

ARTICLE

# The Intersection of ‘English Use’ Liturgy and Social Justice: Snapshots of Augustus Pugin, Percy Dearmer, Conrad Noel and William Palmer Ladd

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## Abstract

The thought of Percy Dearmer was related to that of Augustus Pugin and Daniel Rock, Roman Catholics seeking to revive English medieval forms, and to his Anglican near-contemporaries Conrad Noel and William Palmer Ladd. In England, Noel was more ideologically committed than Dearmer and his imagined medieval society and the English Use were given applied expression at Thaxted. In the USA, William Palmer Ladd was a congenial colleague to Dearmer but his liturgical ideals were of the 1930s, and not an outcome of the nineteenth-century English ritual controversies. Dearmer, Ladd and Noel were all grounded in what has been called Sacramental Socialism, which saw a unity between the Eucharist, the corporate church, and its mission as part of the Kingdom of God.

**Keywords:** Christian socialism, Percy Dearmer, English Use, Gothic revival, William Palmer Ladd, liturgical movement, Conrad Noel, Augustus Pugin, Daniel Rock

## Introduction

In a recent essay on Percy Dearmer, Jared C. Cramer wrote:

It must be remembered that the early shape of the Liturgical Movement in England was mediated through the leaders of the Ritualists – alongside the leaders in the Christian Socialist Movement. Dearmer brought together both streams and created something new, an ‘English Use’ approach to liturgy.<sup>2</sup>

It has become commonplace in Anglican liturgical hagiography to attribute to Dearmer the combination of interest in pre-Reformation English ceremonial with

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<sup>2</sup>Jared C. Cramer, ‘Percy Dearmer Revisited: Discerning Authentically Anglican Liturgy in a Multicultural Ecumenical, 21st Century Context’, p. 3, [http://anglicanhistory.org/academic/cramer\\_dearmer2017.pdf](http://anglicanhistory.org/academic/cramer_dearmer2017.pdf) (accessed 22 April 2020).

a concern for social justice to create an 'English Use'. The legacy was mediated to his one-time curate, Conrad Noel, and some of its concerns were shared by Dean W.P. Ladd. However, the combination of English Use and social concern happened earlier than Dearmer, and began among the English Roman Catholic circle of the architect and convert, A.W.N. Pugin. Dearmer's contribution was to develop it and transpose it into an Anglican key.

### Snapshot 1. Pugin and Rock

What is termed the Romantic Movement, like many convenient labels, covered a great many trends and characteristics, sometimes in deep opposition to one another. One of its obsessions and fascinations was medievalism. Charles Dellheim characterized Victorian medievalism as a social language composed of myths, legends, rituals and symbols that was appropriated by Victorians both to criticize and to affirm their own times.<sup>3</sup> At one level, Dellheim argues, medievalism was a response to the social, political and economic strains associated with industrialization, notably the birth of a class society, the erosion of aesthetic standards, the creation of squalid cities, and perhaps above all, the condition of the working class.<sup>4</sup> Part of its myth was the conviction held by some that medieval England had been more prosperous and more socially equitable than Victorian England. In this context, Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin is the archetypal representative. Born in 1812, he became a convert to Roman Catholicism in 1835, just six years after Catholic Emancipation. He died in 1852, two years after the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in England. He is best remembered for promoting Gothic style architecture, though his main passion was for early Gothic, which he termed 'pointed'. Among his secular work was the interiors of the New Palace at Westminster, and his artistic work covered furniture and arts and crafts as well as actual building structures. He was the architect of a number of Anglican churches. However, his passion and concern was for the rejuvenation of the newly emancipated Roman Catholic Community. In a letter of 1840 to his Anglican friend, J.R. Bloxam of Magdalene College, Oxford, he said: 'I have prayed from a child for the restoration of the Long Lost glory of catholic England'.<sup>5</sup> He was given the opportunity by the patronage of Lord Shrewsbury at Alton Towers and other Catholic areas of Staffordshire, and met a kindred spirit in the earl's chaplain, Dr Daniel Rock. He also had the support of the Vicar Apostolic of the Midland District, Bishop Thomas Walsh.

It is clear from Pugin's designs and his letters that he carefully researched early English Gothic church architecture, interiors as well as exteriors, and their furnishings and vestments. It was this English Catholic style that he wanted to restore and promote. In another letter to Bloxam he wrote:

under the blessing of God I have already erected 5 Churches with their southern porches covered fonts screened chancels sedilia Sacrariums chapels open

<sup>3</sup>Charles Dellheim, 'Interpreting Victorian Medievalism', in Florence S. Boos (ed.), *History and Community: Essays in Victorian Medievalism* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), p. 39.

<sup>4</sup>Dellheim, 'Interpreting Victorian Medievalism', p. 44.

<sup>5</sup>Margaret Belcher, *The Collected Letters of A.W.N. Pugin. I. 1830-1842* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 155.

benches and all the Long Lost features of our antient Parochial ecclesiastical architecture and I have 11 more in hand besides several shortly to be commenced – all of which are strict *revivals of antient buildings*.<sup>6</sup>

And again to Bloxam, he asserted:

I erected the first Rood & Rood Loft. I restored the 2 Candlesticks on the altar & the curtains on each side. I have made the first Basins with Prickets for tapers to hand before the altar. . . I have rebuilt the first holy water stoops in the *Porches*. reengraved the first *ecclesiastical brass* – got back the old English surplice the old chasuble the old dalmatic the appareled alb.<sup>7</sup>

Pugin also promoted the hanging pyx rather than a tabernacle for the Blessed sacrament. Pugin worked with Hardman of Birmingham on church plate, and borrowed old chasubles from Dr Rock's collection for models for Oscott College, and for St Mary's Uttoxeter and St Mary's Derby.

Daniel Rock was a liturgical scholar, and in his multi-volumes *The Church of our Fathers*, set out to show that the Sarum Use was in complete descent from the Anglo-Saxon usage, and urged the restoration of Sarum Use and the English liturgical customs. This included the hanging pyx, two candles on the altar and not six, the rood screen and loft, and appropriate vesture, the Lenten array, and the revival of ceremonies since lost to the then contemporary Roman tradition. Rock's work is a compendium of encyclopaedic antiquarian knowledge. He concluded thus:

Between the Anglo-Saxon and the Sarum rite there was but small difference: this latter bore about it a strong sister likeness to the first, so that, while looking upon the one, we, after a way, behold both. In its features and its whole stature, we gaze, as it were, upon our fathers in their religious life; we read their ghostly annals, through a thousand years and more, as a Catholic people. . . . can these rites never again be witnessed in England? They may. Let us hope then – let us pray for their restoration, so that England may once more gaze upon her olden liturgy; let us hope and pray that her children, in looking upon, may all acknowledge their true mother, and love and heed the teaching the while they study the ritual of *the Church of our Fathers*.<sup>8</sup>

Pugin could write enthusiastically that 'Dr. Wiseman is now completely *ad usum Sarum* which is a great blessing'.<sup>9</sup>

English Use, then, was the mission of Pugin and Dr Daniel Rock. But what of social justice? One aspect of Victorian medievalism was the belief that the old Christian society was kinder and more humane than mid-nineteenth-century

<sup>6</sup>Belcher, *Collected Letters*, I, p. 144.

<sup>7</sup>Belcher, *Collected Letters*, I, pp. 153–54.

<sup>8</sup>Daniel Rock, *The Church of our Fathers as Seen in St. Osmund's Rite for the Cathedral of Salisbury* (rev. edn; ed. G.W. Hart and W.H. Frere; London: Murray, 1906), IV, pp. 296–97. The volumes were originally published in 1849.

<sup>9</sup>Belcher, *Collected Letters*, I, p. 338.

Victorian England. In his second edition of *Contrasts*, 1841, Pugin added an illustration which contrasted the treatment of paupers under the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and his own imagined treatment in medieval Christendom. Michael Fisher writes of the contrasting illustrations:

The medieval poor are well-dressed and amply fed, and after death they receive a dignified burial with full Catholic rites. On the other hand the modern pauper is threatened with a whip and fetters, is fed on gruel, and when he dies his body is sold for dissection. It is a caricature no doubt, but no more so than Dickens's verbal portrayal of Poor Law institutions in *Oliver Twist*; and unlike the novels of Dickens, Pugin's writings suggested antidotes to the ills he saw around him.<sup>10</sup>

As Fisher adds, Pugin believed that in the God-centred Middle Ages there had been social cohesion, and true fellowship, but nineteenth-century humanity was materialistic, unspiritual, and deeply divided. In practical terms, Pugin's solution is seen in his plans for St John's Alton, with its school and hospital – the latter in its medieval sense of sheltered accommodation for the poor and elderly. Pugin wrote: 'What a glorious place the hospital at Alton will be with its warden, confraternity, brethren, children of the school etc. Why, it could be a little paradise.'<sup>11</sup>

It was all part of the Pugin dream, but the dream remained unfulfilled. The hospital never housed those for whom he intended it – it was later used by the Sisters of Mercy. His liturgical ideals were also thwarted. Roman Catholic politics insisted on six candles on the altar, not two. The tabernacle triumphed over the hanging pyx. The English surplice did not last long before being replaced by lace cottas. And the Gothic chasubles were criticized, and Bishop Walsh was reprimanded by the *Propaganda Fidei*. Pugin wrote to Ambrose Lisle Phillipps:

In this censure the bishop is accused of having at *my* instigation introduced various *innovations* in the Liturgy and vestments. Intolerable ignorance, these innovations as they are called are the mere restoration of the glorious ornaments which the ascendancy of heretics had deprived us of, and because those who ought to *delight in the study of these things are utterly ignorant of them* we are to be denounced as *innovators*.<sup>12</sup>

His rood screens were also criticized, and the proposal to adopt *ad usum Sarum* was sabotaged by ultramontanism, and the so-called Tridentine rite and contemporary Roman Catholic ceremonial won the day in the English Roman Catholic Church. As more recent scholarship has shown, this 'English Use' was an invention; much of it had parallels elsewhere in medieval Europe, much of it surviving well into the nineteenth century. However, Pugin and Rock were convinced that it was distinctly English and different. Ironically, a more fertile pasture for Pugin's 'English Use'

<sup>10</sup>Michael Fisher, 'Gothic for Ever': A.W.N. Pugin, Lord Shrewsbury, and the Rebuilding of Catholic England (Reading: Spire Books, 2012), p. 124.

<sup>11</sup>Belcher, *Collected Letters*, I, p. 298.

<sup>12</sup>Belcher, *Collected Letters*, I, p. 127.

and social improvement was to be found among the so-called heretics in the Church of England.

## Snapshot 2. Dearmer

Judith Pinnington has observed that all the early ‘Anglican Social Democrats’ had what might be called a ‘patrician’ background, and neither Percy Dearmer, nor one of his curates, Conrad le Dispenser Roden Noel were exceptions.<sup>13</sup> Percy was second son of Thomas and Caroline Miriam Dearmer and was born in 1867. His father died when Percy was ten, and he had no good memories of his mother, who was strict and evangelical. He attended Westminster School, then Vevey, Switzerland, and then Christ Church, Oxford. It was at Oxford that he came under the influence of York Powell, who would introduce him to socialism, and Thomas Banks Strong, Dean of Christ Church, who would introduce him to a more Catholic churchmanship. Donald Gray comments that from these two strands came a synthesis which found its practical outworking in Christian Socialism.<sup>14</sup> Such a synthesis was already to be found with Stewart Headlam and the Guild of St Matthew, and Dearmer became a member. He also became secretary to Charles Gore at Pusey House, Oxford, and was acquainted with the liturgical scholar, F.E. Brightman. Dearmer became secretary of the Guild of St Matthew in 1889, and was a frequent contributor to the *Church Reformer*, a radical paper. He went to assist J.G. Adderley feeding dock workers in the London Dock strike of 1889. He contributed to a socialist collection of essays, *The New Party*, in 1895. The New Party was headed by Andrew Reid, and was supposed to replace the older established political parties in England, which it failed to do. Its ideals were set out in the collection of essays, which included a contribution by the Labour Party founder and leader, James Keir Hardy. Essays had titles such as ‘Land Monopoly’, ‘The Social Economy of the Future’, and ‘Factory Girls’. Dearmer’s contribution was entitled ‘The Social Work of the Undivided Church’.<sup>15</sup> He argued that the schisms that had rent the Church had disrupted its socialism, and a divided church loses its social character. There is a hint that all was well in England until the Norman Conquest, and he has a sympathy for the Romantic medievalism of Ruskin and of William Morris. So Dearmer wrote, ‘The agricultural labourer was not a wage-slave as he is now. He lived out of his own land and lived extremely well, while he worked a certain portion of his time on the lord’s demesne in return for his protection’.<sup>16</sup>

And in words which could have been written by Pugin, Dearmer wrote of his medieval golden age:

Trade-union uniforms, banners, processions were then as common and as beautiful as they are now uncommonly ugly. The infirm and the bereaved were

<sup>13</sup>Judith Pinnington, ‘Gentlemen into Social Democrats: An Anglican Evolution’, in Kenneth Leech (ed.), *Conrad Noel and the Catholic Crusade* (London: Jubilee Group), p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>Donald Gray, *Percy Dearmer: A Parson’s Pilgrimage* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2000), p. 16.

<sup>15</sup>Percy Dearmer, ‘The Social Work of the Undivided Church’, in Andrew Reid (ed.), *The New Party Described by Some of its Members* (London: Hodder Brothers, 1894), pp. 287–314.

<sup>16</sup>Percy Dearmer, ‘The Social Work of the Undivided Church’, p. 302.

provided for. The craft-gilds owed their strength to religion, their apprentices were admitted in Church, they had their own chapels, their own altars, and their own services. Even women (for sweated female labour was unknown) were admitted.<sup>17</sup>

However, Dearmer did not argue for a return to medievalism, but rather that Christians should forget their sectarianism and narrow prejudices, and claim for their Divine Master that position as the great Emancipator which he held in times past, and which he holds now in spite of his followers.<sup>18</sup>

In 1897 Dearmer wrote a pamphlet entitled *Christian Socialism. Practical Christianity*. Here he argued that socialism is what Christians do when they do what their Lord commanded them. He argued for the christological basis of this Christian socialism. In his signs, Christ cured many from their diseases; in his parables, he spoke on moneymaking, love for the other, and doing good; in the sermon on the Mount, laid down a guide for living; and in the Lord's Prayer, we find prayer that is social in scope. He ended the pamphlet with these words: 'For the man that loves much is a Socialist, and the man that loves most is a saint, and every man that loves the brotherhood is in a state of salvation'.<sup>19</sup> However, the decades that separate Pugin from Dearmer meant that Dearmer's socialism was inspired not simply by Romantic medievalism, but in addition by the Christian Socialism of F.D. Maurice, socialist politics and the labour movements.

Dearmer, though, is best remembered for his influential guide on ceremonial, vesture and church furnishings, *The Parson's Handbook*, first published in 1899 and expanded in many subsequent editions. It came to be decried by many with the label 'British Museum Religion', though when first coined by James Adderley, it was not intended as a term of ridicule as it later became. Dearmer had been curate to Adderley, who was himself a leading Christian Socialist. Adderley explained:

It was when we were at Berkeley Chapel [a proprietary chapel of St. George's Hanover Square, London] that Dearmer began to turn his thoughts towards finding a way out of the liturgical chaos in which the Church of England was struggling. He tells me that I set him thinking by my continually asking, 'Is this in the Prayer Book?' The question he asked himself was, 'Is there an English Church ritual?' He is a real student, and always has been one, and, moreover, he has a very clear brain and writes and preaches more lucidly than almost anyone I know. He was just the man to rescue liturgiology from the pedantry of the mere man of letters and make it attractive to the whole Church.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Dearmer, 'The Social Work', pp. 305–306.

<sup>18</sup>Dearmer, 'The Social Work', p. 313.

<sup>19</sup>Percy Dearmer, *Christian Socialism: Practical Christianity* (Clarion Pamphlet 19; London: Clarion Press Newspaper Company, 1897), p. 16.

<sup>20</sup>James Adderley, *In Slums and Society: Reminiscences of Old Friends* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1916, p. 80.

Whether Dearmer did ever spend time in the British Museum researching for his book is not clear to me. He did, however, draw on the liturgical works that were becoming available through the Alcuin Club, which had been founded by lay liturgical scholars in 1897 to promote the study of the history and use of the *Book of Common Prayer*. The 1899 first edition of *The Parson's Handbook* did not list Rock in the bibliography, but it did list John Micklethwaite, *The Ornaments of the Rubric* (1897) and G. Morse, *Notes on Ceremonial* (1888), both of whom had used Rock. In the later editions of *The Parson's Handbook*, Rock's work, as revised and edited by G.W. Hart and Walter Frere, is cited. Rock's work, indirectly and later directly, furnished much of the evidence of the English Use for Dearmer – notably the two candles, the curtains and riddle posts, the rood screen, Gothic style vesture, the hanging pyx, and so on. However, whereas Rock attempted to discover an English Use for English Roman Catholics, Dearmer was concerned with the Ornaments Rubric of the Prayer Book and its faithful execution.

Dearmer set out to clarify and justify as much ceremonial, vesture and furnishings as could be covered by the ornaments rubric, without having to import other ceremonial and liturgical forms. He drew on *ad usum Sarum*, because this was the most common use in England prior to the 1549 *Prayer Book*, and so its ceremonial formed the basis of the intentions of the rubric. He argued that the only modification to the pre-reformation ceremonial was by the Injunctions of the Privy Council in 1547, which ordered the removal of shrines and images. Dearmer neatly dodged the two-fold fact that the Ornaments Rubric had been introduced in the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*, and that the Elizabethan Settlement included the confiscation of chasubles, as well as the destruction of any surviving or newly erected figures on the rood screens, and that the Holy Table was to sit where the old altar stood only when it was not in use! Whatever the historical reality over against Dearmer's wishful thinking, it is beyond doubt that many clergy in the Church of England felt that they could in good conscience follow his urgings for this 'English Use' without the guilt that they had sold out to Rome. However, his concern with social justice was not entirely swamped by ceremonial concerns. In the Introduction to *The Parson's Handbook*, where he wrote:

A modern preacher often stands in a sweated pulpit, wearing a sweated surplice over a suit of clothes that were not produced under fair conditions, and, holding a sweated book in one hand, with the other he points to the machine-made cross at the jerry-built altar, and appeals to the sacred principles of mutual sacrifice and love.<sup>21</sup>

Dearmer was inducted as incumbent of St Mary's Primrose Hill, London in 1901, and there he developed ceremonial and furnishings in accordance with the principles set out in *The Parson's Handbook*, and continued with involvement and writing on Christian socialist subjects, which included a Fabian Tract, *Socialism and Christianity*, 1907 (a reprint of *Christian Socialism. Practical Christianity*) and, echoing the concerns of Pugin, *The Reform of the Poor Law* in 1908, which noted the hardships under the law suffered by children, the sick, the aged and the

<sup>21</sup>*The Parson's Handbook* (London: Henry Froude, 6th edn, 1907), p. 6.

unemployed.<sup>22</sup> Another pamphlet, *The Church and Social Questions*, 1910, defended the dignity of manual labour, and argued that the Church was the great educator of humanity in moral and social duty. In this work Dearmer quoted from a report of the 1908 Lambeth Conference, which gave a prominent place to a variety of moral principles, such as brotherhood, justice (including for all races), honesty, purity, peaceableness, self-education, cleanliness, care of health and the Christian call to public duty.<sup>23</sup> The combined concerns can also be seen in the founding of the Warham Guild in 1912, to facilitate the making of all 'ornaments of the Church and of the Ministers thereof' according to the standard of the Ornaments Rubric, and under fair conditions of labour.<sup>24</sup> The combination is also evident in *The English Hymnal*. Dearmer was editor, and Vaughan Williams, an agnostic but convinced socialist, was the music editor. Dearmer was the first editor to remove the verse of Mrs Alexander's 'All Things Bright and Beautiful', which spoke of God ordering the estates of the rich man in his castle and the poor man at his gate; he included Ebenezer Elliott's 'When wilt thou save the people?', and authored the hymn 'The winter's sleep was long and deep', for May Day. Katie Palmer Heathman comments:

The hymnal's socialist editors build communality into their book at every level, from music designed to foster participation and to reject Victorian individualism in favour of shared activity; to appeals to nationality as a bond of common culture and the English past as a shared heritage.<sup>25</sup>

### Snapshot 3. Noel

Dearmer was already acquainted with Conrad le Dispenser Roden Noel, who became part-time curate to Dearmer at St Mary's, Primrose Hill. Noel was born in 1869, in a house on Kew Green, one of the royal cottages inhabited by ladies-in-waiting to Queen Victoria, and lent to his father during a period of service at court. His grandmother was Lady Gainsborough, and though his mother was an evangelical, Conrad frequented Anglo-Catholic Churches, including St John's, Upper Norwood and St Alban's, Holborn.<sup>26</sup> He was educated at Wellington and Cheltenham, and was admitted to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge where he ran up large bills and seemed to learn very little, and was rusticated for a term, though he never returned to the University. It was, though, at Cambridge that he met his future wife, Miriam Greenwood, who was totally committed to Catholic Socialism. It was some years later that they married, in All Saints', Jesus Lane, Cambridge, with Percy Dearmer officiating. After leaving the university, Noel acquainted himself with the writings of George Tyrrell and Catholic Modernism, and then he was admitted to Chichester Theological College. He immersed himself in theology and church

<sup>22</sup>Percy Dearmer, *The Reform of the Poor Law* (London: A.R. Mowbray & Sons, 1907).

<sup>23</sup>Percy Dearmer, *The Church and Social Questions* (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1910), p. 20.

<sup>24</sup>'The Warham Guild', <http://anglicanonline.org/special/warham.html> (accessed 23 January 2019).

<sup>25</sup>Katie Palmer Heathman, "'Lift Up a Living Nation": Community and Nation, Socialism and Religion in *The English Hymnal*, 1906', in *Cultural and Social History* 14 (2017), p. 183.

<sup>26</sup>For the biographical summary, see Conrad Noel, *An Autobiography* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1945).



history, and delighted in collecting quotations from the church fathers which supported his growing socialist convictions.

Noel was offered a curacy at All Saints', Plymouth with Fr Chase. It was his advocacy of socialist ideas, and perhaps a less than sophisticated articulation of the ideas of F.D. Maurice and George Tyrell, that resulted in the Bishop of Exeter summoning him the night before his ordination to inform him that because of his Romanism and pantheism, he was not prepared to ordain him. After an unsuccessful interview with Bishop Westcott of Durham, which took place at Lambeth Palace, Noel stayed in London at a doss house, Rowton House, with a view to learning something first-hand of the ways of the poor. Noel noted:

It was from Rowton House that I called on Percy Dearmer, and he was surprised when he opened the door to see a tramp with a red handkerchief knotted round his throat. We talked of the Guild of St. Matthew, formed by Stewart Headlam, and of our common enthusiasm for catholic Socialism.<sup>27</sup>

Noel had become a member of the Guild of St Matthew.

Noel found a curacy at Floweryfield in Cheshire, but his Sunday afternoon lectures on Catholic Socialism were thronged by non-church folk and shunned by most of the congregation, and the bishop refused to ordain him priest. He finally found a place at St Philip's Salford, and then went as curate to the noted socialist W.E. Moll at Newcastle-on-Tyne. From there he went as curate at St Mary's, Paddington, and he became close friends of the Chesterton brothers, and prepared Cecil Chesterton for Confirmation. In 1904 Noel became part-time curate to Percy Dearmer, and as Reg Groves observed, 'Dearmer made St. Mary's, Primrose Hill, a living testament to the principles he had set out in the *Parson's Handbook* and in this, Noel took a part, and much that he saw and helped to do at St Mary's was to have a place in his later work at Thaxted.'<sup>28</sup> But Noel was not uncritical of Dearmer; he disliked his adherence to the Prayer Book rite with its dislocated canon.<sup>29</sup> In 1906 the Church Socialist League was formed, and members included Conrad Noel, W.E. Moll, Percy Widdrington, Paul Bull, Walter Frere, Lewis Donaldson, Percy Dearmer, James Adderley, Maurice Reckitt, Ruth Kenyon, Charles Record and Harold Buxton. In 1907 Noel became the League's organizing secretary. In 1910 he was offered the living of Thaxted. The patronage was held by the Countess of Warwick, a former mistress of Edward VII, and by this time, a convinced socialist. He was inducted by the bishop of St Alban's on the feast of St Matthew 1910, and among those who attended was Percy Deamer.

Conrad Noel's Catholic Socialism was set out in his book, *Socialism in Church History*, published in 1911. A somewhat romantic idea of the medieval church is presented, and Thomas a Becket and John Ball are set forth as heroes. Appealing to F.D. Maurice, Noel believed passionately that the true Catholic faith teaches that

<sup>27</sup>Noel, *An Autobiography*, p. 42.

<sup>28</sup>Reg Groves, *Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement* (London: Merlin P., 1967), p. 32. Conrad Noel's signed copy of the second edition of *The Parson's Handbook* is in the possession of Canon Dr Donald Gray, President of the Society for Liturgical Study.

<sup>29</sup>Noel, *An Autobiography*, p. 80.

the church is a visible society ordained by Christ to bring about the Kingdom of God.<sup>30</sup> This conviction was set out in detail in his *The Life of Jesus*, published in 1937, and dedicated to a fellow Christian Socialist and former curate, Harold Mason.<sup>31</sup> The core of the book was that Jesus taught that both the oppressed manual workers and all men of goodwill must fling themselves with all their energies into the cause of a new world here on earth, and that this new world is a replica of the world as it exists in God's mind and of a fellowship beyond death.<sup>32</sup>

For Noel, Catholic Socialism, theology and liturgical practice were inextricably interwoven. He wrote:

The revolutionary teaching at Thaxted may be studied in books and pamphlets on sale in the church, but the Thaxted experiment is by no means only concerned with the pulpit and the press, but just as much in the life of a group and the expression of that life in worship. Thaxted is becoming a place of pilgrimage for those who are tired of the sluggish routine and conventionalism of much modern Nonconformity and of the 'C of E.' We are proud to claim membership of the Church of England for she is the Church of Anselm, of Becket, of those such as Langton and John Ball who fought for the freedom of the people, the Church of Laud in his fight against a narrow Calvinism and the oppression of the poor, and in still more modern times, the Church of Maurice and Kingsley, of Scott Holland and Stewart Headlam. . . . Now what is there in Thaxted worship which scandalises the 'ratepayers' and attracts many, in the town itself and many pilgrims from all quarters? . . . The organ and surpliced choir no longer predominate. The processions on High days and Holidays include not only the ceremonial group in bright vestments, but the people themselves, children with flowers and branches, women in gay veils, men with torches and banners, all this colour and movement centering round the Lord Christ present in the Eucharist. We preach the Christ who all through His life stressed the value of the common meal, the bread and wine joyously shared among His people, the mass as prelude to a New World Order in which all would be justly produced and equally distributed. The Lord thus chose the human things of everyday life, the useful bread and the genial wine, to be the perpetual vehicles of His presence among us till the kingdom should come on earth as in heaven. But all this involves politics, and we are often rebuked for mixing politics with religion. Well! The blind following of any political party, the politics of the party lack, these are certainly not the business of the pulpit, but politics, in the wider sense of social justice, is part and parcel of the gospel of Christ, and to ignore it is to be false to His teaching. Worship and beauty are not to be despised, but worship divorced from social righteousness is an abomination to God.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Conrad Noel, *Socialism in Church History* (Milwaukee: The Young Church Company, 1911), p. 245.

<sup>31</sup>Conrad Noel, *The Life of Jesus* (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1937). Republished by the Religious Book Club in 1938.

<sup>32</sup>Noel, *Life of Jesus*, p. 431.

<sup>33</sup>Conrad Noel, 'Epilogue', in Ethel Simcoe, *A Short History of the Parish and Ancient Borough of Thaxted* (Saffron Walden: W. Hart & Son, 1934), pp. 135–36.

Noel's socialism has been told in detail elsewhere by Reg Groves and Arthur Burns.<sup>34</sup> Noel became dissatisfied with the Christian Socialist League, and founded the Catholic Crusade, and when that seemed to fail, he founded the Order of the Church Militant. Though many regarded him as an out and out communist, he denied it, and although liking much of what Lenin wrote, found Marx boring, and appealed instead to William Morris, 'to whom, by the way, I was enormously attached'.<sup>35</sup>

As for liturgy, his initial struggle at Thaxted was over padded Bible boxes and their owners who took the best seats, and so he removed the Bible boxes. He introduced a sung Mass at nine o'clock, and began using incense at Easter 1911. He abolished the surpliced choir, and cheerfully accepted the resignation of the organist. He had singers, but placed them with the congregation, and developed congregational singing, and his curate George Chambers trained the choir in plainsong. The Church interior was beautified with hangings, and vestments were made by his wife Miriam.<sup>36</sup> He placed a statue of Mary in the church, and a banner dedicated to John Ball. At the same time Folk dancing and Morris dancing were introduced to the parish – not in worship, but as another expression of celebration. His ministry made a great impression on the workers at the sweet (candy) factory which at that time existed in Thaxted.

Festivals with processions became a central feature of Thaxted liturgy. The Feast of the Assumption had been an important three-day festival with a summer fair in medieval Thaxted, and Noel restored outdoor processions through the town with banner and the host, culminating in Benediction, on Corpus Christi and the Assumption.<sup>37</sup> In 1914 Essex had ceased to be part of the St Alban's diocese and had become part of the newly formed diocese of Chelmsford. The bishop, Edwin Watts Ditchfield, did not approve of the Thaxted processions. In 1919, learning of the forthcoming procession, Watts Ditchfield sent a telegram saying:

'Just heard that it is your intention to carry the Host through streets today. Can scarcely imagine this correct, but if it is, I, as your Father in God, absolutely prohibit the same either inside or outside your church'.<sup>38</sup>

Noel announced that the bishop had given his blessing – of course there was not a procession inside *or* outside – it was inside *and* outside.

<sup>34</sup>Reg Groves, *Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement*; Arthur Burns, 'Beyond the 'Red Vicar': Community and Socialism in Thaxted, Essex 1910–84', *History Workshop Journal* 75 (2013), pp. 101–24.

<sup>35</sup>Conrad Noel and Thaxted: A Village Revolution', *The Church Times*, 22 June 1938, p. 95.

<sup>36</sup>Noel's son-in-law and former curate who would later succeed him at Thaxted, Jack Putterill, recorded how he (Putterill) restored an old loom in a disused vestry in 1925 and founded a local Guild of Weavers. Putterill was assisted by Alec B. Hunter, a noted textile designer and craftsman. Hunter and his wife often visited Thaxted, and eventually moved to the village. The couple were involved with the Morris dancing, and Hunter was Squire of the Morrismen; see Jack Putterill, *Thaxted Quest for Social Justice* (Marlow: Precision Press, 1977), p. 79; and the Catalogue, *Alec B. Hunter. Textile Designer and Craftsman. An Exhibition arranged by Warner & Sons Ltd.*, 1979/1980. Some of Noel's copes are in the possession of Dr Julian Litten who kindly furnished me with the information and photographs of the copes; personal communication to author, 27 November 2017 to 3 July 2018.

<sup>37</sup>See Simcoe, *A Short History*, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup>Cited in Groves, *The Thaxted Movement*, p. 223.

As to the Thaxted use, there is a copy of the Sunday Mass in the Essex Record Office entitled *Thaxted Church: A Guide to the Lord's Service*, deposited in 1936, and it is similar to the rite Noel published for the Catholic Crusade in a booklet entitled *Devotions*, which has no date, but probably dates from the 1920s, and a copy of which is held with the Noel archives at the Hull History Centre.<sup>39</sup> What he used earlier I have not been able to discover.<sup>40</sup> It would seem to me that just as his ceremonial and his socialism was selective and eclectic, so was his liturgical rite.<sup>41</sup> Noel wrote:

It was my intention to bring to life again the ancient worship of the English church with the Eucharist as its centre, and to restore the old ceremonies of the Church of England to the place they once held in the life of the people . . . . We are not in line in thought or expression with those Anglo-Catholic churches, in which you may see numerous little boys in chemisettes, clergy bedecked in lace and capped in cardboard birettas; we dislike their stiff frontals, muddy colours and multitudinous ornaments . . . We have borrowed from ancient English Uses and ceremonials and adapted them to modern needs . . .<sup>42</sup>

He drew on Dearmer's ideas for the imagined English Use, and shared the idealism of William Morris about the medieval period, selecting John Ball as an ecclesiastical socialist hero, and he also managed to co-opt St Thomas of Canterbury into the same tradition.

#### Snapshot 4. Ladd

In 1918–19 Percy Dearmer spent some months at Berkeley Divinity School, Middletown, Connecticut, lecturing on theology and liturgy. Dearmer had suffered personal tragedy during the Great War. He had been a chaplain to the forces serving in Serbia in 1915, and his wife Mabel volunteered as a nurse, and joined him in Serbia. His two sons were also serving soldiers. Within six months Mabel contracted a fever and died, and his son Christopher was killed. He resigned his position at Primrose Hill, and from then until 1931 was without any Church of England appointment. He remarried, and travelled to India, and then accepted an invitation from Dean William Palmer Ladd, Dean of Berkeley Divinity School, to be a visiting

<sup>39</sup>Essex Record Office D/P 16/1/36; Hull History Centre U DNO/6/29.

<sup>40</sup>Though pure speculation on my part, he might have used something like the order found in *Catholic Prayers for Church of England People*. A copy of the 1893 edition by W. Knott, London, in the possession of Canon Dr Donald Gray, has the inscription: 'To Conrad Noel 1894 with the best wishes of Percy and Mabel Dearmer'. Some parts of the mass have been cut out, perhaps for cutting and pasting.

<sup>41</sup>The Thaxted High Mass began with the Asperges, and the Litany or people's procession *à la* Dearmer, and then the Confitour, mentioning the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist. In the Red Mass, St Thomas of Canterbury took the place of John the Baptist. Then came the Collect for Purity, Introit, Kyries, Gloria and Collect for the Day. A Sequence hymn came after the Epistle. There was an offertory procession by laypeople. All the liturgical texts were basically those of the *Book of Common Prayer*, though the 'Consecration' used common rephrasing to unite the prayer of oblation with the 1662 Prayer of Consecration, and restored a post-institution epikletic petition. The fraction came after the Lord's Prayer, and the Pax was given. The Agnus Dei was included, and after the mass the Last Gospel was recited and the people said the Angelus.

<sup>42</sup>Noel, 'Epilogue', in Simcoe, *A Short History*, pp. 134–35.

professor. No biography of Ladd has been written, and he published very little in comparison with Pugin, Rock, Dearmer and Noel. However, the Berkeley Divinity School archives and a few published pamphlets reveal Ladd's commitment to Christian Socialism, and his liturgical interest is of course expressed in his *Prayer Book Interleaves*.<sup>43</sup>

The year 1919 was a significant one at Berkeley Divinity School, quite apart from the presence of Dearmer. A lecture was given by Wilfred Humphries on Russia and Bolshevism, and although the talk had been given at other institutions in New England without incident, at Middletown it resulted in accusations that Ladd and his faculty were communists. Ladd requested a committee be appointed to investigate the whole matter, and he was vindicated. However, the matter was fuelled and prolonged by a prominent Middletown resident, Richard L. deZang, who accused Ladd of changing Berkeley into a socialist divinity school, and revealed the fact that Ladd did belong to a number of socialist organizations.<sup>44</sup> That was quite true. Ladd was a signatory to the founding of the Church League for Social and Industrial Democracy in June 1919. This was a successor to the Society of Christian Socialists, founded in 1889 by the Episcopal priest, William Bliss, and its manifesto of 1890 appealed to the teaching of F.D. Maurice and J.M. Ludlow.<sup>45</sup> Episcopal clergy headed the Church Socialist League founded in 1911, and then in 1919 came this new league with Ladd as one of the Executive Committee. Its constitution asserted: 'We affirm our belief that only that social order can properly be called Christian which substitutes fraternal co-operation for mastership, in industry and life.'<sup>46</sup> It also deplored the 'contemporary suppression of freedom in America' and pledged to work for the immediate restoration of those bulwarks of democracy, the rights of free assembly, free discussion, a free press and a free pulpit – without which any minority seeking to express itself is encouraged to the use of force. Ladd was also on the Executive Committee of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (which appears to have been the avenue by which Wilfred Humphries had been invited to speak), and he was a member of the Committee of 48. This latter was founded with the hope of developing a new political party, and urged public ownership of transportation and public utilities, with equal economic, political and legal rights for all, irrespective of sex or colour, and some of its pamphlets are to be found among Ladd's papers.<sup>47</sup> His concern for social justice resulted in his appointment to the Child Welfare Commission in Connecticut, and he drew up its report.

In the wake of the Russian Revolution, socialism was easily branded as communism under a different name. Bishop Charles Williams, in an address at a meeting of the Church League for Industrial Democracy in Detroit, reported, to considerable laughter:

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<sup>43</sup>First published by Oxford University Press in 1942, after Ladd's death. The book was reprinted with a foreword by Massey H. Shepherd in 1957 by Seabury Press, and again in 2018 by Wipf & Stock, in the centenary year of Ladd's appointment as Dean of Berkeley Divinity School. Pagination is the same for the main text in each edition.

<sup>44</sup>Letter of 31 December 1919, William Palmer Ladd Papers, Record Group 136, Box 1.

<sup>45</sup>William Bliss, *What Is Christian Socialism?* (Boston: The Society of Christian Socialists, 1890).

<sup>46</sup>*The Living Church*, vol. 61, 28 June 1919, p. 307.

<sup>47</sup>*Platform of the Committee of 48*, 1919, in Ladd papers, Record group 136, Box 6, Folder 3.

I heard that in a pulpit not so very long ago we were described – let me see if I can remember all the adjectives – as anarchists and socialists, and revolutionists and nihilists, and instigators and inciters of violence, etc., etc. I cannot remember all of it. I can only say with regard to this, that if we are both anarchists and socialists, we must have a pretty wide program, because each of those terms is the exact opposite of the other, as everybody who knows anything about sociology and economics is fully aware.<sup>48</sup>

It was in the same spirit that in answer to the wild charges of Bolshevism, Ladd wrote in an open letter to the Middletown Chamber of Commerce:

The Berkeley Divinity School does not stand for 'Bolshevism'. It stands for the gospel of Christ, and for those things for which the Christian Church stands, no more, no less. And among these are not only patriotism and good citizenship, but good-will, sobriety, reason, justice, freedom, the very things which are our most certain safeguard against 'Bolshevism', and the only things which can accomplish its overthrow.<sup>49</sup>

Ladd's commitment was of course to social justice as the practical expression of the Gospel. That too was one factor in the move of the School from Middletown to New Haven. As a memo of October 1923 noted, the new school should be located away from the Society end of town, and near plain people.<sup>50</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that Ladd found in Dearmer a kindred spirit. However, Ladd's liturgical interests were not precisely those of Dearmer. To begin with, the American Book of Common Prayer – at the time of Dearmer's visit, that of 1892 – did not contain the ornaments rubric, and so vestures and ceremonial were much more a utilitarian matter. However, when Ladd wrote the articles which would become *Prayer Book Interleaves*, it was the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer* that was in use. Furthermore, writing in the 1930s, Ladd was aware of the Roman Catholic Liturgical Movement and its implications for Anglican liturgical use. Whereas Dearmer, following Rock, wrote at great length about Gothic style chasubles, Ladd hardly mentions vesture, other than to say that a knowledge of the usual vestments and altar linen is assumed, and of the need to learn to handle them gracefully and expeditiously.<sup>51</sup> Two altar lights are taken as standard. But Ladd's concerns are for intelligibility and artistic beauty, with functional ceremonial. He urged recovering the Parish Eucharist as the main Sunday service. And here Ladd saw the intersection of sacrament and social justice:

No eucharistically minded Christian can possibly say his whole duty is to save his soul and other people's souls. He must be concerned about the body, about

<sup>48</sup>*The Church League for Industrial Democracy. Containing the Major Portion of the Speeches made at the meeting in Arcadia Hall, Detroit, on Sunday Afternoon, October 19, 1919*, Bulletin 7, The Church League for Industrial Democracy, 1919 (no place, no pagination, but p. 1.)

<sup>49</sup>Letter, 23 December 1919, Ladd papers, Record Group 136, Box 6, Folder 4.

<sup>50</sup>Ladd papers, Record Group 216, Box 1, B. File 5.

<sup>51</sup>*Prayer Book Interleaves*, p. 68.

hunger and poverty, about unsanitary tenements, ugly cities, and every social injustice.<sup>52</sup>

And again:

Why must our Prayer Book perpetuate the illusion that we still live in a vanished XVI or XVIII century world? . . . Times and needs change. . . . And because our prayer [of intercession] ignores the very existence of such things as Christian education, social justice, family life, international relations, foreign and domestic missions, are we therefore never to mention them at the altar?<sup>53</sup>

Percy Dearmer is mentioned in *Prayer Book Interleaves*, but Ladd is more excited by Gabriel Hebert's *Liturgy and Society*, and the Parish Communion movement. And regardless of the canons, Ladd felt the need to adapt and change the 1928 rite, and did so as the 'Berkeley rite' Eucharist witnessed.<sup>54</sup>

### In a Single Album

These snapshots feature in the same liturgy photo album because they are related. Dearmer drew on Daniel Rock to elaborate upon English Use, and although Dearmer's socialism was more politically grounded, he shared with Pugin a belief that England's medieval period was a more just society than late Victorian England. Noel was more ideologically committed than Dearmer, but his imagined medieval society and the English Use were given applied expression at Thaxted. Dearmer and Ladd were congenial colleagues, but Ladd's liturgical ideals were of the 1930s, and not an outcome of the nineteenth-century English ritual controversies. All four linked social justice and the eucharistic liturgy. Pugin and Rock had an agenda that was framed by the Emancipation of the English Roman Catholic Church, and an imagined medieval paradise regained. Dearmer, Noel and Ladd, though, were explicitly grounded in what has been called Sacramental Socialism, which saw a unity between the Eucharist, the corporate church, and its mission as part of the Kingdom of God. It was ably expressed by another Christian Socialist, Stewart Headlam:

In the worship of Jesus really present in the Sacrament of the Altar before you, all human hearts can join, and especially secularists, for when you worship Him you are worshipping The Saviour, the social and political Emancipator, the greatest of all secular workers, the founder of the great socialist society for the promotion of righteousness, the preacher of a revolution, the denouncer of kings, the gentle, tender sympathizer with the rough and the

<sup>52</sup>*Prayer Book Interleaves*, p. 51.

<sup>53</sup>*Prayer Book Interleaves*, p. 66.

<sup>54</sup>Joseph Britton, 'The Berkeley Rite', in Melanie Ross and Simon Jones (eds.), *The Serious Business of Worship* (London: T & T Clark, 2010), pp. 119–29.

outcast, who could utter scathing, burning words against the rich, the respectable, the religious.<sup>55</sup>

The call from the Eucharist to the divine mission in the world is not always as explicit as it might be in our current liturgical texts. The pictures in this album might challenge us to do better on that score in future liturgical revision.

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<sup>55</sup>Headlam said this in his 1883 address to the annual Guild of St Matthew's meeting, cited in William L. Sach's, 'Stewart Headlam and the Fabian Society', *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 45 (1976). It is cited also in Gilbert Binyon, *The Christian Socialist Movement in England* (London: SPCK, 1931), p. 120, though without specific date and context. I have been unable to locate the primary source.