see precisely what kind of business should be engaging a Christian Socialist group. Clearly the answers to such questions were influenced by the particular circumstances in which the various Christian Socialist organisations arose.

Christian Socialist societies were faced moreover with the more mundane considerations of institutional viability and survival. They were voluntary associations, unsupported by any sub-structure of law, property or endowment, without economic function, if one disregards the transient and ill-fated foray into the world of workers co-operatives by the Maurice group, engaged in no activity which might commend them to the charitable instincts of the general public or in any enterprise which might bring tangible benefits to possible adherents in return for the investment of subscriptions. They were reliant basically on their own resources and on chance philanthropy from the occasional sympathetic contact or well-heeled member. Unless they could attract a substantial following they were caught in a kind of institutional poverty trap: growth depended on propaganda which in turn depended on funds which depended on membership. The tensions inherent in their situation in terms of policy contributed further to their instability as institutions. The Christian

Socialist societies, then, operating in the general context of an industrialised society and springing up in response to particular situations, were faced with three key issues: ideological tensions, practical policy problems and institutional viability. The context of circumstances and events, secular and ecclesiastical, in which these problems were confronted added its own dimension of difficulty, particularly in the case of the First World War.

The Church Socialist League arose in response to the political upsurge manifested in the Labour election successes of 1906. In its explicit profession of Socialism it advanced more boldly into the middle ground between religion and politics than preceding societies and was to pose more acutely the dilemma of the relation between secular political principles and Christian theology. At the time of its formation the majority of the members saw no ideological conflict between Socialism and the Christian Faith. Socialism was seen simply as the expression of Christianity in the social and economic milieu. Christianity completed Socialism: it provided the vertical line, the Fatherhood of God, to cross the horizontal line, the Brotherhood of Men, common to Christians and Socialists. The Christian Faith was seen as providing motivation and inspiration to the pursuit of Socialism. The ethical impetus of Socialism, powerful at this time, was seen as entirely congruent with the ethical principles of Christianity and those members of a more theological cast of mind were free to find their sacramentalism consonant with a profession of political Socialism. The members were insistent that their Socialism was not a particular brand or watered down version: it was simply ordinary Socialism as understood by political Socialist societies, and as defined in dictionaries but arrived at by way of the Christian

Faith[5]. On the 'religious' side for those who, like Donaldson, were particularly conscious of the Church's failings with the working class and the significance of the Labour Church phenomenon, this identification of Socialism with the outward practice of Christianity held particular attraction: if Beatrice Webb detected a transfer of social energy from religion to politics, if Socialism was seen as an alternative to religion, if the Labour Churches were making of Socialism an alternative religion, then the C.S.L. could bid fair to arrest these trends - Socialism and Christianity, rightly understood, were part of the same entity. The question of appropriate action also presented few problems at this stage. There was the sense of standing at the beginning of a new advance with the expectation of future triumphs. It was a moment meet for crusading propaganda and Church and nation alike provided ample scope for its exercise. Engaged in the promotion of Socialism they anticipated a large following in the confidence that the trends of the time were on their side. As an institution they expected success and the League's early rapid growth seemed to confirm such optimism.

The superficial unity and enthusiasm imposed by the euphoria of the moment disguised, however, potential for future discord and disruption. Whilst in its 'institutional utterance' as expressed in Forms I and II of its constitution it was insistent on its being a Church society, the novel and distinctive feature of the League was its explicit commitment to Socialism: on the theological and ecclesiastical side its formularies were as comprehensive and as loose and potentially factional as the Church of England - there was no specific requirement other than Church membership

5. How far such an explanation accorded with members' adoption of Socialism is perhaps open to question. The writings of some members make clear that their observation and experience of working class conditions had a major impact on their attitudes: it may well be that in some cases 'observation' and theology synchronised or even that they came to Socialism via observation and subsequently sought and found a theological rationale for their political conversion.

through baptism. Within a year of its foundation the term Socialism had been given formal definition in collectivist terms. Later it was to be lifted out of the series of Principles and placed at the very head of the League's Basis, which then began with the statement "The Church Socialist League consists of Church people who accept the principles of Socialism" followed by the definition of that term. While the crusading spirit which animated Socialism held sway and the movement could be interpreted by Church Socialists as a divinely inspired ethical enterprise directed to the establishment of social justice, the League could maintain cohesion on such a basis. Nevertheless, despite this considerable degree of ideological attachment, there were signs from the outset of divergent views on the question of the institutional relationship of the League to the Labour Movement. Some members, whilst personally and as Church Socialist Leaguers supporters of economic and political Socialism, were not prepared for the League to surrender an independent position to the extent of becoming identified as an integral part of that movement, and the attempt to persuade the League to affiliate to the Labour Party and become institutionally a branch of the workers' political movement was unsuccessful. In its activities too, though it continued in its first half dozen years to engage in successful and sometimes spectacular propaganda, the note of ambiguity could be detected. Paradoxically the original formularies of the League in the period of its most uncomplicated and enthusiastic Socialism were essentially Church-centred. The third Principle spoke of the acceptance of Socialism by members, but the first affirmed the Church's mission to the whole of human life and the second asserted that this mission could best be fulfilled by the Church acting in its corporate capacity. The sole enunciated 'Object' of the League was to secure the corporate action on these principles: the distinction in the Basis between Principles and Objects was not entirely satisfactory semantically, as can be seen. The 'Methods' were

overwhelmingly Church-oriented with much concern about representation on official ecclesiastical bodies. In practice, however, the League's activities were by no means restricted to the ecclesiastical sphere in this period: it was generally active in the Labour movement, becoming involved, for instance, in elections, both local and parliamentary. At this time the League was in harmony with the Labour movement but pointedly critical of 'general' and 'official' Church opinion. By 1911, when many of its members had become increasingly critical of the Labour Party, the two fronts on which it operated, the secular and the ecclesiastical, came both to be recognised in its Basis. By this time the third 'Method' was "to help the advance of Socialism by every just means" and the fourth "to convert Church people to the principles of Socialism, and to promote a better understanding between Church people who are not Socialists, and Socialists who are not Church people". By now however the cohesion of the C.S.L. had been threatened not merely by complications over the directional thrust of its practical activity and by the crisis of the party affiliation question but by conditions within the Labour movement itself. As we have remarked the absence of a specifically worked out theological basis and the existence of a carefully defined statement of Socialism as the basis of association could serve to hold together the League whilst that Socialism could command general, and indeed largely uncritical, assent from the members. Certainly by 1910, if not before, this condition was no longer fulfilled. There was increasing disappointment, even disillusionment, with the parliamentary performance of Labour and in Syndicalism, Distributivism, Guild Socialism and the Women's Suffrage Movement there emerged alternative ideas to engage the interest and in some cases command the allegiance of the disaffected. This new situation was clearly hazardous for the C.S.L. If the Labour and Socialist movement was speaking increasingly in a variety of tongues, and if some members now regarded the Collectivism which the League had supported as a transient and even

discredited political phenomenon which, perhaps regrettably, had been encapsulated in the League's formularies, it was natural that they should turn to the League's other reference area, the 'Church' aspect, but here, however, they found no corresponding elaborated position. As we have seen, they were faced with nothing more specific than Church membership and a passing reference to prayer and sacraments. The situation, therefore, was decidedly open for controversy and factional contests on the theological front to add to the confusion on the political one - indeed, in the circumstances they were almost inevitable, though it would take time for them to develop and to make their destructive impact on the League as an institution. Those who had joined the League had for the most part belonged previously to the G.S.M. and the C.S.U.: they had been held together in a kind of coalition under the bond of the Socialist spirit of 1906. The stress to which this bond was subjected revealed the precarious nature of that coalition. The Leaque entered a period of confusion. The series of magazine 'interviews' in the Church Socialist in 1912 under the title 'Some Church Socialists and their Views' exhibited the divergence of opinions among the League leaders and the fact that it was thought necessary to confront them with the question, 'What, in your opinion, should be the main work of the League?', was significant in indicating the organisation's uncertainty as to its direction.

The remainder of the history of the C.S.L. is concerned with the working out of the implications of this situation. The last ten years of the League's life were essentially a transitional phase between its period of early coherence and the emergence of the League of the Kingdom of God - a kind of vestibule of preparation opening into a particular standpoint expressed in the L.K.G. and when this standpoint came to birth the C.S.L. disappeared. It was a process of development characterised by the rivalry of competing

groups and set in the context of the war and its aftermath which created urgency and gave opportunity.

Ideologically the group whose standpoint emerged victorious from this phase distanced itself increasingly from Socialism as 'ordinarily' understood. Gore in his Introduction to The Return of Christendom said of this group that "none would accept the description 'Socialist' save in its most general sense", i.e. they were "all at one in believing that no stable or healthy industrial or social fabric can be built upon the principle of Individualism or is consistent with the assertion of an almost unrestricted Right of Private Property".[6] As a result of their activities the word Socialism was eliminated from the Basis of the Church Socialist League and ultimately they swept away the title itself. Widdrington and Gobat were both prominent in the League's foundation in 1906 but the manoeuvres which ended in 1923 represented a repudiation of the 1906 position. Somewhat ironically the C.S.L. and the Labour Party passed each other on the way: while the Labour Party was moving towards the acquisition of a Socialist constitution in 1918, the C.S.L., Socialist in 1906, was in the process of shedding the term. To the revisionists secular 'sociology' (in their meaning of the term) was not something incomplete, or complementary to the Christian Faith, as it might have been regarded in the early C.S.L. days, but something separate, different, even perhaps alien in spirit:[7] their aim was to outline a distinctively Christian sociology based not on the findings of secular thinkers but founded on the doctrines of the Church. Whereas the contribution of Christianity as a 'motivating' factor was a prominent element in the social and political attitudes of the early C.S.L. the revisionist group were preoccupied with 'content': from the social traditions of the Church they could recover a Christian social system. For inspiration they turned to

6. p.9.

7. For a consideration of this point see W.G. Peck's Hale Memorial Lectures for 1933 published as The Social Implications of the Oxford Movement (1933) pp.83 ff.

the Middle Ages and to Catholic dogma. In this process we have, then, an inversion of the original C.S.L. position: the C.S.L. began as 'open' theologically but specifically Socialist: by 1923 the dominant tendency was specifically Catholic but 'open' as regards political and economic systems. There was no pretence that there was a foot in two 'camps' or a bridge between two systems: in the formation of the L.K.G. the revisionists escaped from the problem of ideological tension - they simply abandoned Socialism.

With the revisionist phase we find changes too in the nature of the League's activities, partly through circumstance and partly through the interests and attitudes of the revisionists. By 1912 the phase of propaganda was essentially over. The war, moreover, brought its own restrictions. Even if this group had been inclined to engage in activist support of the Labour movement the position of Labour politically had advanced far from the early days of the C.S.L. when the efforts of small vocal groups were welcome additions to the swelling chorus: as Labour grew in Parliamentary strength and moved towards government such efforts from a now enfeebled small Christian Socialist society would have appeared increasingly marginal. Within the Church too the scope for significantly conspicuous activity on the part of the C.S.L. appeared to be smaller through what the League regarded as its success in putting across its message - the National Mission of Repentance and Hope and the subsequent Fifth Report were seen by Widdrington, surveying the League's situation in 1922 as indications of the success of the League's efforts over the years in achieving its aim of making the 'official' Church recognise the full extent of its mission, and ironically, this very success, he believed, was a principal reason for the failure of the League to re-establish itself as an effective force in the Church in the post-war period.[8]

8. Commonwealth, May 1922 - P.E.T. Widdrington, The Future of the C.S.L.

The Church itself was also at this time becoming increasingly pre-occupied with other internal matters: the Life and Liberty movement and the first stirrings of Ecumenical awareness were arousing interest and engaging the minds of some of its more able members. If it was never easy to decide precisely what was appropriate and effective action for a Christian Socialist society to take it became more difficult in the period of war and its aftermath. The situation of the League members increasingly resembled that of Mazzini Dunn in Shaw's Chekhovian play of 1919, Heartbreak House, who, in answer to Hector's question 'Why didn't you do something?' replies 'But I did. I joined societies and made speeches and wrote pamphlets. That was all I could do.'[9] In fact the speeches and the pamphlets became fewer[10] as the revisionists retreated more and more into study or concerned themselves with internal political manoeuvrings in their bid to take control of the League.

Institutionally the League became weaker, staggering from one financial crisis to another, propped up by the Buxton Trust in much the same way as the G.S.M. was supported from Headlam's pocket, abandoning its magazine in the very period that William Temple felt able to launch The Pilgrim, a review of 'Christian Politics and Religion'. Even in its heyday the League's institutional viability had been precarious and its ambitions had always run ahead of its resources, but its 'open' churchmanship and its active commitment to the Labour and Socialist movement held out some hope that its desire for a mass membership might be fulfilled. The policies adopted by the revisionists - their detachment from Socialism, their firm adoption of Catholicism, their engagement in what in their terminology was described as the adumbration of an autochthonous Catholic Sociology -

9. Act III.

10. With the exception of a series of pamphlets by Bull in the post-war period.

made of Christian Socialism, in so far as the term was still applicable to the group, a specialist and erudite activity incapable of ever attracting more than a small following. Reckitt, remarking on the need for a new Christian Socialist society in 1906, described the C.S.U. as speaking "with the accents of the University Common Room to audiences almost wholly unfamiliar with the outlook or the needs of the mass of the people":[11] if the C.S.L. in its most populist days never quite achieved the accents of the dock gate and the pit head, Reckitt and his revisionist associates in the League's latter days spoke with the accents of the seminar, the study circle and the summer school to those of their kind.

The flight of these men from the 'present world', whose organisation and values they entirely rejected, their retrenchment in a specifically and exclusively Christian position, drawing inspiration from a distant and 'classical' period in Christian history, invites the interpretation that their attitudes were derived from their feeling that they stood at the end of the liberal bourgeois era, a phase of progressive development shattered and devalued by the cataclysm of the war - in much the same way as Karl Barth, on learning that most of his revered Liberal Protestant teachers had signed a declaration supporting the Kaiser's war policy, realised that he must break away from their whole theology and outlook.[12] Some such elements certainly contributed to the thinking of this group. It is seen in some of the statements of Swann, a revisionist but not a mediaevalist, who stressed the eschatological element in theology:- "Sloshy ideas (whether revolutionary of conservative) of inevitable 'progress' are best met by developing the true idea of the Kingdom of God, emphasising its primarily eschatological character".[13] Reckitt ended his final Church Socialist editorial, at the end of 1919, by telling his readers that "the resources of the capitalist regime we have accepted as civilisation are in fact exhausted with no alternative society to take its place.

11. P.E.T. Widdrington, p.43
12. A. Richardson, The Bible in the Age of Science, p.88.
13. Church Socialist, December 1917, The Outlook for the C.S.L.

Perhaps it needs this dark extremity, like to the Dark Ages that followed the collapse of the Roman imperialism, for the Church to recover her mission and restore the world".[14] On the other hand it would be a mistake to exaggerate the contribution of this consciousness to the stance of the revisionist group. Many of their attitudes pre-dated the war: as we have seen, Widdrington was calling for a Christian sociology in 1906, Penty published his first book on the Guild system in the same year and Reckitt was attracted to the Guilds as an undergraduate, his interest being reinforced by the New Age articles in 1912.

In many respects the courses advocated and taken by the revisionists ran counter to the currents of the time. They embraced Guild Socialism which minimised the importance of the State at a time when a World War could lead only to an enhancement of its powers in the co-ordination of resources and direction of policy; the turned away from any kind of broad, open Maurician stream of Christian Socialism to embrace a narrow Anglo-Catholicism at a time when ecumenism was becoming manifest and was to find social expression in COPEC and the 'Life and Work' conferences. Members of the L.K.G. did in fact contribute to COPEC[15] but their main pre-occupation came to be the Anglo-Catholic Summer Schools of Sociology held each year in Oxford.[16] The direction which the revisionists took can however be criticised at a more basic level. In a post-Christian society a Christian Socialist organisation is faced with two 'policy options': it can attempt to change the industrial and economic system and the social structure by working actively through the Labour movement or it can work out a Christian social system through study and prayer apart. The C.S.L. began by being close to the first option and ended by embracing fully, in its

14. Quoted in As It Happened, p.257.
15. M.B. Reckitt, P.E.T. Widdrington, p.94.
16. Reckitt interview.

successor organisation, the second. Each course has its drawbacks in a post-Christian society: alliance with the 'secular' Labour movement risks commitment to a position not necessarily Christian and the attempt to devise a Christian 'sociology', though it may be a 'proper' activity for a Christian organisation risks being dismissed as irrelevant. It seems to have been a consideration which The Return of Christendom authors failed to grasp. Quite apart from the issue of how far they were able, in their intellectual excursions, to enter into the spirit of the Middle Ages and become aware of the contrasts between the intellectual cosmology of that era and their own, there is the fact that they spent enormous time and mental energy in elaborating the concepts of the Christendom for whose return they wished[17], but whose return depended on the acceptance of a Christian scheme by a people indifferent to Christianity. It was an exercise therefore conducted in a vacuum. It required for its realisation conditions which did not exist and of which there was no prospect. A basic ingredient of mediaeval society was missing in the modern world. Noel's group, the Catholic Crusade certainly did not engage in the adumbration of a Catholic Sociology, but its position shares the same basic defect. If the Widdrington-Reckitt schemes pre-supposed the re-conversion of society, the attitude of Noel's group pre-supposed a revolution: the latter prospect was more probable than the former but neither group was firmly earthed in reality. Only the third group, the Society of Socialist Christians eschewed visionary schemes and aimed to keep in touch with the Labour Movement as it existed.

The total achievement of the C.S.L. is difficult to estimate. Widdrington asserts that "its usefulness consisted in allaying the suspicion entertained by the

17. Reckitt anxious to refute the charge of 'mediaevalist' points out that the group were appealing for a return of not a return to Christendom. Crucible, October 1963, p.117.

Labour Movement that the Church was hostile to the claims of social democracy" and states that it is "indisputable" that "it brought many men and women back to the practice of religion".[18] He cites also, as we have noted, the influence of the League in the National Mission and on the 'Fifth Report'. At its lowest level it performed the 'biological' function of maintaining the Christian Socialist species and begetting the next generation in the tradition. The C.S.L. was ultimately a failure in synthesis: it broke into fragments and its constituent elements re-grouped. Its failure was not surprising given the fissiparous tendencies in both Socialism and Christianity, their different reference points, the particular traditions of the League's members and the circumstances and events of the period of its existence. It came into being at a time when Churchmen were conscious of the alienation of the working class. The process of alienation has continued and been progressively extended into other classes of society.[19] The failure of the League or of Christian Socialism in general is, regardless of the innate difficulty of relating two ideologies and giving the relationship institutional expression in time and circumstance, an aspect of the wider failure of the Church.

Alec Vidler ends his survey, The Church in an Age of Revolution by remarking that "Christopher Dawson once observed that 'men today are divided between those who have kept their spiritual roots and lost their contact with the existing order of society, and those who have preserved their social contacts and lost their spiritual roots'"[20]. In the foundation of the Church Socialist League we may see an attempt to link the spiritual and the social and in its life-cycle an illustration of the magnitude of the task.

18. Commonwealth, July 1927, pp.221-223.

19. Wickham, op.cit., p.14.

20. p.273.

A P P E N D I X  1



MAP TO SHOW THE EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH SOCIALIST LEAGUE THROUGH THE DISTRIBUTION OF BRANCHES

KEY

YEAR OF FOUNDATION

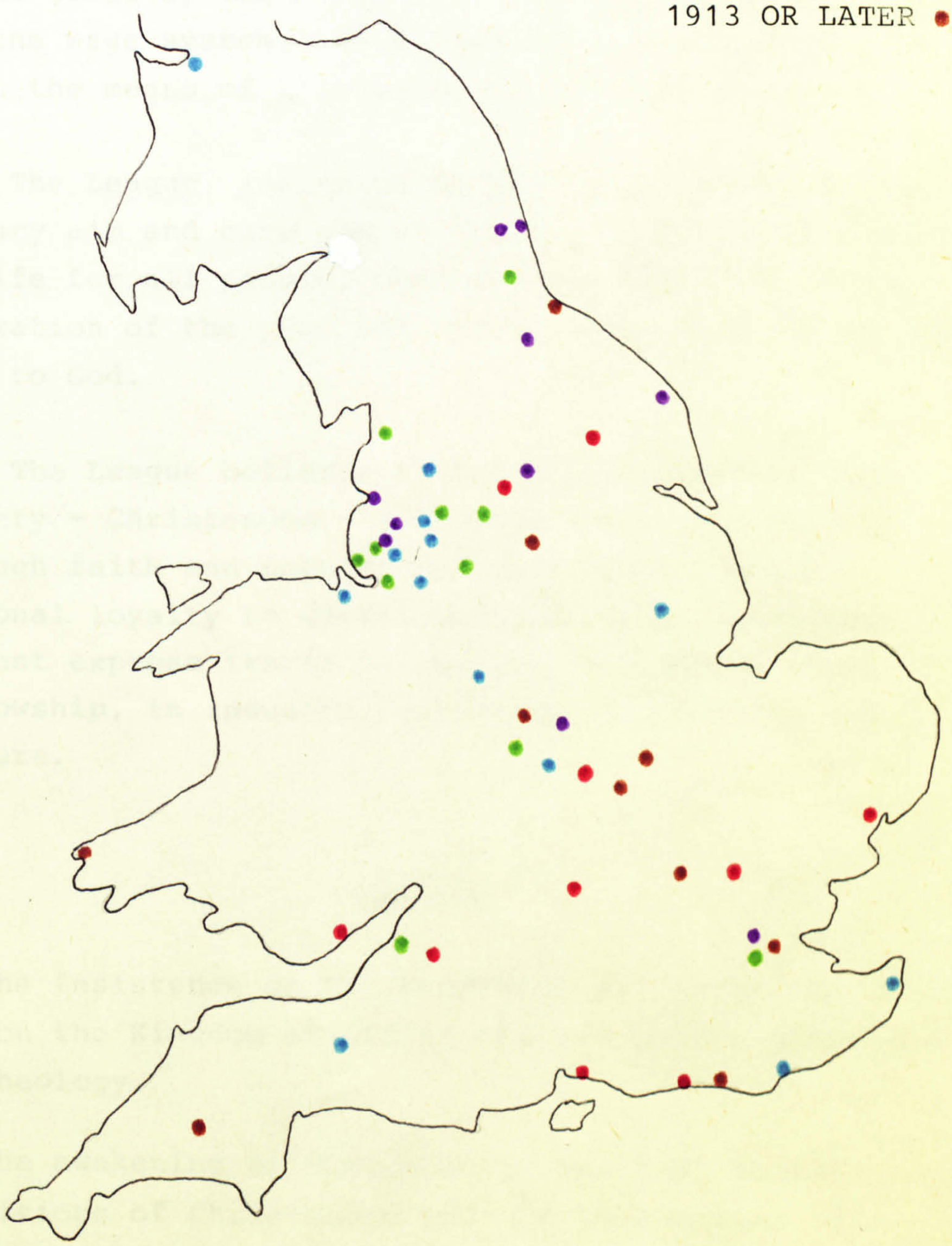
BY 1907

1908

1909

1911-1912

1913 OR LATER



APPENDIX II

# THE LEAGUE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD[1]

## BASIS

The League is a band of Churchmen and Churchwomen who believe that the Catholic Faith demands a challenge to the world by the repudiation of capitalist plutocracy and the wage system, and stands for a social order in which the means of life subserve the commonweal.

The League, insisting on the Faith as the Church's primary aim and care and as the only satisfactory basis of life for all people, declares its devotion to the liberation of the poor and oppressed as a cause specially dear to God.

The League believes that a holy, just and free society - Christendom - will come first and chiefly through faith and thought and sacramental power - personal loyalty to Christ and His cause - and that it must express itself in zealous endeavours after fellowship, in industry, commerce, citizenship and culture.

## OBJECTS

1. The insistence on the prophetic office of the Church and on the Kingdom of God as the regulative principle of theology.

2. The awakening of Churchmen to the lost social traditions of Christendom and the re-creation of a Christian Sociology consonant with the needs of the age.

1. Basis and Objects from L.K.G. literature, Stacy papers, Hayward Collection.

3. The restoration of the Eucharist as the central act of Christian worship - the Sacrament of Fraternity, and the embodiment of Christian values.

4. The recognition and enforcement of the Church's social discipline over her own members.

5. The winning of those indifferent or hostile to the Catholic Faith while standing for justice in the common life, and those within the Church who resist the Christian ordering of Society.

6. Co-operation with other bodies, religious or secular, on occasions when fundamental issues of social righteousness are at stake.

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New Age
New World
North Star
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